



Meeting With
God
On The Mountains

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF
RICHARD M. DAVIDSON

JIRÍ MOSKALA, EDITOR

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of
Richard M. Davidson

Jiří Moskala, Editor

Old Testament Department
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
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Jiří Moskala, Editor

Contributors

Merling Alomía Bartra, PhD, Professor of Old Testament Exegesis and Theology, Emeritus, Universidad Peruana Unión, Lima, Perú.

Stephen Bauer, PhD, Professor of Theology and Ethics, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Alexander Bolotnikov, PhD, Director, Shalom Learning Center, Hollywood, Florida.

Lael O. Caesar, PhD, Research Professor of Hebrew Bible, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan; Associate Editor, *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Fernando Canale, PhD, Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Emeritus, Seventh-day Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

P. Richard Choi, PhD, Professor of New Testament; Chair, Department of New Testament, Seventh-day Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Jo Ann Davidson, PhD, Professor of Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

- Jacques B. Doukhan, DHebLett, ThD, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis; Director, Institute of Jewish-Christian Studies, Seventh-day Theological Seminary; Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan; General Editor, Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary.
- Ron du Preez, DMin, ThD, Professor (retired), Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.
- Denis Fortin, PhD, Professor of Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
- Eriks Galeniaks, PhD, Associate Professor of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis; Director, PhD (Religion) and MABTS Programs, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Constance Clark Gane, PhD, Associate Professor of Archaeology and Old Testament; Curator, Horn Archaeological Museum; Associate Director, Institute of Archaeology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
- Roy E. Gane, PhD, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
- Norman R. Gulley, PhD, Research Professor in Systematic Theology, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.
- Robert M. Johnston, PhD, Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, Emeritus, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
- Grenville J. R. Kent, DMin, PhD, Conjoint Senior Lecturer, Avondale College, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia.
- Greg A. King, PhD, Dean and Professor of Biblical Studies, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.
- Miroslav M. Kiš, PhD, Professor of Christian Ethics, Emeritus, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

- Gerald A. Klingbeil, DLitt, Research Professor of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan; Associate Editor, *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland.
- Larry L. Lichtenwalter, PhD, Dean, Faculty of Philosophy and Theology; Director, Adventist Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies, Middle East University, Beirut, Lebanon.
- Skip MacCarty, DMin, Associate Pastor, Pioneer Memorial Church (retired); Adjunct Faculty, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
- John K. McVay, PhD, President and Professor of Biblical Studies, Walla Walla University, College Place, Washington.
- Jiří Moskala, ThD, PhD, Dean and Professor of Old Testament Exegesis and Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
- Ekkehardt Mueller, DMin, ThD, Associate Director, Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.
- Jon Paulien, PhD, Dean, School of Religion, and Professor of Religion, Loma Linda University. Loma Linda, California.
- John C. Peckham, PhD, Associate Professor of Theology and Christian Philosophy, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
- Gerhard Pfandl, PhD, Associate Director (retired), Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of SDA, Silver Spring, Maryland.
- Paul J. Ray, Jr., PhD, Associate Professor of Archaeology and Old Testament; Director, Archaeological Publications, Institute of Archaeology; Associate Curator, Siegfried H. Horn Museum, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

A. Rahel Schafer, PhD, Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible, Department of Religion and Biblical Languages, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Ranko Stefanovic, PhD, Professor of New Testament, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Alberto R. Timm, PhD, Associate Director, Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Randall W. Younker, PhD, Professor of Archaeology and History of Antiquity; Director, PhD (Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology) Program; Director, Institute of Archaeology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

E. Edward Zinke, MA, MDiv, Biblical Research Institute (retired), General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.



Richard M. Davidson

Life Sketch

Richard M. Davidson, PhD, J. N. Andrews Professor of Old Testament Interpretation

Richard M. Davidson, the youngest of three brothers, was born into a Seventh-day Adventist home. He was class pastor three of his four years in Glendale Adventist Academy, in Southern California, and still has the Bible that his academy Bible teacher, Joe Engelkemier, gave all the seniors to mark during their Bible classes.

A theology major at La Sierra University, Richard colporteur during the summer months to earn tuition scholarships. After his junior year, he spent a year in Hong Kong as a student missionary, one of the first from La Sierra University. After college, Seminary training found him in Berrien Springs, Michigan, at Andrews University Theological Seminary, where he graduated with his M.Div., *Summa Cum Laude*.

As a college student in the sixties, Dr. Davidson was introduced to the historical-critical method and became persuaded that its principles and methods were an objective approach to studying Scripture. As he began applying this methodology to the Bible, he “almost imperceptibly” found himself “drifting into uncertainty regarding the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture.” As a pastor who was very aware of his sinfulness and was experiencing a deep absence of God’s loving forgiveness, it was difficult to encourage and instruct his parishioners in God’s amazing plan of salvation

and bountiful forgiveness. While pastoring, he attended a Bible Conference on hermeneutics in which he learned of the humanistic presuppositions he had been using in his biblical studies, and discovered that he had been judging God's Word, instead of letting Scripture judge him. Through the ensuing years, the insights received at that conference led him to "an implicit faith in the truthfulness of God's Word."

After pastoring for six years in Arizona, he returned to the Seminary at Andrews because of a hunger for further Old Testament studies under Dr. Gerhard Hasel. Near the end of his doctoral studies, he was invited, in 1979, to teach in the Seminary's Department of Old Testament, where he has served since then, and was chair of that department for 25 years. The Old Testament is ever on his mind and has been a source of rich inspiration. Even when traveling, he wrestles with it, his mind ever engaging in constant reflection of its complex materials.

His dissertation on biblical typology, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Τύπος Structures*, is still reprinted and considered a major scholarly contribution on the topic. Dr. Davidson has also written a seminal study on human sexuality in the Old Testament entitled *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*. He regularly presents professional papers and is constantly writing articles and books as assignments come to him from around the world. His website displays an extensive collection of scholarly contributions over the years, and his ministry to the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide is year-round.

Dr. Davidson has been blessed with a loving companion, Jo Ann Mazat Davidson, who has faithfully supported and encouraged him through his spiritual journey and long teaching career, and two wonderful children, Rahel Schafer and Jon Davidson who has insightfully written the following regarding his father:

I've been blessed with a world-class dad. He's one of the most patient, intelligent, funny, wise, faith-filled, well-balanced people I've ever met. We've climbed at least one mountain together every year since I was old enough to carry a backpack (which, in my family, was around the age of four months).

The best thing about my dad is that he never tried to make my decisions for me. He taught me right and wrong through the way he lived.

I admire the way he's always been so real, so transparent.

I've seen him, year after year, simply love God, my mom, my sister, and me in a remarkable way (*Of Bombs and Blackberries: The Only Guide to Life You Will Ever Need* [Portland, OR: Safe Silver Press, 2012], 70).

Dick Davidson is a devout Christian gentleman and loyal Seventh-day Adventist scholar with an unselfish motivation to uphold and glorify the God of heaven through His Word. This has been demonstrated by his dedication to a thorough study of the Holy Scriptures which has made him one of the leading Bible scholars and theologians in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Those who have studied under him, read his written material, or heard him preach testify to how powerfully they were influenced to understand God's revelation and encouraged to serve God and others with joy and faithfulness.

A Selected Bibliography of Richard M. Davidson

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>ABR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
<i>AJBA</i>	<i>Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology</i>
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i>
ANETS	Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies
ASOR	<i>American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>ASTI</i>	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
<i>ATJ</i>	<i>Ashland Theological Journal</i>
ATSDS	Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series
AUSDDS	Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>

BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBC	Broadman Bible Commentary
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BBRSup	Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplements
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
<i>BDB</i>	<i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BRIS	Biblical Research Institute Studies
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BTCB	Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series
ConcC	Concordia Commentary
<i>COS</i>	<i>The Context of Scripture</i>
CPNIVC	College Press NIV Commentary

<i>CT</i>	<i>Christianity Today</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>CurBS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
<i>DOTP</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets</i>
<i>EBC</i>	<i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>EDB</i>	<i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
<i>EstBib</i>	<i>Estudios bíblicos</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExAud</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FOTL</i>	<i>Forms of the Old Testament Literature</i>
<i>GAT</i>	<i>Grundrisse zum Alten Testament</i>
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>Hermen</i>	<i>Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible</i>
<i>HRCS</i>	<i>Hatch and Redpath. Concordance to the Septuagint</i>
<i>HSS</i>	<i>Harvard Semitic Studies</i>
<i>HTCNT</i>	<i>Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i>
<i>IBC</i>	<i>Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching</i>
<i>IBHS</i>	<i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i>
<i>ICC</i>	<i>International Critical Commentary</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IRT</i>	<i>Issues in Religion & Theology</i>

<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
IVPNTC	IVP New Testament Commentary
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAAS</i>	<i>Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JATS</i>	<i>Journal of Adventist Theological Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JEA</i>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHebS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
<i>JIH</i>	<i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JRE</i>	<i>Journal of Religious Ethics</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>JTSA</i>	<i>Journal of Theology for Southern Africa</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
LBC	Layman's Bible Commentary
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MBC	Mellen Biblical Commentary

<i>MSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDB</i>	<i>New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NPNF¹</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series 1</i>
<i>NPNF²</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series 2</i>
<i>NRTh</i>	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NTG	New Testament Guides
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i> (NS)
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTM	Old Testament Message

<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestmentische Studiën</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'assyrologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
<i>RelSRev</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RThom</i>	<i>Revue thomiste</i>
<i>RevistB</i>	<i>Revista bíblica</i>
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SB	Sources bibliques
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLABS	Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SDABC</i>	<i>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SP	Sacra Pagina
STR	Studies in Theology and Religion
StudBib	Studia Biblica
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TDNTW</i>	<i>The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>

<i>Theo</i>	<i>Theologika</i>
<i>ThWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TRu</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup`	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word and World</i>
WyEC	Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
YJS	Yale Judaica Series
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Introduction

M *eeeting With God on the Mountains* is a fitting title for Dr. Richard M. Davidson's lifelong scholarship and theology, and even characterizes his lifestyle, because without exaggeration, one can say that his theology and biblical studies spring from his meetings with the Lord on many mountains. Richard loves mountains, not so much the climbing (as he often stresses), but the splendid and inspiring view from the top, which is worth all the pain of attaining the peak. He has climbed all 54 absolutely gorgeous and very demanding 14,000 feet mountains in Colorado (the last three he conquered in July 2016). He has also climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, Mt. Whitney ten times, and many more peaks. He told me that the most important thing to do in order to achieve one's goal when in a very dangerous passage in the mountains is to look forward and up—never down—and to breathe properly.

There is something special and extremely attractive on mountains. Their grandiose majesty uplifts the human spirit, and their beauty is breathtaking. The fresh air, contact with pure nature, excellent views, but above all, the closeness with God, is what is so appealing. Encountering the Lord on the mountain is not surprising, because God Himself resides on the Mountain at the utmost North (Ps 48:2; see also Isa 14:13; Ezek 28:14, 16), and many significant events and theophanies recorded in the Scriptures occurred on the mountains. God speaks and reveals Himself in these places.

God loves to meet with people on the mountains and communicate His will from there. Let me name a few such encounters with the Lord (there is a whole theology of mountains behind it):

- A. The Ark of Noah rested in the Mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4–5) from where new life spread after the Flood.
- B. Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac happened on the Mount to which Abraham gave a new name: “The Lord will Provide” (Gen 22:14). The substitution given for Isaac (v. 13) points to the ultimate sacrificial and substitutionary death of the Messiah on our behalf.
- C. God met and appeared to Moses on Sinai in a very intimate manner. At the apex of these meetings, God made a special proclamation to him which we may call “the John 3:16 of the Old Testament”—namely, Exod 34:6–7. This is the self-revelation of God describing His character, who He is. This was revealed to Moses during the seventh encounter with God on Sinai, and as a result, Moses’ face was radiant (Exod 34:29).
- D. God gave the last vision to Moses on Mt. Nebo where He buried him (Deut 34:1–6).
- E. The Lord Himself chose to appear to His people at Sinai and speak to them personally (Exod 19:16–20:1, 18–21). They camped at the foot of Sinai for more than one year, and through Moses, God gave them important instructions and directions for life. They heard God’s voice, but did not see Him (Deut 5:22–26). The Mt. Sinai experience was the most powerful revelation of God to His people.
- F. The Levitical priests had to stand on Mt. Gerizim to bless God’s people and on Mt. Ebal to pronounce the curse. This external display of blessings and curses underlined God’s willingness to bless His people and warn them against disobedience (Deut 27:9–28:68).
- G. The Temple of Solomon was built on the holy mount in Jerusalem where people were meeting God in true worship, and He blessed them. Thus the Mount of Zion was a synonymous term for the faithful people of God (Ps 133; Heb 12:22). Psalm 15:1–5 characterizes God’s followers who may dwell on God’s holy mountain. The nations will stream to the Holy Mount of God to learn about the true living God and to serve Him (Isa 2:2–4; 56:1–7).
- H. Mount Carmel witnessed the prophet Elijah’s calling God’s fire down on the sacrifice, and 850 of Baal’s and Asherah’s prophets were defeated (1 Kgs 18) according to God’s instruction given to the prophet (18:36). This event became a type for the final showdown where God will defeat all the enemies of God’s people in the final

battle of Armageddon (Rev 16). Forty days later, God appeared to Elijah on Mt. Sinai (1 Kgs 19:8, 11).

- I. Ezekiel received a final vision regarding the restoration of God's people and the new temple on the mountain (Ezek 40:2).
- J. The eschatological picture of the new earth is described in the following way: "The infant will play near the cobra's den, the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isa 11:8–9 NIV).
- K. On the Mount of Beatitudes, Jesus Christ pronounced the Constitution of His kingdom (Matt 5–7).
- L. From the Mount of Olives, Jesus ascended to heaven after He commissioned His followers to be His witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8–12).

This Festschrift in honor of Dr. Davidson is divided into four parts that reflect upon his main areas of study, lectures, and publications: (1) Old Testament Exegesis—9 articles; (2) Intertextuality, Typology, and Ancient Near Eastern Background—7 articles; (3) New Testament Studies—7 articles; and finally (4) Theology and Church History—10 articles. Dr. Davidson always combined exegesis with theology, and his intertextual studies often included typology. When He was teaching or preaching, the practical outcome was his concern because for him, biblical and theological studies were not mere intellectual, theoretical, and academic exercises, but all activities were done for real life in order to help students, readers, and audiences to grow intellectually and in the practical applications of the Word of God.

The following two biblical texts describe in a stunning way the person who is spreading the Gospel on the mountains: "You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God'" (Isa 40:9 NIV)! A few chapters later, Isaiah nicely comments on this messenger (and Dr. Davidson is one of those who practices that in an outstanding way): "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isa 52:7 NIV)!

Dr. Davidson, we wish you many productive years; may the summiting of future mountain tops with their new lookouts and scenery inspire you with fresh new perspectives on life when God meets with you on those mountains. May many powerful publications result from these close encounters with Him who is always faithful, loving, gracious, holy, and awesome!

Jiří Moskala, editor



Conquering Knife Edge on Capitol Peak
July 25, 2016

I. Old Testament Exegesis

1

The Subordination of Women Revisited: A Contextual and Inter- textual Exegesis of Genesis 3:16

Jacques B. Doukhan

Introduction

Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16 NKJV). Most interpreters have read this text as a part of the curse directed to the woman.¹ The woman is affected not only in the pain of her child bearing (first part of the curse) but also in the pain of her subordination to her husband (second part of the curse).² It is usually argued that “rule” here represents “harsh exploitive subjugation,

¹ For a review of the six major interpretations of this passage, see Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 2007), 60–65.

² Thus, S. R. Driver read there an “allusion to the oppressed condition of women in Antiquity” (*The Book of Genesis: With Introduction and Notes*, 14th ed.; WC [London: Methuen, 1943], 49); likewise, John C. L. Gibson applied this text to the status of the woman as “subordinate to that of man” (*Genesis*, 2 vols.; Old Testament Daily Study Bible 24 [Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1981], 1:137); C. F. Delitzsch concluded from this passage that the woman who was “created for man . . . was made subordinate to him” (*A New Commentary on Genesis* [trans. Sophia Taylor; 2 vols.; repr. 1978; Edinburg: T & Clark, 1888], 1:103); for H. G. Leupold this is the woman’s “penalty . . . that she should be the one that is controlled” (*Exposition of Genesis* [Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1942], 172). Having briefly reviewed the various “common interpretations” of this passage, Susan T. Foh observed that

which so often characterizes woman's lot in all sorts of societies."³ However, as we shall see, a careful examination of Gen 3:16 with special attention to its particular connections with Gen 4:7 and Gen 3:15 suggests another direction of interpretation.

The Connection with Genesis 4:7

Indeed the numerous echoes between the two texts, Gen 3:16 and Gen 4:7, which are both rebuking words of God, are worth noticing:

Gen 3:16: וְאֶל-אִשְׁהָ תְּשׁוּקָתְךָ יְהוּא מִשְׁלֶבֶךָ

Gen 4:7: וְאֵלֶיךָ תְּשׁוּקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל-בּוֹ

Transliterated text:

Gen 3:16: ***we'el-'ishek teshukatek wehu'yimshol-bak***

Gen 4:7: ***we'eleka teshukato we'atta timshol-bo***

Literal translation:

Gen 3:16: and to your husband your desire, but he shall rule over you

Gen 4:7: and to you his desire, but you should rule over him

As the bold print of the Hebrew transliteration indicates, the Hebrew is basically the same, except for the corresponding adaptations to person and gender:

1. The same technical and rare word *teshuqah* ("desire") is used within the same association with the word *mshl* ("rule");
2. The same prepositions and particles at the same place (beginning and end of the phrase): *we'el*, "and to" . . . *b*, "over";
3. The same sequence of the same words "and to" (with pronominal suffix)-"desire" (with pronominal suffix)-"but he/you"- "rule"-preposition *b* (with pronominal suffix);
4. The same syntax: note, for instance, the same *waw* of contrast opposing the two statements ("but he" // "but you").

These consistent linguistic and syntactical parallels invite for a reading of Gen 3:16 in the light of Gen 4:7, and should, therefore, guide us in our interpretation of the text. As Victor Hamilton noted, "Given the pairing of

"despite the differences . . . all the commentators agree that through the woman's desire for her husband, he rules her" ("What is the Woman's Desire?" *WTJ* 37 [September 1975]: 377).

³G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 59 (Waco, TX: Word Books), 81.

tēšûqātô and *timšôl* in [Genesis] 4:7, one suspects that the pairing of *tēšûqātēk* and *yimšâl* [in Genesis 3:16] should carry the same force, whatever that is. Here is a case where the clear meaning of 4:7 illuminates a less clear meaning of 3:16.⁴ Indeed several interpreters have recognized the similarity and parallelism of language between the two texts; unfortunately they generally fail to account for it, either partially or totally in their interpretation.⁵ It is this challenge that I propose to pursue in this exegetical enterprise. On account of the particular connection between those two texts, I will seek the sense of the whole text of Gen 3:16 in connection to Gen 4:7. This task will not only deal with the meaning of the technical words of the phrase such as *teshuqah* and *mshl*, but will also embrace by implication and, more significantly, the place and the meaning of the curse on the woman.

The Meaning of *teshuqah* (“Desire”)

The word *teshuqah* is rare; it is only used three times, in these two passages and in Song of Songs 7:10. It is clear however that the use of this word in the two Genesis texts is fundamentally different than in the Song of Songs, as the association of words, the syntax, and the literary context testify. Unlike the two Genesis texts, the Song of Songs does not associate the word *teshuqah* with the word *mshl* and is applied to the man in regards to the woman in a positive context of joy and salvation. Furthermore, the preposition ‘*al* (“on”) is used instead of the preposition ‘*el* (“to”), suggesting that the *teshuqah*, which in Gen 3:16 was oriented “towards” the future (‘*el*), has now in the Song of Songs reached its point of destination, it is “on” (‘*al*) it. The fact that in the Song of Songs the phrase “his *teshuqah* is on me” is in parallelism to the phrase “I am to my beloved” (literal translation) and takes the place of the usual phrase “and my beloved is mine” (Song 2:16; 6:3) confirms this shift of meaning. It means that the relationship which is described in Genesis as a “not yet” process has now reached the mature stage of “belonging.” All these changes in the Song of Songs in comparison to the Genesis text suggest a new direction from that in Genesis, thus transforming, transfiguring the original meaning of the word in Genesis.⁶ The use of the

⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 201. Likewise Walter Vogels argued that “the closeness of these two verses . . . invites us to explain one verse in light of the other” (“The Power Struggle between Man and Woman [Gen 3,16b],” *Bib* 77. 2 [1996]: 201).

⁵ See Foh, “Woman’s Desire,” 381; cf. Vogels, “Power Struggle,” 201.

⁶ See Phyllis Trible’s comment on the juxtaposition of the Song to the Genesis narratives as positive to negative, as celebration contrasted to exploitation (*God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, OBT [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978], 144–165); see Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 73, 552, 577.

passage in the Song of Songs to understand our Genesis text should therefore be circumscribed insofar as it suggests only its reverse side. The connection between the two Genesis texts is much stronger than that with the Song of Songs, considering the number of unique parallels between the two Genesis texts, and their contextual relation. The interpretation of the word *teshuqah* in Gen 3:16 should be, therefore, conducted essentially in connection to the other Genesis text rather than in connection to the text of the Song of Songs.

Reading Gen 3:16 in the light of Gen 4: 7 suggests that beyond the *teshuqah* of the woman towards the man, it is “sin” that is profiled as “desiring” Adam and prompting him to evil. Indeed the word *teshuqah* in Gen 4:7 should be interpreted in relation to its most immediate antecedent *hatt’at* “sin,”⁷ referring not only to the evil deed per se but also to the associated consequences. Thus the word may be associated with death (Exod 10:17) and have a cosmic scope (1 Kgs 13:34). More particularly, this feminine form based on the intensive “refers to the enduring sphere of conduct observed by Yahweh, which He will one day punish or which must be atoned for.”⁸ It is not surprising, then, that the word *hatta’t* is used in connection with the word *ns’* to describe the vicarious process of atonement (Exod 10:7; 1 Sam 15:25), and belongs also to the language of Leviticus, in the majority of cases referring to the “sin offering” (Lev 7:37; Ezek 40:39). The meaning of the word *hatta’t* in Gen 4:7 is therefore not well settled. Does the word mean, “sin,” “evil,” referring here to the evil power that would allure the sinner? Or does it mean “sin offering” referring to the solution to the problem of evil, its vicarious atonement represented by the sacrifice? Both interpretations have been advocated. As Koch noted for the word *hatta’t*, “the assignment to one or the other meaning varies from exegete to exegete,” and he then raised an interesting question: “Should we postulate a double usage of the word, a technical meaning alongside the common meaning? Or are the two meanings really more closely related than they seem to the modern Western observer?”⁹ Could it be that this ambiguity is implied in this text? If this were the case, it would mean that the same text which refers to sin/evil alluring (*teshuqah*) the sinner would also carry the solution to that sin/evil, namely,

⁷ It cannot therefore refer to Abel, whose name only appears several verses before (v. 4), contra Joaquim Azevedo, “At the Door of Paradise. A Contextual Interpretation of Gen 4:7,” *BN* 100 (1999): 50–51. Also the meaning of *teshuqah*, which implies the specific relationship between male and female (Gen 3:16 and Song 7:10), would not fit the relationship between Cain and Abel.

⁸ K. Koch, “*hatta’*,” *TDOT*, 4:312.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:316.

the “sin offering” that brings atonement. This ambiguity may in fact account for the awkward syntax that uses the masculine participial form *robets* (“lying down”) in connection to its feminine subject *hatta’t*, thus implying both the feminine, the “sin offering” and the masculine, the threatening evil. It is interesting that the same ambiguity is attested in the meaning of the word *rbts*, which is generally associated with animals but carries both positive and negative overtones. The positive side of *rbts* refers to the sacrificial animal, which rests in the pasture, carrying a message of hope through the promise of atonement. The word *rbts* is indeed associated with the pasturing herd or flock (Gen 29:2) and the shepherd (Isa 13:20). This interpretation on the positive side has the merit to fit with the immediate context that deals precisely with the issue of the right sacrifice confronting Cain and Abel.¹⁰

The negative side of *rbts* refers to dangerous and hunting animals, the fierce and violent lion (Gen 49:9), the wild beasts of the desert (Isa 13:20–21), or the monstrous crocodile (Ezek 29:3). Significantly the word *rbts* is also associated with the “deep” (Gen 49:25; Deut 33:13), and with a “curse” (Deut 29:19, 20). The latter example is particularly interesting as it evokes, like in Gen 4:7, a personification behind the word *rbts*. The curse on the sinner is personified as an animal: “it will lie in wait for him (*rbts*).” Now, the implied presence of a malefic animal behind the word *rbts* in Gen 4:16 points naturally to the serpent¹¹ (masculine) mentioned just above in the oracle about the prophetic conflict with the serpent (Gen 3:15), as well as in the previous episode dealing with the temptation (Gen 3:6), a section with which our text shares a good number of parallels.¹² This specific identification is also confirmed from the outside by the use of the word *rbts* in Akkadian, where it is associated with some kind of demonic animal, a view that is shared by most interpreters.¹³ The ambiguous range of our text suggests, then, that behind the word *teshuqato* “his desire” we may read as its agent “*hatta’t robets*,” the lying (feminine-masculine), not only as a reference to the

¹⁰ See on that Azevedo, “Door of Paradise,” 49.

¹¹ See Vogels, “Power Struggle,” 204.

¹² Cf. W. Dietrich, “Wo ist dein Bruder?; Zur Tradition und Intention von Genesis 4,” in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für W. Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart, and Rudolf Smend; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977), 94–111; Walter Vogels, “Cain: l’être humain qui devient une personne (Gn. 4: 1–16),” *NRTh* 114 (1992): 327.

¹³ See E. J. Waschke, “*rabats*,” *TDOT*, 13:303. This demonic and animal identification excludes, of course, the interpretation that relates *teshuqah* to Abel, as defended by K. A. Deurloo, “*תְּשׁוּקָה*, dependency, Gen 4,7,” *ZAW* 99.3 (1987): 405; cf. Von Ulrich Wöller, “Zu Gen 4:7,” *ZAW* 96 (1984): 271–272.

personification of evil, the serpent that has initiated the sin, but also the solution to that sin and the problem of evil, namely the “sin offering,” atoning for it. In other words, it may well be that one interpretation does not exclude the other one and that a double entendre is here intended. The agent of *teshuqah* is then both the sin/evil and its solution, the atoning sin offering.¹⁴ This reading of Gen 4:7 suggests that our text has then nothing to do with some kind of “sexual” desire on the part of the woman towards her husband, as it has often been claimed;¹⁵ the text is not so much concerned with Adam’s relationship with the woman (as female) per se, as it is with Adam’s relationship with the power of evil manifested by the serpent in the context of Gen 3.

The Meaning of *mashal* (“Rule”)

In Gen 4: 7, God’s advice to Cain is then that “he should (or “would”) control” (*mshl*) this evil. The verb is in the jussive mood. If we transfer this syntax to the same verb in Gen 3:16, we are allowed to interpret it here also as a jussive, meaning that man should control (or should have controlled)¹⁶ this evil “desiring” him.¹⁷ The issue at stake here has then nothing to do with men (males) designed to control and subdue women, as a result of Eve’s having tempted Adam, but rather with the issue of controlling evil, as figured in Gen 4: 7 through the image of a crouching animal, alias the serpent. Through the connection between the two texts, one may read that, just as Cain would overcome the evil only through a sacrifice, man should also be victorious over evil, the serpent, only through a sacrifice. This is the scenario just described in Gen 3:15. This is why in Gen 3:16, just as in Gen 4:7, the verb *mshl* should be understood with an aggressive and violent connotation¹⁸

¹⁴ Although this interpretation of *hatt’at* as “sin offering” allows the recognition of an allusion to Abel who offered a sin offering, it remains only an indirect one by association.

¹⁵ See, for instance, L. Ouellette, “Woman’s Doom in Genesis 3:16,” *CBQ* 12 (1950): 389–399. Also the etymological analysis of the word *teshuqah* (probably from the Arabic root *saqa*) does not support the idea of sexual desire but points rather to the idea of “urge,” “impel,” see Foh, “Woman’s Desire,” 378.

¹⁶ In Hebrew, the verb does not express the categories of tense (past, present, or future) and only carries aspects; see *IBHS*, 247–248. Thus the use of the Imperfect form to render the past conditional (in English “should have”) is well attested in Hebrew; see, for instance, Lev 10:18; Num 35:28; 2 Kgs 3:27; Job 10:19; Pss 69:22 (Heb. v. 23); 81:15 (Heb. v. 16); Isa 48:19; and Jer 48:19.

¹⁷ This is also the interpretation of Foh: “As the Lord tells Cain what he should do, i.e. master or rule sin, the Lord states what the husband should do, rule over his wife . . . Sin has corrupted both the willing submission of the wife and the loving headship of the husband,” (“Woman’s Desire,” 381–382).

¹⁸ It is significant that the majority of texts use the verb *mshl* in the sense of “political dominion” (H. Gross, “*mshl* II,” *TDOT*, 9:69) and in the context of apocalyptic interpretation of

implying the total crushing of the animal. Any attempt to dismiss the disturbing idea of “dominion” or “control” in the verb *mshl* at the expense of the less threatening idea of “to be like”¹⁹ or even of the more positive idea of “comfort, protect, care for, love,”²⁰ would not fit the intention implied in the context of Gen 3:16. The act of control applies here to evil and is, therefore, to be received with all its force and negativity. What is “ruled” here, evil and not the woman as a person, has to be dominated even to the extent of being eliminated.²¹ This principle warns us against any misappropriation of the “ruling.” The subjection concerns the temptation of evil and should therefore apply to both man and woman,²² for the need of controlling evil exists for

history in Dan 11:3–5, 39, 43, to describe the rule (victory) of kings as the result of battles. See also Prov 16:32 where the verb *mshl* parallels the victorious conquest of cities.

¹⁹ See John J. Schmitt, “Like Eve, Like Adam: *Mshl* in Gen 3:16,” *Bib* 72 (1992): 1–22; John H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Women in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 197–98. For other proponents of this position, see Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 64. This interpretation is based, however, on an etymological mistake; since the meaning of “be like” belongs to another root, from the Proto-Semitic *mthl* (see K. M. Beyse, “*mashal I*,” *TDOT*, 9:65).

²⁰ See Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 72. Although this kind of “ruling” on the part of the man over the woman is tempered through spiritual consideration, the submission of the woman still remains in the inferior position; for instance, she will never be able to function as a “committee chair” in the family setting (*ibid.*, 77). As for the warning that this condition “cannot be automatically broadened into a general prescription mandating subordination of all women to men in society” (*ibid.*, 78), it is hardly realistic for it is doubtful that the habit of considering the woman always in the inferior position within the family setting would not influence the position of the woman in society. Besides, this idea is highly problematic and raises a number of serious questions in regard to specific cases: What about the husband working under the supervision of his wife, would he abandon his leadership position? What about the single woman, would she be exempted from the curse? Or should she submit herself to all the men of the planet? What about the woman who has a job and occupies a leadership position while her husband is unemployed, would she, then, have to submit herself to her husband, at home? What about the woman who is more intelligent or wiser than her husband would she have to submit herself to her husband’s will, simply because he is the man, because of the curse? On the other hand, it is ironic that while some men are willing to allow the woman, their wife, to behave as the “boss” at home, they are reluctant to let her rule in the work place or in the church.

²¹ It is noteworthy that Ellen G. White applied the same text to the control of our appetite, thus supporting the traditional interpretation that it is sin that lies at the door and should be controlled: “‘And if thou doest not well sin lieth at the door.’ Let all examine their own hearts to see if they are not cherishing that which is a positive injury to them, . . . Let them strive to bring appetite under the control of reason.” (*Manuscript Releases Volume Twenty* [Nos. 1420–1500], p. 8).

²² Note that the same idea of reciprocity detected in Gen 3:16, which describes the mutual control between man and woman or between man and evil reappears between Cain and evil: unless Cain controls evil he will be controlled by it. The same process of reciprocity could work as well if one retains the allusion to Abel through the reading of *hatt’at* as sin offering: unless Cain controls evil and follows the lead of his younger brother in his offering of the right sacrifice, he would not recover his status as the elder brother, cf. Azevedo, “Door of Paradise,” 50–51; cf. Ellen G. White: “Abel’s offering had been accepted; but this was because he had done in every particular as God required to do. If Cain would correct his error, he would not be deprived of his

both. The biblical text refers to Adam in a generic sense, implying both Adam and Eve (see Gen 3:22). The man should control the urge for evil whether it comes from the woman or from within himself. And the same can be said for the woman. For the problem of temptation exists for the man as well as for the woman, even when they are single. In other words, the subordination of the woman to the man is subject to the subordination of the man to the woman insofar as this subordination pertains to the subordination of evil, and not because she is a woman and he is a man. It seems that this interdependent submission is implied in Paul's double recommendation: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Eph 5:22–25).²³

The Cause for the Curse

Our passage (Gen 3:16), the curse directed at the woman, is situated in the center of the three curses (Gen 3:14–19). Three times, the word of God is introduced by the regular "said," and the reference to the addressee, "to the serpent," "to the woman," and "to the man":

Gen 3:14–15:

So the Lord God said to the serpent:
"Because you have done this,
You are cursed . . ."

Gen 3:16:

To the woman He said:

birthright: Abel would not only love him as his brother, but, as the younger, would be subject to him. Thus the Lord declared to Cain, 'Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.'" (*Bible Echo*, April 8, 1912, par. 7).

²³ It is interesting that this paradigm of reciprocal subjection has been implied in Ellen G. White's interpretation of this passage: "In the creation God made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by **submission on the part of the one or the other.**" (*Patriarchs and Prophets* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958], 58; emphasis supplied). Then White explained that it is because Eve was the first to have left the original state of original harmony that God enjoined her, to submit herself to the new order of mutual subjection described as "submission on the part of the one or the other." Then White deplored that this divine readjustment was broken by man who abused the new situation: "Had the principles enjoined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence [of mutual subjection], though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter and made her life a burden" (*ibid.*, 58–59).

“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
in pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule
over you.”

Gen 3:17–19:

Then to Adam He said:

“Because you have heeded the voice of your wife,
and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded
you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

Cursed is the ground for your sake.” (NKJV)

A comparison between the word of God to the serpent and to Adam on the one hand and the word of God to the woman on the other hand reveals one striking particularity in the word addressed to the woman: while the two curses to the serpent and to Adam are regularly introduced by a reason, “Because you have done this” (Gen 3:14); “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife . . .” (Gen 3:17), the curse of the woman has no such introduction. This irregularity suggests that the reason for the curse has been given but we have not been able to identify it. Insofar as the meaning of Gen 3:16 should be searched in the light of Gen 4:7, an analysis of the reason for the control in the former text may help also to determine the reason for the control in the latter text.

Indeed the text of Gen 4: 7 contains two distinctive phrases, as indicated by the Massoretic accentuation (the disjunctive *atnakh* marks the separation after *rbts*), and the logical connection between the two phrases suggests that the second phrase, “And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it,” should be understood as the explanation, the reason for the first phrase “Isn’t if you do well, lifted; but if you do not do well, sin lies at the door” (my literal translation).

The linguistic connections *’im tey tiv* (“if you do well”) // *’im l’o tey tiv* (“if you do not do well”) and the symmetric conclusion on the verbs with opposite meanings *s’et* (“lift”) and *rbts* (“lie down”) suggest that the two statements “”Isn’t if you do well, lifted,” and “but if you do not do well, sin lies at the door” belong together in the same sentence and are both under the regime of the same interrogation *halo’* (“isn’t?”). Then, the second sentence, is not just related to the last statement about *rbts*, as suggested by a number of translations,²⁴ but responds to the whole interrogative phrase. The

²⁴ See *The Bible in Basic English* (BBE) and *Young’s Literal Translation* (YLT).

purpose of the second phrase is now to explain the condition described in the first sentence, why “sin lies at the door.” The introductory *waw* would then function as an explanatory/causal *waw*;²⁵ and the verse could therefore be literally translated in these terms:

“If you do well, will you not be accepted?
 And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.
Because (*waw*) its desire (is) for you, and you should rule [or
 should have ruled] over it.”²⁶

The reason why “sin lies at the door” and why your offering has not been accepted is that “you should have ruled over it” through the sacrifice. If this analysis is correct, we could infer by analogy that in Gen 3:16, the second phrase “Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you” should be understood in a similar manner as the explanation to the first phrase, “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children.” In this perspective, the second phrase would then function as the reason for the first phrase, the curse, as it is the case for the two other curses:

“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain
 you shall bring forth children
Because your desire (is) for your husband, and he should rule
 [should have ruled] over you.”

With the lessons learned from the semantic and syntactical connections with Gen 4: 7, we would like to propose the following translation: “Because to your man, your *teshuqah*, but he should control you.” This statement refers back to the past situation when evil was “desiring” man, but he has not controlled it (Gen 3:6), as well as to any future similar situation when evil is to be controlled. And this failure to control evil is identified as the very reason for the curse, given here before the cause, in contrast to the other two curses, displaying then the following double chiasmic structure ABBA, BAAB:

Because you have done this (A),
 you are cursed (B) . . .

²⁵ See *IBHS*, 651.

²⁶ It seems that this explicative function of the second phrase has been perceived by the American Standard Version, since it puts a colon before our phrase, “If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? and if thou does not well, sin coucheth at the door: and unto thee shall be its desire, but do thou rule over it” (Gen 4:7).

I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children (B)

Because your desire for your husband, and he should rule [should have ruled] over you (A)

Because you have heeded the voice of your wife (A) . . .

Cursed is the ground for your sake (B)

It is also noteworthy that this thematic flow cause-curse of the text is followed and thus confirmed not only by the shift of tenses, but also by the shift of persons involved, serpent-woman/woman-man/man:

Words to the serpent: Cause (A), Past (serpent); Curse (B), Future (woman);

Words to the woman: Curse (B), Future (woman); Cause (A), Past (man);

Words to the man: Cause (A), Past (man); Curse (B), Future (man).

The implication of this reading is that the second phrase of Gen 3:16 is not a part of the curse but only its explanation, and this observation should affect the very meaning of the curse on the woman.

The Meaning of the Curse and the Connection with Genesis 3:15

The cause of the curse refers to the failure of the man and the woman to rule over evil and points beyond the mere issue of the husband-wife relationship to the cosmic issue of salvation. The meaning of the curse on the woman should also, then, be concerned with more than the mere issue of clinical birth and should also point to the cosmic solution. This direction of reading is, indeed, confirmed as we note the particular connections between Gen 3:16 and its preceding verse, Gen 3:15, and apprehend this verse within its immediate context of the three curses.

The Connection Between Gen 3:15 and Gen 3:16

Gen 3:15: וְאִיכָּה אֲשִׁית בְּיַנְיָהּ וּבִין הָאִשָּׁה וּבִין יִרְעֶהָ וּבִין יִרְעֶהָ הוּא יְשׁוּפָהּ רָאשׁ וְאֵתָהּ תִּשְׁוֹפְנוּ עֶקֶב

Gen 3:16: אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר הִרְבָּה אֲרִבָּה עֲצָבוֹנָהּ וְהִרְבָּה בְּעֲצָב תִּלְדֵי בָנִים וְאֶל־אִישָׁהּ תִּשְׁוֹקֶתָהּ וְהוּא מִשְׁלֶבֶתָהּ

Transliterated texts:

Gen 3:15: **we'ebah 'ashit benka uben ha'ishshah uben zar'aka uben zer'ah hu' yeshupka ro'sh we'attah teshupennu 'aqeb**

Gen 3:16: 'el-**ha'ishshah** 'amar **harbeh 'arbe** 'itsbonek **weheronek**
 be'esseb **teldi banim** we'el-'ishek teshukatek **wehu'** yimshol-
 bak

Literal translation:

Gen 3:15: Enmity I will put between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed, He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel

Gen 3:16: To the woman he said: I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall give birth to children; your desire shall be for your husband, but he should control you

Besides being next to each other, as the bold print of the transliteration indicates, these two texts (Gen 3:15 and Gen 3:16) share a number of common words, syntactical forms, literary parallels, and specific motifs:

1. Both share the same unique divine annunciation in the first person:
 "I will put enmity"
 "I will greatly multiply"
2. Both share the same unique reference to "the woman" (*ha'ishah*).
3. Both share the same reciprocal relation of "ruling over /crushing" between the masculine third person ("he," *hu'*) and the second person "you":
 He (*hu'*) will crush you [masc], but you [masc] will crush him
 To your [fem] husband your [fem] desire, but he [*hu'*] will rule over you [fem]
4. Both share the same motif of birth: in Gen 3:15 by reference to the seed (*zera'*) and in Gen 3:16 by reference to conception and giving birth to sons.

Indeed the strong echoes between these two texts suggest, as is the case with Gen 4:7, that these two texts are interrelated and that they should be understood in connection to each other. The parallels invite, then, to a reading of Gen 3:16 in the light of Gen 3:15:

1. The phrase of the curse "I will greatly multiply" related to the phrase "I will put enmity" would mean, then, that the curse on the woman, bearing on the birth giving, should be understood in the perspective of the "enmity" put by God between the forces of evil and the messianic seed.

2. The echo on “the woman” (*ha-’isha*) would mean that the woman who will suffer the pain of birth giving and the woman who is confronted with the serpent are the same. This identification between the two women is confirmed by the structural thematic flow of the three curses: Serpent-woman, woman-man, man. Just as the mention of the man in the third curse follows and is related to the man of the second curse, the woman of the second curse follows and should then be related to the woman of the first curse.
3. The literary parallel of reciprocal relation between the “he” (*hu’*) who crushes the serpent (second person) and the “he” (*hu’*) who rules over the woman (second person) suggests that the ruling over the woman should be understood within the fight which confronts the messianic seed with the serpent.
4. The same motif of birth in the two curses suggests that the pain and the anguish associated with birth giving and the woman in the second curse should also be related to the woman and birth giving in the first curse, and therefore to salvation. Saying that birth is threatened, means that the process of salvation, which depends on the delicate transmission of the “messianic” seed, is itself threatened. It is also interesting to notice that the same anguish is associated to the curse of the earth in God’s words to man; the same word *’itsavon* (“sorrow” in v. 16 and “toil” in v. 17) reappears there in the same perspective of a threat over the production of the earth and the future of humankind. The use of the same key word for the curse on the earth, which relates to man, as for the curse on birth, which relates to the woman, suggests that the two curses are of the same nature. The anguish and the pain in the curse of the woman means then more than the physical pain of childbirth; its horizon is cosmic and concerns human fate and hope. It is in that connection significant that the word “curse” (Heb. *’rr*) is never directly used for man or woman; it only applies to the serpent (Gen 3:14) and to the earth (Gen 3:17). There is still hope for humans. This is precisely the lesson that Adam takes in the conclusion of the section of the curses. Following immediately the prophecy on the

name of Adam (*'adam*), etymologically related to the word “earth” (*'adamah*) and conveying death and hopelessness (Gen 3:19), Adam comments on the name of Eve, referring to her childbearing: “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20). This prophecy on the name of Eve (*Hawah*), etymologically related to the word “life” (*hay*), conveys, now, as a response to death and hopelessness contained in the name of Adam, the message of hope and salvation.

Conclusion

Our exegetical analysis of Gen 3:16, which proceeded in connection to its unique parallel text in Gen 4:7, has led us to a new understanding of the meaning of the curse: the pain of giving birth by the woman in Gen 3:16 and the action of “ruling over” (*mshl*) should be interpreted within the paradigm of the conflict opposing humans to the force of evil “lying at the door” in Gen 4:7, rather than within the mere paradigm of male-female relationship.

This interpretation has been confirmed by our exegesis of Gen 3:16 in connection to the verse which precedes it, Gen 3:15: The pain of giving birth by the woman in Gen 3:16 is to be related to the cosmic enmity and conflict between evil and the messianic seed as outlined in Gen 3:15, and should therefore be understood in the perspective of the message of hope as outlined in that first messianic prophecy.

Ironically, the so-called curse on the woman that has been abusively exploited to justify the subordination and hence the oppression over women by men may well have been intended to mean, instead, blessing and salvation for humankind.

2

The Role and Functions of the Biblical Genealogies

Paul J. Ray, Jr.

Introduction

Interest in the biblical genealogies was cultivated as early as the post-exilic period. The authors of the various Apocryphal (Tob 1:1–2), Pseudepigraphal (Jubilees 4:1–33), NT (Matt 1:1–17), and Rabbinic writings (b. Pes 62b) produced at that time considered this type of literature to be historically accurate.

This was the dominant position until the latter half of the nineteenth century when serious doubts were raised concerning the use of this material for writing history. Ancient Near Eastern parallels to the early parts of Genesis led scholars to suspect that their biblical counterparts might have been extracted from these early legends and myths. It was also discovered through ethnographical data, that tribal societies, like ancient Israel,¹ used genealogies to express political and social relationships between families, and

¹ For the latest critique on tribalism, see Piotr Bienkowski, “‘Tribalism’ and ‘Segmentary Society’ in Iron Age Transjordan,” in *Studies on Iron Age Moab and Neighbouring Areas in Honour of Michèle Daviau*, ed. P. Bienkowski (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 15–22.

therefore, the biblical genealogies might be seen simply as accounts of tribal origins and interrelationships at the time they were composed.²

It was also noted by literary critics that, although a few of the genealogies (or sections of them) might be as early as David (J), the majority were composed very late, by the “P” source and the Chronicler.³ These data and various interpretations of it were formulated into a view which suggested that the early sources were tribal interrelationships, while the later ones were, for the most part, artificial and retrojected back into antiquity, usually being purely fabrications. Modern scholars echo these older positions which have tended to fall within three basic positions, viewing the biblical genealogies as 1) originally tribal genealogies reflecting varying degrees of historicity; 2) artificial creations, usually late, which join earlier narrative segments;⁴ or 3) more liberally, providing accurate information for historical purposes on the basis of the fact that tribal cultures have amazing memories when it comes to genealogical data.⁵

These treatments however, have tended, until recently, to deal exclusively with the literary function of the biblical genealogies. Two major monographs have appeared during the twentieth century. The first,⁶ basically followed the literary-critical paradigm, while the second,⁷ though breaking much new ground by the use a comparative approach which looks into modern oral genealogies, as well as written genealogies from the Ancient Near East, nevertheless, in the opinion of the present writer, still takes a basically literary approach. In addition, a number of recent articles have appeared, some of which use the latter as a starting point, broadening this approach, or sometimes moving in new directions.

The methodology used in this paper assumes the Bible is the word of God, but also takes advantage of modern scientific methods where they make a contribution to the study of the biblical genealogies. We will first provide an

² Robert R. Wilson, “The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research,” *JBL* 49 (1975): 169–72.

³ S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Glouster, MA: Peter Smith, 1972), 14–17, 159, 519–21.

⁴ Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 214–19.

⁵ W. F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), 72–81, 238–43.

⁶ Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 3–82.

⁷ Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977).

analysis of the terms that appear in connection with genealogies in the biblical text. Next, we will summarize the approach to the genealogies found in Wilson and others, and attempt applications to some biblical material, which, for the most part, have not been considered by them. Finally, we will glean the above insights and make some suggestions in terms of the role and functions of the biblical genealogies.

Linguistic Data

The verb *yālad* is frequently used in the books of Genesis and 1 Chronicles where it occurs primarily in the genealogies connected with the patriarchal narratives. It occurs 468 times in the OT⁸ as follows: Genesis, 170 times; 1 Chronicles, 108 times; Ruth, 14 times; and 176 times in the other books. It is most frequently found in the *qal* (217 times: Genesis, 89; 1 Chronicles, 20; and Ruth, 4) and *hiphil* (172 times: Genesis, 60; 1 Chronicles, 77; and Ruth, 9) formations. In *niphal* it is used 38 times (Genesis, 7; and 1 Chronicles, 10), in *pual* 27 times, and in *hophal* three times (Genesis, 1). In *piel*, where it means “do the office of midwife,” it occurs 10 times (Genesis, 2; Exodus, 8), and in *hithpael*, meaning “register by genealogy,” it occurs only one time (Num 1:18).

The basic meaning of the word⁹ is “bring forth,” and both *qal* and *hiphil* have the meaning “become the father of,” “beget,” and “procreate” with the male as the subject. In *qal*, it takes the meaning “bear (children)” when a female is the subject.¹⁰ The *qal* and *hiphil* forms of *yālad* have been used by literary critics to differentiate between the so-called “J” and “P” sources of the biblical genealogies. Thus, e.g., the genealogy of Genesis 4 and parts of the Table of Nations are thought to be “J” because the verb is used in *qal*, while the genealogies in Genesis 5, 11 and Ruth 4 are seen as “P” because of the use of the verb in the *hiphil*.¹¹

The question arises as to whether or not this method is legitimate in terms of trying to understand the meaning of the biblical text. The answer would seem to be no. Cassuto¹² has pointed out that there is a peculiarity in the Hebrew language whereby the verb *yālad* can be used with reference to

⁸ A. Evon-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1985), 467–69.

⁹ J. Schreiner and G. J. Botterweck, “yalad,” *TDOT* 6:77.

¹⁰ W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 134–35.

¹¹ Driver, *Literature*, 15, 134n 45; 455–56; Schreiner and Botterweck, “yalad,” 79.

¹² U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 46–47.

the male role in the production of the child in the *hiphil* perfect and imperfect, and occasionally in the *qal* perfect, but basically never in the *qal* imperfect. The latter is only used in the feminine form and translated into English as “bear,” or “give birth to.”

Indeed, if one checks the overall usage of the verbal forms, it will be found that the *qal* imperfect of *yālad* is used only one time in the masculine form (Prov 27:1), and even then only in a metaphorical sense. However, the same form is used in the feminine 68 times. The *qal* perfect on the other hand is used 24 times (though even a few of these are used metaphorically). The *qal* active participle is also used occasionally (three times). By contrast, *yālad* is used in the *hiphil* formation quite frequently (47 times in the imperfect and 112 times in the perfect). It would seem that the *qal* form was used with the female role in the production of the child (but not exclusively), whereas, the *hiphil* was for the most part reserved for the male role. It is thus the general rule or usage of the Hebrew language itself that determines the specific choice of the verb *yālad* rather than a particular author’s rather limited vocabulary. It would also appear that the choice of one form of the verb over another is not a legitimate device for determining ancient sources.

Another problem in connection with the usage of this verb in *qal* and *hiphil* is whether or not direct physical offspring is necessitated by the use of the *hiphil* formation.¹³ It is well known that the use of the verb in *qal* can have a more general relationship; Ps 2:7 being an apt example. While it would seem that actual paternity is reflected in almost every instance of the *hiphil*, the word does not necessarily point to the immediately following generation,¹⁴ as is seen by its usage in the genealogies themselves (see below).

¹³ Schreiner and Botterweck, “yalad,” 79. The suggestion that the *hiphil* form of the verb *yālad* is preferred in vertical (i.e., linear) genealogies (e.g., Gen 5) and that *qal* is preferred in segmented genealogies (e.g., Gen 10) is inadequate. As in 1 Chronicles (G. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, AB 12 [New York: Doubleday, 2003], 250), there are genealogies in Genesis of “mixed type,” combining both linear and segmented forms. Genesis 5, in the *hiphil* formation, ends in a segmented genealogy (5:32) and Genesis 4, which is in the *qal* formation, has both linear and segmented elements to its structure (See Table 1 for an illustration of these types of genealogies). Other examples could be cited. G. F. Hasel, “The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11,” *Origins* 7 (1980): 67 suggests that the *hiphil* imperfect plus the *wau* consecutive (converted imperfect) indicates direct physical offspring in Genesis 5 and 11. While the uniqueness of Genesis 5 and 11 (perhaps also Exod 6:16, 18 and 20, at least in part) seems to be their interlocking features, *yālad* in the *hiphil* imperfect plus the *wau* consecutive would seem to equal the *hiphil* perfect found in genealogies with evidence of telescoping (e.g., the genealogy of David, below).

¹⁴ P. R. Gilchrist, “yālad,” *TWOT* 1:378–80 pointed out that by giving birth to a child, that individual becomes a parent to all the descendants of that child.

In this connection, it is interesting to note the LXX translations of this verb in *qal* and *hiphil*. There are four verbs used to translate the *hiphil* of *yālad* in the LXX. They are γεννάω, (γί)γνομαι, (ἐκ)τίκτω, and τεκνοποιέω. These same four verbs (along with six others),¹⁵ are used to translate the *qal* of the Hebrew verb. It would seem then, that the translators of the LXX saw no basic difference between these two forms of the Hebrew verb *yālad*.

The NT genealogies of Jesus, in Matthew and Luke, use γεννάω and the phrase “the son of” in the genitive (τοῦ), respectively. Matthew 1:3–6 is based, for the most part, upon Ruth 4:18–22, and 1 Chr 2:3–15, where all of the former and the majority of the latter use the *hiphil* form of the verb *yālad*. Hence, in the NT, where the Hebrew originals were consulted (at least by the translators of the LXX, before them), the Greek words are translations of the verb *yālad* in the *hiphil* form. In addition, Jesus is described as “the son of David, the son of Abraham,” in Matt 1:1, and there are also a number of omissions of Judahite kings, known elsewhere in the OT, in the remainder of this genealogy, which is stylized into three sets of fourteen generations (cf. v. 17). In Luke 3:36, there is the well-known addition of Cainan. It would seem therefore, that the Greek writers were aware of and made use of the phenomena known as genealogical fluidity (to be discussed below).

One other verb is used in the OT in connection with the biblical genealogies. This is *yḥś*, which is found only 20 times, all in postexilic period contexts. It is distributed as follows: Ezra, 3 times; Nehemiah, 2; 1 Chronicles, 10 and 2 Chronicles, 5.¹⁶ It is always found in the *hithpael*, where it has the meaning “have oneself registered in a genealogical table.”¹⁷ The noun *yaḥś* is used one time in Neh 7:5 meaning “pedigree” or “register.” It has been suggested that the original meaning of this word may have been “people” in the sense of an ethnic or social group, and only later taken on the specialized meaning connected with legitimate descent.¹⁸ Whatever the case, its comparatively late use in the history of Israel adds little to the overall meaning, role and function of the biblical genealogies.¹⁹

The noun *tôl^edôt* is used 39 times in the OT, always in the plural. It is found in Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1, 32; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 13, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2; Exod 6:16, 19; 28:10; Num 1:20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 3:1;

¹⁵ HRCS, 1:237, 256, 443; 2:1342, 1351; cf. Schreiner and Botterweck, “yalad,” 77.

¹⁶ Evon-Shoshan, *Concordance*, 464.

¹⁷ Holladay, *Lexicon*, 133.

¹⁸ R. K. Harrison, “Genealogy,” *ISBE* 2:424.

¹⁹ G. F. Hasel, “Chronicles, Books of,” *ISBE* 1:667.

Ruth 4:18; 1 Chr 1:29; 5:7, 7:2, 4, 9; 8:28; 9:9, 34 and 26:31. It is also found a number of times in the Dead Sea Scrolls literature including four times in IQS and three times each in IQM and the Songs of the Sacrifices. Its meaning has been translated variously as “generations,” “genealogies,” “succession,” “narrative,” “family history,” “fathering,” “begetting,” “offspring,” and “descendants.” It has been suggested that its meaning comes closest to the *hithpael* form of the verb, the *hapax legomenon* in Num 1:18 translated “to get one’s descent acknowledged.”²⁰ Whether this is the case or not is debatable. It seems safer to let each context suggest its exact meaning.

In eleven instances in the book of Genesis and also two other places (exactly one third of the total usage) the formula *zeh/ʔelleh (sēpher) tōlēdōt* PN (“this/these is/are [the book of] the generations of PN) is used. This forms a series whereby each individual genealogy runs in an overlapping sequence.²¹ In Genesis this formula is usually connected with a genealogy. Only the first and last of these usages do not have this connection, and as such perhaps form an *inclusio* around the whole system in that book. If the two other usages (Num 3:1 and Ruth 4:18) are included, the genealogies run from Adam to David. Table 1, below, summarizes that data.

Following Wiseman,²² Harrison²³ has popularized the view that the book of Genesis was divided into 11 tablets (or sources) based on the analogy of the colophon in cuneiform tablets. The *tōlēdōt* formula, like the colophon, is reflective of what precedes it rather than what follows as well as the natural use of genealogies which focus on the offspring that are brought forth from an ancestor. Nowhere in Genesis does a genealogy include the birth of an individual whose genealogy is introduced, with the exception of Isaac in Gen 25:19. Although this is a possible function of the *tōlēdōt* formula, one should be cautious about its use as sources, as it would seem that the analogy breaks down in places e.g., Gen 36:9 which introduces a genealogy of Esau’s descendants²⁴ in Seir, after he left Canaan, but without any preceding narrative section dealing with this material. Rather it follows another genealogy of Esau in Canaan.

²⁰ Johnson, *Purpose*, 14–15; J. Schreiner, “Toledeth,” *TDOT* 15:582–83, 587.

²¹ Johnson, *ibid.*, 15, 22–23; Schreiner, *ibid.*, 583.

²² P. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia About Genesis* (London: Marshall, 1958), 46.

²³ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 543–51; “Genesis,” *ISBE* 2:436–37; and “Genealogy,” 424.

²⁴ Gilchrist, “yālad,” 380.

The use of the *tôledôt* formula in Gen 2:4 has always been seen as problematic. It is sometimes seen as an interpolation of a redactor.²⁵ Looked at from the perspective suggested above, the emphasis would be on the previous section (Gen 1:1–2:3), which has already dealt with the creation of the heaven and the earth, not on the material yet to follow. The following section (Gen 2:4–25), would then take its rightful place as a detailed account of the creation of mankind, and along with the introduction of sin (Gen 3), and its spread (Gen 4), constitute the background of Adam’s genealogy (*tôledôt*) in Gen 5.²⁶

The noun *dôr* is sometimes understood to be important in connection with genealogical terminology. It is used 167 times in the OT,²⁷ and while usually translated as generation,²⁸ actually has a wide range of meaning.²⁹ Its basic meaning seems to be the “circle of person’s lifetime” (e.g., Gen 15:16).³⁰ Other meanings include an extended period of time, e.g., an age or period of past (Isa 51:9), future (Ps 102:24), or even endless (Ps 89:1) time; one’s contemporaries (Isa 53:8); a class of individuals distinguished by certain moral or spiritual characteristics (Ps 14:5); or a group as opposed to a single person (Gen 17:12).

Its most well-known meaning refers to the time from a person’s birth to the birth of his offspring. It is here that the problem of the average length of a generation comes to play. Some have taken Gen 15:16 as indicating a length of 100 years,³¹ while the most popular average is 40 years, based on the generation who died in the wilderness (Deut 2:14; Ps 95:10). A figure of 25 years is actually closer to the average,³² for individuals whose life spans are about 70 years (Ps 90:10). It would seem that the average was longer for those who lived prior to the Exodus. If one averages the life spans for all whose age at death was recorded from Abraham to Moses and Aaron, a figure of ±140 is obtained. A figure of 50 years per generation (twice 25 for 70 years), therefore, seems reasonable. In fact, recent research³³ on 737 well-documented dynasties (mostly medieval and modern Europe and Asia),

²⁵ J. Skinner, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 41.

²⁶ Gilchrist, “yālad,” 380.

²⁷ Even-Shoshan, *Concordance*, 261–62.

²⁸ Holladay, “Lexicon,” 69.

²⁹ R. D. Culver, “Dor,” *TWOT* 1:186.

³⁰ D. N. Freedman and J. Lundbom, “D ô r,” *TDOT* 3:169–81.

³¹ Cf. P. J. Ray, “The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt,” *AUSS* 24 (1986): 236–37.

³² J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 121.

³³ D. Henige, “Comparative Chronology and the Near East: A Case for Symbiosis,” *BASOR* 261 (1986): 62.

indicates an average generation of 25–34 years for 480, 15–24 years for 145, and 35–50 years for 112 of these dynasties. It would therefore, seem that 50 year pre-Exodus and 25 year post-Exodus generational averages are tenable figures.

Genealogy and History

As we have seen above, many modern biblical scholars have been reluctant to consider the biblical genealogies accurate sources for reconstructing Israel's history, and have tended to approach them from an exclusively literary point of view. However, since the appearance of Wilson's book, the way of dealing with this material has moved in a different direction. Though cautious, Wilson has suggested that the biblical genealogies are both accurate, and used critically, may be used as sources for historical research.³⁴ In fact, the current consensus is that the biblical genealogies not only contain historically accurate information,³⁵ but they are accurate explanations of the milieu in which they were created.³⁶

Wilson first dealt with modern anthropological evidence, consisting of oral genealogies, then moved to comparisons with ancient Near Eastern written genealogies, and finally to the biblical genealogies. For convenience, we shall move from Wilson's conclusions to the specifics of his arguments, and make some of our own comparisons with the biblical genealogies, both in passing and more specifically at the end of the discussion.

In no case, whether in terms of modern oral genealogies, or ancient extra-biblical and biblical written genealogies, did Wilson find evidence that they were produced primarily for historical records. Nevertheless, due to the following reasons, they may still be seen as authentic statements, and as such can be used by the modern historian. In the case of oral genealogies they are accepted by society as accurate statements of past domestic, political and religious relationships. In written genealogies (both from the ancient Near East and the Bible), they preserve historical information incidentally. In the former, this takes the form of genealogical data in king lists, which can only be interpreted as being given for additional information, possibly as historical notes. The king lists were regarded as historical records and were

³⁴ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 200.

³⁵ Y. Levin, "From Lists to History: Chronological Aspects of the Chronicler's Genealogies," *JBL* 123/24 (2004): 606.

³⁶ M. W. Chavalas, "Genealogy," *EDB* 490.

possibly even used as the basis for historical works. Where parallels exist, they have been found to be identical, and therefore, accurate.³⁷

Likewise, in the biblical genealogies, much information, though not created for the purpose of conveying historical information, is nevertheless preserved incidentally. Although the genealogies were originally created for domestic, political and religious functions, they were nevertheless later understood as historically accurate. This, for instance, is how the Chronicler understood the genealogies of Genesis. Other genealogies ceased to function in terms of their original purpose, after becoming frozen in written form. They were, therefore, preserved for other reasons. Genesis 36 seems to be one of these “frozen” types, perhaps functioning only for historiographical purposes.³⁸

Genealogy itself, in terms of expressing kinship relationships, can take two forms: the list form and genealogical narrative (see below). The list form is more common and focuses on descent, of which there are two types. In the first, a genealogy traces only one line of descent from a living member to a single individual in the past. This is known as a linear genealogy. In the second, the genealogy expresses more than one line of descent from a single ancestor to two or more living individuals. This is called a segmented genealogy³⁹ (See Table 1). This second type of genealogy is very common in tribal (*šebet* or *matteh*) societies such as was ancient Israel. Here, the concept of kinship extends beyond the nuclear family (*bēt ’ab*), and is the basis on which larger family units called lineages (*mišpaḥah*) were organized. Lineages consist of all those individuals who claim descent from a common ancestor, whether maternal or paternal, the latter in terms of Israel.⁴⁰

Another feature of list-type genealogies is depth, or the number of generations between the founding ancestor and its living members. In segmented genealogies, the smallest functioning lineage is usually three to five generations in depth (cf. e.g., Exod 6:16–25, where the descendants of

³⁷ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 54–55; 132–33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 198–200.

³⁹ R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967) 123, 126–27. Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 9. See also Wilson, “Between ‘Azel’ and ‘Azel’: Interpreting the Biblical Genealogies,” *BA* 42 (1979): 12.

⁴⁰ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 18–20, R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961) 13, 21; L. E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 20–22. See also W. Osborne, *The Genealogies of Chronicles 1–9* (PhD diss., Dropsie University, 1979), 147–48; B.S.J. Isserlin, *The Israelites* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 100–101; and P. J. King and L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 37–40.

Levi are traced for three generations), while the largest seldom traces descent back further than ten to fourteen generations, the average being twelve. Lineages which exceed twelve generations in depth are usually in linear form, the most common examples being king lists presented as genealogies.⁴¹ A biblical example of this can be seen in 1 Chr 3:10–14, where 15 of the kings of Judah from Solomon through Josiah are given in linear form, followed in vv. 15–17 by three kings and their descendants in a segmented genealogy.

Depth is related to another characteristic feature of genealogies called fluidity. This occurs because genealogies, which are “owned” by a living group must fluctuate over time due to constant changes within its structure. As such there are three basic types of fluidity.⁴² The first type is due to relationship changes. This is reflected in such forms as the changing of the order of names within a generation, or names being moved from one generation to another. Some biblical examples follow: In Gen 11:27 Abram is listed first (due to his prominence, or theologically his relationship with God) although he was not actually the first born son of Terah. In Gen 36:9–14, the sons of Esau’s wife, Oholibamah, are listed with his grandsons instead of his sons, perhaps since Oholibamah was a wife taken from a subjugated people (cf. vv. 2, 20, 24–25; Deut 2:12, 22).

A second type of fluidity consists of the addition of names to a genealogy, whether from simple births or from the addition of previously unrelated individuals. A biblical example of the latter suggests itself where Caleb (and his relations, cf. 1 Chr 4:13–15), who was a non-Israelite (Num 32:12), was included into the tribe of Judah (Num 13:6; 1 Chr 4:15) due to faithfulness to Yahweh. From the perspective of the NT, the Gentiles are included or grafted into the “genealogy” of Israel (cf. Rom 11), when they become partakers of the covenant.

The third form of fluidity consists of omission,⁴³ either by only citing the relevant portion of the genealogy relative to a situation, in which case that portion is said to be “temporarily” lost, or through telescoping, where individuals of the same name are combined into a single figure. Typical reasons for omission include death, the lack of an offspring, deliberate suppression, simple forgetting, or loss of function. These reasons serve to

⁴¹ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 21–26.

⁴² Wilson, *Ibid.*, 27–37.

⁴³ Noted as early as 1890, cf. W. H. Green, “Primeval Chronology,” *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. W. C. Kaiser (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972), 18–19.

show that names are not omitted capriciously. Fluidity is not to be equated with invention.⁴⁴ The most logical place for names to be omitted are in the middle of genealogies, especially in the linear type. This is due to the fact that those individuals at the beginning of the genealogy are the founding ancestors, and are never forgotten, and the individuals at the end are living members and those within living memory. Hence, it is usually only those members in the middle who have done something special or who were connected with something important that are remembered.⁴⁵

A few examples of the less obvious types of omission should be mentioned. An example of deliberate suppression of names from a genealogy would be the exclusion of the priestly line of Eli through Abiathar in the genealogy of Levi. This must be reconstructed from the biblical narrative (cf. 1 Sam 1:3; 14:3; 22:20; see Table 2). Omission of entire genealogies which have lost function might be seen in 1 Chr 1–9, where the genealogies of both Dan and Zebulun are lacking among the twelve tribes. For a case where a person has the same name, status and position, and where it is difficult to know the exact number of individuals bearing it, might be seen in Neh 12:11 with Jaddua.⁴⁶

Yet another aspect of genealogy is function. When a genealogy is cited, it is done so for a specific purpose. The form that it takes cannot be separated from its function, by which it is both influenced and limited.⁴⁷ The three basic functions are domestic (dealing with social order, i.e., position and status); political-jural (e.g., king lists); and religious. The first type usually takes the form of a segmented genealogy, while the latter two usually take the linear form. Biblical examples of the above include Num 27:1, cf. Num 26:29–34, where the genealogy functions for the purpose of establishing property rights (cf. Num 27:2–4); the king list/genealogy of 1 Chr 3:10–14; and the priestly genealogies of Levi in 1 Chr 6:1–15, Ezra 7:1–5, Neh 11:11; 12:10–11.

Some genealogies can have more than one function. In so doing their form is altered, resulting in seemingly “conflicting” versions.⁴⁸ A good biblical example of this is Ezra 7:1–5, where the genealogy functions as both a method to legitimize the position and status of Ezra, as well as to show continuity with the preexilic priesthood. In so doing, it was not necessary to

⁴⁴ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 55.

⁴⁵ Wilson, “Azal,” 12.

⁴⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.4–5.

⁴⁷ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 18, 23.

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Ibid.*, 46–47.

reproduce the Levitical (priestly) genealogy with every name back to Aaron, and thus it is seemingly in conflict with other and longer versions of the genealogy (cf. 1 Chr 6:1–15, 50–53).

Change in any of the types discussed above may become hindered by the genealogy's being recorded in written form. This, of course, is the way that all of the biblical and extra-biblical genealogies appear. As a result, they may cease to function, and therefore serve as historiographical information, or may yet serve a further function (as in king lists and priestly genealogies in their linear forms), by the continual addition of names until they reach their final form.⁴⁹

In Table 2, which follows, we attempt a reconstruction of three genealogies which are temporally parallel (individuals at both the beginning and the end of the genealogies are known contemporaries, as is also the case at one point in the middle, cf. Exod 6:23). All three, begin as segmented genealogies, but soon take a linear form. They each exhibit a depth of two to three generations in their segmentary form, and from ten to fourteen, with a longer variation of twenty-two generations, in their linear form.

Fluidity is also exhibited in the form of telescoping. As elsewhere, Korah (Num 16:1), a contemporary of Moses is combined with the founder of one of the lineages of Levi (Exod 6:21) as is Amram, the founder of one of the lineages of Levi, with the father of Moses and Aaron (Exod 2:1; 6:18, 20). The focus in the genealogy of Judah is primarily on those individuals at its beginning and end. However, in the middle are three individuals who were connected with the Exodus and Conquest⁵⁰ events as well as two well-known names from the period of the Judges (cf. Ruth 4:18–22). Much the same can be said for the priestly genealogy of Levi. The much longer Levitical genealogy of the sons of Heman the singer, seems, on the other hand, to be as complete as possible. In our reconstruction, at least for the genealogy of Judah, a figure of 50 years per generation (average) is used for pre-Exodus individuals, and a 25 year generational average is used for those who lived after the Exodus (see above). An Exodus date of ca. 1450 BCE and a long

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 47.

⁵⁰ Matthew 1:5 connects Salmon with the conquest period and Rehab of Jericho. Scholars are divided on their acceptance or non-acceptance of this late detail, e.g., see J. D. Quinn, "Is 'Rahab in Mt 1,5 Rehab of Jericho?' *Bib* 62 (1981): 225–28, who denied the equation; and R. E. Brown, "Rehab in Mt 1,5: Probably is Rehab of Jericho," *Bib* 63 (1982): 79–80, who accepts it. The latter's arguments seem to the present writer to be more cogent.

sojourn of Israel in Egypt are assumed, and reflected in the dating.⁵¹ For the rationale behind the missing links in the first part of the priestly genealogy, see our earlier work on this genealogy.⁵² Also reconstructed here is the deliberately suppressed section of the genealogy from Eli through Abiathar.⁵³

Finally, these genealogies also have a functional component. The priestly genealogy is the most obvious, as its function is religious. The levitical genealogy also has a religious function as its members performed various duties in the Temple. The reason for its relative completeness⁵⁴ is unknown, as this is the exception, rather than the rule. It might be suggested that since this material appears within a postexilic-period book, the emphasis on genealogical purity and continuity, especially for the priests and Levites, that the Temple functionaries at this time went out of their way to be exact. The function of the genealogy of Judah seems to reflect the continuity of the Patriarchs with King David. Since it also forms the basis of the beginning of the king list/genealogy, it also has a theological function in terms of the Messiah.

Recent Research

There have been a number of studies in recent years dealing with biblical genealogy. We will comment on their contributions without any attempt at being exhaustive. Several of these studies have focused on genealogical narrative, which is narrative that focuses on genealogy (kinship relationships are expressed) rather than narrative which merely contains a genealogy.⁵⁵ It has been recognized that in the book of Genesis, there is an alteration between genealogy in list form as expressed in the *tôledôt* formula and genealogical narrative, which focuses on family relationships as

⁵¹ W. H. Shea, "Exodus, Date of," *ISBE* 2:230–38, P. J. Ray, "The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt," *AUSS* 24 (1986): 231–48. The dating of Perez, Salmon and Boaz call for some explanation. Perez was born (Gen 38:29) before Israel moved to Egypt (ca. 1880 BCE). Salmon seems to have married Rehab (Matt 1:5, see note 50, above). It is assumed here that this occurred after the conquest and quite some time after her acceptance into the covenant community. As for Boaz, the story of Ruth seems to fit best in the early part of the period of the Judges, cf. P. J. Ray. "The Story of Ruth: A Chronological and Genealogical Perspective," *JATS* 20 (2009): 3–18.

⁵² Ray, "Duration," 237–38, Table 2 on p. 239 and Excurses B, on pp. 247–48.

⁵³ For more details, see Ray, "Ruth," 14–15.

⁵⁴ Though not actually in this genealogy, we have added Bukkiah, the son of Heman, a contemporary of David (1 Chr 25:1, 4) for sake of a more exact temporal comparison.

⁵⁵ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 9.

mediated by the promise (covenant).⁵⁶ Thus, Genealogy and narrative can be seen as reinforcing each other. In fact Steinberg⁵⁷ has gone so far as to say that “Genesis is a book whose plot is genealogy.” Renaud⁵⁸ has noted another element, universalism, which ultimately results in a choice or selection process. In these studies, there is a move toward looking at the book of Genesis as a whole rather than in fragments (Alexander, cf. also E. Fox⁵⁹), whether from theological (Alexander, Renaud), or from literary (Robinson, Steinberg) interests.

Another group of studies are anthropological in nature, some of which have many helpful insights into understanding the kinship relationships found in the narratives (Prewitt,⁶⁰ in terms of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage and the endogamous preference of the patriarchs, Donaldson,⁶¹ on wife-exchange alliances, and Oden,⁶² on the avunculate relationship). All of these studies have as their basis the works of Levi-Strauss⁶³ and Leach.⁶⁴ Andriolo’s study,⁶⁵ though even earlier than Wilson, makes an important contribution by noting that there is an element of choice which balances out any lop-sided emphasis on determinism in the status of the heir.

Other studies have focused on various tangents, and must be dealt with separately. A number of writers⁶⁶ have found a correspondence between the *Apkallu* or the seven antediluvian sages, the Sumerian king list and the genealogies of Genesis 4 and 5. These genealogies are usually seen as being

⁵⁶ R. B. Robinson, “Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 595–608; N. Steinberg, “The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis,” *Semeia* 46 (1989): 41–49; T. D. Alexander, “From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis,” *EvQ* 61 (1989): 5–19; and B. Renaud, “Les genealogies et la structure de l’histoire sacerdotale dans le livre de la Genese,” *RB* 97 (1990): 5–30.

⁵⁷ Steinberg, “Genealogical Framework,” 41.

⁵⁸ Renaud, “Les genealogies et la structure,” 29.

⁵⁹ E. Fox, “Can Genesis Be Read as a Book?” *Semeia* 46 (1989): 31–40, who saw the structure of the book in the form of a chiasm.

⁶⁰ T. J. Prewitt, “Kinship Structures and the Genesis Genealogies,” *JNES* 40 (1981): 87–98.

⁶¹ M. E. Donaldson, “Kinship Theory in the Patriarchal Narrative: The Case of the Barren Wife,” *JAAR* 49 (1981): 77–87.

⁶² R. A. Oden, “Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew: Kinship Studies and the Patriarchal Narratives,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 189–205.

⁶³ C. Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

⁶⁴ E. Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969).

⁶⁵ K. R. Andriolo, “A Structural Analysis of Genesis and Worldview in the Old Testament,” *American Anthropologist* 57 (1973): 1657–69.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Purpose*, 7; Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 149–63; and D. T. Bryan, “A Reevaluation of Gen 4 and 5 in the Light of Recent Studies in Genealogical Fluidity,” *ZAW* 99 (1987): 180–88.

variations of the same *Vorlage* (Johnson and Wilson from the point of view of fluidity). Bryan followed Wilson, but suggested that rather than being from the same *Vorlage*, they were instead two separate genealogies which have later been conflated. Shea's study⁶⁷ though not dealing directly with the issue of *Vorlage* is far more enlightening.

Oded's study⁶⁸ on the Table of Nations, in Genesis 10, moves beyond organizing the table on the principle of ethnicity or geography, which leave numerous problems. Instead, he argued that the table is organized on the basis of types of communities or lifestyles: those nations linked with Shem are seen as nomads on the basis of v. 21 where Shem is said to be the father of all the children of Eber (*ʿbr*). In contrast, those associated with Ham, the father of Canaan, the traditional enemies of Israel, must therefore be the sedentary populations, or those who dwell in cities. Lastly, those connected with Japheth represent the maritime nations (cf. v. 5). Levin⁶⁹ emphasized the importance of context in determining the meaning of biblical genealogies and noted that most of the short linear genealogies in the historical books introduce a central character into the narrative. Finlay⁷⁰ focused on the birth report, consisting of conception, naming and so-called "etiological" elements in the narrative. Many times the latter are introduced with the *wattōmer* formula in a speech preceding the naming element, indicating the significance of the name or the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child.

The study by Rendsburg⁷¹ on the consistency and reliability of the biblical genealogies is a disappointment and brakes no new ground. It is too simplistic, assuming that because most of the genealogies from the Patriarchs to the Exodus range consistently between three to six generations, that they are therefore complete. He also assumed that those genealogies covering the same time frame, but are longer, such as the genealogy of Ephraim (Num 26:35–36; 1 Chr 7:20–27) and that of Heman the singer (1 Chr 6:33–38), have many names which were added. Although he cited Wilson, he did not

⁶⁷ W. H. Shea, "The Antidiluvians," *Origins* 18 (1991): 10–26.

⁶⁸ B. Oded, "The Table of Nations (Genesis 10)—A Socio-cultural Approach," *ZAW* 98 (1986): 14–31.

⁶⁹ Y. Levin, "Understanding Biblical Genealogies," *Currents in Research* 9 (2001): 33–34.

⁷⁰ T. D. Findlay, *The Birth Report Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 24, 36.

⁷¹ G. A. Rendsburg, "The Internal Consistency and Historical Reliability of the Biblical Genealogies," *VT* 40 (1990): 185–206.

seem to have learned anything from those studies, moving out on his own in a different and rather unlikely direction.

Solomon's study,⁷² on Chronicles sees the structure of these books as being patterned after the Pentateuch. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with this the idea per se, and although she has several useful insights, Solomon's methodology is at best questionable and her connections between the two sections of the biblical text, in the opinion of the present writer, are forced. Levin's studies⁷³ on the genealogical material in Chronicles are more fruitful in that the genealogical material itself is used to elucidate the social setting of the author. He noted that the Chronicler employed a genre (i.e., genealogy) that his audience was familiar with and transferred the more usual oral form into a grand literary work depicting all humanity, with Israel at its center. Levin also attempted to discern chronological aspects within the genealogies in Chronicles by focusing on the literary devices the author used to tell the story, especially within the linear sections of the genealogies.

The Functions of the Biblical Genealogy

After analyzing the textual data, looking into how genealogy is employed, and reviewing what others have said about it, we now attempt to say something about the functions that the biblical genealogies played in the text of the OT, and finally if possible, to narrow down these functions to a single (central) role. We propose to do so on the basis of the above-mentioned data-sets.

The simplest and most obvious function of the genealogies is succession or descent. The focus here is the family, and this can be seen by the basic structure of the genealogies in list form. This has been pointed out in several of the studies mentioned above.⁷⁴ Closely akin to this, is the function of continuity. This again is obvious and is reflected in the successive genealogies from earliest mankind, through the Flood to the Patriarchs, and from there through the sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus and up to the beginning of the monarchy (see Table 1).⁷⁵ Another good example is the census of Num 26,

⁷² A. M. Solomon, "The Structure of the Chronicler's History: A Key to the Organization of the Pentateuch," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 51–64.

⁷³ Y. Levin, "Who Was the Chronicler's Audience? A Hint from His Genealogies." *JBL* 122.2 (2003): 242–45 and "From Lists to History," 611–35.

⁷⁴ Harrison, "Genealogy," 425; Alexander, "Significance," 8; Renaud, "Structure de l'histoire sacerdotale," 10–15; and Steinberg, "Genealogical Framework," 47.

⁷⁵ Johnson, *Purpose*, 22–23; Renaud, "Structure de l'histoire sacerdotale," 27; Robinson, "Literary Functions," 595, 607, and Steinberg, "Genealogical Framework," 43.

where the continuity of God's people after the Exodus is expressed by making a connection with the patriarchs (Gen 46). Johnson⁷⁶ pointed out that this is the same function as in the books of Chronicles and Ezra/Nehemiah. In the former, the Chronicler goes back to the Table of Nations and the patriarchal genealogies (1 Chr 1–9), and attaches these people groups, tribes and individuals to the period of the monarchy, and finally Ezra/Nehemiah bring things one step further by insisting on the continuity of the postexilic community with that of the old "Theocracy."

The genealogies also function to show the existing relations between the people of God and their neighbors. The most obvious example is the Table of Nations.⁷⁷ Another interesting example of this is that Israel and Edom are connected through Issac (Gen 25:26, cf. Gen 36) as brothers, but are disassociated with each other in Ezek 25:12–14 and other places due to treachery (no longer brothers). This is sometimes seen as a political or apologetic function.⁷⁸

Legitimacy plays an important function in terms of genealogical relationships on several levels: individual, office (Kingship, priesthood, cf. Table 2), property, and purity of race.⁷⁹ We have already looked at several examples. Johnson⁸⁰ has pointed out several aspects of this function in the postexilic period. In fact, he claimed that the main purpose of the genealogies in Ezra/Nehemiah is legitimacy as well as the continuity of the priesthood and the theocracy. One could perhaps extend that as well to the genealogies in 1 Chr 1–9, where the author spends 100 verses on Judah, another 47 verses on Benjamin (the kingly genealogies), and 81 verses on Levi (the priesthood). The amount of space dedicated to the other genealogies (less Dan and Zebulun which are absent), ranges from 1–20 verses.

Other aspects include the continual updating of an authoritative (accurate) contemporary list of families (*bêt 'abôt*), cf. 1 Chr 6:15, Neh 12:22–23; genealogical purity being much more explicit in Ezra/Nehemiah (Ezra 9:2, 8, 11; 10:10; Neh 9:2; 13:1–3) than in the rest of the OT; and the need for the Holy seed not to be mixed with the people of the land(s), with the genealogy functioning to safeguard that purity. Genealogy also has a

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Purpose*, 42.

⁷⁷ These connections may have more to do with the type of community rather than the degree of kinship perceived, if Oded, "Table," 14–19, is correct.

⁷⁸ Johnson, *Purpose*, 7.

⁷⁹ Harrison, *Genealogy*, 425; Johnson, *Purpose*, 79.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Purpose*, 43–47.

theological function. The genealogies in Genesis 4 and 5 differentiate between the sinful and righteous lines.⁸¹ Renaud,⁸² as mentioned above, has pointed out the universal aspect to the genealogies in Genesis. This would indicate that God is interested in all nations and peoples. In fact, another look at Table 1 shows that there is a continual alternation between segmented and linear genealogies. The initial focus on mankind was broad (segmented), but continually narrowed in focus (linear) to a specific genealogical line, due to sin. Although with each new generation there was potentially an opportunity to broaden (segmented) again, with further inroads of sin there were few (usually only one line), that maintained faith in God and become heirs to the covenant promises (linear).

Closely aligned to the previous function is that of relationship by choice.⁸³ One might object that this choice was arbitrary, based upon a selection by God; or by culture, based on primogeniture or reactions to it, resulting in various types of usurpations, usually by younger siblings. Nevertheless, we have already implied that this choice was based rather on a faith relationship. The choice of the heir of the covenant promises then, belongs to those who belong to God in a real sense. The rejection of the other siblings (whether older or younger), was thus based on their own rejection of God, and not arbitrary. It is of interest to note that the genealogies and other accounts of relationships in Genesis seem to alternate between those who accepted and were accepted (+) and those who did not and were not (-): Heavens and Earth/Adam (Gen 2 +), Cain (Gen 4 -), Seth/Noah (Gen 5–6 +), Table of Nations (Gen 10 ±), Terah/Abraham (Gen 11 +), Ishmael (Gen 25a -), Isaac (Gen 25b +), Esau (Gen 36ab -), Jacob (Gen 37:2, 46 +).

The genealogies also function variously for such laudatory usages as announcing the founders of various cultural and technological events (Gen 4 and 10),⁸⁴ as well as such mundane, administrative purposes as military organization (Num 1:3; 1 Chr 7:4, 11, 40), taxes and offerings (Num 7:11–89) and ordinary censuses (Num 26).⁸⁵ In addition, the genealogies serve a structural function. This can be seen in the book of Genesis, where they alternate with genealogical narrative, extend into other historical books

⁸¹ Johnson, *Purpose*, 10; Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 154–56, 164–65.

⁸² Renaud, “Structure de l’histoire sacerdotale,” 29.

⁸³ Renaud, *ibid.*, 29, his “progressive selection process”; cf. Andriolo, “Structural Analysis,” 1162.

⁸⁴ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 148; Harrison, “Genealogy,” 425.

⁸⁵ Harrison, “Genealogy,” 425; Johnson, *Purpose*, 63–65, 78–79.

(Exodus, Numbers and Ruth), sit at the head of the books of Chronicles, and again alternate with genealogical narrative in Ezra/Nehemiah.⁸⁶ In so doing, they trace a family history. Even later, when the focus became political and national, it is nevertheless still spoken of in terms of family (Edom as the brother of Israel, cf. Amos 1:11; Obad 10).⁸⁷

A final function of genealogy, though there are perhaps others, is that of movement in Creation.⁸⁸ God created mankind and intended for them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). Even though the Flood interrupted this divine intention, Genesis 9:1 reveals that this was still very much a part of God's plan. It is brought out most forcefully in Genesis 1:26–27; 5:1–3. In the former section mankind is created in God's image (a) and likeness (b), and this is picked up again in 5:1–2. Then, in v. 3, Adam bears a son in his own likeness (b') and according to his image (a'), with the elements presented chiasmatically. It has been pointed out by Robinson⁸⁹ that Adam in Gen 1:26–27 is generic, in Gen 5:3 he is definitely an individual, and in Gen 5:1–2 there is a transition between the two. Genesis 5 thus takes up creation where Genesis 1 left off. However, there is also an irony in between. While the emphasis of genealogy is life, the genealogy of Cain (Genesis 4), both begins and ends with murder.

The Role of Biblical Genealogy

In coming to a central role or function which the genealogies play in the biblical text, we would like to suggest as the center (*Mitte*), the theme of covenant, much the same as others have seen as the central theme in biblical theology.⁹⁰ Promise, or better covenant, has been seen as one of the functions that genealogies play,⁹¹ but to the knowledge of the present writer it has not been suggested as its basic or central function.⁹² If one takes seriously the implications of Gen 3:15 as covenant terminology without the use of the word

⁸⁶ Harrison, "Genealogy," 424; with some qualifications, cf. Gilchrist, "yālad," 380; Renaud, "Structure de l'histoire sacerdotale," 27–30; Alexander, "Significance," 6; Robinson, "Literary Functions," 588–89; and Steinberg, "Genealogical Framework," 47.

⁸⁷ Robinson, "Literary Functions," 607.

⁸⁸ Robinson, *ibid.*, 599–601; Renaud, "Structure de l'histoire sacerdotale," 29.

⁸⁹ Robinson, *ibid.*, 599–600.

⁹⁰ G. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948); J. B. Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962).

⁹¹ Harrison, "Genealogy," 425–26; Alexander, "Significance," 8–19; Robinson, "Literary Functions," 604.

⁹² Alexander, "Significance," 5–19 focused on "seed" as a major theme holding together the Book of Genesis, even extending it to the Book of Ruth in passing. However, if we understand him correctly, he did not see it as the central role of genealogy, in general.

itself, then covenant would seem to be the key to the central role of the biblical genealogies. In this verse there is one of the central themes of the covenant, that of the promised seed (*zera*^c). Alexander⁹³ pointed out that the noun seed (according to him it is used 165, actually 229 times in the OT)⁹⁴ occurs 56 times in Genesis, or approximately one fourth of its total usage.

The basic function of genealogies, as pointed out above is simple biological succession. The noun seed (*zera*^c) is a collective, but seen as plural in terms of God's people. Ultimately, however, a single seed is reached in terms of the Messiah. We have already pointed out the extension of the *tôlêdôt* formula outside of Genesis leading up to David, or the type of the Messiah. Certainly this was no mere coincidence. Similarly, two other aspects of the covenant, i.e., land/nation and blessing (Gen 12; 15; 17) also point to the Messiah.

Seed (*zera*^c) is particularly adept in showing how the genealogies help to reinforce the covenant theme. However one wishes to treat Gen 4:1, it would seem that Eve was somehow hoping that her child would be the promised seed. After she lost both Cain and Abel through murder and lack of fidelity to God, she rejoiced that she was given yet another seed (*zera*^c) in Seth (Gen 4:25). In what follows in the biblical text it can be seen that through the medium of genealogy, both in list form and in genealogical narrative, that there is a single line, a biological offspring leading from Adam, through Abraham and David and many others to the Messiah.

God has a plan, and he will fulfill it. Individuals may foul it up and lose out on the covenant blessing, and hence be left out of the genealogy, or develop deviant lines, but ultimately, God will fulfill his plan through those who love him and allow him to do so. The covenant promises must be conveyed personally and concretely from one generation to the next.⁹⁵ Human choice is maintained, but God is ultimately in control. The unconditionality on God's part of the covenant, ultimately to fulfill his end, can thus be seen in genealogical narrative, where such things as barrenness, wife/sister problems, the child begotten by a slave syndrome, the wife taken by a foreign king or any other choice that his people make are no match for his resources. God protects the genealogical line despite men's attempts to take care of things in their own way.⁹⁶ History is governed and ordered by

⁹³ Alexander, "Significance," 8n6.

⁹⁴ Even-Shoshan, *Concordance*, 340-42.

⁹⁵ Robinson, "Literary Functions," 606.

⁹⁶ Robinson, *ibid.*, 604-5, 608.

God. His foreknowledge and election assure that his plan will ultimately be fulfilled. In terms of fulfillment, the genealogies both in list and narrative form culminate in the NT, with Jesus. Once Jesus' mission on earth was successful, his return was assured. There is thus an eschatological aspect to the genealogies as well.

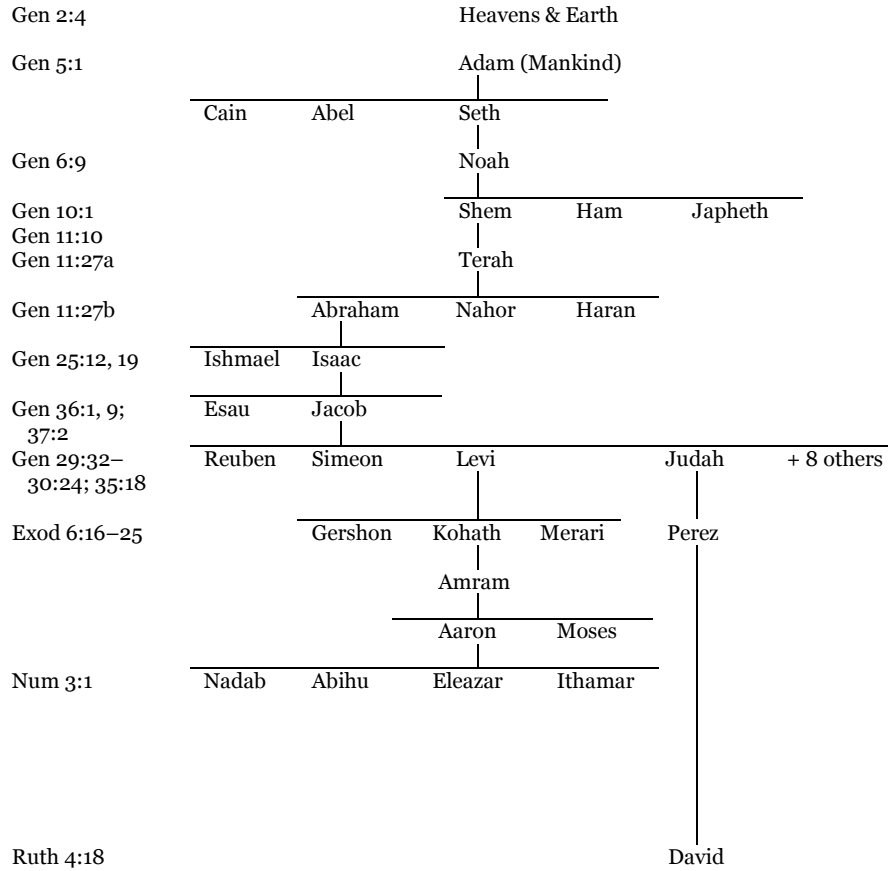
Summary

The history of the treatment of the biblical genealogies has gone from a position of assumed complete accuracy and uncritical acceptance, to one of assumed unreliability and the view that they were mere fabrications, to that of cautious acceptance of authenticity and historical usefulness. This has come about, at least in part, because of Wilson's 1977 monograph, which compares modern oral genealogies, and ancient extrabiblical written genealogies from the ancient Near East with the biblical genealogies. The conclusion made there was, that although in none of these cases were the genealogies created for historical purposes, they are nevertheless considered accurate statements of existing relationships, and therefore, are of value to the modern historian for the reconstruction of Israel's history.

In the present study we have not only followed up on Wilson's conclusions and applied them in a more extensive way to the biblical genealogies, but have also analyzed the biblical terminology for indications of its own thoughts on the subject and have tried to make some tentative conclusions. Finally, we have identified a number of ways that they functioned and posited an overall role of genealogy in the biblical text. In so doing, we have also taken a look at many of the contributions that have already been made since Wilson's work in an effort to round out the study.

We have found, as have others, that the book of Genesis presents an alternating structure of genealogy in list form with that of genealogical narrative. This is also extended in its broadest form into the rest of the historical literature of the Bible, as Israel's history no matter how complicated, is always described in terms of family. Even in the NT, the Gentiles are grafted into the family of Israel (Rom 11), and genealogy in list form is interspersed in at least a couple of places. The Messiah is the goal of this family-oriented literature, and as such genealogy has an eschatological aspect. We have suggested that the overall *mitte* of genealogy is covenant, the same as others have seen as the central theme of biblical theology. This focuses more specifically on the seed (*zera*^c), leading through the various generations of God's people and ultimately to the Messiah.

Table 1



Linear Genealogies
 Segmented Genealogies

Table 2

	1 Chr 6:33–38; 25:1, 4	Num 16:1	1 Chr 6:1–8	1 Sam 1:3; 14:3; 22:20	Ruth 4:18–22; 1Chr 2:3–5; 9–15
1	<i>Levi</i> *		<i>Levi</i> * (1923– 1786)+		<i>Judah</i> * (1922)
2	<i>Kohath</i>		<i>Kohath</i>		<i>Perez</i> (ca. 1882)
3	<i>Izhar</i>	<i>Izhar</i>	<i>Amran</i>		<i>Hezron</i> (ca. 1832)
4	Korah	Korah	?		<i>Ram</i> (ca.1782)
5	Ebiasaph	?	?		? (ca.1732)
6	Assir	?	?		? (ca. 1682)
7	Tahath	?	?		? (ca. 1632)
8	Zephaniah	?	Amran (?)		Amminadab (ca. 1582)
9	Azariah	Korah	Aaron (1534– 1411)		Nahshon (ca. 1532)
10	Joel		Eleazar	Ithamar	? (ca. 1482)
11	Elkanah		Phinehas		Salmon (ca. 1432)
12	Amasai		Abishua		Boaz (ca. 1370)
13	Mahath		Bukki		Obed (ca. 1310)
14	Elkanah		Uzzi		? (ca. 1285)
15	Zuph		Zerahiah		? (ca. 1260)
16	Toah		Meraioth		? (ca. 1235)
17	Eliel		Amariah		? (ca. 1210)
18	Jeroham		Ahitub		? (ca. 1185)
19	Elkanah		?	Eli (1168–1070)	? (ca. 1160)
20	Samuel		?	Phinehas (?– 1070)	? (ca. 1135)
21	Joel		?	Ahitub	? (ca. 1110)
22	Heman		?	Ahimelech	Jesse (ca. 1085)
23	Bukkiah		Zadok	Abiathar	David (1040–970)

*Lineage Founder

Founders of Families (lineage segments)

+ in dates BCE

3

Genesis 38: Its Function in the Literary Structure and Plot of the Joseph Narrative¹

Stephen Bauer

Introduction

Is there any connection between Genesis 38 and the Joseph narrative found in Gen 37:1–46:7?² The almost universal answer is a resounding “No!”³ As a result, very little was done with Gen 38 until the latter half

¹ Having been a student of Dr. Richard Davidson, I think he has never met a chiasm that he did not like. This essay is an adapted segment of a paper originally written for a class with Dr. Davidson, and later expanded in hopes of publishing it. Time and teaching duties have waylaid me from completing that task. I am thus honored to have been invited to offer this article, a major subsection of the full manuscript, to honor a key mentor and friend. Congratulations, Dr. Davidson, on your accomplishments as a scholar.

² I will consider the Joseph narrative to be a subsection of the “generations [toledoth] of Jacob” (Gen 37.2), and to be comprised of the textual corpus of Gen 37:1–46:7. The starting point seems self-evident. I have delineated the ending point as Gen 46:7 because the next verse starts a genealogical section shifting the thematic focus from Joseph to the whole of Jacob’s clan.

³ For example, see: John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 450; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, 3rd ed., AB 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 299; Michael Maher, *Genesis*, OTM 2 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), 214–15; H. Freedman, “The Book of Genesis,” *The Soncino Chumash: The Five Books of Moses with Haphtaroth*, ed. A. Cohen (Hindhead, Surrey, UK: Soncino, 1947), 236; Eric I. Lowenthal, *The Joseph Narrative in Genesis* (New York, KTAV, 1973), 1.

of the twentieth-century. As Susan Niditch has observed, “views of the function and purpose of Gen 38 have remained relatively static through the years.”⁴

However, in last couple of decades, Gen 38 has been receiving more attention. In particular, there is a small body of interpretation which attempts to link Gen 38 to its context, usually to the whole book of Genesis.⁵ Only a very small handful of authors have suggested ties between Gen 38 and the Joseph narrative. Maddox and Alter essentially followed Cassuto’s connections of Gen 38 to chapters 37 and 39 with only minor expansions.⁶ Mathewson attempted to go a little further but ended up doing more with the connection of Gen 38 to the rest Genesis than to the immediate context. Thus the questions of the purpose and position of Gen 38 in the Joseph narrative, and of the literary interconnections between Gen 38 and its context, remain largely unanswered.

This article will focus on the literary structure of Gen 38 in its surrounding narrative. It thus proposes that there is a purposeful connection to the Joseph narrative, evidenced, in part, by a chiasmic structure of the Joseph narrative, in which Gen 38 plays a key role in parallel with Gen 39. This study will focus only on the chiasmic structure, as the scope permitted does not allow discussion of other literary and thematic connections.

Genesis 38 in the Literary Structure of the Joseph Narrative

The Literary Structure

Proposing that there may be a chiasmic structure in the Joseph narrative is not an overly radical idea, for a fair number of such structures have been discovered in Genesis.⁷ With this in mind, I propose that the Joseph narrative

⁴ Susan Niditch, “The Wronged Woman Righted: An Analysis of Genesis 38,” *HTR* 72 (1979): 143.

⁵ Two of the foremost expositors in this camp are Steven D. Mathewson, “An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38,” *BSac* 146 (1989): 373–92; and John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 209–210; John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, EBC* 2, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 230–33. See also Umberto Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1973), 1:29–40; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 3–12, 159–61; and Judah Goldin, “The Youngest Son or Where Does Genesis 38 Belong,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 27–44.

⁶ Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, 30–31; Randy L. Maddox, “Damned If You Do and Damned If You Don’t: Tamar—A Feminist Foremother,” *Daughters of Sarah* 13.4 (July–August, 1987): 15; Alter, *Narrative*, 4–5, 10.

⁷ See Isaac M. Kikawada, and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985). This book proposes several chiasms, mainly in the first half of Genesis.

demonstrates a clear chiasmic structure with Gen 38 holding a key place in the overall scheme. The proposed chiasm is as follows:

A. Jacob's family together in Canaan—Joseph is favored son (37:1–4)	A'. Jacob's family together in Egypt (46:1–7)
B. Personal dynamics between Joseph and his brothers (37:5–35)	B'. Personal dynamics between Joseph and his brothers (40:1–45:28)
1. Dreams and anticipated fulfillment (37:5–11) ⁸	1. Dreams with fulfillment plus fulfillment of dreams from time of youth (40:1–41:57)
2. Joseph leaves home to find his brothers (37:12–17)	2. Brothers leave home to find food and also find Joseph (42:1–6)
3. Brothers' plot to kill favored son Joseph (37:18–20)	3. Joseph plots against his brothers (42:7–16)
4. Brothers cast Joseph into a pit (37:21–24)	4. Joseph casts brothers into prison for three days/Simeon for one year (42:17–28)
5. Brothers eat and drink—Joseph separate, favored son treated with contempt (37:24–25)	5. Brothers eat and drink—Joseph separate, favored son Benjamin treated with preference (43:16–34)
6. Judah intervenes in fate of favored son Joseph—delivers from threat of death into Egyptian slavery (37:26–28)	6. Judah intervenes in fate of favored son Benjamin—delivers from threat of Egyptian slavery into freedom by offering himself as a substitute (44:1–34)

⁸ See James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 14, where he named motifs of the Joseph narrative (without direct reference to Gen 38) including the dream–dream interpretation motif. This motif is expanded into a dream–dream interpretation/fulfillment motif in this narrative.

7. Grief/Fear of Reuben (37:29–30)	7. Grief and fear of brothers upon discovering Joseph’s identity (45:1–5)
8. Grief of Jacob (37:31–35)	8. Joy of Joseph, brothers, Jacob (45:4–28)
C. Antagonist Highlighted (37:36–38:30)	C'. Protagonist Highlighted (39:1–23)
1. Biographical interlude (37:36–38:11) a. Introductory formula: Joseph sold to Potiphar (37:36) b. Activities of Judah: establishes family, separated from Jacob (38:1–11)	1. Biographical interlude (39:1–6a) a. Introductory formula: Joseph bought by Potiphar (39:1) b. Activities of Joseph: establishes reputation, separated from Jacob (39:2–6a)
2. A temptress plans and successfully seduces Judah (38:12–23)	2. A temptress plans and unsuccessfully attempts to seduce Joseph (39:6b–12)
3. Perpetrator Judah identified by a piece of attire—true allegations lodged against Judah (38:24–25)	3. “Perpetrator” Joseph identified by a piece of attire—false allegations lodged against Joseph (39:13–18)
4. Judah initiates and then cancels judgment against Tamar (38:24, 26)	4. Potiphar initiates and executes judgment against Joseph (39:19, 20)
5. Judah’s repentance—admits fault, refrains from punishing Tamar—birth of two sons implies <u>favor with God</u> (38:26–30) ⁹	5. Joseph finds <u>favor with God</u> and the jailer (39:21–23)

⁹ Goldin, “The Youngest Son,” 30, “Judah who had lost two sons, Er and Onan, now begets twins—a sign certainly that Judah has been forgiven.” We will explore this assertion by Goldin in greater detail later in the article. Certainly divine forgiveness should imply restored favor with God.

With this proposed chiasmic structure in mind, let us examine the evidence in support of our proposal. I shall first look at the use of the proper names, Jacob and Israel. Then we will proceed section by section in the proposed chiasm.

Evidence for the Literary Structure

The Use of the Names Jacob and Israel

The name, Jacob is used 14 times in 12 verses in the Joseph narrative, while the name Israel occurs 11 times in 11 verses. Only two uses of Jacob (Gen 42:29, 36) and only three uses of Israel (Gen 43:6, 8, 11) are not used in chiasmic parallel. The remaining occurrences of these two names appear only in parallel sections of the chiasm. These appearances are in any combination of the two names as follows:

A. Gen 37:1–3 Jacob – 2 uses Israel – 1 use	A'. Gen 46:1–6 Jacob – 4 uses Israel – 3 uses
B.2. Gen 37:13 Israel – 1 use .8. Gen 37:34 Jacob – 1 use	B'.2. Gen 42:1, 4, 5 Jacob – 3 uses Israel – 1 use .8. Gen 45:21, 25, 27, 28 Jacob – 2 uses Israel – 2 uses
C. Neither name is used	C'. Neither name is used

The close association of the names Jacob and Israel with specific parallel portions of the proposed chiasmic structure provides our first evidence in support of this chiasm. Other linguistic and literary evidences also support this proposal. Let us examine that evidence proceeding in the order of the proposed chiasmic sections.

Linguistic Evidence in Each Structural Section

Evidence in sections A/A' (37:1–4; 46:1–7).

In addition to the names of Jacob and Israel just noted, sections A and A' are marked by the word נָשִׁים (*našim*, wives). This word is used only twice

in the Joseph narrative (37:2; 46:5), once each in A and A'. This fits into part of a larger picture of viewing Jacob's family as a wholistic unit in both A sections. Both sections mention flocks/cattle, sons, wives, and little ones. Both A and A' portray the whole family together in Canaan and Egypt respectively. In the rest of the story the family is fragmented.

Evidence in sections B/B' (37:5–35; 40:1–45:28)

In sections B/B', one can find numerous parallels and connections in the respective chiasmic couplets.

Part one (37:5–11; 40:1–41:57). Part one of B is clearly linked to part one in B' by the language of the dreams. Joseph has dreams in the first half, and then in the counterpart he interprets dreams, which are then fulfilled.

Part two (37:12–17; 42:1–6). Part two does not enjoy as clear linguistic linkage as part one. However, evidence is not totally lacking. The respective second parts both involve seeing (רָאָה, *rā'āh*) and some kind of sending by Jacob (שָׁלַח, *šālach* - 37:14; יָרַד, *yārad* - 42:2–3). Thus we have some linkage although not overly strong.

Part three (37:18–20; 42:7–16). Both B and B' part three are linked by the only other dream language in the Joseph narrative. Gen 37:20 has the brothers scoffing about what will become of Joseph's dreams, while in Gen 42:9 Joseph remembers those dreams when his brothers bow before him. This is a very clear linkage between B and B', part three. This section also contains the parallel themes of the brothers plotting against Joseph and vice-versa.

Part four (37:21–24; 42:17–28). The fourth part of the B sections is linked by two words. The first, נֶפֶשׁ (*nepeš*, soul), is only used twice (37:21; 42:21) in the Joseph narrative with one each in B/B', part four. דָּם (*dām*, blood), the second word, is used four times in the narrative. Two of the uses of דָּם (*dām*) occur in this couplet (37:22; 42:22), one in each part. The first is the call not to shed Joseph's blood, while the second interprets the misfortune of the brothers as a reckoning for the blood of Joseph, implying that they believed him to have perished in slavery.¹⁰

Even stronger evidence is found for this chiasmic couplet when Joseph's brothers connect his casting of them into prison to their casting of Joseph

¹⁰ The other two occurrences of דָּם (*dām*) are in Gen 37:26, 31 or part B, 7, 8. They are logical extension of the original call not to shed Joseph's blood in v. 22.

into the pit (Gen 42:21–22). This connection is especially significant in light of the brothers' ignorance of Joseph's identity at this point in the story.

Part five (37:24–25; 43:16–34). This subsectional pairing is linguistically linked by three words: אָכַל (*'ākal*, eating), לֶחֶם (*lehem*, bread), and מַיִם (*mayim*, water). With the exception of Gen 39:6 regarding Potiphar, אָכַל (*'ākal*, eating) and לֶחֶם (*lehem*, bread) are used together only in this chiastic couplet. Likewise, מַיִם (*mayim*, water) occurs only twice in the narrative, once each in B and B', part five.

Another connection between these sections is the use of the phrase, “lifted up his/their eyes” (37:25; 43:29). This formula is used only twice, once in each half of this couplet.

Part six (37:26–28; 44:1–34). B and B', part six, are linked by two key terms: עֶבֶד (*'ebed*, slave) and כֶּסֶף (*keseph*, silver). Both of these terms are used fairly extensively throughout the narrative. However, in reference to Joseph or Benjamin, the favored sons, the term for slave is used almost exclusively in this couplet. Slavery for Joseph is implied in Gen 37:17, 19 although the term is not used there. This status is later made explicit in Gen 39:17 with the designation's being made by Mrs. Potiphar. The counterpoint is the declaration by Joseph that Benjamin will be punished by being made his slave (44.10).

The parallel theme of the favored son being forced into slavery is bolstered by the role of silver in the story. Silver is the medium of delivering Joseph into slavery. Joseph's silver cup becomes the means of placing Benjamin, the new favored son, into slavery. The use of silver in this couplet as the means to deliver the favored sons into slavery demonstrates a clear connection between the two halves of this chiastic subsection.

Additionally, two of the three uses of the formula, “and Judah said,” found outside of Judah's conversations in Gen 38, occur in this chiastic couplet.¹¹ Furthermore, both of these formula statements introduce Judah's involvement in determining the fate of the favored son regarding slavery: First to sell Joseph into slavery and then to deliver Benjamin from slavery.

Part seven (37:29–30; 45:1–5). Part seven of B and B' seems to have no significant verbal connections. However, both halves of this couplet deal with a man or group of men that has been caught by surprise and put in deep distress, Reuben tearing his clothes (37:29), and the brothers being terrified (בָּהָל *bāhal*, Gen 45:3). Both parties are confused, Reuben not knowing

¹¹ The third use is in Gen 43:8.

“where to turn,” and the brothers being unable to reply to Joseph being paralyzed by fear.

Part eight (37:31–35; 45:4–28). In this chiasmic pairing, we find a connection through the word, בָּכָה (*bākāh*, weeping). Four of the seven uses of this word occur in this couplet, once in the first half (37:35) and three times in the second half (45:14–15).¹²

Finally, in the first half of this couplet, Joseph’s coat and token of favored status (כְּתֹנֶת, *ketōnet* or כְּתֹנֶת קֹטָן *kutōnet*)¹³ plays a significant role in inducing grief, while in the second half, garments (שִׁמְלֹתַי *simelāh*) play a moderately significant role in the celebration (45:22) and confirm Benjamin’s favored status (he was given five common garments compared to single garments for the brothers). Thus while the linguistic evidence may not be as strong as in other portions of B and B’, there still seem to be some observable interconnections.

Evidence in sections C/C’

Sections C and C’ continue to demonstrate further linkage between Gen 38 and the Joseph narrative.

Common introductory formula. Sections C and C’ are introduced in virtually identical language. Gen 37:36 and 39:1 share three proper nouns: Potiphar, Pharaoh, Egypt. Gen 37:36 uses the pronoun, “him” referring to the proper name Joseph in verse 33, which is matched by the occurrence of the proper name in Gen 39:1. Both verses depict the sale of Joseph as a slave to Potiphar, one in terms of selling and one in terms of buying. Both verses share an identical description of Potiphar as an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard: (לְ)פֹטִיפָר קָרִים פְּרֹעָה שָׂר הַטַּבָּחִים [(*le*)*pôtîphar serîs phar’oh sar hattabbāchîm*]¹⁴. Thus there seems to be very strong linguistic links functioning as chiasmic markers in the opening portions of C/C’ in the literary structure of the Joseph narrative.

¹² The other three uses are of Joseph weeping privately at seeing his brothers and then Benjamin. These three uses are an anticipation of the weeping which occurs in the second half of this couplet. Thus, they do not detract from weeping’s being an indicator of the chiasm.

¹³ In the book of Genesis this term is used only of Joseph’s robe and the clothes of skins in Gen 3:21. The rest of the Pentateuch only uses this term in reference to the special clothes of the priest. The vast majority of uses in the remainder of the OT is likewise referring to the uniform of the priest. A few cases may refer to royal clothing. כְּתֹנֶת (*ketōnet*) thus appears to be a clothing associated with high political, religious, and social status. This connotation adds to the weight of Joseph’s being the favored son.

¹⁴ Gen 37:36 has the preposition l. (*le*) which is missing in Gen 39:1. Otherwise the two phrases are identical.

The descent of Judah and Joseph. A further link in the early parts of the C/C' chiastic sections would be the use of יָרַד (*yārad*) in verse one of both Gen 38 and 39. Goldin notes how rabbinic tradition struggled with the issue of the position of Gen 38, citing Rabbi Lazar's answer to why Gen 38 is where it is: "[It is a deliberate juxtaposition] in order to connect the one 'descent' (38.1) with the other 'descent' (39.1)."¹⁵ This connection between the descent of Judah and that of Joseph lends further support to our proposed chiastic linkage of Gen 37:36–38.1 with 39:1.

Another interesting observation is that in section C, we have the Potiphar formula followed by the descent of Judah, while in section C', starts with the descent of Joseph which is then followed by the Potiphar formula, a chiasm within the chiasm.

The name יְהוָה (YHWH). The name יְהוָה (YHWH) appears exclusively in the C/C' sections of the Joseph narrative chiasm. Eight of its eleven uses occur in the matching biographical interludes prior to the temptress stories (38:7 [two uses], 10; 39:2,3 [two uses], 5 [two uses]). This would appear to be a very strong verbal interconnection between the two biographical interludes in the first part of C and C'.¹⁶

אִשָּׁה (*iššāh*, wife/woman) and בְּגָדִים (*beḡed*, garments). There are two more words in the Joseph story that are almost exclusively used in the two temptress stories, the second couplet of sections C/C'. The first word, אִשָּׁה (*iššāh*, woman/wife), is used twelve times in the Joseph story, with ten occurring in the temptress accounts (38:6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 20; 39:7, 8, 9, 19). Such a concentration seems more than coincidental and aids the argument in favor of a chiastic structure.¹⁷

The second word is the term בְּגָדִים (*beḡed*, garments). It is used ten times in the Joseph narrative with eight occurrences in the temptress tales (38:14, 19; 39:12 [two uses], 13, 15, 16, 18). Like אִשָּׁה (*iššāh*, woman/wife). Such a clustering is difficult to deem coincidental and would seem, thus, to add weight to the evidence supporting our proposed chiasm.¹⁸

¹⁵ Goldin, "The Youngest Son," 28–29.

¹⁶ The other three uses (Gen 39:21, 23 [two uses]) occur in reference to the imprisonment of Joseph and remind the reader that God's favor is still on Joseph as it was in the first few verses of the chapter. The language Gen 39:21, 23 is very similar to verses 2–3. Thus these three extra uses do not detract from the chiastic structure but extend the theme of Joseph's favor with God into his imprisonment to affirm his status to the reader.

¹⁷ The other two uses (Gen 41:45; 44:27) are simple, unavoidable aspects of the historical flow of the narrative which do not weaken the proposed chiastic structure.

¹⁸ The other two uses are in connection with Reuben, and later the brothers, rending their clothes (Gen 37:29; 41:42). While the rending of the clothes does not follow the chiastic structure

Reversals as Evidence of the Literary Structure

In the second half of the chiasm (especially B') virtually every event reverses one from the first half (thus demonstrating a key characteristic of the book of Genesis). For example, in the first half, Joseph is torn in pieces and Jacob mourns and refuses to be comforted.¹⁹ Then, the picture is reversed in the second half: Joseph is alive and Jacob's spirit revives after his heart faints upon hearing the good news. Jacob states he will go and see Joseph before he dies, a statement not unlike his words in the first half that he would mourn his way into the grave.

In addition, the brothers conspire against Joseph and cast him in a pit. He then plots against his brothers and casts them in prison. In the first eating and drinking scene the favored son is treated with contempt. In the second scene he is treated preferentially. Judah first delivers the favored son into slavery and then attempts to save the other favored son from slavery.

In the temptress stories, we have more reversals. Judah solicits Tamar while Mrs. Potiphar propositions Joseph. Judah and Tamar behave in a morally decadent manner yet escape punishment, while Joseph's virtue is beyond reproach yet he is punished. These reversals closely follow the chiasmic structure of the Joseph story and help confirm the chiasmic couplings.

It seems evident that there is ample linguistic evidence to justify validity of the proposed chiasm in the Joseph narrative. However, one must recognize that the evidence is not perfectly airtight. We must, therefore, raise and answer some potential objections to our proposed chiasm.

Challenges to the Chiasmic Structure

Section B'

The discerning reader will note that the section from Gen 42:29 through 43:15 plays no significant role in this proposed chiasmic structure. How are we to account for this absence?

The answer lies in the fact that the chiasm must work around the events of the story instead of the opposite. It must be observed that there are two stories of Joseph's brothers going to Egypt. Two trips were necessary in order

(except for being in the general B/B' halves of the chiasm), neither does it appear to mark any kind of competing proposed structure.

¹⁹ See Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton, 1996), 219, where he observes another small connection between Gen 38:12 and the Joseph narrative noting Judah's consolation is "the antithetical echo of Jacob's refusal of consolation at the end of the previous chapter."

to get the new favored son, Benjamin, into Egypt. The repetition of trips opened the way for the favored son to be threatened with slavery in Egypt. This anonymous section thus belongs to the basic plot of setting up Benjamin to be doomed to slavery. Thus it does not detract from the clear chiasmic parallels in the balance of the Joseph narrative.

Judah's Favor with God

In section C, item 5 of the chiasmic structure, I assert that Gen 38 shows or implies a repentance of Judah with forgiveness and new-found favor with God.²⁰ How did Judah fall out of favor with God and then regain it?

Freedman asserted that because Judah's counsel bereaved Jacob of his son, Judah himself "was requited according to the fruit of his action by being bereaved of two sons."²¹ In addition, it would seem that if Onan incurred divine disfavor for not performing his levirate duty, certainly Judah's withholding of Shelah from performing the levirate duty would place him in disfavor before God.²²

Regarding the evidence that Judah was forgiven and again under divine favor we have seen Goldin's assertion that the birth of the twins was a sure sign of forgiveness. Similarly, Leale, commenting on Gen 38:26a (where Judah admits his mistreatment of Tamar), declared, "God will find a time to bring His children upon their knees and to wring from them penitent confession."²³ Commenting again on verse 26b ("And he knew her not again."), Leale declared, "An assurance of the sincerity of his repentance."²⁴ Keil and Delitzsch brought Goldin's and Leale's ideas together in stating,

Judah himself, however, not only saw his guilt, but he confessed it also; and showed both by this confession, and also by the fact that he has no further conjugal intercourse with Tamar, an earnest endeavor to conquer the lusts of the flesh, and to guard against the sin into which he had fallen. And because he thus humbled himself,

²⁰ See Goldin, "The Youngest Son," 30, where he asserted that the birth of twins to Tamar was "a sign certainly that Judah has been forgiven." Forgiveness, of course, implies renewed favor with God.

²¹ Freedman, "The Book of Genesis," 237.

²² See Sharon Pace Jeanson, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 102: "Like his son, Onan, Judah pretends to have Tamar's interest at heart when in reality he perpetrates another injustice upon her. . . . Judah who fears losing this son, ignores Tamar's right to ever have one."

²³ T.H. Leale, *A Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary on the Old Testament (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1892-6), 1:635.

²⁴ Leale, *Homiletic Commentary*, 1:635.

God gave him grace, and not only exalted him to be the chief of the house of Israel, but blessed the children that were begotten in sin.²⁵

It is true that the case is not fully airtight regarding Judah's repentance and reinstatement into divine favor in Gen 38. However, it seems strongly enough implied that it cannot be easily discounted. And, there is further evidence that Judah did experience a major repentance. His self-sacrificing defense of Benjamin, the favored son (and his touching concern for his father), stands out in distinct contrast to his treatment of Joseph at the pit. Also, his being chosen to beget the royal line is equally suggestive of his reformed status. It thus seems plausible to contend that the claims of Judah's repentance and reform are valid.

Genesis 37:36–39:23 as the Chiastic Center

Introduction

With the evidence we have just reviewed, it seems reasonable to suggest that Gen 38 is an intimate and integral literary component of the Joseph narrative. Second, it appears that Gen 37:36–39:23 form the chiastic center of the Joseph narrative and thus constitutes its high point. This second suggestion is bolstered by Benno Jacob's declaration that the Judah-Tamar story of Gen 38 is "the crown of the book of Genesis . . ."²⁶

The assertion that Gen 38 is part of the chiastic center of the Joseph narrative is further supported by seeing the purpose it serves in that narrative. To understand that purpose, it seems prudent to avoid introducing preconceived notions regarding the purpose that Gen 38 plays in the Joseph narrative so as not to limit our thinking prematurely and unnecessarily. We will therefore follow the plot of the Joseph story, being mindful of the evidences of literary unity given in the previous linguistic and structural analysis.

Setting the Stage: Genesis 37

Like all good stories, the Joseph narrative begins with biographical sketches, which introduce the various characters in the story. The Joseph narrative is actually part of the "generations of Jacob" (37:2).

²⁵ C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885), 343.

²⁶ Benno Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible: Genesis*, trans. E. Jacob and W. Jacob (New York: KTAV, 1974), 261.

The story starts with the patriarchal family together in Canaan. Joseph, the hero of the story, immediately appears. He is the favored son of Jacob and that favoritism is identified by means of the multicolored coat, which Jacob gave to Joseph. The ten older brothers are jealous of Joseph's favored status and hate him for being a tattletale. Joseph adds to the intensity of these emotions by recounting his dreams, which depicted the family giving homage to Joseph. The brothers' jealousy was probably further intensified when Jacob apparently sheltered Joseph from the harder aspects of work and chores by not sending him with the ten brothers to care for the sheep.

The situation was thus ripe for the conspiracy of the brothers to kill Joseph. Reuben briefly attempts to exercise leadership as the first-born and saves Joseph from immediate death. His covert plan to restore Joseph to his father raises his significance in the story, but Reuben's significance will be short lived.²⁷

Judah, who had the "smoothest tongue in Genesis,"²⁸ comes up with a plan, which successfully preempts Reuben's and is thus clearly depicted as the leader of the brothers. Candlish and Goldin further established that Judah was the prime candidate for being the leader because Reuben forfeited that leadership by his escapade with his father's concubine (Gen 35.22). Likewise, Simeon and Levi had forfeited their chances of succeeding Reuben through their treachery with Hamor and Shechem (Gen 34).²⁹ Thus Judah, the fourth-born, was next on the seniority list. As Goldin puts it,

If Joseph could be got rid of once for all and Reuben remain in disfavor, who stood to gain? Is it surprising that the one who speaks up now is Judah? "Let us get rid of that boy, sell him. There's nothing to be gained by killing him . . ." ³⁰

In short, Judah makes an opportunistic move to solidify his leadership position over the other brothers.

²⁷ See Goldin, "The Youngest Son," 37-42 for a penetrating study on the motivational dynamics of Reuben's attempt to save Joseph. Reuben had forfeited his father's favor by trying to depose Jacob, signified by sexually having Jacob's concubine. Now Reuben sees a chance to redeem himself in his father's eyes by saving the favored son. Thus the strong grief when he discovered Joseph had been sold.

²⁸ Ibid., 41.

²⁹ Goldin, "The Youngest Son," 37-38, 41-42; Robert S. Candlish, *Commentary on Genesis* (1868; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1955), 2:129.

³⁰ Goldin, "The Youngest Son," 42.

Judah not only emerges as leader of the brothers (over Reuben) but he also emerges as the villain or antagonist of the Joseph narrative by forming the plan, which dooms Joseph to slavery and possible death. The early part of the Joseph narrative fundamentally becomes a dynamic of Judah against Joseph. Cherubic Joseph is cast in sharp contrast to the opportunistic, greedy Judah who cloaks his dark character with quasi-moral reasoning that it is wrong to kill one's own brother. (Is it not wrong to kidnap one's brother and sell him as a slave)? As Jeansonne has observed:

Judah's behavior and character are the subject of the chapter [37] that immediately precedes the account of Tamar. . . . The narrator reveals Judah as a scheming and corrupt man.³¹

It is exactly this contrast between Judah and Joseph, which forms the corpus of Gen 38–39, the chiastic center of the Joseph narrative. The villain is the focus of Gen 38 just as the hero is the focus of Gen. 39. Gen 38 then is Judah's story. Tamar and the sons are secondary characters, although not insignificant, in Judah's story.

The Heart of the Plot: Genesis 37:36–39:23

We actually begin the central chiasm with Joseph's being sold in Egypt. This is immediately followed by the statement that, "It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers . . ." (Gen 38:1 RSV).

At first glance, there seems little connection between Gen 37:36 and 38:1. However, Freedman asserted that there was a direct causal relationship between the events of these two verses in stating: "When the brothers saw Jacob's intense grief they deposed Judah from his leadership, holding him responsible for it."³²

Freedman's comment also affirms the suggestion that Judah was indeed the leader of the brothers. Indeed, Kidner asserted that Gen 38 fills out the portrait of an effective leader among the ten sons of Jacob,³³ a portrait begun in Gen 37. So what kind of person is this leader Judah?

Moral Portrait of the Villain-Leader

When Judah went down from the brothers, he is said to have "turned in" or "turned aside" to an Adulamite man. Jeansonne comments:

³¹ Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis*, 99.

³² Freedman, "The Book of Genesis," 236–37.

³³ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, ed. D. J. Wiseman, TOTC (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 187.

The word used for “turned aside” (*wayyēt*) may also be used figuratively to indicate deviating from what is right or to indicate disloyalty. The narrator thereby suggests that Judah’s political loyalties are leaning in the direction of this Canaanite man. Like his uncle Esau, Judah distances himself from his own people by marrying a Canaanite woman, the unnamed daughter of Shua.³⁴

Jeansonne’s observation is insightful. Gen 38 indeed will depict the moral decay of Judah and his family. First, he marries a presumably heathen woman. Then their first two sons behaved so vilely that God slew them in immediate judgment. Finally, Judah has an affair with Tamar. Like his older brothers, Judah now compromises his qualifications to be the family leader.

The Sin of the Sons

Judah’s image and ability as a family leader was certainly not bolstered by the performance of his sons. The nature of their sin is not fully clear but Freedman made an interesting suggestion based in Rabbinic tradition. He argued that Onan’s sin is the same as Er’s. He based this on the “also” of 38:10, interpreting it to mean “for the same reason,” that is, God slew Onan for the same reason he slew Er.³⁵ This proposal regarding the nature of their “crime” is most interesting.

Freedman cited rabbinic traditions, which asserted that the crime of Er (and thus Onan) was that “he did not want her to lose her beauty through pregnancy and childbirth.”³⁶ Er and Onan are portrayed as treating Tamar not as a wife but as a sex object for their selfish gratification. They are depicted as being totally uncaring for her personal and marital rights. She is simply an object for their sexual gratification.

It is interesting to note that in the chiasmic parallel, Potiphar’s wife attempts to victimize Joseph on the same grounds: She was attracted to his physical beauty. The same selfish sexuality is thus depicted in both halves of the chiasmic center. The moral fruits rendered by the sons of Judah are no commendation of his family leadership. But was Judah himself any better?

³⁴ Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis*, 100. In an endnote, Jeansonne cited four Bible texts which, she asserted, use *wayyēt* (װײַט) in the figurative sense: Exodus 23.2; 1 Samuel 8.3; Judges 9.3; 1 Kings 2.28.

³⁵ Freedman, “The Book of Genesis,” 237.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The Sin of the Father

Judah essentially abandons Tamar by withholding Shelah as the levirate husband. He forces her into such dire circumstances that she resorts to desperate, questionable, and shrewd measures to rectify the situation.

The death of Judah's wife may serve as an explanation for Tamar's plan to seduce Judah but this view is not entirely convincing. Tamar had been sent home before the death and was separated so long that Judah did not recognize her by appearance, mannerisms, or voice when he fell for her temptation.

It seems much more probable that Judah had an ongoing habit of patronizing prostitutes. This is evidenced by the reasonable deduction that Tamar would have chosen the plan she considered most likely to succeed. Thus she chose to capitalize on this predictable habit. Furthermore, Judah is recorded as initiating the bartering. He then shows savvy in negotiating for Tamar's "services," suggesting he was experienced in conducting such transactions.

Judah thus depicts the same sexual deviancy of his two sons. Women are treated as objects for selfish sexual gratification. Judah's shameless encounter with Tamar belies his own immorality. The sins of the sons are the sin of the father. Like his three older brothers, "Judah also is found to have made shipwreck of his integrity. He too has fallen."³⁷ But the account of Judah's character does not stop here.

Finishing Touches on a Moral Portrait

Judah's attempted payment of the "prostitute" is quite revealing of his character. He sends it by a friend in an attempt to remain anonymous and the friend carefully guards that anonymity. Judah then decides to call off the search "lest we be laughed at" (38:23). This decision is made in spite of the critical value of his lost pledge. As Jeansonne observed, "His only interest is his reputation."³⁸ How ironic, then, that Tamar blows that public image to pieces by identifying Judah as her consort.

Prior to being "found out," however, Judah's response to the announcement of Tamar's pregnancy by prostitution is noteworthy. He condemns her to death with no apparent opportunity for Tamar to answer the charges against her. The hypocrisy of Judah is thus magnified. As Bird

³⁷ Candlish, *Commentary on Genesis*, 129.

³⁸ Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis*, 105.

observed, Judah consorts with a whore but condemns the whoring Tamar to death.³⁹

We can see that Gen 38 focuses on Judah and picks up the character portrait begun in Gen 37 to fully develop the villainous aspect of his personal character. He indeed is well qualified to be the antagonist of the Joseph narrative. But the portrait is not quite finished. Gen 38 does not end on a sour note.

Judah's Moral Reform

The Tamar incident appears to have been a turning point in Judah's moral experience. We have already observed the claim that Judah repented and reformed his ways. A further indicator of such a change is Judah's open admission of wronging Tamar. Furthermore, he attempts to right that wrong by keeping Tamar in his family instead of sending her back to her father as before. Thus, her sons are found in Egypt with the clan. Nevertheless, the focal point of Gen 38 seems ultimately focused on the indiscretion of Judah with Tamar, which produced this reformation.

Moral Portrait of the Hero: Genesis 39

In Gen 39 we find the moral antithesis of Judah in Gen 38. Just as Judah's moral deficiency was introduced in Gen 37 and then more fully depicted in chapter 38, so Gen 39 gives us the most exalted depiction of Joseph's moral virtue followed by less developed examples in the following chapters. Thus Gen 38 "puts the faith and chastity of Joseph . . . in a context which sets off their rarity."⁴⁰

Joseph's Moral Victory

Joseph's experience with Potiphar's wife is the moral antithesis of Judah's escapade with Tamar. Freedman, Kidner, Goldin, Alter, and others have commented on the close, but contrasting, connection between these two incidents.⁴¹ While Judah is sexually immoral, Joseph is the epitome of moral integrity in his sexuality. He recognized the dehumanizing impact of perverted sexuality, which attacks the *imago Dei* and thus labels it as a sin against God. Furthermore, his understanding of the meaning of sexuality in

³⁹ Phyllis A. Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 124.

⁴⁰ Kidner, *Genesis*, 187.

⁴¹ Freedman, "The Book of Genesis," 237; Kidner, *Genesis*, 187; Goldin, "The Youngest Son," 29; Alter, *Genesis*, 220.

the marriage—to maintain Potiphar’s unique position in the household (especially with his wife)—is profound, especially for an unmarried man. Joseph recognized how proper sexuality sets the husband and wife uniquely apart from everyone and unto each other. Violation of such a sacred purpose is presented as a moral offence to God. The contrast with Judah’s morality could not be greater.

Completing Joseph’s Moral Portrait

Another contrast between Joseph and Judah regard the concern for public image. While Judah was highly concerned not to embarrass himself publicly, Joseph boldly confronts Potiphar’s wife with the moral implications of her demands. As a slave it is dubious that he had the legal right to do so, yet he feared God more than whatever repercussions Mrs. Potiphar could throw at him.

This same lack of fear regarding public image is seen later in the narrative. Joseph did not soften the interpretation of the dreams of the butler and baker. What is more important is that he told Pharaoh in a straightforward manner the negative aspects of his dreams instead of glossing over the negative in order to secure political advantage. Joseph’s God-fearing, tactful forthrightness stands in sharp contrast to the man-fearing, scheming Judah.

A final contrast involves the treatment of those who have committed moral offenses. In sharp contrast to Judah’s vindictive treatment of Tamar (until he got caught!), Prime Minister Joseph, who had every means at his disposal to wreak exquisite revenge on his brothers, did not do so. His manifestation of magnanimity was not rooted in being caught, as was Judah’s. It was rooted in his conscious innocence before God and in the evidence of repentance he observed in response to his testing. Joseph even went so far as to tell the brothers that they had not sent him to Egypt but rather that God had (Gen 45:5). However, the narrative closes with a unique and significant loss of moral contrast between Judah and Joseph.

From Villain to Co-Hero

While Judah’s moral deficiency highlights Joseph’s moral integrity, Judah does not remain on the moral black-list. When he reappears in chapter 45 he is again the leader and spokesman for the brothers. But this time he is the bastion of moral uprightness, boldly and selflessly offering himself to Joseph in exchange for Benjamin. His eloquent and touching speech to Joseph elevates him from villain to co-hero with Joseph. The contrast is so

complete that we could borrow the New Testament words “born again” to describe Judah’s moral reformation.

This final elevation of Judah from villain to co-hero becomes part of the reconciliation and reuniting of the patriarchal family in Egypt. If Judah were to have remained on the moral blacklist, the reunion of the family would not have been complete. With Judah’s moral reformation, the narrative can comfortably end with the family fully reunited in Egypt.

We have seen how Gen 38 is an integral part of the Joseph narrative. It remains now for us to address the issue of the purpose of Gen 38 in the Joseph narrative.

The Purpose Genesis 38 in the Joseph Narrative

Why is Gen 38 where it is in the Joseph narrative? The distinct theme of Judah’s moral deficiency contrasted with Joseph’s moral integrity suggests an answer. It seems reasonable to conclude that the primary purpose of Gen 38 is to highlight Judah’s inferior moral character in order to showcase Joseph’s virtuous character by the contrast.

This conclusion is supported by Freedman’s depiction of the purpose of Gen 38:

The purpose of narrating this incident at this point is to contrast Judah’s conduct in the matter with Tamar with Joseph’s in connection with Potiphar’s wife.⁴²

Freedman’s comment recognized the connection implied in our proposed chiasmic center and that the position of Gen 38 is regulated in part by its purpose to highlight the hero by way of contrast with the villain. However, he did not develop the picture of character contrast between Judah and Joseph as fully as we have. While character contrast appears to be the primary purpose of Gen 38 and the reason for its position in the Joseph narrative, there may be supporting, secondary purposes as well.

This contrast and development of character between Judah and Joseph creates a thematic climax that matches the chiasmic focal point, and thus helps justify the proposal that Gen 38 and 39 are the chiasmic center of the Joseph narrative. Both intertextual markers and the broad themes push the

⁴² Freedman, “The Book of Genesis,” 237. See also Goldin, “The Youngest Son,” 29, where he recognized this as a proposed purpose. However he did not develop the idea further.

reader to see this centrality of these two chapters. Gen 38 is thus very much connected to the Joseph narrative.

Conclusions

We conclude then that Gen 38 is thematically, linguistically, and theologically indispensable to the Joseph narrative. The abundance of conceptual and linguistic connections, and especially the chiasmic structure, imply that a single author-editor intended Gen 38 to be an integral part of the Joseph narrative. It seems difficult to conceive that a communal anthology from four sources would have such a clear, orderly structure and thematic interrelationships.

As part of the Joseph narrative, the primary purpose for Gen 38 is to develop fully the picture of the defective moral character of the antagonist, Judah, in order to showcase the moral virtues of the hero, Joseph. Our proposal is the only one which ties Gen 38 to the Joseph narrative, gives a logical explanation for its position in the narrative, and still allows Gen 38 to perform the functions of the other proposals.

This study raises significant theological, philological, and moral issues in Gen 38. The implications beg for further investigation. For example, is there further structure in the temptress stories? Gen 38 has the statement that Tamar put off her widow's clothes, then later has her putting them on. Could this indicate an *inclusio* or some other substructure in her temptress story? It seems clear that Gen 38 is still a treasure trove waiting to be further explored.

4

Co-creaturely Associates or Peers? The Nature of Animals as Portrayed in Isaiah

A. Rahel Schafer

Animals are portrayed in a variety of ways in the Bible, and have many roles and functions throughout the Old Testament (OT). Interest in the types of animals mentioned in the Bible, along with those animals present in surrounding regions, is expressed by zoological surveys and faunal analyses.¹ Some scholars have examined the functions of animals in the ancient Near East,² and the history of the

¹ For example, see F. S. Bodenheimer, *Animal and Man in Bible Lands*, Collection de travaux de l'Académie internationale d'histoire des sciences 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1960); Joachim Boessneck, *Die Tierwelt des alten Ägypten: Untersucht anhand kulturgeschichtlicher und zoologischer Quellen* (Munich: Beck, 1988); Luc Delvaux, and Eugène Warmenbol, eds., *Les divins chats d'Égypte: Un air subtil, un dangereux parfum* (Leuven: Brill, 1991); Jehuda Feliks, "Animals of the Bible and Talmud" in *EncJud*, 2:166–72; Patrick F. Houlihan, *The Animal World of the Pharaohs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996); Patrick F. Houlihan, *The Birds of Ancient Egypt* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986); Rosalind Janssen and Jack Janssen, *Egyptian Household Animals* (Haverfordwest: Shire, 1989); Jaromir Málek, *The Cat in Ancient Egypt*, rev. ed. (London: British Museum, 2006); Dale J. Osborn, *The Mammals of Ancient Egypt* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1998); W. Pangritz, *Das Tier in der Bibel* (München: Ernst Reinhardt Verlag, 1963).

² For example, Oded Borowski, *Every Living Thing: Daily Use of Animals in Ancient Israel* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 1998).

domestication of animals.³ A few studies have argued that animals are important to God,⁴ or even more important than humans,⁵ but few have directly and comprehensively considered the nature of animals in relation to humans and God.⁶

However, concerning passages that seem to equate animals with humans on some level, there are three basic views among scholars. Many argue that animals are only the property of humans in the Bible, and any hints of equality should be interpreted as anthropomorphism at best, or care for the animal only because it belongs to a human at worst.⁷ Other scholars contend that the Bible is responding to the surrounding ANE myths and worship of animals, so any reference to equality is simply a remnant of such thought.⁸ Lastly, some consider only the biblical data referring to the

³ See Frederick E. Zeuner, *A History of Domesticated Animals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); I. L. Mason, ed., *Evolution of Domesticated Animals* (London: Longman, 1984); Juliet Clutton-Brock, *A Natural History of Domesticated Mammals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Douglas Brewer, Donald B. Redford, and Susan Redford, *Domestic Plants and Animals: The Ancient Egyptian Origins* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1992); P. Ucko and G. Dimbleby, eds., *The Domestication and Exploitation of Plants and Animals* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); H. Nachtshiem, *Vom Wildtier zum Haustier* (Berlin: Paul Parey, 1949).

⁴ Peter Riede, *Im Spiegel der Tiere: Studien zum Verhältnis von Mensch und Tier im alten Israel* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2002); Chilkuri V. Rao, *Ecological and Theological Aspects of Some Animal Laws in the Pentateuch* (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2005). Most modern supporters of animal care from the Bible begin with Genesis and then jump to the New Testament. See J. R. Hyland, *God's Covenant with Animals: A Biblical Basis for the Humane Treatment of All Creatures* (New York: Lantern, 2000); Robert N. Wennberg, *God, Humans, and Animals: An Invitation to Enlarge Our Moral Universe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁵ For examples, see Norman C. Habel, ed., *Readings from the Perspective of the Earth* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim, 2000).

⁶ A few exceptions include B. Janowski, U. Neumann-Gorsolke, and U. Gleßner, eds., *Gefährten und Feinde des Menschen: Das Tier in der Lebenswelt des alten Israel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993); David S. Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the *Imago Dei*," in *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals*, ed. C. Deane-Drummond and D. Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 110. For other theologians with similar views, see Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Lorraine Daston, and Gregg Mitman, eds., *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2005); H. Peter Steeves, ed., *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999); David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume 1 Systematic Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012).

⁷ For example, Cyril Rodd states that the OT is "thoroughly anthropocentric, one of the worst vices in the eyes of those championing the rights of animals. . . . In the end, it is difficult not to say, 'Why bother? We have the New Testament and modern moral sensitivities'" (*Glimpses of a Strange Land: Studies in Old Testament Ethics* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001], 233, 309).

⁸ For some examples, see E. J. Schochet, *Animal Life in Jewish Tradition: Attitudes and Relationships* (New York: Ktav, 1984); Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant: Biblical Themes*

apparent superiority of animals, or blow up any references to equality into an injunction to protect animal life above or at least similarly to human life.⁹

These three disparate viewpoints result from more than presuppositional differences among scholars, and seem to be closely related to the different interpretations of metaphorical language regarding animals. Since the meaning and function of the metaphor may have little to do with the animal itself, the most common view is that any attribution is only anthropomorphic. Many scholars, however, are confused and inconsistent in their treatment of animal metaphors. For instance, Schochet speaks almost in the same breath about how animals do not actually have emotions or morals or character, and yet contends that these animal metaphors are meant to denote/teach about the emotions or morals or character of humans.¹⁰ When the animals are portrayed in conscious or active roles, Schochet calls this only an “effective literary device,” and yet states that “humans would do well to learn certain vital moral lessons and basic religious truths by observing the behavior of animals.”¹¹

However, the reason that metaphors work is that they are dependent on some common knowledge about the thing/being to which they refer or are compared.¹² The reality behind the comparison is important. Thus, when animals are described in metaphorical terms, or used in similes, there must be some correspondence with certain characteristics that animals have, or

of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Heythrop Monographs 7 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1992).

⁹ For instance, Waldau contends that the “mainline Christian tradition has, in a meaningful sense, been speciesist” (*The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 217).

¹⁰ Schochet continues by noting that animals are a commodity, and any punishment is just sharing in the fate of the owner, and yet he mentions that by becoming covenantal partners in Genesis 9, responsibility for animals is implied (*Animal Life*, 63). When referring to fables, this confused and inconsistent picture regarding animals is even more evident. Schochet contends that if there is not a reality that makes sense, the fable would not work at all. He states that “we use the phrase ‘normal’ in describing such fauna because, for the most part, they retain their essential natural characteristics. Indeed, they are easily recognizable precisely because they conform in feature and in personality to the accepted stereotypes of their respective species” (*Animal Life*, 110). See also Benjamin A. Foreman, *Animal Metaphors and the People of Israel in the Book of Jeremiah*, FRLANT 238 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 3.

¹¹ Schochet, *Animal Life*, 110, 129.

¹² Gitay notes that “in order to argue realistically and effectively the speech’s thesis must be perceived by listeners/readers as a fact of life;” thus, as nature provides “stable and unchangeable” realities, it is used often in biblical metaphor (“Why Metaphors? A Study of the Texture of Isaiah,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, VTSup 70 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 1:59, 65).

the usage would not seem plausible or even work at all. In addition, when the animals are portrayed in a “shocking” way, this also implies that there is at least something basic about their character that can be ascertained. Cyril Rodd argues for the “double-sided” metaphor when looking at the biblical picture of animals, in that “they reveal both the writer’s views on human [behavior] and the way he thinks about animals.”¹³

There is also a difference between metaphor and poetic/prophetic language. Prophets use emotive and hyperbolic language that may not necessarily be intended to be taken as literal, but simply to refer to the worst or best possible thing that could happen in apparent reality. For example, in destruction by God, prophets want “to explain as clearly as possible how God could and would bless the people—and on the other hand, how he could and would curse the people—and the prophets conceptualized that future reality in things common in their own day.”¹⁴ Although some background knowledge about the portrayal of animals can be garnered from a metaphorical usage, much more information is ascertainable from these realistically portrayed, though hyperbolic, possible situations.¹⁵ Even when similes are used, Schochet notes that different animals are used in certain comparisons not only because they were common, but also because they actually at least appeared to have certain emotions, and did have characteristic behaviors and actions. “Scripture often focuses on unusual traits of animals to effectively illustrate religious truths.”¹⁶ Thus, these characteristics of animals are

¹³ Rodd, *Glimpses*, 299.

¹⁴ D. B. Sandy, *Plowshares & Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 71. This helps to visualize all the possibilities “if its totality is to be expressed. . . . The point was not to announce the precise and only forms it would take” (Sandy, *Plowshares*, 90).

¹⁵ Sandy (*Plowshares*) defines many different ways in which a metaphor can be recognized: it is identified in the passage itself; the impossibility of two concepts that are linked; the Hebrew parallelism matches referents; a simile establishes one; certain numbers may be metaphorical; it compares history with current situations; it is often in language full of emotion; it “uses an image that points to an underlying idea” (191); one part of the OT helps to identify other OT metaphors; there is a diversity of poetic language about one idea; prophecies seem to disagree with each other; it contains stylized language of judgment to “depict the depths of God’s wrath” (193).

¹⁶ Schochet, *Animal Life*, 43. He also states that “the effectiveness of Scripture’s use of the animal as a literary device is dependent upon the animal’s being recognizable to the audience in all of its natural features and behavioral characteristics as an animal” (45). Animals are also used as messengers of God and even as agents of his judgment (1 Kings 13; 17; 2 Kings 2; 17). Schochet states that “it is true that many of these ‘agency’ roles played by animals are perfunctory and unthinking roles. But on another level, some scriptural passages seem to exalt the virtues of

compared directly to human characteristics, implying that similar “creature” characteristics are found among all of them (cf. Gen 6:17; Job 7:7–16; 10:9; 20:8; 34:15; Pss 36:6; 104:14, 29; 145:16; 146:4; 147:9; Ecc 3:19–21).

Methodology

This paper attempts to determine how the nature of animals is pictured in Isaiah. Since animals are so prevalent in Isaiah, especially in metaphor and imagery, it is impossible to examine comprehensively all of the passages in this paper. Hence I will first broadly categorize the passages as to the ways that animals are considered, distinguishing between domestic and wild animals. I will consider the following scenarios for each passage where animals are mentioned, in order to ascertain as best as possible in which category or categories to place them.¹⁷

- If the animals mentioned are domestic and portrayed simply as belonging to a human or working for them, the passage will be in the “property” category.
- If the animal is offered as a sacrifice or burnt offering, the category will be “sacrifice.”
- If the animal is worshipped or represented as a supernatural being in some way, the passage will be in the “superior” category.
- The category of “peer” involves several possible scenarios:
 - animal behavior/emotions/characteristics are used as a metaphor for similar human or divine behavior/ emotions/ characteristics
 - animal rights/responsibilities/accountability are compared to human rights/responsibilities/accountability
 - animal actions are described with verbs used elsewhere only for human actions
 - animals receive similar gifts from God as do humans

animals far above those of humans!” (*Animal Life*, 55). Cf. Isa 1:3; Jer 8:7; 1 Kgs 4:33; Job 36:33; Num 22.

¹⁷ Dell considers animal imagery in the Psalms, and classifies it into seven categories: denoting human social context, illuminating human behavior, instructing human behavior, observing animal behavior, showcasing God’s relationship with the creation, describing God’s work in creation, and witnessing to God’s actions in salvation history (“The Use of Animal Imagery in the Psalms and Wisdom Literature of Ancient Israel,” *SJT* 53 (2000): 275–91). Although I found these categories to be helpful comparisons, they seem to be tied more closely to the wisdom literature, as certain categories are unclear in other genres like prophecy. In addition, Dell does not seem to consider any relational nature from the perspective of the animals themselves.

In addition, although others may find different references in the metaphors related to animals than I do, I will tentatively classify the metaphorical use of animals along the same lines as the clearer passages. Where I am uncertain, I will signify this with a question mark. If there seems to be two categories referred to, I will list the text in both groups.

Many passages mention animals on a functional level alone, especially when they are considered as property, sacrifices, or representing supernatural beings. These categories do not as explicitly answer the question about the relational nature of animals. Therefore, the remainder of the examination will focus on the passages concerning animals as associates or peers, which seem to be able to help most clearly delineate the nature of animals as portrayed in Isaiah.¹⁸

Regarding the three views about animals mentioned above, in this paper I contend that there is a fourth and mediating position, with a spectrum of living creatures as they relate to God and each other. At least in the picture of Isaiah (which may or may not cohere exactly with that of the Pentateuch or the rest of the OT), domestic animals appear to be considered more as associates to humans, ones who have a subordinate status but are joined in purpose on a nearly equal basis, and accountable to humans more than to God. On the other hand, it seems that wild animals are portrayed more as peers to humans, especially concerning their relationship to God and possession of the land.¹⁹

In order to demonstrate this distinction, the book of Isaiah will be examined as a synchronic whole in regard to the passages involving animals as associates/peers. I will first briefly survey the texts in Isaiah that seem to correspond to the category of domestic animals as associates. Within this section, I will separate the passages in which the characteristics/emotions/behaviors of domestic animals are metaphorically compared to the characteristic/emotions/behaviors of humans and/or God, and those passages in which a more poetic/non-metaphorical usage is demonstrated. I will then look in more detail at Isa 60:7, which seems to elucidate most clearly the nature of domestic animals. The next section of the paper will briefly consider the passages that seem to correspond to the category of wild

¹⁸ Appendix A contains all the passages that refer to animals in Isaiah.

¹⁹ This does not in any way diminish the special function of humanity as the “image of God” (Gen 1:27), but is simply an attempt to clarify the portrayal of animals in Isaiah. These two pictures are not necessarily incompatible.

animals as peers to humans, again differentiating between metaphorical and poetic/non-metaphorical usage. I will then proceed to examine more closely Isa 43:20, which appears to be the passage which most explicitly sets forth the nature of wild animals. Any theological implications regarding the nature of animals in Isaiah will be noted in the conclusion.

Domestic Animals as Co-creaturely Associates

When comparing the nature of animals as compared to humans in Isaiah, the picture is not easy to articulate in words. The word “associate” is here defined as someone who has subordinate status, or less than full rights/membership in an organization, but is often joined in purpose or relationship on a nearly equal basis. Different aspects of domestic animals as associates of humans will be examined in this section. First, the metaphorical use of animals in various passages will be noted, and any pertinent conclusions regarding the nature of animals will be suggested. Then, non-metaphorical uses of animals will be mentioned, and Isa 60:7 will be examined in more detail.

Metaphorical Usage of Domestic Animals

The following chart sets forth the passages in which it appears that domestic animals are described in metaphorical terms.

Text	Animal	Kind	Brief description of passage
13:14	Sheep	Domestic	People will flee on the day of the Lord like sheep that are not gathered by anyone
38:13–14	Lion, swallow, crane, dove	Wild/ Domestic	Hezekiah writes that he meditated like a lion, and cried like a crane or swallow, and mourned like a dove
53:7	Sheep, lamb	Domestic	Servant is compared to a lamb that is silent when going to slaughter or being sheared
63:13–14	Flock, horse, animal	Domestic	God led his people (flock) like a surefooted horse in the wilderness; the spirit of God causes animals to rest, like he will lead his people

Domestic animals are portrayed in metaphorical language as having certain characteristics that are at least superficially similar to those of humans.²⁰ The silence of the servant in Isa 53:7 is compared to the silence (אלם) of a lamb (להל) before its shearers. This comparison likely reflects the lack of struggling in sheep that trust their masters. Isaiah 63:13 refers back to the Exodus, where YHWH's people were led by him through the deep, in order that "like the horse in the wilderness, they might not stumble."²¹ The surefootedness of the horse here seems to symbolize the stability and care YHWH provided for Israel. In Isa 13:14, those people who flee on the day of YHWH are compared to a sheep that is not gathered in by anyone. The picture is that of a lost, lonely and wandering animal, with no one to care for it, which is in stark contrast to the many pictures of YHWH as gatherer of his people even when they are outcasts (Isa 11:12; 34:16; 40:11; 43:5; 56:8; 66:18). In Isa 38:14, Hezekiah describes his mourning (הנה) like that of a dove. This comparison seems to be based on the call of doves, which often is described as sorrowful or grieving.

Thus, for these metaphors and similes, the comparisons are pointing to certain characteristics in animals that seem similar on some level to those of humans. Although metaphors do not usually serve as evidence for an ontological comparison between the two objects/creatures, these metaphors do seem to imply similar attributes or attributions. If this were not the case, no comparison could be made and the metaphor would not be relevant or make any sense.

Non-metaphorical Use of Domestic Animals

The following chart shows the various passages in which domestic animals are portrayed with poetic imagery, but as part of a literal/potential reality or situation, and not simply a comparison, simile, or metonymy.

²⁰ Assyrian literature has also been shown to use animal similes in much the same way as the Old Testament (D. Marcus, "Animal Similes in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," *Or* 46 [1977]: 86–106).

²¹ All biblical quotations are translations of the author. Isa 63:14 states that "as an animal (בהמה) goes down into the valley, the spirit of YHWH causes it to rest (נוח); so you lead your people, to make yourself a glorious name." Just as in Exod 23:12, the verb נוח is used in reference to animals, implying that rest for animals involves more than physical rest and is comparable in some way to God's rest in Exod 20:11. For further reference, see A. Rahel Schafer, "Rest for the Animals? Nonhuman Sabbath Repose in Pentateuchal Law," *BBR* 23 (2013): 15–34. In addition, YHWH takes responsibility for the well-being of all his creatures, not just humanity. In fact, his spirit *causes* animals to receive tranquility, possibly even emotional/mental rest.

Text	Animals	Kind	Brief Description of Passage
1:3	Ox, donkey	Domestic	Animals know their master, Israel does not
11:6–9	Wolf, lamb, leopard, young goat, calf, young lion, fatling, cow, bear, lion, ox, cobra, viper	Domestic /Wild	Peace between animals and humans that should be killing each other; no hurting or destruction in God's mountain
17:2	Flock	Domestic	The ruins of Damascus are for flocks to lie down, and they will not be made afraid
30:6	Animals, lion, viper, fiery flying serpent, donkeys, camels	Wild/ Domestic	The oracle against the animals of the south: riches are carried on domestic animals through a land filled with dangerous wild animals
32:14	Wild donkeys, flocks	Wild/ Domestic	Deserted cities become a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks
34:6–7	Lambs, goats, rams, wild oxen, bulls	Domestic /Wild	God's slaughter of Edom is compared to a sacrifice of many animals
46:1	Animals	Domestic	Animals are burdened by heavy loads, including idols
60:6–7	Camel, flock, ram	Domestic	Animals praise God, serve humans; offer sacrifices?
65:25	Wolf, lamb, lion, ox, serpent	Wild/ Domestic	No hurting or destruction in God's mountain
66:3	Bull, lamb, dog, swine	Domestic /Wild	Different sacrifices that are offered by people that are rejected by God as abominations

Domestic animals are also described in non-metaphorical language as having emotions or characteristics comparable to humans. In Isaiah 46:1, animals are described as being weary (עִיף) under heavy loads, an adjective used elsewhere only of humans when hungry, thirsty, or exhausted.²² Although this could be classified as physical symptoms, rather than emotional, some passages hint at mental weariness as well (Jer 4:31; 31:25).²³ Isaiah 17:2 paints a picture of desolated human civilization, where the deserted cities will be “for flocks, which lie down (רָבִיץ), and will not be caused to tremble (אֵין מַחְרִיד).” Most other passages that speak of trembling or fear (חָרַד) refer to humans and not animals,²⁴ but this text parallels Lev 26:6, which is speaking of blessings to obedient Israelites “who will lie down (שָׁכַב), and will not be caused to tremble (אֵין מַחְרִיד).”²⁵ Zephaniah 3:13 also picks up this language and applies it to the remnant of Israel, who will “feed as flocks (רָעָה) and will lie down (רָבִיץ) and no one will cause them to tremble (אֵין מַחְרִיד).” Thus, the emotion of fear is attributed to both animals and humans interchangeably with this verb.²⁶

In some passages, actions against domestic animals are compared on some level to actions against humans. Although the exact translation of Isa

²² The implication here is that “Yahweh will carry and save when the weary Babylonian animals, trying to carry the idols, cannot” (F. J. Gaiser, “‘I Will Carry and Will Save’: The Carrying God of Isaiah 40–66,” in *And God Saw That It Was Good: Essays on Creation and God in Honor of Terence E. Fretheim*, ed. F. J. Gaiser and M. A. Throntveit [St. Paul, MN: Word & World, 2006], 99).

²³ Bosman, “עִיף,” *NIDOTTE* 3:390–6, notes that this weariness often involves mental, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion.

²⁴ Cf. Gen 27:33; Exod 19:16; Lev 26:6; Judg 7:3; 1 Sam 16:4; Isa 10:29; 19:16; 32:11; 66:2, 5; Jer 30:10; Micah 4:4.

²⁵ However, in the covenant curses of Deut 28:26 (and reiterated in Jer 7:33), animals are pictured as feasting on the carcasses of the disobedient Israelites, and “no one will frighten them away” (אֵין מַחְרִיד). However, there is no mention of lying down here, as in Isa 17:2 and Lev 26:6. Other passages in which חָרַד refers to nonhumans include Isa 41:5 (the ends of the earth חָרַד); Ezek 26:18 (the coastlands חָרַד); Hos 11:11 (people will חָרַד like doves); Nah 2:11 (there is a place where lions dwell and no one makes them afraid [אֵין מַחְרִיד]); Zech 1:21 (the horns that scattered Judah will be caused to tremble [חָרַד]). Interestingly, Ezek 34:28 seems to reverse the covenant curses, where God’s people will dwell safely, no longer prey for the wild animals and “no one will make them afraid (אֵין מַחְרִיד).”

²⁶ Although this might at first seem like anthropomorphic attribution to animals, words of simile are not used. In addition, the reality that these words are otherwise used only for God/humanity does not mean that they cannot be used for animals, just that they *have* not been. This could mean personification (the traditional view), but could also be relying on a shock factor, and/or reflecting an emotional reality behind the application to animals. Not all meaning/significance can be limited to the main point of the passage. The message could still be regarding humanity, but that does not negate underlying currents of other informative realities.

66:3 is uncertain, some sort of association is warranted, if not a direct comparison.²⁷ Animal life is sacred to God, too, even if this text has been improperly used to equate animal sacrifice as morally unacceptable like human sacrifice.²⁸ Isaiah 34:5–7 compares YHWH’s slaughter of Edom to the sacrifice of animals. The language shifts back and forth between Edom, people, Bozrah, and the blood of lambs, goats, rams, and bulls. Again, this passage does not seem to equate the sacredness of human life with animal life, but a definite association is made. Just as the blood of animals provides propitiation for sin before YHWH in the Levitical cult, here the slaughter of Edom is recompense for the evil they have performed against Israel.

In Isa 11:6–9, the peace among God’s creatures involves both domestic and wild animals along with humans.²⁹ Interestingly, v. 9 summarizes the previous verses by declaring that “they will not cause evil (רעע) or destroy (שחת) in all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of YHWH, as waters cover the sea.” The natural referents of these two verbs include the animals mentioned in vv. 6–8 as well as humanity. Animals as well as humans will not be the perpetrators or recipients of evil or destruction.³⁰ Isaiah 65:25 reiterates this point, repeating the phrase “they will not cause evil (רעע) or destroy (שחת) in all my holy mountain,” but addresses only wild and domestic animals, although humans would surely be implied as well.³¹

²⁷ The debate is over the difference between the following two translations: “he who kills a bull is as if he slays a man. . .” or “he kills a bull, he slays a man.” Although the first one seems to equate human and animal death in the eyes of YHWH, it also requires the addition of words not present in the Hebrew text. Either way, however, this is a list of abominations before God by those who have chosen their own ways. The bull is being slaughtered, as are other humans, likely with a lack of correct motive so that sin is the problem, not the sacrifice. See A. Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah: Re-evaluating Prophetic Ethics and Divine Justice*, Biblical Interpretation 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 92.

²⁸ Some argue that the prophets condemn sacrifice outright in this passage and others (e.g., Amos 5:21–27), but the context seems to be either incorrect performance or improper attitudes toward YHWH, not the sacrifices themselves. Isaiah 43:22–24 condemns Israel for not honoring God with their sacrifices. See K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, Hermen (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001).

²⁹ Although it does not seem completely clear, the interwoven nature of the creatures mentioned in the passage seems to suggest it could be both peace “from” and peace “with” animals.

³⁰ Perhaps even the “knowledge of YHWH” could be attributed to animals here. Job 12:7–10 seems to hint at this possibility. Cf. Jer 8:7; Dan 5:21.

³¹ Some have interpreted this passage as allegorically or symbolically referring to the nations (e.g., C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39*, Interpretation [Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1993]), but the only other place where Isaiah seems to use such an allegory is in Isa 5, where the vineyard is

In some instances, domestic animals are even highlighted as more faithful than humans, at least in their own sphere. Isaiah 1:3 states that “the ox knows (עֵד) its owner, and the donkey the feeding trough of its master; Israel does not know (עֵד), my people do not consider.” From the very beginning of Isaiah’s prophecies, animals play a central role in the relationship of Israel and God, such that YHWH wishes Israel even had the sense of their animals (cf. Jer 8:7). Although this may at first seem derogatory towards the ox and donkey, the presumption is actually the opposite. Animals are explicitly mentioned first, before Israel is named, in the book of Isaiah. The animals know, but Israel does not! It seems that even if Israel had the knowledge of an animal, it would be enough to commend her to YHWH, keep her from iniquity, and result in faithfulness to YHWH rather than abandonment (v. 4). This comparison seems to hint that domestic animals have some sort of responsibility, certainly to their owners, and perhaps even to YHWH if the knowledge of an animal would suffice for Israel.

Domestic Animals in Isaiah 60:6–7

The passage that seems most unusual in regards to the domestic animal/human relationship is found in Isa 60. The chapter begins by describing the return of Israel from exile, and the resulting glory of God that will be upon them despite the darkness of the earth (vv. 1–2). Indeed, the beginning, end, and center focus of the chapter is upon YHWH, as the following chiasmic structure that arose from my textual analysis illustrates:³²

directly identified as Israel. See D. Fleer and D. Bland, eds., *Preaching the Eighth Century Prophets*, Rochester College Lectures on Preaching 5 (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2004).

Interestingly, Rodd finds the transformation/eradication of wild animals for human civilization to be best described as “nature is reordered for the sake of Israel” (*Glimpses*, 232).

³² Many others see Isa 60 as “little more than a collage of quotations, revisions, and allusions,” its composition “untidy and disjointed” (Clements, “‘Arise, Shine, for Your Light Has Come’: A Basic Theme of the Isaianic Tradition,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, VTSup 70 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 1:450, 452). See also Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 19B (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998). Goldingay calls Isaiah 60 an “unstructured stream-of-consciousness” (*Isaiah*, NIBC 13 [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001], 338). See also R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, NCBC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975].

However, Motyer (*The Prophecy of Isaiah* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994], 493) does see a chiasm in this passage, but only notes thematic parallels, with a climax in v. 12 in the discussion of Zion. Polan sees a very broad chiasm or “concentric pattern” in Isa 60, with 5 stanzas and many repeated words, but little notation of parallels between sections (“Zion, the Glory of the Holy One of Israel: A Literary Analysis of Isaiah 60,” in *Imagery and Imagination*

- A—Glory (כבוד) of YHWH (v. 1)
 B—Light (אור) and darkness (vv. 1–2)
 C—Daughters will be nursed (אנין) (v. 4)
 D—Hearts will swell with joy (v. 5)
 E—Nature—Abundance of the sea (v. 5)
 F—Wealth (חיל) of the nations is brought to Israel (v. 5–6)
 G—Animals will serve Israel (שרת) Israel (v. 7)
 H—YHWH’s house will be glorified (פאר) (vv. 6–7)
 I—All will come to the Holy One of Israel (v. 8)³³
 H’—YHWH has glorified (פאר) Israel (v. 9)
 G’—Kings of the nations will serve (שרת) Israel (v. 10)
 F’—Wealth (חיל) of the nations and kings are brought to Israel (v. 11)
 E’—Nature—Trees (v. 13)
 D’—YHWH makes Israel a joy (v. 15)
 C’—Israel will drink (ינק) the milk of the nations, and the breast of kings (v. 16)³⁴
 B’—YHWH will be their light (אור) everlasting, with no darkness (v. 19–20)
 A’—God will be their glory (תפארת) and will be glorified (פאר) (vv. 19, 21)

The nations and their kings will be drawn to Israel (v. 3), along with the abundance of the sea and the wealth/strength of the nations.³⁵ However, in verse 6, the focus shifts from the nations to specific animals, which parallel the kings that will also serve (שרת) Israel (v. 10):

שפעת גמלים תכסך | A multitude of camels will cover you,

in *Biblical Literature: Essays in Honor of Aloysius Fitzgerald*, ed. L. Boadt and M. S. Smith, CBQMS 32 [Washington, D.C: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2001], 50–71). Vermeulen finds a 5 part “structure concentrique,” but mentions no verbal linkages (“La lumière de Sion Isaïe 60 et ses rédactions successives,” in *Quelle Maison pour Dieu?* ed. C. Focant [Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2003], 179). Oswalt finds Isa 60 to be unified, but with no clear structure, only “a recurring treatment of similar themes” (*The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998], 536).

³³ Oswalt notes that this is the climactic use of the phrase “Holy One of Israel” (*The Book of Isaiah*, 543).

³⁴ Blenkinsopp notes that this imagery implies “rich and satisfying prosperity” (*Isaiah 56–66*, 216).

³⁵ Blenkinsopp compares the language here to the enthronement psalms, as well as the repatriation in Isa 49:12, 18, 22 (*Isaiah 56–66*, 211–12).

בכרי מדין ועיפה	Dromedaries from Midian and Ephah;
כלם משבא יבאו	All those from Sheba will come;
זהב ולבונה ישאו	They will carry gold and incense,
ותהללת יהוה יבשרו	And they will proclaim the praises of YHWH.

The subjects of the verbs in this verse seem continually to be the camels. Although the last phrase might initially seem to refer to the humans upon the camels, there is no mention of the humans, unless they are tied to the wealth of the nations in v. 5. Thus, it seems possible that there is no other subject for the action of praising God than the animals themselves.³⁶

Several additional hints point to the camels as the subjects of the verbs in v. 6.

First, as mentioned above, there is no mention of human owners of the camels in v. 6 or other animals in v. 7. Second, the ones coming from Sheba are described as actually carrying/bearing (נשא) the gold and incense. With this in mind, it seems at least possible that “all of those (כלם)” is referring to the camels, at least along with the humans.³⁷ An interesting parallel is Isa 30:6, where treasures are carried (נשא) on the humps of camels, but the treasure is portrayed as belonging to the animals (בהמות) of the south within the poetic imagery. Also, later in this chapter (Isa 60:11), the wealth of the nations is brought to Israel, but it is once again not specified whether humans or animals are responsible for this.

In addition, v. 7 continues to speak of animals, not humans:

כל-צאן קדר יקבצו לך	All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered to you,
אילי נבות ישרתונך	The rams of Nebaioth will serve you;
יעלו על-רצון מזבחי	They will go up with acceptance on My altar,
ובית תפארתִי אפאר	And I will glorify the house of My glory.

³⁶ Young argues for this interpretation (*The Book of Isaiah 40–66* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972], 447). Clements captures the possibility of animals praising God in his translation: “Laden with gold and frankincense, they proclaim Yahweh’s praise” (“Arise, Shine,” 441). Goldingay also hints that the herds of camels praise God (*Isaiah*, 343). Cf. Psalm 148.

³⁷ Brueggemann, however, interprets these verses as camel caravans like 1 Kgs 10:1–13 (*Isaiah 40–66*, 205). This would entail some sort of metonymy, or the camels as an instrumental rather than efficient cause. Although this is likely to be part of the picture, the focus seems to be more on the camels themselves, not as much on those bringing them.

Oswalt notes that אֵיל can refer to human leaders in some circumstances, and thus “it is tempting to think that the writer is referring to the flocks and the leaders of Nebaioth at the same time” (cf. Ezek 27:21).³⁸

The verb שָׂרַת is nowhere else used with a non-human or non-angelic subject in the OT.³⁹ It usually refers to the ministry of the priests and Levites in the name of YHWH (e.g. Deut 10:8), even within the most holy place, or the care of the tabernacle as a whole (Exod 28:43; 30:20). Sometimes שָׂרַת refers to a human serving a superior (like Joshua to Moses in Exod 33:11; Josh 1:1), or the priestly work on behalf of the people, which involves sacrifices of animals (Ezek 44:11, 15). The only other references in Isaiah are 56:6, where the sons of foreigners serve (שָׂרַת) YHWH, 61:6 where Israel is called servants/ministers (בְּשָׂרַתִּי) of God, and 60:10 where the foreign kings “will minister (שָׂרַת) to” Israel. Here, however, the rams are to שָׂרַת the returned exiles, and this certainly involves the animals as well as the humans in freewill service, rather than forced labor.⁴⁰

The use of this term often associated with priesthood is juxtaposed with another commonly cultic term in the next clause: “They will [cause to] go up (עָלָה) with acceptance (רָצוֹן) [on] my altar.” This clause is difficult, because עָלָה in the hiphil stem usually refers to offering a sacrifice when referring to cultic practices, and thus almost always has as the object of the verb the type of sacrifice offered.⁴¹ However, since the animals are the subjects here, there does not seem to be an object. Scholars have taken this to mean one of two things: “offered” or simply “ascending.” Although enigmatic, the first translation seems to be preferable with the abundance of cultic terminology

³⁸ J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 542. Blenkinsopp notes that Midian, Ephah, Sheba, Kedar, and Nebaioth were established Arabian trading partners in Transjordan and Edom, but makes no mention of the animals (*Isaiah 56–66*, 213). Childs also finds this a reference solely to the wealth of the nations (*Isaiah*, OTL [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 496–7). A. Motyer points out that these four locations basically represent the four points of the compass, implying a “world converging on Zion” (*Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999], 372). Goldingay (*Isaiah*, 341) considers that these events will reunite all of Abraham’s descendants, as Ephah was a grandson of Abraham and Keturah (Gen 25:4), and Nebaioth and Kedar were the oldest grandchildren of Abraham and Hagar (Gen 25:12–13).

³⁹ T. Fretheim, “שָׂרַת,” *NIDOTTE* 4:256–7, concludes that only Ps 103:21 and Ps 104:14 refer to non-humans, but interprets שָׂרַת in Isa 60:7 as referring to Israel in contrast to the foreigners, as in 61:6. Although there are many interesting parallels between Isa 60:7 and 61:6, this interpretation does not seem to do justice to the syntax and immediate context of Isa 60:7. In addition, this would seem to imply that Israel was to be serving Israel in 60:7.

⁴⁰ See Young, *The Book of Isaiah 40–66*, 448.

⁴¹ Cf. Lev 17:8; Judg 6:26, etc.

surrounding this word. However, this either seems to imply that the animals are offering themselves, or that they are taking a more active role here than in typical sacrifices.⁴²

The word רָצוֹן in a cultic setting often refers to the free will offering, but can also have connotations of acceptance or blessing.⁴³ If it means “free will,” this would seem to support the parallel between the rams ministering (שָׂרָת) to the people, and then ascending/being offered on the altar on behalf of the people. Interestingly, it is because of the ministry of the animals, that YHWH states that he will “glorify (פָּאָר) the house of my glory (תְּפִאֲרָתִי).” In addition, in v. 13, the glory of Lebanon that will beautify (פָּאָר) the place of God’s sanctuary is the cypress, the pine, and the box tree together.

Thus, domestic animals are portrayed as associates to humans, subordinate and accountable to their owners more than to God. However, they also seem to have some sort of spiritual responsibility as well as a capacity for knowing YHWH.

Wild Animals as Peers

A better term for wild animals might actually be peers, rather than associates. They are not owned by humans, and compete with them on some level for possession of land, food, and even favor with God. They also seem to be responsible to God rather than humans, and even give honor to him. As with domestic animals, the passages referring to wild animals in a metaphorical sense will be briefly noted first, followed by mention of passages in which wild animals are considered in non-metaphorical/literal language. Isaiah 43:20 will then be analyzed in detail to ascertain more clearly the nature of wild animals.

⁴² Oswalt also notes this ambiguity, and connects it with the ambiguous nature of אֵיל noted above (*The Book of Isaiah*, 542).

⁴³ See T. Fretheim, “רָצוֹן,” *NIDOTTE* 3:1185–6. For examples, see Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 205; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66*, 204. Motyer states that the flocks of the nations “are accepted as offerings . . . in their own right as partaking of the benefits of the altar” (*The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 495). While this focus on the humans seems to be accurate on some level, it also downplays the syntax of the text, in which the flocks are the subject of the verb עלה.

Also interesting is the lack of the preposition (ב) before “altar (מִזְבֵּחַ)” which is often present for offerings that are burnt before YHWH. This could be explained by the brevity of the poetic parallelism and imagery (cf. Isa 56:7).

Metaphorical Use of Wild Animals

The following chart sets forth the passages in which it appears that wild animals are described in metaphorical terms.

Text	Animal	Kind	Brief Description of Passage
5:28–29	Horse, lion and young lion	Domestic/ Wild	Horses' hooves are like flint, showcasing the strength of the invaders/ invaders roar like lions
10:14	Fleeing bird	Wild	After God's judgment on Assyria, the land is compared to an empty nest, with no one moving a wing or peeping
13:14	Gazelle, sheep	Wild/ Domestic	People will flee on the day of the Lord like a hunted gazelle, or sheep that are not gathered by anyone
14:29	Serpent, viper, fiery flying serpent	Wild	Babylon is compared to a serpent with a viper from its roots, and offspring of a fiery flying serpent
16:2	Wandering bird	Wild	Moab is compared to a bird thrown out of its nest
31:4–5	Lions, birds flying about	Wild	God will fight for Zion like a lion or attacking birds
35:6–9	Deer, jackal, lion, violent animal	Wild	The lame will leap like the deer; there will be grass in the home of jackals; no violent animals will be on the highway of holiness
38:13–14	Lion, swallow, crane, dove	Wild/ Domestic	Hezekiah writes that he meditated like a lion, and cried like a crane or swallow, and mourned like a dove
40:31	Eagle	Wild	Those who wait on God will rise up on wings like eagles
41:14	Worm	Wild	Jacob is called a worm by God
46:11	Bird of prey	Wild	One who executes God's counsel is called a bird of prey
50:9	Moth	Wild	Those who condemn God's

			servant are compared to an old garment that a moth will eat up
51:8	Moth, grub	Wild	Moths and worms will eat the wicked like garments/wool
56:10–11	Dog	Wild?/ Domestic	Watchmen are compared to silent dogs that are lazy and greedy
59:5	Viper, spider	Wild	Evil deeds of rebellious people are equated with viper's eggs and spider's webs
59:11	Bear, dove	Wild	People growl like bears and moan sadly like doves because there is no justice
66:24	Worm	Wild	The worm of the transgressors does not die

The actions/emotions/behavior of wild animals are compared to the actions/emotions/behavior of both God and humans. God compares himself to wild animals in several instances. In Isa 31:4–5, YHWH states that he will fight for Zion “as a lion roars, and a young lion (כפיר) is over its prey (טרף) when a multitude of shepherds is called against him; of their voices he will not be afraid, and of their noises he will not be disturbed.” This is in contrast to Israel, who is turning to Egypt for help rather than YHWH, and the image is one of fierceness and determined defense in spite of obstacles. Verse 5 continues the imagery to include birds: “Like birds flying around, so will YHWH Armies defend Jerusalem; in defending, he will deliver (נצל) it.” In Isa 5:29, YHWH calls the nations to discipline Israel, and uses lion imagery to describe their actions as well, as his agents of destruction. “Their roaring will be like a lion, they will roar like young lions (כפיר); they will roar and lay hold of the prey (טרף); they will carry it away safely and no one will deliver (נצל).” The one who executes YHWH’s judgments in Isa 46:11 is called a “bird of prey (עיט).”

The nations and individual humans are also compared to wild animals. Moab is like a “wandering bird thrown out of its nest” in Isaiah 16:2. Jacob is described as a “worm (חולעת)” in Isaiah 41:14, emphasizing his small and helpless nature without YHWH’s help. In Isa 13:14, the refugees are compared to “a hunted gazelle,” fleeing from YHWH’s fierce anger. But when YHWH comes to save his people, the “lame will leap like a deer” (Isa 35:6). The contrast between these last two highlights the difference that it makes to

have YHWH as a deliverer rather than as a destroyer. When he is angry, it is like being banished and driven out or hunted, where one runs for one's life. But the running in Isa 35:6 is that of joy or boundless energy/strength (cf. 2 Sam 22:30; Song 2:8). In Isa 10:14, YHWH's punishment of Assyria equates the people to baby birds in a nest, when the rest of the eggs are snatched from the nest, and not one of them moves or makes a noise.⁴⁴

Those who hope in YHWH will "go up on wings like eagles (נשר)" in Isa 40:31, implying that the ascent will be rapid, tireless and soaring. In Isa 38:13, meditation and consideration (שורה) all night long is compared to the stalking of a lion.⁴⁵ Isaiah 56:10–11 compares the watchmen to mute dogs that cannot bark, and greedy dogs that never know when to stop eating.⁴⁶ Isaiah 59:11 describes the grief and frustration for the all-encompassing iniquity and lack of justice in terms of the searchers who "growl (הימה) like bears, and moan sadly (הינה) like doves."⁴⁷ Isaiah 59:5 portrays the wicked as hatching viper's eggs and weaving spider's webs, which is compared to conceiving evil and begetting iniquity (v. 4).⁴⁸

Just like the metaphors used for domestic animals, these comparisons point to certain characteristics in wild animals that seem similar on some level to those of God or humans. If this were not the case, the metaphors would not make any sense.

⁴⁴ Along the lines of this comparison, sometimes wild animals are negatively affected because of human actions. In Isa 34:7, even the wild animals are part of the sacrifice of Edom, not only the domestic animals. YHWH rebukes the sea in Isa 50:2 in order to deliver his people, and as a result the fish (דגה) "stink because there is no water, and die of thirst."

⁴⁵ This usage might suggest that it appears the lion is calculating and thinking, rather than simply sitting there and waiting. Daniel 5:21 and Job 12:7–10 also hint that the wild animals know and understand that YHWH is ruler over the earth.

⁴⁶ Dogs in and of themselves do not seem to be likened to the lazy, gluttonous, and selfish watchmen, but only certain undesirable types of dogs. This hints at different personalities among animals, and even some sort of uncharacteristic action that is condemned in the useless watch dogs.

⁴⁷ The Hebrew word הימה can mean "roar" or "yearn/long for/mourn" and this usage seems to be a play on the dual meaning here (W. Dörmers, "הימה," *NIDOTTE* 1:1041–3). The bear roars, but when compared to humans, they are mourning. This might even imply a certain emotional state for the bear. The word הינה also seems to mean two things: "meditate" or "make sounds of mourning," even connoting an "emotive force that heightens the sense of tragedy or dread in a particular context" (M. Van Pelt and W. Kaiser, Jr., "הינה," *NIDOTTE* 1:1006–8).

⁴⁸ This could imply that certain animals at least give an appearance of accountability for their transgressions.

Non-metaphorical Use of Wild Animals

The following chart shows the various passages in which wild animals are portrayed with poetic imagery, but as part of a literal/potential reality or situation, and not simply a comparison, simile, or metonymy.

Text	Animal	Kind	Brief Description of Passage
11:6–9	Wolf, lamb, leopard, young goat, calf, young lion, fatling, cow, bear, lion, ox, cobra, viper	Domestic/ Wild	Peace between animals and humans that should be killing each other; no hurting or destruction in God's mountain
13:21–22	Wild animals of the desert, owls, ostriches, wild goats, hyenas, jackals	Wild	Babylon will be inhabited by wild animals rather than humans
14:23	Hedgehog	Wild	YHWH will make Babylon a possession of hedgehogs
15:9	Lion	Wild	Lions are used by God as a means of punishment
21:7–9	Horses, donkeys, camels, lion	Domestic/ Wild	The watchman saw chariots with domestic animals, and then a lion.
23:13	Wild animals of the desert	Wild	Assyria founded the land for the wild animals of the desert by destroying it for people
27:1	Leviathan the fleeing and twisted serpent, the reptile in the sea	Wild	God will punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and will punish Leviathan and the sea reptile
30:6	Animals, lion, viper, fiery flying serpent,	Wild/ Domestic	The oracle against the animals of the south: riches are carried on domestic animals through a land filled with dangerous wild

	donkeys, camels		animals
32:14	Wild donkeys, flocks	Wild/ Domestic	Deserted cities become a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks
34:11–15	Pelicans, porcupines, owl, raven, jackal, ostrich, wild animals of the desert, hyena, wild goat, night creature, arrow snake, vulture	Wild	Animals will possess the land of Edom after destruction
35:6–9	Deer, jackal, lion, violent animal	Wild	The lame will leap like the deer; there will be grass in the home of jackals; no violent animals will be on the highway of holiness
43:20	Wild animals, jackals, ostriches	Wild	Wild animals honor God because he provides water for people in the desert
51:9	Serpent	Wild	The arm of the Lord pierced the serpent
56:9	Wild animals, animals of the forest	Wild	The wild animals are called to eat (the watchmen?)
65:25	Wolf, lamb, lion, ox, serpent	Wild/ Domestic	No hurting or destruction in God's mountain

Wild animals are peers of humans in that they live in the land instead of humans after God punishes humans. But rather than a description of surviving in the land, words of possession, joy, dwelling, making homes, and resting are used for the wild animals in relationship to the land. In Isa 13:21–22, the “wild animals of the desert lie (רביץ) there; their houses are full of owls; ostriches will dwell (שכן) there, and wild goats will dance (רקד) there;

the hyenas will cry in their citadels, and jackals in the palaces of delight.” The word for dance is usually reserved for play or rejoicing, the opposite of mourning (e.g., Eccl 3:4). YHWH will make Babylon a possession (מורש) of the hedgehog after its destruction (Isa 14:23). In Isa 23:13, Assyria establishes (יסד) Babylon for the wild animals of the desert. In Isa 35:7, jackals are described as having a dwelling (נוה) and an abode (הציר). In Isa 32:14, the desolated cities and fortresses will become the “joy (משוש) of wild donkeys.” The word מושוש is elsewhere used only in regards to the joy God or humans have in something, but here it is attributed to animals.⁴⁹ Although this wasteland will likely not be permanent, the rejoicing of the donkeys implies pleasure beyond physical nourishment, and seems to clearly suggest the presence of emotions in animals.

After Edom is destroyed by YHWH in Isa 34, “the pelican and the porcupine will possess (ירש) it, and the owl and the raven will dwell (שכן) in it” (v. 11). In vv. 12–15, the land becomes a dwelling (נוה) for jackals, an abode (הציר) for ostriches, a place of rest (מנוח) for the night creatures who rest (רנע) there, and a place of nesting for snakes and of gathering (קבץ) for hawks, every one with her mate (אשה רעותה). Verses 16–17 seem to suggest that God’s spirit has done the gathering (קבץ) and his mouth has commanded that they will not lack a mate (אשה רעותה).⁵⁰ Not only that, but God “has cast the lot (גורל) for them, and his hand has divided (חלק) it among them with a measuring line. They shall possess (ירש) it forever; from generation to generation they shall dwell (שכן) in it.” These two verbs form

⁴⁹ Certain emotions that are normally reserved for YHWH or humans are actually seemingly attributed to wild animals. Although this may appear anthropomorphic, the text seems to present the situation as hyperbolically realistic. For other uses of מושוש, see Isa 24:8, 11; 32:13; 60:15; 62:5; 65:18; 66:10; Jer 49:25; Ezek 24:25; Hos 2:11; Ps 48:2; Job 8:19; Lam 2:15; 5:15.

⁵⁰ Sandy states that “these extreme statements seem to be stylized ways to emphasize the severity of destruction. To say that wild animals will inhabit it underscores God’s radical judgment on Babylon” (*Plowshares*, 166). However, he seems to have missed some of the logic behind the imagery here. Yes, the main message is not about the animals per se, but still, a reality of habitation and possession is expressed. Even if it is for the purpose of punishing humans, that does not diminish from the actual portrayal, and in fact, depends on it. It seems that most scholars note only what the metaphor is *used* for and *means*, and therefore do not recognize that it can represent both a warning to humans *and* can express a truth about animals as well.

an inclusio around this passage referring to the animals that possess the land.⁵¹

Perhaps reminiscent of the feast in Ezek 39, where the birds and animals of the field are invited to eat (אכל) of the people and domestic animals of Israel as a sacrificial meal (the ultimate irony), in Isa 56:9 the animals of the field (חיה שדה) and the animals of the forest (חיתו ביער) are invited to come and devour (אכל). Although it is not clear what they are to eat, the following condemnation of the watchmen seems to imply that the wild animals are to devour the greedy selfish humans that were supposed to be serving YHWH (56:10–12).

Non-domestic animals also seem to be punished by God for their transgressions. In Isa 26:21–27:1, YHWH “will punish (פקד) Leviathan the twisted serpent, and thus perhaps other animals are included as well when YHWH comes to “punish (פקד) the inhabitants of the earth.”⁵² When Isa 35:9 states that no “violent (פריץ) animals” will be on the highway of holiness, most translations use “ravenous” even though elsewhere פריץ is used of human robbers and destroyers. This perhaps suggests some sort of accountability for animals in regards to harmful acts against humans (cf. Gen 9:5–6). The pictures painted of the peaceable kingdom (Isa 11:6–9; 65:25) also imply that wild animals are involved in doing evil (רעע) and corruption or destruction (שחת).

Wild Animals in Isaiah 43:20

This passage seems to be the most clear for interpreting the nature of wild animals and their relationship with God, and how that compares with the human-divine relationship as portrayed in Isaiah.

In Isa 43:7, YHWH declares that “all who are called by my name, who I have created for my glory (כבוד), I have formed them, indeed I have made them.” YHWH goes on to describe how these will be his witnesses to his unique and almighty creative and redemptive powers (vv. 8–15). In vv. 16–17, the incredible acts of YHWH to deliver his people in the Exodus seem to be

⁵¹ As an interesting comparison, the noun נורל and the verb חלק occur together in only six other verses in the OT, and five of them refer to the dividing up of the promised land by YHWH for the children of Israel (Num 26:55, 56; Josh 18:10; 19:51; 1 Chron 24:5).

⁵² In Isa 51:9, the arm of YHWH is said to have “pierced the serpent (תנין),” which refers back to the reptile of the sea (תנין) that is also killed by YHWH in Isa 27:1.

recalled in the vocabulary and imagery (cf. Exodus 14–15).⁵³ This sets the stage for the new thing that YHWH is going to do in v. 19: make “in the wilderness, a road (במדבר דרך), and in the desert, rivers (נהרות בישמון).”

Verse 20 continues:

תכבדני חית השרדה	The wild animal of the field will honor me,
תנים ובנות יענה	The jackals and the ostriches;
כי־נתתי במדבר מים	Because I give in the wilderness, water,
נהרות בישמון	Rivers in the desert,
להשקות עמי בחירי	To give drink to my people, my chosen.

In light of the previous background, one would expect that YHWH would be honored and glorified by his people for this marvelous act. Instead, YHWH first proclaims that the “wild animal of the field (חית השרדה) will honor (כבד) me, the jackals and the ostriches” (v. 20).⁵⁴ The use of the verb כבד hearkens back to v. 7, and is often used of humans giving glory to God, or animals glorifying God by being sacrificed. But this verse seems to be the only place in the OT where animals are the subjects of כבד to YHWH. Pangritz sees this verse describing “eine geheime Gottesbeziehung und Gottessehnsucht” that the animals have.⁵⁵

The reason that the wild animals honor God in v. 20 is that he gives “in the wilderness, waters (במדבר מים), rivers in the desert (נהרות בישמון).”⁵⁶ The focus shifts to the water in this verse, rather than the way in v. 19, perhaps implying that דרך could refer to a path for water to flow down (cf. Deut 1:40; Isa 9:1), or connect to v. 16 (a way through the waters). And yet, the wild animals honor YHWH because the water in the wilderness is “to give drink to my people, my chosen, this people I have formed for myself; they will declare my praise (תהלתי יספרו).” This is not a selfish reason for the

⁵³ K. Baltzer notes, however, that there is no mention of Egypt or Pharaoh, so Babylon is likely in view as well (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 172). See also J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*.

⁵⁴ These animals are some of the most timid animals in the desert, and least likely to see people. The jackals and ostriches also occur together in Isa 34:13; Micah 1:8; Job 30:29 (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 174). Goldingay notes that animals praise God “when something new buds” as in Isa 42:10–12; 55:12–13 (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* [London: T&T Clark, 2006], 299).

⁵⁵ Pangritz, *Das Tier*, 124.

⁵⁶ Goldingay sees an envelope structure in vv. 16–21, with “a way of life through water” on the outer parts, and old events contrasted with new events in the center (*Isaiah 40–55*, 292).

animals to glorify YHWH, but hints at an other-centered awareness for wild animals.⁵⁷

In vv. 22–24, a stark contrast is made between the selfish nature of the people who have not honored YHWH, and the wild animals who have.⁵⁸ YHWH states that the people “have not called upon (קראו)” him, and “have been weary of (יגעו)” him (v. 22). Not only that, but YHWH reminds Israel that they have not brought sheep for burnt offerings nor “honored (כבדו)” him with their sacrifices (זבחו).⁵⁹ The type of comparison made here between human and animal responses to YHWH seems to indicate cognition or emotion for animals on a similar level to that of humans, and is more critical for the understanding of the nature of animals than a simile or metaphor stating that “God is like . . .”

Each clause in these three verses seems to be connected with verbal links either to the previous or following clauses. It is almost as if certain words remind the author of previous words or lead to other phrases using those words, forming a tightly interwoven cluster of indictments. YHWH continues, “I have not caused you to serve (עבדו) with grain offerings (מנחה),

⁵⁷ Some commentators seem so surprised by this “bizarre parallel” between wild animals and Israel that they explain it away by noting that God is simply making Israel’s journey easier by “rendering wild animals innocuous” (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 228). Whybray calls this verse a “taming of the wild beasts” (*Isaiah 40–66*, 89). No mention is made of the use of כבד by Brueggemann either, who interprets this passage as noting that the water in the wilderness was a benefit for the jackals and ostriches as well, though primarily for humans (*Isaiah 40–66*, 59). See also J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*.

Oswalt calls this language figurative, as turning a desert into rivers would destroy the homes of the animals, and thus they are “reacting just as thirsty humans would” (*The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, 155). However, this interpretation does not seem to consider the verbal contrasts between humans and animals, and the textual reason (כי) given for the honoring of God by wild animals. Goldingay (*Isaiah 40–55*, 299) agrees, noting that the animals “see what Yhwh has done in bringing down Babylon and restoring Israel.” Lee finds that the honoring of YHWH by animals is a “necessary part of the universal response which reiterates Yahweh’s supremacy” (*Creation and Redemption in Isaiah 40–55* [Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1995], 156).

⁵⁸ Although only one sentence is given to this verse by Childs, his statement sums up the apparent reality well: “The way in the wilderness will climax in the honoring of God not only by the wild beasts, but above all by his chosen people who declare his praise” (*Isaiah*, 337). Interestingly, however, the people never כבד God in this passage like the animals do, and are indicted specifically for not honoring God! Goldingay also downplays the contrast between humans and animals, as he states that vv. 16–21 come to a “climax with the reminder that it is Israel’s calling to honor Yahweh” (*Isaiah*, 250) But כבד is not used in v. 21 for humans, only in v. 20 for the animals, and in v. 23 to state that Israel has *not* honored God.

