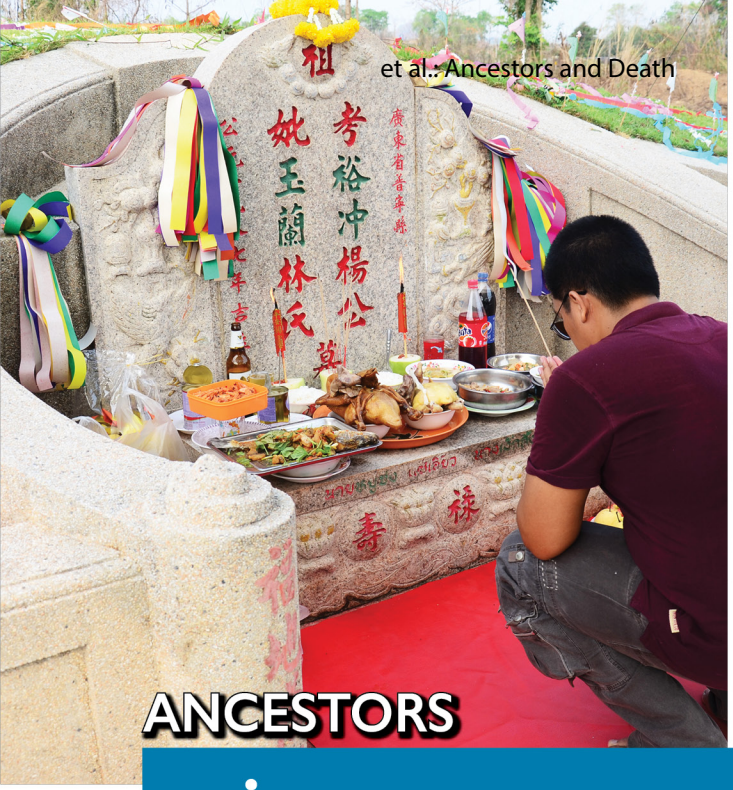

ANCESTORS AND DEATH

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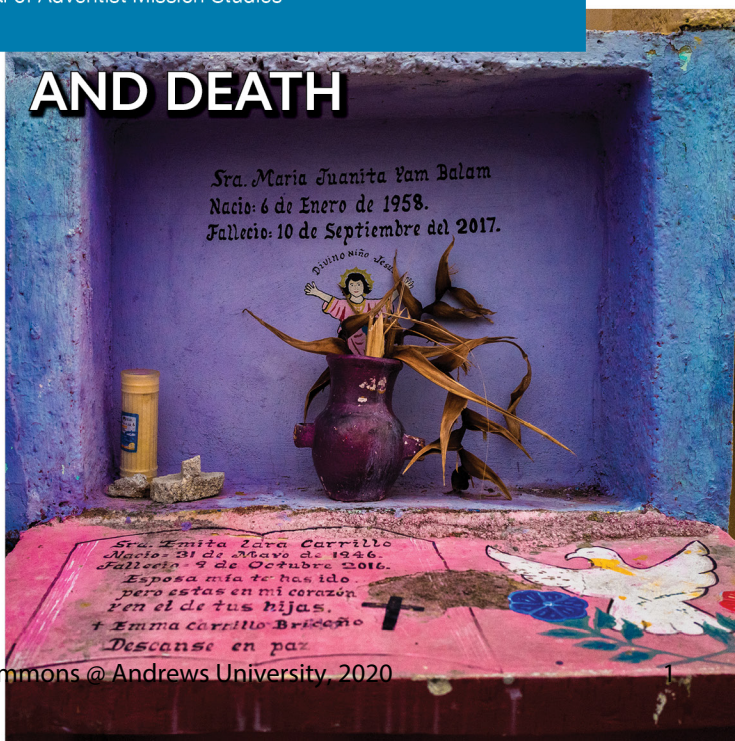

VOL. 16 NO. 1
2020

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JAMS
Journal of Adventist Mission Studies Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2020
ISSN: 1553-9881
Editor: Bruce L. Bauer
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Cover and Layout: Amy Rhodes
Cover Photos: AdobeStock/Photo, AdobeStock/tuayai

JAMS is a peer-reviewed journal published in the Spring and Fall by the International Fellowship of Adventist Mission Studies, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-1500
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https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol16/iss1/1
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol16/iss1/

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Editorial

Understanding the biblical position on death, ancestors, and whether or not the human soul is immortal or mortal is of vital importance in Christian mission. Many in Africa and Asia have strong connections with their ancestors, believing that even after people die they continue to have an influence on the living. If the ancestors are not properly cared for, it is believed that harm, sickness, and even death can impact the family, the clan, and even the whole community.

This issue of the *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* provides three excellent articles detailing the biblical position on death and ancestors. Check out Richard Davidson's article from an Old Testament perspective, Reinaldo Sequeira's article on a Jewish perspective, and Wagner Kuhn and Boubakar Sanou's article on a biblical framework for discipling new believers who fear death and hell.

Much of the Christian world with its belief in the efficacy of saints ministering to the living or with a strong belief in an immortal soul can provide little comfort to those who fear the wrath of angry ancestors. The tragedy is that as Seventh-day Adventists have discipled new believers too often they have taught the biblical doctrine without spending the time to change the underlying worldview assumptions and premises.

For example, in 2018 the General Conference commissioned a Global Church Member Survey that had 63,756 responses from all 13 divisions with a margin of error of less than 1%. One of the items on the survey stated, "When people die, their bodily remains decay and they have no consciousness or activity until they are resurrected." This is good Adventist teaching. Among respondents from all divisions, 89.6% agreed or strongly agreed. However, in a subsequent statement that said, "The soul is a separate part of a person and lives on after death" 8.3% of the respondents said they were not sure and an additional 32.5% agreed or strongly agreed. A large majority answered the belief question correctly, but when it came to applying that statement to cultural concepts and assumptions, a large percentage continued to believe in an immortal soul. Many new Adventist members share a cultural or religious heritage with strong Catholic or Protestant teachings concerning an immortal soul or come from cultures where most people believe that ancestors interact with the living.

Another statement from the survey said, "People who have died believing in Christ are in heaven right now." Among all divisions, 8.2% were not sure and an additional 19.5% agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. This means that 27.7% of Adventists were not sure or confused on this issue. I believe these statistics reveal deeply held cultural and religious values and assumptions that continue to intermingle with an Adventist belief system. Therefore, it is not only important to exegete the Word of God to ascertain what it says about death, ancestors, and whether a person's soul is mortal or immortal; it is just as important to exegete the local culture and the world religions to understand where people are coming from and what their deeply held beliefs and worldview values are. Four articles discuss what Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus believe concerning these vital topics.

Bruce L. Bauer, editor

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RICHARD M. DAVIDSON

Death and Ancestors in Light of the Old Testament

Introduction

From my personal study and from listening to the various excellent papers presented at this conference, I have been both sobered and saddened to see the extent to which the belief in ancestors surviving death and being venerated or worshiped has permeated all the various religions and people groups throughout the world, both ancient and modern, both Christian and non-Christian.

Why does ancestor worship persist in spite of Christendom's strenuous efforts to eradicate it? Various authorities have noted a major factor to be that ancestor worship has its parallels in Christian cults of the dead and of the saints. Such "parallels" are due to the widespread belief of Christendom in an immortal soul. Ironically, then, Christian missionaries have actually often *reinforced* the traditional indigenous belief that dead ancestors can help and harm. For example, Harriet Ngubane, in the book *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine, states:* "Usually a Christian Zulu living in a chiefdom [tribal area] does not find Christian beliefs and ancestral beliefs incompatible" (1977:4). Various denominations and individual scholars have argued for "common ground" between Christianity and the Indigenous Religions of Africa and elsewhere who practice ancestor worship. Therefore, Emmanuel K. Twesigye writes, "The spirits referred to as 'ancestral spirits' are the African equivalent of the Christian 'Community of Saints,' particularly within the Catholic tradition and devotional practice." He goes on to affirm:

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> It can be said that the African idea of instant transformation of the human being at the moment of death, the subsequent embodiment in a spiritual body, evaluation, and judgment by God and the ancestral spirits, and the consequent acceptance by the ancestors and God if judged as good or rejection if judges as unworthy for having lived a life of hatred, malice and lacking in 'Obuntu,' is probably a viable alternative eschatological view to the traditional Christian teaching on death, the resurrection, judgment, hell and heaven. (1987:154)

Pope John Paul II speaks positively of the African spiritual worldview on life and of the life-after-death:

> Africa is endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities, which it can offer to the churches and to humanity as a whole. . . . *The sons and daughters of Africa love life*. It is precisely this love for life that leads them to give such great importance to the veneration of their ancestors. They believe intuitively that the dead continue to live and remain in common with them. *Is this not in some way a preparation for belief in the communion of the Saints?* (1995:42, 43)

As further evidence of accommodation to indigenous ancestral religions, even some spirit mediums and witch doctors have found acceptance in Christian churches. A survey taken by Dr. Chavunduka of the University of Zimbabwe revealed that among 145 traditional healers were Methodists, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Seventh-day Adventists, and members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Chavunduka concludes: "Membership of a church does not prevent an individual from participating in traditional religion" (Ancestor Worship 1985).

What especially sobers and surprises me is to find the name Seventh-day Adventist among this list of churches in which traditional healers have found a home. This surprise is heightened by the results of the 2018 survey conducted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists presented by David Trim in this conference, revealing the extent to which belief in the state of the dead among Seventh-day Adventists includes acceptance of the notion of an immortal soul and some form of veneration and worship of ancestors who continue to exist after death and interact with human beings who have not died.

One cannot deny the powerful cures and miracles that have been affected by traditional indigenous healers, spirit mediums, and witch doctors. In the past, Christian churches in their mission outreach opposed spirit mediums and witch doctors. Now many are changing their tactics. While endorsing modern medical trends, they try to retain the support of church members who still cling to ancestral beliefs. Some church entities

have therefore decided that rather than try to stamp out "indigenous healers," they should work with them (Wulfhorst 2005).

What should be the response of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the belief and practice of ancestor worship or veneration and acceptance of necromancy (communication with the dead), and the larger affirmation that when a person dies the soul lives on and interacts with the living? As a church which upholds the belief in *sola Scriptura*, we have the mandate to test all beliefs and practice—including that of ancestor worship or veneration, and associated miracles and cures that have accompanied such phenomena—by Scripture. Isaiah 8:20 states: "To the Law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." What is not often recognized in quoting this text to support *sola Scriptura* is that the immediate context concerns the practice of seeking to consult the dead via mediums and spiritists. Verse 19 (NASB) reads: "When they say to you, 'Consult the mediums [Heb. *'obot*] and the spiritists [Heb. *yidd'oni*] who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?"

In light of this mandate of *sola Scriptura*, calling us to base all our faith and practice upon the teachings of Scripture, especially in the context of attempted contact with the dead ancestors, in this study I invite us to reassess what the Bible, and especially the "Law and Testimony" of the Hebrew Bible (HB, the Old Testament), has to say about this subject.

In particular, there is a need to assess the biblical validity of the presuppositions that undergird the view of ancestor veneration and worship. Three major presuppositions underlie this belief and practice: (1) dualism of soul and body: the soul and body are two separate (and separable) entities that comprise the human being; (2) the immortality of the soul: the soul is immortal, and thus does not die; and (3) when human beings die, their soul survives death and continues to exist as a conscious intelligent entity separate from the body, able to interact with the living.

The Nature and Constitution of the Human Being

A growing consensus within biblical scholarship affirms that the opening pages of the Bible (Gen 1-3) provide the foundation for the rest of Scripture: "whether one is evangelical or liberal, it is clear that Genesis 1-3 is the interpretive foundation of all Scripture" (Rankin 1996:203). "Canonically, the understanding of human nature expressed or implied in the laws, wisdom literature, narratives, prophetic texts, and other genres of the Hebrew Scriptures may be viewed as commentary on the creation texts. . . . The Bible's first statement concerning humankind remains the normative statement that governs all others" (Bird 1994:525, 527; Brown and McBride Jr., 2000:xi).

The first two chapters of Genesis provide foundational insights into biblical anthropology. We first will examine the key passage in Gen 1 discussing humanity as the *imago Dei*, look at the constitution of humans as set forth in the pivotal passage of Genesis 2, and relate these foundational passages to other OT relevant material (Davidson 2015:11-42).

Genesis 1:26-27: The Nature of Humanity in God's Image

In Genesis 1:26-28 "the high point and goal has been reached toward which all of God's creativity from v. 1 on was directed" (von Rad 1961:57; Wilfong 2000: 47). Here in lofty grandeur is portrayed the creation of humankind (*ha'adam*):

> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image [*tselem*], according to our likeness [*demut*]; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image [*tselem*], in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (NRSV)

A careful semantic examination of the word *tselem* ("image") in its etymology and seventeen occurrences in the OT reveals that "aside from its two possibly figurative usages, *tselem* always refers to a physical image, having a formed body" (Waltke 2007:215). John Goldingay draws the implication: "An image is the visible representation of something, which suggests God's image lies in humanity's bodily nature. . . . [T]he First Testament. . . systematically presupposes a correspondence between God and humanity in its bodily as well as its inner nature" (2003:102, 103; von Rad 2001:145; Porteous 1962:684).[1] With solid biblical data David Carr counters the common notion "that Genesis 1 must be talking about something else—anything else—than actual physical resemblance between God and humans" (2003:17-26).

The second Hebrew word in Genesis 1:26 depicting the resemblance between God and humanity is the abstract noun *demu* ("likeness"). In its twenty-five occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, this term refers most often to abstract qualities, although it also can be occasionally used for material objects. It "is generally used to signify the 'appearance,' 'similarity,' or 'analogy' of nonphysical traits" (Rashkow 2000:61).

Thus the Hebrew words *tselem* "image" and *demu* ("likeness"), although possessing overlapping semantic ranges, in the juxtaposition of v. 26 appear to emphasize the concrete and abstract aspects of the human being, respectively (Porteous: 684, 685; von Rad 1961:57-58; Garr 2003:117-176). Ilona

Rashkow summarizes the implications of this juxtaposition: "God says that his intention is to make Adam both in 'in our image' (that is, physically similar, whatever that may mean), and in 'in our likeness' (having the same abstract characteristics)" (Rashkow 2000:61).[2] Ellen White is thus on the mark when she writes, "Man was to bear God's image both in outward resemblance and in character" (1890:45). Again, she states, "In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature" (1911:644, 645; 1899:2).[3]

At the same time, the two expressions (*tselem* "image" and *demu* "likeness") are used together in Genesis 1:26 ("in our image, according to our likeness") with no conjunction separating them, and both terms are used alone as a cipher for the two together (Gen 1:27 uses *tselem*, and Gen 5:1 uses *demu*), thus implying that these terms should not be taken as describing two separable components of the human nature, as presumed in Greek dualism and as attempted throughout much of the history of interpretation (under the influence of such dualism). Rather, these two terms indicate that the person as a whole—both in physical/bodily and spiritual/mental components—is created in God's image (White 1903:15). In his commentary on Genesis, von Rad has insightfully concluded with regard to Genesis 1:26: "One will do well to split the physical from the spiritual as little as possible: the whole man is created in God's image" (1961:58; Garr 2003:117-176; Neuer 1991:65-67). Likewise, Vriezen contends that the whole human being is created in the image of God (1970:203).

Genesis 2:7: The Constitution of Human Beings

A second "*locus classicus* of Old Testament anthropology" (von Rad 1961:77) is found in Genesis 2:7: "Then the LORD God formed man [*ha'adam*] of dust [*'apar*] from the ground [*ha'adamah*], and breathed into his nostrils the breath [*nishmat*] of life; and man became a living being [*nepesh khayyah*]" (NASB).

In a previous age it would have been necessary to argue from this passage for the OT concept of anthropological wholism,[4] against strong opposition from almost the entire scholarly community, which was upholding the traditional dualistic anthropology. However, all that has changed. "In the last two centuries, biblical scholars have increasingly moved toward a consensus that both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament provide a holistic model of the human person" (Shults 2003:175). It has become increasingly apparent that Genesis 2:7 (like Gen 1:26) articulates a wholistic view of humans. According to the understanding of anthropology set forth in this verse, a human being does not *have* a soul, he/she *is* a soul. A human is a living being, a psychophysical unity.

Genesis 2:7 gives the basic "formula" for the constitution of humans: "dust" + "breath of life" = "soul." Let's look briefly at the basic OT vocabulary for human constitution, as set forth in this verse and continued elsewhere in Scripture:

First, dust, flesh/body, flesh and bones. The "dust [*'apar*] from the ground [*ha'adamah*] refers to the basic material elements of which the body is composed. The name for "the human" (*ha'adam*) or "Adam" (*'adam*) is etymologically related to *ha'adamah* "the ground," implying the source of Adam's material substance. Later in Genesis 2 the whole person is viewed from his physical perspective as "flesh" (*basar*) and "bones" (*etsem*) when Adam states his oath of solidarity (or marriage vows) regarding Eve: "she is now bone [*etsem*] of my bones and flesh [*basar*] of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). In Genesis 6:3, humankind is described as "flesh" (*basar*). The term "flesh" *basar* ("flesh, body") occurs 270 times in the OT, and "designates the corporeal substance of a living human being or animal, with emphasis on the visual and graphic" (Waltke 2007:224). Unlike the Greek term for "flesh" in the NT, the word *basar* is never used as "the principle of sin" in the OT, but rather emphasizes man in his weakness in contrast to the divine being (Jacob 1958:158).[5] The terms "bone and flesh" together indicate a biological relationship or bond of solidarity (Waltke 2007:224; Brueggeman 1970:540).

Second, breath/breathe, nostrils, breath of the spirit of life, breath of life, spirit. The phrase "breath of life" (*nishmat khayyim*) in Genesis 2:7 is equivalent to *ruakh khayyim* "spirit of life" or the longer form *nishmat-ruakh khayyim* "breath of the spirit of life" in the Flood narrative (Gen 6:17; 7:22). Elsewhere in Scripture, when referring to the constitution of humans and alluding to Genesis 2:7, writers often shorten this terminology to the single word *ruakh* "spirit" (see esp. Eccl 3:19-20; Ps 103:14; 104:29-30; Job 33:4). The narrator in Genesis 2:7 uses the full expression, including the terms for "breathe" (*napakh*),[6] "nostrils" (*'ap*), and "breath of life" (*nishmat khayyim*), (Waltke 2007:227)[7] making clear that this breath is not understood as a conscious entity within the human being, but rather as referring to the animating "life principle" or "vital power" bestowed by God on living beings.

The term *ruakh* ("wind, spirit") occurs 378 times in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), and when used of humanity is "an expression of the human being's dynamic vitality" (Waltke 2007:227). It is often used to refer to the "complex, yet unified, physical-psychical constitution of a human being," either emphasizing "physical vitality" (best glossed as "breath"), or psychical vitality (best glossed as "spirit") (Waltke 2007:227). Not even once is the term *ruakh* used to denote "an intelligent entity capable of existence apart from the physical body, so far as man is concerned" (Vriezen 1970:406, 407).

Third, Living being, "soul." According to Genesis 2:7, the physical material ("dust of the ground") plus the divine life principle ("breath of life") equals the living being (*nepesh khayyah*). In his monumental and classic work on OT anthropology, Hans Walter Wolff has shown that the word *nepesh* in Genesis 2:7 should be translated as "person, being, individual." He further shows that in its 754 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, *nepesh* "is never given the meaning of an indestructible core of being, in contradistinction to the physical life, and even capable of living when cut off from that life" (Wolff 1974:20). Wolff states emphatically: "man does not *have n[epesh]*, he *is n[epesh]*, he lives as *n[epesh]*" (1974:10). Numerous Old Testament scholars echo this conclusion (Dyrness 1979:85; Brotzman 1987:222). The term *nepesh* depicts the entire human being, seen from the perspective of a person's "passionate vitality," one's "*e'lan vital*, vibrant with energy" (Terrien 2003:90).

Gerhard von Rad elaborates regarding the meaning of Genesis 2:7: "It distinguishes not body and 'soul' but more realistically body and life. The divine breath of life which unites with the material body makes man a 'living soul' both from the physical as well as from the psychical side" (1961:77).

Since the early 1950s and the rise of the biblical theology movement, this view has become the standard interpretation of Old Testament scholarship. There is no room in such a view for a platonic/philonic dichotomy of body and soul. Rather, the picture of the constitution of humans throughout the Old Testament is one of wholism.[8]

Having looked at the nature and constitution of human beings, it now needs to be asked: what happens when people die?

The Nature of Death

In our discussion of the nature and constitution of the human being, building upon Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:7 and the testimony of later biblical writers, it became clear that the Hebrew understanding was one of anthropological wholism; the human does not have a soul, but is a soul, he is a psycho-somatic whole. As mentioned, this is recognized almost universally by biblical scholars today. At the same time, the debate still rages as to whether this wholism is only existential-functional, or also ontological. Are human beings functionally wholistic in their existence, but ultimately dualistic in their being? John Cooper claims that "this is a question of fact which can only be determined by discovering what the Hebrews thought about death and survival" (1989:52). Many OT scholars acknowledge that the Hebrew anthropology was wholistic—a human does not have a soul but is a soul—and yet contend that in the Hebrew worldview something

conscious survived death, and thus ultimately (ontologically) the human nature is dualistic. Is such a picture of the afterlife accurate?

Genesis 3

This question is already answered decisively in the third chapter of Genesis. The serpent had countermanded God's announcement of death for disobedience, with the bold assertion to Eve: "You shall not surely die" (Gen 3:4).[9] In the judgment upon the man, which describes the nature of the death they would eventually suffer (Gen 3:19): "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." This passage is clearly harking back to Genesis 2:7, indicating that the person would not experience any intermediate state after death, but rather cease to exist. It is not just the body that returns to the ground/dust, but the whole being ceases to exist as a living entity, and returns to dust. God says to Adam: "till *you* return to the ground . . . dust *you* are, and to dust *you* shall return." No conscious entity survives in a non-material form. No immortal soul continues on.

Later Inspired Commentary on Genesis 3

Later inspired commentary on this passage by the psalmist and Qoheleth, give even more details that show death to be the reversal of the process that brought about the living being: God removes the "spirit of life" that animated the person, and the person ("soul") dies;[10] nothing is left but the dust:

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20: "For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all *is* vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust."

Psalm 103:14-16: "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we *are* dust. *As for* man, his days *are* like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more."

Psalm 104:29 (ESV): "When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust."

The creation of the wholistic human being in Genesis 2:7 and the announcement of its reversal in 3:19 and other later biblical passages make clear that this wholism is not only existential-functional, as some have claimed, but ontological wholism, ontological monism (vs. ontological dualism) (Green 1998:149-173; Green 2008).

Death is the reversal of the process (described in Gen 2:7) that brought about the living person (or "soul"): God removes the "spirit of life" that animated the person, and the person ("soul") dies; nothing is left but the dust. Therefore, Life is Dust + Breath of Life = Soul (person), while Death is Soul (person) – Breath of Life = Dust.

The Bible is clear that a "soul" can die. Ezekiel 18:20 says, "The soul who sins shall die." Numerous other passages in the OT refer to a "soul" dying or a "dead soul" (e.g., Gen 37:21; Lev 19:28; 21:1, 11; 22:4; Deut 19:6, 11; Num 5:2; 6:6, 11; 9:6, 7, 10; 19:11, 13; 23:10; 31:19; 35:15, 30; Josh 20:3, 9; Judg 16:30; Job 11:20; Ezek 18:22:25, 27; Jer 40:14, 15; Hag 2:13).

According to the Bible, when humans die, they are truly dead, with no consciousness surviving. Note the following passages:

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6: "For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your might; for *there is* no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going."

Psalm 146:3, 4: "Do not put your trust in princes, *Nor* in a son of man, in whom *there is* no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish." (See also Job 7:9-10;14:12; Ps 6:5; 30:9-10; 31:17-18; Isa 38:18-19.)

Throughout the Old Testament, death is compared to a sleep, in which one is not conscious of what is transpiring around them. The following passages make this point clear:

Job 14:12: "So man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens *are* no more, They will not awake nor be roused from their sleep."

1 Kings 2:10: "So David slept with his fathers." This phrase is used some 40 times in the OT. (See also Job 3:12-14; Ps 13:3-4, 76:5-6; Jer 51:37-39; Dan 12:2.)

Summary of the View of the Nature of Humanity and the Nature of Death

Humans are made in the image of God, a unity of outward resemblance and character.
The constitution of humans is dust + spirit (breath of life) = soul (person).
Humans do not *have* a soul; they *are* souls.
Death is the reversal of creation: soul – spirit (breath of life) = dust.

Passages Allegedly Supporting Human Conscious Survival after Death

The above view of the nature of death is consistent with the rest of the Old Testament, despite numerous claims to the contrary. Other articles in this issue have already dealt with some of the terms and passages allegedly supporting humans' conscious survival after death, but here I summarize some major studies that support ontological monism vs. ontological dualism. Regarding the term *Sheol*, which many OT scholars consider to describe the underworld, the abode of conscious dead, a published dissertation by Ēriks Galenieks shows the opposite to be true. After analyzing all 66 occurrences of the term in the OT, Galenieks concludes, "the Hebrew Scripture provides no support for the idea that the term *Sheol* is somehow associated with one's after-death existence in the so-called underworld" (2005:621). Rather, *Sheol* is consistently "a poetic designation of the grave" (2005: abstract). Galenieks comes to the same conclusion regarding related OT terms such as *bor* or *shakhat* (both translated "Pit") (2005:582-588).

Likewise, careful study has shown that the term *repa'im* (*Rephaim*) does not refer to conscious "disembodied spirits" or "shades," as is widely assumed by biblical scholars, but is a poetic term (like the other terms mentioned above) used in highly figurative contexts for the dead who dwell in the dust (i.e., have returned to dust) (Bacchiocchi 1997:164-166; Green 2008:155-157).

It is beyond the confines of this study to trace in detail the Old Testament teaching of the final punishment of the wicked as eternal annihilation and not an eternal existence in hell. Numerous recent studies have set forth weighty evidence in favor of this interpretation of the OT data (Fudge 2011:51-84, 349-359; Froom 1965).[11] LeRoy Edwin Froom lists some fifty different Hebrew verbs that describe the final end of the wicked, and all of these speak of "the *decomposition*, of the *breaking up of the organism* and *final cessation of the existence of being—never* that of immortal life in endless suffering" (1965:106, 107). Edward Fudge examines in more detail many of these passages, as well as various OT examples of destruction providing paradigms that are taken up by NT writers in describing the eschatological destruction of the wicked (2011:51-84). He also examines eight OT passages which deal directly with the final eschatological judgment (Ps 1:3-6, 2:9-12; Isa 11:4, 33:10-24, 66:24; Dan 12:2-3; and Mal 4:1-6) and summarizes their content with regard to the fate of the wicked as follows: "In these texts, we encountered fire and storm, tempest and darkness. The slain of God will be many—corpses will lie in the street. Amid this scene of utter contempt, worms and fire will take their final toll. Nothing will remain of the wicked but smoke and ashes—the righteous will tread over

them with their feet" (Fudge 2011:84). This is the consistent picture of the OT regarding the final fate of the wicked (Luchian 2001).

An OT Case-Study of Ancestor Worship: 1 Samuel 28:3-25

Perhaps the most-cited biblical story that is seen as describing a postmortem appearance of the dead and providing "the clearest example we have of what the dead were thought to be like" in OT times (Cooper 1989:74), is the story of Saul and the witch/medium of En-dor (1 Sam 28:3-25). This story is taken by many scholars as supporting the continued existence of the dead and the possibility of dead ancestors being able to communicate with the living. This story allows us to consider the relationship of the living to their dead ancestors according to OT Scripture.

This narrative has been examined closely in recent years by two Seventh-day Adventist OT scholars, Grenville Kent (in his doctoral dissertation and subsequent articles 2011; 2014:141-160; 2010:196-200) and Daniel Olariu (2015:75-94). It is pointed out that there are two major views on this passage throughout the history of interpretation. One view supports the conclusion it was the *post partem* Samuel himself (either as a disembodied spirit or soul or a resurrected being), who actually appeared to Saul at En-dor, sent from God. The other view interprets this figure as "a demonic impersonator giving a false prophecy calculated to deceive and destroy Saul" (Kent 2014:142). Kent and Olariu have provided solid exegetical analysis of this passage. I will build upon their analysis, summarizing the major evidence, in bullet format, but consider the data in light of the possibility that this passage is describing ancestor worship and/or veneration.

Biblical Context

- **Saul was vulnerable to the demonic** (1 Sam 16:14-16, 23, 18:10, 19:9): and an "evil spirit" haunted Saul.
- **God had forbidden Israel to be involved in witchcraft or to consult spiritist mediums**. "There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or* a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead" (Deut 18:10-11). "And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people" (Lev 20:6).

- **Many words and phrases of the woman's speech in 1 Sam 28 echo Deut 18 and Lev 20.** These serve as landmines in the speeches of the woman: subtle, allusive warnings to the reader.
- **Samuel had warned Saul against the sin of witchcraft** (Heb. *qesem*). **1 Sam 15:23.** "For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft [*qesem*]." But this is exactly what Saul asked the medium to do (the same Hebrew word *qasam*). In 1 Sam 28:8, this is in fact his first word to her. "Conjure up [*qasam*] for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you" (NASB). This word *qesem* describes pagan diviners (Num 22:7; 1 Sam 6:2; Josh 13:22). Saul was in absolute apostasy, engaged in forbidden occult practices.
- **The immediate context**: **verse 3.** "Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land." And **verse 6:** "Saul inquired of the Lord, and the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets." From these passages, already, we may anticipate the inference before the story begins, based upon the cues in the context: If Lord did not answer Saul, then if someone answered by another means, it would not be the Lord, but anti-Yahwistic power.

Cultic Context: Canaanite Ritual of Ancestor Veneration/Worship at En-dor

Of particular interest in Kent's study is that the cultural background of the spirit medium of En-dor story involves pagan ancestor worship, which reveals that Israel as a nation was facing a similar challenge of a competing system to the biblical worldview as we face today.

- Verse 7: En-dor was probably a Canaanite settlement, not conquered by Joshua (Josh 17:11-13). The name may come from the term *enna durenna*, the Hittite term for the gods. "The Hittites maintained an active line of communication with the deities who lived beneath the earth in order to retain their goodwill" (Collins 2007:169, 170). There is a close parallel between the En-Dor story and a Hittite ritual where the ritual specialist makes figurines of the underworld gods, opens a pit in the ground into which honey, wine and other libations are poured and money thrown, and conjures the spirit. "Such rituals typically included sacrificing an animal over the pit as well" (Collins 2007:143).
- Recent archaeological data from Ugarit indicate that the Canaanite religion also involved ancestor worship, including rituals for conjuring up the dead, which closely parallel what the medium of

En-dor did. The medium at En-dor uses the very language found in the ancestor worship rituals at Ugarit (Kent 2014:143). Bill Arnold summarizes the findings:

Whereas previous scholarship tended to deny the presence of ancestral worship in ancient Israel, it is now generally agreed that normative Yahwism battled against the practice of necromancy and other death rituals, such as self-laceration and offerings to deceased ancestors. As with such practices in comparable cultures, it is assumed that Israelite cults of the dead sought to appease the dead or to secure favours from them. (1999:414)

- **The Canaanites considered the dead to be divine in the underworld, and so were called *Elohim* ("gods"), the very term the spiritist medium used in 1 Sam 28:13**: "I saw gods [plural] ascending [plural participle] out of the earth." Note the plural noun and verb, implying polytheism.
- Verse 14: Saul concentrates on one form, and the spirit medium adjusts her message to fit this focus. Saul bows down and "worships" or "pays homage" (Heb. *hishtakhawah*)—he adopts the Canaanite theology.

Cultic Meal as Part of the Ancestor Worship Ritual

According to v. 24, the spirit medium "slaughters" the fatted calf; but the narrator does not use the regular word for "butcher" (*tabakh,* as in 25:11), but the word *zabakh*, "to slaughter for ritual sacrifice." She is performing a cultic ritual slaughter.

- Saul is led into an act of pagan worship (as Israel at Baal Peor, Num 25:1-3; Ps 106:28).
- Saul is actually making a covenant with the medium (i.e., eating a covenant meal with the occult).

Verses 15-19: The Apparent Samuel's Speech

- The speech employs the name Yahweh (special covenant name for God used by Hebrews) seven times, which gives an air of authenticity.
- The speech recites almost verbatim previous words of Samuel.
- But there is no rebuke of Saul for his "sin of divination" that the real Samuel warned about (1 Sam 15:23). The rebuke avoids the most obvious issue—Saul is disobeying Samuel's warning while he was alive.

Saul's Punishment Is Greatly Increased by the Apparent Samuel

- "Samuel" massively increases the amount of punishment for old sins that God already dealt with (1 Sam 13:10-14, 15:13-35) by removing Saul from being king. According to the prediction in v. 19, Israel and Saul will fall into the hands of Philistines; and Saul and his sons would die the next day. Would God in fairness add to Saul's punishment when no new offences are mentioned?

The Rebuke by the Apparent Samuel for Bringing Me Up" (28:15)

- This was a petty self-centered complaint in view of the life and death issues related to Israel and its king (see the situation of the battle in 1 Sam 28:4-5).
- Why does he credit Saul and/or the woman for bringing him up? If this were the real Samuel sent by God, why give the woman or Saul the credit? It implies that Samuel is under their control.
- From where does the apparent Samuel come? In the Christian paradigm, why would Samuel be in the same place where the wicked king would go when he died (v. 19)?

Inaccurate Predictions of the Apparent Samuel

- Verse 19 predicts that Israel and Saul would fall into the hands of Philistines and that Saul and his sons would die the next day.
- The apparent "Samuel's" prediction did not come true. Saul was not "handed over" to the Philistines; he committed suicide before the Philistines could capture him; and not all of his sons died (Ishbosheth did not die; 2 Sam 2:8-10).
- Earlier in 1 Samuel the narrator makes clear that when Samuel the prophet was alive everything he predicted came to pass (3:19-21; 9:6). If this was the real Samuel appearing to Saul, we should expect no less now, but it was not so.

Does the Narrator Say That Samuel Really Appeared?

- The spirit medium saw someone whom she and Saul *thought* was Samuel (vv. 12 and 14). The narrator never says that Saul saw Samuel.
- The narrator uses the common narrative technique of "language of focalization" by temporarily describing the scene from the perspective of the characters.

- See parallel in the description of Dagan, god of Philistines, described as a person, fallen on his face (1 Sam 5:4).
- This is subtle suspense writing, so that the readers feel the power of the deception until the many textual "warning lights" make them realize the truth.

The Triumph of the Occult

- Saul came with two problems: (1) he was afraid and (2) he was weak from not eating.
- The occult medium does not help his first problem of fear, but instead he is sent out to the battlefield with a prophecy of certain death.
- When Saul comes, he is giving orders; at the end the occultist gives him orders: "Go. . . ." She (and the occult) has triumphed (vv. 22, 23).

Conclusion

In light of the above evidence (and this is only a sample of evidence provided by Kent and Olariu), I agree with Kent's conclusions that "the real Samuel was not at En-Dor on the basis of the text itself" and that "1 Samuel 28 is compatible with a view of conditional immortality and a biblical anthropology of wholism" (Kent 2012:abstract). Nevertheless, we have not yet answered the crucial question in the narrative. Who appeared to the medium at En-Dor? The answer to this question leads into the next section of study.

The Great Controversy Worldview

Who Was the Being that Appeared to the Medium at En-Dor?

Daniel Olariu has analyzed in detail the literary structure of the En-Dor narrative in 1 Samuel 28:3-25. He demonstrates that the passage is structured chiastically (in a concentric structure), in which the apex of the structure is found in the central verses of 13 and 14 where Samuel is identified. The medium reports that the mysterious being that comes up out of the ground is *'elohim,* taking the appearance of an old man wearing a robe. It is important to notice the limits set by the introduction to the story. Verse 6 states that "the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets." God had stopped communicating with him. Thus, the identity of the *'elohim* rules out God as a possibility. Further,

Samuel is ruled out as a possibility by the narrator's theology. In 1 Samuel 2:6 he records, "The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave [*Sheol*] and raises up." It is the Lord who controls the grave. If Yahweh controls who might be coming up (in resurrection), then, having ruled out God as being represented by *'elohim*, the text also rules out Samuel as a possibility. God has stopped communicating with Samuel and would not raise up the real Samuel from the dead to speak with Saul.

Some have suggested that the word *'elohim* here in this passage refers to idol-gods, but the HB is consistent that idol-gods, made of wood or stone, do not communicate and hear, get upset or reason (see Deut 4:28; Ps 115:4-8; Dan 5:23). There are however, two passages in the HB outside of the En-Dor narrative in Samuel, which employ similar terminology and themes, including the term *'elohim* in connection with necromancy (communicating with the dead). Olariu points out that these two passages "are the only references in the Hebrew Bible to demons, which suggests that *'elohim* in 1 Samuel 28:13 also refers to demons" (2015:91).

The first passage comes in the Song of Moses (Deut 32) in which Moses describes the apostasy of Israel. "They incensed Him with alien things [the word "gods" is not found here], vexed Him with abominations. They sacrificed to demons [*leshedim*], no-gods [*lo' 'eloah*], Gods [*'elohim*] they had never known, new ones, who came but lately, who stirred not your fathers' fears" (Deut 32:16-17 NJPS). Olariu notes regarding this passage that "synonymous parallelism here equates demons with both *lo' 'eloah* "no god" and *'elohim*" (2015:91).

The second passage is found in the poetic rehearsal of Israel's apostasy in the wilderness at Baal Peor (recorded in Num 25:1-3). "They attached themselves to Baal Peor, ate sacrifices [*zibkhe*] offered to the dead [*metim*]" (Ps 106:28 NJPS). In the original reference to the Baal Peor apostasy in Num 25:1-3, the word used is not *metim*, but *'elohim*. Back to Psalm 106, verses 36-37 (NJPS) speaks of demons as the real object of Israel's worship and sacrifices. "They worshiped their idols, which became a snare for them. Their own sons and daughters they sacrificed [*wayyizbekhu*] to demons [*lashedim*]."

The word translated "demon" (Heb. *shad*, usually in pl. *shadim*) is a loanword from Akkadian, and in Akkadian it "has a double meaning: it is primarily used to indicate a protective spirit, but it is also used for a malevolent demon, particularly in the pl[ural]" (*shedu*) (Koehler et al. 1994–2001:1417b). In the narrative of 1 Samuel 28, this being fulfills both roles, protective of the woman, and "malevolent and vindictive toward Saul" (Olariu 2015:92). The LXX translates this term as *daimonion* in both instances.

In answer to the question regarding who was the being that appeared to the medium at En-Dor, I concur with the conclusion of Kent. "1 Sam 28 dramatically depicts a Canaanite séance where a medium promises 'gods rising' from the underworld, but a demon impersonates Samuel to deceive Saul into feeling hopelessly guilty and giving up on Yahweh and on life. The devil is in the details" (2010:199). In this story, "the apparent Samuel speaks for the dark side and helps make Saul's downfall irrecoverable. Thus, the story echoes timeless biblical warnings against necromancy [and ancestor worship] as opposed to genuine prophecy" (Kent 2014:160).

The narrative of 1 Samuel 28 takes us back to Isaiah 8:19, 20, the passage which was cited at the beginning of this study. These two passages share common themes such as the silence of God and the appropriate attitude toward the practice of necromancy (consulting the dead through mediums). Isaiah 8:19, 20 makes explicit what is implied in the narrative regarding the medium at En-dor: God's people are to consult the Word of the Lord and not spirit mediums, because the latter channel demonic messages and not true communication from God.

Other Terms Referring to Demons in the Hebrew Scriptures

Other terms in the Hebrew Bible contextually refer to demons (Owusu-Antwi 2011:51-67). For example, the word *sa'ir* "hairy one" is used in Leviticus 17:7 with the meaning of "demon" (NKJV), "goat demons" (NASB). Note the connection with Leviticus 16: where there are two goats, one for Yahweh, and one for Azazel, the opponent of Yahweh. Thus, the term is linked with the great conflict between Yahweh and his adversary in the Day of Atonement ritual. Another example is Psalm 96:5, where the term *'elilim* are to be regarded as a type of demons, and is translated by the LXX as *daimonia.*

Within the larger context of the biblical canon, the origin of these demons is clear: they are angels that fell with Satan, following the cosmic battle described in Ezekiel 28:14-18 and Rev 12:4, 9 (Davidson 2015:57-69). NT passages clarify that Satan has angels under him which he rules (Matt 25:41), and Satan is called Beelzebub (or Beelzebul) "ruler of the demons" (Matt 12:24). Like Satan, who can be transformed into another form ("an angel of light" 2 Cor 11:14), so can the demons under his authority transform themselves into the forms of the deceased and impersonate them as if they actually appear to or communicate with the living.

The Great Controversy Grand Metanarrative

In discussing the nature of death and ancestors in the OT, it is not enough to have a clear picture of what happens to a person when he or she dies, that the soul is not immortal, that the body turns to dust, and that the dead know nothing until they are resurrected at the end time.

It is also important to recognize the source of the very real power that is evidenced by the supposed appearance of ancestors, and their work of beneficence or malevolence, and not seek to explain it away. We need to emphasize the Great Controversy setting in which this subject of death and ancestors occurs. We must make vivid that those claiming the dead can communicate with the living are continuing the first lie told by "that Serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan" (Rev 12:9) in the Garden to Eve, "You surely will not die!" (Gen 3:4 NASB). This lie has been perpetrated for thousands of years, and truly the Serpent now "deceives the whole world" (Rev 12:9). The Serpent who first told, and now perpetuates, this lie, must be unmasked. His origin, fall, and malevolent purpose down through the history of this earth—and the final end of Satan, sin, and unrepentant sinners—must be made clear to all. Even more importantly, the truth must be traced in all its beauty concerning the resurrection of the dead who have responded to the grace of Christ, and the eternal joys of the afterlife for God's people. The hope of bodily resurrection is found in numerous passages throughout the OT, covering the whole sweep of OT history, which cannot be dealt with in detail in this paper (Dahood 1970:xli-lii).[12]

Elsewhere, I have articulated what I perceive to be the biblical worldview, set forth already at the canonical beginning of Scripture, in Genesis 1-3, and repeated in the chronological beginning of Scripture, the book of Job , and again in the final three chapters of Revelation 20-22 (Davidson 2009:5-29; Davidson 2000:102-119). We must clearly set forth the worldview behind those systems which argue for an immortal soul and the dead as "the living dead" and uphold veneration or worship of dead ancestors worship (Chalk 2013).[13] Then we must make clear the worldview of the Bible, emphasizing the nature and destiny of humanity and the source of evil and the identity of the so-called ancestor spirits, building especially on the early chapters of the Bible where such a worldview is foundationally set forth.

I was especially encouraged by a personal experience related by a prominent Adventist missionary who attended my class in Old Testament theology, where I set forth the biblical worldview based upon the early chapters of Genesis. He was visibly moved during the presentation, even to tears, and in my office after class, shared why that lecture had affected

him so deeply. He related how he had been a missionary for many years in Papua New Guinea, and had won many souls for Christ, teaching them the fundamental beliefs of the Bible, and baptizing them into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, when a crisis came to his village, almost all of these people fell back into their animistic ways. He told how this experience devastated him, leading him to come home to America and for more than a year seek to understand what had happened, why the converts who had accepted all the biblical doctrines so easily apostatized when faced with a crisis. The Spirit convicted him that he needed to return with a different methodology, one which began with the opening chapters of the Bible. He needed to linger long on those early narratives of the Bible, immersing the hearers in the biblical worldview that emerges from those foundational stories, before going on to other parts of Scripture presenting the other doctrines. He went back to Papua New Guinea, and spent many months teaching the people from the early chapters of Genesis, until they were drawn into the grand metanarrative of the Bible and accepted its fundamental worldview as their own, and not just a list of doctrinal proof-texts. Then he moved to the Gospels, and shared the gospel within this worldview. The people were converted not only to doctrine, but also to the "cosmic metanarrative" of the Bible, centered in Jesus their Creator and Redeemer, and bathed in the gospel emerging from the first gospel promise of Genesis 3:15. Again, many were baptized; however, when another crisis came to the village, this time no one left the church or abandoned the biblical worldview for animism.

This experience highlights what must be part of our missiological strategy today in relating to those whose worldview is based upon a false understanding of the state of the dead and ancestral worship/veneration.

Needed: A Robust Theology of Ancestors in the OT (and NT)

This paper has focused mainly on the negative—on the fact that there is no room in the biblical worldview for teachings about ancestors that presuppose an immortal soul that survives death and can interact with the living. From what has been discussed so far, one could get the impression that the Bible has nothing positive to say about ancestors. Nothing could be further from the truth. The OT (as well as the NT) contains a robust theology of ancestors. To flesh out this theology would be a subject for another paper; however, a few broad strokes of the brush may give an idea of how missiologists might not only counter a nonbiblical view of ancestors with biblical correctives, but also might take the offensive by presenting the beauties of the positive view of ancestors presented in Scripture.

The English reader of the Bible does not easily recognize the wealth of passages dealing with ancestors in the OT because the Hebrew words that can often mean "ancestor" are usually not translated as such. But when one realizes that the term usually translated "father" (Heb. *'ab*) in the plural (*'abot*) often denotes "ancestors," as does the term usually translated "people" (Heb. *'am*), then a whole catena of passages emerges dealing with the ancestors. One then finds more than 300 references to "ancestors" in the HB. Fortunately, some recent English translations consistently render these words as "ancestors" in their proper contexts (see esp. CEB, NLT, NET). Some of the theological themes and motifs that emerge from an examination of passages regarding ancestors include the following.

Family Ties: A Common Family Burial Plot for the Patriarchs

The first passage in the HB utilizing a term that may be translated "ancestor" is Genesis 25:8 (CEB). "Abraham took his last breath and died after a good long life, a content old man, and he was placed with his ancestors [lit. 'gathered to his people']." In his paper (and in his published dissertation upon which the paper is based), Ēriks Galenieks has dealt with the phrase which literally reads "gathered [Heb. *'asaph*] to his people [Heb. *'am*]." He shows how in context it means "to become dust, respectively, to be dead and buried next to one's ancestors" (2019:17).[14]

We find the same statement regarding Isaac. Genesis 35:29 (CEB) reads: "Isaac took his last breath and died. He was buried with his ancestors [gathered to his people] after a long, satisfying life. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him." Likewise, regarding Jacob when he was about to die, the record states his wish (Gen 49:29 NLT): "Then Jacob instructed them, 'Soon I will die and join my ancestors [be gathered to my people]. Bury me with my father and grandfather in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite." Genesis 49:29 (NLT) records Jacob's death: "When Jacob had finished this charge to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and joined his ancestors in death [was gathered to his people]" (Gen 49:33). Jacob's request was honored by Joseph, who took Jacob's bones to be buried in the ancestral grave in Palestine (Gen 50:5-14).[15]

The HB gives a robust view of strong family ties, both in life, and in the desire to share a common family burial.

The "Founding Fathers (Ancestors)"

The three patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—were in a special way the primary ancestors of the people of Israel, to whom God made and

confirmed the covenant (Gen 12:1-3, 15:9-18, 17:1-27, 26:1-5, 28:13-15, 35:10-12; Exod 2:24, 6:3-4, etc.). They together are called "ancestors" (Heb. *'abot*), referred to by name or implied over 35 times in the Pentateuch. These patriarchs were revered, but never venerated or worshipped. They were remembered as the ones to whom God had made a covenant and had sworn to give the land of Canaan.

