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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

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THE WOODGATHERERS' SABBATH: A LITERARY STUDY OF NUMBERS 15:32-36

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This study examines the Sabbath narrative in Num 15:32-36 from the contextual perspective of cultic legislation prescribed in Num 15 and attempts to demonstrate the literary relationship that seems to exist between these legal prescriptions and the wood-gatherer's rebellious act on Sabbath. Furthermore, the Sabbath narrative seems to contain intertextual connections with the account of Israel's life in slavery (Exod 5), which, according to the narrative context in Num 14 and 16, appears to the Israelites to be a more favorable choice than to continue the journey to the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Therefore, the case of the man gathering wood on Sabbath not only illustrates the law and the consequences of defiant sin, but reveals the significance that the Sabbath carries for the covenant relationship of the whole Israelite community, as well as for each individual Israelite as a liberated slave from Egypt.

Key Words: Sabbath, defiant sin, rebellion, woodgatherer

1. Introduction

The Pentateuch tells the incident of an unnamed man gathering wood on Sabbath in the wilderness. The man is caught and brought before Moses, Aaron, and the whole congregation of Israel. The narrative briefly records this event, with the only speech coming directly from YHWH, who declares: "The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp" (Num 15:35). The congregation acts immediately and stones the man to death according to the command of YHWH.

At first glance this brief report seems to be used as an example of defiant sin in the context of the cultic legislation about offerings for expiation of inadvertent versus defiant sin (vv. 22-31) that precedes the narrative about the wood-gatherer. Some commentators conclude that the narrative serves to impress upon the hearer/reader the severity of

religious prohibitions, especially the severity of the Sabbath command.¹ However, the narrative context, which deals with Israel's community and leadership crisis in the desert (Num 14 and 16), adds more information and shows that the focal subject in the wood-gatherer's case is the significance of the Sabbath as a sign of freedom from slavery and a solemn and binding agreement between YHWH and each individual of the Israelite congregation.

In scholarly opinions, Num 15 is viewed as a strange collection of cultic laws² and as an appendix to other cultic codes, especially those of Lev 4-5.³ In particular, the section on inadvertent versus defiant sin in Num 15:22-31 is seen as full of difficulties⁴ and, in Milgrom's words, it "may be the displaced conclusion of another legal section."⁵

When analyzing the literary structure of Num 15, several significant characteristics and subjects establish the building blocks of this chapter, and in so doing lead to the narrative section on the Sabbath. These building blocks are (1) Num 15 consists of seven laws concerning offerings and violations of both the congregation and the individual; (2) the offerings mentioned in Num 15 consist of burnt offerings and offerings for special vows, freewill offerings, or well-being offerings (vv. 3, 8); (3) these offerings may be performed "at your appointed times" (v. 3); (4) the verb "gather" (vv. 32, 33) describes deliberate activity on the part of the wood-gatherer, in violation of repeated divine commands against work on the Sabbath (Exod 16:28, 29; 20:9, 10; 31:14, 15; 35:2), thereby revealing his rebellious attitude toward YHWH and rejection of the liberation from slavery; and (5) the tassels on the garments are required to remind the Israelites of the laws of the covenant (Num 15:37-41).

2. Literary Analysis

2.1 Literary Structure

The literary structure of Num 15 shows that the defiant sin of one individual on the Sabbath affects the whole congregation. The structure of Num 15 pointed out by Sailhamer favors the literary unity of this chapter by showing that it consists of seven laws, followed by the narrative of the

¹ Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 386.

² Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 126.

³ Levine, 386.

⁴ Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Bamidbar: Numbers* (Jerusalem: Haomanim, 1995), 150.

⁵ Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, The JPS Torah Commentary (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 405.

man gathering wood on Sabbath.⁶ The first three laws specify in ascending order the amounts of grain and drink offerings that must accompany each animal sacrifice, sheep or goat, ram, and bull, in accordance with its size or value.⁷ The fourth law prescribes a different kind of grain offering, a cake made from the dough of the first fruits of the land. The last three laws deal with expiation offerings for inadvertent sins of the whole congregation as well as the offering for the individual followed by the extirpation of the defiant sinner, for whom no offering is possible. The seven laws are as follows:

1. Grain and drink offerings with a lamb (vv. 3-5)
2. Grain and drink offerings with a ram (vv. 6-7)
3. Grain and drink offerings with a bull (vv. 8-16)
4. Offering of a cake from the first dough (vv. 17-21)
5. Offering for the inadvertent sin of the whole community (vv. 22-26)
6. Offering for the inadvertent sin of an individual (vv. 27-29)
7. Penalty for a defiant sin (vv. 30-31)

Numbers 15:22-36 includes the legal prescriptions for inadvertent and defiant sin and the Sabbath narrative, and displays an interesting chiasmic arrangement by parallelisms (especially through repetitions of the expression "all the congregation") and contrasts between different parts:

A But when you unwittingly fail and do not observe all these commandments, which YHWH has spoken to Moses, even all that YHWH has commanded you through Moses, from the day when YHWH gave commandment and onward throughout your generations, then it shall be, if it is done unintentionally, without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation (כל־העדה) shall offer one bull for a burnt offering, as a soothing aroma to YHWH, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one male goat for a sin offering (vv. 22-24).

B Then the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation (כל־העדה) of the Israelites, and they will be forgiven; for it was an error, and they have brought their offering, a food gift to YHWH and their sin offering before YHWH, for their error. So all the congregation (כל־העדה) of the Israelites will be forgiven, with the alien who

⁶ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 390.

⁷ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 620.

sojourns among them, for it happened to all the people through error (vv. 25-26).

X Also if one person sins unintentionally, then he shall offer a one year old female goat for a sin offering. The priest shall make atonement before YHWH for the person who goes astray when he sins unintentionally, making atonement for him that he may be forgiven. You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the sons of Israel and for the alien who sojourns among them (vv. 27-29).

X' But the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming YHWH; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of YHWH and has broken his commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt will be on him (vv. 30-31).

B' Now while the Israelites were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation (פְּלִי־הַעֲדָה); and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. Then YHWH said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation (פְּלִי־הַעֲדָה) shall stone him with stones outside the camp" (vv. 32-35).

A' So all the congregation (פְּלִי־הַעֲדָה) brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones and he died, just as YHWH had commanded Moses" (v. 36).

This chiastic structure is built upon the concept of Israel as a community and its involvement in inadvertent versus defiant sin. The phrase "all the congregation" occurring three times in the passage about inadvertent sin (A and B) corresponds to the threefold occurrence in the passage about defiant sin (B' and A'). The center of the chiasm (X and X') focuses on the distinction between inadvertent versus defiant sin and emphasizes the same law for the native and the alien.

The passage on inadvertent sins of the community (A and B) prescribes that "all the congregation" shall offer one bull for a burnt offering with its accompaniments, as prescribed in Num 15:1-10, and one

male goat for a sin offering. Then the priest will make atonement for "all the congregation" and "all the congregation" will be forgiven (vv. 24, 25, 26). The passage on defiant sin narrates the case of the wood-gatherer as an individual person (B' and A') who sinned against the Lord. The wood-gatherer was brought before Moses and Aaron and "all the congregation."⁸ Moses, after inquiring with YHWH, received the instruction that "all the congregation" shall stone the man to death outside the camp. "All the congregation" followed this command, took the man outside the camp, and stoned him to death (vv. 33, 35, 36). The whole congregation was called to take up a certain responsibility by imposing capital punishment on this man.

This structure supports the literary unity of Num 15:22-36 and shows that the focus of the text is placed upon the specific role of the whole congregation, with one law for both the native and the alien (see center X). The Sabbath narrative involves the whole congregation, despite the fact that the rebellious act of wood-gathering on Sabbath was the sin of one individual person and not that of the community. This shows that the Sabbath contains a decisive meaning for the covenantal relationship between the whole congregation and YHWH. The sin of one individual performed on the Sabbath affected and disturbed the life of the whole community.

2.2 Key Words

Key words in Num 15:32-36 show that the Sabbath is the day that decides between life of slavery and life of freedom. Various readings of this passage propose a close connection between this narrative about gathering wood on Sabbath, the narrative about gathering manna on Sabbath (Exod 16:5, 23), and the prohibition of kindling a fire on Sabbath (Exod 35:3). Weingreen, in dealing with Num 15:32-36 in a critical way, suggests that the gathering of wood on Sabbath could have been construed as being a manifest prelude to the kindling of fire.⁹ Levine assumes that in this instance, wood was being gathered in order to make a fire for cooking, which is expressly forbidden on Sabbath according to Exod 35:3.¹⁰

Gane approaches Num 15:32-36 from a thematic perspective and shows that this narrative illustrates inexpressible sin because "the man violated the Sabbath command of the Decalogue (Exod 20:8-11), of which the people were reminded every weekend when they received a double

⁸ This is not the case in Lev 24:10-16, the narrative of the blasphemer, which displays parallels with Num 15:32-36. The blasphemer was brought only before Moses.

⁹ Jacob Weingreen, "Case of the Woodgatherer: Numbers 15:32-36," *VT* 16 (1966): 362.

¹⁰ Levine, 399.

portion of manna on Friday and none on the Sabbath (16:22-30)¹¹ by gathering wood for a fire even though “the climate was warm and the people had manna to eat (Exod 16:35). So a fire for warmth or cooking would not have been urgent even if it were not Sabbath.”¹²

However, one verb reveals a different aspect that scholars have so far more or less neglected. This is the verb *קָטַף* “gather” which occurs eight times in the Hebrew Bible.¹³ The Pentateuch employs this verb four times, twice when describing the toil and oppression of the Israelites in Egypt (Exod 5:7, 12) and twice when narrating the wood-gatherer’s behavior on Sabbath after his deliverance from Egypt (Num 15:32, 33). The telling link that Num 15 draws between the Israelite slaves who were forced to gather straw to make bricks and the man gathering wood on Sabbath reveals the intention of the text to show that the Israelite man, even though freed from slavery, consciously chose to act against the law of freedom and thereby placed himself back into the position of a slave.¹⁴

After the man was found gathering wood on Sabbath, he was kept in custody (verb *נָחַ*). The importance of the verb *נָחַ* “rest” is unquestionable in the context of the Sabbath (Exod 16:23, 24, 33, 34; 20:11; 23:12; Deut 5:14). Here also, in Num 15:34, the verb *נָחַ* identifies the Sabbath as the day of rest of “YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exod 20:2), for it is this same Lord who “rested on the seventh day” after he “made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them” (Exod 20:11). The hip’il form of the verb *נָחַ* in close connection with the Sabbath in Num 15:34 shows that the man “was caused to rest” by Moses, Aaron, and the whole congregation, for, indeed, it was Sabbath, the day of rest. Sadly, this rest that he could have enjoyed in freedom, he now had to endure in confinement as a “slave.”

While the question what to do with this man was initially Moses’ and Aaron’s concern, it has also produced much scholarly discussion in studies of the Hebrew Bible. The rabbis argued that “our Master Moses knew that the wood-gatherer [had incurred the penalty of] death, as it is said, ‘He who desecrates it shall be put to death’ (Exod 31:14), but did not

¹¹ Gane, 622.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Exod 5:7, 12; Num 15:32, 33; 1 Kgs 17:10, 12; Zeph 2:1.

