

On Being the Remnant

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Seventh-day Adventists claim to be the remnant church of biblical prophecy. Following the historicist method of prophetic interpretation they see themselves as the end time remnant predicted in Revelation 12:17.¹ Specifically, they see their movement meeting the identifying marks of the remnant in the book of Revelation. These marks include commandment keeping (12:17), having the testimony of Jesus (12:17), perseverance (14:12), having the faith of Jesus (14:12), and proclaiming the three angels' messages (14:6-12).² Adventists teach that one should keep all the commandments of God, believe in gift of prophecy manifested through the writings of Ellen White, persevere, have the faith of Jesus (the truths of the Bible that Jesus believed and taught), and preach the three angels' message of Revelation 14:6-12 that prepares God's people for the Second Advent.³

With the passing of time, however, some Adventists have become more hesitant about their identity as the remnant. Although they are aware of the identifying marks of the remnant, they find it increasingly difficult to understand what makes them the remnant and explain it to other Protestant

¹ Gerhard Pfandl, "Identifying Marks of the End-time Remnant in the Book of Revelation," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 139.

² For an explanation of the identifying marks of the remnant see *ibid.*, 140.

³ *Ibid.*, 158.

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Christians.⁴ To them a simple exegetical exposition of the identifying marks of the remnant in Scripture does not suffice. After all, other Protestant Christians interpret these texts differently. Moreover, how could the keeping of the Sabbath, having a manifestation of the gift of prophecy in the writings of Ellen White, and preaching the Gospel in the context of the three angels' messages make Adventism the only true visible expression of God's church on the planet? After all, other Protestant Christians keep the commandments, even the seventh-day Sabbath. They also have manifestations of the prophetic gift, persevere in the faith of Christ and preach the Gospel. If Adventists and Evangelicals preach the same Gospel, other Christian denominations also should belong to the visible church as the body of Christ, and therefore, to the remnant.

Protestants generally think the "church" is the spiritual invisible interdenominational body of Christ. From this perspective, they must find the idea that one denomination is the true visible Church of Christ odd, misguided, unbiblical, and perhaps presumptuous. Clearly, a simple declaration that Adventism is the Remnant church because we fit the identifying marks of the Remnant presented in the book of Revelation is insufficient both for church members and for fellow Christians.

In this context we need to ask ourselves some important questions. What does it mean to be the Remnant? How does the Remnant relate to other Christian denominations and the ongoing Ecumenical movement? What is the ground on which the Remnant stands? What transforms a group of Christians into the Biblical Remnant? In other words, we need to look beyond the identifying marks and think about the essence or basic characteristics of the Remnant and the ground on which it stands.

I do not intend to prove that the Seventh-day Adventist church is the remnant church but to show to Adventists and non-Adventists the understanding that undergirds the claim and mission of the remnant. Moreover, I will not address here the biblical grounds for my ecclesiological, theological, and philosophical assumptions. I will only attempt to draw an introductory and incomplete picture of what it means to be the remnant in our times.

⁴ Tarsee Li, "The Remnant in the Old Testament," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2009), 163-70.

The Remnant Church

In Scripture the nature and existence of the Remnant is embedded in the history of salvation and becomes a synonym for the people of God both as Israel and the church.⁵ Paul clearly conceived the Christian church as the remnant of Israel (Romans 11:16-26). He sees the emerging Christian church as “grafted,” “nourished,” (v. 17), and “supported” (v. 18) by faith in God’s covenant with Israel. As Israel, the church stands on its faith in God’s word and covenant with Abraham. As branches, both belong to the same cultivated olive tree, and, receive by faith their nourishment from its “holy root” (vv. 16-17). The church is a “cultivated tree” that stems from a “holy root.” The preceding context⁶ strongly states that God has not rejected Israel (v. 1)⁷ and suggests that the “cultivated tree” is the concrete remnant of Israel,⁸ chosen by God’s grace (v. 5) and constituted by the faith

⁵ Raoul Dederen, “The Church,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001), 548.

⁶ In Romans 11:1-2, Paul affirms that God has not rejected Israel whom He foreknew. Foreknowledge takes us back in the history of Salvation to the time before time, that is, the time when God devised the plan of salvation (predestination) on the basis of his foreknowledge (Romans 8:29). For an introduction to the biblical understanding of foreknowledge and predestination, see Fernando Canale, *Basic Elements of Christian Theology: Scripture Replacing Tradition* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Lithotech, 2005), 104-64. Based on His foreknowledge and predestination God chose (Romans 11:6-11) to create the nation of Israel to be His chosen instrument to bring salvation to all the nations of the earth. Assuming this theological context, in Romans 11:2, “Paul reflects the common OT and Jewish corporate sense of election, according to which God’s choosing of the nation Israel guarantees blessings and benefits (as well as responsibility; note the continuation of Amos 3:2, cited above) to the people as a whole but does not guarantee salvation for every single Israelite (see again the argument of 9:6-29).” Douglas J. Moo, “The Epistle to the Romans,” *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1996), 674-75.

⁷ “By placing the verb at the earliest possible position in the question [Romans 11:1], the words ‘God’ and ‘his people’ stand next to each other so as to express the inconceivability of God actually turning his back on his chosen people. Numerous passages in the OT express the idea of an absolutely irrevocable commitment of Yahweh to Israel. The exclamation ‘By no means!’ expresses ‘abhorrence’ at this incredible possibility.” Robert Jewett, Royd David Kotansky and Eldon Jay Epp, *Romans: A Commentary, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, Press, 2006), 653.

⁸ In Romans 11:2-4, the reference to “[t]he 1 Kings passage, which is one of the seminal ‘remnant’ texts in the OT, suits Paul’s purpose admirably, with its contrast between the apparent hopeless state of Israel and God’s assurance of his continuing care for the people

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response of part of Israel (v.23). In this way, Paul describes the emerging Christian church to which he belongs (v. 1) as the remnant of Israel, God's tenderly cultivated olive tree. Paul's view suggests that the eschatological remnant described by John in Revelation 12:17 is not to be understood as an entity different from the church but as the church itself, the historical-spiritual continuation of the church as remnant of Israel.

The Biblical anticipation of the emergence of an end time remnant and the description of its identifying marks alert Christians to its appearance and mission. However, we should not think about the remnant as an entity that will come into existence only at the end time before the second coming of Christ. Instead we should think about the remnant as a biblical designation applied to the historical and spiritual development of God's people, both Israel and the church, through the history of salvation. The "remnant," then, is a qualifier describing the historical-spiritual reality of God's Church throughout the history of redemption. In fact, there is an eschatological remnant because the historical nature of God, His covenant, and the history of salvation require and open up the future for His faithful people, the church.⁹

through his preservation of a remnant of true believers. It is possible that Paul also finds a parallel between Elijah and himself: each is a key salvation-historical figure, is confronted with the apparent downfall of spiritual Israel, but finds new hope in God's preservation of a remnant of true believers. For God's preservation of a remnant is not only evidence of his present faithfulness to Israel; it is also a pledge of hope for the future of the people." Moo, "The Epistle to the Romans," 676-77. Paul "makes the comparison between Elijah's situation and his own explicit. As God had 'left for himself' a solid body of faithful worshipers in Elijah's time, so 'at the present time,' the time of eschatological fulfillment, he has brought into existence a 'remnant.' No more than the defection of Israelites to the worship of Baal in Elijah's time could the widespread Jewish indifference to the fulfillment of God's promises in Paul's day invalidate God's faithfulness to Israel and thereby cause his word to 'fail.'" (cf. 9:6a). Ibid., 677. The "remnant motif" was already a technical and dynamic historical category biblical writers used to refer to Israel's development and eschatology. On the use of the historical pattern of the remnant in the Old Testament, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980). See also, Li, "The Remnant in the Old Testament," 23-41.

⁹ "In the Hebrew Bible the remnant motif was from the start incorporated into salvation history and became gradually employed to express the future expectations of the Yahwistic faith. The remnant and the possibility of a future are so deeply connected that where there is no 'remnant,' there is no future." Li, "The Remnant in the Old Testament," 24.

The Essence of the Remnant

Due to its historical nature, the people of God always exists as a remnant, that is, as the rest, residue, or last ones to join the long history of believers who no longer exist. Additionally, because God's people's commitment to God is always under attack by the forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:16-17) it can survive only by holding fast through faith to God's word and covenantal promises (Ephesians 6:13-19). These facts help us to understand why in Scripture the word remnant not only names the eschatological church but also and mainly describes the essence of the Church as historical and faithful to God's revelation in Scripture.

Within the broad context of the history of salvation, covenant, and divine election, two essential characteristics of the people of God (Israel, church, and eschatological remnant) are faithfulness¹⁰ and mission. The remnant church was, is, and will be the community faithful to God's call.¹¹ The existence of the church depends and stands on her faithfulness to God's word (Psalm 78:8; Acts 11:21-23; 16:5).¹² Without faith in God's word in Scripture, the church becomes a human organization.

The origin of the Christian church took place because the God of the Old Testament fulfilled his covenantal promise to the world (Genesis 3:15) and to Abraham (Genesis 12:3) by revealing his being and character in

¹⁰ "The fundamental characteristic is a living faith. According to the NT, the church is a society not of thinkers or workers, but of believers. 'Believers,' or 'those who believed,' is constantly used as a synonym for the members of the church (cf. Acts 4:4, 32; 5:14; 15:5; 18:27; 1 Thess. 1:7; 1 Tim. 4:12). Baptism, which from the start was the entrance rite into the church and a sign of belonging to the body of Christ, was essentially a rite of faith and of confession (Acts 2:44; 8:12; 16:31-33; 18:8). This church-building faith was no mere act of intellectual assent, but the symbol of an intimate union between the believer and Christ, which resulted in a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17)." Dederen, "The Church," 561.

¹¹ "In Christian parlance *ekklesia* denoted the "congregation" or community of those called by God, out of the world, to be His people. Theirs was the society of those who were free but always conscious that their freedom sprang from obedience to their Lord... God in Christ is the authority that has constituted the *ekklesia*. It belongs to God because He has called it into being, dwells within it, and rules over it." Ibid., 542.

¹² "There is an historical pattern in the Old Testament motif of the faithful remnant. We find that after the Lord chooses a faithful remnant out of a larger group, this faithful remnant later tends to depart from the Lord to such an extent that the Lord chooses a new faithful remnant from that group, this initiating the cycle again." Li, "The Remnant in the Old Testament," 31.

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Jesus Christ's life and death on the cross (Matthew 16:16-18; John 14:8-10). More precisely, the Christian church emerged as a faithful remnant of God's people who by faith embraced God's revelation in the Old Testament, and Christ's revelation in the New Testament (Hebrews 1:1-2). Thus, the Church is the historical-spiritual community that gathers around, coheres in, stands on, and testifies about Jesus. The Church exists because of her faith in Christ and her witnessing Christ to the world. In the most real sense the Church exists in-Christ.¹³ Her existence is spiritual. It takes place as a historical communal relationship of faith in His Word and His mission as revealed through the history of salvation and recorded in Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In the history of salvation, then, the eschatological remnant is not something new but rather is the continuation of the Christian church as remnant of Israel. Her nature and existence revolves around her spiritual faithfulness to Christ's Word and mission. Consequently, in order to move beyond only the claim of being the eschatological remnant on the basis of its identifying marks to actually being the remnant God will use with power in the end time, Adventists should examine their faithfulness to Christ's Word and His mission within the general context of Christian Church history.

The Emergence of Tradition

Soon after the apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed the revelation of God in Jesus Christ among them in the New Testament writings, Christians began to use them not only as rule of faith but also as spiritual food. Together with the revelations God gave previously during Old Testament times they became the theological and spiritual ground for the Christian Church.