Joining the Ancestors Who Came Out of Egypt

Moses often reminds Israel in the wilderness of how Yahweh had brought their "ancestors" out of Egypt. However, regarding these passages the theology of ancestors becomes very personal. Notice what Moses tells the children of Israel on the borders of Canaan in his farewell sermon to a congregation. Most of the people had not literally come out of Egypt nor experienced the making of the covenant at Sinai (Joshua and Caleb were the only adults still alive after the forty years of wandering in the wilderness). "He [God] did not make this covenant with our ancestors [only], but with us, we who are here today, all of us living now" (Deut 5:3 NET). Using five different terms in Hebrew, Moses emphasizes that all who heard his sermon on the borders of Canaan were to consider that they were personally present at Sinai forty years earlier when God entered into a covenant with Israel.

Joshua 24 continues and makes more vivid than ever this principle of personalization. Even though almost all of those who literally witnessed the Exodus had already died, notice how God insisted that his audience was to consider that they were there. When the Lord described his acts of deliverance for the children of Israel, he deliberately shifted back and forth from referring to "your ancestors" (those who were literally present at the Exodus) to "you" (the later generation who were to consider that they were there).

> Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I brought terrible plagues on Egypt; and afterward I brought **you** out as a free people. But when **your ancestors** arrived at the Red Sea, the Egyptians chased after **you** with chariots and charioteers. When **your ancestors** cried out to the LORD, I put darkness between **you** and the Egyptians. I brought the sea crashing down on the Egyptians, drowning them. **With your very own eyes you saw what I did**. Then you lived in the wilderness for many years. (Josh 24:5-7 NLT, emphasis mine)

These passages (which are only samples of many others) demonstrate the principle of corporate solidarity between Israel's ancestors and every succeeding generation. All were to remember the ancestors by personalizing

or re-actualizing history, by considering that in the great redemptive events of the past, by faith they were present with the ancestors, participating in those mighty acts of God. Furthermore, in the various annual festivals, they were to plug into their ancestral history, commemorate those salvific events and celebrate what God had done for them, in solidarity with their ancestors. Thus, the history of ancestors and contemporary generations becomes fused. In addition, this principle becomes a reality for Christians. "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29). The experience of our ancestors in salvation history is our history. We do not venerate or worship our ancestors, but join them by faith as we together personalize and celebrate God's working in "our history." Ellen White understood this principle when she wrote: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us [in corporate solidarity with our ancestors], and His teaching in our past history [Adventist history, and the ancestral history of salvation since the time of Adam]" (1915:196).

Continuity of the Ancestors from the Beginning

The biblical canon presents an unbroken line of ancestors all the way back to Adam. It is clear that the writers of the Bible, under inspiration, intended to present a grand paragenealogy, tracing the line of ancestors from the beginning, down through salvation history all the way to the conquest of Canaan under the command of Joshua. A pivotal study by Bernard White shows that "what at first glance appear to be unconnected genealogical and chronological elements are, in reality, part of a single, overarching genealogy—a paragenealogy—unified thematically by this idea of a godly line, and technically by the details of age and chronology" (2016:14). He concludes that in the twenty-seven generations represented in this genealogy "Scripture thus presents us with a distinct period defined by a single, unbroken genealogy that begins with Adam and ends with Joshua" (2016:14). White suggests the following implication (among others): "The paragenealogy witnesses to a very close divine supervision over the writing of the earliest portions of Scripture. It suggests a God who is concerned not only with people and places, events and institutions, but also with time and chronology" (2016:29). In the context of this study, I would suggest another implication: God intends for us to see the continuity of our ancestral history all the way back to the beginning. In the light of this continuity, Paul's comment is on the mark. "From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth" (Acts 17:26 CEB). We are all in solidarity with each other through our common ancestral line back to Adam, and thus we all ultimately have the same ancestors and are one family.

Messianism of the Ancestors

It is important to note how the ancestral lines in Scripture narrow—from Adam down to Noah and his son Shem; from Shem down to Abraham; from Abraham down to the line of Jacob and his twelve sons, especially Judah; from Judah down to King David; and from King David down to the Messiah (see the abbreviated ancestral lists emphasizing this narrowing lineage down to the Messiah in Matt 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38). These ancestor lists in Scripture may be compared to the "tablets of ancestors" in many ancestral religions. Although there are other short ancestral lines (such as for the other sons of Jacob), the major ancestral line of Scripture is messianic, funneling through Abraham (Gen 22:17-18), Judah (Gen 49:10), and David (2 Sam 7:12-19), to the Messiah, "son of David, son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). Ultimately the line begins with Adam, and ends with the "second and last Adam" (1 Cor 15:20-28, 45). Thus Christ, the Second/Last Adam, is the ultimate Ancestor.

The Eschatology of the Ancestors

Genesis 3:15 gives the first gospel promise and summarizes the flow of the cosmic conflict throughout salvation history (Davidson 2002:13-16). It also announces the final outcome of this great controversy between Christ and Satan. Satan may have crushed Christ's heel at the cross, but ultimately the Serpent's head will be crushed. Satan, sin, and sinners will finally come to an end. The last three chapters of Revelation detail this climax of the history of the ancestors. Christ the ultimate Ancestor will be victorious over the forces of evil. The lies of Satan regarding God, Christ, and death, will be fully unmasked, and death itself will be vanquished. The ancestors of all generations, saved by the blood of Christ the Victorious Ancestor, will be united in one glorious family, in the Earth made new, forever. Ancestor worship will continue for eternity, true ancestor worship, as all creatures bow in veneration and adoration of Christ, the Ultimate and Eternal Ancestor.

Ancestors in New Testament Theology and Beyond

This theology of ancestors in the Old Testament may be carried into the New Testament. See, for example, the ancestor list in Hebrews 11, showing how even so-called "flawed individuals" such as Samson are on God's list of worthy ancestors. We have already mentioned some aspects of this New Testament theology of ancestors in connection with the treatment of the Old Testament material.

Conclusion

This paper has only scratched the surface in the study of ancestors in the Old Testament, especially in dealing with the positive aspects of a robust biblical theology of ancestors. Much remains to be done in setting forth the biblical data. This data needs then to be contextualized for each culture which embraces ancestor worship. Instead of focusing so much upon tearing down the "shanties" of death-related rituals built upon false ideas of ancestor worship, Adventists need to erect beside these shanties, beautiful "temples" of ritual (perhaps involving especially the ready-made Christian rituals of baptism and the Lord's Supper) built upon a robust biblical theology of ancestors, centered in Christ the ultimate Ancestor—and invite all to come to dwell in this Temple of Truth, the eternal home of the Ultimate Ancestor.

Endnotes

[1] The Watchtower is an official publication of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who share the same belief in the state of the dead as Seventh-day Adventists.

[2] Brown et al. (1907:15) translates as "necromancer," while Koehler et al. (1994–2001:20) defines as "prophesying spirit of the dead." The term occurs fifteen times in the HB.

[3] Brown et al. (1907:396) gives the meaning "familiar spirit," while Koehler et al. (1994–2001:393) defines the term as "spirit of divination" (in Lev 20:27) or "one in whom that spirit dwells, soothsayer" (the other nine passages where the term occurs, including Isa 8:19).

[4] Against those who would dismiss the possibility that God has a form based upon Deuteronomy 4:15-25, Porteous (1962:684) points out that though no form was visible at Mt. Horeb, "it is not denied that God has form, and that he has is clearly the implication of certain theophanies described in the OT (e.g., Isa. 6; Ezek. 1)."

[5] I do not agree with the application Rashkow makes of this basic data, positing a difference between Eve and Adam, for which I see no justification in the text.

[6] Notice that when White mentions "image" she speaks first of the "outward resemblance," and when she uses the term "likeness" she refers first to "character," without excluding the other aspects in either term. See also her paraphrase of this resemblance as "moral faculties" and "physical powers": after citing Genesis 1:26, 27, she writes, "The Lord created man's moral faculties and his physical powers. All was a sinless transcript of Himself" (White 1899:2).

[7] I use the term "wholism" instead of "holism," to distinguish between the biblical concept and Eastern "holistic" concepts that have become popular in Western culture.

[8] Numerous biblical passages illustrate this usage (see, e.g., Gen 6:3, which we will examine below; 2 Chr 32:8; Ps 56:5; 65:3; 78:39; 145:21; Isa 31:3; 40:6; Jer 12:12; 25:31; 32:37; 45:5; and Ezek 21:4).

[9] The verb *napakh* occurs 13 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, with the most common meaning of "blow, breathe, gasp, pant", although it also can mean "set aflame" in several passages. For a similar meaning and context as Genesis 2:7 (animating a lifeless body), see Ezekiel 37:9.

[10] The noun *neshamah* occurs 23 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, and "denotes the process of breathing" (Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 227). It refers most often to the (divine) breath(ing) that animates a human being (Gen 2;7; 1 Kgs 17:17; Job 27:3; 34:14; Prov 20:27; Isa 2:22; 57:16; Dan 10:17); it also is used as metonymy for a living being, "one who breaths" (Deut 20:16; Josh 10:40; 11:11, 14; 1 Kings 15:29; Ps 150:6). The exact phrase *nishmat khayyim* appears only in Genesis 2:7, but the phrase occurs with the intensifying intervening word *ruakh* ("breath") in Genesis 7:22, describing everything on land that had "the merest breath of life [NJPS, Heb. *nishmat ruakh khayyim*]" in its nostrils," which died in the Noahic Flood.

[11] In the next section we must ask the question whether this holism is only existential-functional, as some maintain, or also ontological. This question is decided by the answer to the question of whether or not the OT supports survival in an intermediate state after death.

[12] In the remainder of this study, the NKJV will be cited unless otherwise noted.

[13] There are various references in the OT to a "soul" dying or a "dead soul" (see, e.g., Gen 37:21; Lev 19:28; 21:1, 11; 22:4; Deut 19:6, 11; Num 5:2; 6:6, 11; 9:6, 7, 10; 19:11, 13; 23:10; 31:19; 35:15, 30; Josh 20:3, 9; Judg 16:30; Job 11:20; Ezek 18:20; 22:25, 27; Jer 40:14, 15; Hag 2:13).

[14] Recent supporters of this position among prominent biblical scholars include, e.g., Richard Bauckham, F. F. Bruce, E. Earle Ellis, Joel B. Green, Philip E. Hughes, I. Howard Marshall, Clark Pinnock, John R. W. Stott, John W. Wenham, and N. T. Wright; see bibliography and discussion in Fudge (2011:349-359).

[15] Various biblical passages may be cited (see especially Gen 22:5 [cf. Heb 11:19]; 2 Kgs 4:8-31; 13:21; Job 19:21-29; Pss 16:10-11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24; Isa 25:7-9; 26:19; Ezek 37:1-14; Dan 12:2, 13; and Hos 5:8—6:6). Note that these passages come from all the major periods of Israel's history: Patriarchs (Abraham and Job); United Monarchy (David, Asaph, sons of Korah); Divided Monarchy (Elisha, Isaiah, Hosea), and Exile (Ezekiel and Daniel).

[16] Chalk's work promises much, since he seeks to set forth the biblical worldview based upon Gen 1-11 (similarly to what I have set forth in the sources cited in the previous footnote. Unfortunately, he does understand the biblical teaching of the state of the dead as we have set it forth in this article, and fails to address crucial presuppositions in the African worldview regarding death and ancestors that we have dealt with in this study.

[17] The word for "people" (*'am*) can also mean "kin" (see the NJPS translation of this verse) and in this verse the "ancestor" or "kin" of Abraham to whom he is gathered is his wife Sarah (see vv. 9-11).

[18] Joseph also made this same request, which was honored when the people went out of Egypt (Exodus 13:19): "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear to do this. He said, 'God will certainly come to help you. When he does, you must take my bones with you from this place.'"

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Death and Ancestors in Contemporary Judaism

Introduction

Historically, Judaism and Jews have eluded a clear cut definition, for "there never was, and there is not now, one Judaism; rather there have always been many Judaisms" (Sigal 1988:1).

Contemporary Judaism, understood as the present manifestations of Judaism in the 21st Century, reflects the complex and multifaceted development over more than thirty-five centuries of a people with a religious, philosophical, cultural, and group identity, which ranges from ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jews to secular non-religious Jews. This diversity is present both in the modern State of Israel and in almost any other country where there is a sizeable Jewish community.[1] Frequently the different branches of Judaism sustain quite different beliefs and practices concerning any specific subject. They do share, however, a basic core of beliefs and values that historically have united and identified them as Judaism vis-à-vis other religious and social groups existing in the world. This unity, however, is not that of a unified system but rather that "of a symphony" (Silver 1989:6). The present Jewish religious and non-religious ideas concerning death and ancestors, with their related cultic and mortuary practices reflect this long, complex, and many times antagonistic development.

This paper first briefly surveys the major Jewish beliefs concerning death and the soul in order to provide a basis for the differing Jewish understandings concerning these two ideas. There follows a summary of the main Jewish cultic and mortuary practices that are directly related to these variant beliefs. Finally, it explores the opportunities and challenges Jewish

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DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol16/iss1/

beliefs and practices pose to Adventist Mission, presents some practical suggestions on how to deal with these, and points out some areas that need further exploration with the goal of finding ways to improve the effectiveness of our mission efforts.

Death and Soul in Judaism

The Hebrew Bible

The biblical view concerning the nature of man and death is the foundation stone for Jewish thought about the reality of death and the nature of what comes after. It is clearly recognized that in biblical times the human being was considered an inseparable unity. Three key biblical words *neshamah*, *ruach*, and *nefesh*, in reference to a person, did not imply any idea of what became traditionally understood as "soul" or "spirit." The first two terms meant only "breath," and the last one, *nefesh*, referred to the individual or even to the body (Ivry 2007:19:33). Death (most usually expressed by the Hebrew word *mavet*) was conceptualized as non-existence, the opposite of life: the person ceased breathing, life was gone, the body decomposed and returned to dust (Bowman 1980:1:802). Nothing but God's and the survivors' memories of the dead person remained after death. The Hebrew Bible expressly teaches that a dead person does not think, talk, feel, suffer, worship, or praise God—the deceased do not participate in anything that is done in the world of the living; therefore, biblical thought rejects the idea of the immortality of the soul. Any kind of ancestor worship or interaction with the dead is expressly forbidden as a direct anathema to God. In patriarchal and ancient Israelite times, those who practiced any such rituals regarding the dead did so following the customs of the pagan nations and were considered unfaithful to God and his covenant. The only biblical hope for life after death and interacting again with someone who has passed away was the resurrection of the dead that God would bring at the eschatological close of human history (see Andreason 2000:314-346).

The Intertestamental Period

Belief in the immortality of the soul became part of Jewish religious thought via contact with Greek philosophy during the Hellenistic period of Second Temple times before the Common Era. From these influences, some Jewish circles incorporated the belief of a blessed immortality for the righteous soul and eternal torment for the soul of the wicked (Kohler). Speaking about the righteous dead, the Book of Jubilees 23:31 states: "And

their bones will rest on the earth, and their spirits will increase in joy, and they will know that the Lord is an executor of judgment; but He will show mercy to hundreds and thousands, to all who love Him" (Wintermute 1985:2:102). Statements in the book of 1 Enoch also attest to such beliefs, affirming that "all good things, and joy and honor are prepared for and written down for the souls of those who died in righteousness. . . . The spirits of those who died in righteousness shall live and rejoice; their spirits shall not perish, nor their memorial from before the face of the Great One unto all generations of the world" (1 Enoch 103:3, 4). About the wicked, this source asserts: "Woe to you sinners who are dead! . . . . You yourselves know that they will bring your souls down to Sheol; and they shall experience evil and great tribulation–in darkness, nets, and burning fire" (1 Enoch 103:5-7; see Isaac 1983:1:84). The belief in the immortality of the soul is also attested to in other works of the time such as the *Wisdom of Salomon*, *IV Maccabees*, the *Sibylline Oracles*, the *Testament of Moses*, the *Book of Baruch*, and in the writings of Philo of Alexandria (Kohler; Silver 1989:274).

Jewish literature of this period shows the complexity that was developing in Jewish thought and beliefs concerning the state of the dead and the concept of resurrection. Some voices, for example Ben-Sira, maintained a view very close to the biblical teachings (Silver 1989:275, 276). Some voiced the belief of an immortal soul whose functionality, however, depended on the existence of a body, hence the need for resurrection. Other groups held a more "classical" Greek view of the soul as an independent entity, fully functional after death. In such thought the resurrection was understood as an elevation of the soul to a higher level in the heavenly realms. Between these extremes, many shades of belief concerning these topics existed within Judaism during the Hellenistic period of Second Temple times (Elledge 2017).

During Hellenistic times, the acceptance within some Jewish circles of belief in the immortality of the soul and the immediate reward or punishment after death, apparently led some pious Jews to honor the righteous dead by offering food at their graves, as pointed out in the injunction of *Tobit* 4:17. "Be generous with bread and wine on the graves of upright people, but not for the sinner." Such practices, however, were severely condemned by other religious groups, as can be seen in Ben-Sira's outburst in opposition to them, as well as in the *Book of Jubilees*.[2]

Rabbinic Judaism and the Talmud

Later in the Common Era, the *Talmudic* rabbis believed in the continued existence of the human soul after death. There were divergent views,

however, concerning the nature of this existence. Some held that the soul of the righteous would enter the Garden of Eden in Heaven immediately after death (*Shabbat* 152b), while the soul of the wicked would go to *Gehinnom*–the place of torment reserved for them (*Chagigah* 15a). On the other hand, there were those who defended the view that the soul of the righteous at death, after being separated from the body and its functions, ascended to Heaven where it was kept in the treasury beneath God's throne of glory (*Shabbat* 152b). This soul then awaited the moment when it would be reunited with the body at the resurrection. The soul of the wicked, having been cast out of the body was imprisoned on the earth (*Shabbath* 152b; Grintz 2007:19:35). Along with the view of the soul being kept in the heavenly treasury, the belief existed that the soul of the righteous remained in relation to its dead body until the final decomposition of the later. During this interim period the soul would be ascending to heaven and descending back to the grave (35).

In the *Talmud*, views concerning the level of independence, consciousness, and functionality of the soul after death were also quite divergent. On one side were those who stated, "if one makes remarks about the dead, it is like making remarks about a stone" (*Berakhot* 19a). In another point of view, some held that a dead person hears whatever is spoken in his or her presence until the grave is sealed (*Shabbat* 152b). Others proclaimed that a dead person knows at the most his or her own pain, but not what transpires in the world (*Berakhot* 18b). Another side believed that the deceased soul has contact with the living and can direct them in worldly affairs (18b; *Shabbat* 152b; *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Avodah Zarah* 3:1; Grintz 2007:19:35, 36).

During Talmudic times, belief in the resurrection of the dead continued to be one of the central teachings of Rabbinic Judaism. The tenth chapter of the *Mishnah*, tractate *Sanhedrin*, explicitly affirms that corporeal resurrection will be part of the World to Come, with the exception of those "who say there is no resurrection of the dead" (Robinson 2008:192). The most well known explanation of this belief is the rabbinic parable in the *Talmud*, found in *Sanhedrin* 91a-b:

> To what is the matter likened? To a king of flesh and blood who had a beautiful orchard and there were in it lovely ripe fruit, and he placed two guardians over it, one a cripple and the other blind. Said the cripple to the blind man, 'I see beautiful ripe fruit in the orchard. Come and carry me and we will bring and eat them.' The cripple rode on the back of the blind man and they brought and ate them. After a while the owner of the orchard came and said to them, 'Where is my lovely fruit?' The cripple answered, 'Do I have legs to go?' Answered the blind man, 'Do I have eyes to see?' What did he do? He placed the cripple on the back of the blind man and judged them as one—so also the Holy Blessed One brings the soul and throws it into the body and judges them as one." (See Boyarin and Siegel 2007:17:241, 242)

Middle Ages

Although much continuation of *Talmudic* views can be observed among Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages, increasingly divergent views developed regarding the human soul and its nature, its situation after death, and the resurrection of the dead.

For Saadiah Gaon (882-942 CE), the soul was "a more pure, transparent and simple substance than are the spheres," meaning that the soul was understood as the refined part of the body. At the time of death, it separated from the body and existed without a fixed abode until the body had decomposed. The souls of the dead remained in a heavenly treasury until the resurrection, when each would be reunited with its body and continue in this combined state thereafter (Boyarin and Siegel 2007:17:143; Pines 2007:19:36).

There were also a number of Jewish Medieval philosophers who understood and taught more along the lines of the Platonic idea of soul. For Isaac Israeli (832-932), in accordance with the belief held in Greco-Roman paganism, the soul was an incorporeal substance that after death went to enjoy the eternal bliss above the heavens or went beneath the heavens where it was tortured by fire. Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021/1022-1070), for his part mentioned the idea of Platonic recollection, according to which the soul existed prior to its conjunction with the body. When united with the body, the soul then forgets its previous knowledge which it may again recollect after death. Ibn Gabirol, however, also expressed belief in the Jewish idea that the souls of the righteous rest beneath the throne of glory. Following Israeli and ibn Gabirol, Joseph ibn Tsaddik (late 15th Century) also believed that the soul was incorporeal, existed before the body and continued to exist after death. If in life the soul attained the necessary level of knowledge, after death it returned to its place of origin—the world of the intelligibles; however, if it remained ignorant, it was pulled by the motion of the celestial spheres and tortured by fire. For Judah Halevi (1075-1141), Judaism was the religion that insured the immortality of the soul after the death of the body. Hasdai Crescas (1340-1410/1411), a critic of Maimonides and other Jewish Aristotelean philosophers, argued that since man was a spiritual being his soul remains immortal after its separation from the body. The souls of the righteous would then enjoy the splendor of the *Shekhinah* and attach themselves to God in an ever-growing union with the divine. The souls of the wicked were unable to reach this union because of sin and so they suffered great sorrow. In the worst cases, this suffering was so complete that it led to their total destruction. For Joseph Albo (1380-1444), the soul was a spiritual being with an independent existence. It was not intellectual in nature, but it was capable of attaining knowledge (Pines 2007:19:36-38).

The Middle Ages also witnessed a number of Jewish philosophers who followed a more Aristotelian concept of soul, according to which the soul was not an independent entity but rather the intellect. Abraham ibn Daud (1110-1180) is considered to be the first Spanish Jewish neo-Aristotelian. He maintained that the individual soul continued to exist after the death of the body, and he characterized the soul as an immaterial substance that was not matter but form (37; Olan 1969:5:169). Following this same understanding, Maimonides (1135/1138-1204) believed that the soul was a form—the form of reason. Nothing remained after a man's death except his intellect with no trace of individuality. In his *Mishneh Torah* (*Yad*, *Teshuva*, 8:2), he stated that in the *Olam Haba* (World to Come—heaven) there were no bodies but only souls, or more precisely the form of souls—the intellect of the righteous—serving God as angels. In the heavenly realm there was no eating, drinking, sitting, standing, sleeping, or anything characteristic of the body. Maimonides seems to have denied the idea of an individual immortality(Olan 1969:5:169; Pines 2007:37). However, in his commentary in the *Mishnah*, in tractate *Sanhedrin* 10, in what seems to be a contradictory statement to his view on the soul, he declared that the resurrection was one of the foundations of the Jewish religion, and he postulated it as the 13th of the 13 Principles of the Jewish Faith. For Maimonides, there was no religion and no connection with the Jewish nation for whoever did not believe in it. In his work, *Ma'amar Techiyyat haMetim* ("The Essay on Resurrection"), he clarified his understanding of these apparent contradictions. He stated that there will be resurrection, but it will not be permanent, for the resurrected individual will die again. The souls of the righteous will again return to the *Olam Haba*, for this was their true reward. Some modern interpreters of Maimonides ask themselves if that was truly his understanding; they propose that his belief in the resurrection was a concession for the masses, while his true view was that of the afterlife of incorporeal intelligences that have acquired theoretical knowledge in this life (Boyarin and Siegel 2007:243).

For Abraham bar Hiyya (1070-1136 or 1145), the intelligible soul was a "form" which continues to exist even after its separation from the body. In the case of the wise and righteous person, that soul would ascend to the upper world, attach itself to the pure high form, and forever enter into it. For the wise and wicked person, that soul would arrive at the world of the spheres where it would revolve under the circle of the sun, whose heat would be for it a perpetually scorching fire. As for the ignorant but righteous person, that soul would return a second and third time to bodies until it would acquire wisdom and be able to ascend. The fourth case was that of the ignorant and wicked person, that soul would die the death of an animal (Pines 2007:37).

The Haskalah (The Jewish Enlightenment)

The Jewish Enlightenment of the 18th and 19th Centuries, known as the *Haskalah*, saw some proponents tackling the issues of death and the immortality of the soul. One of the most outstanding was Moses Mendelssohn, who produced the work, *Phaedon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (Phaedon or On the Immortality of the Soul), published in 1767. Following Plato's *Phaedo*, Mendelssohn defended the belief of the immortality of the soul from the perspective of the rationality of modern times. He rejected the theory that the soul, after death, enters into an inanimate state similar to sleep. For Mendelssohn, all rational beings were destined to increase their perfection. It was for this reason that the world was created, and it is impossible that these beings, after their struggle to perfect themselves in this world, would have their efforts frustrated in the World to Come. Hence, it was possible and necessary that the human desire for this eternal bliss, implanted in the human being by God himself, should be fulfilled, regardless of any setback or obstacle to it (Bergman 2007:19:38).

In the 19th Century, the idea of the immortality of the soul lost its importance and appeal among Jewish philosophers. An important representative of this phase is Moritz Lazarus in his work on the ethics of Judaism (*Ethik des Judentums*, 1898). He rejected or was not concerned with the idea of individual immortality of the soul. For him, more important than the destiny of the individual was the destiny of society; and true knowledge of a man's fate can be attained, not by the philosophy of the "I," but rather by the philosophy of the "We." For Lazarus, expanding on the sayings of Rabbi Jacob in *Pirkei Avot* 4:16-17, it is better to have a life of goodness in this world than an eternity of bliss in the World to Come (Bergman 2007:19:38).

From the Twentieth Century to the Present

The ideas of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead have been modified, reinterpreted, and in some circles even abandoned by some Jewish thinkers and modern religious movements (Sigal 1988:235).

For Ahad Ha'Am (1856-1927), the founder of "cultural Zionism" and one of the foremost pre-state Zionist thinkers, belief in the immortality of the soul was a sign of weakness: people who lacked the courage to face death looked for a "future" after it. He ridiculed belief in the World to Come and the immortality of the soul. To him, such beliefs were a "sickness of the spirit" (Bergmann 2007:38).

Hermann Cohen, in his *Religion der Vernunft* ("Religion of Reason") (1918), spoke of the immortality of the soul as applying to communities as a whole, instead of the individual. A community never dies but enjoys an eternal continuation in history. The existence of the individual soul is perpetuated through this history and becomes a reality only through the continued existence of the community. True immortality of the soul is the perpetuation of the community's "spirit," understood as the obligation to implement the principles of truth and morality in this world (Bergman 2007:19:38).

Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983), an American Jewish writer and educator and the co-founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, was a theological naturalist who rejected all beliefs rooted in supernatural phenomenon such as the afterlife and the resurrection of the dead (Sigal 1988:235). For Kaplan, a person's salvation did not lie in the World to Come but rather in his self-realization in this world: "it lies in learning what to live for in the here and now" (Scult 2014:159, 160). In his *Sabbath Prayer Book* published in 1945, he modified the wording of traditional Jewish prayers to reflect his convictions. For the second benediction of the *Amidah* prayer that praises God for resurrecting the dead, Kaplan proposed wording to praise God "who in love rememberest thy creatures unto life" (203).

The Reform movement in modern Judaism rejected the idea of the resurrection of the dead and accepted the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 clearly states that Reform Judaism rejects "as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and *Gehinnom*" (Boyarin and Siegel 2007:244; see Robinson 2008:192, 193; Gillman 2011:202-204, 230, 231).

While the rationalistic and humanistic perspectives became quite common in many branches of contemporary Judaism, the traditional doctrines concerning the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead still maintained their stronghold in Orthodox Judaism (Gillman 2011:211-213) and even gained renewed attention and support in postmodern Judaism. The Jewish Renewal movement, with its retreat center *Elat Chayyim* near Woodstock, NY, fostered a rebirth of Jewish interest in the issues of life after death, belief in the immortality of the soul, reincarnation, and even some issues of messianic resurrection of the dead (Salkin 2003:366; Gillman 2011:239, 240).

Among certain Jewish circles, a renewed interest in eschatology in the last decades of the 20th Century resulted in a renewed interest also in the doctrine of bodily resurrection. Contemporary Jewish scholars such as Will Herberg, Arthur A. Cohen, Michael Wyschogrod, and Neil Gillman; Reform Judaism rabbis Eugene Borowitz and Richard N. Levy; and Conservative Judaism rabbi Hershel Matt have all voiced and written about

their interest and belief in a bodily resurrection as a better understanding of God's final solution for the problem of death than the classical understanding of the immortality of the soul (Gillman 2011:215-239, 243-274).

Jewish Mysticism, the Kabbalah

Before concluding this brief survey of Jewish views concerning death, immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the dead, let us review the impact that ancient Jewish mysticism, known as *Kabbalah*, has had in modern times and its importance among the general Jewish population. As Neil Gillman has observed, this form of Jewish mystical thought had far more impact on the masses of believing Jews than the thinking of the Jewish philosophers (2011:173).

The roots of this Jewish form of esoterism and mysticism were already established by the beginning of the Common Era—the time of the birth of Christianity. Earlier Persian and Greek influences interplayed with the dynamics of Palestinian and Hellenistic Jewish sects of the latter Second Temple times, especially with Apocalyptic and Merkabah (throne/chariot of God) mysticisms. This mysticism then developed through the centuries, producing esoteric and mystical literature at the same time the *Talmud* and the *Midrashim* were being composed. Such a development was especially notable among the Hasidic ("pious") milieu of Jews in Europe and Egypt. It took a strong foothold in Provence in the southern region of France in the 12th Century, and especially in Spain from the 13th Century and onward. After the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain by the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, the *Kabbalistic* center moved to Safed, in the Muslim-controlled Galilee region in the Holy Land. From there, it radiated out to many countries of the Jewish Diaspora, from northern Africa to Oriental Europe (Poland, Lithuania, etc.) and Russia. It became quite influential among the Hasidic movements of Central and Oriental Europe during the 18th and 19th Centuries. These Hasidic movements, and more specifically the Chabad, popularized some of the teachings of *Kabbalah* world-wide during the 20th Century, having a profound impact on the Jewish world and even among non-Jewish circles (see Scholem 2007:11:677-681; Garb 2007:11:677-681).

Kabbalists believe in the pre-existence of the soul, that the body serves as the soul's outer cloak, and that the soul survives the body after death. They also believe in the resurrection of the body as a firm Jewish doctrine established in the Bible and in Jewish Oral Tradition. However, their most distinctive contribution to the development of afterlife beliefs in Judaism is the *Kabbalist* central doctrine of metempsychosis: the transmigration/reincarnation of the soul (the Hebrew term used is *gilgul*, "revolving").

They understand the three Hebrew terms that define the human being—*nefesh*, *neshamah* and *ruach*—as referring to three distinct parts of the soul. *Nefesh* is understood as life itself, the vital part of the being; *neshamah* is the part of the soul related to mystical cognition; while *ruach* is the part of the soul related to ethical discrimination. In this understanding, the soul could undergo multiple reincarnations until it becomes perfect through the observance of the *mitsvot* (commandments) of God. Then it could achieve resurrection in the last body in which it was incarnated. This belief also understands innocent suffering in one's life as a way of purification of the soul from sins committed in a previous life. The incarnated human soul that keeps the *mitsvot* and perfects itself also helps to repair (*tikkun*) God's Creation, preparing the world for redemption at the coming of the Messiah. Such a perfected soul can even repair God's original unity that was shattered at Creation. For *Kabbalists*, God is a transcendent God: he is above and distinct from Creation, but he is also immanent—he exists within Creation. In *Kabbalistic* thought, these two aspects of God's own nature need to be restored to their original unity that existed before the Creation (Scholem 2007:652-659; Gillman 2011:176-188).

Cultic and Mortuary Practices

Throughout time, the distinctive Jewish beliefs concerning the state of the dead, bodily resurrection, and the immortality of the soul had a powerful influence on Jewish cultic worship and mortuary practices. These practices reflect the differing answers, from biblical times to the present, given to the problem of death and the hereafter, and the theology behind those answers. The variations in these practices can be articulated around two major perspectives: (1) the resurrection of the dead, and (2) the immortality of the soul.

The Resurrection of the Dead

First I will examine the *Amidah* (Standing) prayer that is at the very core of every Jewish prayer service. Also called the *Shemoneh Esrei* (The Eighteen) prayer, or in the *Talmud*, *Ha-Tefillah* (The Prayer, par excellence), this is a very ancient prayer. One Jewish tradition dates its composition back to the 5th Century BCE, to the 120 Men of the Great Assembly (*Talmud*, *Megillah* 17b). Another tradition ascribes its arrangement to Rabban Gamaliel in Yavneh, after the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem that occurred in the year 70 CE (*Talmud*, *Berachot* 28b). Scholarly opinions concerning its origin span between these two traditions (Ehrlich 2007: 2:72-73; Donin 1991:69).

Originally composed of 18 benedictions (later it became 19), it is a congregational prayer recited individually by the worshiper in every worship service, standing in silence, moving only the lips, while facing the direction of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. On the day of *Shabbat* and the festival days it has only seven benedictions, with the exception of the *Musaf* (additional) service of *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year) when the number is nine benedictions. If there is a *minyan* (a quorum of at least ten male adults) attending the service, the worship leader will repeat the *Amidah* aloud, making some additions to it. During regular weekdays it is recited in the three daily services (morning, afternoon, and evening). On *Shabbat* and festival days, in addition to being recited in the prayer portion of the regular service, it is repeated in the *Musaf* service. On *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement), it is recited a fifth time, during the *Ne'ilah* (Concluding Prayer) (Ehrlich 2007:72; Donin 1991:71, 72, 109-122).

The first benediction of the *Amidah* praises God as the Faithful, Powerful, and Awesome God, the God of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a Good God that remembers his promises to them, the One who helps and redeems, the One who is the Shield of Abraham. The second benediction focuses on the power of God to resurrect the dead, stating:

> "You are powerful forever, O Lord;
> One who resurrects the dead are You, great to save.
> Sustain the living with mercy, resurrect the dead with great compassion,
> support the falling, heal the sick, free the bound,
> and keep Your faithfulness to those that sleep in the dust.
> Who is like You, O Lord of mighty acts?
> Who resembles You, O King, who kills and resurrects,
> and brings forth salvation?
> Faithful are You to resurrect the dead!
> Blessed are You, O Lord, who resurrects the dead!" (author's translation).

The *Amidah* clearly points to the hope of the resurrection of the dead as God's solution for the problem of death, and powerfully extols him for this hope. This prayer is strong evidence of the importance and centrality of this doctrine for early Jewish theological thought (Donin 1991:79, 80).

A second important example is the thirteenth statement of the Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith by Maimonides of the 12th Century. There are other lists of principles of faith beside that of Maimonides, such as those of the *Karaite* Judah Hadassi (mid-12th Century); David ben Samuel Kokhavi (13th Century); Hasdai Crescas (15th Century); Joseph Albo (15th Century); Elijah Delmedigo (15th Century); and Isaac Abarbanel (late 15th Century) (Altmann 2007:2:529-531). The principles proposed

by Maimonides prevailed over these other lists and became the "official" statement that embodied the Jewish faith. It comes as an appendix to the regular morning prayer service in Askhenazi (Jews in Germany and central and northern Europe) prayer books. A poetic version of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles appeared as the *Yigdal* hymn (ca. 1300) that has been adopted in practically all Jewish cultic rites (530). The thirteenth principle affirms: "I believe in perfect faith that there will be a resurrection of the dead in the time pleased by the Creator, blessed be his Name and his Memory forever and ever" (Fridlin 1997:120, author's translation).

The final line of the *Yigdal* hymn declares: *Metim yechieh 'El berov chasdo, baruch 'adei-'ad Shem tehilato* (24) ("The dead ones God will resurrect by his great mercy, blessed forever be his praised Name"; author's translation).

A third example is another well-known Jewish liturgical hymn, the much beloved *Adon Olam* ("Lord of the Universe"). It is attributed to Solomon ibn Gabirol (11th Century), but it may be much older, with its origin in Babylonia. It is sung during the initial part of the morning prayer service and also during the conclusion of the evening prayers. On *Shabbat* and festival days it appears as part of the *Musaf* (additional service) and during *Kol Nidrei* (the opening service on the eve of *Yom Kippur*). *Adon Olam* is a very popular song, chanted on many occasions in the Jewish world (Herzog 2007:1:414, 415). The final strophe declares: "*Beyado 'afqid ruchi be'et 'ishan ve'a'irah* ("In his hand I depose my spirit, in the moment of rest, but I will wake up"), *Ve'im ruchi geviyati YHWH li velo' 'ira'* ("And with my spirit, my body, the Lord is with me, I will not fear") (author's translation).

The wording of this final strophe seems to speak not so much of the daily regular sleep, but rather of the final sleep, the sleep of death (see Borowitz and Schwartz 2010:182, 183).[3] This hymn begins by extolling God as the Creator, the Eternal God that always existed in eternity, the only One, for there is no other like him. He is the living Redeemer, the Protector in difficult times, and one's Portion in this life; the One to Whom one can surrender one's life (spirit) and one's body without fear, for he/she will raise up, for he, God, is with him/her and he/she should not fear.

A fourth example is the *Kaddish*, a doxology prayer that is recited at the close of individual sections of regular prayer services in the synagogue. There are four main types of *Kaddish*: (1) the Complete *Kaddish*, containing the entire text, that is usually recited by the worship leader after the *Amidah* prayer; (2) the Half *Kaddish* that excludes some final verses of the prayer; (3) the *Kaddish de-Rabbanan* (the *Kaddish* of the Scholars/Masters) that replaces a part of the prayer with a request for God's blessings upon teachers and disciples who study the Torah—in one part of the prayer service on Friday night and at the end of the early morning service it is

recited by mourners after communal study; (4) the Mourners' *Kaddish*, that contains basically the full text of the prayer with the exception of one line, and is recited by the close relatives of a deceased person at the end of the prayer service, after the concluding *Aleinu* prayer. The Mourners' *Kaddish* is recited while standing with one's face turned toward Jerusalem; in some communities only the mourners stand for this recital of the *Kaddish*. Its apparent origin is quite old, probably dating previous to the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE, since it does not have any reference to such a momentous event (Avenary 2007:11:695, 696). The custom of mourners reciting the *Kaddish* seems to have begun in the 13th Century CE in Germany, in the midst of a severe persecution by the Crusaders. The *Kaddish* is recited at the funeral ceremony, and the mourner recites it daily for a period of eleven months after the death of a close relative. It is recited as well on the *Yahrzeit* (anniversary) of the death of the beloved kin. It is so connected with the experience of mourning for the deceased that it became popularly known as the "prayer for the dead" (696, 697).

What is surprising about the *Kaddish* is that nowhere in the prayer is there a reference to the dead. No request is made on their behalf, and there is not even an allusion to the mourning experience. What the prayer specifically does is sanctify and exalt God as the Creator and King and praises his Name, and there is a request for the coming of the Kingdom of God. In the Sephardic version there is an added request for Redemption and for the soon advent of the Messiah. In this request, a petition is made that this coming would happen in the days of the lifetime of the ones praying. At the end of the prayer, there is also a request for a peaceful and blessed life for the worshipers and for the House of Israel (Donin 1991:216-222).

Why then did this prayer become identified with mourners and traditionally the most well-known prayer in reference to the dead? Various answers have been given to this question: (1) it is an expression of submission and acceptance of the will of God and his Sovereignty, even in face of the worst evil in human experience—the loss of a beloved one; (2) it is an indirect prayer in favor of the soul of the dead, so that mourners could free the soul of their relative from hell (reference is here made to a late *haggadah* ("story") in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta,* usually dated to the 10th Century, that reports how Rabbi Akiva helped to rescue the soul of a father from hell by teaching the small son of the deceased to recite the *Kaddish* in public; (Avenary 2007:696; Donin 1991:222, 223); (3) there are those, however, who propose that it became the prayer of mourners because of its eschatological emphasis on the final coming of Redemption through the Messiah, and the correlated hope for the resurrection of the dead. Earlier versions of the *Kaddish* did have a reference to the resurrection in its messianic section at the beginning (Avenary 2007:696;

Gillman 2011:142). This form of the *Kaddish* remains today in the "Burial *Kaddish*" that is recited at the graveside immediately following the burial. It begins with: "May His great Name be exalted and sanctified [Amen], in the world that will be renewed, and where He will resuscitate the dead and raise them to eternal life."[4]

A fifth example can be seen in the very short morning prayer, *Modeh 'Ani* ("I Give Thanks") that religious Jews are supposed to recite right after they wake up: "*Modeh* [woman: *Modah*] *'ani lefanecha Melech chay veqayyam* "I give thanks before You, living and eternal King" *Shehechezarta bi nishmati bechemlah, rabah 'emunatecha,* "that returned my soul in me with compassion, great is Your faithfulness" (author's translation).

This prayer is of late origin, probably composed in the 17th Century, as it was first published in a prayer book in 1675 (*Modeh Ani* 2007:14:406). The idea seems to be that of the existence of the soul as a separate entity that can leave and return to the body. However, it also seems that the view here is close to the *Talmudic* idea that both soul and body must coexist together, not as separate entities (Bronner 2015:100). Therefore, awakening every morning becomes a daily symbol of the final awakening at the resurrection (Gillmann 2011:141, 142, 212).

A last example appears in the custom of some Jewish individuals or groups in the Diaspora of placing a small bag of earth from Israel close to the head of the deceased. This practice is connected with the idea of the bodily resurrection, since Jewish Orthodoxy believes that those buried in the earth of the land of Israel will be the first to be revived in the resurrection at the coming of the Messiah. However, this custom is also related to the search for ways of atonement for the dead, since the *Talmud* speaks of the atoning powers of the soil of the land of Israel (*Ketubbot*, 111a) (Robinson 2008:188; Meyers 1971:99-105).

The Immortality of the Soul

It should first be noted that Judaism assigns great value to human life, which is to be cherished and preserved as long as possible. The dying person (called *goses*) should not be left alone, some member the family or relatives and friends should be present to the very end. Religious Jews usually recite the *Viduy* (a prayer of confession of sins) as a deathbed confession. The moribund may also address God, asking that their death serve as atonement for the sins of their life. The dying person will also try to pronounce the *Shema'* (Deut 6:4—the central statement of Jewish faith in God as the God of Israel and as One God) as his/her last words. Because Judaism sees life as a gift from God, Jewish law forbids euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. One who commits suicide is abhorred as one

who denied the life given to them by God. Such a person cannot be buried in a Jewish cemetery with full funeral rites, with such a deed becoming a stigma to the family (Robinson 2008:184, 185).

When a person dies, his/her eyes and mouth are closed, usually by the firstborn son. The body is covered with a sheet and is not left alone until the burial. Those present with the body, the *Shomer* (Guard), usually read various Psalms. Among Orthodox Jews, the immediate family will tear their clothing, called *K'riah* (tearing), and they will wear the torn garments for the seven-day period of mourning known as *Shivah* (seven). Liberal Jews usually wear a torn, small black ribbon on the lapel (187).

Practices and customs based on the belief of the immortality of the soul can be seen in many details related to Jewish burial and mourning rites. For example, in an organized Jewish community, the *Chevrah Kadishah* (Holy Society), the Jewish Mortuary Society composed of volunteers, will come to prepare the body for burial. They wash the body in warm water, and cut the hair and nails. After this first washing, they then perform the *Taharah* (purification) ritual of the dead body, using a specified measure of water (around twenty-four quarts). They pour this water over the body as a symbolic purification of a person passing from one state to another, from life to death. For just as a human being enters life from the waters of the womb, he or she departs life in the waters of the *Taharah* (Dosick 2009:304). The body is then wrapped in a white linen shroud. Men will also be wrapped in their *tallit* (prayer shawl) with the *tsitsit* (fringes) having been cut off, for the dead cannot anymore fulfill God's commandments that are represented by the *tsitsit* on a *tallit* (Robinson 2008:187, 188). The white burial shrouds are called *tachrichin*, and their pure white color is symbolic of the purity of the soul. Because the shrouds are the same for all people, rich or poor, they represent the uniformity and equality of everyone in death (Dosick 2009:304, 305).

An observant Jew will generally be buried just wrapped in the white shroud. But if a country requires that a dead person be buried in a casket, this is done using a simple wooden box, made without nails, as better built caskets would delay the return of the body to the earth (Robinson 2008:188). The body is honored as the holy vessel that contained the soul, so it must be treated with the utmost reverence. Traditional Judaism requires burial in the ground (Dosick 2009:303). Jewish burial practices reject embalming, for this delays the return of the body to the dust of the earth; above-ground burials are also banned, for this renders impossible the return of the body to the earth. Cremation of the body is also abhorred as a pagan practice that destroys the body and disregards the creation of the human body in the image of God (Robinson 2008:188; Dosick 2009:303).

It is a Jewish custom to bury the dead person within twenty-four hours of death, if possible, or at least within forty-eight hours. The funeral is held this soon after death to emphasize Jewish belief that the soul, wherein is the spark of life, immediately returns to God who gave it. So also, the body that has been the earthly abode of the soul should immediately be returned to the dust. It should not be the object of mournful veneration, for it was only the container-dwelling of the soul (Dosick 2009:303). However burial can be delayed in consideration of the time needed for relatives to come and participate.

There are no burials on *Shabbat* or festival days. It is usual to hold a service before burial, with a *hesped* (eulogy) given by a rabbi or by close individuals who knew the deceased (306). Then the body is escorted to the graveyard, with close relatives and friends carrying it or accompanying it on foot at least part of the way into the cemetery. At the graveside, after the body is deposited in the grave, each person present will place three shovelfuls of dirt into the grave, starting with the immediate family. One person does this and then inserts the shovel into the ground, then the next person comes and does the same. The *Kaddish* and the prayer *'El Maleh Rachamim* ("God Full of Mercies") are recited at the graveside after burial. It is also a custom among observant Jews to wash their hands before leaving the cemetery because of the impurity implied in contact with a dead body or even by walking in a cemetery (Robinson 2008:187-189).

Until the burial, everything was focused on honoring the deceased. Now Jewish practices and customs turn to comforting the mourners. From the moment of death until the burial, the mourners were in *Aninut* ("delicate"—a time of intense grief), the first stage of the mourning process. After the burial, the participants return to the home of the deceased's family (189). Immediately on returning from the cemetery, the period of *Shivah* (seven days of mourning after the burial) begins. A candle, known as the *shivah* candle, is lit in the home. Jewish tradition sees Proverbs 20:27 as teaching that "the candle [the flame, the light, the spirit] of God is the soul of humankind." The *shivah* candle is therefore seen as a symbol of the soul of the deceased (Dosick 2009:308). After the lighting of the candle, a small meal that has been prepared by friends of the mourning family is served, usually consisting of bread and hard-boiled eggs. Or chickpeas and bagels may be served, for like eggs they are circular, representing the never-ending cycle of life, death, and life. This begins the second stage of the mourning process, the time of *Avelut* (mourning) that runs concurrent with the *Shivah* and lasts seven days (307).