⁵⁹ Baltzer (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 180–2) sees verbal and thematic parallels in these verses with the story of Jacob in Genesis. Lee sees vv. 22–28 as a disputation or trial speech (*Creation and Redemption*, 68–71).

nor wearied (יגע) you with incense (לבונה).” The people are weary of YHWH, but YHWH has not wearied them. In v. 24, the people have not satisfied YHWH with sacrifices (זבח), but he reminds them, “you have burdened (עבר) me with your sins (חטאת), you have wearied (יגע) me with your iniquities (עון).”⁶⁰ Not only are the verbal parallels between v. 23 and v. 24 many, but even the very words for the sins that the people gave to God instead of sacrifices sound like the corresponding words for grain offering and incense.⁶¹

This contrast between wild animals and humans is significant, because it is the wild animals who honor God, not Israel. Although in other places, Isaiah seems to hint that wild animals can do evil (e.g., 11:6–9; 65:25) and act violently outside of what YHWH asks them to do as agents for punishment (e.g., 35:9), here they are portrayed as giving glory to God even when humans do not. Thus, wild animals are portrayed as peers to humans, possessing the land, giving honor to YHWH, and more directly accountable to YHWH for their actions.

Conclusions and Contemporary Implications

This examination of animal references in Isaiah represents a different lens with which to look at passages: what is the relational nature of animals in comparison and response to God and humans? I fully acknowledge that this may not be the lens of the author, and is definitely not the main function or point of the metaphors and comparisons, but as long that is acknowledged, we can still legitimately analyze texts to see the background assumptions and underlying picture of animals. Even though many of the texts dealing with this issue are in poetry or are located within metaphors, the image must rely upon a reality behind it in order to function properly.

As noted in the introduction, I have attempted to avoid the ideological framework that keeps me from seeing how the text is functioning primarily. What I am looking at is different from how the text is mainly being used (to compare humans with God, to teach humans, to simply categorize how

⁶⁰ Booji suggests translating these verses as “do not say that you have called upon me. . .” (“Negation in Isaiah 43:22–24,” *ZAW* 94: 399).

⁶¹ The word association continues in vv. 25–27. YHWH states that he will wipe out their transgressions (פשע) and “will not remember (זכר) [their] sins (חטאת).” In contrast, he calls on his people to “remember (זכר)” him in v. 26. The first father of the people sinned (חטא), and the mediators transgressed (פשע) against YHWH. Davies suggests that the sacrifices were being performed, just to other gods besides YHWH (*Double Standards*, 93).

animals act, or to compare humans to animals based on appearances and not necessarily on realities), but I contend that the main meaning of the text does not exclude the realities about animal nature that are assumed by Isaiah's prophecies, and in fact often depends on those realities.

Thus, based on the preponderance of evidence for domestic animals as associates to humans, and wild animals as peers, I suggest that there may be some sort of continuity or spectrum of a relational nature (or even "personhood") of created beings in relationship to God. The domestic animals seem more likely to act in relationship to humans, often similar in emotions and characteristics, but responsible and accountable to their masters, perhaps even honoring humans in some fashion by serving them faithfully (cf. Isa 60:7). Wild animals, on the other hand, seem to be more of a peer group to humans, with metaphorical comparisons between their actions and God's, possession of land, accountability to God for their actions, and the honoring of God in contrast to rebellious humans (cf. Isa 43:20).

These distinctions may not be so complete and without overlap, however, when the rest of the OT is considered. Other texts seem to suggest praise to God coming from all non-human life.⁶² All animals are also responsible for certain things before God (e.g., Exod 19:13; Gen 9:5), although some have argued that this is because of the ultimate human responsibility. There is also a difference between all animals and humanity, as humans were made in the image of God and were created to rule over God's creatures as his representatives (cf. Gen 1:26–28). The OT speaks much more of humans praising God than other living things. Humans are also responsible for much more throughout the Bible than are animals. However, as with other subjects, just because the Bible is relatively silent on a topic does not mean that it is nonexistent. The multiplicity of hints throughout the OT suggests that we must look beyond the standard anthropomorphic explanations given for apparent animal relationality/spirituality and consciousness of accountability before God. The breadth and depth of usage compels us to cull out the reality concerning the nature of animals that is assumed behind the main meaning or significance of the metaphors/hyperboles.

⁶² Cf. Pss 19; 98:8; 148; 150; Isa 44:23; 49:13; 55:12.

Therefore, I contend that not only do the animals in Isaiah serve a didactic function,⁶³ but also give a glimpse into the nature of animals as associates and/or peers of humans, also responsible to authority and honoring God (sometimes even more than humans do!). This picture of animals heightens the human responsibility to care for and rule righteously over all the creatures that YHWH has made.

⁶³ Forti sees a similar function of animal metaphors in Proverbs (“Animal Images in the Didactic Rhetoric of the Book of Proverbs,” *Biblica* 77 [1996]: 48–63).

APPENDIX

Passages Referring to Animals in Isaiah

Text	Animal	Domestic /Wild	Category	Meta-phor?	Brief description of passage
1:3	Ox (שׁוֹר)/ donkey (חֲמוֹר)	Domestic	Property/ Associate	Yes	Animals know their master, Israel does not
1:11	Rams (אֵיל)/ cattle (מִרְיָא)/ bulls (פָּר)/ lambs (כִּבְשׁ)/ goats (עֲתוּד)	Domestic	Sacrifice	No	God has had enough of the sacrifices of Israel
2:7	Horse (סוֹס)	Domestic	Property	No	Represent wealth and strength
2:20	Moles (חֲפֵר פְּרוּת)/ bats (עֲטֹלֵף)	Wild	Peer		The idols are hidden from God in the caves, cast away to the moles and bats
5:17	Lambs (כִּבְשׁ)/ fatlings (בָּזָח)	Domestic	Property	No	Animals eat in the pastures of those who were exiled
5:28–29	Horse (סוֹס)/ lion (לְבִיא) and young lion (כַּפִּיר)	Domestic /wild	Property/ Peer	No/Yes	Horses' hooves are like flint, showcasing the strength of the invaders/ invaders roar like lions
7:21–25	Cow (בָּקָר)/ sheep (צֹאן)/ Oxen (שׁוֹר)/ sheep (שֶׂה)	Domestic	Property	No	Animals roam where people used to cultivate crops, representing the desolation

10:14	Fleeing bird (כנף נדר)	Wild	Peer	Yes	After God's judgment on Assyria, the land is compared to an empty nest, with no one moving a wing or peeping
11:6–9	Wolf (זאב)/ lamb (כשב)/ leopard (נמר)/ young goat (גדי)/ calf (עגל)/ young lion (כפיר)/ fatling (זריא)/ cow (פרה)/ bear (דב)/ lion (אריה)/ ox (בקר)/ cobra (פתן)/ viper (צפע)	Domestic / wild	Associate	No	Peace between animals and humans that should be killing each other; no hurting or destruction in God's mountain
13:14	Sheep (צאן)	Domestic	Property	Yes	People will flee on the day of the Lord like sheep that are not gathered by anyone
13:21–22	Wild animals of the desert (צי)/ owls (אור)/ ostriches (יענה)/ wild goats (שעיר)/ hyenas (אי)/ jackals (תן)	Wild	Peer	No	Babylon will be inhabited by wild animals rather than humans
14:11	Maggots (רמוה)/ worms (תולעת)	Wild	Peer?	No	Maggots covering the king's body seems to

					symbolize death and decomposition
14:23	Hedgehog (קבד)	Wild	Peer	No	YHWH will make Babylon a possession of the hedgehog
14:29	Serpent (נחש)/ viper (צפע)/ fiery flying serpent (שרף מעופף)	Wild	Peer	Yes?	Babylon is compared to a serpent with a viper from its roots and offspring of fiery flying serpent
15:9	Lion (אריה)	Wild	Peer	No	Lions are used by God as a means of punishment
16:1	Lamb (כר)	Domestic	Property?	No	A lamb is sent to the ruler of the land (enigmatic. . .)
16:2	Wandering bird (עוף נודד)	Wild	Peer	Yes	Moab is compared to a bird thrown out of its nest
17:2	Flock (עדר)	Domestic	Property	No	The ruins of Damascus are for flocks to lie down, and they will not be made afraid
18:6	Mountain birds of prey (עיט הרים)/ animals of the earth (בהמת הארץ)/ birds of prey	Wild	Peer	Yes	The branches will be left as food for the wild animals

	(עיט)				
21:7-9	Horses (פרש)/ donkeys (חמור)/ camels (גמל)/ lion (אריה)	Domestic /Wild	Property/ Peer	No	The watchman saw chariots with the three domestic animals, and then a lion.
22:13	Cattle (בקר)/ sheep (צאן)	Domestic	Property	No	When God calls for mourning, the people turn instead to feasting and killing oxen and sheep to eat
23:13	Wild animals of the desert (צי)	Wild	Peer	No?	Assyria founded the land for the wild animals of the desert by destroying it for people
27:1	Leviathan the fleeing and twisted serpent (נחש)/ reptile in the sea (תנין)	Wild	Peer	Yes	God will punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and will punish Leviathan, slaying the reptile in the sea.
27:10	Calf (עגל)	Domestic	Property	No	Calf feeds in the desolated city to represent the destruction
30:6	Animals (בהמה)/ Lion (לביא)/ lion (ליש)/ viper (אפעה)/	Wild/ Domestic	Peer/ Property	No	The oracle is against the animals of the south: riches are carried on the backs of donkeys

	fiery flying serpent (שרף מעופף)/ Donkeys (עיר)/ camels (גמל)				and the humps of camels through a land of trouble filled with dangerous wild animals
30:16	Horses (סוס)	Domestic	Property	No	Rather than returning to YHWH, the people flee swiftly on horses
30:23–24	Cattle (מקנה)/ oxen (אלף)/ donkeys (עיר)	Domestic	Property	No	Cattle will feed in large pastures, oxen and donkeys will eat good food, representing wealth and prosperity
31:1	Horses (סוס)	Domestic	Property	No	Woe to those who rely on horses for help rather than God
31:4–5	Lion (אריה)/ young lion (כפיר)/ birds flying about (צפרים עפות)	Wild	Peer	Yes	God will fight for Zion like a lion or attacking birds
32:14	Wild donkeys (פרא)/ flocks (עדר)	Wild/ Domestic	Peer/ Property	No	Cities are deserted, and become a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks, representing the
32:21	Ox (שור)/ donkey (חמור)	Domestic	Property	No	Those who send out the animals to sow seed are blessed

34:6-7	Lambs (כֶּרִי)/ goats (עֲתוּדִי)/ rams (אֵילִי)/ wild oxen (רֵאֵם)/ bulls (פָּרִי)	Domestic / Wild	Sacrifice	Yes	God's slaughter of Edom is compared to a sacrifice of many animals
34:11-15	Pelicans (קֶאֱתִי)/ porcupines (קַפְּוֹדִי)/ owl (יִנְשׁוּףִי)/ raven (עֵרָבִי)/ Jackal (תַּןִּי)/ Ostrich (יַעֲנָבִי)/ Wild animals of desert (צִיִּי)/ hyena (אִיִּי)/ wild goat (שַׁעִירִי)/ night creature (לַיְלִיתִי)/ arrow snake (קַפְּוִיזִי)/ vulture (דִּיהִי)	Wild	Peer	No	Animals will possess the land of Edom after destruction
35:6-9	Deer (אֵילִי)/ jackal (תַּןִּי)/ lion (אַרְיֵהִי)/ violent animal (פְּרִיץ חַיּוֹת)	Wild	Peer	Yes	The lame will leap like the deer; there will be grass in the home of jackals; no violent animals will be on the highway of holiness
36:8	Horses (סוּסִי)	Domestic	Property	No	Horses offered as a gift from Rabshakeh
38:13-14	Lion (אַרְיֵהִי)/ Swallow (סוּסִי)/ Crane (עֲנוּרִי)	Wild/ Domestic	Peer/ Associate	Yes	Hezekiah writes that he meditated like a lion, and cried like a crane

	Dove (יונה)				or swallow, and mourned like a dove
40:11	Lamb (טלא)/ flock (עדר)	Domestic	Property	Yes	God will feed his flock like a shepherd, and gather lambs in his arms
40:16	Animal (חיה)	Wild	Sacrifice	No	The animals of Lebanon are not sufficient for an offering
40:31	Eagle (נשר)	Wild	Peer	Yes	Those who wait on God will go up on wings like eagles
41:14	Worm (תולעת)	Wild	Peer?	Yes	Jacob is called a worm by God
43:17	Horses (סוס)	Domestic	Property	No	Horses used in war were brought down by YHWH with the rest of the army (refer to Exodus?)
43:20	Wild animals (חית השדה)/ jackals (תן)/ ostriches (יענה)	Wild	Peer	No	Wild animals honor God because he provides water for people in the desert
43:23	Lamb (שה)	Domestic	Sacrifice	No	The people have not brought sheep to God for sacrifice
46:1	Animals (חיה, בהמה)	Domestic	Property	No?	Animals are burdened by heavy loads, including idols
46:11	Bird of prey	Wild	Peer	Yes	The man who

	(עיט)				executes God's counsel is called a bird of prey
50:2	Fish (דגה)	Wild	Peer	No	Fish stink and die of thirst because God dries up the river
50:9	Moth (עש)	Wild	Peer?	Yes	Those who condemn God's servant are compared to an old garment that a moth will eat up
51:8	Moth (עש)/ grub (סס)	Wild	Peer?	Yes	Moths and worms will eat up the wicked like garments or wool
51:9	Serpent (תנין)	Wild	Peer	No?	The arm of the Lord pierced the serpent
53:7	Sheep (שה)/ Lamb (חלה)	Domestic	Property	Yes	Servant is compared to a lamb that is silent when going to slaughter or being sheared
56:9	Wild animals (חיתו שדי)/ animals of the forest (חיתו ביער)	Wild	Peer	No	The wild animals are called to eat (the watchmen?)
56:10–11	Dog (כלב)	Domestic	Property?	Yes	Watchmen are compared to silent dogs that are lazy and greedy

59:5	Viper (צפע) / spider (עכביש)	Wild	Peer	Yes	The evil deeds of the rebellious people are equated with viper's eggs and spider's webs
59:11	Bear (דב) / Dove (יונה)	Wild / Domestic ?	Peer / Property	Yes	We all growl like bears and moan sadly like doves because there is no justice
60:6-7	Camel (גמל), flock (בכר) / ram (איל) (צאן)	Domestic	Associate / sacrifice	No	Praise God and serve humans; offer sacrifices
61:5	Flocks (צאן)	Domestic	Property	No	Strangers will feed the flocks of the returning exiles
63:13-14	Flock (צאן) / Horse (סיס) / Animal (בהמה)	Domestic	Associate	Yes	God led his people (flock) so they would be surefooted as a horse in the wilderness, and the spirit of God causes animals to rest as he will lead his people
65:4	Pig (חזיר)	Domestic	Property	No	Those who rebel against God eat the flesh of pigs
65:10	Flocks (צאן) / cattle (בקר)	Domestic	Property	Yes	Flocks represent the people who seek God, who will lie down in safety
65:25	Wolf (זאב) / lamb (טלה)	Wild / Domestic	Associate / Peer	No?	No hurting or destruction in God's mountain

	lion (אריה)/ ox (בקר)/ serpent (נחש)				
66:3	Bull (שור)/ lamb (שה)/ dog (כלב)/ swine (חזיר)	Domestic	Sacrifice/ (Peer?)	No	Different sacrifices that are offered by people that are rejected by God as abominations
66:17	Pig (חזיר)/ mouse (עכבר)	Domestic / wild	Property	No	God will consume those who eat unclean flesh, like these animals
66:20	Horse (סוס)/ mules (פרד)/ dromedaries (כרכרה)	Domestic	Property	No	People will be brought as an offering to God on these animals and in chariot
66:24	Worm (תולעת)	Wild	Peer?	Yes?	The worm of transgressors does not die

5

Notes on the Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel

Jiří Moskala

Richard M. Davidson has written the most profound study on the literary structure of the book of Ezekiel published to date.¹ He built his outstanding research on the work of other scholars² but presented a most compelling work. Even though new studies have appeared on the topic, no recent publication supersedes his contribution.³ Scholars who deal with the literary structure of the book of

¹ Richard M. Davidson, "The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel," in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea* (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum, 1997), 71–93.

² See especially, Umberto Cassuto, *The Arrangement of the Book of Ezekiel*, Biblical and Oriental Studies (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973); H. Van Dyke Parunak, *Structural Studies in Ezekiel* (Unpublished dissertation, Harvard University, 1978); idem, "The Literary Architecture of Ezekiel's *mar'ot 'elohim*," *JBL* 99 (1980): 61–74; William H. Shea, "The Investigative Judgment of Judah: Ezekiel 1–10," *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1981); idem, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1982); S. Talmon and M. Fishbane, "The Structuring of Biblical Books, Studies in the Book of Ezekiel," *ASTI* 10, ed. Bengt Knutsson (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 129–153.

³ For recent examples, see Tyler D. Mayfield, *Literary Structures and Setting in Ezekiel* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010). Mayfield looks for the literary markers and he finds them in the chronological formulas which divide the book into 13 macrounits. He then further

Ezekiel are amazed at how beautiful its literary artistry is, and they agree that Ezekiel's literary architecture is more advanced "than in other prophetic books."⁴ Such a clear and symmetrical structure is unparalleled as Margaret Odell aptly observes: "The book of Ezekiel reflects a degree of literary coherence unmatched in the canon of biblical prophets."⁵ David Dorsey claims that "the Book of Ezekiel has been rigorously designed in a grand sevenfold structuring scheme."⁶

Understanding its structure is decisive for interpreting the meaning of the book. The document is marvelously developed on the background of the most tragic event in Old Testament history, namely the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 587/586 BCE. The sanctuary was the place for reconciliation, receiving grace, and worshiping the Lord. With this devastation collapsed the hope and aspirations of God's people, because they lost practically everything—homes, capital city, independence, autonomy, freedom, and worst of all, the central place of worship, and they were deported into Babylonian captivity. This unprecedented tragic event lies at the organizational heart of this book: chaps. 1–25 run up to this event and

focuses on the prophetic word statements which form subunits within those macrounits. Some of his units are problematic, because they include material which belongs on contextual and thematic grounds to different units (see, for example, his macrounits of Ezek 24–25 and 32:17–33:20). However, this form critical synchronic study also confirms Ezekiel's intention in creating his literary structural masterpiece. See also the latest commentaries on Ezekiel and their understanding of the literary structure of the entire book: Daniel Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Ian M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999); Brandon Fredenburg, *Ezekiel*, CPNIVC, Old Testament Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002); David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structures of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 253–258; Horace D. Hummel, *Ezekiel 1–20*, ConcC (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2005); Robert W. Jenson, *Ezekiel*, BTCB (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009); Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007.); Margaret S. Odell, *Ezekiel*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005); Mark Rooker and Max E. Anders, *Ezekiel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006); Steven Tuell, *Ezekiel*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009); Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

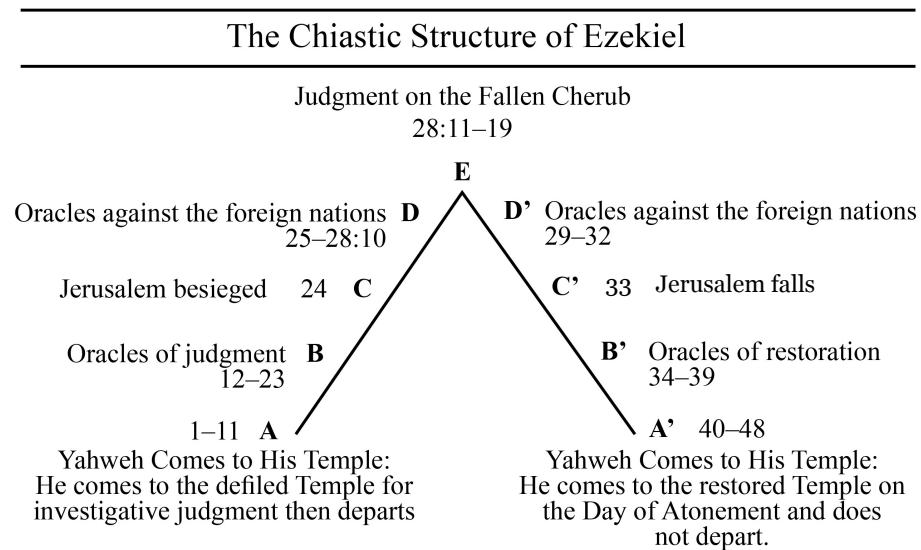
⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, IBC (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1990), 3. In a classical commentary on Ezekiel, Walter Zimmerli states: "One is struck by the impression of great order in the book of Ezekiel" (*Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Hermen [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 1:2). See also Luther J. Mays, *Ezekiel, Second Isaiah*, Proclamation Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 22; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 23.

⁵ Odell, *Ezekiel*, 1.

⁶ Dorsey, *Literary Structures*, 258. He stresses that "the book is not arranged in an overall symmetry" (*ibid.*), and divides the book in the following units: 1–7, 8–13, 14–19, 20–24, 25–32, 33–39, and 40–48.

chaps. 33 to 48 depict messages after this catastrophe.⁷ The basic linear progressive structure of the book of Ezekiel is threefold: (1) judgment on Israel—chaps. 1–24; (2) judgment on foreign nations—chaps. 25–32; and (3) comfort and new life for Israel—chaps. 33–48. Each part may be divided in other subunits.

Davidson presents his literary analysis of the macrostructure of the book of Ezekiel on the basis of used vocabulary, conceptual observations, and thematic features, and convincingly demonstrates that the book contains many insightful panel structures. As the culmination of his outstanding work, he draws the chiasmic structure of Ezekiel with its center on “Judgment on the Fallen Cherub” with the following 9 parts:⁸



This symmetric literary structure was a subject of our many conversations. The focus of his structure seemed to me too limited, and I

⁷ Chapters 1–24 describe messages of judgment which were delivered before this tragedy *par excellence* in order to prevent it (Ezekiel calls people to repentance and admonishes them to follow God faithfully—Ezek 14:6; 18:30–32; 33:11), and chaps. 33–48 describe new hope for the people after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 BC when they lost sovereignty and their religion-centered activities were terminated. In the second part, Ezekiel comforts and as a pastor speaks about the restoration and a new future for God’s people.

⁸ Davidson, “Chiasmic Literary Structure,” 75.

tried to convince him to enlarge it. I proposed that the central part of the chiasm should be doubly-focused and intermingled with additional elements. There are four reasons why I wanted to improve Davidson's chiastic structure:

I. To Make It Consistently Theocentric

There is an extraordinary emphasis on God in the book of Ezekiel. The Lord is in the beginning (see the introductory vision about the Lord's Glory which is a euphemism for God himself), at the center (he judges not only Israel but also the surrounding nations), at the end when God with his glory returns to the new Temple and the city receives the new name "God is there"⁹ (Ezek 48:35, a fitting title for Ezekiel's entire message), and everywhere else in between in the book. Judgments and renewal of God's people are explained from "God's point of view."¹⁰ James Hamilton states that "the Glory of God in salvation through judgment is the centre of biblical theology."¹¹ People are always described in their relationship to God and the Lord wishes that "they will be my people and I will be their God" (11:20; see also 14:11; 34:30; 36:28; 37:27). Depending upon their attitude toward God, they would either prosper or undergo the covenant curses. The whole book is a metanarrative about God. It is a bittersweet story because his people were stubborn and/or indifferent, did not repent, and did not faithfully follow the Lord; consequently the covenant lawsuit curses occurred. All three visions (1-3; 8-11; 40-48) are focused on God himself and his activities. In chap. 37 God demonstrates that Israel can live only by his word and Spirit, because God's Presence gives life where before, death reigned. Joyce rightly speaks about "the radical theocentricity of Ezekiel."¹² Greenberg explains in his commentary on Ezekiel that the author of the book emphasizes the Majesty of God (see 1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:4; 10:4, 18-19; 11:23; 43:2, 4-5).¹³

Many repetitious phrases reveal this, as well, for example: "The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel/me" (used 50 times in the book: 1:3; 3:16; 6:1; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1; 33:1; 34:1; 35:1; 36:16; 37:15; 38:1; etc.); "hear the word of the

⁹ Bible quotations are from NIV translation unless it is indicated otherwise.

¹⁰ Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel*, 22-23.

¹¹ James Hamilton, "The Glory of God in Salvation Through Judgment: Centre of Biblical Theology?" *TynBul* 57.1 (2006): 69.

¹² Paul M. Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 51 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 89.

¹³ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 80.

(Sovereign) Lord” (attested 10 times: 6:3; 13:2; 16:35; 20:47 [=21:3]; 25:3; 34:7, 9; 36:1, 4; 37:4; see also similar phrasing in 2:8; 3:10; 33:30; 40:4; 44:5); “I the Lord have spoken” (employed 14 times: 5:13, 15, 17; 17:21, 24; 21:17 [22], 32 [37]; 22:14; 24:14; 26:14; 30:12; 34:24; 36:36; 37:14); “I am the Lord your God” (stated four times: 20:5, 7, 19, 20); “I am the Sovereign Lord” (used five times: 13:9; 23:49; 24:24; 28:24; 29:16); “I am your God” (occurring only once in 34:31); “I am the Lord their God” (used four times: 28:26; 34:30; 39:22, 28); “this is what the Sovereign Lord says” (occurring 126 times: 2:4; 3:27; 5:5, 7, 8; 6:11; 38:3, 10, 14, 17; 39:1; etc.); “declares the Sovereign Lord” (attested 81 times: 5:11; 11:8, 21; 12:25, 28; 13:8, 16; 14:11, 14, 16, 18; etc.); “declares the Lord” (employed four times: 13:6, 7; 16:58; 37:14); “the hand of the Lord was upon him/me” (stated seven times: 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1); “visions of God” (used three times: 1:1; 8:3; 40:2); “He/the Lord said to me” (used 36 times: 2:1; 3:1, 10, 22; 4:16; 8:5; etc.); “they will know that I (am) the Lord” (occurring identically 25 times: 5:13; 6:10, 14; 7:27; 12:15, 16; 24:27; 25:11, 17; 26:6; 28:22, 23; 29:9, 21; 30:8, 19, 25, 26; 32:15; 33:29; 34:27; 35:15; 36:38; 38:23; 39:6; see also 18 similar phrases in 17:24; 20:12, 26; 21:10; 25:14; 28:24, 26; 29:6, 16; 34:30; 36:23, 36; 37:28; 38:16; 39:7, 22, 23, 28); “you will know that I (am) the Lord” (used identically 21 times: 6:7, 13; 7:4, 9; 11:10, 12; 12:20; 13:14; 14:8; 15:7; 17:21; 20:38, 42, 44; 22:22; 25:5; 35:9; 36:11; 37:6, 13, 14; see also 13 similar phrases in 13:9, 21, 23; 14:23; 16:62; 20:20; 22:16; 23:49; 24:24; 25:7; 35:4, 12; 36:32); “making Myself known to them” (employed only once: 20:5); God’s knowing (attested twice: 11:5; 37:3); and “the Spirit” or “the Spirit of the Lord/God” (used 20 times: 1:12, 20 (twice); 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 19, 24 (twice); 18:31; 36:26; 36:27; 37:1, 14; 39:29; 43:5). All these facts very powerfully testify that the book of Ezekiel is consistently God-centered.¹⁴

II. To Underline the Vindication of God’s Holiness

The vindication of God’s holy character through his judgments and through his people is a pivotal concept and lies at the center of the book. God’s judging presence is a dominant feature in Ezekiel, and God states that he “will gain glory” through judging Sidon (28:22). Ezekiel 28:20–26 is the only passage with the double contrasting emphasis on God’s vindication in the book. This intensification in vv. 22 and 25 highlights the importance of this truth and the crucial position of this passage. The Hebrew phrase

¹⁴ See Jenson, *Ezekiel*, 27–30.

niqdashti bah (“I show myself holy within her,” v. 22) points to God’s vindication through his judgment on Sidon, and the statement *niqdashti bam* (“I will show myself holy among them,” literally “through them,” v. 25) focuses on God’s vindication through God’s people. They will give him glory when they live according to his word and law and when the Lord brings them back to their homeland from Babylonian captivity. The identical term *niqdashti* is also used in two other places, namely in Ezek 20:41, *niqdashti bakem* (“I will show myself holy among you,” literally “through you”), and in 39:27, *niqdashti bam* (“I will show myself holy through them”), and both occurrences speak about God’s vindication through his people “in the sight of many nations” (39:27).¹⁵

Ezekiel 36:23b and Ezek 38:16 employ the *nifal* infinitive prepositional phrase *behiqqodshi bakem/bka* which is mentioned in the entire Hebrew Bible only in these two places.¹⁶ In both verses, the ESV translators use the verb “vindicate.” Each occurrence explains vindication from a different angle: one defends God’s honor through a positive action and the other through God’s negative judgment. The first one stresses that God’s name will be glorified and his reputation restored through his people when they live holy lives in correspondence to his standard of holiness and when they respond to God’s grace and return home. The second text underlines God’s condemning judgment upon Gog and his allies. Thus, God’s vindication of his holiness is demonstrated in his judgment over his enemies—Gog and his allies who are a type for Satan and all antagonistic evil forces. However, God’s character is also vindicated through his people when they allow themselves to be transformed by his grace and live according to the principles of love, when they follow him, and when they can finally return home and live according to his laws (see 36:22–32). God wants to be known as a loving and just God among the nations (20:41; 39:27). The expression *le’eyneyhem* (“before their eyes”) is used 15 times only in Ezekiel (4:12; 12:3 [twice]; 12:4 [twice]; 12:5; 12:6; 12:7; 20:9; 20:14; 20:22; 21:11 [6]; 36:23; 37:20; 38:16; 43:11), and this can be true only when his followers consistently live in harmony with his revelation. In this way they are responsible for God’s honor and his “life and death” among the Gentiles.

¹⁵ It is crucial to note that outside of the book of Ezekiel the Hebrew word *niqdashti* is employed only in Lev 22:32: “Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites [*niqdashti betok* = ‘so that I may be honoured as holy among the Israelites,’ as the NJB translates]. I am the Lord who makes you holy [*meqaddishkem* = lit. ‘sanctifies you’].”

¹⁶ See also Ezek 39:7.

God declares that he will vindicate his character by stating, “I will show the holiness of my great name” (Ezek 36:23a). This phrase *qiddashti ’et shmi haggadol* is a *hapax legomenon* and stresses God’s care for his reputation, his name. It is important to note that Ezek 36:23 is the only biblical text with the double positive emphasis on the vindication of the Lord’s holiness, his character, mentioned in the beginning and at the end of this verse. The previous verse also mentions that the Lord is concerned about the holiness of his name: “It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations” (Ezek 36:22). The true picture of a loving God needs to be known to all nations otherwise no one would be attracted to him.

God’s character is vindicated through Sidon’s and Gog’s actions before the nations, because he exposes their work, course of action, and unmasks their awful character. Their activity is a type of all antigodly behavior. In this way, God’s action against them is justified and he is vindicated as the God of love, truth, and justice. Thus, God’s vindication is a central thought in the book of Ezekiel, as it is presented in the heart of the book, and it is expressed twice in our central passage (28:20–26), the only such passage in the entire Hebrew Bible! This double emphasis is intentional and without doubt reveals its cruciality.

III. To Stress the Restoration of God’s People and Their Positive Role

Israel, the prototype of God’s faithful followers, is mentioned in Ezek 28:20–26 in the midst of the prophecies against the foreign nations. This is a surprising and exceptional appearance and needs to catch our attention and be capitalized. This unusual and unique feature emphasizes God’s action for his people who is defined in their relationship to him. It is also worthwhile to notice that four times in this center and culminating passage the staccato phrase, “They will know that I am the Lord” (28:22, 23, 24, 26), is used. This personal pronoun “they” points mainly to the Gentile nations who will recognize the sovereignty of God, but at the end of this passage, it is more universalized and includes even God’s people. The recognition formula climaxes with the specific addition in the last phrase: “They will know that I am the Lord *their God*” (28:26).

IV. To Get a Doubly-Focused Theme with Cosmic Dimensions at the Very Center of the Book

The center of the book relates to negative and positive judgments: (1) God's judgment on the fallen cherub, Satan (28:11–19);¹⁷ and (2) God's vindication of his character ("they will know that I am the Lord God"; 28:20–26). The cosmic dimension gives the message a new importance and urgency. Two cosmic opposites are presented—a patron of evil on the one side, and the Sovereign God (a Patron of ultimate good) on the other; two unequal parties are in focus at the chiastic climax of the book. One picture is destructive, and the other very affirmative. God's holiness through his judgments is uplifted and vindicated, and his people are restored to him. Nevertheless, in the cosmic drama, it is unfolded that at the very end the fallen cherub will be totally destroyed (28:19). However, a life of security and peace for God's people is projected, because there will be no disturbance but only peace, safety, and abundant, blessed life under God's protection and leadership (28:25–26). The eternal covenant of peace will be secured (34:25; 37:26) and God's victory manifested; the Lord will be their God and they will be his people (11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27).

Conclusion

I had incorporated these elements into the literary structure of Ezekiel that I had published in an article in 2007:¹⁸

- I. God judges Israel: the glory of the Lord departs from the defiled temple (1–11).
- II. God judgments against Israel explained (12–23).
- III. God's impending judgment: siege of Jerusalem and prediction of the destruction of the temple (24).
- IV. God judges foreign nations (25–32).

¹⁷ For the discussion about Ezek 28:11–19 referring to the fall of Satan, see José M. Bertoluci, "The Son of Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy Between Good and Evil" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1985); Hummel, 860–869; Norman R. Gullett, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), 421–430; Irene Nowell, *101 Questions & Answers on Angels and Devils* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2010), 49–51; Robert D. Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Fearn, Great Britain: Mentor, 2005), 178–182; Tony Kessinger, *The Devil is in the Details: The Subtlety of Satan in the Complexity of Life* (Bloomington, IN: CrossBooks, 2010); Miguel A. De La Torre and Albert Hernández, *The Quest for the Historical Satan* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011).

¹⁸ Jirí Moskala, "Toward the Fulfillment of the Gog and Magog Prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39," *JATS* 18.2 (2007): 245.

- V. God's actual judgment: fall of Jerusalem reported (33)
- VI. God comforts, gives hope, and promises restoration of Israel (34–39).
- VII. God's vision for the restored community—the new temple and city: the glory of the Lord returns to the temple (40–48).

In footnote no. 7, I specified important details: “At the very center of the literary structure are two panels reflecting the spiritual warfare: (1) God's judgment upon the anointed cherub (Ezek 28:11–19); and (2) God's vindication of His holiness and restoration of the people of Israel (Ezek 28:20–26).”¹⁹

After engaging and friendly discussions with Professor Davidson, we both agreed on the macrostructure of the book of Ezekiel that was published in the *Andrews Study Bible*. We have implemented into the chiasmic structure of the book of Ezekiel the four points mentioned above and augmented it with some finer details, so the final table is presented as follows:

- A. God judges Israel: the glory of the Lord comes to his defiled temple for a covenant lawsuit and departs from the temple and city (1:1–11:25)
- B. God's judgment against Israel explained (12:1–23:49)
- C. God's impending judgment: Jerusalem besieged and the destruction of the temple predicted (24:1–27)
- D. God judges foreign nations (Part 1) (25:1–28:10)
- E. God judges the fallen cherub (cosmic “king” of Tyre) (28:11–19)
- E'. God vindicates his holiness and promises hope and restoration for Israel (28:20–26)
- D'. God judges foreign nations (Part 2) (29:1–32:32)
- C'. God's actual judgment: fall of Jerusalem reported (33:1–33)
- B'. God comforts, gives hope, and promises restoration of Israel (34:1–39:29)
- A'. God's Day of Atonement vision for the restored temple, city, and land: the glory of the Lord returns to his temple and remains in his city (40:1–48:35)²⁰

¹⁹ Moskala, “Toward the Fulfillment,” 45.

²⁰ *Andrews Study Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 1043.

6

The Conversion of the Nations in Zephaniah¹

Greg A. King

Introduction

A little book that is sometimes slighted when setting forth Old Testament theology in general, and the theology of the prophets in particular, is Zephaniah. Also, within Zephaniah, an important theological concept that is oft overlooked is the conversion of the nations, that is, the transformation that takes place in a number of non-Israelites leading them to worship Yahweh. However, it is important that this concept not be disregarded, because herein the diminutive book of Zephaniah makes a distinctive contribution to the Old Testament's overall message, giving a positive emphasis to a portion of Scripture that is sometimes (wrongly) viewed as being exclusively preoccupied with the well-being of Israel and ignoring the salvation of other nations.

In light of the above, this essay will attempt to delineate the prophet

¹ This essay is presented as a tribute to the teaching ministry of Richard M. Davidson, my seminary teacher and good friend, who along with me, loves the Old Testament and enjoys a good, vigorous set of tennis when the opportunity arises. May his passion and contagious enthusiasm for the Word of God continue to inspire many other students as they inspired me so many years ago.

Zephaniah's portrayal of the future blessing that awaits some who are not of the covenant people. It will demonstrate that, according to Zephaniah, God has a glorious destiny in store for a number of foreigners who will be blessed along with the faithful ones among his people Israel.

It should be mentioned at the outset that Zephaniah does not foresee this blessed destiny for every citizen from the other nations. To the contrary, the majority of people from other nations will experience judgment (Zeph 1:2, 3, 18). However, just as a group of people from Judah survive the coming judgment (Zeph 3:12), so with the nations, as well. Immediately following the fires of judgment, which threaten to consume all the people of the earth (Zeph 3:8), survivors from the nations emerge and worship Yahweh (Zeph 3:9).² This clearly shows that Zephaniah's description of the destiny of the nations is not totally bleak. Rather, it includes a portrait of a group of foreigners giving allegiance to Yahweh in the wake of the judgment on the Day of the Lord.

As is obvious even to the casual reader, this theme of the conversion of the nations does not merit attention because it dominates Zephaniah or appears frequently therein. On the contrary, it is confined to only two units and three verses within these two units of the entire book.³ Regarding the three verses which express this theme in Zephaniah, a number of scholars hold one or more of the following opinions. The verses are misplaced in their current context in Zephaniah, incongruent with the remainder of Zephaniah, later additions to the text of Zephaniah, and expressive of a viewpoint inconsistent with the prophet Zephaniah's era.⁴ Such assessments sometimes

² Some scholars would attach the label "remnant" to these survivors from the nations. O. Palmer Robertson, in *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 327, commented that Zephaniah speaks of "the salvation of a remnant both from the nations as well as from Israel." V. Hertrich, in "The 'Remnant' in the Old Testament," *TDNT*, 4:208, also talked about "a remnant of the Gentiles." Perhaps this is legitimate if one operates with a fairly broad definition of remnant. However, it should be noted that Zephaniah does not refer to foreign survivors as a "remnant," nor does he simply merge them into the remnant of Judah. Rather, he maintains some distinction between the two groups, seeing the remnant of Judah as the heirs of the covenant promises and as the recipients of positive attention from the survivors of the nations (Zeph 3:19–20). These factors suggest that a narrower definition of remnant is preferable and lead me to avoid the appellation "remnant" for the survivors from the nations.

³ The three verses are Zeph 2:11; 3:9–10. Adele Berlin, in *Zephaniah*, AB 25A (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 133, and Paul R. House, in *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama*, JSOTSup 69 and Bible and Literature Series 16 (Sheffield: Almond, 1988), 65, noted the linkage between the two units in which these verses are found.

⁴ J. J. M. Roberts, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1991), 201, called Zeph 2:11 "an isolated and apparently misplaced fragment."

result in these verses and their description of the conversion of the nations being disregarded or barely considered in treatments of the message of Zephaniah.⁵

It is not the purpose of this essay to contend for the authenticity of the verses concerned with this theme of the salvation of the nations, though I think a good case can be made. Rather, my methodology is simply to develop the various statements, nuances, and inferences of the verses in Zephaniah which deal with the conversion of the nations.

Notwithstanding its lack of prominence in Zephaniah (and within the prophetic corpus as a whole for that matter), the theme of the conversion of the nations warrants consideration for the following reasons. First, simply because it, together with the more frequently studied theme of the Day of the Lord, is also a part of the overall message of the book of Zephaniah. If one is to understand the theological message of Zephaniah in its totality, no verses or theological concept should be overlooked.

Furthermore, it is not just a part of Zephaniah's message, it is important, even integral, to the prophet's theology.⁶ This will be demonstrated in the ensuing discussion, but suffice it to say here, as implied above, that the theme of the conversion of the nations serves to complement Zephaniah's proclamation of judgment on the nations. Zephaniah's description of the destiny of the nations is one-sided if this theme is not taken into account. Related to the previous, it is essential because it reveals Yahweh's goal in bringing judgment on the nations. It demonstrates that this judgment is not

Talking about the same verse, J. M. P. Smith observed, in J. M. P. Smith, W. H. Ward, and J. A. Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, and Joel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 229, "This vision of the world-wide acceptance of Yahweh as God of the nations far transcends the reach of faith in Zephaniah's time and indelibly stamps the verse as later." Regarding Zeph 3:9–10, the same author, in *ibid.*, 252, stated that they "constitute a disturbing element within this oracle. They seem to be foreign to, if not also later than, their present context." He took this position due to "the fact that they manifest a totally different attitude toward the nations from that of v. 8." Also speaking of Zeph 3:9–10, Charles Taylor declared in "The Book of Zephaniah: Introduction and Exegesis," in *IB*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1956), 6:1031, "another spirit, more kindly and less grim, breathes through these two verses."

⁵ Note the minimal attention given to Zeph 2:11 in Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, WBC 32 (Waco: TX: Word, 1984), 134–135, a commentary which is a contribution to a major commentary series. Taylor, in "The Book of Zephaniah," *IB* 6:1012–1013, explicitly excluded Zeph 3:9 from consideration when setting forth the prophet's religious teaching. Also, there is no reference to the conversion of the nations in the section entitled "The Prophet and His Message" in Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 164.

⁶ House, in *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama*, 132, called the emphasis on the salvation of the nations "an indisposible part of Zephaniah's plot."

an end in itself.⁷ Without this theme a necessary component of Zephaniah's message is lacking.⁸

Additionally, several points made by Zephaniah in connection with this theme are quite startling in the context of the prophetic corpus. When compared to the general thrust of the salvation oracles of the prophetic books, a thrust that emphasizes the deliverance of Israel, this announcement of the conversion of the nations is striking.⁹ In fact, it is worth mentioning that the theme of the salvation of the nations is sometimes slighted in presentations of prophetic theology as a whole. Thus, this description of the nations' conversion in Zephaniah is all the more worthy of attention. Not only is it a vital part of the theology of Zephaniah, it can also enhance our understanding of the overall prophetic message regarding the destiny of the nations.

Nature and Purpose of Yahweh's Actions

The verses in Zephaniah which speak of the conversion of the nations speak of two divine actions. At first blush, one of the actions seems destructive in nature. The prophet declares of Yahweh, "Yahweh will be terrible against them; indeed, he will shrivel (*rāzâ*) רָצַח all the gods of the earth" (Zeph 2:11). Although the precise meaning of *rāzâ*, and thus the exact action which Yahweh will take against these other gods, are uncertain, the main thrust seems apparent enough. Yahweh will reduce to nothingness the gods worshiped by the other nations.¹⁰ However this act of diminishing the

⁷ Ehud Ben Zvi noted in *A Historical-Critical Study of Zephaniah*, BZAW 198 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 313, "YHWH's purpose is not to destroy nation after nation—as the series of announcements of judgment may suggest—but to bring them to bow to YHWH."

⁸ The importance of Zeph 2:11, one of the verses that speaks of this theme, may also be underscored by its position in the structure of the prophetic book. Although I am not necessarily advocating a chiasmic structure for either the entire prophetic book or chapter two, the significance of this verse does seem to be enhanced by the fact that it is ensconced at the center of the four judgments against foreign nations in Zeph 2. J. du Preez, in "An Interpretation of Zephaniah 2:11 with Special Reference to the Phrase *ʾiš mimqômô*," *Scriptura* 19 (1986): 19, spoke highly of this verse's importance, calling it the "pivot" for the entire unit of Zeph 2:1–3:7.

⁹ Willem VanGemeren observed in *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 241, "Zephaniah's oracle pertaining to the inclusion of the Gentiles is one of the most revolutionary among the preexilic prophets."

¹⁰ The interpretation of Berlin, in *Zephaniah*, 110, is that "the Lord will constrict or shrink the foreign gods by constricting the land over which they have dominion." Alternatively, Robertson, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 308, took this to mean that since God has devastated the lands in which these gods are worshiped, as described in the preceding verses, the lands "will produce nothing which might be offered to the idolatrous gods. They will wither to nothing for lack of attention." This is coherent with the view suggested by J. M. P. Smith in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Zephaniah*, 229, who observed "that in earlier times,

gods is accomplished, it clearly signals an attack on these gods.¹¹ It demonstrates their helplessness and thus undermines their credibility in the minds of their worshipers.¹² But as will be pointed out below, this destruction of the gods yields a constructive result for the nations.

The second action which Yahweh takes is that he converts those of the nations who have survived the judgment on the Day of the Lord. Immediately after announcing the punishment, Yahweh declares, “Because then I will give to the peoples purified lips” (Zeph 3:9). The implication is that the lips of these foreigners are tainted, perhaps due to boastful comments (Zeph 2:8,10,15) and expressions of devotion to other gods (Zeph 2:15). Such tainted lips render them unable to worship Yahweh properly. Like the prophet Isaiah (see Isa 6:5), their unclean lips make them ripe for destruction.¹³ As in Isaiah’s case, only Yahweh’s transforming power can purify from sin.

This transforming power is in view in Zeph 3:9 with the use of the verb פִּתְּחָהּ (“I will give”). The verbal root (פִּתַּח) of this word connotes a drastic reversal of the previous situation.¹⁴ In light of this connotation,

sacrificial offerings were looked upon as the ‘food of the gods’ (cf. Ez. 44 7); hence, by causing the offerings to cease, Yahweh will deprive the gods of their means of support.”

¹¹ Robertson, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 308, suggested that the statement of Zeph 2:11, “Yahweh will be terrible (nōrā) against them,” implies a theophany. This may be correct in light of the fact that a theophany is an important component of the Day of the Lord and this same niphil participle is used elsewhere in descriptions of the Day of the Lord. See Joel 2:11, 31 (MT 3:4); Mal 4:5 (MT 3:23).

¹² Emphasizing the attack on other gods is the fact that the word rāzâ may connote impotence or death due to starvation. As Richard D. Patterson pointed out in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, WyEC (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 348, either of these ideas is “a serious affront to the nature gods of Canaan.”

¹³ Jacob Milgrom, in “Did Isaiah Prophecy during the Reign of Uzziah?”, *VT* 14 (1964): 172n4, held that the purified lips mentioned here are the antonym of the unclean lips of Isa 6:5. Alternatively, Ben Zvi, in *Historical-Critical Study of Zephaniah*, 225–226, maintained that this passage cannot be understood in light of Isa 6:1–7. He rejected the idea that the lips of foreigners are being purified because of idolatry, holding that Zeph 3:9 simply refers to “pure, sincere speech.” He was probably mistaken to deny an association with idolatry in light of its strong condemnation in Zeph 1:4–6 and the linkage of idolatry with foreigners in Zeph 2:11. Moreover, these two views may not be mutually exclusive. As Berlin suggested in *Zephaniah*, 133, “The idea seems to be that the impure speech of idolatry is replaced with pure speech by means of which one can praise the Lord.” In other words, the prophet is implying that Yahweh will cleanse the stained lips of foreigners, enabling them to worship him properly and to speak purely and sincerely, just like the remnant of Judah in Zeph 3:13. The view that “purified lips” should be rendered “pure Hebrew” (see, for example, the translation of Zeph 3:9 in *The Living Bible*) and that the fulfillment of this verse can be witnessed in the modern state of Israel is not convincing.

¹⁴ Note the use of the same verb to describe the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 19:21, 25, 29. Speaking of this word, Maria Széles averred in *A Commentary on the Books of*

conversion, a word indicating a dramatic change, is not too strong a word to describe what is herein portrayed.¹⁵ These surviving foreigners undergo an epic transformation. Their lips, the instrument through which they give expression to their thoughts and attitudes, are impure and defiled with sin, but they do not remain in that condition.¹⁶ Rather, they are transmuted by Yahweh.

This conversion takes place in order that these lips might be used for a specific purpose. This purpose emerges when the verses portraying the theme of the conversion of the nations are examined. Briefly stated, Yahweh purifies the lips of the peoples and eliminates their gods so that the survivors from the nations might worship and serve him.

That this is Yahweh's purpose is obvious in both of the units of Zephaniah in which the concept of the nations' conversion appears. Immediately following the announcement that Yahweh will shrivel or starve the gods of the nations, the prophet declares, "They will bow down to him, each in his own place, all the islands of the nations" (Zeph 2:11). This juxtaposition and sequence of Yahweh's action and the result of his action suggests that his aim in eliminating these gods is to engender worship of himself. When Yahweh exposes the fundamental inferiority and impotence of their gods, then these foreigners turn to Yahweh and worship him. Perhaps their reasoning goes something like this: If our gods cannot even supply themselves with nourishment, how can they avail us? If their fate is starvation at the hands of Yahweh, let us worship him, not them. Thus, Yahweh's elimination of the other gods leads to worship of him as the one true God.¹⁷

Also, subsequent to the announcement that Yahweh will purify the lips

Habakkuk and Zephaniah, ITC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 107, "It is not a gradual, consistent, developing change that is meant, but the result of a sudden, vigorous interference."

¹⁵ Rex Mason, in *Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel*, OTG (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 24, spoke of "an extraordinary change of fate for the nations," holding that Zeph 3:9-10 predicts "no less than their conversion to the worship of Yahweh."

¹⁶ Széles, in *Commentary on Zephaniah*, 107, implied the significance of the lips, stating that they represent "the instrument that reveals the inner ego." Noting that the remnant are praised for speaking no falsehood in Zeph 3:13, Ivan J. Ball, Jr., observed in *A Rhetorical Study of Zephaniah* (Berkeley, CA: BIBAL, 1988), 236-237, "The lip, or speech, is a key concept in this section, as indeed in the whole of the book of Zephaniah."

¹⁷ As Széles observed in *Commentary on Zephaniah*, 97, "This very helplessness will become the driving power that will lead the peoples to the one true and eternal God."

of the peoples is a statement of the purpose of this action.¹⁸ The purpose is “that all of them may call on the name of Yahweh, and serve him unitedly” (Zeph 3:9). Although different words are used than in Zeph 2:11, the portrayal is similar. Like Zeph 2:11, Zeph 3:9–10 describes foreigners’ giving allegiance to Yahweh. This allegiance is manifested in several ways. First, they are said to call on Yahweh’s name. This phrase is a clear reference to invoking him in worship.¹⁹ But there is more than just audible worship from the lips of these foreign devotees. Not only do they call on his name, they also serve him in unison. The connotation of עָבַד, the verbal root of “serve,” is that the people of these nations are entirely devoted to Yahweh and that they demonstrate this devotion by yielding their lives in complete obedience to him.²⁰

A further demonstration of their devotion to Yahweh appears in the statement that the peoples from afar “shall bring my offering” (Zeph 3:10). Two Hebrew words, יוֹבִלְוּן (“they shall bring”) and מִנְחָתִי (“his offering”) work together to help underscore the spiritual commitment depicted in this phrase. The root יָבַל is used elsewhere with religious significance, describing foreigners’ presenting gifts to Yahweh that express their veneration of him (see Pss 68:29 [MT 30]; Isa 18:7).²¹ The same idea is present here. People of other nations are bringing him an offering, thus indicating their fealty and devotion to him.

The exact nature of this offering is not specified.²² However, the fact that

¹⁸ The infinitives לְקַרְא and לְעַבְדוּ in Zeph 3:9 are best understood as infinitives of purpose, indicating the aim or objective of what precedes them. For this meaning of the infinitive, see B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor in *IBHS*, 606, pars. 36.2.3c–d.

¹⁹ Roberts, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 217, observed that “the expression ‘to call upon Yahweh’ refers specifically to the invoking of God’s name in praise and prayer, but it is often used as a general expression for worship.” Similarly, Patterson, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 370, held that it “means to invoke his name in belief, submission, and supplication.”

²⁰ Of this word Széles wrote in *Commentary on Zephaniah*, 108, “The verb ‘*abad*’ points to this, that a lifestyle lived according to the will of God means service of him in every area of life.”

²¹ Dennis J. McCarthy, in “Hosea XII 2: Covenant by Oil,” *VT* 14 (1964): 220–221, called attention to the specifically religious usage of יָבַל, noting that in Zeph 3:10 it describes “the bringing of gifts to Yahweh,” gifts “by which the Gentiles finally acknowledge His unique supremacy.”

²² מִנְחָה often indicates a grain offering (see, for example, Lev 2:1,3). Patterson, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 371, identified the offering that the foreigners bring as Israelites, but this is dubious. He arrived at this conclusion by a somewhat idiosyncratic rendering of Zeph 3:10. In his view, “my worshipers” and “the daughter of my scattered ones” are not in apposition. Rather, the former is the subject and refers to foreigners and the latter is the first of two accusatives and refers to Israelites, giving the translation, “My worshipers shall bring My scattered ones as My

it is characterized as a *מִנְחָה*, along with the surrounding description of these foreigners and their activities, implies that they are giving homage to Yahweh, expressing their gratitude to him, and submitting to his lordship.²³ It also hints that their service referred to in Zeph 3:9 does not stem from compulsion or fear, but from a heart full of praise for what Yahweh has done. These saved of the nations, formerly devoted to their idols, now have a new object of adoration.²⁴ Their worship is focused on Yahweh, and they demonstrate their appreciation and reverence for him and their compliance with his requirements by presenting him an offering.

It is worth emphasizing that Zephaniah envisions that Yahweh worshipers will span the globe. All nations will be represented in this group. Several times the prophet stresses that this is no localized phenomenon. It includes “the islands of the nations” (Zeph 2:11), an idiom intended to suggest the most distant inhabited lands.²⁵ Also, those who worship Yahweh are said to hail “from beyond the rivers of Cush” (Zeph 3:10). Again, this is probably meant to imply the farthest point possible.²⁶ Moreover, the adjective “all” (*כָּל*) further underscores this point. “All the islands of the nations” bow down to Yahweh (Zeph 2:11).²⁷ Not just a few of the peoples but

tribute.” Notwithstanding the fact that he adduces a Canaanite text with some parallels to this translation, I do not think that this is the most convincing understanding of this verse.

²³ Speaking of *מִנְחָה* sacrifices, Hans-Joachim Kraus commented in *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1966), 115, “The one who offers the sacrifice pays homage to the *deus praesens*, submits himself to him and demonstrates his complete devotion.” Gordon Wenham, in *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 71, noted that in the Israelite cult, the *מִנְחָה* offering “was an act of dedication and consecration to God as Savior and covenant King. It expressed not only thankfulness but obedience and a willingness to keep the law.”

²⁴ In fact, the implication of Zephaniah is that idol worship was their main problem. As Richard Nysse observed in “A Theological Reading of Zephaniah’s Audience,” *WW Suppl.* 1 (1992): 68, “Deceitful worship has been at the root of the injustice that has been or will be punished—not *hypocritical* worship, but *false* worship, calling on other names than the ‘name of the Lord.’” But with the purification of their lips by Yahweh, “false worshipers will be made into true worshipers.”

²⁵ Robertson, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 308, stated that this phrase “refers to the most distant habitations of people on the earth.”

²⁶ Berlin, in *Zephaniah*, 134, and Ball, in *A Rhetorical Study of Zephaniah*, 248–249, both contended that “the rivers of Cush” in Zeph 3:10 is an allusion to the river that flows around Cush in the Garden of Eden (see Gen 2:13) rather than being a reference to Ethiopia as most scholars assume. While this may be the case, it does not change the main intent of the phrase, which is, as Berlin indicated (p. 134), “to evoke a far-off place, at the ends of the earth.”

²⁷ David W. Baker, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, TOTC 23b (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 108, noted the structural parallel in Zeph 2:11 with the adjective “all” appearing near the end of each half of the verse. Thus, “the totality of the doomed gods (‘all’) are in contrast with the universal (‘all’) extent of the worship of the true God.”

“all of them” invoke Yahweh’s name (Zeph 3:9). According to Zephaniah, worship of Yahweh will be universal among the survivors from among the nations, encircling the world.

To summarize, Yahweh eliminates the gods of the nations and converts foreigners by purifying their lips. This enables him to achieve his ultimate purpose for people from all nations of the world, that they might serve him through both their words and their actions.²⁸

Attributes and Characteristics of Yahweh

An important attribute of Yahweh emphasized by Zephaniah’s description of the conversion of foreigners is that Yahweh is not only the God of Israel, he is the God of the nations as well. This is indicated in several different ways by Zephaniah. One of the most prominent is in Zeph 3:10 where Yahweh announces, “From beyond the rivers of Cush, my worshipers, the daughter of my scattered ones, will carry along my offering.” Who are these “worshipers,” these “scattered ones,” whom Yahweh claims as his own? Although some scholars understand one or both of the terms to refer to Israelites, this interpretation breaks the flow of thought of the unit and seems intrusive to the context.²⁹ Rather, in light of the fact that the foreigners who “call on the name of Yahweh” in Zeph 3:9 are closely linked to Zeph 3:10 by the term “worshipers”, the same group is probably in view in both verses.³⁰ That is, “my worshipers, the daughter of my scattered ones” in Zeph 3:10 are most likely the “peoples” of Zeph 3:9.³¹ Thus, they are citizens of other

²⁸ Robertson, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 329 worded it nicely when he remarked, “Not only with their lips, but also with their lives they will serve him.”

²⁹ Supporting my point is the fact that the views of some scholars who think that the Israelites are in view in Zeph 3:10 are not always self-consistent. Elizabeth Achtemeier, in *Nahum–Malachi*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 82–83, held that “the remnant of Judah” is described in Zeph 3:10, but this seems contradictory to her interpretation of Zeph 3:9 as a reversal of Gen. 11 that speaks of the peoples. In addition, Robertson, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 329–330, thought that the term “the daughter of my scattered ones” probably refers to Israelites. However, this interpretation appears incongruent with his position that “my worshipers” refers to foreigners since he translated these two terms in apposition (p. 326).

³⁰ עֲרֵבִי (in Zeph 3:10 can be translated as “suppliants” (as in the NRSV), a rendering which makes the connection with those who “call on the name of Yahweh” in Zeph 3:9 even more apparent. Ben Zvi, in *Historical-Critical Study of Zephaniah*, 229 found finds a close relationship between the two verses. He even posited that v. 10 is a loose parallel of v. 9, suggesting a relationship not only between the terminology I have already mentioned, but also between “serve him” (v. 9) and “carry along my offering” (v. 10).

³¹ Berlin, in *Zephaniah*, 135, held that foreigners are the referent in Zeph 3:9–10. Joining in this opinion, among others, are R. Smith, in *Micah–Malachi*, 141–142, and Baker, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 115–116.

nations.³²

This interpretation is buttressed by the echoes in Zeph 3:9–10 of the Tower of Babel narrative with its scattering of nations and confusion of tongues.³³ In that narrative Yahweh confuses the language or lip (nominal root, שָׁפַח, שֶׁפַּח) of the people and scatters (verbal root, פָּרַץ) them (see Gen 11:1–9). In Zeph 3:9–10 Yahweh purifies the lip (nominal root, שָׁפַח, שֶׁפַּח) of the people and his scattered (verbal root, פָּרַץ) ones return. In other words, Zephaniah announces a reversal of the Tower of Babel incident.³⁴ It depicts the future with the imagery of a more pristine time when all people were Yahweh’s people. This world-wide perspective is stressed with the two possessive pronominal suffixes of Zeph 3:10. Not only does Yahweh claim the people of Judah, calling them “my people” (Zeph 2:8), he also lays claim to foreigners, designating them “my worshipers” and “my scattered ones” (Zeph 3:10). The fact that Yahweh claims as his own citizens from other nations indicates that he is not just the national deity of Judah, not merely the God of Israel. He is also the God of the nations.

This same attribute of Yahweh is suggested by his action in transforming the lips of foreign peoples to enable them to worship him (Zeph 3:9). The meaning of this action is discussed above. My point here is that if Yahweh takes an interest in these peoples, if he is concerned enough to initiate a conversion which engenders proper worship, then *ipso facto*, he is their God also.

Another way that Zephaniah portrays Yahweh as the God of the nations is by depicting his acceptance of their worship from their own locale. Zeph

³² Regarding the term “the daughter of my scattered ones,” J. H. Eaton asserted in *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (London: SCM, 1961), 153, “There seems no good reason why it could not have referred to the peoples of the world, in accordance with the context.” This being the case, it is unnecessary to join W. Rudolph, in *Micah–Nahum–Habakkuk–Zephaniah*, KAT 13/3 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1975), 292, and consider this phrase as “the mark of a Judean particularist.” Rather than being incongruent with the tone of the passage, it augments and enhances its universal flavor.

³³ R. Smith commented in *Micah–Malachi*, 142, “Zephaniah seems to have combined the ideas in Gen 11 and Isa 6 and looked for a time when all of the uncleanness and impurity on the lips of the peoples of the world would be removed and they would come to worship Yahweh with one accord.” Other scholars who see possible reflections of Gen 11 in Zeph 3 include Eaton, in *Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, 153, and Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., in Roy B. Zuck, ed., *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 417. By way of contrast, Ben Zvi, *Historical-Critical Study of Zephaniah*, 225n736, contended that any connection between the two accounts “can only be a very loose one, built around free associations.”

³⁴ Ball, in *A Rhetorical Study of Zephaniah*, 236, stated that Zephaniah contains “a reversal of the account in Genesis.” He also noted seven words that Zeph 3:9 has in common with Gen 11:1–9.

2:11 declares, “They will bow down to him, each in his own place, all the islands of the nations.” Some scholars advocate that the Hebrew word מִמְקוֹמֹם (which I have translated “in his own place”³⁵) may indicate that these foreigners are making a journey to worship at Jerusalem.³⁶ Although this picture is more common among the prophets than foreigners worshiping in their own countries (see Isa 2:2–3; Mic 4:1–2; Zech 14:16), it is not the likely meaning here.³⁷ Rather, than envisioning a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, “Zephaniah sees the worship of the true God spreading outward to the ends of the earth. Every nation shall become sacred as a center for the worship of the Lord.”³⁸ This picture of Yahweh worship taking place by foreigners on their home turf is rather astounding when considered in conjunction with other Old Testament passages (see, for example Deut 12:13–14), and it speaks of Yahweh’s relationship with these people of other nations.

To summarize, the implication of these verses in Zephaniah seems clear. If Yahweh claims other peoples as his own, if he transforms them and enables them to worship him, and if he accepts this worship which they engage in while in their home countries, then he is not merely the God of Israel. He is that, and much more, for he is the God of the nations as well.

As an outworking of his role as Lord of the nations, Yahweh is portrayed as a God of salvation and grace and mercy when it comes to his dealings with these foreign survivors. I will look briefly at each of these three characteristics. Regarding salvation, it should be noted that Yahweh’s fierce judgment which punishes the world is not his final word on the fate of the nations. The last picture of the nations in Zephaniah is not one of their being consumed by the fires of judgment but is a picture of their bringing an offering to Yahweh (Zeph 3:8–10). Thus, Yahweh’s final word regarding the

³⁵ The translation of the NRSV (“in its own place”) is supportive of the interpretation of the verse advanced here.

³⁶ For example, Baker declared in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 108, “This could mean that foreigners will flock to Jerusalem.” From a previous generation, C. F. Keil, in Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 2, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), 145, understood the verse in this way.

³⁷ In his helpful discussion of this text, du Preez, in “An Interpretation of Zephaniah 2:11,” 21, concluded that it likely means that “every nation serves the Lord where it lives.” Rudolph, in *Micha–Nahum–Habakkuk–Zephaniah*, 282, Roberts, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 202, and Széles, in *Commentary on Zephaniah*, 97, concur in this viewpoint.

³⁸ Robertson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 308.

nations is a word of salvation.³⁹ As stated earlier, his judgment is salvific in purpose. It is not an end in itself, but is the means of accomplishing Yahweh's ultimate goal, that of saving some of the peoples of the world and bringing them into a relationship with himself.⁴⁰

Regarding grace, it is implied that this salvation of the nations springs out of Yahweh's grace because they have done nothing to deserve it. Although the remnant among the covenant people are said to be a humble people who seek Yahweh (Zeph 2:3; 3:12), there is nothing indicating such commendable traits among the peoples of the world. It is true that they come to a recognition of Yahweh as the true God, but even this is due to his prior actions on their behalf. He exposes the impotence of their gods, and this is what leads them to bow down to him (Zeph 2:11). He cleanses their impure lips and thus they are enabled to worship him (Zeph 3:9). One finds no evidence that they are deserving of Yahweh's salvific actions. Yahweh is a God of grace, and this grace extends beyond the boundaries of Israel to embrace the world.⁴¹

That Yahweh is a God of mercy is emphasized by the fact that his mercy spans the world. According to Zephaniah, God's mercy is as broad as his judgment. While judgment is universal (Zeph 1:2–3), encompassing Cush (Zeph 2:12),⁴² mercy is also. In fact, mercy even reaches beyond Cush (Zeph 3:10). Although Yahweh's sword of punishment cuts a wide swath,⁴³ the swath of his mercy is broad as well. It has no limits. This is most clearly expressed by the fact that people from every nation, from the farthest

³⁹ Ben Zvi asserted in *Historical-Critical Study of Zephaniah*, 320, "The universal announcement of judgment in Zeph 3:8 turns out to be the first act of the divine action that leads to universal salvation."

⁴⁰ Speaking of this purpose in divine judgment, Patterson observed in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 370, "God's goal is to effect change in the hearts and lives of all."

⁴¹ House, in *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama*, 60, spoke of this divine attribute when he asserts, "The day of Yahweh will conclude with the grace of Yahweh." And elsewhere (p. 115), "God could destroy the whole human race, but chooses to spare some." However, his observation (p. 60) that God's grace "is extended first to all the nations" is not necessarily correct. Rather, the fact that the same temporal phrase that begins Zeph 3:9, כִּי־אָזְנָה ("because then"), is also found in Zeph 3:11 suggests that the salvation of the nations and the salvation of the remnant of Judah occur at the same time.

⁴² The argument of Ball in *A Rhetorical Study of Zephaniah*, 140–141 that the phrase commencing Zeph 2:12, "even you, O Cushites," should actually be the conclusion of Zeph 2:11, indicating that the Cushites are destined for Yahweh worship instead of for judgment, is unconvincing.

⁴³ This is an especially fitting metaphor because Yahweh's sword is a symbol of divine judgment in Zeph 2:12.

inhabitable places, engage in worship of Yahweh and he embraces their worship.⁴⁴ To summarize, Yahweh is the God of the nations, a God of salvation and grace and mercy to the peoples of the world.

Implications and Conclusions

The theme of the conversion of the nations in Zephaniah is a significant part of the prophet's message and it serves several functions. First, it can be said that the conversion of the nations is an important happening in the continuum of events occurring on the Day of the Lord.⁴⁵ This happening demonstrates that the events at that time are not totally negative in nature, either for Israel or the nations. Rather, the events of that day reach their culmination and climax in a thrilling portrayal of salvation for some from both groups.

Also, Zephaniah's announcement of the conversion of the nations serves to demonstrate that judgment and hope are not incompatible. They are not mutually exclusive, cancelling each other out, as some think. Instead, they are both part of the same tapestry.⁴⁶ In fact, they have an even closer connection because judgment is what paves the way for salvation (see Zeph 2:11). The prophet's picture is one of salvation through judgment, a conversion to Yahweh that is made possible by divine punishment. As stated above, salvation is the purpose of judgment all along. Universal judgment is not an end in itself, but it has a goal in mind, namely, to engender worship from among the nations.⁴⁷

Zephaniah's description of the conversion of the nations serves to complement his portrayal of the salvation of the remnant. Just as a group of people from Judah emerge from the judgment and proceed to worship Yahweh, so with the nations also. Both groups seek "the name of Yahweh."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ House averred in *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama*, 115, "Zephaniah presents Yahweh's mercy through the choice of a remnant and the promise of the nations' coming to Him (2.11)."

⁴⁵ B. Renaud, in *Michée, Sophonie, Nahum*, SB (Paris: Gabalda, 1987), 247, emphasized that the salvation described in Zeph 3:9 is part and parcel of the same Day of the Lord as the judgment depicted in Zeph 3:8. That is, there is only one Day of the Lord, not two.

⁴⁶ du Preez, in "An Interpretation of Zephaniah 2:11," 22, held that the salvific message of Zeph 2:11 is not incongruent with its surrounding context, calling this verse "a profound message of salvation within a prophecy of divine judgment."

⁴⁷ Baker, in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 115, pointed out that "the purpose of the punishment, not only of Judah but of all the nations, is restoration for all, the conversion of the pagans to God."

⁴⁸ Note that this phrase occurs with the converted of the nations in Zeph 3:9 and with the remnant of Judah in Zeph 3:12. In addition, Ball, in *A Rhetorical Study of Zephaniah*, 238,

After the consuming fires of punishment have subsided, Zephaniah depicts a remnant from Judah, a group that celebrates the presence of Yahweh (Zeph 3:14–15), a group that Yahweh loves and over which he rejoices (Zeph 3:17). But they are not alone. They have a counterpart in another group of people, the converted of the nations. This group also seeks the presence and the blessing of Yahweh, and the implication is that they are accepted by him as well.⁴⁹

The evidence suggests that Zephaniah's announcement of the nations' conversion functions as a clear indication of Yahweh's salvific purpose for the human race. These foreigners are not of the elect nation, they hail from lands where idols are worshiped, and they have tainted lips. All of these combine to imply their unworthiness and to suggest that for them judgment is certain. But in a stunning display of mercy, God works on their behalf and enables them to worship him.⁵⁰

In summary, Zephaniah's description of the conversion of the nations is this. In addition to the remnant from Israel, Yahweh will save a group of people from the nations. He will act on their behalf by exposing the impotence of their gods and converting them. These actions will engender worship and service from these peoples, a worship and service that will encompass the earth, knowing no boundaries. Such actions and the results that they yield portray Yahweh as God of the nations, a God of salvation and mercy and grace for all peoples.

observed that these two groups are linked by identical phrases (אֲנִי־יְיָ) in Zeph 3:9,11, asserting that in these two sentences “we have the restoration of a humbled and lowly people, both within Israel and among all the peoples, whose language also has been purified and made one.”

⁴⁹ Robertson stated in *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 327, “The converted from the nations shall join with his people in the worship and service of the one true God.”

⁵⁰ Speaking of these saved of the nations, House declared in *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama*, 81, “The fact that they can come to Yahweh at all is an incredible offer. Idolaters and enemies of God and His people are made as acceptable as Israel. There is no greater evidence of the Lord's kindness in the entire book, and it is this kindness that best defines His personality.”

7

The Term *Sheol* and Its Meaning in the Context of Job 7:9

Eriks Galenicks

General Introduction

Regardless of one's social and religious status, whether a person was rich or poor, righteous or wicked, king, slave, or prophet—all of them had to face, one day, the reality of death and the grave, or, in other words, they had to go down to the place called *Sheol*. The term *Sheol* occurs sixty-six times in the Hebrew Scriptures and the rate of its recurrence contains a distinct message in terms of its importance¹ It is no coincidence that the Hebrew Scriptures have much to say about life, but even much more about death, as is seen from the frequency of the employment of the roots חָיָה (“live”)² and מָוַת (“die”).³

¹ The term *Sheol* occurs seven times in the Torah: Gen 37:35; 42:38; 44:29; 44:31; Num 16:30; 16:33; Deut 32:22; twenty-four times in the Prophets: 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Sam 22:6; 1 Kgs 2:6; 2 Kgs 2:9; Isa 5:14; 7:11; 14:9; 14:11; 14:15; 28:15; 28:18; 38:10; 38:18; 57:9; Ezek 31:15; 31:16; 31:17; 32:21; 32:27; Hos 13:14; 13:14; Amos 9:2; Jonah 2:3; Hab 2:5; and thirty-five times in the Writings: Pss 6:6; 9:18; 16:10; 18:6; 30:4; 31:18; 49:15; 49:15; 49:16; 55:16; 86:13; 88:4; 89:49; 116:3; 139:8; 141:7; Job 7:9; 11:8; 14:13; 17:13; 17:16; 21:13; 24:19; 26:6; Prov 1:12; 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:11; 15:24; 23:14; 27:20; 30:16; Cant 8:6; Qoh 9:10.

² Occurs about 800 times.

³ Occurring more than a 1,000 times. Michael A. Knibb, “Life and Death in the Old Testament,” in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*, ed. Ronald E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 395.

It should also be noted that in spite of the best efforts by the brightest scholarship of this age, which is involved in extensive anthropological-theological studies of the Hebrew Scriptures; in spite of the fact that many scholars have made valuable contributions to the issue under discussion,⁴ there is little or no consensus at all among them in regard to the nature (the “what”), function (the “how”), and purpose (the “why”), or the meaning of the term *Sheol* in general. Moreover, it has caused so many misunderstandings and differing opinions and has become so controversial that it has led scholars to fierce polemic.⁵

The Book of Job

The book of Job, as an integral part of the Hebrew Scriptures, is unique and complex from its literary and artistic perspective.⁶ It deals with the most

⁴ Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*; Petersen, *Hell on Fire*; R. Laird Harris, “The Meaning of the Word *Sheol* as Shown by Parallels in Poetic Texts,” *JETS* 4.4 (1961): 129–135; Edward William Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical and Theological Dialogue* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000); Gerald C. Studer, *After Death, What?* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976); Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Shape of Death: Life, Death, and Immortality in the Early Fathers* (New York: Abingdon, 1961); John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (London: Collins, 1976); Braun, *Whatever Happened to Hell?*; John Macquarrie, “Death and Eternal Life,” *ExpTim* 89 (November 1977): 46–48; Stewart R. Sutherland, “What Happens after Death?” *SJT* 22.4 (December 1969): 404–418; Calvin D. Linton, “The Sorrows of Hell,” *CT* 16 (November 1971): 12–14; Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, *BibOr* 21 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969); Martin-Achard, *From Death To Life*; Lloyd R. Bailey, *Biblical Perspectives on Death* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); David George Moore, *The Battle for Hell* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995).

⁵ For example, R. Morey described conditionalists as those who are trying to “silence their conscience,” “justify their wicked lives” and “defend their evil ways” as “they capitulate to liberalism” and a “weak view of Scripture.” Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1984), 157, 203. John Ankerberg accused conditionalists of teaching “doctrines of demons” (*The Facts on Life After Death* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1992], 37). J. Blanchard called E. W. Fudge an Adventist, which for him was a concept denoting something sectarian and cultic. John Blanchard, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* (Durham: Evangelical, 1995), 166, 212–219. In the same book he wrote, “The human body is a part of the material universe, and it has long been established that no material object in the universe can be destroyed in the sense of being wiped out of existence. Even if it disappears it is immediately reconstituted either as matter or energy. As this is a law which operates everywhere in nature, the human body is literally indestructible, and that being the case the extinction of the soul would be out of character with everything else that God has created” (68). Dixon asserted that those who deny the tradition of everlasting punishment share “modernism’s mindset,” from positions based on “tolerance of all viewpoints,” or shape their beliefs in such a way as to achieve “a kinder and gentler evangelism.” Larry Dixon, *Other Side of the Good News* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1992), 9, 16, 182.

⁶ Andersen, Francis I, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 14:17–57.

fundamental questions of human existence: the issues of life and death, suffering and the grave, resurrection and the nature of Yahweh.

It is worth mentioning that exactly in this context the term *Sheol* occurs eight times.⁷ However, because of space limitations this paper will focus only on Job 7:9 in its immediate book and canonical contexts. This concise study should help to answer and clarify the controversial question of the general meaning of the term *Sheol* for a broader anthropological-theological context, which include in itself such argumentative issues as man's continues existence or non-existence after death in *Sheol*.

Job 7:9: Text, Its Unit and Genre

A crucial factor for any translator is to sift through and then to decide between various readings and word meanings in the text that he translates. In order to provide as genuine translation of Job 7:9 as possible, I employed a textual base approach:

לֵה עָנָן וַיִּלָּךְ

כִּן יֵרֵד שְׂאוֹל לֹא יַעֲלֶה

As the cloud vanishes and is gone,
so he who is going down to Sheol does not come up.

Job's first response, covering two chapters, consists of a monologue which, because of its double focus, has two distinct sections. In chap. 6:1–30 Job addresses his three friends/comforters, whereas in chap. 7:1–21 he directs his speech to God. Accordingly, chap. 7 can stand on its own as a block, which can be divided thematically into the following major units:⁸

Description of man's lot and Job's sufferings	(vv. 1–6)
Brevity of life	(vv. 7–10)
Complaint and description of suffering	(vv. 11–16)
Questions to God	(vv. 17–21)

⁷ Job 7:9; 11:8; 14:13; 17:13, 16; 21:13; 24:19; 26:6.

⁸ For structural variants of chap. 7 and dividing it into smaller subunits see Roland E. Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*, FOTL 18 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 25–26; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 129–130; David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, WBC 17 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 17:167–169; Samuel Terrien, "The Book of Job," *IB*, 3:949–950; Gerald J. Janzen, *Job*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 76–77; John A. Baker, "The Book of Job: Unity and Meaning," in *StudBib 1978, Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, JSOTSup 11 (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, Department of Biblical Studies, 1979), 17–26; Edwin C. Webster, "Strophic Patterns in Job 3–28," *JSOT* 26 (1983): 33–60; Pieter Van der Lugt, "Stanza-Structure and Word-Repetition in Job 3:14," *JSOT* 40 (1988): 3–38.

Chap. 7 is dominated by various complaint motifs and elements,⁹ which blend the description of afflictions and fate of human beings in general together with the agonizing sufferings of Job and certainty of his near death. Depending on one's approach, the overall genre of chap. 7 can be denoted either as that of a lament¹⁰ or as a disputation speech,¹¹ whereas vv. 7–10 function as a complaint against God.¹²

Exegetical Notes

In the book of Job the term *Sheol* occurs mainly in the context of death, which can be characterized as highly dramatic, passionate, and extremely intense expressions, thus presenting unique cases for the disclosure of the nature and function of the word *Sheol* under investigation.

Scholarly Conclusions

Before starting the exegesis of Job 7:9 and referring to some intertextual references in their contexts, it should be noted that many scholars refer to *Sheol* as a place of some kind of post-mortem existence. For instance, F. Andersen pointed out that “in spite of the vagueness with which the living conditions of Sheol are described, the continuation of conscious personal existence and identity after death is clearly believed.”¹³

Others emphasize that “Sheol . . . was not life. . . . It was a kind of existence to be abhorred,”¹⁴ or point out that “in Sheol . . . the Shades, in their dreary, shadowy existence . . . could neither praise Him, nor experience His benefits (Ps 6:8; 88:6, 11–13; Isa 38:18),”¹⁵ or like Thomas Aquinas would

⁹ See Clines, *Job 1–20*, 17:168.

¹⁰ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 142; Claus Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis*, trans. Charles A. Muenchow (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 43–47.

¹¹ Murphy, *Wisdom Literature*, 25.

¹² John E. Hartley, “The Genres and Message of the Book of Job,” in *Sitting with Job: Selected Studies on the Book of Job*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 65–78. See also the following articles in the same book: Gregory W. Parsons, “Literary Features of the Book of Job,” 35–50 (also in *BSac* 138 [1981]: 213–229); Claus Westermann, “The Literary Genres of the Book of Job,” 51–64, and Norman C. Habel, “Literary Features and the Message of the Book of Job,” 97–124.

¹³ Frances I. Andersen, *Job*, 107; Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Notes* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 80.

¹⁴ Balmer H. Kelly, ed., “The Book of Job,” in *The Book of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job*, LBC, 25 vols. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 8:66.

¹⁵ Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job: Together with a New Translation*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 69; John C. L. Gibson, *Job* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 29.

declare that man “by reason of his soul, remains in existence after death.”¹⁶ And N. Habel made a statement that “to descend to Sheol is to enter the meeting house of the living in the realm of the dead below (30:23).”¹⁷ All these seemingly logical inferences can either be accepted or denied after the examination of the term *Sheol* is complete, and its nature, function, and purpose become manifest.

Text, Context, and Imagery

First of all, in vv. 7–10, including their broader context, Job fixes his mind on the subject of the brevity of his life, which is repeatedly emphasized by means of various similes and metaphors. It is particularly important to note that whenever and whatever imagery is used by Job to emphasize the transitory nature of his life, it does not contain any allusion to an afterlife in the underworld.¹⁸ Only some of the metaphorical imagery, which Job employs to picture the fundamental truth concerning the fragility and shortness of human life, will be mentioned here.

my days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle	יָמֵי קְלוֹ מְנִי־אָרֶג	Job 7:6
and they come to an end without hope/ thread ¹⁹	וַיִּקְלוּ בְּאָפֶס תְּקוּהָ	Job 7:6
for a breath is my life	כִּי־רוּחַ חַיִּי	Job 7:7
As the cloud vanishes and is gone	כְּלָה עָנָן וַיִּלָּךְ	Job 7:9
for a shadow are our days on earth	כִּי צֶל יָמֵינוּ עַל־יַרְדֵּן	Job 8:9
My days are swifter than a runner	וַיָּמֵי קְלוֹ מְנִי־רָץ	Job 9:25
they have passed with ships of reed	חֲלָפוּ עַם־אֲנִיּוֹת אָבָה	Job 9:26
like a vulture [eagle] that swoops on its pray	כְּנֹשֶׁר יְטוֹשׁ עַל־יֶאֱכֹל	Job 9:26

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on Job: A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence*, trans. Anthony Damico, Classics in Religious Studies Series of Scholars Press and the American Academy of Religion 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 107.

¹⁷ Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 161.

¹⁸ William B. Stevenson, “Rhythm, Assonance, Structure, and Style,” in *The Poem of Job: A Literary Study with a New Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 56–72; Clines, *Job 1–20*, 17:186. Compare with 1 Chr 29:15; Isa 38:12; 40:6–7; 44:22; Hos 13:3; Pss 37:20; 39:7; 78:39; 90:5–6; 102:4, 12; 103:15–16; 129:23; 144:4.

¹⁹ The NEB renders “and come to an end as the thread runs out.”

The basic function of this vocabulary is to refer to the time element of fleetness and speed as emphatically as possible. Its employment clearly demonstrates that Job understood the transience and fragility of human life, and that is why he addresses himself to God by introducing v. 7 with the imperative form זָכֹר (“remember”), which by contrast means “do not forget me,” “do not leave me.” In vv. 7–10 Job intertwines two unquestionable facts: (1) death is unavoidable, it ends all, and (2) after death there is nothing in *Sheol*, as it is seen from the subsequent texts.

Such expressions as לֹא־הָשׁוּב עֵינַי לְרֵאוֹת טוֹב (“my eye will never again see good,” v. 7) and וְאֵינִי (“and I will not be,” vv. 8, 21) are clear and mean “I will be dead” and “I will no longer exist,”²⁰ thus excluding any idea of life’s continuation after death in the netherworld. If there were some kind of existence after death, Job certainly would have alluded to it.

Moreover, in the first line of v. 9 Job illustrates his transient life by the image of the עָנָן (“cloud”), which rapidly vanishes וַיִּלָּךְ (“and is gone”). Here the verb הִלָּךְ (“to go,” “walk”) has the sense of “disappearing”²¹ and is parallel to יָרַד (“to go down”), thus clearly referring to death and dying.²²

In the second line of v. 9 Job continues to elaborate on his idea of death further by referring to the nature of *Sheol*: כִּי־יֵרֵד יִשְׂאוֹל לֹא־יָעֹל (“so he who is going to *Sheol* does not come up”). Job does not allude here to the spirit or soul’s consciousness in *Sheol*. On the contrary, his choice of terminology demonstrates his keen perception and clear insights of life-and-death issues. Such straightforward expressions as וְאֵינִי (“and I will not be,” vv. 8, 21),²³ כָּלָה (“be finished,” “cease,” “vanish,” v. 9),²⁴ וַיִּלָּךְ (“and it goes,” “disappears,” v. 9), and יֵרֵד (“he who is going down,” v. 9)²⁵ affirm not only his conviction of imminent end,²⁶ but also refer to the finality of death, the decomposition of his body in *Sheol* from which nobody יָעֹל (“will come up,” v. 9). Besides, the construction of the second line of v. 9 functions as “an emphatic denial of the possibility of return to earth after death.”²⁷

²⁰ William D. Reayburn, *A Handbook on the Book of Job* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 153.

²¹ Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 205.

²² Sauer, Georg, “הִלָּךְ,” *TLOT*, 1:365–370; *BDB*, s.v. “הִלָּךְ,” 237.

²³ “אֵינִי,” *BDB*, 35.

²⁴ “כָּלָה,” *BDB*, 478.

²⁵ See Gen 37:35.

²⁶ Clines, *Job 1–20*, 17:187.

²⁷ Victor E. Reichert, *Job: Hebrew Text & English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Soncino Press, 1985), 30. E. Dhorme commented that “for the

It should also be pointed out that a number of scholars use v. 9 to assert that “disbelief in the resurrection could hardly be affirmed more bluntly than it is here.”²⁸ However, the phrase לֹא יַעֲלֶה (“he will not come up”) is limited in its meaning and controlled by the following verse. The statement; לֹא-יָשׁוּב עוֹד (“he will not return again to his house,” v. 10) does not speak about the denial of resurrection at all, but refers back to v. 9. The phrase לֹא יַעֲלֶה (“he will not come up”) coupled with לֹא-יָשׁוּב עוֹד (“he will not return again”) forms the strongest possible double negation, the purpose of which is to provide an additional clarifying explanation that the dead in *Sheol* do not rise to return to their families. Even if one takes the phrase לֹא יַעֲלֶה (“he will not come up”) in isolation, it does not refer to definiteness and finality in an eschatological sense, but to an unfinished process. It means that the statement of v. 9 לֹא יַעֲלֶה (“he will not come up”) does not support the view which emphasizes a denial of the resurrection.

The observation that by the term *Sheol* Job means simply the grave where his physical body goes, without any further implications, is further demonstrated by the parallel terminology, which occurs in a broader context in the book of Job. The phrase יוֹרֵד שְׂאוֹל (“he who is going down to *Sheol*”) is equivalent to the expression of v. 21 לְעֶפֶר אֶשְׁכַּב (“I will lie down in the dust”), where the verb שָׁכַב (“to lie down”) functions as a metaphor for death.

Intertextuality

In other words, to go down to *Sheol* means to lie in the dust, because עֶפֶר (“dust”) is one of the major characteristics of *Sheol*. In Job 17:16 עֶפֶר (“dust”) and *Sheol* form a direct parallel, whereas in Job 20:11 and 21:26 the expression עַל-עֶפֶר יִשְׁכְּבוּ (“they lie down in the dust”) primarily refers to death and then to the grave.²⁹

Hebrews, as for the Babylonians, Sheol is situated beneath the earth: one goes down to it, one comes up from it (cf. 1 S 28:11ff).” Furthermore, Dhorme referred to the meeting of Saul with the witch of Endor, who brought up Samuel, as “the case of an extraordinary intervention.” Dhorme, *Job*, 103.

²⁸ Robert L. Alden, *Job: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture NIV Text*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 11:110; Harold H. Rowley, *Job*, Century Bible (London: Nelson, 1970), 79; Reichert, *Job*, 30; Robert Frew, *Job: Notes on the Old Testament, Explanatory and Practical by Albert Barnes*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1955), 1:188.

²⁹ There is also a direct interrelatedness of the term שְׂאוֹל. With עֶפֶר in Job 17:16 and Ps 30:10; and in Ezek 31:14, 16, 18 שְׂאוֹל is linked with אֶרֶץ, (Ezek 26:20).²⁹ In Job 21:26 עֶפֶר is represented as the grave through concise but precise references to those who שָׁכַב (“lie down”) and רָמְדָה (“worm”) that בִּסְתָה (“covers”) them. The imagery of the grave is further represented by

It is said that in Dan 12:2 the dead sleep in אֶדְמַת־עָפָר (“the dusty earth”), which points back to Gen 3:19 and functions as a synonym for *Sheol*. The construct chain אֶדְמַת־עָפָר³⁰ literally means “the earth of dust” and is associated with the imagery of burial in the grave.³¹ Since the plural noun מְיַשְׁנֵי is in a construct state, it specifies the dead as “sleepers of the dusty earth,” which in fact qualifies the dead as dust.

Note in particular that the author does not allude to souls or spirits of the dead, which continue their miserable semi-conscious existence somewhere in darkness, but to the dead in their graves.³²

Of particular importance for the current discussion is passage of 3:13–22, which contains one of the longest and most elaborate descriptions of the place of the dead in the entire Hebrew Bible, though the term *Sheol* is not directly mentioned.³³

Despite the fact that Job employs here a variety of words to refer to the place of the dead in general terms, the imagery of death and the descriptive elements of the grave are so precise that he leaves no place for misinterpretation or manipulation. For instance, he employs the noun קֶבֶר (“grave”) as an equivalent for the term *Sheol* in Job 3:22, 5:26, and 10:19, while the grave of 3:22 functions as a parallel term to מָוֶת (“death”) in v. 21. Job also refers to the place of the dead or the grave by employing its

joint significations of עָפָר and מְתֵיךָ (“Your dead”) and בְּבִלְתִּי (“my corpse”), אֶרֶץ (“earth”) and רִפְאִים (“Rephaim,” “the dead”), which is further intensified by a punctuated vocabulary of the resurrection (Isa 26:19).

³⁰ Yitshak Avishur, “Pairs of Synonymous Words in the Construct State (and in Appositional Hendiadys) in Biblical Hebrew,” *Semitics* 2 (1971–72): 17–81.

³¹ For a detailed analysis of the phrase אֶדְמַת־עָפָר; see Artur A. Stele, “Resurrection in Daniel 12 and Its Contribution to the Theology of the Book of Daniel” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1996), 111–115.

³² The direct intertextual connection of Dan 12:2 with מִן־הָאֲרָמָה (“from the dust of the ground” or “dust from the ground”) in Gen 2:7, and with the identical representations of Gen 3:19, אֶל־הָאֲדָמָה, (“to the ground”), כִּי־עָפָר, (“for dust”) and אֶל־עָפָר, (“to dust”), is unmistakable, as it signifies both the material from which man was formed and the place of his return. The imagery of the returning place as *Sheol* is further determined by the directional preposition אֶל, and the function of the verb תָּשִׁיב (“you will return”), where every lexical element influences each other towards the same representation, thus unmistakably characterizing and strengthening the idea of the grave as the place of אֲדָמָה and עָפָר.

³³ Because of space restrictions, the discussion of chap. 3 will focus only on the major key elements.

antecedent, the adverb שָׁם (“there,” see 3:17 [twice] and 19),³⁴ whereas in 7:21 he denotes the place of the dead as עָפָר (“dust”), and in 10:21 and 22 as אֶרֶץ (“earth,” “land”).³⁵ Consequently all five words, עָפָר, שָׁם, מְנוֹת, קְבָר, and אֶרֶץ, serve as an analogous vocabulary of the term *Sheol*.

Furthermore, the book of Job vividly pictures the nature of *Sheol* by employing a variety of synonymous terms, which function not only as descriptive elements but undoubtedly qualify *Sheol* as the place of the dead. For example, in order to call attention to the fundamental nature of *Sheol* he uses at least five different words for darkness: (1) חֹשֶׁךְ (“darkness,” 3:4, 5) and (2) צִלְמֹת (“shadow of death,” 3:5).³⁶ In 10:21 Job qualifies *Sheol* as “land” by employing both terms חֹשֶׁךְ and צִלְמֹת simultaneously, that is, אֶרֶץ וְצִלְמֹת חֹשֶׁךְ (“the land of darkness and the shadow of death”). The other qualifiers are: (3) אֶפֶל (“darkness,” “gloom,” 3:6)³⁷ and (4) עֵיפָה (“darkness,” 10:22).³⁸ The last three words for darkness are piled up in 10:22 in the following way, אֶרֶץ עֵיפָה כְּמוֹ אֶפֶל צִלְמֹת, which is also designated as (5) וְלֹא סֵדְרִים (literally, “and no order” or “disorder,” “chaos”).³⁹

Though it is impossible to discern all the semantic nuances intended by these words and what exactly they imply, it is apparent that they refer not only to the grave as the place of darkness but also allude to the creation account of Gen 1:2.⁴⁰ In fact, by using the language of synthetic parallelism, Job reverses the order of creation and returns to the place of nonexistence and darkness, which is also described in the prophetic vision of Jer 4:23–26.⁴¹

³⁴ See exegesis on Ezek 32:21 in Eriks Galenieks, “The Nature, Function, and Purpose of the Term Sheol in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings: An Exegetical-Intertextual Study” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1995), 210–226.

³⁵ See Galenieks, “Sheol,” 75–100.

³⁶ Compare Ps 23:4; Job 10:21, 22; 12:22; 16:16; 24: 17; 28:3; 34:22; 38:17. See Walter L. Michel, “šLMWT, ‘Deep Darkness’ or ‘Shadow of Death’?” *Papers of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research* 29 (1984): 5–20; Winton Thomas, “צִלְמֹת in the Old Testament,” *JSS* 7 (1962): 191–200; “צִלְמֹת,” *BDB*, 853.

³⁷ Job 10:22; 23:17; 28:3; 30:26. “אֶפֶל,” *BDB*, 66.

³⁸ “עֵיפָה,” *BDB*, 734.

³⁹ See “סֵדְרִים,” *BDB*, 690.

⁴⁰ See Michael Fishbane, “Jeremiah IV:23–26 and Job III:3–13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern,” *VT* 21 (1971): 151–167. See also Rick D. Moore, “The Integrity of Job,” *CBQ* 45, no. 1 (1983): 17–31; Cox Dermont, “The Desire for Oblivion in Job 3,” *Liber Annuus* 23 (1973): 37–49.

⁴¹ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 104.

In addition to the five nouns, which lead to the powerful intensification of the imagery of “darkness,” chap. 3 contains nine other no less important terms, thus providing additional insights concerning the nature and function of the term *Sheol* in Job. Four of the nine terms stand next to each other in v. 13.

כִּי־עַתָּה שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאַשְׁקוּט

For now I would be lying down and quiet

יִשְׁנֶתִי אִזּוּ יָנוּחַ לִי

I would be asleep and then at rest

By employing the verb שָׁכַב (“to lie down”)⁴² metaphorically, Job creates a vivid mental picture of himself as being dead and lying in the grave.⁴³ He continues to describe his state at death by two other verbs: שָׁקֵט (“be quiet,” “undisturbed,” “motionless”)⁴⁴ and יָשָׁן (“sleep,” “be asleep”)⁴⁵ Because of “the similarities of one deceased to one asleep”⁴⁶ the last word יָשָׁן (“sleep,” “be asleep”) functions as a metaphor for designating death and thus refers to “the sleep of death.”⁴⁷ The fourth verb נָחָה (“to rest,” “be quiet,” “cease,” see in v. 17)⁴⁸ also “relates to rest in death,”⁴⁹ that is, Job would be free from all his earthly troubles if he were dead and in the grave/*Sheol*.

Job 3:17–19 contains the second cluster of five similar terms, which describe the place of the dead almost in the same way as v. 13. However, this cluster differs from v. 13 by the emphasis Job puts on the earthly social structure and its total reversal in *Sheol*.

It is significant to note that such terms and expressions as הָרָגוּ רִגְזוּ (“they cease from raging,” v. 17),⁵⁰ Silver Spring שָׁאַנְנוּ (“they are at peace,” v. 18)⁵¹,

⁴² See Galeniaks, “Sheol,” 75–100, 282–305, 549–581.

⁴³ James G. S. S. Thomson, “Sleep: An Aspect of Jewish Anthropology,” *VT* 5 (1955): 421–433.

⁴⁴ Philip J. Nel, “שָׁקֵט,” *NIDOTTE*, 4:234–235; “שָׁקֵט,” *BDB*, 1053.

⁴⁵ “יָשָׁן,” *BDB*, 445.

⁴⁶ William C. Williams, “יָשָׁן,” *NIDOTTE*, 2:553–555.

⁴⁷ See also Pss 13:4; 90:5–6. “יָשָׁן,” *HALOT*, 2:447–448.

⁴⁸ “נָחָה,” *BDB*, 629.

⁴⁹ Leonard J. Coppes, “נָחָה,” *TWOT*, 2:562–563.

⁵⁰ “הָרָגוּ,” *BDB*, 293; “רִגְזוּ,” *BDB*, 919.

⁵¹ “שָׁאַן,” *BDB*, 983.

לֹא שָׁמְעוּ (“they hear not,” v. 18), and הִפְשִׁי (“are free,” v. 19)⁵² are used in a definite and precise sense in order to describe the state of the dead in the grave, thus providing a comprehensive picture of its nature and function.

Finally, in chap. 3:11 Job laments that if he had died (מות) and perished (גוּעַ) at his birth, he would lie down with the dead whom he describes according to the standards of this earth, namely, עִם־מְלָכִים וְיַעֲצִי אַרְץ (“with kings and counselors of earth,” v. 14) and עִם־שָׂרִים (“with princes,” v. 15). He points out that in the grave שָׁם רְשָׁעִים (“there are the wicked,” v. 17) and נְגִיעֵי כֹחַ (“the exhausted of strength,” v. 17), and together with them are אֲסִירִים (“prisoners,” v. 18), נִגְשׁ (“slave driver,” v. 18), קָטָן וְגָדוֹל שָׁם הוּא (“the small and the great alike are there,” v. 19), וְעֶבֶד (“and the slave,” v. 19) with his אֲדוֹן (“master,” v. 19). The expression קָטָן וְגָדוֹל functions as a summary of the previous verses, thus including everyone on the list of the dead.

The power of this dynamic imagery can be attributed neither to the adjectives and their function nor to the nouns themselves, but only to what these various identified representatives of a social structure have become in *Sheol*.⁵³ In the land of the living these various social groups were locked together and there was a distinction between them, but in death all their social differences have been annihilated.⁵⁴

Summary

Consequently, as can be seen in table below †, chap. 3 contains directly interrelated and interconnected terminology representing the sphere of death, which unveils and amplifies the intrinsic nature of the term *Sheol* in Job 7:9 in a more expanded way.

A BRIEF SUMMARY of DEATH TERMINOLOGY in JOB 3 and 10

Place	Qualifier	Death	The Dead
קֶבֶר	חֹשֶׁךְ	שָׁכַב	מְלָכִים
Grave	darkness	lie down	kings
מָוֶת	צֶלְמָוֶת	שָׁקֵט	וְיַעֲצִי
Death =grave	shadow of death	be quiet	and counselors

⁵² “הִפְשִׁי,” BDB, 344.

⁵³ See Reyburn, *The Book of Job*, 83.

⁵⁴ Clines, *Job 1–20*, 93.

שָׁם	אֶפֶל	יָשָׁן	שָׂרִים
There	darkness, gloom	be asleep	princes
Place	Qualifier	Death	The Dead
עָפָר	עֵיפָה	נוּחַ	רְשָׁעִים
Dust	darkness	rest	the wicked
אָרֶץ	לֹא סֵדְרִים	שָׁאֵן	יְגִיעֵי כֹחַ
Earth	no order, chaos	at peace	the exhausted of strength,
		לֹא שִׁמְעוּ	אֲסִירִים
		they hear not	prisoners
		הִפְשִׁי	נִגְשׁ
		be free	slave driver
		הִדָּל	קָטָן וְגָדוֹל
		cease	the small and the great

Indeed, it is hard to comprehend on what grounds scholars take more than a dozen specific synonymous terms, which refer to death and the place of the dead, and assert that Job is dealing here “with death as a quiet, restful, inactive existence,”⁵⁵ or “degrees of punishment in the afterlife,”⁵⁶ or “that the dominant image of existence in the underworld he presents is of peace and rest.”⁵⁷

The above statements concerning the quiet “existence” of the dead in *Sheol* are almost impossible to reconcile with those particular images of death, which form a comprehensive description of *Sheol*. It is a great mistake to identify *Sheol* as the place of the departed spirits, because Job was not looking for the spirit or soul existence in the underworld, he was longing for

⁵⁵ Reyburn, *The Book of Job*, 80.

⁵⁶ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 97–98.

⁵⁷ Clines, *Job 1–20*, 91.

the grave.⁵⁸ Job, as was seen above, employs five synonyms for the term *Sheol* to designate the grave, and not six different locations. To qualify *Sheol* as the place of darkness he uses five different terms, all of which are inseparably joined with the grave. In other words, as light is associated with life, so darkness is associated with death and the domain of the dead.

In addition, Job employs a cluster of nine different words to emphasize repeatedly the fact that in *Sheol* no physical, mental, or spiritual activity is possible, because in the grave there is a total absence of consciousness and existence. In the grave there is no social distinction; whether one belongs to the class of kings, of princes, of prisoners, of slaves, of the wicked, or of the “blameless and upright” like Job himself (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3), it does not matter, because in death “all corpses look alike.”⁵⁹ This comprehensive picture of death and the place of the dead have nothing to do with existence in the underworld, but solely refer to the grave. That is the essence of the term *Sheol* in Job 7:9.

Conclusion

In *Sheol* there is no hope, no punishment, no survival, no blessing, no existence, for there is nothing: “As the cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who is going down to *Sheol* does not come up” (Job 7:9).

With death every existence is terminated, every biography is closed, and every possibility to straighten out its mistakes and blunders is cut off. Because of the finality of death, no second chance is given to the dead in *Sheol*. That is the main reason why the Hebrew Scripture is totally silent, providing no information of what “lies beyond” the grave, except disintegration of the corpse (Gen 3:19) and those passages which point to the bodily resurrection.⁶⁰

Job knew that all worldly hopes and concerns come to their end in the grave and that everything would rest in the dust. Because hope is

⁵⁸ Laird Harris, “Why Hebrew *She’ol* Was Translated ‘Grave,’” in *The NIV: The Making of a Contemporary Translation*, ed. Kenneth L. Barker (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1986), 68.

⁵⁹ Leo Calvin, *Leo Rosten’s Treasury of Jewish Quotations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 173.

⁶⁰ See Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, AB 16 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), xxxvi, and idem, *Psalms 101–150: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 17A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), xli. According to him, there are about 40 texts referring to the resurrection and future life: Pss 11:7; 16:10, 11; 17:15; 21:7; 23:6; 27:4, 13; 36:8, 9; 37:37, 38; 41:12, and others.

synonymous with life⁶¹ it cannot continue its existence where there is no life. In spite of his critical circumstances and the statements he had made and the question he had asked, וַאֲיֵה אֶפֹּי תִקְוָתִי (“and where then is my hope?” See Job 17:15), Job had a hope and he had described it already in 16:17–21. This idea of hope is beautifully summarized by Harris: “The poignancy of Job’s question shows that he hoped for more than the grave (*Sheol*) and its dust (17:16). His hope as he had said in 14:15 was for a future where God would call him to a new life,” and then he continues, “This hope is made explicit in Job’s famous declaration of 19:25–27.”⁶²

The book context reveals that in spite of Job’s indescribable sufferings and agony his hope and assurance were rooted in a final, eschatological deliverance from death and *Sheol*.⁶³ The resurrection of the dead from their graves, and not some kind of passive existence in *Sheol*, is the ultimate culmination of Yahweh’s final redemption of man.⁶⁴

Indeed, human death with all its implications, the concept of soul and the nature of *Sheol*, and any other related theological teaching can be understood and accordingly appreciated only against the scriptural focus on the new creation, which among other things implies the bodily resurrection from the dead.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 271; Robert A. Watson, *The Book of Job* (New York: Armstrong and Son, 1908), 210–212; Jay S. Southwick, “Job: An Exemplar for Every Age,” *Encounter* 45.4 (1984): 373–391.

⁶² Harris, “Why Hebrew *Sheol* Was Translated ‘Grave,’” 69.

⁶³ Hubbard, “פֶּרֶה,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:578–582.

⁶⁴ Coker, “פֶּרֶה,” *TWOT*, 2:716. W. Kaiser was very clear when he wrote concerning the resurrection of the body, “The common assertion that the Old Testament saint knew nothing at all about such a possibility is an error caused by preconceptions;” see Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, Frederick F. Bruce, Manfred T. Brauch, ed., *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 128.

⁶⁵ Especially insightful and useful research on this topic was done by Steele, “Resurrection in Daniel 12 and Its Contribution to the Theology of the Book of Daniel”; see also Pablo S. David, “Daniel 12:1–4: Towards a Critical Study on the Old Testament Motif of Resurrection and Afterlife” (Unpublished thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1988); Milton McC. Gatch, *Death: Meaning and Mortality in Christian Thought and Contemporary Culture* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969); Josef Finkenzeller, “Resurrection of the Dead,” in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Florenza (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 595–598; Walther Zimmerli, *Man and His Hope in the Old Testament*, SBT 20 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1968); Ovid R. Sellers, “Israelite Belief in Immortality,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 8 (1945): 1–16; Simcha Paul Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1994).

8

The Time Prophecies in Daniel 12¹

Gerhard Pfandl

In recent years a number of Seventh-day Adventists have begun to apply the time prophecies in Dan 12:5–13 to the future. Rejecting the traditional Adventist understanding, which places the 3½ times, the 1290 and 1335 days as prophetic times in the past, they claim these time periods are to be understood as literal days still to come.

Adventist Futurists

1. Marian Berry

When prophetic time periods are couched in the context of symbolic figures, these time periods should be treated as symbolic time and decoded by the Year-day Computation Principle. The timelines of Dan 12 are **not** couched in symbolic context and should therefore be considered literal time. . . . Therefore the “days” spoken of in Dan 12 should be regarded as **literal** days.²

¹ It is a pleasure and a great honor to contribute to this Festschrift for my friend and colleague Richard Davidson. His love for the Scriptures and the Lord of the Scriptures is an inspiration to his students, colleagues, and everyone else who is privileged to hear him passionately expound the Word of God. His scholarly contributions to Adventist and Evangelical theology are well known and greatly appreciated by Adventists and non-Adventists alike. May he enjoy many more years of fruitful service for his Lord and Savior.

² Marian G. Berry, *Warning!* (Brushton, NY: Teach Services, 1990), 4.

2. Ronald Gary Stickney

The count-down of the 1290 literal days begins when the power represented by the “little horn” takes away the “tamid”! The 1260 literal days, the time during which God’s people are in the wilderness experience, begins [sic], it is believed, 30 days after the passage of the National Sunday Law by the United States Legislature. The 1260 and 1290 days thus end at the same point in time; when Michael (Jesus) “stands up”, when He finishes His ministrations in the heavenly sanctuary. . . .³

3. Robert N. Smith, Jr.

It should be noted that some historicists, including myself, believe that the nature of the apocalyptic time periods (1260 days; 1290 days; 1335 days) in Dan 12 focus exclusively on the end-time in units of literal time.⁴

4. Kenneth Cox

The word *yowm* is used in the book of Daniel only when referring to literal time. Therefore, to be consistent we must conclude that the 1,260, the 1,290 and the 1,335 days of Dan 12:11, 12 must be literal days.⁵

While these interpreters differ in regard to other details of the prophecies in Dan 11 and 12, they have all indicated that the time periods in Dan 12 should be interpreted as literal days rather than according to the year-day principle.

Evaluation

This new proposal contains a number of problems, which make this interpretation unacceptable:

1. The 3½ times or 1260 days in Dan 7:25 and 12:7 are seen as two different time periods in history, one in the past and one in the future. This interpretation violates one of the fundamental principles of biblical hermeneutics; namely “scripture interprets scripture, one passage being the

³ Ronald Gary Stickney, *The Prophecy of Daniel 11 and Revelation* (Grand Junction, MI: Proclaim the Prophecy “Now” Seminars, 2002), 82.

⁴ Robert N. Smith, Jr. *Sunday vs Rapture* (Ft. Worth, TX: Roheka Books, 2002), 37.

⁵ Kenneth Cox, *Daniel* (Coldwater, MI: Remnant Publications, 2005), 150.

key to other passages.”⁶ If this principle is discarded, prophecy becomes a wax nose which can be bent in any direction the interpreter wants it to go.

2. The prophecies of Daniel are given according to the principle of repetition and enlargement. This can be clearly seen by looking at the four major prophecies in the book which all begin in the time of the author and end with the Second Advent:

- a. Daniel 2 Babylon - 2nd Advent (stone kingdom)
- b. Daniel 7 Babylon - 2nd Advent (kingdom given to the saints)
- c. Daniel 8–9 Medo-Persia - 2nd Advent (little horn is broken)
- d. Daniel 10–12 Medo-Persia - 2nd Advent (resurrection)

These parallel prophecies cover essentially the same sweep of time from Daniel’s days to the Second Advent. Each prophecy emphasizes different aspects of this time period. Daniel 2 provides the overall historical outline; Dan 7 introduces the little horn and emphasizes its political activities in history; and Dan 8, building on Dan 7, emphasizes the religious activities of the little horn. This underlines the fact that Daniel’s prophecies must be interpreted in harmony with the “scripture interprets scripture” principle. Thus, common elements in different chapters of the book must refer to the same things or events. For example, the little horn in Dan 7 and 8 must refer to the same historical power, not to two different powers. If the “taking away of the daily” in Dan 8:11 refers to events in the past, so must “the taking away of the daily” in Dan 12:11; and if the 3 ½ times in Dan 7:25 refer to the past, so must the 3 ½ times in Dan 12:7. To do otherwise makes a mockery of the “scripture interprets scripture” principle and leads to utter confusion.

3. The passage in Dan 12:5–13 is seen as a new vision which contains time prophecies for the future. This view ignores the basic structure of Daniel’s visions where visions are always followed by explanations.

- a. Daniel 2 vision (31–35), explanation (36–46).
- b. Daniel 7 vision (1–14), explanation (15–27).
- c. Daniel 8–9 vision (1–12), explanation (13–26; 9:24–27)
- d. Daniel 10–12 vision (11:2–12:4), explanation (12:5–13)

While it is true that the vision in Dan 11:2–12:4 is itself an explanation of the vision in Dan 8, we must not overlook the fact that in Dan 7, 8, and 10–12 the time prophecies are always situated within the explanation section not in

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, (Washington DC: Review & Herald, 1970), 581.

the visions themselves. In Dan 7 the vision ends in v. 14 and the time prophecy is given in v. 25. In Dan 8 the vision concludes in verse 12 and the time prophecy is given in v. 14. In Dan 10–12 the vision ends in 12:4 and the time prophecies are given in 12:5–13. This structure is destroyed if 12:5–13 is interpreted as a new vision.

4. This new view completely ignores the linguistic and grammatical connections between the vision in Dan 11 and the explanation in Dan 12. First, it needs to be emphasized that the vision concludes in 12:4 with the command to Daniel to “seal the book.” The passage of 12:5–13 is an epilogue to the preceding vision, and in a sense to the whole book. It is not a new vision with a different topic, but an explanation of certain elements in the vision of chapter 11. This is evident from the question in 12:6, “How long shall be the fulfillment of *these wonders*?” The Hebrew noun פִּלְעוֹת (*peleʿ*) for “wonders” can be translated as “awesome events”⁷ or “wonderful events.”⁸ Since verse 5 does not refer to any events, “these wonders” can refer only to events seen in the vision in Dan 11. The verb פָּלַא (*pālāʾ*) is in fact used in 11:36 where it refers to the blasphemies spoken by the King of the North. It is also used in 8:24 where the little horn destroys “fearfully [*pālāʾ*].”

Furthermore, in 12:7, 8 Daniel hears the words, “and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered *these things* shall be finished.” Because he does not understand what he heard, Daniel asks, “what shall be the end of *these things*?” Thus three times in 12:6–8 we have references to “these things/wonders.” Each time they refer to the events of the vision in chapter 11. This clearly indicates that Dan 12:5–13 is part of the vision of Dan 11:2–12:4, and not a new vision.

There is also a strong thematic and linguistic connection between the texts in 7:25 and 12:7.

7:25 [He] shall persecute the saints of the Most High . . . The saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.

12:7 He swore . . . that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished

The shattering of the power of the holy people in 12:7 lasts for 3½ times

⁷ Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 296.

⁸ *HALOT*, 928.

and is the same as the persecution of the saints in 7:25 which also lasts for 3½ times. This is further evidence that the times in Dan 12 do not refer to the future but to the past.

5. M. Berry, one of the main proponents of this new view, began both the 1260 and 1290 days in Dan 12 with the universal Sunday law.⁹ The 1260 days, she believed, end with the universal death decree, the 1290 days continue for another 30 days. She explained the extra 30 days as two 15-day time periods. The first 15 days are the “one hour” in Revelation 17:12 (360 divided by 24 is 15), and the second 15 days are the “one hour” referred to in Revelation 18:10. What we have here is an amazing mix of literal and prophetic time. While the 1290 days are counted as literal days, the last thirty days of the 1290 are two prophetic hours, which she interprets according to the year-day principle. This mixing of literal and prophetic time is an indication of the confusion in this new view.

6. Finally, this new interpretation of the times in Dan 12 is also against clear statements of Ellen White. In 1880 she wrote, “I have borne the testimony since the passing of the time in 1844, that there should be no definite time set by which to test God's people. The great test on time was in 1843 and 1844; and all who have set time since this great period marked in prophecy, were deceiving and being deceived.”¹⁰ Now it is true that Ellen White here spoke about date setting for the Second Advent, which the new view did not, nevertheless, there is no indication in her writings that any kind of prophetic time would play a role in the future.

In fact, in a letter from 1850 Ellen White mentioned a Brother Hewit from Dead River who believed that the destruction of the wicked and the sleep of the dead were an abomination and that Ellen White was Jezebel. She then wrote, “We told him of some of his errors in the past, that the 1335 days were ended and numerous errors of his. It had but little effect. His darkness was felt upon the meeting and it dragged.”¹¹

Some believe that in this statement she placed the 1335 days in the future. However, the sentence is generally understood to mean, “We told him of some of his errors in the past, [we told him] that the 1335 days were ended and [we told him] numerous errors of his.” Otherwise we must ask, why Ellen White reprimanded brother Hewit and not her husband and all the other

⁹ Berry, *Warning!* 157.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943), 221.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 6:251.

pioneers who taught that the 1335 years were ended? James White in an article in the *Review and Herald* in 1857 wrote, “Evidences are conclusive that the 1335 days ended with the 2300, with the Midnight Cry in 1844. Then the angel [Rev. x, 1–6] swore that time should be no longer.”¹² In the same paper in 1863, Uriah Smith stated:

Now it is manifestly wrong to date the 1290 days from the setting up of the papacy, when the prophecy says they are to date from the taking away of paganism [which for him was the daily], which was thirty years previous. We therefore date the 1290 days from the year 508; and as the 1335 days are spoken of in connection with these, no possible reason can be given why they do not commence at the same point. The 1290 and 1260 end together in 1798.¹³

The fact that Ellen White nowhere argued against these statements supports the reading of her sentence as generally understood. At the same time this indicates that she herself placed the 1335 days in the past.

Samuel Nuñez

A more scholarly attempt to interpret the time prophecies in Dan 12 as literal days is made by Samuel Nuñez, a ThD graduate of Andrews University. In his 1987 doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Vision of Daniel 8*, he made a systematic study of the different methods used in the interpretation of the book of Daniel.

In 2006 he published a book on the prophecies of Daniel in Spanish. Prior to its publication he sent me an English version of chapter 4 from this book entitled “The Sign of the End of the World” in which he dealt with the time prophecies in Dan 12. The chapter is at times fairly technical, but it impresses the reader with the author’s detailed knowledge of the text. On page 42 he wrote, “It is the linguistic and textual evidence that permits us to conclude that the days of Dan 12:11 and 12 should be understood in a literal way.”¹⁴ In evaluating his views we will consider the literary structure, linguistic matters, and hermeneutical issues.

Literary Structure

1. A main pillar of Nuñez’s argument that the 1290 and 1335 days in

¹² James White, “The Judgment,” *Review and Herald*, January 29, 1857, 100.

¹³ Uriah Smith, “Short Interviews with Correspondents,” *R&H*, February 24, 1863.

¹⁴ Since I do not read Spanish, my evaluation is based on the English manuscript sent to me.

Dan 12:11–12 are literal time periods in the future is the literary structure of Dan 10–12. While literary structures are helpful in analyzing biblical passages, the interpreter needs to be aware of the subjective component in establishing a literary structure. In regard to Dan 10–12, Nuñez, in harmony with most Daniel scholars, divided the text into three sections:¹⁵

- Daniel 10:1–21 Two supernatural beings and Daniel’s dialogue with Gabriel
- Daniel 11:1–12:4 Gabriel’s predictive discourse
- Daniel 12:5–13 Two supernatural beings and Daniel’s dialogue with Michael

What is puzzling in this chapter is the fact that in Nuñez’ discussion of the text, he ignored this literary structure and began his analysis with Dan 12:1, i.e., he took the last part of Gabriel’s discourse and combined it with the final section to form a new literary unit (the present chapter 12) which he then analyzed.

We need to remember that chapter and verse divisions are not part of the original text. The division into chapters, for example, was only established in the thirteenth century CE. Since Nuñez’s focus was the time of the end, why did he not begin his analysis in 11:40 where, in the text, the time of the end begins? The reason is simple, if he had started in 11:40 one main pillar of his argument would not exist.

2. On pages 8 and 9 of his manuscript Nuñez presents the following chiasmic structure:

- A Stand up, time (12:1)
- B Everlasting or forever (12:2)
- C Everlasting or forever (12:3)
- D Many, knowledge (12:4)
- E Daniel (12:5)
- F End of the wonders (12:6)
- G Surely, after a time, times, and half a time. And as soon as . . . all these wonders will be finished (12:7)
- F’ End of these wonders (12:8)
- E’ Daniel (12:9)

¹⁵ Samuel Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel 8: Interpretations from 1700 to 1800*, AUSDDS 14 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 3–4.

- D' Many, wise (12:10)
- C' Days, time (12:11)
- B' Days (12:12)
- A' Stand up, days (12:13)

This chiasmic structure looks very impressive. However, the chiasmic structure is not as compelling as Nuñez wanted us to believe. For example, Nuñez has several time references in Dan 12

- A Stand up, time (12:1)
- B Everlasting or forever (12:2)
- C Everlasting or forever (12:3)
- C' Days, time (12:11)
- B' Days (12:12)
- A' Stand up, days (12:13)

Yet, he ignored the time references in vv. 4 and 9 (time of the end)? The name Daniel appears also in v. 4 not just in vv. 5 (E) and 9 (E'). The Hebrew verb ָמַד (*amad*) “stand” appears not only in vv. 1 (A) and 13 (A'), but also in v. 5 “there stood (*amad*) two others.”

Thus the chiasmic structure is not as solid as it seems, and if one takes into account that the “time of the end” section begins in 11:40 and not in 12:1, the chiasmic structure disappears altogether.

It is interesting to note that Nuñez used Dan 11:40–45 when he explained Dan 12:11 (pp. 29, 35, 36, 40, etc.), but not when he established the literary structure of the “time of the end” section of Daniel.

Linguistic Matters

1. Nuñez claimed that the preposition ַל (l) in Dan 12:7 should be translated “after” rather than “for.”¹⁶ He, therefore, translated the answer to the question in Dan 12:6 “Until when shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” as “Certainly it will be after a time, times, and half a time” (12:7);¹⁷ but is this answering the question? “Until when . . .?” expects an answer beginning with “until” or “for” not “after.”

Isaiah 6:11 Then I said, “Lord, how long?” (ַל־כַּי־מָה) And He answered: “Until (ַל) the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant,

¹⁶ Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel* 8, 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Daniel 8:13–14 Then I heard a holy one speaking; and *another* holy one said to that certain *one* who was speaking, “How long (ܐܘܢܐܢܐ) will the vision *be*, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?”¹⁴ And he said to me, “For (ܐܘܢܐܢܐ) two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

Daniel 12:6–7 And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, “How long (ܐܘܢܐܢܐܐܘܢܐܢܐ) shall the fulfillment of these wonders *be*?” Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time (ܐܘܢܐܢܐܢܐ), times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished.

Nuñez was correct in stating that sometimes the temporal use of *l^c* can be translated by “after.”¹⁸ The question is, is this the case in Dan 12:7? The prepositional phrase ܐܘܢܐܢܐܢܐ (l^cmo^eed) appears thirteen times in the Old Testament outside of the book of Daniel and five times in the book of Daniel (8:19; 11:27, 29, 35; 12:7). In the Old Testament outside the book of Daniel it always has the meaning of “at, within, for,” or “according to the appointed time.” In Dan 8:19; 11:27 and 29 it has the meaning “at the appointed time” or “it refers to the appointed time,” and in 11:35 ܐܘܢܐܢܐܢܐ (l^cmo^eed) can be translated as “for a time appointed” or “until the time appointed.” Thus, not once does ܐܘܢܐܢܐܢܐ (l^cmo^eed) mean “after.” Of course, this does not mean that it cannot have this meaning in 12:7. However, in Dan 7:25 we have the Aramaic equivalent to “a time, times, and half a time;” and there the context clearly indicates that the saints shall be persecuted by the little horn *for a time, times, and half a time* in the past.

Since the shattering of the power of the holy people in 12:7 which lasts for 3 ½ times seems to be thematically the same as the persecution of the saints in 7:25 which also lasts for 3 ½ times, it is difficult to see why the preposition *l^c* in Dan 12:7 should be translated “after” rather than “for.”

2. Nuñez claimed that the “wonders” in Dan 12:6 refer to God's salvific work on behalf of His people, i.e., the destruction of the king of the North in 11:45 and the liberation of the people of God in 12:1, rather than to the

¹⁸ Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel* 8, 18.

blasphemous words of the “King of the North” in 11:36 or to the incredible destruction of the little horn in 8:24. The reason he gave is that the latter two texts use the verb פָּלַא (pālā) whereas 12:6 uses the noun פֶּלֵא (pele’).¹⁹

First it needs to be noted that the word “wonders” does not appear anywhere in 11:45 or 12:1. Secondly, in Dan 8:24 and 11:36 the verb is a feminine participle used as a noun. Furthermore, as Hamilton, who is quoted by Nuñez, has pointed out, there is no difference in meaning between the noun and the verb. In the book of Psalms, for example, “both refer to God’s wonders, either in a general sense, or in a specific historical antecedent.”²⁰ While the noun פֶּלֵא (pele’) generally refers to God’s acts or words, in Lamentations 1:9 it refers to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, as Hamilton has pointed out.²¹ Thus, the statement that פֶּלֵא (pele’) “is always used in the context of the acts or words of God”²² and therefore cannot apply to Dan 8:24 or 11:36 is special pleading and not supported by the larger context of the vision. If it is argued that God used the Babylonians to punish Jerusalem, we have to respond that whatever God allows he does (Isa 45:7), including the activities of the little horn.

To my knowledge, every Daniel commentator, whether liberal or conservative, applies *pele’* in Dan 12:6 to the activities of the little horn in 8:24 and the activities of the King of the North in 11:36.

3. Nuñez claimed that the 1290 and 1335 days in Dan 12 are literal days because the word יוֹם (yôm) “day” in the Old Testament when accompanied by a numeral always means literal days; he referred to Ezekiel 4:5, 6 to prove his point.²³ Now, while it is true that for Ezekiel the numbers referred to were literal days (lying 390 days on the left side and 40 days on the right side), it is precisely this passage that shows that the 390 and 40 literal days symbolized 390 and 40 years, “I have laid on you a day for each year” (Ezek 4:6). Daniel and Revelation are apocalyptic books and in contrast to Gen 1, for example, the days in these apocalyptic prophecies are symbolic and not literal as Revelation 12:6 and 14 show.

Hermeneutical Issues

1. As indicated above, a fundamental principle of biblical hermeneutics is that “scripture interprets scripture, one passage being the key to other

¹⁹ Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel 8*, 16

²⁰ V. P. Hamilton, “pala’,” *TWOT*, 2:723.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel 8*, 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, 42.

passages.”²⁴ In Dan 8, 11 and 12 we find two key phrases repeated:

Dan 8:11

He even exalted *himself* as high as the Prince of the host; and by him **the daily sacrifice was taken away**, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.

Dan 11:31

And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then **they shall take away the daily sacrifice**, and place there the abomination of desolation.

Dan 12:11

And from the time *that the daily sacrifice is taken away*, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Samuel Nuñez agreed that in Dan 8:11 and 11:31 the taking away of the daily sacrifice and the setting up of the abomination of desolation refer to events during the 3½ times of Dan 7:25 which are in the past.²⁵ In Dan 12:11, however, he saw the taking away of the daily and the setting up of the abomination of desolation as events in the future. He did this on the basis of the structure of Dan 12 which he established at the beginning of the paper, but as we have seen the structure he found in Dan 12 is not as solid as he would like it to be

On pages 33, 34, and 37 Nuñez identified the תָּמִיד (*tāmîd*) “the daily” or “the continual” as the “continual service” or Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, which has been the Adventist position for a long time. However, the “daily” that is taken away in Dan 12:11, according to Nuñez, is primarily the Sabbath. He arrived at this conclusion in the following way:

What does it mean that the “continual service will be put aside”? Did we not say that it refers to the *redemptive ministry of Jesus in the Heavenly Sanctuary*? How then could the eschatological Christian Rome put side or remove this ministry that operates in the Heavenly Sanctuary? To understand this issue we must settle, in the first place, that the ministry of Jesus in the Heavenly

²⁴ Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel 8*, see page 123.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

Sanctuary is focused on the atonement of sin and the worship of God. In second place, we must see that Jesus' ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is performed in conformity to the principles of the law of God and on the basis of his sacrifice. Based on these facts, we can assert that the "continual service" will be put aside when the "king of the North" casts away the law of God and Jesus' ministry, by imposing in a universal and obligatory way a religious day of observance which will be contrary to the Ten Commandments of God."²⁶

Consequently, on p. 39 he identifies the "abomination of desolation" as Sunday. This is a curious mixture of different concepts. The Sabbath/Sunday issue is an important element in Adventist eschatology, but to my knowledge never before has anyone identified the Sabbath with the תָּמִיד (*tāmîd*).

2. Nuñez claimed that "Ellen G. White applied the expression 'abomination which causes desolation' of Matthew 24:15 to the idolatrous standards of the Roman army and the future imposition of a false day of rest."²⁷ This is not quite correct. What Ellen White said is this:

As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation, in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath, will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains.²⁸

She compared two signs; as the siege of Jerusalem was a sign for the Christians then, so Sunday laws will be a sign for the faithful at the time of the end to leave the cities. Nowhere in the context did she even refer to the expression "abomination of desolation." In the book *The Great Controversy* she identified the "abomination of desolation" as the Roman standards.²⁹

As shown above, the basic structure of Daniel's visions indicates that the visions are always followed by explanations. Dan 12:5–13 provides explanations for the whole vision of 11:2–12:4 not just for the last few verses. The fact that the "man dressed in linen" says to Daniel, "Go Daniel, because

²⁶ Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel* 8, 37.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:464–465.

²⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 26.

the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end” does not imply, as Nuñez has claimed, that Daniel wanted to know more about the events of the time of the end.³⁰ The phrase אֶחָרֵית אֵלֶּיךָ (ʿahāřîṯ ʿēlleh) “the end of these things” in Daniel’s question “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?” (12:8) is not simply asking what will happen at the end of time, but what is the conclusion of all these wonderful things he has been told. One of the meanings of אֶחָרֵית (ʿahāřîṯ) is the “end” or “conclusion” of a transaction or event, e.g., Prov. 25:8; Isa 41:22.³¹ Daniel wanted to know what the end, the outcome, the result of all the wonderful things he had heard would be.

The Adventist Interpretation

In Dan 12:5–13 the prophet is still by the river Tigris, where he was in 10:4. Now he overhears a conversation between two heavenly figures and eventually joins in. This passage parallels Dan 8:13, 14 in several ways. Both take place besides a river, both involve two anonymous heavenly beings, and both involve the question “How long?”

How long shall be the fulfillment of these wonders? (12:6)—as indicated above, this refers back to the vision in chapter 11. Gabriel had given Daniel this long explanation to help him understand what would happen to God’s people (10:14). Now, two other heavenly beings appear, and one of them, for Daniel’s information, asks Michael, the man clothed in linen, a question. The answer in v. 7 defines the time of the end as that which follows the 1260 years of papal supremacy and persecution.

In this answer Daniel was actually given the other half of the answer to the question asked by these same celestial attendants in 8:13. That question concerned the trampling under foot by the papal power of both sanctuary and host. In 8:14 the answer given was that the sanctuary would be trampled down till 1844. Now the answer is given that the host will be trampled down till 1798. And in the ensuing enquiry by Daniel and answer by Michael will be given the relationship between these two periods.³²

1. *1290 days* (12:11) - “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one

³⁰ Nuñez, *The Vision of Daniel 8*, 44

³¹ Andrew E. Hill, “אֶחָרֵית,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:362.

³² Ernest W. Marter, *Daniel’s Philosophy of History* (Bracknell, England: Newbold College, 1967), 115.

thousand two hundred and ninety days.” The taking away of the *tāmîd* (the daily) is mentioned three times in the book of Daniel:

Dan 8:11 No specific time is connected with it.

Dan 11:31 Again no specific time or date is given.

Dan 12:11 “From the time . . . 1290 days.”

It is important to note the parallelism between Dan 11:31 and 12:11

Dan 11:31

Forces shall be mustered by him [king of the North] and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress: then they shall *take away the daily sacrifices*, and *place there the abomination of desolation*.

Dan 12:11

And from the time that the *daily sacrifice is taken away*, and the *abomination of desolation is set up*, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

The two texts are clearly parallel and refer to the same events in history. Now if 11:31 refers to the past so must 12:11, because “scripture interprets scripture.” If the two events in 11:31 and 12:11 are not the same, this principle becomes irrelevant.

In Dan 8:11 “the daily” refers to Christ’s intercessory ministry, which was usurped by the work of the priests through the mass and the confessional. By sacrificing Christ anew in every mass, the papacy has removed Christ’s heavenly ministry in the thinking of men. How long has this been going on?

In May 1998, Pope John Paul II issued his pastoral letter *Dies Domini* in which he challenged Christians “to ensure that civil legislation respects their duty to keep Sunday holy.”³³ . In the same letter he spoke about the attendance at Sunday mass. Early in the history of the Christianity, he said, people had to be reminded to attend mass. Sometimes the Church had to resort to specific canonical precepts:

This was the case in a number of local Councils from the fourth century onwards (as at the Council of Elvira of 300, which speaks

³³ Pope John Paul II, “Dies Domini” (May 31, 1998), section 67. For the text of this Apostolic Letter see the Vatican website: www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii. Dies Domini can be found under his Apostolic Letters.

not of an obligation but of penalties after three absences) and most especially from the sixth century onwards (as at the Council of Agde in 506). These decrees of local Councils led to a universal practice, the obligatory character of which was taken as something quite normal.³⁴

Here the pope said that particularly from the beginning of the sixth century on there were universal statutes which made it obligatory for people to attend mass. As Seventh-day Adventists, we say that in the sixth century “the daily” was taken away and the abomination of desolation was established. We begin the 1290 years with 508. Why? Primarily, because deducting 1290 from 1798, which is understood to be the end of the 1260 and 1290 years, brings us to 508.

What happened in 508? In 496 Clovis, king of the Franks became a Roman Catholic.³⁵ All the other Germanic tribes who had dismantled the Roman Empire were Arians and therefore in opposition to the pope in Rome. Clovis defeated the Visigoths and became the first civil power to join up with the rising Church of Rome. France, therefore, is called the oldest daughter of the Roman Catholic Church.

After his great victory over the Goths in 507 . . . together with his Burgundian allies, Clovis came to Tours, probably in the middle of 508, to hold a victory celebration. There he met Byzantine envoys who presented to him the decree naming him an honorary consul [of Rome].³⁶

The joining of the civil and the religious powers (the Franks and the papacy) at that time was an important step in “setting up the abomination of desolation,” which refers to the unscriptural teachings of the papacy and their enforcement through the union of church and state. It is one of the ironies of history that France, the power that helped the papacy at the beginning of the 1290 years, was also the power that brought about its demise at the end of this time period, when Napoleon in 1798 had Pope Pius VI taken prisoner.

2. *The 1335 days* (12:12) - “Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the

³⁴ Pope John Paul II, “Dies Domini” (May 31, 1998), section 47.

³⁵ Some historians place the baptism of Clovis in the year 508, e.g., Edward James, *The Franks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 123; Danuta Shanzer, *Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 29.

³⁶ Herwig Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 222.

one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.” No specific event is mentioned for the beginning of the 1335 days. The context however seems to imply that it began at the same time as the 1290 days. If this is correct, the 1335 days ended in 1843–44 at the time when the first angel’s message was being preached—this is also the last year of the 2300 year prophecy which runs from the fall of 1843 to the fall of 1844.

The 1335-day prophecy is not mentioned in connection with the activity of the Little Horn power. Rather it is related to a special blessing for those who live at the end of that time period. Another blessing for the time of the end is found in Rev 14:13, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”

Blessed indeed were those who lived at the time of the Advent expectancy when the first angel’s message was preached in England and America. And blessed are those who die in the faith of the third angel’s message in the time of the end, for they will take part in the special resurrection, which will precede the Second Advent, and the first resurrection.

Conclusion

Marian Berry’s interpretation of the time prophecies in Dan 12 is a curious mixture of literal and prophetic time periods. It is highly speculative and finds no support in Scripture or the Spirit of Prophecy. Other Adventist futurists fare no better.

Nuñez’s strongest pillar for his new interpretation was the literary structure of Dan 12. However, the literary structure that he sees in Dan 12 is really not valid. It is an artificial structure that is not inherent in the text. While Nuñez is to be commended for the detailed and close study of the text, not all his conclusions and deductions are supported by a grammatical-historical exegesis. The weakest point in his study is the identification of the removal of the *tāmîd* with the substitution of Sunday for Sabbath in the time of the end. This is pure speculation and contradicts his interpretation of the *tāmîd* as the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

Probably without intending it, Nuñez is undermining the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation. His introduction of futurism into the interpretation of Dan 12 will add fuel to the fire of those lay people who have advocated this view for years.

The evidence from Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy does not support the concept that the time prophecies in Dan 12 are still in the future. The

Adventist interpretation which, in harmony with the historicist principles of interpretation, places these time prophecies in the past is still the best solution to the difficult texts in Dan 12:5–13.

9

When Not to “Tie the Knot”: A Study of Exogamous Marriage in Ezra-Nehemiah Against the Backdrop of Biblical Legal Tradition¹

Gerald A. Klingbeil

Introduction

The study of a particular historical period, including its underlying legal principles and realities, is not always an easy undertaking, particularly when the primary data is limited and—as some would claim—historically unreliable due to its theological (or ideological) bias. This has been the case for Persian period Palestine as portrayed in the book of

¹ This study was first presented in the Historical Books (Hebrew Bible) section of the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, July 26, 2007, in Vienna, Austria. It is a privilege to contribute this study to a collection of essays honoring Richard M. Davidson, a colleague and esteemed fellow-searcher of truth and understanding of the meaning and relevance of the text of the Hebrew Bible in the larger context of Scripture. His studies focusing on hermeneutical issues have shaped my own understanding on this topic. His publications dealing with the biblical perspective of human sexuality, including more aggregate topics such as marriage, divorce, polygamy/monogamy, rape, premarital sex, etc. are highly relevant, including also his *opus magnum* (cf. Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007]). We may not agree on all the details but respectful difference to an esteemed colleague is another way of expressing appreciation and uttermost regard.

Ezra-Nehemiah, a period that William Albright long ago called “one of the most obscure in the history of the Hebrew people,”² which, however, has experienced an ever-increasing boom in recent biblical scholarship. The study of postexilic Jerusalem and the social realities of Yehud have enjoyed a tremendous interest in recent studies,³ due to an improved understanding of

² Compare William Foxwell Albright, “Light on the Jewish State in Persian Times,” *BASOR* 53 (1934): 20. Similar sentiments have been expressed by Anson F. Rainey, “The Satrapy ‘Beyond the River,’” *AJBA* 1 (1969): 51, who lamented the meager primary source situation in Persian period Palestine. See also Otto Kaiser, “Zwischen den Fronten. Palästina in den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen dem Perserreich und Ägypten in der ersten Hälfte des 4. Jahrhunderts,” in *Wort, Lied und Gottesspruch. Beiträge zu Psalmen und Propheten. Festschrift für Joseph Ziegler*, ed. Josef Schreiner (Würzburg: Echter Verlag/Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1972), 197 [for fourth century BCE Palestine], and Ephraim Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period (538–332 B.C.)* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982), xv; Herbert Donner, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel und seiner Nachbarn in Grundzügen. Teil 2: Von der Königszeit bis zu Alexander dem Großen*, GAT, ATD Ergänzungsreihe 4.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 416; Eric M. Meyers, “The Persian Period and the Judean Restoration: From Zerubbabel to Nehemiah,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion. Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1987), 510; Gösta W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander’s Conquest*, JSOTSup 146 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 822. Compare also Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: Volume II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods 732–332 B.C.E.*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 418, who lamented the lack of reliable historical data (as opposed to archaeological data) for the Persian period in Syria-Palestine. It should be noted that all these scholarly opinions concern the state of historical sources and primary data pertaining to Palestine (and more precisely Yehud) during the fifth–fourth century BCE. There is an increasing amount of primary data for the Persian period *per se*. See here the monumental work of Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander. A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

³ See here the volume edited by Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, eds., *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), containing 26 highly relevant studies. Compare also Monika Bernett, “Polis und Politeia. Zur politischen Organisation Jerusalems und Jehuds in der Perserzeit,” in *Die Griechen und das antike Israel. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Religions- und Kulturgeschichte des Heiligen Landes*, ed. Stefan Alkier and Markus Witte, OBO 201 (Fribourg: Academic Press / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 73–129; Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King. Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 10 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004); Ehud Ben Zvi, “What is New in Yehud? Some Considerations,” in *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Period*, ed. Rainer Albertz and Bob Becking, STR 5 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003), 32–47; Joachim Schaper, “Priestly Purity and Social Organization in Persian Period Judah,” *BN* 118 (2003): 51–57; Hugh G. M. Williamson, “The Family in Persian Period Judah: Some Textual Reflections,” in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 469–85; David Janzen, “Politics, Settlement, and Temple Community in Persian-Period Yehud,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 490–510; Arndt Meinhold, “Serubbabel, der Tempel und die Provinz Jehud,” in *Steine-Bilder-Texte: Historische Evidenz ausserbiblischer und biblischer Quellen*, ed. Christof Hardmeier; Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 5 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 193–217; Willa Mathis Johnson, “Ethnicity in Persian Yehud: Between Anthropological Analysis and Ideological Criticism,” in *Society of Biblical*

the Persian period as a whole.⁴ The current thinking about Persian period Yehud entails an (ethnically) multi-faceted population, a much better understanding of its archaeology,⁵ as well as the interaction between the smallish province of Yehud with other Persian provinces in Palestine, including Moab, Ammon, Gilead, Samaria, Ashdod, Idumea, etc., that were all part of the fifth Persian satrapy called Ebir-Nāri.⁶ This interest is not only due to a more careful and differentiated analysis of the material culture (i.e., the archaeology of Persian period Palestine),⁷ but also to the fact that most modern scholars view this period as the hotbed of creative literary activity during which most books of the Hebrew Bible were edited or composed thus meriting a closer look.⁸

In this study I am particularly interested in understanding the issues involving exagamous marriages in the time of Ezra-Nehemiah, roughly correlated to the second half of the fifth century BCE. As can easily be seen I am following here the traditional dating and sequence of Ezra-Nehemiah as

Literature 1995 Seminar Papers, ed. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr.; SBLSP 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 177–86; Charles E. Carter, “The Province of Yehud in the Post-Exilic Period: Soundings in Site Distribution and Demography,” in *Second Temple Studies: Vol. 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period*, ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards, JSOTSup 175 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 106–45.

⁴ See here particularly Charles E. Carter, “Syria-Palestine in the Persian Period,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 398–412; David Vanderhooft, “New Evidence Pertaining to the Transition from Neo-Babylonian to Achaemenid Administration in Palestine,” in *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Period*, ed. Rainer Albertz and Bob Becking, STR 5 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003), 219–35. Another important aspect in the study of Persian period Palestine has been the recognition of the importance of *Hinterland* (or rural areas) archaeology as has been shown in the study by Avraham Faust, “Judah in the Sixth Century B.C.E.: A Rural Perspective,” *PEQ* 135 (2003): 37–53. Compare also Oded Lipschits, “Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 323–76. Obviously, the translation and publication of the *opus magnum* of Pierre Briant into English has fostered even more research into the history of the Persian period.

⁵ This trend began with the publication of the important work of Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period*.

⁶ The biblical text reads here עֲבֵר־נָרַי “beyond the River” (Ezra 4:10, 11, 16, 17, 20; 5:3, 6; 6:6, 8, 13; 7:21, 25; 8:36; Neh 2:7, 9; 3:7). The point of reference is the river Euphrates. The Greek historian Herodotus (3:89) in his *Histories* refers to twenty satrapies, while Persian inscriptions of the period mention more than twenty peoples (= satrapies?). See Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 178–80, for more references.

⁷ In order to differentiate more carefully the excavated material culture of this period, Carter suggested the following archaeological divisions: Iron Age IIC (605–539 BCE), Persian I (539–450 BCE), and Persian II (450–332 BCE). See Carter, “Syria-Palestine in the Persian Period,” 400.

⁸ Compare Carter, “Syria-Palestine in the Persian Period,” 398–9. See also Thomas M. Bolin, “When the End is the Beginning: The Persian Period and the Origins of the Biblical Traditions,” *SJOT* 10 (1996): 3–15.

my working hypothesis and do not want to spend much time defending this position.⁹ After providing a brief introduction to the basic sociological categories involving exogamous marriages and ethnicity I will describe the different loci in Ezra-Nehemiah that involve cross-cultural marriage and will try to understand the involved critical issues. This is followed by a review of the biblical laws about marriage, and particularly cross-cultural marriages, and a brief glimpse at relevant data throughout the history of Israel, beginning from the settlement period until the destruction of the First Temple. In this section I will also draw on recent pragmatic and sociolinguistic studies that may provide a helpful perspective for our understanding of the drastic actions associated with cross-cultural marriages in Ezra-Nehemiah.¹⁰ A brief summary will seek to synthesize the findings of this research and provide some suggestions for continued research in this area.

⁹ There is ample bibliography on this. However, it seems to me that the traditional sequence is still the most convincing alternative. See, for example, Carl G. Tuland, “Ezra-Nehemiah or Nehemiah-Ezra: An Investigation into the Validity of the Van Hoonacker Theory,” *AUSS* 12 (1974): 47–62; Leslie McFall, “Was Nehemiah Contemporary with Ezra in 458 BC,” *WTJ* 53 (1991): 263–93; Sara Japhet, “Composition and Chronology in the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah,” in *Second Temple Studies: Vol. 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period*, ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards, JSOTSup 175 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 189–216; Thomas Willi, “Zwei Jahrzehnte Forschung an Chronik und Esra-Nehemia,” *TRu* 67 (2002): 61–104; and Elelwani Farisani, “The Composition and Date of Ezra-Nehemiah,” *OTE* 17 (2004): 208–30, as well as the standard commentaries.

¹⁰ There are important studies that have tried to integrate sociological/anthropological approaches and perspective into the study of the biblical material of Ezra-Nehemiah. See, for example, Kenneth D. Tollefson and Hugh G. M. Williamson, “Nehemiah as Cultural Revitalization: An Anthropological Perspective,” *JSOT* 56 (1992): 41–68, particularly the methodological discussion found in pp. 43–49, which focuses on the concept of revitalization in cultural processes involving distinct societies, paying particular attention to the sequence of foreign dominion, planned change, and subsequent cultural revitalization. See also the work of Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of the Post-Exilic Judaeen Community,” in *Second Temple Studies: Vol. 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period*, ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards, JSOTSup 175 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 243–65, who located the issue of cross-cultural marriages within the larger sociological context of the postexilic community. Harm W. M. van Grol, “Schuld und Scham: Die Verwurzelung von Esra 9,6–7 in der Tradition,” *EstBib* 55 (1997): 29–52, has provided an interesting study that looks at the anthropological categories of shame and guilt in the context of Ezra’s prayer in Ezra 9:6–7. Elelwani Farisani, “The Ideologically Biased Use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a Quest for an African Theology of Reconstruction,” *OTE* 15 (2002): 628–46, and idem, “The Use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a Quest for an African Theology of Reconstruction,” *JTSA* 116 (2003): 27–50, discussed the Ezra-Nehemiah narrative against the background of an African theology of reconstruction after Apartheid in South Africa.

Ethnicity, Family and Marriage in Sociological Perspective

Sociology has provided helpful categories that make it easier to classify the interaction between individuals, families, and clans. These categories include (a) the family structure; (b) the basis of family bond; (c) the line of descent; (d) the locus of control; (e) the place of residence; and (f) the marriage structure.¹¹ Other important sociological categories related particularly to the question of the selection of the marriage partner (or “mate” as sociologists would prefer to call it) include the norms of endogamy (i.e., marriage within one’s ethnic group) and exogamy (i.e., marriage outside one’s ethnic group). Some of these norms are frequently written into law (e.g., incest laws in modern societies or in the Hebrew Bible [Lev 18:6–18; 20:11–12, 17, 19; Deut 22:30 [MT 23:1]; 27:20, 22–23; Ezek 22:10–11]),¹² but oftentimes they function on an informal level of a particular culture. There are three major schools with regard to the theoretical framework of marriage and family: (1) the *functionalist perspective* that focuses upon functions (or dysfunctions) of marriage and family and stresses the interaction of this particular social form with other relevant parts of society; (2) the *conflict perspective*, which interprets marriage and family against the background of gender and power issues; and (3) the *symbolic interactionist perspective* which is also interested in gender issues, but instead of explaining all facets of marriage and family exclusively against the power structure (as in the second perspective) or the function within society (as in the first perspective) this perspective seems to combine both angles and look at the meaning of marriage and family as perceived by the members of the particular social group, including also gender issues.¹³

Not all of these categories are applicable to the study of exogamous marriage in biblical texts, since the available data is often limited due to its “textuality.” A field researcher studying an isolated tribe in the central

¹¹ See here Jon M. Shepard, *Sociology*, 5th ed. (Minneapolis, MN: West, 1993), 331–36. Similar also James M. Henslin, *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999), 430–35, and Richard T. Schaefer, *Sociology. A Brief Introduction*, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004), 281–303. *Family structure* refers to extended or nuclear families. The *basis of the family bond* can be consanguine (= based on blood) or conjugal (= based on marriage). The *line of descent and inheritance* can be patrilineal (= male lineage), matrilineal (= female lineage), or bilateral. The *locus of control* again includes patrilineal (= male dominance), matrilineal (= female dominance) or democratic (= power is shared between sexes) subcategories. The *place of residence* can be patrilocal (= husband’s parents), matrilocal (= wife’s parents), or neolocal (= independent). Finally, the *marriage structure* refers to either monogamy (= one spouse), polygyny (= several wives), or polyandry (several husbands).

¹² See here my entry on incest in the Bible in Gerald A. Klingbeil, “Incest,” in *NIDB*, 3:40.

¹³ Henslin, *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*, 433–38.

African Congo basin will employ research strategies such as observation, video and sound recordings, and interviews (if the language is accessible) and will try to live with the tribe for a prolonged period of time. The study of a particular sociological or legal issue in the Hebrew Bible, on the other hand, does not offer the luxury of direct interaction with those involved and thus requires, first, a conscious recognition of this limitation, and, second, careful attention to all the available textual data, without disregarding *a priori* particular evidence due to preconceived models or hypotheses concerning literary development. To put it more directly, in this study I will read the final canonical text of the Hebrew Bible following the internal chronology and logic of the text without paying particular attention to the ongoing scholarly debate about the dating of these texts.¹⁴ This is not done out of ignorance or lack of respect for past and current scholarship. I am aware of the difficulties involved in the dating of biblical texts.¹⁵ Rather, I am interested in understanding the issue of cross-cultural marriage from the perspective of the biblical authors themselves and not from the supposed (and hypothetical) textual reconstruction of modern scholarship that lacks material evidence.

The concept of cross-cultural interaction presupposes two basic notions: *first*, the existence and importance of culture as a definable and visible entity, and, *second*, the interaction between culture and ethnicity and its appearance

¹⁴ A good example for this can be found in Pentateuchal research, an area where I have spent considerable time and published extensively. I have discussed a number of the underlying philosophical, theological, and historiographical issues in Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Historical Criticism," *DOTP* 401–20. For recent assessments of Pentateuchal scholarship see the contributions of Bill T. Arnold, "Pentateuchal Criticism, History of," *DOTP* 622–31; Georg Fischer, "Zur Lage der Pentateuchforschung," *ZAW* 115 (2003): 608–16; Hans-Winfried Jüngling, "Das Buch Levitikus in der Forschung seit Karl Elligers Kommentar aus dem Jahre 1966," in *Levitikus als Buch*, ed. Heinz-Josef Fabry and Hans-Winfried Jüngling, BBB 119 (Berlin: Philo, 1999), 1–45; Gordon J. Wenham, "Pondering the Pentateuch: The Search for a New Paradigm," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies. A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker / Leicester: Apollos, 1999), 116–44; Rolf Rendtorff, "Directions in Pentateuchal Studies," *CurBS* 5 (1997): 43–65; David M. Carr, "Controversy and Convergence in Recent Studies of the Formation of the Pentateuch," *RelSRev* 23 (1997): 22–31; Rolf Rendtorff, "The Paradigm is Changing: Hopes—and Fears," *BibInt* 1 (1993): 34–53; Gordon J. Wenham, "Method in Pentateuchal Source Criticism," *VT* 41 (1991): 84–109. The tenor of all of these assessments appears to be the fact that there is no consensus position in sight regarding the supposed textual sources of the Pentateuch, its editorial history, and the dating of these sources.

¹⁵ See here the accurate evaluation of Susan Niditch who wrote: "Perhaps the most difficult problem faced by students of Israelite religion is the dating of biblical literature. Biblical texts are guides to the worldview of at least some Israelites, but the social and intellectual history of Israel spans almost a thousand years, and it is far from certain exactly where in that spectrum all of the texts originate." Compare Susan Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 120–1.

in textual data or in the material culture of a particular area/region.¹⁶ Different cultures are characterized by differing sets of material culture, basic underlying values, and social relations. However, culture is always based upon a particular worldview. This worldview functions as the grid that orders and aligns all elements of our life and outlook. A good illustration taken from the computer world is that of the operating system. Worldview corresponds to the operating system, which allows other programs and data to be integrated and understood in a meaningful way.¹⁷

Ethnicity and its presence (or lack thereof!) in the archaeological record or in a written text, such as the Hebrew Bible, has been the subject of heated discussion in recent scholarship.¹⁸ What ethnic markers would make a

¹⁶ For an interesting discussion of intercultural and interracial communication that provides some theoretical framework for the discussion of anything cross-cultural (and possibly also cross-racial) see Andrea L. Rich and Dennis M. Ogawa, "Intercultural and Interracial Communication: An Analytic Approach," in *Culture, Communication and Conflict: Readings in Intercultural Relations*, ed. Garry R. Weaver (Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 29–36 (= reprinted from *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, ed. L. A. Samovar and R. E. Porter [Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982]).

¹⁷ See here the important remarks found in Chantal J. Klingbeil, "Iglesia y cultura: ¿amigas o enemigas?," in *Pensar la iglesia hoy: hacia una eclesiología adventista. Estudios teológicos presentados durante el IV Simposio Bíblico-Teológico Sudamericano en honor a Raoul Dederen*, ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil et al. (Libertador San Martín, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2002), 351–4. Compare Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation. Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 23–24. See particularly the poignant remarks in Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001), 89–90, concerning this issue, emphasizing (among others) a shared worldview as a marker of a common ethnic background.

¹⁸ See here, for example, from the perspective of archaeology most recently the study of Terje Oestigaard, *Political Archaeology and Holy Nationalism: Archaeological Battles over the Bible and Land in Israel and Palestine from 1967–2000*, Gotarc Serie C 67 (Gothenburg: Göteborg University/Department of Archaeology, 2007), who considered ethnicity a close associate of political agendas (both ancient and modern) and focused on the theoretical framework (and limitations) of such an endeavor. Compare also Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity. An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel 1300–1100 B.C.E.*, SBLABS 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); Gloria London, "Ethnicity and Material Culture," in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 146–9; Shlomo Bunimovitz and Avraham Faust, "Building Identity: The Four-Room House and the Israelite Mind," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palestine*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 411–23; idem, "Ethnic Complexity in Northern Israel during Iron Age II," *PEQ* 132 (2000): 2–27; Israel Finkelstein, "Pots and People Revisited: Ethnic Boundaries in the Iron Age I," in *The Archaeology of Israel. Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, ed. Neil Asher Silberman and Daniel Small, JSOTSup 237 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 216–37. Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998) has studied Israelite ethnicity as portrayed in the biblical corpus. He relied heavily on standard historical-critical dating schemes which then inform the chronological development of the concept. More important resources for the study of ethnicity in the text of the Hebrew Bible can be found in the volume edited by Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible*

particular person living during the postexilic period in Palestine distinct from another individual? Definitely, language (or even dialects) would be a good distinguishing mark. Religious loyalties or conviction also have played a major role in the discussion of ethnicity, as can be seen in the analysis of the onomastic data from Iron Age II period Palestine where both language and religious conviction meet.¹⁹ Historians—also outside the field of biblical studies—are (re)discovering the relevance of names and their important linguistic elements for the reconstruction of history.²⁰ Michael Silverman developed four criteria that help distinguish different name types and ethnic markers, including (a) phonological, morphological, and lexical elements; (b) the determination of the theophorous elements in the names that can be restricted to one particular ethnic group; (c) the presence of a gentilic or ethnic indication, such as “the Jew” or “the Arab” (cf. Ezra 2:10, 19, etc.); and (d) the assumption that the patronymic of a known name belongs to the same name group.²¹ Clearly, not all of these criteria are equally helpful or even present. Sometimes the corpus of inscriptional data is relatively small, which will diminish the importance of the phonological, morphological, or lexical elements. However, in the case of biblical Hebrew sufficient data is present. Furthermore, not all theophoric elements are equally distinctive. The theophoric element $\lambda\aleph$, for example, can be found in most Semitic languages, and thus loses its distinctive character.²² Finally, political oppression or social upheaval (such the experience of the exile or the Diaspora) can lead to

BibInt (Boston: Brill, 1996), which contains six studies relevant to the issue of ethnicity in the Hebrew Bible (Diana Edelman, “Ethnicity in Early Israel” [25–55]; Frank Crüsemann, “Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel’s Self-definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis” [57–76]; Rolf Rendtorff, “The *Gēr* in the Priestly Laws of the Pentateuch” [77–87]; Jonathan E. Dyck, “The Ideology of Identity in Chronicles” [89–116]; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation and Inclusion of the ‘Foreigner’ in Post-exilic Biblical Theology” [117–42]; and Jon D. Levenson, “The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism” [143–69]). I will refer to additional bibliographical references in the context of the issue of ethnicity during the Persian period.

¹⁹ An important pioneering study that focused on onomastic data can be found in Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions*, HSS 31 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

²⁰ See here the relevant remarks in Joel T. Rosenthal, “Onomastics and Its Uses,” *JIH* 36 (2005): 57–62, discussing two important volumes dealing with the importance of onomastics for historical research.

²¹ Michael H. Silverman, “Aramean Name-Types in the Elephantine Documents,” *JAOS* 89 (1969): 691.

²² Compare here for more details Frank M. Cross, Jr., “ $\lambda\aleph$,” *ThWAT* 1:259–71. A similar case can also be made for the theophoric element $\beta\epsilon\lambda$ which is often associated with Phoenician religion, but can also be found apart from Phoenician name types. See here for more, Johannes C. de Moor, “ $\beta\epsilon\lambda$,” *ThWAT* 1:707–11.

a disruption of name patterns (such as the typically Semitic patronymic formula).²³ Even considering some of these reservations, onomastics are an important indicator of ethnicity, particularly in written data, and will be used to look at the realities “on the ground” in Persian period Palestine and elsewhere.

When reviewing the literature on the issue of exogamous marriages in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah one immediately notes the use of the term “mixed,” instead of “cross-cultural” or “exogamous.”²⁴ As a matter of fact, I have not been able to find the term cross-cultural in connection with the Ezra-Nehemiah narratives. Some more modern English translations (NIV, NLT) employ the term “intermarriage” in their subheadings, which do not, as immediately pointed out, form part of the Hebrew text of the Tanach, but have shaped considerably the modern reader’s (who is generally unable to consult the original Hebrew text) understanding of the biblical text. Older translations appear to have favored the term “mixed marriage” (RSV, revidierte Lutherübersetzung [German], NSRV, KJV) which may have influenced the titles of scholarly studies. In this study I am employing the terms cross-cultural or exogamous which appear to be less ethnocentric and loaded, and thus preferable.

One major issue, which will be discussed further in this study, concerns the ethnicity of the involved women in Ezra-Nehemiah. According to Neh 13:23 these women came from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. In other words, they were members of societies that lived close to the Judahite heartland and it must have been difficult to distinguish them from members of the Yehud society. Syro-Palestinian archaeology has demonstrated a remarkable continuity and correspondence between the material culture of the regions to the east and to the west of the Jordan valley rift.²⁵ In terms of ethnicity, there

²³ I have discussed these qualifications to Silvermann’s useful criteria in further detail in Gerald A. Klingbeil, “The Aramaic Epigraphical Material of Syria-Palestine during the Persian Period with Reference to the History of the Jews” (MA Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1992), 79–80.

²⁴ See here, for example, the titles of the works of Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “The Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13: A Study of the Sociology of the Post-Exilic Judaean Community,” in *Second Temple Studies: Vol. 2: Temple Community in the Persian Period*, ed. Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards, JSOTSup 175 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 243–65; Yehoshua Gitay, “A Designed Anti-Rhetorical Speech: Ezra and the Question of Mixed Marriage,” *JNSL* 23.2 (1997): 57–68; Christophe Pichon, “La prohibition des mariages mixtes par Néhémie (xii 23–31),” *VT* 47 (1997): 168–99.

²⁵ Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 B.C.E)*, 454–60. Stern mentions on p. 576 of his important work the similar division into two settlement phases (with sometimes a third phase in some sites) that can be found on both sides of the Jordan. For the discussion of Persian period Transjordan see Carter,

does not seem to have been too great a difference in the appearance and look of people from Yehud and the Transjordanian or coastal regions. In fact, the biblical etiology for Moabites and Ammonites is closely associated with Israel’s forefathers (Gen 19:30–38).²⁶ Linguistically, Moabite, Ammonite, and Hebrew were closely related and the phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics shared many common elements.²⁷ Actually, most experts in North-West Semitic languages would rather speak of dialectal variations when considering the Transjordanian “languages” of Ammonite, Edomite, and Moabite.²⁸ Recently, Anson Rainey went even further and suggested that Hebrew was more of a “Transjordanian language” than a Canaanite language.²⁹ So, in fact the material culture, the racial or ethnic make-up, and the language of Moabites, Ammonites, and Yehudites did not differ

“Syria-Palestine in the Persian Period,” 398–412, and earlier Piotr Bienkowski, “The Persian Period,” in *The Archaeology of Jordan*, ed. Burton MacDonald, Russell Adams and Piotr Bienkowski, *Levantine Archaeology 1* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 347–65. Rudolph Henry Dornemann, *The Archaeology of the Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Age* (Milwaukee, MN: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1983), already observed important interconnection of the material culture during LBA and IA I–II between Transjordan and Palestine proper.

²⁶ The biblical data concerning the relationship between Moab and Israel is ambiguous: ethnically, Moab is associated with the family of Lot, the wayward nephew of the patriarch Abraham (Gen 19:30–38). In the Exodus narrative Moab is described as opposing Israel, including the hiring of a freelance prophet in order to curse the troublesome people (Num 22–23). During the famine hinted at in Ruth 1:1, the family of Elimelech finds refuge in Moab on the other side of the Jordan and the two sons marry Moabite women. David sends his parents to Moab during the days of Saul’s persecution (1 Sam 22:3–4). Later on, however, Moab seems to have become under Israelite rule, which is broken after the death of King Ahab (2 Kgs 1:1; 3:3–7). For additional archaeological, historical, and biblical data concerning Moab see Øystein Stan LaBianca and Randy W. Younker, “The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom: the Archaeology of Society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan (ca. 1400–500 BCE),” in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), 399–415; and earlier Udo Worschech, *Die Beziehungen Moabs zu Israel und Ägypten in der Eisenzeit: Siedlungsarchäologische und siedlungshistorische Untersuchungen im Kernland Moabs (Ard el-Kerak)*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 18 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990); and J. Andrew Dearman, ed., *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, ABS 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

²⁷ This can be easily verified by reading the important Moabite inscription of the Mesha stele, which can be understood fairly easily by somebody who understands biblical and epigraphical Hebrew. Interestingly, some epigraphical textbooks group Moabite closely together with Hebrew. See, for example, J. C. L. Gibson, *Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions*, vol 1 of *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

²⁸ See here, most recently, Simon B. Parker, “Ammonite, Edomite, and Moabite,” in *Beyond Babel: A Handbook for Biblical Hebrew and Related Languages*, ed. Steven McKenzie and John Kaltner, RBS 42 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 45, basing himself on the important earlier work of W. Randall Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000–586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

²⁹ Anson Rainey, “The Consensus Theory is Dead,” *Biblical Archaeology Society Webb Site*, http://www.bib-arch.org/bswb_BAR/Rainey/bswbRaineyMainPage.asp.

significantly, how would ethnicity and ethnic boundaries be established? One important aspect of ethnicity in ancient societies involved the religious identity that a particular group shared. As already indicated above, the textuality of the biblical data does not always provide all the relevant information, due to its selective and interpretive (or evaluative) nature. However, it does provide an inside glimpse which may reflect historical realities, but truly provides us with an understanding of important theological concepts present at the time of writing.³⁰ We will return to this important issue further on in our study.

Exogamous Marriage in Ezra-Nehemiah: Nexus between Narrative and Law

Narrative and law are often closely connected in biblical (and also extrabiblical) texts.³¹ Frequently, law is established once a narrative has highlighted a particular issue. A good example of this from the Pentateuch can be found in the issue of inheritance laws, particularly the question of the daughters of Zelophehad (Num 27:1–4), whose father had died without leaving a male offspring and whose case was not covered by the already established law.³² In turn Moses inquires from YHWH how this case is to be

³⁰ The archaeology of religion is a complex issue. Some relevant bibliographical resources include William G. Dever, "Religion and Cult in the Levant: The Archaeological Data," in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader*, ed. Suzanne Richard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 383–90; Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel. A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001); Beth Alpert Nakhai, *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel*, ASOR 7 (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2001); Garth Gilmour, "The Archaeology of Cult in the Ancient Near East: Methodology and Practice," *OTE* 13 (2000): 283–92. William G. Dever, "The Contribution of Archaeology to the Study of Canaanite and Early Israelite Religion," in *Ancient Israelite Religion. Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 209–48. More recently I presented a substantial study on the archaeology of religion during the crucial transitional LBA period in Palestine where I sought to integrate textual, archaeological and iconographical data in order to get the bigger picture. Compare, Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Between North and South: The Archaeology of Religion in LBA Palestine and the Period of the Settlement," in *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History*, ed. Richard S. Hess, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Paul Ray; *BRS*Sup 3 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 111–49.

³¹ Cultic law and ritual is often presented in narrative sections. See for Ugaritic material the important study of David P. Wright, *Ritual in Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001). Relevant studies dealing with biblical material include Adele Berlin, "Numinous *Nomos*: On the Relationship between Narrative and Law," in 'A Wise and Discerning Mind.' *Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, ed. Saul M. Olyan and Robert C. Culley, *BJS* 325 (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 25–31, and earlier Félix García López, "Narración y ley en los escritos sacerdotales del Pentateuco," *EstBib* 57 (1999): 271–87.

³² The issue of what to do when there is no established law has been discussed recently by Raúl Quiroga, "¿Qué hacer cuando no se ha prescrito qué se debe hacer? El caso paradigmático de las hijas de Zelofehad en Números 27:1–11," in *Misión y contextualización. Llevar el mensaje*

handled and a new case law is established through the authoritative divine instruction (Num 27:8–11).³³ The mix of genre involving narrative and law predates the texts of the Hebrew Bible, as it can already be seen in the Codex of Hammurabi.³⁴ Some have argued quite forcefully that biblical law constitutes mostly a commentary on critical matters arising in earlier narratives.³⁵ While this is an attractive option and seems to fit the current consensus involving the evolutionary development from story to law/ritual of the literature of the HB, extrabiblical material shows the co-existence of both at the same time in the same text. An alternative explanation of the nexus between law and narrative that should be considered is that narrative tacitly refers to biblical law and provides a real-life window into its application or lack thereof. What requires further research, at least in my mind, is the rationale for the embeddedness of legal material in narrative contexts.³⁶

The issue of cross-cultural marriage in Ezra-Nehemiah is closely associated with narrative and ritual contexts, be it prayers or narratives depicting the postexilic community. In the following, I will briefly outline the relevant references to exogamous marriage in Ezra-Nehemiah. The first relevant references can be found in Ezra’s prayer in Ezra 9. There is a strong cultic tone to this prayer, underlining the religious connotations of cross-cultural marriage in the eye of the biblical author. In Ezra 9:1 the Yehud leadership approaches Ezra and informs him that the *הָעָם יִשְׂרָאֵל* “the people

biblico a un mundo multicultural, ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil; Serie monográfica de estudios bíblicos y teológicos de la Universidad Adventista del Plata 2, (Libertador San Martín, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2005), 157–71, with relevant earlier bibliographical references.

³³ The Hebrew text reads here *מִשְׁפֶּט מִתְּקַת*, “a statue of judgment” [German Elberfelder Übersetzung has the more technical term ‘Rechtsordnung’]. The same phrase occurs also in Num 35:29 referring to laws about murder and blood revenge. The phrase *תְּקַת עוֹלָם* “perpetual statue” is well known in the Pentateuch (e.g., Exod 12:14, 17; 27:21; 28:43; 29:9; Lev 3:17; 7:36; etc.) and refers to cultic and civil law.

³⁴ As has been pointed out by Berlin, “Numinous *Nomos*,” 29, this mix emphasizes the divine origin of the law.

³⁵ This has been proposed by Calum M. Carmichael, *Law, Legend, and Incest in the Bible* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 6. While his quest for a feasible explanation of the interaction of law and narrative in the Pentateuch is laudable, his suggestion is not entirely convincing. See here also my comments in Gerald A. Klingbeil, review of Calum M. Carmichael, *Law, Legend, and Incest in the Bible: Leviticus 18–20*, *JBL* 120 (2001): 149–50.

³⁶ Also stressed in Carmichael, *Law, Legend, and Incest in the Bible*, 195. I have tried to discover ritual (= cultic law) in narrative contexts in the Hebrew Bible (both from the Pentateuch and the historical books). See Gerald A. Klingbeil, “Altars, Ritual and Theology—Preliminary Thoughts on the Importance of Cult and Ritual for a Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures,” *VT* 54 (2004): 495–515, and Gerald A. Klingbeil, “*Momentaufnahmen*’ of Israelite Religion: The Importance of the Communal Meal in Narrative Texts in I/II Regum and their Ritual Dimension,” *ZAW* 118 (2006): 22–45.

of Israel” (including priests and Levites)³⁷ have not ‘separated’ themselves from the surrounding people. The verbal form of *בדל* is repeatedly used in cultic and ritual contexts (see Exod 26:33; Lev 1:17; 5:8, etc.), including key texts like Leviticus 10:10 or 11:47 which emphasize the separation between holy and profane and between pure and impure. One should also note the importance of the term in creation theology (Gen 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18) where separation is part and parcel of created order and forms the basis of the pure↔impure|| holy↔profane system so prevalent in Israelite religion.³⁸ It seems clear that there is a terminological and conceptual link between Ezra 9:1 and Lev 20:24–25 where future separation from the nations of Canaan is required of Israel. The particular terminology employed in Ezra 9:2 to indicate the cross-cultural marriages is *כִּי־נָשְׂאוּ מִבְּנוֹתֵיהֶם לָהֶם* “because they have taken [נשא] from their [=people of the land] daughters for themselves.” In the prayer of Ezra (Ezra 9:12), uttered in response to this troubling news, the *giving* [נתן] of sons and daughters [אֶל־תַּתְּנוּ לְבָנֵיהֶם וּבָנוֹתֵיהֶם] as well as the *taking* [נשא] is indicated [אֶל־תִּשְׂאוּ לְבָנֵיכֶם] note the exclusive references to sons], thus emphasizing two important elements of marriage contracts.³⁹

An additional verb is used in Ezra 9:14 [Hithpael of *חתן*] which can be translated as “become the son-in-law of somebody” or simply “intermarry.”⁴⁰ Another idiomatic expression, which does not appear to generally carry the notion of marriage, is used in Ezra 10:2: *וְנָשְׂבוּ נָשִׁים נְכָרִיּוֹת* “and we have married foreign women” [lit. “caused foreign women to dwell”].⁴¹ Based on

³⁷ This is clearly a narrative and theological link to the Pentateuchal and later historical references to the covenant people. It should be noted that the *ישׂראל* of Ezra’s time is not the same as the *ישׂראל* of earlier periods.

³⁸ These are key terms of the Israelite religious world. For a good introduction to the issues involved see Gordon Wenham, “Purity,” in *The Biblical World*, ed. John Barton (London: Routledge, 2002), 2:378–94, esp. the helpful figure on p. 384. Compare also Richard E. Averbeck, “Clean and Unclean,” *NIDOTTE* 4:477–86, and earlier also Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness. A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup 106; (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 43–55. Concerning the etymology and semantics of *בדל* see B. Otzen, “בדל,” *ThWAT* 1:518–19, and Cornelis van Dam, “בדל,” *NIDOTTE* 1:605–7. This link to creation is also important in the context of the Yehud community in the postexilic restoration period. A new Israel is being born!

³⁹ Similar terminology is also used in Nehemiah 13:25.

⁴⁰ The same root is also used in Ugaritic literature with the meaning of ‘marry’ and it may be etymologically associated with the concept of providing protection. See here Robert H. O’Connell, “חתן,” *NIDOTTE* 2:325–26.

⁴¹ See here Manfred Görg, “ישב,” *TDOT* 6:427, who proposed that the basic meaning of “undergoing a change of place” is also present in the South Semitic (Ethiopic) *awsaba* ‘marry’ and the Arabic *wajaba* “leap up from one’s seat” (p. 423). The same phrase appears also in Ezra 10:10, 14, 17, 18. The same expression, minus the reference to the foreigner, is also found in Neh

the atypical terminology and the usage of the term נְקָרְיֹת Williamson has suggested that these marriage-like unions were not true marriages.⁴² However, while the terminology is unusual, the reference to divorce in Ezra 10:3 is pretty standard and uses the root נָצַח [Hiph], which is also employed in Deuteronomy 24:2 in connection with divorce. Furthermore, the wholesale “shacking up” of the Yehud citizenship during the time of Ezra-Nehemiah seems to me rather a reading from the perspective of the 21st century and not from the perspective of a relatively small town community that is marked by religious conservatism.

An additional reference to exogamous marriage relations in Ezra-Nehemiah can be found in Neh 6:18 and is marked by the use of the term בְּתוּרָה “son-in-law” and refers to the Ammonite Tobiah, the son-in-law of Shechaniah, the son of Arah, the latter being a prominent member of the Yehud community. The same term is used in Neh 13:28 and refers there to one of the sons of the high priest who was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, who—similar to Tobiah—is portrayed as a prominent enemy of the Yehud community. Another relevant reference can be found in Neh 13:26, referring to the many foreign women of “ideal” (or prototypical) king Solomon. Again, the language is highly cultic. The results of these marriages are described in terms of sin [חַטָּא], used twice in this verse.

Summarizing this section, it appears as if law and narrative are closely connected and often embedded. In this sense it could be argued that narrative can both lead to law formulation and is also often referring tacitly to biblical law, providing a real-life window on its impact and application (or lack thereof). Cross-cultural marriages are always portrayed as negative in Ezra-Nehemiah and are often associated with cultic terminology, reminding the reader of cultic prescriptions (including terminology such as אֲשֵׁרֶת, בְּלֵל or the unique אֲשֵׁרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ “holy seed”).⁴³ The overall context of Ezra 9–10, involving prayer and confession, as well as a covenant renewal ceremony, is shaped by cultic and ritual language. Interestingly, beginning in Ezra 10:18–44, the list of those guilty of marrying cross-culturally mentions in first place those associated with the temple (i.e., priests [10:18b–22], Levites [10:23],

13:23, where it is associated more specifically with Ashdodite, Ammonite, and Moabite women, and in Neh 13:27.

⁴² Hugh G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, WBC 16 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1985), 150. The נְקָרְיֹת is often used in Proverbs as a reference to a prostitute (Prov 2:16; 5:10, 20; 6:24; 7:5; 23:27; 27:13). However, this is not the only meaning of the term.

⁴³ A similar phrase appears in Isa 6:13 [אֲשֵׁרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ], but this is the only other reference of this combination.

singers [10:24a], gatekeepers [10:24b]), which is only later followed by the guilty members of the non-professional community (10:25–43). In Nehemiah 10:30 the solemn vow of the people is part of a larger re-consecration ritual and involved written commitments. Interestingly, the vow begins with the issue of exogamous marriages and only then are other issues such as Sabbath observance and offerings/tithes mentioned. Finally, the reference to Nehemiah’s analysis of the current situation and possible reforms is spiced with cultic language, as can be seen in the summary statement in Neh 13:30 which states: וְטִהַרְתִּים מִכָּל־נֹכַר “and I purified them from everything foreign.” In this section even the “ideal” king Solomon does not receive good press in Ezra-Nehemiah and is used as a negative example of the results of exogamous marriages, which always lead to sin [אֵת].

Biblical Law(s) Concerning Exogamous Marriage

Marriage and family in the Hebrew Bible has been the subject of much research. Useful summaries of the vast and diverse data can be found in dictionaries and encyclopedia,⁴⁴ as well as more focused monographs.⁴⁵ In

⁴⁴ See, for example, Victor P. Hamilton, “Marriage, Old Testament and Ancient Near East,” *ABD* 4:559–69, who discussed some relevant categories employed in sociological research, such as the issue of the initiation of the marriage (parentally arranged or self-initiated), endogamous or exogamous marriage, as well as marriage structures. Compare also the earlier (and less complete) R. K. Bower and G. L. Knapp, “Marriage,” *ISBE* 3:261–66. Discussion of the relevant data limited to specific text collections (such as the Pentateuch) can be found in Victor H. Matthews, “Family Relationships,” *DOTP* 291–300.

⁴⁵ The honoree of this *Festschrift* has published a landmark volume dealing with the issue of sexuality in the Hebrew Bible. He included significant sections dealing with the general issue of marriage, as well as exogamous marriages, particularly those involving two distinct faith sets (“interfaith marriages”). The entire volume and its extensive bibliography (nearly 150 pages!) provide a rich mine of data relevant to the issue of exogamous marriages in the Hebrew Bible. See for more information Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*, passim. Compare also earlier Ken M. Campbell, ed., *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), including the relevant chapters by Victor H. Matthews [“Marriage and Family in the Ancient Near East” pp. 1–32] and Daniel I. Block [“Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel” 33–102]. In the same year a volume edited by Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. was published by Baker Books that included five relevant chapters that discussed family in the context of particular canonical limits (e.g., Pentateuch, historical books, wisdom literature, and prophetic literature), see Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R., eds., *Family in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003). Other relevant studies include Carol L. Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel* (ed. Leo G. Perdue et al.; The Family, Religion, and Culture; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 1–47; Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Family in First Temple Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel* (ed. Leo G. Perdue et al.; The Family, Religion, and Culture; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 48–103; John J. Collins, “Marriage, Divorce, and Family in Second Temple Judaism,” in *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Leo G. Perdue et al., *The Family, Religion and Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 104–62; Naomi Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis. A Household Economics Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993).

this study I will not look at family in the Hebrew Bible in general, but rather at legal biblical material that informs the issue of exogamous marriage. Considering the clear presence of decentralized cultic worship (= “high places”) in the material culture of Syria-Palestine,⁴⁶ it is clear that reality did not always reflect the ideal (e.g., the legal prohibitions concerning the worship of images and idols [Exod 20:4–6 || Deut 5:8–10]). In other words, it appears as if a gap often existed between the demands and requirements of the law and the reality on the ground.⁴⁷ Let us see if this is also true in the issue of exogamous marriages.

Explicit legal data concerning the marriage of Israelites with non-Israelites can be found in Deuteronomy 7:1–10. The context of the chapter in the book of Deuteronomy suggests a location on the eastern side of the Jordan, at the end of the forty-year wilderness sojourn (Deut 1:1–4). Thus, both theologically as well as conceptually, it aims to explain (and even contextualize) law for the new generation of Israelites that is about to enter the ‘Promised Land’. This motif of explaining prior law is introduced in Deut 1:5 and 27:8 where the rare Hebrew root בִּאֵר I “explain, elucidate, pen down” is being used.⁴⁸ Looking forward to Israel’s increasing interaction with foreign nations,⁴⁹ including the Hittites, the Gergashites, the Amorites, the

⁴⁶ While one should be careful not to assign cultic significance to every divergent site (see here my general comments on the archaeology of religion, focusing particularly on the methodology of discovering cultic sites, note 29 above), there is clear evidence for the existence of high places involving some type of sacred image/tree/stela, etc. in Syria-Palestine during the time that Israel lived in Palestine. See, for example, Avraham Biran, I. Pommerantz and H. Katzenstein, eds., *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology of Hebrew Union College, 1981); M. D. Fowler, “The Israelite *bamâ*: A Question of Interpretation,” *ZAW* 94 (1982): 203–13; J. A. Emerton, “The High Places of the Gates’ in 2 Kings xxiii 8,” *VT* 44 (1994): 455–67; Matthias Gleis, *Die Bamah*, *BZAW* 251 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997); Scott M. Langston, *Cultic Sites in the Tribe of Benjamin. Benjamite Prominence in the Religion of Israel*, American University Studies Series 7: Theology and Religion 200 (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); and, most comprehensively, Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel*, 81–266.

⁴⁷ This seems to be one of the recurring motifs of prophetic talk in the Hebrew Bible.

⁴⁸ See here also Edesio Sánchez, “Family in the Non-Narrative Sections of the Pentateuch,” in *Family in the Bible*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 44–45.

⁴⁹ It should be noted that I just reflect the language use of the Hebrew Bible. The Western notion of a “nation” or a “state” (as an integrated and highly complex entity) is not at all present in the ancient Near East. One should rather consider these divisions in terms of distinct tribal groups. For a good discussion of the relationship between the concepts of “nation/state” and “tribe” see the doctoral dissertation of Zeljko Gregor, “Sociopolitical Structures of Transjordanian Societies during the Late Bronze and Iron I Ages (ca. 1550–1000 B.C.)” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1996), 127–72, esp. 154–61. Compare also the application of the tribal model to Transjordanian LBA society in LaBianca and Younker, “The Kingdoms of Ammon,

Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites (Deut 7:1) during the settlement period, there is a need for clarifying the prior order to execute the “ban” on these peoples (as, for example, in Num 21:2–3). As has been argued, the complex issue of the ‘ban’ does not only involve military or socio-political connotations but involves definite religious and ritual implications.⁵⁰ In Deut 7:2–3 the author of Deuteronomy further elucidates that executing the “ban” on these tribes means practically that no covenant should be entered into with these nations [כרת ברית], as well as not giving sons and daughter in marriage, or taking sons and daughters from them for their own children. Deuteronomy 7:3 employs the technical term הון “to marry, become a son in law” that we have already seen in Neh 6:18 and 13:28. The rationale provided by the text is simple and expressively stated in Deut 7:4:

כִּי־יִסֹר אֶת־בְּנֵי מֵאֲחֵרֵי וְעַבְדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וְתָרָה אַרְיֵהוּ בְכֶם וְהִשְׁמִידָךְ מִהָרַ

Because it would turn away your children from following me and they would serve other gods. Consequently, the anger of the YHWH would burn against you [pl.] and would destroy you [sg.= collective] speedily.

In other words, exogamous marriage (be it giving or taking) would result in grave consequences affecting the entire community. Clearly, the formulation of this law emphasizes the collective (or corporal) nature of the possible consequences to be administered by the deity. As already observed in the case of the references to cross-cultural marriages in Ezra-Nehemiah, the religious and cultic connotations of marriage are strongly emphasized. Following this statement more specific commands are included that describe the religious dimension of the ban, involving the demolition of unauthorized altars [מזבֵּחַ], the destruction of standing stones [מִצֵּבָה], the breaking down of Asherah poles [אֲשֵׁרָה], and the burning of the images [פְּסִילֵי] (Deut 7:5). This is then followed by a reference to the theological basis of being YHWH’s holy people [כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אֵתָה לַיהוָה], i.e., divine election (Deut 7:6–7) and divine salvation based on YHWH’s love (Deut 7:8).

Leviticus 21:14 contains specific requirements for priestly marriages. A priest was not to marry a widow [אֵלְמָנָה], a woman that had been driven away

Moab and Edom: the Archaeology of Society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan (ca. 1400–500 BCE),” 399–415.

⁵⁰ This has been argued convincingly (including many further bibliographic references) by Allan Bornapé, “El problema del הון en el Pentateuco y su dimensión ritual,” *DavarLogos* 4 (2005): 1–16.

[גְּרוּשָׁה],⁵¹ or a woman profaned by harlotry [זִנְיָה]. Rather—and here comes the indicative clause of the law—he should take as a wife a virgin from his own people [בְּתוּלָה מִמְּעֻמֵּי]. This implies the prohibition to marry a foreigner. Thus, ethnic compatibility appears to have been highly relevant for this group of religious specialists, a point that reappears in Ezra’s list of all affected people from Yehud, focusing particularly on the distinct groups of religious specialists (priests [10:18b–22], Levites [10:23], singers [10:24a], gatekeepers [10:24b]).

A slightly different tack on exogamous marriages can be found in Deuteronomy 21:10–14 which contains instructions governing the taking of a wife from female war prisoners. It is noteworthy to observe the patrilocal locus of control of this marriage relationship. The ritual acts indicated prior to the consummation of the marriage involve movement and a changed location [אֶל־תּוֹךְ בַּיְתְּךָ], the cutting of hair and nails [וְעָשְׂתָהּ וְעָשְׂתָהּ וְעָשְׂתָהּ], an important change of dress [וְהִסִּירָה אֶת־שִׁמְלֹת שְׂבָיֶיהָ מִעָלֶיהָ], lit. “and she shall remove from herself the mantle/clothing of her captivity”, as well as a 30-day period of mourning [וּבְכֹתֶהָ אֶת־אֲבִיהָ וְאֶת־אִמָּהָ יָרַח יָמִים]. This last rite is particularly important. The mourning rite suggests death and complete separation from the female prisoner’s previous culture and/or religion.⁵² This has also been observed by Craigie:

These actions may have a double significance. They indicate her transference from a foreign community into the family of Israel; they may also indicate her mourning. For a full month, she was to weep for her father and mother; although the mourning could

⁵¹ Most versions translate this term (גְּרוּשָׁה) as “divorced woman” (NKJV, NASB [1995], NJB, to mention a few). The term appears quite regularly in the Pentateuch and is not only used in the context of marriage. Adam and Eve are driven out of Eden (Gen 3:24) and Cain is driven away from farming (Gen 4:14). In both instances no direct marriage links are visible, although one could argue that both acts of separation are so existential as would be the separation of husband and wife, who have become one flesh (Gen 2:24). The next occurrence of this lemma in Gen 21:10 is quite significant and could be used to suggest the semantic range of “divorce, legal separation,” as it involves the sending away of Hagar by Abraham, a demand made by Sarah. Other relevant references that suggest this meaning include Lev 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num 30:10; and Ezek 44:22. For a more detailed discussion of this term see P. J. J. S. Els, “גרשׁ,” *NIDOTTE* 1:898–9, and Helmer Ringgren, “גרשׁ,” *ThWAT* 2:71–72.

⁵² Compare here also the study of Xuan Huong Thi Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 302 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), that deals with biblical and ANE mourning rites.

indicate the death of the woman's parents in war, it may simply point to her removal by force from the parental home.⁵³

A later relevant passage dealing with exogamous marriages in biblical times can be found in Josh 23:11–13. The historical point of reference of the narrative is the settlement period, towards the end of the life of Joshua. The call to love YHWH [לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם] in Josh 23:11 is followed by explicit indications of how this love is to be expressed: if you intermarry [technical term חָתַן] with all the nations that have been left in Canaan [בְּיָתֵר הַגּוֹיִם] and in turn you join them and they join you (Josh 23:12), then YHWH will not continue to drive these nations out of the land and they will become stumbling blocks to you (Josh 23:13). There is no particular reference to religious leadership (i.e., priests or Levites) or other privileged leadership. Contextually, this appears to be a clear command to the people as a whole, as can be seen in the use of the 2nd masc. plur. verbal forms of the section, the 2nd masc. plur. pronominal suffixes, as well as the introductory formula describing the audience in Josh 23:2, referring to לְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְזִקְנָיו וְלְרֹאשֵׁיו וְלִשְׂפֹטָיו וְלִשְׁפָטָיו “to all of Israel, to their elders, to their leaders, to their judges, and to their officials.”

Apart from the legal prohibitions and indications regarding exogamous marriages, what do the narratives prior to the Exodus event tell about the issue of exogamous or endogamous marriage relationships? As has been noted elsewhere, it appears as if endogamous marriages were the norm during the patriarchal period depicted in the book of Genesis.⁵⁴ Abraham married his half-sister (Gen 20:12), Nahor married his niece Milcah (Gen 11:29), Isaac married his cousin Rebekah (Gen 24:15), Esau married his cousin Malhalath (Gen 28:9), and Jacob married his cousins Rachel and Leah (Gen 29:12). Endogamous marriages are very emblematic in small groups and are designed to provide socio-economical protection (i.e., goods and land stay within the group) as well as maintaining the religious identity of the group which often involve particular rituals or ethics. However, while endogamous marriages seem to have been the norm, exogamous relationships can also be found during the early patriarchal history, though it

⁵³ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 281. Similar also Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy. An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 4 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 291. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, NIBC 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson/Paternoster, 1996), 234–35, emphasized the general protection of the captured woman under Israelite law.

⁵⁴ I am basing my observations here on the helpful work of Hamilton, “Marriage, Old Testament and Ancient Near East,” *ABD* 4:563–64.

seems as if they are mostly negatively portrayed by the biblical author: Esau marries two Hittites (Gen 26:34) who in turn cause his parents great grief (Gen 26:35).⁵⁵ Genesis 34 describes the abuse of Dinah by Shechem the son of Hamor and the subsequent negotiations to initiate exogamous marriages between the inhabitants of Shechem and the clan of Jacob. As was the case in most ancient marriage arrangements the parents had to set up the marriage and negotiations are set in motion (Gen 34:6–8). Genesis 34:9 introduces the technical term חתן “intermarry,” focusing particularly on the females of both clans: בְּנֹתֵיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ לָנוּ וְאֵת־בְּנֹתֵינוּ תִקְחוּ לָכֶם “give your daughters to us and take our daughters for you.” As a result, familial ties would have been established and the clans of Hamor and Jacob would have become related. Seemingly, the request is considered positively by the sons of Jacob and one wonders why Jacob is portrayed so passively, up to the point of being non-present. The conditions for exogamous marriages between the two clans, however, involve an important religious element, i.e., the circumcision of all male members of the clan of Hamor (Gen 34:14–17). While the modern reader has already been alerted to the treacherous intention of the sons of Jacob,⁵⁶ the unsuspecting male members of the clan of Hamor of Shechem simply accept the religious connotations of the exogamous marriage proposal and willingly agree to the conditions laid out by the sons of Jacob (Gen 34:18–22). The bloody outcome of the treachery maintains Jacob’s clan pure but the social costs are high and the clan has to evacuate the region quickly.

Another truly cross-cultural marriage can be found in Gen 41:45 where Joseph marries the daughter of an Egyptian priest. Both in biblical literature as well as in Egyptian literature, Egypt and Canaan are mostly described as being hostile or alienated regions.⁵⁷ However, one of the patriarchs is married

⁵⁵ The Hebrew reads here מֵרַת רוּחַ, literally “bitterness of spirit.” This particular phrase does not occur elsewhere, but the similar phrase מֵרַת נַפֶּשׁ “bitterness of being” is used in 1 Sam 1:10 and refers there to Hannah’s bitter experience of being childless while her rival has many children. The same phrase appears also in Prov 14:10 where it indicates bitterness *per se*.

⁵⁶ An important marker is the term בְּמַרְמָה וְיָדְבָרוּ “and spoke deceitfully” (Gen 34:13). Jacob is described with the similar noun in Gen 27:35, which is significant for the narrative analysis of the passage. The sons of the “deceiver” are also “deceivers.”

⁵⁷ See here Donald B. Redford, *Egypt and Canaan in the New Kingdom*, Beer-Sheva. Studies by the Department of Bible and Ancient Near East 4 (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1990), and idem, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). In biblical literature Egypt is mostly called the בֵּית עֲבָדִים “house of slavery/bondage” (Exod 13:3, 14; 20:2; Deut 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5, 10; Josh 24:17; Judg 6:8; Jer 34:13; and Mic 6:4) or is associated with bad memories (Isa 10:24, 26). When people do not trust in YHWH to provide for their every needs (including protection against enemies) they are depicted as “going down to Egypt” or “relying on the reed of Egypt” (Isa 30:2, 3; 31:1; 36:6, 9; similar Jer 2:18, 36). For a recent discussion of the memory of the Exodus in

to an Egyptian woman, who is, worst case scenario, the daughter of a priest. Interestingly, the biblical text does not seem to contain an open (or even veiled) critique of this reality, even though the place of residence is matrilocal, i.e., Joseph and his family live in the wife's family location, due to the particular socio-economic realities of the narrative. When Gen 41:51–52 informs the reader that Joseph's wife gives birth to two sons, it is the father who gives the names, thus emphasizing the locus of control as being patrilineal. While Joseph's family is physically present in Egypt, mentally and spiritually he is back in Canaan, as can be seen in his final request to his brothers, prior to his death, of taking his bones home (Gen 50:25).⁵⁸

Other examples of exogamous marriages in the Pentateuch include Moses and Zipporah (Exod 2:16–22) whose relationship is not entirely easy to understand.⁵⁹ The fact that Zipporah was not an Israelite appears to be the major issue in Aaron's and Miriam's attack of Moses' authority (Num 12:1).⁶⁰ Numbers 25:1–3 includes a narrative section about the worship of Baal Peor. While it does not contain legal material, the narrative may provide an important hint as to the reason why there is such a strong reaction against exogamous marriages in the later book of Ezra-Nehemiah. After the fourth (unsuccessful) attempt of the prophet-turned-mercenary Balaam to curse Israel, a strategy shift seems to take place in the Moabite/Midianite anti-Israel coalition. As a result, the people of Israel began to indulge in prostitution (or “sexual immorality” as the NIV puts it) with Moabite women (Num 25:1).⁶¹ This is followed by the change of religious loyalties as “the people” [not specified but implied to be Israel] are invited to sacrifice to the

later biblical texts see Ronald Hendel, “The Exodus in Biblical Memory,” *JBL* 120 (2001): 601–22. A good example of the Egyptian perception of the regions north of the Nile delta can be found in the literary work *The Tale of Sinuhe*, composed most probably during the Middle Kingdom. For a good introduction to the text and relevant bibliography see Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible. A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 254–56. An up-to-date translation of the work can be found in “Sinuhe,” translated by Miriam Lichtheim (*COS* 1.38:77–82).

⁵⁸ The MT reads וְהֵעֵלְתֶם אֶת-עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה “you shall bring up my bones from here.” Note the geographical detail, suggesting the going up from flat Egypt to mountainous Palestine.

⁵⁹ See here the comments of Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Zipporah,” in *Women in Scripture*, ed. Carol Meyers (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 171.