The process of receiving, appropriating, and spiritually internalizing God's word, however, always involves interpretation. Due to many and complex historical reasons early in her history the Christian church progressively adapted her teachings and liturgical forms to Greek

¹³ For an introduction to the "In-Christ" motif in the writings of Paul see Ivan T. Blazen, "In Christ: Union with Him as Savior and Lord in Paul," in *Biblical Research Institute Release - 2*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005).

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ontological categories.¹⁴ Christian leaders facing the world of culture, science, and reason, decided, for various reasons, not to reject the leading scientific culture of their days: Greek philosophy in its Neoplatonic format. Historians of Christian theology label this process the “hellenization”¹⁵ or alternatively the “de-Judaization”¹⁶ of Christianity. By adapting to the cultural trends of their days early Christians progressively and radically replaced the macro hermeneutical presuppositions New Testament writers took from the Old Testament canon. I have no doubts that in so doing Christians thought they were faithful to God and desired to advance His mission on earth. Unfortunately, they progressively neglected Isaiah’s injunction to use Scriptural teachings as interpretive principles to evaluate new spiritual events (Isaiah 8:20). Moreover, they also failed to follow Christ’s hermeneutical practice when He used Old Testament teachings and categories as interpretive principles necessary for a proper explanation of His salvific ministry and death on the cross to his disciples (Luke 24:27).

The replacement of Old Testament macro interpretive principles with interpretive principles derived from Greek philosophical categories led to the development, consolidation and dominance of Christian tradition in all levels of Christianity, such as Scriptural interpretation, theological constructions, ministerial practices, liturgical forms, and missionary strategies. As this situation ruled unopposed for over a thousand years, a systematic mingling of philosophical views about God, human nature, reason, and the world, permeated all levels of Christian thought, life, and action, becoming ingrained in Christianity itself. For spiritual purposes Scripture was replaced by the sacramental system of liturgy and worship.

¹⁴ Adolph Harnack describes the Christian Church of the middle of the third century as “a new commonwealth, politically formed and equipped with fixed forms of all kinds. We recognize in these forms few Jewish, but many Greco-Roman features, and finally we perceive also in the doctrine of faith on which this commonwealth is based, the philosophic spirit of the Greeks.” As consequence, “The Christian Church and its doctrine were developed within the Roman world and Greek culture in opposition to the Jewish Church.” Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, 7 Volumes vols. (New York: Dover, 1961), 1: 45-46.

¹⁵ Harnack popularized the notion of “Hellenization” to describe the gradual adaptation of Christian doctrine to Greek, Neoplatonic ontological patterns. See for instance, *ibid.*, 1: 41-50. See also, Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 5 vols. vols. (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1971-1989), 1: 45.

¹⁶ ———, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*: 1: 21.

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Although Scripture was never absent from Christian tradition the new philosophical hermeneutics decisively distorted its teachings and weakened its power. Eventually, it contributed to the church's self understanding as being the replacement of Israel rather than as being its remnant.

The Emergence of Scripture and the Anonymous Remnant

The "synthesis" between Greek macro hermeneutical interpretive principles and biblical data on which Christian tradition stands sheltered a fateful conflict that sooner or later was bound to create theological and spiritual inconsistencies along the way. For example, Luther noticed a glaring irregularity: clearly, the system of meritorious works did not fit experience or the clear teachings of Scripture. With a God-given conviction and staunch determination he turned to Scripture to fight against tradition and reform the church. Scripture was emerging from tradition.

With the passing of time Luther's and Calvin's "turn to Scripture" intensified and disseminated throughout Europe and America. In the process, mainline and radical reformations progressively rediscovered and integrated forgotten biblical teachings into the fabric of Christianity. Notably, English Puritan theologians during the seventeenth century and John Wesley during the eighteenth century used Scripture to challenge tradition. Simultaneously, the discovery of further biblical teachings produced an ever-increasing doctrinal and theological fragmentation of Protestant Christianity.

In fact, the "turn to Scripture" by mainline and radical reformations did not challenge but assumed and used the interpretative principles Christian tradition had drawn from Greek philosophical ideas. This little noticed fact buried deep in the history of Protestant and Evangelical experiences may explain why the emergence of Scripture that followed in the wake of the Reformation did not produce a unified alternative to Roman Catholicism but rather an ever increasing fragmentation of Christianity in doctrines, practices, and denominations that still goes on unabated.

Nevertheless, from an historical perspective the Protestant "turn to Scripture" involves the progressive emergence of an incipient "anonymous" remnant. It is a remnant because it springs into existence from faithfulness to Scripture rather than tradition and philosophy. It is anonymous, because lacking the features or marks that characterize and identify the remnant it cannot be recognized as such. Finally, it is incipient because it exists in an embryonic stage of development. Consequently, the anonymous remnant

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is a provisional stage in the process of the restoration of the Church back to its biblical nature as the remnant of Israel.

Perhaps, the analysis of change in scientific thought and practices advanced by philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn may help us to better understand the unstable existence of the anonymous incipient remnant that emerged as a result of the Reformers' "turn to Scripture."¹⁷ Kuhn argues that "normal" science produces discoveries that become the foundation guiding the search and interpretation of new data and discoveries.¹⁸ With the passing of time, accumulation, and refinement of knowledge produces a body of information forming a "tradition of normal science." Normal science, in turn, becomes the interpretative paradigm guiding scientific interpretation, knowledge, and, practice.¹⁹ Yet, when the paradigm cannot interpret or assimilate new data or discoveries anomalies arise²⁰ that lead to crisis in scientific interpretation and to a period of "extraordinary science."²¹ When this happens the interpretive paradigm is challenged, studied, and eventually replaced by a new one, giving rise to a "scientific revolution." We should keep in mind that the new interpretive paradigm is not the articulation or extension of the old one. It is rather "the reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field's most elementary theoretical generalizations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications."²²

A group of Christian theologians led by Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng recognized the value of Kuhn's analysis of scientific revolutions and applied it to the field of Christian theology with the purpose of interpreting Christian traditions and advancing the development of ecumenical theology and practice.²³ Clearly, Küng and his group

¹⁷ For an introduction and evaluation to Kuhn's thought see, for instance, Frank Hasel, "Scientific Revolution: An Analysis and Evaluation of Thomas Kuhn's Concept of Paradigm and Paradigm Change for Theology," *Adventist Theological Society* 2(1991).

¹⁸ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

²² *Ibid.*, 85.

²³ Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium*, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1988), 123-27. Hans Küng, and David Tracy, ed. *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1991); Hans Küng,

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understood that the questions facing Christianity in the third Christian millennium were about hermeneutical macro interpretive principles.²⁴ However, their theological commitment to tradition²⁵ did not allow them to properly recognize the true nature of the “anomalies” that the emergence of Scripture brought about by Luther and the Protestant Reformation introduced into the fabric of Christianity. Obviously, they did not understand either the true nature of the theological crisis and hermeneutical revolution facing Christianity.

Let us now apply Kuhn’s description of macro hermeneutical change in the thinking patterns of the scientific community to the thinking and practice of the Christian church. This will help us to examine the way in which the Protestant “turn” to Scripture yielded the emergence of the anonymous, incipient, and unstable remnant.

Because faithfulness to Scripture and its mission belong to the essence of the remnant we will focus our brief analysis on theological change, that is to say, change in the understanding of the doctrines of Christianity. An attentive reading to the history of Christian doctrines reveals that Christianity soon developed a theological tradition that consolidated throughout the Middle Ages. Guided by Neoplatonic and Aristotelian hermeneutical principles, Augustine and Aquinas respectively are perhaps the most distinguished systematizers of Christian tradition. Up to the present time, this tradition corresponds to Kuhn’s “normal science.” Let us call it then, “normal theology.”

According to Kuhn, progressively anomalies arise. Anomalies come from new data, teachings, or events that do not “fit” with the system of normal science. As the system of normal science solves new challenges, it becomes stronger and more precise. Yet, eventually some anomalies that do not fit the system arise. To solve them creative thinking is needed. Here, “creative thinking” means “thinking outside the box” (the box being tradition). As mentioned above, Martin Luther noticed a glaring inconsistency between Paul’s clear teachings on justification by faith and the traditional teachings of the church on meritorious works and assurance

Christianity: Essence, History, and Future, trans. John Bowden (New York, NY: Continuum, 1995).

²⁴ ———, *Theology for the Third Millennium*: xii.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 47-63, specially page 59.

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of salvation through plenary papal indulgences. In his attempt to solve these anomalies, however, Luther was still thinking inside the box of normal theology and using the sources he found in that box: tradition and Scripture. We all know that the system of normal theology did not like the “fixing” Luther advanced with his “justification by faith alone” proposal and placed him “outside” its community.

As Luther’s insight caught the imagination of his time, anomalies rising from Scripture challenging the system of normal theology multiplied. In time, this trend gave rise to a period of theological crisis stemming from the Protestant “turn to Scripture.” However, after almost five centuries of “theological crisis” and fragmentation no theological revolution has taken place. A period of “extraordinary science” Kuhn’s analysis predicts has not yet been replicated with a period of “extraordinary theology.” According to Kuhn’s analysis of scientific revolutions a period of “extraordinary theology” should replace the old hermeneutical paradigm, where normal theology drew from Greek philosophical ideas, with a new one. Clearly, a theological revolution commensurable to what Kuhn describes as a scientific revolution has not happened yet. Why not?

A main reason for the absence of extraordinary theology and the onset of a theological revolution is that the Protestant “turn to Scripture” never challenged the hermeneutical principles of normal theology. Although with the passing of time the Protestant Reformation led to the rediscovery of a veritable wealth of Scriptural teachings and practices, it never challenged tradition’s philosophical interpretation of the foundational macro hermeneutical principles. Hence, the much-heralded Reformation principle of scripture alone (“sola Scriptura”) never actually challenged the interpretive role of tradition based on Greek philosophical ideas on the reality of God, human nature, the world, the whole of reality (ontology and metaphysics), and reason (epistemology). More precisely, main line Reformers used Scripture to challenge doctrinal points in tradition but never the hermeneutical and methodological basis on which Christian tradition stands. On the contrary, tradition is the explicitly recognized source of Biblical hermeneutics.²⁶ Additionally, even when the Radical Reformers like the Anabaptists departed from the mainline Reformation by

²⁶ Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001), 48.

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explicitly applying the “sola Scriptura” principle in a radical way and thereby further leaving tradition behind, they never challenged the macro hermeneutical principles of normal theology either.

Will the Protestant “turn to Scripture” ever produce a period of extraordinary theology challenging and replacing the macro hermeneutical paradigm of normal theology?

In conclusion, because the church stands on Christ as revealed in Scriptures the Protestant turn to Scripture initiated the emergence from tradition of the Biblical remnant albeit in a “stealth” or “anonymous” provisory way. The anonymous remnant was provisory because the Protestant commitment to Scripture did not challenge the ontological, metaphysical, and hermeneutical presuppositions on which Christian traditions had built their theological and ecclesiological systems. Because Protestantism still shares these basic guiding assumptions with Roman Catholicism, its turn to Scripture is partial and produces systemic and theological inconsistencies that unavoidably generated an ever-increasing ecclesiological fragmentation. Due to this situation Protestantism became unable to fully emerge as the Biblical remnant church. Instead it became shaky and in need of theological answers and ecclesiological stability. With the passing of time this search for answers will cause the anonymous remnant to pave the way to the rise on one side of the emerging remnant, and, on the other side, of the emerging church.