¹⁴ See the recent article by Novick who briefly alludes to this aspect of the verb “gather.” Tzvi Novick, “Law and Loss: Response to Catastrophe in Numbers 15,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 101 (2008): 5.

know by what mode of execution he should be killed."¹⁵ Moses then consulted the divine oracle and the response was "death by stoning"¹⁶ Milgrom comes to the conclusion that this answer is unconvincing and proposes that the case of the wood-gatherer provided the precedent for the principle that all work on Sabbath would be punishable by death and be "cut off," because this narrative was placed here in juxtaposition to the law of Num 15:30-31 for the reason that violation of the Sabbath shall be not only punished by being "cut off," but also by stoning to death.¹⁷

In his study on defiant or "high-handed" sins versus inadvertent sins, Gane concludes that "wrongs that are open, bold, and shameless . . . may be undetectable by human beings,"¹⁸ however, before God these sins cannot be covered up.¹⁹ In the case of the wood-gatherer, the context shows that he committed openly defiant sin that could not be expiated through animal sacrifice because of the rebellious attitude and affront against the authority of YHWH. The expression "high-handed" (Num 15:30), signifies "the physical gesture of the raised hand, with or without a weapon in it, which indicates that one is triumphantly determined to fight and to win."²⁰

The laws about inadvertent versus defiant sin in Num 15:22-31 seem to contrast expiation and forgiveness as a result of the sacrifice that was available for inadvertent sins against the severity of being "cut off" that cannot be reversed in the case of defiant sins. The strategic positioning of these laws between narratives that describe open rebellion (Num 14 and 16) is highlighted by the narrative of the wood-gatherer, who committed inexpiable violation of the Sabbath with the result of being "cut off" according to the law in Num 15:30-31 and put to death by the Israelite congregation.

¹⁵ *Sanh.* 78b.

¹⁶ *Sif. Num.* 112; *Sif. Emor* 14:5; *Targ. Jon.* on v. 32; *Shab.* 96b.

¹⁷ Milgrom, *Numbers*, 408, 409.

¹⁸ Roy Gane, "Numbers 15:22-31 and the Spectrum of Moral Faults," in *Inicios, Paradigmas y Fundamentos: Estudios teológicos y exegeticos en el Pentateuco*, ed. Gerald Klingbeil (Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2004), 155.

¹⁹ See Achan's sin that was revealed by God (Josh 7).

²⁰ Caspar J. Labuschagne, "The Meaning of *beyad rama* in the Old Testament," in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift for J. P. M. van der Ploeg*, ed. W. C. Delsman et al. (AOAT 211, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener, 1982), 146.

3. Theological Implications

3.1 Sabbath and Rebellion

The narrative context of Num 15, which deals with corporate rebellion of the Israelite community in Num 14 and 16, may reveal further information regarding the crucial aspect of the Sabbath within the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The context recounts the crisis of the congregation and its leaders during the desert journey and shows that this crisis became extremely serious after the discouraging report of ten of the twelve spies so that "the whole congregation" regretted leaving Egypt and were determined to appoint a leader to take them back to slavery (Num 14:2-4). Only because of the intense intervention by Moses and Aaron before the congregation and before YHWH does the story in Num 14 disclose a turn by the remark "and the people mourned greatly" (Num 14:39).

The narrative that follows is divided in two parts, Num 14:40-45 and Num 21:1-3. Numbers 14:40-44 tells that the people mourned greatly after YHWH's word that they will die in the wilderness and after they witnessed the abnormal death of the ten spies (vv. 20-35). However, they rose up on the next morning, went up to the top of the mountain, and exclaimed boldly: "See, here we are, we will go up to the place that YHWH has promised, for we have sinned" (v. 40). Against Moses' warning about the Amalekites and Canaanites and against the direct command not to go to war, the people went up heedlessly or conceitedly, but Moses and the ark of the covenant remained in the camp. The end of the story reveals that "the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down, and struck them and beat them down as far as Hormah" (v. 45). Then, the story is picked up again in Num 21:1-3, telling of Israel's victory, the subsequent vow to YHWH, and the positive outcome at Hormah, "So Israel made a vow to YHWH and said: 'If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.' YHWH heard the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites; then they utterly destroyed them and their cities. Thus the name of the place was called Hormah."

In Num 16 corporate rebellion does not come about "heedlessly" by a chaotic crowd (Num 14:44) but is well-organized by Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On together with 250 of the most prestigious leaders of the Israelite congregation (Num 16:2). The issue of the revolt is leadership by Moses and Aaron, and God himself issued and executed the capital punishment: "YHWH created a creation," or "YHWH brought about an entirely new thing" (Num 16:30) when "the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up" (v. 32).

Numbers 15, with its laws on offerings and their accompaniments and the prescription about inadvertent sin of the whole congregation and defiant sin of the individual, is placed in between these narratives and implicitly promises to the Israelite community that in spite of what happened in Num 14, the younger generation will enjoy life in the Promised Land in the future, because God regulates such life.

Novick argues that the question of Moses, Aaron, and the congregation does not concern the content of the covenant law, but its applicability and asks the question: Does the covenant law that prohibits work on Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11; 31:12-17) remain valid and in force even for the generation that will not enter the Promised Land according to the words of YHWH in Num 14:22-35?²¹ Novick holds that although the wood-gatherer acts alone, he gives expression through his action to the doubt of the whole congregation. For the law, under which the wood-gatherer must die, is well known, but the people wonder, rather, whether the wood-gatherer is correct in supposing that the law no longer carries force.²²

In response to Novick's argumentation, three particular observations show that the narrative context does not leave the impression that the covenant, including the law of the Sabbath, is no longer valid for the adult generation of the Israelites in the wilderness. Rather, the covenant between God and Israel and the commandments have binding force for the wilderness generation because of God's faithfulness and trustworthiness:

First, after the people's rebellion, Moses pleaded with almost the same words that he used after the fiasco with the golden calf (Exod 34:6-7) and likewise YHWH grants forgiveness (Num 14:20). This act is made possible because of YHWH's faithfulness to his covenant relationship with Israel. He even issues a further command, namely to turn around and set out toward the Red Sea (Num 14:25, 41-43).

Second, the promise of YHWH that the new generation will enter the Promised Land implies the assignment of a significant role to the parents in the lives of their children as the future generation. They have to take upon themselves the responsibility in guiding and teaching their children the law of the covenant over the course of almost forty years of their desert journeys so that the children will reach the land that the parents failed. Furthermore, the command to make tassels on their garments that immediately follows the narrative of the wood-gatherer is given for the specific purpose so "that you may remember to do all my commandments

²¹ Novick, 5.

²² *Ibid.*; Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Mikra ki-Pheshuto: The Bible According to Its Literal Meaning* (New York: Ktav, 1969), 1:268.

and be holy to your God" (Num 15:40). This context shows that all the commandments are in effect even for the adult generation destined to die in the desert.

Third, the book of Numbers shows that the daily miracle of the gift of the manna including the manna miracle of the Sabbath did not cease after YHWH's pledge that the adult generation will die in the wilderness but continued for the entire time (Num 11:1-9; 21:5). This miraculous event implies that the prohibition of work on Sabbath was in force over the entire period of the forty years in the desert (Exod 16:35; Josh 5:12).

These contextual characteristics imply that the Sabbath is a testing marker for the people's loyalty toward the covenant with God. The rebellious act of the wood-gatherer occurs in between the corporate rebellions of Num 14 and 16 and seems to function as a microcosm of the whole Israelite congregation when they rebelled and preferred slavery in Egypt to leadership by God under Moses and Aaron. The wood-gatherer acted out his personal decision to openly renounce the freedom gained by his liberation from slavery and demonstrated his choice to turn back to Egypt. He chose the Sabbath to show his determination to break out of the covenant relationship with YHWH, for it is indeed the Sabbath that signified his personal covenant relationship with YHWH (Exod 31:12-17). By requiring the whole congregation to stone this man, God appealed to the whole congregation to reject the rebellious attitude that in a larger sense they all shared. Thus the narrative context of Num 15 reveals that the Sabbath is indeed the sign of freedom from slavery and the individual person's behavior on the Sabbath shows his choice between "going back to Egypt" (Num 14:4) or going forward to "enter the land, which YHWH is giving you" (Num 15:2).

3.2 Sabbath and Remembering

The law that follows the narrative of the wood-gatherer instructs the Israelites to make tassels for themselves in order to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord. The Pentateuch uses the two verbs "remember" and "see, look" in close relationship only in the context of the covenant in two places, in Gen 9:16 and Num 15:39. Thus the instruction to make tassels in order to look at and remember may indicate an allusion to God himself who once promised Noah and his family to look at the rainbow in the clouds and remember the everlasting covenant between himself and every living being on the earth (Gen 9:16). Now after the tragedy of the wood-gatherer that affected the whole congregation, the people are asked to imitate God who remembers his covenant when he looks at the sign of the covenant. The people also, are asked to look and remember in order to fulfill their part of the covenant by keeping or

doing all the commandments (Num 15:37-41). Thus, the prohibition of gathering wood on Sabbath is not limited to the wilderness. It promotes Sabbath ethics that reach far into the future, when each generation and each individual is called to live a life free of slavery and its oppression.

This law further evokes the narrative of the spies in Num 13-14 by striking verbal connections. According to Num 15:39, the Israelites are called to look at the tassels and remember God's commandments. By doing this they will not "explore" or "stray" adulterously after their own heart or after their own eyes. The tassels are a reminder of the sin of the spies, who explored the land and saw tall men, and in their own eyes they saw themselves as grasshoppers. Then they discouraged the Israelites who strayed from God (Num 13:32-33; 14:33).²³

Therefore, the people needed tassels and cords²⁴ to "do all my commandments and be holy to your God" (Num 15:40) and remember that "I am YHWH your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am YHWH your God" (Num 15:41). These last words fit in well with the meaning of the Sabbath as YHWH's sign of freedom from Egyptian slavery. Indeed, violation of the Sabbath demonstrates revolt against YHWH, who liberated Israel from slavery. The narrative of the wood-gatherer is incorporated in the overall theme of the covenant, where the Sabbath constitutes the essence of the covenant relationship between God and Israel.

²³ Gane, 622; Novick, 3.

²⁴ On the violet cords attached to the tassels in the context of the high priest's robe. See Gane, 623.

MARY MAGDALENE, MARY OF BETHANY AND THE SINFUL WOMAN OF LUKE 7: THE SAME PERSON?

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This article argues that Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and the sinful woman in Luke 7 should be identified as one and the same, as long held by Christian tradition but recently challenged. Comparison of the four Gospel narratives of Christ's anointing reveals numerous details supporting this identification. Sustained literary motifs also build a consistent characterization. An intriguing story emerges which, far from discrediting Mary from influence or ministry, honours her as a woman called by Christ to be an apostle even to the apostles and an eyewitness to his resurrection and transformative grace, the essence of his message.

Key Words: Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, "sinful woman," women, sexism, women's ordination

1. Introduction

Western Christian tradition long held that the anonymous woman "sinner" of Luke 7:36-50, the woman who anoints Jesus in Bethany (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8) who is named Mary the sister of Lazarus (John 11:2), and Mary Magdalene who is mentioned by all four Gospels in connection with the resurrection of Jesus, are all one and the same person.¹ Tertullian (ca.155-220 A.D.) linked the Lucan and Marcan characters, using an idea common to the other two Gospels.² A sermon by Pope

¹ H. Pope, "St. Mary Magdalen," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1910). Retrieved Jan 1, 2009: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>. The Greek fathers saw three separate people. For a historical summary, see U. Holzmeister, "Die Magdalenenfrage in der kirchlichen Überlieferung," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, 46 (1922): 402-422, 556-684.

² Tertullian, *De pudicitia*, XI, 1, PL2, col 1001B, writes: "He permitted contact even with His own body to the 'woman, a sinner,'—washing, as she did, His feet with tears, and wiping them with her hair, and inaugurating His sepulture with ointment." (Trans. by Thelwall, "On Modesty": tertullian.org/works/de_pudicitia.htm). Tertullian links together the "sinner," an idea only in Luke, with getting Jesus ready for burial ("inaugurating his sepulture" or "inaugurating his own decease"), an idea

Gregory (ca. 591 A.D.) identified Mary Magdalene with Luke's unnamed sinner, "She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary [of Bethany], we believe to be the Mary [Magdalene] from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark."³ For centuries paintings portrayed a seductively clothed Mary Magdalene, often with red or gold hair and an alabaster jar of perfumed oil.⁴ In Cecil B. DeMille's classic film *King of Kings* (1927) she is a jewelled courtesan with pet leopards and male slaves. In *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1970), Mary is the ex-prostitute singing of Christ, "I don't know how to love him."

