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GRACE, THE JUSTICE OF GOD, AND THE FUNCTION OF THE MILLENNIUM IN THE ATONEMENT

GEORGE R. KNIGHT, Ed.D.
Professor of Church History,
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary,
Andrews University

Introduction

Grace is absolutely central to the plan of salvation. Yet, there is a sense in which grace—giving people what they don't deserve, giving them forgiveness and eternal life when they deserve condemnation and death—is essentially unjust.

In light of God being a God of grace, one of the central issues in any understanding of the atonement is the justice of God. How can God save some people and destroy others when all have rebelled and sinned against Him and His principles? It is the contention of this paper that the best answer to such questions is found in the Apocalypse of John. In examining that contention, we will look at the Apocalypse in terms of the Second Advent and God's judgment on sin, the millennial period and the universe's judgment on God, and the doxologies of the Apocalypse and the universe's verdict for God.

The Climax of History, the World's Longest Battle, and God's Judgment on Sin

The great climax of history arrives in Revelation 19, with Christ symbolically pictured as galloping out of heaven on a white horse to engage Satan in the battle that eventually brings about the end of the struggle between good and evil (v. 11). That picture of the Second Advent should be seen as a continuation of God's atoning, reconciling, saving work. "In his cross and resurrection," writes George

Eldon Ladd, "Christ won a great victory over the powers of evil; by his second coming, he will *execute* that victory."[1]

One thing that takes place at the Second Advent is the resurrection of those who have died believing in Jesus (those who have accepted God's grace). While the wicked (those who have rejected God's grace) are slain at Christ's advent (Rev 19:1-21), the living and resurrected righteous are caught up to meet Jesus in the air and taken to heaven (1 Thess 4:15-17; 1 Cor 15:51-53; John 14:1-3). Thus, the earth is left without living people during the 1,000-year period of Rev 20.

Christ, however, speaks of recompense, not only for the righteous but also for the wicked (Matt 16:27). He also talks of two resurrections. He claims, "The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment ['damnation,' KJV]" (John 5:28-29).[2]

The rewards for both groups, of course, result from the decision of the pre-Advent judgment (Dan 7:22-27). Jesus goes on to claim that His judgment is "just [fair or righteous]" because He is in harmony with the Father (John 5:30). Thus, Jesus ties divine justice or righteousness to the decision as to who will come forth in the two resurrections. Such an assertion of righteousness in judgment, however, is far from being demonstrable proof of the fact of justice. This is an especially important problem in a universe where Satan has insinuated that God could not justly save some sinners without saving all of them.

What Jesus does not make clear in John 5 is that 1,000 years will separate the two resurrections. That point is later revealed through John in Rev 20. According to that chapter, some people will be resurrected at the beginning of the 1,000 years (v. 4), while the "rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended" (v. 5). The context indicates that the first resurrection of Rev 20 is that of the righteous mentioned in John 5, while the second is that of "damnation," also mentioned in the Gospel. "Blessed and holy," writes the Revelator, "is he who shares in the first resurrection" (v. 6). Those who come up in the second resurrection soon meet the consuming fire of the "second death" (vv. 7-9).

Whereas the resurrection of the dead is a fairly common theme in Scripture, Rev 20 is the only explicit mention of the 1,000-year period in the Bible. That time period is referred to as the millennium, a Latin phrase meaning 1,000 years. Christian interpretations vary widely concerning the significance of the millennium and its place in the flow of history. For example, Ladd writes that "the New Testament nowhere expounds the theology of the millennium, that is, its purpose

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[1]George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 252-53 (emphasis mine). Cited hereafter as *Revelation of John*.

[2]Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the RSV.

in God's redemptive plan."[3] Yet, he claims that "in some way not disclosed in Scripture, the millennium is part of Christ's Messianic rule by which he puts all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25)."[4]

Meanwhile, it is important to examine the context of Rev 20. The immediate and obvious context is the material in chaps. 19 and 21. Robert H. Mounce points out that the recurring phrase "and I saw," of Rev 19:11,17,19; 20:1,4,12; and 21:1 "appears to establish a sequence of visions which carries through from the appearance of the Rider on the white horse (Rev. 19:11) to the establishment of the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1ff)."[5] Ladd also sees a connected series of visions, with chap. 18 telling of the destruction of Babylon, chap. 19 the destruction of the beast and false prophet, and chap. 20 the destruction of Satan himself.[6]

The last half of chap. 19, as mentioned above, pictures Christ's second coming. This time, however, He comes not as the sacrificial Lamb of God, but as the "King of kings and Lord of lords" who will make war on all evil (vv. 11-21). Then comes Rev 20, after which we find a picture of Eden restored. John opens chap. 21 with a glimpse of "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth [that is, those polluted by sin and its results] had passed away." Next, John sees the "holy city," God's "new Jerusalem," coming down from heaven with blessings from the throne room/sanctuary and that God Himself will now dwell with His people and provide them with the full blessings of His covenant. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death [the penalty of sin] shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (vv. 1-4).

Rev 20, therefore, pictures the events that take place between the Second Advent and the establishment of God's perfect kingdom on earth. The millennium is the period that spans the gap from the time when sin was still alive and well, to the time when sin is no more. Rev 20 is the crucial link between those two very different earthly contexts. It holds an important place in God's great plan of at-one-ment, or reconciliation. At the end of the 1,000-year period, God finally eradicates the sin problem.

A further contextual understanding of Rev 20 is rooted in Rev 16. Verses 12-16, which describe the pouring out of the sixth plague, identify the three great symbolic adversaries of God: the dragon (identified as Satan in 12:9), the beast, and the false prophet. These three issue forth "demonic," wonder-producing spirits

[3]George Eldon Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 39.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 352.

[6]Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 261.

"who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. . . . And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew *Armageddon*" (v. 16). Verses 14 and 15 make it clear that God's "great day" for the battle is at the second coming of Christ.

This thought brings us back to Revelation's description of the Second Advent in chap. 19. Near the end of the chapter we find an account of the first part of the battle of Armageddon. "And I saw," writes John, "the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army" (v. 19). In the next verse we find two of our three acquaintances from chap. 16, namely, the beast and the false prophet. Christ captures and destroys them in "the lake of fire" (v. 20).

With those two enemies (representing the leadership of Satan's human agents on earth) annihilated, God turns to deal with the root of the problem, Satan himself. Chapter 20 opens with Satan being bound for the 1,000-year period (vv. 1-3).[7] At the end of that time, Satan and all his works and the results of sin are destroyed in "the lake of fire" (vv. 10,13-15). Armageddon, the final and decisive battle between Christ and Satan, is then over.

Thus, Armageddon is represented in Rev 19 and 20 as having two significant engagements, one at the beginning of the millennium and one at the end.[8] The second Armageddon engagement finds God executing His ultimate and complete wrath on those sinners who have refused to accept (1) His principles into their lives, and (2) Christ's vicarious sacrificial propitiation (the basis of Grace) that turned aside the divine wrath (judgment on sin). Those individuals and forces destroyed in Armageddon will be those that have chosen to remain in rebellion against God, His government, and His law of love. Following the final destruction of Satan and the sin problem, Rev 21 and 22 depict the renovation of the earth into Eden restored (cf. 2 Pet 3:12,13).

The Millennium and the Judgment "On" God

G. B. Caird claims that Rev 20 has been "the paradise of cranks and fanatics . . and literalists." Furthermore, "it bristles with questions."[9] Why, he asks, must Satan be let loose to wreak further havoc after he had been firmly bound? And what claim does the devil have on God, that God is obliged to give him his due? Why the

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[7]He is bound in the sense that with the righteous in heaven and the wicked in their graves he has no one to tempt or deceive. See Rev 20:2,7-8.

[8]Cf. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 256, 268.

[9]G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 249.

millennium? And what blessing do the righteous receive that makes it worth their while to wait 1,000 years for the greater bliss of the new earth?[10]

With such questions being raised by this controversial chapter, Caird sees several good reasons for leaving it out of the Bible. Nevertheless, in the face of the disturbing and troublesome issues suggested by Rev 20, he forcefully concludes that "the only safe inference is that *John included the millennium because it was an indispensable element in his vision of the future.*"[11]

The key to that "indispensable element" appears to be found in Rev 20:4, where the text refers to those to whom "judgment was committed." Two questions arise from that short expression: (1) Who will be passing judgment? and (2) What is the nature of the millennial judgment?

With regard to the first question, Mounce suggests that according to Rev 20 "all we know for sure about the occupants of the throne is that judgment is given to them."[12] He then goes on to note other Bible passages that help identify the occupants. The apostles, for example, were promised that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28). Paul told the Corinthian believers that "the saints will judge the world;" indeed, they would even "judge angels" (1 Cor 6:2-3).[13] Furthermore, earlier in the Apocalypse we find Christ promising that all who conquered would sit with Him on His throne (2:26; 3:21). On the basis of these texts and others, Ladd indicates that the judges in Rev 20:4 probably include all the saved, since "this would accord with the biblical theology as a whole, which gives to the saints a share in the eschatological rule of Christ."[14]

But what is the function of their judgment? What is left to be judged? After all, the saints have already been judged worthy to come up in the first resurrection (Luke 20:35), and the wicked have obviously been found to be unworthy, since they do not come up until the second resurrection. The judgment of Rev 20 is obviously *not* to see who is saved or lost. The decision regarding the fate of all human beings will have been made before the Second Coming. At Christ's coming all will have received their just rewards. But questions arise: Were the rewards actually just? Did God really do the right thing in saving the saints while condemning those awaiting the second resurrection?

Those questions bring us back to certain troubling Bible passages. For instance, in Matt 25:31-46, we cannot forget the total shock of both the sheep and the goats in the parable of the judgment. "Why me?" ask some of those judged as unrighteous. They may have kept the law as perfectly as they could, yet they are lost. Why? Because, claims Jesus, they did not really love their neighbors. They did

[10]Ibid.
[11]Ibid., 251 (emphasis mine).
[12]Mounce, 354.
[13]Ibid., 355.
[14]Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 263.

not really care about the sick, the poor, and the downtrodden. Thus, they had not internalized the principles of God's kingdom. They were mere keepers of the letter of the law, but they were out of harmony with its spirit of love. However, those judged to be sheep, having internalized the spirit of the law, but not being necessarily as dedicated as the Pharisees to a total life of consciously keeping the outward aspects of the law, are equally surprised. Neither group receives what they think they deserve (vv. 37-39,44). If both sides in this parable show such surprise at the nature of their final rewards, how do we know that they were handed out correctly?

That brings me to the perplexing text of Matt 7:21-23. There Jesus declares:

> Not every one who says to me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven. . . . On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers."

Such sayings seem to be rather arbitrary. These people were obviously Christian believers of some sort. Not only were they believers, but they appear to have possessed some powerful spiritual gifts. How can God be so sure He is rejecting the right individuals?

The entire problem is complicated by God's grace. *Remember that God in His grace gives people what they do not deserve.* This is why I essentially agreed with the older son in the parable of the prodigal in Luke 15, when I first read it as a 19-year-old agnostic. Thus, also my grumbling with the workers who had toiled through the heat of the day only to get paid the same amount as those who had worked only the last hour (Matt 20:1-16). Giving people what they do not deserve did not sit well with my human sense of justice. The problem even gets worse when one takes into account the fact that the rewards are eternal: immortal life versus eternal damnation (cf. Rom 6:23). And what if God gets so wild with grace that He gives it to some guy like Hitler or Stalin or people you personally know to have sexually abused 2-year-old children?

Can God really be trusted? That is the most important question of the universe. After all, look at the mess He allows to go on year after year. He has permitted thousands of years of murder, rape, and sins of every sort. In summarizing the sceptic's position, C. S. Lewis writes:

> If God were good He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore, God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.[15]

[15]C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 26. See also John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 5.

So the question is urgent, "How can we trust such a Being?"

And one person dying for another does not seem to be much of a solution. From the time of Cain, Satan has challenged the validity of substitutionary sacrifice, claiming that God is arbitrary and that there is no justice in having the best of men die so that a pack of criminals and rebels can get what they definitely do not deserve. Neither grace nor forgiveness seems to be completely moral. How can God justify (declare as righteous) some people and destroy others eternally? And what is He going to do with those who were early turned from God by their parents or who were born into non-Christian cultures where they had never heard the name of Jesus? In short, the most important questions ever asked are, "Can God be trusted?" And, "If He can be, on what basis?"

That is what the millennium is all about. Its purpose is to provide the saints with the time and opportunity to pass judgment (Rev 20:4) on God's judgment on sin and His solution in Christ. By extension, because of God's judicious openness, the millennial judgment is the final phase of judgment by a concerned universe on how God has handled the sin problem on this earth, the lesson book of the entire cosmos (1 Cor 4:9).

The millennial judgment is the universe's juridic validation of God's justice and righteousness in justifying and eternally saving those who have accepted Christ's sacrifice, while forever destroying other individuals who also sinned. Can God do this and still be trustworthy and just? That was the underlying problem Paul wrestled with in Rom 3:21-26. Earlier in chap. 3, Paul had been concerned that God might be "justified" in His words, and "prevail" when He was "judged." Paul was quoting the Septuagint version of Ps 51, where David was dealing with the blamelessness of God in His judgment on and sentencing of sin (Rom 3:4; Ps 51:3-4). Thus, writes B. A. Gerrish, there is a sense in which "even God may be said to be justified."[16] On a cosmic scale the great millennial judgment is the validation of God's judgment on sin so that everyone sees the justice of His solution, and that solution is both the best and the only answer to the sin problem.

It is crucial that all questions about God and His righteousness are settled before He destroys sinners and Satan in the second death at the end of the millennium. After that point it will be too late. Thus, the cruciality of the 1,000-year period that takes place between the two resurrections.

It is my guess that life during the millennium will not be a completely peaceful time. Rather, it will be a time of healing and questioning and probably some weeping. How would you feel, for example, if you were to meet the murderer of your youngest child in the millennial kingdom? How would you react if, as far as you could tell, that person had gone to execution kicking, cursing, and unrepentant? There will be some saved like that. We know of one who first found

[16]B. A. Gerrish, "Justification," *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Alan Richardson and John S. Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 314.

Jesus on the cross (Matt 27:44; Luke 23:39-43). Or how would you react if you discovered that one of the most saintly Christians you had ever known had failed to arise at the first resurrection? And what about family members whom you loved and felt you could never live without? What about sons, daughters, wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, and others with whom you shared closeness and who may be among the missing? What will be your attitude toward the God who intends to "execute" His judgment upon them at the end of the millennium? Could you really love and trust such a Being?

Coming to grips with those questions, feelings, and attitudes will be part of the work accomplished during the millennium. As in the pre-Advent phase of the judgment, God desires to keep no secrets. In that earlier phase "ten thousand times ten thousand" angelic beings witnessed the proceedings (Dan 7:10). The same kind of openness will be evident in the post-Advent phase of judgment.

Those resurrected will have a chance to examine and pass judgment on the evidence God has collected. The Bible speaks of books of judgment (Dan 7:10; 12:1; Phil 4:3; Rev 20:11-12). The presence of these books, Henry B. Swete concludes, indicates that "the sentence of the Judge is not arbitrary; it rests upon written evidence."[17]

Rev 20:11-12 mentions two kinds of books, the book of life and another type, seemingly standing in contrast to the book of life. The books, Caird writes, "are the record books, containing all the evidence that the court needs if men are to be judged by their deeds."[18] The book of life, Ladd suggests, "includes the names of all who have believed in Christ."[19]

In Rev 20:11-12 these books are mentioned in connection with the very last act of judgment at the end of the millennium, when God pronounces final sentence. The "books" had earlier been used in the pre-Advent judgment of Dan 7, and it is reasonable to suppose that they will be used by the saints during the millennial judgment. After all, the truth has nothing to lose from open investigation, and God's trustworthiness is the issue at hand. Just as God condescended to show the angels His justice and His righteousness in dealing with sinners in the pre-Advent judgment, so He does for the redeemed during the millennium.[20]

God's record-keeping system is undoubtedly much more advanced than human systems that use computer technology and sophisticated audiovisual devices. Since God is more concerned with motives than with outward actions, it seems safe

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[17]Swete, 272. During the time the Bible was being written, of course, there were few, if any, books as we know them. Records were kept on scrolls. Since that time record-keeping has progresively advanced from scrolls to bound books to computer technology.

[18]Caird, 259.

[19]Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 273 .

[20]See Edward Heppenstall, *Our High Priest* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1972), 209.

to assume that His record-keeping system includes human thoughts and motivations as well as actions.

With that in mind, let us go back to our questions about why some people obviously destined for hell come up in the resurrection of the righteous, while some of those we felt should have been in the first resurrection remain in their graves awaiting the second. "Why God?" is the question that must be answered. "How can You justify this or that particular decision?" In answer, God points to the record "books." I respond by pushing the "computer button" representing the name of my favorite preacher, a person whom I believed to be a saint of saints, but who is still sleeping in the earth after the beginning of the millennium.[21]

Suddenly, the record of his life flashes onto the screen in Technicolor and octophonic sound (or whatever type of system God has). There for me to see is the fact that my friend's inner life did not match up with his outer. In fact, to my surprise, I see that even his outward life was different from what he claimed to believe, especially when he was "far enough" away from home or behind closed doors. The shocking realization hits me that he was not in harmony with God's principles and would not be happy in heaven.

With true heartache I turn off his record, realizing in a stab of shock that God had been right after all. Not being satisfied with that one case, however, I check out several more. Each time I reach the same conclusion—God is right—He knew more about my closest friends than I did. He had done the best thing.

On the other hand, some of those who arose "with" the saints shock me just as much as those who did not. There obviously had been a frightful mix-up. I do not want to say much about it, but finally I just cannot stand it any longer. So I go to the books of condemnation and push the button for one "I know" to have been an unrepentant child abuser to the very end of his earthly life.

All I get is a blank at first, but then a signal flashes on the heavenly "computer screen," indicating that I am in the wrong document file. Rather haltingly approaching the "book of life" files, I again push this person's "button." To my genuine surprise, I find his name and "experience" his conversion through God's sophisticated technology. The record shows that he has a new heart and mind and truly loves Jesus, even though, because of the last-minute (the eleventh hour of Matt 20:6) nature of his conversion, he did not have much earthly time to demonstrate his new attitudes and actions.

Stunned, and not completely sure, i shut off the machine. For a while I do not feel comfortable around this individual, even though he has come up as a "saint." But from a distance I observe him from time to time, only to discover that God truly

[21]Perhaps I should point out the elements of fact and fiction in the accounts below that attempt to illustrate the millennial investigation. The accounts, as I see them, are true to millennial purpose, but are obviously parabolic. However, my dinner with the preacher actually took place and I had that reaction.

knew what He was doing. This "new man" is certainly a saint if I ever saw one. The full force of God's redeeming love and transforming power hits me as I realize the miracle that I have witnessed. "God," I almost shout, "is just and righteous and His judgments are true in every case." I have nothing but praise for Him.

But I have a friend who still is not convinced that everything is right. My friend had loved her oldest son with fierce devotion throughout her long years of earthly motherhood. He had been what we had called a "good boy" during our time on earth. That is, he had been a good boy up until he was 23 years old. That was the year his father had died. During that year the young man turned against all he had once stood for. At first it was only a case of the outward signs of remorse in response to the great injustice that had befallen him. But then it turned into deep-seated rebellion. Feeling abused himself, he developed a character that consistently mistreated others.

His mother, as you might expect, was deeply upset by the physical loss of her husband and the spiritual loss of her son. Unlike the boy, however, she did not turn against God. In fact, the experience softened her. After all, had not God lost His "beloved" on the cross? Her response to her great loss was one of daily prayer for her rebellious son. She was strong in faith that he would be in the kingdom. She went to her deathbed firmly believing that he would be converted. But, she hastened to add, if he were not converted, she did not want to be in heaven either. She could never be happy without her boy.

I know her struggles and her convictions, because I was there when she died, and I later conducted her funeral. After her death I continued to work with the son, but to no avail. He was finally shot three times and killed while resisting federal agents in a drug crackdown.

I am glad to meet the mother soon after the first resurrection. As I expected, she had been looking in vain for her wayward treasure. She asks me what I know of him, and I fill her in on the newspaper stories. I then suggest that she "push his button" in the divine record system to get the full story. Feeling she needs support, I volunteer to sit through the experience with her. She views it over and over and over again.

His case seems plain enough to me, but she is devastated, weeping profusely. Somewhere I had been taught that there would be no tears after the second coming of Christ, but I am beginning to realize that I must have been wrong. I check my Bible and find that it plainly promises that all tears will be wiped away *after* the millennium (Rev 21:4; cf. Isa 65:17-19), but it gives no such assurance for the millennial period.

My weeping friend still is not sure she wants to be in the kingdom if her son is not there. At that point I suggest that we "experience" the video of his life one more time. On this viewing I stop it from time to time, trying to help her realize that her son could not possibly be happy in God's kingdom because everything he stood for was diametrically opposed to God's law of love.

I tell her the story of the first time I had dinner with a preacher. Back in those days, not knowing any ministers, I thought they were all perfect, or at least very close to it. But then, when I was 19 years old, I began to attend church so that I could spend more time with my girlfriend. I soon concluded that I had made a mistake, because before I knew it we had been invited to dinner by the young preacher and his wife. The day of the dinner was the longest and one of the most miserable in my life, up to that point. I had dreaded it all week, and it turned out to be more uncomfortable than I had expected. Being totally out of harmony with his principles, I had to watch everything I did, said, and how I said it.

Since that day I have often thought about what it would be like to have to live for eternity in the presence of the omniscient God if I were out of harmony with Him. Such an experience would be more like a living hell than heaven.

Using my personal experience, I try to help my friend understand what C. S. Lewis had enabled me to see sometime before the Second Advent. Lewis taught that there are only three possible states of existence: (1) to be God, (2) to be like God, or (3) to be miserable.[22] This third category represents the end result of lives that are out of harmony with God's character of giving and loving. People in that group would be doubly miserable in the company of a holy God.

Ellen G. White teaches a similar perspective when she writes,

> The sinner could not be happy in God's presence; he would shrink from the companionship of holy beings. Could he be permitted to enter heaven, it would have no joy for him. The spirit of unselfish love that reigns there—every heart responding to the heart of Infinite Love—would touch no answering chord in his soul. His thoughts, his interests, his motives, would be alien to those that actuate the sinless dwellers there. . . . *Heaven would be to him a place of torture;* he would long to be hidden from Him who is its light, and the center of its joy. It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven; they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship.[23]

My friend, the distraught mother, is beginning to realize that God is doing what is best for her boy. It hurts deeply for her to recognize that fact, but more and more clearly she sees that the God of love could not and would not force anyone to be saved.

She even starts to grasp the fact that eternal annihilation is better than eternal misery, the fruit of sin. Through her reddened eyes she begins to see a new aspect of God's love. She does not like all that she sees, but she realizes that God is

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[22]Lewis, 54.

[23]Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 17-18 (emphasis mine). Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 670.

making the very best out of a disastrous situation, that He still wants the very best for her son. She sees at last, through her tears, that her son could never be happy in heaven. She also sees that the best and most loving alternative would be for him to be as if he had never been (we will return to that topic below). *My motherly friend finally sees that God's solution is not merely the best solution, but the only solution to the sin problem.*

The Verdict "For" God in the Apocalyptic Doxologies

At this point we need to look at a prominent doxological theme that runs throughout the book of Revelation. That theme, often bursting forth in songs of praise, is the worthiness, justice, and truthfulness of God.

Rev 4 and 5, for example, repeatedly declare God's worthiness in the context of the heavenly throne room/sanctuary. "*Worthy* art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power" (Rev 4:11). In 5:4 John wept because he could find no one "worthy" to unseal the mysterious scroll. Then the Lamb entered, and the heavenly beings "sang a new song, saying, '*Worthy* art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, *for thou wast slain* and by thy blood didst ransom men to God' " (v. 9). That song was shortly followed by the numberless host of heaven "saying with a loud voice, '*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,* to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!' " (v. 12).

In these passages it is of more than passing interest to note that the "worthiness" of Christ to undo the seals of the scroll of salvation history is directly related to His propitiary sacrifice on the cross. It was that sacrifice, Paul claims, that shows God's righteousness in justifying sinners through grace (Rom 3:24-26).

The second major round of worshipful doxologies is found at the time when the seven last plagues are poured out during a period of divine judgment. God's justice and truthfulness are praised at least three times in chaps. 15 and 16. "*Just and true are your ways,*" sing the victorious saints (Rev 15:3); "*just art thou in these thy judgments,*" the angel proclaims at the pouring out of the third bowl. The altar responds with the cry: "Yea, Lord God the Almighty, *true and just are thy judgments!*" (Rev 16:5,7).

The third series in Revelation's doxological sequence takes place at the Second Coming of Christ. Chapter 19 opens with "a great multitude in heaven, crying 'Hallelujah! *Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just*' " (vv. 1-2). Then, later in the chapter, the coming Christ on His white horse "is called *Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war*" (v. 11).

Now either the heavenly hosts and/or the apostle John has an unhealthy fascination with the topic of God's truthfulness, justice, and worthiness to judge, or it is a central problem in the great controversy between good and evil. The latter position is the correct one. Whereas the heavenly hosts were largely convinced of the justice of God at the cross, they would have had all their questions answered by

the time of the Second Advent of Christ in Rev 19. The resurrected saints will have the same opportunity to validate God's righteousness in solving the sin problem during the millennial judgment of Rev 20. The purpose of that judgment is to clear up any final questions before God puts an end to sin. Thus, He provides both adequate time and adequate records that He might be vindicated before all created beings.

At the end of the millennium, after all questions concerning God's righteousness and trustworthiness have been settled, God resurrects the wicked. At that time, the Bible says, Satan is loosed from his prison and goes "out to deceive" those who come up in the second resurrection. He gathers his multitude together for the second half of Armageddon, and they surround "the camp of the saints." At that point, fire comes down from heaven and *consumes* them (Rev 20:7-9).

For years I wondered why God would raise the wicked merely so they could be snuffed out again. Mounce writes that "perhaps the most reasonable explanation for this rather unusual parole is to make plain that neither the designs of Satan nor the waywardness of the human heart will be altered by the mere passing of time."[24] White is even more specific: "In his last great effort to dethrone Christ, destroy His people, and take possession of the city of God, the archdeceiver (is) *fully unmasked*."[25] In their last destructive moves, Satan and his followers provide one final validation for the correctness of God's judgment. They have not changed. They come out of the grave with the same character they had upon entering it.

With all the universe satisfied that Satan's principles lead to death, animosity, and destruction, God is at last free to deal decisively with the sin problem without creating fear and without spreading the doubt that Satan had insinuated concerning His love. It is from that perspective that Rev 20:11-15 presents the last great act of divine executive judgment. At that point in history, God eradicates Satan, his followers, and the results of sin. They are consumed in the "lake of fire" (vv. 9,15).

Strange as it may sound at first, God demonstrates His mercy even in the final destruction of the wicked. God wants the best for all His creatures. He wants their happiness. By the time of the Second Advent, He will have done everything possible to reach down and rescue people from their alienation and selfishness, but some will have rejected His outreach. God will not force His love on the rejecters of His grace. The acceptance of the principles of love and the healing they bring cannot be coerced. Satan's sin and selfishness ultimately leads to self-destructive misery. God is caught in a paradox: either He can let sinners continue to exist in endless unhappiness or He can mercifully put them out of their self-chosen misery. There are no other choices. God opts for the latter.

[24]Mounce, 361. (Cf. p. 354).
[25]White, *Great Controversy*, 670 (emphasis mine).

His choice, however, has been misunderstood and perverted beyond recognition. One of the most misleading theories in religious history is the one claiming that the merciful and loving God of the Bible will torture people unmercifully, forever and ever, in endless flames. That theory certainly casts doubt on God's character by making Him into a kind of an infinite Hitler.[26] That interpretation has forwarded the original accusation of God through the ages. It proclaims that God truly is unjust and cannot be trusted. Beyond that, it furthers the unnatural fear of God that entered with sin in Gen 3. In fact, it is a continuation of Satan's first lie to Eve, "You will not die" (Gen 3:4).

To the contrary, God says that the wages of sin is death, not immortality in hell (Rom 6:23). Thus, Rev 20:9 makes it explicit that hell-fire "consumes" the wicked. The results are eternal. Those consumed will be burned up and be as if they had never been (Mal 4:1).

The imagery of the lake of fire, suggests Michael Green, "probably denotes final and irreversible ruin and *annihilation* rather than endless torment."[27] Another Oxford scholar, John W. Wenham, comes to similar conclusions when he writes that "it might be nearer the mark to think of their end as a *merciful euthanasia* than as a callous execution."[28]

The bottom line on who will be in heaven, it seems, is determined by the standard of who will be happy there. All who could be happy with God will be there. Those with that attitude, of course, will be willing to live in harmony with God's great law of love (they will live lives of grace themselves), which will affect every part of their lives. Those rejecting God's way are laid to permanent rest.

God's purpose is not endless torture for His erring children, but endless sleep in death. In that context, Emil Brunner's startling statement that "the wrath of God is the love of God"[29] makes good sense. In His judgment on sin, God does the best thing possible in a perplexing situation. Peter Taylor Forsyth writes that punishment must be viewed "as an indirect and collateral necessity, like the surgical pains that make room for nature's curing power."[30] God's solution once again demonstrates that He is righteous and trustworthy.

White pens that by the end of the millennium

> The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought

[26]See George R. Knight, "The Infinite Hitler," *Signs of the Times*, July 1997, 10-13.
[27]Michael Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 218.

[28]John W. Wenham, *The Enigma of Evil: Can We Believe in the Goodness of God?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 38, n. 9 (emphasis mine).

[29]Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), 187.

[30]Peter Taylor Forsyth, *The Work of Christ* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, n.d.), 135.

> fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law.[31]

Because all the universe is satisfied that God can be trusted and that Satan's principles lead to deterioration and death, she goes on to say that sin will never arise again.

> A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom.[32]

Satan's rebellion will be a lesson to the universe throughout eternity on the nature of sin. "Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion" will be a "perpetual safeguard" to God's universe.[33]

Similar thoughts are expressed elsewhere:

> *Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified.* The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again rise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy.[34]

Theoretically, of course, sin could rise again. After all, it arose unexplainably and spontaneously the first time because of the power of choice that God gave His creatures. God has not taken away that power, nor can He, without changing His own nature. Thus, it is theoretically possible for sin to rise a second time, but it is safe to say that it would not be able to rise very high. The entire universe will have come to love and trust God, and all will have seen the results of sin. God, therefore, will be in a position to put down any rebellion immediately. The great experiment with sin will never need to be repeated. The cross of Christ demonstrated once and for all the love of God and the malignity of sin.

Sin, we must never forget, is not a personal aberration. Rather, as Brunner rightly claims, it is "an attack on God's honor."[35] It is an assault on the cosmic moral order. Because of what sin is, the greatest challenge ever faced by God was

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[31]White, *Great Controversy*, 504.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., 499.

[34]Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 26 (emphasis mine).

[35]Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 444.

to meet it responsibly and decisively in a manner that would preserve the moral order of the universe and at the same time demonstrate both His love and His justice.

The crisis of sin is not merely a human crisis, but a divine crisis. Sin deeply affected the stability of God's universe. God, seeing the magnitude and subtlety of the problem, has not treated it lightly. His answer to the sin problem is the life and death of Jesus Christ and the extension of grace to sinners. James S. Stewart writes insightfully, "At the heart of the Christian doctrine of atonement stands the fact that if our sin has serious consequences for ourselves, it has terrible consequences for God."[36]

God gave of Himself to meet the problem. The life of Christ demonstrated that God's law of love could be kept, while His death demonstrated both God's love and justice on the one hand, and Satan's hate and unfairness on the other. Christ's sacrifice prepared the way for God to gracefully forgive on a moral basis by taking into account the full penalty of the broken law.

It was at the cross, Forsyth indicates, that God justified "Himself and His holy law. . . . If He had not vindicated His holiness to the uttermost . . . it would not be a kind of holiness that men could trust."[37] Because God has first justified Himself in holiness, He can also justify human beings and still be righteous.[38]

The fruits of God's great plan of reconciliation or at-one-ment through Christ, as has been repeatedly noted, are not just for Himself and earthlings. The New Testament pictures the sin problem as having cosmic proportions. Thus, Paul could write:

> We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12)

Paul also indicates that the implications of the solution are of universal import. Thus, he asserts that God is reconciling to Himself all things, "whether on earth or in heaven," through the cross of Christ (Col 1:20). The end result of God's program for handling sin will be "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11).

Thus, both the problem of sin and God's solution to that calamity affect the entire universe. Vincent Taylor argues convincingly, "Wherever Christian teaching

[36]James S. Stewart, *A Faith to Proclaim* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1953), 69.
[37]Forsyth, 136.
[38]Ibid.

narrows the idea of the Atonement to a prospect less dazzling than this it is untrue to the New Testament."[39]

It Is Really Finished

At the end of the millennium God stands vindicated and justified before the universe. Sin has been destroyed, and the Holy City descends out of heaven so that God can re-create the planet to be the home of those redeemed from sin. All tears have been wiped away, and there is no more death, suffering, or sorrow (Rev 21:1-4; 2 Pet 3:12-13).

The atonement (at-one-ment) is finally completed. All who can be reconciled to God have been. White captures the idea beautifully,

> The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.[40]

John the Revelator documents it with the effect of a great crescendo. He beheld

> a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! *Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen!*" (Rev 7:9-12)

All are convinced that the God of grace can indeed be trusted.

[39]Vincent Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching*, 2d ed. (London: Epworth, 1945), 168.

[40]White, *Great Controversy*, 678. A point of special interest is that the first three words of the first volume and the last three words of the last one of Ellen White's five-volume set depicting the great controversy theme are the same: "God is love." To her, that was the point at issue in the struggle between Christ and Satan and it was what God demonstrated in His multiplex plan of atonement.

PROV 30:1-6 AS THE MAIN IMPLIED REFERENCE IN JOHN 3:1-21

AECIO E. CAIRUS

Introduction

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3:1-21 is widely recognized as one of the summits of God's revelation in the New Testament,[1] and as foundational to all other discourses in the fourth gospel.[2] For all its spiritual luminosity, however, the passage exhibits an apparently uneven flow of thought, with abrupt transitions between topics. The successive interventions between Nicodemus and Jesus may be outlined as follows:

N   Your teaching must come from God, for it is obvious that God is with you (v. 2).

J   To enter the kingdom of God one must be born again/from above (v. 3).

N   Can anyone reenter the womb? (v. 4).

J   One must be born both from water and spirit (or: flesh and spirit, vv. 5,6). The development of the spirit-born person is as incomprehensible as the wind (vv. 7,8).

N   How can this be? (v. 9)

J   You are rejecting a testimony given strictly within the limits of personal knowledge (vv. 10-12) about events on earth. But the Man who "ascended to heaven and descended" can be no other than the Son of Man (v. 13), who must now "ascend" giving salvation to all those who trust in Him (vv. 14,15), since His previous "descent" was not for condemnatory judgment but for a salvific mission from the loving Father (vv. 16,17). Judgment is automatic as every single person chooses to accept Him or not (vv. 18-21).

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[1]For many Christians John 3:16 is the first, foremost, or even the only passage they commit to memory.

[2]Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber & Faber, 1940), 203.

