From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology
Part III Sanctuary and Hermeneutics

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1. Review

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Adventist theology stands divided. In the first article of this series, we discovered that Adventist theological pluralism originated when the lay theology of early Adventism faced the academic world of scholarly research. Theological tradition, philosophy, and science generated questions they were not prepared to answer. By the late seventies, a sector of Adventism was adjusting Adventist beliefs to Evangelical theology. Simultaneously, another sector was adjusting Adventism to science. In the process, Evangelical and Progressive Adventisms forgot and replaced the sanctuary vision that originated the systematic understanding of Christian theology that brought Adventism to existence. The nature of Adventist pluralism is methodological. It generates from disagreements on the basic principles from which we interpret scripture and understand Christian doctrines. It seriously endangers the unity, ministry, and mission of the church.

In the second article, we saw that Adventism could overcome its present theological divisions by creatively engaging in biblical and systematic theologies. Systematic theology provides the scholarly method and space for the complete and harmonious system of truth Adventist pioneers saw. Systematic and biblical theologies assume methodological conditions and a hermeneutical vision to guide them in the discovery of truth.

2. Introduction

However, the conviction that philosophy and science provide the hermeneutical guide and principles from which Christian theologians should interpret scripture and articulate Christian doctrines in a systematic way is the methodological rock on which the great and long theological tradition of Christian theology rests. Can we challenge this conviction in a scholarly way? Can we derive the theological *apriori* from scripture? Is a biblical systematic theology possible at the scholarly level? To answer these questions we need to consider the hermeneutical role philosophy and science play in Christian theology. Within this general context, the specific purpose of this article is to assess the possibility of interpreting the theological *apriori* from *sola-tota scriptura* and the hermeneutical light of the sanctuary doctrine.

To reach this goal, we will (1) underline the hermeneutical role that philosophy has in Christian theology; (2) recognize the scholarly area where theologians should identify, criticize, interpret, and formulate the philosophical and scientific conditions of theological method, interpretation, and construction; (3) identify the hermeneutical principles of Christian theology; (4) call for a biblical interpretation of them; (5) argue that theological pluralism in Adventism stems from different interpretations of the hermeneutical principles of theology; (6) explore briefly the hermeneutical consequences of the timeless understanding of God's reality derived from philosophy; (7) explore briefly the hermeneutical consequence of the temporal understanding of God's reality present in scripture; (8) explain the context in which the sanctuary doctrine functions as hermeneutical vision; (9) suggest that the sanctuary and covenant doctrines clarify each other and work together as hermeneutical vision; (10) argue that postmodernity open the door for the scholarly acceptance of the biblical approach to theological hermeneutics; (11) describe the nature of theological pluralism in Adventism; (12) consider a way to overcome theological pluralism in Adventist theology; (13) and outline the challenge to think theologically in the light of scripture within postmodern times.

3. Philosophy: Nobody's Land

Should Biblical Adventism concern itself with Philosophy? Adventism and philosophy seem to cancel each other out. Because of its strong biblical origins, Adventist theology has not engaged philosophy at its

disciplinary level.[1] In the last decades of the twentieth century, Progressive Adventism began dealing with ethical issues and searching for the meaning of beliefs in the context of their cultural situation. Their search relates better to systematic than exegetical methodology. Thus, Progressive Adventism departed from Biblical Adventism not only in methodology,[2] but also in disciplinary concentration. Progressive Adventism engaged in issue-oriented thinking that relates to philosophy more closely than biblical studies. Meanwhile, mainstream Adventism was ill prepared to understand and evaluate the new ideas developing on this front. Because these ideas have departed radically from Biblical Adventism, it becomes necessary to consider the role that philosophy should play in Adventist theology.

In this article I will briefly argue that, in part, the present theological pluralism in Adventism is nurtured by a lack of critical and creative thinking in this area where the hermeneutical foundation for all theological disciplines lies. Overcoming theological pluralism in Adventism, then, requires faithful creative thinking in the area of philosophy.

Adventism cannot avoid theological pluralism by reaffirming its traditional commitment to stay away from philosophical study and reflection. Implicitly or explicitly, all theologians assume philosophical notions whose existence and operation go unnoticed at the level of theological thinking. These assumptions are necessary for the proper operation of all theological disciplines and their interdisciplinary relations. The question is not whether we have to use philosophical assumptions in theology, but how we are going to interpret them. More specifically, from what source we are going to derive our interpretation of the hermeneutical principles of Christian theology. In short, Adventism cannot choose not to use philosophical ideas. Adventist theologians can only choose how to interpret the philosophical ideas they must use when approaching the task of Christian theology from the *sola-tota scriptura* principle.

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[1] Most Evangelical and Protestant theologians do not engage in the scholarly field of philosophy. They draw from philosophical thought what they need for theological construction as needed. Tradition results from the direct hermeneutical contributions of ontological and epistemological teachings from various philosophers throughout Christian history.

[2] While Evangelical and Progressive Adventisms endorse the historical critical method, Biblical Adventism works with the historical grammatical method. See, Fernando Canale, "From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Biblical and Systematic Theologies—II." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 16/1-2 (2005): 121-124.

Does this mean the end of the *sola-tota scriptura* principle? In other words, since theologians "have to" use "philosophical" ideas, are they in practice bound to capitulate to the multiple sources of theology matrix?[3]

I suggest that this is what Protestant and Evangelical theologians implicitly do. They deal with philosophy by using philosophical ideas produced by different philosophical systems through the history of western civilization.[4] Evangelical and Progressive Adventists borrow this methodological pattern and implicitly or explicitly use philosophical and scientific guidance in their interpretation of scripture and understanding of Christian doctrines. Philosophy and science produce the ideas that guide the hermeneutical enterprise of Christian theology in all its disciplines, including biblical and systematic theologies.

To avoid implicitly drawing our interpretation of the hermeneutical principles of theological method from philosophy and science, it is necessary to apply the *sola-tota scriptura* principle to the criticism and interpretation of them. This preliminary task calls for the contributions of at least a scholarly discipline that is almost non-existent in Evangelical and Adventist theologies. Let us consider briefly the task of fundamental theology.

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[3] Stanley Grenz and John R. Franke point out that theologians who reject the reality of the fact that the interpretation of scripture "is always shaped by the theological and cultural context within which interpreters participate. . . . and seek an interpretation unencumbered by the 'distorting' influence of fallible 'human' traditions are in fact enslaved by interpretive patterns that are allowed to function uncritically precisely because they are unacknowledged" (*Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 112-113).

[4] Stanley Grenz and John Franke summarize this broadly accepted methodological conviction by explaining that the *sola scriptura* principle means that scripture is the *norma normans non normata* (the norm with no norm over it) of Christian theology. Yet, "in another sense [they add] *scriptura* is never *sola*. Scripture does not stand alone as the sole source in the task of theological construction or as the sole basis on which the Christian faith has developed historically. Rather, scripture functions in an ongoing and dynamic relationship with the Christian tradition, as well as with the cultural milieu from which particular readings of the text emerge" (ibidem, 112). Yet, why is this definition of *sola scriptura* as norm with no other norm over it not applied to all issues that belong to theological construction? Why should we abstain from applying the scripture norm to ontological and epistemological issues that are included in biblical thinking and assumed in biblical interpretation and theological construction? The only reason that comes to mind is that tradition has not done it. So, let us break with tradition. It will not be the first or the last time tradition has held theology captive.

4. Fundamental Theology

There is no scholarly consensus about the name or disciplinary structure the study of ontological and epistemological assumptions should have in theology. In Catholic theology, philosophy and natural theology play this fundamental role. Probably the reason for this situation is that Catholic theologians draw their method of studying theology directly from philosophy. Protestant theology, being by far less familiar with philosophy and hesitant to relate it to theology, refers to the same philosophical task in various ways. Pannenberg, for instance, addressed this area of theology under the label of "Philosophy of Science."[5] Some systematic theologies group the various preliminary, methodological, and hermeneutical issues under the rubric of "prolegomena" to theology proper.[6] The "fundamental theology"[7] and "metatheology"[8] labels are also used.

I prefer the "fundamental theology" label because it properly describes the nature and role of the issues we discuss at this level. Briefly, scholarly reflection in this area investigates all the issues related to the methodological and hermeneutical foundations of Christian theology. They include the cognitive, hermeneutical, teleological, and methodological principles of Christian theology. On the positive side, to name this area of reflection "fundamental theology" properly moves the notion

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[5] *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminister, 1976).

[6] Norman Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2003); Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics I: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2 vols., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987); and Anders Nygren, *Meaning and Method: Prolegomena to a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology*, trans. Philip S. Watson, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

[7] For instance, see Johannes B. Metz, ed., *The Development of Fundamental Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1969); David Tracy, "Task of Fundamental Theology," *Journal of Religion* 54 (1974): 13-34; Avery Dulles, "Method in Fundamental Theology," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976): 304-316; Rene Latourelle and Gerald O'Collins, ed., *Problems and Perspective of Fundamental Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1982); Matthias Neuman, "The Role of Imagination in the Tasks of Fundamental Theology," *Encounter (Indianapolis)* 42 (1981): 307-327; Randy L. Maddox, *Toward an Ecumenical Fundamental Theology* (Chico: Scholars, 1984); Helmut Peukert, *Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology: Toward a Theology of Communicative Action*, trans. James Bohman (Cambridge: MIT P, 1984); and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987). However, fundamental theology mixes methodological and apologetical issues.

[8] Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1999), 7.

of foundationalism from the modern to the postmodern meaning and use. On the negative side, Roman Catholic theology uses the fundamental/foundational theology label to designate the apologetical task in theology.[9]

Stanley Grenz has popularized the "foundationalism" and "nonfoundationalism" labels to refer to modern and postmodern epistemologies respectively.[10] "Foundationalism" becomes the label pointing to a philosophical loyalty to the epistemological teachings of modernity and its commitment to absolute certainty. In the label "fundamental theology," the word 'fundamental" is closely related to the word "foundation," and therefore, could be incorrectly connected to modern, empiricist scientific foundationalism. Instead, it names the area where theologians address the basic issues they assume in theological thinking and methodology. Fundamental theology, then, addresses issues we have become aware of through postmodern research in the area of hermeneutics.[11] Since these issues become guiding principles from which we build our theologizing, they play a foundational role. Therefore, we can appropriately consider them as "foundations" of the theological task. The Adventist reader must be aware at this point that early Adventists unknowingly addressed this area of theological thinking under the "Pillars of the Church" label. Implicitly, the "Pillars of Adventism" refer to some of the foundational issues included in fundamental theology. Explicitly, they assume a biblical understanding of them.

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[9] See for instance, Metz; Latourelle and O'Collins; Ratzinger; and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

[10] Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 3-54. Because Grenz assumes the multiplex matrix of theological sources, he replaces modern epistemology with postmodern epistemology without much philosophical reflection involved in the process. His theological method requires integrating philosophical teachings. When philosophical teachings change, then, theologians must adjust to the new philosophical view. One gets the impression that postmodern epistemology does not affect the overall constitution of Christian doctrine, only its universality and certainty. Grenz overcomes postmodern relativism by calling on the community of faith, where the spirit gives the certainty of salvation. Unfortunately, Grenz begs the question. Changes in epistemology directly require changes in the contents of the theology of the community.

[11] On the philosophical study of hermeneutics as a process of interpretation, see, for instance, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 1989); Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979); and John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana UP, 1987).