Yet in the late 20th century, the Roman Catholic Church officially changed its view, removing any suggestion of prostitution from Mary's name.⁵ More recent scholarship discounts the previous tradition as based on a conflation of Gospel texts, motivated by the mediaeval aversions to women and the body, and now regards Mary Magdalene as a wealthy woman, perhaps married, who befriended Jesus after he freed her from demons, and who supported Him financially. This re-examination occurs in the context of feminism, the quest for gender equality in the Christian texts,⁶ and questions of women's ordination.⁷

found in all Gospels except Luke. Contact with Christ's body is mentioned in Matt 26:12 and Mark 14:8. Thus Tertullian brings together the Gospel accounts of this story.

- ³ S. Grégoire Le Grand, *Homiliae in evangelia*, II, xxxiii, PL76, col.1239C, cited in A. Feuillet, "Les deux onctions faites sur Jesus, et Marie-Madeleine," *RevThom* 75 (1975): 361, n. 12.
- ⁴ Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London: Pimlico, 2005), fascinatingly chronicles Mary's portrayal in two millennia of art, literature, and theology.
- ⁵ The Roman Calendar was changed in 1969 to remove the reading of Luke 7:36-50 and the reference to Lazarus as her brother. In 1978 the entry for Mary Magdalene in the Roman Breviary had the names "Maria poenitens" (penitent Mary) and "magna peccatrix" (great sinner) removed, a result of scholarly reconsideration. See Haskins, 388, 486, n. 35.
- ⁶ Compare among others, Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (London: Vintage, 1979); Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1979). By contrast see also Susanne Heine, *Women and Early Christianity: A Reappraisal* (London: SCM Press, 1987).
- ⁷ As one example, Gruppe Maria von Magdala was a German Roman Catholic group formed in 1986 to campaign for equal rights for women in the church and for women's ordination. Haskins 397.

This article attempts a fresh examination of the Gospel texts connected with Mary's identity. It will argue⁸ that Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and the Lucan ἀμαρτωλός are likely the same person, and that the Gospels contain clues that tend to support this longstanding Christian tradition. It will find that this view affirms rather than discredits Mary Magdalene, portraying her as a prime eyewitness to Christ's resurrection and as an apostle to the apostles.

2. Is Mary of Bethany the Lucan ἀμαρτωλός?

The following is an examination of possible connections between Mary of Bethany and the unnamed woman sinner (ἀμαρτωλός) of Luke 7. Carefully laying the four Gospel accounts alongside each other reveals striking similarities (see Table 1): (1) Ten details are clearly agreed upon by two writers without contradictions elsewhere (#12, 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29). For example, Mary of Bethany wipes Jesus' feet with her hair (John 11:2; 12:1, 3), as does the unnamed woman sinner (Luke 7:38). This was a striking action, since the rabbis considered a woman's hair too seductive to be shown in public.⁹ One could reasonably expect this action to be unique and strongly suggests the connection between the stories and the characters. (2) Six details show that three writers agree with each other without contradictions elsewhere (#1, 9, 16, 18, 20, 24). (3) Three details without differences occur in all four writers (#2, 7, 11). (4) Thirteen details are mentioned in only one writer, without contradictions elsewhere (#5, 10, 13, 15, 25, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38). The table totals a number of thirty-two details without differences¹⁰ and seven details with differences (#3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 19, 21).

⁸ As do Andre Feuillet, "Les deux onctions faites sur Jésus, et Marie-Madeline," 357-394; and John Wenham, *Easter Enigma: Are the Resurrection Accounts in Conflict?*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992).

⁹ J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 101-102, "It was the greatest disgrace for a married woman to unbind her hair in the presence of men." "According to Tos. Sota 5, 9; j. Gitt. 9, 50d it was a reason for divorce." Similar rules presumably applied to single women.

¹⁰ These are conservative figures. For example, #19 is clearly agreed upon by two writers, but we have not counted this as agreement because another writer offers a different detail. Also, our figures would look even more favourable if we included obvious details—for example, that Jesus was there.

Detail	Matt 26:6-13	Mark 14:3-9	Luke 7:36-50	John 12:1-8
1. Town	Bethany	Bethany	–	Bethany
2. Location	house	house	house	house (v. 3)
3. Timing	two days before Passover (v. 2)	two days before Passover (v. 1)	–	six days before Passover (v. 1)
4. Host	Simon the leper (v. 6)	Simon the leper (v. 3)	Simon the Pharisee (vv. 36, 37, 39, 40)	–
5. Others present	–	–	–	Martha, Lazarus
6. Woman	unnamed (vv. 7, 10, 13)	unnamed (v. 3)	unnamed (vv. 37, 39, 47)	Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha (vv. 1, 2)
7. Reclining	lie at table (v. 7)	lie down at table (v. 3)	recline at table (v. 36)	lie at table (v. 2)
8. Anointed parts	head (v. 7), body (12)	head (v. 3), body (v. 8)	feet (vv. 38, 46)	feet (v. 3)
9. Alabaster jar	yes	yes	yes	pint or <i>litra</i> (v. 3)
10. Jar broken	–	yes	–	–
11. Perfume	very expensive (v. 7)	very expensive (3)	perfume (38)	expensive perfume (v. 3)
12. Pure nard ¹¹	–	yes (v. 3)	–	yes (v. 3)
13. Scent fills house	–	–	–	yes
14. Objections by	disciples (v. 8)	guests (v. 4)	–	Judas (v. 4)
15. Judas' motive	–	–	–	thief (v. 6)
16. Indignant	yes	yes (v. 4)	–	objected (v. 4)
17. Why waste?	yes (v. 8)	yes (vv. 4-5)	–	–
18. Should be sold	yes	yes	–	yes
19. Cost	high price	year's wages	–	year's wages
20. Money to poor	yes	yes	–	yes (v. 5)
21. Jesus defends	don't bother her	leave her alone	–	leave her alone
22. Jesus: she did	what she could	a beautiful thing (v. 6), what she could (v. 8)	loved much (v. 47)	–
23. Poor always ¹²	yes	yes	–	–
24. Prepare for burial	yes (v. 12)	yes (v. 8)	–	yes (v. 7)
25. Faith saved you	–	–	yes (v. 50)	–

Table 1: Comparing Details of the Gospel Accounts

¹¹ Nard is extracted from the spike of the nard plant, which grows near the foothills of the Himalayas. It had probably come via the spice markets of India by ship to Arabia, then by camel train to Jerusalem. Pure nard, not mixed with cheaper substances, would be worth a working person's wages for a year (300 denarii). One can only imagine the personal cost of earning this as a prostitute.

¹² Only Mark adds the phrase "and you can help them whenever you want," alluding to Deut 15:11, the command to be open-handed to the poor and needy.

26. Her story told	yes	yes	-	-
27. Judas will betray	yes (vv. 14-16)	yes (v. 10)	-	suggested (v. 4)
28. Mary Magdalene travels with Jesus	mentioned later (27:55-56)	mentioned later (15:40-41)	follows immediately (8:1-3)	-
29. Mary Magdalene had demons	-	yes (16:9) ¹³	yes (8:2)	-
30. After stories of Mary of Bethany	-	-	-	yes (chap. 11)
31. She stood behind Jesus	-	-	yes	-
32. She wet Jesus' feet with tears	-	-	yes	-
33. She wiped Jesus' feet with hair	-	-	yes	yes
34. She kissed Jesus' feet	-	-	yes	-
35. Simon thinks: if prophet . . .	-	-	yes	-
36. Jesus reads thoughts	-	-	Simon's (39ff)	-
37. Two debtors story	-	-	yes	-
38. You gave me no water	-	-	yes	-
39. Sins forgiven, loved	-	-	yes	-

Table 1: *Comparing Details of the Gospel Accounts—Continued*

If one takes the position that the writers were accurate and that the manuscripts are reliable, unless there is convincing evidence to the contrary (an assumption whose justification is beyond the scope of this paper), then this would suggest that different events were being described. Yet Carson has observed that “details in the text encourage the reader to inject a small dose of historical imagination before resorting too quickly to the critic’s knife.”¹⁴ In that vein, careful examination of some of the details listed in Table 1 will find that the apparent differences are quite compatible, without contrived or forced harmonisation:

#3. Matthew and Mark date the Bethany feast two days before Passover. John says Jesus *arrived* in Bethany six days before Passover, but does not say the feast was held that first day. This is not a contradiction.

#4. Matthew and Mark call the host “Simon the leper.” Luke’s narration at first conceals the personal name, four times referring to the host

¹³ This text forms part of the longer ending of Mark, the originality of which is debated.

¹⁴ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 426, describes the connections between the Matthean, Marcan and Johannine accounts.

merely as a Pharisee (11:36 [2x], 37, 39), but then Luke lets Jesus' speech make the surprise revelation of the name Simon (v. 40), after which the narrator twice uses the name (vv. 43, 44). The personal name agrees with Matthew and Mark, who also give the same small town as the location, yet are leper and Pharisee compatible titles? Since a leper would not be allowed social contact for fear of contagion, one logical way to assemble the data is to infer that Simon was once a leper but was healed by Jesus¹⁵ who is often described as healing lepers (e.g. Matt 8:2-4; 11:5; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 7:22; 17:12). Since the Pharisees often saw sickness as caused by God's judgment upon sin (cf. John 9:2), Simon's leprosy would have seemed like God's curse and Christ's healing would powerfully demonstrate forgiving grace. Yet still Simon's heart had no place for Mary, and his religion had "no real answer to the problem of sin." He could only condemn her and feel superior. "But Jesus could actually do away with sin, and in this deepest sense bring salvation and peace."¹⁶ Jesus told Mary that her faith—the simple belief in the love and forgiveness of Jesus—had saved her (Luke 7:50). The key theme of the story is showing Jesus as forgiver of sin: the woman is a sinner (vv. 37, 39, 47) but Jesus freely forgives sins (vv. 42-43, 47, 48, 49). Luke referring to her simply as a sinner fits this theme. Thus, Simon the leper of Bethany could also have been Simon the Pharisee and the unnamed host in John's narrative, with various Gospel writers giving different details to suit their purposes.

#6. Mary of Bethany could well be unnamed in the other gospels, which call her γυνή ἥτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἀμαρτωλός, which probably meant a prostitute.¹⁷ We will discuss below possible reasons for leaving her unnamed.

#8. Mary could well have anointed the "head" (Matt, Mark) and "feet" (Luke, John) or, speaking more generally, the "body" (Matt, Mark) of Jesus.¹⁸ Anointing the head was standard hospitality for guests in the

¹⁵ Compare Richard Bauckham, "Names in the Gospel Traditions," in *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 53, 81; Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, World Biblical Commentary (WBC), vol. 34b, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2001), 359; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, WBC, vol. 33b, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995).

¹⁶ Wilcock, 91.

¹⁷ Or an adulteress. Usage helps define meaning and the phrases "tax collectors and sinners" and "tax collectors and prostitutes" seem to be almost interchangeable. Cf. Matt 9:10, 11 with 21:31, 32. The phrase "sinner in the city" in Luke's story probably has the sense of "public sinner," and the story makes most sense when "'sinner' is understood as a euphemism for 'prostitute' or 'courtesan,'" argues John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, WBC, vol. 35A, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 353.