While this summary is not intended to do justice to the spiritual depth of the conversation, it truthfully reports on the sequence of topics. The connection between some of these thoughts is self-evident, but this is not true for all parts of the conversation. For example, how is the divine origin of Jesus' teaching, as recognized by Nicodemus, to be connected with the need for a new birth? How is the rejection of personal testimony by some Jewish leaders to be related to the true explanation about Him "who ascended and descended from heaven"?

These difficulties with the flow of thought in the passage disappear with the realization that there is an OT passage to which both Nicodemus and Jesus implicitly allude, and which weaves together the topics of their conversation. Prov 30:1-6 is not explicitly cited in this talk. However, since both men were considered rabbis (John 3:2,10), they were expected to recognize the implicit biblical allusions in each other's intervention, and extend them in their own, so as to produce a biblical repartee of the type enjoyed even today by many people deeply familiar with the biblical text.

It has long been understood that the words of Jesus in this conversation allude to Prov 30:3-5.[3] These verses have been called the "seed-bed"[4] of ideas expounded by Jesus at that time, especially "His central thoughts"[5]: the recognition of His name as God's eternal Son, the promise of eternal life for all those who put their trust in Him, the ascending and descending of the Son of Man, and even God's "heavenly activities with water and wind." [6]

However, the first verses of the unit (Prov 30:1,2) as well as the last (30:6),[7] have been insufficiently recognized as integral to these allusions. This paper contends that, once the whole of Prov 30:1-6 is given its proper place, the flow of ideas in John 3:1-21 becomes fully comprehensible. Further, we will also learn how Jesus gave shape to His usual self-presentation as the Danielic "Son of Man" by means of other less apocalyptic parts of the Hebrew Bible. In this way we obtain additional insights into how He understood His mission on earth and revealed it to His disciples.

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[3]For example, Prov 30:4 is given as a cross-reference for John 3:13 in K. Aland et al., ed. *The Greek New Testament*, 3d ed. (NY & London: United Bible Societies, 1983).

[4]W. Hall Harris III, "Exegetical Commentary on John 3," Trustworthy Bible Study Resources; accessed 21 Sept, 2004; available from http://www.bible.org; Internet.

[5]Zane C. Hodges, "Water and Spirit: John 3:5," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (1978): 220.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Both the ancient Hebrew *petachah* system and the modern *Biblia Hebraica* paragraphing confirm these limits for the unit.

Possible Allusions

Allusions to Prov 30:1-6 in John 3:1-21 can be verified in any version. However, by reading the Hebrew consonantal text in a particular way, the relationship becomes clearer. In particular, some terms in 30:1 may be translated as part of the discourse of the text, instead of constituting personal names ("Ithiel" and an otherwise unknown "Ucal") as in the modern versions that follow the medieval Masoretic punctuation.[8] Ancient versions, such as the LXX and the Vulgate, did not find personal names here. This does not imply that such a reading of the Hebrew text is the "correct" one,[9] only that it was possible for Nicodemus and/or Jesus to see the text in this way, which contributes to explain their conversation.

The consonantal Hebrew text below, together with an interlinear translation, are designed to highlight those possibilities that enhance an understanding of the passage:

30:1a *dbry*　　　*'gwr*　　*bn-yqh*　　　　*hmś'*
　　　The words of Agur son of Jakeh,　　　the oracle.
30:1b *n'm*　　　*hgbr*　　　　　*l'yty 'l*
　　　The Man of God[10] spoke on "God is with me";[11]
30:1c *l'yty 'l*　　　　　*w'kl*
　　　On "God is with me, so I am fully capable,[12]
30:2a *ky*　　*b'r*　　*'nky m'yš*
　　　for I am the most unschooled of men,
30:2b *wl'*　　　*bynt*　　*'dm*　　*ly*
　　　and do not possess human sophistication,
30:3a *wl'*　　　*lmdty*　　*ḥkmh*
　　　nor did　　I learn　　wisdom,

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[8]An exception is ASV mg, which translates *'ty 'l*, not as "Ithiel," but as "I have wearied myself, O God;" and *'kl*, not as "Ucal," but as "am consumed."

[9]"The Hebrew of this verse is obscure" (RSV mg).

[10]A *gbr* is by itself a "strong man," but the formula *ne'um haggeber* is used in contexts of revelation (Num 24:3,15; 2 Sam 23:1ff.) and special relationship with God. See H. Kosmala, "*Gābhar*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:378-79.

[11]The preposition *le* after verbs of speech denotes the topic of the speech (as the English *on*). The term *'yty* can be pointed as *'itty*, "with me," which is also how it is to be understood as a component of the personal name "Ithiel." See M. Newman, "Ithiel," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (*IDB*), ed. George Arthur Buttrick (NY: Abingdon, 1962), 2:772. "God" (*'l*) is here written separated from the preceding term.

[12]Pointing *'kl* as *'ukal*, which preserves the Masoretic pronunciation. For the sense "I am capable," see Num 22:6 and Esth 8:6.

30:3b *wd t̊*   *qdšym*   *ʾdˁ*
yet,[13] I have the knowledge of the Holy One."[14]

30:4a *my*   *l̊h*   -   *šmym   wyrd*
Who   ascended into heaven   and descended?

30:4b *my*   *ʾsp*   -   *rwḥ*   *bḥsnw*[15]
Who   gathered the spirit in his bosom?

30:4c *my*   *srr   mym   bśmlh*
Who   has wrapped the waters in a cloth?

30:4d *my*   *hḥzyq*[16] *bkl- ʾpsy- ʾrs*
Who has dominion over all the ends of the earth?

30:4e *mh*   - *šmw   wmh-šm-bnw*
What is His name,   and what is the name of His Son,

30:4f *ky*   *tdˁ*
since   you know it?

30:5a *kl- ʾmrt*   *ʾlwh   srwph*
Every word of God is   tested.[17]

30:5b *mgn*   *hwʾ*   *lhsym   bw*
He is a Protector[18]   for those who trust in Him.

30:6a *ʾl - twsp*   *ˁl - dbryw*
Do not add to His words,

30:6b *pn - ywkyḥ bk*   *wnkzbt*
lest   He reprove you   and you be proved a liar.

Read in this way, the allusions to Prov 30:1b-3 in Nicodemus' greeting (John 3:2) become plain. "This man came to Him by night,[19] and said to Him: 'Rabbi, we know that *you have come from God as a teacher* (Prov 30:3), for no one can do *these signs that You do* (30:1c,2), unless *God is with him*' " (30:1c,d).

Here Nicodemus recognizes that Jesus had the "knowledge of the Holy One" even though He did not have the benefit of rabbinical education ("the most unschooled of men" Prov 30:2a). Jesus is a "fully capable" (cf. Prov 30:1c) Man

[13]The conjunction *wᵉ* often has an adversative sense at the end of a series.

[14]There is no negative particle in this clause, as in the modern versions. "Knowledge of the Holy One" follows the NASB.

[15]This follows the Greek versions as suggested in the Stuttgartensia critical apparatus. The LXX represents a Palestinian form of the Hebrew text popular in the days of Jesus.

[16]This also follows the Greek versions.

[17]Henceforth, the NASB is followed, unless otherwise noted.

[18]This is vocalized as *megen*, the alternative being *magen* (shield). In any case it contains a reference to Gen 15:1-6.

[19]Rabbis who had secular occupations during the daytime met for theological study and debate at night.

of God, and the signs He performs argue powerfully that "God is with Him" (cf. Prov 30:1b).

This greeting shows that some elements in the religious establishment[20] of the late Second Temple era were able to accept the notion that Jesus was a man of God. They did not seem to realize, however, that a new era was dawning with Him. Therefore, Jesus, who obviously had no difficulty in recognizing the allusions to Prov 30:1-3 in this salutation, found in the next verse (30:4b,c) some ideas that might correct this deficiency. His statement, "Unless one is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), seems inspired in terms of Prov 30:4 which suggests sonship. In the Hebrew Bible, the term *hosen* (bosom) connotes the place where sons are gathered (Isa 49:22). Following this clue, the "spirit" which is "gathered" in the bosom of a heavenly Being (Prov 3:4a,b) suggests a spiritual sonship "from above."

Many commentators believe that being "born from water" (John 3:5) refers to natural birth, that is, being born "from the flesh" (3:6).[21] They hold this position because of the "bag of waters" (amniotic sac) in which the fetus develops inside the uterus, the rupture of which announces an imminent birth.[22] Others ardently dispute this, seeing in "water" a reference to baptism or, with more claim to probability, to the waters upon which the *ru*ʰ* (wind/spirit) of God hovered at creation (Gen 1:2) This understanding makes the birth "from water" synonymous with the birth "from above."

This *crux interpretum* will probably remain even after taking the passage of Proverbs into consideration,[23] since the "waters wrapped into a cloth" (Prov 30:4c) may seem to favor both interpretations, either as a literal description of the fluid enveloped in the amniotic membrane or as a poetic description of the "gathering of the waters in one place" at creation (Gen 1:9). While the former has the advantage of literalness, the latter is more natural in the context of Prov 30 when this passage is seen independently from its echo in John 3.

[20]Nicodemus, "ruler of the Jews" (John 3:1) was a Pharisee (7:50) and a rich man (19:39). This name was probably for Gentile consumption only (Grk., conquering people). In more intimate circles he would have been known as "Rabbi Israel," a people's name that means "prevailing upon God," according to Gen 32:28. A possible pun ("teacher of Israel," that is, Rabbi Israel) may be found in 3:10.

[21]Cf. Hodges, 211-13.

[22]This cannot be considered too "scientific" or "clinical" to be a valid interpretation, as Hodges, 212, claims. As a matter of fact, primitive peoples, and those of antiquity, were much more familiar with the phenomenon than modern urban populations, who tend to consign this matter to health care specialists.

[23]One of the main objections leveled against the "birth from water = birth from the flesh" position, is that which stipulates that biological birth is a condition for entering the kingdom of heaven. Hodges says that it is unnecessary or "jejune" (ibid.). However, this objection disappears if Jesus is not bringing up the topic of water Himself, but merely interpreting successive parts of the OT passage.

What seems beyond dispute is that Nicodemus saw the amniotic bag of waters as an interpretive option, since he pointed to the difficulty of "enter[ing] a second time into his mother's womb" (Grk. *koilia*, the uterus, 3:4). This statement is almost uniformly denounced today as unbelievably crass literalism on the part of Nicodemus. However, seen against the backdrop of Prov 30:4, it looks as if Nicodemus intended it to show he was on track, following the allusions to the Hebrew Bible which he initiated and Jesus continued.

Jesus' statement on the mighty sway of wind (*pneuma*, spirit), which is able to "blow where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it" (John 3:8), seems inspired by Prov 30:4d, for this heavenly power "has dominion over all the ends [i.e., compass points] of the earth." Nicodemus should "not marvel" that such a power is present in an unschooled man, because, just as in the case of wind, the development of this force cannot be perceived by humans or attributed to normal causes. Indeed, we do "not know where it comes from and where it is going" (3:8). Nicodemus, however, remained skeptical (3:9).

Jesus then continued His *pesher*[24] on Prov 30 at another verse. The incredulity of Nicodemus was inexcusable, since Jesus was, in fact, keeping to the letter of 30:6. He was not adding to God's words or going beyond direct knowledge into speculative matters (John 3:11). So far He had only spoken about events in which He had been involved on earth (3:12), that is, the signs which had so impressed Nicodemus (3:2). But Prov 30:4a attributes this power to Somebody who "ascended into heaven and descended," and 30:4e implies a reference to both God "and His Son." This, says Jesus in 3:13, can only be taken as meaning the Son of Man.

This heavenly personage (Dan 7:13) had already been eschatologized by the pre-Christian Jewish reflection (Enoch, IV Ezra, and a large part of the early Rabbinical literature), following the clues in Dan 7:14,22,27, as the Judge who will appear at the end of time "sitting on the throne of His glory" (Enoch 62:2-5).[25] While Jesus applied this phrase to Himself (Matt 25:31), He introduced important nuances in this concept, as will be presently shown.

The Son of God will indeed resurrect the righteous and (separately) the unrighteous at the end of time (John 5:25-32), when He is to "execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man" (5:27). However, in our passage Jesus seems to point out that the "Son of Man who is in heaven" (3:13)[26] in the Danielic vision, is described in Prov 30:4, not as first descending from heaven and then ascending, but on the contrary, as first ascending and then descending. While the latter descent is undoubtedly eschatological, the Son of Man who was now on earth having

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[24]This is a contemporary application of a biblical passage, a practice that was typical of the Second Temple period.

[25]S. E. Johnson, "Son of Man," *IDB* (1962), 4:413-20.

[26]RSV mg, following the "majority text" (Byzantine manuscripts).

"descended from heaven" (3:13), had yet to ascend there. Hence, Jesus was next expected to be "lifted up" (3:14) before His descent for final judgment.

This implies that the present mission of the Son of Man on earth was not one of condemnatory judgment, but of salvation, providing eternal life (3:15,16) for everyone who believes in Him, for "He is a Protector for those who trust in Him" (Prov 30:5b). The thought is repeated and reinforced in John 3:17-19. There is a sort of judgment going on since the descent of the heavenly Son of Man to earth, but this is largely automatic, as people choose to "name" Jesus as "[God's] Son" (Prov 30:4e) or not, that is, to believe or disbelieve in Him (John 3:18,19). However, this is not yet the judgment in which He will sit "upon the throne of His glory," but a judgment preceding His "lifting up," after which all people are drawn to Him (John 12:31,32).

Conclusion

The foregoing comments are not meant as a full exposition of this exceedingly rich conversation, but merely attempts to elucidate the relationship between Prov 3:1-6 and John 3:1-21. Such analysis tends to show that the passage alluded to by Nicodemus provided Jesus with an opportunity to show from Scripture the essential core of His mission on earth. It also enabled Him to preclude conceptualizing this mission as an "over-realized eschatology" in which the Son of Man was to execute the final judgment without further delay.

This analysis also tends to give more cohesion to the different parts of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus as an extended exposition of a biblical passage obliquely alluded to by both teachers. Seen in this way, the conversation is an excellent example of how Jesus was able to "explain . . . the things concerning Himself in *all* the Scriptures" (Luke 23:27), including, somewhat unexpectedly, the book of Proverbs.

THE PROCLAMATION OF RELEASE IN LUKE 4:16-30

JAMES H. PARK

Introduction

There is general consensus that Luke 4:16-30 is of programmatic significance in Luke-Acts.[1] This pericope has attracted a great deal of attention because of the major themes Luke encapsulates in the story and repeats elsewhere.[2] Thus, Luke 4:16-30 has been seen as a "preface,"[3] a "condensed version,"[4] and "an implicit reference to the future Gentile Mission."[5]

The Feast of Jubilee (Lev 25:8-17) shares the underlying theme of release with Luke 4:16-30. According to this legislation, "liberty" (LXX *aphesis*) was to be proclaimed throughout the land every seventh Sabbatical (25:1-10). The Jubilee was especially good news to the poor who could return to their own property (25:12) and receive forgiveness for their debts (25:41).[6] In one of the few extended studies on Jubilee theology in Luke, Robert B. Sloan has noted that "though not universally noticed, or, at best, not often pointed out by commentators of recent years, the jubilary background of this passage was widely recognized by commentators of bygone years."[7]

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[1]J. Verheyden, "The Unity of Luke-Acts. What Are We Up To?" in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. Verheyden (Lueven-Louvain, Belgium: Lueven University Press, 1999), 55. Verheyden reports that disagreement over the exact nature of the programmatic discourse by scholars in the late 1980s has resulted in "skepticism about the programmatic status of the discourse."

[2]F. Neirynck, "Luke 4:16-30 and the Unity of Luke-Acts," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. Verheyden (Lueven-Louvain, Belgium: Lueven University Press, 1999), 357, states that "there are a number of good reasons to justify the choice of Lk 4:16-30, widely held to be programmatic for Luke-Acts." The major reason given by Neirynck is that several themes introduced in Luke 4:16-30 reappear a number of times throughout Acts.

[3]Hugh Anderson, "Broadening Horizons: The Rejection of the Nazareth Pericope of Luke 4:16-30 in Light of Recent Critical Trends," *Interpretation* 18 (1964): 260.

[4]Jacques Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles: Essays on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 20.

[5]David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 89.

[6]The Jubilee itself was tied to the seventh-day Sabbath upon which both its time frame and theology of rest or release were founded.

[7]Robert B. Sloan, *The Favorable Year of the Lord* (Abilene, TX: Schola), 1977. He cites a number works that have noted the connection between the Nazareth pericope and the Jubilee: Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel According to S. Luke,* The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896); George B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke,*

More recently, others have joined Sloan in investigating the possible jubilary theme in Luke 4:16-30, emphasizing aspects such as the theology of the Sabbath;[8] Jesus' ministry to the poor;[9] and His role as a Liberator.[10] There has also been some ambivalence expressed about connecting Luke 4:16-30 with the Jubilee.[11]

Both Michael Prior and Paul Hertig have attempted to show the central themes of the Nazareth pericope by discerning the chiastic structure of Luke 4:16-22. This chiasm is important because it helps us to understand how Luke used this structure in order to amplify the meaning of the important elements within the story. Prior's chiasm appears to be based on the English translation:

> **A** And he came to Nazareth . . . and went to the *synagogue*
>> **B** He *stood up* to read;
>>> **C** there *was given to him* the book of the prophet Isaiah
>>>> **D** *He opened the book and found the place* . . .
>>>>> **E** *The Spirit of the Lord* is upon me, because he has anointed me
>>>>>> **F** to *proclaim* good news to the poor.
>>>>>>> **G** He has sent me to proclaim *release to the captives*
>>>>>>>> **H** and recovering of sight to the blind
>>>>>>> **G'** to set *at liberty* those who are oppressed
>>>>>> **F'** to *proclaim*
>>>>> **E'** the acceptable *year of the Lord*
>>>> **D'** He *closed the book,*
>>> **C'** and *gave it back* to the attendant,
>> **B'** and *sat down*;
> **A'** And the eyes of all *in the synagogue* were fixed on him.[12]

The Pelican Gospel Commentaries (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963); John Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

[8]Samuele Bacchiochi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Berrien Springs, MI: n.p., 1980). He incorporates and broadens Sloan's research by including a more foundational OT understanding of the Jubilee's relationship to the Sabbath.

[9]Paul Hertig, "The Mission of the Messiah and the Year of Jubilee: A Comparison of Luke 4 and Isaiah 61." (Th.M. thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989). He applies Sloan's research to Jesus' ministry to the poor.

[10]Michael Prior, *Jesus the Liberator* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). Prior devotes an insightful section on the Jubilary aspect of Jesus' proclamation and ministry in Luke 4. (See especially pp. 139-40).

[11]Robert F. O'Toole, "Jesus as the Christ in Luke 4,16-30," *Biblica* 76 (1995): 512-13. He notes that although not many have been convinced that Luke was speaking literally of the Jubilee, "most would grant that themes associated with the Jubilee appear in Luke 4:16-30." Cf. Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986), 67-68.

[12]Prior, 153 (emphasis his).

While the center of the chiasm (**H**), bracketed by the two release phrase (**G-G'**), appears to be clear, the other components taken from Isa 61:1-2 and 58:6 need further analysis. Another solution to the possible chiastic structure is offered by Hertig who uses the Greek text itself in constructing the various components.

> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up,
> and on the Sabbath day he went into the *synagogue*,
> as was his custom
>   **A** And he *stood up* to read.
>   The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was *given to him*.
>   *Unrolling it*, he found the place where it is written:
>   The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
>   because he's anointed me to *preach good news* to the poor.
>   **He has *sent* me to proclaim for the prisoners release**
>   **B**   **and recovery of sight for the blind,**
>   to *send away* the *oppressed* into *release*
>   to *proclaim* the year of the *Lord's* favor."
>   Then he *rolled up* the scroll,
>   *gave it back* to the attendant
>   **A'** And *sat down*
> The eyes of everyone in the *synagogue* were fastened on him,
> and he began by saying to them. . . .[13]

Like Prior, Hertig sees the expression, "recovery of sight for the blind," bracketed by the two "release" phrases from Isa 61:1 and 58:6 as the center of the chiasm. However, in order to better understand the fuller meaning of this passage and how it relates to the mission of the Messiah and His disciples, its theological richness needs to be discussed.

The Reality of Release

Probably the most important term in the whole pericope is the catchword *aphesis* (release). Luke has underscored this important term by inserting Isa 58:6 into 61:1-2 and presenting them as one quotation as shown here:

> 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

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[13]Hertig, 72 (emphasis his). For a slightly modified version of both Hertig's and Prior's chiasm, see David L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 43; O'Toole, 508; and Tannehill, 61-62, whose discussion of the chiasm affirms the importance of *aphesis* as a structuring factor.

recovery of sight for the blind, *to release the oppressed* [inserted from Isa 58:6], to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.[14]

This insertion has been discussed in several places.[15] Robert C. Tannehill observes that it could not have come from an accidental reading of the LXX.[16] Hertig maintains that it is clearly intentional and is placed here to highlight the significant OT theological meaning of *aphesis* and make it "an important theme in the book of Luke."[17] This word is used seventeen times in the NT, primarily by Luke, for the concept of forgiveness.[18] According to Sloan, *aphesis* is the key word that "ties together the quotation of Isa. 61:1-2a and Isa. 58:6 in Luke 4:18-19 . . . the programmatic Lukan rendering of the ministry of release."[19] Patrick D. Miller concurs with this idea when he writes, "The tie that binds Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6 together in Luke 4 is the small word *aphesis*, the word translated 'release' for the captives and 'liberty' for the oppressed. . . . It is the catchword binding the two quotations together."[20]

This forgiveness or "release" was an integral part of the mission of Jesus as well as His disciples.[21] Just as Jesus had certainly predicted that the repentance and forgiveness (*aphesis*) of sins will be preached in His name to all nations (Luke 24:47), Peter stood up before the nations on the day of Pentecost and proclaimed, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness (*aphesis*) of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).[22] As Paul begins his ministry, he echoes Peter's first sermon by saying, "that through Jesus the forgiveness (*aphesis*) of sins is proclaimed" (Acts 13:38).

This forgiveness or release is clearly accomplished only through the power of the Holy Spirit, which is constantly mentioned alongside this theme in almost every instance in Luke-Acts (cf. Luke 4:18-19; 24:4; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43 and 26:17). In the last instance, the release from sin through the power of the Holy Spirit is directly connected to the incorporation of the newly converted believers into the community of the disciples.

[14]Luke further modifies the verse by leaving out the phrase "to bind up the brokenhearted" which appears in Isa 61 after the phrase "to preach good news to the poor."

[15]See Bacchiocchi, 142; Hertig, 73-77; Sloan, 36-38, 177-94; and Tannehill, 66-71.

[16]Tannehill, 67.

[17]Hertig, 73. Of the approximately fifty times that *aphesis* appears in the LXX, twenty-two are found in Lev 25 and 27 where it is translated in most cases as "year of Jubilee" and in other cases as "release" (cf. Lev 25:10). *Aphesis* also translates the complex of Sabbatical-year passages (Exod 23:11; Deut 15:1-6; 31:10). In a unique sense, it is used in the "sending away" of Azazel on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:22).

[18]See Matt 26:28; Mark 1:4; 3:29; Luke 1:77; 4:18 (2x); 7:47; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:22; and 10:18.

[19]Sloan, 178.

[20]Patrick D. Miller, "Luke 4:16-21," *Interpretation* 29 (1975): 419.

[21]Hertig, 73-74.

[22]All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the NIV.

I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from *darkness to light*, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness (*aphesis*) of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me. (Acts 26:17-18)[23]

Tannehill summarizes correctly, "All this material demonstrates the fulfillment of the commission which Jesus announced in Nazareth, the commission to preach good news to the poor and proclaim release to the captives and oppressed."[24] It is through the release of their sins that individuals would be redeemed and incorporated into the community of disciples. Hence, the proclamation of salvation and the forgiveness of sins could be seen as a central gateway through which Jew and Gentile alike would enter into the new covenant promise as blessed by the Holy Spirit.

According to Sloan, this central concept of *aphesis* is itself rooted in the Sabbath and Jubilee and represents "in the Old Testament virtually every aspect of that particular legislation."[25] It was in harmony with this Sabbath/Jubilee theme, that Jesus went forth on His mission proclaiming release to those afflicted by physical, spiritual and social imprisonment.

It could then be posited that through the theologically rich word *aphesis*, Luke attempts to tie the Old Testament Sabbath/Jubilee time of release to the announcement and subsequent ministry of the Messiah and the community of His disciples. This redemption not only applies to the chosen people but must be extended to everyone who has need, including the poor and oppressed in society.

The Proclamation of Release

Sloan notes that the verb *kerusso*, "to proclaim," which is repeated twice in Luke 4:18-19, also has clear jubilary connections.[26] This verb strongly links the heralding concept of the Jubilee Year in Luke 4:19[27] with the proclamation that the "prisoners" and the "oppressed" have been released from their bondage.[28] The

[23]The motif of "darkness to light" is echoed in Luke's first mention of forgiveness (Luke 1:77-79) and Jesus' address in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19).

[24]Tannehill, 139. It is most important to note that once individuals were set free they did not go their separate ways, but were "released" from their sins and old ways of life in order to follow Jesus in the way of discipleship.

[25]Sloan, 177.

[26]Ibid., 35.

[27]Ibid., 36, further notes that although three different Greek words underlie the word "proclaim" in the LXX of Lev 25:10 and Isa 61:1-2a, all translate the same Hebrew root *qr'*.

[28]While the word for prisoner (*aichmalotos*), taken from the LXX of Isa 61:1, literally means "prisoners of war," it may also have a broader meaning indicating "those shackled by pauperizing economic and social conditions." Ibid., 38. (Cf. 2 Cor 10:5; 2 Tim 3:6). The parallel expression in Luke 4:18, taken from Isa 58:6, is "oppressed"

proclamation of the Messiah's intent to release the poor in Luke 4:18-19 outlines both the primary means God is going to employ to bring about His redemption and the condition of the recipients of that salvation. The proclamation of the good news to the most needy and marginalized in society is often repeated in the ministry of Jesus and became the pattern that Luke's community of disciples was to follow.[29] Thus, the theologically rich term "release" is closely linked with the mission of Jesus and His disciples. The good news of salvation *must* be proclaimed.[30]

The Agent of Release

The "Anointed One" of Luke 4:18 is clearly a messianic term. Derived from the verbal form *msh* (to anoint), the noun is translated "Messiah." The Greek form is *Christos*, from which we get Christ. From the very beginning of his gospel, Luke highlights the theme that Jesus is the Christ. The first time the word "Christ" is used, Luke connects it with the announcement of the angel to the poor shepherds, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).[31]

This attestation that Jesus is indeed the Christ is immediately challenged by the devil in the wilderness of temptation (Luke 4:3). Christ's conquering of the devil in the wilderness invests His preaching and ministry with authority. These divine testimonies and events are clearly connected with the Spirit (Luke 1:17,35; 2:27; 3:16,22; 4:1,14) and the jubilary theme of the good news of redemption (Luke 1:68,77; 2:10,14,30-32,38; 3:6). The proclamation of the Spirit-filled Messiah is thus woven into the very fabric of Luke until it rises to a wonderful crescendo in 4:18-19. Sloan's description is quite appropriate here:

> Since the time of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi the Holy Spirit was believed to have departed from Israel, silencing the prophetic voice. Not until the Messianic time of the end, when the eschatological prophet would appear with the anointing of the Spirit, would Scripture again be fulfilled, the voice of revelation once more speak, and the Spirit return to Israel. Therefore, when Luke writes that Jesus "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (4:14), and then immediately proceeds to the incident in which

(tethrausmenous). Although Sloan notes that Isa 58:6 has both a jubilary history of interpretation in Judaism and a thematic connection with Isa 61, its particular character is manifested in "the jubilee charged term aphesis." Ibid., 40.

[29]Examples of this in Luke-Acts include the angel's proclamation to Zechariah that his son would prepare the way for the Messiah (1:19), Jesus' proclamation of the good news to "other towns" (4:43), and Paul's desire to go and preach the good news to the Macedonians (Acts 16:10).

[30]A good case in point is given in Acts 3 where Peter not only heals the beggar but then uses the occasion to proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection.

[31]It may be that the terms "today" and "Christ" are echoed in Luke 4:18,21.

"he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up" the crescendo of Messianic anticipation has by Luke's skillful hand reached its finest swell.[32]

From this brief survey we may say that the important terms in Luke 4:16-22 reveal that the programmatic pericope contains the essential elements for this mission of Christ and His disciples. Through the catchword *aphesis* Luke envisions the ministry of the "Anointed One" to "proclaim" the "favorable year" of the release of the "poor" and those on the margins of society. Responding by faith to this proclamation of release would become the essential gateway through which people would be incorporated into the community of disciples (cf. Acts 2:38). This divine message of release does not occur in a historical vacuum but is closely linked in Luke 4:16-22 to a very specific time.

The Time of Release

While Jesus ends His reading of Isa 61:1-2 by announcing "the year of the Lord's favor," the OT text actually ends with the negative expression, "the day of vengeance of our God." The fact that Jesus ends the reading from Isaiah proclaiming the Lord's favor instead of His wrath has "evoked varied explanations from the scholarly community."[33] The main focus of the closing part of Christ's citation of the text focuses on announcing the apparently sudden and immediate historical reality of God's favor. This positive and climatic nature of Luke 4:19 is defined by the terms "favorable"[34] and "year," the latter capturing "the desired verbal flavor of a celebrative era, season, or anniversary, and thereby indicates a time of special note."[35]

The proclamation of release or forgiveness on the Day of Pentecost by the apostles (cf. Acts 2:38) also has clear jubilary connotations. Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks (Exod 23:16; 34:22; Deut 16:9-10,16; 2 Chron 8:13), occurred fifty days after the Passover and was associated with the end of the harvest. It was significant because "on it the Jews celebrated the gifts of the grain harvest, thanking God for the blessings so received."[36] Since the very name Pentecost means "fifty," it may be said that it carries a jubilary motif as well.

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[32]Sloan, 53.

[33]Ibid., 32. He further reports that Bo Reicke "puts forward the two elements of significance relative to the omission: (1) the reference in 61:2b to God's wrath was not in keeping with the primary theme of the reading (i.e., the year of God's grace) as applied by Jesus and hence was abandoned; and (2) it was out of his sense of prophetic authority—that Jesus was free to effect both the omission of 61:2b and the addition of 58:6." Ibid., 93. See also Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations* (London: SCM, 1958), 44-46.

[34] This term is again repeated in Christ's important rejoinder in 4:24, "No prophet is accepted in his hometown."

[35]Sloan, 34.

[36]Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 233.

It appears that Luke intentionally constructed this closely knit pericope in order to highlight time as a major component in Christ's and the disciple's mission of release. Although it may be said that the opportunity for God to bring about redemption is always present, these verses seem to point to a specific time when the Messiah's salvation will especially be exercised.[37] In short, the time of release and the Messiah's action of release go hand in hand. We now turn our attention to this.

The Anointed One Proclaims Sabbath Release

In order to further clarify the meaning of Luke 4:16-22, another investigation into its possible chiastic structure is needed. The chiastic framework builds upon the insights of Prior and Hertig and seeks to understand the apparent anomaly in Luke 4:18-19 and the boundary elements in Luke 4:16,21-22 as they relate to who Jesus is and the timing of the redemptive release.

A He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up,

   B and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.

   C And he stood up to read.

      D The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him.

         E Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

            F "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

               Fα Because he has anointed me

                  G to preach good news to the poor.

                     H He has sent me to proclaim
                        release for prisoners

                           I and recovery of sight for the blind,

                     H' to release the oppressed,

                  G' to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

         E' Then he rolled up the scroll,

      D' gave it back to the attendant

   C' and sat down.

   B' The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

A' All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

[37]This apparent emphasis of time in Luke 4:16-22 gives added support to the hypothesis that the divinely appointed times of the Sabbath and Jubilee are an integral part of the Messiah's mission.

We have noted that the proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord in Luke 4:19 is climactic in nature. By removing the part which mentions the retribution of God from the pericope, Luke enhances its role in the linear structure of the verse but provides no complementary element to follow it in order to balance the structure.

In order to maintain the climactic nature of proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, the complementary expression, "Because he has anointed me" (**F**) has been placed immediately after "the Spirit of the Lord has anointed me" (**F**). By placing the two Spirit-filled/Anointed phrases together, Luke underlines both the pneumatological and Christological aspects in the ministry of release which is about to be proclaimed. As such, the apparent anomalies in the structure, rather than weakening, strongly promote the two main themes of the Nazareth pericope, namely, that *Jesus is the Christ* and *now is the time*. The amplification of these two important elements is further brought out in the boundaries of the chiasm in Luke 4:16,22. The opening and closing verses of the chiasm (**A** and **A'**), clearly bring to the fore the whole question of just who Jesus is. The people of Nazareth not only witnessed the humble life of Jesus as He grew up among them, but had just heard the Messianic scripture of Isa 61:1-2 applied at that very moment to the son of Joseph. Thus, Luke highlights the very important element of Christ's identity in the introduction (**A**), center (**F** and **F**), and concluding elements (**A'**) of Luke 4:16-22.

Further, the definite jubilary time proclaimed in Luke 4:19 is echoed in the "Sabbath day" of v. 16 and the related term "Today" of v. 21 as reflected in **B** and **B'**:

B and on the *Sabbath day* he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.

B' The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "*Today* this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Christ's announcement of messianic fulfillment through the reading of the texts in Isaiah echoed both the contemporary sectarian and mainstream Jewish expectation that such an event would soon take place.[38] By applying the words of

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[38]David E. Aune, "A Note on Jesus' Messianic Consciousness and 11Q Melchizedek," *Evangelical Quarterly* 45 (1973): 165, states that an early first century fragment from Qumran called 11Q Melchizedek, "provides the first piece of conclusive evidence before A.D. 70 that the proclamation of glad tidings could be considered a significant aspect of the messianic task." August Strobel, *Kerygma und Apokalyptic* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 105-111, argues that behind Christ's proclamation lay an actual historical jubilee year which is dated about 26-27 C.E. Prior, 141, rejects this viewpoint and regards any literal or liturgical reckoning of the Jubilee as "indulging in interesting speculation." While a chronological reckoning of the exact year

the prophet to Himself, Jesus brought the prophetic future of the messianic ministry of release into the immediate present on the Sabbath. Through the structuring of the key time elements in the pericope, Christ's proclamation is not only grounded in "the year of the Lord's favor" but even more specifically on "the Sabbath day." "Today," that is, "the Sabbath day," the reality of jubilary rest and redemption was fulfilled.

The Continuing Proclamation of Release

At the very heart of the messianic proclamation by Jesus is the promise that the blind would recover their sight (I). Although His own kinsfolk were blind and rejected Him, as they had rejected Elijah and Elisha, Jesus went forth to heal the sight of others and incorporate a faithful remnant into the community of disciples. This same ministry of redemption announced in the synagogue in Nazareth was then entrusted to His faithful followers to go forth and proclaim release to the nations (Acts 2:38-39).