5. Hermeneutical Principles

More specifically, the fundamental theology label names the area where theologians reflect on the theological *apriori*. The theological *apriori* refers to all the necessary assumptions theologians make when engaging in the task of doing theology in the various disciplines of the theological encyclopedia. The theological *apriori* includes the cognitive, hermeneutical, teleological, and, methodological principles of Christian theology.

Here our discussion requires brief familiarity with the hermeneutical principles of Christian theology. Even though all the principles included in the theological *apriori* studied by fundamental theology provide "guidance" to the theological task, hermeneutical principles play the leading role in the interpretation of scripture and building the teachings of Christianity. The hermeneutical principles of the theological *apriori* include our assumptions on ontology, epistemology, and metaphysics. In Christian theology, the hermeneutical principles include the areas of (1) *reality* (principle of reality, technically known as ontology); (2) *reality as a whole* (principle of articulation, technically known as metaphysics, studying "the whole and the parts" or "the one and the many" issue);[12] and, (3) *knowledge* (principle of knowledge, technically known as epistemology).

For reasons I cannot explain here, the understanding of all the components or fields of theological *apriori* revolves around the way we interpret reality. This area includes general ontology, or the interpretation of the main overarching interpretations of the basic characteristics of all that is real. On this basis, regional ontologies study the reality of God, human beings, and the world. The interpretation of knowledge builds on the understanding of reality. It includes, among others, the question about the origin and interpretation of human knowledge. The interpretation of the "whole and the parts" envisions the way in which all reality, "the one and the many," relate to each other, forming an orderly "whole."[13]

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[12] On the whole-part issue as belonging to metaphysical studies see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V. 26; 1023b,26-1024a,10; and Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Metaphysics & the Idea of God*, trans. Philip Clayton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 139-152.

[13] In common parlance the philosophical question of the "one and the many" the "whole and the parts" is expressed as "the big picture" or the "forest and the trees."

6. Biblical Philosophy

Traditionally, theologians have adapted for theological use what Christian and non-Christian philosophers have concluded on these issues.[14] This intellectual borrowing fits the multiplicity of sources matrix in theological method. Since Adventism and many Evangelical theologians side with the *sola-tota scriptura* principle, we need to develop our own thinking on these issues on the light of scripture. We cannot use what Christian and non-Christian philosophers have taught on them. We need to arrive at our own conclusions on how to understand the issues we assume from the light scripture provides on them.

A fundamental theology faithful to the *sola-tota scriptura* principle should identify these philosophical ideas and discover why we need them in the theological task. Then, we should discover how philosophers have interpreted these ideas and how Christian theologians have adapted them for theological use. Finally, we should discover how biblical authors have interpreted the same ideas. This procedure will help us identify what we may have borrowed from extrabiblical sources from our theological readings and belonging to western culture. In this way, early Adventist deconstruction of tradition finds a home in the scholarly realm.[15] Once we identify the philosophical and scientific interpretations of the hermeneutical principles of theology, we can replace them with biblical ones. Thus, we define first our philosophical ideas from scripture (*sola-tota scriptura* principle), and then we use them as hermeneutical guides to understand all theological and scientific disciplines (*prima scriptura* principle).

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[14] This procedure is the hallmark of Roman Catholic theological methodology. Yet, implicitly it continues to operate in Protestant theology. See, for instance, one occasion when Luther recognizes the commonly held view that Platonic philosophy is compatible with biblical thought. "The Platonic philosophers have stolen much from the fathers and the Gospel of John, as Augustine says that he found almost everything in Plato which is in the first chapter of John. Therefore, those things which the philosophers say about these ecclesiastical matters have been stolen, so that a Platonist teaches the Trinity of things as (1) the maker, (2) the prototype or exemplar, (3) and compassion; but they have mixed philosophical thoughts with one another and have falsified them" (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament IV*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, Luther's Works [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999, c1971]; 38: 276).

[15] Fernando Canale, "From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology Part I: Historical Review." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15/2 (2004): 9.

7. Hermeneutical Vision and Pluralism

Theological pluralism in Adventism does not take place as superficial differences in lifestyle, biblical interpretation, or doctrinal emphasis. Instead, it comes from the deep methodological ground where the entire edifice of biblical interpretation and doctrinal construction stands. Understanding and overcoming theological pluralism in postmodern times, then, requires careful reflection in the area of fundamental theology.

We may trace deep theological differences back to the hermeneutical principles Christian theologians explicitly or implicitly assume in their work. We can track the origin of classical, modern, evangelical, and postmodern hermeneutical principles back to philosophical ideas theologians adapted for theological use. After all, when doing Christian theology one assumes an understanding of reality (ontology), the big picture (metaphysics), and the nature of knowledge (epistemology).

In Evangelical Adventism, justification by faith works as the hermeneutical vision from which proceeds the interpretation of Scripture and the construction of Christian theology. In Progressive Adventism, the notion of biological and historical evolution works as the hermeneutical vision from which proceeds the entire interpretation of Scripture and the construction of Christian theology. Obviously, their views will be largely incompatible with each other. However, because they build on the same basic ontological assumptions, they are able to agree on the essentials.

Hermeneutical visions derive from philosophical sources. Evangelical and modern versions of Christianity build from the same philosophical non-biblical sources. Thus, the philosophical foundation of theology becomes the guiding light from which proceeds all theological hermeneutics.

Earlier in this study, we have suggested that biblical interpretation and theological construction require hermeneutical guidance. We have noticed also that Christian theology has drawn its hermeneutical guidance from philosophical ideas. Moreover, we know that the ontological, metaphysical, and epistemological issues philosophy addresses are necessary presuppositions for the task of theology. We cannot avoid the issues, but we can choose how to interpret and use them in theological disciplines. Both Evangelical and Progressive Adventists explicitly or implicitly draw their hermeneutical visions from the same philosophical

and scientific sources classical and modern theologians use.[16] What are the hermeneutical assumptions from which Biblical Adventism operates? To answer this question, we need to explore briefly the hermeneutical assumptions implicit in the sanctuary doctrine early pioneers experienced as hermeneutical vision leading their biblical interpretation and theological understanding. Can we use the same hermeneutical vision in our disciplinary approach to Christian theology?

As we mentioned above, in Christian theology, the hermeneutical principles include principles of reality (ontology*)*, articulation (metaphysics), and *knowledge* (epistemology). The doctrine of the sanctuary implies specific ontological views regarding the principles of reality and articulation. These views, in turn, have direct implications for biblical epistemology. Here we will briefly consider the principles of reality and articulation implicit in the biblical sanctuary. With this goal in mind, we turn our attention to the way in which the sanctuary doctrine assumes the reality of God.

8. God and Timelessness

Biblical and systematic theologies agree in affirming the centrality of the doctrine of God in their interpretations and constructions.[17] This

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[16] Fernando Canale, "From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Biblical and Systematic Theologies—II," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 16/1-2 (2005): 141.

[17] Philosophers and theologians recognize the central role of the doctrine of God. Among the philosophers we find, for instance, Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, 6.1.10,11) and Martin Heidegger ("The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics," in *Identity and Difference*, ed. Joan Stambaugh [New York: Harper and Row, 1969], 59, 60). Among biblical theologians, see Gerhard Hasel (*Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 100); and among systematic theologians, Wolfhart Pannenberg, who explains that "in theology, the concept of God can never be simply one issue among the others. It is the central issue, around which everything else is organized. If you take away that one issue nothing would be left to justify the continuation of that special effort that we call 'theology' " (*An Introduction to Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 21). John Macquarrie states that in Christian theology the doctrine of God "has a central place" that "underlies all the other doctrines," and he further explains that this "doctrine of the triune God already contains *in nuce* the whole Christian faith, so that reflection upon it will provide us with a center to which we can relate all the other doctrines as we pass through them" (*Principles of Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977], 187). In addition, see Anders Nygren, *Meaning and Method: Prolegomena to a Scientific Philosophy of Religion and a Scientific Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 357; and David Tracy, *Blessed Rage*

means that the implicit or explicit understanding of God's being (reality) and actions theologians assume when reading scripture or reflecting on the doctrines of the church determine their interpretations and constructions.

As presented in scripture, the sanctuary is not primarily a doctrine but a reality. This means that when biblical authors wrote about the sanctuary they were interpreting reality. The reality of the sanctuary is not primarily a building but a Being, God. This means that we cannot understand the meaning of the sanctuary by focusing on the building. Instead, we should focus on the Being who inhabits and relates through the building. The sanctuary is the "house of being." According to scripture, God dwelt in the Old Testament sanctuary (Exodus 25:8). Did He really dwell in a spatiotemporal tent? Should we understand this statement "theologically" as symbol or metaphor? Most schools of theology will deny that God really dwelt in space and time. This denial stems from the conviction that God's reality has no time or space. We know this view as the timelessness of God. Theologians generally relate timelessness to "eternity" as an attribute of God[18] and fail to see how timelessness determines the kind of reality God is and the way in which He acts.

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for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 146-147.

[18] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 168-169; Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 91-93; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley, 3 vols., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, 1994), 1:401-410. Millard Erickson connects divine timelessness to God's infinity (*Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1998), 300). The contemporary discussion on divine timelessness and temporality includes, for instance, Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness*, *Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970); Alan G. Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992); William J. Hill, *Search for the Absent God: Tradition and Modernity in Religious Understanding* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001); *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001); Gregory Ganssle, ed., *God and Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001). These studies approach eternity as an attribute of God. They do not consider the analogical understanding of God's being as basic characteristic of his ontology. The notion that the history of God presented in scripture is real is being discussed but still has not found an acceptable ontology that may make it "usable" as a hermeneutical presupposition for theological method.

The basic characteristics of timelessness are the total absence of temporal sequence and space in that which is timeless.[19] God exists, lives and acts outside of the future-present-past sequence of time.[20] His being

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[19] Thus Augustine explains, "It is not in time that you precede time: elsewise you would not precede all times. You precede all past times in the sublimity of an ever present eternity, and you surpass all future times, because they are to come, and when they come, they shall be past, 'but you are the Selfsame, and your years shall not fail' (Psalm 102:27). Your years neither come nor go, but our years come and go, so that all of them may come. Your years stand all at once, because they are steadfast: departing years are not turned away by those that come, because they never pass away" (*Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan [Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1960], 11. 13, page 287). Boethius provides the classical definition of timelessness. "Eternity is the simultaneous and complete possession of infinite life. This will appear more clearly if we compare it with temporal things. All that lives under the conditions of time moves through the present from the past to the future; there is nothing set in time which can at one moment grasp the whole space of its lifetime" (Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. W. V. Cooper, Gateway ed. [Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1981], 5.6, page 115). In contrast with temporal life, "[w]hat we should rightly call eternal is that which grasps and possesses wholly and simultaneously the fullness of unending life, which lacks naught of the future, and has lost naught of the fleeting past; and such an existence must be ever present in itself to control and aid itself, and also must keep present with itself the infinity of changing time" (ibidem, 116). Aquinas connects the notion of timelessness to the being of God by saying that there is "no before and after in Him: He does not have being after non-being, nor-nonbeing after being, nor can any succession be found in His Being. For none of these characteristics can be understood without time" (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956], 1.15.3).