The Emerging Eschatological Remnant

During the Eighteenth century the anonymous remnant intensified and expanded throughout the American frontier beyond the restraints imposed by tradition and organized established denominations. In this environment the Protestant turn to Scripture generated two revivals of practical piety among common folks and shaped the culture of the times.²⁷ During this period growing grassroots dissatisfaction with doctrinal inconsistencies generated by the Protestant Reformation motivated serious Bible students to search for a way to overcome tradition and ecclesiological fragmentation through a deeper and more inclusive understanding of Scriptures. Unlike

²⁷ See Alister McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2007), 156-66.

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the Magisterial Reformers (sixteenth century) and the English Puritans (seventeenth century) this search did not originate with the professional clergy and theologians but with the laity. It grew from the basic and naïve conviction that Scripture can interpret itself. This radical view implicitly departed from the hermeneutical perspective of the Magisterial Reformers that set the patterns, limits, and hermeneutical principles of what we know today as Protestant or Evangelical theology. The refusal to use tradition as a source of theology and a hermeneutical guide could be traced back to the Radical Reformers' call for a restoration of Biblical, mostly New Testament, Christianity. In eighteenth century America various restorationist groups embraced this approach to Christian theology²⁸ in an attempt to overcome what had gone wrong with the Catholic Church²⁹ and historical churches of the Reformation.³⁰

In this environment and out of the second American revival (1800-1830)³¹ interest in the study of the long forgotten apocalyptic prophecies of the Old and New Testaments intensified, and, in

²⁸ Mark G. Toulouse, "Restoration Movements," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 659-64. Mark A. Noll, "Rethinking Restorationism: A Review Article," *The Reformed Journal* 39, no. 11 (1989).

²⁹ According to Steven L. Ware "restorationism may be viewed primarily as an interpretive framework used to varying degrees by nearly every Protestant group." He goes on to explain: "Stated bluntly, there was a wide- spread but not always consciously articulated perception among early radical holiness leaders (as well as among many other Protestants) that something went very wrong early in the history of the church. Following the apostolic era of the first century, during which time the church was marked by the purity of apostolic teaching, the exemplary character of sanctified lives, and the power of the Holy Spirit's demonstrations among them, the church slowly sank into corruption. Over the next few centuries pure apostolic Christianity was corrupted through the development of ecclesiastical hierarchies, the addition of pomp and splendor to worship, and the wide acceptance of Platonic philosophy. The result was a medieval Roman Catholicism which was marked by moral laxity, persecution of non-conformists, and continual dissension with kings and emperors in a struggle for political power. The church became a religious system in which, as viewed by restorationists, much of the truth of Christianity is 'buried beneath the rubbish,' buried so deep that it has been 'scarce seen or heard of for a thousand years.'" Steven L. Ware, "Restoring the New Testament Church: Varieties of Restorationism in the Radical Holiness Movement of the Late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries," *Pneuma; The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 21, no. 2 (1999): 235.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 236.

³¹ McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*: 164.

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consequence, attention shifted from the first to the second coming of Christ. By a careful application of the well-established historicist method of prophetic interpretation to the study of Daniel chapter 8 and 9 a veritable ecumenical movement emerged mostly out of laity belonging to various protestant denominations announcing the visible and historical coming of Christ on October 22, 1844. Out of the Great Disappointment that crushed the sincere expectations of the “Advent Movement” a very small number of believers sought answers in Scriptures for their predicament. When on October 23 they turned their eyes to the reality of the Heavenly Sanctuary where Christ since His resurrection and ascension had been ministering salvation to human beings they found the explanation for their disappointment. Christ was not coming to earth but entering in the most Holy place in the Heavenly Sanctuary. Eventually, this discovery gave rise the Seventh-day Adventist church and its claim of being the remnant church of biblical prophecy.

However, in turning their attention to Christ in the heavenly sanctuary the group of evangelical believers that later became the Seventh-day Adventist church did not discover a new doctrine or information unknown to Christians. Rather, to the contrary, Protestant theologians had also recognized the New Testament belief that Christ, since his resurrection and ascension,³² sat at the right hand of His heavenly Father in the heavenly sanctuary, where he has been ministering continuously for our salvation.³³ This being the case, then, one may ask what thus far neglected theological truth, that may sustain the claim of being the remnant church did this group of untrained young evangelical believers discover in Scripture when they revisited the interpretation of Daniel 8:14? The answer to this question is probably none. Adventist historians have long recognized that Adventists’ doctrines were known as such in earlier periods of church history and notably during the emergence of the anonymous remnant.³⁴

³² Ware, “Restoring the New Testament Church: Varieties of Restorationism in the Radical Holiness Movement of the Late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries,” 237.

³³ Bryan W. Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1981), 103-07.

³⁴ See for instance, *Bible Teachers Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, and Editors, Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957). Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The*

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However, with the passing of years, new generations of Adventists concluded that early pioneers discovered the biblical doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment prior to Christ's second coming. If this is the case, are these "distinctive" doctrines enough to sustain the claim of being the remnant. Many Adventists and non-Adventists correctly wonder whether the "discovery" of the sanctuary doctrine is enough to sustain the claim of being the remnant church, the only true visible church on earth at the end time. For them, having a few "distinctive" doctrines is not enough to back such a far-reaching claim. Thus, we need to give a closer look to the theological and ecclesiological experience of the early Adventists pioneers.

During the first six formative years that followed the Great Disappointment, early Adventist pioneers continued their search for Biblical truths beyond the interpretation of prophecies and the doctrine of the sanctuary.³⁵ Their genius was not to discover these truths, most of which had been already recognized and accepted by many in the anonymous remnant. Instead, they made a small step that was to generate a gigantic theological revolution in Christianity: They used their newfound insights into the way in which prophecy and the sanctuary interrelate in Scripture as the hermeneutical presuppositions needed to understand the entire Bible, the whole range of Christian doctrines, and the mission of the Church.³⁶ Perhaps Ellen White summarized this epoch changing experience best when she explained, "The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's

Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers: The Conflict of the Ages over the Nature and Destiny of Man (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1965-66). And the more detailed exposition by Ball, *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*.

³⁵ "Thus the Sanctuary truth, so long 'cast down' and trodden underfoot throughout much of the Christian Era—until the prophesied end of the 2300 years—began to be recovered in 1844. That was the demand of Biblical Prophecy. That was the significant fulfillment of history. It is tremendously impressive. With the coming of the time came the people called of God, and the recovered message of the Sanctuary truth foretold in holy writ." Leroy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 80.

³⁶ C. Mervyn Maxwell, "A Brief History of Adventist Hermeneutics," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 4/2, (1993): 214-15.

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hand had directed the great advent movement, and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people.”³⁷

Kuhn’s analysis of “scientific revolutions” we are using to probe into the development of the Christian church may help us to understand the magnitude of what Adventist pioneers accomplished in a few years by pressing on the search for truth guided by the *sola* and *tota Scriptura* principles. In their determination to understand prophecy, the Protestant “turn to Scripture” had finally advanced from the initial phase, when new discoveries in biblical research progressively generate anomalies to the decisive time of “extraordinary theology” when the old paradigm is replaced by a new one. In other words, when Adventist pioneers used their understanding of apocalyptic prophecies and the Sanctuary as an interpretive paradigm they effectively replaced the interpretive paradigm Christian tradition had drawn from extra Biblical philosophical ideas. This paradigmatic epochal shift in the hermeneutical paradigm made possible the emerging of the visible remnant from Scripture. The remnant visible Church had finally arrived to challenge the theological and ecclesiological status quo. The Protestant “turn to Scripture” embraced by the “anonymous remnant” eventually had given way to the “biblical hermeneutical turn” embraced by the emerging incipient visible Remnant.

Would the anonymous remnant embrace the “biblical hermeneutical turn” and join forces with the emerging remnant in the work of “extraordinary theology” it entails? Alternatively, would the anonymous remnant fully embrace the hermeneutical principles of Christian tradition that it never challenged or gave up? Recent developments indicate that a substantial portion of the anonymous remnant is becoming the emerging Church. This “church” emerges from tradition. By embracing tradition evangelical leaders attempt to overcome the theological contradictions and ministerial anomalies by dividing the already fragmented protestant tradition. By failing to apply the “turn to Scripture” to the interpretation of the hermeneutical principles, and fully embracing the non-biblical interpretation of the ontological, metaphysical, and hermeneutical principles of “early” Christian tradition the emerging Church is returning

³⁷ Ellen White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Co., 1888), 423.

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to Rome intentionally.³⁸ Nonetheless, at this time not all the anonymous remnant is embracing the emerging Church movement. A large sector remains wholly committed to the “turn to Scripture” and yet they still implicitly and inadvertently assume the hermeneutical paradigm of Christian tradition. Consequently, this sector remains unstable because it is unable to overcome the contradiction between their theological data and hermeneutical presuppositions. Eventually, as its members may join the emerging church or the emerging remnant, the anonymous remnant may vanish.

Even so, the biblical hermeneutical turn of early Adventist pioneers, revolutionary as it was and is, only signals the birth of the remnant, not its fully-developed existence. The history of Adventism so far makes this development possible, not actual. The Biblical remnant, then, exists not as a finished reality but as the ongoing process of becoming the church Christ gathers around Him by His presence and words. In its essence the remnant church exists and grows in its becoming and being as Christ generates its message and mission.

To properly understand the meaning of being the emerging incipient visible Biblical remnant church in the context of the end times of the history of salvation, we need to consider briefly its message and mission. However, before moving in that direction we need to highlight the manner in which the “biblical hermeneutical turn” embraced and advanced by early Adventist pioneers relates to the essence of the Christian remnant church.

Christ, Hermeneutics, and the Remnant

How does the hermeneutical turn from tradition to Scripture relate to ecclesiology? Concretely, in what way does the hermeneutics of Christian tradition (Catholic and Protestant) and the hermeneutics of Adventist pioneers shape their understanding of the Christian church?

One indirect way to see how the hermeneutical turn from tradition to Scripture relates to ecclesiology is to consider the influence of hermeneutical presuppositions on the doctrinal system of the church. In this approach, hermeneutics relates to ecclesiology by generating alternate

³⁸ Fernando Canale, “The Emerging Church: What does it Mean? And Why Should We Care?,” *Adventist Review*, June 10, 2010; and, John Jovan Markovic, “The Emerging Church: Voices of Confusion” (Part 2 of 2), *Ministry* 82, no. 5 (2010).

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understandings of the entire ensemble of Christian doctrines and practices thereby producing two competing and incompatible ways of understanding Christianity.

The incompatibility between the traditional and Adventist theological systems stems from the conflicting views Christian tradition and Adventists assume about the nature of reality. Christian tradition embraces the view of reality inspired and mediated by Greek Neoplatonic ontology and articulated by Aristotelian metaphysics. Adventists, naively and implicitly embrace the view of reality expressed and assumed by biblical writers. The former places the reality of God, His acts, and human spirituality outside the realm of time, space, and history. The latter, places the reality of God, His acts, and human spirituality inside the realm of time, space, and history. These opposite views about reality (ontology of God, human beings and the world), the whole (everything in the universe in relation to God) become unavoidable assumptions at the time of interpreting Scripture, understanding its doctrines and fulfilling God's will and mission. The difference and conflict between them could not be greater or more inclusive. Only one can be the actual church of Christ.

Churches based on tradition ignore and replace the view of reality (ontology) and the whole (metaphysics) God revealed in Scripture. In so doing they distort the biblical teachings about God, Christ and salvation. This fact disqualifies them to represent the God of Scripture and to the claim of being Christ's visible church on earth. However, this first approach deals with ecclesiology indirectly, via the doctrine and practices of the church. Yet, there is a direct way in which hermeneutics conditions the essence of Christian ecclesiology.