The book of Isaiah itself had promised that the Messiah would become a "light to the nations" (49:6). This universal proclamation of God's redemption is then entrusted by Jesus to the disciples who would follow Him in the Way. Like Christ, Paul confirmed in his own ministry, again on the Sabbath day, that he had been made a light for the nations, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).[39]

Just as the elements of Luke 4:16-22 are embedded at the beginning of Paul's ministry, they are reconfirmed in his last major and climactic speech where both his own (Acts 26:18) and Christ's mission are described as bringing the light of God's salvation to the nations (Acts 26:23). Tannehill's commentary here is insightful:

> More strikingly, Paul summarizes his mission in words that seem to paraphrase Jesus' description of his mission in Luke 4:18. In Acts 26:17-18 Paul presents his commission from the risen Christ in these terms: ". . . the people and the nations, to whom I send you" [cf. Luke 4:18: "He has sent me"] to open their eyes, [cf. Luke 4:18: "to proclaim . . . to the blind new sight"] so as to turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan [cf. the "prisoners" who need "release" in Luke 4:18] to God so that they might receive release of sins" (cf. "release" in Luke 4:18).[40]

of the Jubilee may be somewhat tentative, I believe that linking the Jubilee with the Nazareth pericope is sound, despite the remarks of Tannehill, 68, who asserts that "this remains a possibility but has not been proved."

[39]Tannehill, 64-65, further delineates the meaning of "sight for the blind" by discussing how Luke might have encapsulated the extended references of light in Isaiah to this and other references in Luke-Acts. The healing of the blind may refer both to physical healing (cf. Luke 7:22) and spiritual illumination in Isaiah and Luke.

[40]Ibid., 67.

Thus, the proclamation of release that was originally enunciated on the Sabbath day in the synagogue at Nazareth provided important elements for the mission of the church. The Nazareth pericope contributed to the ongoing mission of the disciples as they went forth to proclaim that indeed, *Jesus is the Christ* and *now is the time* of release.

Conclusion

We have noted the central importance Luke gives to Christ's proclamation of release on the Sabbath day in the synagogue in Nazareth. While it is true that the catchword *aphesis* (release) is often translated "forgiveness" in Luke, the term is also deeply connected with the OT jubilee legislation of release, which itself, rests on the seventh-day Sabbath. Further, the concept of release forms a nexus with the jubilary material found in Lev 25:10; Isa 58:6; 61:1-2; and Luke 4:18-19. The central theme in all cases is *release*.

It is clear that Luke wanted to provide a strong Christological framework to surround the Nazareth pericope by carefully constructing a number of witnesses and events that all testify that Jesus is indeed the Anointed One. This is denoted by the chiastic structure of Luke 4:16-22 which highlights two critical elements in the pericope, namely, *Jesus is the Christ* and *now is the time* of release. Furthermore, the importance of a definitive time for the ministry of the "Sabbath day" and the proclamation of the jubilary "today" are underlined. Finally, the significance of the central phrase of the chiasm, "and recovery of sight for the blind," also infused the ministries of Jesus and Paul.

As such, Luke 4:16-30 provides a number of important themes for Luke's understanding of the disciples and their mission. The Nazareth pericope shows both the profound Christological and universal character of their community. Their ministry was to be imbued with the same Spirit that prompted Christ to proclaim the release of the prisoners of all nations and ages. The theological themes of the Sabbath and Jubilee informed and directed the understanding and practice of redemptive release and forgiveness in the life and ministry of the discipleship community.

Thus, it could be argued that the highly recognized programmatic discourse in Luke 4:16-30 not only has strong prospective elements but retrospective ones as well. As such, the Nazareth pericope may well be grounded not only in the Jubilee of Lev 25 but more foundationally in the Sabbath command of Deut 5:12-15; Exod 20:8-11, the story of the manna in Exod 16, and ultimately back to the Creation story itself in Gen 1-2. This may be fertile ground for further investigation.

ŚRD AS A REMNANT TERM IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT IN THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

KENNETH D. MULZAC

Introduction

The root *śrd* appears twenty-nine times in the OT. Twenty-eight of these occurrences are the masculine noun *śārîd*, "survivor." This word is used largely with "definite historical entities"[1] and mostly with a negative emphasis since it belongs to the language of warfare.[2] Nevertheless, there is a semantic bipolarity in the use of the noun that expresses decimation of the masses yet there is survival with clear implication for future existence and renewal.[3]

This noun is used four times in the book of Jeremiah: 31:2; 42:17; 44:14; and 47:4. The first is employed in the context of salvation while the latter three are found in the situation of divine punitive action against the people. In this paper, however, we will restrict our investigation only to those passages that deal with the word in the context of judgment.

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[1]A "definite historical entity" refers to individuals, groups, or families that have survived a catastrophe. See V. Herntrich, "*Leimma Ktl.*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (*TDNT*), ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 4:197; Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Origin and Early History of the Remnant Motif in Ancient Israel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1970), 145, 189, 194, 195.

[2]Louis Jonker, "Śrd," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:1271-72; Hasel, 196.

[3]Hasel, 199.

Jer 42:7-22[4]

This extended passage describes a situation of impending judgment, the result of the remnant's stubborn design to flee to Egypt, despite God's express command not to do so.

Translation and Textual Considerations

(7) At the end of ten days the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. (8) Then he called Johanan, son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces who were with him and all the people, from the least to the greatest (9) and said to them,

"Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition before him:[5] (10) '*If* you will certainly stay[6] in this land, *then* I will build you up and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not uproot you; for I repent of the evil which I have done to you. (11) Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, says the Lord. For I am with you to save you and to deliver you from his hand. (12) I will give you mercy. And he will have mercy and will let you return to your own land.'[7] (13) But *if* you say, 'We will not remain in this land,' disobeying the voice of the

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[4]Many scholars contend that the text should be rearranged. They hold that 42:7-17 presents Jeremiah's initial report of a divine oracle. However, vv. 18-22 in the present order assume the officers' refusal of that initial report, whereas in 43:1-3 they outrightly refuse it. Therefore, to sharpen the force of the dialogue, commentators transpose the passages: 42:7-17; 43:1-3; 42:19-21; 42:18,22. So too William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 275-76; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 3d ed. Handkommentar zum Alten Testament 12 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1968), 256; and John Bright, *Jeremiah*, Anchor Bible, vol. 21 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 251-52. However, J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 644-55; E. W. Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 143-44; and Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 715-21, agree that Jer 42:7-22 is a logically coherent unit. It is pointed out that while 42:18-22 anticipate the people's refusal to listen to Jeremiah, and 43:1-3 actually spell that out, the reader is already introduced to the motif of going to Egypt in 41:17. This is expanded in 42:13-17. Hence, "42:18-22 is a further statement about the journey to Egypt which describes Egypt in terms . . . about the fate of Jerusalem." Carroll, 720.

[5]LXX says briefly, *kai eipen autois outōs eipe kurios*, "and he said to them, Thus says the Lord."

[6]The emphatic form *yāšô tēšᵉ û*, "you will certainly stay," is used. MT omits the first *y* but this is restored in the LXX.

[7]LXX reads *kai eleēsō humas*, "and *I* will have mercy on you;" *kai epistrepsō*, "and *I* will restore."

Lord your God (14) and saying, 'No! We will go to the land of Egypt, where we will see no war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or be hungry for bread, and we will live there.'

(15) Now then, hear the word of the lord, O remnant (*šᵉ'ērît*) of Judah, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, '*If* you surely set your faces to go into Egypt and you go to sojourn there, (16) *then* the sword which you fear will overtake you in the land of Egypt, and the famine which you fear will follow you to Egypt, and there you will die. (17) *And it shall be that all the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there will die by the sword, famine and pestilence. There will be no survivor (śārîd) or escapee (pālît) from the evil which I will bring upon them.*'

(18) For thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, 'Just as my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will my wrath be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You will become an execration, a horror, a curse and a taunt. You will never see this place again.' (19) The Lord has spoken concerning you, O remnant (*šᵉ'ērît*) Judah, 'Do not go into Egypt.'

Surely, you know that *I have warned you today*[8] (20) that you have erred at the costs of your lives;[9] for you yourselves sent me to the Lord your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the Lord our God; tell us all that the Lord our God says and we will do it.' (21) And *I have declared to you today*, but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God in everything that he has sent me to tell you. (22) Now therefore, *surely you know* that you will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to live."

Structure

This unit describes Jeremiah's response to the remnant's inquiry for divine guidance. Further, a unitary quality is observed in the use of the verb *šlh*, "to send": in 42:9, Jeremiah presents the word of the Lord, to whom the people had *sent* him; in 43:1, Jeremiah has presented the word of the Lord, who *sent* him back to the people.[10] Therefore, the entire address of 42:9-22 belongs together.

One may schematize the passage into three parts:

[8]LXX lacks the phrase, "that I have warned you today." Holladay, 275, thinks that this omission is due to haplography, given the likeness of *kî-ha'îdôtî,* "that I have warned" in v. 19 to *kî hit'ētēm*, "for you used deceit" in v. 20.

[9]MT *hit'ētem bᵉnapšôtēkem*, "you have erred at the cost of your lives." LXX says *eponēreusasthe en psuchais humōn*, "you have done wickedness in your souls."

[10]The "sending" motif weaves the whole section together: vv. 5,6,9,20,21.

1. The introduction, which names the people in the situation: Jeremiah and the remnant (vv. 7-8).[11]

2. The body, consisting of Jeremiah's report of the oracle from God (vv. 9-19a). This has three distinct sections as indicated by the formulaic express, *kōh 'āmār* *ªdōnāy*, "Thus says the Lord":

a. vv. 9-15a, Introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel." Note the specific pattern:

      (i) v. 10a, Protasis, "*if*"

      (ii) v. 10b, Apodosis, "*then*"

      (iii) v. 13, Protasis, "*If* you say . . ."

      (iv) v. 15a, Apodosis, "*Now then*, hear the word of the Lord, O remnant of Judah."

b. vv. 15b-17, Introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel." Note the specific pattern:

      (i) v. 15b, Protasis, "*If* you surely set . . ."

      (ii) v. 16a, Apodasis, "*Then* it will be . . ." This apodosis extends to the end of v. 17.

c. vv. 18-19a, Introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel." The expression, "The Lord has spoken concerning you, O remnant of Judah" (v. 19a), acts as the concluding statement to this main body.

3. Conclusion (vv. 19b-22), Jeremiah's personal admonition to the people. Note the AB:BA chiastic structure here:

A Surely you know (19b)   **B** I have warned you today (19c)

B' I have declared to you today (21a)   **A'** Surely you know (22a)

Historical Background

Jer 42:7-43:7 describes both the prophet's reply to the remnant's request for a divine oracle and their actions in light of that reply. It is specifically noted that ten days[12] had elapsed before the divine revelation came (42:7). The context conveys the idea that immediately on receipt of the divine word, Jeremiah gathered the

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[11]In v. 7 *wayᵉhî*, "and it happened," is doubled. This is unusual. Cf. Jer 1:4,11,13; 2:1; 16:1; 33:1; 35:12; 43:8 for the usual introductory formula where the verb is used only once. This doubling of the verb is so because the temporal phrase precedes the actual statement of time. This exact statement of time (10 days) is found only here. The closest expression of time compared to this is found in Jer 41:4.

[12]Ten days are seen as the standard calculation for a period of waiting and testing (Dan 1:12-15). See Jacques Doukhan, *Daniel, The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 46. B. F. Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 336-37, indicates that this length of time gives an insight into the process by which a prophet seeks the will of the deity.

remnant together, described as "all the people, from the least to the greatest" (42:8; cf. 42:1), to give them the awaited answer.

Interpretation

Upon receiving the divine word, Jeremiah called the entire community together, along with its leaders.[13] They had sent him to the Lord (v. 9) and now he provides the reply which is set out in vv. 10-17 in terms of alternatives. The portases set the condition and the apodoses define the results: *If* they choose to remain in the land, *then* the Lord will deal positively toward the community. He will create conditions for normal life: building, planting, and not pulling down or plucking up.[14] The condition for such rejuvenation was singular: the remnant, those who were left behind following the catastrophe, *must* remain in the land. This would demonstrate faithfulness in the word of the Lord that He is able to save His people and fulfill His promise to restore them to the land (v.12). Also, remaining in the land demonstrated dependence on, and allegiance to, God and not on a foreign government or to another god. Hence, salvation was tied to obedience and faithfulness to God. Destruction was linked to disobedience and unfaithfulness. Salvation and doom were held in tension. God was willing to do His best to ensure that these people could receive the blessings that He was so willing to give. Indeed,

> This remnant, like the one in Babylon, was being offered the same promise of renewal and restoration. There was no unwillingness on Yahweh's part to allow any individual or group of individuals among his people to enjoy the blessings of the day of restoration.[15]

This offer of renewal toward the remnant community was due to the Lord's repentance or change of mind (*nhm*).[16] Robert P. Carroll observes, "It is the language of possibility and renewal, and when used of the deity indicates such changes in his attitude towards the community that its future becomes an open one. A good future is now possible for the people."[17]

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[13]This group is the remnant that is constituted of "the least to the greatest" in 42:1,8 (hence tying together both sections, 42:1-6 and 7-22). They are specifically named the "remnant" in 42:2,15,19.

[14]This language is reminiscent of Jeremiah's call to the prophetic office in 1:10.

[15]Thompson, 665.

[16]Ibid., 666. Thompson thinks that the verb should be translated as "grieve for," instead of "repent." His claim is that the primary sense of the verb is "take a (deep) breath," which is the sense here, and the translation "grieve" (sigh sorrowfully) would better suit the context. For the semantic range of this root, see H. J. Stoebe, "nhm," *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1984), 2:59-66.

[17]Carroll, 718.

The clauses of vv. 11-12 continue to indicate the protasis of v. 10. William L. Holladay indicates that the reassurance formula ("do not be afraid . . ."), the support formula ("for I am with you . . ."), and the statement of divine intervention ("to save you and deliver you"), form an oracle of salvation (*Heilsorakel*).[18] For the remnant community, the factors that mitigate against them, divine wrath and Babylonia reprisal,[19] are set at nought.

The protasis of v. 13 is shaped in a negative form describing the anticipated reply of the determination of the remnant to flee to Egypt. The apodosis of v. 15a repeats the introduction ("the word of the Lord"; cf. v. 7) and specifically names the group as the remnant. The introductory formula is also renewed. This gets the attention that *if* the people give a negative response to God, *then* the word of God also has a negative response. This is strengthened by the negative nature of the extended protasis (v. 15b) and apodosis (vv. 16-17). *If* they are determined[20] to go to Egypt for safety, security, and food, *then* disaster will certainly overtake them. Ironically, the very evils that they would attempt to avoid would be encountered. They would be destroyed by sword, famine, and pestilence.[21] The future is built on the either-or response: either they stay in Judah and live or go to Egypt and perish.

Verse 17 is located in the extended apodosis that denotes the terrible fate of destruction. It is a description of the intent of absolute judgment to be executed against the remnant group that is determined to go to Egypt. This group is clearly a decimated group, constituting "but a few of many" (42:2) after the Babylonians had overrun the country. Fearing Babylonian reprisals in light of the assassination of Gedaliah and the Babylonian garrison, this already small group determines to go to Egypt in an attempt to establish a positive future. Jeremiah's hardline position is that doing this would result only in a disastrous future. The very evils they are attempting to avoid would overtake them. This would be directed by the Lord. The extent of the Lord's judgment would be so complete that of this already small remnant, there will be no survivor (*šārîd*) or escapee (*pālît*). J. A. Thompson's

[18]Holladay, 285. See further John M. Berridge, *Prophet, People and the Word of Yahweh: An Examination of Form and Content in the Proclamation of the Prophet Jeremiah*, Basel Studies of Theology 4 (Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1970), 202-07; Eugene W. March, "Prophecy," in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. John H. Hayes (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1974), 163; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 11-13.

[19]MT allows for the king of Babylon to show peace toward the remnant. LXX reads the first person throughout and makes the Lord the advocate for peace, "I will let you remain in your land." This may understand the verb forms *riham* and *hēšîb* as infinitive absolutes, which are also possible and make good sense. See Thompson, 666, n. 6.

[20]The expression *śôm t*'*śîmûn p*'*nēkem*, "set your faces," denotes determination. The verb is strengthened by the use of the infinitive absolute.

[21]On the occurrence of this series of judgments in Jeremiah and in the OT, see John Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951): 32.

assessment is correct, "As though to contrast their experiences after the fall of Jerusalem and the murderous acts of Ishmael with what could now happen, the threat was that there could be no *survivor (śārîd)* and no *escapee (pālît)*."[22]

The effect of having no survivors or escapees highlights the drama of choice: *either* the people be obedient to the Lord, stay in Judah and live; *or* disobey the Lord, ignore covenant loyalty, go to Egypt, and perish completely. The second option underscores the overwhelming negative value of the judgment. The combination of the nouns *śārîd* and *pālît*, together with the force of the negation, serve the point well. As Carroll so aptly states, "The positive future lies in the land of Judah or nowhere. The Lord's repentance only holds good for life in Judah; elsewhere his intention is evil (v. 17).[23] "Failure to follow the Lord's injunction will bring incorrigible destruction which renders a state of "remnantlessness."

Verse 18 repeats the introductory formula and likens the effect of the wrath of the Lord on Jerusalem to that on the remnant who go to Egypt. The lesson is transparent: as Jerusalem was destroyed by God, so too the remnant that survived will be destroyed by God if they go to Egypt. Devastation and death are inevitable with the wrong choice.

Jeremiah then brings to an end the direct word of the Lord in the vocative address and the forceful imperative: "O remnant of Judah, do not go to Egypt."[24] The expression *šᵉ'ērît yᵉhûdāh*, "remant of Judah," forms an inclusio in vv. 15a and 19a. Therefore, the terrible consequences of going to Egypt are forcefully set to befall the remnant. This remnant will become hopeless and will never see Judah again. Hence, the forceful admonition, "Do not go to Egypt." Carroll is correct in stating, "In going to Egypt the people would appear to be reversing the original divine act of redemption which brought the people out of Egypt."[25] The Lord's word to the remnat is clear—going to Egypt will only be fatal.

The concluding statement of vv. 19b-22 shows Jeremiah's warning. The section is demarcated by the words *yādō'a tēdᵉ'û*, "surely you know" (vv. 19b and 22). Jeremiah issues an emphatic statement that the remnant's own self-deception[26] has led them to conceive a plan of fleeing into Egypt. They were so confident of winning the Lord's approval that they sent Jeremiah to pray for them and pledged themselves to do exactly what the Lord requested, as the prophet himself reiterates in vv. 20b and 21. Carroll comments correctly, "The emphasis by the people on

[22]Thompson, 667.

[23]Carroll, 719.

[24]There is a question regarding the statement, "Do not go to Egypt." Is it to be constructed as the Lord's word or Jeremiah's word? There is general unanimity that this is a citation of the Lord's word. Cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 252.

[25]Carroll, 720.

[26]The verb phrase *hitᵉᵗēm bᵉnapšŝôtᵉkem* means literally "you have caused yourselves to wander." See Holladay, 301, who proposes that the prophet is addressing the leaders of the group, saying, "You have led astray the whole group at the cost of your lives."

their willingness to obey (vv. 5-6) can now be seen as a literary device whereby the enormity of the people's disobedience is underlined (vv. 13,21)."[27]

The chiastic structure of this last section further emphasizes that, with the certainty of the warning and its rejection, the certainty of judgment is also real. Like the Lord's word, Jeremiah's warning is also clear: going to Egypt would only be fatal. Indeed, "the remnant of Gedaliah's community is presented as tottering on the brink of annihilation. Will they be so foolhardy as to go to Egypt?"[28]

Jer 42:7-22 constitutes Jeremiah's report of the divine word to the survivors who had requested him to inquire of the Lord on their behalf. The passage brings together three distinctive remnant terms, namely, *šᵉ'ērît*, *pālît*, and *śārîd*. Taken together they function to give a stinging message of judgment against the small Judean remnant that had survived the Babylonian overthrow of Jerusalem. Their stubborn choice to go to Egypt, despite God's warning that such an action can result only in punitive repercussions, leads to a case of remnantlessness. There will be no *šᵉ'ērît*, *pālît*, and *śārîd*.

Jer 44:11-14

In this pericope, the unmistakable ring of divine punitive action is heard. It is directed against the remnant, those who had remained in the land after the Babylonian onslaught.

Translation and Textual Considerations

(11) Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold, I have set my face against you for evil and to cut off all Judah. (12) And I will take the remnant (*šᵉ'ērît*) of Judah who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall be consumed; in the land of Egypt they shall fall; by sword and by famine they shall be consumed; from the least to the greatest, by the sword and the famine they shall die; and they shall become an execration, a horror, a curse and a taunt. (13) I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt just as I punished Jerusalem: with sword, famine, and pestilence. (14) *And there will be no escapee (pālît) or survivor [śārîd] of the remnant of Judah who have come to sojourn there in the land of Egypt (who will) return to the land of Judah to which they desire (lit. "lift up their souls") to return to settle there; for they shall not return, except as fugitives.*"[30]

[27]Carroll, 720.

[28]Ibid., 720-21.

[30]The expression *kî 'im-pᵉlēṭîm*, "except as fugitives," is suggested as a gloss in light of v. 14a. However, it is found in both the MT and LXX and is likely to be intentional.

Structure

Jer 44:11-14 constitutes a single unit as indicated by two factors: (1) the word *lākēn*, "therefore," introduces the section, just as *wᵉ 'attāh*, "and now," introduced vv. 7-10; and (2) v. 11 starts with, "Thus says the Lord . . ." while v. 15 begins a new section with *wayya ᵃnû*, "and they answered."

The unit is arranged chiastically:

A Remnant of Judah who determine to go to Egypt to live
   B They shall all be consumed
      C Sword and famine shall consume them
         D From the least to the greatest
      C' Sword and famine shall kill them
   B' God will punish them until they are consumed
A' No survivor or escapee of the remnant of Judah who have gone to live in Egypt.

Historical Background

Sometime after the remnant had sought refuge in Egypt, the divine oracle was given to Jeremiah (43:8-44:14). In fact, chap. 44 provides the account of the accusations of both God (44:2-14) and the prophet (44:20-30) leveled against the refugees because of their practice and open defense of idolatry (44:15-19).[31] This address concerned all the Jews living in different locations in Egypt: Migdol,[32]

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[31]Such idolatrous practices were not new to the Lord's people. Jeremiah had earlier condemned such in his "Temple Sermon" (7:16-20). Robert Davidson, *Jeremiah*, vol. 2, The Daily Study Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 150, claims that as a tolerated minority in a foreign land, it appeared sensible to adapt as far as possible to local Egyptian customs.

[32]"Migdol" is a NW Semitic word which means "tower" or "fortress." It is known from the Tell el-Amarna letters (14th century B.C.E.) as Ma-ag-da-li. The exact site is unknown. Thomas O. Lambdin, "Migdol," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (IDB)*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 3:377, identifies it as Tell el-Her. A more recent explanation claims a site labeled simply as T. 21, about 24 miles east-northeast of Tahpanhes. See Eliezer D. Oren, "Migdol: A New Fortress on the Edge of the Eastern Nile Delta," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (BASOR)* 256 (1984): 7-44.

Tahpanhes, Memphis,[33] and land of Pathros.[34] This suggests that Jewish settlements were already existing in Egypt before the arrival of these refugees.

Since no indication is given as to how much time had elapsed since the word and action of 43:8-13, we may agree with Holladay that it is difficult to envisage the implications of chap. 44. On the one hand, it suggests a kind of general epistle to all the Jews living in Egypt; but on the other hand, vv. 15,19, and 20 suggest that this is an address to an assemblage, and it appears implausible to imagine that all the Jews living in Egypt would gather for such an occasion.[35]

Interpretation

This pericope (vv. 11-14) is a "Prediction of Disaster"[36] against the remnant and the extent of that punitive action. The wordplay of the divine "setting of the face" (v. 11) against those who "set their faces" to go to Egypt (v. 12), immediately sets the stage for confrontation. This "idiom of determination"[37] (*sîm pānîm*, set the face) highlights the fact that the same behavior is carried out by both the Lord and the remnant, and only one party will eventually stand (cf. v. 28).

The judgment against the entire remnant is described in terms of consummation with the use of the verb *tmm*. Combined with the idea of "falling" (*npl*),[38] this spells absolute destruction and death.[39] The agents of this terrible disaster are the sword and famine.[40] These respect no one, regardless of rank or

[33]Memphis (Heb. *Noph*) was one of the main cities of Lower Egypt. It was located about 13 miles south of modern Cairo.

[34]The expression, "Land of Pathros," suggests a region, perhaps of upper Egypt. Thomas O. Lambdin, "Pathros," *IDB* (1962), 3:676, indicates that the Hebrew Pathros is a rendering of the Egyptian *p '-t ' -rsy*, "the Southern Land." It is also known that there was a Jewish community at Elephantine in the fifth century B.C.E. Their Aramaic documents tell much of their society. See A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923)

[35]Holladay, 303.

[36]March, 160, indicates that *lākēn*, together with the formula *kōh 'āmar 'adōnāy*, "Thus says the Lord," is a "Prediction of Disaster." It underlines the future aspect of the announcement and its disastrous effect or nature. Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, reprint, trans. Hugh Clayton White (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 65-67, calls this an "Announcement of Judgment" or an "Announcement of Ill."

[37]Carroll, 730. See also Jer 21:10 for the notion of setting the face against the city as an act of judgment.

[38]*Npl* means more than the common physical act of "falling." It is often associated with something violent or accidental. The root often designates damage, death, and destruction. See M. C. Fisher, "*Nāpal*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:587.

[39]Cf. vv. 18,27 for the consummation (*tmm*) idea.

[40]The alliteration *bahere bārā'ā*, "by sword, by famine," catches the readers' and hearers' attention and alerts one to the gravity of the situation.

status, wreaking havoc "from the least to the greatest," that is, the remnant (who are similarly described in 42:2,8).

The repetition of the agents of disaster emphasizes the fact that the very things that the refugees hoped to escape by going to Egypt are the very things that would bring about their ultimate demise.[41] Escape shall be cut off because the remnant shall degenerate to *l*ᵉ*'ālāh*, "execration,"[42] *l*ᵉ*šammāh*, "horror," *liklālāh*, "curse," and *l*ᵉ*herpāh*, "taunt." The remnant shall deteriorate to an object of derision and ridicule.[43] The reality of being reduced to an object of curse suggests the violation of the covenant, for curse is as much a part of broken covenant as blessing is of the unbroken covenant.

The person behind the agents of the destruction is now identified (v. 13). The remnant shall be consumed because the Lord shall execute judgment. In fact, the Lord will deal with the remnant in Egypt as He has dealt with Jerusalem. The equation is complete: the destruction of Jerusalem equals the destruction of the remnant in Egypt.[44]

The extent of the judgment is described in v. 14: there will be no escapee (*palît*) or survivor (*śārîd*) of the remnant of Judah. This points to a state of absolute devastation. It now becomes clearer that even the "remnant of the remnant" is in jeopardy of annihilation. The remnant who set their faces to live in Egypt shall have no redress. Jutta Hausmann's summary is quite appropriate, "There could now be no hope for revival either in Judah or amongst the community in Egypt."[45]

Further, the emphasis on "land" may be noted. The "remnant of Judah" are disobedient in that they refused the Lord's protection when they refused to remain in the land of promise. Instead, they return to Egypt, the land of former bondage. Hence, the remnant abandoned the Lord who in turn disinherited and displaced them. Their inescapable destiny, therefore, is death and loss of the "Promised

[41]Cf. Jer. 44:16,22 where death by these same means is threatened for going into Egypt.

[42]Here *'ālāh* has a metonymic use to describe people on whom curse come, having a calamitous effect. The person under consideration is placed in such a deleterious situation that if someone wanted to curse his fellow, he would refer to the fate of that person. See Josef Scharbert, "*'ālāh*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1974), 1:264-65.

[43]Cf. Jer 42:18 where the same fourfold designation is used of the remnant.

[44]W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistiche Redaktion von Jeremia 26-52*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten Testament 52 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 73, indicates that this equation between Jerusalem and the remnant in Egypt marks the conclusion of Jeremiah's sermon.

[45]Jutta Hausmann, *Israels Rest: Studien zum Selbstverständnis der nachexilischen Gemeinde*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament 7 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987), 110.

Land."[46] Jer 44:14 highlights this fact in that it underscores the divine punishment that will be executed upon the disobedient remnant. Rank and social standing have no credibility here because the judgment will be all-encompassing, "from the least to the greatest," of those who have determined to go to Egypt to live. Their very attempt to escape the things that will bring destruction is ironic because those same things will bring about their destruction.[47]

The totality of divine retribution is highlighted in the headline: $w^e l\bar{o}$ '$yihy^e h$ $p\bar{a}lit$ $w^e s\bar{a}r\hat{i}d$ $li\check{s}$ '$\bar{e}r\hat{i}t$ $y^e h\bar{u}d\bar{a}h$, "and there will be no escapee or survivor of the remnant of Judah." Three remnant terms are combined. The effect of this is that it denotes a state of absolute devastation: even the "remnant of the remnant" is in jeopardy of annihilation. In fact, even their desire to return to Judah will be truncated. Jeremiah is clear that he is not speaking of "permanent Jewish settlers in Egypt (v.14) but only to the remnant who had sought refuge there with the hope of returning to the land of Judah at the earliest opportunity."[48] Perhaps the point is being made that the future did not lie with those who determined to go to Egypt, even if they intended to return to their homeland later.

The last phrase of v. 14, $k\hat{i}$ $l\bar{o}$ '$-y\bar{a}\check{s}\bar{u}b\bar{u}$ $k\hat{i}$ 'im-$p^e l\bar{e}t\hat{i}m$, "they shall not return, except fugitives," seems to contradict v. 14a where no such allowance is made. For this reason, it is often treated as a gloss by commentators.[49] However, this may be a stylistic device designed to deliberately denote the effect of the judgment. As Thompson affirms, "If a very few return to the homeland it will be so few as merely to emphasize the extent of the judgment on the community in Egypt."[50] The total effect of the picture presented here is one of unrelenting judgment on the remnant. Indeed, "Only *casual fugitives* will survive. For the remnant the picture is one of unrelieved gloom."[51] To be certain, the decimation of the people and their landlessness point to the insignificance of the remnant. A people without roots, destined to destruction, signals their rejection as the people of God.

Here again, a cluster of remnant terms are combined in a message of blistering judgment against the Judeans who survived the Babylonian onslaught in 586 B.C.E.

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[46]For land as a theological theme in the prophets, see H. Wildberger, "Israel und sein Land," *Evangelische Theologische* 16 (1956): 404-22; F. Dreyfus, "Le théme de l'héritage dans l'AT," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques Théologiques* 42 (1958): 3-49.

[47]For the motif of the familiar triad of destruction: sword, famine, pestilence, see Jer 14:12; 21:7,9; 24:10; 27:8,13; 29:17,18; 32:24,36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:22; and 44:13.

[48]Charles L. Feinberg, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 642.

[49]J. P. Hyatt, "Jeremiah: Introduction and Exegesis," *Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956), 1098; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 264; Holladay, 304.

[50]Thompson, 678.

[51]Feinberg, 642 (emphasis mine).

Jer 47:2-7

In this passage, we find the only use of the *śārîd* in the context of a judgment oracle against a foreign nation in the book of Jeremiah.

Translation and Textual Considerations

(2) Thus says the Lord,
"Behold, waters are rising from the north
    And they will be like an overflowing river;
And they shall overflow the land and all that is in it,
    The city and all who dwell in it.
Men shall cry out.
    And all who dwell in the land shall wail.
(3) At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his stallions,
    at the rushing of his chariots and the rumbling of their wheels.
Fathers do not turn back for their children
    Because their hands are feeble.[52]
(4) *Because that day[53] is coming to destroy all the Philistines*
    To cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor (śārîd), helper[54]
For Yahweh will destroy the Philistines[55]
    The remnant (šᵉ'ērît) of the island[56] of Caphtor
(5) Baldness has come to Gaza

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[52]MT *mēripyôn yādāyim*, lit. "because of sinking of hands."

[53]Duane L. Christensen, *Transformation of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy: Studies in the Oracles Against the Nations*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 3 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975), 212, reads *'al-hayyôm*, "on that day" at the end of v. 3.

[54]MT *lᵉhakrît lᵉsōr ûlᵉsîdôn kôl śārîd 'ōzēr*, "to cause to cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor, helper" is rendered by LXX as *kai aphanizō tēn Turon kai tēn Sidōna kai pantas tous kataloipous tēs boethēias auton*, "and I will destroy Tyre and Sidon and all the rest of their allies."

Holladay, 334, following the Vulgate, revocalizes from a hiphil infinitive construct, *lᵉhakrît* to niphal infinitive *lᵉhikkᵉrēt*, and construes the preposition *lᵉ* before Tyre and Sidon as introducing the agents. The phrase is then rendered: "(to be cut off) *by* Tyre and Sidon . . . ." (emphasis mine).

[55]LXX lacks "the Philistines." John Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 59, sees it as a gloss from v. 4a.

[56]MT *'î kaptôr*, "the isle of Caphtor," is translated in LXX as *tōn nēsōn* "the islands," which is equivalent to *hā'iyyîm* as suggested by *BHS*. Both Holladay, 334, and Janzen, 59, 74, accept the emendation but translate "the coasts."

Ashkelon has been silenced[57]
O Remnant (*šᵉ'ērît*) of their strength[58]
    How long will you gash yourselves?
(6) Ah[59] sword of the Lord,
    When will you rest (be quiet)?
Return to your scabbard,
    Rest and be still.
(7) How can you rest,[60]
    When the Lord has given it an order?
Against Ashkelon and seashore he has appointed it.

Structure

It is generally agreed that this oracle divides into two sections: (1) vv. 2-5: a war oracle of doom against Philistia; and (2) vv. 6-7: a song of Yahweh's sword (the agent of Philistia's destruction).[61]

This strophic division is based on the fact that in the first section, pairs of short cola are given while in the second, introduced by the vocative *hôy*, there is an unusual metrical pattern.[62] Both sections are linked by certain key concepts:

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[57]MT *nidmᵉtah,* "destroyed" (if the root is *dmm*) or "silenced" (if the root is *dmh*). Commentators favor the latter: Bright, *Jeremiah,* 309; Carroll, 776; Thompson, 695. LXX *aperriphē,* "cast away," seems to point to the first. The ambiguity of the root strengthens the sense of punitive damage: Ashkelon has perished, that is, been rendered silent.

[58]MT *šᵉ'ērît 'imqām,* "the remnant of their valley," seems awkward. Bright, *Jeremiah,* 310, suggests that *'mq* has the force of "strength" as attested in Ugaritic, rendering the translation, "O you last of their strength." So too Christensen, 212. Both follow the lead of G. R. Driver, "Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson,* ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), 61.

Albert Condamin, *Le Livre de Jérémie,* 3d ed., Etudes biblique (Paris: Lecoffre, 1936), 309, and Rudolph, 272, say that it is plausible that a city name has dropped out. Since Gaza and Ashkelon have already been mentioned, then Ashdod appears favorable; hence, "Ashdod, the remnant." However, textual evidence is completely lacking.

LXX has *kai hoi kataloipoi Enakim,* "and the remnant of the Anakim," the race of giants who inhabited Canaan before Israel settled there (Num 13:22; Deut 1:28). According to Josh 11:22, remnants of these people were found in the Philistine cites of Gaza and Ashdod.

[59]LXX lacks *hôy.*

[60]MT, *'ēk tišqōṭî,* "how can *you* rest?" Some versions read *tišqōṭî,* "how can *it* rest?"

[61]Christensen, 213.

[62]See conveniently, Holladay, 335, for the division by cola.