[20] The God of the Bible thinks and works in the future, present, past sequence of time. Yet, the God of Greek ontology that Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions use to interpret scripture and construct their theological systems requires the assumption that God does not act historically but simultaneously. This affects all actions of God and therefore all doctrines. Augustine clearly explained the timeless way of divine activities. "Will you say that these things are false, which, with a strong voice, Truth tells me in my inner ear, concerning the very eternity of the Creator, that His substance is in no wise changed by time, nor that His will is separate from His substance? Wherefore, He willeth not one thing now, another anon, but once and for ever He willeth all things that He willeth; not again and again, nor now this, now that; nor willeth afterwards what He willeth not before, nor willeth not what before He willed. Because such a will is mutable and no mutable thing is eternal; but our God is eternal. Likewise He tells me, tells me in my inner ear, that the expectation of future things is turned to sight when they have come; and this same sight is turned to memory when they have passed. Moreover, all thought which is thus varied is mutable, and nothing mutable is eternal; but our God is eternal." These things I sum up and put together, and I find that my God, the eternal God, hath not made any creature by any new will, nor that His knowledge suffereth anything transitory" (Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J.G. Pilkington, vol. 1, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* [Albany: Ages Software, 1996], 12.15.18). By modifying the as-

experiences all perfections and our history simultaneously. God's time-lessness extends to His life. God does not experience his perfect life in a past present and future sequence. If He would, by definition He would cease to be perfect, immutable, and eternal. He would cease to be God because time is the basic ontological trait of creation. Consequently, God does not have real history. God does not have space. God is incompatible with space and time. If we assume God has no space or no time in any sense of the word, then we cannot accept that God actually, really dwelt in the Old Testament sanctuary and interacted with Israel as the Old Testament claims. These ontological presuppositions require us to interpret biblical language about sanctuary and divine activities as being real in a timeless, non-historical sense, that is, in a timeless spiritual sense.

This assumption provides the hermeneutical vision for theological interpretation through the spectrum of Christian theologies throughout history.[21] Theologians understand and interpret scripture and theology assuming the main features of Plato's dualistic cosmology. That is to say, there are two levels of reality. There is "this" side, the side of nature where we live in space and time. Then, there is "the other side," the side of God and supernature. God's side is timeless; our side is temporal. As-

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sumed referent of divine actions, divine timelessness affects the understanding of all Christian doctrines.

[21] To scholars unfamiliar with the process of the construction and development of Christian doctrines, this assertion may sound like an overstatement. It is true that the way Greek ontological thought influences concrete theologians may vary greatly. At times, Protestant theologians seeking to be faithful to Greek and biblical ontologies affirm contradictory theological statements. Charles Hodge represents the few that recognize the inner contradiction that exists between the timeless philosophical notion of timelessness and the temporal view of divine reality presented in scripture. On one hand, following tradition, Hodges incorrectly believes that God "does not exist during one period of duration more than another. With Him there is no distinction between the present, past, and future; but all things are equally and always present to Him. With Him duration is an eternal now. This is the popular and the scriptural view of God's eternity" (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Originally Published 1872. [Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997], 1:385). On the other hand, following scripture, Hodges correctly believes that God "is not a stagnant ocean, but ever living, ever thinking, ever acting, and ever suiting his action to the exigencies of his creatures, and to the accomplishment of his infinitely wise designs" (Ibid.,1:389). He concludes, "Whether we can harmonize these facts or not, is a matter of minor importance. We are constantly called upon to believe that things are, without being able to tell how they are, or even how they can be" (Ibid.) Unfortunately, the way we understand God's reality is not "a matter of minor importance," but the basic assumption on which theologians conceive and formulate their teachings.

suming this map or reality, theologians have attempted to understand God and His relation to us. This is the basic hermeneutical vision of Christian theology.

The full picture of the ontological dualism that Christian theologies assume includes the more familiar ontological dualism of body and soul. Thus, the timeless understanding of ontology calls not only for a cosmological dichotomy between heavenly and historical realities, but also for an anthropological dualism between soul and body. We find these ontological interpretations firmly established in the writings of Augustine and Aquinas. Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies retrieve their ontological foundations from their writings.

The consequences of this hermeneutical vision extend to the entire body of Christian doctrine.[22] For instance, let us consider Christ's death at the cross. What did God do at the cross? The cross being a temporal event and God being a timeless being posit a major challenge to theologians. They have met the challenge in many and creative ways. Yet, when we take the timelessness of divine being into account, we arrive at the inescapable conclusion that whatever happened at the cross was only a manifestation of what already and always exists in God.[23] In other

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[22] The way in which the timelessness of God and the soul shape Christian doctrines depends on the nature of each doctrine and the creativity of each theologian. However, in general issues—for instance, spirituality, salvation, sacraments, revelation, eternal life, and eschatology—there is broad agreement across main line denominations. In more biblically oriented communities and theologians we will find the effects of the timelessness of God and the soul mixed in various configurations with ideas that properly correspond to the historical frame of biblical thinking. I have shown the way in which the absolute timelessness of God and the relative timelessness of the soul shape the leading models of revelation and inspiration reigning in Christian theology (see my *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundations of Christian Theology in the Postmodern World* [Lanham: UP of America, 2001]). I have explored the role of timelessness in the doctrine of creation and theological method in my *Creation, Evolution and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Acommodation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews U Lithotech, 2005). In the second volume of his *Systematic Theology* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, expected publication date November 2007), Norman Gulley explores the way in which the timeless view of Greek ontology has influenced the doctrines of God, human nature, and Christ.

[23] We find an example of the notion that the reality of God's act at the cross takes place in eternity and therefore precedes and grounds what is revealed at the cross when Moltmann alludes to salvation in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity. We should bear in mind that Moltmann assumes God's eternity is timeless (see below). "[T]he Son's sacrifice of boundless love on Golgotha *is from eternity already included* in the exchange of the essential, the consubstantial love which constitutes the divine life of the Trinity.

words, the historical events that the Gospels narrate only reveal God's eternal love and salvific intentions but do not cause our salvation. This directly contradicts the claim in Hebrews 5:7-9 that Christ's death is the cause of our salvation. I have written elsewhere regarding the way this hermeneutical vision affects the doctrine of the sanctuary.[24] Suffice it to say, there is not a real sanctuary in heaven where God engages in a sequential series of salvific activities. The heavenly sanctuary, like all "heavenly" realities, is "spiritual" because they have neither space nor time.

9. God and Time

The timelessness of God originates in Greek philosophical thinking that Christian theology continues to respect due to the multiple sources of theological method matrix it chooses to follow. Yet, divine timelessness has no ground in scripture. The evidences of this fact are present throughout scripture. The God who ordered Moses to build a sanctuary so that He might live among them was the same God who appeared to him in space and time on Mount Horeb earlier (Exodus 3:1). In response to Moses' request for divine identification, God revealed Himself as I Am (being). God revealed the temporality of his being by making Himself present in space and time before Moses (Exodus 3:1-15).[25] Even though God reveals the temporality of His being, He does not explain it. Yet, God's being is not timeless but temporal. The move from a timeless to a temporal understanding of divine reality entails the major hermeneutical paradigm shift in the history of Christian theology.

Recently, a number of studies on timelessness and God's relation to time have been published. The timelessness of God is ingrained so deeply in the collective consciousness of Christian theologians that it is difficult if not impossible to replace its assumed role as hermeneutical

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The fact that the Son dies on the cross, delivering himself up to that death, *is part of the eternal obedience* which he renders to the Father in his whole being through the Sprit, whom he receives from the Father. *Creation is saved and justified in eternity in the sacrifice of the Son,* which is her sustaining foundation" (*The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* [New York: Harper & Row, 1981], 168).

[24] See Fernando Canale, "Philosophical Foundations and the Biblical Sanctuary," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 36/2 (1998): 183-206.

[25] For an in depth study of the biblical affirmation of the temporality of God's reality in these verses, see Fernando Luis Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions*, vol. 10, *Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series,* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1983), chapter 3.

vision. For instance, Nelson Pike concludes his research on divine time-
lessness by reporting that he has not found any basis for divine timeless-
ness "in biblical literature or in the confessional literature of either the
Catholic or Protestant churches."[26] Moreover, he confesses that on this
crucial point the evidence he has uncovered "seems to point rather
clearly in the other direction."[27] However, Pike seems to have no re-
placement for timelessness as hermeneutical vision. This is seen when he
suggests that we should not exclude the doctrine of timelessness from a
system of Christian theology. Instead, we should ask ourselves "what
reason is there for thinking that the doctrine of God's timelessness
should have a place in a system of Christian theology?"[28] Addressing the
same issue, Alan G. Padgett suggests, "God is in fact both temporal and
'relatively' timeless"[29] in a fashion that brings to mind Process Philoso-
phy's proposal. In a similarly dualistic attempt to understand God's real-
ity as both timeless and temporal, William Lane Craig suggests, "God is
timeless without creation and temporal since creation."[30] This may very
well be a "perfectly coherent"[31] view, but it does not respond to the bib-
lical understanding of divine reality.

There are few theologians affirming the temporality of God from
scripture. Openview theologians, for instance, affirm the temporality of
God without giving much theological or philosophical thought to it. For
instance, Clark Pinnock sees Jonah 3:10 implying that "God experiences
temporal passage, learns new facts when they occur and changes plans in
response to what humans do."[32] On this basis, he adds, "God is unchang-
ing in nature and essence but not in experience, knowledge, and ac-
tion."[33] Oscar Cullmann, in a more detailed study about time in the New

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[26] *God and Timelessness, Studies in Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion*, 190.

[27] Ibidem.

[28] Ibidem,

[29] *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 126.

[30] *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time,* 241.

[31] Ibidem, 265. I suspect there is some sort of incoherence in Craig's view. When we
assume an ontological transition from timelessness to temporality, the contradictory no-
tion that what is timeless can change seems to be assumed. By definition, if a reality is
timeless, transition (change) cannot take place. If a reality is temporal, transition belongs
to its nature. Probably, Craig is not thinking in ontological terms.

[32] Clark Pinnock, et al, "Systematic Theology," in *The Openness of God: A Biblical
Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity,
1994), 118.

[33] Ibidem.

Testament, unambiguously affirms that New Testament writers assumed the temporal reality of God's being.

> [T]ime and eternity share this time quality. Primitive Christianity knows nothing of a timeless God. The 'eternal' God is he who was in the beginning, is now, and will be in all the future, 'who is, who was, and who will be' (Rev 1:4). Accordingly, his eternity can and must be expressed in this 'naïve' way, in terms of endless time. This time quality is not in its essence something human which first emerged in the fallen creation. It is, moreover, not bound to the creation.[34]

More recently, Yale's philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff affirmed divine temporality from scripture. He shows biblical texts used to "prove" that divine timelessness is a biblical idea fail the test. Instead, they indicate that God is temporal.[35] If God is temporal, then we can speak of a real history of God. The history of God revolves around his actions. Wolterstorff correctly explains,

> The actions of Jesus were not simply human actions brought about by God, plus human actions freely performed by Jesus in situations brought about by God; they were God's actions. In the life and deeds of Jesus it was God who dwelt among us. The narrative of the history of Jesus is not just a narrative concerning events in the history of the relationship of a human being to God; it's a narrative about God. God does have a history; the doctrine of the incarnation implies that the history of Jesus is the history of God.[36]

The change from a timeless to a temporal understanding of the hermeneutical principle of ontology is the most radical hermeneutical paradigm shift in the history of Christian theology. This shift requires critical assessment of doctrinal tradition. In other words, systematic theology must start by a systematic deconstruction of received doctrines because earlier theologians constructed them from non-biblical hermeneutical visions. Then, the interpretive (biblical theology) and constructive (systematic theology) tasks ensue. We should start by reinterpreting the entire doctrine of God and His history. The biblical outline of God's history

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[34] Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, trans. Floyd V. Filson, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 63.

[35] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Unqualified Divine Temporality," in *God and Time: Four Views*, ed. Gregory E. Ganssle (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 187-193.

