2012

The Book and the Student: Theological Education as Mission

Wagner Kuhn
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/missions-books
Part of the Missions and World Christianity Commons, and the Practical Theology Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/missions-books/3

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the World Mission at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Books by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.
Section 1
THE BOOK AND THE PROFESSOR

THE BOOK
and the student:
Theological Education as Mission
José Carlos Ramos earned his Doctor of Ministry degree in 1983 at Andrews University. His dissertation was entitled “A People Waiting for Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation of Watchtower Christology and Soteriology with Suggested Strategies for the Evangelization of Jehovah’s Witnesses.” As a theology professor, his experience lasted a little over thirty years and included teaching at the Seminaries in Pernambuco (ENA), Bahia (IAENE), and São Paulo (UNASP, Engenheiro Coelho). All together as pastor, evangelist, and professor of theology, Ramos worked forty-one years, five months, and four days. Now that he has retired, he has been writing articles, preparing books, participating in pastors’ councils and conferences, preaching at churches, and conducting weeks of spiritual revival.

During his more than thirty years as a professor of theology, Dr. Ramos’ preference was for the disciplines related to pastoral ministry, public evangelism, and teaching the books of Daniel, Revelation, and Romans. He taught several different classes for the Bachelor in Theology, the Master of Pastoral Theology, and the Doctoral programs, including the following: Public and Personal Evangelism, Communication, Pentateuch, Daniel, Christ and the Gospels, Christology, Doctrine of the Sabbath, Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, Romans, The Gospel of John, and Revelation.
For a long time, his special interest has been Christology, the Gospel of John, and the Prophecies (Daniel and Revelation).

He has published two books through the Casa Publicadora Brasileira (Brazil Publishing House): *A Igreja em Perigo: O Ômega da Apostasia Predita por Ellen White* (2008) and *Mensagem de Deus: Como Entender as Profecias Bíblicas* (2012). Besides these books, Ramos has written scores of articles in the theological and the practical fields for academic journals and for the general public. His articles have been featured in *Revista Adventista, Sinais dos Tempos, Ministério*, and *Parousia*, among others.

Ramos was born in São Caetano do Sul, São Paulo, Brazil on September 3, 1941. At that time his family was not Seventh-day Adventist. By the time he was ten years old, influenced by his maternal uncles who had embraced the Adventist message, he joined the church with his parents, Itagyba Ramos and Maria Francisca Ramos.

Early on, José Carlos was motivated by his parents to accept the call for the pastoral ministry. As a literature evangelist (canvassing), he obtained financial resources and was able to enroll at the Instituto Adventista de Ensino, in São Paulo. Upon completing his secondary education, he studied theology and graduated in 1965. Ramos married Elda Martins Ramos and they had three children: Jarlan Martins Ramos, Elmara Martins Ramos (Braun), and Jaider Martins Ramos.

As an evangelist during the first three years of his ministry in the Bahia-Sergipe Mission, Ramos reinforced the Adventist presence in areas where Adventists were already found, and formed new congregations in the unreached cities of Paulo Afonso and Irecê in Bahia, Propriá in Sergipe, and Petrolina in Pernambuco. His plan consisted of preaching for twenty-eight nights straight, which allowed him to hold five to seven evangelistic campaigns per year. In 1974, Ramos was called to work as the director of communication in the Rio-Minas Conference and later in the East-Brazilian Union, but he continued his public evangelism ministry alongside his new responsibilities. During this period he conducted public meetings in Padre Miguel, Marechal Hermes, Bar dos Cavaleiros, and Vilar dos Teles, in Rio de Janeiro, Uberaba in Minas Gerais, and Itapetinga in Bahia.

Ramos remembers the moment in which he was called to be a professor of Theology: “Everything was going well in my work at the Union until, on a beautiful March morning in 1978, while I was gathering some materials to be published in the Brazilian Adventist Review (*Revista Adventista*), the president of the Union unexpectedly entered into my office saying: ‘We are
needing a professor to teach Theology in ENA’ (our then Adventist College in Pernambuco). Surprised, I felt a mix of joy and uncertainty. To teach was one of my greatest dreams, but at the same time, I thought about the consequences of moving to the distant and almost unreachable Belém de Maria (the region where ENA was located)... My answer was ‘yes.’”

So it was in 1978 that José Carlos began the new task of being a professor of Theology at ENA. “During that year I remained in the Seminary without the presence of my family, and I went to see them once every semester. The president of the Union provided enough support for me to have more opportunities of seeing my family, but the circumstances did not permit me to be absent from the classroom.” Finally in 1979, it was decided that he would remain permanently in Belém de Maria. At ENA, Ramos taught the classes of Public Evangelism and Personal Evangelism, and held two evangelistic campaigns in the neighboring cities of Palmares and Cupira.

José Carlos left ENA, in 1981, to pursue a Doctor in Ministry degree at Andrews University, returning home in 1983. He graduated on June 3 of 1984 in absentia. After returning to ENA, he continued as professor of Theology. At the end of 1985, Ramos moved to Bahia (IAENE) with the newly established Theological Seminary. In 1992, he was nominated Dean of the Theological Seminary. In 1993 his academic career went through another transition as Ramos received an invitation from the South-American Division to coordinate the Master and Doctoral programs in Pastoral Theology, in São Paulo (UNASP). In 2007, he left this function and once again taught Theology classes at the undergraduate level until June 2008.

**Summary of José Carlos Ramos’ Ministerial Career:**
*Evangelist, Pastor, Departmental Director, and Professor of Theology*

6 Festschrift: José Carlos Ramos

- Professor of Theology in ENA, 1978-1980.
- Professor of Theology in ENA, 1984-1986.
- Professor of Theology in IAENE, 1987-1993.
- Dean of the Theological Seminary in IAENE, 1992.
- Director and Professor of the Master and Doctoral Programs in Pastoral Theology in UNASP, 1994-2007.
- Professor of Theology in UNASP, 2008.

Personal Reflections

- Favorite Quote: “Everything I am is because of Him by whom I live.”
- Advice to friends and family: “Put yourself in the hands of the Lord. Be the best you can be and leave the rest for God to complete.”
- Advice to Theology professors: “In addition to communion with God, the three main things you should have: knowledge (experience), methodology (pedagogy) and relationship.”
- Advice to students and pastors: “Devote yourselves to God daily and allow yourselves to be used by Him, so that the ideals of the Church are widely achieved. Preach the genuine gospel of Jesus, without adding or taking anything away. Fulfill the ministry in the power of God.”

Beyond the satisfaction generated by the privilege to see the fruits of labor, these more than 41 years of ministry have taught me that the source of power, not only to the ministry but for the whole of a triumphant life, consists of constant prayer, meditation, and love as an impelling force to all that we do. In regular devotional practice, the power from above is reached.”

“I pray for a Christocentric church, filled with the Holy Spirit, fully submissive to God, who tenaciously clings to His promises and, as a beneficiary of His provisions, fully commits itself to overcoming the challenges that confront it—a supportive church for the suffering, that cares for its members while seeking lost souls; a spiritual church, fervent,
humble, reverent, practitioner and preacher of the truth, courageous enough to say ‘no!’ to sin and ‘yes!’ to the fulfillment of its duty.”

The concern of Dr. Jose Carlos Ramos with the pastoral ministry and with a preaching that is centered in Christ can be understood in the words he always spoke to students and pastors: “May Christ be the foundation, structure, and covering of your ministry. He must not only be the cornerstone, but also the touchstone, the decisive element, the ultimate criterion between right and wrong, truth and deception, between salvation and eternal damnation. The challenge of the centuries continues on, therefore fulfill your ministry, but do so in the power of God.”
BIOGRAFIA DE JOSÉ CARLOS RAMOS


Durante os mais de 30 anos que trabalhou como professor de Teologia, a preferência do doutor José Carlos Ramos sempre foi por disciplinas ligadas ao ministério pastoral, ao evangelismo público, e aos livros de Daniel, Apocalipse e Romanos. Lecionou uma quantidade diversa de matérias tanto para o bacharel em teologia, para o mestrado em teologia pastoral, bem como para o Doutorado. Dentre estas destacam-se: Evangelismo Público e Pessoal, Comunicação, Pentateuco, Daniel, Cristo e os Evangelhos, Cristologia, Doutrina do Sábado, Atos dos Apóstolos.
e Epístolas, Romanos, Evangelho de João, e Apocalipse. Mas por muito tempo seu interesse especial tem sido em Cristologia, o Evangelho de João, e Profecias: Daniel e Apocalipse.


José Carlos Ramos nasceu em 3 de setembro de 1941, em São Caetano do Sul, estado de São Paulo. O menino cresce. Está com dez anos de idade. Gosta de ler, pesquisar e entender o que o livro sagrado diz. No convívio com familiares recebe os primeiros ensinamentos das sagradas letras. Com seus tios maternos estuda a Bíblia e, juntamente com seus pais, abraça o evangelho da salvação para se tornar um Adventista do Sétimo Dia.


Como evangelista da Missão Bahia-Sergipe, nos três primeiros anos de seu ministério, José Carlos Ramos reforçou a presença adventista em lugares em que já havia adventistas e formou novas congregações em cidades ainda não alcançadas. Entre as novas congregações estabelecidas destacam-se das cidades de Paulo Afonso e Irecê, na Bahia, Propriá, em Sergipe, e Petrolina, em Pernambuco. Seu plano consistia em pregar 28 noites seguidas, de modo que ele conseguia realizar de cinco a sete

O pastor José Carlos relembra com emoção o momento em que foi chamado para ser professor de Teologia: “Os eventos transcorriam bem em meu trabalho em nível de União, até que, numa bela manhã de março de 1978, eu estava alinhavando algumas notícias para serem publicadas na *Revista Adventista*, quando repentinamente o presidente da União entrou em meu escritório e foi logo dizendo: ‘Estamos precisando de um professor para ensinar Teologia no ENA’ (interior de Pernambuco). Surpreso, senti um misto de júbilo e incerteza. Afinal, lecionar era meu grande sonho; no entanto, pensava nas consequências de me transferir para a longínqua e quase inacessível Belém de Maria (região em que estava o ENA)... Minha resposta foi ‘sim’.”

Durante o ano de 1978, José Carlos acumulou o cargo que exercia na União com o de professor no ENA. “Durante aquele ano permaneci no Seminário sem a presença de minha família, indo vê-la uma vez durante cada semestre. O presidente da União facultou-me mais ocasiões para visitá-la, mas as circunstâncias não permitiram que eu me afastasse da sala de aula.” Finalmente, em 1979, decidiu-se que ele permaneceria definitivamente em Belém de Maria. No ENA, ministrou matérias de Evangelismo Público e Evangelismo Pessoal, e realizou duas campanhas de evangelismo nas cidades vizinhas de Palmares e Cupira.

Resumo da Carreira Ministerial de José Carlos Ramos: Evangelista, Pastor, Departamental e Professor de Teologia

- Professor de Teologia no ENA, 1984-1986.
- Professor de Teologia no UNASP, 2008.

Reflexões Pessoais

- Frase favorita: “Tudo sou em virtude dAquele por quem eu vivo.”
- Conselho aos familiares e amigos: “Coloque-se sempre nas mãos do Senhor. Seja o melhor que você puder ser e deixe que o restante Deus completará.”
- Conselho aos professores de Teologia: “Além da comunhão com Deus, as três coisas principais que você deve ter: conhecimento (bagagem), metodologia (didática) e relacionamento.”
- Conselho aos alunos e pastores: “Dedique-se diariamente a Deus e permita ser usado por Ele para que os ideais da Igreja sejam amplamente alcançados. Pregue o genuíno evangelho de Jesus, sem acréscimo nem decréscimo de qualquer natureza e cumpra o ministério no poder de Deus.”
“Além da satisfação gerada pelo privilégio de contemplar os frutos do trabalho, estes mais de 41 anos de ministério me ensinaram que a fonte do poder não só para o ministério, mas para o todo de uma vida triunfante, consiste de oração constante, da meditação e do amor como força impelente para tudo que se venha a fazer. Na prática devocional regular o poder do Alto é alcançado.”

“Oro por uma Igreja Cristocêntrica, cheia do Espírito Santo, plenamente submissa a Deus que tenazmente se apegue às Suas promessas e, beneficiária de Suas providências, empenhe-se totalmente em superar os desafios que a confrontam. Uma Igreja solidária com os sofredores e que cuide de seus membros enquanto cuide de buscar as almas perdidas. Uma Igreja espiritual, fervorosa, humilde, reverente, praticante e pregadora da verdade, corajosa o bastante para dizer ‘não!’ ao pecado e ‘sim!’ ao cumprimento do dever.”

A preocupação do Dr. José Carlos Ramos com o ministério pastoral e a centralização da pregação em Cristo pode ser entendida nas palavras que ele sempre dirigiu a alunos e pastores: “Seja Cristo o fundamento, a estrutura e a cobertura do ministério de vocês. Ele tem que ser não somente a pedra de esquina, mas também a pedra de toque, o elemento decisivo, o critério final entre o certo e o errado, a verdade e o engano, entre a salvação eterna e a perdição. O desafio dos séculos ainda continua, então cumpram o ministério, mas cumpram-no no poder de Deus.”
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS MISSION

Wagner Kuhn

Introduction

The people you will meet as you read the various chapters of this book are from Brazil, and they have all been students at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, in various masters and doctoral programs. These writers are ‘theologians in the making’ seeking to demonstrate in word and deed, in theory and in practice, the everlasting gospel (Rev 14) in a variety of ways. Their aim is to lift up Jesus Christ, and present with power and effectiveness “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Accordingly, these writers understand that theological education whose mission is to educate and transform must be grounded in the Scripture and have as the ultimate goal the salvation of the greatest number of human beings. Such mission originates in God who is love seeking to reach all (John 3:16, 1 John 4:8-10, 19),¹ and wanting to reveal His character and will to His people. Thus, God’s “love, the basis of creation and redemption, is

¹“God is love.” This is a phrase used by Ellen G. White surprisingly as the first statement of the book Patriarchs and Prophets, and as the last statement of the book The Great Controversy. These are respectively the first and last books in the Conflict series.
the foundation of true education.” Moreover, His love is also demonstrated through redemptive education seen when both students and teachers are transformed alike through His Word, and as the apostle Paul, they desire to become servant-missionaries of Jesus Christ, and as a result of that process, theologians.

**Theology and Mission: Following Paul (Apostle, Servant, Missionary, and Theologian)**

Paul taught theology and practiced mission by trying to get as close as possible to people in order to save them for Christ. He says: “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor 9:22).

This is the methodology of Paul (his theological pedagogy), who in word and deed, by the theology and mission given to him, combines in his ministry both the knowledge and the preaching of the gospel—teology and mission. Paul’s theological education bears fruit as he follows Christ. He states, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). He takes the example of Christ and applies it to his own apostolic life—a life of a servant, a disciple, a theologian, and a missionary.

The encounter (revelation) and the vision that the apostle Paul had with Christ provides perhaps the best human example of the unity of theology and mission and how these two concepts, or disciplines (and facets of God’s revelation), go hand in hand. In the knowledge of God (theology) and in the practice or preaching of the gospel (mission), the salvation of God in Christ is transmitted, is given to the Gentiles. God reveals Himself to Paul, and thus, Paul knows God, he preaches the good news (gospel) led by the Holy Spirit, he writes a major portion of the New Testament, and does so from the perspective of his encounter with God. He writes and transmits theology in mission, and this mission that was given to him by Christ Himself (Acts 9) is the factor that produces theology. In preaching—he teaches and writes; and in writing—he preaches and teaches! It is theology and mission educating and transforming.

---

The theology and mission of the apostle Paul relate to each other not just as theory and practice in the sense that his mission flows from his theology, but rather in the sense that his theology is a missionary theology and that his mission is fully theological and is related to his identity, thought, vocation, and calling. Paul is a theologian, but likewise he is an apostle, a servant, a missionary, and a teacher. Thus, theological education must be centered in the love of God revealed by Christ at the cross of Calvary, and it must come from God through a call (revelation), a vocation, and a mission. And its content and principles, as well as its methodology must have its source in the Word of God.

**Adventist Mission and Education: Engaging Theological Education in Mission**

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is carried forward mostly through preaching, teaching, and healing ministries. It is a mission aimed at reaching and transforming the whole person—spirit, mind, and body. Such focus denotes an effort to consider the mission of the Church as an all encompassing and holistic ministry. More than we may realize, Seventh-day Adventist believers are sent by the Church to distant and difficult places to minister and serve those in need, and theirs is a challenging task.

Moreover, many committed missionaries go to preach the Good News and, in addition find themselves involved in challenging circumstances where providing physical healing and education to the masses is a priority. In many places theological education has played a significant role in achieving the overall mission of the Church, which is to proclaim the everlasting gospel to all the world. Accordingly, in various regions of the world schools were some of the first institutions to be established. Among the first subjects to be taught were Bible, religion, and then theology, as these disciplines were needed for the theological training of the new members and future leaders of the Church.

It is also not uncommon for many missionaries and church workers to involve themselves in the task of providing education and other activities that are developmental in nature, as these types of ministries provide a venue whereby people and communities can have an opportunity

---

for development, change, and transformation, and most importantly
the hearing of the gospel. In other words, the traditional lines that
compartmentalize teaching, preaching, healing, educating, and spiritual
development become blurry, and they all feed into each other—an
integrated and holistic gospel ministry.

Many times the motivation behind these types of educational and
holistic ministries is to help provide opportunities for those who are poor
or discriminated against, those who might never hear about Jesus Christ
and His soon return other than through those involved in various kinds of
healing and educational initiatives.

In the past such educational initiatives (included theological education)
motivated by a spirit of charity, inspired the establishment of several schools
and universities in Europe and throughout the world, many of which still
exist today. Michel Riquet makes the following comment regarding the
establishment of the Sorbonne in France and other European universities:

It was in fact in order to enable sixteen poor men, Masters of Arts aspiring
to the doctorate, to pursue their studies at the University, that Robert de
Sorbon, chaplain to St Louis the king, founded the College of the Sorbonne
in 1257. It was the same at Orleans, Salamanca, Oxford and Cambridge. In
these university centres the Friars Preachers for many years fostered a flame
of fervour and charity.6

For these missionaries, an education, inspired by the spirit and fervor
of the gospel, must encompass all forms of Christian life and practice—
evangelistic, educational, medical, pastoral, and so forth. Thus, theological
education has played a vital and important role in preparing and equipping
many to continue to carry God’s Word and mission to the ends of the
earth.7

Christian believers must continually be aware that God provides
them with an excellent opportunity to reach and touch people through
education, as education means development, which leads to transformation
and redemption. Education has to do with the restoration of human
dignity. Thus, an education that is transformational and redemptive must

7See Dietrich Werner, “Theological Education in the Changing Context of World Christian-
ity—An Unfinished Agenda,” International Bulletin of Missionary Research 35, no. 2 (April
encompass every dimension of human existence—physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

“In the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one, for in education, as in redemption, ‘other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ’” (1 Cor 3:10). The author expands this principle by stating the following:

Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ. It means emancipation from ideas, habits, and practices that have been gained in the school of the prince of darkness. The soul must be delivered from all that is opposed to loyalty to God.

In my opinion this is a universal principle that must be followed by Adventist educators because it has such major theological and missiological implications for the church everywhere.

Accordingly, theological education must be based on the assumption that love is the foundation for a Christian vision of human development (1 Cor 13) and redemption because true education is relational. Thus, the goal of a theological education that is all encompassing (integral-holistic) is to see persons transformed and redeemed by the love of Christ. Any philosophy, theology, and practice of Adventist ministry and education, especially within the context of mission, should carry the principles of Jesus’ holistic gospel, which aims to transform the whole human being—body, mind, and spirit.

Furthermore, a theological education that in its very nature is biblical and missionary must also aim at the redemption and transformation of the structures and powers that hinder and obstruct a person from experiencing the abundant life Christ wants everyone to enjoy (John 10:10). Such knowledge of God gained through theological education imparts and infuses the student and believer with a zeal and vision for ministry. Through the Holy Spirit’s power, the believer becomes a disciple, able to transform individuals and communities for the glory and honor of God. Theological education that is not transformative, that does not aim at also helping and redeeming those who are broken and destroyed by sin loses its mission, its value, and its focus.

An example of an all-encompassing education that aims at transforming

---

the whole person, and also focuses on integrating the knowledge of God (theology) and the preaching of the Word is provided here. It was with this aim in mind that Ellen G. White pushed forward with the vision to establish an institution of higher education—the Loma Linda College of Medical Evangelists in 1906. The purpose was that the healing of the sick and the ministry of the Word were to go hand in hand.\textsuperscript{10}

This purpose must continue, and not only at Loma Linda University, CA, or at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University, MI, or at the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary in Brazil, but in all educational, medical, publishing, and other institutions of the church—integrating the teaching of the word and healing of the body. But in order for this to occur we need to know our Creator God, the One who heals our wounds, restores our bodies, and transforms our minds—thus, the importance of theological education.

God’s mission, a mission that is all encompassing, must continue through hospitals that not only heal but also teach the words of the great Physician. His mission must continue through relief and development agencies that not only provide humanitarian aid but also words of hope in the God who loves and cares. It must continue through educational institutions that not only teach the established curriculum but also build men and women of noble character for this world and for His kingdom not yet fully established. Yes, God’s mission must also continue through theological seminaries that are responsible for providing theological education to lay members, pastors, teachers, and missionaries—those most responsible for teaching and preaching the good news to all humanity. God’s mission must continue through all the members of His body—you and me—His Church.

**The Holy Spirit: The Integrating Agent of Theology and Mission\textsuperscript{11}**

For the integration of theology and mission to occur is necessary to understand that both an Adventist theology and an Adventist mission that bear fruit are the results of the work of Christ through the Holy Spirit—the agent that makes both possible.\textsuperscript{12} The Spirit is given to the Church to


\textsuperscript{12} The experience that Ellen G. White had in considering and accepting the invitation to work
proclaim the everlasting gospel with power, as it is her mission. The Holy Spirit is given for a mission because:

1. The Holy Spirit enables through the Word instructing and guiding for mission;
2. He gives life and power through the Word. He transforms people through the teaching and witness of the Word;
3. The Spirit gives the vision, encouragement, perseverance, and patience to apostles, teachers, and missionaries in mission;
4. He chooses, calls, and sends out his servant-missionaries and leads them as they cross borders to preach the gospel, teach, baptize, and make disciples;
5. He empowers the Church to support mission programs and activities;
6. The Holy Spirit works miracles and victories through the Church and its members;
7. He inspires the telling of stories of what God does and about the encounters of God with those He wishes to save;
8. By giving the Holy Spirit to the Church, Jesus grants all other gifts needed for the mission of God to be fulfilled.

The Holy Spirit desires to fulfill God’s mission, revealing Christ’s salvation to the world. Moreover, He is the unifying agent of the members of the body of Christ (the Church) for mission. And in order for us to unite theology and mission as the Spirit unites believers to Christ, we must understand that an Adventist theological education for mission can and should be understood from the following aspects:

1. An Adventist theological education for mission that is understood from the goodness of God to save everyone (that is, God calls and sends Jonah to proclaim his message to Nineveh);
2. A theological education for mission understood from the love of God to send His Son (Gen 3:15, John 3:16, Acts 4:12, 1 Cor 13); a theology and mission from God’s promises and these promises fulfilled in the “God with us”—Jesus (Isa 7:14, John 1:1, 14), and in the life of the church;
3. A theological education for mission understood from the story of

as a cross-cultural missionary in Europe reveals her anticipation, her effort to understand the responsibility and prophetic mission in the European context, while constantly depending upon the direction of the Holy Spirit. See the following article on the subject: Martin G. Klingbeil, “The Word Has Gone Forth in Europe, ‘Go Forward’! Ellen G. White as an Intercultural Missionary,” in Misión y Contextualización: Llevar el Mensaje Bíblico a un Mundo Multicultural, ed. Gerald A. Klingbeil (Libertador San Martin, Entre Rios, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2005), 113-130.
the creation, the patriarchs and prophets, God’s people, His apostles and martyrs, from the whole of salvation history in the context of the great conflict, redemption, and final restoration;

4. A theological education for mission from the teacher. From the professor of theology, the Bible teacher, and finally a theological education for mission from the teacher’s life and teachings, his whole example—his theology and his mission, words and deeds;

5. A theological education for mission from the life of integrity and sacrifice of the teacher-missionary. Many non-Christians (and Christians) accept Christ by the example demonstrated by the life of integrity and sacrifice of those who proclaim the gospel as God’s servant-missionaries. The life and story of these people should guide this Adventist theological education for mission;

6. A theological education for mission from the biblical command of Jesus, expressed in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) and motivated by the desire and vision of Adventists to see the everlasting gospel reaching every nation, tribe, language and people (Rev 14:6-12);

7. A theological education for mission understood from the love and sacrifice of Christ towards the needy, the lost, and fallen. A theology and mission from the need and human suffering, for Christ, as He saw the crowds, had compassion on the people;

8. And finally, a theological education for mission not because of any capacity and human skills or gifts, but because of the wisdom of God, for

---

13 Ellen G. White says: “The worker in a foreign field must carry in his heart the peace and love of heaven; for this is his only safety. Amid perplexity and trial, discouragement and suffering, with the devotion of a martyr and the courage of a hero, he is to hold fast to the hand that never lets go, saying, ‘I will not fail nor be discouraged.’ He must be a close Bible student, and should be often in prayer. If, before talking with others, he will seek help from above, he may be assured that angels of heaven will be with him. At times he may yearn for human sympathy, but in his loneliness he may find comfort and encouragement through communion with God. Let him be cheered by the words of the Saviour, ‘Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world’ (Matt 28:20). From this divine Companion he will receive instruction in the science of soul-saving. Energy and self-sacrifice are needed in the missionary field. God calls for men who will push the triumphs of the cross; men who will persevere under discouragements and privations; men who have the zeal and resolution and faith that are indispensable in the missionary field. By persevering toil and a firm trust in the God of Israel, resolute, courageous men will accomplish wonders. There is scarcely a limit to what may be achieved if the efforts made are governed by enlightened judgment and backed by earnest endeavor.” *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 469.
Theological Education as Mission: The Professor, This Book, and Theologians in the Making

I started this section introducing you to the people who have devoted much time and effort into making this book possible. They are the ones really behind the creation of each chapter—they are theology students who are reflecting on pressing issues as they look into the future and as they follow the Master. Their thinking is being shaped as they walk, and listen, and learn, and share, and move forward, and as they go into all the world as disciple-servants, apostles, theologians, and missionaries of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In a way this book desires to walk together with you, the reader, rather

---

14 In her book *Christ’s Object Lessons*, White says: “You need not go to the ends of the earth for wisdom, for God is near. It is not the capacities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you expect great things from Him. He longs to give you understanding in temporal as well as in spiritual matters. He can sharpen the intellect. He can give tact and skill. Put your talents into the work, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given you” (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941), 146.
than describing the finish line or providing final and conclusive answers. This book stands at the crossroads where theological education, theological thinking, and mission meet. The question to be asked could be: How are these disciplines going to come together to shape our life, our Church, and the world around us?

Let me suggest that the ways the writers of this book engage with the Bible (the Book) and with challenging theological as well as practical ministry issues will determine the ways they will challenge or affirm how things should be done in their ministry context. Following in the steps of Paul, they will seek to allow mission to shape their theology, and infuse their mission praxis with the content of their theological reflection. They will allow the revealed Word to be foundational and transformational in their ministries. And here at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, we are striving to prepare the next generation to think about critical issues in this way, where mission and theology are integral to each other in response to the specific issues that arise from the different contexts. As Paul, we will be able to say: “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1).

Reflecting on the Word and following in the footsteps of Paul, who followed the example of Christ, the writers of this book are indebted to those who have gone before them, to those who walked similar paths. To all our professors, the ones who have run the race and by example, in principle and practice have lifted up Christ through their life, ministry, teaching, and writing—to our mentors, professors of theology, especially Dr. José Carlos Ramos—we dedicate this book.
Section 2
THE BOOK AND THE TEXT

THE BOOK
and the student:
Theological Education as Mission
A CASE FOR LAW AND NARRATIVE IN NUMBERS

Carlos A. Bechara

Introduction

Recent decades have seen much progress in the area of law and narrative in the Pentateuch, especially in relation to intertextuality. The combination of these two genres also provides intratextual links that broaden the understanding of individual books. No less important are the resulting implications for theological interpretation. The cases in point deal with sexual offenses in the book of Numbers, where the highest incidence of law and narrative in the Pentateuch can be found. They comprise the law of the suspected adulteress, so-called Sotah (Num 5:11-31), and the narrative of Israel’s stay at Baal-Peor (Num 25).

The law of the suspected adulteress in Numbers 5:11-31 (henceforth Numbers 5), addresses a case of individual secret adultery, and prescribes

---

the procedure for dealing with cases of suspected or hidden adultery. After the case is introduced (vv. 11-14) and the rite commenced (vv. 15-18), comes the main part of the case: the swearing of the oath (vv. 19-22); the washing off of written curses into the “water of bitterness” (v. 23); the presenting of the grain offering of jealousy (vv. 25-26); and the woman’s drinking of the water of bitterness (vv. 19-28). The summary closes the ritual in verses 29-31. The narrative of Peor in Numbers 25 juxtaposes two cases of public sexual offense, one corporate (Israel) and the other individual (Zimri and Cozbi).

When taken together, law (Num 5) and narrative (Num 25) reveal a pattern of increase in sexual offenses that is followed by judgment proportionate to them. This pattern results from a series of intratextual connections that may even run in parallel sequence. This literary framework develops a rising conflict between sexual immorality and divine judgment that eventually threatens the very survival of the Israelites. In a surprising turn of events, redeeming divine expiation is made possible through Phinehas’ zeal for God. In this way both genres provide, on an individual and corporate level, implicit theological education on the dynamics of evil, judgment, and the importance of loyalty to God.

**Individual Cases of Sexual Offense**

In spite of dealing with matters of sexual offense in different contexts, the ritual of the suspected adulteress in Numbers 5 and the Phinehas story in Numbers 25 display a number of intratextual parallels. These links make up for a synchronic analysis in which similar but distinct cases of

---


4 For Adriana Destro the law of the suspected adulteress has larger ramifications: “The solemn warning made to the woman allows us to see clearly not only a threat to the familial and social system, but also a series of circumstances which are able to throw light on the logical and juridical means on which an entire culture is based. Adriana Destro, *The Law of Jealousy: Anthropology of Sotah*, Brown Judaic Studies 181 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), xi. Here I attempt to show examples of sexual offenses and judgment that are related on logical and juridical grounds in law and narrative.
A Case for Law and Narrative  

sexual offense fit into a common overall framework. The diagram below shows the literary parallels divided by rows. The law in Numbers 5 deals with secret adultery or threat thereof, and the narrative of chapter 25 with sexual offenses, as seen in the shadowed titles of the diagram.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers 5</th>
<th>Numbers 25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Law</strong></td>
<td><strong>Narrative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Adultery</strong></td>
<td><strong>Secret Adultery</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If any <em>man</em> whose wife goes astray (v. 12)</td>
<td>If any <em>man</em> whose wife goes astray (v. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is hidden from the <em>eyes</em> of her husband (v. 13)</td>
<td>Couple parade in the <em>eyes</em> of Moses and in the <em>eyes</em> of the people (v. 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit of <em>jealousy</em> comes over him, and he is <em>jealous</em> of his wife (v. 14)</td>
<td>Spirit of <em>jealousy</em> comes over him, and he is <em>jealous</em> of his wife (v. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Judgment Investigation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Judgment Execution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman taken to the <em>priest</em> (tabernacle) (vv. 15, 16)</td>
<td>Phinehas the <em>priest</em> leaves (tabernacle) (v. 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest places offering of jealousy in her <em>hands</em> (v. 18)</td>
<td>Phinehas grabs spear in his <em>hand</em> (v.v. 6-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water of affliction in the <em>hand</em> of the priest</td>
<td>Water of bitterness <em>goes into</em> body (v. 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water of bitterness <em>goes into</em> body: thigh falls and womb swells (vv. 20-22)</td>
<td>Phinehas <em>goes into</em> chamber, spear is driven on her <em>belly</em> (v. 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free to bear seed (v. 28)</td>
<td>Takes unlawful seed of copulation (vv. 13, 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phinehas and his seed receive new covenant and perpetual priesthood (25:13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first row below concerns the participants in each case. The *man*, or husband is affected by suspicion that his wife has committed adultery secretly, but the law of Numbers 5 holds only the woman potentially

---

responsible. On the other hand, the man of Israel (Zimri) is directly implicated as he takes bold steps towards public immorality. As the cases progress they implicate both genders.\(^6\) Also, Numbers 5 presupposes adultery committed among Israelites, whereas chapter 25 involves outsiders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Adultery</th>
<th>Secret Adultery</th>
<th>Public Sexual Offense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>If any man whose wife goes astray (v. 12)</td>
<td>If any man whose wife goes astray (v. 12)</td>
<td>A man of/from Israel brings a Midianite into the camp (25:6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another aspect linking the law of the suspected adulteress and the Phinehas episode is the manner and location of sexual offenses in relation to the tabernacle, as seen in row 2. The closer the offense is associated to the tabernacle, the greater its gravity.\(^7\) The actions of the suspected adulteress are covert, but Zimri and Cozbi flaunt themselves in front of the tabernacle, the holy dwelling of Yhwh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Adultery</th>
<th>Secret Adultery</th>
<th>Public Sexual Offense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>She is hidden from the eyes of her husband (5:13)</td>
<td>Zimri and Cozbi parade in the eyes of Moses and in the eyes of the people (25:6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scene takes place in the eyes of Moses and in the eyes of the assembly (Num 25:6). The same word is used contrastingly in the law of the suspected adulteress, where the matter is hidden from the eyes of the

---

\(^6\) In Numbers 25:1 the men of Israel are implicated in no small number as well. By suggesting juxtaposition of texts, intratextual analysis can bring a more inclusive perspective into the discussion of gender regarding the law of the suspected adulteress (Num 5).

husband (Num 5:13). The use of eyes describe secret adultery (law) and public promiscuity (narrative) in a progression or pattern of increasing degree.

Secret adultery and public immorality provoke an aggravating response in row 3: the husband’s jealousy for his wife, and the zeal of Phinehas for God (against Zimri and Cozbi). Despite their seeming difference from each other, the responses are designated by the same verb פָּרָשׂ, “to be jealous.” It is significant that the verb and its derived noun/adjective occur four times in both chapters 5 and 25: twice in reference to a woman innocent of adultery, and twice to her being guilty (Num 5:14).² Yhwh’s honoring of Phinehas (Num 25:11, 13) also uses the same term four times. Far from coincidental, the repetition of the keyword “jealousy” establishes a link (Leitmotif) between the two individual cases in both law and narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>No Adultery</th>
<th>Secret Adultery</th>
<th>Public Sexual Offense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spirit of jealousy comes over him, jealous of his (undefiled) wife (5:14)</td>
<td>Spirit of jealousy comes over him, jealous of his (defiled) wife (5:14)</td>
<td>“Phinehas was jealous with my jealousy so I did not consume Israel in my jealousy… in that he was jealous for his God.” (25:11, 13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “state of affairs” that caused the human reaction of jealousy leads invariably to judgment on those implicated in sexual offenses (row 4). Judgment plays an important part in the law of the suspected adulteress (Num 5) and the Phinehas story (Num 25). At first these instances of judgment may appear too independent to show any synchrony between them, yet the adjoining of law and narrative allows these differences to come together as phases of judgment. In the case of secret adultery, the woman is “investigated” prior to judgment to determine whether she is liable for punishment. In contrast, there is no process of investigation in the public case of individuals in Numbers 25. This indicates judgment follows the nature/degree of sexual offenses in each case.

²Additionally, it is also found twice in the postscript of the law (Num 5:30).
The links anchoring both texts share common terminology. In addition, the same words take on different meanings according to context. These two aspects of intratextuality, common words and related semantics reveal two types of judgment. The priest is a mediator in a judgment investigation in law, and Phinehas the priest becomes an agent of judgment execution in narrative. Next, Phinehas’ hand holds a spear to execute the offenders, but the hands of the woman and the hand of the priest point to a unique exchange observed by Jacob Milgrom. He states that the offering of jealousy in the woman’s hand, the source of which is outside the sacred domain, is transferred over to the realm of the divine when offered by the priest to God at the altar. Conversely, the water of affliction in the priest’s hand, the source of which is sacred, is transferred over to the non-sacred realm of the woman’s body as she partakes of it.\(^9\)

The question of the kind of judgment that bears upon this law has been a difficult one for scholars. A common assumption is that this ritual is more about a judgment to condemn the woman than anything contrary.\(^10\) But the ritual’s main concern is the discovery of status or condition not hitherto known, mentioned several times as hidden or secret (Num 5:13, 19). The law is altogether a detailed procedure whereby the woman is

\(^9\) Milgrom states the offering of jealousy is profane because it lacks the two main elements of the grain offering (oil and frankincense), and is made of the cheapest edible barley. The water of affliction is, in contrast, sacred by virtue of its being taken from the laver in the court and by the fact that two elements are added to it: dust from the floor of the sanctuary and ink from the written oath containing the divine name. See Milgrom, *Numbers*, 352.

\(^10\) Some have questioned the rationale of the ritual by remarking that a suspected adulteress, who is not necessarily condemned thereby, should not be subjected to such an ordeal. Others have stated that the ritual is more about the jealousy of the husband than the moral conduct of the woman. However, the ritual opens the possibility for the woman’s innocence (Num 5:14, 19, 28) as well as for the husband’s right to jealousy (5:14, 30). Milgrom reminds us that the ritual would provide a measure of social balance by protecting women falsely accused, from being lynched by male courts. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 349-350.
examined through ritual acts. In brief, she is made to: (1) stand before Yhwh with hair loose, (2) hold the grain offering of jealousy, (3) take an oath, and (4) drink the water of affliction containing a bit of soil from the tabernacle plus ink wiped out from a writing of curses (Num 5:16-26). The context points to a more nuanced view of judgment, one that is based upon a juridical examination. Only upon completion of this process is the verdict rendered, with administration of judgment bifurcating into either acquittal or punishment (v. 27).

Why the need for investigation? The marital covenant is particularly vulnerable to the threat of hidden adultery. The husband is subject to involuntary jealousy (“it comes over him”; Num 5:13) caused by secret adultery or the threat thereof, and she is in turn vulnerable to her husband’s jealousy. Interrogation of the woman in this case is ineffective. As for the priest, he has no special insight to tell whether the woman sinned or not (Num 5:19-21). The condition of the suspected adulteress cannot be ascertained by any means human due to the secrecy of the matter.

For this reason the suspected adulteress is placed before Yhwh, who presides as judge in this enigmatic case (5:16). His predominant presence is attested seven times in the ritual. The examination of the suspected woman is performed through ritual means and priestly mediation, and judgment comes not in words but in the result to the woman; either nothing or failure in her reproductive organs, resulting in sterility.

For whose benefit is this divine investigation? Milgrom would say primarily for the woman. Since she is not caught in flagrant violation, “the community and, the overwrought husband may not give way to their passions to lynch her.” The shifting of focus from jealousy to unrestrained passion to lynching is not hinted in the text, but his point is central: the woman is not executed if proven guilty (though she suffers for it). The ritual, rather provides for an innocent woman and her husband. The woman’s personal involvement in the divine investigation vindicates

\[11\] It is implied that there is nothing the suspected woman can say to appease her husband, as he obviously would suspect being lied to. By the same token the husband cannot free himself from the torment of his suspicion until he avails himself of the divine provision set in the law (Num 5).


\[14\] Milgrom, Numbers, 350. Cf. footnote 11.
The ritual law of the suspected adulteress is neither a pre-determined judgment according to the husband’s suspicion, nor merely an investigation of the woman devoid of judicial consequence. יְהֹוָה reserves the right to judge this kind of case because only he knows the secret relevant facts. The law of the suspected adulteress and the Phinehas story give evidence of the instrumental use of judgment in row 5. The water of bitterness is the means by which the hidden condition of a suspected adulteress may be ascertained in a divine investigation where the judge is always God. In chapter 25, the instrument is a spear in the hands of Phinehas, who becomes an agent for divine judgment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>No Adultery</th>
<th>Secret Adultery</th>
<th>Public Sexual Immorality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water of bitterness goes into body: no effect (Num 5:19)</td>
<td>Water of bitterness goes into body: thigh falls and womb swells (5:20-22)</td>
<td>Phinehas goes after the man from Israel into the chamber, pierces both of them, the man and the woman through her belly (25:8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Granted the difference in judgment in law and narrative—physical impairment and infertility (Num 5) versus death (Num 25)—the movement whereby judgment is carried out in each text is curiously similar. As the water of affliction enters the body of a suspected adulteress, so Phinehas enters into the tent chamber of the culprit after tracing their footsteps (Num 25:8). If the water that brings curse “finds” her, the womb is impaired externally and internally (5:22). In a similar vein, upon finding the culprit Phinehas pierces both of them, “the man and the woman through her belly” (25:8).

The inner and outer movement of judgment toward the very locus of sin, womb (in law) and belly (in narrative) cannot be accidental. Moses gave expression to the concept of inexorable, divine retributive justice in his warning to the Transjordan tribes: “But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and your sin will surely find you” (Num
Common terms among law and narrative in row 5 illustrate the dynamic nature of judgment in pursuit of those who committed adultery or sexual promiscuity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>No Adultery</th>
<th>Secret Adultery</th>
<th>Public Sexual Offense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free to bear seed (5:28)</td>
<td>Takes unlawful seed (5:13, 20)</td>
<td>Covenant/priesthood to Phinehas' seed Death to Zimri and Cozbi (25:13-14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The conclusion to the law of the suspected adulteress and the Phinehas story are also markedly similar, as shown in row 6. The keyword “seed” ties our two texts together by signaling two important contrasts. First, the wife judged worthy to bear seed is portrayed as a life-giving woman, as opposed to the accursed and sterile adulteress who unlawfully took the seed of another man. Second, the new covenant of peace and perpetual priesthood are given to Phinehas and his seed, in contrast to the death met by Zimri and Cozbi. Judgment results can be organized into four categories in ascending order: (1) Zimri is executed and loses his line of descendants; (2) the adulteress survives but cannot continue her line of descendants; (3) the innocent woman lives on to continue posterity; (4) Phinehas is given “a new life” through the covenant of peace (25:12), and a new line of descendants through an everlasting priesthood (v. 13).

Analysis of individual sexual offenses shows that cases vary in gender (woman/man), manner (secret/public), location (near/far from the sanctuary), response (human/divine), and results affecting the status of participants. The sequence of parallels between Numbers 5 and 25 demonstrates that judgment intensifies in proportion to transgression committed, clearing the innocent/honoring the faithful, and punishing the guilty. To summarize, individual cases of sexual offense and their juridical consequences are considerably interrelated through law and narrative in Numbers and are best understood in association to each other.

---

Israel’s Case of Corporate Adultery

Israel's corporate sexual offenses and idolatry in Numbers 25 can be seen as the culmination of a pattern that began with a case of individual secret adultery (Num 5) and progressed to a case of individual public sexual promiscuity (Num 25). Israel’s corporate case is related to the individual case of the woman (Num 5) in the way their description is structured. Each text exhibits a cluster of four clauses to determine individual secret adultery (Num 5:12-13) and corporate sexual offenses (25:1-3).

| WOMAN Law | (1) strays away; (2) unfaithful/breaks faith with husband; (3) takes another man's “seed of copulation”; (4) becomes ritually impure. |
| ISRAEL Narrative | (1) they commit adultery with the Moabite women, (2) who take them to offer sacrifice to their gods; (3) so they ate/bowed down to their gods. (4) Israel was yoked to Baal |

The first cluster (secret adultery) is too uncertain and the second (corporate adultery) too serious for any single clause to fully define them. While the initial clause in the first cluster, “she strayed away,” implies a process through which a married woman becomes one with a stranger, the last clause in the second cluster, “Israel yoked herself to Baal,” reveals a series of actions through which God’s people became one with Baal. On both ends of the spectrum, sexual offenses are portrayed on an individual and corporate level as a deliberate process involving several steps taken by the adulterers. Israel's innate and growing propensity for disloyalty toward God is strongly emphasized by the fact that the ritual law opens the possibility for the woman's innocence while the narrative closes it for the Israelites.

Several terms link the cases of corporate and individual sexual offenses. The first concerns the use of the term הָאֹרְזָ, “to be unfaithful,” in the law of the suspected adulteress (Num 5:12). According to J. Milgrom, the husband as object of הָאֹרְזָ is exceptional in view that the verb is used always in the context of holy things in relation to God.16 Documents from the ancient Near East add weight to the correlation between husband and YHWH by regarding adultery as “a great sin,” offensive to man, but especially to the

16 Milgrom, Numbers, 37.
gods.\textsuperscript{17} Milgrom adds: “Moreover, *ma’al* is used in priestly texts for idolatry (cf. Lev. 26:40; Num. 31:16). Since *ma’al* denotes straying after other gods, its extension to straying after other men is obvious.”\textsuperscript{18} The semantic field of מָלֶל supports a correlation between the two cases of sexual offense in chapters 5 and 25 by suggesting the parallels husband–*YHWH*, and adultery–idolatry.

Second, the verb נַמוּס ("jealous/zealous"), used for the jealousy of the husband as well as the jealousy of God, establishes a strong relationship between Numbers 5 and 25. Furthermore, נַמוּס not only ties together a personal and a corporate case of adultery but also demonstrates a progression from human to divine jealousy, which also follows a pattern of increasing sexual offenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HUSBAND</th>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Spirit of jealousy comes over him; He is jealous of his wife (5:14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>“Phinehas was jealous with My jealousy so I did not consume Israel in my jealousy... in that he [Phinehas] was jealous for his God.” (25:11, 13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Numbers 5, A. Balorda states that the basic context for divine jealousy is to be found in the realm of a marital relationship.\textsuperscript{19} He argues that the structure and dominant theme of Numbers 25 is the numinal covenant union of God and his people, which is distinguished by and based upon the divine zeal/jealousy.

In accordance with the jealousy/zeal motif, the covenant exists as a numinal marriage between the Law-giver and law-recipients, where the Founder of the covenant plays the role of the Husband, the covenant people being His bride or wife, and the breaking of the covenant through idolatry being viewed


\textsuperscript{18} Milgrom, *Numbers*, 37.

as marital unfaithfulness, adultery, or harlotry. The most sublime affection between the Lord and His people is encapsulated in the term jealousy, which refers both to the feeling of intense, passionate marital love (cf. Cant 8:6), as well as to the feeling of anger of the injured party (cf. Num 25:11). The notion of jealousy connotes the strongest sentiment of love, commitment, and loyalty between the parties of the numinal marriage, on the human side most clearly displayed and illuminated in the act of Phinehas.\textsuperscript{20}

To speak of the husband’s jealousy and that of Yhwh is to maintain their similar and distinct aspects. On the one hand, the husband’s jealousy cannot equal the jealousy of God because suspicion breeds the first (Num 5:14, 30), while the second is fueled by Israel’s persistent disloyalty (25:1). On the other hand, both responses vis-à-vis adultery can be equivalent even in different categories. The husband’s jealousy points to the underlying principle of relational loyalty operating in the more magnified form of divine jealousy, even though the latter differs exponentially from the former in degree. The two texts of Numbers 5 and 25 work in tandem by showing relational dynamics in perspectives both micro (marital covenant) and macro (national covenant).

Instead of לעמ, which was used in the context of “suspicious unfaithfulness” in Numbers 5, the narrative of chapter 25 employs the more forceful הנז, referring to sexual promiscuity. This verb covers a wide range of sexual offenses: it is usually thought to refer to fornication as practiced by women, but could also include adultery.\textsuperscript{21}

Israel’s case is more closely related to the individual public promiscuity of Zimri and Cozbi (Num 25). In terms of seriousness of the offense (not chronology), Zimri and Cozbi’s case is intermediate between the cases of Israel and the suspected adulteress. Some may think that Zimri and Cozbi’s flagrant sin in Israel’s camp is even more serious than the Israelites

\textsuperscript{20} Balorda, “The Covenant of Phinehas,” 86. Others have also pursued the correlation: “My suggested figural reading of the passage is to find here a description of the relationship between YHWH and Israel in the wilderness, where YHWH is the jealous husband and Israel, the wife suspected of unfaithfulness. Nathan MacDonald, “'Gone Astray': Dealing with the Sotah (Num 5:11-31),” in Go Figure! Figuration in Biblical Interpretation, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, ed. Stanley D. Walters (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 59.

being seduced by Moabite women. However, the massive casualty caused by the plague, and the kind of judgment leveled against the nation (see next section) supports grading them this way. The discussion proceeds to identify this third type of judgment in a pattern of ascending order that corresponds to the three types of sexual offenses.

**Phases or Types of Judgment**

While judgment takes the form of investigation in the case of secret adultery (Num 5), the last two cases of public immorality in Numbers 25 bypass any process of investigation. As explained below, judgment results in execution in the Phinehas story, and in the larger narrative of Numbers 25 it goes beyond by adding a curse on execution. Would this point to a lack of consistency on how judgment operates in law and narrative? In the cases of public (individual and corporate) sexual offense in Numbers 25, the open and flagrant nature of the transgression removes the need for a formal trial of investigation as seen in Numbers 5.

The case of the suspected adulteress sheds light upon the more severe judgment sustained by Zimri and Cozbi, in line with our comparative analysis. Their rejection of the law’s injunction against secret adultery (Num 5) makes the couple’s affair quite serious. Of course, the Decalogue prohibits any kind of sexual immorality (Exod 20:14, 17), but the legal case of the suspected adulteress provides an immediate “fleshing out” of a moral commandment, showing how moral principles were further enforced in Israelite life. In view of the obligation upon each Israelite to have the law’s precepts always before their eyes and ingrained in their hearts (Num 15:38-41) so that “they would not whore after their own hearts” (v. 39), it is not difficult to see why defiant, “high-handed” sinners were subject to immediate extirpation (vv. 30-31; cf. Deut 22:22).

The judgment executed by Phinehas is closely associated to the one in the larger narrative in Numbers 25 because of the close relationship between the two narratives. This is evident by the words of Yhwh in Numbers 25:18, where both stories are mentioned in complementary...

---

22 The categories of sexual offenses in Numbers 25 need not be watertight to show Israel’s pattern of progressive infidelity toward God.
fashion, neither one absorbed into the other.\textsuperscript{23}

It would stand to reason that the severest judgment would be reserved for the most blatant form of sexual offense, and this is precisely the case with Israel’s corporate adultery followed by idolatry. In addition to the severest plague which claimed 24,000 Israelites, this divine judgment mandates the most serious manner of execution for the Israelite yoke to Baal. The leaders (lit. “heads”) who represent the people are to be executed and their corpses impaled in the sun before the Lord (Num 25:4). “In the ancient Near East, it was an appalling disgrace to be denied a timely, decent burial (e.g., Isa 14:19-20). Thus, the sentence of death followed by exposure of the corpse . . . was worse than capital punishment.”\textsuperscript{24} Only this extreme judgment—execution followed by cursed exposure—would sever Israel from Baal.

The Israelites had been fully warned against any further backsliding after the Golden Calf episode (Exod 32). Exodus 34:14-16 includes a series of pointed warnings prohibiting the very excesses that marked their apostasy at Peor.\textsuperscript{25} Verse 14 goes so far as to say that the following commands were based on God’s jealousy for his people! The Israelites were to reject any future (1) covenant or yoke with other nations, (2) invitation from pagan women to worship their idols, (3) meal sacrificed to idols, (4) and intermarriage with these women. Therefore, Israel’s willful pursuit of the Moabite women and ensuing idolatry constituted a deliberate crime against Yhwh.

The three types of judgment described above can be named (1) judicial investigation, (2) summary execution, and (3) cursed execution. A common denominator among them is that each involves some form of bodily

\textsuperscript{23} Mary Douglas notes: “These two crises ought to be treated as one. . . . They are not only connected in time and place but the last provides the whole series with its conclusion. It would have been clearer if we had written it thus: A. Israel sacrifices / A1. Offence of Zimri and Cozbi; B. Leaders to be punished / B1. Execution of offenders by Aaron’s grandson; C. Moses gives the order of execution / C1. Plague; D. The people weeping / D1. Covenant of peace.” The sequence of events seems to be based on the chronology of events. Mary Douglas, \textit{In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers} (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 192.

\textsuperscript{24} Roy Gane, \textit{Leviticus, Numbers}, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 727.

punishment. The phenomenon is listed in increasing order: (1) when convicted of secret adultery through divine investigation, the adulteress bears a curse in her body (physical suffering and infertility); (2) Zimri and Cozbi are summarily executed with a spear driven into their bodies; (3) the exposure of the leaders’ corpses extends a curse on their execution. From cursed body to corpses under curse, there is no case of adultery or sexual offense immune to judgment. These three types of judgment are affected by the degree of sexual offense in each case. In this way a pattern or criteria of judgment is applied consistently to different scenarios and cases of sexual offense of law and narrative in Numbers.

Expiation in Cases of Public Immorality

Expiation is a crucial theme intersecting the two cases of public immorality in Numbers 25. Because expiation takes place in an individual case of promiscuity (Zimri and Cozbi) that directly affects Israel’s case of corporate immorality, it introduces a new dimension into the pattern of sexual offense and judgment seen so far. That is, through Phinehas’ summary execution of Zimri and Cozbi, expiation is extended to a plagued nation whose leaders stand under cursed execution! The Phinehas episode operates in a way that reverses the chaotic and tragic effects of divine judgment caused by Israel’s transgressions. This momentous achievement makes Israel’s survival possible.

Such unexpected expiation is, however, a gift of divine grace. The priest makes it available through Phinehas’ zeal for God on behalf of unmerited Israel. Even the closest (sacrificial) parallel in Numbers 16 is markedly different. When Aaron stands between the dead and the living (v. 48) to make expiation for Israel, he is following Moses’ order (v. 46) by virtue of being the high priest. But there is no such mandate in chapter 25 because Phinehas is not the high priest (it was his father Eliezer who was high priest). Further, Aaron’s instrument of atonement is a censer representing

---

26 Cf. the discussion of row 5 above, on the movements of judgment in reference to the water of affliction and Phinehas tracing of the footsteps of Zimri and Cozbi.
27 I noticed Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 3: 1084; came to the same conclusion: “though the priest performs the rituals, it is only by the grace of God that they are efficacious.” The accepted offerings of the sacrificial system were also based on God’s grace because they were considered to be only a prerequisite to divine expiation and forgiveness. Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 49, 80-86.
the whole sacrificial apparatus (pars pro toto), but Phinehas uses a non-sacrificial object. No wonder God had to instruct Moses about the legitimacy of this form of expiation (Num 25:11-13).

The type of expiation (רפכ) in Numbers 25 is non-sacrificial, non-substitutionary ransom. This רפכ-ransom averts the plague of God from engulfing all Israelites amid the widespread affair of Peor (Num 25:4, 11). Contrary to any idea of payment made to God, רפכ-ransom is brought about by the extraordinary clemency of God: it is Yhwh who grants it on the basis of Phinehas’ active loyalty for him. So the elimination or removal of Zimri and Cozbi results in a purified camp for the survival of the innocent among the Israelites (Deut 4:3-4). However, the offenders do not receive the benefit of redeeming expiation.29

Phinehas action is special. Whereas God intervenes to assist his leaders in times of crisis (cf. Num 11:25-26; 12:6-8), Phinehas initiates intervention on behalf of God (Ps 106:30). At the Golden Calf episode, the Levites also displayed zeal for God in killing 3,000 Israelites, but they were responding to Moses’ command that included a categorical “Thus saith the Lord” (Exod 32:26-27). In the Zimri-Cozbi affair, this kind of command was not given, so his initiative stands out. It is true that the initiative of Phinehas was based on two clear orders that had been given already—one by God and the other by Moses (Num 25:4-5), which certainly propelled him to action. However, the text singles out Phinehas as carrying out these orders, making him the receiver of unprecedented privileges.

**Theological Implications of Phinehas’ Mission**

The qualities attributed to Phinehas (Num 25:11-13) following divine expiation make him a catalyst for theological reflection. In what follows I draw some examples of prominent roles applicable to Phinehas as suggested in the text. At some point readers will readily recognize a Christological semblance afforded below, but one limitation should be kept in mind: symbolism is limited in that Phinehas performed a non-substitutionary, non-sacrificial expiation—showing what happens when offenders do

---

28 Milgrom, Numbers, 370-71; Gane; Cult and Character, 204.
29 Gane, Leviticus, Numbers, 719.
not receive benefit of expiation, but the community is purified by their execution (cf. Rev 20:9-21:3; John 2:16-17). Christ, on the contrary, accomplished a definitive substitutionary sacrifice for all humankind (Heb 7:27; 9:26; John 3:16; Rom 5:8).  

Phinehas’ first role is implied in his response to the passing of Zimri and Cozbi across the entrance to the tabernacle. He stands as a representative of the remnant assembly that is gathered with Moses to weep over Israel’s apostasy (Num 25:6). Their mourning, sitting position contrasts with the hasty, brazen determination of Zimri and Cozbi to commit transgression. Phinehas represents the remnant by sharing in their suffering and then standing for them as he acts in zeal for Yhwh. This role alludes partly to Hebrews 2:17, where mercy and action also characterize the mission of the greater High Priest.

Phinehas’ second role as a representative for God is based on his inward and outward identity with God. Yhwh says twice that Phinehas experienced the zeal of God in his pursuit of Zimri and Cozbi (Num 25:11, 13); and, under the authority of Yhwh, he brings closure to divine wrath (v. 11) and interrupts a massive plague in its tracks (vv. 3, 9). This astounding accomplishment results in the union of Phinehas to God, which separates Israel from Baal.

How was one man’s bond to Yhwh made stronger than the yoking of an entire multitude to Baal? The narrative strategy provides a clue in the representative roles given also to Zimri and Cozbi. As the Phinehas story defines the main narrative, those yoked to Baal are represented in Zimri, who is called “one of the people of Israel” (Num 25:6) and “a man of Israel” (v. 8); the foreign seductresses are in turn represented in Cozbi. The narrative makes reference to their ethnic identities, as their names are given only in the postscript (vv. 14-15).

---

31 For an examination of the principle of substitution at work in the sacrificial system, see Angel M. Rodriguez, “Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus and in Cultic-Related Texts” (Th.D. diss., Andrews University, 1980).

32 Noticing that commentators give “mourning” only a passing mention, one author proposes that the many gestures in “mourning” intend to question a dominant status quo. See Paul Kruger, “The Inverse World of Mourning in the Hebrew Bible,” Biblische Notizen 124 (2005): 46. This is befitting of a mourning assembly waiting on YHWH to revert Israel’s apostasy.

33 The divinely established hierarchy of Moses’ leadership, Aaron’s priesthood, and the Levites’ tabernacle service is no substitute for individual loyalty and obedience to God expected of each Israelite—the principal requirement of the covenant between YHWH and Israel (Exod 19:5; 24:7; Deut 4:10).
In this way corporate transgression is “channeled,” as it were, into a case of public sexual offense between two individuals. In theological terms, the sins of many are made to be the sin of one couple. Zimri is portrayed as “the man” who brings evil into the camp, and into his own family (Num 25:6). His public and defiant promiscuity represents Israel’s deliberate yoke to Baal. Conversely, Phinehas is “the man” who purifies the camp by cleaving Zimri and Cozbi with a spear. No sooner are the two sinners destroyed (in parallel with the other 24,000) than expiation is made for the rest of the people of Israel.

Bearing in mind the caveat of Phinehas’ non-substitutionary expiation, the conflicting forces at work in Numbers 25 can be read between the lines of a well-known passage in Romans 5, where two representatives of the human race offer two opposing destinies in the meta-narrative of the world. The parallel is worth noticing regardless of the local application of Numbers 25 and the universal in Romans.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin . . . death reigned from Adam to Moses . . . but the gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man . . . abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following the trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. (Rom 5:12, 14-16)

As the large-scale dynamics of sin and salvation of humankind are narrowed down to two individuals, so are Israelites at Peor represented by Zimri and Phinehas. The “free gift” of God’s grace in the cosmic substitutionary-sacrificial expiation can also be seen in the (non-substitutionary, non-sacrificial) ransom of the loyal and zealous Phinehas. In this process, Israel’s corporate offenses in Numbers 25 are “miniaturized” into a case of individual public promiscuity from where

---

34 Theological reflection of Zimri’s role could also find that Numbers draws on the Fall narrative (Gen 3): Zimri walks with Cozbi across the sanctuary as Eve walks with the fruit across the center of the garden; Zimri presents Cozbi to his family as Eve gives the fruit to Adam. In the case of Zimri, the verb “to present” is a technical term for bringing acceptable offerings to God, which in Numbers 25 combines the themes of idolatry and adultery. See Gane, Leviticus and Numbers, 717-18.

35 The similarity is certainly partial and limited. Whereas Adam is included within Christ’s universal substitutionary expiation, the execution of Zimri excludes him from any benefit of expiation.
expiation overflows to all Israelites. By virtue of expiation given freely to Phinehas and Israel, he is given a new and final role: representative of a new hereditary line of priests and priesthood (Num 25:12-13).

Conclusion

Intratextual analysis of cases of sexual offenses in Numbers 5 and 25 has demonstrated the relevance/promise of integrating law and narrative for biblical exegesis. The cumulative effect of textual links and interrelated meanings tells more than similarity among the sexual offenses in individual and corporate cases. The sequence of parallel links supplies a framework integrating the themes of adultery and judgment across the different genres of Numbers 5 and 25.

This framework shows an increasing pattern of offenses spanning three distinct but complementary transgressions: individual secret, public, and corporate. Logically fashioned into each case is the theme of judgment, which follows the movement or dynamics of sexual offenses. The analysis reveals three kinds of judgment phases or scenarios (judgment investigation, summary execution, and cursed execution) deployed across law and narrative in proportion to each case of adultery.

Added to the different cases of sexual offense and judgment is the theme of expiation. The grace-based redemption in chapter 25 reverses the pattern of increasing transgression and judgment that had resulted from Israel's yoke to Baal. The blending of these three themes (adultery, judgment, expiation) promotes a better understanding of the literary vitality of the biblical text.

My synchronic analysis of cases of sexual offense in law and narrative (Numbers 5 and 25)—which focused on aligning their parts in outline—identifies a system of classification of cases of sexual offense according to several aspects (gender, manner, location, response, and status), keywords, and themes. Three points stand out: (1) Israel’s growing and depraved pattern of sexual offenses result in spiritual adultery/apostasy; (2) God’s relentless pursuit of evil through proportionate judgment vindicates the innocent and punishes the guilty; (3) Phinehas’ loyalty for God through his zeal crystalized into expiation that confirmed judgment, satisfied divine wrath, and triumphed over evil.
AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF ‘INJUSTICE’ IN QOHELET: ABSURDITY AND FAITH AS ASPECTS OF REALITY

Marcelo de Paula Santos

Introduction

It is hard to find scholarly works exclusively dedicated to the topic of “injustice” in the book of Ecclesiastes. However, scholars who have studied the ancient Hebrew tract have addressed the theme, for it is a prominent one in the biblical book.¹ Though the theme of injustice recurs throughout the book, it is addressed sporadically in modern scholarly works.

For many scholars, the aspect of injustice that mostly disturbs the Preacher is social injustice, though authors like Gordis² and Brown think that, for Qohelet,³ social injustice means basically economic oppression.⁴

³ The name “Qohelet” is the transliteration of תֶלֶהֹק “a speaker (in assembly)” a qal participle form from לָהָק “to assemble.” “Qohelet” is the name of the book of Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Bible and is used throughout this article to refer to the author of the biblical book.
Some authors stress the book’s citing of individuals: the king himself, officers who abuse their authority, and judges, who pronounce their sentences. Rudman underscores Qohelet’s denunciation of absence of "decision, judgment" as the sum of the concept of injustice. Nevertheless, despite the incrimination of public officers, common people also are condemned.

Another noteworthy topic accentuated by scholars, in their study of Qohelet’s preaching is the prevalence of injustice precisely where justice is expected (presumably in the law-courts and temples), the contrast of righteousness and wickedness and the inversion of man’s earthly deserts without any apparent sign of just retribution. Authors also feel at liberty to trace parallels between Job’s and Qohelet’s claims, as both biblical characters appeal God due to personal injustice. One aspect that the author calls special attention to in Qohelet’s defense, is the fact that he thinks that injustice equates humans with beasts.

Scholars also noted the refinement of Qohelet’s argument that, although death by itself is an injustice, it also has a judicial function to put an end to injustice. Qohelet’s personal position regarding injustice is also analyzed. Though the Preacher discards the standard answers of his time to the problem of injustice, he is personally affected by injustice. Despite his wisdom and power, originating in by both his political status and God,

---

8 Doukhan, *Ecclesiastes*, 89.
14 Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 32, 36.
the king is impotent to rectify whatever he thought was wrong. Qohelet also notices that religious faith does not prevent one from clearly seeing the injustice and the absurdity of life, on the contrary, he has the courage and lucidity to face it, though his logic system is shaken. Nevertheless, while quite aware of the reality of injustice, Qohelet learned to live with present conditions in the world “resigned’ (if not ‘cynical’)” for he thinks that God lets injustice happen to “purify the sons of men.” Finally, regardless of his apparent despair, Qohelet is confident concerning the end of injustice “at a certain time” by an act of God himself, for God will bring to judgment the injustice of both humans beings and human courts.

**Morphological and Lexical Analysis**

**Injustice Expressed in Several Ways**

This section examines important Hebrew words that occur in the book of Ecclesiastes. All of them are words that have their precise semantic meaning, which is cited in each reference. However, in the context of the discourse of the Preacher, each of these words are charged with the sense of his vexation in face of life's rampant injustice. In the majority of the words studied in this article, no direct allusion is made to the injustice theme, due to the evident connection of the studied word with the theme. In rare cases, where the connection is not so clear, an explanation is added.

![Image of a page from a book](image_url)

The expression is composed of נוֹרְתָּא הַמ pronoun interrogative no gender no number “what” and יָּרְתַּא noun common masculine singular absolute “advantage, profit.” The meaning of the expression is “what comes of, result.” The expression נוֹרְתָּא יָּרְתַּא occurs in the book of Ecclesiastes three times (Eccl 1:3; 3:9; 5:15) and is used to express the Preacher’s indignation against the injustices that abound in life. Moreover, the word נוֹרְתָּא in the expression נוֹרְתָּא יָּרְתַּא is used in Eccl 2:11 in the same indignant sense.

---

20 Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, 39.
21 Krüger, *Qoheleth*, 95.
The word יִעְגְּי adj. masc. pl. abs. “weary, striving, troubled,” is used only one time in the book of Ecclesiastes (Eccl 1:8), where the Preacher complains that life is certainly an injustice for “all things are wearisome; man is not able to tell it.”

רָע — ra

The adjective רָע “bad, evil” is used 20 times in the book of Ecclesiastes and is a key word in the book used to ascribe quality to several elements: “grievous task” (1:13); “evil activity” (4:3); “severe affliction” (6:2); “evil time” (9:12); “wicked madness” (10:13); etc. These are the injustices that the Preacher sees around him and in the whole world.

הָשֶׁךָ — hōšek

The word חָשַׁךְ “darkness, darkening” occurs 98 times in the Hebrew Bible and is used eight times in the book of Ecclesiastes (Eccl 2:13; 2:14; 5:16; 6:4—2 times; 11:8; 12:2; 12:3). The word is used in the sense of physical darkness only in two verses (2:13; 12:2). In the remaining quotations, although the word does not refer to any specific event or situation of injustice, the many comparisons of life’s aspects to the concept of darkness is indicative of how disenchanted Qohelet felt about life.

מאָק — mak’ ôb

The word מַעֲק is a noun common masc. sing. abs. “pain, suffering.” The Preacher uses this old vocable (cf. Exod 3:7) to voice his dissatisfaction against life’s injustices, like in the example given in Eccl 1:18: “increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.” This is a complete injustice, for increase in knowledge should, in fact, prevent suffering.