We turn our attention now to a direct way in which the hermeneutical turn from tradition to Scripture relates to ecclesiology. In general, most Christians agree that by essence the church is the spiritual community of Christ on earth that exists because of her faith relationship with the real presence of Christ. Ecclesiological disagreements revolve around the way in which Christians interpret the real presence of Christ as the ground and center of the Christian church. Clearly, any exposition of the presence of Christ depends on one's preunderstandings on the nature of God, human beings, and Christ assumed by the interpreter. And these, in turn, depend on the preunderstandings the interpreter assumes about the general nature of reality as a whole (ontology and metaphysics). Let us consider, then, the way in which hermeneutical presuppositions influence the understanding

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and experience of the presence of Christ. This approach will help us to see how hermeneutics relates to ecclesiology by generating alternate understandings of the presence of Christ thereby producing two competing and incompatible grounds for the Christian church.

Roman Catholics and a large sector of mainline Protestant denominations believe that after Christ's ascension to heaven we have access to His real presence in or through the sacraments.³⁹ Christ's presence in the sacraments then, is the essence, center, and foundation of the Christian Church.

This belief springs from the hermeneutical assumption that God's spiritual reality and our spiritual realities are neither temporal nor material. Within this hermeneutical assumption, God can relate directly to separate souls (souls without a body, as the angels are according to tradition) but not to souls incarnated in material bodies. Since humans souls exist in an essential connection to a material body, God needs to use a material element to reach the soul. Thus, to become present to incarnate souls God uses a material element to bridge the material ontological gap that exists between God's non-historical reality and the non-historical reality of the human soul. In the case of Christ, his body is the material vehicle God used to make his spiritual non-historical nature present in the times of the disciples. After the ascension of Christ's body to heaven God uses other material vehicles (wine, water, bread, etc.) to communicate the presence of Christ's divinity and humanity to the Christian Church.

Tradition teaches, then, that Christ's spiritual, non-historical, divine presence becomes real to us through material signs and symbols (sacraments) we apprehend with our spirits. It is important to bear in mind that the divine presence mediated by the sacraments is the same the disciples experienced through the human body of Jesus Christ. This relation takes place in the "spiritual" timeless realm outside the every day flow of historical events. The sacraments, then, provide the material element God needs to become present to our embodied souls.

According to tradition, then, God relates to our immaterial (spaceless and non-historical) souls without the need of the historical mediation of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. The human Christ is no longer

³⁹ Although Christians have developed various ways to understand the sacraments, all of them see the presence of God in or through them.

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God incarnated but the sacrament necessary for the eternal timeless God to communicate his spiritual presence directly to our souls. Thus, through the sacraments, Christian believers do not relate to the incarnated Christ ministering for them in heaven but directly to God's own transcendent unmediated non-historical being.

Radically departing from this view, Seventh-day Adventism believes that after Christ's ascension to heaven, believers experience His real historical presence in the heavenly sanctuary by faith through prayer, study, and obedience to his words (Scripture).

Adventists are not the first Christians to accept this view⁴⁰ but are the first to take the revolutionary step to use this biblical belief as the key of the hermeneutical presuppositions required for the entire theological system and for the biblical understanding of the real presence of Christ who is the center and ground of the Church. By taking this small step, Adventists effectively rejected the Neoplatonic-Aristotelic-Augustinian-Thomistic ontological ground on which traditional churches stand and replaced it with the biblical ontology-metaphysics of God in His sanctuary relating historically to historical temporal beings (Biblical ontology of human nature). In so doing Adventists radically depart from traditional conservative and modern Protestant and Evangelical theologians. Clearly, when understood historically, the resurrected and ascended Christ cannot be at the same time present in or through the sacraments and bodily in the heavenly sanctuary. To claim He is present in the sacraments involves the spiritualization of Christ.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Early in the Protestant Reformation Zwingli understood Christ's presence was tied to his body in heaven, see, for instance, W. P. Stephens, "Zwingli's Theology," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 5: 864. He used this idea as presupposition to reject the traditional view that Christ was present in the bread and wine of the Holy Communion. Thus, he "argued that Christ's body could not be present on many altars at one and the same time, since after the ascension it was restricted to one location at God's right hand." Scott Hendrix, "Luther's Theology," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999-2003), 3: 373.

⁴¹ To say that Christ is present in the sacraments necessarily involves the spiritualization of the historical reality of Christ in heaven, which the implicit ontologies of God's timeless being and the immortal soul require. Wolfhart Pannenberg represents well theologians working from the perspective of "normal" traditional theology when he considers Zwingli's hermeneutical use of Christ's bodily presence in the Heavenly Sanctuary as a "hindrance"

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Therefore, in Adventism the heavenly-sanctuary-word-prayer-personal relational dynamics replaces the impersonal ritualistic mechanics of the sacraments as the essence, center, and foundation of the Christian church as the remnant of Biblical history and prophecy. Believers no longer experience the presence of Christ in and through the mediation of the liturgical rituals of the church. Instead, through the understanding of Scripture and prayer, believers encounter the presence of Christ who as an historical living person in heaven is the mediator between God's transcendent being and his creatures. Moreover, He is also the merciful high priest ministering salvation and providentially guiding believers. In this ontological context the remnant church exists and stands as the spiritual and visible community that grows out of the redemptive-mediatory work Christ performs in the heavenly sanctuary; and, by accepting his love and sovereignty in faith and obedience, accepts Christ's given mission to proclaim his gospel of the kingdom of God to the world.

Unquestionably, the turn to biblical hermeneutics belongs to the macro historical level of theological and ecclesiological developments. Thomas Kuhn's analysis of scientific revolutions we explained and used earlier in this article may help us to properly understand its implications in the area

to a correct understanding of the sacraments. "On the matter of the real presence Zwingli was hampered by this idea of the exalted Christ being tied corporeally by his session at the right hand of God." Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991-1998), 3:310-11; *ibid.* Calvin, though, following Scriptural evidence from the Gospels argues that Christ real body presently exists in heaven but makes room for his presence to be real in the sacrament through the Holy Spirit, not bodily as Roman Catholic dogma affirms, but in the mode of "majesty, providence, and ineffable grace." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), IV, xvii, 26. Although Calvin goes further than Luther in challenging traditional thought on the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine, he remains closer to tradition than Zwingli by embracing the ontology of tradition that "hampers" (to use Pannenberg wording in the quotation above) him from accepting the ontological implications of the biblical teaching by which Christ's presence is indivisibly in heaven and tied to his body in space and time. In the final analysis, with some caveats, Calvin embraces Christ's real presence in the bread and the wine. He concludes, "[b]ut when these absurdities are discarded, I willingly admit anything which helps to express the true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord, as exhibited to believers under the sacred symbols of the Supper, understanding that they are received not by the imagination or intellect merely, but are enjoyed in reality as the food of eternal life." *Ibid.*, IV, xvii, 19.

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of Christian ecclesiology. The acceptance of the biblical teachings about Christ's historical and bodily presence in the heavenly sanctuary produce a radical change at the ontological foundations of Christian theology and ecclesiology. The temporal historical ontological framework of Scripture definitively replaces the timeless non-historical ontology of Christian tradition. The hermeneutical consequences of this ontological shift are momentous and all inclusive. Its consistent application by Adventist believers to the entire system of Christian theology, worship, and ministerial practices amounts to a macro paradigm shift at the very foundation of Christian theology that initiates a period of extraordinary theology and sets the stage for the emergence of the eschatological remnant of Biblical prophecy.

The Bread of Life

The Church as a spiritual visible community exists because it receives its nourishment from Christ, its center and foundation. Teaching in the synagogue, Christ taught: "I am the bread of life. . . . The one who eats this bread will live forever" (John 6:35, 58 NRSV). Traditional ontology dictating the hermeneutics of traditional churches led them to interpret Christ's teachings on the "Bread of Life" in a sacramental way. They see Christ teaching that by partaking in the bread and wine Christians actually eat His real spiritual being which is "spiritually" present "in" the bread and wine. According to this view, the soul of the believer actually "feeds" from the very substance of the transcendent God. It "feeds" from the actual power of divine life. The "feeding" does not take place in the realm of every day life but in the "parallel realm" of spiritual substances (God and the soul). This transaction, therefore, is mechanic and impersonal.

The radical paradigm shift in ontological views that generated the remnant church dictates a different hermeneutical commitment that leads to interpret Christ's teachings on the "Bread of Life" historically and personally. According to biblical ontology, the "bread of life" is the real incarnated Christ that came down from heaven (John 6:33, 39) and as he went back up to heaven (John 6:62) now feeds us the words of life He spoke personally and through the prophets (John 6:63) and by the teaching ministry and providences of His representative the Holy Spirit.

According to Scripture, then, the "feeding" on Christ that generates the church does not take place mechanically in and through the sacraments as an impersonal encounter with God's transcendent reality. Instead, the

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“feeding” on Christ that generates the remnant church takes place as an historical experience that involves the whole being in and through the words of Scripture as a personal encounter with the incarnated Christ in heaven. The spiritual feeding Christ speaks about, then, takes place in the realm of our every day lives within the sequence of time and the spatiality of our bodies not in the ethereal, non-historical, non-spatial realm of traditional Christian spirituality. In short, a personal spirituality centered in Christ’s words and historical acts replaces an impersonal spirituality centered in the transcendent, non-historical substance of the divinity.

The Message

Precisely because according to Christ believers feed from his words of revelation in Scripture, the spirituality of the remnant church is essentially and indissolubly connected to its message. Adventists talk much about their “message.” But what is a message? A message is a communication addressed to a recipient. Clearly, the recipient is the world, but what is the content of the communication God expects the remnant to deliver to the world? Progressively, Adventists answered this question in various ways generating confusion. Because of its essential role in the life and mission of the church we need to become familiar with the contents of the message God expects us to live and proclaim to the world.

When we speak about sending a “message” to somebody we generally have in mind something short and to the point. Not surprisingly, most Adventists think about the message of the church as something brief. Some believers may find difficulty in identifying it. Others may readily identify the “message” of the Church with some of the so call distinctive truths, as, for instance, the seventh-day Sabbath, the second coming, the health reform, the gospel, or the three angels’ messages. Is the message of the Church something short that can be delivered quickly even as a mail person delivers mail? Let us reflect for a moment in the message of the church as it relates to the essence and mission of the Church.

Ellen White frequently wrote about the message of the Church. According to her, the message of God gives the remnant church is the same Gospel commission Christ gave to the disciples before His ascension to

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heaven.⁴² That being the case, one wonders about the contents of Christ's commission to the Church. Is the Gospel commission the proclamation of divine grace? Certainly, but the proclamation of "the mysteries of the grace of God," requires the inclusion of "the whole counsel of God,"⁴³ "the saving truths of the third angel's message,"⁴⁴ and "the especial truths that have separated us from the world and made us what we are."⁴⁵ Let us explore these rather succinct and technical points a little further in order to appreciate their spiritual and practical meaning.

The message God gives the church to proclaim is a message about God's grace. But grace is not a thing or a power but an essential characteristic of God's person who by nature is merciful and gracious (Exodus 34:6; Deuteronomy 4:31, Psalm 116:5). Grace, then, is revealed and experienced through divine actions. Consequently, the mission of proclaiming God's grace requires the church should make all of God's acts as revealed in Scripture known to the world. The proclamation of God's grace, then, coincides with the proclamation of His acts.

Moreover, according to Paul, the message the church proclaims includes nothing less than "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27 ESV). "God's counsel" refers to the "plans of his heart" for all generations (Psalm 33: 11 NRSV) that in His eternal wisdom and understanding God designed (Job 12:13, Proverbs 1:25, 8:14), and, by the free decision of His will predestined for our salvation before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:11). The "counsel of God" or "plan of salvation" the trinity predestined for our salvation includes, among other things, Christ's incarnation and ministry (2 Corinthians 2:7; 1:30), the goal that human beings should become holy (Eph 1:4), and transformed in the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) through Christ's redemptive sacrifice (Eph 1:7), forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7), and adoption in the family of God (Eph 1:5). The

⁴² Ellen White, "The Great Commission: A Call to Service," *Review and Herald*, March 24, 1910, par. 8.