⁶⁰ וַתְּדַבֵּר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמִשְׁחָה עַל-אִדֹּת הָאִשָּׁה הַכְּשִׁית אֲשֶׁר לָקַח “and Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses for the reason the Cushite wife he had taken.” Some scholars believe that Zipporah and the Cushite woman mentioned in Num 25:1 are not the same and represent two different wives of Moses. A helpful discussion of the data can be found in Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Africa and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 35–37.

⁶¹ The Hebrew verbs employed here are חָלַל “to be profaned” (Hiph) and זָנָה “to commit fornication, act like a harlot.” Again we can note the close link between cultic purity (such as expressed by חָלַל) and sexual immorality (as indicated by the use of זָנָה).

Moabite women’s gods. In consequence MT reads וַיֹּאכְלוּ הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶן “the people ate and bowed down to their gods” (Num 25:2). Numbers 25:3a seems to function as a summary statement: וַיִּצְמַד יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַעַל פְּעוֹר “in consequence Israel joined itself to Baal Peor.”⁶² Figuratively, Israel was harnessing itself by sexual immorality and ritual acts to another deity. In consequence the anger of YHWH is aroused against Israel (Num 25:3b) and public legal action is taken (Num 25:4–8).⁶³ In this particular narrative a close link between sexual union and religious loyalties is emphasized. It should be noted that the text does not tell us about formal cross-cultural relations, but rather about extra-marital, immoral relationships that led to a change of religious affiliation.

The list of exogamous marriages in the Hebrew Bible is quite extensive. This is, however, not the purpose of this particular study. *Positive* (e.g., Rahab and Salmon [according to the genealogy of Matth 1:5], Ruth and Mahlon/Chilion,⁶⁴ and later Boaz, etc.), *negative* (Solomon and Pharaoh’s daughter [1 Kgs 3:1],⁶⁵ Ahab and the Phoenician princess Jezebel [1 Kgs 16:31]), as well as neutral (Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite [2 Sam 11:3]) examples are given in the Hebrew Bible. One wonders why some exogamous marriages were strongly criticized while others seem to have been condoned (or at least tolerated)? What particular element made the difference in the evaluation of the biblical authors? Was it prior experience with the particular people/tribe involved—be it negative or positive? Was it geographical distance to a particular people group that made it easier for the new member to be integrated?⁶⁶ Or did the evaluation depend on other factors that are not that easily visible on the textual surface?

A preferred solution to the apparent inconsistency of these conflicting appraisals by the biblical authors has been the suggestion to posit different

⁶² The Hebrew verb נָצַד, used here in the Niphal inflection, expresses the basic idea of harnessing something and has cognate forms in Akkadian *šamādu* “bind, harness” and other Semitic languages. See John E. Harvey, “נָצַד,” *NIDOTTE* 3:814.

⁶³ I have argued elsewhere that this phrase does not suggest irrational fury but involves a conscious decision to punish or react in ritual (or legal) manners appropriate to the situation. Compare here Gerald A. Klingbeil, “Quebrar la ley: algunas notas exegeticas acerca de Éxodo 32:19,” *DavarLogos* 1 (2002): 73–80, esp. 77–79.

⁶⁴ The MT is not clear on who married whom. If order of appearance in the text is any indication, it seems as if Ruth married Chilion, since her name appears after Orpah’s name.

⁶⁵ The critique of this marriage is veiled, but nevertheless present. Compare the poignant remarks in Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, NIBC 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 44–45.

⁶⁶ In this sense, was it better to get married to a member of a people or tribe that lived far away, e.g., Hittite marriage companions are better than Moabite, while Egyptians have historical problems standing against them?

(and often conflicting) sources. The postulation of different sources that were undergoing different redactions and editions has been the mainstay of critical scholarship for at least two centuries, although this notion has not been accepted in all quarters of biblical scholarship.⁶⁷ Without getting into the nitty-gritty of this all-consuming subject I would like to look beyond this one-way road toward the insights of socio-linguistic pragmatics that may shed some light on the issue of cross-cultural marriages in the Hebrew Bible and their differing evaluations.

Modern linguistics has emphasized the importance of pragmatics and communication models that need to be taken into consideration if one wants to communicate competently.⁶⁸ In the following I will present the basic concepts of socio-linguistic pragmatics which will then be integrated into the larger task at hand, i.e., our trying to come to decipher and understand the significance of the strong reaction against exogamous marriages in Ezra-Nehemiah.

⁶⁷ I have sought to interact with some of the critical issues that led to the postulation of source criticism have been discussed in my entry on historical criticism in the Pentateuch. See Klingbeil, "Historical Criticism," *DOTP* 401–20. Compare most recently John van Seters, *The Edited Bible. The Curious History of the 'Editor' in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), and his comments concerning the figure of the presumably almighty editor in biblical scholarship.

⁶⁸ For a helpful introduction to the issue of pragmatics in the context of biblical interpretation see Chantal J. Klingbeil, "Mirando más allá de las palabras—pragmática lingüística y su aplicación a los estudios bíblicos," in *Entender la Palabra. Hermenéutica Adventista para el Nuevo Siglo*, ed. Merling Alomía et al. (Cochabamba: Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, 2000), 123–35. Compare also Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen, "The Reader in Genesis 22:1–19. Textsyntax–Textsemantics–Textpragmatics," *EstBib* 53 (1995): 289–304. A general introduction to the important topic from a linguistic perspective can be found in Jens S. Allwood, *Linguistic Communication as Action and Cooperation. A Study in Pragmatics*, Gothenburg Monographs in Linguistics 2 (Göteborg: University of Göteborg, Department of Linguistics, 1976). Compare also Horacio Simian-Yofre, "Pragmalingüística: comunicación y exégesis," *RevistB* 50 (1988): 75–95. For a discussion of particular elements of pragmatics that are important for translators see James K. Waters, "Contrastive Discourse Pragmatics and Translation with Implications for Training," *BT* 51 (2000): 124–34. Waters suggests that modern Bible translators need to be able to recognize discourse level linguistic features of their own languages which may be carried over subconsciously into the receptor language. Cristo H. J. van der Merwe, "From Paradigms to Texts. New Horizons and New Tools for Interpreting the Old Testament," *JNSL* 22 (1996): 167–79, has called for acknowledgement and integration of pragmatics in the teaching of Biblical Hebrew. A similar call, however, more detailed has also been made by William M. Schniedewind, "Prolegomena for the Sociolinguistics of Classical Hebrew," *JHebS* 5 (2004) [<http://www.jhsonline.org> and <http://purl.org/jhs>]. Another important contribution to the growing corpus of studies dealing with pragmatics in biblical interpretation is particularly interested in the postexilic Yehud community. Compare here Frank H. Polak, "Sociolinguistics and the Judean Speech Community in the Achaemenid Empire," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 589–628.

Similar to real-life spoken communication, written texts contain more than content. On a linguistic level one can distinguish between morphology (i.e., the forms of the language), semantics (i.e., the meaning of the individual terms), and syntax (i.e., the interaction of terms on the sentence level). To this one could add another level, generally known as discourse analysis, which involves the intent to understand a sequence of sentences resulting in a complete text. As pointed out by Walter Bodine, “in discourse there is a linguistic entity that is greater than any distilled, logical summary sentence and also greater than only the sequence of sentences that make up the discourse.”⁶⁹ While semantics responds to the questions: “What does X mean?,” pragmatics tries to answer the question: “What would you like to say with X?” A good definition of the concept is suggested by Thomas: “Pragmatics is the place where a speaker’s knowledge of grammar comes into contact with his/her knowledge of the world.”⁷⁰ This means practically that pragmatics cannot be studied isolated from the social, intellectual, cultural and religious context of both the reader and the original author. Sociolinguistic research adds an important element to pragmatics, since it is interested in the illocutionary force of a particular statement. While this can be better done in spoken language research, it is also helpful for the study of written languages, as in the case of the Hebrew Bible. Important elements in this regard are the particular context, tone or mood of expression, as well as

⁶⁹ Walter R. Bodine, “Introduction: Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What it is and what it offers,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine, SemeiaSt (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 3. The literature on discourse analysis is vast and growing. For good introductions see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and Discourse of Covenant,” in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew et al., The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 1–49; Hilaire Paul Valiquette, “Exodus–Deuteronomy as Discourse: Models, Distancing, Provocation, Paraenesis,” *JSOT* 85 (1999): 47–70; Luis Vegas Montaner, “Sintaxis del verbo hebreo bíblico: Nuevas tendencias,” in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century. Proceedings of the 6th EAJS Congress Toledo, July 1988: Volume I: Biblical, Rabbinical, and Medieval Studies*, ed. Judit Targarona Borrás and Angel Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 221–31; Ernst Wendland, “Recursion and Variation in the ‘Prophecy’ of Jonah: On the Rhetorical Impact of Stylistic Technique in Hebrew Narrative Discourse, with Special Reference to Irony and Enigma,” *AUSS* 35 (1997): 189–209; Jeffrey T. Reed, “Discourse Analysis as New Testament Hermeneutic: A Retrospective and Prospective Appraisal,” *JETS* 39 (1996): 223–40; K. E. Lowery, “Bibliography: A Classified Discourse Analysis Bibliography,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine, SemeiaSt (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 213–53; and K. E. Lowery, “The Theoretical Foundations of Hebrew Discourse Grammar,” in *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, ed. Walter R. Bodine, SemeiaSt (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 103–30, as well as the many studies in the edited volume Robert D. Bergen, ed., *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994).

⁷⁰ J. Thomas, “Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure,” *Applied Linguistics* 4.2 (1983): 99.

meaningful factors of non-verbal communication. The simple phrase “there is a dog in the room” communicates more than mere information. It can be an urgent warning or a promise (if intended as a surprise for a child, for example) or it could represent a threat.⁷¹

The failure to understand these fine nuances is called sociopragmatic failure, which stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior.⁷² In other words, if one would like to understand the exact meaning of a certain phrase, particularly a phrase originating in a distinct cultural and historical context (as is the case with Scripture), understanding must endeavor to go beyond the literal meaning.⁷³ A good example can be found in 2 Kgs 4:26 where the Sunnamite woman, grief stricken and with an obvious heavy heart, responds to the question of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha of הַלֵּלְךָ הַשְּׁלוֹמִים “how are you doing?”⁷⁴ with the seemingly untruthful statement: הַשְּׁלוֹמִים “Peace.” Judging from her subsequent action of taking hold of the feet of the prophet of YHWH (in itself a taboo!), nothing is well with her and she definitely does not express peace. However, understood as a customary and formulaic greeting the response makes more sense.⁷⁵ As this example has shown, a superficial translation and reading of a text, far removed from our present reality, will result in a distorted understanding.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Klingbeil, “Pragmática lingüística,” 127.

⁷² See here Thomas, “Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure,” 99.

⁷³ T. Desmond Alexander wrote: “Students need to be taught about ancient Near Eastern literary conventions and styles. They need to appreciate that documents, written over two thousand years ago in a culture far removed from our own, cannot be simply read as modern short stories. We have to understand the culture(s) and world view(s) of the ancient writer, insofar as that is possible.” See T. Desmond Alexander, “A Religious Book in a Secular University,” in *Make the Old Testament Live: From Curriculum to Classroom*, ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 98.

⁷⁴ Literally the translation is: “Is there peace for you?”

⁷⁵ See here for more details Gerald A. Klingbeil, “‘Asir los pies’—2 Reyes 4:27 y el lenguaje idiomático en el Antiguo Testamento,” *Theo* 12 (1997): 2–15, esp. 7.

⁷⁶ A helpful introduction to the issue can be found in Mildred L. Larson, *Meaning-Based Translation. A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998). The questions and issues arising from cross-cultural communication is not an invention of 20th or 21st century scholarship but also perceivable in the Old Testament as has been pointed out by Elmer Smick in his presidential address at the 40th annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on November 18, 1988 (cf. Elmer B. Smick, “Old Testament Cross-Culturalism: Paradigmatic or Enigmatic?,” *JETS* 32 [1989]: 3–16). Smick’s observations have important repercussions upon our understanding of the mission of Israel in the Old Testament, a topic which has recently be tackled by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament. Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000). As has been argued elsewhere, the conscious inclusion and use of mythological language in Old Testament texts should be interpreted in the light of this cross-cultural reaching towards the surrounding nations. Compare here, as an example, the discussion of the Psalm 121:6 as found in Gerald A.

I submit that socio-linguistic pragmatics can provide a useful perspective for understanding the apparently extreme reaction of Nehemiah to cross-cultural marriages.⁷⁷ The result of these marriages of male members of the Yehud community to women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab is primarily described in terms of linguistic ability. Half of the children spoke the language of Ashdod,⁷⁸ or any other language involved, but none could speak *לשון יהודה*; “the language of Yehud” (Neh 13:24; also 2 Kgs 18:26, 28 || 2 Chron 32:18 || Isa 36:11, 13), which—based on the earlier usage in the Hezekiah narrative—has been interpreted as Hebrew. It is most likely that the children spoke local dialects (Ammonite, Moabite, though not necessarily Ashdodite), which—as already mentioned above—were linguistically fairly close to Hebrew. It is also interesting to note the sequence of actions that is described in the narrative. First, Nehemiah *sees* [לראות; 13:23], then he must have *heard* [not explicitly mentioned, but implicit in the description of the languages the children of these cross-cultural marriages spoke; 13:24], and finally he *acts* and curses them, strikes some of them and pulls the hair from others (13:25).⁷⁹ As has been observed, language is a highly emotive indicator of cultural identity.⁸⁰ However, language and language use have also important religious connotations. It is very unlikely that Nehemiah was incensed about the children speaking two or more languages or dialects *per se*. As a matter of fact, it is most likely that as an official at the royal Persian court Nehemiah himself spoke Persian and Aramaic, plus Hebrew and perhaps even additional languages. Rather, the strong reaction to the different languages spoken by the children of the exogamous marriages should be understood in light of socio-linguistic pragmatics, and more

Klingbeil, “Sun and Moon in Psalm 121:6: Some Notes on their Context and Meaning,” in *To Understand Scriptures. Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum/Andrews University, 1997), 33–43.

⁷⁷ The initial impetus for this perspective came from a paragraph from Klingbeil, “Mirando más allá de las palabras,” 124–5.

⁷⁸ Compare Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 393, 397–98, for a discussion of the term *לשון אשדוד*; “the language of Ashdod,” and additional bibliography. Some scholars understand it as a reference to any non-intelligible language or perhaps an allusion to a non-Semitic language that was a relic of the language of the Philistines.

⁷⁹ It should be noted that all these acts involve legal elements and seem to represent a public shaming of the men. Note should also be taken that it is not the women or the children who are shamed or punished, but the involved men. Compare here for a discussion of the extrabiblical evidence Michael Heltzer, “The Flogging and Plucking of Beards in the Achaemenid Empire and the Chronology of Nehemiah,” *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 28 (1995): 305–7; and also the discussion in Fried, *The Priest and the Great King*, 219–20.

⁸⁰ Leslie C. Allan and Timothy S. Laniak, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, NIBC 9 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 164.

particularly, as an indication (or realization) of the importance of language in religious formation, which was generally done by the mothers. As already observed in other legal and narrative contexts of the Hebrew Bible, religious affiliation and orientation seems to be a (if not *the*) major criteria for the validation of cross-cultural marriages. It seems that in these cases of exogamous marriages in the Yehud community the foreign women dominated family life so much that it was their language[s] (and by extension their values and religion[s]) that dominated the child's education.

Psalms 45 provides an interesting glimpse into the royal marriage scenario (perhaps during the time of Solomon?) and the associated status of foreign wives (or queens). Commentators have entitled this psalm as a royal wedding song⁸¹ and verse 11 [ET v. 10] is highly relevant for our present discussion: שְׁמַעֲיִי בַת יִרְאֵי וְהָטִי אָזְנוֹךָ וְשָׁכַחֵי עַמֶּךָ וּבֵית אָבִיךָ “Listen, oh daughter, watch out and incline your ears: forget your people and your father's house.” I submit that the admonition to forget both family and the “father's house” suggests not only cultural or sociological reorientation but must have also involved religious loyalties.⁸² In this sense the ideal for anybody marrying outside the tribal group involved a reorientation of the woman's loyalties, including also her religious affiliation.⁸³ Obviously, the opposite of this ideal is visible in the Nehemiah narrative.

Some Tentative Conclusions

The fascinating study of exogamous marriages in Ezra-Nehemiah and the larger context of law and narrative in the Hebrew Bible suggest some intriguing results.

1. The evaluation of exogamous marriages by the writers of the different books of the HB in general is contextual and seems to depend entirely on the cultural and religious context of the narrative. In other words, the HB

⁸¹ See here, for example, Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, trans. Herbert Hartwell, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 360; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald, CC (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 450; Luis Alonso Schökel and C. Carniti, *Salmos I (Salmos 1–72): Traducción, introducciones y comentario*, Nueva Biblia Española (Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1992), 644.

⁸² An important contextual argument for this focus is based on Ps 45:7 where the eternal character of God's throne is described. Both before and after this reference there are references to the king or his bride. It is God who is the real king with the earthly king (and his bride) representing the shadow (earthly) government. The relationship between original and shadow can also be seen in the sanctuary references (esp. Exod 25:9). In the NT the Letter to the Hebrews develops this shadow-reality paradigm further.

⁸³ It is interesting to note that Psalm 45:11 seems to represent an inversion of the creation order where man leaves and father and mother and clings to his wife and thus becomes one flesh (Gen 2:24). See here Schökel and Carniti, *Salmos I*, 651.

presents positive, negative, and sometimes also neutral examples of cross-cultural marriages.

2. Israelite (and also later on Yehud) society was marked by embeddedness, which functioned as the underlying conceptual framework of the marriage relationship in the HB.⁸⁴ As observed by Hanson, “Every individual is perceived as embedded in some other, in a sequence of embeddedness so to say.”⁸⁵ A comparison taken from the realm of computer technology would be the interconnectedness of servers on the world-wide internet. Each server has its own function, but rules and particular specifications exist on how to communicate with other servers. As a matter of fact, they are interconnected and embedded and when one server goes down, all embedded servers are affected.

3. The biblical data concerning cross-cultural marriages emphasizes particularly the close connection between family and religion. Family members (husband, wife, children, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, etc.) are expected to integrate into one “religious body,” a notion that is not always easy to implement when marrying cross-culturally.⁸⁶

4. Ezra-Nehemiah goes beyond the biblical norm of not marrying foreigners and focuses upon the restoration, which is one of the major theological themes found in the work. This restoration involves also the special status of Israel, which in turn requires the dissolution of cross-cultural marriages.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the restoration motif connects to creation motifs (as, for example, the use of the root of *בדל*). In this sense, restoration should be understood as a re-creation or second creation.

5. The cultic link of the issue is underlined by the use of many terms that generally appear in cultic or ritual contexts. After all, in the mind of the author of Ezra-Nehemiah the people of Yehud were the *עַרְבֵי הַקִּיָּיִם* “the holy seed” (Ezra 9:2) which should religiously not mix with the surrounding nations.

⁸⁴ This also could be the reason that there is no explicit mention to the wife in the Sabbath commandment in Exod 20:8–11. Women were tightly embedded in their husband’s family, pointing to a corporal identity.

⁸⁵ K. C. Hanson, “Sin, Purification, and Group Process,” in *Problems in Biblical Theology. Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, ed. Henry T. C. Sun et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 171.

⁸⁶ I have argued elsewhere that the ‘family’ and ‘body’ metaphors, so prevalent in New Testament ecclesiological statements, are deeply rooted in the tribal and family structure of the Hebrew Bible. See here Gerald A. Klingbeil, “The ‘Church’ in the Old Testament: Systematic, Linguistic, and Metaphor Perspectives,” *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 9 (2006): 13–33, esp. 26–31.

⁸⁷ Van Dam, *NIDOTTE* 1:605.

6. I have not dealt with the ethics and theological implications of the results of the reforms during the time of Ezra-Nehemiah. While it has been argued that the marriage relationships should be considered legitimate (against the interpretation of understanding the strange terminology of בִּשְׂרָיִם as a reference to illegitimate marriage-like relationships or cohabitation), how can the envisioned mass separation be harmonized with the ethical demands of the law to care for and protect the stranger, widow, and orphan? Clearly, this is a thorny issue and goes beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that scholars have puzzled about this in the past.⁸⁸ The contribution of socio-linguistic pragmatics, underlining the close link between language, cultural values and religious convictions, may be helpful here. In the mind of the biblical authors this was a desperate situation that required desperate measures.

⁸⁸ See, for example, William R. Eichhorst, "Ezra's Ethics on Intermarriage and Divorce," *Grace Journal* 10.3 (1969): 16–28.

***II. Intertextuality,
Typology, and Ancient
Near Eastern Background***

10

Does Isaiah 65:17–25 Describe the Eschatological New Heavens and the New Earth?

Jiří Moskala

Introduction

This study¹ focuses on the difficult passage of Isa 65:17–25 which is often applied by conservative evangelical authors to the description of the eschatological New Heavens and New Earth, and who claim that Isaiah portrayed it in the limited language of his time.² “As

¹ This essay is dedicated to my friend and colleague Dr. Richard M. Davidson, who taught me how to understand and love the beauty of biblical typology. I am indebted to him for deep insights into type and antitype structures. I have traveled and lectured with him around the world and greatly appreciate his humble attitude toward God's revelation, great desire to learn more about the goodness of our loving and holy God, and the sharing of this passion for truth with others. I identify with him in the mission of presenting the Lord and his character in a positive way to people that they may be attracted to the God of Scripture. It is possible only when they perceive the God of the Old Testament as the God of love, mercy, forgiveness, truth, and justice that this correct picture of God will lead them to love and obey him who loved us so much that he even died for us. I am always amazed how close Dr. Davidson and I are in our biblical and theological thinking. To work with him is more than joy because it brings inspiration, fresh new understanding of the Bible, surprising insights, deeper understanding of the excellent harmony of God's revelation, and abundant fun.

² See, for example, Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *Isaiah: God Saves Sinners* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 444–445; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and*

Isaiah paints a picture of the new heavens and the new earth, to which God has been leading his people for so long, the prophet uses images from life as we know to communicate life as we'll know it then (vv. 19–25).³ The crucial question is whether such an interpretation is in harmony with all the biblical data within the context of Isa 65–66. What kind of “new heavens and a new earth” does the prophet Isaiah describe? It is well documented that our text under investigation is echoed by Rev 21.⁴ Does that mean that this Isaianic passage portrays an eschatological description of the New Earth with the new conditions of life as revealed in the concluding chapters of the book of Revelation?⁵ A close reading of Isaiah’s text helps to determine its meaning.

Isaiah 65:17–25 forms a literary unit which is delimited in its immediate context by the specific theme of newness. This passage begins with God creating new things (65:17), and ends with a new and peaceful relationship in the animal world (65:25; see also 11:6). Under this umbrella, the new conditions of life on the new earth are described.

The literary structure of the whole book can be divided into three main parts: (1) Isa 1–35—God’s judgment upon his people and the nations; (2) Isa 36–39—historical transition: the example of God’s favorable intervention

Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 529–531; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 654–662; U. Mauser, “Isaiah 65:17–25,” *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 181–186.

³ Ortlund, *Isaiah*, 444.

⁴ George W. Buchanan, *The Book of Revelation: Its Introduction and Prophecy*, MBC: Intertextual (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993), 555–560; David Mathewson, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1–22.5*, JSNTSup 238 (New York: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 30–61, 217–218. Mathewson states that “there is unanimous agreement among scholars” that Rev 21:1 reflects Isa 65:17 (33).

⁵ There is vast literature dealing with this biblical passage of Isa 65:17–25. Especially see G. K. Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNTSup 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998); Daniel K. Bediako, “Isaiah’s ‘New Heavens and New Earth’ (Isa 65:17; 66:22),” *JAAS* 11.1 (2008): 1–20; Margaret Dee Bratcher, “Salvation Achieved: Isaiah 61:1–7; 62:1–7; 65:17–66:2,” *Review and Expositor* 88 (1991): 177–188; John W. De Gruchy, “A New Heaven and a New Earth: An Exposition of Isaiah 65:17–25,” *JTSA* 105 (Nov 1999): 65–74; Emmanuel Uchenna Dim, *The Eschatological Implications of Isa 65 and 66 as the Conclusion of the Book of Isaiah* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005); William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21–22 and the Old Testament* (Homebush West, Australia: Lancer, 1985); Anne E. Gardner, “The Nature of the New Heavens and New Earth in Isaiah 66:22,” *ABR* 50 (2002): 10–27; Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21–22 in the Light of its Background in Jewish Tradition* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 18–24; Mathewson, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*; Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, eds., *Isaiah in the New Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005); Jon Paulien, “Will There Be Death In the New Earth,” in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl; BRIS 2; (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 225–227; Eva Maria Räßle, *The Metaphor of the City in the Apocalypse of John* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

into human affairs; and (3) Isa 40–66—comfort and hope for God’s people. In the book of Isaiah, salvation and judgment are presented together within a healthy tension. These three sections of material can be further divided into multiple specific literary subunits. Isaiah 65:1–66:24 forms the final climax of the book: the Lord will bring his faithful ones (after the deliverance and return from Babylonian exile), called his servants,⁶ into the New Jerusalem, and they will live under the new heavens and on the new earth, while the rest of humankind will meet God’s dreadful judgment (65:12, 15; 66:24). Thus, Isa 65–66 presents God’s faithful servants in contrast to the wicked and unrepentant, and this literary unit can be subdivided in the following chiasm:⁷

- A. The Lord’s call to those who had not previously sought or known him (65:1).
- B. The Lord’s requital on those who have rebelled and followed cults (65:2–7).
- C. A preserved remnant, his servants, who will inherit his land (65:8–10).
- D. Those that forsake the Lord and follow cults are destined to slaughter because he called and they did not answer but chose what did not please him (65:11–12).
- E. Joys for the Lord’s servants in the new creation. The New Jerusalem and its people (65:13–25).
- D’. Those who have chosen their own way and their improper worship. They are under judgment because the Lord called and they did not answer but chose what did not please him (66:1–4).
- C’. The glorious future of those who tremble at the Lord’s word, the miracle children of Zion, the Lord’s servants (66:5–14).

⁶ The Servant of the Lord (42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12) has his faithful followers; the *Ebed Yahweh* produced many devoted servants (56:6; 63:17; 65:8–9, 13 [3x], 14–15; 66:14). Brevard S. Childs correctly asserts: “Verse 23 [of Isa 65] summarizes this eschatological hope: ‘They shall be the offspring blessed by Yahweh.’ The link with the promise to the suffering servant is fully evident: ‘[H]e will see offspring. . . . From the agony of his soul he will see’ (53:10–11)” (*Isaiah*, OTL [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 538). See also Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Servant and the Servants in Isaiah and the Formation of the Book,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretative Tradition*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, 2 vols., VTSup 70 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:155–175. Blenkinsopp argues for a possible view of the Servant-servants relationship in “terms of discipleship” (172).

⁷ Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 522–523.

B'. Judgment on those who follow cults (66:15–17).

A'. The Lord's call to those who have not previously heard (66:18–21).

Conclusion: Jerusalem, pilgrimage center for the whole world (66:22–24).

It is important to observe that our passage under the scrutiny is at the center of this chiasmic literary structure, which suggests its crucial importance. The literary context of our passage deals with salvation and judgment, and it needs to be remembered that Isa 65:17–25 is a part of the larger unit of Isa 65–66 which provides details as to what salvation looks like. It is also important to detect that this passage comes after “a pronouncement of coming judgment upon wrongdoers within the restored nation (65:11–16).”⁸ “A new world order is promised to the faithful, wherein the latter days shall be similar to the antediluvian era.”⁹

A Close Connection with the Book of Revelation

There are multiple Old Testament allusions in the book of Revelation. According to Fekkes, there could be as many as 638 of them in 404 verses.¹⁰ However, it is not easy to calculate them because there are no direct Old Testament quotations in the book of Revelation. Swete's statement that there are “278 OT allusions out of 404 verses” is often mentioned by scholars.¹¹ Thus, it should be of no surprise that among these allusions are those from the book of Isaiah. Fekkes claims: “Of the approximately 73 potential Isaiah allusions examined, 41 were judged to be authentic; 9 were judged probable, though not certain; and . . . 23 were classed as doubtful.”¹² This total does

⁸ R. E. Clements, “The Wolf Shall Live with the Lamb: Reading Isaiah 11:6–9 Today,” in *New Heavens and New Earth Prophecy and the Millennium*, ed. P.J. Harland and C. T. R. Hayward (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 92.

⁹ Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 603.

¹⁰ Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Development* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 62.

¹¹ This total is based on the appendix of Old Testament quotations in Westcott-Hort. Tenney claims that the book of Revelation contains 348 allusions, Marty speaks about 453 allusions, Gelin points to 518 allusions, UBS Greek New Testament enumerates 634 allusions, and Staehelin counts 700 of them (see Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 61–63). Thus, without an exaggeration, one can maintain that statistically speaking each verse of the book of Revelation has at least one OT allusion. See also Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, JSOTSup 155 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 14–16; David Mathewson, “Isaiah in Revelation,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 189–210.

¹² Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 279. See also Jan Fekkes, “Isaiah and the Book of Revelation: John the Prophet as a Fourth Isaiah?” in *As Those Who are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL*, ed. Claire Mathews McGinnis and Patricia K.

not include repetitions. It is interesting to observe that Swete counts 46 allusions from Isaiah and Lestringent accepts 47 of them in the book of Revelation. Fekkes concludes in regard to our passage: “Similarities in theme, structure and vocabulary between Isa. 65.19–20a and Rev. 21.4b suggest that John has now returned to the New Jerusalem prophecy of Isaiah 65 with which he began his final vision.”¹³ The problem is that many Christian readers of the Bible often unconsciously project back to Isa 65 what they know about the New Earth from Rev 21–22.

Description of Life on the New Earth

Childs rightly stresses: “The description that follows v. 17 and provides the context by which to understand the new heavens and earth is portrayed always in relation to God’s faithful people, who experience the entry of God’s rule within transformed Jerusalem.”¹⁴ Smith fittingly divides the biblical passage under scrutiny into four parts:¹⁵

1. God’s new creation (65:17)
2. Rejoicing and long life (65:18–20)
3. God’s blessing (65:21–23)
4. Harmony and peace (65:24–25)

How does Isaiah describe the conditions of life on the new earth? Carefully study the following 12 characteristics:

1. God’s Unique Creation

“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth” (Isa 65:17a). This phrase is used by John in the book of Revelation: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1). The phrase “behold, I” underlines the amazement and surprise of God’s intervention. Isaiah three times in two verses (65:17–18) stresses that it is God who will “create” these new things. The verb *bara*¹⁶ is used here in all three occurrences as a participle, indicating that it will be what God will do in the near future, and that it will be his continuous activity. This participial form is also used in Isa 40:28; 42:5; 43:15; 45:18; and in 57:19, but nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures. “New” (Hebrew: *khadash*)

Tull (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 125–143.

¹³ Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*, 255.

¹⁴ Childs, *Isaiah*, 538.

¹⁵ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, NAC (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2009), 717.

indicates that God will “renew” things according to their original purpose; he gradually renews those things affected by sin, and reverses the situation.¹⁶

When the verb *bārā'* (“created”) is used in the Hebrew Bible (38 times in the Qal and 10 times in the Niphal stems),¹⁷ God is always the author of the described activity or the implied subject of the passive verb constructions. Creation and restoration are acts of God alone! The verb *bārā'* stresses that God brought these new things into existence. Walter Brueggemann declares that Isa 65:17–25 is “the most extreme statement” of God’s “capacity for the recovery of creation” and “perhaps the most sweeping resolve of Yahweh in all of Israel’s testimony.”¹⁸ He further aptly states that “the poem is a declaration in the mouth of Yahweh, who publically and pointedly claims authority to replicate the initial creation, only now more grandly and more wondrously. . . . The newness of creation here vouchsafed touches every aspect and phase of life. All elements of existence are to come under the positive, life-yielding aegis of Yahweh.”¹⁹ God’s intention is to transform reality in different spheres of life: human personal and family life, human society, and the natural world.²⁰

This verse incorporates many allusions to “heavens” and “earth” in the book (see 1:2; 13:13; 24:4, 18, 21; 37:16; 40:12, 22, 26–28; 42:5; 44:23–24; 45:8, 12, 18; 48:13; 49:13; 51:6, 13, 16; 55:9). For example, Isaiah already in

¹⁶ One can speak about a gradual establishment of God’s kingdom. Roy Gane writes: “What we have here in Isaiah 65 is God presenting the creation of ‘new heavens’ and a ‘new earth’ as a process, [a] series of steps, that begins with the re-creation of Jerusalem. Compare Isaiah 11, where the Messiah would bring justice (vss. 1–5). Then, eventually, there will be peace on God’s worldwide ‘holy mountain’; the imagery used in Isaiah 11 is similar to what’s found in Isaiah 65: ‘The wolf shall live with the lamb . . . and the lion shall eat straw like the ox . . .’ (Isa. 11:6, 7, NRSV). Although the Lord’s ‘holy mountain’ would begin with Mt. Zion at Jerusalem, it was only a precursor, a symbol, of what God promises to do, ultimately, in a new world with his redeemed people” (*Isaiah: “Comfort My People,”* Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, April–June 2004 [Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2004], 150).

¹⁷ Qal: Gen 1:1, 21, 27 (three times); 2:3; 5:1, 2; 6:7; Num 16:30; Deut 4:32; Pss 51:12; 89:13, 48; Eccl 12:1; Isa 4:5; 40:26, 28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7 (twice), 8, 12; 18 (twice); 54:16 (twice); 57:19; 65:17, 18 (twice); Jer 31:22; Amos 4:13; Mal 2:10. Niphal: Gen 2:4; 5:2; Exod 34:10; Pss 102:19; 104:30; 148:5; Isa 48:7; Ezek 21:35; 28:13, 15.

¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 548.

¹⁹ Brueggemann, *ibid.*, 549.

²⁰ Other biblical prophets envisioned the same radical activities of God in relationship to his people and nature. Ezekiel, for example, speaks powerfully in 36:22–36 about (1) the change of the human heart or transformation of our human nature by the power of God’s Spirit; (2) transformation of Israel’s society after returning from the Babylonian captivity; and (3) changes in nature, envisioning the land of Israel to be like the garden of Eden. See also Isa 2:2–5; 11:2–9; 35:1–2, 5–7; Ezek 47:1–12; Jer 31:31–34; Joel 2:28–29; Mic 4:1–5).

51:16 announces that God will do all these new things for his people after the exile (see vv. 12–15): “And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, ‘You are my people’” (ESV).

2. The Past of No Burden

“The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind” (Isa 65:17b). This text is echoed in Rev 21:1, 4b: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea . . . the old order of things has passed away.” What does it mean that “the former things will not be remembered”? It cannot refer to the loss of memory, because people with amnesia lose their own identity and become different persons with dissimilar behavior. In addition, if the redeemed do not remember the lessons learned from the Great Controversy, sin could enter the world once again and the whole conflict between good and evil would be in vain. The former painful life will be no more, it is over. “A healed memory is not a deleted memory,”²¹ the redeemed’s memory is at peace. Isaiah refers especially to former unpleasant things experienced during the Babylonian exile. With the new exodus and God’s intervention, the past is healed.

God will create new things because the old system has been marred and ruined by terrible problems and intense wounds (65:16b). He will accomplish it by creating a new order with the right content. It is a picture of restoration, not a description of totally new things from scratch. “Former things” means “past troubles” as mentioned in v. 16: “For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.” Watts explains that the former or first things are the things of “the past kingdoms of Israel under curse and judgment that were pictured in chaps. 1–39.”²² Lee states that the “former troubles” mean “the Babylonian exile” and that life in the New Jerusalem will erase the past, shameful history related to that exile.²³ The former troubles will be forgotten, which means forgiven and reconciled, and will also be hidden from his eyes, i.e., the old order of things will pass away, namely the exile. This text flashes back to 43:18–19 where Isaiah underlines that God will do new things, will cause a new exodus for his people: “I am making a way in the

²¹ A quote of Lewis B. Smedes, n.p. Online: www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/l/lewisbsme132879.html.

²² John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, WBC, rev ed. (New York: Nelson, 2005), 924.

²³ Lee, *New Jerusalem*, 19.

desert and streams in the wasteland” (cf. 43:5–7).²⁴ The mistakes of the past will no longer be a burden to his people. They will not be haunted, troubled, or bothered with their past sins, hurts, unfinished duties, and problems, because they went through a process of reconciliation. Harmony, peace, and joy are restored. They will no longer be slaves of their past transgressions and deep emotional wounds. No painful flashbacks will irritate them; the past things “will no longer distress or annoy the mind or cause feelings of remorse.”²⁵

3. A Place of Joy and Happiness

“But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy” (Isa 65:18). The wonder of God’s action should lead to excitement. The whole situation will change and be different. Jerusalem will be a place of joy and gladness, a delight for people, the city of enjoyment. “The pair of roots for *gladness* and *rejoicing* occurs three times in vv. 18–19, emphasizing how completely the wonder of God’s creative work will blot out all the memory of the former world. . . . The very nature of Jerusalem will be gladness, and the nature of her people will be joy.”²⁶ This positive imagery of rejoicing is saturated with a description of gladness in 49:13; 51:11; 61:10 (and possibly even 52:1; 54:1, 10).

It is important to notice that “Isa. 65.17–18 provides the threefold structural order for Rev. 21.1–2: (1) new heaven and new earth (Isa. 65.17a/Rev. 21.1a); (2) the former things (Isa. 65.17b/Rev. 21.1b); (3) and the city Jerusalem (Isa. 65:18b/Rev. 21.2).”²⁷ The close parallels between these two passages expressed in the same sequence makes it clear that, without any doubt, John had Isa 65 in mind when he wrote about the New Jerusalem.

4. No Weeping or Crying

“I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more” (Isa 65:19). The text first expresses God’s joy over Jerusalem and his people, and then describes in a negative way what was said positively in the previous verse. It underlines that there will be no cause for weeping or crying, no more suffering and pain. There will be no hindrance to experiencing true joy; it means that no destruction or harm will take place. It is a reversal of the situation of God’s

²⁴ For these connections, see Mathewson, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, 60–62.

²⁵ *SDABC*, 4:333.

²⁶ Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 657.

²⁷ Mathewson, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, 33–34.

people before the Babylonian exile (Jer 3:21), where their crying is associated with God’s silence because of the people’s wickedness (Jer 3:21; Mal 2:13) and the destruction of their land (Jer 9:9; 31:15; 48:5), and is put in contrast to the prophet Jeremiah’s announcement that in Babylon will be crying, because destruction will come upon her (Jer 51:54). Because of this new situation made by God, his people rejoice, and there will be no more tears in Jerusalem (see God’s promise already in 25:8; 30:19; 61:3).

Pay also close attention to how John is using this Isaianic text. Besides repeating that there will be no weeping or crying in the New Jerusalem, he also adds that death will be there no more (something that Isaiah does not include): “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:4 ESV). John expands the description and makes a universal, all-encompassing statement.

5. No infant Mortality or Miscarriages

“Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days” (Isa 65:20a). There will be no more infant mortality. Babies will be born healthy, and there will be no stillborn babies. Marriages will come to fruition and family life will be blessed. One of the visible signs of God’s blessing was many children and a harmonious family (Pss 112:2; 127:3–5; 128:3; Prov 13:22; 14:26; 17:6; 20:7; 31:28). “The first quality of the new city, stated negatively and then positively, is a stability and order that guarantees long life. . . . Moreover, it is possible to think that infant mortality is an index of the quality of community life.”²⁸

6. Longevity of the Faithful but for Sinners Premature Death

“Or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed” (Isa 65:20b). This text is quite difficult to translate and understand, but the main idea and meaning seems to be clear. People will live long like mighty trees (i.e., survive for many generations, see v. 22; cf. Ps 92:13–15), and they will live several hundred years. They will die in a mature patriarchal age and length of years; but more than that, they will live long like God’s faithful ones in the time of patriarchs or even before them (see genealogies of God’s people in Gen 5 and 11). If someone would die at the age

²⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, Westminster Bible Companion 2 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 247.

of a hundred, that person would be considered a mere youth, because he/she would not come to maturity of life, but would die prematurely as a young person. However, a death at such a young age would mean that the person was an unrepentant sinner and accursed, i.e., sinful. Observe that according to this verse, curse, sin, sinners, and death exist in the new Isaianic earth. These are surely surprising elements. Note that Isaiah does not say here that God's faithful will live eternally and that death will be no more as is stated in the apocalyptic-eschatological section of Isa 24–27 called the “small apocalypse” (see especially 25:8–9; 26:4, and 26:19) and in Rev 21:4.

Debate continues in regard to the literal translation of Isa 65:20: “No more will be (from) there an infant [but a few] days, or an old man who does not fill out his days. If someone will die at a hundred [he will be considered as] the youth. [For the young man will die one hundred years old], but the sinner, (being) one hundred years old, will be [declared, reckoned, considered] accursed.”²⁹

An alternative interpretation has been proposed by Motyer, who explains Isa 65:20 in the following way: “Throughout this passage Isaiah uses aspects of present life to create impressions of the life that is yet to come. It will be a life totally provided for (13), totally happy (19cd), totally secured (2–23) and totally at peace (24–25). Things we have no real capacity to understand can be expressed only through things we know and experience. So it is in this present order of things death cuts life off before it has well begun or before it has fully matured. But it will not be so then.” And he continues: “No infant will fail to enjoy life nor an elderly person come short of total fulfillment. Indeed, one would be but a youth were one to die aged a hundred! This does not imply that death will still be present (contradicting 25:7–8) but rather affirms that over the whole of life, as we should now say from infancy to old age, the power of death will be destroyed. . . . ‘But the sinner, a hundred years old, will be accursed’ . . . Of course, there will be no

²⁹ Compare with the following translations: “No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed” (ESV); “No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; nor the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed” (NKJV); “No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed” (RSV); “No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed” (NASV).

sinner in the new Jerusalem (6–7, 12, 15c). Once more metaphor is being used, but the reality is that if, per impossible, a sinner were to escape detection for a century the curse would still search him out and destroy him. Thus verse 20 expresses a double thought: death will have no power and sin no more presence.”³⁰

However, this interpretation goes against the flow of thoughts in Isa 65. Even if it would be a hypothetical case, it still reflects the reality of earthly life even though in a more ideal situation. The apocalyptic passage of Isa 25:7–9 describes the situation of the second coming of Jesus when this eschatological event will destroy death as our enemy and expresses victory over sin which will be no more, but Isa 65–66 is a classical prophecy of the restoration of Israel and speaks about the earth’s situation in Israel after the return of the remnant from the Babylonian exile. It does not describe life without death. As Mathewson correctly observes: “Isa. 65:20 refers to the absence of death, but the absence of *untimely death*, whereas John refers to the absence of all death. It appears then that John has brought in Isa 25:8 to expand the death referred to in 65:20 to exclude all death in the new creation.”³¹

7. Creative Work

“They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit” (Isa 65:21). Creative work and enjoyment of its results will exist in the New Earth. No one else will destroy or possess what God’s people have built or produced.

8. Peace and Prosperity

“No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands” (Isa 65:22). God promises constant security and long prosperity because life will be sustained. This picture not only includes good health but also a promise of no wars, military attacks, robberies, threats to life, or fear of an enemy. Nothing and no one will destroy or threaten their peace. God’s faithful servants will enjoy their own work.

9. Life Under God’s Presence and Blessing

“They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for

³⁰ Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 530.

³¹ Mathewson, “Isaiah in Revelation,” 203.

they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them” (Isa 65:23). God’s blessing will be with his people, their children, and posterity. “Verse 23 sums up 21 and 22 in a negative manner. The labor the people will expend will not be for vanity (i.e., in vain; cf. 49:4).”³²

10. Prayers Answered

“Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear” (Isa 65:24). The prayers of God’s people will be heard and quickly answered by the Lord—no more delays or silence. God’s people will enjoy God’s Presence. The covenant relationship between God and his people is cultivated and strengthened.

11. New Conditions in Nature

“The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,’ says the LORD” (Isa 65:25). The aggressive and peaceful animals will live together in harmony with no more devouring of other creatures. The strong and carnivorous animals will not harm domesticated ones, and the wolf and lamb will live side by side as well as the lion with the cattle, which are a natural prey for them. In Isa 11:7–9 the picture of peace in the animal world is depicted in the context of a Messianic prophecy (see statements about “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit” [Isa 11:1; see also v. 10]). The Messiah will rule in justice and will accomplish all things by the Spirit of the Lord.

12. Reversal of Curses into Blessing

The overall picture of Isa 65:17–25 is about blessings that come as a fulfillment of God’s covenant Presence (see Lev 26:1–13; Deut 28:1–14) and as a contrast and reversal of curses (see Lev 26:14–39; Deut 27–28).³³ God’s intervention on behalf of his people goes beyond these Pentateuchal blessings because God’s promise to create a new heavens and new earth is language

³² Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 516.

³³ Lee, *New Jerusalem*, 21, states emphatically: “The blessings in the New Jerusalem/the New Creation [of Isa 65:19–25] are largely described as the reverse of the covenant curses found in Deut. 28.” Deuteronomy 28:30 contains the specific curse: “You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit” and this curse is negated in our Isaianic passage. Leviticus 26:22 describes the curse of being killed by wild animals, but see God’s promises of safety when wild animals will no longer hurt (Isa 11:6–9; Ezek 34:25, 28; Hos 2:18).

that was not used in Leviticus or Deuteronomy.

Isaiah 65:17–25 is a poignant passage that eloquently depicts a harmonious, peaceful, and fulfilling place that has no parallel in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is a reverse of the post-fall situation and a return to Edenic conditions (Gen 1:30). These verses powerfully hint at a totally new eschatological (even apocalyptic) transformation of life including the animals' behavior.

Where and When?

Where will such new conditions be experienced with a “new heavens and a new earth”? God’s Holy Mountain. Isaiah asserts at the beginning of our section that it will be in Jerusalem (65:18–19), because “the creation of the ‘new heavens and a new earth’ parallels the creation of Jerusalem,”³⁴ and at the end of the passage that it will be “on all my holy mountain” (65:25). These two expressions need to be taken as complementary, so the focus is on the land of Israel. This becomes clear when studying how Isaiah uses the following expressions: (1) “The mountain of the Lord”—“Go up to the mountain of the Lord’s temple . . . all nations will stream to it” (Isa 2:3–4); “your hearts will rejoice as when people playing pipes go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel” (Isa 30:29).³⁵ (2) “My holy mountain”—“They [the cobra or viper] will neither harm or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (Isa 11:9); “you [Israelites] . . . will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem” (27:12–13); “These [eunuchs, foreigners, all who keep the Sabbath] I will bring to my holy mountain” (56:7); “But the man who makes me his refuge will inherit the land and possess my holy mountain” (57:13); “And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem” (66:20). The expression “my holy mountain” is also used twice outside the book of Isaiah: (1) “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain” (Ps 2:6); and (2) “For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, there

³⁴ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 53. It is significant that the sentence “I will create new heavens and a new earth” (v. 17) is in parallel with “I will create Jerusalem” (v. 18). This means that creating a “new heavens and a new earth” equals the creating of “Jerusalem.” As a result the Lord “will rejoice over Jerusalem” (v. 19). See also, Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 89–90.

³⁵Outside the book of Isaiah, this phrase is employed in Gen 22:14; Num 10:33; Ps 24:3; Mic 4:2; and Zech 8:3.

the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things” (Ezek 20:40; NASB).³⁶

The Big Picture

On the basis of these different texts, one can conclude that the holy mountain refers, first, to the Temple mountain in Jerusalem, but in a larger sense also to Jerusalem and then to the land or territory of Israel where worshipers should come and serve the Lord. Many passages in Isaiah describe the glory of God’s Temple, new conditions in the land of Israel, and the faithfulness of God’s people. Nations would come to Jerusalem to learn about the true God and worship him (Isa 11:1–10—Messianic context; Isa 35:1–10—joy and praises of the redeemed; Isa 56:1–8—“My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations” (v. 7); see also Isa 43:18–21; 60:3–5 and compare with Mic 4:1–3; Zech 14:16). Jerusalem should become a mega-capital city where people would come to learn about the true, living God (Isa 2:1–5; 56:1–8; 66:19–20; Mic 4:1–4; Zeph 2:11; 3:8–10). In such a setting, the new conditions in the land of Israel would affirm the truth about the greatness of the living God. This Isaianic picture is magnificent: Assyrians and Egyptians along with Israel would serve the Lord together (Isa 19:23–25)! However, the ultimate picture included the whole earth, because God wanted all people to serve him (Isa 66:22–24). From the Old Testament perspective, it should have been a growing reality that the kingdom of God would continue enlarging until the Lord reigned as the King and everyone would come to worship him (Zech 14:1–21).

The overall picture of the restoration prophecy of Isa 65:17–25 seems clear. It points to the restoration of Judah to their land after the Babylonian Exile. The faithful remnant would experience what was never experienced in Israel: God’s blessing of longevity, prosperity, peace, and joy. The messianic kingdom in Palestine/Judah (“on the holy mountain of God”) is pictured in connection with it, according to Isa 11. Isaiah 65:17–25 presents the ideal description³⁷ of what God wanted to do for and through his people in order

³⁶ See also Ezek 28:14 where the expression “my holy mount” refers to the heavenly mountain of God (compare with Isa 14:13): “You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.”

³⁷ Watts, *Isaiah*, 925–926: “The new order promises security and longevity in contrast to the history of some three centuries past. It promises a receptive religious climate. Then, for at least the third time, the Vision of Isaiah presents a picture of an idyllic existence that has no violence of any kind. The picture should be read against a background that gives only partial or

for them to be the light for the whole world and attract people to the true worship of God in Jerusalem. This passage describes what would have happened, and would have been brought about by God himself, had Israel remained faithful to God and fulfilled the divine commission to be a light to the world (Isa 42:6). It would have been a miniature model, *Vorbild*, or a living example, for the nations of what it meant to serve the Lord and what God could do for them, as well.³⁸ Ultimately, the temple mount is also a symbol for the transformation of the whole world, because the Temple represents the entire world.³⁹ Jon Levenson declares: “The reconstruction of the temple-city was not a recovery of national honor, but also a renewal of the cosmos, of which the temple was a miniature.”⁴⁰

A New Heavens and a New Earth

What are the new heavens and the new earth in v. 17 to which Isaiah is referring? It is noteworthy to observe that Isaiah repeatedly declares that God creates heaven and earth and pairs these two key words even though sometimes quite loosely (see 1:2; 13:13; 24:4, 18, 21; 37:16; 40:12, 22, 26–28; 42:5; 44:23–24; 45:8, 12, 18; 48:13; 49:13; 51:6, 13, 16; 55:9), and they are often mentioned in the context of his power to save his people. To create new heavens and earth is figurative language for restoration. God stated previously in Isaiah that he is the Creator and will establish a “new” heavens and earth: “I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people’” (Isa 51:16 NASB). Only two times in the Hebrew Bible is it stated that the Lord creates “the new heavens and the new earth,” and it is only in Isaiah (65:17 and 66:22). The only other reference is in the book of Revelation (21:1).

Well, then to what situation or event does Isa 65:17–25 refer? Is this a

intermediate stages in the achievement of God’s purpose; but these idyllic passages (11:6–9; 35:1–2, 5–7; 65:25) point to a perfection of nature like that in the Garden of Eden before the expulsion of Adam and Eve. They point to God’s original and ultimate plan for humanity in a totally nonviolent and innocent creation. But each is set in a context that, while it speaks of ideals, nevertheless is realistic in terms of rulers, of worship, or of Israel’s return to Palestine.”

³⁸ Lee, *New Jerusalem*, 24: “[Isaiah] 65:16–25 focuses on the New Creation and particularly, the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the center of the New Creation; the New Creation is the setting of the New Jerusalem. Life in the New Jerusalem means life in the New Creation, which consists of the just reward of labor, and longevity, which are summarized as productivity in work and childbearing, perfect communication with God and restoration of peace in the Garden of Eden by harmony and safety in the natural world.”

³⁹ John Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 147–152.

⁴⁰ Levenson, *Creation*, 89–90.

picture of life on the New Earth identical with life on the New Earth according to Rev 21–22? Isaiah 65–66 does not describe the eschatological New Earth of Rev 21–22 (because death, sin, curse, marriage, birth of babies are included), but paints the new conditions on the sinful earth in Israel if the people of God would live according to God’s Word after returning from the Babylonian captivity.⁴¹

God’s kingdom will be manifested in Israel, the knowledge about the true God will grow, and the acceptance of the Messiah will secure it even further. In view is the growing establishment of God’s values until he will bring the eschatological “new heavens and a new earth” (the establishment of God’s justice on earth by the Messiah is likewise a gradual reality—the kingdom of grace is followed by the kingdom of glory until even nature will be universally transformed to reflect the Edenic sinless conditions).

“New heavens and a new earth” is an idiomatic, figurative, or hyperbolic expression which means in its context new conditions of life on earth which are described in the verses further in Isa 65:18–25, and points to the restoration of Judah after returning from the Babylonian captivity. It describes the ideal conditions for God’s people in their land of that time expressed in the contemporary language that speaks about longevity (not eternity), prosperity, peace, joy, security, and happiness in family life. Isaiah 65 is a pre-picture or type of the eschatological New Heavens and New Earth! Isaiah 65:17–25 is the *Vorbild* of Revelation 21–22. In Isa 65 we have only a foretaste of the apocalyptic New Heavens and the New Earth, a glimpse of things to come.

Classical Prophecies and Transformation

This passage (Isa 65:17–25) belongs to the classical biblical prophecies of restoration (like Messianic prophecies or covenant-centered kingdom prophecies/restoration prophecies) even though it contains many eschatological-apocalyptic features. It might have been literally fulfilled if God’s people had been faithful. This prophecy concerning the new heavens and the new earth could occur exactly as predicted and one can envision the

⁴¹ Mathewson aptly explains the typological correspondence between exodus from Egypt and eschatological exodus: “Following their deliverance from Babylon ([Rev] chs. 17–18), in a new exodus ([Rev] 21.5a; Isa. 43.19) the saints are restored to their homeland, a new heaven and new earth ([Rev] 21.1; Isa. 65.17–18), with the restored bride-new Jerusalem at its center ([Rev] 21.2; Isa. 52.1; 61.10) where God establishes his dwelling with his people in a renewed covenant relationship ([Rev] 21.3; Ezek. 37.26–7), the very goal of the first exodus (cf. Exod. 6.7; 15.17; 25.8)” (*A New Heaven and a New Earth*, 63).

historical, literal fulfillment of this prophecy in the context of the Messianic expectations and Israel’s faithfulness to God’s leadership and his word. Nevertheless, we need to recognize that many Old Testament classical prophecies were conditional, and because “the conditions were never met the predictions were not fulfilled in literal Israel. Nor can all the details be projected into the future so as to have a fulfillment then. Only those features reiterated later by sacred writers can be taken positively to have future application.”⁴²

The prophet Ezekiel in chap. 36 unfolds a threefold transformation of God’s people after the Babylonian exile: (1) God promises to restore his people to their land and for them to be his witnesses to the nations (vv. 24, 28, 33–36); (2) God promises to give them a new heart and a new Spirit in order to move them to obey him and his laws (vv. 25–27); and (3) God promises to bless his people—it will become like the garden of Eden (vv. 29–30, 35).⁴³ Because the divine conditions and described background were not fully met so also the prophecy was not literally fulfilled.

Typology as the Key Interpretive Tool

However, when one has a potential historical fulfillment, one encounters a type (the similar typological structures one encounters in Ezek 38–39;⁴⁴ Ezek 40–48; and Zech 14). Some kinds of predictions are made through typology that can be called “mute” prophecies.⁴⁵ How does typology work? Typology is based on a relationship between type and antitype.⁴⁶ Type can be a person, event (place), or institution, and must be always rooted in the biblical text. Type is also a historical figure. For our purpose, the most important feature is the so-called “Steigerung” principle, i.e., the antitype is always bigger, larger, greater, and more universal than the type.⁴⁷ For

⁴² *SDABC*, 4:709.

⁴³ For a detailed ideal scenario of what would have happened to Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple if they had been faithful to God, see Richard M. Davidson, “Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, BRIS 1, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), 193–200.

⁴⁴ Jiří Moskala, “Toward the Fulfillment of the Gog and Magog Prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39,” *JATS* 18.2 (2007): 243–273.

⁴⁵ Prophecies are given in different forms through words, typology, sign actions, and visions/dreams.

⁴⁶ The Greek preposition *anti* means (1) “against,” but also (2) “in place of”; “instead of”; “in correspondence to.” Only the second meaning is relevant in typological structures.

⁴⁷ Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical *tipos* Structure*, AUSDDS 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981); *idem*, “Biblical

example: The second Adam, Jesus Christ, is bigger than the first Adam; Jesus as the antitypical fulfillment of the sacrificial system surpasses all sacrifices or priestly Levitical ministry; the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. was a local event which is the type for a universal antitypical spiritual Babylon of the end-time; etc.⁴⁸

The classical conditional prophecies⁴⁹ have a factual historical fulfillment (see, for example, Nebuchadnezzar's madness in Dan 4, the drying of the Euphrates River, the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C.), or potential historical fulfillments (see the Gog and Magog prophecy in Ezek 38–39; the vision about the new temple, land, and city in Ezek 40–48 and Zech 14). Conditionality of these prophecies is the crucial issue to recognize. These potential historical fulfillments become types for events related to the eschatological end of time. The eschatological-apocalyptic elements/features integrated into these prophecies provide the needed hints for such an interpretation together with the later inspired authors who use these prophecies in the typological sense. This is also true for the restoration prophecy of Isa 65:17–25.

I want to propose that one can understand the relationship between Isa 65:17–25 and Rev 21–22 as typology. The typological relationship between these two texts is type—Isa 65 and antitype—Rev 21–22. The fundamental question is what can be applied from Isaiah 65 (type) to the eschatological New Earth (antitype)?

Three Key Intertextual Principles

One needs to implement three principles in order to understand what will and what will be not present in the eschatological New Earth from Isa 65.

Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen; (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 83–86.

⁴⁸ Jesus Christ used typology as is demonstrated in the following examples: Jesus is bigger than Jonah (“Now something greater than Jonah is here”; Matt 12:41), is greater than Solomon (“Now something greater than Solomon is here”; Matt 12:42), and greater than the temple with its sacrificial system (“I tell you that something greater than the temple is here”; Matt 12:6). It means that Jesus is more than all these earthly types; he is surpassing them and superior and greater: he is the Prophet, the King, and the Priest.

⁴⁹ For the description and definition of classical prophecies in contrast to the apocalyptic ones, see the “Methods of Bible Study” document voted by the General Conference Committee Annual Council, “Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods,” Rio de Janeiro, October 12, 1986, published in the *Adventist Review*, January 22, 1987; Davidson, “Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy,” 183–185.

Principle #1: What is not denied remains.

Descriptions of the new earth of Isa 65:17–25 that later inspired biblical writers (A) either confirm, support, and/or repeat, (B) or do not deny or comment on, are valid and thus applicable to the eschatological New Earth. To say it simply: What is not denied will be there, because it is automatically transferred and its validity continues.

What is, then, applicable? What will be in the New Earth that is described in Isa 65:17–25? What is confirmed or not denied by other biblical writers? One can clearly state that the following good qualities of life are retained and present: joy, happiness, security, peace, prosperity, creative work, new relationships in the animal world, no more crying, pain, sorrow, suffering, or the past as a burden, and God’s abundant blessings. No later inspired author is against these crucial characteristics of life or denies them. On the contrary, these values are endorsed.

Principle #2: What is denied is not transferred.

What later biblical authors oppose or explicitly deny from the description of Isa 65:17–25 does not apply to the eschatological New Earth. In other words, from Isa 65:17–25 the aspects of life that contradict other places of the Holy Scripture about the life on the New Earth will not be included. So what will not be there? What is denied, discontinued, annulled, and not transferred to life on the eschatological new earth?

Death

Isaiah has death in view (after productive, blessed, and prosperous life), but John explicitly renounces it: “He [God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:4).

Sin, Sinners, and Curse

Isaiah mentions “curse” and “sinners,” but John clearly proclaims that nothing sinful will enter the New Earth: “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death” (Rev 21:8). And in another text he openly states: “Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev 21:27); and in the last chapter of the Bible, he flatly declares: “No longer will there be any curse” (Rev 22:3).

Marriage and Birth of Children

Isaiah underlines that on “the new earth” there will be no miscarriages or infant death which implies that meaningful marriages with abundance of children as expression of God’s blessing will be there. However, when Jesus was asked about the resurrection and the life afterwards, he responded that marriage and childbirth will be not part of eternal life: “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Matt 22:29–32). What God prepares for his children will be much better and more fulfilling than what we can experience today in the best, happiest, most harmonious, and meaningful marriage! One does not need to hurry into marriage because it will not be a part of life in heaven. God will give the redeemed something better and even more satisfying. Jesus points out that humans will be “upgraded,” because he discloses that we “will be like angels in heaven” in that reality of life. We need to wait for this surprise because we know nothing about the (family) life of the angels. We should guard ourselves against all sorts of speculations; silence in this matter is the best explanation and attitude to many complex questions.

This point is also clearly supported by the writings of Ellen G. White. She unequivocally states:

There are men today who express their belief that there will be marriages and births in the new earth; but those who believe the Scriptures cannot accept such doctrines. The doctrine that children will be born in the new earth is not a part of the “sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19). The words of Christ are too plain to be misunderstood. They should forever settle the question of marriages and births in the new earth. Neither those who shall be raised from the dead, nor those who shall be translated without seeing death, will marry or be given in marriage. They will be as the angels of God, members of the royal family.

I would say to those who hold views contrary to this plain declaration of Christ, upon such matters silence is eloquence. It is presumption to indulge in suppositions and theories regarding

matters that God has not made known to us in His Word. We need not enter into speculation regarding our future state.⁵⁰

On another occasion Ellen White made the following strong statement:

Every conceivable fanciful and deceptive doctrine will be presented by men who think that they have the truth. Some are now teaching that children will be born in the new earth. Is this present truth? Who has inspired these men to present such a theory? Did the Lord give anyone such views?—No; those things which are revealed are for us and our children, but upon subjects not revealed, and having nought to do with our salvation, silence is eloquence. These strange ideas should not even be mentioned, much less taught as essential truths.

We have reached a time when things are to be called by their right name. As we did in the earlier days, we must arise, and, under the Spirit of God, rebuke the work of deception.⁵¹

Ellen White further explains in her correspondence with a minister who was fantasizing regarding a woman not his wife, with whom he was sentimentally involved and thought of living and having children by her in heaven, the unbiblical ground and sinfulness of such thinking. She underscores:

I have much to say to you. You have been represented to me as being in great peril. Satan is on your track, and at times he has whispered to you pleasing fables, and has shown you charming pictures of one whom he represents as a more suitable companion for you than the wife of your youth, the mother of your children. Satan is working stealthily, untiringly, to effect your downfall through his specious temptations. He is determined to become your teacher, and you need now to place yourself where you can get strength to resist him. He hopes to lead you into the maze of spiritualism. He hopes to wean your affections from your wife, and to fix them upon another woman. He desires that you shall allow

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, MS 28, 1904; see *idem*, *Selected Messages—Book One* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1958), 172, 173.

⁵¹ Ellen G. White, *The Southern Watchmen*, April 5, 1904; see *idem*, *Selected Messages—Book Two* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1958), 25, 26.

your mind to dwell upon this woman until through unholy affection she becomes your god.

The enemy of souls has gained much when he can lead the imagination of one of Jehovah's chosen watchmen to dwell upon the possibilities of association in the world to come, with some woman whom he loves, and of their raising up a family. We need no such pleasing pictures. All such views originate in the mind of the tempter. We have the plain assurance of Christ that in the world to come, the redeemed 'neither marry, nor are given in marriage, neither can they die anymore; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection' (Luke 20:35, 36).

It is presented to me that spiritual fables are taking many captive. Their minds are sensual, and, unless a change comes, this will prove their ruin. To all who are indulging in these unholy fancies I would say, Stop, for Christ's sake, stop right where you are. You are on forbidden ground. Repent, I entreat of you, and be converted.⁵²

Principle #3: New things will be included.

In the eschatological New Earth, there will be new surprising things that were not mentioned in Isa 65:17–25. In the Isaianic type or pre-eschatological picture are missing items that later inspired writers stress will be there and are included in Rev 21–22. These new items were also not present in the Garden of Eden of Gen 2, because they are introduced only after the sin problem occurred and the final solution was brought through Jesus Christ. What is new in Rev 21–22 that was not mentioned in Isa 65? At least three magnificent realities will be there:

1. The New Jerusalem descends from heaven.

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God'" (Rev 21:2–3).

⁵² The full letter (Letter 231, 1903) can be read in Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery and Divorce* (Silver Spring, MD: The Ellen G. White Estate, 1989), 199–202.

2. *The throne of God with the living water will be in the city.*

“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him” (Rev 22:3). “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1).

3. *God himself, his physical, visible, and constant Presence, will dwell with his people.*

“They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever” (Rev 22:4–5)

Beloved author and preacher Dean Farrar was a personal friend and chaplain of Queen Victoria in the 1870s. Sometime during the queen’s reign, she discussed the second coming of Christ with Farrar. Reportedly she had heard a message at Canterbury Cathedral on this topic and was greatly moved. When she spoke to Farrar about the sermon, she said, “Oh, how I wish that the Lord would come during my lifetime.” “Why does your Majesty feel this very earnest desire?” asked the great preacher. With deep emotion the queen of England replied, “Because I should so love to lay my crown at his feet.”⁵³

The concluding remarks of Isa 66:22–24 break into the eschatological time when all the servants of the Lord will be in the New Jerusalem living under the new conditions described as the new heavens and the new earth (66:23). The final outcome is that the faithful servants of the Lord are in the New Jerusalem, but those outside are under the divine judgment of condemnation and total destruction (66:24). This cosmic picture is the last picture of Isaiah where the new life is rid of the wicked people so that peace and harmony will be never again be disturbed by sin. This result comes after intense evangelistic activities among the nations (Isa 66:19–21), and many are reinstated not only into God’s people but also receive special positions of honor, respect, and service. They are part of the eschatological kingdom of God.

⁵³ Online, n.p.: www.casperjournal.com/columns/tami_rudkin/article_f16cbc99-coe2-5072-a209-e5f7acf9a5cb.html.

Conclusion

Does Isa 65:17–25 project an eschatological picture of the new earth and the new heavens? This Isaianic text is best understood in a typological way according to the type-antitype structure. The double fulfillment of this classical prophecy⁵⁴ (some features break into apocalyptic genre) may be best understood if this prophecy is interpreted first in its original setting as predicting the ideal earthly kingdom of Israel had they be faithful to the Lord after returning from Babylonian captivity and then eschatologically in principle. The historical fulfillment never happened, but the potential historical fulfillment provides the basis for an antitypical fulfillment. Isaiah 65:17–25 serves as a *Vorbild* for full-fulfillment as seen in Rev 21–22. It provides an appetite for better things to come, a foretaste of the heavenly reality, a miniature pattern for eschatological antitypical fullness. The three principles discussed above can guide the student of the Bible in how to apply the studied Isaianic passage in its larger context to the establishment of the ultimate “new heavens and a new earth” at the end of time.

The anticipation of the Old Testament Church was splendid. It was a view forward—to the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God, of the new heavens and the new earth! In linear time perspective—from Creation to de-Creation, and then finally to re-Creation. Texts like Isa 65:17–25 as well as Dan 2; 7–9; Isa 24–27; Ezek 38–39; 40–48; Joel 3; Mic 4; Zech 14 provide important glimpses to this Old Testament hope. This church was expecting, waiting, and anticipating outstanding things to come—the Messiah and the establishment of God’s kingdom.

⁵⁴ Double historical-eschatological fulfillment of the apocalyptic prophecy can also be discerned in Ezek 38–39 and Matt 24.

Sarah Our Mother

P. Richard Choi

Paul's citation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 does not appear to have drawn much interest among scholars. De Witt Burton¹ considers Paul's citation of Isa 54:1 "appropriate,"² but he does not offer much explanation.³ Hans Dieter Betz⁴ tersely comments that the point of Gal 4:27 is that "Sarah=heavenly Jerusalem=Christianity,"⁵ but again he does not explain whether or not Paul's use of the Isaiah passage is faithful to the original context. C. K. Barrett⁶ does address the question of original intention but offers an ambiguous answer. He states that Paul is thematically faithful to the original context of Isa 54:1,⁷ but notes that Paul's usage corresponds to rabbinic *gezēra šāwā*,⁸ an interpretive method that often disregards the

¹ Ernest de Witt Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians," ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark LTD, 1980).

² *Ibid.*, 264.

³ *Ibid.*, the reason he offers is that "[the language] involves the figure of Jerusalem as a mother."

⁴ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 251.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 249. Betz notes, "In [Paul's] view, the quotation refers to Sarah." He offers no further explanation.

⁶ C. K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians," in *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

original context. J. Louis Martyn,⁹ who accepts and builds upon Barrett's conclusions, does not address the question of the citation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27. Nor does Troy Martin¹⁰ address this question in his carefully argued article. Herman N. Ridderbos¹¹ asserts that Paul's reading of Isa 54:1 is "the true sense of the Scripture,"¹² without offering an explanation how this is so. Sigurd Grindheim¹³ carefully compares the covenant theologies of Isa 54:1 and Gal 4:21–31, concluding that God's election results in a reversal between the visible and invisible.¹⁴ However, like others before him, he offers no detailed analysis of Gal 4:27 or Isa 54:1. Mark D. Nanos, who often offers valuable Jewish perspectives on Paul, does not specifically discuss Gal 4:27.¹⁵ Clearly, there is a noticeable lack of interest among Pauline scholars about whether Paul's citation of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 is faithful to its original context. The intent of this paper is to argue that, as a whole, Paul's discussion of Sarah's barrenness in Gal 4:21–31 closely coincides with the original intent of Isa 54:1. The first section of the paper will argue that Isa 54:1–3 contains references to Sarah and Hagar, similar to the way we find them in Gal 4:24–27. The second section of the paper will argue that a close reading of Isa 54:1–3 reveals that both Paul and Isaiah base their concept of Sarah's barrenness on Gen 11:30 and 17:15–20. In the final section of the paper, I shall attempt to apply the significance of this study to modern medicine.

Galatians 4:24–27 and Isaiah 54:1–3

Galatians 4:24–27 is composed in a loose chiasmic structure, which may be shown as follows:¹⁶

- A. One woman, in fact, is **Hagar**, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for **slavery**.
Now **Hagar** is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present

⁹ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

¹⁰ Troy Martin, "Apostasy to Paganism: The Rhetorical Stasis of the Galatian Controversy," *JBL* 114.3 (1995): 437–461.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 181–182.

¹² *Ibid.*, 180.

¹³ Sigurd Grindheim, *The Crux of Election*, WUNT 202 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 179–183.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁵ Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First Century Context* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2002), 115–119.

¹⁶ All quotes are NRSV unless otherwise indicated.

Jerusalem, for she is in **slavery** with her children (vv. 24–25).

B. But **the other woman** corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is **free**, and she is our mother (v. 26).

B'. For it is written, "Rejoice, you **childless one**, you **who bear no children**, burst into song and shout, you **who endure no birth pangs**; for the children of the **desolate woman** are more numerous (v. 27a–b).

A'. than the children of **the one who is married**. (v. 27c).¹⁷

In A, vv. 24–25 mention Hagar by name and identify her as a slave woman. In B, v. 26 introduces Sarah as “the other woman” (ἡ δέ) and describes her as “free,” causing A and B to form an antithetical parallel. Although Sarah is not directly identified by name in B, for those who know the Genesis story of Abraham, her identity should be sufficiently clear from the mention of Abraham in v. 22 and of her son Isaac in v. 28. In B₁, v. 27a–b introduce further descriptions of Sarah. She is called “barren one” (στεῖρα), “who bears no children” (ἡ οὐ τίκτουσα), “who endures no birth pang” (ἡ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα), and “desolate woman” (τῆς ἐρήμου). These are attributes of Sarah, who is described as a free woman (ἐλευθέρα) in line B. Then finally, Hagar is briefly reintroduced in A₁ with the description, “one who has the husband” (that is to say, Sarah’s husband) and completes the chiasm that began in v. 25. The structure of Gal 4:24–27 may be simplified as follows:

A. Hagar the slave woman (vv. 24–25)

B. Sarah the free woman (v. 26)

B'. Sarah the barren and desolate woman (v. 27a–b)

A'. Hagar, the one who has the husband (v. 27c)

The net effect of this chiastic structure is that Sarah and Hagar described in Gal 4:24–26 closely align with the two women in Isa 54:1—the barren woman and the woman who has the husband. Many commentators of Isaiah, however, see a broader reference in Isa 54:1 than just Sarah because the passage does not identify her by name. As a result, Rebekah, Rachel,

¹⁷ A μία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ εἰς δουλείαν γεννώσα, ἥτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ (v. 24) τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ | ... (v. 25)

B ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν, ἥτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν (v. 26)

B₁ γέγραπται γάρ· εὐφράνθητι, στεῖρα ἡ οὐ τίκτουσα, ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον, ἡ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου (v. 27a–b)

A₁ μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα α (v. 27c)¹⁸

Manoah's wife, and Hannah, who are also called "barren" in the OT (Gen 25:21; 29:31; Jud. 13:2; 1 Sam 2:5), have been named as possible referents.¹⁸

Isaiah 54:1, however, contains numerous verbal echoes of Gen 11:30 and strongly suggests Sarah as the referent, regardless of whether one reads it in the MT or the LXX. The wording of MT Isa 54:1 is similar to Gen. 11:30.¹⁹

Isa 54:1: יִלְדָה לֹא יֵקְרָה לִּי (Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear)

Gen 11:30: וְלֹד לָהּ וְלֹד (Sarai was barren; she had no child)

Both passages have the word עקרה (barren). And both passages contain verbal derivatives of ילד (bear children). Thus Isa 54:1 has ילדה (has given birth), and Gen 11:30, ולד (child). Moreover, both verses have a similar word order. In Isa 54:1, עקרה is followed by the negative (not) and ילדה. And in Gen 11:30, עקרה is followed by אין (not) and לה ולד (she had a child).

Significantly, the LXX translation—the text that Paul cites in Gal 4:27—retains the same verbal characteristics that we see in the MT. Genesis 11:30 and Isa 54:1 read as follows in the LXX:

LXX²⁰ Gen 11:30: καὶ ἦν Σαρα στεῖρα καὶ οὐκ ἔτεκνοποῖει

LXX Isa 54:1: εὐφράνθητι στεῖρα ἢ οὐ τίκτουσα

Both LXX passages translate עקרה (barren) with στεῖρα. And ἔτεκνοποῖει (bear children) of Gen 11:30 and τίκτουσα (give birth) of Isa 54:1 have the same semantic range. Also, both passages rigidly follow the word order of the MT. In both passages, στεῖρα is followed by οὐ τίκτουσα and οὐκ ἔτεκνοποῖει respectively.

A close verbal relationship exists between Isa 54:1 and Gen 11:30 in both the MT and the LXX. Indeed, this verbal relationship has not escaped the notice of modern exegetes. For example, W. A. M. Beuken writes: "The wording [of Isa 54:1] ... recalls Gen xi 30."²¹ Richard Longenecker states that

¹⁸ E.g. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 19A (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 361.

¹⁹ Translations from the RSV.

²⁰ Rahlfs edition.

²¹ W. A. M. Beuken, "Isaiah LIV: The Multiple Identity of the Person Addressed," *OtSt* (1974): 37; see Klaus Balzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55*, Hermene (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 434, note 264 for others; see also Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 273.

Isa 54:1 is an allusion to Gen 11:30.²² Mary Callaway simply assumes that Isa 54:1 is an allusion to Sarah's barrenness in Genesis.²³ And according to Karen Jobes, "Isa 54:1 echoes Gen 11:30."²⁴ This close verbal relationship between Isa 54:1 and Gen 11:30 surely would not have escaped Paul, an astute student of Scripture.

Furthermore, Isa 54:3 contains two key words that are found in Gen 17:16–19: "nations" and "seed." The two passages read as follows:

Isa 54:3: Your seed (זרעך) will inherit (יירש) the nations (גוים) and they will inhabit (ישבו) the desolate cities (my translation).

Gen 17:16b, 19: I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations (לגוים) ... Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his [seed] (לזרעו) after him (RSV)

First, there is a verbal similarity between the two passages. Isaiah 54:3 uses זרע (seed) and גוים (nations) to describe the descendants and the inheritance of Zion, respectively. These same words are used in Gen 17:16–19 to describe Sarah's descendants: she will become the mother of *nations* and God will establish a covenant with her *descendants*. Second, the two passages share thematic similarities. The reason most translations miss this thematic echo is that they take the verb יירש in Isa 54:3 in the sense of "dispossess" or "drive out." The direction taken by these translations is understandable since שרש is often used in such violent sense in the Pentateuch.²⁵ Thus, for example, Blenkinsopp considers שרש as deuteronomic.²⁶ But introducing the meaning of "dispossess" to Isa 54:3 does not fit the context well and misses an important thematic echo being made to Sarah. As we have seen, Isa 54:3 contains verbal echoes of Gen 17:16–19, with reference to Sarah's זרע and her role as the mother of גוים. The promise in Isaiah 54:3 that her "seed will inherit the nations" closely echoes the language of promise found in Gen

²² Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 215.

²³ Mary Callaway, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 59–72.

²⁴ Karen H. Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother: Metalepsis and Intertextuality in Gal 4:21–31," *WTJ* 55 (1993): 307; cf. F. S. Malan, "The Strategy of Two Opposing Covenants: Gal 4:21:5:1," *Neot* 26.2 (1992): 434.

²⁵ The overwhelming usage of this term denotes dispossessing through violence (Gen 24:60; Exod 34:24; Num 14:24; 21:24, 32, 35; 32:21, 39; 33:52, 53, 55; Deut 2:24,31; 4:38, 47; 7:1, 17; 9:1, 3–6; 10:11; 11:23; 12:29; 18:14; 19:1; 25:19; Josh 3:10; 8:7; 12:1; 13:6, 12; 13:13; 14:12; 15:14, 63; 16:10; 17:12–13, 18; 18:3; 19:47; 21:43; 23:5; 23:9, 13; 24:8).

²⁶ Blenkinsopp, 357, 362.

17:16, namely, that Sarah will become the mother of nations (אִמֵּי הָעַמִּים). The notion of a violent military conquest does not fit the context of Isa 54:3. Rather, the picture is that the descendants of Zion will inherit the nations, and that they and the nations that have joined their ranks will live peacefully together in the cities of the land.

The structure of Isa 54:1–3 further corroborates my reading of v. 3. In v. 1, there is a call to Zion to rejoice, for she will have many children. In v. 2, she is told to enlarge her tent, with clear implications that her descendants will be extremely large in number. Then, in v. 3, she is told that she will be blessed, so that her seed will inherit the nations who will inhabit the desolate cities. According to this structure, v. 3 explains vv. 1–2. It reveals why Zion needs to rejoice, who her descendants are, and why she needs to enlarge her tent. In conclusion, then, Isa. 54:1–3 echoes the story of Sarah in Genesis.²⁷ Verse 1 contains allusions to Sarah’s barrenness in Gen 11:30, and v. 3 contains allusions to the promise made to Sarah in Gen 17:16–19 that she will become the mother of nations.

Genesis 11:30 and 17:15–20

Genesis 11:30 stands out from its immediate surrounding context like a sore thumb. The genealogy of Gen 11:10–26 is very patterned and formulaic: “When A had lived X number of years, he became the father of B, and A lived after the birth of B, Y number of years, and he had other sons and daughters.” Terah’s genealogy in v. 27 deviates somewhat from this pattern, but it is still about his family history—who married whom, and who begat whom. However, Gen 11:30 sharply departs from this heavily patterned text when it announces: “Now Sarai was barren; she had no child” (RSV). According to Klaus Balzer, Gen 11:30 is “a very marked passage.”²⁸ Gordon J. Wenham also notes the extreme importance of this “digression within [the] genealogy.”²⁹ According to Tammi J. Schneider, the purpose of this digression in 11:30 is to introduce “a major problem”³⁰ for the plot of the Abraham story. Furthermore, Gen 11:30 occurs at a very strategic point in the Abraham narrative. It appears in a *toledoth* passage (11:27–31) that functions as a link between two major narrative complexes—the Abraham narrative, on the one hand, and the Tower of Babel narrative, on the other—throwing

²⁷ Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 231.

²⁸ Balzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 434.

²⁹ Wenham, *Genesis*, 273.

³⁰ Tammi J. Schneider, *Sarah: Mother of Nations* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 17.

spotlight on the barrenness of Sarai as the key element in the plot. Klaus Balzer notes: “Sarah’s barrenness [in 11:30] . . . plays a moving part.”³¹

Genesis 17:15–16 forms an inclusio with 11:30.³² First, Sarah’s name is abruptly changed in 17:15. She is introduced as Sarai in 11:30. Thereafter, she is consistently referred to as Sarai until her name is changed to Sarah in 17:15. God tells Abraham: “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.” This abrupt change³³ of Sarah’s name signals the end of the inclusio that began in 11:30. Second, 17:15 announces that Sarah will bear Abraham’s offspring. This joyful announcement effects a sudden change in Sarah’s status.³⁴ Sarah begins her career in 11:30 in her lowly and shameful status of barrenness. She remains in this state throughout the story (cf. 16:1), despised even by her own mistress Hagar who is pregnant with Abraham’s offspring (16:4). The announcement in 17:15 removes her shame and elevates her status to a mother. Third, the promise of posterity appears multiple times before ch. 17 (cf. 12:2–3, 7; 13:14–17; 15:5–6, 13–16, 18), but Sarai is never mentioned in any of these promises. Genesis 17:15–16 is the first promise in the Abraham cycles that specifically mentions Sarah by name: “you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her.” It is clear, then, that 17:15–16 presents the solution to the problem of Sarah’s barrenness that was introduced in 11:30. These two passages complement each other. Furthermore, the appearance of גוים (nations) in 17:16—a word that we already discussed in connection with Isa 54:3—reconnects Sarah to the genealogies in Gen 10–11. The term גוים first occurs in the genealogies of Gen 10 (vv. 5, 20, 31, 32), and then it resurfaces only in 17:4 in connection with Abraham’s fatherhood: “You shall be the father of a multitude of nations (גוים)” [RSV]. גוים also appears in 22:18 in a similar sense in the context of the sacrifice of Isaac: “by your descendants shall all the nations (גוים) of the earth bless themselves” (RSV). These occurrences of גוים refer back to chs. 10–11 which form the backdrop of Abraham’s call.³⁵ Appropriately, the

³¹ Balzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 434.

³² The “small break” after 17:14 in the MT perhaps indicates a scribal recognition of this inclusio; see Schneider, *Sarah*, 57, who does not mention the inclusio.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 61.

³⁵ Critical scholarship generally explains the close literary relations between Gen 10–11 and 17 on the grounds of P. See Blenkinsopp, “Abraham,” 225–241, for the current debate on P’s functions in the Genesis story of Abraham. The basic reasoning is that the covenant texts in Genesis 9:8–17 and 17:1–11, as well as the table of the nations in ch. 10 and the genealogy of ch. 11, belong to P. It is, however, methodologically unsound, indeed anachronistic, to try to explain Paul’s reading of the Abraham story in Galatians on the basis of the documentary hypothesis of

phrase *לְגוֹיִם יְהִי אִמָּהּ* (she will become nations)> in 17:16 is translated by the RSV, KJV, NKJV, and NASB with: “[Sarah] shall be a mother of nations” (RSV). This promise makes Sarah an equal recipient of the promise with Abraham.³⁶ It is significant in this context that the LXX translates the *לְגוֹיִם* in 17:4 and 17:16 with *ἔθνη* (Gentiles). For the LXX translator of Genesis, Abraham and Sarah are the father and mother of the Gentiles. The reference to Sarah’s barrenness in 17:17 further strengthens the close literary relationship between 17:15–16 and 11:30. Abraham asks in 17:17: “Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” This mention of Sarah’s barrenness alongside the mention of her being the mother of the “nations” in v. 16 creates a thematic continuity between 17:15–17 and 11:30.

Gen 11:30 and 17:15–17 form an *inclusio* in the story of Abraham and plays a crucial interpretive role. First, it allows Sarah to emerge as an agent of the promise no less than Abraham. Genesis 11:30 signals to the reader that barren Sarah will become the mother of the promised seed one day, a knowledge that the characters in the story including Abraham apparently lack.³⁷ This tension causes the reader to wonder how barren Sarah will be able to fulfill the promise. For example, for the alert reader, suspense heightens when Sarai is endangered in Egypt in 12:10–20 or when Abraham marries Hagar in ch. 16. This heightened sense of suspense causes barren Sarai to stand out in the story as an agent of the promise. Second, the *inclusio* also underscores the importance of the announcement in 17:16 that Sarah will become the mother of nations. This announcement surprises Abraham. He falls on his face and laughs in disbelief³⁸ when he hears it (v. 17). The announcement also surprises the reader. The Abraham story promises blessing to the Gentiles in numerous places (12:3; 18:18; 22:18), but no passage directly mentions that Sarah is the mother of *nations*. This revelation

P, since the Pentateuch was a unified text by Paul’s time. Blenkinsopp notes the universalistic tendency of P, allegedly composed over several generations by numerous temple scribes (230), but universalism is hardly limited to so-called P, since it is also found in 12:1–3, a passage generally attributed to J. See Thomas Christian Römer, “The Elusive Yahwist: A Short History of Research,” in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2006), 24.

³⁶ Cf. Schneider, *Sarah*, 58.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 48; Laurence A. Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, JSOTSup 96 (Worcester, England: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 61, rightly states that “to hear the promise as Abraham heard it, we [the reader] must bracket out any later developments we now know will take place” based on 11:30. The alert reader knows what the characters in the story do not know.

³⁸ Cf. Schneider, *Sarah*, 58–59; Turner, *ibid.*, 78.

occurs only in 17:16. The point of this surprise is to underscore the importance of the concern that God has for the nations in the Abraham story. Finally, the *inclusio* excludes Hagar and Ishmael from the promise of posterity. Hagar and Ishmael are not part of the promise of posterity because the *inclusio* designates Sarah as the mother of Abraham's heir. In fact, Gen 17:18–21 explicitly denies that Ishmael is an agent of the promise. In v. 18, Abraham asks God to make Ishmael his heir. It is clear that Abraham had profound misconceptions about Ishmael's role in the promise. In v. 19, God corrects Abraham and clarifies that Ishmael has no role to play in the covenant: "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him." In v. 20, God also promises a blessing for Ishmael, but in v. 21, God restricts his covenant blessings to Sarah and her offspring Isaac—"I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you" (RSV).

Conclusion

C. K. Barrett writes concerning Paul's use of the Abraham story in Gal 4:21–31: "Its plain, surface meaning supports not Paul but the Judaizers."³⁹ The detailed analysis of the Genesis account of Abraham, above, has shown that Barrett is wrong. It is Paul, rather than his opponents, who correctly reads the story. In Gal 4:21–31, Paul advocates three things about the Genesis story of Abraham. First, he writes in v. 28 that the Gentile Christians "are children of the promise, like Isaac" and identifies Sarah and Isaac as the agents of the Abrahamic promise. Second, Paul calls Sarah "our mother" in v. 26, making her the mother of the Gentiles. And third, in v. 30, Paul calls on his Gentile converts to "cast out the slave [Hagar] and her son" (RSV), denying Hagar any agency in the covenant. These three points in Gal 4:21–31 perfectly coincide with the intention of the story of Abraham in Genesis. Paul writes in Gal 4:21: "Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not hear the law?" (RSV), underscoring the need to read the story of Abraham more closely.

Yet, Paul is not original in this reading. He borrows understanding of Sarah's barrenness from Isa 54, which describes the fate of Jerusalem in

³⁹ Barrett, 164; Karen Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother," who devotes nearly half of her article (306–320) to the allusions to Isaiah found in Galatians, concurs: "Paul's argument in Gal 4:21–31 resonates, not with the Genesis narrative, but with Isaiah's transformation of its themes of seed and inheritance" (312).

allegorical terms, as Sarah's experience. Isaiah 54 describes Jerusalem in exile under a curse (vv. 4–8) as Sarah humiliated in her barrenness. Conversely, it describes Jerusalem restored as Sarah who became a mother (v. 1). Like Sarah, Zion will be the mother of the nations (v. 3) and become the center of the universal people of God. It will be a heavenly city (vv. 11–12) vindicated by God, like barren Sarah. Moreover, Isa 54:1–3 employs the motives of Sarah's barrenness in Gen 11:30 and her vindication and healing in Gen 17:15 as an interpretive inclusio of the Abraham story that allows Sarah to emerge as the key agent of the promise (cf. Isa 54:10). It is clear, then, that Paul's allegory of Sarah and Hagar in Gal 4:21–31 is heavily dependent on Isaiah's breathtaking reading of the Genesis story of Abraham.⁴⁰ For Paul, however, the eschatological moment prophesied by Isaiah and Genesis has arrived through Christ the Seed of Abraham.⁴¹ His Gentile converts represent the eschatological children of Sarah⁴² who in turn represents the heavenly Jerusalem, their city.⁴³ To the casual reader, Paul's Gentile-centered reading of the Abraham story in Galatians may appear novel, or as Barrett notes, even contrary to the plain sense of the story. But to those very familiar with the text of the Genesis, like Paul and Isaiah, there is no other way to read the story.

Application

Paul's understanding of the story of Sarah is most apparent in the comparisons he makes between her and Hagar in Gal 4:21–28. Even a cursory reading of this passage reveals that the two women represent two sets of opposing qualities. In v. 22, Paul begins with their similarities: they both had sons. But that is where their similarities end, and the contrast begins. The son of Hagar is a slave, and the son of Sarah, a free man. In v. 23 Paul widens the contrast between them. The slave son is born "according to the flesh," but the son who is free is born according to a promise. Then vv. 24–25 apply these contrary predicates to the covenants of Israel. The Mosaic covenant of Sinai is Hagar, and the guardians of that covenant in Jerusalem are her children. Then in v. 26, Paul and his Gentile converts are described as the children of Sarah the free woman. They belong to the new covenant and serve the heavenly Jerusalem. Then Paul cites Isa 54:1: "Rejoice, you

⁴⁰ This is the way Paul would have viewed Isaiah 54, not as Deutero-Isaiah's reading of P.

⁴¹ Gal 3:16.

⁴² The descendents of Abraham in Gal 3:29.

⁴³ Gal 4:26.

childless one, you who bear no children, burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married.” Paul then announces in v. 28: “Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac.” The rest of the verses of chapter 4 return to the contrast between Ishmael and Isaac in vv. 22–23 and reaffirm that Paul and his Gentile converts are the free children of Sarah and call for the expulsion of Hagar and her slave children from the household of Abraham.

It is obvious from this description that Abraham is not the focus of Paul’s discussion Gal 4:21–31. Sarah is. When Paul declares in v. 22 that Abraham had two sons, it implies that it is not enough to be a child of Abraham. For Abraham had two wives, one a slave woman and the other a free woman. The point of this comparison is that it is insufficient to be offspring of Abraham. One must be a child of Sarah in order to be a free person, the promised offspring of Abraham. Another obvious point in the story is that Sarah is barren, and Hagar is not. And the true children of Abraham come from a barren woman. Thus the significance of Sarah’s role in the story is not only that she is Abraham’s original wife or that she is a free woman, but that, as Gen 11:30 makes plain, she is barren. This focus on barrenness is evident from the fact that Sarah is not mentioned by name in Gal 4:21–31. Like Isaiah, Paul wants to broaden the significance of her barrenness, so that it applies to all types of impossible and lingering human conditions. For Isaiah, the barrenness is Israel in exile, and for Paul it is the disobedience of the Gentiles and his own past. That Paul persecuted the church or that the Gentile believers were dead in sin (Eph 2:1–22)—these are all varying manifestations of Sarah’s barrenness. Paul and his Gentile converts, like Israel in exile, were rescued from a barren condition by the power of God’s promise and grace. Therefore the problem of the Jews in Jerusalem is not necessarily that they are Jews. Paul does not condemn Jews *qua* Jews. Otherwise he would himself be excluded from the promise. Rather, the problem is their unshakable notion of human possibility. The Mosaic covenant that they revere and trust is the symbol of human possibility for them, an institution that inspires them with a sense of control and hope that they can hasten the promised time of blessing by the exercise of their will. It is this overreliance on human works and processes that links Paul’s Jewish opponents to Hagar and her slavery.

It is, then, obvious from this discussion that there are two ways of looking at Sarah’s barrenness. One way is to view it as an obstacle that stands

in the way of Abraham's becoming the father of a great nation (Gen 12:2). Abraham's marriage to Hagar in Genesis 16 is an example of such a view. Another way is to see it as an agent of Abraham's transformation. In other words, her condition of lingering infertility is the reason why God unfolds his plan of redemption in Abraham's life the way he does. If Sarah had been fertile, there would have been no need for God's promise of a son in Gen 15:4: "no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." Furthermore, there would have been no need for Abraham to peer into the night sky and believe in God and be justified (v. 6). It is all because of Sarah's incurable infertility that Abraham experienced God's deliverance in the unique and marvelous manner in which he did. Seen this way, Sarah's infertility is not an obstacle standing in the way of Abraham's ability to become the father of many nations but the very agent or catalyst that enables and sustains the slow moving transformation process that makes him the father and shining example of faith for many nations down through the ages.

The significance of Sarah's barrenness may be further broadened and applied to modern illnesses, especially since infertility is a disease process by modern definitions. For many, an illness is an obstacle that stands in the way of their ability to enjoy a fulfilling life. But it is well known that in spite of great advances in medicine, most illnesses cannot be "removed" like an obstacle. In fact, many life-threatening illnesses are incurable, creating great inconveniences for the patients as well as their families. Notwithstanding, many longingly seek cures for their illnesses. And they are often discouraged when their disease processes continue without much progress. Paul would disagree with the modern tendency to view illnesses solely negatively, as an obstacle to overcome or some chronic inconvenience to manage and live with. For it is enslaving and not transformational to have such a fixation on physical healing and the treatment processes that facilitate it. The Jews of Paul's time tried to usher in a time of blessing by their meticulous works of the law. However, they failed to see that their overreliance on human effort was depriving them of their freedom, enslaving them under the burden of fear and unnecessary restrictions. I do not speak against modern medicine, just as I do not speak against the law, but I am concerned with the pervasive misguided notion that one can enjoy life fully only if one is healthy. Our illnesses and other debilitating human conditions do not necessarily have to hinder us from living a fulfilling life. They can be agents of positive change for those who walk with faith like Abraham who patiently waited for God. Like Sarah's barrenness, one's incurable illnesses and debilitating conditions

can become the reason that explains why God is involved one's life the way he is, and, why the unique stories of one's life have unfolded the way they did. Furthermore, rather than hindering us from becoming the people that God intends us to be, our impossible and incurable conditions become the hands that guide us to conform to the glorious image of the Son of God.

We may perhaps broaden the definition of barrenness a bit more. Just about everyone I know struggles with some insurmountable problem in their lives, and not all become a better person because of them. Yet for those who understand the positive significance of their barren conditions, it is evident that their obstacles and human conditions are agents that transform their lives, strengthening their faith and hope. These are the children of Sarah, for they find a new life in the crucible of human barrenness. They may join in Sarah's song of rejoicing because their lives have been made richer and fuller than those who are apparently without the same burdensome conditions. For these see that through it all—the unpredictable ups and downs of life—they have been with God.

12

James' Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15 in the Current Debate

Ranko Stefanovic

The Bible of the early Christians was the Hebrew Scriptures, which were, for them, the only inspired and sacred revelation of God. The authoritative Old Testament writings were the source of their beliefs and played a key role in shaping their preaching and teaching. Joseph Woods observed: “The New Testament it makes plain that, in the view of the early followers of Jesus, there was an inescapable connection between him and the Old Testament.”¹ The abundance of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament proves the accuracy of such a statement. In the last decades, an increasing number of New Testament scholars have turned their attention to the theological significance of the Bible regarding its unity as well as the interrelationship between the two testaments.

The well-known *axiom* of Augustine, *quamquam et in Vetere Novum lateat, et in Novo Vetus pateat* (“The New Testament is concealed in the Old and the Old lies revealed in the New”),² finds its counterpart in Schodde’s statement, written close to a century ago, “The New Testament is altogether without a historical and religious foundation without the Old, and the Old is

¹ Joseph Woods, *The Old Testament in the Church* (London: S.P.C.K., 1949), 6.

² Augustine, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 2, 73 (PL 34:623).

incomplete and unfinished without the New.”³ He then added that this signifies not only a prime hermeneutical principle but also an important fact with reference to the interrelationship of Bible books.⁴

In contemporary scholarship the question of the relationship between the Old and New Testament is of great significance for the interpretation of the Bible. Some scholars have pointed out that many uses of the Old Testament material in the New seem unrelated to the meaning intended by the original writer.⁵ They have tried to show that some quotations of Old Testament prophecies “give the impression that unwarranted liberties were taken with the Old Testament text in the light of its context.”⁶

One of the passages commonly referred to in order to prove such an alleged misuse of the Hebrew Scriptures in the New Testament is Acts 15:16–18a. This passage deals with the prophecy from Amos 9:11–12 quoted by James at the council in Jerusalem. Michael A. Braun argued that “Acts 15:6–29 is a crucial passage in the development of the New Testament Church, and Amos 9:11–12 played a most strategic part within the Acts passage.”⁷

The focus of this paper is James's use of Amos' prophecy at the Jerusalem council as a case study of the use of the Old Testament in the New. The two passages—Amos 9:11–12 and its counterpart Acts 15:16–18a—will be compared. Then, the passage from Acts 15 will be analyzed in its own right to find a likely answer regarding the method the early church used to apply Old Testament prophecies to their life and mission.

The Historical Setting

Acts 15 reports that the Jerusalem Council assembled in approximately A.D. 49 to discuss the issues regarding the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church. The Gospel had spread throughout Judea and outside of Palestine, resulting in the conversion of Gentiles to the Christian message. The need for the council was raised in the church of Antioch when “some men came down from Judea” (15:1) and questioned the validity of the conversion of Gentiles

³ George H. Schodde, *Outlines of Biblical Hermeneutics* (Columbia, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1917), 60.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ See William J. Larkin, *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 257–258.

⁶ Gleason L. Archer and Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), xxviii.

⁷ Michael A. Braun, “James Use of Amos at the Jerusalem Council: Steps toward a Possible Solution of the Textual and Theological Problems,” *JETS* 20 (1977): 113.

to Christianity without practicing Judaism, particularly circumcision.⁸ The young church was threatened with division, so a request was made to the church leadership in Jerusalem to look into the matter and come to a final decision. The need for the council and its authority was evident because the problem was not confined only to the Antioch area, but threatened the entire church. Therefore, the council was an event of great importance for the early church.

The council began with profuse debate. After lengthy discussion, the assembly was silenced by Peter who rose and gave a testimony recalling his visit to the house of Cornelius (15:7–11; cf. chap. 10). He reiterated to the audience that the conversion of the Gentiles was initiated by God himself (cf. Acts 11:4–17). The Holy Spirit was then given to the Gentiles in the same manner as to the Jews at Pentecost (11:15). As a result of this argument, Peter was able to articulate persuasively his firm conviction that through him God had led the church to accept the Gentiles without requiring them to be circumcised or keep other rituals of the Mosaic Law. This occasioned an opportunity for Paul and Barnabas to proclaim “what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles” (15:12).

The climax of the council was the speech delivered by James (15:13–21),⁹ who was a part of the group of the elders and apostles (vv. 6, 22). At the very outset, James pointed to Peter’s experience with Cornelius by which the door of salvation opened to the Gentiles. In order to convince the audience, James quoted Scripture for support.

The conversion of the Gentiles was in agreement with the words of the

⁸ As Richard Bauckham rightly observed, the issue was not whether Gentiles could be accepted in to the people of God, but whether they could do so without becoming Jews (“James and the Gentiles,” in Ben Witherington, *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 168). A number of scholars argue that it was the Jewish and Gentile table fellowship practiced in the church in Antioch that led to the tension, including Michele Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century CE: Communion and Conflict*, JSNTSup 244 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 25–52; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), 369; Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 414. Whether the visitors mentioned in Gal 2:2 are the same as the ones mentioned in Acts 15:1 is questionable (see F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990], 330–331); Eckhard J. Schabel challenged this view (*Acts*, ZECNT [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012], 620–621). See an extensive critical analysis of the Gal 2:1–10 argument of this view by Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012–14), 3:2195–2202.

⁹ J. B. Bowker argued that James’ speech is of the Jewish yelammedenu-homily form, the term derived from a request for instruction *yeladdenu rabbenu*, “let our teacher instruct us” (“Speeches in Acts: A Study in Proem and Yelammedenu Form,” *NTS* 14 (1967–1968): 99, 107–110).

prophets: “With this the words of the Prophets agree (συμφωνοῦσιν), just as it is written” (v. 15). At this point he used Amos 9:11–12 as scriptural support, quoting it with minor alteration (Acts 15:16–18). This prophecy from Amos was the crux of James’ argument.¹⁰ By appealing to it, he argued that Scripture confirmed Peter’s ministry in Cornelius’ home as well as God’s desire for the Gentiles to become a part of his believing people.¹¹

Next, James made a proposal to the church that they “should not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles” (v. 19) insisting that the Gentile converts should not be required to be circumcised, except to “abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood” (v. 20). A number of scholars have argued that these four items conformed to the legal prohibition for the aliens living in Israel in Lev 17–18. Richard M. Davidson has shown that these four items follow both the list and the same order of the four major legal prohibitions for the resident alien (*gēr*) specified in Lev 17–18.¹²

The council unanimously accepted James’ proposal. The decision, known as the Apostolic Decree, was written in a form letter and sent to the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia by two messengers—Judas and Silas—chosen and commissioned by the council. In such a way, the issue of inclusion and the status of Gentiles in the Christian church were once for ever put to rest with the Decree.

Acts 15:16–18a in the Current Debate

It seems obvious that the passage from Amos played a significant role in the decision of the Jerusalem Council. At least, the apostles and elders were convinced that the decision proposed by James and adopted by the church was according to Scripture, i.e., announced beforehand by God. As they set out to fulfill their mission, they understood that God intended, according to the Old Testament promise, to gather into one people believers from many nations.¹³ Stephen G. Wilson stated that with this, “the problem of the Gentiles and the Gentile mission is once and for all decided at a meeting in

¹⁰ Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: the Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 182.

¹¹ Daniel Schwartz, “The Futility of Preaching Moses (Acts 15:21),” *Bib* 67 (1986): 279.

¹² Richard M. Davidson, “Which Torah Laws Should Gentile Christians Obey? The Relationship Between Leviticus 17–18 and Acts 15” (paper presented at ATS/ETS Annual Convention in San Diego, CA, November 15, 2007). So also Hans Conzelman, *Acts of the Apostles*, Hermen (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 118–119; Schabel, *Acts*, 645; see also Pervo, *Acts*, 377.

¹³ Larkin, *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics*, 228.

Jerusalem of all the main figures of the early Church.”¹⁴

However, James’ quote of Amos’ prophecy at the council has occasioned vehement scholarly debates. George H. C. Macgregor wrote more than a half-century ago that chapter 15 of Acts has “raised more problems than any other in the book of Acts. Every kind of error and confusion has been attributed to the author, perhaps the least culpable being that he has misunderstood completely the nature of the dispute.”¹⁵ While most modern commentators acknowledge that the first Jerusalem Council was an event of great historical significance and importance for the Christian church during its formative years,¹⁶ they are, however, divided, among other things, on the credibility of Luke’s report with regard to what really happened at the council.¹⁷ Yet, they generally all agree that a decisive point at the council was the speech of James and his use of Amos 9:11–12 that eventually settled the council debate.

While it is recognized that Acts 15:13–21a is a crucial passage in the development of the Christian church,¹⁸ Walter C. Kaiser wondered in 1977 “how little hard exegetical and contextual work has been done on these key passages. Even the journal literature on these texts of Amos 9 and Acts 15 is extremely rare.”¹⁹ Since then, several in-depth studies on the subject have appeared in journals and books,²⁰ and some various hypotheses have emerged regarding James’ citation of Amos’ prophecy at the Jerusalem Council. The majority of the scholars belong to two camps: those who deny and those who accept the authenticity of James speech as recorded in Acts 15:13–21.

¹⁴ Stephen G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Missions in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 178.

¹⁵ George H.C. Macgregor, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *IB* (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 195.

¹⁶ Braun, “James Use of Amos,” 113.

¹⁷ Martin Dibelius is representative of the commentators who hold that Luke’s treatment of the event is only literary-theological and can make no claim to historical worth (“The Apostolic Council,” in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Heinrich Greeven [New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1956], 100).

¹⁸ Braun, “James Use of Amos,” 113; Walter C. Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9:9–15 and Acts 15:13–18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems,” *JETS* 20 (1977): 101; the same article appears in his book, *The Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 177–194.

¹⁹ Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise,” 100; about twenty years later, Bauckham asserted: “Study of the speeches in Acts has unfortunately paid little attention to the speech of James” (“James and the Gentiles,” 155).

²⁰ E.g., Earl Richard, “The Divine Purpose: The Jews and the Gentile Mission (Acts 15),” *SBLSP* 19 (1980): 267–282; “The Creative Use of Amos by the Author of Acts,” *NovT* 24 (1982): 37–53; Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” 155–184; James A. Meek, *The Gentile Mission in Old Testament Citations in Acts* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 56–93, 131–136.

Critical scholarship in general views the passage of Acts 15:13–21 as the work of a certain Greek editor, most likely Luke (or some other person), who either composed the whole speech with the quotation from Amos²¹ or was dependent on an existing Hellenistic Christian exegetical tradition.²² They have argued that James as a Jewish Christian in Jerusalem would not have used a Septuagint text that differed from the Hebrew original as a proof text for his argument.²³ Thus, for instance, Ernst Haenchen argued that it is “incontrovertibly clear that James’ speech, too, is not a historical report but a composition of the Hellenistic Gentile Christian Luke,” and further concluded: “It is not James but Luke who is speaking here.”²⁴ F. W. Filson believed that the actual wording of every speech in Acts is the work of Luke. In his reporting of the position taken by James, Luke wrote in Greek; therefore, he naturally used the Greek translation of the Amos passage.²⁵ On the other hand, J. C. O’Neill, who argued that James’ speech “was the work of a Greek-speaking writer, who could just as well be Luke himself,” thinks that the citation from Amos is not from the LXX, but a free and independent translation from the Hebrew.²⁶ In such a way, “James was arguing that Scripture had foretold that the restoration of the tabernacle of David would be accompanied by the chosen people’s possession of all nations called by the Lord’s name, in other words, that when God sent the Messiah to Israel, the Gentiles God had designated would flock to put themselves under the Son of David’s rule.”²⁷

²¹ E.g., F. W. Filson, *Three Crucial Decades: Studies in the Book of Acts* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1963), 79; J. C. O’Neill, *The Theology of Acts in its Historical Setting*, 2nd ed. (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), 123; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 459; Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 224–225; Richard, “The Divine Purpose,” 267–282; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 117; C. K. Barrett argued that Luke used the quotation that was traditionally used by Christian Jews who habitually use the LXX (*The Acts of the Apostles*, ICC [New York: T & T Clark, 1998], 724–728); Joseph A. Fitzmyer has argued that Acts 15 is a conflation of reports about two separate incidents when the church in Antioch consulted the leaders of the Jerusalem church about certain problems (*The Acts of the Apostles*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1998], 553); so also C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 695; see an extensive critical analysis of this view by Keener, *Acts*, 3:2205–2206.

²² Jacques Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. John R. Keating (New York: Paulist, 1969), 139–153; also, “*Laos ex ethnōn*” (Act. xv.14), *NTS* 3 (1956–1957): 47–50; N. A. Dahl, “A People for His Name,” *NTS* 4 (1957–1958): 319–327; Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” 154–184.

²³ See Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 459; also 448; Pervo, *Acts*, 376.

²⁴ Haenchen, *ibid.*

²⁵ Filson, *Three Crucial Decades*, 79.

²⁶ O’Neill, *The Theology of Acts*, 123; see also Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” 154–184.

²⁷ O’Neill, *The Theology of Acts*, 123.

Having surveyed the usages of the Old Testament texts in the book of Acts, Dom Jacques Dupont concluded that the speech of James was one more example of the use of the Septuagint text in the Lucan fashion.²⁸ He further argued that Luke was dependent on the method of scriptural interpretation practiced in the early church, which was free of any sort of allegorical exegesis.²⁹ A practice of messianic exegesis, based on the literal exegesis, would be rather in keeping with the practice of the rabbis.³⁰

Earl Richard reached a similar conclusion. He asserted that Acts 15:16–18a shows Luke’s creativeness in quoting the Old Testament. While very faithful to his LXX source, Luke, in his view, imposes upon the quotations some stylistic, thematic, or manifestly theological modification; and secondly, the scriptural text itself has had significant influence upon the composition of Acts.³¹ Although he found that “Luke’s knowledge of the OT is indeed profound,” he was not certain “whether Luke has chosen carefully his OT texts to reinforce his ideas and his view of history, or whether the composition results, in large part, from a serious reading of the Jewish Scriptures and meditation upon their meaning for the spread of Christianity.”³²

More recently, Richard Bauckham advocated a middle ground in treating James’ speech in Acts 15. While accepting the historicity of the Jerusalem Council, he concluded that Luke took the material from the original, longer letter of the Jerusalem Council to compose James’ speech in the manner of the first-century Jewish exegetical practice.³³ Although not sure, he concluded that “the probability that the substance of James’ speech derives from a source close to James himself is high.”³⁴ He argued that on the basis of what we know about Jewish exegetical method, “especially from the study of the Qumran pesharim, the peculiar text-form of conflated quotation in Acts 15:16–18 requires to be studied and understood as a product of a skilled exegetical work.”³⁵ Such a study leads, in his view, to an inevitable conclusion that “Luke has accurately, if rather summarily, preserved the exegetical basis on which the Jerusalem church, under James’ leadership,

²⁸ Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles*, 139–153; also Dahl, “People,” 319–327.

²⁹ Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles*, 154.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

³¹ Richard, “The Creative Use,” 52.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” 154–184.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 155–156.

was able to endorse Paul's Gentile mission, with the important proviso embodied in the Apostolic Creed."³⁶

Those who hold to the authenticity of James' speech follow two approaches to Acts 15:16–18a: advocating the dispensationalist interpretation of the passage³⁷ or adhering to the historical-grammatical interpretation and reject the dispensational interpretation of the passage from Acts 15. A representative of the former might be Willard M. Aldrich who argued that the literal fulfillment of the Amos' prophecy would be realized in future renewed national dealings with Israel.³⁸ The interpretation of the text includes, first, that God is doing a new thing: calling out of the Gentiles a people for his name, and second, that after this, God will return to earth to fulfill his covenant with David.³⁹

The dispensationalist view has been seriously contested and dismissed by scholars.⁴⁰ Thus Royce Dickinson noted that "the grammatico-exegesis . . . provides no support for dispensationalism and actually militates against such theology."⁴¹ Walter C. Kaiser found two passages, Amos 9:11–12 and Acts 15:13–18a, to be most appropriate in addressing some insoluble controversies, such as the relationship between the Old and New Testament, exegetical methods New Testament writers employed in seeking the Old Testament support, the relationship between Israel and Christian church, and the question of whether the prophets envisaged the Church or even the salvation of the Gentiles during the Church age in their writings.⁴²

Kaiser further noted that scholars differ mainly on the question of the significance and meaning of the Old Testament quotation used by James to resolve the issue under debate. In other words, did James indicate by quoting Amos 9:11–12 that the mission to the Gentiles was a fulfillment of the Amos prophecy—a part of the divine revelation to the Old Testament prophet? His

³⁶ Bauckham, "James and the Gentiles," 156.

³⁷ Allan MacRae, "The Scientific Approach to the Old Testament: A Study of Amos 9 in Relation to Acts 15," *BSac* 110 (1953): 309–320; Willard M. Aldrich, "The Interpretation of Acts 15:13–18," *BSac* 111 (1954): 317–323; J.E. Rosscup, *The Interpretation of Acts 15:13–18* (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1966); *The Scofield Reference Bible* states that "Dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the New Testament" (Cyrus I. Scofield, ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1917], 1343).

³⁸ Aldrich, "Interpretation," 317.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁴⁰ E.g., Claude E. Hayward, "A Study in Acts xv. 16–18," *EvQ* 8.2 (1936): 162–66; Kaiser, "The Davidic Promise," 104–111; Royce Dickinson, "The Theology of the Jerusalem Conference: Acts 15:1–35," *ResQ* 32 (1990): 65–83.

⁴¹ Dickinson, "Theology," 82.

⁴² Kaiser, "The Davidic Promise," 97.

own exegetical analysis of Amos 9 led him to a conclusion that “James used a plain, simple and straightforward hermeneutic when he appealed to Amos.”⁴³ Here Kaiser tried to find middle ground to reconcile two systems of interpretation, covenant theology and dispensationalism. For him it was the *ἐπαγγελία*, the full promise of God. He rejected the possibility that the “tabernacle of David” was a type of the Christian Church which simply transferred Amos’ national hopes into spiritual realities of the gospel era. The only safe method to obtain a full biblical picture of a unified people and program of God, which includes both Israel and the Church, was, in his view, to “hold its finger on the Biblical text and context while it talks through these complex issues.”⁴⁴

Michael A. Braun held a similar view. In his article, he analyzed Acts 15 from both textual and theological perspectives.⁴⁵ He noted that “James’ citation of Amos 9:11–12 is clarified by the remnant concept in early Jewish Christianity.”⁴⁶ Two distinct groups are included in the prophecy, “the remnant of men” (believing Jews) and “all the Gentiles who are called by my name.” However, he opposed the view that the believing Jews would have to be considered as the “tabernacle of David” and that the Gentiles be included in the remnant. Gentiles are not included, they are the remnant.⁴⁷ The “tabernacle of David” is the coming kingdom of the Messiah. At the time of his coming, according to Amos, both the righteous remnant and the elect among the Gentiles will seek God. The believing Gentiles will share the riches of the restored Israel.⁴⁸ He rightly concluded that

in the Church when Jews and Gentiles are considered together they are the “people of God,” an ontological union to which the NT gives ample witness. But when considered separately the believing Gentile was never compelled to live like a Jew, and the believing Jews alone have the distinction of being called a righteous remnant. James preserves Amos’ dichotomy even while he pleads for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the fellowship of the Gospel.⁴⁹

⁴³ Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise,” 110.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Braun, “James’ Use of Amos,” 113–121.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁹ Braun, “James’ Use of Amos,” 113–121.

David M. King endeavored to show that James does quote from the LXX and that this version of the passage from Amos is “based upon a flawed reading of the Hebrew.” He concluded, after observing the three versions (MT, LXX, and the NT), that James’ use of the passage does not violate the intended meaning of the prophet.⁵⁰

More recently, in an extensive study of the two texts (Amos 9:11–12 and Acts 15:16–18a), James A Meek has reached, somehow, a similar conclusion.⁵¹ For him, James’ quotation was basically from the LXX. “Nevertheless, neither the LXX nor the citation distort the sense of the original words of Amos. Despite frequent assertions to the contrary, there is no substantial evidence that the citation contains allusions to other OT texts or that the argument in Acts 15 depends particularly on the LXX form of the text.”⁵²

While among modern scholars there is a general consensus on the importance of Amos 9 in the decisions of the Jerusalem Council, much attention has been paid to the interpretive method of James (or Luke) to the Amos passage.

Parallels among the Texts

The comparison of Acts 15:16–18a with its counterparts in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) and the Hebrew Bible (MT) (see chart, next page) clearly shows that, on one hand, James’ citation agrees in meaning, and is also, for the most part, in verbatim agreement with the LXX text.⁵³ On the other, however, the citation in Acts apparently differs, to a certain degree, from the LXX text of Amos.

As it can be observed, the chief deviations are found in the beginning and the end of the two texts. In the opening clause of the citation, James replaces the original ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ (“in that day”) of the LXX by μετὰ ταῦτα (“after these things”) amending it with ἀναστρέψω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω (“I will return and I will rebuild”) as an substitute for ἀναστήσω (“I will raise up”) in Amos 9.

It appears that in using μετὰ ταῦτα ἀναστρέψω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω in connection with the restoration of the David’s dynasty, James conflated

⁵⁰ David M. King, “The Use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–18,” *ATJ* 21 (1989): 8.

⁵¹ Meek, *Gentile Mission*, 56–94.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵³ As Haenchen, (*Acts of the Apostles*, 448) and others observed (e.g., Dickinson, “Theology,” 73; for a more specified comparison of the two texts see Richard, “The Creative Use,” 44, and Dickinson, “Theology,” 73–79).

Amos' prophecy with at least two other Old Testament prophetic texts. The first one might have been Jeremiah 12:15–16 LXX: καὶ ἔσται μετὰ τὸ ἐκβαλεῖν με αὐτοὺς ἐπιστρέψω . . . καὶ κατοικιῶ αὐτοὺς . . . οἰκοδομηθήσονται . . . (“and it shall be *after* I have cast them out, that *I will return* . . . and *cause them to dwell* . . . *they shall be built*”).⁵⁴ The second could be Hosea 3:5: καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐπιστρέψουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπιζητήσουσιν κύριον τὸν θεὸν αὐτῶν καὶ Δαυὶδ τὸν βασιλέα αὐτῶν. (“And *after these things*, the sons of Israel *shall return* and *seek* the Lord their God, and *David* their king”).⁵⁵ The verbal and thematic parallels between the two texts are very strong. Both associate the turning of God's people to seek God with the restoration of Davidic rule. One might also observe that the verb ἀναστρέψω is used by James both with reference to

**Comparisons of Acts 15:16–18a, Amos 9:11–12 LXX, and
Amos 9:11–12 MT :**

Acts 15:16–18a	Amos 9:11–12 LXX	Amos 9:11–12 MT
μετὰ ταῦτα	ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ	בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
ἀναστρέψω καὶ	~ ~ ~ ~ ~	~ ~ ~ ~ ~
ἀνοικοδομήσω	ἀναστήσω	אֶקְמֵם
τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ	τὴν σκηνὴν Δαυὶδ	אֶת־טַבַּעַת דָּוִד
τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν	τὴν πεπτωκυῖαν	הַנִּפְּלָא
~ ~ ~ ~ ~	καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω τὰ	וְיִבְנֶה
~ ~ ~ ~ ~	πεπτωκότα αὐτῆς	אֶת־פְּרָצֵיהֶן
καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς	καὶ τὰ κατεσκαμμένα αὐτῆς	וְהִסְתִּי
~ ~ ~ ~ ~	ἀναστήσω καὶ	אֶקְמֵם
ἀνοικοδομήσω	ἀνοικοδομήσω αὐτήν	וְיִבְנֶהָ
καὶ ἀνορθώσω αὐτήν,	~ ~ ~ ~ ~	~ ~ ~ ~ ~
~ ~ ~ ~ ~	καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ	כִּי־עוֹלָם
~ ~ ~ ~ ~	αἰῶνος,	
	~ ~ ~ ~ ~	לְמַעַן יִרְשׁוּ אֶת־שְׂאֵרֵי יְהוּדָה
ὅπως ἂν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ	ὅπως ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ	~ ~ ~ ~ ~
κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων	κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων	~ ~ ~ ~ ~

⁵⁴ Archer (Archer and Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations*, 153) maintained that ἀναστρέψω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω brings out that Hebr. יְבִינֶה means “I will rebuild” in Amos 9, not simply “I will build.” James thus “makes clear and explicit what is implied by the Amos text.” He also pointed out that the first ἀναστήσω in verse 11, which James substitutes with ἀναστρέψω καὶ ἀνοικοδομήσω, brings out that Hebr. אֶקְמֵם here means “I will re-establish.”

⁵⁵ I am indebted to Bauckham for this insight (“James and Gentiles,” 180–181).

<p>τὸν κύριον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐφ' οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ' αὐτούς, λέγει κύριος ποιῶν ταῦτα γνωστὰ ἀπ' αἰῶνος.</p> <p>“After these things I will return and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the gentiles who are called by my name,” says the Lord who makes these things known from long ago. (NASB)</p>	<p>~ ~ ~ ~ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἐφ' οὓς ἐπικέκληται τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐπ' αὐτούς, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα. ~ ~ ~ ~</p> <p>“In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and will raise up its ruins and rebuild it up as in the ancient days, so that the remnant of mankind and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, may earnestly seek [me],” says the Lord God who does these things. (my translation)</p>	<p>~ ~ ~ ~ וְכִלְיָהוּם וְשִׁרְיָרְקָא וְעִלְיָהוּם וְשִׁהַת ~ ~ ~ ~</p> <p>“In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name,” declares the Lord who does this. (NASB)</p>
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God's visitation (Acts 15:14) and the turning of the nations/Gentiles to God (v. 19).⁵⁶ “In effect God returns to his people (the Jews) so that the Gentiles may turn to him (ἀναστρέψω καὶ ἐπιστρέψω).”⁵⁷

The reason for substituting ἀναστρέψω (“I will raise”) with ἀνοικοδομήσω (“I will rebuild”) twice might be theological. Richard noted that the transitive use of ἀνίστημι is very rare in the New Testament (about 14 times of which 9 occur in Acts). Except in three cases where it is used in relation to Deuteronomy 18:15 (raising up a prophet like Moses), the term is used regularly with reference to the resurrection of Christ. Thus, ἀνίστημι is for Luke a theological term, and is “therefore, replaced by the verb ‘rebuild’ which he finds more appropriate and one which he finds in his Old Testament source.”⁵⁸

At the end, ὁ ποιῶν ταῦτα (“who is doing all these things”) is appended with γνωστὰ ἀπ' αἰῶνος (“known from old”). Some scholars have suggested

⁵⁶ As rightly observed by Richard, “The Creative Use,” 47–48.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 47.

that this ending is borrowed from Isa 45:21 (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς) by which James modified the concluding prepositional phrase ἀπ' ἀρχῆς from Isaiah to ἀπ' αἰῶνος⁵⁹

Less significant differences can be seen as well. Some additions, such as ἄν and τὸν κύριον are made; but, on the other side, the phrase καθὼς αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ αἰῶνος (“as in the ancient days”) is omitted by James. Also, ἀνοικοδομήσω (“I will rebuild”) in Amos is substituted with ἀνορθώσω (“I will restore it”) in James.⁶⁰

The major deviation is clause ὅπως ἄν ἐκζητήσωσιν οἱ κατάλοιποι τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸν κύριον (“so that the rest of men may seek the Lord”) which differs from the MT which can be translated, “that they may possess the remnant of Edom” (וְיִרְשׁוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־רֵשְׁטֵי עֵדוֹם). The Hebrew text thus talks about the restoration of Israel which Yahweh would engender after the Exile. The Davidic line would be re-established and restored to its former glory and God’s people would “inherit what is left of Edom and other nations that will be called God’s people.”⁶¹ The Septuagint text, however, talks about the remnant of mankind and all the nations seeking the Lord in the restored Davidic kingdom. Edom now becomes the “all humanity.”⁶² However, both the Hebrew and Greek texts refer to “the nations called by my name” resulting in “a people for his name” in Acts 15:14.

It seems self-evident that in the LXX, the Hebrew word שָׂרָה (“to possess”) is replaced with שָׂרָה (“to seek”) due to the similarity of two letters; also, the exchange of שָׂרָה for שָׂרָה involving only a change of vowels.⁶³ Thus οἱ κατάλοιποι has become the subject of ἐκζητήσωσιν,⁶⁴ stating that “the remnant (rest of the mankind) will seek,” where τὸν κύριον is introduced as the object of seeking.⁶⁵

Some scholars, such as Chain Rabin, have argued that the “MT would

⁵⁹ Richard, “The Creative Use,” 47; Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” 164–165.

⁶⁰ The verb ἀνορθώσω appears only here in Acts together with the adjective ὁρθός which appears in 14:10. The both passages are related to the Gentiles. For a special meaning see Richard, “The Creative Use,” 48.

⁶¹ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 555.

⁶² Daniel L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 503. Kaiser (“The Davidic Promise,” 102–103) and King (“The Use of Amos 9:11–12,” 8–12) argued that the MT still supports James interpretation.

⁶³ Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 340.

⁶⁴ Archer believed that the object marker ׀, preceding ׀ (remnants”) was originally ׀ or ׀ and the final *waw* or *yod* was dropped out in the course of scribal transmission (Archer and Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations*, 155).

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*

actually have supported the exegesis” offered by James.⁶⁶ However, many scholars hold that the LXX (and Acts 15) might render the original and more authentic reading of the text.⁶⁷ Jan de Waard argued that the text form of Amos cited in Acts 15 is “exactly identical with that of 4QFlor [1:12],”⁶⁸ while Rabin suggested a common textual tradition between the citation in Acts 15 and that in CD 7:16.⁶⁹ Archer argued that the clause: “in order that the rest of mankind might seek him” fits much better in the context of Amos 9 than a promise of taking possession of Edom. He also believed that the MT could have replaced the subject (“the rest of man”) with the object in the course of scribal transmission.⁷⁰ He concluded that the rendering of the LXX (=NT) could be very accurate, and added: “we feel grateful that in this verse we have access to the earlier and more authentic reading: ‘In order that the remainder of mankind might seek him/me and all Gentiles (upon whom my name is called).’”⁷¹

The Significance of James' Use of Amos

This comparison of the text in Amos with the quotation in Acts 15 raises serious questions: was James' interpretation of Amos' prophecy contrary to the intended meaning of Amos? Was the decision of the Jerusalem Council based on a misapplication of an Old Testament prophecy?

James' appeal to Scripture was for the purpose of showing that the conversion of the Gentiles was according to God's plan announced earlier through the Old Testament prophets. This is evident from his opening statement (15:14) in which he spoke of God's concern to *take out of the Gentiles a people* for his name (λαβεῖν ἐξ ἐθνῶν λαὸν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ.). The phrase “for his name” means for himself.⁷² The phrase “people for his

⁶⁶ See Chain Rabin, *The Zaddokite Document* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), 29; so also Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles* 341; Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise,” 102–103; Polhill, *Acts*, NAC 26 (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 329.

⁶⁷ A number of commentators defend the idea that the LXX text is closer to the Hebrew original whereas the MT reflects a corruption, such as Braun, “James Use of Amos,” 117; William J. Larkin, *Acts*, IVPNTC 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 223; Larkin, *Acts*, 223; Archer and Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations*, 155; Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 459; Richard N. Longenecker, “Acts,” *EBC*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 10:948.

⁶⁸ Jan de Waard, *A Comparative Study of the Old Testament in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 24–26; so also Larkin, *Acts*, 223; Braun, “James Use of Amos,” 115–116; Richard N. Longenecker, “Acts,” 10:948

⁶⁹ Rabin, *Zaddokite Document*, 29.

⁷⁰ See note 60.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁷² See Dah, “People,” 320–323; Keener argued that the phrase “over whom my name is

name” occurs neither in the Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint; however, it is a common usage in the Palestinian Targum⁷³ which suggests that James used an expression well known in his day.

In the LXX, nations or Gentiles are ἔθνη (Heb. יְגוּל) and stands in contrast to λαός (Heb. אָמָּר; “people”), the term applied exclusively to Israel as the people of God chosen from other nations: “You are a holy people [λαός] to the Lord your God, and the Lord your God has chosen you . . . of all the nations [ἔθνη] on the face of the earth”⁷⁴ (Deut. 14:2 LXX; also 26:18–19; 32:8–9). Luke himself constantly uses the word λαός with reference to the Jews as the people of God (cf., Luke 1:68, 77; 2:32; 7:16; Acts 7:34; 13:17).⁷⁵ In the Old Testament, Israel is the people “called by the name of the Lord” (Deut. 28:10; 2 Chron. 7:14; cf. Isa 43:7; Jer. 14:9; Dan 9:19), whereas Gentiles are “those who were not called by Thy name” (Isa. 63:19).⁷⁶ However, in his opening statement, James refers to the Gentiles as God’s λαός for God’s name in the full meaning of the word.⁷⁷ “Converted Gentiles belong to God, just as Israel belonged to God.”⁷⁸

It appears that behind this opening statement (v. 14) stands the prophecy of Zechariah 2:11 [15] LXX which speaks of many Gentiles (ἔθνη πολλὰ) who will take refuge in the Lord in the final days; they will become God’s λαός and will dwell in the restored Zion. And James made it clear that the time prophesied by the Old Testament prophets has finally come for God to bring the Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη) into his people (λαός) “for his name sake.” Thus, God’s people are no longer defined in terms of ethnicity, but in terms of faith in Jesus the Messiah.⁷⁹

Thus, for James, the turning of the Gentiles to God and their inclusion into the people (λαός) of God is grounded in the Old Testament prophets.⁸⁰ At this point he refers to Amos’ prophecy where God promised that “in those days” (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ) he would rebuild the fallen tent of David and rebuild its ruins and restore it as it was “in the ancient days, that the remnant

called” is an OT idiom denoting ownership (Acts, 3:2252): so also Schabel, *Acts*, 640.

⁷³ Cf. *Targum Neofiti I* on Exodus 19:5–6 and 22:30 (Martin McNamara, *Aramaic Bible: Targums* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994], 2:80, 98). See further Dahl, “People,” 320.

⁷⁴ My translation.

⁷⁵ See J. Bradley Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 61.

⁷⁶ Bauckham, “James and the Gentiles,” 168.

⁷⁷ Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 418.

⁷⁸ Schabel, *Acts*, 638.

⁷⁹ Schabel, *ibid.*, 638.

⁸⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, 329.

of men, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, may earnestly seek me” (9:11–12 LXX).⁸¹ “The fallen tent of David” (ἡ σκηνὴ Δαυὶδ ἢ πεπτωκυῖα) in Amos refers presumably to the demise of the Davidic throne at the Exile in 586 BCE. Thus, “in those days” refers in Amos to the time after the Exile (cf. 9:1–10). The restoration of “the tent of David,” is “the coming kingdom of the Messiah, the scion of Jesse. At the time of his coming, according to the LXX text, both the righteous remnant and the elect among the Gentiles will seek him. Believing Gentiles who would have been ‘grafted in’ will share the riches of restored Israel.”⁸² In such a way, the two groups would comprise the “people of God.”

In applying Amos’ prophecy, James argued that Scripture has foretold that “after these things” (μετὰ ταῦτα), that is after the Exile, God would return and restore ἡ σκηνὴ Δαυὶδ and subsequently bring the Gentiles called by the Lord’s name into the chosen people of God. In other words, according to James, the prophecy entailed both the renewal of the Davidic kingship and the conversion to the Lord of the remnant of mankind from all nations, namely the Gentiles.⁸³ The reason for changing “in those days” into “after these things” (μετὰ ταῦτα) was due to the fact that, from James’ perspective, the exile lay in the past after which God would return and rebuild the fallen tent of David.

Thus, by employing the phrase “after these things,” James meant that the time foretold by Amos had come for the Gentiles to be accepted into the people of God. James applied the prophecy of Amos messianically. For him, the prophecy with regard to the restoration of the Davidic house was fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ and his installation on the heavenly throne (Acts 2:29–36). David in his royal office is a type of Christ.⁸⁴ When God sent the Messiah to Israel, he had designated Gentiles, on whom God’s name had been invoked (Amos 9:12), to be incorporated into the believing community of God, under the rule of the Son of David.⁸⁵ Thus, what James wanted clearly to emphasize was that with the inclusion of the Gentiles, “God was choosing a people for himself, a new *restored* people of God, Jew and Gentile in Christ, the true Israel.”⁸⁶

⁸¹ Kaiser suggested that the text points back to the promise of 2 Sam 7:11–12, 16 (“The Davidic Promise,” 102).

⁸² Braun, “James Use of Amos,” 121.

⁸³ Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles*, 139.

⁸⁴ Schodde, *Outlines*, 220. It is noteworthy to observe that the Davidic theme runs throughout Acts: 2:25f; 4:25f; 7:45f; 13:22, 34f.

⁸⁵ O’Neill, *The Theology of Acts*, 123.

⁸⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, 330; Braun, “James Use of Amos,” 121.

One might conclude that “the Gentile mission did not originate as a bright idea of the early Church, nor did it occur unexpectedly or by accident; it was rooted in the words of Jesus, as a promise in his earthly ministry and as a command after the Resurrection.”⁸⁷ In this lay the reason why the early Christians began their preaching with the person, namely Christ. Their faith was focused on him, and in relation to him they used Scripture to support their teaching and actions.

Conclusions

Our task was to find how James interpreted and applied Amos’ prophecy in the context of the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Christian church. Two different views on the issue may be observed among the biblical scholars. The first one asserts that the Hebrew text cannot substantiate the interpretation that James, a Jew, used, because this would scarcely have been James’ way of using the Old Testament.⁸⁸ Another view is that the Hebrew text, like the LXX, implies the inclusion of the Gentiles.⁸⁹ This author holds that the latter view is correct. This author agrees with King who stated that James did not in any way violate the intended meaning of Amos’s prophecy, which means that the incorporation of the Gentiles into the church was present in the Hebrew text of Amos.⁹⁰ Filson ingeniously observed that “even the Hebrew text, though it sounds more nationalistic than the Greek version, nevertheless promises the inclusion of Gentile nations in the restored Davidic kingdom, and so fits the point of the speech as Luke gives it.”⁹¹ And, as has been shown, the conjoined work of Archer and Chirichigno confirms that James’ citation really does not distort the original intent of Amos and is not based on a poor exegesis.⁹² It is especially interesting that James’ way of interpreting Amos 9:11–12 was similar to that by the Qumranians who had applied it to the rise of the Qumran community and restoration of the Torah to its rightful position.⁹³

In quoting the LXX, James was referring to a Scripture with which his

⁸⁷ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 243.

⁸⁸ Wilson, *ibid.*, 184–185; Dickinson, “Theology,” 73–74; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 448.

⁸⁹ See Filson, *Three Crucial Decades*, 79. He thought that it was natural for Luke to write up James’ speech in Greek, using the LXX.

⁹⁰ King, “The Use of Amos 9:11–12,” 8.

⁹¹ Filson, *Three Crucial Decades*, 79.

⁹² See p. 18 of this paper. See also Archer and Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations*, 155.

⁹³ See 4QFlor 1.12; CD 7:16 (Florentino Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 136, 380.

audience, both Jews and Gentiles, were familiar, without violating the intended meaning of its prophecy. As Wilson properly observed, throughout Acts, the quotations from (2:17; 3:25; 13:47; 15:17) and allusions to (1:8; 2:39; 10:34; 15:14; 26:17; 28:26f) the Old Testament are “used to prophesy, explain and justify the proclamation to the Gentiles.”⁹⁴ Thus, without violating the original meaning of the text, James’ appeal to Amos’ prophecy was to show that the conversion of the Gentiles was in agreement with what was happening as well as to support the decision about to be made (vv. 15–18).⁹⁵

A closer look into the text shows, as Kaiser stated, that James used a plain and straightforward hermeneutic rather than distorting or perverting the original message.⁹⁶ Apparently, his quotation comes essentially from the LXX.⁹⁷ Rather than being a straight quotation of Amos 9:11–12, it proves to be a conflation of several other texts including Jeremiah 12:15 LXX, Hosea 3:5 LXX, and possibly Isaiah 45:21.⁹⁸ This would thus clarify the meaning of the expression “the words of the prophets (οἱ λόγοι τῶν προφητῶν) in Acts 15:15. The conversion of the Gentiles was in agreement (συμφωνοῦσιν) with the words of the prophets. The reference to the “prophets” (plural) shows that James had more than just Amos 9 in mind.

Another question might be asked: could it be possible that James’ speech was delivered in Aramaic? For one thing, it is very likely that James quoted the passage from Amos from memory. Then, it is quite possible that he translated the LXX text into Aramaic. Since Luke wrote in Greek and, endeavoring to incorporate James’ speech in his book, he had to translate it into Greek; so he naturally used the LXX translation of the Amos’ passage. However, whether James indeed quoted the LXX text or Luke translated it by using the LXX, does not deny the point James tried to make.⁹⁹

This single case of usage of Scripture by the New Testament authors can illustrate the role of the Old Testament in the life of the early church and how first Christians understood and interpreted Scripture. Ajith Fernando stated it in the following way:

⁹⁴ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 243.

⁹⁵ Bowker, “Speeches in Acts,” 107.

⁹⁶ Kaiser, “The Davidic Promise,” 110.

⁹⁷ See Keener, *Acts*, 3:2247–2248; Bruce (*Acts of the Apostles*, 298) remarked that in the epistle of James all the Old Testament quotations are taken from the LXX; so Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles*, 139.

⁹⁸ Bauckham, *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 453–454.

⁹⁹ Bauckham, “Jews and the Gentiles,” 182–183.

Scripture and experience both played a role in arriving at the doctrinal formulation that emerged from the Jerusalem Council. God spoke through the experiences of Peter, Paul and Barnabas. But James showed that what they had experienced was in keeping with the Scriptures, so that it should become normative.¹⁰⁰

The early Christians saw logical relationships between Old Testament prophecy and its fulfillment in their days. Its fulfillment took place because God had foreseen and promised it by sending the Savior of the nations. With such an understanding they did not hesitate to bring out the implications emerging from a given passage. That is why they were able to preach the gospel message with full conviction and authority.

¹⁰⁰ Fernando, 427.

13

Unclean Spirits Like Frogs: A Revelation From Job

Lael O. Caesar

Introduction

This paper owes much to Richard Davidson’s inspiration of my life. It does, too, to a remarkable statement published in the nineteenth century affirming that the book of Job “would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time.”¹

Job and Eschatology

These words suggest that worthwhile truths for all time, and significant eschatological lessons, are probably to be found in this book composed at the beginning of written revelation, and preserved for reading, by God’s people, “with the deepest interest . . . until the close of time.”² Like human history as

¹ Ellen White, *Signs of the Times* (February 19, 1880).

² White believed the book to have been written by Moses in the Midian desert, but the book inspires an abundance of theories on dating and composition. Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray wrote that “in recent times there is increasing agreement that while the book is certainly older than the 1st, it is scarcely older than the 5th or at all events the 6th cent. B.C.” See Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, ICC, S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, & C. A. Briggs, eds., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), lxv. More specifically, Driver and Gray rule that “the book of Job is best explained as the product of a period lying between the close of the 7th and the beginning of the 2nd cent. B.C., and indeed at some distance from either of these extreme limits”; *ibid.*, lxix. Despite those

who would locate it in later times, Talmudic tradition (“Moses wrote his own book, and the passages about Balaam and Job,” *Baba Bathra*, 14b—וַאֲיוֹב . . . מִשָּׁא כְתוּב סִפְרוֹ . . . וְהַיּוֹב) and the book itself both seem to support an ancient date: witness its non-monarchic patriarchal representation of Job, particularly in context of Job’s own description of his society, and his use of the terms “prince,” and “king” (29:9, 25), also the measurement of wealth in flocks and herds. A union of royalty with patriarchal living is most consistent with biblical data on Edom, Job’s geographic setting (cf. Gen 36, noting v. 31; Job 1:1; Lam 4:21). Marvin H. Pope’s reasons for respecting an early date also include simple religion equivalent to that of Balaam (Num 23:1, 14, 29), with no priesthood or shrine, and where the patriarch himself offers sacrifice (Job 1:5; 42:8); Sabaeans and Chaldeans as marauders rather than monarchs’ counsel as later (1:15, 17, vs Dan 2:2); Job’s longevity that approximates Abraham’s (cf. Gen 25:7), and is only exceeded by the antediluvians’ (Gen 5). See Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB 15 (New York: Doubleday, 1973), XXXII–XXXIII. Further support for the book’s antiquity is its use of vocabulary found only in the oldest texts: *qesita*, an ancient coin—Job 42:11; Gen 33:19; Josh 24:32; also, the absence of information fundamental to pentateuchal and other OT texts—Abram’s call, the development and establishment of Israel. Nahum M. Sarna, “Epic Substratum in the Prose of Job,” *JBL* 76 (1957) 13–25, comparing Job with ancient Akkadian and Ugaritic literature, notes that “the literary structure [of prologue and epilogue] contains all the classic elements of repetition and schematization associated with that of the epic” 25. Among *Job* distinctives Sarna cites in this regard are hapax legomena such as וְהִקְרִיפוּ—1:5 (Hiphil of קָרַף), and שְׂכָרְךָ בְעֵדוֹ—1:10; also morphology: שְׂכָרְעֹנָה בְנִים (42:13), equivalent to Ugaritic [see UM 11:3]; syntax—אֲהִי־יָהּ—(1:4); as well as the special status of numbers (3000, 7000, 500, 7, 3), and the prominence of women (Job’s daughters). While conceding that “the age in which the writer intends us to think of Job as living, . . . is the patriarchal age” (lxvi), Driver and Gray set aside traditional early dating with the remark that “early Jewish was scarcely less divided than modern opinion” (lvi). In support they point out the ample discussion in *Baba Bathra* that follows the statement on Mosaic authorship, and floats possibilities for Job’s lifetime and the book’s composition that range from Isaac, through the time of the spies, to the days of the judges, or perhaps the return from captivity, or Ahasuerus’ day; Job may in fact be nothing more than a parable. Driver and Gray thus highlighted the intriguing tension between Talmudic historical affirmations and its own rabbinic casuistry in which, for example, Abraham either has no daughter, or has one, or has one named *ba-kol*, all based on discussion of the statement “the Lord blessed Abraham in all things”—*ba-kol*, *Baba Bathra* 16b). For John D. W. Watts, parts of Job “may have been written as early as the tenth century.” John D. W. Watts, in collaboration with John Joseph Owens & Marvin E. Tate, Jr., “Job”, in *Esther–Psalms*, BBC 4 (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1971), 23. Elmer B. Smick however found that “the most recent tendency supports an early date” for the book. Elmer B. Smick, “Job,” *1 Chronicles–Job*, rev. ed., EBC 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 852. “It seems likely that Job himself lived in the second millennium (2000 to 1000 B.C.) and shared a tradition not far removed from that of the Hebrew patriarchs.” *ibid.*, 853. “Probably the oldest book in the world is the book of Job,” said J. Allen Blair; see J. Allen Blair, *Living Patiently: A Devotional Study of the Book of Job* (Neptune, NJ: Loiseaux Brothers, 1966), 11. For a fair review of discussion on the book’s date and source, see Smick, 850–53. On the linguistic arguments for (mis)dating *Job* based on things ancient Near Eastern, Robert Alden spoke caution: “. . . we must remember that the Old Testament is the largest piece of literature to emerge from the ancient Near East. All the Ugaritic epics together do not match the volume of Job alone. All the Hebrew inscriptional evidence from the Old Testament period fills only a few pages. Since the clues are few, we must eschew dogmatism on this matter of date.” Robert L. Alden, *Job*, NAC 11, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 27. Alden’s admirable caution, taken in context of a comparison of Driver and Gray’s recent (1921), with Smick’s recent (1988), may be seen as establishing the Bible in its rightful place in relation to the small or large, and varied or insistent speculations of critics through the ages. Arno C. Gaebelein was more categorical: “Inasmuch then as the book exhibits a fine picture of patriarchal times and its language also bears witness to a very early date all the objections of the critics are void.” Arno C. Gaebelein, *Gaebelein’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Neptune, NJ: Loiseaux

a whole, its drama begins with an idyll and climaxes in particular, remarkable, and elaborate restoration. Like the conflict that swirls through all of Scripture, except for the first and last two chapters, so is the controversy that rages in *Job*, for all but its first and last seven verses. *Job* is surely the story of redemption in microcosm, one of the clearest, most accessible, and comprehensive depictions of the cosmic war between evil and good found anywhere in the OT.

The Present Thesis

The present thesis seeks merely to elaborate on the statement of its relevance to the end times, and seeks to extract specific illumination on the correct interpretation of a much disputed event of earth's last hours, that is, the drying up of the Euphrates river, one aspect of the sixth plague of Rev 16.

The Plagues

Introducing the Plagues

Few accounts in all of Scripture so focus the reader on the strange act of divine judgment, as does Rev 16. I mention but five of the many elements of high significance John's introduction underscores:

1. First, his opening remarks speak to the perfection of holy wrath against the unrepentant wicked that these plagues constitute—there are seven angels, and there are seven plagues (15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1). A total of ten iterations of the number seven identifies these plagues and their angelic executioners between John's first reference to them in 15:1 and the command to carry out the punitive action in 16:1.
2. The passage speaks, too, of the unmistakable and unequivocal will that ordains these acts—there is a double and plural imperative—'Go [all of you], and pour [all of you]' (v. 1).³
3. Third, John establishes the transcendent authoritativeness of the action—it is a loud voice, a great voice, a mighty voice that speaks it, and it is from the temple that that voice commands.
4. Beyond this, he underlines the focused particularity of the command—the plagues must be poured out “on the earth,” on this cosmos—and its human inhabitants, as the action later makes clear.

Bros., 1985) 420.

³ J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, AB 38, (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 260, noted the unique usage, in this chapter, but nowhere else in Revelation, of the cultic term (εκχεω—“pour”), recognizable from the LXX, where the priest “pours out” the rest of the blood of the sacrifice at the foot of the altar after touching the horns of the altar with it (Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34, etc.).”

5. Finally, he exposes the climactic nature of this vengeance: From their earliest mention, these plagues are introduced as “the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished” (15:1).⁴ Later, the great voice from the temple, more certainly now than ever, the voice of Jesus himself,⁵ as he speaks from the throne, leaves us no doubt that this is the end: “Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, ‘It is done’ [or ‘it has happened,’ or ‘it is finished’]” (v. 17).

As the angels begin to discharge their awful burden of duty the chapter powerfully sustains the momentous tone of the prophecy’s introduction: loathsome malignancies possess the worshipers of the beast’s image (v. 2); the sea becomes like a dead man’s blood and everything there dies (v. 3); the rivers and water springs become blood (v. 4); the sun scorches with fire (vv. 8, 9); the beast’s kingdom is benighted while its subjects gnaw their tongues for pain (v. 10). So, then, the first five plagues, with their punishment cumulative and continuous.⁶ And the seventh produces no less drama: There are “flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and . . . a great earthquake, [like none] since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake . . . it [is], and so mighty” (v. 18).

Introducing the Sixth Plague

The sixth of these seven plagues is the Armageddon plague. It is the plague of war—a war that may have inspired more exegetical passion and imagination than any other in Scripture. The present study looks at a few aspects of this plague. It does not exegete the entire chapter or span the range of seven. And even in its focus on only one plague, it does not essay anything approaching exhaustive exploration of Armageddon battle theories or definitive etymology of the term itself.⁷ Rather, its modest effort is to look at

⁴ Except otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

⁵ The great voice (μεγαλης φωνης) of Rev 16:1 may also be Jesus himself, for Jesus frequently so speaks (see Matt 27:46, 50; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:46; John 11:43). But 16:1 is not as definitive as v. 17.

⁶ At plague 5 people still suffer from the sores of plague 1 (cf. vv. 2, 11).

⁷ I essayed something like that as an undergraduate in a colloquium some four decades ago. Besides, Dallas Youngs has written “an informal, in-depth, exhaustive study of Bible prophecy” treating of *Armageddon the World’s Last War*, Drama of Revelation series, 8 vols., vol. 6 (self-published, 1979). I know enough now to know I may do better by leaving well alone. Jon Paulien’s article in the Anchor Bible Dictionary warns that “The abundance of solutions and the great creativity with which they have been developed suggests that it is unwise to be dogmatic about the etymology of Armageddon.” See David Noel Freedman, ed., “Armageddon,”

the Armageddon plague in context of a story from the book of Job. And should someone comment on the oddity of such a proposal, it may be pointed out that it is no stranger than the sixth plague itself within its scriptural context of Rev 16. As Jon Paulien observed, in the midst of “universal boils, scorching sun, and hailstones the weight of 27-inch color TVs” plague six “doesn’t seem to amount to much.”⁸ In the midst of the cataclysmic furies of that chapter, the sixth plague is nothing if not singular: “The sixth *angel* poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs” (vv. 12, 13).

This plague varies more noticeably than its predecessors from the chapter’s formulaic reportage. Plagues one to three feature a) the angelic action, b) the terrestrial recipient, and c) an horrific result.⁹ Evidently, this result is also immediate.¹⁰ The audition, which follows plague three (see vv. 5–7), is germane to the narrative, but not a feature of the plague. The two that follow, plagues four and five, augment our sense of the intensity of the divine rage. They describe the misery of the humans who are kept alive to continue to be the recipients of this wrathful outpouring. Detailing the condition of the human subjects makes more graphic the reported results: “Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God” (v. 9); “and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores” (vv. 10, 11).”

Plague six does not appear designed to continue this build up. It includes nothing that sharpens our sense of the sufferers’ pain or God’s unmitigated fury. The audition of plague three does have such an effect, as John hears voices, which affirm God’s justice in meting out his vengeance

ABD 1:394–95, 395.

⁸ Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End Time* (Hagerstown, MD: R&H, 1994), 131. His reference to 27-inch TVs reflects, of course, a reality now decades too old to be as metaphorically significant.

⁹ Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16, 17–19, 10* [i.e., Rev 16:17 to 19:10], European University Studies, Series XXIII, Theology (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989), 232, also sees a three part articulation: “a) A numbered angel pours out his bowl; b) Nature reacts to the pouring of the bowl; c) People react to the pouring of the bowl.” However I hesitate to label an outbreak of sores as people’s reaction [plague 1], or as separate from and secondary to nature’s reaction.

¹⁰ Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse*, foreword by Myles M. Bourke (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 134: “In each case, however [plagues 1–4], the plague on nature is immediately translated into suffering for mankind.”

(vv. 5–7). The formula of a) angelic action, and b) terrestrial recipient continues in plague six. But instead of loathsome sores, widespread death, or scorching heat, part c) of the pattern informs of a way prepared for the kings of the East. Admittedly, the preparation is for war, and war is usually a matter of carnage. Nevertheless, the plague here speaks of preparation instead of instant conflict. Further, the disarming tonal variation of diminished physical intensity is accentuated by the presence of a vision within the pericope. Unlike the audition that follows plague three, or the footnote of Jesus’ own beatitude in v. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes”), this revelation is an integral part of the sixth unit. The added note, either of clarification or greater obfuscation, serves to slow the narrative further, and by implication, the pace of the action it reports. Its scene of emerging frogs lengthens the plague narrative of Rev 16 in accordance with the pattern of a longer episode six in Revelation’s sequences of sevens.¹¹ Be that as it may, that inclusion also seems to soften the increasingly strident tone of plagues one through five. And precisely because it seems to demand less through these tonal and content differences, plague six is not to be overlooked.

Aspects of Difference

A number of elements occur in plague six which are absent from antecedent plagues (vv. 2–10) as well as from the final plague (vv. 17–21). This observation refers, not to what distinguishes one plague from another within the formulaic reportage, but to aspects of plague six that vary from the recognizable pattern of the plagues.¹² Beginning with the second—i.e., “b” rather than “a”—of my list of unique elements, I mention b) the triumvirate of v. 13 (dragon, beast, false prophet), c) the frog-like spirits of the same verse, d) their wonder-working activity (v. 14), e) the kings of the whole world—the note of universality here struck (v. 14), and a) and f) the prospective war (vv. 12, 14, 16). Graphically, the six might appear as follows:

¹¹ Plague 6 involves a total of 90 words, or 188% of the 48 words of plague 5. The sixth of the seven seals includes a total of 135 words, or 167% of the 81 words of seal 5. These figures lend some support to a theory of patterned lengthening of item 6 in these sequences of 7. The irregularities in the sequences caution against too much dogmatism about the literary significance of any observed patterns.

¹² E.g., earth in plague 1 has its counterpart of sea in plague 2, and rivers in plague 3. These all belong to a pattern and are mere identifying characteristics of each of several similar plagues. By contrast, the frog-like spirits of plague 6 have no corresponding element in any other plague. Thus frog-like spirits is a unique element of plague 6.

- A. “so that the way would be prepared” (v. 12)
Preparation for war
- B. “the dragon . . . the beast and . . . the false prophet” (v. 13)
The Triumvirate
- C. “3 unclean spirits like frogs” (v. 13)
Frog-like spirits
- C'. “spirits of demons, performing signs” (v. 14)
Their wonder working activity
- B'. “the kings of the whole world” (v. 14)
Universality
- A'. “to gather them together [to Har-Magedon] for the war of the great day of God” (vv. 14, 16)

Preparation for War

Whatever commentary elements A and A' may inspire in the chiasm above, they require little, if any, explication, because of the transparent language of their identification. They clearly speak of preparation for war. Notably, the very idea of preparation departs entirely from the character of the plagues to this point. None of the previous five plagues exhibits any dimension of future consciousness. Nor in fact does plague seven. All other plagues instance action devoid of projection, prediction, or anticipation. Angelic outpourings produce both fierce and immediate results.¹³ And this is again so at the conclusion of this climactic heptad: Answering to the ten iterations that announce the plagues, the cataclysm of plague seven constitutes a ten-fold assault on the disintegrating cosmos: (1) From his throne in the temple, God shouts, “It’s over!”; (2) lightning and thunder flash and roll; (3) an earthquake of unprecedented violence splits the globe; (4) the great city shatters into three parts; (5) the cities of the nations collapse. (6) God remembers Babylon the great, “to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath”; (7) every island flees; (8) the mountains disappear; (9) hundred pound hailstones plummet down upon people; and (10) humans blaspheme God because of the fury of the plague of hail (Rev 16:17–21). No hesitation or reflective pause is here apparent.¹⁴ Nor is there room for anticipation or preparation. In Rev 16, God’s long tarried judgments unfold

¹³ See again Minear, *New Earth*, 134.

¹⁴ Reflection may be suggested in the verb *μνησκω*, in the sense of bringing back to mind, as with Peter remembering Jesus’ words (Matt 26:75). This would not be the meaning of the term when applied to the one before whom “all things are open and laid bare” (Heb 4:13). With God, the verb evidently refers to having present in mind, as with Cornelius’ good deeds (Acts 20:31), or here (Rev 16:19), with Babylon’s sin.

in sustained, unbroken, and unmitigated fury. Except for plague six. In plague six there is preparation, and preparation for war.

God and Final War

Much has already been said and written on the time, nature, participants, location, outcome, and other aspects of that war. To cite but a few positions: Preterists have understood it to refer to a literal physical conflict in the times of the book of Revelation, with a Nero *redivivus* leading Parthian horsemen invading from the east.¹⁵ Albertus Pieters, invoking W. M. L. De Wette and the Roman Catholic scholar Alcazar, asserts that the war [Armageddon] stands for the struggle between Christianity and the persecuting Roman Empire, a struggle, which concluded with the victory of the gospel early in the fourth century of the Christian era.¹⁶ Readings such as these hardly accommodate the climactic and universal language of the plague narrative. Today's world is inhabited by billions of non-Christians. And seventeen hundred years have elapsed since Pieters' date for Christianity's conquest of pagan Rome. A reading more consistent with the clear statement of the text must still be sought.

In Stephen Haskell's concrete understanding of the plague, physical armies clash in the valley of Jehoshaphat, "the ancient meeting place for Egypt and Assyria, known in the Hebrew as Megiddo, and in Greek as Armageddon."¹⁷ Variations of that view have existed through the history of Adventist interpretation. A recent summary of it accepts the Euphrates river as the former Ottoman Empire and its modern successor Turkey. "The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire is seen as preparing the way for Oriental nations to join battle with those of the West in the valley of Megiddo."¹⁸ Also pursuing the geographic conception, evangelical John MacArthur advises of major environmental changes, brought on by supernatural meteorological assaults, that will make this physical, military confrontation possible.¹⁹ He knows that "God's drying up of the Euphrates is not an act of kindness toward the kings of the east, but one of judgment. They and their armies will

¹⁵ See for example Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, SP series, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 16:166, on Rev 16:14. Also Ford, *Revelation*, 273.

¹⁶ Albertus Pieters, *Studies in the Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1943), 270–75.

¹⁷ Stephen N. Haskell, *The Story of the Seer of Patmos* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1905, 1977), 284. On the "valley of Jehoshaphat" see Joel 3:1, 2, 9–16; probably alluding to 2 Chron 20:1–30.

¹⁸ SDABC, 7:842, on Rev 16:12.

¹⁹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur NT Commentary: Rev 12–22* (Chicago: Moody, 2000), 146.

be entering a deadly trap.”²⁰ For MacArthur, the kings of the east are enemies of God and his people.²¹ At the climax of salvation history, then, to judge by twentieth and twenty-first century Bible students such as Haskell and MacArthur, the God of heaven avails himself of military mayhem between East and West as a means of resolving the age old conflict between decency and wickedness. Postponing our summary on the value of this theory, we turn to the contributions of the book of Job.

Comparisons with *Job*

Conflict and Persuasion in Job

Very much like the battle of Armageddon, the book of Job has been, over time, the subject of much disagreement, and strongly differing interpretations. The book’s structure, its date of origin, its composition history, even the question of what its message is, all these have been the focus of vigorous dispute. It may be less than remarkable, then that we should turn to it for explication of the significance of another biblical topic of much contention, the battle of Armageddon. The insights we derive relate directly to the heart of the six-part chiasm that makes plague six so different and distinct from all the others of the seven last plagues. Lines C and C' of that structure make up its thematic core, and occur at the structural center of the narrative of the sixth plague. Introducing the chiasm are the regular features [parts 1–3] of John’s overall plague narration. In context of its remarked chiasm, the sixth plague account also exhibits three other idiosyncrasies. These are a secondary introduction, a beatitude, and the repetition and elaboration of A'. In the depiction of the complete report [below] it will be clear that the secondary introduction may, without literary, interpretive, or graphic complication, be considered a normal part of the chiasm’s line B:

Reviewing the chiasm (below), it becomes apparent that at the heart of plague six is the operation of demonic spirits performing signs that result in universal consensus. These spirits produce a harmony that unites “the kings of the whole world . . . for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty” (v. 14).

²⁰ MacArthur, *Commentary*, 146–47.

²¹ So too, long before him, E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St. John*, trans. Rev. Patrick Fairbairn (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1852), 2:169: “The Euphrates is mentioned here merely in respect to the hindrance it presented to the march of the ungodly power of the world into the holy land, against the holy city, against the church.”

INTRODUCTION**part 1—acting angel**

The sixth *angel* poured out his bowl

part 2—terrestrial location

on the great river // the Euphrates

part 3—result

and its water was dried up

THEMATIC CORE—CHIASM

A. so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east

secondary introduction

--And I saw--

B. out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and
out of the mouth of the false prophet,

C. three unclean spirits like frogs

C'. spirits of demons, performing signs

B'. going out to the kings of the whole world

A'. to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the
Almighty.

BEATITUDE--("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is
the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he
will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")

A'. **[REPEATED]**--And they gathered them together to the place, which
in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon (Rev 12:12–16)

The story of Job involves a situation of noticeable similarity to the scenario in Rev 16. It may therefore be appropriate to review that situation, keeping open the possibility of deriving instruction therefrom that may assist our conclusions on the best interpretation of the sixth plague. Following our Job retrospective, we shall return to the book of Revelation, to see how the Joban material relates, in general, to the range of interpretations on the sixth plague, and, specifically, to the chiasm that defines the plague's thematic core.

The Message of Job

Despite much scholarly difference of opinion, it is at least recognized that the book of Job constitutes an attack on the idea of fairness in this life—specifically, the idea that evil people suffer while good people thrive. The protagonist who gives the book its name remains long unpersuaded of the notion of terrestrial justice. At the end, after God's intervention, he claims to get the point, though what point is got has become part of the academic

dispute: “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes” (42:5, 6).

These words have been heard as prostrate humiliation before a God whose torrent of rhetorical questions silences, indeed, marginalizes Job’s tirade of objections. James Crenshaw, who rejected the repentance as an inauthentic interpolation, believed the words are nothing but “the drowning of doubting questions in the rushing crescendo of praise,” a “masochistic response . . . so prevalent in the Judeo-Christian world.”²² They represent the view that in posing those questions Job has been out of his league, speaking on things he knows nothing about (see Job 42:3).

The protest of repentance has also been heard as sarcastic rebellion. John Briggs Curtis’ contrasting opinion accepts 42:5, 6 as Joban indeed, but surely not to be heard “as abject repentance [in dust and ashes]. Job here alludes to the frailty of humanity formed from dust. His exclamation actually means “I am sorry for frail man!”²³

Whatever their apparent difference, Crenshaw and Curtis largely represent one side of the Joban issue. It is that of interpreters who accept Job’s rage as confirmed hostility to God—hence Crenshaw’s rejection of apologetic interpolation. For him, for Curtis, and for others of similar perspective, there is little narrative or rhetorical satisfaction to be found in the idyllic resolution of the book’s final verses. The book is for them a story of war between Job and God, which Job either wins or loses. Restoration and reconciliation, partying, *kesita[s]*, and children, are distasteful and shallow sweetness after the raw and deep rhetorical violence of earlier chapters.

Such a view threatens to diminish the story of the book. It tends to reduce the whole to a matter of the wrongness or rightness of Job versus God. To that degree, it brings this sophisticatedly nuanced treatise to a premature and flat conclusion. Even when this perspective takes note of the friends’ arguments, those are simply seen as the old dogma now shattered by the courage of Job, *l’homme révolté*.

But going beyond Job’s apology (42:1–6) allows us to appreciate how the book’s denouement (chap. 42:6–17) takes up and resolves the larger issue of the character of God, and how everyone’s attitude—the Satan’s, Eliphaz’ own, Bildad’s, Zophar’s, and Elihu’s, as well as Job’s, relates to that transcendent reality. Everything in the book of Job is related to this question of divine

²² James L. Crenshaw, “The Problem of Theodicy in Sirach: On Human Bondage,” in *Theodicy in the OT*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, IRT 4 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 129, 128.

²³ John Briggs Curtis, “On Job’s Response to Yahweh,” *JBL* 98 (1979): 505.

character—how fair God is; and everyone’s testimony, Job’s wife and servants included, is in some way implicated in this broader perspective. A focus on universal attitudes, rather than a focus on God vs. Job, is crucial to understanding how the work summarizes on its main issue, and how we may responsibly relate to it in eschatological reflections in our own time.

Integrity, the Book’s Main Issue

The main issue of the book of Job, I repeat, is larger than Job. Thus, animated celebration of the hero as rebel is not enough to get to the heart of the book’s matter. Rejecting thirty-five Joban words of apology will not allow for balanced appreciation of the story in context of its final conclusions. Nor will reading them as sarcasm accomplish much more. Nor, indeed, does their mere acceptance as climactic allow readers to appreciate properly how the book resolves one of life’s and humanity’s most burning and burdening issues. Job may be the book’s human center. However, there is more to the center than he. He may be the incarnation of the book’s message, but there is more to the message than he. And if the issue of the book is theodicy—the character of God, divine justice versus innocent or other suffering—then the message of the book is integrity—the integrity of God as exhibited in the person and life of his servant Job. The book’s concluding chapter makes clear that God and Job are not opponents in the controversy of life. They are partners in the program of integrity, opposed by those who are introduced as Job’s friends (2:11–13), but who serve, in fact, as powerful agents of the original adversary.

This is an important assertion, worthy of repetition and demanding adequate warrant. I repeat then, that the book of Job exhibits an alignment of Job and God over against his friends and the devil,²⁴ at whose impulse they serve through the book’s dialogue. How may such a notion be justified? It may be justified on the basis of how characters align themselves with or against the issue the book states as its own, and for or against the message the book gives as its own. The issue, it may be repeated, is divine justice, and the message is divine integrity—as lived out by Job.

From the beginning of the book Job, introduced as the human center of the book, is presented to the reader as a person of integrity (1:1). In

²⁴ For arguments on Satan as the devil see Lael Caesar, “Religious Faiths and the Problem of Evil: A Biblical Perspective”, 4th Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship, web publication of the Foundation for Adventist Education: <http://fae.adventist.org/essays.htm>; also idem, “Who Is Job’s Satan,” in Gerhard Pfandl, ed., *The Great Controversy and the End of Evil* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), 25–34.

questioning that integrity the adversary simultaneously questions the integrity of God, who is the witness to Joban integrity (1:8). God's failure to peremptorily silence a challenge to his and Job's integrity sets the stage for the protracted and bitter struggle that fills up the book. At the end, as with the plagues (Rev 16), God shows himself to be the final arbiter of all destinies, the judge of all the earth, who, as Abraham confides, may be counted on to do right (see Gen 18:25).

When Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar first enter the drama of Job they are introduced as his friends (2:11). And so he continues to refer to them (6:14, 27; 12:4; 16:20; 19:21), even though, incidentally, they themselves never so refer to him. Strangely enough, these men who undertake a special journey to accompany and commiserate with their companion, have, by the end, fiercely denounced his wickedness (22:5–7), and advised that he does not receive as much punishment as he actually deserves (11:6).

A Persuasive Night Visitor

One might reasonably wonder what event would so alter the perspectives and attitudes of long-time friends. The answer seems to be found in a supernatural visitation to which Eliphaz becomes privy, and of which he speaks in 4:12–19:

Now a word was brought to me stealthily, and my ear received a whisper of it. Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, dread came upon me, and trembling, and made all my bones shake. Then a spirit passed by my face; the hair of my flesh bristled up. It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance; a form *was* before my eyes; *there was* silence, then I heard a voice: "Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? He puts no trust even in His servants; and against His angels He charges error. How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth?"

This speech is significant, *inter alia*, for the range of reactions it provokes from commentators. A. B. Davidson spoke of the "great delicacy and consideration" of this "profoundly reverential" piece.²⁵ Saadiyah Gaon believed Eliphaz to have been in an "inspired state."²⁶ Similarly, H. Ranston

²⁵ A.B. Davidson, *The Book of Job*, (1884); Rev. H.C.O. Lanchester, (1918); quoted by H. H. Rowley, *The Book of Job*. NCBC, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976, 1980), 45.

²⁶ Saadiyah Ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi, *The Book of Theodicy: Translation & Commentary on*

detected “something of the prophet” in him, describing him as a man “intense in religious conviction, a mystic recipient of heavenly visions.”²⁷ Of the few notable exceptions to this admiration, Norman Habel called Eliphaz’ story “a parodied religious experience.”²⁸ And William Whedbee probed at the inconsistency between Eliphaz’ style and “the usual ambiance of the sage”, finding “a curious incongruity between the elaborate portrayal of the vision and the rather commonplace information contained therein.”²⁹ The first half of Whedbee’s point is well taken. For wisdom’s sages usually ground their authority in nature, the cosmic order, or the wisdom of previous generations, rather than in supernatural visitations as Eliphaz here does.

But Eliphaz does not report “commonplace information” as Whedbee claimed. The content of Eliphaz’ supernaturally imparted message is entirely remarkable—remarkable for its direct contradiction of what the deity himself has already established by a double declaration (1:8; 2:3). How this is so and why it should matter to our study of Revelation 16 are questions we now address.

Responding to the first, we note God’s unequivocal witness to the character of Job: God is focused—and focuses the Satan’s attention—upon a man, “my servant Job” (1:8; 2:3). And he knows he can count on Job’s staying power: “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil” (2:3). God is clearly proud of Job. But Eliphaz’ night visitor informs that God sets no store by his creatures:

He puts no trust even in His servants; and against His angels He charges error. How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth? (4:19).

Given the contradiction between God and Eliphaz’ visitor, it would be less remarkable if the visitor were promptly identified as God’s opponent, the

the Book of Job, ed. Leon Nemoy, trans., with a philosophic commentary by L. E. Goodman, YJS 15 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 187, on 4:13–16.

²⁷ H. Ranston, *The Old Testament Wisdom Books and Their Teaching* (1930); quoted in Rowley, *Job*, 45.

²⁸ Norman Habel, “The Narrative Art of Job: Applying the Principles of Robert Alter,” *JSTOT* 27 (1983): 104. A look at Burke O. Long, “Reports of Visions Among the Prophets,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 353–65, particularly his category iii, shows Eliphaz’ experience as clearly distinct from that of the prophets, though it may at first appear to share some similarity. Eliphaz receives no insight into the future, a feature of the visions of Zechariah cited by Long as illustrative of this group (Zech ii 1–2, vv. 3–4; iv 1–6a, etc.).

²⁹ William Whedbee, “The Comedy of Job,” *Semeia* 7 (1977): 11.

one who launched the trial of Job, God's servant, by insisting that Job's, and thus God's integrity, was open to question. But this is not the case. Indeed, the mysterious visitor's message has been deliberately overlooked by respected Job commentators. Whedbee, as just noted, dismisses it as commonplace information. Edouard Dhorme, supported by St. Thomas Aquinas, found it "needless to ask whether [Eliphaz] really experienced this vision or whether he imagines it for the purposes of his argument."³⁰ To which I submit that neither St. Thomas, nor Dhorme, nor we, are likely to know, terrestrially, whether Eliphaz' story is actual or invented. Nevertheless, and at the very least, the truth or falsehood of statements in an argument, and the truthfulness, or otherwise, of participants in an argument, should matter to the outcome of that argument—all the more when that argument concerns integrity, human and divine.

Surprisingly enough, dismissing Eliphaz' factuality, or otherwise, is not the ultimate in this interpretive exercise. Francis I. Andersen, for example, took it even further. Rather than consciously [or unconsciously] overlook the reliability of Eliphaz' story, he chooses to engage it and submit that Eliphaz' visitor was in fact the Spirit of God.³¹ Nor is he the only one who comes to agree with Eliphaz. Indeed, the Eliphaz story eventually becomes the defining criterion that measures support for, or opposition to Job.

Consider the following: Eliphaz introduces us to his specter in the first half of his very first speech. He advances this word as the proof that Job cannot be what, unbeknownst to him, God has already twice said he is. Eliphaz' remaining speeches will both make use of this supernatural testimony (15:14, 15; 22:1, 2). He introduces his final intervention with this low view of humanity: "Can a vigorous man be of use to God, or a wise man be useful to himself?" (22:2). Besides Eliphaz the cycle includes two other participants, along with Job. Zophar, the second of these, appropriates Eliphaz' imagery and rhetoric from the very outset, winking in Andersen's direction. With Eliphaz, it a spirit (רוח) passing by (עָלָה, 4:15); the antecedent of Zophar's passing by (עָלָה, 11:10) is Eloah (v. 7). Bildad, before him, the quintessential sage, knows that his discipline relies on more concrete sources

³⁰ Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. H. H. Rowley, with a preface by Francis I. Andersen (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1984), 49. He cites St Thomas, *Expositio in librum Sancti Job*: "Eliphaz vel vere vel fecte loquitur" (Eliphaz speaks either truly or falsely).

³¹ Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 114n1. So also L. Alonso Schökel and J. L. Sicre Diaz, *Job: Comentario teológico y literario* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1983), 139: "No es mero sueño, . . . Es un mensajero de Dios [This is no mere dream. This is a messenger of God]."

than his colleague has cited. What the wise utter is not prophecy, but the wisdom of hoary years, the traditions that crown generations of insightful observation into human behavior and the processes of nature. He says as much (8:8–10), obliquely rebuking the older man.³² He may even know, though we cannot tell, that Eliphaz' contemptuous view of humanity is not in keeping with wisdom's faith in the wisdom of the wise. For whatever reason, Bildad never borrows from, or alludes—until the end—to Eliphaz' prophetic revelation. Then, when he does, in his last speech, his words are few, his surrender is abject (25:4–6), and the cycle of verbal insults and counsel ceases without even a final retort from Zophar. This eventual borrowing by Bildad and his speaking the words of a fiction he has resisted until the end are the book's articulated statement on the effectiveness of supernatural deception. And the dialogical collapse Bildad's act precipitates is the book's implicit statement on the final result of supernatural deception.

Summarizing and Concluding

Some Implications of Dialogue Among Friends

On Job's main stage, sociological grouping is co-terminus with theological allegiance. Job and his friends in particular, are the human expression of a spiritual alignment either for God or for the cause of satanic deception. The foregoing summary underlines the critical role of deception in uniting the friends against Job. Through the drama, and oblivious to the clash of supernatural powers which brings on Job's crisis, they confront and denounce the one whom God calls his servant, repeating and expanding on a claim disclosed to them by supernatural revelation. But the reader knows that claim to be a lie, the first blatant lie of the interlocution, and one advanced and exalted by men whose conduct thus identifies them as witting or unwitting instruments of the first liar. Through their behavior, however sincere, Job's friends serve the agenda of the one who first defies God before his heavenly council, and then communicates his sentiments to them through Eliphaz' night visitor. The friends' insistence on the story, their appropriation and repetition of it, insult their innocent friend, distort the divine character, and arouse the fury of a God whose hatred for the distortions of evil is as strong as his love for his servant, Job.

³² In context of ANE custom, and judging by the ordering of their names (2:11; 42:9), the order in which they speak, and the manner of the divine rebuke (42:7–9), Eliphaz is the oldest of the friends.

Deception the Common Theme

White's statement on the end time value of the book of Job encourages me to study the book in context of history's final scenes as foretold in the book of Revelation. Job's accessible depiction of the ongoing struggle between good and evil may well enhance our understanding of the marvelous symbology, imagery, and metaphor that overflow in the book of Revelation. One of the insights that comparison affords is the significance of deception for Satan's work. Our analysis of the sixth plague shows that it differs decidedly from all the preceding ones as well as the following and final, seventh plague. Announcement of other plagues follows a regular pattern that a) numbers the acting angel, b) names the locale of its action, and c) describes an immediate and horrific result. Plague six proceeds at a distinctly and deceptively different pace: Action of the numbered angel, and the focus of its outpouring, are followed, not by immediate and horrific result, but by preparation. Moreover, in plagues one through five, and seven, God's angels of wrath are the exclusive initiators of action. Earth's inhabitants react to what the angels of vengeance have done. In this regard, pattern disruptions in plague six include the involvement of spirits of demons as initiators of action. In plague six the world responds to the direction of demon spirits. The content of those demonic instructions is not here given, but another look at *Job* may contribute some further insight before we conclude. We look again to *Job* because of discernible parallels to end time prophecy in this book, parallels that support claims on its relevance through all the ages of written revelation, including the end time. Those parallels may encourage us to continue the search for the spiritual and theological information the book may yet yield. Further, *Job's* chronological primacy and literary transparency, by contrast with *Revelation's* symbolism, suggests that we may at times strengthen our grasp of meaning even better by looking first to *Job* and thence to *Revelation*. We look then, before we conclude.

Patterns in Job

Like human history as a whole, the drama of Job begins with an idyll and climaxes in remarkable and elaborate restoration. From Scripture's first to last book, except for the first and last two chapters, earth is embroiled in conflict. In Job, from first to last chapter, except for the first and last seven verses, the book swirls in controversy. Job, and all of the history of our race, is caught up with a test of integrity. Fecund seeds of doubt, concerning God's character and Job's, yield a treacherous forest that fills the horizons of Job 1–42 and Genesis to Revelation. Job's suffering horrifies us as does Christ's as

we watch him twisted and naked on a cross. But the conflict in Job and in Genesis through Revelation has never been primarily a physical conflict. It has always been moral. As surely as academe will never be able to explain how thorns appeared on rosebushes when Adam and Eve ate from the tree in the middle of the garden, so sure is it that Chinese or Russian or Arab, communist or Islamic or other human armies, colliding against Israeli forces and their allies, will never resolve the issues in the final conflict.

In Job, as in the cosmic controversy, the power of the enemy is the power of deception. From beginning to end, Eliphaz' first lie, communicated by supernatural revelation, dominates the interlocution. Bildad resists until, whether through belief or merely in exhausted surrender, he unites with Eliphaz and Zophar. Then universal accord is achieved; for the narrator of this conflict between truth and error, between integrity and the farce, there is nothing left to prove, the dialogue collapses. It is done.

I submit that this end of struggle in Job equates with some precision to that which transpires under demonic impulse in the sixth plague, and speaks with some eloquence to the actual character, moral and spiritual rather than physical and military, of that event. Once the spirits of demons succeed in gathering the kings of the whole world together nothing remains but the outpouring of the seventh bowl, and the voice of God announcing "It is done": "And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done" (Rev 16:16, 17).

Armageddon is not a great nuclear holocaust. It is not a terrible world war. I do not deny that fearful wars may well come upon the earth, causing widespread suffering and destruction. But Armageddon is a spiritual warfare, with consequences far more severe than any war between nations could ever be. It is the final conquest of Christ over Satan at his glorious advent."³³

The drying up of the Euphrates does not differ from the work of the demonic spirits. It must signify whatever final acts of supernatural deception enable final unity of the world of rebels against God and his faithful remnant. And the battle that ensues once that work of satanic preparation is done, will

³³ Don Fortner, *Discovering Christ in Revelation* (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2002), 284. Fortner does see the eastern invaders as enemies of God's people. But his spiritual insight is admirable.

be a battle between those camps—the camp of evil arrayed against the Lord of good and those who have trusted his lordship here on earth. That biblical interpreters have been able to read the climax of the story of redemption in terms of actual military conflict is in itself a hint at the effectiveness of satanic deception as to the virtue of so evil a horror as war. That exegetes have been able to read Armageddon as God choosing his political side from among us is commentary on how far the work of deception can go. It matters less, to this paper, that the antitypical Cyrus has been confused with Chinese, or Arab, Parthian or Persian forces. What seems most remarkable is the notion that God must avail himself of end of time ordnance to finally wipe out the armies of darkness. And that God must take sides in a political struggle in order to rid the world, at last, of the evil rebellion initiated by the political ambitions of the self-centered son of the morning (Isa 14:12–14).

That Satan is a purveyor of deceit is not news. We know it to be his *modus operandi*. “In his dealing with sin, God could employ only righteousness and truth. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit.”³⁴ Human beings are not bound to be, indeed, are not supposed to be ignorant of his devices and thus permit him an advantage over us (2 Cor 2:11). God has not left us in darkness. Strong warning has been given concerning deceptions Satan intends to employ to unite the world at the end of time, and how the drama may be expected to close. Roy Adams, writing in *Adventist World*, drew a line connecting the hauntingly beautiful music of “Ave Marias” to William Young’s literary fascination, *The Shack*, and to a slew of compelling movies that put departed daddy’s girls in contact with the grieving fathers. He entitled his article “Spiritual Perils.”³⁵

³⁴ Ellen White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 498.

³⁵ Roy Adams, “Spiritual Perils,” *Adventist World*, May 2010, 30, 31. Adams’ warning is against the appealing, engaging, unbiblical teaching of soul immortality. White has addressed, in politically inappropriate language, the power of this widespread teaching as one of two whose allurements will unite earth’s misguided multitudes. See White, *ibid.*, 588: “Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of Spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.” Again, on the closing fraud in the dramatic struggle for men’s spiritual allegiance, see Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 7:141: “The substitution of the laws of men for the law of God, the exaltation, by merely human authority, of Sunday in place of the Bible Sabbath, is the last act in the drama. When this substitution becomes universal, God will reveal Himself. He will arise in His majesty to shake terribly the earth. He will come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity, and the earth shall disclose her

Getting the Message

If we learn what we need to and ought to from warnings such as these, we do well to act upon them: We do well to understand that we live in a moral universe: Whether as exegetes, or simply as life's subjects, we endanger our sanity and spirituality if we deny or overlook the supernatural, or trivialize the implications of misunderstanding its operation. And, contrary to a host of militarily enthusiastic Christians, we only insult the God of such a universe by calculating his victory based on the bore of our guns and his. Moreover, we do well to learn from Eliphaz and company that commitment to winning theological arguments can make us vulnerable to demonic deception. We do well to acknowledge that God did not begin revelation with the book of Revelation. Yes we are encouraged to study the book of Revelation, and we must surely not diminish our study of that last marvelous text.³⁶ Instead, we may deepen our insights into its teaching by applying the Reformation principle of *Tota Scriptura*, embracing all of Scripture, *Job* included, given to us to be read "with the deepest of interest until the close of time."³⁷ May God continue to guide as we keep up our exploration of revelations from *Job*.

blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Now see also White, *Great Controversy*, chaps. 39, 40–613–52, where she described, in detail, conditions on earth among God's people, as well as the attitude of the unregenerate wicked through this final period to Jesus' coming, the resurrection of the just, and their glorification; or, for a step by step account, see Idem, *Maranatha; The Lord Is Coming* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976), chaps. 259–89.

³⁶ Ellen White, *Review and Herald* (August 31, 1897): "The book of Revelation opens to the world what has been, what is, and what is to come; it is for our instruction upon whom the ends of the world are come. It should be studied with reverential awe."

³⁷ White, *Signs of the Times* (February 19, 1880).

Deuteronomy 24:1–4 in the Context of Ancient Near Eastern Law

Alexander Bolotnikov

Dissolution of a marriage is a legal topic that is very scarcely represented in the Hebrew Bible and cognate literature. Deuteronomy 24:1–4 is the only passage in the Torah that explicitly deals with this issue. The expression סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוֹת (certificate of divorce) occurs in this passage for the first time in the Hebrew Bible. The word כְּרִיתוֹת never occurs in the Bible as a freestanding word. Its meaning can be determined only through etymology or by context. Etymologically the word comes from the verbal root כרת, whose basic meaning is “to cut off”¹ which may euphemistically indicate the severance of the relations. However the same verbal root is used across the Hebrew Bible to indicate making of the covenant especially between God and man.² Contextually the action/phrase וְכָתַב לָהּ סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוֹת (and he writes her a certificate of divorce) is connected with the action וַיִּשְׁלַחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ, (and sends her from his house) which definitely points out to the dissolution of the marriage. The usage of derivatives from the verbal root כרת to indicate divorce is unusual. Conventionally, the verb גרש, whose basic meaning is “to drive out,” is used

¹ HALOT, 2.500.

² Ibid., for detailed investigation of the usage of כרת in the context of the covenant cf. TDOT.

for the denotation of the divorce (Lev 21:7, 14, 22:13, Num 30:10, Ezek 44:22). This verb becomes a colloquial term for divorcing in Post-Biblical Hebrew.³

Another five passages in the prophetic books⁴ mention divorce and allude to Deuteronomy 24, using the same lexical and legal characteristics. However, neither of these passages provides any information about the content of the certificate (i.e., the *סִפְרֵי כְרִיתָהּ*) or the procedure of divorce. The Torah is also silent with regard to any details of the divorce procedure. This is why there is room for exegetical maneuverings and speculations based on Deuteronomy 24. The goal of this study is to investigate and systematize recent scholarship that deals with the issue of divorce found in the Ancient Near Eastern documents. This research will look at the sources related to divorce found in Sumer, Babylon, Assyria and Elephantine. The study will compare similarities and dissimilarities between the legal traditions of divorce from different locations of ANE. It will also allow one to observe the changes that these customs incurred over time from early second millennium to IV – V century BCE.

Extensive scholarly research in the area of ANE family legal issues produced for past 150 years resulted in discovering very limited materials that specifically deal with the issue of the divorce. This is why the topic of divorce is either investigated in conjunction with the marriage laws⁵ or considered strictly in connection to one locality⁶. Nevertheless, there are a number of legal documents found at different locations related to different historic periods that are specifically related to the dissolution of marriage. These available ANE records help to establish historical, cultural, and legal backgrounds to the biblical legislation found in Deut. 24:1–4. Therefore, in the next section, we will analyze scholarly works that are related to the ANE texts, which explicitly focus on the divorce proceedings.

Sumerian Materials

Several Sumerian law collections and legal documents were discovered among numerous tablets found at the Ancient Mesopotamian cites from the

³ M. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature*, (New York: Judaica Treasury, 2004).

⁴ Hos 2, Jer 3, Isa 50 Ezek 16 and Mal 2.

⁵ See for example: David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁶ For example: Reuven Yaron, *The Laws of Eshnuna* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1969), 109–145; or Godfrey Rolles Driver and John C. Miles, *The Assyrian Laws* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1975), 266.

22nd to the 18th centuries BCE. Significant portion of legal materials is dedicated to the issue of consummation of marriage and marriage contracts. Legal documents and laws, which deal directly with the dissolution of the marriage, are rare. Nevertheless, divorce is mentioned in the Laws of Ur Nammu ca. 2100 BCE that came to us through Nuppur (A), Ur (B) and Sippar (C) tablets⁷.

“If a man divorces his first ranking wife he should pay *her* one mana of silver” (B i 20–24, C iv 93–97). “If a man divorces a widow he should pay *her* half mana of silver” (A vi 246–249, B i 25–29, C iv 98). “If he had sex with the widow without *marriage* contract he should not pay *her* any silver” (A vi 250–24, B i 30–36)⁸.

These particular laws indicate the existence of the divorce in the ancient Sumerian society. They seem to imply the husband as an initiator of divorce and establish the settlement payouts depending on the status of the wife and circumstances of the marriage.

Another Sumerian law that deals with dissolution of marriage belongs to Lipit-Ishtar collection ca. 1900 BCE found mainly in Nippur represented in five different fragments⁹.

“If a married man had sex with the street prostitute and the judges order him not to go back to her. *If* later on he divorces his main wife and pays her silver as her divorce settlement, *still* he cannot marry this prostitute” (B xix 20’–29’, F iii 21 – iv 5, J iii 21’ – iv 8, L ii 3’– 4’ K iii 1’ – 5’).

While Ur Nammu laws focus solely on the size of the divorce settlement, the Lipit-Ishtar legislation definitely contains ethical concerns. It imposes the limitations upon a husband who was unfaithful to his wife. The law definitely discourages extramarital activities of the husband with a street (not a temple) prostitute by limiting his ability to marry a prostitute with whom he had an affair, even if he divorces his wife and pays her the settlement. The law cited above is preceded by another matrimonial legislation (B xix 1’ – 8’, F ii 26 –iii 6, J iii 1’ – 6’ L I 1’ – 5’), which prohibits divorce in the case where the first-ranking wife becomes paralytic or unattractive.¹⁰

⁷ Martha T. Roth *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1997), 13–14.

⁸ Transliteration published by Roth was used in this translation.

⁹ Roth, *Law Collections*, 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

Ethical issues were in the middle of the event described in neo-Sumerian¹¹ tablet from Bagdad museum published in 1959 J. J. by van Dijk¹². The document marked as IM. 28051 contained the description of the court rendering with regard to divorce proceedings. The text of the tablet records three charges the husband pressed against his wife. She stole from his storage, made an opening in his oil jar, and her husband found her sleeping with another man.¹³ The text talks about the divorce money, but due to the breaks in the text, it is unclear if the settlement was paid. The concluding lines of the document describe the humiliating punishment the woman received from the court.¹⁴

Unfortunately Sumerian law codes are very brief on the subject of the divorce. However, the texts discussed above and some other fragmentary Sumerian legal texts, not mentioned in this section¹⁵ regarding spousal infidelity, constitute important contributing factors to the handling of the process of dissolution of the marriage¹⁶.

Babylonian Texts

The broad spectrum of Babylonian texts that deal with marriage includes different law codes as well as private marriage documents, contracts, and court records discovered across the whole of Mesopotamia from the Old

¹¹ J. J. A van Dijk. "Neusumerische Gerichtsurkunden." in *Bagdad* 21 (1962): 70.

¹² J. J. A van Dijk. "Textes Divers Du Musee De Bagdad." *Sumer* 15, no. 1&2 (1959): 5-15.

¹³ Greengus Samuel, "A textbook Case of Adultery in Ancient Mesopotamia," *HUCA* 40-41 (1969-1970): 35. Due to the ambiguities of gender determination in Sumerian language van Dijk in his translation of the text presented the situation as the case of the wife against the husband. According to his interpretation the wife caught the husband in a homosexual act with another man. Greengus in his article presents strong evidences against van Dijk's rendering of the document.

¹⁴ The punishment included shaving the genitals. Sumerian *sur.ra gal₄.la* echoes the "נִפְלְאָה לְהַרְגֵּלָהּ" ("her loins will fall away") curse from Num. 5:27. However in the case of Numbers 5, the curse comes as a result of drinking bitter water while the Sumerian document definitely describes mutilation as a form of punishment enforced by the court. For detailed discussion on all aspects of the meanings of Num. 5:27 see Daniel Boyarin, *Women's Bodies and the Rise of the Rabbis: The Case of Sotah*, Vol. XVI, in *Jews and Gender: The Challenge to Hierarchy*, Studies in Contemporary Jewry 88-100 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ See for example the additional fragment of Ur Nammu Code (U 7739) published by O. R Gurney and S. N. Kramer, "Two Fragments of Sumerian Laws," *Assyriological Studies*, (1965): 13-19; also several tablets from so called 'completed judgments' (DI.TIL.LA) that came mainly from Lagash from the period of the third dynasty of Ur contain records from the court cases related to the disputes over the divorce money and the dissolution of the marriage published by H. de Genouilliac, "Textes Juridiques de l'Epoque d'Ur," *Revue d'Assyriologie* (1911): 8-9, 15-17, 22-23.

¹⁶ A wife's infidelity is considered by the school of Shamai as the only possible ground for divorce.

Babylonian, Middle Babylonian, and Neo-Babylonian periods. The documents from all three periods are well researched and few texts that specifically address divorce were found among the private documents as well as in the law codes.

Two Babylonian law codes are dated to the Old Babylonian period: the Code of Eshnuna and the Code of Hammurabi.¹⁷ Two tablets containing the Laws of Eshnuna that were discovered at Tel Harmal and dated from 18th century BCE¹⁸ contain several legislations that are related to marriage, however, only §59 directly deals with divorce. The law is written in the casuistic format with the protasis that states simply three factual elements.¹⁹ The apodosis, however, is much more difficult to understand. Line 33, which is the last clause, is poorly preserved and the identity of the subject in lines 31-33 is not clear. In other words, the syntax of the clause from the apodosis does not allow for determining who bears the penalty of divorce, the husband or the wife.²⁰ Goetze,²¹ Yaron,²² and Westbrook,²³ in their monographs, provided detailed discussions of all issues concerning the restoration of the text and subject of the apodosis. Due to the limitations of this research, it is impossible to discuss all the aspects, complications, and different scholarly opinions about the text and the meaning of this law. Nevertheless, based on the comparison with the similar Babylonian legal documents, Goetze, Yaron, Roth,²⁴ and Falkowitz²⁵ have found that the subject of the subclauses in the apodosis has to be “he,” meaning the husband. According to Falkowitz, law #59 is translated as follows:

If a man begat sons, divorced his wife and married another, that man will be uprooted from the house and property and may go after whom he loves. The wife (on the other hand, she claims the house).²⁶

¹⁷ For detailed definition of the period see for example: Raymond Westbrook, *Old Babylonian Marriage Law* (PhD diss., Yale University, 1982; New Haven, CT: UMI Dissertation Series, 1982), 1:1-2.

¹⁸ Roth, *Law Collections*, 57-58.

¹⁹ Reuven Yaron, *The Laws of Eshnuna* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1969), 137-138.

²⁰ As it is rendered in Yaron's translation, see Yaron, *ibid.*, 51.

²¹ Albrecht Goetze, *The Laws of Eshnunna* (New Haven, CT: Dept. of Antiquities of the Government of Iraq and the American Schools of Oriental Research, 1956), 142-146.

²² Yaron, *Laws of Eshnuna*, 137-145.

²³ Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 2:208ff.

²⁴ Roth, *Law Collections*, 68.

²⁵ Robert Falkowitz, “Paragraph 59 of the ‘Laws of Eshnunna’,” *RA* 72 (1978): 79-80.

²⁶ Falkowitz, ‘Laws of Eshnunna’ 79.

Even though the Eshnunna legislation is directly concerned with the financial side of the divorce settlement, it is apparent that ethical issues are taken into consideration. The law definitely intends to make the remarriage of the man who has sons very expensive. Legislation does not only provide the divorce settlement for the wife but it ensures that the heirs will not be cheated.²⁷

The Code of Hammurabi is the largest legislative text from the Old Babylonian period. Out of 282 laws included in the code, 50 deal with a variety of family and matrimonial issues.²⁸ Laws in the §§133–143 are related to divorce and remarriage. They can be subdivided into three subtopics: §§ 133–136, §§137–140, and §§141–143.