קַא — ka’ as

Though the root קָע (“to be vexed, to irritate, to provoke to anger, to offend”) occurs 76 times in the Hebrew Bible, the form קַע noun common masc. sing. abs. “vexation,” can only be found twelve times in the Old Testament. From these twelve times, five are in the book of Ecclesiastes (Eccl 1:18; 2:23; 7:3, 9; 11:10) and in two more instances in this book the root occurs like a verb (Eccl 5:16; 7:9). This indicates the
importance that the Preacher gave to this word as an indicator of all the sorts of problems that man faces in his journey in this life.

The root לָמָע is a very important concept for the Preacher, who uses it 35 times. It is found in the book in two nominal forms: "trouble, care, anxiety;" and the verb "to exert oneself." With the word, Qohelet declares how unfair life is, for he knows that "all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, ... I must leave it to the man who will come after me" (Eccl 2:18).

The verb שׂאֵנָה “to hate” is used three times in the book of Ecclesiastes (2:17, 18; 3:8). In the first two verses the form הַשָּׂאֵנָה qal perfect 1st person common singular is used by Qohelet, with all its strength, to assert that "which had been done under the sun was grievous to [him]" (v. 17) for he considered a treacherous disloyalty that he had to leave “all the wealth that [he] was gaining under the sun … to the man who [would] succeed him” (v. 18, TNK).

The root קֶשׁוע appears five times in the book of Ecclesiastes. Three times (in the same verse, Eccl 4:1) it occurs in a verbal form “oppress, exploit:” qal passive participle masculine plural, and קֶשׁוע qal participle masculine plural, and 2 times it occurs as a noun קֶשׁוע “oppression, brutality, extortion.” There hardly could be another word which asseverates the Preacher’s abhorrence with life’s unfairness. In Isaiah 23:12, the same root קֶשׁוע pual participle feminine singular absolute means “violated, raped.”

The word גֶּזֶל noun common masculine singular “robbery,” by itself, indicates the existence of a wrong. However, the word, which is only found once in the book of Ecclesiastes, is not found in its absolute state, but in the expression גֶּזֶל לֶזֵפְשִׁמ לֶזֵgēzel translated “violent perverting of justice” (JPS, KJV). This is a strong expression as it can be noticed in the way it has been translated by some versions, as seen above. A similar expression is used in Isa 10:2, with a verbal participle form of the root גֶּזֶל which is again
translated in vehement literal language “to rob of their rights the needy of my people” (TNK).

ףֶצֶק—qesel

The word פֶצֶק noun common masculine singular absolute “wrath, anger, frustration,” is another strong word used to express Qohelet’s abhorrence (Eccl 5:5, 16).

יִלֳח—hōlī

The noun יִלֳח “sickness, suffering, agony” occurs twice in the book of Ecclesiastes (Eccl 5:16; 6:2) and in the latter verse it is used to characterize the unjust situation (called “evil” in v. 1 and “grievous ill” in v. 2) of a man who is rich, wealthy, honored, and lacks nothing, but finally sees his stock enjoyed by a foreigner.

עשׁר—rš

The root עשׁר is used by the Preacher twelve times. Four times the root used is the noun עשׁר "wickedness" (3:16—2 times; 7:25; 8:8); seven times the root is the adjective עשׁר "guilty, wicked person, criminal" (3:17; 7:15; 8:10; 8:13; 8:14—2 times) and a single time the word occurs like a verb עשׁר “to be wicked” (7:17). This word is used to describe what can probably be considered one of the most unjust situations that can occur in this life: “There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness” (Eccl 7:15).

פּעַגֶה—pegā

The noun פּעַגֶה occurs only 2 times in the Hebrew Bible: 1 Kings 5:18 and Ecclesiastes 9:11, where it forms the interesting expression פּעַגֶה תֵע “time and chance.” This expression unequivocally enunciates how treacherous human effort can be: “I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise, nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all” (Eccl 9:11).

הָעיִגְי—yěgi

Though the root עגי appears thirty times in the Hebrew Bible, the noun עגי “weariness” (Eccl 12:12) occurs only one time to form another
An Exegetical Study of ‘Injustice’ in Qohelet

interesting expression, probably coined by the learned author of the book of Ecclesiastes תַעִגְי “weariness of the flesh” (NRS, KJV) which, again, puts into words that even wisdom cannot prevent or correct all inequalities of life.

Study of Selected Passages

The book of Ecclesiastes as a whole is a vigorous invective against injustice. Injustice is the theme of the book. People, events, institutions, and phenomena are described or cited by Qohelet as examples of the never-ending malevolent atmosphere of the world. By the means of several different words, expressions, or descriptions, the Preacher voices his passionate incrimination of reality. This study has chosen five passages, representative of the various types of injustices addressed by the entire book, as illustrative examples of Qohelet's anxieties.

Ecclesiastes 1:15

תונמיה לדך ואורסה ותקלח לדך לא י תורה תועמ

“What is crooked cannot be straightened, and what is lacking cannot be counted.”

Although Eccl 1:15 contains four *hapax legomena* תונמיה and תועמ there is basically consensus concerning its translations and the majority of versions have an almost identical rendering (RSV, NKJ, KJV, NRS, NAS, NIV, and JPS). The only version that differs from the aforementioned is TNK, which sees v. 15 as a dependent clause and תונמיה “crooked” and תועמ “lacking thing” not as subjects but as additional predicates of כמוָך תועמ תונמיה “works,” of verse 14, since neither תועמ nor תונמיה have the article. The word תונמיה “crooked” has a rare root, used only in the intensive conjugations.

The *qal* תועמ requires a passive translation (לכז תועמ “to be made straight”) to parallel תונמיה. This is precisely what the LXX has since it reads ἐπικοσμηθῆναι infinitive aorist passive “be adorned, ameliorated.”

The parallel structure of the verse clearly points to a proverb. The noun חותכית “lacking” is in parallel with תועמ “crooked” and the verb תונמיה “be counted” is in parallel with the verb תועמ “be straightened.”

---

Among scholars there is consensus that this verse is a proverb, though Seow suggests that this proverb was meant “to balance” an antagonistic proverb of the Egyptian wisdom text *The Instruction of Anii* that says that “a crooked stick [that is, a student], may be straightened.”

Verse 15 demonstrates the author’s penetrating understanding of the world and its difficulties in its entirety. The word ועמש emphasizes what is wrong in the planet. It is present there, but has been distorted. On the other hand the word נרסח represents what is missing in the planet. It should be there to make existence better, but is not there, it is lacking. Both words, in an interesting complementarity, are used by the Preacher to express the world’s problems in its totality. To this abundance and deficiency it is possible to attribute the cause of the injustices of life. Nevertheless, God cannot be blamed for these things.

The noun למע has the primary meaning of “toil, labor” referring to the dark, grievous, and unfulfilling aspect of work. But it also developed a metonymic meaning of “that achieved by labor.” Though this differentiation is sometimes difficult to tell, in v. 18 the second signification should be accepted for it provides an antecedent for the 3rd person pronominal suffix acting as a direct object of the verb חונ “to leave behind,” otherwise lacking if למע is interpreted as “labor.”

An interesting feature of v. 18 is the emphasis in the first person in the first colon of the verse. Besides using the verb אש “to hate,” in the first person and the first person pronominal suffix attached to למע the author uses the first person singular independent pronoun אש 2 times. The first time the independent pronoun is used is right after the verb אש conjugated in the first person indicating the rhetoric intention of the literary device.

The strong rhetoric of Qohelet’s text in v. 18, using the verb אש “to hate” and the word למע (this word is used 35 times in the book of Ecclesiastes,

---

26 Gordis, *Koheleth*, 201.
28 Harris, Archer, and Waltke, “למע,” *TWOT*, 675.
An Exegetical Study of ‘Injustice’ in Qohelet  53

10 times in vv. 18-23) is a good example of what the Hebrew author sensed as an injustice: the injustice is to leave his estate to someone who did not toil for it. Scholars are divided about who is “the man” to whom Qohelet must leave his wealth. Since some scholars think that the book was written in Persian or Ptolemaic times, they vaguely refer to this individual as the “successor,” the one “who will come after him.” On the other hand, ancient Jewish readers recognized in the angry protest the voice of Solomon, king of Israel and an entire class of modern scholars see in v. 18 references to both Rehoboam and the political turmoil surrounding the king’s succession, related in 1 Kings 12.

Ecclesiastes 3:16

“Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, wickedness was there and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there.”

Again the panel structure of the verse has much to say about the Preacher’s comprehension of the world and the problem of evil. The verse is another strong denunciation of how unjust the world is. Could there be a greater injustice than seeing wickedness where justice is expected? Besides the repetition of the phrase “wickedness was there,” in a manner of a cliché, the use of the word טפשמ “decision, judgment” refers to objective judgments and indicates that the Preacher might be thinking about wrong cases, wrong decisions taken by the judges of the land. He might have in mind cases of individuals who have been aggrieved. On the other hand the word קדצ “equity, justness, accuracy” refers to the subjective righteousness and has to do with inner convictions about morals. The sage may be thinking about officials and magistrates of his own kingdom

---

31 Krüger, Qoheleth, 19.
33 Seow, Ecclesiastes, 156.
34 E. S. Christianson, Ecclesiastes Through the Centuries, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 162.
35 Leupold, Exposition of Ecclesiastes, 71.
36 Doukhan, Ecclesiastes, 30.
37 Leupold, Exposition of Ecclesiastes, 94.
that were not administering justice correctly for he speaks about bribes (Eccl 7:7), oppression (Eccl 8:9), evil rulers (Eccl 10:5), and drunken princes (Eccl 10:16).

However, the Preacher was not naïve to think that only those who were in charge of public affairs were subject to evil. The real reason for injustice in the world is humanity’s inner injustice. “Moreover, the hearts of all are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live” (Eccl 9:3). This is certainly the reason why the statement: “for there is not a just [יְדִיד] man on earth who does good and does not sin” (Eccl 7:20) can be understood in a broad moral and spiritual sense rather than simply as a social phrase.

Though momentarily discouraged, the king knows that injustices will be reversed, for he comforts himself with the thought that “God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work” (Eccl 3:17).

Ecclesiastes 7:15

לֹֽאָיוֹן שֶׁיִּלְבֶּה יִֽשְׁמָאָר לָלַֽדְתָּא וֹתָעָרְבּ ךְּיִ֖אַר עָ֔שָׁר שֵׁ֣יְו וֹ֔קְדִצְבּ דֵ֣בֹא

“I have seen everything during the days of my vanity: there is a righteous man that perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness.”

The word לֶבֶּה “vapor, breath” occurs thirty-eight times in Qohelet (73 times in the Hebrew Bible) and can be translated in different ways “futile, absurd, useless, meaningless, idols, fugacious,” etc. The JPS Tanakh translates “hebel contextually” in eight different ways. Notwithstanding the difficulties to translate לֶבֶּה, “vanity” is the best option to be retained for it is vague enough to accommodate all the nuances of the Hebrew word.38 Qohelet uses the word repeatedly to denounce the “futility and fleetingness”39 of life, its absurdity, the inexorability of death and what is “unknowable and incomprehensible.”40 “Whatever hebel means precisely, the world is full of it!”41

At this point, after designating the fugacity and absurdity of his own life, the Preacher denounces what he seems to think to be the most unbearable

38 Doukhan, Ecclesiastes, 13.
39 Krüger, Qoheleth, 3.
40 Anderson, Qoheleth, 14.
41 Brown, “The Travesties of Toil and Justice,” 22.
injustice he has seen: that a righteous man perishes in his righteousness and that a wicked man prolongs his life in his wickedness!

In the words וִקְדִצ and בּוֹתָעְר, the preposition בּ should be understood not as “in,” but as “in spite of” since this ב is a preposition of “concomitant conditions.”

What overwhelms Qohelet is that the reality he sees in life directly contradicts what is not only a popular theology of retribution (cf. Job 4:7-9; 8:10-22; 11:13-20), but also impugns direct promises from God, who had assured that those who sought justice would prolong their life (Exod 20:12; Deut 4:40; Ps 91:16). In two proverbs (Prov 12:18; 21:21), that Qohelet might have known very well, the gift of life—םיִיַּח— is directly subordinated to the possession of הָקָדְצ “righteousness, justice, rightness” (though not exactly the same word used in Eccl 7:15 [קדצ, “rightness, righteousness, accuracy, equity”], the word הָקָדְצ is from the same root).

Although the principle stated in Ecclesiastes 7:15 is not a “general principle,” its occurrences are shocking enough to let readers think that this is one of the works that God has made crooked (Eccl 7:13). Moreover, the imponderable contingency of a righteous man’s premature death (the same consternation is again expressed in Eccl 8:14) is a good warning against fanaticism (Eccl 7:16-23; 8:15-17; 9:7-10).

Ecclesiastes 8:9

“All this I have seen and applied my heart to every work that has been done under the sun, wherein a man rules over another man to his hurt.”

It has been proposed that the clause should be emended to "there is a time when … “ However, most scholars and versions following Gesenius-Kautzsch and König, think that the Masoretic Text has to be maintained, since תֵע is, in reality, a temporal accusative and should be translated “at a time when …” The use by the LXX of ὅσα (adjective

43 Bland, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, & Songs of Songs, 357.
44 Anderson, Qoheleth, 132.
45 Krüger, Qoheleth, 151.
46 Leupold, Exposition of Ecclesiastes, 193.
relative accusative neuter plural no degree from ὅσος presupposes instead of ἦν, hence the translations like, “There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt” (NIV).

An interpretive question that the Hebrew text leaves opened is whether the ruler or the ruled is intended to be the recipient of the “hurt” referred to in the verse. The understanding that the subaltern is the impaired party is attested by the LXX, the Vulgate and most of modern translations (NRS, RSV, NAS, JPS, TNK). However, like one Hebrew manuscript (Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum, according to B. Kennicott) which reads (in order to harm him) instead MT’s (for his hurt, “or literally “for hurt for him”) the LXX paraphrases the expression (for the word rendered as a verb, κακῶσαι (kaksōsai) infinitive aorist active from κακόω (kakóō) and not as a noun. The Syriaca and the Targum (A. Sperber) have the same understanding of the LXX.

The exercise of power consistently bears a destructive potential, but politically speaking, the consequences are, most of the time, in detriment of the inferior party. Thus, it is easy to imagine that no human being will always escape personal oppression in the long run, for there will ever be despotic people or structures to maltreat or even persecute either an individual or a collectivity. “Regardless of who was done harm, the fact remains that there is baseness in the political arena which has hurtful implications for the ordinary citizens.”

Nevertheless, it is possible to conceive in Qohelet’s words the intention to alert the superior party as to human accountability for vices. Qohelet informs that though the wicked may go down to the grave in honor (Eccl 8:10), though they may not be punished speedily (Eccl 8:11), though they may keep on sinning and may prolong their life, things can only conclude well “with those who fear God” (Eccl 8:12).

**Theological Lessons**

**Wisdom or Theology?**

Albeit part of a wider and older context in the neighboring cultures, biblical wisdom literature reveals its superiority in ethical awareness and religious spirit as compared to the former. But what about Ecclesiastes, is it possible to learn about God from its pages? Although God is mentioned

---

48 Ibid., 132.
forty times (*Yahweh* is never used), some scholars think that logical and theological coherence remains an elusive construct for the book.⁴⁹ However, the book is indeed seen as a repository of theological insights on creation, judgment, grace, sin, hope, inspiration and revelation, state of the dead, prophecy and apocalypse.⁵⁰

**The Theme of Injustice in Ecclesiastes**

The book of Ecclesiastes is a virulent indictment of injustice. Though the word “injustice” occurs ten times in the English Old Testament (RSV), most of the times translating the word לֶוָע “perversity, injustice,” neither “injustice” nor לֶוָע can be found in the book of Ecclesiastes. Nevertheless, the concept of injustice permeates the book from its inception to the last word.

The use of several words with negative connotations and descriptive of unjust situations or events is one of the best ways to attest the dark intonation of the book. The use of the expressions אֶרֶץ רְעָתִי מְזָרַעְתִּי “what comes of” (Eccl 1:3; 3:9; 5:15) and יִת אֵדְוּ “who knows” (Eccl 3:21; 2:19; 6:12; 8:1) evince Qohelet’s revolt in the face of injustices he was sure he could not amend. How could one man repair overwhelming matters that were wrong for millennia and presumably would remain wrong and getting even worse after his death (Eccl 1:10; 7:10)?

**Ecclesiastes’ Philosophy on Injustice**

Many aspects of injustice are cited by Qohelet in his book. From these, five were chosen to be examined: existential, social, cosmic, moral, and political.

**Existential Injustice**

Happiness is an aspiration of every single man and woman, it could even be said that each person has the right to be happy. But what is the reality? People’s lives are either boring or physically weary or subject to all sorts of privation (physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual). Qohelet enumerates all these problems either permitted or imposed by God upon humanity: oppression, envy (Eccl 4:1, 4), fanaticism (Eccl 5:1; 7:16), poverty, greed (Eccl 5:8, 10), mourning, sorrow, bribe, pride, anger,

---

⁴⁹ Brown, “The Travesties of Toil and Justice,” viii.
adversity, sin, cursing (Eccl 7:2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 14, 20, 21, 22, ), hatred (Eccl 9:6),
war (Eccl 9:18), drunkenness (Eccl 10:16), slothfulness (Eccl 10:18; 11:4),
ilness (Eccl 5:17), aging (Eccl 12:1-6), etc.

Certainly there is no personal injustice like death (Eccl 3:18-20). Humanity longs to live (Eccl 3:11) but he dies. This world and its structures conspire against happiness and this whole thing “which is crooked cannot be straightened,” and the whole thing that is “lacking” to provide happiness “cannot be counted” (Eccl 1:15).

Social Injustice

Among all the injustices that the book of Ecclesiastes censures, social injustice—"oppression" in Qohelet’s terminology—certainly projects itself. Qohelet seems to be very sensitive to personal injuries caused by distortions in social relations like work, family, marriage, religion, and other social structures. Painfully he discovers that even wisdom can be used in vain to help correct the problems of society (Eccl 1:18). Marriage, an institution that should harbor only happiness—Qohelet recommends marriage (Eccl 4:11, 9:9)—unfortunately is subject to various disappointments, especially if conjugal betrayal happens (Eccl 7:26). Religion and community, institutions that should support the individual and provide comfort in adversities for poor, sick, widows, orphans, etc. can be very frustrating as they forget those who had benefited them (Eccl 8:10; 9:15). Finally work, undoubtedly a source of great contentment and self-esteem, can result in compulsion or disillusion (Eccl 2:11, 22, 23; 5:12; 6:7). Of special significance in this topic is Qohelet's personal disenchant with the perception that he would leave the legacy of all his administrative and building enterprises to “that” unworthy man who would come after him (Eccl 2:18).

Cosmic Injustice

Qohelet’s discourse, filled with comprehensive words and expressions like קֶשֹׁע “a generation goes, and a generation comes” (Eccl 1:4), רָאָי “earth” (Eccl 1:4; 5:2; 7:20; 8:14, 16), כּל “all, the whole, everything” (the word כּל occurs ninety-one times in the book—cf. Eccl 1:8, 13; 2:9; 3:11; 6:6; 7:18; 8:9; 11:5; 12:13, 14), renders very clear the cosmic scope of his manifesto. But one expression is prominent in the text and transmits this perception: תּוֹם “under the sun.” The expression occurs thirty times in the book (the closely related תּוֹם “under heaven” occurs
another three times) and together with the motto “vanity of vanities” constitutes a trade mark of the book.

Since it is facile to assume that Qohelet was acquainted with the Hebrew corpus of wisdom knowledge of his time (and certainly of the surrounding nations) it is safe to deduce that he was well informed of the ideas found in the book of Job. Though the Preacher is silent about a metaphysical agent (cf. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7) as a co-player in the cosmic drama in the world, the cosmic perspective of both works are alike.

Though Qohelet is aware of the omnipresent eventuality of evil, he vehemently protests against its existence. The obviousness of his protestation that “under the sun … in the place of justice, wickedness was there and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there” (Eccl 3:16) sounds almost redundant. However, the apparent ingenuity of the complaint “was there, … was there” only reinforces the demonic aspect of reality behind the words.

**Moral Injustice**

Within the book’s atmosphere of anger and exasperation Qohelet expounds what seems to be his most bitter dissatisfaction and incomprehension: good things happening to bad people and bad things happening to good people.\(^51\) This randomness, confusion, or even inversion of recompenses is alluded to throughout the book (Eccl 2:16; 6:2; 8:10; 8:14; 9:11; 9:14, 15). With the possible exception for Ecclesiastes 2:16, the Preacher seems to be remembering real cases of injustice he had seen during his life. The reality is invulnerable to any sophisticated argument: to behave well is not a pledge of a life exempt of privation, probation, and many times persecution. However, Qohelet balances his indictments with considerate recognition that many times the “standard theology” comes along and God’s recompense for obedience is manifest (Eccl 2:26; 3:13; 5:18, 19; 8:5; 9:7; 10:8, 9).

Although such scenes of moral questioning are propitious for raising the question of theodicy, Qohelet consistently averts the issue, notwithstanding scholars who think that he admits an eschatological timing for judgment.\(^52\)

In spite of an envisioned final reconciliation, the naked truth is that during the “days of our vanity,” “there [are] righteous men that perish in

---

\(^{51}\) Doukhan, *Ecclesiastes*, 89.

\(^{52}\) Anderson, *Qoheleth*, 108.
[their] righteousness, and there [are] wicked men that prolong [their] life in [their] wickedness” (Eccl 7:15).

Political Injustice

Since politics is part of society, political injustice must be encountered within the world from which the Preacher attempts to extract some coherence. Moreover, this Preacher was king over Jerusalem and Israel (Eccl 1:1, 12) and this circumstance is certainly to be held responsible for the frequent allusions to public office and officers in the book (1:16; 2:4; 4:13, 14, 15, 16; 5:8, 9; 7:7; 8:2, 3, 4; 9:17; 10:4, 5, 6; 10:16, 17, 20). These many references embrace all levels of public administration from the king in the capital city to officers in the provinces, both executives and magistrates.

Like many other puzzling injustices that come to his notice, Qohelet wonders “why people must suffer oppression?” Though his question really was “why must people suffer at all?” The Preacher knows that the prince has an immense capacity to influence human lives for good or for bad, but unfortunately, since every human being has a “fully set” propensity to err (Eccl 8:11) oppression is prevalent in citizen-state relationships.

Since the Preacher does not condemn state and government as institutions, rather protects them—especially the figure of the ruler (Eccl 8:4; 10:17, 20) it remains distinct that his real perplexity (literally “the giving of his heart”) is to the possibility of the existence of oppression. “All this I have seen and applied my heart to every work that has been done under the sun, wherein a man rules over another man to his hurt” (Eccl 8:9).

Conclusion

Philosophy has proposed that “at any streetcorner the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face.”53 Although Qohelet apparently fashioned his book in the manner of an absurdist philosopher, his intention was not to lead man to break with the Creator. In a coarse manner, he warns that no one should be “shocked” because they see unabating injustice (Eccl 5:7, NAS). The real rationale behind his treatise is to balance the optimism of

faith with the realism of observation,\textsuperscript{54} not negate faith.

Unlike Job, Qohelet does not have an encounter with God, nor does he receive from God an answer to his questioning—God is utterly there and at the same time utterly absent.\textsuperscript{55} Nevertheless, Qohelet takes upon himself the initiative of advancing a solution to the absurd condition into which creation was plunged. He claims that humanity should fear God and obey his commandments (Eccl 12:13) for these two elements will guide people safely throughout life. Qohelet is confident that God’s future and conclusive intervention will amend every wrong work, punishing even the remotest injustice and rewarding coherently the righteous and the wicked (Eccl 12:14). Only the repair of a new order,\textsuperscript{56} rectifying the illogical injustice that engulfed the planet after creation (Eccl 7:29) is a satisfying response for the problem of evil. Qohelet’s proposition is, absolutely, a leap of faith.

\textsuperscript{54} Williams, “A Biblical Theology of Ecclesiastes,” 86.


\textsuperscript{56} Doukhan, Ecclesiastes, 126.
AN EXEGETICAL LOOK AT EZEKIEL 28:11-19 AND THE GREAT CONTROVERSY ISSUE

Rodrigo de Galiza Barbosa

Introduction

The themes of the Great Controversy are of major importance to Seventh-day Adventist identity.1 And since Scripture is the primary source of doctrinal formation, throughout its history Adventists have used Scripture passages to defend their position. One of the main passages is Ezekiel 28, which is interpreted by Adventists as expounding on the origin of sin in heaven and the downfall of Satan to earth. Since this passage of scripture is one of the most controversial in the Old Testament (OT), it is important to see which way Adventists look at the text, and what message the text conveys.

1 Alberto R. Timm, “The Sanctuary and the Three Angels’ Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Doctrines” (Ph.D. dissertation, Adventist Theological Society Publications, Andrews University, 1995). Raoul Dederen, ed. Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000). Both of these books show that the Great Controversy theme is the part of the worldview behind the Seventh-day Adventist view of reality, and its place in the history of God’s redemptive plan to rescue humans from sin and the devil. Adventists were influenced mostly by the writings of Ellen G. White, which saw world history as the unfolding of the heavenly controversy between Christ and Satan. See her two major works on the topic: Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1958); Idem., The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1950).
It is not my purpose to give the correct interpretation of the text, but to discuss the possibilities. The main goal of this study is to look at Ezekiel 28:11-19 exegetically to extract as much as possible which can help clarify what is the intent of the text.

The exegetical method adopted is a reflection of the presuppositions already mentioned above. Considering the Bible as a written text and the book of Ezekiel as being authored by both God and the prophet, the exegetical process used in this study is an adapted version of the steps outlined by Doukhan and others.

**Exegetical Analyses of Ezekiel 28:11-19**

The passage selected from the book of Ezekiel is one of the most controversial passages in the whole book of Ezekiel, full of *hapax legomena* and figures of speech, posing a great challenge to the interpreter. As stated above, the goal of this study is not to give a final interpretation, but to experiment using the seven step methodology suggested above and to gather the information which this method will bring to the surface. Instead of giving theological answers, the primary goal is to gather data that could be useful in further research.

---

2 It is good to clarify here that I firmly believe that there is a correct interpretation, against relativistic reading of scriptures which see multiple interpretations as possible. But this does not mean that only one literal meaning should be considered as the only interpretation of scriptures.

3 By the intent of the text I mean the message which God and the biblical writer, as authors of scriptures, desire to convey to its readers both of the past and the present.

Textual Problems

Taking the Massoretic Text (MT) as the basis for this study as rendered in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), this first step compares the variants with other ancient manuscripts. The first variant occurs in v. 12. The traditional manuscript of the LXX omits the word אֱלֹהִים. The phrase מלאי המר (full of wisdom) does not appear in the LXX.

The next word which poses a variant is חֹדֵק, which is rendered in the MT as a participle masculine singular construct (hotem) and a few other manuscripts renders it as a defective (hotam), such as in the translation of the LXX of Aquila, Syriac, and Latin Vulgate. In some manuscript versions of the MT, the feminine noun חָנֵינֵי (feminine singular of חָנָה – meaning: perfect example, structure, arrangement) is changed to חָנֵינַת (also feminine singular of חָנָה – meaning: model, form, resemblance, building). This change in gender is frequent in this portion of the Scriptures and poses some challenges to the interpreter.

The last changing of nouns described does not affect the meaning of the text, since they are synonyms. The form used by the MT is attested elsewhere in Ezekiel (43:10) and should not be changed. About the omissions mentioned above, besides the omission of full of wisdom in the LXX, they go against the literary pattern of the text which will be dealt with in the literary section. The omission of the LXX seems without reason because wisdom is referred to later in the passage (v. 17) with a thematic sequence discussed below.

The first variant of v. 13 which shows up in the BHS is the addition of the LXX in the number and name of stones. In the MT nine nouns are given while the LXX has 12, following the list of precious stones from Ezekiel 28:17-20. Cooke points out another variant, not found in the BHS apparatus of the Syriac manuscript which mentions only eight stones.
instead of nine (MT) or twelve (LXX). The next variant is related to the suppression of the phrase הַמַּלְאָכֵי יְهوֹ作った which is explained as the εὐεργετήρα τοῦ θησαυροῦ σο καὶ τα αποθεκα, (tr. to fill your treasures, even your storehouse). The noun הַמַּלְאָכֵי is a hapax legomenon and will be discussed in the linguistic section. Here let it suffice to say that the rendering of the LXX is an explanation and not a translation as Cooke had noticed. Still in v. 13, Cooke points out that a variant reading for מַכַּחַר (feminine singular – meaning: covering) is present in the version of Ginsburgii (bibliam masoreticam of 1894), which renders מַכַּחַר (to mix or mingle).

In v. 14 the BHS apparatus points out that תַא (pronoun 2nd person feminine singular – meaning: you) should probably be read as תָא (direct object marker or preposition with, by). And also points that the LXX and Syriac renders μετ το χερου (with the kerub), which suggest that they both translated from the Hebrew תא. The LXX also differs with the MT by omitting the words מַמְשָׁה הָסָבִיק (anointed that cover). Another difference between the LXX and the MT is that נָתָה (Qal perfect 1st person singular – meaning: I placed you) is translated as εἴδοκεσ (place you) and for this reason the editors of the apparatus suggest the Hebrew reading of נָתָה, which makes not much difference, since the subject who suffers the action is still the king. The editors also suggest that the noun יָד (holy) should be deleted because of the parallel with v. 16, which does not contain the structure holy mountain of God, but just даי אלוהים.

On v. 16, some Hebrew manuscripts read מַלְאָך (Qal 3rd person masculine plural – meaning: they were full) instead of מַלְאָכַר which is a variation of the same lexical form. This word is also changed in the LXX and Syriac which renders εἰληφησα (2nd person singular aorist indicative – meaning: you filled) from רָאָל (Piel perfect 2nd person masculine singular – meaning: you were filled). Also the apparatus show that רַאָל (Piel 1st person singular – meaning: made profane) is rendered with רַאָל,13

---

10 Ibid., xlv.
12 Ibid., 488, 489.
and the LXX follows with καὶ ἐπραγματεύσθη (Aorist 2nd person singular indicative– meaning: you were traumatized) from לוח.\textsuperscript{14}

The other difference of gender and number between LXX and MT occurs in the verb ידבָּּּ (Piel 1st person singular – meaning: I have destroyed you), with is changed to ἔγαγε σ (Aorist 3rd person singular active indicative – meaning: he lead you). And the LXX omits again, like v. 14, the word כְּסַּבַּכ (Qal participle masculine singular – meaning: who cover). And in v. 18 the masculine rendering דָּוִּני (noun with 2nd person masculine singular suffix – meaning: your iniquity) is changed in multiple editions (Edd) of the MT and in the genizi Cairensi codex fragment 2, to a feminine דָּוִּני.

Also the word מִקְדֶּשׁ (noun plural sanctuary with suffix of 2nd person masculine singular) is changed in multiple MSS, editions (Edd), in the Syriac and Targum to מִקְדֶּשׁ (noun singular with suffix 2nd person masculine singular); the editors of the apparatus proposed מִקְדֶּשׁ (with suffix 1st person masculine singular); and LXX (L - Luciani), Vulgate, Symmachus renders מִקְדֶּשׁ (noun singular with suffix 2nd person masculine singular – from מִקְדֶּשׁ – meaning: holy). The issue here is to identify what is being “defiled” by the king of Tyre. Is it the sanctuary of God, the sanctuary of the king, the holiness of God or other possibilities?

Since the issue is complex, I adopt the version of the MT which was the basis of all other translations. Also because the changes presented above do not, affect its interpretation.

Linguistic Challenges

In this section attention is directed to specific words and expressions which I found relevant to the interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19 in this particular study. Since this section of Scriptures is full of hapax legomena the focus is on those words which are more commonly used with references to two nouns which is more debatable.

First, it is important to recognize the metaphorical/symbolic language widely used in the whole book of Ezekiel. This indicates that the vocabulary which would normally be interpreted as it is, should be seen in a wider

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid. On p. 320, there is a discussion a second usage of the verb ידֶבֶּר showing that it can be used as a piel and polal with the meaning of piercing, wounding.
semantic category. And it is in this category that the intertextuality of Ezekiel 28 is better portrayed.\textsuperscript{15}

The first noun which poses a question is in v. 13, יד (Eden). This word first occurs in the Hebrew Bible in Genesis 2:8-10 to describe the first place created by God for human beings to dwell.\textsuperscript{16} It is a place of beauty, of delight and perfect enjoyment.\textsuperscript{17} In its biblical usage, it is found 13 times in the OT; 6 times in Genesis, 5 times in Ezekiel, Isaiah 51:3, and Joel 2:3. All these references refer to a concept of paradise, or fertile land.\textsuperscript{18}

In Genesis 2:8, 10; 4:16, and Ezekiel 31:16, 18 it is a specific geographical place, while in Genesis 2:15; 3:23, 24 and Ezekiel 36:35 the noun qualifies the garden. The relation or parallel to the garden of God is found in Ezekiel 28:13 and 31:9, as well as in Joel where the reference of Eden is a contrast to a dry unfertile place, or wilderness.

This association of semantics between fertile land and the word eden is also suggested by its possible etymology.\textsuperscript{19} Some relate it to the Sumerian word eden or the West Semitic ʿdn which means luxury, delight, or abundance. Even though some suggest that it is related to the Akkadian word edinu which means plain, steppe, this imagery in Scripture is doubted, for it is widely attested in relation to the locus amoenus.

In post-exilic Jewish writings this word is used to refer to heavenly places (I Enoch 24-25; 28-32 and IV Ezra 8:52).\textsuperscript{20} The Garden of Eden in Genesis and Ezekiel 28 is the habitation of divine and/or semi-divine beings who dwelt in paradise before their sinful acts which caused God
to expel them from this wonderful place, and destroyed it (Joel 2:3). But according to Isaiah 51:3 and Ezekiel 36:35 this land will be restored by God.\(^{21}\)

Related to this word is the expression אַלְוֹרִים נֶ (garden of God) or העולה נֶ (garden of the LORD). The first expression occurs in the OT only in Ezekiel 28:13 and 31:8, 9.\(^{22}\) The second one occurs other times, and like in Genesis 13:10 and Isaiah 51:3 it refers to a paradisiacal place. In ANE there are many descriptions of a place with springs, trees with supernatural strength, beauty and fertility with divine attributes,\(^ {23}\) similar to Ezekiel 31.

Also in many ANE texts the garden of God is the habitation of divine creatures living in perfect harmony\(^ {24}\) and where divine decrees of cosmic importance are sent after divine assembly.\(^ {25}\) This divine garden is the abode of the gods, or the sanctuary from where life flows to the whole created realm, especially in the form of water which brings fertility to the land.\(^ {26}\) So like the word Eden which in post-exilic times was used to portray heavenly imagery, the garden of God in ANE was also associated with a divine place.

In v. 13 there are two words which seem to pose some trouble. The first one is נֶפֶת. According to Arbel, this word can came from the root נָפָה, which occurs 17 times in the OT. The meaning outside of Ezekiel is clearly related to tambourine, a small hand drum.\(^ {27}\) The second word connected with נֶפֶת is נֶפֶת. The root בֶּפֶת denotes the action of “dig”, “to tunnel”,
but also means “woman, female.” This is why, Arbel points out, some scholars suggest that here in Ezekiel it is synonymous with the word הַלְוִיָּהּ which means flute, for the fact that it is a hollow instrument.

Arbel argues that the meaning of both need to be looked at together with the debated feminine masculine changing of gender in the text. Her suggestion is that these elements of the text made the author of Genesis Rabah interpret the mythological figure of the king of Tyre as Eve (a feminine figure).

In the sequence there is the word שָׁרַב (to create), which is always used to describe the divine activity of creation. “This verb does not denote an act that somehow can be described, but simply states that, unconditionally, without further intervention, through God’s command something comes into being that had not existed before.” This sheds some light on the identity of this character which was in Eden, with a perfect character.

The next significant word is found in v. 14 and 16, בַּרְוֹר (cherub). For Freedman this Hebrew etymology is not used outside the Hebrew Scripture. In the ANE however, the similar verb karabu, which means bless, worship, or offering of sacrifice, is used in association with the worship of Marduk, the god of Babylon. And a similar word kuribu is often used in the context of cultic images such as the lamassu (winged creature half man half animal), lions, birds, and Assyrian monsters.
In Arabic the root word *krb* means (as a verb) also to offer sacrifice, to make a vow, consecrate; and as a noun, it means sacrifice. Freedman-O’Connor observes that twice in the OT this word is used in connection with the garden of God/sacred, vegetation/divine, and abode/sanctuary. Another biblical relation is with the winged creatures, which appear partly animal and partly human, similar to some figurines in the ANE context. They are also depicted as transportation for divinity and as resembling glowing fire/coal, which have similarities to the fiery stones of Ezekiel 28:16.

It is important to notice that *cherub* in v. 14 is qualified by the word נ-wife (anointed). According to the analyses of Seybold, the normal usage of this word in the Hebrew Bible is to refer to kings and priests who are closely connected to God, showing special relationship between the anointed one and the LORD. The word is used in the context of hygiene or purification associated to the sanctuary, and also referring to the changing of social or spiritual status. With very few exceptions the object of this anointing is Israel’s universe of object and people.

This relation between the garden, the cherub, and the anointed, in relation to the sanctuary is extremely important in identifying the character of this king of Tyre. The relation of these elements with the phrase “mountain of God,” mentioned as the place of abode of the king of Tyre, suggests a special relationship between this king and elohim (God).

To finalize this section about linguistic features of the text, it is noteworthy to mention that the LXX translates Tyre in two different ways in the book of Ezekiel with consistency. Until chapter 27 is rendered as Σω (in chapters 26, 27 - 10 times) and after as Tυω (chapters 28, 29 - 5 times). Can it indicate some theological motivation, like a change in the

---

37 Ibid., 310. Cooke also sees the cherub as being related to the cultic image in ANE and the Bible; Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 112.
40 Ibid., 45-53; Seybold mentions Isaiah 45 and Cyrus as an example but misses that in Ezekiel 28 the object of the anointing is apparently a foreign figure, the king of Tyre. But when closely observed, Cyrus is used by God as the type of the Servant of God which would deliver the whole people of Israel, therefore being part of divine plan. But what about the king in Ezekiel 28? Would he not be someone closely related to the plans of God in His sanctuary?
character of its king? More than just this change is necessary to indicate a theological motivation. But this can amount with other characteristics of the text seen above to suggest that a theological intention may be true.

**Literary Structures**

Concerning the literary structure of Ezekiel, the prophetic book has three main parts. Prophetic messages of judgment concerning the sins of Judah-Jerusalem (Israel) in chapter (chapters 4-24), concerning the sins of foreign nations (chapters 25-32), and prophetic messages about the return of the Israelites to the promise land and restoration of Jerusalem (chapters 33-48).

Since a technical term is used often in Ezekiel to start his messages, to determine the division of these oracles is quite clear. The phrase "וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה (and the word of the LORD came) marks the division of oracles in this book. In 2:3 the message is addressed to Israel, which changes at the start of chapter 25. From chapter 25 to 32 the recipients of the oracles are foreign nations, not Israel, which shows clear division in the message. In 33:7 the message is directed back to Israel switching the focus of the oracles.

The text selected for this study is found in the middle section of the book. In the oracles concerning foreign nations, there is a sequence of seven nations which are addressed by God in judgment: Amon (25:1-7), Moab (vv. 8-11), Edom (vv. 15-17), Philistia (vv. 15-17), Tyre (26:1-28:19), Sidon (28:20-26), and Egypt (29:1-32:32).

As with the whole book, this section is marked by a few literary features which bring cadence and constancy to its writing. The expression "וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה (thus says the LORD God) which is repeated 6x in chapter 25 (vv. 3, 6, 8, 12, 15, and 16), 10 times when speaking to Tyre and its king (26:3, 7, 15, 19; 27:3; 28:2, 6, 12, 22, 25) and 13 times when addressing Egypt and its king (29:3, 8, 13, 19; 30:2, 6 [abbreviated form without יְהוָה], 10, 13, 22; 31:10, 15; 32:3, 11).

---

42 Some authors mention an introductory section from 1-3.
These two phrases demonstrate that the messages of Ezekiel are used to convey its written form as originating from God in judgment of the nations on earth. To complement this idea, there is also the phrase הוהי נאם (saith the LORD God) which appears in this section of Ezekiel repeatedly only when referring to Tyre and Egypt (26:5, 14, 26:21; 28:10; 29:20; 30:6, 31:18; 32:8, 14, 16, 31, 32).

Here the similarities between Egypt and Tyre are evident. While the oracles to the other five nations are short and direct, those addressed to Egypt and Tyre are longer and involve not only the nations but its kings as well. The mention of Tyre in the oracle of Egypt (in 29:18) and of similar mythological language such as Eden, garden of God (which only occurs in Ezek 28:13 and 31:8, 9), strengthen the connection between these two oracles.

Now I will focus on the passage selected for this study (28:11-19), which is part of the bigger oracle addressing Tyre and its king (26-28). The oracles involving Tyre can be divided in two main sections; in chapter 26 and 27 the message involves the city of Tyre, while chapter 28 directs its attention to the king. Both sections can be divided by two literary structures called the judgment speech, describing its sins, and secondly the funeral dirge, describing its end.43

The passage studied here is therefore found in the very last section of the oracle addressed to Tyre, where the final judgment is pronounced by God. As noted above, there are literary structures which suggest a similarity between the metaphorical character of Egypt and Tyre. Both have a long judgment oracle directed to them; both are addressed to the people and the king; only in the oracles to these two nations is the language of paradise or Eden found; only in the oracles to those two nations is the phrase הוהי נאם (saith the LORD God) found.

I have also notice that one of the thematic phrases of the book of Ezekiel

---

43 A funeral dirge, or lamentation is characterized by culpability of the ones who suffer judgment, the announcement of destruction from God, and the weeping or lament for the suffering. This genre fits perfectly to the content of its message. In the first section the oracle of judgment is found in chapter 26 while the dirge or lament is found in 27 (see verse 2). And in the second section the division is found in verse 11. From 28:1-10 the description of the judgment and after the funeral pronouncement until verse 19. For more on funeral dirge or lamentation see Dictionary of the Old Testament Wisdom, Poetry & Writings, s.v. “Lamentation 1: Book Of.” Dictionary of the Old Testament wisdom, poetry & writings, s.v. “Lamentation 2: Ancient Near Eastern Background.”
(know that I am the LORD) is absent only in the oracles directed to Tyre in chapters 27-28 and to Egypt in chapter 31. And it is just in these two chapters that the word Eden appears. What caught my attention is that 4x the phrase is attached to Sidon in the midst of the oracles of Tyre and Egypt with the message of hope of gathering of God’s people, Israel, which have “no part” in this section of the book, for it is directed to the foreign nations. All this characteristics seems to point to something special, which is worthy of a deeper study.

Historical

The first historical data in the passage relates to Tyre and its king. Since the city of Tyre has a long history, it is good to limit this discussion to the immediate historical context of the passage. In the book of Ezekiel there is a collection of fourteen dates, seven in the literary part related to Israel and seven in the prophecies related to foreign nations:

1:1 - 30 year, 4 month, 5 day (July 593 BC) [1:2 - 5 year, ? month, 5 day]
3:16 - 5 year, ? month, 5 day (July 593)
8:1 - 6 year, 6 month, 5 day (Aug-Sept. 592)
20:1 - 7 year, 5 month, 10 day (July-Aug 591)
24:1 - 9 year, 10 month, 10 day (Jan 588)
26:1 - 11 year, ? month, 1 day (Mar-Mar 587-6)
29:1 - 10 year, 10 month, 12 day (Jan 587)
29:17 - 27 year, 1 month, 1 day (Mar-Apr 571)
30:20 - 11 year, 1 month, day 7 (Mar-Apr 587)
31:1 - 11 year, 3 month, 1 day (May-June 587)
32:1 - 12 year, 12 month, 1 day (Feb-Mar 585)
32:17 - 12 year, 12 month, 15 day (Feb-Mar 585)

---

44 It occurred to Amon (25:7), Moab (25:11), Edom (25:14 - a little variation—they shall know my vengeance) Philistines (25:17), city of Tyre (26:6), Sidon (4 times - 28:22, 23, 24, 26) and Egypt (29:6, 9, 16, 21; 30:8, 19, 25, 26; 32:15).
46 For details on the historicity and dating of Ezekiel and the history of Israel see the comprehensive discussion with a large bibliography in “The Hebrew Calendar in the Old Testament Times; Bible Chronology from Exodus to Exile,” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, ed. Francis D. Nichol, rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976), 2:100-164; For special details on Babylonian chronology see also Bill T. Arnold, Who Were the Babylonians? Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).
47 The Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Ezekiel,” 713.
33:21 - 12 year, 10 month, 5 day (Dec 586-Jan 585)
40:1 - 25 year, 1 month, 10 day (Mar-Apr 573)
(The italicized dates are related to foreign nations, and includes our passage.)

The author of Ezekiel just gives numbers of years, months and days. The only concrete historical reference point is found in Ezekiel 1:2 when he affirms that the fifth year is related to the captivity of king Jehoiachim. This is the second of three instances where Babylon goes up against Judah and Jerusalem. The first one is registered in 2 Kings 24:1, 2 Chronicles 36:5, and Daniel 1:2, which was during the reign of Jehoiakim, and is dated around 605 BC. The second siege, after the alliance of Jehoiakim with Egypt and his rebellion against Babylon, occurs in the years of Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim.

The second siege is recorded in 2 Kings 24:8-16, 2 Chronicles 36:9, 10 and is dated around the year 597 BC. The third siege is mentioned by Ezekiel while he was in Babylonia in Ezekiel 33:21, twelve years later (c586 BC). Taking into consideration the closest historical date for the text under analysis, the probable date for the message of Ezekiel 28 is the eleventh year (587-6 BC), since it is part of the oracles against Tyre which starts in Ezekiel 26:1 which mentions the 11th year. This eleventh year probably refers to the starting point of the exile of the captivity of Babylon as found in Ezekiel 1:2. This later text is the only precise reference point in the whole book and therefore needs to be taken seriously.

If this is correct, then this would be Tyre around the end of the 7th and beginning of the 6th centuries. Ezekiel is in Babylonia as result of captivity, and God is cursing Tyre because its inhabitants were laughing at the destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek 26:1, 2). Tyre during this time is described as a rich merchant city (Ezek 27, 28).

The richness of Tyre was not something recent or new at the time of Ezekiel. The Bible mentions that even in the time of David, the city was famous for its commerce. In that time, Tyre and Philistia were known for their maritime influence in the east of the Mediterranean. After David’s victory over Palestine, Tyre became even more successful, and probably because of this advantage won by David, Tyre’s king Hiran repaid him by helping with the construction of the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 5:22, 25; 6:38; 7:1; 9:13; 1 Chr 2:13).

---


The richness and idolatrous influence of Tyre over Israel is also recorded in Amos 1:9, Isa 23 and Jer 47:1-7. All these passages along with Ezekiel 28 portray Tyre as a very famous and rich city. Hatzenstein suggests that “it is possible that the sources for the description of Tyre’s greatness originated with Ethbaal I, and there are hints of such songs in both Isaiah (23:16) and Ezekiel (26:13).”\footnote{Hatzenstein explains that Nebuchadnezzar’s victory over Egypt broke the power of the Egypt-Tyre alliance around the year 605. The fall of Jerusalem could have been a motive for the rejoicing and laughing of Tyre during their own time of political distress. Later Babylon, after the oracle of Ezekiel (between 587/6 BC), besieged the city for thirteen years.} This relation between idolatry, Tyre, and Israel is interesting in the context of the Tyre oracle in Ezekiel 26-28.

Furthermore, passages such as Zechariah 9:3 indicate that Tyre continued as a rich and influential city after the exile. Greek historian Herodotus describes golden and emerald pillars in the temple of Tyre during his time (Herodotus 2.44) similar to those described in Ezekiel 26:11, which seems to imply that the city retained its riches for longer than the prophecy predicted. How does this fit with the prophecy, which seemed to indicate and describe its imminent destruction?
years (585-573/2). This siege is mentioned in Ezekiel 29:18, 19. But as the historical evidences and the biblical passage of Ezekiel 29 shows, Tyre was not destroyed and Nebuchadnezzar did not conquer it completely. This data has a direct influence on the interpretation of Ezekiel 28, since the text clearly states that the king of Tyre would be destroyed.

Theological Reflections

The construct image of theology does not involve only God, but man and the world as well. According to the text, the word of the Lord came to “me,” assumed here to be Ezekiel, the only one who receives the oracles of God in the book (Ezek 1:2). The first information found in the text (28:11-19) is that Ezekiel received a cognitive message from God which involved the sensorial perceptions of the prophet.

Second, the message of God relates to Tyre’s king. The passage shows God’s interest in the affairs of human beings. The whole book of Ezekiel is evidence of the interest that God of Israel has in humankind. First God is interested in the history of Judah, which is in captivity. His interest is demonstrated through His judgment and restoration. But the attention of God is not limited to a specific ethnic group. The oracles of Ezekiel 25-32 show that foreign nations are also under the direct care of God.

This care of God is expressed in His feelings toward the specific group of people. God addresses nations by name, including the kings of those nations. The God portrayed in Ezekiel is the One who knows history, and the activities and affairs of all the world. But not only the One who knows history, but the One who controls it. The pronouncement of judgments against the nations is a verdict and prediction about the future. This is so evident that the New International Version translates the expression הַיְהַ נ as the “Sovereign LORD”. God is the sovereign ruler of all history.

Directly connected to this, is the notion of judgment. In this human beings play an important role. The oracle of Ezekiel 28:11-19 shows that God sees His creatures as accountable to Him. His standard is the measure whereby creation receives life or death. In the case of the king of Tyre, pride in his prosperity led to violence, corruption, and sin. These cause God to be displeased with and destroy His rebellious creation (vv. 15-19).

This theme of life-death brings up the issue of purity and impurity,

---

54 See for example 9:1 (I heard), 10:1 (I saw), 27:2 (say).
acceptance and rejection. God in Ezekiel 28 is portrayed as a Being which does not tolerate immoral practices in His presence, for the place of His dwelling is a delight (Eden), holy, and His creation is blameless and precious. For this antagonism of character, finally the ones involved in the acts of immorality will be punished with eternal destruction, for they “will be no more” (v. 19). And to accomplish His intention, God can use other nations (humans) to punish the rebellious (28:7).

The theme of judgment in Ezekiel 28 also shows that the wicked acts of the king of Tyre were a result of his exercise of freedom. The passage clearly affirms that God created the king blameless, perfect, full of splendor, and suddenly, wickedness was found in him (in his heart; vv. 2, 5, 15). And freedom when exercised in the wrong way, against God’s standard is punished. The contrast between the sovereign God and the creature which desires to be god (vv. 2, 6, 9) is clear.

**Interpretation**

As Arbel points out, this passage was attached to Genesis 1-3 by the midrashic tradition in Judaism. According to this interpretation the anointed cherub of Ezekiel 28:14 is Eve. The reflection of *Genesis Rabah 18:1* on Genesis 2:22 quotes Ezekiel 28:13 as referring to the woman. The methodology of the Midrash was to juxtapose similar biblical quotations from different sources to make a point. The link here is the reference to creation and the common themes of the garden of God, acquisition of divine knowledge, misappropriation of divine qualities, expulsion from Eden and sentence of mortality.

While this Jewish tradition saw Eve in Ezekiel as the arch enemy of God, the early Christian interpreted this character as being Satan. Very few church fathers attempted to interpret the whole book of Ezekiel, which was by them considered to be a difficult book. But at least four main authors did make an attempt at interpreting it: Origen, Jerome, Theodoret of Cyr and Gregory the Great. Their methodologies were somewhat similar, using

---

the allegorical method of interpretation.\textsuperscript{58} Origen employed allegory the most, and after him Gregory the Great, than Jerome. But Theodoret of Cyr was more exegetical due to being influenced by the tradition of Antioch.\textsuperscript{59}

It is interesting to note that little attention is given to the passages of Ezekiel 25-27 and Ezekiel 28:20-32:32.\textsuperscript{60} The focus of attention for the early Christians was the mythological character of Ezekiel 28:1-19. Jerome, writing about the king of Tyre, said that governors of nations that are tyrants against the truth of Jesus “assume for themselves the name of gods, gods that are really called idols and inflated with pride. They fall under the judgment of the devil, into the snare of which the Savior speaks in the Gospel ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’”\textsuperscript{61}

In the same line, Origen pictured the prince of Tyre as the spiritual power of evil, quoting Psalm 2:2 to explain the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Theodoret of Cyr also affirmed that the devil “has persuaded people to offer worship to him instead” of Christ saying that he is god.\textsuperscript{62} On verses 11-19, Origen, Jerome, Ambrose, Cyril of Jerusalem, Tertullian, Augustine, Gregory the Great, John of Damascus, and Ephrem saw the king of Tyre as Satan.\textsuperscript{63}

The arguments to identify this king with Satan are given by Origen who affirms that its characteristics is too supernatural to mean an earthly king and the text affirms that this being was “cast forth into the earth” meaning that he was not on earth before.\textsuperscript{64} Along with Origin, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Tertullian, Augustine also identifies the element of freedom in the transition between perfection and fall, saying that God did not create evil but it originated in the will of Satan.\textsuperscript{65}

The only different interpretation in early Christianity comes from the Persian/Assyrian Christian author of the early IV century called Aphrahat. He saw the cherub in Ezekiel 28:14 as being Jesus Christ who protected the holy mountain of God. This is lightly perceived also in Jerome who affirms

\textsuperscript{58} Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible, s.v. “Allegory.”
\textsuperscript{59} Ezekiel, Daniel, xxi-xxiii.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 90, 97.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 91.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 94.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 95-97.
that as the cherub guards the garden of God so Jesus guards the Church of God from Satan’s assault.66

Until the 20th century, biblical scholars, because of its structure and series of dates did not question it so much. But as a result of the critical method of interpretation, its authenticity was put into question. In 192467 Gustav Hölscher said that the book was a mixture of prophetic oracles (ecstatic phenomena–144 poetic lines) and the remaining 80 percent of its 1,235 lines was added later. C. C. Torrey (1930) affirmed that the whole book was from the Seleucid period (3rd century) and Millar Burrows (1925) said it was from the time of Manasseh in 650 BC. J. Smith proposed an even earlier date, after the fall of Samaria between 721-650.

George Fohrer (1952) through stylistic arguments continued with the argument that there is a core message from Ezekiel himself but the final format of its book is a compilation and additions of postexilic Jews. Walter Zimmerli develops this thought further by suggesting that there was a “school” of Ezekiel disciples who formed and enhanced the original oracles of the prophet. Even though the studies of Lawrence Boadt, B. Lang and M. Greeenberg see a more unifying purpose in the book, they still maintain that all literary approaches today “are deeply in debt to Zimmerli’s insight into the editorial process”.68 In other words, the book of Ezekiel as we read it today is considered by these modern scholars to be an edited document and a product of the post-exilic Jewish mind.

For this reason the passage of Ezekiel 28:11-19 is seen mostly in its historical context as a product of its own culture. History and not divine inspiration is the only necessary way to interpret the meaning of this mythological story, more specifically the history of the exile and post-exile.

The problem of this historical critical tradition is the unquestioned attribution of the literary borrowing of Ezekiel 28:11-19 from a non-Hebrew collection of myths. One example can show how this process occurs. Take for example Cookes bold affirmation that, “The story [of Ezekiel 28] belonged, no doubt, to the common stock of Semitic myths,

66 Ezekiel, Daniel, 94.
67 The description here is taken from the article of Lawrence Boadt which gives a detailed explanation of how the book of Ezekiel was interpreted in modern Christianity. The Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Ezekiel,” 715, 716.
some of them preserved in the Babylonian epics, some in the Phoenician traditions."

This is followed by the doctoral study and article of Williams which completely shaped the view of Ralph Alexander who says that there is no need to go outside of the mythologies of Ancient Near East (ANE) to interpret the metaphor of the king of Tyre as being the historical king of Tyre from the time of the author of Ezekiel.

The arguments of all of them is that those myths of the ANE portray the garden as the place of the gods, and that the king of Tyre desired to be assimilated by the image of the god Malkart, in other words, the king of Tyre was going through the process of deification (apotheosis) which was common in ANE. The problem with this hypothesis is that Cooke, the author quoted in many of these arguments, does not mention any fact/text which show a Tyrean myth related to the description given above. This is just assumed, or at least no fact is given to be checked, in the light of other myths in ANE.

What is interesting is that Williams recognizes this absence when he quotes McKenzie, on page 59 of his article, "A number of authors, both older and contemporary, have asserted that Ezekiel either recounts a foreign myth or alludes to one. This consensus is remarkable when one observes that no myth is cited upon which the allusions are based." In Pritchard (1955) also no myth is related to the Ezekiel's cherub of chapter 28.

While this argument of the borrowing from mythology of Tyre has no historical evidences, until today, there is a consensus to the intertextuality of Ezekiel 28:11-19 to the book of Genesis and the primeval story of chapters 2 and 3. And it is based on this relation that Jewish, early Christians and Seventh-day Adventists built their understanding.

Ellen G. White was a major theological influence among Seventh-day Adventist interpreters of this passage. In her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, like the church Fathers, she used the language of Ezekiel 28:11-19 and

---


Isaiah 14:12-14 to describe the rebellion of Lucifer. She clearly interpreted these passages as referring to a time before the creation of the world, therefore primarily relating them to Satan and not the king of Tyre in the time of Ezekiel.\[^{73}\]

I adopt the interpretation of the church Fathers and Ellen G. White which saw the figure of Ezekiel 28:11-19 as Satan and not primarily the historical king of Tyre. As mentioned in the historical survey above, the city of Tyre was not completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Since the oracle mentioned explicitly that this king and his kingdom should “be no more” (v. 19; cf. 27:36), this must refer, primarily to another figure, unless one reject the truthful prediction of this prophecy.

Furthermore, when seen in the light of the New Testament, Satan and his kingdom are completely destroyed in the future coming of the Messiah Jesus, which will bring the restoration of Israel and the New Jerusalem (Rev 20-22). This fits well with the overall structure of the whole book of Ezekiel. The first part of the book shows the sins of Israel until the destruction of Jerusalem. The second part, after the historical destruction of the city in 587 BC, the oracles are against the nations alluding to Genesis 12:3,\[^{74}\] and finally the restoration of the people of God to its rightful place.

It is worth mentioning, that this interpretation still needs to be more exegetically elaborated on. The evidences seems to point in this direction, but more research needs to be done in this area, because the arguments on both sides of the question are still weak exegetically speaking.

---

\[^{73}\] Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1898), 35. In *Youth Instructor*, October 11, 1904, White quotes Ezekiel 26 referring to the prophecy of the destruction of Tyre by king Nebuchadnezzar. Her focus here though, is not Tyre, which she mentions quickly, but the description of the power of the king of Babylon. She does not affirm here that Tyre was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which did not happen historically (see historical background above). Some evangelicals also see Satan in this passage. See as an example, Lamar Eugene Cooper Sr., *Ezekiel*, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 17 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994).

\[^{74}\] Alexander, *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, 744. Even though he mentions this intertextuality, he does not elaborate on the eschatological consequence of this allusion. For more on the eschatological development of the Abrahamic promise see Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).
Relevance

What does this judgment pronounced against the king of Tyre more than two thousand five hundred years ago have to do with humans today? Is it not only a nice drama to be read? The story of the prediction of the fall of the king of Tyre involves elements common to all mankind. God created human beings to live in a perfect world. But sin has destroyed this world.

The drama of Tyre’s king also reveals the danger of pride. When someone looks to their own riches without attributing them to those who contributed to the acquisition of them, often find themselves living a life full of dishonesty, falsehood, and immoral actions of rebellion. This can be seen today in the greedy actions of big corporations, which aim only to increase their own profit regardless of the many individuals they may hurt along the way.

Riches and pride go hand in hand. This does not mean that riches are evil, for beauty and natural resources are created by God, but rather that only when God is considered in the use of these resources can life be cherished properly, for this is the intimate interest of God.

The story of Ezekiel 28 also teaches the danger of starting right and finishing wrong. We can start our projects according to what God projected us to do, but when we deviate from the master plan of God and look only to ourselves, our past state will not count in the final judgment. For those who do not obey God will surely be destroyed. This is not only a threat but a hope that all evil powers used by Satan today will finally be done away with.

Conclusion

In the first section, the textual variants as presented in the MT were reviewed, showing that apparently no great discrepancy is given in the ancient manuscripts. The change of gender (feminine to masculine), in the number of stones in v. 13 and the form of “sanctuaries” in v. 18, shows that the translators have struggled with the identity of this figure throughout history. And since the text is full of hapax legomena and a metaphorical one, careful analysis needs to be performed before any suggestions regarding changing the text can be entertained.

In the second section, the words investigated revealed the common themes of creation and worship. The word Eden which alluded to the garden created by God for the first couple has the same meaning in the
ANE. This place was known as the abode of gods, a sanctuary, and post-exilic Jewish writings portrayed it as heaven showing the relation between God and its inhabitants.

The cherub fits perfectly in this picture, since it is also seen in the story of Genesis, as the guardian of the divine place. In the Ark of the Covenant this figure protects the divine abode. In ANE a similar figure is seen in relation to cultic settings, and possibly its etymology refers to worship. Connected to the qualification of the cultic theme becomes more evident. Since this word is mostly used for personage close to God, in Israel, especially in ritual of purification of changing of spiritual status in connection with the temple.

The word arb complements the language of creation and worship. Since this is used in the OT just for the activities of God. It is for this very reason that creation worships Him. This element of primeval creation and worship reveals that this mysterious king of Tyre is someone very close to God involved in the worship of Him.

The complex phrase emphasizes even more the cultic thematic of the passage. The interpretation for this phrase is related to music and worship, namely the “tambourine and flute.” Relying heavily on the studies of Arbel, I concur that the term alludes to feminine figures playing instruments which is attested by archeological findings related possibly to cultic prostitution of the pagan nations close to Israel.

If this is right, it fits well with Ezekiel’s oracle to Tyre and its king who desires to be god, in the place of the God of Israel. The relation here to the second commandment of the Decalogue is clear, especially when seen in the context of the sanctuary. The changing in the LXX from Σω to Tu between chapter 27 and 28 may also indicate something different in this personage who challenges God.

Another important concept is that in the literary structure and features of the text there are similarities between Tyre and Egypt. And it is only in those sections of Ezekiel that the key phrase know that I am the LORD is absent and the figure of speech garden of God/Eden appears. Alluding to the fact that something special exists in these two characters, the kings of Tyre and Egypt.

The historical study indicated the probable time of Ezekiel’s oracle to the king of Tyre, according to the dating of the book itself. The context of exile and the image of Tyre also is important in the study of the Ezekiel 28. As was explained in this section, Tyre became relevant to Israel’s
history with the construction of the temple in the time of David, and its economical apex probably happened during the time of Ahab, with the father of Jezebel.

If Hatzenstein suggestion is correct, that the historical image behind the figure in Ezekiel’s oracle is Ethbaal I (the father of Jezebel), the contrast between true worship and false worship becomes more evident showing a theme of conflict between false gods and the true God of Israel.

I presented how Jewish, early Christians, modern theologians, and Seventh-day Adventists approach the text. The midrash *Genesis Rabbah* saw Eve in the character of this mythological king, because of its allusion to Genesis 2 and 3, the theme of the fall and possibly the feminine wording.

Christians, in the context of the establishment of the Church, saw in the king of Tyre a representation of Satan and all the tyrant kings which go against Christ’s gospel. They read this text in the lens of the New Testament description of Satan and affirmed that this exaggerated image of the king of Tyre could not be historically true. Seventh-day Adventists also have traditionally interpreted this passage as alluding to Satan and the primeval fall of the cherubim of God. But both of them are weak in their exegetical arguments.

The modern approach to the book of Ezekiel stresses the need of historical and cultural studies to enlighten the message of its content. Seeing the whole book as a product of post-exilic Judaism, most recent authors who publish studies on the book of Ezekiel, follow this approach which influences their interpretation. The passage is often seen in the context of ANE mythology applied to the historical king of Tyre.

They often interpret the passage as only applying to the king of Tyre, referring to myths in Tyre that show the god Melkart and its temple as the perfect context for such characterization of divinization of a king. The problem with this interpretation is that so far no myth of Tyre has been found to support this assumption, and often, the works simply quote Cooke and his ideas without investigating them.

Finally, I have given my theological analysis of the text, focusing on the textual description of God, the world and mankind, showing that the passage stresses the idea of God’s historical involvement with mankind’s affair. His interest is expressed through judgment and creation which is tied to the theme of the Great Controversy and the sanctuary as Seventh-day Adventists have interpreted it.

More exegetical work needs to be done on this passage. Even though
this work was just a preliminary one, it points out that the worship thematic can help understand the passage. Its connection with Jezebel, Eden, the sanctuary, pagan worship, and exile may elucidate this hard and key passage in connection to the Great Controversy.
The Ultimate Faith: A Study on Romans 8:31-39
Dário Gabriel Ferreira

Introduction

After speaking of the freedom won by those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1-11) and now walk in the Spirit (8:12-17), Paul calls on believers to have hope in the midst of suffering, based on the freedom achieved by the death and resurrection of Jesus (8:18-25). The certainty of our hope is confirmed both for those who love God and those who are called according to His purpose (8:28). In the last part of the chapter, Paul poses a series of at least six questions (vv. 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35) that are answered in an surprising and uncompromising manner, where the love of God, as demonstrated in the person of Jesus, is presented as the believer’s assurance that nothing exists or could exist in the physical, temporal, or timeless world that can accuse and condemn us.

As children of God living in this hostile world, we are naturally subject to threats and accusations from various enemies coming from different places and times or cosmic realities, all of them seeking to condemn us and separate us from the love of God. In Romans 8:31-39, Paul emphasizes the triumphant way in which we can have confidence in God’s faithfulness to those who receive His supreme love, and promises victory in the assurance that nothing can separate us from His love.
The Eternal Purpose of God

The provision of these verses (Rom 8:31-39) has been the subject of differing opinions. Many scholars divide the verses into five parts (vv. 31a, 31b-32, 33-34, 35-37, 38-39).¹ Edwards and Allen divide them into four stanzas (vv. 31-32, 33-34, 35-37, 38-39).² Boa classifies them into three bases for the protection of the believer (vv. 31-32, 33-34, 35-39).³ Spence divides the verses into three different sections: The Believer’s Soliloquy (vv. 31-32), The Believer’s Challenge (vv. 33-36) and The Believer’s Supreme Persuasion (vv. 38-39).⁴ Still other scholars divide Romans 8:31-39 into two parts (vv. 31-34 and 35-39) focused on the security of the Christian: in God’s faithfulness in His Judgment and the assurance of His love in any condition of existence in this world.⁵

The first question found in Romans 8:31 introduces the conclusion of the whole argument of 8:18-30, which in turn is a conclusion of chapters 6-8.⁶ Paul often uses this rhetorical question (“What shall we say then”) in Romans to anticipate his arguments (3:1, 4:1). These words do not stand alone, but are part of a substantive question: “What shall we say in view of these things?”⁷ πρὸς τὰ παῦτα, “to these things” (v. 31), refers to what Paul said earlier in chapters 6-8, especially in relation to the suffering of Christians. For Dunn, the New English Bible (NEB) best expresses the meaning of

⁶ Dunn, Romans, 499.
⁷ Douglas J. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 539.
this question: “With all this in mind, what are we to say?” The function of these two questions in 8:31 is to make a general statement of what is to come, which is then unwrapped in successive phases. The certainty of salvation (justification) of those who are by faith in Jesus Christ and their hope in the midst of suffering come to a climax in verse 31 with the expression εἰς ὅ θεος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “If God is for us.” This is Paul’s expression of triumph over the trials and “sufferings of this present time” (8:18) and the certainty of life in hope. This term evokes all the “things” previously mentioned by the apostle that were given to us by God as well as the victory of the full salvation, which is in Christ Jesus (8:37). The expression εἰς ὅ θεος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “If God is for us,” implies Jewish monotheism because the confidence of the believer is not based on some of the gods being “for us,” but on the one God who is “for us.” It is interesting, as suggested by Dunn, to contrast the one God with the “many” who are against us. To the only God they are nothing. The Greek preposition ὑπὲρ, “for,” could also be translated as “on behalf of.” Paul uses this word many times to describe the atonement of Christ (Rom 14:15; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14-15, 21; Gal 1:4; 2:20, 3:13; Eph 5:2, 25; 1 Thess 5:10; Titus 2:14; and especially Rom 5:6-8). According to Moo, this expression “suggests that God is ‘on our side,’ that he is working ‘for’ us.”