⁴³ ———, *Life Sketches Of Ellen G. White: Being A Narrative Of Her Experience To 1881 As Written By Herself; With A Sketch Of Her Subsequent Labors And Of Her Last Sickness* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 329.

⁴⁴ ———, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1855-1909), 8: 24.

⁴⁵ ———, *Life Sketches Of Ellen G. White: Being A Narrative Of Her Experience To 1881 As Written By Herself; With A Sketch Of Her Subsequent Labors And Of Her Last Sickness*, 329.

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proclamation of “the entire counsel” of God, then, coincides with the proclamation of the entire plan of salvation.

The “saving truths of the third angel’s message” include, among other things, the eternal gospel, the fear of the Lord, God’s judgment hour, the worship of God the creator, the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14: 6-13). The proclamation of “the saving truths of the third angel’s message, then, identifies especial aspects of God’s message that his Church will emphasize before his second coming.

“The especial truths that have separated us from the world and made us what we are” include issues like, for instance, the sanctuary doctrine, the non-immortality of the soul, the law of God, the Sabbath, and the three angels’ messages.⁴⁶ These truths are “especial” because they provide the biblical hermeneutical foundations to interpret, the “saving truths of the third angel,” the “whole counsel of God,” and the “mysteries of God’s grace.”

On the one side, this brief exploration into the contents of the message of the remnant shows that the message is not something brief that can be swiftly processed and disseminated without much personal involvement. On the other side, many may find this extended notion of the message complicated, disconnected, and overwhelming.

At first glance, the message so described seems complicated, because having various parts it requires closer attention. The message seems disconnected because its many parts appear to stand as independent components detached from each other. The message seems overwhelming because its perceived intricateness and lack of connections puts it over the head of individuals superficially acquainted with the Scriptures. Perhaps intellectuals or specialists could get the “message” but not common folks. This very common negative feeling about the message normally awakens when we become aware of its unavoidable complexity: the message has many truths. Unfortunately, some of us deal with this disquieting feeling by simplifying the message and reducing it to the truth or truths with which

⁴⁶ ———, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), 30.

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we relate better. The result is an emasculated message and the loss of the power, unity, and mission in the Church.⁴⁷

This situation arises when we fail to perceive the way in which all the parts of the message interconnect and form a perfect, complete, and harmonious system of truth. However, through Bible study and prayer anyone can perceive the complete and perfect harmony of the Biblical message as the pioneers did. Then, its complexity will become accessible to students of the Word and lead them to experience the most rich and satisfying personal encounter with Christ.

How do we come to perceive the inner theological, spiritual, and experiential harmony that exists between the manifold components of the Adventist message? We do it by using the “landmarks” or “pillar” truths of Adventism as hermeneutical tools to understand how the Bible “unfolds a complete system of theology and philosophy.”⁴⁸ This biblical system of theology and philosophy articulates all the contents of the remnant church’s message. The message of the remnant, then, is a complete system of theological and philosophical truths that replace the system of theological and philosophical truths of tradition. This is the reason why the remnant church stands in discontinuity and replaces the churches of traditional Christianity.

Presuppositions of the Message

The biblical message of the remnant church stands on three major methodological principles of theology and the practice of ministry. The first fundamental principle makes Scripture the only source of our knowledge of God, the *sola, tota, prima Scriptura* principle. Its application leads to the second and third principles. The second principle is the principle of reality. According to this principle ultimate reality is historical rather than timeless, spaceless, and non-historical as tradition assumes. The third principle is the principle of articulation. This principle deals with the way in which the manifold components of historical reality interconnect forming a whole. The historical Christ “connects” the whole of reality historically, thereby replacing the “chain of being,” “order of being,” or

⁴⁷ For a good explanation of this phenomenon, see, George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008).

⁴⁸ Ellen White, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1894), 106.

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“pyramid of being” tradition uses to articulate biblical contents and spiritual realities.⁴⁹ The consistent application of the second and third principles helps the remnant church to go beyond the theological and ecclesiological fragmentation that followed the Protestant “turn to Scripture”⁵⁰ and its failure to overcome the hermeneutical rule of Christian tradition.⁵¹

The conviction that the Bible is the only source from which the community can derive its knowledge of God is clearly stated in the first Fundamental Belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In scholarly circles we refer to this principle under the label of the *sola* and *tota*

⁴⁹ This will be enlarged and clarified later on in this chapter.

⁵⁰ Through the centuries radical Protestants experienced the “turn to Scripture” as what some historians call “primitivism,” a going back to a golden age before the distortion brought about by tradition. This they argue is impossible. The implication is that Christians cannot reach unity by working from Scripture alone. “Primitivism . . . in its search for a pristine fount in biblical time and especially for the simpler, less complicated realities of the New Testament, makes two misjudgments. It underestimates the hold of our own times on our vision of the Scriptures. And it overestimates our ability to get back, to recover that ideal time—the Old Testament for some Puritans, the Gospels for the Anabaptists, the Acts for the Pentecostals, or the Epistles for fundamentalists—in its original purity.” Noll, “Rethinking Restorationism: A Review Article,” 21. The last portion of Noll’s comment, however, seems to indicate that fragmentation originates from the inability to grasp the entire system of Scriptural truth. They failed to find in Scripture the principle of reality and the principle of articulation.

⁵¹ According to Mathison, the *sola Scriptura* principle as experienced by the Radical reformers destroys the authority of Scripture because it calls for an individualistic hermeneutics to decide its meaning. As you read the following quotation you should bear in mind that Mathison uses the label “*solo scriptura*” to refer to the Radical Reformation claim to get the truth without the help of tradition. He reserves the label “*sola Scriptura*” label to the Magisterial Reformers who used the hermeneutical guidance of tradition. “The doctrine of *solo scriptura*, despite its claims to uniquely preserve the authority of the Word of God, destroys that authority by making the meaning of Scripture dependent upon the judgment of each individual. Rather than the Word of God being the one final court of appeal, the court of appeal becomes the multiplied minds of each believer. One is persuaded that Calvinism is more biblical. The other is persuaded that dispensationalism is more biblical. And by what standard does each decide? The standard is each individual’s opinion of what is biblical. The standard is necessarily individualistic, and therefore the standard is necessarily relativistic.” Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001), 246-47. Individualism, in turns, ends up creating new human traditions, Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, 253.

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Scriptura principles. These principles replace the multiplicity of sources of Christian tradition and unleash the two methodological principles that give rise to the remnant church. Meanwhile, the leading sector of the “anonymous remnant” still grounds its hermeneutical principles on tradition failing to see the need for the “biblical hermeneutical turn.”⁵²

At this point a question arises, does Adventism have a principle of reality and a principle of articulation? The answer to this question is yes Adventism has them; although so far Adventist theologians have not explicitly identified and formulated them as such. While Adventists are not used to thinking about the reality and articulation of their message, they have since early days operated assuming biblically defined notions about them. These preunderstandings arose from the pioneers’ hope on Christ’s personal historical second coming, and, after the Great Disappointment, by following Him into the heavenly sanctuary.

In synthesis, Adventists assume that reality is historical both for human beings and for God (ontology). They also presuppose implicitly that the whole of reality is the common history of God with His creatures (metaphysics). By understanding reality as existing in one single historical level where God and humans as spiritual beings interact Adventists effectually rejected and replaced the Neoplatonic cosmological dichotomy between the realms of spirit (heaven) and history (creation). Finally, Adventists have always assumed that the historical, incarnated, resurrected, and ascended Christ is the principle of articulation of all realities in the vast universe from past to future eternity.

⁵² “Instead of advocating chaos, the Evangelical church must regain an understanding of the Reformation doctrine of sola scriptura, which is essentially nothing more than the early Church’s doctrine of Scripture and tradition framed within a different historical context. The Church must affirm that Scripture is the sole source of revelation. The Church must affirm that Scripture is the sole, final, and infallible norm of faith and practice. And the Church must affirm that Scripture is to be interpreted in and by the communion of saints within the theological context of the rule of faith. Only by rejecting all forms of autonomy, institutional or individual, can any branch of the Church be in obedience to Jesus Christ the Lord.” Ibid., 347.

Message as System

By using these principles Adventist pioneers discovered a “complete system of truth, connected and harmonious.”⁵³ The remnant came to existence not because they came to a correct understanding of prophecy but because the sheer beauty and power of the complete system of connected and harmonious truth they discovered in Scripture left them no other option before God.⁵⁴

The system brings all the teachings of Scripture together into a harmonious whole centered and articulated by the living historical person of Christ; the historical incarnated Christ that died, resurrected, ascended to heaven, ministers for our salvation, and will come to take us home forever. Adventists know this system as “the Great Controversy theme.” Yet, the Great Controversy is much more than a biblical “theme” or “motif.” The Great Controversy is the gospel-message-system, because it unfolds the history of God’s love for the world and the universe.⁵⁵ Adventists preach the same gospel that the disciples proclaimed after the resurrection. “They had a Gospel to preach—Christ in human form, a Man of sorrows; Christ in humiliation, taken by wicked hands and crucified; Christ resurrected, and ascended to heaven, into the presence of God, to be man’s Advocate; Christ to come again with power and great glory in the clouds of heaven.”⁵⁶ The incarnated Christ, then, “His character and work, is the center and circumference of all truth. He is the chain upon which the jewels of doctrine are linked. In Him is found the complete system of truth.”⁵⁷ Within the “golden chain” of Christ historical acts from predestination before creation to the consummation of salvation in the

⁵³ White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation*, 423.

⁵⁴ This is what Ellen White briefly summarized by stating that the complete system of truth they were able to experience showed to them that God had directed the great Advent Movement revealing to them their position (to be the Remnant Church) and duty (their mission to the world as the Remnant). *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ For an introduction to the broad and all inclusive reach of the Great Controversy see, Herbert E. Douglass, *The Heartbeat of Adventism: The Great Controversy Theme in the Writings of Ellen White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010).

⁵⁶ Ellen White, *God’s Amazing Grace* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1973), 49.

⁵⁷ ———, *Our High Calling* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1961), 16.

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restoration of the new earth, the cross is the great central truth around which cluster (1) all biblical truths,⁵⁸ (2) Christ's work of atonement in the soul of the believer,⁵⁹ and (3) the history of the church in heaven and earth.⁶⁰ In short, the historical resurrected Christ himself "the Son of God is the center of the great plan of redemption which covers all dispensations."⁶¹ He is the center of all doctrines.⁶² The "completeness" of

⁵⁸ "The Sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption,—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers."——, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948), 315. However, the cross should not be reduced to justification by faith as the theology of the anonymous remnant claims. Instead, "[t]he atoning sacrifice, the righteousness of Christ, is to us the vital center of all truth. In the cross of Calvary, mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The law and the gospel are in perfect harmony; they are interwoven as the warp and the woof. They shed a flood of light amid the moral darkness of the world, stimulating, renovating, sanctifying, all who will believe the truth, all who will gladly and gratefully accept the light coming from the throne of God."——, "Missionary Work," *Review and Herald*, September 29, 1891, par. 8.

⁵⁹ The cross is the center of Christ's work of atonement in the soul of the believer. "To love God with all the heart, to be a partaker with Christ in His humiliation and suffering, means more than many understand. The atonement of Christ is the great central truth around which cluster all the truths that pertain to the great work of redemption. The mind of man is to blend with the mind of Christ. This union sanctifies the understanding, giving the thoughts clearness and force. . . ."——, *Lift Him Up* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), 229.