In an observant home, mirrors will be covered, removed, or turned to the wall. Differing reasons have been given for this practice. Some say that its intention is to avoid human vanity in the face of death. Others

understand it as a manifestation of the fear that the projection of the human image could be snatched by the spirit of the recently deceased. Some believe that this custom is based on the superstition that the Angel of Death has already visited the household, and if the mourner sees the "reflection" of the angel in the mirror, he may also die. During *Shivah*, the mourners do not wear leather shoes, and they sit on low stools or on the floor. This is symbolic of "being brought low" in grief, as well as a symbol of submission to the will of God, and it recalls ancient days when mourners would sit on the ground. The mourners do not shave, bathe, go to work, or study the Torah (except for passages related to mourning). They do not engage in conjugal relations, extend greetings, get haircuts, do their laundry, or wear freshly laundered clothes. This is the time when the community comes to express their condolences, tell their remembrances of the departed one, and bring food for the mourners (Robinson 2008:189, 190: Dosick 2009:309).

On the first day of mourning, visitation is usually limited to family and close friends. It is a *mitzvah* (good deed) to help form a *minyan* (10 male adults) at the home of mourners so that *Kaddish* can be recited. The *Shivah* is usually suspended during *Shabbat*, for the joy of the Sabbath takes precedence over mourning, and the mourners attend religious services at the synagogue. *Shivah* ends on the seventh day after death; a friend goes to the house of the mourners, greets them and escorts them out for the first time in a week (Robinson 2008:190).

The mourning period now enters into a third phase called *Sheloshim* (thirty) when restrictions are reduced. This period of twenty-three days following the *Shivah*, along with the previous seven days, total a period of thirty days of mourning (Dosick 2009:310). During these thirty days men do not shave, and the mourners do not have their hair cut. The mourning for spouses, children, and siblings officially ends after thirty days. The morning for a parent continues for eleven months and the mourners will not shave or cut their hair until friends "urge" them to do so. During *Sheloshim* the mourners do not attend festive meetings. In the case of mourning for a parent, this will continue for eleven months. During this period of mourning, priority is given during regular services in the synagogue for mourners to lead out or have an *Aliyah* (reading of the Torah). In Israel, the mourner visits the deceased's grave after the end of *Sheloshim*; outside of Israel, this graveside visit usually occurs one year after the death (Robinson 2008:191).

The mourners recite *Kaddish* daily for eleven months after the death of a beloved one. The reason for eleven months rather than twelve, according to a Jewish legend, is that a soul that does not have enough of its own merit to enter heaven has one year to "earn" eternity. Each time a mourner

recites *Kaddish* for the deceased, this soul earns points in its heavenly quest. The legend also says that no person could be so bad that he or she would need a full year of *Kaddish* points (Dosick 2009:307).

Not only the daily recitation of the *Kaddish*, but many other religious and charitable acts done by the mourners in memory of their beloved deceased are seen by religious Jews as ways to atone for the sins of the departed one. Dedication to the study of Torah and other religious literature, leading the worship service at the synagogue, participation in an *Aliyah* to read the Torah, the giving of alms to charity—all these actions are considered ways of atoning for the soul of the deceased. This atonement is believed to help the soul to avoid *Gehinnom* (Hell) and to ascend to higher levels in Heaven (see Hebel 2010—a book that contains religious and charitable actions that can be done to help atone for the soul of the deceased kin).

A year after the death, the mourners go to the cemetery for the "Unveiling the Tombstone" at the graveyard—in Israel this is done after thirty days. The name of the deceased and the dates of his/her birth and death have been carved onto the tombstone. At the top of the stone the letters "peh" "nun" for *poh nitman* (here lies buried), or *poh nkbar* (here is interred) often appear. At the bottom of the stone the letters "tav," "nun," "tsade," "bet," "hay," standing for the phrase *T´hi nishmato [nishmatah] tsrurah b´tsror hachayim* ("May his [her] soul be bound in the bond of life"), are often carved. There is no set ceremony, but the tombstone will be covered with a white linen cloth; Psalm 23, *El Maleh Rachamim*, and *Kaddish* are recited; a eulogy to the deceased is given; and at a certain moment in the ceremony the tombstone is unveiled (Robinson 2008:191, 192: Dosick 2009:310).

Each year, the anniversary of the death of the beloved one is commemorated in a practice called *Yahrzeit* ("time of the year" in Yiddish, a Jewish dialect of German). The first-year *Yahrzeit* is commemorated on the anniversary of the day of the funeral; from then on, it is observed on the anniversary of the day of death (311). At this time, it is particularly commendable for family members of the deceased to lead the synagogue service, take *Aliyah* (read a passage of the Torah), and recite *Kaddish*. It is also traditional to light a memorial candle in the home, a *Yahrzeit* candle that burns for twenty-four hours. This candle, as was the *shivah* candle, is symbolic of the soul and the spirit of the deceased. If possible, one should also visit the grave on the day of *Yahrzeit* (311). Some Ashkenazi Jews also fast on the day of *Yahrzeit* for a parent or grandparent (Robinson 2008:192). By commemorating the anniversary of the death of the beloved one, instead of his birthday, Judaism celebrates a life fulfilled (Dosick 2009:311).

Another very important example of the impact of the belief of the immortality of the soul and the Jewish attitude toward the deceased ancestor is *Yizkor*, memorial prayers that are recited five times in the Jewish liturgical year. On *Yom Kippur*, and on the last days of the three annual pilgrimage festivals (Feast of Tabernacles [*Succot*], Passover [*Pesach*], and Pentecost [*Shavuot*]), the entire community comes together in a special section of the service in memory of all its deceased people. Memorial candles are lit in the synagogue in memory of the deceased, whose names are often read aloud. Specific prayers are inserted into the morning service of the three Pilgrim feasts, and in the morning and afternoon services of *Yom Kippur*. These include both communal prayers and individual prayers paying tribute to the memory of the deceased. In recent decades, prayers remembering those who perished in the Holocaust and those who died defending the State of Israel have been added to the *Yizkor* service in many synagogues (312).

In these prayers, when referring specifically to someone who is deceased, his/her name will be pronounced, followed by the phrase *'alav hashalom* ("on him [may there be] peace") for a man, and *'aleha hashalom* ("on her [may there be] peace") for a woman. In a written list, the name of the deceased person is followed by the Hebrew letters "ayin" and "hay," standing for the two phrases above. Another custom is to write the Hebrew letters "zayin" and "lamed" after the name of the deceased, standing for the phrases *zichrono levracha* ("[May] his memory [be] for a blessing") for a man, and *zechronah levracha* ("[May] her memory [be] for a blessing") for a woman. These phrases are used to distinguish the name of a deceased person from those who are living, and it is a way to demonstrate reverence, respect and affection for the beloved ones who have died (312).

The first part of the synagogue *Yizkor* service is comprised of individual prayers, during which the congregants pray in favor of their deceased parents (father or mother). The second part includes communal prayers in favor of the victims of the Holocaust and the deceased soldiers of the State of Israel. The *Yizkor* service concludes with the recitation of the prayer *'Av haRachamim* ("Merciful Father") and *'Ashray* ("Blessed are the Ones"), a recitation of the first verse of Psalm 84 and Psalm 114, followed by the entirety of Psalm 145, and concluded by the final verse of Psalm 115 (see Fridlin 1997:220-226). During the recital of the first individual prayers, those whose parents are yet alive and those who lost their parent(s) within the last year may leave the synagogue and not participate in this part of the service. They are invited, however, to return for the communal section to pray for the victims of the Holocaust and the deceased soldiers of Israel (220).

The individual section is composed of two prayers: The first prayer is a direct request to God that he may *Yizkor* (remember) one's deceased father or mother, whose soul has departed to the divine realm. In memory of the beloved deceased, the praying ones commit themselves to the giving of alms for the sake of the deceased, so that these souls may be connected to the flowing River of Life, together with the souls of patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel, and with the souls of all the righteous ones that are in the heavenly Garden of Eden (220, 221).

The second prayer is the *'El Maleh Rachamim* ("God Full of Mercies") that is also recited at the burial service along with the *Kaddish*. In this prayer, the names of the deceased father and mother are again mentioned, and one pleads with God that the soul of his/her beloved deceased may enjoy a peaceful rest under the wings of the Divine Presence and on the divine steps where the holy ones and the saints shine like the glow of the Firmament. For the sake of the deceased, the mourner again commits himself/herself to give alms in the memory of the beloved deceased. The prayer requests that the soul of the beloved one may rest in the heavenly Garden of Eden, and that the Merciful One may protect it under his Wings for eternity and connect it to the stream of life. It is proclaimed that the Eternal God is the deceased's heritage, and the prayer ends with the final request that the mourner's father or mother may rest in peace in the grave (220, 221).

Then follows the communal section of the *Yizkor* service. In many synagogues, a prayer in favor of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust is inserted into the service, asking that God will remember them, their suffering, their faithfulness, and the tragedy they went through. The prayer requests that God will remember these victims, even though they were not afforded the opportunity to be buried properly in a Jewish grave. It is also requested that God take vengeance upon the perpetrators of such crimes, avenging thereby the blood of his children according to the biblical promises (222).

For those whose parent or family member died as a victim of the Holocaust, two individual prayers (*Yizkor* and *'El Maleh Rachamim*) are recited with an insertion mentioning that these beloved ones were victims of the atrocities of the Holocaust. One specific addition is quite interesting: at the end of *'El Maleh Rachamim*, instead of asking that they may rest in peace in their grave (since they did not have a proper grave and most of them were burned to ashes), there is the request that they may rise up (resurrect) at the end of time (223).

In many synagogues there then follows the recital of the *Yizkor* and *'El Maleh Rachamim* prayers for the sake of the soldiers who died in defense of the State of Israel, but there is no reference to giving meritorious alms

on their account. The bravery and unselfish sacrifice of these soldiers are the merit upon which the praying one requests God's favor for their souls.

The two final prayers, *'Av haRachamim* and *'Ashray*, exalt God as a Merciful God who remembers his children with mercy, avenges the blood of the innocent, and judges with justice. He takes care of the afflicted with his kindness. He raises the fallen ones, provides for the needy, is near to all who invoke his Name and saves them. The service closes with the final words of Psalm 145:20-21 ("The Lord preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever") and Psalm 115:18 ("But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!") (225, 226).

Conclusion: Opportunities and Challenges in Mission

Adventist mission to the Jewish people must face the complex situation of Jewish beliefs and practices related to death, the state of a dead person, and the hereafter. The belief in the immortality of the soul became the predominant one in Judaism for centuries. Such a belief brings in many complications that impact one's understanding of God, the Bible, and the status of people in this world and the hereafter, questions regarding salvation and atonement for sins, etc. However, there is much in Jewish liturgy, teaching, and practices that preserve the early biblical view on the state of the dead and its teaching of the hope of resurrection at the end of time.

When approaching a Jewish person, or a Jewish community on these topics, emphasis should first be given to the biblical teachings on these subjects. Second, the rabbinic teachings that are based on the biblical perspective should also be emphasized. Furthermore, the biblical view concerning the hope for the resurrection of the dead can be further substantiated by the study of this view in well-known Jewish prayers such as the *Amidah*, the *Kaddish*, and the morning prayer *Modeh 'Ani*, as well as in the beloved hymn *Adon Olam* that show reminiscences of this Jewish hope. One should further recall that the hope in the resurrection is one of the Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith as stated by Maimonides, and this principle of faith is also expressed in the hymn *Yigdal*.

The study of the biblical belief of the resurrection can also be a way to develop and affirm a proper understanding of the biblical message concerning atonement for sins. Such a study can help a Jewish person understand that there is nothing that a living person can do to improve the status of their beloved deceased, for redemption and atonement are deeds of God and not of man. The way for atonement is taught in the ritual of the sanctuary, and this points to salvation by God's grace and by the merits,

death, and ministry of the Messiah in the Heavenly Sanctuary. The resurrection of the dead is part of this way of redemption, for it depends totally on God and is another evidence of God's grace. Life after death is totally dependent on God's grace, for he alone is able to change the situation of a dead person and bring him/her back to life through his power to resurrect the dead.

One can also promote the understanding that the resurrection of the dead does justice to the biblical theology of Creation. Resurrection is the only belief that corresponds to the biblical teaching about the nature of man, confirming the way the Bible reports that he was created by God. It points out his mortality, his dependence on God for life and the fact that God is the only One who has life in himself. It also emphasizes the moral character of humanity and their freewill—the human responsibility for their future in life. The resurrection of the dead corresponds to the biblical narrative of sin, the Fall as the reason for death, and the way outlined for redemption. The idea of the immortality of the soul, on the other hand, aligns itself with the contradictory statements of the Serpent that man, even after sin, would never die and would have the opportunity to become like God.

A very delicate situation always manifests itself in the contextualized missiological approach to the Jewish people as they come to participate with us in our worship on *Yom Kippur* and the other three annual pilgrimage festivals. The Jewish visitor or attendee that is taking an interest in the Adventist message will usually anticipate the *Yizkor* service. This portion of the service is the most expected part of the liturgy among the majority of Jews today. Some even go to the synagogue on these specific dates just to recite the *Yizkor* for their beloved that has passed away. To completely ignore it is very offensive and can break the feeble connection the Jewish person is establishing with us. To use the traditional prayers of *Yizkor* in our service without much concern would be an unfaithful attitude toward Adventist fundamental beliefs, to our mission of restoration of biblical truth, even to God and his teachings in the Bible.

One possible solution is to replace most of the *Yizkor* prayers (specifically those that are built on the idea of the immortality of the soul) with biblical prayers and the recital of Bible texts that speak of the resurrection of the dead and the final reunion with the deceased in the soon coming Kingdom of Heaven. The lighting of memorial candles during the service is another complex issue to be dealt with. These could be seen as representing the memory of the beloved ones who have departed, and one could argue that it should be practiced with this meaning. However, since these are usually considered as a symbol of the soul of the deceased ones, such a practice could be very confusing for our community members and

the visitors who are studying with us. So even if it could be quite a shock for our Jewish visitors that we do not light memorial candles on such occasions and do not recite all the traditional *Yizkor* liturgy, this could become a way to open a respectful dialogue concerning the biblical view of the state of the dead and the hope of the resurrection.

Special wisdom must also be exercised with those who are going through the process of actively mourning the recent loss of a beloved one. A Jewish person, even in an advanced stage of interest in the Adventist message, would normally prefer the assistance of the regular Jewish mortuary services and to bury the deceased in a Jewish cemetery. This is a precious time to approach this person with unbiased and true friendship, including one's presence during the funerary services and subsequent mourning periods. Such supportive actions and a friendly, non-judgmental attitude may later open the door for much dialogue about death, the state of the dead, and the biblical hope of the resurrection.

Belief in the immortality of the soul continues to be predominant in contemporary Judaism. In present Jewish society there is also much influence from *Kabbalah* with its view not only on the immortality of the soul but also reincarnation and transmigration of the soul. However, in many branches of today's Judaism there are signs of an important rediscovery of the biblical hope of the resurrection. Perhaps a wise approach by Adventists in their outreach to Jewish people can help strengthen this phenomenon and encourage many Jews to prepare themselves for the biblical hope of the soon coming of the Messiah and then enjoy the much desired reunion with their resurrected beloved ones.

Endnotes

[1] Jewish world population (derived from synagogue and Jewish institutions membership) was calculated in 2018 as including approximately 15 million people. This population is widely dispersed among the different continents, with Asia having almost 7 million (with 6.7 million in Israel), followed by the Americas with 6.5 million (5.7 million in the United States), then Europe and Russia with 1.4 million (more than 450 thousand in France), Oceania with 121 thousand (including almost 115 thousand in Australia), and Africa with 73.6 thousand (around 67 thousand in South Africa). See "Vital Statistics: Jewish Population of the World (1882-Present)," Jewish Virtual Library, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-of-the-world (accessed September 4, 2019).

[2] Ben-Sira's attack appears in Ecclesiasticus 30:18: "Good things lavished on a closed mouth are like food offerings put on a grave." The Book of Jubilees 22:16-17 presents the following admonition of Abraham to Jacob: "And you also, my son, Jacob, remember my words, and keep the commandments of Abraham, your father. Separate yourself from the gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs… They slaughter their sacrifices to the dead, and to demons they bow down. And they eat in the tombs. And all their deeds are worthless and vain." See Harry Rabinowicz, "Death," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed. (2007), 5:511.

[3] The Hebrew word *geviyah* that appears in the final line may also refer to a dead body, a corpse, see Fabry 1977:2:433-438.

[4] Chevra Kadisha Mortuary, N.d. *Prayers to be Said at Funerals and Visiting Gravesites of Beloved Ones* (Los Angeles: Chevra Kadisha), 11; "The Graveside Kaddish," Chabad.org, (accessed September 11, 2019). https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/387409/jewish/The-Graveside-Kaddish.htm.

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CEDRIC VINE

Ancestor Worship and the Gadarene Demoniacs

Introduction

In his homily on Jesus's healing of the Gadarene demoniacs in Matt 8:28-9:1, John Chrysostom (AD 349-407) asks why the two demoniacs loved to dwell in the tombs (*Hom.* Matt 28:3). For Chrysostom, the answer to this question does not lie in the text. In fact, Chrysostom avoids answering his own question and instead takes the opportunity to strongly lambast from a theological and experiential perspective the idea that the souls of the dead become demons. He questions the popular-level belief that sorcerers kill children in order to have their souls assist them and asks on what basis one can actually know that the child's spirit is with the sorcerer. He describes the view that souls of the dead become demons as a "pernicious opinion," wrong because, as we all know, the souls of the recently deceased righteous immediately depart to be with God in heaven, or to hell if unrighteous. He asserts that demons are in fact not the souls of the dead but instead evil spirits that have taken on the personae of the deceased.

The question remains, Why did the demoniacs love to dwell in the tombs? Chrysostom most likely avoided answering this own question from the narrative itself because he knew that many 4th century Christians understood demons to be the spirits of the dead and associated them with tombs. If this was the case with his 4th century Christian audience, we can only conclude that there would have been a very high possibility that first-century pagan hearers of Jesus's healing of the Gadarene demoniacs would have understood the association of demons with tombs as relating to ancestor worship in some way. As such, the purpose of this article is to review the portrayal of ancestor worship in ancient sources

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DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol16/iss1/

and then to ask how the account of Jesus healing the two Gadarene demoniacs might have been understood by first-century ancient holders of such beliefs. The selection of sources is necessarily restricted due to the brief nature of this article.

Ancestor Worship: A Core Belief in Graeco-Roman Culture

In his 1864 masterpiece, *La Cité antique,* Numa Denis Fustel de Coulange argued that ancestor worship represented a core belief that shaped the religious practices, laws, and institutions of ancient Greece and Rome (2006). Fustel Coulange recognizes that within the ancient world there were multiple views as to the state of the dead. There is evidence that many Greeks or Romans believed in metempsychosis, the idea that the immortal spirit escaped one's body at death and migrated to animate another body (e.g., Plato, *Rep.* 10.619b-612d; Virgil, *Aen*. 6.714-750). Some believed that death represented the cessation of both body and spirit. This belief was a minority position held by a few philosophers and a section of Judaism (cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 27-30). The majority of ancient Greeks and Romans, asserts Coulange, believed that while a few great men might ascend to a celestial abode, an idea first encountered in the poet Phocylides (possibly 6th century BC), the souls of most deceased persons did not pass into a foreign world, but continued to live underground near men (Cicero, *Tusc.*, 1.16; Euripides, *Alc*. 163). For Coulange, the key evidence for this belief are the rites of sepulture that indicate that when a body was buried, it was popularly believed that they were burying something living. This may indicate an answer to Chrysostom's question: Why did the demons love to dwell in the tombs?

Before turning to the rites of sepulture, it is necessary to first define some basic terms. Romans referred to anyone who died and inhabited the afterlife as a *mane* (Ausonius, *Parentalia* 16.1-12; *Epitaphs* 28; Seneca, *Oct*. 343). They were distinguished, however, between those *mane* which were the spirits of one's ancestors, which they called *lares*, and *parentes*, the spirits of one's immediate family—one's father and mother. The *lares* were represented in statue form and were kept in a cupboard in the home. Daily prayers were offered to them and regular festivals were held in their honor. Key to the focus of this article is Cicero's (106-43 BC) observation that "those that the Greeks called demons we call Lares" (*Tim.* 11; cf. Ovid, *Fast.* 2.614; Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 9.11). This link between *lares* and demons is crucial in that it opens up the possibility that many ancient auditors of the Gospel, especially those immersed within Graeco-Roman ancestor worship, would have heard the account of Jesus healing

the demoniacs as signalling his victory over malevolent ancestral spirits. We should add that even Josephus defines demons as spirits of the dead (*War* 7.185). Finally, the *lemures* were the spirits of those dead ancestors who had not enjoyed proper burial, funeral rites, or been buried in tombs. Due to their improper burial, they were typically malevolent wandering spirits that disturbed their living family members.

The Rites of Sepulture

The idea that burial involved the internment of something living is found throughout Greek and Roman sources (Virgil, *Aen.* 4.24-34). For example, in Virgil's (70-19 BC) description of the burial of Polydorus he recalls how Aeneas arrived in Thrace whereupon he set up an altar upon a mound of earth upon which a myrtle tree grew. The myrtle tree had branches that protruded from the ground like sharp spears. Aeneas proceeded to uproot one of the branches with which to decorate the altar, whereupon, to his horror, black blood started to ooze out from the end of the speer-like branch. Aeneas pulled out another branch and the same thing happened. Finally, he pulled out a third bleeding branch, at which point he was addressed by a voice from under the ground, the voice of the deceased Polydorus. Polydorus appealed to Aeneas for clemency and then claimed that the blood from the javelin-like branches was in fact his own blood resulting from his murder by Lycurgus the king of Thrace. He then advised Aeneas to flee Thrace for his own safety. Aeneas then conferred with his fellow travellers and they agreed to solemnize "fresh funeral rites" on behalf of the already dead Polydorus (*Aen*. 3:61). These rites included the heaping up of a fresh mound of earth and the erection of an altar to "his honored shade" (*stant Manibus arae*, 3.63). New milk and blood were then poured out on the ground and his soul laid in the tomb (3.63-68). Throughout this account the deceased Polydorus is assumed to be living in some sense (see also Homer, *Il.* 23.221). Proper burial involved the provision of appropriate food and shelter for this 'living' being. The expression used by Virgil to 'lay the soul in the tomb' was widely used in antiquity as a colloquial expression for burial. It is found in both Ovid and Pliny despite the fact that neither writer accepted this view of the living soul (Ovid, *Fast.* 5.451; Pliny, *Ep.* 7.27). In addition to inhumation, cremation was widely practiced in the ancient world, although there is little to indicate that this variation in practice indicated a different understanding of the dead.

In such situations the funeral ceremony was not performed to assuage the grief of the mourners but rather to ensure "the rest and happiness of the dead" (Coulange 2006:18). The rite included a number of steps,

described by Walter Burkett as "the laying out of the corpse, *prothesis*, the carrying out, *ekphora,* and the funeral proper with funerary sacrifices and a funerary banquet, which are taken up as the basis of a continuing grave cult" (1985:192). This rite indicates that it was necessary for the soul to be confined to a subterranean abode suited to its second life, and for this to occur the body to which it was attached had to be covered with earth. A failure to bury the body or an improper burial resulted in a wandering spirit that would restlessly search for an appropriate resting place. Such a wandering spirit was known as a *larva*, or phantom, a being that would wander without ever receiving the offerings and food it required. The result of such deprivation was that the spirit would become a malevolent spirit, a spirit that tormented the living. Such a spirit would inflict disease, disrupt harvests, and frighten the living by appearing to them as a ghostly apparition, warning the living to give sepulture to its body and to itself. Coulange claims that "all antiquity was persuaded that without burial the soul was miserable, and that by burial it became forever happy" (2006:17). Two examples illustrate this belief.

In his comedy *The Ghost,* Plautus (d. 184 BC) tells of a father who returns unexpectedly from a trip abroad. His son has been living a riotous life with his newly freed slave girl and fellow guests, and, in their panic at the father's return, lock the front door of the house and hid in silence. One of the household slaves welcomes the father home but warns him not to enter the house for the terrible reason that in the father's absence, they have discovered that the previous owner of the house had murdered a guest and hidden his body under the house. This improper burial procedure resulted in the soul of the murdered guest appearing to the son in terrifying visions, warning him to leave the house because it was cursed (*scelestae [hae] sunt aedes, impia est habitatio*, *Mostellaria* 504). The ruse works and the father leaves.

A second example of the effects of improper burial is found in Suetonius' (b. *ca.* AD 69) account of the burial of Gaius Caligula. Caligula, a despised and hated emperor, had been stabbed to death in his palace by, and accounts differ, either two tribunes or by a group of centurions (*Cal*. 58). His body was then secretly spirited out of the palace and partially burned on a hastily erected pyre in the gardens of the Lamian family. His charred body was then buried under a thin layer of turf. This improper burial is said, according to Suetonius, to have resulted in ghosts or shades (*umbris*) disturbing the caretakers of the garden and numerous fearsome apparitions in the building where he was murdered (*Cal.* 59). This situation was only rectified when his sisters, upon their return from exile, dug up his body, cremated it properly, and placed it in a tomb.

These two examples illustrate the fear that improper burial rites would result in wandering souls which would disturb the living and that specific rites were necessary to ensure that the souls of the dead were properly placed in and restricted to their tombs. The corollary of this rite was the possibility that through alternative rites, the spirits of the dead might be tempted out of their tombs.

The Festival of Feralia

Festivals for the dead played an important part of Graeco-Roman culture. The Roman festival of Feralia, held on February 21, marked the end of *Paternalia* (February 13-21), a nine-day festival honoring one's dead ancestors. An important source is Ovid's *Fasti* in which he provides a description, month by month, of the origins and rituals of the various festivals practiced by Romans. The work covers the first six months of the year (January to June) and it is uncertain as to whether Ovid (43 BC—AD 17) completed the final six months or whether they have been lost. Ovid's description of the festival, found in *Fast*. 2.533-616, sets out the purpose of the festival as to placate "the souls of your fathers" *Animas placate paternas* (2.533), to placate the shades (*sed et his placabilis umbra est*, 2.541), or to placate ghosts (*ultima placandis manibus illa dies*, 2.570). These acts of placation were achieved through the giving of gifts. Thankfully, Ovid tells us, the dead ancestors (*manes*) do not require costly gifts but rather attach greater significance to the motive in which the gifts were given. Acceptable gifts included "a tile wreathed with votive garlands, a sprinkling of corn, a few grains of salt, bread soaked in wine, and some loose violets, these are offerings enough" (2.537-539). These might be left on a potsherd in the middle of the road and were to be accompanied by prayers and appropriate words offered at hearths set up for this purpose. Ovid explains that these practices originated with Aeneus who offered offerings and prayers to the spirit of his deceased father (2.540-544).

Ovid warns that a failure to offer such rites occurred during a period of war when many funerals were held at the same time outside the walls of Rome (2.548-562). The result was that the spirits of Rome's dead ancestors left their tombs and roamed the streets of Rome, groaning and moaning and terrifying the inhabitants. As a result, the rites of ancestral worship were reinstated and a limit was set on the number of funerals that could take place at any one point in time. According to Ovid, weddings were prohibited during the festival of Feralia, although it is difficult to gauge how widespread this prohibition was respected. A brief allusion to the festival is also found in Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which he describes Andromache, the wife of dead Hector, "offering her yearly feast and gifts of mourning to

the dust, and calling the ghost to Hector's tomb," which consisted of a green mound of turf before which she had placed two altars (*Aen*. 3.300-305). Such accounts testify to a popular level of belief in the abiding presence of ancestral spirits and a belief that it was necessary to placate them with certain rites in order to enjoy their favor. The extent to which these beliefs were held was such that, according to Ramsay MacMullen, they heavily influenced early Christian beliefs and practices in Rome well into the fourth and fifth centuries AD (MacMullen 2010).

The Festival of Lamuria

A counterpart to the festival of Feralia was the festival of Lamuria, held in May, with the purpose to placate the *lemures*. Again, Ovid's *Fasti* is a key source (cf. *Fast.* 5.419-492). The ritual of Lamuria was performed at midnight by the head of the household after everyone had gone to bed, and dogs and fowl had quietened down. The head of the household would rise and make the sign of the *mano fica* (fig gesture) in case he might meet a malevolent spirit. The *mano fica* was an obscene gesture that represented the sexual union between a man and woman. The term *fico* is the Latin for fig, a term used for the female vulva. It was used to ward off the evil eye and demons in the belief that malevolent spirits were fearful of the idea of sex and would flee at the sign.

The head of the household would then wash his hands in clean spring water and then take a handful of black beans and throw them behind him, walking barefoot around the house, while repeating nine times the phrase, "These I cast; with these beans I redeem me and mine" *haec ego mitto, his redimo meque meosque fabis* (*Fast*. 5.437-438). It was believed that the malevolent spirits of the dead would follow behind and collect the beans. The master of the household, having attracted the spirits, would then touch water and clash bronze implements, imploring the spirits nine times to depart with these words, "Ghosts of my fathers, go forth!" *Manes exite paterni* (*Fast.* 5.473). This festival was celebrated on May 9, 11, and 13, and resulted in the belief that marriages solemnized in May would not last, expressed in the popular phrase, "Bad girls marry in May" *mense malas Maio nubere* (*Fast.* 5.490). In summary, such rites testify to a popular belief that improper burial practices or a failure to continually care for one's ancestors could result in them turning into malevolent spirits.

Providing for the Needs of Ancestral Spirits

Ancestor worship required the ongoing provision of physical food for the souls of the dead. Virgil tells of food left at altars placed before tombs

(*Aen*. 5.98; cf. Pausanias, *Descr.* 2.10.5). Ausonius' fourth century AD collection of epitaphs indicates that the feeding of one's ancestors was widely practiced:

> *On the Tomb of a Happy Man:* Sprinkle my ashes with pure wine and fragrant oil of spikenard; bring balsam too, O stranger, with crimson roses. Unending spring pervades my tearless urn: I have but changed my state, and have not died. I have not lost a single joy of my old life, whether you think that I remember all or none. (Ausonius, *Epitaphs* 31)

Euripides tells of a less appetizing meal offered to the ghost of the dead Achilles, who returned from his grave and demanded the death of Polyxana, the daughter of Priam the king of Troy (*Hecuba* 536-582). Polyxana had earlier become a confidant of the living Achilles and had revealed to her brothers, Paris and Deiphobus, the secret of Achille's weakness—his heel. They had then taken advantage of this knowledge and killed Achilles, shooting arrows into his heel. Polyxana, who had been captured by Achille's son Neoptolemus, permitted her throat to be cut in order for her blood to be offered as a libation offering to pacify the angry spirit of Achilles. While this story does not present a rite, it further attests to a basic belief that spirits of the deceased needed to be placated with libations.

Tombs as Temples for the Gods/Demons

Tombs functioned as the temples of ancestral spirits and often included an altar either before or above the tomb as the case with the temples to the gods. Suetonius describes how Nero was buried in a sarcophagus, which was placed in his family tomb with an altar of luna marble standing above it (*Nero* 50). Many tombs bore the inscription, *Dis Manibus Sacrum* ("to the sacred ghost-gods"), and in Greek, *theois chthoniois* ("to the gods of the nether world"). There is widespread literary evidence that many Greeks and Romans believed that souls of the deceased were in some sense divine (cf. Homer, *Il.* 1.222; 3.420; Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 8.23). Euripides (b. *ca.* 480s BC) recalls how Admetus, after the death of his wife Aclestis, a death necessitated in order that Apollo might prolong Admetus's life, was encouraged to honor her in death as a god:

> Let not the grave of your wife be regarded as the funeral mound of the dead departed but let her be honored as are the gods (*theoisi*), an object of reverence to the wayfarer. Someone walking a winding path past her tomb shall say, "This woman died in the stead of her husband, and now she is a blessed divinity (*makaira daimōn*). Hail, Lady, and grant us your blessing!" With such words will they address her. (Euripides, *Alc*. 995-1004)

Of particular interest in this passage is the way in which Euripides equates the dead Aclestis with the gods while also describing her as a "blessed demon." Clearly, the term 'demon' was not just a pejorative term as in the Gospels but was instead frequently used with reference to dead ancestors in a honorific manner that evoked divinity (cf. Philostratus, *Imag*. 1.5.16.). Support for this view is found in Euripides's statement that "there are many shapes of divinity (*tōn daimoniōn*), and many things the gods (*theoi*) accomplish against our expectation" (Euripides, *Alc*. 1160).

Plutarch (b. before AD 50, d. after AD 120) cites Varro as describing Roman sons as honoring "the tombs of their fathers even as they do the shrines of the gods; and when they have cremated their parents, they declare that the dead person has become a god at the moment when first they find a bone" (*Rom. Quest.* 14). To be declared a god upon one's death does not mean that one's character was suddenly transformed for the better, that sinners were miraculously transformed into godly saints. Rather, as one's character was during one's life, so it remained in death. The view that demons were ancestral spirits was not universally held. Socrates claimed that something "god-inspired (*theion*) and spirit-like (*daimonion*, literally, a divine power)" comes to him, starting when he was a boy, a warning voice in his head that functioned rather like the Christian conscience, alerting him of things he should not do (Plato, *Apol.* 31c-d, 40a). Dio Chrysostom (AD 40-120) tells the story in his *Fourth Discourse on Kingship* of Diogenes the Cynic warning Alexander the Great that he will never become king until he propitiates his attendant spirit (*prin an hilasē ton hautou daimona*, *4 Regn.* 75). The king reflects the popular understanding that a demon is a deity that would require sacrifices (*4 Regn.* 76). Diogenes 'corrects' Alexander by informing him that there are evil and good demons (*hoi ponēroi kai agathoi daimones*) but that these are nothing more than the guiding spirit of the owner, that is one's own character choices (*4 Regn.* 79-81). Diogenes's correction of Alexander's understanding may be taken, however, as further evidence of the widespread belief that demons were divine spirits, often associated with ancestors.

Jesus and the Gadarene Demoniacs

We return to Chrysostom's question, Why did the demoniacs dwell in the tombs? If this question is addressed in light of the evidence considered above, it seems reasonable to conclude that Matthew's account of Jesus casting out the demons from the Gadarene demoniacs would have been understood by many first-century readers within an ancestral spirits framework. Chrysostom was well aware of this possibility but tried to dismiss it (cf. Davies and Allison 1991:83). Before considering the account from this perspective, a clarificatory word about demons is necessary.

Demons are presented biblically as fallen angels rather than the spirits of dead ancestors. In Deut 32:17, for example, Israel is criticized for making Yahweh jealous by sacrificing "to demons (MT: *laššeḏim*; LXX: *daimoniois*), not God, [and] to deities (MT: ʾᵉlōhim; LXX: *theois*) they had never known." The parallelism in this verse indicates a close association of demons with strange gods, which, in the wider context of Scripture, may be identified as fallen angels (cf. Isa 14:12-15; Rev 12:7-9). In this context, the numerous references to Jesus casting out demons should be interpreted as an indication that Israel was in a state of idolatry, under the control of strange deities. His exorcisms functioned as the equivalent to the actions of Old Testament judges or prophets who tore down the high places and cleansed Israel of foreign gods (cf. Judg 6:28-32).

In classical Greek usage there was a distinction between *daimonion*, a general reference to the manifestation of divine power, and the more specific *daimōn* which connotes a particular god or goddess. It is difficult to know whether this distinction is maintained in the New Testament. According to BDAG 2000:210, *daimonion,* which is found frequently in the Gospels, may refer to a particular god or goddess as well as to a hostile divinity or evil spirit. *Daimōn,* however, is only found in Matt 8:31 and, according to BDAG, refers specifically in that instance to an evil spirit.

1. *Gentile Demoniacs Dwelling Amongst the Tombs*: When Jesus entered the country of the Gadarenes, two men who are possessed by demons (*daimonizomenoi*, Matt 8:28) meet him. Matthew drops Mark's reference to unclean spirits (*en pneumati akathartō*, Mark 5:2; compare his use of 'impure in 5:8, 13) and ritual impurity and instead adopts demon-related language more common in Gentile usage (Wahlen 2004:122). The region seems to have been near the town of Gadara on the eastern side of Lake Galilee in the Gentile territory of the Decapolis. The Gentile nature of the region is affirmed later in the account by the presence of a herd of pigs, inconceivable in Jewish territory (Hill 1972:168; Luz 2001:24). The Evangelist describes the demoniacs as "coming out of the tombs" to meet Jesus (8:28). Contrary to Chrysostom's question, Matthew drops Mark's reference to them dwelling there (cf. Mark 5:3). The element of indeterminacy relating to their abode may possibly indicate that the improper burial rites were carried out with respect to these particular ancestral spirits. Alternatively, Matthew's omission may simply reflect his editorial practice of reducing Mark's more lengthy account. Whichever option is chosen, the association of the demoniacs with tombs, understood by Graeco-Romans as temples for the dead, would have affirmed for believers in ancestor worship that the two men were controlled by the spirits of their ancestors, by *manes* who normally dwelt in tombs in close proximity to the urns in which their bodies were interred (Burkert 1985:191).

2. *Fierce Demons*: The Evangelist describes the demons as very fierce (*chalepoi lian*), as controlling the surrounding region (Matt 8:28). The term *chalepos* indicates that they were a cause of great trouble or stress, intensely violent (cf. 2 Tim 3:1). Background sources indicate a certain ambiguity over why demons might be either good or bad. They were sometimes viewed as beneficial, as indicated by one rite recorded in a Greek magical papyri to attract demons: "A [daimon comes] as an assistant who will reveal everything to you clearly. And will be your [companion and] will eat and sleep with you" (*PGM* I.1-42 quoted in Betz 1992:3). They may alternatively turn troublesome as a result of the community's failure to follow correct burial rituals or to regularly honor the dead. Additionally, they may be malevolent simply because their behavior reflects the character of the deceased person. Either way, these two possibilities point to either a failure on the part of the wider community to honor their ancestors or a failure of some in the community to live virtuous lives. The demoniacs present a particular problem for the community in that they are described as permitting no one to "pass that way" (Matt 8:28). From an ancestor worship perspective, this was a particularly serious problem in that it would have inhibited the local community's ability to regularly honor the graves of their ancestors, leading to a downward spiral in relations between the communities of the living and the community of the dead.

3. *Jesus' One-Word Command*: The demoniacs confront Jesus, asking what he wants with them. Their tone is aggressive, shouting at him (*ekraxan*, Matt 8:29). They question Jesus' business with them, addressing him as Son of God, and asking whether he has come to torment them before the time. Their identification of Jesus as Son of God implies supernatural knowledge, an ability, from an ancestor worshipper's perspective, of one supernatural being to recognize another. In reply, Jesus says nothing. He performs no ritual. The mood of the demoniacs then changes from aggression to one of desperation, and supplication.

The demons (*daimones*) beg (*parekaloun*) Jesus to send them into the pigs feeding some distance away. Matthew's use of *daimōn* (evil spirit) instead of *daimonion* in v. 31, a hapax in the New Testament, is, according to Clinton Wahlen, a concession to the "Gentile-dominated locale since it was the more common term for demons in Hellenistic circles" (2004:122). From an ancestor worship perspective, this request would have been understood as the spirits of the dead seeking to remain in close physical proximity to their buried cadavers and deceased family members (8:31). In contrast to Mark's account in which Jesus enters into dialogue with the demons (Mark 5:8-9), in Matthew's account Jesus does not engage with them. Instead, he uses a single command, structurally at the heart of the account, the only word he utters throughout: *hypagete* "Go!" (Matt 8:32).

For ancestor worshippers this would have been highly surprising in that they were used to employing elaborate rituals and lengthy and repetitive incantations to control malevolent spirits (cf. Betz 1992:38, 301, 304). In the case of the demoniacs, all previous attempts to control them had failed (cf. Mark 5:3-4). In contrast, Jesus controls them with a single word, an indication of his complete mastery over them.

4. *A Community in Fear*: The demons depart into the pigs, who rush down the steep bank into the lake and perish (*apethanon*) in the water (Matt 8:32). There is some evidence for Jewish belief that spirits were afraid of water because it had purifying capabilities (Davies and Allison 1993:84). On the other hand, other sources indicate that some types of demons were associated with water. The Evangelist is silent either way on this issue. It is also unstated as to whether the demons die with the pigs (Luz 2001:25). Nevertheless, these actions would further signal to ancestor worshippers Jesus' complete mastery over malevolent ancestral spirits. They respond to his bidding.

The swineherds then announce to the local townsfolk what has happened. The "whole town" then came out to meet Jesus and begged (*parekalesan*) him, as the demons had begged him earlier, to leave their region (8:34). The reason for their communal request is not made explicit. It may have been out of fear, as in Mark 5:15 and Luke 8:35. Some suggest it was due to the economic implications of losing their livestock (Vledder 1997:197). Matthew is silent as to their motive. We may suppose, however, that from an ancestor worship perspective, the Gentile inhabitants of the town would not have believed that the drowning of the pigs would necessarily have resulted in the destruction of the demons. From their perspective, the demons, who had been so disrespected by Jesus, now inhabit the waters of Galilee. As such, they would have feared further trouble from the demons. The Evangelist finishes his account with these words: "And after getting into a boat [Jesus] crossed the sea and came to his own town" (Matt 9:1). From Jesus' perspective, the power of the demons has been broken, indicated by his ability to travel unhindered and undisturbed. Not even a storm disturbs his journey home.

Conclusion

In his account of the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs, the Evangelist does not argue against the existence of demons. Instead, he affirms Jesus's power over them. Jewish readers of the Gospel would likely have interpreted references to demons within a fallen-angel framework.

In contrast, many Gentiles and early Gentile Christians steeped in ancestor worship would have interpreted Jesus' exorcism as a

demonstration of his control and absolute power over ancestral spirits. John Chrysostom's deep concern that readers do not read the passage in such terms affirms the very likelihood of such readings. The fact that the exorcism occurs in Gentile territory and in the vicinity of tombs would have strongly affirmed such associations. Maybe this is why Chrysostom avoided directly appealing to Matthew's story as evidence against ancestral spirits. Instead of dissuading belief in ancestral spirits, he could have appealed to the text as strong evidence that Jesus is more powerful than such spirits. If he had taken this approach, the decision that believers in such spirits would have had to make was whether or not to permit the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus to replace their ancestor's spirits as the controlling spirit of their community.

Endnotes

[1] Elsewhere, Chrysostom describes how "many of the simpler sort" believe that those who die violent deaths turn into demons. Chrysostom, *Hom. Laz.* 6.235-236. Unless stated, quotations from Graeco-Roman sources are taken from LCL.

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WAGNER KUHN AND BOUBAKAR SANOU

A Biblical Framework for Discipling Believers Who Fear Death and Hell

Introduction

What happens to a person when he/she dies is a question humans have always wrestled with. Many people, including some Christians, believe that hell and life after death literally exist; and as such, they live in constant fear of death and hell. According to the Pew Research Center's 2015 Religious Landscape Study conducted among U.S. adults, 70% of Christians, 76% of Muslims, 32% of Buddhists, and 28% of Hindus believe in hell (Murphy 2015). According to the December 16, 2013 Harris Poll, 64% of American adults believe in the survival of the soul after death. The same poll indicates that 58% of American adults believe in hell. Hell is viewed as a place of eternal punishment for people who have not lived right in this life. The afterlife fate of the departed has a strong resonance in many parts of the world. Because of the belief that the dead who are in hell can still receive salvation through post-mortem means, many death-related rituals are practiced by believers of various religions around the world as a way of helping a person's loved ones avoid or escape the eternal punishment of hell (Shannon-Missal 2013).

Death, Hell, and Funeral Rites: A Brief Overview

Death is a disrupter of harmony. Many traditional mythologies and religious beliefs assert that death was not part of the original human condition. Because of this, many "societies are laden with rituals, beliefs, and practices that acknowledge, affirm, grieve, and [try to] heal the inevitable effects of death" (Martin 2009:195).

In many traditional contexts such as in Africa, the concepts of life and death are not mutually exclusive concepts. It is believed that "death does not annihilate life and that the departed continue to exist in the hereafter" (Mbiti 1970:264). This belief asserts that at death the body decays but the soul escapes to continue its existence, wandering as a ghost until it is released by means of rituals to go and join the ancestors (Goody 1962:364, 371).

In traditional thinking, "dead people are not dead at all. Death is only a transitional state to a spiritual life free from material hindrances" (Amanze 2003:44)). Death is spoken of as a departure, a setting out on a journey, a transition to ancestorhood. Nevertheless, whenever it occurs, "the soul of the deceased must undergo a series of spiritual adjustment if he or she is to find a secure place in the afterlife and continue to remain in contact with the family left behind" (Ray 1976:140). Funeral rites are performed to reduce the effect of the loss as well as to facilitate the process by which the deceased joins the community of the ancestors. A traditional funeral is believed not only to help the deceased reach their "fathers" (i.e., enter the ancestral world) but also "have a tomorrow" (i.e., a continuation of life in the lineage) (Abasi 1995:448, 450, 452). This is the community's expressed desire for kinship continuity and solidarity even in death. The community's survival is crucial and rests on the strict observance of proper burial and funeral rites to help the deceased make a good and successful journey to the ancestral world to join those who ensure life and wellbeing, and who become intermediaries to the living.

Because of the general belief among many traditional religionists that there is life after death, funeral rites are elaborate ceremonial occasions as they are considered to be the indispensable means by which human beings avoid hell by passing from the land of the living to that of the ancestors (Sidonia 2002:9). In the event of death, the bereaved family seeks the help of a diviner to find the cause of their loved one's death. Every human death is assumed to also have other unnatural/supernatural causes (Mbiti 1990:151). Every death is thus thought as having a hidden cause that must be known before the deceased is buried (Labouret 1931:319-320). For example, when someone dies of a snake bite, the snake is perceived not as the cause of the death but rather as an intermediary agent (Goody 1962:208). While mourning goes on, many attempts are made to determine with some degree of certainty the cause of death in order to counteract its effect on the deceased reaching ancestorhood.

The discussion above reveals that in some traditional religious contexts, a person experiences hell at their death if they fall short of becoming an ancestor. It is believed that when a person dies their body decays but their soul escapes to continue its existence wandering as a ghost until it is released by properly conducted funeral rites to go and join the ancestors

(Goody 1962:364, 371). A person's soul therefore remains a wandering spirit without a resting place if the family fails to go through all the prescribed rites of passage during their life on earth, or if the person died of a "bad" death (Sanou 2015:87),[1] had improper burial and funeral rites, or are denied ancestorhood by the clan's ancestors because of an offence done to them by the deceased (43-48, 87).

Similarly, some Christian denominations (including the Roman Catholic Church) and other traditions point to life after death and hell as part of what happens to humanity after a person dies. In this view, not only is there life after death for those who will go to heaven, but there is also a subsequent hell as part of the afterlife. Furthermore, for those who have not lived properly in this life, and have to still atone for certain sins, there is the need that they must pass through "purgatory" (a transitional state between death and heaven) in order to "undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven" (Purgatory 2019).

Biblical View of Life and Death

Addressing the fear of death and hell among converts from traditional religious or animistic contexts (for further reading see Sanou 2015:58-63) calls for a clear biblical understanding of the state of human beings in death and a concise and systematic presentation of the plan of salvation demonstrated in the life, death, resurrection, and continued ministry of Christ.

The creation story gives an account of the origin of life on earth. Two key texts are considered: Gen 1:26, 27 and Gen 2:7. At creation, humanity was given the special status of being created in God's image: "Let us make mankind in *our image*, in *our likeness*, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. God created mankind in *his own image*, *in the image of God* he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:26, 27, emphasis added).