God appears here in verse 31 as that which arises ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “for us,” that is, in our defense. Thus, there are no enemies, be they men, angels, adversity, or persecution, that can prevent salvation as a result of the γάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, “love of God that is in Christ Jesus” (8:39). It is interesting that the same God who is ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “for us” (v. 31), or in our defense, is the same God who gave His only son ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων, “for us all” (v. 32). These two apparently similar expressions refer to different salvific actions of God himself. The first expression, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “for us” (8:31), shows God standing in our defense, while the second expression, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων, “for us all” (8:32), shows God giving His Son, Jesus, in our place. Dunn rightly asserts that the phrase θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “God is for

---

8 Dunn, Romans, 499.
10 Dunn, Romans, 500.
11 Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 539.
12 Wright, The Letter to the Romans, 612.
13 Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 539.
us,” can be understood as a summary of Paul’s gospel.\textsuperscript{14} Actually, the gospel is “God for us,” or rather “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom 1:16).

The question τίς καθ’ ἡμῶν, “... who is against us?” already suggests the answer. But even so, Paul suggests a number of candidates in the following verses (8:35-39). Among them, he mentions the dangers and difficulties that he experienced in life as a missionary, as well as threats from the spiritual world, natural disasters, and even other humans.\textsuperscript{15} Paul remains steadfast as a good monotheist: “There is one God, and if this God is on our side, then no force on earth or elsewhere can ultimately stand against us,”\textsuperscript{16} so we have nothing to fear.

In verse 31, the Apostle Paul describes the high position of the children of God above this threatening world in a negative way (Mohrlang suggests a more positive translation: “His power transcends everything—who can stand against him?”).\textsuperscript{17} He goes on to describe it in a positive way in verse 32: God is for us as our protector in complete fulfillment of His divine plan “to such a degree That He Gave His Son for us.”\textsuperscript{18}

It is likely that the expression ἵνα οὐκ ἐφείσατο, “did not spare His own Son,” is a reference to Genesis 22:16, when Abraham was tried by God and also “did not spare his only son.” (This view is shared by many scholars.)\textsuperscript{19} Lenski adds that this verse not only recalls the words

\textsuperscript{14} Dunn, \textit{Romans}, 500.
\textsuperscript{15} Wright, \textit{The Letter to the Romans}, 612.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Roger Mohrlang, \textit{Romans}, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 143.
\textsuperscript{18} John Peter Lange, \textit{A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical, with Special Reference to Ministers and Students: Romans} (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915), 282.
of Genesis 22:16, but the act itself in a double correspondence: “What God acknowledges as the highest proof of love in Abraham he himself has furnished us: he actually spared not his own Son.”

According to Dunn, the active form of the verb παρέδωκεν “delivered” (v. 32), differs from the passive form at 4:25, and “at this point it serves to answer the triple—in 1:24, 26, 28, thus strengthening the impression that 8:31-39 is intended to round off the whole argument thus far: God’s Son hanging over His grace in his answers handing over his creatures in wrath.” In verse 32, παρέδωκεν clearly refers to Christ’s atoning sacrifice on our behalf. Dunn makes an important observation of the text, pointing out that σὺν αὐτῷ must take up the παρέδωκεν. God has given His Son, and in addition He will give “all things,” that is, “Everything which we need.” Here Paul is adding to his argument by showing that if God had done as much as He could, giving His Son, how could He fail to do what was much lower?

The preposition ὑπὲρ, “for,” in the context of v. 32, has a much deeper meaning than simply “for the benefit of”—it means the vicarious death characteristic of a sacrifice or martyr. Even more telling is the fact that the addition of πάντων, “all,” to ὑπὲρ, “for the benefit of,” relates to the common usage of this word that Paul employs in Romans both implicitly (1:5, 16; 2:9-10; 3:4, 9, 20, 22, 23; 4:11, 16; 5:12, 18) and explicitly (10:4, 11, 12, 13; 11:26, 32; 15:11, 33; 16:26) to include Gentiles as well as Jews.

The word χαρίσεται, “graciously give,” may be in contrast with παρέδωκεν, “delivered” (8:32). Delivering His Son was a difficult and agonizing act of God for humanity. However, after this daunting task was undertaken and the victory won, God is revealed by Paul as the one who gives us grace and all things through Jesus Christ.

ἐγκαλεῖω, “bring to account” (8:33), is discussed by Dunn as a legal term that refers to bringing formal charges against someone. Thus, this verse...
clearly states (or predicts) the final courtroom scene. The word ἐγκαλέσει, “will bring a charge,” is derived from a verb form indicating that someone comes forward with the aim to acknowledge or lay charges against another (see Acts 19:40; 23:29; 26:2).

In verse 33, God is seen as the Supreme Judge of His elect, declaring them blameless in Christ. I appreciated the understanding of Dunn regarding the phrase ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ, “God’s elect.” He mentions that this expression is the central element in Jewish self-understanding. By using this expression, Paul intends to show the continuity of Israel between the old and the eschatological people of God; it is also used by other New Testament writers (Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; Col 3:12; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1; Rev 17:14). Dunn is right to say that the immediate repetition of θεὸς places emphasis on it.26

By ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ, “God’s elect,” Paul is not advocating the idea of double predestination—the election of some and rejection of others. Paul is referring to believers who freely choose to accept God’s plan for the salvation of His children through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Dunn shares my observation that δικαιῶν represents that the action of God is not an isolated action, but an ongoing sustaining action.27 Δικαιῶν clearly also has a forensic significance, as “Luther excellently says, in harmony with the sense, ‘God is here.’”28

In verse 34 we find the third question, which is followed by a statement. They are referring to basically the same topic: complaint against those who are in Christ. But in all the statements that follow, there is no possibility of condemnation τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰςοῦ, “for those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1). Verses 31-34 in particular confirm the striking conclusion (8:1) that starts with chapter 8 of Romans. Dunn notes the ambiguity of Greek in many cases, as with the verb κατακρίνων (v. 34), which “could be either the punctuated the present or the future.” This ambiguity could be intentional on the part of Paul, with eschatological goals, referring to the final judgment. In affirming that Χριστὸς Ἰςοῦς ᾧ ἀποθανόν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐγερθεὶς, “Christ Jesus is He Who Died, yes, rather who was raised” (8:34), “Paul is still thinking in terms of Adam soteriology, of Jesus’ death as an end of Adam (see on 8:3), opening the way for the new Adam, to

---

26 Dunn, Romans, 502-503.
27 Ibid., Romans, 503.
appear in the resurrection (1 Cor 15:20-22).”

The expression δὲ καὶ ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, “who is also at the right hand of God” (DBT), is echoed in Psalm 110:1, which had an unquestionably messianic interpretation among the Jews at the time of Jesus (Mark 12:35-37), and since the early days of the church (see Mark 14:62, 16:19; Acts 2:33, 7:55-56; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; 1 Pet 3:22; Rev 3:21). Some agree that this passage was very much beloved in early Christology due to its abundant use in the New Testament. This is without doubt the passage of the Old Testament most applicable to Christ. Being at the right hand is a place of special honor and authority (1 Kgs 2:19; Ps 45:9; Acts 2:33, 5:31, 7:55-56), taking into account that the right hand represents power (Exod 15:6, 12; Deut 33:2; Job 40:9; Ps 17:7, 18:35, etc.). “The right hand was the traditional place of honor beside a king, giving the occupant direct access to him.” The one sitting at the right hand shares the king’s authority and power over his people.

Jesus has sovereignty, dominion, and authority on earth and in heaven, and no unfavorable circumstance can stop Him from caring for His people or keeping them in His infinite love. This verse includes “two emphatic relative clauses, the δὲ of each = ‘he who.’” The phrasing “He who is at the right hand of God, He who also intercedes for us” (my own translation) emphasizes the purpose for which Jesus “was raised from the dead” and “exalted into the fullest participation in his divine majesty and power.” Talbert notes another fact that is important for understanding Romans 8:34: the right hand was the proper place of honor for one who came to intercede (e.g., Bathsheba sat at the right hand of Solomon when she came to intercede for Adonijah: 1 Kgs 2:19). Thus, Jesus takes the honorable place at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for us (Heb 7:25, 9:24; 1 John 2:1; Matt 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9; Acts 7:55-56). This is the first verse where Paul speaks of Christ being ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ, “at the right hand,”

29 Dunn, Romans, 503.
30 See Allen, The Broadman Bible Commentary, 224; Dunn, Romans, 503.
32 See Dunn, Romans, 503; Keck, Romans, 221; Best, The Letter of Paul to the Romans, 103; Hendriksen, Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 289.
33 Best, The Letter of Paul to the Romans, 103.
34 John Murray, The Epistle to the Romans (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 329.
35 Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 571.
36 Ibid., 571; Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 542.
in His work of intercession (Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; Col 3:1).\(^{37}\)

The last phrase of verse 34, δὴ καὶ ἐντυχεῖνε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, “who also intercedes for us,” recalls the words of the Song of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53:12, “and interceded for the transgressors” (NASB). We find similar expressions in the New Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 7:25; 9:24) and the writings of John (1 John 2:1; John 14:16).\(^{38}\)

Paul continues the sequence of questions in verse 35 and gives a striking response that is no less triumphant. Dunn proposes that when Paul uses the definite article with Χριστός in 8:35, he is thinking in Jewish terms—Jesus as the Messiah “who has fulfilled the Jewish expectation and hope,” and not just by expressing God’s love for his people.\(^{39}\)

The forms of distress in verse 35 are described according to the experience of Christians at the time, especially Paul’s own personal experience.\(^{40}\) The Apostle Paul, more than any other, was aware that believers were not free from adversity. He could talk about how it affected his own life, as he did in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. Like Paul, Christians may suffer evil of all kinds, only to realize that the evil can never separate them from the love of Christ or divert them from their journey to heaven. The words of Romans 8:35 ensure the safety of the Christian spirit in the face of the dire circumstances of life, even if those circumstances do not have the power to destroy or impede their spiritual journey.

The initial words of verse 36, καθὼς γέγραπται, “As it is written,” occur seventeen times in the Epistle to the Romans, continually connecting its message to the Old Testament. Paul considered his message to be a continuation, and often the fulfillment, of Old Testament revelation.

Most scholars confirm that verse 36 is a quotation from Psalm 44:22,\(^{41}\) but it could also evoke other passages, such as Zechariah 11:4,7 and Isaiah

---

\(^{37}\) Talbert, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, 229.

\(^{38}\) Allen, The Broadman Bible Commentary, 224.

\(^{39}\) Dunn, Romans, 504.

\(^{40}\) Lange, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, 284; Dunn, Romans, 505.

\(^{41}\) See Barret, Black’s New Testament Commentary, 163; Keck, Romans, 222; Lange, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, 284; Maly, Romans, 72; Schreiner, Romans, 463; Boa, Holman New Testament Commentary, 263; Edwards, New International Biblical Commentary, 225; Allen, The Broadman Bible Commentary, 224; Talbert, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, 230; Hendriksen, Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 291; Murray, The Epistle to the Romans, 331; Best, The Letter of Paul to the Romans, 103; Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 574; Mohrlang, Romans, 142; Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, 544; Moo, Romans, 283.
53:7. Maly suggests that Paul used this psalm to refer to the suffering of Christians, because he knew the application that the Jewish rabbis had for the martyrs in 2 Maccabees 7.

In my view, the expression ἐν εὐκενῶ σοῦ, “For your sake,” expresses that believers would suffer harm for the love of Christ because they would be targets of attacks in the kingdom of darkness, as Christ was. Christians are compared to sheep being led to slaughter. I see the expression πρόβατα σφαγῆς as a reminder that just as sheep are humble and innocent beings, so Christians must have patience, meekness, and humility in the face of the suffering that is sure to come if they follow Christ. “Suffering and persecution are not mere evils, which Christians must expect and endure as best they can; they are the scenes of the overwhelming victory, which Christians are winning through Christ.”

In Romans 8:37, “ἀλλὰ is the simple adversative,” and therefore the expression ἀλλὰ ἐν τούτωι πάσιν, “In all these things,” could be better translated as “for all this” or “in spite of all these things.”

Dunn noted the presence of many ὑπερ- compounds in Paul’s writings, like the one he uses in verse 37, ὑπερνίκησιν, a heightened form of νικάω, which conveys something like winning more than victory: “we are more than conquerors” (NIV). The verb ὑπερνίκησιν which is only used here (8:37), throughout the New Testament could better be translated as “We are super-conquerors,” or even, “We are super victors.” Paul might have had at least two reasons for this statement: that we can achieve victory even in the midst of spiritual suffering, and also when we suffer, we participate in the sufferings of Christ, which brings much benefit and comfort. The aorist verb ἀγαπησαντος ἡμῶν translated here as “who loved us,” probably recalls the great demonstration of the love of Christ on Calvary’s cross. There is nothing intrinsically in humans that can become a super-conqueror in this troubled world; the victory is only possible through the redemption that is in the blood of Christ. We are winning by the grace that is in Christ Jesus and not because of our own strength. Jesus overcame the world for us and shares this victory with us, making us more than conquerors (John 16:33).

---

42 Dunn, Romans, 505.
43 Maly, Romans, 72.
44 Barrett, Black’s New Testament Commentary, 163.
45 Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 37.
46 Dunn, Romans, 506.
47 Fitzmyer, Romans, 534; Maly, Romans, 72.
Paul closes chapter 8 of his letter with a poetic declaration of victory affirming the safety and spiritual welfare of believers (vv. 38-39). In Romans 8:38-39, Paul cites things that are feared by human beings: death, life, supernatural powers, etc. All these things are threats, and except for “powers,” they are all presented in pairs, contrasting realities that go beyond the realities known by human experience (v. 35). Each of these pairs refers to different realities, as Keck states quite clearly: “life-death (the givens of creaturely existence), angels-rulers (heavenly and earthly beings), present-future things (temporal vicissitudes), height-depth (cosmic dimension).”48 Maly presents a somewhat wider view, but does not go beyond the meaning given by Keck.49

The perfect passive verbal form πεπείσματι, “convinced,” in verse 38 can be translated as “I have been convinced and continue to be so.” Paul uses the force of the perfect passive to underline his complete certainty.50 By using the expression πεπείσματι, “for I am convinced,” the apostle emphasizes something more than a mere knowledge of facts. The emphasis that Paul placed on the term shows that he knew what he was saying from experience. He was sure of what he was talking about, because he had already experienced the certainty of God’s love in the most unusual circumstances (v. 35). Paul asserts that there is nothing in death or in its results that can produce fear in us, because the love of Christ surpasses the power of death, which, according to Paul, will be the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor 15:26). Life often can be more difficult than death. The bitterness, uncertainty, and discouraging circumstances that life imposes on us, difficult as they are, cannot take from us the certainty of God’s love for us. Neither death nor life can separate us from the love of Christ.

The words ἄγγελοι and ἀρχαί occur only once in Romans. Dunn suggests different possible meanings, but recognizes the uncertain nature of these expressions, due to their lack of specificity. This could be intentional to indicate the whole range of heavenly beings, supernatural beings, and good or hostile angels. δυνάμεις, “powers,” could be another title for supernatural beings.51 As powerful as the angels are, none of them can stop us from having access to the redeeming love of Christ. Even the fallen angels, who can often influence or even temporarily possess any

48 Keck, Romans, 222; See also Schreiner, Romans, 464–465.
49 Maly, Romans, 72.
50 Dunn, Romans, 506.
51 Ibid., 507.
believer, have no power over the believer who turns to God’s love in Christ. The nouns “angels,” “principalities,” and “powers” used by Paul in this text can relate to the spiritual or supernatural world at different levels and intentions, whether good or bad. Neither the present (the known) with its harsh realities, nor the future (the unknown) with its countless surprises and uncertainties, can alter the loving plan of God for His children. For Paul, none of these things have any effect on God’s love.

The words \( \psi\omega\mu\alpha, \) “height,” and \( \beta\dot{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma, \) “depth,” used by Paul in Romans 8:39 are somewhat vague. However, \( \psi\omega\mu\alpha \) may be an allusion to the extreme point of this vast universe reached by the heavenly body and \( \beta\dot{\alpha}\theta\omicron\varsigma, \) by extension, could mean the extreme depth of the underworld (Rom 10:7; Eph 4:9; Matt 12:40). These words are followed by \( \tau\varsigma \ k\tau\iota\varsigma \iota \varepsilon\tau\varepsilon\alpha, \) “any other creature,” which could suggest that Paul had heavenly powers in mind. Paul could also be referring here to agents of the underworld, Satan, and evil angels, stating that they could not prevail against those who trust in Christ (see Matt 16:18). Jesus, the great conqueror, is in control of everything (Rev 1:17,18). It would seem that \( \tau\varsigma \ k\tau\iota\varsigma \iota \varepsilon\tau\varepsilon\alpha, \) “any other creature,” could also be translated as “anything in all creation,” which could include anything animate or inanimate that we can imagine or even that we cannot. The believer has the assurance of God’s love and has no reason to fear anything in all creation. These words of Paul’s have the power to instill limitless hope in the believer’s heart. If believers trust in the redeeming love of Christ, they can be sure of victory over sin, against Satan, and against the world.

These final words of Paul in verse 39 demonstrate emphatically that he had confidence in God’s faithfulness to those who were the focus of his supreme love—both Jews and Gentiles. The love of Christ is clearly stated in verse 35. Verse 37 speaks of He who loved us, and verse 39 identifies the source of that love and the means by which it is revealed, stating that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39b, NIV). Here, the full title and name of Jesus is used, and remembering that the preposition \( \varepsilon\nu, \) “in,” also means “in connection with,” we can conclude that “the love of Christ and that of God is the same.”

---

52 Dunn, Romans, 507-508.
53 Ibid., 508.
54 Ibid.
55 Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, 578.
find to show that the divine power the Scriptures call love, which Paul saw endlessly demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ, as inexhaustible.\textsuperscript{56} The great love of God, as was clarified by Paul, is a “love illimitable, all-pervasive, eternal; yes, but a love which has a channel and a course; love which has a method and a process by which it pours itself over the world.”\textsuperscript{57} MacLaren, in very significant words, exposes the deeper meaning of “the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39b): “In Christ the love of God is all centered and embodied, that it may be imparted to all sinful and hungry hearts, even as burning coals are gathered on a hearth that they may give warmth to all that are in the house.”\textsuperscript{58}

Thus ends this remarkable and wonderful chapter, reinforcing that because we are justified by grace through faith in Christ’s sacrifice, we are safe in the arms of God in Christ, where “nothing” can snatch us.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Robinson said with propriety that Romans chapter 8 was “perhaps the greatest chapter in the New Testament,” and verses 31-39 in particular confirm this statement.\textsuperscript{59} Paul, through his questions and answers, anticipates any complaints that may be made against the children of God by any other creature. “No condemnation is more persuasive than Christ’s intercession, no deprivation, no sovereignty, no distance a greater reality.”\textsuperscript{60} There is nothing that can separate a true believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

I conclude with the resounding words of Mohrlang:

Whether we live or die, we are safe. We have nothing to fear from either the angelic or the demonic realm—or from any kind of spiritual evil, no matter how hellish. Our anxieties and fears of the moment, our worries about the future—these things have no power to sever our relationship with Christ. There is nothing, absolutely nothing in the whole universe—from one end to the other, from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell—that has the power to overcome God’s love for us in Jesus Christ. For ‘your real life is hidden with Christ in God’ (Col 3:3).\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{56} Maly, \textit{Romans}, 72.
\textsuperscript{57} MacLaren, \textit{Expositions of Holy Scripture}, 220.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Barton, \textit{The Oxford Bible Commentary}, 1099.
\textsuperscript{61} Mohrlang, \textit{Romans}, 145.
AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FOURTH WARNING IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Natal Gardino

Introduction

This article attempts to explain three important issues in the pericope of Hebrews 10:26-31, which is known as “the fourth warning” in the book. It deals with questions that emerge from the text summarized as: (1) “What kind of sin is the author referring to in this passage? Is it about any specific sin?” (2) “What punishment is the author talking about? Is it about a local punishment like the destruction of Jerusalem or is it about the final judgment in the Second Coming of Jesus?” and (3) “What is the nature of this ‘fire’? Is it literal or a figure of language?”

Textual Analysis

The topic for this study is the so called “fourth warning passage” in the book of Hebrews, which for the purposes of this article will be delimited by the verses 10:26-31 for two main reasons. First, because this is the
most significant passage to be called properly as a “warning” within the larger section where it is embedded in (10:19-39, which is known as an “exhortation section”). And the second reason is because there seems to be an “inclusion” here—a special material sandwiched between two occurrences of the adjective φόβος ροώς (“fearful, terrifying”) in the beginning and in the end of this little section in order to delimit the complete unity of thought.

**Literary Genre**

The book of Hebrews is called by its author as a “word of exhortation” (Heb 13:22). As a large majority of scholars point out, it is often delineated into alternate sections which are referred to as “exposition” and “exhortation.” In this manner the author tries to find a way first to teach or indoctrinate his recipients and then he appeals for their commitment as he applies the teachings through considerations, exhortations, warnings, and appeals.

The “warning passages,” which most commentators consider as being in total number five, are very important parts within the structure of the “exhortation sections.” They are strong appeals to the readers that they keep their commitment and do not suffer the consequences of “drifting away.”

**Contextual Analysis**

**Historical Background**

The background of the book of Hebrews is thoroughly discussed in a wide variety of commentaries; therefore, it is enough to say here that (1) since the early church there are only conjectures about who its author is; (2) that its addressees were Christians who were very aware of Jewish issues (sanctuary, sacrifices, Old Testament laws, rabbinic traditions, etc.), therefore they were probably Jewish Christians; (3) that the addressees were at risk of “drifting away” from Jesus (either for persecution motives

---

2 In this passage between the words φό, and βεροώς we find “pathos,” or “an appeal to fear the God who comes as Judge and Avenger”; see Herbert W. Bateman, ed., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2007).

3 Only a few commentators dare to give a name to the author. Out of all the literature consulted for this paper, I found one author, Arthur W. Pink, who affirms that Paul the apostle wrote this book. Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1954), 2:114.
when some had to insult Jesus publicly\(^4\) or for going back to the old system of Judaism and its sacrifices or simply for not going to the church and having a sinful unrepentant life); (4) that the time when this book was written is approximately around and most probably before the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**Literary Context and Structure**

Within the exhortation sections there are smaller parts known as “warning passages.” Despite the fact that the exact delimitations of the warning sections are disputed\(^5\) (as also are some of the exposition and exhortation sections), it must be observed that the warning passages play an important role within their respective exhortation structures because without them the whole section (no matter where it begins or ends) would lose much of its strength. The first warning (Heb 2:1-4), for example, stands alone as a full exhortation section by itself.

The fourth warning in 10:26-31 is an exhortation with a strong eschatological motive, which is divided into three parts of two verses each. Verses 26-27 establish the argument for the cause of divine punishment (“going on sinning” after having received full knowledge of the truth which equals despising the real sacrifice for sins) and the consequence (judgment and a zeal of fire to devour the adversaries); verses 28-29 suggest a reflection on how serious this attitude is when compared to the Old Testament rejection of inferior sacrifices; and verses 30-31 quote God as saying He will punish the wicked and echo a verse in the OT (2 Sam 24:14) on how terrifying it is to “fall into the hands” as an “adversary” (cf. v. 27).

**Intertextuality**

To understand the “fourth warning” we need to see its context in the book as well as its links to the other four warnings since they share some

---


common aspects for example: (1) repetition of the main problem in all of them: “drift away” (1st); “fallen short” (2nd); “fallen away” (3rd); “sinning willfully” (4th); and “turn away from Him” (5th); (2) the first, fourth and fifth warnings use techniques of comparison taken from Old Testament episodes applying them to a bigger situation in the present (as we are going to see below); (3) same expressions and themes (like 2nd, 4th and 5th: “the Living God”; 4th and 5th: Moses); (4) one warning can amplify and clarify another (the 4th warning clarifies the 3rd one; and the 5th clarifies the 4th7).

Verses 26-27

Most commentators have linked the word ἐκδοχὴ (“willfully”, “deliberately”) to the “sin of high hands” of Numbers 15:30-31.8 This was the sin committed on purpose, simply by rebellion against the law of God. For that kind of sin there were no sacrifices provided, and the sinner was excluded from the community of Israel.9 That is why the author of Hebrews says that for deliberate sins (continuously going on sinning) “there no longer remains a sacrifice”. “Still living in the practice” of sin after having “died to sin” (cf. Rom 6:2) is rejecting Christ’s offering, leaving the sinner condemned without a substitute sacrifice. What does remain instead is a

---


7 Edward William Fudge, The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment (Houston, TX: Providential Press, 1982), 277. He sees a parallel between both the 4th and 5th warnings; however Johnson goes further suggesting there is a parallel of both 4th and 5th with also the 1st one, saying that the 5th warning reasoning is “exactly parallel in form and content to 2:1-4 and 10:26-31”; see Johnson, “Hebrews,” 225. The interconnections in the five warnings are so interesting that Bateman suggests even a chiasmus of them but, in my view, despite ingenious, it is forced since he has to adapt words to fit his goal of a chiasmus. See Bateman, Four Views, 84.

8 See, for example, Fudge, The Fire That Consumes, 275; See also Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 96; Attridge, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 292. For one author who does not agree much with this connection, see Alan Mugridge, “Warnings in the Epistle to the Hebrews: An Exegetical and Theological Study,” Reformed Theological Review 46, no. 3 (1987).

9 Attridge, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 292.
“certain” (τις) expectation\(^{10}\) of judgment and a zeal of fire that will devour the enemies” (Heb 10:27).

Tertullian and other ancient leaders of the church believed that this passage taught that after baptism a person cannot commit sin and be accepted back into the church.\(^{11}\) But this is not the case in this passage, as will be commented on later.

It is difficult not to connect verse 10:27 to Isaiah 26:11b, which the author probably alluded to.\(^{12}\) The verse says: “γνώντες δὲ αἰσχυνθήσονται ζῆλος λήψεται λαὸν ἀπαίδευτον καὶ νῦν πῦρ τοὺς ὑπεναντίους ἔδεσαι” which can be translated as “They will see [Your] zeal for the people and will be put to shame; Indeed, fire will devour [ἔδεσαι, from ἔσησο] Your enemies.”

Still in the Greek Old Testament there are also two other verses closely connected to Hebrews 10:27 by the idea of judgment, punishment, zeal, and destruction caused by “the day of the Lord:”\(^{13}\) Zephaniah 1:18b\(^{14}\) and 3:8c. Zephaniah 1:18 says, “Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord’s wrath; and all the earth will be consumed in the day of the anger of the Lord and in [the] fire [of] his zeal. Verses 3-8b say: “Wait for Me, declares the Lord, for the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them my burning anger; for all the earth will be consumed in [the] fire [of] my zeal.”

At least two important things should be observed when comparing these verses in Zephaniah against Hebrews and Isaiah 26:11: First, although the

---

\(^{10}\) Fudge believes that the meaning of the expectation here is conscient for the sinner, who “expects” the judgment. Fudge, The Fire That Consumes, 277-278. But I believe that this is not the case here since the sinner is doing it “deliberately”; rather the meaning is that the condemnation is sure to come (“about to come”).

\(^{11}\) Mugridge, “Warnings in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 78.


\(^{13}\) The motive of the “day of the Lord” is also understood as the antecedent for our pericope in v. 25.

\(^{14}\) Hume prefers to connect Heb 10:27 to Zeph 1:18 and says that “our author has omitted the first part of the verse” which talks about “the day of the Lord’s wrath” “but his audience would have known the reference to the day of the Lord of which v. 25 had reminded them”; see Hume, Reading through Hebrews, 91.
words for the destructive action of the fire are different (καταναλίσκω in Zephaniah and ἐσθίω in Hebrews and Isaiah) they have almost the same meaning when applied to total destruction by fire for either things or people and are used interchangeably in this sense throughout the Bible.\(^\text{15}\) Even the author of Hebrews alternates the form in Hebrews 12:29 where he quotes from the LXX: “Our God is a consuming [καταναλίσκων] fire (cf. Deut 4:24; 9:3).”\(^\text{16}\)

Some scholars suggest that the author also had in mind the fate of Nadab and Abihu when they were “devoured” by fire from the Lord.\(^\text{17}\) The word used in the LXX for “devoured/consumed” in this case is a third one, similar to ἐσθίω but stronger than it: κατεσθίω (“to devour”).

Second, in spite of the fact that the word ὑπεναντίως (enemies, adversaries) is not used in Zephaniah, there is an important factor in this book that makes the linkage to Hebrews 10:27 still stronger, which is the word relation between “fire” and “zeal.” In Hebrews, what is going to “devour” the enemies is “a zeal of fire” (πυρὸς ζῆλος ἐσθιεῖν) and in Zephaniah all the earth will be “consumed” “by the fire of His zeal” in 1:18 (ἐν πυρὶ ζῆλους αὐτοῦ καταναλωθήσεται) or “by the fire of My zeal” in 3:8 (ἐν πυρὶ ζῆλους μου καταναλωθήσεται).

The connection of the fourth warning to these three eschatological verses (Isa 26:11; Zeph 1:18; 3:8)\(^\text{18}\) and the reference to “the day” in the immediate verse before our pericope (10:25) have raised a debate among some scholars questioning whether the “day of the Lord” in the fourth warning is about a “local day of the Lord” accomplished in the destruction

---

\(^{15}\) For the use of ἐσθίω see Judg 9:20; Isa 10:17; 26:11; 30:27; Jer 21:14; Heb 10:27; Jas 5:3; for the use of καταναλίσκω see Lev 6:3; Deut 4:24; 9:3; 1 Chr 21:26; Zeph 1:18; 3:8; Zech 9:4.

\(^{16}\) The word for God as a “consuming” fire here as well as in Deu 4:24 and 9:3 is “καταναλίσκω”; but God is also referred to as a “consuming” fire with the word ἐσθίω in Isa 10:17; 26:11; 30:27; Jer 21:14.

\(^{17}\) See for example Pink, An Exposition of Hebrews, 117; and Fudge, The Fire That Consumes, 275.

An Exegetical Analysis of the Fourth Warning

of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., or if it is about the eschatological day of the Lord, the “Final Judgment.” But if we admit that the backgrounds from which our author gets his imageries to apply in the 4th and 5th warnings are from Exodus 19 we will see that he is making a comparison between the *epiphanía* in Moses time and the *parousía* in the Second Coming of Jesus, which is far superior.

For example, the 5th warning, which is very close in concept to the 4th as we can see in the appendix, has the preparation for an encounter with God in Sinai in Exodus 19 as a typology for the encounter with the glorious Jesus in His Coming. In the very first verse of that pericope (Heb 12:14) the author gives the imperative to “pursue” sanctification (*ἀγιασμόν*), “without which no one shall see the Lord,” which is a possible connection to Exodus 19:10-11 where God asks Moses to “sanctify” the people so that they could be able to see the Lord, whose glory appeared to them like a “consuming fire” (Deut 4:24). This is the same expression with which the author concludes the pericope in Hebrews 12:29 (“consuming fire”). And the New Testament teaches us that Jesus will come “in the glory of His father” (Mark 8:38) and the wicked will ask to hide from His presence for they cannot bear it (Rev 6:16-17; cf. Mal 3:2; Isa 33:14-16).

This aspect of the glory of Jesus being like the one that God displayed in His *epiphanía* in Exod 19 is not a unique interpretation by the author of Hebrews, but it is seen in numerous passages in the New Testament. We find in 2 Thessalonians 1:8, for example, that Jesus will come “in flaming fire” (*ἐν πυρὶ φ λογός*), which makes reference to the appearance of the glory of God upon the mount in Exodus 24:17 (*πῦρ· φλέγων*). In 2 Thessalonians 2:8, when affirming that in His coming Jesus will destroy the disobedient (*ἀνωμοί*), it says that it will be literally “by the *parousía* of His *epiphanía*” (*τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ*), as it was with Nadab and Abihu.

**Verses 28-29**

In Hebrews 10:28-29 the author uses (as he also does in the 1st and

---

19 For the idea of a local accomplishment of the “day of the Lord” over Jerusalem, see Bateman, *Four Views*, 363-365. On page 365 it is said that it is about “the devastation soon to be brought upon the Jewish nation by the Romans.”

20 The word in the Massoretic Text here is *ψαγή*, “sanctify,” but the LXX in this verse translates it as *ἀγιασμόν*, “purify, cleanse.”

21 This verse is numbered 1:7 in NAS and NAU versions.
5th warnings, specifically in 2:2-3 and 12:25) an “exegetical technique known as ‘from lesser to greater’ (a minore ad maiorem or, in Hebrew, qal wohomer),” which argues that “if something is true of a lesser example, then it is certainly true of a greater one.” It was a well known technique used “both among the rabbis and the rhetoricians” of that time, as can be seen in some other examples in the writings of Philo. Attridge suggests that this rhetoric technique “may represent a Christian adaptation of a commonplace of synagogue homiletics.”

Verses 30-31

In verse 10:30 he then confirms that the consequences are sure to come quoting from Deuteronomy 32:35-36 where God Himself states He will do it. Interestingly, he quotes as if they were two separate passages, a pattern he also applies in other places of his book (Isa 8:17-18 in Heb 2:12-13, and Deut 32:35-36 in Heb 10:30-31). Another interesting point here is that the quotation from Deuteronomy 32:35 (“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay”) is different from the LXX we know, but probably it was from a known Greek version current at the time, since Paul also uses this variant reading in Romans 12:19. Several proposals for an answer have been suggested for this variant usage: “intentional choice” by the author or he might be influenced by a liturgical text; or it might have come from a Targum, an Aramaic translation of the OT.

Regarding the 2nd quote in Hebrews 10:30 (from Deut 32:36) the reading is the same in Hebrews, the LXX, and Psalms 135:14 (134:14 LXX), “with Hebrews just dropping the οὐ”.

---

24 See examples of Philo’s usage of the technique in Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 293. See footnotes 24 and 25.
25 Ibid., 293-294.
Theology and Message

This little pericope of six verses containing the fourth warning (Heb 10:26-31) is called by Toussant as “the most severe of the five warning sections,” the “harshest warning in the book” by Guthrie and “the painful passage” by Fudge. Guthrie suggests that this warning must be so terrible because it comes after the author “concluded the great extended discourse of 4:14-10:25,” which is about the better priesthood of Jesus that should never be despised.

There is no other way in which humans can be saved than through the sacrifice of Jesus. Despising it is the same as “trampling,” “insulting,” and considering “common” the blood of Jesus, which means to deny His deity, counting His blood “just like the blood of any human.” Regarding forgiveness, yes, there is forgiveness for sins, but the ongoing action, against the conscience, may “harden the heart” of one in such a way to become like Esau, who “found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears” (Heb 12:17). Despite the fact that commentators have speculated about “what kind of sin” the author had in mind (apostasy, going back to the sacrifices of Judaism, “halfhearted adherence”), I believe it is important to remember that even one who does not abandon the church, can commit terrible sins, like the person mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 (who apparently was later on readmitted into the church, cf. 2 Cor. 5:2-8).

Thus, the problem is not about abandoning the church only (cf. Heb...
10:25, right before our pericope) but about the sin itself after having “tasted the goodness of the word of God” (Heb 6:5). The 3rd warning in chapter 6 says that in this case, going on sinning despite the knowledge received, “it is impossible” to renew the commitment of the person with Christ. “Here is a will to sin in spite of a full knowledge of the truth, knowledge being a thorough knowledge both in mind and by personal relationship.” 38 It can be compared to the so called sin “against the Holy Spirit.”

Nadab and Abihu had seen the fire coming out from the shekinah (Lev 9:23) which first devoured/consumed the offering given in their places. But when by their behavior they despised the substitute offering, they did not have a valid offering any longer, and they themselves were instead devoured by the same fire in the same manner. 39 “An acceptable offering or the sinner himself, those are the only options still.”

The presupposition of the idea of Hell does not allow some commentators to see this fire as being the very Glory of Jesus in His coming. 41 But there is evidence that for first readers the message of this warning was very well understood, because they believed in the second coming of Jesus. One evidence of this is the curious fact that several Church Fathers of the ancient church understood the “consuming fire” of Hebrews as referring to Jesus Himself, probably as a reminiscence of the first readers. Howard Jacobson points out that “sometimes when the fathers quote the Deuteronomic verse [4:24]…, they understand it not of God but of Jesus.”

38 Fudge suggests there is a link here with 2 Tim 2:25 where Paul exhorts the church to try to be kind to those who oppose to see if “perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.” See Edward William Fudge, Our Man in Heaven, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), 63.

39 Note in Lev 9:24 and 10:2 the same words are used to refer to both the consuming of the offering and that of Nadab and Abihu’s fate: “καὶ ἔξηλθεν πῦρ παρὰ κυρίου καὶ κατέφαγεν” (“and fire came from the Lord and devoured”).

40 Fudge, The Fire That Consumes, 245.

41 See for example the contrast between Toussaint and A. T. Jones about this “consuming fire.” “The judgment awaiting those … consist of eternal loss in hell,” Toussaint, “The Eschatology of the Warning Passages,” 77. “As He is a consuming fire; and as, when He comes, we shall see Him as He is, we shall have to meet Him as that consuming fire that He is and there is no escaping it,” Alonzo T. Jones, “Our God Is a Consuming Fire,” Review and Sabbath Herald 76, no. 4 (1899): 51.

42 Based on several quotations from the Early Fathers, Jacobson convincingly suggests that there circulated in the Early Church a Jesus “saying” in which He (Jesus) compares Himself to the “consuming fire” of Deut 4:24, as can be seen in his article. Howard Jacobson, “God as Consuming Fire,” Harvard Theological Review 98, no. 2 (2005): 219-222.
Summary and Conclusion

The sacrifices of the Old Testament were holy and were the only providence for the forgiveness of sins. But Jesus’ sacrifice was far superior. Drifting away from Jesus, whether apostatizing from the church or living in sin after having “full knowledge” of His plan of salvation would leave a person without any other providence for sins, as it was in the Old Testament. When the author of Hebrews refers to sinning, he is not referring to any specific sin, but a “deliberate” continuous life of ongoing sinning. It would be the same as trampling and insulting the Son of God and His Spirit.

Despising the sacrifice God offered, therefore, is a serious sin. There is room for repentance and forgiveness until a certain point, which is when the “hardened hearts” cannot find “place for repentance,” even if one may seek it “with tears” (Heb 12:17).

There is a connection between the 4th and the 5th warnings that makes us understand, after comparison with the Old Testament and the New, that as the Hebrew people were to be prepared to meet the Lord in His glorious theophany at Sinai, we ought to be prepared to meet Jesus in His glorious parousia in Zion. The comparison of the pericopes does not allow us to think of a local punishment as a fulfillment for this warning, but rather of a real encounter with Jesus in His second Coming, Him who is “the radiance of His [God’s] glory and the exact representation of His [God’s] nature” (Heb 1:3).

The fire that is “about to come to devour the enemies” is taken from the punishment scenes in the Old Testament, like the one with Nadab and Abihu, the 250 with the incense burners and others who were punished with fire from God. This punishment, beyond being used in all the Old Testament when referring to the eschatological “day of the Lord” or the “final judgment” is the same imagery used in the New Testament when referring to the Second Coming of Jesus, whose glory will be displayed as fire and will cause the final destruction of sin and sinners; thus this “fire” must be literal, as seen in 2 Peter 3:7, 10-12, a fire that will melt the “elements” with “intense heat.”
### Appendix

**Five Warnings of Hebrews Briefly Paralleled**

| FIRST  
| SECOND  
| THIRD  
| FOURTH  
| FIFTH  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Drift away”</td>
<td>“unbelieving heart that turns away” (3:12); “Fallen short” (4:1)</td>
<td>“Fallen away”</td>
<td>Sinning willfully after…</td>
<td>Turn away from Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How shall we escape?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve?</td>
<td></td>
<td>If they did not escape when they refused him … how much less will we?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Moses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnt (kausin)</td>
<td>Zeal of fire</td>
<td>Consuming fire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The living God</td>
<td>The living God</td>
<td>The living God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>Spirit of Grace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.</td>
<td>there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they again crucify to themselves the Son of God.</td>
<td>has trampled under foot the Son of God.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put Him to open shame.</td>
<td>Insulted the Spirit of grace.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

43 This is not an exhaustive comparison of the warnings as the reader can notice.
AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FIFTH TRUMPET (REVELATION 9:1-11)

Leonardo Rodor de Oliveira

Introduction

The fifth trumpet in Revelation 9:1-11 is part of a larger section of “the Seven Trumpets” which is one of the more perplexing subjects in the book of Revelation and the entire New Testament. An incorrect interpretation of this passage may compromise an accurate understanding of the entire book of Revelation, and consequently important truths about God. This research seeks to study the meaning of the main elements of Revelation 9:1-11 which provides a context for judgment. This article will also seek to show that this judgment is limited to those who are not part of God’s people.

Methodology

It is understood that the most influential view of biblical interpretation is the critical method with its main presupposition as the natural origin

---

of Scripture against the supernatural. But the principles of interpretation used in this paper are taken from the Scriptures themselves, and not the ones advocated by the critical school of thought.

The article is divided into two main sections. The first part analyzes the text, which includes a grammatical analysis and a word-study of the key expressions found in Revelation 9:1-11. The words or expressions that were chosen for the study are: “Star fallen from heaven,” “Was given to him,” “Abyss,” “Locusts,” “Green grass” or “trees,” “five months” and “tail.” The second part will establish the immediate and the general context of Revelation 9:1-11, its OT motifs, and then its meaning and theological relevance through contextual analysis of the text.

Textual Analysis

“Star Fallen from Heaven” (ἀστέρα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πεπτωκότα)

ἀστέρα is a noun accusative masculine singular common from ἀστήρ. This word has both literal and figurative connotations in the Bible. Most of the time it carries a literal significance which simply means an astronomic body created by God (Gen 1:16, Ps 8:13; 147:4). But in a number of texts it has a symbolic implication which could mean angels (Judg 5:20; Job 38:7; Rev 1:20), God’s faithful people (Dan 12:3), Satan (Isa 14:12-14), the tribes of Israel or the twelve apostles (Rev 12:1),4 and Christ (Rev 22:16). This symbolic language can be found also in 1 Enoch 18:14 that mention’s the stars as heavenly beings.5 Since all texts referring to “star” in the book of Revelation (1:16; 1:20; 2:1; 2:28; 3:1; 6:13; 8:10, 11, 12; 9:1; 12:1; 12:4; 4

produced by human beings. It rejects the testimony of Scriptures to the divine existence and actions in the realm of human reality. In other words, this method has a problem with accepting the claim of supernatural revelation and inspiration of Scripture.

3 Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the Greek text are from Barbara Aland and others, The Ubs Greek New Testament, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deuthsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).

4 There is a strong allusion to Joseph’s dream in Rev 12:1, in which the sun, moon, and stars represent Jacob, his wife and his sons, namely, the twelve tribes of Israel. Since the twelve tribes no longer existed in the days of John, the stars could also refer to the twelve apostles of the New Testament Church, which is the new Israel. See Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, 378.

22:16), except 6:13, have a symbolical meaning, there is little doubt about the non-literal significance of “star” in Rev 9:1.

Isaiah 14:12 uses a similar expression alluding to Satan as the “morning star,” “that has fallen from heaven and has been cast down to the earth.” In Luke 10:18, Jesus uses similar language when describing Satan’s subjection to Him and His disciples: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven,” which seems to be in agreement with Revelation 12:9 and 13 which state that Satan was hurled to the earth with his angels. With this reasoning, it could be understood that Revelation 8:7 and 9:1 are another way of saying that Satan was expelled from heaven to earth.

It may also be argued, as Ladd has done, that Revelation 10:1, 18:1, and 20:1 are referring to heavenly angels “descending,” καταβαίνω, from heaven to earth which could indicate that the star that fell from heaven in Revelation 9:1 is an angel that was divinely commissioned to carry out God’s purpose. Michaels affirms that the fact that this star had fallen from heaven does not imply some kind of defection or rebellion against God. He considers this “star” rather to be a messenger of God. Beale, however, argues that καταβαίνω is a different metaphorical language and that the “falling star” metaphor is applied uniquely to evil angels in the OT, Jewish writings, and in the NT. This image of the “falling star” corresponds to the expression of being “cast down.”

In addition to these evidences of the “falling star” as representing Satan, Revelation 9:11 suggests that the locusts “had as king over them the angel of Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Appollyon.” Osborne states that the two words are synonymous and that the Hebrew word carries the function of a proper name derived from the

---

6 When John mentions the “sun,” the “moon,” and the “stars” in these verses, he uses the word ὡς (as, like). He is trying to explain something that he heard or saw comparing with something that he knew. In this case, the object of comparison must be literal because the symbol can only be compared with something literal, not with another symbol. Other examples are Rev 1:10, 14, 16; 4:1, 6, 7; 6:1.

7 George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 129.

8 J. Ramsey Michaels, Revelation (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 124.


10 Ibid. Beale also affirms that the word “descending” could indicate the judgment of evil angels as in 1 Enoch 86:3, but this does not mean that the “falling star” metaphor should be seen as interchangeably applicable to good angels.
verb “destroy” and means “Destroyer,” which is a term usually connected with the destruction of the world in apocalyptic literature. Therefore, the “falling star” of Revelation 9:1 could be an inclusio with “the angel of abyss,” namely, the “Destroyer” of Revelation 9:11, and would frame the fifth trumpet with the actions of Satan. This is compatible with a description of Satan as a thief that comes only to steal, kill, and destroy as in John 10:10. Therefore, Revelation 9:1 is not dealing with either “good angels,” as suggested earlier, or humans as military characters or other leaders of an invading army.

πεττωκότα is a verb participle perfect active accusative masculine singular of πεττω (fall). Kistermaker points out that πεττωκότα, “have fallen,” indicates that the star had already fallen before the blowing of the fifth trumpet. This is in agreement with Jesus when He said He “saw” Satan fall like lightning from heaven and Revelation 12:9 where John writes that Satan “was hauled” (ἐβληθη) to the earth. The description of the fall here is a description of an event that happened at some point in the past.

“Was Given to Him” (ἐδόθη)

ἐδόθη is a verb indicative aorist passive 3rd person singular of διδωμι, that means “was given.” This same tense appears frequently in Revelation (6:2, 4, 8; 7:2; 8:2, 3), which points out God’s sovereign control over the action. Rogers affirms the same, saying that the aorist passive in Revelation 9:1 is a divine passive that indicates that God is the one who gives. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary mentions that this divine passive

---

12 An inclusio is “a literary device in which the same word or phrase stands at the beginning and the end of a section.” Matthew S. DeMoss, Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 71.
13 Osborne, Revelation, 362.
14 Uriah Smith saw the fallen star of Rev 9:1 as being Chosroes II, the king of the Persian Empire that fought against the Roman Empire and prepared the circumstances for the Saracen invasion that was led by Mohammed. He also considered the Saracens, or Arabs, as being the locusts of the fifth trumpet. Uriah Smith, The Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1944), 493-505.
16 Osborne, Revelation, 362.
implies that “the power represented by the key was not intrinsically his (the fallen star), but was allowed to him by a higher power.”\textsuperscript{18} Stefanovic, agreeing with this view, explains why this divine passive was used:

The passive form here (“was given”) functions as the Hebrew divine passive. It was very common in the Judaism of the time. Jews believed that God’s name was too sacred to be uttered except in rare circumstances. When talking about God or his actions, they usually used what is called the divine passive. For instance, “You are blessed”, meant clearly, “God has blessed you.” The divine form is used often in the book of Revelation. The fact that the fallen star was given the key of the abyss meant that the key was given to him by God.\textsuperscript{19}

Ultimately, it is Christ that bestows this key, since He is the one who that overcame Satan and through His death and resurrection holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev 1:18). Champlin affirms that the book of Revelation portrays God as the One who has the control of every place including the abyss, and that even the mightiest evil power cannot work without His permission. He limits the means and the places of their function.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{“Abyss” (ἀβύσσος)}

ἀβύσσος is a noun genitive feminine singular common of ἄβυσσος, and it is translated as abyss, depth, and underworld.\textsuperscript{21} The LXX translated the Hebrew word צורק as ἄβυσσος, which is originally related to the immeasurable depth of the ocean in Genesis 1:2 where is said that “darkness was over the surface of the deep.” The same connection with the ocean is evoked in other OT texts (Gen 7:11; 8:2; 49:25; Ps 36:7; 42:7; 104:6; Prov 8:27-28; Isa 51:10, Ezek 26:19; Amos 7:4; Jonah 2:6; Hab 3:10).

The “abyss” became an expression for the place of the dead as in Psalms 63:9 in which David says that those who sought his life would be destroyed and would go down to the “depths of the earth.” The same meaning can be seen in Psalms 71:20, when David expresses his assurance in God that would bring him up from the “depths of the earth.” Osborne argues that

\textsuperscript{19}Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, 300.
possibly because the dead were considered unclean, “abyss” came to be used for the “pit” or “prison house” (1 En 10:4-6) in which fallen angels were imprisoned (1 En 10:4-6; 18:9-16; Jub 5:3-11).²²

In the NT, outside of the book of Revelation, it occurs only twice: in Romans 10:7 where it is referred to as the place of the dead, and in Luke 8:31 where it is used as the prison of evil spirits when the spirits begged Jesus repeatedly not to command them to go into the abyss. Though the word “abyss” is not found in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6, the same idea of a place where fallen angels are kept in gloomy dungeons bound with chains waiting for the day of their judgment is established.

In Revelation, “abyss” occurs seven times, three times in the context of the fifth trumpet. These references seem to be in agreement with 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6 since “abyss” is seen as a closed prison that, when it is opened, smoke (9:2) and the beast (11:7; 17:8) emerge, and that it will be locked again during the millennium when Satan will be kept in prison (20:1-3).²³ With this analysis of the word ἀβυσσός in the biblical texts in Revelation 9:1, 2, and 11, it appears to represent the headquarters of Satan and his fallen angels. In 9:11 he is portrayed as angel of the Abyss that rules over the demonic forces as a king.

“Locusts” (ἀκριδεῖς)

Although locusts were one of the few insects that were considered clean food (Lev 11:22; Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6) and were eaten by poor people, they are best known in the Bible for their destructive power. Simkins declares that the two prominent characteristics of locusts are that they swarm in vast numbers and have a voracious appetite.²⁴

Locusts in the OT are used as a symbol of judgment, both against apostate nations and Israel.²⁵ God used locusts against Egypt (Exod 10:4-15; Ps 77:46), Babylon (Jer 51:14 and 17), and it is also used as figure of language to depict the destruction of Nineveh (Nah 3:15).

Against Israel or Judah, God’s use of locusts is always related to their disobedience in connection to the covenant. It is mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:38 among the calamities that would fall upon Israel

²²Osborne, Revelation, 363.
²³Ibid.
²⁵Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, 300.
in the case of them breaking God’s commandments. In both Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple (2 Chr 6:28) and God’s answer to this prayer (2 Chr 7:13), elements of the covenant of Deut 28 can be seen, including the locusts. When in apostasy, the metaphor of the nations that came up against them as swarms of locust (as the Midianites, Amalekites, and all the Kedemites Judg 6:5; 7:12), was a reminder that God’s covenant had been broken.

But among all texts in the OT the most similar in language to Revelation is found in the book of Joel, where we find locusts connected to the language of judgment (Joel 2:4-10), but also connected to the day of the Lord (Joel 2:1). Joel 2 is a major passage behind the scenes of Revelation 9:1-11.26

While Joel 2:1 begins with a prophetic warning “blowing the trumpet” because “the day of the Lord is coming,” Revelation 9:1 begins with the blowing of a trumpet by an angel. Joel presents that day as a day of darkness and gloom and the sun and moon are darkened and the stars no longer shine (2:2 and 10). Revelation presents the sun and sky darkened by the smoke from the Abyss (9:2). In Joel the locusts have the appearance of horses (2:4), and in Rev 9 they look like horses (9:7). In Joel 2 they leap over the mountaintops with a noise like chariots and a mighty army drawn up for battle (2:5), in Rev 9 the sound of their wings is like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle (9:9). In Joel 2, at the sight of them, nations are in anguish and every face turns pale (2:6), in Revelation people will seek death but will not find it (9:6). It is clear that there is a strong relationship between these two texts.

“Grass, Plants, and Trees” (τὸν χόρτον τῆς γῆς χλωροῦν ἀνὸ δένδρον)

Just as “star” and “abyss” had a symbolic meaning apart from the literal in the OT, “grass,” “plants,” and “trees” also have figurative significance that go beyond the literal understanding.

Stefanovic points out that the symbols of trees and green grass are used in reference to Israel as God’s covenant people.27 This affirmation in connection with “trees” can be verified in the following texts (Ps 1:3; 52:8; 92:12-14; Isa 61:3; Jer 11:15-17; 17:7-8; Ezek 20:46-48), and “green grass” (Ps 72:16; Isa 40:6-8; 44:2-4) carry this connotation. The NT uses the same correlation in Matt 3:10 when John the Baptist compares the Pharisees and Sadducees to trees that did not produce fruit. The same analogy is also

---

26 Osborne, Revelation, 364.
27 Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, 288.
used by Jesus in Luke 23:28-31 and Luke 13:6-9 where He compares the Jewish people to a green tree and to a fig tree that did not produce fruit.

It is noteworthy that in Revelation 9:4 another divine passive is used (ἐρρέθη ἄντωνις) that means “it was said to them,” where God gives a command to the locusts that contrasts between those who would not be harmed by them and those who would be harmed. While the “grass of the earth,” the “plants,” or “trees” are not harmed, the “people who did not have the seal of God in their foreheads” are. This seems to indicate that “grass of the earth” and “plants” or “trees” corresponds to the people of God who are protected by Him. Paulien comes to the same conclusion when he comments that God’s people are safe from the demonic forces which come up from the abyss.28

“Five Months” (μῆνας πέντε)

In the OT the expression “five months” is found only in the Flood Story (Gen 7:24; 8:3). And, as it is noted by Stefanovic, it is mentioned there twice just as it is mentioned twice in the context of the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:5, 10).29 The only difference is that while in Revelation 9 the Greek words are μῆνας πέντε (five months), in Gen 7:24 (LXX) are ἕμερας ἐκατόν πεντήκοντα and in Genesis 8:3 are πεντήκοντα καὶ ἕκατον ἕμερας, both meaning “one hundred and fifty days.” Another important connection between the two texts is that both the Flood and the fifth trumpet are judgments of those who are not part of God’s people. In the Flood all who rejected God perished in the waters during the period of 150 days except Noah and his family, in the fifth trumpet all who reject God (they did not have God’s seal on their forehead) are tormented for five months, except God’s people.

“Tails” (οὐρᾶς)

οὐρᾶς noun accusative feminine plural common of οὐρά which means “tail”. The word appears only eleven times in both the OT and the NT (Deut 28:13, 44; Job 40:17; 41:7; Isa 9:14, 15; 19:15; Rev 9:10 [2x]; Rev 9:19 [2x]; Rev 12:4).

The use of the word in Isaiah 9:14-15 is significant for the book of Revelation. Isaiah uses the word to describe the prophets that teach lies. This fits into the image of the dragon in Revelation 12:4 that with his tail

29 Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, 301.
(lie or deception) “swept a third of the stars out of the sky.”

**Contextual and Literary Analysis**

**Immediate Context**

The fifth trumpet is part of a section in the book of Revelation called “the seven trumpets” (8:6-11:19), which are blown for “those who dwell on the earth” (8:13) or those “who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads” (9:4). The trumpets take the format of 4-2-1, with an interlude in 10:1-11:13 between the sixth and seventh trumpets. The last three trumpets are connected by the “woe” sayings (8:13; 9:12; 11:14). And the fifth trumpet is considered the first of these “woes.”

Osborne makes an important statement that a call to repentance is introduced in the context of the fifth and sixth trumpets and, in this way, “the trumpets participate in the mission to the world and provide both a final proof of God’s power over the earthly gods and a final chance to repent.”

Stefanovic agrees with this view, stating that the trumpet woes have a twofold purpose, which is to bring the wicked to repentance and to warn that the time for repentance is rapidly running out. Friedrich also supports this by saying “that these penal judgments are at root judgments of grace as it is emphasized in Revelation 9:20. The aim of God in sending the plagues is that men should be converted from idolatry. They are meant to drive men to repentance before it is too late.”

**Broader Context**

The seven trumpets are linked to the seven seals found in Revelation 8:3-5. This text is an interlude which splits the literary unit of the seven seals and seven trumpets in two parts. Therefore, Revelation 8:3-5 both concludes the seven seals and introduces the seven trumpets.

---

30 Osborne, Revelation, 339.
31 Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, 279.
33 Stefanovic points to other intercalations in the book of Revelation. For instance, 8:3-5 is sandwiched between vv. 2 and 6; 12:7-12 between vv. 6 and 13; and 15:2-8 between 15:1 and 16:1. In a similar way, chapter 7 is interlocked between the sixth and the seventh trumpet. Ranko Stefanovic, “The Angel at the Altar (Revelation 8:3-5): A Case Study on Intercalation in Revelation,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 44, no. 1 (2006): 94.
Stefanovic rightly observes that there are strong verbal and thematic parallels between the fifth seal and the interlude of Revelation 8:3-5, which makes the seven trumpets the response of God to the petition of saints that were slain because of the Word of God. For example, as observed by Beale, the word “altar” is mentioned three times in 8:3-5 and it is directly connected with the “prayers of the saints” whose souls are under the altar (Rev 6:9). But Stefanovic goes further when he affirms that the altar in 8:3a is the altar of sacrifice, while the “golden altar” in 8:3b-5 is the altar of incense. In his view, the apostle John did not identify the first altar but simply refers to it as “the altar” while he identifies the second as “the golden altar,” because he had in mind the altar previously mentioned, that is the altar in the scene of the fifth seal, where the slain saints prayed to God for vindication: “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”

The seven trumpets are linked to the seven bowl plagues as well. Stefanovic also states that while the plagues in the trumpets are seen as mixed with mercy, the bowl plagues are expressed as the fullness of God’s wrath unmixed with mercy (15:1). LaRondelle sees the first six trumpets as preliminary warning judgments, that “warn the world concerning the last plagues to come and the unmixed wrath of God to be poured out at the conclusion of the day of atonement, when no one can enter the temple in heaven (15:1, 5-8).”

---

34 Beale, The Book of Revelation, 461.
35 Ibid.
36 Stefanovic presents two reasons why the altar in Rev 8:3a must be the altar of sacrifice: First, the angel “came and stood at the altar” (8:3). Since whenever an angel “came”, they regularly came from the presence of God which can be expressed with terms as “from the rising of the sun (7:2), “from heaven” (10:1; 18:1; 20:1), and “out of the temple [in heaven]” (14:15, 17, 18; 15:6). And even when it does not mention the specific location, which happens three times, the context indicates that the angel came from the presence of God. With this in mind, the altar in 8:3a could not be the altar of incense because this altar is located “before the Lord” in front of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. This would make the word “came” irrelevant, since the angel was already in the presence of God. Second, it is said in Rev 8:3 that the angel stood (ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστήριου) “on the altar.” The preposition ἐπὶ when associated with genitive most frequently means “on” or “upon” which denotes something that forms a support or foundation. That would fit perfect with the structure of the altar of sacrifice which had a large dimension and had steps that led to its top where the sacrifices were offered. Stefanovic, “The Angel at the Altar,” 82.
37 Stefanovic, “The Angel at the Altar,” 84.
38 Ibid., 79-84.
39 Hans K. LaRondelle, “The Trumpets in Their Contexts,” Journal of the Adventist Theological
This would lead us to conclude that the seven trumpets have connection both with the seven seals, since they are connected to them through the intercalation in Revelation 8:3-5 which points the trumpets as the divine response to the prayers of the martyred saints of the fifth seal in Revelation 6:9-11, and with the seven bowl plagues in the sense that the seven trumpets are, in fact, a foretaste of what the seven plagues will be, when no additional opportunity will be given for those who rejected God.

**Background Motifs**

The background motifs of the specific elements of the fifth trumpet were already developed in the previous section dealing with the contextual analysis of the text. However, here we are going to deal with the background motifs of the trumpets in general.

Friedrich wrote a meticulous article describing “trumpet” and its word group into the context of the Greek World, in the OT, in Judaism, and in the NT with its use in context of war, peace or solemn occasions, cultic significance, theophanies, eschatological significance, and as musical instruments.\(^{40}\) In this study, he says that it is not possible to differentiate strictly between the secular, and cultic, and theological significance of the horn.\(^{41}\) At the same time it is used in war as a signal of attack (Job 39:24), to give added strength in the battle (Josh 6:20; Judg 7:18; 2 Chr 13:14; Jer 4:19; 1 Macc 5:31), to inspire courage or to terrify the enemy (Judg 7:18-21), to end the battle (2 Sam 2:28; 18:16), to commemorate the victory when returning home and going to the temple (2 Chr 20:28), and dismiss the army and send them home (2 Sam 20:22); it also had a spiritual significance that was related to God’s invocation. When the trumpet was blown, the people were to remember that God rescued them from their enemies (Num 10:8-10). It was in such a moment that Judah, when they saw that they were being attacked both from the front and the rear by the Israelite army, cried out to the LORD and the priests blew their trumpets, and as a result God delivered them from the Israelite army (2 Chr 13:14-16).

Stefanovic sees Num 10:8-10, as a key text in the OT pointing to the concept of “remembering” that is crucial to understand the seven

\(^{40}\) Friedrich, *The Eschatological Significance of the Trumpet*, 71-88.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 80.
trumpets in Revelation 8-9.\textsuperscript{42} When fighting against enemies, Israel blew the trumpets invoking God to protect them and deliver them. When in solemn occasions such as the New Moon festivals (Num 10:10), and the New Year’s feast (Lev 23:24; Num 29:1), the trumpet was also blown at the burnt offering and peace offerings. And even in the daily sacrifice, or \textit{tamid}, the blowing of the trumpet announced the sacrifice. It has also been pointed out that the trumpets were blown on the occasion of the dedication of the temple, and God with His Shekinah came into the temple and His glory filled the house (2 Chr 5:13). All these texts are reference to the fact that when God’s people blew the trumpet invoking Him, He “remembered” His people.

But the “trumpet” also had association with divine theophany, where God can be identified as the One who blows the trumpet (Zech 9:14). In Exod 19:19, it could denote the voice of God Himself, in which “the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, and then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.” According to Friedrich, Deuteronomy 5:22 confirms this when it mentions this moment saying that the Lord proclaimed the commandment “in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness.”\textsuperscript{43} It could be said that in a theophany context, the sound of the trumpet is God breaking the silence and revealing Himself to His people.

The eschatological significance is another aspect of the “trumpet” found in the OT. The Lord’s Day will be announced by a trumpet (Zeph 1:16; Joel 2:1). It is also related to salvation of God’s people (Isa 27:13; Zech 9:14).

In the NT, “trumpet” could sound on special occasions as is suggested in Matt 6:2, when generous gifts were given and the horn was blown to stimulate others to the same act.\textsuperscript{44} It also has a theophanic implication as in Hebrews 12:19, and also in Revelation 1:10 and 4:1 where the voice heard by John is compared with the sound of a trumpet. In its eschatological dimension, “trumpet” is associated with God’s intervention as it is seen in Matthew 24:31, 1 Corinthians 15:51:53, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, and Revelation 1:10, where it is always associated with the Parousia.

After looking at this background of the “trumpets” in both the OT and NT, we can approach Revelation 8-11 remembering that the seven trumpets

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Stefanovic, \textit{Revelation of Jesus Christ}, 276.}
\footnote{Friedrich, \textit{The Eschatological Significance of the Trumpet}, 80.}
\footnote{Ibid., 86.}
\end{footnotes}
are a divine act in response to the prayers of the slain saints under the altar that are praying for vengeance:45 “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (6:10). When the trumpets are blown, God starts to act, remembering His persecuted and slain people, thus He breaks the silence beginning the judgment against “those who dwell on the earth.”

**Theology and Message**

Even though there is a theoretical consensus among scholars in considering the book of Revelation as symbolical in its nature, there is no practical unity because literal and symbolical meanings are randomly imposed on the text based on personal assumptions and a lack of a consistent criterion of biblical interpretation.46 Another problem is related to which approach to use in order to interpret the fifth trumpet. Depending on which approach we use, whether it is preterist, idealist, futurist, or the historicist approach, certainly we will achieve different conclusions of what it means and when it was, is, or will be fulfilled.

As suggested by Stefanovic and Paulien, the seven trumpets cover the period of time between the cross47 and the second Coming of Christ48

---

45 Stefanovic observes that the slain saints' plea is not a request for revenge against their enemies. The word ἐκδικέω, that may be translated as “help (someone) get justice,” “avenge,” “punish” implies a legal action. This can be seen in Luke 18:3-5 where the widow of Jesus’ parable makes a plea to the judge to give her justice. The same principle is found in Rev 19:2 where God avenge on Babylon the blood of His servants. Stefanovic, “The Angel at the Altar, 90-91.


47 His argument is based on the fact that the introductory scene in Rev 8:2-5 is built on the ritual of the daily sacrifice, known as tamid, in the Hebrew temple, where the trumpet was blown to announce the sacrifice. After that sacrificial Lamb had been placed upon the altar and the blood poured out at the base of the altar, the priest went with the incense upon the golden altar into the holy place. Based on the interlude of Rev 8:2-5, that portrays the same image, the seven trumpets of Revelation 8-11 comes right after the cross, where Jesus was offered once for all as our sacrificial Lamb. Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 280-281; Jon Paulien, *Seven Keys, Unlocking the Secrets of Revelation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2009), 92-94.

48 See Rev 11:17. God in this verse is described as “the One who is and who was” in contrast with Rev 1:8 and 4:8, where He is the One “who is and who was and who is coming.” The
as well as the seven seals. Mueller also supports this idea saying that Revelation 8:2-5 is disconnected from the seven seals and favors that the seven trumpets are a recapitulation of the seven seals instead of considering them as an extension or progression of the last seal. These arguments, as well as the parallels between the seals and the trumpets, give us support for a historical interpretation of the seven trumpets.

Therefore, we conclude that based on the historicist approach of interpretation and following the symbolic interpretation of the book of Revelation, that it is a symbolic book (cf. 1:3) because it was communicated by means of signs. The elements of Revelation 9:1-11 that were analyzed in this research, the “Star fallen from heaven,” “Was given to him,” “Abyss,” “Locusts,” “Green grass” or “trees,” “five months,” and “tail” must be interpreted as symbolic and with a fulfillment in history.

These elements are permeated with judgment language which is rooted in the OT and refer specifically to the partial judgment of the persecutors of God’s people, giving them an opportunity to repent. The fallen star, Satan, receives authority from God to open the abyss from where the smoke and the demonic locusts come out to cause great torment under the power of Satan himself, who is also identified as the Destroyer. This torment is carried out on only those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads, while the green grass or trees, representing God’s people, are not allowed to be touched.

Even in the historicist method of interpretation, there are many different suggestions of when the fifth trumpet was fulfilled. One popular argument in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the one given by Uriah Smith who interpreted the fallen star of Revelation 9:1 as being Chosroes II, the king of the Persian Empire that fought against the Roman Empire and prepared the circumstances for the Saracen invasion that was led by Mohamed. He omission of the “who is coming” in 11:17 is an evidence that He is already come and His eternal reign has begun. Osborne, Revelation, 443. Beale, The Book of Revelation, 613. 49 Ekkehardt Mueller, “Recapitulation in Revelation 4–11,” Journal of the Adventist Theological Society 9, no. 1-2 (1998): 272.

50 The book of Revelation itself points to historicism as the most appropriate and only valid approach to prophetic interpretation. It sees the events predicted in Revelation as taking place both in the past and the future as well as in the centuries that lie between, and divides the book of Revelation into three parts: First, 1:9-3:22, with a primary focus on 1st century; Second, 4-11, with a historical focus; Third, 12-22, with a eschatological focus. In this scheme, the seven trumpets are seen as an historical event rather than an eschatological one as seen by futurists.
also considered the Saracens, or Arabs, as being the locusts of the fifth trumpet. But this interpretation could be refuted if the “tail” refers to Satan’s ideological deception and not literal war.