⁶⁰ Finally, the cross at the center of Christ's central work of atonement is the center of church history and the church of the redeemed in heaven. And the cross and Christ's work of atonement is the center of Church history. "The church history upon the earth and the church redeemed in heaven all center around the cross of Calvary. This is the theme, this is the song,—Christ all and in all,—in anthems of praise resounding through heaven from thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand and an innumerable company of the redeemed host. All unite in this song of Moses and of the Lamb. It is a new song, for it was never before sung in heaven."——, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962), 433.

⁶¹ ——, "Inexpressible Joy," *Signs of the Times*, December 22, 1914, par 9.

⁶² "Christ is the center of all true doctrine. All true religion is found in His word and in nature. He is the One in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered; and the teacher who learns from Him finds a safe anchorage." ——, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), 453.

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the system of truth revealed in Scriptures includes everything Christians need to know in faith and practice.⁶³

Moreover, the system of which Christ is the center includes not only the intellectual level of doctrines but through them also the spiritual level of the soul's union with Him on which the Biblical church stands and exists. The biblical system of truths Christ articulates into a harmonious whole is the spiritual bread that nourishes and unites the soul with Christ thereby generating the existence of the Church.⁶⁴ In other words, through the teaching ministry and providences of the Holy Spirit the complete system of divine living truths centered in Christ penetrate, cleanse, and sanctify the soul.⁶⁵ In this way the church gathers around Christ "the center of all love and light."⁶⁶

⁶³ "The Lord has uttered His voice in His Holy Word. Those blessed pages are full of instruction and life, harmonious with truth. They are a perfect rule of conduct. Instructions are given, principles are laid down, which apply to every circumstance in life, even though some particular case may not be stated. Nothing is left unrevealed which is essential to a complete system of faith and a correct line of practice. Every duty that God requires at our hands is made plain; and if anyone fails of eternal life, it will be because he was self-sufficient, self-confident, full of vain conceit, and did not rely solely upon the merits of the blood of Christ for salvation. None will err from the right path who meekly and honestly take the Bible as their guide, making it the man of their counsel."———, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 2:784.

⁶⁴ "The cause of division or discord in the church is separation from Christ. The secret of unity is union with Christ. Christ is the great Center. We shall approach one another just in proportion as we approach the Center. United with Christ, we shall surely be united with our brethren in the faith."———, *Manuscript Releases*, 21 vols. (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen White State, 1981, 1987, 1990, 1993), 15: 301.

⁶⁵ "The oil so much needed by those who are represented as foolish virgins, is not something to be put on the outside. They need to bring the truth into the sanctuary of the soul, that it may cleanse, refine, and sanctify. It is not theory that they need; it is the sacred teachings of the Bible, which are not uncertain, disconnected doctrines, but are living truths, that involve eternal interests that center in Christ. In Him is the complete system of divine truth. The salvation of the soul, through faith in Christ, is the ground and pillar of the truth."———, *Ye Shall Receive Power* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995), 16.

⁶⁶ "The more closely we walk with Christ, the center of all love and light, the greater will be our affection for His light-bearers. When the saints are drawn close to Christ, they must of necessity be drawn close to each other, for the sanctifying grace of Christ will bind their hearts together. You cannot love God and yet fail to love your brethren."———, *Manuscript Releases*, 15: 88.

The History of God's Love

Adventists have a history to tell to the world. The biblical history of God's love is their message. By living this message in everyday life they become part of God's history of salvation as the eschatological Biblical remnant. They are God's visible remnant church because they experience spiritually and proclaim this history to the world. This history is the complete harmonious system of biblical truths centered in the historical acts of Christ from before the creation of the world to the unending ages of future eternity. As noted earlier, Adventists refer to this history as the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan.

Christian denominations have neglected, forgotten, and rejected this history because hermeneutical assumptions led them to spiritualize it. The ontologies of God and the soul Christian tradition assumes have no place for God acting historically as an agent among other historical agents as Christ did during His life and ministry in Palestine. Thus, the Great Controversy became spiritualized as the "story" of Christ's ontological "descending" from the Father (incarnation) and "ascending back" to the Father ("dearnation"). The history of God became a story.

In this "story" the personal historical relationship that Christ had with his disciples when he lived on earth is replaced by the platonic idea of communion as participation.⁶⁷ After the resurrection believers are thought to relate directly with God by "participating" in its being. Tradition understands "participation" as a "sharing-in-being," "mutual indwelling," and "mutual interpenetration" of the timeless non-historical reality of God with the soul.⁶⁸ Participation, then, defines communion as the relationship

⁶⁷ Irenaeus and later tradition used "to describe the kind of relationship that humanity enjoys with the triune God." Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 6.

⁶⁸ George Hunsinger explains that according to Christian tradition *κοινωνία* "means that we are not related to God or to one another like ball bearings in a bucket, through a system of external relations. We are rather, something like relational fields that interpenetrate, form, and participate in each other in countless real tough often elusive ways," George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 257. Quoted by Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension*, 7-8.

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of the soul with the timeless God through the ascended Christ. Thus understood, communion with God frees human souls from their present association with matter and historical events and unites them with the timeless realm of the Trinitarian life.⁶⁹ Clearly, participation in the being of God replaces the biblical personal, social, spiritual, face-to-face, fellowship (communion *κοινωνία*) with the incarnated historical Christ that lies at the foundation of the Great Controversy.

Calvin, arguably the leading systematic thinker of the anonymous remnant also spiritualized the history of God's Great Controversy with Satan by translating it into Neoplatonic ontological categories. This becomes apparent, for instance, when we discover that Calvin spiritualized the obvious historical meaning of communion with Christ in Scripture by embracing the traditional notion of "participation." Communion with Christ, according to Calvin, cannot be understood in terms of fellowship or society basic to the Great Controversy but rather as the "unity by which the Son of God engrafts us into His body, so that He communicates to us all that He is. We so draw life from His flesh and His blood, that they are not improperly called our food."⁷⁰ We can see why the anonymous remnant's strong and unremitting dependence on Calvin's theological system prevents it from embracing the biblical history of God's love and, therefore, from becoming the visible remnant of biblical prophesy.

However, more conservative and biblically minded Evangelical denominations do still think historically and have not surrendered completely to the spiritualization of God's history of love.⁷¹ Yet, the influence of traditional hermeneutical ideas still operates in the background of these denominations, leading them to reduce the history of God to the history of Christ's incarnation on earth. In the practice of spirituality, the

⁶⁹ ———, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension*, 3, 43-44, 177-78.

⁷⁰ Calvin Letter to Martyr (8 August, 1555; CO 15.723), quoted by *ibid.*, 13.

⁷¹ See for instance, Henry M. Morris, *The Long War Against God: The History and Impact of the Creation/Evolution Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 199. "...the modern creation-evolution conflict is more than a mere scientific controversy, or even a battle between science and religion, as evolutionists pretend. It is nothing less than a new and critical phase in the agelong conflict between the only two basic world views. One is centered in the Creator of the world and his redemptive work on behalf of that lost world; the other is centered in the creatures of that world, not only man and his self-oriented goals, but also in the devil himself, who is ultimately behind all rebellion against God."

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history of God's love is reduced to Christmas and Easter. And even this history is understood as a symbol of a non-historical spiritual reality that transcends and leaves behind human history.

At the antipodes of tradition, the history of God's love takes place within the temporal, spatial, and material realm of creation. Spiritual communion with God happens as a historical social relationship between creatures with the ascended incarnated historical Christ ministering from the heavenly sanctuary. Christ is the center of human reality, and therefore, of human and cosmic history. Ellen White's massive five volume theological commentary on Scripture, the Great Controversy ("Conflict of the Ages") series, starts and ends with the words "God is love," thereby indicating that God's history reveals his loving merciful being and character.

According to Scripture, the history of God's love in creation and redemption is an extension of the eternal history of love of the three persons of the Godhead. We can trace the origins of this history back to the time before the beginning of Creation when through divine infinite wisdom the three persons of the Trinity planned the design of the universe. From love and through love they thought to share their life by opening themselves to their creatures.

At the beginning of God's way, before the beginning when God created the universe, Christ was appointed to be the great center of creation (Proverbs 8:22-23, ESV), to play the role of mediator between the infinite transcendence of the being, life, and history of the trinity and the limited reach of the life, being and history of the creatures to be.⁷² According to

⁷² "I suggest that according to Prov 8, at the beginning of creation, we find a situation of equal members of the Godhead as Co-creators. There is no reference to a time before which One of the Members of the God-head did not exist, nor a reference to the eternal subordination of One Member of the Godhead to Another Member. Rather, there is described a time, before the creation of the universe, when, presumably by mutual consent, one Person of the Godhead is 'installed' (nskIII) in a role of Mediator. While the Person we call the Father continued to represent the transcendent nature of the Godhead, the Person we know as the Son condescended in divine *kenosis* to represent the immanent aspect of divinity, coming close to His creation, mediating between infinity and finitude, even before sin. This is not a subordination of the Son to the Father, but a voluntary condescension to be installed into a mediatorial role, representing the divine love in an immanent way to His inhabited universe." Richard Davidson, "Proverbs 8 and the Place of Christ in the Trinity," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 17, no. 1 (2006), 54.

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God's design all things in the universe will hold together in Christ (Colossians 1:17). In other words, Christ was appointed to be the center of the system of reality God was about to create. God's love prompted Him to relate directly with His creatures through the mediatory presence of Christ in their future life and history. God's love is direct, personal, and historical. Through Christ's mediation God's wisdom and law will become the basis of spiritual order among free beings created in the image of God.

Also, before the creation of the world, God knew in detail what would take place after He created the universe. God knew His creatures would rebel against the spiritual order centered in Christ and challenge His historical sovereignty. God also knew about the suffering and death that would follow as a consequence of the new spiritual order their creatures would generate by rejecting Christ's mediatory role in creation. Yet, God created the universe anyway. Many Christians who question God's love forget God decided that Christ, the center around which all things cohere in the universe, should become a human being and die in the place of His rebellious creatures. God's love in Christ's incarnation and death was the way to respond to the creature's challenge to Christ's sovereignty and restore the spiritual harmony in the universe.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth even when He did not need to do it. Yet, in love, he did. When God created the historical reality of the universe perfect spiritual harmony existed, until controversy arose in heaven and on earth. In love He allowed the other than Himself to exist over against Him to the point of challenging His sovereignty, wisdom, love, law, and government. Only a God of love could create a universe that will cause Him infinite suffering while pursuing the well being of His creatures. Through the rebellion of His creatures, the history of God's love became the history of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan.

Ever since the rebellion against God's government by spiritual creatures in heaven and on earth began, the history of God's love carried on with the aim to restore creation back to its original spiritual harmony articulated through His law and eternal love. Beginning with Satan's rebellion in heaven and its expansion to the Garden of Eden, Christ has continued to be the heart around which all things cohere together.

Christ is the historical agent of the great acts of God's covenant of salvation. The preaching of the Gospel before the flood, the call to Abraham, Christ's presence and revelation at Sinai, His incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly ministry are some of

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the actions the Second Person of the Godhead executed in history to achieve a full restoration of the perfect spiritual harmony that existed in the beginning of Creation.

The history of the universe thus revealed in Scripture and articulated in the person and work of Jesus Christ helped the Biblical visible remnant to understand the long and deep history of God's love for His creatures. It integrates all the teachings of the Scriptures and doctrines of Christianity into a comprehensive and harmonious whole.