The same concept is reiterated in Gen 5:1 and Gen 9:6. Genesis 5:1 simply states that "when God created mankind, he made them *in the likeness of God*" (emphasis added). Genesis 9:6 gives the very first clear implication for humanity being created in God's image. It states that it is because humanity is created in the image of God that human beings should not shed the blood of one another: "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for *in the image of God* has God made mankind" (emphasis added).

The image and likeness of God in humans has had many interpretations among scholars. Is image and likeness the same or are they referring to two different things? Is it physical, mental, or spiritual? Although this

is not the focus of this study, I concur with the view that "bearing God's image does not imply so much resembling God [physically] as representing Him. Man is God's collaborator (Gen 2:4-6, 15) and lieutenant (Ps 8:3-8; 115:6)" (Cairus 2000:208). The likeness of God in humans refers to "the representational functions of humans," which includes "everything that enables humankind to rule over their sphere as God rules in His" (208). The creation in the image and likeness of God sets humanity apart from other creatures, because only humanity (man and woman) has been granted this special status. Although no clear clues are given as to the features of the likeness of God, God's image in human beings and the dominion that was given them over other creatures (Gen 1:26) probably has to do with humanity's relationship both to other creatures and to God the Creator. In other words, people were created as relational beings (Reiss 2011:184). Also, because the Bible further says that God is spirit (John 4:24), it seems safer to see the image of God in humans in terms of their spiritual nature (Nichol 1976-1980:1:216; "In Our Image" [Gen 1:26]).[2] For Reiss, the image and likeness of God in humans are located in "some spiritual quality or faculty of the human person" (2011:185). In a nutshell, the creation of humans in the image of God, the highest conceivable status, affirms their dignity and worth (181). Our true identity is first and foremost found in the fact that humans are created in God's image.

Genesis 2:7 gives the two basic components of every human being, namely, a physical body and the breath of life, which is immaterial: "The Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Scholars have also debated whether at death the body and spirit have an independent existence. Two main groups have emerged out of these debates.

Scholars such as H. David Lewis, Wayne Grudem, Gary R. Habermas, and James P. Moreland believe in the immortality of the soul on the basis of texts such as: "The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccl 12:7), "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28), and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). For them, between death and the resurrection, believers are in some kind of conscious state of intermediary existence. Lewis states, "Throughout the centuries Christians have believed that each human person consists in a soul and body; that the soul survived the death of the body; and that its future life will be immortal" (1984:125). Wayne Grudem unpacks the nature of the immortal soul by defining death as "the temporary cessation of bodily life and a separation of the soul from the body. Once a believer has died, though his or her physical body remains on the earth and is buried, at the moment of death

the soul (or spirit) of that believer goes immediately into the presence of God with rejoicing" (emphasis added) (1994:816). Gary R. Habermas and James P. Moreland push this concept a step further by stating that in the intermediary state "the person enjoys *conscious fellowship with God* while waiting for a reunion with a new, resurrected body" (emphasis added 1998:222).

For other scholars such as Edward Fudge and Joel Green, the body and the spirit cease to exist until the resurrection of the dead. Green (2008:179) states that

> Death must be understood not only in biological terms, as merely the cessation of one's body, but as the conclusion of embodied life, the severance of all relationships, and the fading of personal narrative. It means that, at death, the person *really dies*; from the perspective of our humanity and sans [without] divine intervention, there is no part of us, no aspect of our personhood, that survives death.

The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* provides additional insight. In commenting about the body and spirit it says,

> Although Eccl 12:7 says that at death the spirit (*ruach*) returns to God, in not one of the 379 instances of its use throughout the OT does *ruach* denote an intelligent entity capable of existence apart from a physical body, so far as man is concerned, and it must therefore be clear that such a concept is without basis as the teachings of the Scriptures themselves are concerned (see Gen. 2:7; 35:18; Num. 5:14; Eccl. 3:19-21; cf. on Num. 5:2; 9:6). That which here returns to God is simply the life principle imparted by God to both man and beast (see on Eccl. 3:19-21, where *ruach* is translated "breath"). (Nichol 1976-1980:3:1104)

For Edward Fudge, a human being is an indivisible whole. The soul and the spirit are not parts into which a human may be divided. The soul refers to the living human individual; in other words, human beings do not have souls, they are souls. The spirit is a constant reminder that humans have their source in God (2011:27). He further asserts that the consistent witness of the Old Testament is that when a person dies, it is the entirety of their soul that dies (Ezek 18:20) (27). Scholars who say that no part of humans survives death argue that it was only when God breathed the breath of life into the inanimate body of Adam that he became a living being/soul (Gen 2:7; Nichol 1976-1980:1:223). There is a difference between "breath of life," *ruach,* and "soul," *nephesh,* in Gen 2:7. The soul "denotes man as a living being after the breath of life entered into a physical body formed from the elements of the earth" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 1998:82). This is supported by the fact that the account

of Gen 2:7 says that "man *became* a living soul. Nothing in the Creation account indicates that man *received* a soul—some kind of separate entity that, at Creation was united with the human body" (81, 82; emphasis in the original).

Also, humans were only given conditional immortality at creation, as attested to by Gen 2:15-17: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly *die*'" (emphasis added). Adam and Eve's conditional immortality was changed to mortality when they disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen 3). Death is simply the reversal of the process of creation. At death, the breath of life is withdrawn from the living being/soul (Nichol 1976-1980:1:223), and "when that happens, the person dies. He or she ceases to exist. The 'soul' is no more because the living person is no more" (Ball 2011:15). Other Bible passages also highlight the fact that the dead are in an unconscious, nonexistent state (Eccl 9:5, 6), a state of unconscious sleep (John 11:11-13), and the next thing they will be conscious of will be when Christ returns and raises them either to eternal life (1 Thess 4:13-17) or to eternal damnation (Matt 25:46).

Christ the Victor Over Death and Hell

The question of mediation between God and humans is central to the doctrine of salvation. Among traditional religionists (and animists), it is humans who, at their own cost, reach out to God through the mediation of their ancestors, whereas in Christianity, mediation has been initiated and paid for by God by means of Christ's victory over death (Wikipedia 2019). Christ's victory over the grave won him the right to become the sole mediator between God and humans (1 Tim 2:5, 6). That is why in the name of Jesus, every believer can approach boldly the throne of God to receive mercy and the assurance of salvation (Heb 4:16) (Kuhn 2016).

The death of Christ on the cross and his subsequent resurrection is God's statement that he is able to, effectively and conclusively, deal with sin and death, and the fear caused by both. Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead was to make the power of God real and available to all. That power is evident in the life of the early church and in the life and ministry of many who have faithfully and fearlessly followed Christ.

Understanding the biblical basis and the implications of the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief #11 "Growing in Christ" is foundational for addressing the fear of death and hell among converts from non-Christian religions and even other Christian denominations. In addition,

this Fundamental Belief #11 is especially relevant when mission is carried out in traditional and animistic religious environments where many church members are constantly afraid of spirits and ancestors.

The biblical principles provided by Fundamental Belief #11 when communicated and taught properly should drive away the fear of evil power. It states,

> By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience (Ps 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Col 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil 3:7-14; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Matt 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal 5:22-25; Rom 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb 10:25). (Ministerial Association 2005:149-150)

Fundamental Belief #11,"Growing in Christ," helps to understand that "salvation transforms how we see our world. We no longer fear our past or future, but embrace a present full of hope, love, passion and praise as the Spirit lives in us" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2019). People who fear death are looking for power to overcome this fear. Power comes from a personal communion and relationship with the victorious Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and an understanding and knowledge of Scripture. Christ is the only one who has overcome death and who is powerful to protect all those who put their faith in him. Once church members learn of and experience his power over all other spiritual forces, they will allow him to enter their lives, and the fear of death and evil spirits will no longer cripple their existence. Individual church members can now live with the assurance that just as Jesus overcame death they will also overcome.

A Biblical Model of Discipleship

People will not give up on their old beliefs so long as those old beliefs remain the only working alternatives they have (Velsor and Drath 2004:390). The only solution is for the gospel to not only change former beliefs but also to transform the converts' worldviews in theory and practice. If this does not happen, the new beliefs will continue to be re-interpreted in terms of the old worldview (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999/2000:177). A biblical model of discipleship is key to worldview transformation, and to conversion.

A good biblical model of discipleship is portrayed in 1 Thessalonians 2:7-13. This text presents discipleship as a process of spiritual parenting. In that passage, Paul uses the parent-child metaphor to describe principles of discipleship by referring to familiar things of life, which both the direct recipients and the wider readership of the epistle were conversant with. This parent-child metaphor is still a powerful means of impressing on people's minds important spiritual principles about Christian discipleship. Spiritual mentoring as discipleship can help achieve four things: (1) a long-term commitment to the spiritual welfare and growth of believers, (2) modeling a spiritual walk with God to mentees, (3) personal attention to believers' spiritual growth needs, and (4) the teaching of biblical truth. A brief analysis of this passage reveals the following four components of biblical discipleship.

Long-term Commitment to the Spiritual Welfare and Growth of Believers

"Just as *a nursing mother cares for her children*, so we cared for you" (1 Thess 2:7, 8; emphasis added). The process of discipleship requires the investment of quality time in those being discipled. Paul and his missionary team cared for the believers in the congregations they established as a mother cares for her children. This would have involved tenderly and patiently teaching the Thessalonians to walk with God. They demonstrated intentional commitment to the spiritual growth and welfare of believers. Their long-term commitment to the welfare of the believers at Thessalonica echoes Jesus' long-term concern for the growth of believers: "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. . . . I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:1, 16-18). An important implication of these two examples

is that "disciples cannot be mass produced but are the product of [long-term] intimate and personal investment" (Ogden 2007:20).

Modeling a Spiritual Walk with God to Mentees

"Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of *how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed*" (1 Thess 2:9, 10, emphasis added). The missionary team strove to be role models to the new believers. If Hampton Keathley's perspective on discipleship is correct, about 90 percent of what a disciple learns or applies is caught from the discipler's life rather than from his/her teaching. As a result, he argues that "we should place our emphasis on being a friend and let people see how we deal with things, how we study, how we pray, how we love, etc. We don't want to just give him all the facts. We need to allow him to see how we work through various issues and help him work through the issues himself" (Keathley 2004). Without any doubt, this was what happened in Jesus' discipling ministry of the Twelve and his other early followers who so faithfully imitated him that when those who had observed them found no other way to call them but Christians (Acts 11:26).

Following Jesus' example, mature Christians are called to be pacesetters, positively influencing new believers in their spiritual growth. Paul's understanding of this principle of Christian growth led him to ask the Corinthian believers to imitate him just as he himself imitated Christ (1 Cor 11:1). He later challenged Timothy to "be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12). This is a challenge to all mature Christians and church leaders to keep on growing in their relationship with Christ so that they can manifest godly character worthy of being imitated.

Personal Attention to Believers' Spiritual Growth Needs

"For you know that *we dealt with each of you* as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:11, 12, emphasis added). Paul and his team gave the believers individual attention and instruction as a father would do to his children with the intention to help each of them with their unique needs. They understood that each believer's uniqueness meant individual attention. With what is known in the Bible about Paul's ministry, it is very likely that the personal attention

given to the believers' spiritual needs also included power encounters to set people free from demonic harassment (Acts 16:16-18, 19:11-12, 20:7-12; Eph 6:10-18).

Hampton Keathley (2004) illustrates the need for personal attention to believers as follows:

> When we bring a newborn home from the hospital, we don't just put down the infant and say, "Welcome to the family, Johnny. Make yourself at home. The towels are in the hall closet upstairs, the pantry is right here, the can opener is in this drawer. No crying after 10 p.m. If you have any questions, there are lots of people in the family who would love to help you so don't be afraid to ask." You laugh and say that is ridiculous, but that is what usually happens to new Christians. Someone gets saved and starts going to church but never gets much personal attention. We devote 18 years to raising our children, but don't even spend six months helping a new Christian get started in understanding the spiritual world. As a result, many people have been Christians for many years, but have not grown very much. Hebrews 5:12 refers to this phenomenon. So, new believers need someone to give them guidance and help them grow. Like a newborn, they need some personal attention.

An important insight highlighted in Keathley's illustration is that discipling converts requires a significant investment of time. It is not an event limited to a two-to-three-week evangelistic series or something that is taken care of in a formal teaching setting (e.g., baptismal class). This makes mentorship inseparable from discipleship. Since the call to "make disciples" (*mathēteusate*) in Matthew 28:19 is essentially a call to duplicate one's self, mentorship is inseparable from discipleship.

A mentor is defined as someone who is committed to a healthy spiritual relationship with another person for the purpose of mutual accountability and growth in Jesus Christ. In addition to the formal teaching settings, spiritual mentors should be available to share their spiritual journey and experiences (both positive and negative) with new converts. I once invited a renowned Adventist preacher to share her spiritual journey with a group of students I mentor. She explained to us that throughout her life she always sought to be happy. Before she became an Adventist, she searched for happiness through wrong means to no avail. When she was converted and later became a pastor, she unsuccessfully sought happiness in the applause and approval of other people. One day, she finally found the answer to her quest in the following statement in *Steps to Christ* by Ellen White: "God made man perfectly holy and *happy*" (emphasis added) (1999:9). It was only then that she understood that true happiness is only found in surrendering one's life with its past mistakes to God. My

students really appreciated our guest being vulnerable in sharing her life experience with them. They understood that she did not get where she is currently in her spiritual journey at a click of a button. They also understood that they are not the only ones struggling in their spiritual journey. Because of this open conversation with our guest, we all resolved not to let our past mistakes determine who we become in life.

The Teaching of Biblical Truth

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe" (1 Thess 2:13). Conforming themselves to the command of Matthew 28:19-20, Paul and his companions made the Word of God an essential element of the Thessalonians' discipleship process. They taught biblical truth using illustrations and metaphors their hearers were familiar with (2 Tim 2:3-5). This not only helped their hearers relate to their teaching but also to easily remember them.

First Thessalonians 2:7-13 clearly shows that although the teaching of biblical truth was essential, it was not the sole component of Paul's missionary team's discipleship model. While the teaching of biblical truth is an essential component of discipleship because a convert cannot fully mature spiritually without understanding biblical principles, it must also be acknowledged that a convert may have considerable biblical knowledge and yet remain spiritually immature. For this reason, the teaching of biblical truth must always be balanced with other components of biblical discipleship such as an intentional commitment to the spiritual growth and welfare of new believers, a modeling of a spiritual walk with God, and personal attention to each believer's spiritual welfare and growth needs. Congregational and small group teaching and personal attention of the believers are needed to encourage them along the road to their Christian maturity. Just as a baby needs an additional amount of attention, new converts also need someone to provide them with attention and guidance in the maturation process.

A Way Forward: Brief Considerations and Conclusion

It is expected that when new believers experience genuine conversion in Christ and embrace the Adventist movement wholeheartedly, they will leave the old religious practices and beliefs behind, and as new persons, become faithful disciples. Their allegiances and belief now and onwards

are to Jesus Christ and his remnant church who through his death on the cross has triumphed over the forces of evil and hell. In places where Satan pushes and coerces individuals to live in fear as his allies and prisoners, it is only through Jesus' victorious power that pastors and missionaries working for the Adventist Church can carry forward their mission, proclaiming the gospel and rescuing people from the devil's hand and the fear of hell and its grip.

Allegiance to the true God and his church happens only when believers know where they come from and who they are (history/identity), where they are right now (saved and in God's church), and where they are going (purpose/prophetic perspective). Accordingly, believers will have to depend on the Holy Spirit and on the members of Christ's body to learn the biblical truths cognitively, but they must also be discipled through the principles and biblical framework of God's kingdom. This must be based on a clear understanding of the spiritual realities of life so that new believers will fully grow up in Christ and become mature and committed Adventist Christians.

Believers "struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm" (Eph 6:12). However, in all their struggles, believers are more than conquerors through Christ who loved them and sacrificed his life for them (Rom 8:37; Kuhn 2012:4, 5).

Endnotes

1 Among the Lobi of Burkina Faso, death by lightning, drowning, snake bite, or suicide are considered bad deaths for which no funeral rite is performed. As a result, such people cannot become ancestors.

2 It is also important to consider that in humanity, a spiritual nature is intertwined with a physical nature, as there cannot be one without the other. One could ask, "What is a spiritual nature without a physical nature?"

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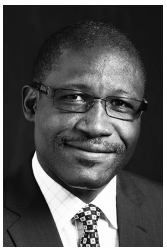

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The Phenomenon of Ancestor Cults with Missiological Implications

Introduction

This paper seeks to briefly describe the ongoing interaction between Christianity and ancestor cults. Ancestor cults are found all over the world in nearly every society and continue to form stumbling blocks to the full evangelization and Christian practice of many (Hwang 1977:340). Some Christians may quickly dismiss ancestor cults as heretical, heathen, and "other;" however, the phenomenological diversity of the problem begs a more nuanced response from reflective Christians. This article will illustrate the problem of ancestor cults, describe their general features, and Christian attempts to address them. Finally, some evangelistic reflections and suggestions for further study will be offered.

The Problem

The experience of death is universal to the human condition. In the West, comments reflecting the sentiment that "We all die, the only question is how soon" are common. It is no wonder then that all cultures have created mechanisms for helping people cope with the process of death, memory of loved ones, and questions of ongoing existence after death.

Western cultures have their own traditions that mark death rituals. From caricatures of the undertaker, to crematoriums and caskets, to drunken wakes and funerals, to granite tombstones—people know what the processes of death look like. After the rituals are over, the process of grief of those closest to the deceased is dictated to some degree by culture. This is evidenced in the opprobrium or esteem that follows a remarriage that has taken place "too soon" or "long enough" after the death of a spouse.

What about the deceased after the typical funeral and mourning is over? In the West, the gravesite often becomes a center of memory for the deceased. Families gather to decorate the gravesite with flowers and artifacts, to remember, grieve, and pray, and sometimes to try to speak to the dead one. Careful observers will note the ritual patterns: placing offerings on the grave (flowers, pictures, teddy bears), recounting memories, and some invoking assistance of the deceased—at least as listening ears. It is not uncommon for Christians to "feel closer" to their dead while at the gravesite. Countless movies depict the protagonist feeling the presence of their loved one or asking advice while at grave. This is the cultural air we breathe in the United States.

The experience of the departed is viewed differently in Asian and African cultures, however. Thus, Christians cannot avoid reflecting on this issue (Ela 1988:14). For many Africans, the ancestors continue to exert a strong sense of presence among those left behind. As Jean-Marc Ela explains, "In many African societies, the cult of the dead is perhaps that aspect of culture to which the African is most attached" (14). For Ela, what is essential to the African experience of the ancestors is that they continue to be part of the family and community. Thus, the gravesite is the place where the spirit of the ancestor is most concentrated. Often the family will maintain a mask or statue that serves as a human representation "of the spiritual presence of the ancestor" (15). Ela describes how in one tribe in Cameroon the head of the family carries with him a jar—*baba*—that represents the presence of his father or grandfather. This jar is used as the focal point of rituals that remember the ancestor, maintains the kinship linage, and helps bring unity among the living. In this belief, death is not annihilation, but a departure. Indeed, most Africans speak of death euphemistically as having "gone," "gone past," or "left us behind" (Mosothoane 1973:88). The implication is that the departed have gone to the spirit world where they continue to exist. This departure is only feared if there are no descendants (preferably male) to remember—to be an ancestor one must first have children.

In traditional African societies, life is lived in a chain of remembering. "As I remember my fathers, my children will remember me." In this chain of remembering, ancestors become the "living dead" who are symbolized with objects, remembered and honored in ritual, and called upon to help in times of need (Triebel 2002:188). In such a worldview, the individual lives a shared life with the past ancestors and the future progeny. They are "part of an endless stream that flows from parent to child and from generation to generation" (Heibert 2008:107). The focus here is not on life after death, but on the "well-being of the human community" in the present (Staples 1981:272).

These examples drawn from an African and America perspective illustrate a central human concern: What is the relationship of the living to the dead? Does this relationship exist only in the memory of the living or is there some spiritual interaction with the dead? These are necessary concerns for the Christian who desires to surrender all aspects of life, culture, and worldview to God.

What Are Ancestor Cults?

The term "ancestor cult" is used to define a wide array of beliefs and practices that deal with one's ancestors. These beliefs and practices encompass various aspects of social identity and utility as well as spirituality and religion. They are not exclusive to one's biological forerunners as they can include the clan, tribe, or national ancestors. Finally, ancestor cults are not vestiges of idealized primitive cultures. Rather, they are complex and dynamic systems of belief and practice that are adapting themselves to myriad expressions in the contemporary world.

According to Bernard Hwang, ancestor cults are built on a few basic assumptions. These are that "the departed ancestors live on [in some way] after death, man has a soul or souls, ancestors can help or harm their living descendants, they [ancestors] need support in their new mode of existence" (1977:361). Added to these is the African assumption that ancestors continue to play roles as members of the community (Triebel 2002:188). It should be noted that not all these assumptions are true for all ancestor cults nor do many practitioners clearly understand or articulate them. The next sections will examine the social aspects of ancestor cults followed by their spiritual aspects.

Social Aspects of Ancestor Cults

One of the key functions of ancestor cults is in the realm of social relationships. There are a variety of ways that ancestors impact social relationships. In some cultures, the keeping of the object of remembering (i.e., mask, jar, or altar) grants hierarchal status to the keeper as the leader of the family or clan. These objects can also contribute to a sense of solidarity and unity among the family or clan (Ela 1988:15). In Confucianism, the concept of filial piety is the central virtue of the society. Proper respect and care for parents, mourning them at death, and continued honoring of them after death helps maintain social order and harmony (Hwang 1977:349, 350). This generational projection of honor toward progenitors aids in building up ethical and moral behaviors that pattern everyday life (Hua 2016:92). In some places, national heroes are venerated as proto-

ancestors worthy of the respect and emulation of all. Among many tribes in Africa, childbearing fills a crucial role in the society as the primary link to becoming an ancestor. For example, to the Shona, true adulthood means one is on his or her way to becoming an ancestor and this can only be achieved by producing offspring (Makwasha 2009:49).

These social functions of ancestor cults help shape the behaviors and attitudes of those who operate within such a worldview without the direct need of interaction with the dead. They are not necessarily spiritual practices seeking to communicate or interact directly with the ancestors and it is in this sense that they are more social in function than religious. As Hwang asserts, "Explicit belief in an afterlife is not essential to [the] practice of ancestor cult" (1977:344). For many practitioners of ancestor cults, the practice is rooted in memory, social harmony, and ethical behavior, not in fear and interaction with the afterlife (Hua 2016:93).

Spiritual Aspects of Ancestor Cults

Nevertheless, many ancestor cults are practiced with the assumption that the dead continue to exist and interact with the living. This interaction is sometimes demanded when a malevolent ancestor needs appeasement or when the descendents seek some sort of blessing or benefit from the ancestor (Makwasha 2009:38). It can be a reciprocal exchange whereby the cult is practiced in order to gain some help or desire. Sometimes the troubled spirit of the deceased is disrupting harmony because they need help finding their resting place (see the story of Mbuya Ndoro in Makwasha 2009:44ff). Other times the descendants have not adequately served the ancestor through some ritual process or memory and thus they bring down the wrath of the ancestors.

For many Chinese, the choice of a good burial site is essential to the appeasement of the ancestors. This choice of the ideal location is made with the help of *Feng-shui*—geomancy, the Chinese pseudoscience of choosing ideal locations based on innate energies. Appropriate care and concern with the burial and ongoing practices of veneration help ensure the prosperity of the descendants (Heibert 1982:35-47). This reciprocity is a key factor in many ancestor cults (Hwang 1977:349). Hwang notes that more educated Chinese will emphasize the social aspects of the ancestor cults but in the practice of common people, the cults take on a decidedly spiritual nature (348).

In many African societies, the ancestors have powers that are feared. They can bring or prevent misfortune and therefore induce fear. Johannes Triebel sees in this fear clear spiritual implications that make it difficult for the sympathetic Christian to abandon the ancestor cults wholly to the

social sphere (2002:188). For many Africans, at least, the ancestors cannot be dismissed as merely social constructs of the memory of the dead. Ancestors are beneficent or malevolent beings that continue to exist and must be appeased, venerated, and cared for in a reciprocal exchange.

Ancestor cults can fulfill both social and spiritual functions. Christians wanting to resolve the issue may be tempted to accept the social functions of ancestors while rejecting their spiritual presence and functions. This solution fails because many who participate in ancestor cults are held hostage by fear of the spirits or in need of the ministrations of the spirits. The next section briefly surveys how Christians approach ancestor cults.

Christian Approaches to Ancestor Cults

Christians have generally taken three different approaches to dealing with ancestor cults: they have ignored or rejected them, they have sought some way to accommodate them within Christian theology, and they have sought to contextualize Christian theology as the fulfillment or replacement of the ancestor cults.

Ancestor Cults Ignored and/or Rejected

During the great missionary expansion, Western missionaries sometimes did not perceive or believe in ancestor cults (Staples 1981:275). This was due to the Enlightenment philosophy and materialistic worldview they came with. The missionaries from Europe and America often dichotomized the universe into the unseen God of heaven and the seen material world. While most believed God could and did intervene on Earth, the Earth was essentially the mechanical operation of scientific laws. Thus, when the missionaries came into contact with people from different worldviews, they were often unable to recognize the experiential reality of things like spirits and ancestors that inhabited the spiritual middle ground between the natural world and God. This fallacy of the "excluded middle," as Paul Hiebert called it, is what often resulted with the missionaries ignoring the spiritual realities and/or rejecting them as contrary to Christianity (1982:35-47).

Where missionaries did perceive ancestor cults, they often simply confronted them using Western theological categories and rejected them as a superstitious vestiges of pre-Christian heathen religion (Thom 1973:75). This dismissal and rejection was often the position of "evangelical ministers with fundamentalist backgrounds" (Hwang 1977:351). Missionaries tended to see the cults as the worship of the superstitious and magical and therefore in direct contradiction to the first and second commandments (Makwasha 1085:153).

Whether a group confronts, rejects, or ignores ancestor cults, the end results are often the same, since missionaries mostly failed to develop or encourage appropriate Christian theologies useful to the needs of the newly evangelized peoples with regard to the ancestors. Without an adequate Christian theology to replace the old needs and desires, newly converted people would often carry on dual allegiances with their new Christian faith and the ancestor cults. The ongoing persistence of ancestor cults often perpetuated the "conspiracy of silence"—if you cannot beat them, ignore them (Staples 1981:275). In southern Africa by 1981, up to "90% of members [continued to] believe that the ancestors can powerfully intervene in their lives" (276). Consequently, in vast parts of Africa and Asia, converts to Christianity have few resources to address some of their deepest religious needs (Hwang 1977:352; Triebel 2002:193). Additionally, while many early missionaries did not address ancestral cults adequately, some indigenous leaders who replaced them in the post-colonial period often simply absorbed Western theological categories and failed to adequately theologize an adequate response to the ancestor cults.

Ancestor Cults Accommodated

The problem of what to do with ancestor cults is more obvious to Christians who entertain a robust understanding of saints and intermediate states (i.e., the period between life on earth and the final resurrection of the body). Often Roman Catholics have been at the forefront in working out how to accommodate ancestor cults and fit them within Catholic doctrine. Catholic doctrine teaches that "the communion of saints is the spiritual solidarity which binds together the faithful on earth, the souls in purgatory, and the saints in heaven in the organic unity of the same mystical body under Christ its head" (Sollier 1908). Even to the casual observer, similarities between ancestors, the souls in purgatory, and saints in heaven is obvious. Unsurprisingly, for Catholics in Africa and Asia, the traditional ancestors have been accorded the status of souls in purgatory and sometimes of saints in heaven (Staples 1981:280; Daneel 1973:62, 63). As saints, they can join in a ministry of mediation between humans and God with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, at their head (Catechism of the Catholic Church).

Roman Catholics did not arrive at accommodation of ancestors without a struggle, however. This position was first worked out over centuries in China. In the 16th century, accommodation was practiced beginning with the early Jesuit missionaries led by Matteo Ricci. This position was reversed in the 17th century when opposition to the ancestor cult was mandated by the Pope. It was not until the declaration of Pope Pius XII

in 1839 that the ancestor cult was accepted as orthodoxy by the church. In Pius XII's view, the cult was accepted because it represented respect and honor for the dead, not worship (Chi-Ping 1985:150, 151).

It should be noted, however, that it is not only Catholics who have accommodated ancestor cults in their beliefs and practices. The practice has been especially common among some African Initiated/Indigenous/Independent Churches (AICs) as well (Makwasha 2009:175). AICs are often more sensitive to the spiritual needs of the culture and some found ways of incorporating traditional practices into their new Christian practices (168). Others simply turned a "blind-eye" toward ancestor cults (295). So accommodation, the acceptance and reinterpretation of ancestor cults has continued by many different Christian groups around the world.

Ancestor Cults Addressed through Theological Contextualization

One significant way Christians have sought to address ancestor cults is through what some have called "fulfillment through transformation" or "elimination by substitution" (Makwasha 2009:194). The objective is to replace the cultural concepts of ancestors with a scriptural theology that answers the felt needs of each culture. The missiological assumption undergirding contextualization is that Christian theology is broad enough to answer the questions and felt needs of every person in every culture. For those who place great importance on *filial piety*, the mediatory roll of the ancestors in the afterlife, or the need to appease the ancestors, the Scripture should provide a source book of fulfillment, correction, and healing. For example, much has been written about how Jesus's sacrifice on the cross does not only remove our *guilt*, but also expiates our *shame* by restoring our *honor*, and removes our *fear* by granting us *power* over Satan and his dark forces. It is well understood that different cultures place salvific inflections differently, some emphasizing honor while others emphasize innocence, or power (Muller 2000). In a similar way, the immense cultural influence exerted by the ancestors should find a culturally appropriate and scripturally sound solution.

Several scriptural theologies have been developed as possible substitutions or fulfillments of ancestor cults. These overlapping theologies place emphasis on the centrality of Jesus Christ as Ancestor Par Excellence, victor, mediator, or reconciler. They seek to replace improper reliance on ancestors with Jesus as the ultimate ancestor. Following these theologies, Christians dealing with ancestor cults do not simply replace and exclude the old beliefs and practices, they celebrate them as fulfilled in Jesus Christ and therefore necessarily transformed as Christ fully replaces their role

and function. As Samuel Kunhiyop argues, "It is thus possible to understand ancestral belief and practices as predicting or foreshadowing the mediatorial role of Christ described in the book of Hebrews" (2012:138). Rather than seeing the ancestor cults as simply vestiges of pagan religion, they are reinterpreted as pre-evangelistic, opening up and sensitizing hearts to the work of Christ as the fulfillment of their desires (Makwasha 2009:301).

When seeking theological solutions to the question of the ancestors, African theologians often turn to the Book of Hebrews for inspiration, some even calling it "our book." In Hebrews, the mediatorial role of Jesus Christ is clearly seen. As the "Great Ancestor" of Hebrews, "Jesus bridges the gulf between the Holy God and sinful humanity, achieving for humanity the harmonious fellowship with God that all human priestly mediations only approximate" (300, 302). This role of mediator is of central importance in many African cultures that rely on mediation to help resolve conflicts. This reliance on mediation extended to the conception of the spirit world as a place where human conflicts are often worked out with the help or hindrance of ancestral spirits. Thus, theologically Jesus Christ is to be granted primacy as the "ultimate mediator" "between us and the spirit world," and he is fully capable of helping Christians solve all their conflicts (Kunhiyop 2012:137).

Another central role for Jesus Christ as fulfillment and substitute of ancestor cults has to do with the concern for the final destination of dead ancestors. In Africa where the ancestors are experienced as the "living dead" who are thought to continue as part of the family and society, the Christian demand to abandon the ancestors often felt like a deep betrayal. As Mbuvi states, "This was a vexing concern for most early African converts to Christianity" (2014:159). For Mbuvi, the book of 1 Peter portrays Jesus as the victorious Christ who "went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison" (3:19). "This passage provides the possibility of comfort in knowing that the ancestors, who died before the advent of the modern missionary endeavor in Africa, still have the chance to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ" (159). In this way, Christians can rest confidant in the Victorious Jesus Christ's care and concern for the ancestors.

In Asian cultures that deeply value *filial piety* and the social and ethical order it sustains, God should be viewed "as the oldest (thus, according to many East Asian cultures, the most respectable) and ultimate ancestor" (Hong 2017:17). From this viewpoint, parents can be best honored by honoring God. Asian scholars sympathetic to the issue of filial piety argue, based on the commandment to honor parents, "that those who revere God must practice filial piety" (24) and even exceed non-Christians in doing so (Ro 1985:10).

Missiological Implications

Bernard Hwang proposed addressing ancestor cults through a process of confrontation with dialogue, accommodation with study, and transformation through grace (1977:354-357). In addition this process must be boldly evangelistic, presenting the gospel in a way that powerfully addresses the needs of the people. Samuel Kunhiyop lamented that Christians turn to traditional practices, such as ancestor cults, for help in their difficult lives on earth (2012:137). It is a tragedy that they have not been taught the gospel that releases its transformative power in their lives. To those in bondage, fear, or need, "the gospel can [and must] proclaim a message of hope and freedom" (Hua 2016:92). The following suggestions are made with the goal of releasing the evangelistic hope and freedom of the gospel:

Most Protestant Theologians Agree That the Living Cannot and/or Should Not Communicate with the Dead

The issues surrounding the intermediate state—the destination or condition of the spirits/souls of the dead—are of little help in dealing with the ancestor cult because of widely accepted and orthodox Christian teaching.

> Nowhere in the Old or New Testaments are the dead represented as themselves taking the initiative to make contact with their living descendants, neither to communicate, nor to harm, nor to bless. A number of passages condemn, implicitly or explicitly, attempts by the living to contact the dead . . . and while this may be taken to imply of establishing such contacts, nowhere is it positively affirmed that communication between the living and the dead can be initiated. (Ferdinando 1996:122, 123)

Thus, whether the soul continues to exist after death (as some Christians believe) or falls into some sort of soul sleep while waiting for the resurrection, the Scriptures are clear that there is no interaction between the living and the dead (Ro 1985:8). The presence of the dead continues only in the memory of these left behind or in the deceptive activities of evil spirits. This message of freedom from fear of the dead should be couched in the context of God's goodness and hope of the resurrection.

The Role of the Church as an Alternative Imagination of Community on Earth Must be Emphasized

Wise and sincere Christians in every culture are aware of the effects of sin on their own culture. Lamentations over materialism, tribalism, or corruption exist in many places. Much of the time, Christians are well aware of where they fall short and how they can improve. There may be a tendency on the part of some, especially in the West, to sensationalize ancestor cults due to their spiritualistic overtones. However, as mentioned, ancestor cults occupy wide functions in cultures that are often as social as they are spiritual or religious.

Ultimately, one of primary goals of evangelism is to alter the sinful reality of human experience and worldview (Ro 1985:9). Christians are called to allow the gospel to intentionally alter the way they imagine the world. Bryan Stone articulates a vision of Christianity that refuses to simply live within worldviews that are dependent to empire, civil religion, or militarism (2018). Though Stone writes to the west, we should also join him in calling on the church not to "play chaplain" to any culture, but, rather, to be a "Spirit-empowered and Christ-shaped performance of an alternative social imagination" in which comfort is not found in the arms of dead ancestors but in the presence of the risen Lord, faithful mediator, and ancestor par excellence (48). Figuring out what this "alternative social imagination" will look like must become the ongoing task of all Christians in one's church community. In order to address ancestor cults, Christian communities around the world will need to design practical solutions that will help their adherents place the fear or guilt that they feel from their ancestors at the feet of Jesus.

Ancestor Cults Persist, in Part, Because of Faulty Understanding of Evangelism and Conversion

Far too often, Christians have too narrowly defined evangelism as a momentary decision having to do with "mental assent" to a set of beliefs. When evangelism is done simplistically as a ritual process (baptism) following acceptance of narrow set of beliefs (sin/salvation) and when the emphasis is placed on numeric growth, then the gospel loses much of its power to render change within a culture.

Dealing with ancestor cults will require a broader theology of evangelism that reframes the evangelistic objective in terms of transferred allegiance rather than professed belief in a narrow set of doctrinal statements. Matthew Bates argues convincingly that the ultimate goal of evangelism is the transfer of allegiance to Jesus Christ as king. Bates identifies three

dimensions of allegiance as mental affirmation, professed fealty, and enacted loyalty (2017:92). Within Bates' paradigm of allegiance, ancestor cults should be dealt with head on as a process of accepting a nuanced and scriptural fulfillment/replacement theology that addresses the needs and concerns of the people in question, appropriate support in the decision to live by that truth, and welcoming into a community that is fully able to act on that truth. If counting members must be taken for organizational reasons, it should not be taken until mental affirmation, professed fealty, and enacted loyalty are demonstrated.

More Needs to be Done to Relate the Theology of the Holy Spirit to the Issue of Ancestor Cults

The role of the Holy Spirit in addressing ancestor cults has yet to be fully explored. Wey Hua has worked to relate the "the power of the Holy Spirit, who moves and works through all believers" to the issue of ancestor cults in China (2016:98). Additionally, Russell Staples sees the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as a "fundamental part of the theological approach to the ancestors" for the Shona people of southern Africa (1981). Therefore, while some work has been directed toward developing a theological response to ancestor cults through the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, there is much more to be done to relate pneumatology to ancestor cults. Great opportunities exist in Trinitarian theology that teaches that Jesus Christ himself relied on the Holy Spirit during his earthly ministry and sent the Holy Spirit with power and authority as the comforter, sustainer, and energizer of the church (Wimber and Springer 2009:38).

Conclusion

This paper has described the ongoing interaction between Christianity and ancestor cults. It has described the diversity of ancestor cults, their roles and functions, and Christian responses to them. Much work has been done to develop theological approaches to ancestor cults in specific cultural contexts, but there is still more to be done. Bernard Hwang noted almost half a century ago that it seemed likely that "ancestor cults will last for some time" (1977:359). As long as such beliefs continue to impact people, faithful theologians with localized knowledge must continue to develop biblical responses to address those beliefs and practices in each cultural context. In this theologizing process, it is imperative that theologians neither forget the power and hope present within the gospel nor ignore the heartfelt needs of common believers. If the power and hope of the gospel does not meet the needs of believer, it will soon be discarded as pearls are discarded by swine.

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CRISTIAN DUMITRESCU

Ancestors in the Asia-Pacific Context

Identity, Roles, and Ancestry

How does one pay respect to one's ancestors? This is one of the most important questions people ask all around the world. Such inquiry assumes that life continues after death, and this assumption undergirds the many varied rituals and ceremonies in honor of the departed. Scott Moreau adds that "the cult of the ancestors has critical social functions such as maintaining order in society through sustaining respect for the elders and adherence to social roles" (2000:59). Ancestors are expected to provide the living protection, material and spiritual blessing, while the living are required to continue to respect the ancestors as they are done for the living elders. Lack of respect or disrespect towards the departed may in turn bring bad luck or suffering.

Looking at ancestor cults from an anthropological perspective, Mary Douglas contends that dealing with ancestors is

> one of the very important functions of religions throughout the world. . . . Ancestors can take some of the weight of explaining pain and suffering. If they are cast as very moral, they want their descendants to be good to each other, and punish their sins with misfortune. Or if the ancestors are thought to be spiteful and jealous they may inflict suffering on the living. (2012:176-177)

The Bible attributes no action to deceased ancestors, the only one in control being God. Monotheism makes God the agent of both good and evil, in spite of Satan positioning himself as the adversary and the source of all evil and suffering.

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol16/iss1/

Douglas considers informal explanations of agency as popular beliefs; however, when such explanations become institutionalized, they form an ancestor cult that requires worship. Ancestor worship can take several forms, one being seeking advice from or offering it to the living. In Douglas' words, "The great benefit to the society at large is that the tragedies are not laid at the door of living persons; an ancestor cult allows amnesty for the living, the dead carry the blame" (2012:179).

An ancestor's role may be to insure the status of a person or community. Other times an ancestor is invoked for protection when a rebellion against the colonists or oppressors is called for. An ancestor may provide a name for a family or for an entire genealogical line. Political contenders may claim that an ancestor empowered and called them to run for an office or become an uncontested leader. The entire process has to do with the distribution of power across generations.

Some members of the community often claim that they have direct access to the ancestors, communicating with them and performing rituals to appease and control them. Such intermediaries may be shamans, medicine men, quack doctors, or the Filipino *albularyo*. Rituals that they recommend are assumed to carry power to overturn bad luck and suffering in life, as well as appeasing the anger of the spirits when mistakes or lack of respect was shown toward them; however, biblical repentance, renewal, and reformation require that images are forbidden, that magic is repudiated, and any divination or acknowledging of minor powerful spiritual beings is excluded. This clear injunction creates a gap between biblical monotheism and most other religious systems.

Douglas also notes that ancestor worship is used to control communities, especially to subdue younger generations. Attitudes toward authority are shaped by fear of the unknown and the realization that the future is tied to the power of the dead. "The more the living old can impose their authority on the living young, the more we should expect [a] cult of the dead. Those in control use the idea of the interventionist dead to warn the young against insubordination" (2012:189). Any rebellion of the young against the older generation announces mistrust of the old people alive and no special respect for them when they are dead. "The wheel of culture turns according to the swings in the relation between generations" (189). The young fear the old sorcerers and their power, but at the same time, sorcerers may be eliminated so their spell on the future may be broken.

Philip Esler states that an interpretation of (biblical) texts indicates communion with the deceased authors. He believes that "human beings are genetically disposed to respect their ancestors. . . . While our deceased relatives and friends have no rights, who would deny that we have a duty, at the level of common humanity, to honor their memory? We do so in di-

verse ways, from keeping portraits of them on our walls, to visiting their graves, to dedicating books to their memory, and so on" (2005:215, 214).

For Esler, the biblical text is made up of messages sent by biblical authors, "our ancestors in faith . . . a hard-copy version of the living voices of Paul and all the rest—proclaimed, heard, and acted upon" (2005:216). Esler considers that on the one hand "these authors enliven our present identity," and on the other hand "their words come to us not as binding decrees but as revelations of the lives in Christ possible when the faith was formed and shaped by the distinctive cultures in which it emerged" (226).

"The dead were often seen in family religion as benefactors of their descendants, particularly in the bequest of ancestral land" (Brett 2008:53). Naboth refuses to sell the land inherited from his ancestors calling it "the inheritance of my fathers" (1 Kgs 21:3 with a parallel in 1 Sam 14:16 "the inheritance of Elohim"). Stones and pillars had been dedicated on the land to mark the origin as a gift from the ancestors.

Among Christians, the veneration of the dead and of their remains is very popular. From early times, Roman Christians believed that the martyrs were alive and that they had special powers. Calling on them to intervene in daily life became popular. "This process was thought to be more efficacious if the petitioners could place themselves as close as possible to the particular martyr's physical remains. . . . By the practice of invocation, living Christians thought that they enjoyed a personal interaction with the saints whose memories they treasured" (Esler 2005:224). Rituals were developed to make the martyrs happy and to appease their anger.

Ancestors are part of daily life for people in many parts of the world. In China, for example, houses are not only intended to offer comfort for the living, but to provide communion between the dead ancestors, the living family members, and the unborn who represent the next generations. For Africans, the visible and invisible world are interconnected. The ancestors' role is to "guarantee the integrity and vitality of the community. All this produces an intensely felt sense of solidarity between members of a community" (Esler 2015:216). Without the ancestors and the supernatural, Africans feel incomplete.

Esler finds that the communion between the living and their predecessors is a dynamic exchange process.

> Every group is, to an extent, engaged in the reconstruction of its shared past to serve the needs of the present. Its leaders are social agents with a firm grasp on group identities, practices, and ideas who also have the capacity to pass them on to others. . . . Our link with the past is a balance of persistence and change, continuity and newness. . . . The holy Christian men and women who have died in Christ will very often be culturally distant from us. Yet we hold in common with

> them a set of practices, beliefs, ideas, and aspirations centered on faith in Jesus Christ. . . . We are able to see them as prototypes of Christian identity and as providing it with a stock of 'possible selves.' From what they have been in the past, we gain a sense of what we can be, now or in the future. (2005:225)

In other religions, the main question is not so much what happens to the dead, but "how to deal with the ghost that was apt to revisit and disturb the survivors. The practical question was how to induce the ghost to go away and to stay away" (Jevons 1985:63). Funeral rites and ceremonies are often intended to take care of the ancestors' spirits. The life of the soul after death is often associated with how well the living preserve the body of the dead. One of the main fears is that the body was not buried properly. The popular belief is that the ghost of the dead returns in a dream, or even as real, to express the anger of the body for not being treated properly. People believe that the ancestors' souls can return and impact the present and future life of living relatives.

In order to avoid the wrath of the ancestors, the deceased person's personal items are placed in the coffin or in the grave. Sometimes a mausoleum is built and equipped in the same way the bedroom was where the deceased used to spend their resting time. If ancestors have everything they need, it is believed that they have no reason to return. In rural China, people abandon "the dwelling of the dead man and everything that belonged to him" in order not to upset the dead or give them any reason for returning (Jevons 1985:65). Giving everything was considered an offering that was to be repeated at different intervals in order to make sure the deceased stays away. Traditional Christians visit the graves of their deceased relatives at least on All Souls' Day. Chinese visit the graves twice a year with abundant offerings.

The ancestors' wrath is considered more powerful and effective than the wrath of the gods. In fact, ancestors are seen as intermediaries between gods and humans. They are not the source of blessings, but can mediate in behalf of humans to the gods. The gods in China, for example, are depicted in human form in the temples. They are no longer worshipped by communities but by individuals with private offerings, the same as people do to their ancestors. As a result, ancestor worship replaced over time, worship to the gods.

Case Studies

China and Hong Kong

Some people believe that the Chinese are the "'greatest people on earth' because of their tradition of paying respects to their ancestors" (Butcher 1994:397). Well-preserved funeral shrines may be seen all over the place in China and Hong Kong. When the Rites controversy took place, resulting in the papal edict of 1740, Confucian filial piety was the major problem. Although Matteo Ricci and the Jesuits who followed him tried to contextualize the rituals related to ancestors, the issue proved to be too sensitive. Butcher aptly notes that "perhaps one of the reasons for the failure of Nestorianism to establish itself in China at that time is precisely because it went too far in attempting to integrate the existing traditions it found there, and thereby lost its defining power as a religion in its own right" (1994:444).

In China, the gods are depicted in human form. Beautiful or ugly, laughing or scaring people, they are part of the "pantheon" of symbols honored by people in a special way. While they are no longer worshipped by entire communities, individuals bring food offerings, hence the confusion between ancestors and deities. The "offering to gods" ritual requires that the ancestors are invited to eat first, followed by the rest of the living family. The offerings are always placed before the ancestors' tablets, and the family is expected to speak to the gods in behalf of the individual or the family bringing the offering. The Chinese use a make-see approach, with sacrifices and offerings brought as replacements or images of people made out of paper, of clay, or of straw. Although the offerings preserve the ritual that is done with the replacements, the gods are believed to be real because people expect real blessings as a result of their sacrifices. Filial piety lays at the basis of the ancestor worship ritual, and it is rather a duty than an expectation of real gain.

Ancestors are buried in columbary, well above the city, in order to have them watch and protect the living. People have to climb hundreds of steps in order to get to their beloved. All this effort is considered making merit for the ancestors. Candles or sticks are lighted and all senses are involved. The number of dragons placed at the corners of the columbary roof indicates the status of the ancestors buried there.