[36] Ibidem, 209-210

beginning with foreknowledge, predestination, and continuing with creation and providence should uncover the metanarrative that articulates the inner logic of biblical thinking.[37] The historical acts of God's being are the center that articulates the biblical metanarrative. In it, God's acts proceed in a real historical chronological progression.[38]

Moreover, we should attempt to understand each divine act as historically generated from within God's being.

The situation is clear. If we work from a multiple sources of theology methodological paradigm, we commit ourselves to "integrate" biblical insights with insights drawn from tradition, philosophy, science, and culture. From this commitment, we inherit the hermeneutical principle of divine reality from philosophy via tradition. From these sources we are led to believe that divine reality is either totally timelessness, or in some way is both timeless and temporal, thus "making" room for the obvious realities of human existence and biblical narratives.

When we operate from the *sola-tota-prima scriptura* principle, the timeless interpretation of divine reality becomes an extrapolation originating not in divine revelation but human imagination. Bible authors express and assume divine temporality throughout scripture. There is no reason not to think God is temporal or has a real history. Of course, we need to understand what we mean by saying God is temporal. Affirming divine temporality without further clarification of its specific characteristics may lead some readers to view God as possessing the same limitations creatures have. Moreover, this is not what scripture teaches. We need to leave for a later time a full study of God and time. For our specific purpose here it suffices to say that whatever God's temporality means is something we need to discover while thinking in obedience to biblical revelation and not by assuming it means the same as time means to us. Quite to the contrary, a careful consideration of God's actions and revelation through scripture will lead us to understand divine temporality in ways that are quite different (transcendent) from ours. Thus, we should not understand divine temporality univocally[39] or equivocally[40] but analogically to created temporality.

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[37] I discuss these foundational issues in my recent *Basic Elements of Christian Theology: Scripture Replacing Tradition* (Berrien Springs: Andrews U Lithotec, 2005).

[38] Because Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies work from a timeless hermeneutical vision, they interpret God's history in a logical rather than historical order. Obviously, this situation calls for a careful deconstruction of tradition.

[39] Process Philosophy understands divine temporality univocally. That is to say, the meaning of God's time and our time is the same. This shows up in the panentheistic no-

A temporal understanding of the hermeneutical principle of reality is important because it determines whether we should understand scripture cognitively as real history or, functionally as metaphorical, symbolical, and mythical pointers to timeless spiritual reality. Thus, what matters in the end is that the "real" meaning of scripture depends on our interpretation of the hermeneutical principle of reality. We can appreciate the "guiding" hermeneutical role of the principle of reality as we compare two different approaches to biblical eschatology.

Adventist theology arose as a truly "eschatological" theology a century before the German "eschatological" theologians Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann came to prominence. We can trace the radical differences that exist between these two "eschatological" theologies to the hermeneutical principle of reality from which they flow. The former

tion of a dipolar God. Although in his *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, Alfred North Whitehead does not deal explicitly with the notion of time his dipolar view of God implicitly assumes it. "Thus, [explains Whitehead] analogously to all actual entities, the nature of God is dipolar. He has a primordial nature and a consequent nature. The consequent nature of God is conscious; and *it is the realization of the actual world in the unit of his nature*, and through the transformation of his wisdom. The primordial nature is conceptual, the consequent nature is the waving of God's physical feelings upon this primordial concept." In the next paragraph Whitehead further explains that the consequent nature ". . . *originates with physical experience derived from the temporal world*, and then, acquires integration with the primordial side." Whitehead additionally explains that "In God's nature, permanence is primordial and flux is derivative from the World . . ." ([New York: Macmillan, 1960], 529, see also 531). Thus, it is clear that Process Philosophy understands divine time and flux univocally to human time and flux. Divine time and human time are identical.

[40] Barth speaks about the history of God, but still he subscribes to the timelessness of his Being. Thus, whenever we apply the terms "history" or "time" to speak about timeless God and temporal reality, we are using the words in an equivocal sense. That is to say, they carry complete different meanings. Since Karl Barth affirms the timelessness of God's being, language about God's history is to be understood in an equivocal sense. Barth writes about the timelessness of God in clear terms. "The being is eternal in whose duration beginning, succession and end are not three but one, not separate as a first, a second and a third occasion, but one simultaneous occasion as beginning, middle and end. Eternity is the simultaneity of beginning, middle and end, and to that extent it is pure duration. Eternity is God in the sense in which in himself and in all things God is simultaneous, i.e., beginning and middle as well as end, without separation, distance or contradiction. Eternity is not, therefore, time, although time is certainly God's creation or more correctly, a form of His creation. Time is distinguished from eternity by the fact that in it beginning, middle and end are distinct and even opposed as past, present and future" (*Church Dogmatics.* ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 13 vols. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936], II/1, 608).

implicitly adopts the biblical temporal-historical interpretation flowing from scripture. The latter explicitly adopts the traditional timeless interpretation flowing from Greek philosophy via the tradition of the church.[41] Adventist eschatology accepts the historical reality of the new earth. This specifically means that the new earth will be real in space and time. We take this clue from the understanding that the new creation of which Revelation 21:1-5 speaks is a restoration to the perfect design this planet had when God created it (Genesis 1-3).

We can clearly see how the timeless interpretation of the principle of reality guides Moltmann's eschatology when he explains that in the new earth there will be no more time and no more future.[42] The "eon of glory" describes the reality of the new earth. Following Plato and Christian tradition, Moltmann understands the reality of the new creation as belonging to "aeonic time," which corresponds to the eternity of God. In aeonic time, the "before and after"[43] succession essential to created time does not exist. Instead, everything exists "simultaneously."[44] Consequently, the "new earth" is not this planet restored, but a metaphor for God's presence and interpenetration of creation.[45] In this act God is not restoring the perfect plan He achieved at creation week, but bringing about the ultimate goal of creation for the first time.[46] In sum, because Moltmann assumes God's reality is timeless, he thinks that in heaven there will be no time[47] or space as we experience them now.[48] There will be no places

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[41] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley, 3 vols., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1:401-410; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

[42] He writes, "The temporal creation will then become an eternal creation, because all created beings will participate in God's eternity. The spatial creation will then become an omnipresent creation, because all created beings will participate in God's omnipresence. Creation's departure from time into the aeon of glory comes about through the annihilation of death and the raising of the dead. Once death is no more, *there will be no more time either, neither the time of transience nor the time of futurity"* (ibidem, 294). In the introduction to his book, however, Moltmann declares that the "eschaton is neither the future of time nor timeless eternity" (ibidem, 22).

[43] Ibidem, 282.

[44] ". . . for simultaneity is one of the attributes of eternity. Universal simultaneity would be absolute eternity as 'the fullness of time'"(ibidem, 287).

[45] Ibidem, 295.

[46] Ibidem, 318.

[47] Moltmann explains, "The figure, or configuration, of time that corresponds to the one, unending eternity is *cyclical* time, which has no end. It represents the reversible, symmetrical, unending and hence timeless form of time. According to Plato 'the body of

or days to worship God or do new things. There will be no Sabbath day to keep.

When classical and modern theologians understand God's reality as timeless, they expect biblical texts to speak about timeless reality also. Yet, scripture presents God acting historically in the flow of created historical time. In this hermeneutical context, a literal interpretation of scripture is impossible because it involves an inner contradiction. God cannot be temporal and timeless at the same time. To solve this problem, they interpret scripture "theologically"[49] or "spiritually."[50] For them, scripture is symbolic, metaphorical, or mythical language indirectly referring to God's spiritual, non-historical reality. In technical jargon, scripture speaks about "ultimate" reality.

However, if, following biblical thought, we understand God's reality as infinitely temporal, we realize that biblical texts do speak directly about God's reality. Since this assumption stands on God's revelation in scripture, we should prefer it to the timeless view that stands on human imagination. Because God is a historical being who acts historically in the sequential future-present-past order, to understand scripture "theologically" and "spiritually," we need to interpret it historically.

10. Sanctuary Hermeneutical Vision

In scripture, the metanarrative of "God's history" includes but is much broader than the history of God in Jesus Christ. The history of God extending from past to future eternity becomes the metanarrative that biblical and systematic theologies develop from the *sola-tota-prima scriptura* principle and the temporal understanding of the hermeneutical principle of reality. Early Adventist theology implicitly assumed God is temporal and acts in a historical chronological sequence that constitutes His history. This implicit conviction allowed them to realize that God operates His work of Salvation *historically* through the sanctuary structure, and interpret the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation *historically*. This led them to view the biblical metanarrative as a great controversy

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the world' is spherical, and in the same way the time of the world is 'a movable image of non-transience', 'a circle'" (ibidem).

[48] We will be "interpenetrated" by the divine presence in a static never changing state of being (ibidem, 307-308). This resembles Aquinas' *visio Dei* (vision of God).

[49] See, for instance, Fritz Guy, "Interpreting Genesis One in the Twenty-first Century," *Spectrum* 31/2 (2003): 5-16

[50] See, for instance, Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 190).

between Christ and Satan. In this way the sanctuary doctrine became the key that opened to view a "*complete system of truth, connected and harmonious*."[51]

The system of truth connected and harmonious refers to all Christian doctrines that find their inner logic when interpreted from the biblical understanding of the hermeneutical principle of reality (ontology) and articulation (metaphysics).[52] Because biblical authors speak of God as unlimited by space and time yet able to relate temporally and spatially with His creation, "metaphysics" becomes "metanarrative." In other words, the traditional issue of the "one and the many" (the whole and the parts) that Greek philosophy explained by way of "metaphysics," biblical thinking addressed by way of "metanarrative." Metaphysics and metanarrative are different ways to solve the same philosophical problem of the one and the many, the whole and the parts. Metaphysics is the classical and modern approach that explains it by way of a static hierarchical structure of timeless-temporal entities. Metanarrative is the postmodern approach that explains it by way of a dynamic ongoing historical process.[53] There are many possible ways to interpret metaphysics and metanarratives. Scripture is one among many possible philosophical metanarratives explaining the issue of the one and the many.

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[51] Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 423 (emphasis mine).

[52] Gregory Boyd correctly perceives the hermeneutical role that the "warfare worldview" plays in our understanding of the cross. He maintains that "the anthropological significance of Christ's death and resurrection is rooted in something more fundamental and broad that God was aiming at: to defeat once and for all his cosmic archenemy, Satan, along with the other evil powers under his dominion, and thereby to establish Christ as the legitimate ruler of the cosmos, and human beings as his legitimate viceroys upon the earth" (*God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997], 240). So far, however, Boyd has applied the biblical metanarrative only to the question of evil.

[53] When theologians assume God's reality is timeless, they assume "metaphysics." Yet, if we assume God's reality is temporal and his acts historical, we speak of "metanarrative." This language is not just an accommodation to postmodernity and its emphasis on metanarratives. Instead, the technical word "metanarrative" replaces "metaphysics" because postmodernity no longer understands the inner logic and connection of what is real from timelessness but from time. The reason for our temporal historical view of reality, however, is not postmodern philosophical teaching that reality is temporal, but the ancient revelation of God in scripture. Martin Heidegger has written the decisive ontological argumentation about the temporality of Being, thereby departing fully from the philosophical tradition on which theologians have been constructing Christian tradition for two millennia. See, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Collins, 1962).

Adventism needs to recover the great controversy metanarrative biblically.[54] Most Adventists relate to the great controversy through Ellen White's writings.[55] Then they apply it to their biblical interpretation and doctrinal construction. With the passing of time, the exponential growth of the church, and the advent of a postmodern, visually oriented society, today Adventists are much less acquainted with Ellen White's writings and the great controversy motif than were earlier generations.