Understanding this history has profound implications for Christian theology because it replaces the macro hermeneutical perspective that tradition draws from classical and modern metaphysics or postmodern metanarratives and metahistories.⁷³ As a biblical historical metanarrative the history of God's love enlarges and reinforces the "biblical hermeneutical turn" that helped Adventist pioneers to free themselves from the hermeneutical dominion of Christian tradition and overcome the inconsistencies and ambiguities generated by the anonymous remnant's "turn to Scripture." With the passing of time, the theological and spiritual strength of the historical metanarrative of the Great Controversy brought about the emergence of the Biblical visible remnant church. This insures faithfulness to the gospel of Christ and the apostolicity of the Church.⁷⁴

Understanding the history of God's love also has profound implications for Christian spirituality because it facilitates a deep and steady personal relationship with God. When by faith the believer understands and obeys God's words he or she feeds on Christ the Bread of Life. God's words through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit penetrate deep in the heart of believers transforming them in the image of Christ. Communion with God is no longer participation in His being experienced through the liturgical mechanics of the sacraments leaving the heart empty. Instead, communion with God is a personal ongoing dialogue with the incarnated, ascended Christ ministering in the heavenly sanctuary. This dialogue is

⁷³ The word "metahistory" refers to the overarching narrative or "grandrécit" that gives order and meaning to the historical record, especially in the large-scale philosophies of history of writers such as Hegel, Marx, or Spencer. See, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* in <http://www.answers.com/topic/metahistory-1>.

⁷⁴ The apostolicity of the Church according to Scripture is not based on apostolic succession but on faithfulness to the gospel of Christ. See for instance, Dederen, "The Church," 563-64.

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very real and takes place in everyday life through Bible study, prayer, obedience, and mission. This experience that unites each believer in fellowship with Christ and simultaneously with each other is the spiritual ground on which God's visible remnant church on earth stands.

The Mission of the Remnant Church

When through faith and obedience believers accept Christ's message and fellowship with him in everyday life they become his disciples (John 8:31) and through adoption (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:4) share in the history of God's family (Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:19, 3:15) and its mission (Matthew 28:19-20). Thus, in the spiritual relation of the believer with Christ His message and mission belong together and are essential to the existence of the Church.⁷⁵ Without this message, the mission of the church is powerless. Without this mission, the message of the Church is fruitless. The Church as a spiritual entity exists, then, when believers unite around Christ by experiencing in their lives His message and mission.

The mission of the church is to share Christ's message to the world. The message of Christ includes the history of His love from before Creation, through the history of sin, to the restoration of the original harmony in love among all creatures and God. Adventists discovered this message through a series of historical experiences that they saw reflected and announced in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14.

As explained earlier, their discovery of the system of "present truth" sprang from their unwavering commitment to the *sola Scriptura* and *tota Scriptura* principles inherited from the anonymous remnant, and the paradigmatic change in biblical interpretation and doctrinal thinking they discovered. In short, they found out the way in which all biblical doctrines belong together in a complete and harmonious system of present truth based only on Scriptural hermeneutical assumptions. This philosophical and systematic achievement became the message that originated the existence of the remnant church. Arthur White characterized the few formative years of Adventist thinking after the Great disappointment as a "scattering time" (1845-1850) when "the invulnerable structure of truth to present to the word" was discovered by way of "thorough Bible study and the confirming

⁷⁵ Ibid., 549, 51.

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work of the Spirit.”⁷⁶ By the end of this period, when everything in experience and biblical understanding fit together, Ellen White confidently wrote: “we know that we have the truth.”⁷⁷ Adventist pioneers referred to this system of truth under the label of “present truth,”⁷⁸ the “three angels’ messages,”⁷⁹ and the “platform of truth.”⁸⁰

⁷⁶ “In the perspective of time by which we are advantaged, what may not have been so easily seen by the pioneers through the years 1845 to 1850 ‘the scattering time’ may now be easily seen as the time of the development of a doctrinal structure, a time when the body of truth was being firmly fitted together, piece by piece. It was a time when those involved would have been ill-prepared to herald a message not yet understood in its fullness and its interrelationships. The ‘scattering time’—when attempts to spread the truth accomplished little—allowed the painstaking, thorough Bible study and the confirming work of the Spirit of God through the visions, which resulted in the invulnerable structure of truth to present to the world.” Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981-1986), 1:190.

⁷⁷ Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, 6:388. “Dear Brother Rhodes was with us in our last conference. It was good to see his face once more and cheering to hear him talk the plain cutting truth of God from the Bible. How plain our position is! We know that we have the truth. Brother Rhodes has now gone in company with Brother John Andrews to the eastern part of the State to hunt up the scattered sheep. We have received two letters from them. God is at work and is bringing souls from the rubbish to the clear light of truth. We have received cheering letters from different places. God is with Israel,” Letter 30, 1850, p. 2. (To Brother and Sister Loveland, December 13, 1850).

⁷⁸ ———, “Dear Brethren and Sisters,” *Present Truth* (1850): par. 8. “I also saw that the shepherds should consult those in whom they have reason to have confidence, those who have been in all the messages, and are firm in all the present truth, before they advocate any new point of importance, which they may think the Bible sustains. Then the shepherds will be perfectly united, and the union of the shepherds will be felt by the church. Such a course I saw would prevent unhappy divisions, and then there would be no danger of the precious flock being divided, and the sheep scattered, without a shepherd.”

⁷⁹ “The proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages has been located by the word of Inspiration. Not a peg or pin is to be removed. No human authority has any more right to change the location of these messages than to substitute the New Testament for the Old. The Old Testament is the gospel in figures and symbols. The New Testament is the substance. One is as essential as the other. The Old Testament presents lessons from the lips of Christ, and these lessons have not lost their force in any particular. The first and second messages were given in 1843 and 1844, and we are now under the proclamation of the third; but all three of the messages are still to be proclaimed. It is just as essential now as ever before that they shall be repeated to those who are seeking for the truth. By pen and voice we are to sound the proclamation, showing their order, and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel’s message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. These messages we are to give to the world in publications, in discourses, showing in the line of prophetic history the things that have been, and the things that will

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After this initial discovery, Ellen White enlarged this system of truth in considerable detail in her voluminous writings. After Ellen White's death, Adventist believers found it easier to draw the message of the church from her writings than from Scripture. On the positive side, this practical procedure allowed successive generations to keep the message and mission of the church alive. However, on the negative side, this practical procedure distanced the church from Bible study and the unwavering commitment of early Adventist pioneers to the *sola* and *tota Scriptura* principles.

While some Adventists found it easier to retrieve the message from the writings of Ellen white, others turning to Scripture found it harder to prove Adventists doctrines and practices only from Scripture. Correctly convinced that Adventism should build only on Scripture the latter group eventually deemphasized the message of the remnant and, with the passing of time, replaced it with the message they found in the Protestant churches. As a result of this situation, an increasing number of Adventists no longer experience or proclaim the coherent system of biblical truth the pioneers discovered and Ellen White expanded in her writings. They reduce the mission of Adventism to the dissemination of present discrete doctrines, practices, and services that fail to include the coherence of all biblical data, doctrines, and history in the living person of the incarnated Christ. Consequently, the message and mission of the remnant no longer departs from and challenge the message and mission of Christian tradition and the anonymous remnant. The remnant no longer aims at establishing "Christianity upon an eternal basis."⁸¹

be," ———, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 26, 27.

⁸⁰ White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation*, 401.

⁸¹ "As the end approaches, the testimonies of God's servants will become more decided and more powerful, flashing the light of truth upon the systems of error and oppression that have so long held the supremacy. The Lord has sent us messages for this time, that will establish Christianity upon an eternal basis; and all who believe the present truth, must stand, not in their own wisdom, but in God's wisdom, and raise up the foundations of many generations; and they will be registered in the books of heaven as 'repairers of the breach,' the 'restorer of paths to dwell in.' In face of the bitterest opposition, we are to maintain the truth because it is truth. God is at work upon human minds; it is not man alone that is working. The great illuminating power is from Christ; the brightness of his example is to be kept before the people in every discourse. His love is the glory of the rainbow encircling the throne on high." Ellen White, "Let the Trumpet Give a Certain Sound," *Review and Herald*,

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Instead, some Adventists in our days assume the message and mission of Adventism and the anonymous remnant is one and the same.⁸² Not surprisingly, deep doctrinal divisions within Adventism⁸³ generate spiritual disunity, a declining mission, and uneasiness among some sectors with the “inherited” claim of being the visible remnant church of God on earth. These developments endanger the very existence of the Remnant and the success of its mission.⁸⁴

In spite of this situation, Adventism continues to emphasize the global mission of the Church albeit in increasing disconnection from the complete and harmonious system of biblical truth. Even those who identify the mission of the remnant with the “three angels’ messages” or “present truth” tend to miss the inner coherence of the biblical system and its unifying and transforming power. They do so by proclaiming the “distinctive” doctrines of Adventism but failing to use them as the key that opens to view the whole and harmonious system of biblical truth. In so doing, they stop short from experiencing and communicating the message of Adventism, and from accomplishing its mission.

In this environment, the mission of the Church shrinks to baptisms and numbers as the measure of its success.⁸⁵ The history of God’s love turns into a few distinctive disconnected doctrines. Consequently, the remnant misses the spiritual power of God’s message and replaces it with ideas and methods devised by human minds. When the remnant no longer understands its mission as the restoration of Christianity to its eternal

December, 13 1892, par. 5.

⁸² See for instance, George Knight, “Twenty-seven Fundamentals in Search of a Theology,” *Ministry* 74, no. 2 (2001).

⁸³ For an introduction to theological divisions in Adventism, see for instance, Fernando Canale, “From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology, Part 1: Historical Review,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15, no. 2 (2004).

⁸⁴ For a simple explanation of the dangers facing Adventism, see, Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*.

⁸⁵ Ellen White warned us about the danger of measuring success by numbers. “If you lower the standard in order to secure popularity and an increase of numbers, and then make this increase a cause of rejoicing, you show great blindness. If numbers were evidence of success, Satan might claim the pre-eminence; for, in this world, his followers are largely in the majority. It is the degree of moral power pervading the College, that is a test of its prosperity. It is the virtue, intelligence, and piety of the people composing our churches, not their numbers, that should be a source of joy and thankfulness.” White, *Christian Education*, 42.

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biblical basis it runs the risk to become institutionalized and pursues its mission in unbiblical ways following the lead of tradition.

The question arises, is it possible to ground the Adventist message, as discovered by the pioneers and expanded by Ellen White, on the Bible alone? Would Adventists be able to discover the history of God's love from Scripture alone without quoting from Ellen White? The call to being the remnant demands a positive answer to this question.

Due to the present development of Adventism in the world of scholarship this question must be answered at the sophisticated level of theological and scientific scholarship. This task involves all sectors and levels in Adventism and calls for a renewed commitment to (1) the *sola, tota, and prima Scriptura* principles (the turn to Scripture away from tradition and culture), and toward (2) the hermeneutical role of the Adventist pillar doctrines (the biblical hermeneutical turn) embraced by Adventist pioneers. Moreover, it requires that Adventist scholars, pastors, administrators, and laypersons, recognize the philosophical nature of the biblical hermeneutical turn and the systematic nature of the "invulnerable structure of truth" discovered by the pioneers. This aspect of the task implies a substantial broadening of current theological practices to include the as yet untrodden areas of biblical philosophy and biblical systematic theology. Simultaneously, current ministerial and missionary practices also need substantial broadening to include the areas of education and discipleship.

The implementation of these tasks will allow Adventists to experience in their lives the discovery of the harmonious and complete system of truth by themselves. By understanding in spiritual depth the history of God's love and becoming part of it Adventists will obtain a first hand experience on being God's visible remnant church. They will also grow spirituality in union with Christ⁸⁶ and with each other,⁸⁷ which are the necessary

⁸⁶ "When we bring our hearts into unity with Christ, and our lives into harmony with His work, the Spirit that fell on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost will fall on us."———, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4th ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 8:246.