Korea

Ancestor worship was always part of Korean life, bringing together religion and kinship relations based on Confucian philosophy. Young

people were supposed to care for the elderly and to continue to do that even after their death. The departed were never considered dead but were viewed as the living dead. Death was only a new state in which the ancestors would move and continue to exist for at least four generations. Sung-Deuk Oak considers that "through ancestor worship the group's *qi* (material force or energy) was activated and descent was thereby ritually reinforced" (2013:190-191). This *qi* was the concept that united all descendants. Confucianism was based on family unity and ancestor worship became the pinnacle of the rituals related to filial piety. Oak notes that "the only unpardonable sin was the lack of filial piety, from which every other virtue flowed" (192).

Ceremonies usually took place several times a year, around midnight, at which time the ancestors' spirits were invited to partake of food and drink. The ritual also involved an invocation to the spirits, bowing down before them, prayers, as well as burning incense. Lastly, after sending off the spirits, the family would enjoy the food that they also shared with their neighbors the following day. Such rituals were also performed at the graves of the ancestors, which were usually located on a mountainside. Placing food on the grave and spilling wine was part of the ceremony designed to entice the ancestors to bless the family for the incoming year. Pilgrimages to the gravesites took place annually, and the graves were considered sacred places.

Unlike the Buddhist belief that at the end of life one disappears in Nirvana or reincarnates, Confucians "believed that they would achieve immortality by ensuring the continuity of their family bloodline" (Oak 2013:193). The entire set of rituals related to ancestors blended soteriological beliefs with family identity. "Ancestor worship was a scared rite for the prosperity of the living that depended on harmony with the ancestors, traditions, and the cosmos" (193). What Christians call worship and religion is a way of life in all other religions. One cannot stop respecting the ancestors without ceasing to be part of that community and nation. While Christians invite converts to join the new community of God's kingdom, they cannot simply abandon the traditional communities they came from. People feel that Christianity is asking them to abandon their genealogies, identities, and past in order to embrace an idealistic uncertain future. Ancestors were real, while the new community is viewed as utopic.

With this as a background, it is little wonder that Christian converts often return to their original way of life when only a religion was offered to them. Oak remarked that "personal salvation apart from the ancestral line represented an overwhelming existential crisis, and choosing to sever this tie was a difficult choice. Thus some seekers lapsed into the old custom" (2013:206).

In Korea, the most difficult decision and the last item to give up before a person was baptized was to bury or burn the ancestral tablets. These tablets contain the name of the deceased person and people believe that they contain the actual spirit of the ancestor. Incense sticks are burned by the side of the tablet and food is often placed before it. The tablets are made of a variety of materials, but sometimes out of paper so the ancestors could be easily moved when migrating or during emergencies. Ancestor worship became the most difficult obstacle in the process of conversion to Christianity.

The second major obstacle in people's conversion to Christianity was the social pressure and even persecution. Ostracism was triggered by the burial or burning of the tablets and the refusal to worship the ancestors. The accusation of being "unfilial" became the mantra under which Christians were accused of having "no father and no king." Any tragedy or loss among the members of the family was attributed to the ancestors who became angry for not being shown respect. The greatest anathema for Christian converts was to have their name erased from the family's genealogy and to be excommunicated.

Gypsies in Europe

Gypsies came to Europe more than a thousand years ago but remained an unintegrated ethnic group. They have their own traditions, languages, and worldview that are very similar to the North Punjab where they originated from. The average life span of gypsies is short compared with those of the countries they live in, exceptions being considered "a sign that they are especially in favor with the good fairies, and have been exceptionally successful in conciliating the evil ones. Age is therefore, greatly respected" (Block 1939:241), although Gypsies do not know their precise age since birth certificates are rarely present. They do not celebrate birthdays, but name days, especially for old people (Gropper 1975:111).

For Gypsies death is a short sleep, a short interruption of life that continues on "the other side," while the spirits of the ancestors living in the underworld have power over living people. Gypsies do not talk negatively about their ancestors out of fear of vengeance. "Their concern at death deals almost entirely with the question of what relationship the dead will have with those who remain among the living" (Trigg 1973:96). The duty of a gypsy is to honor the ancestors.

When a Gypsy dies, two traditions exist. The nomadic Gypsies simply bury their ancestors wherever the are at the moment, and no sign marks the place of burial. The memory of the deceased is preserved in traditional songs passed on to the next generations, to which one or more stanzas are

added. In case of the death of a settled Gypsy, the extended family comes from wherever they are around the world. Funerals and burial ceremonies are merry occasions where people eat and drink and sometimes play games. Gypsies keep wakes where extraordinary stories of exaggerated heroism from the life of the deceased are told. The oldest person in the room begins a story, and everyone else follows. People are assigned to help keep order since Gypsies have the tendency to talk all at once. "Such gatherings provide an occasion for the younger ones to learn about their history and culture" (Dumitrescu 2010:40).

At the cemetery, the burial place is prepared as a regular bedroom, with all the items an ancestor may need: mirror, hair combs, tooth brushes, antiperspirant, broom and mop, money, shoes, makeup, and hats. All these possessions help the ancestor receive the appropriate honor when crossing to "the other side." People shout messages that the deceased is supposed to share with the rest of the ancestors in behalf of the living. Letters to the ancestors may be read aloud or placed in the casket or in the grave, if relatives are literate. Older Gypsies did not learn to read or write, and often use Romani words that refer to reading the palm rather than a written text (Fonseca 1995:11). Grave markers can be items remembering some characteristics of the deceased: money, expensive bottles of alcohol, cassette tapes, LPs, jewelry, and even a replica of an ATM if the person was a shopaholic. Often, no dates are engraved on the grave marker.

During the funeral, relatives of the deceased are not taking showers, and women do not comb their hair. After the funeral, it brings honor to announce the cost of the funeral and the number of participants. If the deceased had no children, the costs are supported by the extended family. No gifts or donations are accepted, but money can be borrowed.

The family grieves for at least a year, wearing only black clothes. Males are required not to shave for a year. Weddings are postponed during that year, and any joyous events are canceled. TVs are unplugged and any source of merriment is removed. Relatives are not supposed to smile or laugh. Food and water are often placed outside the house, in case the ancestor visits and needs to be satisfied. A visit from the spirit of an ancestor is considered a special honor. Before the New Year, a bucket of water is poured on the ground signifying that plenty of water is provided for the ancestors to keep them happy. A remembrance meal is offered to the family and to the poor people in honor of the ancestor after 40 days and one year after the death.

The Kanak of New Caledonia

Ancestor rituals among the 341 tribes of New Caledonia are very diverse. From preserving the mummy of the ancestor to the totems planted by the seashore to guard the spirits of the deceased and protect the living from these spirits, ancestor rituals are present and alive. The world of the spirits blends with the world of the living. Major public celebrations are often related to the ancestors.

During the second half of the 19th century, the Kanak fought against the French because of the inhumane treatment received from the colonizers. In 1878, the French colonizers killed Ataï, one of the leaders of the Kanak tribe. Ataï was beheaded and his skull deposited in a museum in Paris. For more than a hundred years, the Kanak suffered the shame of not being able to pay the due respects to their deceased leader through an honorable burial. Decapitated bodies are shameful. The entire tribe felt the shame brought against their leader.

For decades, when official requests were submitted by the Kanak asking the French to return Ataï's skull, the French claimed it was lost, had disappeared, and that it had no value anyway. However, for the Kanak, it was an open wound and permanent reason for shame. Finally, in an attempt to earn the Kanak's favor, the French government announced that the skull was found in the Museum of Humankind and returned to the island; however, the authorities refused to provide proper land for the burial. By the time I visited Noumea and the Kanak tribal lands in 2017, Ataï's skull was still not buried. The tribe still hopes that the French government will agree to apologize and provide an honorable burial for one of the Kanak's most revered ancestors.

In the middle of the Kanak tribal land is located the Grand Hut. Shaped as a cone, this hut serves as the sanctuary for the ancestor spirits. Although most of the Kanak are Christians, their worldview is clearly animistic. Tourists are not allowed to enter the hut without permission and without being guided. The chief is the one inviting the ancestors when there is a problem within the tribe or a conflict between tribes. The entire Kanak population gathers on the open mall in front of the hut, each tribe with its leader. The chief summons the ancestors for advice. Only the tribal leaders are allowed to enter the hut, where the chief maintains a permanent kindling fire. A hole is provided in the back of the hut for the spirits to enter, and a basket located at the top of the main pole provides rest for them.

All the elements of the Grand Hut symbolize the unity of the ancestors with the living, of the spirits with the humans. Totems and carved images of the ancestral spirits guard the entrance into the hut. Leaning poles are provided in order to teach humans of their need to bow before their

ancestors as a sign of respect and obedience. A *flèche* faîtière (slender spire) sits on top of the hut symbolizing the unity of the three spheres of the world: the spirit world, the human world, and the underworld. It is a symbol of transition between the dead and the living. Even the tall trees surrounding the open gathering mall line up with their tops almost united as a symbol of unity between the living and their dead ancestors.

La Coutume is an ancestral set of rules and rituals, a code of social relations that outlines the Kanaks' relationships with the world, the ancestors, the land, and the community. It defines their relationship to the material world, to the unseen world, and to other people (LaFargue 2012:5-6). *La Coutume* provides a visible form to allow *La Parole* (the tradition and history passed on to them by the ancestors) to manifest itself among people; it is a set of practices that the Kanak have developed to give the Word—*La Parole*—a form, a body through the expressions and symbols of *La Coutume* (Klein 2012:8). The Kanak worldview cannot be understood without comprehending *La Coutume* and *La Parole*, and the symbols, meanings, and functions attached to them. The heritage that is so closely tied to the ancestors is kept alive, and these traditions, in turn, shape the lives of the Kanak.

Toraja of Borneo

To the Torajans, Bentian, and other groups in Borneo, the ancestors are real and are viewed as part of the community. In spite of recording a Christian majority, and claiming the highest statue of Christ blessing the valley, Torajans continue to perform traditional rituals related to ancestors. Upon death, the deceased is placed in the best part of the house in a bed and watched carefully. To many visitors, the dead person looks like a person in a deep sleep. They are fed daily as though they are alive, and periodically they are washed and refreshed. Dead bodies can be kept in this state until the family collects enough money to organize the traditional mass animal sacrifice.

Torajans, in contrast to other Borneo groups, believe that human beings are born with different statuses. As Clifford Sather observed, "Hierarchically-ranked 'kinds of people' (nobles, commoners, slaves) are each believed to have been created in a different manner and that these differences are 'actuated' in funerary rituals through animal sacrifices" (2012:130). Thus, animal sacrifices are intended to bridge the gap between the living and their ancestors, to the point where the living can "think and feel the desires of the dead" (Tsinjilonis 2004:381).

Although Torajans care for their deceased, and refresh their bodies periodically, the long-term process aims to incorporate them into the "generalized ancestral spirit" (Coville 2002:70). Kenneth Sillander notes that

when the ancestors merge into the general ancestral body "as nobody's ancestors in particular they are everybody's ancestors" (2012:87) and filial piety becomes mandatory for everyone in the larger community.

The animal sacrifice is a ceremony where all the community participates. The more animals sacrificed, the more honor the deceased and the family receives. Young people train for weeks ahead of the event in order to be able to cut the throat of the bulls in one move. The actual scene of the carnage is grotesque. However, the family rejoices when the horns of the bulls are placed on the entrance of the house, increasing their honor in the community. Some families may have to repay the borrowed money for the rest of their lives, but nothing compares for them with the new status in the community.

When babies die, they are considered unborn and are buried within tree trunks. In time, these small "coffins" are covered by the bark of the growing trees. The dead and the unborn are part of the living. Both the ancestors and the unborn are spirits that can affect the lives of the living.

After the animal sacrifice and the end of the ceremonies and festivities, the dead body is carried to the burial place in a triumphal march. The body is placed on a throne and often enclosed into a replica of a Toraja house, with the ends of the roof pointing upward. This is the symbol that the world of the living and the realm of the dead are communicating. The dead are carried to caves dug into high rocks, and a replica of the person is placed at the entrance to remind the community that the ancestors are watching them. Small bits of flesh from the sacrificed animals are placed on top of the stone pillars that form a "Stonehenge." These are supposed to be reminding the ancestors of the great sacrifice the families made in their behalf. In response, the ancestors should not threaten the community but bless them.

At regular times, the dead bodies are retrieved from the caves and taken through a process of restoration. The bodies are painted, their clothes are changed, glasses and prescriptions are updated, and in this way they are endeared to the community. Eloquent speeches are made praising the ancestors and inviting them to bless the community since it is believed that filial piety has to be demonstrated in a very palpable way.

Conclusions

Looking at the described cases, there are common burial features and rituals, as well as differences in how different cultures treat their ancestors. Filial piety seems to be a common factor, as well as the belief that the ancestors continue to live in the community or in the surroundings, being able to affect the lives of the living. All cultures described in this article

seem to espouse a worldview in which the spirit world blends with the world of the senses in an animistic way.

In conclusion, I offer several recommendations derived from the study:

1. Seventh-day Adventists need to discover a theology of biblical filial piety. Such a theology should be produced by local Christians who have not embraced Christianity with all the Western values.
2. Christian funeral rites that speak to the local culture, using functional substitutes, also need to be developed.
3. Missionaries should design indigenous memorial services that can be part of the local way of life. This is the most difficult step for Adventists because they do not believe in the existence of the soul after death and follow the second commandment. Christian denominations that have no problems with their believers bowing down before icons or statues (Catholics or Eastern Orthodox) seem to use a conciliatory approach and be more open to accept converts continuing their ancestor worship rituals. Protestants, however, have a more exclusive approach to the issues related to the second commandment, but Protestant missionaries in certain countries developed a similar form of a memorial service at the beginning of the 20th century. The Koreans adapted a memorial ritual, Ch'udohoe, that may be a starting point.
4. Presenting God as the Great Ancestor should be explored within the local context. The Bible uses language as "The Ancient of days," or "the Alpha and the Omega." Creative solutions are required in order to find the best theology and rituals that remain both biblically faithful and contextually relevant.

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CHRISTOPHER KABWE MUKUKA

Funeral Rituals and Practices: The Quest for Missiological Approaches of Witnessing to Mwami Church Members in Zambia

Introduction

Zambia has 73 ethnic groups whose diverse funeral rituals and practices are important to reflect on in relation to God's mission. Among these ethnic groups, the Ngoni people reside around the Mwami Mission Station. The Ngoni people migrated from South Africa to Zambia between 1820 and 1840. Some went to Tanzania and others settled in the Malawi area. This ethnic group is perceived to be very religious since it usually defends its funeral rituals and practices in their communities and ensures that every person living in the vicinity adhere to its rituals and practices whenever a funeral occurs. The problem for Adventist mission is that these funeral rituals and practices teach the community that the dead are still alive.

The gospel message came to Mwami in 1927 when an eye and leprosarium hospital was established at Mwami Mission Station. At the end of 2019, the Mwami district of the Seventh-day Adventist Church comprises 22 congregations with a total membership of 2,600. Even though the Adventist message came to Mwami 92 years ago, the church is still struggling to help its members and the community in knowing how to participate in funeral rituals and practices that compromise the biblical understanding about the state of the dead. What role should the church take without losing its relevance in such a society? Should the church be silent over this issue? How should the church evangelize in this area? These are some of

the implicit questions this paper seeks to explore in looking for missiological approaches to address the issues connected with funeral rituals and practices.

It has been observed that some Mwami community leaders overreach their authority in telling local churches what they can and cannot do during funeral ceremonies. For instance, when one member of the Ngoni community who was a Jehovah's Witness died in March 2018, the community leaders stopped the church from burying its member. The community alleged the church was taking the role that belonged to the community on what to do concerning the burial of a Ngoni member. What the church prescribed was not in line with the cultural practices of the local community. Another incident occurred when one of the retired Seventh-day Adventist pastors died in December 2018. The community complained bitterly after the church went ahead in burying the pastor without allowing the deceased body to sleep in the house where the funeral was held a day before burial. What was interesting was that several Adventist members were in the forefront siding with the community over the funeral rituals and practices. This was an eye-opener—showing that folk religion and animistic practices are not easily discarded in the lives of many members of the church. Edward Taylor defined folk religion or animism as the belief that the world is saturated by spirits and powers (1970:9). These spirits are feared by many people in this community and as a result many are reluctant to go against the old ways of doing things.

When I probed about the significance and meaning of having a deceased body remain in the house, I was told that the dead needed to bid farewell to the occupants of that house or else the spirits of the dead would torment the living if that was not done.

Another important funeral ritual involves wailing performed by men mourners. This ritual is enforced during all funerals in Mwami territory for all local residents and is conducted to ensure the spirit of the dead person is appeased. If this ritual is not performed, then the family of the deceased will be charged and expelled from the village for abrogating the laws of the community.

It is a widely known fact that many African Christians remain immersed in their folk religion and that "the African is notoriously religious" (Mbiti 2008:2). No matter how long a person has been a member of a Christian church or how educated they might be, the old ways of the local folk religion has left a big impression on their lives, especially when dealing with rites of passages such as birth, initiation, marriage, and death. Even though many Christian leaders openly oppose the local folk religions, the majority of people throughout Zambia are still influenced in many areas of their lives by the folk tenets and practices.

The Local Setting

The 2017 population census indicated that Zambia had a population of 16,405,229 and the Eastern Province had 1,910,782 (CSO 2018:10). Chipata, where the Mwami Mission is situated, is the fifth largest city in Zambia, behind Lusaka, Ndola, Kitwe, and Livingstone. Chipata comes from the Ngoni word "Chimpata" meaning "large space," in reference to the town situated in a shallow valley between hills. The central neighborhood of Kapata, the original center of town, comes from the Ngoni phrase meaning "small space" (Chipata 2019). Chipata is the capital of the Eastern Province of Zambia and has a modern market, a central hospital, shopping malls, universities, colleges, and a number of schools. Chipata is the business and administrative hub that serves the region. The town boasts a four-star hotel, a golf course, an airport, a mosque, and many Christian churches.

The town is the regional center of the Ngoni tribe, and as such, is the primary language, although Nyanja and English are widely spoken. Nyanja, like Chewa culture, is mainly matriarchal and matrilineal while Ngoni culture is patriarchal and patrilineal. Chipata is located near the border with Malawi and lies on the Great East Road, which connects the capitals Lilongwe (130 km) and Lusaka (550 km) (Chipata 2019).

Socio-Historical Cultural Setting

The socio-historical context and the cross-cultural mix of the Mwami district impact the funeral rituals and practices in the city. The various ethnic groups living in Mwami belong to both matrilineal and patrilineal cultures. Even though others may argue that Chipata is a Ngoni city, demographically the Ngoni are a minority compared to the local people they defeated when they came from Southern Africa. That hindered the Ngoni from completely changing the way of life of the local people. Over the last 200 years Ngoni men married local women, which has contributed to the process of assimilating the two cultures. The children of such marriages usually were taught the language of their mothers (Chondoka 2017:82-84); however, in spite of the loss of the Ngoni language, Ngoni people succeeded in having their cultural practices predominate among the people they lived with.

In the Eastern Province the Chewa ethnic group is the largest community with 39.7% of the population and with 34.6% speaking the Chewa language. The Ngoni ethnic group comprises 15.3% with only 4.6% of the population speaking the Ngoni language (CSO 2014:57). The Chewa language is widely used in schools and churches and other public functions

followed by Tumbuka, a factor that has caused other languages in the Eastern Province to gradually die out.

Religious Context

In Zambia, an estimated 85% of the population professes some form of Christianity. Another 5% are Muslim; 5% subscribe to other faiths, including Hinduism, Baha'ism, and traditional indigenous religions; and 5% are atheists. The majority of Christians are either Roman Catholic or Protestant. Currently, there is also a surge in new Pentecostal churches, which have attracted many young followers. Muslims tend to be concentrated in parts of the country where Asians have settled along the railroad line from Lusaka to Livingstone, in Chipata, and in the Eastern Province (Zambia Religions 2019).

Rituals

Rituals are religiously meaningful acts people perform in appropriate circumstances usually by adhering to prescribed patterns (Lugira 2009:74). Africans feel their beliefs should be expressed in some concrete way. A ritual, as defined by Bronna Romanoff, is a device created by a culture that serves to preserve social order and provide a means of understanding during complicated times (1998:697-711). In the African context, rituals continue to connect people with their ancestors and the old ways of doing things.

Worldview Values in Funeral Rituals and Practices

Mission history offers many examples of the need for the early introducers of Christianity to learn the language and culture of those they are sharing the gospel with. Without such an understanding, tragic mistakes are often made with gross syncretism and dual allegiance the result. "The worldview of a culture describes deep philosophical assumptions about the purpose of life and the nature of reality" (Plueddemann 2009:71). Worldviews are like the air people breathe—very important but taken for granted. Worldviews are, in many cases, largely implicit, which requires the missionary to spend time and effort to discover the implicit to make it explicit (Van Rheenen 1991:33). Worldview and culture are so intertwined that culture is thought of as the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another." By "collective programming," Lewis perceives it as a process to which one has been subjected since birth (2018:15). This means that every person has

a culture, worldview, and lifestyle that is affected by general customs and social behavior of their particular people group.

It is true that worldviews are more about the deep hidden values and assumptions that shape beliefs and behavior. Thus, those who are interested in doing Christian mission in the Mwami district need to pay attention to various cultural events as practiced by the Ngoni people to better understand how folk religious elements continue to influence Christians in the area. The syncretistic and dual alliance realities are especially noticeable during times of crises or death in the community. It is also during such times that even long-time Christians continue to practice elements from African Traditional Religion that are in direct opposition to biblical teaching.

In the Mwami district there is the belief that when people die they enter into a new relationship with the living; hence, great care is always taken to ensure peace and harmony with the ancestors. A proper burial, following the traditions of the ancestors, is necessary in order to avoid trouble in the family and community; therefore, funeral rituals are required to be performed in the proscribed way to appease the spirits. If funeral rituals are ignored, people believe that the dead will come back as ghosts to torment the family and the community. In addition, failure to perform the required death rituals could also cause mental sickness and mysterious deaths among the family members.

I have noticed during Adventist funeral and memorial services that the words "soul" and "spirit" frequently are used in a way that causes confusion. People insinuate that the dead continue existing as a living soul. This position strengthens the old beliefs that the dead continue to live as the living dead—the ancestors who continue to influence the living. For example, almost all tombstones in the Mwami Mission District have an inscription that says, "May his/her soul rest in eternal peace (MHSRP)." This seems to indicate that the soul is thought of as an independent entity from the body—a view that perpetuates the view of ancestors as the living dead who continue to influence the living and who, if not treated according to cultural customs, can bring harm on the family and community.

Death and Funeral Rituals and Practices in the Bible

Death and funeral rituals practiced in the Old Testament are similar to those practiced in the New Testament in many ways. There was a fear of defilement by coming in contact with a dead body (Num 19:11-16) since Jewish law stated that being in the presence of a dead body causes ritual uncleanness. That is why a member of a priestly family was not to be in the presence of a corpse, and those who had been in contact were required

to wash their hands before entering a home, whether or not they had touched the body (Lev 21:11; cf. Num 19:13-14). Mourning practices in Judaism were extensive, but they were not an expression of fear of death. Jewish practices relating to death and mourning had two purposes: "to show respect for the dead . . . , and to comfort the living . . . , who will miss the deceased" (Jewish Virtual Library n.d.).

One important point that the Old Testament did not stress was the belief in the resurrection. A complete mortuary ritual is not described in the Bible; however, some texts indicate that the dead were kept in a house (1 Kgs 17:19; 2 Kgs 4:18-20). Once a person died, the Hebrew practice required that the eldest son or a near relative close the eyes of the dead, "I will close your eyes when you die" (Gen 50:1, cf. 46:4). After the body was prepared, the Hebrews put the body inside a room (2 Kgs 4:21, 17:19), followed by wailing and weeping, which alerted the community about the death (2 Sam 1:12; Jer 9:17-18; Micah 1:8). The Hebrews had specific days of mourning. Joseph observed seven days of mourning for his father (Gen 50:10).

The Hebrews showed their grief by tearing their garments and putting on sackcloth (Isa 20:2; Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 13:31). Job—who is called a friend of God, blameless, and upright—after he learned of the death of his children, not only tore his robe but also shaved his head, then fell to the ground and worshipped (Job 1:20). Job knew that a person was nothing but dust and ashes, which is a phrase that occurs in only three places in the Old Testament (Gen 18:27; Job 30:19, 42:6).

The Mystery of Death

There are so many myths about death; however, the Bible gives a glimpse of the origin of death. It is clear that death came as a result of disobedience. God explicitly commanded Adam and Eve, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Gen 2:16-17).

The failure of the first couple to obey this command resulted in death entering the human family, regardless of the assertion of the serpent when it said, "You will surely not die" (Gen 3:4). This verse succinctly explains the origin of death. The explanation may not be comprehensive but at least it allows us to see where death came from and its cause. The Bible also teaches that the dead are not conscious and have no part in the activities of life under the sun (Eccl 9:5). Ellen White writes, "Multitudes have come to believe that it is spirits of the dead who are the ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (1950:551).

She says that these spirits are not the spirits of dead people but agents of darkness, the fallen evil angels.

When looking at the origin of death through a folk religion lens, Mbiti suggests that "even though people believe that death came into the world at a very early date, in the history of mankind, they believe also that every time a person dies, this death is caused" (1991:117). In African folk religions the idea that sickness and accidents are always caused has a very strong hold on just about everyone. The causes of death are either by witchcraft, curses, or by unhappy, angry ancestral spirits. Even when someone dies from a known disease or sickness that has been diagnosed by a doctor, people still believe that someone or something caused the death in that way and at that time.

The Implication of an Immortal Soul

The concept of an immortal soul independent of the body is popular and widely believed. People believe that the body may die but the spiritual soul is freed from the constraints of physical matter, and then goes to its eternal reward. Such an idea appears to be comforting; however, what does a body animated by such a soul mean? Some suggest that the physical body creates a soul as it grows and develops, impressing upon its invisible substance the individual's personality. The soul, being the imperishable record of the physical brain structures, can then survive physical death and wait in God's presence until the resurrection.

Some have offered evidence for a belief in a soul distinct from the body by arguing that God created a physical body for the preexisting Son of God (Heb 10:5; Wheeler 2009:50). Others think that a body can exist without a soul, while some Christians believe that a soul is never independent of a body. What does the Scripture say?

Soul and Spirit in the Bible

The New Testament counterpart of the Hebrew word *nephesh* is the Greek word *psyche*. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) employs *psyche* in the same wide range usages (Laurin 1960:91, 492) as used in the New Testament. In both the Old and New Testament it states, "The first Adam became a living thing" (1 Cor 15:45). Also both OT and NT refer to people as individual souls (Acts 2:41; 7:14). James says that "he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:20). If the word soul is substituted by person, it still makes sense (Schwartz 1981:25).

The word spirit in the Greek comes from the root *pneuma* and is indicated by *pneu*, meaning to blow or breath. The root *pneu* and the suffix ma refers to air in motion as a special substance that empowers one's being. In the New Testament, *pneuma* has also been translated as mood (1 Cor 4:21; 2 Tim 1:7; Rom 8:15). *Pneuma* is the power that God gives to energize or the life principle found in human beings (25).

When Jesus was about to die, he cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46, cf. Acts 7:59). Jesus died echoing the words of the Psalmist who said, "Into your hands, I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth" (Ps 1:5).

In relation to the life of a human being, *pneuma* must be understood as the life principle found in the body when a person is alive. This is in agreement with the Old Testament writings as depicted by Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes that at death the dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7). At death, the life principle, *pneuma*, ceases and returns back to God. *Pneuma*, returning back to God does not mean it is an entity. *Pneuma* going back to God is recognition of God's creative power that he imparts and takes it back at death.

The New Testament also uses soul and spirit interchangeably as indicated in the book of Luke. "My soul magnifies the Lord. And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47). When compared to the Old Testament, the New Testament adds some unusual elements that may at first appear puzzling. For instance, Paul prays that (his readers) "may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess 5:23). The text has created a lot of debate over the significance of these terms.

> The vocabulary here is certainly tripartite—body, soul, spirit—but that the emphasis is on the sanctification of the whole person, and that in the future coming of Christ. In popular thought, the point of making a sharp distinction between body and soul is the assertion that something else must die. The text teaches that every aspect of being human is to be kept for the coming of Christ, which contradicts the reason for dividing up human beings. Paul is free to speak of being human from different aspects, but avoids any obscuring of the unitary reality we find in Christ, seeing it as headed toward greater fulfillment in Christ, not division. (Sherlock 1996:218)

A living soul is a living person and a dead soul is a person who has died. It must be understood that it is pointless to pray for a dead person's soul for it cannot exist separately from a dead body. The correct position is that a human being does not have a *nephesh* (soul), for the person is the soul. This view is in agreement with the suggestion that the death of a

nephesh means a loss of personhood. Thus it is not what Adam had, but what he was (Bromiley 1982:587, 588). The Bible says, "For every living soul belongs to me, the father, as well as the son—both alike, belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die (Ezek 18:4). Interestingly when the word *nephesh* is referred to a corpse or a dead body (Num 6:6, 11, 9:6, 7, 10), that forces a conceptual change in many cultures. The term soul does not translate easily because it represents the concepts of reality that may differ widely from culture to culture and because it reflects the philosophical history of each particular culture as well (Petersen 2005:9).

Immortality Belongs to God Alone

In addition to ruling out that a soul cannot exist independently of a body (Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid 1993:767), the Bible equally does not endorse immortality as being something belonging to human beings. God is the only one who is immortal (Ps 90:9-14; 1 Tim 6:15). The view of immortality that predominates in Western, Folk religions, and Christian thought is Platonic, where the term signifies an in-built characteristic of every soul with persistence after death (Plato 1981:78b-80b). However, the granting of immortality to human beings is clearly stipulated by Paul when he says "For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this incorruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality." The New Testament defines human "immortality" as the immunity from decay and death that results from sharing the divine life of the resurrected state (Harris 1986:47-52). The promise of immortality is to "those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality" (Rom 2:7).

Burial Activities in the Old Testament

During the Old Testament, there were activities prior to burial. Individuals of high status in society would frequently be clothed in linen garments. The affluent individuals enjoyed burials with elaborate funerary collections that included robes, jewelry, furniture, weapons, and pottery (1Sam 28:14; Isa 14:11; Ezek 32:27).

After preparation of the body, the procession to the grave or tomb began with the corpse being carried on a wooden platform, usually by friends, servants, or relatives (2 Sam 3:31). The procession was led by professional mourners, followed by family members who filled the air with cries of sadness and agony (2 Sam 3:31-32; Job 21:33; Eccl 12:5; Jer 9:17; Amos 5:16)" (Achtemeier 1985:145, 146). This special treatment of the body of the deceased signifies how the families perceived death. The treatment given

to a dead person was a demonstration of respect for the living. It has been observed that the time between death and burial witnessed the intensity of respect the people accorded the deceased, and the special treatment given the body demonstrated how the family perceived the dead person.

The Hebrews practiced burial in the land of the ancestors. Abraham purchased a burial place for his wife Sarah, and his descendants were also buried there (Gen 47:29, 30, 49:29-32; Exod 13:19). The Old Testament practice was to bury the dead in family tombs or a family sepulcher (Gen 49:29-33).

There were two types of burials among the Hebrews—temporary and permanent. After time had elapsed, the bones were moved from the temporary burial place to a permanent one (2 Sam 21:12-15). The Hebrews had a great fire when Hezekiah died (2 Chr 16:14). The fire was built as a memorial and was an honorific rite customarily granted to Kings (Freedman 2000:205). The origins of such fires for dead kings are not known.

The Hebrews did not end their funeral activities with the burial. After burial and weeping and mourning the bereaved family continued to receive comfort and care. They had seven days of intense mourning when a close relative died (Gen 50:10, cf. 1 Sam 31:13; Job 2:13). There was a period for intense mourning, normally between death and burial. During that time the mourners did not receive greetings of peace (Ezek 24:17). The mourning was extended for thirty days when the Israelites grieved the death of Moses. Aaron too was mourned for thirty days when he died (Deut 34:8; Num 20:29). When Jacob breathed his last, Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. This process required forty days, during which time the family mourned. In fact, the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days (Gen 50:1-3).

Funeral rituals were part of the Hebrew cultural practices; however, when Ezekiel's wife died, the Lord told him not to mourn in the traditional way. The Lord said to him, "Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke, yet you shall neither mourn nor weep nor shall your tears run down. Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead, bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your lips, and do not eat man's bread of sorrow" (Ezek 24:16-17). The Lord's command to Ezekiel indicates there were ritual practices common to the Hebrew people. But Ezekiel was to mourn differently because he was a lightbearer for the Lord.

Burial Activities in the New Testament

The Old Testament provides the foundation of the burial activities in the New Testament. After a death was announced, burial had to take place

within twenty-four hours (Acts 5:5-10). This was necessary because there was no way to preserve the body. Quick burials also acted as a means to reduce excessive grief and to reduce the amount of time a dead body was kept in the house (Benjamin 1983:246, 254).

As soon as the individual expired, the eldest son or nearest relative present would close the eyes of the deceased (Gen 46:6), which helps explain why Jesus called death a sleep (John 11:11-14). The mouth was bound shut (John 11:44), the body washed (Acts 9:37) and then anointed with aromatic ointments (John 12:7, 19: 39; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1). The body was usually wrapped in a linen cloth (Matt 27:59; John 11:44). Then the body was put on a platform and carried on the shoulders to the grave site (Luke 7:12-14). Professional mourners would accompany the body to the grave (Matt 9:23; John 11:31-33). Jews located their burial tombs away from towns in Palestine.

Most Jewish communities had a special group of volunteers, whose duty it was to care for the dead. They had the responsibility to wash the body and prepare it for burial according to Jewish custom (Lamm 1969:93). The Jewish people also had a practice of moving the bones from one part of the tomb to another. After a body had decomposed the bones could be piled in one area or put in a small box called an ossuary, and then shelved (Hallote 2003:123-126).

Jewish law required that tombstones be erected on graves so the dead would be remembered and to ensure that the grave was not desecrated. People who could not afford expensive rock-hewn tombs were placed in the ground. After the body was placed in the ground, earth filled the grave and a heap of stones was put on top to preserve the body from depredations of beasts or thieves (White 1948:557).

Missiological Suggestions

The missiological approach that I suggest to be applied to funeral rituals and practices in Mwami is a process known as critical contextualization. Funerals are just as significant today as they were in biblical times. They also offer the church great opportunities for sharing God's perspective on death, the resurrection, and the hope for spending eternity with God in heaven. Thus, during the funeral service, preaching is not done to the dead but to the living who attend the funeral.

The issues of death and funeral rituals in the Mwami District should be handled using Paul Hiebert's critical contextualization process, which comprises four steps: First, the people must have a deep appreciation for the Word of God and a willingness to deal with all areas of their lives in a biblical way. This would entail a willingness to discuss the funeral rituals and practices and relate them to what the Bible says.

Second, the people should spend time looking uncritically at the cultural item or practice (in this case funeral rituals and practices) so they understand the meaning and implications of each action. This step would help the faith community analyze the cultural meaning and significance of each aspect of the funeral rituals and practices. During this second step no judgment should be made as to the rightness or wrongness of the practices.

Third, the faith community applies applicable biblical passages and principles to the cultural item in question. What aspects of funeral rituals and practices are incompatible with the principles of the Word of God? What aspects are in line with the biblical principles? During this third step the district leader, the local pastor, and elders are resource people helping the larger group access the Bible passages that offer suggestions on how to deal biblically with the issue.

Fourth, the group, led by the Holy Spirit, decides what they can do and what they cannot do in light of the biblical principles they have discovered. There may be aspects of the ritual that can continue to be used since they do not go against biblical principles. There may be other aspects that can be slightly modified by having biblical meanings added to the practice, and there may be some areas that need to be totally discarded. (Hiebert 1985:186).

Too often church leaders have just told people what to believe and what to do. By engaging the faith community in the process of looking at what God's Word says and having them actively involved in deciding what can remain, what needs changing, and what needs to be discarded, there is a group buy-in. When the group makes these kinds of decisions the pastor or district leader no longer has to try to force people to act in a certain way—they have agreed to a course of action so they willingly follow the decision.

Conclusion

The conflict between Folk Religion and Christian beliefs is as old as the Church in Zambia. Folk Religion when mixed with God's ways for his people leads to dual allegiance—the very thing that caused the Israelites to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Mwami Mission District has been in existence for ninety-two years but many of the believers are still tied to folk religious practices. It is true that "the Lord . . . is patient toward you not wishing for anyone to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). Similarly, church leaders must learn to exercise patience as they guide their members into a deeper understanding of God's Word and as the people learn to apply the principles of God's Word to their cultural practices. The second step in Hiebert's critical contextualization process is

important since many people never stop to analyze their cultural practices or understand how the deep meanings are in direct opposition to biblical principles (Hiebert 1999:21).

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Adventist Devotional Theology in Mission: An Emphasis on Spiritual Life in the Encounter with the Buddhist Karmic Understanding of God and the Afterlife

Introduction

The topic of Adventist devotional theology became dear to me during my first year of Doctor of Missiology studies at Andrews University in 2016. Before that time, my family and I had been acquainted with people's lived experience of being Buddhists in Southeast Asia. During my field research with refugees along the Thai-Burmese border, it dawned on me that God frequently reveals the core essence of what it means to be God's beloved children through dreams and visions. Many sincere Buddhist believers in the camps were searching for meaning in suffering and their struggle for daily existence. What they discovered was the incarnation of the meaning of the gospel in their lives and context. While learning about God's guidance and revelation to Buddhist believers through dreams and visions, I realized that Adventist devotional theology can play a significant role in the lives of Buddhists because experiential faith lies at the core of the Buddhist religion. This implies that the God-given gift of communion that allows for intimacy with the divine leads people into an understanding of the meaning of the gospel message in their context and opens new gateways for a departure from a *karmic* understanding of God.

Writing this article gave me the privilege and opportunity to contribute to the conference theme of "Death and Ancestors in a Global Missiological Perspective" and to share some insights concerning Thai Buddhists' cyclical cosmology and its related practices. I would also like to increase interest in the implications of the Spiritual Life dimension as an integral part of Adventist mission in the context of Buddhism in Southeast Asia.

There are three main parts of this article. First, I will share some essential research findings from the AFM "Facilitator's Guide to Introducing Christianity to Thai Buddhists." This valuable document reflects the outcome and application of a three-year missional research project that was conducted by AFM missionaries in Thailand. The inner logic of my argument has also been impacted by the theological theory of the Reciprocating Self, Victor Frankl's Search for Meaning, and Charles Kraft's unique perspective on worldview. However, most importantly, my personal perspective on the theme has been impacted by the missiologist Jon L. Dybdahl, whose writings became an inspiration for my study on the spiritual life and Adventist devotional theology in mission.

There is a palpable tendency towards a deistic worldview among Christian believers in Thailand. A deist is characterized by a divided or feigned relationship with the Holy Spirit. This is most likely the result of a neglect of spiritual life practices. Unfortunately, this dysfunctional connection with the divine-relational source of spiritual intimacy leaves Adventist mission ill equipped for making adequate responses to the cyclical worldview of Thai Buddhists. In the cyclical worldview of reincarnation beliefs and ancestral worship practices, a majority of Buddhist believers hold on to ancestor worship because it comforts them with relational rootedness. The fundamental concept of *karma*, the fixed connection between blessings and good deeds, and the flat karmic understanding of de-personalized gods does not leave any room or familiarity with the scheme of a relational God. This naturally implies that Thai Buddhists are disconnected from the intention of the gospel, to bring people into covenant relationships with God and human beings. Therefore, the question this paper seeks to answer is, "How does a Buddhist believer come to understand Christ within the Buddhist circular cosmology of the cycles of birth and rebirths through the law of karma?

In the first part, I will describe the nature and essence of a deistic worldview and how it leads to neglecting the spiritual life. It will also illustrate how deistic ignorance of the supernatural keeps Christian missionaries from communicating the gospel through experiential faith. Experiential faith is anchored in Christian spiritual life practices such as Christian meditation and contemplation on Jesus and his Word. The brief analysis of a deistic worldview is essential because it highlights that the

biblical understanding of death, ancestors, and afterlife will only appear meaningful to Buddhist believers when a correct biblical understanding of these themes becomes an integral part of their experiential faith practice. Therefore, the first section stresses that the philosophical underpinnings of missiological research need to be rooted in an Adventist theology of devotion, so that new missiological findings can dynamically re-inform our devotional theology.

The second part of the article describes a simple and yet profound path of recovery from Christian dysfunctional connections with God and promotes the restoration of a Christian theistic worldview. In the light of the Buddhist understanding and practice of merit making in the context of filial obligation, the Why and How of a relationship with God in mission with Thai Buddhists will be emphasized. I will suggest that Adventist interactions and sharing of the biblical narrative with Buddhists in Thailand must be thoroughly embedded into spiritual life practices, since this is the core realm of Buddhist faith. Giving a high priority to the devotional life emphasizes reciprocity with God and is embedded in the theology of the Reciprocating Self: to live up to one's original *telos* (meaning), which is to experience spiritual intimacy in Christ and to translate this into human relationships.

The third part of the article elaborates on devotional theology as the core of Adventist missiology. The underlying concepts of Buddhist meditation with their search for "mindfulness" will be compared and contrasted with the thrust of Christian meditation. Finally, I will suggest a few applications concerning Christian meditation, which is the most critical component in Adventist interactions with Thai Buddhists. The thesis of this article says, *Adventist devotional theology in the missional encounter with Buddhists and their karmic understanding of God is crucial because its emphasis on communion with God allows the Holy Spirit to directly incarnate the meaning of the gospel through a relational, divine encounter.*

Deistic Worldview: Spiritual and Missional Consequences and Implications

The emphasis on some essential criteria of a deistic worldview in comparison with a holistic, theistic worldview does not mean that this article has a primary focus on worldview. However, a clear understanding of certain worldview tendencies in Western Christianity is indispensable in order to achieve a breakthrough in communicating the gospel truth in connection with Buddhist beliefs in the area of ancestors and the afterlife. A brief analysis of a deistic worldview is also mandatory for a deeper understanding of its relationship with various dimensions of the spiritual life.

Traditional Enlightenment Western Worldview: The Subtle Undermining of Spiritual Life

In his book *Hunger*, Jon Dybdahl describes how basic worldview issues have deep implications for the religious life. When Western Christians do not believe at their deepest worldview level that God is active in everyday life, the practice of the spiritual life is neglected. Our belief or disbelief in the activity of God in everyday life determines whether or not we encounter God in prayer, meditation, and worship. Dybdahl used a six-segment and three-level diagram for his analysis of religious worldview systems that was developed by Paul Hiebert. He then applied it to the question of the spiritual life. Hiebert's argument was that the rational enlightenment view of the universe in mainstream Western culture sees the world as a closed system, consisting of the physical and social sciences and placed in the bottom level of the diagram (Dybdahl 2015a:107-108).

However, although Western Christians acknowledge the upper divine level of the worldview chart, they are often challenged to believe in the middle level of the diagram. This middle level, which includes the realm of the spiritual life and practices has been more and more excluded by Western enlightenment; therefore the title, "Excluded Middle." However, Dybdahl argues that "ignoring this area seriously hampers the interchange between top and bottom levels" because "the middle level is the means of communication between the upper and lower levels" (109). A neglect of this middle level seriously hinders communion and communication with God. In other words, "the traditional Enlightenment Western worldview, with its excluded middle, questions any divine activity in life and subtly undermines the cruciality and value of the spiritual life" (109).

The deistic worldview is one among several other incomplete religious worldview systems. When I experienced first-hand how Adventist believers often define personal demonic encounters in terms of mental illness or emotional abnormalities, I understood that "many Christians, especially intellectuals in midlife or older, are really closet deists" (Dybdahl 2015a:110). Deistic Christians are challenged by anything that suggests God's direct action in the world. This also includes local narratives of God-given dreams and visions that communicate a relational God. In the book *Encountering God in Life and Mission*, Bruce Bauer wrote in his chapter "Guidance through God-given Dreams and Visions" the following notion.

> In spite of the fact that the Bible lists many dream narratives showing that God guides and directs through dreams and visions, many Christians, especially Westerners, are skeptical of people who even talk about God giving them a dream. It seems that the effects of the enlightenment, a strong belief in the scientific method, and a denial

> of revealed knowledge from a personal God leave some Western Christians with a very deistic perspective of God—they believe that God is there, but He is distant and does not interact with His creation. (2010:108)

Further Explanations for Developing a Deistic Worldview: Carnal Christianity

When I first became aware of the possibility that we as Adventists may have the tendency to live with a deistic worldview, I felt challenged and wondered why it seems so difficult to identify carnal Christianity? The evangelical reformed theologian Emil Brunner wrote that the Holy Spirit "has always more or less been the stepchild of theology" (Haubeil 2018: loc 131). A. W. Tozer said, "If the Holy Spirit were taken away from our church today, 95% of what we do would continue and no one would notice the difference. But if the Holy Spirit had withdrawn from the early church, then 95% of what they were doing would have stopped and everyone would have noticed the difference" (Haubeil 2018: loc 643-644). In this context, the statement of Dwight Nelson rings true: "Our church has to the point of exhaustion developed admirable forms, plans and programs, but if we don't finally admit to our spiritual bankruptcy [lack of the Holy Spirit], which has overtaken many of us ministers and leaders, then we will never be able to get out of our Pro-Forma-Christianity" (Haubeil 2018).

The German evangelist Helmut Haubeil provides groundbreaking insights into Christian attitudes towards God, as further described in *Steps to Personal Revival*. Haubeil observed that there are only three basic attitudes towards God: "No relationship—the Bible calls this the natural man. Full, real relationship—the Bible calls this person spiritual. Divided or feigned relationship—the Bible describes this as a person of the flesh or carnal" (Haubeil 2018: loc 442). These three groups are described in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 and 3:1-4. In summary, the difference between the spiritual and carnal believer has to do with the Holy Spirit. The spiritual Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit. The carnal Christian is not or is not sufficiently filled with the Holy Spirit (Haubeil 2018: loc 634).

However, Haubeil is convinced that most Christians do not consciously subscribe to a feigned relationship with God. Carnal Christians want to follow Jesus and please him, but they often fail to realize they are missing out on a vital relationship with Christ. Jesus is not in the center of their lives but rather outside or on the sidelines. It seems the price of discipleship is too high and Christians move on to a purely intellectual and cognitive plane in their spiritual lives (John 3:1-10) (Haubeil 2018).

Deistic Worldview Implications on Missiology and Missiological Research

In his article "On Epistemology of Missiological Research," Petr Cincala insightfully addresses the nature of missiological research and its relationship with other academic disciplines. He concludes that "missiology can benefit enormously from a social science approach to research but may be paralyzed by utilizing social science research as a whole package" (2017:7). This would be the case when all steps, phases, and data interpretations are governed by the philosophical principles and theoretical assumptions of the various social science disciplines.

The contribution of other academic disciplines have considerably strengthened missiology with its interdisciplinary emphasis on the complexity of contemporary research problems in cross-cultural missions; however, Cincala underlines the differences between missiological research and research in the social sciences. Differences exist in terms of expected outcomes, research design, and the interpretation of data. However, since missiological research is driven by very distinct assumptions that differ from secular disciplines, I strongly agree with Cincala in the conviction that "the philosophy and assumptions of missiology also need to be followed as carefully as social scientists follow the philosophy and assumptions of their discipline" (2017:3). Therefore, clear distinctions need to be made between using social science and missiological research methodologies.