Moreover, Adventism has come to experience the sanctuary doctrine as one of its parts, the judgment prior to the second coming of Christ.[56] When new generations of Adventists receive the sanctuary doctrine in this limited way, they understand it from the context of a different metanarrative. As we saw in the first article of this series, Evangelical and Progressive Adventists find the sanctuary-investigative judgment either meaningless or contradictory to the doctrine of justification by faith. The events surrounding Christ's sacrifice at the cross implicitly become the metanarrative from which they understand the doctrine of the sanctuary. Yet, as we will see later, the biblical doctrine of the sanctuary includes more than the investigative judgment and opens to view a broader biblical great controversy metanarrative that includes and articulates the incarnation and death of Christ.

Besides, the biblical text does not yield its metanarrative to the descriptive approach of biblical theology, but to the constructive approach of systematic theology. The biblical metanarrative comes to view when we are able to follow the inner logic and progression of the historical process of divine activities described in scripture. For this reason, the great controversy metanarrative is more than the cosmic battle in heaven

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[54] Recently, Gregory A. Boyd has explored the great controversy metanarrative that he identifies as a "warfare worldview" (*God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict*, 9-27). He uses exegetical methodology to survey the question of warfare in the Old and New Testaments. His goal, however, is to use the biblical warfare to challenge traditional theodicy and the theistic ideology that stands behind it (ibidem, 20).

[55] Notably, see, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1890 (Washington: Review and Herald, 1958); *Prophets and Kings*, 1917 (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1943); *The Desire of Ages*, 1898 (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1940); *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911 (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911); *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, 1888 (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1907).

[56] Roy Adams convincingly argues for dropping the "investigative" nomenclature to refer to the "Pre Advent Judgment" (*The Sanctuary: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology* [Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1993], 124-129). The opening of the books in Daniel 7:9-10 seems to imply revelatory and evaluative actions rather than investigation as fact finding activity.

before the creation of this planet described by Ellen White.[57] The great controversy is also more than the conflict between God and the powers of evil Gregory Boyd describes as the "warfare worldview."[58] The great controversy as metanarrative comes to view when we are able to follow the inner logic and historical progression of divine activities involved in the plan and accomplishment of cosmic redemption.

How do we recover the great controversy metanarrative biblically? First, we need to be convinced we need to use it in our theological method. Second, we need to work systematically from the ground of the *sola-tota-prima scriptura* principle under the hermeneutical guidance of the biblical understanding of the hermeneutical principle of God's reality. Third, we need to use the contents of the sanctuary doctrine we already have as a community as the key to access the flow of historical acts involved in the plan of redemption. Here I will only make a few suggestions of how to proceed.

To use the sanctuary doctrine as the key to access the biblical metanarrative of the great controversy, Adventists need to become familiar with its contents.[59] We also need to broaden our view of what the sanctuary doctrine entails in scripture.[60] This broadened view will help us to use the sanctuary doctrine as a key to the great controversy as metanarrative.

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[57] *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33-43.

[58] We should distinguish between a worldview and a metanarrative. A worldview is one of the three realities assumed in the hermeneutical principle of reality (ontology): God, human beings, and the world. Thus, a worldview refers to a specific interpretation of the world the biblical writers assume. A metanarrative is a way to interpret the principle of articulation, which deals with the problem of the one and the many and the whole and the parts. Although Gregory Boyd, using mainly exegetical methodology and some systematic method is able to correctly affirm what he calls a "warfare worldview," he has not yet moved to the interpretation of the biblical metanarrative by following the inner logic of God's historical acts of redemption in scripture.

[59] Non-Adventists also may need some introductory reading to become familiar with the "doctrine of the sanctuary." For a brief introduction, see Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 409-432; for a broader introduction, see Roy Gane, *Altar Call* (Berrien Springs: Diadem, c1999); Roy Adams, *The Sanctuary: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1993). For a full scholarly development, see Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonement and the Heavenly Judgment: From the Pentateuch to Revelation* (Siloam Springs: Creation Enterprises International, 1992).

[60] Roy Adams correctly remarks that the subject of the sanctuary "is so vast that it would take the combined effort of many people to explore its full dimensions" (*The Sanctuary: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology*, 14).

The biblical "doctrine of the sanctuary" does not result from the simple description of sanctuary or "cultic" passages of scripture. It comes to view from the integration of the sanctuary and cultic texts with the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation made possible by the biblical interpretation of the hermeneutical principle of God's temporal reality. The historical understanding of God's being and acts grounds the historicist approach to prophetic interpretation and the historical presence and activity of God in the sanctuary.

We will turn our attention now to the way in which the sanctuary doctrine relates to the covenant.

11. The Sanctuary-Covenant Structure

We usually deal with the sanctuary doctrine and the covenant as different theological issues. Yet, what if these two are part of a complex structure through which God operates redemption historically in the flow of created time? Perhaps to understand properly the sanctuary doctrine, we need to consider the way it relates to the biblical covenant, and vice versa. In this section, I will suggest that God brings his eternal plan of salvation to operation through a historical sequence of redemptive acts centered in the sanctuary-covenant structure. Following this structure and its connections with history and prophecy will help us to discover the great controversy metanarrative in scripture.

By dwelling in the Old Testament sanctuary, God related to the people and ministered to them His salvation. This dwelling became the type of Christ's incarnation.[61] As in Christ's incarnation, in the sanctuary God became close to His people by dwelling in a building. The sanctuary is the dwelling place of God. Just as the sanctuary without God's presence is an empty building (Exod 33:1-17), God's presence in the sanctuary without a people is not sanctuary but a purposeless residence. The sanctuary is the spatiotemporal structure through which God was continuously present and relating to His people throughout Old and New Testaments times (Heb 8:1-2). Thus, the sanctuary is a spatial structure facilitating God's interaction with His chosen people. As God achieved goals in the salvific process of redemption in Christ, the sanctuary moved to heaven to reach still unachieved goals in the plan of salvation at the cosmic level of the great controversy (Heb 1:13; 2:8; 1 Cor 15:23-28).

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[61] That Christ's incarnation follows the type or pattern of divine dwelling in the Old Testament sanctuary seems suggested by John description of the incarnation as a tabernacling (ἐσκήνωσεν) of God with men.

Through the covenant, God creates a people out of the world (Gen 12:1-3) to restore in them the perfect design of creation the world lost through sin (Jer 31:33). God initiates His redemptive restoration of the world by working with and for His chosen people in the historical flow of everyday life. In the covenant, God relates to His people through commands and promises (Gen 12:1). The covenant is the living historical relationship between God and human beings that requires the sanctuary setting to articulate the living historical relations of God with His people.[62] By dwelling in the Old Testament sanctuary, God brings about His covenantal relation with his people and fulfills His promises to them.

We can liken the inner relationship between the covenant and the sanctuary to marriage. Marriage is the binding of a man's and a woman's lives and destinies forever. Yet, to share a common life, the married couple needs a home. We can liken the marriage vows to sharing a common life in the covenant. In the covenant, God and the people commit themselves to share a common life. The sanctuary is the place from where that common life takes place.

Covenant and sanctuary belong together. They correspond and complement each other as aspects of the same historical process of redemption God accomplishes in history. The sanctuary without the covenant is empty. The covenant without the sanctuary is blind. The covenant is the content of the sanctuary. The sanctuary gives historical structure and precision to the covenant relationship. In this sense, they become the immediate contexts from which God relates to His people and brings about historically the salvation of the world.

If God is analogically temporal, we should understand His works in the sequential order presented in scripture. God operates the works of salvation not by unleashing the full force of His omnipotence, but from within the limitations of created time and space. In scripture, this progression takes place within the divinely established parameters articulated in the sanctuary-covenant structure.[63] If we use the sanctuary-

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[62] In the book of Exodus, God renews His covenant with Israel after the golden calf rebellion in chapter 34. In chapter 35, Moses asks the people to contribute materials for building the sanctuary. Chapters 36-39 describe the building of all the components, furniture, and ritual clothing required in the sanctuary service. In chapter 40 the sanctuary is assembled, inaugurated, and filled with the presence of God.

[63] For instance, there is an "old" covenant that corresponds to the "old" sanctuary. Likewise, there is a "new" covenant that corresponds to the "new" sanctuary. Why is there something "old" that passes away and something "new" that replaces it? Because in eternity God decided He will secure salvation for humankind and the universe through a

covenant relational structure as key to understanding divine redemptive activities through past and future histories—historicist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation—we will arrive at the great controversy metanarrative biblical authors assume when thinking and writing theologically.

As biblical metanarrative, the great controversy is the hermeneutical principle of articulation in Biblical Adventist theology. This fundamental interpretive choice sets Biblical Adventism apart from all classical and postmodern systems of Christian theologies. Biblical Adventism does not articulate biblical teachings and Christian doctrines using the hierarchical metaphysics of classical times, the evolutionistic understanding of history of modern times, or any postmodern metanarrative that philosophers or scientists may generate to explain the philosophical question about the "whole and the part," the "one and the many." Instead, Biblical Adventism uses the great controversy metanarrative it finds in scripture.

Clearly, the commitment to the *sola-tota-prima scriptura* principle calls for a biblical interpretation of all hermeneutical principles that Christian theologians continue to draw from various schools of human philosophy. Yet, can we actually engage in such a radical departure from all theological tradition? Would not such a move leave us outside of the realm of scholarly research and university questioning? Can we shape our theological *apriori* from scripture in postmodern times?

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complex historical process. The Trinity is involved in several divine activities *ad extra* that sanctuary-covenant structure explains and articulates. The major grounding piece on which the whole plan of salvation as historical process stands is the fulfillment of the covenant promise of divine personal historical intervention in the controversy between good and evil, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Later on, in another historical setting, God gave the same promise to Abram: "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Paul understood that this promise spoke about Christ (Gal 3:8). In Gal 3:16, he shows that the *seed* of which Genesis (13: 15-16; 17:7-8) speaks refers not only to the historical descendants of Abraham, but also to Christ. Connecting the seed with Christ's future sacrifice on the cross goes back to the promise about the victory of the seed of the woman over the seed of Satan in Genesis 3:15. Thus, the movement from the old to the new is part of the historical design of divine predestination. Both sanctuary and covenant find their ground in the historical fulfillment of God's promise of the victory of the seed of the woman and in his providing Himself a substitute for sinners other than animals. God's test of Abram's faith—by asking him to offer his only son Isaac—further explains the nature of the blessing God had in mind. God prevented Isaac's death by providing a ram as substitute (Gen 22:13). Abraham, however, understood the entire experience as a promise of future personal divine intervention. "Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, 'In the mount of the Lord it will be provided'" (Gen 22:14 NAB).

12. Modernity, Postmodernity, and the Theological *Apriori*

To answer the questions enunciated at the end of our previous section, we need to relate our study on theological pluralism in Adventism to the "nature" and power of reason. Arguably, theological method is the orderly organization and operation of human reason to reach specific cognitive goals. Changes in the philosophical interpretation of reason and its role in the generation of philosophical and scientific discourses brought about the modern and postmodern eras in the development of western culture.

Modernism understood reason to reach spatio-temporal objects and to function historically. However, modern philosophers still clung to the classical ideal according to which reason produces absolute universally valid results disconnected from the historical circumstances in which all human beings live. By disconnecting itself from history, reason became "objective." However, with the passing of time, philosophers concluded that reason's products are also historical and therefore shaped by the actual contents we acquire though life experiences. From this, an unavoidable conclusion followed. Western civilization had overemphasized the powers of reason since its earliest beginnings. We have come to know the conviction that reason does not produce absolute but rather relative results under the ubiquitous label of "postmodernity."