The first subtopic does not directly mention divorce, but presents a different situation where the wife of the man who became captive ‘enters another house’ (*ina bit shanim irrub*). Driver classified these cases as matrimonial offences and equated them with adultery,²⁹ while Westbrook considered these circumstances as remarriage caused by the prolonged absence of the husband³⁰ presumed dead. These laws are parallel with Deuteronomy 24:4 that prohibits reunification between the ex-wife and ex-husband. In the case of the Hammurabi Laws the wife must return to her husband, even if she has children from her ‘entering another house’, when it was discovered that her remarriage was caused by her inability to support herself (§§ 134–135). In this case, she has not committed any offence. However, if the wife had enough provision during the extensive absence of her husband and nevertheless remarried, this is considered as crime of adultery (§133). Only when the man is considered a deserter does his wife have full rights to stay with her new husband (§136).

The laws in §§137–140 address marriage settlements that the husband has to pay if he decides to dissolve the marriage. These paragraphs are based upon the same principle as the Law of Eshnunna §59,³¹ although they are more complex. While LE requires the husband to give the house to his wife and

²⁷ Based on the comparison with the other Babylonian documents that will be considered below, it appears that if the man did not have heirs, his settlement could be cheaper. The other laws and contracts put specific clauses about the wife who cannot bear a son. The childless wife enjoys much lesser legal protection under the Babylonian family law. See for example Mervin Breneman, “Nuzi Marriage Tablets” (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1971), and Samuel Greengus, “The Old Babylonian Marriage Contract,” *JASOR* 89.3 (1969).

²⁸ Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 1:31.

²⁹ J. C. Miles G. R. Driver, *The Babylonian Laws* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 1:285.

³⁰ Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 1:32.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1:32.

children, it is not specified there if the house includes any assets such as fields or orchards that could be around the house. LH specifically indicates the portion of the assets that the father must give to the children and to the wife after the children grow up (§137). Paragraphs 138–140 confirm the conclusion made above with regard to the purpose of LE §59 to protect the heirs. The childless ex-wife receives just her bride price and the dowry. If the social status of the family is lower the payout is also lower. Compared to LE §59, stipulations of LH §138–140 are formulated in a less aggressive manner giving the husband more flexibility in his exit from the family. Different terms in LH denote the social status of the wife. Besides the expression “first ranking wife” used in §§138–140, which also occurred in the laws of Ur Nammu in relation to the wife, §137 mentions the terms *shugetum* and *naditum*. These words also occur in §§144–146 and their meanings are disputed.³² In all the laws of §§138–140, divorce is mentioned as a part of the protasis; they regulate the consequences of husband’s decision to divorce, but do not explain the grounds for such a decision.

In §§141–143, divorce is a part of the apodosis and represents a consequence of the actions of the other party. According to §141, a man can divorce his wife without paying her any settlement if she “decides to leave, appropriates goods, squanders her household possessions, or disparages her husband.”³³ This statute has some parallels to the accusations described in the court record from the Neo-Sumerian IM 28051 tablet discussed in the previous section. However, LH §141 does not mention explicit sexual misconduct,³⁴ which was an important part of the Sumerian proceedings. LH §129 deals with the case where the wife was actually caught in the act of adultery. In this case, she and her lover are thrown into the water unless husband pardons her. Instead of public humiliation as in the Sumerian case, in LH the wife can lose her life. The situation where the wife is not caught in adultery, but only suspected by her husband or by other people is discussed in §§131–2. These statutes have some similarity with Num 5 *sotah* case law. However, LH does not mention any consequences for the situation when the wife admits to her infidelity. In his doctoral dissertation, Raymond Westbrook had a detailed discussion on this matter. He believed that the Akkadian *mussa ushamta* (belittles her husband) implies sexual misconduct,

³² For a detailed discussion of the meaning of the terms see Driver, *Babylonian Laws*, 294–96 and also Paul Koschaker, *Rechtsvergleichende Studien zur Gesetzgebung Hammurapis* (Leipzig: Vait, 1917), 190–191.

³³ Roth, *Law Collections*, 107–8.

³⁴ Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 215.

which if admitted or proven, will give a husband the right to divorce his wife.³⁵ Driver's position was that §141 does not have adultery among the marital offences while §143 does.³⁶ From the Laws themselves it is hard to determine whether this discovered infidelity could lead just to divorce or to execution. In Num 5 consequences for proven adultery come upon the woman in a form of curses³⁷.

Laws 142–143 uniquely demonstrate the options of the woman if she initiates the dissolution of the marriage.³⁸ Even though the woman, according to LH, has such opportunity, this can have deadly consequences for her, if she fails to prove her case. In all three laws, the dissolution of the marriage is clearly predicated on the decision of the court.

On the other hand, according to Westbrook, §§138–140 allow “divorcing a wife without justification.”³⁹ In other words, issues of settlement and dowry represent the pivotal point in the Hammurabi divorce legislation. If the husband is willing to settle with his wife, no special investigation seems to be needed. If the husband wants to keep the dowry and avoid settlement he should find specific justification that is to be proven by the authority. The same is applied to the wife who wants to get out of marriage and keep her dowry. In Deuteronomy 24:1–4 divorce is a part of the protasis,⁴⁰ however no mention of any type of settlement is found neither in the book of Deuteronomy nor in any other text of the Torah.

A specific case is addressed in §§148–9 where the wife is seized by *la'bum* disease.⁴¹ The statute allows the husband to remarry but prohibits him from divorcing his sick wife without her consent.⁴² In this case she receives her dowry.

Besides the law collections of Eshnunna and Hammurabi, several private documents unfold the picture of the divorce proceedings that happened in the real life during the Old Babylonian period. The undated

³⁵ Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 215–6.

³⁶ Driver, *Babylonian Laws*, 303.

³⁷ For the details see Boyarin, *Women's Bodies*.

³⁸ Driver, *Babylonian Laws*, 301 interpreted the action of the wife as a “marital offence” through refusal of conjugal rights. Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 100–2 argued that the law is related to the bride who desires to nullify her betrothal.

³⁹ Westbrook, *ibid.*, 200–1.

⁴⁰ Detailed syntactic structure of Deuteronomy 24:1–4 will be discussed in the next section.

⁴¹ [“A malarial-type fever or a skin disease,” Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper, Code of Hammurabi (Long Version). Milestone Documents. <https://www.milestonedocuments.com/documents/view/code-of-hammurabi/glossary>]

⁴² Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 216.

tablet CT 45, 86 from British Museum found in Sippar, although very poorly preserved, records actual divorce court proceedings:

In the presence of these witnesses they questioned Aham – nirshu: ‘is this woman still your wife?’ He declared: ‘Hang me on a peg, yea dismember me—I will not stay married (to her)!’ Thus he said. They questioned his wife and she answered: ‘I (still) love my husband.’ Thus she answered. He, however, refused. He knotted up her hem and cut it off! The gentlemen questioned him: “A woman, who has come to live with your family and whose status of married wife is known to your ward, is she to depart simply like that? Fit her exactly as (she was when) she moved with you!”⁴³

No financial arrangement is recorded. This supposedly led Westbrook to believe that the proceeding follows LH §141. This conclusion, however, does not seem to make any sense. According to Veenhof, the last sentence clearly indicates the court injunction to restore to the woman what she brought along.⁴⁴ This case is in line with §§137ff where the husband exercises his will to divorce and, since his wife has not committed any marital offence, he must pay the settlement.

Document CT 45, 86 describes the act, which seems to be associated with divorce proceedings before the court. The husband cuts the hem (*sissiktam bataqum*) of his wife. This phrase is attested in five OB documents.⁴⁵ Three of these documents, CT 45, 86; VAS 8, 9–10, and Newell 1900, deal with the dissolution of the marriage while two are related to the nullification of the betrothal. Two tablets that come from Sippar: CT 45, 86, and VAS 8, 9–10 use the expression *sissiktam bataqum* to denote the severance of the relations, while the traditional verb *ezebum*⁴⁶ used for divorce in LH does not occur there.

The same ‘*sissiktu*’ clause occurs in the documents from the Middle Babylonian period found in Nuzi.⁴⁷ Seven tablets contain fragments of divorce court records where the husband nullifies his marriage and pays out the settlement. Among these records tablets H XIX 136, G 33, H XIX 135, H

⁴³ Veenhof K. R., “The Dissolution of an Old Babylonian Marriage According to CT 45,86,” *RA* 70.2 (1976): 154.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁴⁵ Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 193.

⁴⁶ The Hebrew cognate for this Akkadian verb is עזב (to leave or to abandon), however Deuteronomy 24 uses the verb שלח (to send away).

⁴⁷ J. Mervin Breneman, “Nuzi Marriage Tablets,” *Doctoral Dissertation* (Brandeis University, 1971), 246–248.

XIX 138 and AASOR XVI 32 mention the act of hem cutting. H XIX 135 also records breaking of the marriage tablet,⁴⁸ which refers to the destroying of the contract.⁴⁹ Precise meaning of the cutting of hem is unclear but Akkadian *sisiktu* could be cognate with Hebrew ציצית.⁵⁰ It is also possible to suggest that the Akkadian verb *bataqum* corresponds to Hebrew verb כרת that contains the idea of cutting or separating. The word כריתות that is a part bill of divorcement clause in Deut 24:1–4 ‘cutting’ derives from the root כרת. The act of cutting the hem does not appear in any formal law but apparently was used in real divorce practice throughout the second millennium BCE.⁵¹

Another court document presents the following interest case of Tablet BE 6/1 59 from Sippar which dates back to the reign of Samsuiluna descendant of Hammurabi. In this case, the wife is stricken by epilepsy⁵² and the court orders divorce. This litigation appears to be in conflict with the LH 148–9 court case and which actually has power to forbid the divorce. Westbrook struggled with this contradiction and suggested that *ezebsha iqbu* in this context means court’s permission for divorce.⁵³ This explanation does not remove the tension between the legislation and the practice. LH 148–9 is clear that the husband is permitted to take a second wife, but is forbidden to divorce and is obliged to sustain his wife in his house unless the wife does not agree to stay in his house. According to this law, the court does not have power to grant the permission for divorce. It is possible to argue that the *la’bum* disease mentioned in the law and *kishuti ilim* mentioned in BE 6/1 59 present different circumstances. This may imply that the court had authority to act in accordance with local customs and situations. Two examples of the court documents discussed above demonstrate the difference between the written legislation that existed in this period and actual practice.

⁴⁸ Breneman referred to Gadd’s 1926 translation of the Nuzi tablets and argued that that *sisiktu* means veil. Koshaker believed that *sisiktu* is synonymous to *qanu*. Driver, and later Westbrook, disagreed with this translation. For detailed analysis of the Akkadian noun *sisiktu* see CAD, v. 15, 322–5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁵⁰ In this case it is possible to suggest that the commandment found in Num 15:38–39 where Israelites are told to make tassels (ציצית) has to do with the public demonstration of their covenantal relations with God. In fact, this ordinance contains the words ולא תהרו אחרי לבבכם ולא תהרו אחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זנים אחריהם: (“and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot”), which is definitely a language of marital unfaithfulness.

⁵¹ In Sumerian Law Handbook of Forms §iv:15–16 (Roth, *Law Collections*, 50) the cutting of *siku* (*bab. sisiktu*) is mentioned. However, the origin of this document is unclear. Scholars consent that this prism was used for scribal exercises. The phrase ‘^ugsiku-ni in-kud’ resembles the language of the divorce court record rather than the law.

⁵² Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 1:68.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2:193.

Significant differences with LH and LE are found in various marriage contracts from the OB period discussed in detail by Westbrook.⁵⁴ The penalties for the divorce that the father of the bride stipulates upon the husband are much more elaborate and sophisticated compared to legislation in LH 137–140. According to Westbrook, “the OB law of divorce thus frequently presents a dichotomy which has been a source of much confusion, but which in our view is not the expression of a conflict within a legal system or even two legal systems; [it] is the difference between theory and practice.”⁵⁵ Tablet BE 6/1 59 demonstrates that the theory can sometime contradict the practice.

Many Old Babylonian marriage contracts were designed with the goal of preventing their breach. For example CT 2 44 from Sippar, created during the reign of Apil-Sin the predecessor of Hammirabi, states:

If Taram – Sagila and Iltani say to their husband Warad – Shamash ‘You are not my husband’ they shall cast then from a tower. And if Warad – Shamash says to his wives Taram – Sagila and Iltani ‘You are not my wife’, he shall forfeit the house and furniture.”⁵⁶

Although this agreement has some parallels with LE 59, its language is much stricter and involves the death penalty for one party and complete forfeiture of the property for the other party if either of the parties attempts a divorce. While LE 59 intends to discourage divorce, stipulations in CT 2 44 definitely meant to prevent one from happening. The same language is used in the tablet PS 8/2 107 from Nippur. Although no wife’s execution is mentioned, the husband’s decision for divorce could cost him his house, field, and orchard. Westbrook described several more documents with very severe punitive actions against the husband who wishes to divorce.⁵⁷ It is apparent that the bride’s father included special safeguards in these agreements that intended to prevent divorce from happening.

With time, style and vocabulary of the Babylonian marriage agreement have undergone changes. In the documents discovered from the Neo-Babylonian period, no mention of the cutting the hem act was attested. While strong preventive language is present, it aims to prevent adultery, not the divorce.⁵⁸ Many tablets, such as BM 54158 lines 23–26; 50149 lines 9–12,

⁵⁴ Westbrook, *Marriage Law*, 2:218–238.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:107

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:219; 2:220–1.

⁵⁸ No adultery was mentioned in the OB marriage contracts.

BM 61176 lines 10–11 and others,⁵⁹ contain the provision of punishment through death by dagger if the wife is found with another man. However, the penalties for the husband’s decision to divorce are strictly monetary. The new verb (*w*)*ushuru* (release)⁶⁰ is used instead of *ezebu*, but the OB declaration “you are not my wife” remains in circulation.⁶¹ In OB, the verb *wushuru*, which is a D-stem of (*w*)*asharu*,⁶² is used to denote the *manumation* of slaves. In the Middle Babylonian period, the verb was used to convey the idea of sending,⁶³ analogous to the Hebrew verb לָשַׁל used in Deut 24 and in Mal 2.

Several agreements contain the statement that specifies the option for the husband to remarry⁶⁴ added to the (*w*)*asharu* clause. While some contracts allow the wife to ‘go where she wishes,’⁶⁵ which may provide for the possibility to remarry without any legal constraints attached. Other agreements stipulate the wife’s return to her father’s house.⁶⁶

Based on the marriage agreements published by Roth, it is clear that Neo Babylonian marriage and divorce traditions differed from the ones legislated during the period of Hammurabi. In 1889 Peiser published a short collection of tablets from the British Museum that contained Neo-Babylonian laws. No direct mention of divorce was found there.⁶⁷ Therefore, a comparison between the laws and the tradition is not possible. Nevertheless, it appears that society took divorce and remarriage during NB period much more lightly than during the OB and MB periods.

Assyrian Laws.

In comparison with the number of Babylonian documents related to the marriage and divorce, Assyrian material is much more scarce. The Middle Assyrian Law collection from ca 1076 BCE⁶⁸ contains several paragraphs that deal with the issue of divorce. Two laws in §§37–8 use the verb *ezebu*, which

⁵⁹ Martha Roth, *Babylonian Marriage Agreements 7th–3rd Centuries B.C.* (Kevelaer, Germany: Butzon & Bercker Verlag, 1989), 40–55.

⁶⁰ Andrew George, Nicolas Postgate Jeremy Black, *A Consise Dictionary of Akkadian* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 436.

⁶¹ See for example BM 61176 from 584 BCE.

⁶² *Washaru* is a G-form of the verbal root which according to CAD is semantically unrelated to (*w*)*ushuru*.

⁶³ George, Postgate, Black, *Dictionary*.

⁶⁴ For example: Strassmaier Liverpool 8, VAS 6 61.

⁶⁵ Strassmaier Liverpool 8, BM 30571.

⁶⁶ For example BM 61176.

⁶⁷ Driver, *Babylonian Laws*, 1:324–349.

⁶⁸ Roth., *Law Collection*, 153.

is the same as in LH. Syntactically, in both of these laws, divorce is a part of the protasis. Both laws deal with the issue of property and, compared to LH, give much fewer rights to the wife.

“If a man divorces his wife if it is his will he shall give her something; if it is not, he shall not give her anything and she shall go forth empty.”

“If a woman is still dwelling in her father’s house and her husband divorces her, he may take the ornaments which he himself bestowed on her; he shall not claim the bridal gift which he has brought, he then is quit in respect with the woman”⁶⁹

These two legislations create a legal environment which differs significantly from the Babylonian legal background discussed above. While in Babylon the groom always has to take the bride out of her parents’ house, in Assyria, apparently, the wife can stay in her father’s house. No mention is made of this case in the Babylonian code.⁷⁰

Due to the limited availability of Assyrian legal documents, especially in the area of matrimonial law, the meaning of the MAL §38 remains unclear. Driver⁷¹ and Morgenstern⁷² suggested the possibility for matrilocal family structure in Assyrian society. The other way to explain the wife’s living in her father’s house is to suggest that the woman was living in the house of her father from the time of her betrothal until she actually moved in with her husband. This interpretation means that the married woman living in her husband’s household in Assyria had very limited rights and protection and in the case of the husband’s decision to divorce, she could lose absolutely everything. On the other hand, MAL §34 that addresses the case of marriage between the husband and the widow describes the situation when the husband could live in his wife’s house and in this case, the husband’s property rights were limited. The circumstances described in MAL §38 are parallel with §35. In other words, due to the social status of the man, the richer family of the bride could take him in without any rights of ownership to their estate. In this case, it is obvious that the woman had more protection in her own house.

⁶⁹ J. C. Miles, G. R. Driver, *The Assyrian Laws* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1975), 404–5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Julian Morgenstern, “Beena Marriage (Matriarchat) in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Implications,” *ZAW NF* 6 (1929): 91–110.

A similar situation with the wife's having more rights than the husband is reflected in the Neo-Assyrian marriage tablet ND 2703 from the Iraq museum.⁷³ The agreement gives the option of divorce for both parties. However, if the wife divorces her husband, she walks away without any penalty attached. The husband will have to pay two-fold if he initiates the dissolution of the marriage. Such an agreement is unique. It may support the idea of a matrilocal family structure. The text of the contract definitely shows that the wife is the wealthier member of the family and she brings her dowry into a joint household. The scarcity of Assyrian matrimonial documents prevents making definite conclusions.

Detailed discussion about the exact meaning of the wife's staying in her father's house and the issue of the matrilocal family in Assyrian culture is beyond the scope of this research. However, the issue of belonging to the household plays a significant role in Deuteronomy divorce legislation. In vv. 1–2, the husband sends his wife away from his household and she enters the household of another man (וַיִּצְאָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ וְשִׁלְחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ).

While Assyrian matrimonial legislation significantly differs from the Babylonian, limited comparison between a real marriage contract and the Middle Assyrian Law demonstrates the same difference between the written law and real judicial document.

Elephantine Papyri.

Papyri from the 5th century BCE produced by Jewish settlers in Elephantine have been very well researched. Nevertheless “in the Elephantine documents divorce is one of the more difficult topics.”⁷⁴ Only three complete marriage contracts were found and they contain provisions concerning divorce. For, example, contract C15 from 441 BCE contains this wording: מחר [אז י]ום אחרן תקום [מפ]טחיה בערה ותאמר שנאת לאסחור בעלי [“To-morrow or (another) day (if) (Miph)ṭahiah should stand up in the congregation and say, I divorce Aṣḥor my husband”].⁷⁵ Two other marriage contracts, K2 from 449 BCE and K7 from 420 BCE,⁷⁶ in the Brooklyn

⁷³ J. N. Postgate, *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents* (Warminster, UK: Teddington House, 1976), 103–107.

⁷⁴ Reuven Yaron, *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 53.

⁷⁵ Cowley A., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BC* (Osnabruck, Germany: Otto Zeller, 1967), 44–45, ll 22–23.

⁷⁶ Brooklyn Museum, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri*, ed. E. G. Kraeling (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953).

Museum, have similar expressions⁷⁷. The payment of settlement follows the declaration of divorce. This practice and the language of the declaration are very similar to the ones found in Neo-Babylonian contracts. Instead of a punitive action or an extreme circumstance, as appear in the ancient contracts, dissolution of the marriage becomes a mere provision.⁷⁸

All three contracts use the same word **שנא** (lit. hatred) for divorce. This word occurs in the book of Mal 2:16 and according to the Masoretic vocalization, expresses God's hatred for divorce 'כִּי־שָׂנֵא שְׁלֵחַ אֶמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל' [“For I hate divorce, says Yahweh, God of Israel,” NJB]. However, the LXX does not view the Hebrew **שֶׁלַח** as an infinitive absolute that carries a nominal function and translates it as subjunctive in the second person **ἐξαποστείλης** changing the subject of **שָׂנֵא** from God to husband, thus allowing the husband to divorce his wife if he hates her.

No lexical or legal relations with Deut 24:1–4 can be observed in these documents. In Deuteronomic law, the certainty of *divorce* is assured by the delivery of the bill of divorce to the wife; no such document is mentioned in the Aramaic papyri.⁷⁹ Any connection between the Bible and the Elephantine marriage contracts, if argued, can only be found through the LXX recension of Mal 2:15. However, scholars here suggested a few connections between the Elephantine papyri and rabbinic halakhah.⁸⁰ While there seems to be no relation between the legal procedure of divorce described in the papyri and in rabbinic law, it is possible that the understanding of the nature of the dissolution of marriage depicted in Elephantine and Neo-Babylonian documents could have some impact on the development of traditional divorce halakhah.

Conclusions

It has been emphasized by many researchers that the casuistic style of the legislation found in Deuteronomy 24:1–4 with the divorce clause found in protasis points to the fact that this biblical passage does not legislate

⁷⁷ C15 contains the clauses that permit the declaration of divorce by both a wife and a husband. Such practice goes against other ANE laws and against conventional halakhah. For details cf. Reuven Yaron, "Aramaic Marriage Contracts from Elephantine," *JSS* 3.1 (1958): 11–28.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁹ Yaron, *Aramaic Papyri*, 54.

⁸⁰ Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 222.

divorce.⁸¹ Most of the Sumerian and Babylonian Middle Assyrian laws that deal with divorce are syntactically casuistic. With the exception of LH 141–143, in all ANE legislations discussed above as well as in Deut. 24, divorce is mentioned in the protasis. This means that these laws were designed not actually to sanction the divorce, but to regulate the consequences of the decision to dissolve the marriage. However, in spite of apparent similarities between the syntactical structure of the ANE laws and Deut 24:1–4, there are significant differences between them.

Among the three groups of law codes considered above, Middle Assyrian laws are notorious for the absence of any ethical concerns and considerations with regards to the procedure of the divorce. No attempts to prevent the divorce have been found in MAL or in Neo-Babylonian, Neo-Assyrian, and Elephantine marriage contracts. On the contrary, Sumerian, Old and Middle Babylonian laws and legal documents attempt to create safeguards that would prevent divorce. Neither in Assyrian nor in Babylonian legal documents has spousal infidelity been found as a direct cause for the divorce. On the other hand, the Sumerian matrimonial system makes some connections between divorce and adultery. In fact, only Sumerian legal documents contain the mention of the reasons for divorce. All these observations point to commonalities between earlier ANE laws and the law found in Deut 24:1–4 that spells out specific reason for divorce. This fact could indicate to the early second millennium origin of the Deuteronomic legislation.

Unlike the ancient Sumerian and Babylonian divorce customs, Neo-Babylonian and Elephantine traditions treat divorce much more lightly. While some Middle Babylonian customs associated with divorce present it as a “cutting off” procedure, which concurs with the language found in Deut 24:1, Elephantine and Neo-Babylonian legal documents portray divorce as a legal transaction, focused more on the details of the settlement, rather than on the severance of relations. The language of these documents could have been at the root of the Early Rabbinic legal terminology associated with divorce. This usage substitutes the biblical phrase ספר כריתות with the legal term *get*, which simply means ‘a transaction receipt’ that allows a wife to remarry.

⁸¹ See for example, A. Toeg, “Does Deuteronomy 24:1–4 Incorporate a General Law of Divorce?” *Dine Israel: An Annual of Jewish Law* 2 (1971): 5–24; R. Gane, “Old Testament Principles Relating to Divorce and Remarriage,” *JATS* 12.2 (2001): 35–61; Peter G. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 271; R. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 395.

Cosmic Conflict and Divine Kingship in Babylonian Religion and Biblical Apocalypses

Roy and Constance Gane

Introduction

Richard M. Davidson has highlighted the important and neglected fact that the Bible presents God's end-time judgment, an eschatological Day of Atonement (Dan 7:10; 8:14; Rev 14:6, 7, etc.; cf. Lev 16; 23:26–32), as good news. He elucidated several encouraging aspects of this judgment, including vindication of God's character:

God is shown to be just and yes, merciful, in bringing the Great Controversy to an end...

The redeemed will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb:

Great and wonderful are thy deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are thy ways,

O King of the ages! (Rev. 15:3, RSV).¹

¹ Richard M. Davidson, "The Good News of Yom Kippur," *JATS* 2.2 (1991): 22.

In this essay dedicated to Richard, our dear friend and colleague, we will explore some aspects of the way God brings the Great Controversy, i.e., the cosmic conflict between God and the forces of evil, to an end and restores his eternal kingship over Planet Earth. We will focus on striking parallels between this combination of themes—cosmic conflict and divine kingship—in ancient Babylonian myth, ritual, and iconography and in the biblical apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation, which illuminate the biblical message through contextual analysis of comparisons and contrasts between them.²

Babylonian Backgrounds to Biblical Apocalypses

It is well known that ancient Near Eastern materials, including from Mesopotamia, provide useful cultural backgrounds to enhance our understanding of biblical apocalypses.³ The parallels that we will investigate here do not simply involve individual elements, i.e., “punctiliar parallels (which could prove anything),”⁴ but equivalences among complex clusters of components with strikingly similar (but not identical) dynamic relationships among them. In fact, it appears that these affinities operate within a shared conceptual framework. Despite the vast differences between the world-views of the Babylonians (polytheistic) and the biblical writers (monotheistic adherents of YHWH), they were addressing the same basic problem, which was fraught with comprehensive implications for the lives of their people: How can destructive forces of cosmic chaos be overcome so that humans can experience security and well-being? The Babylonian and biblical answers are similar: *A deity defeats cosmic evil forces, which are too strong for humans*

² On methodology of such contextual study, see, e.g., William W. Hallo, “Biblical History in its Near Eastern Setting: The Contextual Approach,” in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. C. D. Evans, W. W. Hallo, and J. B. White, PTMS 34 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1980), 1:1–12; idem, “Compare and Contrast: the Contextual Approach to Biblical Literature,” in *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature. Scripture in Context III*, ed. W. W. Hallo, B. W. Jones, and G. L. Mattingly, ANETS 8 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990), 3:1–30; idem, “The Contextual Approach,” in *The Book of the People*, BJS 225 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991); K. Lawson Younger, Jr., “The ‘Contextual Method’: Some West Semitic Reflections,” in *Archival Documents from the Biblical World*, vol. 3 of *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo (Leiden: Brill, 2003), xxxv–xlii.

³ E.g. on Daniel 7, see Jürg Egger, *Influences and Traditions Underlying the Vision of Daniel 7:2–14: The Research History from the End of the 19th Century to the Present*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 177 (Fribourg, Switzerland: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, *Hermeneia* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 280–94.

⁴ Arthur Ferch, *The Son of Man in Daniel Seven*, AUSDDS 6 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), 47.

to resist, and provides the positive benefits of his rule for those who are judged loyal to him.

The trajectory of themes just described is central to the Babylonian cosmic conflict and creation myth *Enuma Elish*,⁵ which both reflected and shaped proud Babylonian self-perception during the first millennium BCE. This myth asserts the exaltation of Marduk, city god of Babylon, to divine kingship following his victory over chaos. In the Hebrew Bible, the thematic progression appears in the book of Daniel, the earliest full-fledged biblical apocalypse.⁶ Here YHWH overcomes evil powers, establishes his dominion, and shares it with his faithful people.

For more than a century, scholars have recognized that Mesopotamian religious culture, attested by extrabiblical texts and material remains, forms part of the background to Daniel.⁷ This fits the internal setting of the book, according to which the prophetic wise man Daniel lived in Babylon from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 BCE) into the beginning of the Persian period (shortly after 539 BCE). He is described as educated in the language and literature of the Chaldeans, who were ruling the Neo-Babylonian empire

⁵ Perhaps composed at Babylon during the Kassite period (c. 1570–1157 B.C.), but it may reflect earlier tradition (e.g., Julie Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia*, Gorgias Dissertations 2, Near Eastern Studies 2, [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2004], 63 and refs. cited there). However, W. G. Lambert has argued that *Enuma Elish* was composed later during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104 BCE) (“The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion,” in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of T. J. Meek*, ed. W. S. McCullough [Toronto: University of Toronto, 1964], 3–13). For a recent publication of the Akkadian cuneiform text (with transliteration and French translation) of this myth, see Philippe Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth Enūma Eliš*, SAACT 4 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2005). An English translation by Benjamin R. Foster is included in *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, vol. 1 of *The Context of Scripture* (hereafter *COS*), ed. W. W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 390–402.

⁶ On the genre of Daniel in relation to its ancient Near Eastern background, see Roy Gane, “Genre Awareness and Interpretation of the Book of Daniel,” in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum; 1997), 137–48 and sources cited there.

⁷ See Egger’s review of research history on possible Mesopotamian backgrounds to Daniel 7 (*Influences and Traditions*, 3–7, 16–17, 20–26, 42–8, 55–7, 78–9, 84–6, 107–8), beginning with Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, trans. K. William Whitney, Jr.; with contributions by Heinrich Zimmern (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); *trans. of Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen. 1 und Ap. Jon 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895). But while Gunkel proposed that *Enuma Elish* formed part of the background to Daniel 7, he did not carry out thorough or precise analysis of parallels between these texts (see *Creation and Chaos*, 205–14, 239–40). Nathaniel Schmidt (“The Son of Man’ in the Book of Daniel,” *JBL* 19 [1900]: 26–7) was the first to name Marduk, the hero of *Enuma Elish*, as a prototype of Michael (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; cf. Rev 12:7), whom he equated with the “one like a son of man” (Dan 7:13).

(Dan 1:4), and he lived and worked in a cultural environment saturated with Babylonian religion. For example, the theophoric name “Nebuchadnezzar” begins with Nabû, the name of Marduk’s divine son (cf. Nebuzaradan in 2 Ki 25:8, 11, 20; Nebushazban in Jer 39:13). Belshazzar (Dan 5) and even the Babylonian name of Daniel himself—Belteshazzar (1:7; 2:26, etc.)—begin with Bēl, “Lord,” the title of Marduk. Thus Nebuchadnezzar II spoke of Daniel as “he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god” (4:8).

Anyone (including any Jew) who lived in Babylonia would likely have known about the exaltation of Marduk, which was ritually reenacted during the spectacular Babylonian New Year (*Akītu*) Festival (see further below). This celebration to renew the world order dominated the capital city each spring and was especially glorious during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II at the apex of Babylonian power.⁸ It is almost unthinkable that an elite scholar trained in Babylonian language and literature, as Daniel is depicted in his book, would not be acquainted with *Enuma Elish*, the quintessential literary legitimization of Babylonian dominance. No doubt the propagandistic myth would have been deemed especially suitable for persuading young foreign captives, such as Daniel and his friends, to accept the superiority of Babylon and the honor of assimilation into its culture (cf. chap. 1).

Nevertheless, John J. Collins observed: “Despite the Babylonian setting of Daniel 1–6 and Gunkel’s appeal to the *Enuma Elish* as the ultimate background of Daniel 7, Babylonian backgrounds have not figured prominently in the discussion of Daniel 7.”⁹ This is largely because recent scholars have generally favored other backgrounds, especially fourteenth century B.C. parallels in Canaanite mythology from Ugarit.¹⁰

For example, John Day strongly maintained that Canaanite mythology, rather than *Enuma Elish*, lay behind Old Testament references to divine conflict against sea monsters representing chaos (e.g., Job 26:12; Isa 27:1), including in Daniel 7.¹¹ Because texts from Ugarit were first discovered in 1929, Hermann Gunkel had no access to them in 1895 when he published his *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*.

⁸ Bidmead, *The Akītu Festival*, 4, 33, 130. On the relationship between the Festival and *Enuma Elish*, which was recited on its fourth day, see 63–70.

⁹ Collins, *Daniel*, 283.

¹⁰ For an overview of this research, see Egger, *Influences and Traditions*, 9–14, 58–70.

¹¹ John Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–12, 160–67, following J. A. Emerton, “The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery,” *JTS* 9.2 (1958), 225–42. Collins agrees that the Canaanite/Ugaritic imagery is closer (*Daniel*, 283–91).

Scholars have proposed a number of other possible ancient backgrounds to Daniel 7, including Israelite prophecy.¹² No set of materials from a single ancient culture completely fits the biblical chapter. As Collins recognized, cultural backgrounds to a given literary work can be complex and varied, so it is not necessary to choose one to the exclusion of others. Thus he concluded that Daniel 7 draws on different sources, including Canaanite mythology “mediated through Israelite tradition,” biblical precedents (e.g., Hos 13), and “hybrid creatures in Near Eastern art and literature.”¹³ John Goldingay recognized links between Daniel 7 and *Enuma Elish* that are likely not coincidental, but he added: “They are themselves paralleled, however, in the equivalent Ugaritic combat myth *Baal*, which has more links with Dan 7 and is likely the less indirect background to it.”¹⁴

Scholars have not forgotten the Babylonian materials, but it appears that these deserve further assessment, given the explicit Babylonian setting of Daniel and ongoing advances in our understanding of it.¹⁵ Anne Gardner has argued that “Gunkel’s thesis in 1895 of a correspondence between the *Enuma Elish* and Daniel has been undervalued,”¹⁶ and she pointed out weaknesses of the Canaanite connection:

not only is the main theme of the Baal myth one of rivalry, provoked by jealousy between two gods, there are few details in the myth which find a reflection in Dan 7,2–14: there is no mention of the winds of heaven bringing about the ensuing situation nor of beasts of any kind emerging from, or being part of, the sea. Neither

¹² See especially Eggler’s survey; cf. Roy Gane, “Hurrian Ullikummi and Daniel’s ‘Little Horn,’” in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Chaim Cohen, Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, Avi Hurvitz, Yochanan Muffs, Baruch J. Schwartz, and Jeffrey H. Tigay (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 485–98. Some possible allusions to biblical classical prophecy in Daniel 7 include a lion, leopard, and bear opposed to God’s people (cf. Hos 13:7–8), horns as powers of destructive nations (cf. Zech 1:18–21), and a superhuman/divine individual having the appearance of a human being (cf. Ezek 1:26). Paul Mosca listed sixteen elements with a “biblical pedigree” in Daniel 7 (“Ugarit and Daniel 7: A Missing Link,” *Bib* 67 [1986]: 500–501).

¹³ Collins, *Daniel*, 296.

¹⁴ John Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 151.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Karel van der Toorn, “Scholars at the Oriental Court: The Figure of Daniel Against its Mesopotamian Background,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, VTSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:37–54; Shalom Paul, “The Mesopotamian Background of Daniel 1–6,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, 1:55–68; William Shea, “The Neo-Babylonian Historical Setting for Daniel 7,” *AUSS* 24 (1986): 31–6.

¹⁶ Anne Gardner, “Daniel 7,2–14: Another Look at its Mythic Pattern,” *Bib* 82 (2001): 246–7.

is there mention of such beasts being allowed to survive although their dominion is taken away, nor is Yam, Baal's adversary killed by fire.¹⁷

In addition, while it is easy to see how a first millennium BCE Jewish author of Daniel could encounter Neo-Babylonian cultural phenomena (see above), scholars who favor the Canaanite connection have not convincingly explained how such an author could have had sufficiently direct access to Canaanite Baal mythology dating to the fourteenth century BCE.¹⁸

Gardner has compiled an impressive series of correspondences between Daniel 7 and *Enuma Elish*, including "four winds" stirring up the sea, beasts/monsters coming from a disturbed sea, exceptional lack of physical identification of the last and greatest enemy (fourth beast/Qingu), enthronement of a divine king, "fire" associated with the presence of a deity, captivity of beasts/monsters (except for one in Daniel, which is burned; cf. the burning of Qingu in some Babylonian New Year Festival texts), "approach" of one being ("one like a "Son of Man"/Marduk) to another ("Ancient of Days"/Anshar) for the former to receive eternal dominion, and movement of the one receiving dominion associated with storm/clouds.¹⁹

John H. Walton too has compared Daniel 7 with *Enuma Elish*, and also with the earlier Mesopotamian chaos combat myth of Anzu and the Ugaritic myth of Baal. He finds a number of common elements/motifs, such as the appearance of a monster, emergence from the sea, revolt, usurpation of a tablet of destinies (or prerogatives associated with it), boastful words, the number eleven (monsters of Tiamat/10 horns + "little horn"), split roles of antagonists (fourth beast + little horn/Tiamat + Qingu), ancient deities, a champion, victory, and honor.²⁰ Walton concludes that Daniel 7 is "an informed and articulate literary mosaic whose author has assimilated and mastered a wide spectrum of literary traditions in order to transform them to his own theological will and purpose."²¹

With similarities to Daniel come differences, which are also instructive.²² Although Gardner found the combination of parallels that she

¹⁷ Gardner, "Daniel 7," 245.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 245–6, 251–2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 247–51.

²⁰ John H. Walton, "The Anzu Myth as Relevant Background for Daniel 7?" in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, 1:69–89, with table on 85.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

²² See Egger, *Influences and Traditions*. For criticisms of Babylonian backgrounds to Daniel 7 based on such differences, see 7–8n24, 57–8n204.

has identified to “strongly suggest that the author of Daniel was aware of the *Enuma Elish*,”²³ Daniel lacks the polytheism of the Babylonian myth: The sea is not divine, enemies are human powers rather than deities, and the heavenly assembly consists of the “Ancient of Days” and his attendants, rather than a group of gods. Furthermore, in *Enuma Elish*,

Marduk is summoned to the divine court and enthroned *prior* to judgement being passed upon Qingu and his fellow monsters whereas “One like a Son of Man’ enters the tale only *after* the punishment of the four beasts. It may be, though, that his prior appearance is implied in Dan 7,9 which says, ‘thrones [in the plural] were placed’.²⁴

Walton has referred to some additional differences:

1. The first three animals in Daniel 7, which are likened to existing creatures, do not correspond to the monsters in *Enuma Elish* or other Akkadian literary works (although winged lions appear in Mesopotamian iconography). Rather, Daniel’s beasts show more affinity to the descriptions of animal abnormalities in the *Shumma Izbu* series of omens.²⁵
2. While Daniel 7 resembles the Anzu myth in that the chief enemy is a ferocious beast, Daniel’s fourth beast is unique (unlike in *Enuma Elish*) in that it belongs to a sequence of beasts that emerge from the sea.²⁶
3. Unlike *Enuma Elish* and other chaos combat myths, Daniel presents a champion (the “one like a Son of Man”) who does not do battle with the enemy.²⁷
4. *Enuma Elish* and other chaos combat myths describe gods challenged by monsters as afraid, but the heavenly beings of Daniel 7 are serene.²⁸

²³ Gardner, 249; cf. 250.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

²⁵ Walton, “The Anzu Myth,” 69–70, 73, following Paul A. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters: A Literary-Critical Study of Daniel 7 and 8*, ConBOT 20 (Lund: Gleerup, 1983), 17–22. On this view, cf. Egger, *Influences and Traditions*, 20–22.

²⁶ Walton, *ibid.*, 74.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80–82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 78–9.

Identifying such similarities and differences between biblical and antecedent extrabiblical views aids interpretation of a biblical composition by shedding light on what its author had in common with other ancient Near Easterners and what he wished to present as unique to the religion of his deity. This comparative process directs attention to aspects of the biblical text that we could otherwise overlook and shows how a servant of YHWH can relate to concepts and people outside his faith tradition and community.²⁹

If Babylonian backgrounds inform our understanding of Daniel, which provides crucial background to the New Testament apocalyptic book of Revelation (e.g., Dan 7:2–7 and Rev 13:1–2; Dan 7:25 and Rev 12:14),³⁰ it seems likely that the Babylonian materials could be secondarily relevant to Revelation. Strengthening this possibility is the fact that the author of Revelation repeatedly uses the name “Babylon” with symbolic reference to a future political-religious power (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21; cf. “Babylon” in 1 Pet 5:13, likely referring to the city of Rome). Choice of this geographic designation is not coincidental: The future power shares traits of the earlier, literal Babylon as depicted in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa 13–14; Jer 50–52; Dan 5; Hab 1–2).

Now we turn to systematic comparative consideration of cosmic conflict and divine kingship in Babylonian religion, Daniel, and Revelation. Of the vast Babylonian corpus, we will focus on *Enuma Elish*, the New Year Festival, and iconographic depictions of superhuman beings, all of which were prominent during the Neo-Babylonian (or Chaldean Dynasty) period (625–539 BCE), when Daniel is said to have lived. We will begin with brief descriptions of the Babylonian materials, then compare aspects of them (indicated by clusters of elements), with analogous features of Daniel and Revelation.³¹ We will conclude by drawing implications of this comparison for our understanding of cosmic conflict and divine kingship.

²⁹ Cf. AU Sung Ik Kim, “Proclamation in Cross-Cultural Context: Missiological Implications of the Book of Daniel,” PhD diss., Andrews University, 2005. For other comparisons between biblical and ancient Mesopotamian religious elements, see, e.g., Roy Gane, “Yearly Accountability in Mesopotamian Cult,” chap. 17 of *Cult and Character* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

³⁰ Cf. Gregory K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

³¹ Previous scholarship has already recognized many of the parallel elements (see above and especially Egger’s survey of possible Mesopotamian backgrounds to Daniel 7 (*Influences and Traditions*, 3–7, 16–17, 20–26, 42–8, 55–7, 78–9, 84–6, 107–8)).

Cosmic Conflict and Divine Kingship in Babylonian Religion

Enuma Elish

Enuma Elish (named after its first Akkadian words, translated “When on high...”) is known today as a myth of Creation. However, “its real focus is on the elevation of Marduk to the top of the pantheon in return for taking up the cause of the embattled gods, who build his great temple of Esagila in Babylon in recognition of his leadership. The composition could therefore be as readily called “The Exaltation of Marduk.”³² *Enuma Elish* is a complex epic presenting a theological system that should be understood as a whole. The following summary of its contents traces the development of cosmic conflict and divine kingship.

Tablet I begins by recounting primordial theogony from an original pair of watery gods: the male Apsu (fresh water) and the female Tiamat (chaotic salty sea; lines 1–20). They produced children; then Anshar and Kishar were formed and “grew lengthy of days, added years to years,” and produced their firstborn Anu, who begot Nudimmud = Ea (lines 10–20). Boisterous behavior of their divine children disturbed Apsu, who plotted with his vizier to destroy them, but the wise god Ea killed Apsu and bound his vizier (lines 21–72). Then Ea fathered Marduk, a huge, splendid son, tallest and greatest of the gods, “a hero at birth...a mighty one from the beginning,” endowed with special powers and glory (lines 73–104).

More trouble brewed when Anu, Marduk’s grandfather, created “the four winds” as playthings for his grandson, along with a duststorm and waves that churned up the watery Tiamat (lines 105–109). Unable to rest, a group of gods plotted with their mother Tiamat to destroy Anu and his family, including Ea (lines 110–132). To prepare, Tiamat created eleven ferocious monsters, including composite creatures: “...serpents, dragons, and hairy hero-men, lion monsters, lion men, scorpion men, mighty demons, fish men, bull men” (lines 133–146). Tiamat elevated Qingu to be her husband, command her army, rule the assembly of gods, and possess “the tablet of destinies,” which gave authority to make unalterable commands and determine the destinies of his divine children (lines 147–162).

Tablet II describes how the divine objects of Tiamat’s wrath—including Anshar, whom Ea addressed as “My father, inscrutable, ordainer of destinies, who has power to create and destroy...”—were horrified and afraid to engage

³² Note by William W. Hallo introducing Benjamin R. Foster’s translation in *COS* 1:390–91.

her forces (lines 1–126). But then Marduk (called “the Lord”) approached his great-grandfather Anshar to volunteer, and Anshar readily granted him the commission to go “with the storm chariot” in order to subdue Tiamat with his “sacred spell” (lines 127–153). Delighted, Marduk set the condition that the divine assembly should appoint for him a supreme destiny, namely, that henceforth he would be the one to fix unalterable destinies (lines 154–163).³³

In Tablets III and IV, Anshar invited “all the great gods, ordainers of [destinies],” to a feast, at which they got drunk and ordained Marduk’s destiny as their champion and king, whose word would be supreme (III, lines 1–138; IV, lines 1–34).³⁴ Although Marduk awesomely displayed the power of his word by successfully commanding the destruction and renewed creation of a constellation (IV, lines 22–26), he did not take any chances by relying on his word alone against Tiamat. Rather, he readied his weapons, including destructive winds, and mounted his four-steed storm chariot, “garbed in a ghastly armored garment,” with his head “covered with terrifying auras” (lines 35–58).

When Marduk and his allies saw Tiamat’s forces, they initially faltered, and she cast her spell and uttered lies (lines 59–74). But Marduk responded by accusing her of wrongdoing, including deception, spurning natural feeling for her children, appointing Qingu as chief god when he had no right to be, and perpetrating evil against the gods, including “Anshar, sovereign of the gods” (lines 75–84).

Then Marduk challenged Tiamat to a duel, and she went hysterical as he recited an incantation and cast his spell (lines 85–92). Then Marduk encircled her with his net, released wind into her mouth so that it bloated her belly, and shot his arrow so that it broke open her belly and pierced her heart (lines 93–104). Having slain Tiamat, he scattered her army, imprisoned her divine allies, bound and trampled her eleven monstrous creatures and demons, captured Qingu and “took away from him the tablet of destinies that he had no right to” (lines 105–127). Turning back to Tiamat’s carcass, Marduk trampled it, crushed her skull, cut her open, split her in two, and from her parts he made the cosmos, with places for the high gods Ea, Enlil, and Anu to dwell (lines 128–146).

Tablet V continues with Marduk’s creation from Tiamat of elements such as stars, the moon, underground springs, the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, mountains, and the netherworld (lines 1–64; cf. Gen 1–2). Notice that

³³ COS 1:395.

³⁴ Cf. proclamation of YHWH’s kingship in Ps 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; 1 Chr 16:31.

it was Marduk's victory that enabled him to impose order through creation. Then Marduk returned in triumph to his divine allies, bringing trophies such as the tablet of destinies, which he presented to Anu (lines 67–76). The gods rejoiced and did homage to him as their king (lines 77–88). Marduk cleaned up from battle, anointed his body and arrayed himself as king, held court in his throne room, and announced his intention to establish his royal temple in Babylon (lines 89–156).

Tablet VI recounts the creation of human beings, which Marduk proposed and Ea planned (lines 1–16). Marduk convened a divine assembly, which identified Qingu as guilty for his leadership of Tiamat's army, shed Qingu's blood, and from it Ea made mankind to bear the burden of work in place of the gods (lines 17–38). Then Marduk divided heaven and the netherworld among the gods (lines 39–44).

Grateful for liberation from work, the gods built Marduk's Esagila temple in Babylon with its high ziggurat, and Marduk majestically took his seat there before them (lines 45–68). He convened the gods for a banquet at Esagila, after which "The fifty great gods took their thrones, the seven gods of destinies were confirmed forever for rendering judgment" (lines 69–81, quoting lines 80–81).

After giving Marduk's bow (with which he had defeated Tiamat) a special position, Anu installed Marduk in the divine assembly on the highest throne as eternal lord of heaven and earth, king of the gods, and their provider through his rule over human beings: humans would serve him, their "shepherd," by building and maintaining temples and supplying the gods with food offerings (lines 82–120). In establishing order, "He shall make on earth the counterpart of what he brought to pass in heaven" (line 112).³⁵

In the rest of Tablet VI and the first part of Tablet VII, the gods glorified Marduk by proclaiming fifty names (expressing his supreme attributes) for him, which humans were to ponder and teach so that by paying attention to him they would be safe and enjoy prosperity of their land (lines 138–150). The concluding lines extol Marduk, whose "word is truth"... "He before whom crime and sin must appear for judgment."... "Let them sound abroad the song of Marduk, How he defeated Tiamat and took kingship" (lines 151–162).³⁶

Babylonian New Year (Akītu) Festival

³⁵ COS 1:402; Cf. Matt 16:19 ("whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven..."; NASB 1995 update); cf. 18:18.

³⁶ COS 1:402.

The Babylonians viewed Marduk's victory and establishment of order, dramatically portrayed in *Enuma Elish*, as having occurred in the primordial past. But they believed that a struggle to maintain order continued. So the victory had to be refreshed through the annual New Year Festival so that they could maintain security and prosperity.³⁷ This festival was celebrated at the city of Babylon during the first eleven or twelve days of Nisannu, the first month, in the spring.³⁸ It was the "spring council" of the gods of Babylonia, when they (represented by statues or cult symbols) gathered in assembly at the Esagila temple of Marduk, the city god of Babylon. The officiating priest read *Enuma Elish* at the festival (on Nisannu 4), during which rituals reenacted some elements of the myth, such as determination of Marduk's destiny to divine kingship. The festival also included components not represented in *Enuma Elish*, such as purification of sacred precincts from demonic impurity, re-confirmation of the human king of Babylon, and the triumph of Nabû, Marduk's son.

On the fifth day of the festival (Nisannu 5), some special preparations were made for the climactic events of subsequent days. Special rituals purified (from demonic impurity) the sacred precincts of Marduk and Nabû and reaffirmed the human king's status before Marduk.³⁹ Nabû (i.e., his statue or symbol) arrived in Babylon on day five and went the next day to the temple of Ninurta, where he symbolically slew two rival deities.

Then he proceeded to Marduk's temple, where his triumph was celebrated, and there he lodged in his guest chapel.

The climax of the festival commenced on day 8, when the city gods of the Babylonian kingdom (represented by their idols or cult symbols) determined a supreme destiny for Marduk, whom they hailed as their king in

³⁷ On the ongoing war between order and chaos, and the nature of evil in *Enuma Elish* and other cosmic conflict myths, see Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 75–9.

³⁸ Partially preserved Akkadian tablets prescribe rituals of this festival. An English translation by A. Sachs of a text covering Nisannu 2–5 is in *ANET*, 331–334. Mark Cohen included translation and discussion of extant texts relevant to at least part of each festival day in *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993), 437–51. Bidmead presented translation of some portions, along with reconstruction of ritual events and analysis of their social functions. While written evidence for these rituals dates from the first millennium BCE, the procedures are rooted in much earlier Mesopotamian practice, with the oldest references to such festivals in other cities dating to the third millennium BCE (Cohen, *Cultic Calendars*, 401, cf. 406–18).

³⁹ For analysis of these rituals of Nisannu 5 and comparison with the Israelite Day of Atonement, see Roy Gane, *Ritual Dynamic Structure*, Gorgias Dissertations 14, Religion 2 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), 199–243, 319–23; idem, *Cult and Character*, 362–78.

the presence of the people at the courtyard of his temple. Obviously priests attending the gods functioned on their behalf.

Just as the gods paid tribute to Marduk, so the servants of the human king pledged allegiance to him when the divine assembly proclaimed a happy destiny for him.⁴⁰ Then (probably on Nisannu 9) the human king led the gods (i.e., their idols) in a grand parade along the Processional Way and through the Ishtar Gate to a chapel outside the city, called an “*akītu* house,” where they stayed several nights before parading back to Marduk’s temple on day 11.⁴¹

The meaning of parading idols to and from a shrine outside a city is not entirely clear.⁴² In any case, at the conclusion of the Babylonian festival, the gods again convened in the courtyard of Marduk’s temple complex and proclaimed destinies for the coming year, no doubt affecting the prosperity of the kingdom and its people.⁴³

Babylonian Iconography

In the polytheistic, occult religion of Mesopotamia, the cosmos was controlled by an array of deities and subdivine beings, including demons. These inhabited different locations, were organized by hierarchical social structures affected by their respective origins, and possessed a variety of powers, functions, and dispositions toward each other and human beings. Some were malevolent, but others were beneficent and apotropaic, countering evil forces.⁴⁴

Humans could be profoundly affected by superhuman conflict, and they depended on gods and “good” demons to preserve, prosper, and protect them

⁴⁰ Karel van der Toorn, “Form and Function of the New Year Festival in Babylonia and Israel,” in *Congress Volume: Leuven, 1989*, ed. J. A. Emerton, VTSup 43 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 3; cf. 5.

⁴¹ Karel van der Toorn, “The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and their Bearing on Old Testament Study,” in *Congress Volume: Leuven, 1989*, 335–6; idem, “Form and Function,” 3–4.

⁴² Mark Cohen has suggested that in the Babylonian celebration and other *akītu* festivals elsewhere, escorting the god’s idol into a city from an *akītu* house was the essential ritual to enact “the basic theme of the festival, i.e., the god has just entered his city and been declared chief god of the city” (*Cultic Calendars*, 404, cf. 440). But see Bidmead, *The Akītu Festival*, 118.

⁴³ Van der Toorn, “Form and Function,” 4; cf. Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1948), 331–33. This emphasis on destiny somewhat parallels biblical judgment on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16; 23:26–32) and the rabbinic idea of judgment at the New Year (*Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah* 1:2; *Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah* 16a–b; *Jerusalem Talmud, Rosh Hashanah* 1:3); cf. Frankfort, *ibid.*, 332.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004).

and the fertility of the natural environment (especially the land) on which their well-being depended.

Like other Mesopotamians, the Babylonians believed that two- or three-dimensional artistic depictions of their patron gods not only honored them, but were also imbued with magical powers by representing their presence and connecting with their essence. Such symbolism was ubiquitous in Babylon, from magnificent and colorful glazed brick reliefs representing beings of the divine realm on the massive Ishtar Gate and Processional Way to small figurines shaped as friendly demons and tiny etchings of divine symbols on seals.

Iconography of the Neo-Babylonian period rarely portrayed supernatural beings as having the appearance of natural humans. More frequently they appeared as powerful natural animals, such as the lions (associated with the goddess Ishtar) and bulls (associated with the god Adad) at the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way. But deities and subdivine beings were most often shown as hybrids of two or more kinds of creatures, or as composites of human and animal components.⁴⁵ A wide variety of such fantastic composite creatures/beings is attested for this period, with non-human physical parts including those of quadruped wild and domestic carnivores (e.g., lions, dogs) and herbivores (e.g., ibex, bulls), reptiles (snakes) and scorpions, birds, and fish. Such representations of supernatural beings are attested throughout the ancient Near East from earliest times.⁴⁶

Traditional choice of one or more creatures to represent a particular supernatural being was based on the desire to emphasize correlating attributes that surpass those of humans, with the understanding that gods and subdivine beings are much more powerful than natural animals. Thus, because lions and bulls are physically stronger than humans, they represent formidable gods. Antelopes are faster than humans, snakes and scorpions deploy the non-human weapon of venom, and birds and fish have access to realms inaccessible to humans unassisted by modern technology. So visual depictions of supernatural beings as such creatures reflected the belief that they possess heightened degrees of corresponding powers.

⁴⁵ Constance Gane, "Composite Beings in Neo-Babylonian Art" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012).

⁴⁶ Ibid.; Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*, illus. Tessa Rickards (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), especially 64–5; Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993–1997), 8:222–46; A. Green, "Mischwesen. B," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, 8:246–64.

Portrayals of hybrid creatures most effectively evoked beings of the awesome supernatural realm because their combinations of capabilities, which further enhanced their superhuman powers, do not exist in creatures belonging to our natural world. If you thought a powerful terrestrial predator was dangerous to you or your enemies, add wings and escape is impossible. If you presumed to believe that the bite of a snake could be avoided, what about a snake-dragon with legs and feet of a lion and bird of prey (as on the Ishtar Gate, associated with Marduk)? If you supposed you could outwit a bull or scorpion, what about a bull-man or scorpion-man?

Obviously, a person who believed in such terrifying beings would fear them, attempt to get on their good side and benefit from their power if possible, or seek protection from them if they persisted in threatening harm. This kind of force could only be defeated by a more powerful supernatural being, as illustrated in *Enuma Elish*, where it takes mighty Marduk to overcome Tiamat and her brood of monsters (see above). Ultimately, the only safe way out of cosmic conflict is to trust in the divine king. If even the high gods believed this, according to *Enuma Elish* and as enacted at the New Year Festival, should not the Babylonian people also put their faith in Marduk, the king and protector of their city, whose snake-dragons adorned its main entrance?

We have found that Babylonian myth, ritual, and iconography triangulated to assert the authority of Marduk, who had gained kingship by winning a cosmic battle. The idea that Marduk was regarded as appointing the human king of Babylon, who was accountable for cooperating with the god to maintain order, was so effective in reinforcing hierarchical social order under a monarchy that Persian and Seleucid kings, who successively ruled the city after the collapse of its Neo-Babylonian empire, continued to exploit this ideology through their propagandistic self-identification as kings of Babylon legitimated by Marduk.⁴⁷

Comparison Between Babylonian Religion and Biblical Apocalypses in Terms of Cosmic Conflict and Divine Kingship

Following are some key aspects relevant to cosmic conflict and divine kingship that are shared by Babylonian religion and the biblical apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation, with similarities and differences between their respective views. Throughout this analysis, we should keep in mind two overall distinctions between the materials in view here. First, Babylonians

⁴⁷ Bidmead, *The Akītu Festival*, 129–130, 139–45, 163–4.

were polytheists, but the biblical authors were monotheists. Second, the relative time frames of conflict and kingship in these materials differ. *Enuma Elish* presents protology, with creation providing a new cosmic order after conflict. The Babylonian New Year Festival includes cyclical ritual reenactment of some aspects of the myth in order to renew and thereby maintain the creation order. Daniel and Revelation allude to creation (beasts from sea in Dan 7; Rev 13), but the focus is on eschatological renewal.

1. Cosmic conflict with wind and water. In *Enuma Elish*, conflict erupts when older gods are disturbed by boisterous behavior of energetic younger gods, and later by the “four winds” that Anu creates as toys for Marduk, along with a dust storm and waves. On both occasions, the senior gods unsuccessfully seek to eliminate those who annoy them. The second time, Marduk employs his destructive winds to kill the watery Tiamat, who has spawned lethal monsters.

Also in Daniel 7, large predators arise from chaotic aquatic conditions.⁴⁸ Here these conditions are caused by “the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea” (v. 2), a situation similar to that which resulted from Marduk’s “four wind” toys. Although Daniel’s God is “Ancient of Days” (7:9, 13), in this sense like the older gods in *Enuma Elish*, it is not irritation from winds churning sea that provokes him to retaliate.⁴⁹ Rather, it is the beastly behavior of the predators, especially the “little horn” on the fourth monster, which personally challenges the Lord’s authority, persecutes his loyal people, and presumes to change his (sacred) times and law (Dan 7:25) until it is condemned by his judgment and destroyed (vv. 11, 26). Revelation speaks of the same power as a “beast” that opposes God (13:1–8), but is defeated by Christ and annihilated (19:20).

Enuma Elish and Revelation 12 share several features in their accounts of cosmic conflict: women with children, non-human armies with dragons (serpentine monsters), kings, and a large amount of water. But these features function quite differently. In the Babylonian myth, the woman is the watery Tiamat, whose evil army includes her divine children and other creatures, including dragons. She is vanquished by Marduk, the divine king. In

⁴⁸ Cf. Isa 17:12–14, where the noise of enemy nations is likened to that of the sea, and Rev 17:15, where waters represents peoples.

⁴⁹ Cf. Daniel 8, where “the four winds of heaven” (v. 8) are simply the directions of the compass (cf. Zech 2:6) toward which the Hellenistic empire (of Alexander the Great) divides (cf. Dan 8:21–22). In Rev 7:1–3, “the four winds of the earth” are destructive forces, but they are controlled by God’s angels (compare the way Marduk controls destructive winds, which he hurls against Tiamat).

Revelation 12, a woman gives birth to a son, whom an evil dragon wants immediately to devour.⁵⁰ But the son, who is destined to rule all nations, is snatched away to safety with God. The dragon and his angels are (or had already been) defeated by Michael and his angels in heaven and cast down to the earth,⁵¹ and the dragon unsuccessfully uses water as a weapon against the woman.⁵²

2. Enemy creatures, including hybrids. Enemy forces overcome by the hero of *Enuma Elish* include the chaotic, destructive sea (Tiamat), other gods, and a mighty motley crew of eleven creatures, of which some are composite and some are demons, which originate from Tiamat. In Daniel 7, some unusual (including composite) beasts arise from the sea, of which the last one has eleven horns (ten horns + “little horn”),⁵³ although not all at one time.⁵⁴ In Revelation 12–13, a succession of evil opponents of God and his people include a dragon (representing Satan); a blasphemous beast from the sea that is a composite of Daniel’s animals; and a two-horned animal coming up from the earth.

Earlier we found that in Mesopotamian religion, hybrid creatures/beings represent gods and subdivine beings. Also in the Bible, composite creatures generally belong to the supernatural realm (Ezek 1:5–11; 10:7–8, 14, 21; Rev 4:6–8). In Daniel 7, four animals are opposed to God, of which at least two are hybrids: a lion with eagle’s wings, a natural (non-

⁵⁰ Compare behavior of the feared Mesopotamian Lamashtu goddess-demoness, pictured as a hybrid monster (head and mane of a lioness, teeth and ears of a donkey, furry but human-shaped body and legs, heavy breasts, humanoid hands, and clawed feet of a bird-of-prey). She was thought to slip into the home of a pregnant woman to kill her unborn child, or wait for a baby to be born and then attempt to kidnap, kill, and devour it (Green, 253; Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu, a Profile,” in *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting*, ed. M. Stol [Groningen: Styx, 2000], 217–53).

⁵¹ Cf. Isa 14:12–15, taunting a “king of Babylon” (cf. v. 4) called “Shining One, Son of Dawn” (v. 12; KJV and NKJV—“Lucifer”), who has fallen from heaven to earth and is condemned to go down to Sheol (the Hebrew place of the dead) because of his hubris in challenging the Most High God. Compare the Mesopotamian belief that Lamashtu was the daughter of the high god Anu, who expelled her from heaven because of her malevolent will expressed by her request to feast on human flesh, i.e., that of babies (e.g., Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* [Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993], 59; W. Farber, “Lamaštu,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, 6:444–5).

⁵² Compare a Mesopotamian lion-dragon probably representing a demon that typically lowers its head to the ground and spews out torrents of water from its gaping mouth (Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 8:223, 244; idem, Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts*, CM 1 [Groningen: STYX & PP, 1992], 185).

⁵³ Cf. Walton, “The Anzu Myth,” 78.

⁵⁴ Three of the first ten horns are uprooted to make way for the “little horn” (7:8), leaving a final total of eight horns.

hybrid) but lopsided bear, a four-headed leopard with four wings, and an unidentified monster that initially has ten horns.⁵⁵ In this context where there are hybrids, we would expect all of these beasts, including the natural bear, to represent supernatural beings. But surprisingly, they are interpreted as human kings, i.e., kingdoms (v. 17; cf. 2:36–45; 8:20–25).

This exceptional usage of composite creature symbolism may at least partly explain the fact that none of Daniel's four animals, with exactly the same physical components, represent gods or subdivine beings in extant Neo-Babylonian iconography or literature.⁵⁶ The lack of direct correlation to specific Neo-Babylonian supernatural personalities could serve to avoid referential confusion.

Why would such symbolism, which to an ancient audience would evoke the superhuman realm, be used at all in this context? One or a combination of the three following possibilities could answer this question:

1. In the book of Daniel, arrogant human rulers claim powers and prerogatives like those of supernatural beings, and their hubris can even vaunt itself up to the God of heaven (3:15; 5:2–3; 7:8, 11, 17–25; 8:11–12, 23–25; 11:36–37).

2. Supernatural beings influence human kingdoms (Dan 10:13, 20–21; cf. Eph 6:12).

3. The creatures of Daniel 7 that oppose God and his people are frightening and formidable, as in Hos 13:7–8, where the Lord visits judgments on rebellious Israel as if he were a destructive lion, leopard, or bear (cf. Amos 5:19).⁵⁷ Addition of some composite features in Daniel 7

⁵⁵ From the middle of the second millennium BCE on, non-avian creatures are often depicted with wings, feathers, and talons. Whether or not the wings enable these hybrids to fly, they transform beasts that are otherwise land-bound into supernatural monsters (Westenholz, *Dragons*, 32).

⁵⁶ Cf. Walton, "The Anzu Myth," 69–70, 73. A number of winged lions do appear on earlier Kassite period (c. 1570–1157 BCE) boundary stones (*kudurrus*; Ursula Seidl, *Die Babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs: Symbole Mesopotamischer Gottheiten*, OBO 87 [Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1989], 27, Abb. 3; 39, Abb. 9, no. 63; 40, Abb. 9, no. 63). Neo-Babylonia has a well-attested winged human-headed lion (A. Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* [Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag., 1988], nos. 611, 685, 686; B. Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.7– Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 23 [1992]: 247, no. 109), which could be viewed as partly relating to the transformation of Daniel's winged lion into a kind of lion-human: "...its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it" (7:4; NRSV). Also found in Neo-Babylonian iconography is an unwinged lion-humanoid (Akkadian *urdimmu/uridimmu*, "mad lion" (*CAD*, vol. 20 ["U and W"]: 214; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 50–51).

⁵⁷ Cf. Anatolian "animals of the gods": leopard, lion, boar, bear, gazelle (Billie Jean Collins, "Animals in the Religions of Ancient Anatolia," in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient*

conveys the impression that the great beasts are larger than life. This implies that their threat cannot be overcome by ordinary human means; only the divine sovereign is capable of saving his people from aggression by these rebels against himself. Because of God's solid commitment to deliver them, the event that determines their destiny has dimensions of cosmic conflict. This conflict is somewhat reminiscent of that described in *Enuma Elish*, but closer to that celebrated at the New Year Festival, when the divine king who vanquishes cosmic evil forces presides over a favorable fate for the humans under his protection.

Revelation 13 revisits the biblical saga of cosmic conflict with the rise of a hybrid monster from the sea that assumes the dragon's role as the enemy of God and his people. Like the dragon, it has seven heads, ten horns, and diadems signifying kingly power (13:1; cf. 12:3). Its body "was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth" (v. 2). So the great beast is an ultimate amalgam of the animals coming from the sea in Daniel 7.

3. Role of speech. Tiamat of *Enuma Elish*, the "little horn" of Daniel 7, and the beast from the sea in Revelation 13:1–8 all employ evil speech against deities who possess superior powers of speech and ultimately prevail. In *Enuma Elish*, Marduk can create and destroy by simple fiat. "His word is truth" (Tablet VII, line 151) and cannot be altered. However, although he wields speech against his enemy (by condemning her and casting a magic spell), his primary weapons for overcoming her and her allies are portrayed as physical in nature. Daniel and Revelation do not describe physical instruments or magic for overcoming blasphemous human powers; they are simply condemned by God's tribunal and meet their demise (Dan 7:9–12, 26; cf. Rev 14:7, 9–11; 19:20).

Revelation 19 describes the conquering Christ as possessing only one weapon: a sword from his mouth (v. 15; cf. fire caused by Marduk's lips in *Enuma Elish*, Tablet I, line 96), representing the awesome power of his word (cf. v. 13—"his name is called The Word of God"), with which he slays enemy

Near East, ed. Billie Jean Collins (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 328. Day interpreted the concluding "wild animal" (literally "beast of the field/open country") at the end of Hosea 13:8 as an additional unnamed animal, equivalent in this respect to the fourth beast in Daniel 7 (157). If Daniel 7 alludes to Hosea 13, we gain the impression that God allows the succession of empires, represented by similar animals, to dominate his people because of their disloyalty (cf. Daniel's confession of his people's sins in 9:3–19). However, because these empires arrogantly oppose the Lord, failing to recognize that they are his instruments and carrying their domination too far, he ultimately judges and destroys them (cf. the narratives regarding Babylon in Dan 3–5, and Isa 10:5–27 regarding Assyria as God's rebellious instrument).

armies (v. 21). Like Marduk, he can destroy by simple fiat. In the Bible, God's "word is truth" (Jn 17:17) and others cannot alter his commands (Num 23:19–20).

4. Assembly and determination of destiny. *Enuma Elish* mentions or describes a number of assemblies of gods at various stages, and on both sides of the cosmic conflict. At these gatherings, gods confer to make plans, agree on a course of action, and/or to celebrate. During the Babylonian New Year Festival, divine assemblies were ritually reenacted, with idols from Babylon and surrounding cities representing the gods. Babylonian deities did not involve created beings in their decisions. It is true that human priests necessarily assisted idols/symbols of the gods at their assemblies during the New Year Festival, but according to the interpreted meaning of these rituals, only gods participated in determination of fates.

In Daniel 7 an obviously divine "Ancient of Days" is enthroned to preside over an assembly with innumerable attendants, who are privy to books recording evidence used for reaching verdicts in a judgment (vv. 9–10). But there is no indication that these attendants are divine, and within this monotheistic context they could not be gods. So they must be created beings. In Revelation 20:4, enthroned beings/persons are given authority to participate in judgment during the millennium (cf. vv. 11–13 of judgment using books), again with no mention of their divinity. By contrast with Babylonian deities, the Lord of the Bible grants his created beings a remarkable level of access to the processes and bases of his decisions.

In *Enuma Elish*, gods who possess a written "tablet of destinies" have authority to determine destinies, which goes with power to create and destroy. When their assembly ordains an exalted destiny for Marduk by installing him as the supreme, eternal fixer of destinies, he gains awesome power to judge and destroy enemies, and also to create and determine the destinies (including roles/functions and locations) of the things and people that he creates. Similarly, divine assemblies at the Babylonian New Year Festival were believed to determine destinies, including Marduk's supreme position as king of the gods and the fate of the Babylonian people for the coming year.

When Daniel's God presides over an assembly that judges destinies on the basis of written data (7:10), he appoints an exalted destiny for "one like a son of man," i.e., one who appears like a human being, who receives authority over all loyal peoples on earth (vv. 9–14). These human "holy ones of the Most High" enjoy the dominion of earth under his rule after the judgment

and removal of their evil oppressors (vv. 18, 22, 27). So the negative and positive destinies fixed for the enemies, on the one hand, and the “one like a son of man” on the other, benefit God’s loyal people.

In Revelation 5, after an awkward moment when it appears that no one can open a scroll (vv. 3–4; cf. the frustrated silence of the gods before Marduk volunteers in *Enuma Elish*, Tablet II, lines 119–122), God gives the scroll to the “Lamb,” likely indicating that he controls destinies. Daniel 7 and Revelation 5 contain parallel elements: thrones, written records (books/scroll), an approach to God, and bestowal of authority. So the settings are similar, but they do not necessarily portray the same point in time. In Daniel the books are opened before an assembly as evidence in an investigative phase of judgment. But in Revelation 5 a scroll is given to the Lamb (Christ), with no mention of or allusion to judgment, and the scroll is not yet open. Rather, its disclosure must await a series of events, following which it is announced at a time of judgment that the kingdom of the world now belongs to the Lord and his Christ (Rev 11:15–19).

The emphasis in Revelation 5 is on what Christ has the authority to do in the future, just as *Enuma Elish* has Marduk initially receiving authority to determine destinies before he carries out judgment on Tiamat and her allies. The difference is that in Revelation 5, Christ has already conquered (in the sense of redemption through his death) when he receives the scroll, but Marduk only later conquers and captures the “tablet of destinies.” Nevertheless, Christ also has a later stage of conquest, when he will destroy his enemies (Rev 14, 19; cf. Dan 8:25).

Once a hero has the authority to determine destinies, he may exercise it whenever he wishes. So after Marduk’s victory, he creates humans and determines their destinies, and after Christ’s final victory, he recreates Planet Earth, for which a happy destiny is announced (Rev 21:3–4).

5. Divine kingship: usurpation of it and exaltation to it. When conflict is already brewing in *Enuma Elish*, Qingu becomes Tiamat’s supreme commander. According to Marduk, her elevation of him usurps leadership of the gods, which had rightfully belonged to Anshar (Tablet IV, lines 82–3). In Daniel, the arrogant “little horn” picks a fight against the “Most High” by blasphemously exalting itself against him and attacking what belongs to him, including his people, law, and temple (Dan 7:25; 8:11–13; cf. 11:31–39). In Revelation, Satan himself is a usurper, working through human agents (dragon and beast with diadems; Rev 12–13).

Anshar, who had grown “lengthy of days,” was initially king of the gods and therefore possessed the right to determine destinies. However, he was also burdened with the responsibility of any ancient Near Eastern monarch to lead against every threat. Marduk, his glorious great-grandson, approached him with the offer to defeat Tiamat and her allies, on condition that Marduk would become king. So Anshar convened the divine assembly to transfer his royal position and authority to Marduk, who assumed the title of “Lord.” The magnitude of the reward was commensurate with that of the peril. Maintenance of Marduk’s new status was conditioned on his success against the enemy army. After riding to battle on his storm chariot and achieving magnificent victory, his eternal kingship over the new order was confirmed and celebrated.⁵⁸

In Daniel 7, it is the divine “Ancient of Days” who is supreme over the assembly (vv. 9–10). “One like a son of man” approaches him “with the clouds of heaven” (v. 13; compare Marduk’s storm chariot).⁵⁹ The fact that this individual, who receives eternal kingship over earth (v. 14) is only “like” (preposition *k*) a son of man (v. 13) indicates that he is not simply a human being (cf. Ezek 1:26–28 of the Lord—“like the appearance of a man”).⁶⁰ But there is no indication that this “son” is descended from the “Ancient of Days” (no theogony in Daniel) or that the “son’s” kingship replaces his rule. Rather, this looks like a co-regency. Nor does Daniel indicate that the “son” earns or confirms his exalted royal status by his prowess as a warrior, as Marduk does. But later Christ, who is called the “Son of Man” (e.g., Matt 9:6; Rev 1:13; 14:14), defeats his enemies (Rev 14:14–20; 19:11–21).

In Revelation 5 the “Lamb,” who has special sight (seven eyes; compare Marduk’s special power of sight in *Enuma Elish*, Tablet I, line 98), is worthy of authority and glory because he has conquered. But paradoxically, his conquest is through his death to redeem humans by his blood. In *Enuma Elish*, the leader of the enemy gods (Qingu) is slain so that his blood can be

⁵⁸ Cf. 1 Sam 11:12–15—renewal of Saul’s kingship after his victory over the Ammonites.

⁵⁹ André Lacocque, “Allusions to Creation in Daniel 7,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, 1:130.

⁶⁰ Emil Kraeling (“Some Babylonian and Iranian Mythology in the Seventh Chapter of Daniel,” in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry*, ed. Jal Dastur Cursetji Pavry [London: Oxford University Press, 1933]) recognized the similarity between determination of fates in the Babylonian New Year Festival and in Daniel 7 (228–9) and suggested a parallel between the human king of Babylon receiving his authority from Marduk at the festival and the “one like a son of man” receiving kingship from the “Ancient of Days” (229–30). However, the fact that the “one like a son of man” is superhuman makes him analogous to Marduk, not the human king.

used to carry out the plan of the hero (Marduk) to create humans, but in Revelation it is the hero (Christ) himself who is slain to renew humanity.

Just as Daniel 7 depicts the coronation of the “one like a son of man” as co-regent at the time of judgment, Revelation 11 has Christ proclaimed as co-regent when the judgment begins and God’s heavenly temple is opened to show the ark (vv. 15–19). Later, Christ as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16; compare Marduk as “Lord”) takes possession of his dominion, riding a white horse to lead the armies of heaven into battle against “the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies” (vv. 11–21; compare Marduk riding to battle in *Enuma Elish*).

6. Temple. According to *Enuma Elish*, the gods build Marduk a temple in Babylon to reward him for defeating their enemies, and he is responsible for seeing that humans under his rule build and maintain temples for the gods. The Babylonian people did build and maintain many temples, whose gods (idols) visited Marduk at his temple during the New Year Festival.

There is no explicit reference to a temple in Daniel 7, but the judgment assembly at which God is enthroned seems to take place at his headquarters, i.e., temple. However, the imagery in Daniel 7:9–10 appears heavenly (“his throne was fiery flames...”) and no earthly structure could contain the vast number of attendants mentioned here (“ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him”). So unlike Marduk’s temple on earth in Babylon, the divine headquarters in Daniel 7 must be located in heaven (cf. Ps 11:4).

In the parallel prophecy of Daniel 8, the functional equivalent of the judgment is the justifying of God’s temple (v. 14) after attacks against it by the “little horn” power (vv. 11–13). Compare Revelation 11:19, where “God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple” at the beginning of the divine judgment. Daniel 8:14 and Revelation 11:19 allude to vindication (legal “cleansing”) of God’s sanctuary/temple administration on the Day of Atonement, Israel’s judgment day, the only occasion on which the high priest could open the holy of holies to go before the ark of the covenant (Lev 16), over which God’s presence was enthroned (Exod 25:22; Num 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4).⁶¹ Unlike *Enuma Elish*, Daniel does not explain the origin of a temple, but its eschatological renewal.

⁶¹ On purgation of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement enacting vindication of God, see Gane, *Cult and Character*, 318–23. On vindication of God in Daniel 8:14, see idem, *Who’s Afraid of the Judgment: The Good News About Christ’s Work in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 40–42.

7. Role of human beings. In *Enuma Elish*, after Marduk's victory over an enemy force of gods and demons, he initiates creation of human beings and determination of their destiny to bear the burden of the gods, in order to free the latter from work.⁶² Consequently, the gods prostrate themselves before him and proclaim him the people's "shepherd" (Tablet VI, line 107). As the master of humans, he judges "crime and sin" (Tablet VII, line 156). It is true that the Babylonian people were free from work during some days of their New Year Festival, which reenacted the myth.⁶³ But this did not alter the basic role of humans as workers for the gods.

In Daniel 7, enemy powers are composed of human beings, whose creation has previously occurred. After God subdues them, those humans who are loyal to him rule the dominion of earth under the higher rule of the "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:13–14, 18, 22, 27; cf. Rev 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5, where humans reign). While they "serve" their divine king (Dan 7:14), there is no indication that their role is to free him or any other deity from work.

The role of Christ in relation to humanity presents the most striking contrast between biblical and Babylonian theology. Like Marduk (with Ea), Christ (with the other members of the Trinity) is the Creator (Jn 1:3–4; Heb 1:2). But rather than creating people to enslave them, as Marduk does, Christ as their shepherd (Rev 7:17; 14:4) has died as a "Lamb" to ransom them by his blood and re-create them (Rev 5:6, 9–10, 12; cf. chaps. 21–22). Consequently, created beings in the heavenly throne room prostrate themselves before him (5:8, 14).

Conclusion: Implications

The fact that major expressions of Babylonian religion—*Enuma Elish*, the New Year Festival, and iconography—share with biblical apocalypses clusters of elements involved in resolution of cosmic conflict by divine kingship, and even some similar expressions, suggests that the relationship between them is more than coincidental. It appears that Daniel's eschatological visions concerning conflict with human oppressors, including Babylon, and restoration under YHWH, Israel's deity, at least partly respond to aspects of the proud Babylonian worldview expressed in the protological myth that elevates Marduk, god of Babylon, to divine supremacy. This

⁶² Cf. creation of humans for the same reason in the first tablet of the Old Babylonian epic *Atra-ḫasis* (W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-ḫasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999], 42–67; cf. *COS* 1:450–51).

⁶³ Van der Toorn, "Form and Function," 3.

conflict is central to the book of Daniel, which begins with defeat of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who took some vessels from God's temple and deposited them in the treasury of his gods (Dan 1:1–2).

When Babylon was victorious over YHWH's people, exiled them, and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple there (2 Ki 25; 2 Chron 36; Jer 52), it appeared that Marduk had prevailed over YHWH. The supremacy of Marduk would be reinforced by his prominence in Babylonian culture, in which Jewish captives were unwillingly immersed. The situation called for redress and re-affirmation "that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals; he gives it to whom he will" (Dan 4:17). This message of God's sovereignty is the primary theme of Daniel, which the book emphasizes by repetition (cf. vv. 25–26, 32; 5:21).⁶⁴

Both the narratives and visions of Daniel reveal that not even the exalted Marduk, divine sovereign of Nebuchadnezzar's golden kingdom (cf. 2:37–38) and lord of a sophisticated theological system, can successfully challenge YHWH's ultimate divine kingship. This implies *a fortiori* that no other power stands a chance.

In the process of demonstrating YHWH's supremacy, Daniel shows that Marduk and the other Babylonian gods are powerless to control the future by maintaining the Babylonian kingdom on earth to serve them (Dan 2, 4–5, 7), which means that they do not really control destinies and therefore lack divine rule. In fact, these deities do not even reveal the future to their human representatives, as YHWH does to Daniel (chaps. 2, 4–5). The Babylonian gods are losers, as prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah:

Bel [Lord = Marduk] bows down, Nebo [=Nabû] stoops,
 their idols are on beasts and cattle;
 these things you carry are loaded
 They stoop, they bow down together;
 they cannot save the burden,
 but themselves go into captivity.
 as burdens on weary animals. (Isa 46:1–2).

Babylon is taken,
 Bel is put to shame,
 Merodach [= Marduk] is dismayed.

⁶⁴ "Even though there is a dramatic contrast in genre between the two halves of the book, however, the overall message of the book is uniform: *In spite of present appearances, God is in control*" (Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIVAC [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999], 19).

Her images are put to shame,
her idols are dismayed. (Jer 50:2).

I will punish Bel in Babylon,
and make him disgorge what he has swallowed.
The nations shall no longer stream to him;
the wall of Babylon has fallen. (Jer. 51:44).

Daniel 7 dramatically demonstrates that while human empires, including Babylon, seem to be invincible as if they were superhuman, they are accountable to YHWH and he easily removes their domination. God's loyal people will receive the benefit of his judgment, which condemns their oppressors and establishes the beneficent co-regency of the "one like a son of man."

In Daniel 7, evocation of a complex of elements from the Babylonian religious environment powerfully reinforces YHWH's counter-message. Thus "the Bible undermines the false religion of its idolatrous neighbors through the use of their imagery."⁶⁵ This does not mean that we should look for *origins* of Daniel 7 in ancient Near Eastern culture, as many scholars have attempted to do.⁶⁶ Daniel's visionary scene does not appear to be basically dependent on mythology or other literature, rituals, or iconography from Babylon, Canaan, Anatolia, Egypt, Greece, or anywhere else. But the apocalyptic revelation does relate to existing ancient Near Eastern backgrounds, of which Babylonian ones have been the focus of this essay.

The book of Revelation expands on the message of Daniel to show the ultimate sovereignty and benevolence of the true God. The "one like the son of man" (cf. Dan 7:13) is Christ (Rev 1:13; 14:14), whose attitude toward human beings radically contrasts with that of Marduk. Rather than creating humans to toil in place of the gods, Christ dies to redeem them by his blood as "the Lamb" (Rev 5). This self-sacrifice does not mean that he is weak. Whereas Marduk required several weapons to conquer his enemies, Christ needs no weapon but his word (Rev 19:13, 15).

In Revelation, "Babylon" represents a proud, corrupt, human power that enjoys fabulous wealth and persecutes God's people, but is doomed to

⁶⁵ Longman, *Daniel*, 181. Cf. Collins's observation that "the use of imagery associated with Marduk or with Ba'al may serve to make the claim that Yahweh, not the pagan deities, is the true deliverer" (*Daniel*, 282).

⁶⁶ See the scholarly literature on alleged origins and parallels with the "one like a son of man" in Daniel 7 that is reviewed by Ferch, 40–107; cf. Day, 151–67.

destruction (Rev 17–18). Christ, the divine King, rescues the oppressed ones who are loyal to God and restores to them the dominion over a perfect earth originally given to Adam and Eve (Rev 19–21; cf. Gen 1:26–28). So the end of eschatology is a renewed protology. But this is not cyclical, like the yearly Babylonian New Year Festival; it only happens once. When the cosmic conflict ends, the security of Paradise is permanent.

16

Tall Jalul: Biblical Bezer, a City of Refuge?¹

Randall W. Younker

Tall Jalul, which at 18 acres (74 dunams or 74,000 sq meters) is the largest tell site in the central Jordan plateau, occupies the highest point in the immediate region around Madaba, making it a most imposing feature on the western side of the Madaba Plain. It is located 5 km due east of the town of Madaba and due west of the Queen Alia International Airport. The site is almost square in outline with a high, flat acropolis occupying the southwest quadrant. A number of rocky hills on the tell are suggestive of badly eroded ruins of ancient buildings. Two broad depressions in the southeast quadrant indicate the presence of elements of ancient water systems—a cistern on the north and a reservoir to the south. The ruins of a large Byzantine/Islamic settlement is located immediately to the south of the tell. Surface surveys and excavations of both the tell and the settlement to the south have revealed an occupational history of Jalul that runs (with a few interruptions) from the Early Bronze Age to the end of the Ottoman period in the early 20th century (see below).

¹ It is a pleasure to dedicate this study to my friend, colleague, and former teacher, Richard M. Davidson whose own enthusiasm for archaeology led to his tremendous support of our endeavors through the years.

Jalul's Identity in Antiquity

One of the challenges that scholars studying Jalul continue to face is the identity of Jalul in antiquity. Ibrahim Zabn, a Jordanian archaeologist who excavated in the Islamic Village at Jalul, suggested that the name Jalul comes from an Arabic word *Jaljul* which mean luck. He also suggested that *Jaljul* in Aramaic means the high slope. Unfortunately, he provided no references or support for his suggestions.²

Biblical scholars have suggested several possibilities for the identity of Jalul during Bronze and Iron Age times. These suggestions have included Heshbon (Num 21), Jahaz, and Bezer,³ one of the cities of refuge located in Transjordan (Josh 20:8).

Originally, I favored identifying Jalul with Sihon's Heshbon—following up on the suggestions by Horn and Geraty. Support for this identification seemed to come from the discovery of a water system on the tell which included a large reservoir and a water channel that seemed to run from the reservoir to a series of pools outside the city wall. We thought that the water reservoir and the extramural pools might be the pools of Heshbon mentioned in Song of Solomon. However, the channel seems to have been constructed in the 7th century BCE (too late for Solomon) and does not seem to connect with the earlier (10th–9th century BCE) reservoir as originally thought. There is also less certainty that the water channel carried fresh water as opposed to sewage. Thus, it seems unlikely that the Jalul water channel fed the pools of Heshbon. Moreover, recent re-evaluation of the reservoir at Tall Hesban suggests that the large square reservoir/ pool there does indeed date to the 10th century BCE, and thus remains a viable candidate for being at least one of the pools of Heshbon.⁴ These factors have led me to reconsider other options for the identity of Jalul.

Of the proposals that have been made, the equation of Jalul with Bezer seems to make the most sense to me at this point in time. As I will outline in

² Ibrahim Zabn, "The Excavation and Survey Jalul Village" (report filed at the Department of Antiquities, Jordan; The Excavation of Jalul Village, Munjazat 3, 2002), 74–75.

³ Andrew Dearman, "Levitical Cities of Reuben and Moabite Toponymy," *BASOR* 276 (1989): 55–66.; Burton MacDonald, *The Debate over the Chronology of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant: Its History, the Current Situation and a Suggested Resolution*. (Baltimore, MD: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2000), 177–78.

⁴ James A. Sauer, "The Pottery at Hesban and Its Relationships to the History of Jordan: An Interim Hesban Pottery Report," in *Hesban After 25 Years*, ed. David Merling and L. T. Gearaty (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994), 241–43; Paul Ray, *Tell Hesban and Vicinity in the Iron Age* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2001), 99, 107.

this article, there are three lines of evidence that seem to support Jalul's identity with ancient Bezer: (1) geographic considerations; (2) historical/archaeological correlations; (3) and finally, some linguistic considerations.

Which Bezer?

Before looking at the geographical evidence in the biblical text for the location of Bezer, it is important to note that there are actually *three* place names that appear in the Biblical text that are located in Jordan which have very similar names to Bezer—Bozrah of Moab/Bezer of Reuben, Bozrah of Edom and Bozrah/Bosor of Gilead (Haurān). Naturally, we are interested in the Bezer located in Moab—so, which of our biblical texts describes Bezer of Reuben/Moab?

There is no doubt that the Bozrah of Isa 34:6; 63:1; Amos 1:12; Micah 2:12; Jer 49:13, 22 is the name of the Edomite capital and properly equated with the ruins at Bouseira, Jordan, located 20 km south of Tafilah; the Arabic Bouseira, or course, still echoes the ancient Edomite name.

However, the Bozrah mentioned in Jer 48:24 appears to be Bezer of Reuben; it is listed as a city of refuge in the wilderness (*midbar*) on the plateau (*mishor*) within the territory of the Reubenites (Deut 4:43; Jos 20:8) as well as a Levitical city within the same tribal territory (Jos 21:36; 1 Chr 6:78). Most interesting is that it seems to be the same town as *Bezer* mentioned in the Mesha Inscription (MI)⁵ as a ruined city that Mesha had rebuilt. Bezer of Reuben continued to be occupied during the Talmudic period, since queries originate during this time as to whether Bezer belonged to Israel—an important question inasmuch as the answer affected whether or not Jewish occupants of Bezer were obligated to pay tithe on their agricultural produce

Bezer of Reuben is sometimes confused with Bosra in the land of Gilead (the Haurān, located in what is now southwestern Syria and northwestern Jordan). That site today, located in southwestern Syria, is known in Arabic as بصرى or *Buṣrā/Bosra* (although Frants Buhl identified the ancient site with a site known in his time as Buṣr el-Bariri;⁶ historically, it has also sometimes been called **Bostra**, **Busrana**, **Bozrah**, **Bozra**, **Busra ash-Sham** and **Nova Trajana Bostra**). This city is mentioned in 1 Maccabees 5:26, 36 as a

⁵ MI Line 27; ANET, 320–21.

⁶ See Frants Buhl, *Geographie des Alten Palästina*, Grundriß der Theologischen Wissenschaften II, 4, (Freiburg im Breisgau: J. C. B. Mohr, 1896), 253)

place conquered by Judas Maccabeus. Josephus also made reference to this battle.⁷ The confusion of Bosrah in Gilead with the more southern towns of the same name is noted in Lightfoot's *The Talmud and Hebraica*. "In the Jews we read, 'Trachon, which is bounded at Bozra'. Not Bozrah of Edom, Isaiah 63:1; nor Bezer of the Reubenites, Joshua 20:8; but another, to wit, Bosorra, or Bosor, in the land of Gilead. Concerning which, see Josephus, and the First Book of Maccabees, 5:26."⁸

Beyond their clarification of the three Bozrahs, the references in the Talmud are important in that they seem to suggest that Bezer in Moab (Reubenite Bezer) was still occupied between the 3rd and 6th centuries CE. This point can be helpful in identifying Reubenite Bezer with the appropriate archaeological site (below).

Reubenite Bezer's Geographic Location

Having identified those texts that are talking about Reubenite/Moabite Bezer, we can now consider identifying archaeological sites that best fit the biblical description. Probably the best study in attempting to locate Reubenite Bezer is that of Andrew Dearman.⁹ After a brief review of text critical analysis of those passages that refer to Reubenite and Levitical cities in Transjordan, Dearman proceeded to the question of the geographical location of these sites. Dearman first noted that both Kedemoth and Jahaz are said to be located in the *midbar*—the wilderness or open steppe land of the Moabite plateau—north of the Arnon River and east of the King's Highway. He then directed us to the description of Israel's battle with Sihon (Deut 2:26–32) which shows that Jahaz must be located south or southeast of Heshbon and Kedemoth is located south or southeast of both of them.

Next, Dearman discussed the locations Bezer and Mephaath. Like Kedemoth and Jahaz, Bezer is also said to be located on the *midbar*. Mephaath has been reliably identified with Umm er-Rasas via inscriptional and ceramic evidence—placing it also on the *midbar*.¹⁰ Thus, all four of these Levitical cities are located on the *midbar*—the eastern section of the Transjordanian plateau and east of the main settlement line along the King's

⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.8.3.

⁸ John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament From the Talmud and Hebraica* (orig. publ., 1658; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), Chapter 91. Perea

⁹ ANET, 320–21; Dearman, "Levitical Cities."

¹⁰ R. W. Younker and P. M. Michele Daviau, "Is Mefa'at to be found at Tell Jawa (South)?" *IEJ* 43 (1993): 249–251.

Highway. Various prophetic references also indicate that Bezer, Jahaz, and Mephaath eventually became Moabite cities, suggesting that they could not be north of the Madaba Plains region and likely towards its southern end.

Dearman then turned to the Mesha inscription and noted that Bezer was mentioned there as well—as one of the cities that Mesha rebuilt. Dearman also pointed out that *none* of the settlements mentioned by Mesha was located north of Madaba. For example, Heshbon or Elealah are not mentioned in the Mesha Inscription. Since Bezer is said to be in the *midbar*, and it is not north of Madaba, near Heshbon or Elealah, it must be located in the steppe lands east or southeast of Madaba.

Finally, Dearman discussed the other two Israelite sites mentioned by Mesha—Ataroth and Jahaz (which also appear in the conquest account— noted above). Both of these sites are described as *bnh*—built up towns— during the time of Mesha. This would be an appropriate and expected description for fortified Israelite towns along the Moabite/Israelite border. Ataroth has been securely identified with *Khirbet 'Atarus* on the Wadi Heidan—a northern tributary of the Mujib—the traditional northern border of Moab. This would mean Ataroth was the southwest most border city of Israel on the plateau, facing Moab. Due east of Ataroth, on the *Wadi eth Themed*—also on a tributary of the Mujib—is another fortified site known today as *Khirbet Medeiniyeh*. This site is located in the eastern steppe country or *midbar* and thus makes a suitable candidate for the Israelite site of Jahaz.¹¹ Since Jahaz is on the southeastern-most border of the Israelite Transjordan plateau—the Israelite *midbar*—then Bezer must be located *north* of this location.

Hence one should look for ancient Bezer east or southeast of Madaba and north of Jahaz, Mephaath, and Artaroth. The only significant ancient site in that area is Tall Jalul.

Historical/Biblical Considerations

In addition to the geographical information that can be found in the ancient texts (Bible, Mesha, and Talmud) about Bezer, there is also significant historical information that can also assist in determining whether Bezer can be equated with the archaeology of Jalul.

¹¹ Dearman, “Levitical Cities,” 57; Andrew Dearman, *Studies in Moab and the Mesha Inscription*. Baltimore: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1989), 181–182.

Ancient references to Bezer can be found in the following sources: the Hebrew Bible, the Mesha Inscription, possibly in the Transjordanian (Moab) itinerary of Ramses II, and the Talmud. When literary references to Bezer are brought together, the following reconstruction of Bezer's history emerges:

A Levitical City within the Territory of Reuben. Bezer appears in the Hebrew text as an early Israelite settlement town within the territory of the tribe of Reuben; it is designated by lot as a **Levitical city** (one of 48 such cities), a place of residence to the children of **Merari** of the Levite tribe (Josh 21:36; 1 Chr 6:63, 78); it is also designated as one of three cities of refuge in Transjordan (Deut 4:43; Josh 20:8; Josh 21:36; 1 Chr 6:78; 1 Chr 7:37). These cities of refuge in Transjordan—north to south—were Golan (land of Manasseh), Ramoth Gilead (land of Gad), and Bezer (Land of Reuben) (Josh 20:1–9).

As a city of refuge and a Levitical city, it would have been occupied by Levites (see above; in this case the Merarites). It possibly had a sanctuary of some sort (1 Kgs 12:31)¹² and would have had good roads leading to it for easy access (Deut 19:3). It was likely strategically located—again for easy access. It served as a provincial administrative center,¹³ and was also likely well-fortified since its function included not only protecting its inhabitants, but also protected the eastern frontier of the Transjordan tribes.¹⁴

A Levitical City within the Territory of Gad. During the time of Saul, it appears likely that the Reubenites abandoned their territorial holdings in the Madaba Plains region for better lands in eastern Gilead—apparently leaving their former territory to their sister tribe, Gad. Specifically, 1 Chr 5:18–22, recounts an event during the time of King Saul in which the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half of the tribe of Manasseh in Gilead formed an allied army of 44,760 to battle with the Hagrites in east Gilead. The **Hagrites** (also spelled **Hagarite**) were an offshoot of the Ishmaelites mentioned in the Bible, and were the inhabitants of the regions of Jetur, Naphish and Nodab lying east of Gilead. Their name is understood to be derived from Hagar (Ps 83:7 [6]). The Transjordan tribes successfully defeated the Hagarites. As a result of the battle, the Reubenites captured the Hagarite land as well as 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, and 2,000 donkeys.

¹² Benjamin Mazar, *Biblical Israel: State and People* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992), 140.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 142–144; Edward Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age: Historical and Topographical Researches* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 327.

Finally, the Reubenites captured 100,000 Hagriles, men, women and children, and held them as captives. Reuben is then said to have occupied the Hagrite tents, suggesting they abandoned their holdings in the Madaba Plains region (not too dissimilar to the migration of the tribe of Dan).

The migration of Reuben from the Madaba Plains region to eastern Gilead is not particularly significant in historical terms except for the interesting fact that later, in the Mesha inscription, Mesha (line 10) mentions confronting only Gadites (at Ataroth, southwest of Madaba)—not Reubenites—as the Moabites moved across the Arnon (Mujib) River north into the Madaba Plains. It is likely that as a result of the Reubenite migration, Bezer also fell within Gadite territory. However, the migration does raise the question as to whether it would have had any effect on Bezer's material culture. My own assumption would be that there would be little if any effect. For example, if Bezer was a Levitical city, how would their material culture differ (if at all) from that of Reubenites and Gadites? And if Bezer was occupied by Levites, would they not likely have continued to occupy Bezer and not have participated in the Reubenite migration north? This would suggest that the material culture of Bezer would have continued uninterrupted (apart from normal gradual evolutionary changes) from its initial settlement by the Israelites until its takeover by the Moabites during the latter part of the 9th century BCE (below).

A Moabite City. Line 27 of the Mesha Inscription describes the acquisition of Bezer, which was in ruins (presumably by the Dibonites) and its rebuilding. The acquisition and rebuilding of Bezer by the Moabites would have happened towards the latter part of the 9th century BCE, sometime between 840 and 820 BCE.

An Ammonite City. During the late 8th century BCE, Bezer came under Ammonite control. While the biblical text does not specifically mention Ammon's conquest of Bezer, there are a couple of texts that indicate that during the time of Assyrian domination, Ammon was able to expand north into Gilead (Amos 1) and south to Heshbon and the lands of Gad (Jer 49)—which would have conceivably included Bezer.

A Byzantine Settlement in Talmudic Times. As noted above, Bezer appears in later Talmudic sources in the context of clarifying where Bezer/Bosrah of the Reubenites was located during Talmudic times. Additional references in the Talmud concerning Bezer deal with its function as a city of refuge and the obligation of paying taxes on territory tied to Bezer. Also, as noted, these references in the Talmud are significant because they

seem to suggest that Bezer in Moab (Reubenite Bezer) was still occupied between the 3rd and 6th centuries CE.¹⁵ If so, we would expect archaeological evidence for occupation during these centuries (which seems to be the case at Jalul, as shown below).

Excavation Results at Jalul

After tentatively identifying Bezer with Jalul based on geographic and historic references in the ancient texts, we will now turn to Jalul's archaeological findings to see if such an identification is plausible.

Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Ages

The earliest materials that have been recovered from Jalul include an Early Bronze Age wall in Field W2, as well as some Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age sherds that have appeared in fills beneath the Iron Age II buildings in Field A. Forms include various MB/LB White slip wares, Chocolate-on-White wares, Late Bronze Bichrome Ware, biconical jugs, and triangular rimmed cooking pots. No architecture has as yet been found in association with these fills or ceramics. Possibly these fills are outside the city wall of the MB and LB periods.

Early Iron Age IA Thirteenth–Twelfth Centuries (1250–1100) BCE

Remains from the Early Iron Age IA have now been recovered and identified from Fields A, B, C, D, E, and G at Jalul.

In Field A, no architectural remains survived, apparently having been robbed for the construction of later Iron Age buildings. However, several fills with Iron IA pottery were found stratigraphically beneath the Iron IB, Iron IIA, and Iron IIB layers. The ceramics found in these fills contained significant quantities of Iron I pottery, including carinated bowls, so-called Manasseh bowls, cooking pots with elongated triangular rim, and collared rimmed store jars. Some LB forms are present as well such as Chocolate on White, triangular rimmed cooking pots, etc. Some pots exhibit Iron I painted designs. A preliminary comparison with similar materials found at nearby Tall al-'Umayri, suggests the two corpi are the same. Herr has dated the Umayri materials to the late 13th century BCE making Umayri one of the

¹⁵ See Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan*, 327.

earliest Iron I settlements in Cis- and Transjordan.¹⁶ Tall Jalul would seem to have been occupied during the same period. Iron IA Bowls at Umayri,¹⁷ Hesban¹⁸ and Jalul seem identical to the so-called Manasseh bowls on the west side of the Jordan. Herr¹⁹ has suggested these early forms may reflect a Reubenite presence in this region at the beginning of the Iron Age.

In Field B (as in Field A), no Iron IA architectural remains have yet been found in the east gate area, apparently having been robbed for the construction of later gate systems. However, fills containing Iron IA ceramics were found stratigraphically beneath (earlier than) the Iron IIA approach road and gatehouse. The ceramics included collar rimmed store jars, Manasseh bowls, etc.

In Field C, the remains of a four-room pillared house were recovered—the same tradition that is seen in Cis-jordan and often associated with early Israelite settlement. The pillared building in Field C was pretty much in tact except for the western wall which had been robbed in the subsequent Iron Age phase. The robber's trench was evident in association with the four-room pillared house. Also in Field C, a small section of a collapsed mudbrick wall that appears to date to the Iron IA period was found south of the four-room pillared house and was apparently part of the superstructure of the south wall of the building. Two lamps, a chalice and triangular-rimmed cooking pots from the Iron Age IA were found in association with this wall collapse pointing to the early Iron IA date of this house. A necklace containing a variety of glass and semi-precious stones was also found in the collapse.

In Field D, sections of walls stratigraphically beneath the Iron II “courtyard” building were dated to the Iron IA by associated ceramics.

In Field E, just below the surface in Square 4, in an area that had been heavily disturbed by 19th century Bedouin graves, an Egyptian seal was found. According to Field E supervisor Robert Bates, the hieroglyphics read

¹⁶ L. G. Herr, “The Settlement and Fortification of Tell al-‘Umayri in Jordan during the LB/Iron I Transition,” in *The Archaeology of Jordan and Beyond: Essays in Honor of James A. Sauer*, ed. Joseph A. Greene, Michael D. Coogan, and Lawrence E. Stager (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 167–179.

¹⁷ L. G. Herr, “The Iron Age,” in *Hesban 11, Ceramic Finds: Typological and Technological Studies of the Pottery Remains from Tell Hesban and Vicinity*, ed. James A. Sauer and Larry G. Herr (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 9–172.

¹⁸ Paul Ray, *Tell Hesban and Vicinity in the Iron Age* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2001), 47, fig 3.3:3, 5–6.

¹⁹ L. G. Herr, “Tall al-‘Umayri and the Reubenite Hypothesis,” *Eretz Israel* 26 (1999): 64–77.

“Amun-Re, Re of the Two Lands.” It possibly dates to the time of Ramesses III of the 20th Dynasty (ca. 1187 to 1156 BCE).

In Field G, fills beneath the foundation of the Iron IIA wall (below) contained Iron IA ceramics including collar-rimmed jars and Iron IA bowls.

Iron Age IB Twelfth–Tenth Centuries (1100–980) BCE

Some of the fills in Field A contain pottery from the later Iron I—possibly as late as the 10th century BCE. Again, the pottery forms include typical cooking pots and collar-rimmed jars. The fact that the fills are full of ashy lenses suggests that Jalul was destroyed by fire towards the end of the Iron Age I.

Field B. Some ceramics that may date to this period come from fills immediately under the Iron IIA approach road.

Field C. The four-room pillared building appears to have continued in use.

Iron Age IIA Tenth–Ninth Centuries (980–840/830) BCE

Several strata from the Iron IIA have been excavated at Jalul. The earliest has been provisionally dated to the 10th–9th centuries BCE (Iron IIA).

Field A. No architectural remains from this phase have been recovered from the excavations in Field A. Rather, it appears that the building stones from this phase (at least in the areas excavated in this field so far) were completely robbed out for later construction. Nevertheless, several fills were exposed stratigraphically *beneath* (earlier than) the 9th–8th century BCE (Iron Age IIB) building remains that contain ceramics from the Iron IIA. Ceramics of the Iron IIA include collared pithoi, but they now have short vertical necks. Cooking pots include a unique form—high-ridged cooking pots, but with a vertical neck (later in the Iron IIB, the neck appears inverted).

Field B. Architectural remains from this phase include an approach ramp or road to the city gate complex, including the outer gatehouse. The approach ramp was paved with flagstones in a manner similar to that seen at Cisjordan sites such as Dan and Beersheba. A patch of paving stones within the inner gatehouse as well as the pylons for the inner gatehouse also date from this period. The interior of the outer gatehouse was surfaced with small

pebbles. In the area of the outer gatehouse was found an Iron II stamp seal with a stylized depiction of an ibex.

Field C. During the beginning of the Iron IIA, the pillared building of the Iron I was modified. The western wall was moved more than 1 meter to the east, essentially reducing the size of the pillared building.

Field D. The early phases of the courtyard house appear in this period.

Field G. The earliest phase of a pillared house appears in this phase.

Iron IIB Ninth–Eighth Centuries (840/830–732/701) BCE

Field A. The corner of a building that appears in the east side of Field A dates to this period. The building is stratigraphically above the Iron I and Iron IIA fills, yet below the Iron IIC tripartite building that occupied most of Field A during the 8th–6th centuries BCE (discussed below).

Field B. The approach road to the gatehouse was completely rebuilt, about one meter higher than the Iron IIA road (discussed above). The outer gate house was also rebuilt, but most of it was robbed out in later periods (below).

Field C. The modified pillared building continued in use during this period.

Field D. The courtyard building continues in use with some modifications.

Field G. The walls of the pillared house was modified somewhat. Several floor layers date to the Iron IIB. A room to the south of the pillared house contained a large pottery cache of Iron IIB pottery—distinctive Moabite forms appear for the first time, including square-rimmed cooking pots and a light-colored slip on many forms. Some distinctive Moabite painted designs also occur on some decanters and bowls.

Iron IIC Eighth–Early Sixth Centuries (732/701–605/586) BCE

Based on parallels for the ceramics of this stratum, as well as on a number of inscriptional finds, we have provisionally dated this phase to the 7th–6th centuries BCE—specifically to the years 732/701 BCE to 605/586 BCE following Mazar’s modified chronology.²⁰ The ceramics are typical Ammonite

²⁰ Amihai Mazar, “The Debate over the Chronology of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant: Its History, the Current Situation and a Suggested Resolution,” in *The Bible and Radiocarbon*

forms, including some with distinctive painted designs. Several distinctive Ammonite Inscriptions were also found in these occupational layers. This points to an expansion of Ammon into formerly Moabite territory. The presence of an Assyrian bowl provides support to literary sources that Ammon was under Assyrian hegemony during this time of expansion.

Field A. The tripartite building in Field A was rebuilt along the same lines in the late 8th century BCE and continued in use throughout the 7th century BCE. As is typical of many of these buildings, the side rooms were paved while the central room was dirt. Two parallel rows of pillars founded on a stylobate separated the side rooms from the central room. To the west of the tripartite building, patches of pavement and the remnant of a small room were found. Under the floor of this room was typical late Iron II pottery, including a fragment of an Assyrian bowl. The exact purpose or function of the room is unknown at present. A pit was found north of the tripartite building that contained late Iron II pottery including typical burnished wares, several bone spatulae, a bone pendant shaped like a hammer, and a ceramic figurine shaped like a horse—probably part of a horse and rider figurine—well-known in this region during the Ammonite period. Other fragments of horse and rider figurines were also found. Other small finds from this period included a crowned male figurine similar to the crowned busts found in the Ammon region, the upper portion of a typical female figurine with hands held below exposed breasts, a lion figurine, and a human figurine wearing an Egyptian styled headdress.

In Field B, the inner gatehouse area was repaved with flagstones. No evidence of this repaving appeared in the outer gatehouse or the approach road, so it is assumed the 9th–8th century pavement continued in use in these areas.

In Field C, the pillared house continued in use with some modifications. A seal from this room was found in the sift pile (Fig. 3). It was carved out of a red-brown limestone and was divided into three registers—the middle depicted a winged griffin, while the upper and lower registers contained an inscription, “Belonging to ‘Aynadab son of Zedek ‘il.” The paleography is typical of late 7th century Ammonite.²¹

Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science, ed. T. E. Levy and T. Higham (London: Equinox, 2005), 15–30.

²¹ R. W. Younker, “An Ammonite Seal from Tall Jalul, Jordan: The Seal of ‘Aynadab son of Zedek ‘il,” in *Eretz Israel*, ed. B. Levine (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1999), 221–24.

Of special interest was the discovery of an opening in the middle of the central courtyard of the house that dropped into a cave directly below. Initially, it was thought to be a cistern, but the sides of the cave were faulted and there was no evidence of plaster to seal the sides and make it watertight. The cave had been filled with dirt and large boulders when the house was destroyed. As the boulders were removed, the skeletons of some 20 individuals were discovered—mostly women and children. The manner in which the bodies were unceremoniously dumped into the cave would suggest they were either thrown there by an enemy who had destroyed the house and killed the occupants, or were hastily thrown into the cave because the individuals had died of a plague. Ceramics and figurines found in the debris along with the skeletons dated to the Iron II—8th–7th centuries BCE. The figurines included a fragment of a horse and rider figurine.

Field D. The courtyard house continued in use with some minor modifications. A fragment of a seal found during a balk removal from Field D dates to the early part of this phase. It reads, “Belonging to Maneh/Mehah.” Interestingly, paleographic analysis suggests that the script is Hebrew and dates to the 8th–7th centuries BCE. King Jotham of Judah is said to have conquered the Ammonites and subjected them to tribute in the 8th century BCE (2 Chr 27:5). While the seal does not represent tribute, its presence in Ammon at this time may reflect, in some manner, the Judahite domination that is recorded in the Hebrew text. An Ammonite ostrakon with 8 lines of text was also found in a later fill, but undoubtedly dates to the latter part of this phase. A clay bulla found during balk removal probably comes from this phase. The writing is Ammonite and dates to the late 7th –early 6th century BCE. It reads, “Belonging to ‘Amasa’ son of Yenahem.” An ostrakon fragment “son of . . .” was found in the east balk of Field D. It appears to be Ammonite but the script is Aramaic—not uncommon in Ammon during this period.²²

Field G. The pillared building underwent some major modifications, probably to accommodate the new water channel built immediately west and south of the pillared building. Pottery is now Ammonite in style—this is reflected in the various forms, finish, and painted decoration.

²² C. J. Goulet and Roy E. Gane, “Three Epigraphic Finds from Tall Jalul,” *BASOR* 365 (2012): 27–32.

Iron IIC/Persian. Early Sixth–Fifth Centuries (605/586–331) BCE

Field A. In the western portion of Field A, a semicircular wall of uncertain purpose appears to date to the Persian period. North of this structure, running in an east-west direction, was a well-built wall of what appeared to be a separate building dating to the same period.

Field B. In Field B, a patch of pavement in the inner Gatehouse dated to the Persian period.

Field C. In Field C, there were three major phases of occupation. The pillared house ceased to exist. There were two large buildings—one to the east of where the pillared house used to stand and another to the south. The southern-most building seems to have been part of a large courtyard building that is also found in Field D and may have served as an administration building based on its large size and layout. In the latter two phases of the Persian period, a street separated the north and south buildings. Pottery from this phase included Attic ware. A small stone incense stand was also found in this building.

Field D. The most significant remains of the Iron IIC/Persian period were found in Field D where a large domestic structure with several rooms was uncovered. A considerable amount of pottery was found in the rooms. The roof had collapsed over several of the rooms—when the roof debris was removed numerous whole forms were found smashed on the floor. Several figurines were also found. Jalul Ostrakon I, An Ammonite inscription to or from certain individuals, dates to this period (6th century BCE. It contains six lines of texts and deals with distributions of some commodity (probably grain).

Byzantine Occupation

Finally, it should be noted that immediately to the south of the tell in the area we refer to as the “Islamic Village,” remains have been found from the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. This is possibly significant because of Talmudic references to Bezer—the Talmudic period can be dated to between the 3rd and 6th centuries CE.²³ The extent of the Byzantine settlement at Jalul (Bezer?) is not yet fully known. Ceramics have been recovered during surface surveys; a Christian gravestone was found in Field JIV A as was part

²³ Noted above; Gottfried Reeg, *Die Ortsnamen Israels nach der rabbinischen Literatur*, *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients* B/51 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1989): 134–35.

of a wall of a building. In Field JIV C, part of a mosaic floor and various architectural elements (such as column drums) of a Christian church were found under the ruins of an Ottoman period house.

Linguistic Considerations: Bezer

An interesting discussion that equates Bezer with Jalul is found in a recent study by Lipiński.²⁴ He noted that the Hebrew word *בְּצֻרָה* (*bezer*) means “fortress.” The adjectival form (*btrt*—qal imperfect feminine plural) is usually translated as a “fenced” or “fortified” city (e.g. *בְּצֻרֹת* Ezek 36:35; *בְּצֻרֹת* Num 13:28; *בְּצֻרֹת* Deut 1:28, Neh 9:25; *בְּצֻרָה* Deut 3:5, 9:1). Similarly, the name *bozrah* means a fortified place²⁵ Lipiński noted that the Arabic *bzr* means “to be inaccessible” and thus, similarly reflects the meaning of a fortified place.²⁶ Therefore, while not absolutely determinative, it is not unreasonable to assume that Bezer’s name had something to do with the fact that it was a well-fortified site.

Lipiński also argued that Bezer may appear in the itinerary of the Egyptian pharaoh, Ramses II. The relevant inscription appears in the Upper Egyptian Temple of Luxor, at the north end of the east wall of Ramses II’s court. The inscription dates to the 9th year of the pharaoh’s reign, ca. 1270 BCE. It is a topographical list with a section describing Moab as well as some key cities there, including *Ti-bu-nu* and a place called *Bu-tá-r-tá*:

“A city which the mighty arm of Pharaoh, blessed be he, conquered in the land of Moab (*Mú-’a-bu*), Butarta (*Bu-tá-r-tá*).

A city which the mighty arm of Pharaoh, blessed be he, [captured], of Dibon (*Ti-bu-nu*).

The place name *tpn/tbn* is generally identified with Dibon (modern Dhiban)—capital of the Moabites²⁷

As for locating and identifying B[w]trt, Kenneth A. Kitchen argued that this site should likely be equated with the south Transjordanian toponym

²⁴ Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan*.

²⁵ G. B. Gray, “Place Names,” in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* vol. 3, ed. T. K. Cheyne and J. S. Black (London: Macmillan, 1902), 3317; Wilhelm Borée, “Die alien Ortsnamen,” in *Palästinas*. 2. (1968): 51, 108.

²⁶ Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan*, 327.

²⁷ Kenneth A. Kitchen, “Some New Light on the Asiatic Wars of Ramesses II,” *JEA* 50 (1964): 47–70; “The Egyptian Evidence on Ancient Jordan,” in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan*, ed. Piotr Bienkowski (Sheffield: Collins, 1992), 21–34.

Raba Batora which appears in the Byzantine gazetteer *Tauble Peutingeriana* (Peutinger Table);²⁸ Kitchen further equated Raba Batora with the modern site of ar-Rabba (Areopolis/Rabbat Mo'ab), south of the Wadi Mujib. However, other scholars believe that Raba Batora is better identified with the Betthoro of the *Notitia Dignitat*,²⁹ the latter of which is indisputably equated with the modern site of Lajjun.³⁰ If so, this leaves the identification of B[w]trt open.

However, Lipiński has recently proposed a linguistic connection between the Hebrew Bezer and the Egyptian toponym *b[w]trt* in the Ramses II Moabite itinerary.³¹ First of all, Lipiński noted that in Hebrew *bzr* is typically translated as a “fortification” while the Arabic cognate, *bzr*, means to be inaccessible—which reflects a similar sense as the Hebrew. Based on this, Lipiński proposed that *btrt* (apparently referring to the Hebrew *bezer* in its adjectival form and which means “fortified”) is reflected in the Egyptian *B-t-r-t* (*B-w-t-i-r-t-i*) from the topographical list of Ramesses II.³² Lipiński also noted that another form of the word בְּצֶרֶה (*bṣrḥ*) as seen in Jer 48:24, is reflected in later Rabbinic (Talmudic) texts which discuss the town of Bosrah.³³ Based on this, Lipiński argued that Ramses II's *b[w]trt* is none other than Biblical Bezer! Elsewhere, he argued that Jalul is the best candidate for this site (*ibid.*).

Routledge has conveniently summarized some important aspects of this text.³⁴ First, he noted that Moab is written with the determinative sign for a foreign land or hilly country. Following Gardner,³⁵ Routledge went on to say that this sign marks a spatial totality—a geographical or political entity, rather than a regional subdivision or a group of people. Routledge further pointed out (following Kitchen) that the settlement *b[w]trt* is described as a *dmi* (town), the largest type of settlement the Egyptian would recognize in

²⁸ Kitchen, “The Egyptian Evidence.”

²⁹ Or. 37 (1968): 22.

³⁰ Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan*, 319.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 327.

³² *Ibid.*, 327; cf. Kenneth Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969–70), 180.2.

³³ Reeg, *Die Ortsnamen Israels*, 134–135.

³⁴ Bruce Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age: Hegemony, Polity, Archaeology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 59)

³⁵ Gardner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd. ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957),

foreign countries—a true city (*niwt*) was reserved for Egypt only.³⁶ The *dmi* was typically understood to be a central settlement (actual scale relative to its territorial context), while a *whywt* (village/hamlet) would be a smaller, dependent settlement.

In view of the above observations, Routledge summarized the Ramses II inscription concerning *b[w]trt* as follows:³⁷

Ramses II campaigns against a Levantine walled town (as opposed to a village or a Nubian settlement), inhabited by “Syrians” (as opposed to “Shasu nomads,” “Hitties,” or “Libyans”), ruled by a *wr* (as opposed to an ‘3) in a territory (as opposed to an *ethné*, or province) named Moab.

This all points to *b[w]trt* as a rather significant city in terms of the Transjordanian context. In terms of sheer size, Jalul is the largest site in central Jordan beyond Dhiban—it would not be at all surprising that these two sites were the very ones that would have attracted Ramses II’s attention on his foray into northern Moab. Equating Jalul with *b[w]trt* based on this criterion alone would make sense. If Lipiński’s linguistic arguments are viable, then the case that Jalul is ancient Bezer is even stronger. Ramses II’s relief of this site would also provide us with an actual (albeit stylized) picture of Jalul!

³⁶ See Donald Redford, “The Ancient ‘City’: Figment or Reality?” in *Aspects of Urbanism in Antiquity: From Mesopotamia to Crete*, ed. Walter Aufrecht, Niel Mirau, and Steven Gauley, JSOTSup 244 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997), 211n5.

³⁷ Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, 60.

III. New Testament Studies

Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and the Sinful Woman of Luke 7: The Same Person?

Grenville J. R. Kent

Western Christian tradition long identified Mary Magdalene with Luke's unnamed woman "sinner" (7:36–50) and with the woman who anoints Jesus in Bethany (Matt 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:1–8), whom John 11:2 names as Mary of Bethany, sister of Lazarus.¹ Tertullian (ca.155–220 AD) linked the Lucan and Marcan characters, using an idea common to the other two Gospels.² A sermon by Pope Gregory (ca. 591 CE) identified Mary Magdalene with Luke's unnamed sinner: "She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary [of Bethany], we believe to be the Mary [Magdalene] from whom seven devils

¹ H. Pope, 'St. Mary Magdalen', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Appleton, 1910. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>). The Greek fathers saw three separate people. For a historical summary, see U. Holzmeister, 'Die Magdalenfrage in der kirchlichen Überlieferung', *ZKT* 46 (1922) 402–422, 556–684.

² Tertullian, *De pudicitia*, XI, 1, PL2, col 1001B, wrote: "He permitted contact even with his own body to the 'woman, a sinner',—washing, as she did, His feet with tears, and wiping them with her hair, and inaugurating His sepulture with ointment". (Translated by Thelwall, "On Modesty": tertullian.org/works/de_pudicitia.htm). Tertullian linked together the "sinner," an idea only in Luke, with getting Jesus ready for burial ("inaugurating his sepulture" or "inaugurating his own decease"), an idea found in all Gospels except Luke. Contact with Christ's "body" is mentioned in Matt 26:12 and Mark 14:8. Thus Tertullian brought together the Gospel accounts of this story.

were ejected according to Mark.”³ For centuries, paintings portrayed a seductively clothed Mary Magdalene, often with red or gold hair and an alabaster jar of perfumed oil.⁴ In Cecil B. DeMille’s classic film *King of Kings* (1927) she is a jewel-draped courtesan with pet leopards and male slaves. In Tim Rice’s lyrics for *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1970), Mary is the ex-prostitute relaxing Jesus with ointment, and singing, “I don’t know how to love him.” Franco Zeffirelli’s *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977) portrays her as a prostitute. Further, Mel Gibson’s film, *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), links Mary Magdalene to the woman Jesus rescued from stoning after she was caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3–11), as does the hugely controversial film *The Last Temptation of Christ* by ex-seminarian Martin Scorsese.⁵

Yet in the late 20th century, the Roman Catholic Church moved away from associating Mary Magdalene with prostitution. In the Roman Calendar, the Gospel reading for the feast of St Mary Magdalene (July 22) was Luke 7:36–50, but in 1969 the Second Vatican Council changed the reading to John 20:1–2 and 11–18, which describes Mary Magdalene’s role at Christ’s resurrection.⁶ (The Eastern Church in its calendar of saints had already distinguished Mary Magdalene from Luke’s anonymous sinner.) In 1978, the entry for Mary Magdalene in the Roman Breviary removed the names “Maria poenitens” (penitent Mary) and “magna peccatrix” (great sinner) as a result of scholarly re-consideration.⁷

Much recent scholarship discounts the previous tradition as based on a conflation of Gospel texts, likely motivated by mediaeval aversions to women and the body, and now regards Mary Magdalene as a wealthy woman, perhaps married, who befriended Jesus after he freed her of demons in some sense, and who was one of his financial supporters. This re-examination has occurred in the context of feminism, the quest for gender equality in

³ ‘Hanc vero quam Lucas peccatricem mulierem, Johannes Mariam nominat, illam esse Mariam credimus de qua Marcus septem daemonia ejecta fuisse testatur.’ S. Grégoire Le Grand, *Homiliae in evangelia*, II, xxxiii, PL76, col.1239C, cited in A. Feuillet, “Les deux onctions faites sur Jesus, et Marie-Madeleine,” *RThom* 75 (1975): 361, n12. See the full translation and comments in Esther de Boer, *The Mary Magdalene Cover-Up: The Sources Behind the Myth* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), ch. 10.

⁴ Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London: Pimlico, 2005), fascinatingly chronicles Mary’s portrayal in two millennia of art, literature and theology.

⁵ Scorsese’s film is based on Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ* (London: Bantam, 1968) (English translation 1960).

⁶ Jerry Filteau, ‘Scholars seek to correct Christian tradition, fiction of Mary Magdalene’, *Catholic Online*. www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=19680

⁷ See Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 388, 486 n. 35.

Christian texts,⁸ and questions of women's ordination.⁹

This article attempts a fresh examination of the Gospel texts. It will argue¹⁰ that Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and the Lucan ἀμαρτωλός are likely one and the same person because the Gospels contain clues that tend to support this longstanding Christian tradition and nothing that contradicts it. However it will find that this view affirms rather than discredits Mary Magdalene, portraying her as an eyewitness to Christ's resurrection and honouring this woman as an apostle to the apostles in a way that should promote gender equality.

Is Mary of Bethany the Lucan ἀμαρτωλός?

First let us examine connections between Mary of Bethany and the unnamed ἀμαρτωλός of Luke 7. Laying the four Gospel accounts alongside each other reveals many similarities:

Comparing details of the gospel accounts:

Detail	Matt 26:6–13	Mark 14:3–9	Luke 7:36–50	John 12:1–8
1. Town	Bethany	Bethany	–	Bethany
2. Location	House	House	House	House (v. 3)
3. Timing	Two days before Passover (v. 2)	Two days before Passover (v. 1)	–	Jesus arrived six days before Passover (v. 1)
4. Host's name	Simon the leper (v. 6)	Simon the leper (v. 3)	Pharisee (vv.36, 39) named Simon (vv. 40, 43, 44)	–
5. Others present	–	–	–	Martha serves, Lazarus at table

⁸ Compare among others: de Boer. Jane Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (New York: Continuum, 2004). Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (London: Vintage, 1979); Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1979). By contrast, see also Susanne Heine, *Women and Early Christianity: A Reappraisal* (London: SCM, 1987).

⁹ As one example, Gruppe Maria von Magdala was a German Roman Catholic group formed in 1986 to campaign for equal rights for women in the church and for women's ordination. Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 397.

¹⁰ As do Andre Feuillet, "Les deux onctions," 357–394; and John Wenham, *Easter Enigma: Are the Resurrection Accounts in Conflict?* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992).

6. Name of woman	Unnamed woman γυνή (vv. 7, 10, 13)	Unnamed woman γυνή (v. 3)	γυνή ἥτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἀμαρτωλός (v. 37), τίς καὶ ποταπή ἡ γυνή... ἀμαρτωλός (v.39), ἀμαρτίαι αὐτῆς αἱ πολλαί (v. 47)	Mary of Bethany, sister of Lazarus and Martha, (vv. 1–2, cf 11:1–2)
7. Reclining at table	Yes 'lie at table' ἀνακειμένον (v. 7)	Yes 'lie down at table' κατακειμένον (v. 3)	Yes 'recline at table' κατεκλίθη (v. 36)	Yes 'lie at table' ἀνακειμένον (v. 2)
8. Anointed what part of body?	Head (v. 7) and body (v. 12)	Head (v. 3), and body (v. 8)	Feet (vv. 38, 46)	Feet (v. 3)
9. Alabaster jar	Yes	Yes	Yes	(A pint or <i>litra</i> , v.3)
10. Broke jar	–	Yes	–	–
11. Expensive perfume	Very expensive perfume (v. 7)	Very expensive perfume (v. 3)	Perfume (v. 38)	Expensive perfume (v. 3)
12. Pure nard ¹¹	–	Yes (v. 3)	–	Yes (v. 3)
13. House filled with perfume	–	–	–	Yes
14. Who voiced objections?	Disciples (v. 8)	Some of those present (v. 4)	–	“one of his disciples, Judas... who would betray

¹¹ Nard is extracted from the spike of the nard plant, which grows near the foothills of the Himalayas. It had probably come via the spice markets of India by ship to Arabia, then by camel train to Jerusalem. Pure nard, not mixed with cheaper substances, would be worth a working person's wages for a year. One can only imagine the personal cost of earning this as a prostitute.

				him” (v. 4)
15. Judas’ hidden motive	–	–	–	Thief (v. 6)
16. Indignant	Yes	Yes (14:4)	–	Objected (v. 4)
17. Why waste?	Yes (v. 8)	Yes (vv. 4–5)	–	–
18. Should be sold	Yes	Yes	–	Yes
19. Cost	High price	Year’s wages (300 denarii)	–	Year’s wages (300 denarii)
20. Money to poor	Yes	Yes	–	Yes (v. 5)
21. Jesus defends her	Don’t bother her	Leave her alone	–	Leave her alone
22. Jesus says she did	“what she could”	“a beautiful thing” (v. 6), “what she could”(v. 8)	“loved much” (v. 47)	–
23. Poor always ¹²	Yes	Yes	–	–
24. Prepare me for burial	Yes (v. 12)	Yes (v. 8)	–	Yes (v. 7)
25. Faith saved you	–	–	Yes (v. 50)	–
26. Her story will be told wherever gospel goes	Yes	Yes	–	–
27. Result: Judas plots to betray	Yes (vv. 14–16)	Yes (v. 10)	–	Mentioned indirectly (v. 4)
28. (Result?)	Mentioned later	Mentioned later	Yes, follows immediately	–

¹² Only Mark adds the phrase, “and you can help them whenever you want,” but this sense can be understood in both since Jesus is alluding to Deut 15:11, the command to be “open-handed” to the poor and needy.

Mary Magdalene travels with Jesus, supports from own finances	(Matt 27:55–56)	(Mark 15:40–41)	“After this” (8:1–3) ¹³	
29. Mary Magdalene had demons	–	Yes (16:9) ¹⁴	Yes (8:2)	–
30. Follows after stories re: Mary of Bethany	–	–	–	Yes (John 11)

The Simon subplot (written by Luke from Simon’s testimony?)

	Matt 26:6–13	Mark 14:3–9	Luke 7:36–50	John 12:1–8
a. She stood behind Jesus	–	–	Yes	–
b. She wet Jesus’ feet with tears	–	–	Yes	–
c. She wiped Jesus’ feet with hair	–	–	Yes	Yes (also 11:2)
d. She kissed Jesus’ feet	–	–	Yes	–
e. Simon thinks: if prophet	–	–	Yes	–
f. Jesus reads thoughts	–	–	Simon’s, v. 39ff	–
g. Two debtors story	–	–	Yes	–
h. You gave me no water, etc.	–	–	Yes	–
i. Sins forgiven, loved	–	–	Yes	–

From these thirty-nine details, we find:

Three details in all four writers (#2, 7, 11).

Six more details agreed upon by three writers without contradictions elsewhere (#1, 9, 16, 18, 20, 24).

Ten more details clearly agreed upon by two writers without contradictions elsewhere (#12, 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, c). For

¹³ See discussion below.

¹⁴ This text of course forms part of the longer ending of Mark, the originality of which is debated.

example, Mary of Bethany wipes Jesus' feet with her hair (John 11:2; 12:1, 3) as does the sinner (Luke 7:38). Since the rabbis considered a woman's hair too seductive to be shown in public,¹⁵ this was a striking action and one could reasonably expect it to be unique. While this does not constitute proof, it does strongly suggest the connection between the stories and the characters.

Thirteen details that are mentioned in only one writer, without contradictions elsewhere (#5, 10, 13, 15, 25, a, b, d, e, f, g, h, i).

Totals:

Thirty-two details without differences.¹⁶

Seven differences of detail (#3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 19, 21).

If one takes the default position that the writers were accurate and that the manuscripts are reliable unless there is convincing evidence to the contrary (an assumption whose justification is beyond the scope of this paper), then factual incompatibilities between Gospel accounts would suggest that different events were being described. Yet Carson has observed that "details in the text encourage the reader to inject a small dose of historical imagination before resorting too quickly to the critic's knife".¹⁷ In that vein, careful examination below will find that the apparent differences are quite compatible, without contrived or forced harmonisation:

#3. Matthew and Mark date the Bethany feast two days before Passover. John says Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before Passover—but does not say the feast was held that day. This is not a contradiction.

#4. Matthew and Mark call the host "Simon the leper." Luke's narration at first conceals the personal name, four times referring to the host merely as a Pharisee (7:36 twice, 37, 39), but then Luke lets Jesus' speech make the surprise revelation of the name Simon (7:40), after which the narrator twice

¹⁵ J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1954), 101–102: "It was the greatest disgrace for a married woman to unbind her hair in the presence of men." "According to Tos. Sota 5, 9; j. Gitt. 9, 50d it was a reason for divorce." Similar rules presumably applied to single women.

¹⁶ These are conservative figures. For example, #19 is clearly agreed by two writers, but we have not counted this as agreement because another writer offers a different detail. Also, we have not weighted the figures with obvious details—for example, that Jesus was there.

¹⁷ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 426, in describing connections between the Matthean, Marcan and Johannine accounts.

uses the name (7:43, 44). The personal name agrees with Matthew and Mark, who also gave the same small town location, yet could leper and Pharisee be compatible titles? Since a leper would not be allowed social contact for fear of contagion, least of all among Torah-aware Pharisees, one logical way to assemble the data is to consider Simon was once a leper but was healed by Jesus,¹⁸ who is often described as healing lepers (e.g. Matt 8:2–4; 11:5; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 7:22; 17:12). Since Pharisees saw sickness as caused by God’s judgment upon sin (cf. John 9:2), Simon’s leprosy would have seemed like God’s curse and Christ’s healing would powerfully demonstrate forgiving grace. Yet still Simon’s heart had no place for Mary, and his religion had “no real answer to the problem of sin.” He could only condemn her and feel superior. “But Jesus could actually do away with sin, and in this deepest sense bring salvation and peace.”¹⁹ Jesus told Mary her faith—the simple belief in the love and forgiveness of Jesus—had saved her (Luke 7:50). The key theme of the story is showing Jesus as forgiver of sin: the woman is a sinner (7:37, 39, 47) but Jesus freely forgives sins (7:42–43, 47, 48, 49). Luke referring to her simply as a sinner fits this theme.

So Simon the leper of Bethany could also have been Simon the Pharisee and the un-named host in John’s narrative, with various Gospel writers giving different details to suit their purposes.

#6. Mary of Bethany could well be unnamed in the other Gospels, which call her γυνή ἥτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἀμαρτωλός, which probably meant a prostitute.²⁰ We will discuss below possible reasons for leaving her unnamed.

#8. Mary could well have anointed both the “head” (Matt, Mark) and “feet” (Luke, John) or, speaking more generally, the “body” (Matt, Mark) of Jesus.²¹ Anointing the head was standard hospitality for guests in the ancient world, where oil was commonly used in personal grooming (Lk 7:46; cf Ps 23:5; 133:1–2), so John may be suggesting both head and feet when he writes of “Mary . . . who poured perfume on the Lord [the head would be expected]

¹⁸ Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 53, 81; C. A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2001), 359; Donald A Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (Dallas: Word, 1995).

¹⁹ Michael Wilcock *The Message of Luke* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 91.

²⁰ Or an adulterer. Usage helps define meaning and the phrases “tax collectors and sinners” and “tax collectors and prostitutes” seem almost interchangeable. (Cf Matt 9:10, 11 with 21:31, 32.) The phrase “sinner in the city” in Luke’s story probably has the sense of “public sinner,” and the story makes most sense when “sinner” is understood as a euphemism for ‘prostitute’ or ‘courtesan,’” argued John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 353.

²¹ Contra David P. Scaer, “The One Anointing of Jesus: Another Application of the Form Critical Method,” CTQ (July 1977): 54–55, who saw these as “obvious differences” which would “raise red flags” for anyone “working with anything like the doctrine of inerrancy.”

and wiped his feet with her hair” (John 11:2).²² Yet the quantity of ointment described (approximately 11 ounces) seems too great for anointing the head alone; also the two references to anointing his body would be “a strange way of referring to his head alone.”²³ A guest reclining at table with their feet furthest away could be anointed on any part of their body.²⁴

Mark and John show her anointing Jesus’ head. In Jewish culture, anointing is also a mark of being king²⁵ or “Anointed One:” Messiah or Christ. Thus anointing the head could be seen as Mary’s statement that Jesus was Messiah.²⁶

Luke and John show her anointing Jesus’ feet. The only time feet were anointed in Jewish culture was as a funeral ritual.²⁷ Brown notes: “One does not anoint the feet of a living person, but one might anoint the feet of a corpse as part of the ritual of preparing the whole body for burial.”²⁸ Further, it was a Jewish tradition that when anointing a dead person, the neck of the ointment bottle should be broken, perhaps as a symbol that it would not be used again, or a sign of loss. Later the bottle would be put into their burial cask.²⁹ This suggests why Mary broke the box, even though it was made of alabaster (Mark 14:3) and had resale value. Jesus seems to be recognising this symbolic meaning when he says: “She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial” (Mark 14:8). While the other disciples misunderstood and resisted the idea of his crucifixion, which did not fit their plans for Messiah (e.g. Matt 16:21–23), Mary listened (c.f. Luke 1:39, 42) and understood that he would die to pay for the forgiveness of human sin, including hers. Apparently she decided to show her love and gratitude by this memorial while he was still alive.

#14. Mark simply records that some people present criticised Mary. Matthew focuses on the disciples, and John is even more specific that the

²² Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, p.25.

²³ Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 426.

²⁴ Carson, *ibid.*, 428.

²⁵ C.f. 1 Sam 10:1; 16:1, 13; 1 Kgs 1:39; 19:15–16; 2 Kgs 9:3,6; Ps 89:20. See Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 190; Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 427.

²⁶ Compare Peter’s: Matt 16:13–20.

²⁷ Feuillet, “Les deux onctions,” 382, citing Legault and Schnackenburg. See John 19:38–42 for the description of the burial rituals for Jesus’ body, performed by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

²⁸ Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 454.

²⁹ A. M. Hunter, *St Mark* (London: SCM, 1948), 127, cited in George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 209.

disciple Judas was the ringleader. Perhaps they observed different things from different places around the table.

#19. Two Gospels agree on the price as 300 denarii. Matthew does not give the figure but a year's wages is indeed a "high price" for perfume: Judas' objection to "waste" would fit with this.

#21. Two writers have Jesus say, "Leave her alone." Matthew has, "Don't bother her." These express the same idea; Jesus may even have used both lines.

While we are considering possible differences, some have argued that Luke's feast story must be different because he puts it earlier in the overall narrative of Jesus and does not give a location. But Luke may be structuring his material around an idea, grouping stories around themes so that his subjects suit his object. The evangelists do seem to group their narratives either topically, geographically according to various travels, or chronologically as suits their purposes.³⁰

In summary, there are differences in details recorded by the evangelists but none that necessarily contradict, which allows the conclusion that they are describing the same incident and characters. So Mary of Bethany, the Matthean and Marcan "woman" and the Lucan ἀμαρτωλός could well be one and the same.³¹

³⁰ For example, Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 192, argued that Mark sandwiches the anointing story between the plot to arrest Jesus (14:1-2) and Judas' visit to the chief priests (14:10-11), at which he would have reported the planned "messianic uprising". He argued that John, dating the anointing two days before Passover, may be the most historically accurate (196-97). D. A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 426, observed that 'the time indicators in Matthew/Mark are notoriously loose. These Evangelists often order their accounts according to topic, not chronology.' See also Feuillet, "Les deux onctions," 370. We note that John briefly mentions the anointing incident (11:2) before fully narrating it (12:3). This could suggest dischronologised narrative, though other reasons are plausible: he could be foreshadowing the plot, or revealing Mary of Bethany in a story already known to his readers but, until then, without the main character's name.

³¹ Robert Holst, "The Anointing of Jesus: Another Application of the Form-Critical Method," *JBL* 95.3 (1976): 435-46, saw the same incident in all four accounts. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke 1-9: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 686, found seven reasons to connect Mark's and Luke's versions. C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 162-73, saw one incident behind all the accounts. Andreas J. Köstenberger, 'A Comparison of the Pericopae of Jesus' Anointing', in *Studies on John and Gender: A Decade of Scholarship* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), treated Mark, Matthew, and John as referring to the same occasion, but Luke to another occasion. He listed (55) scholars who saw one anointing: Bernard, Bultmann, Dauer, Dibelius, Dodd, Elliot, Holst, Klostermann, R.H. Lightfoot, Nesbitt, O'Rahilly, D.F. Strauss, et al; scholars who saw two separate occasions: Chrysostom, Tatian, Bevan, R.E. Brown, Carson, Cribbs, Drexler, Grubb, Lagrange, Legault, Lindars, I.H. Marshall, Morris, Nolland, Schnackenburg, Smalley, de Solages, et al; and Origen who saw three occasions. Benoit and Legault saw in Luke a

Is Mary of Bethany the Same as Mary Magdalene?

This is not clearly stated in the biblical texts, and we will explore possible reasons for this, yet there are some intriguing clues and “converging probabilities”³² that make it plausible:

1. We have already seen that the Synoptic Gospels suppressed, for whatever reason, the identity of a woman with a sinful past and that John, usually believed to be the last to write, revealed her as Mary of Bethany.³³ If Mary was active in public witness to Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, or was known in the Jerusalem church, then her fellow evangelists would have a good reason to spare her from unwanted publicity.³⁴ After her retirement or death, John could have felt free to name her. (Even then, no-one uses the word prostitute.)³⁵

An even more pressing reason for privacy may have been personal security. The three earliest Gospels do not tell the story of the resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany, and John, writing later, reports what could be a good reason: leading priests were planning to kill Lazarus to silence his witness to Jesus (John 12:9–11). Luke mentions only “a certain village” in describing an incident involving Mary and Martha (10:38). So perhaps the early Gospel writers kept this Bethany family anonymous for security reasons—especially if Mary’s anointing was understood as acknowledging Jesus as Messiah, and was read by authorities as subversive and politically rebellious.³⁶ Luke writes “of the sinner in chapter 7, of Mary Magdalene in chapter 8, of Mary sister of Martha in chapter 10 and of Mary Magdalene again in chapter 24, without

different story about another woman. Feuillet saw separate incidents but the same woman, Mary of Bethany = Mary Magdalene = the anonymous sinner.

³² Feuillet’s phrase, “Les deux onctions,” 380.

³³ John also identifies ‘the man who cut off the ear of the high priest’s slave as Peter, and the slave himself as Malchus.’ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 40.

³⁴ John 11:45–53. C.f. Bauckham, *ibid.*, 46, 51, 298 n. 17. Christopher Wordsworth, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Original Greek, With Notes and Introductions: The Four Gospels* (London: Rivingtons, 1886), 323. Pope, argued that Luke’s gospel also protects Matthew by not identifying him as the former tax collector Levi (Luke 5:27).

³⁵ The blunt term *πόρνῆ* is not applied to a character in the Gospels and appears in only two passages, both in the teaching of Jesus (Matt 21:31–32; Luke 15:30).

³⁶ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 191, argued that whether Mary understood it as such or not, “in the charged atmosphere of this time in Jerusalem and with the question whether Jesus was the messianic son of David certainly being widely asked, the woman’s action could easily be perceived by others as of messianic significance.” He used Gerd Theissen’s phrase, “protective anonymity” (190) and argued that it was for similar reasons that Simon Peter was not named as the attacker of the high priest’s servant, but John could later reveal that detail. See also Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 32.

ever saying that they are the same person.”³⁷ So perhaps Luke carefully removes her name from a story of prostitution, naming her achievements as generous supporter of Jesus and as resurrection eyewitness, but in sketching her relationship with Martha he suppresses her home town and the other sibling Lazarus, likely for her protection. Writing later, John gives fuller details (11:1, 5).

The title “Magdalene” meant someone from the village of Magdala near Galilee (cf. Matt 15:39). If Mary had lived there for a time as a prostitute, the alliterative name Mary Magdalene (perhaps a professional name) would be accurate, with the added advantage of distracting hostile readers from her family home in Bethany, to which she may have returned after her contact with Jesus.³⁸ Magdala was a very wealthy town, largely from producing woollen fabric and dyes taken from shellfish in the lake, but was regarded as morally corrupt. Edersheim recorded the rabbinic opinion that its sinfulness led to its destruction: “its wealth was very great” but “its moral corruption was also great.”³⁹ “According to y. Ta’anit 4, 69c, ‘Magdala was destroyed because of prostitution (znut)’.”⁴⁰ A girl living away from home and family support would seem more likely to enter prostitution. So a change of towns could explain why Mary sometimes has the title Magdalene⁴¹; she is Mary “who is called the Magdalene,” Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή (Luke 8:2).

2. Mary Magdalene was “possessed by seven demons” until Jesus exorcised her (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). Some would take this as a pre-scientific attempt to describe psychological or physical illness,⁴² but Jesus often seems to speak in this way of spiritual warfare. He mentions “the devil” and “Satan”

³⁷ Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 31. He argued that it would be confusing to refer to Mary of Magdala when she is in her home in Bethany.

³⁸ Still with the local reputation as a “sinner.” She seems to find out about Simon’s feast (ἐπιγνοῦσα Luke 7:37: NIV ‘learned’) and just appear abruptly rather than being invited, though her brother was an honoured guest and her sister was serving, *δηκόνει* (John 12:2), cf. *διακονίαν* / *διακονεῖν* as the Leitwort associated with Martha in Luke 10:40.

³⁹ Alfred Edersheim cited the Jerusalem Talmud (Jer Taan 69 a; 11 Jer Taan us; Midr on Lament ii 2, ed. Warsh, 67 b middle) in *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book III, chapter 22, 1883, http://philologos.org/_cb-lat/book322.htm. *Migdal* in Hebrew means a tower, so Magdala probably got its name from a defensive tower.

⁴⁰ Schaberg, *Resurrection of Mary*, 55

⁴¹ Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 32. Several well-known Rabbis came from Magdala and “are spoken of in the Talmud as ‘Magdalene’ (Magdelaah, or Magdelaya).” (Baba Mets. 25 a, middle, R, in Edersheim).

⁴² Especially since the 19th century. See Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 14. For example, Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, *Women in the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 184, put this down to exaggeration due to the New Testament’s “primitive knowledge of the origins of mental and physical illnesses,” and claimed “exorcism aptly represents Jesus’ struggle against evils that afflict people in many forms.”

and his demons. Evil spirits are said to be “unclean” and to cause madness and destruction (Mark 5:1–13), and even sin (John 8:46–49).⁴³ Similar ideas are reflected in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a pseudepigraphical document from the first or second century BCE, which lists seven spirits that are sent to humans by “Beliar” (evil or perhaps Satan),⁴⁴ of which the first is sexual sin (“fornication”).⁴⁵ Thus it was “understood that demons push people into all manner of sin and vice,”⁴⁶ which would fit well with the idea of Mary Magdalene having a dark past, morally and spiritually—including sexual sin.

Jesus said he made demons leave “by the Spirit of God” (see Matt 12:28; Luke 4:33–36), suggesting serious conflict: Jesus’ bringing God’s kingdom to earth under attack from Satan, the self-styled “prince of this world,” whom Jesus came to throw out and to judge (see John 12:31; 16:11), a “head-on collision” between “the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God”⁴⁷ which revealed both the nature and power of God’s kingdom (see Luke 11:20). Jesus also warned that when he had driven out a demon, the exorcised person must allow God’s Spirit to fill them or else the demon could bring back seven others, a worse condition than before (Luke 10:24–26; Matt 12:43–45). Thus, Mary Magdalene’s “seven demons” may suggest a story of being freed from her possession, then falling back into possession even more severely. This would suggest that Jesus had shown incredible patience and strength. It may also parallel the comment that Mary of Bethany had “many sins” (Luke 7:47). This hardly fits with the view of Mary Magdalene as a basically upstanding woman, perhaps with a few depressed moments.

3. Luke depicts Mary Magdalene serving with Jesus on a mission trip among other well-to-do women who had been “healed of evil spirits and diseases” (Luke 8:1–3). This follows immediately after the scene in which Jesus tells the “sinful woman” (shown in the grid above to be Mary of Bethany; in point 2 above, her sins are linked to the demonic) that her faith has saved her and that she can go in peace. Luke connects these two scenes

⁴³ Contra Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 14: “nowhere in the New Testament is demoniacal possession regarded as synonymous with sin.” Haskins explained John 8:46–49 as a ‘direct comparison’ between being a sinner and having a devil.

⁴⁴ *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, I, 3. See jewishencyclopedia.com or earlychristianwritings.com/patriarchs.html. See also Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 30.

⁴⁵ Others listed are gluttony, angry fighting, flattering trickery, arrogance, lying, and injustice or theft. These are said to cause darkening of the mind, not understanding God’s law, not obeying parents, and ultimately death.

⁴⁶ Feuillet, “Les deux onctions,” 387–8.

⁴⁷ Wilcock, *The Message of Luke*, 91.

with καθεξῆς (8:1), which denotes “sequence in time, space or logic”⁴⁸ and here suggests that this is the logical result of what went before. We could translate, “And consequently. . .” Wenham wrote, “Luke’s introduction of Mary Magdalene at the beginning of chapter 8 would be explained if chapter 7 is the story of her conversion.”⁴⁹

4. Mary of Bethany gives an extremely generous, “enormous”⁵⁰ gift equivalent to a year’s wages. Mary Magdalene is wealthy enough to do this, which also suggests a connection. A popular prostitute in a wealthy town would be expected to acquire wealth.

5. Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany never appear in a scene together.⁵¹

6. The Gospels mention only one “other Mary,” the wife of Clopas, though Mary was a common name. In describing the scene near Christ’s cross, all four Gospels have only two women named Mary: Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” (see Matt 27:61; 28:1). (Jesus’ mother Mary was named earlier, but is now identified only by the title “his mother” rather than her personal name.) John says, “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” (John 19:25) Matthew, Mark and Luke show the same scene and identify “the other Mary” in slightly different words (see table), but she is fairly clearly the same person.⁵²

Women at the cross and tomb⁵³

	Matt 27:55–56	Mark 15:40	Luke 24:10 (shows the women at the tomb; cf. Mark 16:1) and Luke 23:49	John 19:25
1	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
2	Mary, mother of James and	Mary, mother of James the	Mary (mother?) of James	Mary the wife of Clopas

⁴⁸ “denoting sequence in time, space, or logic . . . literally in the next . . .” (Friberg); “a sequence of one after another in time, space, or logic” (Louw-Nida).

⁴⁹ Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 28.

⁵⁰ Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 429.

⁵¹ Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 29.

⁵² Feuillet, “Les deux onctions,” 381, and see the discussion in Raymond F. Brown, *The Gospel According to John, XII–XXI* (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 904–6.

⁵³ After Brown, *ibid.*, 905. See also Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 49.

	Joseph. Later twice called “the other Mary” 27:61; 28:1	younger and Joses. 15:47 also calls her mother of Joses. 16:1 calls her mother of James.		
3	The mother of the sons of Zebedee	Salome	–	–
4	–	Joanna	– (in Luke 8:3, a woman travelling with Jesus’ team)	–
5	–	–	–	His mother (name Mary not given, perhaps to avoid confusion of Marys)

Matthew twice mentions “the other Mary,” mother of James and Joses, alongside Mary Magdalene (Matt 27:61; 28:1). Matthew does not ever name Mary of Bethany, but it has been argued above that he suppresses her name in the anointing story, in which case he could well have had her in mind here. So if Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene were different people, then there would be two Marys (other than his mother) close to Jesus and prominent in his life story, and Matthew would have needed to say “one of the other Marys” so as to avoid confusion. But he does not, which suggests Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany are one and the same.

7. Mary Magdalene is not named by her relationship to a husband or male family member, unlike most women in the Gospels,⁵⁴ for example “Mary the mother of James” (24:10) or “Joanna the wife of Chuza” (Luke 8:3). By contrast, Mary Magdalene is named for her town of residence (Luke 8:2). Martha and Mary of Bethany are also named independently in their own right (Luke 10:38–39), and once linked to their town (John 11:1).

8. Viewing Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene as the same person builds a coherent narrative running through the Gospels, with Mary as a

⁵⁴ Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 14, claimed Mary Magdalene “alone stands out undefined by a designation attaching her to some male as wife, mother or daughter,” but Susanna does, too (Luke 8:3).

consistent character: “impulsive, emotional, devoted, discerning, privileged.”⁵⁵

(a) After Jesus’ death, Mary Magdalene came to anoint his body for burial (Mark 16:1–2).⁵⁶ This is the very thing Mary of Bethany aimed to do in the feast at Simon’s house, as Jesus recognised and three gospels recorded (cf. Matt 26:12; Mark 14:8; John 12:7) and which the John reference linked to “the day of [his] burial.”

(b) In the Synoptic Gospels’ description of the feast at Simon’s house, the un-named woman (later named by John as Mary of Bethany) appears suddenly without introduction, and yet Judas assumes that if her perfume were sold, the money would be given for the poor into the money bag he managed (John 12:4–6). This suggests that he knew her as a financial contributor, perhaps Mary Magdalene (Mark 15:40, 41; Luke 8:2).⁵⁷

(c) Repeated literary motifs cluster around Mary.

(i) Mary is often pictured at Jesus’ feet. Mary of Bethany sits at Jesus’ feet, listening to him (Luke 10:39).⁵⁸ She falls at his feet to tell him about the loss of her brother (John 11:32). She anoints his feet (John 12:3). After his resurrection, Mary Magdalene and other women are suddenly met by Jesus and they clasp his feet and worship him (Matt 28:9). Then, after Mary and the other women have told the disciples that he had risen, Jesus appears surprisingly in the room, and they all hold his feet and worship him (Luke 24:39–40), perhaps because his feet still show wounds from the cross, which prove to them his death and resurrection for them, and his supernatural character. Admittedly, many other people fall at Jesus’ feet to ask him for things or to thank him (Matt 15:30; Mark 5:22; 7:25; Luke 8:41; 17:14), which was fairly normal in that culture (Matt 18:29), or sit at his feet to listen to him (Luke 8:35). Yet

⁵⁵ Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 29. On emotionality, compare the grieving of Martha and Mary and Jesus’ response to each (John 11:20–36).

⁵⁶ Apparently they intend to do so on Friday afternoon (Mark 15:47 // Matt 27:61) but wait until Sunday morning.

⁵⁷ Feuillet, “Les deux onctions,” 384–5, citing A Lemonnier.

⁵⁸ In Acts 22:3, being “at the feet of” someone means learning from them.

this repeated image in the gospels tends to characterise Mary and hold together the various narratives.

(ii) Near the tomb of her brother Lazarus, Mary of Bethany is said to be weeping (John 11:31, 33), κλαίω describing strong audible crying. The verb used of Jesus, ἐδάκρυσεν, means to shed tears silently (11:35). Later Mary Magdalene appears near Jesus' tomb, weeping (again κλαίουσα John 20:11, twice).⁵⁹ The angels ask her why she is crying, and then Jesus asks her the same question (John 20:13, 15). While κλαίω is an ordinary word used 21 times in the Gospels, six of the seven occurrences in John are associated with a character named Mary,⁶⁰ which suggests it works as a Leitwort.

(iii) In another repeated motif, Jesus asks Martha and Mary of Bethany, sisters of the deceased Lazarus, where they have laid him (John 11:34). After the crucifixion, women mark where Jesus is laid (Matt 27:60–1; Mark 15:46–7; Luke 23:53–5), but early on the Sunday, Mary Magdalene runs to Peter concerned that Jesus' body has been taken and “we do not know where they have laid him” (John 20:1–2). She says the same thing to the angels (John 20:13) and again to the unrecognised Jesus (20:14–15). But then she, among other women, is told that he is risen and she should examine the place where he was laid, then go and tell the disciples that he is risen (Mark 16:6–7).

These are only subtle literary connections, but they tend to link Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene.

(d) In two Synoptic Gospels (Matt 26:13; Mark 14:9), Jesus says the actions of the woman will be spoken of wherever the gospel is preached around the world, not just in general terms about good actions and their significance but “as a memorial to her,” suggesting her personal identity is an important part of the story.

⁵⁹ F. Scott Spencer, *Dancing Girls, Loose Ladies and Women of the Cloth* (London: Continuum, 2004), 95, and Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, *Women in the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 188, point out the parallel between these two verbs and scenes, even though they do not equate the two characters.

⁶⁰ 11:31; 11:32 twice, the second of mourners with Mary; not 16:20; 20:11 twice of Mary; 20:13; 20:15

Despite that, these writers do not name her.⁶¹ Yet it could be that John fills this gap by naming her as soon as it is safe to do so. Wenham finds it “hard to believe” that Mary of Bethany, having been told her beautiful deed would always be remembered, “played no part in the resurrection story, but that the privilege of first seeing the risen Lord was given to another, almost unknown, Mary.”⁶²

None of these strands is conclusive on its own, but taken together they build a web of probability and a consistent characterization⁶³ of an intriguing person.

If one Mary indeed had two separate lives under two names in two towns, then hers is a fascinating narrative. In one lifetime, Mary was

a sexually damaged person who knew Jesus’ ability to heal sin, and to meet the real needs of the human heart;

a victim of demon possession who felt Jesus’ power over the spirit world;

a close personal friend to Jesus, who sat at his feet and listened by the hour to his extraordinary teaching;

an eyewitness to the resurrection of her brother, Lazarus;

a co-worker and financial backer of Jesus’ ministry team;

a giver, whose costly present and spontaneous tears expressed her love and gratitude;

a listener, who heard more clearly than most disciples that Jesus would die—and that it was to save humans from sin;

an eyewitness to his death, and faithful supporter when most (male) disciples “deserted him and fled” (Matt 26:56)

one who came to anoint his body, which would have been her second time doing so;

⁶¹ See Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 190, who cites R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 555.

⁶² Wenham, *Easter Enigma*, 29.

⁶³ To which some would add the story of the un-named woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3–11). See Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*, 26–29. Some would also connect the Woman of Samaria (John 4:4–43) in to Mary’s story, though the geography, chronology and backstory here appear hard to harmonize.

the first human to see Jesus after he was resurrected (even before his mother Mary);⁶⁴

the first to tell others that he had triumphed over death;

the first preacher of the Resurrection, initially doubted and disbelieved but later confirmed.

Importantly, if Mary Magdalene indeed had a background as a sex worker, this need not discredit her. The male apostles had sinful pasts: Paul for one violently attacked Christians (Acts 8:3) and does not cover this up, rather featuring his past to boast all the more about Christ's transforming power (1 Tim 1:12–16; Phil 3:6). Similarly, Mary offers an inspiring story of rising from brokenness to an honoured role. Jesus did say prostitutes were going into heaven ahead of some priests because they believed and repented (Matt 21:31, 32), and his message was forgiveness and life change.⁶⁵

What of sexism? Mary and other women were the first to announce the resurrection, yet one striking irony is the role that sexism played in the skepticism of Mary's first audience—Jesus' disciples. Gender is prominent in the account that the men “did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like empty talk” (Luke 24:9–11). “In the cultural stereotypes of the day . . . these are ‘only women,’ not to be believed in matters of deep importance. Their report is passed off as hysteria. . . Though Luke has a high view of women, he reflects here his awareness of the widespread tendency to discount the word of a woman.”⁶⁶ Yet Jesus calls Mary to be a witness to his resurrection, in words similar to his first call of the male apostles. John's account has Jesus ask her, “Who is it you are looking for?” (20:15), which echoes his almost identical question when asking the first disciples to follow him (John 1:35–40).⁶⁷ She calls him Παῦλον, just as they called him Παῦλον and became his apostles. Mary is in effect asked to go as an apostle to the

⁶⁴ For the sequence of her visits to the tomb, see Wenham, *Easter Enigma*.

⁶⁵ Pope, criticizing “Protestant critics” for a reluctance to allow this “apostle to the apostles” a sinful past, blamed it on a “failure to grasp the full significance of the forgiveness of sin.” This forgiveness of sexual sin is certainly reflected in the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3–11).

⁶⁶ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 1193, 1191. Hysteria was formerly regarded as a condition of women due to a disturbance in the uterus (Greek *hysteria* = uterus).

⁶⁷ F. Scott Spencer, *Dancing Girls*, 95.

apostles, an eyewitness⁶⁸ testifying that he was alive again as he promised (John 20:17). And she did so (John 20:18; Luke 24:10).

Later the church would be affected by misogyny, resulting in part from dualist theology,⁶⁹ but in this it was not following Jesus. Having called the first preacher of the resurrection, Jesus later appeared in person and powerfully confirmed what the women had said. Mary Magdalene provides strong New Testament precedent for women in the role of evangelists.

So Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany and the “woman sinner” can be read as the same person, making her story a case study in gospel transformation. This may be the reason Jesus said her story would be told wherever the Gospel is taught (see Matt 26:13; Mark 14:9).⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 48, argued that repeated use of verbs of seeing by the women gives them eyewitness credentials. See de Boer, 87–88, on Paul’s definition of apostleship.

⁶⁹ For a broad historical, cultural and theological sweep, see Haskins, *Mary Magdalen*.

⁷⁰ The writer thanks Pr Eddy Johnson for French translation and Dr Philip Rodionoff for critical feedback.

The Sabbath in the Gospel of John

Jon Paulien

Introduction

The Sabbath in the Gospel of John is of interest to this project¹ for at least two reasons. First, the Sabbath occurs in four different locations in the Gospel of John.² No study of the Sabbath in the New Testament would be complete without an examination of these texts. Second, John 5:17–18 provides, in the minds of many Sunday-keeping scholars, the definitive evidence that Jesus abolished the Sabbath as a requirement for those who follow him.

We will examine, therefore, the various occurrences of the Sabbath in the Gospel of John, with special emphasis on the Sabbath conflict miracles in chaps. 5 and 9.³ We will do so in conversation with earlier scholarship,

¹ The purpose of this study is understanding and promoting the Sabbath as of ongoing validity for Christians today.

² Scholars have noted that John's treatment of the Sabbath is quite different from that of the other gospels. See A. J. Droge, "Sabbath Work/Sabbath Rest: Genesis, Thomas, John," *History of Religions* 47 (November 2007/February 2008, Numbers 2/3): 128; and the literature cited in Henry Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest of God: How Jesus Came to Personify the Sabbath* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2005), 204–265.

³ These two Sabbath miracles are unique to the Gospel of John and were probably recorded in the Gospel because they highlight the theme of creation. In the first account, the miracle is effected by the spoken word (John 5:8, 19, cf. Gen 1:3, 6, 9, etc., Ps 33:6, 9), in the second, by handling the dust of the earth (John 9:6, 32, cf. Gen. 2:7). See Abraham Terian,

including representatives of those who disagree regarding the ongoing validity of the Sabbath for Christians.

The Four Sabbath Texts in John

The first reference to the Sabbath is found in John 5:9 and following, at the heart of the story about a paralyzed man at the Pool of Bethesda. Healing the man gets both Jesus and the former paralytic in trouble. The second reference to the Sabbath in John is found in 7:22–23. Jesus briefly draws the attention of “the Jews” back to the Sabbath healing of chap. 5.

The third reference to the Sabbath is found in John 9:14, 16. On the Sabbath day, Jesus heals a man born blind, using a poultice made from mud. The healed man not only comes to believe in Jesus, but argues ably in his behalf. The fourth and final reference to the Sabbath in John is found in the story of the crucifixion, John 19:31. It notes the ritual concern of the Jews that the victims of the crucifixion not hang on the cross during Sabbath hours.⁴

John 5:17–18 as Evidence for the Abolition of the Sabbath

John 5:17–18 is seen as evidence for the early abolition of the Sabbath by a number of NT scholars. Nevertheless, there is little agreement among them in terms of how the passage should be read. Barnabas Lindars,⁵ Rudolf Bultmann,⁶ and Heather McKay,⁷ for example, have argued from John 5:17 that God is not bound to rest on the Sabbath and the same liberty belongs to his Son. Bultmann went even further to state that in chap. 5, Jesus asserts this liberty and extends it to those who follow him by ordering the healed man to carry his bedroll on the Sabbath (8–12).⁸

“Creation in Johannine Theology,” in *Good News in History: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, ed. Ed L. Miller (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 54, 57.

⁴ But note the comments of Weiss on this text: Herold Weiss, “The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 110.2 (1991): 319–320.

⁵ Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1972), 218.

⁶ Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 246–247.

⁷ Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 122, ed. R. van den Broek, H. J. W. Drijvers and H. S. Versnel (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 148.

⁸ See also Samuele Bacchiocchi, “John 5:17: Negation or Clarification of the Sabbath?” *AUSS* 19.1 (Spring 1981): 4–9 and note 11.

The point of John 5:17, according to McKay (*Sabbath and Synagogue*, 148), is that Jesus is equal in authority to God and is therefore above the authority of both Torah and tradition.

Paul Jewett, Herold Weiss, Oscar Cullmann and Willy Rordorf argued from John 5:17 that the decisive rest of God was not achieved at the end of the first creation. God's work of salvation continued "until now" and was completed in Jesus Christ. The Sabbath, therefore, was a foretaste of the new creation rest in Christ. In fulfilling the ultimate intent of the Sabbath by his redemptive work, Christ set it aside, to be replaced by Sunday or by a daily celebration of redemption.⁹

There is a third major approach that assumes a negation of the Sabbath in John 5:17–18. Rudolf Schnackenburg argued on the basis of the Greek behind "was breaking" in John 5:18 (NIV) that Jesus not only violated the Sabbath, but completely abolished it.¹⁰ Schnackenburg, therefore, took the statement of 5:18 at face value. Jesus both made himself equal with God and broke the Sabbath.¹¹ Beside these major positions, there are a couple of other Sabbath-abolishing approaches that are too idiosyncratic to gain wide support.¹²

⁹ Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day: A Theological Guide to the Christian Day of Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 84–87; Oscar Cullmann, "Sabbat und Sonntag nach den Johannesevangelium," in *Memoriam, Ernst Lohmeyer* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1951), 127–131; idem, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM, 1953), 89–90; Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Era* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 98–100.

Cullmann's point of view is criticized by Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII–XXI)*, AB 29a (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 2:1019–1020; see also Weiss, "The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel," 316.

Weiss ("The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel," 318–320) seemed to hold a similar view, except that the ritual weekly Sabbath is not replaced by Sunday, but by "every" day. For followers of Jesus "every day is a Sabbath" (320), since the Sabbath has been released from the weekly cycle (319).

Though Sturcke was more nuanced than the others, he seemed to lean in this direction (*Encountering the Rest*, 264–265). He argued that whether or not the Johannine community had abandoned the Sabbath by the time of writing, the theology adopted in the Gospel would have eventually led them to do so.

¹⁰ "Jesus. . . did away with the Jewish sabbath in a radical manner with all its stipulations." Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John: Commentary on Chapters 5–12*, vol. 2 of 3, trans. Kevin Smythe, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 97.

¹¹ Ibid. Schnackenburg's view was criticized by Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:645–647.

¹² From a postmodern reading of the Gospel of John, Tom Thatcher drew the conclusion that Jesus truly broke the Sabbath in John 9. His "neutral" standpoint toward the perspective of the Gospel, however, caused him to see Jesus as the chief sinner in the Gospel, which attempts to "trick" the reader into accepting unconditionally the authority of the Gospel and thereby also the authority of Jesus. This strange reading of the Gospel of John is not likely to impact conservative Christians in their attitude toward the Sabbath. See Tom Thatcher, "The Sabbath Trick: Unstable Irony in the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 76 (1999): 75–76.

Dale Ratzlaff took something of an “all of the above” approach.¹³ Like Bultmann, he argued that Jesus has a divine right to work on the Sabbath and extends that right to the healed man by ordering him to carry his bedroll.¹⁴ Like Rordorf and others he argued that the primary purpose of the Sabbath law was to point forward to the salvific work of Christ.¹⁵ Like Schnackenburg, he accepted the statements of John 5:18 at face value. Jesus was breaking the Sabbath.¹⁶ He united these arguments with a covenantal perspective¹⁷ that he imported from his study of other parts of Scripture.¹⁸

Conclusion

What all these scholars have in common is the belief, as Bacchiocchi put it, that John 5:17–18 is “an implicit (if not explicit) annulment of the Sabbath commandment.”¹⁹ Jesus replaced the Sabbath with Sunday or an ever-present rest in the finished work of Christ. This essay will not attempt a point-by-point refutation of the arguments offered by these scholars. Instead, we will carefully investigate the Sabbath texts in the Gospel to understand their meaning in the larger context. We will then conclude with the implications of the exegetical analysis for the debate over the ongoing validity of the Sabbath for Christians.

The Purpose of John’s Gospel

We begin our examination of the Sabbath in the Gospel of John with a brief summary of the purpose for which the Gospel was written. Understanding the purpose of the Gospel is crucial to understanding how the

A. J. Droge argued that the Sabbath, according to John 5:17, has not even been established yet, because the creation itself is unfinished and incomplete. The fact that the Father is working implies that the true Sabbath is still future from John’s perspective. See Droge, “Sabbath Work/Sabbath Rest,” 129–130.

¹³ Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Christ* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 2003), 150–175. Ratzlaff’s work was thoughtful and gave careful attention to an English translation of the Gospel. He did not, however, deeply engage the scholarly issues and literature. This makes his work less useful for our purpose than it might otherwise have been.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 152–154.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 158–159.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 151, 158.

¹⁸ Ratzlaff made no attempt to argue for old and new covenant language within the Gospel of John itself. He simply restated what he has argued on the basis of covenantal language elsewhere in the Bible. His argument in John stands or falls on the validity of these covenantal assumptions.

¹⁹ Bacchiocchi, “John 5:17,” 11.

Sabbath functions in the places where it appears, particularly in chap. 5. Out of the four gospels in the New Testament, only Luke (Luke 1:1–4) and John (John 20:30–31) have clear statements of purpose. It would be foolish to examine the purpose of either gospel without careful attention to the statements of purpose placed in each.

John 20:30–31

John expresses the purpose of his gospel in the following words (John 20:30–31, ESV):

“³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

We are told here that the events recorded in the Fourth Gospel are selected from a much larger body of events. There is a purpose in the selection. It is “so that” (translates a Greek expression of purpose) the reader may believe that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of God” and in so doing experience life at its fullest.²⁰ Since the latter is the consequence of the former, the crucial purpose of the Gospel is to convince the reader that Jesus is the Messiah of Jewish expectation,²¹ and more than this, that he is the Logos, who was with the Father from the beginning. The Sabbath miracles chosen by John uniquely serve this purpose of the Gospel.²²

The Prologue of the Gospel

In the Prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1–18), the author summarizes its main themes. Before Creation, the Word was already in existence (John 1:1a) and was a constant companion of the Father (1:1b, 18). While distinct from “God” (the Father), he completely shared the divine nature (1:1c). Not

²⁰ The scholarly debate on this text is whether the appeal of 20:31 is directed to “outsiders,” seeking conversion, or to “insiders,” to confirm a faith they already hold. Tanzer took an interesting middle position. She felt that the Gospel is directed to individuals caught in between the synagogue and the Johannine community. It would then serve as a call to Jewish believers in Jesus to commit fully to the Jesus community represented in the Gospel. See Sarah J. Tanzer, “Salvation is *for* the Jews: Secret Christian Jews in the Gospel of John,” in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. Birger A. Pearson and A. Thomas Kraabel (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 285–286.

²¹ The English word “Messiah” is based on the Hebrew word for anointing, the English phrase “the Christ” is based on the Greek word for anointing.

²² Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 204.

only this, he was the God of creation.²³ Apart from him, not a single thing was made (1:3). The identity of Jesus is clearly central to the opening verses of the Gospel.

John then introduces two creation themes that will be crucial for our main texts. Jesus is the source of both life and light (1:4–5). In the main body of the Gospel he brings life to the paralytic in chap. 5 and light to the blind man in chap. 9. These stories become real-life parables, demonstrating who Jesus really is and how human beings should regard him. Both of these healing miracles occur on the Sabbath, further reminders of the original creation week in Genesis.²⁴

The Prologue moves to a stirring conclusion in verses 14–18. Though the Word always “was” (1), in verse 14 he “became” (Greek), the same term used to describe the original creation in 1:3 and Genesis 1. The Word went from being “with God” (1–2) to being “with us” (14). Although he does not replace Moses (1:17), he and his mission certainly exceed who Moses was and what he was able to accomplish for God.²⁵ The One who was always “with God” (John 1:1–2), who is now again at the Father’s side (1:18), this is the One who became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14).

The Prologue to John, therefore, interprets everything that happens in the Gospel in the larger perspective of eternity. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus says and does things that only make sense in the light of his identity in the Prologue. In light of this introduction, it is clear to the reader why “the Jews” and others in the Gospel had such a hard time understanding many of Jesus’ sayings and actions. While readers know what the Prologue says, the characters in the stories do not.

²³ The opening passage of the Gospel of John deliberately recalls the language of creation in Gen 1 and early Jewish interpretation of that language. See Terian, “Creation in Johannine Theology,” 50–53. There are also echoes of “wisdom” in Prov 8:22–31, which allude back to the Genesis stories. See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I–XII)*, Anchor Bible, 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), cxxii–cxxiv.

²⁴ Terian, “Creation in Johannine Theology,” 54. According to the creation accounts in Genesis, two main legacies of creation are marriage and the Sabbath. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first of Jesus’ “signs” in the Gospel of John (see 20:30–31) occurs in the context of a wedding (John 2:1–11), a wedding that takes place at the conclusion of Jesus’ first week of ministry in the gospel (see Droge’s [“Sabbath Work/Sabbath Rest”] enumeration of John’s first “week” on page 132, note 7). The references to the Sabbath in the Gospel of John are consistent with the theme of creation.

²⁵ The “but” in some translations of John 1:17 is supplied, it is not present in the original. An adversative conjunction would imply that Jesus and Moses are at odds (“Moses is bad, Jesus is good”). Instead, the progression of the text is elaboration and expansion (“Moses is good, Jesus is better”).

Conclusion

John 20:30–31 clearly states the purpose of the Gospel of John: to bring the reader to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. The identity of Jesus, who is the object of Johannine faith, is clearly stated in the Prologue to the Gospel (1:1–18). The body of the Gospel, then, portrays human beings in the earthly context grappling with who Jesus really is. It is in the latter context that the Sabbath conflict stories of John 5 and 9 are set.

The Sabbath Healing at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5) The Preceding Context

The identity of Jesus is at the heart of the narrative in John 1:19–4:54. This section begins with a debate between John the Baptist and “the Jews” (Pharisees—John 1:19, 24) regarding “the Christ” (the Messiah—1:19–28). John then identifies Jesus as the Messiah (1:30) and the Son of God (1:34), titles central to the purpose statement of John 20:30–31.

The next chapter introduces the theme of believing²⁶ as the appropriate human response to the words and deeds of Jesus (John 2:11, 22–23).²⁷ Then Nicodemus, being impressed with what Jesus did in the temple (John 3:2), struggles to make sense of it.²⁸ In story after story, the Gospel portrays people wrestling with the issue of who Jesus is and how to explain his words and actions.

In chap. 4 we encounter two more responses to the words and actions of Jesus. The Samaritan woman, somewhat like Nicodemus, is skeptical of Jesus at first. However, after he reveals his prophetic insight into her life, she becomes totally receptive to him. Then, the encounter with the royal official at the end of chap. 4 again highlights faith as a response to who Jesus is (4:46–54). In a real sense, the healings of 4:46–54 and 5:1–9 are quite

²⁶ For example, at the wedding of Cana the “master of the feast” (John 2:9, ESV) had no idea who Jesus was, nor did he perceive the significance of the drink Jesus provided. On the other hand, the disciples, who had already encountered Jesus in chap. 1, developed an initial level of faith in him (John 2:11). After the cleansing of the temple, “the Jews” clearly misunderstood the significance of the event (John 2:18–21, 23–25), but the disciples’ faith in Jesus was strengthened.

In the Gospel of John “faith” is always a verb (translated “believe” in English), while in Paul “faith” is normally a noun (see, for example, Rom 3:21–4:5).

²⁷ Martin Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts as Juridical Controversy*, *Wissenschaftlich Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2, ed. Martin Hengel and Otfried Hofius (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Siebeck], 2001), 39–40.

²⁸ Jon Paulien, “Nicodemus,” *ABD* 4:1105–1106.

similar, so the second sign at Cana (4:54) sets the stage for the healing sign of chap. 5.²⁹

Chapters 2–4 also prepare the way for the healing at Bethesda by introducing the themes of temple and water.³⁰ The ineffectual healing water at Bethesda (5:2, 7) recalls the ineffectual waters of purification at Cana (2:6). Nicodemus is informed that he must be born of both water and the spirit (3:5). Jesus begins his encounter with the Samaritan woman by requesting a drink of water (4:7). He then offers the woman living water (4:10, 14).

The mention of the temple in John 5:14 is anticipated by the Passover cleansing of the temple in 2:14–17.³¹ Jesus' cleansing of the temple did not result in faith on the part of "the Jews," instead it led to confrontation. While John 2 sets the stage for John 5, the decisive difference is that Jesus' sign in John 5 occurs on the Sabbath. If the healing of the paralytic had occurred on any other day, it would not have caused a stir, any more than the healing of the royal official's son in chap. 4 did (46–54). While the core issue of the Gospel has to do with the identity of Jesus, the Sabbath plays a central role in how that issue works itself out in chap. 5, as we will see.

An Exegesis of John 5

John 5 centers on a story of conflict between Jesus and "the Jews."³² The conflict arises on account of a Sabbath healing at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–14), which lies today just north of the temple mount in the vicinity of St. Anne's church.³³ In the story, Jesus healed the man arbitrarily. He picked one

²⁹ In a number of ways, the royal official in chap. 4 is the mirror image of the paralytic in chap. 5. See Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 52.

³⁰ Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 42.

³¹ In chap. 5, the Jewish feast is not named, leading to much scholarly speculation. One of the peculiarities of the Gospel of John is that whenever a feast is mentioned, the major characteristics of Jesus described in the narrative tend to correspond to the major characteristics of the feast. In John 5, the main themes are judgment and life-giving creation. Judgment and creation happen to be the major themes of the Feast of Trumpets, on the first day of the seventh month of the Jewish festal calendar. See Jon Paulien, *John: Jesus Gives Life to a New Generation*, Abundant Life Bible Amplifier, ed. George R. Knight, (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 117.

³² See Sturcke (*Encountering the Rest*, 206–207) for evidence that chap. 5 is a discreet unit somewhat distinct from what precedes and what follows.

³³ There is archaeological evidence that the pool at some point was a shrine to Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. See James H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research and Archaeology: A New Perspective," in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 34. Asclepius was usually depicted in conjunction with snakes, so the statement in John 3:14 ("Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must

man out of a whole crowd of people; a man who hadn't sought Jesus out, a man who did not even know him, a man who expressed no faith in him before being healed.³⁴ Jesus also clearly chose to heal the man on the Sabbath.³⁵ It was not an accident, the timing was deliberate.³⁶ The rabbis allowed for healing on the Sabbath in emergencies, but this was no emergency.³⁷ After all, since the man had been crippled for thirty-eight years, a day or two's delay for the sake of the Sabbath would not have made a major difference.³⁸ So Jesus was deliberately making a point here.³⁹

The man's responses make it clear that he had no idea who Jesus was in human terms, much less in the cosmic perspective of the Prologue (John 5:7, 11). In contrast, the reader is well aware of Jesus' divine origin (1:1–2) and

be lifted up," NIV) may have prepared the educated reader of the Gospel for Jesus' replacement of this Hellenistic shrine with the healing power of his heavenly identity.

³⁴ Koester (*Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 53–54) went so far as to say that the paralytic's lack of commitment to Jesus allowed him to be intimidated by the authorities into betraying Jesus. See the amusing account of the man's unbelief in Michael Card, *The Parable of Joy: Reflections on the Wisdom of the Book of John* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1995), 65–67. While the biblical text does not portray the man as having faith in Jesus, Ellen White suggested some level of faith was necessary to his acting on Jesus' command. See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 203.

³⁵ It seems in all four gospels that whenever Jesus takes the initiative in healing someone, the healing comes on a Sabbath! See Paulien, *John*, 119. Jesus initiative in John 5 runs counter to the pattern established in the first two "signs" (water to wine [2:1–11] and the royal official's son [4:46–54]) in which a request is made of Jesus that he seems reluctant to fulfill. See Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 212.

According to Ellen White (*The Desire of Ages*, 206), Jesus deliberately chose the worst case at the pool to raise the question of what is or is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.

³⁶ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2:97; Tom Wright, *John for Everyone: Part 1, Chapters 1–10* (London: SPCK, 2002), 59; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:210. Carson underlined this point by noting that the paralyzed man was singularly dull mentally and incapable of taking the initiative in a matter like this. Jesus is clearly the one taking the initiative. See D. A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 80–81. His pre-destinarian perspective, however, encouraged him to think that Jesus was not provoking a confrontation over the Sabbath, but simply carrying out his mission.

³⁷ Walter F. Specht, "The Sabbath in the New Testament," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1982), 100. Specht considered Jesus' act an open challenge to rabbinical rules of Sabbath-keeping, nevertheless, he acknowledged that Genesis 2:2 had challenged early Jewish exegetes to allow that for God, with a universe to maintain, there is truly no rest, no Sabbath.

Jewett (*The Lord's Day*, 39–41) discussed the non-emergency character of this and several other Sabbath healings.

³⁸ Keener noted that the rabbis prohibited any action on the Sabbath that could have been done before the Sabbath. See Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:642 and note 75.

³⁹ To carry a pallet on the Sabbath was contrary to the oral law. See Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 215, 233.

miraculous powers (2:1–11; 4:46–54).⁴⁰ Taking up the bed roll and walking (John 5:8–9a) was not part of the healing itself, but the proof that the healing had occurred.⁴¹

It is at this point in the story that the author introduces the crucial detail.⁴² The healing had taken place on the Sabbath day (5:9b). This introduces a decisive complication into the narrative and changes the whole direction of the action to follow.⁴³ The Sabbath is central to the purpose of this . in the Gospel.⁴⁴ The whole matter comes to a head when the man, after finding out who had healed him (5:14⁴⁵), immediately goes to “the Jews” and identifies that it was Jesus who had healed him (5:15).⁴⁶

In John 5:18 the religious leaders level two distinct charges against Jesus. They accuse him, first of all, of breaking the Sabbath and, second of all, of making himself equal with God. Actually, both claims are false in the context of the Gospel.⁴⁷ While there are strong statements in the Gospel that

⁴⁰ Asiedu-Pepurah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 64.

⁴¹ Asking the man to carry his bed roll may have violated a couple of strictures in the Mishnah (*m. Shabbath* 7:2 and 10:5). See Herbert Danby, editor, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 106, 109. See also Specht, “The Sabbath in the New Testament,” 100; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, Reading the New Testament Series (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 123.

⁴² The omission of essential information until the point in the story where it is essential is a common feature of Hebrew narrative. See Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 215n48; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 66; and Jeffrey L. Staley, “Stumbling in the Dark, Reaching for the Light: Reading Character in John 5 and 9,” *Semeia* 53 (1991): 60.

⁴³ Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 215. Thatcher (“The Sabbath Trick,” 59–60) considers this late-breaking detail so remarkable he calls it “The Sabbath Trick.” He believed that the author of the Fourth Gospel often deliberately withholds crucial information to force the reader to re-evaluate first impressions in a given narrative. The sudden revelation that the healing occurred on a Sabbath undermines the reader’s earlier perceptions by forcing a complete change of direction in the reader’s impression of the narrative and its role in the overall direction of the Gospel. This certainly underlines that the Sabbath is the crucial context in the story.

Thatcher’s point is ironic in that John normally favors the reader of the Gospel with advance information (see 1:1–18, for example), but in the two Sabbath narratives, the characters in the story know it is Sabbath before the reader does.

⁴⁴ McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 148. The Sabbath is the means by which the author achieved his intention, to highlight the identity of Jesus in the story.

⁴⁵ The implication in 5:14 that the paralytic’s illness was in some way connected to sin is in startling contrast to Jesus’ assertion in 9:2–3. See Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 217.

⁴⁶ In contrast to the man blind from birth (John 9:38), the paralyzed man of Bethesda does not become a disciple of Jesus. See Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1: 644. Sturcke pointed out (*Encountering the Rest*, 216) the irony that the act of carrying a pallet on the Sabbath arouses more interest from the religious leaders than the mighty work of God that had just occurred in their midst.

⁴⁷ Weiss, “The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel,” 317; Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 261.

assert Jesus' equality with God in the ultimate sense (1:1; 10:30; 20:28), "the Jews" in this text accuse him of "making Himself" equal with God, something he would have no right to do if he were merely human, as the religious leaders perceive him. The very point of John 5:19–30 is to argue that Jesus' divine work is directly authorized by his Father.

The issue of Sabbath breaking is not taken up directly until chap. 7, where there is a clear reference back to the Sabbath healing at Bethesda (7:21–23).⁴⁸ In that passage Jesus clearly denies being a Sabbath breaker. He justifies the Sabbath healing on the grounds that circumcision is not postponed on the Sabbath (7:23).⁴⁹ The argument is quite logical, from an ancient Jewish perspective. Circumcision on the Sabbath appears to be breaking the Sabbath law, but it is necessary in order to make a small part of a baby boy conform to God's will. Making an entire person conform to God's will would be even more important on the Sabbath.⁵⁰ It would fulfill the creation purpose of the original institution.⁵¹ So in Jesus' own mind he was honoring the Sabbath.⁵² He was disputing their inconsistent practice of the Law's principles (7:24).⁵³

⁴⁸ Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 223. Sturcke also noted (*ibid.*, 246) a connection between the two arguments in defense of Jesus' Sabbath activity. The only male babies who would be circumcised on the Sabbath (7:21–24) are those that were born the previous Sabbath (see 5:17– the work of God)!

⁴⁹ See citations of Jewish discussions of this in Terian, "Creation in Johannine Theology," 57. McKay (*Sabbath and Synagogue*, 148) noted that Jesus has exploited the inherent contradiction in allowing circumcision to over-ride the Sabbath law but not healing. Sharon Ringe pointed out that Jesus' response in this passage does not concern *whether* the Sabbath should be kept, but rather *how* it should be kept. See Sharon H. Ringe, "Holy, as the Lord Your God Commanded You: Sabbath in the New Testament," *Interpretation* 59. (January 2005): 17–19.

According to Carson, the point of this passage is that some laws over-ride other laws. In this case the opportunity to do good over-rides any detailed and legalistic observance of the Sabbath. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath," 82; see Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:716.

⁵⁰ Wright, *John for Everyone*, 101. In this argument Jesus is moving from the minor to the major. Circumcision was regarded as completing a man's perfection. Abraham was not regarded as perfect until he was circumcised. See Specht, "The Sabbath in the New Testament," 101; see also Bacchiocchi, "John 5:17," 18. The principle, as enunciated by Jesus in this text, was acknowledged by more than one ancient Jewish teacher, see George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC 36, ed. Glenn W. Barker and David A. Hubbard (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 109–110; Talbert, *Reading John*, 146.

⁵¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 408–409; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1: 317.

⁵² This is consistent with a point made by Weiss: the early Christian communities observed the Sabbath while engaging in debates over what was and was not permissible behavior on the Sabbath. See Herold Weiss, "The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel," 313; *idem*, "The Sabbath in the Synoptic Gospels," *JSNT* 38 (1990): 13–27. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 456.

In light of chap. 7, let's return to the assertion of John 5:18 (NIV) that Jesus "was breaking the Sabbath." The Greek translated "was breaking" (ἔλυνεν) readily means to destroy something (2:19) or to violate the law (7:23, cf. Matt 5:19) in John, so the translation is not at issue here. We need to keep in mind, however, that the claim of Sabbath-breaking does not come from Jesus' mouth or the pen of the evangelist, rather it is an accusation from his opponents. And throughout the Gospel "the Jews" are portrayed as very unreliable characters, their opinion on this question should not be taken at face value.⁵⁴

To argue that Jesus here annuls the Sabbath through these words (as Schnackenburg does⁵⁵), therefore, is to hold the same position as Jesus' accusers, a charge Jesus explicitly refuses to admit in John 7:21–24.⁵⁶ Jesus also states later on (John 10:35) that Scripture cannot be "broken" (λυθῆναι). Why would we accept the characterization of his enemies rather than his own testimony regarding himself?⁵⁷ Jesus' healing of the paralytic did not abolish the Sabbath, he was acting as God's agent to do what God does on the Sabbath, as noted in the previous verse.⁵⁸

In John 5:17 (NIV), Jesus summarizes his response to the accusation of Sabbath breaking (John 5:16, 18). Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."⁵⁹ Jesus asserts that his

Sturcke (*Encountering the Rest*, 241) argues that Jesus presumes in 7:21–24 the continuing validity of both circumcision and the Sabbath.

⁵³ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:714, 716; Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 243.

⁵⁴ On the concepts of misunderstanding and characterization in the Gospel of John see R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁵⁵ See above on page 347.

⁵⁶ This point is forcefully made by Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:636. Jesus is not undermining the Sabbath, he is disputing "the Jews" interpretation of it. See also Bacchiocchi, "John 5:17," 15.

⁵⁷ The same Greek word is used in both John 5:18 and 10:35. Jesus is explicitly contradicting the assertion of 5:18.

⁵⁸ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1: 645–646.

⁵⁹ The Greek behind John 5:17 actually has "until now" instead of "always." Bacchiocchi argued that there is a significant difference between the two. Rather than a constant disregard of the Sabbath, "until now" suggests activity focused from a beginning point to a goal. In other words, the Sabbath work of Jesus and his Father is not so much a continuation of creation as it is working for the redemption of a fallen creation, from the first "to the final Sabbath." Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath in the New Testament*, Biblical Perspectives (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1985), 5:49; see also idem, "John 5:17," 11–13.

According to Weiss ("The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel," 317–318) the phrase "until now" has an eschatological ring that highlights the saving activity of the Father in the work of the Son. The time will come when no more "work" can be done (John 9:4), but for now the Son's work must go on even on the Sabbath.

Sabbath work involves participation in God's ongoing work to sustain and redeem his creation.⁶⁰ Behind this assertion lay a long history of Jewish debate about the relation of God to the Sabbath. It was clear to Jews of the time that God could not stop working on Sabbath or life as we know it would cease.⁶¹ God's ongoing action on the Sabbath was clear to them from the fact that children are born and nourishing rain occurs on that day. While various ancient Jewish thinkers justified God's actions in different ways,⁶² there was a general consensus that God is able to work on the Sabbath without in any way breaking the Sabbath.⁶³

Jesus' assertion that God is always at work, therefore, would have gone over well with his accusers if he had left it at that. His claim that he had the same right as God to work on Sabbath did not go over well.⁶⁴ "The Jews" clearly understood him to be claiming prerogatives that belonged to God alone.⁶⁵ To the reader of the Gospel, Jesus' claim made perfect sense in light

Whatever the merits of the above, the phrase does not imply a termination point so much as continuing, uninterrupted action on the part of the Father. Any inference that the Johannine community had given up the Sabbath on the basis of this phrase is speculative at best. See Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 248–251.

⁶⁰ The monologue in 5:19–30 makes it clear what Jesus had in mind by "works," in the Gospel's terms it was "giving life" and "judging." See Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 220.

Bacchiocchi ("John 5:17," 13–14) drew a distinction between the sustaining and redeeming work of Jesus and the Father. He argued that in the Gospel of John the "works of God" are repeatedly and explicitly identified with the saving mission of Christ (John 4:34; 6:29; 10:37–38). This is a point worth noting. I am not sure, however, that 5:17 is drawing that fine a distinction, so I have chosen to use both "sustain" and "redeem" with reference to this text.

Weiss pointed out that in Hebrews, God is portrayed as being at rest since creation, and people in Old Testament times failed to enter that rest, even though they superficially kept the Sabbath. Ironically in John the same point is made in the opposite way. God is always doing the right thing on the Sabbath and Jesus does so as well, inviting his followers to a true grasp of the Sabbath. In a sense, the eschatological quality of the Sabbath has been brought into the Jesus community. Weiss, "The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel," 318–319.

⁶¹ In a side note, Ellen White argued that the demands upon God are even greater on the Sabbath day than on other days of the week. See *The Desire of Ages*, 207.

⁶² Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 77 and notes; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1: 216–217; Weiss, "The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel," 315.

⁶³ Terian, "Creation in Johannine Theology," 55–56. Philo said that while God rested on the Sabbath day it means only that his Sabbath activity required no labor. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:217; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:646; Talbert, *Reading John*, 123–124.

These discussions affirmed that the exclusive prerogatives of God were his activities as life-giver and judge, the very things Jesus highlights in verses 19–30.

⁶⁴ To exercise the prerogatives of one's father in a culture where sons are subordinated to fathers would have been offensive. See Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 236.