⁸⁷ "Christ is the uniting link in the golden chain which binds believers together in God. There must be no separating in this great testing time. . . . The children of God constitute one united whole in Christ, who presents His cross as the center of attraction. All who believe are one in Him."———, *Lift Him Up*: 296. "The people of God will be abiding in Christ,

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conditions⁸⁸ for success in the final mission of proclaiming and sharing God's history of love in Christ's historical acts of salvation from past to future eternity.

In summary, the mission of the Remnant consists in sharing the message and spiritual experience that grounds its existence as the visible community of Christ. In being the remnant, mission and message belong together. Mission cannot exist without message, and message cannot exist without mission. While the mission describes the experience of the message, the message outlines the nature and contents of the spiritual experience of union with Christ. The summary and essence of the message-mission experience of the remnant centers in the entire biblical system of theology and philosophy the pioneers labeled under the rubrics of the "three angels message," "present truth," and the "platform of truth."

Mission is not merely the sharing of doctrines but also of the spiritual historical experience articulated by them. Thus, Christ's disciples understand and live in their daily lives the message they share and proclaim. Moreover, they understand their experience of being the remnant as part of the actual real history of God's love in the Great Controversy against Satan.

The mission-message of the remnant is broad and all-inclusive. It helps disciples to discover the inner coherence of the entire Bible and all its doctrines. Moreover, it brings intellectual, spiritual, and existential coherence to the brokenness brought up by sin and rebellion against God. Here lies the power of the Gospel to restore life and hope. The mission-message of the remnant meets well the needs for meaning and spiritual coherence of our postmodern culture. At the same time, it implies

the love of Jesus will be revealed, and one Spirit will animate all hearts, regenerating and renewing all in the image of Christ, fashioning all hearts alike. As living branches of the True Vine, all will be united to Christ, the living head. Christ will abide in every heart, guiding, comforting, sanctifying, and presenting to the world the unity of the followers of Jesus, thus bearing testimony that the heavenly credentials are supplied to the remnant church. In the oneness of Christ's church it will be proved that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world." ———, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958, 1980), 1:385.

⁸⁸ "In unity there is a life, a power, that can be obtained in no other way. There will be a vast power in the church when the energies of the members are united under the control of the Spirit. Then will God be able to work mightily through His people for the conversion of sinners." ———, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7: 236.

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a veritable and wholesale departure and replacement of the theological and philosophical systems and spirituality embraced by Christian tradition and the anonymous remnant. In so doing, the mission of the remnant establishes Christianity on its eternal basis.

Summary and Conclusions

Adventists claim to be the visible Remnant Church of Christ because they see themselves fulfilling the identifying marks of the Remnant included in the book of Revelation. Because many inside and outside the church feel such a sweeping claim needs stronger explanation, in this article I explored briefly the grounds and the meaning of the Seventh-day Adventist claim to be the visible eschatological remnant church of Christ.

A brief analysis of biblical data showed that the Church exists in-Christ. Her existence is spiritual because of her faith in Christ's words and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, her engaging in Christ's mission to the world as recorded in Scripture. Moreover, Scripture applies the "remnant" designation to the historical and spiritual development of God's people, both Israel and the church, throughout the history of salvation. Consequently, we should not understand the eschatological remnant described by John in Revelation 12:17 to be an entity different from the church but as the church herself, the continuation of the New Testament church as the remnant of Israel. The nature and existence of the remnant church, therefore, is grounded on her spiritual faithfulness to Christ's Word and mission as recorded in Scripture.

Early in her history, however, the Christian church progressively abandoned the hermeneutical presuppositions New Testament writers took from the Old Testament canon and replaced them with Greek ontological categories. This "hermeneutical turn to Greek philosophy" distorted biblical teachings and produced the reinterpretation of Scripture and its teachings. Moreover, it led Christian tradition to replace Christ's presence in the heavenly sanctuary with the liturgy and sacraments of the church. In this way, the church chose to stand on a new alien spiritual ground thereby rejecting the biblical spiritual ground on which the New Testament church as the remnant of Israel stood. Although Scripture was never absent from Christian tradition the new philosophical hermeneutics decisively distorted its teachings and weakened its power. Eventually, it contributed to the church's self understanding as being the replacement of Israel rather than

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as being its remnant, to ground its existence on the sacraments, and to the claim of apostolic succession.

Although the mainline and radical reformations' "turn to Scripture" led to the discovery of forgotten biblical teachings they stopped short from challenging the hermeneutical principles of Christian tradition. This fact prevented the churches of the Reformation from becoming a unified theological and ecclesiological alternative to Roman Catholicism. Instead, the Protestant "turn to Scripture" fragmented the Christian church into an increasing number of denominations. Yet, in spite of these shortcomings, the discovery of biblical truth and emphasis on the Biblical Christ brought about by the Protestant "turn to Scripture" generated an "anonymous remnant." In other words, disseminated among the denominational fragmentation of Christian tradition the Remnant Church began to gather around the Christ of Scripture anonymously and without a visible face.

Following the pattern of scientific and theological development outlined by Thomas Kuhn and Hans Küng, the anonymous remnant's "turn to Scripture" intensified leading to the unavoidable "biblical hermeneutical turn" generated by early Adventist pioneers. Seventh-day Adventist identity as the remnant church, then, does not stand on the scriptural marks of the remnant, or the teaching of isolated Christian doctrines such as the seventh-day Sabbath, the manifestation of the gift of Prophecy, the sanctuary or the three angels' messages. Instead it stands on Scripture, alone (*sola*), completely (*tota*), and hermeneutically (*prima*). According to Scripture, however, the remnant exists in spiritual union with Christ. This union flows from the discovery, acceptance, and spiritual internalization of the complete and harmonious biblical system of theology and philosophy that the "biblical hermeneutical turn" opened to view.

More precisely, as the "biblical hermeneutical turn" replaced the "philosophical hermeneutics" embraced by Christian tradition and the anonymous remnant, the spirituality of Scripture centered in the presence of the historical incarnated Christ in the heavenly sanctuary replaced the spirituality of Christian tradition centered in the imaginary presence of Christ in the liturgy and sacraments of the church. The remnant church, then, stands on the same biblical spiritual ground on which Israel and the remnant of Israel in the New Testament church stood, and, eats the same spiritual food they ate (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). In this way, the biblical remnant of Israel church of the New Testament emerged from Scripture in

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eschatological times. The anonymous remnant mutated into the visible eschatologically biblical remnant church.

The challenges facing the remnant are gigantic and epochal. Being the remnant is not easy but Christ brings it about through His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the providential work of the Holy Spirit. Being the Biblical remnant is not a possession or badge of honor to brag about, but responsibility, service, and mission. Believers do not inherit the Church but bring it into existence through faithfulness to the Christ of Scripture and His salvific mission. The remnant exists as the unfinished process of reviving and reforming of the Christian church out of the wilderness of human traditions.

Being the Remnant is the spiritual experience of being-in-message. This means that the message/system of the remnant belongs to its very existence and life. The message of the remnant church is the process of historically appropriating the complete system of theology and philosophy Adventists know as the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. The message of the Church coincides with the history of God's love and salvation. On top of that, we should bear in mind that message and spirituality belong together. Consequently, the spirituality of the remnant springs from the internalization in the heart of Christ's teachings and history of love. As believers unite with Christ in spirit they become completely loyal to Him and fully identified to His laws, teachings, and promises. Being-in-the message means a being-in-the-history of God's love and therefore assumes a deep understanding of this history as presented in Scripture. Because being-in-the history of God is an existential spiritual experience of the whole being it involves a radical departure from the spirit of the world and human cultures.

Being-in-message requires Adventists should articulate in detail the contents and power of the "complete system of theology and philosophy" early pioneers discovered and outlined. Can the Great Controversy theology and philosophy masterfully developed by Ellen White be presented on the basis of the *sola, tota, and prima Scriptura* principles at the scholarly level of systematic theology and philosophy? Would Adventists at the beginning of the twenty-first century extend the theological and philosophical revolutions initiated by the pioneers in the scholarly areas of philosophy, systematic theology and the sciences? Would Adventists present to the Church and the world the complete system of biblical doctrines without using human traditions or the writings of Ellen White (*sola Scriptura*)?

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Would Adventists show the beautiful inner historical systematic coherence of Christ's acts of redemption and teachings throughout the entire Bible (*tota Scriptura*)? Would Adventists use the biblical philosophical and theological systems as principles to guide scientific and philosophical research in all areas of human knowledge and spirituality (*prima Scriptura*)? To answer these questions the Remnant Church must challenge tradition with Scripture in the scholarly areas of philosophy, systematic theology, and the sciences.

Being the Remnant is the spiritual experience of being-in-mission. This means that the mission of the remnant belongs to its very existence and life. The mission of the remnant church is the historical process of witnessing the message and mission of Christ. In its essence, the remnant is a call to repentance extended to Christian tradition and the anonymous remnant for neglecting and replacing the real living Christ with human traditions and teachings. In this broad context, mission is an invitation addressed to every human being to leave the ways of the world and culture and follow the spiritual ways of the Christ of Scripture. The mission of the remnant church, then, is to share the experience of understanding and belonging to the history of Christ's love and redemptive acts thereby making and gathering a community of spiritual disciples ready to share the same experience and eager to meet Christ personally in the new earth. By fulfilling its mission the remnant is destined to become the ecumenical biblical alternative to the ecumenical traditional alternative spearheaded by the Roman Catholic church.

Being-in-mission requires that Adventists should uplift the Christ of Scripture by experiencing and sharing the complete and harmonious system of philosophy and theology to the church and to the world. This message/system (the three angels' messages, present truth, platform of truth) is powerful because it includes all doctrines and data of Scripture in a coherent all encompassing spiritual historical metanarrative centered in Christ. In this metanarrative the cross is the center of attraction, and the incarnate resurrected Christ ministering in the Heavenly Sanctuary is the center of spirituality and salvation. Would Adventists live and proclaim the Christ of Scripture without using sources, methods, liturgies, and spiritual disciplines derived from tradition and culture? (*sola Scriptura*)? Would Adventists live and proclaim the whole message (doctrines) and historical spirituality of Christ and not just some isolated doctrines and practices of their choice (*tota Scriptura*)? Would Adventists use methods, liturgies, and

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practices of the anonymous remnant only after critically adapting them to the complete and harmonious spiritual system/message of Scripture (*tota Scriptura*)? Would Adventists call believers out of the traditional and nominal Christian churches to join the biblical remnant church? To answer these questions the remnant church must challenge tradition with Scripture in the scholarly areas of ministry, mission, spirituality, and religious education.

Being the remnant is the spiritual experience of being-in-hope. This means that hope belongs to the very existence and life of the remnant. In other words, the remnant church is the historical process of preparing a people for Christ's judgment and second coming. Being-in-hope means that the remnant lives in anticipation of eternity. Believers eagerly expect to meet Christ face to face, exactly as the disciples did, very soon when He returns back historically, visibly, and in glory and majesty. At that time, He will restore everything in heaven and on earth back to the original perfect harmony of love.

Being-in-hope requires Adventists should live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4) (mission) in all the words that come from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4; Romans 10:17) (message). Hope makes the message and mission of the Remnant real. Would Adventists trust and hope only, completely, and hermeneutically in the imminent, historical second coming of the Christ of Scripture? To answer this question Adventists need the revival and reformation of their lives, their homes, and their Churches. Revival comes from totally surrendering to the real Christ of Scripture, His love and promises. Being-in-hope is the blessed and joyous experience of living our lives in this dark world as an advance of the time when by the grace and work of God "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."⁸⁹

⁸⁹ White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation*, 678.

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