"Yahweh" (vv. 4,6,7); "isle" (v. 4) and "shore" (v. 7); the questions *'ad-māṭay*, "how long?" (v. 5) and *'ad- 'ānāh*, "how long?" (v. 6 and *'ēk*, "how?" (v. 7).[63]

The entire passage is generally accorded to Jeremiah, without any literary dependence on other oracles against Philistia contained in the prophets (Isa 14:29-32; Ezek 25:15-17; Amos 1:6-8; Zeph 2:4-7).[64]

Historical Background

Jer 47:2 says that this oracle against the Philistines came before Pharaoh attacked Gaza. Several positions have been put forward regarding this occasion: (1) Some connect it with the activity of Pharaoh Neco in Philistia subsequent to his victory over Josiah in 609 B.C.E. This theory is based on the statements of Herodotus, which claim that after the battle of Megiddo, Neco destroyed the city of Kadytis, usually identified with Gaza, in 609 B.C.E.[65] (2) Gaza's defeat points to the Babylonian conquests in Palestine after the defeat of Egypt in 605 B.C.E.[66] (3) In late 601 B.C.E. Pharaoh Neco defeated Nebuchadnezzar, and in an attempt to reassert his authority in Palestine, he destroyed Gaza in 600 B.C.E.[67] (4) H. Tadmor looks at fragments of the poem here in Jer 47 that he thinks point to a rebellion of Ashkelon against the Assyrian emperor Esarhaddon.[68] (5) Perhaps Pharaoh Psamtik I, after his capture of Ashdod, also captured the more southerly cities of Ashkelon and Gaza. This may have happened toward the end of his reign (d. 610 B.C.E.).[69] (6) John Bright thinks that the "most plausible cause" is to connect chap. 47 with the events of the year immediately following 605 B.C.E. when the Babylonians marched into Palestine and destroyed certain Philistine cities.

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[63]Note the relation between *dmh* and *dmm*: Ashkelon has been "silenced" (from the effects of war [*dmh* niphal], v. 5) and O sword, be "silent" (that is, " stop killing" [*dmm* qal], v. 6). So *dmm* is intended to be heard in assonance with *dmh*.

[64]Andrew W. Blackwood Jr., *Commentary on Jeremiah* (Waco, TX: Word, 1977), 292.

[65]Herodotus *Hist*. II, 159. Cf. A. Malamat, "The Historical Setting of Two Biblical Prophecies on the Nations," *Israel Exploration Journal* 1 (1950): 154-55, 158; Oded Borowski, "Judah and the Exile," in *Israelite and Judean History*, Old Testament Library, ed. J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (London: SCM, 1977), 468.

[66]D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1956), 68-73.

[67]H. J. Katzenstein, " 'Before Pharaoh Conquered Gaza' (Jeremiah 47:1)," *Vetus Testamentum* 33 (1983): 250. He dates the actual giving of the oracle to the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605/604 B.C.E.).

[68]H. Tadmor, "Philistia under Assyrian Rule," *Biblical Archaeologist* 29/3 (1966): 100, n. 52.

[69]Ernst Vogt, "Die neubabylonische Chronik über die Schlacht bei Karkemisch und die Einnahme von Jerusalem," in *Volume de Congréss, Strasbourg, 1956: Vetus Testamentum Supplement 4*, ed. G. W. Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 1957), 77. Vogt's deduction is based on the statements of Herodotus, *Hist*. II, 157.

For example, the Babylonian Chronicle shows that Ashkelon was ravaged in December, 604 B.C.E.[70]

Despite all these choices, I have to admit with Bright that with regard to the exactness or the circumstances surrounding the time 'before Pharaoh smote Gaza', "we cannot be sure." [71]

Interpretation

Judgment comes to the fore in this poem against Philistia. The first strophe vividly portrays the terror of battle. The pairs of short cola heighten the emotional content.[72] The overflowing flood of v. 2 is used as a metaphor of destruction by an invading foe. While the foe is unnamed (it comes only from the north),[73] its devastating effect is underscored both in lamentation (*the inhabitants of that land shall howl* v. 2b) and paralysis (*the fathers shall not look back for their children because of enfeebled hands* v. 3b). This is "a paralysis so overwhelming as to inhibit the basic instinct of parent to protect child." [74]

In v. 4 the poem becomes specific for the first time:[75] "the day has come" (*hayyôm habbā'*) for the destruction of the Philistines. This day is synonymous with

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[70]Bright, *Jeremiah*, 312.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Christensen, 213.

[73]That opposition comes from the north has led some exegetes to comment that it could not be the Egyptians (who would come from the south) but the Babylonians. So Bright, *Jeremiah*, 312; Holladay, 337; Thompson, 697. On this basis, it has been forwarded that v. 1 is merely an erroneous interpretation by a later editor. The LXX (which says only, "Concerning the Philistines," in v. 1) is of little help.

Malamat, 155, thinks that the "foe from the north" refers to the Scythians. They were so intrigued to destroy Egypt that while the Babylonian army returned home, they pursued Pharaoh Psamtik I to the border of Egypt. He was able, by means of gifts and entreaties, to persuade them not to invade Egypt. On their retreat, the Scythians invaded the coast of Palestine in the spring of 609 B.C.E., partially devastating Philistia on the way. The echo of their invasion is heard in Jer 47:2-3. After Psamtik I died (610 B.C.E.), Neco assumed the throne, and on his way home after the indecisive siege of Harran in Elul/September 609 B.C.E., he demolished Gaza.

However, this proposal of a Scythian invasion of Palestine has been refuted. See Richard P. Vaggione, "Over All Asia? The Extent of the Scythian Domination in Herodotus," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973): 523-30.

[74]Holladay, 336.

[75]Prior to this, there was a certain ambiguity since neither the speaker nor the audience was named; the king who inflicts the wound was unnamed; even the land to be punished was not mentioned. Ibid., says, "This non-specific tone communicates distance and a kind of cosmic totality."

the "Day of the Lord,"[76] which boils with judgment and defeat. Specificity is advanced by pointing to Tyre and Sidon. Whether or not there was an alliance between these Phoenician cities and the Philistines, "the story of the past showed that the great powers all attacked the persistently rebellious (cf. 27:3) Phoenician seaport towns first of all before descending on Philistia."[77]

Yahweh is identified as the agent of this terrifying disaster. He will destroy the Philistines, "the remnant (*šᵉ'ērît*) of Capthor."[78] The noun *šᵉ'ērît* expresses a

[76]Jeremiah never speaks of the "Day of the Lord," *yôm YHWH*. However, he uses expressions like *yāmîm bā'îm*, "the days come" (7:32; 9:24; 23:5; 31:27,31); *bayyāmîm hāhēm*, "in those days" (3:16,18; 31:29; 50:4,24); *ba'ēt hāhî*, "at that time" (3:17; 4:11; 8:1; 31:1); *hāy yôm hāhû*, "that day" (46:10; and slight variations in 50:27,30,31); and *hāyyôm habbā'*, "the day has come" (47:4), with essentially the same meaning as *yôm YHWH* in the other prophets. See G. von Rad, " 'Day' in the OT," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:946.

See further on the "Day of the Lord" in the OT: M. Weiss, "The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord'–Reconsidered," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 37 (1966): 29-60; F. J. Helewa, "L' origine du concept prophétique du 'Jour de Yahve'," *Ephemerides Carmeliticae* 15 (1964): 3-36; F. C. Fensham, " A Possible Origin of the Concept of the Day of the Lord," *Biblical Essays* (1967): 90-97; Klaus-Dietrich Schunck, "Strukturlinien in der Entwicklung der Vorstellung vom Tag Yahwes," *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964): 319-30; C. van Leewen, "The Prophecy of YOM YHWH in Amos 5:18-20," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 19 (1974): 113-34; J. Gray, "The Day of Yahweh," *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 39 (1974): 5-37; Y. Hoffman, "The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 (1981): 37-50; Ralph W. Klein, "The Day of the Lord," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39 (1968): 517-25; J. Bourke, "Le Jour de Yahve dans Joel," *Revue Biblique* 66 (1959): 22-28; D. Stuart, "The Sovereign Day of Conquest," *BASOR* 221 (1976): 159-64.

[77]Thompson, 697. Relying on James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 287-88, Thompson shows how Sennacherib did precisely this in his first campaign.

[78]Cf. Amos 9:7. Capthor is widely identified with Crete (but may be extended to include the Aegean Islands), possibly the original home of the Philistines. While there is still uncertainty regarding the identity and place of origin of these people, it is usually conceded that they were fierce and warlike and were enemies of Israel. Generally described as "Sea Peoples" they assaulted the Mediterranean in the 12th and 11th centuries. They were halted at the frontier of Egypt by Ramses III about 1190 B.C.E., who settled them, mostly as Egyptian mercenaries, in coastal towns of Palestine (which name itself reflects the Philistine presence). There they developed the famed Philistine Pentapolis, a confederation of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod, together with two towns in the Shephelah, Ekron and Gath.

For more on the Philistines, see Neal Bierling, *Giving Goliath His Due: New Archeological Light on the Philistines* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); J. C. Greenfield, "Philistines," *IDB* (1962), 3:791-95; W. L. LaSor, "Philistines," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (*ISBE*), ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 3:841-46; Moshe Dothan and Trude Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Macmillan, 1992); Trude Dothan, *The Philistines and Their*

negative intent here, in that even the "remnant" will be destroyed. This is strengthened by the emphatic *kî* clause introducing Yahweh and repeating the verb *śdd*, "destroy." Hence, the notion of destruction broods in this text. This too is magnified by the parallelism of the text: *Because that day is coming to destroy all Philistines* parallels *For Yahweh will destroy the Philistines*. Further, *to cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor, helper* parallels *the remnant of the island of Caphtor*. What is in view here is nothing short of the notion of the wiping out of the group so that not even a remnant is left.[79] This is confirmed in the emphasis placed on destruction, especially as this is expressed in the use of the verb *krt*.

Verse 5 confirms the terror of judgment by pointing out the response of the Philistine citizens to the destruction. Three of the common signs of mourning were the funeral rites of shaving the head, silence, and self-laceration.[80] This designated the ruin of Gaza and Ashkelon, "the last remnant of their strength," that is, of the Philistines. Long known as historic strongholds of Philistine resistance, Gaza[81] and Ashkelon[82]—the remnant of Philistine strength—plummet to destruction.

Material Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); H. J. Katzenstein and Trude Dothan, "Philistines," Anchor Bible Dictionary (*ABD*), ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 5:326-33; R. A. S. MacAlister, *Philistines: Their History and Civilization* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1965); Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Philistines," in *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 53-78; W. F. Albright, "Syria, the Philistines, and Phoenicia," in *Cambridge Ancient History*, 3d ed., vol. 2, Part 2: *History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 B. C.*, ed. I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd, N. G. L. Hammond, and E. Solberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 507-16.

[79]Julian Morgenstern, "The Rest of the Nations," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 2 (1957): 225-31, argues that this refers to a calamity that removed a considerable portion of the citizenry and rendered the nation numerically but a remnant of its former self. This historic event he traces of Xerxes' fouled foray into Greece in 481 B.C.E. By 479 B.C.E. the remnants of the Persian army were expelled from Greece. Since nations like Philistia and Edom, which assisted Xerxes, were depleted of population, especially of men who died in battle or who refused to return home for one reason or another, they were called *šᵉ'ērît hagôyîm* (Ezek 36:3-5).

[80]Carroll, 777; Thompson, 697.

[81]A city of long history, Gaza was the land gateway between Egypt and Asia for caravan and military traffic. It appears that it was not initially conquered by the Israelites (cf. Josh 13:2-3; Judg 3:1-3). Judg 1:18 in LXX says, "Judah did not capture Gaza."

Ancient reliefs show Gaza to be extremely well fortified. See H. J. Katzenstein, "Gaza," *ABD* (1992), 2:912-15; W. F. Stinespring, "Gaza," *IDB* (1962), 2:357-58; A. F. Rainey, "Gaza," *ISBE* (1982), 2:415-18.

[82]Ashkelon, a city with a long eventful history, is first mentioned in the Execration Texts of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt (ca. 1850 B.C.E.) where it is vilified as a rebellious element and enemy of Egypt. Seemingly, it was not conquered by the Israelites. See Douglas L. Esse, "Ashkelon," *ABD* (1992), 1:487-90; W. F. Stinespring, "Ashkelon," *IDB* (1962), 1:252-54; J. F. Prewitt, "Ashkelon," *ISBE* (1979), 1:318-19.

In the second strophe (vv. 6-7), introduced by a vocative, Yahweh's sword is personified as the "destroyer." Duane L. Christensen remarks, "The imagery is that of holy war with the Divine Warrior marching in battle against Philistia."[83] The name "Yahweh" connects this strophe with the first. The question, "How long/Until when will you be silent (rest)?" has the same purpose. As Holladay detected, Ashkelon has been "silenced" (from the effects of war), so now, the sword is asked to be "silent," that is, to stop the killing.[84] But as the further question of v. 7 indicates,[85] any attempt to restrain the sword of Yahweh before its work of destruction is complete will be futile. Hence, the ambiguity of the "foe from the north" is clarified. While the identity of the invading force is not given, Yahweh is the holy warrior who marches from the north wielding His sword to cut off the Philistines. Regardless of the identity of the actual army (that is, the stallions and chariots of v. 3a) it "is but the means he uses to vent his spleen."[86] The fury of the judgment is so great against the Philistine towns and seacost[87] that there is no survivor or remnant.

The fury of the judgment is enunciated in the completeness of its effect in that there will be no survivor (*śārîd*). This word belongs to the language of warfare,[88] and it is precisely Yahweh's war declared against the Philistines that renders havoc to the point that no survivor is left. This is highlighted in that *śārîd* is used in conjunction with *šᵉʼērît*, both in a negative context. The intent is transparent—complete destruction for Philistia so that there will be no survivor (*śārîd*) and no helper (*ōzēr*).[89] The noun *śārîd* points exclusively to destruction. Used in a negative way, it "leads to the inescapable conclusion that the reality of total loss is

[83]Christensen, 215.

[84]Holladay, 335.

[85]Note how the verb *škt*, "to be quiet, to rest," in v. 7 echoes the same verb in v. 6. Hence *ad-'ānāh lōʼ tiškōṭî*, "Until when will you be quiet?" (v. 6); *ʼēk tiškōṭî*, "How can you be quiet?" (v. 7).

Note also the parallelism between the second and fourth cola: *When the Lord has given it an order* parallels *He has appointed it.*

[86]Carroll, 777.

[87]Thompson, 698, believes that the prophecy against Ashkelon and the coast in v. 7 was fulfilled in 604/3 B.C.E. when Nebuchadnezzar overran it. A clue to this is found in a letter found at Saqqara, written in Aramaic, where Adon, king of Ashkelon, seeks help from Pharaoh Neco because the Babylonian troops had advanced to Aphek. See H. L. Ginsberg, "An Aramaic Contemporary of the Lachish Letters," *BASOR* 111 (1948): 24-27; John Bright, "A New Letter in Aramaic Written to a Pharaoh in Egypt," *Biblical Archaeologist* 12 (1949): 46-52.

[88]Hasel, 196.

[89]The two nouns are juxtaposed, giving the notion of an alliance. While there is no historical evidence of such an alliance, Holladay, 338, makes a case from Amos 1, where an oracle against Tyre (vv. 9-10) parallels an oracle against Philistia (vv. 6-8). He concludes that an alliance is not unlikely. (Cf. Ps 83:3 that pairs Philistia and the inhabitants of Tyre.)

emphasized.[90] This is strengthened by the parallel infinitives: *to destroy all the Philistines* parallels *to cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor, helper*.

Again, by combining another remnant word ($š^e$ '*ērît*) with *śārîd*, Jer 42:2-7 becomes rife with divine punitive action against a people. This time it is not directed against Judah but against a foreign nation, Philistia, the traditional enemies of God's people. This poem elucidates the effect of Yahweh wielding His bloodthirsty sword against Philistia. He marches from the north and His insatiable sword cuts down Philistia until there is no survivor (*śārîd*).

Conclusion

The noun *śārîd* functions as a powerful testament of judgment in the book of Jeremiah. In all three passages examined, the clarion call for judgment is unmistakable. Furthermore, the judgment comes from God. He is the One who calls for and executes His divine wrath. The nature of the judgment is such that there will be no remnant remaining. Yahweh's work is total; there is no escape.

[90]Hasel, 198.

ENFLESHMENT OF THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE: A MODEL FOR CHURCH MUSIC

JOHNNY RAMIREZ-JOHNSON, DAVID L. TAYLOR, RUBISEL RAMIREZ

Introduction

In this paper we argue that Christian worship, including the biblical accounts of it, is embedded in human culture. Because human culture is part of the worship experience, there is need for a method or model to determine what is appropriate and what is not. The hermeneutics of worship need to be biblically based and defined. Hermeneutical approaches to biblical exegesis are designed to translate the message of the Bible from the original text into today's language. This process of interpretation is part of a complex scheme of human oral and textual communication. All human communication, be it oral, musical, or ritual, when crossing from one culture to another, or from one time period to another, needs to be interpreted. Kenneth D. Mulzac puts it this way:

> Generally, oral communication takes place in familiar situations with familiar people. We are able to assess the context and intention of the speaker as we analyze and comprehend his/her message. A similar, though not identical, situation occurs when we read written documents. Since the writer is usually absent, the words themselves assume a greater importance than in a situation of oral communication. This introduces some degree of difficulty in the interpretation which may be compounded due to two factors: the extent to which the sender (author/editor) and the receiver (reader) share a common world of discourse and experience, and the extent to which the communication and the form in which it occurs involved specialized content and forms of expression. In biblical studies, other complexities may compound this difficulty in interpretation.[1]

Because human oral and textual communication is bound to a "world of discourse and experience," there is a need for understanding the world of the Bible

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[1]Kenneth D. Mulzac, "Methods, Steps, and Tools in Interpretation," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 5 (2002): 25.

in relationship to the world today.[2] Mulzac presents hermeneutical rules, a set of steps, for today's understanding of the truth revealed in the Bible. His sixth step focuses on the role of culture in determining the biblical message for today, "The Bible was not written in a vacuum. The people, events, languages, and customs were set in a particular place and time and were influenced or affected by the cultural norms and mores of society."[3]

The need to account for the "situation of oral communication" described by Mulzac, when written about biblical interpretation, becomes even more crucial when talking about the worship experience. When rituals and musical expressions of worship are the issue at hand, the role of culture is even more acute, and the need for exegesis even more relevant.

Following Aecio Cairus' work, we agree that there are two types of biblical writing: those where the writers testify of what God says (1 Pet 1:10-12), and those where the writers' intelligence (from within their own culture) mediates the message.

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[2]The key idea derived from Mulzac's steps for interpreting biblical culture is based on the axiom that when talking about the divine, humans do so in human language. This idea is also present in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 1:19.

> The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men. These men were inspired of the Holy Spirit. Because of the imperfections of human understanding of language, or the perversity of the human mind, ingenious in evading truth, many read and understand the Bible to please themselves. It is not that the difficulty is in the Bible. Opposing politicians argue points of law in the statute book, and take opposite views in their application and in these laws.

She says once again:

> The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. The Bible, perfect as it is in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought. Instead of the expressions of the Bible being exaggerated, as many people suppose, the strong expressions break down before the magnificence of the thought, though the penman selected the most expressive language through which to convey the truths of higher education. Sinful beings can only bear to look upon a shadow of the brightness of heaven's glory. Ibid., 22.

[3]Mulzac, 36.

> For Adventist exegesis, the meaning intended by the biblical author is
> paramount, since the communication of divine ideas is mediated by the
> intelligence of the human author. In some cases, however, the purpose of the
> author has been merely to testify to a revelation from God, the signification
> of which he could not fully know at the time (1 Pet 1:10-12), so that he
> merely transmits the revelation verbatim and lets us know that he is doing just
> that.[4]

When describing the worship experience, human emotions, feelings, and
cultural contexts influence that experience, and thus are "mediated by the
intelligence of the human author."[5]

Having established the need to account for cultural contexts when defining
Christian worship, it is pertinent to define what is meant by *culture*. Claude Geffre
sees culture as "a system of values and elements that induce modes of life."[6]
Culture is a "combination of knowledge and technical, social, and ritual behaviour"
that is "connected to history, rooted in a certain tradition."[7] K. Black's definition
incorporates the mental and ideological aspects of culture along with the material
means for culture to be experienced and communicated. "Culture is the sum [of]
attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another.
Culture is transmitted through language, material objects, rituals, institutions, from
one generation to the next."[8] Clifford Geertz defines culture as a system of symbols:

> In any case, the culture concept to which I adhere has neither multiple
> referents nor, so far as I can see, any unusual: it denotes an historically
> transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited
> conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men
> communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about, and their
> attitudes toward life.[9]

According to Geertz, when defining culture one also defines religion; in fact,
they go together. He comments:

> Religion is: *(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful,
> pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating
> conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these*

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[4]Aecio E. Cairus, "A Brief History of Bible Interpretation," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 5 (2002): 19.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Claude Geffre, "Christianity and Culture," *International Review of Mission* 84 (2001): 17.

[7]Ibid., 18.

[8]K. Black, *Culturally-Conscious Worship* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 8.

[9]Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

> *conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.*[10]

Using Geertz' definition of religion does not preclude a believer from accepting divine intervention; one can believe that religion is culturally grounded and still believe in God. One does not take away from the other; it is possible to develop a model where religion exists in a cultural format while acknowledging God as the ultimate rationale for religious life. What is particularly useful about Geertz' definition of religion, however, is the means by which the experience of religion can be factored in. He explains the experience and life of religion by means of culturally bound realities that are humanly construed. Regardless of the reality of God as revealer of truth, human beings cannot experience religion outside of their culturally bound sensory experiences and language. Every time someone worships God they do so via cultural means.

Worship and Culture

Defining worship from the point of view of experiencing it, S. A. Stauffer declares, "Christian worship is a corporate event in the sense of the church being the body or corpus of Christ."[11] She further defines worship as an activity that is "inherently related to culture."[12] Worship is a human activity and we bring our cultural identities to our worship. When we get together to worship God, we bring our personal ideas, feelings, and emotions, as well as our beliefs and norms. We express ourselves, our past and present, and our story of who we really are. As Frank Senn states, "We cannot avoid bringing our culture to church with us; it is part of our very being."[13]

Redefining worship, G. W. Hanson explains that the experience of the church in worship is a function of two variables: the degree to which members of the church recognize it as an appropriate response of the individual, and the corporate experience with the transcendent.[14] In other words, worship is an opportunity for believers to express their admiration, respect, obedience, and reverence for God who has chosen to reveal Himself to His people. These expressions can be experienced through people's behaviors, actions, rituals, attitudes, gestures, verbal

[10]Ibid., 90 (emphasis his).

[11]S. A. Stauffer, "Culture and Christian Worship in Intersection," *International Review of Mission* 84 (2001): 66.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Frank C. Senn, *Christian Worship and Its Cultural Setting* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 51.

[14]G. W. Hanson, " 'Multicultural' Worship: A Careful Consideration," in *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, ed. B. Blount and L. Tisdale (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 145-61.

expressions, body movements, and processions. Hanson labels such as spontaneous and ritual responses.[15] He asserts that the experience of a congregation can be authentic when it uses its cultural vocabulary, that is, the importance and value that each congregation gives to the experiences of the believer and their response to God.

All human worship of the divine comes in human language and consequently involves human manifestations of culture. Religious denominations and local congregations are influenced by some ethnic culture.[16] If the assumption that human culture guides all worship experiences proves acceptable, the question then is, how do you determine what is proper worship?

Christian Worship as Metaworship

James F. White, a Christian worship specialist, states that in Christian worship it is important to take into consideration "the whole body and all senses," and to "recognize that music is a body art."[17] Also, it is necessary to "think in terms of people's tastes and choices," not only in abstract terms of quality.[18] The "whole body" refers to the whole individual *person* as well as the feelings, attitudes, and experiences of the *people* participating in corporate worship as a group, the whole congregation. This embodiment can be called "metaworship" or "enfleshment" (worship that occurs as an experience and manifestation of the flesh), through which the worshiper can feel the holy presence through all the senses and emotions.[19] Timothy L. Carson states, "In metaworship, the Holy is experienced and felt . . . spiritual passion is expressed, thoughtfulness sharpened; and all the

[15]Ibid.

[16]P. C. Phan, "Liturgical Enculturation: Unity in Diversity in the Postmodern Age," in *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, ed. Keith Pecklers (New York: Continuum, 2003), 55-86, 199-211.

[17]James F. White, "Worship and Culture: Mirror or Beacon?" *Theological Studies* 35 (1974): 299.

[18]Ibid., 299-300.

[19]Enfleshment is defined as an experience of the flesh and through the flesh. It is not to be interpreted as being "of the flesh" in the most common sense that Paul uses that term, referring to a sinful tendency. (For examples of flesh as sinful tendency, see Rom 7:5; 1 Cor 1:26; Gal 4:29; Eph 2:3; Phil 3:3; Col 2:23.) Instead, this flesh is what Paul describes as defining the human experience; it is the very essence of what humans are. It is the biblical "heart," in today's terms equivalent to the mind or consciousness. Enfleshment is about flesh as a definition of what God created from dust, instead of flesh as a tendency towards sin. Flesh is what defines us as creatures with a human culture; we are human flesh and are bound by human experiences of the flesh, and experience the divine in the flesh. This is particularly true for Seventh-day Adventists who believe in the unity of the human and reject the duality of flesh and spirit within the human experience. Cf. 2 Cor 3:3; 1 Tim 3:16.

senses are engaged."[20] In metaworship, everybody is called to worship God with all their emotions, senses, traditions, beliefs, choices, and tastes. The worship experience involves not only the whole church congregation, but the person as a whole: physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Metaworship, as a corporate experience of the community of worshipers, brings meaning and provides the opportunity for the whole congregation to express their own desires and hopes.

It is helpful to consider the process of enculturation when discussing worship and culture. Stauffer speaks of "contextualization," which in Christian worship is "the use or echo of the local cultural and natural elements in worship."[21] Geffre says that in Gospel work, enculturation means the incarnation of the gospel in native cultures and also the introduction of these cultures into the life of the church.[22]

White believes that the forms and functions of worship can vary and are adaptable to all cultures.[23] There are doctrinal and doxological elements of worship that are universal in its presentation (that is, the centrality of the Gospel message), but the majority of worship elements show a dependency upon culture and reflect the beliefs, traditions, customs, and origin of the congregation's culture.

Enfleshment as a Worship Mode

The Third International Consultation of the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on Worship and Culture, held in Nairobi, Kenya, January 1996, concluded that

> Christian worship relates dynamically to culture in at least four ways, it is trans-cultural, the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture. It is contextual, varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture). It is counter-cultural, challenging what is contrary to the gospel in a given culture. And it is cross-cultural, making possible sharing between different local cultures.[24]

The Lutheran World Federation team represents five continents of the world. Their intention is to call churches to explore the local or contextual elements of liturgy and worship and their relationship with the cultures around them.

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[20]Timothy L. Carson, *Transforming Worship* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2003), 40.

[21]Stauffer, 72.

[22]Geffre, 17-29.

[23]J. White, 299. He adds, "In this pluralistic approach to worship we have rediscovered some of the things that revivalism knew. We need to know and understand people in order to plan Christian worship. We need to take seriously the importance of the whole body."

[24]Lutheran World Federation, "Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities," *Ecumenical Chronicle* (1996): 415-17.

This *enfleshment* of the worship experience is *enfleshment* in the sense that God interacts with us humans, that is, in the flesh of our human context and reality. This is what Carson described as *metaworship*. For White this enfleshment is called *whole body experience*, and Stauffer describes it as a *contextualization* experience. Geffre calls it *enculturation* while the Lutheran World Federation calls it *contextual*. An experience of worship enfleshment acknowledges human culture and brings it to the surface. Doing this helps to both criticize and celebrate the human culture of the context where the worship experience is taking place.

Using language and elements that are culture specific makes the worship experience relevant and joyous to those who identify with that culture. All worship that is meaningful must happen in human language and human culture. What is all too common, however, is to have worship in a foreign culture, as discussed below, mostly European or Euro-American in origin, that has been made the norm and has been imposed through evangelism.

Paul Tillich presented the idea that religion and culture do not stand by themselves but need each other.[25] Culture is a "form of religion" and religion, in turn, is the " substance of culture."[26] This mutuality, however, will not eliminate the persistent tension which religious values should impart when confronting human culture at large, since worship should both affirm and criticize the culture with which it must live.[27] The dual relationship between social and religious values promotes a conflict that is in a constant state of flux and has never been totally resolved.

Worship, Music, and Conflict

Singing Christian music, rather than bringing Christians together, sometimes drives them apart. Several commentators express this view. Martin Tel observes, "The new [church] divisions are based not so much on what we believe as on how we worship."[28] A. Strawn de Ojeda remarks, "People who are certain that there is only one way to sing praises to God regularly criticize others who think otherwise."[29] According to C. M. Hawn, most of the conflict in the church

[25]Paul Tillich, *Writings in the Philosophy of Culture*, ed. Michael Palmer (Berlin: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1990); idem, *Theology of Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 40-52.

[26]Tillich, *Theology and Culture*, 42. Cf. idem, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Life and the Spirit, History and the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 157-61.

[27]J. Maraschin, "Culture, Spirit and Worship," *Anglican Theology Review* 82 (2000): 47-63.

[28]Martin Tel, "Music: The 'Universal Language' That's Dividing the Church," in *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship*, ed. B. Blount and L. Tisdale (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 2001), 162.

[29]A. Strawn de Ojeda, "Sing the Song of Gladness," *Ministry*, September 1996, 5.

regarding worship and music style has to do with the tensions that exist between what he calls dominant traditional Euro-American cultural styles and other cultural groups.[30]

It should be clear that Hawn's model is American-centered and although it can be generalized to non-American contexts it is presented from an exclusively American view. The possibility of universalizing Hawn's model is particularly appropriate since most missionary work to the world at large emerged from European and Euro-American roots. Therefore, even in places far from Europe and America, within Christian communities, the dominant patterns of worship and music are, by and large, traditional European and Euro-American ways.

Hawn describes the modern worship conflict as responding to a "center vs. periphery model."[31] In Hawn's model the dominant traditional Euro-American cultural style and the group that promotes it (otherwise called Whites or European) see their styles of music and worship as normative, that is, outside cultural influences. This normative style is often in opposition to indigenous music and worship styles.

In Christian worship then, the normative culture (traditional European and Euro-American) occupies the center, and other types of contemporary or ethnic Christian music become peripheral. More than any other cultural product, music conveys and enfleshes the uniqueness of a people.[32] Music serves as a vessel that enables people of all cultures to pour out their feelings, emotions, traditions, tastes, spirits, and souls. Music serves as a text that community can read.

M. S. Hamilton points out that conflict over worship in general, and music in particular, is present in churches of every denomination.[33] For Pedrito Maynard-Reid the "debate is based on whether one is a high church liturgiologist or contemporary celebration-church liturgiologist."[34] He goes as far as saying that resolving worship style conflict within the church is more difficult than dealing with terrorists. "What is the difference between a liturgiologist and a terrorist? You can negotiate with a terrorist."[35] The fact that no negotiations are welcome and no

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[30]C. M. Hawn, "Worship that Transforms: A Cross-Cultural Proposal," *Journal of the International Theological Center* 27 (1999-2000): 111-33.

[31]Ibid., 125-26.

[32]Mark Bangert, "How Does One Go About Multicultural Worship?" in *Open Questions in Worship: What Does "Multicultural" Worship Look Like?* ed. G. Lathrop (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1996), 30.

[33]M. S. Hamilton, "The Triumph of the Praise Songs," *Christianity Today*, July 1999, 28-35.

[34]Pedrito Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African-American, Caribbean, and Hispanic Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 14.

[35]Ibid., 13.

compromise is attractive comes from a "very dogmatic" understanding of worship and music.[36]

Lillianne Doukhan puts the issue in bold relief when she says, "The value of the old [music] is associated with 'tradition', synonymous with stability and absence of change," while traditional music "carries also the aura of being consecrated by the past." [37] Traditionalists' views of contemporary worship style and music seek to keep the worship experience holy.[38] "The 'traditional' stream finds the source of Christian worship in the historical shape of liturgy."[39] What traditionalists often miss or ignore is the fact that throughout history music from secular sources has been brought into the church to be used in the worship service.[40] However, the scope of this article does not allow for a historical review of the secular origins of some Christian music and worship styles.[41]

Advocates of more contemporary music argue that "worship should speak (and sing) in a language that reaches today's generation and that old structures are no longer relevant."[42] We argue that worship enfleshes itself within contemporary cultural patterns.

Functions of Worship Music

Worship music should be viewed as "functional art" and judged by how well it fulfills its function.[43] The purposes of church music include both creating unity and cohesion.[44] In terms of the first, singing hymns, one of the few things people actively do together, is among the last vestiges in our culture of the sort of communal activity that has kept societies intact since the dawn of the human race. One reason people keep gathering to sing is instinctual: we have to sing together to be who we are. In terms of the second, the promotion of group identity provided by music is particularly crucial for migrants who find themselves to be minorities

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[36]Ibid.

[37]Lillianne Doukhan, "Historical Perspectives on Change in Worship Music," *Ministry*, September 1996, 8.

[38]Strawn de Ojeda, 5-7, lists three assumptions that traditionalists have about contemporary music in worship: (1) the majority of contemporary Christian music uses dance, jazz, or rock music with sacred words; (2) contemporary styles appeal to humans' sensual nature and therefore cannot be from God; and (3) it is entertaining instead of uplifting.

[39]Hawn, 113.

[40]Strawn de Ojeda, 5-7.

[41]For a short bibliography on works that discuss the influence of culture in current traditional Christian European and Euro-American hymnody, see appendix A.

[42]Hawn, 114.

[43]Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate! Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1981), 25.

[44]P. Henry, "Singing the Faith Together," *Christian Century* 114 (1997): 500.

in the midst of foreign languages and cultural realities.[45] Music can provide a worship experience that is "consecrated by the past." However, one must ask, whose past?[46]

Worship and the Holy

Worship music intends to convey the Gospel, inculcate Christian theology, and teach Holy Scripture.[47] Marva J. Dawn suggests that Christians can determine which music is appropriate for worship by following three criteria[48] as defined by three questions: Is the music making God the focus? Is it nurturing godly character? Is it promoting genuine community? The issue ceases to be whether or not the music is either traditional or contemporary.

Christian worshipers can use a wide variety of music, but for theological reasons, some songs are simply not appropriate. For instance, they may present doctrine in a way that is "muddled."[49] Tel agrees, pointing out that worship music must convey "a Judeo-Christian understanding of God and the revelation of Scripture," and if it does, it is "still viable for the church today."[50] F. B. Brown puts it simply, yet straightforward, "Music is never the message. . . . Music is good if it conveys the gospel; it is bad if it does not."[51]

Christ-Centered Worship

The Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ is to be central and supreme in the thinking and life of the Christian (Col 2:8-10).[52] We should "welcome any worship music that helps churches to produce disciples of Jesus Christ. We need to

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[45]J. M. Spencer, *Sing a New Song: Liberating Black Hymnody* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), vi-vii: "Music . . . provides hope for oppressed strangers and aliens far from home."

[46]Doukhan, 8.