⁶⁵ Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1: 217; Paulien, *John*, 119.

of the Prologue. The religious leaders, on the other hand, were enraged that he might consider himself equal with God.⁶⁶

So the introduction of the Sabbath in chap. 5 served to highlight the identity of Jesus.⁶⁷ If he was truly the Messiah, the Son of God, then he did not really break the Sabbath. Instead, he did what God always does on the Sabbath, sustain and rescue his creation.⁶⁸ He was not usurping the power and authority of God, he was doing what the Logos had done from the beginning (John 1:1–3). As the Creator, he was the author of the Sabbath and was therefore Lord of how to keep it (cf. Matt 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5).

With Jesus' statement in John 5:17, therefore, the story turns once more. It is no longer centered on the Sabbath, but is now centered on the identity of Jesus,⁶⁹ on his claim to a special relationship with God, his Father.⁷⁰ The central point of this chapter is not the Sabbath nor the healing of the paralyzed man, it is John's ongoing mission to convince the reader that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20:30–31).⁷¹ *To make the ongoing validity of the Sabbath the point of contention in the chapter is to miss the point.*

By claiming equality with God, however, Jesus was not claiming independence from God.⁷² Weiss argued that "the Jews" were wrong about both issues in John 5:18. According to him, Jesus was neither breaking the Sabbath nor claiming equality with God in the absolute way the editorial

⁶⁶ In a way, I sympathize with the religious leaders in John 5. Although Jesus' words in John 5:17 and 19–30 are powerful and eloquent, they would ring false in the mouth of every other human being who ever lived. See Paulien, *John*, 122. Without the knowledge gained from the Prologue, even readers of the Gospel would probably be stumped by Jesus' claims at this point.

Ellen White tied the negative reactions of the religious leaders to the deceptive actions of Satan, which prevented them from picking up the clues in Jesus' actions that he truly was far greater than any other human being. See *The Desire of Ages*, 205–206. The blindness of this opposition is exposed in the Gospel itself in John 9:27–41.

⁶⁷ Ringe, "Holy, as the Lord Your God Commanded You," 22; McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 149; Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 220.

⁶⁸ Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 244–245.

⁶⁹ Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath," 81–82.

⁷⁰ Specht, "The Sabbath in the New Testament," 100.

⁷¹ Weiss, "The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel," 311.

⁷² See Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 80; Karen Pidcock-Lester, "John 5:1–9," *Interpretation* 59 (number 1, January 2005), 63; Talbert, *Reading John*, 124. While the Jews speak of Jesus' relationship to his Father in terms of "equality," Jesus does not take up that language in his own defense. According to Ringe ("Holy, as the Lord Your God Commanded You," 23), by doing the work his Father does, Jesus is claiming not equality but obedience. He is carrying on the family business.

Weiss, "The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel," 317.

comment of John 5:18 would imply. Rather, in John 5:19–20 Jesus defends himself by clarifying two things: 1) The Son in no way acts independently of his Father (John 5:19–21, 30), and 2) he has both natural right (5:26) and divine authorization (5:22–23, 26–27) to act as God acts in both the giving of life (5:21, 25) and judgment (5: 22, 27–29).⁷³ He is not defying God's will, he is carrying it out.⁷⁴ They are not honoring the God of Israel when they dishonor him (John 5:23).

In the rest of this chapter (John 5:31–47), Jesus brings forth witnesses to undergird his own testimony concerning himself. The testimony of John the Baptist, the nature of Jesus's works, the Father himself, the Scriptures and Moses, rightly understood (5:33–45), all testify that the Father has sent Jesus to do his works. Rather than defending the God of Moses and Israel, Jesus' accusers are resisting that God (5:45–47). If Jesus had been attempting to abolish the Sabbath, he would not have appealed to Moses and the Law as part of his defense (John 5:39, 45–47).⁷⁵ His dispute with the Jews is not about the validity of the Sabbath, but about how the Sabbath ought to be kept.

Anyone who looks for justification of a casual observance of the fourth commandment will not find it here. The Sabbath is written into the order of the universe, and Jesus does not challenge or change that order.⁷⁶

Conclusion

It was not the purpose of John 5 to demonstrate that Jesus broke the Sabbath and thereby abolished it for his followers. Healing the man by the Pool of Bethesda was performed by the same God who created the Sabbath (John 1:1–3; Gen 2:1–4). If the Sabbath was valid throughout OT times, it was certainly still valid at the time when John was written. The Sabbath is not introduced in John 5 to assess whether it has ongoing validity, but as the trigger point of a controversy which enabled Jesus to outline more clearly his divine nature and activity.⁷⁷

⁷³ See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 75.

⁷⁴ Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 92.

⁷⁵ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1: 641. See note 19 on page 7 concerning the relationship of Jesus and Moses in the Prologue. See also Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 242.

⁷⁶ Pidcock-Lester, "John 5:1–9," 62.

⁷⁷ McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 149.

The Sabbath Healing Outside the Temple (John 9) The Preceding Context

The context of John 9 clearly goes back to chap. 5.⁷⁸ In both narratives water plays a central role (John 5:2, 7; 9:7). In both narratives Jesus takes the initiative to heal on the Sabbath (5:9; 9:14) and the religious leaders accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath (5:10; 9:16). In both narratives the healed person doesn't know where or who Jesus is (5:13; 9:12). Sin is discussed in relation to each man's suffering (5:14; 9:3). In both cases, Jesus ends up seeking the man out and inviting belief (5:14; 9:35). Both narratives concern the identity of Jesus. And in both narratives, Jesus justifies his actions with a lengthy speech in defense.⁷⁹ The two passages, therefore, need to be looked at together, as we are doing here.⁸⁰

The theme of conflict between Jesus and his religious contemporaries is taken up again in chap. 6. Jesus returns to Galilee (John 6) and engages in a lengthy debate with "the crowd" (John 6:24) and "the Jews" (6:41, 52) over his Bread of Life statements. The sense of conflict is clear, but there is no mention of the Sabbath in this chapter.

At the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, the stage moves back to Jerusalem (John 7:1–14), where Jesus engages his opponents in the temple (7:14–8:59). The wording of John 8:59 and 9:1 makes it clear that the story of John 9 is an extension of the Feast of Tabernacles narrative of John 7 and 8.⁸¹ As we have seen, there is a brief reference to the Sabbath in chap. 7, but the main source of controversy in this section, as usual, is the identity of Jesus.

The debate over Jesus' identity escalates throughout this section until Jesus' opponents take up stones to kill him (8:59). Two themes of chaps. 7 and 8, in particular, set the stage for the Sabbath controversy in John 9. Both themes are based on the Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrated the miraculous provision of water in the desert and the pillar of fire and cloud during the Exodus. In John 7:37–39 Jesus applies the metaphor of water to

⁷⁸ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:639–640.

⁷⁹ The analogy of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1–21) is linked to the narrative of chap. 9 and forms the major part of Jesus' defense of his identity in the narrative.

⁸⁰ Sturcke (*Encountering the Rest*, 231) noted some contrasts between chaps. 5 and 9 as well as the similarities.

⁸¹ The scene occurs as Jesus is walking away from the temple after the conflict episodes of John 7 and 8. See Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 117; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:776–777.

himself. What the Feast of Tabernacles promised to the worshiper is provided by Jesus.

In John 8:12, Jesus declared himself to be the Light of the World. Just as the pillar of fire provided light in the wilderness, Jesus provides spiritual light to those who follow him. Both themes, water and light, are taken up in chap. 9. The reference to the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7) recalls how Jesus transforms the literal elements of Jewish worship (including the water procession of the Feast of Tabernacles) into spiritual realities by faith. The healing of the blind man is a living illustration of Jesus' role as Light of the World (9:5).

While the conflict motif of John 5 is continued in chaps. 6–8, the Sabbath is not at the center of that conflict, except for the brief recollection of John 5 in John 7:22–23. It is only in chap. 9 that the author of the gospel takes up the Sabbath once more as a focal point in the conflict over Jesus' identity.

Exegesis of John 9

The narrative of chap. 9 is closely linked to the Good Shepherd passage in the next chapter, creating a continuous narrative (9:1–10:21).⁸² The combined narrative is a unity in which Jesus, the Light of the world (8:12; 9:5), brings judgment on the religious leaders (particularly in 9:39–10:21) who resist the shining of his light on the hearts and lives of those who had once served the system.

As mentioned earlier, in John 9 Jesus acts out in real life what he meant when he said, "I am the Light of the world" (8:12; 9:5).⁸³ In healing the man

⁸² See Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 227. The close linkage between John 9:1–41 and 10:1–21 is evident in the original language. The chapter is not sharply divided from what precedes, but begins with "I tell you the truth" (Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν). Nowhere else in the Gospel does Jesus use this expression at the beginning of a discourse, it always comes as a point of emphasis in the midst of a discourse or a discussion (for example, 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58). Furthermore, the reference to opening the eyes of the blind in John 10:21 shows that the events of chap. 9 are still squarely in view.

In chap. 10 Jesus builds on the story of his healing of the blind man and then rescuing him from the spiritual abuse of the religious leaders (9:1–41). The response of the healed blind man to Jesus is reflected in 10:4; he was a sheep that recognized the voice of the Shepherd and followed him. In John 10 Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for the sheep, even the sheep that have been cast out of the sheepfold. See Paulien, *John*, 169–170; see also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 167; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:775; Talbert, *Reading John*, 164.

⁸³ Terian noted ("Creation in Johannine Theology," 57) that creation week began with the creation of light and ended with the creation of the Sabbath. So John 9 ties these two themes

born blind, Jesus first of all gave him access to literal light; the man could now see (9:7, 11, 15). At the end of the chapter, Jesus moves beyond the miracle of physical sight and gives to the man his spiritual sight (9:35–39). His power to give physical sight demonstrated his ability and his authority to give spiritual understanding and spiritual life.

Chapter 9 opens with a brief discussion between Jesus and his disciples regarding who is to blame for the blindness of a man they are walking by (9:1–5). Jesus then anoints the man’s eyes with mud and sends him off to the Pool of Siloam to wash the mud off (9:6–7). At this point in the narrative, the Sabbath has not yet been mentioned, but the method of the healing prepares the way.

There seem to be several breaches of the oral law regarding the Sabbath in this action of Jesus.⁸⁴ First of all, mixing was forbidden on the Sabbath.⁸⁵ Second, kneading is one of 39 prohibited types of work in *m. Shabbath* 7:2.⁸⁶ Third, the smearing of mud on the man’s eyes could have transgressed the stricture against anointing on the Sabbath.⁸⁷ The healing itself would also have been considered unlawful on the Sabbath, as the man’s blindness from birth was far from creating a health-care emergency.⁸⁸ So while Jesus does not challenge any written precept of the Mosaic law, his actions are in conflict with a number of strictures in the oral tradition.⁸⁹

As the healed man is brought to the Pharisees for questioning (9:13), the narrative drops the bomb into the discussion. Since the day of the healing was a Sabbath (14), Jesus’ actions of making mud and healing the man are problematic for his identity. The fact that it was Sabbath is not critical to the fact of the man’s healing, but it is critical to the Pharisees’ condemnation of that healing.⁹⁰

together in a way that was natural to the Jewish mind of the first century. See also Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1: 379; Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:779; Talbert, *Reading John*, 158.

⁸⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 156–157; Brown *The Gospel According to John*, 1: 373; Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath,” 82; Specht, “The Sabbath in the New Testament,” 101; Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 230. These scholars have assumed that these strictures in the *Mishnah* accurately reflect earlier practice.

⁸⁵ *m. Shabbath* 24:3. See Danby, *The Mishnah*, 120–121.

⁸⁶ Danby, *ibid.*, 106. See also Asiedu-Pepurah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 118.

⁸⁷ *m. Shabbath* 14:4. See Danby, *The Mishnah*, 113.

⁸⁸ As was also the case with the man who had been paralyzed for 38 years (John 5:2–5).

⁸⁹ Carson, “Jesus and the Sabbath,” 84. According to Brown (*The Gospel According to John*, 1: 210): “That Jesus violated the rules of the scribes for the observance of the Sabbath is one of the most certain of all the historical facts about his ministry.”

⁹⁰ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:784. According to Deut 13:1–5, the prophet who does mighty works yet does or teaches things contrary to the law of God is a false prophet.

The Pharisees conclude from this new healing on the Sabbath that they have further evidence that Jesus' identity claims are false (9:16).⁹¹ They level once again the same basic accusations expressed in John 5:18: Jesus does not keep the Sabbath, therefore he is not from God. But this time they are divided in their sentiment.⁹² Some among them argue that the greatness of the sign militates against a sinful origin (9:16). Their use of the word "signs" reminds the reader that everything Jesus did was designed to develop faith in him as the Messiah, the Son of God (John 20:30–31).⁹³ So the identity of Jesus remains at the core of the issue here. If Jesus was who he claimed to be, he was not breaking the Sabbath in John 9. he was demonstrating his identity as the One who was Lord of the Sabbath and therefore knew how it ought to be kept.

The healed man's picture of Jesus grows and grows throughout the narrative. He immediately testifies that Jesus must be a prophet (9:17, cf. 4:19). Then he waxes bolder and bolder in sarcastic defiance of the religious leaders who oppose Jesus (9:27, 30–33). His part in the narrative concludes with a full and complete expression of commitment to Jesus (38).

In contrast, the religious leaders' opposition grows in intensity and irrationality as the narrative moves on. In their final statement the religious leaders even let on that they know that the healing was valid (34). The way they cast the man out of the synagogue shows that their opposition to Jesus was not based on reasoned argument, but on blind hatred (39–41).⁹⁴ But at this stage, Jesus as the Good Shepherd steps in (John 9:35–38–10:21) and cares for the outcast man.

A crucial point in the narrative, for our purpose, is the response of the religious leaders to the man's question, "Do you also want to become his disciples (9:27, ESV)?" In response, they assert that they are disciples of Moses (9:28). Moses is the one they trust to speak for God, not Jesus (9:29).⁹⁵ The basis for this contrast is their understanding of the Sabbath.

⁹¹ According to Ellen White (*The Desire of Ages*, 472), the Pharisees revealed here their ignorance that Jesus was the one who had made the Sabbath and therefore knew all of its obligations. The prologue is once more decisive for readers of the Gospel of John.

⁹² Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1:787.

⁹³ The man born blind is one of the best examples in the Gospel of faith growing directly out of a "sign." Tanzer, "Salvation is *for* the Jews," 299, cf. Thatcher, "The Sabbath Trick," 69.

⁹⁴ Douglas K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 208.

⁹⁵ Asiedu-Pepurah (*Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 141) noted that the particle *de* is used in these verses to establish a contrast between "the Jews" and the man, on the one hand, and between Moses and Jesus, on the other.

The disciples of Moses claim to exhibit their discipleship by scrupulously observing the Sabbath laws given by Moses.

The reader of the Gospel, however, already knows that the opposition between Jesus and Moses, between the gospel and the law, is a false dichotomy. First, as the messianic Son of God, who was with the Father from the beginning and who created everything that was made (1:3), Jesus enjoys the same prerogatives as the Father. He is not the adversary of Moses, but the One who elaborates and expands on the Law (1:17). In the Old Testament, the Sabbath celebrated both creation (Exod 20:8–11) and re-creation (Deut 5:12–15). So for Jesus to do works of healing on the Sabbath day was to participate in God's continuing work of sustaining his creation (John 5:17, 19–30). If Jesus is who he claims to be, he has not broken the Sabbath, he has rather affirmed its celebration of creation in his work of re-creation (5:26–27).

It is on this point that the fourth Sabbath text in the Gospel of John has relevance. In John 19:31, “the Jews” show more concern for the ritual observance of the Sabbath than they do for the Lord of the Sabbath. They are acting as disciples of Moses, yet they ironically demonstrate that Jesus has obeyed Moses at a far deeper level than they comprehend (19:36; cf. Exod 12:46; Num 9:12). The cause of this Sabbath controversy in John 9, therefore, was not the action of Jesus, but the Pharisees' lack of understanding of the words God spoke through Moses (5:45–47).⁹⁶

The healed man underscores this very point in 9:30–33. His healing is without precedent “since the world began” (9:32). This allusion to creation recalls to the reader's mind the role of the Logos in creation (1:3) and Jesus' earlier claim to be exercising God's sustaining power in the current situation (John 5:17, 19–30). In a sense, by giving the man something he was born without, Jesus was bringing the work of creation to its perfect completion (see John 5:36).⁹⁷ The healed man affirms this conclusion by his words and actions in verse 38.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ In this paragraph I am considerably indebted to Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 141–142. He went on to note (142) a central message of the Gospel of John. The Law of Moses is not in opposition to Jesus and the gospel, it finds its perfection in the truth that was given through Jesus (1:17–18). The two are not opposed in any way, instead the writings of Moses in the Law bear witness to Jesus and, rightly understood, lead to faith in him (5:39–40).

⁹⁷ Wright, *John for Everyone*, 138–139. Droge (“Sabbath Work/Sabbath Rest,” 128) made the fascinating observation that in John 1:5 the presence of darkness (“the light shines in the darkness”) indicates that the full sabbath rest of creation (as stated in Gen 2:1–3) has yet to be achieved. From the standpoint of John, the original creation remains incomplete and unfinished

The narrative of John 9, therefore, invalidates the judgments of “the Jews” with regard to Jesus. First, the fact that God’s power is at work in him means that he cannot be a sinner (cf. 9:16, 24), in other words, a Sabbath breaker. Second, the unprecedented nature of the healing indicates there must be a special relationship between Jesus and the God of creation himself. Jesus’ Sabbath healings, therefore, are not violations of the Sabbath, they are testimonies to the unique identity of Jesus, who does the work of the Father on this earth.⁹⁹

Conclusion

As many scholars and other chapters in this book make clear, the authors of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts assume that the Sabbath was honored by Jesus and his disciples.¹⁰⁰ The same would appear to be the case in the Gospel of John. But the purpose of the Sabbath texts in John is not to address whether the Sabbath should be kept by Christians, it is to highlight the identity of Jesus.¹⁰¹ He is the One apart from whom nothing was made (1:3), the one who is equal with the Father (10:30), who works on the Sabbath as his Father works (5:17). It would be taking the evidence too far, therefore, to say that the author of John, or the Jesus he portrays, is

at the time when Jesus comes. Thus, the work of Jesus in the Gospel is designed as a completion of the original work of creation.

Droge (see “Sabbath Work/Sabbath Rest,” 133–134) also enumerated the various places where Jesus speaks of his mission as “to finish his (the Father’s) work” (John 4:32, 34, cf. Gen 2:2). He speaks of “the works that the Father has given me to finish” (5:36), glorifying God by “finishing the work” (17:4–5), and pronouncing that “it is finished” (19:28, 30).

⁹⁸ This paragraph is indebted to Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 145.

⁹⁹ Asiedu-Peprah, *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts*, 145–146.

¹⁰⁰ One non-Adventist scholar who made this point unequivocally is Ringe, “Holy, as the Lord Your God Commanded You,” 17–19. See also the arguments and literature cited in Weiss, “The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel,” 313–314; and idem, “The Sabbath in the Synoptic Gospels,” 13–27.

¹⁰¹ This is almost universally acknowledged by Johannine scholars, even those who attempt to make John 5:17–18 a negation of the Sabbath for Christians. “The Gospel of John fundamentally contains but a single theme: the Person of Jesus.” Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 5. Bultmann then tellingly made the following admission: “The stories of healings on the Sabbath, for example (chs 5 and 9) do not, as in the Synoptics, demonstrate the Christian understanding of the Sabbath command, but serve as occasions for discussions about the person of the miracle worker.” Ibid. So there is an internal contradiction in how Bultmann handled these passages.

See also Ruldolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John: Volume One, Introduction and Commentary on chapters 1–4*, trans. by Kevin Smythe, HTCNT (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), 154–156; Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 204, 227, 264.

intentionally re-affirming the validity of Sabbath observance for his readers.¹⁰²

What is clear, however, is that the Sabbath texts in the Gospel of John do not support the idea that the Sabbath has been abolished for Christians. Even D. A. Carson, who organized and edited the most thorough case for a shift from Sabbath to Sunday,¹⁰³ agreed that John 5:17–18 does not make that case. “John, by taking the discussion into Christological and eschatological realms, does not deal explicitly with the question of whether or not Christians are to observe the weekly Sabbath.”¹⁰⁴ This conclusion is affirmed by Geza Vermes, who wrote, “If, as is often claimed, the evangelists aimed at inculcating . . . Christian doctrine such as the annulment of the Sabbath legislation . . . they did a pitiful job which falls short of proving their alleged thesis.”¹⁰⁵ Jesus did not reject the Sabbath, he simply kept it in a way that was different from most of his contemporaries.¹⁰⁶ While Jesus clearly rejected the rabbinical rules for Sabbath keeping, he honored the deeper principles implied within the Sabbath command he himself had established at creation.

¹⁰² Sturcke, *Encountering the Rest*, 204, 227, 264; Wright, *John for Everyone*, 138–139. Sturcke, nevertheless, felt that while the Johannine community acted in ways the Jews interpreted as Sabbath breaking, they themselves understood their behavior as in harmony with the Sabbath as interpreted by Jesus.

¹⁰³ D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, Academie Books Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1: 643.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 643.

19

Soul Rest and Seventh-day Rest

Robert M. Johnston

Matthew 11:25–30 is a Synoptic logion¹ so uniquely Johannine in tone and flavor that it could be parachuted into the Fourth Gospel without causing the least disturbance.² The second part of it is one of the most beloved passages in the New Testament: “Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (*anapausō humas*). Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am

¹ Evidently from Q; the first part is closely paralleled in Luke 10:21–22.

² Besides the content of the logion itself, even the form is reminiscent of the Fourth Gospel. The use of *apokrinesthai* in this location to introduce this saying is somewhat unexpected, though not quite unique. One would expect this word to introduce a formal reply to a charge or a challenge (as in John 5:17), but here no one has said anything for Jesus to reply to, for Matt 11:7–24 is pure monologue. The word is characteristically, though not exclusively, used to introduce Jesus’ replies in controversies, especially in the Fourth Gospel. A simple count of occurrences of the word in all contexts yields 55x in Matthew, 30x in Mark, 46x in Luke, and 78x in John.

R. McL. Wilson called the saying a “Johannine thunderbolt in the Synoptic sky,” quoted in Jan Helderman, *Die Anapausis im Evangelium Veritatis: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung des valentinianisch-gnostischen Heilsgutes der Ruhe im Evangelium Veritatis und in anderen Schriften der Nag Hammadi-Bibliothek* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 60. Helderman noted, however, the striking fact that the word *anapausis* is lacking in the Fourth Gospel, perhaps because the author wanted to avoid a word, which had developed Gnostic associations, and used instead the words *chara* (joy) and *eirēnē* (peace).

gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest (*anapausin*) for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (vv. 28–30).³

Unfortunately an artificial chapter division obscures the fact that these words are the introduction to the Sabbath controversies in the next chapter (12:1–14), where Jesus defends the lawfulness of his liberal use of the Sabbath day. Human need, he says, may legitimately be succored on the holy day, for “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (12:12). Indeed, Jesus is the final authority on the subject of Sabbath-keeping, “For the son of man is lord of the Sabbath” (v. 8). The issue here is not whether the Sabbath is to be kept, but *how* it is to be kept.

In the Septuagint *anapauō* and *anapausis* are Sabbath words.⁴ Often they translate the Hebrew *šabat* and *šabbat*, as well as other words associated with the Sabbath, such as *nuach*, although they also are used for rest in a more generic sense. Frequently, this rest is a gift of God, as in Isa 25:10 LXX, a fact that is a significant background of Matt 11:28. Davies and Allison saw the verse as dependent upon the Lord’s word to Moses in Exod 33:14, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”⁵

What is important for us to see is that Jesus, in Matt 11:28–30, introduces a new dimension to the idea of the Sabbath.⁶ Already in Judaism the Sabbath had become a metaphor or a foretaste of something more than a day of the week.⁷ One idea was that the Age to Come was to be a millennial or a perpetual Sabbath. Thus *m. Tamid* 7:4 entitles Psalm 92: “A Psalm, a song for the time that is to come, for the day that shall be all Sabbath and rest in

³ The words are probably a parody of Sirach 51:23–27, where Wisdom is the speaker. Cf. Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 349. Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

⁴ This can easily be seen by surveying dozens of occurrences listed by Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 80, 81). For example, see Exod 16:23; 23:12; Lev 23:3; Deut 5:14. *Katapauō* and *katapausis* are synonyms of *anapauō* and *anapausis*.

⁵ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 2:288. Against this, however, is the fact that Exod 33:14 LXX has *katapauēin*, not *anapauēin*.

⁶ Augustine, however, probably overstated matters when he said, “Christ is the true Sabbath” (cited in Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:287). Jesus says not that he *is* the Rest, but that he *gives* the Rest.

⁷ See Robert M. Johnston, “The Rabbinic Sabbath,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1982), 73; “The Eschatological Sabbath in John’s Apocalypse: A Reconsideration,” *AUSS* 25 (Spring 1987): 39–50.

the life everlasting.”⁸ We may call this idea the eschatological Sabbath.⁹ Yet another idea is found in the writings of Philo, a contemporary of Jesus and Paul. Philo said that God in heaven keeps Sabbath all the time. Thus he wrote:

God alone in the true sense keeps festival. . . . And therefore Moses often in his laws calls the sabbath, which means ‘rest,’ God’s sabbath (Exod. xx.10, etc.), not man’s, and thus he lays his finger on an essential fact in the nature of things. For in all truth there is but one thing in the universe which rests, that is God. But Moses does not give the name of rest to mere inactivity. . . . God’s rest is rather a working with absolute ease, without toil and without suffering. . . . But a being that is free from weakness, even though he be making all things, will cease not to all eternity to be at rest, and thus rest belongs in the fullest sense to God and to Him alone.¹⁰

We may call this idea the transcendental Sabbath.

However, the idea that is introduced in Matt 11:28–30 has no parallel in Jewish literature, though it is not incompatible with the two ideas just mentioned. We may call it the existential Sabbath, the rest that God in Christ gives to the soul. According to one possible interpretation, the same or a similar conception is seen in Heb 4:1–10.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to note yet another variation because of its later Gnostic development in relation to the foregoing concept. In Rev 14:11, 13 we are told that they who die in the Lord will rest (*anapaēsontai*) from their toil, in contrast to the worshipers of the beast, who will have no rest (*anapausin*), day or night, from their torment.¹¹

The question may be raised whether these spiritualized understandings of the Sabbath supersede the literal seventh-day Sabbath. A negative answer is obvious in the cases of the eschatological Sabbath and the transcendental Sabbath, for both the Rabbis and Philo carefully kept the seventh-day of the week as the Sabbath. But what is the relationship of the *Anapausis* of Matt 11

⁸ Mishnah quotations are taken from Herbert Danby, trans., *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

⁹ There are hints of this idea in the book of Revelation, and it is taken up by Christian writers. See Johnston, “Eschatological Sabbath.”

¹⁰ Philo, *On the Cherubim* 86–90, in *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 2:61–63.

¹¹ The future tenses used in this passage point to its eschatological fulfillment. Cf. Johnston, “Eschatological Sabbath,” 47; Helderman, *Anapausis*, 60.

to the literal seventh-day Sabbath, about which a discussion immediately follows this saying?

A close analogy can be seen in the antitheses of Matt 5:21–32, where Jesus deals with the commandments, “Thou shalt not kill” and “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” He intensifies their force by underlining their interior meaning. However, by showing their spiritual and larger meaning he does not nullify their literal meaning. One breaks the commandment against murder by hating someone, but a mafia hit-man cannot say, “Friend, I have nothing against you personally, but my job is to rub you out. Sorry.” One breaks the commandment against adultery by lusting in his heart, but Jesus is not saying that sexual relations outside of marriage is excusable if one feels no attraction to the woman involved. Similarly, the deeper meaning of the Sabbath in Matt 11:28–30 does not negate the significance of the literal, seventh-day Sabbath, as indeed we see in the controversies that follow in the next chapter. Rather, the weekly Sabbath day is ideally the school of Christ for receiving that rest of soul to which the day points. Thus, this saying does for the Sabbath commandment what Matt 5:21–32 does for the commandments against murder and adultery.¹²

According to Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were missing this meaning of the Sabbath.¹³ They had the Sabbath day, but not the Sabbath experience. They kept the Sabbath outwardly, but not inwardly. They represented one kind of error regarding the Sabbath. They separated the day from the experience and discarded the experience.

¹² The antitheses of Matt 5 when formally analyzed have three parts. First comes the *protasis* that states the conventional teaching, “You have heard it said . . .” (e.g. Matt 5:21), then the *epitasis* in which Jesus contrasts his own teaching, “but I say unto you. . .” (e.g. 5:22), and finally the *catastasis* in which he reinforces his teaching in various ways, such as practical examples, “Therefore. . .” (e.g. 5:23–26). The passage in Matt 11:28–12:13 does not follow this neat pattern, but its elements are there by implication. The *protasis* is the Pharisaic rules about sabbathkeeping. Thus *m. Shabbath* 7:2 forbids reaping and threshing, a reasonable deduction from Exod 34:21. When the disciples of Jesus plucked ears of grain and rubbed off the husks to satisfy their hunger it was seen as breaking this rule. Although the halakhah permitted the Sabbath to be overridden in the case of a life-threatening emergency (the principle of *pekkuah nephesh*, mortal danger; see e.g., *Mekilta* Shabbata 1 on Exod 31:13), Jesus in Matt 12:9–13 healed a chronic affliction that was not life-threatening, as was the case in nearly all of his Sabbath healings. The implied *epitasis* was, “I, who am the Lord of the Sabbath, give rest from your burdens by alleviating human physical need that distracts from devotion to God and that symbolizes spiritual need. The Sabbath is a day for physical and spiritual healing and doing good.” The *catastasis* is the two examples of applying this insight in 12:1–13.

¹³ Many Jews did and still do find great joy in their keeping of the Sabbath day. See Johnston, “Rabbinic Sabbath.” However, one cannot study all the minute rules of sabbathkeeping found in the mishnaic tractates *Shabbath* and *Erubim*, reflecting Pharisaic tradition, without sighing at their burdensomeness. Yet for Essenes, Samaritans, and Sadducees the Sabbath rules were in some ways even more restrictive than those of the Pharisees.

The opposite error is represented by the Gnostics.¹⁴ They also sought to separate the day from the experience but discarded the day. If the Pharisees put too much emphasis on externals, the Gnostics despised externals. Their radical dualism meant a rejection of everything material and physical, and of everything literal, for the literal meaning of the Scriptures was like the body, without value. The only thing of value is the spirit, and the “spiritual” meaning of the text.¹⁵ Accordingly, the true Sabbath rest is not a literal day, but an exalted experience or mystical state. So for the Gnostic Christians the *Anapausis* of Matt 11:28–30 became a point of departure for doctrines that would have been recognized by neither Jesus nor Matthew.

The process of transition from literal to “spiritual” is illustrated in perhaps the best-known work in the Nag Hammadi collection, the so-called Gospel of Thomas (GT), in Codex II. It is of special interest for several reasons, but two stand out.

First, fragments of the work in the original Greek, discovered at the site of Oxyrhynchus in Egypt, have been known for a century.¹⁶ The earliest of the Greek fragments comes from the second century, and when compared to the fourth century Coptic version they reveal that the text was somewhat fluid, undergoing various modifications. It is possible to detect a subtle

¹⁴ About Gnosticism there is now a vast literature. It probably arose from within Christianity, as the existence of a pre-Christian Gnosis has not been proved, but it is not impossible that it arose phoenix-like from the ashes of Jerusalem among disillusioned Jews after CE 70. Besides being radically dualistic, it was antinomian and typically anti-Judaistic. It was stoutly opposed by the Christian writers who were subsequently adjudged orthodox, but not without their being consciously or unconsciously affected by it. Some modern treatments of Gnosticism include Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983); R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966); Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, eds., *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986); Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990); Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1963); Edwin Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973); Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

¹⁵ Our knowledge of ancient Gnostic thought has been greatly expanded by the discovery and publication of the trove of fourth century Coptic language codices discovered near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt. The most authoritative English translations with introductions are those provided by many scholars in James M. Robinson, general editor, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). To the Nag Hammadi codices are added two other manuscripts from the separately discovered Berlin Papyrus 8502. The various translators are not consistent, however, in their translation of *anapausis*: some have “rest,” others say “repose.” For this reason I will use an eclectic translation where necessary and consistently render *anapausis* “rest.” Though these manuscripts were translations from Greek into Coptic, many Greek terms including *anapausis* were taken over unchanged.

¹⁶ P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655. (B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* [London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1898, 1904])

intensification of the Gnostic flavor with the passage of time, and indeed even in its Coptic form it lacks some Gnostic features.¹⁷

Second, the work consists of a collection of sayings attributed to Jesus, without any narrative setting and without any obvious logical order.¹⁸ The discovery of this document gave credence to the reality of the putative Q source assumed to have been used by Matthew and Luke, which was also a collection of sayings. Many of the sayings in GT have parallels in the canonical gospels, but many do not.¹⁹ Scholars have long debated whether GT is dependent on the canonical gospels, and therefore secondary to them, or whether it represents an independent witness to the transmission of Jesus's sayings. It is the second view which has largely prevailed.²⁰ The picture that we are getting is that there was an original Jewish-Christian collection of the teachings of Jesus,²¹ quite likely dating from the first century, which in the hands of people with a Gnostic orientation suffered transformation into a document setting forth their views. This is not unlike what the other Gnostic literature does with the canonical Scriptures.

The Jesus of GT is a dispenser of enigmatic wisdom. As Meyer aptly said, "In contrast to the way in which he is portrayed in other gospels, particularly New Testament gospels, Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas performs no physical miracles, reveals no fulfillment of prophecy, announces no apocalyptic kingdom about to disrupt the world order, and dies for no one's sins."²² Salvation does not come by his blood, but by understanding his mysterious sayings: "Whoever finds the interpretation (*hermeneia*) of these sayings will not taste death" (GT 2).

¹⁷ Translations of the Coptic version and the Greek fragments are laid out in parallel columns by J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 135–41.

¹⁸ Modern editors have numbered the sayings, finding 114 of them. Consequently we now refer to the work in terms of the saying number.

¹⁹ Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 133–35, supplied a complete list of parallels. See also A. Guillaumont et al., *The Gospel According to Thomas: Coptic Text Established and Translated* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 59–62.

²⁰ Thus Helmut Koester, Introduction to the Gospel of Thomas in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi*, 125; Marvin Meyer, trans. and ed., *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 13. This does not mean, however, that everyone agrees with Koester's judgment that the GT transmits a more original version of the sayings than the canonical gospels.

²¹ Even in its fourth century form, GT still bears marks of its Jewish-Christian roots. Thus in saying 12, when the disciples ask Jesus who will be their leader after he departs, Jesus says: "Wherever you have come, you will go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being." Parallels to this manner of speaking are common in the rabbinic literature. See, for example, b. Sanhedrin 98b.

²² Meyer, *Gospel of Thomas*, 10.

Six sayings in GT speak of Sabbath or Rest (*anapausis*): 2, 27, 50, 51, 60, 90. One uses the word Sabbath, and the others Rest. GT 27 survives in both Coptic and Greek (P.Oxy. 1).²³ The Greek has: “Unless you fast to the world, you shall in no way find the Kingdom of God; and unless you sabbatize the sabbath (*ean mē sabbatisēte to sabbaton*), you shall not see the Father.”

The only significant difference in the Coptic is the change of “Kingdom of God” to simply “Kingdom,” which represents a closer conformity with Gnostic thought.²⁴

Tjitze Baarda has studied this saying very intensively.²⁵ He acknowledged that the saying may go back to a Jewish-Christian form criticizing the wrong observation of the Sabbath, “so that the sense may be ‘If you do not truly keep the Sabbath,’ or ‘If you do not keep the true Sabbath,’ or also ‘If you do not make the Sabbath a real Sabbath.’”²⁶ This would be in line with what Jesus apparently meant in Matt 11:28–30. But Baarda concluded that, whatever the saying may have meant in its original source, the GT as we have it has transformed the meaning of the saying so that its significance is quite different.

The two parts of the saying make a parallelism and thus say the same thing.²⁷ “Fasting from the world” means the same as “Sabbatizing the Sabbath,” and “world” and “Sabbath” are equivalent. However, GT opposes literal fasting (GT 6, 14, 104). “These passages demonstrate that within a Gnostic setting there is a rather critical attitude towards religious duties or ceremonial prescriptions commonly found in Judaism and early Christianity. . . . [These] are merely outward expressions of religion which the Gnostic believer due to his interiorization of faith or knowledge, does not value.”²⁸ Fasting from the world is therefore a metaphor for “the total denial of present

²³ P.Oxy. 1 dates from the second century and is the oldest of the three fragments.

²⁴ The Coptic translator also apparently had difficulty with the expression “sabbatize the Sabbath” (which is indeed awkward also for the English translator!) and so rendered it roughly as “keep the Sabbath as Sabbath.”

²⁵ T. Baarda, “If You Do Not Sabbatize the Sabbath . . .’: The Sabbath as God or World in Gnostic Understanding (Ev. Thom., Log. 27),” *The Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. R. Van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld, (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 178–201.

²⁶ Ibid., 199. Baarda cited authors supporting each of these renderings. The first part of the saying, he said, may have originally come from an encratite or ascetic source. Meyer said, “keeping the sabbath as sabbath seems to imply that one should rest in a truly significant way and separate oneself from worldly concerns.” *Gospel of Thomas*, 81.

²⁷ Baarda, “If You Do Not Sabbatize the Sabbath,” 195–99.

²⁸ Ibid., 198. Cf. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 263.

reality of the Cosmos and its Creator to enable the finding of the true reality of the Kingdom and the Father.”²⁹

Baarda found that “Sabbath” is almost synonymous with “world” and its creator, Yaldabaoth, the demiurgic god of the Jews, the god of this world. To sabbatize the Sabbath means to come to rest with respect to the Sabbath/world,³⁰ that is, to become fully detached from it. So “Sabbath” represents a negative thing. But Rest (*anapausis*) is, on the contrary, the ultimate goal of the Gnostic. Thus the Gnostics radically separated and placed in opposition to each other Sabbath and Rest, just as they separated body and spirit, and Christ and Jesus.

We now turn to GT 2, which also has been preserved in both Greek (P. Oxy. 654) and Coptic. As we compare the two versions we find that the Coptic drops the reference to Rest. The Greek reads as follows: “[Jesus said]: Let him who seeks not cease until he finds, and when he finds he shall wonder; having wondered he shall reign (*basileusei*), and reigning he shall rest (*anapaēsetai*).” The Coptic has: “Jesus said: Let him who seeks not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All.”³¹ Koester and Pagels saw the saying as presenting “an eschatological timetable. . . . The disciples have sought and found and marveled, but their ruling and resting will come only in the future. At the present time, they still carry the burden of the flesh”³²

The idea is somewhat unpacked in another work from Nag Hammadi, called the Dialogue of the Savior (DS).³³ In DS 49, 50 Judas says, “Behold! The archons³⁴ dwell above us, so it is they who will rule over us!” The Lord

²⁹ Baarda, “If You Do Not Sabbatize the Sabbath,” 199. As is well known, Gnostics despised the creation of the material world and the creator god, who (in their view) is a bungling inferior god or demiurge. The God of light, the Father, is not responsible for the mess that is the material world, or for the physical bodies in which the spirits have been entombed. For a comprehensive account of Gnostic teachings, see Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 53–272.

³⁰ Baarda, *ibid.*, 200–201.

³¹ For a discussion of the composition of this and parallel sayings see Ernst Bammel, “Rest and Rule,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 23 (1969): 88–90.

³² Helmut Koester and Elaine Pagels, Introduction to Dialogue of the Savior in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi*, 245.

³³ DS is commonly referred to in terms of its location in the Nag Hammadi library: Codex number, page number, line number, thus: III, 121.4. But it is susceptible to being divided up into sayings (*logia*) of Jesus and his disciples, and this has been done by its modern editors. I shall thus refer to it, using the saying numbers in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi*, 246–55.

³⁴ In Gnostic thought, the Archons are the principalities and powers that, together with the god of this world, rule over the world and the souls imprisoned in it, imposing onerous law and fate.

says, “It is you who will rule over them!” In DS 65, 66 Matthew says, “Why do we not rest right now?” The Lord says, “When you lay down these burdens.” This will happen “when you abandon the works which will not be able to follow you, then you will rest” (DS 68). (It is difficult not to see here a contradiction to Revelation 14:13.) We find here, then, the meaning of ruling and resting. The Gnostics will overcome the rule of the archons and will find rest. When? Ultimately when at death they are liberated from the flesh born of woman. Using a metaphor also found in GT (21, 37) DS 85 the release will come when they strip off their bodies: “But you, as children of truth, not with these transitory garments are you to clothe yourselves. Rather, I say to you that you will become blessed when you strip yourselves!” Then they will find Rest in Him who is always at Rest.”

When the soul of the Gnostic rises from the world to return to the Realm of Light from which it had been separated and cast into a stinking body it is interrogated by the archons, which it must pass. In GT 50 Jesus coaches them about what to say:

If they say to you: “From where have you originated?” say to them: “We have come from the Light, where the Light has originated through itself. It stood and it revealed itself in their image.” If they say to you: “Who are you?” say “we are His sons and we are the elect of the Living Father.” If they ask you: “What is the sign of your Father in you?” say to them: “It is movement and Rest (*anapausis*).”

That is, they have internalized the attributes of the God of Light, who always lives and rests.

GT 51 introduces another dimension: “His disciples said to him: ‘When will the Rest of the dead come about and when will the new world come?’ He said to them: ‘What you await has already come, but you know it not.’” We find here the Gnostic realized eschatology. Because the Gnostic knows that the Father is Rest, he himself is already resting in the Father, he is already resting with respect to this world and its creator/sabbath.³⁵ It is a case of “already-but-not-yet,” a future hope yet a present experience. The Kingdom of the Father is known to the Gnostic, though the world sees it not. The Gnostic knows that he came from the Kingdom and will return to it, and because of this enlightenment he has the Rest. It is within him. The Gospel of Truth, a Valentinian Gnostic work explains it thus:

³⁵ Baarda, “If You Do Not Sabbatize,” 201.

Since the deficiency came into being because the Father was not known, therefore, when the Father is known, from that moment on the deficiency will no longer exist. As in the case of the ignorance of a person, when he comes to have knowledge (*gnōsis*), his ignorance vanishes of itself, as the darkness vanishes when the light appears, so also the deficiency vanishes in the perfection" (GTruth 24–25).

By dying to the world through knowledge the Gnostic is already perfect, already at rest. By definition he cannot sin. He is free from all law, because he is no longer subject to the archons and the demiurge. He is not of the material world, and he is not wedded to his body.³⁶ He is detached from all of that.

GT 60 uses an extravagant metaphor: "You too, look for a place for yourselves within Rest, lest you become a corpse and be eaten." As Rudolph remarked, "Repose and safety are expressions for the possession of redemption which is attained already in this world. . ." ³⁷

Finally we come to GT 90, "Jesus said, 'Come unto me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is mild, and you will find Rest for yourselves.'" ³⁸ Here Helderman pointed out an important difference from the canonical version that should not be overlooked. In Matthew Jesus gives rest (11:28), but the Gnostic *himself* achieves the Rest through his renunciation and forsaking of the material world.³⁹

Anapausis, as Helderman abundantly demonstrated, is a major motif in the Gospel of Truth,⁴⁰ but here I must limit myself to one passage, one mentioning the Sabbath:

He is the shepherd who left behind the ninety-nine sheep which were not lost. He went searching for the one which had gone astray. He rejoiced when he found it, for ninety-nine is a number that is in

³⁶ One is sometimes struck by the similarity of the concept of Rest in Gnosticism to the concept of Nirvana in Buddhism and classical Hinduism.

³⁷ *Gnosis*, 221.

³⁸ Gnostic use of the saying in Matt 11:28–30, whether quotation, allusion, or parallel, was frequent. See Helderman, *Anapausis*, 114.

³⁹ *Ibid.* Of course, if one took only Matt 11:29 without verse 28 the case would not be as clear. However that may be, Helderman was right in pointing out that after the Gnostic has received the enlightening revelation it is up to him after that.

⁴⁰ The Gospel of Truth probably dates from the middle of the second century, and whether or not it was written by Valentinus himself, it certainly represents the Valentinian brand of Gnosticism. It exhibits a reconceptualizing of the New Testament writings upon which it is based. See the introduction by Harold W. Attridge and George W. MacRae in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi*, 38, 39.

the left hand which holds it. But when the one is found, the entire number passes to the right hand. As that which lacks the one—that is, the entire right hand—draws what was deficient and takes it from the left-hand side and brings it to the right, so too the number becomes one hundred. It is the sign of the one who is in their sound; it is the Father. Even on the Sabbath, he labored for the sheep which he found fallen into the pit. He gave life to the sheep, having brought it up from the pit in order that you might know interiorly—you the sons of interior knowledge—what is the Sabbath, on which it is not fitting for salvation to be idle, in order that you may speak from the day from above, which has no night, and from the light which does not sink because it is perfect. (GTruth 31.36–32.31.)

This is an interesting passage for several reasons. It is partly, as I have argued elsewhere,⁴¹ a permutation of an apocalyptic passage. But here we are concerned to know what the Gnostics understood by it.

It is part of a passage derived from Matt 12:11 (and possibly John 5:17), exhorting the spiritual Gnostics to do the “mission work” of awakening the imprisoned spirits to their true nature, it holds up no less an example than the Son as Savior. He was active on the Sabbath, but with what meaning? GTruth goes on to say: “Say, then, from the heart that you are the perfect day and in you dwells the light that does not fail (32:311–33).” Baarda argued for the implication that the Sabbath, by contrast, is not the perfect day (indeed, the “perfect day” is not a day), and the passage describes the saving activity of the Savior in the world. The Sabbath is identified with the created world and the creator demiurge, as Baarda interpreted it in GT 27. He is able to cite also other Gnostic references, such as The Interpretation of Knowledge 11, where spiritual slumber brought labor and “the Sabbath which is the world.”⁴²

All this be as it may, whether the Sabbath represents something positive (like the Pleroma), or something negative (like the world or the demiurge god of the Jews who created it), it can be agreed that it is being used in Gnostic literature as a metaphor for something that is not a day of the week. It is clearly not identical with the Rest (*anapausis*), which is reabsorption into the Father of Light who is always at rest.

⁴¹ Johnston, “Eschatological Sabbath,” 49.

⁴² Robinson, *Nag Hammadi*, 476; cf. Baarda, “If You Do Not Sabbatize,” 189–90.

There is a great number of other relevant passages that we cannot review here, nor is it necessary to do so.⁴³ They will only reinforce what we have already seen in the Gnostic literature. Basically this can be summarized as follows. The Sabbath and the Rest are quite different things. Whether literal or metaphorical, the Sabbath is representative of this dark world. The Rest to which the Savior summons the spiritual people (Gnostics) is the Rest from which they primordially fell. It is a return to the Father's Realm of Light, so that which was lost from the Deity is restored. They came from it and they return to it. Rest is thus an eschatological goal, but it is not only that. Even before liberation from the body it can be experienced now when the enlightened soul spiritually detaches itself from the world, the flesh, and the demiurge, and all their works. It is thus both a future destiny and a present experience. Gnostics have heaven in their heart. In modern terms, eschatology and psychology are one. The Sabbath day means nothing good; the Rest is everything to hope for.

Now we turn back to the Great Church, represented by the great early defender of the faith, Justin Martyr. Justin flourished in the middle of the second century, at the same time as great Gnostic teachers Valentinus and Marcion. He knew about them, opposed them, and even wrote a tract against them.⁴⁴ But he breathed the same air as they, and it is not surprising to find similarities as well as differences.

Justin deprecated external observances that are devoid of interior experience, such as he charges the Jews with. Thus in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, a Jew, Justin wrote:

For what is the use of the baptism which cleanses the flesh and body alone? Baptize the soul from wrath and from covetousness, from envy, and from hatred; and lo! the body is pure. For this is the symbolic significance of the unleavened bread, that you do not

⁴³ Helderman listed and examined all the relevant passages of the Gospel of Truth in *Anapausis*, 85–231, as well as others on 282–330.

⁴⁴ Justin, *Apology* 1:26. After attacking the Simonians and Marcion, specifically deploring the doctrine that the Creator God is inferior to another Great God, he concluded: "But I have a treatise against all the heresies that have existed already composed, which, if you wish to read it, I will give you." He repeated his attack in chapter 58. The tract that he mentioned has not survived, but it was apparently used by Irenaeus in his massive *Against Heresies*, wherein great attention is given to the Valentinians. See Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 4.6.2. In his *Dialogue with Trypho* 35 Justin specifically listed Marcians, Valentinians, Basilidians, and Saturnilians.

commit the old deeds of wicked leaven. But you have understood all things in a carnal sense.⁴⁵

This desire to spiritualize at the expense of what Justin regarded as “a carnal sense” carries over to his understanding of the Sabbath, about which he said:

The new law requires you to keep perpetual sabbath, and you, because you are idle for one day, suppose you are pious, not discerning why this has been commanded you: and if you eat unleavened bread, you say the will of God has been fulfilled. The Lord our God does not take pleasure in such observances: if there is any perjured person or thief among you, let him cease to be so; if any adulterer, let him repent; then he has kept the sweet and truth sabbaths of God.⁴⁶

For Justin, then, true sabbathkeeping is ceasing from sin.

Justin differed from the Gnostics in not giving the word Sabbath a negative connotation, representing the world or an inferior Jewish god. Neither did he believe that a spiritual enlightenment about one’s true identity and destiny renders one beyond sinning or accountability to law. But he resembled them in completely spiritualizing it, giving it a meaning somewhat analogous to the Gnostic *anapausis*: true sabbathkeeping is an interior experience of the soul, divorced from any external observance such as a day of the week; but it does have behavioral consequences—one no longer sins. One attains to the Rest not by *gnōsis* but by repentance.

Justin does not look like a radical innovator. He is probably representative of many in his time who were seeking to establish Christian identity in distinction from Judaism, on one side, and Gnostic modes of thought on the other. In fleeing from one they could run into the arms of the other. Looking back we can see now that both the Scilla and the Charybdis involved divorcing external from internal, Sabbath day from Sabbath experience. Having separated them they discarded one or the other.

Many years ago Burkitt made a striking observation. In the third century Tertullian wrote a long refutation of the doctrines of Marcion. Shortly afterward either Tertullian or someone closely associated with him compiled a treatise against the Jews. The interesting thing is that about half of the treatise against the Jews was copied out of the Third Book against Marcion.

⁴⁵ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.. Justin also argued that the Old Testament patriarchs, like nature itself, did not “sabbatize.” Chs. 19, 23.

“The important thing is that the same arguments that were thought appropriate to use against the Jews were thought appropriate to use against Marcion the anti-Jew. Surprising as it seems at first sight, the Church had to a great extent the same controversy with both opponents.”⁴⁷

Perhaps we can draw an analogy to this. Those who cherish the Sabbath have the same controversy with both Pharisees and Gnostics: both separate the day from the experience. Matt 11:28–12:13 puts them together. What God hath joined let no man put asunder.

⁴⁷ F. Crawford Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), 306–7.

Eschatology in the Thessalonian Correspondence

Ekkehardt Mueller

It can be assumed that 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians were written to encourage the new believers in Thessalonica and belong to the oldest parts of the New Testament canon. Probably Paul was not able to spend as much time with the believers in Thessalonica as he would have liked. A letter would be of some help. Paul had heard that some church members were worried about loved ones who had passed away, and he wanted to address this issue as well as related questions dealing with the Second Coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. He was aware of other problems within the church that he wanted to address, such as the danger of adopting pagan standards with regard to sexuality, the problem of idleness, and calling in question the authority of leaders. In this article we will focus on the eschatology of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

I. Texts Containing Eschatological Statements

1. First Thessalonians

The Second Coming of Jesus permeates 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thess 1:3, Paul constantly remembers the Thessalonians' "work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." The Second Coming

is clearly in view in 1 Thess 1:10: “and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

In 1 Thess 2:12 the apostle challenges his readers “to walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” The next clear reference to eschatology is found at the end of the second chapter, 1 Thess 2:19: “For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?”

Again the third chapter ends with the hope of the Second Coming: “so that he may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints” (1 Thess 3:13).

In chapter 4, there is an entire passage on the Second Coming (1 Thess 4:13–18). “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” Then Paul dwells on Christ’s Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead, and their effects on the deceased believers in Thessalonica.

Chapter 5:1–11 continues in a related way: “Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night . . .” (1 Thess 5:11–12).

The last reference is found in 1 Thess 5:23: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This is an impressive list of eschatological texts. C. Wanamaker pointed out that eschatology is “the only significant doctrinal issue raised in the letter, namely, the problem of the return of Jesus from heaven, which is dealt with in 4:13–5:11.”¹

2. Second Thessalonians

Eschatology is also dominant in 2 Thessalonians. In 2 Thess 1:5–10, Paul addresses the suffering and persecuted Christians in Thessalonica and encourages them by pointing out that the Lord Jesus will judge their adversaries at his coming: “. . . after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not

¹ Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 89.

know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess 1:6–8).

Another long section is found in 2 Thess 2:1–15 dealing with what commonly has been called the antichrist and his coming. In this passage there are two different comings, the *parousia* of Christ and the *parousia* of the lawless one: “Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish”

The last specific reference to eschatology occurs in 2 Thess 2:14: “It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

II. Important Eschatological Terms

These passages in the two Thessalonian letters contain a number of important terms:

1. *Terms Describing the Second Coming of Jesus*

Five terms describe the Second Coming of Jesus. Some of them are standard terms, whereas others are used only rarely.

(a) *Parousia*. The word “means basically ‘presence’ (as in 2 Cor. 10:10, where the NIV has ‘in person’), but it came to be used as a technical expression for a royal visit or a manifestation of a deity.² In the New Testament it became the accepted term for the second coming of the Lord”³ The term is found twenty-four times in the New Testament, fourteen times in the Pauline corpus and ten times in Matthew, James, Peter,

² F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, WBC 45 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 57, notes: “Not long after 1 Thessalonians was written, coins bearing some such legend as *adventus Augusti* were struck at Corinth and Patras to commemorate an official visit of Nero. When Christians spoke of the *παρουσία* of their Lord, they probably thought of the pomp and circumstance attending those imperial visits as parodies of the true glory to be revealed on the day of Christ.”

³ Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, rev. ed., TNTC 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 68.

and 1 John.⁴ In the non-Pauline material it always refers to Christ's Second Coming. This is quite different with Paul. Only half of the occurrences of *parousia* in his writings describe Christ's return. The other seven texts talk about a coming of Paul's coworkers,⁵ his own presence,⁶ or the coming of the antichrist (2 Thess 1:9). Seven of the fourteen Pauline references are found in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Furthermore, the *parousia* of Christ occurs six times in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and only once elsewhere in Paul, namely in 1 Cor 15:23.⁷ In other words, in the Thessalonian letters the *parousia* is only the Second Coming of Jesus⁸ and the public appearance of the antichrist. The heaviest concentration of the term *parousia* is found in these two letters. In addition, in 1 and 2 Thessalonians the term always has a future orientation. The Second Coming of Christ is imitated by the antichrist. Nevertheless, the Lord's *parousia* clearly dominates these writings.

(b) *The Day (of the Lord)*. The "day" is found nine times in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, but only six times does the term directly or indirectly refer to the Day of the Lord.⁹ The full expression "day of the Lord" occurs in the New Testament in 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5, 2 Cor 1:14; 1 Thess 5:2, 2 Thess 2:2; and 2Pet 3:10 only. A similar expression is found in Rev 6:17.¹⁰ The Day of the Lord is the Second Coming of Jesus.¹¹ The expression goes back to the Old Testament where judgment is associated with it (Amos 5:18–20). Consequently, the judgment idea is also found in the New Testament when the Day of the Lord is in view.

(c) *To Come (erchomai)*. This common verb is found six times in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In 1 Thess 5:2 and 2 Thess 1:10 it refers to Christ's Second Coming.

(d) *Apokalupsis*. The term *apokalupsis* describes an action of uncovering, disclosing, or revealing and is often translated "revelation." Paul uses it thirteen times. In the rest of the New Testament, five additional references are found. The word denotes a divine revelation that people may experience (1 Cor 14:6). This may include a vision but is not limited to it. Second, it depicts the revelation of Jesus Christ at his Second Coming (1 Cor

⁴ Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; Jas 5:7, 8; 2 Pet 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1 John 2:28.

⁵ 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6, 7; Phil 1:26.

⁶ 2 Cor 10:10; Phil 2:12.

⁷ Cf., Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 124.

⁸ 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:1, 8.

⁹ 1 Thess 5:2, 4, 5, 8; 2 Thess 1:10; 2:2.

¹⁰ "The great day of their wrath" points to God and the Lamb, cf. Rev. 6:16.

¹¹ I. Howard Marshall, "Jesus as Lord: The Development of the Concept," in *Eschatology and the New Testament*, ed. W. Hulitt Gloer (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 143.

1:7). *Apokalupsis* is the first word that occurs in the Book of Revelation (Rev 1:1). Probably its title is taken from there. In the letters to the Thessalonians it is found in 2 Thess 1:7 only and refers to Christ's Second Coming. The respective verb *apokaluptō* occurs in 2 Thess 2:3, 6, 8 and refers to the revelation of the man of lawlessness only. Thus, 2 Thessalonians describes two different revelations and two different comings which are opposed to each other, the genuine and the counterfeit, Christ's coming and antichrist's coming.

(e) *Epiphaneia*. In the New Testament "appearance" is a Pauline word. It is found in 2 Thess 2:8 and five times in the Pastoral Epistles.¹² It describes a visible manifestation of a divine being. In the New Testament it is used exclusively of Christ and depicts his first coming to earth (2 Tim 1:10) as well as his future coming (1 Tim 6:14).

2. Terms Related to the Second Coming of Jesus

(a) *Hope*. The term "hope" occurs fifty-three times in the New Testament. Paul uses it forty-one times. It is found in 1 Thess 1:3; 2:19; 4:13; 5:8; 2 Thess 2:16 and is not only future-oriented—which is normal, because the term implies that—but is oriented toward Christ's Second Coming.

(b) *Kingdom*. The term abounds in the Gospels, especially the Synoptic Gospels. Paul uses it rarely. In 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5 the kingdom seems to have a future orientation especially for the Thessalonians.¹³

(c) *Glory*. This word is used 166 times in the New Testament. More than half of the references are found in Paul.¹⁴ Of the five places where it occurs in 1 and 2 Thessalonians¹⁵ four have an eschatological setting (1 Thess 2:12, 20; 2 Thess 1:9; 2:14) and three talk about God's or Jesus' glory (1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:9; 2:14). The other two refer to humans.

3. Terms Describing Positive Effects of the Second Coming

(a) *To Rise*. Because Jesus died and rose again (1 Thess 4:14), the dead in Christ will also rise (1 Thess 4:16). The verb occurs frequently in the New Testament,¹⁶ but Paul employs it only seven times, and only in the letters to the Thessalonians does he talk about the future resurrection which is associated with the Second Coming.

¹² 1 Tim 6:4; 2 Tim 1:10; 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13.

¹³ "Kingdom" is found in the New Testament 162 times and in Paul 17 times. The Synoptic Gospels employ the word 121 times.

¹⁴ 84 times.

¹⁵ 1 Thess 2:6, 12, 20; 2 Thess 1:9; 2:14.

¹⁶ 108 times.

4. Terms Describing Negative Effects of the Second Coming

The following terms describe negative effects on those who persecute Christians and do not believe in Jesus. With the exception of the first term mentioned below the others are rare words and do not occur more than four times each in all of the Pauline writings: (a) wrath—1 Thess 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; (b) destruction—1 Thess 5:3; 2 Thess 1:9; (c) judgment—2 Thess 1:5; (d) retribution—2 Thess 1:8; and (e) punishment—2 Thess 1:9.¹⁷

These terms show that the Thessalonian correspondence has a strong eschatological orientation. However, it is not only the quantity of eschatological statements that is surprising, but also the employment of specific and rarely used vocabulary. Thus, 1 and 2 Thessalonians have a unique emphasis, different from other Pauline letters. In the second letter there is also a sharp contrast between the divine side and that of the opponent. The conflict will reach so far that the “son of lawlessness” will imitate Jesus’ Second Coming, a grandiose deception for those who do not love the truth. Eschatology permeates the two Thessalonian epistles.

III. 1 and 2 Thessalonians’ Eschatological Passages Reviewed

1. First Thessalonians

a. 1 Thess 1:3 In 1 Thess 1:3 Paul praises among other things “your steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” Morris wrote: “*Hope*, in a Christian context, always has an air of certainty about it. It is a confident expectation, not the unfounded optimism we often mean by the word. More particularly, the Christian hope is directed towards the second advent which seems to be in mind here”¹⁸

In the beginning and at the end of 1 Thessalonians we find the triadic formulation “faith, love, and hope” (1:3; 5:8). These elements are used individually throughout 1 and 2 Thessalonians. The last element in this triadic formulation is hope (1 Thess 1:3; 2:19; 4:13; 5:8; 2 Thess 2:16). The Thessalonians have “hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” In 1 Thess 4:13 believers are contrasted with those who have no hope. Christians have hope in Jesus’

¹⁷ “Wrath” is found in the New Testament thirty-six times and twenty-three times in the Pauline writings. “Destruction” is used by Paul only. It occurs twice in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and twice in other Pauline literature. “Judgment” is used forty-seven times in the New Testament and four times by Paul, but only once in 2 Thessalonians. “Retribution” and “punishment” are also specific terms employed only once in 2 Thessalonians. “Retribution” is found nine times in the NT and four times in Paul, whereas “punishment” is used only by Paul, namely three times in total.

¹⁸ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 43; cf. D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC 33 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 56.

coming and in the resurrection of the dead. They maintain the hope of salvation. It seems as if Paul in 1 Thessalonians introduces the triadic formula and subsequently spells out how these elements relate to Christians in Thessalonica. First, he develops what faith means. Then he focuses on love. Finally, he discusses hope and clearly links it to Christ's Second Coming.

b. 1 Thess 1:9–10 The next passage—1 Thess 1:9–10—reports how the believers in Thessalonica had turned away from their idols and had begun to serve the living God. They had experienced a genuine conversion which led to a life of service and a persistent expectation of the second advent of the Lord. It is perseverance to the end when believers expectantly wait¹⁹ for the risen and exalted Lord, who rescues from the future wrath, i.e., the eschatological wrath.

Jesus' resurrection and his Second Coming as well as the complete deliverance of his followers from God's wrath are associated. God's wrath over sin²⁰ is taken seriously as is Christ's perfect salvation. However, the resurrection of Christ would be quite meaningless for his disciples, if it did not lead to Christ's return. The belief in the *parousia* "is explicitly part of the belief to which the Thessalonians have converted Actually, the soteriological dimension is even connected directly with Jesus' final coming which will deliver the faithful from the wrath to come."²¹ Wanamaker claimed: "Had the early followers of Jesus not believed that he would soon return from heaven as the messianic Lord, Christianity would almost certainly not have come into existence. Belief in the *parousia* of Christ is what gave the resurrection its real significance by promising the realization of Christ's messianic rule on the plane of human history" ²² The return of Christ was an integral part of the faith of the Thessalonians and obviously it shaped their lives and their Christian experience. They did not expect

¹⁹ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 47: "The word *wait for* (*anamenein*, here only in the New Testament) means 'wait expectantly.'"

²⁰ Cf., 1 Thess 2:16.

²¹ Eduard Schweizer, "The Significance of Eschatology in the Teaching of Jesus," in *Eschatology and the New Testament*, ed. W. Hulitt Gloer (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 9. Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 87: "This was a foundational belief both of Paul's apocalyptic theology . . . and of earliest Christianity in general. . . . It enabled the early Christians to maintain that Jesus was the Messiah in spite of his failure to actualize his messianic rule during his earthly lifetime"

²² Wanamaker, *ibid.*, 87–88. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 18, wrote: "The Advent (*Parousia*) of Christ in glory is not treated in the early church simply as the consummating event due to take place in the indefinite end-time but as something to be actively expected in the near future: it is assumed rather that asserted in these early letters that Christians of that generation may hope to witness it."

condemnation but salvation and coronation.²³ At the same time Paul's favorable statement about the Thessalonians may have served as encouragement for further persistent anticipation of the Lord's coming on their part.

c. 1 Thess 2:12 In 1 Thess 2:12 Paul used the term "kingdom," which was so common in Christ's proclamation, and told his audience that God had called them to his kingdom and glory. This statement is found in a context in which Paul talked about his ministry, a ministry free of deceit, flattery, and greed. He tenderly cared for and encouraged his spiritual children. His behavior was blameless and upright. So the walk of the Christians in Thessalonica should also be "in a manner worthy of the God" who called them "into His own kingdom and glory." Life and faith must go together. To live worthy of God implies "to live in a manner consistent with the commands and character of God."²⁴ The motivation for such a life is the coming kingdom. Ethics and eschatology are closely related.

For Jesus "kingdom" was not a static concept, not so much a realm but rather "God's rule in action"²⁵ which in one sense is already present, and yet its full realization is still future. Christians therefore live in two overlapping ages, the present evil age and the new age. This is stressed in other places in the NT and especially in a number of Paul's letters (e.g. Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20). However, in 1 and 2 Thessalonians "kingdom" has a future dimension rather than a present or both a present and future orientation. The present dimension of the kingdom as found in the Gospels is not directly employed in the Thessalonian letters. The believers in Thessalonica had not yet finally entered the kingdom or dominion of God and his glory, because this would be fully realized with the *parousia* only when the dead in Christ would be resurrected and the living saints be transformed.

Both "kingdom" and "glory" seem to relate to the future and seem to be used almost interchangeably.²⁶ They may also supplement each other as in

²³ Cf. Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 66; Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 87–88.

²⁴ Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 85.

²⁵ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 61. He then described this kingdom, 61–62: "The kingdom is closely associated with the person of Jesus, and, while the kingdom and the cross are not explicitly linked, we cannot but think that the death of the Christ was necessary to the establishment of the kingdom. It is a gift from God (Lk. 12:32), not the result of men's labours; it is not explicable but is always sheer miracle (Mk. 4:26–29). The thought of the Gospels is that God has broken into this world of space and time in the person of his son, and it is in this way that the kingdom is brought in."

²⁶ However, Karl Paul Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 232–234, 240–243, argued that the kingdom in 1 Thess 2:12 is a present reality, whereas in 2 Thess 1:5 it has a future dimension only.

“glorious kingdom.” On the other hand, it is suggested that “kingdom” refers to divine lordship, whereas “glory” denotes “the state of divine glory. In both cases, however, it is implied that the future reality has a bearing on the present and teleologically conditions Christian thinking and conduct.”²⁷ Although the kingdom is not directly described as a present reality, it still affects everyday life. A Christian lifestyle or good conduct are connected with the expectation of the return of Jesus. To be perseverant is possible in view of the hope of Christ’s Second Coming only.

d. 1 Thess 2:19 Paul considered the Thessalonian believers to be his hope, joy, and crown of exultation when the Lord comes. The context is one of suffering on the part of the Thessalonian believers as well as on Paul’s part. It also points to Paul’s desire to see his new converts again, although he had been hindered by Satan more than once. The expectation of Christ’s *parousia* gave the oppressed Christians power and helped them “to endure with hope.”²⁸

Richard understood this reference to the *parousia* of Christ as a judgement scene—especially in light of the preposition “before/in front of” the Lord (cf. 2 Cor 5:10)—in which the missionaries appear in the presence of the Lord and receive their reward.²⁹ The term *parousia* is here employed for the first time in 1 Thessalonian, although the concept of the Second Coming of Christ was presented earlier.

Morris suggested that the frequent use of *kurios*, Lord, in 1 and 2 Thessalonians describing Jesus as “the one who is in the highest place” may have been due to the letters’ strong stress on his Second Coming.³⁰

e. 1 Thess 3:13 In 1 Thess 3:13 Paul expressed his wish that his audience would be blameless “in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.” Expecting the Lord will lead to ethical behavior. 1 Thess 3:13 is found right at the transitional point where Paul, after his review, turns his attention to exhortation and ethics and stresses holiness and sanctification. Eschatology will and must influence the Christian lifestyle. Otherwise it is only an academic exercise and intellectual construct without practical implications.

²⁷ Earl J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, SP 11 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 86. See also page 108.

²⁸ Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 125.

²⁹ Cf. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 132 and 137.

³⁰ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 68. The term is used twenty-four times in 1 Thessalonians and twenty-two times in 2 Thessalonians.

In a special way, 1 Thessalonians stresses sanctification (4:3–4, 7; 5:23). This is linked to ethical behavior, in chap. 4 especially to the right use of the gift of sexuality. Another lifestyle issue is work ethics. Believers are to work with their own hands and should not be idle (1.Thess 4:11–12; 5:14). Whether or not the hope of the Second Coming was misunderstood and church members felt they should stop working, idleness is unacceptable. Since the problem was not resolved after Paul had written his first letter, he came back to this issue in 2 Thessalonians and spent even more space on it (2 Thess 3:6–15). He noted that whoever refused to work should not eat or be fed either. Paul seems to mention even church discipline in the case that change would not occur.

Another, yet positive aspect is patience or endurance (1 Thess 1:3; 5:14; 2 Thess 1:4; 3:5). Christians are patient in persecution and patient with each other, because the Lord is patient. Patience is also linked to faith, love, and hope. In the two Thessalonian letters ethics is found in the context of eschatology. There is an intimate relationship between the two. Expecting the Lord's coming encourages believers to live moral and holy lives³¹ "so as to be ready to meet him."³²

"For the Apostle, then, it is the eschatological gift of faith that determines our lifestyle, and not our lifestyle that determines the ethical content of the gospel. One reason the church today is so ineffectual in certain parts of the world is because it no longer offers pagan society an alternative intellectual or ethical option. Not only does the church seldom exist as a contrasting community over against the mores of society, but often it baptises and incorporates into its existence behaviours that are blatantly opposed to the sanctified life in Christ Jesus."³³

1 Thess 3:13 uses the term *parousia* for the second time in this letter. The Lord's *parousia* is with all his saints. Who are these saints? Two suggestions have been made: (1) angels³⁴ or (2) "saints who have departed this life."³⁵ Wanamaker argued: "The Christian saints, however, will not come

³¹ Cf. Karl P. Donfried and I. Howard Marshall, *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 45.

³² Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 19.

³³ *Ibid.*, 76.

³⁴ Cf., Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 114.

³⁵ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 78. He held, 79, that these saints consist of "all who will be with the Lord when he returns," which would at least include deceased humans.

with Christ at his parousia. Rather they will rise to meet him in the air according to 1 Thes. 4:15–18. In light of this it seems likely that the ἄγγελοι of 3:13 are the angels”³⁶ The description of the Lord’s coming reminds of OT theophanies, in which God regularly was accompanied by angels (cf., Deut 33:2; Dan 7:10). According to the Gospels Jesus returns with his angels (cf., Mark 8:38; 13:27), and Rev 19:14 portrays Jesus as a rider on a white horse attended by the armies of heaven. Furthermore, the concept of a natural immortality of humankind rather than the concept of death as an unconscious state comparable to sleep is not supported by Scripture.³⁷ Therefore the saints in 1 Thess 3:13 are better understood as angels.

Obviously Paul counted on the imminent return of Christ. Why would he stress the need to be ready if he thought Christ’s coming would be in the far future? This may contain a lesson for Christians today who have gotten used to putting off the *parousia*. Genuine discipleship requires Christians to believe in the imminence of the Lord’s return.

f. 1 Thess 4:13–18 A long section dealing with eschatology is found in 1 Thess 4 and 5. With 1 Thess 4, the second part of the letter begins containing instruction and exhortation. It is remarkable that in this context, which focuses on ethics, a major passage on Christ’s Second Coming occurs. This is clear evidence that ethics and eschatology should not be separated. Martin correctly stated: “Doctrine without ethics is hypocrisy; ethics without doctrine lacks firm foundation.” Chapter 4 begins with the issue of sexual purity, followed by the call to brotherly love and the passage on the Second Coming and the resurrection of the dead. In 1 Thess 5, admonitions on different subjects including idleness follow.

We will separate 1 Thess 4:13–18 from 1 Thess 5:1–10 because these two passages seem to be two different though somewhat related sections, and will focus on the second part of 1 Thess 4 first.

In v. 13, Paul expresses his concern that his audience is uninformed, ignorant, or failed to understand some of his teachings and therefore, whenever a believer dies, grieve in a way similar to that of a society which has no hope.³⁸ Paul is not opposed to grieving but to a grief that is incompatible

³⁶ Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 145.

³⁷ Cf. Raoul Dederen, ed., *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000) 314–346.

³⁸ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 233, seems to suggest that the “others” were not necessarily non-Christians but people who had a fatalistic outlook and denied the possibility of an afterlife or a future resurrection. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 96, however, shows that in the context—1 Thess 4:5—as well as other Pauline letters may have pagans in view (Eph 2:3; Rom 11:7).

with Christian hope. He wants to remedy the situation in Thessalonica and therefore presents to these believers the Christian hope and a correct understanding of the *parousia* and events related to it such as the resurrection of the faithful dead and the transformation of the living saints. In 1 Thess 3:10 Paul had already mentioned that he wanted to “complete what is lacking in [their] faith.” A correct understanding of the Second Coming and the resurrection would influence the behavior of the Christians in Thessalonica.

The question is, What was the real problem of the Thessalonian believers? Various answers have been provided such as the following:³⁹ (1) Paul had not given systematic instruction about the resurrection—probably because he could not stay in Thessalonica long enough—and wanted to provide it now. (2) Gnostics had created doubts concerning the resurrection and had spiritualized it, thus church members were confused. (3) There was a loss of confidence in the *parousia*. “Some of the Thessalonians had evidently understood Paul to say that all who believed would see the *parousia*. Some believers had died. Did this mean that they would be at a disadvantage when the Lord came? . . . Some may even have felt that these deaths discredited the whole idea of the *parousia*.”⁴⁰ (4) The Thessalonians had received instruction about the resurrection but “had not fully appreciated it.”⁴¹ And (5) church members did not have a problem with the belief that dead Christians would share in the resurrection but they feared that these would be disadvantaged and would not have a chance to be taken to heaven. Whatever the problem was precisely, Paul needed to help these believers. Thus, he wrote down this passage which has become one of the most important texts of the New Testament dealing with Christ’s Second Coming and the Resurrection of the dead.

Another point of discussion is whether or not Paul was persuaded of the imminence of the Lord’s coming. How should we interpret the statements “we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord” (v. 15) and “Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord” (v. 17) in which Paul included himself? The opinions differ. Morris asserted that Paul may have thought that he would be alive at the Second Coming, but concluded that this cannot be proven. He also suggested that sometimes Paul

³⁹ See, Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 164–166; Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 141–143.

⁴⁰ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 89.

⁴¹ Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 166.

included himself with his audience without participating in some of their activities. Therefore, he reasons that the “we”-statements cannot help to determine whether or not he believed in Christ’s imminent return.⁴² Guthrie, on the other hand, was much more positive:

“The nearness of the coming seems to have been the mainspring of Paul’s thought in several of his epistles, although never more clearly than in 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff. . . . by using the first person plural, Paul implies a distinct possibility that he might be present The most natural understanding of the passage is that Paul expected an imminent parousia. . . . If the time was unknown, Paul had no alternative but to expect it as imminent. . . . Even if Paul was later obliged to think that he would not after all be alive at the parousia, this cannot be construed as a blunder which had to be modified or corrected. In any age it is possible to contemplate a coming at any moment without being guilty of a delusion if it does not happen within one’s lifetime. The expectation of the event is more important than its timing. . . . for the Christian it is always five minutes to midnight. . . . There is, in fact, no evidence that Paul made any change in his eschatology, although as he grew older he would realize that the possibility of his being alive at the parousia was diminishing. This does not mean that even at the end of his life Paul abandoned his belief in the imminence of Christ’s return.”⁴³

1 Thess 4:14 connects Christ’s resurrection with the future resurrection of the believers. It is interesting that a distinction is made between the death of Jesus and the death of his followers. Whereas Paul clearly states that Jesus “died,” he maintains three times that the believers “sleep” (vv. 13, 14, and 15).⁴⁴ Obviously there is a deep qualitative difference between Jesus’ death and the death of his followers. Because Jesus died and saved those who belong to him, they do not die in the ultimate sense but sleep while waiting

⁴² Cf., Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 92. On the same page he wrote: “Paul has a little-noticed habit of classing himself with those to whom he is writing, even in activities in which no one would expect him to take part, like eating in idol’s temples (1 Cor. 10:22; cf. Rom 3:5; Gal. 5:26, etc. .)”

⁴³ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 804–805, 810. Cf., Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 241.

⁴⁴ Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 98, suggested that the aorist in v. 14 and obviously also in v. 15 “relates to the moment of their falling asleep, whereas the present κοιμωμένων in v. 13 relates to their consequent state of sleep (death).”

for the resurrection.⁴⁵ The fate of the unbelievers is not discussed in this passage.

The end of v. 14 can be understood differently. The first question is, Who is “him”? Is it God the Father or is it Jesus? The flow of thought and the close proximity of “him” to “through Jesus” make it probable that the meaning is: God will bring with him, i.e., Jesus, those who sleep.⁴⁶ Then the next question is, What is the direct antecedent of the phrase “through Jesus”? Does it refer to those who sleep or to the verb “to bring”? If it refers to the verb “to bring” then we have an awkward duplication: “God will bring with him, Jesus, through Jesus those who sleep.” Furthermore, in such a case the sleeper would not be identified. It is better to take “through Jesus” with the preceding word: “Those who sleep through Jesus God will bring with him (Jesus).” Jesus will take along only those who are asleep in him.⁴⁷ What does “will bring” mean? Wanamaker suggests that the verb “will bring” (*axeĩ*) does not point to the resurrection of the dead in Christ but to their assumption to heaven at the *parousia* of the Lord. They will be taken to heaven like those who will be alive at the coming of the Lord.⁴⁸

Whereas in 1 Thess 4:13–14 the emphasis is on those Christians who have fallen asleep, with v. 15 the living saints are introduced. They are described as (1) “we,” (2) “the living ones,” and (3) “the remaining ones.” The same description is repeated in v. 17. In v. 16, three elements associated with Christ’s Second Coming are mentioned. A similar threefold enumeration is found in v. 17b.

The Living Saints (4:15)

- We (nominative)
- The living ones (nominative)
- Those who remain (nominative)

and those who have fallen asleep

⁴⁵ Cf., Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 90: “Christ endured the full horror of that death that is the wages of sin and thus transformed death for his followers into sleep. In the New Testament Christians are never said to die; they fall asleep. But Christ is not said to fall asleep (though cf. 1 Cor 15:20); he died for us.”

⁴⁶ Cf., Francis D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1978), 7:247.

⁴⁷ Cf., Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 169: “It has often been missed that Paul changes from the present participle κοιμωμένων in verse 13 to the aorist participle κοιμηθέντας in verse 14. This means that verse 14 refers to the moment of their dying (cf. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 98), when the issue of whether they belonged to Christ or not was of central importance for their future salvation. God will not bring with Christ all those who sleep but only those who have died while in relationship to him.”

⁴⁸ Wanamaker, *ibid.*, 170.

The Coming of the Lord (4:16)

- With (*en*) a shout
- With (*en*) the voice of the archangel
- With (*en*) the trumpet of God

The Living Saints (4:17a)

- We (nominative)
- The living ones (nominative)
- Those who remain (nominative)

*and they (the dead in Christ)**Being Caught Up to the Coming Lord (4:17b)*

- In (*en*) the clouds
- To (*eis*) the meeting of the Lord
- In (*eis*) the air

¹ 1 Thess 4:15 contains the statement that deceased Christians are not disadvantaged, and living Christians are not privileged when it comes to the *parousia* of the Lord. This statement is supported by a chain of events depicted in vv. 16 and 17. At the same time, Christ's Second Coming is described in some details—see the two threefold descriptions—, although this is not the main emphasis of the passage.

In 1 Thess 4:15 Paul claims the highest possible authority, the authority of the Lord: “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord.” Paul may allude to or even quote an actual statement of Jesus that was not preserved elsewhere, a so-called *agraphon*, or he may—under inspiration—summarize the teaching of Jesus as found, for instance, in Matt 24.⁴⁹ It would be possible that v. 15 is a summary statement, whereas vv. 16–17 are the “word of the Lord.”⁵⁰ The *parousia* of Christ is certain. When it will come about, the dead in Christ will not be disadvantaged over against those who will still be alive.⁵¹

1 Thess 4:16–17 contain to some extent a chronology of events.⁵² After a description of the *parousia* resembling Matt 24:29–31 the accompanying

⁴⁹ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 91, held: “There is nothing improbable in the suggestion that Paul is quoting an otherwise unrecorded saying, for there is much that is not included in the canonical Gospels (Jn. 20:30; 21:25).” Cf., Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 170. On page 171 he wrote: “The similarities between Mt. 24:29–31, 40f., in particular, and the images and language used in vv. 16f. suggest that Paul was utilizing what he took to be the teaching of the Lord regarding the end of age.” Cf. also Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 98–99.

⁵⁰ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 226, suggested to tie the opening words of v. 15 to the previous verse and understand “the word of the Lord” as prophetic speech of Paul, who has a message from God.

⁵¹ Cf., Nichol, *SDABC*, 7:249.

⁵² Cf. Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 150.

resurrection is mentioned. It is important to notice that Jesus himself takes the initiative in bringing about these events. Simultaneously the raised believers as well as the living and now transformed believers will be taken to the Lord. “. . . neither group will be at a disadvantage when the day of the Lord arrives . . .”⁵³ Then they will be with the Lord forever.

The three audible acts of v. 16, namely the “shout,” “the voice of the archangel,” and the “trumpet of God” are understood by some as a single event: The command of the Lord, possibly addressed to the dead to come out of their graves, is expressed through the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God.⁵⁴ The archangel is mentioned here and in Jude 9 only, where Michael is the archangel. If Michael is Jesus than it is the voice of Jesus which is heard and which brings forth from the graves those who have died in him.⁵⁵

Jesus himself will return, not a representative.⁵⁶ The end of the age will be brought about by him. At the same time, this end will be a new beginning. Trumpet and clouds are signs of a theophany (Exod 19:16; Dan 7:13). The Lord will descend from heaven, whereas the redeemed will ascend to meet him in the air. They will be with the Lord always; but Paul does not tell us precisely what is going to happen next. It may be assumed that they are taken to Christ’s heavenly home, but details are missing here and are furnished by other parts of Scripture.

Important for Paul are the certainty of the *parousia*, the resurrection of the dead who will not suffer any disadvantage for having died prior to Christ’s coming, the transformation of the living, and the assumption of all believers. Finally, they will be reunited with their Lord and with each other.⁵⁷ Paul does not only emphasize that the living disciples are not better off than the deceased, but that both groups will be reunited. “The loss remains a reality, but it is a temporary reality. The grief is real, but it is no longer grief

⁵³ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 228.

⁵⁴ Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 173 suggested “that Christ’s cry of command is directed to the dead, whom he calls to the resurrection by means of the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. This interpretation is perhaps supported by the statement in Jn. 5:25–29 that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and will come forth to the resurrection and the judgment.” Cf., Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 229.

⁵⁵ Cf., Nichol, *SDABC*, 7:249.

⁵⁶ Cf. the statement in Nichol, *ibid.*, 7:248: “Christ does not send a deputy, nor does He come spiritually. He Himself comes in person. The same Jesus who ascended to heaven now descends from heaven.”

⁵⁷ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 248, stated: “Paul’s intention, however, is not a discourse on the end-time but an attempt to reassure his readers that all faithful followers will be united with their risen Lord.”

without hope.”⁵⁸ Indeed, Christians have a wonderful hope with which they comfort each other in the dark hours of loss and grief (1 Thess 4:18).

g. 1 Thess 5:1–11 After having discussed the resurrection of the dead associated with Christ’s Second Coming, Paul gives attention to the time of the *parousia* and to proper Christian behavior, namely watching. 1 Thess 5:1–11 is a parenetical section.⁵⁹ Verse 1 introduces the passage. Verses 2–3 focus on the manner of Christ’s return. Verses 4–10 describe how Christians should live in view of the insights they have gained, and v. 11 concludes the section with a final appeal.⁶⁰

In v. 1, “Paul is saying that there is not need for him to write on any aspect of the time of the *parousia*.”⁶¹ The Lord’s return will be like a thief in the night, completely unexpected (v. 2).⁶² People will be surprised. While they believe everything is fine, the day of the Lord will suddenly overtake them. The illustration of a pregnant women serves to stress the suddenness of the event (v. 3). While unbelievers will be unprepared, church members should be aware of the imminence of the day and should not be astonished: “But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief” (v. 4).

Believers are told:

- A. You are all sons of light
- B. and sons of day.
- B'. We are not of night
- A'. nor of darkness (v. 5).

As such they must be alert and sober and should not sleep (v. 6). Watchfulness and preparedness go together and lead to a consistent

⁵⁸ Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 153.

⁵⁹ Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 176, wrote: “The theme of the *parousia* is still very much the topic of the discussion in 5:1–11, but the focus shifts to parenesis concerning the need for constant vigilance and readiness for the arrival of the *parousia*.”

⁶⁰ Cf. Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 157.

⁶¹ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 95. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 108, remarked that in the NT there is basically no difference between *kairos* and *chronos*.

⁶² Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 96, quoted Leith Samuel who said, “if there is one thing certain about the timing of the Lord’s return it is this, that we cannot be certain of the timing. . . . It is inevitable, but unpredictable.” Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 159, suggested: “Also Paul did not apply the implication of the thief analogy to believers. They were, in fact, specifically excluded. The Lord’s coming will not be as a thief in the night for members of the church (v. 4). Believers expect it, though they do not know when the day will arrive.” And Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 252, held that even for believers the Second Coming of the Lord will come unexpectedly “but will not overtake them menacingly in the way a thief does an unprepared victim.”

Christian life which expects the soon coming of the Lord while following the Master's footsteps. That is, indifference and lethargy with regard to the *parousia* do not have a place with believers. Because they await the day of the Lord they are already here and now "sons of light" and "sons of the day." This is a Hebraism, but the point is that they already belong to that specific day and will triumph on that day while they still live their lives on this earth.⁶³ ". . . the metaphor 'sons of the day' in the context cannot be divorced from the theme of the passage, the day of the Lord. To be a 'son of the day' is to be one who awaits with expectancy the day of the Lord."⁶⁴ On the other hand, "blindness to the things of God and immoral behavior are activities characteristic of spiritual darkness"⁶⁵ as portrayed in v. 7.

However, the "sons of the day" have "the hope of salvation" (v. 8). They have also put on faith and love; and they are "not destined . . . for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 9). Whereas in later Pauline letters salvation is already present (e.g., Eph 2:8; Col 1:13), here it is still future. Although salvation is stressed in vv. 8 and 9, an ethical dimension is also present in vv. 7 and 8. 1 Thess 5:9 connects our life to Jesus' death. Salvation is always dependent on Jesus.

Verses 6 and 7 contain a call not to sleep and talk about those who do sleep and therefore belong to night. The same Greek word *katheudō*, "to sleep" found in these two verses occurs also in v. 10. However, there is a shift in meaning. Whereas in vv. 6 and 7 it was referring to those who were unprepared for the Lord's coming, in v. 10 it designates those believers who have passed away. Although the verb is different from the term used in chap. 4:14 Paul returns to the situation addressed in the previous passage: Some believers would have passed away while others would be alive at Christ's Second Coming.⁶⁶ Verse 10 can apply only to believers, because together with v. 9 it mentions life and salvation through the Lord Jesus. Thus, the term "to sleep" used negatively in the previous verses, is employed with a different meaning in v. 10.⁶⁷ This is also evident when we look at the context: "We will

⁶³ Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 111, called this a form of realized eschatology.

⁶⁴ Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 182.

⁶⁵ Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 165.

⁶⁶ Cf., Nichol, *SDABC*, 7:254.

⁶⁷ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 101, noted: "Whether we are awake or asleep means 'whether we live or die' (cf. Rom. 14:8); it is physical life and physical death that are in mind, not the ethical use as in verse 6 . . ." However, Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 168, wondered whether or not the term should be understood "as an attempt to allow for human frailty" and signify "Christians who are spiritually dull." On page 169 he continued and wrote, "Human vigilance may flag, but Christ's sacrifice will not fail to deliver the believer from wrath, even believers who have fallen asleep at their post." On the other hand, Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 114, taking the

live together with him” of 1 Thess 5:10 is parallel to 1 Thess 4:17: “we will be with this Lord always.” The purpose of Christ’s death is that believers may live with him forever. And the last verse of our passage, v. 11 is closely related to chap. 4:18 which also concluded a section of the letter dealing with the *parousia*. Some English translations are not as clear as the Greek text is:

4:18: “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

Ōste parakaleite allēlous . . .

5:11: “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another . . .”

Dio parakaleite allēlous . . .

So both paragraphs are pulled together. Believers have strong hope for salvation. Today they watch and are vigilant. Expecting the *parousia* and their salvation will “encourage proper religious and ethical conduct.”⁶⁸ However, whether they die before the Lord returns or whether they are still alive at the Second Coming does not make a basic difference. They will not be disadvantaged but will live and be with the Lord always.

h. 1 Thess 5:23 Once more Paul mentions the Second Coming. At the end of his first epistle after having penned a number of exhortations he adds an eschatological prayer beginning with 1 Thess 5:23. Christians are called to hold up high standards. However, while doing that they need the sanctifying power of God which touches every part of their being. They are already “holy,” and yet God is asked to make them perfect in holiness for the *parousia*.⁶⁹ It is God who can preserve them “complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And Paul confirms: “Faithful is he who calls you; he also will bring it to pass” (v. 24).

i. Summary The information on the Second Coming provided in 1 Thessalonians is the following: (1) Jesus who was raised from the dead will come again. (2) He will come from heaven with his saints. (3) His coming will be audible. (4) Those who have died in Christ will be resurrected at the Second Coming and together with the living believers will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. “Paul affirms that the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus is a pledge that those who have died in Christ

position that the verb “to sleep” in v. 10 does not refer to moral carelessness continued: “It is ludicrous to suppose that the writers mean, ‘Whether you live like sons of light or like sons of darkness, it will make little difference; you will be all right in the end.’” Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 257, noted that *katheudō* can be understood metaphorically or literally. When taken literally it normally refers to physical sleep, but in the LXX of Ps 87:5 and Dan 12:2 it denotes death. Dan 12:2 may be the background for 1 Thess 5:10.

⁶⁸ Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 189.

⁶⁹ Cf. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 288.

will not be forgotten at the *parousia*; they will, in fact, rise first.”⁷⁰ (5) This is the real “rapture.”⁷¹ (6) The Second Coming of Jesus means final salvation for the believers but at the same time the coming of God’s wrath upon the unbelievers. (7) God’s people will be with the Lord forever. (8) Yet the Second Coming of Jesus will be like the coming of a thief. There will be an element of surprise. (9) Early Christians expected the Coming of Jesus and so should we. (10) It is important to be prepared, to be awake, and to be sober. Those who are expecting the Lord’s *parousia* will live a holy life. Ethics and eschatology are closely linked with eschatology furnishing the motivation for Christian conduct. The Second Coming is one of the most important topics in 1 Thessalonians.

2. Second Thessalonians

a. 2 Thess 1:5–10 The first passage of 2 Thessalonians which contains eschatological statements is found in chapter 1. The passage reflects ideas that we have already noticed in 1 Thessalonians. The church members in Thessalonica were suffering persecution. They had to endure afflictions. Paul praises their perseverance, their faith, and their common love, but he also introduces the idea of God’s “righteous judgment.” Divine judgment is not necessarily a negative concept. It can be redemptive.⁷² In this section it is associated with Christ’s Second Coming. The coming of the Lord will be payday.

God will “repay with affliction those who afflict you” (v. 6). The judgment will be a day of retribution (v. 8), a day of “penalty of eternal destruction,⁷³ away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (v. 9). These statements reminds us of God’s wrath associated with the day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians. It will affect “those who do not know God and . . . those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” (v. 8).

However, there is not only the negative aspect. The Second Coming of Christ will have a double effect. The very same passage that describes the terrors of the unbelievers highlights the blessings of the Lord’s which will come upon his children. For them it means to “be considered worthy of the kingdom of God” (v. 5). The persecuted Christians would be heirs of God’s

⁷⁰ Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica, and Early Christianity*, 63.

⁷¹ Cf., Nichol, *SDABC*, 7:249–250.

⁷² Cf. Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 206.

⁷³ Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 228, was not willing to take this statement in the physical sense and therefore understood it metaphorically.

kingdom of glory. This concept we have already met in 1 Thessalonians. Believers will enjoy the reign of God. They also will enjoy rest and relief (v. 7).

The coming of the Lord is described as an *apokalupsis*, a revelation (v. 7), a term found as noun only once in the Thessalonian correspondence. The Lord was concealed but now he will be revealed. How will he be revealed? The passage answers: (1) from heaven, (2) with the angels of his might,⁷⁴ and (3) in flaming fire.⁷⁵ Fire is often connected with God's presence (Exod 3:2; Isa 66:15–16). Whereas 1 Thess 4 stressed an audible aspect of Christ's coming, we now encounter a visible aspect. In the end God will be glorified in his saints (v. 10).

This passage may have served a double purpose, (1) to comfort and encourage suffering Christians by pointing to God's fair judgment and (2) to introduce the idea of a delay and thus preparing for the subsequent discussion of the *parousia* in 2 Thess 2. There would be an interim between suffering and the coming of the Lord for judgment. Martin suggested:

The Thessalonians may have interpreted their intense experience of suffering as an indication that the day of the Lord had dawned. A misleading word of prophecy or letter had compounded their misunderstanding. The combination of suffering and false teaching created an eschatological confusion that both 1:5–10 and 2:18¹² were intended to correct. That day was coming but had not yet arrived.⁷⁶

b. 2 Thess 2:1–15 Chapter 2 is probably the most important eschatological section in 2 Thessalonians. The passage deals with the Lord's *parousia* and "and our gathering together to him" (v. 1). The two events are juxtaposed and belong together⁷⁷ and thus refer back to 1 Thess 4:13–18. However, 2 Thess 2 also goes further and mentions an interim, a period of time which precedes the *parousia* of Jesus Christ. Thus it provides a bigger picture of what is going to happen. This passage is somewhat difficult to interpret. It contains an incomplete sentence in v. 3 and possibly in v. 7. Nevertheless, we are able to hear Paul's basic message. The passage can be outlined in the following way:

⁷⁴ This is the better translation. The emphasis is not on the angels' authority and power but on Jesus'. Cf. Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 120.

⁷⁵ The "flaming fire" is better taken with the preceding verse as a number of translations do. Cf., Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 227.

⁷⁶ Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 209.

⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 223–224.

Introduction—Appeals and Thesis: “The <i>Parousia</i> has not come yet.”	
	1–3a
Proofs	3b–14
The Man of Lawlessness	3b–4
Parenthetical Comment	5
The Restraining Power/Restrainer	6–7
The Man of Lawlessness	8–10
God and the Unbelievers	11–12
Thanksgiving—the Believers	13–14
Final Appeal	15

In 2 Thess 2 Paul addressed the idea probably espoused by many Thessalonian believers that the Second Coming of Jesus had already come. Whereas some, especially older commentaries suggest that the Thessalonian Christians believed that the coming of Christ was immediately at hand and that Paul balanced their expectation of the imminence of the *parousia* with the concept that still something had to happen prior to Christ’s return, the majority of modern commentators suggest that the disciples in Thessalonica believed in a completely realized eschatology. Obviously the word *enestēken* when used in the perfect tense means that the Day of the Lord has arrived.⁷⁸

The passage in 2 Thess 2 was supposed to help church members not to become fanatical or to refrain from fanaticism. They may have taken Paul’s counsel in 1 Thess 5 very seriously and may have gone to extremes.⁷⁹ One wonders whether or not those who were idle (2 Thess 3:6–16) belonged to the fanatical part of the church and had a false understanding of Christ’s return. They may even have quit their jobs because presumably Jesus had returned to this earth. In any case, v. 2 indicates that the believers in Thessalonica had become unsettled and alarmed—an expression used by Jesus in Matt 24:6 and Mark 13:7—and irritated by some form of communication, whether genuine or fake. Maybe they had even misunderstood Paul himself.⁸⁰ “The church members in Thessalonica had failed to heed the advice of Christ not to get overly excited about current events.”⁸¹

The passage is a passage on the antichrist, who would bring about an immense apostasy, pretend to be God, and take his seat in the temple of God.

⁷⁸ Cf. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 325; Bruce, 165–166; Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 227–228; Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 240.

⁷⁹ Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 1994), 95.

⁸⁰ Cf. Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 225–226; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 164.

⁸¹ Paulien, *End-Time*, 96.

Yet this power seems to work behind the scenes. The *parousia* of the antichrist would come only after his public appearance or revealing and would lead to his destruction. Thus, signs for the Second Coming of Christ are apostasy, the removal of the restrainer, and the revelation of the lawless one.⁸²

Who are the main figures in this passage? In v. 3 we encounter “the man of lawlessness,” “the son of destruction.” We hear about the restrainer, about Jesus and God, and about those who are lost and those who are saved.

“The man of lawlessness” is in willful opposition to God and his law. Obviously, the apostasy mentioned in the same verse is associated with his activity. Apostasy may refer to religious defection and political rebellion.⁸³ In v. 4 this “man of lawlessness”⁸⁴ is further described, namely as the one “who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.” The same verbal form of “to oppose” (*antikeimenos*) is used in 1 Tim 5:14 referring to Satan. Three times in v. 4 God is mentioned whose prerogatives are claimed by “the man of lawlessness.” Obviously he wants to take the place of God on the throne of the universe attempting “to usurp God’s position and power.”⁸⁵ The language reminds us of passages in the Book of Daniel—e.g., Dan 7:25; 8:9–12. However, no direct quotations are used. Furthermore, other passages are also alluded to:⁸⁶ 1 Thess 2 reminds us of Satan who is the adversary in Zech 3:1–2 and the one who aspires God’s throne hiding behind the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:2, 6, 12–17) and the king of Babylon (Isa 14:12–14). Richard and Bruce also point to Rev 13:2.⁸⁷

Whereas the mystery of lawlessness is mentioned in v. 7, “a satanic counterpart of the mystery of God’s purpose,”⁸⁸ the lawless one appears again in v. 8. He will be slain by the Lord at his coming, but before that he will have his own deceptive *parousia* “in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish” (vv. 9–10). Indeed, he is an evil parody of Jesus: Like Jesus he has a *parousia*. Like Jesus he is “revealed.”

⁸² Cf. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 326–327; Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 230.

⁸³ Cf. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 166

⁸⁴ Lawlessness (*anomia*) and the lawless one (*anomos*) occur three times in this passage, in vv. 3, 7 and 8.

⁸⁵ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 329.

⁸⁶ Cf., Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 128.

⁸⁷ Cf. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 333; and Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 173.

⁸⁸ Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 170.

Miracles, signs, and wonders are used in the Gospels to describe Jesus' activity. Peter uses the same three terms in Acts 2:22 to depict Jesus' ministry, and Paul attributes miracles, signs, and wonders to the apostles of the Messiah. By performing these acts "the man of lawlessness" is characterized as antichrist.⁸⁹ Whereas with Jesus and his apostles these manifestations were evidence of a divinely ordained ministry, in the case of "the man of lawlessness" these miracles are deceptive and demonic. No wonder that they are associated with the "activity/working/power of Satan" (v. 9) which is in contrast to God's activity (v. 11).

What does it mean that the man of lawlessness is revealed? Is this person an unknown figure? Not necessarily. As mentioned before the noun *apokalupsis* was used in chap. 1:7 to describe Jesus' revelation, that is, his Second Coming. However, Jesus is not unknown to us, although he will be "revealed" in the future. In the same way the revealing (the verbal form is being used) of the "son of destruction" does not imply that this being is unknown and unidentified. His revelation will be an imitation of the *parousia* of Christ, a counterfeit revelation or anti-*parousia*.⁹⁰ Paulien correctly noted that present tense participles in v. 4 point to the fact that this power or person is already at work in Paul's time and will continue to be at work.⁹¹ This is supported by v. 7. It seems best to understand the "man of lawlessness" as Satan himself and as agencies through which he works. Since the language of Daniel is employed, the little horn power, that is secular Rome and the papacy, seems also to be involved.⁹²

What is the temple in which the adversary sits? Some have understood the temple to be the Jerusalem temple or the city Jerusalem,⁹³ but such an

⁸⁹ Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 334, reminds us of Rev 13:14.

⁹⁰ Cf., Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 245.

⁹¹ Cf., Paulien, *End-Time*, 97.

⁹² Cf., Paulien, *ibid.*, 97. Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 128, denied that it is Satan: "He is not Satan, for he is distinguished from him (v. 9); but he is Satan's instrument, imbued with Satan's spirit." Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 255, allowed for Satan to be present in v. 7.

⁹³ Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 129; Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 259; Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 168–169; Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 236–237. On one hand Wanamaker, *Epistles*, 262, stated: "The coming of the rebel is clearly intended to imitate the parousia of the Lord and is the final great lie perpetrated by Satan in an effort to delude those who are perishing. God ensures that this delusion, which those who are perishing have effectively chosen for themselves, is complete." On the other hand he held, 259: "According to v. 4 the rebel, who was probably thought of as a future emperor, would manifest himself at the temple in Jerusalem, where he would take his seat in order to assert his deity. Paul saw this as a work of Satan . . ." And 248: "The passage can no longer be understood as valid, since the temple was destroyed in AD 70 without the manifestation of the person of lawlessness or the return of Christ occurring. In order to maintain the continuing validity of the passage, some deny the obvious reference to the historical temple at Jerusalem. . . . A more straightforward way of treating the problem is to

interpretation would force us to embrace preterism, reinterpret the *parousia*, and claim that Paul was mistaken in what he wrote about the *parousia* and its accompanying events in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Or it would force us to accept futurism, in which case the man of lawlessness is a still future ruler. However, v. 7 maintains that already in the first century the “mystery of lawlessness” was at work. How did Paul use the term “temple” in his other writings? In Paul’s letters the temple is basically a picture for the church (1 Cor 3:16, 17; 2 Cor 6:16). Paul uses *naos*, temple eight times. The term refers to the church in 1 Cor 3:16, 17, 17; 2 Cor 6:16, 16; Eph 2:21. It refers to the individual Christian, that is, his body in 1 Cor 6:19. 1 Thess 2:4 is best understood as a reference to the Christian church. “In an place presumably dedicated to the worship of the true God the wicked one sits soliciting worship of himself.”⁹⁴

Our passage contains several parallels to Matt 24. One is this concept of lawlessness. In Matt 24:12 Jesus talked about the fact that the lawlessness would increase and that the love would grow cold in many. Then he added the promise that “the one who endures to the end, will be saved” (Matt 24:13) before he showed the counterpart to the lawlessness in Matt 24:14: “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.” Whereas Jesus portrayed the end in this verse from a positive perspective, namely the spread of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, Paul, in 2 Thess 2, portrayed it from the other side, the increasing apostasy and deception.

Another person in 2 Thess 2 is the restrainer of v. 7. As long as the restrainer is present, the man of lawlessness is not fully revealed. This restrainer is described as a person (v. 7; participle masculine singular) and also as a power (v. 6, participle neuter singular).

“The restrainer is a law-upholding power . . . that is on a divine time mission (he continues his work until an appointed time—verse 7). In a sense the restrainer, by holding back the revelation of lawlessness, is holding back the end itself. . . . Not only is the restrainer powerful enough to restrain the revelation of Satan or his agent, he (it?) appears to continue in operation until just before the

admit that the passage meant something very different to Paul and his original readers than it can mean for us today.” He seems to have in mind that the passage has a double function. It shows that the day of the Lord has not come yet, and it addresses the situation of persecution in Thessalonica by referring to a first century context such as the “imperial rule under Gaius Caesar.”

⁹⁴ Nichol, *SDABC*, 7:271.

end itself (verse 8). The lawless one is destroyed almost as soon as he appears. And according to the Greek of verse 7, it is not clear whether the restrainer is ‘taken out of the way’ . . . or has the authority to remove himself”⁹⁵

In any case it is a restraining force and a restraining person. Several suggestions have been made as to who the restrainer is. Morris listed seven possibilities: (1) the Roman Empire, (2) some angelic being, (3) the preaching of the gospel in addition to Paul who was preaching the gospel, (4) the Jewish state, (5) God the Father or the Holy Spirit, (6) Satan, or (7) an unknown power or person.⁹⁶ Some of these suggestions do not seem to fit the message and/or a historical understanding of this passage. For instance, Satan cannot be at the same time the man of lawlessness and the restrainer; the Roman Empire has nothing directly to do with the Second Coming of Christ.

At the end of our passage God is portrayed. He is in control.⁹⁷ He “sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness” (v. 11–12). God will force people to make a decision for or against him and will bring judgment on those who have not accepted the truth but the lie. Ultimately, God is portrayed as being in control of whatever the “man of lawlessness” is doing. The *energeian planēs* of v. 11 finds its counterpart *energeian tou Satana* in v. 9. “Paul presents God as so completely in control that He even ‘sends’ the working of Satan at the end. Ultimately only God can restrain Satan, and only God can hold back the Second Coming.”⁹⁸

Therefore, the restrainer should be understood as God and the restraining principle as the availability of the gospel, because our passage has connections to Matt 24, and in Matt 24:14 the end is linked to the preaching of the gospel. This preaching of the gospel unmasks God’s adversary and brings about the final events of world history.

People have to make a decision. Those who do not believe will fall prey to the deception of Satan. Believers, however, love the truth and shun falsehood and deception. They accept and obey the gospel.⁹⁹ Before 2 Thess 2:1–15 ends another reference to the *parousia* of Christ is found in v. 14. Paul

⁹⁵ Paulien, *End-Time*, 98.

⁹⁶ Cf., Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 130–131. He himself seemed to choose the last option.

⁹⁷ Cf. Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 242.

⁹⁸ Paulien, *End-Time*, 98.

⁹⁹ Cf. Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 246.

addresses his church member and thanks God that he has chosen them “from the beginning for salvation” (1 Thess 2:13). And again he reminds them of their goal, namely “that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The term “glory” was also used in 1 Thessalonians in connection with the kingdom of God. Believers wait for the future glory. They hold on to the teachings they have received from the apostles whether by word or by letter (v. 15). The terms “word” and “letter” refer back to 2 Thess 2:2 and form an inclusion.¹⁰⁰

This passage clearly teaches the future *parousia* of our Lord which is the same *parousia* that we have encountered elsewhere in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In v. 8 it is also called *epiphaneia of his parousia*, the appearance of his coming or—as some scholars render the phrase—“the splendor of his coming” which stresses the glory of the Lord’s Second Coming.¹⁰¹ It is the true *parousia* which unmasks the *anti-parousia* of the “man of lawlessness” (v. 9) and will bring him to an end. It is difficult to maintain that the other references to the coming of the Lord in 1 and 2 Thessalonians point to the yet still future *parousia* and this one would not.

Second Thessalonians 2 presents a large picture of the time from the first century to Christ’s Second Coming. It portrays a time in which the mystery of lawlessness is active. The secret power is not yet openly revealed but is at work. At the same time the gospel is being preached. With the climax of the proclamation of the gospel the restraint is removed. The great deception is going to happen. Satan will imitate the Second Coming of Jesus. Then Christ will intervene and return. The “man of lawlessness” and his followers will perish with him. God’s people will be saved and vindicated.¹⁰²

Ellen G. White has described this final scene of world history:

As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour’s advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13–15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air:

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 222.

¹⁰¹ Cf., Martin, *ibid.*, 243.

¹⁰² Cf., Paulien, *End-Time*, 101.

"Christ has come! Christ has come!" The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion. Like the Samaritans who were deceived by Simon Magus, the multitudes, from the least to the greatest, give heed to these sorceries, saying: This is "the great power of God." Acts 8:10. But the people of God will not be misled. The teachings of this false christ are not in accordance with the Scriptures."¹⁰³

c. Summary Although 2 Thessalonians does not contain as many texts about the Second Coming as 1 Thessalonians does, it still has two major passages. Of special importance is 2 Thess 2 because it present a big picture of the end time scenario. The Second Coming is described with different terms and is the event to which Christians are looking forward. It means deliverance from evil powers and salvation for believers. However, believers are called refrain from fanaticism and know about an interim between the present time and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Yet they must count on the future glory.

IV. Implications

Two of the earliest books of the New Testament are filled with references to the *parousia* of the Lord. Both of them give us important information. The First Letter to the Thessalonians tells us about the privilege that one day we will finally be saved. It tells us about the signs of Christ's coming and the accompanying events such as the resurrection of the dead. Second Thessalonians reminds us that the Second Coming of Jesus means deliverance for us and informs us about the signs in the interim. Both books

¹⁰³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911; repr., 1950), 624–625.

let us know that the doctrine of Jesus' Second Coming is foundational for Christians. Therefore, it must have a proper place in our belief system. Other doctrines are dependent on the *parousia*.

However, doctrines are not sterile and irrelevant statements of ecclesiastical bodies. Doctrines influence and shape our lives. To know that Jesus comes again and that there is a resurrection and transformation to eternal life gives meaning to our lives. This is evident when we read 1 Thessalonians. The Second Coming of Jesus must be more than a teaching. It must be part of your daily life. Although in church history Christ's Second Coming was almost forgotten for a while or had been replaced by human traditions, it is crucial for our everyday life. By believing in it we have strong hope. We live with clear priorities. Christ's Second Coming encourages us to live a moral and holy life and take seriously what Jesus has commanded us. We are not idle. We do not get involved in immorality, but with true Christian love pray and care for brothers and sisters in the church. We do good, encourage others, are patient with them, and do not avenge for evil. We do not look to the future only, but live as God's stewards here and now helping humans and improving their quality of life. On the other hand, we are not only focused on what is temporary and transient but know that there is more than this earth with its pleasures and sufferings and that this life of toil and anguish is just the prelude to the glorious life to come. Ethics and eschatology are clearly connected in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. The hope of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the motivational force for Christian ethics.

The Second Coming of Jesus also encourages us to seek a close relationship with the Lord. We meditate on what he has done for us. His return is possible only because he was raised from the dead. And he was raised from the dead because he died for us. The Second Coming ties together many important events in history and brings about our final salvation.

The two letters to the Thessalonians tell us to await Christ's coming, to look forward to his return, to watch and be vigilant. It is not wrong at all to count on Christ's imminent return. This is what other Christians did too, and they were blessed. However, we have to be careful not to become fanatical, to set dates, and become irrational in our faith or our behavior. As his followers we want to represent Jesus fairly and correctly so that others are attracted to him. Sometimes we need to go back to the foundation and be reminded what it means to expect the Lord's return. And we confess that we long to see him face to face and be united with him. We are called to his kingdom and glory. Therefore we pray: "Your kingdom come!"

The Armament Passage (Ephesians 6:10–20) as Metaphor for the Church: A Proposal and Its Implications

John K. McVay

If I were to adopt a metaphor for this essay—itsself about a metaphor—it would be the standard agricultural one of seedtime and harvest. Over the past years, I have been sowing the seed of study and research on Eph 6:10–20. In this essay, I hope to begin the harvest.¹ Of course, if you believe that tares have been sown rather than nourishing crops, you will likely be even less satisfied with the harvest. So allow me to begin by defending the quality of the seed I have sown.

I have been fascinated by the connection between ecclesiology and the armament passage, Eph 6:10–20. Feeling a bit guilty for excluding the metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY from my dissertation, which focused on metaphors for the church in Ephesians,² I offered a proposal in a paper

¹ This essay represents a revised version of a paper presented to the 2nd International Bible Conference, Izmir, Turkey, July 6, 2006. I am pleased to offer it in revised form in honor of my friend and esteemed colleague, Dr. Richard Davidson, whose life and passion for the Bible have inspired me over the years.

² “Ecclesial Metaphor in the Epistle to the Ephesians from the Perspective of a Modern Theory of Metaphor” (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 1995). The image of the church as *ecclesia militans* is not generally included as a major one when summarizing the ecclesiology of the NT as a whole or of the Epistle to the Ephesians in particular. Dederen followed this pattern.

read several years ago at the West Coast Chapter of the Society of Biblical Literature and later revised and expanded in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*.³ In the paper I noted that the armament passage is largely neglected when it comes to summarizing metaphors for the church in the Epistle to the Ephesians or the New Testament as a whole. The paper offered arguments as to why the primary setting of the passage is corporate rather than individualist. These include that the passage is the conclusion and summary to a letter that in which the theme of the church is central. Since the military metaphor mirrors the other major, ecclesial metaphors in Ephesians (body; temple/building; bride) in the detail with which it is treated and the strategic setting in which it is introduced, the metaphor should take its place with these others. If so, it offers hope of a more balanced understanding of the doctrine of the church disclosed in the letter.

Later, in a 2003 essay titled, “Ephesians 6:10–20 and Battle Exhortations in Jewish Literature,” I explored in more detail the genre of the armament passage, extending the work of Andrew Lincoln who underlines the role of the passage as *peroratio* (or conclusion) and suggests that it reflects a common place of classical literature—the speech of a general before battle.⁴ I compared Eph 6:10–20 to some sixteen examples of battle exhortation in Jewish literature (LXX; DSS). Having identified and organized the topics taken up in these battle exhortations, I concluded that “Ephesians 6:10–20 both mimics battle exhortations and innovates in its use of the genre.”⁵ The passage mimics Jewish battle exhortations in its basic literary

In treating images of the church, he discussed the church as “a body,” “a bride,” “a temple,” and “the people of God.” He added, though, “This selection of images of the church is by no means exhaustive. An adequate review would require consideration of many more, such as pictures of the church as a fortress, a vineyard, an army, a commonwealth, and a pillar of truth, to mention just a few” (Raoul Dederen, “The Church,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series, 12 [Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000], 547–48). I adopt the standard of Lakoff and Johnson in capitalizing a summary statement of a metaphor as a way of identifying it clearly. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; reprint, 2003 [with an Afterword, 243–76]).

³ “Our Struggle’: *Ecclesia Militans* in Ephesians 6:10–20” (paper presented at the SBL West Coast Regional Meeting, March, 1997); “Our Struggle’: *Ecclesia Militans* in Ephesians 6:10–20,” *AUSS* 43 (2005): 91–100.

⁴ John K. McVay, “Ephesians 6:10–20 and Battle Exhortations in Jewish Literature,” in *The Cosmic Battle for Planet Earth: Essays in Honor of Norman R. Gulley*, ed. Ron du Preez and Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2003), 147–69. I also offered this research as an oral paper: “Ephesians 6:10–20 and Battle Exhortations in Jewish Literature” (paper presented to the Disputed Paulines Consultation, SBL, San Antonio, TX, Nov 20–23, 2004); Andrew T. Lincoln, “Stand Therefore . . .’: Ephesians 6:10–20 as *Peroratio*,” *BibInt* 3 (1995): 99–114.

⁵ McVay, “Ephesians 6:10–20,” 162.

structure and its theology. It innovates in deconstructing the genre “by explicitly demilitarizing it, including in the description of the armor a call to readiness ‘to proclaim the gospel of peace’ (vs. 15) . . .”⁶

This understanding of Eph 6:10–20 has implications for two interpretive issues: (1) The nature of the church’s battle; and (2) The identity of the church’s opponents. Taking the genre of the passage seriously suggests that “Paul’s military metaphor depicts the church’s battle against evil as combat—both defensive and offensive—requiring full, sustained, and energetic engagement of the foe. For Paul, believers are not merely sentinels, who stand stoically at watch, but combatants.”⁷ When Paul repeatedly invites his addressees to “stand,” he is referring to the awful moment on the ancient battlefield when the opposing phalanxes crashed into each other. Paul does not command his audience to “stand and watch” but to “stand and fight.”

The metaphor, though, is carefully guarded with the emphasis in the wider context on unity, edifying speech, and tenderheartedness and in the immediate context with its exhortation for addressees to be shod with “whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace” (v. 15) and the modality of prayer (vv. 18–20).⁸ With regard to the identity of the church’s opponents, reading Eph 6:10–20 as mimicking ancient battle exhortations suggests that Paul “views the real but metaphorical battle on two planes—against supernatural foes ‘in the heavenlies’ and against the humans they control on earth.”⁹

In 2004, I had the opportunity to offer the Heubach Lecture at Pacific Union College and chose to treat the theme, “Waging Peace in the Great Controversy: Paul’s Call to Arms.” In the presentation, I sought to popularize what I was learning about Eph 6:10–20. I offered a more detailed list of reasons why the primary setting of the passage is corporate rather than individual:

- The passage is set in a letter that is all about the church. It would be strange indeed for Paul to conclude this letter with a picture of a lone Christian warrior doing battle against the foe.
- Though not obvious in English, all of the commands are in the plural.

⁶ McVay, “Ephesians 6:10–20,” 162–63.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations are drawn from the New Revised Standard Version.

⁹ McVay, “Ephesians 6:10–20,” 168.

- In formulating his image of the church as the army of Christ, Paul seems indebted to Roman military equipment and practice. The genius of Roman military might was not the legionary but the legion. Rome knows nothing of the lone warrior.
- In chapter 3:10 Paul has already discussed the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” In the passage it is not the individual Christian, but the church that discloses God’s wisdom to those rulers and authorities.
- This is battle speech. Paul addresses the church as army.
- That the passage intends to highlight Christian camaraderie in battle, is evident, it seems to me, in the final verses of the passage, vv. 18–20:

¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

I summarized the message of Eph 6:10–20 in four distilled commands: 1. *Follow the Leader*. We must bear clarion, crystal clear witness to our Commander. And we must experience the assurance of his presence and provision for our success; 2. *Know the Foe*. We must be ever alert to the unseen dimensions of the Great Controversy which impact our lives and witness; 3. *Join the Army*. We are invited—even commanded—to practice Christian community and collaboration; 4. *Fight to the Finish*. We are called to active, zealous engagement in the church’s mission as we “wage peace” until Christ’s Return.

In a 2006 article published in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, I considered the metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY in the wider context of biblical metaphors for the church.¹⁰ Reflecting on the seminal work of Paul

¹⁰ “Biblical Metaphors for the Church and Adventist Ecclesiology.” *AUSS* 44 (2006): 285–315. A condensed version of the essay is available as “Biblical Metaphors for the Church: Building Blocks for Ecclesiology” in *Message, Mission and the Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), 41–60.

Minear,¹¹ I treated five “clusters” of biblical metaphors for the church: 1. Corporal: The Church as Body; 2. Architectural: The Church as Building/Temple; 3. Agricultural: The Church as Plant/Field/Vineyard/Vine; 4. Martial: The Church as Army; 5. Familial & Marital: The Church as Family and as Bride.

With regard to the “martial” or military cluster, the use of the metaphor in the NT is not a case of a single, rhetorically intense, but isolated passage, Eph 6:10–20. Rather, the identity of believers as combatants in an extended war between good and evil is part of the very fabric of the NT. Gregory Boyd held that “almost everything that Jesus and the early church were about is decisively colored by the central conviction that the world is caught in the crossfire of a cosmic battle between the Lord and his angelic army and Satan and his demonic army.”¹² If this is true of the Gospels, it is also true of the Pauline Epistles concerning which Peter Macky asserted:

in Paul’s writings we recognize that one of his ways of presenting the gospel was by using military symbolism, imagery taken from the realm of warfare—armies, soldiers, weapons and physical destruction. The conflict between good and evil, which is the inner driving force of the story of Christ, is pictured here as a long-running cosmic war: battles ebb and flow between two armies which face each other down through the ages until one wins the final confrontation by destroying the other completely.¹³

To Eph 6:10–20 may be added other passages in Paul’s writings that explore the understanding of *ecclesia militans*: Rom 13:11–14; 1 Thess 5:8; 2 Cor 10:3–6.

Important for Seventh-day Adventists is the role of the metaphor in Revelation. The Apocalypse reinforces the identity of believers as combatants in the cosmic war against evil. In the face of satanic opposition (e.g. 2:10), the risen Christ offers repeated promises to believers who endure and “conquer” (“to everyone who conquers,” τῷ νικῶντι (and variants); 2:7, 11, 17, 26–28; 3:5, 12, 21). The struggle is intense with the church (as the woman) bearing

¹¹ Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960; repr., Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004 [With a Foreword by Leander E. Keck, xiii–xxvii]).

¹² Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 172. Boyd invested the last five chapters of his volume (pp. 169–293) in developing this thesis.

¹³ Peter W. Macky, *St. Paul’s Cosmic War Myth: A Military Version of the Gospel*, Westminster College Library of Biblical Symbolism 2 (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 1.

the brunt of the dragon's wrath, a foe who "makes war" on the end-time "remnant" (KJV) who "obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (12:17). Casualties are to be expected (6:9–11; 14:13), as is victory (12:11) and celebration before the throne of God for those who have come out of "the great ordeal" (7:14; 7:9–17; 14:1–5). Repeatedly, believers as combatants in this struggle are exhorted to exercise endurance and faith (13:10; 14:12) and to stay awake and clothed (16:15). Fighting behind enemy lines, they await the conquest of the Lamb (17:14), the victory of the rider on the white horse who leads "the armies of heaven" (19:11–16).

In short, the metaphor of *ecclesia militans*, embedded as it is in the theme of the Great Controversy, is widespread—even ubiquitous—in the NT. This is no minor image for the church, but is frequently used and often implied in the language of the NT.

So those are the seeds that I have sown in the furrows of past years. Having reviewed this work on Eph 6:10–20, it is my purpose here to begin the harvest, to explore implications of the proposal that the metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY should take its place as a central metaphor for the church. Specifically, I wish to offer and support the idea that THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY is an especially apropos metaphor for Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology. First, though, I need to acknowledge resistance to developing a Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology in general and more specific opposition to a military metaphor for the church.

Over the years, church scholars and leaders have often decried the lack of attention the doctrine of the church has received in Seventh-day Adventist circles (It is a delight to see that lack being addressed in a spate of conferences and publications).¹⁴ If we have neglected the theme of the church, there are obvious reasons close at hand. Specifically, we have—most often unconsciously—avoided ecclesiology because of clashes with our eschatology. The role of the Roman Catholic Church ("The Church") in history has been a favorite theme of our eschatological understandings, making us wary of much attention to the theme of the church. Moreover, to focus attention on the church seems to imply a permanency to its role that fits uncomfortably in the context of the imminent return of Christ. I do not raise these points to demean them. Both are legitimate concerns that are part of our treasured theological heritage.

¹⁴ For one catalog of developments, see Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Ecclesiology in Seventh-day Adventist Research, 1995–2004," *AUSS* 43 (2005): 11–29.

To our aversions to undue attention to ecclesiology may be added more recent nervousness with regard to military imagery for the church. This nervousness has been driven by two powerful streams of thought that have been central to the identity of Seventh-day Adventism—pacifism and missiology. These mean that we have been unlikely to turn to the biblical metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY to alleviate the tension between an underdeveloped ecclesiology and a fully-articulated eschatology.

Our attention to the Ten Commandments has made us sensitive to the command, “Thou shalt not kill,” and has yielded our position of non-combatancy. In that context, it is appropriate to note Richard Rice’s critique of contemporary uses of the metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY. The adoption of such a metaphor can lead to tragic consequences if it inspires physical combat, evangelism becomes equated with conquering the enemy or taking captives, the only measure of mission becomes whether or not it succeeds (since an “army church” may become “impatient with tactics that do not lead to victory”) or members are depersonalized.¹⁵ I have no quarrel these criticisms of a military metaphor for the church. I would point out, though, that these criticisms do not describe the use, or even overuse, but the misuse of the biblical metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY. Prayerful appropriation of the biblical metaphor provides a corrective to such misuse and inspiration in a moving call to the church to wage peace.¹⁶

An aversion to using the military metaphor for the church is implied, too, in a new advocacy for pacifism in our midst. One indication of this is the development of the Adventist Peace Fellowship. APF “seeks to raise consciousness about the centrality of peacemaking and social justice to the beliefs and heritage of Adventists.”¹⁷ The organization believes that “We hold fast to the faith of Jesus not only by proclaiming his Advent, but by refusing violence and coercion as tools to establish God’s kingdom.”¹⁸ Our interests in peace mean that we are reticent to identify the church as an army.

Our missiological concerns have yielded a similar result. In becoming more alert to issues of global mission, we have become sensitive to the sad

¹⁵ Richard Rice, *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church* (Roseville, CA: Association of Adventist Forums, 2002), 98–100, 22–24, 47, 60, 72–73, 99–200, 205.

¹⁶ In much of this section I am reflecting the thought and wording of McVay, “Biblical Metaphors for the Church: Building Blocks for Ecclesiology,” 33–34.

¹⁷ “Adventist Peace Fellowship,” <http://www.adventistpeace.org/>.

¹⁸ “Adventist Peace Fellowship,” <http://www.adventistpeace.org/about/vision-statement>. See the book Douglas Morgan, ed., *The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays & Historical Documents* (Adventist Peace Fellowship, 2005).

heritage of the Crusades and their impact on Christian witness among Muslims. While this has meant that we have become careful to avoid such language as “evangelistic crusade,” the influence of this missiological thought has moved well beyond its impact on vocabulary. We have become keen to shed the trappings of a militant evangelism-as-conquest and to explore the possibilities of evangelism in the dress of “faith in context” insider movements.¹⁹ From my point of view, noting with care the ways in which Paul guards the use of the military metaphor in the context of Eph 6:10–20 provides a satisfying response to these concerns.

Given some discomfort with ecclesiology in general and a growing and specific aversion to military language in particular, my proposal may seem doomed from the start. However, in spite of these deficits, I see real potential in this idea: The biblical metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY, when carefully considered, holds promise of aiding in the development of a uniquely Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the church.

If there are good reasons to avoid using the language, there are even better reasons for employing the biblical metaphor. The metaphor, as I have noted, is a ubiquitous part of the biblical materials. It is also a thoroughgoing part of our theological heritage. To understand that THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY is to set the identity of the church solidly within meta-narrative of the Great Controversy. Indeed, our self-understanding as “the remnant” may be seen, in the central use of Rev 12:17, as part of the wider, military metaphor: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (KJV).

Yordan Zhekov traced a close relationship between the theology of Eph 6:10–20 and that of the Apocalypse, especially Revelation chapter 12, in his monograph, *Eschatology of Ephesians*.²⁰ Zhekov argued in some detail

¹⁹ For one recent expression of such concerns see Bruce L. Bauer, ed., *Faith Development in Context: Symposium Papers* (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2005).

²⁰ Yoran Kalev Zhekov, *Eschatology of Ephesians*, Theologia Evangelica Biblica (Osijek, Croatia: Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2005). The volume is the published version of his 1999 MTh thesis accepted by the Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia though, as Davorin Peterlin noted in a plaudit on the back cover, the thesis “approaches the length of a doctoral dissertation.” While the English is quite ponderous, I judge the basic argument of the volume to be sound and convincing. For my own arguments against the idea that Ephesians displays little or no future eschatology, arguments in which Eph 6:10–20 play a prominent part, see John McVay, “Eschatological Expectation in Ephesians,” Chap. 23 in *The Great Controversy and the End of Evil: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Angel Manuel Rodriguez in*

against the now common view that Ephesians demonstrates little or no future eschatology. Instead, he made the case that Ephesians, and especially Eph 6:10–20, exhibits the same basic eschatology as “the battle motif in the book of Revelation” (12; 16:12–16; 19:17–21; 20:7–10).²¹ In both Ephesians and Revelation, the people of God are under attack by the enemy, an enemy that holds a position “in the heavenly places” and “is active and powerful in the present aeon.” In both, the people of God are encouraged by “the picture of the future aeon.” Both documents “explicitly point to the final battle when the enemy will be conquered completely after which the new aeon will be established forever.” Further, “Both scenarios explicitly point to the final battle when the enemy will be conquered completely after which the new aeon will be established forever,” a new aeon in which “the final glorious state of the people of God” and “the eternal doom of the enemy” will be evident.²²

To continue to argue the case that the metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY is a central part of Seventh-day Adventist theology, one need only review Ellen White’s “ecclesiology” as evident in *The Great Controversy*. In this book, Ellen White is consistently interested in the church down through the ages as the embattled but victorious *ecclesia militans*. She is especially interested in the church of the end time as an extension of the church throughout time, sharing in the same struggle, enjoying the same resources, and looking toward the same end—full and complete victory at the return of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps we Seventh-day Adventists have done more ecclesiology than we have sometimes recognized. When we judge Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology on the common and restricted list of biblical metaphors for the church, we may judge it to be underdeveloped. However, when the metaphor, THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY, is included prominently in the mix, the unique perspectives and contributions of Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology come to the fore. Any marginalization of the metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY robs us of a central resource for biblical self-understanding and Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology.

The church consists of those people who, in loyalty to God, are engaged in an ages-long battle against evil. In this battle, with all its hardships and losses, the church is assured of divine provision to fight the good fight and of

Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, Review and Herald, 2015), 239–49.

²¹ Zhekov, *Eschatology of Ephesians*, 217.

²² *Ibid.*, 233–35.

ultimate victory as the overwhelmingly superior forces of heaven come to its aid at the return of Christ.

Such an understanding of the church contributes much to the more usually considered, central metaphors of body, building/temple, and bride. The metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY highlights, in a way other metaphors do not, the church's engagement against the forces of evil and the real struggle and suffering that such conflict entails, all the while assuring believers of the adequacy of God's provision and the victory that awaits.²³ It offers a strong note of realism and so helps to avoid triumphalism. It contributes, too, an energizing dynamism. Here, believers are clearly exhorted to a full, fight-to-the-finish engagement in the church's battle against evil.

Once again comes the reminder that Paul's argument itself warns us against confusing the vehicle (the military language and imagery of the metaphor) with the tenor (the identity and mission of the church). Paul and other biblical authors trust their addressees to distinguish the two, to understand that the church "fights" its battles with the peace-filled strategies of the Gospel rather than the war-weary ones of military combat.

While the metaphor THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY has been neglected in the study of the Epistle to the Ephesians and in the wider ecclesiology of the NT, it should play a central role in Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology as a way of linking our understandings of the church with the meta-narrative of the Great Controversy. The metaphor remains an accessible and motivating one that vividly portrays important, ecclesiological concepts: 1) we are invited to active, zealous engagement in the church's mission (since soldiers are to be fully committed to battle); 2) we must be alert to unseen dimensions which impact our lives and witness; 3) we have the assurance of divine provision for our success; 4) we are called to Christian community and collaboration (since soldiers are to support one another and encourage one another to fight courageously).

I conclude with a quotation from Ellen White, one that captures some of the dynamism and energy of the metaphor:

²³ Ernest Best, who did not include *ecclesia militans* as described in Eph 6:10–20 among metaphors for the church, faulted the ecclesiology of the letter for its lack of interest in the non-Christian world, an absence of any sign of harassment of Christians, and a lack of reference to suffering, arguing that all of this "lends a triumphalist aspect to the church" (Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, NTG [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1993], 72.). Acknowledging the ecclesial, military metaphor of Eph 6:10–20 provides access to a more accurate and well-rounded view of the ecclesiology of the Epistle to the Ephesians and of the NT as a whole.

Our work is an aggressive one, and as faithful soldiers of Jesus, we must bear the blood-stained banner into the very strongholds of the enemy. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' If we will consent to lay down our arms, to lower the blood-stained banner, to become the captives and servants of Satan, we may be released from the conflict and the suffering. But this peace will be gained only at the loss of Christ and heaven. We cannot accept peace on such conditions. Let it be war, war, to the end of earth's history, rather than peace through apostasy and sin.²⁴

²⁴ *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 8, 1888, paragraph 9.

Σάββατα in Colossians 2:16 Singular or Plural?

Ron du Preez

Colossians 2:16 reads: “Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων.”¹ In his 1977 Master’s thesis, Paul Giem noted: “Historically, the greatest controversy over this phrase [i.e., ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων] has been whether the σαββάτων is singular or plural. Those who viewed it as plural regarded its plurality as proof that the seventh-day Sabbath is not intended, but rather the many ceremonial sabbaths.”² As the literature indicates, in addition to Seventh-day Adventists, other seventh-day

¹ This is from the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek text. According to the 1995 Robinson-Pierpont Majority Text, the only textual differences are that it has the Greek word ἢ (“or”) instead of the word καὶ (“and”), and in place of νεομηνίας (“new moon”), it uses the alternate spelling νομηνίας, minor distinctions of no significance to the main issue under discussion in this essay. In brief, “Col 2:16 does not present a problem of MS. readings, nor primarily of translation. It is a linguistic question of whether the word [σαββάτων] used here ... should be translated as an English plural;” *Problems in Bible Translation* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1954), 230–231.

² Paul Giem, “An Investigation of the Meaning of the Word Σαββάτων in Colossians 2:16” (MA thesis, Loma Linda University, 1977), 26. See also, Harper-Knapp’s Master’s thesis, where she similarly noted that seventh-day Sabbatarians “sometimes” point to this “plural form” as “evidence that the sabbaths referred to are not the seventh-day Sabbath;” Lucille Harper-Knapp, “A Critical Study of the Greek Words *Sabbaton* and *Sabbata*” (MA thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1949), 2.

Sabbatarians have argued similarly over the centuries regarding the word “σαββάτων” in Colossians 2:16, or its lexical form, σάββατα.³

Early Adventist View of Σαββάτων as Plural

In 1862, the year before the formation of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, J. M. Aldrich, later to become president of the SDA Publishing Association,⁴ argued that in Colossians 2:16, 17 Paul is speaking, “not of the weekly Sabbath of the Lord, (singular,) but of the ‘Sabbath days’ (plural,) that were connected with meats and drinks, new moons, &c, which were the annual Sabbaths of the Jews.”⁵ More than 20 years earlier, though contending that Sunday be observed as the Sabbath, the following argument had already been promulgated, in a discussion on Colossians 2:16: “The plural form, *Sabbath days*, rarely, if ever, occurs in Scripture when the original institution is intended.”⁶

³ For example, before the seventeenth century had ended, Mr. Bampfield claimed that “because the word σάββατα (the plural), meaning literally ‘Sabbaths,’ is used in Col. ii. 16, the weekly Sabbath cannot be meant;” see Robert Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath Question*, (Edinburgh: MacLachlan & Stewart, 1865), 2:100. More recently, Sabbatarian Christenson stated: “Note that the term used is ‘sabbath days’ (plural). Apparently, Paul is here referring to the manifold Jewish sabbaths;” Reo M. Christenson, “Questions Often Asked on The New Testament Sabbath,” *Bible Advocate*, December 1971, 6. Similarly, Johnson opined: “Paul here says ‘sabbath days’ (plural) which are a shadow of things to come.... Paul is not talking about the seventh day Sabbath;” Ross Johnson, “A Discussion of the Sunday-Sabbath Subject,” *Bible Advocate*, August 1973, 16.

⁴ Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862–1876* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1986), 173.

⁵ J. M. Aldrich, *Review of Seymour’s Tract: His Fifty Questions Answered* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1862), 74. Less than a decade after the publication of this book, the only official publishing house of the Seventh-day Adventist Church published a book by a Seventh Day Baptist pastor, in which he clearly stated: “The truth is that, in the New Testament, the singular and plural forms of the word are used interchangeably;” though he still maintained that “in the passage under consideration, the word is indeed plural, but the reference is not to the seventh day of the week;” Thomas B. Brown, *Thoughts Suggested by the Perusal of Gilfillan, and Other Authors, on The Sabbath* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1870). One wonders why this matter of the σαββάτων, being either singular or plural, does not appear to have been taken into account in the early arguments used by Adventists in regard to Colossians 2:16.

⁶ Harmon Kingsbury, *The Sabbath: A Brief History of Laws, Petitions, Remonstrances and Reports, with Facts and Arguments, Relating to the Christian Sabbath* (New York: Robert Carter, 1840), 196. Such reasoning, by those arguing for the sanctity of a Sunday-Sabbath, was not necessarily agreed upon by all though. For example, in 1879 one commentator argued that “the word for ‘Sabbath’ is here in the plural form, and therefore should naturally include not only the weekly Jewish Sabbath, but the Sabbatic year—each seventh—and the jubilee—the fiftieth. The plural form of Sabbath (Greek) is sometimes used for the weekly Sabbath only, leaving it doubtful whether Paul designed to include all the Mosaic Sabbaths;” Henry Cowles, *The Shorter Epistles; viz: Of Paul to the Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; Thessalonians; Timothy; Titus and Philemon; Also, of James, Peter, and Jude* (New York: D. Appleton, 1879), 173–174.

In 1971, more than a century after that initial article by Aldrich, Don Neufeld referred to the importance of Colossians 2:16 being translated as “the plural ‘sabbath days,’” since this represents “the position Seventh-day Adventists have held through the years, namely that Paul is speaking of ceremonial sabbath days whose observance has become obsolete.”⁷ Over the decades, until as recently as 2009, articles have repeatedly appeared in Adventist materials, arguing that the term “σαββάτων” in Colossians 2:16 is a plural and hence refers to ceremonial sabbaths, and not the weekly Sabbath.⁸

Seeking to strengthen this view, during the past century various Adventists, including the well-known Adventist apologist Francis D. Nichol, have relied upon the explanation of the respected Presbyterian commentator, Dr. Albert Barnes.⁹ For example, in the 1912 edition of *The History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*, Barnes is quoted at length, part of which is noted here:

“Or of the Sabbath days; Gr., ‘of the Sabbaths.’ The word *Sabbath* in the Old Testament is applied not only to the seventh day, but to all the days of holy rest that were observed by the Hebrews, and particularly to the beginning and close of their great festivals. There is, doubtless, reference to those days in this place, as the word is used in the plural number, and the apostle does not refer particularly to the Sabbath properly so called.... If he had used the word in the singular number, ‘the Sabbath,’ it would then, of course, have been clear that he meant to affirm that that commandment had ceased to be binding, and that a Sabbath was no longer to be

⁷ D[on] F. N[eufeld], “Sabbath Day or Sabbath Days?” *Review & Herald* (April 15, 1971): 13.

⁸ See, for example, Uriah Smith, *What Was Nailed to the Cross?* (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 187?), 14; Eugene S. Smith, and J. L. Shuler, *The Smith-Shuler Debate on The Law, The Sabbath, and The Lord’s Day* (Dallas, TX: Gospel Broadcast Publication, 1947?), 99; Myung Soo Cho, *The Biblical Lord’s Day and Its Purpose* (Silver Spring, MD: np, 2006), 37; Myung Soo Cho, *Beauty and Truth Calendar* (Silver Spring, MD: np, 2009), 53.

⁹ See, for example, Carlyle B. Haynes, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1928), 30; Walter E. Straw, *Sunday or Sabbath: Which Should Christians Observe? An Answer* (Berrien Springs, MI: College Press, 1947), 23; Arthur E. Lickey, *God Speaks to Modern Man* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1952), 448; Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections: An Examination of the Major Objections Raised Against the Teachings of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1952), 167; Allen Walker, *The Law and the Sabbath* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland Publications, 1985), 172. Though Barnes was used as recently as 1982 as supposed supportive evidence that Colossians 2:16 does not discard the seventh-day Sabbath, his very basis for such reasoning (i.e., the alleged plurality of the term “sabbath” in the Greek), has been completely excised; see Kenneth H. Wood, “The ‘Sabbath Days’ of Colossians 2:16, 17,” in Kenneth A. Strand, ed., *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1982), 340.

observed. But the use of the term in the plural number, and the connection, show that he had his eye on the great number of days which were observed by the Hebrews as festivals, as a part of their ceremonial and typical law, and not on the moral law, or the ten commandments.”¹⁰

Adventist Shift Toward Σαββάτων as Singular

Over time, this plurality postulate became popular, and it appeared to persist for many decades. However, as early as the 1930s Adventist authors, while still insisting that “the original word is in the plural,” began to somewhat tentatively conclude “that the term ‘sabbath’ in Colossians 2:16 should be used in the singular.”¹¹ This initial shift may have been spurred on by a former Seventh-day Adventist, who argued that “all educated Sabbatarians are obliged to admit that.... precisely the same form of the word that is used in Col. 2:16, is time and again used for the weekly Sabbath.”¹²

In the late 1940s, Lucille Harper-Knapp, a budding Greek scholar within the denomination, appropriately concluded her research as follows, regarding the Greek term σάββατα: “Even though by every appearance it was plural, the fact that in the Aramaic the form and meaning were singular doubtless carried over into the Greek.”¹³

¹⁰ J. N. Andrews, and L. R. Conradi, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, 4th ed. rev. and enl. (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1912), 161–162. Andrews’ name is listed as coauthor since he produced the original volume. However, as evident from earlier editions, Andrews himself did not include this statement by Barnes. Hence, since it appears in print only years after Andrews’ death, it seems that this quote was added in later by coauthor Conradi. See Albert Barnes, *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, rev. John Cumming (London: George Routledge, 1851), 279.

¹¹ See, for example, W. E. Howell, “‘Sabbath’ in Colossians 2:16,” *Ministry* (September 1934): 21. This idea persisted for decades, as seen in Paulien’s claim: “Although the word σάββατα is plural, it can have a singular meaning;” Jon Paulien, “An Exegetical Overview of Col 2:13–17: With Implications for SDA Understanding,” August 1983, TMs [photocopy], p. 6; www.andrews.edu/~jonp. See also, Milton C. Wilcox, *Questions Answered* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1938), 150. Wilcox (ibid.), without providing any supportive documentation, claimed: “The Greek word *sabbatōn* is used for the singular in its plural form, partly for emphasis.” As recently as 2002, though reluctantly admitting that “this is not conclusive,” one writer, still attempting to cling to the plurality view, suggested that “the PLURAL form used here could indicate that Paul had these ceremonial ‘sabbath days’ in mind;” Howard A. Peth, *7 Mysteries Solved: 7 Issues That Touch the Heart of Mankind* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 2002), 399.

¹² I. C. Wellcome, *The Seventh-day Sabbath Claims Examined – The Lord’s Day Vindicated: History of Seventh Day and First Day Keeping During the Gospel Dispensation Contrasted* (Boston, MA: Advent Christian Publication Society, 1913–33?), 26–27.

¹³ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 7. For similar conclusions, see also, William DeLoss Love, “The Sabbath: The Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord’s Day: Article II,”

This incremental departure from the generally accepted plurality argument became more widespread with the publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary in the mid-1950s. Commenting on the King James Version's "Sabbath days," it states: "Gr. *sabbata*. This may represent either a genuine plural of the Gr. *sabbaton* or a transliteration of the Aramaic *shabbata*, a singular form."¹⁴

Interestingly, more than 300 years before the above statement was published in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, a serious challenge to the plurality perspective of the "σαββάτων" in Colossians 2:16 had already been in print. In his 1636 disputation against seventh-day Sabbatarians in general, Dr. White stated, in part:

The word Sabbath (say they) is plural and indefinite in this text. Therefore it comprehendeth not the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. But this cavil is ridiculous. For first of all, in the very decalogue itself, where the law of the weekly *Sabbath* is rehearsed, the Greek translation reads, μνήσθητι τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων: *Remember the day of the Sabbaths*, Exodus 20:8.... In like manner, the word *Sabbaths* is used in the plural number in many other passages, both of the Old and New Testament, in which it is certain that it comprehendeth the *Sabbath* of the fourth commandment.¹⁵

This basic challenge to the plurality position has been reiterated more

BSac 37 (July 1880): 423; William DeLoss Love, *Sabbath and Sunday* (Chicago: Revell, 1896), 55.

¹⁴ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1980), 7:205; originally published in 1957. This commentary (*ibid.*) goes on to state: "Hence, *sabbata*, though grammatically plural in form, may and often does represent a singular (Matt. 28:1; etc.). Either form may be adopted here, for the interpretation of the passage does not depend upon whether the reading is 'sabbath days,' or 'a sabbath.'" The accuracy of these statements will be considered later in this essay. Interestingly, while quoting Barnes in support of the plurality view of this passage, Odom, apparently aware of the above information, then proceeded to undercut this view by admitting the following in a footnote: "The Greek term rendered as 'sabbath days' in the King James Version of Colossians 2:16, 17, may represent either a genuine plural of *sabbaton* or the singular form of a transliteration of the Aramaic word *shabbata*"; Robert L. Odom, *Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1977), 63n2.

¹⁵ Fr. White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath-Day: Containing a Defence of the Orthodoxall Doctrine of the Church of England, Against Sabbatarian Novelty* (London: R. B., 1636), 165–166. Note: In the above quotation, the spelling and punctuation have been updated. In addition to Deut 5:12, which he mentioned earlier, White went on to list the passages which he maintains provide evidence for his conclusions: Lev 19:3; 23:3, 38; Lam 1:7; Isa 1:13; 56:4, 6; Ezek 20:12; Matt 12:5, 11; Mark 1:21; 2:23; 3:2, 4; Luke 4:31; 6:9; 13:10; Acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:2. These passages will be considered later in this essay, to ascertain the accuracy of White's assertions.

recently, and more vigorously, by writers such as H. M. Riggle: “This reasoning is so flimsy that Sabbatarians ought to be ashamed of it. The Sabbath is frequently in Scripture spoken of in the plural. This is true both in the Old and the New Testament.”¹⁶

Historically, there may be an additional possible catalyst for the transition away from the plurality argument used by early Adventists.¹⁷ After the epochal events of the mid-1950s, during which a few Adventist leaders discussed key doctrinal issues with two major Evangelical scholars, one of them, Walter Martin, published a book titled *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists*.¹⁸

In his analysis of Adventist arguments regarding Colossians 2:13–17, Martin charged that Adventist Sabbatarians “appeal to certain commentators” such as Albert Barnes for support, even though these commentators “do not analyze the uses of the word ‘sabbath.’”¹⁹ Then Martin added: “If a commentator’s opinion is not in accord with sound exegesis, it is *only an opinion*.”²⁰ Quoting various respected scholars, Martin then propounded the idea that the “σαββάτων” here is singular, and that it refers to the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath of the decalogue.²¹

Despite the centuries-old claim noted above, and ignoring the challenge by Evangelicals such as Martin, as well as the movement by many Adventists away from the plurality theory, a few contemporary Adventist writers are still

¹⁶ H. M. Riggle, *The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day* (Guthrie, OK: Faith Publishing House, 1980), 101. Riggle (ibid.) then elaborated on his point by quoting several passages, including the following: “‘My sabbaths ye shall keep’ (Exod. 31:13). ‘Keep my sabbaths’ (Lev. 19:3, 30). ‘Eunuchs that keep my sabbaths’ (Isa. 56:4).... ‘Is it lawful to heal on the *sabbath-days*?’ (Matt. 12:10). ‘On the *sabbath-days* the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath’ (vs. 5). ‘Taught them on the *sabbath-days*’ (Luke 4:31).”

¹⁷ The reason for such a tentative proposal is due to evidence that the immediate reaction by church leaders was to make a strong response to Martin’s book, repeating the traditional plurality perspective, as follows: “We would merely reiterate the grammatical fact that in Colossians 2:16 the word is a plural and that Walter Martin can cite no grammatical reasons why this word should not be translated as a plural;” *Doctrinal Discussions: A Compilation of Articles Originally Appearing in The Ministry, June, 1960–July, 1961, in Answer to Walter R. Martin’s book The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1961), 91.

¹⁸ See Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960).

¹⁹ Ibid., 163.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 163–166. Based on the above, Martin concluded: “In the light of this Scripture alone, I contend that the argument for Sabbath observance collapses;” Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997), 576. Similarly, Richard James Griffith, “The Eschatological Significance of the Sabbath” (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1990), 166–171; Dale Ratzlaff, *Sabbath in Crisis* (Applegate, CA: Life Assurance Ministries, 1990), 157–163.

contending that the term “σαββάτων” in Colossians 2:16 should be understood and interpreted in this passage as a plural, i.e., “sabbaths.” Incidentally, based on this plurality idea it has also been alleged that the lexical term σάββατα can rightly be rendered here as either “week” or “week days.”²²

As recently as 2009 Edwin Reynolds asserted in an Adventist scholarly journal: “The word in Col 2:16 is *sabbatōn*, which is not ambiguous: it is a genitive plural and it cannot be singular.”²³ This variety of views demands

²² While assuming that σαββάτων is a plural, Bacchiocchi raised the following question, in his doctoral dissertation: “Does the plural form ‘σάββατα’ refer exclusively to the seventh-day Sabbath?” Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), 360. See also, Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath in the New Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1985), 132. Based on the fact that σάββατα at times can rightly be rendered “week,” Bacchiocchi (ibid.) then speculatively conjectured that the σάββατα of Colossians 2:16 could actually be referring to “week” or “week days.” Though he claimed that certain scholars support this view, Bacchiocchi’s reference notes provide no evidence of this at all. On the contrary, careful contextual investigation reveals that, only when the word σάββατα is directly preceded by a numeral (or such a numeral followed by the definite article), can it legitimately be rendered as “week.” The Greek language is not open to the haphazard speculative approach suggested by Bacchiocchi. For additional in-depth data on the manner in which σάββατα is used to identify the “week,” see Ron du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008), 38–45.

²³ Edwin Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can’t Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron du Preez, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 47 (Autumn 2009): 277. Interestingly, Reynolds’ categorical claim is somewhat an echo of what was alleged almost 50 years earlier: “The fact of the matter is that in the Greek this term is a plural, *sabbatōn*, the nominative form of which is *sabbata*,” *Doctrinal Discussions*, 91. More than 20 years after the publication of *Doctrinal Discussions*, this plurality view was still being glibly followed, to some degree; see Seizou Wagatsuma, “Christ’s Ministry Today and Shadow: The Exegesis of Col 2:16–17,” July 1982, TMs [photocopy], p. 15, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI. After recognizing that “many scholars” argue that “*sabbata* in Col 2:16” is “a singular rather than a plural,” Reynolds (277) alleged: “What is generally overlooked in this regard is that the ambiguous *sabbata* does not appear in Col 2:16.” After asserting (ibid.) that “scholars, including Du Preez [*sic*], indulge in a careless substitution of something from outside the text for what is actually in the text,” Reynolds opined: “Du Preez then follows though the rest of his argument with this false assumption, weakening the rest of the argument.” Then, he added: “This is a weak link in his study, casting doubt on some of his other conclusions.” All the above concerns raised will be addressed through the research of this essay. Interestingly, Reynolds’ theory about the alleged plurality of the σαββάτων is used in an attempt to prove that the seventh-day Sabbath is in view in this passage. Actually, he held that the “*sabbatōn* in Col 2:16 is, in fact, unquestioningly genitive plural” (278)—a matter to be addressed later in this essay. Hardy opined: “No one denies that this Greek plural can be translated as a singular where context requires, but if the context does not require singular meaning—if instead it requires plural meaning, as I believe the present context does—there is nothing in the plurality of the Greek term which would require us to translate it other than what it is, i.e., a plural,” Frank W. Hardy, “The Sabbath in Colossians 2?,” 10, http://www.historicism.org/Documents/Sabbath_Colo2.pdf. While Hardy suggested that the “context”

further meticulous analysis in order to determine the weight of evidence as to the correct meaning of the lexical term *σαββατα* (especially as seen in the manner it has actually been utilized), and the most appropriate translation of the specific word “*σαββάτων*” in Col 2:16.

Rendering of *שַׁבָּת* in the Septuagint²⁴

Respected Greek grammarian, Archibald Robertson noted that, since the writers of the New Testament were used to speaking the common Greek language from their youth, it was only natural for them to employ the language and phraseology of the Septuagint (LXX) in their writing.²⁵ In fact, “the quotations in the N. T. from the O. T. show the use of the LXX more frequently than the Hebrew.”²⁶ Since this early translation of the Old Testament into Greek has exercised such a considerable influence upon the New Testament, it is clear that an examination of the LXX is indispensable to the study of the New Testament.²⁷ This will be the focus of the following major sections of this research.

Exhaustive examination of the manner in which the translators of the Septuagint have rendered the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* into the Greek language of more than two millennia ago reveals some valuable insights regarding their understanding of the meaning of the regular lexical term for the singular *σαββατον* and its appropriate declensions, the meaning of the normally plural form *σαββατα* and its appropriate declensions, as well as the intended contextual meanings of both Greek words.

First, it must be pointed out that the LXX does not always translate the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* into Greek.²⁸ At times, *שַׁבָּת* is translated with a contextually related word, but not with the lexical term for “sabbath.”²⁹ There are also a

indicates that “*σαββάτων*” is plural here, he failed to provide any substantive evidence for his hypothesis.

²⁴ The edition used for this research is the LXX Septuaginta Rahlfs’.

²⁵ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), 93.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 96, 100.

²⁸ See Exod 20:11; 31:15b, 16b; Lev 23:11; 24:8b; 2 Kgs 16:18. Yet, the Modern Greek Bible [MGK] includes the singular “*τοῦ σαββάτου*” in Exod 20:11, 31:15b, Lev 23:11, and 2 Kgs 16:18. While omitting any form of *σαββατον* or *σαββατα* in Exod 31:16b, and Lev 24:8b, it does imply it.

²⁹ See Lev 23:15b (*ἐβδομάδας*, i.e., “weeks”), 23:16 (*ἐβδομάδος*, i.e., “week”); 25:8a (*ἀναπαύσεις*, i.e., “rest”), 25:8b (*ἐβδομάδες*, i.e., “weeks”). The MGK provides the following translation for these passages: Lev 23:15b has “*ἐβδομάδας*” (i.e., “weeks,” as noted above in the LXX); 23:16 has “*τοῦ ἐβδόμου σαββάτου*” (i.e., “the seventh sabbath”); 25:8a has “*ἐβδομάδας*” (i.e., “weeks”); and 25:8b has “*ἐβδομάδων*” (i.e., “weeks”).

few occasions when the LXX does contain a form of either σάββατον or σάββατα, even when the specific Hebrew term שַׁבָּת is not used in the original text.³⁰ This includes one use of σάββατον, as a singular, to identify the week: “δευτέρα σαββάτου” (Ps 47:1 [Eng. Ps 48]), i.e., “on the second [day³¹] of the week.” Also, it includes at least two occasions in which σάββατα likewise refers to the week: (1) “τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων” (Ps 23:1 [Eng. Ps 24]), i.e., “on the first [day] of the week;” and (2) “τετράδι σαββάτων” (Ps 93:1 [Eng. Ps 94]), i.e., “for the fourth [day] of the week.”³²

Once the above anomalies are appropriately taken into account, it becomes possible to engage in an accurate analysis of the Septuagint’s use of the term שַׁבָּת. An actual count of all the occurrences of שַׁבָּת, as confirmed by other scholars,³³ shows that it appears 111 times throughout the Hebrew Bible.³⁴ Of these 111 instances, the LXX renders a total of 101 into the Greek language.³⁵ It is these 101 cases that are considered and investigated here, in

³⁰ This is considering, at least, the currently available form of the Massoretic Text (hereafter MT). See Num 15:33; Ps 24 (LXX: 23:1); 48 (LXX: 47:1); 93 (LXX: 92:1, where the LXX superscription includes the lexical term προσάββατον [i.e., “{the day} before Sabbath”), a term found only here, in Judith 8:6, and in Mark 15:42); 94 (LXX: 93:1). See also, Lev 16:31b (where the Hebrew term is שַׁבָּת 23:32b (where the Hebrew term is, likewise, שַׁבָּת); Amos 6:3 (where the Hebrew has שַׁבָּת, the basic consonants of which are the same as for שַׁבָּת). In basic accord with the MT, the MGK does not include any form of either σάββατον or σάββατα in the above passages. In Lev 16:31a and 23:32a, the MGK uses ἀναπαύσεως (i.e., “rest”) to translate the Hebrew שַׁבָּת.

³¹ The word “day” has been added into the English translation, for this is in accordance with the grammatical demands, and the context. Because the numerals μιᾶς, δευτέρα, and τετράδι are feminine adjectives, it is appropriate to insert the word ἡμέρα, since this fits the immediate context, and is in accord with the rule governing such relationships (i.e., that a feminine noun agreeing in gender, number and case, must be supplied, when needed).

³² Incidentally, there are only five known occasions when (in the Septuagint) a plural numeral is directly attached to the word weeks, in order to make it into a definite plural: (a) “ἑπτὰ ἑβδομάδας” (i.e., “seven weeks,” in Deut 16:9 [2x]); (b) “ἑβδομήκοντα ἑβδομάδες” (i.e., “seventy weeks,” in Dan 9:24); and (c) “τρεις ἑβδομάδας” (i.e., “three weeks,” in Dan 10:2, and 3).

³³ Such as F. Stolz, “שַׁבָּת,” *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 3:1301; and Gerhard F. Hasel, “Sabbath,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:849.

³⁴ For an extensive study on this, see du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*, 17–26, 155–162. The linguistic markers, as well as the immediate and broader contexts, indicate that 94 times the term שַׁבָּת directly refers to the seventh-day Sabbath, while in the 17 other cases the שַׁבָּת identifies something other than the weekly Sabbath. This essay will include the use of שַׁבָּת for both the seventh-day Sabbath and for the other occasions indicated by this Hebrew word.

³⁵ The ten times that the LXX does not include either σάββατον or σάββατα for the Hebrew שַׁבָּת (as seen in the MT) are as follows: Exod 20:11; 31:15b, 16b; Lev 23:11, 15b, 16; 24:8b; 25:8 (2x); 2 Kgs 16:18.

context.³⁶

For a total of 27 times, whenever the Hebrew **תַּבִּיט** appears as a singular, the LXX similarly renders it appropriately in Greek as a singular, a phenomenon which happens almost exclusively in the historical books of 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah.³⁷ In various sections of the Hebrew Bible, for a total of 28 times, whenever the term **תַּבִּיט** occurs in a plural form, the Septuagint translators likewise render it as a Greek term that appears to be a plural form.³⁸

However, there are a total of 46 times when, despite the fact that the Hebrew utilizes the term **תַּבִּיט** as a singular, the LXX chooses to render it with terms which clearly appear (at least on the surface) to be a plural form of the singular lexical term **σάββατον**. For analytical reasons, all of these cases are outlined below.

The following table reveals that the LXX “Greek Pentateuch consistently uses the plural form to express the singular Hebrew word **תַּבִּיט**.”³⁹

Reference	MT Text	LXX Text	Contextual Meaning
Exod 16:23	תַּבִּיט	Σάββατα	“tomorrow;” single day
Exod 16:25	תַּבִּיט	Σάββατα	“today;” single day
Exod 16:26	תַּבִּיט	Σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath
Exod 16:29	הַתַּבִּיט	τὰ σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath
Exod 20:8	הַתַּבִּיט	τῶν σαββάτων	vs. 9 contrasts “six days”

³⁶ These 101 cases are rendered as singulars 27 times: (a) 11 are **σάββατον** (either nominative or accusative); (b) 12 are **σαββάτου** (genitive); and (c) 4 are **σαββάτω** (dative). The rest of the 74 cases are rendered with the apparent plurals, as follows: (a) 44 are **σάββατα** (either nominative or accusative); (b) 23 are **σαββάτων** (genitive); and (c) 7 are **σαββάτοις** (dative).

³⁷ See 2 Kgs 4:23; 11:5, 7, 9 (2x); 1 Chron 9:32 (2x); 2 Chron 23:4, 8 (2x); Neh 9:14; 10:31 (2x) [MT: vs. 32]; 13:15 (2x), 16, 17, 18, 19 (3x), 21, 22. The other four appearances of these singulars are found in the superscription of Ps 92 [LXX: 91:1]; Isa 66:23 (2x); Lam 2:6. Similarly, the MGK renders all of the above texts as singulars, except for 1 Chron 9:32b, and Isa 66:23b, where these singulars are implied.

³⁸ See Exod 31:13; Lev 19:3, 30; 23:38; 26:2, 34 (2x), 35, 43; 1 Chron 23:31; 2 Chron 2:4 [MT: vs. 3]; 8:13; 31:3; 36:21; Neh 10:33 [MT: vs. 34]; Isa 56:4; Ezek 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24; 22:8, 26; 23:38; 44:24; 45:17; 46:3. Incidentally, the LXX never renders a Hebrew plural of **תַּבִּיט** as a singular in the Greek text. In a manner similar to that of the LXX, the MGK utilizes forms of the normal plural Greek lexical term **σάββατα** in all of the passages identified in this footnote.

³⁹ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 10. Harper-Knapp (*ibid.*, n. 16) indicates that the only exceptions to this use of **σάββατα** are found in Codex Alexandrinus [A] in Exod 31:15, Num 15:32, and 28:10, which is probably due to slips on the part of the copyist.

Exod 20:10	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath
Exod 31:14	הַשְּׁבִתָּה	τὰ σάββατα	singular pronouns = sing.
Exod 31:15	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath
Exod 31:16	הַשְּׁבִתָּה	τὰ σάββατα	v. 15 contrasts “six days”
Exod 35:2	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath
Exod 35:3	הַשְּׁבִתָּה	τῶν σαββάτων	v. 2 contrasts “six days”
Lev 16:31a	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	v. 29 says it is a “day”
Lev 23:3a	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath
Lev 23:3c	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	v. 3 starts with “six days”
Lev 23:15	הַשְּׁבִתָּה	τῶν σαββάτων	from “day after” Sabbath
Lev 23:32a	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	v. 27 says it is a “day”
Lev 23:32c	שֶׁבֶתְכֶם	τὰ ⁴⁰ σάββατα ὑμῶν	“even to even” of the Day of Atonement = singular
Lev 24:8	הַשְּׁבִתָּה	τῶν σαββάτων	“on each Sabbath day”
Lev 25:2	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	land must keep a sabbath
Lev 25:4a	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	“seventh year” = sabbath
Lev 25:4b	שֶׁבֶת	Σάββατα	v. 4 starts with “7 th year”
Lev 25:6	שֶׁבֶת	τὰ ⁴¹ σάββατα	v. 4 shows it is “7 th year”
Num 15:32	הַשְּׁבִתָּה	τῶν σαββάτων	was “on the Sabbath day”
Num 28:9	הַשְּׁבִתָּה	τῶν σαββάτων	and “on the Sabbath day”
Num 28:10a	שֶׁבֶת	σαββάτων	v. 9 shows “day” context

⁴⁰ As can be seen here, the LXX adds in the definite article τὰ which is not in the Hebrew text. The significance of the clear and careful delineation between the use and non-use of the definite article by the writers of the original text (both in the Hebrew Old Testament and the κοινή Greek Testament) is discussed in du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*, 17–45, 155–168. However, this issue is not directly germane to the above investigation, regarding the interpretation of the Hebrew שֶׁבֶת by the Septuagint translators. There are times when linguistic markers and context identify the שֶׁבֶת as the seventh day Sabbath (even when the definite article is not included in the Hebrew); hence, when the LXX aptly adds the definite article in the Greek, this will not be discussed, since such rendering is linguistically appropriate.

⁴¹ Evidently due to the construct in the Hebrew (שֶׁבֶת הַיּוֹם) the LXX adds in the article τὰ.

Num 28:10b	בַּשַּׁבָּת	τοῖς ⁴² σαββάτοις	v. 9 shows “day” context
Deut 5:12	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	observe “the Sabbath day”
Deut 5:14	שַׁבָּת	σάββατα	“seventh day” = Sabbath
Deut 5:15	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	keep “the Sabbath day”

In brief, the above analysis reveals that in every single case in the Pentateuch in the LXX, the immediate and broader contexts, together with the linguistic indicators, demonstrate that the word for “sabbath” must of necessity be a singular, and not a plural. Yet, despite this evidence, the Septuagint translators consistently employed σάββατα (and its concomitant declensions), which, at least on the surface, appears to be the plural form of the regular Greek singular term σάββατον. Harper-Knapp concluded that this seems “to constitute the strongest kind of evidence that,” before the New Testament era, “the plural form was used in the sense of the singular—and that not rarely.”⁴³ As John Wallis noted in his 1694 book: “In all the five books of Moses we shall hardly meet with σάββατον in the singular number, but σάββατα in the plural.”⁴⁴ The most probable reasons as to why these translators “used the neuter plural form σάββατα to express the singular meaning”⁴⁵ will be explored later in this essay.

Before proceeding to an examination of the Septuagint’s rendition of שַׁבָּת in the prophetic writings, we need to briefly consider the Modern Greek Bible’s translation of the above passages. In clear contradistinction to the LXX, this contemporary Greek version renders the שַׁבָּת in every one of the above texts as forms of the regular singular in Greek, except for Numbers 28:10b, where it is simply implied.⁴⁶ In other words, while the LXX employed

⁴² The definite article “the” being implied in the Hebrew, it is added into the LXX text, as τοῖς.

⁴³ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 10.

⁴⁴ See Cox, 2:100, quoting from John Wallis, *A Defence of the Christian Sabbath. Part the Second. Being a Rejoinder to Mr Bampfild’s Reply to Dr Wallis’s Discourse Concerning the Christian Sabbath* (Oxford: np, 1694), 4–131. In basic agreement with the evidence from the Pentateuch, Richardson noted: “The plural form is used several times for the weekly Sabbath, including in the heart of the fourth commandment;” William E. Richardson, “Sabbath: Nailed to the Cross?” *Ministry*, May 1997, 15. Decades earlier, the Adventist publication, *Problems in Bible Translation* (231) already noted that, in the “Septuagint, the translators used the plural form of *sabbaton* to translate the Hebrew singular in Ex. 16:23, 25, 26, 29;” and that “the Septuagint uses the plural *sabbata* to translate Ex. 20:8, 10; 31:15, and 35:2, although the sense is clearly singular.”

⁴⁵ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 10.

⁴⁶ Incidentally, for Lev 24:8, the MGK has omitted the definite article in front of the word σαββάτου, a matter of no real consequence for this essay.

the apparent plural σάββατα (yet, in such a way as to convey a singular meaning), the Modern Greek Bible has rendered these same texts with unequivocal singulars. This newer translation thus basically validates the hypothesis that is arising out of the current analysis—i.e., that σάββατα was often utilized as a singular.

In the prophetic books, the Hebrew singular שַׁבָּת is similarly rendered as σάββατα (or its inflected forms), an apparent plural form, 85 percent of the time:⁴⁷

Reference	MT Text	LXX Text	Contextual Meaning
Isa 1:13	שַׁבָּתִי	καὶ τὰ ⁴⁸ σάββατα	new moon & sabbath: sing.
Isa 56:2	שַׁבָּת	τὰ ⁴⁹ σάββατα	keep “Sabbath” = singular
Isa 56:6	שַׁבָּת	τὰ σάββατα	keep “Sabbath” = singular
Isa 58:13a	מִשַׁבָּתִי	τῶν σαββάτων	from “Sabbath” = singular
Isa 58:13b	לְשַׁבָּת	τὰ σάββατα	“the Sabbath” = singular
Jer 17:21	שַׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“on the Sabbath day” sing.
Jer 17:22a	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“on the Sabbath day” sing.
Jer 17:22b	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	hallow Sabbath day: sing.
Jer 17:24a	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“on the Sabbath day” sing.
Jer 17:24b	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	hallow Sabbath day: sing.
Jer 17:27a	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	hallow Sabbath day: sing.
Jer 17:27b	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“on the Sabbath day” sing.
Ezek 46:1	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“six days” then “Sabbath”
Ezek 46:4	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“on the Sabbath day” sing.
Ezek 46:12	הַשַּׁבָּת	τῶν σαββάτων	“on the Sabbath day” sing.

⁴⁷ That is, 17 out of 20 times; the three times when it rendered as singulars in Greek are: Isa 66:23 (2x); Lam 2:6.

⁴⁸ See comment for footnote #40 above.

⁴⁹ Based on the linguistic indicators and the context the LXX has aptly added in the definite article τὰ here, as well as in Isa 56:6, and the definite article τῶν in Isa 58:13a.

Hos 2:11 [MT: v. 13]	וַשַּׁבְתָּהּ	καὶ τὰ ⁵⁰ σάββατα αὐτῆς	all 3 terms, “festival, new moon, sabbath” = singular
Amos 8:5	וַיְהִי שַׁבָּת	καὶ τὰ σάββατα	“and the Sabbath” = sing.

The above outline shows results somewhat similar to the earlier pentateuchal analysis. While there is admittedly less direct contextual data, in each case there is sufficient significant linguistic information to demonstrate that the term for “sabbath” should preferably be translated as a singular, and not as a plural.⁵¹ Nevertheless, in the overwhelming majority of the cases in these prophetic books, the Septuagint has rendered the Hebrew singular **שַׁבָּת** with what visually appears to be a plural Greek word (or its associated inflectional forms). As Kenneth Wood quite aptly noted: “In the Septuagint the plural form with a singular meaning is found in numerous places.”⁵²

Incidentally, the Modern Greek Bible’s translation of these passages is quite similar to that mentioned in connection with the Pentateuch. In 15 of the above 17 passages, this version renders the Hebrew **שַׁבָּת** with the appropriate Greek singular. The only passages that include a form of the apparent plural **σάββατα** are Isaiah 1:13 and Hosea 2:11.⁵³

In brief, the translational evidence observed above reveals that, while **σάββατα** was seen as the apparent Greek plural term, it was frequently used in the LXX as a singular. This utilization of the term **σάββατα** as a singular, is confirmed by the following intra-textual grammatical and semantic data that

⁵⁰ See comment for footnote #40 above.

⁵¹ Of the above 17 texts, only three have additional contextual data similar to those seen in the Pentateuch. However, the linguistic indicators, together with the recognition that these prophetic books were produced at a point when the context of and use of **שַׁבָּת** was already well understood, are sufficient to identify these terms as singulars.

⁵² Wood, ‘Sabbath Days’, 341. His examples include Exod 16:23, 25; 20:8; Deut 5:12; Jer 17:21, 22; Ezek 46:1. Neufeld, “Sabbath Day or Sabbath Days?” 13, essentially concurring, states that “in the Septuagint” “*sabbata* occurs frequently where the Hebrew has the singular. Examples are Exodus 16:25; 20:8.” Likewise, in his Master’s thesis, Ray noted that “a comparison with the LXX of Exod 20:11 shows this same word [σάββατων] in plural form obviously having a singular meaning, referring to the Hebrew word meaning Sabbath;” Paul Ray, “New Moons, Sabbaths and Eschatological Newness: A Study of the Typological Significance of Isaiah 66:22–23, and Related Texts” (MA thesis, Andrews University, 1981), 25. So also, David Coltheart, “An Examination of Colossians 2:14–17,” June 1974, TMs [photocopy], pp. 21–22, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI; Marvin Moore, “Dialogue,” *Signs of the Times* (February 2003): 28.

⁵³ Interestingly, both of these are passages in which the weight of evidence indicates that the **שַׁבָּת** mentioned here does not refer to the seventh-day Sabbath, but rather to the ceremonial sabbaths of the ancient Jewish religion. For more on this, see du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*, 20, 21, 25, 105–128, 177–179.

arise from an intensive investigation of the intriguing manner in which the Septuagint has rendered dozens of passages of the Hebrew Scriptures into the common Greek language of more than two thousand years ago.

Grammatical Analysis of Σάββατα in the LXX

Relationship of Σάββατα to “Tomorrow”

Based on the Hebrew text, where the noun מָחָר appears the very first time in Scripture, the LXX translators have rendered Exodus 16:23b, as follows: “σάββατα ἀναπαυσις ἅγια τῷ κυρίῳ αὔριον.” According to various standard Greek lexicons, αὔριον is an adverb meaning “tomorrow,” or the “next day.”⁵⁴ Hence, the above passage, if one insists that the word σάββατα must be understood as a Greek plural, would read: “Tomorrow [is the] Sabbath s, a holy rest to the Lord.” Obviously, in order for this construction to convey a coherent concept, the word σάββατα, though it merely appears as a plural, must be rendered as a singular, “Sabbath.” A similar case appears in Leviticus 23:15b: “ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπαύριον τῶν σαββάτων.” If the word “σαββάτων” must be seen as the genitive plural, then this phrase would literalistically read: “from the morrow after the Sabbath s.”⁵⁵ However, taking into account the diagrammed evidence that σάββατα (as well as its inflected forms) is frequently employed in the LXX as a singular, this “τῶν σαββάτων,” though simply visually looking like a plural, needs to be correctly understood as “the Sabbath,” singular.

Connection of Σάββατα to “Today”

Within the same pericope in Exodus 16 considered above, we find the following clause in the Septuagint: “ἔστιν γὰρ σάββατα σήμερον τῷ κυρίῳ” (v. 25). The key term considered here is σήμερον, which the lexicon defines as the adverb “today.”⁵⁶ Based on the notion that σάββατα needs to be seen and rendered as a plural, this LXX translation would then literalistically read: “for today is Sabbath s to the Lord.” Again, it is clear that the term σάββατα, as used here, must be seen as a singular, “Sabbath,” in order for this clause to make any sense at all.

Demonstrative Pronoun and Σάββατα

The intra-textual evidence for such an understanding of σάββατα

⁵⁴ See, for example, Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 122.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, 283, where the adverb ἐπαύριον is defined as “tomorrow.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 749.

becomes even stronger in the final appearance of the term “sabbath” in this narrative. Exodus 16:29a states: “ἴδετε ὁ γὰρ κύριος ἔδωκεν ὑμῖν τὴν ἡμέραν ταύτην τὰ σάββατα.” When the demonstrative pronoun “ταύτην” (i.e., “this”⁵⁷) is linked with “τὴν ἡμέραν” (i.e., “the day”), it is rendered “this day.” Once again, it becomes obvious that, though the apparent plural σάββατα is used here in the Septuagint, the only way for this sentence to be coherent is to translate it as a singular, “Sabbath.” Thus, the LXX would read: “See, for the Lord has given you this day [as] the Sabbath.”

Σάββατα Listed as “the Seventh [Day]”

Repeatedly in the LXX Pentateuch the Sabbath is recognized as the “seventh day,” following “six days” of labor. For example, the Septuagint renders the section of the fourth commandment seen in Exodus 20:9–10a, as follows: “ἕξ ἡμέρας ἐργᾶ καὶ ποιήσεις πάντα τὰ ἔργα σου τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ σου.”⁵⁸ If the σάββατα must be seen and translated as a plural, then this would literalistically read: “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but on the seventh day [is] the Sabbath s to the Lord your God.” Once more, it is clear that the σάββατα needs to be rendered as a singular, “Sabbath.”

Σάββατα Identified as “the Day”

Finally, throughout the Pentateuch and in the writings of two major prophets there are at least seventeen occasions in the Septuagint when the phrase “τὴν ἡμέραν” (i.e., “the day”) or “τῇ ἡμέρᾳ” (i.e., “on the day”) immediately precedes and is directly linked with “τῶν σαββάτων” (which visually appears as a genitive plural).⁵⁹ For instance, the fourth commandment begins: “μνήσθητι τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων ἀγιάζειν αὐτήν” (Exod 20:8).⁶⁰ While it is obvious that the words “τὴν ἡμέραν” are in the

⁵⁷ Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 596–598.

⁵⁸ See also, Deut 5:13–14a, which reads in the identical manner in the LXX. See, also Exod 16:26 (“ἕξ ἡμέρας συλλέξετε τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα” = “six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day [is a] Sabbath”); 31:15 (“ἕξ ἡμέρας ποιήσεις ἔργα τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα” = “six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day [is a] Sabbath”); 35:2 (“ἕξ ἡμέρας ποιήσεις ἔργα τῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ κατὰ τῆν ἁγίον σάββατα” = “six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day [shall be] rest – a holy Sabbath”); and Lev 23:3 (“ἕξ ἡμέρας ποιήσεις ἔργα καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ σάββατα” = “six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day [is a] Sabbath”).

⁵⁹ In addition to the passages in the LXX, based on the currently available MT, the LXX of Num 15:33 also has “τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων.”

⁶⁰ The other sixteen cases are as follows: (a) “τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν σαββάτων” appears in Deut 5:12, 15; Jer 17:22b, 24b, 27a; (b) “τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων” appears in Exod 35:3; Lev 24:8; Num 15:32; 28:9; Jer 17:21, 22a, 24a, 27b; Ezek 46:1, 4, 12.

singular, they are inextricably intricately intertwined with the “τῶν σαββάτων” (literalistically rendered as, “of the Sabbath **ς**”).⁶¹

Yet universally, this sentence has been consistently and correctly comprehended and interpreted by Bible translators to refer to the seventh-day “Sabbath,” singular: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” As noted earlier in this essay, at least since 1636 it was already recognized that the Greek translation of the fourth commandment utilized the term σάββατα here.⁶² The frequency with which this phenomenon appears in the LXX, of directly connecting the singular “τὴν ἡμέραν” (or its equivalent) with “τῶν σαββάτων,” provides additional significant supportive data that the word σάββατα must be recognized as a singular, and translated thus, unless compelling contextual cues and/or lucid linguistic links demand otherwise.⁶³

In all, of the 46 times that the LXX has rendered the Hebrew singular noun שַׁבָּת as the term σάββατα (or its derivatives), almost 60 percent of these usages can be seen to be employed in intra-textual ways that require that the term σάββατα be rendered as a singular.⁶⁴ Concurring with the evidence described above, Moulton and Milligan in their Greek vocabulary volume, noted that in various places in the Septuagint, “τὰ σάββατα is used

⁶¹ Admittedly, there are occasions when “τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ σαββάτου” (i.e., “the day of the Sabbath [singular]”) appears, as in Neh 13:17, 22; and in the LXX translation of the superscription of Ps 91:1 (Eng. Ps 92); also seen is “ἐν ἡμέρα τοῦ σαββάτου” (i.e., “on [the] day of the Sabbath [singular]”), as in Neh 10:32; 13:15b, 19c.

⁶² Fr. White, 165. White listed many texts as purportedly supporting his view. As the analysis in this essay reveals, his point of the “plural” use of “Sabbaths” was correct, as follows: (a) The LXX rendered what was already plurals of שַׁבָּת into σάββατα (or its derivatives) in Lev 19:3; 23:38; Isa 56:4; Ezek 20:12; (b) The LXX translated the singular Hebrew שַׁבָּת and rendered it with σάββατα (or its inflections) in Lev 23:3; Deut 5:12; Isa 1:13; 56:6; (c) In the New Testament the following passages do have σάββατα (or its declined forms) in Matt 12:5a [but, it is singular in v. 5b], 11; Mark 1:21; 2:23; 3:2, 4; Luke 4:31; 6:9 [but, it is singular in the NU text, which came into existence more than 200 years after White’s publication]; 13:10; Acts 13:14; 16:13. Acts 17:2 is not a congruent example of σάββατα since it is immediately followed by the word τρία, so as to indicate that it is intended as a plural. Also, Lam 1:7 actually does not have the term “Sabbaths” at all. The King James Version mistranslated the Hebrew term שַׁבָּתוֹת (“her desolations”), as “her Sabbaths.”

⁶³ Incidentally, the deuterocanonical Judith (10:2) has “ταῖς ἡμέραις τῶν σαββάτων” (i.e., literally, “on the days of the Sabbaths;” or more aptly “on the Sabbath days”), a phrase not ever found throughout the LXX translation of the 39 books of the Old Testament (as accepted by Protestants).

⁶⁴ The actual count is 17 out of 29 times in the Pentateuch, i.e., 58.62% (Exod 16:23, 25, 26, 29; 20:8, 10; 31:15; 35:2, 3; Lev 23:3, 15; 24:8; Num 15:32; 28:9; Deut 5:12, 14, 15); and 10 out of 17 times in the books of the prophets, i.e., 58.82% (Jer 17:21, 22 [2x], 24 [2x], 27 [2x]; Ezek 46:1, 4, 12).

both for ‘the Sabbath’ and “the sabbaths.”⁶⁵ As Wilfred Stott succinctly summarized: “There does not seem to be any difference in meaning between the singular and plural forms of the Greek equivalent in the LXX.”⁶⁶

Thus, in addition to the general manner in which the Septuagint has repeatedly rendered the singular שַׁבָּת with the term σάββατα (or its inflections), the supportive data from the Modern Greek Bible, and the evidence from the intra-textual grammatical and semantic analysis, as well as the confirmation of Greek scholars, provide persuasive proof that σάββατα (including its declensions) cannot simplistically be considered as a plural Greek term. Rather, since it is clear that the LXX translators understood and employed this term (as well as its inflected forms) repeatedly as a singular, readers of the κοινή Greek Testament must take this information seriously into account when seeking to comprehend its meaning in context appropriately.⁶⁷

Σάββατον and Σάββατα in Apocryphal Writings

Before proceeding to an extensive examination of σάββατον and σάββατα in the New Testament, a brief excursus will be made here into deuterocanonical writings (and into extra-biblical works, in the next section) so as to observe the manner in which these two terms were employed by some writers about two centuries before the writing of the Greek Scriptures. The first book of Maccabees, written in Hebrew about the latter part of the second century BCE by a Jewish author, survives only through the Greek translation contained in the Septuagint. However, 2 Maccabees was written in κοινή Greek, probably in Alexandria, Egypt, ca. 124 BCE, and includes a revised version of the historical events of the first seven chapters of 1 Maccabees, together with some additional materials.

To begin with, it must be noted that the singular form σάββατον appears a total of seven times in 1 and 2 Maccabees. A clear example of this is seen in a phrase from 2 Maccabees 5:25: “ἕως τῆς ἁγίας ἡμέρας τοῦ σαββάτου,” i.e., “until the holy day of the Sabbath.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952), 567.

⁶⁶ Wilfred Stott, σάββατον, *NIDNTT* 3:405. See also, σάββατον, *TDNTW* 1133.

⁶⁷ Wallis (in Cox, 2:100), noting this use of σάββατα to refer to a single Sabbath day, says that “the New Testament doth use to follow” the Septuagint.

⁶⁸ This is from the NJB. The other six passages that use the singular σάββατον are 1 Macc 1:43 (“καὶ ἐκβεβήλωσαν τὸ σάββατον,” i.e., “and profaned the sabbath” [NRSV]); 6:49 (“ὅτι σάββατον ἦν τῆ γῆ,” i.e., “for that was a sabbath year in the land” [NAB]); 2 Macc 8:26 (“ἦν γὰρ

In addition to the seven uses of the singular, these books employ the apparent plural *σάββατα* ten times. In six of these ten instances *σάββατα* is placed in a phrase that requires that it be understood and interpreted as a singular term. For example, 1 Maccabees 2:32 has: “τῆ ἡμέρᾳ [regular singular] τῶν σαββάτων [apparent plural],” which would read “on the day of the Sabbath⁶⁹,” if *σάββατα* must literalistically be rendered as a plural. However, despite the apparent plural of “τῶν σαββάτων,” translators have rightly interpreted this phrase as “on the Sabbath day.”⁷⁰ Similarly, 1 Maccabees 2:38 reads: “καὶ ἀνέστησαν ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς ἐν πολέμῳ τοῖς σάββασιν.” Though the “τοῖς σάββασιν” may be technically viewed as a dative plural, this clause has been correctly translated, in reputable English Bible versions, as referring to a singular Sabbath: “So they attacked them on the sabbath.”⁷¹

Thus, in a nutshell, though the regular singular term *σάββατον* was employed in these deuterocanonical writings, the apparent plural *σάββατα* was likewise repeatedly used in a manner that requires understanding and interpreting it also as a singular, seventh-day Sabbath, in a manner virtually identical to that observed in the Greek version of the Old Testament materials considered above.

The Usage of Σάββατα in Extra-Biblical Works

Extensive employment of the form *σάββατα* with a singular meaning can be found in non-biblical writings as well. The earliest known occurrence of *σάββατα* in secular works appears in the collection of the Zenon Papyri.⁷² In the mid-third century BCE, Zenon was a business manager for Apollonius, who held a high post during the reign of Ptolemy II (285–246 BCE). The records left by Zenon include papyrus 59762, which contains an account of a week’s delivery of bricks. The editor and translator of these papyri, C. C.

ἡ πρὸ τοῦ σαββάτου,” i.e., “it was the eve of the Sabbath” [NJB]), 27 (“τὸ σάββατον,” i.e., “the Sabbath” [NJB]), 28 (“μετὰ δὲ τὸ σάββατον,” i.e., “Then after the sabbath” [Douay-Rheims]); and 12:38 (“τὸ σάββατον διήγαγον,” i.e., “kept the Sabbath” [NJB]).

⁶⁹ See also, 1 Macc 2:41; 9:34, 43, which all have the identical phrase “τῆ ἡμέρᾳ [regular singular] τῶν σαββάτων [apparent plural],” which is rightly rendered, “on the Sabbath day” (NJB). A similar phrase in 1 Macc 2:34, (“τὴν ἡμέραν [regular singular] τῶν σαββάτων [apparent plural]”), is aptly rendered “the Sabbath day” (NJB); and 2 Macc 15:3 (“ἄγειν τὴν τῶν σαββάτων [apparent plural] ἡμέραν [regular singular]”), correctly rendered “the keeping of the Sabbath day” (NJB).

⁷⁰ This is according to the NJB. See also, JB, NAB, NEB, NRSV, REB, RSV, etc.

⁷¹ This is from the NRSV. See also, RSV; and similarly JB, NAB, NEB, NJB, REB, etc.

⁷² See C. C. Edgar, *Zenon Papyri*, IV.59532–59800 (Cairo, Egypt: Imprimerie de l’Institut Français, d’Archéologie Orientale, 1931).

Edgar, made an astute observation: “The writer was apparently a Jew, and a strict observer of the Sabbath; for the 7th is marked Σάββατα, and on that day no bricks were delivered.”⁷³ This term σάββατα, as shown in column one of the original text, provides conclusive evidence that as early as 250 BCE the apparent plural was already being used in speaking of a single, seventh-day Sabbath.

The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE–50 CE), used the regular singular σάββατον when referring to Exod 16:23. He stated that the “seventh” day (“ἑβδόμη”) “was called Sabbath” (“ἦν σάββατον καλεῖ”) by God.⁷⁴ However, in a strikingly similar passage, Philo used the apparent plural σάββατα (yet with a singular meaning) in referring to “the seventh” day (“τὴν ἑβδόμην”) as the day which “the Hebrews call ‘the Sabbath’” (“ἦν Ἑβραῖοι σάββατα καλοῦσιν”).⁷⁵

The works of Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (ca. 37–101 CE), a contemporary of the New Testament writers, evidences a similar usage of σάββατον and σάββατα. First, it is clear that Josephus repeatedly utilized the normal Greek singular σάββατον in various of his writings. For example, in his defense of Judaism he uses the clause “καὶ ἐκάλεσαν τὴν ἡμέραν σάββατον” (i.e., “and called that day the Sabbath”)⁷⁶ However, similar to Philo, Josephus repeatedly used σάββατα to refer to a single seventh-day Sabbath. For instance, near the beginning of his *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus referred to the “seventh” day (“ἑβδόμη”) as a day when God ceased from his creative activities; then he referred to “τὴν ἡμέραν,” i.e., “the day” (singular), which God calls “σάββατα” (an apparent plural, but with a singular meaning).⁷⁷ In the same work, Josephus later writes: “κατὰ δὲ

⁷³ Edgar, *Zenon Papyri*, 191.

⁷⁴ Philo Judaeus. *On the Change of Names*, 260.

⁷⁵ Philo Judaeus. *On Abraham*, 28.

⁷⁶ Josephus. *Against Apion*. II.2. A little later in this same section, Josephus wrote: “ἡ δὲ περὶ τὴν ὀνομασίαν τοῦ σαββάτου γραμματικὴ” (“and as for this grammatical translation of the word Sabbath”). This translation is by William Whiston. See also, Josephus. *Wars*. II.19.2, where he spoke of the Jews who fought on the “Sabbath” (σάββατον). Similarly, in his autobiography, he writes of “ἡμέραν σάββατον” (“Sabbath day”); Josephus. *Life*. 32.

⁷⁷ Josephus. *Antiquities*. i.I.I, reads in full: “καὶ τὸν κόσμον ἕξ ταῖς πάσαις ἡμέραις Μωυσῆς καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ φησὶ γενέσθαι, τῇ δὲ ἑβδόμῃ ἀναπαύσασθαι καὶ λαβεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων ἐκεχειρίαν, ὅθεν καὶ ἡμεῖς σχολὴν ἀπὸ τῶν πόνων κατὰ ταύτην ἄγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν προσαγορευόντες αὐτὴν σάββατα: δηλοῖ δὲ ἀνάπαυσιν κατὰ τὴν Ἑβραίων διάλεκτον τοῦνομα.” According to the translation of Louis H. Feldman (Brill, 2000): “Moyses says that the universe and all the things in it came into being in six days in all and that on the seventh day He ceased and took a rest from his activities, whence we also on this *day* take leisure from our activities, calling it the *Sabbath*. This word means ‘rest’ in the language of the Hebrews;” (emphases added).

ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν, ἥτις σάββατα καλεῖται.” Literalistically rendered, this would translate incoherently as, “but on the seventh day [singular], which is called Sabbath[s] [plural].”⁷⁸ Again, the σάββατα is utilized as a singular.

Perhaps most instructive regarding the manner in which σάββατον and σάββατα were both used to refer to a single, seventh-day Sabbath comes from the following statement, where Josephus refers to the twelve loaves of unleavened bread that were placed on the table in the holy place of the tabernacle, every week, “μετὰ δὲ ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ” (i.e., “after seven days”), “ἐν τῷ καλουμένῳ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν Σαββάτῳ: τὴν γὰρ ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν Σάββατα καλοῦμεν.”⁷⁹

The intriguing manner in which Josephus apparently intentionally juxtaposed these two clauses, which form part of the same sentence, deserves additional analysis, especially since the first clause uses the singular “Σαββάτῳ,” while the second employs the seemingly plural “σάββατα,” and furthermore because this latter clause can be seen to be substantially similar to the first. To begin, our Jewish author observed that these loaves were brought in after,

ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ; ἐν τῷ καλουμένῳ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν Σαββάτῳ:

“seven days;” “on the [day] called by us the Sabbath:”

Then, clearly emphasizing this fact, Josephus immediately added:

τὴν γὰρ ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν Σάββατα καλοῦμεν.

“for we call the seventh day the Sabbath.”

Obviously, if this final clause were to be rendered literalistically, it would

⁷⁸ The entire passage (Josephus. *Antiquities*. iii.10.I) reads: “Ἐκ δὲ τοῦ δημοσίου ἀναλώματος νόμος ἐστὶν ἄρνα καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν σφάζεσθαι τῶν αὐτοετῶν ἀρχομένης τε ἡμέρας καὶ ληγούσης, κατὰ δὲ ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν, ἥτις σάββατα καλεῖται, δύο σφάπτουσι τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἱερουργούντες.” Again, according to Feldman’s translation: “There is a law that at public expense a year-old lamb should be slaughtered each day both at the beginning and at the end of the day; *but on the seventh day, which is called Sabbath*, they slaughter two, sacrificing in the same manner;” (emphases added).

⁷⁹ The entire quote from Josephus. *Antiquities*. iii.6.6 reads: “ὑπὲρ δὲ τῶν ἄρτων ἐτίθεντο φιάλα δύο χρύσεια λιβάνου πλήρεις, μετὰ δὲ ἡμέρας ἑπτὰ πάλιν ἄλλοι ἐκομίζοντο [ἄρτοι] ἐν τῷ καλουμένῳ ὑφ’ ἡμῶν Σαββάτῳ: τὴν γὰρ ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν Σάββατα καλοῦμεν: τὴν δ’ αἰτίαν ἐξ ἧς ταῦτα ἐπενοήθησαν ἐν ἐτέροις ἐροῦμεν.” Feldman (Brill, 2000) renders it: “Above these loaves of bread were placed two golden offering-cups full of incense. After seven days seven other loaves of bread were brought in turn *on the day called by us the Sabbath. For we call the seventh day the Sabbath*. We shall mention elsewhere the reason why these things were contrived;” (emphases added). See Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 339, n. 8.

illogically read: “For we call the seventh day [singular] Sabbath_s [plural].”⁸⁰ Moreover, the way in which the above two clauses are used in parallel serves to demonstrate that for Josephus, living and writing at the time of the apostles, the term *σάββατα* was clearly understood and applied in everyday usage to refer to a single entity.⁸¹

Living about the same time as Josephus, Plutarch (ca. 46–120 CE), the Greek historian, biographer and essayist, who became a Roman citizen, similarly used the term *σάββατα* when referring to a single seventh-day Sabbath.⁸²

Σάββατον and Σάββατα in the New Testament

A careful enumeration of all “sabbath” terminology in the κοινή Greek of

⁸⁰ Incidentally, in Josephus. *Wars*. I. 7. 3 the following clause is found: “ὕπερ μόνου γὰρ τοῦ σώματος ἀμύνονται τοῖς σαββάτοις.” The last two words could be translated either as “the Sabbaths,” or “the Sabbath.”