To avoid any distraction from the purpose of missiology, missiological research findings should serve its original purpose of changing people's worldviews and beliefs, views that are in opposition to the philosophical underpinnings of secular anthropology (5). It is indeed interesting that cultural anthropologists and sociologists seem to be unfamiliar with missiological issues such as "worldview change, form and meaning, and dynamic equivalents" (4-5). From my personal perspective, this uniqueness of missiological research needs to be fostered in order to impact the Christian-Buddhist encounter. Further definition of the nature and essence of missiology's philosophical assumptions will help create an environment allowing the spiritual nurture for Buddhist believers, so that they may receive the opportunity to encounter a loving and personal God and depart from their karmic understanding of God.

The Need for Doing a Theology of Devotion in the Context of Buddhist Experiential Faith

In his article "Doing Theology—Part 1," Dybdahl says, "context interacts with the gospel (Scripture) in the process of mission, and the result is theology" (2005:19). It is fascinating that the disciples and Paul did theology because they were doing mission. This also implies that the context of Buddhist believers in Thailand and elsewhere also requires "readjustments in mission" and "new theologies." Buddhism has a heavy emphasis on experience. Whereas the four noble truths address the universal human experience of pain and suffering, the eight-fold path emphasizes meditation and spiritual life practices. In his 45 years of preaching the Dharma, the Buddha declared explicitly concerning only two things: suffering and the cessation of it (Duc 2008:69). In his first sermon in Benares around 2,500 years ago, the Buddha suggested that the origin of suffering was craving or false views (2008).

In another sermon, the Buddha "says there is no contending with anyone in the world for a wise person who is not obsessed by any perceptions. What is the origin . . . of the number of obsessions and perceptions which assail a man, if there is nothing to rejoice at, to welcome, to catch hold of, this is itself an end of a propensity to attachment." (Duc 2008:70). The Buddhist solution to end suffering is to stop to obsess or perceive rejoicing. The Dharma, the so-called doctrine of the middle path relates to non-attachment, neither to be attached to existence, nor to non-existence. Due to attachment to the one or the other, the world is imprisoned (72). The negation of wrong views of attachment to anything inclusive of extremes is the Middle Path. This mental state of "emptiness means no views or no doctrines, even the Four Noble Truths are ultimately false. The Ultimate Truth alone is not dependent on anything else; it is ultimately real" (73).

Because the aim of Buddhism is to benefit the emotional and spiritual welfare of all sentient beings, to decrease suffering and to bring a sense of inner harmony, devoted Buddhists commit themselves to the practice of meditation and mindfulness of thought, action and speech, to truly achieve a sense of internal and external harmony (Duc 2008:82). The Vietnamese monk Hanh describes the energy of mindfulness as the means to calm things down, to understand them, and to bring harmony and peace. Thus, the Buddhist monk and scholar Thich Nhat Hanh connects the relief of suffering and the creation of understanding and compassion as the fruit of the Buddhist state of mindfulness (Hanh 1995:354). This theme of Buddhist mindfulness is further developed below.

What are appropriate theological responses to the religious practice-based Buddhist faith? I believe it is important to note that traditional Adventist theology emphasized truth by a doctrinal thrust, using the modes of logic and rational argument to bring people to Christ through the acceptance of right beliefs. However, contemporary Adventist theology emphasizes truth as a living experience of God's presence, which involves an active devotional life (Dybdahl 2006:20). This is vitally important because Buddhist believers consistently expose their worldview and mindset to transformative spiritual life practices. In the realm of the Buddhist search for new levels of consciousness, dogmas, or absolutes are not considered trustworthy. Therefore, an Adventist theology of devotion is an urgent need for mission practitioners in Thailand and elsewhere, so that a fruitful and discerning Christian-Buddhist encounter can be established.

Towards Recovery from Dysfunctional Connections with God

In this second part, I emphasize the need for recovery from a deistic worldview and the importance of becoming a Christian Theist who is characterized by the renewal of one's Christian spirituality. Christian Theists believe that "true divine-human interchange" takes place, that God and the laws of the universe exist, and that God has equipped human beings with the ability to live environmentally and morally responsible lives. Dybdahl suggests "the devotional life is the way that contact and communication with an active God takes place" (2015a: 115).

It is also vital to realize that when God's divine intervention takes place, that Christians and Buddhists sense an inner urge and desire for living devotional lives. In order to experience change from being deistic to becoming spiritual, Haubeil suggests that the crucial point is that we (as a rule) daily surrender ourselves to God, including everything we are and have and that we also daily ask and receive by faith the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Haubeil 2018: location 841, Dybdahl 2015:112-115).

First Systematic Guide for Approaching Thai Buddhists

I want to express my gratitude for the Thailand-based AFM research team members who wrote and finalized the "Adventist Frontier Mission Facilitator's Guide to Introducing Christianity to Thai Buddhists" in 2019. This contextualized Christian discipling program was tailored specifically for Thai Buddhists (TBs) and Thai Buddhist background believers (TBbbs). The facilitator guide deals biblically with the fundamental concept of *karma* with its fixed connection between blessings and good deeds,

a concept that is central in Thai Buddhism. It should be noted that the primary purpose of the AFM Facilitator Guide is to lead Thai Buddhists towards a meaningful experience with Christ and to gain a knowledge of core Bible teachings (Shipton et al. 2019:2).

According to the Facilitator's Guide, the goal is to transition TBs from 'a giving to gain merit approach' to a Christian worldview of giving in response to receiving grace (Shipton et al. 2019:3). Since there is a steep, relational learning curve involved, the Facilitator Guide introduces a shift from a karmic understanding of God to a historicized, relational understanding in later stages (4). In addition to this stage-based approach, I suggest a spiritual life-based Christian-Buddhist encounter with priority given to devotional life (Biblical meditation) and a reciprocal relationship with God being emphasized from the beginning.

The Buddhist Understanding and Practice of Merit Making: Filial Obligation in Perspective

Thai merit-making practices (*tham bun*) are an integral part of the Thai cyclical worldview and should not be seen in isolation from other important practices in Theravada Buddhism or general Buddhist practices. Thai desire to maintain the practice of merit-making in the context of filial obligation in the areas of ancestor worship.

Khun Nilubon, a Thai Buddhist woman, showed me around her family home and the garden area with the spirit house dedicated for ancestor worship. Although her father had passed away some time ago, a strong connection and intimate bond between her and her father was still palpable. To neglect her ancestors' and especially her father's spirit would mean Khun Nilubon was foregoing her basic family / filial obligations. She shared with me her longstanding familiarity with Christianity through her school and college years. She had accumulated considerable knowledge about Jesus and the Bible; however, she could not even imagine the possibility to stop making merits for her ancestors. Thai merit-making practices (*tham bun*) include an element of devoting merit to (*utit bunhai*) deceased loved ones. The idea is to send merit to one's deceased ancestors so that they can have a better place in the afterlife.

AFM researchers propose that "even though most TBs focus more on their current life than on what may come after, the idea that a spirit lives on after death is still a very deep and widely shared conviction in Thailand" (AFM 2019:158). They found that "in the Thai Buddhist perspective, it is possible and common for people to send merit (happiness) they make to another person through religious rituals. This is particularly done for people who have died, in order to aid them in their after-life and progress

of reincarnation" (139). Since common TBs do not know of any divine being who is willing and capable to send divine merit, this belief in the spirits of the deceased is very difficult to counter. Therefore, Thai Buddhists face major challenges when they are asked to discontinue merit-making practices for their deceased ancestors.

The Thai religious rituals of merit making and devoting merit to deceased loved ones is interrelated with Thai filial obligations, which find their roots in Buddhist teaching in the *Sutra* and in the Thai cultural concept of *bunkhun* (Crawford 2010:82). The notion of *bunkhun* occupies a prominent place in Thai interpersonal relationships (82). Crawford describes "*bunkhun* [as] a deeply ingrained relationship pattern with ancient roots in Thai society that is fundamental to understanding interpersonal relationships in Thailand. A compound word consisting of *bun* (merit) and *khun* (good or virtue), *bunkhun* can simply be understood as "indebted goodness" (82).

Buddhist believers often feel strong connections and ties of belonging with deceased ancestors. The Buddhist monk and scholar Thich Nhat Hanh interacts with his ancestors on a daily basis. This helps him with feeling rooted (1995:148, 162). He also encourages his students to respect their blood ancestors and spiritual ancestors. The Buddhist lack of familiarity with relational gods necessitates a strong emphasis on ongoing interactions with ancestors. Since their gods respond to them in a formulaic, mechanical way based on karmic laws of exchange, ancestral relationships become more important. To further reflect on the important AFM research findings, it has been concluded "that TBs do not have the readily available categories in their worldview that would help them understand the critical component of . . . a relational God" (AFM 2019:113). This lack is grounded in the experience of divine beings seen as impersonal operators of . . . "the law of karma that says that a good deed results in merit (happiness), and a bad deed result in de-merit (suffering)" (113).

Search for Meaning: Communicating Christ in the Context of Buddhist Cosmology of Karma

In a *Festschrift* honoring Jon Dybdahl, Siroj Sorajjakool wrote a chapter on "Christ and Karma: Mission in the Land of Theravada Buddhism." In the beginning of the chapter, he describes the core of Buddhism as teaching that "to be is to suffer (*dukkha*)." I am because I suffer. Suffering is because I perceive and experience transitoriness. The only way out of suffering lies "in the attempt to not be" (2010:374, 376). Discussing Christ and karma as a part of worldview, the author explains, "there is no forgiveness in Buddhism." The Thai expression "*Tam dee dai dee. Tam chua dai chua*"

("you reap what you sow") is the law of karma. Karma is understood as the punishment of the will or desire to be, to live, or to have (377-78).

When Christians talk about the love of God, intimate attachment is communicated. However, in the Buddhist cosmology, "compassion is the promotion of detachment . . . the ultimate goal to find freedom by being unattached to people." Likewise, promoting eternal life through Jesus Christ is also associated with attachment and desire. Desiring eternal life, from the perspective of a Buddhist worldview, means to remain captured within "the cycle of birth and rebirth" (Sorajjakool 2010: 372). In the day-to-day life of a Thai Buddhist, this religious and cultural reality is reflected in people's perceptions of gods: gods are impersonal, only responsive to karma. Thai Buddhists "see divine beings as aloof responders to karma. This of course explains why the core biblical motif of *covenant*, the relationship between God and [hu]man[s], is an alien idea for Thai Buddhists (AFM 2019:112).

In his professional work, Sorajjakool discovered the importance of presenting Christ to Buddhists by raising an awareness for a sense of meaning that lies in the coexistence of being and suffering (2010:378). This sense of meaning arises in people when the presence of existential love becomes a lived experience for Buddhists. In his book *Communicating Jesus' Way*, Charles Kraft proposed that the gospel message is far more than a verbal message. It is a "person message."

> "God himself is the message, and we are to respond to a person to properly attach meaning to that message. At the pure human level, we do the same thing with messages of love, care, concern, sympathy and the like—we respond not simply to words but to the person who does the deed. The ultimate Christian message then, is a person. And anything that reduces that message to mere words stimulates in the receptor meanings unworthy of the message. Our message is a message of life and only life can properly convey it. Thus, only if that message is actually conveyed by life can it be properly understood." (Sorajjakool 2010:381)

The Will for Meaning: The Basic Striving of People to Find and Fulfill Meaning and Purpose

This idea that "only if the gospel message is conveyed by life can it be properly understood" is striking because it re-emphasizes the crucial importance of experiential faith, which is the realm of spiritual life. The father and founder of Existential Analysis, Victor Frankl, wrote extensively on the will to meaning, the most human phenomenon. Frankl repeatedly says that people are on a search for ultimate meaning and there must be

meaning in all existence and suffering. He suggests, instead of chasing after happiness directly, people need to develop the will to meaning, which gives a reason to be happy. As a consequence, happiness follows. To the extent to which happiness is the objective of motivation, happiness becomes the object of attention. However, by doing so, people lose sight of the reason for happiness, and happiness fades away. In contrast, by experiencing something or encountering someone, meaning can be discovered (1992:129, 130).

The Theology of the Reciprocating Self

A research team consisting of Jack O. Balswick, Pamela Ebstyne King, and Kevin S. Reimer brought human development into theological perspective and developed a theology of the Reciprocating Self—a Trinitarian Analogy of Being and Becoming. They point "to Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God and recognize that becoming like Christ is God's intention for all of humanity" (Balswick et al. 2016: loc 418). This also means to become particular beings in relationship with the divine and the human other (2016). The researchers "assert that developmental teleology, the goal of human development as God intends, is the reciprocating self. To live according to God's design is to glorify God as a distinct human being in communion with God and others in mutually giving and receiving relationships" (loc 517). Reciprocity is understood as the glue between uniqueness and unity, a form of relationality that is exhibited among the three persons of the Trinitarian God.

Testimony of a Thai Buddhist

In the following few paragraphs, I will share a few lines from a testimony I witnessed in 2019. Yui is a 29-year-old Thai woman. She is the girlfriend of a Christian young man who recently was baptized in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chiangmai, Thailand. Yui received two visions from God at a time when she tried to understand Christianity. Her Christian boyfriend tried to explain to her the Bible. Both of them studied the Bible. However, she basically did not understand anything about scriptural readings or from what people tried to communicate to her.

> All I knew and understood so far in my life came from a Thai perspective. I grew up in a Buddhist home and surrounded myself only with friends from a Buddhist background. I grew up in Buddhism all my life and didn't know who God was. I even didn't know the difference between God and Jesus. One day, I visited the SDA church in Bangkok. But all people there only spoke English. I didn't understand

> anything of what had been said or taught. We suddenly were told to pray. I was in shock! Praying to God? What should I say? How could I pray? I didn't have faith; I didn't believe in God. But I followed the action of everyone else and just closed my eyes. Then I saw a picture of a man, he had shoulder-length hair. His eyebrows and his hair were of the same color—golden brown. His hair was in waves and his face was bright and shining. He looked at me and smiled. He was there, holding his arms open wide. He talked to me and said, "Come to me, be my child. I will save you." His words touched my heart and I felt happiness as I had never felt in my life before. Then I wondered, "Who is He?" He was so kind. I wanted to run to him like a child into a father's arms. I cannot even now find words for the happiness I felt. When I began to cry, the church prayer was over. I opened my eyes and the picture was gone."

Before Yui received this vision, the verbal message of the gospel did not get through to her. She needed a "person message," God himself. Yui soon found that her heavenly Father reached out to her. During her testimony, Yui said over and over again, "And I knew that the vision was true and real." "I felt the love that he gave to me, and I need to say that this kind of love is much stronger than the love I shared with my parents. That was the time when I began to believe in Jesus and in God. God worked on my heart. He changed me. Before that happened, I couldn't imagine that someone could change what I had believed since I was born. But He did change me! I want to thank him a dozen of times! I want to thank Him for coming into my life. Happiness came to me because I now love God. I am so grateful for knowing him, my God. My faith grew so much stronger and I have no doubts anymore. This experience gives me the strong desire for learning more about God and to study about God in the Bible."

Yui's testimony is revealing. When God himself becomes the message, people definitely do respond to a person by properly attaching meaning to that message. This sense of meaning arises in people when the presence of existential love becomes a lived experience for Buddhists. When the gospel message is conveyed by life, it can be properly understood. Experiencing something or encountering someone, allows meaning to be discovered. In order to help Buddhist believers come to understand Christ within the Buddhist circular cosmology of the cycle of births and rebirths through the law of karma, it is crucial to acknowledge that anything that reduces that message to mere words stimulates in the receptor meanings unworthy of the message. Through her personal encounter with God, Yui became able to live in communion with God and to taste and enjoy the experience of mutual reciprocity with God and other human relationships.

The Thrust of Adventist Devotional Theology in Missiology

"The Savior desires [nothing] so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character" and give a "manifestation through humanity of the Savior's love" **(**White 1911:600).

In his book *Hunger*, Dybdahl suggests that many Christians feel hunger for God because their primarily cognitive and intellectual definition of religion "cuts them off from the source of spiritual life" (2015a:4). The discipline of theology traditionally included devotional theology as one important pillar among three major branches. However, the contemporary exclusive focus on doctrinal theology not only betrays believers' need for spiritual growth but also marks itself as insufficient in its missional response to other more spiritual practice-oriented world religions.

In an unpublished paper, "Encounter with God: Steps toward an Adventist Devotional Theology," Dybdahl expressed his concerns about the neglect of devotional theology. Notice a few key thoughts from his paper. (The reader should take note that the content of this paper comes from the Ellen G. White archives and probably dates back to the 1980s or early 90s.) Too often Adventist identity has merely been defined by its dogmatic, moral, biblical, historical, and pastoral disciplines. All of these disciplines are important; however, the neglect of spirituality bears widespread implications for the church and world missions.

Meanwhile, there is a deep-seated unease with abstract theology because religious experience is also a necessary part of religion. Devotional theology explores the dynamics of how one actually encounters or relates to God. Instead of falling victim to a kind of Adventist Scholasticism, we need "to do truth" rather than "speaking truth." We need to find ways to teach Christian ways of touching the divine. And devotional theology must be clearly related to the central themes in Seventh-day Adventist theology, so that experience testing takes place along with doctrinal testing in evaluating faith (Dybdahl Unpublished:5).

When I recently searched for writings on meditation and contemplation in my online Ellen G. White library, I received 1,713 references on meditation and 1,557 on contemplation. It simply is an inspiring and humbling realization that Ellen White's "biggest contribution is her writing and teaching on the spiritual life. Her writings breathe an atmosphere of deep personal communion with God and open the path to an intimate experiential relationship with Jesus" (Dybdahl 2015b:22).

The Spiritual Life Practice of Biblical Meditation: Communion with a Relational God

Christian Meditation can be defined as "a particular way of receiving the revealed and dynamic Word of God into the heart from the mind so as to direct the will in the way of God's guidance. It is related to, but not identical with, intellectual Bible study and prayer" (Dybdahl 2015a:56). John Piper states, "Mission is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not mission, because God is ultimate, not people. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, mission will be no more. It is a temporary necessity, but worship will abide forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal in mission" (Dybdahl 2015a:14).

The emphasis of meditation as described in the Bible is the focus of the mind and heart on God's law, Word, character, and action (Dybdahl 2015a:53; Griswold 2010:356). The longing and thirst of the soul for communion with God is expressed in many Psalms. Scott Griswold beautifully describes meditation as the devotional practice of pondering the words of a verse or verses of Scripture with a receptive heart. Through meditating, we allow the Holy Spirit to take the written Word and apply it as the living Word into our inner being. As divine truth is imparted to us, it inevitably brings forth a response to God (2010:359).

In comparison and contrast, Buddhist meditation aims for the ultimate enlightenment and escape from suffering and the cycle of reincarnation. In the Zen tradition, mindfulness (*sati*) seeks to avoid getting stuck in notions and seeks to transcend words and concepts to enable an encounter with reality (Hanh 1995:14). The Buddhist term *samatha* means stopping, calming, concentrating, and the term *vipasyana* means insight, or looking deeply. "Looking deeply" means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between the observer and observed disappears (40). Thich Nhat Hanh, a renowned Vietnamese Buddhist monk and scholar even compares mindfulness with the Holy Spirit. He says that both, [mindfulness and the Holy Spirit] are agents of healing. "When you have mindfulness, you have love and understanding, you see more deeply, and you can heal the wounds in your own mind" (45). Hanh feels "that all of us also [like the Holy Spirit who descended on Jesus] have the seed of the Holy Spirit in us, the capacity of healing, transforming, and loving. When we touch that seed, we are able to touch God the Father and God the Son" (45).

These last two quotes from Thich Nhat Hanh are very insightful. First, these words communicate the attempt to get in touch with "divine, impersonal, cosmic consciousness inside of oneself." A relational, personal God remains unknown. Discussions about concepts of God are perceived as a waste of energy. Only the practice of mindfulness and concentration is perceived as getting in touch with a living reality. Second, these words also illuminate the fact that Buddhist believers feel very unfamiliar with the Holy Spirit (*phrawinyaan borisut*) "and may conjure up the idea of a deceased person's ghost (*phii*). This is not only biblically incorrect; it also does not necessarily present the Holy Spirit as an attractive Person to put one's trust in" (AFM 2019:68). In contrast to the Buddhist approach to meditation and mindfulness, "Christian meditation seeks communion with a personal God who enters and fills us at our invitation. It begins with thoughts about His Presence, Word, and works, but does not end there. While Eastern meditation searches for the true self, Christian meditation seeks the true God's infilling and the transformation that His presence brings" (Dybdahl 2015a:58).

Practical Applications of Meditation/Contemplation Practices

It is my sincere desire and commitment to grow in my devotional and spiritual life practices, so that I can reach out to practitioners of Eastern meditation more effectively in order to invite them to experience true Christian meditation. I am also convinced that meditation is a biblical teaching and that God desires us to understand and apply his Word and will at a deeper level. Only when we become joyful practitioners of biblical meditation and contemplation (including many other spiritual disciplines) will we be able to reflect authentic experiential faith to Buddhist believers. As Griswold already pointed out, "biblical meditation, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, can powerfully impact the character of the Christian witness, transforming his or her ways of interacting. Buddhists will be more attracted to the Christian whose life reflects the morality of the law and the purity of God's character. Truth spoken will be much more credible coming from a life that exemplifies the same (2010:365).

Earlier sections of the paper pointed out that Buddhist believers come from a cyclical karmic worldview that is unfamiliar with a personal, relational God. However, knowing that God created and intends every human being to become a reciprocating self with God and other humans, I see the major thrust in doing biblical meditation and contemplation with Buddhist believers as a discovery of a God who actively longs to be experienced. Meditation practices should involve reading Scripture, memorizing Scripture, followed by meditation on the text. This sequence creates

space and opportunity for the Holy Spirit to communicate meaning into the message of the text. Buddhist participants and Christians who facilitate meditation sessions with Buddhists receive the opportunity to grow in their desire for God while resting in God's presence.

Christian meditation in partnership with Buddhist believers is a journey of experiencing what being and becoming relational means. In the set-up of a spiritual environment for meditation practice, we can anticipate and be assured that the Word becomes a real person to be experienced. Authenticity comes in because both, the Christian and the Buddhist, are learners. It is not only the person who needs to get acquainted with Christianity. Divine reciprocity is possible and holistic learning with mind and heart takes place. When the Buddhist believer becomes more familiar with meditation procedures, a variety of inspiring types of biblical mediation—for example silence or verbal expression of God's Word—can be introduced. This also includes re-living or re-experiencing the presence and life of Jesus through meditation.

Another powerful aspect of utilizing meditation practice in the Christian-Buddhist encounter is the use of words to speak intimacy: to pray Abba, Father, speaks volumes to what Jesus tells us about God and the familial core of the Christian faith. God is Mother as well as Father in Christian theology (Matt 23:37; Luke 13:34). We all are children of a divine heavenly Parent who wraps up in one being the caring elements of both human parents (Dybdahl 2015:41). The loving and intimate care of a relational God can breathe attachment into the lives of Buddhist believers who have often searched for ongoing bonding with deceased ancestors. When merit-making practices for deceased ancestors are discontinued, culturally acceptable practices for honoring and remembering ancestors can be put into practice. However, this is another topic, worthwhile for further research and reflection.

Summary and Conclusion

The thesis of this paper suggested that Adventist devotional theology in a missional encounter with Buddhists and their karmic understanding of God is crucial because its emphasis on communion with God allows the Holy Spirit to directly incarnate the meaning of the gospel through a relational, divine encounter.

Throughout the first part, I elaborated on how a deistic worldview is intrinsically prone to neglect the spiritual life, which severely limits a person's ability to communicate the gospel message. The neglect of one's spiritual life is illustrated in Helmut Haubeil's framework of "Carnal Christianity." Missionaries are hindered in communicating the gospel by

the means of an experiential faith when they themselves subconsciously fall victim to being carnal Christians, which means to miss out on new infillings of the Holy Spirit in their daily Christian walk. It was suggested that missiological research may easily lose its unique thrust when it is conducted in sole dependency on the philosophical underpinnings of the social sciences. Thus, the integration of an Adventist theology of devotion with other branches of existing theologies may contribute to a more effective communicating of the gospel message.

Part two of the paper emphasized the need for a worldview recovery and a renewed Christian spirituality. I proposed that the occurrence of God's divine interventions is the strongest motivation factor for living devotional lives. Therefore, I proposed a spiritual life-based Buddhist-Christian encounter with an immediate emphasis on a reciprocal relationship with God. That section further explained the law of Karma, which is a punishment of the will or desire to be, to live, or to have. That view sees the biblical motif of a covenant attachment to Christ as a sin. Therefore, the importance of a new understanding of "reciprocity" and an awareness for "meaning" needs to be encouraged. The section concludes with the notion that a personalized gospel message provokes a person's desire to attach meaning to that message.

Finally, part three summarizes the thrust of Adventist Devotional Theology in missiology. Devotional theology explores the dynamics of how one actually encounters or relates to God. Adventist Theology of Devotion means "to do truth" rather than "speaking truth." However, it remains vitally important for Devotional Theology to become clearly related to the central themes in Seventh-day Adventist theology. An interesting phenomenon that can be anticipated is that Devotional Theology will not do away with important doctrinal Adventist truth. On the contrary, it will strongly emphasize all truth, and inspire a new commitment and love for doctrinal truth in all believers. In an authentic set-up of a spiritual environment for mediation practice, the Word becomes a real person and authentic Christianity can be understood. When God's intimacy is breathed into Buddhists' lives, new pathways will open up for finding new ways to express respect and honor for ancestors.

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CHANCHAL GAYEN

Facing Missiological Challenges by Understanding Hinduism's Approach to Ancestors

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's doctrine regarding the state of the dead denies the continuation of the deceased's soul or spirit in any form. The doctrine describes death as an unconscious state until the day of the resurrection. Many Hindus teach that the soul endures after physical death; therefore, special attention is given to one's departed ancestors. The Hindu teaching concerning ancestors is complex and is closely associated with many other teachings. To develop a comprehensive picture of the status of an ancestor and the relationship between ancestors and the living it is necessary to look at a few other Hindu teachings. The belief in ancestors compliments *Advaita* philosophy and supports a fundamental Hindu social structure and identity-development process. *Advaita* is the philosophical teaching of non-duality of the Supreme Realty found in the *Upanishads*, one segment of the *Vedas*.

This study is divided into five sections. The first section describes Hindus from socio-legal and scriptural perspectives, in order to explain the connection between a family and their ancestors. The second section examines death, the continuation of the soul after death, and describes the elevation of an individual from a living being to an ancestor. The third part of the study explores the rites and rituals performed for the dead in order to explain the connection between the ancestors and the living. The fourth section reports on a pilot study done among a few practicing Indian Hindus to better understand their view of death and ancestors. Finally, the last section discusses the missiological challenges related to Hindu teachings on ancestors.

Hindu Identity: Social and Legal

Hindus develop their ancestry through family lines. The simplest definition of ancestors, according to Hinduism, are the members from the family line who are no more and by extension all those who have departed. The family line should match the identity of an individual through his/her same caste and *gotra*. It is only Hindus who carry the caste and *gotra* identity. The discussion in this section is to establish the identity of a Hindu from a socio-legal perspective and then move on to a discussion on caste and *gotra* to establish the link between the three to help understand the connection between the living and the ancestors.

Who is a Hindu? It is very difficult to define Hinduism or a Hindu because the scriptures of the faith itself do not provide a definition. The word *Hindu* has geographical and social connotations. The name was attributed by foreigners around the 7th-8th century AD to the people who lived across the River Sindh, which is currently in Pakistan. Since the foreigners could not pronounce Sindh, they replaced the S with H, and it became Hind. The land slowly became known as Hindustan, and the people of the land were called Hindus (Nirvedananda 2011). Prior to this, the indigenous faith did not carry any specific name. Looking back, scholars identify this faith as the Vedic Arya Brahminical religion (Sunder Raj 1998). Currently, Sanatan Dharma refers to the indigenous faith which existed before the foreign invasion and continues to the present day. To most Hindus, *Sanatan Dharma* and Hinduism are synonymous. Any individual contributing to *Sanantan Dharma* is a Hindu.

Under Great Britain's rule of India, it became necessary to identify the population of India (Hindustan) based on their faith. The Census Commission of 1910 identified Vedic Arya Dharma followers with the following characteristics (Sunder Raj 1998):

1. Accept the supremacy of the Brahmins
2. Receive mantras from a Brahmin or another recognized Hindu guru
3. Accept the authorities of the Vedas
4. Worship Hindu gods
5. Are served by good Brahmins as family priests
6. Have access to the interior of the Hindu temple
7. Do not cause pollution by touch
8. Cremate their dead
9. Do not eat beef

Justice Venkatachala,[1] in his 1986 verdict on the petition of Bramachari Sidheswar Shai & others verses State of West Bengal in the Supreme Court of India, identified the following as salient features of Hinduism:

1. Acceptance of the Vedas with reverence as the highest authority in religious and philosophic matters and acceptance with reverence of Vedas by Hindu thinkers and philosophers as the sole foundation of Hindu philosophy.
2. Maintain a spirit of tolerance and willingness to understand and appreciate the opponent's point of view based on the realization that truth was many-sided.
3. Acceptance of great world rhythm, vast periods of creation, maintenance, and dissolution that follow each other in endless succession, by all six systems of Hindu philosophy.
4. Acceptance by all systems of Hindu philosophy the belief in rebirth and pre-existence.
5. Recognition of the fact that the means or ways to salvation are many.
6. Realization of the truth that the gods to be worshipped may be many, yet there are Hindus who do not believe in the worshipping of idols.
7. Unlike other religions or religious creeds, the Hindu religion is not tied-down to any definite set of philosophic concepts or beliefs.

The constitution of India does not define the term *Hindu*. However, Hindu Personal Laws identify[2] the following categories of people as Hindus: (1) any person who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi, or Jew unless it is proved that the person does not participate in Hindu customs, rites, and rituals; (2) any person who is a Buddhist, Sikh, or Jain; and (3) any person belonging to any form of Hinduism such as Brahmo, Prarthana, Arya Samaj, Virashiva, or Lingaya, etc.

Schedule castes and Schedule tribes[3] are not included in the list of Hindus unless the Central Government of India officially states that a specific tribe among the schedule tribes is Hindu.[4]

The religio-socio-political identity of Hindus is very wide-ranging. Hinduism "embraces an eclectic range of doctrines and practices, from pantheism to agnosticism and from faith in reincarnation to belief in the caste system. But none of these constitutes an obligatory credo for a Hindu" (Tharoor 2018:4). Therefore, people with very different faith practices and ideologies identify as Hindus. Even though different Hindu groups vary in their faith practices they all contribute in practicing caste and *gotra* identity and belong to a cast and *gotra* inherited from the ancestors.

While the Hindu scriptures do not define a Hindu, they provide some guidelines. There are two important identities that a Hindu maintains throughout his or her life—caste (*jati*) and *gotra*. These two identities are important during religious occasions as well as for social identification. Following are two pivotal texts that led to the development of the caste system among Hindus. In the creation chapter of the *Rig-Veda*, it says,

"When they divided Purus how many portions did they make? What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet? The *Brahman* was his mouth, of both his arms was the *Rajanya* made. His thighs became the *Vaisya*, from his feet the *Sudra* was produced" (*Rig-Veda* 10:90:11-12).[5]

Four different groups of people are mentioned: *Brahmana, Rajanya (Kshatriyas), Vaishya*, and *Sudra*. Though the duties of these groups are not mentioned in this text, over time *Brahmanas* were identified as priests, *Rajanya* as kings/warriors, *Vaishya* as traders/businesspersons, and *Sudra* as farmers and other tradespersons. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna encouraged Arjuna to do his caste duty as a king because Arjuna belonged to the *Rajanya* caste. In his discourse, Krishna told Arjuna, "The four orders of society are created by Me, classifying them according to *gunas* predominant in each and apportioning corresponding duties to them; though the originator of this creation, Know Me, the Immortal Lord, to be a non-doer" (*Bhagavad Gita* 4:13).

These texts have been interpreted as categorizing society according to divisions of labor. In a family of four brothers, four different castes should exist. However, this is not the reality. The caste system became a social structure in which all Hindus are born into an inherited caste. Kuruvachira (n.d.) points out that because the *Rig-Veda* describes the origin of the four castes, it was taken as a divine command and became the foundation of Hindu society. "A strong caste identity could provide feelings of belongingness and self-esteem, thereby relying on some caste norms. Particularly, it is known that high caste individuals see caste identity as a more stable construct wherein this identity is inherited at birth" (Sankaran, Sekerdej, and von Hecker 2017: para. 4). Caste identity cannot be adopted or conferred on anyone. Therefore, "caste identity is one of the most salient identities in the Indian context. That is with whom your future and the future of your children and grand-children are bound" (Hoefer 2001:230). Tharoor comments along the same lines stating, "India is a land of multiple identities, and one of the key identities, inescapably, is caste" (2018:76).

Along with caste, *gotra* is also an identity marker that is decided at birth. According to the *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, "A *gotra* is an exogamous kinship division within a *jati* (caste)" (Jones and Ryan 2007:170). The word "is formed from the two Sanskrit words *Gau* (meaning Cow) and *Trahi* (meaning Shed)" (Gurudev 2011). In ancient times, people of the same kinship group used to keep their cows in the same place, and thus the terminology was coined. "This system was started among Brahmins, with a purpose to classify and identify the families in the community" (IndiaDivine.org 2015). Originally, seven sacred saints and one more *Rishi* were

known as *Gotrakarin*, the originators of all Brahminical *gotras*. Later other castes also developed their own *gotra* systems.

The primary purpose of the *gotra* system is "to prevent marriages within the same *Gotra*" (Sakshi 2017:1053). This is done "to keep the *gotra* free from inherited blemishes and also to broaden the influence of a particular *gotra* by wider alliances with other powerful lineages" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Gotra"). Both male and female children of the family are endowed with the father's *gotra* at their birth. Girls belong to the *gotra* of their father prior to their marriage. They are adopted into the *gotra* of their husbands after marriage. The *gotra* of a male member of the family never changes.

Both the caste and the *gotra* of a Hindu child are inherited and, therefore, integral and unchangeable. These two identities connect Hindus with their ancestors. This relationship binds, for eternity, a Hindu child to an extended family, living or dead. This chain of connection becomes very evident when a Hindu goes to worship. Offerings are made to the divine by mentioning the name of the worshipper and preferably three previous male ancestors along with caste and *gotra* identity. If a person converts to another faith, it is as if they have walked away from two identities—their families and their ancestors. Furthermore, they have brought disrespect and shame on their families.

Death

Unlike Christians, Hindus do not view death as a consequence of sin. According to popular Hindu belief at death *Yamaraj* visits the individual and takes the person's *atma* (soul) either to hell or heaven, depending upon the person's karma. Death signifies the soul's departure from the body allowing it to make its onward journey. According to *Gita* 2:18, one of the popular scriptures of Hinduism says a person's soul is eternal. A soul does not die but transmigrate from one body to another until it achieves salvation. Death involves only the body.

According to Hindus, a living being has two components, the perishable and imperishable. Hinduism has identified these two identities as body and soul. The soul is the true eternally existing imperishable entity, whereas the body is simply a perishable vehicle. In the battlefield of Kurukshetra Arjun refused to fight against the Kauravas because he would have to kill his friends, relatives, and teachers. At that time, Sri Krishna, the incarnated eternal Brahman (*Gita* 10:12, 13). In chapter 11 Krishna had shown his cosmic form to Arjuna as eternal, gave a discourse to Arjun explaining that Arjun would destroy only the body, which is a temporary dwelling place for the eternal soul. He said, "But know that

by whom this entire body is pervaded, is indestructible. No one is able to cause the destruction of the imperishable soul. The embodied soul is eternal in existence, indestructible and infinite, only the material body is factually perishable, therefore, fight O Arjuna" (*Bhagavad Gita* 2:17-18).

Sri Krishna continued by clarifying that the eternal soul cannot be destroyed by any means: "Anyone who thinks that the soul is a slayer and anyone who thinks that the soul is slain both of them are ignorant, the soul never slays nor is slain. The soul never takes birth and never dies at any time nor does it come into being again when the body is created. The soul is birthless, eternal, imperishable and timeless and is never destroyed when the body is destroyed" (*Bhagavad Gita* 2:19-20). Sri Krishna illustrates this further, "As a man shedding worn-out garments, takes other new ones, likewise, the embodied soul, casting off worn-out bodies, enters into others that are new. Weapons cannot cut it, nor can fire burn it; water cannot wet it, nor can wind dry it" (*Bhagavad Gita* 2:22-23). Therefore, according to the *Bhagavad Gita*, death is one of many events in the journey of the imperishable soul toward the ultimate goal—*moksha* (salvation). Swami Sivananda explains this phenomenon by saying, "Death is separation of the soul from a physical body. Death becomes the starting point of a new better life. Death does not end your personality and self-consciousness. It merely opens the door to a higher form of life. Death is only the gateway to a fuller life" (Sivananda 2015:34).

Death becomes an important event because it opens the door for the next stage of the soul's journey. In this process, the soul may spend some time in heaven or hell, depending upon the accumulated karma, but the journey continues until *moksha* (salvation) is attained. At death, the individual becomes an ancestor, whose body is subject to decay and whose soul moves forward. The progeny of the deceased is expected to help the soul journey successfully. Several rituals are prescribed in Hindu scriptures to help the soul along that journey; however, the details of the rituals vary according to the context and the divisions/sects of Hinduism, while the basic structure is more or less the same.

Rituals for the Ancestors

According to Hindu teachings, a person's primary ancestors are one's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Next in importance are all others in the family who have died, and all from the same *gorta* and caste. Ancestors on both the father's side and mother's side, as well as unnamed souls, are included (Ghosh 2002:83).

It is believed that those who die from natural causes become *preta*,[6] and preferably the son (or in the absence of a son, some other male member of

the family) should perform the rituals for the *preta* to have a safe journey to the next world. The *Rig-Veda* suggests three primary rituals to perform after the death of an individual: *pitr-yajna, pinda-pitr-yajna,* and *pinda-dana*. The *pitr-yajna* is an important moment in the culmination of the cremation rite. This is when the ancestor receives the first offering. *Pinda-pitr-yajna* is the offering made to the ancestors 30 days after death. Brahmins (priests) play an important role in all these activities since they are considered the mediators between the household and their ancestors (Sayers 2015).

In current times there are a number of activities identified with the veneration of ancestors. The first ritual is the preparation of the cremation, followed by *sraddha,* annual veneration (*Batsarik*), p*inda-daan* (food offered to the ancestors), and *tarpan* (a ritual to satisfy the ancestors). Hindu religious works of literature describe the rituals to be performed during cremation. The body must be washed and laid on a cot. One of the important steps of preparation is the spreading of an unbleached and uncut sheet of cloth with its four corners hanging out. This is performed by a son, brother, close relative, or another person assigned to perform that duty. The individual must recite, "Give up thy old clothing and dress up in a new suit" (Ghosh 2002:143). In the past, the body was usually cremated in an open crematorium, but in many places today, electric crematoriums are used.

Following the cremation, the period of *asauch* (period of defilement) occurs. Usually, the chief mourner and the sons of the family wear seamless clothing, go barefoot, do not style their hair, do not clip their nails, sit on a particular type of mat, and eat a simple vegetarian meal once a day. In modern times, many of these practices are simplified and are not observed as meticulously as in the past. These signs of mourning are continually performed until the next landmark ritual, the *sraddha*.

The word *sraddha* originates from Sanskrit and means respect. This rite is an expression of respect for the deceased. The religious texts guide the next generation to express their respect by fulfilling the responsibility of helping the soul continue on the next leg of its journey. "So long as the mortal elements of the deceased do not turn into a higher body, he wanders day and night in the ethereal form seeking sustenance" (*Garuda Puran* 3:16). Usually, the s*raddha* ceremony takes place on the eleventh day after the cremation, but it may vary according to caste, family tradition, and extenuating circumstances. The *sraddha* primarily involves offering food and other items to the deceased as a form of worship. The most significant offering is rice balls, which are given to crows. It is believed that the soul of the deceased comes in the form of a crow. The *Sraddha* is performed with the help of a Brahmin (priest). A minimum of three Brahmins must be invited, along with other friends and family members. Usually, a feast

is held. During the religious performances of the s*raddha*, the chief mourners, along with other mourners from the family, take a ritualistic bath, shave their heads, and clip their nails. Once the *sraddha* is completed, the mourners return to regular life.

The next form of s*raddha* is p*arvana sraddha*, a monthly ritual where food, in the form of rice balls, is offered to the person who recently died. The third form of s*raddha* is *ekoddista sraddha*, which takes place one year after the death. Once again, rice balls are offered to the deceased. Most Hindu families do not celebrate any festivals in their homes during this year. The whole year is considered to be an *asauch* period. The final s*raddha* is s*apindakarma sraddha*, which is performed any time after the first annual rite. It is advised that *sapindakarma sraddha* be performed in a holy place, if possible. By performing this rite, the son helps the deceased to be elevated to the level of the three primary ancestors—the father, grandfather, and great-grandfather (Sayers 2015). The great-great-grandfather is now elevated to the pantheon of the anonymous, though not ignored. Among some Hindu communities, the annual rite needs to be continued until the last rite, *sapindakarma sraddha,* is performed. The rituals are also a form of consolation to the family by assuring them that they have helped the deceased journey to the next world.

The *tarpan* is another ritual performed in honor of ancestors. The word *tarpan* is the combination of two Sanskrit words, *tript* and *on. Tript* means to satisfy, while *on* is the suffix according to the Sanskrit grammar to provide the verb form of *tript*. Therefore, *tarpan* means to satisfy or appease the ancestors. This is done primarily with water although other items are also included in the ritual. The most preferable location for the ritual is on the bank of the River Ganges. If this is not possible another body of water may be utilized. It is expected that the person doing *tarpan* stand in deep water, up to his or her belly button. In the past these rituals were only performed by men; however, over time some women have also begun to perform the rituals, though this is rare. Since this is a rite to be performed on specific days, according to a Hindu almanac, *tarpan* is also considered to be a daily duty. It is to be performed every day while bathing. The *grihi* (the man of the family) may use a shortened form of the *tarpan* chant, "Father is heaven, father is Dharma, and father is indeed the greatest form of austerity. When the gratification of this father has been gained, all gods (automatically) get gratified" (Ghosh 2002:153). The most auspicious *tarpan* is *mahalaya tarpan*, which announces the closing of *Pitar Paksha*. *Pitar Paksha* is a fifteen-day rite during which the household (*grihi*) is expected to make an offering to the ancestors.

Other than these rites and rituals, Hindus remember their ancestors during almost every major rite, such as marriage, *upanayana* (sacred thread

ceremony), and so on. Every time Hindus perform a major rite, they are asked the names of their caste, *gotra*, and three ancestors. All these activities are ways to remember, pay respect, connect, and bind both the living and the dead.

Reality Check

I have observed that often what is written in Hindu texts and what is practiced do not always agree. To better understand how Hindus today interact with their ancestors, I engaged in a dialogue with twenty-three educated, mostly middle aged, practicing Indian Hindus belonging to three upper castes. This is just a pilot study and does not represent all Hindus. I had a few questions in my mind and I asked those questions in the process of dialogue. Following are the responses received from the participants.

1. Do you observe the *pitar paksha*?

All of the participants, except two, observe the *pitar paksha*. Three of them do so in a very orthodox way. During the *pita paksha* they eat a vegetarian diet and perform the appropriate rituals. Others believe in it but perform the rituals only on the last day, the *mahalaya tarpan* rather than every day. Mr. Hari[7] does not observe the *pitar paksha* because he does "not believe in rituals." Mr. Prakash said, "The soul of the ancestor has gone either to take another body or has attained moksha. How will I [my] observing *pitar paksha* benefit the soul? I do not know. It may even be I." By this he wanted to say that the soul which had the body of one of his ancestors might have taken his current body. There is no way to substantiate nor deny the claim. This is his justification for not observing *pitar paksha*.

2. Did you or will you perform all the *sraddhas* if there is a death in the family?

Everybody agreed that they have performed or will perform all the *sraddhas* in case of a death in the family. They believe this is a requirement of their faith and a requirement of their society. They also believe the *sraddha* is required for the soul to achieve peaceful rest. Most importantly, the mourning period and the the *sraddhas* are an expression of gratitude to the departed ancestors. Naresh said, "It is on their foundation we are standing today. How can we deny them?" All of them agreed that the ancestors bless their progeny.

3. Do you believe in *swarga* (heaven) and *narak* (hell)?[8]

None of the interviewees had a clear idea about heaven or hell. Purva stated very emphatically, "Heaven and hell, all are here on earth. [The soul does] not need to go anywhere." Arun said, "We have heard about it but never thought seriously about it." Karuna added, "[They] may exist, but I am concerned about this life. If this goes well, I am happy." Some of the interviewees do not believe in the existence of heaven or hell. Yet most of them observe the rites and perform the required rituals. This appears to be a contradiction yet they are comfortable with that. Five of the interviewees do not believe in the transmigration of souls, and so the issue of the continuation of the soul to some destination does not matter to them.

4. Do the ancestors become gods, like other gods in heaven, after they become ancestors?

Most of my interviewees were not sure what to answer for this question. They strongly believe that the blessings of the ancestor have power but are not sure about them becoming gods. They all seek the blessings of the ancestors and believe that the ancestors, especially their parents, bless them whether they perform the rituals or not.

As I analyzed the responses of the Hindu interviewees, the following themes emerged.

A. A sense of attachment: People perform the rituals because they are attached to their ancestors. This attachment develops because of two factors. First, the participants respect their ancestors and acknowledge their contribution in their lives, and they believe that they can retrieve additional blessings from them. Second, they have been taught, through examples and words, to maintain the link with their ancestors through various rituals. The simple reminder of their caste and *gotra and* through the rituals, reinforces their connection to the long chain of ancestors.

B. Religious requirements: Hinduism is rich in rites and rituals. Individuals may believe or may not believe in a ritual, may understand the activities of a ritual or may not understand it, yet they perform the action in faith, believing that the ritual itself will have its effect. Very few refuse to participate. The efficacy of the rituals cannot be justified logically. In the same way, participating in a ritual without believing in it cannot be logically explained. Every individual has her/his own explanation. Some may say it was the desire of their parent and some may justify it as fulfilling social requirements.

C. Social requirements: Hindus generally form tight-knit communities. Many of their actions are to fulfill a social requirement. All of my participants agreed that either they have performed or will perform last rites for their parents. In the process of discussion, it also emerged that they do this not only because of religious requirements but also because of social requirements.

D. The expectation of blessings from the ancestors: Blessings from parents is a common theme in Hindu communities, which was also endorsed by the participants. They believe it is immaterial whether the ancestors become gods or not; the ancestors still have the ability to bless.

E. A peaceful coexistence of contradictions: Contradictions are evident in the answers of the participants, yet they are not disturbed with that. People may not consent to the theory behind a ritual, yet they may perform the ritual for several reasons. They may not believe in certain teachings yet continue to claim to be Hindus because Hinduism does not provide a set of dogma like Christianity or Islam for their adherents to follow. Thus, Hinduism is an all-encompassing faith.

Missiological Challenges

Issue of Identity

Ancestors play an important role in shaping the identity of Hindus. They are remembered during major religious events, by name, caste, and *gotra*. Remembering ancestors at different family ceremonies is a means of bonding within an extended family. It is a matter of honor for the family and is a known fact that in a Hindu community, shame and honor play an important role.

Usually, when a Hindu accepts Jesus Christ, the individual is disowned by the family for several reasons. One reason is losing the caste identity, and therefore the *gotra* identity as well. If people no longer belong to the Hindu fold they cannot hold a caste identity. Theoretically speaking, caste identity is exclusively for Hindus. Some Christians continue to hold their caste identity after their conversion experience, which is not validated by the Hindu community. Thus, the new Christian becomes an orphan in the sight of the community, without any identity to hold on to. The question is whether or not the church really and truly can provide a new family identity as the family of God?