In agreement with this point, Stefanovic suggests that fifth trumpet is a picture of the world from the eighteenth century to the present time. He expresses this in the following way:

The fifth trumpet refers to the spiritual condition in the secular world and the consequences of such conditions from the eighteenth century to our time. As Hans LaRondelle explains, ‘traditional God-centered theology was replaced by a man-centered philosophy, in which man is accountable only to himself.’ The oppressive rule of the church was replaced by the atheistic philosophy expressed in various forms, such as deism, relativism, nihilism, nationalism, and communism. The fact is that human beings try to live life apart from God. The secular-minded have become alienated from God, from others, and from themselves. On one hand, atheistic philosophy has created in people the agony of emptiness and meaninglessness of life. In the symbolic scene of the fifth trumpet we can observe the despair of the secular man and woman: no God, no future, and no meaning of life. It stands in contrast to green grass and trees that are nourished by water.

For this reason, the message of the fifth trumpet is not important only because it is in a context of judgment and it is limited to those who are not part of God’s people, but also because its application involves the present and must be seen as crucially relevant.

**Conclusion**

This article sought to establish the meaning of the fifth trumpet of Revelation 9:1-11, as pointing to a context of judgment of those who are not part of God’s people.

In the word-study, we established that the key words or expressions are symbolically used in the text in consideration. The “fallen star” metaphor (ἀστέρα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πεπτόμενο) used by John is unequivocally applied to Satan since it is used in the OT, Jewish writings, and the NT always as a reference to evil angels and would correspond to be “cast down.” This expression could also be an “inclusion” with the Destroyer (Ἀπολλύων), which would frame the actions in the fifth trumpet as Satanic actions.

The verb δίδωμι in its aorist passive 3rd person singular ἔδωθη indicates

---

52 Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 306.
a divine passive, which means that God is the one who gives, and shows His superiority over the one to whom the key “was given” and also that He has authority even over the Abyss.

The noun “abyss,” ἄβυσσος in Revelation 9, differently from its original meaning in the OT, is a representation of the center of operations for Satan and his angels.

The “locusts,” ἄκριδες are a symbol of judgment both against God’s people when breaking the covenant and against their enemies when trying to destroy them. Its use in Revelation is specifically linked to Joel 2 where the word is connected to judgment in the day of the Lord. It could be identified as demonic forces, since they came from the abyss and have Satan as their commander.

The elements “grass of the earth,” “plant” or “tree” (τὸν χόρτον τῆς γῆς, χλωρόν, and δέντρον respectively) are, as in other texts in both the OT and NT, used as a reference to God’s people. The contrast between “grass,” “plants,” and “trees” that are protected by God and “those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads” in v. 4 is also evidence that supports this interpretation.

The “five months,” μηνὰς πέντε in Revelation 9:5 and 10, is found only in Genesis 7:24 and 8:23 in the context of the Flood Story, which was a judgment over those who rebelled against God, and, consequently, were not part of God’s people who were inside the ark.

The “tails” of the locusts, οὐρας according to Isaiah 9:14-15 and Revelation 12:4, is related to a deception or lie, which is a device used by Satan against angels and against people.

In synthesis, considering the elements of judgment present in the fifth trumpet, it could be said that the fifth trumpet is about God judging those who are not part of His people through Satan and his demonic agents for a limited period of time. This understanding is confirmed by the contextual and literary analysis.

The immediate context, that is, the seven trumpets, indicates that they were blown for “those who dwell on the earth” (Rev 8:3) which is synonymous for “those who did not have the seal of God in their forehead” (Rev 9:4), and were a call to repentance for them to become part of God’s people. The broader context indicates that the seven trumpets are both connected to the seven seals through the intercalation in Revelation 8:3-5 and are God’s response to the prayers of His persecuted and martyred people in the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-11), and also connected to the seven
plagues since the seven trumpets are a foretaste of the unmixed wrath of God that will be poured out when no additional opportunity will be given by God for those who reject Him. The meaning of the “trumpets” as a symbol of God “remembering” His people is another significant element in understanding the seven trumpets as a judgment.

Therefore, we conclude that based on the historicist approach of interpretation and following the symbolic interpretation of the book of Revelation, which is a symbolic book (cf. 1:3), the elements of Rev 9:1-11 that were analyzed in this research, the “star fallen from heaven,” “was given to him,” “abyss,” “locusts,” “green grass” or “trees,” “five months,” and “tail” must be interpreted as symbolic and with a fulfillment in history.
Section 3

THE BOOK AND THEOLOGY

THE BOOK
and the student:
Theological Education as Mission
THE INFLUENCE OF MACRO-HERMENEUTICAL
PRESUPPOSITIONS IN RECENT
INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 1:
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Tiago Arrais

“I, therefore, take my reason captive and subscribe to the Word
even though I do not understand it.”
—Martin Luther, Lectures on Genesis

Introduction

The interpretative history of Genesis 1, in all its varied forms,
is as complex as it is controversial. Differences in interpretation can be

---

1 Even though the discussions and debates on the topic of origins can be traced back as far as
Greek and Eastern Philosophies, the issue of origins as worldview construed by biblical data was
birthed in Patristic interpretations, and turned even more problematic after the Enlightenment.
For more on the complexity of interpretation in Genesis see: Gerald Bray, Biblical Interpretation:
Past & Present (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 115-116; Kenneth A. Mathews,
a: 106-111. The complexity is strengthened in the interpretation of specific issues in Gen 1-2,
yet I do not intend to provide an extensive bibliography on such broad issues, for an introduction
to the main issues see: G. F. Hasel, “The Days of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal ‘Days’ or Figura-
(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993); David Hagopian, ed., The Genesis Debate: Three Views
on the Days of Creation (Mission Viejo, CA: Cruz Press, 2001); Richard F. Carlson and Tremper
Longman III, Science, Creation and the Bible: Reconciling Rival Theories of Origins (Downers
Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010).
appointed to different causes, yet among these, the issue of hermeneutical presuppositions stands distinctive.\(^2\) Knowing that disputes and debates in regard to the interpretation of Genesis 1 have also reached “members of the same tradition,”\(^3\) the issue of presuppositions becomes even more significant, since within the same interpretative tradition interpreters arrive at different results.

Within Seventh-day Adventist interpretation this is not dissimilar. Fernando L. Canale asserts that “in regard to Adventist theology, there are two competing views on the source of Christian theology,”\(^4\) namely, the *prima* and *sola Scriptura* principles.\(^5\) Woodrow Whidden, one of the proponents of the *prima Scriptura* principle in method, confirms that the problem in divergent interpretative conclusions is the principle of *sola Scriptura* itself. For Whidden, the choice of the material condition\(^6\) in interpretation can be problematic, and the Adventist choice of *sola Scriptura* is the cause behind the “embarrassing pluralistic impasse”\(^7\) seen

---

\(^2\) Carlson and Longman believe that the reason for divergent interpretative conclusions in Gen 1-2 is due to a lack of clarity in the characteristics of each field of study. They write: “Identifying the characteristics of each field, theology and science, may contribute toward resolving the creation-evolution conflict,” in Carlson and Longman, *Creation and the Bible*, 15. Even though I doubt that the Bible and evolution could one day be harmonized under one methodology that supports the *sola Scriptura* principle, the initiative to identify methodological characteristics between the two disciplines is important, and the first step toward such a goal is the evaluation of macro-hermeneutical premises in interpretation.


\(^5\) Even though to introduce the reader to the concept of *sola Scriptura* would be to depart from the intent of this study, it is necessary to say, at this stage, that *sola Scriptura* does not eliminate the authority of other sources. The basic translation of the expression *sola Scriptura* is “by Scripture alone.” This definition allows other sources to have a voice in theological method but not as primordial sources of information that are to be seen in the same authoritative standing as Scripture. *Sola Scriptura* is an open ended principle, yet all other authorities that it allows to speak are ultimately evaluated by Scriptural claims.

\(^6\) For clarification, in this study I will use the term “material condition” to refer to the sources of information in Christian theological interpretation. The “material conditions” in method are synonymous to the “formal principles” seen in other studies. Both refer to the authoritative source of theology.

The Influence of Macro-Hermeneutical Presuppositions

in interpretation today. Whidden proposes an alternate solution to the problem: “the judicious application of the methodology inherent in the so-called Quadrilateral....”8 In short, for Whidden, the principle of sola Scriptura must be replaced by prima Scriptura9 opening up the material condition in interpretation to a vast array of sources of information such as science, philosophy, etc.

Canale emphasizes that “the quadrilateral approach to theological sources justifies the use of sources other than Scripture for theological purposes. In so doing, it facilitates the classical and modern conviction that we may draw the macro-hermeneutical principles for doing theology from philosophy and science.”10 It is in this movement back to Classical structures of reason and theological construction that Adventist interpretation runs the risk of falling into the same interpretative impasse seen in the traditions that subscribe to the same structures of theological construction. Furthermore, in such replacement of the material condition in interpretation, philosophy and science end up having the same authoritative weight as Scripture in regard to macro-hermeneutical issues. If indeed Scripture itself already seems problematic in interpretation, the addition of more sources of information would just enhance the problem.11

The basic assumption of this study is that a change in the material condition of interpretation will not solve the pluralistic impasse pointed out by Whidden. Since the active role of the subject in interpretation is presuppositional in nature, I will argue in this study that the macro-hermeneutical presuppositions brought by the interpreter into interpretation is the cause behind conflicting results. Oliver Glanz has summarized the notion well: “The active interpreting of the subject supposes a framework by which interpretation is possible. Consequently, the contribution of the subject to the subject-object relation is presuppositional.”12 I will come back to this issue further along in the

10 Ibid., 33.
11 To expand on this specific issue is to depart from the purpose of this study. For more on the change of material conditions in hermeneutics and its implications for Christian theology see Canale, Creation, Evolution and Theology.
12 Oliver Glanz, “Investigating the Presuppositional Realm of Biblical-Theological Methodol-
study when I attempt to summarize some of the macro-hermeneutical presuppositions scholars bring into the interpretation of Genesis 1. In this study I will affirm the *sola Scriptura* principle as the only viable source of information in theological interpretation as I depart into the critical nature of this study—the evaluation of macro-hermeneutical presuppositions in the scholarly interpretation of Genesis 1.

**The Context of Interpretation: Epistemological Premises**

The first issue I will cover in this study relates to the epistemological premises interpreters bring into the interpretation of Genesis 1. Through the analysis of the subject-object relationship my intent at this stage is to delineate the context in which interpreters build their textual constructions. In any structure of reason there are three frameworks that generate meaning: an ontological framework (the concept of reality), an epistemological framework (the concept of knowing), and a theological framework (the system that provides unity and guarantees coherence). In this introduction to the problem of hermeneutical presuppositions in the interpretation of Genesis 1 I will only address the first two frameworks since they apply to the subject at hand.

Any attempt a subject makes to create meaning involves a subject-object relationship. It is this subject-object relationship, present in any scientific or theological quest for knowledge that provides the context in which reason occurs and consequently that defines the conditions for interpretation. Oliver Glanz writes:

> In any philosophical endeavor, the interpreted subject-object relation is a necessary fundamental of a detailed construction of a philosophical system. Thus the basic framework of Reason is the subject-object relationship, and it is this relationship that is the center of meaning.¹³

Canale also affirms this by saying: “All cognitive activities spring from the subject-object relationship, which functions as the foundational cognitive unit.”¹⁵

---

¹³ Glanz, “Investigating the Presuppositional Realm of Biblical-Theological Methodology,” 221. I am greatly indebted to the pioneering work Oliver Glanz has done. This study will draw much from his work as it uncovers the philosophical choices interpreters make in interpretation through method.

¹⁴ Glanz, “Investigating the Presuppositional Realm of Biblical-Theological Methodology,” 220.

¹⁵ Canale, *Creation, Evolution and Theology*, 17.
The Influence of Macro-Hermeneutical Presuppositions 135

Through time philosophers and thinkers have argued as to how the subject-object relationship functions in reason, and in the search for meaning. History shows that in different periods of time the emphasis shifted from the object to the subject until postmodernism provided methodological harmony between both sides. The three major shifts in the understanding of the subject-object relationship began with classical and modern scientific thought, where the emphasis was laid upon the active object in interpretation. The assumption was that “the subject passively receives input from its objects” as it insists that the active subjective is to be seen as a tabula rasa, that is, a blank mind, awaiting the active influence of the object. It is this basic premise that provided the ground for “the notion of scientific objectivity as excluding all contributions from the cognitive subject.”

The second shift came through German Idealism, having on board thinkers such as Kant and Hegel. The emphasis here took the opposite direction, from the active object to the active subject who “in turn is supposed to create its own object of thought.” This shift in the turn of the 19th century “marked one of the richest and most exciting explosions of philosophical energy and talent, perhaps even comparable to the generation that gave birth to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.”

---

16 Canale, Creation, Evolution and Theology, 19.
17 Tabula rasa is “the theory that the mind at birth is a tabula rasa (blank writing tablet) awaiting ideas from experience.” See R. S. Woolhouse, “Tabula Rasa,” in A Companion to Epistemology, 2nd ed. eds. Jonathan Dancy, Ernest Sosa, and Matthias Steup (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 763.
18 Canale, Creation, Evolution and Theology, 19.
19 For more on the “classical period” of philosophical thought in Germany see: Karl Ameriks, ed., The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Frederick C. Beiser, German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism 1781–1801 (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2002); Nektarios G. Limnatis, German Idealism and the Problem of Knowledge: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel (Dordrecht, Germany: Springer, 2008); Robert C. Solomon, Continental Philosophy Since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). The “ideal” in German Idealism of course carries a positive and a negative intention in its application and its implications are well portrayed by Karl Ameriks who writes: “The negative meaning of ‘idealism’ implies that most things that are commonly taken to be real are not so in fact … the positive … in contrast, involves seeing the term as adding rather than subtracting significance.” See Karl Ameriks, The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism, 8. The negative and positive sides of the “ideal” in German Idealism mark the active influence of the subject in interpretation.
20 Canale, Creation, Evolution and Theology, 19.
The objectivism of classical thought was overcome by the subjectivist emphasis of German Idealism.

The final shift in the interpretation of the subject-object relationship came with the advent of Postmodernism.\(^\text{22}\) The twentieth century was marked by a time of foundational criticism toward the idealistic emphasis on the subject in interpretation. Stanley Grenz focuses on the active participation of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger in this period affirming that it was Heidegger who argued that “Descartes and Kant directed all modern philosophy down an illegitimate and destructive path.”\(^\text{23}\) In short, Postmodernists argue for an active unity between subject and object in interpretation.

I have laid out, then, the three major shifts in the understanding of the relation between subject and object in the structure of reason in history. Since scientific thought and the historical-critical method operate on basic classical assumptions, the ontological dimension of reason, the object, is understood through timeless categories.\(^\text{24}\) Glanz correctly adds that “the interpretation of Being in the early Greek philosophy of Parmenides set the ground for all further developments in Western philosophy.”\(^\text{25}\) Consequently, that which unites both classical and modern interpretations of the subject-object relationship is reliance upon a timeless conception of


\(^{24}\) Unfortunately to explain in detail the significance and implications of a timeless conception of being, upon method and theology departs from the scope of this study, I refer the reader to the pioneer work of Fernando L. Canale, *Back to Revelation and Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundation of Christian Theology in a Postmodern World* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 2011); and Canale’s doctoral dissertation, *A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions,* Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertations Series 10 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987). It is also important to point out that even though historical critical scholars seem to deny any “supernatural” or “timeless” reality, they still operate under the same metaphysical assumptions of Aristotle and Plato. Yet to expound on this issue would be to depart from the intent of this study.

\(^{25}\) Glanz, “Investigating the Presuppositional Realm of Biblical-Theological Methodology,” 231.
Being. This way even though Kant changed the theoretical grounds of the structures of reason “Being was still interpreted as timeless.”

What are the implications of having a timeless conception of Being? The repercussions will be better understood when I address the ontological premises scholars bring into interpretation and the macro-hermeneutical choices that are embedded into method. But before I reach these implications it is imperative to know that “the cognitive subject needs to be backed up by a basic understanding of the whole (i.e., a worldview or cosmology) in order to establish a meaningful subject-object relation.” For this reason, I will move to the cosmological premises that “back up” subjective cognition and will address the implications it creates in connection to the subject-object dynamics in interpretation.

The Conditions of Interpretation: Cosmological Premises

Cosmological premises are brought into the interpretation of Genesis 1 through methodological assumptions. They are normally not seen in the exegetical discourse of interpreters but they are the elusive conditions that shape interpretation. Langdon Gilkey in his renowned article “Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language” points out the problem of cosmological assumptions in modern interpretation. Knowing that the orthodox literal reading of Scripture offended the liberal mindset in at least two manners, he wrote: “The orthodox belief in special revelation denied the reign of causal law in the phenomenal realm of space and time, to the liberals, therefore, this orthodox view of revelation represented a primitive, prescientific, form of religion and should be modernized.”

At this stage it is imperative to understand what Gilkey meant with the expression “the reign of causal law” and how such a methodological choice is embedded in modern interpretations of Genesis 1.

The assumption of “causal law,” and “causal continuum,” can also be understood to be the “rule of analogy.” Jack Bonsor writes:

According to the rule of analogy the world has always operated by the same natural patterns. People in our world do not rise from the dead. Therefore, the resurrection of a dead person cannot be asserted as historical, i.e.,

26 Glanz, “Investigating the Presuppositional Realm of Biblical-Theological Methodology,” 232.
27 Ibid., 225.
historians cannot assert it as a fact in history. Historical research excludes, a priori, such an occurrence.29

What is overlooked in biblical interpretation is that such an assumption is already dictated by the demands of method. And the obvious result of such methodological choice of the interpreter is well defined by A. Berkeley Mickelsen as he writes:

This assumption is only a presupposition that his experience is the only possible experience and represents the only experience of any other person or groups of persons who lived on this planet. The scholar who assumes this has made his empirical experience and that of his contemporaries the sole criterion of what is possible.30

The result of such hermeneutical choice in the interpretation of Genesis 1 is undeniably destructive. Voicing the result of upholding these assumptions in modern thought Gilkey writes: “We believe that the biblical people lived in the same causal continuum of space and time in which we live, and so one in which no wonders transpired and no divine voices were heard.”31 In short, the cosmological assumption of a causal continuum eliminates the possibility of a literal understanding of the creation account presented by the author of Genesis 1.

The hermeneutical choice of a causal continuum in interpretation is also co-dependent upon a second assumption, namely, the principle of doubt. On the significance of the principle of doubt upon modern interpretations of Scripture, Ted Peters writes:

The principle of doubt has become the cutting edge of modern critical thinking … the ‘hermeneutic of suspicion.’ The hermeneutic of suspicion in short, accuse religious people of having a false consciousness, of projecting their own quite mundane self-interests onto God and heaven, where they do not belong…. This critical consciousness accounts for the so-called death of God.32

Both assumptions, of a causal continuum, and of the principle of doubt shape the active subject in many interpretations of Genesis 1, especially those that attempt to reconcile the narrative of creation with evolution.

30 A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Interpreting the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 67.
Furthermore, since the principle of doubt sustains that “a belief should be rejected by a subject if it is uncertain”\textsuperscript{33} it is the active subject who remains in control of the object, and ultimately judges that which is reasonable or possible in interpretation.

As an example of the effects of such assumptions upon the interpretation of Genesis 1 I turn to the long upheld “documentary hypothesis.” For some, seen as pure objectivism and true to what the text presents in itself, the hypothesis carries the major tenets of what I have outlined above. Han Young Lee summarizes well the implications of sustaining the documentary hypothesis:

If the majority of Wellhausen’s contemporaries utilized the \textit{documentary hypothesis} as presupposition, it is clear that it was due not only to their trust in Wellhausen’s proposition, but rather because of their shared common epistemological assumptions… the widespread concept of philosophy of life or of a world-view, as a product of a time conditioned culture… it means that our scientific inquiry presupposes our world-view.\textsuperscript{34}

The documentary hypothesis expresses the climax of such assumptions in the interpretation of the text, where the subject not only has control over the text but reads it conditionally within his causal continuum perspectives.\textsuperscript{35}

Under the hermeneutical umbrella of the documentary hypothesis the majority of the critical commentaries to the book of Genesis find their weakness, in failing to be faithful to the “text itself” by upholding these pre-determined assumptions. Foundational works such as Von Rad’s commentary on Genesis assume such principles of interpretation. In the opening discussions of his commentary on Genesis Von Rad writes:

The preceding discussion presupposes the recognition of a fact that has become accepted in contemporary Old Testament science … the books of Genesis to Joshua consist of several continuous source documents that were

\textsuperscript{34}Han Young Lee, \textit{From History to Narrative Hermeneutics} (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), 74-75.
woven together more or less skillfully by a redactor.\textsuperscript{36}

And even though Gordon Wenham departs from the classical “source critical methodology” he still operates under the guidance of literary criticism, which in turn, is grounded on the principle of doubt.\textsuperscript{37}

I have outlined two basic assumptions often assumed in critical interpretations of Genesis 1, namely, the assumption of a causal continuum (or rule of analogy), and the assumption of methodological doubt. Even though it has come to be expected to see critical scholars working under such assumptions in biblical interpretation, it comes as a surprise when evangelical and conservative scholars are found operating under the same methodological demands.

John Sailhamer, an evangelical Old Testament scholar,\textsuperscript{38} argues correctly that as we look to the biblical texts “we look to them, the texts themselves, for our understanding of the world they depict.”\textsuperscript{39} Evidently this affirmation demonstrates Sailhamer’s attempt to give priority to the description of the text itself. Yet this positive intention is left behind when Sailhamer sustains the non-biblical assumption of a causal continuum\textsuperscript{40} as he writes: “We should not expect human affairs to have been any different in the past than they are in the present … if we are to understand these events, we will certainly need to employ the tools of causality and analogy.”\textsuperscript{41}

Another evangelical author that has recently been in the academic spotlight is John Walton with the publication of his book \textit{The Lost World}

\textsuperscript{38}Sailhamer has also served as president of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2000, enhancing even more his credibility among conservative scholarship. Information taken from: \url{www.theopedia.com/John_H_Sailhamer}
\textsuperscript{40}Sailhamer will use the expression “rule of analogy” to address the assumption I have identified in this study as causal continuum.
\textsuperscript{41}Sailhamer, \textit{The Pentateuch as Narrative}, 16. Notice that Sailhamer himself in the previous quote affirmed that to understand biblical events properly, the interpreter must see the text along the lines of two basic assumptions “the tools of causality and analogy.” I have addressed the issue of causality so far, I will leave the issue of analogy to the end since its necessity is created by a metaphysical assumption that influences the subject-object relationship, that is, the ground where reason itself takes place.
of Genesis One.” Walton indicates the place of theology in his scheme of interpretation: “One of the principal attributes of God affirmed by Christians is that he is Creator. That conviction is foundational as we integrate our theology into our worldview.” Any lucid biblical scholar would agree with the reality of a God who is Creator. The problem arises with Walton’s indication that theology should be “integrated” into an already established worldview. In other words, the worldview, which is grounded in philosophy and tradition, becomes the ground in which theology is accommodated. Canale points out this problem in evangelical theology and invites evangelical scholars who take scripture seriously “to deconstruct their own traditions to free Christian theology from the long centuries of hermeneutical bondage under science and philosophy.”

Even though Walton proposes, in his work, to provide an interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis that he believes to be “faithful to the context of the original audience and author, and one that preserves and enhances the theological vitality of this text” his interpretation is still guided by assumptions foreign to scripture, since for him, “what science provides is the best explanation of the data at the time.” Walton, as an evangelical voice in recent Old Testament scholarship, affirms that such an assumption is “accepted by consensus, and often with few detractors,” meaning that the assumption is already integrated in the fabric of evangelical interpretation. It is in science that causality and methodological doubt are grounded and immersed in the interpretation of Genesis 1 through scholarly assumptions.

The works of Sailhamer and Walton, and the assumptions these evangelical scholars bring into recent developments in the interpretation of Genesis 1, indicate that the reality within evangelical interpretation is not far from that which is found in critical reconstructions of the creation narratives. At this stage I will move from the cosmological assumptions of a causal continuum and methodological doubt to the primordial

---

63 Ibid., 7.
66 Ibid., 17.
67 Ibid.
presupposition in the interpretation of the text of Genesis 1—the assumption of “analogy.”

**The Outcome of Interpretation: Ontological Premises**

I begin this section where I left off in the first, in which I addressed the issue of epistemological premises in the interpretation of Genesis 1. The question that remained to be answered was: What are the implications of having a timeless conception of Being in the interpretation of the Bible? Knowing that classical and modern thought still operate under a timeless understanding of the object, that is, “what is real” is still understood as a timeless conception in the subject-object relationship, what are the implications of such hermeneutical choice in method? And how do these “timeless” assumptions relate to the hermeneutical principle of “analogy”?

The relation of a timeless understanding of ontology and the premise of “analogy” are interdependent. Oliver Glanz writes:

> When Being is defined as timeless, the ontological framework consequently conceives ultimate reality as timeless…. Timelessness further implies that Being exists independently from the cognitive subject. This means that the interpretation of Being as timeless automatically creates a gap between being and Being, as they do not share the same time frame. This gap, albeit in different ways, exists both in the Platonic and Kantian line of thinking.

It is essential, at this stage, to clarify some of these issues for the reader. The concept of Being is the ultimate reality wherein all other beings have their existence. It is the broadest conception of what is real since it answers the primordial question of “what is?” In this broad description of “what is,” everything around the subject (beings) has existence. The ontology of something is, in a nutshell, the description of how that something “is” or “exists.”

This way, if Plato and Kant share the same conception of Being as a timeless reality, there is a break between ultimate reality (Being) and the objects around us (being). The first consequence of upholding a timeless view of the “object” or Being is, therefore, that everything around us in “time” will only be understood as an analogy of that timeless reality established *a priori*. It is this break between the subject and the object in the structure of reason that leads both critical and evangelical scholars, both Plato and Kant, both Von Rad and Walton, to see the objective realities

---

of the biblical text as analogies of that which is ultimately real (through a timeless conception of Being).

It is this ontological ground that leads Gilkey to criticize both orthodox and liberal scholars as they are united in the same scientific mindset in interpretation. Gilkey writes:

Theological verbs such as “to act,” “to work,” “to do,” “to speak,” “to reveal,” etc., have no longer the literal meaning of observable actions in space and time or of voices in the air. The denial of wonders and voices has thus shifted our theological language from the univocal to the analogical.49

Consequently to this ontological shift in the interpretative premises of scholars Gilkey identifies the root of the problem in both orthodox and liberal interpretations of the Bible. For them “the Bible is a book of the acts Hebrews believed God might have done and the words he might have said had he done them and said them—but of course we recognize he did not.”50 To understand and challenge interpreters in their ontological ground is imperative in any dialogue relating to the interpretation of Genesis 1. When such premises are overlooked, proof texting, exegesis, or any micro-hermeneutical initiative will prove to be unproductive since they will operate under these macro-hermeneutical assumptions.

Having the ontological concept of Being as a timeless reality creates a break between the subject and the object that leads to analogical interpretations of the biblical text. If this is the case, how are scholars to understand the meaning of the text knowing that in them they find only analogies to a greater reality? Walton responds to this challenge by resorting to Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) sources.

Even though relying upon ANE sources is an imperative task at the level of meso- and micro-hermeneutics, in the macro-hermeneutical level it only indicates the analogical premises of the interpreter. In seeking to understand the macro-hermeneutical meaning of the text in ANE sources the interpreter recognizes that the phenomena in the text is not the reality itself but only an analogy, and to understand the analogy one must understand the context of the time as a primary “source of information.” In short, the interpreter seeks the thought of the time to understand the event described in the text. The thought precedes the event. Following this elusive Cartesian principle, in interpretation, the interpreter thinks before

50 Ibid., 197.
he understands the description of what “is” in the text.

In the biblical Hebrew mindset the “western” conditions of thought are not a primary reality. For the biblical Hebrew mind it is the event, the phenomena, that precedes the thought. The biblical writer “knows” because of the event. Jacques B. Doukhan argues toward the same direction as he writes: “Hebrew thought does not construct the truth as a philosophical system; rather it is essentially the response to an event…. The fact that the Hebrew Bible starts with the event of Creation points to that movement.”\(^{51}\) It is in this reliance upon the intent seen in biblical Hebrew thought itself that interpretation should be built upon—the thought follows the event. It is not Onto-logical, or even Onto-theo-logical,\(^ {52}\) since for both what is of primary importance is the understanding of Being as timeless even before the thought of God in Scripture. If the manifestation of God through His acts as recorded in Scripture is primary in the structure of reason, this is better expressed under a Theo-onto-logical category,\(^ {53}\) if categories are even called for in a possible philosophical understanding of Scripture.

This section highlighted the interdependency of a timeless conception of Being and analogical readings of the biblical text. The hermeneutical choice of a timeless ultimate reality creates a break between the subject and the object that directly influences the readings of the biblical text. Both critical and orthodox scholars are joined together in analogical readings of Scripture because of this common understanding of Being.

**Summary and Implications**

Through this study I intended to present an introduction to the influence of macro-hermeneutical presuppositions upon recent interpretations of Genesis 1 as a cause for divergent interpretations of the text even within the same interpretative traditions. I summarized what I believe are the three basic premises that influence scholars in the interpretation of the text.

---


of Genesis 1. First, through an analysis of the epistemological premises, I attempted to underscore the context in which any interpretation takes place—the subject-object structure of reason. Second, I addressed the cosmological issues that are immersed in interpretative methods, namely, the notion of causal continuum and principle of doubt. Third, I focused on the ontological premise that conditions biblical interpretation under the rule of analogy.

The reliance upon these assumptions is not only seen in critical commentators, but also in conservative evangelical exegetes. This way, the cause between such methodological and exegetical dissention among interpreters of the same tradition is grounded in these subjective assumptions. Denying the *sola Scriptura* principle at the level of hermeneutical presuppositions opens the path for a multiplicity of sources in interpretation. This denial, together with subjective assumptions creates the vast array of interpretations of the text of Genesis 1 seen today in modern scholarship. The macro-hermeneutical choices established *a priori* will always have the final word in interpretation, and Scripture becomes secondary to these hermeneutical choices.

This basic introduction to the assumptions brought into the interpretation of Genesis 1 reveals the necessity for Seventh-day Adventist scholarship to deconstruct previous interpretations of the text and attempt to build the foundations for interpretation (macro-hermeneutical presuppositions) from Scripture as opposed to scientific and Greek influences.
Introduction

Throughout the entire Bible there is a concept of a judgment that, according to Hebrews 8:1-5 and other texts, is taking place in the heavenly sanctuary at this very moment. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in its twenty-third fundamental belief, states that:

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are
ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Heb 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num 14:34; Ezek 4:6; Lev 16; Rev 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12)\(^1\)

Another fundamental belief that is taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church is that God is the creator of all things and all things exist because of Him. The sixth fundamental belief states:

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made “the heaven and the earth” and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was “very good,” declaring the glory of God. (Gen 1; 2; Exod 20:8-11; Ps 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb 11:3)\(^2\)

Considering the location of this doctrine in the Bible—it is the first teaching in the Holy Book—it seems plausible to assume that all the other biblical doctrines are built upon this doctrine, including the sanctuary doctrine.\(^3\) Thus, it is also reasonable to assume that the relation between these two doctrines may go beyond their foundational connections, reaching the human level in a more intimate and personal sphere.

Presently, the doctrines of creation and the sanctuary are severely criticized by many different Christian denominations, and even among some Adventists. Much of the criticism is directed towards the literal interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, which presents the account of creation in six literal and historical days. Similarly, criticism is also applied to the idea of an actual sanctuary in heaven where Christ ministers before

\(^1\) General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual* (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), 43-44.

\(^2\) Ibid., 31.

the Father in favor of His people. When these doctrines are opposed, the student of the Bible will miss the opportunity to see the connections existing between them.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the biblical concept of the sanctuary, and to explore its relation, if any, to the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 and the creation event/Garden of Eden of Genesis 1:1-2:3.

**Exploration of the Biblical Evidence**

After these introductory remarks, research on the meaning of the word מִקְדָּשׁ (miqdāš) and defining sanctuary in the biblical context will be presented. I intend to explore by comparison and exegesis whether the events of creation and the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement have any significant connection that can provide the reader with a better understanding of both events, keeping in mind that both events were used by God as an important means of divine revelation. Next, an analysis of the Garden of Eden and different aspects of the earthly sanctuary will be undertaken, seeking to verify if the links proposed between the two have biblical and rational support. Finally, by examining the link between the earthly sanctuary and Daniel 8:14, I intend to search for a possible link between the Day of Atonement of Leviticus 16 and the creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3, which will bring this research to its conclusion.

This article does not present a full evaluation of the doctrines of the sanctuary and creation. Rather it focuses on the Mosaic account of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3, on God’s request for the construction of a sanctuary in Exodus 25:8, and on its annual cleansing in Leviticus 16, although other passages of the Old Testament will be analyzed in the search for a biblical concept of the sanctuary and a linkage between events.

Another important delimitation is that no argument will be made to support the “year-day principle.” The author presupposes that such a principle fits the historicist method of prophetic interpretation defended by Adventists.4

A very important consideration is that when referring to creation week, I presuppose that the Genesis account is reliable, and therefore historical. This presupposition implies that the seven days described in Genesis 1:1-

---

2:3 are seven 24-hour periods, which can be verified by the use of a Hebrew numeral (יָמִים (יֵהָדָא), יָמִין (שְּנֵינִים), יָמִין (סְלֵשַׁנִים), and so forth) preceded by the noun יָמ (יָוֻם).\(^5\) In addition, I presuppose that the heavenly sanctuary is a biblical reality and therefore, despite the criticism of these doctrines, I assume that Seventh-day Adventists’ assertion of their biblical validity is correct.

**Defining Sanctuary: A Biblical Perspective**

The command to Israel to build a sanctuary appears in Exodus 25:8. After the people had walked in the desert for some time, God called Moses and told him to build a sanctuary so He could dwell among the people. The Hebrew יָום לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וּמְשָׁכָנַי בְּתוֹכָם (w’tâšû lî miqdâš w’mšâkantî b’tôkâm) is commonly translated as “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (NIV). In this text, two words stand out immediately: מִקְדָּשׁ (miqdâš) and מְשָׁכָן (mšâkantî). They must be analyzed separately to provide a full understanding of the text.

Miqdâš

The word מִקְדָּשׁ (noun common masculine singular absolute) occurs in the Old Testament 75 times in 72 verses, and in 15 different forms. According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT), the word “שָדְּקִמ (miqdâš) means holy place, sanctuary.”\(^6\) In searching for the meaning and understanding of this word, one will find that Strong’s observes that מִקְדָּשׁ (miqdâš) is translated as “sanctuary” 69 times, “holy place” three times, “chapel” once, and “hallowed part” once.\(^7\) In addition, Strong’s notes that when translated as “sanctuary,” the word מִקְדָּשׁ (miqdâš) is in direct reference to the sanctuary of the temple, of the tabernacle, of Ezekiel’s temple, or of Jehovah.\(^8\) Thus, it seems plausible to accept that the best translation for מִקְדָּשׁ (miqdâš) is the English word “sanctuary,” which means a consecrated place.\(^9\)

---

\(^7\) The difference between TWOT and Strong’s counting is due to Ezek 45:4, where the word מָקְדָּשׁ occurs three times: twice it is translated as “sanctuary,” and once as “holy place.”
Additional details on the Hebrew word שָדְּקִמ (miqdāš) can contribute to a better, more significant understanding of this term. For instance, some scholars have pointed to the similarity between the Hebrew noun השָדְּק (miqdāš) and the Hebrew word שָדְּק (qōdeš), translated as “holy” on 263 occasions. The important detail regarding this word is that שָדְּק (qōdeš), which derives from the primitive root שָדְּק (qādaš), “in the Qal [stem] connotes the state of that which belongs to the sphere of the sacred. Thus it is distinct from the common or profane.”

The word שָדְּק (qōdeš) is formed by the particle conjunction שָדְּק (qōdeš) meaning “and, but, that,” and the verb שָדְּק (qādaš) (Qal perfect, 1st common singular, vav consecutive) meaning “to dwell.” According to the TWOT, the verb שָדְּק (qādaš) “is used 129 times in the OT, most often in the Qal (111 times), in the Piel 12 times, and in the Hiphil 6 times. God is the designated subject of the verb 43 times.” This implies that God is the one to dwell among His people, either on Mount Zion or in Jerusalem (Ps 74:2; Exod 25:8; Zech 8:3). The SDA Bible Commentary amplifies this concept by saying:

The Hebrew word shakan, “dwell,” means to be a permanent resident in a community. It is closely related to the word Shekinah, used of the manifestation of divine glory that took up its abode above the mercy seat. The Shekinah was the symbol of the divine presence, in which God promised to “dwell among them” (see Exod 25:22). Another Hebrew verb, בָּשָׁב (yāšab), is also translated as “to inhabit, dwell” and is occasionally used in parallelism, but a more significant distinction is that yāšab is reserved for passages describing man’s dwelling among his people on earth. Seldom is yāšab used when God’s dwelling on earth is under discussion. Solomon even asks the rhetorical question, “Will God indeed dwell (yāšab) on the earth?” (1 Kgs 8:27). When yāšab is used in connection

---

11 Harris, Archer, and Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 786.
12 Ibid., 925.
with God’s dwelling it is his heavenly abode that is alluded to.\textsuperscript{14}

Although the interpretation above finds support in the Bible as well as among some scholars, the argument is not conclusive.\textsuperscript{15} Based on the evidence found up to this point, the Hebrew word \(\text{יֵשָּׁקַנְתִי} (\text{vēshākantī})\) will be restricted to its most common translation, “that I may dwell” (NASB) for the purpose of this article.

The analysis of these Hebrew words can help the reader visualize God’s willingness to live among his fallen creatures. It adds to the idea that it is God who takes the initiative to attract His chosen people to His place of dwelling. Although at times His dwelling place is nothing more than a simple tent, it is a place so sacred and distinct from the common or profane that no wrongdoing can exist there (see Gen 3:6, 22-24; Lev 10:1-3), and only those who are found and forgiven by His grace can inhabit it. This place is called the sanctuary—the place where God is present.

A clear demonstration of this concept is found in Exodus 3:1-4:18. On this occasion, Moses’ attention was caught by a burning bush that was not consumed. Puzzled by that mysterious event, Moses walked toward the bush, and heard the voice of the Lord calling his name: “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am” (v. 4). “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground” (Exod 3:5 NIV).

Another example is found in Exodus 24:16, when Moses went to the top of Mount Sinai to receive the Decalogue for the first time. The \textit{New American Standard Bible} (NASB) says, “The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai.” On this occasion, the Hebrew word translated as “rested” is \(\text{עָשָּׁק} (\text{vaïšak})\) from the root \(\text{שָׁקָן} (\text{shākan})\) which means “dwell.”

What could possibly make such an ordinary place into a holy place? What could transform the ordinary sand and rocks and the ordinary bush approached by an ordinary man into a holy place? The answer is obvious: what made the difference and transformed that particular and ordinary location into a holy place was the presence of the Almighty God. His presence makes all the difference.

As exemplified on the two events mentioned above, as well as the brief exegesis of the words \(\text{מִקְדָּשׁ} (\text{miqdāš})\) and \(\text{שָׁקָן} (\text{shākan})\), it seems plausible to establish a consistent paradigm where, independent of the place, physical

\textsuperscript{14}Harris, Archer, and Waltke, \textit{Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament}, 925.
\textsuperscript{15}For more information, see ibid., 412.
structure, or form, what makes the difference between the מִקְדָּשׁ (miqdāš) = sanctuary and an ordinary place is the God who שָׁדְּקִמ (šāḵan) = dwells. But does this view find support among other theologians from the first century until now?

Concepts of Sanctuary—First Century to Modern Day

In the book God and Temple, R. E. Clements suggests that by examining the cultural and religious background surrounding Israel in c. 1200 B.C., one can observe “that a prominent feature of Canaanite religion was its belief in the function of sanctuaries as divine abodes.”

This notion is in complete agreement with the evidence presented at the beginning of this article, which directs the reader to the fact that the presence of God is what makes an ordinary place a holy place.

After the birth of Christ, for example, it was Jesus Christ himself who amplified the concept of sanctuary in Matthew 26:61, stating that His body was the ναὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ (naos tou Theou) (temple of God). The Greek word “ναὸς” means “a building in which a deity is worshiped (in the case of the Temple in Jerusalem, a place where God was also regarded as dwelling)—'temple, sanctuary.” The apostle Paul explores this same concept in his epistles.

In Paul’s epistles the word naos appears six times (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; 2 Thess 2:4) and hieron once (1 Cor 9:13). In these verses Paul maintains the distinction of definition noted above. When speaking of the actual physical temple, he used the word hieron to indicate the place where the priests offered up animal sacrifices on the altar (1 Cor 9:13), which was situated in the outer court (see Exod 27-29, 40). And when Paul referred to the abominable act of the lawless one in usurping God’s place in the temple, he used the word naos—the word that designates the place of deity’s presence (2 Thess 2:4). In all the other Pauline passages, naos is used metaphorically—to depict a human habitation for the divine Spirit.

By the second century A.D. (120 – 202), Irenaeus also explored the same concept of the individual as a temple where the Spirit of God would dwell. After this period it appears that not much attention was given to the

---

19 For more information on this Ante-Nicene church father, see Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of
topic of the earthly sanctuary or the heavenly sanctuary among the church fathers. According to the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, this occurred because “their main emphasis was on Christ’s priestly work on the cross where He offered Himself as a sacrifice.”\(^{20}\) A tragic consequence was that through the Middle Ages, Christ’s mediatory work was neglected, and many saints as well as the Virgin Mary were credited for this work.\(^ {21}\) Fortunately, the Reformation brought significant improvement in this area, portraying Christ as the only mediator or intercessor for the human race before the heavenly throne.

During the Age of Enlightenment, with enormous spiritual revival among Christians, the message of the second coming of Jesus Christ started to be preached more frequently. One very prominent preacher was William Miller, whose studies on the book of Daniel were very significant in North America and later throughout the world. The basis of his message was Daniel 8:14: “Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (ASV). The history of the Millerite Movement is well known, for it brought much suffering and bitterness to all its adherents. Nevertheless, God used that tragic event to raise a remnant church to proclaim the message of the sanctuary and its cleansing, as well as to maintain the announcement of the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ that had been put aside for so long.

By the end of the year 1844, a young girl named Ellen G. Harmon (later Ellen G. White) was given the gift of prophecy by the Lord, reinforcing the proximity of the final days (Joel 2:28; Rev 14:7, 19:10). Thus, in light of Ellen White’s significant contribution in favor of the remnant church, it appears important to consider White’s understanding of “sanctuary” and “dwell.” Ellen G. White understood the heavenly sanctuary ontologically, that is, as part of reality, in the same way that the earthly one was, to teach God’s people the plan of redemption to be consummated in the future. She stresses:

The cover of the sacred chest was called the mercy seat. . . . Above the mercy seat was the Shekinah, the manifestation of the divine Presence; and from between the cherubim, God made known His will. Divine messages were

---


\(^ {21}\) Ibid.
sometimes communicated to the high priest by a voice from the cloud.

The law of God, enshrined within the ark, was the great rule of righteousness and judgment. That law pronounced death upon the transgressor; but above the law was the mercy seat, upon which the presence of God was revealed, and from which, by virtue of the atonement, pardon was granted to the repentant sinner. Thus in the work of Christ for our redemption, symbolized by the sanctuary service, “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Psalm 85:10.22

In almost poetic language, Ellen G. White describes the significance of the mercy seat placed on top of the tablets of the law, assuring that nothing can be above God’s immeasurable grace. In her statement, the phrase “above the mercy seat was the Shekinah, the manifestation of the divine Presence,” requires additional consideration to bring the reader to a full understanding of the term used. Here White mentioned the Hebrew word שָׁדְּקִמ (šā·ḏeq), which comes from the verb נָסְקָן (nā·ṣek), meaning “dwell,” conveying the idea that God’s presence causes the mercy seat to be a holy place. To add to this idea, Eliade states that “virtually any place can serve as a sanctuary. It is essential, however, that a sanctuary be marked off, that is, that the distinction between sacred and profane be perceptibly indicated.”23

Thus, the evidence analyzed up to this point has clearly established that, independently of the place, what makes the difference between the שָׁדְּקִמ (miqdāš) = sanctuary and an ordinary place is the presence of God dwelling among His people.

**Garden of Eden as a Sanctuary Before the Fall**

Based on what has been presented so far, it seems plausible to suggest that “a sanctuary” is defined by the presence of God dwelling among His people. Twice prior to the construction of the earthly sanctuary, God made it clear that His presence transformed ordinary places into sacred places: one time was on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:16), and the other was in the land of Midian when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exod 3:1-4:18). But are these two locations the only places that could be called sanctuaries

---

of God before the construction of the tabernacle? Could another location on earth also have the characteristics of a sanctuary and be identified as such? If so, is there any evidence indicating a connection between this place and the heavenly sanctuary?

In the two creation accounts found in Genesis 1 and 2, the Holy Scriptures declare that God created “the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1), and that He did it in seven consecutive 24-hour periods. It is also stated that during the process of creation, “the LORD God planted a garden” in Eden (Gen 2:8), where the Lord caused to grow “every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9). Finally, after seeing all that He had created and finding it to be good, God “rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done” (Gen 2:2).

It is appropriate to consider some evidence, which has shown that the Garden of Eden could be seen as a sanctuary prior to the Fall, mainly because in Genesis God is presented as dwelling in the garden with Adam and Eve before the fall (Gen 1:27, 28; 2:15-17, 19, 21, 22; 3:8-13). In support of this view, Richard Davidson has suggested that “the language of Genesis 1-2 points towards the Garden of Eden as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly sanctuary.”24 Scholars like G. K. Beale, Jon D. Levenson, John Walton, and others have supported this view, which deserves a more detailed investigation.

Examining the Links

Before getting into the actual analysis of the text, some considerations are important. For instance, it is imperative to recognize that symbolism is perhaps the most common and powerful tool used by OT writers to transmit God’s message to a fallen world. Although why they used it is not the focus of this section, it seems appropriate to explore some of the symbolism that links the heavenly sanctuary to the Garden of Eden.

Elaborating on the purpose of the earthly sanctuary, Ellen White wrote, “The whole system of types and symbols was one compacted prophecy of the gospel, a presentation of Christianity.”25 The key word here is “symbols”

since symbols were the means of communication chosen by God to reveal Himself to the people. One might question why I am referring to the earthly sanctuary as a symbolic means of communication if the emphasis of this research is to investigate the connection between the heavenly sanctuary and the Garden of Eden? The answer is, despite the apparent incoherence, a thorough investigation of the OT sanctuaries has demonstrated that in fact the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries are intimately connected: the former portrays, by means of symbolism, the actual activities done in the latter in favor of the salvation of God’s people. In his doctoral dissertation, Elias Brasil de Souza presents forty three biblical texts that show the connections between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. In his conclusive remarks, Souza stresses:

The heavenly sanctuary/temple was understood [in his research] as existing in structural and vertical correspondence to the earthly counterpart, and an intensification from type to antitype was observed. In addition, the notion also emerged of a dynamic interaction between the heavenly sanctuary/temple and its earthly counterpart.26

In that sense it is certainly plausible to suggest that the symbolic connections found between the earthly sanctuary, the Garden of Eden, and the creation events of Genesis 1-2, are in fact connections between the Garden of Eden, the creation account, and the heavenly sanctuary. Hence, such a suggestion does not emerge as incoherent at any level.

**Creation and Construction**

A link that has been long suggested by others is the connection between the creation account and the construction of the tabernacle. The biblical texts related to these connections are Genesis 1:31; 2:1; 2:2; and 2:3, in parallel with Exodus 39:43; 39:32; 40:33; and 39:43 respectively.27 In *Text and Texture*, Michael A. Fishbane states: “For a close reading of the Instance is particularly striking. For a close reading of the echoes of the language of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Indeed, as Martin Buber long ago noted, a series of key verbal parallels exists between the account of the creation of the world and

---


the description of the building of the tabernacle in the desert.”

When these texts are arranged in parallel, the similarities become more visible, as illustrated by table 1.

**Table 1. Parallels between the account of creation and the construction of the tabernacle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis</th>
<th>Exodus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good (1:31)</td>
<td>And Moses examined all the work and behold, they had done it (39:43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts (2:1)</td>
<td>Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was completed (39:32).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done (2:2)</td>
<td>He erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work (40:33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (2:3)</td>
<td>And Moses examined all the work and behold, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, this they had done. So Moses blessed them (39:43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the Hebrew text demonstrates that these parallels are also present in the original text. For instance, in Genesis 1:31 and Exodus 39:43, the Hebrew word יאר (yāre‘), translated as “saw” and “examined” respectively, is exactly the same. In Genesis 2:1 and Exodus 39:32, the Hebrew word translated as “completed” derives from the same verb קול (kōl) meaning “to be complete, finished.” The latter is in its singular form and the former in its plural form, which implies the existence of a triune God during the creation. The other passages, Genesis 2:2 and Exodus 40:33, also show interesting similarities between the Hebrew phrases ישל ביויםحاשֶׁה and ישל חנמים (way‘kal yōhîm bayyôm haššēh and yōhîm haberêh) translated as “By the seventh day God completed His work” (the creation work) and

---

30 Ibid., 440.
“Thus Moses finished the work” (the tabernacle) respectively.\textsuperscript{31} Finally, in Genesis 2:3 and Exodus 39:43, we read “Then God blessed the seventh day” and “So Moses blessed them” respectively, where God and Moses ḫə̀rak (bāarak) the work that has been completed.\textsuperscript{32}

Although these observations strengthen the connection between these two important events of the OT, they are not exhaustive. As observed by Fishbane, there is a shift in emphasis from divine to human work in Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 39-40 respectively, indicated in three steps:

First, by the fact that Moses is presented as subject of the actions performed; and by the fact that the rare expression ruah ‘elohim (“wind/spirit of Elohim”) appears in Genesis 1:2, just prior to the transformation of the desolate waste into a world, as well as in Exodus 31:3, in connection with Bezalel’s inspired role in the construction of the tabernacle. Second, it is most striking that both contexts place singular and decisive emphasis on Sabbath rest. In keeping with the aforesaid shift from divine to human action, the stress in Genesis 2:1-3 is on divine rest, whereas the emphasis in Exodus 31:12-17 and 35:2-3 is on human cessation from labor. And third, there is the arresting fact that the desert tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month of the year (Exod 40:2, 17). Manifestly, then, the building of the tabernacle has been presented in the image of the creation of the world, and signified as an extension of a process begun at the creation.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus, as concluded by Fishbane, it is logical to assume that the construction of the tabernacle “was portrayed in the image of the world’s creation.” Beale further amplifies this view by stating:

More specifically, both accounts of the creation and building of the tabernacle are structured around a series of seven acts: cf. “And God said” (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24, 26; cf. vv. 11, 28, 29) and “the LORD said” (Exod 25:1; 30:11, 17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12) (Sailha-mer 1992: 298-299). In the light of observing similar and additional parallels between the “creation of the world” and “the construction of the sanctuary,” J. Blenkinsopp concludes that “the place of worship is a scaled-down cosmos” (1992: 217-218).\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Harris, Archer, and Waltke, \textit{Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament}, 464.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 132.
\textsuperscript{33} Fishbane, \textit{Text and Texture}, 12.
The Verb מִתְחַלְתֶּק

The verb מִתְחַלְתֶּק (mithallēk) (Verb הָלַךְ hitpael, participle, masculine, singular, absolute), translated as “walking around,” appears in the entire OT eight times in the BHS (Gen 3:8; Deut 23:14; 1 Sam 12:2; 2 Sam 7:6; Ps 68:21; Prov 20:7; Prov 24:34; Esth 2:11). From these passages, only three (Gen 3:8; Deut 23:14; 2 Sam 7:6) present God as the subject of the sentence: the first presents “God walking in the midst of the garden,” the second “God walks in the midst of your camp,” and the third presents God as “moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle.” This is the occasion on which God tells Samuel that David would not build the Temple in Jerusalem, but Solomon would.

Most significant, however, is the fact that in the eight passages above, the word מִתְחַלְתֶּק preceded by the Hebrew words יְהֹוָה אלֹהִים (yhwh yhwh–Lord God) “is found only twice in the entire OT, once in connection with God’s walking in the garden (Gen 3:8) and the other when He is walking in the midst of the camp of Israel (Deut 23:14).”

Since the Garden of Eden was a unique place for God’s presence before the fall, where Adam could walk and talk with God, and the tabernacle was the place where the priests could experience God’s unique presence after the fall, it seems more than mere coincidence that the biblical writer would use this combination of words מִתְחַלְתֶּק יְהֹוָה אלֹהִים only twice throughout the OT to describe “God walking in the midst” of His people. It reveals a strong link between these two places.

To “Serve” and “Keep”

In addition to what has been presented, two other texts of the OT reveal possible connections between the Garden of Eden and the tabernacle. The first is found in Genesis 2:15: “the LORD God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” In this text, the words translated as “cultivate it and keep it” are the Hebrew words הָדַע וְהָרַע מִיְּתַקְּרָא and הָפרֶכֶת וְהָשַׁל מִיְּתַקְּרָא...ו. Both words are parsed as follows: 1. הָדַע וְהָרַע מִיְּתַקְּרָא - Particle preposition מְ, Verb Qal infinitive Constructive (בָּֽמֹ, Suffix (נ) feminine singular; 2. הָפרֶכֶת וְהָשַׁל מִיְּתַקְּרָא - Particle conjunction (ז), Particle preposition מְ, Verb Qal infinitive Constructive (רָ, Suffix (ו) feminine singular. For additional information see Harris, Archer, and Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.
The second text is Numbers 3:7-8, which says in reference to the priest: “They shall perform the duties for him...before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle. They shall also keep all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.” Similarly, the words here translated as “they shall also keep” and “to do” are the Hebrew words ḥāznū (wāfšăm‘rû) and ḥāznū (la‘aḥōd) respectively.37

When elaborating on the connection found in these two passages, Beale stresses:

The two Hebrew words for “cultivate and keep” are usually translated “serve and guard [or keep]” elsewhere in the Old Testament....When, however, these two words (verbal [‘ābad and shāmar] and nominal forms) occur together in the Old Testament (within an approximately 15-word range), they refer either to Israelites “serving” God and “guarding [keeping]” God’s word (approximately 10 times) or to priests who “keep” the “service” (or “charge”) of the tabernacle (see Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr 23:32; Ezek 44:14).38

Many other links can be found in the OT between the Garden of Eden and the tabernacle. As a matter of fact, Davidson suggests several others that can be explored in future research, building upon the background information provided in this article.39

Evidently, the three pieces of biblical evidence provided in this section, along with the information provided in the earlier sections, demonstrates that the connection between the Garden of Eden/creation and the Israelite tabernacle/sanctuary is strong and insightful. Would it be reasonable to assume that in light of this evidence, another link can be found in one of the most important ceremonies of the OT, the so called Day of Atonement?

Creation and the Day of Atonement

In this section I examine the accounts of the creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 to determine whether a

37 These words are parsed as follows: 1) ...ωφ’μΔωω - Particle conjunction (ω), Verb Qal perfect 3 common plural consecutive (rmv); 2) δ’Οβσολλ - Particle preposition ‘λ, Verb Qal infinitive Constructive (βπ). For additional information see Harris, Archer, and Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.

38 Beale, The Temple and the Church’s Mission, 66, 67.

39 For more information on these possible links, see Addendum 1. In addition, see Beale, 29-100; Fishbane, Text and Texture; Clements, God and Temple.
link between the two may be established. The purpose is to investigate the possibility of a link between the cleansing of the sanctuary and God’s creation week, which includes the planting of the Garden of Eden, defined earlier as God’s sanctuary before the fall.

The Creation Week

Although Genesis 1:1-2:3 contains the entire narrative of the creation week, one may quickly verify that Genesis 1:1-5 describes the acts of creation until the end of the first day, and all the other days of creation follow the same pattern, with the exception of the seventh day. Table 2 below provides a simplified list of events that can give the reader a better understanding of the literary structure of creation week.

Table 2. Structure of the days of creation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Sixth Day — Gen 1:1-30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>God commands an event</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion of the creation day</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seventh Day — Gen 2:1-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” Gen 2:3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Day of Atonement and the Cleansing of the Sanctuary

The word translated as “atonement” in Leviticus 16:16 derives from the Hebrew verb הָפַר (hāpar), meaning primarily “to cover” or “cover over.” According to Leviticus 16:29, the people of Israel were instructed to gather once a year “in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month” and “humble [their] souls and not do any work,” as a prerequisite for the activities that would take place in the sanctuary. Thus, intending to perform a “spiritual housecleaning” in the earthly sanctuary, Moses instructed the people to do everything in the way that the Lord had commanded. Roy
Gane states: “Sins and impurities could remain in the sanctuary only for so long. If God’s house became too polluted, He would not remain there (compare Ezek 9:3; 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23). We are talking about spiritual ‘housecleaning’ here rather than physical cleaning which the priests must have performed at other times.”

Amplifying this concept, Gane also emphasizes that the atonement for the sins of the people was done in two stages. The first was that of “forgiveness through individual sacrifice during the year” (Lev 4:26), and the second was the “cleansing through the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement” (Lev 16:30). Thus, in light of this twofold process of atonement (נהר (kāpar)), it appears that the view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—that Christ’s death on the cross would stand for the forgiveness portion, and his resurrection, ascension, and ministry in the heavenly sanctuary would stand for the cleansing portion—is more than a remediation for the great disappointment of 1844: it is actually a biblical truth. As a matter of fact, Ellen White said that “the intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven.”

Once it is established that Leviticus 16 deals with this twofold process of atonement as forgiveness and cleansing, and that this process is directly connected to the priestly work of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17), another link emerges which links Leviticus 16 to the cleansing of the sanctuary described in Daniel 8:14, which says in prophetic language, “Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (ASV).

---

40 Roy Gane, Altar Call (Berrien Springs, MI: Diadem, 1999), 186.
41 Ibid., 186, 187.
43 The traditional interpretation of Dan 8:14 by Seventh-day Adventists is based on the “year-day” principle and the historicist method of prophetic interpretation. Seventh-day Adventists have advocated that the year 457 B.C. is the beginning of this period of 2,300 years. As for the “cleansing” of the sanctuary, Adventists believe that this is an ongoing process that started on October 22, 1844 in the heavenly sanctuary and will culminate with the complete elimination of sin after the final coming of Jesus Christ to this planet (Rev 20: 7-15). Then, a new creation will take place (Rev 21), and sin will be no more. For additional information on the interpretation of Dan 8:14, see Shea, Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation, 31-171 and Frank B. Holbrook, Symposium on Daniel, 2 vols., Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver
I have set forward as my purpose in this article to investigate and search for the existence of any link between the Day of Atonement and the creation week/Garden of Eden. Although it seems that a direct link can be established between these two important events of the OT, fully establishing the link would require a longer and more detailed investigation than space allows in this article. Nonetheless, after verifying the existence of a link between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly one, it seems reasonable to convey that an indirect link is found between Leviticus 16 and Genesis 1:1-2:3, through Daniel 8:14 and the expression רֶפֶת בּוֹקֶר (‘ereb bōqer), translated as “evenings and mornings.” To clarify this statement, some additional considerations are necessary. For instance: The expression רֶפֶת בּוֹקֶר (‘ereb bōqer), translated as “evenings-mornings,” appears only once in the entire OT in its asyndetic form (Dan 8:14). Scholars have debated the number of times that these two nouns occur individually in the OT. For instance, the New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries suggest that the Hebrew noun בּוֹקֶר (bōqer), appears 132 times, “translated as evening (114), evening (1), evenings (2), every evening (1), night (2), sunset (1), twilight (11).” The other noun, רֶפֶת (‘ereb), occurs 208 times according to the NASB Dictionaries, translated as “dawn (1), dawn (2), day (1), daybreak (1), every morning (5), morning (195), mornings (2), soon (1), tomorrow morning (1).” Another source, the TWOT, suggests 131 times for בּוֹקֶר (‘ereb), and states that רֶפֶת (bōqer), which is “linked with the root bāqar, bōqer,” occurs “about 200 times.”

There are strong arguments in favor of רֶפֶת בּוֹקֶר (‘ereb bōqer), as being the Hebrew way to refer to the period of one day. Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch state the following:

When the Hebrews wish to express separately day and night, the component parts of a day of a week, then the number of both is expressed. They say, e.g., forty days and forty nights (Gen. 7:4, 12; Ex. 24:18; 1 Kings 19:8), and three days and three nights (Jonah 2:1; Matt. 12:40), but not eighty or six days-

---

44 Robert L. Thomas and W. Don Wilkins, *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, Updated ed. (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, 1998), H6153. An asterisk (*) indicates that the key word represents two or more Hebrew or Aramaic words. Refer to the English concordance listing of the key word for the additional Hebrew or Aramaic word numbers.


46 Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 693, 125.
and-nights, when they wish to speak of forty or three full days.\(^{47}\)

Once the concept of “evenings-mornings” is affirmed and established as being the Hebrew way to refer to a full day, the reader of Daniel 8:14 may question why the author of the book of Daniel used this unique combination of words instead of just using the word “days.” In his Ph.D. dissertation, Martin Probstle suggests that the intention of the author of Daniel in using יָרְקָא עַרְבָּה (‘ereb bōqer), was to strike the reader of the book with the inevitable recollection of the days of creation. In the Genesis narrative, the Hebrew words יָיִשְׁוָא עַרְבָּה יָיִשְׁוָא בּוֹעוֹר (wayhi-‘ereb wayhi-bōqer) only appear in this sequence six times in the entire OT—one for each day of the week. They are followed by the noun יָומָא (yōm) + a numeral, which emphasizes the time involved in each day during that week. Probstle states:

Yet, the uniqueness of the time unit “evening-morning” in BH could suggest that the order “noun + numeral” is intentional in order to focus attention on the time unit “evening-morning” before the actual number is given. The emphasis of the whole time phrase is on the semantic notion being conveyed by “evening-morning,” which, suggested by its intertextual relation, is creation. This creates a powerful rhetorical effect: After the question until which point in time the destructive situation will continue, the first thought triggered by the answer is regarding creation. Thus, the idea is that creation counters destruction.\(^{48}\)

Adding to this view, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* defines the term as “literally, ‘evening morning,’ an expression comparable with the description of the days of creation.”\(^{49}\) And the *SDA Encyclopedia* elaborating in the article “Creation” concludes: “The God of creation is also the God of salvation and judgment (Psa 89:11–15; 146:6–10; Rev 14:7). He who has power to create has power to redeem, to restore, to create anew the heavens and the earth, to create within man a clean heart (Isa 44:21–28; 65:17–25; Psa 51:10).”\(^{50}\)

Therefore, in light of what has been shown in this section, after examining


\(^{50}\) *SDA Encyclopedia*, 2002 ed., s.v. “Creation.”
the accounts of the creation in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, as well as the link between the latter and Daniel 8:14, it is simply reasonable to conclude, based on the grammatical and contextual insights suggested by Probstle, Nichol, and others, that a link between the cleansing of the sanctuary and God’s creation week is something stronger than speculation or imagination: it is, in my view, actually a fact.

**Conclusion**

The grammatical significance of the words יִמְדָּשׁ (miqdāš) and וְשָּׁקָנִי (wēšākanti) and the events described in Exodus 24:16 and Exodus 3:1-4:18 were analyzed in order to obtain a biblical definition for the term “sanctuary,” and it became clear that what defines a sanctuary from a biblical perspective is the unique presence of יהוה (yhwḥ), independent of place, structure, or form. Conclusively, a place can only be called a “holy place” while God is dwelling in it.

Subsequently, three suggested connections between the earthly sanctuary and the Garden of Eden were investigated by methods of exegesis and comparison. The striking similarities between the accounts of the creation and the construction of the Mosaic tabernacle, the use of the Hebrew verb מִתְּחַלֵּךְ (mithallēḵ), and the portrayal of Adam and the priests as keepers and sustainers of God’s dwelling places made it clear that these connections were valid and well established.

Finally, after analyzing the evidence in favor of the Garden of Eden as the earthly counterpart of the heavenly sanctuary before the fall, and verifying the connection between Leviticus 16 and Daniel 8:14, one can conclude that the unique expression יֵרֵבַּבֶּרְבֶּר (‘ereb bōger) serves as a bridge to link the Day of Atonement with the creation week. Even more impressive is the idea that the ritual of Leviticus 16 not only implies a new beginning for the people of Israel after the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary, but in fact alludes to the promise of a new creation by the Most Holy One where death and sin will be no more. “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 1:8).
Introduction

In Psalm 73 the poet struggles to understand the justice of God in His dealings with the righteous and the wicked. He is confused by the prosperity of the wicked (v. 3), by their peaceful deaths and healthy bodies (v. 4) in spite of their violence and disrespect for God (vv. 6, 11). However when he enters the Sanctuary of God he is able to see “their end” (v. 17). From that moment on his description of the wicked and their lives is quite different compared to the description prior to this verse.

Psalm 73—Translation¹
A Psalm of Asaph
1. Surely God is good to Israel
   To the pure of heart
2. But as for me, my feet almost slipped
   My steps stumbled a little
3. For I was envious of the arrogant
   I saw the prosperity of the wicked

¹This translation of the Psalm is the author’s.
4. For there are no pains in their deaths
   And their body is fat
5. Of the troubles of mankind there are none to them
   Nor are they stricken with other men
6. Therefore pride is their necklace
   Violence is the garment they wear
7. Their eyes bulge from fatness
   The imaginations of their heart transgress
8. They mock and speak wickedly of oppression
   They speak loftily
9. They have set their mouths against the heavens
   And their tongue walks through the earth
10. Therefore his people return here
    And abundant waters are drained by them
11. They say: “How can God Know?
    And is there knowledge in the Most High?”
12. Behold these are the wicked ones
    Always easily they increase in wealth
13. Surely in vain I kept my heart pure
    And washed my hands in innocence
14. And I was stricken all day long
    And punished in the morning
15. If I had said: “I will speak thus”
    Behold I would have betrayed the generations of Your children
16. As I pondered to understand this
    It is troublesome in my eyes
17. Until I come to the Sanctuary of God
    Then I perceive their end
18. Surely You put them in a slippery path
    You make them fall into ruin
19. How they are to be destroyed in a moment
    They come to a complete end from terrors
20. As a dream from awakening, the Lord rises
    You will despise their form
21. For my heart was embittered
    And my kidneys were pierced
22. But I am stupid and lack knowledge
    I was like a beast before You
23. Nevertheless I am always with You
   You hold my right hand
24. In Your counsel You will lead me
   And after glory You will take me
25. Who else do I have in heaven?
   But with You I desire nothing on earth
26. My flesh and my heart have failed
   God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever
27. For behold those who are far from You will perish
   You have destroyed all who are unfaithful to You
28. But for me, the nearness of God is good for me
   I have made the Lord GOD my refuge
   That I may tell of all Your works

**Literary Analysis—Passage outline**

**Introduction**: acknowledgement of God's goodness and human limitations (1-3a)
**Apparent reality**: prosperity of the wicked and suffering of the righteous (3b-14)
  - Description of the advantages of the wicked (3b-5)
  - Description of the behavior of the wicked (6-12)
  - Suffering of the righteous (13-14)
**Turn of events** (15-17)
**Reality**: the true situation of the wicked and the righteous (18-24)
  - The true end of the wicked (18-20)
  - Acknowledgement of the author's situation before God opened his eyes:
    - Poet is stupid, ignorant like a beast (21-22)
    - God leads him to understanding (23-24)
**Conclusion**: Acknowledgement of God's greatness (25-28)

This psalm opens and closes with an acknowledgement of God as good and just. The introduction and conclusion stating the qualities of God brackets the poet's doubts and questions concerning the justice of God. The center of this psalm is the turning point in verse 17 when the poet gains understanding and is able to shift his thinking which goes from doubt and questioning the prosperity of the wicked before he goes into the temple (17), to a very different description of the fate of the wicked
afterwards. There is a thematic chiastic structure that goes as follows:

A – Introduction: acknowledgement that God is good  
B – Apparent reality: God is not fair, the wicked prosper  
  C – Turning point: he goes into the Sanctuary  
B1 – Reality: God is just, the end of the wicked is not prosperity  
A1 – Conclusion: acknowledgement of God’s greatness

An alternate way to divide this psalm, is to divide it in two halves, before and after verse 17. Verses 1 and 28 form an inclusio, and the two parts of the psalm are compared as panels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Alternated possible division of Psalm 73</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6     | Pride is their necklace  
         Violence is the garment they wear | 20             | You will despise their form |
| 7     | The imaginations of their heart transgress | 21             | My heart was embittered |
| 8     | They speak loftily | 22             | I lack knowledge |
| 9     | Heaven and earth [the wicked] | 25             | Heaven and earth [God] |
| 10    | Is there knowledge in the Most High? | 26a            | God is the strength of my heart |
| 11    | They increase in wealth | 26b            | God is my portion |
| 13    | In vain I kept my heart pure | 27             | Not in vain: those who are far from you will perish |

There are some gaps in this structuring and as seen above it is still greatly thematic. A closer look at the wording of the psalm however
reveals a more concrete division into sections. The psalm can be divided into seven sections based on the focus on third or first person in each verse as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>first person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-12</td>
<td>third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>first person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 17      | a. first person  
         | b. third person |
| 18-20   | third person  |
| 21-26   | first person  |
| 27      | third person  |

According to this structure verses 1 and 28 are paired up again forming an *inclusio*. They are linked by their focus on God and the word *bwοf* (good). Also supporting this division is the presence of particles at the beginning of each one of the sections (*τς, ἥς, τς*).³

This division can be further organized into a chiasm showing the connections between the first person sections to the third person sections as seen below:

```
  17
 13-16  18-20
  4-12  21-26
  2-3  27
```

This chiasm is substantiated by the fact that the particles that start each section match the particles in the corresponding section: verses 13-16/18-20 start with “surely” (*ής*); 4-12/21-26 with “for” (*ς*) and 2-3/27 starting with “for” (*ς*) (note that verse 3 and not verse 2 starts with the particle). In contrast verse 17 starts with its own particle: “*until*” (*ς*), singling it out.