[47]Oskar Söhngen, "Music and Theology: A Systematic Approach," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion Thematic Studies* 50/1 (1983): 1-19; Jan Overduin, "I Played My Best for Him: A High Purpose Calls for High Performance," *Reformed Worship* 30 (1993): 38-39; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Psalms, Philippians 2:6–11, and the Origins of Christology," *Biblical Interpretation* 11 (2003): 361-73.

[48]Marva J. Dawn, "Beyond the Worship Wars," *Christian Century* 114 (1997): 550-53.

[49]Ibid., 552.

[50]Tell, 163.

[51]F. B. Brown, "A Matter of Taste?" *Christian Century* 117 (2000): 905.

[52]Hamilton, 9.

welcome the experimental creativity that is always searching out new ways of singing the gospel."[53]

Donald P. Hustad proposes that all Christian music must promote the gospel and express the best Christian theology.[54] The pinnacle of Christian worship and worship music must be to glorify, describe, promote, and otherwise communicate the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the foremost test of anything that is worthy of being a part of worship. Paul says it best:

> When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. (1 Cor 2:1-3)[55]

According to R. H. Mitchell, music for worship functions as commentary, the exposition of the Word of God.[56] Music is a means of exhortation; the experience of the interpreter exhorts the listener to enter into a similar experience. Mitchell also points out the mystical, revelatory function of worship music. He proposes that music is a means of revelation. God will be encountered "as God's Spirit brings revelation to our human spirit."[57]

Musical pieces for worship have been judged and assessed for the propriety of the words used in them and for their coherence. Dawn suggests that "sometimes liturgies or songs are unsuitable because they trivialize God."[58] Music is a means of evangelism as well as Christian formation. Daniel Zager sees these two functions as potentially different and conflicting in that music may be seen not only "as a participant in theological proclamation" but also "as a tool for outreach and numerical growth in church attendance."[59]

[53]Ibid., 35.

[54]Hustad, 10 ff.

[55]Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the NIV.

[56]R. H. Mitchell, *Ministry and Music* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 11-12: "Every pastor can expect to be involved in church music. . . . Every church musician can normally expect to be involved in ministry."

[57]Ibid., 91.

[58]Dawn, 551.

[59]Daniel Zager, "Cultures, Chorales, and Catechesis," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64/2 (2000): 105.

Music, Excellence, and Worship Styles

As part of divine worship and praise to God, worship music should demonstrate excellence. It should be of high quality and be well presented. A song used in worship should be among the best in its genre. Dawn believes a song should be rejected for a worship service if for a musical reason it is "not appropriate."[60] The criteria put forth by Dawn include various layers of excellence. "Music should be rejected if it uses forced or awkward harmonies, grating rhythms, boring repetition, phrases that don't go anywhere, predictable musical clichés, clumsy part-writing, or musical discourse that is too rapid or otherwise unsingable."[61] She also mentions incongruity or a mismatch between words and music.[62] Dawn urges attention to the following features of musical performance: "skillfulness, aptness, and consistency of style, clarity of intent, melodic and rhythmic interest, harmonic appropriateness and craftsmanship."[63] Tel insists that Christian music for worship should be excellent.[64] Hustad argues that worship should show creativity.[65]

Worship Music and Enfleshment

Worship music should involve the whole person of the worshiper in response and praise to God. Mitchell points out that music establishes a mood and appeals to the feelings, emotions, and ideas of the people.[66] Hustad also insists that Christian music should speak to the whole person.[67] Tel says that the music for worship should have "relevance" and that "all music, including music from another culture, must have significant meaning for those who are worshiping."[68]

Worship music should create meaning and significance and must be authentic. It must resonate with the experience of the believers. Roberta King believes that worship should be a spiritual journey home:

> God is not limited to any one style of music. Neither is He limited to only one spoken language. He is the Creator of the world. He knows the music that speaks to us. He works within our musical styles so that we know He cares for us. There is no musical style that is Christian or

[60]Dawn, 550.
[61]Ibid., 552.
[62]Ibid.
[63]Ibid.
[64]Tel, 108-27.
[65]Hustad, 9.
[66]Mitchell,79-80: "Participation in congregational music can encourage the worshiper to be truly what that term implies—one who worships."
[67]Hustad, 25.
[68]Tel, 164.

non-Christian. He is pleased with His creation, including various musics [sic], and chooses to communicate with us in a loving receptor-oriented manner. He uses our musical languages to speak to us. He is the one and only caring God who is concerned about our needs. He communes with us through the music we know and love. [69]

Our motives are more important than the kind of music or any certain style of worship. One expert says, "What needs to be questioned is our motive for singing or listening, not the melody, beat, or instrument."[70] Another comments, "Worship music ought to be judged not by the songs themselves but by the people who sing them."[71] Will Eva asserts that "we are all looking for meaning and life, for significance and authenticity in our worship experience."[72] He believes that "the essence of the relationship between music and worship has to do with the heart of God and the heart of the worshiper."[73]

Good worship music must be a means for believers to give self-expression, a way for them to proclaim their beliefs and ideas, while at the same time, reinforcing and celebrating their values and identity. Erik Routley notes that when a congregation sings a hymn, "they are not far from saying, 'we think this', 'this is our own idea'."[74] Hamilton agrees, asserting that "when one chooses a musical style today, one is making a statement about whom one identifies with, what one's values are, and ultimately, who one is."[75] He continues, "The advantage of multiple expressions of Christianity—whether they are based in doctrine or based in worship—is that there is an expression for everyone."[76]

Worship music is a two-way means of enculturation because "music shapes identity."[77] Worship music has been used as a means for enculturation, a process by which persons learn the rules of society through its symbolic systems. According to Ronald L. Grimes, the process of enculturation is how we are programmed or biologically mapped. This includes an interchange between the dominant and receptor cultures. Music serves as a means for enculturation and as a channel to transmit values, traditions, and beliefs.[78]

[69]Roberta King, *A Time to Sing* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1999), 79.

[70]Strawn de Ojeda, 29.

[71]Hamilton, 33.

[72]Wil Eva, "Worship and Music: Natural But Uneasy Mates," *Ministry*, September 1996, 4.

[73]Ibid., 4.

[74]Erik Routley, *Hymns Today and Tomorrow* (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 21.

[75]Hamilton, 30.

[76]Ibid., 33.

[77]Spencer, vii.

[78]Ronald L. Grimes, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982).

Good worship music must be attentive to details of rhythm and must employ this to good advantage. Mark Taylor emphasizes that in the worship experience it is necessary to embrace rhythm, not only in theory but also in practice. He urges the church to embrace "a polyrhythmic sensibility" and to welcome a diversity of rhythms[79] especially since they play an important part in people's lives and appeal to their emotions and feelings. Taylor also finds it appropriate in worship for people to embody rhythm "by clapping hands, stomping feet, nodding the head, swaying, dancing, processing into, during, and after, worship ceremonies."[80] In fact, as Strawn de Ojeda points out, in biblical times the music was "sometimes loud, accompanied by common instruments."[81] She insists that "the act of praise is more important than the method one uses."[82]

[79]Mark Taylor, "Polyrhythm in Worship: Caribbean Keys to an Effective Word of God," in *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship,* ed. B. Blount and L. Tisdale (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox), 124. The musical options listed by Taylor are not meant to be all encompassing; they represent examples of diversity in musical venues within the American musical scene.

[80]Ibid., 125.

[81]Strawn de Ojeda, 6.

[82]Ibid. When describing the dancing of David and the response his wife had to his showing off his body before the people of Israel (2 Sam 6:12-23), E. G. White makes this very argument. It is not about what your worship looks like or what others can see beneath your garment, it is about the way God sees you (1 Sam 16:7). See Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1908), 711:

> Thus musing, David turned toward his palace, "to bless his household." But there was one who had witnessed the scene of rejoicing with a spirit widely different from that which moved the heart of David. "As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart." In the bitterness of her passion she could not await David's return to the palace, but went out to meet him, and to his kindly greeting poured forth a torrent of bitter words. Keen and cutting was the irony of her speech: "How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!"
>
> David felt that it was the service of God which Michal had despised and dishonored, and he sternly answered: "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor." To David's rebuke was added that of the Lord: because of her pride and arrogance, Michal

Good worship music must promote successful and enjoyable group singing. Albert Boehm argues for the supremacy of congregational involvement as a measure of successful worship experience, and that to promote singing by the people, all styles of music, all types of instruments, and all resources need to be used.[83] He believes that people must use new methods to promote singing. Boehm quotes the Catholic authority, the Congregation for Divine Worship, which states that new forms should be used that are adapted to differing mentalities and modern tastes.[84] Mitchell agrees that music brings to worship an opportunity for participation; it frees the congregation to sing and worship.[85]

Model for Worship and Music

In order to promote healthy church relationships between members and groups that represent a diversity of views, there is a need to "cease to promote our own concerns or simply tolerate one another's viewpoints."[86] Instead, the church should "rediscover and reinstitute the fabulous Christian art of defending the special interests of one another rather than our own."[87] Because worship music combines the human element and the divine presence, it is necessary to ask what God thinks about our music for worship.

Asking God for wisdom has been the biblical model for the church from its birth. The wisdom of God should come to the church through a process where all debate their divergent views until consensus is reached, with the result of this

"had no child unto the day of her death."

The solemn ceremonies attending the removal of the ark had made a lasting impression upon the people of Israel, arousing a deeper interest in the sanctuary service and kindling anew their zeal for Jehovah. David endeavored by every means in his power to deepen these impressions. The service of song was made a regular part of religious worship, and David composed psalms, not only for the use of the priests in the sanctuary service, but also to be sung by the people in their journeys to the national altar at the annual feasts. The influence thus exerted was far-reaching, and it resulted in freeing the nation from idolatry. Many of the surrounding peoples, beholding the prosperity of Israel, were led to think favorably of Israel's God, who had done such great things for His people.

[83]Albert Boehm, "Let the Congregation Sing Out," *America* 186 (2002): 22-24.

[84]Ibid., 22: "All means must be used to promote singing by the people."

[85]Mitchell, 91.

[86]Eva, 4.

[87]Ibid. Eva's argument for prioritizing the other, instead of self, accords with Paul's advice to the Ephesians: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph 5:21).

being blessed by the Holy Spirit.[88] John Suggit provides a detailed description that is worth contemplating for purposes of how to make decisions about music that is to be used in church:

> So it was that the decisions of the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) were seen to be the decisions not only of the assembled apostles and presbyters (which they assuredly were), but also the judgment of the Holy Spirit, who is here considered in personal terms, rather like the description of wisdom in Wisdom 7:22–8:1. No distinction is made, for Acts 15:28 really means "The Holy Spirit and we resolved. . . ." The translation of the RSV—"It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . ." is too weak. The expression was regularly used to denote resolutions of an assembly, especially of a legislative assembly. . . . Similarly Acts 15:22 means "The apostles and the presbyters resolved, together with the whole congregation. . . . "Here was truly synodical resolution of the church at Jerusalem. The actions of human beings and of the Spirit are inextricably intertwined, so that when the members of the community of the Holy Spirit meet together their decisions are those of the Spirit. Although this is especially the emphasis of Acts, the same idea is expressed by the other evangelists in different ways. Matthew, for example, reports the words of Jesus (18:20), "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in their midst." In Acts the presence of the risen Lord is mediated through the Holy Spirit, who is present not only with each member of the church through baptism, but also with the church as a whole meeting in the Lord's name.[89]

Suggit provides a good summary of the workings of consensus in the early church and how this process was blessed by the Holy Spirit as a member of the community working through the body of the whole church and not only through a selected few or appointed leaders cloistered by themselves.

The proposed model of the working of the Holy Spirit as the church today selects its worship liturgy, rituals, and music is based on the principles already outlined.

[88]The book of Acts presents several examples of a consensus process for resolving conflicts. The conflict registered in 6:1-7 was based on ethnic and language differences and was resolved when the general assembly nominated new leaders. The conflict in 15:1-35 was based on a doctrinal and administrative divergence of viewpoints and its resolution was also achieved by way of public debate and approved by all: "Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men. . . . It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (15:22, 28).

[89]John N. Suggit, " 'The Holy Spirit and We Resolved . . . ' (Acts 15:28)," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 79 (1992): 44-45.

The Attitudinal, Personal Intangible,
Immeasurable Spiritual Test

This is related to Step I in the chart below: "Supremacy of Christ—Personal: Is the worshiper living a Christ-centered life?" Two important factors are worth considering here:

1. Since God looks at the heart of the believer, the sincerity of purpose and motivation of the participant in worship (whether participating in the Lord's Supper, singing, or any other liturgical part) must be judged individually, not communally (1 Cor 11:26-28).

2. The church will judge the obvious and follow a strict system of checks and balances. No single individual, only a community vote, may exclude someone from participating in the religious life of the church (Matt 18:15-20).

The Theological, Biblical, Foundational Test

There are two important points to consider in this matter:

1. Christ must be glorified as the center of all worship experience. Salvation clearly communicated must be a central test of the propriety of all parts of worship (sermon, hymns, liturgy). Text and message must be Christ-centered (Col 2:8-10). This is related to Step II below: "Supremacy of Christ—Collective: Is this music Christ-centered?"

2. The worship experience needs to conform to all biblical teachings; whatever part of the worship experience contradicts the Bible must not be retained (Phil 4:7-8). This is the gist of Step III below: "Supremacy of the Bible: Is this music doctrinally sound?"

The Cultural Metaworship, Enculturation,
Contextual, Enfleshment Test

To understand this, we must consider the following factors:

1. Worship presented to God must be executed in the most perfect fashion humanly available. Only our best can be acceptable to God. It must be recognized that there are universal elements for determining excellence, and relative, taste-based elements for determining what is excellent. Each community, with its culturally established and recognized patterns, must determine the best genre, sermon, reading, ritual, and so forth, that individuals and that congregation can present as part of the worship experience (Col 3:23-24). This is important to Step IV below: "Excellence for God: Is this music in the best possible fashion?"

2. The worship experience, being a human-divine activity, must appeal to the humans that are partakers. Enfleshment of the worship experience demands that all parts be culturally grounded. This means that worship must be specific to the particular human culture. There is no universal Christian or biblical culture;

therefore, when selecting the worship experience (liturgy, message, rituals, and so forth), the language, feelings and styles of the local culture should be celebrated and embraced. Obviously, not all aspects of any human culture are acceptable or appropriate for the worship of God, but the Holy Spirit and the congregation must make decisions together regarding excellent worship. This will be a contextualized, localized decision of the church, not a top-down decision of the hierarchy (be it local, national, or worldwide). This is the New Testament model. Church members should all be able to declare, "The Holy Spirit and we resolved" to use this as part of our worship experience (Acts 15:28).[90] This is central to Step V below: "Supremacy of the Community: Is this music a reflection of the community?"

The model may be presented graphically:

A MODEL FOR WORSHIP ENFLESHMENT
"The Holy Spirit and we resolved..." Acts 15:28

V. SUPREMACY OF THE COMMUNITY
Is this music a reflection of the community?

IV. EXCELLENCE FOR GOD
Is this music in the best possible fashion?

III. SUPREMACY OF THE BIBLE
Is this music doctrinally sound?

II. SUPREMACY OF CHRIST-Collective
Is this music Christ-centered?

I. SUPREMACY OF CHRIST-Personal
Is the worshiper living a Christ-centered life?

[90]Ibid., 44.

This inverted pyramid characterizes the process of enfleshment of the worship experience. Since worship encompasses many aspects and not just one, the model uses music as an example. The same questions apply to all other aspects of the worship experience. The inverted triangle is a good symbol because from the monolithic, universal reality of Christ as personal Savior and Redeemer (Acts 4:12), the model moves to broader, less specific, and diverse culturally-bound aspects of worship. God created all human nations, languages, and peoples for them to all worship Him as the only true God, each in their own way. Paul was correct in his anthropological doctrine that all cultures can worship God and reach out to Him from the specificity of their cultural context:

> From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'. (Acts 17:26-28)

Conclusion

The hermeneutics of proper worship decor and music style are crucial for the church today. As we worship God and develop a proper liturgy, we must both reach out in an enfleshment mode in order to make worship meaningful for the particular contexts of all believers, and at the same time reflect the glory and sanctity of God. The two objectives *can* and *must* be kept together in functional dynamism. The church cannot afford otherwise. This methodology is presented in a spirit of humility and praise to God, who is the center of worship. A multicultural, multinational church *must* address the realities of enfleshment in order to assure serving all groups, regardless of racial, ethnic, language and cultural factors. Such must be the case because God created us all.

Appendix A

Short Bibliography on the Influence of Culture in Current Christian European and Euro-American Hymnody
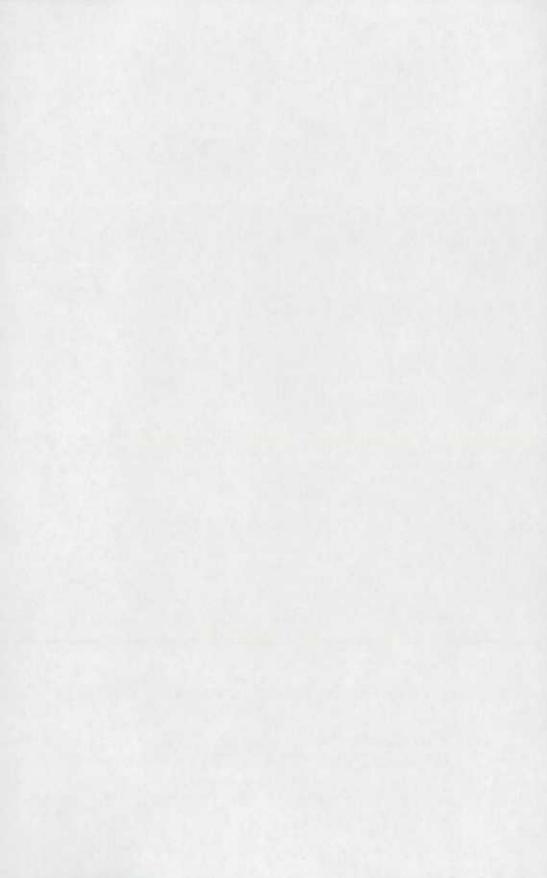
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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONS AND HEALTH

EVELYN ALMOCERA

Introduction

Sometimes we are prone to colds, asthmatic attacks, high blood pressure and other ailments because of our emotional response to the stresses of life. The idea that diseases spring from internal responses to events in our lives is not new and is found in the literature and traditions of many cultures.[1] The earliest medical scholars like Hippocrates, understood that there is a relationship between personal emotional traits and disease causation.[2] In 200 C.E., Galen, who was one of the most influential physicians of all time, wrote that melancholic women are more susceptible to breast cancer than sanguine women.[3] Practitioners of early Indian Ayurvedic medicine theorized that the prognosis of a patient is based on his/her emotional responses to external stimuli, so that a patient with a poor prognosis may be afflicted by intensely negative emotions like hatred, violence, grief, and ingratitude. These theories are not farcical because the medical world is rapidly presenting more and more scientific evidence on the relationship between physical health and our emotional well-being. Indeed, medical practitioners who used to focus on the details of the anatomy or pathology of a sick person have now acknowledged that emotions, whether positive or negative, being a part of human expression, play a major role in health and illness.

In the past two decades, the scientific arena has become increasingly more interested in the relationship between emotions and the immune system, which in turn affects the whole person. In the 1980s, medical research substantiated the concept that what we think and feel affects our immune system through a biochemical process. Psychoneuroimmunology is a relatively new science that explores and describes the relationship between emotions, both positive and negative, and the responses of the human body. For example, in 1981 Dr. G. F. Solomon published his findings which, for the first time, indicated the relationship

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[1]William Clark, *At War Within* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 221.

[2]Clayton E. Tucker-Ladd, *Psychological Self-Help* [book on-line], accessed 13 September 2004; available from http://www.psychcentral.com/psy.help/chap5/chap5.htm; Internet.

[3]Rachel Charles, *Mind, Body and Immunity* (London: Cedar, 1996), 49-50.

between rheumatoid arthritis and personality conflict. He discovered that when female rheumatoid arthritic patients were compared with their sisters who did not have the disease, those who had the disease scored high on perfectionism, compliance, subservience, nervousness, introversion, depression and sensitivity to anger. By contrast, their healthy sisters described themselves as "liking people," being easy to get acquainted with and enjoying life in a generally unruffled manner.[4] This study, as well as several others, indicate that there is a direct relationship between emotions and physical well being.

Research Confirms the Bible and Ellen G. White's Counsel

The evidence from modern medical research on how our emotions affect our physical well-being is consistent with the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White (EGW). We will turn our attention to this in the next section.

Body Defense Downers

These are factors that compromise the defense system of the body. They are both external (like viruses and bacteria) and internal (like emotions and feelings). For our purposes we will focus on the latter. No specific word for emotion is found in the Bible. However, there are several references to men and women in the Bible who have expressed some of the emotional responses that have been studied by researchers today. Gen 3:8-10 records that Adam and Eve were afraid of the Lord and hid among the trees in the Garden of Eden. Moses was so angry at the sight of the golden calf and the people dancing around it that he shattered the tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments, written by God's own fingers. He then burned the golden calf, took the resulting powder and scattered it in the water and made the offending Israelites drink it (Exod 32:15-20). Nabal the Calebite, refused to feed David and his men who had protected both his sheep and shepherds from harm, and instead held a great feast. He later learned that his wife Abigail had secretly taken food to David's company. Realizing the consequences, his heart failed and he died ten days later (1 Sam 25:37-38). John Wilkinson believes that Nabal actually suffered a fatal heart attack.[5] Job spoke of both the bitterness he felt (10:1) and the hopelessness he experienced (6:11). David's distress as expressed in Ps 31:9,10, caused his eyes to grow weak with sorrow, his body and soul to rock with grief, his life to consume with anguish, his strength to fail and his bones to grow weak. Solomon conveys the message that a broken spirit dries up the bones (Prov 15:13) and advised in Eccl 7:9 not to be hasty in anger.

The Bible also underscores the effects of negative emotions on health. Jer 45:3 describes how sorrow and pain caused the prophet to feel worn out and

[4]Ibid.,
[5]John Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1998), 42.

restless. Jeremiah disclosed to Baruch his sorrow and pain. The books of Lamentations and Ecclesiastes convey a rather depressing emotional overtone. Matt 6:25-31 talks about people's worries in life while God urges us not to worry.

More than 100 years ago, EGW wrote about the effects of certain emotional responses on the body. She claims that many of the diseases from which people suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt and distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death.[6] She wrote perceptively:

> Sadness deadens the circulation in the blood vessels and nerves and also retards the action of the liver. It hinders the process of digestion and of nutrition and has a tendency to dry up the marrow (interior substance) of the whole system.[7]

She indicates that it is worry, not work, that kills.[8] Anxiety tends to cause weakness and disease,[9] while dissatisfied feelings and discontented repining cause sickness of body and mind.[10] She claims that nothing is so fruitful a cause of disease as depression, gloominess and sadness.[11]

Our day-to-day response to psychological stresses influences our defense system. A growing body of research confirms that the biblical counsel and that of EGW regarding the influence of emotions on health are real. Let us examine some of these findings.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention studied the relationship between negative affects and the risk for hypertension among 3,310 persons. Results indicated that negative affects are associated with an elevated risk of hypertension and are predictive of the development of hypertension.[12]

D. M. Brynes of the Department of Psychology at the University of Miami led a study on the effects of pessimism and its influence on the natural killer (NK)[13]

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[6]Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1905), 241-59.

[7]Ellen G. White to J. N. Andrews, 29 March 1883, Letter 1, 1883, Ellen G. White Research Center, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (EGWRC-AIIAS), Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

[8]Ellen G. White to Brethren and Sisters, 20 May 1903, Letter 208, 1903, EGWRC-AIIAS.

[9]White, *Ministry of Healing*, 229.

[10]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1855), 1:566.

[11]Ibid., 702.

[12]Bruce Jonas and James Lando, "Negative Affects as a Prospective Risk Factor for Hypertension," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 62/2 (2002): 188.

[13]These are white blood cells that are responsible for seeking and destroying cancerous and infected cells. They constitute the body's first line of defense.

and suppressor T-cells[14] in HIV positive women at risk for cervical cancer. The researchers found that greater pessimism is related to lower NK cytotoxicity[15] and suppressor T-cells, lessening the capability to kill tumors and to stop NK cell production when the pathogen no longer poses a threat. This results in an increased risk for future promotion of abnormal development of tissues in the cervix, to the extent of becoming malignant, with the tendency to spread to healthy tissues among HIV positive minorities.[16]

The department of Periodontology, College of Dentistry, at Ohio State University, studied the effects of examination stress on wound healing in the lining of a cavity such as that of the mouth or stomach. The conclusion indicates that during examination time, it takes three days longer for a 3.5 mm wound to heal completely because of a sixty-eight percent decline in the production of interleukin, a protein that controls immune response. This suggests that even something transient, predictable, and relatively benign as stress caused by an examination, may indeed be quite a significant factor when it comes to the healing of a wound.[17]

N. Pavlidis and M. Chirigos, in their study on stress and impairment of the T-cells that destroy tumor cells, observe that hormones released from the adrenal gland during a stressful period of time were able to inhibit macrophage cytotoxicity[18] and thus affect the host's immunosurveillance, that is, the ability of the immune system to recognize a tumor antigen[19] as a foreign body.[20]

Researchers from the Department of Epidemiology, University of Michigan, studied the relationship between anger expression and the incident of hypertension. They concluded that there is strong epidemiological evidence for a positive

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[14]T-cells are a specialized group of white blood cells that attack and kill anything that invades the human body. The suppressor T-cells are special cells that terminate T-cell activity once the fighting is over.

[15]Natural Killer (NK) cytotoxic cells are like the body's civil defense force attacking anad destroying diseased cells, particularly cancer cells.

[16]D. M. Byrnes, M. H. Antoni, K. Goodkin, J. Efantis-Potter, D. Asthana, T. Simon, J. Munajj, G. Ironson, and M. A. Fletcher, "Stressful Events, Pessimism, Natural Killer Cell Cytotoxicity, and Cytotoxic/suppressor T cell in HIV+ Black Women at Risk for Cervical Cancer," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 60/6 (1998): 714-22.

[17]P. T. Marucha, J. K. Kiecolt-Glaser, and M. Favagehi, "Mucosal Wound Healing is Impaired by Examination Stress," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 60/3 (1988): 362-65.

[18]Macrophage cytotoxicity refers to the ability of the white blood cells to inspect the surfaces of all the cells they encounter.

[19]An antigen is a toxic substance produced by a bacterium. The body's immune system responds by producing antibodies.

[20]N. Pavlidis and M. Chirigos, "Stress-induced Impairment of Macrophage Tumoricidal Function," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 42/1 (1980): 47-54.

relationship between anger expression style—either anger is expressed or suppressed—and hypertension.[21]

John Gallacher and a team of researchers concluded that anger, either expressed or suppressed, was predictive of developing occlusion of the heart and the coronary blood vessels due to lack of blood supply to these organs.[22]

The effects of performing a frustrating twenty-one minute laboratory task, such as a Stroop test, on the cellular immune response was studied by E. A. Bachen and colleagues. A Stroop test consists of 200 words such as "red" and "green," each printed in a color different from the one it actually signifies. For example, the word "red" may be printed in green ink and the word "green" may be printed in red ink. Normally, it is done in two minutes with the participants calling out the color of the ink. This test typically stresses people and induces physical changes such as rapid heart rate. The study discovered that taking a frustrating test, even for period as short as twenty-one minutes, reduces cell division and alterations in various circulating lymphocyte populations[23] resulting in a diminished T-helper/T-suppressor cell ratio.[24]

The effects of hopelessness on health has also been investigated. The focus was on hopelessness as a predictor of mortality in older Mexican and American-Europeans. The results suggest that hopelessness as an emotional factor is a significant predictor of mortality in these ethnic populations.[25] Others have studied the significance of hopelessness, the risk of mortality, and the incidence of heart attack and cancer. They showed that a high degree of hopelessness is a predictor of myocardial infarction, while moderate hopelessness was a predictor for cancer development.[26]

[21]S. A. Everson, D. E. Goldberg, G. A. Kaplan, J. Julkunen, and J. T. Salonen, "Anger Expression and Incident of Hypertension," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 60/6 (1998): 730-35.

[22]John Gallacher, John W. G. Yarnell, Peter M. Sweetnam, Peter C. Elwood, and Stephen A. Stansfeld, "Anger and Incident Heart Disease in the Caerphilly Study," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 61/4 (1999): 446.

[23]These are white blood cells that are constantly circulating throughout the body and are responsible for recognizing antigens and producing antibodies to destroy them.

[24]E. A. Bachen, S. B. Manuck, A. L. Marsland, S. Cohen, S. B. Malkoff, M. F. Muldoon, and B. S. Rabin, "Lymphocyte Subset and Cellular Immune Response to a Brief Experimental Stressor," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 54/6 (1992): 686-97.

[25]Stephen Stem, Rahul Dhanda, and Helen Hazuda, "Hopelessness Predicts Mortality in Older Mexican and European Americans," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 63/3 (2001): 344-51.

[26]S. A. Everson, D. E. Goldberg, G. A. Kaplan, R. D. Cohen, E. Pukkala, J. Tuomilehto, and J. T. Salonen, "Hopelessness and Risk of Mortality and Incidence of Myocardial Infarction and Cancer," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 58/2 (1996): 113-21.

Beverly Brummett was the lead researcher in a study on social isolation and the risk of mortality in coronary artery disease. It was shown that participants with three or fewer people in their social support network have a very high risk of cardiac mortality that is not attributable to confounding heart disease severity, demographical or psychological stress.[27]

Even among children, particularly boys, stress due to family conflict plays an important role in the development of coronary risk.[28]

Finally, seventy-five first-year medical students at Harvard University were tested to identify the effects of naturally occurring stressors on components of the immune response. The results of negative emotions on the immune system are summarized in the table below:[29]

Summary of the Effects of Negative Emotions on the Immune System

Negative Emotions	Effects on the Immune System
Bereavement	Decreased lymphocyte proliferation
Pessimism	Decreased lymphocyte reactivity; decreased T-cell effectiveness
Depression	Decreased T-cells; decreased number and function of lymphocytes; decrease NK cells
Academic stress	Decreased NK cell activity; decreased T-cells; decrease in certain immune chemicals; decreased immunoglobulin A; increased susceptibility to herpes virus
Loneliness	Decreased NK activity
Chronic stress	Decreased T-cells; decreased NK cells; decreased B cells

[27]Beverly Brummett, John C. Barefoot, Hene Siegler, Nancy Clapp-Channing, Barbara Lytle, Hayden Bosworth, Redford Williams Jr., and Daniel Mark, "Characteristics of Socially Isolated Patients with Coronary Artery Disease Who are at Elevated Risk of Mortality," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 63/2 (2001): 267-72.

[28]G. Weidner, J. Hutt, S. L. Connor, and N. R. Mendell, "Family Stress and Coronary Risk in Children," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 54/4 (1992): 471-79.

[29]J. K. Keicolt-Glaser, W. Gamer, C. Speicher, G. M. Penn, J. Holliday and R. Glaser, "Psychosocial Modifiers of Immunocompetence in Medical Students," *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 46/1 (1984): 7-14.

Divorce / separation/ poor marital quality	Decreased lymphocyte function; decreased T-cell effectiveness
Expressed need for power and control	Decreased NK activity; decreased lymphocytes
Negative behavior during discussions of marital problems	Decrease NK activity; decrease macrophage; decreased immunity by mitogen test[30]

Body Defense Boosters

Defense boosters are factors that build up the body's mechanism to fight off illness. Emotional balance is certainly included here. The Bible is not silent about how positive emotions affect health. While the Word of God expresses these health-promoting emotions in different ways, they all underline the principle that a healthy life is basically affected by our emotional state.

The Bible describes several positive emotional responses. The Lord commanded Moses to be of good courage and be not afraid (Deut 31:6,7). 2 Chron 20:27,28 describes the joy of Jehoshaphat and his people when God delivered them from their enemies. They returned to Jerusalem with praises and thankfulness to the Lord. The kingdom experienced peace. Esther and the Jews were joyful when King Xerxes reversed the devising of the wicked Haman whose intention was to annihilate the Jewish population (Esth 8:15-17). David wrote in Ps 42:11 that even if the Lord had cast him down, yet he will "praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God."[31] Ps 71:14 records, "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more." Prov 17:22 speaks about the cheerful heart as a good medicine. Isa 26:3 is a promise on how we can attain peace in this world. Many people are suffering from depression, but Isa 40:31 exclaims, "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (NIV). Hope can make a weak person strong and a sad person happy. Nehemiah instructed the Israelites not to grieve, for the joy of the Lord is their strength (Neh 8:10). No wonder in Matt 11:28, God promises to give us peace if we come unto Him. This peace, which He alone can give, would "impart vigor to the mind and health to the body."[32] The

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[30]This is a functional test that determines the activity of the cells in the immune system.

[31]Except otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the KJV.

[32]Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages in the Life of Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 270.

example of Jesus sleeping in the boat on the Sea of Galilee when a storm erupted, places the disciples' fear and distress in bold relief. But Jesus' voice saying, "Peace. Be Still!" calmed not only the rough seas but also the disciples' fears. Calmness was regained, tensed muscles relaxed and thus the immune system regained its function. John 14:1 advises us not to let our hearts be troubled. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, encourages the people to rejoice and not be anxious; instead, he counsels them to pray with thanksgiving and the Lord will guard their hearts and their minds in Christ Jesus (4:4-7).

White insists that courage, hope, faith, sympathy, and love promote health and prolong life. A contented mind and a cheerful spirit are health to the body and strength to the soul.[33] She claims that the pleasure of doing good to others "imparts a glow to the feelings, which flashes through the nerves, quickens the circulation of the blood and induces mental and physical health."[34] Indeed, "nothing tends to promote health of the person than does a spirit of gratitude and praise."[35]

Science does not have substantial studies on positive emotional responses and their influence on health because the field of medicine is more focused on studying the disease process than health itself.[36] However, some researchers have conducted studies on how laughter, optimism, satisfying relationships and personal sharing positively affect health and well-being.

Kubzansky and others conducted a study among 1,306 men using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, a standardized questionnaire developed at the University of Minnesota and one of the most popular clinical psychology personality inventories in use today. Results from a 10-year follow-up suggest that optimism might protect against the risk of coronary heart disease among older men.[37]

Mary Payne Bennett's dissertation on the effect of mirthful laughter on stress and NK cytotoxicity, discovered that persons who laughed heartily had a significant improvement in NK cytotoxicity. This suggests that laughter has the potential to improve NK activity and may, therefore, be used as complementary therapy in the care of cancer patients.[38]

A Harvard University study on the effects of positive emotions on the immune system is summarized in the table below.[39]

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[33]White, *Ministry of Healing*, 241-59.

[34]White, *Testimonies*, 4:56.

[35]White, *Ministry of Healing*, 251.

[36]Bill Moyer, *Healing and the Mind* (NY: Doubleday/Dell, 1993), 197.

[37]Laura Kubzansky, David Sparrow, Pantel Vokonas, and Ichiro Kawachi, "Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?" *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* 63/6 (2001): 910-16.

[38]Mary Payne Bennett, "The Effect of Mirthful Laughter on Stress and NK Cell Cytotoxicity" (Ph.D. diss., Rush University, 1998).

[39]J. K. Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 7-14.