Grieving Process

The yearlong religious requirements for the peaceful and safe passage of the deceased soul helps the family through the grieving process. The last ritual, *sapindakarma sraddha,* is consoling for the family. They develop a sense of satisfaction—they have done enough to help the departed soul on its journey, and thus they are comforted. The yearlong grieving period, with several rituals, is a process of slow separation of the grieving family from the departed individual. How does the church help in this separation process? Some denominations have developed functional substitutes, like memorial services after ten and/or forty days, with another memorial service at the end of the first year. Many Seventh-day Adventists also follow the same practices. The church has played a neutral role allowing the local practices to be continued. The Anglican Church celebrates All Souls' Day. People visit their ancestors' gravesites on the anniversary of their deaths. I once visited the gravesite of a very dear relative. As I stood by the grave, the wife of the deceased told me, "I know there is nothing in this grave, but I have my everything in it." I am not suggesting that we blindly follow the models used by others, but could the church think of creating functional substitutes as a coping mechanism for grieving families?

Presentation of the Doctrine

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's doctrine of the state of the dead teaches that death is a state of unconscious nothingness. It is a discontinuation of the dead person in any form until the second coming of Jesus Christ. Hindus believe in the existence of an individual in a different conscious form after death. The teaching of unconscious nothingness creates a void in the Hindu mind. Many Hindus possibly could recite the names of their ancestors from the last six or more generations. It is difficult for them to accept such a void. Many years ago, a non-Adventist friend asked me, "Why do you teach the annihilation of the dead?" Hindus look at our doctrine of the state of the dead in the same way. This is a challenge for the church because if the doctrine is not communicated successfully, ancestor veneration will continue to be practiced by the recent disciples of Jesus Christ from Hindu communities.

It is challenging to remove ancestors from the minds of the Hindu converts. Disrespecting ancestors will also send the wrong signal to the non-Christian neighborhoods and will act as an obstacle for mission. My lifelong interaction with the Hindu community teaches me the reason behind remembering ancestors is to hold onto a legacy in which people can take pride. Ancestors are the reminder of the origin and belongingness of an individual to one's family and community. The church needs to address the issue and provide a Bible-based response for new converts.

Endnotes

[1] To read the details of this case, visit https://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=5047.

[2] "The Hindu law is one of the most ancient and primitive laws that are still prevalent in today's era and also known to the world at large. It is governed by the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, it is a codified law passed by the Parliament of India" https://blog.ipleaders.in/hindu-law/.

[3] Schedule castes and tribes are those Indians who do not belong to the four Castes of Hinduism. They are considered as the Avarna (non-caste people) and considered as untouchables. Currently they are called Dalits.

[4] Constitution of India Article 341 and 342

[5] *Rig-Veda* texts are quoted from the translation by Ralph T. H Griffith, http://www.sanskritweb.net/rigveda/griffith-p.pdf.

[6] Typically English translations of this word are *ghost*, which does not reveal the true sense of the word. It can simply be described as the soul, which is not yet released from its earthly bindings.

[7] All names are changed to maintain the participant's anonymity.

[8] I asked this question to find how much people know about heaven or hell.

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Faith, Force, and Fear: Factors that Influence Ancestral Worship among Hindus

As a young boy in India, I (Santosh) grew up in a traditional Hindu home. My mother was extremely religious. In fact, she was a public preacher for the god Shiva.[1] We celebrated many festivals in our household; every week it seemed as if we observed one holiday or another through rituals and fasting. My mother also fed wild animals and birds in the area, specifically crows, as she believed that feeding these creatures meant the food reached our dead ancestors. In some parts of India, clay pots full of freshly cooked food are hung from trees (mostly outside the village) for the dead to eat. Many families offer the first cooked meal of the day to the crows, believing that their ancestors accept the first share of the food (Amarujala 2017). Hinduism was not just a part of everything we did, but it was who we were.

In spite of my family's strong connection to Hinduism, I felt as if something was missing. In Hinduism, one's association with the gods is not relational. Rather, it is based on the devotion of a follower to the divine and provides a systematic way to move a believer towards their goal, thus improving *karma*.[2] As such, there is a strong focus on good works in Hinduism. Additionally, ancestral worship is deeply ingrained in the Hindu religion. While many Hindus attribute their devotion and the accompanying actions to faith, my personal experience suggests that there are often other factors at work beneath the surface.

While this was the world in which I grew up, when I was exposed to Christianity, I found that the Hindu ways were less rewarding than the

ways of Jesus. Because of this, in 2007, I was baptized and dedicated my life to Jesus Christ. However, my conversion to Christianity had unfortunate familial consequences.

Based on my upbringing and experiences with Hinduism and subsequent conversion to Christianity, I have identified three factors that highly influence adherents to Hinduism in the practice of ancestral worship: faith, force, and fear.

Background to Ancestral Worship

Reverence, obedience, and the transmission of traditions/values from one generation to the next are some of the most profound human responsibilities for families, clans, and tribes. One of the values that is transmitted in many cultures is respect for elders. However, the ways values are expressed differ based on culture and religion. From a Christian scriptural perspective, the Bible says, "Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you" (Exod 20:12).

Hindu believers abide by a similar principle. The Hindu scriptures, *Padma Purana,* state that an ideal Brahmin (that is, someone of good virtue, but not of the priestly class) shows respect to his parents and observes the rituals mentioned in *Vedas* (*Padma Purana*, 2.1.12). *Taittiriya Upanishad* 1.11 tells us,

> देवपतृिकार्याभ्यां न प्रमदतिवयं। मातृदेवो भव। पतृिदेवो भव। आचार्यदेवो भव। अतथिदिवो भव। यान्यनवधानि कर्माणि तानि सेवतिव्यानि नो इतसाणि यान्यस्माकं सुचरतिानि तानि त्वयोपास्यानि नो इतराणि।
>
> Never swerve from the rites due to the gods, and to the manes [Manes refers to the ancestors]. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 1.5.16 mentions "the world of the Manes" (*Pitriloka)*]. Let thy mother be to thee a god; let thy father be a god to thee; a god let thy teacher be unto thee, and (so also) let thy guest be unto thee a god. Let only those works be done by thee that are free from blemishes, and not others. Only those deeds of ours should be followed by thee, that is good, and not others. (Sharvananda 1928:42, 43)

According to Hinduism, the absence of such respect brings disgrace to one's family, specifically the ancestors. Ancestors are an integral part of one's existence (Hertzel 2017:1) and a source of identity. For Hindus, honor and reverence are always in tandem.

Because of the importance of ancestors, ancestral worship is commonly practiced in India and exists in many forms (Griffith 2003:50). To understand

who ancestors are, it is crucial to understand the definition of this term and to whom the term refers. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines an ancestor as "one from whom a person is descended;" this includes one's parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents. According to the *Rig Veda,* ancestors are considered as semi-divine beings or demigods. While these beings do not possess the power to punish sinners, as do the gods, the ancestors are the source of beneficial gifts and have the ability to dole out curses (Sayers 2013:26).

While ancestors can be both living and dead, it is important to differentiate between the two. The ways of the elderly are highly respected, strictly followed, and taught to the children to carry on tradition. However, a Hindu family's regard for their dead ancestors is far superior to that given to those alive.

The ancestral funeral offering is one of the triad concepts of Hinduism, alongside several others (triad refers to the triple deities of Hinduism). Wendy Doniger states that "triad" represents the number "three" as both plural and complete and is used as a short form of "lots and lots" (1981:23). In Hindu thinking, each person is responsible for three debts, which is considered the *dharma* (duty) of every person. The triad duties consist of studying the sages, presenting funeral offerings to the ancestors, and sacrificing to the gods. When a family member dies, the family performs many rituals to benefit the spirit of the dead, specifically to ensure that s/he has a better afterlife. This motivates Hindus to practice the rituals and sacrifices mentioned in the *Rig Veda.*

Discussion about the dead, as well as the worship associated with them, would not be complete if the concept of death is not clearly understood. Life and death play a crucial role in almost every culture. Every society, culture, community, family, and individual places significant attention on certain events in life: birth, puberty, marriage, and death (Grunlan and Mayers 1988). Death stands out among the stages, as almost every culture looks at death as a curse, a loss, or an incident that cannot be postponed or avoided. Yet not every culture or person reacts to death in the same way (Aiken 2001:210).

For example, in Rajasthan, located in northern India, it is common to hire professional weepers to lament with the family when a death occurs. These mourners are called "*Rudaali"* and dress in black (color of *Yama,* the god of death) (Bains 2017). Sometimes, due to the shock of an untimely death, a family may struggle to express their grief; the professional weepers help convey the family's grief to the community. In southern India, Tamil people dance and set off firecrackers during a funeral procession. It is believed that the soul must be sent off with happiness as it transitions from the old body to its new status. Regardless of local traditions, the

importance of keeping the dead happy does not change, thus a series of rituals are performed to keep the soul of the deceased at peace. The various ritualistic performances in honor of the dead are the essence of *dharma* (duty) and remains the crux of ancestral worship.

Ancestral Worship in a Modern Hindu Family

Even in modern culture, ancestors play a central role in a typical Hindu family. Additionally, most families maintain connections to their ancestors who are physically dead, believing that the spirit of the ancestor remains alive, watching over and protecting them. The worship of ancestors involves many rituals and often food offerings. The process of feeding the departed ancestors is an important religious ceremony in Hindu homes (Bhattacharyya 1885:31).

However, today's fast-paced world and continued urbanization have influenced many within Hindu society to give up some of the practices of their forefathers (*gotra*). In Hinduism, *gotra* is related to the patrilineality of a family. The purpose of *gotra* is to keep a family's lineage unbroken and avoid incestuous marriages. In Hinduism, *gotra* plays an essential role in relation to families. For example, marriages are not allowed within the same *gotra*. In addition, every *gotra* worships a specific god and guru alongside the mainstream gods and demigods. Even in the absence of practice, the centrality and identity of a Hindu family are linked to their ancestors; therefore, the participation of a Hindu family in ancestral worship is considered essential, even if it is not always practiced.

Many modern Indians no longer live within a joint family (i.e., many family members, including grandparents [mostly paternal], uncles and aunts, cousins, etc., all living under one roof). Because of this, family values, rituals, and customs, including ancestral worship, are often not being well-taught or passed down from generation to generation. However, there are families who respect and follow a few general instructions and guidelines towards their ancestors while not following or conducting all the rituals as required by tradition.

Methodology

Since Hindu customs are essential for ancestral worship, this study examined the three driving forces behind those rituals: faith, fear, and force. Throughout my own Hindu upbringing, I (Santosh) worshipped and participated in the rituals conducted by my family. However, today as a Christian, I can clearly see that the practices in and around my family and society were underscored by these three factors.

A multi-method study was conducted to learn more about the Hindu perspective on ancestral worship and the factors behind the conducting of those rituals. For the first phase, 198 participants (119 males and 79 females) filled out a survey about their understanding of and participation in ancestral worship. Participants were between 18-70 years of age. This phase included Hindu believers from various cities across the country, including those who spoke a variety of languages and dialects. As India is a diverse nation, participants from various regions of the country were able to add value to the research data collected.

For the second phase of this study, seven participants (four males and three females) were interviewed to gain an in-depth understanding of their beliefs and participation in ancestral worship. Participants were between 18-36 years of age. The intention of selecting people from this specific age-group was to understand how the younger generation views the cultural and ritualistic practices of their religion. This does not mean that elderly participants' contributions would not have been insightful, but the age limit of this study to the contemporary world and the new generation community was intentional.

Using purposive sampling, research questions addressing the role of the ancestors in an individual family and major factors that influence ancestral worship were used (Ray 2012). The primary source of data was telephone interviews conducted at the participants' preferred time. The interviews were conducted in both the Hindi and English, depending on the comfort of the respondents. Conversations were audio-recorded using a narrative inquiry method (Clandinin 2006:77-79). The data were then analyzed to determine themes.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data, collected via questionnaires, indicated that over two-thirds (68.2%) of the respondents believe in Hindu practices. When the same respondents were asked if they believe in family ritual practices, a similar number (63.3%) reported that they do. However, when asked if they believe in the ceremonies related to deceased members of the family, only three in five (60.6%) reported that they believe in such rituals.

Qualitative Findings

Sharing or following traditions as a member of a family and a community is essential as an indication of one's faith. If a person has faith, then s/he needs to put that faith into action (Rinehart 2004:3, 102). Though the expectation of the society for each individual is evident, one must also

take note that the changing world is also changing society. Urbanized communities are populated from the outside but isolated from the inside; however, there is no intention of giving the impression that the urbanized community has divorced culture and tradition. To better understand current Hindu beliefs, several Hindus were interviewed concerning ancestral worship, with their responses listed below.

Respondent 1: Krishna

Krishna is married and works with a company in a metropolitan city. With his wife, children, and younger brother, Krishna left his father's home to earn a living in a bigger city. He is from a high caste and takes pride in his community and its contribution to society, especially in connection with the temple. Krishna indicated that his wife is the one who mostly practices spiritual exercises, but he does not have much interest in participating. Krishna is not a religious person himself, but he is supportive of his wife's performance of rituals or *puja*. When asked about his understanding of the departed ancestors, he expressed, "I greatly honor my father's ancestors, and I feel a sense of pride in my lineage."

Krishna acknowledges that the ancestors must be revered as commanded by the elders. He also asks them for blessings whenever needed. However, he also said that performing rituals in honor of the ancestors is practiced only at his father's home but not at his house in the city. (When Krishna lived with his father, he had no right to make decisions on his own because he was not the head of the family; however, since he moved to a different place, he is now the head of the family and makes almost all the decisions by himself. At times, he allows his wife to be involved in the decision-making.)

Krishna believes that his reverence toward his ancestors is out of pure faith, and he regrets that he is often unable to perform this duty in a city far from his home. He states that since he lives in a city, "there is no place to conduct worship and follow rituals in my building. Everything is fast-paced, and I work almost every day of the week, sometimes even on Sundays. There is absolutely no time, situation, or even the finances to spend for this occasion. I revere my forefathers with all my heart, and I hope they will understand my situation."

Respondent 2: Radha

Radha recently completed her studies and is preparing to study abroad. Her family maintains fairly modern thoughts, and her parents are open-minded. Both of her parents work, which makes for a very busy lifestyle.

Hence, Radha did not spend much time at home since she attended a boarding school. She does not have a lot of power over decision-making for the family, but her parents respect her choices and opinions. In response to the interview questions, she says, "I am not a practicing Hindu. I believe in god but I don't have to do all the rituals and observe fasting to show my respect to god. I visit temples with my parents, especially on my birthday or when there is something good happening in our house."

Radha gives to charity but is not actively involved in spiritual programs or rituals. She says that she knows about ancestral worship but has never participated in such a ritual. She mentions that her immediate family hardly associates with the rest of their larger family. Hence, most occasions or festivals are spent only with her immediate family. Radha fears the spirits of the departed ancestors and does not desire to encounter any. Therefore, she is willing to participate in *pujas* that may require her to honor her ancestors, if need be. Radha states, "I deeply respect my forefathers and seek their blessings to help me make the family proud of my success in life."

Respondent 3: Gopal

Gopal is a married man who works in a private company in a small town. He lives with his widowed mother, his wife, and one son. Gopal lives in his ancestral house, which was built by his grandfather. To support themselves financially, the family rents out part of their house to tenants. The family requires that the tenants be Hindu.

After his father died, Gopal had to take up the responsibility of the house, which did not allow him to study beyond high school; thus, he ended up working for a small company. He says, "I feel my family and I are cursed by someone, and that is why we have one problem after another." He feels that the financial predicament and loss of family members could be because his forefathers are unhappy. He states that his mother makes sure to take every opportunity to please the ancestors and the gods are asked to bring back peace and prosperity. However, nothing seems to be working now. Gopal states, "For the sake of peace in the house and respect for my mother, I do not oppose any kind of worship at home but I do not believe in the ancestors' protection over me. If they were really concerned, they would have helped us and protected us. In my heart, I feel scared of them." He is scared to displease any dead spirit, and therefore does not want to do anything to put the family or himself at risk.

Respondent 4: Madan

Madan is a college student who lives with his parents and siblings. His father is the head of the family and is the primary decision-maker. Religious practices are common in his house, and a *puja* is conducted twice daily, in the morning and evening, at the shrine of the house. Madan mentions that although there are spiritual activities in the house, participation from everyone is not expected. The priest usually visits them for special worship or rituals where only the parents are involved, specifically his mother. Madan states, "I do not have sufficient information on my ancestors, and my family does not engage in any such worship. We are only instructed to observe Monday seriously. On that day, we do not wear new clothes, set marriage dates, or buy things because my grandfather died on that day." It is believed that it is auspicious and dangerous to do anything on Mondays.

To a follow-up question, Madan responds that the sacred days are only observed for the paternal grandfather. Interestingly, no such days are observed for any departed female. Madan states that the family is always careful not to use any such days for important programs or events. He states that he wishes to keep his ancestors happy, but does not believe in the rituals, such as feeding the ancestors by hanging food in the trees outside the village or the community. He does not want to get involved in worshiping the departed beings, stating that he would rather feed the poor and worship the deities.

Respondent 5: Sita

Sita is a homemaker and supports her husband by raising the children and taking care of her in-laws.[3] Sita comes from a well-to-do, modern family. Since she married into a conservative family, she has had to give up her desire to hold a job. She discontinued her studies and has almost given up on ever continuing because her in-laws may not allow it. Sita mentions that her in-laws are very good people but are not modern in thought. She has no role in decision-making, not even in the clothes she wears, and is required to wear a *sari* (typical Indian attire) throughout the day at home. She mentions that her husband's family worships their ancestors, and there are many days in a month when there are different types of *puja* conducted and fasting is often observed.

Sita mentions that although she believes in gods, she has no interest in worshipping the dead. She states, "I feel frightened to engage in the worship of departed people. In my husband's house, there is a small room that is always locked and dedicated to the first dead son. The belief is that

the spirit of the son lives in that room, and therefore it is locked and kept dark." When feeding the dead, the room is opened by Sita's mother-in-law to perform rituals and offer food.

Sita does believe the ancestors are helpful and shared an incident that happens frequently. "Every time when we leave our terrace dirty, that night, the dead spirit sweeps the entire terrace, and in the morning, it is all clean." She mentions that there are several incidents when the dead spirits have helped the family in difficult situations.

Sita emphatically states that she will do away with these practices when she becomes the elder of the house, and she will not teach her children to observe them. She mentions that respect for the ancestors is essential but creating an ambiance of fear in the house is not acceptable.

Respondent 6: Devi

Devi married into a Brahmin family and lives with her husband and two children. Devi is a teacher by profession, and her husband serves in the government sector. Her parents arranged Devi's marriage, so she did not have any choice in the selection of her husband; however, she is content with her life and focuses on continuing the family and its values into the next generation. Devi believes that "our ancestors were once humans, but after death, they joined the gods and now they are among them. Therefore, worshiping the ancestors is as equal as worshiping any god."

Devi believes that there is no reason to fear the departed; instead, one must follow in their footsteps and receive blessings and prosperity. She mentions that the rituals and practices honoring her ancestors are as crucial as keeping her family alive. She states that "once a family, always a family," and even when gone, it is unacceptable to leave the ancestors hungry or thirsty. "I regularly feed cows and crows on the rooftop so that the food reaches my departed ancestors and blesses my family."

Devi strongly believes that the dead are not dead but alive in spirit and must not be thought of as if they were dead. She intends to earn good *karma,* which may benefit her now as well as in the afterlife.

Respondent 7: Madhav

Madhav is a married man and lives with his wife and parents in their paternal house. Madhav has been married for six years but does not have children and preferred not to talk about that topic. He is not the head of the family, but since he is the one who supports his family financially, he makes all the family decisions.

In response to ancestral worship, Madhav states that his duty is towards his parents, and he will honestly do that, but he does not want to be involved in any rituals for the ancestors and does not feed their spirits. He mentions that since life is short, he must focus on what he can see and touch. Therefore, spending on the unseen is not his way.

Responding to a question of whether the ancestors could curse him and his family, with hesitance, Madhav responds, "Yes, that perhaps may be possible, and that is why I do not have children even after consulting several doctors, witch doctors, etc." He mentions that a priest once told him about performing a ritual to call upon the dead spirits so that they would bless him with a child.[4] However, he states, "I do not really believe these priests, they are always interested in making money. I don't understand how the dead can give life." Madhav states that he respects the forefathers but does not intend to associate in worshipping them in the near future.

Themes: Faith, Force, or Fear

Ancestral worship is a requirement for every pious Hindu. They offer rituals to keep their ancestors satisfied and living in peace in the other world (Thirumalai 2002). Therefore, engaging in the rituals is a societal obligation in which most individuals participate. Reflecting on the stories above, there appear to be three factors that influence ancestral worship in a Hindu family: faith, force, and fear.

Faith

Faith is a phenomenon that is both seen and unseen. The act of worship is a seen experience, and, on the other hand, faith in the divine is an unseen experience. Faith can be defined over a diverse spectrum, depending on the context. Similarly, the understanding of the term "faith" in Hinduism can have numerous interpretations, depending on the community. It is crucial to understand that Hinduism is a diverse religion and that theological understandings and interpretations vary from place to place (Rinehart 2004:64). While it may appear that faith is present through practice, practice does not require a deep understanding or true faith. It is the act of devotion that is important, not the meaning. Therefore, many Hindus follow what they have been instructed to do by their elders and complete rituals as a responsibility while not internalizing the act as personal faith (Rinehart 2004:64).

The quantitative data showed that a majority (68.2%) of those surveyed believe in Hindu practices. Over one-fourth (28.6%) of respondents believe that if the proper rituals are not performed, the ancestors may get

angry and cause bad things to happen to the family. Those who speak Hindi reported a higher rate of belief in the anger of the ancestors (32.5%) than those who speak other languages. Additionally, respondents were asked if they believe that their ancestors can harm the family if they are not worshipped; 36.4% of all respondents shared that belief or believed it might be true. However, among Hindi speakers, 47.4% shared this belief.

Although a mixed understanding of faith and Hindu beliefs can be seen among the participants, there are common grounds on which almost all participants agreed, such as in the existence of their ancestors (in spirit/demigod form), respect for them, and the blessings or curses that come from them. It was observed that almost every interviewee expressed their respect for their ancestors, and a few of them were even willing to do rituals and *puja* to please them. As Krishna (respondent 1) said, "I greatly honor my father's ancestors, and I feel a sense of pride in my lineage." Other respondents expressed that, due to some circumstances, it is not feasible for them to participate in rituals for the ancestors.

Force

In several interviews, participants indicated that some form of force pressures them to be involved in ancestral worship. The force to participate in such worship comes from the desire to advance and prosper in life. It is also believed that such practices will exorcise negative and evil forces, thereby protecting the family. The quantitative data showed that 30.5% of survey respondents reported that they feel forced to follow rituals related to ancestral worship. It is also believed that doing noble acts towards ancestors will add to good *karma* (Foor 2017:190-192).

Based on participant responses, *force* can be divided into three categories: (1) force from family, (2) societal expectations, and (3) force from spiritual gurus or priests.

It is important to identify that the expectation to participate in ancestral worship or rituals begins at home for many, especially within families where traditional values are upheld. When the number of those who live in joint homes and were forced to practice rituals was cross tabulated with those who do not, a much higher number (42.9%) reported being forced to follow rituals than those who do not live in joint homes (23.3%).

Figure 1. Joint family v. Non-joint family

Societal expectations are not seen as a contemptuous force but instead as a legitimate part of community. In Hinduism, society is as important as family, and thus society's expectations cannot be disregarded. Historically, sati,[5] female infanticide, and the caste system have been a part of the community; fulfilling societal expectations has been a requirement to remain a part of society. Failure to abide by this could result in excommunication from society. Therefore, a sense of force can be seen among the communities in India.

This societal force includes participation in ancestral worship. One third (33.3%) of survey respondents shared that they believe it is shameful for society at large if ancestral rituals are not followed. Another 10.3% answered that "maybe" such behavior is shameful. Interestingly, a higher number of males (38.8%) reported that ignoring ancestral rituals is shameful than females (26.0%).

Table 1.

Do you believe that if the rituals are not performed, it can be shameful in society?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes 1	65	32.5	33.3	33.3
	No 2	105	52.5	53.8	87.2
	Can't tell 3	5	2.5	2.6	89.7
	Maybe 4	20	10.0	10.3	100.0
	Total	195	97.5	100.0	
Missing	System	5	2.5		
Total		200	100.0		

Figure 2. Male vs. Female

The third factor that imposes force towards ancestral worship is the presence of spiritual gurus or priests. These religious figures influence both families and societies. Their words are considered more authentic than the holy scriptures, yet no one verifies their statements. Spiritual gurus direct individuals to be responsible and fulfill their *dharma* (duty) towards their religion, family, and community, and to improve their *karma*.

Madhav (respondent 7) said that "the spiritual gurus often connect their problems with the spirit or the planets (astrology)." He also mentioned that the words of the priest is very important and disobeying them can bring unwanted consequences, especially when they live in a close community.

Fear

In many ways, the factors of force and fear overlap, as the pressure of family, societal pressures, and the presence of gurus ultimately result in fear. However, there are some additional aspects of fear that drive Hindus to participate in ancestral worship.

Doniger states that nearly all Hindus think that the dead are to be feared and avoided (2014:89). The fear of the dead leads to a fear of death; that is, Hindus fear that the departed ancestors will bring death to them, personally. Interestingly, the fear about death seems to be centered on a fear of losing everything behind once dead (Ali 2004:158). Worldliness is deeply inculcated in the Hindu mindset, leading them to fear their dead ancestors if religious practices are not fulfilled. The feeling of fear was seen in nearly every qualitative interview. The fear of the dead tormenting them or bringing a curse to the family are some of the primary reasons why Hindus do not intend to upset their ancestors. In fact, over a quarter (28.6%) of surveyed respondents reported that they believe that if they do not carry out the proper ancestral rituals, the ancestors will be angry and will cause bad fortune to befall the family. Several such fear incidences led people to take extreme steps and become involved in occult activities and witchcraft to either protect themselves from the dead or to please them.

Missiological Implications

In Mark 16:15, Jesus tells his disciples, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." Christians have been given the command—and privilege—to share the good news of Jesus with the world. However, when ministering to those within the Hindu context, there appears to be many barriers. How can missionaries effectively share the gospel in this setting, overcoming faith, force, and fear?

Overcoming Fear of the Dead

As seen in the above study, Hindus' practice of many traditions and rituals are based on three factors: faith, force, and fear. Yet the Bible discusses people's involvement in ancestral worship and provides several texts rejecting such practices since they are closely linked to idolatry. Leviticus 20:6 states that God turns away from those who turn to mediums or spirits.

While presenting Christ to the Hindu community, it is crucial to help them address their fear of the dead and assure them that in Christ, the dead do not have any power over them. Since the devil has deceived the

minds of people, convincing them that the dead are still alive and continue to participate in a human's life (Kraft 2017:83), a biblical approach, filled with the Holy Spirit, is crucial for setting the people free from their burdening rituals.

An Intimate Relationship with God

The gods of the Hindus maintain their distance; there is no human-god relationship. In fact, most of the interactions between humans and the gods involve fear. However, the One True God, the God of the universe, craves intimacy with his people. He desires to know them and to, in turn, be known. This is seen again and again throughout Scripture: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8), "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4), "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me" (Rev 3:20).

While this concept may seem foreign to those who have spent their lives in fear of distant gods, what beautiful, unique truth these verses reveal about God's character. Humans were created to be in loving relationships. If people truly love someone, they cannot (and will not) force them to do something. Fear and love cannot go together. Therefore, if God is love, force and fear cannot exist in that relationship. God offers freedom to his followers. What a juxtaposition to the way in which Hindus view their gods!

Work within Familial Limitations

Many traditional Hindu families live in joint family homes where the head of the household makes most, if not all, of the familial decisions. Because of this, many people are not at liberty to learn about Christianity. However, if the elder of the family is led into a knowledge of Christ and into a relationship with him, many times the rest of the family will follow.

Additionally, educated families are also more likely to listen to alternate views and ideas, including about religion and Christianity. This is linked to the fact that many of these more educated families are less tied to the past and its customs.

While Hinduism is considered one religion, it is incredibly nuanced. This makes it impossible to prescribe one method to reach all the various Hindu groups. However, one way that has proven consistently effective in reaching the varius people groups is through the development of relationships. Perhaps a household elder will not be interested in hearing sermons about Christianity, but he may be interested in having a friend sip tea with

him. He may not want to have his long-held rituals questioned, but he will likely be pleased to have someone come and spend time with the elderly in his family.

Works vs. Grace

As discussed above, Hinduism is a religion based on works. Yet Christians believe that Jesus has already committed the ultimate work—death on a cross for our sins. This belief may be hard for those who have previously adhered to Hinduism, as the need for a works-based faith has likely been engrained in them for their entire lives.

When working with such people, it is important to teach the truth of salvation by grace. There are certain actions that set Christians apart from other religious groups. These actions are not meant to earn salvation or to prevent a curse from hurting the family. Instead, these actions are a marker by which God's people can be recognized. As stated in John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" and "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10).

Conclusion

This article brings a unique perspective on ancestral worship among Hindu believers—unique because behind this article is a story of someone (Santosh) who grew up in a Hindu culture, and, as an adult, converted to Christianity despite unpleasant consequences. For Santosh, there is no doubt about the value of being Christ's follower and believing in a loving Heavenly Father who pours out his Holy Spirit upon his people.

Santosh desired to research various practices connected to ancestral worship in order to determine to what degree the dynamics he experienced in his childhood are in place with other Hindu believers. From his own experiences, Santosh understood that the spiritual presence of deceased ancestors is not taken lightly in the Hindu worldview. Thus, this article has examined the deeper values associated with ancestral worship that may not always include heart-felt devotion.

The quantitative research confirmed that most Hindu homes deal with, at some level, the issue of ancestral worship, whether it is because of generational beliefs/values, because of fear of the spirits (for bringing shame on the family), or simply being forced to follow familial practices. Hindu customs are indeed for the most parts motivated by faith, force, and fear. The qualitative research allowed for a better understanding of

the complexity of this issue and for the reader to "walk in their shoes" for a moment, allowing a better understanding and empathy.

A contextually relevant missiological approach is needed to free those imprisoned by ancestral worship. This article has offered several suggestions for bringing encouragement to Hindu people, perhaps new hope, freedom, and victory over the bondage they experience. We hope this study will bring deeper insights into the inner world of Hindu people, as well as inspiration for how to relate to them in positive ways and possibly bring them into a better quality of life aligned with the gospel. All of this, thanks to the desire God placed in Santosh's heart, to reach out to the Hindu people of his homeland.

Endnotes

1 Shiva is one of the most prominent deities, is predominantly worshipped among Hindus, and is also known as the "*Bhootnath*," Lord of the ghosts. Shiva is the destroyer of the universe when sin prevails.

2 Karma means action, works, or deeds. Karma is referred to as the principal factor that effects the future of an individual. It also affects the rebirth of a Hindu, depending on good or bad Karma. See Elizabeth Clare Prophet and Patricia Spadaro. 2001. *Karma and Reincarnation: Transcending Your Past, Transforming Your Future.* Gardiner, MT: Summit University Press.

3 In India, it is common for parents to live with their son and his family, but not with their daughters. It is lawful and essential for the son to take care of his parents to receive the blessings in life now and after.

4 A fascinating fact associated with this incident can be found in *Rig Veda* 9.83.3 and 10.64.14. It is believed that if the ancestors are respectfully called upon, they may place their seed (semen) in the womb of the desiring woman, and she will thereby bear children.

5 *Sati* was a historical practice, mainly in the northern part of India, in which a widow had to sacrifice her life by sitting atop her husband's corpse and allowing herself to be burned to death during his cremation. See Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, and Michael Jerryson. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence.* New York: Oxford University Press, 215, 216.

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PETRAS BAHADUR

Rituals and Beliefs Surrounding Death in Islam

Islamic View of Human Nature

The view of human nature within Islam can be derived from the Qur'an and the Hadiths. The Qur'an states that God created everything in six days (7:54; 57:4), and after informing the angels about the creation of human beings and their superiority over them (15:28-29), he formed them from dirt (22:5; 23:12-16). God keeps a supply of souls in heaven and takes them from there[1] (Merklin 2012:3) to place in each human being, choosing the right one for each person (Sahih Muslims 1214). Therefore, it is God who put a soul inside the first man's body of clay and he became alive (Qur'an 32:7-9). The Muslim belief regarding the soul is that the soul lives on into eternity and will receive the reward or punishment along with the body (Allen and Toorawa 2011:56). Haeri (1991:2) believes that the final destiny of people will be decided at the final judgment, but this life is given to finally allow the soul to return to where it emerged from, and that is permanent non-time reality.

Although the angels knew that humans would be disobedient and sin against God (Qur'an 3:30), Merklin (2012:6) explains that humanity's failure was in that they had "forgotten" God and his ways. The Qur'an records that people were created weak (4:280), impatient (70:19), stingy (17:100), and argumentative (18:54), and it is the soul that prompts a person to do wrong as when Cain's soul told him to kill his brother (5:29).

Islamic View of Death and State of the Dead

The Qur'an (67:2) states that God is the one who created death and life to test humans. In Islamic literature the meaning of death is to move from a life of sorrows and sufferings to a permanent life of peace and comfort

(Ilahi 2010:2, 6) and is compared to the birth of a child from the narrow womb of one's mother to the comfort of the world (Tirmidhi).

God created human beings from clay and has predestined their time on earth (Qur'an 6:2); therefore, all human beings will eventually taste death (3:185; 21:35; 29:57). Islam (1989:9) reports that Muhammad said that the person who is concerned about the affairs of this world is deceived by temptations of the world and has no concern for the day of his death. Al-Ghazali (1989:7) believes there are three kinds of people: those engrossed in the things of the world, penitent, or Gnostics. It is penitent people who often remember death so that fear engulfs their hearts and their repentance becomes complete. Haeri (1991:3) argues that people are programmed to fear death, but death is good because it returns the body to the earth and the soul or "real self" from where it originally came from—a place of eternal consciousness. Death does not mean the end of the process of life, but it continues in paradise or hell (Shahid 2005:168). Muhammad taught that death releases the person from the torment of this life, so it is actually a gift from God to the believer (Al-Ghazali 1989:9). Schirrmacher (2012:252-255) describes four ways of dying in Islam: death at one's own hand (suicide), death from another's hand (accident, manslaughter, or murder), violent death by self-sacrifice (a martyr's death), and natural death.

Al-Ghazali suggests that the Angel of Death inspects every house three times daily and takes away the spirit, at which point the person becomes a dead person (54, 51). Apparently, David, Solomon, and other prophets met the angel of death and died upon seeing it. When David came home, the angel of death was waiting for him and upon meeting him he died

(Al-Ghazali 1989:44, 51). Muhammad Ibn Wasi is reported to have said when dying, "O my brethren! Farewell! To Hell, or to the forgiveness of God" (cited in Al-Ghazali 1989:47). Aisha reported that before Muhammad died he "communed with his angel of death at length" (cited in Al-Ghazali 1989:65) and when the angel of death took the prophet Muhammad's spirit, the agony of death came and his voice was raised in moaning, his color changed, he breathed in and out and his left and right sides shook (57-58). It is said that Aisha added, "I feel no envy for anyone whose death is easy after having seen the rigour of the death of God's emissary" (40).

The Qur'an states that near the time of death, Allah sends *Izraeel,* the Angel of Death, to take the soul out of the flesh. "Say: The Angel of Death, put in charge of you, will (duly) take your souls: Then shall you be brought back to your Lord" (32:11). The angel of death will demand, "Expel your souls" (6:93). The Angel of Death says to the soul of the unbeliever, "O bad soul! Come out to Allah's curse and anger." The soul of unbelievers comes out having a very foul smell (Sakr 1992:44), whereas the soul of the believer comes out smelling like a good musk (Ilahi 2010:9). When the soul

is transported to heaven, then Ilahi (13) reports that the Mishkat states that "all the angels from earth to sky send their blessings on him and [the] doors of heaven are thrown open for him." In Paradise, "according to one text the spirit lives inside the bird, according to another the spirit is outwardly like a bird" (Eklund 1941:20) and the souls of martyrs and other believers are embodied in green birds (Ilahi 2010:25).

Questioning in the Grave

Islamic literature informs that after death, two angels, *Munkar* and *Nakir,* come to question the dead and prepare a report (Shahid 2005:169). Upon entering the dead person's grave, probably on the first night (Starkey 2009:290, 298), the angels ask the dead person several questions and the believer is expected to be ready with answers as follows. "God is my Lord, Muhammad my Prophet, the Qur'an my guide, Islam my *Din*, the Kaaba my *Qibla*, Abraham my Father and his community my community" (Smith and Haddad 1981:44). According to Tirmidhi (Hadith 51), the main question that the soul is asked by the angels after death is, "Which religion did you follow?" However, Sahih Al-Bukhari 23.422 believes that the question is, "Did you do any good deeds (in your life)?" After the initial interrogation, the souls are placed in *barzakh* (Ilahi 2010:2), a "period between death and resurrection" (Shahid 2005:186; see Qur'an 25:55, 55:20, 23:102), whereas Eklund (1941:21) questions whether this concept of *Barzakh* refers to time or space. Other scholars believe that instead of being placed in *Barzakh* after the interrogation, the dead are told of their reward: gardens of bliss for the righteous and curses of angels and the fires of hell for the unbeliever (Shahid 2005:170-171).

Torments of the Grave

In the grave, while waiting for the day of resurrection, there is torment or punishment. This torment includes the narrowing of the grave so that the dead are "squeezed like an egg" (Tabarani), ribs are crushed (Al-Bara ibn 'Azib), they are "hit by iron hammers" (Sahih Al-Bukhari 2.456), "lashed a hundred times," or "ninety-nine dragons bite . . . and sting . . . till there comes the hour (of resurrection)" (Al-Tirmidhi 46).

Muhammad said, "When the dead body is placed in the grave, he listens to the sound of their shoes as they depart (from the cemetery)" (Sahih of Muslim 17:204; (4:#6863) of the English Translation) and he believed that they can hear but cannot answer (17:206; (4:#6868) of the English Translation). At one time, "the camel of the prophet was afraid while going through a graveyard at hearing, as only animals can, the shrieks of the

damned suffering the torments of the grave." Another time, "the prophet was walking with his friends by a graveyard when he realized that two people buried there were being tortured, so they cut off shoots from a tree and placed one on each grave to cool them off" (Smith and Haddad 1981:45; see also al-Subki, Taqi al-Din, Shifa al-Saqam fi ziyara khayr al-anam p. 148).

Al-Ghazali (1989:41) reported that Muhammad used to pray, "O Lord God! Grant me your support in death and render it easy for me to bear." This is probably the reason why the funeral prayers include the following:

> O Allah! Forgive him, have mercy on him, pardon him, heal him, be generous to him, cause his entrance to be wide and comfortable, wash him with the most pure and clean water, and purify him from sins as a white garment is washed clean of dirt. Give him in exchange a home better than his home (on earth) and a family better than his family and a wife better than his wife and protect him from the trial of the grave and the torture of Hell Fire. (Fiqh-us-Sunnah 4.40)

Aisha, the wife of the Prophet questioned, "If believers will undergo pressure of the tomb. [The] Prophet said, 'Pressure of the tomb is like a mother stroking her son's head when he complains of [a] headache'" (Smith and Haddad 1981:46). However, the believers who pass away in the night or on Friday will not be tormented in the grave (see Ahmad and Tirmidhi), and if one dies in sickness that person is like a martyr. There are five rewards for martyrs1 (1) they are forgiven, (2) experience no torment in the grave, (3) remain safe from embarrassment on the day of resurrection, (4) will have a crown on their heads, and (5) will be given 72 celestial brides (Ilahi 2010:36). If the believers have done good works, they will have a comfortable rest until the resurrection and judgment, their graves will expand to 4,900 cubic feet, the grave will be illuminated, and they will sleep like a bride whom nobody can awake except her husband (Al-Tirmidhi 44).

According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad feared the torment of the grave because he heard that other prophets had suffered before him. God asked Moses what he thought of death, and he replied, "It was like [a] sparrow being roasted alive or like [a] sheep being flayed alive" (Al-Ghazali 1989:42).

View of the Last Day and Afterlife in Heaven or Hell

Islamic belief about the Last Day is that the life on earth is actually a preparation for death, resurrection, and judgment before God. "Our faith

will be verified and then our deeds will be weighed before He dispenses perfect justice" (Lamkahouan 2019). There are a number of texts in the Qur'an referring to the resurrection day and the Day of Judgment when the angels hand out rewards (Merklin 2012:9). Farnaz Masumian says the Qur'an mentions

al-akhira (the hereafter) 113 times, which shows the significance Islam places on the next life (1996:75).

There are three signs before the hour of resurrection—the appearance of anti-Christ, the return of Christ, and the coming of the Mahdi (Masumian 1996:77). After three trumpet blasts by Israfil, there will be a general resurrection (79). All humanity will arrive in Jerusalem after having walked on the *Sirat* bridge, over which the prophet will be the first one to cross (79, 80). God will come down with his angels and everyone's deeds will be weighed in balances after which they will be assigned heaven or hell. Surah 79:7-12 says, "The Hour is a day in which every person is accountable for his deeds" and "then shall each soul know what it has put forward" (81:1-14).

In Islamic theology, there is the concept of two judgments—the questioning in the grave and the ultimate judgment on the day of resurrection (Smith and Haddad 1981:4). On the final resurrection day, the angel *Israfil* (*Seraphiel* from Hebrew) will blow the trumpet three times. The first blast causes terror among the people (Qur'an 22:1-2). The second trumpet blast causes all in heaven and earth to die (39:68). The third trumpet blast will recreate the human bodies so they can receive their spirits (Shahid 2005:12). The interval between the first and second trumpet blast is an interval of probably forty days or forty months or forty years and the interval between the second and third trumpet blast is as long as God wills (Shahid 2005:177). God will resurrect the inhabitants of heaven—*Seraphiel*, Gabriel, and Michael. When the *Seraphiel* blows the trumpet of resurrection, all spirits, good and bad, will burst forth and will enter into people's bodies through their nostrils to prepare them for the Day of Reckoning (182).

Unbelievers in Hell

Unbelievers will spend their next life in hell. The description of hell according to Islamic traditions says that it is so deep that it takes 70 years for a stone to sink to the bottom of hell (Ilahi 2010:43). The walls are so wide that it takes forty years of walking to go from one end to the other (44). Hell has seven gates (45), is black and dark (45) and the fuel of hell fire is people and stones (Qur'an 66.6). Islamic scholars name seven layers of hell—*Hawia* (for hypocrites like Pharoah), *Jahim* (for polytheists), *Saqar* (for the Saibeen, a sect having no religion), *Nati* (for Iblis and his

associates), *Hatma* (for Jews), *Sa'ah* (for Christians), and *Jahan'num* (for general Muslim sinners) (Ilahi 2010:48, 49). The Qur'an states that there is no death in hell (43:75; 35:36; see also Bukhari and Muslim) because hell goes on forever.

Different ways of punishment in hell include boiling water poured over heads with fresh skins given to them. Those who concealed knowledge will have a bridle of fire in their mouth. Those who used to be drunk or used intoxicants will drink pus. Those who preached without practicing will have their intestines removed. Those who used gold or silver utensils will have stomachs filled with the fire of hell. Photographers and painters will be punished by the pictures they made. Those who committed suicide will keep doing the same act in hell again and again. Arrogant people will be in the form of ants (Ilahi 2010:61-67). The Qur'an states that wrong doers will remain in hell (19:72) where there is crying (11:106). Sinners will be driven to hell like cattle are driven to water (19:86), dragged through hell on their faces (54:48), thrown headlong into hell (26:94-95), with no way of escape (14:21). Believers will laugh at the unbelievers (83:35); however, eventually death will be slain (Tirmidhi), but the hypocrites, polytheists, and unbelievers will be in hell forever (Ilahi 2010:221; Smith and Haddad 1981:86). Bukhari and Muslim both report that the prophet was shown that the majority of those in hell are women (Ilahi 2010:72).

Believers in Paradise

Heavenly rewards for believers are described in Qur'an 55:46-76 as having two gardens (46), containing all kinds of delights (48), two flowing springs (50), every kind of fruit (52), carpets to recline on (54), and with virgins, whom no man or jinn has touched (56). Believers are like rubies (58), which are the reward for the good (60). There are two additional gardens (62), also with two springs pouring forth water in continued abundance (66), peopled with fair companions, good, and beautiful (70), companions restrained in their glances (72), whom no man or jinn has touched (74), reclining on green cushions and rich carpets of beauty (76). Manji (2005:57) reports that God's promise to the martyrs is that "gardens of paradise are waiting for you in all their beauty, and women of paradise are waiting, calling out, 'come hither, friend of God.'"

Qur'an 56 presents a picture of further rewards—companions on the right hand and left hand (9) reclining on couches and facing each other (16), while around them are youths of perpetual freshness who will serve them (17) with goblets filled with clear-flowing fountains of wine (18). There will be no after-ache and no intoxication (19). There are fruits to be selected (20), as much flesh from fowl as they may desire (21), and

companions with beautiful big and lustrous eyes like pearls well-guarded—all this as a reward for the deeds of the past life (22-24). These companions are from a special creation (v. 35), are virgins who are pure and undefiled (36), and beloved and equal in age (37). Qur'an 76 lists a few additional rewards: garments of silk (12), raised thrones where there is neither the sun's excessive heat nor the moon's excessive cold (13).

Islamic Rituals for the Dying and Deceased

Since "there is a strict and clear ritual order laid down in Islamic law" which outlines the procedure for the purification of the dead" (Venhorst 2012:8), most followers of Islam practice special rituals for preparing the dying and the deceased (Dockray 2013; see also

K. M. Islam 1989). In certain parts of Egypt, it is the custom for those near a person who has died to squeeze his/her body with their hands to force the soul out of it (Starkey 2009:290). The *Talqeen,* the reading performed for those who are dying before they take their last breaths, is to ensure they are spiritually ready for the journey into death. The person leading the *Talqeen* says to the dying person, "In the name of Allah and on the creed, religion, and faith of *rasulullah* (apostle or messenger of God). O! Allah, ease upon him his matters, and make light for him whatever comes hereafter, and honor him with Your meeting and make that which he has gone to better than that which he came out from."

After those who are present have the opportunity to share their own prayers, the person leading the *Talqeen* then encourages the dying person to recall the *Shahada* before taking their last breath by saying, "I bear witness that there is no god except Allah; One is He, no partner hath He, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger."

Some prefer to give a sweet drink or *zamzam* water to the dying so that the soul can have an easy exit through the throat. The Shias of Northern India put pomegranate or honey syrup in the mouth of the dead. In Gujarat leaves of marjoram are rubbed on the face, the eyes are closed with a pledget of cotton, and two toes are brought together and tied with a thin strip of cloth (Sharif 1972:90, 91).

Once the person has died, Bilal Abu Aisha lists the following rituals that are to be performed for the dying person (2011).

Just after Death: As soon as a Muslim person dies, it is customary to close the person's eyes, bind the jaw and cover the body with a clean sheet. It is also important to prepare the body for the funeral as quickly as possible.

Mourning: Hidaad, or mourning, for a close relative should last only three days. There are guidelines about how that mourning should take shape. Weeping is acceptable, but the Islamic faith discourages loud crying

and acting out during the mourning period. Although mourning is permitted, Islamic theologians believe it should be "composed or restrained" (Schirrmacher 2012:258). However, within Shi'ite mourning practices, the Ahsura rituals for mourning the suffering and the death of the final male of Muhammad's family, Al-Hussain, is done every year during the first ten days of the month of Muharram (259).