**Content and Grammatical Study**

**Verses 1: The Introduction**

The introduction to the psalm is an acknowledgement of the goodness

---

³ Ibid., 99.
of God. Before the poet introduces his doubts he creates a contrast between himself and God, in a way revealing the conclusion he will come to at the end of the poem. He declares, “Surely God is good to Israel” but contrasts it to his own behavior: “but as for me, my feet almost slipped.” In other words, in spite of the knowledge that God is good to Israel and to those who are pure in heart, he doubted God’s justice in His dealings with the wicked and the righteous. By introducing his psalm in this way the poet pointed to where the fault was—himself, a mere human being—and away from God. The statement that is the parallel thought to “Israel” limits God’s goodness to those who are “pure in heart,” that is, the righteous. He is here reinforcing the idea that the righteous are rewarded regardless of the doubts he is about to express. It is almost as if the poet would not dare put his doubt forward before reassuring the readers of his conclusions.

Verses 2-3: The Poet’s Doubts

After making his introductory statement he goes into the question that was bothering him; he was envious of the wicked. These two verses focus their attention on the poet, the first person: me, my feet, my steps … I was envious; I saw.

Verses 4-12: The Apparent Reality of the Wicked

There is a shift to a focus on the third person: the wicked. There is at least one third person suffix, ending or pronoun in every verse. Actually, out of the eighteen lines composing this section only two do not contain a direct or indirect reference to the third person. This section starts with the statement that the wicked prosper. It is this prosperity of the wicked that the poet is envious of. Verses 4-5 describe the “blessings” of the wicked; they do not suffer painful deaths; they have plenty to eat; they do not have the same troubles other people have. The following verses then describe the character of the wicked; they are proud, violent, act on whatever their heart desires, oppress with mockery and even dare to speak against the heavens. To speak against the heavens is a metaphor for speaking against God himself who lives in them.

---

4The word used in the Hebrew is “arrogant” but the word is used in poetic parallelism with wicked implying they refer to the same class of people. Later in the psalm he further describes the wicked as arrogant, wearing a necklace of pride and speaking loftily.

5Literally “their bodies are fat.” In a time when people had to work so hard for their food, fat was a sign of prosperity; plenty of food and not much hard work.
The main issue at stake here is the concept of Divine Justice, the expectation that God will punish the wicked for their evil deeds and reward the righteous for their faithfulness. In Job we find that the discourses of all his friends state again and again that the wicked suffer and are unhappy and that the righteous prosper and are blessed. This expectation comes from a sense of justice that says that people are rewarded according to their actions. The poet is bothered by the fact that the reality he sees does not match this expectation of justice, and he yearns to understand why God is not punishing the wicked right before his eyes.

Verses 13-16: The Apparent Reality of the Righteous

The section switches again to focus on the first person, with a reference to it in every line. The break between sections was also marked by the particle (גַּל). The poet looks at his own life and sees the struggles and difficulties before him, he identifies no reward for having “washed his hands in innocence,” it was all in vain. However verse 15 seems to indicate that the thought was not quite settled in his mind, he was still “pondering” these things (v. 16).

Verse 17: The Turning Point

Verse 17 marks the turning point in the thinking of the poet. This turning point is underlined by the particle (גַּל), which introduces the verse. The first line of the verse still focuses on the first person, but the second line switches its focus back to the third person. From this verse on, his discourse is the opposite of what it was: he sees a different reality, one that seems to stretch beyond this life.

Going into the Sanctuary enabled his eyes to be opened to the reality of both the wicked and righteous. The fact that the verbs in verse 17 are in the imperfect may indicate that this understanding may come every time he enters the Sanctuary. Or indicate some regularity in this visit to the Sanctuary. Most translations⁶ imply by translating these as vav consecutive imperfects that upon pondering the issue of Divine Justice he entered the temple once and the question was settled for him; but perhaps a translation keeping with the incomplete nature of the imperfect verbs used here may suggest that the question is settled anytime one comes to the Sanctuary. In keeping with this understanding the second part of verse 16 should also be

translated in the present “It is troublesome in my eyes.” The sequence flows as follows:

   It is troublesome in my eyes
   Until I come into the Sanctuary of God
   Then I perceive their end

Much controversy has surrounded the term sanctuaries of God (םֶעָרְכָּתָא יִהְיוּ), and some have even stated that the use of the plural is an isolated occurrence. But the term in the plural actually occurs 8 times in the Hebrew Bible, twice within the Psalms (Lev 21:23; Lev 26:31; Jer 51:51; Ezek 21:2; Ezek 28:18; Amos 7:9; Ps 68:35; Ps 73:17). Most of these occurrences are clearly referring to the physical sanctuary of God, maybe in the sense of a sanctuary complex with several compartments and levels of holiness, but a physical one nonetheless. See for example Leviticus 21:23 where the LORD himself refers to his tabernacle in the plural: “Thus he will not come near the veil or approach the altar for he has a defect, so that he will not profane my sanctuaries for I am the LORD who sanctifies the” (italics are the authors). Twice in this verse, one in the plural noun and the other in the final pronominal suffix, we find that the reference to the sanctuary is in the plural.

Verses 18-20: The Real Fate of the Wicked

Once again the focus is on the third person, the wicked. Of the six lines only one does not contain a third person referring to the wicked. The section opens with the particle (וְ), which supports the transition to a new section.

Something related to the Sanctuary revealed to the poet the end of the wicked. He now sees things as they are and gives a very different picture of the wicked: they no longer prosper, it is their feet that are on a slippery path, instead of that of the poet as in verse two. After his visit to the Sanctuary the author knows that the wicked will be destroyed, completely swept away, that the Lord will rise against them and despise their form. The meaning of verses 18 and 20 may be a reference to a punishment beyond death—a second death, since in verse four he says that their death is peaceful. The poet is now sure that justice will be done, that the Lord is

---

not blind to their wicked deeds. The poet affirms that it is the Lord who puts their feet on this slippery path. This may be an allusion to their false security, which allows them to mock God. God is not bothered by their mockery, He sees where they are headed, and their false security blinds them to their own end.

**Verses 21-26: The Real Fate of the Righteous**

Switching the focus back to the first person (mentioned in every one of the twelve lines), the section is introduced with (‘א). The author is now looking at his own reality again. With the understanding of what will happen to the wicked also comes the understanding of the poet’s own ignorance, he realizes that God is the One who takes him by the hand and leads him into understanding, in spite of his own lack of wisdom. He also has in mind now the reward of the righteous; God will take them into glory (v. 24). The meaning here may be a reference to a reward after this life, just like in verses 18 and 20 the punishment of the wicked is beyond death. The verb used in verse 24 is the same one to describe the translation of Enoch (Gen 5:24), who was “taken” into heaven. Elijah also refers to his translation with the verb jql in 2 Kings 2:10. Terrien supports this interpretation in his commentary on the Psalms⁸ and the idea of a reward in the form of an afterlife is also present in the Midrash on the Psalms.⁹

Verse 25 is an acknowledgement of the ultimate sovereignty of God: who else is there in heaven but Him? In contrast to verse nine where the wicked speak against heaven and their tongue parades the earth, in verse 25 God is the only one in heaven and in earth.¹⁰ This brings out the contrast between God’s sovereignty and the current prosperity and domain of the wicked. It also points to the double reward of the righteous; they are rewarded on earth because God is their portion, and they are rewarded in heaven where they will be near to God.

**Verse 27: True End of the Wicked**

One more reference to the wicked (third person) before the final

---


¹⁰Allen, “Psalm 73: An Analysis.”
conclusion, states; those who are far from God will perish. Again a reference to a pavement beyond death, the wicked will perish because they will not be near God—the reward of the righteous, also beyond death.

**Verse 28: The Conclusion**

In this concluding praise the poet is also able to see that the reward of the righteous is the nearness of God, and that the blessing that comes from communion with God outshines any earthly blessing that the wicked may have. The poet now can confess that God is his portion. He is also assured of the privilege granted only to the righteous; He will live with God (v. 28).

**Intertextuality**

Throughout the Psalms different terms are used to refer to the Sanctuary: הֵיכָל (Sanctuary); עֵבֶר (the Holy); הֵיכָל (Temple); בֵּית הָאֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה (house of the LORD); בֵּית הַלַּאֲגָס (Temple); בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים (House of God); בֵּית הָר (Sanctuary); בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים (His holy habitation). Sometimes the word heaven is used to indicate the heavenly sanctuary.

The Sanctuary is represented in the book of Psalms in many different ways. This is where you find God, He is in His Sanctuary—sometimes referring to the heavenly sometimes to the earthly sanctuary (Ps 11:4; 63:2; 68:24, 35); it is the dwelling place of his name (Ps 74:7); strength and beauty are found in the sanctuary (Ps 84:1; 96:6); the sanctuary is where one praises God (Ps 5:7; 29:9; 93:5; 116:19; 132:7; 138:2; 150:1); it is a place for meditation (Ps 27:4; 48:9; 68:29); a place where sacrifices are made and vows fulfilled (Ps 66:13); it is where the righteous long to be (Ps 23:6; 26:8; 27:4; 43:3; 84:4, 10; 92:13; 122:1); it is also the place from where God helps and supports His people (Ps 18:6; 20:2); from where he observes, and sometimes tests, mankind (Ps 33:14); it is a place where one comes to ask a petition, to seek for divine justice (Ps 28:2; 98:3).

The poet of Psalm 73, in referring to the Sanctuary, must have seen something behind the rituals and ceremonies that pointed to the justice of God, for it is justice he is looking for. De Souza sees a connection here between the earthly and heavenly Sanctuaries, and his study on the Psalms convincingly shows that one of the functions of the heavenly Sanctuary was that of judgment, a function that in its correspondence to the earthly
Sanctuary could be seen in it too.\textsuperscript{11} Of interest to this paper are occurrences in the Psalms and elsewhere where judgment is associated with the temple/sanctuary, whether the earthly one or its heavenly counterpart. According to the Psalms can justice be seen in the sanctuary?

Psalm 11:4 uses the term אֹהֵל (Temple): “The LORD is in His holy temple.” Not only does the Psalm speak of the sanctuary, it also presents a contrast between the wicked and the righteous. This Psalm has been classified convincingly by De Souza as a Psalm of Judgment.\textsuperscript{12} Notice that the second half of both of these psalms portrays the ultimate end of the wicked as destruction by the Lord:

Ps 11:6 “Upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup”

Ps 73:19 “How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!”

and the reward of the righteous as being the nearness of God:

Ps 11:7 “the upright will behold His face”

Ps 73: 28 “the nearness of God is my good”\textsuperscript{13}

Coincidently these last two verses are also the closing verses for their respective psalms. Another strong tie between the two psalms is the underlying understanding that God performs judgment in the Sanctuary. De Souza further divides this judgment into an investigative and an executive judgment, the former concentrating on the righteous and the latter on the wicked.\textsuperscript{14}

Other psalms that represent that Sanctuary as a place of judgment are: Psalm 28:2—the sanctuary is where one brings His petitions to God—as to a judge: “Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help, When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.” This Psalm seems to parallel the cry for justice present in Psalm 73.

Psalm 68:5 (NASB) says that God in His Sanctuary is a judge: “A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows is God in His holy habitation.” Psalm 82:1 portrays a judgment scene in the Heavenly Sanctuary, where


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 501.

\textsuperscript{13} Cited from The NASB.

\textsuperscript{14} De Souza, “The Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple Motif,” 366.
God is the judge: “God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers.” This heavenly council appears again more explicitly in Job 1.

Psalms 60:6 and an identical verse in 108:7 portray the Sanctuary as the place where God speaks from, where he governs the earth: “God has spoken in his sanctuary: I will exult! I will divide Shechem and measure the valley of Succoth” (Ps 60:6; my translation). Government in the Ancient Near East was tied to justice and judgment, the ruler being the ultimate judge. Psalms 33, 14 and 102 portray Him as one who looks down from heaven observing, supervising, ruling, and in a sense also judging—judging the actions of the righteous and the wicked (Ps 33:13-14). “The LORD looks from heaven, He sees the sons of men; from His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth” (Ps 14:2). “The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God” (Ps 102:19-20, NASB), “For He looked down from his holy height; From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to set free those who were doomed to death” (Ps 102:19-20).

There are interesting parallels between Psalm 73 and 37. Psalm 37 is also considered to be a wisdom psalm, and it also compares the wicked to the righteous. By advising the righteous not to be envious of the wicked, the poet is implying that the wicked have something to be desired, that is, without stating that they prosper, he implies that they do. The poet also repeatedly expresses that there will be an end to the wicked; they will be cut off (v. 9 נזַע), a punishment administered by God Himself and not necessarily immediate; v. 10 says the wicked have just a little while longer and then they will be no more for His day is coming (v. 13). Throughout the Psalm there is this understanding that in spite of the current prosperity of the wicked their day of judgment will come. What Psalm 73 adds to the picture, is that coming into the Sanctuary has shed light on this issue of final justice.

Some passages outside the Psalms can also help illuminate the expectation for judgment in the sanctuary expressed in Psalm 73. There are striking similarities between this Psalm and the book of Job. Both are

---

15 The Israelite understanding of the function of the earthly temple as a microcosm of the heavenly temple is demonstrated in Exodus 25 by the fact that Moses is shown a pattern to follow—presumably a pattern of the Heavenly Sanctuary that was to be a model for the earthly one.
set against the background of traditional Ancient Near Eastern wisdom of direct retributive justice: you do good you prosper, you do evil you suffer; both deal with the issue of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous; both demonstrate the expectation that it is God’s responsibility to bring justice. But while the author of Psalm 73 finds his answers in the sanctuary of God, Job, in spite of having a vision of God, is not given an answer as to why things are the way they are.

In 1 Kings 8:31 (NASB), Solomon prays that the temple be a place where God judges “condemning the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.”

But what is it that the psalmist sees in the Sanctuary in Psalm 73:17? We know from the reading of the Psalm that what the poet saw has brought light about the “end” of the wicked. Verse 4 implies that the “end” in mind here is not their death, since even in this they have ease, but an end beyond this life. Terrien also suggests that the meaning of verse 20, “You will despise their form/shadow” hints at retribution beyond death. Another verse that points that direction is 18, “surely you put them on a slippery path....” The path of the wealthy wicked is slippery because all the satisfaction he gains from this life causes him to forget his final end. If the reward of the righteous in verse 24 is read as the reward of resurrection or translation, as suggested above, the point is strengthened that the poet sees beyond this life and death.

It may be that upon entering the Temple the poet is reminded of Solomon’s prayer transcribed in 1 Kings 8, and feels reassured that God is a just judge who will ultimately condemn the wicked and justify the righteous. It could also be that the rituals performed in the Sanctuary evoked the understanding of Divine judgment. One of these rituals in particular has relevance to our understanding of Psalm 73, namely the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement was probably the most important day in the liturgical year of Israel. The appointment for this festival and a description of its rituals is found in Leviticus 16. On this day no work was to be done and the community should fast and afflict themselves on penalty of death.

---

A complex ritual\textsuperscript{18} and additional sacrifices for the purification of the temple/tabernacle were made on this day, and the scapegoat carrying the sins of the people of Israel were sent along with Azazel into the wilderness.

Roy Gane\textsuperscript{19} has demonstrated that the Day of Atonement is a judgment day for Israel. An Israelite would only receive full atonement at \textit{Yom Kippur} if he/she had been careful not to break the commandments of God and had obeyed the stipulations for ritual and moral cleansing during the preceding year. But this only made them eligible to partake of the atonement, and they were further required on that day to fast and abstain from work. From the perspective of the poet of Psalm 73 the wicked are not even eligible for this final atonement. According to Gane, “\textit{separation between truly loyal and disloyal people is completed in the Day of Atonement. ... So we find that, within the Israelite cultic year, the Day of Atonement completes the determination of destinies on the national level and in this sense can be regarded as Israel’s judgment day.”\textsuperscript{20} Rabbinic Judaism saw the Day of Atonement as the day when the verdict for each individual was sealed (b. \textit{Roš Haš.} 16a) and “\textit{the sages hold that the fate of every person, which has been left pending from Rosh HaShanah, is finally determined on the Day of Atonement.”\textsuperscript{21} For the faithful Israelite the Day of Atonement brought full reconciliation with God through the purging of the Sanctuary. The Medieval Jews also understood this day to be a day of judgment and justice.\textsuperscript{22}

Another connection between the Day of Atonement and judgment is in the festival day that later became known as Rosh HaShanah—Baruch Levine, \textit{Leviticus}, ed. Nahum Sarna, 5 vols., Jps Torah Commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 3:99. designated at some point in history as the beginning of the Jewish calendar year. Leviticus 23:24 sets the first day of Tishri as a festival day but does not name it, and the days between Rosh HaShanah and the Day of Atonement became known as ten days of repentance. Rosh HaShanah is regarded by the rabbis as the annual day of judgment, on which the book of life is

\textsuperscript{19} Roy Gane, \textit{Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy} (Winnona Lake, WI: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 305.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 306-7.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
opened, but the Day of Atonement is when the book, and the “verdict,” is sealed.\(^{23}\) Therefore it is during these first ten days of the New Year that the fate of each individual is decided.

Another interesting parallel between the Day of Atonement and Psalm 73, is the “end” of the righteous, their reward. This cleansing of the Sanctuary from the sins of the people is what allowed them to live in the presence of a holy God, this cleansing was necessary because God himself dwelt among them. After going into the Sanctuary the poet also sees that the “end” of the righteous is the nearness of God, or as Psalm 11 puts it “to see God’s face.” That makes sense after witnessing the Day of Atonement rituals and realizing that this purification is what brings them into God’s presence. Their sins are removed from the temple and sent with Azazel into the wilderness, never to return. The wicked have no such privilege. Their sins are upon them and have not been atoned for, they may live a prosperous life but they will never see God, because their sins are upon them separating them from God forever.

**Theology and Message**

The author of this Psalm understood from the system of rituals instated by God through Moses a theological meaning beyond this life. He was able to understand even in his time that there would be a final judgment, where wicked and righteous would have to answer for their actions. He is assured by the Sanctuary services that in “the end” God will bring about full justice.

The message of this Psalm for today is the clear message it has always carried; you may look around and see the prosperity of the wicked, and your heart may tell you that it is unjust, but they are going down a slippery path, comfortable and at ease and mindless of their “end” because the ultimate truth is that God is just and He will bring justice to the world at the appointed time. If God gave the righteous all the blessings and the wicked all the curses people would be motivated to serve Him because of the immediate reward of their decisions, they would not follow Him out of their hearts unconditionally. In a world where God rains on the righteous and the unrighteous, the righteous learn to follow God unconditionally, to make the Lord their portion, to be satisfied and filled with Him and not with the things of this world.

Summary and Conclusion

Notice that the author of this Psalm, unlike in other Psalms, is not asking for deliverance from suffering, he is asking, “Why?” He seeks understanding of the issue.\textsuperscript{24} The expectation of most people in antiquity (and today) is that justice means getting what you deserve, if you are bad you are punished, and if you are good you are rewarded. Reality nonetheless is quite different from that expectation and there seems to be no justice. For the poet, understanding of reality came by entering into the Sanctuary of God. The language and context of the psalm and of the topic indicate that this entry was a literal visit (or visits) to the Temple in Jerusalem where the poet gained an understanding of the “end” of the wicked and the righteous, probably from his contemplation of such rituals as those performed on the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement, and later Rosh HaShanah, has throughout history been seen as a judgment day for the Israelites, who were purged, cleansed of the sins they had repented of and confessed. On this day, according to tradition, their names were sealed in the book of life, if they were forgiven. Because these festivals are regular annual festivals this visit to the Temple need not be a one-time experience, but one that is tied to the Sanctuary and experienced every time these festivals took place.

Introduction

It is well known that in the time of Josephus, the Temple had been the center of Jewish life for centuries. As a Jew, Josephus would have had a deep reverence for the Temple. Mason comments that the outline of the *Jewish Antiquities* work is based on the Temple. The first half ends with the fall of the first Temple, with special emphasis, among other things, on a list of high priests up to that point. The second half concludes on the eve of the

---


second Temple’s fall in Josephus’ day, and with another list of high priests.³

But in regard to the Israelite Tabernacle, what degree of importance and meaning did it have for Josephus? The word Tabernacle can be found 71 times in Josephus’ works—69 times in Antiquities books 3-8 and 20, and once in Against Apion.⁴ What can we infer from those passages? In order to find answers to these questions we will analyze what Josephus said concerning architecture, fabrics, vessels, and garments of the priests of the Israelite Tabernacle.

**God Present**

In the first instance when Josephus mentions the word “σκηνή” as “Tabernacle” he states the purpose for which the Israelite σκηνή would be built. “[God] had suggested to him [Moses] also that he would have a tabernacle built for him, into which he would descend when he came to them; … and that there would be no longer any occasion for going up to Mount Sinai, but that he would himself come and pitch his tabernacle among us, and be present at our prayers.”⁵

Josephus says here that the Tabernacle should be as a dwelling place for God among the Israelites. Mount Sinai, despite the wonders shown there, would be no more His dwelling place. For God would come and pitch (ἐπιφοιτών) His tabernacle (σκηνή) among the Israelites, and would be present in their prayers.

The Greek verb translated as “come and pitch” is ἐπιφοιτάω (as a verb participle present active nominative masculine singular) which indicates “to come habitually to,” “to visit again and again.”⁶ The meaning of the verb, in addition to its mood, tense and syntactical function (present

---

⁴ Michael D. Tan, Glenn L. Weaver, and Michael S. Bushell, Bibleworks Ver. 7.0.012g (Norfolk, VA: BibleWorks, LLC).
participle adverbial of cause), emphasize the idea of continuous presence or abidance—God coming continuously in order to be present.

The Greek word translated as “tabernacle” is σκηνή (in the dative feminine singular form) which means “tent,” “booth,” “dwelling,” “home.” Due to the context, τῇ σκηνῇ is in the locative, and could be translated “into the tent” or “into the dwelling.” That word is also used by Josephus for the Israelite tents/dwellings. Therefore, a word by word translation from αὐτὸς ἐπιφοιτῶν τῇ σκηνῇ could be rendered “He himself coming [or comes] habitually into the dwelling.” The main clause of the last sentence of Antiquities 3:100 is παρατυγχάνῃ ταῖς ἡμετέραις εὐχαῖς, “and be present in our prayers.” Because παρατυγχάνω is in the subjunctive present active form, and ἐπιφοιτάω is in the participial form, the principal verb in the sentence is παρατυγχάνη. In other words, in the last sentence Josephus is emphasizing the presence of God at people’s prayers. Furthermore, “the present participle most frequently denotes an action in progress, simultaneous with the action of the principal verb.” Thus, we can infer from Josephus’ sentence that when and because God is present in His σκηνή [tent/dwelling/home], He is present at people’s prayers.

Therefore, a word which could summarize the whole of verse 100 could be “presence.” It seems here that for Josephus the Israelite Tabernacle means that God is present in His own house and in the life of His people.

From verse 100 on, Josephus talks about the architecture of the Israelite

---

11 Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses, 54.
12 S. D. Robertson says in his PhD dissertation that Josephus uses the Tabernacle narrative to emphasize the Divine presence, especially at people prayers. Stuart Dunbar Robertson, The Account of the Ancient Israelite Tabernacle and First Priesthood in the “Jewish Antiquities” of Flavius Josephus (Ann Arbor, MI: Bell and Howell, 1992), 9.
Tabernacle. Every detail of the architectural plan is given to make Josephus’
point that the Tabernacle is the house of God among His people. In the
next verse Josephus says

that the tabernacle should be of such measures and construction as he [God]
had shown him [Moses]; and that you are to fall to the work, and prosecute
it diligently. When he had said this, he [Moses] showed them the two tables,
with the Ten Commandments engraved upon them, five upon each table; and
the writing was by the hand of God [Ant. 3:101].¹³

Josephus here links the architecture¹⁴ of the Tabernacle with the making
of the Ten Commandments. Josephus’ sentence, “when he had said this …,”
connects both the tabernacle and the Ten Commandments. According
to Josephus, the architectural design of the Tabernacle was shown
(ὑποδείκνυμι) to Moses by God, and Moses now shows (ἐπιδείκνυμι)
the two tables to the Israelites. As the Law was given by God, so also the
Tabernacle was given by God. In the same way as the Law was central in the
life of the people,¹⁵ so the Tabernacle was, too. The Ten Commandments
were God’s Law, and the Israelite Tabernacle was ἡ σκηνή of God.

After Josephus’ description of the happiness of the Israelites bringing
the best offerings to the Tabernacle building, he states that the master
builders also were set “by the command of God” (3:104). And before he
begins to describe the details of the Tabernacle’s construction (3:108-150),
he once more affirms that these details are “according to the direction of
God” (3:107). Every single detail shows the presence of God.

Josephus summarizes his account on the Israelite Tabernacle saying
that “he [God] came and sojourned with them, and pitched his tabernacle
[κατασκηνώσε] in the holy house … and He came [παρουσίαν] to it”
(3:202). The verb κατασκηνώ “denotes, not a fleeting stay, but longer

¹⁴ Josephus’ concern about architecture is noted in Joshua Schwartz, Shaye J. D. Cohen, and
Jubilee Volume, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity (Boston, MA: Brill, 2007), 207-222.
For a discussion and comprehensive bibliography about the architecture of the temple in Jose-
phus’ time see: Louis H. Feldman, Josephus and Modern Scholarship, 1937-1980 (New York: W.
de Gruyter, 1984), 438-444.
¹⁵ Robertson comments that “the Law was central to the development of Judaism after the ex-
ile, but even more so in the Tannaitic period.” Robertson, The Account of the Ancient Israelite
Tabernacle, 99 [note 18]. Perhaps due to this Josephus had linked the Tabernacle and the Law.
or permanent residence.” Furthermore, ἑλπιστὴ ῥὼ is used here in the indicative aorist active form (κατεσκήνωσε) denoting a complete act. “He came” is the translation or interpretation of the noun παρουσίαν, which means the presence of an object at a particular place—presence, being at hand, to be in person. And in verse 203—the last sentence of the last verse in the Tabernacle account—Josephus reinforces that “the presence [παρουσίαν] of God [was shown] to those that desired and believed it.” Therefore, throughout the Israelite Tabernacle account, Josephus consistently tries to show that the purpose for building a Tabernacle was for it to be God’s dwelling place among the Israelites—God is present amidst His people. But since the impure repels the Holy and the Holy annihilates the impure, how can the Holy God dwell amidst impure people? Within the Israelite Tabernacle account, in the work Antiquities of the Jews, Josephus tries to expose another concept closely related with the idea of presence, as we will see next.

**Representation of the Universe**

The second main idea of Josephus regarding the Tabernacle seems to be the Israelite Tabernacle as a representation of the universe. In Jewish Antiquities Josephus affirms

this proportion of the measures of the tabernacle proved to be an imitation of the system of the world: for that third part thereof which was within the four pillars, to which the priests were not admitted, is, as it were, a Heaven peculiar to God; but the space of the twenty cubits, is, as it were, sea and land, on which men live, and so this part is peculiar to the priests only [Ant. 3:123].

The word “imitation” is a translation of μίμησις. According to TDNT,

---

16 *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 387. See also pages 367-394 for a wider comprehension of the word ἑλπισθή and its variants.

17 Burton says the Aorist “may be used to describe an action or event in its entirety, it may be called the Historical Aorist.” Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses*, 16, 17.


20 Josephus uses here the word “world” instead of universe, but his explanation about the world is a depiction of the cosmos, as we will see in the next pages.
“μίμησις took on special significance in cosmology.”

Plato is the first to apply this term to cosmology and, consistently with his philosophy, he gives to μίμησις the concept of image of what is real. The visible is a μίμησις of the invisible. This concept had a great influence on the understanding of Josephus’ world and on Josephus himself, who employs this word within current usage.

On that account, what Josephus is saying in that verse is that the Tabernacle is a μίμησις of reality, an “image” of what is “real.” The Most Holy place is the very μίμησις of the Heaven of God, which is peculiar to God. No one can enter this place, except the High Priest once a year. And the Holy place is μίμησις, not of water and sand, but of the “real” sea and land, in which men can abide. “The temple is simultaneously the God’s true abode and a symbolic representation of his heavenly home.” Therefore in the Israelite Tabernacle, the image touches the real, time reaches eternity, men meet God, and the Holy God dwells amid impure people.

Throughout the Tabernacle account Josephus follows that pattern. In Antiquities 3:137 Josephus comments, in passing, concerning the angels on the mercy seat, “upon this its cover [mercy seat] were two images, which the Hebrews call Cherubims; they are flying creatures, but their form is not like to that of any of the creatures which men have seen, though Moses said he had seen such beings near the throne of God.” If the Cherubims were seen by Moses—the great law giver—around the throne of God, consequently the presence of Cherubims upon the mercy seat and the ark could be an indication that these things are μίμησις of the throne of God. As Robertson says, for Josephus “the Tabernacle was not merely a symbol

---

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 661, 665-666.
25 Josephus says “he [High Priest] went into the most sacred part of the temple, which he did but once a year [Wars 5.236].
of heaven, but was ‘transubstantiated’ into heaven itself, the place of God’s throne.”

For Josephus, every detail of the Tabernacle architecture, fabrics, and vessels and the garments of the High Priest were “made in way of imitation [ἀπομίμησις] and representation [διατύπωσις] of the universe” [Ant. 3:180]. Then he expands his conclusion comparing those details:

The three parts of the Tabernacle Moses denoted as “the land and the sea … of general access to all; but he set apart the third division for God, because heaven is inaccessible to men.” The twelve loaves he denoted the year, as distinguished into so many months. The seven lamps upon the lampstands, they referred to the course of the planets. The veils with four things, they declared the four elements: the fine linen signifies the earth, the purple signifies the sea, the blue is fit to signify the air, and the scarlet an indication of fire.

The vestment of the high priest signified the earth; the blue denoted the sky, being like lightning in its pomegranates, and in the noise of the bells resembling thunder. The ephod showed that God had made the universe of four [elements]: the breastplate resembled the earth, the belt signified the ocean, the sardonyxes the sun and the moon, the twelve stones the months or the Zodiac. And the mitre, which was of a blue colour, it seems to me to mean heaven, for how otherwise could the name of God be inscribed upon it? That it was also illustrated with a crown, and that of gold also, is because of that splendour with which God is pleased [Ant. 3:181-187].

Whether in architecture, fabrics, vessels, or vestments, we can see God and creation dwelling together. After all, for Josephus the Israelite Tabernacle is the house of God in the midst of his people and for this to become reality the Tabernacle is also the representation (μίμησις) of the universe.

Conclusion

Many years had passed since the Temple had been destroyed when Josephus wrote the Jewish Antiquities. Prayers had become the dominant

---

27 Robertson, The Account of the Ancient Israelite Tabernacle, 258.
element in synagogue worship. Against this background, it seems that for Josephus, talking about the Tabernacle was talking about the presence of God. The Tabernacle (σκήνη) was the dwelling place of God, chosen by Him. So that God and people could live together, the Israelite Tabernacle needed to be an image (μιμητικός) of the Heavenly dwelling of God.

Suggestions for Further Study

In addition to helping us to better comprehend Josephus’ thought and his interpretative approach, this exploratory study suggests possible improvements in our perception of Platonic influence in the Jewish understanding of the sanctuary and possibly in Christian religious practices, as well. Thus further studies would be profitable. For example, a broader study about Josephus’ interpretation of the OT Tabernacle and Temple accounts might be illuminating. Such a study might help clarify the differences and similarities between Josephus and OT and NT interpretations and also between symbological and typological ways of interpretation.

---

31 Josephus’ addition of the sentence “and be present at our prayers” [3:100] to the biblical account, seems to be a reflection of the necessity to have the presence of God at least in people prayer, since there was no temple.
As a common liturgical practice in every Christian tradition, the Lord’s Supper has been the central action of the church at worship. However, this common practice has also been a matter of great theological disagreement among many traditions. In fact, one of the most controversial points of this issue is the understanding of Christ’s presence in the Lord's Supper. Overall, theologians summarize this controversy by indicating four main interpretations: (1) the Roman Catholic tradition, (2) the Lutheran tradition, (3) the Reformed tradition, and (4) the Zwinglian tradition.¹ Following the concept of Transubstantiation, the Roman Catholic tradition affirms that the bread and wine are literally transformed into the physical body and blood of Jesus Christ.² To be more precise,

“the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ are truly, really and substantially present in the Eucharist.” On the other hand, Protestant theologies absolutely reject the idea of Transubstantiation, and therefore expound other beliefs concerning Christ’s presence. The Lutheran tradition argues that “both bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ are present in the Lord’s Supper.” In other words, there is a “substantial union of the body and blood of Christ with the eucharistic elements.” Primarily based on Calvin’s interpretation, the Reformed tradition supports the idea that Christ’s body is spiritually present in the elements of the Lord’s Supper, not physically, as Catholics and Lutherans assume. In this sense, although Christ is “not bodily and locally present in the Supper, He is present and enjoyed in His entire person, both body and blood” in the bread and wine. Finally, the Zwinglian tradition believes that Christ is not present in any way in the elements of the Lord’s Supper. Consequently, the bread and wine are “symbolic visible representations of the death of Christ.” According to that position, this liturgical service is only a memorial and a commemoration of Christ’s suffering and death.

Overall, theology can be epistemologically understood as a cognitive enterprise that seeks to articulate knowledge from biblical data. However, this articulation assumes an ontological framework which provides

---

3 Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 373.
6 Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1940), 3:643.
7 Berkhof, Systematic Theology, 653.
8 Many theologians insist that this was not the consistent position of Zwingli. According to that view, some affirm that Zwingli changed his position at the end of his life, whereas others argue that there is no great difference between Zwingli and Calvin about this point. See Erickson, 1120; Hodge, 626-627; Reymond, 960. For further studies on this topic see Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (New York: Abingdon, 1950), 319; Ulrich Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, Zwingli and Bullinger: Selected Translations with Introductions and Notes, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1953), 179, 183.
basic presuppositions for that rational enterprise.\textsuperscript{11} It means that, from a macro-hermeneutical perspective, biblical data is interpreted and articulated according to a particular comprehension of reality. Therefore, the different theological explanations about Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper mentioned above are based on an explicit or implicit ontological framework. In effect, this perception brings forth some questions: What is the comprehension of reality assumed by these traditions in their theological interpretation of Christ's presence in the Supper? What are the Christological presuppositions that undergird those interpretations? What is the anthropological reality assumed in these interpretations? What is the main theological implication of those ideas from the Adventist perspective? In what manner do those presuppositions affect the liturgical practice of the Lord's Supper?

In this sense, the purpose of this study is to analyze the ontological presuppositions assumed by Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions in their respective theological explanation about the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. In order to accomplish this task we will first describe the interpretations of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper in the context of Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions. Then we will briefly discuss the ontological presuppositions that permeate these concepts of Christ's presence, concentrating specifically on Christological and anthropological presuppositions.

Considering the broadness of this issue, this study will not present an exhaustive description and analysis of the data available in historical and systematic/dogmatic theology.\textsuperscript{12} Particularly in the Protestant tradition, the investigation is limited to two basic positions: Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinism).\textsuperscript{13} In this way, as representative theological exposition of each tradition, this research will privilege the viewpoint of Thomas Aquinas.


\textsuperscript{12}For a comprehensive study of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper through Christian history, see Paul H. Jones, Christ's Eucharistic Presence: A History of the Doctrine (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

\textsuperscript{13}Although Ulrich Zwingli is considered a Reformed theologian, his ideas about the Lord's Supper are not taught in most Reformed confessions. Cf. John Hesselink, “Reformed View: The Real Presence of Christ,” in Armstrong, Understanding Four Views, 59.
Interpretations of Christ’s Presence in the Lord’s Supper: 
The Roman Catholic Tradition

In order to understand the Roman Catholic concept of Christ’s Presence in the Lord’s Supper, we must define the notion of Sacrament and Eucharist in that tradition. Surely, it will not be a comprehensive discussion about these issues, but just a contextual exposition for a proper comprehension of Christ’s Presence in the Roman Catholic perspective.

The Concept of Sacrament

Generally speaking, there are two realities in Catholic theology that are the base for the understanding of Sacrament, namely, the anthropological and the Christological realities. Based on these realities, the Sacraments appear as material instruments (in the case of the Eucharist, bread and wine) by which God confers grace to humanity.

Regarding the anthropological reality, the “sacramental system is wholly adapted to the need of human beings,” especially in their sinful condition. In this way, Aquinas gives three reasons whereby the sacraments are necessary. First, human cognition achieves knowledge of intelligible and spiritual realities through its experience of sensible and physical realities. Second, after the fall humans became dependent on material

---

14As A. McGrath points out, “the eucharist,” “holy communion,” “the mass,” “the Lord’s Supper,” are different terms used for the same ritual in the Christian Tradition. Certainly, they may convey specific interpretations, for instance, the label “eucharist” tends to be used in various traditions, whereas “the term ‘mass’ tends to have Roman Catholic, and ‘Lord’s supper’ Protestant, connotations.” McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 427-428.
15For further information about Sacraments and Eucharist in Roman Catholicism, see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican; Chicago, IL: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; Loyola University Press, 1994), 277-420; Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 325-416; Pohle and Preuss, *The Sacraments*.
16In Catholic theology there are seven Sacraments, which are divided into three categories: the Sacraments of Christian Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist); the Sacraments of Healing (Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick); and the Sacraments at the Service of Communion (Holy Orders, Matrimony). Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 311-414.
18The Thomistic concept that human cognition depends on sensible realities follows the
things. Against this depraved sickness, God has designed the Sacraments as a spiritual medicine in form of certain material signs.\textsuperscript{19} Third, considering that sinful humans tend to direct their activities mainly toward corporeal things, the physical practices of the Sacraments foster a salutary way to perform corporeal activity and, therefore, prevent idolatrous worship.\textsuperscript{20}

Moreover, the Christological reality underlines the present work of Christ through the Sacraments. L. Wash stipulates that the idea of Sacraments as a sharing in the priesthood of Christ provides “a technical theological explanation of how human liturgical acts can be in reality acts of Christ the priest.”\textsuperscript{21} Accordingly, “seated at the right hand of the Father’ and pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Body which is the Church, Christ now acts through the sacraments he instituted to communicate his grace.”\textsuperscript{22} It means that the Sacraments “are an extension of the effects of the Incarnation. In the Sacraments, God continues to act in and among human beings through the organ of Christ’s humanity to bring human beings to life in Christ, and to nourish, sustain and perfect that life in conformity with Christ.”\textsuperscript{23}

This concept of human nourishment through the Sacraments becomes clearer by the analogy of the dichotomous nature of human beings, the incarnate Christ, and the Sacrament. Christ, “the Word incarnate, in whom the Word of God is united to sensible flesh, and this union of word and sensible element is paralleled in the composition of the sacraments.”\textsuperscript{24} Likewise, “the human being who is sanctified is also a composition of body and soul; and the sacraments are adapted to that condition, since the sacrament touches the body through the sensible element, and touches the Aristotelian premise of humankind’s subordinate place in the hierarchy of being. Yocum, “Sacraments in Aquinas,” in \textit{Aquinas on Doctrine}, 165. For further information about Aquinas’ account of human knowing see Jack Arthur Bonsor, \textit{Athens and Jerusalem: The Role of Philosophy in Theology} (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 47-55.

\textsuperscript{19}Related to that idea of God’s medicine, C. Pickstock adds that, for Aquinas, “since it was the higher, Adam’s reason, which first betrayed the lower, his body, redemption is received in reverse order through the descent of the highest, God, into our bodies which then start to re-order our minds.” Catherine Pickstock, “Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for the Eucharist,” \textit{Modern Theology} 15, no. 2 (1999): 173.

\textsuperscript{20}Cf. Thomas Aquinas \textit{Summa Theologiae} III.61.1.


\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, 282.

\textsuperscript{23}Yocum, “Sacraments in Aquinas,” in \textit{Aquinas on Doctrine}, 172.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 166.
Therefore, the dichotomous nature of the Sacraments (which is based on human nature and condition as well as on the nature and work of Christ) implies a dichotomous function as well. It means that the Sacraments are not merely a sign (physical reality) of divine grace, they also confer that grace (spiritual reality) to the human soul.

### The Concept of Eucharist

As Henry de Lubac declares, in Roman Catholicism, it is not the church that makes the Eucharist, rather “the Eucharist makes the church.” In effect, among the seven sacraments, the Eucharist is the most important one. According to Aquinas, this distinction is supported in two ways: (1) it contains Christ substantially, the source of grace, whereas the other sacraments are merely instruments of Christ’s grace; and as a result, (2) the Eucharist is the end and consummation of all the other sacraments.

Therefore, the substantial presence of Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrament is foundational, since “the Eucharist makes substantially present the Body of Christ; [whereas] the other sacraments make present the activity of this Body.” In this sense, “the primacy of the Eucharist is essentially metaphysically dependent upon the Event of the conversion of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ,” namely, the event of Transubstantiation.

Even though this event is ultimately assumed in Catholic theology as

---

26 Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 282; Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 325.
28 Cf. Summa Theologiae III.65.3; III.63.6.
30 Ibid., 292.
The Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper

The understanding of the concept of Transubstantiation rests on Aristotelian ontology, especially its distinction between substance and accidents: “the reality [substance] is changed”—that is, the bread and wine convert into the body and blood of Christ—“but the form [accidents] remains the same.” Thomas Baima explains that:

Aristotelian philosophy as developed by Thomistic theologians understands that every being is composed of matter and form. Matter and form together constitute the substance of a thing. Substance is what the being is, at the level of reality. In addition to the substance, each thing has “accidents.” The accidents are what is apparent to the senses—what we might call “phenomena” today. Accidents can be seen, touched, and measured. To be perfectly clear, anything that is sensible or perceivable is an accident. Substance can only be apprehended by the mind through reason.

In fact, all this philosophical argumentation provides an ontological ground to support a literal interpretation of Biblical references to the elements in the Lord’s Supper (the bread and wine) in relation to the body and blood of Jesus Christ, such as John 6:22-71; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-34; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25; statements like “For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. ‘He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (John 6:55-56, italics mine), the words “this is My body” (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24, italics mine) regarding the bread, and the expression “this is My blood” (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24, italics mine) regarding the wine.

Likewise, through those ontological presuppositions the Council of Trent (1551) defined that “after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things.” T. Baima states that “at the time of the Council of Trent, three errors had to be treated:” (1) “the Lord Jesus was present only as a sign or figure” (Zwingli); (2) “the Lord was present only by his power” (Calvin); (3) “the presence was limited to the

---

34 Ibid., 150 (note 29).
36 Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references in this paper are to the New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995).
37 *The Council of Trent: The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, 76 (italics mine).
celebration and did not continue afterward” (Luther).\(^{38}\)

Furthermore, the Council indicated the threefold composition of the “the whole Christ” that is present in the Eucharist, namely, (1) body/blood, (2) soul, and (3) divinity, which implies a dichotomous notion of human nature (body and soul). Nevertheless, at the same time, the Catholic Tradition affirms that the whole “Christ is brought into the sacrament without leaving heaven, and his presence is effected in myriad places.”\(^{39}\)

According to that idea, there is no contradiction between these two things, that is

that our Saviour Himself always sitteth at the right hand of the Father in heaven, according to the natural mode of existing, and that, nevertheless, He be, in many other places, sacramentally present to us in his own substance, by a manner of existing, which, though we can scarcely express it in words, yet can we, by the understanding illuminated by faith.\(^{40}\)

In effect, the belief in the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist is essential to the Catholic Christological understanding of Sacrifice and Priesthood. In the so-called “Sacrifice of the Mass, Christ’s Sacrifice on the Cross is made present, its memory is celebrated, and its saving power is applied.”\(^{41}\)

Hence, the clear idea of Sacrifice in the Eucharist is followed by the concept of Priesthood, which is described as “the means whereby the fruits of the Sacrifice of the Cross are applied to mankind in need of salvation.”\(^{42}\)

The idea of Priesthood explains the necessity of the Sacrifice of the Mass. More specifically,

[Christ] was about to offer Himself once on the altar of the cross unto God the Father, by means of his death, there to operate an eternal redemption; nevertheless, because that His priesthood was not to be extinguished by His death, in the last supper, on the night in which He was betrayed,--that He might leave, to His own beloved Spouse the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the cross, might be represented, and the memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world, and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of those sins which we daily commit\(^{43}\) (italics mine).

\(^{38}\) Baima, “Roman Catholic View: Christ’s True, Real, and Substantial Presence,” in Armstrong, Understanding Four Views, 127.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 129.

\(^{40}\) The Council of Trent, 76.

\(^{41}\) Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 407.

\(^{42}\) Ibid.

\(^{43}\) The Council of Trent, 153.
Overall, this application of the fruits of the Cross comprises all the benefits provided by the Eucharist, which as “food for the soul,” (1) “preserves the supernatural life of the soul by conferring supernatural life and power on the recipient,” (2) confirms “the supernatural habit of grace and with it the associated infused virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost,” (3) “cures the diseases of the soul,” and (4) “engenders a spiritual joy.”

**Protestant Traditions**

Certainly, there is significant discordance between Protestant and Catholic traditions concerning the understanding of the Sacraments. Besides the discussion about the number of the Sacraments, in opposition to Roman Catholicism, Protestants generally emphasize that (1) “the grace imparted in the Sacrament is first of all the forgiving grace of God;” (2) “the Sacraments are signs and seals attached to the Word, which communicate no kind of grace that is not also imparted by the Word, and which have no value apart from the Word;” and (3) the operation and fruit of the Sacrament “is dependent on faith in the recipient.”

In respect to the Eucharist, “the Reformers one and all rejected the sacrificial theory of the Lord’s Supper and the medieval doctrine of transubstantiation.” However, “as divided as they were on some issues, the Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists were solidly in agreement on two vital issues—that the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a means of grace and that Christ was really and truly present in the sacrament. All three affirmed that the believer is actually nurtured by the risen body and blood of Christ.”

Taking into account these similarities and disagreements, we now look at the distinctive features of the Lutheran and Reformed understanding of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper.

---

45 Catholic Theology rejects “the teaching of the Reformers that the remission of sins is the principal fruit of the Eucharist.” Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 395.
49 For a comprehensive presentation of the notion of Christ’s Presence in the Lord’s Supper, according to Reformation thought, see Thomas J. Davis, *This Is My Body: The Presence of Christ*...
The Lutheran Tradition

The real presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper elements is a significant belief in the Lutheran Tradition. As Carlos Bovell writes, “Luther’s understanding of the sacrament underwent several changes throughout his career. Yet the real presence is one of the few features that remained constant.”50 Such constancy may be observed in his opposition against two fronts: Roman Catholicism and the “Enthusiasts” (chiefly represented by Ulrich Zwingli).51

Luther’s attack on the Catholic Eucharist focused on three main aspects, namely, Priesthood,52 Sacrifice, and Transubstantiation.53 Concerning the two former aspects, Steinmetz highlights that since “the Eucharist was a visible Word of God,” Luther “interpreted the Eucharist in the new context of Word and faith rather than in the older context of sacrifice and priest.”54 However, his ideas about Christ’s presence are more clearly presented in his discussion on transubstantiation.

In short, Luther opposed the idea of transubstantiation principally because it does not have Scriptural support and also due to its philosophical foundations. In the Lutheran point of view, the Scripture simply affirms that Christ’s body is present, and does not provide any explanation about

---

51 Jones, _Christ's Eucharistic Presence_, 118-119. According to Jones, the “central writings against Roma include: The Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1520); The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ (1519); and A Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass (1520). The Letter to the Christians at Strassburg in Opposition to the Fanatic Spirit (1524) marks the transition to the second front. Works in the second period include: Admonition Concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord (1530); Against the Heavenly Prophets (1525); Brief Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper (1528); The Disputation Concerning the Passage: ‘The Word Was Made Flesh’ (1539); The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ (1526); and That These Words of Christ, ‘This is my Body’(1527).” Ibid., 161-162.
52 Luther states that this “sacrament does not belong to the priests, but to all men. The priests are not lords, but servants in duty bound to administer both kinds [bread and wine] to those who desire them.” Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” in _Three Treatises_ (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 142.
53 Cf. Ibid., 142-178.
54 David C. Steinmetz, “Scripture and the Lord’s Supper in Luther’s Theology,” _Interpretation_ 37, no. 3 (1983): 255.
how it occurs, or any distinction between substance and accidents.\textsuperscript{55} Additionally, since Luther was “skeptical of any philosophical explanation of the eucharistic presence of Christ,”\textsuperscript{56} he criticized Aquinas for “attempting to draw his opinions in matters of faith from Aristotle . . . thus building an unfortunate superstructure upon an unfortunate foundation (italics mine).”\textsuperscript{57} By challenging the distinction between substance and accidents, Luther proposed a coexistence of both Christ’s body and the elements: “Why could not Christ include his body in the substance of the bread just as well as in the accidents? In red-hot iron, for instance, the two substances, fire and iron are so mingled that every part is both iron and fire.”\textsuperscript{58} Nevertheless, considering that there is no detailed scriptural description about how Christ is present in the elements, he did not prohibit people from believing in transubstantiation.\textsuperscript{59}

The second front attacked by Luther was the Zwinglian idea that Christ is not present in the elements of the Supper. Indeed, Luther did not necessarily reject the possibility of metaphorical or symbolic interpretations of the words of institution (“this is My body”),\textsuperscript{60} but he refused that kind of interpretation due to its Christological implications.

---

\textsuperscript{55} “Why do we not put aside such curiosity and cling simply to the words of Christ, willing to remain in ignorance of what takes place here and content that the real body of Christ is present by virtue of the words?” Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” 149.


\textsuperscript{57} Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” 145.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 148. In fact, Luther discredits the notion of accidents: “Who has ever proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that heat, color, cold, light, weight, or shape are mere accidents?” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Cf. Ibid., 145.

\textsuperscript{60} Cf. Steinmetz, “Scripture and the Lord’s Supper in Luther’s Theology,” 256. Zwingli “interpreted the words, ‘this is my body,’ in line with certain exegetical suggestions made by the Dutch humanist Cornells Hoen. Hoen made the grammatical point that the verb ‘to be’ is sometimes used in a metaphorical sense, as, for instance, in the ‘I am’ sayings of the Gospel of John. When Jesus calls himself the true vine, the gate of the sheepfold, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, and the bread of life, no one takes him to mean these predications in a literal sense. In this context Jesus is speaking metaphorically and using the verb ‘to be’ in the sense of ‘to signify.’ There is a relationship of similarity, not identity, between the subject and the predicate of the ‘I am’ sayings.” Ibid., 255. For further information about Zwingli’s eucharistic views, see Jaques Courvoisier, \textit{Zwingli: A Reformed Theologian} (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1963), 67-68; Gottfried Wilhelm Locher, \textit{Zwingli’s Thought: New Perspectives} (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1981), 20-23.
According to the Lutheran understanding of incarnation, which assumes that God always reaches humans “in creaturely elements that they can see, touch, and handle,” just like “the flesh of Jesus Christ is the . . . form under which the divine nature is hidden, so too the bread and wine are . . . forms under which the body and blood are hidden.” Therefore, “Luther thinks that the persons who question the corporeal presence of Christ also deny incarnation,” because “no objection can be alleged against the doctrine of the real presence which cannot equally well be alleged against the incarnation itself. To say ‘this signifies my body’ is to obscure the reality of that incarnational principle.”

Moreover, in order to maintain this understanding of the incarnation, Luther denied the Zwinglian concept of incarnation, which presumes that since Christ has assumed human nature in his incarnation, His body cannot be in several places at the same time. Then, as a logical conclusion, Christ’s body cannot be in the Supper, since He is in heaven now, at the right hand of God. Contrary to that position, Luther affirmed that “Christ is in heaven and in the Lord’s Supper,” because the “resurrected Christ is no longer subject to the limitations of time and space.” In other words, “the glorified humanity of Christ takes on certain divine attributes, such as the property of ubiquity.”

Likewise, in the Lutheran thought, the bodily presence of Christ is essential for the believer’s assurance and hope. On the whole, Luther conceives the Lord’s Supper as “the divine promise or testament of Christ, sealed with the sacrament of his body and blood.” It means that Christ’s presence “is the guarantee that God’s Word [which promises the forgiveness of sins] is reliable.” Hence, the believer “knows that the Word is powerful because it effects Christ’s true presence.”

---

61 Steinmetz, “Scripture and the Lord’s Supper in Luther’s Theology,” 256.
63 Steinmetz, “Scripture and the Lord’s Supper in Luther’s Theology,” 256.
65 Ibid., 92.
67 Ibid., 262.
68 Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” 166 (italics mine).
69 Davis, This Is My Body, 50. In Luther’s thought “God’s Word as revelation, however, is not vocalization or a spirit’s voice or a disembodied will; it is Jesus Christ . . . the Word of God as the revelation of God and God’s will is an embodied Word.” Ibid., 58.
The Reformed Tradition

In the Reformed Tradition, the general idea of Christ’s real presence in the Lord’s Supper is that His presence is spiritual in nature. In contrast to Luther, Calvin did not defend a corporeal presence. Nonetheless, in opposition to Zwingli, he affirmed Christ’s presence in the elements. Generally speaking, his distinctive position is supported by two main ideas, namely, his understanding of Christology and Pneumatology.

Similar to Zwingli, “one of Calvin’s fundamental presuppositions with regard to the Lord’s Supper is that the ascended body of Christ is localized, so to speak, in heaven.” In addition, he believes that “the body of Christ is subject to the common limits of a human body and cannot be in more than one place at the same time: it is not in the bread but in heaven.” Then, unlike Luther’s doctrine of ubiquity, Calvin states that “the body with which Christ rose is declared, not by Aristotle, but by the Holy Spirit, to be finite, and to be contained in heaven until the last day.”

In this sense, he criticizes the idea of transubstantiation in its attempt “to bring Christ on the earth that he may be connected with us.” For him, the major problem with this idea is that it disregards Pneumatology. It means that, in his point of view, Catholics and even Lutherans “leave nothing for the secret operation of the Spirit, which unites Christ himself to us.” Actually, the intrinsic relationship between Pneumatology and Christology forms the ground on which the real presence of Christ in the elements can be affirmed, without the notion of corporal presence.

---

71 Hesselink, “Reformed View,” 64.
72 Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 175.
74 *Institutes* IV.17.31. Translation taken from Calvin, 1542.
75 *Institutes* IV.17.31.
According to that understanding, “the Spirit truly unites things separated in space.”

Thus, the communion between believers and the body and blood of Christ “is affected by the power of the Holy Spirit, and not by that fictitious enclosing of his body under the element, since our Lord declared that he had flesh and bones which could be handled and seen.” Furthermore, this pneumatological explanation of the Lord’s Supper provides a twofold human experience: “union with the body of Christ” is not only “achieved through the descent of the Holy Spirit,” but also through “the ascent of our souls to heaven.” In other words, “we do not drag Christ down from heaven; rather, he pulls us up to himself, and that is how we enjoy his presence.”

Actually, that twofold experience in the Lord’s Supper corroborates the fact that in his emphasis on the spiritual presence, Calvin is not thinking in a symbolic presence. Jones suggests that there is a dialectical relation between sign and reality in the Calvinistic interpretation of sacrament. Employing Augustine’s terminology, Calvin depicted a sacrament as a “visible word.”

However, in its dialectical reality, the eucharistic sacrament “not only instructed by means of graphic symbols but it also functioned as a means of grace since the thing signified was communicated.” In this way, Calvin states that “the visible sign is given us in seal of an invisible gift as that his body itself is given to us.” In addition, he explains that “the sacred mystery of the Supper consists of two things—the corporeal signs, which, presented to the eye, represent invisible things in a manner adapted to our weak capacity, and the spiritual truth, which is at once figured and exhibited by the signs.” Hence, for Calvin, the correct understanding of Christ’s presence in the sacrament implies a dialectical relationship between corporeal and spiritual, visible and invisible, sign and reality. Especially in this point,

---

76 Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 175.
77 *Institutes* IV.17.26.
79 Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude*, 175.
80 Cf. *Institutes* IV.17.6.
82 *Institutes* IV.17.10. Translation taken from Calvin, 1515.
83 *Institutes* IV.17.11. Translation taken from Ibid.
Calvin believed that both Luther and Zwingli undermined real presence. By concentrating exclusively on the reality of Christ's substantive body and blood, Luther turned the eucharistic elements into shadows and thereby thwarted their significative function. By concentrating exclusively on the mnemonic role of the Eucharistic signs, Zwingli divorced the sign from the thing signified and thereby thwarted the reality of the sacrament. Both reduced the dialectic tension in the sacrament between the sign and the reality signified and, therefore, undermined the mystery of Christ's real presence.\textsuperscript{84}

**Ontological Presuppositions for Christ’s Presence in the Lord’s Supper**

Taking into account the Catholic and Protestant interpretations of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper described above, we will discuss now the ontological presuppositions that underlie those interpretations. On the whole, in the Catholic tradition, Aquinas clearly assumes an Aristotelian ontology.\textsuperscript{85} Otherwise, in the Protestant tradition, at first glance, Luther and Calvin seem to avoid any philosophical ontology in biblical interpretation, in favor of the Sola Scriptura principle.\textsuperscript{86} In order to be more specific about these ideas, I will analyze the ontological presuppositions which ground their Christological and anthropological concepts in their discussion about Christ’s presence. Then I will present some theological implications based on those presuppositions about the Lord’s Supper liturgy.

**Christological Presuppositions**

The main Christological presuppositions necessary to the understanding of Christ's presence in Catholic and Protestant traditions are, basically, the concept of Christ's body after His resurrection and the notion of Christ's presence in heaven.

**Christ’s Body after His Resurrection**

\textsuperscript{84} Jones, *Christ's Eucharistic Presence*, 146.


\textsuperscript{86} For examples of explicit critiques on the use of Aristotelian philosophy in Christ's presence interpretation, see Luther, ”The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” 145; Calvin *Institutes* IV.17.26.
Roman Catholic theology assumes that “Christ’s Body is at one and the same time, present in many places. Thus He is in His natural mode of being in Heaven, and in His sacramental mode of existence in many places.” That possibility of presence in many places at the same time implies that, following Augustine, “the risen body of Christ is not a resuscitated human body gone to heaven . . . [hence,] the ‘body’ refers not simply to Jesus’ earthly, physical body, but to the risen Christ.”

On the Protestant side, the Lutheran concept of Christ’s ubiquity seems to subscribe to the same position, at least indirectly. In order to support his idea that “the resurrected Christ is no longer subject to the limitations of time and space,” Luther used “the Occamist distinction between circumscriptive, definitive, and repletive presence.” In the definite presence, “the object or body is not palpably in one place and is not measurable according to the dimensions of the place where it is . . . and yet it is obviously present in the place. This was the mode in which the body of Christ was present when he came out of the closed grave, and came to the disciples through a closed door.” In contrast, the Reformed Tradition understands that the resurrected body of Christ is a common and limited human body, containing “flesh and bones which could be handled and seen.” It means that Christ’s body is in heaven, and cannot be present in the Lord’s Supper.

**Christ’s Presence in Heaven**

Certainly, both Catholic and Protestant traditions agree that Christ is

---

88 Bonsor, *Athens and Jerusalem*, 44.
89 Steinmetz, “Scripture and the Lord’s Supper in Luther’s Theology,” 260-261. Although Luther was “skeptical of any philosophical explanation of the eucharistic presence of Christ,” it did not “prevent him from appealing to philosophy” in this case. Simon, “Worship and the Eucharist,” 255. In short, “the Occamist distinction between the various forms of presence” conceives the (1) circumscriptive form as “the spatial presence of an object;” (2) the definite form as the uncircumscribed presence, that is, as “the presence of the soul in the body;” and (3) the repletive form as “the presence of an object apart from its objectivity,” referring to “God’s omnipresence (ubiquity).” Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 174 (italics mine). See Luther’s explanation in Martin Luther, “Word and Sacrament III,” ed. Robert H. Fischer, American ed., *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1961), 37:215-216.
91 *Institutes* IV.17.26. Translation taken from Calvin, 1535.
in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father (cf. Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; Heb 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22). However, they do not comprehend the presence of Christ in heaven in terms of activity in a place. According to the Greek ontology, “the heavenly-intelligible order is timeless and eternal, while the earthly-sensible order is temporal.”92 In addition, the Greeks conceived the notion of a first mover that is absolutely immovable in heaven, which Aquinas identified with the notion of God.93 In this context, he also assumed that, at the right hand of the Father, “Christ’s body is at rest in heaven.”94

Furthermore, to be consistent with his Christological idea of ubiquity, Luther believed that the right hand of God is not a particular place in heaven. For him, it “is a metaphorical expression for the place of favor from which God rules. That Christ is at the right hand of God means that he is the favored one through whom God exercises his rule. Since God exercises his rule everywhere, even in hell, the right hand of God is found everywhere.”95

Even though Calvin did not agree with this metaphorical interpretation, all the heavenly work of Christ in favor of humanity seems to be considered by him as being essentially effected by the Holy Spirit into the human soul, which may imply inactivity in heaven as well.

**Anthropological Presuppositions**

There is considerable agreement between Catholic and Protestant traditions concerning the anthropological presuppositions, which underlie their understanding of the Eucharist. In accordance with the Aristotelian ontology, for Aquinas, “as embodied spirits we know through the physical world,” but “knowledge does not occur on that level.”96 Intelligibility is immaterial, because the intellect (immaterial) must abstract from the

---

matter (physical reality) its form (immaterial).\textsuperscript{97} In this sense, the soul is the form of the human body, whereas the “form of the bread is changed into the form of Christ’s body.”\textsuperscript{98} It means that “the mode of being of the Body of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is . . . similar to that of the soul in the [human] body.”\textsuperscript{99} Therefore, this conception presupposes a dichotomous anthropology (soul and body), and also a spirituality that occurs basically at the level of the soul.\textsuperscript{100} In this context, the Sacrament of the Eucharist is primarily described as the nourishing food for the soul.\textsuperscript{101} Likewise, “Luther falls back on the traditional idiom for the mass, calling it the ‘medicine for the soul’.”\textsuperscript{102} Moreover, Calvin not only assumed that the Sacrament is nourishment for the soul,\textsuperscript{103} but also quoted Chrysostom to support the human necessity of visible things in the Eucharist: “were we incorporeal, he would give us these things in a naked and incorporeal form. Now because our souls are implanted in bodies, he delivers spiritual things under things visible.”\textsuperscript{104} In addition, the spirituality based on the soul is clearly assumed in the Calvinistic description of our union with the body of Christ and is effected not just by the descent of the Holy Spirit, but through the ascent of our souls to heaven as well.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Summa Theologiae III.75.6. Translation from Aquinas, 5:1068-1069.
\textsuperscript{99} Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 389.
\textsuperscript{100} Aquinas admits that the “body is not the immediate subject of grace.” Summa Theologiae III.79.1. Translation from Aquinas, 5:1139. On this basis, Catholic theology argues that “the Eucharistic Sacrifice of propitiation can . . . be offered, not merely for the living, but also for the poor souls in Purgatory.” Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 412.
\textsuperscript{101} Cf. Summa Theologiae III.79.1, 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{102} Davis, This Is My Body, 31. Even though Luther interpreted this expression in the context of the Protestant concept of the Word, he maintained the same anthropological presupposition: “The mouth receives the body of Christ, the soul believes the words as it eats the body.” Marburg Colloquy 1529, 82.
\textsuperscript{103} Cf. Institutes IV.13.13.
\textsuperscript{104} Institutes IV.14.3. Translation from Calvin, 1426. In his dialectical interpretation of the sacrament as sign and reality, Calvin seems to follow the platonic ontology, which conceives that “material objects reflect eternal forms.” Bonsor, Athens and Jerusalem, 50.
\textsuperscript{105} Cf. Institutes IV.17.31. Indeed, this idea seems to echo the Augustinian notion of union with Christ, by which “believers are drawn beyond the earthly to our heavenly home. [In this way,] the incarnation (descent) and ascension, by which Christ draws us to heaven, constitute the mystery of the Lord’s body in eucharist.” Bonsor, Athens and Jerusalem, 37.
The Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper

The Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper

Theological Implications on the Lord’s Supper Liturgy

The assumption that Christ is not performing any activity in heaven carries important implications for the concept of priesthood. If Christ’s body is at rest in heaven (Aquinas), if the right hand of God in heaven is not a place but a metaphorical expression (Luther), or if the work of Christ is essentially accomplished by the Holy Spirit on earth (Calvin), then the biblical\textsuperscript{106} idea of Christ’s priesthood in heaven needs to be reinterpreted.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the Eucharist plays a fundamental role in this reinterpretation: “the Eucharist is the supreme act of Christ’s priesthood: Christ as priest enables believers to share in his sacrifice, that is, to share in himself.”\textsuperscript{107} As a result, “the liturgy of the Eucharist is itself the locus of deification, the centre of history,” strictly speaking “the centre of Christian life really is eucharistic worship.”\textsuperscript{108}

It is true that the Protestant Reformation affirmed the Sola Scriptura principle against the use of Greek philosophy in biblical interpretation. Furthermore, Luther and Calvin certainly presented distinctive ideas about some aspects of the Eucharist, but they were unable to strongly challenge the Catholic ontological presuppositions which ground the understanding of the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{109} Even though they refused the idea of Eucharistic Sacrifice, Luther and Calvin could not renounce the belief of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament, probably because they were incapable of providing a consistent alternative to the Catholic model of Christ’s priesthood on earth (the church as the sanctuary), since their ontological presuppositions did not allow a real priesthood in heaven. It seems that Luther and Calvin assumed a symbolic interpretation of Christ’s priesthood (neither in heaven nor earth), but they needed to indicate a real manner by which the saving power of the Cross is applied to the believer.

In this case, the understanding of the Eucharist as the nourishing food for

\textsuperscript{106} According to Heb 8:1-2, “we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.”


\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 184 (italics mine).

\textsuperscript{109} Since Luther’s earliest Eucharistic writings carry a Catholic tone, Davis writes: “When one considers that the sacramental system of the church was the support structure for a Christian’s entire life, from birth to death, it is not surprising that one would hesitate before restructuring the entire conception of the Eucharist.” Davis, This Is My Body, 37-38.
the soul, based on the real presence of Christ, was still the only sufficient explanation.