¹⁸ Contra David P. Scaer, "The One Anointing of Jesus: Another Application of the Form Critical Method," *CTQ* (1977): 54-55. Scaer sees these as "obvious differences"

ancient world, where oil was commonly used for personal grooming (Luke 7:46; cf Ps 23:5; 133:1-2). Thus, John may be suggesting both head and feet when he writes of "Mary . . . who poured perfume on the Lord [the head would be expected] and wiped his feet with her hair" (John 11:2).¹⁹ However, the quantity of ointment described (approximately 11 ounces) seems too great for anointing the head alone; also the two references to anointing his body would be "a strange way of referring to his head alone."²⁰

Guests reclining at the table with their feet furthest away could be anointed on any part of their body.²¹ Mark and John show the woman anointing Jesus' head.²² Luke and John show her anointing Jesus' feet. The only time feet were anointed in Jewish culture was as a funeral ritual.²³ Brown notes: "One does not anoint the feet of a living person, but one might anoint the feet of a corpse as part of the ritual of preparing the whole body for burial."²⁴ Further, it was a Jewish tradition that when anointing a dead person, the neck of the ointment bottle should be broken, perhaps as a symbol that it would not be used again, or as a sign of loss, and later the bottle would be put into their burial cask.²⁵ This suggests why Mary broke the box, even though it was made of alabaster (Mark 14:3), which presumably had resale value. Jesus recognized this symbolic meaning: "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial" (Mark 14:8). While the other disciples misunderstood and resisted the idea of His crucifixion, which did not fit their plans for the Messiah (e.g. Matt 16:21-23), Mary listened (cf. Luke 10:39, 42) and understood that He would die to pay for the forgiveness of human sin, including hers. Apparently she decided to show her love and gratitude by this memorial while He was still alive.

which would "raise red flags" for anyone "working with anything like the doctrine of inerrancy."

¹⁹ Wenham, 25.

²⁰ Carson, 426.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 428.

²² In Jewish culture, anointing is also a mark of being king or "Anointed One," Messiah or Christ (cf. 1 Sam 10:1; 16:1, 13; 1 Kgs 1:39; 19:15-16; 2 Kgs 9:3, 6; Ps 89:20). See Bauckham, 190; Carson, 427. Anointing the head could be seen as Mary's statement that Jesus was Messiah. Compare Matt 16:13-20.

²³ Feuillet, 382, citing Legault and Schnackenburg. See John 19:38-42 for the description of the burial rituals for Jesus' body, performed by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

²⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XIII* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 454.

²⁵ A. M. Hunter, *St. Mark* (London: SCM, 1948), 127; cited in George R. Beasley-Murray, *John, WBC*, vol. 36, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 209.

#14. Mark simply records that some people present criticized Mary. Matthew focuses on the disciples, and John is even more specific about which disciple was the ringleader. Perhaps they observed different things from different places around the table.

#19. Two Gospels agree on the price as 300 denarii. Matthew does not give the figure, but a year's wages is indeed a "high price" for perfume. Judas' objection to "waste" fits with this and is not without substance.

#21. Two writers have Jesus say, "leave her alone." Matthew cites, "don't bother her." These words express the same idea; Jesus may even have used both lines.

While there exist differences in the Gospel accounts, some have argued that Luke's feast story must be different because he puts it earlier in the overall narrative of Jesus and does not give a location. But Luke may be structuring his material around an idea, grouping stories around themes so that his subjects suit his object. Scholars have recognized that the evangelists may group their narratives logically rather than chronologically or according to the geography of various travels.²⁶

In summary, there are differences in details recorded by the evangelists but none that necessarily contradict, which allows the conclusion that they are describing the same incident and characters. Thus Mary of Bethany, the Matthean and Marcan woman and the Lucan ἀμαρτωλός could well be one and the same.²⁷

²⁶ For example, Bauckham, 192, argues that Mark sandwiches the anointing story between the plot to arrest Jesus (14:1-2) and Judas' visit to the chief priests (14:10-11), at which time he would have reported the planned "messianic uprising." He argues that John, dating the anointing two days before Passover, may be most historically accurate (196-197). D. A. Carson, 426, observes that "the time indicators in Matthew/Mark are notoriously loose. These Evangelists often order their accounts according to topic, not chronology." See also Feuillet, 370.

²⁷ Robert Holst, "The Anointing of Jesus: Another Application of the Form-Critical Method," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95/3 (1976): 435-446. Holst sees the same incident in all four accounts. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke 1-9: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 686. Fitzmyer finds seven reasons to connect Mark's and Luke's versions. C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 162-173. Dodd sees one incident behind all the accounts. Andreas J. Köstenberger, "A Comparison of the Pericopae of Jesus' Anointing," in *Studies on John and Gender: A Decade of Scholarship* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001). Köstenberger treats Mark, Matthew, and John as referring to the same occasion but Luke telling of another occasion. He lists (p. 55) scholars who see one anointing: Bernard, Bultmann, Dauer, Dibelius, Dodd, Elliot, Holst, Klostermann, R.H. Lightfoot, Nesbitt, O'Rahilly, D. F. Strauss, et al; scholars who see two separate occasions: Chrysostom, Tatian, Bevan, R.E. Brown, Carson, Cribbs, Drexler, Grubb, Lagrange, Legault, Lindars, I. H. Marshall, Morris, Nolland, Schnackenburg, Smalley, de Solages, et al; and Origen who saw

2. Is Mary of Bethany the same as Mary Magdalene?

The answer to this question is not clear from the biblical text. However, there are intriguing clues and “converging probabilities”²⁸ that seem to give room for a positive answer:

1. We have already seen that the synoptics suppressed, for whatever reasons, the identity of a woman with a sinful past and that John, usually believed to be the last to write, revealed her as Mary of Bethany.²⁹ If Mary was a witness to Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection and/or known in the Jerusalem church, her fellow evangelists would have a good reason to spare her from unwanted publicity.³⁰ After her retirement or death, John could have felt free to name her. Even then, no one uses the blunt word prostitute.³¹

An even more pressing reason for privacy may have been personal security. The three earliest Gospels do not tell the story of the resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany, and John later reports what could be seen as a good reason: leading priests were planning to kill Lazarus to silence his witness to Jesus (John 12:9-11). So perhaps the early Gospel writers kept this Bethany family anonymous for security reasons, especially if Mary’s anointing was understood as acknowledging Jesus as Messiah and read as subversive and politically rebellious.³² Luke writes “of the sinner in chapter 7, of Mary Magdalene in chapter 8, of Mary the sister of Martha in chapter 10, and of Mary Magdalene again in chapter 24, without ever

three occasions. Benoit and Legault see in Luke a different story about another woman. Feuillet sees separate incidents but the same woman, Mary of Bethany = Mary Magdalene = the anonymous sinner.

²⁸ Feuillet’s phrase, 380.

²⁹ John also identifies “the man who cut off the ear of the high priest’s slave as Peter, and the slave himself as Malchus.” Bauckham, 40.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 46, 51, 298 n. 17. Christopher Wordsworth, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Original Greek, With Notes and Introductions: The Four Gospels* (London: Rivingtons, 1886), 323. Pope argues that Luke’s gospel also protects Matthew by not identifying him as Levi the former tax collector (Luke 5:27).

³¹ *πόρνη* is not applied to a character in the Gospels, and appears in only two passages, both in the teaching of Jesus (Matt 21:31-32; Luke 15:30).

³² Bauckham, 191, argues that whether Mary understood it as such or not, “in the charged atmosphere of this time in Jerusalem and with the question whether Jesus was the messianic son of David certainly being widely asked, the woman’s action could easily be perceived by others as of messianic significance.” He uses Gerd Theissen’s phrase, “protective anonymity” (p. 190) and argues that it was for similar reasons that Simon Peter was not named as the attacker of the high priest’s servant, but John could later reveal that detail. See also Wenham, 32.

saying they are the same person."³³ So Luke carefully removes her name from a story of prostitution, naming her achievements as a generous supporter of Jesus and as a resurrection eyewitness; but in sketching her relationship with Martha he suppresses her town and the other sibling, Lazarus, likely for her protection. Writing later, John gives fuller details (11:1, 5).

The title "Magdalene" meant someone from the village of Magdala near Galilee (cf. Matt 15:39). If Mary had lived there for a time as a prostitute, the alliterative name Mary Magdalene (perhaps a professional name) would be accurate, with the added advantage of distracting hostile readers from her family home in Bethany, to which she may have returned after her contact with Jesus.³⁴ Magdala was a very wealthy town, largely from producing woollen fabric and dyes taken from shellfish in the lake, and was regarded as morally corrupt. Edersheim records the rabbinic opinion that its sinfulness is why it was destroyed soon after: "its wealth was very great" but "its moral corruption was also great."³⁵ A rich, corrupt town sounds like the natural environment for prostitution, and a girl living away from home and family support would seem more likely to enter prostitution. So a change of towns could explain why Mary sometimes has the title Magdalene.³⁶

2. Mary Magdalene was "possessed by seven demons" until Jesus exorcised her (see Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). Some would explain this as a pre-scientific attempt to describe psychological illness³⁷ or some type of metaphor,³⁸ but Jesus seems to take it as spiritual warfare. He often

³³ Wenham, 31, argues that it would be confusing to refer to Mary of Magdala when she is in her home in Bethany.

³⁴ Still with the local reputation as a "sinner" she seems to find out about Simon's feast (ἐπιγιοῦσα, "learned," Luke 7:37, NIV) and appears unexpectedly rather than being invited, though her brother was an honoured guest and her sister was serving (John 12:2; δηρὸν κόνει, cf. the keyword associated with the Lucan Martha, διακονίαῦ δὲ κονεῖν, Luke 10:40).

³⁵ Jer Taan 69 a; 11 Jer Taan us; Midr on Lament ii 2, ed Warsh p. 67 b middle; all in Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book III, chapter 22, 1883; downloaded from <http://www.kjvuser.com/lifeandtimes/book322.htm>. Migdal in Hebrew means a tower, so Magdala probably got its name from a defence tower. Several well-known rabbis came from Magdala and "are spoken of in the Talmud as 'Magdalene' (Magdelaah, or Magdelaya)."

³⁶ Wenham, 32.

³⁷ Especially since the 19th century. See Haskins, 14.

³⁸ For example, Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, *Women in the New Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 184, puts this down to exaggeration due to the New Testament's "primitive knowledge of the origins of mental and physical illnesses" and claims "exorcism aptly represents Jesus' struggle against evils that afflict people in many forms."

mentions "the devil" and "Satan" and his demons. Evil spirits are said to be "unclean" and to cause madness, and destruction (Mark 5:1-13), and even sin (John 8:46-49).³⁹ Similar ideas are reflected in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a pseudepigraphical document from the first or second century B.C.E., which lists seven spirits that are sent to humans by "Beliar" (evil or perhaps Satan),⁴⁰ of which the first is sexual sin ("fornication").⁴¹ Thus it was "understood that demons push people into all manner of sin and vice,"⁴² which would fit well with the idea of Mary Magdalene having a dark past, morally and spiritually, including sexual sin.

Jesus states that He makes demons leave "by the Spirit of God" (see Matt 12:28; Luke 4:33-36), suggesting a serious conflict: Jesus bringing God's kingdom to earth under attack from Satan, the self-styled "prince of this world," whom Jesus came to throw out and to judge (see John 12:31; 16:11), a "head-on collision" between "the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God,"⁴³ which revealed both the nature and power of God's kingdom (see Luke 11:20). Jesus also warned that when He had driven out a demon, the exorcised person must allow God's Spirit to fill them or else the demon could bring back seven others, a worse condition than before (Luke 10:24-26; Matt 12:43-45). So Mary Magdalene's "seven demons" may suggest a story of being freed from her possession, then falling back into possession even more severely. This would suggest Jesus had shown incredible patience and strength. It may also parallel the comment that Mary of Bethany had "many sins" (Luke 7:47). This hardly fits with the view of Mary Magdalene as a basically upstanding woman, perhaps with a few depressed moments.