Summary of the Effects of Positive Emotions on the Immune System

Positive Emotions	Effects on the Immune System
Satisfying personal relationships and social support	Increased lymphocyte function; increased NK activity, increased immunity by mitogen test; increased immune response to hepatitis B vaccine
Personal sharing and disclosure of traumatic experiences	Increased lymphocyte response
Humor and laughter	Increased immunoglobulin A (a class of protein molecule that acts as a specific antibody; increased lymphocyte count and activity
Relaxation	Increased T-cell effectiveness; increased NK cell activity; decreased blood levels of stress hormones
Group intervention and support	Increased NK cell number and activity; increased number of lymphocytes

Conclusion

The body's defense system is such a complex and well orchestrated mechanism that modern medical science fills volumes in an effort to describe it. The constant interaction between the organs in these systems indicates a Grand Designer. We are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps 139:14), such that our defenses can recognize between "friend" and "foe" and protect us from the myriads of invaders that can harm and even kill us. To be certain, the defense systems are rendered more or less effective according to our emotional responses to the stressors that we experience in the affairs of daily living.

In this matter, special interest may be placed on those whose work involves constant interaction with people. For example, ministers of religion, because of the nature of their profession, which involves working with a variety of personalities, often experience mounting tensions. These tensions may be channeled into anger, resentment, frustration, hopelessness and even fear. Sometimes a minister may go to the extent of absorbing a parishioner's negative emotions. This may result in declined effectiveness, paralysis of potential, destruction of relationships, and worst

of all, misdirection of vital energies. These may cause severe damage to the natural body defenses, producing illness and hindering him/her from achieving goals and objectives.

Negative emotional responses should be seriously dealt with because of their role in disease causation. While practices such as eating a balanced diet, getting adequate rest, and following a regular exercise regimen, have been promoted for counteracting stressors, we all need to understand that having positive attitudes in the face of life-related tensions and stresses will help the disease-fighting force to receive a worthwhile boost.

HERMENEUTICS AND THE WRITINGS
OF ELLEN G. WHITE

LIMONI MANU

Introduction

Hermeneutics is the "science and art" of "deriving meaning" or "interpreting literary documents."[1] Derived from the Greek *hermēneuō*, it simply means to interpret, explain, or to translate.[2] It is a process by which the interpreter "seeks to bridge the vast linguistic, historical, social, and cultural gaps that exist between the ancient and modern worlds" so that the text(s) may be understood in the contemporary situation.[3] Hermeneutics is, therefore, a core consideration in the study of Ellen G. White's (EGW) writings.[4]

Two recent incidents reminded me of the need for a working hermeneutics when interpreting EGW's writings. The first dealt with a university student who was

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[1]William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 5; Cf. Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 372; Roger W. Coon, "Hermeneutics: Interpreting a 19th-Century Prophet in the Space Age," *Journal of Adventist Education* (Summer 1988), 16-30.

[2]Roger S. Boraas, "Hermeneutics," *The Encyclopedia of Christianity,* ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and David B. Barrett (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 2:531, notes that in the NT, when the term is used with the prefixes *dia* and *meta*, it may be translated as "interpret" (Luke 24:27), "explain" (Luke 24:27 NEB), "translate" (John 1:38,42), or "mean" (Heb 7:2). See too L. Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation: Sacred Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 11.

[3]Klein et al., 6. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 14, insist that the goal of hermeneutics is neither uniqueness nor trying to find out what no one else has ever seen, but rather discovering the "plain meaning" of the text. Cf. Ng Kah Seng, *SEARCH: An Exegetical Process in Sermon Preparation* (Silang, Cavite, Philippines: AIIAS Publications, 1989), 1-4.

[4]EGW (1827-1915) was a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church which has a worldwide membership of over twelve million, with projected phenomenal growth. She was a prolific writer, and since she is considered a prophetess, her works hold a certain authority among Adventists. Cf. Coon, 16.

disciplined for wearing jewelry, a violation of school policy.[5] The second stemmed from a question as to whether or not EGW approved of marriages between people of different races or cultures. This was raised due to a partial reading of a statement where EGW speaks of "objecting to the marriage of the white race with the black."[6]

Other examples may be cited but the above underscore two important factors. First, the writings of EGW, if wrongly interpreted, pose the potential for major misunderstanding in contemporary situations; second, sound principles of hermeneutics are crucial for a correct understanding and application of EGW's writing today. The questions now raised include (1) What role does the modem interpreter play in the hermeneutical process? (2) How can the interpreter avoid the pitfalls of misinterpreting the writings of EGW? In the following discussion I answer these queries by highlighting the importance of hermeneutics in the interpretation of EGW's material and then suggesting three foundational principles necessary for sound understanding of her inspired messages.

The Importance of Hermeneutics

The inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16)[7] is the foundation upon which the principles and process of hermeneutics are built.[8] Hermeneutics is essential because

[5]According to the university, the prohibition for wearing a "wedding ring" (jewelry) is based on the counsels of Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1962), 180-81.

[6]Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages From the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1958), 2:343-44.

[7]Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Hermeneutics, Biblical," *New 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 386, notes the biblical emphasis in passages such as Neh 8:7-8; Matt 13:51; 15:16,17; Luke 24:27,32,44, 45; Acts 8:30-35; 2 Tim 2:14-19; 3:15-17; and 2 Pet 3:15-17. Berkhof, 11, insists that it is only as we recognize the principle of the divine inspiration of the Bible that we can maintain the theological character of *hermeneutica sacra* (hermeneutics dealing with the Bible as the inspired word of God). Spiros Zodhiates, *"Theopneustos,"* *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Iowa: World Bible Publishers, 1992), 729, says that "inspiration" is derived from *theopneustos*, a combination of two Greek words, *Theos,* "God" and *pneo,* "to breathe" or "blow." It implies that the Bible entails an intrinsic and authoritative message from God which needs to be understood through the interpretive process.

[8]Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today: An Analysis of Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation and Proposals for the Interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God* (Lincoln, NE: College View Printers, 1985), 100-13, discusses the foundations of biblical interpretation. Idem, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics,* ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1974), 164, insists that sound and adequate principles of interpretation must be developed to rightly understand the message of God to us. According to Raoul Dederen, "Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics,* ed. Gordon M. Hyde

unless our interpretations are guided by objective rules or principles, our acceptance of God's message through EGW may only be theoretical. The importance for such guidelines is brought to focus in three interrelated foci: (1) the need for hermeneutics, (2) the search for meaning, and (3) the quest for balance.

The Need for Hermeneutics

It has been rightly observed that correctly understanding inspired writing "is an arduous and often puzzling task."[9] Such may also be the case with EGW's writings for several reasons:[10]

1. A significant gap in time exists between EGW and us. This proposition recognizes that the world in which EGW lived has changed in substantial ways during the past one hundred years. This means that the time gap between hers and ours has undergone changes in the social, cultural, political, and religious perspectives.[11] An adequate hermeneutic will help one to understand that EGW's counsel regarding intermarriage was couched in the context of circumstances and conditions that had the potential for "controversy, confusion and bitterness" between the Black and the White races.[12]

2. The culture in EGW's time affected the meaning of what she said. For example, the statement that "not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married"[13] reflects an American cultural ideal of EGW's time. This is especially poignant in light of her counsel to missionaries serving outside of the USA. She stated that in countries where the custom is imperative, we have no burden to condemn those who have their marriage ring; let them wear it if they can do so conscientiously; but let not our missionaries feel that the wearing of the ring will increase their influence one jot or tittle.[14]

(Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1974), 1-2, God has spoken but what He has said demands interpretation. The need to interpret His word increases in proportion to the distance the text stands in terms of the time and culture of the author from our own.

[9]Klein et al., 3.

[10]The following points have been deduced from Fee and Stuart, 16,17; Coon, 17-19; Klein et al., 3-20; Seng, 2-4; Douglass, 386-91.

[11]See Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 12-14, on some of the challenges of Bible interpretation due to the distance in time: (1) the gap between the ancient texts and our modern world; (2) the gap between the occurrence of events and when they were recorded; and (3) the cultural, social, and religious shifts.

[12]White, *Selected Messages,* 2:343, clearly indicates that her counsel is not an issue of racial inequality. She firmly believed in the equality of all races and the brotherhood of humankind.

[13]White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers,* 181.

[14]Ibid.

For that reason, EGW's 1895 recommendation not to spend a penny for the purchase of a wedding ring does not necessarily affirm its validity today.[15] Indeed, the American culture of the present day is quite different from that of her time. Roger W. Coon's counsel concerning the importance of cultural factors in understanding EGW is therefore quite appropriate. He says that SDAs believe EGW was influenced, sometimes very strongly, by the era of her day. However, she was not a "prisoner" of her culture, unable to transcend it. Hence, an understanding of that time will assist us in understanding EGW and her writings.[16]

3. Language evolves and words change meaning over time. Many words that are found in the 1611 KJV are now obsolete. Examples include: "ear" for "plow" (1 Sam 8:12); "meat" for "food" (1 Tim 4:3); "corn" for "grain" (Gen 41:35); "prevent" for "precede" (1 Thess 4:15); and "let" for "hinder" (2 Thess 2:7).[17] Likewise, EGW also used words which have changed in meaning from her day. For example, EGW's understanding of the "shut door" after her Midnight Cry vision of December 1844 was different to that of her contemporary advocates who thought the world would end in 1843-44. Herbert E. Douglas notes that her developing clarity regarding the Sabbatarian Adventist work of missions led to the worldwide vision in the 1850s.[18] Hence, an adequate hermeneutic is needed to help solve some of these problems. The above factors are far from being exhaustive but they underscore the importance of hermeneutics in order to properly interpret EGW's writings.

The Search for Meaning

The Bible, as the salvific message of God, is entrusted to humanity (see 2 Cor 2:17; 4:2,5-6; 5:19-20). Therefore, the primary goal of biblical hermeneutics is to help us comprehend the will of God in this inspired book.[19] According to 2 Tim 2:15, the goal is expressed as rightly dividing the word of truth in order to achieve balance and avoid distortion. A similar challenge faces the interpreter when

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[15]Ibid.

[16]Roger W. Coon, Course Outline for GSEM 534 The Writings of Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1993, 13. Cited hereafter as GSEM 534. A similar idea is brought to the forefront when interpreting scripture according to Raymond C. Kelcy, "Identifying the Pericope and Its Context," in *Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Practice,* ed. F. Furman Kearley, Edward P. Myers, and Timothy D. Hadley (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 79.

[17]Committee on Problems in Bible Translation, *Problems in Bible Translation* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1954), 41, underscores that words may have one meaning at one time and quite a different one at a later period. Cf. Coon, "Hermeneutics," 117-18, who notes the change in meaning of some 350 words in the 1955 edition of the KJV compared to the initial 1611 version.

[18]Douglass, 502.

[19]Dederen, 2.

trying to make sense of what EGW originally "meant" in her writings and what she "means" today for the modern reader.[20] Hence, the foremost task of the interpreter is to ascertain her primary message and be able to make valid applications for contemporary Christians.[21]

The Quest for Balance

Finding balance in our interpretation of EGW's writing is easier said than done. Sometimes fanciful interpretations, often leading to extreme conclusions, may take place.[22] The Bible metaphorically speaks of the importance of "walking" in truth and adhering to all the commandments of God (Luke 1:6; 2 John 4). The frequent occurrence of such expressions as "walk" (John 12:35; Rom 13:13; Gal 5:16) or "run" (Hab 2:2; 1 Cor 9:24; Gal 2:2; Phil 2:16) suggests the necessity of following closely the "way" leading to "life." To do otherwise leads to "destruction" (Matt. 7:13,14). Here the Christian duty is portrayed as avoiding both edges of extremity on the narrow path toward the goal of life, a "crown of glory," the symbol of victory.[23] In short, the Bible teaches the need for balance.

EGW concurs with the metaphoric intent of scripture in her first vision, when she speaks of those who took their eyes off Jesus, and who stumbled and fell off the path into the dark and wicked world below.[24] Her concern for balance is evident in her counsels to guard against "bigotry and prejudice,"[25] to refrain from "extreme"[26]

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[20]Douglass, 386-91, suggests the following basic rules for interpretation: (1) the recognition of inspiration, (2) recognizing the change of word definitions, (3) understanding the use of hyperbole; (4) understanding the meaning of phrases in which a word is used, (5) recognizing the possibility of imprecise expressions, (6) looking carefully at the immediate context, (7) recognizing that the meaning of words can change in new contexts, and (8) recognizing the challenge of semantics.

[21]See Seng, 2, in dealing with this when interpreting the Bible. Hasel, "Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics," 170, in speaking of the Bible underscores that the goal of interpretation is to comprehend the fuller import and deeper meaning of the writer and to transmit these aspects to the modern reader.

[22]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:305, says that human nature tends to run from one extreme to another.

[23]See Coon, "Ellen White and Hermeneutics: It's Importance and Place," GSEM 534, 4-7.

[24]Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1945), 14-15.

[25]White, *Testimonies*, 4:63, 569.

[26]White, *Testimonies*, 2:538, against extremes in health reform; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:565, against extremes in amusements and sports.

lifestyle habits, and to practice "balance,"[27] "moderation,"[28] and "temperance."[29] Stressing this point, Coon appeals to EGW's writings and insists on staying in the "middle-of-the-road."[30] He explains that extremists are harmful to the SDA Church at large.[31] The role, then, of the modern interpreter of EGW is to be attuned to the need for hermeneutics, being mindful of the distance in time, culture, and language between EGW and us. He/She must also be diligent in the search for meaning while also being constantly vigilant in maintaining balance.

Foundational Principles

The need for sound principles of hermeneutics to protect SDAs from any extremity in understanding EGW's writing is quite urgent. T. Housel Jemison (1914-1963), an eminent SDA theologian, teacher, and writer, early on discussed three principles necessary for the study of EGW's works.[32] These include (1) The general teaching of all the applicable counsels should be studied before conclusions are drawn; (2) the time, place, and circumstances of the giving of certain messages should be considered; and (3) one should try to discover the principle involved in any specific counsel. I will modify each of these principles and illustrate them with specific examples from her writings. They are cast in the negative, but with a positive intent.

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[27]White, *Testimonies*, 6:291.

[28]Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 2:363, for moderation even in doing Gospel work.

[29]Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 211; idem, *Testimonies*, 6:256.

[30]Coon, "Ellen White and Hermeneutics: It's Importance and Place," GSEM 534, 4-7.

[31]Ibid., 6. Extremists bring disrepute to the SDA Church because they injure and hinder the cause of truth, make Christian duties burdensome, raise false standards and expect everyone to reach them, and are used by Satan to cast contempt on the work of the Holy Spirit. Cf. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1950), 8; idem, *Evangelism as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1946), 610-11. Coon, "Hermeneutics/Introduction," GSEM 534, 4-7, also indicates certain topics in EGW's writings that extremists use to create confusion in the church. These include issues on health reform, diet, dress, recreation, education theory and practice, religious experience and practice, racial issues, cultural issues, debt, and homemaking.

[32]T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955), 432-50. Cf. Coon, "Ellen White and Hermeneutics: Jemison's First Rule," GSEM 534, 1-12; idem, "Ellen White and Hermeneutics: Jemison's Second Rule," GSEM 534, 1-15; idem, "Ellen White and Hermeneutics: Jemison's Third Rule," GSEM 534, 1-8. These three "rules" elaborate on Jemison's principles and provides detailed illustrations from EGW's works. Douglass, 394-407, expands Jemison's three principles to a list of eight hermeneutical rules. See also Gerhard Pfandl, "How Shall We Use The Writings of Ellen White?" *Adventist Professional* 7 (1995): 13-15.

Never Overlook the Overall Counsel on a Given Topic

In certain regions of the world church, health reform has become a major issue of contention using statements drawn from EGW's writings. It is, therefore, critical that her overall counsel regarding health reform be considered in totality. To this end, we shall examine both her absolute and variable statements. The first refers to what may seem to be policy statements while the second assists the interpreter in determining the underlying principle on a given topic.

a. Absolute Statements

Vegetables, fruits and grains should compose our diet. *Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs.* The eating of flesh is unnatural. We are to return to God's original purpose in the creation of man. . . . Among those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord, meat eating will eventually be done away; flesh will cease to form a part of their diet. We should ever keep this end in view, and endeavor to work steadily toward it.[33]

God demands that the appetite be cleansed, and that self-denial be practiced in regard to those things which are not good. This is a work that will have to be done before His people can stand before Him a perfected people.[34]

b. Variable Statements

Where plenty of good milk and fruit can be obtained, there is rarely any excuse for eating animal food; it is not necessary to take the life of any of God's creatures to supply our ordinary needs. In certain cases of illness or exhaustion, it may be thought best to use some meat, but great care should be taken to secure the flesh of healthy animals. It has come to be a very serious question whether it is safe to use flesh food at all in this age of the world. It would be better never to eat meat than to use the flesh of animals that are not healthy. *When I could not obtain the food I needed, I have sometimes eaten a little meat; but I am becoming more and more afraid of it.*[35]

We do not mark out any precise line to be followed in diet; but we do say that in countries where there are fruits, grains and nuts in abundance, flesh food is not the right food for God's people. I have been instructed that flesh food has a tendency to animalize the nature, to rob men and women of that love and sympathy which they should feel for everyone, and give the lower passions control over the higher powers of the being. If meat eating was ever

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[33]Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Food* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1946), 380 (emphasis mine).

[34]Ibid., 381.

[35]Ibid., 394 (emphasis mine).

healthful, it is not safe now. Cancers, tumors and pulmonary diseases are largely caused by meat eating. We are not to make the use of flesh food atest of fellowship, but we should consider the influence that professed believers who use flesh foods have over others.[36]

I cannot say to them: You must not eat eggs, or milk, or cream; you must use no butter in the preparation of food. The gospel must be preached to the poor, and the time has not yet come to prescribe the strictest diet.[37]

When you see that you are becoming weak physically, it is essential for you to make changes, and at once. Put into your diet something you have left out. It is your duty to do this. Get eggs of healthy fowls. Use these eggs cooked or raw. Drop them uncooked into the best unfermented wine you can find. This will supply that which is necessary to your system. Do not for a moment suppose that it will not be right to do this. . . . And eggs contain properties which are remedial agencies in counteracting poisons. . . ."[38]

A meat diet is not the most wholesome of diets, and yet I would not take the position that meat should be discarded by everyone. Those who have feeble digestive organs can often use meat, when they cannot eat vegetables, fruit or porridge.[39]

EGW's absolute statements seem to insist on a strict vegetarian diet to be racticed by Adventist believers in every country of the world while awaiting the econd coming of Christ. It may also imply that unless one becomes a vegetarian, 'hristian perfection would not be attained. Her variable statements indicate the eed to consider the practical realities of living in a sinful world as one shares the ealth message with others. EGW's overall approach to health is relevant and alanced.

Although she indicates that the Edenic diet (Gen 1:29; Gen 3:17-18) is the est for human consumption, she cautions that (1) reform should be progressive in

[36]Ibid., 159.
[37]Ibid., 206.
[38]Ibid., 367.
[39]Ibid., 394-95.

nature;[40] (2) we refrain from the dangers of extremes in health reform;[41] and (3) she recognizes that due to sin, the reality in different places or situations may be far from the ideal, hence the need for common sense dietary reforms to be practiced in real life situations.[42] Her counsel for common sense helps us to see her desire for balance.

> It is impossible to make an unvarying rule to regulate everyone's habits, and no one should think himself a criterion for all. Not all can eat the same things. Foods that are palatable and wholesome to one person may be distasteful, and even harmful to another.[43]

> We don't make the health reform an iron bedstead cutting people off or stretching them out to fit it. One person cannot be a standard for everybody else. What we want is a little sprinkling of good common sense.[44]

Unless one considers the overall counsel of EGW regarding health reform, it is quiet easy to become dogmatic on a precise line of reform to be followed by every practicing Seventh-day Adventist. However, EGW rejects the notion of a standard criterion and appeals for the practice of common sense dietary reform.

Never Overlook the Time, Place and Context of Writing

Let us consider one EGW statement in the area of education:

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[40]Ibid., 366, "Let the diet reform be progressive."

Ibid., 380, "Again and again I have been shown that God is trying to lead us back, step by step, to His original design—that man should subsist upon the natural products of the earth."

Ibid., 355, "Fruits, grains, and vegetables, prepared in a simple way, free from spice and grease of all kinds, make, with milk or cream, the most healthful diet. . . . Some, in abstaining from milk, eggs, and butter, have failed to supply the system with proper nourishment, and as a consequence have become weak and unable to work."

[41]Ibid., 202, "Health reform becomes health deform, a health destroyer, when it is carried to extremes." She cautions about the following extremes: the use of large amounts of sugar or mush, too much amounts of food, discarding milk from the diet, meals without salt, tasteless dishes, meals without eggs, dishes without cream, no butter in food preparation, diet lacking proper elements, and vegetables prepared only in water. Ibid., 196-212.

[42]White, *The Ministry of Healing,* 319, "There is real common sense in dietetic reform. The subject should be studied broadly and deeply, and no one should criticize others because their practice is not, in all things, in harmony with his own."

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ellen G. White, "Sermons and Talks," vol. 1, 12, in *The Published Ellen G. White Writings* (Silver Spring, MD: The Ellen G. White Estate, 1994) [CD-ROM].

> Since both men and women have a part in homemaking, boys as well as girls should gain a knowledge of household duties. To make a bed and put a room in order, to wash dishes, to prepare a meal, to wash and repair his own clothing, is a training that need not make any boy less manly; it will make him happier and more useful. And if girls, in turn, could learn to harness and drive a horse, and to use the saw and hammer, as well as a rake and the hoe, they would be better fitted to meet the emergencies of life.[45]

When EGW first penned this counsel in 1903, most SDAs in North America lived in isolated, rural communities. Her emphasis was on practical education, enabling both boys and girls to "be better fitted to meet the emergencies of life."[46] Considering the context of the time, it would have been critical for girls to learn how to harness a horse. As Coon asserts, "If a daughter did not know how to harness/drive a horse, the summoning of a physician might be an impossibility—and the patient might die unnecessarily."[47] This principle helps the interpreter to understand that emphasis is to be placed on the necessity of practical education. In contemporary situations, the principle may be understood in terms of a girl learning how to drive a car, as opposed to harnessing a horse.

Like other literary works, the writings of EGW were construed in a particular context. If her counsels are lifted out of context, the meaning of her writings may be misinterpreted.[48] For example, take the statement that "the frequenters of the theater and the ballroom, put eternity out of their reckoning."[49] In certain areas of the world church this has been used to formulate a kind of unwritten policy, strictly prohibiting watching movies in a theater. But does this statement mean that theater-going is not permissible? Close attention must be given to the context of the passage in order to be faithful to EGW's primary intention. Let us consider the above issue in its entirety:

> The day of the Lord is approaching with stealthy tread; but the supposed great and wise men know not the signs of Christ's coming or of the end of the world. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many has waxed cold. There are thousands upon thousands, millions upon millions, who are now making their decision for eternal life or eternal death. The man who is wholly

[45]Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1952), 216-17.
[46]Ibid.

[47]Coon, "Ellen White and Hermeneutics: Jemison's Third Rule," GSEM 534, 2.

[48]In a similar view Seng, 33-41, discusses this point in terms of the importance of surveying the literary context of a passage in Scripture by examining its historical, geographical, and cultural backgrounds. Cf. Douglass, 390-91; Fee & Stuart, 22-25. Kelcy, 80-81, notes three benefits of such contextual study: (1) It brings an understanding of the underlying thought of the passage, (2) it enables the student to determine how a particular word is being used in the pericope, and (3) it produces in a student a greater degree of faith because he is dealing with the word of God.

[49]White, *Testimonies*, 6:407.

absorbed in his counting room, the man who finds pleasure at the gaming table, the man who loves to indulge perverted appetite, the amusement lover, *the frequenters of the theater and the ballroom, put eternity out of their reckoning*. The whole burden of their life is: What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And wherewithal shall we be clothed? They are not in the procession that is moving heavenward. They are led by the great apostate, and with him will be destroyed.[50]

The context certainly clarifies the ambiguity. EGW's statement has nothing to do with the watching of movies but rather with those who are wholly absorbed in pleasure seeking. Indeed, Coon has rightly cautioned that EGW was totally silent regarding cinemas or the watching of "movies," or videos.[51] Therefore, in this case, a direct or literal application of EGW's statement would be pushing her intended meaning too far. The interpreter cannot afford to overlook the time, place, and context of her writing.

Never Overlook the Principle in Specific Counsel

Some instructions in scripture, although couched in a specific cultural setting, were intended to teach some general principle. To "watch" (1 Pet 4:7; 2 Tim 4:5) and "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17) does not mean to be physically idle, but connotes maintaining a constant and active connection with heaven.[52] Likewise the "remnant" of Revelation who are described as "virgins" undefiled with women does not mean that none of God's people are to marry.[53] EGW affirms that "the word of God abounds in general principles for the formation of correct habits of living, and the testimonies, general and personal, have been calculated to call their attention more especially to these principles."[54] This also applies to the interpretation of her own counsels. As she herself experienced, when it was not possible to obtain a wholesome diet, she would settle for the best food that was available under the

[50]Ibid., 406-07 (emphasis mine).

[51]Coon, "Ellen White and Hermeneutics: Jemison's First Rule," GSEM 534, 1, reminds us that the first Hollywood film was D. W. Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation," produced in 1915, the very year EGW died. Other topics on which EGW was silent include radio programs (introduced in 1920), television programs (first aired in 1939), chemical and mechanical contraception or birth control (first practiced in 1960), as well as abortion, cremation, and organ transplants. Ibid.

[52]"Pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17)," *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-80), 7:255. Cf. 1 Thess 5:14 and 2 Thess 3:15 regarding the apostles' warning against idleness.

[53]Rev 14:4 refers to the saints who have kept themselves aloof from Babylon and were not defiled by association with the union of religious elements rallied by Satan. See "Virgins (Rev. 14:4)," *SDABC,* 4:826.

[54]White, *Testimonies*, 4:323; 5:663, 664.

situation, which may mean the eating of flesh food.[55] This may be illustrated in an occasion during the 1890s in Australia where she advised the cooking of some "chicken broth" for her sick neighbor.[56] In another example, EGW suggested pure grape juice as a food supplement for medicinal purposes.[57] Therefore, the general principle of health reform is eating whatever is best, permissible, and available under the circumstances in which one lives. Hence, the responsibility of the interpreter is to find the general principle in a given counsel of EGW and to make appropriate application. To do otherwise is irresponsible hermeneutics.

Conclusion

The need for hermeneutics has never been more urgent in SDA life and practice. Unless our search for meaning and balance is guided by specific rules of interpretation, misunderstanding of EGW's writings remains a major problem. In order to remain faithful to the primary intentions of EGW's writing, one must adhere to certain dynamic principles: never overlook the overall counsel on a given topic; never overlook the time, place and context of writing; and never overlook the general principle of her counsels.

Undoubtedly, sometimes the basic principles of hermeneutics have been ignored by SDAs, resulting in misinterpretation and misrepresentation of EGW. Ironically, the result is that the very message that was intended to enrich life has become fodder for contention in the church. Further, SDAs appear suspicious to nonbelievers. Safety lies in educating members regarding the principles of hermeneutics so that upon application of its principles, God's message for the SDA Church may remain relevant and meaningful.

[55]See Douglass, 310-17.
[56]Ibid., 310-11.
[57]Ibid., 10.

DID NIMROD BUILD THE TOWER OF BABEL?

MICHAEL O. AKPA

Introduction

The person and activities of Nimrod are highly debated among biblical scholars.[1] On the one hand, there is no consensus regarding his identity. Consequently, Nimrod has been identified as a Mesopotamian god,[2] a legendary Mesopotamian hero or eponym, a historical Mesopotamian or Egyptian king,[3] or simply a historic person.[4] On the other hand, some scholars believe that the activities of Nimrod were hostile and directed against God. They claim that the crowning evil act of Nimrod was building the Tower of Babel.[5] However, a critical evaluation of this claim reveals that it is not based on reliable foundations. Hence, in response to this, and using both biblical and nonbiblical data, this paper seeks to ascertain whether or not Nimrod built the Tower of Babel.

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[1]Peter Machinist, "Nimrod," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1116; Richard J. Clifford, "Nimrod," *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 759; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Baker (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 1:222; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 515-16.

[2]Kenneth Vaux, "How Do I Love Me?" *Christianity Today*, September 1985, 23; Machinist, 1116.

[3]W. Creighton Marlowe, "Nimrod," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 966. Cf. Eugene H. Merrill, "The People of the Old Testament According to Genesis 10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (1997): 17.

[4]Bruce C. Birch and Ronald K. Harrison, "Nimrod," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, completely rev. and reset ed. (1979-88), 3:538; Machinist, 1116.

[5]André Parrot, *The Tower of Babel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), 36; S. Bliss, *Analysis of Sacred Chronology* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn, 1995), 54; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 338; "Babel" (Genesis 11:9), *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-80), 1:286; Laurie Maffly-Kipp, "Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery," *The Christian Century* 119 (2002): 38; Machinist, 1117.

Biblical Arguments

Some who argue that Nimrod was an evil man who built the Tower of Babel base their arguments on linguistic and thematic considerations found in the Bible. We will consider each in turn.

Linguistic Considerations

The first linguistic consideration employed in the characterization of Nimrod is the meaning of his name. Despite the fact that the etymology and meaning of the name Nimrod is not known,[6] some scholars surmise that it means "we shall rebel," as derived from the root *mrd*, "rebel,"[7] or "revolt."[8] As such, a negative quality is attributed to the person and activities of Nimrod. Gordon J. Wenham suggests that this meaning possibly anticipates the rebellion of Gen 11:1-9.[9] S. Bliss points out that Nimrod is supposed to have been the leader of the rebellion that built the city with a tower in Gen 11:1-9, since his name signifies "the rebellious."[10] As a result of these claims, a connection has been made between Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel.

However, some scholars reject the negative attributes attached to Nimrod based on the meanings above. Henry Snyder Gehman says that the name Nimrod apparently "is a 2d component of a theophoric name, of which the 1st part is omitted."[11] If this view is correct, then it suggests that the name was intended to be a positive name, glorifying Yahweh, instead of rebelling against Him. Also, Yoshitaka Kobayashi points out that although the name Nimrod may mean "we shall rebel" or "let us rebel," his movement can be understood as a "religious movement approved by God like in the case of Jehu (2 Kgs 9:22,30), or Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:7). Jehu rebelled against Jezebel, and Hezekiah rebelled against the Assyrian king."[12] In this sense, Nimrod's rebellion was not directed against God, but against ungodly authorities or religious movements.

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[6]Francis Brown, with S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic (BDB)*, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius [1980], s.v. *"Nimrōd."*

[7]Ibid.

[8]William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, based upon the lexical work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (1986), s.v. *"mrd."*

[9]Wenham, 222.

[10]Bliss, 54.

[11]Henry Snyder Gehman, ed., *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), s.v. "Nimrod."

[12]Yoshitaka Kobayashi, "Historicity of Nimrod in Prehistory," Syllabus for OTST 620 Old Testament Backgrounds, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 2003.

Based on the foregoing arguments, it seems that the meaning of the name does not provide very concrete support for evaluating the character and activities of Nimrod. It is therefore cogent that other considerations be made in order to determine the validity of the claim that he built the Tower of Babel.

The second linguistic consideration employed in the characterization of Nimrod is the meaning of the expression *liphnê ªdonai* "before the Lord," in connection with the integrity of Nimrod's activities in relation to Yahweh in Gen 10:9, where Nimrod is presented as "a mighty hunter before the Lord." There is a plausible source for the negative meanings attributed to both *liphnê* and the overall activities of Nimrod. Perhaps this stems from the LXX rendition of the Hebrew *liphnê* as *enantion*. Generally used as an adjective, it means "falsely (reverse), contrary, opposing, in the presence of,"[13] "hostile,"[14] or "against."[15] The hostility and opposition implied in the various nuances of *enantion* perhaps explain why Nimrod is identified as the builder of the Tower of Babel even as early as Philo and Augustine.[16]

However, several scholars believe that *liphnê* in Gen 10:9 has a positive and favorable meaning. For instance, Francis Brown says that *liphnê* means "in the sight (estimation) of" or "before."[17] According to Victor P. Hamilton, it means "under the eye of . . . in full view of . . . at the disposal of."[18] Bruce C. Birch and Ronald K. Harrison hold the view that *liphnê* means "in accordance with the will of."[19] Kobayashi argues that *liphnê ªdonai* "may be understood in a good sense as 'blessed of (Yahweh).' "[20] Derek Kidner says that "there is warmth in the reiterated *before the Lord*, marking God's estimate of [Nimrod's] skill— it is more than a mere formula."[21] Alan Richardson insists that Nimrod had the knowledge of God

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[13] James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (1980), s.v. "*Enantion*."

[14] G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (1976), s.v. "*Enantion*."

[15] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (1988), s.v. "*Enantion, Enantios*."

[16] K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst, "Nimrod Before and After the Bible," *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 17-19. Cf. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 366-67.

[17] *BDB*, s.v. "*Pāneh*."

[18] Victor P. Hamilton, "*Liphnê*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 2:728. Cf. Harry F. van Rooy, "*Pānîm*," *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:638. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 339, believes that Nimrod's power "is a gift of God's grace." He argues further that "the Persian king Cyrus is not the only pagan king whom Yahweh guided, even though the king knew not Yahweh."

[19] Birch and Harrison, 3:537.

[20] Kobayashi, 2.

[21] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1967), 107.

and "lived consciously"[22] in His presence. He also points out that this implies that the knowledge of God persisted in the first generation of people after the Flood, even among non-Semites. In his estimation, in later times after Nimrod, the people of Babylon and Assyria became cruel, oppressive and arrogant against God and His people because they forgot "the knowledge of God which Nimrod possessed."[23] John Hargreaves argues that Nimrod "hunted 'before the Lord', even though he was not an Israelite or a Semite. God chose certain Semites as His special workers and messengers; but Nimrod the Hamite is a sign that God's care was over all nations. It is so still."[24]

Claus Westermann and Wenham share the belief that *liphnê ʾadonai* in Gen 10:9 has a neutral meaning, pointing out that Nimrod's activities stood out as remarkable. It does not imply God's approval or disapproval of his activities.[25]

Although various shades of meaning of *liphnê* include "against" and "to confront,"[26] the preponderance of evidence indicates that it is not necessary to render *liphnê* negatively in terms of opposition. Indeed, the MT suggests neither a sense of hostility directed against God by Nimrod nor a link between Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel.

Thematic Considerations

Two thematic links between Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel are rebellion and the name Babel itself. Both are based on Gen 10:8-12 and 11:1-9. Concerning rebellion, some observe a link between the assumed meaning of the name Nimrod, "we shall rebel" (10:8-9), and the rebellion that actually instigated the building of the Tower of Babel (11:1-9). On this basis, Nimrod is identified as the architect of the Tower of Babel. For example, André Parrot observes that although Nimrod was a mighty man, not all his mighty deeds were beneficent. He attributes the construction of the Tower of Babel to him on the ground that he incited the people in rebellion to erect a tower for protection, should God decide to destroy humanity a second time, in a new Flood.[27] Moreover, Hamilton says that Nimrod is pictured "as the one who led the people in rebellion against God"[28] hence, the builder of the Tower of Babel.

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[22]Alan Richardson, *Genesis 1-11* (London: SCM, 1953), 120.

[23]Ibid.