⁸¹ Regarding this use of *σάββατα* by Josephus, note Lightfoot’s conclusions: “The general use of *σάββατα*, when a single sabbath-day was meant, will appear from such passages as Jos. *Ant.* i.II, ἀγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν, προσαγορευόντες αὐτὴν *σάββατα*, *ib.* . iii. 10. I, ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν ἥτις *σάββατα* καλεῖται;” J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Revised Text with Introductions, Notes, and Dissertations*, new ed. (London: MacMillan, 1879), 194. Lightfoot (*ibid.*) also pointed out that “The general use of *σάββατα*, when a single sabbath-day was meant, will appear from such passages as ... Hor. *Sat.* i.9.69 *hodie tricesima sabbata*.” See also, Abbott (264), who similarly highlighted the Latin use of this term in the apparent plural: “Compare Hor. *Sat.* i. 9. 69, *hodie tricesima Sabbata*;” T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, ICC (New York: Scribner’s, 1897), 264. The evidence reveals that, just as the Jews (hundreds of years before the New Testament era) seem to have borrowed *σάββατα* “directly from the Aramaic language, so the Romans appear to have made a direct transliteration of this Hellenized Semitic word into the Latin;” Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 29. There is sufficient evidence to indicate that the Latin term *sabbata*, though appearing to be plural in form, was actually employed with the singular meaning. The earliest of such usages, as noted above, was produced during the time of Augustus, by the leading Roman lyric poet, known as Horace (65–8 BCE). In one of his works he stated, “*hodie tricesima Sabbata*,” Quintus Horatius Flaccus. *Satirae* I.IX.69. Translated, it reads, “today is the thirteenth Sabbath,” which unquestioningly shows a singular usage of the apparent plural *sabbata*. Later, another Roman poet, Ovid (43 BCE–17/18 CE), also writing before the New Testament, wrote about the *sabbata*; see Publius Ovidius Naso. *Remedia Amoris*. 219. Then, there was Seneca (ca. 4 BCE–65 CE), a Roman stoic, philosopher, statesman, and dramatist, who mentioned *sabbata*; (see Lucius Annaeus Seneca. *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 95. 47); as does the Roman naturalist and philosopher, Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE); (see Gaius Plinius Secundus. *Naturalis Historiae* 31.2.18); besides others.

⁸² Plutarch. *Moralia* 169 C stated: “ἀλλ’ Ἰουδαῖοι *σαββάτων* ὄντων ἐν ἀγνάμτοις καθεζόμενοι, τῶν πολεμίων κλίμακος προσιθόντων καὶ τὰ τεῖχη καταλαμβανόντων.” Frank Cole Babbitt translated this as follows: “But the Jews, because it was the *Sabbath day*, sat in their places immovable, while the enemy were planting ladders against the wall and capturing the defenses;” (emphases added). Perhaps Plutarch was here referring to the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 BCE See *Plutarch’s Moralia II*, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 481, n.f.

the New Testament reveals a total of 69 occurrences.⁸³ First, it would be well to consider the manner in which Greek terms for “sabbath” have been rather consistently rendered in standard English translations, as the word “week.”

Reference	Σάββατον	Σάββατα	Contextual Meaning
Matt 28:1		μίαν σαββάτων	after the Sabbath, on “first [day] of <i>week</i> :” singular
Mark 16:2		μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ⁸⁴	after the Sabbath, on “first [day] of the <i>week</i> :” singular
Mark 16:9	πρῶτη σαββάτου		the resurrection of Jesus, the “first [day] of <i>week</i> :” sing.
Luke 18:12	δὶς τοῦ σαββάτου		referring to those fasting “twice in the <i>week</i> :” ⁸⁵ sing.
Luke 24:1		μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων	resurrection day, i.e., “first [day] of the <i>week</i> :” singular
John 20:1		μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων	resurrection day, i.e., “first [day] of the <i>week</i> :” singular
John 20:19		μιᾷ σαββάτων ⁸⁶	evening of resurrection day, “first [day] of <i>week</i> :” sing.

⁸³ This count does include the one appearance of προάββατον (i.e., “before Sabbath”), located in Mark 15:42. However, the above tally does not include the unique occurrence of σαββατισμός in Hebrews 4:9. Regarding the unique occurrence of σαββατισμός, New Testament scholar Erhard Gallos’ textual study shows that this term *sabbatismos* “is meant to define more precisely the character of the rest;” and that (other than as expected in the works of the allegorical writer Origen) this word “is always used literally” in non-Christian as well as Christian literature to mean the actual literal observance of the Sabbath on the seventh-day of the week. (See Erhard H. Gallos, “KATAPAUSIS and SABBATISMOS in Hebrews 4” [PhD diss., Andrews University, 2011], 238–242). Hence, since this *hapax legomenon* deals with the “character of the rest” rather than specifically the time/timing of a “rest” day, and is therefore not directly relevant to this research, it will not be addressed as such here.

⁸⁴ The Majority Text has “μιᾶς σαββάτων,” a distinction of no consequence to the above investigation.

⁸⁵ Chapter 1 of the *Megillath Ta’anith*, a first-century CE Jewish treatise on fasting, mentions the matter of regularly undertaking a “fast on Mondays and Thursday throughout the year.” Similarly, the *Didache* 8.1 (dated by most scholars to the late first/early second century CE), includes the following phrase, concerning fasting: “δευτέρα σαββάτων καὶ πέμπτη;” literally, “on second of sabbaths and fifth,” yet rightly rendered as “on the second and fifth [days] of the week.

⁸⁶ The Majority Text has “μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων,” a distinction of no consequence to the above investigation.

Acts 20:7		μῆ τῶν σαββάτων	same as in Luke 24:1: “first [day] of the <i>week</i> :” singular
1 Cor 16:2	κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου ⁸⁷		literally, “on first [day] of every <i>week</i> :” singular

In short, based upon the linguistic indicator of an immediately preceding numeral (or such a numeral immediately followed by the definite article), as well as clear contextual cues, competent Greek scholars over the centuries have consistently rendered three appearances of the singular term *σάββατον* as “week,” in translation.⁸⁸ Likewise, based upon the same criteria, these learned linguists have rendered the six occurrences of the apparent plural word *σάββατα* as the singular term “week,” a seeming aberration, to be addressed below.⁸⁹ Incidentally, this type of usage was not an innovation by the writers of the New Testament. Rather, as Harper-Knapp observed, they used these terms “in imitation of the Septuagint translation, which, in turn, imitated a practice already common to the Hebrew language.”⁹⁰

Careful examination of the way in which the Modern Greek Bible has translated the above nine passages, reveals supportive evidence for rendering either *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* as “week,” when required thus by linguistic and contextual cues. In place of the terms *σάββατον* and *σάββατα*, this Bible has consistently employed the lexical term *ἐβδομάς* (i.e., “week”) in all nine passages. Not only does this remove any cause for confusion as to how to

⁸⁷ The Majority Text has “κατὰ μίαν σαββάτων,” a substantive distinction, to be addressed further below.

⁸⁸ This is similar to the Septuagint’s rendition of the superscription of Ps 47:1 (Eng. Ps 48): “δευτέρα σαββάτου” (i.e., “on the second [day] of the week”).

⁸⁹ This is similar to the Septuagint’s translation of the superscriptions of Ps 23:1 (Eng. Ps 24): “τῆς μῆς σαββάτων” (i.e., “on the first [day] of the week”); and, Ps 93:1 (Eng. Ps 94): “τετράδι σαββάτων” (i.e., “for the fourth [day] of the week”).

⁹⁰ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 18. Hebrew has two different words for “week.” The one is spelled שבוע or שבועות (i.e., “period of seven,” “heptad,” or “week”), and appears 20 times in the MT. The LXX has rendered these terms as follows: (a) Twelve times as forms of the Greek lexical term *ἐβδομάς* (i.e., “week,” or “period of seven days”), in Gen 29:27, 28; Exod 34:22; Num 28:26; Deut 16:9 (2x), 10, 16; 2 Chron 8:13; Dan 9:24; 10:2, 3; (b) Twice as “ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας” (i.e., “seven days”), Lev 12:5; Ezek 45:21; (c) Once it is not translated at all (in Jer 5:24); and (d) Five times it appears that a different original Hebrew text than the MT was used (in Dan 9:25 [2x], 26, 27 [2x]). Though less frequently used, the other Hebrew word for “week” is שבת, the same term used for the seventh-day Sabbath (as well as for the Sabbatical year [Lev 25:2ff.], etc.). The LXX has rendered these as follows: (a) Twice as forms of *ἐβδομάς*, in Lev 23:15; 25:8b; and (b) Once it is rendered as a form of the lexical term *ἀνάπαυσις* (i.e., “rest”), in Lev 25:8a. Besides the use of *ἐβδομάς* as “week,” the LXX used the words *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* for “week,” in the Psalms (as pointed out in the above footnotes, #88 and #89).

properly understand the meaning of σάββατον and/or σάββατα in these texts, but such use of ἑβδομάς also compellingly confirms that the writers of the New Testament employed both σάββατον and σάββατα as singulars, referring to the “week,” in these nine instances.⁹¹

Now that we have diagramed the manner in which the two Greek terms σάββατον and σάββατα have been utilized and aptly translated as the singular word “week” in essentially all regular English versions of the New Testament,⁹² the use of these two words in all the other cases in the κοινή Greek needs to be carefully considered.

Reference	Σάββατον	Σάββατα	Contextual Meaning
Matt 12:1		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:2	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on [a] Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:5a		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:5b	τὸ σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:8	τοῦ σαββάτου		“of the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:10		τοῖς σάββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:11		τοῖς σάββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 12:12		τοῖς σ ἄ ββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Matt 24:20	χειμῶνος μηδὲ σαββάτῳ		“in winter nor on a Sabbath:” both singulars
Matt 28:1		Σαββάτων	pre-resurrection day: sing.
Mark 1:21		τοῖς σάββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular

⁹¹ The key parts of these verses are as follows: “πρώτης τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (Matt 28:1b); “πρώτης ἡμέρας τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (Mark 16:2); “πρώτης τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (Mark 16:9); “δὶς τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (Luke 18:12); “πρώτην ἡμέραν τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (Luke 24:1); “πρώτην τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (John 20:1); “πρώτης τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (John 20:19); “πρώτη ἡμέρα τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (Acts 20:7); “κατὰ τὴν πρώτην τῆς ἑβδομάδος” (1 Cor 16:2). Also, this usage of various forms of the lexical term ἑβδομάς is employed in the Modern Greek Bible in all of the 20 appearances, noted in footnote #90 above, in which the Hebrew words שַׁבָּת or שַׁבָּתוֹת were used (except for Ezek 45:21, which has “ἑπτὰ ἡμερῶν,” which is similar to the LXX’s “ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας”).

⁹² This includes versions such as the ASV, CEV, ESV, HCSB, ICB, JB, KJV, NAB, NASB, NASBrev, NCV, NET, NIrV, NIV, NJB, NKJV, NLV, NRSV, REB, RSV, RV, TNIV, etc.

Mark 2:23		τοῖς σάββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:24		τοῖς ⁹³ σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:27a	τὸ σάββα τον		“the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:27b	τὸ σάββατ ον		“the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 2:28	τοῦ σαββάτου		“of the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 3:2		τοῖς σάββασιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 3:4		τοῖς σάββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Mark 6:2	σαββάτου		taught on “Sabbath:” sing.
Mark 15:42	προσάββα τον		day before “Sabbath:” sing.
Mark 16:1	τοῦ σαββάτου		“the Sabbath” ended: sing.
Luke 4:16		τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων	in synagogue, “on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 4:31		τοῖς σάββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:1	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on a Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:2		τοῖς σάββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:5	τοῦ σαββάτου		“of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:6	ἐν ἑτέρῳ σαββάτῳ		“on another Sabbath,” contrasting vs. 1: singular
Luke 6:7	ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 6:9	τῷ σαββάτῳ ⁹⁴		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:10		τοῖς σάββα σιν	“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:14a	τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:14b	τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου		in synagogue, “on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 13:15	τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular

⁹³ The Majority Text has “ἐν τοῖς σάββασιν,” a distinction of no consequence to the above investigation.

⁹⁴ The Majority Text has “τοῖς σάββασιν,” a significant difference, to be discussed further below.

Luke 13:16	τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου		divine healing, “on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 14:1	σαββάτῳ		“on a Sabbath:” singular
Luke 14:3	τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 14:5	ἐν ⁹⁵ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου		animal mercy, “on [the] day of the Sabbath:” singular
Luke 23:54	σάββατον		post-preparation day: sing.
Luke 23:56	τὸ ... σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
John 5:9	σάββατον		healing on “Sabbath:” sing.
John 5:10	σάββατόν		healing on “Sabbath:” sing.
John 5:16	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on a Sabbath:” singular
John 5:18	τὸ σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
John 7:22	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on a Sabbath:” singular
John 7:23a	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on a Sabbath:” singular
John 7:23b	ἐν σαββάτῳ		“on a Sabbath:” singular
John 9:14	σάββατον		healing on “Sabbath:” sing.
John 9:16	τὸ σάββατον		“the Sabbath:” singular
John 19:31 a	ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ		“on the Sabbath:” singular
John 19:31b	ἡ ἡμέρα ... τοῦ σαββάτου		literally, “the day...of the Sabbath:” singular
Acts 1:12	σαββάτου		“a Sabbath:” singular
Acts 13:14		τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων	in synagogue, “on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Acts 13:27	πᾶν σάββατον		“every Sabbath:” singular
Acts 13:42	εἰς τὸ μεταξὺ σάββατον		“on the following Sabbath:” singular

⁹⁵ The Majority Text has “ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου,” a distinction of no consequence to the above investigation.

Acts 13:44	τῷ δὲ ἐρχομένῳ σαββάτῳ		“and on the coming [i.e., next] Sabbath:” singular
Acts 15:21	πάν σαββα τον		“every Sabbath:” singular
Acts 16:13		τῇ τε ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων	worship; “and on the day of the Sabbath:” singular
Acts 17:2		καὶ ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία	“and for <i>three Sabbaths</i> : ⁹⁶ plural (because of “ τρία ”)
Acts 18:4	πάν σαββα τον		“every Sabbath:” singular
Col 2:16		ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων	“or in respect of festival or new moon or ‘σαββάτων:’ 1st two nouns are singular; what then of ‘σαββάτων’?”

Even a cursory overview of the linguistic and contextual evidence outlined immediately above demonstrates the fact that the inspired writers of the New Testament freely utilized both the Greek terms *σαββατον* and *σαββατα* as a singular to refer to “sabbath.”⁹⁷ As the seventeenth-century Bible scholar Wallis noted: “In the New Testament, though the Sabbath be sometimes called *σαββατον*, it is very often *σαββατα*.”⁹⁸ Or, as R. McL. Wilson more recently expressed it: “The [apparent] plural *τὰ σαββατα* is quite often used, as well as the singular, for a single Sabbath day.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Note that the RSV is basically the only formal English translation that renders this as “three weeks,” instead of “three Sabbaths.” However, “there is nothing in the Greek, linguistic or contextual, or in the circumstances described, to require [or even allow] the translation ‘week;’” *Problems in Bible Translation*, 230. Interestingly, there is no known occasion in the entire New Testament (whether the original *κοινή* or the Modern Greek Bible), where any term is to be rightly rendered as the plural “weeks.”

⁹⁷ Referencing James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 174, and R. McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 219, Ranzolin posited that “the plural ‘sabbaths’ (*σαββάτων*) was often employed to refer to a single sabbath;” Leo S. Ranzolin, “The Sabbath in Colossians” (paper presented at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Washington, DC, November 17, 2006). See also the statement in Frank E. Gaebelien, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 11:204: “*Σάββατα*, though plural [at least visually], is regularly used in the NT in a singular sense.”

⁹⁸ See Cox, 2:100. Or, as Abbott, *Commentary*, 264, noted: “*σαββατα*, though plural, means ‘a Sabbath day.’”

⁹⁹ Wilson, 219. See also Vaughan, who noted: “*Σάββατα* (*sabbata*), though plural, is regularly used in the NT in a singular sense;” Curtis Vaughan, “Colossians,” in *Ephesians Through Philemon*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 204; Lohse stated: “The plural *τὰ σαββατα* is very frequently used to designate the singular;” Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robert J.

The *only* incontrovertible exception to this practice is located in Acts 17:2, where the numeral τρία (i.e., “three”), which immediately follows σάββατα, and is thus directly attached to it, indicates that the σάββατα must be translated in this specific instance as the plural word “Sabbaths.”¹⁰⁰

Once again, investigation of the Modern Greek Bible furnishes some helpful data. Other than Acts 17:2 (which is clearly a plural due to the connected τρία), this version has changed 12 of the 18 occurrences of σάββατα into forms of the singular σάββατον,¹⁰¹ thus validating the conclusion that in κοινή Greek the term σάββατα was often understood and interpreted as a singular.

In his *Word Studies in the New Testament* Marvin Vincent corroborated the above analysis, stating: “The plural is *only once* used in the New Testament of more than a single day (Acts xvii. 2).”¹⁰² This general manner, in which the apparent plural term σάββατα is regularly employed as a singular entity,¹⁰³ is repeatedly validated by the following text-critical, intra-narrative, intra-textual, inter-synoptic, semantic, and structural evidence.

Substitutability of Σάββατα with Σάββατον

Comparative Manuscript Analysis

A comparative evaluation of the 27th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek

Karris (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1968), 115. Also, Eduard Lohse, σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή, *TDNT* 7:7, indicated that, among the possible meanings of τὰ σάββατα is “one Sabbath.” Likewise, *Problems in Bible Translation* (231) affirms that “the Greek uses the plural form with singular sense.” Similarly, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 1579.

¹⁰⁰ Earlier, Hardy’s view (“The Sabbath in Colossians 2?,” 10) was noted in a footnote: “No one denies that this Greek plural can be translated as a singular where context requires, but if the context does not require singular meaning—if instead it requires plural meaning, as I believe the present context does—there is nothing in the plurality of the Greek term which would require us to translate it other than what it is, i.e., a plural.” The above data, that shows that the term σάββατα should always be rendered as a singular unless lucid linguistic links and/or clear contextual cues require it, promotes precisely the inverse of what Hardy has proposed.

¹⁰¹ The other passages in which the apparent plural term σάββατα was retained in the MGK are: Matt 12:5a; Mark 2:24; Luke 4:31; 6:2, 9; Col 2:16.

¹⁰² Marvin R. Vincent, *The Epistles of Paul: Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 3 of *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Scribner’s, 1924), 494 (emphasis added). So also, A. Lukyn Williams, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 103, who noted: “In Acts xvii. 2, ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία, it has a plural meaning, but everywhere else, probably, in the N.T. still the singular.”

¹⁰³ Wood, ‘Sabbath Days’, 341, rightly noted that “The New Testament contains similar instances” as seen in the Septuagint, where the [apparent] plural form σάββατα is found with a singular meaning, including Matt 12:1; 28:1; Luke 4:16. Similarly, more than a decade earlier, Neufeld, “Sabbath Day or Sabbath Days?” 13, noted that the [apparent] “Greek plural form” “often stands for the singular,” such as in Matt 12:1; 28:1; Luke 4:16.

text with the 1995 Robinson-Pierpont Majority Text reveals only two substantial variants germane to this research:

(a) While Nestle-Aland has “τῷ σαββάτῳ” (the dative singular) for Luke 6:9, the Majority Text has “τοῖς σάββασι” (the dative apparent plural); yet, both passages contextually refer to the same, single, seventh-day “Sabbath.”

(b) Similarly, whereas the Nestle-Aland text has “κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου” (the genitive singular) for 1 Corinthians 16:2, the Majority Text has “κατὰ μίαν σαββάτων” (the genitive apparent plural); yet, both are rightly rendered basically as, “on the first [day] of every week,” in standard English Bible versions.¹⁰⁴ In sum, while one set of manuscripts employs the lexical singular term σάββατον, to mean either a “sabbath” or a “week” (depending on the linguistic links and/or the context), the other set of manuscripts utilizes what is visually the plural word σάββατα, to identify precisely the same singular “Sabbath” or the identical singular “week.” Concurring with such textual evidence, New Testament exegete Murray Harris affirmed: “Remarkably, σάββατον, -ου, τὸ in either the sg. or the pl. can mean either ‘sabbath’ or ‘week.’”¹⁰⁵ This conclusion is corroborated by various Greek lexicons. For example, in defining σάββατον, the Friberg Lexicon states that “both singular and plural [are] used for the seventh day of the week (Saturday);” also, the “singular and plural [are used] as a designation for the span of seven days [i.e., a] week.”¹⁰⁶

Intra-Narrative Investigation

This type of usage of σάββατα to identify a single concept is further illustrated through a study of the manner in which various inspired writers have used these terms within the same pericopes. This intra-narrative usage first appears in Matthew’s account of the disciples plucking grain on the seventh-day Sabbath. Matthew 12:1 and 5a both have the phrase “τοῖς σάββασι” (an apparent plural), whereas verse 2 has “ἐν σαββάτῳ,” v. 5b has “τὸ σάββατον,” and v. 8 has “τοῦ σαββάτου” (all singulars); yet, both the apparent plurals, and the obvious singulars refer to the identical Sabbath day (singular). The record of this grain plucking is quite similar in Mark 2. While the writer utilizes “τοῖς σάββασι” (the apparent plural) in both vv. 23 and 24, he opts for “τὸ σάββατον” (the singular) twice in v. 27, and “τοῦ σαββάτου” (the singular) in v. 28—all five uses of which refer quite interchangeably to

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, ESV, ICB, NASB, NASBrev, NIV, NIV, NRSV, RSV, RV, TNIV, etc.

¹⁰⁵ Murray J. Harris, *Colossians & Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 118.

¹⁰⁶ See also, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon; as well as Bauer’s *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.

the same, single, seventh-day Sabbath. In the identical grain-plucking chronicle, we find that, while Luke 6:2 has “τοῖς σάββασιν” (an apparent plural), Luke 6:1 uses “σαββάτω,” and v. 5 uses “τοῦ σαββάτου,” inflected forms of the singular σάββατον, all to describe the same single Sabbath.

In an analogous manner, the story of the crippled woman whom Jesus healed in the synagogue evidences a similar substitutability of σάββατα with σάββατον. Whereas Luke 13:10 has “τοῖς σάββασιν” (an apparent plural), vv. 14–16 employ only inflected forms of the singular,¹⁰⁷ all of which are used to identify the identical, single, seventh-day Sabbath.

Third, in the book of Acts a similar example relating to the utilization of σάββατα to refer to an individual Sabbath can be observed. In recording Paul’s visit to Antioch of Pisidia, Luke employs “τῶν σαββάτων” (an apparent plural) in Acts 13:14, to refer to a single Sabbath on which Paul was invited to preach, and then he utilizes “τὸ σάββατον” (v. 42), and “τῷ...σαββάτῳ” (v. 44) to refer to a Sabbath day, of a week later. The appropriateness of this type of intra-narrative interchangeability of σάββατον and σάββατα is confirmed by the manner in which virtually all regular English versions render these passages.¹⁰⁸

Finally, in Mark 16, there is one other example of such unmistakable linguistic use of σάββατα for a single entity. Here, Mark employs “μὴ τῶν σαββάτων,” an apparent plural (in v. 2),¹⁰⁹ followed by “πρώτη σαββάτου,” the singular (in v. 9), to refer to the very same, single, “first [day] of the week,” as evidenced in basically all English translations.¹¹⁰

Intra-Textual Examination

Significantly, one of the clearer passages identifying this essential similarity of meaning between σάββατον and σάββατα is located within one specific verse dealing with the seventh-day Sabbath. Of all the gospels, only Matt 12:5 records the statement of Jesus (regarding the priests who were ministering in the temple on the Sabbath), part of which reads: “ὅτι τοῖς σάββασιν οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τὸ σάββατον.” As rendered in many versions, no distinction is made at all between the apparent plural (of the “τοῖς σάββασιν”) or the phrase in the singular, “τὸ σάββατον”; both are understood

¹⁰⁷ These are “τῷ σαββάτῳ” (in both Luke 13:14a, and 15), and “τοῦ σαββάτου” (in both Luke 13:14b, and 16).

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, ASV, ESV, KJV, NAB, NASB, NASBrev, NIV, NKJV, NRSV, RSV, etc.

¹⁰⁹ The Majority Text, while also using the apparent plural, records this slightly differently, as “τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων.”

¹¹⁰ See, for example, ASV, ESV, KJV, NAB, NASB, NASBrev, NIV, NKJV, NRSV, RSV, etc.

and interpreted to refer to a Sabbath, in the singular, even though a visual plural is employed in the first instance.¹¹¹

Inter-Synoptic Inquiry

Instructive in this regard is the manner in which inspired synoptic gospel writers record the identical event, yet using language that on the surface seems contradictory. Concerning the grain-plucking incident, Matt 12:1, as well as Mark 2:23, indicates that Jesus went through these fields “τοῖς σάββασι” (the apparent plural). However, Luke 6:1 records this same event, indicating that Jesus went through the fields “ἐν σαββάτῳ” (using the singular term). In other words, Luke refers to the same incident on the same Sabbath (using the regular singular term), whereas Matthew and Mark speak of the same event on the same day, while using an apparent plural term. In like manner, Matt 12:2 points out that the Pharisees charged the disciples with doing what was not lawful “ἐν σαββάτῳ” (using the singular), while both Mark 2:24 and Luke 6:2 maintain that the Pharisees accused the disciples of doing what was not lawful “τοῖς σάββασι” (the apparent plural).

The question naturally arises, Which language did the Pharisees actually use: the regular singular or the apparent plural? Or, is it possible that there is really no essential difference between σάββατον (the normal Greek singular), and σάββατα (the apparent plural) in the regular usage in κοινή Greek?

Immediately following the outdoor encounter with the Pharisees, all three synoptic gospels record Jesus’ visit to the synagogue on a certain Sabbath, and the incident regarding the man with a withered hand. This issue, as to the legality of healing on the Sabbath, also provides some insight into the way in which σάββατον and σάββατα were employed in everyday usage in New Testament times. Luke 6:7 indicates that these Jewish leaders were watching to see whether Jesus would heal him “ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ” (the regular singular), while Mark 3:2 uses “τοῖς σάββασι” (the apparent plural form).¹¹² In order to illustrate the importance of showing compassion on the Sabbath, Jesus then asked whether they would rescue an animal that had fallen into a

¹¹¹ On this, Ringer essentially concurred, though he failed to recognize that the plural was merely an *apparent* form: “The New Testament uses both the singular and the plural forms of the Sabbath to refer to the seventh-day Sabbath. A good example of the singular and plural uses of the Sabbath is found in Matt 12;” Wesley Ringer, “A Review of the Controversy over Circumcision, Clean Meats and Sabbaths that Existed Between Jew and Gentile Believers in the First Century and How These Issues Influence the Seventh-day Adventists to this Present Day,” from wes_ringer@prodigy.net.

¹¹² Incidentally, Matt 12:10 records the query of the Pharisees as to the legality of healing “τοῖς σάββασι” (an apparent plural); yet, in Luke 14:3, when Jesus asks the same question of the Pharisees, He asks if it is lawful to heal “τῷ σαββάτῳ” (the normal singular).

pit on the Sabbath: Matt 12:11 uses “τοῖς σάββασιν” (an apparent plural), while Luke 14:5, noting that Jesus asked essentially the same question on another occasion, employs singulars: “ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου.” In Luke 6:9, in this Sabbath miracle account, Jesus rhetorically asks if it is lawful to do good “τῷ σαββάτῳ” (i.e., “on the Sabbath,” singular).¹¹³ Mark 3:4, however, has Jesus asking the same question, but using the phrase “τοῖς σάββασιν” (an apparent plural).¹¹⁴

This same type of substitutability of the lexical term σάββατα for the regular singular σάββατον, can also be seen in the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week. Whereas, Mark 16:1 uses the singular “τοῦ σαββάτου” to refer to the Sabbath that was past, Matt 28:1 employs “σαββάτων” (an apparent genitive plural) to refer to the selfsame entity.

Such usage of σάββατον and σάββατα, as observed in the above examples, engenders the following crucial query: Is it possible that the term σάββατα (together with its various inflected forms), though it may have basically all the visual outward signs of being a normal plural word, should *always* automatically be viewed and treated as a singular term in the κοινή Greek Testament,¹¹⁵ unless it is followed immediately by a plural numeral?

Grammatical/Semantic Issues

Of the various ways in which σάββατα appears in the κοινή Greek Testament, one of the most enlightening is its appearance in the form identical to that located in Col 2:16—“σαββάτων.” Actually “σαββάτων,” this apparent plural genitive of σάββατα, appears ten other times in the ancient New Testament Greek.¹¹⁶ Six of these occurrences have already been discussed above, where it was pointed out that this apparent plural simply refers to a singular “week,” as indicated by the various linguistic identifiers

¹¹³ Admittedly, the Majority Text of Luke 6:9 has “τοῖς σάββασιν” (an apparent plural), like that of Mark 3:4.

¹¹⁴ While Mark and Luke record Jesus asking a question, Matt 12:12 has a statement: “ὥστε ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν καλῶς ποιεῖν” (i.e., “Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” [NKJV]).

¹¹⁵ This conclusion appears also applicable for the Greek of the LXX, since all of the passages in which the lexical term σάββατα appears (whether coming from either singular or plural original Hebrew words), can actually be seen and rightly understood to refer to singular concepts (i.e., the seventh-day Sabbath, the Day of Atonement, or the Sabbatical year).

¹¹⁶ Thus, referencing Lightfoot’s *Colossians* commentary, Bevere aptly noted: “Indeed, the use of the plural σαββάτων here is commonly Jewish;” Allan R. Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians*, JSNT Sup 226 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 78.

and other contextual factors. Incidentally, Matt 28:1 has the term σάββατα in a unique construct: “Οὐψὲ δὲ σαββάτων” (i.e., contextually, “now after [the] Sabbath”). As just noted above, it is obvious that the genitive apparent plural here refers to a single, Sabbath day.

It is the three verses, however, from the pen of the physician Luke that bring to light some fundamental aspects of the meaning of “σαββάτων”—factors that harmonize well with the evidence observed above, in the intra-textual analysis of the Septuagint’s use of the same term. When Luke writes about the weekly custom of Jesus, he notes in Luke 4:16 that he went into the synagogue “τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων.”¹¹⁷ If one insists that the term “σαββάτων” is “not ambiguous,” but is “a genitive plural and [that] it cannot be singular,”¹¹⁸ then one is faced with an intractable anomaly; for, the above phrase would then have to be literally translated into English as “on the day [singular] of the Sabbath s [plural]”—a nonsensical sentence.

This type of grammatical construct is not unique in κοινή Greek; for in Acts 13:14 Luke tells of how Paul went into the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, “τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων” (as above, literalistically, “on the day [singular] of the Sabbath s [plural]”). One other time, in Acts 16:13, Luke informs us that he went with Paul to the riverside to pray, “τῇ τε ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων” (similar to the above, “and on the day [singular] of the Sabbath s [plural]”). Obviously, the very linguistic structure of the above phrases demonstrates that the word “σαββάτων,” though it appears as if it is declined from the apparent plural σάββατα, must be understood and translated as a singular; hence the above phrases would correctly read, “on the day of the Sabbath [singular],” or in smoother English, “on the Sabbath day.”

Linguistic/Structural Considerations

Finally, in connection with the investigation of this type of interchangeability between σάββατον and σάββατα, the word most significant to this study needs to be considered—the actual term “σαββάτων” located in Colossians 2:16. In an extended essay on “The Sabbath,” Kenneth

¹¹⁷ Interestingly, Luke also uses regular singulars (in Luke 13:14, and 16): “τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου” (i.e., “the day of the Sabbath”); and similarly Luke 14:5: “ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου” (i.e., “on [the] day of the Sabbath”). Note: Slightly different, the Majority Text has “ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου” here. Also, in John 5:9 there is a similar sentence structure (utilizing the singular): “Ἦν δὲ σάββατον ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ” (i.e., “Now that day was the Sabbath” [ESV]). Similarly, John 9:14: “ἦν δὲ σάββατον ἐν ἡ ἡμέρᾳ” (i.e., “Now it was a Sabbath on the day” [NASB]). Note: The Majority Text does not have “ἐν ἡ ἡμέρᾳ” here.

¹¹⁸ Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath*, 277.

Strand proposed that “it is also possible that Paul [in Colossians 2:16] was using the common literary device of inverted parallelism, thus moving from annual to monthly and then back again to annual festivals.”¹¹⁹ This hypothesis has now been afforded considerable supportive evidence through ongoing research, as seen in recent scholarly publications.¹²⁰

In order to identify accurately the meaning of the Colossians 2:16 phrase, “ἑορτῆς ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων” (and especially that final term “σαββάτων”), one must adequately take into account certain vital factors, such as the linguistic indicators and the immediate and broader contexts. Sustained scholarly research has demonstrated that the lexical κοινή Greek term ἑορτή (just as with the Hebrew עֲרֹבָה), when used in a cultic context, is a restricted word used for either one or all of the three annual pilgrim festivals (i.e., Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). The lexical word νεομηνία (just as with its Old Testament counterpart חֹדֶשׁ), when used in a ritual context, identifies the monthly new moon celebrations. And, the apparent plural term σάββατα (like the שַׁבָּת in the Hebrew Scriptures), when used in a ceremonial context, refers to the non-seventh-day “rest times” (of Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years). In brief, these three terms, when contextually employed in a very specific manner, are limited to the annual pilgrimage festivals, the monthly new moons, and the annual (and septennial) sabbaths.¹²¹

A second crucial aspect to be considered is the origin of the tripartite phrase: “ἑορτῆς ... νεομηνίας ... σαββάτων.” Meticulous research shows that, contrary to popular assumptions, Colossians 2:16 is not a triad originating from certain passages in Numbers, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Nehemiah, and/or Ezekiel, which may superficially seem similar.¹²² However, there is a

¹¹⁹ Kenneth A. Strand, “The Sabbath,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 506.

¹²⁰ Notably that of *Judging the Sabbath*, as referenced above; see also, Ron du Preez, “Is the Seventh-day Sabbath a ‘Shadow of Things to Come?’” in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl Biblical Research Institute Studies, vol. 2 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 391–397. Commenting on the articles in this volume, the back page notes: “Although each article is signed, they have been reviewed and revised by the members of the Biblical Research Institute Committee, a group of about forty scholars and administrators from around the world.”

¹²¹ See du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath* (pp. 31–53, 71–81, 106–110, 129–130), for the extensive evidence for these conclusions.

¹²² For example, none of the eight passages located in the above-mentioned five books has the crucial three terms in the singular, as does Col 2:16; all eight actually have at least four parts (not three as seen in Col 2:16); all eight specifically indicate that the focus is on burnt offerings and not the actual days themselves (which contradicts the emphasis in Col 2:16); and, all eight

compelling weight of inter-textual, comparative, linguistic, semantic, syntactical, grammatical, structural, and contextual evidence to demonstrate that the three-part calendric string located in Colossians 2:16 originates from Hosea 2:11.¹²³ Here, the prophet Hosea is describing annual pilgrim feasts (of Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), new moon celebrations, and non-seventh-day sabbath “rest times” (of Trumpets, Atonement, and Sabbatical Years), all essential parts of the ancient Israelite religious system.

Finally, in this regard, an increasing number of biblical scholars are now recognizing the indispensability of taking cognizance of a significant aspect of Semitic communication—that is, the frequent utilization by the ancient writers of chiasms or inverted parallelisms in their writings.¹²⁴ Acknowledging this practice, as well as the fact that both the words *ἐορτῆς* and *νεομηνίας* in Colossians 2:16 are irrefutably singulars, it becomes persuasively plain that the third term, “σαββάτων,” would most logically be a singular word as well. Accordingly, Giem aptly concluded in his research, that “it is much more likely that it [i.e., σαββάτων] is singular like *ἐορτῆς* and *νεομηνίας*, the other two words in the series.”¹²⁵

In fact, as Wood observed, in commenting on the King James Version of Col 2:16, “Apparently the apostle Paul used *sabbath* generically in the singular, to correspond with the four other words in the series – meat, drink, holy day, and new moon, each of which is singular.”¹²⁶ Commentator Margaret MacDonald noted: “In Greek the references to festivals and new moons are in the singular and the phrase is sometimes literally translated as such (e.g., NAB: with regard to a festival or new moon or sabbath).”¹²⁷

include a *daily* burnt offering (a factor not present in Col 2:16). See du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*, 55–70, for additional information.

¹²³ Both Hos 2:11 [MT: v. 13] and Col 2:16 consist of a three-part grouping; both have the same sequence (first “feast,” then “new moon,” finally “sabbath”); both have the key terms stated in the singular; both passages deal with the *days* per se, and not with burnt offerings; and both lack any linguistic links crucial for identifying “sabbath” as the seventh day (since such is evidently not the case). See du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*, 55–70, 97–143, for substantial support for this conclusion.

¹²⁴ See, for example, Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*, JSNT Sup 111 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 152; Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 115. Also, see du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*, 115–143, for additional references and evidence for this conclusion.

¹²⁵ Giem, “Investigation,” 28.

¹²⁶ Wood, ‘Sabbath Days’, 341.

¹²⁷ Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, SP 17 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 110. She added: “But it is also possible that the nouns are generic singulars and therefore can be translated as they are here in the plural (cf. NRSV).”

As has repeatedly and abundantly been attested above, the word *σάββατα* (including its inflected forms) is to be understood and rendered as a singular, unless it is directly followed with a plural numeral. Hence, the additional evidence, that Col 2:16 contains a semantic inverted parallelism (in which the singular *ἑορτῆς* echoes the *σαββάτων*), strengthens the position that the “*σαββάτων*” is not to be viewed as a plural, but rather as a definite singular. Though stated somewhat tentatively by a seventh-day Sabbatarian, this fact was already well-recognized in the early 1980s: “Adventists are aware that the word *sabbath* in v. 16, though apparently plural in form, probably should be translated as a singular.”¹²⁸

In brief then, the precise definition of key terms in Colossians 2:16, the most probable Old Testament origin of its tripartite phrase, and the indispensable element of semantic parallelisms, all synchronize to validate the data as outlined in the above charts of New Testament passages—that the textual weight of evidence shows that the lexical term *σάββατα*, as utilized in the κοινή Greek, must be understood and interpreted as a singular, and not as a plural, unless it is immediately followed by a plural numeral. This in-depth examination of New Testament materials provides additional evidence regarding the common usage and understanding of *σάββατα*, which corroborates the findings from the investigation of the Septuagint (as well as the Modern Greek Bible), the deuterocanonical works, and extra-biblical writings.

Etymological Origins of Σάββατα

To begin with, it must be acknowledged that, in and of itself, the basic Greek term *σάββατα* (together with its inflected forms) appears, on the surface at least, to be the regular plural of the normal singular word *σάββατον*. However, extensive examination of *σάββατα* in the LXX, in extra-canonical works, in apocryphal writings, in the κοινή Greek Testament, and as validated by the Modern Greek Bible, together provide compelling evidence that such a simplistic perspective of this term can no longer be credibly maintained. Thus, the following query naturally arises: Why does *σάββατα* have the definite appearance of a plural term when it is always employed as a singular, unless directly followed by a plural numeral?¹²⁹

The issue as to whether or not the term *σάββατα* is simply a genuine plural, as inflected from the Greek neuter noun *σάββατον*, has caused

¹²⁸ Wood, ‘Sabbath Days’, 341.

¹²⁹ As in Acts 17:2, noted above.

considerable discussion over the years. At least as far back as 1879, an acknowledged New Testament Greek authority, J. B. Lightfoot, pointed out the following: “The word *σάββατα* is derived from the Aramaic . . . *שַׁבְּתָא*, and accordingly preserves the Aramaic termination in *a*. Hence it was naturally declined as a plural noun, *σάββατα, σαββάτων*,”¹³⁰ as seen in Col 2:16. As supportive evidence for his conclusion, Lightfoot referenced, among other ancient writers, Josephus,¹³¹ who utilized both *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* for the singular, seventh-day Sabbath, as already indicated above.¹³²

The manner in which Josephus employed these two terms is corroborated by the conclusions of Heinrich Meyer (as published in 1885), in which he recognized the term “*σάββατα* as equivalent to *σάββατον*.”¹³³

In his almost 1,500-page tome on Greek grammar, the widely recognized New Testament scholar Archibald Robertson noted the difference between *σάββατον* and *σάββατα*.¹³⁴ Though, on the surface, appearing as the singular and plural of the identical word, he pointed out that these two terms actually originate from two different languages. First, the Hebrew term for “sabbath” is *שַׁבָּת*, and is the logical source of the normal Greek word *σάββατον*. However, in post-exilic times the Aramaic language was widely used in

¹³⁰ Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles*, 194. Incidentally, about two decades earlier, Robinson had already (though much more tentatively) pointed out the apparent connection with the Aramaic: “*τὰ σάββατα*, mostly for the Singular; originally perhaps an imitation of the Aramaean form *שַׁבְּתָא*,” Edward Robinson, *A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament*, new ed. (New York: Harper, 1858), 651 (abbreviation updated).

¹³¹ Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles*, 194, noted: “The general use of *σάββατα*, when a single sabbath-day was meant, will appear from such passages as *Jos. Ant.* i.I.I, *ἀγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν, προσαγορευοντες αὐτὴν σάββατα*, *ibid.* iii.10.I *ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν ἣτις σάββατα καλεῖται*, *Plut. Mor.* 169 C *Ἰουδαῖοι σαββάτων ὄντων ἐν ἀγνάμπτοις καθεζόμενοι*, *ibid.* 671 F, *οἶμαι δὲ καὶ τὴν τῶν σαββάτων ἑορτὴν μὴ παντάπασιν ἀπροσδιόνυσσον εἶναι*.” See also, Abbott, *Commentary*, 264: “Thus Josephus distinctly, *Ant.* iii.10.I, *ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν ἣτις σάββατα καλεῖται*; also *ibid.* i.I.I.”

¹³² Thus far, the research has not revealed any explanation as to the reason(s) that the above-mentioned writers (including the translators of the Septuagint) chose to use both the regular Greek singular *σάββατον* and the Aramaic singular transliterated form of *σάββατα* to refer to a singular noun (whether it be the seventh-day Sabbath, a week, a ceremonial day, or the Sabbatical Year). Taking into account the historical background, it would not seem unreasonable to postulate that these writers may have been seeking to use both forms since their intended readers and/or listeners may have included both native Greek-speakers, as well as those for whom Aramaic had become the main language of communication.

¹³³ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon*, trans. John C. Moore, rev. and ed. William P. Dickson (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 312. Though more tentative, Barth and Blanke (339n8) basically concurred, saying: “The plural form *sabbata* is probably to be understood in the singular.”

¹³⁴ Robertson, *Grammar*, 88–108.

Palestine, and its word for the sabbath is שַׁבְּתָא, which could easily have been transliterated into Greek as σάββατα, especially since the Greek language has no “sh” sound.¹³⁵

In the mid-twentieth century Harper-Knapp, suggesting “an Aramaic origin for the word in its form σάββατα,”¹³⁶ articulated this view as follows:

The Aramaic form is the same as the Hebrew שַׁבְּתָא but, while the Hebrew substantive is made definite by prefixing the definite article, the Aramaic makes a definite form (often called the emphatic state) with a sort of post-positive article, with a suffixed א. Thus the Aramaic emphatic state [אשַׁבְּתָא] (*sic*) ends in the vocal -a. This Aramaic form, transliterated into the Greek, would appear as σάββατα. This would look like a neuter plural and on this basis was declined as such.¹³⁷

In other words, since in normal Greek grammar σάββατα is the plural of the neuter singular σάββατον, this transliterated Aramaic term, as W. E. Vine noted, “was mistaken for a plural.”¹³⁸

Over time, many other biblical scholars have affirmed the basic perspective on the origin and meaning of σάββατα, as espoused by Greek linguists such as Lightfoot and Robertson.¹³⁹ Now, more than a century after

¹³⁵ See the summary of Robertson by Earle Hilgert, “Sabbath Days’ in Colossians 2:16,” *Ministry* (February 1952): 42.

¹³⁶ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 6.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6–7. Harper-Knapp (*ibid.*, 7) goes on to state, as noted above: “But even though by every appearance it was plural, the fact that in the Aramaic the form and meaning were singular doubtless carried over into the Greek.” Then she added: “This would account in some degree for the very frequent use of this form as a singular.” About two decades after Harper-Knapp’s conclusions, fellow Adventist scholar Neufeld, “Sabbath Day or Sabbath Days?” 13, more cautiously stated: “This plural (*sabbata*) may represent the Aramaic singular *shabbetha*’, the reason perhaps being that the two words sound much alike.” Then, he added: “The *a* ending in Greek represents the plural for this word (the singular ending is *on*), whereas in Aramaic the *a* ending attaches to the singular.”

¹³⁸ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. III (London: Oliphants, 1940), 311. Moule concluded: “The original σάββατα, is a Greek plural in form, but only as it were by accident;” H. C. G. Moule, *Colossian Studies: Lessons in Faith and Holiness from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon*, 4th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), 174–175n2. Similarly, Abbott, *Commentary*, 264, noted that the term σάββατα is “a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic, and from its form mistaken for a plural.”

¹³⁹ See, for example, Abbott (*ibid.*, 264), who indicated that σάββατα is “in fact, a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic.” Moule, *Colossian Studies*, 174–175, agreed: “It is a transliteration of the Aramaic *shabbâthâ* (Hebrew, *shabbâth*).” Lohse (σάββατον, σαββατισμός, παρασκευή, 6), stated: “The Aram. שַׁבְּתָא is used for the single Sabbath or for the whole week.” See also, J. W. Shepard, *The Life and Letters of St. Paul: An Exegetical Study*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950), 521 n38; Norman C. Deck, *The Lord’s Day, or, The Sabbath: A Reply to Seventh Day Adventists* (London: Pickering & Inglis, nd), 77–78.

Lightfoot, contemporary scholarship has confirmingly concluded that this noun σάββατα is actually “an Aramaic loanword taken into Greek by the Jews of Alexandria.”¹⁴⁰

In brief then, the weight of evidence compellingly indicates that for more than two millennia, since at least around 250 BCE, and as corroborated in the translation of the Old Testament into κοινή Greek, in extra-biblical writings (such as that of Philo and Josephus), as well as in deuterocanonical works, the feminine singular Aramaic noun (with its attached definite article), שַׁבָּתָא “was transliterated into Greek as σάββατα and declined as a plural.”¹⁴¹

This cumulative data, together with the consistent usage of σάββατα in the κοινή Greek Testament, and its definition in standard Greek lexicons, provides a persuasive amount of proof that the term σάββατα must be understood and translated as a singular word in every case in the New Testament, except when distinctly identified by a plural numeral directly attached immediately after it, as seen only in Acts 17:2.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Leviticus*, SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series 44 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 380. See also, Hendrik L. Bosman, “Sabbath,” *NIDOTTE* 4:1160. “Modern conservative scholarship establishes the singular rendering of ‘sabbath’ in the New Testament.” Though more cautious, Barth and Blanke (339n8) essentially agreed, noting: “We are probably dealing with the appropriation of the Aramaic singular form *sabata* [sic], which is similar to a Greek form in the neuter plural and its declination.” Admittedly, two other possible origins for σάββατα have been proposed: (1) That it was formed by simple analogy to the neuter plural form of names of festivals such as τὰ ἄζυμα (i.e., “[the feast of] unleavened bread;” Mark 14:1), γενέσια (i.e., “birthday;” Mark 6:21), and τὰ ἐγκαινία (i.e., “[the feast of] the dedication;” John 10:22), where each name ends in the final “-a” sound, appearing to be a plural, but actually being a singular festival; and (2) That it was originally a transliteration of the Hebrew שַׁבָּת into Greek, but was given a Greek ending in “-a” in precisely the same way that ἄλλα, βῆτα, etc., received the final “-a” sound. See Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 7–8, referring to Eduard Schwyzer, “Altes und Neues zu (hebr.-)griech. σάββατα (griech.-)lat. sabbata usw.,” *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der Indogermanischen Sprachen* 62 (1934): 1–16.

¹⁴¹ Williams, *Epistles of Paul*, 103. As noted above, the Modern Greek Bible does render שַׁבָּת basically in accord with the MT.

¹⁴² This fact is corroborated by the consistent manner in which various versions, such as the ASV, ESV, NAB, NASB and NASBrev, have translated all the appearances of σάββατον and σάββατα as seen in the κοινή Greek Testament. Regarding this “unique” use of σάββατα, Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistles*, 194, observed: “In the New Testament σάββατα is only once used distinctly of more than a single day, and there the plurality of meaning is brought out by the attached numeral; Acts xvii. 2 ἐπὶ σάββατα τρία.” Incidentally, extensive study of the manner in which other calendric terms are combined with numerals so as to indicate plurality, provides supportive evidence for the manner in which the τρία is used to show the plurality of σάββατα, specifically in the writings of Luke, the author of Acts (where the only example is found in the κοινή Greek Testament of σάββατα being used as a definite plural, as noted above). For example, Luke places the plural numeral immediately behind the noun it qualifies twice as many times as he places it beforehand. In connection with ἡμέρα (i.e., “day”) being placed before the plural numeral, see Luke 2:21, 46; 4:2; 9:28; 18:33; Acts 1:3; 7:8; 9:9; 20:6 [2x]; 21:4; 21:7; 24:11; 25:6;

Summary and Conclusions

This essay has shown that, together with other Sabbatarians, a key argument made by early Seventh-day Adventists was that the lexical term *σάββατα*, which is used in Col 2:16, was a Greek plural noun; this claim was then used as supposed proof that “the plurality indicates the variety of ceremonial sabbaths,”¹⁴³ and not the seventh-day Sabbath of the decalogue. While this view began to experience a transition as early as the 1930s, some contemporary Adventists still strongly maintain that the actual word “*σαββάτων*” in Col 2:16 “is not ambiguous: it is a genitive plural and it cannot be singular.”¹⁴⁴

An exhaustive analysis of the manner in which the Old Testament was rendered into the *κοινή* Greek language, of more than two thousand years ago, has furnished some intriguing results: (a) All of the 29 times that the singular Hebrew term *שַׁבָּת* appears in the Pentateuch, it is translated as *σάββατα* (or its derivatives), even though the context and linguistic markers show that the word for “sabbath” must necessarily be singular; (b) Similarly, in the prophetic books, the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת* is rendered with *σάββατα* (or its inflected forms), 85 percent of the time, even though the context calls for a singular word; (c) The use of *σάββατον* and *σάββατα* in the Modern Greek Bible, though different, accords well with the analysis of the Septuagint’s employment of these two terms; (d) Intra-textual grammatical and semantic analyses provided additional persuasive proof that the word *σάββατα* cannot be simplistically considered as a plural Greek term.

A review of passages from extra-biblical works (such as that of Zenon, Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus, and Plutarch), as well as texts from

28:12, 14, 17. In connection with *μήν* (i.e., “month”) being placed before the plural numeral, see Luke 1:24, 26, 36, 56; 4:25; Acts 7:20; 18:11; 19:8; 20:3. In connection with *ἔτος* (i.e., “year”) being placed before the plural numeral, see Luke 2:36 [not found in the Majority Text], 37, 42; 3:1, 23; 4:25; 8:42, 43; 13:11; Acts 4:22; 7:6, 30, 36, 42; 9:33; 13:20, 21; 19:10. Besides Luke’s writings, the rest of the New Testament writers place the plural numeral immediately behind the noun it qualifies about half as many times as they place it beforehand, in connection with the same three calendric terms. Incidentally, in contradistinction to the Lukan pattern discussed above, the Modern Greek Bible renders the key phrase in Acts 17:2 as follows: “καὶ τρία σάββατα.” Since the MGK no longer uses either *σάββατον* or *σάββατα* for “week,” (but rather *ἑβδομάς*), there would be no confusion in placing a numeral *before* the noun, the position the numeral is normally placed in *κοινή* Greek to identify the day of the week.

¹⁴³ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 2, was merely reporting, and not endorsing this view.

¹⁴⁴ Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath*, 277. Admittedly, Reynolds did not hold this view in order to prove that the *σάββατα* (literally, “*σαββάτων*” in Col 2:16) refers to ceremonial sabbaths. Rather, his claim was that the “*σαββάτων*” here refers to the seventh-day Sabbath itself.

deutero-canonical writings, furnished additional data that support the compelling evidence already garnered, that the term *σάββατα* was regularly used as a singular Greek word, completely interchangeably with the normal singular *σάββατον*.

On this issue of the term *σάββατα*, it has been rightly recognized that “the writers of the New Testament did not coin any new usage, but used the word as it was commonly understood by the people in their time.”¹⁴⁵ Indeed, in connection with this research, it has been repeatedly attested that “the phraseology of the New Testament is very closely connected with that of the Septuagint, which in turn imitated the idiom of the Hebrew Old Testament.”¹⁴⁶ Hence, it should be no surprise that comprehensive examination of all “sabbath” terminology in the κοινή Greek Testament, revealed the following results, which are quite similar to those seen in the Septuagint.

(a) Regardless of whether the basic term used was *σάββατον* or *σάββατα*, competent Greek scholars over the centuries have consistently concluded that whenever these words are directly preceded by a numeral (or such a numeral immediately followed by the definite article), either of these terms must be rendered as the word “week,” in the singular; (b) In like manner, these two terms, based upon certain other specific cues from the immediate and broader contexts, must be understood and interpreted as the singular “sabbath,” except when it is immediately followed by a plural numeral; (c) Text-critical, intra-narrative, intra-textual, inter-synoptic, semantic, and structural investigation further supports the ever-burgeoning data, that in the LXX and the κοινή Greek Testament, the term *σάββατα* (including its inflectional forms) must be regularly understood and rendered as a singular under all circumstances, unless directly followed by a plural numeral.

As identified above, the only time that *σάββατα* is rightly understood to mean more than one Sabbath can be seen in Acts 17:2, where Luke intentionally immediately followed the term *σάββατα* with the numeral τρία, so as to clearly indicate that the reference in this particular case was specifically to “three Sabbath *ς*” (plural). The concomitant conclusion of the above syntactical rule is that, in the LXX and κοινή Greek Testament, the word *σάββατα*, whenever it has no such plural numerical marker immediately added directly after it, must be understood and interpreted as a singular word, and not as a plural. Since in Col 2:16 the lexical term *σάββατα*

¹⁴⁵ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 5.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

appears without any such numerical markers, and since it is part of a string of five singulars, (as well as part of a chiasmic structure that has a singular as an echo), it must be rendered as a singular, “sabbath.”¹⁴⁷

Finally, a consideration of the possible etymological origins of σάββατα indicated that, though the term appears as a normal Greek plural, it was apparently transliterated from the singular of the Aramaic emphatic form, and has been accepted and used, for more than two thousand years, as a regular Greek singular word, except when immediately followed by a plural numeral.

In brief, it appears that the argument for a plural reading of the σάββατα of Col 2:16, based on this being a supposed declension of the Greek singular σάββατον “is not substantiated,”¹⁴⁸ “rests on a shaky foundation,”¹⁴⁹ and “has been shown to be invalid.”¹⁵⁰ At least as far back as 1949, serious Adventist scholarship had already concluded that “biblical and contemporary non-biblical Greek usage of *sabbaton* reveals that both the singular σάββατον and its plural σάββατα are used to denote the singular meaning.”¹⁵¹ As Walter Martin aptly concluded regarding the σάββατα in Col 2:16: “Modern conservative scholarship establishes the singular rendering of ‘sabbath’ in the New Testament.”¹⁵²

Thus, a comparison of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, the record of translations into various languages over more than two millennia (from the Septuagint to contemporary versions), the extra-biblical writings of Zenon, Philo, Josephus, and Plutarch, deuterocanonical works, intra- and inter-textual analyses, a study of linguistics, together with etymological and lexicographical evidence, all compellingly demonstrate that the term “σαββάτων” in Colossians 2:16 (as derived from σάββατα), is a transliterated term which must be rightly rendered as the singular word “sabbath.”¹⁵³ The words of Wood thus fittingly express the conclusions of this extensive study:

¹⁴⁷ Also, since it has no directly preceding numeral (or with a numeral immediately followed by a definite article), it cannot be translated as the word “week.”

¹⁴⁸ Hilgert, “‘Sabbath Days’ in Colossians,” 42.

¹⁴⁹ Gier, “Investigation,” 28.

¹⁵⁰ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 37.

¹⁵¹ Harper-Knapp, “Critical Study,” 5.

¹⁵² Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists*, 166.

¹⁵³ Although this word has been declined as if it were a regular Greek plural, the “σαββάτων” in Col 2:16 is actually a singular term, and must be translated as “a sabbath,” and understood in the context as a collective singular, thus referring to the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and by extension the Sabbatical Years. As Murray (118) pointed out, Col 2:16 contains generic singulars, which can be translated as plurals. See also, du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*, 120–121, 136, 138, for more on terms which are singular in form, yet plural in meaning.

“The most defensible position seems to be to regard the [apparent] genitive plural *sabbatōn* in Colossians 2:16 as a singular. Not only from a linguistic point of view is this logical, but from the context.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Wood, ‘Sabbath Days’, 341. Recognizing the fact that *σάββατα* is singular, the argument for a connection between Hos 2:11 [MT: v. 13] and Col 2:16 becomes even stronger, especially since this is the only place in the Old Testament, where (just as in Col 2:16) the same three terms, in the same sequence, are mentioned. This also serves to strengthen the case for understanding the “σαββάτων” in Col 2:16 as referring to ceremonial sabbaths of the ancient Jewish religion; (see du Preez, *Judging the Sabbath*, 55–70, 97–143). Incidentally, the allegation (by Reynolds, review of *Judging the Sabbath*, 277) of “a weak link” in the research done for *Judging the Sabbath*, which purportedly resulted in “casting doubt on some of” the “other conclusions” in that volume, has now been shown to be completely without any substance whatsoever. Moreover, this research also highlights the danger of glibly assuming that the meaning of words can always be accurately determined by simply comparing such with the ordinary rules of standard grammars. Instead, the careful scholar must seek to understand how those terms are actually utilized in the language of the time, as well as over time, and in other related languages.

23

Worship, Eschatology, and Ethics: The Revelation of John and the Worshipping Imagination

Larry L. Lichtenwalter

Without doubt, John's Apocalypse is critical for a study of the theme of worship in the New Testament.¹ Even more so, as the last book of the Bible it provides Scripture's "last word on worship."² Apart from the Psalms, Revelation provides the most comprehensive rendering of worship we have.³ It is the longest continuous worship text in the Bible.⁴ It is more a book of worship than about worship itself, where one experiences John's vision during worship in order to

¹ David Peterson, *Engaging With God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 261.

² M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, ed. James Luther (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 1–4; Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John & the Praying Imagination* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 57. Revelation was appropriately placed at the end of the canon as the "last book" of the Bible's unfolding narrative drama of creation to consummation (Boring, *Revelation*, 2.).

³ Eugene H. Peterson, "Learning to Worship from Saint John's Revelation," *Christianity Today*, 35.12 (1991): 25.

⁴ J. Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2010), 186.

understand truly both the meaning of the book and the worship it engenders.⁵

Even a cursory reading of Revelation makes it clear that worship is at the heart of the conflict in which John sees his churches enmeshed.⁶ The language of worship stands out and worship plays an important part in unifying the book in both form and content.⁷ The prologue's liturgical blessing⁸—"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy" (1:3)—suggests that Revelation was intended to be both read and heard in the context of worship.⁹ There are repeated scenes of worship throughout (chaps. 4 and 5; 7:9, 12; 8:3–4; 11:15–19; 12:10–13; 14:1–4; 15:2–4; 16:5–7; 19:1–8; 22:1–5). The matter of worship comes to a head with the demand to worship the beast in chaps. 12–14. Worship becomes the very heart of Revelation's solemn appeal: worship the Creator (14:7); do not worship the Beast or his Image (13:8, 12, 15; 14:11). We find that burden voiced one last time in Revelation's closing words: "Worship God" (22:8, 9; cf. 19:10).

There is no book of the New Testament in which worship figures so prominently, provides so much of the language and imagery, and is so fundamental to its purpose and message as Revelation.¹⁰ Here realities of worship unfold that are timeless, overarching, comprehensive, and architectonic.¹¹ There is a culminating vision of worship that is both prophetic and countercultural. Revelation's worship penetrates to the root of things, stirs both spiritual and moral imagination, and orders both heart and

⁵ Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 32.

⁶ Marianne Meye Thompson, "Worship in the Book of Revelation," *ExAud* 8 (1992): 45.

⁷ Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 53.

⁸ Liturgical material (blessing, hymnic affirmation, designation of the one receiving the praise, doxological ascription, eschatological cry, etc.) is found in both the prologue (1:1–8) and epilogue (22:6–21). See Leonard Thompson, *ibid.*, 54–56.

⁹ Thompson, "Worship in the Book of Revelation," 48. Bauckham wrote how Revelation 1:10 establishes that John "receives his visions on the day when the churches meet for corporate worship and on the same day his prophecy will be read aloud (1:3) in the church meeting. The total situation of 1:9 and the specific occasion of the weekly day of worship (1:10) are for both John and his churches interrelated by the implications of their confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This interrelation is to be understood from the rest of the book." See Richard J. Bauckham, "The Lord's Day," in *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 240, 241. While Bauckham incorrectly asserted this day for worship ("the Lord's Day") is Sunday rather than the biblical Sabbath, he correctly placed the reading and understanding of Revelation within a worship context.

¹⁰ Thompson, "Worship in the Book of Revelation," 45.

¹¹ Barry Liesch, *People in the Presence of God: Models and Directions for Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 233.

life. Its worship models the reverence and awe that are appropriate in meeting God who alone is holy (1:17; 4:8, 11; 5:12–14; 15:4).

All of Revelation's worship is eschatological (15:4; 14:9–13; 19:20; 20:4; 22:7–13). Heavenly worship celebrates eschatological realities in the present, which unfold in a historical flow (past, present, future) against a vivid tapestry of an eschatological horizon (cf. chaps. 12–14). Authentic worship engenders meaning, purpose, and urgency as it remembers the past, experiences the present, and looks toward the future in the context of an overarching warfare worldview with its vision of God and his redemptive recreation. Eschatology thus shapes how one sees the worship of God.

At bottom, Revelation's worship touches moral life—ethics (1:17; 4:8; 14:1–5; 15:2–4; 19:1–8; 22:3, 4).¹² Worship and ethics are inescapably related, inseparable: where authentic worship both expresses and shapes Christian moral identity and action in response to God.¹³ Biblical worship and eschatology cast a moral vision—generating a corresponding ethic and giving promise of offering a unity of life and the possibility of total fulfillment.¹⁴ Thus worship, eschatology, and ethics interweave informing Revelation's moral/spiritual vision and urgent appeal.

¹² Assuming an obvious political perspective of the book of Revelation, Kraybill posited that worship in John's Apocalypse "is political". Allegiance (loyalty) is shaped by whom one worships—emperor or Christ—and the meaning of worship unfolds in the context of the first century political, economic, and social/cultural realities of the early church in the Roman Empire and the imperial cult (Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 13, 187.). While not denying that worship indeed shapes one's allegiance/loyalty or that it often plays out within the political arena, this study asserts that worship in Revelation has moral rather than political qualities and that, correspondingly, the loyalty which worship evokes at bottom is ethical rather than merely political. Understanding such significantly shifts one's hermeneutic of the book. Rather than seeing the aspirations of the Roman Empire and the imperial cult as God's chief antagonists in Revelation, i.e., treating the depiction of a cosmic conflict in the book mostly as metaphor, I work with the conviction that the cosmic conflict imagery is the primary controlling element in Revelation. This places the war-in-heaven and worship in heaven themes in the foreground, calling on us to pay more attention to the personal and moral nature of the conflict and the moral character of the major players within the cosmic plot. Neither the characters nor the plot in Revelation's view of worship are exhausted by the realities of the Roman Empire and its actions within the first century. Any discussion of worship in Revelation must be placed within the moral/spiritual cosmic realities against which first century realities—Roman Empire and imperial cult—play out by way of historic example and context for the viewing and understanding of the larger cosmic conflict. See Sigve K. Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), xv.

¹³ Michael R. Weed, "Worship and Ethics: Confession, Character, and Conduct," *Christian Studies*, 13 (1993): 47.

¹⁴ Carl E. Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics: Essays on the Theology and Ethics of the Kingdom of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1974), 20.

Cosmic and Existential Dimensions of Worship

While the ultimate goal of Revelation's message is to inspire worship of God,¹⁵ John's own experience of falling down to worship his angel messenger reminds us how one can become confused about worship (19:10; 22:9). John is interrupted and corrected. Even the sincere follower of Christ can wrongly worship. There is need to be reminded of both *whom* we worship and *how* we should worship. One must understand what worship is all about: "Don't do that," commands the angel (19:10; 22:9). "Worship God!"

Within the book's vision of worship issues and practice, "Don't do that" speaks to more than mere falling down before an angel. John's own worship interruptions mirror how worship is repeatedly interrupted within Revelation's larger narrative flow and plot where true worship is repeatedly interrupted by the false. There also, God is at work interrupting false worship with a vision of the true. Even the angel must interrupt John to assure correct worship. Within this narrative scenario Revelation portrays the worship of God as "the real meaning of things." Worship of God is not optional. One must worship God. One may not worship any other creature or thing. False worship is seen as the adoration of, the allegiance to and/or the obedience to any other reality than God (9:20; 13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:11; 16:2; 20:4). Such false worship includes existential moral/spiritual realities of moral vision, being, and action—idolatry and ethics (9:20, 21; 21:8; 22:15).

Worship Interruptions

The presence and placement of worship scenes within Revelation's narrative are instructive. In particular, the vision of the sealed scroll (chaps. 4 through 11) nuances worship in evocative ways. This narrative segment both begins and ends with worship.¹⁶ Beginning with chap. 4, John's vision of Jesus walking in the midst of the churches on earth shifts to heaven (4:1, 2).

¹⁵ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 1129.

¹⁶ Revelation's literary structure comprises three broad narrative segments with a prologue (1:1–8) and an epilogue (22:6–21); the story of why John was on the island of Patmos and the messages to the seven churches (1:9–3:21); the story of the sealed scroll and the victorious Lamb who unseals it (4:1–11:19); the story of the cosmic war and final things (12:1–22:5). These narrative segments provide complementary imagery and insights for understanding the book's message. The stories hang together, providing an overarching narrative with respect to worship. The second narrative segment in particular provides images which set Revelation's worship in a cosmic context. See David L. Barr, "The Story John Told: Reading Revelation for its Plot," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2003), 1–24; *ibid.*, 11–23; Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed., (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 40–44.

From this vantage point John now describes “the heart of the book of Revelation”¹⁷—the worship of God and the Lamb.

In the dazzling splendor of the heavenly throne room, all attention is dramatically focused on One who sits on a throne surrounded by heavenly beings that are assembled for worship. The imagery is evocative, multilayered, fluid. A colorful rainbow, lamp stands burning like torches, flashes of lightening, voices, peals of thunder, and songs of praise and worship fill the air (4:2, 3, 5, 6). There are twenty-four elders with white robes and golden crowns encircling the throne with thrones of their own (4:4). Four living creatures full of eyes within and without, in front and back—one like a lion, another like an calf, one having the face like a man, the fourth like a flying eagle—seem virtually within the throne itself (4:6–8). The aroma of incense permeates (5:8; cf. 8:3). Here God on his heavenly throne is praised without end by his court of throne-room guardians who shout and sing about their holy Creator (4:8–11). The worship offered is awesome, riveting and enlightening.

However, this magnificent heavenly liturgy is cut short as the narrative abruptly shifts to a scroll sealed with seven seals in God’s right hand (5:1). John intuits the existential, cosmic, and redemptive import of this mysterious document and soon learns that absolutely nobody in the entire universe is “worthy” to open it (5:2–3). At this point in the narrative, there is neither *wonder* nor *worship* for John at least, only weeping (5:4).

As John’s focus shifts, so does that of the reader. Worship fades as cosmic and existential matters press for both answers and resolution. One of the twenty-four elders now speaks promise of One who is both able and worthy to open the sealed scroll (5:5). While John hears that this commanding character is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he sees a slain Lamb instead (5:6, 7). The juxtaposition of images and meaning are unexpected, profound, jarring. When this unanticipated Lamb takes the sealed scroll from the right hand of God, a series of praise anthems reverberate once more, but now throughout the universe, not just the throne room (5:9–14).

Worship not only resumes, it is now ratcheted up to the highest notch possible!

Chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation depict worship on a breathtaking scale of full sensory expression and experience—sight, sound, smell, touch, and

¹⁷ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 333.

movement.¹⁸ Tens upon tens of thousands and thousands of thousands are engulfed in the praise of God with loud voice. They are joined by the voice of every creature in heaven and earth (5:13). The worshipers individually participate in something larger than themselves in their own personal adoration and worship of God (4:11).

Unexpectedly, worship interruption shockingly returns with overwhelming force. One by one the victorious Lamb breaks the mysterious scroll's seven seals (6:1–8:1). Four horses (white, red, black, and pale) and their riders charge across the horizon. Blaring trumpets and terrorizing woes follow (8:2–11:19). There is bloodshed, darkness, famine, and death. Cries of anguish fill the air as the martyred saints wonder about justice and eternity (6:10). Unbearable angst compels many to seek relief in their own death (9:6). There is refusal to repent (9:20, 21). Rebellion and chaos mushroom. Matters of everyday life, turning points of human history, and questions of theodicy powerfully shift the reader's focus away from sublime heavenly scenes of worship. Cosmic and existential matters, which have already haunted John (5:4), refuse to fade or stay in the background. These concerns spread now throughout the whole of human existence and experience.

Just as abruptly as the reader's vision had been drawn from the heavenly throne room to a weeping John, their vision is now yanked down to the earth. This planet is a world filled with horror, curses, impenitence, death, and rebellion. The reader/worshiper plummets from the heights of awesome praise and the worship of God to the depths of this-worldly conflict and turmoil, violence and death, destruction and inconceivable anguish, suffering innocent and a burdened yearn for answers.

The narrative presses the painfully reality: here on earth at least, the worship of God and the Lamb does not seem to take place. In fact, none of Revelation's scenes of worship depict worship on earth.¹⁹ This is instructive. The worship of God seems absent in a world of evil rebellion, oppression, idolatry, torment, injustice and the struggle for power (both human and demonic). Only the occasional image of the worshiping redeemed and praying saints punctuates the otherwise sobering picture of human

¹⁸ Images within this worship narrative include vocal and instrumental music, strobe-like lightening, thunderous percussion, antiphonal response, burning incense, brilliant color, golden vessels, reverberant acoustics, sparkling gemstones, furniture, crystal-like water, fire-billowing lampstands, shouts, faces, eyes, heads, crowns, composite creatures, hymns, movement and action, prostration, bizarre juxtaposition, prayer—in short, experiential and imaginative. Nothing is held back in worship of God or the Lamb. No part of reality or any being escapes usage, participation in, or the demands of worship.

¹⁹ Thompson, "Worship in the Book of Revelation," 48.

irreverence and idolatry, spiritual compromise and moral dysfunction (7:9, 12; 8:3–4; 14:1–5). But even these few defining images of the worship of God are depicted as taking place in heaven rather than on earth itself.

Finally, as this central narrative segment draws to a dramatic close the enchanting sound of heavenly music once more steals across the reader's imagination. The seventh trumpet announces the eschatological reign of God (11:15–17). Amazingly, rather than dramatic narration of an eschatological event, the seventh trumpet discloses heavenly worship (11:16).²⁰ What should any reader or hearer of such things during worship think, let alone feel?

Suddenly again, the joyful praise of God, so evident in chaps. 4 and 5, abruptly resumes²¹—but now it does so for eternity. We are back in heaven. Worship is in full swing. Elders fall on their faces before the sovereign Lord of all (11:16). There is great celebration of God because his sovereign power and undeniable reign comes now to fullest and enduring expression in a world where true worship has been both excluded and counterfeited.

The Sealed Scroll

The sealed scroll narrative (4:1–11:19) forms a conceptual bridge between the first century historical realities depicted in the book's opening narrative division of the Seven Churches (1:9–3:21) and the cosmic eschatological realities depicted in its final narrative division with its tale of the dragon, Lamb, two women, two beasts, two cities, two destinies (12:1–22:5). As such, this middle narrative segment connects, highlights, and nuances worship matters expressed both before and afterwards. In many respects it is a "worship scroll" narrative.²² It illumines worship history from the first century through to the *eschaton*. It forms a "liturgical diptych" that provides the interpretive key to understanding Revelation as a whole and worship in particular.²³

John's Spirit-inspired letters to the seven churches allude to threats to the authentic worship of God (1:9–3:21).²⁴ Later in the book, the question of

²⁰ Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, 67.

²¹ David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1998), 61.

²² *Ibid.*, 61–100.

²³ James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 105.

²⁴ There are references to the "synagogue of Satan" (2:9; 3:9); "Satan's throne" (2:13), the eating of food offered to idols (2:14), and a false prophetess, Jezebel (2:20). Each of these references suggests some kind of compromise to Christian worship. See Thompson, "Worship in the Book of Revelation," 47.

acceptable worship comes to a head with the life or death demand to worship the beast (12:1–22:5). Within the book's literary structure, Rev 11:15–19 provides an interpretive outline for the remaining eschatological half of the Apocalypse. Verses 16 and 17 of chap. 11 both return the reader to the subject of worship begun in chap. 4 and are set at the heart of the worship issues unfolding in chaps. 12–15 and onward to the close of the book.

This story sequence—worship > interruption > worship > interruption > worship—is instructive. Heaven opens with the vision of God reigning on the throne (4:1, 2). Authentic worship is in process. But repeated interruptions ensue. John's angst over what appears to be a forever-sealed-scroll, the breaking of the scroll's seven seals, the turbulent imagery of the seven trumpets together with three woes, each interrupt and threaten to sidetrack toward seemingly tangential concerns. The readers could almost forget about worship in heaven as they behold incredible events and sorrow on earth. They learn that there is a place in the universe where worship is not taking place. Rather there is rebellion and blasphemy, human beings refusing to repent. The adoring, heartfelt honor paid to God in the heavenly realm contrasts dramatically with the situation on earth where few hold fast to God's words and bear faithful testimony of his character (6:9–11; 7:1–4; 11:3–13). Various forms of idolatry take place (9:20, 21). Worship seems to cease, until some things in the unfolding cosmic drama have been cared for. Yet in the end, the true worship of God resumes. It picks up where it left off. What the Lamb carries out in the flow of human history and the great controversy apparently reestablishes authentic worship of God.²⁵ Throughout Revelation hallelujahs celebrate in worship the victory of God over the evil forces and the establishment of the new age (12:9–12; 15:3–4; 19:1–9).²⁶

Evil Interruptive but Worship Never Interrupted

Everything that takes place within the overarching heavenly worship narrative provides commentary on the meaning of that very worship.²⁷ The drama of the scroll, the breaking of its seven seals, the trumpets and trumpet woes are, in effect, sub-plots within a larger narrative. There is a correspondence between what is going on in the midst of worship in heaven and what is going on in the midst of human history.²⁸ Revelation asserts that

²⁵ Barr, *Tales of the End*, 76.

²⁶ Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, 66–68.

²⁷ Barr, *Tales of the End*, 76.

²⁸ Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 73, 74.

the real center of what is going on in our universe is not evil, but worship. The authentic worship of God is timeless, overarching, and comprehensive. It is elemental, central, and foundational. Such authentic worship existed before the earth was formed and it will continue through eternity. As such we are reminded that the question of our worship is a fundamental and ultimate question.²⁹ The worship of God is the real purpose of human life.³⁰ It is here that human beings find both their meaning and their moral spiritual orientation.

Furthermore, these images of the celestial worship of God hold forth the picture that such worship puts evil in context. Authentic worship binds evil on both sides. Worship is depicted as unceasing before God on his throne. This worship is not an interlude between sequences of dramatic visionary scenes as some have termed it. The reverse is true.³¹ At the least, the seeming interruptive scenes of worship take place alongside these narratives of eschatology to make the book of Revelation something more than mere visions of “things to come.”³² The deeper intent of the book’s narrative plot suggests that revelatory events themselves are the interludes, which break up the practice of continuous worship before the throne of God.³³ Evil and rebellion and the events on earth are the interlude. Evil and rebellion seemingly interrupt the worship of God—but only on the surface, only for a time. Evil is parasitic. It has no enduring roots. The worship of God is enduring. Constant. Ceaseless. Passionate.

Within this worship narrative, evil is never explained or accounted for. Rather, authentic worship of God defines evil’s context. All evil takes place within a historical arena bounded by God and the true worship of him. Evil is not spelled out, only surrounded.³⁴ Thus evil is not minimized, but rather it is put in its place. It is bracketed between the worship of God. It is bracketed between Christ and his redemptive work in our behalf. Evil is surrounded by worship. It is delimited by a universe totally yielded to the One “who is and who was and is to come” (1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17). In the end of Revelation’s cosmic drama, the reign of God is reestablished on earth. Worship resumes. Thus evil is portrayed as interruptive, but the worship of God has never really been interrupted.

²⁹ Thompson, “Worship in the Book of Revelation,” 47.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Liesch, *People in the Presence of God*, 233.

³² Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, 53.

³³ Liesch, *People in the Presence of God*, 233, 234.

³⁴ Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 85.

Worship Tensions

The foregoing worship > interruption > worship narrative sequence places the question of authentic worship against the backdrop of the biblical warfare worldview, i.e., the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan (Gen 1–3; Job 1, 2; Isa 14; Ezek 28; Dan 10; Matt 4:1–11; 12:25–30; John 12:30–32; 14:30; Eph 6:12; Rev 12:1–17). The vision of God on his throne receiving adoring worship is purposefully set against that of the dragon, the reality of the dragon’s throne, and that of the dragon receiving worship from those who dwell on the earth (4:1–5:14; 12:3, 7; 2:13; 13:2, 4). The assertion is that there is but one true throne,³⁵ thus but one true worship.

The heart of the first angel’s solemn appeal to worship links the conflict of worship and the spheres in which this worship conflict between God and the dragon ensue: “worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters” (14:7). Revelation’s call to recognize the Creator by worshipping him reflects an overarching creation/reversal-of-creation motif at play within Revelation as a whole, but particularly in the unfolding narrative of 11:19–15:4.³⁶ Within this broad context of “creation reversal” the words “heaven,” “earth,” and “sea” assert the Creator’s sole sovereignty (and right to worship) in those creation realms in which the “counterfeit trinity”³⁷ has intruded, brought chaos, and would elicit worship for itself, i.e., “heaven” (12:3, 7), “earth” (13:11), and “sea” (13:1).³⁸ The concentric structure of the book places this call to worship the Creator squarely within the book’s theological center, and in doing so unfolds the central issues of the final crisis of earth’s history (11:19–15:4).³⁹ Here unfolds a war between the dragon and

³⁵ The throne is the central symbol of the whole book of Revelation. It occurs forty-seven times in Revelation out of sixty-two occurrences in the New Testament. Although God’s throne is the focal point of Revelation’s vision, other thrones compete with his throne. See Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 141–142.

³⁶ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 284; Larry L. Lichtenwalter, “The Seventh-day Sabbath and Sabbath Theology in the Book of Revelation: Creation, Covenant, Sign,” *AUSS*, 49.2 (2011): 285–320; Anthony MacPherson, “The Mark of the Beast as a ‘Sign Commandment’ and ‘Anti-Sabbath’ in the Worship Crisis of Revelation 12–14,” *AUSS*, 43.2 (2005): 280–283; William Shea, “The Controversy Over the Commandments in the Central Vision of Revelation,” *JATS*, 11.1, 2 (2000): 227–229.

³⁷ For discussion on Revelation’s “counterfeit trinity” (dragon, beast, false prophet) see: Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 377, 379.

³⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 284.

³⁹ For discussion of Revelation’s chiastic structure and 11:19–15:4 as both a literary unit and the book’s theological center see the following: *ibid.*, 15–18; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 131; William Shea and Ed Christian, “The Chiastic Structure of Revelation 12:1–15:4: The Great

the Remnant (12:17), a war that is fleshed out in more detail in Rev 13 and 14. Worship of God or the dragon (via the beast) is clearly the central issue within this cosmic conflict (13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:7, 9, 11; cf. 9:20; 19:10; 22:8, 9). In the story world of Revelation the “counterfeit trinity” displace God from the center and usurp God’s authority (cf. Rev 13, 17). At the end of the story, however, the orderly vision in heaven is also realized on earth with the new heaven and the new earth where God and the Lamb now reside and receive the worship of the redeemed (21:1–22:6).

This worship/warfare tapestry is the horizon against which the following is presented: John weeps because of the seven-sealed scroll (5:4); the saints under the altar cry out for justice and vengeance (6:9–11); the prayers of the suffering saints are offered up to God (8:3, 4; cf. 5:8); the bondservants of God patiently endure, persevere and obey (1:9; 3:8–10; 13:10; 14:12; cf. 12:17); and the longing question which the saints have regarding whom God really loves (3:8; cf. 3:19). This worship/warfare tapestry is the horizon too, against which there is heartfelt celebration of God’s great redemption, the certainty of God’s righteous reign, and the assurance of God’s moral authority to so work (5:9–10, 12; 7:9–12; 11:16, 17; 15:1–4; 19:1–6; 12:10).

Much like the way in which the Psalms display a full spectrum of worship tensions—joy and sorrow, silence and shouts, praise and protest, praying and listening, heartache and peace, hope and hopelessness, community and individual, divine immanence and transcendence—Revelation’s worship/warfare tapestry embraces worship tensions of praise, protest, petition, silence, shouts, heartache, hope, hopelessness, divine presence and absence, community and individual. Innocence cries out for vindication. Hearts murmur at the absence of God. The weary would let go, give in, or give up. The interim between God’s promise and the fulfillment of the promise demands painful waiting. Finding personal and corporate equilibrium in the juxtaposition of interruptive evil and the ceaseless and passionate worship of God on his throne is not easy.

Controversy Vision,” *AUSS* 38 (2000): 269–292; Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 175, 176; J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 46–48; MacPherson, “The Mark of the Beast as a ‘Sign Commandment’ and ‘Anti-Sabbath,’” 271–275; Ekkehardt Müller, *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4–11* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1996), 573–589, 608; Jon Paulien, “Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation,” *JATS*, 9.1–2 (1998); Jon Paulien, *The Deep Things of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2004), 122, 123; Joseph L. Trafton, *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 10.

These worship tensions appear random, mixed, extraneous, and almost peripheral in Revelation's overall narrative. Yet these seemingly unconnected story details are the life of Revelation's worship plot. They highlight questions of theodicy and existential angst as integral to any genuine worship experience. The book's worship interruptions in effect underscore worship tensions. In the process Revelation shows how praise upholds the permanent truths about God acting in history and human life. It reminds us how prayer expresses the full gamut of trust, questions, protest, hope, and hopelessness. Revelation's worship expresses the hurt and pleading on the part of God's people for help. It protests at the way things are.⁴⁰

Such worship contrasts one's present human experience with the characteristic nature of God and the way God has acted in the past.⁴¹ While affirming absolute trust in God, Revelation's worship prayer nevertheless urges God to listen instead of ignore or abandon (6:9–11; 8:3, 4; cf. 19:1–3). It calls for God to deliver. It calls upon God to act against the peoples who are causing the trouble, in order to put right a world that is out of kilter.⁴² Revelation's worship is founded on the good news that God makes himself present in the midst of history to help his people (1:17; 12:10, 11; 17:14).⁴³

Rather than shifting the reader's focus away from the sublime heavenly scenes of worship, these matters of everyday life, these turning points of human history, and these questions of theodicy powerfully engage one in worship. Cosmic and existential matters that haunt God's people (5:4; 6:10) are no mere background. Rather they are the stuff of worship. They illumine why one comes to God in the first place, and why one continues to celebrate God in the midst of human chaos and demonic intrusion. This is worship. God's redemptive work in the face of such realities will fuel worship throughout eternity (5:12; 7:9–15; 15:2–4; 19:1–6; 22:3).

Worship in the Already-and-Not-Yet

Revelation's heavenly worship celebrates eschatological realities (themes) in the present. The *eschaton* is portrayed as the "coming down" of heavenly realities.⁴⁴ As inferred in the worship tensions noted in the forgoing,

⁴⁰ John Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1–41*, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006): 60.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 62, 63.

⁴³ Bernard W. Anderson, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1974), 45.

⁴⁴ Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, 64.

Revelation's worship reflects the biblical eschatological reality of the "already-but-not-yet" of God's kingdom. The reading of Revelation in the context of worship in itself heightens this biblical eschatological tension within the imagination of worshipers (1:3). The words of prophecy (1:3; 22:9) take readers/listeners (worshipers) from the context of where they are (1:4, 9; 2:1–3:22) and propel them into the future toward God's final consummation (1:7, 19; 4:1; 6:1–11:19; 12:1–14:20; 20:1–22:5).

Revelation affirms that God's Kingdom has broken into human history with great redemptive power (12:10–12). God's people have tasted (can taste) already the powers of the age to come (1:4–6, 9–10; 3:18, 20; 5:9, 10; 12:11; cf. Heb 6:4, 5; Eph 2:1–7). And yet, God's Kingdom and sovereign reign have not yet come; it is still future (1:7; 11:15–16; 21:1–8; 22:7, 12). Here is the reality of God now with us and yet not with us. Here is the reality of this worldly life—historical human existence—and life in the world to come.

This "already-not-yet" is evidenced in the worship of God "who is and who was and who is to come" (4:8; cf. 1:4, 8). Past, present, future are linked within the worshiping imagination.⁴⁵ God's gracious work spans the full realm of human reality. He has been active in and accounts for the past. He is present. Right now he is engaged in the world and in the believer's life. He is also the "coming one" Who gives both promise and hope for the future.

Revelation's scenes of heavenly worship express the spatial dimension of transcendent reality alongside that of the temporal dimension of transcendent reality, which the book's dramatic narratives express. This assures the reader/listener that Revelation's message is integrally related to human earthly existence and that there is no radical discontinuity between God and the world or this age and the age to come.⁴⁶ Thus Revelation's worship—eschatology—connects us both with our everyday life today and the hope of our tomorrows. It anchors us in the past and stretches us into the future while at the very same time demanding a life response of worship in the present.

Revelation 12–14 heightens these eschatological realities of worship as it unfolds the historical flow of an overcoming, obedient people harassed by the powers of darkness (12:10–17). This "already-not-yet" tension calls for the worship of patient endurance (13:10; 14:12) and the holding firm of a Christocentric apocalyptic prophetic worldview—the "testimony of Jesus"

⁴⁵ See also with images of God as the "first and last" "alpha and omega" "beginning and the end" (1:8; 21:6).

⁴⁶ Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, 63, 64.

(12:17; 19:10).⁴⁷ As imaged in the 144,000 standing with the Lamb on Mt. Zion, it [the “already-not-yet” tension] brings renewed vision of how the suffering redeemed stand before God in worship, which includes both liturgy and moral life (14:1–5). It includes the burdened call of the first angel to worship God (14:7). It reaches forward in worship imagination toward the victorious song of Moses and the Lamb on the sea of glass where God’s holy character and righteous acts are themes of praise and worship (15:3, 4).

Identity-Building Vision

Revelation’s scenes of heavenly worship are clearly meant to be paradigmatic for God’s people on the earth as they face a godless culture desiring to crush them.⁴⁸ The worship scenes unfold within the cataclysmic conflict being waged across the expanse of heaven and earth as to *who* is to be worshiped—the Lord God or the dragon (Satan). They contain pertinent information about *how* God is to be worshiped.⁴⁹ They furnish a viable model against which our own worship can be compared and challenged.⁵⁰

Most importantly, Revelation’s heavenly worship scenes provide an identity-building vision for God’s people. God’s people must know where they fit in the scheme of things. They must sense the incredible link between heaven and earth. They must already see themselves as that kingdom of priests who faithfully serve God (1:6; 5:10). They must imagine themselves as participants in that vast heavenly worshipping community where the twenty-four elders represent them (4:9–11; 5:14; 11:16–17).⁵¹ In doing so, Revelation’s worship provides a commentary on reality. It unfolds a worldview in which God, human existence, and the spiritual/moral conflict at play with regard to worship, are both spiritually and morally framed.⁵²

⁴⁷ Larry L. Lichtenwalter, “Worldview Transformation and Mission: Narrative, Theology, and Ritual in John’s Apocalypse,” *JATS*, 21.1–2 (2010): 214–223.

⁴⁸ Thompson, “Worship in the Book of Revelation,” 44; Miroslav Volf, “Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian Way of Being-in-the-World,” in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 207.

⁴⁹ Liesch, *People in the Presence of God*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁵¹ Thompson, “Worship in the Book of Revelation,” 48. See discussion, Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 322–326; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 228, 229; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 186–189.

⁵² Revelation puts human beings in a spiritual/moral context. It constructs a world of vision. It tells who the players are. It tells what condition human life is in. It tells where the world is and where it is headed. It envisions the good life. It informs the reader as to what questions need to be answered. Revelation’s worldview provides foundational themes and integrating motifs, which facilitate reflection on the book’s text and theology. This worldview provides the philosophical (metaphysical) map, the larger moral/spiritual vision against which

Revelation asserts a primacy of worship imagination and practices to worldview formation.⁵³ An understanding of God and the world is carried into worship and expressed therein.

The unfolding worship imagery casts this worldview through a narrative, theology, and ritual matrix.⁵⁴ The reader/listener is invited to enter this explicit worship-driven world, assured that what the book says about God, human beings, the moral/spiritual issues, central characters, and moral/spiritual nature of the conflict—worship—is in fact both true and God given (1:1; 21:5; 22:6, 18, 19).⁵⁵ This worship-driven worldview provides a broad conceptual canvas against which all of human life is measured. The true worship of God sets at the heart of this vision and all the book's prophecies are threaded with images of worship both true and false. At bottom the worship of God establishes what is truly real and therefore what is true. True worship reveals the way things are.⁵⁶

Revelation's vast heavenly worshipping community is complex—different kinds of worshippers who worship in different ways at different distances from the throne (living creatures, elders, angels, all of creation—those in heaven and those on the earth, both creatures and earthlings).⁵⁷ Yet

the book's individual themes are to be considered and find meaning. See, Barr, *Tales of the End*, 3–5; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 171–177; Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 181–184; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 16–19.

⁵³ See discussion of the pedagogical practice of worship and worldview formation in James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 133–139. See also my discussion of worldview transformation in the book of Revelation, Lichtenwalter, "Worldview Transformation and Mission," 211–244.

⁵⁴ Worldview is manifested in three ways: through a narrative component, a rational component, and a ritual component. See Dennis P. Hollinger, *Choosing The Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 63; Lichtenwalter, "Worldview Transformation and Mission," 223–232; David K. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁵⁵ The apocalyptic medium establishes its own world in which one must enter in order to fully grasp. The modern reader enters a worldview vastly different from their natural perspective. The first task then is to understand Revelation's outlook. Revelation is wrapped in a worldview and language quite alien to modern times. See Joseph R. Jeter. "Revelation-Based Preaching: Homiletical Approaches," in *Preaching Through The Apocalypse: Sermons from Revelation*, ed. Cornish R. Rogers and Joseph R. Jetter (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1992), 10; Richard Melick. "Preaching and Apocalyptic Literature," in *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*, ed. Michael Duda (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 382, 383; Larry Paul Jones and Jerry L. Sumney, *Preaching Apocalyptic Texts* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 1999), 9–23.

⁵⁶ Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, 70, 71.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

there are certain common characteristics shared by all members of this cosmic community. All worship is located spatially around the throne of God. All worship is focused on God as Creator and Redeemer. All worship situates the individual and/or the community in relation to the grand divine initiative realities of Creation, Redemption, and the Final Consummation. In the process the community of worship breaks down the boundaries between heaven and earth.⁵⁸ True worshippers form an egalitarian community around God and the Lamb at the center (7:9–15; 19:1–6).⁵⁹ Worship is “a radical equalizer that breaks down all boundaries in heaven and earth except between the worshipping community and the two objects of worship”⁶⁰ (19:10; 22:8–9). The social boundary between the people of God and the people of the world “expresses in the region of social experience what the liturgical boundary expresses in the region of worship.”⁶¹

Worship in the Heavenly Realm

Worship and theology are closely related. Doxology reflects theology. Glorifying God involves making many a statement about God.⁶² At bottom Revelation’s worship is envisioned not simply as an act of physical obeisance (or mere political, social, ethical, economic behaviors) but an acknowledgement of God’s character and purposes, as revealed in his person and his righteous acts (15:2–4; 4:8, 11; 19:1–6).⁶³ God is known by what others say about him. Characters of worship (living beings, twenty-four elders, angels, all creation, the innumerable multitude, the 144,000) mirror God’s traits by what they say and do.⁶⁴ There is commentary on God through both word and deed (singing, falling down, casting crowns, citing epithets, ascribing worth, remaining chaste, truthfulness, following the Lamb, wearing white robes, waving palm branches).

Revelation’s worshipers use lengthy, expansive titles and epithets to describe God.⁶⁵ Titles are heaped on one another (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22). No simple “Lord” or “Lord God,” but “Lord God Almighty” (4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22). No simple “Holy” but “Holy, Holy, Holy” (4:8; cf. Isa 6:3). Everything is expanded to correspond to the expansive, unlimited

⁵⁸ Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, 69.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶² Goldingay, *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1–41*, 69.

⁶³ Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 270.

⁶⁴ Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 39.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

character of God “who is and who was and is to come (1:4, 8; 4:8).⁶⁶ God is Other. The expansive titles announce God’s transcendence. The oversized titles heighten the fullness of God’s character.⁶⁷

Revelation’s varied worship scenes (words, acts, descriptions, sounds, characters, settings) celebrate God’s attributes and work. They clarify why God is worthy of worship. God is praised because he is holy (4:8; 6:10; 15:4; 16:5). God is praised because he is sovereign (1:8; 4:2; 15:3, 4; 20:11; 21:5).⁶⁸ God is praised because he is moral (15:3, 4; 4:11). God is praised because he is eternal, i.e., “who is and who was and who is to come” “the Alpha and the Omega” “the beginning and the end” (1:4, 8; 4:8; 21:6). God is praised as Creator (4:11; 10:6; 14:7).⁶⁹ God is praised as Redeemer (7:10; 15:1–4; 19:1–6; cf. 5:9, 10, 12). God is praised for the outworking of his purposes (4:11; 11:17–18).⁷⁰ Such worship envisions God as Triune (1:4–8; 14:6–13; 22:1–5).⁷¹ Throughout God is addressed personally and directly—as “our” Lord and God (4:11; 7:10, 12; 11:15; cf. 5:10; 19:1, 5).⁷² Revelation’s God is a Person.⁷³ He is in personal covenant relation with his creation and all that he voluntarily produces exists in relationship.⁷⁴ His holy being and presence predominates in every way.⁷⁵ God is One who loves and One who is loved (1:5; 3:9, 19; cf. 2:4). He is adored, obeyed, mirrored. In speaking about God, Revelation’s

⁶⁶ Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 39.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁶⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 172, 173; David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 196. See my discussion on “God Above ‘the gods’”, Larry L. Lichtenwalter. “Exodus and Apocalypse: Deliverance Then and Now,” in *Christ, Salvation and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle*, ed. Jiří Moskala, Daniel Heinz, and Peter van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2009), 397–399.

⁶⁹ See my discussion on Revelation’s Creation motif, Larry L. Lichtenwalter, “Creation and Apocalypse,” *JATS*, 15.1 (2004).

⁷⁰ Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 273–274.

⁷¹ Revelation provides one of the most sustained visions of the Triune God in the New Testament. See Edwin Reynolds, “The Trinity in the Book of Revelation,” *JATS*, 17.1 (2006). See also Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 5, 6; Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 65–69.

⁷² Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 113. See also, Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 270–272.

⁷³ “God is revealed in the Apocalypse as a Person rather than an impersonal object or a mere influence. For God to do all that he does in Revelation requires that he be a person, possessing unity of thought, will, character, emotion, and activity. It is thus that the Creator of all reality is adored as a person who willfully creates (4:11)” (Lichtenwalter, “Creation and Apocalypse,” 132.)

⁷⁴ Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 16; Lichtenwalter, “Creation and Apocalypse,” 132.

⁷⁵ Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary*, 67.

characteristic affirmation is that God is involved and active in the church's corporate and individual life. The connection between God and his people is close and decided.

Revelation's visions of worship address one of the main plot threads of the book: Who is worthy of worship?⁷⁶ Who is at center: God or counterfeit gods? The Creator or the creature? The true Sovereign or the imitators? Revelation's worship asserts that God is infinite, transcendent, eternal, Creator, sovereign, Redeemer, Almighty, personal, moral (righteous and true), and love. God alone is worthy of worship.

The Ethics of True Worship

Revelation's visions of the heavenly realm consistently portray the offering of adoration and praise to God and to the Lamb. The language of worship pervades the whole book.⁷⁷ The centrality of worship in Revelation is clear, but what is worship? What are the implications of the book's vision of worship for everyday life? How do the language or expressions or settings or focus of worship found in these visions frame or articulate moral realities? What link exists if any, between Revelation's vision of worship and ethics?

As implied above, Revelation's "worship scroll"⁷⁸ narrative (4:1–11:19) gives the sense "that worship itself is symbolic of bringing life under the control of God."⁷⁹ The worship term *proskynein* is used twenty-four times in the Apocalypse in ways that indicate the centrality of this focus. The word often implies the physical posture of bowing down or prostrating oneself before another, a posture suggesting submission and homage (4:10; 5:10, 14; 7:12; 11:16; 19:4; 19:10; 22:8–9). Physical posture indicates the attitude and action of offering one's allegiance to another. Bowing down in worship means yielding one's whole self. The liturgical elements of Revelation's visionary narratives depict the attitude of worshipful reverence for God as bowing to divine sovereignty in every aspect of human life and in every facet of God's sovereign outworking in both personal and corporate life.⁸⁰ Worship is a whole-person commitment lived out in daily existence.⁸¹ The fundamental question throughout Revelation: Who is on the throne (*of one's life*)? The

⁷⁶ Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 114.

⁷⁷ Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 261; Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, 53.

⁷⁸ Barr, *Tales of the End*, 61.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁸⁰ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 176.

⁸¹ J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 710.

book's vying thrones—the dragon's (2:13; 13:2) and the beast's (16:10)—bring to light created beings (human and demonic) desiring to so sit and rule their own affairs without interference—from God.

This bowing (or not bowing) of self to divine sovereignty in every aspect of life points to both why and how the matter of worship inevitably touches moral life—ethics (1:17; 4:8; 14:1–5; 15:2–4; 19:1–8; 22:3, 4). Moral matters inevitably converge with those of worship. Worship and ethics become inescapably related.⁸² They are entwined in Revelation's apocalyptic vision as confession, character, and conduct. Confession brings to focus questions of whom is to be worshiped, how one worships, and what one says and does in worship.⁸³ Character highlights the reality of who moral beings really are in their inner private world of thought, feelings, emotions, values, and habits-of-the-heart. Conduct relates to behavior, words, action, keeping, works.

These three themes profoundly interconnect in Revelation's vision of worship⁸⁴ making it obvious that “worship is a constitutive act”⁸⁵ forming character and guiding conduct. As per the above, eschatological oriented-worship in particular is constitutive. It frames moral being, identity, and action. The cultural realities of worship ritual both express and engender worldview. Character and conduct are correlative to confession and are both shaped by it.⁸⁶ But character also shapes conduct and nuances confession. Conduct likewise impacts character and confession. Each is a facet of the worship found in John's Apocalypse and together express the book's worship/ethics link.

Becoming What We Worship

It is the sixth-trumpet imagery of unrepentant human beings, which opens up a window into the profound link between worship and ethics and how confession shapes both character and conduct. The frightening vision includes grotesque hordes of cavalry swarming over the earth with but one assignment—to kill a third of mankind (9:13–16). Fire and smoke and brimstone belch out of the horses' mouths like a deadly volcano spews out fire and smoke and lava (9:17–19). Everything in the path of the fire, smoke,

⁸² Weed, “Worship and Ethics,” 47.

⁸³ The term “confession” is used here to mean: Who one worships and how one worships. It is more than mere declaration of beliefs or doctrines.

⁸⁴ See discussion of these themes in both apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic contexts: Volf, “Worship as Adoration and Action,” 203–252; Weed, “Worship and Ethics,” 47–53.

⁸⁵ Weed, *ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

and lava perishes. Snake-like tails inflict further injury (9:19). The death toll is unimaginable: a third of mankind (9:18). The two-thirds who survive this sixth-trumpet woe refuse to “repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts” (9:20, 21).

While the visual description of this sixth trumpet scourge unfolds with vividly grotesque and highly symbolic imagery, it abruptly finishes on a stark note of moral reality. In doing so its close brings precise understandable meaning to our earthly frame of reference. The passage ends with moral terminology with which any reader can identify. There is movement from symbol to real, from vision to life. No matter one’s interpretation of the sixth trumpet, the bottom line issue is the forceful link between worship and ethics. The world of the first century was full of idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood. Here we find the cults of paganism linked with murders, sorceries, immorality and thefts, as an expression of the rebellion of mankind against the rule of God the Creator. So powerful were the forces of natural religion that people would not abandon their immoral values and dehumanizing practices even in the face of God’s terrible judgments.⁸⁷ The demonic nature of the idols as the transforming influence on the idol worshipers is apparent.⁸⁸ Refusal to worship God as God has its consequences in every form of human wickedness, abuse, hypocrisy and injustice in human relationships. Within this imagery Revelation discloses how false worship and immorality are closely linked (cf. Jer 16:18).⁸⁹

The list of sins in vv. 20 and 21 are not to be separated.⁹⁰ The catalog of evil is prefaced by a summary of idolatry’s spiritual essence: behind the idols are demonic forces, which are worshiped instead of God (9:19).⁹¹ Moral dysfunction is expressed in the context of idolatry.⁹² The sins of humanity are generally of two sorts. Verse 20 focuses on sins directed against God (the first four of the Ten Commandments, Exod 20:1–11). Verse 21 directs attention to sins directed against human beings (the last six of the Ten Commandments,

⁸⁷ Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 262.

⁸⁸ G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 264.

⁸⁹ David Peterson, “Worship and Ethics in Romans 12,” *TynBul*, 44.2 (1993): 276.

⁹⁰ Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 265.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 265.

Exod 20:12–17).⁹³ The moral reality expressed in this linkage (idolatrous worship and ethics) is that when human beings worship images (idols) they demonstrate gross disrespect for that which God has made in his image—their fellow human beings (Gen 1:26, 27). Social disruption and evil are a direct result of false worship. The image of God in man distorts before inanimate images.

Old Testament moral imagery stands behind Revelation’s purposeful worship/ethics link:⁹⁴ “Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man’s hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them” (Ps 115:1–8; cf. Ps 135:15–18; Dan 5:23).⁹⁵

Idol worshipers shape their gods after their own view of reality, i.e., they are “the works of their hands” (9:20; cf. Isa 40:18–20; 44:9–20; 66:3; Jer 10:3–8; Hab 2:18, 19). Those who make idols and put their trust in them become like them—they can neither see or hear nor walk, morally. They become morally deaf, catatonic, and insensitive. It’s a moral principle. We resemble our ideals. We become like what we worship.⁹⁶ We become like our gods. We resemble what we revere, either for ruin or for restoration.⁹⁷

It is from here—worship—that ethics takes its start. A person’s god dictates his or her moral vision and conduct, consciously or unconsciously.⁹⁸ The Apocalypse here alludes to this moral principle when it refers to “the works of their hands” in conjunction with idols of gold and silver, bronze, stone and wood which “can neither see nor hear nor walk” (9:20). The “works of their hands” extend beyond the mere material nature of idols themselves to murder, magic arts, immorality, and theft.

⁹³ “The Ten Commandments may have inspired this list, since there idolatry is first mentioned followed by the four sins also here (as most commentators observe),” *ibid.*, 265, 266.

⁹⁴ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 518, 519; Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 36–49; Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary*, 136, 137; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 242–243.

⁹⁵ Compare with: “They worshiped foolish idols, only to become foolish themselves,” (Jer. 2:5 NLT).

⁹⁶ Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 36–70, 241–267; F. B. Meyer, *Gems from the Psalms* (Westchester, IL: Good News, 1976), 188.

⁹⁷ Beale, *We Become What We Worship*, 49.

⁹⁸ William Barkly, *The Ten Commandments for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 17, 18.

This Old Testament principle that we become like what we worship is especially carried on by Paul and John in the New Testament:⁹⁹ “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . . And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them” (Rom 1:21–25, 28–32).

Worship as “confession” thus shapes Christian moral identity.¹⁰⁰ It determines the shape of human life now and defines life in the hereafter.¹⁰¹ It both orients and orders our lives.¹⁰² “It marks us out and trains us to be a particular people who are citizens of another city and subjects of a coming King.”¹⁰³ It is a practice of desire that brings inner formation. Worship is a pedagogical practice that trains our love—either for God, self, or the world.

Confession (whom and how we worship) then, locates worshipers within an all-inclusive and over-arching vision of reality.¹⁰⁴ In worship the self is reconstituted; character is reshaped in direct correlation to confession.¹⁰⁵ It responds to the reality of God disclosed.¹⁰⁶ It is a constitutive act, forming character and guiding conduct.¹⁰⁷ Various elements of worship create certain perspectives and understandings about God and specific attitudes and habits

⁹⁹ Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary*, 137.

¹⁰⁰ Weed, “Worship and Ethics,” 47.

¹⁰¹ Thompson, “Worship in the Book of Revelation,” 47.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 51, 52.

¹⁰³ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 154.

¹⁰⁴ Weed, “Worship and Ethics,” 52. See also Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 133–154.

¹⁰⁵ Weed, “Worship and Ethics.”

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

of being which affect how we think, speak, and act. They determine who we are.¹⁰⁸

In the Apocalypse, worship brings moral awareness in the context of the holy character and conduct of God (14:6, 7).¹⁰⁹ In it confession locates worshipers within an all-inclusive and over-arching vision of reality where God is all in all (1:4–8; 4:1–11).¹¹⁰ There worship as confession—in terms of liturgy affirmation—has moral influence. In keeping with these principles, Revelation’s worship centers, gathers, reveals, affirms around various moral realities of holiness (4:8), truthfulness (6:2; 15:3; 19:2), covenant faithfulness (4:3; 5:1; 21:2–8), reconciliation (5:9–10; 7:9; 21:2–8; 22:1–5), and righteousness (15:3, 4; 19:1–6).¹¹¹ There is response to who God is, what God has done, what God will do. Revelation’s worship movement gives the hearer words of confession. When one voices them—uses the words of Revelation, i.e., “Holy, Holy, Holy” “Righteous and True are Your Ways”—the very words will affect their thinking and touch their being.

A study of the Apocalypse reveals the true meaning of worship and how believers today should worship God. Those who worship God in Revelation are seen adoring God’s being (4:8, 9, 11), declaring the Lamb’s worthiness (5:9–12), celebrating God’s glorious presence (4:9–10; 7:9–12, 15; 11:16; 19:6–7; 21:3–7), submitting to his authority (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:1, 16; 19:4, 10), fearing and serving him (14:7; 7:15; 22:3).¹¹²

In addition Revelation reveals the manner and mode of worship. There is worship for God’s creative works (4:11), worship for Christ’s redemptive activity (5:9; 7:14–15), worship for God’s righteous judgment (14:7; 15:4; 16:5; 19:2); worship for the marriage of the Lamb with his bride (19:7–9).¹¹³ The worship of God in heaven is expressed through praise and thanksgiving (4:6–11; 5:1–14; 7:12; 19:1; 11:17–18), songs (5:9; 14:3; 15:3; cf. 4:8, 11; 7:10, 12; 11:17; 16:5–7; 19:2–3; 5:9–12; 12:10–12), prayers (5:8; 6:10; 8:3–5), offering of gifts (4:10; cf. 4:11; 5:12, 13; 7:12), response to God’s revelation

¹⁰⁸ Marva J. Dawn, “Worship and Ethics,” *Dialog* 32.4 (1993): 297.

¹⁰⁹ As per above “Worship in the Heavenly Realm” we noted how God is praised because he is holy (4:8; 6:10; 15:4; 16:5). God is praised because he is sovereign (1:8; 4:2; 15:3, 4; 20:11; 21:5).¹⁰⁹ God is praised because he is moral (15:3, 4; 4:11). Etc. The profound epithet “Holy, Holy, Holy” in itself is enough to mold the inner self of one who so envisions and praises God.

¹¹⁰ Weed, “Worship and Ethics,” 52.

¹¹¹ Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 59.

¹¹² Mazie Nakhro, “The Meaning of Worship According to the Book of Revelation,” *BSac* 158 (January–March 2001): 75–85.

¹¹³ Mazie Nakhro, “The Manner of Worship According to the Book of Revelation,” *BSac* 158 (April–June 2001): 165–169.

(5:8–14), anticipatory silence for divine intervention (8:1, 2), and festive celebration of God’s goodness (7:9, 10; 12:12; 18:20; 19:7).¹¹⁴

We learn much about worship in heaven and by following the pattern of the redeemed. What happens when we put the words of the heavenly worshipers in our own mouth and frame our own worship with Revelation’s worship thoughts and praxis? We can only imagine the moral orientation and inner formation inherent in expressing our own worship with such language and liturgy. Revelation’s God-centeredness is imaginative enough to enlist our bodies, minds, and emotions in participation, to worship.¹¹⁵ In the true worship, which Revelation engenders, the self is reconstituted. The character is reshaped in direct correlation to moral and spiritual truths confessed. Foundational attitudes and dispositions are evoked—gratitude, humility, reverence, penitence, obedience, and moral life.¹¹⁶ The human being is, above all else, a worshiping creature whose very act of worship, if it is not perverse, is to establish or deepen belief and to do what is good.¹¹⁷

The issue is not whether worship has an effect on the worshiper or evokes a response. Rather, the issue is how true worship affects the worshiper and what kind of effect it should produce in the worshiper’s life.¹¹⁸ The extent to which the meaning of true worship is misunderstood or distorted will be directly reflected in the life of the church and the lives of individual Christians.¹¹⁹ Worship—true or false—is a constitutive act, either forming or deforming Christian character and impacting Christian conduct. To adapt and modify worship inevitably affects its role in forming Christian identity.¹²⁰

All that happens in one’s life provides the context for worshipful response to God and the specific response of one’s worship practices influences both directly and indirectly who they are as they worship through the rest of their life.¹²¹ False worship can nurture a character that is inward-turned, that thinks first of self, rather than God.¹²² Or worship can nurture a character that is outward-turned toward God and toward others.

¹¹⁴ Mazie Nakhro, “The Manner of Worship,” 169–180.

¹¹⁵ Peterson, “Learning to Worship from Saint John’s Revelation,” 25.

¹¹⁶ Weed, “Worship and Ethics,” 52.

¹¹⁷ Vigen Guroian, “Seeing Worship as Ethics: An Orthodox Perspective,” *JRE* 13.2 (1985): 333.

¹¹⁸ Weed, “Worship and Ethics,” 51.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹²¹ Dawn, “Worship and Ethics,” 297.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 298.

Worship as Being

Who and how one worships is inseparably linked to *being*. Worship involves *being*—both the *being* of the one worshiped and the *being* of the one who worships. Worship touches one's inner moral and spiritual orientation. It has to do with their values, attitudes, motives, and ways of thinking. It is a way of *being-in-the-world*,¹²³ which includes a way of *thinking-in-the-world*. It is character, the habits of the heart. It is a life-orientation,¹²⁴ a comprehensive category describing one's total existence before God.¹²⁵ In this way worship truly describes every human activity, both cultic and otherwise.¹²⁶

Revelation expresses this facet of worship—*being*—most profoundly in the imagery of the 144,000 who have names written in their forehead (14:1). In the book's apocalyptic vision of the final conflict between good and evil, everyone will be stamped on their forehead with one of two names: the name of God (and the Lamb) or the name of the beast (14:1; 13:17).¹²⁷ In antiquity a name represented character, *being*.¹²⁸ Revelation's moral vision portrays two types of character: likeness to God, personified in Christ, the Lamb; and likeness to Satan, personified in the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. These two opposing types of character are symbolized by either the seal or name of God written on the foreheads of the saints on the one hand (3:12; 7:3; 14:1; 22:4); and by the mark or name or number of the beast written on the forehead and hand of its followers on the other hand (13:16–17; 14:9; 16:2; 20:4). Thus the primary meaning of the seal of God and the mark of the beast (consisting of the names of God and the beast respectively) stamped upon every individual is that “everyone is conformed to either the image of God or the image of Satan. Everyone bears the character of the divine or the demonic.”¹²⁹ It is a matter of *being*, moral and spiritual orientation. It comes down to mind and heart (2:23)—character.

¹²³ Volf. “Worship as Adoration and Action,” 207.

¹²⁴ Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 17.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹²⁶ Jean-Pierre Ruiz. “The Politics of Praise: A Reading of Revelation 19:1–10,” in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar 1977 Seminar Papers*; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1977), 375.

¹²⁷ The names of the Lamb and the Father inscribed on Christian's foreheads (14:1) is equivalent to the seal placed on the foreheads of the 144,000 in 7:1–8. The mark (= seal) of the beast on the foreheads of unbelievers in 13:17 is identified as “the name of the beast,” and in 14:9–11 a mark on the beast-worshiper's forehead is also called the mark of the beast's name.

¹²⁸ Beatrice S. Neall, *The Concept of Character In The Apocalypse With Implications For Character Education* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 150.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

The implications of the seal and mark include fixity of character and the fundamental link between *being* and *doing* (see 22:11; cf. 2:23; 19:8; 22:15).¹³⁰ The eschatological sealing or mark depicts characters fixed in loyalty to either God or the beast respectively. As those with the mark of the beast no longer experience repentance or change of character, and their characters are permanently fixed in hatred and opposition to God (9:20, 21; 16:2, 9, 11, 21; cf. 22:11), God's bond-servants likewise become unmovable in their loyalty to God (12:17; 14:12; 7:14, 15; 3:12; 14:1). The forehead and the hand as the sites for receiving the mark or the seal are significant in that they point to the total response of the mind, emotions, and behavior. The forehead symbolizes the mind, the thought-life and character, and the right hand indicates the deed or action.¹³¹

Worship inevitably expresses one's own inner relation toward God whom they confess. It is instructive because it celebrates God's deeds and God's character. It expresses, at the same time, commitment to the God it celebrates.¹³² One acknowledges God's character and purpose, as revealed in his mighty acts.¹³³ When one describes God's action and affirm his character, when they thank God, bless him and praise him, they express their own relation toward him and who he is in the world. It brings "reverent alignment with God's character from which God's actions spring forth."¹³⁴ By aligning with God's character and purposes in worship one also aligns oneself with God's ways and purposes in the world.¹³⁵ They align who they are with Who God is. Within this inner alignment process, one's own action in the world is given direction.¹³⁶ This is what the ethic of following the Lamb points to (14:4). It is not just *doing* (conduct, behavior, words, action), but *thinking, being*. No greater act of worship can be given God than to align our thinking with his and in our own heart-of-hearts mirror God's values, attitudes, purposes, and ways of thinking—i.e., to have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16; Deut 6:5; 10:12; Matt 22:37). This is the worship essence of what it means to "fear God and give glory to Him" (14:7). As implied above, the constitutive nature of worship—together with the renewing power of the Holy Spirit—brings such inner moral alignment.

¹³⁰ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 734; Neall, *The Concept of Character*, 150–154.

¹³¹ William Hendricksen, *More Than Conqueror: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 182.

¹³² Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action," 210.

¹³³ Peterson, *Engaging With God*, 270.

¹³⁴ Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action," 210.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Worship as Action

Revelation portrays worship as moral conduct via its repeated emphasizes of “keeping” (*tereo*—1:3; 3:3, 10; 12:17; 14:12; 22:9), “doing” (*poieo*—2:5; 21:27; 22:11, 15), and “deeds” (*erga*—2:2, 5, 6, 19, 22, 23, 26; 3:1, 2, 8, 15; 9:20; 14:13, 16:11; 18:6; 20:12; 20:13). Each of these themes focuses the reality of tangible deeds. They portray worship as action with very concrete and observable dimensions. They suggest ethical responsibility as well as moral/spiritual behavior that are evident to the moral self, to others, and to Christ (2:2, 5, 6, 19, 22, 23). Their tangible observable nature is in keeping with a larger “seeing” motif in the Book of Revelation where one is either seen or threatened with exposure.¹³⁷

Revelation is a text filled with eyes. The living creatures surrounding God’s throne are full of eyes in front and all around, behind and within (4:6, 8). The One like a Son of Man possesses “eyes . . . like a flame of fire” (1:14; 2:18; 19:12). The Lamb has “seven eyes” which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth (5:6). These seven Spirits not only look in every direction, they size up and take stock of it. Each of the messages to the seven churches begins with an examination: “I know your deeds” (2:2, 9, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). Ultimately all the churches will know that Christ is the one “who searches the mind and heart” and who will give to each according to their deeds (2:23). There is no escaping moral scrutiny in Revelation. Both character and conduct are in view. Eyes both look at and within. *Being* and *doing* are alike in focus. This is why one must be sure that they do not walk around naked so that men will see their shame (16:15; cf. 3:18). The threat of *being seen* is a powerful means of assuring observable obedience and shaping consistent adherence—as well as one’s inner moral self.¹³⁸ Being seen regulates. Visibility compels—especially when even one’s inner world is in view. One keeps watch over themselves (because they are being watched) by considering both their disposition and behavior (16:15).

Revelation’s prophetic message is contextualized in seven specific contexts, i.e., the seven churches.¹³⁹ John shows the Christians of each of the seven churches how the issues of their local context belong to, and must be understood in light of larger spiritual and moral issues.¹⁴⁰ The letters to the

¹³⁷ Harry O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation After Christendom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), 64.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹³⁹ See Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 14–17.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 15; Osborne, *Revelation*, 12, 13.

churches (2:1–3:21) provide a more concrete context than do the book’s narrative sections of the sealed scroll (4:1–11:19) or cosmic war (12:1–22:5). They tend toward more specificity in conceptual imagery and introduce practical areas of moral application. They are anchored in history (i.e., a historical context) and provide concrete application of larger moral principles posited and developed elsewhere in Revelation. Perhaps that is one reason why most references to “deeds” (*erga*) in the book occur in the setting of the seven churches (2:2, 5, 6, 19, 22, 23, 26; 3:1, 2, 8, 15) and that Revelation’s “keeping” (*tereo*) motif is likewise integral to the churches’ ethos (1:3; 3:3; 22:7; cf. 22:16).

The letters addressed to the seven churches allude to several threats to authentic worship of God (1:9–3:21).¹⁴¹ There is the “synagogue of Satan” (2:9; 3:9); “Satan’s throne” (2:13), the eating of food offered to idols (2:14), and a false prophetess, Jezebel (2:20). Each of these references suggests some kind of practical (thus detectable) compromise to Christian worship, a pollution of the purity of the church, or a threat from external religious or secular forces. Worship as ethical practice (*erga*) includes sexual integrity¹⁴² (2:24, 20, 21, 22; cf. 9:21; 17:1, 2, 4; 18:3, 9; 19:2), practical first-love expressions (2:5), action that both determines reputation as an authentic worshiping community (3:1) and which completely carries out God’s will in quantity and quality (3:2).¹⁴³ *Erga* also encompasses the practical moral realities of keeping Christ’s word (3:8; cf. 3:10), not denying his name (3:8), and spiritual passion (3:15). Deeds are thus more than just “good deeds.”

¹⁴¹ See Thompson, “Worship in the Book of Revelation,” 47.

¹⁴² Revelation is filled with metaphors of sexuality. *Porn*-words such as fornication, fornicate, and whore, are verbal threads forming a tapestry of sexual images in the book. The book reflects Old Testament prophetic metaphors of sexuality for religious, economic, social, and political intercourse with the dominant culture. While used symbolically to convey spiritual unfaithfulness to God, the rhetoric nevertheless assumes their moral reality and affirms their ethical inappropriateness. Like the Old Testament contexts from which these moral images are drawn, such rhetoric assumes and conveys an unchanging biblical sexual ethic (Exod 20: 14; Lev 19:29; Deut 22:21; Ezek 16:16, 38). Even as Jeremiah and Ezekiel themselves used such rhetoric to cast graphic images of Israel’s spiritual unfaithfulness, the very people they addressed were likewise proving themselves unfaithful to their own spouses (Jer 3:1–9; 7:9; 23:14, 23; Ezek 16:15–17, 26–35, 38, 41; 22:6–13; 23:37). In Israel’s experience, moral compromise of various forms went hand-in-hand with their idolatry (Ezek 22:6–13), a reality we have already observed in the book of Revelation as well (11:19, 20). While sexuality is not one of Revelation’s prevailing moral themes, it nevertheless stands out sharply within its ethical mosaic. Indirectly, at least, one is confronted with their own sexual ethic. The rhetoric not only says what it says in terms of illustrative value, it says what it implies, thus functioning as part of a larger moral referential. Even applied metaphorically, observable compromises with contemporary culture are implied; as opposed to Boring, *Revelation*, 57. See Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 22, 23.

¹⁴³ Osborne, *Revelation*, 175.

They refer to the whole walk of the believer, as defined by the contents of the “deeds” in the letters.¹⁴⁴ They have to do with what the churches are *doing* or *not doing* right.¹⁴⁵

Within Revelation’s larger moral vision, the influence of one’s observable deeds can follow their death by way of continuing example of faithfulness to God (14:13). The tangible expressions of one’s conduct are both something that can be repented of (16:11) and they comprise criteria for judgment where they are recorded as immitigable facts in books (20:12, 13). Even God’s deeds can be both observed and critiqued by moral beings (15:3. 4; 19:1, 2).

The recurring theme of “keeping” (*tereo*) is found ten times in Revelation (1:3; 2:26; 3:3, 8, 10; 12:17; 14:12; 16:15; 22:7, 9) and comprises one of the major ethical themes of the book.¹⁴⁶ The word includes both the basic ethical principle of perseverance (i.e., maintain, hold on to, keep on, continue) and obedience (i.e., heed, obey, observe, comply with, follow, do). In Revelation “*keeping*” is linked with *logos* (word), *entole* (command), *erga* (deeds), and *pistis* (faith). *Keeping* has the force of hold fast a confession, both in facing false doctrine and in meeting a martyr’s death. More specifically it is defined throughout the book in relation to God’s instructions, i.e., “the words of this prophecy” (1:3; 22:7; cf. 22:18, 19), “my deeds” (2:26), “the commandments of God” (12:17; 14:12), and “the words of this book” (22:9; cf. 22:18, 19). In this context “*keeping*” encompasses concrete and observable dimensions.

When the matter of worship comes to a head with the demand to worship the beast in chaps. 12–14, observable moral action and ethical practice are likewise at the heart of the conflict. Eight times in chaps. 13 and 14 attention is called to worship (13:4, 8, 12, 14, 15; 14:1–3, 7, 9, 11). Worship is the crucial word throughout this narrative section of the book. At the end-times, the testing truth of the world is centered on the matter of “proper worship”¹⁴⁷ both in terms of confession and conduct. Central to Revelation’s solemn appeal to worship the Creator (14:7) rather than the Beast or his Image (13:8, 12, 15; 14:11) is the call to persevere (*hupomone*) in both keeping (*tereo*) God’s commandments and guarding the truths of God in a world that has chosen darkness over light (14:12; cf. 12:17; 13:10). The people of God

¹⁴⁴ Osborne, *Revelation*, 112.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴⁷ Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1994), 122.

must persevere.

Hupomone (translated patient endurance, steadfastness, perseverance) is another concrete ethical term in the book (1:9; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12).¹⁴⁸ In this decisive worship context (Rev 12–14) *hupomone* is defined together with *tereo* in terms of ethical requirements.¹⁴⁹ Thus worship is characterized by obedience to God in keeping his commandments (14:12; cf. 12:17). This characterization reveals how the covenant commandments of God are at issue in worship in the end-time (11:19).¹⁵⁰ The specific appeal to worship the Creator—“worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (14:7)—suggests strongly that Revelation has in view the Seventh-day Sabbath. The implication is that when Revelation describes heaven’s final appeal to the human race in the context of earth’s final crisis of worship, it does so in terms of a call to worship the Creator in the context of the fourth commandment. The biblical seventh-day Sabbath is both a tacit concern and an underlying theological-sign concept with regard to the book’s vision of authentic worship and moral action.¹⁵¹

Because the first four commandments of the Decalogue—the so-called first table of the law—are directly concerned with our relationship to God and with worship, it is easy to assume that only the first table of the law is at the center of the battle between the dragon and the remnant people of God. It is also easy to assume that how one relates to the first table of the law is the

¹⁴⁸ Osborne, *Revelation*, 543.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. It is also defined together with *tereo* in terms of maintaining loyalty or allegiance to Jesus, i.e., “their faith in Jesus” (14:12).

¹⁵⁰ The explicit reference to the “ark of the covenant” highlight the *covenant commands*, i.e., Ten Commandments, which were located in the Ark of the Covenant (11:19; cf. Deut 10:1–5; Heb 9:4; Exod 25:16; 34:28; Lev 26:15; Deut 4:13). The words of the covenant comprise the Ten Commandments (Exod 34:28). The reference to “flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm” (11:19) is borrowed from language used to describe the celestial manifestations on Mount Sinai surrounding God’s writing of the Ten Commandments with his own finger (Exod 19:16–19). The covenant commandments of God are his specified way of life within the covenant between himself and humankind. It calls people to an ethical way of life, i.e., the wholeness and preservation of one’s relationship with God and fellow human beings. That God’s covenant and its concrete commands is with humanity as a whole (and not just believers) is implied in the refusal to repent of violating the Decalogue’s concrete moral stipulations by those surviving the corrective judgments of the sixth trumpet (9:20, 21) as well as the call to people of all nations, tribes, tongues, and peoples to “fear God and give Him glory” (14:7). If any analogy is intended between “the ark of the covenant” and the seven-sealed scroll of Rev. 5:1, then the connotation could be that the sealed scroll has to do with a covenantal document consistent with the moral principles of the Ten Commandments (cf. 12:17; 14:12). See Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 342; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 367, 368.

¹⁵¹ See my discussion: Lichtenwalter, “The Seventh-day Sabbath and Sabbath Theology,” 308–313, 285.

primary issue in Revelation's vision narrative of the end.¹⁵² In other words, Revelation would have a theological rather than an ethical emphasis.¹⁵³ Ethics then would not be in view. Observing the broad worship themes in Revelation 12–14 one could easily conclude that the end-time issues focus on loyalty to God rather than on personal moral life and one's relationship to other human beings.

On the one hand this assumption misses the ultimate ethical aim of the Book of Revelation as a whole.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, it misses explicit moral/ethical details and themes within the given eschatological narrative in particular.¹⁵⁵ It also overlooks how Revelation is permeated with direct and indirect allusions to nearly every commandment of the Decalogue.¹⁵⁶ It

¹⁵² Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End Time*, 123, 124.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 124. Neall asserted that Revelation "emphasizes the vertical dimension of Christian almost to the exclusion of the horizontal dimension of relationship to humanity, which appears only in terms of mission to the world through the proclamation of the gospel. The whole category of ethical concern for the needy and oppressed, demonstrated by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for widows and orphans, loving mercy and doing justice, as emphasized in the narrative and hortatory parts of Scripture (e.g., Gen 18:1–8; Job 31:16–21; Isa 58:7; Ezek 18:7–9; Mic 6:8; Matt 25:35–36; Luke 10:30–37; Heb 13:2; Jas 1:27), is not mentioned. This omission appears to support the conclusion that apocalyptic literature is not concerned with ethics, but it views the world as hostile to God, doomed to destruction, and therefore not worth trying to reform. This view cannot be true, however, since another strong theme of the Apocalypse is mission to the world" (Neall, *The Concept of Character*, 181–183.).

¹⁵⁴ Revelation "is not intended as an apocalyptic curiosity to tantalize the intellect but to inform Christians about how God wants them to live in the light of recent redemptive history. The book contains information for the mind, but it is information that entails ethical obligation. That the book has an ultimate ethical aim is borne out by the conclusion in 22:6–21, which is an intentional expansion of the prologue in 1:1–3, and especially by the ethical emphasis of 1:3 (cf. the phraseological parallels in 22:7b 9b, 10b, 18a, 19a)." (Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 184.)

¹⁵⁵ Within the immediate context, the anti-creational actions of the dragon, sea beast, and land beast include deceit (12:9; 13:14), accusation (12:10), persecution (12:13; 13:7), arrogant words (13:5), manipulating power (13:12–14), blasphemy against God and his name (13:6); the introduction of an idolatrous image (13:14, 15), coercive economics (13:17), and murder (13:10, 15). These moral themes appear in the interpretive apex of Revelation's chiastic structure which comprises the book's literary and theological center, and which unfolds the central issues of the final crisis of earth's history. For discussion of Revelation's chiastic structure and 11:19–15:4 as both a literary unit and the book's theological center see Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 15–18; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 131; Christian, "The Chiastic Structure of Revelation 12:1–15:4," 269–292; Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 175, 176; Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, 46–48; MacPherson, "The Mark of the Beast as a 'Sign Commandment' and 'Anti-Sabbath,'" 271–275; Müller, *Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 4–11*, 573–589, 608; Paulien, "Revisiting the Sabbath"; Paulien, *The Deep Things of God*, 122, 123; Trafton, *Reading Revelation*, 10.

¹⁵⁶ References that allude to specific commandments include: 2nd—"worshiping idols" (9:20; cf. 21:8; 22:15); 3rd—"have not denied my name" (3:8; cf. 21:8), "blasphemies against God" (13:6); 4th—"Lord's Day" (1:10); 6th—"murders" (9:21; 21:8; 22:15); 7th—"sexual immorality" (2:14; 2:20; 9:21; 21:8; 22:15), "adultery" (2:22); 8th—"thefts" (9:21); 9th—"liars" (21:8, 27; 22:18); 10th—"fruit you long for" (18:14). See my discussion in Lichtenwalter, "The Seventh-day Sabbath and Sabbath Theology," 306–313, and; Skip MacCarty, *In Granite or*

overlooks the fact that the Ten Commandments beg for a holistic analysis that views them as a series of ten—not as two series of four and six.¹⁵⁷ God and humanity cannot be divided. Any separation of morality and worship is incongruent. As per above, such is the power of idolatry (9:19, 20). The ethic of the covenant commands presupposes the indivisible unity of the two tables of the Decalogue.¹⁵⁸

The comprehensive moral implications of Revelation's vision of worship rule out both an exclusively God-oriented interpretation of the first four commandments and an exclusively neighbor-oriented interpretation of the last six. To turn from the first four commandments is to undo the last six in one's moral life, and to turn from the last six is to render one incapable of holding on to the first four. The truth is that a person cannot worship God and oppress his/her neighbor at the same time.¹⁵⁹ A person cannot be committed to God and be unfaithful to his/her neighbor at the same time. "Cult without justice is no worship of the true God but detestable idolatry (see Isa. 1:11–17)."¹⁶⁰ The morality of everyday life cannot be separated from one's relationship with God. When God has vanished, the neighbor quickly disappears,¹⁶¹ and when the neighbor is no longer visible in our moral vision, the God we think we see is a mere mirage. These principles unfold with graphic detail in Rev 18 where idolatrous worship includes the exploitation of human beings (18:13). One cannot separate the morality of everyday life from their spiritual wellbeing. The Decalogue as a whole is a way of relating both to God and to one's neighbor.¹⁶² As intertwined covenant commands it lays at the heart of Revelation's vision of worship.¹⁶³

Ingrained: What the Old and New Covenants Reveal About the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007), 199, 200. That these *covenant commands* are for humanity as a whole (and not just believers), is implied in the refusal to repent of violating its concrete moral stipulations by those surviving the corrective judgments of the sixth trumpet (9:20, 21). The commandments of God are his specified way of life within the covenant between himself and humankind. It calls people to an ethical way of life, i.e., the wholeness and preservation of one's relationship with God and fellow human beings.

¹⁵⁷ David W. Gill, *Doing Right: Practicing Ethical Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 326.

¹⁵⁸ Jan Milič Lochman, *Signposts of Freedom: The Ten Commandments and Christian Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1982), 73.

¹⁵⁹ Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action," 206.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Walter Brueggeman, *The Covenanted Self: Explorations in Law and Covenant* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 23.

¹⁶² Gill, *Doing Right*, 71; Lochman, *Signposts of Freedom*, 73, 74.

¹⁶³ This indivisible unity of the covenant commands is evinced in Revelation's reference to the Sabbath commandment (14:7) as well as the imagery of the sixth trumpet which links the cults of paganism ("idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood") with murders,

Worship as conduct characterizes imagery of the Lamb's bride who is described as clothing herself with "fine linen." This fine linen is defined as the "righteous acts" (*dikaiomata*) of the saints (19:8). The focus of *dikaiomata* is on a "righteous deed" or "righteous act" in fulfillment of a command or legal requirement.¹⁶⁴ Here it includes "the righteous deeds done by the saints," i.e., human faithfulness and good works (cf. 22:11, "let the one who does right continue to do right").¹⁶⁵ *Dikaiomata* refers to the results of right conduct.¹⁶⁶ Since such right conduct is in fulfillment of a command or requirement, it is logical to assume that the "righteous acts of the saints" includes keeping the commandments of God (cf. 12:17; 14:12). The symbolism of the people of God empowered through divine grace clothing themselves with this kind of fine linen highlights the discernable and concrete nature of these acts, i.e., "it was given to her to clothe herself" (19:8)

Finally, the eternally damned are defined by a repertoire of deeds they have done (21:27; 22:15; cf. 9:19, 20). The lists draws together the comprehensive moral dysfunction (confession, character, conduct) envisioned in Revelation as each term reflects sins (of heart and behavior) mentioned elsewhere in the book.¹⁶⁷ Such sins are either part of the activities surrounding idolatry, or they are actually acts of idolatry themselves.¹⁶⁸ By implication, each transgression can be balanced antithetically by a positive trait (or action) that is to characterize the saints who keep the commandments of God (12:17; 14:12; cf. 19:8).¹⁶⁹ In the end everyone is judged according to his or her *erga* (20:13). While only the appearance of

sorceries, immorality and thefts, as an expression of the rebellion of mankind against the rule of God the Creator (9:20, 21). It is not insignificant that within the Decalogue, the Sabbath command's placement is the symbolic link between the divine/human relationship (Exod 20:4–11) and the human way of life which is further addressed in the following six commands (Exod 20:12–17). See Lochman, *Signposts of Freedom*, 67; Susan Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73. The Sabbath command takes the most space of any of the ten in the two tables (Kathryn Greene-McCreight, "Restless Until We Rest In God: The Fourth Commandment As Test Case in Christian 'Plain Sense' Interpretation," in *The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness*, ed. William P. Brown [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004], 223.). It is the only command that mentions both God and neighbor together. It plunges us into the midst of the question of the nature of biblical holiness and what it means to be in relationship with others who like us need rest from work.

¹⁶⁴ *TDNT*, 2:221

¹⁶⁵ Osborne, *Revelation*, 675. See Beale's discussion where the phrase connotes both righteous human acts and their vindicated condition resulting from their faithful acts, or more likely, from God's righteous acts of judgment against their oppressors (cf. 15:4, "the righteous acts" of God have been revealed) in Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 935–937, 941–942.

¹⁶⁶ Osborne, *Revelation*, 675.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 740, 741.

¹⁶⁸ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1059.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

one's name in the Lamb's book of life can counterbalance any damning evidence contained in the book of their deeds (20:15; cf. 21:27; 13:8; 3:5), the record of one's deeds nevertheless provides an unmistakable mark where his or her loyalty (i.e., worship) really rests. They are in a sense *vouchers* to support what is in or not in the Lamb's book of life.¹⁷⁰

This diverse imagery of worship as action reflects the larger biblical witness of the bodily reality of worship in everyday living. There is not a thing one can do without their body—including worship. Scripture consistently transports the notion of worship from ritual to everyday life:¹⁷¹ “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship” (Rom. 12:1). Worship is expressed in the bodily reality of everyday living. It involves an extreme realism—the bodily offering of oneself to God and all which one does every day with their body.¹⁷² In doing so one presents to God his or her very self—tangibly.¹⁷³ Likewise Scripture consistently focuses worship in the sphere of ethical responsibility (cf. Isa 1:10–17; 58:1–13; Amos 5:21–24; Mic 6:6–8; Ps. 15:1–5; 24:3, 4; Jas 1:27).¹⁷⁴ Worship is defined and understood as inseparable from a concrete life of justice, righteousness, truthfulness, compassion, promise keeping, and sexual integrity.¹⁷⁵

While worship can never be reduced to mere action, it is nevertheless embodied in conduct—action.¹⁷⁶ Worship as praise (confession) and worship as action (conduct) are integrally linked. Thus in keeping with the larger Scriptural vision of worship, Revelation reveals authentic worship as taking place in a rhythm of worship as action.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion: Worship, Ethics, and Eschatology

There is no book of the New Testament in which worship figures so prominently, provides so much of the language and imagery, and is so

¹⁷⁰ Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 85; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22* (ed. Kenneth Barker; Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 432. See my discussion Larry L. Lichtenwalter, *Revelation's Great Love Story: More Than I Ever Imagined* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2008), 52–57.

¹⁷¹ Volf. “Worship as Adoration and Action,” 204.

¹⁷² William Barklay, *The Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 157.

¹⁷³ Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 709.

¹⁷⁴ See Dempsey's chapter “Re-visioning Worship: The Prophets' Ethical Challenge,” in Carol J. Dempsey, *Hope Amid The Ruins: The Ethics of Israel's Prophets* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2000), 107–117. See also, Volf. “Worship as Adoration and Action,” 204, 205.

¹⁷⁵ Dempsey, *Hope Amid The Ruins*, 117.

¹⁷⁶ Volf. “Worship as Adoration and Action,” 206.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

fundamental to its purpose and message as the book of Revelation. As such it provides God's "last word on worship." One burdened theme runs throughout its story plot—Worship God. Realities of worship unfold that are timeless, overarching, comprehensive, and architectonic. Worship is also eschatological. Together worship and eschatology cast a moral vision generating a corresponding ethic. Thus the vision of worship profoundly touches moral life—ethics. Ultimately, authentic worship both expresses and shapes Christian moral identity and action in response to God.¹⁷⁸ It is a constitutive act where confession, character, and conduct converge in a response to God as the Christian way of "*being-in-the-world*." It orders human life.¹⁷⁹ Revelation's worship lifts one out of the world to God and at the same time necessarily drives him or her out into the same world of which God is Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.¹⁸⁰

Revelation's rich liturgical language and worship imagery affords a comprehensive portrayal of worship, which communicates moral vision across varying modes of conceptual imagery (narrative, hymns, rhetoric, worldview, symbolism, sound, sight, color, smell, spatial dimensions, etc.). All spheres of human moral life, character, thought, and experience fall within the book's worship purview and experience. The arena of Christian worship is our world and every relationship in which we find ourselves. It is in this context that Revelation reveals authentic worship as obedience to God (12:17; 14:12). It touches our very *being*. It haunts our worshipping imagination.

The moral content of right action (conduct) as worship is evidenced in worship's connection to the commandments of God, specific areas of ethically inexcusable behavior, as well as Revelation's exhortation to "keep the things which are written in it" (1:3; 12:17; 14:12; 9:20, 21; 21:8, 27; 22:7, 9, 15). Concrete application of worship to moral life is everywhere assumed. The keeping of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is a tacit concern and underlying sign concept profoundly linking worship and eschatology and ethics. Without right observable conduct (action), confession is empty, hypocritical. So too would any notion of righteous character be wanting. Worship thus encompasses obedience in ethical practice. In doing so it reflects the ultimate ethical aim of the book. The reader is not left to his or her imagination either to what worship is or how it is to be expressed in

¹⁷⁸ Weed, "Worship and Ethics," 47.

¹⁷⁹ Thompson, "Worship in the Book of Revelation," 52.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

everyday life of choice, values, conduct, and purposes. Because God is in covenant relationship to the world and with his people in particular, how treat other human beings will ever be an expression of their worship toward God. Worship as ethical practice gives glory to God by affirming his character and conduct as holy (4:8; 15:3, 4; 19:8; 22:11).

Whatever one's read of Revelation, the point of the book remains: the question of our worship is a fundamental and ultimate question. For Revelation, the worship of God is the purpose of human life. Worship is seen as the natural and expected response to the vision of God. It arises from a prophetic-apocalyptic vision, an awareness of God, and leads to a deepening response to that same God.¹⁸¹ Worship is not optional (19:10; 22:9). Because God is our Creator and Redeemer, worship of anything else, or of nothing, or of no one at all, is idolatry.¹⁸² Toward such would Revelation stir our worshipping imagination!

The foregoing linkage of worship and ethics inevitably raises the question of moral agency: Why should I be moral? What motivates me to be moral? From where do I summon the strength to be moral?

Revelation's vision of worship sets the question of moral agency in the context of divine grace and Christ's substitutionary death (7:14, 15; cf. 7:9, 10; 1:4; 22:21). True worship (confession, character, conduct) inevitably follows personal redemption.¹⁸³ God alone empowers righteous acts (19:8).

What else can one do after all that the Lamb has done for them? The Lamb is worthy of all (5:12). The Lamb is worthy of open confession of him even if it means one's very life (Rev 12:11). It is the Lamb's blood that enables victory and brings one under God's reign as a kingdom of priests (12:11; 5:9, 10; cf. 1:5, 6). The Lamb wins and then helps his people win (5:1–10; 12:10–11; 17:14). The Redeemed find themselves released from their bondage to the power and penalty of sin by identifying through faith with Jesus' sacrificial death (1:5, 6; 5:9; 7:14, 15; 12:11).¹⁸⁴ Behind this worship ethic (confession, character, and conduct) stands the Cross of Christ and a deep personal understanding of what it means to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. Revelation's awe-inspiring hymns and graphic worship imagery provide both

¹⁸¹ Thompson, "Worship in the Book of Revelation," 52.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁸³ The imagery of the innumerable multitude of redeemed standing victoriously before the throne includes confession (who they worship and what they say about God), character (white robes and palm branches of victory), and conduct (they are before the throne serving God day and night). See Rev 7:9–15. See also my discussion, Lichtenwalter, *Revelation's Great Love Story*, 105–111, 130–132.

¹⁸⁴ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 191.

language and context for such life-transforming realities. An *inclusio* of divine grace embraces and interprets Revelation's entire worship, eschatology and ethics narrative (1:4; 22:21).¹⁸⁵ Nothing more stirs the worshiping imagination!

¹⁸⁵ As a rhetorical device an *inclusio* uses similar words and phrases to bracket the beginning and ending of a text. Revelation's prologue (1:1–8) and epilogue (22:6–21) form an *inclusio* with similar words, phrases, and concepts, bringing the book to full circle and recapitulating the themes found at the beginning. As “bookends” so to speak, the grace *inclusio* bring incredible implications for the book's worship motif and how the reader's own heart is awakened, trained, and expresses worship.

IV. Theology and Church History

The Creator and Creation: God's Affection for This World

Jo Ann Davidson

The great creator, who reveals himself in Scripture, loves this world his hands have made. His affection is not narrowly confined by modern ideas of love, but embraces all persons, all creatures, and the land itself.¹

Hints of this are embedded throughout Scripture, commencing as it opens: “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2). The word “hovering,” describing the Spirit of God at Creation, is used only once more in the Pentateuch, this time in Deuteronomy, again

¹ Looking around the present world, there are those who see the suffering, death and pollution and doubt that there could possibly be a loving God anywhere. However, Scripture also instructs that God has an enemy determined to ruin God's name and reputation. For many this enemy has succeeded. This chapter does not deal with this important topic. Nevertheless, evidence of God's love can still be seen in the created world. Ellen White speaks eloquently to this point: “The impress of Deity, manifest in the pages of revelation, is seen upon the lofty mountains, the fruitful valleys, the broad, deep ocean. *The things of nature speak to man of his Creator's love.* He has linked us to himself by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. This world is not all sorrow and misery. “God is love,” [1 John 4:8.] is written upon every opening bud, upon the petals of every flower, and upon every spire of grass. Though the curse of sin has caused the earth to bring forth thorns and thistles, there are flowers upon the thistles, and the thorns are hidden by roses. *All things in nature testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God, and to his desire to make his children happy.*” (Ellen White, *Christian Education* [Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894], 67, emphasis added)

describing God, but now with the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings:

He [God] found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an [mother] eagle stirs up her nest, hovers over her young, spreading out her wings, taking them up, carrying them on her wings, So the LORD alone led him (Deut 32:10–11).

The affection of a mother bird hovering over her nest is used to illustrate God's feelings as he creates our new "nest." This is a striking analogy. Though God foreknew that the human family he created would rise up and kill him someday, he tenderly creates our new "nest."

The Creator also expresses his great pleasure over what he makes each day of Creation Week, calling it "good"—even "very good."² Later, he recounts to Job the exceedingly great joy at that time: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? ... When *the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy*" (Job 38:4, 7, emphasis added). This was such an amazing event that the entire universe was rejoicing with the Creator!

On Day Five, after fashioning the birds and water animals, "God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas and let birds multiply on the earth'" (Gen 1:22). With the same words he will use the following day when he creates humans, God blesses the new birds and sea creatures—as yet there were no humans around to listen. He delights in the diversity of life just created, much of which he made with his own hands just as he will Adam on Day Six: "And the LORD God formed man of the ground³

² The original language includes "ki" with "good," which intensifies to read "indeed, good" or "how good it is!"

³ The Pentateuch draws attention to how closely "related" humans and animals are: (1) Both animals and human beings were created with the "breath of life" (Gen 1:20, 24; 2:7, 19); (2) God blessed them both (Gen 1:22, 28); (3) both humans and animals were given a plant-based diet (Gen 1:29–30); (4) animals as well as humans have blood in their veins. That blood is a symbol of life (Gen 9:4–6); (5) they both could be responsible for murder (Gen 9:5; Exod 21:28–32); (6) they are both included in God's Covenant (Gen 9:9–10); (7) both are under the death penalty if they engage in bestiality (Lev 20:15–16); (8) both animals and human beings are given Sabbath rest (Exod 20:8–10; Deut 5:14; Lev 23:10–12); (9) firstborn of humans and animals belong to God (Exod. 22:29–30; 13:12–13); (10) priests and sacrificial animals have to be without spot or blemish (Lev 21:17–21; 22:19–25); (11) animals could not be sacrificed unless eight days old and then they were to be dedicated to God. The same time period of eight days was given for a boy to be circumcised (Lev. 22:27; Exod 22:30; Gen 17:12). Adapted from Jiri Moskala, *The Laws of Clean & Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, &*

... Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, every bird of the air ..." (Gen. 2:7, 19).⁴

God joyfully refers to life's diversity as he exults to Job over some of the animals he created. He obviously treasures the animal kingdom in his longest speech in Scripture, a magnificent four-chapter address starting in Job 38. God mentions animals such as a lioness, a wild mountain goat, an ox, an ostrich, a "majestic" horse, a hawk, an eagle and a raven. He then turns to the behemoth:

Look now at the behemoth which I made along with you; He eats grass like an ox. See now his strength is in his hips, and his power in his stomach muscles. He moves his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit. His bones are like beams of bronze, his ribs like bars of iron. *He is the first of the ways of God* (Job 38:15–19, emphasis added).

Moreover, God speaking directly to newly created creatures on Day Five of Creation Week implies an innate intelligence that humans have been slow to appreciate. Scientists continue to learn about the amazing intelligence of animals—even featured in a cover article in *Time* magazine.⁵ This intelligence is implied throughout Scripture, including Balaam and his donkey, where the text states that "the LORD opened the tongue of the donkey" after Balaam beats her (Num 22:28). The donkey then talks to Balaam, complaining of how she had been treated. A divine being also severely scolds Balaam for beating his donkey. The point is that the donkey already had intelligence, and now with her tongue unloosed she could express human language.

God's affection for all life he created is also reflected in the comment he

Rationale, An Intertextual Study (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 2000), 298–299.

⁴ The skills of the Creator are manifest numerous times throughout the Psalms. For example: "the LORD is the great God, And the great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; The heights of the hills are His also. *The sea is His, for He made it; And His hands formed the dry land*" (Ps 95:3–5, emphasis added).

⁵ *Time* (August 5, 2010). Many current books also presently verify this. See, for example, *Crows: Encounters with the Wise Guys of the Avian World*, by Candace Savage (Greystone Books, 2007). Ellen White displayed sensitivity to this issue over one hundred years earlier: "The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and hear and love and fear and suffer. They use their organs far more faithfully than many human beings use theirs. They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection for those who have charge of them, far superior to the affection shown by some of the human race. They form attachments for man which are not broken without great suffering to them" (Ellen White, *Ministry of Healing* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905], 315–316).

makes to the newly created humans, when granting them dominion over the fish, birds and every living thing:

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; *have dominion* over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’ And God said, ‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every animal of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food” (Gen 1:28, 29, emphasis added).

With this divinely designed, non-violent, cruelty-free diet human dominion is defined and circumscribed by precluding killing. God provides peaceful meals which preserve life.⁶

After six days of creating life and matter, God displays the most extraordinary skill by creating the Sabbath, for the parameters of his power are limitless. **As the God of space and time, his power is limitless.** More verbs are connected with the creation of this day than any of the other six: God ceases from his work and rests, also blessing and sanctifying the seventh day. It is the first day to which he gives a name (Exod 20:8, 11). The previous six days of Creation Week were named by number—“day one,” “day two,” “day three,” etc.

The seventh day is the first entity God makes holy—not a building or a mountain or a city, but twenty-four hours of time. And to make certain everyone understands that this is the same kind of day as the previous six, the phrase “the seventh day” is repeated three times in the two verses summarizing Creation week (Gen 2:1–2).

The first human couple hardly had much time to work the first day of their life, the sixth day. But the very next day, their first full day of life, they were to rest. **In the creator’s finished work, his all-encompassing**

⁶ The Creator reiterates the plant-based diet when presenting the sabbath of the seventh year: “Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you; for you and your servant, for your maidservant and your hired servant, for the stranger who sojourns with you, for your livestock and the animals that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food” (Lev 25:3–7).

love for all life he created is manifest in this gift. He wants all creatures to rest a seventh of their lives.

God refers back to this time when giving the Decalogue on Mount Sinai. He apparently loves the seventh day for the fourth commandment is the longest of the ten, containing a third of all the words in the Decalogue. God just cannot stop talking about the Sabbath! He refers to the first one during Creation Week and then reminds that Sabbath rest is provided for all life.⁷ Nor can the seventh-day Sabbath be considered “legalistic” since “God is love.” Lovers long to set specific times to be together.

Many creation myths suggest the origin of plants, animals, and even the gods. Only the God of Scripture creates the Sabbath. It is his signature in time. His caring affection is reflected in this gift of *rest* for all life.⁸

Later, when the earth has grown violent and desperately evil,⁹ God resolves to bring an end to the abhorrent iniquity. But first he calls Noah to build a huge ark to preserve both humans and animals in the midst of divine judgment. Following the Flood God announces:

As for Me, behold I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, *and with every living creature with you: the birds, the cattle, and every animals of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every animal of the earth* (Gen 9:9–10, emphasis added).

God does not hesitate to place humans and animals under the same Covenant protection. In fact, he repeats this four times in his covenant statement (Gen 9:8–17).

⁷ Exod 20:10. Moses elaborates more than once on the inclusion of animals within Sabbath rest: “Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your maidservant and the stranger may be refreshed” (Lev 23:12). “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall not do any work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates ...” (Deut 5:14).

⁸ Ellen White expressed such a sentiment: “The Sabbath, ever pointing to Him who made them all, bids men open the great book of nature and trace therein the wisdom, the power, and the *love of the Creator*” (Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* [Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1890], 48, emphasis added).

⁹ The text describing the corruptness of that time are startling: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence, So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen 6:5, 11–13).

At Sinai, God gives his people civil laws that govern their relationship with each other, the animals, and the land itself. For example, they must help a staggering donkey even if it belongs to an enemy (Exod 23:4–5); large farm animals cannot be muzzled when helping with the heavy work of harvesting—they must be allowed to eat when working (Deut 25:4); fruit trees must be spared, even in warfare—at a time when siege ramps, constructed of wood, were extensively used in warfare (Deut 20:19–20); the land/soil must be allowed to rest every seven years (Lev 25:1–7). Because God cares for this earth, he provides for its protection. Jewish historian Josephus would subsequently comment on the humane nature of the mosaic laws:

So thorough a lesson has he given us in gentleness and humanity that he does not overlook even the brute beasts, authorizing their use only in accordance with the Law, and forbidding all other employment of them. Creatures, which take refuge in our houses like suppliants, we are forbidden to kill. He would not suffer us to take the parent birds with the young, and bade us even in an enemy's country to spare and not to kill the beasts employed in labor. Thus, in every particular, he had an eye for mercy, using the laws I have mentioned to enforce the lesson.¹⁰

The psalmists regularly ascribe praise to the Creator for his “marvelous works,” rehearsing God’s affection for all life: “Your righteousness is like the great mountains. O LORD, *You save man and animal*” (Ps 36:6, emphasis added). Psalm 145 echoes this, again praising God’s providence. The word “all” or “every” (the same word in Hebrew) occurs sixteen times in this short psalm, underscoring God’s limitless love for **all** creation—for everything he made! The psalm climaxes exalting divine affection: “The LORD is righteous in all His ways and *loving toward all He has made*” (Ps 145:15–17, emphasis

¹⁰ Josephus, *Against Appion*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray¹ (London: Heinemann, 1956), 1.2.210–15. Similar sentiments are given by Philo: “We must now give the reason why he [Moses] began his law book with the history, and put the commands and prohibitions in the second place. He did not, like any historian, make it his business to leave behind for posterity records of ancient deeds for the pleasant but unimproving entertainment which they give; but, in relating the history of early times, and going for its beginning right to the creation of the universe, he wished to shew two most essential things: first that the Father and Maker of the world was in the truest sense also its Lawgiver, secondly that he who would observe the laws will accept gladly the duty of following nature and live in accordance with the ordering of the universe, so that his deeds are attuned to harmony with his words and his words with his deeds.” *Moses* 2.48, trans. F. H. Colson in *Philo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 6:471–73; cited in William P Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 12.

added).¹¹

Psalm 148 lists the myriad different voices of a choir praising the Creator: “Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; Both young men and maidens; Old men and children” (vv. 11–12). These are joined by “great sea creatures and all the depths; Fire and hail, snow and clouds, Stormy wind, mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars; Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl (vv. 8–10).” This multitude joins “His angels, all His hosts, sun and moon; stars of light, heaven of heavens, waters above the heavens” (vv. 1–4). The final line closing the entire Psalter (Ps 150:6) is again inclusive: “*Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!*” (Ps 150:6, emphasis added).¹² Praise wends to the Creator from many diverse voices!

In the prophetic books the Creator mourns the breakdown of creation by human beings. For “God’s creation is at stake in Israel’s behaviors, not simply their relationship with God.”¹³ His words through Isaiah seem very contemporary:

The earth mourns and fades away,
The world languishes and fades away;
The haughty people of the earth languish.
The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants,
Because they have transgressed the law,
Changed the ordinance,
Broken the everlasting covenant.
Therefore the curse devours the earth,
and those who dwell in it are desolate (Is 24:5–6).¹⁴

The prophet Jeremiah concurs, listing a litany of human sins. Then God wails:

¹¹ Psalm 92, “Psalm for the Sabbath” is also full of praise for the created world and the future, perfect, re-created world.

¹² There is increasing recognition and appreciation of the languages of the different animal species. See, for example, Tim Friend, *Animal Talk: Breaking the Codes of Animal Language* (New York: Free Press, 2004); Monty Roberts, *The Man Who Listens to Horses: Story of a Real-Life Horse Whisperer* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009).

As many animal species die out due to destructive habits of humans, this implies that God’s praise is being muted.

¹³ Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005), 165.

¹⁴ Noting the breakdown of America’s ecological systems, George Carlin composed an adaptation of the first verse of “America the Beautiful,” which reflect the sentiments of the divine laments: “Oh, beautiful for smoggy skies, insecticided grain, for strip-mined mountains majesty above the asphalt plains. America, America, man sheds his waste on thee, and hides the pines with billboard signs, from sea to oily sea.” [poster from Northern Sun.com]

Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the LORD.
 "Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?
*I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains
 And for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation,
 Because they are burned up,
 Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled;
 They are gone*" (Jer 9:7–10, emphasis added).

God laments the ruin of the natural world. Decrying human sinfulness, he mourns for the resulting degraded creation because he cares for this earth.

As the book of Jonah closes, God again reveals his love. He tells his petulant prophet, who is raging against God's mercy: "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also *many animals?*" (Jonah 4:11, emphasis added). God specifically states that, by sparing Nineveh, he can also save innocent animals, again underscoring his affection for the life he has created.

When the Creator walks on the earth, even his early childhood years are instructive:

"through all those secluded years at Nazareth, His [Jesus] life flowed out in currents of sympathy and tenderness. The aged, the sorrowing, and the sin-burdened, the children at play in their innocent joy, *the little creatures of the groves, the patient beasts of burden,—all were happier for His presence. He whose word of power upheld the worlds would stoop to relieve a wounded bird.* There was nothing beneath His notice, nothing to which he disdained to minister."¹⁵

He later refers to divine affection for all life when he mentions that God notices when a sparrow falls.¹⁶ He also admires the things his own hands had made: "Consider the lilies of the field ... even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matt 6:29).¹⁷ In his parables he often draws

¹⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898) 74, emphasis added.

¹⁶ Luke 12:6 "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God." Sparrows were welcome in the sanctuary: "*How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! ... Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, Where she may lay her young—Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in Your house ...*" (Ps 84:1, 3–4, emphasis added).

¹⁷ Ellen White pointed to the blessings of flowers: "The shrubs and flowers, with their varied tints, are God's ministers, carrying the mind up from nature to nature's God" (*Review and*

lessons from nature.¹⁸ And once again he compares his love to that of a mother bird: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... I wanted to gather your children together *as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings*, but you were not willing!” (Matt 23:37, emphasis added).

During a major address in Athens, the Apostle Paul speaks of God, who “gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). He also instructs that the invisible attributes of God can be learned through the things he has created: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...” (Rom 1:20).¹⁹ The wisest man, King Solomon, much earlier intriguingly instructs how animals can be our teachers:

“Go to the ant, you sluggard. *Consider her ways and be wise*” (Prov 6:6); “There are *four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise*: The ants are a people not strong, Yet they prepare their food in the summer; The rock badgers are a feeble folk, Yet they make their homes in the crags; the locusts have no king, Yet they all advance in ranks; The spider skillfully grasps with hands, And it is in kings’ palaces” (Prov 30:24–28, emphasis added).²⁰

Solomon apparently was an impressive biologist noted for his great wisdom.

Herald, Oct. 11, 1887). “We should study the [various] ... parables where He spoke them, in the fields and groves, under the open sky, among the grass and flowers. As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love” (Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* [Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1900], 25–26).

¹⁸ Ellen White uplifted the beauty of nature and how the Creator intends that it remind us of his love: “As your senses delight in the attractive loveliness of the earth, think of the world that is to come, that shall never know the blight of sin and death; where the face of nature will no more wear the shadow of the curse. Let your imagination picture the home of the saved, and remember that it will be more glorious than your brightest imagination can portray. In the varied gifts of God in nature we see but the faintest gleaming of his glory.... The poet and the naturalist have many things to say about nature, but it is the Christian who enjoys the beauty of the earth with the highest appreciation, because he recognizes his Father’s handiwork, and perceives his love in flower and shrub and tree. *No one can fully appreciate the significance of hill and vale, river and sea, who does not look upon them as an expression of God’s love to man.*” (White, *Christian Education*, 55).

¹⁹ Paul makes a similar point to the Colossians: “[speaking of Christ] in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Col 1:14–17).

²⁰ These specific animals are not even particularly appreciated in the modern world!

When receiving guests who came to learn from him, Solomon

spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 4:33–34).²¹

In spite of how humans have wreaked havoc with this world, the heavenly beings who cheered God on during Creation Week (Job 38:7) still continue to praise him for this: “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power for You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev 4:11). God’s other great act of salvation is not even mentioned in this creation hymn.²²

As Scripture closes, God’s affection for creation is highlighted once more. After his Second Coming, Jesus does not whisk the redeemed away to a new planet in another part of the universe and be rid of this contaminated place, the “one dark blot” in the universe. No! He renews our “nest.” When God points toward the establishment of his righteous kingdom he pictures it through the animal kingdom:

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb. The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion ... together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze ... And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD ...*” (Isa 11:6–9, emphasis added).

²¹ The ancients seem to have had a greater sensitivity to the created world. Job speaks: “But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach you; and the fowls of the air, and they will tell you: Or speak to the earth, and it will teach you: and the fishes of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this, in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?” (Job 12:7–10).

More and more materials are being published which draw attention to the marvels of animals—their kinship with us, their thinking, suffering and emotions. See, for example, Bernard E. Rollin *The Unheeded Cry: Animal Consciousness, Animal Pain and Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Since animals can hear, smell, and see better than humans, they can even hint what it will be like when human senses are restored at Christ’s Second Coming!

²² Considering the corruption with which humans have violated the created orders, it is no wonder that divine beings also urge God to bring judgment against those who ruin the world: “You should ... destroy those who destroy the earth” (Rev 11:18).

The non-violent, peaceful diet of Eden will be restored. The extremely cruel treatment of animals through the modern practices of “industrial farming” will be halted.²³ The brutal sport of hunting will cease.²⁴ Finally the Creator’s dreams for this world will be fulfilled.

The Doctrine of Creation, the doctrine of *Life*, is a lot more than *not* evolution. It reveals the Creator’s heart of love for this world as seen all through Scripture. Someday soon those accepting redemption will join the heavenly chorus to praise the Creator face to face and there will be a celebration of *re-creation*. Chanting praise in that mighty choir will be many diverse voices. Psalm 148 anticipates what the book of Revelation describes of that time:

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" Revelation 5:13.²⁵

*The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, **all things, animate and inanimate**, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, **declare that God is love.***²⁶

²³ Many books document the horrific practices of modern “industrial farming” which result in frightful suffering of animals. See, for example, Erik Marcus, *Meat Market: Animals, Ethics, and Money* (Boston: Brio Press, 2005). Ellen White wrote of the cruelty caused by a flesh diet over one hundred years ago: “Think of the cruelty to animals that meat eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God! ... What man with a human heart, who has ever cared for domestic animals, could look into their eyes, so full of confidence and affection, and willingly give them over to the butcher’s knife? How could he devour their flesh as a sweet morsel?” *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 316.

²⁴ Matthew Scully wrote an unsettling account of the horrific modern “sport” of hunting, in the process reminding of what it means to be “humane.” See Matthew Scully, *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Sufferings of Animals, and the Call to Mercy* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2002).

²⁵ Christians already words of this doxology: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him *all creatures* here below.”

²⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 677–678 (emphasis added).

Creation and Time¹

Norman R. Gulley

Introduction

During **modern and postmodern times** we live in a changed paradigm from that given in Genesis 1–2. No longer does God create in six contiguous, consecutive, literal 24-hour days with a seventh-day celebration of his finished creation, and thus a day set apart as holy and blessed (Gen 2:1–3). Rather many Christian scholars believe in day-ages in which God created through the natural process of evolution (theistic evolution), and most Christians believe Sunday is the day to go to church. Whereas the seventh-day Sabbath is meaningless if creation days were day-ages, Sunday is not meaningless to those who keep it in honor of Christ’s resurrection on the first day, so they have no problem with the

¹ It is a great privilege and pleasure to write this chapter in honor of Dr. Richard M. Davidson, my esteemed friend from whom I have learned so much, as footnote references to him in my *Systematic Theology* volumes indicate. I have been inspired and informed by his biblical scholarship. See Davidson’s significant article on creation: “The Biblical Account of Origins,” *JATS* 14 (Spring 2003): 4–43, and his book on the Sabbath: *A Love Song for the Sabbath* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1988); also in his magnum Opus (855 pages): *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 15–132. Therefore, I decided to submit some thoughts on creation and the Sabbath as a very small footnote to part of his work. To do justice to this topic would take much more space than possible in this chapter. Those interested may want to read the first chapter of vol. 3 of my system: *Systematic Theology, Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 3–76.

day-ages when it comes to their day of worship. God's Word in Genesis 1–2 is doubted today just as much as Satan, and later Eve, doubted God's Word in the beginning (Gen 2:16–17; 3:1–6). Just as Eve was deceived (2 Cor 11:3) so are most Christians today.

Seventh-day Adventists have a specific mission, in part, to announce to the world and these Christians, the truth about creation and the Sabbath. To fail to do this is to fail to carry out a very important part of our mission. Adventists cannot buy into day-ages without removing the foundation for the seventh-day Sabbath. Doubting God's Word in Genesis 1–2 questions the validity of God's Word throughout the rest of Scripture. This is so foundational, that the first of three angel's messages begins with: "Fear [reverence] God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev 14:7). This is not only a call to remember the Creator when most people look to evolution, but it is a call to remember the Sabbath of his creation, for it is a repetition of a part of the fourth commandment: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them . . ." (Exod 20:11), as pointed out by Jon Paulien² and John T. Baldwin.³

Creation Days

There are more ways of interpreting creation days than we consider below, but hopefully the samples given will give an idea of the confusion that arises when persons do not accept the literal meaning of Scripture.

Instantaneous

The debate over the length of creation days goes back at least to Origen (ca. 185–254 CE).⁴ Hilary of Poitiers (300–367 CE) in his *De Trinitate* said, "creation of the heaven and earth and other elements is not separated by the

² Jon Paulien, "Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation" (paper presented at the Jerusalem Bible Conference, 9–14 June 1998).

³ John T. Baldwin, "Revelation 14:7: An Angel's Worldview, in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, ed. John T. Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), pp. 19–39.

⁴ Origen viewed meaning on three levels, equivalent to humans being body, soul, and spirit. The body is the literal interpretation, and the spirit the spiritual interpretation (*On First Principles*, 4.1.11). He gives a spiritual or figurative interpretation to creation days and the Garden of Eden (*On First Principles*, 4.1.16). The Ante-Nicene Fathers, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 4: 359, 365. Origen thought it "foolish" to suppose God "planted a paradise in Eden" and that eating from one tree brought life and eating from the other brought evil (4.1.16).

slightest interval in God's working, since their preparation had been completed in like infinity of eternity in the counsel of God."⁵

Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) wrestled with philosophical concepts of God's timelessness and immutability, and how, in this context, one should understand God's creation, which suggests time (a beginning) and a change (making a new reality). He said, "assuredly the world was made, not in time, but simultaneously with time" but the result was puzzling to him. For example, if creation days are somehow related to timelessness, what are they? He concluded, "What kind of days these were it is extremely difficult, or perhaps impossible for us to conceive, and how much more to say!"⁶ He ended up saying the days of creation were "the same 'one' day," and other Latin theologians followed him in this. In other words creation was accomplished instantaneously.⁷ Augustine's timeless God is "ever-standing eternity" compared to times that never stand. Eternal means "the whole is present,"⁸ an "ever present eternity."⁹ He refers to God as "Thou, to whom nothing is future,"¹⁰ for he is "unchangeably eternal."¹¹ So, for Augustine, the God of simultaneity created instantaneously, but logically that one instant act was forever present to him from eternity.¹²

Origen, Hilary, and Augustine are examples of theologians not reading the creation days as literal days. They did not arrive at their conclusion through exegesis of the biblical text, but brought to the text a spiritual interpretation (Origen) and a timeless worldview (Hilary, Augustine), and allowed this extraneous data to change the biblical text.

One Thousand Years

Some scholars cite the Psalmist on "creation time" (Ps 90:1–4) as if a creation day is a thousand years. However, the Hebrew says "for a thousand

⁵ Hilary, *On the Trinity* 12.40 (NPNF² 9:228).

⁶ Augustine, *The City of God* 11.6 (NPNF¹ 2:208).

⁷ Augustine believed God "made a heaven before all days," and *spoke* of later days of creation, *The Confessions* 128.8 (NPNF¹ 1:178). But he qualified what he meant by days of creation as follows: "There is no question, then, that if the angels are included in the works of God during these six days, they are that light which was called 'Day,' and whose unity Scripture signals by calling that day not the 'first day,' but 'one day.' For the second day, the third, and the rest are not other days; but the same 'one' day." (*The City of God* 11.9 (NPNF¹ 2:208).

⁸ Augustine, *The Confessions* 11.11.13 (NPNF¹ 1:167).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.13.16 (NPNF¹ 1:168).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.19.25 (NPNF¹ 1:170).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.31.41 (NPNF¹ 1:175).

¹² See *ibid.*, 11.19.26 (NPNF¹ 1:170) where he described past, present, and future for a timeless God as "a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future."

years in your eyes is *like* (Heb *be*) day of yesterday gone by . . . (and like) in the night watch” (my translation, v. 4). The word day is “like” a thousand years and a night watch (a segment of the night). Old Testament scholar Gerhard Hasel made this insightful comment:

From the point of view of Hebrew syntax, the comparative particle serves not only the expression ‘yesterday’ but also the phrase ‘as a watch in the night,’ demonstrating that the comparison is not between a ‘day’ being like 1,000 years. A thousand years with God are ‘like’ yesterday, that is, the past day, or ‘like’ ‘a watch in the night,’ even a briefer period of time than ‘yesterday.’ The point is that God reckons time differently than the way humans do.¹³

Hasel’s further commentary can be summarized as follows:¹⁴

Genesis 1 has no interest in how God defines time. Rather it presents creation time.

Genesis 1 does not use any comparative particle (like/as) in connection with the word “day.”

Genesis 1 gives us the seven-day week, which is literal time.

Genesis 1 “day” is not defined by Psalm 90:4.

2 Peter 3:8 means God is not limited by time to fulfill his promises, and the text is not related to creation.

Terence Fretheim stated that “*the word ‘day’ in the singular is probably never used in the Old Testament for a long period of time.* Given the more than 2200 references, this is striking. It is the plural form ‘days’ that is sometimes used with reference to a period of time.”¹⁵

¹³ Gerhard F. Hasel, “The ‘Days’ of Creation in Genesis 1,” in *Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 45, 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵ Terence E. Fretheim, “Were the Days of Creation Twenty-Four Hours Long?” in *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, ed. Ronald Youngblood (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986; repr., 1990), 17.

Day Ages¹⁶

Many biblical scholars believe God took long periods of time to create, thus *allegedly* bringing the biblical account into harmony with evolutionary deep-time. They come to Scripture with a concordist mind-set, with an attempt to preserve Scripture from being at odds with God's other book of nature. They want to find harmony, for God is the author of both books. Many of these apologists have a mission to protect Scripture from unnecessary criticism. To them, the days of creation are not literal days, but day-ages, each one representing deep-time in which God accomplished his creative work (see footnote for different interpretations).¹⁷ But one has to ask why the record is given in such specificity, noting that "evening and morning" (Gen 1:5b, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) are indicators of the length of creation days? Why not allow the hermeneutical principle of normal usage of language to indicate authorial intent? Isn't it normal to expect days described with an evening and a morning to be literal 24-hour solar days? Assumably, these biblical scholars would want to use this hermeneutical principle in other parts of Scripture, but why not in the creation record?

To set-aside the meaning of language, even with the best of intentions, is to import into the text a meaning that is foreign to the text. Is this not a superimposing on the text that which is alien to it, and making it say something radically different from the author's meaning? Whether realized or not this is akin to a reader-response hermeneutic, where the meaning of a

¹⁶ In 1913, Maurice Logan, of the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, attempted to disprove the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath. Some of the observations he made are as follows: (1) he divided creation week into God's days (days 1–6) and man's days (7th day). He applied Psalm 90:4 (a thousand years is like a day to God) to the six days, but a literal 24 hour period to the seventh-day; (2) at the same time he claimed that the seventh-day never finished (still in process), and in this sense it shares a day-age duration with the other six; (3) God rested on the seventh-day which was also the first-day (first full day) for humans. Hence the seventh-day for God was the first day for humans, which he alleged is the basis of the first-day, or Sunday Sabbath; (4) So the seventh-day is in honor of creation, and the same first-day was later in honor of Christ's resurrection. Scripture knows no division between the first six days compared to the seventh day in the creation record (Gen 1:2–2:3). The fact is creation during seven days (six for work, one for rest) is the origin of the weekly cycle. That's why the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8–11), written by the Creator, speaks of the seven days with no hint of the difference suggested by the Lord's Day Alliance. To believe otherwise is to project human reason onto divine revelation, which replaces the original intent about the first week of creation history.

¹⁷ P. P. T. Pun, "Evolution," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 417. There are a number of versions of the Day-Age interpretation. Three of them include, (1) day-geological age, with different geological eras represented by each day; (2) modified intermittent day, where a 24 day precedes each geological era, and (3) overlapping day-age, where each creative era is delimited by the words "There was evening and there was morning."

text is supplied by the reader and not by the author, which is popular in a postmodern worldview where absolutes, universals, and objective meaning are thrown to the winds, and all do what is right in their own eyes, in everything, including interpretation.

Robert McCabe, Old Testament Professor at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, gave five reasons for the literal days of creation: 1. When the Hebrew word for day (*yôm*) “is used in the singular and is not part of a compound grammatical construction, it is consistently used in reference to a literal day of 24 hours or a portion thereof.”¹⁸ *Yôm* never refers “to an extended period of time involving more than a 24-hour day.”¹⁹ 2. Numeric qualifiers (“first day,” “second day,” Gen 1 :4, 8, 13, 19, 24, 31), and sequential numbering, suggest an ordinary day.²⁰ 3. “Evening” and ‘morning’ used with *yôm* (19 times beyond the 6 uses in Gen 1), or used without *yôm* (38 times) “are used consistently in reference to literal days.”²¹ 4. The use of *yôm* (as mentioned above, #1–3) is consistent throughout Scripture (*sola Scriptura* hermeneutical principle). The two passages on the observance of the Sabbath (Exod 20:8–11; 31:14–17) “cogently reinforce a literal interpretation of the days in the creation week.” The seventh-day Sabbath day follows six other literal days.²² 5. Sequence of events does not make sense if creation days were day-ages. For example, some plants are dependent upon insects for pollination, and they were not created until the sixth day. This symbiotic relationship requires literal days. Furthermore if the days were days-ages, and because the days were comprised of light and dark periods (evening and morning) then the dark periods would make survival of plants and animals impossible.²³

Opponents of literal creation days point to Genesis 2:4 where the singular form of *yôm* refers to the whole week of creation. The Hebrew Bible reads: “This is the account of God’s (*Elohiym*) creation of the heavens and the earth, the day (*yôm*) God (*Yahweh Elohiym*) created.” “The day” in this verse is different from the single days in the creation verses, for it includes all of them. “Days “(1–6) are singular absolute nouns, whereas the “day” (Gen 2:4) is a singular construct noun, for it “appears in a compound grammatical

¹⁸ Robert V. McCabe, “A Defense of Literal Days in The Creation Week,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (Fall 2000), 102.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ McCabe, “Defense,” 105, 106.

²² *Ibid.*, 110, 111.

²³ *Ibid.*, 112.

construction.” The singular days of creation are simple nouns, whereas Genesis 2:4 “forms a temporal idiomatic construction” (in-the-day-of-making); which is equivalent to the word “when” as seen in these versions: KJV, NKJV, NEB, NIV, RSV, Amplified.

This distinction is apparently overlooked by theologian Wayne Grudem, in the following interpretation of the Genesis creation record. “In favor of viewing the six days as long periods of time is the fact that the Hebrew word *yôm* ‘day,’ is sometimes used to refer not to a twenty-four-hour literal day, but to a longer period of time. We see this when the word is used in Genesis 2:4, for example: ‘In the *day* that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,’ a phrase that refers to the entire creative work of the six days of creation.”²⁴

Opponents of literal creation days claim that it was impossible to do all that Scripture says was done on day 6. It would have taken longer than one literal day. The answer to that is found in God’s omnipotence, he can do anything he wishes to do in that time-frame; and God brought some of the animals (cattle, beast of the field, and all birds) to Adam, and this perfect human with God-given ability to rule over this world, named the prototypes, from which all the rest have come subsequently. Adam did not name creatures that move along the ground (Gen 1:24), and sea creatures (Gen 1:20).²⁵ If Moses had intended to mean day-age, instead of a 24-hour period, he would have used the Hebrew term *’olām* instead of *yôm*.²⁶

Revelatory Days

Others consider that the creation days do not refer to God’s acts of creation during those days, but to God’s revelation of what he did in his creative acts. In his book *Creation Revealed in Six Days* (1948) P. J. Wiseman called them six days of revelation rather than six days of creation. He said his task was to try “to find out how the *account* of creation came into existence, not how the universe came to be.”²⁷ He referred to Christ’s words that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of humans (Mark 2:27), and

²⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrines* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 293.

²⁵ McCabe, “Defense,” 120–122.

²⁶ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1998), 393, 394. Reymond also gave six other reasons why the creation days are literal, 24 hour days.

²⁷ P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days: The Evidence of Scripture Confirmed by Archaeology* (Edinburgh: Morgan & Scott, 1948, repr., 1949), 10.

reasoned that the recital of creation of a six-day period was also for the benefit of humans.²⁸ “The creation narrative is a statement of what God said to man about the things he had created.... On each of the six days God told man about some aspect of his creative work, much of which had been accomplished in the long ages past.”²⁹

D. F. Payne of the University of Sheffield, England, delivered a lecture to the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research at Cambridge University (July 1962). He pointed out a linguistic challenge faced by the revelatory days thesis. In the fourth commandment it says, “in six days the Lord made (Heb. *‘āsāh*), and how can that mean “reveal”? Furthermore there is not a hint that God is speaking to anyone in the creation record (Gen 1). When God blesses Adam and Eve, telling them to be fruitful and rule the earth (Gen 1:28), he is not revealing to them something that happened long ago, as is true of the blessing he gave to the sky and water creatures (Gen 1:22). Nor does God name any individual to whom he may be talking in the verse: “This is the account of the events and the earth when they were created” (Gen 2:4).³⁰

24 Hour Days

Biblical Use of the Hebrew Word for Day (yôm) Suggest a Literal 24 hour Period.

Some scholars question whether the creation days are 24 hours in length. They rightly note that the Hebrew word for day (*yôm*) can represent various lengths, just like the English word day. For example, we can speak of the day when a certain king ruled, where day means a time of greater duration than 24 hours. This is not difficult because context determines authorial intent, and clearly the addition of “evening and morning” to the days of Genesis 1 means creation days of 24 hours. But Robert Newman and Herman Eckelmann in their book *Genesis One & The Origin of The Earth* (1977), noted the seventh-day of creation makes no mention of “evening and morning,” and believed the seventh-day is different from the other six days, just as Christ’s blood in the communion is different from his blood at Calvary, and our baptism is different from Christ’s. Furthermore they found persuasive that the Jubilee Sabbath was not a 24-hour Sabbath but a duration up to one year (Lev 25:8–17). Hence they claimed the Sabbath command (Exod 20:8–11) is not a valid way to prove the literal seven-day

²⁸ Wiseman, *Creation Revealed*, 37, 39.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 124, see also p. 40.

³⁰ D. F. Payne, *Genesis One Reconsidered* (London: Tyndale, 1964), 8.

week. They claimed such reasoning was an argument of analogy instead of an argument of identity.³¹

The normal meaning of the Hebrew word *yôm* (day), occurring 2, 225 times is usually a literal day; and the plural *yāmîm* (days), occurring 608 times is always of a 24-hour day. So the preponderant meaning is a literal 24-hour day. The use of the words “evening and morning” (Gen Gen 1:5b, 8b, 13b, 19, 23, 31b) corroborates the literal interpretation. The creation of the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night, on the fourth day (Gen 1:16–18), requires that the days be literal.³² The one day God blessed is called the “seventh-day” by Christ (Gen 2:2, 3) and the seventh day Christ called the “Sabbath” (Exod 20:10a). Christ was the Creator (John 1:13; Col 1:15–17; Heb 1:1–2).

Although many scholars believe the significance of the seventh day lacks the formula “There was evening and there was morning” (that describe the other six days) means all human history is the seventh day. Ivan Blazen said otherwise, for “The fact that only the seventh day of creation week lacks the formula ‘There was evening and there was morning, the seventh day,’ suggests that the seventh day as God’s rest is of permanent significance. Creation week does not close with the creation of human beings, but with God’s rest. As God and his activity is the subject of the six days, so God and his rest is the subject of the seventh day. The account is theocentric, and it is precisely this emphasis that is of perpetual significance. Humans lose their humanity when God is not the center of their lives and the subject of their praise.”³³ It is assumed that the seventh-day is the same length as the other six.

Terence Fretheim said:

To suggest that the seventh day is an indeterminate period of time because evening and morning are not mentioned flies in the face of clear evidence to the contrary. In Genesis 2:3 God blesses and hallows that day, clearly indicating that it is a specified day that is set aside as a special holy day.³⁴

³¹ Robert C. Newman, Herman J. Eckelmann, Jr., *Genesis One & The Origin of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 61–63.

³² For first three, see Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of The Christian Faith*, 393, 394.

³³ Ivan T. Blazen, “Theological Concerns of Genesis 1–2:3,” in *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives* (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today Foundations, 2006), 81.

³⁴ Terence E. Fretheim, in *The Genesis Debate*, 20.

Framework hypothesis proponents dismiss the seventh day as literal because it lacks the phrase evening and morning. They suggest it represents God's eternal rest. But "God does not bless his eternal rest, but he blesses a day (2:3)."³⁵ McCabe pointed out the distinction between creation days and the Sabbath day. The words "evening and morning" are a transitional formula, for each creation day followed immediately by another creation day. There is no need of this formula for the seventh day for the creation is complete. The acts of creation are given each day prior to the formula.³⁶

If creation-days are literal days, then the words "God said" (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24) makes sense, for speaking would not require a long period of time. Furthermore, for all but one of the creation days when "God said," the words that follow are "and it was so," suggesting instantaneous response. That's why God could say each day that the new created reality was "good" (Gen 1:3, 10, 13, 19, 20, 24). On the sixth day "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen 1:31). So creation days are literal/historical, continuous, contiguous, 24-hour periods of time. The creation record is a literal/historical account, in harmony with the rest of this book on beginnings, and gives one method God used in creation—he commanded and it was so.

It is logical that the Hebrew word "*yôm*" used with ordinals (2nd, 3rd, 4th etc.) are in the Genesis creation record (Gen 1) for "*yôm*" with ordinals is always a literal day. So God's commands had instant response. Andrew Steinman argued that "the use of יָמִים in Gen 1:5 and the following unique uses of the ordinal numbers on the other days demonstrates that the text itself indicates that these are regular solar days."³⁷ To think God needed long periods of time to create calls into question his power, for he is all-powerful. Jeremiah exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you" (Jer 32:17); and Jesus declared, "with God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26b). For God not to exercise his awesome power in creation would call into question his wisdom. These are compelling reasons why the days should be considered as literal.

³⁵ Joseph A. Pipa Jr, "From Chaos to Cosmos," *Did God Create in Six Days?* (White Hall, WV: Tolle Lege Press, 1999; repr., Taylors, SC: Presbyterian Press, Greenville Presbyterian Seminary, 2005), 167.

³⁶ McCabe, "Defense," 114, 115.

³⁷ Andrew E. Steinman, " יָמִים as an Ordinal Number and The Meaning of Genesis 1:5," *JETS* 45 (December 2002), 584.

Creation week is the origin of the weekly cycle. The year is linked to the sun's cycle, the month to the moon's cycle, but the week has nothing in nature to which it is linked. The weekly cycle depends on the creation week for its origin. So the week depends upon the literal seven days of creation.

Scholars Supporting Literal Creation Days

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) believed in the six days of creation.³⁸ Martin Luther (1483–1546) rejected Augustine and Hilary's view of equating six creation days with "instantaneous" creation (based on a timeless view of God). He said, "we assert that Moses spoke in the literal sense, not allegorically or figuratively, i.e., that the world, with all its creatures, was created within six days, as the words read."³⁹ Luther said, "the six days were truly six natural days."⁴⁰ Luther believed that "from the beginning of the world the Sabbath was intended for the worship of God."⁴¹ John Calvin (1509–1564) opposed the idea of God's creating "in a moment." "God himself took the space of six days, for the purpose of accommodating his works to the capacity of men."⁴²

Francis Turretin (1623–1687) rejected Augustine's "single moment" creation, saying, "in the fourth commandment (recommending the sanctification of the seventh day), God is said to have been engaged in creation six days and to have rested on the seventh day (so that by this example the people might be induced to rest on the seventh day). This reason would have had no weight, if God had created all things in a single moment."⁴³

Karl Barth (1886–1968) said the following about creation days:

God has made and given to us a day which is not of a thousand years' duration but of twenty-four hours. It is certainly as such that the biblical authors understand the ensuing days of creation up to the seventh day, the day of God's rest. We only cloud the picture,

³⁸ Aquinas spoke of the days of creation, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), 1: 328–359 (66.1–74.30).

³⁹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 1: Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1–5*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1958), 1:4–5.

⁴⁰ Luther, *Luther's Works*, 1: 69.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1: 80. Luther believed that even if Adam had not fallen, he would consider the seventh-day "sacred" and "even after the Fall he kept this seventh day sacred." 79.

⁴² John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 1: 78.

⁴³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992), 1:444. 445.

involving it in dreadful and not very helpful confusion, if for the clear concept of day we try to substitute an indeterminate and immense period of time under cover of which astronomical light-years and geological periods can be introduced for apologetic purposes ... God created time: not just time in general, but our time, the actual time in which each creature actually lives; or concretely time as a unit, i.e., the day, and time as a sequence, i.e., the week; and that he created it by giving to light the name day.⁴⁴

Scholars Rejecting Mythological Interpretation of Genesis 1–2

Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) said,

The first chapter of Genesis, however, hardly contains any ground for the opinion that we are dealing here with a vision or myth. It clearly bears a historical character and forms the introduction to a book that presents itself from beginning to end as history. Nor is it possible to separate the facts (the religious content) from the manner in which they are expressed. For if with Lagrange, for example, the creation itself is regarded as a fact, but the days of creation as a form and mode of expression, then the entire order in which the creation came into being collapses, and we have removed the foundation from the institution of the week and the Sabbath, which according to Exodus 20:11 is most decidedly grounded in the six-day period of creation and the subsequent Sabbath of God.⁴⁵

Henry Blocher added that

The Genesis narrative stands in contrast to the myths by reason of the historicity that it attributes to evil. The whole biblical conception of evil, we dare suggest, is inextricably linked with this unique feature. Nowhere else is evil denounced with such a tireless zeal, intransigence, horror and indignation. It is the disorder that finds no justification, the enemy and the work of the enemy. Nowhere else is the problem of guilt placed in such a central position. Nowhere else do you find such a clear insistence on the conversion of the human heart, that heart from which evil emerges

⁴⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance, trans. J.W. Edwards, O Bussy, Harold Knight (Edinburgh, Scotland, T & T Clark, 1958), 3/1, 125.

⁴⁵ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 2:499.

and which must turn away from it.

Unlike elsewhere, Scripture shows that evil is not a matter of fate because it was present in the beginning, but issues from the misuse of human freedom. The evil of origin is either in God, or is due to a dualism with God.⁴⁶

Gerhard von Rad was open to evolution, but he opposes considering Genesis 1 as containing “archaic and half-mythological rudiments.” Rather, he said, “What is said here is intended to hold true entirely and exactly as it stands. Nowhere at all is the text only allusive, ‘symbolic,’ or figuratively poetic.”⁴⁷ Von Rad said of Genesis 1:14–19, the “entire passage . . . breathes a strongly antimythical pathos.”⁴⁸ Consistency suggests that creation days are not mythical either, but literal, historical days.

Scholars Supporting a Literal Creation Week

Keil and Delitzsch believed Genesis is a “historical document” and hence “as the six creation-days, according to the words of the text, were earthly days of ordinary duration, we must understand the seventh in the same way.”⁴⁹ One could add that if we look at these days as recurring interchange of light and darkness, then the seventh day was **not** any different, even though the formula “evening and morning” was not stated in the Genesis account.

Gordon Wenham, commenting on the Hebrew word day (*yôm*) in Genesis one, wrote, “There can be little doubt that here ‘day’ has its basic sense of a 24-hour period. The mention of morning and evening, the enumeration of the days, and the divine rest on the seventh show that a week of divine activity is being described here.”⁵⁰ Victor Hamilton spoke of the “six days of divine activity” in Genesis one.⁵¹ Derek Kidner said that for him “the march of days is too majestic a progress to carry no implication of ordered sequence; it also seems over-subtle to adopt a view of the passage which discounts one of the primary impressions it makes on the ordinary reader” and speaks of “time-sequence.”⁵²

⁴⁶ Henri Blocher, *In The Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, trans. David G. Preston (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 167.

⁴⁷ Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 45.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 53. von Rad believed in the Creator who created *ex nihilo.*, 48–49.

⁴⁹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 1:37, 69.

⁵⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1, (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 19.

⁵¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 119.

⁵² Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 1 (Downers Grove, IL:

Significance of the Number Seven in Creation and Temple

A number of scholars have noted a link between the work of creation and the work of building the tabernacle (John Walton, M. Fishbane, M. Buber, J.D. Levenson). G. K. Beale made reference to them in his book *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (2004), and then said,

Levenson also suggests that the same cosmic significance is to be seen from the fact that Solomon took seven years to build the temple (1 Kgs. 6:38), that he dedicated it on the seventh month, during the Feast of Booths (a festival of seven days 1 Kgs. 80), and that his dedicatory speech was structured around seven petitions (1 Kgs. 8:31–55). Hence the building of the temple appears to have been modeled on the seven-day creation of the world, which also is in line with the building of temples in seven days elsewhere in the Ancient Near East.⁵³ Just as God rested on the seventh day from his work of creation, so when the creation of the tabernacle and especially, the temple are finished, God takes up a 'resting place' therein. For example, Psalm 132:7–8, 13, 14 says, Let us go into His dwelling place; Let us worship at His footstool. Arise, O Lord, to Thy resting place; Thou and the ark of Thy strength . . . For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for his habitation. This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.⁵⁴

Why Evolutionary Theory Should Not Interpret Genesis 1–2

God inspired Moses to write Genesis 1–2, and the record speaks of "days," not day-ages, or any other alternative. The pre-incarnate Christ wrote with his own finger the Ten Commandments (Deut 10:4). The fourth commandment is written with the same specificity (seventh day) as the creation record, for the Sabbath follows six days of creation (Exod 20:8–11). In other words the days of creation have to be as literal as the Sabbath day that comes each week. If creation days are "day-ages" then logically the Sabbath is a "day age" too. But the Sabbath as a "day-age" in an evolutionary

InterVarsity Press, 1967), 54, 55.

⁵³ J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 78, 79.

⁵⁴ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17, ed. D. A. Carson (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 61, 62.

sense would have no meaning to humans in historical time. This means the Sabbath may never come in the lifetime of many if not all humans. So what would be the point of God asking humans to remember to keep the Sabbath day holy? If days are day-ages, then Christ asked an impossibility of humans to remember each Sabbath day, and if that is true then the Sabbath commandment calls into question his wisdom if the Sabbath was a day-age.