3. Luke portrays Mary Magdalene working and travelling after Mary of Bethany's changed life, and perhaps because of it. He shows Jesus telling the "sinner" (shown in the grid above to be Mary of Bethany; in point 2 above her sins are linked to the demonic) that her faith has saved her and she can go in peace; then his next scene shows Mary Magdalene, among other well-to-do women who had been "healed of evil spirits and

³⁹ Contra Haskins, 14: "nowhere in the New Testament is demoniacal possession regarded as synonymous with sin." Haskins explains John 8:46-49 as a "direct comparison" between being a sinner and having a devil.

⁴⁰ *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, I, 3. See online source <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com> or <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/patriarchs.html>. See also Wenham, 30.

⁴¹ Others listed are gluttony, angry fighting, flattering trickery, arrogance, lying and injustice or theft. These are said to cause darkening of the mind, not understanding God's law, not obeying parents, and ultimately death.

⁴² Feuillet, 387-388.

⁴³ Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Luke* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 91.

diseases" serving with Jesus on a mission trip and supporting him from their means (Luke 8:1-3; a popular prostitute in a wealthy town would be expected to have means). Luke connects these two scenes with *καθεξῆς*, suggesting that this is the logical result of what went before and "denoting sequence in time, space or logic."⁴⁴ We could almost translate, "And so the next thing was . . ." Wenham writes, "Luke's introduction of Mary Magdalene at the beginning of chapter 8 would be explained if chapter 7 is the story of her conversion."⁴⁵ Note that, unlike "Joanna the wife of Chuza" (Luke 8:3) or "Mary the mother of James" (24:10), Mary is not defined by her relationship to men.⁴⁶

4. Mary of Bethany gives an extremely generous, "enormous"⁴⁷ gift equivalent to a year's wages. Mary Magdalene is wealthy enough to do this, which also suggests a connection.

5. Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany never appear in a scene together.⁴⁸

6. There is only one "other Mary" mentioned in the Gospels. Mary was a common name. Yet in describing the scene near Christ's cross, all four Gospels have only two women named Mary: Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" (see Matt 27:61; 28:1; Jesus' mother Mary was named earlier, but is now identified only by the title "his mother" rather than her personal name). John says, "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene" (John 19:25). Matthew, Mark and Luke show the same scene and identify "the other Mary" in slightly different words (see Table 2), but she is fairly clearly the same person.⁴⁹

Matthew twice mentions "the other Mary," mother of James and Joses, alongside Mary Magdalene (Matt 27:61; 28:1). Matthew does not ever name Mary of Bethany, but it has been argued above that he suppresses her name in the anointing story, in which case he had her in mind. So if Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene were different people, then there would be two Marys (other than His mother) close to Jesus and prominent in His life story, and Matthew would have needed to say "one of the other Marys" so as to avoid confusion. But he does not, which suggests Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany are one and the same Mary.

⁴⁴ In Luke 8:1 *καθεξῆς* "denoting sequence in time, space, or logic . . . literally in the next . . ." (Friberg); "a sequence of one after another in time, space, or logic" (Louw-Nida).

⁴⁵ Wenham, 28.

⁴⁶ Haskins, 14, claims "she alone stands out undefined by a designation attaching her to some male as wife, mother or daughter," but so does Susanna (Luke 8:3).

⁴⁷ Carson, 429.

⁴⁸ Wenham, 29.

⁴⁹ Feuillet, 381, and see the discussion in Brown, 904-906.

	Matt 27:55-56	Mark 15:40	Luke 24:10 (women at tomb; cf. Mark 16:1; Luke 23:49)	John 19:25
1	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
2	Mary, mother of James and Joseph. Later twice called "the other Mary" (27:61; 28:1)	Mary, mother of James the younger and Joses (15:47; 16:1)	Mary (mother?) of James	Mary the wife of Cleopas
3	The mother of the sons of Zebedee	Salome	-	-
4	-	Joanna	- (8:3; a woman travelling with Jesus' team)	-
5	-	-	-	His mother

Table 2: *Women at the Cross and Tomb*⁵⁰

7. Viewing Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene as the same person builds a coherent narrative running through the Gospels, with Mary as a consistent character: "impulsive, emotional, devoted, discerning, privileged."⁵¹ After Jesus' death, Mary Magdalene came to anoint His body for burial (Mark 16:1-2).⁵² This is the very thing Mary of Bethany means to do in the feast at Simon's house, as Jesus recognized and three writers recorded (cf. Matt 26:12; Mark 14:8; John 12:7), with the Johannine reference linking it to "the day of [his] burial."

As the Synoptics describe the feast at Simon's house, the unnamed woman (later named by John as Mary of Bethany) appears suddenly without introduction, and yet Judas assumes that if her perfume was sold, the money would be given for the poor into the money bag he managed (John 12:4-6). This may suggest that he knew her as Mary Magdalene, a woman wealthy enough to be a significant financial contributor (Mark 15:40, 41; Luke 8:2).⁵³

In addition, there occur literary motifs clustering around the person of Mary. Mary is often pictured at Jesus' feet. Mary of Bethany sits at Jesus' feet, listening to Him (Luke 10:39).⁵⁴ She falls at His feet to tell Him about

⁵⁰ Brown, 905. See also Bauckham, 49.

⁵¹ Wenham, 29. On emotionality, compare the grieving of Martha and Mary and Jesus' response to each (John 11:20-36).

⁵² Apparently they intend to do so on Friday afternoon (Mark 15:47, cf. Matt 27:61) but wait until Sunday morning.

⁵³ Feuillet, 384-385, citing A. Lemomyer.

⁵⁴ In Acts 22:3, being "at the feet of" someone means learning from them.

the loss of her brother (John 11:32). She anoints His feet (John 12:3). After His resurrection, Mary Magdalene and other women clasp Jesus' feet and worship Him (Matt 28:9). Then, after Mary and the other women told the disciples that He had risen, Jesus appeared surprisingly in the room, and they all held His feet and worshipped Him (Luke 24:39-40). Perhaps this is because His feet still show wounds from the cross, which prove to them His death and resurrection, and His supernatural character. Admittedly, many other people fall at Jesus' feet to ask Him for things or to thank Him (Matt 15:30; Mark 5:22; 7:25; Luke 8:41; 17:14), which seems to have been a fairly normal practice (Matt 18:29), or sit at His feet to listen to Him (Luke 8:35). Yet this repeated image in the gospels tends to characterize Mary and hold together the various narratives. Mary of Bethany appears near her brother's tomb, weeping (from *κλαιω*, describing strong audible crying; by contrast, *δακρύω* means to shed tears silently). Later Mary Magdalene appears near Jesus' tomb, again weeping (*κλαιω*; cf John 11:31-35; 20:11).⁵⁵

In another literary motif, Jesus asks Martha and Mary of Bethany where they have laid him (John 11:34). After the crucifixion, women mark where Jesus is laid (Matt 27:60-61; Mark 15:46-47; Luke 23:53-55), but early Sunday Mary Magdalene runs to Peter concerned that Jesus' body has been taken and "we do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:1-2). She says the same thing to the angels (John 20:13) and again to the unrecognized Jesus (20:14). But then, she, among other women, is told that he has risen and she should examine the place where he was laid, and then go and tell the disciples that he has risen (Mark 16:6-7). These literary motifs seem to link Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene.

In two Synoptics (Matt 26:13; Mark 14:9), Jesus declares that the actions of the woman will be spoken of wherever the gospel is preached around the world "as a memorial to her," suggesting her personal identity is an important part of the story. Despite that, these writers do not name her.⁵⁶ Later, John fills this gap. Wenham finds it "hard to believe" that Mary of Bethany, having been told her beautiful deed would always be remembered, "played no part in the resurrection story, but that the privilege of first seeing the risen Lord was given to another, almost unknown, Mary."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ F. Scott Spencer, *Dancing Girls, Loose Ladies and Women of the Cloth* (London: Continuum, 2004), 95, and Getty-Sullivan, 188, point out the parallel between these two verbs and scenes, even though they do not equate the two characters.

⁵⁶ See Bauckham, 190, who cites R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 555.

⁵⁷ Wenham, 29.

Each of these points, taken by itself, is not conclusive; but taken together, they sketch a consistent characterisation⁵⁸ and help to make the case: If one Mary indeed had two separate lives under two names in two towns, then hers is an impressive narrative. In one lifetime, Mary was (a) a sexually damaged person who knew Jesus' ability to heal sin and to meet emotional needs; (b) a victim of demon possession who felt Jesus' power over the spirit world; (c) a close friend of Jesus, who sat at His feet and listened by the hour to His extraordinary teaching; (d) an eyewitness to the resurrection of her brother, Lazarus; (e) a co-worker and financial supporter of Jesus' ministry team; (f) a giver, whose costly present and spontaneous tears expressed her love and gratitude; (g) a listener, who heard more clearly than most disciples that Jesus would die—and that it was to save humans from sin; (h) an eyewitness to His death, and faithful supporter when most (male) disciples "deserted him and fled" (Mt 26:56); (i) one who came to anoint his body, which would have been her second time; (j) the first human to see Jesus after He resurrected (even before his mother Mary);⁵⁹ (k) the first to tell others that He had triumphed over death; and (l) the first preacher of the resurrection to be doubted and disbelieved.

Importantly, if Mary Magdalene indeed had a background as a sex worker, this need not discredit her. The male apostles had sinful pasts: Paul for one violently attacked Christians (Acts 8:3) and does not cover this up, rather featuring his past to boast all the more about Christ's transforming power (1 Tim 1:12-16; Phil 3:6). Similarly, Mary offers an inspiring story of rising from a difficult background to an honoured role. Jesus did say prostitutes were going into heaven ahead of some priests because they believed and repented (Matt 21:31, 32), and his message was forgiveness and life-change.⁶⁰

What of sexism? Mary and other women were the first to announce the resurrection, yet one striking irony is the sexist skepticism of Mary's first audience—Jesus' disciples. Gender is prominent in the account that the men "did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them

⁵⁸ To which some would add the anonymous story of the woman caught in the act of *μοιχεία* (John 8:3-11); for example, Nikos Kazantzakis' book, *The Last Temptation*, which was filmed in 1988 by ex-seminarian Martin Scorsese as the hugely controversial film *The Last Temptation of Christ*. See Haskins, 26-29. Some would also connect the Woman of Samaria (John 4:4-43) to Mary's story, though the geography, chronology and background story here appear hard to harmonize.

⁵⁹ For the sequence of her visits to the tomb, see Wenham, 76-89.

⁶⁰ Pope, criticising "Protestant critics" for a reluctance to allow this "apostle to the apostles" to have past, blames it on a "failure to grasp the full significance of the forgiveness of sin." This forgiveness of sexual sin is certainly reflected in the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3-11).

like empty talk" (Luke 24:9-11). "In the cultural stereotypes of the day . . . these are 'only women,' not to be believed in matters of deep importance. Their report is passed off as hysteria. . . . Though Luke has a high view of women, he reflects here his awareness of the widespread tendency to discount the word of a woman."⁶¹ Yet it should be noted that in John's gospel Jesus called Mary Magdalene, in similar terms to his apostles, to announce his resurrection. She calls him *ραββουλι*, a personal and endearing term.⁶² He had said, "Who is it you are looking for?" (John 20:15). This raises instructive parallels to the question he asked his disciples when he first called them to follow him. And they answered *ραββουλι* as well, and then became his apostles (see John 1:35-40).⁶³ And now Jesus asked Mary to go as an apostle to the apostles, an eyewitness⁶⁴ testifying that He was alive again as He promised (John 20:17). She did so (John 20:18; Luke 24:10). So although the church had periods of misogyny resulting from dualist theology,⁶⁵ in this it was not following Jesus. Having commissioned the first resurrection preacher, Jesus later appeared in person and powerfully confirmed what the women had said. Mary Magdalene provides strong NT precedent for women in the role of evangelists.

So Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany and the "woman sinner" can be read as the same person, making her story a case study in gospel transformation. This could be why Jesus said her story would be told wherever the Gospel is taught (see Matt 26:13; Mark 14:9).

⁶¹ John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, WBC, vol. 35c, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 1193, 1191.

⁶² Spencer, *Dancing Girls, Loose Ladies and Women of the Cloth*, 98.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶⁴ Bauckham, 48, argues that repeated use of verbs of seeing by the women gives them eyewitness credentials.

⁶⁵ For a broad historical, cultural, and theological sweep, see Haskins.

META TAYTA IN REVELATION: AN EXAMINATION OF SEQUENTIAL PATTERN IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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The phrase *μετὰ ταῦτα* functions as a sequence marker in narrative passages in both the LXX and the New Testament. Of the thirty-five occurrences of *μετὰ ταῦτα* in the New Testament, it occurs only two times in the epistles (Heb 4:8; 1 Pet 1:11), due to the fact of their non-narrative genre. Almost one-third of the occurrences of the phrase are in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:19; 4:1 [2x]; 7:1, 9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3). This suggests that the book of Revelation, with an apocalyptic genre, is presented in a narrative framework. This study examines the ten occurrences of *μετὰ ταῦτα* in the book of Revelation, focusing on their immediate literary contexts. The analysis concludes that *μετὰ ταῦτα* functions as a sequence marker for two narratives in the book of Revelation: the sequence of the apocalyptic events portrayed in the visions as they are unveiled by the heavenly Revealer, and the sequence of the visions themselves as they are seen by the earthly visionary. It seems that the sequence of the visions does not necessarily go together with the sequence of the events portrayed in the visions.

Key Words: apocalyptic, time indicator, time sequence, , vision, audio-visual

1. Introduction

In addition to its apocalyptic genre, the book of Revelation is also marked with the significant occurrence of the phrase *μετὰ ταῦτα*, "after these things," which serves as a literary device marking time sequences in biblical narratives.¹ Of the thirty-five occurrences of *μετὰ ταῦτα* in the NT, ten

¹ Lexicons confirm the use of the preposition *μετά* with the accusative. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, with a rev. supplement (1996), s.v. "meta," explains that *μετά* denotes "sequence or succession of time." Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (1993), s.v. "meta," indicates that the LXX uses the preposition with accusative with the same meaning as it is in the NT: "after, following, subsequently." Frederick W. Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. by Frederick

are found in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:19; 4:1 (2x); 7:1 (μετὰ τοῦτο), 9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3).² This fact confirms the literary style of Revelation as apocalyptic narrative.³

While some scholars are silent about the function of μετὰ ταῦτα in Revelation,⁴ others suggest that μετὰ ταῦτα functions as a transitional phrase leading from a section/vision to the next section/vision of the book.⁵ Scholarly comments have mainly focused on the function of μετὰ

William Danker (2000), s.v. "meta," indicates that μετὰ with accusative (including ταῦτα) functions as a "marker of time after another point of time." In this paper the phrase μετὰ τοῦτο is also counted as μετὰ ταῦτα.

- ² The phrase μετὰ ταῦτα occurs thirty-five times in the New Testament. See Mark 16:12; Luke 5:27; 10:1; 12:4; 17:8; 18:4; John 2:12 (μετὰ τοῦτο); 3:22; 5:1; 5:14; 6:1; 7:1; 11:7 (μετὰ τοῦτο); 11:11 (μετὰ τοῦτο); 13:7; 19:28 (μετὰ τοῦτο); 19:38; 21:1; Acts 7:7; 13:20; 15:16; 18:1; Heb 4:8; 9:27 (μετὰ τοῦτο); 1 Pet 1:11; Rev. 1:19; 4:1 (two times); 7:1 (μετὰ τοῦτο); 7:9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3. The phrase occurs mostly in the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation. The fact that it occurs only three times in the whole NT epistles is understandable due to the fact that epistles are not narratives. At the same time, the significant occurrence of the phrase in Revelation indicates that the book is heavily loaded with narrative elements.
- ³ By definition, apocalypse has been understood as a genre signified by narrative framework: Apocalypse is defined as "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world." John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins, Semeia 14 (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), 9, quoted in Richard Bauckham, "The Theology of the Book of Revelation," *New Testament Theology*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6. See also John M. Court, "Revelation," *New Testament Guides*, ed. A. T. Lincoln (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 80; Arthur W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), 143.
- ⁴ For examples, Roy Allan Anderson, *Unfolding the Revelation*, rev. ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1974); Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000); Edmondo F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John*, trans. Maria Poggi Johnson and Adam Kamesar (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 112, 132; Charles T. Chapman Jr., *The Message of the Book of Revelation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995); Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1:1)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), among others.
- ⁵ See for examples, Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 62, 118-119; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 634, "The introductory μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδος

ταῦτα in Rev 1:19 and 4:1.⁶ These two passages are considered by many as literary indicators for the structural arrangement of the book.⁷

Gregory K. Beale has summarized the various interpretations of the function of the clause ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα “things about to take place after these things” (Rev 1:19).⁸ Beale himself suggests that the phrase ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα in 1:19 echoes Daniel’s eschatological past-present-future⁹ and brings into view the entire vision of the Apocalypse (Rev 1-22).¹⁰

However, it should be noted that Dan 2:28 uses ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι (v. 29, ὅσα δεῖ γενέσθαι) instead of ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι. This makes ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι in Dan 2:28, 29 verbatim closer to ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι in Rev 1:1 than to ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι in 1:19. Daniel begins the unfolding of the dream and its

(*meta tauta eidon*, after these things I saw) always indicates a transition to a new section (4:1; 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1).” Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 333, that says that the phrase μετὰ ταῦτα, particularly in Rev 4:1 (a), 7:1 (μετὰ τοῦτο), 7:9, 15:5, 18:1, and 19:1, marks “the sequence in John’s receipt of the revelation . . . the beginning of a new vision.” So also Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John*, Continental Commentary, trans. John E. Alsup (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 68.

- ⁶ J. Ramsey Michaels, “Revelation 1.19 and the Narrative Voices of the Apocalypse,” *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991): 604-620; G. K. Beale, “The Interpretative Problem of Rev. 1:19,” *Novum Testamentum XXXIV* 4 (1992): 361-386; Fr. Sieg, “The Introductory Formula of Rev 4:1-2a in the Context of Traditions,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria XVIII* (2005): 33-43.
- ⁷ See for example: John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 48, 102-103; Thomas, 115; Roloff, 38.
- ⁸ Beale summarizes the opinions of scholars on the function of the clause ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα in Rev 1:19 as follows: (1) Rev 4:1-22:5, a section concerning the final tribulation before the second coming of Christ; (2) a combination of both present and future elements in the following visions; (3) the visions to be revealed later (chaps. 4-22) after the introductory vision (1:11-20); (4) the visions in chaps. 2-3 only; (5) the totality and the meaning of history (all of chaps. 1-22); (6) an eschatological phrase from Dan 2:28-29, 45.
- ⁹ So also Richard Lehmann, “Relationship Between Daniel and Revelation,” *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 140.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 381-386. In these pages, Beale provides reasons for his conclusions: (1) Daniel 2:28, 29, 45 appears to be used contextually in Rev 1:19c; (2) Rev 1:19a is a commission to write the entire book; (3) Rev 1:9-11 and 1:12-20 function together as a larger literary unit, which introduces the whole book, serving as a prophetic command to John to write all the visions he witnessed.

interpretation from v. 27 and ends it in v. 45.¹¹ The phrase ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν "things must take place in the latter days" occurs at the introduction (v. 28), and τὰ ἐσόμεια ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν "what will come to pass after this" appears at the close of the narrative (v. 45).¹² Between the introduction and the close, Daniel outlines the dream and its interpretation with clear sequence markers.¹³ One of the sequence markers is μετὰ σε "after you" (v. 39). Jon Paulien affirms that these textual sequence markers signify a chronological sequence in the fulfilment of the interpretation of the dream. The kingdoms come one after the other, from the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar to the kingdom of God.¹⁴

This motif is similar to what the book of Revelation suggests, where the phrase ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει occurs in the prologue and the epilogue of Revelation (1:1 and 22:6),¹⁵ and ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα (1:19) appears in between. For this reason, it seems that ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα functions more as a sequence marker between the prologue and the

- ¹¹ Daniel begins his explanation after Nebuchadnezzar asks him a question: "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" (Dan 2:26). Then vv. 27-45 is the answer of Daniel, without any interruption by the king, consisting of the dream and its interpretation. Verses 46, 47 give the response of the king to Daniel. Therefore, as far as the dream and its interpretation by Daniel are concerned, Dan 2:27-45 could be considered as a literary unit.
- ¹² In vv. 27-30 Daniel has not told about the dream. He does it from vv. 31-45a. In v. 45b, τὰ ἐσόμεια ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν, "Things that shall be in the latter days," Daniel repeats what he mentions previously, ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν "Things that shall take place in the latter days" (v. 28), and ὅσα δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν "all that shall take place in the latter days" (v. 29).
- ¹³ The sequence markers occur not in the dream but in its interpretation: "You are this head of gold" (v. 38)—"after you (μετὰ σε)" (v. 39a)—"and another, the third kingdom" (v. 39b)—"and the fourth kingdom" (v. 40)—"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up (στήσει, future tense of ἵστημι) a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (v. 44). "The kings" in the phrase "the days of these kings" does not refer to the King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the kingdom after him, the king of the third kingdom, and the king of the fourth kingdom. Instead, it refers to the kings of the divided kingdom (v. 41). This is indicated by the use of the third person plural ἔσονται "they will be," two times in v. 43. Therefore "the kings in v. 44" refer to its immediate antecedent in v. 43.
- ¹⁴ Jon Paulien, "The End of Historicism?: Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic—Part Two," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17/1 (Spring 2006): 183-186.
- ¹⁵ For a discussion on the prologue and the epilogue of Revelation, see Richard Sabuin, "Repentance in the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. diss., Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2006), 87; Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Spring, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 37.

epilogue than representing the entire vision of Revelation. This function is similar to that of *μετὰ σε* in Dan 2:39 which occurs between the introduction and the end of the account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (vv. 27-45).¹⁶

Based on the parallel motif of Dan 2:28-29, 45 and Rev 1:1; 22:6, and in the light of Paulien's proposal of the chronological sequence in the interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, one may expect to see textual sequence markers in the Apocalypse, between the prologue and the epilogue, that regulate the order of the receiving of the visions and the sequence of the apocalyptic events portrayed in the visions of the book.

This paper attempts to do the task of analyzing the role of *μετὰ ταῦτα* as a possible sequence marker in Revelation, a possibility that has not been explored extensively yet. To achieve an interpretation, questions are raised: What is the antecedent of *ταῦτα* in *μετὰ ταῦτα* in Rev 1:19 and in the other occurrences in Revelation? Also, what is the use of *γινόμεαι* with its different tenses in Revelation 1:19; 4:1; 16:17; 21:6? These occurrences need special attention, because this verb appears together with *μετὰ ταῦτα* in the phrase ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα (1:19; 4:1).