The reason for this scientific conviction came from the realization that reason assumes presuppositions that work hermeneutically. That is to say, knowledge we have gained in the past opens to view the meaning of things we know in the present. The same dynamic applies to scientific work and scholarly theology. Knowledge is not absolute not because postmodernity affirms the sheer subjectivity of meaning. It is true that books about postmodernity describe postmodernity as advancing wild subjectivism and radical pluralism. This popular picture will soon fade away, at least in scientific and philosophical circles. Epistemologically speaking, postmodernity still maintains objective knowledge. What is new is the notion that the categories reason needs to produce meanings originate from the historical nature of human beings and their historical experiences. Thus, we can look at the same object from different categories that produce different understandings (relative to the category employed by each subject). Conversely, classical thought and modernity believed that all human beings had the same categories from which to understand objects. Hence, reason was capable of producing absolute meanings valid for all human beings in all cultures and times. Postmodern reason is hermeneutical reason. This means that all knowledge is an

interpretation that requires careful selection of the presuppositions with which we approach our scholarly enterprise.

Applied to theological method, this means that modern theology expected to produce one absolute truth all rational persons were supposed to accept unless they did not mind the "irrational" or "intellectually dishonest" labels. A modern frame of mind seems to operate in Adventism. Scholars from the various sectors of the church assume that there is only one way to do scholarly theology. Evangelical and Progressive Adventists think that the theological and academic communities outside of Adventism express that "one" scholarly way of doing theology in an "intellectually honest way."

The notion that knowledge is interpretation produced with the presuppositions we bring to the objects we attempt to understand may help us understand the genesis of theological pluralism in Adventism and in the broader world of Christian theology. Variations in Bible interpretation and doctrinal construction generate directly from the way we choose to define our theological *apriori*. In other words, there is not one but many equally "rational" ways to define any condition of the theological *apriori*.

In this context, overcoming present theological pluralism in Adventism by finishing the unfinished theological task of the pioneers becomes possible. There are many rational and coherent theological projects. All scholarly theological projects should explain and justify clearly the way in which they interpret and apply the conditions of theological methodology. No theological project, however, can claim universal assent from all human beings due to its *rationality*. Yet, a biblical theological project such as we are proposing can claim universal assent from all human beings due to its *revelational* origin.

13. The Nature of Adventist Theological Pluralism

About fifteen years ago, I participated in a committee studying the coordination of theological training in Adventist Universities in North America and Canada. In the middle of the conversation, somebody said that Adventism was a pluralistic community. What did my colleague mean? He answered my question with an example. For him pluralism was divergence on the application of church policy. For instance, in some parts of the world married couples wear wedding bands, in other parts they do not. He was right—at this level there is and will be pluralism in Adventism.

Diversity of views at the application level is not divisive but part of the dynamic life of the church. Moreover, diversity in the application of theological teachings and church policy does not lead to theological diversity. Instead, it assumes theological agreement. Hence, to describe non-divisive differences at the level of application of doctrines, I prefer the term "diversity" and reserve the word "pluralism" to describe divisive diversity at the level of the conditions of theological method.

Fifteen years later, I am convinced that there is divisive theological pluralism in Adventism.[64] Evangelical and Progressive Adventisms did not originate from a better application of the same theological data and method followed by early Adventist thinkers. Instead, they originated because explicitly or *implicitly* they work from different interpretations of the conditions of theological method. Differences in theological method explain differences in theological system and practice. A theological system follows an order or inner logic that flows from the principle of articulation chosen as guiding hermeneutical light.

As explained in the first article of this series, Evangelical Adventism works from the Protestant interpretation of the principle of articulation. Justification by faith is the doctrine on which the church stands or falls. It not only explains the doctrine of salvation but also becomes the light from which theologians construct the inner logic or order of the system of Christian theology.

Progressive Adventism works from the modern interpretation of the principle of articulation. Evolutionary theory not only explains biological and human histories, but it also becomes the light from which theologians construct the inner logic or order of the system of Christian theology.

Adventist theology works from the biblical interpretation of the principle of articulation. The sanctuary doctrine as the key to the great controversy metanarrative not only explains the way in which God operates in the history of salvation, but also becomes the light from which Biblical Adventist theologians construct the inner logic or order of the system of Christian theology.

The principle of articulation, however, is only the guiding light working from within the entire constellation of activities and conditions of theological method. The material condition where theologians discuss and interpret the sources of Christian theology plays a grounding role. From it, theologians derive their views on the hermeneutical conditions

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[64] For an introduction to the historical development of theological pluralism in Adventism, see the first article of this series.

of method and the guiding light of theological thinking. We can trace the source of Adventist theological divisions back to the material condition of method. Evangelical and Progressive Adventisms spring their views from the plurality of theological sources conviction they *implicitly* borrow from Roman and Protestant theologies. This borrowing has taken place slowly through a long process of doing "piggyback" theology. That is to say, by doing theology on the shoulders of Protestant and Evangelical theologians. Thus, Evangelical and Progressive Adventisms are not "original" theologies but a rehashing of the Evangelical and modern theological systems.

Theological pluralism in Adventism is divisive because it stems from various and opposite interpretations of the same conditions of theological method. Differences in hermeneutical vision generate incompatible theological systems that, in turn, shape incompatible religious communities involving incompatible ways to worship, minister, and live the Christian life. This situation endangers the unity, mission, and future of Adventism. Can Adventism as a worldwide ecclesiastical institution harboring incompatible theologies survive? Can a house divided against itself stand (Mark 3:25)?

14. Overcoming Theological Pluralism

Adventist pioneers organized the Adventist Church for theological reasons. Adventist believers came out of many denominations because their biblically generated theological views were unacceptable to their communities of faith. Their theology united them and gave them a sense of mission so strong that in one and a half centuries they spread to virtually all the nations around the world. Yet, as we outlined in the first article of this series,[65] at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Adventist theology is divided. There is theological pluralism in Adventism. As we showed in the previous sections of this article, divisions are not about minor nuances in obscure matters of biblical interpretation, nor have they originated in the various ways Adventists have understood and applied some ambiguous lifestyle issues. On the contrary, divisions are about foundational methodological issues that affect the entire theology, ministry, and mission of the church. Theological divisions in Adventism are so deep that there is no common theological ground to speak about diversity

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[65] "From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology Part I: Historical Review," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15/2 (2005): 5-39.

from a common theological perspective. How should Adventism deal with theological pluralism?

One way to deal with theological pluralism in the church is to accept it as an unavoidable, unmovable, unchangeable, unchallengeable fact. When the community accepts this way of dealing with theological pluralism, it will design ways to minimize the role of theology (where the differences lie) and maximize the role of the Holy Spirit and love. What is important is love and acceptance, not theological unity. The community can stand united in the Spirit and divided theologically, this option assumes. Evangelical and Progressive Adventists conscious of their theological disagreements with traditional Adventist teachings but still desiring to remain in the Adventist community propose this solution. Unity does not follow from theological agreement, but from the work of the Spirit who creates accepting and all-inclusive love.[66]

Over a year ago, after a presentation on the consequences of adopting evolutionary theory for Adventism to a selected audience of Adventist international leadership, a group of Progressive Adventists came to dialogue. We knew our theological views were incompatible. In a conversation a few minutes earlier, one of them frankly said my views on creation were wrong. Likewise, I told him his views on evolution were wrong. Their interest was not theological but practical. Would I accept in the Adventist community brothers and sisters that believed in evolution? Obviously, they were "testing" my love level, not my theological views. The implication was, if we cannot agree theologically, we can unite in love. My answer was, love must lead us to talk among ourselves and reach theological agreement based on scripture, one common understanding of truth. Can we survive on love while broadly divided in theology? Can we survive based on the sole strength of a worldwide ecclesiastical institution? Can a house divided against itself stand (Mark 3:25)? I think not. Our survival, identity, unity, and mission revolve around the understanding of biblical truth. Adventism needs to strive for theological

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[66] On this issue, see Richard Rice arguing the community is the work of the Spirit in *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church* (Roseville: Association of Adventist Forums, 2002), 24-32. Rice is dealing with the irrelevance of the church to young Adventists. To make the church relevant to them, we should make community primary to doctrine and behaving (ibidem, 62). It is true that the "Spirit creates community" (ibidem 28). Yet, it does not first create community (belonging) and then lead it to theological understanding (belief) and everyday life (behaving). Instead, the Spirit works through the believing (theological understanding) to create a community (belonging) that testifies through a life lived according to what they believe.

unity. It needs to use the sanctuary vision to discover the complete and harmonious system of biblical truth in the development of its own scholarly approach to Christian theology. Postmodernity has shown that there is not one but many rationally and methodologically viable theological projects. Therefore, Adventism does not need to accept the methods and assumptions generally accepted in Christian tradition and scholarship. Instead, it needs to challenge them and build its own approach to biblical, systematic and fundamental theologies from the *sola-tota-prima scriptura* principle.

Could Adventism overcome its present theological divisions theologically? Or, is Adventism facing a situation where moving into the scholarly arena necessarily requires it to abandon early Adventist thinking because it clearly shows its inadequacy and broad departure from truth? Must Adventism accept theological pluralism for intellectual or theological reasons? In short, are Evangelical and Progressive Adventists right in their claims that we should confess the theological errors of our ancestors, the foolishness of the "remnant church" claim, and their plea for a theological Adventist aggiornamento?[67]

Adventism can overcome present theological divisions theologically. Only a full understanding of the richness, depth, and inner logic of Christianity in the light of scripture will dispel theological pluralism in Adventism. The same understanding will attract many outside secular-minded persons unsatisfied with modern and postmodern versions of Christianity. Moreover, there are no rational or scholarly reasons that compel Adventists to accept the views of Evangelical and Progressive Adventists. Their claims that we should confess the theological errors of our ancestors, the foolishness of the "remnant church" stand on methodological and hermeneutical interpretations based on science and philosophy. Besides, as we have seen in section 10, postmodernity stresses differences,[68] not sameness.[69] No longer does rationality validate only "one" (sameness) approach to scholarly theology that one must accept to maintain

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[67] "Aggiornamento" is an Italian word that became part of theological jargon in relation to the reason for the convocation of the Vatican II Ecumenical Council. It means the process of bringing an institution or organization up to date; modernization, updating.

[68] Jaques Derrida speaks of "*differénce*" as the condition of the possibility of differences and oppositions that take place in language and historical reality. For an introduction to Derrida's notion of "*difference,*" see, for instance, John D. Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jaques Derrida* (New York: Fordham UP, 1997), 96-105. Clearly, Derrida's "*differénce*" stands on a temporal conception of reality.

[69] "Sameness" of reality and meaning flows from a timeless understanding of reality.

intellectual honesty. Instead, there are many scholarly viable theological projects. Postmodernity recognizes the historical fact that there are many theological projects in Christian theology claiming to portray accurately the meaning of Christianity. Since postmodernity recognizes the limitations of human reason to produce one absolute universally binding view of reality, all theological projects become alternate projects in competition with each other.