[24]John Hargreaves, *A Guide to the Book of Genesis* (London: SPCK, 1977), 66. Cf. Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed., ed. Don F. Neufeld, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 8 (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1979), s.v. "Nimrod."

[25]Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 75; Wenham, 223.

[26]*BDB*, s.v. "*Pāneh*." Cf. Holladay, s.v. "*Pāneh*."

[27]Parrot, 36.

[28]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 338. Cf. Machinist, 1117.

Admittedly, it was rebellion that fomented the building of the Tower of Babel. Kenneth Mulzac observes that,

> Gen 11:1-9 decries the disobedience and evil of those who, in apparent defiance of God's promise not to destroy the earth (8:21), were determined to build a great city, a great tower (of Babel), and a great name (11:4). By this action, they 'attempted to defy God . . . , so making themselves as powerful as God himself (11:6).'[29]

However, he does not in any way link the building of the Tower of Babel to Nimrod or any individual as such. This perhaps stems from the fact that there is no strong biblical proof to support that Nimrod either rebelled against God, built the Tower of Babel, or instigated its building.

Concerning the name Babel, there is an apparent thematic (and perhaps linguistic) link between Babel in Gen 10:10 (MT *Bābel*; LXX *Babulōn*)— the first center of Nimrod's kingdom or empire— and Babel in Gen 11:9 (MT *Bābel*; LXX *sugchusis*), the name of the place where the tower was built. Both were located in Shinar.[30] Based on this seeming similarity, Babylon or Babylonia has been equated with Babel, the place where the tower was built and language was confused.[31]

An analysis of this purported link reveals an interesting feature. Although the MT consistently reads *Bābel* (Babel or Babylon),[32] in both Gen 10:10 and 11:9, the LXX reads *Babulōn* (Babylon)[33] in 10:10 and *sugchusis* (confusion, commixture)[34] in Gen 11:9. The LXX reading in Gen 11:9 appears to be an explanation of what happened namely, Babel (confusion), at Babel (Babylon) the geographical location according to 10:10. This does not place as much emphasis on the name of the place (Babel or Babylon) as on what happened there (confusion, and consequently, dispersion).

Furthermore, Kobayashi sees a similarity between the Nimrodic movement and the Ubaid culture. According to him, Nimrod's kingdom began in southern Mesopotamia and expanded northward. Likewise, the Ubaid culture, which was the

[29]Kenneth Mulzac, "The Theological Character of Gen 1-11 (The Primeval History)," *Asia Adventist Seminary Studies* 3 (2000): 39. Cf. P. J. Harland, "Vertical or Horizontal: The Sin of Babel," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998): 526; R. Norman Whybray, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 3.

[30]Cf. Gen 10:10 and 11:2, 9.

[31]Dale S. DeWitt, "The Historical Background of Genesis 11:1-9: Babel or Ur?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22 (1979): 15-17; Harland, 521-23.

[32]*BDB*, s.v. "*Bābel*." So too Holladay, s.v. "*Bābel*."

[33]Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (1994), s.v. "*Babulōn*."

[34]Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones (1992), s.v. "*Sugchusis*." Cf. Friberg and Friberg, s.v. "*Sugchusis*;" Louw and Nida, s.v. "*Sugchusis*."

first to rule the entire area of Mesopotamia, began in the south and expanded toward the north. It was a movement based on a strong religious conviction that destroyed idols and images. It was not known for building towers unlike its successor, the Uruk culture, that was noted for building very high towers. Kobayashi also believes that although the founder of the Ubaid culture (Nimrod?) possibly established his kingdom in the south, it expanded toward the north about 500 years afterward.[35]

Moreover, a careful study of the chronology of Gen 10 indicates that the language confusion of Gen 11 occurred after Nimrod, not during his time. Nimrod was the son (or descendant) of Cush and a grandson of Ham (Gen 10:8), long before Peleg who was born when the earth was divided (Gen 10:25). If the division of the earth here is taken to mean the dispersion that resulted from the building of the Tower of Babel,[36] it becomes obvious that this happened when Peleg was born, long after Nimrod.[37]

In the light of these observations, it is possible that Nimrod's kingdom was established at Babel, long before the building of the tower. However, as his kingdom continued to expand under his successors, the people rebelled against God and built a city with a tower at Babel, but not directly under the rule of Nimrod. This suggests that Babel (Gen 10:10) was already a geographical place existing long before the building of the tower (Gen 11:9). Given this and the fact that "the Bible itself nowhere specifically states that Nimrod had an evil character,"[38] it is not certain that the building of the Tower of Babel can be traced directly to the rule and activities of Nimrod.

Nonbiblical Arguments

K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst observe that since the Bible (especially Gen 10:8-12) contains scanty information about Nimrod "post-biblical tradition has added supplementary details that cannot be found in the biblical text, however much they may be presented as results of exegesis of this text."[39] They also note that it is not known exactly "when post-biblical speculation about the enigmatic hunter began to develop."[40] Peter Machinist also observes that in most

[35]Kobayshi, 1-4.

[36]Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), 146. So too David Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1-11*, ed. J. A. Motyer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 174.

[37]Even though Cassuto, 145-46, attempts to establish a link between Nimrod (Gen 10:8-12), the Generation of Division (Gen 11:1-9), and the cities they constructed, he makes a clear distinction between the two eras.

[38]van der Toorn and van der Horst, 22.

[39]Ibid., 1.

[40]Ibid., 16.

of these post-biblical sources, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, Nimrod has been negatively singled out "as the greatest sinner since the Flood."[41]

Jewish Sources

Philo of Alexandria has been identified as the foremost Jewish writer who explicitly mentions Nimrod by name in his writings around the first half of the first century C.E. He presents a negative image of Nimrod the hunter.[42] Pointing to Nimrod's Hamitic roots, Philo remarks that Nimrod should be translated as "Ethiopian," that is "the black one, because he has no participation in light."[43] In his typical allegorical manner Philo further remarks that,

> Ham, Nimrod's grandfather, stands for evil and that Ham's son Cush stands for 'the sparse nature of earth' and is a symbol of unfruitfulness and barrenness. Nimrod is Cush's son because spiritual unproductiveness can only produce giants, i.e., people who honor earthly things more than heavenly things. 'For in truth he who is zealous for earthly and corruptible things always fights against and makes war on heavenly things and praiseworthy and wonderful natures, and builds walls and towers on earth against heaven. . . . For this reason it is not ineptly said, 'a giant before (*enantion*) God,' which is clearly in opposition to the Deity. For the impious man is none other than the enemy and foe who stands against God.'[44]

Also, Philo comments on Gen 6:4 saying that when the sons of the earth deserted God by succumbing to the instinct of the natural flesh contrary to reason, "it was Nimrod who began this desertion . . . his name means 'desertion' (*automolēsis*)."[45] Nimrod is thus portrayed negatively.

Four main issues stand out in these views expressed by Philo: first, he attempts to connect Nimrod with the story of the giants in Gen 6 as well as with the building of the Tower of Babel. This connection lacks foundation, especially in view of the fact that only Noah's family repopulated the earth after the Flood in Gen 6-9, and there is no link between Noah and the giants in the Bible. Second, Philo interpreted Nimrod negatively to mean desertion. This too is the product of his allegorical approach to biblical interpretation. Third, he called Nimrod an Ethiopian, a negative characterization that is not found at all in the biblical text. Fourth, he maintains that Nimrod directed his activities against God by giving *enantion* an exclusive interpretation as "against." This exclusive and overstretched

[41]Machinist, 1117.

[42]van der Toorn and van der Horst, 17.

[43]Philo, *Quaestiones in Genesin* 2.81-82, quoted in van der Toorn and van der Horst, 18.

[44]van der Toorn and van der Horst, 17-18.

[45]Philo, *De Gigantibus* 65-66, quoted in van der Toorn and van der Horst, 18.

interpretation is not necessary since *enantion* has other shades of meaning including "in the presence of."[46] Moreover, there is no explicit indicator in Gen 10:8-12 that provides the basis for such a negative interpretation.

Apart from Philo's writings, which contributed immensely to the haggadic developments on Nimrod,[47] the midrashim also contributed to the misrepresentation of Nimrod and his activities. According to Devora Steinmetz, the midrashim capitalized on the Hamitic root of Nimrod to a large extent. They indicate that "the promise of creation was misappropriated by Ham and Nimrod and then by Esau, his spiritual descendant. Only in Jacob's time is that original promise redeemed through Shem's descendant."[48] They also claim that the coat which God made for Adam was illegitimately taken from Noah by Ham. Later, Nimrod took the coat from Ham and eventually it was passed to Esau. However, Rebecca later took this coat from Esau and clothed Jacob with it so that he will receive the blessings from his father, thus restoring the blessing promised at creation, to Shem's line.[49]

Josephus also presents Nimrod in a negative light with his claim that Nimrod incited the people on the Plain of Shinar to display insolent contempt for God. According to him, since the people did not trust God's plan for them to disperse and fill the earth, Nimrod

> persuaded them to attribute their prosperity not to God but to their own valour . . . [and] threatened to have his revenge on God if he wished to inundate the earth again, for he would build a tower higher than the water could reach and avenge the destruction of their forefathers.[50]

It may be possible that Philo's writings influenced Josephus.

Non-Jewish Sources

The result of Philo's (and perhaps Josephus') views on Nimrod and his activities is far reaching. They paved the way for promoting the negativity against Nimrod, extending from the Church Fathers to the present. For example, St.

[46]Moulton and Milligan, s.v. "*Enantion*." It should be noted that Philo lived in Alexandria where the translation of the LXX took place. It may be that Philo popularized the negative interpretation of the LXX *enantion*.

[47]van der Toorn and van der Horst, 18, 29. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 338, says that Nimrod is pictured in *Hag*. 13a and *Pes*. 94b as "the prototype of rebellion, the builder of the Tower of Babel, and as the one who led the people in rebellion against God."

[48]Devora Steinmetz, *From Father to Son: Kinship, Conflict, and Continuity in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster, 1991), 199.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Josephus, *Antiquitates* 1.113-14, quoted in van der Toorn and van der Horst, 20-21. Cf. "Babel" (Gen 11:9), *SDABC*, 1:286.

Augustine's comment on the expression "before the Lord" (Gen 10:9) shows that he is aware of the multiple meanings of *enantion*. In spite of this, he claims:

> Some interpreters have misunderstood this phrase, being deceived by an ambiguity in the Greek and consequently translating it as 'before the Lord' instead of 'against the Lord.' It is true that the Greek *enantion* means 'before' as well as 'against'. . . It is in the latter sense that we must take it in the description of Nimrod; that giant was 'a hunter against the Lord.' For the word 'hunter' can only suggest a deceiver, oppressor and destroyer of earth-born creatures. Thus he, with his subject peoples, began to erect a tower against the Lord, which symbolizes his impious pride.[51]

This shows that Augustine believed that Nimrod acted "against" God and led the people to build the Tower of Babel, based on his arbitrary and exclusive interpretation of *enantion*.

This view survived into the medieval period. It was so obvious that it began to appear even in paintings. A typical example of this is the painted panel attributed to Jan Swart (1470-1535), preserved in Venice. Parrot's association of Nimrod with the construction of the Tower of Babel is based on the inscription on this painting.[52] Incidentally, his description of Nimrod mirrors Josephus' views stated earlier,[53] indicating that both Philo's and Josephus' negative views of Nimrod have come a long way in history and in biblical interpretation.

Finally, some modern scholars attribute the building of the Tower of Babel to Nimrod by equating the Babylonian Dynasty with Babel (or Babylon) built by Nimrod (Gen 10:10) on the one hand, and the ziggurat or temple tower with the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:3-5) on the other hand. For instance, Dale S. DeWitt believes that the Tower of Babel is "the ziggurat of the lower Tigris-Euphrates basin."[54] N. M. Sarna holds the view that the famous temple tower of Marduk, built during the First Dynasty of Babylon, qualifies for the Tower of Babel.[55]

Inasmuch as the name Babylon may be common to one of Nimrod's centers as well as the Babylonian Dynasty and Empire, equating either one, or both, with the location of the Tower of Babel is inconsistent for three main reasons. First, the towers in Babylon and the tower at Babel had different purposes. The towers in Babylon were erected for the purpose of worship. Such was the case with Marduk's temple tower and the Etemenanki. On the contrary, the Tower of Babel, according to the biblical text, had the purpose of keeping the people together, to prevent scattering, and was not related to worship.[56] Second, the founding of the First

[51]Augustine, *Civ. D.* 16.4, quoted in van der Toorn and van der Horst, 19.
[52]Parrot, 36, n. 1.
[53]Ibid.
[54]DeWitt, 15.
[55]N. M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 85.
[56]Harland, 529.

Dynasty of Babylon occurred around the middle of the nineteenth century B.C.E., which is later than the time of the building of the biblical Tower of Babel.[57] Consequently, the Bible story of the Tower of Babel "had nothing to do with later Babylon except that in the sequence of kingdoms and civilizations Babylon replaced Sumer in the same general region."[58] Third, the tower of Babel is not the same as any of the Sumerian ziggurats. The ruins of the Tower of Babel have not been found.[59]

Conclusion

On the basis of the linguistic and thematic considerations from the Bible, as well as the nonbiblical arguments presented in this study, the claim that Nimrod built the Tower of Babel does not appear to be feasible. This is evident in view of the fact that the Bible does not portray Nimrod negatively. Further, it was the postbiblical sources, based mostly on speculative traditions, that portrayed Nimrod with the negativity that has persisted up to the present. Therefore, it is unsafe to conclude, based on nonbiblical sources, that Nimrod's activities were hostile and directed against God or that he built the Tower of Babel.

[57]DeWitt, 17.
[58]Ibid., 18.
[59]"Babel" (Gen 11:9), *SDABC*, 1:286-87.

THE REMNANT THEOLOGY OF
MARTIN LUTHER

RICO JAVIEN

Introduction

The German Reformation began on 31 October 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the castle church of Wittenberg, Germany.[1] Luther's placement in church history and his contribution to Christian theology cannot be ignored. There seems to be a general consensus that Luther's idea of righteousness by faith alone was perhaps his "greatest contribution" to Christianity.[2] He also associated remnant theology with this concept of justification by faith.

At the outset, it must be pointed out that to analyze Luther's remnant theology is not easy, but rather, a difficult task. This is due to his personality as a writer and theologian and his characteristics or style in presenting his ideas or views of the Christian faith. He expressed the truth of the Christian faith vigorously in form of powerful paradoxes or opposites, strange complexes, apparent contradictions, exaggeration even inconsistencies at times. He dwells on theological conflicts or debate as an "outspoken activist."[3] This is clear in the way he used the word "alone," or "only." Such phrases as the "remnant only is saved," or the "church alone"[4] are seen to be in tension.

As a lecturer and Bible translator, Luther was familiar with the biblical notion of the remnant as may be noted in some of his comments: "God always remains the Redeemer, who preserves the remnant of the seed of Abraham and Zion."[5] Indeed, the Lord preserves the remnant "alone to Himself as a seed for

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[1]This date is still debated. Some historians claim that the event occurred either in 1514 or 1518, while others contend for 1519 or 1520. For a summary of the discussion see Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction of His Life and Work*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 149-50.

[2]William M. Landeen, *Martin Luther's Religious Thought* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1971), 139.

[3]In connection with these observations, see Landeen, v, 52; Siegbert W. Becker, *The Foolishness of God* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern, 1982), 1; Jerry K. Robbins, ed., *The Essential Luther* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 9, 10.

[4]See Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman, ed., *Luther's Works*, 54 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia/Fortress, 1956-1986), 11:42, 356; 51:166-68, 304-05; cf. 25:85, 96, 395. Cited hereafter as LW.

[5]LW, 17:307.

another people."[6] This preservation of the remnant is by the "election of God's grace" and "not by their own will."[7] However, his ideas on this subject are not systematically treated but are scattered in his lectures on various books of the Bible.[8] However, most scholars, even Lutheran, overlook these ideas on remnant theology and make only scanty references to Luther when dealing with this issue.[9]

Luther's Description of the Remnant

Luther described the remnant as "a root" or the "kernel"[10] of a seed. As such, he was certain that the remnant numbered "just a few,"[11] a mere "part,"[12] or a "very small part,"[13] even "the lesser part"[14] of the people whom God Himself had preserved. Indeed, "God smites His people, yet He does it in such a way that the heathen may not say, 'Where is their God?' Still He saves only the tiniest remnant of His people."[15] As the "few who remained" on the Lord's side, they constituted the "best part of the people."[16] As the "few" or "chosen," they were the "little ones" who had accepted Jesus' teachings.[17] God's assurance is that in spite of the fall of many, "I shall still save My remnant—My little ones—for Myself."[18] In terms of their attitude and response to God's service, they were the "only very few devout"

[6]LW, 25:396.

[7]Ibid., 423.

[8]Luther's lectures on Psalms (1513-15), the Minor Prophets (1524-27) and Isaiah (1527, 1530), provide a hint of his initial views concerning the remnant. His full understanding of the concept seems to have occurred in his lectures on Romans (1515-17) where he discovered the great theme of righteousness by faith.

[9]See Heinrich Borkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament,* trans. Victor I. Gruhn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 70, 78; Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 290, 343.

[10]LW, 20:211 on Zech 3:2.

[11]LW, 25:85.

[12]LW, 18:51 on Hos 9:11-13.

[13]LW, 18:154

[14]LW, 20:150. According to C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, reprint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 243, the preservation of the remnant "is a miracle of divine grace."

[15]LW, 18:101.

[16]LW, 18:149, 177. Ralph Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary , vol. 32 (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 29, comments insightfully, "The remnant is identified with the afflicted, poor, and lame (4:6-7), but it stresses the power of the remnant (5:6-7), forgiven and cleansed."

[17]LW, 20:335. The "few" (Matt 7:4; Luke 13:32), the "little ones" (Luke 17:2), and the "chosen" (Matt 20:14-16) point "to the remnant of faith of Jesus' teachings." See Kenneth D. Mulzac, "Remnant," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1117-1118.

[18]LW, 2:150.

and "faithful"[19] people to their God. Even though they were an "insignificant remnant"[20] or just a "bare remnant"[21] compared to the majority, they were the "people who will hope in the name of the Lord."[22] Therefore, they were the "elect," the ones "chosen from eternity."[23]

Luther also employed metaphorical expressions similar to those used by Bible writers to describe the remnant. For instance, they were the "seed of God,"[24] a "bone of a lamb snatched from a lion's mouth or a brand from a fire,"[25] the "remaining ember,"[26] or a "glimmering spark—which would sweep the whole world."[27] As a "tent peg,"[28] where God hangs many beautiful vessels and ornaments, the remnant are faithful people converted by the Gospel. Accordingly, Paul was an "outstanding peg" and Timothy, Titus, Apollos, Peter and others were among the vessels.[29] Above all, the "elect" and the "remnant" are the same people "chosen from eternity."[30]

Luther's description of the remnant indicates that, overall, he saw the remnant in a positive way. Regardless of their smallness or seeming insignificance they were God's special people and this implies a positive quality.

Characteristics of the Remnant

Luther's idea of justification by faith is not to be divorced from his notion of the remnant. He associated the remnant with those who are "justified" or "live by faith."[31] They are God's remnant people precisely because they "trusted in Him as

[19]LW, 18:341. Cf. Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 3:33, 34, who also describe the remnant as "pious, righteous, and faithful."

[20]LW, 18:282.

[21]LW, 20:66, 148.

[22]LW, 18:358. The "poor and needy" in Jesus' teaching corresponds to the remnant idea. See Gerhard F. Hasel, "Remnant," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, completely rev. and reset, ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (1979-88), 4:130-34.

[23]LW, 17:344; 18:276.

[24]LW, 20:210; 17:406.

[25]LW, 18:154, 158.

[26]LW, 20:211.

[27]Ibid., 82.

[28]Ibid., 109.

[29]Ibid.

[30]LW, 17:344; 18:276.

[31]LW, 17:305, 307; 25:85, 97. Cf. Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Remnant and the Three Angels' Messages," *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. George W. Reid (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 862, who points out that "the spiritual characteristics of the faithful remnant are faith, trust, and willing obedience. . . ."

their God."[32] Because of the quality of their faith, this people "will be holy and righteous"[33] and will become the "saints" of God.[34]

Moreover, the righteous remnant "firmly remain with the pure Word and are refined and tested by both persecution and affliction."[35] Indeed, a "tiny remnant which has been saved knows the sweetness of the Gospel. Therefore they accepted it and believed it."[36]

According to Luther, the remnant is also characterized by their obedience to God. They are loyal to the commandments of God. In admonishing the faithful not to violate the precepts in the Decalogue, he said:

> This is what the persecutors are after, that the faithful forsake God's commandments and receive theirs. Yet the church, even if she is diminished and almost swallowed up, does not forsake them . . . the remnant of the churches preserves and keep them.[37]

In fact, Luther insisted on obedience to God's laws:

> God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. We should therefore fear his wrath and not disobey these commandments. On the other hand, He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them. We should therefore love Him, trust in Him, and cheerfully do what He has commanded.[38]

For Luther, there was a direct relationship between blessings and obedience to God's commandments. For this reason he urged that the remnant preserve and keep the articles of the Decalogue.

Preservation of the Remnant

According to some scholars, the remnant refers to survivors of natural disasters like a flood or famine, calamities stemming from human machinations

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[32]LW, 16:221. Cf. David Latoundji, "*Yeter*," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:573-74, who says that those "who live by faith constitute the true remnant."

[33]Ibid.

[34]LW, 17:381 on Isa 65:8.

[35]LW, 20:336 on Zech 13:8-9.

[36]Ibid., 123.

[37]LW, 11:476.

[38]Timothy F. Lull, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 479.

such as war and tribal conflict, and divine judgment.[39] This is not unique to them. Luther had the same idea. For example, in commenting on God's punitive actions against the antediluvian world, he said,

> And when He destroys something, He still leaves a remnant and keeps a seed through which He will restore again. Thus He had the world, together with its men and animals, destroyed through the Flood and restored it again[40]

Three things are implied in this statement: (1) the life-and-death problem or the threat of extinction of life, (2) survival of a divine catastrophe (since Noah and his family survived the Flood and constituted a remnant), and (3) immediate and future restoration.[41] The same idea may be found in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, where Luther asserts that since Lot survived the divine catastrophe he was left as a remnant.[42] This is equally true of Joseph who was sold to Egypt as a slave but God reversed this sentence and made him the preserver of life (Gen 45:5,7). Luther claims that owing to this, sometimes the "church is called Joseph."[43]

In his exposition of Amos 3:12, Luther indicates that despite the fact that mortal threats are made against the people of God, His preserving power must be kept in focus.

> He treats His people as if He were completely incapable of protecting them. He permits them to be swallowed up almost totally. Yet He *preserves a very few and protects them* in such a way that absolutely no power either of the world or of the devil is so great as to be superior to those few.[44]

God's Mission for the Remnant

For Luther, the preservation of the remnant was associated with God's mission or purpose in saving them. This is due to the fact that God accomplishes His will through the remnant. Because of his future-oriented view of the remnant[45]

[39]See for instance V. Herntrich, "*Leimma ktl.*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 4:196-209.

[40]LW, 20:210, comments on Zech 3:2.

[41]God told Noah and his family to be fruitful and multiply in the earth (Gen 9:1), just as He had commanded Adam and Eve. Hence, what Gen 9 is saying is that this is a new creation. See Kenneth D. Mulzac, "Genesis 9:1-7: Its Theological Connections with the Creation Motif," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12/1 (2001): 65-77.

[42]LW, 17:381; 20:210.

[43]LW, 11:95.

[44]LW, 20:37 (emphasis mine).

[45]This prospective picture is shared by others. See Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, Andrews University Monograph Studies in Religion, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press,

(as seen in his references to Noah, Lot, and Joseph), Luther argued that God preserved them "in order that there might be some in whom the new kingdom might begin."[46] He espoused this view repeatedly. As far as he was concerned, God directed the remnant "toward the world and led to the converting of the nations."[47] It was "from that cornerstone which I saved (that) I shall build Myself a new house, the church."[48] Therefore, the mission of the remnant is clearly evangelistic. Indeed, the remnant may be described as a "fit vessel for honor, because it will go for the Lord, that is, it will be His instrument for teaching others, hearing, and breaking through, even with danger."[49] Again,

> From that tiny remnant I shall raise up for Myself a numberless people. From an insignificant spark I shall kindle a great fire. They will be My sowers of peace, that is, they will be well and prosperous. They will multiply like seed.[50]

It was from such a seed that those who survived the Babylonian captivity became the nucleus of the new community. Indeed, the "Lord might kindle a fire from a tiny remnant—as from a glimmering spark—which would sweep the whole world. For this purpose, some were saved for the sake of the promises."[51] However, this did not occur naturally. It was God's doing and His sovereignty is underscored in that He preserved the remnant "alone to Himself as a seed for another people."[52]

For Luther, the remnant embraced an ecclesiastical dimension. He argued that God raised "the remnant, that the kingdom of Judah should not be [totally] destroyed until Christ would come."[53] In this light, the remnant is

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1974), 247; idem, "Semantic Values of Derivatives of the Hebrew Root *Š'R*," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 11 (1973): 163-65; idem, "The Alleged 'No' of Amos and Amos' Eschatology," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29 (1991): 11-18; Elmer A. Martens, "Remnant," *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 669-71.

[46]LW, 18:207.

[47]LW, 11:95; 18:194, 342.

[48]LW, 20:109. Cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Book of Amos: Basic Issues in Current Interpretations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 114.

[49]LW, 16:77. For Luther the salvation of the remnant people of God is linked to the preaching of the Gospel. Cf. LW, 20:93 on Zech 8:7.

[50]LW, 20:85.

[51]Ibid., 82. For this reason, Merrill F. Unger, *Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 137, claims that there is "still a future remnant in the last days."

[52]LW, 25:396.

[53]LW, 16:85. In connection with this idea it may be noted that God designated the remnant as the "group to whom he purposed to send the Messiah." Siegfried H. Horn, ed. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1979), s.v. "Remnant."

like a little branch from the forest, finally growing and filling the earth—this is the church, the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit—in which there is no ungodly person and sinner, but all are righteous through Christ.[54]

For Luther, the remnant that had "been preserved by God to be a seed"[55] pointed to the Church. According to Paul Althaus, Luther in some sense "related the prophecies about the holy seed and the remnant to future Christians."[56] This "holy seed"[57] will be the "spiritual remnant," "men born of God."[58] It is from them that a "new people will grow."[59]

The Contemporary Remnant

Commenting on Rom 11:5, Luther claimed that just as there was a remnant in Bible times, so "also today a remnant exists and can be found according to the election of grace."[60] Protestant believers who survived bloody persecution were described using language reminiscent of the remnant:

So today destruction looms up for the church under the pope and everywhere. . . . Many people will nevertheless be *preserved* . . . (and) a very *small part* is saved. . . . So our papists boast of their number, their traditional right . . . (so) we must answer them: "God is truthful. Those who believe in Him are the church and the godly, even though they are the *least and the fewest*."[61]

Those who remained firm and loyal in their Protestant faith despite terrible suffering were the surviving remnant. Further, Luther comforted his followers to "not lose heart" or "look at the great destruction" of the persecuted ones, but to

[54]LW, 16:76.

[55]LW, 20:150.

[56]Althaus, 215, n. 256.

[57]According to Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea From Genesis to Isaiah*, 247, the holy seed "is holy only after the cleansing experience brought about by confrontation with the divine holiness analogous to the confrontation and cleansing experience of Isaiah. After the annihilation of the nation a holy people will sprout out of the remaining stock. It will be holy, for it has experienced cleansing judgment."

[58]LW, 16:75, 76.

[59]LW, 17:381. Cf. Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle of Romans*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 328.

[60]LW, 25:423. Cf. Brendon Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 305, who concurs with Luther that the remnant "is the one that has come about on the basis of an election preceding from grace."

[61]LW, 16:136.

look at the "little root" or "little remnant."[62] God will preserve them. For "His own name's sake . . . He preserves the remnant. It will be like this in our time. God protects us not because of our merits but because of His name."[63] In fact, Luther likened the remnant of his time to that of Amos' time (4:10-12).[64] He claimed that "one single brand, kindled and taken from the fire must not be compared with the burning of the entire people."[65] Indeed, God "always leaves us some hope, lest we utterly lose hope. He snatches us away like a brand from the fire."[66] The implication is that for Luther, those who accepted the Protestant Reformation were actually the remnant.

Luther also believed that there were even some among the papists who were the remnant. In this light, he commented, "Yet among them there are remnants, and for their sakes, for those good people, I will speak, even though a number of reasons should dictate silence."[67] He saw himself like Jeremiah (4:19) who was not able to hold peace. But for the "elect's sake, I will not rest, I will continue to preach."[68]

The Remnant and the Church

Before Luther's final separation from the Roman Church, and in fact, before 1517, he was already promoting a new understanding of the church as seen in his lectures on Psalms (1513-15).[69] He did not like the term "church" (*kirche*), but preferred "congregation" and "assembly" of the saints in the sense of the interaction of people who are living members of the body of Christ.

The communion of the saints is both the hidden community (1 Cor 2:7-15) and the visible fellowship. The church is hidden because faith is the "conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). "It is never realized on earth in either its universal or its congregational extension, since God has reserved the complete realization of

[62]LW, 16:326. When God's remnant suffer persecution or affliction, they oftentimes receive special care from Him. See Lester V. Meyer, "Remnant," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 5:670.

[63]LW, 17:307.

[64]Hasel, *Understanding the Book of Amos*, 114, notes that in "Amos the remnant motif is used for the first time in an eschatological sense."

[65]LW, 18:154. According to Byrne, 331, this hope stems from divine grace. He says, "It is not a 'faithful remnant' if by 'faithful' some human quality or value is in view. The 'faithfulness' attached to this remnant is the faithfulness of the God of grace."

[66]LW, 18:154.

[67]LW, 17:344.

[68]Ibid.

[69]In the 1519 Leipzig Debate, Luther pointed out that the Roman Church had already fallen and was no longer the true of church of God. See Eric W. Gricth, *Introduction to the Ministry*, in LW, 39:xv.

faith to the Last Day."[70] The church is also hidden because of its inherent nature. "Therefore it is not fully revealed, just as God was not fully disclosed even on the cross of Jesus, and has remained a hidden God."[71] Luther distinguished between *Deus Absconditus*, "the hidden God," and *Dues Revelatus*, "the revealed God," in his understanding of the church. The true church was constituted of the hidden community of the saints, the people of God living according to the Word of God.[72] This true and hidden church is ruled by Christ's Spirit.[73] Even in the Roman Church "some were called the people and saints of God who were not, while others, who were among them as the remnant, were the people and saints of God."[74] This "assembly of the saints" is pious and "is gathered, preserved and ruled by the Holy Ghost."[75] According to Luther, "where the Word is, there is faith, where there is faith, there is a church."[76] To be certain, "where God's word is purely taught, there is also the upright and true church, that is supported by the Holy Spirit."[77] The church is the *universitas praedestinatorum*, that is, the "totality of the elect."[78] Hence,

> wherever, therefore, you hear or see this Word preached, believed, confessed, and acted on, there do not doubt that there must be a true *ecclesia sancta catolica*, a Christian, holy people, even though it be small in numbers.[79]

Such language is reminiscent of the remnant.

However, Luther allowed for certain external signs that marked the true visible church. Some of these signs include the right to preach the gospel, purity of doctrines, and rites such as baptism and the Lord's Supper.[80] According to Hans K.

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[70]Ibid., xiii.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Borkamm, 217.

[73]Althaus, 342.

[74]LW, 13:88; Cf. Althaus, 343.

[75]Hugh T. Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 123. In relation to this, Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), 7:526, points out that the church was the "spiritual communion of believers scattered throughout the world."

[76]LW, 39:xiii; Borkamm, 207; and Kerr, 130.

[77]Kerr, 135.

[78]Schaff, 527.

[79]Kerr, 127.

[80]There are seven external signs of a true church. These are (1) preaching the Gospel; (2) purity of doctrines; (3) the rite of baptism; (4) the Lord's Supper; (5) possession of the Key; (6) the priesthood of all believers; and (7) adherence to the Reformation principles of *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*. For details see Lull, 540-75; Schaff, 528.

LaRondelle, Luther "restricted the true church to a remnant of faithful believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ."[81]

The Remnant and Predestination

For Luther, God's will is irresistible in its sovereignty of purpose and intention. This idea of election or predestination, according to Justo L. Gonzales, was the common "theme of salvation and damnation that permeated the atmosphere in which he lived."[82] This influenced Luther's theology. Indeed, as William M. Landeen has observed, almost everything that Luther "taught, the whole range of his theology from eternity to eternity, and the complete sweep of his thought, religious or secular, stands upon God's eternal decree of predestination."[83] In 1528, against Zwingli and the Sacramentarians, Luther gave his full view of election:

> I herewith reject and condemn as sheer error all doctrines which glory our free will, as diametrically contrary to the help and grace of our savior Jesus Christ. Outside Christ, death and sin are our masters, and the devil is our god and lord; and there is no power or ability, no cleverness or reason with which we can prepare ourselves for righteousness and life or seek after it. On the contrary, we must remain the dupes and captives of sin and the property of the devil to do and to think what pleases them and what is contrary to God and His commandments.[84]

Therefore, one should not be surprised with the Reformer's belief that the remnant people of God were predestined from eternity.[85]

Because of his views on predestination, Luther believed that salvation was limited only to the elect. For example, in his lecture on Ps 110:1, he asserted that Christ suffered for the elect but not for all people. This was reiterated in his lectures on Romans where, in commenting on 8:28-39, he claimed, "Christ did not die for absolutely all, for He says: 'This is my blood which is shed for you' (Luke 22:20) and 'for many' (Mark 14:24)—he did not say: for all—'to the remission of sins' (Matt 26:28)."[86]

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[81]LaRondelle, 881.

[82]Justo L. Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day* (San Francisco: Harper, 1985), 2:16.

[83]Landeen, 130.

[84]LW, 30:362-63.

[85]In his lectures on Genesis Luther counseled, "One must listen to the Son of God, who was sent into the flesh and appeared to destroy the work of the devil and to make you sure about predestination." See LW 5:47.

[86]Wilhelm Pauck, ed., *Luther: Lectures on Romans*, Library of Christian Classics, 26 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 15:252.

With regard to texts which infer that salvation is possible for all people (1 Tim 2:4), Luther insisted that these should be "understood only with respect to the elect, as the

Luther repeatedly pointed out that the "remnant only will be saved."[87] For him the remnant became the remnant not by exercising free choice or free will but by God's election of grace. He believed that in Rom 9:29, Paul affirmed what the prophets predicted, namely, that God will let others fall and be cut off, but will protect and preserve the prophesied "remnant." This remnant was formed "*not by their own will*, but they were left and preserved by the grace of God."[88] This saved remnant believed the Gospel. This "tiny remnant knows the sweetness and limitless treasure of the Gospel. Therefore they accepted it and believed it."[89] Indeed, "not everyone will believe the Gospel, but only the remnant, *chosen from eternity*."[90] For Luther, only people who heard the Gospel and believed it, who were baptized and called, will be saved. This salvation is the result of the "sheer election and immutable will of God."[91] To be certain, this reflects "the inflexible and firm will of His predestination."[92] Hence, Luther could say that it was because of predestination that "the remnant people of God will be saved through the Gospel."[93] Further, in advocating that only the remnant will be saved, Luther claimed,

> God will not admit all men to heaven. He will count His own very exactly.
> Now the human doctrine of free will and of our powers no longer amounts to
> anything. Our will is unimportant; God's will and choosing are decisive.[94]

Luther underscored the election of the remnant in his comments on Rom 11:4-7. Concerning verse 4, Luther was convinced that those people whom God

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apostle says in 2 Tim 2:10, 'All for the elect.' " Ibid., 252.