This is the problem that those accepting the day-age interpretation of creation days need to think through carefully. It seems to me that Christ clearly defined the length of creation days in his fourth commandment, and the writing of this commandment with his own finger is inerrant. It is an original autograph. The Fourth commandment is God's infallible Word, and as such, calls into question the non-literal interpretation of creation "days." Christ's writing of the fourth commandment is a divine commentary on the literalness of creation days.

Culture Impacting Theology

The RTB Model (Reason to Believe Creation model) opts for day-ages, and hence seems to ignore the biblical insights considered above.⁵⁵ Because the evolutionary worldview impacts so many disciplines, it seems to impact theology with day-ages replacing the biblical evidence for creation days. If this is the case, theologians inclined to opt for day-ages may want to pause and consider what accommodation has done to theology in the past through inappropriate cultural influence:

Deism and the natural religion of reason represented the accommodation of the Christian faith to the intellectual trends that convulsed Europe between 1670 and 1790. The limitations of the universal religion of reason were evident in the unequivocal and at times absurd reductionist tendencies of Enlightenment Christology; during this era Christology degenerated into a Jesuology that was exemplarist, rationalistic, anti-supernatural and thoroughly moralistic.⁵⁶

[T]he most rigorous view of the difference between Him and all other men does not hinder us from saying that His appearing, even

⁵⁵ See Fazale Rana with Hugh Ross, *Who was Adam?: A Creation Model Approach to the Origin of Man* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), 42.

⁵⁶ Colin J. D. Greene, *Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking Out The Horizons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 96, 97.

regarded as the incarnation of the Son of God, is a natural fact. For in the first place: as certainly as Christ was a man, there must reside in human nature the possibility of taking up the divine into itself, just as did happen in Christ. So that the idea that the divine revelation in Christ must in this respect be something absolutely supernatural will simply not stand the test.

Christianity must be allowed to be what it really is, rather than being forced to conform to what the ‘spirit of the age’ regards as acceptable. As an historical theologian, I am uncomfortably aware of how the settled cultural wisdom of an age is often overturned, and occasionally inverted, within a generation.⁵⁷

Francis Schafer said, “We of the West may not be brainwashed by our State, but we are brainwashed by our culture.”⁵⁸

No citizens of any country are immune to influences from culture, and evolution has made as global an impact as any other worldview on the study of the creation-record. Colin Green documented how cultures influence Christology in his book *Christology in Cultural Perspective* (2003).⁵⁹ Thomas Kuhn noted how paradigms change even in hard science.⁶⁰ Because cultures come and go, and scientific paradigms come and go, day-ages may change in the future. It seems wise to conclude that we must not unwittingly question the miracle of Christ’s creation days any more than the miracle of Christ’s incarnation, resurrection, and re-creation of the new heavens and new earth.

There are good evangelical theologians who argue that day-ages seem the most reasonable way to understand “days” in the Genesis creation record, and that the insights of evolution should not be brushed aside any more than the insights of Copernicus or Galileo were brushed aside by the Church, much to the embarrassment of the Church later. I grant that theologians should not be obscurantists, and that hard science has its contribution to make, and should be respected, but we are not talking about hard science when we come to evolutionary theory. In other words, evolutionary theory is not on the

⁵⁷ Alister E. McGrath, foreword to *Christ The One and Only: A Global Affirmation of The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), xvii.

⁵⁸ Francis A. Schaefer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaefer: A Christian Worldview* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1996), 1:141.

⁵⁹ Greene, *Christology in Cultural Perspective*.

⁶⁰ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University Press, 1962).

same level of reality as the empirical findings of Copernicus and Galileo. We are talking about a theory (at the macro level) that has never been proven by empirical evidence. It is a philosophical metaphysical assumption, not an empirical reality. So it takes just as much faith to accept the evolutionary process as it does to accept the creation account (although I believe it takes more).

Newman and Eckelmann referred to R. John Snow's research "How Long Is The Sixth Day."⁶¹ Snow urged theologians not to make the same error as they made against Galileo (on cosmology) and Columbus (on a spherical earth). This is an example of what was stated in the above paragraph. It is of interest that those promoting heliocentrism (Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton) were "all young-earth creationists!"⁶² Snow overlooked the fact that the ideas of Galileo/Columbus are verifiable by empirical science whereas day-ages are not.

Snow was not comparing apples with apples. Snow also argued that all things created on day six of creation were too many to get into a 24 hour period. his argument need not detain us here, for he unwittingly argued (as did Newman and Eckelmann) against Christ's inerrant commentary on creation days as literal 24 hours as he recorded in the Sabbath commandment (Exod 20:8–11). It does not matter how convincing their argument may seem (especially if one is driven by a day-age assumption), the bottom line is their view vies against the Creator's authoritative and infallible declaration. As said above, nothing is impossible for God to accomplish on the sixth day of creation. To say otherwise, is to question his ability as God.

Evolutionists consider that the geological column provides some empirical evidence, but conclusions on that data are dependent upon subjective assumptions brought to it. Those believing the trustworthy Word of God believe in a global flood. They read the geological column as evidence of this catastrophe, whereas atheistic scientists read the geological column as deep-time history of the evolutionary process. In other words, these ways of reading the geological column are contraries. So it is incumbent upon Bible believing Christians to consult all the biblical revelation on the topic. Inter-textual biblical study corroborates the Genesis creation record. Consider the following.

⁶¹ Newman and Eckelmann, *Genesis One*, 125–135.

⁶² Johnathan D. Sarfari, *Refuting Evolution: A Response to the National Academy of Science' Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2004), 101.

Acts of Christ in History Provide Support for Literal Creation days

Christ spoke and instantly Lazarus came forth from the grave (John 11:43, 44). Christ “drove out the spirits with a word” (Matt 8:16b; cf. Mark 9:25, 26). Christ rebuked the furious storm and his disciples exclaimed, “Even the winds and the waves obey him” (Matt 8:27b). Christ said the Gentile Centurion had more faith than those in Israel (Matt 8:10) because he said, “just say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Matt 8:8). Scripture demonstrates that when Christ speaks he gets instant response.

Christ said that in the final resurrection “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God” (John 5:25b) and “all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28, 29). Christ’s power and human logic require the same instantaneous response to his creation commands. Evolution theory requiring deep-time (day-ages) is a human tradition. When considering the creation record we need to remember Christ’s words, “you nullify the word of God by your tradition” (Mark 7:13). Was Christ right to specify creation days as 24 hour literal days, or is human reasoning on day-ages to replace his divine revelation? Followers of Christ will follow him in every way, including accepting creation days as literal as the Sabbath day that concluded creation week.

Creation Record Not to be Relegated to the Non-literal (Spiritual) Level of Knowledge

The complementarity model of a relationship between theology and science (the roots of which go back to Francis Bacon, 1561–1626) suggests that God has two books, Scripture and nature, that common speech used in the biblical account is not literal but spiritual.⁶³ But this is not the way Christ inspired Moses to write about creation in Gen 1–2, nor the way that Christ chose to write about it on tables of stone (Exod 31:18; 34:28b) recorded in Exod 20:8–11. It took a unified view of knowledge, where God was included in the study of nature, for science to be birthed. Early scholars believed in the Creator of nature, so God was not left out of their study of nature. This launched the various sciences by Copernicus (1475–1543), Galileo (1564–1642), Kepler (1571–1630), Faraday (1791–1867), and Maxwell (1831–1879) among others.

Today evolutionary “science” rejects God as irrelevant, and in this

⁶³ See C. A. Russell, “Science and Theology,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 625.

autonomous manner denies the Creator his rightful place to explain what he has created. In this context Francis Schaefer concluded, "It is a very real question whether the scientists of today . . . would, or could, have ever begun modern science" because "it was the biblical mentality which gave birth to modern science."⁶⁴ The confined world of naturalism, as the worldview of evolution, is like a rebel child who denies that parents gave him life. The study of nature in evolution is about origins, yet it denies its true origin in the Creator.

When reality is confined to the world of nature, then the supernatural is shut out from reality, and is of no use in the acquisition of knowledge. In this context, Genesis lacks real knowledge, which has to be supplied by evolution, for Genesis is at best only theological. This comes with all the earmarks of the cosmic controversy, replacing creation by God with evolution by nature. The new god is the created, with all the chance and purposelessness that comes with severance from the real source and purpose of life.

Climax of Creation

There is a correspondence between days 1–3 with days 4–6, where the first three give the areas formed by *Elohiym* and days 4–6 give the days when *Elohiym* filled those days with his creative works.⁶⁵ Wenham charted them as follows:

Day 1	Light	Day 4	Luminaries
Day 2	Sky	Day 5	Birds and Fish
Day 3	Land (Plants)	Day 6	Animals and Man (Plants for food)
	Day 7		Sabbath ⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Schafer, *Complete Works*, 1:226.

⁶⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 6–7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 7. Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 46, arranged the six days as follows:

<i>Form</i>		<i>Fullness</i>	
Day 1	Light and Dark	Day 4	Lights of Day and Night
Day 2	Sea and Sky	Day 5	Creatures of Water and Air
Day 3	Fertile Earth	Day 6	Creatures of Land

Wayne Grudem's arrangement in *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 301:

So in days 1–3 *Elohiym forms* the places to be *filled* in days 4–6. And the remarkable fact in this carefully crafted structure moves to a climax. It is not the creation of humans on day 6,⁶⁷ but the gift of the Sabbath on day 7. The narrative ends with the Sabbath in Genesis 2:1–3, realizing that chapter divisions came long after the time of writing. Josephus records, “Moses says, that in just six days the world and all that is therein was made; and that the seventh-day was a rest, and a release from the labor of such operations; — whence it is that we celebrate a rest from our labors on that day, and call it the Sabbath; which word denotes *rest* in the Hebrew tongue.”⁶⁸ Karl Barth said the Sabbath “is in reality the coronation of His work” for “not man but the divine rest on the seventh-day is the crown of creation.”⁶⁹

As Keil and Delitzsch mentioned, this Sabbath was not confined to a future nation Israel, but was “for all mankind,” as the seventh literal day, which God blessed and sanctified as holy after six literal days of creation.⁷⁰ Robert McCabe noted that “God’s commanding Israel to keep the Sabbath is grounded in the creation week.”⁷¹ John Sailhamer rightly discerned that with the coming of this seventh literal day, the style changes. Instead of speaking and creating during six literal days, God sanctified and made holy the seventh literal day, and rested in it.⁷² Scholars have connected this creation Sabbath gift with the gift of humans being made in the image of God. For example,

<i>Days of forming</i>	<i>Days of filling</i>
Day 1: Light and darkness separated	Day 4: Sun, moon, and stars (lights in the heavens)
Day 2: Sky and water separated	Day 5: Fish and birds
Day 3: Dry land and seas separated, plants and trees	Day 6: Animals and man

⁶⁷ Humans are “the crowning work of Creation” in SDA Fundamental Beliefs, #6 (which compares humans with other created things in space). Davis A. Young considered humans as “the climax of creation” in *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977), 89.

⁶⁸ *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston, *Antiquities of the Jews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1974), 1: 66 (1.1). God did not need to rest from creation, because it was an easy work for an omnipotent God who spoke most of it into being, but he knew humans need this rest even if it was the first day of life for Adam and Eve. As the first day of life they began with a Sabbath communion with their Creator, which is the best way to begin, especially with the fall in mind (Gen 3). Christ provided everything for Adam and Eve, so the fall need not have taken place. God could not have done more for them.

⁶⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. J. W Edwards, O. Bussey, and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1945), 3/1, 223

⁷⁰ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 1:69, 70.

⁷¹ McCabe, “Defense,” 111.

⁷² John H. Sailhamer, et al., *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary with New International Volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 38, 39.

John Sailhamer and Gordon Wenham, respectively, stated:

It is likely, as well, that the author intended the reader to understand the account of the seventh-day in light of the 'Image of God' theme of the sixth day. If the purpose of pointing to the 'likeness' between man and his Creator was to call on the reader to be more like God (e.g., Lev 11:45), then it is significant that the account of the seventh day stresses the very thing that the writer elsewhere so ardently calls on the reader to do: 'rest' on the seventh day (cf. Exod 20:8–11).⁷³

The seventh day is the very first thing to be hallowed in Scripture, to acquire that special status that properly belongs to God alone. In this way Genesis emphasizes the sacredness of the Sabbath. Coupled with the threefold reference to God resting from all his work on that day, these verses give the clearest of hints of how man created in the divine image should conduct himself on the seventh day.⁷⁴

Humans were made in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27). This means that humans were created to enter a covenant relationship with their Creator. God created humans to enjoy a reciprocal love relationship with the Trinity, as experienced in the inner-Trinitarian communion among the Trinity. What an awesome privilege! The Sabbath was given to humans at creation to remind them of this fact, so that they could live during the six days of secular work out of the fullness of fellowship with God on the Sabbath. Their first full day of life was lived in sacred communion with their Creator, the pre-incarnate Christ. The cosmic controversy made it important for humans to rest in Christ, which is the essence of the covenant, and would be the essence of gospel after the fall of humans. If the Sabbath was necessary before the fall, how much more it is needed throughout fallen human history.

As Kenneth Strand rightly pointed out, the first reference to the Sabbath (Gen 2:2–3) is in a chiasmic structure that emphasizes the importance of the day.

⁷³ Sailhamer, et al., *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, 39.

⁷⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 36.

A. God finished his work (v. 2)

B. And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done (v. 2)

C. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it (v. 3)

B. Because on it God rested from all his work which he had done (v. 3)

A. In creation (verse 3 cont.)⁷⁵

In an A-B-C-B-A chiastic structure the middle statement is often the most important of the chiasm. So the emphasis is on the seventh day as the Sabbath, and the seventh day as the day he blessed. God's blessing (Hebrew, *bāraḵ*) was only given to the seventh day. It was set apart from the other six, and in this way it was made holy. This setting apart is seen in Exod 16:23, the Sabbath commandment in Exod 20:8–11, and also in Exod 31:14–16 where it is to be kept forever, and in Exod 35:2 where death is commanded for Sabbath breakers. Isaiah states that the redeemed will keep the Sabbath in the new earth (Isa 66:22, 23). No wonder Christ said the Sabbath would be kept after his resurrection (Matt 24:20). Scripture is consistent in stating the continuing importance of the creation seventh-day Sabbath as holy throughout human history, and throughout eternity.

On the six days God spoke things into existence in space, on the seventh day God comes to be with humans in time up-close. A work in time by a God up-close speaks volumes of the seventh-day's distinction compared to the works of creation in space on the other six days. The seventh-day of creation is called the Sabbath by Christ (Exod 20:8–11). Christ spoke everything into existence for humans. He gave them gifts in space. But on the seventh-day Sabbath he gave himself to them in time, to be their Creator up-close, like his life on planet-earth "to tabernacle" among them (John 1:14) and his coming in the earth made new when "God himself will be with them and be their God" (Rev 21:3). This is Immanuel, "God with us" (Matt 1:23). Sabbath keeping is spending time in communion with Christ. He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), so the seventh-day Sabbath is the Lord's Day chosen and blessed by Christ for all humanity at the end of creation week. There is no other day that can claim to be the Lord's day, for none of the other six days were blessed by him, in creation or since. One can no more un-

⁷⁵ Kenneth Strand, "The Sabbath," *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, SDA Bible Commentary (Hagerstown MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 12:493–495.

Christ's chosen day than undo Christ's incarnation. Both were acts of Christ for the benefit of humans (Mark 2:27, John 3:16) and are eternal gifts to the human race. For "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8, cf. Mal 4:6).

In Gen 2:1–2 the seventh day is mentioned three times (vv. 1, 2 mentioned twice). Wenham rightly noted that the "threefold mention of the seventh day, each time in a sentence of seven Hebrew words, draws attention to the special character of the Sabbath. In this way form and content emphasize the distinctiveness of the seventh day."⁷⁶

Because of the worship of sun and moon was prevalent from early times, God guided Moses to use the words "greater light" and "lesser light" in place of the sun and moon respectively (Gen 1:16). Only the Creator-God is worthy of worship, not his creation. Satan wants to be worshiped instead of Christ (cf. Matt 4:8–10; Rev 13:4; 12:9).

As mentioned above, the word Sabbath is derived from the Hebrew word *šb̄t*, meaning to "cease" or "desist" from a previous activity. In this case, to desist from creating. God finished his work of creation during six days. He did not cease because of being tired, but ceased in order to celebrate with Adam and Eve what he had completed. So Sabbath is time to celebrate the finished work of Christ's creation. John concurs with a finished creation (John 1:2, 3), for in the beginning (Gr. *archē*) God made (Gr. *egeneto*, aorist, meaning completed action) all things through Christ. On day six, Christ judged creation as "very good" (Gen 1:31) and hence it was completed (Gen 2:3). For "in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested" (Exod 31:17). Therefore his "works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3 NKJV). Clearly the work of creation was finished on the sixth day of creation week, and hence the view of a continuing creation through theistic evolution is contrary to the biblical record.

Thus the first seventh-day Sabbath celebrated a finished work of Christ's creation. We find the same Sabbath celebration in history. In Deuteronomy 5:15, the seventh-day Sabbath celebrates Christ's finished work of deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Because Christ rested in the tomb according to the Sabbath commandment (Luke 23:54–24:1), one could say that seventh-day Sabbath celebrated Christ's finished work of sacrificial atonement at the cross. Thus the seventh-day Sabbath celebrates Christ's gift of creation,

⁷⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 7.

liberation, and salvation. The Sabbath is a sign to God's people in every age. It is a set-apart day to set-apart people. "I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so that they would know that I the Lord made them holy (or set-apart)" (Ezek 20:12). Christians find in each of these finished works of Christ reasons for celebrating these finished works by Sabbath—resting on Christ's chosen seventh-day. Therefore seventh-day Sabbath-keeping is Christian. Seventh-day Sabbath celebrations honor Christ, as we rest in him. They look forward to the new creation, when "the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Rev 21:3). Sabbath is special time to rest in Christ, and look forward to the eternal weekly Sabbath rest in the new earth (Isa 66:22, 23).

Nor is there any difference between the gift of the Sabbath throughout human history from the gift of the Sabbath in creation. This is why the first angel's message invites humans to "Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water" (Rev 14:7b). As mentioned above, these words "who made the heavens, the earth, the sea" are taken from the fourth commandment (Exod 20:11). So this linguistic reference to the Sabbath is in the context of the historical reference to the "everlasting gospel" (Rev 14:6). The gospel goes all the way back to Gen 3:15, just as the Sabbath goes all the way back to creation in six days (Gen 1:1–2:3). Neither goes back merely to Israel. Properly understood, Christ's gospel includes Christ's seventh-day Sabbath, with its rest as the essence of the gospel.

Furthermore, this call to worship the Creator is a call to worship Christ the Creator. Scripture is replete with references to Christ as Creator. The Gospel of John (1:1–3) is a divine commentary on Genesis 1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." And v. 14 says, "The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and Truth." Genesis 1 and John 1 take us back to the beginning of creation on planet-earth and we see that the *Elohiym* of Genesis 1, and *Yahweh Elohiym* of Genesis 2 is the Christ of John 1.

There is important linguistic evidence to show that the Sabbath of Gen 2 is a Creation ordinance (given to all humans from the beginning of human history) and not just a future day given to one race, the Jews. H. Ross Cole described this evidence:

The question of whether or not Gen. 2:1–3 pictures the Sabbath as a Creation ordinance is of intense practical and academic interest, as it is a *crux interpretum* that has long tended to divide those who believe the Sabbath is of universal, permanent significance, from those who believe it is of only local temporary significance . . . The blessings of Gen 1 all have an immediate human focus, so there is a presumption that the blessing of the seventh day would be the same . . . It has been argued that in Gen 2:3 God sanctified the seventh day for its *future* use under the law, just as he sanctified Jeremiah as a future prophet in Jer 1:5. However, this argument fails to take into account the fact that while both verses use the verb קדש Gen 2:3 uses the Piel stem and Jer 1:5 uses the Hiphil stem. While the factitive use of the Piel lies close in meaning to the causative use of the Hiphil, evidence suggests that the former emphasizes result and the latter emphasizes process. Whenever the Piel stem of קדש has a period of time as its object, it is never used as a ‘real’ factitive, but always as an estimative or declarative Piel. Context rules out the estimative use in Gen 2:3, suggesting that קדש is here used declaratively to picture the public proclamation of the sanctity of the seventh day at the time of Creation.⁷⁷

C. F. Keil made an insightful statement that needs to be thought through with Cole’s statement just read:

The blessing and sanctifying of the seventh day had regard, no doubt, to the Sabbath, which Israel as the people of God was afterwards to keep; but we are not to suppose that the theocratic Sabbath was instituted here, or that the institution of that Sabbath was transferred to the history of creation. On the contrary, the Sabbath of the Israelites had a deeper meaning, founded in the nature and development of the created world, not for Israel only, but for all mankind, or rather for the whole creation.⁷⁸

Keil believed Genesis is “a historical document” and therefore “as the six creation-days, according to the words of the text, were earthly days of ordinary duration, we must understand the seventh in the same way.”⁷⁹ The

⁷⁷ H. Ross Cole, “The Sabbath and Genesis 2:1–3” *AUSS* 41 (Spring 2003): 11, 12.

⁷⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 1:69.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:37, 69.

fourth commandment (Exod 20:8–11) presents the seven days of creation week as literal; otherwise the Sabbath command would have no meaning. Robert Dabney was right to state that “the moral law as to its substance, was already in force from Adam to Moses” indicating that all ten were given to humans, including the seventh day Sabbath commandment.⁸⁰ Although humans were created in the image of God to have dominion over things on the earth, that was the extent of their dominion. William Shea rightly pointed out that “Adam was not made lord of the Sabbath. The ‘Son of Man,’ Jesus Christ, holds that title.”⁸¹ The Sabbath is the Lord’s Day. “The Sabbath expresses a dominion, too, but not the dominion of Adam and Eve over the creation. Rather, it expresses the dominion of God over Adam and Eve and over all that he had created.”⁸² The Sabbath has never ceased to express God’s dominion over humans. God has a right to tell humans which day is his Sabbath.

Conclusion

U. Cassuto, professor of Bible at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, said, “Scripture wishes to emphasize that the sanctity of the Sabbath is older than Israel, and rests upon all mankind.”⁸³

As seen above, creation and time go together. If creation days are questioned, this questions the seventh-day Sabbath. Christians should not be influenced by any passing or present worldview that questions the unchangeable biblical worldview. If the supernatural is questioned at the very beginning of Scripture, why should the supernatural not be questioned throughout Scripture? It is well known that biblical critics have done much to disparage trust in Scripture, to theirs and others detriment.

The literal meaning of “Genesis” is “origin.” The Book of Genesis is carefully crafted, indicating a single author, which calls into question the multiple author theory (JEP) of historical criticism. The formula *’elleh tôledôt* appears ten times, and introduces various generations, as follows:

“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth” 2:4

“These are the generations of Adam” 5:1

⁸⁰ Robert L. Dabney, *Of Lectures in Theology* (St. Louis, MO: Presbyterian, 1878, 443.

⁸¹ William H. Shea, “Creation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology: Commentary Reference Series* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 12:438.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 425.

⁸³ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1961), 64.

“These are the generations of Noah” 6:9

“These are the generations of the sons of Noah” 10:1

“These are the generations of Shem” 11:10

“These are the generations of Terah” 11:27

“These are the generations of Ishmael” 25:12

“These are the generations of Isaac” 25:19

“These are the generations of Esau” 36:1,9

“These are the generations of Jacob” 37:2

The significance of this structure is the historical focus of each, which suggests that the creation record in Genesis 1–2 should be considered equally as history, rather than as myth (Bultmann) or saga (Barth), or as indebted to ancient Near Eastern (ANE) creation stories such as the *Enumah Elish*. and *Atrahasis Epics*. Victor Hamilton noted that “recent studies have tended to support the essential unity of Genesis. Leading the way are insights gleaned from discourse grammar (Andersen), rhetorical criticism (Kikawada and Quinn; Rendsburg), and literary/aesthetic criticism (Alter and Sternberg).”⁸⁴

Martin Luther had it right. He rejected the allegorization of Origen and Jerome. He said:

I ask you, is this not a desecration of the sacred writings? Origen makes heaven out of Paradise and angels out of the trees. If this is correct, what will be left of the doctrine of creation? Particularly for beginning students of the Sacred Scriptures it is, therefore, necessary that when they approach the reading of the ancient teachers, they read them with discretion, or rather with the definite intention to disprove of these statements for which there is less support. Otherwise they will be led astray by the authority of the name of the fathers and teachers of the church, just as I was led astray and as all the schools of the theologians were. Ever since I began to adhere to the historical meaning, I myself have always had a strong dislike for allegories and did not make use of them unless the text itself indicated them or the interpretations could be drawn from the New Testament.⁸⁵

This is wise counsel. Luther knew from experience that assumed deeper spiritual meanings beyond the historical “were empty speculations and the

⁸⁴ Hamilton, *Genesis*, 38.

⁸⁵ Luther, *Luther's Works*, 1: 232.

froth, as it were, of the Holy Scriptures. It is the historical sense alone which supplies the true and sound doctrine.”⁸⁶ If creation is not historical, why should salvation be historical, for the same Creator-Redeemer Christ acts in both? To call into question the historicity of creation necessarily leads to calling into question the historicity of redemption. Historian Philip Schaff said it right: “Without a correct doctrine of creation there can be no true doctrine of redemption, as all the Gnostic systems show.” Historical time is important in both accounts (creation and redemption).

I concur with Richard Davidson that, contrary to the classical Platonic philosophy view of a timeless God, unable to enter time, “Gen 1–2 underscores that God actually created in time as well as in space, creating the raw materials of the earth during a period of time before creation week, and then deliberately and dramatically forming and filling these inorganic, pre-fossil materials throughout the six-day creation week. Thus Gen 1–2 serves as a strong bulwark against Greek dualistic thought and calls the contemporary interpreter to radical biblical realism in which God actually enters time and space, creates in time and space, and calls it ‘very good.’”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Luther, *Luther's Works*, 1:233.

⁸⁷ Davidson, *The Biblical Account of Origins*, 31–32.

Bone of My Bone

Miroslav M. Kiš

Prologue

It is the first Friday of this Earth's history, and we find Adam comfortably resting after a surgical procedure. God's diagnosis? Heart trouble. More specifically, man is alone, and that is not good (Gen 2:18). But what more does he need? He is created in the image of God, made a little lower than he who crowned him with glory and honor (Ps 8:5). This is his ancestry, his noble pedigree. In God is rooted his very identity. Man is true to himself only when he is like God. All the creatures, plants, trees, and the planet Earth are laid at his feet, yet Adam is lonely. Some important connections hang loose. He cannot identify in totality with God, and God understands. "I will make a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:8).

So God, who does not impose his will upon man, sets the stage for Adam to make him more distinctly and acutely aware of himself and his need. As the animals and birds *in pairs* pass before him, he proceeds to give them names. And while the process moves along smoothly, the narrative ends on a melancholy note: "but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him" (v. 20). This is when the Surgeon Supreme administers anesthesia, performs a surgical extraction and reconstruction, forms a new creature in his own image, and leads her to Adam.

The focus of this essay is on what happened at, and some time after, this initial rendezvous. As he rests his first gaze on Eve, Adam hears himself say:

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman (*Ishshah*) because she was taken out of Man (*Ish*)” (Gen 2:23). In these first audible human words ever recorded¹ lie hidden the key to a healthy identity in human beings. It points us to the fact that the capacity to *identify* with God and other human beings is the path to a healthy personality. It is also the path to happiness and stability in all our essential relationships, both human and divine. The closer and deeper the identification with the right beings, the stronger and healthier our sense of self.

I. Identity and Identification

The word “identity” has a Latin root *idem*, meaning “the same.” Ever since the classical period, philosophers have been debating whether identity has to do with the relations of things or meanings, of permanence amid change, or of unity amid diversity.² We do not intend to engage here in this debate. Rather, from it we distill the meaning of identity as a kind of self-awareness, which can be qualified as *sameness with another* and which occurs in the context of belonging. We notice that healthy human identity is affected by two dimensions of human life and develops along two fronts simultaneously: personal and social. On a personal level, we are capable of relating to and engaging in a dialogue with ourselves (Rom 2:15; Ps 116:7, 43). Our real self continuously yearns for unity with our ideal self, and our ideal self struggles with temptations and sin, which seek to falsify the integrity of our being (Rom 7).

But we also recognize other people, especially those around us whom we love and admire. We feel a genuine need to belong to them in some way, in other words, to identify with them. *Identification* refers to a process, a search for elements, parts, or traits, which are identical, or at least similar or desirable, in other persons.³ For example, a child reaches out to identify with parents or care givers with whom it has formed a strong attachment. So also friends can identify with each other, creating a safe haven of mutual acceptance and care that may last the whole life through, as in marriage. However, identification occurs more easily once all parties have a healthy

¹ H. C. Leopold, *Exposition on Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1956), 1:135, 136; Nahum M. Sarna, ed., *The JSP Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 23.

² See John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford, 1894) 2.2; David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford, 1986), 1.4.6; R. Frondizi, *The Nature of the Self* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971).

³ Dagobert D. Runes, ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy* (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & 1962), 140.

view of their own identity. And the basis for a healthy self-concept comes first and foremost from an individual's identification with their heavenly Father in whose image we all are created.

1. Identification with Status. We return now to that exciting moment of identification between the first man and woman. Adam's words "this at last..." carry overtones of that *prise de conscience* when, in his perfect and beautiful world, he becomes conscious of his situation. In a sudden realization, it dawns upon him that his heart cannot reflect fully the harmony and peace that surround him. Angels are much too exalted for him, and all other creatures are both more limited and "taken," that is, they have a mate, someone of their own standing to identify with. He is the only social creature left to identify with himself alone. So Adam longs for something he cannot yet identify, someone he does not yet know.⁴

Adam's feelings of loneliness emerge from deep recesses within himself, the sense that the Creator did not create him just a man, a generic *homo sapiens*. Instead, Adam is a husband, but a husband confined to solitude. For there is more to being a husband or a wife than meets the eye, more than gender difference, more than social status; it is the matter of the very identity and maturity of a person. And this kind of solitude is a potent mixture of loneliness, yearning, and grieving all at once, a hollowness unlike any other.

One evening several decades ago, as I looked over the Jura valley below with Geneva, Switzerland, in the background, I noticed the lights coming on in a beautiful chalet below. In my musing, I imagined a mother preparing a supper, listening intently to her children's stories from school that day. Then I observed a car entering the driveway. Evidently the husband and father had come home from work and everybody excitedly tried to tell their stories to him all at once. "Lucky!" I mumbled, and shocked myself from my musing. Soon though, the shutters closed and I felt left out. Looking into my room, the hurriedly-made bed, the laundry patiently waiting, the predictable and inevitable cafeteria supper awaiting, a change came over me. I realized my situation. I was free, but also empty, alone, and unclaimed. Tired of rejecting and attracting, weary of belonging to no one, I dreamed of a home of my own, of a wife of my own, where at dusk I too could turn on the lights, close the shutters, and be warm in my own snugness. A husband came to life in me. I imagined Adam experiencing similar feelings yet so much more intensely.

How else can we explain Adam's words "this at last," when he stayed unmarried for no longer than a couple of hours on that Friday of the creation

⁴ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1958), 46.

week? It is not the length of time that matters here; it is the depth, intensity, and quality of solitude and loneliness that the youth of today must endure for a much longer time than Adam did. The ultimate solution to this isolation is not in the strength of human will or character or in the effectiveness of some therapy. Only God could lead Eve to where Adam peacefully slept. Only God could fashion “a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18). God’s matchmaking fires up a lifelong commitment of man and woman to each other. In this business, human matchmaking all too often produces only smoke.

2. Identification with Kind. By the time he falls asleep, Adam thinks that he has experienced everything there is to be seen, felt, and heard on this planet Earth. No doubt he is impressed with God’s creativity and artistry and excited to delve deeper into the mysteries of creation. Possibly, also, he has to deal with his own self-concept, his place in the created order, and as we have seen, his loneliness. With all this on his mind and heart, “... the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and, while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh; and the rib⁵ which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man” (Gen 2:21, 22). Before anesthesia, Adam had no inkling of what awaited him. God did the whole work of planning and making, without Adam’s help. Yet, at the time of awakening, Adam has no trouble with the venture. On the contrary, his approval of the project and its outcome is evident and palpable in the exciting exclamation: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh...” (Gen 2:23).

Calvin’s comments on verse 23 are interesting: “Adam indicates that something had been wanting to him; as if he had said, Now at length I have obtained a suitable companion, who is part of the substance of my flesh, and in whom I behold as if it were, another self.”⁶ “The most complete physical congruity of this new person with himself is at once recognized by this first man. He gives expression to the thought in the words: she is ‘bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.’”⁷ For the first time, in his long hours of loneliness, he senses that he can identify with this one. No need of long eons of evolutionary processes for identification and no tooth and nail fights. This one has just arrived to the place where he is, custom made. We can only imagine the thrill when she responds to Adam with words he understands (in

⁵ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1978), 1:227.

⁶ John King, ed., *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis by John Calvin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 135.

⁷ Leopold, *Exposition on Genesis*, 1:135, 136.

English, of course), when she admires what he does, when they sing God's praises in duet.

3. Identification with Class. Then, since he has not yet given the name to this one being, because this one he had no opportunity to meet before, Adam proceeds with naming, but this time in a different way. This naming has no air of domination, as is the case with animals. Here we observe a statement of acknowledgment and interpretation of the two equal parties. "[W]hen the woman came, formed out of himself, he felt all that attraction which consanguinity could produce, and at the same time he saw that she was in her own person and in her mind in every way suitable to be his companion."⁸ Adam knows she is not a clone of him, and yet she is, in counter distinction from animals, like him in the strongest terms possible. The fact that this new creature has flesh and bone like his makes her eminently fitted to be his companion. In his mind, Adam sees the realization of God's plan to provide for him a helper fit for him. "Without any prompting from God Adam calls her Woman. To distinguish this act of naming from his earlier ones of naming animals, Adam explains the reason for her name. She will be called Woman, because she was taken from her man."⁹

In this naming, we can also readily observe several significant elements of healthy identification. First, Adam identifies a new **class** of beings. "She shall be called *ishshah*, because she was taken from *ish*." The carefully crafted name indicates how close he lets this creature come to him and what she means to him. Second, the name points to etiology, explaining how man and woman are **related** and how they are different from other creatures. The two of them are uniquely consanguineous.¹⁰ Moreover, Adam recognizes Eve as a **companion** he can depend on for understanding and mutual growth. With her, he can be his vulnerable self. Also he experiences her as his second self, a **kindred spirit** singularly fit for close union and affectionate attachment. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourished and cherished it" (Eph 5:29).¹¹ Finally comes **self-discovery**. In naming her *ishshah*, Adam can name himself *ish*, because now he can see a reflection of his own essential characteristics. "Hitherto he is consistently called Adam; he now calls himself *ish* for the first time. Thus he discovers his own manhood and

⁸ Adam Clarke, *Genesis-Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 of *Clarke's Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1938), 45.

⁹ Susan Brayford, *Genesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 233–234.

¹⁰ Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, ed., *The Torah: A Woman's Commentary* (New York: URJ Press, 2008), 13.

¹¹ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 46.

fulfillment only when he faces the woman, the human being who is to be his partner in life.”¹²

Just as the human body is bare and vulnerable at birth, so the human self is open and impressionable all through life, but especially in the early years of life. Our constant need for identification keeps us exposed to outside influences. But those who are the closest to us, to whom we belong, have the strongest impact. One day during a diaper changing my wife called me to come quickly to see something. At that time, as Conference youth director, I carried my many keys on a retractable key chain above the front right pocket of my trousers. My toddler Andrej saw that, and when his mother removed his diaper that morning, she discovered an old key placed at exactly the “right” place, plastered between the diaper and his skin. I stood there stunned. “Son,” I said, “OK, I will make sure you can safely identify with me, so help me God!” We are not born with a complete set of instincts, like animals, to make us do what humans do. It takes orientation, prodding, coaching, forgiveness, tolerance, acceptance, and above all, love and affirmation to become a happy, functioning human. Healthy marriage and family dynamics are the setting where identity is safely awakened and formed.

II. Identification and Estrangement

We are not used to thinking about ourselves in terms of identity. We know that we exist, that we think and what we think, that we are busy and what we are doing. If we ever look at ourselves, our focus is often to evaluate what we *do*, or have failed to do, what we *have* or do not have. We might think beforehand of the consequences of our actions, whether on the environment, our reputation, or our place in society. Furthermore, we might be involved in judging our actions vis-à-vis criminal or civil law. Christians will appraise their conduct against God’s moral law before any other standard of being or doing. All of these are good and necessary exercises. They are distinctly human. Our self-consciousness enables us to consider ourselves as subject and object at the same time. As we act, we judge our actions; as we speak, we try to edit ourselves.

It is not often, though, that we think of ourselves in terms of identity, of who we are or who we are becoming in this certain activity. Yet humans are first and foremost beings, not actors. Our being of necessity determines our doing (Matt 12:33–35). We are, in fact, beings in close affinity with the Being,

¹² Sarna, *JSP Torah Commentary*, 23.

our Original, our Archetype, at every moment of the day, and from this consciousness must spring our actions (Ps 139). When this fails, and we see ourselves primarily as *homo faber*, then our identification with our actions and achievements makes us who we are rather than allowing our identity in God to produce our actions. Our work and our vocation becomes our idol, and this is what makes us especially unprotected at times of temptation. Eve is in the Garden, standing in front of this tree (nothing essentially wrong with that). Initially, she has no intention of eating of its fruit (that too is positively good). Admiring its beauty is equally allowed in itself. Likewise, a conversation with a serpent (which is something new) may be an innocent and fascinating activity. But there are two wrongs with her course of action. First, the focal point of her self-guiding system is on her *doing*, not her *being*. Second, God as her reference point is absent. She forgets him and his warning! Fascinated and curious to the extreme, she picks the fruit (and nothing happens to her), she eats of it (no unusual taste or nausea), she gives it to her husband and he eats. Then, as if some blinders come off from their eyes, and only then, they **look at themselves**, and what they see is strange. Strange feelings, strange thoughts, strange impulses. An uncomfortable stranger now inhabits their being.

Swift and inexorable is the descent of Adam and Eve from mutual identification with God and each other to unremitting estrangement in the wake of the fall. There is no indication of how much time elapsed between chap. 2 and chap. 3 of Genesis. What we do know is that sin attacks human beings at the very core of their identity. Chapter 3 of Genesis narrates the sad metamorphosis of Adam and Eve. Their true self stares with consternation upon their compromised self. In a matter of seconds, the uncomfortable consciousness of who they have become, and the awareness that the change is irreversible, floods their souls. Until that moment, neither of them had any concerns about themselves, their importance, or their destiny. God and Eve served as a “mirror” for Adam’s self-concept, God and Adam were the reference point to Eve’s identity. They experienced themselves in the light of God’s glory and each other’s love, which enveloped them completely. But even in the garden, they had a responsibility to watch out for one another. And this time Adam came too late.

1. Shame. The point of departure from their state of innocence is not to be found in some potential or actual ontological flaw of their nature.¹³ It stems from a freely chosen, independent act outside of God’s context; a

¹³ W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), 50.

strange behavior originating from a strange source and a foreign reference point. “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they were naked” (Gen 3:7). By acting outside of God’s context and his will, they acted out of harmony with their own nature. Adam and Eve’s feet stood upon, as yet, uncharted ground.

What now? What to do with this naked self? Again, our doing. Human ingenuity cannot recreate our compromised identity. By stepping out from under God’s protective shield, they experience nakedness and defenselessness, so all they can *do* is to sow fig leaves together and make aprons for themselves (Gen 3:7). A shallow, superficial response to the deepest and most essential deformity! The sense of their unmitigated oneness with the Source of life and being is fading away, and they become strangers to themselves. “Standing ashamed in each other’s presence, they sought to evade the disgrace of their nakedness. Their fig-leaf aprons were a pitiful substitute for the radiant garments of innocence they have forfeited. Conscience was at work. That this feeling of shame had its root not in sensuality but in consciousness of guilt before God is evident from the fact that they hid themselves.”¹⁴ “The couple has sinned together; they now know by experience that their relationship to each other and to God has changed (3:7–8). They cover themselves before each other, but they are ‘*arummim*’ (naked), and not ‘*arum*’ (astute, or wise).”¹⁵ There is not a shadow of a doubt that what humans do impacts who they become. To a great extent, our doings are pregnant with the quality of our being. But when we behave from our identity with God, and act from our God-likeness, our actions will be in harmony with his will and with our essential nature. There is no guessing here; our identification with God shields us from sin: “...how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9).

2. Fear. The quintessential vulnerability! At war within themselves, their new identity as sinners struggles against their original self. At odds with nature around them, the leaves become but a token of protection. Then they hear the Voice, the voice of God in the garden, which, instead of bringing out squeals and giggles of joy, produces now this strange heavy dread. Where now? If only they could disappear back into the dust of the ground from where they were taken.... But not yet. So, they “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Gen 2:8). What leaves cannot do for shame becomes even less effective for fear and guilt.

¹⁴ Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:231.

¹⁵ John J. Scullion, *Genesis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 40.

Trees—a better shelter from God? The ultimate ostrich game. With the questions “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Ps 139:7), David affirms the utter hopelessness and senselessness of any such endeavor (see vv. 8–12).

But why fear at this time? Was God frowning at them? Was he shouting or uprooting the trees of the garden in rage? No. God asks a question, “Adam, where are you?” Questions solicit a response, and this question implies that men and women are response-able not only for their actions but also for the place and position where their actions place them vis-à-vis themselves and God. Neither does the query betray a flaw in God’s omniscience. He, in fact, calls the first pair to be mindful of their moral and spiritual whereabouts. And Adam understands this very well; his answer carries no hint of their spatial hideout. He knows unquestionably that this hiding is closely connected to the eating of the forbidden tree, but he hides it for now. “The rustling of the leaves in the trees is a sign of God’s presence in the garden; the man and the woman are at a loss to come to terms with their changed relationship before God; so they hid themselves.”¹⁶

3. Distance. Gently, yet firmly, God probes further: “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (Gen 3:11). Like a kind Father, God knows how hard it is to confess, to admit, so he verbalizes the answer with the very question he asks. Yet, even here, Adam is not ready to own his sin, to be vulnerable. His own precious injured self must be protected at all costs, even at the price of relationship with other selves. And here is where all animosities and breakups hatch: the insecure self establishes a safe distance from other selves and acts out of self-interest. Adam tacitly concedes his “misdemeanor” but not his guilt. ‘I did do it, but your fingers formed the woman, and you brought her to be with me.’ “Man is very open with God. He does not hide the fact that he has eaten. But by saying *the woman whom thou gavest*, he places the ultimate blame upon God Himself. Man reminds God that the woman was God’s idea and that by eating of the fruit Man was merely staying with her in obedience to God’s original command.”¹⁷ Again, the seed of all estrangements is sin, which begins with separation from God. And because it is he who holds all things together, when the Cement disappears, the belonging with others vanishes, and our own identity loses its integrity.

¹⁶ Scullion, *Genesis*, 40.

¹⁷ Robert D. Sacks, *The Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1990), 33.

In such a condition no one is safe. Not God, and certainly not Eve, whose physical proximity feels too close for comfort. Instead of doing the honorable thing and assuming full responsibility for what has happened, Adam, in charge and facing their common superior [God], outrightly blames Eve. “She gave me the fruit of the tree, and I ate” (v. 12). But where now is that feeling of wonder, the elation expressed with “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh”? What happened to identification, to intimacy, to clinging, to *Ish - Ishshah* consanguinity? Would he rather be lonely again? Sin defies all logic; all human powers of reason and will become impotent under its sway.

Eve’s response is neither worse nor better than Adam’s except that she now shifts the blame onto the serpent, saying in essence, “the devil made me do it,” and this only widens the gap of separation.¹⁸ The distance between Adam and Eve, the uncomfortable, unbridgeable chasm of sin now requires an enormous effort to love, to forgive, to be kind and civil with each other. Mutual distrust creates dreadful loneliness. Whenever self-preservation is the ultimate goal, whenever God’s word becomes a matter of private interpretation, and whenever human will takes precedence over divine will, the “other” becomes dispensable. There is, however, yet another separation. “It was impossible for man to remain in the garden, and in a state of fellowship with God. Sin and Paradise were incompatible, and so the Lord set them forth, driving them out, and placing the guard with the sword that turned every way. Mark the significance of this phrase. There was no possibility to return to the old life. Paradise was lost, and by no human effort could it ever be regained.”¹⁹

4. Harvest. And now, when all the facts are known and the man and his wife have nothing more to say to God or to each other, we look in vain for God’s wounded honor and his eagerness to punish the guilty. Instead, we observe the law of sowing and reaping as it was enunciated and promised on that first Friday of creation: “...but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:17). Paul would later formulate this law of consequences in more general terms: “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal 6:7). Thus, the pain at childbirth, the submission to her husband, the cursing of the ground, the sweat of the brow, the thorns and thistles, and the expulsion from the Garden have no capriciousness nor vengefulness in them. These are the inevitable outcomes of their decisions to

¹⁸ John C. L. Gibson, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1981), 1:131.

¹⁹ Thomas, *Genesis*, 51.

act out of harmony with the created order. By their actions, they exile themselves. Even hiding behind trees indicates their sense of not belonging there.

The ensuing generations display more fully and vividly the most tragic evidence of the progression of estrangement and loss of human identity.

1. One Bone and One Flesh. There exists a beautiful harmony in God's presence, a nearly mirror reflection of each other's nature, and mutual support—the firm bedrock for a healthy identity (Gen 2:23).

2. Autonomy. Adam and Eve (and Cain following in the footsteps of his parents) choose freely to assert and act their independence from God (Gen 3:6; 4:6–8).

3. Shame. Shame is the first indication of an inner conflict and fragmentation of their sense of self (Gen 3:7).

4. Guilt. Closely on the heels of shame follows the sense of guilt, an awareness of a wrong done to an innocent party (v. 8).

5. Fear. Like strangers in the night they know their vulnerability, but no shelter awaits them (v. 8).

6. Flight. Now their first instinct urges them to protect themselves, but the only option they find is to hide from God (vv. 9, 10).

7. Blaming. As God enquires about their activities, they blame each other and him (vv. 11–13).

8. Exile. In humility and sadness, they have to leave the Garden and enter a rigorous classroom, a workshop where their loyalty to God and their lost identity can be forged (vv. 23, 24).

9. Anger. When Abel resists yielding to his brother's insistence, Cain becomes furious. Even God's direct intervention cannot calm him down or bring him to his senses (Gen 4:1–7).

10. Murder. By now, Abel is at a comfortable distance for a kill (v. 8).

11. Vagrancy. As a homeless and marked man, Cain experiences the apogee of hopelessness and meaninglessness. He can identify with no one; he belongs to no one (vv. 9–16).

Ever since the days of Cain, the identity of our "civilization" is losing its human quality at an incredible speed. Imagine what happens to human identity under circumstances of war, rape, genocides, terrorist attacks on innocent civilians, or concentration camps; when, on a large scale, the human race ceases to be "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." How can anyone torture or inflict pain on a daily basis on their fellow human beings for

money? Who can measure the impact on their victims and trace the state of mind on a global scale for the humanity of tomorrow?

The Lamb

Under God's watchful eye and his tender care, estrangement need not have the final word on human identity. In the story of the Fall, God provides for reconciliation, rapprochement, and restoration of his image in us. His provision is presented in three important movements.

1. First, God reveals his way of dealing with guilt. In addressing the serpent, God declares: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). God creates enmity (*eba*), hostility, or distance between humans and their enemy. In fact, that was the intention of the initial prohibition of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This distance, this estrangement from the tempter, would have safeguarded all human relationships, both human and divine, and formed the bedrock to healthy human identity. It is either enmity toward Satan and friendship with God and his sons and daughters, or befriending the Evil one and forfeiting communion with God. The difference of character between God and the devil is so absolute that no compromise is achievable. "You cannot serve two masters" (Matt 6:24). Friendship with the world is enmity with God (Jas 4:4). Any attempt at building a bridge between the two will end in disaster.

2. These words about enmity between humans and the devil articulate a promise of the coming Substitute, asserting adamantly that Adam and Eve are not alone in facing this formidable enemy. God has provided the Bridge over troubled waters, the only Bridge that can span the distance between sinners and the holy God. "The very first enunciation of the gospel of grace through faith was cradled in a warning of conflict. It foreshadows the incessant activity of satanic powers to oppose the salvation of lost mankind and to resist the Good News by which the fallen race is to be rescued from sin and the power of Satan and demons."²⁰ The Savior will come through Eve's progeny, "the seed," the *monogenēs*, the unique and the only Savior (Gal 4:4). Jesus is the only Human in whom the devil has no foothold (John 14:30). He is the only human who identifies absolutely with both God and humankind. In him the distance between humans and God is reduced to zero. And since in sin humans lost their ability to identify with God, in Christ God

²⁰ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 1:19.

comes down to experience that distance himself (Matt 27:46), remove the barrier of sin, and reunite humanity with divinity (Eph 1:9, 10). But Jesus is also a wall of absolute and eternal separation between Satan and sin and the human race. The promise in Nah 1:9 is unequivocal.

3. Finally, God removes the shamefulness of the human condition. The “Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins, and he clothed them” (Gen 3:21). “Redemption is not only promised in word, it is also pictured in deed. Man attempted to cover his shame by the leaves of the fig-tree, but this was far too slight a covering for so deep a shame. No human covering could suffice, and so we are told with profound significance that the ‘Lord God made coats of skins and clothed them.’... The mention of skins suggests the fact and necessity of death of the animal before they could be used as clothing, and it is more than probable that in this fact we have the primal revelation of sacrifice, and of the way in which the robe of righteousness was to be provided for them.”²¹

In this context, we remember the words of the apostle in Rom 8, where Paul asks questions and then answers them for us:

- “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies” (v. 33).

- “[W]ho is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died...who indeed intercedes for us” (v. 34).

- “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... For I am sure that neither life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our lord” (vv. 35, 38, 39).

Intimacy and identity have been restored and secured forever.

²¹ Thomas, *Genesis*, 51.

Why Keep an Old Covenant Sabbath in a New Covenant Age?

Skip MacCarty

Seventh-day Adventists are often asked, “Why do you keep an old covenant Sabbath in a new covenant age?” A proper answer to that question must begin with a discussion of Christ in the Sabbath and Christ in the covenants.

Jesus as Initiator and Ratifier of the Gospel

There has always been only one gospel, “the gospel of Christ” (Phil 1:27¹). “And I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman [the people of God], and between your offspring and hers; he [Jesus] will crush your [Satan’s] head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen 3:15). This same gospel preached in embryo to Adam was preached in progressively expanded revelations to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to Paul—“for we [in the NT era] also have had the good news [*euangelion*, “gospel”] proclaimed to us, just as they [in the OT era] did” (Heb 4:2). Paul said of this very gospel, “Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse” (Gal 1:8)! Of Jesus’ relation to this gospel and the faith it solicits, the author of Hebrews writes: “fixing

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the 2011 New International Version.

our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb 12:2). Though this gospel was timeless and universal in application and preached through every covenant God made with humankind since Adam’s fall, its ratification occurred at a particular moment in history: “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Heb 9:15).

Jesus in the Old Testament

The same Creator and Savior the OT believer worshiped as Yahweh, the NT believer worships as Jesus. Moses served Yahweh and knew him by that name (Exod 6:2–3), and the NT testifies that “[Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of *Christ* as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb 11:26, emphasis supplied). In Moses’ farewell address to Israel, he recounted how Yahweh, “the Rock [whose] works are perfect, ... the Rock their Savior, ... the Rock, who fathered you,” had accompanied them throughout their desert journeys (Deut 32:3–18), Paul later clarified that during that period Israel “drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was *Christ*” (1 Cor 10:1–4 emphasis supplied). Isaiah wrote concerning his own epiphany: “I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne” as the seraphim cried out, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD [Yahweh] Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.... “Woe to me! ... my eyes have seen the King, the LORD [Yahweh] Almighty.” (Isa 6:1–5) Referring to this very incident and divine Personage, John writes, “Isaiah said this because he saw *Jesus*’ glory and spoke about *him*” (John 12:39–41, italics supplied).

While Scripture identifies the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as distinct personages with distinct roles in their relation to humanity,² it is equally clear that they share the same eternal nature and divine attributes that distinguish them from the created order.³ While references to “God,” “Lord” and “LORD” (Yahweh) in Scripture are not always clear as to which of the divine heavenly trio is being specifically referred to in any given instance, if

² E.g., at Jesus’ baptism the Father spoke from heaven and the Spirit descended on him “like a dove” (Matt 3:16–17), and we are admonished to pray “in the spirit” (Eph 6:18) to the “Father in heaven” (Matt 6:9) in Jesus name (John 14:13).

³ E.g., each is said to be “from everlasting” or “eternal” (Ps 90:2; Isa 9:6; Mic 5:2; Heb 9:14), and are regarded as a divine unit (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14).

Jesus is not the primary referent, he is at least within view. This seems as much a fact of Scripture as it is a mystery.

Jesus the Creator

Thus, Scripture's opening line, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" is later qualified by John, speaking of Jesus: "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3), and by Paul, "for in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him" (Col 1:16). The Father himself sings to the Son an ancient hymn sung to Yahweh: "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; ... and your years will never end" (Heb 1:10–12 quoting Ps 102:22–25). While the Father and the Spirit were undoubtedly involved in the creation event (Gen 1:1–2; Prov 8), Jesus is presented as its active agent.

Jesus the Savior

Scripture makes the same application to Jesus as the Savior. Through Isaiah Yahweh testified, "I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; ... I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior" (Isa 43:3, 11). And yet the NT emphatically declares of Jesus, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). While OT believers may not have known Jesus by name, they were as dependent upon him for forgiveness and salvation were any NT believers, for "he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." Jesus' NT appeal, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest," echoed his OT appeal: "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other," and his assurance to Moses, "my Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28; Isa 45:22; Exod 33:14). He is now and has always been "Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." In every historical era, Jesus has been faith's author and finisher, the sinner's justifier and sanctifier. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph 2:8–9): a truth as applicable in Adam's day as in Paul's, in Moses' day as in our own. Though the exact terminology used by believers in every historical era of salvation history was dependent

upon the development of the revelation made available to them up to their time, Paul aptly expressed the common essence of their testimonies: “We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe” (1 Tim 4:10).

Jesus as “a Covenant for the People”

As Jesus was the active agent in creation and “the Savior of all people,” so he was also the initiator and embodiment of the divine covenant. Yahweh testified of the messianic servant: “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness” (Isa 42:6–7).

Jesus’ ministry as “a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles” did not wait for his birth in Bethlehem. John introduced Jesus as “the true light that gives light to everyone” in every historical era (John 1:9). It was through “the Spirit of Christ in them” that the prophets of old “predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow” (1 Pet 1:11). All divine light that has ever come to humankind has come through the Son; thus he could truly say, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”—a timeless and eternal truth (John 8:12).

As Jesus was the divine light of the world from the beginning, so was he also the divine “covenant for the people” from the beginning—“a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.” This divine covenant predated his birth into our world. In Jesus’ statement at the Last Supper, “I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me” (Luke 22:29), the term “confer” is the verb form of the Greek word for “covenant”; Jesus used this term to refer directly to the covenant between himself and the Father. “The Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world” shed “the blood of the eternal covenant” (Rev 13:8; Heb 13:8)—“the *eternal* covenant” because the triune God from whom it originated is eternal and his love for his creation is eternal. Any mention of divine covenant(s) in Scripture always calls to mind God’s love manifested within the Trinity and extended out to his creation from time immemorial. It is this that Jesus exemplified from eternity past and embodied as he walked among us as “a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.”

The Covenant of Grace/Redemption

In response to Adam's fall, Jesus initiated what has been variously referred to as the covenant of grace or the covenant of redemption (hereafter referred to in this essay as the covenant of grace/redemption). This was the archetypal eternal covenant divinely adapted to meet humankind in their sinful state and restore to them everything that Adam had lost on their behalf. The terms of the covenant of grace/redemption are the same as the terms of the gospel—Jesus would accomplish everything necessary for humanity's salvation; in response, humans must believe and accept his work on their behalf, and then cooperate with his efforts to make them a holy (i.e., obedient) people aligned with his loving character and will.

Progressive Revelation of Timeless Truths in the Covenant(s)

Every covenant Jesus initiated with humanity—with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, David, etc.—bore the fingerprint of the primordial eternal covenant while at the same time being a unique expression of the covenant of grace/redemption crafted to meet the specific needs of those with whom it was made. Each new covenant in history incorporated the revelation of God's character manifested in the previous covenants while revealing new aspects of his character in a developing revelation that culminated in the ultimate revelation seen in Jesus. The same was true of the plan of salvation: the encrypted revelation to Adam that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head was fleshed out in increasing detail in each successive covenant, culminating in the NT's exponentially expanded description of the gospel based on the incarnation, teachings and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

It was in the story of Noah that God was first described as a God who manifests "grace" toward some and accounts as "righteous" those who have "walked faithfully with God" (Gen 6:8–9). God's covenant with Abraham introduced the association of "righteousness" and "faith"—"Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6, 18). In addition, God promised Abraham, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:1–3). While Paul later applied this revelation to the blessing that would come to the world through Christ, the Seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16), it also revealed to Abraham that God blesses people so that they might be a blessing to others as bearers of the gospel: "Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and

to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring” (Gen 28:14). It was the Sinai covenant that first recorded God’s promise, “I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (Lev 26:12), and first identified God as a God of *hesed* (variously translated as “love” and “mercy,” conveying the idea of covenant loyalty, Exod 34:6), who forgives sins (Exod 34:7) and writes his word (his law and gospel) on the hearts of his people (Deut 30:6, 11–14 with Rom 10:6–8; cf. Ps 40:8; Isa 51:7). God would ever after be known as “the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love [‘covenant and mercy’—NKJV]” (Deut 7:9). With the coming of Jesus and the NT came a flood of new insights into the character of God and the plan of salvation.

But though these truths were progressively revealed in increasing detail over time through the successive covenants, they were nonetheless timeless in nature, universally applicable during all historical eras. God did not change, nor did his plan of salvation. Abel was accounted righteous by faith even though such terminology was not introduced until the time of Abraham (Heb 11:4). “Noah [was] a preacher of righteous” long before Abraham and his offspring were the first chronologically in Scripture to be officially called to a gospel-bearing mission (2 Pet 2:5). Sinners were undoubtedly “born again” by the Spirit long before Jesus used that metaphor with Nicodemus (John 3:3). Jesus did not suddenly become a God of grace when he made his covenant with Noah, or a God of love and mercy and forgiveness when he established his covenant at Sinai. Indeed, “this grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:9–10). Nor did he wait until Sinai to begin writing his law and gospel in the hearts of those who put their trust in him. “I the LORD do not change” (Mal 3:6). “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8).

The New Covenant DNA

The unifying strand which wove the individualized covenants together in the progressively unfolding salvation story was the divine commitment to humanity’s salvation expressed in the promises of the new covenant. Both Jeremiah and Hebrews quote God himself providing the only explicit definition of the new covenant contained anywhere in Scripture:

“This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and

write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Heb 8:10–12 quoting Jer 31:33–34).

Jesus thus defined his “new covenant” in terms of four divine promises (the new covenant DNA so to speak), each of which may be summarized with a common and accepted theological term: (1) God will write his laws in their hearts and minds [*sanctification*]; (2) he will be their God and they will be his people [*reconciliation*]; (3) all will know him [*revelation/mission*]; (4) he will forgive their sins [*justification*]. These new covenant promises form the core of “the gospel of Christ.” Jesus embedded them in every covenant he initiated with humankind, and reiterated them in promise-clusters at strategic places throughout the OT (see “New Covenant DNA” chart, next page). Other than in Jeremiah, the OT’s most explicit expression of these promises occurs in the covenant Jesus initiated with Israel at Sinai, which was the most advanced revelation of God and the plan of salvation given to humankind up to that time in history.⁵ All divinely-initiated covenants bore the new covenant promises as their essential DNA, thus characterizing them as grace-based, gospel-bearing, mission-directed and faith-inducing.

The Sabbath as Jesus’ Covenant Sign

It was in the context of his covenant with Israel that the first explicit mention occurs of God’s forbidding idolatry, lying, stealing, adultery or murder, and yet these moral principles were known from the earliest days of salvation history (e.g., Gen 4:8–11; Gen 39:7–9). As noted earlier, in this same context of his covenant with Israel God first revealed that he is a God of love and mercy who forgives sins (Exod 34:6–7), though these divine characteristics are assumed from the moment of Adam’s fall and God’s first promise in the covenant of grace/redemption (Gen 3:15). Similarly, it was in

⁴ The ultimate fulfillment of this promise, as of the others, will be realized in the kingdom of God after the second coming of Jesus. Until then, God is making himself known in the world and has commissioned his covenant people to join him in this mission: “But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and *uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere*” (2 Cor 2:14, italics supplied; cf. Ps 67:1–2; Matt 28:19–20).

⁵ For a more thorough discussion, see S. MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained? What the Old and New Covenants Reveal About the Gospel, the Law and the Sabbath* (Berrien Springs, MI, Andrews University Press, 2007), 37–56.

The DNA of the Covenant(s)

Covenant	Everlasting	Humanity at Creation	Adam after His Fall	Noah	Abraham	Sinai	David	Covenant Consciousness at Temple Dedication	Covenant Consciousness in Isaiah 51-54 (54:10 'Covenant of Peace')	Covenant Language in Ezekiel 35-37	Messiah Jesus Isa 42:6-7 Isa 49:4-6 Mal 3:1	New Covenant	Eden Restored
Made by God with	Earth and universe Gen 3:15 Isa 24:3 EFM 3:10 Col 1:19-20	Adam/humanity Gen 1:26-27 Gen 2:15-22 Hos 6:6-7	Adam/humanity Gen 3:15	All life through Noah Gen 3:8-17 Isa 34:3-10 2 Pet 3:3-9	Abraham and his promised seed Gen 15:18 Gen 17:1-22	Israel and foreign converts Eod 19:23 Isa 35:3 Deut.	David and his descendants 2 Sam 23:5 Isa 35:3	Israel and foreign converts 1 Kings 6:41-43 Isa 36	Israel and foreign converts Isa 36	Post-colic Israel and converts Isa 42:6-7, 49:6	Israel, Gentiles, "the ends of the earth" Isa 42:6-7, 49:6	Israel and Judah Jer 31:31 Heb 8:8	Overcomers
Covenant / Gospel Provisions													
"I will write my laws in your hearts": Sanctification	Heb 13:20-21 Rom 2:14-16	Gen 1:26-27, 31 Implied	Gen 3:15 Implied	Ezek 14:14, 20 Heb 11:7 Implied	Gen 26:5 with John 15:5 Implied	Eod 3:11-13 Deut 20:7-8 Lev 11-14	Ps 40:8	1 Kings 8:51, 58	Isa 51:2, 15-16 Deut 30:6, 11-14 Rom 10:6-16	Ezek 36:26-27	Heb 10:7 with Ps 40:8	Jer 31:33 Heb 8:10	Rev 22:11 Implied
"I will be your God and you will be my people": Reconciliation	Ps 103:17-22 Isa 19:25 Col 1:19-20	Gen 1:26-27, 31 Implied	Gen 3:15, 21 Implied	Ezek 14:14, 20 Heb 11:7 Implied	Gen 17:7 Deut 29:12-13	Eod 5:7 Lev 26:12	2 Sam 7:5, 16 Ps 89:3-4, 20-29	1 Kings 8:59 (41:6, 50, 33-36)	Isa 51:5-16	Ezek 36:28 Ezek 37:23, 27	Matt 1:23 with Matt 3:17 Heb 11:5	Jer 31:33 Heb 8:11	Rev 21:2-3, 7
"All will know Me": Mission	Isa 19:19-25 Isa 45:22 Ps 19:1-4 Rom 1:20 John 17:3 Col 1:19-20	Hos 6:6-7 Gen 1:26-27 Gen 2:15-22 Implied	Gen 3:15 Implied	2 Pet 2:5	Gen 12:3 Gen 28:14	Eod 19:5-6 1 Pet 2:9 Ps 67:1-2 Ezek 36:22-23	2 Sam 23:5 1 Chron 16:7-39 Isa 35:3-5	1 Kings 8:41-43	Isa 52:7-15	Ezek 36:23 Ezek 37:28	Matt 1:21 John 17:25 John 14:7, 9 John 10:30	Jer 31:34 Heb 8:11 2 Cor 2:14-16	Rev 21:2-3 Heb 2:14 John 17:3 1 Cor 13:12
"I will forgive your sins": Justification	Heb 13:20 Mat 26:28-29 Mark 14:24	Not needed but provided for 1 Cor 1:23-24 2 Tim 1:8-9 1 Rev 13:8 Heb 13:20	Gen 3:21 Implied	1 Kings 8:46 Ezek 14:14, 20 Heb 11:7 Implied	Gen 15:6 Rom 4:1-4	Eod 34:6-10 Ps 103:2-14	Ps 32:1-5 Rom 4:6-9 Isa 35:3-7	1 Kings 8:30, 33-34 1 Kings 8:46-51	Isa 53:5-12	Ezek 36:25 Ezek 37:23	Eph 1:3-8 Heb 2:9, 14-17 Heb 9:15 1 Pet 2:22-24 1 Pet 1:18-20 Rev 15 Rev 13:8	Jer 31:34 Heb 8:12	Rev 7:9, 13-14 Zech 9:1-5

⁶ Copyright © 2007 by Andrews University Press. Reprinted, with permission of the publisher, from *In Granite or Ingrained? What the Old and New Covenants Reveal about the*

the context of his covenant with Israel that the first explicit mention is made that Jesus' chosen sign that he is humanity's Creator and Savior is the seventh-day Sabbath, and it can equally be assumed that the sign significance of the Sabbath also began prior to its formal introduction as such at Sinai.

Indeed, when Jesus introduced the Sabbath as his sovereignly chosen sign between himself and his people, he reached back to creation itself as its point of reference: “[the Sabbath] will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” (Exod 31:17).

Covenant Sign of Creation

In the text just cited Jesus directs the reader to the original creation account: “On the seventh day [God] rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen 2–3).

God had previously “blessed” the man and woman created in his own image (Gen 1:27–28). As it was later revealed more explicitly to Abraham, a blessing from God is at the same time a call to fulfill a divinely ordained purpose.⁷ So it was with Adam and Eve: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground’” (Gen 1:28). As Adam and Eve were “blessed” that they might fulfill their divinely-ordained purpose of ruling over the earth, so also the seventh-day was “blessed” that it might accomplish a divinely-ordained purpose. That purpose was revealed more explicitly in the Sinai covenant that it would be “a sign,” “a lasting covenant” between God and his people that “in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested” (Exod 31:16–17). Ever after that first week of creation, the seventh day would be a memorial to the God of creation, a reminder to humankind of whom they had come from and to whom they belonged.⁸

Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath by Skip MacCarty (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2007), 304. This chart may not be reproduced or utilized in any print or electronic form without the expressed written consent of Andrews University Press.

⁷ That divine blessing was also a call to mission was recognized among the devout in Israel: “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us—so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations” (Ps 67:1–2).

⁸ “... *the original divine Sabbath represented the Creator’s covenantal lordship over the world...* The meaning of the original Sabbath (Gen. 2:2) is mirrored in the Sabbath ordinance (Gen. 2:3), the record of which emphasizes that the Sabbath is set apart as sacred to the Creator.”

Jesus chose as his sign something that was neither material nor geographical. It could not be lost (as in misplaced), purchased, stolen, sold for profit or otherwise manipulated. One didn't have to travel to a specific location to be blessed by it. Jesus blessed a segment of time, the seventh-day of the week, equally as accessible to the poor and the lame as to the rich and the healthy. The seventh day would be divinely provided each week as his "blessed" gift, his appointed sign between himself and his people that he created them and embraces them in covenant love.

Covenant Sign of Redemption

But the sign significance of the Sabbath was not limited to memorializing that God is Creator. Jesus invested it with another equally weighty meaning: "the LORD said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.'" (Exod 31:12–13; cf. Ezek 20:12).

The seventh-day Sabbath as a perpetual sign of God's creatorship would have been applicable had sin never touched humankind and had they always lived holy lives in God's image and likeness. However, at the moment of Adam's fall, a terrible alteration occurred in human nature that Adam passed on as a heritage to his descendants. In a poignant passage in Romans, Paul gathered numerous OT statements that describe the doleful results of the unholy human nature that Adam's posterity inherited: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.' 'Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.' 'The poison of vipers is on their lips.' 'Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.' 'Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.' 'There is no fear of God before their eyes'" (3:10–18). That it did not take centuries after Adam's sin for this condition to develop is evident from the fact that Adam's first son, Cain, murdered his younger brother, Abel. The covenantal global fallout from this human condition followed naturally: "The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant" (Isa 24:5).

M. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), 19, 39

Adam had been created capable of living a perfectly holy life in obedience to God, thus obtaining eternal life (Eph 1:4; Titus 1:2). But his descendants had lost that ability. And when Adam sinned, God did not suddenly move the goal line from the 100-yard line to the 10-yard line, to use an illustration from American football, so that holy living was no longer required for entrance into the eternal kingdom of God. It remained true that “without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

That’s where the covenant of grace/redemption came in. Jesus stepped in, not only as Creator this time, but also now as Savior, “the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.” To return to the American football illustration, it is as if Jesus had said, “Give me the ball,” and then ran the 100 yards to the goal line himself on our behalf, living a perfectly holy life and laying down his own life in the process. Then he gave us credit for scoring the winning touchdown, the perfectly holy life required for us to obtain eternal life. All of this is embraced in the declaration, “I am the LORD who makes you holy.”

Christ’s role as Savior, however, “the LORD who makes you holy,” encompasses even more. Holiness/righteousness is not limited to the holy life of Christ imputed to us as a gift that serves as our passport to heaven, while it is most assuredly that. It is also a way of life that the believer is called to live in alignment with God’s character of love and holiness. The divine appeal through the prophets and apostles remains unaltered over time: “Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” (1 Pet 1:15–16, quoting Lev 11:44–45; 19:2). But believers are as incapable in themselves of living a daily life of practical holiness so that unbelievers might “see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” as they are incapable of living the perfectly holy life they need to gain entrance into heaven. Jesus’ revelation was as true for fallen Adam as it was for any believer in Christ’s day or is for any believer in our own: “apart from me you can do nothing,” for “I am the LORD who makes you holy” (Matt 5:16; John 15:5).

While the Sabbath commandment bows to the two great commandments of love to God and neighbor, Jesus invested no other commandment with such weighty symbolic meaning as his designated sign that he is their Creator and their Redeemer/Savior. The two versions of the Sabbath commandment which he embedded in the heart of the Decalogue, qualifying it as the one moral law graced with sign significance, reflect those twin themes:

- “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.... For 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” (Exod 20:8–11)—Creation.
- “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” [slavery in Egypt represents the deeper slavery of sin from which the believer has been rescued by Jesus] (Deut 5:12–15)—Redemption.

His call to keep his Sabbath holy reminds believers of their inadequacy, for only a holy person can truly keep a holy day, and we know our hearts all too well, that we are not “holy in all you do” (1 Pet 1:15). But the sign significance of the Sabbath reminds us that he who created us is able; it calls us to *rest* in him and in his promise, “I am the LORD who makes you holy.”

Jesus’ Affirmation of the Sabbath and Exemplification of Its Observance

When Jesus walked the earth he exemplified profound regard for the Sabbath that he had designated as the sign between him and his people that he is their Creator and Savior. As the One who “blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” at creation, Jesus affirmed that “the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt 12:8). It was his chosen day for public worship: “on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom” (Luke 4:16). He performed many healings (physical and spiritual) on the Sabbath, fulfilling its purpose as a day for restoration. And he who as Lord of the Sabbath had rested from a finished creation on the original seventh day also rested in the tomb on the Sabbath as the Lord of salvation upon his completed sacrifice of atonement on the cross (Luke 23:55–56).

When Jesus affirmed that “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27), he chose Greek terms that would communicate the universal and permanent character of the Sabbath—*egeneto*, “made” (literally, “came into existence,” used 20 times in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Genesis 1 creation story and three times in John 1:3 which establishes Jesus as the One through whom all things were “made”/created), and *anthropos*, “man” (the generic Greek term for humankind)—i.e., “the Sabbath was made [by Jesus at

creation] for man [all humanity].” The Sabbath can be a blessing to all humankind, including unbelievers, as a day of physical rest, and even more so to redeemed believers who observe it also as a day of spiritual rest in Jesus, their Creator and Savior—“the LORD who makes you holy.”

New Covenant Annuls the Sinai Covenant?

The argument for the permanence of the Sabbath finds considerable evidence throughout Scripture. There are numerous references to the Ten Commandments in the NT which assume their timeless and universal applicability.⁹ In addition, in the same context in which the author of Hebrews cited the OT origins of the Sabbath (“on the seventh day God rested from all his works,” 4:4 quoting Gen 2:3), he affirmed, “there remains, then, a Sabbath-rest [Gk, *sabbatismos*]¹⁰ for the people of God” (4:9). And Isaiah testified that in “the new heavens and the new earth... ‘From one New Moon [better ‘month’¹¹] to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind

⁹ E.g., Matt 5:21–22, 27–28; Mark 2:27–28; 7:9–13, 20–23; 10:17–22; Luke 23:56; Rom 1:29–31; 2:21–22; 7:7; 1 Cor 6:9–11; Eph 6:1–3; 1 Tim 1:8–11; Rev 11:19; 12:17; 14:12.

¹⁰ While this is the only place in the Bible where *sabbatismos* occurs as a noun, it occurs in verb form numerous places in the OT with the meaning of “observing Sabbath,” including the seventh-day Sabbath (e.g., Exod 16:30). Cf., “The term [*sabbatismos*] denotes or celebrates the observance of the Sabbath.” A. T. Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” in *From Sabbath to the Lord’s Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1982), 213.

¹¹ Cf. New English Translation (NET): “From one month to the next and from one Sabbath to the next, all people will come to worship me,” says the LORD.” The noun *ḥodeš* in the Hebrew Bible “occurs 283 times, its most common meaning being ‘month.’... A second meaning ... is new moon” (*NIDOTTE*, 5:38).

Although many English versions translate the Hebrew word *ḥodeš* in Isa 66:23 as “New Moon,” the standard Hebrew lexicons agree that in connection with the special grammatical construction of this verse, the preferred translation for *ḥodeš* here is “month,” not “New Moon.” So, F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 191: “as often as month (comes) in its month”; cf. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 219: “from month to month.” (See also the NLT modern English version.) A virtually identical grammatical construction, using the word *šānāh* “year” in the Hebrew Bible (1 Sam 7:16; 2 Chron 24:5; and Zech 14:6), clearly means “year by year” or “every year.” The LXX (Old Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) apparently understood that Isa 66:23 referred to months, rather than to the “New Moon [festivals]” mentioned earlier in Isaiah (1:13, 14). In Isa 1:13, 14 the LXX employs the Greek term *noimēnia* “new moon [festival]” (a contraction of *neomēnia*), but in 66:23 it uses the Greek term *mēn*—the normal Greek word for “month” (see *TDOT*, 4:229). In the NT, Col 2:16 uses the word *neomēnia* “new moon [festival],” which is identified as a “shadow” pointing to Christ (see discussion later in this chapter), but Rev 22:2, in describing the monthly cycle of the tree of life (which, presumably, all would come to experience), uses the same word *mēn* “month” as found in Isa 66:23 (LXX). It appears that Isaiah is referring to the same monthly cycle of worship for the new earth that is implied in Rev 22:2, which is not necessarily linked to any specific New Moon festival.

will come and bow down before me,' says the LORD" (Isa 66:22–23).¹²

Many NT scholars, however, hold that the seventh-day Sabbath was exclusively an old covenant institution which began with Moses and the Sinai covenant and was terminated, along with the old covenant, at the Last Supper and Jesus' crucifixion, with no continuing applicability or sign significance for NT believers. They consider promotion of seventh-day Sabbath observance in the NT era as seriously misguided at best and a regression into old-covenant bondage and salvation-threatening legalism at worst.

According to this view, Jesus simultaneously instituted "the new covenant" and annulled the Sinai covenant at the time he initiated the Lord's Supper on the eve of his crucifixion: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20; cf. 1 Cor 11:25). However, the best manuscripts of Matthew's and Mark's account, as reflected in many modern translations, do not have "the *new* covenant," but rather, "*the* covenant"—"This is my blood of *the* covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28, emphasis supplied; cf. Mark 14:24). These differentiated references to "the new covenant" and "the covenant" do not pit Matthew and Mark's interpretation against Luke and Paul's, but rather reveal that the promises of "the new covenant" highlighted the essential core of "the covenant" of Grace from which all divine covenants with humanity emanated. The covenant Jesus ratified by his sacrificial death transcended the boundary of the NT historical era, for "he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15), including the entire period of the historical OT era. Scripture nowhere states that the gospel as taught in the Sinai covenant changed or was annulled at the Last Supper or the cross. Rather, Jesus' death ratified the entire covenant of grace/redemption which bore the four DNA-marking promises of the new covenant, and through which God provided salvation to the human race from the moment of Adam's fall until the Second Coming of Jesus.

However, in the same passage in which God explicitly defined the new covenant in terms of his four gospel promises (Heb 8:7–12), did he not also say that "the new covenant... will not be like the covenant [He] made with their ancestors [whom He led] out of Egypt" (8:8–9)? Yes, but that passage

¹² For an expanded discussion of Heb 4:9 and Isa 66:22–23, see C. Arand, C. Blomberg, S. MacCarty, J. Pipa, *Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*, ed. C. Donato (Nashville, TN, B&H Academic, 2011), 15–18, 24–29.

also specifically says, “God *found fault with the people*... because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord” (8:7, 9, emphasis supplied). Note carefully that “God found fault with *the people*,” not with his covenant.

What God expected to be different about the post-incarnation phase of the covenant of grace/redemption was a different *response* to the gospel from the people living in the NT era than he had received by and large from those in previous generations, who “did not remain faithful to my covenant.”

Jesus told a parable that illustrated this point. A property owner had twice sent servants to collect payment on a vineyard he had leased to tenants. Both times the tenants had beaten some of the servants and killed others. Finally the owner “sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said” (Matt 21:3–37). So too in the new covenant God is effectively saying, Having killed My prophets and rejected their appeals for repentance and offers of a new heart and spirit in previous generations, especially the post-Sinai generation, surely My people will not reject my Son who died for them and whom I raised for their justification!

It is true that the OT rituals of circumcision, animal sacrifices and the OT priesthood (those things directly tied to the OT sanctuary) were replaced in the NT era with baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the priesthood of Christ and a focus on the divine sanctuary in heaven. But the moral law and gospel promises of the new covenant were timeless and universal characteristics of the covenant of grace/redemption which transcended historical boundaries (note again the new covenant DNA chart on page 564). And of the three covenant signs that God gave to humankind—the rainbow (Gen 9:16), circumcision (Gen 17:11) and the Sabbath—only the Sabbath was rooted in creation and extends into the new earth (Exod 31:16–17; Isa 66:22–23).

The Old and New Covenants in Galatians 4:21–5:1

Numerous Scriptural passages lie at the heart of the debate over the role of the Sabbath in the old and new covenants; two of the major ones will be addressed here. The first is Galatians 4:21–5:1.

“²¹ Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. ²³ His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

“²⁴ These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. ²⁵ Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother....

“²⁸ Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. ³⁰ But what does Scripture say? ‘Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.’ ³¹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

“^{5:1} It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

This is the only passage in the Bible that contains the explicit term, “two covenants,” and it undisputedly refers to the old and new covenants. It is not difficult to see why scholars understand this passage to be a warning against having any association with anything that stems from the Mount Sinai covenant, which they believe to be the old covenant in view. After all, does the text not say explicitly, “One covenant is from Mount Sinai” (v. 24)? This needs to be examined.

First, while this passage does refer to Mount Sinai, it associates the two covenants equally with Abraham and the mothers of his two sons: “The women represent two covenants” (v. 24). Even more telling is the way Paul introduced his references to Mount Sinai, Abraham and the two women: “These things are being taken *figuratively*” (v. 24, emphasis supplied). In other words, Paul is trying to convey an important message in this discussion, and he uses both whatever happened at Sinai and in Abraham’s experience with the mothers of his two sons, as well as the two sons themselves, as *figures* or *analogies* or *illustrations* of the message he is attempting to convey in his discussion of the two covenants. “Mount Sinai,” “Abraham,” “the women” and the sons are not his point; rather, he uses them to *illustrate* his point.

Second, if association with the Sinai covenant is as dangerous as it sounds for NT believers, why should it not have been such for OT believers

also, those with whom Jesus established it as his “covenant of love”? In their defense that the “two covenants” represent the Sinai covenant as the old covenant and the NT gospel as the new covenant, many scholars suggest that the Sinai covenant may well enough have been good for OT believers who were theologically deficient and weak in faith, but not good for post-incarnation believers who are theologically enlightened and strong in faith. In response, we must examine contrasting characteristics with which Galatians 4 describes the “two covenants.”

- **Old:** “Abraham’s son by the slave woman,” “slavery,” “burdened by a yoke of slavery” (4:22, 25, 30; 5:1);
New: “Abraham’s son by the free woman,” “free,” “Christ has set us free” (4:22, 26; 5:1)
- **Old:** “Born according to the flesh” (4:23, 30);
New: “Born as a result of promise,” “born according to the Spirit (4:23, 30)
- **Old:** “Hagar,” “Mount Sinai,” “present Jerusalem” (4:25);
New: “Jerusalem above” (4:26)
- **Old:** “Persecuted” the free son (4:29);
New: “Persecuted” by the slave son (4:29)
- **Old:** “Will never share in the inheritance” (4:30);
New: [Beneficiary of] “the inheritance” (vs. 8–11)

When you remove the *figurative*, temporal illustrations Paul uses (Abraham, the mothers of his two sons, the sons themselves, Mount Sinai, and the earthly and heavenly Jerusalems) the characterizations you have left are these:

- **Old covenant:** “Burdened by a yoke of slavery,” “born according to the flesh,” “persecutors,” “will never share in the inheritance”;
- **New covenant:** “Christ has set us free,” born according to the Spirit,” “persecuted,” sole beneficiaries of “the inheritance”

Consider the implications if these characteristics accurately describe two different and contrasting covenants Jesus initiated—the old covenant at Sinai and the new at the Last Supper. Were this the case, Christ would have destined anyone faithful to his Sinai covenant to a life of spiritual bondage, “burdened by a yoke of slavery” during the 1,500 years it was in effect. In addition, these burdened followers of Christ could “never share in the

inheritance” with the saints. Whenever the Greek term for “inheritance,” “inherit,” “inheritor” or “heir,” is used theologically in the NT, it always refers to a believer’s eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God (e.g., Matt 5:5; 19:29; 25:34; 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 3:29; 4:3–7; 5:21). So no one during the entire 1,500-year Sinai era could have had hope for a place in God’s eternal kingdom.

Even more telling is Paul’s characterization that the old covenant signifies a condition of being “born according to the flesh” in contrast to the new covenant, which signifies being “born according to the Spirit.” New Testament discussions that contrast the “flesh” and the “Spirit,” after the manner that Paul introduces them in Gal 4, follow an identical pattern: the “flesh” characteristically signifies an unconverted, unholy state of unbelief, legalism or unrighteousness, slavery to sin and hostility toward God, resulting in eternal condemnation and death; by contrast, the “Spirit” characteristically represents the results of the Holy Spirit working in the life of converted believers who trust in the righteousness of Christ for their salvation, have been set free to live in holiness before God, bear righteous fruit that positively affects others for the kingdom of God, and are destined to inherit eternal life (e.g., John 3:3–6; Rom 8:5–16; Gal 5:17–21; Phil 3:4–10). If the old covenant in Gal 4 is the one Jesus initiated with his people at Sinai, and the new covenant something he did not initiate or make available until the Last Supper, then all those who lived from Sinai to the cross, including the representative list of faithful OT believers in Heb 11, were destined to a life “of the flesh” and “spiritual bondage,” and were persecutors who could “never share in the inheritance” with the redeemed. Hardly a covenant good for any theologically-deficient, weak-in-faith people living at any time in history!

It is clearly evident that the “two covenants” in Gal 4 cannot and do not represent two historical epochs of salvation history, one prior to the Last Supper and one subsequent to it. Rather, they represent contrasting *human responses* throughout history to Jesus’ ceaseless appeals and offers of salvation through the everlasting gospel conveyed in every covenant he ever initiated with humankind.

God himself said that the difference he anticipated in the new covenant was that Jesus’ incarnation, atoning death and resurrection would evoke a different response in people (Heb 8:7, 9). Gospel appeals previously made through the prophets had been largely spurned, but surely, the Father anticipated, “They will respect my son.”

The Two Covenants in 2 Corinthians 3

A careful study of 2 Cor 3 reveals a similar result.

“³ You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

“... ⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

“⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰ For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹ And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

“¹² Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Scholars agree that this passage addresses the old and new covenants similarly to the discussion in Gal 4. On first read it may appear to have even more indicators than does Gal 4 that identify the Sinai covenant with the old covenant, and the NT gospel with the new covenant. Associating the old covenant with “tablets of stone” (vv. 3, 7), “Moses, (v. 7),” “a veil [Moses wore] over his face” (v. 13) seems to associate it directly with the giving of the law and covenant on Sinai.

However, a closer examination yields a different result. As does Gal 4, 2 Cor 3 describes the covenants Paul has in mind through a series of contrasting characteristics.

- **Old:** “Written with ink” (v. 3);
New: “Written with the Spirit of the living God” (vv. 3, 8)
- **Old:** “Written on tablets of stone” (vv. 3, 7);
New: “Written on human hearts” (v. 3)
- **Old:** “The letter [that] kills” (3:6);
New: “The Spirit that gives life and freedom (vv. 6, 17)
- **Old:** Brings “condemnation”/“death” (vv. 3, 9);
New: “Brings righteousness” (v. 9)
- **Old:** “Transitory glory” (vv. 7, 11);
New: “Surpassing glory which lasts” (vv. 8–11)
- **Old:** “A veil (*kaluma*, from *kalupto*, “to hide”) covers their hearts”/“their minds are made dull” (vv. 13–15)
New: “Turns to the Lord”/“veil taken away”/“unveiled faces”/“transformed into his image” (vv. 16, 18)

If the old covenant of 2 Cor 3 is indeed the covenant Jesus made with Israel at Sinai, then he intentionally designed it to be:

- Written with ink, not the Spirit (but note that the Ten Commandments were not written with ink but with “the finger of God,” “the Lord, who is the Spirit” (Exod 31:16–18; 2 Cor 3:17–18).
- Not written on their hearts but on stone only
- A covenant that kills rather than one that brings life under the supervision of the Spirit
- Lead its adherents to condemnation and death rather to righteousness and life
- A “veil” that dulls their hearts and minds to the gospel

And none of the characteristics listed under the new covenant (written by the Spirit on the heart, life, freedom, righteousness, transformed into his image) could have been experienced until Jesus instituted the new covenant at the Last Supper and his crucifixion.

How different is the old covenant described in 2 Cor 3 from the OT’s characterization of the Sinai covenant as a grace-based, gospel-bearing, faith-inducing “covenant of love and mercy.” Jesus said he designed his Sinai

covenant as a marriage covenant between himself and his people: “I was a husband to them” (Jer 31:32). The theme of Ps 119 expressed the sentiments of devout OT believers towards God’s law and covenant: “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long” (v. 97). Dallas Willard commented on Jesus’ attitude toward it during his earthly sojourn: “Jesus, the faithful Son, does not deviate at all from this understanding of the law that is truly God’s law. He could easily have written Psalm 119 Himself.”¹³

The drastically different old and new covenants discussed in 2 Cor 3, as in Gal 4, do not represent two covenants Jesus made with his children, one prior to his advent and passion, and one afterward. They represent two vastly different human *responses* to the unchanging everlasting gospel he progressively revealed in his successive covenants. This becomes even more apparent when the passages that bracket 2 Cor 3 and form its immediate context are considered. The introductory bracket is 2 Cor 2:14–16:

“¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life.”

Paul here employs the imagery of a general returning from a victorious battle, triumphantly leading his captives before his king. He likens the Church to willing and worshipful captives of Christ in his procession before the Father. He commissions them to make the knowledge of God known everywhere. As they take up their mission, Paul likens them to a pleasing aroma to Christ. The aroma is the gospel as it is shared through their Christ-honoring witness and testimonies. Since Christ has already come in the flesh, they bear witness to the most enlightened gospel ever revealed to humankind. But their aroma, their testimony of this glorious revelation of the gospel, elicits profoundly different responses from those that “smell”/hear it. It reaches some as a life-giving and life-sustaining aroma, but comes to others as an odor of death. The very same gospel receives polar opposite responses—faith and acceptance or unbelief and rejection—with polar opposite effects: “those who are being saved and those who are perishing.” Anyone who receives the gospel through the Spirit that brings life and

¹³ Dallas Willard. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1998), 141.

freedom “turns to the Lord.” On their heart he will write his law, transforming them into the image of Christ that they might live a fruit-bearing life of righteousness and holiness. But to anyone who rejects its saving appeal that same glorious gospel becomes a letter that kills, bringing condemnation and death.

Moses and Paul taught the same gospel (Heb 4:2), though Paul’s formulation of it was more enlightened. But because Moses’ audience by and large resisted his gospel appeal made at Sinai and subsequently, his ministry could be characterized as a ministry of condemnation and death. And because Paul’s preaching was received with faith by the believers in the Corinth he addressed in his letter, he could characterize his own ministry as a ministry of righteousness and life. But the old and new covenants in 2 Cor 3 did not represent one gospel Moses taught in the Sinai covenant that inherently destined its adherents to condemnation and death, and a different, NT gospel Paul taught that produced righteousness and life. Rather they represented contrasting responses—one saving, one damning—to the everlasting gospel taught to people in all generations.

What does the old covenant’s “transitory glory” vs. new covenant’s “surpassing glory which lasts” mean in this *experiential*, rather than *historical/dispensational*, interpretation of the two covenants? Just this: There is a glory in sharing the gospel with those who ultimately reject it and are lost, because the evangelization process offers them the opportunity to accept the salvation that Jesus gained for them and freely offers them. But because they reject the gospel appeal, the glory involved in having offered them salvation in his name becomes a transitory glory indeed. On the other hand, there is truly a “surpassing glory that lasts” in presenting the gospel appeal to those who accept it and are saved.

The closing bracket to Paul’s discussion of the two covenants in 2 Cor 3 occurs in 2 Cor 4:1–6, which includes the following equally enlightening passage:

“If our gospel is veiled (*kekalummenon*, from the root *kalupto*), it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

It is evident from this passage that the “veil” (*kaluma*, from the root *kalupto*) that “covers their hearts” and “dulls their minds” to spiritual things

is not the covenant that Jesus initiated at Sinai, as is commonly believed and taught, but is rather Satan himself, who “blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ.”

The key text on which this *experiential* rather than *historical* interpretation of the old and new covenants in 2 Cor 3 turns is v. 16: “But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil (*kaluma*) is taken away,” which answers Jesus’ appeal through Isaiah: “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth” (45:22). Before anyone “turns to the Lord” they are old covenant, “veiled” (*kekalummenon*) to the gospel, but after conversion and new birth by the Holy Spirit they become new covenant, “unveiled” (*anakekalummenon*, 2 Cor 3:18) believers, inheritors of the four DNA-marking new covenant promises—a truth as applicable to fallen Adam as to any modern. Indeed, the representative faithful listed in Hebrews 11 were all experiential new covenant believers living in the historical OT era.

The gospel appeal of the two covenants presented in Gal 4:21–5:1 and 2 Cor 2:14–4:6 echoes that made in many and various ways throughout Scripture. In the following examples I have noted applicable parallels (OC = old covenant, NC = new covenant); the italicized words (all supplied) correspond to terms also used in Gal 4 and 2 Cor 3 to characterize the old and new covenants.

- “I have set before you *life* [NC] and *death* [OC], blessings and curses. Now choose *life* [NC], so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him” (Deut 10:19).
- “Whoever believes in him is *not condemned* [NC], but whoever does not believe stands *condemned* already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son [OC]” (John 3:18)
- “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal *life* and will not be judged but has crossed over from *death* [OC] to *life* [NC]” (John 5:24).
- “Everyone who sins is a *slave* to sin [OC].... if the Son sets you *free* [NC], you will be *free* [NC] indeed” (John 8:34–36).
- “The mind governed by the *flesh* is *death* [OC], but the mind governed by the *Spirit* is *life* and peace [NC]” (Rom 8:6).
- “You were *dead* in your transgressions and sins [OC], ... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us *alive* with Christ [NC]” (Eph 2:1, 4–5). [Everyone is born into this life in

an old covenant condition, born of the flesh, and must be converted, born of the Spirit, to experience new covenant.]

- “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness [OC] into his wonderful light [NC]. Once you were not a people [OC], but now you are the people of God [NC]; once you had not received mercy [OC], but now you have received mercy [NC]” (1 Pet 2:9–10).
- “Whoever has the Son has *life* [NC]; whoever does not have the Son of God *does not have life* [OC]” (1 John 5:11).

To interpret the old and new covenants in 2 Cor 3 historically is to miss the evangelistic appeal of this passage entirely.¹⁴ Indeed, its impassioned discussion of the old and new covenants can only be understood, as can Gal 4:21–5:1 and the Scriptures just cited, as an altar call. In 2 Cor 3 the Spirit appeals for the unbelieving to put their faith in their Creator God, for those who have no hope beyond death to put their trust in him whom to know is to have eternal life, for those legalistically relying on their own “good behavior” as the basis for their standing with God to trust in Jesus and his righteousness alone as the sole basis of their salvation, for those whose religion and religious experience are little more than a letter that kills and condemns them to find new freedom in Christ and his new covenant promises, and for those believers who have already found peace with God through Christ to continue beholding him daily that they might be “transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Sinai and the Old Covenant

Why, then, would Paul specifically reference Mount Sinai, Moses and the tablets of stone in his discussion of the covenants, and identify them with the old covenant? Remember, however, that Paul also linked Abraham, Hagar and their son to the old covenant as well. Abraham produced a son through Hagar, distrusting God’s promise in the process, and Paul used this as exhibit “A” of old covenant behavior on a personal level. He used Israel’s response of unbelief, disobedience and legalism, by and large, to God’s new

¹⁴ Other NT polemical texts regarding the covenants and the law are discussed from an experiential perspective in MacCarty, *In Granite or Ingrained?* 91–142. Hebrews 7–10’s historical perspective on the covenants, and its implications for understanding Heb 8:13, are discussed on pp. 251–267.

covenant promises as exhibit “B” of how an entire nation, community or congregation can think of themselves as very devout and orthodox while being dangerously old covenant.

“The people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. As it is written: ‘See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame’” (Rom 9:31–33 quoting Isa 8:14).

Jesus applied the stone in Isaiah to himself (Luke 20:17–18 with Isa 28:16), whom Israel had by-and-large rejected. Paul used Israel’s national rejection of Christ going all the way back to Sinai as a contemporary warning against a corporate old-covenant response to the everlasting gospel.

However, does the text not also say “when the old covenant is read... When Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts” (2 Cor 3:14–15)? That certainly sounds like the old covenant is something that can be read, rather than a human response. True enough. The Greek term, *diathēkē* could be translated “covenant,” “testament,” or “will.” Many translations translate it in 3:14 as “Old Testament,” rather than “old covenant,” and translate it as “will” in Hebrews 9:16. Having said that, even if it were to be conceded that the “old covenant/testament” (*palaias diathēkēs*) in 3:14 was meant to be understood as the Sinai covenant, the text itself, viewed in the wider context we have considered (2 Cor 2:14–4:6), would be equating the Sinai covenant with the gospel. For (1) in 3:14–15, a veil over people’s minds prevents them from understanding the old covenant/testament; (2) in 4:3–4, Satan “veiled”/“blinded” people’s minds in unbelief so they cannot perceive the gospel; (3) and in 3:16, “whenever one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” so that they can understand and respond in faith to the gospel of the old covenant/testament. Therefore, the Sinai covenant, rather than veiling its readers to the true gospel, is the true gospel which Satan seeks to veil through unbelief. Having said that, however, the old covenant that is the focus of 2 Cor 3 is characterized as anything but the gospel. Rather, it is an *anti-gospel* that condemns and kills its adherents in opposition to “the Spirit that gives life”; it has been made such by being rejected or legalistically applied—a damning human *response*. The same knife that a criminal uses to destroy lives a surgeon can use to save them. So too, the same covenant/law/gospel

that under the influence of Satan and the sinful nature becomes a letter that kills, under the supervision of the Holy Spirit becomes an instrument to produce life and freedom (cf. Rom 7:10–12). Old and new covenant outcomes depend on whose influence we choose to have sway in our lives.

The Sabbath, the New Covenant and Israel

Another objection many scholars make to the seventh-day Sabbath's applicability in the NT era is based on the claim that it was given to ethnic Israel alone, not to the nations—"the Sabbath will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever" (Exod 31:17). But this objection must first ignore the end of the sentence just quoted, "for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed" (ibid.); the Sabbath and its sign significance reached back to creation. Second, this objection ignores that everything given to Israel, including the Sabbath, was given them in trust to be shared with the nations; through Israel's witness God intended that his "instruction [literally, 'the law'] will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations" (Isa 51:4).

Also, it is not without significance that just as the Sabbath was given as a sign to Israel, the new covenant itself was given specifically to Israel: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with *the people of Israel*...This is the covenant I will establish with *the people of Israel* after that time, declares the Lord" (Heb 8:8, 10, emphasis supplied). Paul refers to the NT church as "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). The fact that the Sabbath was given sign significance to Israel, and that the NT church is the new Israel is another confirming indicator that the Sabbath still serves as a covenant sign between Jesus and his people. "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:9).

In Conclusion

Why keep an old covenant Sabbath in a new covenant age? The Bible does not address this question directly because it knows nothing of an old covenant Sabbath, unless it be one that has been rejected in unbelief or has been legalistically applied. It knows only of "a Sabbath of the Lord your God," which Jesus, the "Lord of the Sabbath," invites believers to observe as a sign between himself and his people, "the Israel of God," that he alone created us and that "I am the LORD who makes you holy."

Show Me Your Glory: A Narrative Theology of Exodus 33:12–34:10 from a Biblical-Historical Perspective

John C. Peckham

The encounter between God and Moses recorded in Exodus 33:12–34:10 is perhaps the greatest divine self-revelation in the OT. The glory of the divine character was manifested in response to the dire situation created by Israel's idolatrous rebellion, an apostasy which called into question the continuance of the covenant relationship itself and jeopardized God's presence among the people. In examining this passage at least two parallel issues are addressed. First, the content of God's self-revelation, its significance and meaning is of central concern. Second, the unity of the passage is brought to light by significant pointers within the flow of the narrative, *contra* the traditional view of source criticism which has dealt with this passage as a hodge-podge collection of multiple sources, dismissing the continuity and importance of the variegated narrative. This paper applies a methodology which seeks the significance of narrative elements by taking into account both human *and* divine authorship. In this way, one may look for continuity from a micro and macro perspective in the immediate pericope and the wider metanarrative of the Exodus. In doing so, it will be seen that Exod 33:12–34:10 weaves a beautiful tapestry of unified, narrative, artistry which depicts the incomparable love of God.

Context of the Narrative

Not long since, Israel's great rebellion of worship of the golden calf seems to have irreparably broken the God-Israel relationship (Exod 32). After a plague has fallen, God commands Moses to lead the people forth (Exod 33:1), promising an "angel" to go before the people (33:2) but denying the presence of God in their "midst" (33:3) lest he destroy them (33:5). The projected absence of God's presence sends the people into deep mourning (33:4, 6) and frames the problem central to Moses' pleas in Exod 33:12ff. The verses of Exod 33:7–11 further highlight this issue by drawing explicit attention to Moses' meeting with God *outside* the camp at a "tent of meeting," but not the yet-to-be-built sanctuary "tent of meeting." Within this context the severe tension regarding the presence of God and the manner of that presence amongst the people permeates the foregoing narrative.

Exodus 33:12–17: Dialogue Regarding Divine Presence

Moses makes three requests of God in Exod 33:12–14, intermixed with two quotations of God's promises. First, Moses wants to know (וַיִּשְׁאֶל) who will be sent with (אֲנִי) him, seeking clarification of the ambiguity of God's statements in Exod 33:1–3. It has been suggested that Moses may be asking which of the people will go with him, in light of the great apostasy at Sinai, or that he may be addressing the distinction between promised angelic presence and his desire for the very presence of God to accompany him.¹ However, it seems likely that Moses is concerned about the ambiguity with regard to the proximity, rather than the agency, of the divine presence, since the "angel" is almost surely theophanic.² If this is the case, Moses is referring to the

¹ Moses may want to know which angel or which of the people will be going with him. Peter Enns, *Exodus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 580. Or, he may be questioning the sending of an angel instead of God's very presence. See J. Gerald Janzen, *Exodus*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 245; Rabbi Samuel ben Meir, *Rashbam's Commentary on Exodus: An Annotated Translation*, trans., Martin I. Lockshin, BJS (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 407; J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 307; Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 213.

² This "angel," already prominent in God's past leading and guidance of the people (Exod 3:1; 14:19–20; 23:20, 23) is recurrently depicted in terms of divinity. God states that His "name is in" the angel (Exod 23:21). Further, throughout the OT, the "angel of the LORD" often seems to refer to God Himself (cf. Gen 16:7–13; 22:11; 32:28; Hos 12:3–5; Exod 3:2–4; Judg 13:13–22; Isa 63:9; Zech 3:1–5). See also Motyer, *The Message of Exodus*, 308.

difference between the divine presence “going before” Israel or going in their “midst” (33:2–3).³

Accordingly, Moses’ second request seeks confirmation of God’s favor through reciprocal knowledge of God. After referencing God’s proclamation, “I have known you by name,” Moses requests that he may, in turn, know (יָדַע) God, pointing to the mutuality of the covenant relationship, albeit presently imperiled (Exod 33:12–13).⁴ Concurrently, Moses asks for special assurance of divine favor in action, using an interesting play on words, “if I have found favor ... so that I may find favor” (33:13).⁵ The parallel protasis and apodosis draw attention to the specificity of Moses’ request, and perhaps even the audacity. He seems unwilling to settle for a spoken word of favor, he desires more (cf. Gen 32). Moses’ concern is not one of private interest, but regards the covenant promise as a whole. This is apparent in his third request, “Consider (חָשַׁב) too, that this nation is your people,” which once again draws attention to the jeopardized covenant relationship (Exod 33:13).

God’s response is striking in its concision. He makes two promises: his “presence” (פָּנָיִם) will go and he will give “rest” (נוּחַ) (Exod 33:14). However, any indication regarding the proximity of the divine presence is conspicuously absent; neither “with you” nor “in your midst” appear in the Hebrew. As such, God’s response does not entirely satisfy Moses’ requests. God affirms that his “presence” (פָּנָיִם) will go but has not stated in what manner he will go with Moses, nor has he specified where or with whom his

³ The language of הָיָה in Moses’ question of who will go with him also appears frequently in God’s promises to the patriarchs (See Gen 21:20; 26:3; 31:3; 39:2, 23). This “expresses communal action or action in company” meaning “to be present with someone.” Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, “עַם,” *HALOT* (Leiden: Brill, 1994). Cf. Horst Dietrich Preuss, “Ich Will Mit Dir Sein,” *ZAW* 8.2 (1968). Gerard notes that “*im* in particular stresses a close relationship.” Van Groningen Gerard, “עַם,” *TWOT* 676. Moreover, there is also a hint of the tension with regard to the “people” since “*im*, the preposition, as ‘*am* the noun, expresses the concept of inclusiveness, togetherness, company.” Gerard, 676.

⁴ Specifically, Moses states: “let me know Your ways that I may know You.” This language of reciprocal, covenant knowledge is often used in suzerain-vassal treaties of the ANE. See Huffmon regarding the ANE prominence of covenants as mutuality of knowing. Herbert B. Huffmon, “The Treaty Background of Hebrew Yada’,” *BASOR* 181 (1966). Muilenburg further suggests that “the knowing relationship both in our text and in other biblical passages carries with it the same connotation” of a relationship of love. James Muilenburg, “The Intercession of the Covenant Mediator (Exodus 33:1a, 12–17),” in *Words and Meanings: Essays Presented to David Winton Thomas on His Retirement from the Regius Professorship of Hebrew in the University of Cambridge*, ed. David Winton Thomas, Peter R. Ackroyd, and Barnabas Lindars (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 181. Cf. Amos 3:2; Hos 2:20 (Heb 22); 6:3, 6; 8:2; 13:4, cf. 4:1, 6; Jer 1:5; 15:15.

⁵ Notice also the use of the Hebraism “favor in your sight.” This is not general favor, but the favor that proceeds in relationship with God Himself.

presence is going.⁶ God could mean that his presence will go with Moses but not with the people, or that his presence may go “before” the people but no longer reside “with” them or in their “midst.”

Moses’ response, “If Your presence does not go, do not lead us up from here” (Exod 33:15), has puzzled many commentators. At first reading it may seem that Moses is talking past God, refusing to hear him, flippantly dismissing his promises. However, in light of the ambiguity of God’s statements and Moses’ own remembrance of the great sin at Sinai, the further plea of Moses need not amount to a lack of confidence in God’s purpose but an understandable uncertainty regarding the future, grounded in his warranted lack of confidence in the people’s ability to dwell with God without special provision for their sinfulness.⁷ Moses is likely unsatisfied both by the absence of any specification regarding the proximity of the divine presence and the absence of explicit reference to the people.⁸

The persistence of Moses’ request is in proportion to the magnitude of what is at stake. The covenant relationship itself is in jeopardy and, accordingly, Moses seems to be negotiating its renewal.⁹ The transgression of the people has seemingly called into question whether the sanctuary, necessary for God’s presence among the people, will even be built. This issue was implied previously in that after the apostasy Moses met with God “outside the camp” in a “tent of meeting” (מִוֶּעֶבֶר לַמַּחֲנֶה), language used later of the sanctuary, but here sadly denoting its absence (Exod 33:7). If there is no

⁶ Some have seen a contradiction here between this promise and the refusal to go with the people in Exod 33:3. However, it is important to note that in 33:3 God specifically says he will not go in their “midst” lest he consume them. The issue is not only whether God will go at all, but also the proximity of his presence.

⁷ While some have attributed this to multiple sources being sloppily combined, the continuity of the narrative argues against this. Meyers suggests Moses is speaking superfluously, having “leftover appeals.” Lester Meyer, *The Message of Exodus: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1983), 160. However, Childs appears closest to the mark when he maintains that the “issue is whether God will again accompany his people in such a way as to make them again distinct from all other peoples. This was the essence of the original covenant promise.” Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 595.

⁸ Since the use of the first common singular in Hebrew may be used for an individual or for a group (collective singular) it is not clear whether God is speaking about Moses alone or the people. Cf. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 595; Sarna, *Exodus*, 213.

⁹ Beyond the narrative context itself, Moses’ repeated use of conditional language often found in treaties, specifically “if” (אִם), in combination with the particles וְ (v. 13) and/or וְ (v. 15), suggests that Moses is renegotiating the terms of covenant, a partial recapitulation of the scene of Exod 3. Cf. James Muilenburg, “Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations,” *VT* 9.4 (1959); Muilenburg, “The Intercession of the Covenant Mediator (Exodus 33:1a, 12–17),” 171–172.

sanctuary, and thus no place of atonement for sin, by default, God will not go “in the midst” of the people since to do so would mean their death. With this in mind, the magnitude of Moses’ requests is staggering. The very possibility of atonement is contingent upon God’s decision to remain “with” the people, that is, in their “midst.”

God’s second response is longer than the first, but still concise: “The LORD said to Moses, ‘I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name’” (Exod 33:17). God’s favor is essential to the continuance of relationship. This is emphatically highlighted in that this is the fifth time in this pericope that reference is made to finding grace in God’s sight. God, on the basis of his grace, has apparently assented to Moses’ appeals. Nevertheless, tension remains in the air, suggesting further drama to follow.¹⁰ Is God intentionally ambiguous and/or partial in His responses, withholding full assent in order to draw out further intercession?

Exodus 33:18–23: Request and Promise of Confirmatory Revelation

The *unified* narrative continues in Exod 33:18 when Moses calls upon God to show himself. Apparently, Moses desires a guarantee that God will go “with” the people and make provision for their sin so that they will not be destroyed by his presence.¹¹ Though Moses has asked to see God’s “glory,” God promises to make all His “goodness” pass before Moses, literally before

¹⁰ Verses 12–17 present a beautifully constructed dialogue which emphasizes the magnitude of the breach between God and the people, and Moses’ action as mediator. As we have seen, throughout the dialogue there is a great deal of selective quoting and carefully crafted queries and responses. Because of this, many have suggested that Moses’ questions and God’s responses do not align together, suggesting that the dialogue is a construct from numerous sources that do not actually cohere. Irwin, however, suggests that vv. 12–17 form a unified narrative with vv. 18ff based on the unique nature of this banter which he calls “delayed response.” William H. Irwin, “The Course of the Dialogue between Moses and Yhwh in Exodus 33:12–17,” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 633. He contends that God and Moses are speaking at “cross purposes,” specifically stating, “neither party to the dialogue responds to what the other has just said.” *Ibid.* 629–30. However, it is not clear that it is necessary to suggest that God and Moses are actually speaking at cross purposes. On the contrary, it seems like Moses and God are responding quite carefully to the statements of one another. Irwin is quite astute in noting some “delay” in the responses, but it seems that the delay might be intentionally partial and not actually at cross purposes. God does respond to what Moses has said, and vice versa, albeit selectively. However, it should be noted that God has not yet gone beyond the verbal promise to a tangible assurance of these promises. Thus, there seems to be an ambiguity that serves both to heighten the tension and invoke further intercession.

¹¹ Apparently, Moses desires a demonstration as “incontrovertible evidence” and “assurance of God’s promise.” Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC 2 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 704, 706. cf. Enns, *Exodus*, 582.

his “face” (פָּנָי), or “presence” (Exod 33:18–19). As such, God refers to language of “goodness” that is at the same time central to covenant relationship and essential to his own character.¹² The very next clause associates this “goodness” with the “name of the LORD,” also to be proclaimed before (לְפָנָי) Moses, which once again points to God’s character and reminds of the first call of Moses and revelation of God’s name, YHWH (Exod 3).¹³ As such, this scene may be a recapitulation of the first call of Moses toward reclamation of Israel as God’s people.

Directly after this mention of God’s name, there follows the somewhat cryptic statement often translated “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion” (Exod 33:19), which has sometimes been taken to mean that God chooses to bestow grace and compassion on some but withholds it from others, emphasizing God’s free election.¹⁴ Yet, on the contrary, this phrase seems to echo once again the first call of Moses where the divine name is made known (Exod 3:14). As such, this *idem per idem*, construction, parallel to the original revelation of the divine name, adds to the divine self-description, moving from “I am who I am” to something like “I will proclaim before you the name LORD, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show” (JPS). This explanation of divine character serves to emphasize the divine right to bestow mercy on even those who are egregiously undeserving, but does not refer to arbitrary election of those who will receive mercy in exclusion to others.¹⁵ In other words, the divine freedom and authority to bestow grace

¹² While פָּנָי may refer to beauty, and thus a visual connotation, it is likely that the term refers to the manifestation of God’s character which is explicated in Exod 34:6–7. The term here describes the omnibenevolence of God by use of the “most all-encompassing positive word in the [Hebrew] language.” Janzen, *Exodus*, 247. Further, פָּנָי is repeatedly found in covenant contexts (cf. Gen 32:10; Deut 23:7; Josh 24:20; 1 Sam 25:30; 2 Sam 2:6; 7:28; Jer 18:10; 33:9, 13). Sarna suggests that in ANE treaties it “bears the technical meaning of covenantal friendship” implying “that the present verse also contains an intimation of the renewal of the covenant between God and Israel.” Sarna, *Exodus*, 214. See also Michael V. Fox, “Tôb as Covenant Terminology,” *BASOR* 209 (1973).

¹³ Sarna comments “a name is understood to connote one’s character and nature, the totality of personality” and thus God intends to disclose “to Moses His defining characteristics.” Sarna, *Exodus*, 214.

¹⁴ For instance, see Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 1st English ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 436; Leonard J. Coppes, “רַחֵם,” *TWOT* 842; Motyer, *The Message of Exodus*, 309.

¹⁵ Many scholars concur that this *idem per idem* construction signifies an emphasis on God’s attributes of grace and compassion rather than discrimination between objects of God’s mercy. Cf. Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 1:940; Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 76, 596; David Noel Freedman, “The Name of the God of Moses,” *JBL* 79

and compassion on Israel, even after such odious rebellion, is highlighted, leading into the fuller expression of the divine character in Exod 34:6–7. Presumably, such proclamation, accompanied by theophany, is to be a concrete evidence that Moses and the people have indeed found grace (חן) in God's sight, in accordance with his character of love (Exod 33:16–17; cf. Exod 33:12–13).¹⁶ The parallel pronouncement in Exod 34:6–7 further supports this interpretation.

There is one caveat, however; Moses cannot see God's face (פָּנָיו), for no human can see the unmitigated divine glory and live (Exod 33:20). By the use of פָּנָיו the narrator highlights what is at stake with regard to the reality and proximity of God's presence (הֵיכָל). If even Moses, who did not sin in the apostasy, cannot see God directly how much more dangerous is the "presence" of God in the "midst" of the people who are sure to sin again? Just as God's face cannot be seen unmitigated, neither can God's presence dwell in the midst of Israel unmitigated. Mediation and accommodation is necessary for the relationship of the all holy God to a sinful people. Thus, the uncertainty with regard to the sanctuary, the locus of such mediation and accommodation through atonement, is again brought to mind.

The description of the future divine self-revelation contains significant insights with regard to the fragile God-Israel relationship. God's "glory" will pass by Moses who must be protected by God from its full extent by being placed in the cleft of a rock and shielded by God's "hand" (כַּף) (Exod 33:21–22; cf. 1 Kgs 9:1, 13).¹⁷ God is at once the glory that endangers Moses' life and the mediator who makes communion possible by his own provision, illustrating the paradox of intimate relationship between the altogether holy God and sinful humans made possible only by the free accommodation of

(1960): 154; David Noel Freedman and J.R. Lundbom, "חֲנֹן," *TDOT* 30; Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1991), 305; Janzen, *Exodus*, 248; William H.C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, AB 2:225; Sarna, *Exodus*, 214; Stuart, *Exodus*, 708. Lundbom asserted that the *idem per idem* construction was used to end a discussion. Jack R. Lundbom, "God's Use of the Idem Per Idem to Terminate Debate," *HTR* 71.3–4 (1978). Oden suggests the construction may express the totality/intensity of the action of the verb. In this context, the adverbial locating phrase (אֵינֶנּוּ) stresses the extent of the verbal action. Perhaps most notably, he concludes that the traditional interpretation that the construction refers to freedom of choice is without substance. G.S. Oden, "Idem Per Idem: Its Use and Meaning," *JSOT* 17.53 (1992).

¹⁶ Accordingly, "The characteristics of Yahweh, namely his grace and mercy, are placed here in grammatical apposition to the name of Yahweh." Stuart, *Exodus*, 708. Cf. G. W. Ashby, *Go out and Meet God: A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, ITC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 134.

¹⁷ This again calls to mind the sanctuary as the root for cover (סֹכֵת) is used to describe the wings of the cherubim who cover the mercy seat (Exod 25:20; 37:9) and for the veil which was to cover (סֹכֵת) the ark (Exod 40:3, 21).

God.¹⁸ Only after God has passed by will his hand be removed and Moses will see only the “back” (אַחֲרָיִם) or remnants of God’s presence. This emphasis upon the limitations of divine proximity draws attention to the enormity of the wider situation and continues the palpable tension regarding the presence of God.¹⁹

While the reference to God’s “back” (אַחֲרָיִם) is often taken as anthropomorphic, the word itself is a directional term which appears to contrast the immediate “presence” (פְּנֵיָהּ) of God with the after-effects or residue (אַחֲרָיִם) of that presence.²⁰ Furthermore, for the second time in three verses it is stated that Moses will not see God’s face (פְּנֵיָהּ). Focus on the respective language of “face” and “back,” in a rush to dismiss divine corporeality, may miss the import of this encounter which highlights that Moses is in physical proximity to God’s very presence with all the danger that entails for a human being, an intimacy which demands attention and worship. Though Moses cannot “see” God’s presence directly, that presence can be experienced. God is willing and able to accommodate humanity in such a way that Moses may stand beside the fullness of God’s presence and remain unscathed. It is just such a provision that will be necessary for God to go in the “midst” of Israel, but will God make such provision for Israel?

Before turning to the encounter in Exod 34, it is important to recognize that Exod 33:18–23 evidences striking continuity with Exod 33:12–17, both verbally and thematically. Though there is a significant shift of emphasis from God’s going and being with them, to a concrete, punctiliar, revelation from God to Moses, God’s “presence,” and by extension the possibility of the continuance of mutual, covenant relationship, is the underlying and unifying theme. Little by little, God responds to Moses’ requests in an unfolding self-revelation. God states four affirmations in v. 19 alone which all relate to the

¹⁸ Interestingly, עָבַר is used at the beginning and end of Exod 33:22, while God passes by and until God passes by. What is the meaning of this repetition? Perhaps the language of עָבַר reminds the reader of the original Passover, in which the very dangerous visitation of God’s judgment is mediated through sacrifice. The careful reader could thus not forget the significance of God’s presence.

¹⁹ Even the language of removal of God’s hand, סָרָה, elsewhere refers to forgiveness and/or removal of punishment (Exod 8:4, 7, 25, 27; 10:17; 23:25; Num 21:7) with God as subject and apostasy with Israel as subject (Exod 32:8; Deut 9:12; 11:16; cf. 1 Kgs 22:43). Though it does not refer explicitly to forgiveness or apostasy in this context, the language might remind of the acute necessity of forgiveness after the rebellion at Sinai. Cf. R.D. Patterson, “סָרָה,” *TWOT* 621.

²⁰ Harris notes that “in no other place is the word used for the back of a person’s anatomy ... the word ‘*ahôr*’ means ‘back’ in the sense of direction” (2 Chr 13:14; Ezek 8:16). R. Laird Harris, “אַחֲרָיִם,” *TWOT* 27. For Sarna, “Here the term means the traces of His presence, the afterglow of His supernatural effulgence.” Sarna, *Exodus*, 215.

concerns of the preceding verses: his goodness will pass, he will proclaim his name, he will be gracious, and he will be compassionate. These should not be seen as only responding to the request to see God's "glory" in v. 18 but also to the tension throughout vv 12–17 regarding God's presence and his favor. Notice especially the verbal connection of "favor/grace" (חַן) and God's proclamation that he will "be gracious" (חַנּוּן) which is made emphatic in the *idem per idem* construction (Exod 33:12–17, 19). The question of God's presence is cleverly revisited in wordplay and allusion throughout vv. 18–23 where the encounter with this "presence" (פָּנִיָּה) is the specific concern. Further, the root פָּנִיָּה is used twice in v. 11, three times in 12–17, and four times in 18–23 (and will appear once more in 34:6). This word for "presence" both semantically and conceptually links all of these sections of the narrative, including the disputed preceding passage of Exod 33:7–11. This encounter is itself the concrete affirmation of this special favor/grace which Moses is calling upon in his requests for God to once again go in the "midst" of the people, that is, to make the accommodations necessary to remain in covenant relationship with imperfect humans.

Exodus 34:1–4: The Centrality of the Law

The narrative abruptly shifts to an interlude which describes the reforming of the law, stipulations which themselves suggest the renewing of covenant relationship. God commands Moses to cut tablets like the ones that had been shattered, reminding again of the rebellion (Exod 34:1). The language itself also reminds of the nature of the apostasy, since the term for cutting (לָחַט) most often refers to the carving of idols, so much so that the term for idol is לַחֹטֶט, literally, something carved.²¹ Thus, Moses cuts (לָחַט) two tablets of stone which only need to be cut (לָחַט) because the people of Israel had made an idol (לַחֹטֶט) of gold for themselves. However, God himself will inscribe the words after Moses has cut the tablets, bringing to mind the synergy involved in this covenant relationship. Moses is then commanded to ascend Sinai in the morning alone, all living are to be out of sight of the mountain, the encounter will be so holy that even the animals are prohibited even from the "front of the mountain" (Exod 34:2–3). Finally, Moses is depicted as following the divine instructions in exact detail (Exod 34:4).

This restoration of the law is strikingly couched between the description of the future encounter and the actual encounter with God. One must note

²¹ In fact, elsewhere in the Pentateuch this root always refers to idolatry, except here and in the re-telling of this story in Deut 10.

the importance of this placement which first points out the nature of the broken relationship in clear allusions, and just as importantly highlights the centrality of God's law to his abiding presence and character. Throughout the narrative, the precision of God's directions remind of the absolute holiness of God and his call for obedience, which is in no way lessened by his character of compassion and grace. Despite the rebellion and the physical shattering of the tablets themselves, the law remains unchanged.²² Clearly, then, the magnanimous grace and compassion of the Lord does not rule out the law, rather, here the law is situated in the middle of the revelation of God's glory, alongside God's grace and compassion, in perfect harmony. This re-institution of the law is itself an act of grace, a concrete indication of God's favor.²³

Exodus 34:5–10: The Climax of God's Confirmatory Revelation

The encounter finally commences, ultimately predicated on God's downward movement toward Moses. Although Moses had ascended to the peak of the mountain, God must descend to him in order for any encounter to take place. Upon descent, God "stands" there "with him" (עִמּוֹ) and proclaims the divine name (Exod 34:5). Although the Hebrew syntax does not conclusively denote the subject of both the standing and the proclamation, there is no shift in the text implying a change in subject from God, the clear subject of "descended," to Moses.²⁴ Further, the wider context suggests that God must also be the subject of the proclamation (אָרָא) of the divine name since God was unambiguously specified as the subject of this action in the foretelling of this encounter (Exod 33:19). God then passes in front of Moses, literally "before his face" (פְּנֵי הָאֵל), again highlighting the divine presence, and

²² "In the core biblical story, the tablets that Moses had smashed in anger were destroyed, but the demands of God were not even slightly damaged, and these demands are what remained unchanged. The text underscores this fact by asserting three times that the new Words being received by Moses were exactly like the first ones (34:1, 2, 4)." Charles D. Isbell, "The Liturgical Function of Exodus 33:16–34:26," *JBQ* 29.1 (2001): 29–30.

²³ "This promise was the concrete sign that Israel had been forgiven and the relationship had been restored from God's side." Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 611. The re-writing of the law signified "God had decided to forgive the Israelites and accept them once again as his covenant people, and he would renew his covenant with them." Stuart, *Exodus*, 712.

²⁴ Although the niph'al of נִצַּח presents Moses as subject in 33:21 and 34:2, here the root is hithpa'el. It is likely that the text presumes that Moses is "standing" there in accordance with Exod 33:21 and God, upon descent, "stands" there "with him." However, even if Moses were the subject of standing, the text would still denote an intimate human presence "with" God.

proclaims the name (Exod 34:6).²⁵ In all this, God is the active agent, only he can effectuate the divine-human encounter.

The name YHWH is likely connected to the proclamation “I am (היה) who I am (היה)” in Exod 3:14, since YHWH is widely considered to be the third person of היה.²⁶ Here the name is proclaimed twice, further evoking the spectacle and content of the first call of Moses at the burning bush, and again suggesting recapitulation (Exod 3:14).²⁷ Yet, the encounter in Exod 34 goes beyond Exod 3 in the profundity and beauty of the self-revelation of the divine character. The divine name is explained in terms of the most unfathomable love in what has become the *locus classicus* of all OT texts on God’s character, Exod 34:6–7.²⁸ “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exod 34:6). As in Exod 33:19, the proclamation of divine character is explicitly associated with his name which is, among other things, compassionate (רחום) and gracious (חנון).²⁹

The root of “compassionate,” רחם, refers to the most profound, rich, and intense mother-love; the love that maternity has for its own offspring, providing affection, comfort, and where appropriate, mercy.³⁰ The root

²⁵ Interestingly, although Moses is not able to see God’s face, his encounter is nevertheless “face to face,” albeit with the necessary mediation.

²⁶ For instance, see Freedman, “The Name of the God of Moses”; J. Carl Laney, “God’s Self-Revelation in Exodus 34:6–8,” *BSac* 158.629 (2001): 42; Norman Walker, “Concerning Exodus 34:6,” *JBL* 79 (1960): 277.

²⁷ Freedman notes that יהוה יהוה is “strikingly parallel to the 1st person repetition in Exod 3:14” אֶהְיֶה אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה. Freedman, “The Name of the God of Moses,” 154. Stuart contends that this may be an instance of “the repetition of endearment phenomenon” even though in all other cases it is someone calling someone else’s name twice and here God is calling his own name. Stuart, *Exodus*, 715.

²⁸ One need only consider the amount of allusions to this text throughout the OT to recognize its pervasive influence. For instance, consider Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; 31–32; Ps 86:15; 103:8, 17; 145:8; Jer 32; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3. Moreover, this “is the only place [in the OT] where God actually described Himself, listing His own glorious attributes.” Laney, “God’s Self-Revelation,” 36. Fretheim refers to it as a “virtual exegesis” of the “name” which “constitutes a kind of ‘canon’ of the kind of God Israel’s God is.” Fretheim, 301–302. “In Jewish tradition these verses are called the Thirteen Attributes of God (Heb. Shelosh ‘esreh middot).” Sarna, *Exodus*, 216.

²⁹ The close relationship between God’s compassionate and gracious nature continues throughout the OT, with the adjectival רחום חנון paired 11 times (Exod 34:6; 2 Chron 30:9; Neh 9:17, 31; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 112:4; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2), and רחום without חנון appearing only twice (Deut 4:31; Ps 78:38). The latter two instances, Deut 4:31 and Ps 78:38, both connect forgiveness, not destruction, with God’s compassionate nature.

³⁰ For further information regarding the meaning and usage of this root, see Mike Butterworth, “רחם,” *NIDOTTE*; Coppes, “רחם”; U. Dahmen, “רחם,” *TDOT*; Robert Baker Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 108; Janzen, *Exodus*, 252; Thomas M. Raitt, “Why Does God Forgive?” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 13

derives from the term, רַחֵם, literally “womb,” and thus by extension connotes internal emotions, often those like that a mother has for her children.³¹ As such, רַחֵם is a word of intense and profound emotionality, often connoting aspects of love with the primary meaning of compassion which is manifested in beneficent action, when appropriate.³² God is by far the most common agent of רַחֵם which is fundamental to his character, connoting God’s intense and profound affection and compassion for human beings, even that which surpasses the mother’s tender feeling for her child (cf. Is 49:15; 63:15; Jer 31:20; Ps 103:13).³³ In some cases it appears not merely as a willed affection, but actually affected and/or aroused, an emotion that is responsive to the actual state of affairs. Although God desires to continually bestow compassion on human beings, רַחֵם may be withdrawn since it is contingent upon the maintenance of an ongoing divine-human relationship (cf. Deut 13:17–18; 30:2–3; Is 27:11; 55:7; Jer 16:5; 42:12–16; Hos 1:6–7; 2:4; 2 Chron 30:9). Nevertheless, divine compassion far surpasses all reasonable expectations and is often manifested in unmerited grace and mercy, the removal of God’s anger/wrath, forgiveness, restoration, and blessing. It is amazingly enduring and one of the primary groundings of God’s beneficent disposition and actions; an integral aspect of God’s love. Here it refers to an emotional, relational love; compassion which surpasses obstacles and is manifested in action.³⁴

(1991): 51; H. Simian-Yofre, “רחם,” *TDOT*; H. J. Stoebe, “רחם,” *TLOT*; Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, OBT (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), chapter 2

³¹ רַחֵםִים is likely an intensive plural. It is “probably in reference to the accompanying physiological phenomena of strong emotion” Stoebe, 1226. This connection is widely recognized, see, for instance Butterworth, “רחם,” 1093; Coppes, “רחם,” 841; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 243–244; Gary Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, NAC 15A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 306; Stoebe, 1225; Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, WBC 20 (Dallas, TX: Word, 2002), 14; Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1:1–15:29*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 527; John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, WBC 24 (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 202.

³² In human usage, it often describes the affection between family members: a father for his children, the compassionate emotion of a mother, and a brother toward his brothers (cf. Gen 43:30; 1 Kgs 3:26; Ps 103:13). It is that affectionate feeling that is especially aroused by the occasion of a loved one in distress or need of help. Conversely, it may also be used to describe the lack of compassion which is shown in times of war. However, the term is most common with divine agency.

³³ The adjectival רַחֵםִים appears 13 times altogether, and in every instance but the likely exception of Ps 112:4, God is the agent, connoting the compassionate nature of God.

³⁴ It “carries strong overtones of the meaning ‘to love’, which the simplest stem normally has in Aramaic and Syriac.” Robert C. Dentan, “The Literary Affinitives of Exodus Xxxiv 6f,” *VT* 13 (1963): 40. Gowan contends that it “needs to be given a stronger emotional quality than the word ‘mercy’ usually has.” Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 236.

The other, closely associated, term “gracious,” is from the root *חנן* which refers to favor and graciousness. In its most basic sense, this root refers to a positive, favorable disposition and/or action from one to another.³⁵ It is closely associated with entreaty since it often consists of a free, beneficial disposition and/or action in a situation where the (potential) object of favor is in, or will soon be in, a situation of distress or need.³⁶ With God as agent, the *qal* is most often used in entreaty, when God is asked to “be gracious,” usually relative to the request of specific action(s).³⁷ It likewise appears frequently as the description of God’s beneficent disposition and/or actions, whether requested or received (Cf. Gen 33:5, 11; 2 Kgs 13:23). However, the term most often appears within the context of entreaty, frequently in the syntagm “find favor” in one’s sight [*חַנַּן* + *חַן* + *עֵינַי*], a syntagm that appears frequently here in Exod 33–34.³⁸ God hears and responds to entreaty not out of any obligation but because he is “gracious” (cf. Exod 22:27).

These core characteristics of compassion and graciousness are further associated with, and perhaps descriptive of, his enduring, longsuffering patience signified by the idiomatic expression that God is “long of nose” (*חַנּוּן*)

³⁵ Yamauchi considers it to entail not only a favorable response but a “heartfelt response by someone who has something to give.” Edwin Yamauchi, “חנן,” *TWOT* 302. Freedman and Lundbom suggest with regard to human relationships, “It is present in the heart of one who is positively disposed toward another.” Freedman and Lundbom, “חנן,” 26. For further information regarding the nature and usage of this root see Freedman and Lundbom, “חנן”; Terence E. Fretheim, “חנן,” *NIDOTTE*; H. J. Stoebe, “חנן,” *TLOT*.

³⁶ Importantly, God is never the patient of *חנן* except when the term refers to supplication, in other words, he is never depicted as the beneficiary of *חנן* or *חנן*.

³⁷ Isa 33:2; Ps 4:2; 6:2 [3]; 9:13 [14]; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:11; 31:9 [10]; 41:4 [5]; 41:1 [11]; 51:1 [3]; 56:1 [2]; 57:1 [2]; 67:1 [2]; 86:3, 16; 119:58, 132; 123:3; Cf. Ps 119:29; 123:2.

³⁸ The idiom apparently refers to the looking at one’s eyes to determine whether one was favorably disposed or not. Fretheim, “חנן,” 203. Since “favor is shown on the face’ . . . ancient peoples looked at the eyes while contemporary humans look at the smile.” Freedman and Lundbom, “חנן,” 24. Moreover, the term for face (*פָּנֵי*) itself is a common term used to express the presence or absence of divine favor, whether it is hidden/turned away, or turned toward someone. In theological usage, with God as the potential benefactor: Noah “found favor” in God’s sight (Gen 6:8). Abraham entreats one of three strangers (in an apparent theophany): “Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight” do not pass by (Gen 18:3). Lot, speaking to the “man” who saved him from destruction in Sodom says “your servant has found favor in your sight” (Gen 19:19). Moses found favor in God’s sight (Exod 33:12) and based his significant entreaty upon it (Exod 33:13, 16–17; 34:9). In times of further distress, Moses laments to God why he has “not found favor” in God’s sight (Num 11:11, 15), entreating further divine response. In numerous other instances the syntagm denotes the request, hope for, or reception of favor in God’s sight: to Gideon (Judg 6:17), to David (2 Sam 15:25). An elliptical instance refers to the Israelites having “found grace in the wilderness” (Jer 31:2). Favor in the sight of another may also be extended by God (and only by him), from the chief jailer to Joseph (Gen 39:21) and from the Egyptians to the Israelites (Exod 3:21; 12:36).

אֵימָה). Since anger was metaphorically seen in the nose (think red) the length signifies a “cooling mechanism.”³⁹ In other words, God has great capacity to overcome his anger at sin and bestow grace and compassion.

Further, God describes himself as “abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exod 34:6).⁴⁰ The latter term, אֱמֻנָה, refers to truth and/or faithfulness, and refers to a core characteristic of God which makes covenant relationship possible.⁴¹ Here it highlights the truth and loyalty of God in contrast to the disloyalty and falsehood of Israel with the golden calf. The former term, אֱמֶת, appears once again in the very next verse; God is the one “who keeps lovingkindness for thousands” and forgives all kinds of sin, though not to the exclusion of justice since he is concurrently the punisher of the guilty (Exod 34:7).⁴² God’s abundant אֱמֶת, here and elsewhere, exceeds the bounds of covenant responsibility, even extending to Israel after their egregious rebellion.

אֱמֶת is one of the most significant descriptors of God’s character in the entire Scriptures, occurring 251 times in 245 verses, 4 here in Exodus. It is often translated as lovingkindness, steadfast love, loyalty, goodness, faithfulness, mercy et al. It may connote love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, yet also faithfulness, loyalty, and strength. Perhaps Gowan puts it best when he writes that אֱמֶת “cannot be adequately translated by anything short of a paragraph.”⁴³ Throughout the OT it refers to relational conduct and/or attitude in accord with the highest virtues (love, loyalty, goodness, kindness) and beneficial to another, which meets and exceeds all expectations (often manifested in mercy and forgiveness), in which the agent

³⁹ Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” 946. Cf. the description of divine anger as the “heat of my nostrils” in Exod 32:10, 12.

⁴⁰ Here, the syntagm אֱמֶת אֱמֶת, appears, which emphasizes the commitment, reliability, faithfulness, steadfastness, and fidelity of the divine אֱמֶת. It appears elsewhere in the Torah in Gen 24:27; cf. Gen 32:10 [11]; Ps 61:7[8]; 85:10, 11; 115:1; Prov 14:22; 16:6; 20:28. These characteristics were “manifested in active kindness and protective faithfulness respectively.” Alfred Jepsen, “אֱמֶת,” *TDOT* 314.

⁴¹ The root “carries underlying sense of certainty, dependability.” Jack P. Scott, “אֱמֶת,” *TWOT* 42. “As a characteristic of God revealed to men, it therefore becomes the means by which men know and serve God as their savior (Josh 24:14; I Kgs 2:4; Ps 26:3; 86:11; Ps 91:4; Isa 38:3), and then, as a characteristic to be found in those who have indeed come to God (Exod 18:21; Neh 7:2; Ps 15:2; Zech 8:16).” Scott, 42. Further, “emeth is something which determines God’s nature, which is a part of his being divine, which makes it possible for man to trust him.” Jepsen, “אֱמֶת,” 316.

⁴² Thus, “as it stands in Exodus, the passage is a beautifully balanced statement with regard to the two most basic aspects of the character of God—His love and His justice. It is significant that love holds the primary place.” Dentan, “Literary Affinities,” 36.

⁴³ Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 236.

is ontologically free to act otherwise, and is responsive to and/or creates or maintains the expectation of appropriate response from the recipient.⁴⁴ Since it describes the attitude of the agent who characteristically acts in such a way, a חסד disposition often becomes the basis of entreaty for חסד action, as is the case here in Exod 34.⁴⁵

Divine חסד is grounded in the divine character of love, compassion, goodness, faithfulness, and justice. It is nevertheless free and voluntary, but not altogether spontaneous, often taking place within the commitment of the covenant relationship, but not restricted thereby.⁴⁶ It is a basic grounding characteristic of God which makes the covenant meaningful and reliable. It is unmerited but not altogether unconditional (cf. Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:12). It includes action which may be one-sided and unilateral, but assumes a relation which will be reciprocated (even if חסד itself is not, or cannot, be). It is from benefactor to beneficiary, not merely *quid pro quo*, but assumes appropriate responsiveness and expects reciprocation when/if the context arises.⁴⁷ Accordingly, it often takes on the connotation of mercy and

⁴⁴ For further discussions of this seminal term of the divine character see D.A. Baer and R.P. Gordon, "Encountering the Rest," *NIDOTTE*; Gordon R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, JSOT (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967); R. Laird Harris, "חסד," *TWOT*; Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978); Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, "Loyalty and Love: The Language of Human Interconnections in the Hebrew Bible," in *Backgrounds for the Bible*, ed. Michael P. O'Connor and David Noel Freedman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987); Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1962); H. J. Stoebe, "חסד," *TLOT*; Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "חסד," *TDOT*.

⁴⁵ From the perspective of the (potential) beneficiary, חסד is a disposition and/or action which will fulfill a need or important desire. חסד may take place in human non-religious relationships, from humans toward God, but most often takes place from God toward humans.

⁴⁶ For instance, it is clear that חסד is possible beyond covenant limits since 2 Sam 15:20 describes it for Ittai, one who is clearly outside the Israelite covenant. Accordingly, Sakenfeld favors the meaning of "free acts of rescue or deliverance, which includes the idea of faithfulness" in the context of "sustained solidarity." Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry*, 1–12. Cf. Dentan, "Literary Affinitites," 43; Raitt, "Why Does God Forgive?" 54; Zobel, "חסד," 61. This is *contra* Glueck, who argued that חסד is a covenantal term with corresponding obligations. In many instances (i.e. with regard to קְרִיית) God has committed himself to certain responsibilities (soft obligations) to which his faithfulness is unparalleled. However, this is to be distinguished from "hard obligations" since (1) there is no external obligation upon God due to the simple fact that there is no one capable of enforcement, and (2) the very language used of God with regard to קְרִיית presumes the lack of ontological obligation. As such, divine חסד may be responsive to virtue and/or entreaty, yet may be withdrawn or withheld according to the state of affairs.

⁴⁷ For examples of human חסד toward God see Jer 2:2; Neh 13:14; 2 Chron 32:32; 35:26; Hos 4:1; 6:4, 6; cf. 2 Sam 22:26; Ps 18:25 among others. Some scholars have contended that humans never direct חסד toward God, interpreting all of the uncertain occurrences as directed

forgiveness and results in the removal of wrath and the bestowal of blessings, especially deliverance. Thus, divine רסן often surpasses the bounds of expectation and exceeds all moral responsibility. As such, divine רסן is an aspect of his character of goodness, but is not mere clemency or beneficence but, rather, consists in always doing that which is best, righteous, and just, always and without fail.

This compassion, grace, truth, and lovingkindness all flow out in forgiveness, which is likewise essential to the continuance of covenant relationship and makes it possible for the divine presence to remain with Israel.⁴⁸ The extent of this forgiveness is highlighted by the use of three different, yet overlapping, terms for sin: iniquity (רָעָה), transgression ($\text{עָשָׂה$), and sin (חַטָּאת).⁴⁹ For all intents and purposes these three words together function to describe the whole scope of sin such that there is no sin outside of the scope of God's forgiveness; there is no sin that God cannot bear for them.⁵⁰ God's forgiveness is larger than the rebellion of Israel.

Importantly, God is not compelled to be gracious. On the contrary, he has every right to destroy the people for their apostasy. Yet, his compassion reaches beyond the blessings and curses of covenant, providing a means for continuance of what would otherwise be a shattered relationship. This divine forbearance, grounded in his character of compassion, graciousness, longsuffering, lovingkindness, and faithfulness, is thus essential to the divine-human relationship; without divine compassion there could be no

toward other human beings. Clark, *The Word Hesed*, 259, 267; Alfred Jepsen, "Gnade Und Barmherzigkeit," *Kerygma und Dogma* 7 (1961): 268–269; Zobel, "רסן," 61–62. A potential rationale for the rejection of human רסן toward God is the theological supposition that humans cannot benefit God. However, numerous scholars correctly recognize that there are examples of human רסן toward God, including Baer and Gordon, "Encountering the Rest," 213; Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, 56–63; E.M. Good, "Love in the OT," *IDB* 168; "Loving-Kindness," in *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, ed. W. E. Vine. (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1996), 142; Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, 128; H. J. Stoebe, "Die Bedeutung Des Wortes Häsäd Im Alten Testament," *VT* 2 (1952); Stoebe, "רסן," 458–459.

⁴⁸ Cf. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 303; Raitt, "Why Does God Forgive?" 54. The root of "forgiveness" (נשא) literally means to carry, lift, or take away. God's love extends to the point where God will take upon Himself the sins and unburden the sinner.

⁴⁹ עוה refers to crooked behavior (cf. Ps 38:7; Is 24:1; Lam 3:9; Job 33:27; Prov 12:8); [עָשָׂה] most often refers to the breach of relationships, which is quite appropriate here; חַטָּאת means to miss the mark (cf. Judg 20:16). See G. Herbert Livingston, "הטאה," *TWOT* 277; Carl Schultz, "עוה," *TWOT* 650.

⁵⁰ Cf. Cassuto, *Commentary*, 440; Stuart, *Exodus*, 716. All three words for sin also appear in Lev 16:21; Job 13:23; Ps 32:5; Is 59:12; Ezek 12:14; Dan 9:24 and two appear in Mic 7:18. In each case the combined magnitude of sin is felt.

God-human relationship.⁵¹ This willingness to overcome sin and the disruption of the relationship manifests the steadfastness of God's commitment, which is the only way in which the divine-human relationship can be continued.

However, once again, none of this is to the exclusion of divine justice since, concurrently, God is the punisher of the guilty whom he will "surely not acquit" (Exod 34:7). Some have considered this statement puzzling, perhaps even contradictory; how can God forgive all kinds of sin, including "iniquity" and yet visit "iniquity?"⁵² Though God may forgive the iniquity as it relates to the divine-human relationship, that does not mean he suspends the immediate consequences of such iniquity, nor is it as if the iniquity never occurred.⁵³ The effects of iniquity are not merely wiped away, thus the importance of remaining in the relationship with God, so that he will "carry" this iniquity. Further light is shed on this by considering the clear allusion to the second and third commandments of the Decalogue.

First, "he will not acquit" is a direct allusion to the third commandment, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished (לֹא יַעֲזֹב אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשֹּׁמֵם אֶת שְׁמִי) who takes His name in vain," or literally, "carries (נָשָׂא) his name in vain" (Exod 20:7). God will forgive, or "carry" (נָשָׂא) iniquity, transgression, and sin but God will not acquit the one who takes or "carries" (נָשָׂא) his name in disrespect and vanity. Notice the emphasis on the divine name; forgiveness puts God's name, his reputation on the line. Mere forgiveness without atonement would fall upon the character

⁵¹ Thus, throughout the Torah, compassion continues to function as the grounding of entreaty and the basis of deliverance (cf. Gen 19:16).

⁵² Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," 947. Some have resolved the perceived issue by interpreting this to mean that God forgives the repentant but does not acquit the unrepentant. Laney, "God's Self-Revelation," 50. Cf. Sarna, *Exodus*, 216. Although this is a correct principle in itself, the passage does not seem actually to state this. Importantly, "āwōn" may refer to the act of sin, the punishment for the sin, or the state between the act and the punishment "guilt." Milton C. Fisher and Bruce K. Waltke, "נִקְיָה," *TWOT* 597. As such, the perceived issue is not as acute as is sometimes supposed.

⁵³ Cf. Exod 32:34. Thus, "Divine forbearance does not mean that sinners can expect wholly to escape the consequences of their misdeeds." Sarna, *Exodus*, 216. "God will not overlook or ignore violations of the covenant." Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," 947. Simian-Yofre has suggested, "This apparent contradiction can be understood only if punishment and forgiveness are understood as separate stages. If punishment aims to restore an objective order that has been infringed, it should be treated as reparation in the metaphysical sense. Forgiveness, by contrast, is the restoration of a personal relationship between the offended and the offender on the free initiative of the former." H. Simian-Yofre, "פְּנִיָּה," *TDOT* 449. Cf. also Cassuto, *Commentary*, 432; Laney, "God's Self-Revelation," 50.

of God, it would be a blight on his name.⁵⁴ The second allusion appears in the latter part of Exod 34:7, “visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations” corresponds to the second commandment, “You shall not worship them or serve them [other gods]; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exod 20:5).⁵⁵ Alternatively, if God were to remove all the consequences of sin what would be the impetus to repentance? Why would humans not live with impunity? How would the horrible effects of sin be known?

Consequences of one’s actions do follow to descendants; the effects of iniquity are often passed down from generation to generation, the guilt of one in the household naturally affects others in the household. Significantly, three generations would often be contemporaries (possibly even four generations).⁵⁶ Thus it should not be surprising that the consequences of one’s actions might affect multiple generations. Such responsibility is also pertinent within a wider context. Due to the intercomplexity of the world every action (and often inaction) by one human affects others.⁵⁷ Yet, even though both commandments were broken at Sinai in the worship of the golden calf, God’s mercy continues to flow to the people of Israel. Although the consequences of rebellion reach to the third or fourth generation, the רַחֲמֵי or mercy of God is kept to the thousandth generation (Exod 20:8; 34:7). The divine רַחֲמֵי is surpassingly magnificent, so great that there is no comparison with his brief anger. As such, the delicate balance between God’s mercy and longsuffering, and his holiness and justice, is maintained.

Accordingly, Moses’ immediate response to divine revelation is to prostrate himself before God (Exod 34:8). Whereas the people had “quickly”

⁵⁴ See Num 5:31; Judg 15:3; 2 Sam 14:9. Thus, “it is God who assumes responsibility for the guiltless. Thus he holds himself responsible for innocent blood (Deut 19:10, 13; II Kgs 24:4; Jer 2:34f; 19:3f; 22:3ff; *passim*).” Fisher and Waltke, “ רַחֲמֵי ,” 597. Thus, those who persisted in taking God’s name in vain with the golden calf received swift judgment. The others were spared from execution, but some effects on the covenant remain.

⁵⁵ Though Exod 34:7 omits the clause “those who hate me” the Hebrew reader would likely have it in mind because of the allusion to Exod 20:5. It is those who remove themselves from a right relationship with God that must receive due penalty.

⁵⁶ Thus, “the sins of one family member will bring suffering on the whole family, all the generations now alive (we know that is true), but that person’s iniquity will not be visited on unlimited number of generations.” Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 238.

⁵⁷ For instance, life on earth is a zero sum “game.” This means that there are not endless resources. The human who uses more resources necessarily leaves less of the resources for others. In this way, the actions of one affect all the others. There is no injustice in this; life could not be lived in relationship in any other way.

turned from God and worshiped an idol, Moses “quickly” worships God (Exod 32:8; 34:8). The contrast is striking. After such appropriate worship, Moses seeks one, final unambiguous response.⁵⁸ It seems that God’s revelation of his character emboldens Moses to ask for what he really wants, forgiveness, reconciliation, and provision for future sin.⁵⁹ Thus, he refers again to his original requests, bringing the pericope full circle, and yet goes beyond them. He once again leads with the familiar phrase, “if I have found favor in your sight” and requests once again God’s presence in the “midst” (בְּקִרְבֵּנוֹ) of the people. This he asks despite their “stiff-necked” disposition, again recalling the incident with the golden calf where such language appears four times (cf. Exod 32:9 ff.).⁶⁰ Identifying himself with the people,⁶¹ Moses explicitly requests forgiveness of their sins and that God would “take” them as his “own possession” (לְקַחֵנוּ) or “inheritance” (Exod 34:9).⁶² This is covenant language; Moses is asking “nothing less than complete acceptance of the nation” as God’s special people, despite their rebellion and the surety of future sin as a “stiff-necked” people.⁶³ God responds in v. 10 with the promise, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant,” thus effectively assuaging all of Moses’ concerns (Exod 34:10). That God will make a covenant (future) means that God is effecting a total reconciliation and reclaiming Israel as his covenant people, his inheritance.⁶⁴ That the covenant is restored is clear in the foreground of this passage where the stipulations of Exod 20–23 are reiterated in a brief summary (Exod 34:11–26).⁶⁵ Accordingly, the sanctuary

⁵⁸ While some have suggested that Moses here exemplifies a lack of faith in God’s promise. Enns, *Exodus*, 585. However, it might rather be that Moses is continuing with his pattern of seeking to leave no ambiguity in regards to the relationship between God and his people.

⁵⁹ Perhaps this was the divine intention of the “negotiations” between God and Moses all along.

⁶⁰ This verse “picks up all the various themes of the last two chapters: ‘finding favor with God’, ‘going in our midst’, ‘stiff-necked people ... iniquity and sin’, and ‘your possession.’” Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 612.

⁶¹ “Such is Moses’ solidarity with the people that their sin becomes his sin, and in his confession they make their confession.” Janzen, *Exodus*, 256.

⁶² See Exod 23:20; 32:13 for further usage of this word.

⁶³ Stuart, *Exodus*, 719.

⁶⁴ Some have thought that God does not actually respond to the request of Moses. See, for instance, William H. Irwin, “The Course of the Dialogue,” 635. However, if Moses is in fact referring to the covenant by his language, as it seems, then God’s response in Exod 34:10 is direct, “I am going to make a covenant.” For Cassuto, “The answer to this petition is given in v. 10 (it is not missing as many scholars have supposed); God not only agrees to the request but even augments it.” Cassuto, *Commentary*, 441. Cf. Sarna, *Exodus*, 214.

⁶⁵ While this covenant has significant continuity with the covenant the Israelites had rebelled against, there is also newness. It is thus “new in the sense of renewed.” Janzen, *Exodus*, 259. cf. Stuart, *Exodus*, 719. At the same time, it is also a new thing in its own right. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 308.

will be built and established in the midst of the people and thus God himself will be present amongst them. Beyond this, his miraculous actions for the people will be a marvelous sign for all nations to see.⁶⁶ God, because of his gracious and compassionate character, will make a way for the covenant people to remain in his presence and will yet use them to accomplish his purpose for a world that likewise needs reconciliation.

Conclusion

Exodus 33:12–34:10 presents a narrative of beautiful unity and grand scope, with literary and thematic connections that steadily build tension with regard to the primary questions at hand: will God remain “with” his people? Will he still be their God? The tension already in place in the aftermath of the golden calf apostasy heightens in the back-and-forth dialogue between God and Moses, with God’s repeatedly vague and partial responses serving to draw Moses to yet more persistent and significant intercession, culminating in a request to behold the very glory of God, to which God responds with the promise of intimate encounter and the manifestation of all his goodness. The tension continues to rise as the law is re-formed, the first tangible hint that God will renew his covenant with his people. The narrative finally climaxes in the display of God’s beauty and the proclamation of his character and purpose.

Therein the divine proclamation and theophany provide the solution to all of the issues that have so troubled Moses, the confirmation of God’s continued favor toward his people, sought so relentlessly by Moses. The intimate presence of God amongst his people, put in jeopardy by Israel’s idolatrous apostasy, is ultimately reaffirmed, grounded in the free and unbounded love of God. The solution is found in God’s own action, which itself flows from his character of compassion, grace, longsuffering, faithful love, and truth, all of which amount to the explication of the divine name. The God who manifests himself here is relational and responsive to human pleas, desiring true communion with his creation, a limited mutuality where his creatures can partake of the abundance of his love and live in harmony with his holiness. This God is also the God of forgiveness, a forgiveness that reaches any kind of sin as long as it is not clung to; a forgiveness which is especially necessary in the context of this grand narrative of the Exodus.

⁶⁶ In this way, the sight (הִרְאֶה) that Moses has repeatedly asked for will thus be extended to the sight (הִרְאֶה) of the nations.

Because of his loving faithfulness, God desires to continue to commune with this sinful people. At the same time, because of his staggering holiness such presence must be mediated. Yet, God Himself provides the mediation to restore the relationship, and concretely set his presence amongst them. Nevertheless, at the same time, God expects appropriate response going forward in order to maintain the relationship. His people must not think that God's compassion will annul his holiness and justice.

This wonderful revelation of God provides Moses with the assurance to press his original requests. The promise of God's presence is finally grounded in the constancy of his character. The surety of the continued presence of God "in the midst" of Israel is his character of compassion and loving faithfulness. The sanctuary will be built and God Himself will dwell with the people. Moses receives the assurance he has sought and, by extension, the entire human race may hope for reconciliation and communion with God. Ultimately, it will take God Himself, giving himself for alien sin, finally to make atonement between holy God and sinful humankind, the ultimate manifestation of his indescribable love.

Scripture and Modern Epistemological
Methodologies
in Adventist Hermeneutics:
An Uneasy Relationship¹

Denis Fortin

Adventists are familiar with the anecdotes and stories of the pioneers' discovery of the biblical doctrine of the Sabbath through contacts with Rachel Oakes, a Seventh Day Baptist woman. A few Adventists kept the seventh-day Sabbath during the Millerite movement in the early 1840s but after the movement began to disintegrate these Sabbath-keeping Adventists became more active in spreading their views. Oakes convinced her pastor, Frederick Wheeler, that he should keep the Sabbath. In turn, Wheeler convinced another pastor, Thomas Preble. Preble wrote an article about it in the *Hope of Israel* in February 1845 and then published it as a tract under the title, *Tract Showing That the Seventh Day Should Be Observed as the Sabbath*. Preble's article and tract got some results and a few more Adventists began to keep the Sabbath.

¹ This paper is adapted from a presentation made at the European Theology Teachers' Convention at Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, Germany, April 1, 2007. The theme of the conference was "Finding the 'World' in Theology: Empirical Dimensions in the Study of Faith."

One of these tracts came across a retired merchant mariner and Millerite leader, Joseph Bates. Impulsive, after reading Preble's tract, Bates dropped everything he was doing and traveled (or likely walked) about 120 miles (200 kilometers) to the little village of Hillsboro, New Hampshire to meet with Frederick Wheeler. We are told that Bates arrived at Wheeler's home very late one evening, woke Wheeler up, and the two studied the Bible all that night. The next morning they visited nearby Sabbath-keeping Adventists and then Bates returned home.

During his return, Bates wrestled with his new discovered knowledge and wondered what effects his new beliefs would have on his family, friends, and neighbors. Crossing the bridge between New Bedford and Fairhaven, Massachusetts, Bates made his first convert out of one of his Adventist friends. "What's the news, Captain Bates?" asked James Hall. "The news," replied Bates, "is that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord our God." And that is how, in 1845, Bates became one of the pioneers and founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

One hundred and sixty-five years later, I wonder what motivated early Adventist pioneers in their search for truth. What was it that motivated Joseph Bates to walk 120 miles to learn more about the Sabbath? To stay up all night to study the Bible? To travel long distances to share this knowledge with unknown people?

These questions deal with basic epistemological assumptions and principles of biblical hermeneutics. It would seem that four such assumptions guided and motivated early Adventist believers: (1) a strong belief in the objectivity of truth – that there is only one truth about a subject; (2) that people can understand that truth; (3) that Scripture forms a compendium of objective truths about God and his will for humanity and these truths can be known by anyone who reads the Bible; (4) that Scripture is the supreme authority on religious beliefs, behavior, and worldview.

Given these assumptions, early Adventists studied Scripture for long hours, seeking to understand the hidden truths of God and to model their lives, their church, and their practices accordingly. They lived by the assumption that if the human mind once accepts something as true it will go on regarding it as true, until something comes up for reconsidering it.² The Adventist approach to knowledge is indeed rationalistic and committed to the use of human reason as guided by Scripture. But this approach is guarded in

² See C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 138–139.

that Adventism has had an uneasy relationship with modern rational approaches and methodologies to finding knowledge.

In order to understand better the approach to hermeneutics Adventism has adopted and how it first responded to modern thinking and methodologies, I will first give a brief summary of the impact of the Enlightenment and rationalism on epistemology and biblical hermeneutics. Then I will review William Miller's approach to the Bible and hermeneutics. I will also give a brief review of Ellen White's ideas on hermeneutics and what she understood to be problematic with modern rational methodologies to the discovery of knowledge. Finally, I will briefly highlight the potential impact of some contemporary methodologies in the search for knowledge on Adventist faith and why our relationship with modern rational methodologies is one of uneasiness. This is a vast subject and this short paper will only briefly and somewhat superficially address what I hope will be some seed thoughts that one day will be explored more deeply.

The Impact of the Enlightenment on Faith and the Bible

The Enlightenment largely changed the western culture's understanding of the human person and how we attain knowledge.³ Enlightenment philosophers appealed to human reason rather than external revelation as the final arbiter of truth. In fact, they appealed to reason in order to determine what constitutes revelation. Anselm of Canterbury's maxim, "I believe in order that I may understand," was replaced with the Enlightenment motto, "I believe what I can understand." This epistemological assumption was clear: people should no longer blindly accept external authorities, such as the Church, rather the truth is to be found in human reason.

For centuries, people had been captive to a monopoly of truth held by the Church and, at first, the Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that sought to bring more balance to the search for knowledge. Many Enlightenment philosophers were committed Christians who sought to find new avenues for knowledge. In the end, however, the Enlightenment inspired

³ This summary of Enlightenment philosophy is taken from Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 15–23; James M. Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996); James C. Livingstone, *The Enlightenment and the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 of *Modern Christian Thought*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997); and Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 1799–1870 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972).

a humanistic rationalism in which God, the Scripture and the Church had little influence. Unknowingly, it did this first by replacing God with humanity as the focus of its cosmology. While for Medieval and Reformation theology human beings were important insofar as they fit into the story of God's activity in history, later Enlightenment thinkers tended to reverse the equation and gauge the importance of God according to His value for the human story.

These changes in western culture came about because of two revolutions: one in philosophy, the other in science. Above all, the Enlightenment was a philosophical revolution. This revolution was inaugurated by René Descartes (1596–1650) who is often referred to as the father of modern philosophy. Descartes' intent was to devise a method of investigation that could facilitate the discovery of those truths that were absolutely certain.

His method consisted of four points the first of which established the necessity of doubting the validity and truthfulness of anything that could not be clearly and rationally proven to be so. He doubted all knowledge derived from the senses and claimed the absolute certainty of purely rational knowledge. Given Descartes' attitude of universal doubt, his quest for truth began with the mind itself. His philosophical system evolved out of his famous: *cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"). When the mind resolves to doubt all things, there is one thing that it cannot doubt, that is, its own act of doubting. It is obvious that in order to doubt it must exist. Hence Descartes concluded that rationalism is well fitted to find objective truth. Understandably, Descartes' writings were banned from many universities because he advocated an epistemological system in which the final authority was not divine revelation, but human reason. Although he did not set out to challenge divine revelation but rather to complement it, his thought had the unfortunate consequence of being perceived as compromising revelation.

The Enlightenment was also the product of a revolution in science, which gave rise to a different way of perceiving the world. This approach to knowledge also marked a radical departure from the worldview of the Middle Ages and caused a change in cosmology ushered in by Copernicus that the earth is not the center of the universe. Subsequent discoveries gradually undermined the medieval model of a hierarchical cosmology in which heaven was spatially above the earth and hell beneath it. However, during the Enlightenment, philosophers and scientists like Isaac Newton (1642–1727) believed the universe was comparable to a grand orderly machine created by

God. This universe follows predetermined laws that were instituted by God at creation. Studied carefully, this universe can provide all the knowledge that is really necessary.

Empiricism was the epistemological assumption of the scientific revolution, that new knowledge can be acquired through human observation and the rational analysis of facts. Ultimately, however, this empirical scientific method became a more valid path to knowledge and dethroned the need of God to understand the fundamental realities of the universe. In fact, this approach to the search for knowledge led, in the end, to the rejection of anything that sounds supernatural or beyond the natural.

Both Descartes and Newton sought to use the power of reason to enhance a theological agenda in providing proofs for the existence of God. However, the revolutions they engendered resulted in a new view of the world and of humanity's place in it that has not always been sympathetic to the Christian faith. In time, the natural sciences took over the central role formerly enjoyed by theology in explaining the functions of the world and our purpose in it. The revolutions in philosophy and in science that marked Enlightenment thinking had immense long-term implications for Christian faith and theology.

By the eighteenth century this new scientific mentality inaugurated a changed understanding of the nature of religion. People began to differentiate between two types of religion: natural and revealed. Natural religion involved a set of foundational truths (typically believed to include the existence of God and some universally acknowledged moral laws) to which all human beings were presumed to have access through the exercise of reason and empirical observations. Revealed religion, on the other hand, involved the set of specifically Christian doctrines that had been derived from the Bible and taught by the Church over time. As revealed religion came under attack, natural religion increasingly gained the status of true religion. This alternative to Christian orthodoxy came to be known as Deism.

Deism, as a religious philosophy and movement, sought to reduce religion to its most basic elements. Deists typically rejected supernatural events, such as prophecy and miracles, and divine revelation through the Bible. Many dogmas of the church were dismissed to retain the existence of God and some kind of postmortem retribution for sin and blessing for virtue. Natural religion was viewed, not as a system of beliefs but as a system for structuring ethical behavior. The chief role of religion was to provide a divine sanction for morality.

Of course, Deism drew numerous attacks from those who saw it as a threat to the Christian faith and to revealed religion. Severe blows to Deism, however, did not come from theology but came from philosophers like Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) who challenged the adequacy and sufficiency of rationalism and empiricism to acquire new knowledge. He showed the difficulties inherent in Deism and the impossibility of a purely empiricist epistemology since human reason can only process what it can understand. Like a computer, a mind is capable of receiving, organizing, and employing various sorts of data only to the extent that such data are compatible with its operating system. Consequently, the Deism which flourished in the eighteenth century, was shown to be rationally questionable as much as it questioned appeals to revealed truth.

By the time of the Second Advent movement that gave rise to the Adventist church, Deism was a dying movement and was being replaced with forms of ethical romanticism and protestant liberalism. However, some of the underlying epistemological assumptions of the Enlightenment that gave rise to Deism never disappeared and continue to form the basis for much of science and philosophy today. In spite of what philosophers like Kant and others wrote regarding the limitations of rationalism and empiricism, rationalism is still regarded as the superior epistemological assumption to acquire new knowledge; human reason alone is still believed to be adequate and sufficient to comprehend the universe.

William Miller's Hermeneutics

William Miller, one of the spiritual founders of Adventism, was raised in a devout Baptist home but became a Deist in his early adulthood years. As a Deist, Miller accepted the assumption that God is so transcendent that he cannot intervene in human affairs. He also rejected the concept that God reveals himself through the Bible and that the supernatural activities of God as described in Scripture ever occurred.

In March 1841, the Millerite journal *Signs of the Times* reprinted a short article on Miller that a Massachusetts newspaper, the *Lynn Record*, had published. What is noteworthy in this article is the reason given for Miller's becoming a Deist.

Mr. Miller wishing to understand thoroughly everything he read, often asked the ministers to explain dark passages of scripture, but seldom received satisfactory answers. He was told that such passages were incapable of explanation. In consequence of which,

at the age of 22, he became a Deist or disbeliever in the truth of Revelation. He thought an all-wise and just God would never make a revelation of his will which nobody could understand, and then punish his creatures for disbelieving it.”⁴

As a Deist, Miller did not believe in the objectivity and perspecuity of God’s revelation in Scripture. Not only was God so far removed from humanity that he could not intervene in human affairs, but neither could he reveal himself through human language and certainly not through the Bible as it was a book filled with unintelligible stories and symbols. The only revelation of God that was acceptable to a Deist was through nature and natural law.

Miller’s worldview was shaken to the core, however, when during the War of 1812–1814 between the United States and Great Britain he survived the battle of Plattsburgh in September 1814. In spite of being surpassed in numbers, the American forces won this battle. Deist logic and reasoning could not account for the unexpected American victory and defeat of the superior British army and navy. Miller’s existential experience and deep emotional reflection following this battle became a turning point in his religious life. Within a couple of years, he became convinced that only the grace and mercy of God could have intervened to allow the American side to win this battle. And, consequently, he began to question his Deist worldview and to return to a biblical worldview in which God can intervene in human affairs. Further reflections also led him to revisit his assumption that God does not reveal himself through Scripture. Within a few years of intense Bible study, Miller became convinced that God does indeed reveal himself through the Bible since history demonstrates the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. God can predict the future of humanity.

From then on, Miller deliberately rejected Deism and its assumptions and became “the instrument of more conversions to Christianity, especially from Deism, than any other man now living in these parts,” recounted the Lynn *Record* article. “He has read Voltaire, [David] Hume, [Thomas] Paine, Ethan Allen, and made himself familiar with the arguments of Deists and knows how to refute them.”⁵

Although Millerism built on the American evangelical, pietist and revivalist ethos and impulses of the first half of the nineteenth century, for all

⁴ *Signs of the Times*, March 15, 1841, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

practical purposes, Millerism became a counter-Deism movement, openly rejecting some key philosophical assumptions emerging from the Enlightenment that God does not reveal himself through history or in Scripture and that the Bible is unreliable as a historical and authentic account of God's work of salvation.

Miller's popular rules of biblical interpretation aimed at countering these Deist assumptions.⁶ He believed in the objectivity of God's revelation in Scripture, that the text of the Scripture is inspired by God and thus a trustworthy revelation of his will, that Scripture can be understood by simply being attentive to the literal and obvious meaning of the words, and that through prophecies God predicts the future of humanity as it relates to the plan of salvation.

Miller's rules of interpretation had a strong impact on Adventist hermeneutics and still do today. Early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers, including Ellen White, built on Miller's rules and also, as he did, rejected the philosophical humanistic assumptions of naturalistic rationalism emerging from the Enlightenment and of new scientific ideas promoted by Darwin and historical-critical scholarship.

Ellen White's endorsement of Miller's rules of interpretation appeared in an article in the *Review and Herald* in 1884.

Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. In the little book entitled "Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology," Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation:—

'1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible; 2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study; 3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering; 4. To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error; 5. Scripture must be its own

⁶ Miller's rules of interpretation can be found in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 70–72 and in P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1977), 299–300.

expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible.’

“The above is a portion of these rules;” she concluded, “and in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth.”⁷

Ellen White also emphasized the “need of a return to the great Protestant principle—the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty.”⁸ She believed in accepting all of Scripture as a source of beliefs and refused to seek a canon within a canon or to consider some portions of the Bible as less inspired, and therefore less authoritative, than others.⁹

To a large extent, Adventist hermeneutics today still upholds the same principles of interpretation. I understand Adventists to believe still in the primacy and sufficiency of Scripture (“the Bible and the Bible only”), that Scripture is the supreme and final authority in beliefs and practice, to be accepted over tradition, human philosophy, and human reason, experience, knowledge, or science. Adventists believe in the totality of Scripture, that there is no canon within the canon, that the Bible does not just *contain* the word of God, but it *is* the word of God. It is a trustworthy revelation of God. Adventists believe in the analogy of Scripture, that there is a fundamental unity among all the parts of the Bible because it is inspired by the same Holy Spirit. The Scripture is therefore its own expositor, one portion interprets another (cf. Luke 24:27, 44–45). There is consistency among all sections of Scripture. The meaning of Scripture is clear (has perspicuity) and straightforward and can be understood by diligent students. The Bible is to be taken in its plain and literal sense unless there is a clear and obvious figure or symbol intended by the author.¹⁰

A *de facto* outcome of the Adventist position on hermeneutics and epistemology is that any modern approaches or methodologies that

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, November 25, 1884.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 204–205.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 190.

¹⁰ There have been many articles and books written on Adventist principles of hermeneutics; the following references are a sample of recent publications: George W. Reid, ed. *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, BRIS 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005); Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 58–104.

challenges any of these tenets regarding the authority of Scripture is therefore seen as suspect. Admittedly, the Adventist approach to hermeneutics and epistemology is rationalistic in ways similar to many early Enlightenment thinkers. But where Adventist hermeneutics and epistemology differ from some Enlightenment thought and Deism is in the primacy it gives to divine revelation as found in Scripture.

Modern Methodologies and the Authority of Scripture

It is in connection with Ellen White's views regarding earth science and geology that we find her most obvious insights into her hermeneutical and epistemological assumptions. Ellen White was not uninformed when it came to the philosophical presuppositions of modern science and critical scholarship in her day. Regarding geology and science, she believed that nature and revelation share the same author and that true science and religion share an intrinsic harmony. When contemporary science contradicted Scripture, she decidedly maintained submission to the Word of God. Biblical truth was the lens through which she viewed all chronological, historical, and scientific claims.

In her day, Ellen White was aware of new geological ideas such as the uniformitarianism of James Hutton and of the scholarly scorn leveled against the notion of a recent historical creation week. In this context of Genesis reconstruction, she stated both, "The work of creation cannot be explained by science" and "True science and Bible religion are in perfect harmony".¹¹

Perhaps Ellen White's most insightful comments into the implications of modern scientific methodologies on the authority of Scripture were written in the context of her discussion of the Genesis flood in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. In this context she expressed her conviction regarding the authority of the Bible in relationship to earth's history. She stated that "There should be a settled belief in the divine authority of God's Holy Word. . . . Moses wrote [about the flood] under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and a correct theory of geology will never claim discoveries that cannot be reconciled with his statements."¹² This statement indicates that Ellen White understood the

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942) 414; Ellen G. White, Letter 57, 1896, published in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1955) 4:1167. I am indebted to Cindy Tutsch for these insights into Ellen White's understanding of geology, earth science and the Genesis flood (cf. Cindy Tutsch, "The Bible and Earth Science" in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, ed. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon [Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2013], 654–657).

¹² Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 114.

crucial implications of the relationship between empirical observations and evidences and the biblical account of the flood. Commenting on this point she wrote further, “relics found in the earth do give evidence of conditions differing in many respects from the present, but the time when these conditions existed can be learned only from the Inspired Record.”¹³

She clearly indicated that the implications which human research draws from empirical information and observations must be informed and guided by a biblical worldview and biblical claims. Thus Ellen White rejected uniformitarianism in favor of creationism. She believed that the accounts of Genesis 1–11 are divinely intended to be interpreted historically, and not only theologically. According to her worldview, the only true biblical understanding of the creation and the flood stories is to interpret them as referring to historical events.

Not only did Ellen White reject popular scientific notions of her day relating to geology, she also recognized the dangers of a higher-critical approach to Scripture.

The warnings of the word of God regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us today. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Scriptures, so today, by the pleasing sentiments of higher criticism, evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths. To many the Bible is as a lamp without oil, because they have turned their minds into channels of speculative belief that bring misunderstanding and confusion. The work of higher criticism, in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God’s word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives.¹⁴

One hundred years ago, Adventists understood the dangers of some methodologies and their potential impact on Adventist beliefs and on the authority of the Scripture. To a large extent, these dangers are still present. Ellen White’s insights into the impact of modern rationalistic methodologies on the authority of Scripture have influenced Adventist hermeneutics for

¹³ White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 112.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 474. Cf. *Bible Echo*, February 1, 1897.

generations and, I believe, are still valid today. Yet, modern scholarship and methodologies are still challenging Adventist beliefs and worldview.

While we can learn valuable insights from the study of the historical and social context of biblical times—one can think of the many insights from the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology that have enriched biblical studies in the last few decades—nonetheless, we cannot underestimate the impact of these and other methodologies on the reading and the interpretation of Scripture. In Adventist scholarship there is therefore to be an uneasy relationship between modern methodologies that rely only on human rationalistic approaches to knowledge and upholding a trustworthy and infallible word of God as found in the Bible.

When modern rationalistic methodologies are used, in a sense judging the validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the biblical text, rationalism and empiricism are placed and valued above Scripture. Many epistemological assumptions of the Enlightenment are still operating with full strength and the Scripture is not considered as the only rule and basis of faith; it is not the final authority in matters of beliefs and it is not really seen as being the inspired word of God.

Yet, Adventist hermeneutics should not be simplistic either in thinking that its epistemological premises are not founded on Enlightenment assumptions as well; that human beings can objectively and faultlessly construct true reality and attain to perfect knowledge is an Enlightenment ideal. Modern methodologies challenge the Adventist claims to know “the truth” perfectly and not to be influenced by modern cultural epistemological norms to arrive at truth.

Be that as it may, William Miller, Joseph Bates and other early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers made a conscious decision regarding the methodology they used to study the Bible and to form their beliefs. It is naive to assume that Miller, Bates, Ellen White, and other early Adventists unknowingly used the predominant hermeneutical methodology of their culture and subconsciously used an unenlightened, simplistic methodology of biblical study. Adventist pioneers understood the times in which they lived and were mindful of the implications of assumptions and presuppositions that conflicted with the word of God. Miller was first a Deist who realized the philosophical shortcomings of Deism and how unsatisfactory a worldview it was. It is in response to Deism that he adopted a strict biblical hermeneutics. And it is also in the context of challenges to biblical faith that Ellen White and other Adventist pioneers upheld a biblical worldview and hermeneutics

and questioned the assumptions and conclusions of new scientific methodologies.

There are and always will be competing philosophies, epistemologies and worldviews in conflict with the biblical one. While we recognize these competing views and attempt to respond to them, we nonetheless need to remain committed to the authority of Scripture and to an implicit submission to what it says. Adventist pioneers showed their intellectual strength and courage when they made a conscious decision to abide by the word of God as the determining epistemological source of their knowledge about God and the world. They were not naive or unsophisticated. They knew and understood the consequences of conflicting worldviews or epistemological assumptions on the authority of the Bible.

The challenge Adventism faces today is to discriminate carefully its use of modern rationalistic methodologies that undermine the authority and reliability of Scripture. A hermeneutics and epistemology that uphold the objective authority of Scripture as the infallible and trustworthy word of God will produce an uneasy relationship with modern rationalistic methodologies.

Sola Scriptura and Hermeneutics: Are Adventist and Evangelical Theologies Compatible?

Fernando Canale

Introduction

Most Adventist theologians and ministers draw feely and uncritically from evangelical theologians and pastors.¹ They seem to assume that Adventist and Evangelical theologies and ministerial paradigms are complementary, and form a harmonious doctrinal and ministerial whole. This assumption implies Adventist and Evangelical theologies share the same theological methodology; do they?

Theological methodology includes several components, among them, we find sources (material condition), goals (teleological condition), and

¹ See for instance, Leroy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1971), 35; 542–43; and, George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2008), 13. A perusal through *Ministry* magazine's advertisement will show Adventists embracing Evangelical leaders in their meetings. See also, Andy Nash, "On Willow Creek," *Adventist Review* (December 18 1997): 6; and, Thomas Mostert, *Hidden Heresy? Is Spiritualism Invading Adventist Churches Today?* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005).

hermeneutical principles (hermeneutical condition).² Hermeneutical principles and goals depend on the sources of data theologians choose to do theology. Seventh-day Adventist theology and ministry depend on the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* (Scripture only, in all its parts, and first) principle.

In this study, I will focus on the role of Scripture (material condition) in relation to the hermeneutical principles of theological method to test the assumed compatibility of Adventist theology and ministerial paradigm with Evangelicalism in general and the Emergent Church³ in particular. This methodological comparison will help us to answer the questions before us. Do Evangelical doctrines stand only on Scripture so that Adventists can continue to use them as faithful expressions of their beliefs? Alternatively, do Evangelical doctrines stand on tradition and Scripture?

Since both Adventist and Evangelical theologies claim to build on a faithful application of the *sola Scriptura* principle, we need to assess the application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in Evangelical Theology by considering the way in which the *sola Scriptura* principle and tradition relate to the hermeneutical principles of Evangelical theology. In this study, we assume that Adventist theology stands on a consistent application of the *sola Scriptura* principle.⁴

To determine if Adventist and Evangelical theologies understand the *sola Scriptura* principle in the same way, we will review the *sola Scriptura*

² Fernando Canale, "Interdisciplinary Method in Christian Theology? In Search of a Working Proposal," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 43.3 (2001): 373–74.

³ The Emerging Church "began with concerns about church growth and retention of young people in a postmodern culture." Larry D. Pettergrew, "Evangelicalism, Paradigms, and the Emerging Church," *MSJ* 17.2 (2006): 165. The Emerging Church is a broad eclectic, ecumenical, and experientially minded movement taking place in Postconservative American Evangelicalism. Richard L. Mayhue, "The Emerging Church: Generous Orthodoxy or General Obfuscation?," *MSJ* 17.2 (2006): 194–203. It seeks to preach the gospel by adapting it to the postmodern culture of late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Emergent Church authors doubted Scripture and resisted its authority. They followed and built Church traditions. For a very good introduction to the Emergent Church and its main leaders see Justin Taylor, "Introduction to Postconservative Evangelicalism and the Rest of This Book," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 17–32. For an introduction to the notion of "emerging" as integrating evolutionary process thought and tradition see Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional + Evangelical + Post / Protestant + Liberal / Conservative + Mystical / Poetic + Biblical + Charismatic / Contemplative + Fundamentalist + Calvinist + Anabaptist / Anglican + Methodist + Catholic + Green + Incarnational + Depressed - yet - Hopeful + Emergent + Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 275–88.

⁴ This assumption stands on the claim Adventists make in their first Fundamental Belief. An independent study should assess the veracity of this assumption in the practice of Adventist theology and ministry.

principle first in relation to the material principle of theological method. We will start (1) considering the Adventist belief that Evangelical theology actually abides by the *sola Scriptura* principle; and, (2) the influential positive picture of Luther Ellen White drew in her writings. Next, we will analyze some declarations on *sola Scriptura* (3) by Luther, and, (4) Luther's dependence on Augustine. Then, we will survey (5) Evangelical representative statements of Faith; (6) John Wesley's methodological use of Scripture; and, (7) the contemporary Evangelical turn to tradition. Finally, we will recognize (8) the two levels in which Evangelical believers experience the role of Scripture.

The analysis that follows is elementary and by no means exhaustive. Yet, it may help Adventists to evaluate their assumptions about the Evangelical claim and use of the *sola Scriptura* principle in their theological constructions and ministerial paradigms.

Adventism's View on Sola Scriptura

While Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs start with the implicit affirmation of the *tota* and *prima Scriptura* principles, it falls short from articulating the *sola Scriptura* principle.

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God [tota Scriptura], given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for Salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history [prima Scriptura]. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)⁵

Some Adventist Scholars, however, clearly affirm and articulate the *sola Scriptura* principle. According to Peter van Bemmelen, "no other holy books, sacred histories, ancient traditions, ecclesiastical pronouncements, or creedal statements may be accorded authority equal to that of the Bible. This also means that conscience, reason, feelings, and religious or mystical experiences

⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual*, 17th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2005), 9.

are subordinate to the authority of Scripture. These may have a legitimate sphere, but they should constantly be brought under the scrutiny of the Word of God (Heb. 4:12).⁶ Since biblical prophets taught and lived by *sola Scriptura* principle, we should not consider it a modern category imposed on Scripture but the cognitive principle given by God to the biblical writers.⁷ *Tota*,⁸ and *prima Scriptura*⁹ principles are also recognized by Adventist scholarship.

Adventists readily and correctly recognize that the *sola Scriptura* principle originates with Luther and the early reformation movement. Accordingly, they believe that Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and the Anabaptists “consistently upheld the Bible and the Bible alone as the standard of truth and sought to utilize Scripture, instead of tradition or scholastic philosophy, to interpret Scripture.”¹⁰ Moreover, Adventists believe that Reformers developed their theologies by applying Bible knowledge as the only and final norm for truth. *Sola Scriptura*, means that “all other sources of knowledge must be tested by this unerring standard.”¹¹

However, Peter van Bemmelen correctly warned us about assuming Evangelical theologians follow their claim to *sola Scriptura* in their teachings. “The *sola scriptura* principle is as much in danger of opposition now as at any time in the past. Through exalting the authority of human

⁶ Peter Maarten van Bemmelen, “Revelation and Inspiration,” in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 42.

⁷ On the biblical nature of the *sola Scriptura* principle in Adventism see, Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 60.

⁸ “All Scripture—not just part—is inspired by God. This certainly includes the whole OT, the canonical Scriptures of the apostolic church (see Luke 24:44, 45; John 5:39; Rom. 1:2; 3:2; 2 Peter 1:21). But for Paul it also includes the NT sacred writings as well. Paul’s use of the word ‘scripture’ (*graphē*, ‘writing’) in 1 Timothy 5:18 points in this direction. He introduces two quotations with the words ‘scripture says’: one from Deuteronomy 25:4 and one from the words of Jesus in Luke 10:7. The word ‘scripture’ thus is used to refer to both the OT and the Gospel of Luke. Peter, by noting that some ignorant people ‘twist’ Paul’s writings ‘as they do the other Scriptures’ (2 Peter 3:15, 16), puts the apostle’s writings into the category of Scripture. Thus the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul are understood as ‘Scripture’ already in NT times.” *Ibid.*, 61.

⁹ “Scripture thus provides the framework, the divine perspective, the foundational principles, for every branch of knowledge and experience. All additional knowledge, experience, or revelation must build upon and remain faithful to the all-sufficient foundation of Scripture.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

reason, tradition, and science, many have come to deny or to limit the authority of Scripture.”¹²

Ellen White on Luther’s Sola Scriptura

Ellen White’s high praise for Luther’s application of the “Bible only” principle against Roman Catholic theology and tradition may be one of the reasons why Adventists generally assume that Protestant theology generates from the faithful and consistent application of the *sola Scriptura* principle.

For instance, Ellen White explained, “When enemies appealed to custom and tradition, or to the assertions and authority of the pope, Luther met them with the Bible, and the Bible only.”¹³ Besides, “God had a work for him to do, and angels of Heaven were sent to protect him.”¹⁴ Moreover, many “received from Luther the precious light.”¹⁵ Thus, Luther is “a champion of the truth, fighting not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places.”¹⁶ Notably, Luther advocacy of biblical truth notably includes justification by faith.¹⁷

Yet, is her correct description of Luther’s pivotal role in the Great Controversy an endorsement of his theology? The answer to this question is no. Although Ellen White chose to underline the many positive contributions of Luther to the Great Controversy, she did not expect Luther and the Reformers to be free from all errors. According to Ellen White their role was “to break the fetters of Rome, and to give the Bible to the world; yet there were important truths which they failed to discover, and grave errors which they did not renounce.”¹⁸

¹² van Bemmelen, “Revelation and Inspiration,” 43.

¹³ Ellen White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1907), 132.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “Nothing but repentance toward God and faith in Christ can save the sinner. The grace of Christ cannot be purchased. It is a free gift. He [Luther] counsels the people not to buy the indulgences, but to look in faith to their crucified Redeemer. He relates his own painful experience in vainly seeking by humiliation and penance to secure salvation, and assures his hearers that it was by looking away from himself and believing in Christ that he found peace and joy unspeakable. He urges them to obtain, if possible, a copy of the Bible, and to study it diligently. It is those who do not learn and obey its sacred truths that are deceived by Satan, and left to perish in their iniquity.” Ibid.

¹⁶ Ellen White, *Signs of the Times* (June 14, 1883): 7

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Luther and his co-laborers accomplished a noble work for God; but, coming as they did from the Roman Church, having themselves believed and advocated her doctrines, it was not to be expected that they would discern all these errors. It was their work to break the fetters of Rome, and to give the Bible to the world; yet there were important truths which they failed to

Furthermore, according to Ellen White, “the Protestants of the nineteenth century” were “fast approaching the Catholics in their infidelity concerning the Scriptures.” Because Protestants found “difficult to prove their doctrines from the Bible,” they were beginning to look to Rome with much favor. Their failure to apply the *sola Scriptura* principle would lead Protestantism to change its theology and eventually to union with Rome.¹⁹

The Protestant lack of success in applying the *sola Scriptura* principle calls for the mission of the Emerging Remnant: “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms.”²⁰

Did Luther follow consistently the *sola Scriptura* principle? Do Evangelical theologians follow the *sola Scriptura* principle in the twenty first century?

Luther’s Ambiguity on Sola Scriptura

Although Luther affirmed the *sola Scriptura* principle, he understood it and applied in a limited and ambiguous way. According to Luther Scripture is “clearer, simpler, and more reliable than any other writings.” This fact determines that “Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings

discover, and grave errors which they did not renounce.” Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*. 4 vols. 1870–1884 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1969), 4: 180.

¹⁹ “And this [Roman Catholicism] is the religion which Protestants are beginning to look upon with so much favor, and which will eventually be united with Protestantism. This union will not, however, be effected by a change in Catholicism; for Rome never changes. She claims infallibility. It is Protestantism that will change. The adoption of liberal ideas on its part will bring it where it can clasp the hand of Catholicism. ‘The Bible, the Bible, is the foundation of our faith’, was the cry of Protestants in Luther’s time, while the Catholics cried, ‘The Fathers, custom, tradition’. Now many Protestants find it difficult to prove their doctrines from the Bible, and yet they have not the moral courage to accept the truth which involves a cross; therefore they are fast coming to the ground of Catholics, and, using the best arguments they have to evade the truth, cite the testimony of the Fathers, and the customs and precepts of men. Yes, the Protestants of the nineteenth century are fast approaching the Catholics in their infidelity concerning the Scriptures. But there is just as wide a gulf today between Rome and the Protestantism of Luther, Cranmer, Ridley, Hooper, and the noble army of martyrs, as there was when these men made the protest which gave them the name of Protestants.” *Review and Herald* (June 1, 1886): 13.

²⁰ “But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.” White, *Great Controversy*, 595.

and doctrine on earth.”²¹ In practice, this meant that Protestant theologians were “willing to fight each other, not by appealing to the authority of any doctor, but by that of Scripture alone.”²² These pointed statements clearly outline the *sola Scriptura* principle. Hence, we can see why many Evangelical and Adventists authors believe Luther applied it in his theological writings.²³ Yet, a closer look shows Luther was ambiguous and inconsistent in the application of the *sola Scriptura* principle.²⁴

The clarity of Scripture led Luther to believe not only that Scripture stands *alone* over against human tradition, but also that Scripture stands *beyond* human interpretation.²⁵ In pre-postmodern times, Luther was unaware that nothing stands beyond interpretation.²⁶ In postmodern times, Luther’s conviction that “the pure Scriptures alone ... teach nothing but Christ so that we may attain piety through him in faith”²⁷ runs against the clarity and manifoldness of Scripture.

It also reveals Luther’s application of justification by faith as his macro hermeneutical presupposition for biblical interpretation and theological construction. Luther explicitly explained how his understanding and experience of justification by faith opened “a totally other face of the entire Scripture... Armed more fully with these thoughts [justification by faith], I began a second time to interpret the Psalter.”²⁸

²¹ “Holy Scripture must necessarily be clearer, simpler, and more reliable than any other writings. Especially since all teachers verify their own statements through the Scriptures as clearer and more reliable writings, and desire their own writings to be confirmed and explained by them. But nobody can ever substantiate an obscure saying by one that is more obscure; therefore, necessity forces us to run to the Bible with the writings of all teachers, and to obtain there a verdict and judgment upon them. Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, *Luther’s Works* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1999), 32:11.

²² *Ibid.*, 33:167.

²³ David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority and Interpretation* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 131.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “Thus the opponent, overcome by the bright light, must see and confess that God’s sayings stand alone and need no human interpretation. The foe who does not believe clear Scripture will certainly not believe the glosses of any of the fathers either.” Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 39:165.

²⁶ “Interpretation seems a minor matter, but it is not. Every time we act, deliberate, judge, understand, or even experience, we are interpreting. To understand at all is to interpret.” David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1987), 9.

²⁷ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 52:173.

²⁸ “There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God

Luther's understanding and use of justification by faith led him not only to conclude that Christ was the only content of his "Scripture alone," but also to create his own canon of Scripture. According to Luther, only books that lead us to Christ should be in the canon. "In a word St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it."²⁹

Evidently, Luther's "Scripture only" modifies the scope of Scripture by discarding the "*tota Scriptura*" principle. In practice, the real "battle cry of the Reformation" is "Christ/Grace alone."

How can the affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* principle turn against Scripture and create a small canon of New Testament books? Adventist and Evangelicals claiming to follow Luther's *sola Scriptura* principle need to understand why Luther came to his macro hermeneutical perspective and the canon within the canon view of Scripture.³⁰

Clearly, Luther's interpretation of Christ and the "Gospel" does not come from Scripture alone. If not from Scripture alone, whence does it come?

According to Luther, not only Scripture leads to Christ but also Philosophy, the Fathers, and specially Augustine. Let us consider briefly how Luther viewed the role of Philosophy and Tradition in biblical interpretation and theological construction.

Luther believed that philosophy belongs to the realm of nature and theology to the realm of grace (supernature) where theology has

justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. . . . Armed more fully with these thoughts, I began a second time to interpret the Psalter." Luther, *Luther's Works*, 34:337.

²⁹ Ibid., 35:362.

³⁰ Luther "applied what became known as the Christocentric principle. His key phrase was 'what manifest Christ' (*was Christum treibet*). What began as a laudable enterprise to see how Scripture points, urges, drives to Christ became dangerous as Luther came to the conclusion that not all Scripture did drive to Christ. This led him to consider some parts of Scripture as less important than others. Accompanying the Christocentric principle was a fourth: dualism between letter and spirit (law and gospel, works and grace). Much of the OT was seen as letter and much of the NT as spirit, although not all in the NT was gospel nor all in the OT was law. Both of these last two principles deny the principle of the totality of Scripture (*tota scriptura*) and lead to subjectivism. The interpreter's own experience ultimately becomes the norm." Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," 89.

preeminence.³¹ For this reason, he was critical of philosophy's contributions to theological issues. Thus, Luther believed that what Neoplatonic philosophers say about theological matters (supernature) in the realm of nature they stole from the Gospel of John and the fathers but falsified by mixing them with philosophical thoughts.³² Yet, because it belongs to nature, "philosophy leads to Christ."³³

Luther, however, did not perceive that metaphysics determined his view of grace as supernature, and consequently, determined his understanding of the Gospel as divine event. Luther uncritically adopted Greek ontological principles via his use of the fathers, notably Augustine.

Because the fathers introduce subtle errors difficult to recognize, Luther correctly advised that we should judge them from "Scripture alone."³⁴ Moreover, we should not use the fathers to throw light on Scripture "but rather to set forth the clear Scriptures and so to prove Scripture with Scripture alone, without adding any of their own thoughts."³⁵ Yet, Luther accepted that we use the fathers to introduce ourselves to "Scripture alone." As philosophy, then, the fathers (tradition) also lead us to Scripture.³⁶

Luther and Augustine

Luther stands on Augustine's shoulder. For him, Augustine was the greatest of all the fathers. "No teacher of the church—explains Luther—

³¹ According to Martin E. Lehmann, Luther "maintained that theological concepts often have a different meaning in philosophy. The road to understanding the incarnation was blocked for philosophy because it taught the way of the law and the meritorious character of works. In its own sphere, however, Luther conceded that philosophy had its independent meaning and was qualified to set forth the truth in the realm of nature. In the realm of grace, however, theology was to hold sway." Luther, *Luther's Works*, 38:238.

³² "The Platonic philosophers have stolen much from the fathers and the Gospel of John, as Augustine says that he found almost everything in Plato which is in the first chapter of John. Therefore, those things which the philosophers say about these ecclesiastical matters have been stolen, so that a Platonist teaches the Trinity of things as (1) the maker, (2) the prototype or exemplar, (3) and compassion; but they have mixed philosophical thoughts with one another and have falsified them." *Ibid.*, 38: 276.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ "For if you do not look to the Scriptures alone, the lives of the saints are ten times more harmful, dangerous, and offensive than those of the impious. For the wicked sin gravely and their sins are easily recognizable and must be avoided. But the saints present a subtle and fine show with their human doctrines and this is likely to lead astray even the elect as Christ says, in Matthew 24[:24]." *Ibid.*, 52: 191.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 52: 176.