There is no need for an "aggiornamento" of biblical theology in the sense that we should adapt it to the ever-changing patterns of human science and philosophy. Yet, Evangelical and Progressive Adventisms have shown the need for theological coherence and progress in theological understanding that unfortunately have been frequently absent in Biblical Adventism. Thus, there is a need for a scholarly development of Biblical Adventism. I am thinking in an Adventism that thinks with the times but in the light of scripture. This movement is already underway, but needs to find its ground in the area of fundamental theology and its expression in the area of systematic theology. For instance, in the area of biblical studies, we find publications by Gerhard Hasel,[70] Richard Davidson,[71] Jacques Doukhan,[72] and Jon Paulien;[73] in systematic theology, by Hans

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[70] *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate,* rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1985); and *Speaking in Tongues: Biblical Speaking in Tongues and Contemporary Glossolalia* (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1991).

[71] *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical τυποσ Structures* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1981); and *A Love Song for the Sabbath* (Washington: Review and Herald, c1988).

[72] *Le cri du ciel: etude prophétique sur le livre de l'Apocalypse* (Dammarie les Lys: Editions Vie et Santé, c1966); *Boire aux sources* (Dammarie les Lys: Éditions SDT, 1977); *The Genesis Creation Story* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1978); *Aux portes de l'esperance: essai biblique sur les prohéties de la fin* (Demmarie les Lys: Editions Vie et Santé, c1983); *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, c1987); *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000); Jacques Doukhan, *Israel and the Church: Two Voices for the Same God* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002); and, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2002).

[73] *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretation of Revelation 8:1-12* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1988); *The Book of Revelation: Too Good to be False!* (Washington: Review and Herald, c1990); *John: Jesus Gives Life to a New Generation*, ed. George R. Knight (Boise: Pacific Press, 1995); *Knowing God in the Real World; How To Have an Authentic Faith in a Faithless Society* (Nampa: Pacific Press,

La Rondelle,[74] Norman Gulley,[75] Miroslav Kis,[76] and John Baldwin;[77] and in fundamental theology, by Norman Gulley,[78] Raul Kerbs,[79] and the Biblical Research Institute.[80]

Finally, will doing theology and ministry in harmony with the methodological patterns of the academic community generate identity, unity and growth in the Adventist community around the world? The answer to this question is "no." Philosophy and the sciences are changing and fragmenting lights. To adopt them as hermeneutical guides will further fragment and divide Adventist thought and community. The fading sense of identity will fade even faster. Instead of growth, larger groups of Adventists will follow the logical consequences of their culture-accommodating theologies. As the fathers adopt the theological projects of other Christian communities, the children will join them in increasing numbers. The motivation for evangelism will decrease, along with the

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2001); *The Millennium Bug: Is this the End of the World as We Know it?* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 1999); and, *Meet God Again for the First Time* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000); *The Day that Changed the World: Seeking God after September 11* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, c2002); and, *John: The Beloved Gospel* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2003).

[74] *Christ our Salvation: What God Does For Us and In Us* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1980); *Deliverance in the Psalms* (Berrien Springs: First Impressions, 1983); *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical-Contextual Approach* (Sarasota: First Impressions, c1997); and, *Assurance of Salvation* (Nampa: Pacific Press, c1999).

[75] *Final Events on Planet Earth* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1977); *Christ our Substitute* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1982); *Christ our Refuge: Making It Safely Through the Last Days* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1996); and, *Christ is Coming: A Christ-centered Approach to Last-day Events* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1998).

[76] *Follow Me: How to Walk with Jesus Every Day* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2001).

[77] *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000).

[78] *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2003).

[79] Raúl Kerbs, "Sobre el desarrollo de la hermenéutica," *Analogía Filosófica*, 2 (1999): 3-33; "El problema fe-razón (1)," *Enfoques* 12/1 (2000): 105-125; "Las parábolas bíblicas en la hermenéutica filosófica de Paul Ricoeur," *Ideas y Valores*, 113 (2000): 3-27; "Una interpretación sobre el origen de la articulación de la desmitologización (interna y externa) y la restauración de los mitos en Paul Ricoeur," *Logos* 29/86 (2001): 57-84; "El método histórico-crítico en teología: En búsca de su estructura básica y de las interpretaciones filosóficas subyacentes (Parte 1)," *DavarLogos* 1/2 (2002): 105-123; "El método histórico-crítico en teología: En busca de su estructura básica y de las interpretaciones filosóficas subyacentes (Parte II)," *DavarLogos* 2/1 (2003): 11-27.

[80] George W. Reid, *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* (Silver Springs: Biblical Research Institute, 2005).

monies donated for such purposes. Adventism will join the Charismatic and Ecumenical movement.

This scenario does not need to happen. There is another way, a better way, the biblical way. Thinking theologically in the light of scripture will overcome theological pluralism originating from thinking theologically in the light of science, philosophy, and culture. The Adventist church is not compelled to embrace the latter or the pluralism it originates. Yet, if the theological enterprise does not play a central role in the life of the community, seminaries, universities, and administrations, theological pluralism will continue to thrive in Adventism. Further theological divisions and fragmentations will lead many to theological cynicism and abandoning the church. Those who remain will feel pressed from many angles to embrace a progressive Protestantization and Charismatization of Adventism. If this scenario happens, Adventism will evolve into an altogether different religious community with little or no theological connection with its historical roots.

In contrast, expanding beyond biblical theology to fundamental and systematic theologies become necessary tools as present and future generations of theologians attempt to finish the unfinished task of Adventist theology. By interpreting the hermeneutical principles of scholarly theology in the light of scripture, Biblical Adventism will uncover the inner logic of scripture and probe even deeper and farther than the early pioneers and Ellen White ever did into the treasure house of scriptural truth.[81] As the harmonious and complete system of biblical truth begin to permeate the thinking, life, and imagination of the church, a new and firmer sense of identity as remnant will become evident and explicit in worldwide Adventism. As theologians, pastors, and administrators unite in the task of further understanding, applying, and disseminating the theological understanding of biblical truth, the Holy Spirit will generate the inner conviction of the mind and involve laity in the final mission

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[81] This notion of incompleteness seems implied in Ellen White's thought. Consider, for instance, the following statement. "If our youth are seeking to educate themselves to be workers in His cause, they should learn the way of the Lord, and live by every word that proceedeth out of His mouth. They are not to make up their minds *that the whole truth has been unfolded, and that the Infinite One has no more light for His people.* If they entrench themselves in the belief that the whole truth has been revealed, they will be in danger of discarding precious jewels of truth that shall be discovered as men turn their attention to the searching of the rich mine of God's word" (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work* [Washington: Review and Herald, 1938], 32-33).

before the coming of the Lord. In this way, Adventism will overcome theological pluralism.

15. Thinking in the Light of Scripture

Overcoming theological pluralism, then, requires finishing the unfinished task of Adventist theology. Can Adventist theologians finish the theological task in the scholarly realm of university research? Can Adventism use the sanctuary doctrine as hermeneutical vision from which to discover and formulate a harmonious and complete system of truth in the scholarly arena? The answer to these questions is yes, they can. However, they cannot do it from within the theological discipline of biblical theology. They also need the contributions of systematic and fundamental theologies, two broad theological areas in which Adventist theology is virtually non-existent.[82] So far, Biblical Adventism has developed mainly within the scholarly discipline of biblical theology. However, we can appreciate better its main contributions and revolutionary nature in the areas of fundamental and systematic theologies. I am not speaking of borrowing from existent approaches of past and present scholarship. Such an approach is already well underway in Evangelical and Progressive Adventism.

Let us turn our attention to another related question. Can we finish in postmodern times the unfinished intuition of a theological system early pioneers and Ellen White formulated over a century ago? The answer to this question is also yes. Postmodernity opens the possibility and shows the reason why a biblical approach to theological methodology and hermeneutics is acceptable as scholarship.[83] Modernity believed that there was only one way to truth. Anything deviating from it fell outside of truth or was unacceptable scholarship. Postmodernity, instead, has convincingly shown that, as David Tracy put it, "to understand at all is to

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[82] There is a small and welcome beginning in these areas. Norman Gulley is doing pioneer work in the area of systematic theology; see his *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2003). In the area of fundamental theology, Fritz Guy's *Thinking Theologically* and Richard Rice's *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside: La Sierra UP, 1991) are pioneer works. They do not work within the same methodological convictions. While Norman Gulley works within the methodological parameters of Biblical Adventism, Fritz Guy and Richard Rice work within the methodological parameters of Progressive Adventism. Thus, their works do not contribute to the development of the biblical approach to fundamental theology I am suggesting here.

[83] See the section on Modernity, Postmodernity, and the Theological *Apriori*.

interpret."[84] As with our scientific and philosophical knowledge, our scientific knowledge is as good as the presuppositions on which we build it.[85] Thus, to deconstruct and reinterpret the hermeneutical structure of theology is an acceptable scholarly enterprise. Biblical Adventism has the opportunity to express the sanctuary doctrine vision and the great controversy metanarrative that it opens to view in the scholarly arena of hermeneutical presuppositions of theological method. Additionally, we have also mentioned in passing that postmodernity has turned from a timeless understanding of reality as "metaphysics" to a temporal understanding of reality as "metanarrative."[86] The historical approach to theology implicit in the sanctuary doctrine and great controversy metanarrative fits the postmodern historical turn.[87] It also makes much more sense to common experience than classical and modern approaches to Christian theology.[88]

To overcome theological pluralism, then, Adventism needs to finish the theological thinking early generations left unfinished. To finish the task of Biblical Adventist theology, Adventism needs to think in the light of scripture within the scholarly context and facing the conditions of postmodern times. What does it take to think in the light of scripture?

We have noticed that theological method is a complex structure, including repetitive procedures and conditions that different theological traditions interpret in diverse and even conflicting ways. Additionally, in this article we have become aware that philosophy and science have shaped the hermeneutical light guiding the theological vision of classical,

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[84] *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope.* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 9. For an introduction to the task of theological interpretation, see, for instance, James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

[85] This is a major feature of scientific method. See, for instance, Fernando Canale, "Evolution, Theology and Method Part I: Outline and Limits of Scientific Methodology," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41/1 (2003): 65-100; and a major component in Thomas S. Kuhn's, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970).

[86] See above, footnote 53.

[87] The appreciation of history began in modern times. Its completion brought about a transition age we call "postmodernity."

[88] Clark H. Pinnock make this point in defense of the openview of God, see, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 154. The openview of God also assumes the historicity of divine activity. Unfortunately, open view theologians continue to define other conditions of method in the classical way (ibidem, 19-24).

modern, and postmodern theologians. The guiding light of these systems is the notion that God's reality exists and His actions take place in a dimension of reality where space and time do not exist (principle of reality). While theology takes place in the spiritual (timeless spaceless reality), our lives transpire in the spatiotemporal realm. On this assumption, the sanctuary doctrine cannot open to view the great controversy metanarrative from which to discover a complete and harmonious system of truth. Instead, the sanctuary and the great controversy are metaphors about God's eternal timeless actions. Greek metaphysics replaces biblical metanarrative.

Conversely, we have underlined that Biblical Adventism assumes the biblical understanding of reality. God's reality is not timeless but analogically temporal. His life does not take place in total simultaneity (*totum simul*), but He has a history independent from creation. Moreover, God is able to act within the limitations and flow of created spatiotemporal reality. From this assumption, biblical metanarrative replaces Greek metaphysics. Thus, the sanctuary doctrine becomes the light guiding the vision of Adventist theologians. Thinking in the light of scripture, then, requires defining all the conditions of theological method from scripture. Consequently, it means to think historically (principle of reality) from the light of the sanctuary doctrine and great controversy (principle of articulation). This perfectly fits another pillar of early Adventist belief, the biblical teaching that humans are not souls but historical beings, whose existence takes place only in space and time. Biblical cosmology (principle of reality) stands on God's perfect design for creation, which He brought about in a closely-knit seven days historical process. Biblical epistemology stands on the revelation-inspiration process that originated scripture as sole source of theological data. Not surprisingly, biblical thinking (hermeneutics) follows a historical pattern where present actions find their meaning in the context of God's past marvelous deeds (history) and prophesied future actions (promises and eschatological future).