In short, the concept of Christ’s real presence in the Lord’s Supper, both in Catholicism and Protestantism, replaces the idea of Christ’s real priesthood in heaven.

Conclusion

The present study attempted to analyze the ontological presuppositions assumed by Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions in their respective theological explanations about the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. In order to accomplish this task, we firstly discussed the interpretations of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper in the Roman Catholic and the Protestant (Lutheran and Reformed) traditions.

Basically, the Catholic interpretation is determined by its sacramental concept of Eucharist, which assumes that humans achieve knowledge of spiritual realities through physical realities, and that Christ’s priesthood is made through the Eucharistic sacrifice in order to nourish humanity, since the human dichotomous nature (body/soul) is analogous to the composition of the Eucharistic elements, which are converted into the body and blood of Jesus Christ (transubstantiation). On the Protestant side, Luther rejected transubstantiation due to its philosophical foundations (Aristotle instead of Scriptures), but he affirmed the ubiquity of Christ’s body and His corporeal presence in coexistence with the Eucharistic elements. In his turn, Calvin argued that Christ’s Eucharistic presence is spiritual in nature, since His body is in heaven (not ubiquitous). For him, the communion between believers and Christ’s body/blood is affected by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Further, we analyzed the ontological presuppositions assumed in these interpretations, particularly the Christological and anthropological presuppositions. In contrast to the Reformed Tradition, the Catholic and the Lutheran traditions assume that the body of Christ is ubiquitous, therefore the risen body of Christ is not a resuscitated human body gone to heaven. Overall, Catholics and Protestants do not understand the presence of Christ in heaven in terms of activity in a place, which implies the Greek ontological notion of God as the first mover immovable in heaven. They also presuppose a dichotomous anthropology (soul/body) and, therefore, a spirituality nourished by the Eucharist that occurs at the level of the soul. Finally, as a theological implication, the concept of Christ’s real presence...
in the Lord’s Supper, based on these presuppositions, assumes that the Eucharist functions as a replacement of the idea of Christ’s real priesthood in heaven.

In conclusion, drawing from all the aspects examined above, it is possible to respond to the questions mentioned in the introduction of this study. The comprehension of reality assumed by the Catholic tradition is essentially Aristotelian, particularly in its understanding of Christ as inactive and unmovable in heaven, and in its explanation of Christ’s real presence in terms of transubstantiation (substance/accidents), and in its anthropological conception of cognition/spirituality based on the soul. Taking into account its rejection of transubstantiation, Protestantism does not follow the Aristotelian comprehension of reality. However, it seems that Lutheran and Reformed traditions did not change the Christological assumption that Christ is inactive in heaven and the anthropological presupposition that human spirituality is based on the soul.

As a result, from the Adventist perspective, this Christological presupposition undermines the understanding of Christ’s real priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary, and this anthropological presupposition fosters the belief that His priesthood is performed in the Eucharist, in the sense that the application of the benefits of the Cross to the believer is expressed in terms of nourishment of the soul by the body and blood of Christ. It demonstrates how deep is the relationship between ontological presuppositions, theological interpretations, and liturgical practices are. In fact, it points out how ideas about ontology and theology take tangible shape in worship, and conversely how liturgical worship assumes ontology and theology. Based on these presuppositions Catholics and Protestants (Lutherans and Reformed) practice a Lord’s Supper which replaces Christ’s real priesthood in heaven.

Perhaps, Adventists are not conscious that their understanding of Christ’s heavenly priesthood with its different Christological and anthropological presuppositions, can really challenge the philosophical ontology that permeates Catholic and Protestant theologies, presenting a consistent understanding of Christ’s real priesthood without Eucharist; and providing a meaningful practice of the Lord’s Supper, that is not only a memorial from the past (the sacrifice of Christ), but also indicates something that is being done in the present (the priesthood of Christ). In this sense, Zwingli’s view of the Lord’s Supper, and the Adventist understanding of this theme in connection with its view of the heavenly sanctuary, could be developed in further studies in an ontological and theological perspective.
Section 4
THE BOOK AND MISSION

THE BOOK
and the student:
Theological Education as Mission
Introduction

The hope in the coming Messiah was a motive for many faithful Israelites to serve God, and they did so by ministering to those in need. Although many kept the spirit of the laws and instructions given to them throughout the Old Testament, the time that preceded the first coming of the Messiah was much neglected of the acts of mercy and charity towards the poor and the oppressed people. Jesus came to inaugurate a new era—with a dimension of the “holistic” gospel of God that thus far was not known to the people of Israel, and to the nations surrounding them.

This ministry of compassion carried out by the Son of God and his disciples in the beginning of the early Christian Church is built upon many instructions given by God himself in the Old Testament.¹ The New Testament borrows many references, mostly from the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Prophets, and expands not only the concepts and precepts,

but also the practice and implementation of holistic ministry, because the gospel of Christ is a holistic gospel. His kingdom was also based upon love and justice and peace, and in this context he still extends salvation to all. It is through his life and ministry that all can find salvation and healing, forgiveness and peace. It is indeed an example to be followed and practiced by individual believers and Christian churches as they fulfill Christ’s extended mission on this earth.

**Jesus as the Word of God Incarnated: God’s Reign with His People**

It is in the person of Jesus Christ, the word of God incarnated, that the poor, the sick, the blind, the lame, the demon possessed, the orphans, the women and widows, and all oppressed by Satan and the evil powers and structures of this world find healing, rest, freedom, and salvation. Jesus’ ministry to these vulnerable human beings was of extreme importance then, as well as today. It was while he lived on this earth that Jesus Christ, Immanuel, dwelt among men and women in order to restore and save, to heal and forgive, releasing and setting free all those tied by the evils of sin and oppressed by the powers of Satan.

Jesus begins his ministry by “proclaiming the good news of God” (Mark 1:14) and by announcing the arrival of the kingdom of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). It seems that the kingdom of God “is undoubtedly central to Jesus’ entire ministry. It is, likewise, central to His understanding of His own mission.” It is central not only because he comes to establish the kingdom of God (his Father), but more so, because he would eventually be the King himself, in the kingdom to come.

In a sense, here we are talking about the wholeness of God, and God’s kingdom, and this wholeness manifested in his son, Jesus Christ. We are talking about “God who is the creator, upholder, and consummator of all

---

2 For a more detailed treatment of this subject see Kuhn, *Integrando Beneficência Social e Desenvolvimento na Missão de Deus: Perspectivas Bíblicas, Históricas e Contemporâneas do Evangelho de Cristo* (Cachoeira, BA, Brazil: CePliB, 2008).


that is. We are not talking about one sector of human affairs, one strand out of the whole fabric of world history; we are talking about the reign and the sovereignty of God over all that is, and therefore we are talking about the origin, meaning, and end of the universe and of all human history within the history of the universe.”

Moreover, the kingdom of God also refers to the establishment of a new moral order—a system that would not only have a beautiful and healthy outward appearance, but more so, would be wholly and pure in its inward motives and attitudes—the kingdom of God within us. Consequently many did not follow Jesus and his kingdom because it did not have all dimensions of outward and worldly glory, more so, it required moral transformation of all.

Jesus also wanted the good news of his kingdom (of God) to transform his Church from the inside out. The established religious structure was not to be a political or abusive structure, it had been entrusted by God to be the “light of the world,” to be his witness both in word and in deed. This kingdom of God in Christ was to be manifested itself as love and compassion to all.

The life of Jesus is undoubtedly the best model in which to build a holistic gospel. In his ministry he integrated the principles of his kingdom in a marvelous way—he taught and preached and healed. His actions confirmed his teachings and proclamation, and at the same time, his healing miracles attested to his loving care and the principles of the kingdom of God. This is what we have called Christian holism—the life and ministry of Christ—who he was, what he did, what he taught, and what he proclaimed.

Accordingly, in the gospel of Luke we find Jesus reading the Scriptures a text from Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). “Anointed by the Holy Spirit, Jesus spoke of a gospel that was at the same time good news

---

7 See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 35.
spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically."\(^8\)

According to Bruce Bradshaw, Luke 4:18-19, the text read and used by Jesus to inaugurate his earthly ministry illustrates the holistic nature of Christian ministry. In it, Jesus affirms that the poor will hear the Good News, the prisoners will be freed, the blind will see, the oppressed will be liberated, and he proclaims Jubilee, the year of the Lord’s favor. The society of Israel will be renewed. There will be no more waiting; the Good News of the kingdom of God has arrived.\(^9\)

Obviously, everything that Jesus says, does, or proclaims—his whole being, his holistic ministry—is related to the reign or kingdom of God that he had just come to establish, a kingdom that was already present in his own life and ministry, but is not yet fully established because this earth has not yet been made new.

Jesus’ ministry of compassion towards the established religious structure (his Church) is evidenced in several occasions throughout the gospels. The Good Shepherd attended the synagogue regularly: “He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom” (Luke 4:15-16).\(^10\) Jesus positively affirmed the religious system with his own presence, by being there as a teacher. He often demonstrated his love and care for the needy while at the synagogue, thus maintaining a proper and positive relationship with the religion of his time and people.

What is sad is that gradually the religious leadership started to dislike Jesus, as it is written: “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (John 1:11). He wanted the established religious system (his Church) to understand that his kingdom was not of this world, that the Kingdom of God was present and manifested to them under the form of weakness, not of power, that in its very essence the kingdom of God was Immanuel—“God with us”—and it would remain hidden to many, as a mystery, unless it would be revealed by the will of God.\(^11\) If the established religious structure would not accept his kingdom in its essence and its

---


\(^10\) See also Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 13:54; Mark 1:21; and John 6:59.

attributes, he would have to choose another group of people as heirs of his kingdom.

The whole mission of Jesus was for the salvation of his own people (the Jews), both individuals as well as the religious leadership.\(^\text{12}\) His ministry was devoted in great proportion to the restoration of Israel’s leadership (religious), but it seems that they could not see, they would not want to see their spiritual blindness (John 9:35-41). They were, in fact, blind guides (Matt 23:24). The majority of Israel’s religious leadership rejected Jesus, and only a few came to understand his mission and accepted him as their Lord and Savior. Only a few wanted to belong to the kingdom of God and be part of Jesus’ new Church.

Jesus’ deep love and compassion towards Israel, his loved people, is clearly indicated in Matthew 23:37, which says: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” His love and identification with his people were so intense that he could not do otherwise but die on their behalf, because it was only at the cross, “but I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32), that Jesus would be able to demonstrate his infinite charity towards a religious leadership (system) that had rejected him.

Only the true shepherd is able to take care of the sheep. Only the true and “good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Only the good shepherd knows his sheep and his sheep know him, therefore he has only one flock, and this flock has only one shepherd, Jesus Christ (John 10:14-16).

Most of the Jews did not accept Jesus as their servant shepherd. They heard, saw, and testified of Jesus’ divine nature, but decided that they should not believe he was the promised Messiah, the shepherd of Israel. It is only the sheep who know the shepherd who can accept him. The good shepherd, who was their Savior and Lord, their healer, their physician and their pastor, was not received by them, thus could not have been known by them as well. Because of their sins, which separated them from their

\(^\text{12}\) Bosch states that “in Jesus’ ministry people matter more than rules and rituals” (Transforming Mission, 36). This means that one of the reasons the religious leaders rejected Christ was that he valued people in a holistic way, valued them much more than things, mere rules, rituals, and their formal religion.
Savior, they plotted several times to have him killed, indicating that they did not want him at all. Finally, they fulfilled their desire and killed him, crucifying their Savior on a cross.

After his resurrection, Jesus, who was rejected by his chosen nation, was accepted by a new group of people who would be without a shepherd, following his ascension. It was by loving this new group of believers the same way he loved the other ones that he commanded Peter to “feed my lambs,” and repeated this by saying, “take care of my sheep,” and “feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). This compassion, love, and care is repeated every time a Christian, obeying Christ’s commands, feeds and takes good care of the sheep, who also are a part of the new flock. “Do you love me? Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). By loving him and feeding his sheep we are establishing his heavenly kingdom here and now on earth. His people are both the objective of, as well as members of God’s kingdom, even while still living under the affects of sin.

Although Christ did come to establish the kingdom of God and live the principles of God’s kingdom in his own life, the kingdom has not been totally established yet. It is already present, but not yet fully established. God’s church has been commissioned by Christ to continue his holistic ministry until he comes again to fully establish his kingdom.

Just as Jesus in his person as well as by his preaching, teaching, and activity communicated the good news of the establishment of God’s reign, he also commissioned the messianic community to continue the same kind of witness. This means that the church must understand its role in instrumental terms rather than in managerial and imperial images, as has often been the case.

The Holy Spirit is God’s agent to lead the Church forward in the mission of bringing the good news to all. It is in this sense that “the evangel is the good news of God’s loving intention to restore all of creation to wholeness.” And, while the Church awaits the coming kingdom, it needs to proclaim and live out in its own life this good news—the holistic gospel.

---

of Christ. His gospel is indeed “good news that needs to be heard and to be seen. It needs words and deeds. Message and proof.”

Furthermore, in anticipation of the kingdom of God and as a sign of being his witnesses with a gospel that is whole and aims at the whole person, his people will feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, invite the stranger in, clothe the naked, care and heal the sick, and visit those who are in prison (Matt 25:35-36). His Church will not only proclaim the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, God’s Messiah, it will also proclaim by its members’ whole lives—by living it in word and deed.

Jesus’ Holistic Ministry

“A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said; ‘God has come to help his people” (Luke 7:16). This was the way that a large crowd recognized what Jesus had just done. They not only recognized Jesus as a prophet, and a great one, but, filled with awe and praising God, they declared that God had come to help them. He was the prophet of benevolence and compassion, the one who came to proclaim the good news of God. He also came to proclaim liberty to the captives and to announce that the kingdom of God was near (Mark 1:14-15; see also Luke 4:18-19).

It was on behalf of the most neglected and the needy that Jesus spent most of his time and energy during his earthly ministry. His heart was constantly touched by the misery and suffering of those most poor, destitute, and deprived human beings. His acts of compassion and mercy went hand-in-hand with the good news of the kingdom that he came to preach, teach, announce, and establish. He lived what he preached and preached what he lived. His prophetic message and ministry and the many miracles and signs that accompanied his ministry attested of his care and love to all.

Among the oppressed and destitute were the women, and for them Jesus had a special consideration. He took time to interact with these women and oftentimes he bestowed his healing touch and saving power unto

---

18 See also Glasser, *Kingdom and Mission*, 161.
19 Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 275, states: “Social action with no evangelistic interest is as nonholistic as is evangelism with no social concern. To be concerned for the poor and hungry but not concerned for people hearing the good news of Jesus is not even to follow the example of Jesus, let alone ‘holistic mission.’”
them. For many women, Jesus was a friend and a companion. The women who were marginalized by society were graciously received by the Savior and cared for, thus they were relieved from their distresses and maladies. It was towards the women that the compassion and merciful acts of Jesus were constantly demonstrated. He always treated the women with dignity, respect, and love, because they were the ones, oftentimes, most mistreated and miserable of society.

Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well sets the example for all who labor in favor of women, wherever they are and whatever their condition, be they poor, outcasts, sinners, widows, mothers, prostitutes, or otherwise oppressed by the devil. Giving the Samaritan woman the water of life, Jesus relieved her from her oppression and guilt, enabling her to live a better life as well as to be one of his witnesses (John 4:1-26). She was thirsty, she was poor, she had to carry her own water, she was tired and needy, and Jesus met her physical as well as spiritual needs.

The way Jesus treated women and how their misery, oppression, and sorrow touched his heart is probably best depicted in the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Here was a person doomed to death, but Jesus, the all-wise, all-compassionate, all-just, acting in all love and kindness and touched by her situation of despair and anguish, took her case into his own hands. Releasing her from her accusers, and, after challenging their hypocrisy, finding that none had accused her, he relieved her from her death penalty. He also did not condemn her, but allowed her to go free, gently inviting her to leave a life of sin. Such is the love of our Savior Jesus, such is his power to restore and to save, even the most needy and degraded of the sinners. Such is his ministry—a ministry to the whole person.

See John Stott, The Incomparable Christ (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 35. “In the ancient world women were generally despised and oppressed, and unwanted children were abandoned or killed. But Luke emphasizes that Jesus loved and respected both.”

The way Jesus handled the situation of the woman caught in adultery and those of many other women\(^\text{22}\) indicates his interest in relieving and restoring the women of all times, and also that his love has no preference towards any class of individuals. Jesus crossed cultural barriers, including gender exclusiveness, and went even against strong religious traditions in order to heal, save, and develop women for his kingdom. His love has no limits, no strings attached, and is bestowed to all women in need.

According to the Gospels, Jesus’ healing ministry towards the sick,\(^\text{23}\) relieving their suffering and setting them free from their maladies, indicates that none who came to him seeking his aid, went away unchanged. It was from him that a stream of healing power flowed, and in body, spirit, and mind human beings were made whole.\(^\text{24}\) We find Jesus healing the mother-in-law of Simon (Peter) from a high fever (Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-30; Luke 4:38-39); He cured a man with leprosy by saying: “be clean” (Matt 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-44; Luke 5:12-13); He healed (forgave) a paralytic by saying: “Friend, your sins are forgiven” (Luke 5:20) and by adding: “I tell you, get up, take you mat and go home” (Luke 5:24; Matt 9:2-8; Mark 2:3-12).

Jesus found great faith in a centurion whose servant was sick and about to die, and rewarded the centurion’s faith by healing his servant (Luke 7:1-10; Matt 8:5-13). It was also by such great faith that a woman who was suffering from bleeding for twelve years touched Jesus and was healed immediately by his power. Jesus confirms her faith by saying: “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace” (Luke 8:43-44; Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34).

The holistic ministry that Jesus performed by healing the sick cannot be measured or described in its full scope in this brief description. It is often

\(^{22}\) See, for example: the Canaanite or Syrophoenician woman (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30); Jesus’ mother (John 19:25-27); Jesus encouraged Martha and Mary (John 11:17-37); Jesus raised a widow’s son (Luke 7:11-17); Jesus was anointed by a sinful women and forgave her sins (John 12:1-11; Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50); Jesus healed and dialogued with a sick woman (Luke 8:43-48; Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34); women were cured from evil spirits and diseases (Luke 8:1-3); Jesus healed a crippled woman (Luke 13:10-13); Jesus noticed the widow giving her offering (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4); Jesus appeared to Mary (John 20:10-18).

\(^{23}\) Reference is made here to physical maladies such as the blind, the ill (in general), the deaf, the mute, the leper, the paralytic (crippled, lame), and the invalid. Jesus healed the sick (Matt 4:23-25; 8:16; 12:15; 15:29-31; Mark 1:32-34; Luke 4:40-41).

mentioned that Jesus spent more time healing than preaching, and it is interesting to note that his teachings were always confirmed by his actions, because as he relieved the sufferings of the people, the truths that he taught were often associated with his acts of mercy. Jesus simultaneously proclaimed the kingdom of God and healed the crowds.

Jesus not only healed those who came or were brought to him, but often demonstrated his love when he saw a person in need. For example, he was teaching in a synagogue on a Sabbath day, when a crippled woman who was bent over and could not straighten herself up happened to be there. Jesus said to her: “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity” (Luke 13:10-13). What a relief to be set free after being crippled by an evil spirit for eighteen years! The record says that Jesus put his hand on her and she was immediately made straight and able to praise God in her newly found freedom.

Jesus healed ten men who had leprosy (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 17:11-19), but only one came back to thank him. On another occasion a blind man, who was also a beggar, was informed that Jesus was passing by, and without hesitation called out: “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!” After asking what he wanted, Jesus said to him: “Receive your sight, your faith has healed you” (Luke 18:35-43). It is worthy to mention that not all who were healed by Jesus followed him, but nevertheless, his acts of compassion toward the sick were a demonstration of his character of love, of wanting all to be healed and restored, to have health and peace.

His ministry of healing went far beyond what the Bible tells us, but it must suffice to mention here what the inspired writers of the Gospels recorded to us. Many other sick people with varied illnesses were healed by the great Physician. An official in Capernaum had a son who was sick, and asked Jesus to heal his son. Jesus granted what the official asked by saying: “You may go, your son will live” (John 4:43-54).

Jesus also healed a man who was an invalid for thirty-eight years by telling him: “Get up, pick up your mat and walk,” and later affirmed to him “stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (John 5:1-15).

25 White, Ministry of Healing, 17.
Several men who were blind, deaf, and mute were healed by Jesus. Thus was the life and ministry of our Savior, always ready to relieve the sufferings and torments of many. Healing, as we can see in the ministry of Jesus, was an integrated way and method for the demonstration and proclamation of the Kingdom of God that he came to establish. In this way, Jesus’ healing was the medium of his message and it was a way to present the kingdom of God to people so that they could become his subjects. Healing is a holistic experience and is not just a secular exercise as many would argue.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “though he [Jesus] was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). Christ’s identification with the poor is clearly stated by the apostle. He was rich, but gave up his possessions and became poor in order that poor humanity could inherit the riches of temporal, as well as eternal, salvation.

The very presence of Jesus among the poor was a sign of salvation to them, and it was only the poor, the rejected, the ones who were suffering the pain of death who could receive the “Servant of Yahweh,” the One who would bring healing, hope, and salvation to them all. Thus, the poor were and continue to be God’s priority.

The poor have a special place in the ministry of Jesus, because it is to them that the gospel (the good news, the kingdom of God) is preached (Matt 11:5; Luke 4:18). Other passages confirm that the poor are not only poor in the spiritual sense, but also in the material sense (Matt 5:3; Luke 6:20), and the story of the poor widow’s offering illustrates this point well:

As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. “I tell you the truth,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on” (Luke 21:1-4).

---

28 See Allen, “Wholeness, Salvation and the Christian,” 22-23. Allen aptly states that “healing is both a sign and manifestation of the kingdom power of God working through Jesus to bring his new order into existence.”
29 Conrad Boerma, The Poor Side of Europe: The Church and the (New) Poor of Western Europe (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1989), 76.
31 For a fuller treatment about the Kingdom of God and the poor please see Glasser, Kingdom and Mission, 197-198; and C. Rene Padilla, Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom of God (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 170-199.
32 See also Mark 12:41-44 and 2 Corinthians 8:9, 12.
The story does not tell us that she had any relatives to care for her, instead, it mentions that she was a poor widow and gave all she had to live on. Jesus’ reference to this poor widow is strikingly interesting because, again, his attention is focused on the poorest of the poor, not only in a spiritual sense—but very much in the material sense, because “she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on” (Mark 12:44).  

Jesus declared that “the poor you will always have with you” (Mark 14:7). The causes of poverty in the time of Jesus’ ministry were many, including oppression, injustice, injuries, death, diseases, drought, poverty, demonic possessions, and so forth. The acts of compassion manifested by Jesus towards the poor and the conditions in which they lived reflected his love and intentional care towards them. Jesus came for the poor (the sick, the demon possessed, the orphans, and widows) and other destitute (sinners) who were in need of healing and restoration, forgiveness and salvation (Mark 2:17).

**Signs and Miracles as Holistic Mission**

Jesus’ healing ministry and the acts of help towards the needy and oppressed were often accompanied by signs, miracles, and wonders. It is interesting to note that Jesus did not perform miracles and wonders to prove his divinity or demonstrate personal authority. In contrast, his many miracles pointed to the reality of the kingdom of God already established there, in the midst of Israel. Moreover the demonstrations through the power of signs and miracles done by the Son of God was a direct confrontation with Satan, the one who claimed this earth as his kingdom. Jesus came to rescue the captives and release the oppressed from the power of the devil (Luke 4:18-19).

The encounter of Jesus with the demon-possessed in the synagogue in Capernaum gives us an idea of what Jesus’ ministry was like and provides

---


34 See Olaotse Gabasiane, “Relational Care as Ministry to the Marginalized,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 14-21.


36 See Hoskyns and Davey, quoted in Glasser, *Kingdom and Mission*, 163, “The physical miracles are external signs of the supreme miracle, the rescue of men from the grip of the powers of evil—from sin. The supreme messianic miracle to which the miracles point is the salvation of men by the power of the living God exercised through the agency of the Messiah.”
us with a picture of terrible confrontation between the power of light and the power of darkness. The miserable man, locked in Satan’s prison, probably tried to appeal to Jesus for help, but the evil spirit put other words into his mouth. He probably tried to come within the reach of Jesus’ hand, but another force held him away from his freedom.37

It was in this context that Jesus spoke with authority asking the evil spirit to come out of him (Luke 5:31-37; Mark 1:21-28), enabling the man to be free and to stand before the wondering people praising God for his deliverance and testifying of the divine power of the Savior.38 The relief that came through this healing (exorcism) was clearly witnessed by all in the synagogue, because the Bible tells us that all were amazed by this miraculous power encounter which set this man free, enabling him to return to his life of joy and to develop the potentials and capacities God had given him.

It is through freedom that Jesus gives men and women what makes it possible for them to achieve their real worth and utility within the kingdom of God. It is by internalizing this personal worth, which comes from Jesus, that a person can praise God and serve other fellow human beings to the fullest. Relief brings freedom, and freedom provides the way for transformational development, and none of these can occur but through the power of Jesus Christ. One of the causes of these physical maladies was directly related to demoniac possessions. Many who were demon-possessed were also suffering physically as a result of being under the control of evil spirits.

Several other stories found in the gospels depict the theme of exorcism.39 I believe the Bible accounts are there so that people do not get discouraged by demonic possession, but are encouraged by the possibility of relief and freedom, the power of signs and miracles that Jesus is able to provide. I also believe that these stories provide the basis on which we can understand, construct, and implement a holistic gospel. It is only through this understanding that a person can develop in his/her Christian journey.

There are several accounts about the signs and miracles manifested by the power of Jesus recorded in the gospels. The first one is found in

38 Ibid., 227.
Matthew 9:18-26 and is about the death of a girl. The Bible tells us that her father came to Jesus, “knelt before him and said, ‘my daughter has just died.’ But come and put your hand on her and she will live” (Matt 9:18). What an example of faith we find in this “ruler.” He believed that Jesus could bring his daughter to life again, and that is what Jesus did. “He went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up” (Matt 9:25). What a powerful hand is the hand of Jesus. Those who believe in him are rewarded by a miracle and come back to life, and life abundantly (John 10:10).

The second account is recorded in Luke 7:11-17, and is the story of a poor widow who had only a son. This incident in the life of Jesus marks his ministry in a way that few are able to understand. The woman who had only a son was extremely poor. Not only was she poor, she was also a widow, therefore, her only son was all she hoped for in regard to a way for her livelihood, her survival, especially in her old age. Jesus’ heart was moved and touched by the poor widow and her situation of misfortune. He approached her and “said, ‘Don’t cry.’ Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother” (Luke 7:13-15).

Jesus himself said “a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out” (John 5:28-29). He also pronounced, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25). Christ’s voice opened graves and resurrected the dead. This was exactly what happened with his friend, Lazarus (John 11). He was not only very sick, or comatose. He had died, was already buried, and had also been in the tomb for four days. Christ’s power would bring him from death to life. His words would call him out of the tomb, even though he had been there for days. Jesus’ words: “Lazarus, come out” (John 11:43) and the fact that Lazarus indeed came out of the grave (John 11:44) indicate that Jesus is the Son of God and that this world, and all that exists, are under his authority. He came to restore human life in its totality, holistically. Through his life we have the assurance of abundant life, and life eternal.

The many miracles of Jesus attest to his love and care and interest

---

40 For a similar account about resurrection in the Old Testament, see 1 Kings 17:17-24, and also 2 Kings 4:32-37.
41 See the chapter entitled “Death and Resurrection” in Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 387-401.
in human life: socially, physically, and spiritually. The beginning of his holistic ministry was inaugurated with his first miracle: the turning of water into wine (John 2:1-11). The Bible mentions that by performing this miraculous sign he revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him (John 2:11). This miracle is important because it demonstrates that the mission of Jesus is not only related with spiritual matters, it is related very much with life’s everyday situations.

Likewise, it is in the miraculous signs of feeding both the 5,000 and the 4,000. Jesus performed these miracles because he had compassion for the multitude that was listening to his message, his word. He did not want to dismiss the crowd with an empty stomach because many of them had been there with him for three days and could faint on the way back home. He decided that feeding them was a way to show his love and care and to demonstrate the nature of his kingdom.

The compassionate character of Jesus and these miraculous signs surprised the multitude when they saw that he could provide for their physical needs, that is, food, and for this reason they wanted to make him a king, as perhaps he could help them conquer their enemies and deliver them from the Roman bondage. But the ministry of Jesus was of another nature, and his kingdom was to be established on the basis of love and reconciliation with God. The miracles and signs attested that his mission was for the restoration of life, for infusion of his love and compassion, and for a demonstration of the character of God.

Many more miracles were performed by Jesus with the very intention of restoring people back to a life that was worth living; a life that would praise God for the miracles Jesus had done (Luke 7:16). Among the needy who received the favor of God through the miracles of Jesus were those who had diseases, sicknesses, and evil spirits; those who were blind, lame, deaf, and paralyzed; those suffering from severe pain, those who were possessed by the devil, and those who had seizures; also the lepers, the poor, the orphans, the women and the widows; the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the oppressed, and the prisoner; and even some who were dead.

---

42 For the multiplication of bread and fish for the 5,000 see the biblical references which are found in Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; and John 6:5-15. The references for the 4,000 are found in Matthew 15:29-39; and Mark 8:1-10.
43 Glasser, Kingdom and Mission, 185.
Jesus came to rescue them from a world that did not want them. He came to transform their lives and he did it through relationships, miracles, and powerful signs. Through these miracles Jesus witnessed to his children about the loving character of God and the disposition of God to heal (and forgive) all those oppressed by the devil. He wanted his children to know how much he cared for them that, even if it required miraculous signs for them to be restored, fed, healed, forgiven, and brought back to life he would do this by God’s power. His goal was not to establish his authority, it was to reveal grace, it was to transform sinners into saved and healthy individuals for his kingdom, the kingdom of his Father, that he came to establish a kingdom that is built on love and justice.

**Holistic Mission through Teaching, Preaching, and Healing**

The whole ministry of Jesus, by teaching, preaching or healing, demonstrated his mission to save and to restore, to heal and to forgive. His actions confirmed his teachings. Moreover,

His miracles testified to the truth of His words, that He came not to destroy, but to save. Wherever He went, the tidings of His mercy preceded him. Where He had passed, the objects of His compassion were rejoicing in health and making trial of their new-found powers. Crowds were collecting around them to hear from their lips the works that the Lord had wrought. His voice was the first sound that many had ever heard, His name the first word they had ever spoken, his face the first they had ever looked upon.

The Savior made each work of healing an occasion for implanting divine principles in the mind and soul. This was the purpose of His work. He imparted earthly blessings, that He might incline the hearts of men to receive the gospel of His grace.

Christ might have occupied the highest place among the teachers of the Jewish nation, but He preferred rather to take the gospel to the poor. He went from place to place, that those in the highways and byways might hear the words of truth... Thus He went from city to city, from town to town, preaching the gospel and healing the sick—the King of glory in the lowly garb of humanity.45

As noted above, Jesus’ ministry was totally devoted to the salvation and redemption of human beings to their wholeness. He preached the gospel

---

to them, healed their sicknesses, forgave their sins, and restored them to a life that is complete—reconciling all into God through himself.

Ellen G. White wrote, “The Savior ministered to both the soul and the body. The gospel which He taught was a message of spiritual life and of physical restoration.” Moreover, it was “by giving His life for the life of men” that “He would restore in humanity the image of God. He would lift us up from the dust, reshape the character after the pattern of His own character, and make it beautiful with His own glory.”

This is without any doubt what we can refer to as the holistic gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel that is able to heal and to save, to protect and restore—transforming human beings into heirs of God’s kingdom by restoring in them the image of God. This is the work that must be done through the power of God’s Spirit in order that many poor, sick, and needy persons might receive the grace of this holistic gospel of Christ and be transformed into his likeness.

**Christ’s Gospel Challenges the Religious Structure**

Although Jesus’ words (Matt 23) were severe and carried the whole truth regarding the situation and content of Israel’s religiosity, they were also aimed towards the restoration of his people. Jesus wanted them to understand his law in a new way. His intention was that they could “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:37-39). Fairness and justice can not be practiced by individuals only, it also needs to be practiced and implemented by the Church, the religious body, the body of Christ.

The religion of Israel had become a burden for everyone. The temple area was turned into a place of oppression, especially for the poor, who had no means to pay for the cost of an offering for their sins. Jesus observed this huge market place, this great confusion, and, filled with a divine authority he “entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves (Matt 21:12).

---

47 Ibid., 504.
Corruption existed because the temple had become a kind of black market where the principles of God were trampled and human rules replaced the ordinances of God. This was a form of oppression because the money changers had imposed on everyone the temple's currency, which was much more costly than in any other place, nevertheless, for an offering to be accepted by the high priest, it had to be purchased from the temple's market using the temple's currency. The poor and needy could certainly not afford the cost that was involved in a simple sacrifice for their sins. They were oppressed by the very same representatives of God who were supposed to care for them and provide a way for their reconciliation with God.\(^{49}\)

Jesus not only condemned this corruption and oppression, but he also himself became the offering for the sins of the poor, blind, oppressed, and all sinners and needy people. He came that all could be reconciled with God. He came to set people free (John 8:36).

His actions affirmed his teachings and his statements confirmed his actions. He condemned the teachers of the law and Pharisees by saying: “You hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former” (Matt 23:23). His seven woes (Matt 23:13-32)\(^{50}\) against the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, denouncing their hypocrisy, are a clear indication that he was against their theology and practice—that their teachings and actions were contrary to the holistic principles of his kingdom. Such practices could never have a place or be tolerated by God.

**The Gospel Ministry of the Apostles**

After Jesus had ascended to heaven, his disciples gathered in Jerusalem, waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Empowered with the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, Peter stood up and preached to a large crowd of people, appealing to them and insisting that they should repent and be baptized. In that day, about 3,000 accepted Christ and were baptized, being added to those who were being saved (Acts 1:1-40).


\(^{50}\) For a fuller description and comments by Ellen G. White on the seven woes of Matthew 23:13-32, see the chapter “Woes on the Pharisees,” in *Desire of Ages* (1898), 353-360.
As the Apostolic Church grew by the addition of many who were being converted to Christ, the problems and needs of the Church also started to increase. But how did the apostles and new converts handle the situation? What was their response to the needs of this new flock (the early Christian community)?

Their response was the result of the love they had seen embodied in the life of Christ, the love that had been poured out on them by the Holy Spirit. The result was manifested in the direct expression of their love in action towards their neighbor. It was a love that expressed itself in the life of the Church: as a community, as it shares together, and as it practices a religion that is true and pure. God’s holistic gospel can be expressed as an encounter with Christ—an encounter with God’s compassionate love, which had been embodied in the life of one person—Jesus Christ.  

The early Christian community was characterized by true fellowship. This true fellowship was the trademark of the apostles and new believers. The fellowship they developed was based on the teachings of the apostles, which they received from Jesus, the breaking of the bread and also through fervent prayer. This group of apostles and believers had received the Holy Spirit because they had laid aside all selfish interests, all differences, and were all of one accord. They had decided to abide in unity with Christ and with each other, having everything in common (Acts 2:42-44).

The early Christian believers were one in heart and mind. The desire of each one of them was to share the possessions they had in order that they would be distributed to those in need. It was because of this practice that “there were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34), thus the act of sharing their possessions was what made it possible for the new believers to meet the needs of those that were in distress (Acts 4:32-47).

It was only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of the believers that such sharing of personal possessions could have taken place. This relief program was not implemented with money from governments or private organizations, but was carried out with the money that originated from the proceeds of the sales of their houses and lands. The early Christian believers did that as it was needed, and due to that

---

practice there were practically no beggars or needy persons among them.\textsuperscript{52}

The practice of Christian relief attested that the believers were living a religion that was true. James rightly emphasized the integration of listening to the word and practicing it, of love that manifests itself in words but also in actions. What then is true religion? James provides an answer: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (Jas 1:27).

It seems that James is somewhat echoing the words of Jesus, “for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matt 25:35-37). It would certainly be appropriate to conclude that Christian relief, which would fulfill the challenge of these biblical texts, is parallel with true religion.

Christian relief that is true will yield results that are for the glory of God because it has been born out of a converted heart that was transformed by Jesus Christ. Orphans and widows suffer distress that touches the heart of the Father, so the one who lives a religion that is true will “defend the cause of the fatherless” and will “plead the cause of the widow” (Isa 1:17).

It was in Antioch that the disciples (followers of Jesus) were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). It is possible that this could be connected with the fact that it was there that an offering to the brothers and sisters (certainly poor) living in Judea (Jerusalem) was collected. The text reads: “The disciples, each according to his abilities, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gifts to the elders by Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:29-30). To provide help (\textit{eis diakonian}) in this context can certainly mean to provide resources (money, gifts) to be used for the help of the brothers in distress. This ministry of the Antioch believers was indeed a “pioneer Christian relief effort. Rooted in Acts

\textsuperscript{52}See the \textit{Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE), Christian Witness to the Urban Poor, Lausanne Occasional Papers No. 22, Thailand Report (Wheaton, IL: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980). On p. 11, the \textit{LCWE} has the following declaration in regards to Christian community in the early church: “The New Testament church sought to live out its life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in continuing the kingdom attitude towards material possessions. The service of God and the sharing of life in the fellowship took priority. Their security was in God’s provision through his people and all property was at the disposal of the community. Social distinctions were abolished and poverty was overcome.”
2 and 4, it may have been the origin of all latter relief and development efforts."

Christian holistic relief was not practiced only within the limits of a certain church or community, but as it is seen here, it transcended geographical barriers, country borders. The relief offering (giving) helped the early Christian churches to be united in the body of Christ (the one family of God), thus increasing fellowship among them and promoting the act of sharing, even in the midst of trials and poverty. Concerning the Macedonian churches, Paul wrote, “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their abilities. . . . They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints” (2 Cor 8:2-4).

The Apostle Paul had special consideration for the members of the local church: “therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Gal 6:10), but he also had a broader and all inclusive view of Christian relief, which includes not only those of the local church or other churches, but humanity in general, even our enemies. He writes: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (Rom 12:20).

**Work and Holistic Development as Mission**

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul makes close reference to holistic development, as we understand development in today’s Christian context. He wrote: “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody” (1 Thess 4:11-12). It is clear that the believers should not depend (be a burden) on others—dependency is against Christian principles. By living a life that was quiet, working with their own hands and not interfering in the affairs of others, the believers would

---


54 Stearns, in *The Hole in Our Gospel*, 187, writes: “If we in the Church are truly dedicated to the Great Commission, then we will first have to do something about the “Great omission.” We will never effectively demonstrate Christ's love to the world, if we cannot first demonstrate it to the Church—the whole Church, and that includes those struggling just to survive.”
possess dignity, would be self-reliant, and would become respected citizens of their communities.

The principle that everyone must work and provide for his/her own family is affirmed by the Apostle. He encouraged the believers to obtain their sustenance by working with their own hands. Idleness must never exist among believers, only hard work. The biblical principle of earning what one eats or has is stressed by Paul. He wrote: “We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you” (2 Thess 3:7-8).

Paul’s example was to be followed by the Thessalonian believers, but it is also to be imitated by today’s believers, in their daily life, and through their services (holistic ministries) in behalf of their brothers and sisters and also of others who live outside the Christian community.

**Conclusion**

The ministry of compassion and relief manifested in the life and ministry of Jesus was the best possible example provided for the disciples, apostles, followers, and new believers of the Early Apostolic church. Jesus (Immanuel) dwelt among men and women in order to restore and save, to heal and forgive, with a love that was even stronger than death itself. His special attention towards the needy, which included, among others, the poor, the sick, the demon-possessed as well as women, caused the Son of God to devote a large proportion of his time and energy healing and caring for them all during his earthly ministry.

Jesus’ teachings were always confirmed by his actions, and his ministry of healing (salvation) affirmed what he preached. He loved Israel (his people) and the established religion, which he intensely wanted to restore and save (Matt 23:37). His was a holistic ministry, which made human beings wholesome in body, spirit, and mind. He came to reveal God’s character to the fallen human race, and by doing so, restore the image of God in his creatures.

When the needs of the church members or non-members are met, the poor are attended, the hungry and thirsty are fed, the naked are clothed, the imprisoned are visited, then the members of the body of Christ have true fellowship with God and with each other, thus demonstrating that they no longer are selfish, but are able to share together and live out a life that testifies of a true and pure religion.

The Apostle Paul encouraged the practice of Christian relief and
development by urging church members to do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Gal 6:10), but he also had a broader view of compassion which included even our enemies: “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink” (Rom 12:20).

This is without any doubt what we can refer to as the holistic gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel that is able to heal and to save, to protect and restore—transforming human beings into heirs of God’s kingdom. This is the work that must be done through the power of God’s Spirit in order that many poor, sick, and needy persons might receive the graces of Christ’s holistic gospel and be transformed into his likeness for the benefit of His children, communities, and nations.
Introdução

O Novo Testamento não aborda o papel do ancião na era apostólica de forma metódica. No entanto, alguns textos bíblicos, ainda que isolados, são elucidativos para a compreensão do assunto. Entre eles, destacam-se Efésios 4:11, 12 e 1Pedro 5:1-3, que indicam a função do ancião como pastor do rebanho de Cristo; 1Timóteo 3:1-7 e Tito 1:5-9, que descrevem as qualificações para alguém exercer a liderança numa congregação; 1Coríntios 12, que apresenta os dons para a realização dos serviços eclesiásticos; e Atos 20, que trata das recomendações de Paulo para os anciãos efésios.

Temos que levar em conta que era desconfortável ser um líder de igreja naquele tempo, apesar do apóstolo Paulo incentivar os membros da igreja a desejar funções de liderança (1Tm 3:1).

Podemos entender sua declaração em termos do prestígio e respeito que se dão aos líderes cristãos hoje. Mas essas coisas passavam longe da...
cabeça de Paulo. Em seus dias, o bispo enfrentava grande perigo e pesada responsabilidade. Recompensas para o trabalho de liderança de igreja eram as privações, desprezo e rejeição. O líder era o primeiro a ser perseguido, o primeiro a entrar na fila para o martírio.\(^2\)

Neste artigo, serão analisados o conceito de ancião, o chamado do ancião, suas qualificações e a descrição de seu trabalho na igreja que o elegeu. Esse estudo pretende trazer subsídios bíblicos para todos os que estão relacionados com a função de ancião na Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia.

**Conceito de Ancião na Bíblia**

“A sociedade hebraica dividia o povo em jovens e velhos (Gn 19:4; Sl 37:25).”\(^3\) As pessoas idosas eram valorizadas, respeitadas e ouvidas em Israel e em outras nações da Antiguidade;\(^4\) porém, a mais distintiva característica de um ancião no Antigo Testamento era a sabedoria (Jó 12:20; 32:9; Sl 119:100).

Arndt e Gingrich sugerem 50 a 56 anos como a idade limítrofe para alguém ser considerado ancião.\(^5\) No entanto, há documentos de Qumran (comunidade monástica da região do Mar Morto contemporânea dos apóstolos e que existia desde o século 2 a.C.) que colocam a idade mínima de 30 anos para diferenciar o ancião do jovem.\(^6\) Coincidentemente, “tinha Jesus cerca de trinta anos ao começar seu ministério” (Lc 3:23). Segundo Robertson, os levitas também deveriam ter essa idade para assumir plenamente as responsabilidades sacerdotais.\(^7\)

Existe ampla evidência de que [na Palestina] um líder ou mestre para ser aceito deveria ter ao menos 30 anos de idade. A ideia é que a pessoa não necessita apenas de treino, mas também de experiência e maturidade. Para conduzir, aconselhar e instruir outras pessoas é preciso que se tenha uma

---


compreensão fundamentada na sabedoria e humildade, e a idade parece prover isso.  

Na Bíblia, o termo “ancião” aparece pela primeira vez associado à função de liderança quando Deus ordena a Moisés para apresentar-se aos anciãos de Israel como alguém escolhido para tirar o povo do Egito (Êx 3:16). Pouco tempo depois, por ocasião da saída do Egito (Êx 12:21), anciãos receberam instruções sobre a condução da primeira Páscoa. Esses fatos deixam explícita a participação dos anciãos na liderança política e religiosa da nação em formação. De modo que, habitando a terra de Canaã, os anciãos já possuíam autoridade para ungir a Davi como rei de Israel (2Sm 5:3).

Os anciãos de Israel não operavam de forma individual como os profetas; eles são sempre vistos agindo em grupo. Através do Antigo e do Novo Testamentos, eles funcionaram como juízes tanto em assuntos civis como religiosos.  
Tudo indica que essa prática era comum entre os povos antigos (Nm 22:7), e Israel a absorveu de forma natural. A prova disso é que não existe nenhum registro da instituição desse ofício entre os judeus.  
Por sua vez, na igreja primitiva, o termo “ancião” tornou-se a designação para aqueles que assumiam o papel de líder nas comunidades cristãs que surgiam (At 14:23).

**Terminologia**

O *Diccionário Bíblico Adventista* considera as qualificações e ofícios do ancião e do bispo semelhantes, e os significados originais das palavras *presbuteros* (ancião) e *epískopos* (bispo ou supervisor) sinônimos.  
*Epískopos*, que no Novo Testamento é equivalente em conceito a *presbuteros*, desenvolve, posteriormente, um trabalho de moderador ou líder dos presbíteros.

Os gregos usavam o termo *epískopos* para definir um ofício que tinha

---

9 Ibid, 70.
11 *SDA Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Elder.”
funções de superintendência, tanto no círculo político como religioso. Seu significado implica em supervisionar outros, particularmente pessoas em necessidade.\textsuperscript{13} No quarto e quinto séculos a.C., Atenas usava *epískopos* como título para oficiais do Estado que atuavam como supervisores na manutenção da ordem pública, frequentemente usando poderes judiciais.\textsuperscript{14}

*Presbuteros* (ancião) tornou-se o vocábulo mais comum usado como referência ao líder de uma igreja local cristã no primeiro século. Essa palavra manteve seu milenar significado graças à Septuaginta, a versão grega da Escritura hebraica, datada do reinado de Ptolomeu Filadelfo (265-247 a.C.), que ficou popular na Judéia do tempo de Jesus e entre os judeus da Dispersão.\textsuperscript{15} No Novo Testamento, muitas referências feitas para “anciãos” são para líderes judeus. Por exemplo, alguns membros do Sinédrio eram chamados de anciãos (Mt 16:21).

A palavra grega *presbuteros*\textsuperscript{16} aparece 67 vezes no Novo Testamento; *presbuterion* aparece três vezes (Lc 22:66, At 22:5, 1Tm 4:14); e *sumpresbuteres*, uma vez (1Pe 5:1). Essas palavras foram traduzidas nas versões bíblicas da língua portuguesa como: “presbítero”, “ancião” ou “presbitério” (concílio de anciãos). Em seu significado primário, “ancião” designa uma pessoa que nasceu antes (Lc 15:25).\textsuperscript{17} Por corresponder também a uma pessoa idosa, ancestral ou alguém de maturidade e experiência, o termo foi aplicado para indicar dignidade (Lc 7:3), e passou a ser o tratamento tanto para os membros do Sinédrio (conselho de autoridades judias) como para os membros do presbitério (conselho das principais autoridades cristãs de uma igreja ou região).\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14} Phil A. Newton, *Elders in Congregational Life: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2005), 34.
\textsuperscript{15} John Maxwell Andrewartha, “Bishop, Pastor: A Descriptive Study of the Terms and Their Implications for a Contemporary Ecclesiology” (Dissertação de Ph.D., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 20.
\textsuperscript{16} A palavra grega *presbuteros* pode ser transliterada também como *presbyteros*.
\textsuperscript{17} William Carey Taylor, *Dicionário do Novo Testamento Grego* (Rio de Janeiro: Casa Publicadora Batista, 1960), 182.
significar ‘o mais velho’ ou simplesmente ‘velho’ sem conotações negativas de perda de poderes’.

A Septuaginta usa a palavra grega presbuteros para se referir aos representantes e conselheiros das cidades e tribos de Israel (Jz 11:5-11; 1Sm 16:4). Zaqen era a palavra hebraica para ancião. No Novo Testamento, a palavra grega toma o lugar da palavra hebraica quando passa a ser aplicada aos magistrados de uma cidade (Lc 7:3) e, posteriormente, ao administrador de uma igreja local. Em Atos 11:30, pela primeira vez o termo “presbítero” é aplicado a uma igreja cristã.

Taylor diz que o sentido de dignidade para presbuteros foi tomado emprestado das instituições judaicas, e Andrewartha explica que os gregos não estavam familiarizados com essa palavra como título. Isso evidencia que a tradição judaica de governo, fundamentada na autoridade de pessoas com mais experiência, influiu fortemente nos procedimentos eclesiásticos dentro da igreja cristã em formação (At 15:2-4). No entanto, a igreja, ao contrário da tradição judaica, admitiu em seus quadros administrativos pessoas jovens, como foi o caso de Timóteo (1Tm 5:1). Isso não deixa de ser mais uma evolução do conceito antigo da palavra presbíteros.

**Função**

Em Israel, o ancionato cuidou do poder judiciário, atuando em funções ligadas ao código civil e ao julgamento de disputas e crimes, porque conferia aos levitas e sacerdotes a atribuição de administrar as atividades religiosas. Por sua vez, na igreja apostólica, o ministério dos anciãos se concentrou no cuidado do rebanho de Cristo, a igreja.

**Administrar e Ensinar**

Os anciãos, na era apostólica, tinham papel específico: administrar as novas igrejas que surgiam como resultado da pregação do evangelho (Tt 1:5). A Bíblia não estipula o número de anciãos que cada igreja ou cidade deveria ter.
deveria ter, mas há indicações, em citações como a de Atos 14:23, de que havia mais de um ancião nas congregações maiores.26

Em Efésios 4:11, Paulo sintetiza em duas palavras as funções correspondentes aos líderes de uma comunidade cristã: “pastor e mestre”. Essas duas funções dos dirigentes de igreja são repetidas em 1Timóteo 5:17: “Devem ser considerados merecedores de dobrados honorários os presbíteros que presidem bem, com especialidade os que se afadigam na palavra e no ensino.”

Referindo-se à expressão “pastor e mestre”, citada em Efésios 4:11, o Comentário Bíblico Adventista diz que “a estrutura dessa frase, no grego, sugere que Paulo pretende falar de duas fases de um ofício. Um ministério eficaz é um ministério que ensina. [...] O Mestre mesmo foi o grande pastor-professor, pastoreando o rebanho e lhe ensinando.”27

Segundo Cowen, o verbo pastorear (poimaino) é usado 11 vezes no Novo Testamento, inclusive na admoestação de Jesus a Pedro, em João 21:16. Ele explica que poimaino significa mais do que alimentar o rebanho. É “zelar por ele” ou “pastorear a ovelha”.28 Parece que os anciãos eram responsáveis pelos fundos de assistência social enviados a Jerusalém (At 11:29, 30). “O ancião deve ser alguém que coloca o bem-estar do rebanho acima de seus desejos e opiniões pessoais. Sua autoridade nunca vai além da Palavra de Deus, deve trabalhar como membro de uma equipe e não como governante independente.”29

Equipar os Santos

Burrill discorda de que o “pastor” de Efésios 4:11 era um líder “estacionário” de uma igreja estabelecida por um evangelista. Ele diz que quem defende essa posição vê o dirigente da igreja do ponto de vista de hoje. No entanto, o papel primário do presbítero era “equipar os santos para o ministério”. Ele se fundamenta em Efésios 4:12, na versão da NASB (New American Standard Bible), que favorece a ideia de que o ancião deveria treinar e equipar sua igreja.30

26 Kelly, I e II Timóteo e Tito, 209.
Áquila e Priscila são exemplos de líderes de igreja que foram agentes passivos e ativos no processo de capacitação.

Começando em Atos 18, Paulo encontra o casal enquanto está implantando a igreja em Corinto, e eles estão entre os primeiros conversos. Quando ele vai para Éfeso (verso 19), ele toma o casal com ele e, posteriormente, deixa-os liderando a nova congregação ali. Então, eles tornam-se mentores de Apolo, que, mais adiante, foi pastorear a igreja em Acaia (versos 24-28).31

**Evangelizar**

Paulo, escrevendo a Timóteo, associou o trabalho do presbítero ao do evangelista: “Tu, porém, sê sóbrio em todas as coisas, suporta as aflições, faze o trabalho de um evangelista, cumpre cabalmente o teu ministério” (2 Tm 4:5). Isso colabora para que se entenda que o ancião deveria estar totalmente engajado na exposição da Palavra, como recomendou o apóstolo: “Prega a palavra, insta, quer seja oportuno, quer não, corrije, repreende, exorta com toda a longanimidade e doutrina” (v. 2). Portanto, a exposição da doutrina consistia no ensino público e pessoal.32

**Proteger a Igreja de Heresias e do Pecado**

O papel dos anciãos de proteger a igreja de heresias ficou claro no concílio de Jerusalém (Atos 15), quando os anciãos, ao lado dos apóstolos, defenderam a igreja de movimentos dissidentes que partiram dos judaizantes. Paulo, em sua passagem por Mileto, reuniu os anciãos de Éfeso para preveni-los quanto ao surgimento de heresias (At 20:28-31). A sua mensagem foi sintetizada na expressão: “Portanto, vigiai” (v. 31). “A única proteção adequada contra a sutileza da heresia é uma fé crescente e um conhecimento progressivo da verdade.”33

**Visitar para Animar e Confortar**

Getz acha provável que a epístola de Tiago tenha sido a primeira carta neotestamentária escrita, e, também, a primeira a ser incluída no cônón sagrado. Ele ainda defende que Tiago, o meio-irmão de Jesus, foi

---

32 “1 Timothy,” *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:313.

Em Tiago 5:14, 15, em que se lê: “Está alguém entre vós doente? Chame os presbíteros da igreja”, Tiago usa para “doença” a palavra grega astheneo, que significa “fraco”, “exausto”. Essa palavra é sinônima de “sofrendo”, que vem do grego kakopatheo (v. 13), e de “enfermo”, que vem do grego kamno (v. 15). Assim, nesse caso, o propósito da oração dos presbíteros é encorajar na fé e reanimar os membros da igreja que foram afetados pelo estresse e adquiriram doenças psicossomáticas, causadas pela tensão das provações (Tg 1:2, 12; 5:10) ou pelo sentimento de culpa por pecados não confessados (Tg 5:15,16).

Partilhar as Decisões com Outros Líderes e a Congregação


Os anciãos e apóstolos também compartilhavam com os membros de suas igrejas as decisões tomadas nos concílios e comissões (At 16:4). É

---

34 Gene A. Getz, Elders and Leaders: God's Plan for Leading the Church (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 331.
35 “James,” SDA Bible Commentary, 7:515.
36 Getz, Elders and Leaders, 335.
37 Ibid., 335-338.
mais uma indicação da visão de igreja que eles tinham: “porque também o corpo não é um só membro, mas muitos” (1Co 12:14). A igreja se distingue de uma organização secular porque ela pertence a Deus e não a homens. Ele a “comprou com seu próprio sangue” (At 20:28).

Atuar como Voluntário

A vigilância pastoral deveria ser desempenhada pelos anciãos com sobriedade (1Pe 5:8). Como bons supervisores, não deveriam servir visando recompensa salarial.40 Burrill, fundamentando-se na segunda parte de 1Pedro 5:2, sustenta que o ancião deve atuar como voluntário na função de administrador da igreja local: “a passagem bíblica indica que eles estavam num cargo de voluntários, não adequado para ‘sórdida ganância’. Assim, eles estavam em cargos não assalariados.”41 Ele ainda lembra que “mesmo aqui [referindo-se à citação de Pedro] o cuidado do rebanho não é designado a uma pessoa, mas a todos os anciãos.”42

Pastorear sob a Coordenação do Pastor Local

As palavras de 1 Pedro 5:2 e Atos 20:28 também estipulam que os anciãos não somente supervisionem, mas pastoreiem. “Eles são subpastores, trabalhando sob a orientação de seu pastor e junto com ele.”43 Paulo, que foi pastor em Éfeso, deu orientações aos anciãos daquela cidade (At 20:28) a fim de que cudassem tanto da vida espiritual deles próprios como do seu rebanho. De modo que, eles preservavam a verdade do evangelho na igreja (Jd 3) e administravam as ordenanças do Senhor (Rm 6:3-6; Jo 13:3-17; 1 Co 11:23-30).

Relação com Outros Líderes

A igreja apostólica atuava em unidade com seus líderes. Apesar de cada congregação ser coordenada pelos anciãos (presbíteros), estes não trabalhavam sozinhos. Outros líderes estavam ao seu lado para apoia-los, como os apóstolos e diáconos. A Bíblia ainda cita outros dois nomes de serviços relacionados com a liderança eclesiástica: “bispo” e “pastor”. Os “profetas” e “evangelistas” não são relacionados como “outros líderes”

40 Guia para Anciãos, 24, 25.
41 Burrill, Recovering an Adventist Approach, 83.
42 Ibid.
43 Guia para Anciãos, 26.
porque não exerciam função administrativa na igreja.

Anciãos e Apóstolos

Os anciãos trabalhavam em harmonia com os apóstolos (Ef 4:11), “com vistas ao aperfeiçoamento dos santos para o desempenho do seu serviço, para a edificação do corpo de Cristo” (v. 12). Há evidências, em Atos 15 e 16:4, de que os apóstolos e anciãos atuavam em conjunto, “como suprema corte e no ofício de ensinar normas para toda a igreja”.

Embora sendo apóstolo, Pedro se referiu a si mesmo como ancião (1Pe 5:1). O apóstolo João também fez o mesmo (2Jo 1:1). Pedro transmitiu instruções aos anciãos em Ponto, Galácia, Capadócia, Ásia e Bitínia sobre como cuidar do povo de Deus (1Pe 1:1; 5:2, 3). O trabalho harmônico entre apóstolos e anciãos ainda está registrado em Atos 21:18: “Paulo foi conosco encontrar-se com Tiago, e todos os presbíteros se reuniram.” Nessa ocasião, o apóstolo Paulo transmitiu aos anciãos recursos destinados aos membros carentes de Jerusalém.

Essas passagens, relacionadas com outras em que os apóstolos dão instruções e incentivam a escolha de líderes nas cidades que eram evangelizadas, são indicações de que o trabalho dos apóstolos era itinerante. “Se fôssemos usar a terminologia moderna para o papel apostólico na Igreja Adventista moderna, os apóstolos de hoje seriam a liderança da Associação Geral que opera no mesmo sentido dos doze apóstolos originais”, observa Burrill.

Anciãos e Diáconos

Cowen diz que “existe certo consenso de que as igrejas do Novo Testamento tinham dois tipos de ministério: os anciãos, que faziam a supervisão geral do ministério da igreja, e os diáconos, que prestavam um ministério de serviço aos pobres e necessitados.” Os diáconos eram subordinados aos anciãos.

Getz considera as diaconisas um grupo distinto dos diáconos, em vez da interpretação tradicional de que Paulo, ao referir-se a elas, estava

---

45 Ellen G. White, Atos dos Apóstolos (Santo André, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1965), 399.
46 Burrill, Recovering an Adventist Approach, 80, 81.
47 Cowen, Who Rules the Church, 101.
48 Kelly, I e II Timóteo e Tito, 81, 82.
se dirigindo às esposas dos diáconos. No entanto, ele não vê isso como motivo para se achar que existem três ministérios na igreja.

Quando olhamos para a história bíblica, notamos que existe apenas uma liderança primária na igreja, especificamente anciãos/supervisores que são responsáveis para administrar e pastorear o povo de Deus. [...] Diáconos, por outro lado, são homens e mulheres qualificados que existem para dar assistência aos anciãos/supervisores em seus ministérios pastorais.

Getz toma por base os textos de Atos 18:1-3, 18 e, especialmente, Romanos 16:3, no qual Paulo chama “Priscila e Áquila, meus cooperadores em Cristo Jesus”. Ainda cita Romanos 16:1, em que ele diz: “a nossa irmã Febe, que está servindo à igreja de Cencréia”.

Nos lugares em que o cristianismo era aceito por um grupo de pessoas, os apóstolos apontavam anciãos, mas não são mencionados os diáconos. Getz acha que os diáconos não eram escolhidos de imediato porque essas igrejas em sua origem eram pequenos grupos, e os anciãos teriam condições de absorver tanto suas funções como a dos diáconos. Ele argumenta que as igrejas, à medida que cresciam, iam ampliando sua forma administrativa, como ocorreu em Jerusalém, quando os apóstolos delegaram algumas responsabilidades aos diáconos para que pudessem se dedicar mais exclusivamente à pregação (Atos 6:1-7).

Anciãos e Bispos

Segundo as cartas de Inácio de Antioquia, no começo do segundo século o bispo era o único que tinha autoridade para administrar batismos e a eucaristia, mas não há nenhum texto no Novo Testamento indicando isso. É universalmente reconhecido que o início da política episcopal começou nessa época. Fischer explica: “o episcopado primitivo, onde ele existiu, conforme vemos nas epístolas de Inácio [bispo de Antioquia que sofreu martírio em Roma, em 107 ou 116 d.C.], foi valioso como um meio de prevenir divisão e preservar a ordem.”

---

50 Ibid., 105, itálico no original.
51 Ibid., 103.
Existem eruditos que rejeitam a interpretação de que ancião e bispo são o mesmo nas Epístolas Pastorais. Entre outros, Joachim Jeremias é citado por Merkle. Jeremias “declara que nas Epístolas Pastorais presbuteros sempre significa ‘homem mais velho’ e nunca se refere a um oficial instituído. No entanto, rotineiramente, os supervisores eram escolhidos entre os membros mais honrados da igreja.”

Jeremias toma por base Filipenses 1:1, em que Paulo se dirige aos “bispos e diáconos”, para elaborar seu argumento de que na igreja havia apenas esses dois ofícios. E ainda, fundamentado em Tito 1:5-7, ele conclui que Tito foi orientado a indicar homens mais velhos (presbíteros) para o ofício de bispo em cada cidade.

Bornkamm tem uma posição contrária à de Jeremias. Ele defende que as funções do ancião e do bispo são as mesmas e que “é natural supor que os ofícios sejam um e o mesmo nas Pastorais”. A posição de que “ancião” é um título, observa Merkle, “toma como fundamento o uso oficial do termo no Antigo Testamento, no judaísmo primitivo e em fontes greco-romanas. No Novo Testamento, o termo é também claramente usado como um ofício instituído (cf. At 14:23; Tt 1:5-7).”

Os eruditos tradicionais, em vez de encontrar em Tito 1:5-7 “homens mais velhos sendo nomeados para o ofício de bispos”, como defende Jeremias, veem Paulo instruindo Tito a indicar em cada cidade pessoas para o ofício de ancião. “O apóstolo, então, expande a qualificação dos anciãos, chamando-os de supervisores”, explica Newton.

Paulo dirige especificamente sua carta aos supervisores e diáconos em Filipos (Fl 1:1). Em 1Timóteo 3:1-7, Paulo dá qualificações para os bispos, as quais são similares às qualificações dadas a Tito para os anciãos (Tt 1:5-9). Lucas também usa “ancião” e “supervisor” para descrever o ofício e a função dos anciãos efésios (At 20:17, 28).

---

55 Epístolas do apóstolo Paulo a Timóteo e Tito.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 5.
60 Merkle, The Elder and Overseer, 19.
61 Newton, Elders in Congregational Life, 35.
Ancião e Pastor

A única referência ao ofício eclesiástico de pastor (*poimen*) está em Efésios 4:11. É encontrada numa lista de dons espirituais dados à igreja. Em adição, a forma do verbo pastorear (associada com o ato de cuidar de ovelhas) é usada onze vezes. O termo pastor, quando usado na antiga Grécia, foi dado a um líder, governador ou comandante, e mesmo como alternativa para um legislador.62

No Israel antigo, a palavra pastor está também associada com a principal função de liderança numa comunidade. Antes de assumir seu posto de liderança, a maioria dos líderes bíblicos trabalhou como pastor.

No Antigo Testamento, *poimen* e seus derivados são usados para chefes como Moisés. Jeremias usa a palavra para representar generais. [...] Jeremias até corrigir aqueles aos quais ele alega serem falsos pastores por estarem conduzindo Israel ao culto de Baal. Esse uso indica que pastores eram identificados com sacerdotes, anciãos ou mesmo os governantes de Israel.63

Outro valor do termo *pastor* está na associação que a Bíblia faz dele com o ministério de Jesus Cristo. Como ressalta Cowen: “Outros usos da palavra *poimaino* referem-se a Jesus, o Grande Pastor. Ele é o grande exemplo para todos os demais pastores. Foi predito que de Belém ‘sairia o Guia que há de apasentar a Meu povo, Israel’ (Mt 2:6).”64 O próprio Jesus atribuiu a si o papel de pastor (Jo 10:14).

Que relação existe entre pastor e ancião nas igrejas do Novo Testamento? Newton diz que “*pastor* sugere alimentar, nutrir e proteger o rebanho”, enquanto “*ancião* enfatiza a maturidade espiritual exigida para esse ofício”. Acrescenta que a herança cultural de cada igreja do Novo Testamento poderia ter determinado que título ser aplicado para os líderes em suas respectivas congregações. Ele comenta:

> Apesar de não ser possível fazer uma clara distinção, parece que os cristãos judeus preferiam o termo *ancião*, enquanto os cristãos gentios mais frequentemente usavam o título *bispo*, cada um se referindo ao mesmo ofício. Como o uso do nome pastor é encontrado apenas uma vez em Éfeso, é presumível que outras igrejas da época descobriram ser esse título útil para descrever a função de seus líderes espirituais.65

63 Ibid.
65 Newton, *Elders in Congregational Life*, 36, itálico no original.
Embora tanto o líder que é designado para ser ancião como o que é designado para ser pastor cuidem do rebanho (igreja) – e os termos continuem intercambiáveis –, pastor passou a ser a designação para aquele que tem a responsabilidade final pelo cuidado do rebanho, não necessariamente fazendo todas as tarefas, mas acompanhando tudo que precisa ser feito por amor do rebanho.66

Sahlin dá uma justificativa para essa diferenciação:

A igreja cristã primitiva foi organizada em “igrejas-casas”, pequenos grupos que se reuniam em lares. Referências das Escrituras, quando iluminadas com evidências da arqueologia e história, formam um quadro que possibilita se tirar um significado prático: “anciãos” eram os líderes pastorais imediatos dos grupos que se reuniam nas igrejas-casas, enquanto “bispos” eram os pastores para todas as igrejas-casas de uma área metropolitana.67

Getz reforça essa posição, ao dizer que “Tiago, o meio-irmão de Jesus, foi o líder principal dos anciãos em Jerusalém”.68

O Chamado do Ancião

No tempo do Antigo Testamento, os critérios em Israel para se escolher os conselheiros de uma cidade, ou mesmo da nação, levavam em conta o sexo, a idade, a experiência e o prestígio. No Novo Testamento, os critérios para se escolher os membros da liderança eclesiástica, principalmente os apóstolos, estão mais identificados com a eleição dos profetas do Antigo Testamento: homens são designados por Deus com um chamado especial.

Considerando esse ato de forma objetiva, sem derivar para aspectos místicos ou subjetivos que podem estender o tema para uma análise mais profunda, Lee vê três fatores relacionados com o chamado para a liderança na igreja:

Em primeiro lugar, o chamado para liderança é um chamado para assumir uma posição. [...] Na maioria das igrejas, o pastor está numa posição de liderança. Ele preenche os requisitos para o papel de líder, e é chamado, eleito ou apontado para assumir as responsabilidades da posição. As congregações também têm numerosas posições para a liderança leiga, membro de uma mesa administrativa ou de uma comissão ou grupo. Assumir um papel de liderança ou responsabilidade é, acima de tudo, uma posição.

66 Jim Van Yperen, The Shepherd Leader (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart, 2003), 17.
68 Getz, Elders and Leaders, 61.
Em segundo lugar, o chamado para a liderança é para o relacionamento, tanto com outros líderes como com o povo a ser liderado. Quando alguém assume uma nova posição, é sábio aprender a respeito de relacionamentos. [...] Líderes são membros de uma equipe.