2. *Μετὰ Ταῦτα* in the Gospel of John

Before analyzing *μετὰ ταῦτα* in Revelation, it seems there is a need to see how John uses *μετὰ ταῦτα*. Of the thirty-five occurrence of *μετὰ ταῦτα* in the NT, John uses it twenty-two times: twelve times in his Gospel (John 2:12 [*μετὰ τοῦτο*]; 3:22; 5:1, 14; 6:1; 7:1; 11:7 [*μετὰ τοῦτο*]; 11:11 [*μετὰ τοῦτο*]; 13:7; 19:28 [2x]; 19:38; 21:1) and ten times in his Apocalypse (Rev 1:19; 4:1 [2x]; 7:1 [*μετὰ τοῦτο*]; 9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3.). This represents almost two-thirds of the total use in the NT.¹⁷

John uses *μετὰ τοῦτο* in John 2:12 to indicate a time sequence that was already started in 1:29, "The next day," continued in vv. 35, 43, "The next day," and in 2:1, "On the third day." The use of *μετὰ τοῦτο* (singular) indicates that it refers only to one event that happens, particularly on the third day, the wedding in Cana (2:1-11). The event following the wedding is

¹⁶ This possibility is worthy of attention since Dan 2 uses also the preposition *μετά* (v. 39, *μετὰ σε* "after you"), although without the demonstrative pronoun *ταῦτα*. It is a common understanding that a pronoun usually has its antecedent. In Dan 2:39 the antecedent of *σε* in *μετὰ σε* is Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom. Pauline, 184, suggests "That the head of gold is not limited to Nebuchadnezzar personally, but represents his whole kingdom, becomes clear in that all the succeeding metals represent whole kingdoms, not just a series of kings."

¹⁷ I assume that the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation are authored by the same John.

designated as μετὰ τοῦτο “after this thing” (2:12) and refers to Jesus going to Capernaum. Another event follows—Jesus cleansing the temple—marked by the temporal phrase ἐγγύς ἦν τὸ πάσχα, “the Passover was near.” The sequence of time and events from John 1:29 to 2:12 may be diagrammed as follows:

Time Sequence Marker	Events
τῆ ἐπαύριον (1:29)	John pointing to Jesus (1:29-34)
τῆ ἐπαύριον (1:35)	Jesus calling His first disciples (1:34-42)
τῆ ἐπαύριον (1:43)	Jesus going to Galilee (43-51)
τῆ ἡμέρα τῆ τρίτῃ (2:1)	The wedding at Cana (2:1-11)
μετὰ τοῦτο (2:12)	Jesus going to Capernaum (2:12)
ἐγγύς ἦν τὸ πάσχα (2:13)	Jesus cleansing the temple

Table 1: The Sequence of Time and Events from John 1:29 to 2:12

The diagram demonstrates that after a time sequence marker there is an event following it. The phrase μετὰ τοῦτο functions as a time sequence marker introducing an event: Jesus going to Capernaum. The antecedent of τοῦτο is the wedding at Cana. In this sense, the use of the singular μετὰ τοῦτο is understandable.

The explanation above justifies the function of μετὰ ταῦτα in 3:22, where μετὰ ταῦτα is in the plural form and indicates at least a couple of previous events: Jesus cleansing the temple (2:13-25), and Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus (3:1-21). Also, the plural μετὰ ταῦτα in 5:1 refers to more than one previous event which μετὰ δὲ τὰς δύο ἡμέρας occurs, “after the two days” (4:43), namely, Jesus going and being welcomed by the Galileans (4:43-45), and Jesus healing the son of a royal official (4:46-54).

In 5:14 μετὰ ταῦτα appears again in the story of the healing on the Sabbath (5:1-18). This story consists of at least five scenes of meeting: the first meeting of Jesus with the sick man (vv. 6-9); the first meeting of the sick man with the protesting Jews (vv. 10-13); a second meeting of Jesus with the sick man (v. 14); a second meeting of the sick man with the Jews (v. 15); the meeting of Jesus with the Jews (vv. 16-18). The use of μετὰ ταῦτα in 5:14 is explainable since it points to the two previous meetings: the instruction of Jesus with the sick man and the interview of the sick man by the Jews. The occurrences of μετὰ ταῦτα in 5:1 and 5:14 demonstrate that μετὰ ταῦτα may function to mark the sequence from one story to another and the sequence from one scene to the following scenes within one story.

The use of μετὰ ταῦτα, together with the other time sequence indicators, is connected to the movement of Jesus from one place to another as shown in the table below:

Time Sequence Marker	Jesus Movement
τῇ ἐπαύριον "on the next day" (1:43)	Jesus going to Galilee
μετὰ τοῦτο "after this" (2:12)	Jesus going to Capernaum
ἐγγύς ἦν τὸ πάσχα "the Passover was near" (2:13)	Jesus going to Jerusalem
μετὰ ταῦτα "after these things" (3:22)	Jesus going to the land of Judea
μετὰ δὲ τὰς δύο ἡμέρας "after two days" (4:43)	Jesus going to Galilee
μετὰ ταῦτα "after these things" (5:1)	Jesus going to Jerusalem
μετὰ ταῦτα "after these things" (6:1)	Jesus going beyond the Sea of Galilee
μετὰ ταῦτα "after these things" (7:1)	Jesus going around in Galilee
τῇ ἐπαύριον "on the next day" (12:12)	Jesus going to Jerusalem
μετὰ ταῦτα "after these things" (21:1)	Jesus appearing at the Sea of Galilee

Table 2: μετὰ ταῦτα with other Time Sequence Indicators

The table above shows that the movements of Jesus from one place to another are always signified by a temporal indicator. The phrase μετὰ ταῦτα plays a dominant role as a time sequence marker in the Gospel of John in relation to the movements of Jesus.¹⁸ The table also explains the use of μετὰ ταῦτα in 6:1. It points back to all the events of chap. 5, when Jesus was in Jerusalem. In 7:1, it points back to all the events in chap. 6, when Jesus was beyond the Sea of Galilee. The plural μετὰ ταῦτα is used to show a variety of places and/or stories which precede its use.

The going of Jesus to Jerusalem (12:12) is followed by a series of events that eventually lead him to the cross where He completed His mission of salvation when He said, "it is finished" (19:30).¹⁹ After His death, Jesus is buried (19:38-42), raised (20:1-10), appears to His disciples (20:11-21:23).²⁰

¹⁸ The table above shows an outline of the Gospel of John based on the movement of Jesus. Interestingly, this outline using the time sequence marker begins with ἐν ἀρχῇ, "in the beginning" (John 1:1).

¹⁹ The expression τετέλεσται, "It has been finished," occurs uniquely in the Gospel of John. The synoptics put it differently: "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit" (Matt 27:50); "And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last" (Mark 15:37); "And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke 23:46).

²⁰ μετὰ ταῦτα occurs two times in these sections (19:38 [μετὰ τοῦτο]; 21:1). In 19:38, μετὰ τοῦτο refers to the previous single event, namely, the death of Jesus. In 21:1, μετὰ ταῦτα refers backward to the previous appearances of Jesus (chap. 20). These appearances of Jesus are also marked by temporal indicators that suggest that the appearances are chronological:

It seems that John arranges his Gospel within a time sequence framework, starting from ἐν ἀρχῇ “in the beginning” (1:1), and ending with τετέλεσται “it is finished” (19:30). This motif, as explained below, is repeated in a similar way in the book of Revelation.

The phrase μετὰ ταῦτα, together with some other time sequence indicators, plays an important role in linking the movement of Jesus from one place to another, from the time He began His earthly ministry until he finished it. In this sense, μετὰ ταῦτα does not function merely as a literary appendage, but is purposely used by John to mark out the chronological sequence of the accounts of his Gospel. The phrase always has a clear antecedent of either plural ταῦτα or singular τοῦτο.

3. Μετὰ Ταῦτα in Revelation

3.1 Μετὰ Ταῦτα in Rev 1:19

The first occurrence of μετὰ ταῦτα in Revelation is in 1:19: “Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things (μετὰ ταῦτα).”²¹ The first task is to find the antecedent of the ταῦτα.²² The first possible antecedent is the audio-visual experience of John in 1:10-20. In this case, 1:19 might be read, “Write therefore the things which you have seen, the things which are and the things that you will see after these visions.”

This suggestion seems to be interesting but lacks both grammatical and literary support. As had been noted previously in the gospel of John, the plural ταῦτα must have a plural antecedent. However, the vision of

Time Sequence Marker	The Appearances of Jesus
“in the first day of the week” (20:1)	Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene (20:1-18)
“the same day at evening, being the first day of the week” (20:19)	Jesus appearing to His eleven disciples minus Thomas (20:19-23)
“after eight days” (20:26)	Jesus appearing to His eleven disciples (20:24-31)
μετὰ ταῦτα “After these things” (21:1)	Jesus appearing to His seven disciples (21:1-23)

Table 3: The Appearances of Jesus are Marked with Temporal Indicators

²¹ Unless specifically notified, all English Bible texts are quoted from the New American Standard Version.

²² It has been argued above, based on the use of μετὰ ταῦτα in the Gospel of John, the μετὰ ταῦτα or μετὰ τοῦτο must have an antecedent.

1:10-20 focuses on only one central person, Jesus Christ.²³ The plural ταῦτα requires a plurality of antecedents which cannot be met by the single vision about the Revealer Jesus Christ. Moreover, the content of the book mentioned in 1:1 is described simply as “the things which must shortly take place.” The words ἃ εἰσὶν “things which are,” and μετὰ ταῦτα “after these things” are absent. Why then are these words added in 1:19?

This question leads to the second option of the antecedent of ταῦτα, namely, the things which are. In this sense, “after these things” means after the things which are, where the neuter plural demonstrative pronoun ταῦτα refers to the neuter plural relative pronoun ἃ “(things) which.” So, the phrase μετὰ ταῦτα means after ἃ εἰσὶν, and ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα means things which shall take place after the things which are. Therefore, the phrase μετὰ ταῦτα in 1:19 does not signify the sequence of the vision John is receiving. Instead, it signifies the whole sequence of the apocalyptic events described in the book of Revelation.

The phrase μετὰ ταῦτα is linked with a verb which is followed by an infinitive, μέλλει γενέσθαι. This construction is similar to the phrase “δεῖ γενέσθαι” in Rev 1:1-2. In these two verses John has introduced a number of audio-visual verbs²⁴ such as the infinitive δεῖξαι “to show” (v.1), and the aorist εἶδεν “he saw” (v. 2). By using these audio-visual verbs, John is distinguishing the visions per se from the apocalyptic events and messages portrayed in those visions.²⁵ Following this argument, 1:19 might then be understood that what John has seen consists of both the present “things which are” and the future “things which shall take place after these things [things which are].” The translation of 1:19 could be “Write therefore the

²³ Although Jesus Christ is not mentioned by name in this vision, Rev 1:1 mentions the name Jesus Christ as the source of the revelation, followed by the content of the revelation, “the things which must shortly take place.” The Revealer-Content motif in 1:1 is elaborated in the vision of 1:10-20. Here, the Revealer is described at length in vv. 12-18, and the content of the book is specified in v. 19: “the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.”

²⁴ By audio-visual verbs, is meant verbs that connotes the idea of seeing, looking or showing, hearing or listening, that are represented by Greek verbs βλέπω, ὁράω, δείκνυμι, and ἀκούω. Charles H. Dyer, “The Identity of Babylon in Revelation 17-18,” Part 1, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 44 no 575 (Jl-S 1987): 306, calls them the “verbs of perception.”

²⁵ The events and messages portrayed in the visions are described by John as ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει “things which must take place shortly,” and τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

things which you have seen, both the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these things.”²⁶

The antecedent of ταῦτα in the phrase μετὰ ταῦτα in Rev 1:19 refers to ἃ εἶσιν “things which are” in the same verse. This does not necessarily regulate the sequence of the visions John had seen or would be seeing, but rather the sequence of the apocalyptic events portrayed in those visions. The question is: what then are the present events labeled as “things which are,” and the future events labeled as “things which are about to take place after these things”?

3.2 Μετὰ Ταῦτα in Rev 4:1

The phrase μετὰ ταῦτα occurs two times in Rev 4:1, at the beginning and at the end of the verse: “After these things (μετὰ ταῦτα) I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things (μετὰ ταῦτα).’”