The philosophical and biblical visions for Christian theology are antithetical. Thinking in the light of scripture, then, requires a radical paradigm shift in the hermeneutical principles of Christian theology. Early Adventist theology, formulated from the sanctuary doctrine-great controversy metanarrative, implicitly assumed this paradigm shift at the hermeneutical level of theological interpretation and construction. They gave us the vision and an unfinished theological task we need to finish at the scholarly level of academic research.

Biblical Adventism cannot follow the philosophical vision of Christian theology without ceasing to be faithful to the *sola-tota-prima scriptura* principle. Consequently, Adventism must start "from scratch." As Husserl and Heidegger used to say, we need to start "from the things themselves." In the case of Adventist theology, we must start from scripture to uncover the biblical explicit or implicit interpretation of the conditions of theological method with special emphasis in the hermeneutical principles from which the vision for theological thinking flows. These studies provide the necessary scholarly platform from which to develop the scholarly methods for biblical and systematic theology. Then, Adventism will be able to develop a biblical (Adventist) approach to biblical theology, as Gerhard Hasel proposed,[89] and a biblical systematic theology as well. At this point, the need for an interdisciplinary approach to Adventist theology shows up.[90] For instance, an interdisciplinary methodology is required to answer questions such as, for instance, how do we relate the findings of biblical and systematic theologies? How are they corrective of each other? How do they contribute to each other functioning?

16. Summary

Before drawing some conclusions, a brief review may help us to connect the main points we have explored in this article. We started by recognizing the role that philosophy plays in theological hermeneutics and suggesting that Adventism should address philosophical issues involved in theological hermeneutics from the *sola-tota scriptura* principle. Then, we recognized that theologians need a theological discipline to identify, evaluate, interpret, and formulate the ontological and epistemological assumptions involved in the task of Christian theology. Generally, theologians draw these assumptions from the philosophical and scientific supermarket. Although now, with the advent of postmodernity, theologians are increasingly addressing these issues themselves, they have not yet agreed on a general label for this area of scholarly research. I suggest that the fundamental theology label accurately reflects the importance and role of the theological *apriori* theologians discuss in this

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[89] See Fernando Canale, "From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Biblical and Systematic Theologies—Part II," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 16/1-2 (2005): 129-133.

[90] For an introduction to interdisciplinary methodology, see, for instance, Fernando Canale, "Interdisciplinary Method in Christian Theology? In Search of a Working Proposal," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 43/3 (2001): 366-389.

portance and role of the theological *apriori* theologians discuss in this field of research.

We surveyed the theological *apriori* that includes a complex web of methodological principles. Among them, we found out that a few hermeneutical principles guide biblical interpretation and the articulation of Christian doctrines. Among them, the principle of reality (ontology) and the principle of articulation (metaphysics-metanarrative) play leading roles in theological hermeneutics. Their influence derives from their all-inclusive reach. In other words, their reach includes everything. The principle or reality interprets the reality of God, human beings, and the world. The principle of articulation interprets the way in which these realities articulate as a whole.

Based on the multiplex sources of theology conviction, Christian theology has consistently drawn its interpretation of the hermeneutical principles of theology from philosophy and science. Based on the *sola-tota scriptura* principle as the source of theology, Biblical Adventism requires the deconstruction of the philosophical and scientific interpretations of the hermeneutical principles of Christian theology, and adopts their biblical interpretation. This is what implicitly took place when the sanctuary doctrine opened to the view of early Adventist believers a complete and harmonious system of truth.

Theological pluralism in contemporary Adventism stems from different ways of understanding the hermeneutical principles of theology. Assuming the plurality of theological sources, Evangelical and Progressive Adventisms implicitly draw their understanding of the hermeneutical principles of theology from philosophy and science. Progressive Adventism's push for the acceptance of evolutionary ideas stands out as a clear example of this trend. Evolutionary ideas radically differ from the biblical understanding of the cosmological principle of reality and unleash a paradigm shift in theological interpretation that reaches the entire range of Christian doctrines.

While classical theology understands God's reality as timeless and therefore incompatible with space and time, scripture presents a God who is compatible with space and time and therefore not timeless. The sanctuary doctrine assumes God's direct historical activity in created time and is incompatible with the classical notion of divine timelessness. When divine timelessness is assumed, the sanctuary doctrine as conceived by the Adventist pioneers fades away into metaphorical oblivion. This explains why scholarly models of Christian theology have never

considered the Adventist understanding of the sanctuary doctrine as a serious option.

We can trace the radical differences that exist between Christian theologies and Biblical Adventism back to the hermeneutical principle of reality from which they flow. The former explicitly adopts the traditional timeless interpretation of God's reality flowing from Greek philosophy via the tradition of the church.[91] The latter implicitly adopts the biblical temporal-historical interpretation of God's reality flowing from scripture.

Changes in the understanding of the principle of reality require changes in the principle of articulation in charge of interpreting the philosophical question of the "whole and the parts." When reality is timeless, metaphysics explains the "whole and the parts." When reality is temporal, metanarratives explain the "whole and the parts." As Biblical Adventism replaced the timeless with the biblical understanding of God's infinite temporality, the sanctuary doctrine helped to understand God's history of salvation as the "great controversy" metanarrative. In turn, the great controversy metanarrative becomes an added hermeneutical guide for biblical interpretation and theological construction.

God brings his eternal plan of salvation to reality through a historical sequence of redemptive acts. In scripture, this redemptive history takes place within the divinely established parameters articulated in the sanctuary-covenant structure. If we use the sanctuary-covenant relational structure as key to divine redemptive activities through past and future histories—historicist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation—we arrive at the great controversy metanarrative biblical authors assume when thinking and writing theologically. As biblical metanarrative, the great controversy becomes the hermeneutical principle of articulation of Adventist theology. As we make this fundamental interpretive choice, we are in fact departing from all classical and postmodern systems of doing Christian theologies.

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[91] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley, 3 vols., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 1:401-410; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 279-319. The timelessness of God becomes clear when Moltmann explains that in the eschaton "The temporal creation will then become an eternal creation, because all created beings will participate in God's eternity. The spatial creation will then become an omnipresent creation, because all created beings will participate in God's omnipresence. Creation's departure from time into the aeon of glory comes about through the annihilation of death and the raising of the dead. Once death is no more, *there will be no more time either, neither the time of transience nor the time of futurity"* (ibidem, 294).

Can such a radical departure from Christian tradition be valid scholarship? Schools of theology following the lead of Christian tradition will strongly oppose its scholarly status. However, postmodernity has opened the door for multiple and contradictory scholarly approaches by showing that reason is not able to produce universally valid results. Eventually, scholarship will recognize the existence of multiple contradictory approaches. Thus, many rational and coherent theological projects compete in the scholarly arena. To achieve scholarly status, they must explain and justify clearly the way in which they interpret and apply the conditions of theological methodology. No theological project, however, can claim universal assent from all human beings due to its *rationality*. Yet, a biblical theological project as we are proposing can claim universal assent from all human beings due to its *revelational* origin.

Theological pluralism in Adventism is divisive because it stems from various and opposite interpretations of the same conditions of theological method. Differences in hermeneutical vision generate incompatible theological systems that, in turn, shape incompatible religious communities involving incompatible ways to worship, minister, and live the Christian life. This situation endangers the unity, mission, and future of Adventism.

To accept theological pluralism as an unchangeable fact and expect that the church will stay united by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and communitarian love will displace theological understanding from playing its central role in uniting and energizing the community of faith. It will also further divide the church as philosophical, scientific, and cultural communities continue to produce contradictory teachings to which theologians feel obliged to accommodate. Instead, Adventism should overcome present theological pluralism theologically by expanding theological thinking in the light of scripture. Strong development in the scholarly disciplines of fundamental and systematic theologies should strengthen the progress Biblical Adventism is already making in the area of biblical theology. As this enhanced, deepened, and timely theological understanding is disseminated through seminaries, universities, colleges, academies, schools, and churches around the world, the worldwide church will become united and strongly motivated for missionary action in postmodern times.

17. Conclusion

Adventism's "uniqueness" is theological. Uniqueness means difference. For over a century, Adventists have sought for their "sameness"

with Evangelical and modern theological projects. Yet, in its essence, Adventism implies a theological revolution not seen in the history of Christian theology since New Testament times. Sadly, that revolution was never completed and subsequently forgotten in the scholarly arena. In the world of academic theology, the Adventist theological project involves a macro hermeneutical shift of monumental proportions.[92]

Moving from a traditional to a biblical interpretation of the hermeneutical principles of Christian theology, Adventist theology challenges tradition at its foundational philosophical level. The repercussions of this paradigm shift reach the entire range of theological disciplines. It changes the rules of the game. It generates a new vision from which to interpret biblical texts and understand Christian doctrines. It produces a new and complete understanding of Christianity. Adventist pioneers saw Christian theology from within this paradigm shift. Ellen White left the best guidelines we have of what they understood from this revolutionary perspective. Yet, they left only an incomplete theological intuition in need of further expansion and formulation.

Through the years, Adventists have forgotten and replaced the biblical sanctuary hermeneutical vision with other visions of human origin. They need to remember the biblical hermeneutical vision and use it as hermeneutical light to finish the unfinished task of Adventist theology at the scholarly level of academic theology.

The task is not easy. It requires changes in the way Adventists do theology. They should realize that the theological intuition early Adventists saw and left unfinished cannot be properly expressed within the disciplinary constraints exegetical methodology places over biblical theology. Consequently, Adventists need to develop systematic and fundamental theologies as theological disciplines to join biblical theology in the search for biblical truth. They should express their hermeneutical vision and interpretation of the hermeneutical principles of theology in a scholarly way. They should present this methodological understanding as

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[92] This does not negate the fact that throughout the history of Christianity, many communities faithful to the *sola scriptura* principle have recognized truths that we also hold dear today. They are antecedents of the same unfinished theological task present day Adventists have inherited from their pioneers. They certainly did not finish the task at the scholarly level. Precisely because the hermeneutical revolution stands on the consistent application of the *sola scriptura* principle, the task of Adventist theology I am proposing should be worked out in the public arena of postmodern scholarship. In this way it will become not only a token of unity and blessing for Adventists, but for all Christians building their beliefs on the same methodological grounds.

the biblical option competing with other available approaches based on tradition, philosophy, and science. To achieve these goals, Biblical Adventism should concern itself with philosophical disciplines such as ontology and epistemology. They need to show the inner logic (order) of biblical thinking and its external coherence with historical realities and translate it in ontological and epistemological categories and language. They should be able to explain why a departure from tradition, philosophy, and science are essential to Christian theology, faith, and mission. They need to formulate the Adventist theological project not only for Adventists within the church but also for the academic community in general.

Will a new generation of postmodern Adventists spread around the world be able to do scholarly theology in harmony with the sanctuary hermeneutical vision that opened to the view of Ellen White and early Adventists a complete system of truth, complete and harmonious? Would such a vision and the system of theology it brings to view require changes in the practical level of Adventist ministry and mission? Would such a theology generate identity, unity, and growth in the Adventist community around the world? We will explore these questions in the next article.

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