[87]LW, 18:177, 419; 20:150 on Amos 7:4; and LW, 25:85, 421 on Rom 9:27.

[88]LW, 25:86 (emphasis mine).

[89]LW, 20:123.

[90]LW, 17:276 on Mic 5:17,18, delivered 7 April, 1525.

[91]Ibid.

[92]Pauck, 247, 248. Luther argued that "by the power of choice none at all would be saved, but all would perish together." Ibid., 220. In Romans, Paul uses four universal terms: "all," "none," "not," and "nowhere." "These are very strong arguments against free choice. These are the clearest evidences that Paul vaunted of the free power of choice." Ibid., 204.

C. G. Krause, "Call, Calling," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 84, 85, holds a similar opinion. In commenting on the remnant in Rom 11:5-6, he says that it is a "matter of grace and election." The remnant do not have their own willful volition or free choice to remain loyal to God or to serve Him faithfully. It is purely God's will for them.

Lull, 217, argues in the same vein. For him it is "evident that in the sight of God free choice, with its will and reason alike, is reckoned as a captive of sin and as damned by it." Since human beings are utterly incapable of obeying God, then "free choice is nothing but a slave of sin, death, and Satan, not doing and not capable of doing or attempting to do anything but evil." Ibid., 206.

[93]LW, 20:19.

[94]LW, 30:6.

kept for Himself are "called the remnant" because they "were left over." Since "God kept them for Himself" or "He preserves these alone for Himself,"[95] Luther claimed that this is "a marvelous commendation for His grace and election."[96]

Verse 5 says that "at the present time there is remnant according to the election of God's grace." Luther added that "indeed, it is so in all times, there is a remnant, a remnant only is saved, while the majority is damned."[97] This saved remnant is "according to the election of the grace of God, that is, they have been chosen."[98] Luther was convinced that God had chosen the remnant and that "He preserves these alone to Himself as a seed for another people."[99]

Conclusion

Luther's views concerning the remnant were largely derived from Scripture. Further, his discussion on the descriptions, characteristics, preservation, purpose and mission of the remnant, are closely related to the findings of modern biblical scholarship. But Luther is not explicitly clear whether the remnant is equated with the true church. To be specific, the true church in the end time is reflected in the book of Revelation (12:17; 14:12). This difficulty lies in his use of opposites or contradictions, inconsistencies, and conflicts in expressing his understanding and theological convictions. However, some parts of his theological framework appear to be problematic. For example, his rigid and subjective stance concerning predestination, that God's will is inscrutable, totally removes the reality of personal decision and human responsibility. This kind of theology seems foreign to the Scriptures. Nevertheless, theological studies on the remnant motif (and related issues) cannot afford to overlook Luther's contribution to this important subject.

[95]LW, 25:421.
[96]Ibid.
[97]Ibid., 423.
[98]Ibid., 96.
[99]Ibid., 396.

AIIAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DISSERTATION AND THESIS ABSTRACTS

THE NATURE AND IMPACT OF WILLIAM H. SHEA'S WORKS ON
BIBLICAL STUDIES

Researcher: **Ferdinand Oberio Regalado**, Ph.D., 2004
Adviser: Aecio E. Cairus, Ph.D.

William Henry Shea, former associate director of the Biblical Research Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland, and former professor in Old Testament at Andrews University Theological Seminary, has gained prominence within Seventh-day Adventist and non-Adventist circles because of his numerous works in different areas of biblical studies. Inspite of his prominence and significant influence, there has been no extensive investigation of his works. This paper seeks to answer the following questions: What is the precise nature of William H. Shea's works in the area of biblical studies? To what extent and in what way, if any, have his works influenced the discipline of biblical studies?

To determine the nature of Shea's works, his published and available unpublished works have been analyzed and classified according to the following categories: contextual-historical, literary, archaeological, and exegetical. This research examines the extent to which they have been cited, used, and responded to by both non-SDA and SDA scholars of reputable standing, either to lend support to their study or to critique Shea's. The method of research used in this paper is both descriptive and analytical.

It is found that the nature of Shea's works in biblical studies is primarily contextual-historical but also multiplex. It includes archaeological, literary, and exegetical work in which he combines all of the approaches.

This study reveals that the impact of Shea's works in the area of biblical studies is felt in both Adventist and non-Adventist circles. The impact of his works is felt largely among conservative biblical scholars who share similar conservative views with him. Based on the data quantitatively analyzed, it is found that Shea had an impact in historical-contextual and literary areas as seen by the number of those who agreed with his positions and conclusions. In the study of the nature and impact of William H. Shea's works in biblical studies, it has been shown that he is both a renowned scholar and a dedicated believer.

FOUNDATIONS OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A COURSE FOR MINISTERIAL STUDENTS AT CENTRAL PHILIPPINE ADVENTIST COLLEGE

Researcher: **Rudy R. Baloyo,** D.Min., 2004
Adviser: Reuel U. Almocera, D.P.S.

A godly character is the foundation of spiritual leadership. After all, leadership effectiveness is most influenced by being not doing. It follows that the early stages of leadership development should mostly deal with spiritual formation and character development.

This project/study aims to provide a foundational course in the preparation of spiritual leaders. In particular, this project/study was undertaken to create a course which will provide ministerial students at Central Philippine Adventist College (CPAC) the foundation for character development.

The project/study report comes in two parts. The first section provides the biblical and theoretical framework which serves as the foundation block for the construction of the course. Here, two basic questions are answered: (1) What character traits do ministerial students need to develop? and (2) How is character developed?

The second section contains the course content and suggests varied teaching methods. The course aims to develop eight character "competencies" in the students, namely: integrity, responsibility, humility, perseverance, courage, fairness, positive attitude, and moral purity. It also promotes the practice of five spiritual disciplines which serve as avenues for character development. These spiritual disciplines are discipline of prayer, discipline of spiritual journal, discipline of meditation, discipline of fasting, and discipline of study.

THE THEOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF GEN 12-50 (THE PATRIARCHAL HISTORY)

Researcher: **Daniel Kwame Bediako**, M.A., 2004
Adviser: Kenneth Mulzac, Ph.D.

Scholarly interest in the book of Genesis is polarized either on diachronic source criticism or synchronic literary criticism. Such polarization has led to the neglect of the theological investigation of the book, particularly the Patriarchal History (Gen 12-50).

A review of the relevant literature indicates that although some scholars notice some important theological ideas in the patriarchal narratives, such ideas hardly receive any in-depth investigation. To this end, this thesis fills a gap in research by identifying and investigating seven dominant theological ideas found

in the Patriarchal History: the Character of God, Promises, Covenant, Blessings and Curses, Sin and Judgment, Salvation, and Genealogies.

God is depicted in the narrative as a sovereign, self-revealed, and faithful God who intervenes in human history with the purpose of repairing the distorted picture painted by human sin in the Primeval History (Gen 1-11). He is described by at least seventeen appellatives, each of which shows an aspect of His character.

Three prominent promises have been identified: Posterity, Land, and Presence-Protection-Guidance. These promises are scattered throughout the patriarchal narrative. By the end of the book of Genesis, it is only the promise of land that is unfulfilled; the other two are largely fulfilled.

The covenant between Yahweh and Abraham, set forth in chaps. 15 and 17, is, in fact, a reaffirmation of the promises of land and posterity. In this light, the covenant is not different from the promises in 12:1-3.

While blessing largely appears in the form of material possessions, it has a spiritual component that reaches its climax in the blessing to the nations. Embedded in this blessing, therefore, is a proclamation of salvation to humanity as a whole. Unlike blessings, curses are pronounced only on persons who stand against the covenant-bearers, hampering the fulfillment of the promises.

Human sinfulness, either within or without the covenant community, remains a problem in the narratives. In several instances, sinful acts directly incur divine punitive judgment or a pronouncement on them. This divine judgment not only reveals the righteous character of Yahweh but also serves to curb the debilitating effects of human sin.

Apart from Yahweh's specific acts of deliverance, salvation is brought to the fore in certain manifestations, namely, messianism, election and grace, righteousness, and worship. While messianism, and election and grace, embody Yahweh's provision of salvation to humanity as a whole, righteousness and worship come as the human responses to this provision of salvation.

The patriarchal genealogies may have important literary functions, and their theological significance cannot be underestimated. In one way or the other, these genealogical lists witness to the fidelity of Yahweh in keeping His promise of progeny.

Based on this investigation, this researcher concludes that the Patriarchal History is not a mere conflation of variegated traditions as some are inclined to think. Rather, the patriarchal narrative is a unified one that has theological concatenations with the Primeval History, in that, theological themes found in the latter are expanded or enlarged in the former. Gen 12:1-3 seems to be programmatic for all that follows in the patriarchal narrative; thus, the rest of the narrative is an expansion or explication of these initial verses. Therefore, the attempt to assign every passage in the patriarchal narrative to a possible source (documentary criticism) appears irrelevant.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF PSALM 22

Researcher: **Jose Manuel S. Espero,** M.A., 2004
Adviser: Yoshitaka Kobayashi, Ph.D.

There is no consensus on the authorship of Psalm 22. The superscription of Psalm 22 says that it is *l*ᵉ*-Dawid*. Ancient writers and some modern scholars hold that *l*ᵉ*- Dawid* indicates Davidic authorship. Some critical scholars say that it is not David who authored Ps 22.

The survey on the authorship of Ps 22 reveals that the ancient writers hold to the Davidic authorship of Ps 22. Some modern scholars who indicate Davidic authorship hold to the tradition that David composed most of the psalms, including Ps 22. It was only in the nineteenth century that the divergent issues relative to the authorship of Ps 22 came out.

The study of the ancient Hebrew inscriptions on the meaning of the preposition *l*ᵉ*-* shows that it consistently means "belonging to" denoting ownership. Nowhere in Hebrew epigraphy does *l*ᵉ*-* means "for." In translating the superscription *l*ᵉ*-Dawid*, it should then mean "belonging to David," indicating authorship.

A passage by passage study of Ps 22 indicates that the sufferings mentioned in Ps 22 can be readily identified within the persecution of David under Saul. Thus, the study strengthens the idea that David is the author of the chapter since the experiences mentioned can be identified with him. The experience of David also extends to the experience of Jesus which makes this psalm Messianic.

From the study, we can say that *l*ᵉ*-Dawid* means "belonging to David" denoting authorship. Since it is found in the superscription of Ps 22, it is most likely that David is the author of such. This claim is strengthened by the experience of David which can be related to the suffering described in Ps 22.

MALACHI'S BLESSINGS AND CURSES IN RELATION TO THE COVENANTAL BLESSINGS AND CURSES OF DEUTERONOMY 27-30

Researcher: **Andy R. Espinoza**, M.A., 2004
Adviser: Kenneth Mulzac, Ph.D.

Historically the book of Malachi has not been at the center of scholarly study and discussion. Compared to other books of the Bible, only few studies have been done on Malachi. Most of these generally focus on historical-critical considerations of the book, the social situation of the Jews in postexilic times, the relationship between Malachi, Haggai and Zechariah, or the literary structure of the book. Nevertheless, a study of blessings and curses in the book of Malachi has not been done. Furthermore, the relationship between Malachi's blessings and curses

and the covenantal blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 27-30, and how this relationship affects the overall message of Malachi, has not been fully explored.

The purpose of this study is multifaceted: (1) to systematically explore the connections that exist between Malachi and Deuteronomy, especially between the blessings and curses of both books, (2) to analyze the way in which Malachi uses the blessings and curses of Deut 27-30, and (3) to discuss how being aware of the usage of blessings and curses in the book of Malachi can broaden our understanding of the message of this book.

Several conclusions may be derived from the findings of this research. First, the book of Malachi seems to be deliberately linked to Deuteronomy by way of the use of blessings and curses that point retrospectively to the covenantal and curses of Deut 27-30. Other relevant links between both books include the use of common themes and lexical connections.

Second, Malachi strengthens its message and gives urgency through the deliberate use of connections with Deuteronomy, as well as the other covenantal features employed in the book. Malachi embraces the concept of covenant and thus, delivers its message in a way that would strongly appeal to the people of Israel. The book presents itself as a call for covenant renewal.

Third, when significant and specific connections between Malachi and Deuteronomy are identified, and the centrality of the concept of covenant in Malachi is evidenced, this must change the way in which Malachi's message is perceived. The book ought to be analyzed in the context of the covenant relationship between God and His people. In this way, all the requests, accusations, arguments, curses, and promises that could otherwise be categorized as legalistically driven, may be recognized as indicators of the people's fidelity, or lack thereof, and of the quality of their relationship with their suzerain, the Great King, Yahweh.

The book of Malachi, as perceived in this investigation, constitutes a last call and ultimatum from the Divine Suzerain to His unfaithful people by which Israel can either return to God and enjoy covenantal blessings, or choose to remain distant from God and be utterly destroyed.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF JUDGMENT IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY AND JAMES WHITE

Researcher: **Mark L. Lastimoso**, M.A., 2004
Adviser: Aecio E. Cairus, Ph.D.

There seems to be not much discussion in Adventist literature comparing James White's concept of the judgment with that of John Wesley. This study attempts to compare their views. The main question that this paper addresses is, what are the similarities and differences between their concepts about the judgment? Finding the similarities and differences between their ideas will aid

religious thinkers to understand the theological position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church about the judgment.

The method used in this research is historical investigation, which is descriptive. From the results of comparing James White's article "The Judgment," with John Wesley's sermons, "The Great Assize" and "The Good Steward," an analysis was made. Similarities and differences were noted.

The researcher found that John Wesley influenced beliefs concerning the need for an investigative judgment and believed that the final judgment takes place after the resurrection of all the dead. However, his idea of the starting point of the judgment differs from that of James White. John Wesley asserted that the judgment commences at the time of the Parousia. James White carefully studied the investigative judgment and arrived at a different conclusion. He believed the judgment began in 1844. The connection between John Wesley and James White may be seen through a study of Josiah Litch's teaching about the pre-Advent judgment during the 1840s.

John Wesley's and James White's views concerning the judgment were greatly influenced by their individual backgrounds and their immediate evangelistic concerns. Although it cannot be directly established that John Wesley influenced James White, the similarities between their concept of the judgment is sufficient to suggest a logical connection.

TOWARD A STRATEGY ON HOW TO PREVENT BACKSLIDING OF NEW CONVERTS IN THE NORTH KIVU SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST ASSOCIATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Researcher: **Kasereka Muthavaly**, M.A., 2004
Adviser: James Park, Ph.D.

The North Kivu Association (NKA) is one of the four associations of the East Congo Union Missions–Northern Sector and is a very fast growing field in this Union. Its pastors and lay people are significantly involved in evangelism and many souls have been brought to Christ through their ministry.

In the 1990s, the Church sharply increased its membership as a direct impact of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church evangelistic program called "Harvest 90." According to the report from the Office of Archives and Statistics of the General Conference of SDA, there was an increase of 67.5% (from 25,467 members in 1990 to 42,656 members in 1999) in the church membership of the NKA. This corresponds to an average of 6.57% membership growth.

Despite this considerable increase in membership, the same report showed that the average loss of members in the same period was 21.9%.

This study attempts to show the problem of the loss of new converts, to describe the major causes of the backsliding phenomenon, and discuss the causes and effects of backsliding in the NKA. It attempts also to draw a suggestive

on how to prevent the backsliding of new converts by looking at Jesus' method of making disciples, the formation of a core group and discipleship in the church, and how this will help in the process of assimilation.

THE SYNTACTICAL RELATIONSHIP OF *TOUT' ESTIN TĒS SARKOS AUTOU* AND ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS IN HEBREWS 10:10-20.

Researcher: **Edwin S. Payet**, M.A., 2004
Adviser: Joel Musvosvi, Ph.D.

This study seeks to understand the syntactical and theological relationships between the phrase "that is, of his flesh" and the rest of the subordinate clause (10:20). Many exegetes hold that *tout' estin tēs sarkos autou*, "that is, of his flesh," is understood in apposition to *dia tou katapetasmatos*, "through the veil."

It means that Jesus inaugurated a new and living way through the veil, that is (through) the flesh. This view has some theological problems. (1) How can Jesus' flesh be a veil that hinders Him from God and then inaugurate a new and living way to God's presence? (2) How could Jesus lose His humanity and then present Himself with His humanity in God's presence to intercede for the believers? While some exegetes have tried to explain the theological problems, others have preferred to look for another possibility of connecting the phrase, "that is, of his flesh." Some prefer to connect *tout' estin tēs sarkos autou*, "that is, of his flesh," as descriptive, dependent on *hodos*, "way." Several others favor *tout' estin tēs sarkos autou*, "that is, of his flesh" to explain the preceding sentence as a whole.

A syntactical study of the expression *tout' estin*, "that is," in the NT, especially the Epistle to the Hebrews, has revealed that (1) *tout' estin*, consistently introduces an appositional phrase; (2) it generally connects the appositional phrase to a preceding noun, adjective, or phrase with the same case; and (3) it does not always relate the immediate neighboring substantives. *Tout' estin tēs sarkos autou*, "that is, of his flesh" should therefore be in apposition to "veil."

To answer the two main theological problems, (1) Jesus inaugurated a new and living way through His flesh, in the strictly limited sense of His humanity under His earthly existential limitations of temptations and sufferings, and especially sacrificial death. (2) It is precisely these limitations that Jesus parted on the cross. It has been further demonstrated that *tout' estin tēs sarkos autou,* "that is, of his flesh" is the means of the new and living way to the presence of God. The clause then means that Jesus inaugurated a new and living way to the immediate presence of God by the suppression of the barrier (veil) between the believers and God.

EVALUATION OF *JUGENDAKTIONSWOCHE* (YOUTH-ACTION-WEEK) IN GROWING SPIRITUALITY AMONG NOMINAL GERMAN ADVENTIST YOUTH

Researcher: **Christian Ströck**, M.A., 2004
Adviser: Lester Merklin, D.Min.

The lack of spirituality in Adventist Youth is the situation today in western society. Many young people are not interested in spiritual matters and therefore are leaving the church. Being aware of this situation, the Baden-Wuerttembery Conference started a youth evangelism strategy to involve the Adventist youth in outreach. This project evaluates the strategy according to its effectiveness in helping the nominal German Adventist youth grow spiritually.

Spiritual life is an intimate relationship with God and the foundation of being a Christian. There are several components involved in spiritual growth, and one of the best ways to help spiritual growth is to involve the youth in evangelistic activities. The Bible gives the illustration of a tree planted by the water which grows and bears fruit in season. The Christian, nurtured by God, receives the fruit of the spirit and becomes a spiritual, evangelistic person. Through active practice and sharing of faith, young people change their lives and grow spiritually.

The strategy of the Conference is to give Adventist youth the opportunity to share their faith and to grow. The young people are the ones who conduct the evangelism through street-activities, friendship and personal witnessing.

There are minor adjustments needed in this strategy plan in order to make it become more effective, but the main idea and direction is good and helpful. First, there needs to be objectives and a strategy plan for the leaders; second, all the activities need to serve the purpose of contacting people with the gospel. The main purpose of the strategy should first be the spiritual growth of the Adventist youth and second the outreach.

The handbook in the appendix is designed to assist leaders in how to conduct effective youth evangelism, lead the German Adventist youth to a decision for Christ, and assist them in developing spirituality.

TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HOUSE CHURCH LEADERS IN CENTRAL VIETNAM

Researcher: **David Pham**, M.A.Min., 2004
Adviser: Praban Saputro, Ph.D.

It is a big challenge to spread the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) message in Central Vietnam. It is very difficult, not because people are unreceptive, but because of the situation. The situation in Central Vietnam is quite unique. There is no pastoral training school, only a few churches, and the SDA Church is not a

recognized denomination in Vietnam. The situation, to some extent, is similar to the early churches in the New Testament.

All the SDA churches in Central Vietnam are house churches. In recent years, there has been good growth in the number of house churches. As in the new decade, opportunities for evangelism are opening to Central Vietnam house churches. The time for harvest has come, we need more trained workers to do the work.

There is a need for training. This project is to design a training program for house church leaders in Central Vietnam. The training will be offered once a year and consist of thirteen lessons, based on the needs of the house churches. The training will help the leaders to have more understanding about house churches, leadership, church services, fellowship, nurture, outreach, and evangelism. The expectation from this training program is that the trainees will be able to implement their learning in their house churches and reproduce other leaders.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PASTORS TO ESTABLISH EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL CHURCHES OF WEST JAPAN CONFERENCE

Researcher: **Yasunari Urashima,** M.A. Min., 2004
Adviser: Praban Saputro, Ph. D.

West Japan Conference (WJC) is one of the conferences in Japan Union conference. The result of the church health assessment in 1999 showed that it was necessary for the growth of WJC churches to improve in their weakest area: empowering leadership. However, WJC does not seem to have been successful in establishing empowering leadership in the churches because most of the pastors do not know how to put it into practice.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to offer suggestions for establishing empowering leadership in the churches of WJC. These suggestions are made based on the concept of empowering leadership which is found in natural church development theory, the Bible, and Ellen G. White's writings. Besides, Japanese context and the states of WJC churches are considered in making these suggestions.

In this research, vision, delegation of responsibility, and multiplication are discussed as essential aspects of empowering leadership. But, it seems that vision and delegation are particularly lacking among WJC pastors, because they have not received enough training on how to discover a vision or delegate their responsibility to the church members.

Therefore, the pastors should first be edified by WJC and the experienced pastors, so that they can equip their church members for God's service, according to the vision which they have received from above. Considering what is proposed as elements of empowering leadership as well as Japanese mentality, workshops rather than seminars, personal contacts and small groups rather than that of general should be utilized in training both the pastors and the church members.

BOOK REVIEWS

Humphreys, W. Lee. *The Character God in the Book of Genesis*: *A Narrative Appraisal*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001. x+284 pp.

W. Lee Humphreys is professor of Religious Studies at the University of Tennessee. He has authored *The Tragic Vision and the Hebrew Tradition* (Fortress, 1985) and *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study* (University of South Carolina Press, 1988).

While extensive discussion occurs about the human characters in the Genesis narrative, scholars are reluctant to discuss God as a literary character. Humphreys attempts to fill this gap. Following recent developments in literary theory, he engages the "God of the text, a figure made of words" (3), employing a "first-time reader" approach and following the Genesis narrative sequentially because he sees the character of God in a "process of becoming" (19).

Using Robert Alter's "Scale of Means," a tool that evaluates how narrators present characters, Humphreys claims that God is basically characterized through His actions and speech. Both are seen in the Genesis narrative. For example, in chaps. 1-4 the character God is a sovereign designer, creating and designing the world. He speaks and acts as a royal and is effective in varying roles such as struggling parent (2:4b-3:24), disciplining father (chap. 4), designer and sustainer (chaps. 5-9), and even as a jealous God (chaps. 10-11). As judge, He acts in both "punitive and preventive ways" (76) as demonstrated in the episode detailing the Tower of Babel.

The core of the book deals with God in relation to the Patriarchs. With regard to Abraham, the character God is depicted as a sovereign patron (Gen 12-14; 16-17; though His patronage is challenged in chap. 15). Further, He is judge of all the earth (chaps. 18-19), deliverer (chaps. 20-21), and savage (chap. 22), demanding the sacrifice of Isaac—a test that brings tension between God and Abraham—and, thus, leads the former into silence thereafter. Although much of what Isaac is told (chaps. 25-27) is an echo of what God had earlier promised Abraham (160), the character God is a deliverer and sovereign patron. With regard to Jacob (chaps. 28-36), the character God is portrayed as a sovereign patron, judge, and opponent. Curiously, it appears that Jacob forces God into fulfilling His promises according to Jacob's designs (201). In the Joseph cycle the character God is silent patron (chaps. 37-41), as is evident from the unfolding scenes of Joseph's life. God is also Joseph's providential designer (chaps. 42-50) leading to his exalted

position in Egypt. There is a marked gradual disappearance of God by the end of the Genesis narrative.

The final chapter of the book pulls together all the aspects of the character God and then turns to specific literary perspectives of characterization. Humphreys asserts that while the character God is basically understood through His actions and speech, there are instances where His appearances, feelings, and thoughts come to the fore. As such, He is a "full-fledged" character in Gen 2-36 and an "agent" in Gen 37-50.

The numerous endnotes (257-271) and bibliography (273-281) complete the book and demonstrate the author's engagement with scholarship.

Several factors commend this book: (1) the logical flow of thought throughout; (2) the emphasis that in Genesis God is not an absentee God as some suppose that He is; (3) the level of engagement with the narrative is generally impressive, especially in the many thought-provoking questions; and (4) besides investigating significant Hebrew words that enrich the scope of his research, Humphreys also studies some concepts against their ANE background. As such, *The Character God in the Book of Genesis* makes a significant contribution to the literary approach of studying the Hebrew Bible.

However, the work is not without some concerns: (1) Genesis was not written for the sake of literature; hence, engaging it in this direction may be disturbing to some people with strong religious convictions; (2) sometimes the author turns from his central focus and dives into details of the narrative, making the character God appear as a minor theme; and (3) at times Humphreys emphasizes the complexity and becomingness of God more than the text requires.

Despite these reservations, the book makes it clear that God is the central figure in Genesis. For this reason, I recommend it for readers interested in literary studies of the biblical narrative. Students of Genesis may find this book valuable.

Daniel Bediako

Strobel, Lee. *The Case for a Creator*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004. 340 pp.

Lee Strobel is a legally trained investigative reporter who documents his spiritual journey from atheism to faith in God. He has written several award-wining books, including *The Case for Faith* (Zondervan, 2000) and *Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary* (Zondervan, 1993). He has also been the teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago and Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange County, California. With such a background one can readily note that Strobel's writing is done with the intent of presenting compelling evidence in order to prove his case so that the ordinary citizen will be educated and at the least, think seriously about the issue at hand.

Strobel describes himself as once being defiant and combative against claims for creationism and a Creator. Having studied evolutionary theory, he was

convinced that "*The Origin of the Species* trumped the Bible. The critical thinking of scientists overpowered the wishful thinking of theists. To me, the case was closed" (275). But in *The Case for a Creator* he demonstrates a drastic change of mind. In the first two chapters (7-29), he discusses the underpinnings of evolution, such as Darwin's "Tree of Life" and the Missing Link, indicating that the main point is to deny the existence of a supernatural Creator and elevate natural selection instead. Strobel's task is to dismantle such ideas and to do this he consults several scientists, all authorities in their fields and engaged in research at leading universities and institutes, with scores of scholarly publications among them. In the next eight chapters, the core of the book, Strobel succeeds in showing, using the qualitative method of research and investigation, that the scientific evidence points unmistakably to the existence of a Grand Designer, God. For example, after examining the "icons of evolution" (35), Strobel indicates that the claims of evolution are weak, illogical, unscientific and even fraudulent. In the words of biologist Jonathan Wells,

> I believe science is pointing strongly toward design. To me, as a scientist, the development of an embryo cries out, "Design!" The Cambrian explosion—the sudden appearance of complex life, with no evidence of ancestors—is more consistent with design than evolution. Homology, in my opinion, is more compatible with design. The origin of life certainly cries out for a designer. None of these things make as much sense from a Darwinian perspective as they do from a design perspective (66).

Over and over, in these chapters covering the fields of cosmology, physics, astronomy, biochemistry, biology (especially DNA) and even the emerging, if not enigmatic, field of "the experience of consciousness" (249), the same conclusion comes to the foreground. Finally, in his concluding chapter, "The Cumulative Case for a Creator," Strobel says with conviction: "I found the evidence for an intelligent designer to be credible, cogent, and compelling" (283). He finds that the depiction of the Creator, in both Scripture and science, is essentially the same. In the end, there are no contradictions between science and faith; they may be fused. They are both founded in God.

The book closes with an appendix summarizing one of Strobel's earlier books, *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) followed by a section (299-305) dealing with provocative discussion questions on *The Case for a Creator*. Although I am disappointed that Strobel does not deal at all with the issue of the age of the earth, even though this was forwarded by a few of the scientists whom he interviewed, several factors recommend this book: (1) it is carefully researched and investigated as evidenced by the extensive endnotes (307-28) and selected bibliography at the end of each chapter; (2) the discussion is lively and intriguing, not dry and wry as one would expect in dealing with material of this sort; and (3) the evidence is compelling.

This book is useful for anyone who has an interest in the relation between science and faith. Though it requires slow, thoughtful reading, even the nontechnical reader can gain much from its insights.

Kenneth D. Mulzac

Vos, Howard F. *Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*. Revised edition. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003. viii + 856 pp.

Howard F. Vos is Emeritus Professor of History and Archeology at King's College, New York. An experienced archeologist, traveler and scholar, this prolific author has written or edited about twenty-five books, including *Nelson's New Illustrated Manners and Customs* (Nelson, 1999) and *Archaeology and Bible History* (Zondervan, 1992).

Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands is a revised version of the 1967 edition but the ideals are the same, providing sound, updated material on *all* the Bible lands: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine, Phoenicia, Syria, Iran, Cyprus, Asia Minor, Greece, Malta, and Italy. Divided into eleven chapters, each thoroughly discussing one of the Bible lands, this book follows a logical pattern; first establishing the territory as a true Bible land and then detailing features such as geography, history, archeological findings, personalities, kingship and kingdoms, cultures and the intermingling of peoples, settlements and cities, politics and governance. Each chapter ends with research notes and a bibliography dealing with issues in that particular land. Thousands of details are brought vividly to light in Vos' vigorous and easy-to-read style.

A very interesting feature of this book is that it covers the entire Bible. It is not infrequent that a shortfall of works of this nature is to concentrate on Palestine (and perhaps Egypt) and focus largely, if not exclusively, on the Old Testament. Vos avoids this pitfall and engages the reader by weaving elements from outside the Bible with those within. This creates a picture where the Bible comes alive with a renewed freshness in its own space and time.

Vos has achieved a comprehensive presentation of the historical geography of the Bible lands by providing a logical way of dealing with each land. Generally, he follows the contours of the Bible in his investigation. Since the earliest events in the OT took place in Mesopotamia, it is dealt with first. Egypt is then canvassed because the Israelites lived there for hundreds of years, even though their forefathers, the Patriarchs, occupied Palestine before the migration to Egypt. Palestine is given great coverage since almost a millennium's worth of events, in both Old and New Testaments, took place there. Since Palestine and Phoenicia enjoyed relations during the United Monarchy, the chapter on Phoenicia is presented before that on Syria, which had political links with the kingdoms in the Divided Monarchy. After the fall of Israel and Judah to the Assyrians and Babylonians, respectively (both Mesopotamian powers), the whole area was

controlled by Persia or biblical Iran. Hence, the discussion on Syria is in the sixth chapter.

Palestine again featured heavily in the first century with the New Testament and events in the life of Jesus. However, under the auspices of Roman rule and law, Paul, who dominates the New Testament narratives after Jesus in the Gospels, carried out his evangelistic and missionary work, rapidly expanding the borders of the church in the territories of Cyprus, Asia Minor, Greece, Malta, and Italy. These comprise the last five chapters.

Several features stand out in this expansive volume: (1) To be certain, there are several works of this nature but this surpasses them in terms of scope and breath; (2) it is well researched, evidencing extensive dialogue with scholarship; (3) it is filled with details that relate to the biblical story, and while not theological, helps the reader to understand things related to theology; (4) it is well illustrated, with hundreds of pictures and full-color maps; (5) it is user-friendly with its Scripture, general and map indices allowing easy access to details in the book. Perhaps the one disappointment is that it lacks a chapter on Ancient Iraq, since Babylon is important in the Bible.

This book is useful for pastors, students and teachers as an invaluable resource for a better understanding of the Bible. I recommend it in the superlative.

Kenneth D. Mulzac

Webber, Robert E. *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003. 219 pp.

Robert E. Webber is Myers Professor of Ministry at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Illinois, and president of the Institute for Worship Studies. He has written 40 books on worship and the church and edited *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* (StarSong, 1994), a multivolume encyclopedia of more than 3,700 pages.

In *Ancient-Future Evangelism* Webber deals with the roots and historical development of the Christian faith and how these might mold an authentic faith in our post-Christian world. The focus is on understanding discipleship, spiritual formation, and evangelism. After the introductory chapter, "The Way New Christians Have Been Formed" (17-37), in which Webber gives a brief but insightful historical overview of how converts were formed in the New Testament, the book is divided into two parts. The first comprises chapters 2-6.

In the second chapter, "Make Disciples" (41-54), Webber aligns discipleship with conversion and shows how converts were grown in the early church. This enveloped a fourfold procedure that included (1) evangelism, (2) discipleship, (3) spiritual formation, and (4) Christian vocation. These constituted important rites of passage where the seeker progressed from initial conversion to instruction in the faith, overcoming evil in his/her personal life, and the daily practice of Christianity.

Chapters 3-6 each develop one of these important elements. In dealing with "Evangelism" (55-69), Webber argues persuasively that in view of our highly individualistic age, building the life of the Christian community and reaching out to others through social networking should be key elements in the church's ministry and witness. With regards to "Discipleship" (70-87), he clearly shows how the New Testament church, through its preaching and worship, provided an atmosphere where new converts could grow through "believing, belonging and behaving" (72). Through communion with God and community with each other, the daily walk of the Christian is molded. Chapter 5, "Spiritual Formation" (88-102), shows how a correct understanding and practice of baptism, as well as the dynamic preaching of Christ as Victor over evil, can both change and deepen the spiritual life of new congregants. The last chapter in part one, "Christian Vocation" (103-18), focuses on calling Christians to live out a life of service for the Lord, the church, and the world. A section on the teaching and the meaning of the Eucharist is also included.

In part two, consisting of chapters 7-9, Webber attempts to explain the cultural and theological background to current practices in evangelism and discipleship. In "The World We Evangelize" (123-36), he discusses the church's message in a post-Christian world. In some respects, Christians in the twenty-first century face similar challenges to those faced by the Early Church with regards to the pluralism and superstition that permeated Roman culture. The modern church is called upon to both stand over against culture and make connections with it.

Webber first traces the mission and message of Jesus as depicted both by the biblical writers and the early Church Fathers in "The Story We Tell" (137-52). He then discusses themes such as the Creation and fall, redemption, eschatology and re-creation. The main idea is the overall purpose of God's restoration of a broken relationship with fallen humankind. The final chapter, "The Church That Tells the Story" (153-64), deals with the theological basis for the mission of the church and how it witnesses for God in a post-Christian era. Imbued with the life of God, the Church is called to provide a divine community in which new Christians are conceived, nurtured, and sent forth to proclaim God's saving mission to others.

I did not find the second part of the book on the cultural and theological aspects of the postmodern world to be as insightful as part one. Although it might serve as a good introduction to this emerging field, other books that deal specifically with this topic will probably need to be consulted. Despite this reservation, there are many other things that highly recommend this book: its readability; thought-provoking insights; excellent summaries and discussion questions at the end of each chapter; and its appendixes, notes, bibliography and index, all of which ensure easy access to information. This is an excellent textbook for college or introductory graduate level study on the spiritual and historical aspects of evangelism, as well as a thoughtful guide to pastors and church leaders who want to deepen their own lives and the life of the church.

James H. Park

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