Washing the Dead: This washing requires following very specific rules. Most adult family members of the same sex as the deceased can do the washing of the deceased person's body. The body is placed on a wooden plank, the private parts are covered with a cloth, and the "entire body must be washed an odd number of times, three or, if necessary, five or seven" (Dessing 2001:145-147). The water for ablution can be mixed with perfume, herbs, rose water, lotus, or camphor. After the final washing, the body is dried, and cotton plugs placed in the body openings (Bot 1998:136). Sometimes, there are professional washers (Sharif 1972:91, 93), but within orthodox Islamic tradition, most people would not allow payment for washing. After the body is washed, it is dried with a clean white sheet, and then typically enshrouded in a plain, white cloth or three pieces of cloth for a man and five for a woman. Finally, the body is perfumed.

Shrouding the Body: There are different rules for shrouding male and female Muslims. To wrap a male Muslim corpse, three white sheets and four ropes are used. After placing the man's hands on his chest, right hand on top of the left hand, each sheet is wrapped over the body with the right side first. To finish the shrouding, two ropes are tied just above the head and just below the feet, with two additional ropes used to secure the sheets around the body.

Funeral Prayer or Salatul Janazah: Even Muslims who are not close to the deceased or the family can participate in this ritual. The prayer should happen immediately after shrouding the body, and usually occurs outside of the mosque and its prayer room. The prayer should take place at dusk or sunset, if possible, unless the body is decomposing and needs burial immediately.

The Funeral: Funeral attendees stand in three horizontal lines facing Mecca: men in the front row, children in the second row, and women in the third row. Like the silent prayer, this occurs outside the mosque, if possible, and the entire prayer service takes place while the people are standing. Participants silently commit to pure intentions for the funeral service, and then they silently recite the *Fatihah*, the first section of the Qur'an. This seven-verse prayer, also called *Sanaa* prayer, asks for Allah's mercy and guidance. After the silent *Fatihah*, there are four more prayers in traditional Muslim funeral services. Before each prayer, attendees say, "Allahu Akbar," which means, "God is good." The four prayers are the

Darood prayer,[2] *dua* prayer,[3] *salaam* prayer,[4] and prayer when putting dirt on the grave.[5]

Transporting the Body: Traditionally, several men carry the body to the cemetery on foot with the funeral goers following behind. Today, however, the body can be transported in a hearse with a funeral procession behind it. The car or truck transporting the body should not be a military vehicle and the funeral procession should keep a respectful silence. No singing, loud crying, or reading the Quran is allowed. There should also be no incense or candles in the funeral procession.

Muslim Burial Tradition: Traditionally, Muslims should be buried in a Muslim cemetery. No women or children are allowed at the gravesite during the burial. The body goes into the grave on its right side, facing Mecca, ideally not inside a coffin. If the cemetery is located in a place with abundant wildlife, sometimes Muslims will cover the grave with bricks or stones to keep animals from disturbing the body.

Marking and Visiting the Grave: Muslim cemeteries are all about minimalism and deference, so they do not have extravagant grave markers. A small marker or gravestone, however, is fine. Traditionally, nothing is placed on or around the grave, such as cut flowers, candles, or other offerings.

Consoling Family and Friends: Consoling grieving friends and family is important in the Muslim community and does not have many rigid rules governing how to comfort those in mourning. It is traditional to reach out to the mourning family with sympathy and with food for three days after the funeral.

View of Ancestors and Ancestor-Worship

Orthodox Islam does not allow ancestor worship or mediation of the deceased; however, the actual practice may be very different. Even the rituals of death and burial are not necessarily followed according to prescription. Claudia Venhorst (2012:3) states, "A clash between formalized rules and the actual praxis is not unusual." Ancestor worship is the practice in many Islamic cultures. Kikuta Haruka (2011:63-78) reports that the shared custom among Muslims in Central Asia is to hold a banquet which involves the sacrifice of animals to Allah and the dead. Towards the end of the banquet, chapters of the Qur'an are recited to bring comfort to the spirits of the deceased. Prayer is specifically dedicated to these spirits, such as the following prayer. "May the spirit of ____ (person's name) be content." The banquet functions as a means that allows people to make contact with *ruh* and many people ask *ruh* for protection or happiness. Valikhanov (1958 [1862]):148-154, 177, 178), commenting on these *ruh*

rituals considered them to be remnants of the pre-Islamic faith of Central Asians and Soviet ethnographers (cited in Peshchereva 1959:362, 363). Rituals concerning *ruh* were also practiced by sedentary Muslims as a ritual banquet, during which time dishes and candles were offered to the *ruh* of their deceased masters and passages from the Qur'an were read. Appealing to deceased relatives or ancestors for aid is viewed as against orthodox Islamic faith, although a sizable number accept the practice in Central Asia, Russia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Visiting Shrines and Appealing to the Deceased

Pew Research conducted a survey in 2012 (see appendix 1) asking people in 23 countries whether visiting shrines of Muslim saints was a legitimate form of worship. The majority agreed that such practices were acceptable, indicating that such views are widespread in Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, and are also practiced in the Middle East and North Africa. In Azerbaijan, Iraq, and Lebanon, Shias are more accepting than their Sunni counterparts in appealing to deceased ancestors. The Qur'an does not specifically mention pilgrimages except to Mecca but certain hadiths encourage pilgrimage to shrines, including Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque in the Sunni tradition and the shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq, in the Shia tradition (Elad 1999:65). For more information on Sunni traditions, see Sahih Muslim 7:3218 and for pilgrimages to shrines in the Shia tradition, see a hadith by the eighth Shia Imam, Ali al-Rida (cited in Nakash 1995:155).

Today, the graves of many early Islamic figures are holy sites for Muslims, including Ali, and the cemetery containing many of Muhammad's companions and early caliphs. Many other mausoleums are major architectural, political, and cultural sites, including the National Mausoleum in Pakistan and the Taj Mahal in India. However, the religious movement of Wahhabism views this respect for holy sites as a form of idolatry. Followers of this movement have destroyed many gravesite shrines, including in Saudi Arabia and in territory formerly controlled by the Islamic State (Veneration of the Dead 2020). However, during the termination of Ramadan, orthodox theologians do not reject visiting graves if it is done with the goal of bringing death to one's attention (Schirrmacher 2012:261).

Muslims travel vast distances in order to imitate the religious rite of *tawaaf*—circling the *kaaba* seven times—by also circling the tombs of saints. Some even offer prayers inside and outside the tombs and other piously bring sacrificial animals to these sites in order to perform the rites of *dhabh* (ritual sacrifice). Most of those who perform rites of worship at shines or graves believe that the righteous among these dead people are so close to

Allah that all acts of worship done in their vicinity will more likely be accepted by Allah than if they were done elsewhere.

Because of this belief, grave worshippers often wipe the walls of graves, and then wipe the residue on themselves in order to collect extra blessings. In addition, they also collect some of the earth in the vicinity of the graves, in the belief that the earth has special healing powers due to the effect of the blessings manifest in those buried there. Many branches of the Shi'ites (Shias) collect clay from Karbala, where Imam Hussain was martyred, and bake it to make small tablets on which they prostrate themselves during their *salaah* (prayer).

The Pew Research survey (2012) finds that many Muslims consider visiting the shrines of Muslim saints an acceptable practice as noted in appendix 1. This is especially true in Southeast Asia, where eight-in-ten or more Muslims in Thailand (99%), Malaysia (89%) and Indonesia (81%) say visiting shrines falls within the bounds of Islam. The acceptance of pilgrimages to shrines is also widespread in Central Asia, with three-quarters or more endorsing the practice. In South Asia, the number of Muslims who believe visiting shrines is part of Islamic tradition range from 96% in Bangladesh to a more modest 63% in Pakistan.

Relatively few Muslims in the countries surveyed (appendix 2) believe it is permissible to appeal to dead relatives or ancestors for aid, for the Quran states that prayers should be offered to God alone (108:2). The two exceptions are Iraq and Lebanon, where 28% and 22% of Muslims say the practice is acceptable, perhaps reflecting the Shia tradition of honoring forebears, such as Hussein and Ali as noted in appendix 3.

Appeals to Spirits, Jinn, Sorcery, and the Deceased

The Qur'an states that God created non-human creatures, referred to as jinn and, as discussed earlier in this report, many Muslims affirm that jinns exist. However, few Muslims believe it is acceptable to make offerings or appeals to these supernatural beings, as noted in appendix 4, since prayers and sacrifices are to be made to God alone (108:2). Appeals to jinn and the use of sorcery are almost universally regarded as falling outside of Islamic tradition, even though many Muslims say they believe in the existence of these supernatural beings and in witchcraft.

Shia and Sunni Muslims differ little when it comes to rejecting the use of sorcery within Islam. In Lebanon and Azerbaijan, members of both groups hold similar views on the acceptability of making appeals to jinn.

Practical Missiological Challenges and Worldview Transformation for Becoming a Disciple of Christ

What are some of the missiological challenges facing Muslims when

they become a disciple of Jesus Christ in the 21st century and what aspects of their worldview needs transformation?

Torment in the Grave

Smith and Haddad (1981:47) believe that the information about the events that take place in the grave undoubtedly come from pre-Islamic Arabic beliefs. Farnaz Masumian (1996:76) states that "the early Muslim theologians and thinkers combined the Zoroastrian belief in a personal judgment in the grave with the pre-Islamic *Barzakh* doctrine to form a coherent system of personal judgment for the faithful." This is why Masumian (76) is convinced that the concept of *Barzakh* (purgatory) is of significance since it is similar to some other faith traditions, especially to the Zoroastrianism. Samuel Shahid (2005:172) concurs by stating that Muhammad was probably informed by Salman al-Farsi who explained his previous faith. Masumian (1996:84, 80-81) suggests that "even a cursory look at Muslim eschatology reveals numerous similarities between Muslim and Zoroastrian accounts of the afterlife," such as, the state of the soul before judgment, the two judgments, the bridge, heaven and hell, and the vision of the Creator.

Ragnar Eklund (1941:3) believes that the doctrine of torment in the grave was first presented to Muhammad by Aisha who heard it from a Jewess since Jews already believed in such a concept. Aisha said that a Jewess came to her and mentioned the punishment in the grave, stating, "May Allah protect you from the punishment of the grave." Aisha then asked Allah's Apostle about the punishment of the grave. He said, "Yes, [there is] punishment in the grave." Aisha added, "After that I never saw Allah's Apostle but seeking refuge with Allah from the punishment in the grave in every prayer he prayed" (Sahih Al-Bukhari 2:454).

In several *hadiths* Muhammad apparently spoke to the dead in the graves. When asked, he responded that "they hear quite well, although they cannot answer." Eklund (1941:10) believes that this concept contradicts the Qur'an which states "verily thou shalt not make the dead to hear" (27:82). Therefore, Eklund questions the interrogation in the grave, which relates to questions about the prophet and quotes Tirmidhi al-Hakim who stated that former communities were to be tested based on their prophets, and Muslims based on their prophet Muhammad (Eklund 1941:50).

Barzakh, which is very much connected to torment in the grave, causes much fear in the hearts of many Muslims. This view is probably similar to the view of *purgatory* in Catholicism. Even the prophet used to pray that his time in the grave would be easy. Based on this belief there is certainly fear among Muslims about death and what will transpire after death. Is

their fear justified? Within the Bible, belief concerning death can be presented from Ecclesiastes 9:5, which states, "For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten." Also, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 states that the dead are resting in their graves until the day when Jesus comes again, at which time the dead in Christ will rise first. This text says to comfort each other with this hope. So according to the Bible there is no concept of *Barzakh* (purgatory) or torment in the grave. This is one place where a Muslim background believer would need a worldview transformation so as to no longer believe that the dead are being punished or tormented in the grave but will face judgment at the resurrection.

Delights of Paradise

The Qur'an describes the material delights of paradise in 76:12-22 and a few other places. Masumian describes these "material delights" as streams of wine, milk, and honey

(Q 47:16, 55:54; 56:15) with tents of lovely damsels (*houris*) (1996:80). Hughes (1973:453) reports one tradition which describes paradise as follows: "He who is least amongst the people of paradise, shall have eighty thousand slaves, and seventy-two women, and has a tent pitched for him of pearls, rubies, and emeralds. . . . Those who die in the world, young or old, are made of thirty years of age, and not more, when they enter paradise."

When Jesus was asked about marriage in heaven, he responded by saying: "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matt 22:30). From this it is clear that the Qur'anic concept of marriage in heaven is centered around the carnal nature of human beings and is another area where worldview transformation needs to happen for a Muslim background believer. The holiness of God and being in his presence for eternity should be an alternative emphasis as the primary attraction of heaven.

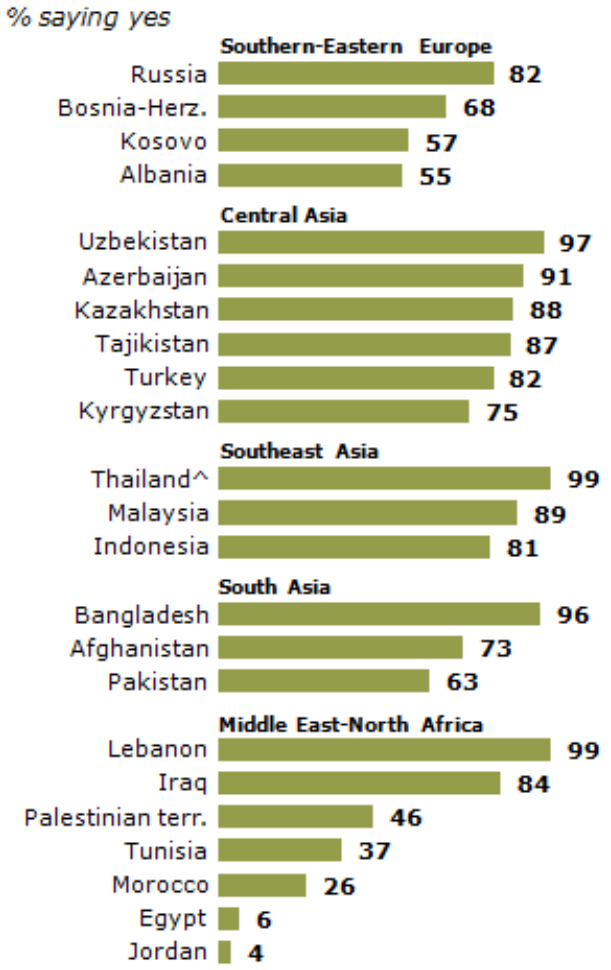
Islamic Eschatology and Jesus

According to Islamic eschatology, Jesus is coming again but after his second coming he will die, and righteous people will also die to avoid the anguish of the evildoers who will live after the blast of the last trumpet (Shahid 2005:167). If Jesus comes at the Last Hour (Qur'an 43:61) and ushers in a kingdom of peace in which all evil will be eradicated, then why would Jesus need to die so that he can be saved from evildoers? Qur'an 43:61 states, "Jesus shall be a sign of the hour of judgment. Therefore, have no doubt about the hour." Only as one believes in Jesus, who will come

at the Last Hour (before judgment), that one can stand in judgment. One does not need to doubt about that hour but can stand in the assurance of Jesus who has gone ahead of us to paradise to prepare a place for us to spend eternity with him.

Appendix 1

Is Visiting Shrines Acceptable?



Appendix 2

Acceptable to Appeal to the Deceased for Aid under Islam?

Appendix 3

More Shia Say Appealing to Deceased is Acceptable

% saying practice is acceptable within Islam

	Sunni	Shia	*Difference*
Iraq	8	44	*-36*
Azerbaijan	5	20	*-15*
Lebanon	16	28	*-12*

In Iraq, Sunni Arabs and Sunni Kurds provide similar responses to this question.

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Appendix 4

Acceptable to Make Offerings to Jinn Under Islam?

Endnotes

1 Merklin states that the "translations of the Qur'an are not consistent in the translation of *ruh* and *nafs*, just as English translations in the Bible for the Hebrew equivalents" (2012:3).

2 "Allah, we ask You to raise the rank of Muhammad, and have mercy upon the Al (family, friends, and everyone else present for the funeral) of Muhammad, as You raised the rank of Ibrahim (Abraham), and the Al of Ibrahim. Verily, You are the One Who deserves to be praised and thanked, and the One Who is glorified. O Allah, we ask You to bless Muhammad, and the Al of Muhammad, as You blessed Ibrahim, and the Al of Ibrahim. Verily, You are the One Who deserves to be praised and thanked, and the One Who is glorified."

3 "Allah, grant forgiveness to our living and to our dead, and to those who are present and to those who are absent, and to our young and our old folk, and to our males and females. O Allah! Whomsoever you grant to live, from among us, help him to live in Islam, and whom of us you cause to die, help him to die in faith. Grant especially this dead person your ease, rest, forgiveness and consent Allah, if he acted well, then increase for him his good action, and if he acted wrongly, then overlook his wrong actions. Grant him security, glad tidings, generosity and closeness to you. We seek Thy blessings, Thou art the most Merciful."

4 "May the peace and mercy of Allah be upon you."

5 "Out of it We (Allah) created you, and into it We deposit you, And from it We shall take you out once again" (Qur'an 20:55).

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HARRIET IKHANE

Theological Education of Seventh-day Adventist Women in Nigeria

Introduction

The theme of women[1] has been a predominantly disputed topic in contemporary political, theological, and social debate for centuries (Daniel 2010:127). Although many efforts have been made in times past to demonstrate that women are as gifted as men (Madu 2014:123), there still appears to be a prevalent and tenacious belief that women are inferior to men (Amoah, Safo, and Amoah 2015:12). In fact, according to Petties and Beach Va, the issue of their religious roles/participation in leadership position has been a major debate in most Christian churches (2008:1-9). Similarly, the theological education of women that would allow for effective mission has being a neglected phenomenon. This article therefore focuses on the theological education of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) women for effective mission in Nigeria.

Women in Ministry: A New Testament Account

From biblical times, women have been equipping themselves for God's service and have been active in personal evangelism (Patterson 2014:65). In the Gospels, one can read of many women who listened raptly to Christ's word and believed him to be the anointed Messiah (John 11:27). Mary of Bethany sat at Jesus' feet to learn deep truths of Scripture (Luke 10:38-42) just as Paul was educated "at the feet of Gamaliel" in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). She became the first propagator of the empty tomb account (John 20:18). The Samaritan woman, within a short period of learning from Christ at the well, became the greatest female evangelist (John 4:5-30).

https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol16/iss1/1
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/jams/vol16/iss1/

After Jesus' ascension, women like Lydia, Euodia, and Syntyche played an important role in the spread of the gospel (Acts 16:14-15; Phil 4:2-3). Some others (e.g., Phoebe and Nympha) used their homes as fellowship centers (Rom 10:1-2; Col 4:15). Priscilla and her husband Aquila worked together in God's mission (Acts 18:1-4, 24-26). Paul further commended Mary, Tryphena, Tryohosa, and Persis for their hard work in the Lord (Rom 16:6, 12).

During the period of the Early Church, women like Felicitas, Perpetua, Cecilia, Donatila, Theodota, and many more were martyred because of their active involvement in spreading the gospel (Page 2012:556). From the late Middle Ages through the eighteenth century, women joined their husbands on missionary journeys to unentered areas. Records showed that women comprised two-third of the international missions force as of 1999 (Page 2012:557). But unfortunately, despite the New Testament precedents of women's involvement in mission, in many contexts today, women's participation in theological education in order to become relevant in the church's mission is not encouraged or even welcomed.

According to Cecilia Madu, women constitute over half of the world's population (2014:123). In Nigeria, as in many societies, they make up 75 to 90 percent of the active membership and sustaining force in almost every congregation, including SDA churches (Vine 1984:21). Scholars have pointed out the pivotal role of women in the propagation of the gospel. Early missionaries to Africa recognized that reaching women and improving their status would lead to the transformation of whole communities (Ayanga 2017:11). While both men and women are gifted for God's service (1 Cor 12) and are called to be Christ's witnesses (Matt 28:18-20), yet only a small minority of women are in the Adventist theological institutions in Nigeria. Thus, women who feel called to the ministry are faced with a number of challenges that hinder them from fulfilling their vocation.

Biblical Perspectives of Women and Theological Education

While some scholars contend that the Old and New Testaments stipulate that all women are to be under the authority of all men, others insist that this is not the case (Madu 2014:124). Thus, it becomes necessary to closely investigate the evidence of Scripture on such claims.

In first-century Judaism, both boys and girls had access to informal education (teaching and training at home and in daily life). Women were taught a little more than the domestic arts by their mothers. These mothers probably learned to read and write and were given enough elementary religious instruction so they could pass on biblical knowledge to their children (Gladson 1984:40). However, only the boys were offered formal

education in synagogue schools where rabbis taught the Torah to them at different stages in life, beginning at age five or six (Oluikpe 2015:118).

Instructing women in the Torah was not considered obligatory and was even seen in part as improper (Daniel 2010:127). For example, Rabbi Eliezer wrote that "whoever teaches his daughter Torah is like one who teaches her lasciviousness" (Davidson 1998:168). Women were also excluded from essential religious tasks and were thought unworthy of participating in most of the religious feasts. They were instructed in accordance with the Torah for the proper regulation of their lives but were not permitted to touch it (West 1999:137). However, Rabbi Meir suggested that if women would study the Torah, they too would merit many things like Deborah and Hulda (cited in Zohar 2015:40, 41).

The experience of the five daughters of Zelophehad (Num 26:33) showed that education in the law was not forbidden to females by Moses. Their actions in claiming their rights in relation to genealogy and inheritance revealed that they were female expounders of the law (Bushnell 1943:218). In spite of females' lack of formal opportunity for an education, there were women who somehow acquired considerable knowledge in the Torah. There are records of some rabbis who had wives learned in the law just as Timothy's mother and grandmother had enough knowledge to give him a solid grounding in the Scriptures (Gladson 1984:40).

Jesus who was recognized as an exceptional Rabbi, taught both male and female disciples (Oluikpe 2015:127). He commended Mary's choice to be at his feet rather than in the kitchen (John 11:23-27). Mary has always been perceived as an earnest student of the Messiah, which was not a conventional choice for Jewish women. She sat at the feet of Jesus and was listening to "his word " (Davidson 1998:179). "To sit at someone's feet" was an idiomatic way of saying "to study under someone" (Specht 1984:72). Although women were not allowed the formal privilege of studying under a rabbi, Jesus clearly admitted Mary as one of his students. She had the privilege of being sent by Christ to announce his resurrection to the apostles (John 20:18). Other women disciples also ministered to Christ and his disciples out of their means (Olujide 2013:28). Some of those women were probably present when the Holy Spirit descended on the 120 at Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14, 12-14, 2:22-47). Therefore, one can say that women shared with men in the witness of the gospel proclamation and were visible and active not only in the ministry of Jesus, but also in the life of the apostolic church (Acts 1:14; Addison 1995:108-121).

Furthermore, the Samaritan woman who came into contact with Christ immediately practiced what she learned by mobilizing others to listen to Jesus (Mautsa and van Rensburg 2018:31). She had to overcome drawbacks such as gender (Sim 2015:4), nationality, her low moral standing

(John 2005:97), religious bias, and cultural convention (Davidson 2006:228) to become a model witness who is listed in the Gospel of John among the seven witnesses of Christ.

Christ's resurrection and ascension set the stage for a new order, which began at Pentecost for women and men alike. Women are explicitly included from the beginning as key players in the unfolding drama. Peter proclaims that the Spirit of God is now being poured out on all people, men and women, old and young, free and slave, enabling them to prophecy (Acts 2:17-18; cf. Joel 2:28 ff.) and the Spirit equips "all flesh" with spiritual gifts, empowering them to be fruitful ministers of the gospel.

To the church in Ephesus, to which 1 Timothy was written, there was a danger of untrained women promoting false teaching that could undercut both the gospel and the church's foundation. Paul temporarily limited the role of women as church teachers and leaders until they were properly trained (Pokrifka 1989:18). Also, the woman Paul described in 1 Tim 2:13-14 is a paradigm of anyone in danger of deception due to lack of proper education. Paul therefore recommended that the unlearned woman of Ephesus learn in silence and submission. In a way, that served as a significant redemptive improvement on the Jewish traditions that completely barred women from participating in the religious life of their communities. This text thus lays down a wise ground rule through which properly trained and educated women teachers such as Pricilla can be produced (Pokrifka 1989:21). Though the ministry of women in the New Testament as Christian wives and mothers in the home was vital to the progress on the church, their ministry did not end there. Because Christ also called them, the church empowered them as much as they could and released them to serve as workers in a more direct sense (Birney 1971:17). The same is needed today.

Women and Theological Education in Africa

The cultural and gender barriers which women are confronted by in many African contexts is entrenched in the history of their communities. The birth of a female child does not bring the same excitement to a home as that of a male child (Adetunji 2001:106). As a result, they are not given the same educational training because of the belief that the rightful place of a woman is in the home. Besides, through marriage, women are destined to leave their parents and take their husband's last name (Madu 2014:123). Mercy Oduyoye, an African Theologian opines that women in general are educated to believe that being born female means to be born innately inferior and due to their low self-esteem, they underrate themselves. This hinders them from participating in *male terrain* (1997:65).

The African traditional society was somehow unfair to women. They were mostly exploited, oppressed, and restricted by taboos, including the issue of withholding training from them (Familusi 2012:310). The status of women became a major concern to mostly female scholars in the promotion of women studies. However, with changing times and with the pertinent questions surrounding the role of women in mission and the recognition of the fact that full partnership between men and women is essential to the fulfillment of the church's mission, the church in Africa has begun to take small steps toward changing the situation (Ruth 1999:109). However, this slow rate of allowing women access to theological education in Africa may keep them unequipped for the task of mission. It may also pose a difficulty in contributing their much needed voices to theological discourse (Ayanga 2017:20).

Ellen White On the Theological Education of Women

Ellen White sensed her call to the ministry in 1889 when in her youth she was chosen by God (after two men had declined the commission) to be his special messenger (Anderson 1984:109). This makes her writings on the role of women in the church very pertinent.

Ellen White used the term ministry to designate the calling and work of every Christian. Thus she explains:

> The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ. (1940:822)

Her basic definition of ministry is the calling of all Christians "to work for the salvation of their fellow men." One can say that since the work of saving souls depends on all believers (including women), likewise, all believers who feel called to ministry need to be given access to formal theological education. White's usage of the terms "ministry" and "minister" gives a sharper focus to the study of women in ministry and also suggests that women should labor in the gospel ministry. She speaks of women who do work that is in the line of ministry and also refers to young women being trained for this work. She believed women to be indispensable in ministry, because they can minister in ways that men cannot (White 1970:472). White additionally affirmed that "when a woman is in trouble, let her take her trouble to women" (1970:460). She further states that:

> Our sisters generally have a hard time with their increasing families and their unappreciated trials. I have so longed for women who could be educated to help our sisters rise from their discouragement and feel that they could do a work for the Lord. This will bring rays of sunshine into their own lives, which will be reflected into the lives of others. God will bless all who unite in this grand work. (1970:114)

Furthermore, she opines that "the Lord has a work for women as well as for men. . . . They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach, their labor is needed" (White 1902:26). The Lord had shown her times without number that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which He has appointed them as are men" (1970:493). She therefore encourages that

> the youth should be encouraged to attend our training schools for Christian workers, which should become more and more like the schools of the prophets. These institutions have been established by the Lord, and if they are conducted in harmony with His purpose, the youth sent to them will quickly be prepared to engage in various lines of missionary work. Some will be trained to enter the field as missionary nurses, some as canvassers, and some as gospel ministers. (1970:229-30)

This simply implies that our theological schools' curriculum should be such that encourages the various aspects of the missionary work. Again, White asserts,

> We should be people of the Word, mighty in the Scriptures; and our women should be as earnest in this matter as are consecrated men working along such lines: The plan of holding Bible-readings was a heaven-born idea. There are many, both men and women, who can engage in this branch of missionary labor. Workers may thus be developed who will become mighty men of God. (1915:192)

Women were vital in the Adventist Church in the 1860s and were formally inducted into the official ministry in the 1870s. They were needed as evangelists for the unentered areas. Both men and women were encouraged to receive ministerial training to allow them to enter the field (Haloviak 1988:1). Unfortunately, women constitute only a tiny minority in our theological institutions either as students or teachers. This may pose a challenge to fulfilling God's mission.

Women in Adventist Theological School in Nigeria

Seventh-day Adventist theological schools are established for the purpose of training students in fulfilling God's mission of reaching people with the gospel of salvation and preparing them for Christ's soon return. They also serve to instruct students to work intelligently as Christ did by presenting a noble and elevated Christian character to those with whom they associate (Ola 2013:1). The first Adventist theological school in Nigeria was established in 1959. It was then called the Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA), aimed at meeting the need for training people for ministry (Agboola 2001:64). Later in response to the dynamics of its sociopolitical environment, ACWA became known as the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) in 1975; however in 1999, ASWA came to be known as Babcock University. Its Christian Religious Studies (CRS) Department serves the purpose of training pastors and ministers to be fit for ministry and to make a positive difference in theological education in Nigeria and beyond.

There is an insignificant ratio of females enrolled in the CRS department at Babcock University. From 2001, out of an average of 35-45 students enrolled every year, only about 7 were females (Efe 2020).The lack of sponsorship from conferences and unions could be one possible contributing factor to this insignificant rate of women in theological training. Most CRS students (males) are sent from their churches with sponsorship, whereas female students are mostly self-sponsored. Also, cultural issues may contribute to the low enrollment (Mugambi 2005:516). Paul Miller suggests that for Africa to fulfill its missionary and evangelistic mandate, workers must be adequately equipped in theological education. He recommends that the churches should experiment with training women for ministry: "Train women workers in the church. This would be in addition to and beyond the present home economics offered for the students' wives" (Miller 1969:11).

The idea that theological education is meant for men has caused most women to be reluctant to join in theological studies. For instance, during my undergraduate years, a teacher addressed me as "Brother Harriet" while returning our papers. This was funny, though not surprising, because being the only female in a supposedly "men's world" what else could I expect? However, this perspective needs to be erased because the purpose of establishing theological schools is to train gospel workers, both men and women, to be fit and equipped for mission. Women are not excluded from participating in fulfilling the Great Commission (Owusu 2014:49). Therefore, the church needs to invest in fully equipping them.

The possibility of being umemployed as a pastor is another factor keeping some women from enrolling in theological studies. There is an urgent need for women to be fully integrated in ministry in a variety of ways.

Benefits of Theological Education of SDA Women in Nigeria

Below are some potential benefits for the church to fully support, sponsor, and train women in theological schools:

First, educating women theologically will allow for the close involvement of women in the daily lives of the people. Women's work serves to "soften the effects of cultural imperialism and create a model for gender-based missions (that is, women ministering to women) for subsequent generations (Patterson 2014:68). Second, a greater partnership between men and women in the Lord will be created. Missionary women will not only be interested in the spiritual welfare of women in their contexts but also in their social status and overall welfare, thus improving the status of women in society (Ayanga 2017:20). Throughout the history of missions, many women have become Christians as a result of other women (teachers, health workers, reading tutors, or visiting neighbors) who have touched them at their point of need. Women can reach the hearts of other women and connect on a level that is not possible for men. In many countries, only female missionaries have been able to gain access to women (Patterson 2014:68).

Fourth, Romans 16 records how several women's missionary endeavors contributed significantly to the life and growth of the church. Priscilla must have been well-grounded in Christian theology to become a capable instructor of the great Orator Apollos (Acts 18:26). Also, women tend to be more reliable and effective in implementing changes in their communities that will help their children and raise the standard of life. Since women are referred to as "nation builders" (Olubunmi and Oloruntegbe 2014:158), they can also be kingdom builders. Therefore, if they are encouraged through sponsorship and church employment to participate in theological education, the church will grow more spiritually, numerically, and financially. The church will enjoy more peace and a touch of compassion if Christian women are sincerely accepted and trained to use their God-given gifts.

Fifth, when women receive theological education, their courage and self-confidence will increase, which could enable them to free themselves from the societal prejudice and negative stereotypic image they have come to accept and which in a way affects the church socially. The combination of men and women learning and interacting together represents the complete creation of God. At Creation, God looked at male and female and saw that all he had made "was very good" (Gen 1:31).

Finally, the recognition of the priesthood of all believers implies a church in which women and men work side by side in various functions and ministries, endowed with gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit according to his sovereign will (1 Cor 12:7-11). As some men are called into the ministry by God so are some women. The statement is germane to this discussion:

> Women's work is essential and without it the cause will suffer great loss. Women will be more successful in this area of ministry than will men. The Lord has a work for women, as well as for men. They may take their places in His work . . . and He will work through them. If they are imbued with a sense of their duty, and labor under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will have just the self-possession required for this time. . . . They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life and come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach, hence become beneficial in enhancing visitation and retention of backsliding members. They can come close to the hearts of those whom men cannot reach. Their labor is needed. The combined talents of both men and women are essential for the highest success in the work of the ministry. Therefore the ideal here is team ministry. (White 1902:7,8).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The theological training of women remains imperative for the SDA Church in Nigeria where women outnumber men in the general population. The task of mission belongs to the church in its entirety. Because both men and women are given the missionary mandate, they should both be trained and equally equipped. Also, because there is no gender specific spiritual gifts (the Holy Spirit does not show any partiality in distributing his gifts to believers), there should not be found in the church any form of discrimination against women's full participation in ministry. One of the implications is that the church should work on dismantling all the barriers to women's full participation in theological education by vigorously combatting any form of discrimination against women, providing educational sponsorship, and subsequent equal employment opportunities for women who feel called by God to dedicate themselves fulltime to ministry.

Endnotes

1 The theme of women here generally refers to all discourses about women, ranging from their status, roles, and leadership positions, etc. In other words, there must be a topic on women probably because of the patriarchal system. Hence; the word "theme" has to do with issues/debates surrounding them, which in most cases pose challenges to their theological education.

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Harriet O. Ikhane teaches at Babcock University and is currently a PhD candidate in Religion (World Missions) at the Adventist University of Africa (AUA) in Nairobi, Kenya. She has worked in the Edo/Delta Conference in Nigeria before joining Babcock University as a teacher in the Religious Studies Department.

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Dissertation Abstract

Towards a Biblical and Missiological Model of Cross-Cultural Contextualization Among Chinese Immigrants in "Barrio Chino" Duarte of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Samuel Telemaque

Adviser: Bruce Bauer, DMiss
Date completed: August 2020

This study examines the challenge of contextualizing the gospel for Chinese immigrants in the Dominican Republic. Chinese people have been migrating to the Dominican Republic, mainly from Guangdong and Fujian, since the early 1960s. The immigrant population grew to appropriately 50,000 in the 1990s; however, in spite of this steady growth in population, Adventist leaders have not been able to influence Chinese immigrants to appreciate the gospel or to make decisions to begin a journey toward Christ. This study examines that missiological challenge.

The purpose of this study is to develop a model of contextualization for presenting the gospel to Chinese immigrants that is biblically faithful and culturally relevant. The model is based on data obtained from interviews and participant observations conducted in Duarte, known as *Barrio Chino*, in the city of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. The data were gathered from 24 respondents consisting of six Chinese immigrants, six Dominican-born Chinese, six leaders from other denominations, and six

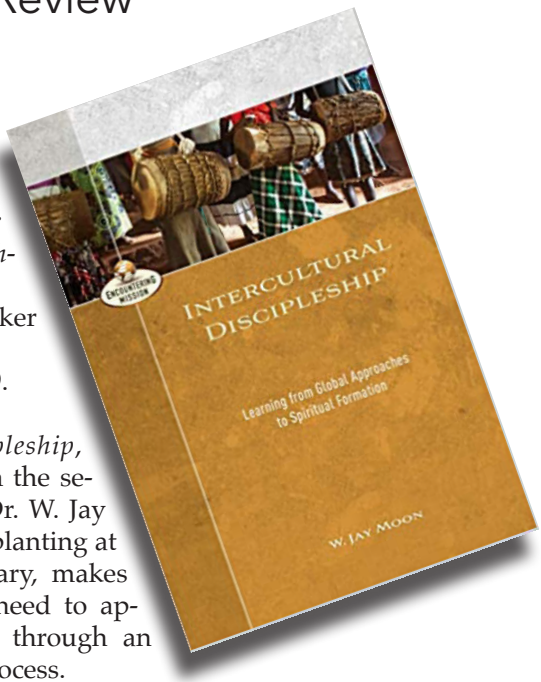
Adventist church leaders. The data were analyzed for reoccurring themes, discrepancies, and nuances. After three cycles of analysis, eight reoccurring themes emerged from the data.

These themes or findings are crisis, language, storytelling, social needs, pragmatism, hard work, values, and availability. Jackson Wu's theories of biblical exegesis and cultural contextualization were used to discuss the findings. The findings were framed within biblical and cultural themes. The cultural themes are *relationship, fortune,* and *identity.* On the other hand, the biblical themes are *creation*, *covenant*, and *eschatology*. The biblical and cultural themes were integrated to evoke responses of *appreciation*, *acceptance,* and *decision* for the gospel of Christ.

The theories of conflict-competence-theory and critical realism were used to explain the inter-relationships between biblical and cultural themes in creating a model of contextualization that is biblically faithful and culturally sensitive. This study is relevant to church administrators, mission practitioners, students of mission, and teachers of mission. It exposes readers to theoretical and practical insights for engaging in contextualization that is biblically faithful and culturally appropriate to the Chinese immigrants' view of reality in the Dominican Republic. The study has the potential of helping Chinese immigrants develop a new appreciation of the gospel and to carefully evaluate biblical beliefs, values, teaching and practices in their journey toward Christ.

DANIEL DUFFIS

Book Review



Moon, W. Jay. 2017.
Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation.
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
299 pp. Paperback $29.99.

In *Intercultural Discipleship*, one of eight publications in the series *Encountering Mission*, Dr. W. Jay Moon, professor of church planting at Asbury Theological Seminary, makes a compelling case on the need to approach spiritual formation through an intercultural discipleship process.

Writing primarily to practitioners in the West (xii), the bulk of the book is focused on analyzing cultural pedagogical forms including symbols, ritual, stories, music, dance, and drama—things that are usually associated with Majority World cultures, as tools to enhance cross-cultural discipleship processes. Moon's focus is to advocate for the inclusion of these native cultural genres, not necessarily for overseas mission, but for spiritual formation in Western home cultures, since these cultural genres have often been perceived by westerners as being too emotive and less rational, a result of the elevation of the cognitive over the emotive in the modern era.

The book is pedagogical in nature. The layout of each chapter follows a very straightforward design, with a theoretical section, a demonstration of the theory in practice, and a section with questions at the end for small group discussions.

In chapters 1-3, the author sets the stage by comparing the underlying assumptions of Western culture and Majority World culture and how these affect approaches to discipleship. Acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of each worldview, Moon demonstrates how a combination of diverse cultural tools for spiritual formation can provide a more holistic understanding to discipleship. He sees intercultural discipleship as the process of transforming worldviews by which Jesus' followers are oriented to the Kingdom of God and learn to contextualize their obedience to Christ through the usage of native genres derived from their different cultures (53).

In chapters 5-9, Moon analyses each cultural tool at an individual level and provides steps in order to properly contextualize the different elements into the process of intercultural discipleship. An underlying theme in the book cautions against syncretism and split-level Christianity by presenting a healthy hermeneutic of interpreting and contextualizing cultural genres that avoid non-critical assimilation while also not totally rejecting cultural forms. In these chapters, therefore, he gives both a theoretical analysis and a practical picture of how native genres could be used in diverse contexts, often through stories from his own personal experience serving as a missionary in Africa for 13 years.

In chapters 10-11, the author calls the reader to consider a more holistic approach to worldview transformation by showing both the necessity to provide a new understanding that impacts belief or ideology, but also the need for both word and deed as agents of change. The end of the book lays out key metrics to measure successful incorporation of these elements in the discipleship journey, including an exploration of the usage of these cultural tools within postmodern contexts.

Moon's scholarship shines throughout this book as he manages to draw from various disciplines, masterfully weaving together sociological, pedagogical, and missiological perspectives on the matter, including thoughts from leading scholars like Paul Hiebert, Clifford Geertz, and Charles Kraft, among others. However, the author also maintains an accessible language for his target audience.

One weakness of the material, however, is that a case could be made against the idea of reflecting on multicultural pedagogy through the eyes of a single author. One would expect such a volume to contain contributions from various voices and viewpoints. Still, with the inclusion of culturally diverse stories and the varied experiences originating from the author himself, Moon presents a well-rounded and culturally informed panorama of the topic that solidifies his own voice in contributing to the topic.

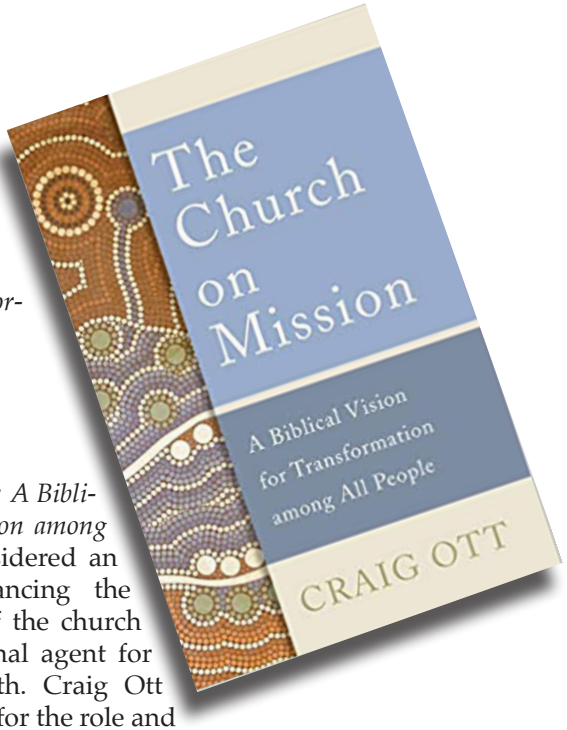
Another area of concern is that although the author vouches for both the usage of words and actions as a means that lead to worldview

transformation, the author tends to still lean towards an exploration of the cognitive aspects of the pedagogical tools, rather than the affective or evaluative. He addresses spiritual formation and worldview transformation mostly from the standpoint of enhancing communication and relaying information, while focusing less on the behavioral and relational tools that could be adopted in the learning environment to encourage imitation, which is core to discipleship.

Nevertheless, the high academic nature of the content blended with practical tools and the suggested exercises at the end of each chapter makes this book a good tool for practitioners who are looking to diversify their pedagogical methods or use this material for the purpose of providing training. With this book, Moon also provides good material for academics and religious educators, especially as the effects of globalization call for a new approach in which multicultural pedagogy will be inevitable.

KERTH PAYNE

Book Review



Ott, Craig. 2019.
The Church on Mission: A Biblical Vision for Transformation among All People.
Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic.
138 pp. US $13.99.

The Church on Mission: A Biblical Vision for Transformation among All People might be considered an abbreviated work advancing the view that the mission of the church is to be a transformational agent for God's Kingdom on earth. Craig Ott makes a compelling case for the role and impact of the church in mission. He is of the view that the church must first understand its mission, its purpose, and then set about carrying out that mission.

Ott lays out his arguments quite succinctly but unequivocally. He first argues for the church in every generation to clarify its understanding of its mission, then provides the reader with an understanding of mission as the goal of the church in the world. Ott espouses the thinking that the church in the world is the link between the now and not yet. The church is to carry out the teaching, preaching, healing, and the good news of the gospel in preparation for the second coming of Christ, which will usher in the ending of the "not yet" and the actualization of the kingdom of God.

The reader is not left to figure out or deduce the author's intent. Ott is quite explicit in his position. For example, in his opening statements, he contends that each generation has to reaffirm its understanding of what is meant by the mission of the church. Further, he identifies the meaning of church as a representation of worship to God.

The author addresses the possible criticism that his view of missional transformation is too church-centered. His response is three-fold. First, that the church is, in fact, the lone agency on the earth to fulfill God's mission. He cites Leslie Newbigin as stating that the root of the history of the Bible is God calling a people to serve him and represent his light to the nations of the world. He states, "God's purposes in history are intimately linked to a people; in our day that is the church" (20).

Second, Jesus' focus was the church. One of his promises was to build the church so that his name could be lifted up in all the earth. Ott's third point is that the church is called to be transformational and to multiply around the globe. To this end, he sees eschatological significance. He recognizes that in light of the fact that Christ redeemed the church and adds to it those who should be saved, the church can be viewed as the first fruits of the new creation, when Jesus makes all things new because the believers would have become "new-creation people." Thus, God's church is a spiritual kingdom; not a national one.

The church indeed is not the kingdom of God; the concept of the kingdom of God is much bigger and includes heavenly realities, whereas the church, though a part of the kingdom, is an earthly reality that will experience the final transformation when Jesus comes. First Peter 2:9 portrays the church as a priesthood, a nation, a generation, never a kingdom. In verse five, the apostle mentions that the believers are *living stones*, to be used in building a spiritual house. The kingdom language therefore is not a fitting characterization in my view, even as a metaphor, for the church of God.

In continuing with the missional and transformational nature of the church, the author laments the neglect that has characterized the behavior of the church as it relates to theology that is rooted in Scripture. He cites a number of reasons for this including the avoidance of dealing with hard issues that usually create discomfort; the tendency to make Scripture a relative and/or experiential philosophy rather than conforming the life to the dictates of Scripture. Some believers have very little interest in doctrinal issues that have created divisions among Christians. This has resulted in a diminished regard for formal theological study, which Ott sees as necessary in order to have sound theological positions. He argues that the church must have the ability to deeply study the Scriptures. To lose sight of this need or to disregard its import is to compromise the

biblical foundations that must be the church's anchors—something that will imperil the church.

Ott is correct in his understanding of the issues that plague today's church. It is true to say that the message of the church is compromised by a relaxed attitude towards the foundational beliefs found in Scripture. This means that the ability to be transformational as well as missional is significantly lessened. For Ott, the transformational church sees the Word of God as fundamental to bringing glory to God's name. They cherish it, love and mediate upon it, and live by it (41).

The author uses poignant metaphors of salt and light to emphasize that the transformational church does not operate in private, that it infuses itself in the wider world. I think that the author makes correct use of the metaphors to illustrate the impact that the church is expected to have in the world. Another example is the Genesis mandate to be fruitful and multiply. Ott sees this Old Testament instruction as a theme that carries all the way into the New Testament because even there, God is working towards the multiplication of his church. A fruitful church is a multiplying church with one goal, to bring glory to God.

Throughout the book Ott remains true to his goal of demonstrating that the mission of the church is to be transformational in the world and to glorify God. In his last two chapters, he argues for unity in the church that must be achieved because people in the world are confused when segregation and other social ills are exhibited in the church. He posits that a transformational church must see this facet as essential to church growth and being Jesus' witnesses. Further, in order to multiply in a way that represents heaven, selfless efforts must be made to embrace others who do not look like us and to work through the discomforts and challenges of diversity. It is necessary, he contends, for kingdom building.

The author does accomplish his goal of providing a clear vision and understanding of the mission of the church. His arguments are well thought out, compelling, and rooted in Scripture, albeit not always deeply theological as he promised. Nonetheless, there is an abundance of scriptural evidence to support his perspective on mission, transformation, and the role of the church in kingdom building. Ott is unequivocal in demonstrating that the church is indeed meant to be a missional and transformational agency in the world, for the glory of God.