Em terceiro lugar, o chamado para liderança é um chamado para ação. Os apóstolos, profetas e mestres da igreja primitiva não foram chamados para posições honorárias, mas para posições de ação, com responsabilidades a cumprir.  

Definição de Chamado

O entendimento da palavra “chamado”, na Bíblia, depende de um estudo comparativo entre as palavras correspondentes em hebraico e grego para “chamado” e “eleição”. Os verbos “chamar” e “eleger” (dos substantivos chamado e eleição), especialmente no Antigo Testamento (do hebraico qr’ e bhr), são sinônimos. Porém, no Novo Testamento (do grego kalleo e ekleyomai), nem sempre o significado é o mesmo. Um exemplo desses casos está em Mateus 22:14: “Porque muitos são chamados, mas poucos, escolhidos.”  

Essas palavras de Jesus indicam que “o chamado pode ficar sem valor, não só quando aquele que foi chamado o recusa, mas também quando pensa poder livrar-se da responsabilidade.” Pode ser esse o motivo de Pedro admoestar os crentes a confirmarem continuamente seu chamado para que não venham perder a vida eterna (2Pe 1:10).

O chamado, na Bíblia, tem vários significados, sendo os mais conhecidos: o apelo de Deus para a salvação, o chamado universal (Is 43:1; 2Tm 1:9); e o apelo de Deus para um determinado ofício, o chamado específico (Êx 3:1-12; 1Co 1:1).  

De acordo com Efésios 4:7-14, os dons espirituais são dados por Deus para serem aplicados pelos crentes no exercício do seu chamado. Os dons se exteriorizam nos serviços ou ofícios que Deus programou para a edificação e crescimento da igreja.  

---

69 Harris Lee, Effective Church Leadership: A Practical Sourcebook (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), 23, 24.
70 Johannes B. Bauer, Dicionário de Teologia Bíblica (São Paulo: Loyola, 1983), 2:1162-1166.
71 Ibid., 2:1166.
72 Ibid., 2:1162.
Deus e o Chamado

A idéia de que há um chamado divino para alguém se dedicar a uma atividade religiosa faz parte da tradição judaico-cristã. No Antigo Testamento, Deus chama pessoas e um povo para um relacionamento de concerto.74 A base desse chamado é explicitada em Deuteronômio 7:7, 8: “Não vos teve o Senhor afeição, nem vos escolheu porque lhes fôsseis Seu povo próprio, pois éreis o menor de todos os povos, mas porque o Senhor vos amava e para cumprir o juramento que fizera a vossos pais.”

No pressuposto desse chamado sobrenatural, por meio do qual Israel se tornou o povo de Deus, foi formada a religião judaica e criada a expectativa de que Israel, como nação eleita, deveria cumprir os propósitos divinos de anunciar o Salvador ao mundo (Is 62:1, 2).

Quando Jesus escolheu doze discípulos, no início de Seu ministério, ele indicou que pretendia dar continuidade à missão da nação israelita,75 de que “nela serão benditas todas as nações da Terra” (conferir Gn 22:18 com Mt 28:19, 20).

Ao escolher Seus líderes, é notável que Jesus repete o mesmo princípio usado por Deus na escolha de um rei para o antigo Estado de Israel, citada em 1Samuel 16:7: “Não atentes para sua aparência, nem para sua altura, [...] porque o Senhor não vê como vê o homem. O homem vê o exterior, porém o Senhor, o coração.” Jesus ignorou inteiramente os conceitos seculares que sempre são observados na escolha de pessoas para funções ou cargos representativos. Os discípulos, em sua maioria, eram indivíduos sem formação intelectual, pessoas rudes e, à primeira vista, sem nenhuma perspectiva para o exercício da liderança. Mas Jesus os chamou, instruiu e dotou de poder.76

Após o Pentecostes, eles assumiram a direção da igreja como uma extensão do ministério de Jesus.77 Por essa perspectiva, os discípulos se tornaram também agentes de Deus no processo do chamado (Mt 18:18), cujo objetivo é “proclamar as virtudes daquele que vos chamou das trevas para a Sua maravilhosa luz” (1Pe 2:9).

Com a expansão do ministério, os apóstolos perceberam que eram

74 Ellen G. White, Testemunhos para a Igreja (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2001), 2:450.
75 White, Atos dos Apóstolos, 19.
76 Ellen G. White, O Desejado de Todas as Nações (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1990), 295-297.
77 Francis Foulkes, Efésios – Introdução e Comentário (São Paulo: Mundo Cristão, 1984), 98.
necessárias mais pessoas para a administração dos serviços da igreja; primeiramente, em Jerusalém (At 6:2, 3), e, posteriormente, em outros lugares (At 14:23). A Escritura deixa claro que Deus é quem escolhe seus servos, “conforme a sua própria determinação” (2Tm 1:9). Ele chama crentes para ocupar funções, desempenhar serviços missionários e apoiar o ministério, dando-lhes diversos dons para o cumprimento do chamado.78 A igreja de Corinto é citada na Bíblia como modelo desse procedimento (1Co 12:27-30).

A convicção de que é Deus quem chama “conforme a sua própria determinação” é reforçada por Paulo em seis introduções de suas epístolas (1Co 1:1, 2Co 2:1, Gl 1:1, Ef 1:1, Cl 1:1 e 2Tm 1:1).

A Pessoa e o Chamado

Houve diferença de reação entre as pessoas que foram chamadas no tempo do Antigo Testamento e do Novo Testamento. Todos os profetas do Antigo Testamento descrevem sua motivação para profetizar como um “fardo” que o Senhor lhes deu e do qual não podem escapar. Em cada caso, a iniciativa da ação partia de Deus. Ele lhes dava a mensagem e os dizia para anunciá-la. Alguns, como Jonas, tentavam escapar do chamado de Deus, mas não eram capazes de evitá-lo.79

As pessoas que foram chamadas por Jesus para fazer parte do corpo do discipulado, ao contrário dos profetas do Antigo Testamento, imediatamente deixaram seus negócios e aceitaram o chamado. Levi Mateus é um dos exemplos. “Quando [Jesus] ia passando, viu a Levi, filho de Alfeu, sentado na coletoria e disse-lhe: Segue-me! Ele se levantou e o seguiu” (Mc 2:14).

A mesma disposição de atender ao chamado se verifica em Paulo, conforme ele próprio relatou aos gálatas: “Quando, porém, ao que me separou antes de eu nascer e me chamou pela sua graça, aprouve revelar seu Filho a mim para que eu o pregasse entre os gentios, sem detença, não consultei carne e sangue” (Gl 1:15, 16).

Enquanto as evidências bíblicas são claras de que profetas, no Antigo Testamento, e apóstolos e alguns missionários, no Novo Testamento, eram chamados, Paulo diz, em 1Timóteo 3:1, que “se alguém aspira ao episcopado, excelente obra almeja”. Essa declaração, embora seja a única

no gênero, pode sugerir que a Bíblia deixa cada pessoa livre para tomar sua decisão de ser ou não ancião de igreja, à parte do chamado de Deus.

Cowen não vê indicações na Bíblia de que o desejo de alguém em querer assumir a função de ancião o qualifica automaticamente para o ofício. Segundo ele, 1Timóteo 3:1 diz apenas que desejar esse ofício é uma coisa “boa”. Cowen observa ainda que o contexto imediato desse texto, em vez de incentivar a ambição pela função de ancião, somente apresenta restrições para eventuais candidatos ao ancionato.80

Os eventos registrados em Deuteronômio 18:20, Jeremias 23:30, Isaías 6 e Jeremias 1:4-10 reforçam a posição de que Deus é quem elege e chama seus mensageiros. Essa mesma indicação há no Novo Testamento, em Atos 10:28 e Colossenses 4:17.

Lutzer pensa que a pessoa que é chamada deve sentir uma forte convicção de que Deus a chamou e lhe conferiu dons para o trabalho. Ele sintetiza a descrição do chamado e seu desdobramento como “uma convicção interior dada pelo Espírito Santo que é confirmada pela Palavra de Deus e pelo corpo de Cristo”.81

Ellen G. White não vê o chamado como uma experiência isolada de alguns crentes, mas como uma oportunidade dada a todos os que se entregam a Cristo: “Todo filho e filha de Deus é chamado a ser missionário; somos chamados ao serviço de Deus e de nossos semelhantes; e habilitarnos para essa obra deve ser o objetivo de nossa educação.”82 Pelo prisma de que o chamado é para ser missionário e não para uma função ou lugar específico, há indicação de que qualquer filho de Deus, e aqui se entende todo aquele que esteja vivendo em harmonia com a Escritura e a igreja, pode aspirar exercer qualquer função de liderança na igreja, tanto no ministério local como em outras regiões distantes. “Visto como todos os crentes são chamados para serem ministros de Deus, todos se tornam evangelistas de uma forma ou outra.”83

A Igreja e o Chamado

A Bíblia não apresenta instruções sistematizadas sobre o procedimento da eleição dos anciãos, mas sugere normas sobre como eles devem ser

---

80 Cowen., Who Rules the Church? 23.
82 Ellen G. White, A Ciência do Bom Viver (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1990), 395.
83 Guia para Anciãos, 76.
indicados para seus sagrados postos (At 14:21-23). Uma delas é que não podem indicar a eles mesmos.84

“E, servindo eles ao Senhor e jejuando, disse o Espírito Santo: Separai-me, agora, Barnabé e Saulo para a obra que os tenho chamado” (Atos 13:2). Essa é uma citação bíblica que envolve o Deus que chama, pessoas que são chamadas e a igreja que confirma o chamado. Embora a origem primária do chamado esteja restrita a Deus, a concretização do chamado depende tanto dos indivíduos (que são chamados) como da igreja, “que reconhece os dons dos anciãos para a liderança e os elege como oficiais”.85 “Geralmente, o chamado é discutido sob dois aspectos: o chamado interior, que é o chamado para o indivíduo em particular; e o chamado exterior, que é a confirmação de Deus do chamado do indivíduo, por meio da assembléia local de crentes.”86

Cowen sugere algumas perguntas que uma pessoa pode fazer para verificar se ela de fato está habilitada para a função de ancião: (1) os outros reconhecem meus dons e habilidades nesta área? (2) Outras pessoas têm me solicitado para servir em atividades que exigem liderança? (3) Outros têm me encorajado para pregar e ensinar? (4) Alguém tem me sugerido que eu deveria ser ancião da igreja? (5) Sinto que Deus está me conduzindo nesta direção?87

Segundo o Manual da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia, “o ancião local deve ser reconhecido pela igreja como um forte líder espiritual e religioso, e ter boa reputação ‘dos de fora’”.88

Em geral, na Igreja Adventista, uma pessoa é eleita pela igreja a que está vinculada para exercer a função de ancião “pelo período de um ano ou dois anos, segundo determinação da igreja local”.89 Porém, “a eleição para o cargo de ancião, por si só, não qualifica a pessoa para atuar como ancião. É requerida a ordenação antes que o ancião tenha autoridade para atuar como tal. No intervalo entre a eleição e a ordenação, o ancião eleito pode atuar como líder da igreja, mas não pode administrar os ritos da igreja.”90

Segundo Mappes, “as qualificações arroladas em 1Timóteo 3:1-7

---

85 Guia para Anciãos, 24.
87 Ibid., 31.
88 Manual da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2005), 50.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
constituem o padrão para determinar quem deve ser indicado para servir como ancião. Essa lista requer que a conduta dos anciãos em perspectiva seja observada durante algum tempo antes deles assumirem como anciãos”.

A respeito do intervalo entre o anúncio da nomeação de alguém para a função de ancião e a sua eleição pela igreja, Gerard Gerghoef e Lester De Koster acham que, em 1Tessalonicenses 5:12, quando Paulo diz: “acateis com apreço os que trabalham entre vós”, ele sugere que tempo suficiente deve decorrer entre o anúncio da nomeação para o ancionato e sua eleição para o ofício. A congregação tem o direito de conhecer como cada candidato, naquele momento, se posiciona em assuntos relacionados com a igreja. Um esboço biográfico em um boletim seria útil, detalhando dados particulares da pessoa nomeada, tais como sua formação educacional, vocação, família, interesses, etc.

A ordenação é uma cerimônia de imposição de mãos administrada por um pastor, diante de outros líderes religiosos e da congregação em que o ancião eleito assiste. Esse ritual, na Igreja Adventista, é a confirmação pública de um chamado interno para o exercício do ministério de liderança na igreja. “Uma vez tendo sido ordenado como ancião de igreja, ele não precisará mais ser ordenado na reeleição para esse cargo, ou na eleição como ancião de outra igreja, contanto que tenha mantido sua comunhão com a igreja.”

Qualificações do Ancião


Há várias qualificações descritas nessas passagens, como o mostra o

---

94 Ibid., 51.
95 SDA Bible Commentary, s.v. “Elder,” 7:297.
quadro 1. “Essas qualificações claramente enfatizam mais o caráter da pessoa do que suas aquisições educacionais. Em resumo, [...] indicam que um ancião é para ser uma pessoa altruísta, de boa reputação, um bom líder de família, e capaz de manusear as Escrituras.”

As qualificações esperadas de um ancião também podem ser enquadradas apenas nos itens espiritualidade, conduta ética e preparo para o exercício do ofício. Strauch incentiva o ancião a desenvolver esses pontos: “crescimento exige destreza, trabalho duro e mais tempo do que presumimos. Assim, encorajo-o a ser paciente com outras pessoas e a orar por elas. A vontade de Deus será para que você cresça em Sua graça e poder.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALIFICAÇÕES DO ANCIÃO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualificação espiritual</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualificação ética</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualificação teológica</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualificação administrativa</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualificação psicológica</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualificação social</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualificação pessoal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualificação doméstica</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

98 Adaptado de Cowen, Who Rules the Church 77.
Espiritualidade

Segundo Sanders, “espiritualidade não é fácil de definir, mas se pode dizer quando ela está presente. É a fragrância do jardim do Senhor, o poder para mudar a atmosfera em torno de alguém, a influência que faz Cristo real para os outros.”

Cristo se apresenta como modelo de espiritualidade: “Aprende de mim, porque sou manso e humilde de coração” (Mt 11:29). A espiritualidade, na Bíblia, é caracterizada pelo real senso de humildade, representado pelas figuras do servo, da criança e do aprendiz que se submetem com o “espírito manso e quieto, que é precioso diante de Deus” (1Pe 3:4). A humildade era uma das posturas que Jesus esperava de Seus discípulos para que se tornassem cristãos bem-estruturados na religião e em condições de liderar: “Mas o maior dentre vós será vosso servo” (Mt 23:11); “Portanto, aquele que se humilhar como uma criança, esse é o maior no reino dos céus” (Mt 18:4).

No início de seu reino, numa oração, Salomão revelou humildade e forte desejo de obter a direção de Deus: “Não passo de uma criança, não sei como conduzir-me” (1Rs 3:7). O esvaziar-se do eu é imprescindível para que uma pessoa apresente o diferencial da espiritualidade (Jo 3:3). “O mais infantil dos discípulos é o mais eficiente no trabalho para Deus. Os seres celestes podem cooperar com aquele que procura não se exaltar, mas salvar almas.”

“A humildade precede a honra” (Pv 15:33). “A humildade é a marca do líder espiritual. [...] Ela deve aumentar com o passar dos anos, como outras qualidades e atitudes.” Paulo é exemplo de um líder cristão que cresceu na graça da humildade. No início de seu ministério, declarou: “Porque eu sou o menor dos apóstolos, que mesmo não sou digno de ser chamado apóstolo, pois perseguí a igreja de Deus” (1Co 15:9). E, no fim do ministério, ainda mantinha a humildade: “Cristo veio ao mundo para salvar os pecadores, dos quais eu sou o principal” (1Tm 1:15).

Em 1Timóteo 3:1-7 e Tito 1:6-9, Paulo enquadrou qualidades que rotulam a espiritualidade de um líder cristão: “justo”, “piedoso”, “que tenha domínio de si”, “sóbrio”, “temperante”, “não arrogante”, “não avarento”. No
entanto, a espiritualidade não é uma virtude inerente, mas flui do Senhor. Essas virtudes somente são possíveis por meio da conexão do ancião com Deus; relacionamento desenvolvido numa postura de humildade por parte do obreiro para com seu Senhor.102

Conduta Ética

Quando Paulo diz que o ancião deve ser “amigo do bem”, ele está tratando de um princípio da conduta ética que embeleza a imagem do ancião.103 Ser “amigo do bem” implica “ser hospitalheiro”, “não dado ao vinho”, “cordato”, “inimigo de contendas”, “não irascível”, qualidades citadas por Paulo em 1Timóteo 3:2-7 e em Tito 1:6-9. “Coobreiros com Cristo não manifestarão rudeza ou auto-suficiência. Tais coisas devem ser expulsas da alma e a gentileza de Cristo deve assumir seu lugar. Nunca sejam rudes com qualquer pessoa.”104 A conduta ética compreende a probidade nos negócios. “Porque o amor do dinheiro é raiz de todos os males; e alguns, nessa cobiça, se desviaram da fé e a si mesmos se atormentaram com muitas dores” (1Tm 6:10). No quesito “uso do dinheiro”, é imprescindível que o ancião tenha um caráter íntegro e seja generoso, “não avarento”, “nem cobiçoso de torpe ganância” (1Tm 3:3; Tt 1:7).

O apóstolo também chama a atenção dos presbíteros para a conduta em família (1Tm 3:4,5; Tt 1:6). “A Bíblia sugere que uma forma de saber se as pessoas serão ou não bons anciãos é olhar para o tipo de relacionamento que mantêm com sua própria família.”105

Outro ponto que Paulo se preocupa é com a pureza moral do ancião (1Tm 4:12). Isso envolve o cuidado que o ancião deve ter no relacionamento com o sexo oposto, “estando atento à sua vulnerabilidade, previendo-se ao aconselhar alguém do sexo oposto, especialmente em assuntos íntimos”.106

A compostura com o sexo oposto, a honestidade nos negócios, a cortesia nos relacionamentos e a abstinência de bebida alcoólica são fatores que colaboram para que um líder de igreja tenha “bom testemunho dos de fora” (1Tm 3:7).

---

105 *Guia para Anciãos*, 30.
106 Ibid., 31.
Habilidades

Dons espirituais têm sido distribuídos a cada crente (Rm 12:6). Embora a aspiração ao episcopado seja incentivada por Paulo (1Tm 3:1), nem todos os pretendentes ao episcopado recebem os dons imprescindíveis para o exercício da liderança. Segundo Strauch,

uma pessoa pode ter intenso desejo espiritual, grande habilidade e amor a Deus, e ainda ser desajustada e fraca para opinar e julgar. Tais homens frequentemente desejam posições de liderança espiritual e proeminência, mas são incapazes para tratar com sensibilidade de assuntos controvertidos e problemas, de modo que acabam conduzindo o povo de Deus para extremos perigosos.107

Entre os dons úteis para a função de ancião, destacam-se os dons de “administrar” e “ensinar” (1Co 12:28). Em Efésios 4:11, pastores, que estão relacionados com “o ato de administrar”, e mestres, com “o ato de ensinar”, estão “ligados pelo mesmo artigo em grego” indicando “que não há uma nítida linha divisória entre os dois”.108

Comentando a palavra “governos” (administrações), citada em 1Coríntios 12:28, Strauch diz que “o termo grego para administrações (kiberinesis), no sentido literal, significa dirigir ou pilotar um navio. Originalmente, esse termo descrevia a ação de um timoneiro (grego, kybernetes). Aqui, no entanto, é usado figurativamente para governar, administrar ou guiar uma sociedade de crentes”.109

Paulo, “em sua constante atividade de modelar, aconselhar, encorajar e exortar, ensinando e treinando, exemplifica a liderança do Novo Testamento em seu zênite”.110 Quando ele falou que o ancião deve ser “apto para ensinar” (1Tm 3:2), ele estava falando de um requisito básico a respeito do qual possuía experiência própria.

Em Efésios 4:12, Paulo continua falando do ancião como “pastor e mestre” (v. 11). Sua expectativa era de que o presbítero estivesse habilitado a edificar a igreja, usando com eficácia o dom da palavra. “O que ensina esmere-se no fazê-lo” (Rm 12:7), exortou ele. Ellen G. White salienta que

---

108 Foulkes, Efésios, 99.
“um dos requisitos essenciais em um professor é a habilidade de falar e ler com clareza e vigor”.¹¹¹

Radcliffe considera importante que a liderança da igreja saiba harmonizar as atividades administrativas com as ligadas ao ensino:

treinamento ao lado dos componentes administrativos de um bom projeto ministerial voltado para o ensino é de vital importância para que a igreja permaneça forte e ajustada à Palavra de Deus. Portanto, o papel de ensinar do ancião é uma necessidade vital hoje na igreja.¹¹²

Resumo

O propósito deste artigo foi resgatar o modelo de ancião da igreja apostólica a partir das descrições da Bíblia, de escritos de Ellen G. White e de literatura teológica que trata do assunto. O estudo se preocupou com o significado etimológico do vocábulo grego presbuteros (ancião) dentro da cultura hebraica e grega; também procurou encontrar conexão entre “ancião” e outros termos correlatos usados no Novo Testamento para se referir às funções administrativas na igreja.

Na perspectiva bíblica, “ancião” é uma pessoa habilitada e eleita por Deus para o exercício de um ministério específico em sua congregação. Isso inclui cuidar do rebanho de Cristo em sua comunidade, alimentando-o com a Palavra de Deus e protegendo-o do ataque de inimigos espirituais. O ancião deve também estar atento às necessidades individuais, visitando pessoas carentes, orando com elas e encorajando-as na experiência cristã. Compete a ele ainda colaborar com o programa de evangelismo da igreja. O ancião, em síntese, é um líder espiritual que trabalha pelo bem-estar da comunidade.

Foi necessário investigar os procedimentos eclesiásticos do tempo bíblico para se tirar aplicações para hoje. Isso incluiu uma abordagem sobre a questão do “chamado”, as qualificações, funções e tarefas de um ancião, bem como a natureza religiosa da igreja e o propósito espiritual de sua liderança.

¹¹¹ Ellen G. White, Conselhos aos Professores, Pais e Estudantes (Santo André, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira), 193.
¹¹² Robert J. Radcliffe, Effective Ministry as an Associate Pastor: Making Beautiful Music as a Ministry Team (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1998), 18.
Introduction

The early decades of the nineteenth century in the United States were a time of remarkable optimism, growth, and change. Changes in Western civilization in the eighteenth century resulted in radical changes in the United States. The American Revolution, which was an expression of the “democratic revolution” character of those days, established a government that constitutionally supported the inalienable human right to individual freedom and declared separation between church and state. These views set the stage for dramatic changes in the newly independent nation.

The United States was shaken by the Great Awakening, and as the result

---

1. This paper is a revised version of the chapter, “James and Ellen White’s World: The United States in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” from a forthcoming PhD dissertation on the relationship of James and Ellen White.
2. For a “magisterial reassessment” of the democratic spirit that fermented in Europe and America between 1760-1800, see R. R. Palmer, The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959, 1964). Though Palmer suggests that the last half of the eighteenth century was “the age of the democratic revolution,” he recognizes that except in America, the attempts before the 1790s to democratize Western civilization were either “crushed” or “of very doubtful success” (Palmer, v. 2).
of a few eighteenth-century events (e.g., the Lisbon earthquake and the French Revolution), the citizens of this newly formed nation “may have lived in the shadow of Christ’s second coming more intensely than any generation since.” This millennial environment led to the emergence of many sectarian and utopian communities as well as many reform movements. Henry S. Commager calls this time, especially the Middle Period, “a day of universal reform” when “almost every man” had “a plan for a new society.” The years before the Civil War saw a “proliferation of reforms” and “it was a rare person who engaged in only one of them.”

The purpose of this study is to briefly explore the nineteenth century in America in order to contextualize the days when both James White (1821-1881) and Ellen Harmon (1827-1915) were born and raised. Special attention will be given to the religious milieu of the time. Since both James and Ellen were born in Maine, this study will focus on events in or affecting New England.

Christianity in America

There was a dramatic religious expansion, both numerically and geographically, in the nineteenth-century in America. Edwin Gaustad argues that it resulted from five factors: (1) “the conquest of the West,” in which the “churches followed and occasionally led this steady migration”; (2) “the reconquest of the East” that moved on the waves of revivalism of the Second Great Awakening, which fought against church disloyalty, the increased urbanization and industrialization of the original colonies and the “detrimental effect upon institutional ties” of the French Revolution; (3) immigration; (4) the “rise of new religious groups”; and (5) “respectability,” which demanded church attendance and support.

According to Robert Baird, a nineteenth-century American clergyman and author, the evangelical denominations in the United States in the first

---

decades of the nineteenth century could be subsumed under five great denominational families: Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Congregational/Presbyterian, and Methodist. Baird estimated that by midcentury, these five groups had a membership of over four million, and a population of over seventeen million “more or less under the influence of the evangelical denominations.”

The Baptists grew rapidly during the years immediately preceding and following the American Revolution. Their growth was so significant that by 1800 they had become the largest religious group in America. Methodism also experienced impressive growth: officially organized in the United States as an independent denomination in 1784, it had become the largest American denomination by 1820. The Methodist church not only grew in numbers, but also “exploded spatially,” thanks to their numerous itinerant preachers.

The impressive success of Baptists and Methodists resulted from

---

10 Ibid., 123. The leading itinerant who spearheaded the advance of Methodism in America was Francis Asbury (1745-1816). For an overview and summary of the “circuit rider” Methodist preachers until 1820 see John H. Wigger, “Fighting Bees: Methodist Itinerants and the Dynamics of Methodist Growth, 1770-1820,” in Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture, 87-133.
an “incarnation of the church into popular culture,” in which they joined “most efficiently a democratic appeal with effective leadership.” Methodism was in a large sense responsible for making evangelical religion “more enthusiastic, individualistic, egalitarian, entrepreneurial, and lay oriented” in the favorable democratic milieu that surged in a post-Revolution America.

The number of Roman Catholics in America also greatly increased in the nineteenth century; the main source of this growth was immigration. Between 1790 and 1850, more than one million immigrants of Roman Catholic background arrived in the United States, and this large-scale immigration continued until the end of the century. Catholic religious orders established several colleges, academies, and schools to serve Catholics within their own institutions. Thus, by the end of the first half of the century, “the Roman Catholic Church had become the largest ecclesiastical body in the nation.”

American Christianity was deeply involved in politics in the nineteenth century. Slavery was one of the main issues, and ended up being the cause for schisms in several denominations between the 1840s and 1860s. Especially affected by the controversy over slavery were the largest Protestant denominations of the nation, the Methodists and Baptists.

**The Second Great Awakening**

The religious awakening that occurred in the United States during the post-American Revolution years and the first half of the nineteenth century was “the most influential revival of Christianity” on American soil. The Second Great Awakening was an evangelistic effort to energize America against the influence of Deism and Unitarianism, and also to revitalize an interest in religion that seemed to be in decline. The goals of

---

15 Historians differ about the exact timing of the Second Great Awakening, but the most common dating has the period beginning around 1800 and extending to the 1830s (see William G. McLoughlin, “Revivalism,” in *The Rise of Adventism*, 134; also idem, *Revivals, Awaken-
the religious revivals were to present “aggressive evangelistic campaigns,” bring salvation to the unchurched, convince skeptics of the Christian truths, and transform the United States into a Christian nation.\textsuperscript{16}

These frequent and widespread religious revivals occurred in “a time of eager expectancy, unbridled enthusiasm, and restless ferment.”\textsuperscript{17} Excitement was generated in church congregations throughout New England, the mid-Atlantic, the Northwest, and the South. The existing denominations, especially the free-will ones, grew in number, and several new American denominations were created. One important result of this new religious fervor was massive evangelical participation in social causes, especially abolitionism and temperance, which greatly influenced “most of America’s social reforms.”\textsuperscript{18}

Scattered revivals first became evident among Congregationalists in the “more remote sections of New England” during the last part of the 1790s. By 1800, sufficient numbers of revivals had occurred in central and western New York that locals referred to that year as the year of “the great revival.”\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{17}Corrigan and Hudson, Religion in America, 200.

\textsuperscript{18}McLoughlin, “Revivalism,” 125, 145; idem, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, 98-140.

\textsuperscript{19}Corrigan and Hudson, Religion in America, 150; Whitney R. Cross, The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 9. Cross points out that the “less sensational” and “more calm” spirit of the Awakening in western New York, compared with “the violent sensationalism of the southern frontiersmen” led historians to “more easily” forget the significance of New York in the explosion of the Second Great Awakening (Cross, 7, 9). For accounts of several revivals in New England during the end of the eighteenth and early days of nineteenth-century, see Bennet Tyler, New England Revivals: As They Existed at the Close of the Eighteenth, and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries, compiled principally from narratives first published in the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, 1980; Reprint of the 1846 ed. published by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society
However, historians usually consider the beginning of the Second Great Awakening to be marked by events such as the 1801 Cane Ridge camp meeting in Kentucky and the impressive revival at Yale College in 1802.\(^{20}\)

Initially, the Awakening mostly involved Kentucky and Tennessee, where Methodists and Baptists presided over "rowdy revivals," though a "more sedate awakening" was seen among New England Congregationalists.\(^{21}\)


\(^{20}\)Camp meetings became a popular tool for evangelism and a place of many conversions. Martin Marty says that Frontier camp meetings were “prolonged outdoor gatherings at which people who may never before have seen any sort of large crowd became part of congregations that numbered in the thousands.” They “sang and prayed late into night,” “some fell to the ground, … penitents shrieked, and the healed cried in rapture,” Martin E. Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1984), 175-76. The 1801 Cane Ridge camp meeting in Kentucky was a great Presbyterian (though some Methodist and Baptist ministers participated too) outdoor revival that occurred from August 6 through 12, 1801. Though it was a local event and not the first one, it reached attendance of “mammoth proportions” and ended up serving “as the medium which rocketed the institution on to the national religious landscape, thanks in part to the tremendous publicity of the ‘Pentecost’ at Cane Ridge.” Kenneth O. Brown, Holy Ground, Too: The Camp Meeting Family Tree, enl. and rev. ed. (Hazleton, PA: Holiness Archives, 1997), 6, 7, cf. 27-28. For a comprehensive account and analysis of the Cane Ridge camp meeting, see Paul K. Conkin, Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); and Ellen T. Eslinger, “The Great Revival in Bourbon County, Kentucky” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1988). For a comprehensive history of the camp meetings in America dating from 1786, see Brown, Holy Ground; also, Ellen Eslinger, Citizens of Zion: The Social Origins of Camp Meeting Revivalism (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1999). For a theoretical analysis of the phenomenon of revival and culture in America, see George M. Thomas, Revivalism and Cultural Change: Christianity, Nation Building, and the Market in the Nineteenth-Century United States (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989); also Giuseppe E. Dardano, “The Frontier Camp Meeting and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century North America” (MA thesis, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, 1991). For a selection of 1819 to 1898 documents written by influential people of both theological and intellectual traditions, that though sharing the “revivalists’ faith commitment” and desiring the good for the Christian cause in the United States believed that revivals were harming more than helping the church, see James D. Bratt, ed., Antirevivalism in Antebellum America: A Collection of Religious Voices (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006); also idem, “Religious Anti-Revivalism in Antebellum America,” Journal of the Early Republic 24 (Spring 2004): 65-106. Bratt points out that the antirevivalist’s main charges concerned the “excitement” indulged (emotional), liturgy (how people worshiped), polity (modes of church governance), theology (Calvinism and Arminianism), and lack of proper education of some revivalist preachers and laity (Bratt, Antirevivalism, xviii-xxiii).

\(^{21}\)Walters, American Reformers, 22.
The East became more prominent in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when influential clergy such as Lyman Beecher began preaching the “New England theology,” which stressed the ability of humans to come to Christ, resulting in the founding of several institutions and societies “designed to evangelize and reform America.” After 1825, Charles G. Finney became the main figure of revival-evangelism in America. Revivals then “became the standard American way of drawing a crowd and then building up the churches.” This was a result in part of their self-generated character. Instead of relying on the agency of the state or a religious authority, they relied “on the vigor, dedication, and persuasive skill of each revivalist.”

“New Theology” in Theory and Practice

A remarkable religious awakening happened at Yale in 1802 under the auspices of Timothy Dwight (grandson of Jonathan Edwards and president of Yale from 1795-1817). It is estimated that one-third of the students were converted as a direct result of the revivals at Yale, and many of these students later became leaders of the revival movement that spread around the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century. The most notable were Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), the “great organizer and promoter of the New England Awakening,” and Nathaniel

---

W. Taylor (1786-1858), the “theologian who worked out the appeal and provided the intellectual defense.” They worked to revive traditional American Presbyterianism and Congregationalism: Taylor became the chief architect of the “New Haven Theology” or the “New Divinity,” which strove to “create a bridge between eighteenth-century Calvinism” and the “revivalistic Arminianism” emphasis on free choice of the nineteenth-century, while Beecher put this theology into practice by becoming a leader in organizing “the converts of their revivals into missionary and reform societies to sustain the faith and order of the nation.” Thus revival was connected with reform.

Beecher developed the concept of revitalizing the churches by putting converts to work in reform societies. Beecher bravely fought “the general state of public morals,” especially the treatment of the Indians, Sabbath-breaking, and intemperance. His efforts and influence were widely seen. Theodore Parker (1810-1860), who devoted himself to a life of scholarship, preaching, and social action, considered Beecher to be “the father of more brains than any man in America.” Beecher regarded the voluntary societies as “heaven-sent means of uniting the resources of all the churches behind every good cause.” Basically, all major societies enlisted Beecher’s “propagandist and promotional skill,” which made him, among the New

---

26 Corrigan and Hudson, *Religion in America*, 150.
Englanders, “the most important figure in ‘the benevolent empire.’”

Disestablishment also gave the churches extraordinary vigor, turning them into voluntary associations that depended on both leadership and financial support from their members. The last states to pass disestablishment did so in the midst of the Second Great Awakening, when “religious voluntarism” was evident. Contrary to what some believed, this self-supporting system produced unparalleled growth and prosperity among the churches in America.

The revivalists of the Second Great Awakening were generally postmillennialists. They “assumed that an era of peace, justice, and goodness would precede the return of Christ.” Their goal, therefore,

---

32 The Bill of Rights in its First Amendment explicitly forbade the federal government from enacting any law respecting a religious establishment or designating an official national church. It, however, did not prevent state governments from establishing official churches. Disestablishment took several decades to be prevalent in all the states, and was a process independent of the adoption of the Bill of Rights. It was usually pushed by religious people who saw biblical reasons for it, and decried state establishments as having the effect of corrupting religion, the clergy, and the church.” Carl H. Esbeck, “Dissent and Disestablishment: The Church-State Settlement in the Early American Republic,” Brigham Young University Law Review 4 (2004): 1395; cf. Nicholas P. Miller, “A Populist Religious Movement: Theology of Separation of Church and State in Early America,” Liberty Magazine, Mar/Apr 2006, 4-7. For a description of the development of disestablishment in United States, see ibid., 1448-1547.
33 “Dissent and Disestablishment,” 1590-91. Connecticut (1818), New Hampshire (1819), and Massachusetts (1833) were among the last states to adopt disestablishment.
34 William V. D’Antonio and Dean R. Hoge, “The American Experience of Religious Disestablishment and Pluralism,” Social Compass 53 (2006): 348. A clear example of that was Lyman Beecher. Initially fighting for establishment, which to Beecher “meant the preservation of true religion, good morals, and sound government,” he was later “obliged to confess that he had been mistaken.” He discovered that voluntarism—against establishment—roused churches from their lethargy, “compelled to assume responsibility both for their own institutional life and for the moral and spiritual life of society,” therefore, they “were able to exert … a deeper influence than ever before.” As Hudson points out, “contrary to all his [Beecher’s] expectations, [it] constituted the very heart of Beecher’s great discovery.” Hudson, The Great Tradition, 65, 79; cf. 64-65, 74, 98; also Esbeck, “Dissent and Disestablishment,” 1540-47; Edwin S. Gaustad and Mark A. Noll, eds., A Documentary History of Religion in America: To 1877, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 299-300.
35 Corrigan and Hudson, Religion in America, 214. Charles Beecher points out that Lyman Beecher’s one idea in life was “the promotion of revivals of religion … as a prominent instrumentality for the conversion of the world, and the speedy introduction of the millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ” Charles Beecher, ed., Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1871), 2:9, quoted in Bernard A. Weis-
was to awaken the populace and summon them to battle against sin, and they started numerous reform movements and associations that “aimed at individual and social perfection.” This millennial dream was also linked to the political arena; as Ralph Gabriel summarized, “The vision of the world saved by democracy was the secular version of the Protestant millennial hope.” The climax of these reform movements came between the 1820s and 1840s.

**Foreign Missions**

American religious enthusiasm could no longer “be contained within the national boundaries.” Missionary societies had been established during the eighteenth century, but they were devoted almost entirely to home missions, aiming to evangelize Native Americans (“Indians”) and people on the southern frontiers. However, in 1810 a group of Congregationalist church leaders in Massachusetts organized the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), the first successful agency dedicated to mission in foreign lands, and for the next several decades, the largest organization sending missionaries abroad. Leaders

---

37 Ralph Henry Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Ronald Press, 1956), 37. Winthrop Hudson points out that Charles Finney and Andrew Jackson represented a “parallel phenomena.” “They were parallel figures,” Hudson notes, “in that Finney represented the same tendencies in religious life as Jackson represented in political life.” They had “a similar constituency and a similar ideology.” Their “close identification with the unbridled hopes of the less wellborn and the less well-educated … made them chief symbols of the political, social, and religious ferment of their time.” “In Finney and other Methodistic-type revivalists,” Hudson continues, “popular religion was blended with Jacksonian aspirations—the aspirations and hopes of common people.” Hudson, “A Time of Religious Ferment,” 4, 7.
from other groups, such as Reformed Christians and Presbyterians, joined
the ABCMF, and in 1812 their first missionaries sailed to India.\footnote{It is argued that the ABCFM, though not officially bound to creedal affirmations, was a New Divinity creation, rooted in its theology and inspired by its revivals. See David W. Kling, “The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,” \textit{Church History} 72, no. 4 (2003): 791-819; ibid., in \textit{North America Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, and Policy}, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 11-38; cf. Wolfgang Eberhard Lowe, “The First American Foreign Missionaries: ‘The Students,’ 1810-1820. An Inquiry into Their Theological Motives” (PhD diss., Brown University, 1962). Among the first missionaries was Adoniram Judson. Judson left the United States as a Congregationalist, but en route he reconsidered the doctrine of baptism and became Baptist; he was baptized by immersion shortly after his arrival in India.}
In 1814, the Baptists formed the Baptist Mission Board, and by mid-century, all of
the mainline churches had their own well-established mission boards and
societies.\footnote{P. E. Pierson, “Missions, Protestant Mainline Foreign,” in \textit{Dictionary of Christianity in America}, 754.} This reflected the great missionary impulse among Protestants
in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth-century, and the “larger
transatlantic evangelical movement encompassing the English-speaking

\begin{center}
Charles Grandison Finney
\end{center}

One of the greatest preachers of the Second Great Awakening, Charles
Finney (1792-1875) appeared in the later years of the movement. He is
knew how to persuade an audience. His sermons had a personal intensity
and a democratic spirit; he invited people from any denominational
background to convert. He used examples from daily life as homiletic
deVICES, addressed the common people directly, and made frequent use of
the personal pronoun “you” instead of the general “they.”\footnote{Weisberger, \textit{They Gathered at the River}, 102-03.} Finney either
introduced or popularized new methods of evangelism such as “protracted

meetings” (religious meetings that continued for many successive days), “anxious seat” (the near-converted could move up front directly below the pulpit when they felt ready for conversion), the use of young laymen as preachers, and allowing women to testify about their experiences and pray in public. Finney was also successful in combining evangelism and reform.

Finney was a postmillennialist. In the 1830s, he said, rebuking Christians for neglecting to do their part but also with a tone of optimism, that “if the church will do her duty, the millenium [sic] may come in this country in three years.” He definitely rejected the premillennialist implication that the world was getting worse.

The “Burned-over District”

In the 1830s, the Second Awakening was taking shape in central and western New York. Charles Finney became the leading preacher of the Awakening during this time, although it was not the work of a single man. The most famous of Finney’s revivals took place in Rochester during the

---

46 Nancy Hardesty argues that Finney’s revivals were responsible, “at least in part,” for an increase of women in the nineteenth century beginning “to fill new roles as pastors, preachers, evangelists, exhorters, and lecturers.” Nancy Ann Hardesty, “‘Your Daughters Shall Prophesy’: Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney” (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1976), 160-61.

47 Keith J. Hardman, Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875: Revivalist and Reformer (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), xiii. Finney, however, was convinced that men must be reformed from within, and that conversion, not laws, would perfect society (McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform, 129).

48 Charles G. Finney, Lectures on Revivals of Religion, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835), 282; idem, Lectures on Revivals of Religion, rev. and enl. (Oberlin, OH: E. J. Goodrich, 1868), 290. According to Finney, had the church done its part faithfully the millennium could have already come. “If the whole church as a body had gone to work ten years ago, and continued it as a few individuals, whom I could name, have done, there would not now have been an impenitent sinner in the land. The millennium would have fully come in the United States before this day,” ibid. (1835); ibid. (1868), 289.

49 McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism, 105-06; Knight, Millennial Fever, 18.

50 Whitney Cross points out the “distinct peaks of fervor” in upstate New York. After the first climax of 1800 “excitement diminished, rose again to a lesser peak in 1807-1808,” slumped during the war years, but following the War of 1812 the “religious upheavals … surpassed all previous experiences,” although proportionately the number of converts “may have been smaller than in 1800.” The postwar waves of enthusiasm declined by 1820, but after reaching another low point the “strenuous evangelism” reached “a grand climax between 1825 and 1837.” Cross, The Burned-over District, 10-13; cf. 30.
winter of 1830-31. Upper New York State became home to so much religious excitement that it became known as the “burned-over district.” This region gave birth to or nurtured diverse religious groups like the Shakers, Mormons, Millerites, and Spiritualists, as well as a variety of utopian movements.

New Religious Movements

The nineteenth century in the United States was a propitious era for the development and strengthening of new religious movements. Some of them were transported from Europe, while others were indigenous. While many of these movements grew enormously during the nineteenth century, many others only began in that period. Here I will only mention those religious movements that had a great impact on American life or a connection to James White and Ellen Harmon.

Restorationism

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a religious philosophy of restoring Christianity to its primitive, New Testament, condition began to emerge in the United States. The formalization of the Restoration movement was possibly the most lasting legacy of the famous revival in Cane Ridge. The Restorationists focused on making a commitment to the Bible (specifically the New Testament) as the only guidebook for the faith and practice of the church (they objected to creeds). They strongly emphasized Christian unity and local church autonomy as opposed to the organization

---

52 The most complete treatment of revivalism in western New York during the first half of the nineteenth century is given in Cross, The Burned-over District.
53 For an examination of the relationship between millenarianism and utopianism, using the Millerites and Oneidaites in New York as a test-case, see Michael Barkun, Crucible of the Millennium: The Burned-over District of New York in the 1840s (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986).
54 Nathan Hatch says, “In 1802, in the wake of the Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky, [Barton] Stone decided he could no longer live under Presbyterian doctrine or church organization. A year later, he and five other ministries pushed this idea to its logical extreme and proclaimed that … all church structures were suspect, … [and] these men vowed to follow nothing but the Christian name and the New Testament.” Nathan O. Hatch, “The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People,” Journal of American History 67 (1980): 549-50.
of denominations (e.g., conferences, etc.). The central figures in the movement were Elias Smith in New England, James O’Kelly in Virginia, Barton Stone in Kentucky, and Alexander Campbell in Pennsylvania. In 1808, Elias Smith from the Christian (Connexion) Church founded the first religious newspaper in the United States, the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Eventually other religious movements made use of journals and newspapers, which became widespread and were avidly read.

The Restorationist or “Christian” movement questioned “traditional authorities and exalted the right of the people to think for themselves.” Several churches originated from this movement, such as the Disciples of Christ, a number of independent Churches of Christ, and other smaller groups. This philosophy of freedom of thinking invited “fresh appraisals of the popular culture” and opened the religious environment for some laymen and ministers, such as William Miller, John Humphrey Noyes, and Joseph Smith, to follow their own convictions and hermeneutics.

---

61 Hatch, “The Christian Movement,” 547-48. This new pragmatic theological approach, “which made no man the judge of another’s conscience, had little holding power and sent many early advocates scrambling for surer footing.” Among the five men who signed the “Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery,” only Stone retained his identity as a Christian. Two of them returned to the Presbyterians, and the other two became Shakers. Elias Smith left the Christian Connection in 1818 to join the Universalists, and two of his colleagues, Joshua
Unitarianism and Universalism

Beginning in the eighteenth century, several anti-Calvinism movements proliferated in America. They varied in their approach to Calvinism from a mild adjustment to a total refutation. According to William Sweet this “anti-Calvinistic revolt” was a product of two major influences: first, the financial prosperity of some Boston merchants, which convinced them that “they were masters of their own fates and captains of their own souls” and not “helpless and impotent puppets in the hands of Calvin’s arbitrary God,” and second, “an anti-revival party” that emerged under the leadership of Charles Chauncy, who became Universalist toward the end of his life.

The American Unitarian Association was formed in 1825 and numbered 125 churches, most of them within forty miles of Boston. Lyman Beecher, who came to Boston in 1826 as pastor of the Hanover Street Church,


claimed, “All the literary men of Massachusetts … [and] all the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarian.” Unitarian churches were crowded with “all the elite of wealth and fashion.”

Universalism had its genesis in America through the teachings of the English clergyman John Murray (1741-1850), who arrived in America in 1770. It did not prosper, however, until after the Baptist minister Elhanan Winchester (1751-1797) was converted in 1781. Under the leadership of Hosea Ballou (1771-1852), the Universalists adopted an antitrinitarian position and “except for social status, became indistinguishable from the Unitarians.” Unitarianism “was the faith of well-to-do, urban New Englanders who rejected the notion of human depravity,” while “Universalism was its counter-part among less urbane, rural folk who were repelled by the idea of eternal damnation” and thus affirmed the doctrine of universal salvation. They were basically “in fundamental agreement”: the Universalists held that “God was too good to damn man” and the Unitarians insisted that “man was too good to be damned.”

Universalism, being a lower-class denomination, was mainly propagated by “self-educated farmer-preachers” who competed with the Free-Will Baptists and Methodists for the allegiance of ordinary people and the unchurched. Initially concentrated in rural New England, Universalists later “moved into the newer settlements of the West” and were so successful that by the middle of the century “they had more than twice as many churches as the Unitarians.”

---


66 Murray was born in a strict Calvinist home (his father was Anglican and his mother Presbyterian), but later he found “delight in religious themes and exercises” of the Methodists. John Wesley appointed him “class-leader of forty boys” and soon he began preaching. Later he joined the Whitefield congregation, but was disfellowshipped when he accepted the teachings of the Universalists Allen and Eddy, 388-89.


68 Corrigan and Hudson, Religion in America, 172.

69 Sweet, Religion in the Development of American Culture, 197.

70 Ibid., 197; Corrigan and Hudson, Religion in America, 172; Noll, A History of Christianity, 150.
Mormonism

The Mormon Church was founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith Jr. (1805-1844) after he reported receiving a series of “revelations” and discovering a set of gold plates. From the plates, Smith translated the *Book of Mormon* (first published in 1830), which became “the scripture of the new church.”

Smith and almost all of the early leaders were from New England, a nest of enthusiastic religion in the nineteenth-century. Initially the movement attracted “the poor, restless, and dissatisfied, those who succumbed eagerly to religious emotionalism and those whose fortunes were at low ebb.”

Smith’s “religious innovations,” which included plural marriage, in addition to his engagement in the presidential campaign of 1844, caused discontent among some and provoked fierce struggles between Smith’s

---


72 Tyler, *Freedom’s Ferment*, 86. Tyler comments that the success of the first Mormon missionaries sent to England was the fact that they “found a vast reservoir of new adherents in the poorer districts of English factory towns, where discontent and superstition combined to make conversion easy, especially when land was promised to all who would migrate.” About ten thousand were converted during 1838-1843, and an emigration agency was set up in Liverpool, where the church provided aid for those too poor to emigrate. The population of Nauvoo, Illinois, changed from nine thousand in 1841 to about fifteen thousand in 1845; ibid., 103.

followers and their neighbors. In 1844, Smith and several other Mormon leaders were brutally murdered by angry shooters while they were in jail in Nauvoo, Illinois.\textsuperscript{74} After the death of Smith, Brigham Young, president of the Twelve, “claimed that this body should now rule the church,” and though there was a certain amount of splintering, the affairs of the church were placed in the hands of Young and the Twelve.\textsuperscript{75} In 1847, Brigham Young and his followers arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley, where they soon founded Salt Lake City and several other settlements, which were the beginning of the “Mormon Empire.”\textsuperscript{76}

**Millerism**

Millerism was a movement that spread in America during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, under the leadership of William Miller, a Baptist farmer.\textsuperscript{77} The movement flourished under the strong waves of

\textsuperscript{74}O’Dea, *The Mormons*, 68-69, 72-73; Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 392-95.

\textsuperscript{75}O’Dea, 70.

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 81-83, cf. 76ff. Several Mormon dissident groups were organized, but most of them had short lives. The only group among the dissidents that became large and important was the one that met as the “New Organization of the Church” in 1852. They won the adherence of Smith’s immediate family, and were organized in 1860 in Amboy, Illinois. Smith’s son Joseph Smith III (who was 11 years old in 1844) became its president. More recently this church has adopted some new practices, such as open communion and ordination of women to the priesthood (see O’Dea, *The Mormons*, 248).

The United States in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

the nineteenth-century Awakening, and the Millerites began to develop a unique system of historicist premillennial prophetic interpretation. While many other religious groups arose out of emotionalism (which usually led to antinomianism or perfectionist idealism) or new revelations, Miller was led to a more literal and rational study of the old biblical prophecies.

Miller, who was raised a Christian, later became disillusioned with the Bible and Christianity and eventually became a Deist. The denial of a future existence and the doctrine of non-involvement of God in human affairs held by the skeptics made Miller rethink his beliefs. In a dramatic conversion, he turned back to the Bible and Christianity in 1816, and initiated a systematic and persistent Bible study over several years. He eventually became one of the leading exponents of premillennialism in the first half of the nineteenth century in America. Based on a historicist biblical hermeneutic and using the year-day principle in prophetic interpretation, Miller concluded by 1818 that the Second Coming of Jesus would be personal and imminent, and that “in about twenty-five years the glory of the Lord would be revealed, and all flesh see it together.”

To resolve the objections that arose in his mind concerning his findings, he dedicated several more years to studying the matter. In 1822, he confidently claimed that Christ’s return would take place “on or before 1843.”

The Millerite movement was not a one-man phenomenon. Miller

---

78 Miller, Apology and Defence, 12.
79 Bliss, Memoirs, 79.
began preaching publicly in 1831, and by the end of the decade, several other leaders had joined him. Some of the foremost personalities in this movement were Joshua Himes, Josiah Litch, Charles Fitch, Apollos Hale, and Sylvester Bliss. With the help of other ministers and prominent premillennialist reformers, Millerism rapidly “developed into the most spectacular evangelistic crusade of the Middle Period.” Moreover, besides being “America’s most significant millenarian expression,” the rise of Millerism, with its thousands of converts, marked a peak in the Second Awakening.

When the Second Coming of Jesus did not occur in the fall of 1844 as the Millerites had preached, there was a great split in the group, and out of that chaos several denominations arose. The Great Disappointment, thus, “instead of weakening denominational life, added to its panoply such stalwarts as the Seventh-day Adventists.”

Women and the First Half of Nineteenth Century

The first half of the nineteenth century in America was an era characterized by gender inequality. American women had limited rights in the legal, social, academic, and political arenas. Only a limited number of paid occupations were offered to women, and they were paid much less than men were for similar work. At the beginning of the century, secondary education was available only to some girls, and there was no provision for higher education for women.

Industrial development and the westward expansion opened new

---

80 Joshua Vaughan Himes (1805-1890) was a minister of the Christian Connexion in Boston who became crucial in introducing Miller to the large cities and revolutionizing the movement by launching several periodicals and organizing camp-meetings, general conferences, etc. See David Tallmadge Arthur, “Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism, 1839-1845” (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1963); David T. Arthur, “Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism,” in The Disappointed, ed. Numbers and Butler, 36-58.

81 Charles Fitch (1805-1844) was a Congregational Church minister who designed together with Apollos Hale in 1843, A Chronological Chart of the Visions of Daniel & John, which was of a great help in preaching the prophetic scheme.

82 Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought, 36.


85 Gaustad, Faith of the Founders, 126.
opportunities to women. Women’s rights were still limited compared to those of men, but by the second quarter of the century, women had gained more access to education and doors were opening to them in fields that had been previously male-dominated. Nonetheless, most middle-class married women put their energy into housework and childrearing, and those unmarried women who worked outside the home earned wages far inferior to those of men.86

The 1820s were the beginning of a new era in education for women. The Troy Female Seminary in Troy, New York, founded by Emma Hart Willard (1787–1870) in 1821, and a small school founded by Catharine Beecher (1800-1878), which became the Hartford Female Seminary in 1828, began offering young women a college education comparable to that of young men. These schools soon became models for others of their kind.87 Rapid population growth created a greater demand for teachers, and the need for men in industrial and commercial jobs opened the teaching profession to educated women.88

The 1830s “became a turning point in women’s participation, public activities, and social visibility.”89 Though restrictions were still evident, women had more opportunities for education, which enabled them to take leadership roles in religious activities and voluntary associations, as well as using their talents in teaching and reform work.90

Some Christian denominations and the Great Awakening offered new ways for women to develop their talents, and several women evidenced

86 For an overview of the condition of women and the new opportunities that were accessible to women before the Civil War, see Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, Century of Struggle: The Woman’s Rights Movement in the United States, enl. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 3-98.
90 For an analysis of ideas about woman and their involvement in the work of reform in America before the Civil War, see Lori D. Ginzberg, Women in Antebellum Reform (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2000); also idem, Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); also Gifford, Encyclopedia of Women, 3:1021-1025.
their talents as powerful lecturers. Charles Finney’s revivals played an important sociological role for women: the fact that he encouraged women to testify and pray in public also encouraged them “to fill new roles as pastors, preachers, evangelists, exhorters, and lecturers.”\footnote{Hardesty, “‘Your Daughters Shall Prophesy,’” 160-61. For an examination of the lives and ministries of more than one hundred female preachers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Brekus, \textit{Strangers \& Pilgrims}.}

In 1848, Seneca Falls, New York, became the birthplace of the women’s rights movement when Elizabeth Cady Stanton (a Seneca Falls resident), Lucretia Mott (a feminist Quaker minister), and about 300 other women and men held the first Women’s Rights Convention there. One hundred of them signed the Declaration of Sentiments, which stated in one of its paragraphs, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men \textit{and women} are created equal.” Women’s rights activists argued for equality of opportunity for women in all areas of life, but many of their demands were not met until decades later.\footnote{Henry Steele Commager, ed., \textit{Documents of American History} (New York, NY: Meredith, 1963), 315-17. For a well-documented history of the facts that led to this movement, see Judith Wellman, \textit{The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman’s Rights Convention} (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004). In 1920, the 19\textsuperscript{th} Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was ratified, granting women the right to vote.}

\textbf{Conclusion}

The first half of the nineteenth century was an era of remarkable optimism, progress, and change in the United States. A sense of freedom and self-determination inspired people to work for the improvement of the nation, and the religious milieu of the time was hospitable to many reform movements. The era of progress, freedom, religious and social reforms in the new continent prepared the course which made the United States “the center of the great advent movement.”\footnote{Ellen G. White, \textit{The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation} (Washington, DC: Review \& Herald, 1911), 368.}

The Second Great Awakening steered the U.S. toward a more democratic approach to religious life through the “New Theology,” which called attention to human responsibility; the voluntarism developed by Lyman Beecher, which emphasized Christian responsibility for the betterment of society; and the revivalism of Finney, which focused on real conversion experiences. It reflected the democratic and revolutionary spirit of the nation and opened the doors to innovation, especially in the theological camp.
The theological concept that all who earnestly repented of their sins and reformed their lives could be saved led many Americans to believe that it was their duty to improve society, not only in their own land but also in the rest of the world. The idealistic belief that society could be bettered by human ability motivated Americans to work hard for its enhancement. Missionary societies were founded to spread the practical gospel and keep America Christian. This reform was generally based on a millennial faith that a golden age would be inaugurated by Christ’s Second Coming or established through the preaching and practice of the gospel. Several new denominations and utopian societies, therefore, developed in the prevalent restless ferment.

Women’s place in society also changed during this innovative and revolutionary century. Though the reform in this area progressed in small steps, by the middle of the century, women enjoyed some advancement and had the opportunity to be part of the intellectual and social transformation taking place in America. Religion played an important part in the opening of doors for women.

This indeed was part of the religious context in the New World during the first half of the nineteenth century in which James White and Ellen Harmon [White] were born and called to serve God as pioneers in the Seventh-day Adventist movement.
Introduction

According to researcher and author Alan Nelson, every year more than 6,000 congregations close their doors. Nelson affirms the predictions are that in the next few years, tens of thousands of churches will cease to exist. He explains that many of these closures are the direct result of an unwillingness to dream new dreams and develop new approaches to ministry.¹

The task of this article is to review the literature from 2000-2010 on the theme of reigniting the life cycle of plateauing churches, comparing and contrasting the scholars’ ideas in dialogue with the author of this article. In some cases, older works will be referenced, if the material was thought to be relevant. The principal intention is to create a foundation for recommending new ideas and develop a strategy that will help redirect the declining cycle of plateauing churches.

The Life Cycle of Churches

McIntosh suggests that most churches go through a normal life cycle. They experience a period of birth and growth, followed by a period of flat development or a plateau, and then eventually a decline and death. See figure 1.2

![Figure 1. Typical church cycle.]

Some of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Brazil are following this cycle. As a result of conferences, investment in church planting, and evangelism, there has been fast-paced birth and growth in many regions of the country. While these younger churches are in the exciting stages of birth and growth, some of the older churches in several places are beginning to plateau. If this trend continues unchecked, the churches that have begun to plateau will inevitably begin a slow decline toward death. Previous pastoral experiences with plateauing churches suggest that a potential contributing factor to older churches reaching a state of plateau is the lack of a prayer-based evangelism strategy that keeps the members on fire for their own salvation and the salvation of others.

McIntosh also states that it takes twenty to twenty-five years for a church to grow to maturity. After it has reached its goals, there are no more challenges, and the members start to think that they no longer need to set up new goals or new projects; they are in a comfort zone. McIntosh states, “There is a slowing of growth as the church moves into a maintenance mode.

---

of ministry.” He adds, “If this plateauing church is left unchallenged, the eventual result is decline and often death of the church.” He also affirmed that most plateauing churches remain in that state for fifty to sixty years.

McIntosh named the plateau stage “St. John’s Syndrome,” after the part of Revelation when Apostle John had the vision of the seven churches, ending with Laodicea’s church. The Bible says (Rev 3:14-22) that the church was neither hot nor cold and the Lord was about to throw it up out of His mouth; concerning the seventh church, John declares, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Rev 3:16, 17). I believe that, although McIntosh does not see it in the complete light of the prophecy, this passage offers a fabulous illustration of the plateauing church.

So, what does McIntosh recommend in order to avoid the fatal doom of the church? He states, “Unfortunately, though, most of the churches never replace the dream of paying off the church mortgage with a new vision for the future. Thus the church begins to plateau, which leads to an eventual decline.” So, the key to overcoming “St. John’s Syndrome” is to rediscover the church’s values and then develop a new dream for the future based on those values. He adds, “The life cycle of a church with a new dream would look like this . . .” (see figure 2).

---

3 McIntosh, Look Back Leap Forward, 28.
4 Ibid., 31.
In the new life cycle of the church suggested by McIntosh, the members will have to “look back in order to leap forward.” McIntosh mentions a very important weapon to keep fighting the enemy and enabling the church to grow; he says, “Powerful prayer is essential for a powerful plan.” In other words, planning with faith in God and human motivation and effort, the church will grow powerfully.

Rick Warren, the pastor of a mega church in Saddleback, California, agrees with McIntosh. Warren says that prayer is absolutely essential for any church that wants to grow. Every step of Saddleback’s development has been bathed in prayer. Warren also states that every program of his church has a prayer team praying while the service is going on. He thinks that a ministry without prayer is a ministry without power. Although Warren elevated the value of prayer, he declares that it takes far more than prayer to grow or keep on growing a church; he says that it is necessary to develop skills and act on them in order to constantly keep growing the church of God.

Joshua offers a clear biblical example of what Warren and McIntosh are saying, after the Israelites under Joshua’s leadership were struck by the men of Ai, he devoted himself and the leaders to prayer and supplication. They were in this desperate state of prayer when God told Joshua to stop praying about failure, get up, and start correcting it instead (Josh 7).

Prayer and Intensive Growth

One of the noted authorities on this subject is scholar and prayer evangelist Ed Silvoso. He concentrates all his efforts on prayer in order to save the lost. He uses the example of the early church, saying that through prayer and evangelism, the disciples shook the entire city of Jerusalem in only a few weeks. Silvoso believes in the statement Jesus made when he said that if we believe in Him, we would do greater work than He did while He was on the earth (John 14:12). Silvoso says that this is a key passage for answering one of the most difficult questions: “Why is the church today doing such a poor job of fulfilling the Great Commission compared to the early church?” Silvoso answers: Surely it was not easy for the disciples to preach the gospel in the city where Jesus Christ was crucified together.

5 McIntosh, *Look Back Leap Forward*, 43.
with two criminals, but “nevertheless, Jerusalem was reached and soon the gospel spread to all Judea and Samaria and beyond until all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord.” He declares that the early church understood something that the modern church has not yet learned: “They could do greater works than Jesus did” (Acts 19:10). Silvoso emphasizes the method for reaching the cities, using the biblical example of the apostle Paul, who according to him, taught us about prayer evangelism. He says that the apostle Paul admonishes us to pray for everyone everywhere (1 Tim 2:1-8). The author also affirms that Paul is telling Timothy that this “statement is so reliable” that “everyone in the city will accept it.” Ed Silvoso justifies this assumption, by saying that all the people will at least know the truth and accept the truth but not all of them will give their heart to Jesus, accepting Him as their personal savior.

Peter Wagner, another noted scholar, agrees with Silvoso, saying that he “believes that the cities of the world have become the primary target for planning evangelistic strategy as we move into the twenty-first century.” Wagner concentrates his writing on beautiful stories of people who believed in prayer ministry as a tool of evangelism everywhere, but especially in the cities. He believes that, just as Israel knocked down the wall of Jericho and won the city through the power of prayer, we can do the same today. He attests that it is biblical to pray for the lost, even though the lost do not know anyone is praying for them. “Prayer is the most tangible trace of eternity in the human heart. Intercessory prayer on behalf of the felt needs of the lost is the best way to open their eyes to the light of the gospel.” Wagner also states, “Working together in harmony, city pastors and city intercessors are an unbeatable combination.” With Silvoso and Wagner, I believe that when we pray to intercede for the lost, Satan trembles, because he knows his power is not greater than the power of Jesus. He has already been defeated on the cross, but he still roars as a lion looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8), and he may devour us, if we do not pray for protection. But, if we have prayer as our shield and the sword of God (Holy Scripture), he has no power against the church, and the congregation will surely grow.

Mark Mittelberg, a passionate expert on church growth, says that just

---

8Ibid., 56.
as “people matter to God,” they should matter to us. If the members of a plateauing church remember this value, their church will immediately start to grow and turn into a “contagious church.” It is a pity when church leadership ignores this issue and pays more attention to problems or other programs that do not reverse the declining situation. Mittelberg affirms that “when this value really takes root,” everything in the church starts to change, beginning with the calendars, because the calendar expresses exactly what we care about each day. The core value of a church must be concerned for the lost, and we can see the core value of heaven, “God so loved the world” (John 3:16). Through this statement, Mittelberg suggests that, when we also love the world (in terms of passion for people), we are able to do anything that our Father asks in order to accomplish the mission of saving the lost.10

Another fact that Mittelberg mentions is an exemplary evangelistic life in the heart of the leader. When the value of caring for the lost has slipped, the leader must be the first to admit it and try to open the eyes of the church to see and admit it as well. Mittelberg states, “The most natural thing to do after admitting to yourself that the value of evangelism has slipped is to talk to God.”11 Surely, he is right, because prayer will warm you up, and you will warm the others.

Mittelberg applies the following prayer formula that pastors and lay ministers would do well to emulate, using the acronym A.C.T.S:

A—Adoration: In this moment, you exalt the name of God, give glory to Him for all the things you remember that God created for the benefit of humankind and thank Him for his love, protection, maintenance, forgiveness, and salvation for the lost, including us.

C—Confession: In this part of the prayer, you confess your failure to “love lost people in the way He does.” Mention that the Lord moved the earth and heavens in order to save all of us, and confess that we lose so many opportunities to preach the gospel every day whenever we meet someone that may be lost on the avenue to hell. Confess how selfish you have been, and ask for forgiveness.

T—Thanksgiving: Thank the Lord for the payment Jesus made on the cross that extends to us today. Express your gladness for the privilege of

10 M. Mittelberg, Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 35.
11 Ibid., 93.
Reigniting the Life Cycle of Plateauing Churches

being part of the family of God, for the honor of serving Him and having the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of other people. Finalize this part with a “Thank you that your love and grace are examples for me as I try to express my faith this day.”

S—Supplication: This part is where you really supplicate for God’s mercy in order to make you passionate about loving those around you. Ask God to help you when you see someone to remember to love him or her with the love and passion of God. Ask Him for expertise and skills in order to evangelize whoever is open to hear the Good News of salvation, and plead for God to help you to abide in Christ and bear much fruit. In Jesus’ name, finalize the prayer.12

Praying for a Sister Church

Aubrey Malphurs believes that whether a church is growing, plateauing, or declining, the remedy is to plant a sister church. Although Malphurs states that the remedy for plateauing churches is to plant a sister church, he declares that the first step in the process is prayer, because “those who plant churches” should never forget that they are fighting a spiritual and not a physical fight (Eph 6:10-20).13 Therefore, they will need to recruit intercessory warriors. There is no doubt that prayer is a fundamental weapon to fight against the enemy (Eph 6:18-20). No one who is going to work for the Lord’s army will succeed without praying for the lost. Malphurs (2004) says that churches plateau because there is a strong inward selfish focus and they are not looking outward. Along with the author, I think this trend needs to stop and if the church wants to continue fulfilling the great commission of the Lord, it needs to use powerful prayers and powerful strategies to start and sponsor a sister church.14

He states that when a church decides to plant a new church, it is natural for it to lose some part of its membership. They will become the core cell of the new church; through them, the work of God will take place and be a blessing in the new area. By faith followed with work, the church goes forward; Malphurs suggests that when the mother church sees that its pews are empty, instead of complaining, it should keep on praying and create

---

12 M. Mittelberg, Building a Contagious Church, 93, 94.
14 Ibid., 257.
new strategies in order to fill those places again. In that way, the natural cycle of the church will be reignited and the members will be happy again and again until Jesus’ second coming.\textsuperscript{15}

Aubrey Malphurs also states that the mother church’s main concern should be prayer for the sister churches, beginning with the leadership and then the members. He declares that a church will never rise above its leadership. Therefore, if the leadership is not committed to church planting, the membership will also not be committed. If the leadership does not pray for sister churches, the membership will not pray either. Malphurs urges that the leadership must set the example for the congregation. A leader should cast the vision for church planting in such a way that will motivate people to pray for the project. He concludes that although it is not realistic to expect someone to state the same burden and to pray to the same extent, the main purpose and goal is to have some people praying all the time.\textsuperscript{16}

McIntosh comments about the plateauing stage of the life cycle of a church, stating that it could take fifty to sixty years to start declining.\textsuperscript{17} In apparent disagreement, Malphurs affirms that “churches stay plateaued for only a short time. If the church continues to conduct business as usual, it will begin to decline, which is a nice way of describing the death process.”\textsuperscript{18}

My hometown church plateaued for more than forty years and never declined; then, a new pastor came with a new vision and planted two sister churches. The members became full of enthusiasm, praying, and glorifying the Lord. I was ministering to another church that was transitioning from plateauing to declining, to a point where the conference almost had to close the church; however, that measure motivated the members in such a way that two years later they were as alive and organized as they were before.