³⁶ "One should not use the fathers' teachings for anything more than to get into Scripture as they did, and then one should remain with Scripture alone. But Emser thinks that they should have a special function alongside the Scriptures, as if Scripture were not enough for teaching us." *Ibid.*, 39: 167.

taught better than Augustine... It would be too bad if we did not have Augustine; then the other church fathers would leave us in the lurch terribly. Augustine taught and guided us better than the pope with all his decretals. He leads me to Christ, not away from Him.”³⁷

Not surprisingly, Luther based his hermeneutics and theology squarely on Augustine’s teachings. In so doing, the reformer was following the *sola Scriptura* principle he found in Augustine. According to Luther, Augustine was “the first and almost the only one who determined to be subject to the Holy Scriptures alone, and independent of the books of all the fathers and saints.”³⁸ As proof, Luther quoted Augustine’s explanation of the way he applied the *sola Scriptura* principle to the fathers: “I have learned to hold the Scriptures alone inerrant. Therefore I read all the others, as holy and learned as they may be, with the reservation that I regard their teaching true only if they can prove their statements through Scripture or reason.”³⁹ The last two words in the last quote, “or reason,” reveal that in spite of their claims to follow the *sola Scriptura* principle, neither Augustine nor Luther consistently applied it. Together with Scripture, reason also plays a foundational role in theological hermeneutics, method, and theological construction.

In theological matters, Luther also put Scripture on the same plane with tradition. We can see Luther’s ambiguous use of the *sola Scriptura* principle also when he shared his personal experience with Scripture and tradition. “No book—affirms Luther—except the Bible and St. Augustine” had come to his attention “from which I have learned more about God, Christ, man, and all things.”⁴⁰

As “Augustinian Doctor,” Luther naively and incorrectly thought Augustine applied the *sola Scriptura* principle in his biblical interpretation and theological writings. The Roman Catholic Church considers Augustine a saint and a doctor of the church. He was instrumental in consolidating the merging of philosophical and biblical ideas on which the Roman Catholic theological system stands.⁴¹ By following the theological lead of Augustine,

³⁷ Luther, *Luther's Works*, 22: 512.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 34: 285.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 41: 25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31: 75.

⁴¹ “One of the decisive developments in the western philosophical tradition was the eventually widespread merging of the Greek philosophical tradition and the Judeo-Christian religious and scriptural traditions.... Augustine is not only one of the major sources whereby classical philosophy in general and Neoplatonism in particular enter into the mainstream of

Luther's thought stands on the same Roman Catholic philosophical principles and theological system.⁴² Following Luther, Protestantism, and American Evangelicalism stand on the same foundation. Not surprisingly, the "emerging" of the twenty-first century Emerging Church movement, springs from tradition and its Neoplatonic metaphysical foundation.

Luther's affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* principle is ambiguous. On one hand, he gives Scripture a unique place and role among all other writings. Scripture, he contended, is clear and stands beyond interpretation. Consequently, we should use Scripture to judge all other writings, and read Scripture rather than theological treatises, even his own writings.⁴³ On the other hand, Luther greatly qualified the contents of Scripture and its methodological role as source of theological knowledge. Thus, by Scripture Luther did not mean the whole Old and New Testaments writings but mainly Paul's letters. Moreover, in practice, he used Augustine (tradition), and reason, to judge the fathers and interpret Scripture (cannon within the cannon).

Although Luther did not apply the *sola Scriptura* principle consistently, we must recognize his sincerity and personal courage in its formulation and application, as Ellen White frequently did in his writings. More importantly, his affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* principle unleashed a theological revolution that has not reached its climax yet. Finally, we need to understand that Adventism as the Emerging Remnant stands on Luther's affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* principle, not on his theological formulations or their implicit philosophical foundations.

early and subsequent medieval philosophy, but there are significant contributions of his own that emerge from his modification of that Greco-Roman inheritance, e.g., his subtle accounts of belief and authority, his account of knowledge and illumination, his emphasis upon the importance and centrality of the will, and his focus upon a new way of conceptualizing the phenomena of human history, just to cite a few of the more conspicuous examples." <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/>.

⁴² "The decisive role in the formulation of Luther's theology was played by St. Paul and Augustinianism. . . . Luther was, indeed (at least concerning the basic tenets of justification), a spiritual son of the bishop of Hippo and of the 'Doctor Angelicus'." Norman Geisler, Ralph E. MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals Together: Agreements and Disagreements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 96, 99.

⁴³ "I'd rather that all my books would disappear and the Holy Scriptures alone would be read. Otherwise we'll rely on such writings and let the Bible go. Brenz wrote such a big commentary on twelve chapters of Luke that it disgusts the reader to look into it. The same is true of my commentary on Galatians. I wonder who encourages this mania for writing! Who wants to buy such stout tomes? And if they're bought, who'll read them? And if they're read, who'll be edified by them?" Luther, *Luther's Works*, 54: 311.

Protestant Creeds on *Sola Scriptura*

Let us consider briefly some doctrinal statements on the *sola Scriptura* principle in the Calvinist (Belgic Confession, 1561; and, Canons of Dort, 1618–1619), and Lutheran (Formula of Concord, 1575–1577) traditions.

According to the Belgic confession, Scriptures are *sufficient to be the only rule of faith*. They fully and sufficiently contain the will of God, all that we need to believe for salvation.⁴⁴ No human writing (customs, councils, decrees or statutes), is of equal value with the truth of God. “Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule, as the apostles have taught us, saying, Prove the spirits, whether they are of God.”⁴⁵ Thus, the Belgic Confession affirms the *sola Scriptura* principle.

The Synod of Dort exhorts “all their brethren in the gospel of Christ ... to regulate, by the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, not only their sentiments, but also their language, and to abstain from all those phrases which exceed the limits necessary to be observed in ascertaining the genuine sense of the Holy Scripture.”⁴⁶ Thus, while the Canons of Dort give a high place to Scripture they fall short from affirming the *sola Scriptura* principle.

The Formula of Concord “confess[es] that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged.”⁴⁷ This affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* principle, however, leaves room for the role of ancient official catholic tradition as a help to combat heresies. “The ancient church formulated symbols (that is, brief and explicit confessions) which were accepted as the unanimous, catholic, Christian faith and confessions of the orthodox and true church, namely, the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. We pledge ourselves to these, and we hereby reject all heresies and teachings which have been introduced into the church of God contrary to them.”⁴⁸

After conceding the role of tradition in theological matters, the Formula of Concord cautions: “Other writings of ancient and modern teachers,

⁴⁴ “The Belgic Confession” (1561), in *Historic Creeds and Confessions*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Article. 12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Article. 12.

⁴⁶ The Canons of Dort, (1618–1619) in *Historic Creeds and Confessions*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), conclusion.

⁴⁷ Theodore G. Tappert, ed. “Formula of Concord” (1575–1577) in *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000, c1959), 464; emphasis mine.

⁴⁸ Tappert, “Formula of Concord,” 464.

whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times.”

The Formula even goes further to explain that tradition does not judge Scripture but Scripture judges tradition. Tradition merely witness and explain of the way in which early generations of Christian interpreted Scripture and understood controversial doctrines.⁴⁹ In practice, however, the role of tradition calls for the multiplicity of theological sources and grows from the Roman Catholic methodological paradigm.⁵⁰

Although the Formula of Concord presents a more nuanced and detailed affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* principle than the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort, it also explains in more detail the role of tradition as a complementary source of theological data to be used in conjunction with Scripture.

The partial review of evidence presented so far explains the fact that while mainline reformers embraced of the *Sola Scriptura* principle they held the patristic writers in high esteem. “Quite simply,—explained Alister McGrath—the mainline reformers believed the bible had been honored, interpreted, and applied faithfully in the past and that they were under *an obligation to take past reflections into account* as they developed their own.”⁵¹ In practice, the “Bible only” became the “Bible and tradition.” McGrath unpacked the way in which Evangelicals today retrieve, relate, and use the mainline reformers’ view on Scripture’s relation to tradition. “The

⁴⁹ “In this way the distinction between the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings is maintained, and Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong. Other symbols and other writings are not judges like Holy Scripture, but merely witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood by contemporaries in the church of God with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned.” Tappert, “Formula of Concord,” 465.

⁵⁰ For instance, when discussing the issue of love and the keeping of the law the Formula of Concord uses the plurality of sources approach: “But later we shall assemble more testimonies on this subject, though they are obvious throughout not only the Scriptures but also the holy Fathers.” Theodore G. Tappert, “The Apology of the Augsburg Confession,” (1531) in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2000, c1959), 130.

⁵¹ Alister McGrath, “Engaging the Great Tradition: Evangelical Theology and the Role of Tradition,” in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 144, emphasis added.

magisterial Reformation thus offer and approach to engaging with the ‘great tradition’ that has immense potential for their evangelical progeny today. Theology is not simply about giving priority to the Bible; it is about valuing and engaging with those in the past who gave priority to the Bible, and valuing and interacting with the ideas their derived from that engagement.”⁵²

In conclusion, the *sola Scriptura* principle, as presented so far in Luther, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Formula of Concord, speak about the role of Scripture and its relation to Christian tradition in four ways. First, Scripture’s clarity and sufficiency became the basis from which Protestants criticized and tested the writings of church fathers and theologians (methodological deconstructionism). Second, the fathers that passed the critical test of Scripture became useful sources for understanding Scripture, constructing Christian teachings, and facing heresies (multiplicity of theological sources). Third, tradition de facto became the hermeneutical context from which Reformers interpreted Scripture and constructed their teachings and practices.⁵³ Forth, as mainline reformers fell short from explicitly applying the *sola Scriptura* principle to the philosophical or scientific ideas assumed in the writings of the early fathers, their hermeneutical principles implicitly flow from Greek philosophical thinking.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of this oversight. Luther was wrong when he assumed Scripture is beyond interpretation. The biblical interpretation and theological construction of the fathers and all theologians stands on metaphysical ontological and cosmological presuppositions the fathers and most theologians after them took from non-biblical sources. Failure to subject the fathers’ philosophical assumptions to biblical criticism becomes the point on which the *sola Scriptura* principle stands or falls.

These findings should help Adventist and Biblically grounded Evangelicals to realize that the Protestant Reformation was not about restoring biblical thinking but about restoring “the ancient catholicity of the church.”⁵⁴ Tradition is the ground from which the Emerging Church emerges.

⁵² McGrath, “Engaging the Great Tradition,” 144.

⁵³ “The Reformers’ appeal to Scripture sufficiency was crafted on the assumption that the Bible was the book of the church’s faith. That faith of the church, New Testament and Patristic, was seen as contiguous with the biblical narrative, so that *the only proper way to read the Bible was within the framework of the church’s teaching and practice.*” D. H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 200, emphasis provided.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 201.

As a forgotten task, the Biblical Reformation of the Church lies still in the future. Scripture is the ground from which the Emerging Remnant emerges.

John Wesley on Sola Scriptura

When looking back to the complex history of Protestantism, Adventists in general feel closer to the Arminian than to the Calvinistic Lutheran tradition. John Wesley has captured the imagination of many Adventists. I had teachers who led us young students to believe John Wesley was right in all his teachings, and wrong only regarding the Adventist distinctive doctrines. Surely, then, John Wesley must have stood squarely on the *sola Scriptura* principle. Let us review briefly how Wesley related to the material and hermeneutical principles of theological method. On the material principle, we will focus on John Wesley's view of Scripture and tradition. On the hermeneutical principle, we will focus on his view on God's and human realities.

As the mainline reformers, John Wesley had Scripture in high regard. "My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small."⁵⁵ This seems to be a concise statement affirming Scripture's clarity, sufficiency and even the *sola Scriptura* principle. Moreover, Wesley believed Scripture was completely inerrant.⁵⁶ He went on to state the *sola Scriptura* principle as his commitment "to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible."⁵⁷ The "comparatively," in parentheses above, introduces ambiguity in an otherwise tight statement. In other words, at the center of his commitment to study only one book, Wesley told us he also studied other books. This opens the question to the way in which Wesley understood the relationship of Scripture with tradition.

Methodists, explained Wesley, "desire and design to be downright Bible-Christians; taking the Bible, as interpreted by the primitive Church and our own, for their whole and sole rule."⁵⁸ Consequently, Methodism is not something new but "the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England."⁵⁹ John Wesley,

⁵⁵ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3 ed., 14 vols. (Albany, OR: Ages, 1872), 3: 240.

⁵⁶ "Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth." *Ibid.*, 4: 88.

⁵⁷ "In 1730 I began to be *homo unius libri* to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible." *Ibid.*, 3:197.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8: 387.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7: 448.

then, identified tradition with the primitive church and the Church of England. Making explicit what Luther denied but implicitly embraced, Wesley took for granted tradition guiding role in the interpretation of Scripture. Moreover, tradition plays its hermeneutical role not only in theological but also in devotional matters of the heart.⁶⁰

Wesley seemed to distinguish between the “bad” tradition of Roman Catholicism⁶¹ and the “good” tradition of the early fathers of the universal Church (Patristic).⁶² This distinction is misleading. A better way to categorize patristic and scholastic traditions would be “general” and “detailed.” In other words, early fathers, notably Augustine, worked on the same methodological and hermeneutical principles as later fathers like Thomas Aquinas whom most protestant like to reject off hand. From the methodological perspective of analysis, we follow in this study, both patristic and scholastic traditions stem from the same non-biblical neo-platonic philosophical principles. Consequently, in spite of Luther’s and Wesley’s claims to the *sola Scriptura* principle, their failure to apply it to the philosophical presuppositions of the fathers led them to transgress in practice the very principle they committed themselves, in theory, to follow.

Let us turn our attention to some choice hermeneutical principles operating in Wesley’s thinking. Are there practical consequences for

⁶⁰ “Our common way of living was this: From four in the morning till five, each of us used private prayer. From five to seven we read the Bible together, carefully comparing it (that we might not lean to our own understandings) with the writings of the earliest ages.” Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 1: 31.

⁶¹ “Persons may be quite right in their opinions, and yet have no religion at all; and, on the other hand, persons may be truly religious, who hold many wrong opinions. Can anyone possibly doubt of this, while there are Romanists in the world? For who can deny, not only that many of them formerly have been truly religious, as Thomas à Kempis, Gregory Lopes, and the Marquis de Renty; but that many of them, even at this day, are real inward Christians? And yet what a heap of erroneous opinions do they hold, delivered by tradition from their fathers! Nay, who can doubt of it while there are Calvinists in the world, — asserters of absolute predestination?” Ibid., 6: 215.

⁶² Consider for instance the following statement: “So true is that well known saying of the ancient Fathers: *Fecisti nos ad to; et irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in to*. “Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest, till it resteth in thee.” Ibid., 7: 288. C.f. Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 5: 408. Thomas Oden, a Wesleyan Methodist theologian, grounded his Vincentian/postmodern Theological Method to overcome on this distinction. For an introduction to Oden’s method see, Kwabena Donkor, *Tradition, Method, and Contemporary Protestant Theology: An Analysis of Thomas C. Oden's Vincentian Method* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003). Oden’s method is also followed in the Ancient/Future approach to ministry and liturgy in the Emergent Church movement of younger evangelicals. See for instance, Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002); Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).

transgressing the *sola Scriptura* principle? Yes, there are many. Some of them affect the way Wesley implicitly or explicitly understood some basic hermeneutical principles. For instance, John Wesley's view of heaven, soul, and spirituality built on Augustine's philosophical appropriation of Greek ontology. Although Wesley's reading of the Bible led him to conceive God's eternity as temporal duration rather than timelessness, he still understood reality according to the Neoplatonic view of heaven and earth, matter and spirit.

On the one hand, following Scripture, Wesley described eternity as infinite temporal duration⁶³ and assumed God created the universe within his eternal time.⁶⁴ He also conceived God as intently spatial.⁶⁵ Yet, showing his dependence on Augustine, Wesley hinted the possibility that the time of infinite duration may not move at all, and so, be timeless.⁶⁶ Moreover, following tradition, Wesley assumed the existence of an ontological dichotomy between time and eternity,⁶⁷ the visible and the invisible worlds,⁶⁸

⁶³ "Now, what a poor pittance of duration is this, compared to the life of Methuselah! 'And Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty and nine years.' But what are these nine hundred and sixty and nine years to the duration of an angel, which began 'or ever the mountains were brought forth,' or the foundations of the earth were laid? And what is the duration which has passed since the creation of angels, to that which passed before they were created, to unbeginning eternity? — to that half of eternity (if one may so speak) which had then elapsed?" Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 7: 187.

⁶⁴ "He began his creation at what time, or rather, at what part of eternity, it seemed him good. Had it pleased him, it might have been millions of years sooner, or millions of ages later." *Ibid.*, 10: 408.

⁶⁵ "Nearly allied to the eternity of God, is his omnipresence. As he exists through infinite duration, so he cannot but exist through infinite space; according to his own question, equivalent, to the strongest assertion, — 'Do not I fill heaven and earth? Saith the Lord;' (heaven and earth, in the Hebrew idiom, implying the whole universe;) which, therefore, according to his own declaration, is filled with his presence." *Ibid.*, 7: 286.

⁶⁶ "But this is only speaking after the manner of men: For the measures of long and short are only applicable to time which admits of bounds, and not to unbounded duration. This rolls on (according to our low conceptions) with unutterable, inconceivable swiftness; if one would not rather say, it does not roll or move at all, but is one still immovable ocean. For the inhabitants of heaven "rest not day and night," but continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, the God, the Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come!" And when millions of millions of ages are elapsed, their eternity is but just begun." *Ibid.*, 6: 209–10.

⁶⁷ "Of what importance is it to be continually sensible of the condition wherein we stand! How advisable, by every possible means, to connect the ideas of time and eternity! so to associate them together, that the thought of one may never recur to your mind, without the thought of the other! It is our highest wisdom to associate the ideas of the visible and invisible world; to connect temporal and Spiritual, mortal and immortal being. Indeed, in our common dreams we do not usually know we are asleep whilst we are in the midst of our dream. As neither do we know it while we are in the midst of the dream which we call life. But you may be conscious of it now. God grant you may, before you awake in a winding-sheet of fire!" *Ibid.*, 7: 346.

(earth and heaven), mater and spirit, and the soul and the body.⁶⁹

Implicitly embracing Neoplatonic ontology, Wesley believed that heaven and the spiritual life are not material realities different and independent from the materiality and flesh of our bodily spatiotemporal existence that ends at death.⁷⁰

Do these hermeneutical principles matter? Do they relate to salvation? They do. According to Wesley, we experience the big chasm between heaven and earth at death.⁷¹ Wesley asked, How will we “pass from things natural to spiritual; from the things that are seen to those that are not seen; from the visible to the invisible world? What a gulf is here! By what art will reason get over the immense chasm?”⁷² In this way, Wesley framed the ontological scenario for his understanding of the Gospel as the way to spiritual heavenly eternal life. In short, the Gospel is the way in which God’s action bridges our passing from the natural to the spiritual realms of reality.

Wesley thought the knowledge of God was the cure for the soul facing death and hell. “There is a knowledge of God which unveils eternity, and a

⁶⁸ “It is a total studied inattention, to the whole invisible and eternal world; more especially to death, the gate of eternity, and to the important consequences of death, — heaven and hell!” Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 7: 284.

⁶⁹ “But what am I? Unquestionably I am something distinct from my body. It seems evident that my body is not necessarily included therein. For when my body dies, I shall not die: I shall exist as really as I did before. And I cannot but believe, this self-moving, thinking principle, with all its passions and affections, will continue to exist, although the body be moldered into dust. Indeed at present this body is so intimately connected with the soul, that I seem to consist of both. In my present state of existence, I undoubtedly consist both of soul and body: And so I shall again, after the resurrection, to all eternity” *Ibid.*, 7 : 246.

⁷⁰ “The more reasonable among you have no doubt of this; you do not imagine the whole man dies together; although you hardly suppose the soul, once disengaged, will dwell again in a house of clay. But how will your soul subsist without it? How are you qualified for a separate state? Suppose this earthly covering, this vehicle of organized matter, whereby you hold commerce with the material world, were now to drop off! Now, what would you do in the regions of immortality? You cannot eat or drink there. You cannot indulge either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. You love only worldly things; and they are gone, fled as smoke, driven away for ever. Here is no possibility of sensual enjoyments; and you have a relish for nothing else. O what a separation is this, from all that you hold dear! What breach is made, never to be healed! But beside this, you are unholy, full of evil tempers; for you did not put off these with the body; you did not leave pride, revenge, malice, envy, discontent, behind you, when you left the world. And now you are no longer cheered by the light of the sun, nor diverted by the flux of various objects; but those dogs of hell are let loose to prey upon your soul, with their whole unrebrated strength.” *Ibid.*, 8:208.

⁷¹ “What a great gulf then is fixed between you and happiness, both in this world and that which is to come! Well may you shudder at the thought! more especially when you are about to enter on that untried state of existence. For what a prospect is this, when you stand on the verge of life, ready to launch out into eternity! What can you then think? You see nothing before you. All is dark and dreary.” *Ibid.*, 8:208–09.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8:16.

love of God which endears it. That knowledge makes the great abyss visible; and all uncertainty vanishes away.”⁷³ The question is, then, how can we know God from within our material body that hides him from our sight?⁷⁴ The answer is that God as Spirit reveals himself to the spirit of human individuals.⁷⁵ “This knowledge necessarily generates love⁷⁶ and thereby *transfuses more and more of God’s image into the human soul.*”⁷⁷ As a result, God’s commandments are no longer grievous, but are the very joy of your heart; ways of pleasantness, paths of peace.”⁷⁸

In sum, Wesley affirmed Scripture but used macro hermeneutical principles retrieved from tradition and based on philosophical imagination. In so doing, he fell short from the *sola Scriptura* principle. These methodological principles affect the entire edifice of Christian theology and led Wesley to spiritualize the Gospel and make it stand on a mystical⁷⁹ rather than biblical spirituality. This hermeneutical basis explains why Arminianism and Methodism still build on the same Calvinistic tradition.⁸⁰

On this basis, Adventist and Evangelical believers firmly committed to the *sola Scriptura* principle cannot assume Wesley’s teachings properly correspond to biblical thinking and teachings.

Evangelical Postmodern Turn to Tradition

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, how are evangelical leaders relating to the *sola Scriptura* principle? Are they overcoming the ambiguity of the Reformation? Are they lapsing back to tradition? The answer to these questions is crucial for Adventism because an increasing number of Adventist

⁷³ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 8:209.

⁷⁴ “This veil of flesh now hides him from my sight; and who is able to make it transparent? so that I may perceive, through this glass, God always before me, till I see him ‘face to face.’” Ibid., 8:211.

⁷⁵ “And why should this seem a thing incredible to you; that God, a Spirit, and the Father of the spirits of all flesh, should discover himself to your spirit, which is itself ‘the breath of God,’ *divinae particula aerae*; any more than that material things should discover themselves to your material eye? Is it any more repugnant to reason, that spirit should influence spirit, than that matter should influence matter? Nay, is not the former the more intelligible of the two?” Ibid., 8:211.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 8:212, emphasis provided.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8:212.

⁷⁹ On Wesley’s mysticism see for instance, Ibid., 7:343, 51, 93–94.

⁸⁰ “He [Wesley] noted that many of them [Protestants] actually knew very little about the revision of Calvinist predestinarianism that Jacob Arminius proposed in the earthy seventeenth century.” Gary Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1998), 168.

leaders feel free to use Evangelical theology and ministerial practices under the assumption that Evangelicals theologians and pastors build their views on Scripture alone. Is this assumption correct in the twenty-first century? Let us turn our attention to some recent developments in American Evangelical leadership.

While many Evangelicals continue to believe the hermeneutical role of Scripture is the methodological watershed that divides Protestantism from Roman Catholicism,⁸¹ by the turn of the twenty-first century the emerging theological and ministerial leadership of American Evangelicalism (the “young evangelicals”) was departing from Scripture and embracing tradition.

Postmodernity has intensified Evangelical ambiguity about the *sola Scriptura* principle. While some evangelical leaders still have affirmed the *sola Scriptura* principle,⁸² the cultural and philosophical challenges of postmodernity are leading many others to depart from it. The former correctly believe Christians should interpret Scripture from Scripture (*sola Scriptura*); the latter, incorrectly believe Christians should interpret Scripture from tradition. They are seizing the imagination of young leaders to the point of causing a serious rift in the Evangelical movement⁸³.

In postmodern ecumenical times, Evangelical leaders are anxious to overcome their long history of theological divisions⁸⁴ that make the very

⁸¹ “The perduring dividing line between evangelical Protestantism on the one hand and Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy on the other is the enigmatic relation between holy Scripture and holy tradition. The Catholic churches assign tradition a role virtually equivalent to that of Scripture. The final norm for faith is held to reside in Scripture, but tradition communicates and interprets this norm to all generations after Christ. Protestants who adhere to the tenets of the Reformation insist that Scripture interprets itself by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the role of the church is to be obedient to this interpretation. The Reformers upheld *sola scriptura*. Catholics and Orthodox generally affirm Scripture plus tradition as the ultimate authority for faith.” Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 86.

⁸² “We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. We deny that any creed, council, or individual may bind a Christian’s conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation. Ibid., 290.

⁸³ Taylor, “Introduction to Postconservative Evangelicalism.”

⁸⁴ “Evangelicals have clashed for centuries over the nature of biblical authority, the authority of the church, the nature of divine predestination, the work of the Holy Spirit, the relation between justification and sanctification, the scope of sanctification, the relation between reason and revelation, and the possibility of fellowship between evangelicals and nonevangelicals.” Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, 172–73.

notion of “Evangelicalism” a contested concept,⁸⁵ and its very existence questionable. The Fundamentalist and Evangelical coalitions implicitly assume untenable doctrinal diversity and confusion. This plurality originates from their failed attempt to interpret Scripture from the perspective of the *sola Scriptura* principle. This failure validates Roman Catholic prediction that without tradition Christians cannot interpret Scripture correctly or achieve unity. Young Evangelical leaders understand well that in postmodern ecumenical times they must overcome this situation. Are they seeking to overcome it by coming back to Scripture or Roman Catholic tradition? They find them both working in their own theology, spirituality, and ministerial practices.

During the twentieth century, American Evangelical leadership has evolved slowly from Scripture to tradition. From the Neoplatonic/Augustinian/Calvinistic hermeneutical foundation, early in the twentieth century, *Fundamentalism* battled against modernity by the affirmation of verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture.⁸⁶ The apologetical spirit of Fundamentalism did little to advance theological understanding of Christian doctrines from Scripture or overcome Protestant ambiguity about the *sola Scriptura* principle.

By the middle of the century, Billy Graham perhaps became the best-known face of Fundamentalism. Graham led *Traditional Evangelicals* (1950–1975) and gave them national and international recognition through well-known evangelistic crusades based on Scripture and centering on the evangelical interpretation of the Gospel. Fundamentalism and evangelistic crusades, however, did little to overcome Protestant ambiguity about the *sola Scriptura* principle, which continued to lurk in the methodological basis of evangelical theology and ministry.

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, Mill Hybels’ (Willow Creek) adaptation of liturgical forms to contemporary culture in the megachurch context brought *Pragmatic Evangelicals* to prominence. Liturgical pragmatism, that young evangelical leadership found, not in Scripture, but in the tradition of the church and the religions of the world,

⁸⁵ “The ample disagreements that divide modern evangelicals confirm that ‘evangelicalism’ is an inherently contested concept. Its meaning cannot be defined precisely, because it is claimed by groups that bear fundamental differences from one another in the ways in which they define themselves.” Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, 169.

⁸⁶ James Barr, “Fundamentalism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch, and Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999–2003) 2:363.

created a theological and spiritual vacuum. Deep changes in theological and ministerial patterns were taking place serendipitously during this period in the young generation of Evangelical. They are transforming Evangelical leaders and Evangelicalism in ways we can only adumbrate. Also for practical reasons, a sizable number of representative Adventist leaders felt compelled to adapt Adventist liturgy to contemporary culture thereby intensifying the secularization of the Adventist mind and lifestyle. While not turning explicitly to tradition, many Adventist leaders drifted away from Scripture as the ground for theological and ministerial thinking. Biblical and doctrinal illiteracy intensified in Adventist leaders and lay members.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, young evangelical leaders came to prominence and began to exercise influence in the community at large. The new period is underway and observers label it in various ways, for instance, “Younger Evangelicals,” “Post-Conservatism,” and the “Emerging Church” (2000 and beyond).⁸⁷ Notable leaders in the movement are the late Stanley Grenz (theoretical and doctrinal theology),⁸⁸ Brian McLaren (practical theology),⁸⁹ and Robert Webber (Liturgy).⁹⁰

The Emergent Church decidedly embraces ecumenism and postmodernity. They believe the Protestant Reformation is over and a new spiritual, pluralistic, ecumenical reformation based on tradition is underway. Emerging Church leadership decidedly overcomes Protestant ambiguity on the *sola Scriptura* principle by explicitly affirming that the “sources of theology include not only the Bible, but also Christian tradition, culture, and the contemporary experience of God’s community.”⁹¹

Although renowned Evangelical theologian Donald Bloesch affirmed the *sola Scriptura* principle theoretically in 2002,⁹² twenty five years earlier he joined Emergent Church leader Robert E. Webber in “a conference of

⁸⁷ Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World*, 21. For a concise introduction to Evangelical post conservatism see Taylor, “Introduction to Postconservative Evangelicalism,” 17–32.

⁸⁸ See for instance, Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994); Stanley Grenz, and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

⁸⁹ See for instance, McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*; Brian D. McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus Christ: Uncovering the Truth That Could Change Everything* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2006).

⁹⁰ See for instance, Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*.

⁹¹ Taylor, “Introduction to Postconservative Evangelicalism,” 19.

⁹² See footnotes 82 and 84.

evangelical leaders and scholars that issued an appeal, known as the Chicago Call, for a more catholic and historically rooted evangelicalism... It called for a new evangelical movement that affirmed the historic creeds, sacraments, and ecclesial ethos of classical Christianity.”⁹³ Postconservative Evangelicals, then “argued that Luther and Calvin belonged to the great tradition of classical Christian orthodoxy, and that the hope of a genuinely catholic evangelicalism lies in the modern evangelical recovery of the catholic elements⁹⁴ in Lutheran and Calvinist Christianity.”⁹⁵

Yet, not all Evangelical leaders embrace the Emergent Church turn to tradition. Recognizing that tradition has been wrong many times and cannot be implicitly trusted ⁹⁶ conservative traditional Evangelical leaders continue to embrace the Reformation *sola Scriptura* principle, and its built-in ambivalence on tradition. Pastors, leaders, scholars, writers, and seminary professors of established main line Protestant and Evangelical denominations, build their theologies assuming the Roman Catholic multiple sources of theology principle and use Catholic tradition, philosophy, and science, as macro hermeneutical principles to understand Scripture and construct Christian doctrines.

In short, on one side, Emergent Church neoconservative Evangelical leadership openly embraces Roman Catholic tradition and religious pluralism. On another side, Conservative Evangelical scholars and leaders implicitly assume that Protestant theologies cannot stand based on the *sola*

⁹³ Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, 170. “The Chicago Call was issued in the form of an eight-point manifesto that urged evangelicals to affirm the roots and catholic heritage of Christianity, the authority of scripture, the identity-conferring authority of the historic creed, the holistic character of salvation, the value of sacramental practices and theology the centrality of Christ’s redemptive work to Christian spirituality, the need for church authority, and the hope of Christian unity.” (Ibid.)

⁹⁴ Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng recognized the existence of a underlying continuity between macro theological schools of Christian theology through the centuries. “Elements of the old paradigm can be taken over into the new paradigm, unless they contract the primal, basic testimony. In this way steps have been taken in advance so that, not only between Origen and Augustine, but also between Augustine and Thomas, and even between Thomas and Luther, an Upheaval does not lead to a total break; what happens, rather, is that with the common bond of Christian faith a certain amount of common theological ground is also preserved.” Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 158.

⁹⁵ Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, 171.

⁹⁶ “The creeds are often wrong, ... The Nicene Creed contains Origenist concepts; Chalcedon conferred on Mary the title ‘Mother of God’; the Fourth Lateran Council endorsed Cyprian’s dictum that outside the church there is no salvation; the Augsburg Confession prescribes the Eucharistic doctrine of consubstantiation; the Marburg Articles teach baptismal regeneration; and the Westminster Confession identifies the pope as the Antichrist.” Ibid.

Scriptura principle. The difference between the two competing branches of Evangelical leadership is not qualitative but quantitative. The difference, then, revolves around how much church tradition, philosophy, science, and experience as hermeneutical principles to interpret Scripture and construct Christian theology is permissible for Evangelicals.

As they relate to Evangelical theology and ministerial practices, Adventist leadership should keep in mind the Emergent Church's explicit turn to tradition and the implicit hermeneutical role of tradition in conservative evangelical thinking. Moreover, they should realize also the existence of a "hermeneutical gap" dividing Evangelical leaders from church members.

The Two Protestant Worlds

To assess properly the way in which Adventism relates to Protestantism we need to distinguish carefully between two Protestant worlds (methodological context) and, become aware from which level Adventism came into existence (historical context).

Evangelical theologian John Sanders recognized correctly that when Evangelicals believers become "theologically informed" they come to understand Scripture in a different way.⁹⁷ What causes the difference between lay and scholarly theologies? While the former flows from Scripture texts and canonical context, the second flows from Scripture and tradition as vehicle of other extra biblical contexts (philosophy, science, experience). We can infer, then, that there is a significant hermeneutical gap between the world of theologically well-informed Evangelicals and the world of Evangelical church members. The earlier uses Church tradition as source of its macro hermeneutical principles to understand Scripture and Christian doctrines; the latter claims to build on Scripture alone.

Thus, Evangelicalism conceals a fateful foundational division between their own ranks. On one hand, the world of lay believers strongly assumes their beliefs and well-informed leaders squarely stand on Scripture alone. On the other hand, explicitly or implicitly, knowingly or unknowingly, the world of Evangelical well-informed theologians, writers, and pastors do not stand on Scripture alone but on Scripture and tradition. Adventism also hides within its own ranks the same dichotomy between the worlds of laity and

⁹⁷ John Sanders, "Historical Considerations," in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, ed. Clark Pinnock et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 59.

leadership. The Emergent Remnant springs from Adventist and Evangelical laities committed to the *sola Scriptura* principle.

Conclusions

In this study, we explored the role that the *sola Scriptura* principle plays in Evangelical theological methodology in order to assess whether Evangelical theology and ministerial practices are automatically compatible with Adventist theology. To answer this overall question we asked, do Evangelical doctrines stand only on Scripture so that Adventists can continue to use them as faithful expressions of their beliefs? Alternatively, do Evangelical doctrines stand on tradition and Scripture?

The brief and incomplete survey of evidence we considered in this study suggests the following conclusions. Adventists correctly recognize that the *sola Scriptura* principle originates with Luther and the early reformation movement, and incorrectly assume that the Magisterial Reformers (Luther and Calvin) developed their theologies by consistently applying the *sola Scriptura* principle. They believe these views find support in Ellen White's positive description of Luther's pivotal role in the Great Controversy. However, although Ellen White highly praised Luther for his use of Scripture against tradition she did not endorse his theology because there were many important truths yet to be discovered.

Luther affirmed and partially used the *sola Scriptura* principle. Yet, he did not follow it consistently because explicitly and implicitly he still gave a guiding hermeneutical role to tradition, notably to Augustine. Besides, Luther did not abide by the *tota Scriptura* principle choosing to value the portions of Scripture that better fitted his theological interpretation of justification by faith.

The Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Formula of Concord, speak about the role of Scripture and its relation to Christian tradition along the same lines established by the Reformers. Tradition and its Greek philosophical assumptions became the implicit hermeneutical context from which Protestants interpreted Scripture and constructed their teachings and practices.

John Wesley did not alter the pattern established by the Magisterial Reformers and the confessions of faith. While he affirmed Scripture, Wesley also used macro hermeneutical principles retrieved from tradition and based on philosophical imagination. In so doing, he fell short from the *sola Scriptura* principle.

During the twentieth century, American Evangelical leaders retained the traditional Protestant ambivalence on the *sola Scriptura* principle. Implicitly, they continued to embrace tradition and its implicit philosophical assumptions as did Luther, the Protestant Confessions, John Wesley, and Methodism.

By the end of the twentieth century, the advent of postmodernity and Roman Catholic aggressive Ecumenical Evangelization unleashed by Vatican II prompted young Evangelical leaders to reassess their ministerial patterns and theological positions. As a result, at the turn of the twenty-first century, an increasing number of Evangelical leaders are turning for inspiration and guidance to Roman Catholic tradition and world religions instead that turning to Scripture. Yet, we can still find a remnant within Evangelical denominations of believers still committed to the *sola Scriptura* principle. Unfortunately, their doctrines and practices continue to stand on tradition and non-biblical philosophical hermeneutics.

These findings should help Adventist and biblically grounded Evangelicals to realize that the Protestant Reformation was not about restoring biblical thinking but about restoring “the ancient catholicity of the church.”⁹⁸ Tradition is the ground from which the Emerging Church emerges.

The consistent neglect of Magisterial Reformers, Protestant tradition, and Evangelical authors to subject the fathers’ philosophical assumptions to biblical criticism becomes the point on which the *sola Scriptura* principle stands or falls. We should keep this in mind because Adventism stands or falls on the faithful application of the *sola Scriptura* principle.

We can now answer the questions formulated in the introduction. Do Evangelical doctrines stand only on Scripture so that Adventists can continue to use them as faithful expressions of their beliefs? The answer to this question is that Protestant and Evangelical theologies and ministerial paradigms never stood on Scripture alone. Moreover, during the last thirty years, Evangelical Leadership in America has decisively turned to Roman Catholic tradition and moved away from Scripture alone.

Adventist and Evangelical believers firmly committed to the *sola Scriptura* principle should not assume any longer that theologies and ministerial paradigms of Protestant and Evangelical authors correspond to biblical thinking and teachings. Instead, they should emulate Luther’s

⁹⁸ Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition*, 201.

methodological use of Scripture to deconstruct tradition and apply suspicion to all Protestant and Evangelical theologies and ministerial practices.

Consequently, Adventists should not continue to assume that Protestant and Evangelical theologies and ministerial practices are compatible with the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle and with Adventist theology. As a forgotten task, the Biblical Reformation of the Church lies still in the future. Scripture is the ground from which the Emerging Remnant should continue to emerge until Jesus Christ our Lord comes again.

If Salvation Is by Faith, Why Doctrine?

E. Edward Zinke

Understanding of Christianity is seen in many ways. For some it is a legal religion: obey its laws, give generously of your offerings (pay a few extra cents for safety's sake), attend church – that's what makes you a Christian. Others see the essence of Christianity in socially correct living: giving to the poor, establishing schools, caring for the homeless, and healing the sick. Others turn Christianity into a gnosis. They see Christianity as the acquisition of knowledge. If you know the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, understand that the true Sabbath is from sundown to sundown, understand the investigative judgment, and accept the literal, visible soon return of Christ, then you are a Christian.

However, Christianity is not a ladder of works that we use to climb to God or a checklist of do's and don'ts on how to live. Neither can it be reduced to meditation or a list of doctrines. It is not a human philosophy. While each of these approaches plays important roles in Christianity, we would like to discuss the essence of Christianity. What is at the heart of the Christian message?

The Essence of Christianity

Christ summarized the essence of Christianity: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3).¹ The sum and substance of Christianity is to come to the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. The word *knowledge* used here does not refer to simple facts and figures, such as the distance between two cities. It involves the kind of knowledge that leads to a personal relationship with another individual. The goal of salvation is to enter into a full, rewarding, and mature fellowship with God and Jesus Christ that begins in the present and will last for eternity.

God created us for communion with himself. After creation, he spent the very first evening in the garden in fellowship with Adam and Eve. He made us in his own image so that we might enter into fellowship with him. When our character is in harmony with that of God's, we can relate to him with no barrier between. The Lord desires such close fellowship with us that the Bible often uses the imagery of marriage to describe it: “I am married to you,” God declares (Jer 3:14, cf. Hos 2:20). Unfortunately, sin shattered the original Edenic picture of life in harmony with God, rupturing face-to-face communication with him. Our sins have separated us from God and have hidden his face from us (Isa 59:2). We are like a branch severed from the tree, a light bulb unscrewed from its socket, a water faucet disconnected from its source.

Sin is the transgression of the character of God (1 John 3:4). When we violate the character of another individual we distort or even break our relationship with that person. Thus we are not at peace with God, because our characters are out of harmony with his. We have chosen to live independently from God (Isa 53:6). The result is that we cannot rectify our situation with God by our works, knowledge, meditation, or any other human effort. There is nothing within us by which we can commend ourselves to God.

The grace of God is that even while we were sinners—in fact enemies—God reached down through his own Son Jesus Christ so that our fellowship might be restored with him. We can now be grafted into the Vine; we can be adopted into God's family.

¹ Biblical quotations are from the NKJV.

The Role of Doctrine in Christianity

If the essence of Christianity is the restoration of our original relationship with God, why bother with doctrine, why not simply concentrate on a relationship with God?

Consider some of the elements of healthy relationships. In order to enter a relationship with another person, it is essential to know something about that person. Without such knowledge, the relationship is meaningless. The two parties can sit and stare at each other all day long, but without a knowledge of each other, there would be no substance to the relationship. In addition, when entering relationships, it is essential to understand oneself. A lack of self-understanding can easily lead to misunderstandings, causing relationships to flounder. It is also important to understand the parameters within which the relationship can flourish. For example, relationships vary depending upon whether one is relating to a spouse, a son, a daughter, a boss, or a secretary. Each of these relationships is unique and, therefore, operates by a unique set of guidelines.

Doctrines are essential to our relationship with God, for they provide the information we need to enter into deeper communion with him. They tell us about ourselves, and how we may appropriately relate to God. Just as there are various types of unique relationships in the human sphere, so also there is a unique relationship appropriate with God.

A Systematic Whole

Just as there is a vital connection between the doctrines and fellowship with God, so there is also a relationship among the doctrines themselves. They are a systematic whole. Sometimes we approach doctrine like we do a cafeteria line. I will take a little of this and some of that—I will take a lot of righteousness by faith, a little works, some Sabbath, a little creation, and no judgment. And so we may attempt to pick and choose what suits us best. Since doctrine tells us about God, the temptation to pick and choose is the temptation to develop a “designer God,” a God who suits me, who fits my culture, who can be sold in the contemporary marketplace. Ellen White states that “the precious, golden links of truth are not separate, detached, disconnected doctrines; but link after link from one string of golden truth, and constitute a complete whole, with Christ as its living Center.”²

² E. G. White, *Appeal and Suggestions to Conference Officers in Regard to the Development and Elevation of the Gospel Ministry* (n.p.: 1892?), 26.

Come with me to a beautiful white sandy beach. Majestic rocky cliffs tower on each side of us. The waves roll onto the beach in front of us while they crash against the rocks along the cliffs. Clouds painted red and orange by the setting sun fleece the sky. The rays of the sun glisten in the wet sand and sparkle in the splashing waves. Lean back on the beach and enjoy the site. Now watch as the scene changes. You are sitting in the same place, looking at the same beach and rocks in the waves, but the sun has vanished. The sky is dark and gray. The sand does not glisten; no pink tints the sky. Although you have not moved, are you looking at the same picture?

Biblical doctrine must be viewed as a whole. When we remove from it even one of the basic fundamental doctrines, it is as if we have erased the sun from the picture. We might be sitting in the same place, but the picture is not the same. All biblical doctrines comprise a beautiful mosaic. To remove even one piece of the picture distorts the whole.

Illustrating the Role of Doctrine in Christian Life

Several doctrines will be studied to illustrate the relationship between Christian living and doctrine.

The Sabbath

The Sabbath, for example, tells us that God is our Creator, our Redeemer, and the One who holds our future in his hands—the One who will completely restore us to himself in the new earth. The Sabbath also assures us that God is personal. He is not the impersonal God of Deism who set processes in motion and then abandoned his creation. Nor did he return thousands of years after creation to inform us that we were created for relationship with him. Rather, he was there the very first day of creation, to reveal himself to us and to fellowship with us. Thus the Sabbath assures us that our God is not some impersonal object, force, or concept; rather he is a personal God who created us for fellowship.

The Sabbath also tells us about ourselves. In our fast-paced environment, it is tempting to think that humankind is the creator and sustainer. The Sabbath reminds us that we were created by the hand of God, and we are redeemed by his power. It assures us that our future is in his hands and that we can rest our lives in his care just as he rested and ceased his labors on the seventh day.

The Sabbath also describes our relationship with God. God is the Creator, and we are the created. Our existence cannot be credited to our intelligence or power. We are not autonomous. We are the creation of God.

Thus the Sabbath is a reminder that God is God, and we are human. We do not relate to God as equals. Our appropriate response to God is worship.

The Sabbath also reminds us that authority lies within God's self-revelation given to us in his Word. As such, the Sabbath plays an eschatological role, demarcating those who are willing to rely on God's Word in spite of the dictates of human reason and human powers.

Thus the Sabbath represents our entire relationship with God: from creation to redemption, from sin to salvation, from self-centeredness to God, from self-reliance to reliance upon God's power and Word. The Sabbath is not simply a doctrine, its meaning is fulfilled when it initiates, defines, and provides the opportunity for restoration to fellowship with God.

The doctrine of God's self-revelation and the resultant authority of the Bible are also important to our relation to God. Imagine Adam and Eve waking up from creation wondering how they got there, who they were, and what the purpose was for their lives. Without God's revelation, they would not have known about the dangers of the tree in the center of the garden, about the meaning or existence of the Sabbath, nor would they have known God as a personal, loving Being. Without the Bible, we are left with guesses about the existence and nature of God and about his relationship with us. It is through the Bible that we can know God, understand our own existence, and have the confidence to look forward with purpose in our lives.

Biblical Creation

The biblical doctrine of a recent literal six-day creation also illustrates the importance of doctrine for the development of our understanding and relationship with God. For example, theistic evolution, the popular alternate explanation for the existence of life on earth, leaves open many questions about the nature of God, mankind, and the relationship between God and mankind. Does God exist, and did he create life on earth? If so, is he really a personal God, or is he some kind of impersonal force or concept in the universe? Is he a God of love, and if so, why would he take hundreds of millions of years of tooth and claw to create mankind? And who are we, descendants of a lightning strike that initiated life and a rich pre-biotic soup? Did we humans ascend through the chain of the animal kingdom and finally through our ancestors, the apes? When did God decide to initiate fellowship with us? Why did it take millions of years to make that decision? And so we see that the acceptance of evolution for the origin of life raises many questions about the nature of God and mankind. We are left without a basis for knowledge of God and an understanding of ourselves.

The Results of Denying Essential Characteristics of God

Imagine you have a friend who is extremely friendly and outgoing. This friend has excellent people skills and is constantly finding ways of helping those with whom he comes in contact. Now suppose that you deny the essential characteristic of this friend, namely, that he has a very keen interest in people. How would this denial impact your relation with that friend? No doubt your friend would respond by continuing to reach out to you. Nonetheless your relationship would be impacted because you yourself would begin to withdraw from that friend.

Now let us ask, what happens when we deny the essential characteristics of God? Suppose we say, “God, I don't believe that You created life on earth in six days, nor do I think that You created Adam and Eve in your image; furthermore, I do not think that You sent your Son to take my sins upon himself and to die in my place. Also, I can't imagine why You would send a prophet into this world just before your second coming, and it makes no sense to me that You would conduct an investigative judgment in heaven as preparation for the second coming.” Denying essential characteristics of God and his activities is just as detrimental to our relation with God as is denying key elements in the personalities of our close friends.

In addition, it is the law of the mind and character that we will become like the individual thing or concept that we admire most in life. If we have placed God first in our lives and accept his self-revelation as a guide to our lives, God will send his Holy Spirit to transform us into harmony with his character. The more fully our lives are in harmony with God's character, the closer we can live in relationship with him. On the other hand, if we accept false concepts of God and allow those concepts to mold our lives, our characters, we will be out of harmony with God's character and our relationship will be distorted if not eventually destroyed.

The Apostle John tells us that eternal life comes from knowing the only *true* God (John 17:3). Not just any God, not a creation of our own imagination—a “designer” God—but God as he has revealed himself to us in the living Word, Jesus Christ (John 1:18) and in his written Word, the Bible. Ellen White comments: “This book [the Bible] is the voice of God speaking to us. The Bible opens to us the words of life; for it makes us acquainted with Christ who is our life. In order to have true, abiding faith in Christ, we must know him as he is represented in the word.”³ “He who through the word of

³ E. G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1923), 433.

God has lived in fellowship with heaven will himself be at home in heaven's companionship.”⁴ John did not say that we should know God, whoever we think he is! Nor did he suggest that we should get to know the *designer gods*, which are popular in our culture. He emphasized that we should know the only *true* God.

In summary, Christianity is not Christian if it attempts to find its basis in the knowledge of doctrine, works, meditation, or any other human effort. However, doctrines do provide the guidelines and the context within which our relationship with God can flourish. Christianity is fulfilled when we are restored to a right relationship with God through Christ. It means that Christ is the Center of doctrine, not simply because the study of doctrine refers to his name, nor because his words are quoted when teaching doctrine, but because doctrine leads to the knowledge of him so that we might fellowship with him.

⁴ E. G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1980), 264.

Influence and Ministry of the Vicar of Christ in the History of the Christian Church

Merling Alomía

Reality of the Vicar of Jesus

The reality of the Holy Spirit as the sole Vicar of Christ is based on the Word of God that records what Jesus said about him:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth... But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”— John 14:16, 26.

“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment... he will guide you into all truth... he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” — John 16:7–15.

Introduction

Not long ago, in the field of biblical scholarship it was usual in theological jargon, to brand the Holy Spirit as the “Great Unknown” and even “Cinderella,”¹ mostly due to the lack of biblical references that would mention him, and especially the few works dedicated to him. At present, it is no longer appropriate to refer to the third Person of the Trinity in this way,² given the growing interest shown in him and considering the immense variety of exhibitions expressed focused on him in recent decades.³ However, above all, this is due to the reality of his existence as it is expressed in Scripture.

¹ A. W. Wainwright, *La Trinidad en el Nuevo Testamento*, Koinonia 2 (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1976), 235.

² Carmelo Granado, *El Espíritu Santo en la teología patristica* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1987), 9.

³ The following list is by no means exhaustive pretense, it is hardly representative: H. Mülhen, *El acontecimiento de Cristo como obra del Espíritu Santo* (Madrid: Mysterium Salutis, 1971); Francis Schaeffer, *The New Super-Spirituality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972); J. de Goitia, *La fuerza del Espíritu: Pneuma-Dynamis*, Teología Deusto 6 (Billbao: Ediciones Mensajero, 1974); Vynson Synan, *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Alachua, FL: Bridge Logos, 1975); H. Mülhen, *El Espíritu santo en la iglesia*, Koinonia 1 (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1974); Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 1976); George T. Montague, *The Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition* (New York: Paulist, 1976); J. Leon Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1976); W. A. Criswell, *The Holy Spirit in Today's World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976); C. Heitmann and H. Mülhen, eds., *Experiencia y teología del Espíritu Santo* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1978); C. K. Barret, *El Espíritu Santo en la tradición sinóptica*, Koinonia 8 (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1978); J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesús y el Espíritu*, Koinonia 9 (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1981); F. Porsch, *El Espíritu Santo defensor de los creyentes*, Koinonia 18 (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1983); Y. M. Congar, *El Espíritu santo* (Barcelona: Herder, 1983); René Pache, *La persona y obra del Espíritu Santo* (El Paso, TX: Casa de Publicaciones Bautista, 1983); Richard J. Sklba, “Until the Spirit on High is Poured out on Us” (Isa 32:15): Reflections on the Role of the Spirit in the Exile,” *CBQ* 46 (1984): 1–17; Jon D. W. Watts, ed., *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honor of J. Rodman Williams*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 5 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994); R. P. Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in I Corinthians 12–15* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984); M. G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980); D. I. Block, “The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of RWH in the Book of Ezekiel,” *JETS* 32 (1989): 27–49; Victor H. Mathews, “Holy Spirit,” *ABD* 3:260–280; W. Hildebrand, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995); Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah*, JSOTSup 271 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); A. B. Simpson, *El poder de lo alto* (Terrasa, Barcelona: CLIE, 1989); Horacio Alonso, *El don del Espíritu Santo* (Terrasa, Barcelona: CLIE, 1992); G. Campbell Morgan, *El Espíritu de Dios* (Terrasa, Barcelona: CLIE, 1984); Oswald Smith, *El Espíritu Santo está obrando* (Tarragona, Barcelona: CLIE, 1986); William E. Richardson, *Speaking in Tongues: Is still the Gift of the Spirit?* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1994); George W. Dollar, “Church History and the Tongues Movement S,” *BSac* 120.4 (1963): 309–311; C. L. Rogers, Jr., “Gift of Tongues in the Post-Apostolic Church (A.D. 100–400),” *BSac* 122 (1965): 134–143; Watson E. Mills, ed., *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glosolalia* (Grand Rapids,

The Old Testament story begins in Genesis with the account of the origin of the universe and our existence, highlighting the powerful action of the third person of the Trinity working directly from the first day of creation (Gen 1:2) to the latter part of the Old Testament which ends by explicitly noting the intervention of the Spirit and the promise of his help and constant companionship to the faithful in the last centuries prior to Christianity (Hag 2:5; Zech 4:6). However, throughout this time, it seems that he remains hidden in the actions of his two divine companions and his presence is assumed, or tacit, and is not always as conspicuous as that of the first or second person. Their actions and presence are or appear as something binding; that is, his actions exert as if they were the link that binds or holds together the actions of the three in a way that results in a joint action, united and perfect from our triune God.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is seen in glimpses in times of great actions as being the executor of the acts of God. In the New Testament, he is seen fully as the director of the unfathomable wonders that identify him with the divine plan to redeem us from the detestable tangle called “the Great Controversy” and from its abominable result, sin.

An attempt to frame the blessed course of the action of the Spirit throughout the centuries in Christendom would be as follows: [a] At the start of the apostolic church (1st century); [b] when he spoke through the patristic apologetics and convened councils (centuries 2–5); [c] when the medieval

MI: Eerdmans, 1986); Donald A. D. Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Asbury Press, 1990); Gerhard F. Hasel, *Speaking in Tongues: Biblical Speaking in Tongues and Contemporary Glossolalia* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1994); Donald W. Dayton, *Raíces teológicas del Pentecostalismo* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991); José M. Martínez, *Introducción a la espiritualidad Cristiana* (Tarragona, Barcelona: CLIE, 1997); Vinson Synan, *The Holiness Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); D. I. Block “Empowered by the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Historical Writings of the Old Testament,” *Southern Baptist Theological Journal* 2 (1998): 46–55; J. Stephen Lang, *1,101 Things You Always Wanted to Know about the Holy Spirit* (Nelson, 1999); H. Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901–2001* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2001); Stanley M. Burgess, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002); Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Wüdasé Mesrak Teshome, *Glossolalia: The Therapeutic Value of Praying in Tongues* (Fullerton, CA: ABC Psych. Consultants, 2006); Jack W. Hayford and Seth David Moore, *The Charismatic Century: The Enduring Impact of the Azusa Street Revival* (New York: Warner Faith, 2006); Paul Alexander, *Signs and Wonders: Why Pentecostalism is the World’s Fastest Growing Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2009); Warren D. Bullock, *When the Spirit Speaks: Making Sense of Tongues, Interpretation and Prophecy* (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 2009).

darkness clouded the truth (centuries 6–15); [d] during the days of the Reformation and counter reform (centuries 16–17); [e] during the “end time” (centuries 18–end).

At the Start of the Apostolic Church (First Century)

The New Testament is the authentic record of the beginning of the Christian church, which, in turn, begins with the wonderful revelation of the divine intervention of the third person of the Godhead by making the most wonderful miracle of the universe and of the ages, the embodiment of the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Verb (Word), in such a way that it became flesh, and as Son of God and man, might dwell among miserable sinners in order to seek and save them; this was the reason for the incarnation. This unfathomable mystery, which is the essence of the Gospel, is revealed to us briefly and sublimely.

Scripture records this portent consummated the incarnation because “the Word became flesh” to dwell among us (John 1:14) and, it was so. Then, the same Spirit that fathered him anointed him in the year 27 at his baptism (Luke 3:21–22), to be a Messenger, a prophet (4:16–19), an atoning offering for sin on Calvary, and our Holy Pontiff in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 5:5; 7:25–26). Moreover, after his ascension, the Holy Spirit as his faithful vicar descended fully on his Jewish-Christian church at Pentecost in the upper room (Acts 2:1–4) and in the same way over the Gentile-Christian church in the house of Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10:44–45). Since then, he guides everyone towards the Messiah (Jesus), towards the anointed, leading them to repent and, after making them born again, seals them unto salvation (Eph 4:30), guides them as children of God (Rom 8:14), helps them in their weakness, constantly interceding for them (Rom 8:26).

In fact, when one enters the New Testament field, it is very evident that the picture of the Trinity picture is enlarged because, from the moment when the second Person of the Godhead takes our nature, each one received his own distinctive name as we now know them: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Isa 9:14; Matt 28:19). Jehovah became flesh to dwell with us in order to save us.

All this and much more, as recorded in each book of the New Testament, was part of the knowledge and message that the apostolic church believed, taught, preached, and lived concerning the Holy Spirit. his fully divine identity, his nature, his sacrosanct works as such in the saving ministry were recognized and lived openly. However, in every occasion and throughout

time, he “has breathed where he wanted and how he wanted to” and especially on those who have received him to be born of the Spirit (cf. John 3:8) “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom 8:14).

Tracing history, it seems mostly that, with respect to the Holy Spirit, the early church had to face the problem of where the Holy Spirit spoke and where not, but also had to define the genuineness of the personal testimony of those who claimed to speak as inspired by the Spirit. In both cases the church followed the apostolic advice. For the “where to and where not,” the church obeyed the Pauline inspired direction, the divine spiritual authenticity was discernible in the recognition that the community made to the lordship of Jesus, because “no one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3) and also, if that demonstration was uplifting for the community (14:1–5); that is, what “fruit” such demonstration generated where it appeared (Matt 7:16). In contrast, discernment regarding the genuineness of personal testimony, i.e. the “talk to,” followed the Johannine inspired counsel, considering the full recognition of Christ as the Incarnate and his full action as such in the world (1 John 4:1–6).

Since the first half of the first century, Christianity in Syria, in the Didache community,⁴ in addition to recognizing the genuineness of the prophetic manifestation as a gift of the Holy Spirit obviously had to deal with pseudo itinerant prophets who claimed to be led by the Spirit.⁵ This is evidenced by the Didache which acknowledged the genuineness of the prophetic gift given by the Holy Spirit (XI.7). At the same time, it determined who were not by showing the standard adopted against them to establish their falsity (XI.8). It stipulated that an itinerant prophet, accepting hospitality from a community for more than two days (XI.5), claiming to be impelled by the Spirit, and requesting a meal and even money for himself, should be expelled as a false prophet (XI 9, 12).⁶ This, in fact, matched the

⁴ Didache is the name of a Syrian Christian community of the first century. In turn, Didache is also the name of an anonymous document produced by the Christian “Didachean” community of the place that reveals some rules established by the church of the town and were probable also practiced in other Christian communities of that era. Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), ix, x, 29. Although the Didache seems to be more of a “pastoral manual” (ibid., vii), scholars consider the *Didache* even a “church manual” dating it between 70 to 150. See James L. Ash, “The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church,” *TS* 37.2 (1976): 232.

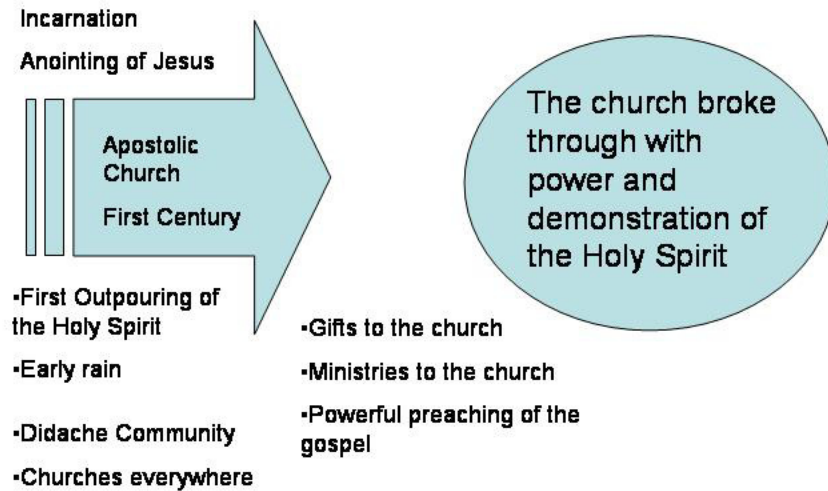
⁵ Notable, the Didache protects specifically protects from trial prophets who “speak in the Spirit” because otherwise the judge commits the “unpardonable sin” (11:7). Milavec, *The Didache*, 36, 37.

⁶ Milavec, *The Didache*, 26–39.

Johannine warning not to even “receive in your home, or even welcome” someone opposed to the “doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9–10).

In fact, Scripture itself testifies that, when entering the new century, the church was convinced that the Holy Spirit was the third person of the Trinity who, along with the church, was the divine agent inviting sinners to participate freely and fully of salvation (Rev 22:17).

Ministry of the Holy Spirit during the first century



The Apologetic Fathers and Councils Convened (Centuries 2–5)

Halfway through the second century, there appeared in Phrygia, minor Asia, Montanus (ca. 157) who considered himself to be “the incarnation of the Holy Spirit” that Christ promised to his church. It is said that he had a large retinue of prophets and especially prophetesses who, in ecstatic demonstrations, heralded the end of the world and the descent of the

heavenly Jerusalem.⁷ Similarly, they practiced a strict way of life, which required fasting, which took into account certain sins as unpardonable; in addition, they did not accept second marriage, and for them, escaping, including escaping persecution, was unacceptable.⁸ Their writings have disappeared, but their ideas are known from Eusebius, Epiphanius and Tertullian.⁹ His influence was powerful because it spread rapidly through Italy, throughout Gaul and North Africa.

Fortunately, around the same time there were patristic champions who spoke legitimately concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, among them Justin Martyr (d. ca. 165) who was also a philosopher. Three of his works have survived: “*Apologia I*” [*First Apology*], “*Apologia II*” [*Second Apology*], and “*Diálogo con el judío Trifón*” [*Dialogue with Trypho*]. In two of them the Spirit is a prominent theme and this Christian sees the Spirit as the indispensable being-producer in the work of salvation. For Justin, Pentecost is a special time where the Spirit becomes a gift of Jesus to believers.¹⁰ Since then, the Comforter continues to communicate through the church because she is the place of communication of the Spirit, because he considers the presence of the gifts in the church as a continuation of the Apostolic Pentecost.¹¹

Origen of Alexandria (184–164) is credited with the preparation of the first systematic treatise on the Holy Spirit in his work *De principiis* [*First Principles*] I 3. Speaking of the Spirit’s action in humanity, Origen believed that there were two comings of the Holy Spirit on mankind. The first occurred in the Old Testament, basically with the coming of the Spirit to the prophets. The second, which is the main one, is the one that happened to the apostles at Pentecost and in fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (Joel 3:1).¹² The point is that he considered them explicitly only on men, and which are not to be considered part of the descent of the Spirit on Christ at his

⁷ Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1971), 569–570.

⁸ Tertullian referred that the Montanist concept in this aspect was, “adultery and fornication were forgiven before baptism,” after it, impossible. David W. Bercot, ed., “Montanus,” *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 464.

⁹ It should be noted that although all that is known about Montanus is mostly of his opponents, however, there is uniformity in what they say about him so that his teachings were not quite right.

¹⁰ Justin Martyr, *Diálogo* 87,6, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 26.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 39:2, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 27.

¹² Origen, *De Principiis* II 7, 2: *Sources chrétiennes* 252, 238, 34–41, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 109.

incarnation nor, especially, at his baptism. To these however, he did give paramount importance.

According to Origen, the Spirit came upon Jesus in the Jordan, not merely as it came on many others in the Old Testament. To the latter, the Spirit came to equip them for a particular and temporary function, and at best as a gift. By contrast, it came upon Christ, so to speak, with the seven gifts that Isaiah had prophesied (Isa 11:1–2). This in fact means the fullness with which the Spirit came upon him was in the fullness of its potential, personality, and power in its highest degree.¹³ Origen's theology, however, erred in considering the origin of the Spirit, because even when he associated the Spirit with the Father and the Son in a variety of places in his work, he included uncertainty in the disquisitions concerning the question of the origin of the Spirit and¹⁴ whether or not the Spirit can be considered child.¹⁵

By the late second century, Irenaeus of Lyon (d. 202), became a champion in the presentation of the activity of the Holy Spirit in all stages, or as he called it, God's economy, the history of salvation. His works "*Canon de la verdad*" (*The Cannon of truth*) and "*Regla de fe*" (*Rule of faith*) are remarkable. Irenaeus did not conceive of any stage of the Spirit which was interrupted in the world because he always is "attending men, announcing the future, showing the present, and interpreting the past."¹⁶ For Irenaeus, from the outpouring of the Spirit in the church, the Spirit, as God's gift, has been entrusted to the church. To mention church, it is in reference to the

¹³ "So on all who have prophesied, the Holy Spirit has rested, yet on none of these has he rested as he did on the Savior. This is why it is written of him that: 'A shoot shall arise from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall grove from his root. The Spirit of God will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of piety and the spirit of fear will fill him'.... But notice on no other is the Spirit of God described as having rested with this sevenfold virtue." Origen, "Homily 6: Numbers 11:16–25, 3:2," in *Homilies on Numbers*, ed. C. A. Hall, trans. Thomas P. Schek, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 22; see also, Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 107n45.

¹⁴ "On this point it is not clear if he is begotten or not, or whether he should be considered the son of God or not: both must be investigated according to our forces from the Holy Scripture and keenly examined." Origen, *De principiis*, Praefacium I 4, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 106.

¹⁵ See for example, his statements like the following: "If it is true that all things were made through him (*pánta di'autoû egéneto*) we must examine whether the Spirit was also made through him (*di'autoû egéneto*)," *Commentary to Saint John* II 10, 73. "I think that for anyone who claims to have an origin (*genetón*) and puts forward 'all things were made through him', must necessarily admit that the Holy Spirit was made by the Word (*dia toû Logoû*), considering the Word is older than him," *ibid.*, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 115.

¹⁶ Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* IV 33, 1: *Sources chrétiennes* (Lyon: Cerf, 1965), 100, 802, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 33.

Spirit that creates it and, where the Spirit of God is there is the church with the gifts raised up by the Spirit. In fact, the correct differentiation between true and false prophets must have been something that always troubled the church since the days of the apostolic church, and this was something that involved a direct manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Irenaeus, in turn, began to claim an unbroken succession of bishops who were custodians of the charisma of truth, which is why they were the ones who could decide the place and the way the Spirit spoke.¹⁷

The last decades of the second century and early third century were the scene in which Arius (270–236) proclaimed his doctrine. Arius did not conceive of the Son as consubstantial with the Father. The Son came to be, at most, the first of creatures and even the greatest of them, something like the first of the angels and nothing else. With this, he questioned whether the Word was created or begotten and, although begotten is greater than created, in relation to time, his acceptance always eliminated coeternity with the Father. Arianism resulted in serious clashes with Christianity; its missionaries were very active and effective especially in the Germanic peoples where it flourished until the sixth century. His particular development, as well as his confrontation with the so called incarnationists, was later developed in the fourth century. Although the Council of Nicaea (325) rejected Arianism's ideas, they gained prestige when Emperor Constantius II officialized Arianism's thesis until the Council of Constantinople (381) condemned Arianism. The problem persisted because the nature of the Holy Spirit was not determined and, therefore, given the dignity it was owed. Ideas, beginning with the Jewish, barely granted the Spirit the category of a type of "divine force." Modalism argued that it was only a divine quality. Then there was the Arian, who in referring to the Holy Spirit, barely considered him as a second creature or a second angel, and such was their rejection of his divinity that when the confrontation intensified, by mid-century, its proponents were branded "Pneumatomachi," that is, those who "kill the Spirit." However, the incarnationist theology prevailed that granted divinity to the Son, and therefore, also gave it to the Holy Spirit.

Already in the third century, Sabellius had appeared in the middle of an arduous Trinitarian controversy affecting the nature of Christ. He started a school in opposition to the teachings of Hippolytus, who denied the Trinity.

¹⁷ Eduard Schweizer, *El Espíritu Santo* (Salmanaca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1984), 12, 13n3.

However, Sabellius said that there was no distinction between divine persons, since the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one entity. They are the same God, manifested in various ways (modes) and hence the Sabellians were also called “modalities” [modalists], and thus, also denied the Trinity but from another angle. Besides, they argued that the one who was incarnated was not the Logos but the Father and rather it was the Father who died on the cross.¹⁸ Thus, Sabellius attempted to clarify the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit without contradicting the Jewish monotheism.

Hippolytus (d. ca. 236), was a Greek who became a disciple of Irenaeus. He acted precisely in papal Rome and was bishop there.¹⁹ Initially, he taught that the Divine Logos (the Word) became flesh in Christ, but that he differs from God the Father in every aspect and that Christ is the intermediary between God and Creation. This means that Christ was not God and thus, it is a denial of the Trinity. In fact, Hippolytus was a major contributor, as understood by Rome, of the first formal schism of the church and, at the same time, the first of the so-called anti-popes in the Petrine succession adduced by the Church of Rome.²⁰ Likewise, he began to defend the idea that the Holy Spirit is manifested only in the successors of the hierarchical priesthood as guardians of the faith and the church, who own the apostolic succession and the ministry of teaching. Thus, the idea that the Holy Spirit, which approved of and was present only in church ministry, grew since and lasted until today in the ranks of the Roman Church.

The beginnings of the third century were the scene of the prolific Tertullian (d. ca. 220). For him the Gospel, as the substance of the New Testament, contains the essence of New Testament revelation which, in turn, is the self-revelation of the Godhead in its three-person unit, which is fundamentally different in the Christian faith than in that of the Jewish. With this revelation, the New Testament boasts a new understanding of God which, in essence, is a new way of understanding the oneness of God, that is,

¹⁸ Charles A. Coulombe, *A History of the Popes Vicars of Christ* (New York: MJF, 2003), 38.

¹⁹ Hippolytus is seen as anti-pope, but is considered as the successor of Peter in the list of papal succession because his bishop was exercised in full pontificate of Callistus I (217–222), Urban I (222–230) and Pontian (230–235). He was a disciple of Irenaeus. Most of his writings are lost, but *Antichrist* survived in a complete way, commenting on this prophecy of Revelation. Hippolytus, was an outspoken opponent to the Christological heresies of his day. He also wrote many treatises in Greek concerning the unity of God in the Trinity. *Ibid.*, 41–43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

as tripersonal. Thus the New Testament revelation is made through the Son and the Spirit, who was acting during the Old Testament period and, although they revealed God, God was not understood in his true triperson essence. For Tertullian the one and only God is at the same time, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as these are the names of each of the divine persons.²¹ Actually Tertullian also noted that the Spirit is “another” within the Godhead and even named as “third party” and, moreover, he is the first theologian who applied the term “person” to the Holy Spirit which is essential to later Trinitarian theology.²²

Novatian is also a son of the third century and was previously a stoic philosopher. He is also one of the first so-called anti-popes because he exercised his pontificate in the years 251–258 parallel to these five popes: Cornelius (252–253), Lucius I (253–254), Stephen I (May 12, 254–August 2, 257) and Sixtus II (August 31, 257–August 6, 258).²³ His treatises *De Trinitate* and *Regula Veritatis* exhibit their teaching on the Spirit. For Novatian, the Spirit, being always the same, has operated throughout history. Moreover, the activity of the Holy Spirit in the prophets of the Old Testament is the reference point to contrast or illustrate the activity of the Spirit in the New Testament and the church. The Old Testament prophets are those in whom the Spirit has expressed its preferred action, and has portrayed them so prominently that in those days all activity of the Spirit was concentrated in them. However, the prophets, moved by the Spirit, proclaimed Christ as the giver of the Spirit to the church. One thing to note is that Novatian did not define the Spirit as a “person,” Although Hippolytus and Tertullian had already defined it in that way and were known and used by Novatian, he never called the Spirit “God” explicitly. Although Novatian was excommunicated, he organized a parallel church that lasted until the year 600.²⁴

²¹ Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 31, 1–2: *Corpus Christianorum Latina*. Series Latina. Thurnhout. 2, 1024, 1–11, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 50.

²² Tertullian said, “Since then (Gen 1:26) the Son was with him, second person, his Word, and the third (person), the Spirit in the Word” (*Adversus Praxean* 12, 3: CCL 2, 1173, 12–13). He further stated, “In favor of my thesis is that the Lord, when he used this word about the first person of the Paraclete, did not suggest a division but a disposition, he says: And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth (Juan 14, 16). So he says the Paraclete is another different than himself, as we say that the Son is another than the Father” (*Adversus Praxean* 9, 3: *Corpus Christianorum*. Series Latina. Thurnhout, 2, 1168, 18–1169, 24), quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 74, 75.

²³ Coulombe, *A History of the Popes, Vicars of Christ*, 48–54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

Well into the third century, there were groups of men and women living in the most severe sexual continence and who certainly claimed to be influenced by the Holy Spirit. They traveled the country alone or in groups, visiting the sick, casting out demons, bringing together the brotherhood and in fact relying only on the Spirit, preaching the gospel with simplicity but effectively, that is, without fanfare of oratory but with undeniable eloquence.²⁵ Around the same time one of these groups appeared who called itself “small,” whose members separated themselves from the others, including the church, to live in a world apart. This way, they claimed, they received the Holy Spirit in all its fullness and, equally, they said to see what no other mortal could see or hear, that is, what only heavenly dwellers could perceive.²⁶

In fact, it was from the fourth century, when the idea grew that the full possession of the Spirit was given only to one who has an absolutely ascetic life in a cloister, in marriage or to him who denies his own existence. Crucial to this is what would be established by the Catholic Church centuries later at the Council of Trent, declaring that bishops are the result of apostolic succession and that they “are placed by the Holy Spirit to govern the Church of God.”²⁷

The Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381)

The terminology used by Origen to describe the role of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit was the subject of much discussion, because even his disciples exaggerated their position. Criticism came from those who felt that he was against monotheism, and also from those who identified the Holy Spirit with the Son or with grace or with a child. When the church met at the First Council of Nicaea (325), it was concerned with examining the ideas of Arius and started working on the question of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. The pronouncement against Arius laid a basic foundation for the extensive development of Christology. However, while this council was not about the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the scheme of the Nicene Creed does point to a certain equality when it states, “*We believe in one God, Father almighty... in one Lord Jesus Christ... in the Holy Spirit.*” Not until the year 360, according

²⁵ G. Kretschmar, “Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Ursprung frühchristlicher Askese,” *ZTK* 61 (1964): 33–34, quoted in Schweizer, *El Espíritu Santo*, 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Concilio de Trento*, session 23, col. 3 and 4, quoted in Schweizer, *El Espíritu Santo*, 13.

to reports from Athanasius, and heated disputes with the Arians, does attention turn from Christology towards Pneumatology.

Then at the Council of Constantinople (381), the expressions of Gregory of Nyssa (331–396) were assumed in the following terms: “we believe [...] in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, and with the Father and Son is worshiped and glorified who spoke by the prophets.”

In the middle of the fourth century, Cyril of Jerusalem arrived (350–387). What is remarkable about Cyril is that he was well aware of the impossibility of speaking about the Holy Spirit without the help of grace, and it was too dangerous to talk about it outside the realm of Scripture.²⁸ So he declared unequivocally that his writings were supported by the Holy Scriptures and only by them. As he affirmed, “About the Holy Spirit let us say only what is written. If something is not written, then let’s not occupy on it.”²⁹ Similarly, recognizing the authorship of Scripture by the Holy Spirit, Cyril said that if the desire of the Spirit had been that we knew more about it, he would have revealed more in it.³⁰ Cyril’s understanding of the Spirit was fully Trinitarian. For him, the Spirit belonged to the divine Trinity and was inseparable from both the Father and the Word and, being inseparable from both, and exercising his domain with them without beginning or end, is a partaker of the same glory of the Father and the Son,³¹ with whom he is simultaneously honored.³²

Hilary of Poitiers (d. 368), as the leading figure of the Council of Paris (361) wrote his masterpiece “*De Trinitate*” (*On the Trinity*) in twelve books in which he broadly outlined his doctrine on the Spirit. In fact, the second book of his work presents systematically the doctrine of the Trinity based on Matt 28:19–20. Hilary was convinced that this text was sufficient for

²⁸ “Spiritual grace is truly necessary to speak of the Holy Spirit, not because we are going to speak as the subject deserves, because it is impossible, but to proceed safely when exposing things from Holy Scripture,” *Catechesis* 16 1: *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J. Migne (Paris, 33 917^a), quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 129

²⁹ *Catechesis* XVI 2: *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J. Migne (Paris 33, 920 AB), quoted in Granado, *ibid.*, 129n12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 129n16, 19.

³¹ As he said, “He sits on the very throne of the Glory of the Father and the Son. Reigns without beginning and without end with the Father and the Son.” *Catechesis XVI additamentum* 2: *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.- P. Migne (Paris, 33, 995A), quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 172n349.

³² *Catechesis* XVI 4: *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J.- P. Migne (Paris, 33, 921^a), quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 172.

believers, because it was all that was necessary for the salvation of man, and it was in this text that the Spirit was presented with the Father and the Son, as belonging to the sphere of the divine.³³ However, it is in explaining the text of the baptism of Jesus that Hilary exposed one of his peculiarities concerning the Spirit. For him, in baptism the Word was anointed, but only the man Jesus that is the humanity of the Word, because in his understanding, that anointing was intended to sanctify the humanity that had been assumed.³⁴ Since Jesus is God and man, as God he is already perfect, so the reason for his anointing is to be found in his humanity. Thus, by his anointing it is our humanity that becomes sanctified in Christ.³⁵ Moreover, for Hilary, the Holy Spirit is of God, and is in God and, as such, penetrates and searches the deep mysteries of God. No other is comparable to the Spirit and it is by virtue of all this absolute knowledge that he has of God that he helps us learn more about God.

Ambrose of Milan (340–397) is also one of the writers who focused on the reality of the Spirit in his work and mission on this earth but, above all, that which is linked to the activity of Jesus. Ambrose is fundamental in the characterization of the descent of the Spirit on the Savior when he was baptized in the Jordan. The anointing of the Messiah surpassed any other experienced by men since it is only with Jesus that communication and surrender occurs in the fullness of the Spirit. Central to their understanding of the fullness and significance of this anointing is this:

If you say Christ, you have named God the Father, by whom the Son was anointed, and the same, who was anointed, namely, the Son and the Spirit, with which he was anointed. Indeed, it is written: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38).³⁶

For Ambrose, the term “Christ” said in isolation has no significance aside from being a mere name. However, in the context of the Gospel announcement, it is the theological synthesis of the Trinity, since by declaring Jesus as the Messiah or Christ, you are implicitly declaring the three persons who participate in this anointing. However, Ambrose also

³³ Hilary, *Trinitate* II 1:38, 12–32, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 192.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, XI 18: 547, 12–548, 25, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 199

³⁵ *Ibid.*, XI 19: 549, 30–550, 34, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 199, 209n35.

³⁶ Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto* I 3, 44: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, Vienna, 79, 33, 63–66, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 234.

understood a central aspect of Jesus' anointing because it indicates that therefore he was anointed by the Father as a priest.

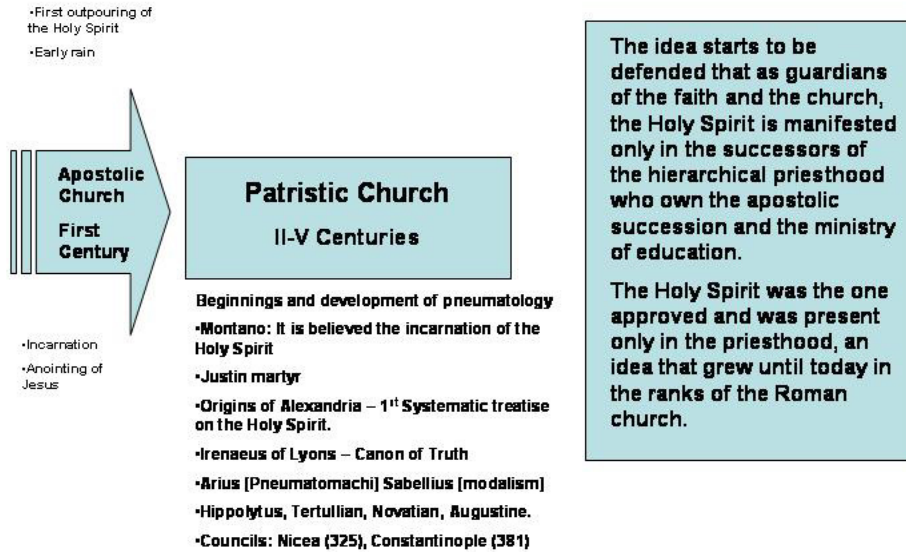
And with good reason (the Spirit) is an ointment as it is called oil of gladness (Psalm 44:8), with which, exhaling the scent of the mixture of many graces, God and Father almighty anointed the true prince of high priests, who was not anointed symbolically as the others in a legal way, since he was not only anointed in his own body according to the law but rather was actually filled in reality above the law by virtue of the Holy Spirit that comes from the Father.³⁷

During the 5th century, Augustine of Hippo (354–430) contributed greatly to the formation of the Trinitarian doctrine. He started with the identity of the substance and the distinction of the divine persons claiming that this distinction is due to their respective roles that, although common to all three persons, are granted. Thus the Holy Spirit is the common gift of the Father and the Son (cf. *De Trinitate* V 12 13; 15 16; 16 17). The philosophical category allowing you to overcome tritheism is the relationship and therefore, affirms that the Holy Spirit is “consubstantial and eternal communion” or “caritas” reciprocal of the Father over the Son and vice versa. Therefore it is the Holy Spirit who properly receives the name of “love” used in the first letter of John.³⁸

³⁷ Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto* I 9, 100: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna), 79, 59, 4–9, quoted in Granado, *El Espíritu Santo*, 235.

³⁸ Augustine, *De Trinitate* VI 5 7; XV 17 30s.

Ministry of the Holy Spirit during II-V centuries



During the Medieval Darkness When the Truth Was Thrown to the Ground (6th–14th Centuries)

Already in the sixth century, during the celebration of a council, the Western Church chose to change the Nicene formula of origin of the Spirit by adding, “proceeding from the Father *and the Son.*” However, this formula was rejected in the east, resulting in what is known as the question of “*filioque*” —which in Latin means “*and the Son.*”

Later in the year 876 a synod in Constantinople condemned the pope for failing to correct the heresy of the “*filioque clause.*” The disputes took great force since the prepositions “*ex*” and “*dia*” were not considered identical because the Byzantine theologians argued that the first was used for the Father and the Son. The idea was to affirm that the Holy Spirit proceeds (εκπορευεσθαι) from the Father through the Son. However, the Council approved the text “*proceeds from the Father and the Son.*”

Then, during the Middle Ages, the Antichrist was responsible for the clouds that cloaked the existence of the Vicar of Jesus and, cancelling his ministry, appropriated to itself the title of “Vicar of the Son of God” and thus added to his list one more blasphemy against the Most High, as was shown to

Daniel, the works that the “little horn” would do during the peak of his power (Daniel 8:11–13; 11:31; 12:9). This issue is so important that it was explicitly revealed to John that the pretended vicariate of the beast would be accentuated by the adoption of its preferred, ancient, and blasphemous title *Vicarius filii Dei* for his image, imposed as a sign and number of his blasphemous name requiring his adoration under threat of death (Revelation 13:15–18). The remarkable thing about this is that the Lord emphasized this pretention in the apocalyptic prophetic picture showing the way the Beast would dare to point out his mendacity. It would show in his image the same long-cherished favorite title at a time when the Holy Spirit itself would be acting after the eschatological Pentecost and when his church would be giving the last cry of mercy to a lost world with the power fully received in the latter rain.³⁹

Tensions rose between Rome and Byzantium in 1054 as the papal representative imposed papal excommunication on Caerularius Michael, patriarch of Constantinople, while presiding over the Sabbath service. Without delay Michael put Pope Leo I under curse. The “Filioque” controversy is still a point of contention between the Church of the West and East. However, the main reason for the schism was the Roman papal claim alleging apostolic Petrine succession, which required his leadership as bishop, head, and prince of all bishops and of the church and required the vicariate of Christ as the bishop of Rome rejecting the validity of the Sabbath in the Eastern Church.

³⁹ The issue of the interpretation of the blasphemous papal vicariate in its numeric decipherment has become controversial even in the ranks of Adventism in the last decades. They adopt the interpretation of the same Catholic Church and apostate Protestantism, preferring to see in the apocalyptic digit as only a number revealed in an individual and uncertain future or the direct compliance with Nero or some symbolic representation of purely human ostentation. However, in doing so, they are only republishing in some way the futurist and preterist interpretations invented by the same “little horn.” The classical protestant interpretation of this matter, considering its antiquity, as well as its evident characterization, should lead to the consideration to be seen as correct at least until proven otherwise. It is impossible to ignore that for thirteen centuries the papacy had maintained its continuously growing demand for the insolent claim to be the “Vicar of the Son of God.” If we take into account Pope Stephen II (752–757) as the first who laid a hand on the title by setting the false “donation of Constantine,” such a claim would come from the year 753, which is the date of this false decree, supposedly made by Constantine where it refers to the pope as “Vicar of the Son of God.” However, the same fraudulent decree claims to have been delivered on March 30 315. See Jerry A. Stevens, *Vicarius Filii Dei. Connecting Links Between Revelation 13:16–18, the Infamous Number 666, and the Papal Headdress* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2009), 17–18. Also see Edwin de Koch, *The Truth about 666* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2009), 453–485.

Already at the end of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries there appeared in Calabria, Italy, Joaquim of Fiore, whose teachings shook the church with great acceptance among the Franciscans. He stated that, after the Old Testament age of the Father and the New Testament age of the Son, the age of the monastic Spirit surfaced, and thanks to this, decisive change came to all ages of the world; he also announced the immediate disappearance of the world. Also by this time several religious movements had surfaced that later contributed to the formation of the *Union of Brothers* or *Moravian Brethren* in the mid-fifteenth century.

One of these groups was that of the Valdenses, which dated from the twelfth century. Another influential group was the movement derived from the Hussites, followers of John Hus.⁴⁰ This group preached that they should remain steadfast in their stand against politics and the world, adhering firmly to the Scriptures. Among their beliefs the members of this *small party*—their beliefs are registered in their masterpiece *Acta Unitatis Fratrum* (Acts of the Union of Brothers)—conceived of the *Holy Spirit*, as the *Finger of God and God's gift, a consolation, or the power of God, which the Father gives believers on the basis of the merits of Christ*.

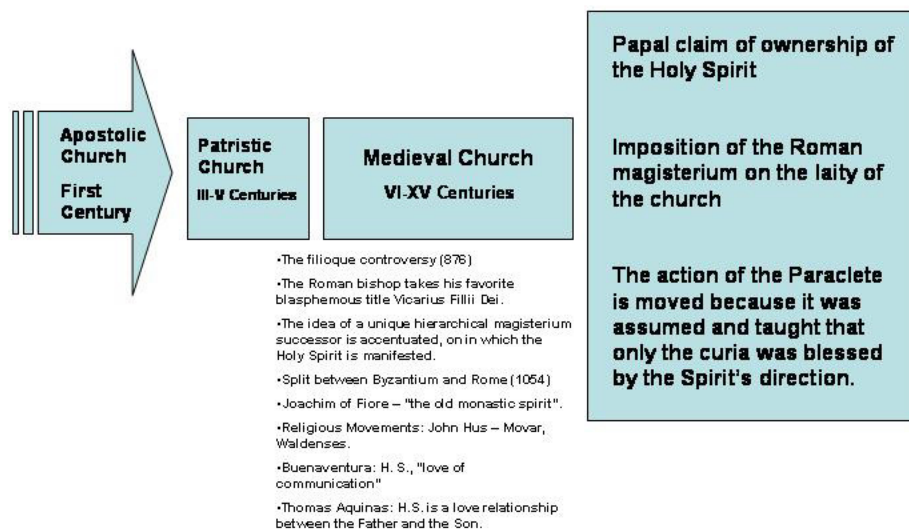
In the thirteenth century, Giovanni Fidanza, known as Buenaventura and also known as the Seraphic Doctor (1221–1274), defended the position of Augustine. Buenaventura spoke of the Holy Spirit as a communicative love (*Coment. a las Sent. I d.10 q.1*). According to him, the Spirit is the relation, the link between the Father and the Son, but that relationship is substantial. When directed towards us, it is a gift.

Thomas Aquinas (1227–1274) was the most prominent representative of medieval scholasticism. As a follower of the Aristotelian line, he sought to harmonize it with the Christian dogma. Aquinas in his work summarily affirms the existence of only three divine persons Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He declares it accepting completely the notion of the Holy Spirit as a

⁴⁰ The movement started by Jan Hus, called "Hussitism" coincided with the ideas of John Wycliffe and his followers were the Hussites, which greatly increased at times when several popes claimed the Roman prelate (Alexander V in 1409). Taken by deceit to the Council of Constance, Germany, and despite being "protected" by a safe conduct by the Hungarian Emperor Sigismund, Hus was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415. Before being set on fire, he warned his killers, "You are going to roast a goose, but within a century you will find a swan that you cannot grill." Hus means "goose" in Czech, and 102 years later the Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed to the door of the chapel of Wittenberg his 95 theses, starting with this the great movement of the Reformation and his coat of arms featured a swan. All the papal inquisitorial repressive apparatus of the Church of Rome could never burn Luther at the stake, because this time there were no traitor emperors to falsify his word.

relation of love between the Father and the Son. He develops a comparison between divine Trinity and the human mind's understanding since, "three things are found in the mind: the mind itself, which is the source of its procession, and which exists in its own nature; and in the mind as conceived in the intellect, and the mind as loved in the will."⁴¹ As Lambert expresses, this internal arrangement is used by Aquinas only as an analogy to the Trinity showing that the mind, its conception of itself and its self love; and the mind as loved in the will all have different natures like the persons of the Trinity ."⁴²

Ministry of the Holy Spirit during VI-XV centuries



⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith (Summa Contra Gentiles)*, trans. Anton Pegis, et al., 5 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1995), Vol 5 *Salvation*, 1997., Book 4, 26, 1.

⁴² Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles* IV 26, quoted in Richard T. Lambert, *Self Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas: The Angelic Doctor on the Soul's Knowledge of Itself* (Blomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2007], 54).

In fact, in the days of medieval papal claim to ownership of the Holy Spirit, and the imposition of the Roman ecclesiastical magisterium on the laity of the church, the performance of the Paraclete was displaced as it was assumed and taught that only the curia was blessed by the direction of the Spirit.

During the Days of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation (16th–17th Centuries)

Later, towards the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, there appeared in Zwickau, Saxony, Germany, some called prophets who taught that the interior lighting was more important than the doctrine concerning justification. They influenced powerfully through Thomas Müntzer (1468–1525) who claimed to be a new John the Baptist to prepare the kingdom of God, looking to establish a new theocracy free from tyrants and obeses. Likewise during the century of reform in full, there emerged in Münster, Rhine, Germany, Jan Matthys and Jan Beuckelsson who claimed to be guided by the Spirit to establish the kingdom of God. In their founding zeal, they eliminated Sundays and feast days and with equal enthusiasm, held what they called “love feasts” in the cathedral square where even citizens who did not enjoy the popularity of the people were beheaded; communal property was established, and polygamy was also introduced. To achieve all this, they burned all the city documents except the Bible.

On the other hand, several factors came together to create a sentiment contrary to the spiritual monopoly of the Roman clergy in the interpretation of Scripture and contrary to the rejection of the participation of the Spirit outside of the alleged apostolic succession. These continued until the outbreak of the indisputable support to the Augustinian monk Martin Luther in 1517 who dared to challenge the papal dogma. With the cry of *sola fide sola Scriptura* the Reform shook the foundations of papal Rome. Framed by this concept, Luther understood the Holy Spirit as the divine agent which made possible, through the Scriptures, the recognition of Christ as the Savior. Such a dynamic implies the principle of discernment whereby an inspired text talks to us about Jesus Christ. Of course, this recognition is possible only by the action of the Spirit in the believer’s soul.

John Calvin maintained a similar idea, stressing that it is the testimony of the Holy Spirit that allows us to distinguish what is the truly inspired word and what is not. Only then can the Word of God be considered as the supreme authority over human reason. Thus, he argued that the Scriptures

should be taken as the highest authority and above all reason or evidence or conjecture of human nature, as this meant that it was based on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. In this way, illuminated by his power, and not from our judgment or from that of others, the Scriptures are considered as coming from God. Calvin, in turn, stated that the Word was supreme in order to receive Jesus as the gift of God, which in turn was the instrument of the Holy Spirit.⁴³

During the days of the Reformation and Counter Reformation Protestants expressed a renewed attention to the issue of the sources of revelation, which is why they proclaimed *sola Scriptura*. Catholics, for their part, stressed the insufficiency of the Scriptures without the direction of a correct interpretation. Thus, contrary to the Protestant understanding of Scripture, they pointed that the Scripture should be read only in church because there is where the Holy Spirit dwells. However, the Holy Spirit was the full guarantor of the teachings by the magisterium and their decisions, and, of course, the interpretation of Scripture.

The same period of the Reformation corresponds to the participation of Miguel Servetus (1511–1553) who sought to restore, as he conceived, true Christianity without philosophical speculative misrepresentations, including, in particular, those related to the Trinity. In his Bible study he rejected everything that contradicted Scripture. His work *Restitución del Cristianismo (Restitution of Christianity)*, expresses the Holy Spirit as “essence of God by communicating with the world,” and also “a substantially divine mode,” which puts himself as “pure deity and the fullness of God in Christ”; however, this “is not a third metaphysical entity.”⁴⁴ Thus, for Servetus, the Holy Spirit is just a way for God to intervene in the world and particularly with humans. As a doctor, he illustrated this understanding through his famous description of the lesser circulation, according to which the Spirit enters the body through breathing and through its entry into the bloodstream through the lungs, enlivens the body and regenerates the soul, but it is not a specific entity or one of the persons that composes a divine trinity.

⁴³ John T. McNeil, ed., *John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 4.1.12.

⁴⁴ Miguel Servet, *Restitución del Cristianismo* (Zaragoza: Prensa Universitaria de Zaragoza, 2007), 277.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Methodist experience resulted from the work of John Wesley and, in turn, Methodism, from which came Pentecostalism. Wesley began his religious career in 1725 reading Jeremy Taylor (*Holy Living and Dying*) and Thomas à Kempis (*Imitation of Christ*). However, the works that influenced him the most were those of William Law (*Treatise on Christian Perfection* and a *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*) in 1726. In fact, Wesley adopted much of the mindset of Law in *Serious Call* as his. In this book, Law called for a life of holiness among the laity that the church for centuries had restricted, insisting that holiness was reserved only to the monasteries and clergy.⁴⁵

Among those years, Pentecostalism began within Methodism as a “Holiness Movement” and, in turn, went to America in 1776, appearing first in Virginia. However, the first Pentecostal meeting where some manifestations of his practices appeared took place in Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1801. The data indicates that there were up to 25,000 believers who flocked to their meetings and that there were phenomena such as hysteria, barking dogs, ecstatic convulsions, and the like.⁴⁶ Then, a little more than a century later, a new Pentecostal revival began in California, which is even now prevailing in large charismatic manifestations.

⁴⁵ In this sense, Law claimed that “there is no reason why you might think that the highest holiness is only part of the duties and happiness of a bishop, since it is a good reason in itself for you and other to consider it the duty and happiness of all Christians.” William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (London: William Innys 1729; repr., New York: Dutton, 1955), 115. A similar opinion is expressed by, John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon, 1956), 19; Robert Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Asbury, 1989), 17, 91–111.

⁴⁶ Bernard Weisberger, *They Gathered at the River* (New York: Little, Brown, 1958), 20–21.

Ministry of the Holy Spirit during XVI-XVII centuries



During the End Time (18th Century – to the End)

Jesus pointed out that the end time would be plagued by unprecedented demonic activity and that its agents of mendacity and prophesy would spread falsehoods to counter the work of the Holy Spirit to deceive the world and, as far as possible, the people of God (Matt 24:24–26). In fact, the sources of divine revelation tell us that this activity will increase (1 Tim 4:1) until the demons will dominate at will those members of humanity who have dismissed the last call to salvation.

The last two centuries, the nineteenth and twentieth, were spectacular in regard to how the Spirit sought to shape the people of God, but even more spectacular was the way that spiritistic manifestations misrepresented the work and presence of the Holy Spirit. These emerged counteracting the influence and work of the Comforter. However, in turn, the announced events are gradually being completed in the eschatological scenario to make way for the final submissions of the great controversy.

In particular, in the mid-nineteenth century, modern Spiritism made its appearance and alongside it, the occult societies which were responsible for spreading the teachings of spiritists emerged. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, Emmanuel Swedenborg and Anton Mesmer, contributed greatly to the awakening and expansion of the occult. The first was an occult theologian who began to receive messages from spirits from April 7, 1744 and is known in occult circles as “the prophet of the north.” The second, as the inventor of “animal magnetism” or Mesmerism was, at the same time, the precursor of hypnotism around 1874. Also, in 1875, Helena Blavatski started the Theosophical Society.

Adventists are very familiar with the 1844 date as the beginning of their denomination after the prophetic disappointment of the Millerite awakening.⁴⁷ However, that year is not always also remembered as the beginning of modern Spiritism with the direct participation of Andrew Jackson Davis, and later, the Fox sisters in 1848. For followers of the occult, these are key dates involving all the occult apostles in the preparation of groundwork that would start a century later in a new, unprecedented occult movement which they themselves are responsible for calling the “New Age.”⁴⁸

Also during the nineteenth century, Edward Irving sought the restoration of spiritual gifts in the modern Church of England. Even though he was not able to do so, he did establish the fact that glossolalia be seen as a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit, a sign that in turn is central to Pentecostals.⁴⁹ By 1880, there came a new wave of missions initiated by the “Holiness Movement.” The movement was then projected into various fields, even supported by Methodism, and its principle of “Christian perfection” became well known. However, the struggle between the Pentecostal and the Methodist Churches came to a turning point after which the Holiness Movement had to return to the Methodist side or turn away. While a minority

⁴⁷ It is singular to note that Miller was also guided by the Spirit from agnostic confusion by the assiduous reading of Scripture, becoming later a powerful preacher of prophetic truth.

⁴⁸ The Seventh-day Adventist Church itself was not exempt from the insidious attack of spiritism to which two leaders of the church succumbed, Pastor Moses Hull and Dr. John Kellogg. Both Hull and Kellogg, for their participation in the ranks of the spiritism of their day, were recognized by the spiritualist leadership in the first century celebrations of spiritism and even today are regarded as outstanding collaborators of modern spiritualism.

⁴⁹ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 2.

broke away to found their own holiness churches, Methodism with its four million participants emerged then as the largest U.S. Protestant group.⁵⁰

By 1891, Pentecostalism began a revival with Charles Fox Parham who believed in “the baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” In addition, he also preached that speaking in tongues must be a sign of baptism in the Spirit. Then William J. Seymour, who was called “the prophet of Pentecost for the Angels,” took Parham’s Pentecostal message to Los Angeles where he gained great power.⁵¹ Seymour led a congregation of thousands of believers in a former temple of the African Methodist Episcopal Church located on Azuza Street where shrill and disorderly meetings were said to be a product of the “latter rain” to the world.⁵² Although the manifestations of this movement were clearly controversial and very little biblical, in Azuza a new chapter certainly opened in the history of Christianity in relation to the Holy Spirit.

During the twentieth century, Pentecostals grew exceptionally strong throughout Latin America. In Chile, the physicist Willis C. Hoover started Pentecostalism as a Methodist missionary. After living some mystical experiences, he started promoting glossolalia, and when its members began to follow these ways, he was expelled from the Methodist church. Hoover then founded the “Methodist Pentecostal Church” which all the other Pentecostals in Chile followed; however, this Methodist is considered as “anti-Methodist, irrational and against the writings.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Jolt Fromhage, *Las iglesias Pentecostales en Latinoamérica* (Göttingen: Georg-August-Universität, 1997), 2.

⁵¹ See www.forumlibertas.com

⁵² A reporter from the newspaper *Times* who visited the new church on Azuza Street reported that “*African Americans, with a few whites . . . practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories, and stir themselves to create a state of frenzy crazy fruit of their particular zeal.*” And referring to Seymour in particular, the reporter wrote, “*With his eye fixed hard on some poor old incredulous the old man yells challenges and dares to respond. They pile anathemas on whoever has the audacity to question the utterances of the preacher.*” P. Breeze, who was the founder of the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene, did not believe that the languages spoken in Azuza Street came from God. When the same Charles Parham visited Azuza Street meetings, he was shocked by the demonstrations that they called “spiritual” and claimed that they were simply spiritualists. His description was illustrative: “*I sat on the platform of Azuza Street, and saw demonstrations of the flesh, manipulations of spiritualism, people practicing hypnotism at the altar on candidates seeking baptism, although some were real baptism of the Holy Spirit. After preaching two or three times, two of the elders, one practitioner of hypnosis, informed me that I was persona non grata in that place.*” The Azuza Street Church finally, full of doctrinal differences and absolute racial discrimination—they do not accept whites or Hispanics—declined and disappeared, leaving its members to other sites carrying the Pentecostal fervor where they went. www.christianhistory.net

⁵³ Fromhage, *Las iglesias Pentecostales en Latinoamérica*, 4

In contrast, in Brazil, Pentecostalism began with two Swedish immigrants who came to Pará where they opened a mission and started the first congregation as “Asambléias de Deus” in 1911. From there the Pentecostal movement became the largest in the nation, so that in 1997 it constituted the largest national Pentecostal movement in the world with about 20 million members.⁵⁴

Later, glossolalia, the Pentecostal gift of prophecy (establishing prophets by the laying on of hands), the gifts of the Spirit, Spirit Guide, “reborn,” charismatic groups, Marian apparitions becoming more frequent, are spiritual phenomena pertaining to our days, all occurring more frequently and dramatically in the last half century and, with the explicit statement of its practitioners, asserting with conviction to be the result of the action of the Holy Spirit. Particularly, the “charismatic groups” are a spiritual phenomenon that has manifested itself in all continents and “speaking in tongues” is now accepted, approved and practiced by members of nearly all Christendom.⁵⁵ Their congregations have been growing by leaps and bounds and today, according to encyclopedic data, Pentecostals and charismatics number approximately 600 million in the world.⁵⁶ Their activities have not gone unnoticed over the past century so that they are seen as a “new force in Christendom” and in the United States are taken as “one of America’s greatest contributions to twentieth-century Christianity.”⁵⁷

The last decades of the last century were of constant and accelerated interdenominational activity so much so that the most prominent has been the charismatic dialogue between the Pentecostals and Catholics in a major way.⁵⁸ However, the Catholic Church is more interested in an approach to the

⁵⁴ Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 134–135; Fromhage, *Las iglesias Pentecostales en Latinoamérica*, 4.

⁵⁵ Kenneth S. Kantzer, “The Charismatics Among Us,” *Christianity Today* 22 (February 1980): 25–29.

⁵⁶ Towards 2008 they reached 548 million. Enciclopedia Británica, 2008. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online 22 2008, <http://www.britanica.com/eb/article-231742>

⁵⁷ Watson E. Mills, ed., *Speaking in Tongues: A Guide to Research on Glosolalia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 8.

⁵⁸ This was manifested and shown by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, who is the most prolific Pentecostal theologian today to discuss the dialogue between Roman Catholics and Pentecostals in the years of the previous two decades. See his works: *Ad Ultimum terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue (1990–1997)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999); *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002); *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical/Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

charismatic scope based on its long ecclesiastical history. If there is a modern starting point in which Rome has been interested in the Spirit is undoubtedly after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), because according to her understanding, in no other council has more attention been given to the role of the Spirit in the church.⁵⁹ John XXIII himself, when announcing the council officially, stated, “This meeting of all bishops of the church should be like a new Pentecost.”⁶⁰ In addition, Kärkkäinen noted that Paul VI pointed out the existence of at least 258 references to the Holy Spirit in the pages of the Council documents.⁶¹ From this Council, the popes have urged their theologians and lay people to rekindle their interest in the Spirit.⁶² In all this ecumenical-charismatic-Roman interest and activity John Paul II played an important role, as he was very clear that the Holy Spirit is the one who gives growth to the church throughout the centuries and, of course, is equally leading her to a larger unity. However, for John Paul II and his predecessors, it was even clearer that there is no unity without the primacy of the Bishop of Rome as the “Vicar of the Son of God.”⁶³ John Paul II also expressed his full

⁵⁹ Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 34. For an understanding of the pneumatological perspectives of the Vatican Council II, see Hans Urs von Baltasar, *Creator Spirit: Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1993), 3:245–267; and Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1997), 167–173.

⁶⁰ G. Marc’hadour, “The Holy Spirit over the New World: II,” *The Clergy Review* 59.4 (1974): 247, quoted in Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*, 34.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 248; same as Edward E. O’Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 1971), 184.

⁶² A clear evaluation of the papal documents as well as their meaning with regards to this is given in Kilian McDonnell, *Open the Windows: The Popes and the Charismatic Renewal* (South Bend, IN: Greenlawn Press, 1989).

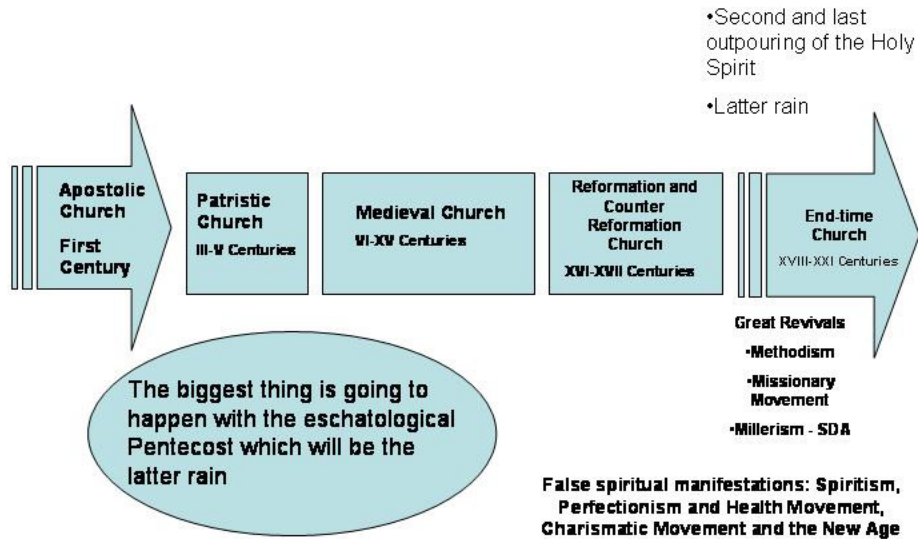
⁶³ “This holy Synod, following in the footsteps of the First Vatican Council teaches and declares with it that Jesus, eternal Shepherd, built the holy church sending his apostles the same as he was sent by the Father (cf. *Jn* 20, 21), and wanted the successors of the Bishops, to be the pastors of his church to the end of time. But to make the same Episcopate as one and undivided, he placed before the other apostles the blessed Peter and instituted in the person of the same the perpetual and principal foundation, of the unity of faith and communion. This doctrine about the institution, perpetuity, and power and rationale of the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and his infallible magisterium, the holy council again proposes as the object of unwavering faith to all the faithful, and, continuing in the same line, proponed, before the face of all, to profess and declare the doctrine concerning bishops, successors of the Apostles, which, together with the successor of Peter, Vicar of Christ and visible head of the whole Church, govern the house of the living God,” *Lumen gentium*, cap. III:18 – Hierarchical constitution of the Church, and particularly the Bishops; “Because the Roman Pontiff is the Church, by virtue of his office, that is, as Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the whole Church, full, supreme and universal power, which he can always freely exercise,” *Ibid.*, III:22 . See www.aciprensa.com

conviction of “vicar” in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* ⁶⁴ by claiming the following:

Confronted with the Pope, one must make a choice. The leader of the Catholic Church is defined by faith as the Vicar of Jesus Christ (and as such accepted by the faithful). The Pope is considered the man who on earth represents the Son of God, who ‘takes the place’ of the Second Person of the Trinity. The Catholics . . . call him ‘Holy Father’ or ‘His Holiness.’”⁶⁵

The inspired eschatological picture becomes increasingly clear in stating the explicit role that the Spirit will have at the end of everything and the way that the deceiver will continue to try to overturn the faithful ministry of the Comforter with all of his arts of falsehood.

Ministry of the Holy Spirit during XVIII-XXI centuries



⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

⁶⁵ Ibid. quoted in David Bird, *Sabbath Challenge, Sabbath Delight!* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2003), 238.

Conclusion

It is significant that at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, a journey along the history of Christianity shows the mark left by the Holy Spirit in its ancient run by conducting his ministry and guiding the flock that the Good Pastor commissioned him as his Vicar. Again and again the ministry and guidance of the Spirit have been twisted and movements raised have left their indelible ugly stamp. However, it is good to remember that even Jesus himself was accused of being led by Satan and not by his heavenly Father. Thus, in the first century of apostolic Christianity, the enemy sought to contradict the direction of the Spirit with the manifestation of false prophets as prophesied by Jesus and certified by the Bible and the *Didache*. Then in the next four centuries (2–5), when the patristic voice spoke out to defend the identity of the Son of God and to certify the legitimacy of its parent ministry, the church councils certified and endorsed the statements and correct teaching. The significant participation of Justine, Origen, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Novatian, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Jerusalem, Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose of Milan and many others underpinned the certainty of the heavenly Paraclete despite the wiles of Montanus, Arius, Sabellius and many more. In addition, the Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Paris (361) and others established the correction pointed out by explaining and defending the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit with biblical correctives.

The following eight centuries (6–15) were crucial to the ministry of the Spirit in favor of the church. These were part of the long period of the dark age when the truth was thrown to the ground and trampled by the “man of sin” who dared to plead “Vicar of the Son of God” to establish his “appalling abomination.” However, even in such a situation, the fidelity of the Comforter established for the church kept his faithful ministry. Noteworthy was the appearance of Joachim of Fiore who said that his days, and a few before and after him were the ones in the monastic age in which, he claimed, the Spirit manifested itself in a special way in the monks, who pointed a decisive change in the world and at the same time indicated the approaching of the end of the world. However, even more noteworthy is the emergence of various religious movements, evidently led by the Spirit, who, tired of the oppression imposed by the “mystery of iniquity,” sought freedom of the Spirit. Among them were the Moravians, the Waldenses, and the Hussites, who paid dearly for their faith for contradicting the opposing Vicar. In fact, in the days of medieval papal claim of ownership of the Holy Spirit, and the

imposition of the Roman magisterium on the laity of the church, the performance of the Paraclete was displaced inasmuch as it was assumed and taught that only the curia was blessed by the Spirit's direction.

When the days of the Reformation came (16th–17th centuries) a new dawn seemed promising in Christianity, however, the counter reform warned the believers that the 1260 years had not yet passed. Spiritual manifestations occurred in Zwickau with their alleged prophets as well as the claim of Thomas Müntzer (1468–1525) to being John the Baptist, and as such the precursor of the kingdom of God. These found echo in Jan Matthys and Jan Beuckelsson who also claimed to be guided by the Spirit to establish the kingdom of God but failed to eliminate the ministry of the Paraclete.

The clarion call of “end time” (18th century–end time) showed the church that the end time was closer than they had thought. However, it is exciting to note that in these centuries the Spirit acted powerfully, looking to lead the people of God through a safe path. Several spiritual revivals were expressed in which the influence of the Spirit was noticed in both the Old and New World, but the correct was still mixed with the spurious. In Europe it emerged with John Wesley's Methodism with which Pentecostalism also appeared which in turn moved to the Americas. In turn, during the first half of the nineteenth century, Millerism was reflected to Adventism which in time, in the second half of the century, came to be the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In each of these revivals emerged peculiar manifestations which contradicted the tranquility and peace that is an essential feature of the Comforter and led to obvious distortions in the ministry of the Spirit. However, especially since the middle of the last century the charismatic manifestations have transcended Protestant borders and have flooded Roman Catholic circles in a clear acceptance of what they call an ecumenical manifestation of the Spirit. Parallel to this, the seductive spiritist movement of the New Age has flooded the world and disoriented the churches with other manifestations of spurious spirituality.

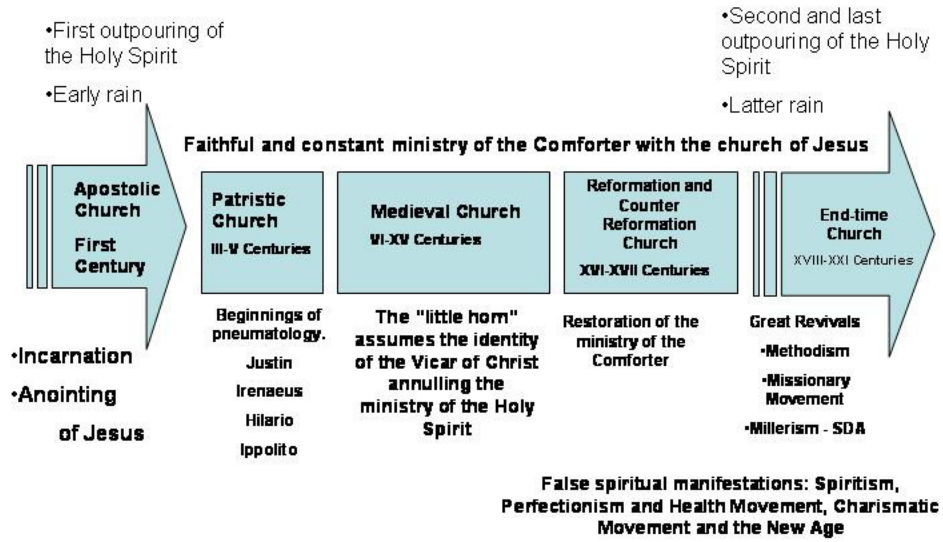
The first decade of the twentieth century was marked by the onset of charismatic Pentecostalism in Azusa Street, in Los Angeles, California, showing the seal of the “Holiness Movement” with its emphasis on so-called “Christian perfection” and, as they expressed it, in “the baptism with the Holy Spirit fire.” The preaching stressed that speaking strange tongues was a sign of baptism in the Spirit and their meetings were characterized by their shrillness and total disorder which claimed that it was a product of the “latter rain” to the world. This influence after a few years has increased and has

overwhelmed Protestant denominational boundaries and has even captivated Roman Catholic communities, proclaiming ecumenical benefits as a sign that the Spirit is in the midst of the church. The charismatic manifestations excite its followers from the Pope to the last immersed protestant or Catholic member who is assured of divine guidance throughout this awakening.

It is evident that these two events are aimed at countering the final legitimate Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit upon the church that has to shake the world with the loud cry. Additionally, at a time when the church presumes to be filled with the power of the spirit in its various charismatic manifestations, the Faithful witness begs to obtain discernment from the Holy Spirit in order to perceive its condition of poverty, nakedness, and blindness, so that it is participant in the final triumph of the Trinity in the great controversy (Rev 3:21–22).

It is by far reassuring to note how Scripture certifies and assures the ministry of the divine Paraclete through the history of the Church of God despite the enemy's attempts to try to pervert and distort his ministry. When God revealed to John the future of his church as displayed in seven periods, he alerted and promised that in each stage of its history, the people of God would have the full assurance and guarantee of the special care of the Holy Spirit. Without his ministry there is no hope of concrete fulfillment; with his power everything promised is accomplished, for he is the power of both the militant church and the triumphant church. Be it in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia or Laodicea, it is "the Spirit that says—that is, guides, helps, protects, admonishes, teaches and provides—to the churches" its message of encouragement, hope, and power (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). There was never a time when the Comforter has been inattentive to the needs of the flock entrusted by the Good Shepherd and, in fact, there never will be until the consummation of all things, when the same Spirit will present to the Savior, his church that he cared for and kept "blameless before his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24–25).

Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the church during centuries



Seventh-day Adventist Protology, 1844–2015: A Brief Historical Overview

Alberto R. Timm

Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists have given much attention over the years to the basic components of Biblical protology, the study of origins. Accepting the historicity of Genesis 1–11, mainstream Adventists believe that God, by the power of his Word, created the earth perfect in six literal days (Gen 1 and 2), which took place a few thousand years ago; that through the fall of Adam and Eve sin corrupted this world (Gen 3); and that the flood was a global catastrophe that changed the geological characteristics of the earth (Gen 6–8). Many authors helped to place Adventist protology on a solid exegetical platform and enriched that platform with scientific evidences derived from the natural world. But since the early 1970s, some voices within the denomination began to echo more explicitly several concepts of “scientific evolutionism.” This has generated major tensions in some scholarly circles related mainly to Adventist universities and colleges.

A few studies have considered the development of specific aspects of Seventh-day Adventist protology. For example, Harold W. Clark’s article

“Traditional Adventist Creationism: Its Origin, Development, and Current Problems” (1971)¹ provides a short historical overview of major Adventist contributions in the area of creationism up to the late 1960s. Clark’s book *The Battle over Genesis* (1977)² deals with the origin and development of evolutionism and its ongoing conflict with creationism. Ronald L. Numbers, in his book *The Creationists* (1992),³ presented the historical development of scientific creationism, with several references to Seventh-day Adventist contributions in that field, including a whole chapter on George McCready Price. Rodrigo P. da Silva’s article “Interpretações dos capítulos 1 a 11 de Gênesis na história do adventismo” (2003)⁴ highlights some basic Adventist historical landmarks in the interpretation of Genesis 1–11, with special emphasis on conflicting interpretations that began to emerge within Adventism in the 1960s. None of those historical writings has, however, contemplated the development of the whole Seventh-day Adventist protology up to the present time.

The present study provides a brief historical overview of the development of Seventh-day Adventist protology between 1844 and 2015. After a few introductory remarks on the Millerite background, the investigation deals specifically with the development of Seventh-day Adventist protology. That development is considered within the framework of the following three major periods: (1) Building on the Biblical Foundation (1844–1902); (2) Looking for Scientific Confirmation (1902–1971); and (3) Dealing with Internal Challenges (1971–2015). The study highlights some of the most significant Seventh-day Adventist literary contributions for the understanding of the biblical accounts of creation (Gen 1–2), the age of the earth, the fall (Gen 3), and the flood (Gen 6–8).

A clear perception of the origin and historical development of Seventh-day Adventist protology is of major importance for responding to the protological challenges of our days and keeping alive the doctrinal identity of the denomination.

¹ Harold W. Clark, “Traditional Adventist Creationism: Its Origin, Development, and Current Problems,” *Spectrum* 3 (Winter 1971): 7–18.

² Harold W. Clark, *The Battle over Genesis* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1977).

³ Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

⁴ Rodrigo P. da Silva, “Interpretações dos capítulos 1 a 11 de Gênesis na história do adventismo,” *Revista da Escola Adventista* (Brazil) 7 (1st Semester 2003): 10–14.

The Millerite Background

Millerism was essentially an eschatological movement with special emphasis on the single doctrine of the literal, visible, and premillennial Second Coming of Christ.⁵ Yet, the eschatological platform of that movement was sustained by several prophetic time-periods beginning at different events of human history. The largest of those periods was 6,000 years, understood as reaching from the creation of this world (protology) to the second coming of Christ (eschatology).⁶ This temporal connection between eschatology and protology provided room for a few Millerite insights on biblical protology.

In the writings of William Miller one can find references to the basic protological concepts addressed in the present study. For example, already in his 1822 Statement of Faith he affirmed his personal trust in the biblical records of creation and the fall, by stating,

3rdly. I believe that God, by his Son[,] created man in the image of the Three persons of the Triune God, with a body, soul, and spirit; and that he was created a moral agent, capable of living up to the Laws of his Maker or transgressing them.

4th. I believe that *man*, being tempted by the enemy of all good, did transgress and became polluted; from which act, sin entered into the world, and all mankind became natur[al]ly sinners, thrust out from the presence of God, exposed to his just wrath forever.⁷

However, it seems that Miller was not sure in regard to the specific length of each creation day (Gen 1:1–2:3). In his “Lecture on the Great Sabbath,” he mentioned that Mason Good, in his *Book of Nature*, supposed that “the earth was six thousand years in forming: if so, then here would be another proof that I am right concerning a thousand years being a day with the Lord.”⁸ In this

⁵ Cf. Editorial, “Dangers Which Believers in the Doctrine of the Second Advent Should Avoid,” *Signs of the Times* (Millerite) (hereafter *ST[M]*) (May 3, 1843): 68: “We should avoid bringing in connection with the Second Advent, and a preparation therefore, any doctrines not necessarily connected therewith. They only serve to divert the mind from the true issue, and repel those who might otherwise embrace the doctrine of the Second Advent.”

⁶ [William Miller], *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*, edited by Joshua V. Himes (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1841), 40–53, 157–71; idem, “Synopsis of Miller’s Views,” *ST(M)* (Jan. 25, 1843): 147–50.

⁷ William Miller, [“Statement of Faith”], autograph manuscript photocopy, Sept. 5, 1822, Advent Source Collection. An edited version of those statements appeared in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller, Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 78.

⁸ [Miller], *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*, 170.

statement, the expression “if so” implies that Miller did not discard the theory that each creation “day” could have been a thousand years long.

Miller also accepted the old notion that each day of the creation week represents analogically one thousand years of human history (2 Enoch 33:1–2; cf. 2 Pet 3:8). For him, the Bible mentions three kinds of days: (1) “the natural day,” which is of twenty-four hours; (2) “the prophetic day,” which is a year long (cf. Ezek 4:5, 6); and (3) “the day of the Lord,” which stands for a thousand years (cf. 2 Pet 3:8, 10). By applying the third option to the creation week, he could suggest that “as God created the heavens and earth, and all that are in them, in six days, and rested on the seventh, so Christ would be six thousand years creating the new heavens and earth, and would rest on the seventh millennium.”⁹ Some early Seventh-day Adventists would uphold a similar interpretation.

Another basic protological concept that Miller fostered was his theory that creation occurred not in 4,004 B.C., as suggested by James Ussher,¹⁰ but rather 153 years earlier, i.e. in 4,157 B.C.¹¹ Miller argued in 1840 that

it is a well-known fact that chronological writers disagree much as to the present age. The Chinese make it about 25,000 years; the Hindoos about 14,000; the Romans about 6550. The Pentateuch, or Samaritan copy of the five books of Moses, makes it about 5648. The Septuagint copy of the Old Testament makes it 6254. The Hebrew Bible, from which ours is principally taken, makes the age of the world, as calculated by Us[s]her, 5844. Some others have varied from

⁹ [Miller], *Views of the Prophecies*, 41, 166–67.

¹⁰ James Ussher, *The Annals of the World*, rev. and updated by Larry and Marion Pierce (Green Forest, AR: Master, 2003), 17.

¹¹ Cf. William Miller, *A Lecture on the Typical Sabbaths and Great Jubilee* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 25–26: “It is said by our chronological writers, that the world was 4004 years old at our era for the birth of Christ. But I think they are not right, into more than 150 years; and I think I can prove by the Bible they are not. In the one article of chronology, for the time of the judges’ rule, from Joshua to Samuel, or to the death of Eli, our chronologers have given but about 295 years, when the Bible, in the history of the judges, gives us 448 years; Paul, in Acts xiii. 20, gives us about the space of 450; and Josephus, the Jewish historian, gives us for judges 451 years. Now, I ask, in all human probability, who is right – our late writers, who only give 295 years, or the history of the judges, which gives us 448 years, corroborated by Paul and Josephus’s testimony? Surely all must agree, that the weight of testimony is in favor of that chronology which makes the year of Christ’s birth, according to our computation, 4157 years after the creation or the fall of man. Then, by adding 1843, we have our 6000 years up to the commencing of the day of rest, or the beginning of the seven thousandth year, or the great sabbath, of which our seventh day is but a shadow. What strong evidence is this, that we are now living at the end of the 6000 years, in which the work of redemption must be completed, and the glory of God be revealed in the face of Jesus Christ at his appearing and his kingdom!”

Us[s]her's calculation. The reader will find, accompanying this volume, a chronology, made, as it is believed, from the Bible, having very clear evidence of every period of time given from creation to Christ, which makes our present year [1840], from the creation of Adam, 5997.¹²

This allowed Miller to suggest that the 6,000 years of the world's history would end in 1843, together with the 2,300 symbolic days of Daniel 8:14 and other prophetic time-periods, when the seventh millennium of rest would be brought about by Christ's second coming.¹³ Although early Seventh-day Adventists would maintain some of Miller's basic protological concepts, they disentangled the supposed end of the 6,000 years from the fulfillment of the 2,300 symbolic days.

In regard to the flood, Miller accepted the literality of the Bible account, which describes it as a global catastrophe. In his exposition of Matthew 24, he spoke of the global flood in the days of Noah as a type of the final passing away of the heavens and earth by fire (2 Pet 3:5–7). He regarded the “last days scoffers” (2 Pet 3:3, 4) as the true followers of the wicked scoffers in Noah's day who doubted the possibility of any global flood having occurred. In a hypothetical conversation between a wicked host and a stranger guest, the later said sarcastically to the former,

God will not destroy the world in the midst of this hilarity and glee, and in the height of all these improvements at the present day. Much, much of the earth remains yet to be cultivated and inhabited. Our western wilderness is yet to be explored and settled. Then the world is yet in its infancy – not two thousand years old yet; and you know we have a tradition that the earth is to wax old like a garment. It cannot be true, what the old man [Noah] tells you. I will warrant you the earth will stand many thousand years yet.¹⁴

Thus, Miller linked together protology and eschatology by means of a typological relationship. He saw the flood in the days of Noah and the final

¹² [Miller], *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*, 170–71.

¹³ Miller, “Synopsis of Miller's Views,” *ST(M)* (Jan. 25, 1843): 147–50.

¹⁴ William Miller, *A Familiar Exposition of the Twenty-fourth Chapter of Matthew, and the Fifth and Sixth Chapters of Hosea. To Which Are Added an Address to the General Conference on the Advent, and a Scene of the Last Day*, ed. Joshua V. Himes (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 37–43.

destruction of the earth by fire as global events. The Sabbath-keeping branch of Millerism retained many of his protological concepts.

Building on the Biblical Foundation (1844–1902)

Early Sabbath-keeping Adventists were much concerned with the development and refinement of their eschatological system of distinctive beliefs.¹⁵ Consequently, not so much attention was given to the biblical accounts of creation (Gen 1–2), the fall (Gen 3), and the flood (Gen 6–8). Most of the allusions to creation were related to the institution of the Sabbath as the seventh day of the literal creation week (Gen 2:1–3), on which the pattern for the seventh-day Sabbath observance was grounded (Exod 20:8–11; Heb 4:9–10).¹⁶ In other words, the acceptance of the seventh-day Sabbath helped to confirm the notion that the creation week comprised seven days of 24 hours each. Consequently, evolutionary geology, with its long ages for the formation of the earth, was regarded as “the great instrument which unbelievers are endeavoring to wield against the authenticity of the Scriptures. To its deductions they bow as to the oracles of God.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Helpful expositions of the formation and early development of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines can be found in P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977); and Alberto R. Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines*, ATSDS 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1995 [published, 2002]).

¹⁶ See, e.g., Joseph Bates, *The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1846), 3–9; Editorial, “When Was the Sabbath Instituted?” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald* (Nov. 1850): 1; “The Sabbath. A Weekly Memorial of the Living God,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald* (hereafter *RH*, April 18, 1854): 101–2; J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Review & Herald, 1859), 7–12; *ibid.*, 2nd ed., enl. (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1873), 9–32, 44–64; [Uriah Smith], *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists* (Oakland, CA: Steam Press of the Pacific S. D. A. Publishing House, 1878), 116–20; *idem*, *Synopsis of the Present Truth: A Brief Exposition of the Views of S. D. Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1884), 63–68.

¹⁷ Editorial, “Geology,” *RH* (Dec. 16, 1858): 28. See also “Science and the Bible,” *RH* (Nov. 24, 1859): 107; “Geology,” *RH* (July 3, 1860): 49; G. W. A[madon], “The Skeptic Met,” *RH* (Sept. 4, 1860): 121–22; G. [Amadon], “Geology and the Bible,” *RH* (Oct. 17, 1865): 157; D. T. Bourdeau, “Geology and the Bible; Or, a Pre-Adamic Age of Our World Doubtful,” *RH* (Feb. 5, 1867): 98–99; “Geological Chronology,” *RH* (Feb. 8, 1870): 51; “That Old Skull,” *RH* (Oct. 25, 1870): 146; S. Pierce, “Does the Bible Agree with Science?” *RH* (Oct. 3, 1871): 121–22; “Turning the Tables,” *RH* (Apr. 9, 1872): 130; Phebe A. Miner, “Science, Falsely So Called,” *RH* (July 8, 1873): 31; “Darwinism Examined,” *RH* (May 18, 1876): 153; J. W[hite], “The First Week of Time,” *RH* (Feb 12, 1880): 104–5; J. O. Corliss, “Geologists Vs. the Mosaic Record,” *RH* (Feb. 19, 1880): 116–17; “False Theories of Geologists,” *RH* (Sept. 5, 1882): 568–69; “Evolution. Anti-Bible, Anti-Science, Anti-

In 1867, D. T. Bourdeau added,

Genuine Geology is as true as the Bible, and it does not contradict the Bible; for truth cannot contradict truth. Yet it is strange that some should pretend that there is a discrepancy between this science and the Bible; and it is stranger still that some *professing* to believe the Bible, should adopt views purporting to be based on Geology, which are antagonistic to plain Bible facts, and yet claim that there is harmony between their views and the Bible.¹⁸

The 1872 *Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* mentioned God as “the creator of all things” and the Lord Jesus Christ as “the one by whom God created all things.”¹⁹ These simple wordings would be kept until 1980, in the subsequent statements of beliefs prepared by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.²⁰

The notion that each day of the creation week analogically represents one thousand years of human history continued to be echoed in some early Seventh-day Adventist circles. For instance, Joseph Bates stated in 1847 that “the 6000 years of the world could not be completed until the seventh month” of the Jewish year of 1843.²¹ Other Seventh-day Adventist authors also spoke of the history of this world as comprising 6,000 years, but they did not define specifically the years when they started and when they would end.²² Yet, James

Commonsense,” *RH* (Apr. 24, 1883): 261–62; [A.] T. Jones, “The Uncertainty of Geological Science,” 3-part series in *RH* (Aug. 7, 1883): 497–98; (Aug. 14, 1883): 513–14; (Aug. 21, 1883): 529–30; idem, “‘Evolution’ and Evolution,” 3-part series in *RH* (Mar. 11, 1884): 162–63; (Mar. 18, 1884): 178–79; (Mar. 25, 1884): 194–95.

¹⁸ Bourdeau, “Geology and the Bible,” *RH* (Feb. 5, 1867): 98.

¹⁹ *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventists Publishing Association, 1872), 4; republished in “Fundamental Principles,” *Signs of the Times* (June 4, 1874): 3.

²⁰ See “Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists,” in *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book of Statistics for 1889* (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 1889), 147; *Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists*, Words of Truth Series, No. 5 – Extra (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 1897), 1–2; “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” in *1931 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1931), 377.

²¹ Joseph Bates, *Second Advent Way Marks and High Heaps, or a Connected View, of the Fulfillment of Prophecy, by God’s Peculiar People, from the Year 1840 to 1847* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), 16. See also idem, *A Vindication of the Seventh-day Sabbath, and the Commandments of God: With a Further History of God’s Peculiar People, from 1847 to 1848* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1848), 83.

²² See, e.g., [James] W[white], “The Day of Judgment,” *Advent Review*. 4 (Sept. 1850): 49; Hiram Edson, “An Appeal to the Laodicean Church,” *Advent Review Extra* (Sept. 1850): 14–15; Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week* (2nd ed.), 9; E. G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation*, rev. and enl.

White argued as early as 1849 that the seventh-day Sabbath is not “a type of the seventh thousand years,” for “all shadows cease when they reach the bodies which cast them,” but the weekly Sabbath was instituted “before the fall” and “will never end.”²³ It seems evident, therefore, that early Seventh-day Adventists saw the relationship between the creation week and the 6,000 years more on the basis of analogy than of typology.

In regard to the flood, early Seventh-day Adventists held consistently to its literal occurrence as a global event. Uriah Smith stated in 1878 that any figurative rereading of the flood would end up sweeping away the eschatological “new heaven” and “new earth” (Rev 21:1; cf. Isa 65:17; 66:22). He argued,

The apostle [Peter] has so clearly identified [in 2 Pet 3:5–7, 13] the three worlds, namely, the one before the flood, the one that now is, and the new earth which is to come, as to entirely preclude the figurative view. . . .

No fact can be more plainly stated than that the world that perished by the flood is the same as that which now is, and is reserved unto fire. This is to be changed by fire, and then will appear the new heavens and the new earth, according to the promise of God. And it is a remarkable fact that the promise referred to by the apostle is found only in Isa. chapter 65. Thus, the apostle links the three worlds together. Are the first two worlds literal? So is the third. Is the new earth, mentioned by Isaiah, figurative? So are all three worlds figurative. But if they are all literal, then we see a harmony in Scripture respecting them. If they be regarded as figurative, then we are left to the following conclusion:—

That in the days of figurative Noah, the figurative heavens and earth, being overflowed by figurative water, perished figuratively. But the figurative heavens and earth, which are now, are reserved unto figurative fire, against the figurative day of judgment and perdition of ungodly figurative men. Nevertheless, we, according to his figurative promise, look for figurative new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth figurative righteousness.

(Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1888), 518, 656, 659. Cf. Warren H. Johns, “Ellen G. White and Biblical Chronology,” *Ministry* (April 1984): 20.

²³ [James White], “Scripture Usually Quoted to Prove the Abolition of the Sabbath, Examined,” *Present Truth* 2 (Aug. 1849): 10–11.

True, the sacred writers use figures and parables. But we should believe that God in his word means just what he says, unless the connection shows good reasons why a figure or parable is introduced. If God does not mean what he says, in his word, who will tell us what he does mean? In case that God does not mean what he says, the Bible ceases to be a revelation, and he should give us another book to teach what this one means. But the Bible is the very book in which God has plainly spoken to the children of men.²⁴

Meanwhile, some of the most significant Seventh-day Adventist protological contributions of the period under consideration (1844–1902) came from the prophetic writings of Ellen G. White. As early as 1864, volume 3 of her *Spiritual Gifts* was published with many significant insights on the subject,²⁵ including a literal creation-week and a short chronology of “about six thousand years” for the earth. She argued forcefully:

I was then carried back to the creation and was shown that the first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was just like every other week. The great God in his days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle as a sample for successive weeks till the close of time. . . .

When God spake his law with an audible voice from Sinai, he introduced the Sabbath by saying, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” He then declares definitely what shall be done on the six days, and what shall not be done on the seventh. He then, in giving the reason for thus observing the week, points them back to his example on the first seven days of time. “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” This reason appears beautiful and forcible when we understand the record of creation to mean literal days. . . .

²⁴ [Uriah Smith], *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists* (Oakland, CA: Steam Press of the Pacific S. D. A. Publishing House, 1878), 10–11.

²⁵ “Ellen G. White Statements Relating to Geology and Earth Sciences” (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1982; reformatted for website in 1999 by the Geoscience Research Institute); http://www.grisda.org/resources/GRI_ref-egw.htm

But the infidel supposition, that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment, strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It makes indefinite and obscure that which God has made very plain. It is the worst kind of infidelity; for with many who profess to believe the record of creation, it is infidelity in disguise. It charges God with commanding men to observe the week of seven literal days in commemoration of seven indefinite periods, which is unlike his dealings with mortals, and is an impeachment of his wisdom.

Infidel geologists claim that the world is very much older than the Bible record makes it. They reject the Bible record, because of those things which are to them evidences from the earth itself, that the world has existed tens of thousands of years. And many who profess to believe the Bible record are at a loss to account for wonderful things which are found in the earth, with the view that creation week was only seven literal days, and that the world is now only about six thousand years old. These, to free themselves of difficulties thrown in their way by infidel geologists, adopt the view that the six days of creation were six vast, indefinite periods, and the day of God's rest was another indefinite period; making senseless the fourth commandment of God's holy law. Some eagerly receive this position, for it destroys the force of the fourth commandment, and they feel a freedom from its claims upon them. . . .

I have been shown that without Bible history, geology can prove nothing. Relics found in the earth do give evidence of a state of things differing in many respects from the present. But the time of their existence, and how long a period these things have been in the earth, are only to be understood by Bible history. It may be innocent to conjecture beyond Bible history, if our suppositions do not contradict the facts found in the sacred Scriptures. But when men leave the word of God in regard to the history of creation, and seek to account for God's creative works upon natural principles, they are upon a boundless ocean of uncertainty. Just how God accomplished the

work of creation in six literal days he has never revealed to mortals. His creative works are just as incomprehensible as his existence.²⁶

Also in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3, Ellen White provided a very insightful behind-the-scenes description of the fall of Adam and Eve.²⁷

In a detailed explanation of the geological effects of the flood she stated, for instance, that (1) “The whole surface of the earth was changed at the flood”; (2) the earth became “a vast burying ground” for the dead bodies of both people and animals; (3) “The precious wood, stone, silver and gold that had made rich, and adorned the world before the flood, which the inhabitants had idolized, was sunk beneath the surface of the earth”; (4) large buried forests “petrified and become coal,” which by its turn “has produced oil”; (5) “God causes large quantities of coal and oil to ignite and burn” within a complex melting process that “causes earthquakes, volcanoes and fiery issues”; and (6) in the end-time judgments upon the earth “God will send lightnings from Heaven in his wrath, which will unite with fire in the earth.”²⁸

In volume 1 of *The Spirit of Prophecy* (1870) the same author enlarged somewhat her expositions of the creation, the fall, and the flood.²⁹ However, it was in her classic *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890) that her more extended treatment of those subjects appeared.³⁰ Noteworthy also is the fact she spoke throughout her writings about the age of the earth in terms of about 6,000 years.³¹ This and many other protological concepts from her pen helped to shape the thinking of mainstream Adventism over the years. Many other writers have accepted those concepts as faithfully reflecting the teachings of Scripture.

²⁶ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864), 3:90–93.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 36–47.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 78–83. Some helpful remarks about Ellen White’s statement on the formation of “volcanoes” are provided by Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 492–93.

²⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870), 1:24–44, 66–85.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan, as Illustrated in the Lives of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 50–68, 94–112 (in more recent, standard editions, pp. 44–62, 90–110).

³¹ Ellen G. White, “Ellen G. White Statements on the Age of the Earth,” chap. 4 of “Ellen G. White Statements Relating to Geology and Earth Sciences” (Washington DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1976), 12–13.

Looking for Scientific Confirmation (1902–1971)

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century saw an increasing impact of evolutionist ideas on the North American schooling system. Many evolutionist textbooks were reshaping the mind frame of a large number of former Christian students. Reflecting on the seriousness of the problem, Ellen G. White stated in 1903:

In the study of science, as generally pursued, there are dangers equally great. Evolution and its kindred errors are taught in schools of every grade, from the kindergarten to the college. Thus the study of science, which should impart a knowledge of God, is so mingled with the speculations and theories of men that it tends to infidelity.

Even Bible study, as too often conducted in the schools, is robbing the world of the priceless treasure of the word of God. The work of “higher criticism,” in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation; it is robbing God’s word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives.³²

The next year White added:

False science is one of the agencies that Satan used in the heavenly courts, and it is used by him to-day. The false assertions that he made to the angels, his subtle scientific theories, seduced many of them from their loyalty. . . .

The field into which Satan led our first parents is the same to which he is leading men to-day. He is flooding the world with pleasing fables. By every device at his command he seeks to prevent men from obtaining the knowledge of God which is salvation.

We are living in an age of great light; but much that is called light is opening the way for the wisdom and arts of Satan.³³

As logical and helpful as such biblical-philosophical arguments could be in facing the evolutionist challenges of that time, there was still the need for someone to demonstrate the scientific bases of creationism (creation) and

³² Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 227.

³³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1904), 8:290.

catastrophism (flood). That need was supplied outstandingly by the self-taught geologist George McCready Price (1870–1963), who received a B.A. degree from Loma Linda College (1912) and a M.A. degree from Pacific Union College (1918).³⁴ Strongly influenced by Ellen G. White, Price argued for a literal six-day creation, a short chronology of the earth and a literal fall of Adam and Eve, besides explaining that the geologic column was formed, not by a slow evolutionist process, but rather by a worldwide flood. As early as 1902 his book, *Outlines of Modern Science and Modern Christianity*,³⁵ came off the press as one of the earliest significant attempts to respond to evolutionist presuppositions from a scholarly creationist perspective. Up to the early 1920s, several other books from him were launched by Adventist and non-Adventist publishers.³⁶ Notwithstanding, in 1923 the Pacific Press Publishing Association launched his mature 726-page textbook titled *The New Geology*, the content of which was divided into the following five parts: (1) “Physiographic Geology,” (2) “Structural Geology,” (3) “Dynamic Geology,” (4) “Stratigraphical Geology,” and (5) “Theoretical Geology.”³⁷ Used for many years as a textbook in Adventist and some non-Adventist colleges and schools, it became his single most influential contribution to the so-called “flood geology.”

³⁴ An insightful biography of George M. Price, from the perspective of his literary contribution, was provided in Harold W. Clark’s *Crusader for Creation: The Life and Writings of George McCready Price* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1966). See also F. D. N[ichol], “1870—George McCready Price—1963,” *Review and Herald* (Feb. 7, 1963): 36; obituary in *RH* (Apr. 4, 1963): 24; “Price, George McCready,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996).

³⁵ George M. Price, *Outlines of Modern Science and Modern Christianity* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1902).

³⁶ See, e.g., George M. Price, *Illogical Geology: The Weakest Point in the Evolution Theory* (Los Angeles, CA: Modern Heretic, 1906); idem, *God’s Two Books; or, Plain Facts about Evolution, Geology, and the Bible* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1911); idem, *The Fundamentals of Geology and Their Bearing on the Doctrine of a Literal Creation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913); idem, *Back to the Bible* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1916); idem, *Q.E.D.; or, New Light on the Doctrine of Creation* (New York: Revell, 1917) (published in German as *Naturwissenschaft und Schöpfungslehre* [Hamburg, Germany: Advent-Verlag, 1925]); idem, *A Textbook of General Science for Secondary Schools* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917). See also Price’s *Evolution and the Sabbath* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1908]), a 16-page tract advertised in the *RH* (Apr. 19, 1908): 24; and his *Did a Good God Make a Bad World?* Bible Truth Series 18 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1922]) and *Why I Am Not an Evolutionist*, Bible Truth Series 52 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1922]), two 8-page tracts advertised in the *RH* (Apr. 20, 1922): 21.

³⁷ George M. Price, *The New Geology: A Textbook for Colleges, Normal Schools, and Training Schools; and for the General Reader* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923); *ibid.*, 2nd ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1926).

Several new titles by Price were released by Adventist and non-Adventist presses from the 1920s up to the 1950s,³⁸ with special reference to his *Genesis Vindicated* (1941) and *Common-Sense Geology* (1946). By publishing some of his books outside the Seventh-day Adventist realm (especially by the Methodist Fleming H. Revell Company), Price reached out to a much wider group of readers, many of which got interested also in reading his books published by Adventist presses. Trying to define his own work, Price stated that “when a building is to be erected on ground already occupied, the old structures must be demolished first. His task, he said, was to clear the old evolutionary structures from the ground.”³⁹ In other words, he was the outstanding pioneer who paved the way for the appearance of many other creationists. According to the Baptist Henry Morris, “the most important creationist writer” of the first half of the twentieth century “was a remarkable man by the name of George McCready Price.” Even without a formal Ph.D. degree, Price was, in Morris’ opinion, “a clear and original thinker,” “with the ability to analyze and retain what he read,” “far better educated, in the true sense, than 90% of the Ph.D.’s and Th.D.’s cranked out by the assembly lines of the educational establishment.”⁴⁰

While Price was making his outstanding contribution, a few other Seventh-day Adventist authors also began to argue for creationism. Already in 1919 Lucas A. Reed’s book *Astronomy and the Bible* tried to demonstrate how

³⁸ See, e.g., George M. Price, *Science and Religion in a Nutshell* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1923); idem, *The Phantom of Organic Evolution* (New York: Revell, 1924); idem, *The Predicament of Evolution* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1925); idem, *Modern Botany and the Theory of Organic Evolution* (n.p., [1925]); idem, *A Solution of the Evolution Riddle* (Watford, England: Stanborough Press, [1925?]); idem, *Evolutionary Geology and the New Catastrophism* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1926); idem, *A History of Some Scientific Blunders* (New York: Revell, 1930); idem, *The Geological-Ages Hoax: A Plea for Logic in Theoretical Geology* (New York: Revell, 1931); idem, *Modern Discoveries Which Help Us to Believe* (New York: Revell, 1934); idem, *The Modern Flood Theory of Geology* (New York: Revell, 1935); idem, *Some Scientific Stories and Allegories* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1936); idem, *Genesis Vindicated* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1941); idem, *If You Were the Creator: A Reasonable Credo for Modern Man* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942); idem, *How Did the World Begin?* (New York: Revell, 1942); idem, *Common-Sense Geology: A Simplified Study for the General Reader* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942); idem, *Feet of Clay: The Unscientific Nonsense of Historical Geology* (Malverne, NY: Christian Evidence League, 1949); idem, *Were the Fossils Contemporary?* (Malverne, NY: Christian Evidence League, 1949); idem, *The Man from Mars* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1950); idem, *The Story of the Fossils* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1954); idem, *Problems and Methods in Geology* (Malverne, NY: Christian Evidence League, 1956); idem, *Theories of Satanic Origin* (Loma Linda, CA: author, n.d.).

³⁹ Clark, *Crusader for Creation*, 82.

⁴⁰ Henry M. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, new updated ed. (Santee, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1993), 87, 90.

Astronomy requires the existence of God and supports creationism. Reed argued eloquently:

Some of the men accounted great to-day—mere pygmies compared with the men just mentioned [Kepler and Newton]—have the effrontery to tell us that they see in the heavens no trace of a God. But in making such a statement, they but confess their own blindness and dumbness. They are like one who cannot read, pointing at the letters of the printed page, and saying there is no trace of knowledge or intelligence there.

To disbelieve in God, a man must believe in a thousand anomalies which he cannot reconcile with reason; and he must accept contradictions and improbabilities without number. He must assume that effects are greater than their causes; that the greatest effects are without any cause at all; in fact, that something, and a mighty something at that, came from nothing.

That he may not see evidences of God, the atheist must close his eyes to the light which shines upon him everywhere, from sun and stars, and reflected from satellite and planet, and that also gleams from the eyes of countless intelligent creatures in the world about him.

That he may not hear the message of God in nature, he must close his ears to the voices that sound in creation's harmonies, from the hum of insects and the songs of the birds, up to that silent thunder of uncounted worlds and suns and systems which pour into the ear of the soul the mighty music of the spheres.

The irreligious scientist is a contradiction. The undevout astronomer has become spiritually deranged.⁴¹

Besides teaching and writing many book and articles for scholarly journals, Price also inspired several of his students to go on “to make significant contributions of their own.” Among them were especially Harold W. Clark and Frank L. Marsh, as well as Ernest S. Booth and Clifford L. Burdick.⁴² After attending a course in geology taught by Price at Pacific Union College in 1920, Clark continued teaching that course in the same institution for many years. In

⁴¹ Lucas A. Reed, *Astronomy and the Bible: The Empire of Creation Seen in the Dual Light of Science and the Word* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1919), 13–14.

⁴² Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 90–92.

1929 Clark's *Back to Creation* came off the press,⁴³ followed by several other books on creationism and flood geology.⁴⁴ It was basically in his *The New Deluvialism* (1946) and especially in *Fossils, Flood, and Fire* (1968) that he differed from Price by trying to show (1) "how the data regarding glacial action [or glaciation] could be fitted into the Flood theory"; (2) "that there was much more regularity to the stratified rocks than Price had recognized"; and (3) "that there seemed to be clear evidence for extensive lateral movements, known as *overthrusts*—a point which had hitherto not been recognized by diluvialists."⁴⁵

A significant contribution for the creationist cause was made also by Frank L. Marsh, who taught Biology for many years at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, and who received a Ph.D. in the same area from the University of Nebraska. In 1941 he released his book *Fundamental Biology*, written from a creationist perspective.⁴⁶ In his *Evolution, Creation, and Science* (1944, revised in 1947), he challenged the so-called "unjustified authority" claimed by evolutionist scientists for themselves.⁴⁷ Marsh's *Studies in Creationism* (1950) provided a meaningful explanation of the biblical account of creation and correlated topics found in the Pentateuch.⁴⁸ In his *Life, Man, and Time* (1957), he stated that "there is no scientific method available [including the newly proposed radiocarbon dating] which is able to demonstrate that this first life

⁴³ Harold W. Clark, *Back to Creation: Back to Creationism; a Defense of the Scientific Accuracy of the Doctrine of Special Creation, and a Plea for a Return to Faith in the Literal Interpretation of the Genesis Record of Creation as Opposed to the Theory of Evolution* (Angwin, CA: Pacific Union College Press, 1929).

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Harold W. Clark, *Genes and Genesis* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940); idem, *The New Deluvialism* (Angwin, CA: Science Publications, 1946); idem, *Creation Speaks: A Study of the Scientific Aspects of the Genesis Record of Creation and the Flood* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1947); idem, *Nature Nuggets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955); idem, *Skylines and Detours* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1959); idem, *Wonders of Creation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1964); idem, *Genesis and Science* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1967); idem, *Fossils, Flood, and Fire* (Escondido, CA: Outdoor Pictures, 1968); idem, *The Battle over Genesis* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1977); idem, *New Creationism* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1980).

⁴⁵ Clark, *Fossils, Flood, and Fire*, 41–42.

⁴⁶ Frank L. Marsh, *Fundamental Biology* (Lincoln, NE: author, 1941).

⁴⁷ Frank L. Marsh, *Evolution, Creation, and Science*, 2nd ed., rev. (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1947).

⁴⁸ Frank L. Marsh, *Studies in Creationism* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1950); published in Portuguese as *Estudos sobre Criacionismo* (Santo André, SP, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, n.d.).

appeared on our earth more than a few thousand years ago.”⁴⁹ Besides these, Marsh also wrote a booklet titled *Evolution or Special Creation?* (1963).⁵⁰

That was indeed a time of much challenge for the general creationist cause in the United States. Back in 1925, John T. Scopes, a high-school teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, was taken to court for violating the recent state law against teaching human evolution in public schools. A convincing creationist speech at that trial could have reinforced the teaching of a literal creation week in the science classes. Unfortunately, however, the Presbyterian layman and politician William J. Bryan, who spoke for the creationist cause, did confess that he himself accepted the day-age interpretation of Genesis 1.⁵¹ Furthermore, in 1947 at the Institute for Nuclear Studies of the University of Chicago, Willard F. Libby and his colleagues developed the carbon-14 dating technique, which he researched and perfected over the next 12 years.⁵² There was an increasing feeling in many Christian circles that Bible chronology was already outdated by modern science. It is not a surprise that many Adventist professors felt unqualified to answer some of the hard questions raised by their students.

In Los Angeles, California, already in 1938 George M. Price and some Adventist associates had formed the Society for the Study of Creation, the Deluge, and Related Science, commonly known just as the Deluge Geology Society, which continued for some ten years.⁵³ Only those who believed “in the literal six-day creation week, and that the flood should be studied as the main geological event since creation,” were eligible to join the society.⁵⁴ But on August 29, 1957, the General Conference Committee voted to approve “a plan whereby selected science teachers be assisted in taking advanced study in geology, paleontology, and related fields, in order to be prepared to offer counsel and give assistance in the teaching of these subjects.”⁵⁵ The 1957 Autumn Council recommended that the General Conference should appoint “a committee of

⁴⁹ Frank L. Marsh, *Life, Man, and Time* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1957), 51. This book was published in German as *Leben, Mensch, Zeit* (Zürich: Advent-Verlag, 1967).

⁵⁰ Frank L. Marsh, *Evolution or Special Creation?* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1963); published in Portuguese as *Evolução ou Criação Especial?* (Santo André, SP, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1964).

⁵¹ See Numbers, *The Creationists*, 41–44, 72–73, 96–101.

⁵² The first comprehensive exposition of carbon-14 dating was Willard F. Libby’s *Radiocarbon Dating* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).

⁵³ See Numbers, *The Creationists*, 118–39.

⁵⁴ Benjamin F. Allen, “Deluge Museum at Southern California Camp Meeting” – Note, *RH* (Oct. 3, 1940): 20.

⁵⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Teaching of Geology, Paleontology, and Related Fields” (Two Hundred and Fifteenth Meeting of the General Conference Committee, August 29, 1957).

seven” in charge of (1) recommending names of selected individuals “of proved loyalty” to get “additional training in the fields of geology and paleontology” and (2) giving “the necessary guidance to those men in their study program.”⁵⁶ That was the beginning of the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), which functioned on the campus of Andrews University up to 1980, when it was relocated to the campus of Loma Linda University. The staff scientists who worked for GRI have done much research over the years in response to some of the major tensions between modern science and the Bible record.⁵⁷

One of the most enduring Adventist contributions for the study of the origins was volume 1 of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*.⁵⁸ In the process of producing such a work, a special Committee on Bible Chronology was established to deal with some major issues, especially the inaccuracies of Ussher’s chronology.⁵⁹ Besides the insights provided in the exposition of Genesis 1–11, that volume of the *Commentary* also has some helpful introductory articles dealing specifically with “Science and a Literal Creation”; “Evidences of a Worldwide Flood”; and “The Chronology of Early Bible History.”⁶⁰

In 1969 Harold G. Coffin’s 512-page volume titled *Creation: Accident or Design?* came off the press. It became, through a few revisions and updatings, one of the most influential Adventist responses to evolutionism. Its nine sections deal respectively with (1) “A Perfect World,” (2) “The Flood,” (3) “The Structure of the Earth,” (4) “The Fossils,” (5) “Glaciation,” (6) “Origins and Time,” (7) “The Formation of New Species,” (8) “Science and God,” and (9) “The Theory of Evolution.” The discussion ends with the conclusion that the acceptance either of the creationist model or of the evolutionist theory is a matter of faith. The author argues,

⁵⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Individuals to Be Trained in Geology and Paleontology” (Autumn Council – Two Hundred and Twenty-sixth Meeting of the General Conference Committee, October 25, 1957).

⁵⁷ Frank L. Marsh, “Geoscience Research Center,” *RH* (June 2, 1960): 21–22; Numbers, *The Creationists*, 290–98; Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 254–56; “Geoscience Research Institute,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*; L. James Gibson, “Geoscience Research Institute,” *Adventist Review* (June 30, 2005): 62–63.

⁵⁸ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1953), vol. 1.

⁵⁹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Committee on Biblical Chronology” (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; Siegfried H. Horn letter to Alberto R. Timm, Sept. 2, 1992).

⁶⁰ Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:46–97, 174–96.

By faith the creationist accepts the Biblical account as a correct history of the earth. By faith men receive the evolutionary theory as a true basis for understanding prehistoric times. A man is circumscribed by his faith. His life, hope, and destiny are determined by the quality of this faith. One faith holds to a theory that permits him to trace his descent “from germs and mollusks and apes,” whereas the other entitles him to be a part of the genealogy that traces his ancestry back to “Adam, which was the son of God.”⁶¹

The contributions of George M. Price and his followers helped to strengthen the Seventh-day Adventist responses to the evolutionary challenges. But by the mid-twentieth century a few Seventh-day Adventist scholars were already tempted to accept some theistic-evolutionistic views. Yet, it was only from the early 1970s on that those disruptive views found their way into unofficial Adventist publications.

Dealing with Internal Challenges (1971–2015)

The new period under consideration (1971–2015) is characterized by major tensions and contributions to Adventist protology. It is not always easy to distinguish between tensions and contributions. As a general rule, however, the following discussion regards as protological “tensions” the new concepts that either departed from traditional Adventist concepts or generated a certain kind of theological struggle within the denomination. Protological “contributions” stands for other eschatological developments which do not fall directly into the previous category. The following discussion will address first the tensions and lastly some significant contributions.

Major Tensions

Some of the most challenging Adventist protological tensions were generated by both the Association of Adventist Forums (publisher of *Spectrum* magazine) and the Adventist Today Foundation (publisher of *Adventist Today* magazine), unofficial Adventist entities with historical-critical leanings. The Winter 1971 issue of *Spectrum* magazine suggested a critical revision of Seventh-day Adventist protology in order to bring it closer to modern scientific evolutionism. Under the assumption that “neither the Bible nor the writings of

⁶¹ Harold G. Coffin, *Creation—Accident or Design?* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1969), 463.

Ellen G. White give a scientific account of Creation and the Flood in any modern sense of the word,” Ross O. Barnes suggested that “the uniformitarian hypothesis should be the starting point for our investigation of geology.” Denying the historicity of the biblical creation and flood stories, Barnes argued for “a figurative and theological interpretation of this material.”⁶² Such revisionist ideas would continue to be echoed by other Adventist scholars.

A major landmark for revisionist protology was the 1985 Conference on Geology and the Biblical Record, in West Yellowstone, Montana, sponsored by the Association of Adventist Forums.⁶³ The papers presented at that conference would be published 15 years later in a volume titled *Creation Reconsidered* (2000).⁶⁴ The overall tone of the conference was well expressed by Raymond F. Cottrell, who stated that “historical conditioning permeates the entire Bible,” and that, “in matters of science, the Bible writers were on a level with their contemporaries.”⁶⁵ For Cottrell, “the Bible writers have much to say about who created the universe, some to say about why he created it, little to say about how he created it, and nothing to say about when he created it.”⁶⁶ So, he could speculate that “at an unspecified time in the remote past, the Creator transmuted a finite portion of his infinite power into the primordial substance of the universe—perhaps in an event such as the Big Bang.”⁶⁷ But, at the same time, Cottrell had no difficulty in accepting that the Big Bang could have happened “perhaps fifteen or twenty billion years ago.”⁶⁸

The notion that “the words and forms of expression in the Bible were historically conditioned to their time and perspective” led the same author, elsewhere, to the conclusion that the Genesis Flood did not extend beyond the known “lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea.” He further stated that “only by reading our modern worldview of ‘all the earth’ [Gen 7:3] back into the Hebrew text can the idea of a world-wide flood be established.”⁶⁹ This represents indeed a major departure from the traditional Adventist

⁶² Ross O. Barnes, “Time—and Earth’s History,” *Spectrum* 3.1 (Winter 1971): 31, 44.

⁶³ Karen Bottomley, “Pilgrimage in the Rockies: The AAF Geology Tour,” *Spectrum* 16.4 (Nov. 1985): 21–26.

⁶⁴ James L. Hayward, ed., *Creation Reconsidered: Scientific, Biblical, and Theological Perspectives* (Roseville, CA: Association of Adventist Forums, 2000).

⁶⁵ Raymond F. Cottrell, “Inspiration and Authority of the Bible in Relation to Phenomena of the Natural World,” in Hayward, *Creation Reconsidered*, 199–200.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶⁹ Raymond F. Cottrell, “Extent of the Genesis Flood,” in Hayward, *Creation Reconsidered*, 275.

understanding of a universal flood, as presented in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*,⁷⁰ of which Cottrell himself was an associate editor.

Special appeals for a theistic-evolution model, with emphasis on a long-age creation process, appeared in the issues of *Spectrum* magazine for Autumn 1999⁷¹; Winter 2000⁷²; and Spring 2004.⁷³ For instance, James L. Hayward argued in the Winter-2000 issue that

by 1999, significant numbers of Adventist scientists accepted (1) the possibility of rather large-scale evolutionary change among organisms; (2) the reality of the sequence of fossils in the geological column; and/or (3) the implication from radiometric dating that the earth, and possibly life, is billions of years old. Joint acceptance of all three of these propositions would mean a significant paradigm shift in Adventist perspectives about the past.

It would be a mistake to assume that the shifts in thinking highlighted here have been universal—a number of Adventist scientists continue to hold very traditional views regarding the past. . . .

If anything conclusive can be said about the progression of Adventist views on earth history, it is that pluralism has characterized and continuous to characterize the process.⁷⁴

Another revisionist exposition of Adventist protology was published in 2006 by the Adventist Today Foundation, under the title, *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives*.⁷⁵ Its chapters were written by scholars mainly from Loma Linda University and La Sierra University. Richard Bottomley, from Canadian University College (now Burman University),

⁷⁰ Cf. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:257: “This description [of Gen 7] renders utterly foolish and impossible the view set forth by some that the Flood was a local affair in the Mesopotamian valley.”

⁷¹ See articles by Edwin A. Karlow (“The Metaphor of Design: How Shall We Talk about the Creation?”), Richard J. Bottomley (“Age Dating of Rocks”), and Mary Pat Koos (“The Age of the Earth”) in *Spectrum* 27.4 (Autumn 1999): 36–54.

⁷² See articles by Langdon Gilkey (“The Meaning and Relevance of Creation”), James L. Hayward (“Shifting Views of the Past: Adventists and the Historical Sciences”) in *Spectrum* 28.1 (Winter 2000): 56–68.

⁷³ Brian Bull and Fritz Guy, “Then a Miracle Occurs,” *Spectrum* 32.2 (Spring 2004): 30–40; reprinted as a booklet, under the same title, by AAF/Press, 2004.

⁷⁴ James L. Hayward, “Shifting Views of the Past,” *Spectrum* 28.1 (Winter 2000): 67–68.

⁷⁵ Brian Bull, Fritz Guy, and Ervin Taylor, eds., *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives* (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today Foundation, 2006).

expressed well the overall feeling of the contributors of that multi-authored book when he stated,

But if we accept the data from age dating, would we not be theologically adrift in a sea of uncertainty and chaos? Not at all! Remember, we are all still creationists. We are not surrendering to a Godless evolutionary paradigm. . . .

I believe we need to learn to state our theology and beliefs in a way that is not wholly dependent on the literal veracity of a young-earth model in order to be relevant. . . . The current idea that if we do not support a young-earth/deluge model we cannot be Adventist Christians seems to be pathological theology.⁷⁶

Despite such appeals for theistic evolutionism, mainstream Adventism continues to emphasize its trust in a literal six-day creation, a short chronology of human history, and a worldwide flood.

Major Contributions

The early 1970s saw the launching of a few influential academic journals promoting creationism. In April 1972 in São Carlos, SP, Brazil, the Sociedade Criacionista Brasileira (www.scb.org.br) published the first number of its *Folha Criacionista*, intended “to spread out scientific aspects related to the doctrine of creation as exposed in the Bible.”⁷⁷ Although not officially related to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the society was founded and managed over the years by a Seventh-day Adventist scholar. Two years later (1974) the Geoscience Research Institute launched its official periodical titled *Origins*, “designed mainly for the Seventh-day Adventist educator, especially the science educator.”⁷⁸ In its very first issue, Berney R. Neufeld proposed “a General Theory of Creation,” with the following 11 postulates:

POSTULATE 1. The physical substance of the observable universe and the laws of their interactions were brought into existence by an infinitely wise Creator, and their continued existence is dependent upon His maintenance.

⁷⁶ Richard Bottomley, “The Clocks in the Rocks: A Personal Perspective,” in *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives*, ed. Bull, Guy, and Taylor (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today Foundation, 2006), 110.

⁷⁷ “Editorial,” *Folha Criacionista* (Brazil) 1.1 (Abril 1972): 1.

⁷⁸ Ariel A. Roth, “Editorial: Why a Publication on Origins?” *Origins* 1.1 (1974): 4.

POSTULATE 2. In the relatively recent past a creative event(s) occurred on earth. By this act the earth was organized and/or created to provide a suitable substrate for living organisms, and organisms were created to live upon that earth.

POSTULATE 3. The events of Postulate 2 occupied an extremely short period of time (six literal days).

POSTULATE 4. The biological world was created so as to relate intimately with the physical world. There was a balanced fauna and flora present including the major categories of plants and animals now living.

POSTULATE 5. Man was endowed with characteristics unique in the creation. These included: 1) higher intelligence, 2) exercise of dominion over the animals, 3) a knowledge of the Creator, and 4) free will.

POSTULATE 6. The initial creation was perfect. It was designed for mankind by a Creator whose character is love. As such it provided for man a completely adequate opportunity for physical occupation and sustenance and met fully his aesthetic and spiritual needs.

POSTULATE 7. The initial creation was modified, subsequently, in such a way that it became progressively less “perfect.” Death became the lot of all organisms.

POSTULATE 8. The crust of the earth provides a record, albeit incomplete, of the past history of the earth. In particular, the upper layers contain the remains of organisms destroyed in a major post-creation event—the flood.

POSTULATE 9. The organisms existing today are the descendants of those brought into being during the initial creation period. There have been no subsequent creations.

POSTULATE 10. The present characteristics and distribution of organisms are the result of the dynamic interactions between the organisms and the ecological history of the earth. The biological world as we know it is well-described as “descent with modification.”

POSTULATE 11. The Creator is not capricious in His actions and thus the biological and physical universe can, most often, when adequately understood, be described in mathematical terms.⁷⁹

As already mentioned in the introduction to the present article, in 1977 Harold W. Clark's *The Battle over Genesis* provided a general overview of the development of evolutionism since ancient times and its ongoing conflict with creationism.⁸⁰ In 1978, Jacques Doukhan defended his Th.D. dissertation, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story,"⁸¹ inferring that the text of Genesis 1 and 2 forms a literary unity under three genres—genealogy, prose, and recitation; and recognizing the historicity of the creation account.

While many critics tried to undermine the historicity of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, in 1980 Gerhard F. Hasel published a two-part series in *Origins*, highlighting the historical relevance of those "chronogenealogies."⁸² In contrast to the genealogies of Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38, which only list name after name with a few gaps in between, the chronogenealogies of Genesis 5:1–32 and 11:10–32 are intertwined with time elements and direct-descent statements, which do not provide room for genealogical gaps. In Hasel's view, the longer time periods mentioned in some ancient manuscripts do not support a symbolic rereading of those genealogies.

The 1980 "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" included a specific statement on "Creation" and another one on "The Nature of Man." Statement 6, on creation, reads as follows:

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the

⁷⁹ Berney R. Neufeld, "Towards the Development of a General Theory of Creation," *Origins* 1.1 (1974): 6–7.

⁸⁰ Clark, *The Battle over Genesis*.

⁸¹ Jacques Doukhan, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story" (ThD diss., Andrews University, 1978); published as *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, AUSDDS 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978); cf. abstract in *AUSS* 19 (Spring 1981): 73–74.

⁸² Gerhard F. Hasel, "Genesis 5 and 11: Chronogenealogies in the Biblical History of the Beginnings," *Origins* 7.1 (1980): 23–37; idem, "The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11," *Origins* 7.2 (1980): 53–70. See also idem, "The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and Their Alleged Babylonian Background," *AUSS* 16 (Autumn 1978): 361–74.

crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was “very good,” declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8–11; Ps. 19:1–6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)⁸³

Statement 7, on “The Nature of Man,” adds,

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and soul, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:7; Ps 8:4–8; Acts 17:24–28; Gen 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12–17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15.)⁸⁴

In 1983 a revised and updated edition of Coffin’s *Creation: Accident or Design?* came off the press under the new title *Origin by Design*, with the special contribution of Robert H. Brown. After addressing critically the major arguments of contemporary evolutionist science, Coffin concluded that,

since both Creation theory and evolution theory lie outside the realm of science, we cannot make a decision on the basis of which one is science and which one is not. We must determine which theory the total range of available evidences at hand best supports and which comes closest to the method of operation and results we have learned to expect of science.

⁸³ “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), 33.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

I believe that Creation is a viable alternative theory of origins and that it adequately incorporates the facts of science.⁸⁵

At Andrews University in 1994, Marco T. Terreros, from Colombia, defended his Ph.D. dissertation titled, “Death Before the Sin of Adam: A Fundamental Concept in Theistic Evolution and Its Implications for Evangelical Theology.”⁸⁶ Terreros argued that the evolutionistic interpretation of the geological column requires the assumption that death existed before the sin of Adam, therefore contradicting the biblical teaching that death began through Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12; cf. Gen 3).

Leonard Brand’s helpful *Faith, Reason, and Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design* (1997)⁸⁷ is regarded by Kurt Wise, from Bryan College, as “one of the very few creationist works where . . . evolutionary theory and thus evolutionists (even theistic evolutionists) have been treated with respect.”⁸⁸

In 1998 Ariel A. Roth, director of the Geoscience Research Institute for 14 years (1980–1994), brought out a 384-page book titled *Origins: Living Science and Scripture* (1998).⁸⁹ Roth concludes from his study that

I cannot accept the idea that God does not exist. Nature is too complex and existence too meaningful for me to think that all the intricacies and delicate balances I see about me are just accidental. There has to be a Designer. If there is a Designer, I would expect some meaningful communication from Him. . . .

My personal assessment is that creation answers that question [Why are we here?] better than do other models. Creation makes a

⁸⁵ Harold G. Coffin and Robert H. Brown, *Origin by Design* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1983), 430.

⁸⁶ Marco T. Terreros, “Death Before the Sin of Adam: A Fundamental Concept in Theistic Evolution and Its Implications for Evangelical Theology” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1994); cf. abstract in *AUSS* 32 (Spring-Summer 1994): 114.

⁸⁷ Leonard Brand, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997); published in Spanish as *Fe y Razón en la Historia de la Tierra: Un paradigma de los orígenes de la tierra y de la vida mediante un diseño inteligente* (Lima, Peru: Ediciones Theologika, Universidad Peruana Unión, 1998) and in Portuguese as *Fé, Razão e História da Terra: Um paradigma das origens da Terra e da vida por planejamento inteligente* (São Paulo, Brazil: Unaspress, 2005).

⁸⁸ Kurt Wise, “Foreword,” in *ibid.*, vii.

⁸⁹ Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Living Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1998); published in Portuguese as *Origens: Relacionando a Ciência com a Bíblia* (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2001).

significant, reasonable, and satisfying contribution to the great questions of truth, meaning, purpose, duty, and our personal destiny.

Some establish their worldview on the basis of science alone. While science is worthy of respect, it is an incomplete worldview. Others ground their worldview on the basis of Scripture alone. But even this is a restricted outlook, and Scripture encourages us to learn from God's creation. To me, a more satisfactory approach is to link science and Scripture.⁹⁰

From a popular perspective, Dwight K. Nelson's booklet *Built to Last: Creation and Evolution: A Thoughtful Look at the Evidence That a Master Designer Created Our Planet* (1998)⁹¹ pulls together several evidences of an intelligent design behind the complexities of life in this world.

Two helpful Adventist theological treatments of creation came to light in the year 2000. One was William H. Shea's chapter on "Creation" in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*,⁹² providing a general overview of the subject throughout the Scriptures, the Church history, and the writings of Ellen G. White, with emphasis on a short chronology and a literal 24-hour day creation week. Another theological treatment was the book *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, edited by John T. Baldwin,⁹³ and with chapters by the editor himself ("Revelation 14:7: An Angel's Worldview"; "The Geological Column and Calvary: The Rainbow Connection—Implication for an Evangelical Understanding of the Atonement") and by Gerhard F. Hasel ("The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' on Figurative 'Periods/EPOCHS' of Time?"), Randall W. Younker ("Genesis 2: A Second Creation Account?"), Richard M. Davidson ("Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood"), Ariel Roth ("The Grand Canyon and the Genesis Flood"), Norman R. Gulley ("Evolution: A Theory in Crisis"), Ed Zinke ("The Role of Creation in Seventh-day Adventist Theology"), and Martin F. Hanna ("Science and Theology: Focusing the Complementary Lights of Jesus, Scripture, and Nature").

⁹⁰ Roth, *Origins: Living Science and Scripture*, 361, 363.

⁹¹ Dwight K. Nelson, *Built to Last: Creation and Evolution: A Thoughtful Look at the Evidence that a Master Designer Created Our Planet* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998). A revised edition of this booklet came off the press as *Creation and Evolution: A Thoughtful Look at the Evidence that a Master Designer Created Our Planet*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2009)

⁹² William H. Shea, "Creation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 418–456.

⁹³ John T. Baldwin, ed., *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000).

The early 2000s saw some significant denominational attempts to settle the creation-evolution tensions. The 2001 General Conference Annual Council approved the plan of having (1) an International Faith and Science Conference in 2002, to “initiate a process by which the Seventh-day Adventist Church addresses the interplay of faith, science, and philosophy and the ways in which these challenge or contribute to the Church’s understanding and witness regarding Genesis 1–11”; (2) Regional Faith and Science Conferences in 2003 and 2004, “to broaden the involvement of theologians, scientists, church leaders, and others in the discussion of agenda issues outlined by the International Faith and Science Conference in 2002”; and (3) a second International Faith and Science Conference in 2004, “to bring to summation the international dialog which began in 2002 by providing counsel, guidance, and information to the Church regarding its understanding and explanation of Genesis 1–11.”⁹⁴

The first International Faith and Science Conference took place in Ogden, Utah, August 23–29, 2002, with participation of 84 Seventh-day Adventist scholars and leaders.⁹⁵ Regional Faith and Science Conferences were held in seven of the church’s 13 world divisions. And a second International Faith and Science Conference convened in Denver, Colorado, August 20–26, 2004, with 135 participants, 45 of whom were from outside the North American Division.⁹⁶ Out of those conferences came the document “An Affirmation of Creation,” presented to and received by the General Conference Executive Committee at the Annual Council Session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 11, 2004.⁹⁷ Two days later the same Executive Committee accepted and voted another document titled, “Response for an Affirmation of Creation,” stating, “We reaffirm the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the historicity of Genesis 1–11: that the seven days of the Creation account were literal 24-hour days forming a week

⁹⁴ “136-01G Faith and Science Conferences,” *2001 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee—General Actions* (Silver Spring, MD, Sept. 25–27, 2001), 25–28.

⁹⁵ Ray Dabrowski, “Adventist Scholars and Leaders Begin Faith and Science Conversation,” *Adventist Review* (Oct. 2002): 40–41.

⁹⁶ Bill Knott and Sandra Blackmer, “Denver ‘Faith and Science’ Meeting Reaffirms Six-Day Creation, Calls for Humility and Dialogue,” *Adventist Review* (Oct. 2004): 40–41.

⁹⁷ “147-04Ga An Affirmation of Creation—Report of the Organizing Committee,” *2004 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee—General Actions* (Silver Spring, MD, Oct. 8–14, 2004), 35–41; reprinted in *Statements, Guidelines & Other Documents* ([Silver Spring, MD]: General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Communication Department, 2005), 12–20.

identical in time to what we now experience as a week; and that the Flood was global in nature.”⁹⁸

In 2005 a new revised and updated edition of Harold G. Coffin and Robert H. Brown’s *Origin by Design*, with the co-authorship of R. James Gibson, came off the press.⁹⁹ The content was rearranged under five major sections: (1) “The Biblical Narrative of Creation and the Flood,” (2) “Geology and Genesis,” (3) “Paleontology and Genesis,” (4) “Geochronology: The Age of the Earth,” and (5) “Biological Change.”

Meanwhile, several words of anti-theistic-evolutionistic warnings could be heard. For example, in 2002 Ariel A. Roth warned in the *Adventist Review* that “Adventists need to be especially careful that the pressures that have caused other churches and institutions to drift away from the Bible and God do not affect us.”¹⁰⁰ In a short article entitled “Seventh-day Darwinians,” published in 2003 in the same magazine, Clifford Goldstein stated,

What amazes me isn’t so much that people can believe in evolution (after all, I used to), but that those who do still want to be Seventh-day Adventists. I can respect someone who, believing in evolutionary theory, rejects the Adventist Church entirely. I have no respect for those who think they can meld the two.¹⁰¹

In the same year (2003), the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* published eight papers read at the International Faith and Science Conference held in Ogden, Utah (August 23–29, 2002), plus three additional articles.¹⁰² In his paper “The Biblical Account of Origins,” Richard M. Davidson presented seven arguments for the so-called “passive gap” notion of “a two-stage creation of this earth” (cf. Gen 1:1 and 1:3ff.). Against theistic evolutionism, Davidson warned,

Interpretations of these chapters which present God as an accomplice, active or passive, in an evolutionary process of survival of the fittest,

⁹⁸ “147-04Gb Response to an Affirmation of Creation,” *2004 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee*, 41; reprinted in *Statements, Guidelines & Other Documents*, 21–22.

⁹⁹ Harold G. Coffin, Robert H. Brown, and R. James Gibson, *Origin by Design*, rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Ariel A. Roth, “The Evolution Bandwagon,” *Adventist Review* (hereafter *AtR*, June 27, 2002): 28.

¹⁰¹ Clifford Goldstein, “Seventh-day Darwinians,” *AtR* (July 24, 2003): 29. Cf. “Clifford Goldstein,” *AtR* (Aug. 28, 2003): 2–3; “Seventh-day Darwinians? Readers respond to a six-day creationist column,” *AtR* (Sept. 18, 2003): 25–27.

¹⁰² *JATS* 14.1 (Spring 2003).

millions of years of predation, prior to the fall of humans, must seriously reckon with how these views impinge upon the character of God. I would argue that perhaps the greatest reason to reject (theistic) evolution or progressive creation is that it maligns the character of God, making Him responsible for millions of years of death/suffering, natural selection, survival of the fittest, even *before* sin.¹⁰³

Also in 2003 Michael G. Hasel argued that a protological change to accommodate theistic evolutionism would require a similar eschatological change. According to Hasel, “eschatologically the ‘creation of new heavens and a new earth’ indicates that what was created at the beginning will also be created at the end.” Consequently, under a theistic-evolutionistic model, “the object of re-creation becomes so indefinite in the face of 600 million years of evolutionary development that we must even wonder whether it would ever take place.”¹⁰⁴

In 2005 Fernando Canale’s book *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* brought new light into the evolutionist-creationist debate by dealing with some foundational issues. He argued,

Is Seventh-day Adventist theology compatible with the evolutionary metanarrative, according to which life on our planet originated through deep time by way of a process in which higher organisms of life emerged from lower forms? Can Adventist theology be harmonized with evolutionary science? . . .

Harmonizing creation and evolution inescapably leads to the abandonment of the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle. If science can correct Scripture’s views on origins, it can also correct it in any area where scientific and theological discourses overlap. Finally, any attempt at harmonization calls for a radical change in the understanding of the divine revelation and inspiration of Scripture. . .

¹⁰³ Richard M. Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Origins,” *JATS* 14.1 (Spring 2003): 21–24, 28.

¹⁰⁴ Michael G. Hasel, “‘In the Beginning...’ The Relationship between Protology and Eschatology,” in *The Cosmic Battle for Planet Earth: Essays in Honor of Norman R. Gulley* ed. Ron du Preez and Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Old Testament Department, 2003), 30–31.

Harmonizing Scripture to evolution, then, requires the harmonization of the Adventist theological method to the always-changing dictates of human science and tradition. In turn, methodological changes will require a reformulation of the entire corpus of Adventist doctrine and, eventually, the reformulation of all 27 fundamental beliefs. Before seeking harmonization between the creation and evolution metanarratives, then, Adventists should seriously think whether they are willing to give up the very reason for their existence as a church.¹⁰⁵

After surveying “Creation through the New Testament Looking Glass” (2005), Ekkehardt Mueller concluded that “Jesus does not propose a literal reading of Genesis 1–2 and at the same time a symbolic reading.” For Mueller, “if at the end of the Millennium, God is able to create a new heaven and a new Earth without time spans of millions or billions of years, but brings them about right after the Millennium, why should He not have used similar techniques right in the beginning?”¹⁰⁶

Another major contribution for Adventist protological studies was Richard M. Davidson’s article “Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture,” published in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle* (2009).¹⁰⁷ Davidson suggested that “in these opening chapters of Gen 1–3 is summarized the multi-faceted center of Scripture,” comprised of the following seven facets:

1. Creation and the divine design for this planet.
2. The character of the Creator (with implications for theodicy).
3. The rise of the moral conflict concerning the character of God.
4. The Gospel covenant promise centered in the Person of the Messianic Seed.
5. The substitutionary atonement worked out by the Messianic Seed.
6. The eschatological windup of the moral conflict with the end of the serpent and evil.

¹⁰⁵ Fernando Canale, *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University LithoTech, 2005), 136, 140–41.

¹⁰⁶ Ekkehardt Mueller, “Creation through the New Testament Looking Glass,” *Perspective Digest* 10.3 (2005): 32–34.

¹⁰⁷ Richard M. Davidson, “Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture,” in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle*, ed. Daniel Heinz, Jiri Moskala, Peter M. van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Old Testament Department, 2009), 5–29.

7. The sanctuary setting of the moral conflict.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, David C. Read's 684-page work, *Dinosaurs: An Adventist View* (2009),¹⁰⁹ came off the press as the most exhaustive treatment of the subject from a Seventh-day Adventist catastrophist perspective.

In 2010 the Biblical Research Institute published the book *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, edited by Gerhard Pfandl, with several short articles dealing with issues related to Genesis 1–11.¹¹⁰ Those articles were written by Gerhard Pfandl (“Does Genesis teach that the earth existed in an unformed state prior to the Creation week?”), Jiri Moskala (“What was the light created on the first day of the Creation week?” and “Were the Creation days 24-hour days or indefinite periods of time?”), Randall W. Younker (“Are there two contradictory accounts of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2?”), John T. Baldwin & Erno Gyeresi (“Can we know where the garden of Eden was located based on the names of rivers?”), Tarsee Li (“Why didn't Adam and Eve die immediately?”), Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole (“Is Genesis 3:15 a Messianic prophecy?”), Michael G. Hasel (“Where did Cain get his wife?”), Donn W. Leatherman (“Who were the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘daughters of men?’”), and Richard M. Davidson (“How could every species be preserved on the ark?” and “Was the Flood global?”).

At the 2010 General Conference Session, Atlanta, Georgia (USA), the newly-elected General Conference President Ted Wilson addressed the evolutionist-creationist debate in his Sabbath July 3 sermon in the following terms:

Don't go backwards to misinterpret the first eleven chapters of Genesis or other areas of Scripture as allegorical or merely symbolic. As just this week we have once again affirmed in an overwhelming manner, the Seventh-day Adventist Church both teaches and believes in the biblical record of creation which took place recently; in six literal, consecutive, contiguous 24 hour days. The Seventh-day Adventist Church will never change its stand or belief in that foundational doctrine. If God did not create this world in six literal days and then blessed the Sabbath day, why are we worshipping Him today on this seventh-day Sabbath as SEVENTH-

¹⁰⁸ Davidson, “Back to the Beginning, 11, 19.

¹⁰⁹ David C. Read, *Dinosaurs: An Adventist View* (Keene, TX: Clarion Call Books, 2009).

¹¹⁰ Gerhard Pfandl, ed., *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, BRIS 2 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013).

DAY Adventists? To misunderstand or to misinterpret this doctrine is to deny God's Word and to deny the very purpose of the Seventh-day Adventist movement as the remnant church of God called to proclaim the three angels' messages with Holy Spirit power. Don't go backwards to atheistic or theistic evolution, go forward to the prophetic understanding that loyalty to God, the Creator and Redeemer, will be seen in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as the distinguishing characteristic of God's people in the very end of time. Seventh-day Adventist Church members, hold your leaders, pastors, local churches, educators, institutions, and administrative organizations accountable to the highest standards of belief based on a literal understanding of Scripture.¹¹¹

In the early 2010s, Pacific Press published two helpful books with multi-authored chapters on creationism. One of those books was *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science* (2011), edited by L. James Gibson and Humberto Rasi,¹¹² articulating twenty crucial questions that Christians often struggle with. The other book, edited by Bryan W. Ball, is titled, *In the Beginning: Science and Scripture Confirm Creation* (2012),¹¹³ and seeks to demonstrate that "it is entirely possible to defend the traditional Adventist positions on Scripture, Creation and the Flood and not be scientifically illiterate."¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Volume 3 of Norman R. Gulley's massive *Systematic Theology* devoted a 390-page section to "Creation."¹¹⁵ The book's comprehensive biblical-systematic exposition of creation, the fall, and the flood is enriched by insightful allusions to the most influential figures in the faith and science debate.

It is worthwhile to mention also the popular expositions of L. James Gibson's *Origins* (2012);¹¹⁶ Leonard R. Brand and Richard M. Davidson's *Choose You This Day: Why It Matters What You Believe About Creation*

¹¹¹ Ted Wilson, "Go Forward: Church President Affirms Foundational Adventist Beliefs," www.adventistreview.org/wilsongcsesermon

¹¹² L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi, eds., *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2011).

¹¹³ Bryan W. Ball, ed., *In the Beginning: Science and Scripture Confirm Creation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2012).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, back cover.

¹¹⁵ Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology, [Vol. 3] Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 1–390.

¹¹⁶ L. James Gibson, *Origins* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2012). This was the companion book for the Adult Sabbath School Lessons of the 1st quarter of 2013.

(2013);¹¹⁷ as well as the multidisciplinary approach of *Criacionismo no Século 21: Uma abordagem multidisciplinar* (2013).¹¹⁸ But the most widely translated and circulated creationist exposition in 2013 was L. James Gibson's Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide titled, *Origins*.¹¹⁹ At the 2013 General Conference Annual Council, the DVD *The Creation: The Earth Is a Witness* was launched as part of the major Creation Project (www.creationsabbath.net/creation-project).¹²⁰

Several significant contributions came off the press in 2015. Among them are the scholarly multi-authored book, *The Genesis Creation Account and Its Reverberations in the Old Testament*,¹²¹ and its more popular version entitled, *He Spoke and It Was: Divine Creation in the Old Testament*,¹²² both edited by Gerald A. Klingbeil. These two correlated books demonstrate how the Creation narrative of Genesis 1 and 2 is understood by other Old Testament writers. Furthermore, Richard M. Davidson's article, "The Nature of the Human Being from the Beginning: Genesis 1–11," provides helpful glimpses into humanity's original, fallen, and future states.¹²³

In the revision of the "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" voted at the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, Statement 6 on "Creation" was slightly changed to read as follows:

God has revealed in Scripture the authentic and historical account of His creative activity. He created the universe, and in a recent six-day creation the Lord made "the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" and rested on the seventh day. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of the work He performed and completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath

¹¹⁷ Leonard R. Brand and Richard M. Davidson, *Choose You This Day: Why It Matters What You Believe About Creation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2013).

¹¹⁸ Wellington dos Santos Silva, ed., *Criacionismo no Século 21: Uma abordagem multidisciplinar* (Cachoeira, BA, Brazil: Centro de Pesquisa em Literatura Bíblica, 2013).

¹¹⁹ L. James Gibson, *Origins*, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide—Jan.–Mar. 2013 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2013).

¹²⁰ Edwin Manuel Garcia, "Creation Movie Central to Church Identity Is Key to 2014 Evangelism," <http://news.adventist.org> (released on Oct. 15, 2013).

¹²¹ Gerald A. Klingbeil, ed., *The Genesis Creation Account and Its Reverberations in the Old Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2015).

¹²² Gerald A. Klingbeil, ed., *He Spoke and It Was: Divine Creation the Old Testament*, Creation Series 1 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015).

¹²³ Richard M. Davidson, "The Nature of the Human Being from the Beginning: Genesis 1–11," in *What Are Human Beings that You Remember Them?* *Proceedings of the Third International Bible Conference Nof Ginosar and Jerusalem, June 11–21, 2012*, ed. Clinton Wahlen (Silver Spring, MD: Review & Herald, 2015), 11–42.

constituted the same unit of time that we call a week today. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was “very good,” declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1–2; 5; 11; Ex. 20:8–11; Ps. 19:1–6; 33:6, 9; 104; Isa. 45:12, 18; Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Rev. 10:6; 14:7.)¹²⁴

Yet, with such a rich protological literary heritage available, theistic evolutionism is still tempting some Seventh-day Adventist academic circles and individuals.

Concluding Remarks

The present study considered the development of Seventh-day Adventist protology within three major periods. During the first one, titled “Building on the Biblical Foundation (1844–1902),” Seventh-day Adventists emphasized the historicity of Genesis 1–11, believing that God, by the power of his Word, created the earth perfect in six literal days (Gen 1 and 2), which took place around 6,000 years ago; that through the fall of Adam and Eve sin corrupted this world (Gen 3); and that the flood was a global catastrophe that changed the geological characteristics of the earth (Gen 6–8). The second period, “Looking for Scientific Confirmation (1902–1971),” was deeply influenced by George McCready Price and some of his followers in their task of responding to major challenges from the external evolutionistic world. And the final period, called “Dealing with Internal Challenges (1971–2015),” demonstrated how many of the formerly-external challenges were embraced in some academic Adventist circles, related mainly to such non-official Adventist entities as the Association of Adventist Forums and the Adventist Today Foundation.

In the ongoing Adventist debate between creationism and theistic-evolutionism, mainstream Adventism has taken a clear stand in defense of the historicity of Genesis 1–11, against a symbolic rereading of that biblical section; of a short chronology of the world, against deep time evolutionism; of a literal creation week of 24-hour consecutive days, against long geological periods; and of a universal flood related to Noah, against the confinement of that event to any specific region of the ancient world. Seventh-day Adventist scholars have

¹²⁴ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” in *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015), 163–164.

pointed out also that any departure from these foundational components would erode the overall Adventist doctrinal system. After all, doctrines do not function in isolation from each other. So, if Seventh-day Adventists want to keep their biblical identity, they should not ever allow the authority of science to weaken their commitment to the Protestant *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle. For “the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa 40:8).

“Dr. Richard Davidson has spent decades engaging with the Scriptures, and notably the Old Testament. During that time, he has published extensively for both Seventh-day Adventist publications and the wider press, seeking to communicate his love of the Old Testament to multiple audiences: scholars and general public alike. He has mentored thousands of students, deepening their understanding of the beauty and truth of the Scriptures. He has in effect lived and breathed Old Testament Studies.

It is very fitting therefore that this volume, dedicated to Dr. Davidson, includes a range of articles from colleagues at Andrews University and other Adventist Universities, including former students. The thoughtful biblical understanding that will be found in these chapters reflects the thoughtful, careful biblical approach Dr. Davidson has consistently brought to his own scholarly work. The inspiration that will be found here and the relevance of biblical scholarship to contemporary Christian life is indicative of the importance Dr. Davidson holds in ensuring the study of the Scripture informs how we live.

In honoring Dr. Davidson through this volume, I trust this festschrift will also honor the God he has so diligently served throughout his career. Thank you, Dr. Davidson, for your years of engaged, humble and insightful engagement as a scholar and teacher.”

—Andrea Luxton, President, Andrews University

“Meeting With God on the Mountains is the best possible title for a book written in honor of an Adventist scholar par excellence Dr. Richard M. Davidson. The 33 essays, many of which have been written by students of Dr. Davidson or his colleagues, represent rich materials that everyone should read and through it be motivated to study the Word of God in-depth. It is the thorough study of the Scriptures that can lead us to the mountaintop where YHWH himself will be seen.”

—Artur Stele, Vice-President, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and Chair, Andrews University Board of Trustees

This Festschrift in honor of Dr. Davidson is divided into four parts that reflect upon his main areas of study, lectures, and publications: (1) Old Testament Exegesis; (2) Intertextuality, Typology, and Ancient Near Eastern Background; (3) New Testament Studies; and (4) Theology and Church History.