Considering the apparent disagreement of Malphurs and McIntosh, I would say that both are right. The difference between the ideas is the thinking of the leadership, which acted by implanting new ideas in order to change the life cycle of the church in different times. In other words, the church that is dying can be revived at any time, depending on the response of the leadership.

\textsuperscript{15}Malphurs, \textit{Planting Growing Churches}, 250-257.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 257.
\textsuperscript{17}McIntosh, \textit{Look Back Leap Forward}, 28.
\textsuperscript{18}Malphurs, \textit{Planting Growing Churches}, 256.
Reigniting the Life Cycle of Plateauing Churches

Malphurs comments that, sometimes, the only solution for declining churches is to advise the people to congregate in some other place, sell the property, and invest in evangelistic work somewhere else. Another option is to close the church for a period of six months, refurbish the facility, and plant a new work with a new vision and perspective for the neighborhood in order to attract people in a different manner. Malphurs believes that even dying churches can be involved in starting a new work.\textsuperscript{19}

Malphurs may be right in his final statement above, but I believe that the measures mentioned by him should be the last alternative after trying to change the leadership. The fact is that in churches that are in decline or plateauing, the leadership should change their mind or they should be replaced. Prayer is the best way to prepare hearts for any needs or changes.

\textbf{The Radical Prayer}

I really believe that situations of plateauing or dying churches should be confronted only with resolute radical prayers. Derek J. Morris, the senior pastor of Forest Lake Church in Orlando, Florida, discovered a radical way to pray. He relates the results of his research and experience with prayer ministry. The most impressive finding was the radical prayer on behalf of people considering that we work for the Lord of the harvest: “When you give the Lord of the harvest permission to involve you in His harvest, as a lamb among wolves, He asks you to demonstrate an attitude of radical dependence.” Morris complements this with the instructions found in Luke 10:4, “Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals.” In other words, Morris is saying if we want to fulfill God’s purpose in our life, if we pray a radical intercessory prayer while really believing in Jesus’ power, we will accomplish it.\textsuperscript{20} He says that the apostle John talks about it in Revelation when he mentions the characteristics of the Laodicea Church, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm; neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (Rev 3:15, 16).\textsuperscript{21} The church of Laodicea should never be conformed to the lukewarm situation.

According to the authors of the book \textit{Comeback Churches}, churches that are in state of plateau should establish strategic prayer emphasis in their

\textsuperscript{19} Malphurs, \textit{Planting Growing Churches}, 256.
\textsuperscript{20} D. J. Morris, \textit{The Radical Prayer} (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House, 2008), 65.
\textsuperscript{21} McIntosh, \textit{Look Back Leap Forward}, 31.
communities. They quote Roger Lipe, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Woodlawn, Illinois, who met the church almost dead and through specific emphasis in prayer, the dead church that was in debt $109,000, in a year and a half, paid the whole amount. According to the pastor “Giving continues to increase, and the once-dead church is alive and ministering effectively to the community around them.” Stetzer adds “His attitude toward change and belief in the power of prayer caused others to believe;” they prayed radically in order to re-ignite the life cycle of the church and that was their secret.\footnote{E. Stetzer and M. Dobson, \textit{Comeback Churches} (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 70-71.}

McIntosh also suggests “a powerful prayer is essential for a powerful plans and dreams.” He mentions that prayers in plateauing churches are often left out of the planning processes.\footnote{McIntosh, \textit{Look Back Leap Forward}, 43, 44.} Solomon tried radical prayer in order to be a great king and build the temple of the Lord at which time God warned him and the people saying, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chr 7:14). Prayer was Solomon’s secret.

The Bible says that Joshua, after the disappointment of the city of Ai, was again an example of how someone overcame the plateauing situation through a process of radical prayer. Joshua was so radical that the Lord had to instruct him to stop praying, stand up, and accept that God would be with him. “Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening” (Josh 7:6, 10). Hannah, in the temple, was so radical that the priest thought that she was out of her mind (1 Sam 1:10-15). But her radical prayer reinvigorated her dream and brought into existence one of the greatest prophets of Israel.

\textbf{As God Sees}

Philip Yancey agrees with Morris when he tells the story of Mike and his friend, two students who decided to live on the street and had a radical experience helping the people around them through intercessory prayer. Yancey also discusses the radical love that involves a person who prays. He used to think of intercessory prayer as bringing to God a request that God did not yet know about, but now he sees intercession as an increase
in his own awareness. He states, “When I pray for another person, I am praying for God to open my eyes, so that I can see that person as God does, and then enter the streams of love that God already directs toward that person.”  

If a church is in decline or plateauing, the members need to learn how to love one another and pray to intercede for each other. Ellen White (1946) says that in churches that are not growing, the ministers should train the members to be ambassadors for Christ through training and prayer.  

White cautions that “in laboring where there are already some in the faith, the minister should at first seek not so much to convert unbelievers, as to train the church members for acceptable co-operation.” In other words, she is saying that the pastors should let the believers labor for themselves individually, endeavoring to arouse them to seek for a deeper experience themselves and then, work for others. White concludes, saying, when they are prepared to sustain the minister by their prayers and labors, greater success will attend their efforts.  

The Bible also endorses the opinions of the authors cited above. As Ken Anderson puts it in the words of Matt 11:28-30 and Gal 6:2: “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ (NIV). Anderson says that through prayer and actions we demonstrate care and concern for others in such a way that we will with pleasure and willingness be able to carry somebody else’s burdens. In that way, he affirms that we represent Christ’s Kingdom and become ambassadors of heaven.  

Jon L. Dybdahl, a professor of Spiritual Formation at Andrews University Seminary, offers an impressive program for anyone who desires to be a true disciple of Jesus. One thing that Dybdahl highlights is God’s invitation to each one of us to have fellowship and a relationship with God and with our neighbors. He says, “God’s people have always been a community—a group of like believers who share and support each other. This principle

26 Ibid., 110, 111.
is especially important in the spiritual life.”28 It is necessary to create an environment of peace and welcoming in order to make new believers feel welcome in the community. When that happens, we can call it prayer and revival.

**Prayer and Revival**

According to expert on prayer Edward M. Bounds, many of the failures in revival efforts have been because of a lack of nurture and powerful prayer. He declares that without prayer, a “church is like a body without spirit; it is a dead, inanimate thing. A church with prayer in it has God in it.”29

In his article “Prayer and Revival,” Louis Bartlet defines revival as “the saints getting back to normal.”30 This means that revival can only happen followed by sanctification, and that will happen if the church gets back to normal. It is time for prayer and revival as at the day of pentecost.

The pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York, Jim Cymbala, states that “revival is where you see multitudes getting saved, not coming over from another church because there’s a better program . . . a church loving each other and coming together to pray and call out to the Lord . . . a return to the Book of Acts.”31 The essence of his definition is that a growing church by transference is not real growth or revival. The real revival has to do with the real conversion of unbelievers to believers in Jesus Christ following completely His teachings.

**The Importance of the Larger Community over the Individual**

According to Ed Stetzer and Mike Dobson a church revival depends on some elements that are vitally important for church growth: (1) the church should renew the belief in Jesus Christ and the mission of it; (2) the church should renew an attitude of servanthood; (3) the church should develop strategic prayer efforts.32

---

28 Jon L. Dybdahl, *Satisfying the Longing Hunger of Your Soul* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008), 78, 79.
32 Stetzer and Dobson, *Comeback Churches*, 56-70.
Stetzer and Dobson state that Homestead Heights Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina, had its name changed to Summit Church in Durham. The change occurred because the formal old church was declining, and according to the local pastor, the reason was the transition of the community around the church. Although the pastor was partially right, the real problem was a lack of commitment toward the current situation and the mission. When they changed the name, they changed their marquee and the community around the church was impacted by the new name and by their actions toward people who lived in the area. As a result of the courage and the new vision of the church, in a few years the attendance increased from 600 to 1,600 members. Stetzer and Dobson, concluded by saying that the missional motivation elevated the attitude of people toward servanthood and through prayer, they were able to sustain firm in the right purpose of the church in that area, “every time people have prayed seriously, growth has happened.”

Prayer: The Source of Revival

There is no doubt that prayer is the basis for revival. Actually, the secret to revival in every generation has been prayer. Frank Beardsley wrote, “It is possible to have revivals without preaching, without churches, and without ministers, but without prayer a genuine revival is impossible.” The early church began with prayer and revival. After Jesus’ death, the disciples were greatly disappointed. The day of Pentecost provided tangible evidence that when the disciples of Jesus prayed, something happened. There were only 120 people praying for the Holy Spirit, and the command of Jesus was simple: He told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for God’s promise to be fulfilled (Acts 1-2).

Prayer Changes the Individual Not the Environment

The disciples needed to pray for many things: Peter had denied Jesus (Matt 26:69-75), Thomas had doubted Jesus (John 20:24-29), and the brothers John and James were ashamed because they recalled how they had wanted to have better positions than the others in Jesus’ kingdom (Mark 10:35-45). Indeed, prayer was more than necessary to change their

---

33 Stetzer and Dobson, *Comeback Churches*, 56-70.
attitudes toward the mission and to move the church to be united and revived it was essential.

The directors of Concerts of Prayer in Greater New York, Pier and Sweeting relate that after Jesus’ ascension, He expected the disciples to be praying together, and they did. They pointed out that the Bible clearly says that the disciples were united through prayer. “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14, NKJV). Pier and Sweeting believe that it was the power of prayer that unified the believers and prepared them for action.\(^{35}\)

John Stott stated that “on the day of Pentecost the whole world was there in representatives of the various nations,” through prayer the Holy Spirit came down, “each listener heard the gospel proclaimed in his or her own language,” and as a result of the prayer and union of the disciples, “more than 3,000 were baptized into the early church in one day” That was an impressive revival.\(^{36}\)

Peter Master the author of the book *Worship in the Melting Pot* (which is a critique of some contemporary movements in the Christian churches) states that the biggest church in the world, is the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea with more than 850,000 members.\(^{37}\) Paul Yonggi Cho states in his book *Prayer: Key to Revival* that the only way to start a revival in a church is through prayer. He goes on to explain that receiving and getting to know the Holy Spirit is necessary to get into a life of prayer. He says that prayer opens the door for the Holy Spirit, and as pastor of the largest church in the world, he could feel the results and the power of a life of prayer.\(^{38}\)

He also declares that the Holy Spirit can bless and direct when one reads the Scripture and witnesses for Christ. Cho affirms that although the Holy Spirit can anoint people as they preach and teach the word of God, the only way to have an intimate communion with the Holy Spirit is through a life of prayer.\(^{39}\) Ministering to the largest church in the world, Cho realized that without the power of the Holy Spirit, he could not do many things.

---


\(^{39}\) Ibid.
He says that He began by trying to save souls using Bible studies and friendship, but with poor results. Then, he realized that he needed to learn how to reach the Holy Spirit through prayer; his church started to grow and soon became the largest church in the world. Peter Wagner defends Cho’s movement of prayer and in his presentation about prayer ministry intercession for Christian leaders, mentions that he went to visit Dr. Cho in Korea and saw him as an amazing man of prayer. Wagner relates that they went to the Mountain of Prayer and he thought they were only there for a tour, but when they got there, Pastor Cho said they were going to pray there for an hour. According to Wagner, he was not used to doing that and it was quite hard for him to stay there and pray for an hour, but after that, his way of praying changed.\footnote{C. P. Wagner, How to Have a Prayer Ministry: Intercession for Christian Leaders [video-recording] (Pasadena, CA: Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, 1992).}

Both Cho and Wagner are charismatic and, because of that, some are tempted to criticize their method and for some good reasons, such as their beliefs regarding the gift of tongues and other charismatic issues, we do not accept their ways of praying. But so far, in this conversation, their theology of prayer is biblical and we surely have good things to learn from them. Masters rigidly criticizes Cho for what he wrote in one of his most recently re-printed books called \textit{The Fourth Dimension}. Masters argues that “Cho teaches that prayer will definitely alter the material world and lead to church growth, but he fails, affirms the writer; to realize that true prayer does not necessarily demand the changing of circumstances or the material world for man; rather, it requires the changing of the attitude of the believer and the submission of his will to God’s will.”\footnote{Masters, \textit{Worship in the Melting Pot}, 36-49.} Masters is right when he criticizes Cho about Him giving God orders or commands. Although we have examples in the Bible of men telling God what to do (Josh 10:12, 13), it does not mean that the men have the right to always exercise their own will. In Jesus model of prayer, He taught us to pray according to the Father’s will. “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). Telling God what to do is not our rule, but the Holy Spirit’s duty of intersession for us (Rom 8:26-27). Although Peter Masters is right, in part in his criticism to Cho, I believe Cho is closer to the ideal biblical kind of prayer than many other traditional protestant
churches. We should have a balanced idea on prayer and not fear what people will say, if we are following God’s biblical model.

Prayer Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

According to one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen G. White feels that after the lay people are trained to pray, they should be prepared to sustain the minister by prayer and labors, and great success will attend their efforts. White also wrote, “The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted.” When the people are converted to Jesus Christ, they will have love and passion to save the ones who are lost. In other words, if the church recognizes the need to be revived in order to succeed in winning souls to Jesus, the church would learn and start a movement of intercessory prayer. As previously mentioned, we have to look back in order to leap forward. White states that in times past, there were those who fastened their minds upon one soul after another, saying, “Lord, help me to save this soul.” This is not happening any more, she declares. If it happens, such instances are rare.

Adventist church planter Russell Burrill suggests that the “Seventh-day Adventist Church is not a denomination but a planting church movement,” and he adds that a movement through prayer and preaching moves all the time. If we have plateauing churches in this movement, they have lost their focus on moving and changing, perhaps the comfort zone is so relaxing that people do not want to be bothered to plant a new church. I agree with Burrill although the Adventist Church today seems to be acting more as an institutional denomination than as a movement like he suggested.

Burrill is in tune with David J. Bosh who wrote about the failure of the early church; Bosh says that the early church “ceased to be a movement and turned into an institution.” He affirms that there are many differences between an institution and a movement. The one is conservative and the other is progressive; the one is more or less passive, yielding to influences from outside, while the other is active and influences rather than being

---

42 E. G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1915), 196.
Reigniting the Life Cycle of Plateauing Churches

influenced; the one looks to the past, the other to the future.” Bosh includes, “We might add, the one is anxious, the other is prepared to take risks; the one guards boundaries, the other crosses them.”

Is our church becoming institutionalized and happy with the tremendous success it has achieved? Is this why in many countries the churches are aging, there is a lack of goodwill to preach the gospel, there is a lack of love for the ones who are not known, and there is a lack of prayer and revival?

There will be no changes if we think we have achieved everything we have dreamed for our church. In fact, while the population is growing so fast, so should our church. If there is a village without a church, we are not done. This philosophy needs to be a part of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs everywhere in the world.

Christian Schwarz is praised because of the discoveries he has made concerning the concept known as “Natural Church Development” (NCD). Burrill says that it was one of the most exciting developments in church growth over the last decade. He claims that the NCD brings the church growth movement back to the principles enunciated in the early days. He says that the Bible and the writings of Ellen White can endorse the eight characteristics identified by Schwartz. The churches that are seeking health can achieve it by putting into practice the NCD’s eight characteristics.

According to Burrill, the eight principles of the NCD are (1) Empowering Leadership, (2) Gift-based Ministry, (3) Passionate Spirituality, (4) Effective Structures, (5) Inspiring Worship Services, (6) Holistic Small Groups, (7) Need-Oriented Evangelism, and (8) Loving Relationships. He emphasizes these eight quality characteristics as absolutely essential for those churches that are serious about growth.

Burrill cautions that the right growth to be desired is not only numeric growth but quality, healthy growth. In my opinion, all eight quality characteristics are essential for healthy growth, but the eight will not happen if the third one (passionate spirituality) is not a reality first in the heart of the individual Christian. We can definitely be healthy only

---

47 Burrill, “Challenges-seeds 2001.”
49 Ibid., 59-62.
50 Ibid.
through the reading of the scripture, followed by conversation with God and obedience to His Word.

Many churches suffer stagnation of growth because they have already accepted the status quo (which means “to keep the things the way they are presently). Churches suffer in order to reach the status of being well-built, having plenty of members, well-established facilities; the membership is tempted to think that they have everything they need—the church is just the right size. The first love, being passionate about the church and sharing invitations to others to visit and to join, is finished. In other words, the church becomes so satisfied and sophisticated that only certain people are invited to become a part of the church. Burrill suggests that there are two different types of churches: one is the extended church and the other is the non-extended church. The extended church comes from their oikos (home) with the openness to integrate with others, and become a big family, while the non-extended church is concerned about their own members and does not want to stress themselves, by having to start new relationships. He compares the two churches with the simple fishing vessel and the luxury cruise liner. In the fishing vessel, the fish are caught, thrown on the deck, their guts are cut out, and the smell is not the best but everybody is happy. In the luxury cruise liner, if you decide to fish, just before the fish hit the deck you will have to stop by the security office. The luxury cruise liner is happy to have you with them, but will not allow you to bring fish on board because of the mess and the terrible smell. Burrill concludes, saying that some Seventh-day Adventist churches, after accepting the status quo transform themselves from a fishing vessel to a luxury cruise liner, and do not want to fill the boat with the bad smell of fish. It is sad, but I have to agree with him; however, at the same time, I think that the point of transition, plateau, or new growth is an opportunity for the leaders of the churches to rethink the vision of the church and find creative ways to change the mentality of the congregation before it is too late.

Prayer Partners

Steve Barker defines a prayer partner as “a member of your group with whom you meet regularly for sharing and prayer.”

---

51 Burrill, How to Grow an Adventist Church, 71, 72.
52 S. Barker, Good Things Come in Small Groups: The Dynamics of Good Group Life (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 172.
The coordinators of the Prayer Partners Ministry, Shewmake and Shewmake, in the article “Evangelism Prayer Partners” suggests a strong program of evangelism prayer. The proposal suggests, “While all prayer partners will pray for the outreach of the church some will especially focus on the evangelistic meetings of the church.”

A group of three or more prayer partners should begin praying regularly as soon as the evangelistic meetings are planned and continue throughout the series. Specifically, they need to have some suggestions as to the focus of their prayer times.

Following is a suggested sequence for the prayer partners: First, pray for the people who will be invited to the meetings. This list is compiled from the names of friends and neighbors suggested by church members, referrals from television, radio, internet, Bible study contacts, etc. Second, pray for the preparations for the meeting: location, equipment, advertising, the evangelist, and musicians, etc. Third, pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in preparation for the meetings and during the meetings. Fourth, pray during each meeting for the speaker and all who participate, as well as each person attending the meeting, including members of the church. Fifth, be ready to pray after any meeting with people who need special prayer for healing: spiritually, emotionally, relationally, or physically.

Although these suggestions are quite basic, they do make a big difference in an evangelistic meeting, and are necessary in order to keep the devil out of the field and keep the angels of the Lord guarding the lives of the souls.

Prayer partners need to be a strong component of programs where spiritual growth for the members, the church in general, and the community is the focus. One specialist in church growth, Dr. John Maxwell suggests a prayer-based evangelism strategy through Prayer Partners Ministry as a great instrument of church growth and efficiency in ministry. He says that “the great challenge facing the local church is to mobilize Christians to really pray,” and emphasizes the leadership first, starting with the pastor. Maxwell says, “The most effective ministries are those that begin with a core of laborers who have a deep burden and then grow slowly but steadily,” and he encourages pastors to start praying for those who are

54 J. Maxwell, Pastor’s Prayer Partners (Norcross, GA: INJOY, 1990), 1.
55 Ibid., 11.
devoted to his leadership and have a vision for his ministry. That is just the beginning of the Prayer Partners Ministry. John Wesley once said, “Give me 100 preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God and I care not a straw whether they be clergy or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer.”

On the topic of revival and evangelism through prayer, Peter Wagner says, “The more we can target our prayers to God for pulling down strongholds, the more powerful our prayers are likely to be.” Also, talking about the success of a Christian leader, Blackaby and Blackaby say that “more and more leaders are recognizing that, with deliberate effort, good planning, and much prayer,” they need not surrender to the pitfalls “that could impair their leadership and jeopardize their personal lives.” Blackaby also suggests that a good church leader should take part in a small prayer and fellowship group in order to set an example for the laity.

I believe that when humans make an effort to reach the lost, God, as the one most interested in the issue, will dispose his power in order to make effective the plans. That is why it is necessary to establish plans with prayer and special care, as said, “Goals should be prayerfully set. The church that I am a member of is not mine, it is God’s church.” Regarding what McQuoid says, I would say that many could use this as an excuse, saying that it is not their business but God’s business; however, the Lord entrusted this business to human hands. We only need to seek God’s direction at all times and move forward listening to his voice.

In agreement, K. McFarland comments that God has placed a great responsibility on you and me in these momentous last days of great conflict between Christ and Satan. Studying the Bible, reading the writings of Ellen G. White, and praying for the power of the Holy Spirit in order to share the good news of salvation with the lost, should be the priority of the church’s members and leadership.

The Bible says that we need to improve our faith through hearing and

---

56 Maxwell, Pastor’s Prayer Partners, 14.
57 Wagner, Praying with Power, 87.
60 K. McFarland, The Called the Chosen: God Has Always Had a People (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 4.
studying the Word of God and preaching the message received through the Holy Spirit to those that do not know yet (Rom 10:17). The people of Israel heard the Word of God but did not believe and did not preach; as a consequence of this disobedience, they lost the right to be called the people of God. I believe this is what will happen to those who hear the great commission of Jesus and do not obey. Jesus once told the disciples: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Therefore, He emphasizes, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20).

Listening to God

In his phenomenal Willow Creek Church, Hybels presents an extraordinary plan of dialoguing with God, but in a special way listening to God’s voice. He says that this idea came to his mind when he as a child listened to a pastor preaching about Samuel’s call and his ability to hear God’s voice. A thought came to his mind suggesting that one day he would hear God’s voice as Samuel did. He also reveals that since that time, after the thought came to his mind, his prayer was “Lord give me the ear of Samuel.”

Along with Hybels, I think that listening to God’s voice is a necessity of the church today more than ever. But also, there is the danger of the church being so far away from God that listening to God’s voice seems to be almost impossible. I suggest, that in order to hear God’s voice, the church should be acquainted with the Lord. The shepherd knows his flock and the sheep recognize his voice (John 10:14); otherwise, the church may confuse God’s voice with conflicting voices. The Bible says that Satan is wise enough to mislead God’s people and masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). Hybels suggests five filters he believes can help us to distinguish whether the voice comes from the Lord or not. We should ask, (1) “Is the message truly from God?” (2) “Is it Scriptural?” (3) “Is it wise?” (4) “Is it in tune with his own Character?” (5) “What do the people you most trust think about it?”

These five filters suggested by Hybels are very important, but we should never forget that Jesus admonishes us saying, “By their fruit you will

---

62 Ibid., 98-105.
recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit (Matt 7:16-18). When Ellen G. White says that “prayer is talking to God as to a friend,”63 she is suggesting prayer as a dialogue with God, and in any given dialogue both talk and both listen. We really need to learn to listen to the Lord’s voice.

Considering the difficulties found in the act of prayer, Dwight Nelson discovered that the biggest problem is the lack of concentration. When we are talking to Jesus, the lack of concentration goes beyond not allowing sufficient time, but not using some of the time to listen. Therefore, Nelson suggests a new way to pray, through journaling to Jesus, He says that all you need are your Bible, red marking pen, a writing pen, and a journal. Along with this, you need to choose a special place, or, as he calls it a “prayer closet.” He mentions that prayer warriors of long ago used to call the place of daily prayer in old English a “place to repair to.” It is an excellent plan to have a place of prayer to repair with Jesus at the end of the day. The main keys of his journaling proposal include the following: first, choose a passage of the New Testament and read only one story, or pericope. Concentrate and meditate on it. Re-read and ask, What does this tell me about Jesus? Before the next step, date it and choose a different color for that. Second, write a letter to Jesus, explaining your reaction to what you have read. Third, write a letter from Jesus expressing what he was speaking to you. In that way, while you are writing a letter to and from Jesus in your confidential journal, you do not lose your concentration with interruptions, and time goes fast enough to spend at least twenty minutes daily. As the habit consolidates, it will soon be more than an hour every day spent in dialogue with Jesus through the journaling process.64

Nelson’s method is a wonderful design, but I would respectfully add the reading of the Gospels, then the whole New Testament and certain parts of the Old Testament, as well as some writings of the Ellen G. White. As Seventh-day Adventists, we need to know the complete message of God, which composes the whole doctrine of our faith.

Summary

In this article, different approaches to prayer were examined. It is clear that prayer is necessary for every program, project, or movement in Christian service. The writer suggests that without prayer the Church of God loses direction, and the power of the Holy Spirit. If the leadership does not realize that prayer is so important and does not prepare a plan to reignite the churches that are plateauing or in decline, many will become pastors and leaders of dying churches. The disappointed leaders and members need only to turn to God and accept the power offered to the disciples.
Introduction

Vision, the natural ability to view things around, that most of us have, has become more than just that, as new meanings have been attributed to the same terms. In the last two decades “vision” and “visioning” became part of almost everyone’s daily vocabulary. Being “visionary” and having the ability to inspire an organizational vision is also one of the most widely touted competencies of leadership.¹

These concepts have been used in different disciplines and contexts, including Christian ministry but usually relying on secular presuppositions and understandings of the concept of vision in order to explain how to write mission and vision statements, how to implement a vision, and the motivating power of a vision, which have been explored in books on leadership and strategic planning.

The purpose of this article is to study the concept of vision and how Christian ministry can benefit from it. It will start by looking at the historical development of the current definition of vision and its implications in

the first section. The biblical understanding of vision as part of its future orientation will be the topic of the second section.

The same way this concept has been seen as fundamental in other areas, the conclusion of this study will indicate that vision is even more important for Christian ministry in understanding that God has a plan for His children and that understanding is powerful in the process of accomplishing that plan.

The hybrid proposal that rediscovers and redefines vision based on the biblical understanding and applies it to the current knowledge on how to implement vision is only accepted here as a temporary bridge until further studies develop steps to implement vision based solely on biblical assumptions.

As this study deals with God’s plan for His children on earth, may it enlighten the leaders who deal with the challenges brought about by the evil notion that life has no purpose or meaning, everyone’s future is determined by fate, and the life of one’s neighbor cannot be improved by one’s decision, and may it, ultimately, bring more understanding about a powerful divine transformational concept for everyone.

The Concept of Vision

Words such as “vision,” “visioning,” “visioneering,” and “envisioning” have become widely used. Everyone seems to want to have the quality or be part of the process described by those words, which received new connotations in the last two decades.

In the literature, these terms have been especially employed in the field of leadership in connection with planning, business strategy, and organizational change, but not limited to these areas. The terms have been employed in many areas, such as psychology, sports, medicine, education, politics, and holistic healing.

As Robert Shipley and Ross Newkirk point out, in the academic realm, a “vision is so popular in planning that it is difficult to pick up a professional

---

2 The word “visioneering” is a neologism. It cannot be found in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, but it became the title of a book by Andy Stanley, *Visioneering* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 1999).

journal from the mid-1990s and not encounter it. Visionary, visioning, or envision is often found when the word vision itself is not used.”

In this article the researcher presents different aspects of the concept of vision, including current definitions of the terms “vision” and “visioning” and the historical development of these terms in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of vision in the secular context.

History

The more recent meaning attributed to the term “vision” is new, but the underlying idea of its definition is not. However, there seems not to exist an exclusive historical path for the development of the contemporary concept of vision, a possible reason for the scarce material dealing with it.

Therefore, although one could look at the same historical development from a different angle, Robert J. House, author of one of the most comprehensive studies, sees this unfolding with psychological and anthropological lenses, relating the concept of vision to a concept called future orientation, which “although the construct of future orientation received growing attention from twentieth-century scholars, it has been an important characteristic of cultural systems for a long time.”

There are two main connected implications of the concept of future orientation in cultural systems: the understanding about time and the outlook on the future.

As for the understanding about time, in ancient Greek civilization, India, and China the concept became more than a reference for agricultural activity. In the Western world, House points out that only in the seventeenth-century public clocks were put in most cities and market towns in Europe as a sign of their timekeeping habits to pace life.

Fresh philosophical interest in the concept of future orientation as a distinguishing and essential characteristic of cultures has emerged during recent times in relation to the differentiation between physical time, or linear time, and social time.

---

4Shipley and Newkirk, “Visioning: Did Anybody See Where It Came From?” 407.
6Anthropologist Edward T. Hall began classifying groups as monochromic or polychromic, high or low context, and past or future-oriented according to Richard D. Lewis, The Cultural Imperative: Global Trends in the 21st Century (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2003), 69.
7House et al., Culture, Leadership, and Organization, 284.
8Ibid.
House also sees a recent shift in the concept of spiritual orientation referring to a sense of a higher power guiding and shaping existence. Until modern times, there was a very spiritual aspect of the understanding about time. God or gods and goddesses influenced or controlled, but definitely had a different relation with time.  

His observation is that “the dominant religion in a society also determines the future orientation of societal members.” “Members of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions believe in the concept of a sovereign God and humans who are not able to comprehend, let alone influence, the future.” On the other hand, these same religions teach about a concrete concept about the near future, in a linear timeline for everyone to look forward to.  

Many ancient religions and cultures had the traditions of prophets, seers, and shamans. Future was unknown to mortals, predetermined by divine or extra worldly power and outside human control. Plato described two different forms of foretelling which he called sane divination and insane divination.  

The concept of future has changed in different eras with outlook variations following the general understanding. In medieval times, pessimism was prevalent and future probably meant doomsday while during the Renaissance times the optimism brought a positive attitude toward the future. Modernism has moved toward a concept of utopia, a word coined by Thomas More in the sixteenth century that means a perfect society that attempts to eliminate all social problems.  

Important influences in the following two centuries helped shape the concept of future orientation. In the nineteenth century a specific literary approach originated in which the future would be described as history. Jules Verne is considered the father of science fiction. And “this positive approach to man as creator of the future which lies behind all utopian-style literature of modern times.”

---

9 House et al., *Culture, Leadership, and Organization*,.  
10 Ibid., 295.  
12 Ibid., 230.  
The Concept of Vision

The twentieth century saw technology make its way into how humanity dealt with the future. Machines and formulas replaced older beliefs and helped form the idea that enough information about the past trends would be enough to forecast the future. “Under these circumstances there was no longer any need to speculate, dream or even worry about the future. It would be a matter of knowledge not of vision.”

H. Maslow, influential psychologist of the twentieth century, introduced the idea of self-actualization—ordinary people’s dreams or visions could be realized. According to him, “study of motivation must be in part the study of ultimate human goals or desires or needs.” In other words, the goal or the vision of the future was what motivated present actions.

The last century also saw a Dutch sociologist, Fred Polak, write *The Image of the Future*, where he advocated a clear mental picture of states of being and events yet to come as the key to all choice-oriented behavior. Polak wrote an extensive history of societies from classical Greece to modern Israel in which he argued that a clear vision of their desired future was the common element of success. Polak’s idea can be summarized in his words: “The future not only must be perceived: it also must be shaped.”

“So it was that many primary human activities came into being such as astronomy which allows the accurate prediction of the seasons, and arithmetic, which enables one to keep track of days.”

Although cultural anthropologists have classified cultures depending on their time orientation (past, present, or future), it is important to realize that “some vision of the future is necessary because without this we cannot act at all. There is also a moral requirement to consider the future.”

**Definition**

The current, somewhat loose, usage of the terms “vision,” “visioning,” and “envisioning” has yielded a variety of general definitions for them.

---

16 Ibid., 233.
18 Shipley, “The Origin and Development of Vision,” 228. Also, a specific detail singled out by House about the spreading of the concepts of future images and motivation in the U.S. has to do with Elise Boulding and Ken Boulding, professors at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and participants of the peace movement of 1960s and 1970s.
The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* divides the definition of “vision” in four categories: first, as something seen in a dream, trance, or ecstasy; a supernatural appearance that conveys a revelation; second, as the act or power of seeing; third, as something seen, a lovely or charming sight; and, fourth, as the act of power of imagination in the sense of a mode of seeing or conceiving or an unusual discernment or foresight.\(^{20}\)

Historically, however, the last definition was added at a later time. The *Online Etymology Dictionary* credits the definition of “vision” as “something seen in the imagination or in the supernatural”, with French (*visioun*) and Latin origin (*visio*) meaning “act of seeing, sight, thing seen” to the late thirteenth century. In the late fifteenth century, it was first recorded the meaning “sense of sight”. And only in 1926, it was used for a “statesman-like foresight, political sagacity”.\(^{21}\)

The use of the term “vision”\(^{22}\) also suffered some transformations over time. The first use was without reference to a single visionary. During this first stage, one can already identify both, literal and metaphoric meanings to the word “vision.” A second transformation occurred by the attachment of the word “strategic,” referring to goal-like statements that serve as the focus for long-range or strategic plans. During the same time a new shift began to emphasize vision not only as a product but also as a process, “visioning.”\(^{23}\)

Vision and vision-related words are rarely found in planning periodical literature before the late 1980s, during which time, as Shipley and Newkirk point out, “The vision terms were common in the planning lexicon. Articles briefly mentioning vision and visionaries began to regularly appear in the United States around 1986.”\(^{24}\)

In contemporary literature, one will find definitions for “vision” such as “a motivating view of the future,” “a guiding purpose,” “a waking dream,” “a snapshot of the future in the mind of a leader that simply will not fade,”\(^{25}\)


\(^{21}\) *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “Vision.”

\(^{22}\) Since those three terms are intimately related, for simplification purposes, this research will deal specifically with the term “vision.”

\(^{23}\) Shipley and Newkirk, “Visioning: Did Anybody See Where It Came From?” 412.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 409.


\(^{26}\) Ibid., 188.

\(^{27}\) David L. Goetz, quoted in Marshall Shelley, *Renewing Your Church through Vision and*
“a comprehensive portrayal of the organization as its members would like it to be in the future,”28 “foresight with insight based on hindsight,” “seeing the invisible and making it visible,” “an informed bridge from the present to the future,”29 a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future.30 The vision concept also appears sometimes associated with terms such as “personal agenda, purpose, legacy, dream, mission, philosophy, strategy, and goal.

Stephen J. Zaccaro and Richard J. Klimoski have identified four elements in common among different definitions of vision: (1) An idealized representation of what the organization should become, (2) a relation to a longer time span than strategies, (3) a reflection on certain values, and (4) symbols of change.31 One could narrow it down to a single aspect that could be identified as a common thread in these definitions: an outlook of the future. Vision, in that sense, is about what could be and should be, although life is about right this minute.32 Further, vision processes seek to create a compelling picture of desirable future state that often represent quantum changes from the past. They develop memorable imagery and stories about the nature and benefits of this future, and work backwards to understand the journey that could carry people to this vision.33

In the most practical sense, this concept is known to be documented and communicated predominantly in the traditional form of brief, highly elevated vision statements. A more recent application of the term has been seen by the self-help movement in books like Visioning: Ten Steps to Planning: 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry, Library of Leadership Development 2 (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997), 7.


Designing the Life of Your Dreams by Lucia Capachione and The Vision Board Book: How to Use the Power of Intention and Visualization to Manifest the Life of Your Dreams by John Assaraf.

Source

A research about the concept of vision eventually faces the important question: Where do visions come from? While Max De Pree believes some people have a gift for being visionary, he will quickly admit that one does not have to have a gift for vision or be the author of the vision. The leadership expert explains that vision can come from a number of sources.

The majority of the literature seems to refer to an individual’s reflections. Kouzes and Posner find that people have a hard time describing where their visions come from. Usually they refer to a feeling, a sense, a gut reaction, therefore, “visions are reflections of one’s fundamental beliefs and assumptions about human nature, technology, economics, science, politics, art, and ethics.”

In general, visions are reported as being derived from personal aspirations and ideals. Such aspirations and ideals are based on a keen interest, yearning, and passion for something. However, Ira M. Levin believes that interest and passion are not sufficient. One also has to be well informed to imagine what might be. While creativity and imagination certainly play a role in vision creation, it also is a product of insights derived from knowledge and experience. Cowley and Domb summarize this aspect by saying, “Visioning is a synthesis process.”

Purpose

Vision has become a fundamental element of any planning process. Warren Bennis, a pioneer in leadership studies, says that “an essential

---

36 Shelley, Renewing Your Church, 28.
39 Cowley and Domb, Beyond Strategic Vision, 27.
competency of leaders is to have a vision and persuade others to make that vision their own.”

Selecting the right vision, an “overarching vision,” according to Bennis, then, is a key strategic decision that will guide the rest of the strategy. That is specifically true because of the effects expected from the “metaphor that embodies and implements the vision,” although the process and outcomes of visioning may seem vague and superfluous to some.

The purpose of a vision, then, would be directly related to results such as the ones Marcus and Smith point out: “A promise of attracting commitment and energizing people, of creating meaning in the lives of the members of the organization, of establishing a standard of excellence, and of bridging the present and the future.” In other words, visioning is expected to generate a common goal, hope, and encouragement; offers a possibility for fundamental change; gives people a sense of control; gives a group something to move toward; and generates creative thinking and passion.

In the long-term visioning is believed to: (1) break one out of boundary thinking, (2) provide continuity and avoid the stutter effect of planning fits and starts, (3) identify direction and purpose, (4) alert stakeholders to needed change, (5) promote interest and commitment, (6) promote laser-like focus, (7) encourage openness to unique and creative solutions, (8) encourage and build confidence, (9) build loyalty through involvement (ownership), (10) result in efficiency and productivity, (11) enable coordination and integration of activities by providing a framework for action, (12) provide basis for developing organizational norms and structures as a result of the prescriptive beliefs embedded in it.

A further step in understanding the purpose of visioning is Nanus’ suggestion that vision is not only “an idea or image of a desirable future but that the right vision actually could jump-start that future by mobilizing

---

41 Ibid., xxx.
42 Ibid.
people into action toward achieving it.” The motivational value of a clearly articulated vision comes from the sense of broader purpose and meaning that it provides. Levin identifies Viktor Frankl, noted psychiatrist, as one of the first to propose that the search for meaning and the need to attach some broader significance to one’s life was a basic human drive.

Only a good vision is believed to bring the benefits listed, which according to George Barna, would be inspiring, change-oriented, challenging, empowering, long-term, customized, detailed, and people oriented.

In more specific terms, Kotter lists six characteristics of an effective vision:

1. imaginable, as it conveys a picture of what the future will look like,
2. desirable, as it appeals to the long-term interests of employees, customers, stockholders, and others who have a stake in the enterprise,
3. feasible, as it comprises realistic, attainable goals,
4. focused, as it is clear enough to provide guidance in decision making,
5. flexible, as it is general enough to allow individual initiative and alternative responses in light of changing conditions,
6. communicable, as it is easy to communicate.

Strategic Planning

In the process of strategic planning, visioning comes first. It should, together with the mission, drive the rest of the process. Although vision may share common elements of expectation and goals, it is unique to an individual, project, or organization.

One of the main confusions is between mission and vision and their respective statements, which could be partially attributed to the different definitions found in strategic planning books.

Mission and vision are not the same thing. A mission statement is a

---

broad, general statement about who you wish to reach and what is hoped to be accomplished. Mission is basically a definition. Vision, on the other hand, is specific, detailed, customized, distinctive, and unique.

The relationship between the two in strategic planning lies in the fact that visioning should draw on the beliefs, mission, and environment of the organization in order to describe the future aim.\(^{51}\)

**Criticism**

A balanced presentation of the concept of vision should also include the criticism that it has received. In general, there is a general assumption that visioning is good, effective, and progressive.

One of the criticisms about the process of visioning is that it is an isolated approach. It can generate impractical and ungrounded concepts. “In highly dynamic industries it may be better to work with multiple scenarios and potential future states rather than over-focus on one vision which, if wrong, could derail the organization.”\(^{52}\)

A second criticism is offered by those advocating for tradition that fear the new and the innovative. Visioning implies considering looking to the future and considering change. There is no need to discard the first in this process, but extremists have a hard time because of complacency, fear of change, and short-term thinking. Barna makes a comment: “We deplete the past to enjoy the present at the expense of the future.”\(^{53}\)

A third criticism comes from those who believe this is another passing fad. The over usage of the term has transformed it in a jargon that led it to be less effective in many circles. Many see vision statements as part of a mechanical process in which consultants write up those catchy phrases.

Finally, a misunderstanding comes from a more recent association of visioning with New Age and self-help movements. As Barna explains, “With recent New Age techniques such as visioning gaining attention in the marketplace, the notion of associating the Christian faith with vision may appear improper or unorthodox.”\(^{54}\) Newkirk also sees a “potential contradiction between the notion of a planner as visionary leader and the

---


\(^{54}\) Ibid., 11.
idea of citizens creating their own futures through participation.”

**Vision in the Bible**

In the last two decades, Christian leaders have related the recent concept of vision to the Bible. They have found evidence of this concept in the past and support for its application in the present.

If the idea of vision is related to the concept of time orientation, which is part of every culture, the Bible would be a good source to understand the Israelites’ worldview and God’s role as they interacted.

The Israelites orientation toward time was probably focused on the present. As it was discussed earlier, Westerners have a tendency to look toward the future as the time to reach their goals. The *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* explains that

from the perspective of the Israelites, imaginary time was the exclusive domain of God. The possible worlds of the past and the future are made possible by God; they are outside of human control. As the time of God, the past and the future give warrant to Israelite society in the present. Present concerns and aspirations are projected onto the past and the future.

In this part, the concept of vision, as related to future orientation, will be approached in a non-exhaustive survey of the Bible. It will be the primary object of this study. Three motifs related to vision will be looked at, they are: promises, prophecy, and hope. It will also be enlarged by the contributions of the specific systematic theological concept of “now” and “not yet.”

**Future Orientation in the Bible**

The Bible narrative, which is characterized by a balanced time orientation, has a clear emphasis on that possible world of the future of their linear timeline. Scripture was written from this future orientation perspective that has salvation as the end of the journey in a sinful world and the complete restoration of God’s plan.

---

55 Shipley and Newkirk, “Visioning: Did Anybody See Where It Came From?” 413.
57 In this part, the researcher has decided to avoid the use of the word “eschatology” because of a tendency to lead the reader's mind away from the actual biblical experience. That word is regularly employed “in a variety of different senses, some of which extend the meaning of the phrase to such an extent that the connection with the original future orientation has virtually
The Concept of Vision

Old Testament

The first books of the Bible are characterized by a future orientation. It seems that the theme of the Pentateuch is “the not-yet realized promise of blessing for the patriarchs.” The God-given vision to Abraham through His promise in Genesis 12:1-3 (and repeated in 15:1-7; 17:1-15; 18:18; 22:17) represents this thematic development: (1) promise of descendants, the emphasis in Genesis (chapters 12-50); (2) promise of relationship with God, the emphasis in Exodus and Leviticus; and (3) the promise of land, the emphasis in Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Portraying that concept in the Old Testament, the use of the Hebrew word \textit{olam} (often translated as “age”) is very special. It has a main connotation of lengthy duration, with both a past and future sense.

It is within this future orientation that the word’s most significant theological emphasis is to be found. Out of approximately 380 references to the indefinite future, approximately 100 of these have to do with some aspect of the promised new covenant of redemption or the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David. In every instance the common emphasis is that such divine plans and purposes will have permanent and lasting effectiveness.

The expression “in the days to come” (used in Gen 49:1-3, for example) is also significant in understanding the role of future orientation in the Old Testament. It is an expression that reinforces the future orientation aspect of God’s guidance through the patriarchs. “The same language in the prophets announces the events of Israel’s future restoration and preeminence (Isa 2:2; Dan 10:14; Hos 3:5).”

Many other examples could be pointed out of how God’s revelation to His people included a future orientation. Moses receives a vision from God in Exodus 3:1-10. Barna highlights the amount of strategic detail contained in the revelation to Moses reported in Exodus 3:1-10.

The historical books of the Bible show the same pattern. Examples disappeared.”

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Mathews, \textit{Genesis}, s.v. “Genesis 49:1-2”.
\item Barna, \textit{The Power of Vision}, 160.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
would include Joshua 1:1-5, which shows God giving a vision that includes directions and goals of God’s plan to lead Israel into the Promised Land; Nehemiah 2:12 and his vision to rebuild the city of Jerusalem; and God’s revelation to David about an overarching plan for His people (1 Sam 17:34-37, 45-48).

Interestingly, George Cronk has classified the future orientation as “the most striking characteristic of the wisdom literature and the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament.”\textsuperscript{62} The orientation of time in prophecy is futuristic, whether immediate or distant, but the future has essential implications for the present. An important remark is made by the Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible: “The prophets are put on a par with the Mosaic law. … The prophetic writings continue to call the community to repent, while proclaiming an indefeasible hope based on the faithfulness of God.”\textsuperscript{63} Clear examples of future orientation in the revelation of God found in the prophets could include Isaiah 1:1; 6:1-10; Jeremiah 1:4-19; and Ezekiel 1:1-28; 2:1-10; 3:4-9.

The Minor Prophets follow the same pattern. They were also future oriented. According to Payne, 636 verses in the Minor Prophets—61% of the total—contain predictive material. Payne counts 263 separate predictions in these twelve books.\textsuperscript{64}

Malachi 3:10-12, for example, talks about a future blessing. “Whereas positive motivation in the first two addresses takes the form of past incentives to present behavior, both motivation sections in this final address have a future orientation.”\textsuperscript{65}

Proverbs 29:18

Proverbs 29:18 is probably the most commonly used Bible verse in connection to the concept of vision. In reference to that verse Shipley, for example, sees the Bible as the primary source for the concept of vision and visioning.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{63}Kevin J. Vanhoozer and others, \textit{Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 631.
\textsuperscript{64}J. E. Smith, \textit{The Minor Prophets} (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1992).
\textsuperscript{66}Shipley, “The Origin and Development of Vision,” 227. The use of Proverbs 29:18 to sup-
One of the likely reasons for the emphasis on Proverbs 29:18 is the fact that the King James Version of 1611 translated it as “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

The *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* identifies the meaning of הָעֵזֶן, translated as “vision” (KJV, NASB), “prophecy” (RSV), and “revelation” (NIV), in this verse as “divine communication in a vision, oracle, prophecy,” and more specifically in a written form.\(^{67}\) Shipley agrees as he understands this verse is talking about “divine communication of an ecstatic nature”\(^ {68}\) and not planning exercises.

The origin of the misunderstanding, however, may be found with a minority of people who have influenced important Christian leaders. These think like William D. Reyburn and see a problem in this verse “because of the mention of prophecy, which occurs nowhere else in Proverbs.”\(^ {69}\) A more natural saying, in this case, would include wisdom as the guide to right conduct. He goes on to offer a rather dubious explanation that vision in this context refers to “the ability to discern events or the ability to foresee or anticipate the future”\(^ {70}\) with no clear reference to the activity of a prophet.

The traditional understanding of Proverbs 29:18 has been that “the fatal effect of the absence of such revelation of God’s will is stated to be confusion, disorder, and rebellion; the people, uncontrolled, fall into grievous excesses, which nothing but high principles can restrain.”\(^ {71}\)

So, although the KJV translation of this verse has made it popular, Dave Bland understands the issue well: “The proverb is interpreted to mean that where people have not created a clear vision or a dream for which they can strive, then they have nothing for which to live. They will perish for lack of
a goal. That misses the meaning of the proverb.”

While the traditional understanding relates this verse to the prophetic message, another group has applied the Bible in the most recent meaning of the word vision. The word for “revelation” is commonly associated with the visions of the prophets and stands for the importance of prophetic exhortation to the community.

In conclusion, Barna, another one who emphasizes this verse, seems to look for a conciliatory position and a relation between the two meanings as he explains that the Hebrew word underscores the fact that true vision comes only from the Lord. Visioning does not start with humanity, but with God. It is not about what one wishes would happen, but about what God assures us will happen to fulfill all our needs.

New Testament

It seems clear that the Old Testament prophets have emphasized the future, the same way that much of the New Testament is focused on the present. However, the present is seen in relation to the future, as a time of waiting and preparation.

In Jesus’ ministry, one can identify the future orientation of his parables related to the kingdom, for example, besides His prophecies (Matthew 24; 28:18-20).

Even though Jesus’ message contained a dialectical tension between the experience of salvation in the present and the hope of future salvation, according to the tradition of the earliest church the center of gravity lay on the hope for the future consummation of salvation, the parousia (Matt 24-25 par).

The same tension is found in other parts of the New Testament, especially in connection with the plan of salvation. For example, the verb “save” and the noun “salvation” often refer to the believer’s ultimate deliverance.

---

from sin and death that takes place at the time of Christ’s return in glory (examples are found in Rom 5:9, 10; 13:11; 1 Thess 5:9; Phil 2:12; 1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 9:28; 1 Pet 1:5, 9; 2:2; 4:18).  


Paul is consistent with the future orientation of Scripture as “the element of the future in the Pauline expectation cannot be denied.”78 First and Second Thessalonians are probably the most explicit examples of Paul’s future orientation (for example, 1 Thess 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13, 14; 5:23). Marshall notices that apart from the issues in the church “the parousia occupies a central place in Paul’s understanding of the Christian life.”79

Future orientation is also present in the epistolary writings elsewhere in the New Testament as the writers appealed to the readers’ obedience based on present and future participation and blessings in Christ.80 James 4:13-15 illustrates this point.

James’ references to salvation reflect a future orientation as well (Jas 2:14; 4:12; 5:15, 20). Berkouwer, however, clarifies the future orientation in this part of the Bible when he says that “it is not a matter of an outlook on vague distances in the future whereby the remembrance of the past fades, but the outlook is essentially and completely connected with what has occurred in the past, in the historical act of reconciliation.”81

First Peter especially contributes to this study since one of its major themes is hope. According to Kendell Easley, this subject is oriented to the future and it sets the background for other important topics such as suffering, holiness, humility, and submission. “When believers are absolutely certain that there is a glorious future ahead, they can endure

---

whatever negative experiences they must face in the present.”

Although saving grace is a present reality, the gracious gift of final deliverance awaits a future realization.

Finally, Revelation is the only book of the New Testament “that deals almost exclusively with the future” and “the most thoroughgoing example of biblical apocalyptic prophecy.” One cannot ignore the futuristic application of the apocalyptic message that “presents the ultimate triumph of God at the end of time … the culmination of world history and the expectation that right will triumph over wrong.”

As one considers Scripture, “we have the unity of perspective, that future orientation inherent in both Testaments.” The New Testament fulfills the Old Testament and points toward the final fulfillment.

Three Biblical Motifs

An alternative way to look at future orientation in the Bible is to look at three main complementary motifs: promise, prophecy, and hope. Although they are interwoven and there is overlapping in their meanings and applications, they will be presented separately for didactic purposes.

Promise

God continually made promises to His people. It was His initiative. Some were conditional and some were unconditional. Some were fulfilled in a short period of time, some in a long period of time, and some were not fulfilled.

The New Bible Dictionary’s definition says that “a promise is a word that goes forth into unfilled time,” an assurance of some future act.” Divine
promises in Scripture can guarantee blessings to their recipients or have the form of announcements pertaining “to the programmatic unfolding of God’s plan of redemption in a grand procession of historical events…. In such cases promise becomes nearly synonymous with prophecy.”

There is no single word in Hebrew language to express the English idea of promise. That becomes the translation of common words in specific contexts having God as the subject, such as “to speak” (Exod 12:25; Deut 6:3; 9:28; Josh 23:15; 2 Sam 7:28); “to say” (Neh 14:40; 2 Kgs 8:19; Ps 77:8); “to swear” (Gen 26:3; 1 Chr 16:15–18; Neh 9:15). In the New Testament, “the Greek verbal and noun form of ‘promise’ occurs more than forty times” mostly in Acts, Galatians, Romans, and Hebrews.

Besides being part of God’s self-revelation and communication, promises play an important role in human’s lives. This is true primarily because of God’s character. His promises are true because God is powerful and his promises are founded on His grace.

Scott J. Hafemann describes this process by saying that “He is the One who calls us to himself, supplies the power of his presence, and with his promises provides the motivation to trust-obey him.”

**Prophecy**

The word vision in the Bible is connected with prophecy. Vision in the Bible is the supernatural revelation. This is the interaction between God and humanity, by which God reveals His plans in order for human beings to have general or detailed guidelines of what is happening and what will happen until the promises are fulfilled.

Prophecy in the Bible is associated with the ideas of speaking, proclaiming, or announcing something under the influence of divine inspiration. Primary modes of prophetic inspiration are direct encounter, dreams, and visions (dreams and visions are used almost interchangeably). According to *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vision was the most

---


90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.


characteristic mode of prophecy. “The revelatory visions experienced by the classical (canonical) prophets were not limited to visual phenomena alone, but also included the auditory dimension as well.”\(^\text{94}\)

The message of a prophecy most commonly was introduced by phrases such as “Thus says the Lord,” indicating the source of that revelation. The body of the message would vary. Judgment speeches or oracles of salvation were often found at the core.

Prophecy has an evident future orientation.

All of the classical (canonical) prophets predict the future. Such prediction, however, is based not on human curiosity of what the future will hold, but is rather rooted in the future consequences of past or present violations of the covenant, or on a future act of deliverance which will provide hope for a discouraged people.\(^\text{95}\)

Prophecies were not only intellectual self-disclosures by God, but messages often associated with their current social issues of justice and reform.\(^\text{96}\)

Hope

This is the response by God’s people to His promises based on His prophecy. *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling* defines hope, a major theme in both Testaments, as “the motivating driving force for the present while awaiting for the future promised and revealed by God. It is partly cognitive (it is a thought), partly emotional (it involves anticipation and other positive affects), and partly volitional (it contains belief).”\(^\text{97}\)

Faith seems to answer to the human need for spiritual meaning, love relates to the intrapersonal and interpersonal needs of humans to relate to self and others, and hope reflects the motivational needs of humans to find meaning and purpose in the future. Hope is clearly portrayed as a significant motivator of human endeavor (Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:3).\(^\text{98}\)

Biblical hope is hope in what God will do in the future. At the heart of Christian hope is Jesus and his relation with humanity. In the Old Testament, hope was based on the promises and prophecies of His incarnation.

\(^{94}\) Elwell and Beitzel, s.v. “vision”.

\(^{95}\) Elwell and Beitzel, s.v. “prophecy.”

\(^{96}\) Ibid.


\(^{98}\) Ibid.
“Somehow this hope in the coming Messiah motivated many Israelites to love and obey God’s commandments, and in faith they waited in the hope that the promises of God were true and would soon be fulfilled.”

Then, Christian hope became founded in His death, resurrection, and second coming. “Attainment of this future lies beyond human abilities, for it is only through hope grounded in the promise of God that believers are able to gain the blessings of faith.”

Therefore, biblical hope is deeper than secular connotations. “Included are an expectation of the future, trust in attaining that future, patience while awaiting it, the desirability of the associated benefits, and confidence in the divine promises.”

As mentioned before, these concepts cannot be analyzed totally independent. There is revelation in the promises of God, as well as an aspect of promise in His prophecies, while hope related to both. While prophecy has a stronger emphasis on the revelatory aspect, promise has a stronger appeal on faith for a commitment, and hope has a stronger motivating factor.

**The Now/Not Yet Tension**

The systematized understanding of the nature of the church and the nature of the kingdom of God has often been defined in relation to the now and not yet tension. This tension tries to explain the relationship, as found in the Bible, between a present reality and a future one.

The importance of this concept for the definition of church and kingdom of God makes it especially relevant at this point of this study as it transitions from the theory to the practice of visioning. Stanley Grenz summarizes it this way:

The link of the church to the reign of God means that ecclesiology has an unavoidable future reference. This eschatological orientation leads to a dynamic ecclesiology. God’s kingdom is eschatological. It marks the goal of God’s work in history, the fullness of which lies in the yet unconsummated future.... What the church is, in short, is determined by what the church is destined to become.

---

101 Ibid., 605.
This is exactly the tension that every Christian experiences as they live according to the Gospel and it “is symbolized in the tension between the first and second comings of the Christ.”\textsuperscript{103} The death of Christ is an eschatological event. Because of Christ’s death the believer has already been delivered. The resurrection of Christ is an eschatological event. Christ has already abolished death and conquered death. Christ has been seated at the right hand of God, already crowned with glory and honor, but not yet being made Lord over all things Christians have already been delivered from the corruption of this world, yet they await the new heavens and new Earth.

George Ladd points out that “the early church found itself living in a tension between realization and expectation—between ‘already’ and ‘not yet.’ The age of fulfillment has come; the day of consummation stands yet in the future.”\textsuperscript{104}

This understanding has many implications for the present life since “the events of the eschatological consummation are not merely detached events lying in the future…. They are rather redemptive events that have already begun to unfold within history.”\textsuperscript{105}

For the individual Christian, this tension becomes real in terms of their life transformation (2 Cor 5:17, Rom 6:3-4, Eph 2:6). George Ladd says that “the blessings of the Age to Come no longer lie exclusively in the future; they have become objects of present experience.”\textsuperscript{106}

Ernest Martin, however, sees the influence of the now/not yet tension also in the interpersonal interaction. “An eschatology of hope takes on added relevance when the church encounters hardship and persecution. In an age of aimlessness and despair, a gospel that majors in hope will be attractive, not simply as a fantasy of escape, but as a stabilizing goal.”\textsuperscript{107}

\textbf{Enlarging the Concept of Vision}

After considering the concept of vision in the Bible, it is clear that the current connotation for that term is not present in Scripture. However,

\textsuperscript{103} Paul Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology} (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 120.
\textsuperscript{104} George Eldon Ladd, \textit{A Theology of the New Testament} (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 596.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
future orientation is predominant in many parts of the Old and the New Testaments.

Grenz seems to capture the full dynamics of the role future orientation plays in the Bible and in the lives of Christians today when he says that the Spirit speaking through the Bible orients our present both on the basis of the past and in accordance with a vision of the future. The past orientation transposes the contemporary hearer of the biblical narrative back to those primal events that originally constituted the community of God. For the ancient Hebrews, the Exodus was the central primal event. For the church the life, passion, and resurrection of Jesus and the subsequent sending of the Holy Spirit are constitutive. But the goal of the narrative does not lie simply in the recounting the story. Rather, through the retelling of the narrative, the Spirit recreates the past within the present life of the community. In so doing the texts provide paradigms and categories—an interpretive framework—by means of which the community under the direction of the Spirit can come to the challenges of life in the present.¹⁰⁸

The Bible establishes itself as preceding the recent developments of the concept of vision. One can find there the future orientation that is foundational for vision and the motivational influence for the present, but with at least four significant differences. The concept found in the Bible (1) starts with God, (2) involves a propositional revelation, (3) provides powerful motivation, and (4) aims at the whole restoration/salvation of the human being according to the Divine plan. In contrast, the secular concept (1) is ignited within the human being, (2) may involve minimum amounts of discoveries about one self, (3) provides oscillating motivation, and (4) aims at the partial development of someone.

A basic comparison of the most sought-after characteristic of the concept of vision, the motivation, in the secular model, will reveal that this hope aspect is weakened because the authority of God is not associated with the vision. A vision that is not God-centered may enjoy temporary success but it will not provide a long-lasting impact since it is not based on the powerful and never-changing God.¹⁰⁹ “Visions created by men are, nevertheless, tempered by their perceptions of human limitations, resource realities and incomplete information about the environments they seek to conquer. While individuals may dream big, they also will dream realistically.”¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 71.
What may be an obvious conclusion after this survey about future orientation in the Bible is highlighted in R. Paul Olson’s study of several commonly used concepts related to human motivation in the Synoptics and the New Testament (such as will, want, desire, choose, wish, value, purpose, decide, strive, intend, or goal).

These terms and their various derivatives occur about ninety-five times in the Synoptics alone and a total of about 400 times in the entire New Testament. In contrast, terms that connote motives with either a past or present orientation (drives/needs/motives) occur only twenty-four times in the Synoptics and sixty-five times in the entire New Testament.¹¹¹

The major conclusion drawn by the author is Jesus’ teleological theory of motivation, in which the future influences the human behavior more than the present and the past. According to the Bible, vision becomes a true precedent for passion for God. He has given a vision for the future, which encompasses a vision for the present.

In order to use the term vision in light of the understanding from the Bible, it may be necessary to redefine it as Barna suggests: Vision is “a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.”¹¹²

He goes on to explain what he believes a vision entails change based on God’s empowerment and direction to improve the situation toward the final goal. Vision for ministry, then, is a reflection of what God wants to accomplish through you and me to build His kingdom.

In connection with the concept of vision in the Bible, two additional qualities distinguish these leaders: prayer and faith. “Prayer is a key element for those who ask God to give them vision and continue to do so while communicating and applying God’s will. Faith plays an important part in believing in God’s sovereignty and in His vision for humankind.”¹¹³

The Concept of Vision for Ministry in the Twenty-First Century

After surveying the development of the most recent emphasis on the concept of vision and enlarging this idea by briefly considering the biblical

understanding, the practical concern arises: What are the implications for ministry today? Although this would be best addressed possibly in a separate research project, three general principles could lead that discussion.

First of all, there is a need for visionary ministry today. Modern times seem to have negatively affected people’s perception of life challenging its origin, meaning, and purpose. A possible indication of that is the large number of popular books on topics related to that human search.

Second, there is a need to imitate the biblical principle. The biblical future orientation not only provides meaning, purpose, and motivation for individual lives but also to minister to each other. As Kuhn points out, “The hope and trust in the coming Messiah provided a motive for many Israelites to serve God and to help, heal, feed, and clothe his children—the poor, sick, stranger, widow, weak, and orphan.” One could synthesize this thought by saying that hope was a motive and a motivation for the people of Israel—a very powerful motivating force.

Third, there is a need to broaden the current understanding of vision in ministry. Although in reality all the different dimensions of visioning are interconnected, for research purposes one could identify seven characteristics of biblical vision for ministry today. First, true vision comes from God; second, vision happens in a broader context of planning; third, communication is an essential part of visioning; fourth, vision has to be implemented in order to classify as a true vision; fifth, a common and desired goal of visioning is to engage and to motivate people; sixth, in visioning, God’s revelation is contrasted with the human needs; and finally, seven, vision is an agent of change.

**Conclusion**

The current concept of vision is not necessarily new, since it is built upon the understanding of future orientation, which is found in all cultures. Even a brief survey of the Bible demonstrates that God’s people were long ago the object of a future orientation, which is based on the past and influences the present reality.

Through His promises and prophecies, God has taught His people to look forward to the end of the history of this world and the beginning of a new life with hope. That concept of vision is not an ethereal idea,
but a power that guides, inspires, and improves current circumstances. As Daniel Gilbert, professor of psychology at Harvard University states, “The greatest achievement of the human brain is its ability to imagine objects and episodes that do not exist in the realm of the real, and it is this ability that allows us to think about the future... the human brain is an ‘anticipation machine.’”

However, the Christian expectation is a far different thing from a generalization like “the seeds of the future lie in the present.” It is something completely determined by the unique relation between what is to come and what has already occurred in the past.

This vision should guide especially Christians since “the objective in life and in ministry is neither financial profit nor the attraction and adulation of large numbers of people. The assumption is that your goal is the alignment of your heart, mind and actions with God’s desires and intentions for ministry.”

Therefore, it is not enough to be able to look into the future but, as Kuhn points out, to keep alive “a vision that is accurate and focused. And the vision must be one that has to do with desiring and seeing transformed individuals and communities anticipating the coming of Jesus and the final establishment of His kingdom.” And “This hope is also a motivation for us today as we live in the reality of God’s kingdom and in the hope of his second coming. To mend the broken hearts and heal the wounds of those who suffer is a mandate that must be carried forward while we wait his arrival.”

As an old proverb says,

A vision without a plan is just a dream.
A plan without a vision is just drudgery.
But a vision with a plan can change the world.

---

118 Kuhn, *Christian Relief and Development*, 143.
119 Ibid., 20.
Section 5

THE BOOK AND THEOLOGIANS IN THE MAKING
BIOGRAPHIES

Tiago Arrais is a PhD student in Old Testament and Systematic Theology studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. Tiago is married to Paula, and both are from Brazil.

Rodrigo de Galiza Barbosa is a Master of Divinity student (with an emphasis in Old Testament studies) at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He has undergraduate degrees in Theology and Journalism, and currently works as a research assistant to Drs. P. Gerhard Damsteegt and Ranko Stefanovic. Rodrigo is married to Grazieli Galiza, a MA student in Church History.
Carlos A. Bechara is a PhD candidate in Old Testament studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He has worked as a pastor for seven years in Brazil and for another six years in the United States. He and his family are currently preparing to return to Brazil. Carlos is married to Luciene and the couple has two children, Caroline and Christian.

Marcelo E. C. Dias is a PhD student in Mission and Ministry studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He served as church pastor in the United States and in his home country, Brazil. He also taught church growth and leadership at the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (UNASP-EC), Brazil. Marcelo holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in Theology and Business Administration.

Dário Gabriel Ferreira is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He has worked as a pastor for the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1992. Dário worked in Brazil for twelve years (1992-2003). He then moved to the United States and worked as a volunteer church planter in Sarasota, Florida, for four years (2004-2007). After that, he and his family moved to Andrews University to continue his graduate theological studies.
Otoniel de Lima Ferreira (DMin) is professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (IAENE), Bahia, Brazil. At the time he wrote this article he was studying at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He is married to Geovania and they have a son, Patrick Ferreira. The family lives in Cachoeira, Bahia, Brazil.

Natal Gardino is a MA candidate in New Testament studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He is also a Doctor of Ministry student with emphasis in leadership. He is an ordained minister who served as school chaplain and district pastor in his home country, Brazil. He is married to Irineide and they have two sons: Kaléo and Nicholas.

Christie J. Goulart (now Christie Chadwick) is a PhD candidate in Archaeology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. She holds a MA in Religion degree in Archaeology and Biblical Languages also from Andrews University. Christie has taught Archaeology and Biblical Hebrew at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary as a contract teacher.
Wagner Kuhn (PhD) is professor of World Mission and Intercultural Studies at the Department of World Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. From 2005 to 2011, he worked as Associate Director of the Institute of World Mission (General Conference). Since 2007 he has been the director of Global Partnerships, an initiative that provides cross-cultural training for tentmakers (self-supporting missionaries) in restricted access countries. He has worked for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil, United States, Naxcivan Autonomous Republic, and Azerbaijan.

Leonardo G. Nunes is a ThD student in Biblical and Theological studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He has worked as church pastor for ten years, and as professor of Theology for the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (IAENE), Bahia, Brazil, for another four years. He is married to Beverly, and they have two children, Larissa and Eduardo.

Leonardo Rodor de Oliveira is a Master of Divinity student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He has served the church as chaplain, teacher and youth pastor in Brasilia, Brazil, and as senior pastor of the Gaithersburg Brazilian Church in Maryland, United States. He is planning to continue his studies (PhD program) in New Testament studies. He lives with his wife Vanessa Martins in Berrien Springs, MI.
Paulo Roberto Pinheiro is a Doctor of Ministry candidate at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He works as editor at the Brazilian Publishing House since 1983. He has also served as church pastor from 1972 to 1983 in his home country, Brazil.

Adriani Milli Rodrigues is a PhD student in Systematic Theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He has been a professor of Theology at the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (UNASP-EC), Brazil, and upon completing his studies will return to continue serving as faculty for the Theological Seminary in Engenheiro Coelho, SP, Brazil.

Gerson Rodrigues is a PhD candidate in Adventist Studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He and his family are currently preparing to return to Brazil, where Gerson will serve as director of the Ellen G. White Research Center and professor of Theology for the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary (SALT-IAENE), Cachoeira, Bahia. Gerson is married to Irlacy and they have three boys: Michael, Daniel, and Stephen.
Marcelo de Paula Santos is a PhD student in Old Testament studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He served as pastor in East Sao Paulo Conference in his home country, Brazil, from 1985 to 2007.

Sergio Silva is currently pursuing a PhD in Systematic Theology and Church History studies at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. Sergio is married to Cedilia Silva (R.N.), and the couple has two sons: Matheus and Gabriel Silva.