The first μετὰ ταῦτα comes with an audio-visual verb εἶδον “I saw.” It occurs in the same setting for the first time in 1:12 as described below:²⁷

εἶδον in Rev 1:12	εἶδον in Rev 4:1
Audio-visual verb εἶδον “I saw,” a first person testimony of John of his audio-visual experience	Audio-visual verb εἶδον “I saw,” a first person testimony of John of his audio-visual experience
Audio-visual verb ἤκουσα “I heard,” a first person testimony of John of his audio-visual experience	Audio-visual verb ἤκουσα “I heard,” a first person testimony of John of his audio-visual experience
Source of Voice: Jesus’ voice (vv. 10 – 18)	Source of Voice: “the first voice which I had heard” (4:1) ²⁸
Time indicator: ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ, “on the Lord’s day” (1:10)	Time indicator: μετὰ ταῦτα, “after these things” (4:1)

Table 4: εἶδον in Rev 1:12 and εἶδον in Rev 4:1

²⁶ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 98, translates Rev 1:19, “The things which you saw, namely, the things which are and the things which are about to take place after these.” The “things which are” refers clearly to the seven messages sent to the churches (chaps. 2-3). In 4:1, John is told that he will be shown “the things which must take place after these things,” namely, the things recorded in chapters 2-3. See also Aune, *Rev 1-5*, 105-106.

²⁷ The verb occurs the very first time in Rev 1:2, but in the third person singular εἶδεν. However, it does not occur in the same setting as in 4:1 as described above.

²⁸ The first voice John heard was the voice in 1:10. This is evident for two reasons: (1) the first occurrence of the verb ἤκουσα is in 1:10 and the second is in 4:1, and (2) the voice, both in 1:10 and in 4:1, is described as sounding like a trumpet.

The table demonstrates that μετὰ ταῦτα in 4:1a appears in the setting of a verb which describes the audio-visual experience of John. John's audio-visual experience in chap. 4 onward happens after the audio-visual experience he had in 1:10-3:21. Thus, μετὰ ταῦτα in 4:1a functions as a time sequence marker from one vision of John to another and not as a time sequence marker of the apocalyptic events portrayed in the visions.²⁹

The occurrence of the phrase μετὰ ταῦτα in Rev 4:1b looks similar to the one in 1:19. It is joined together with ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι, which echoes the phrase in 1:19. As in 1:19, μετὰ ταῦτα is mentioned in a direct sentence by Jesus to John in 4:1b. The voice says to John, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." In this sentence there is an audio-visual verb δεῖξω "I will show," and the phrase ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι "things that must take place." In this case, the showing is the vision, and "things that must take place" represent the content of the vision, namely, the heavenly realities. Therefore, μετὰ ταῦτα in Rev 4:1b serves as the chronological sequence marker of the apocalyptic narratives described in the vision shown to John.

What is the antecedent of ταῦτα in 4:1b? I have argued³⁰ that the original readers of Revelation read the book with the awareness of the purpose and the content of the book.³¹ Any reemphasis of the purpose of the book would help the readers to understand the message of the book of Revelation. In 1:19, the content of the book is reemphasized: καὶ ἃ εἶσιν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα "both things which are and things which are about to come after these things." The original readers would have understood that what follows after 1:19³² would be visions about (1) things that were happening in their time (local), and (2) things that will happen in their future (historical and eschatological).³³ Therefore, Rev 2 and 3 picture the situation of the Christian church in the first century A.D., and at

²⁹ The antecedent of the plural ταῦτα in 4:1a is everything included in the audio-visual experience of John 1:10-3:21: the hearing of a voice (v. 10); the imperative to write (vv. 11, 19); to see the source of the voice (vv. 12-18); the response of John (v. 17); and the receiving of the messages to the seven churches (chaps. 2, 3).

³⁰ Richard A. Sabuin, "Historicism: An Adventist Approach?—A Response to the Challenges to Historicism," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 11.2 (2008): 159-174.

³¹ The purpose and the content of the book is stated in Rev 1:1: δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει "to show his servants what must soon take place" (1:1; 22:6).

³² I am aware of the fact that the original readers of Revelation did not have the text with the divisions of chapters and verses.

³³ The terms *local*, *historical*, and *eschatological* were not originated by the first century readers. These terms are used in this article with reference to the subdivisions of the book.

the same time project what would happen to the church from the first century onward.³⁴

In 4:1, Jesus once again says to John: *δείξω σοι ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα* "I will show to you the things which must take place." With the absence of the phrase "the things which are" which occurs in 1:19, the original readers might have understood that, while chaps. 2 and 3 describe what was going on with the Christian church in Asia Minor (local fulfilment) as well as the church since the first century A.D. along the timeline of history (historical fulfilment),³⁵ what follows 4:1 no longer has local fulfilment. What remain are historical and eschatological fulfilments—future from the perspective of the original audience.³⁶ In this sense, the antecedent of

³⁴ The book of Revelation should not be compared with the occasional epistles of the NT. It is an apocalyptic letter. Its original audience read it with a full awareness of its apocalyptic nature, because they had been familiar with apocalyptic works such as 1 and 2 Enoch. For the information about the familiarity of 1 and 2 Enoch in the early church, see E. Isaac, "1 Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 8. See also some parallels between 4 Ezra and Revelation in B. M. Metzger, "4 Ezra: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 522. Stefanovic, 21, states, "Some of the Jewish apocalyptic works, like 1 Enoch (Ethiopic Enoch), 2 Enoch (the Slavonic Enoch), 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch, were widely popular and read in the first century A.D." Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: Ann Arbor, 1979), 17, sees these as "extra-biblical apocalypses written shortly before the time of Revelation or approximately contemporary with it." For a comprehensive discussion of the apocalyptic nature of the Seven Churches, see Wahlen, 146-156.

³⁵ A dual application of an apocalyptic narrative appears also in Daniel 2. Here, Daniel, before unfolding the interpretation of the dream, emphasizes three times that the dream is about: *ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν* "what will take place in the latter days" (v. 28), *ἅα δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν* "what would take place in the future" (v. 29a), and *ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι* "what will take place" (v. 29b). Nevertheless, in the interpretation, Daniel includes the present reign of Nebuchadnezzar with future events by saying, "You are the head of gold" (v. 37). Nebuchadnezzar not only receives a present application of the interpretation but he is shown that his kingdom is part of an apocalyptic narrative whose interpretation covers the entire cosmic sweep of history up to the coming of God's kingdom.

³⁶ Modern scholars recognize that there is a division between the historical and the eschatological sections of the book. To mention some, Kenneth A. Strand, "Foundational Principles of Interpretation," *Symposium of Revelation—Book I*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 29, considers chaps. 1-14 as the historical section and 15-22 as the eschatological section of the book; Stefanovic, 36, argues that Rev 1-11:8 is the historical section and 11:9

ταῦτα in 4:1b is the same with the antecedent of ταῦτα in 1:19, namely, "things which are."

3.3 Μετὰ Ταῦτα with Audio-Visual Verbs

In addition to μετὰ ταῦτα in Rev 4:1a, the use of this phrase in 7:1, 9; 5:15; 18:1; and 19:1 is accompanied by the two audio-visual verbs εἶδον "I saw" (7:1, 9; 5:15; 18:1), and ἤκουσα "I heard" (19:1). Dyer mentions that μετὰ ταῦτα in these verses has a temporal use because it comes with verbs of perception: "The time sequence was in his observation of the visions and not necessarily in the unfolding of future events. When John wanted to indicate a gap of time in future events, he did not include a verb of perception."³⁷

In addition to the verbs of perception as indicators of the temporal use of μετὰ ταῦτα in Revelation, all those verbs are in first person singular form indicating his own audio-visual experience. John is telling his own story of what he experienced: εἶδον and ἤκουσα. The table below puts together all the usages of μετὰ ταῦτα with these two verbs in Revelation which mark out the chronological sequence of John's visions:

Time Sequence Markers	John's Audio-Visual Experience
ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ "On the Lord's Day" (1:10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I heard (ἤκουσα) behind me a loud voice (1:10) • I saw (εἶδον) Him (Jesus) (1:17) • I saw (εἶδον) seven golden lampstands [the seven churches] (1:12, 20; 2:1-3:21)
Μετὰ ταῦτα "After these things" (4:1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw (εἶδον) the throne of God (4:1-2) • I heard (ἤκουσα) the first voice (4:1) • I saw (εἶδον) a scroll (5:1), a strong angel (5:2), a Lamb (5:6)

Table 5: Uses of μετὰ ταῦτα in Revelation with εἶδον and ἤκουσα

to chap. 22 is the eschatological section of the book; Roy C. Naden, *The Lamb among the Beasts* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996), 20-21, draws a dividing line of the book between 12:10 and 12:11; Reynolds, 265, says, "In any case, chaps. 1-11 fall in the historical section of the book and chaps. 15-22 fall in the eschatological section of the book." Jürgen Roloff, *The Revelation of John*, trans. John E. Alsup, *Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 15, sees 1:1-3:22 as the first section and 4:1-22:5 as the second section. Frederick J. Murphy, *Fallen Is Babylon: The Revelation to John, New Testament in Context* (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 1998), 50, divides the book by visions. The introductory vision is 1:9-3:22, and 4:1-22:5 consist of two great cycles of visions.

³⁷ Dyer, 306.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I heard (ἤκουσα) the voice of many angels (5:11), the voice of every created thing (5:13) • I saw (εἶδον) the opening of the six seals, and I heard (ἤκουσα) the voice of the four living creatures (chap 6)
Μετὰ τοῦτο "After this thing" (7:1) ³⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw (εἶδον) and I heard (ἤκουσα) the sealing of the 144,000 (chap. 7)
Μετὰ ταῦτα "After these things" (7:9) ³⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw (εἶδον) the great multitude around the throne (7:9-17) • I saw (εἶδον) and I heard (ἤκουσα) the seven angels with the seven trumpets, and the sounding of the six trumpets (8:2-9:21) • I saw (εἶδον) a mighty angel whose face is like the sun, with a little scroll, and the two witnesses (chaps. 10, 11) A great sign appeared (σημεῖον μέγα ὤφθη): the woman and the dragon (12:1-17)⁴⁰ • I saw (εἶδον) a beast coming up out of the sea and then I saw (εἶδον) a beast coming up out of the land (13:1, 11). • I saw (εἶδον) the Lamb standing on Mount Zion (14:1) • I saw (εἶδον) the three angels flying in the midst of heaven (14:6-12) • I saw (εἶδον) the two harvests (14:14-15:4)
Μετὰ ταῦτα "After these things" (15:5) ⁴¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw (εἶδον) seven angels with the seven

Table 5: Uses of μετὰ ταῦτα in Revelation with εἶδον and ἤκουσα – Continued

³⁸ The singular μετὰ τοῦτο occurs only here in Revelation. It may well refer to a single event of the opening of the sixth seal (6:12-17), the only singular event before John saw the sealing of the saints (7:1-8). In 7:1 John says: "After I saw the opening of the sixth seal, I saw the sealing of the 144,000."

³⁹ The plural μετὰ ταῦτα "After these things" with the verbs of perception have appeared just before the vision of the seven churches (1:19), just before the vision of the seven seals (4:1), and now, just before the vision of the seven trumpets (7:9). This μετὰ ταῦτα in 7:9 could serve as the time sequence marker to introduce the seven trumpets, because John does not mention μετὰ ταῦτα in chap. 8. In this sense, the antecedent of ταῦτα in 7:9 is the series of the seven seals excluding the seventh (8:1).

⁴⁰ Although the εἶδον does not appear there, ὤφθη "it was seen," the aorist passive indicative third singular form of ὁράω is used. This form of the verb occurs three times in Revelation (here, and 11:19; 12:3).

⁴¹ Again, we have μετὰ ταῦτα just before the seven last plagues as we do before the seven churches (1:19), the seven seals (4:1), and the seven trumpets (7:9).

	last plagues (chaps 15, 16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw (εἶδον) a woman sitting on a scarlet beast (chap 17)
Μετὰ ταῦτα, "After these things" (18:1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I saw (εἶδον) an angel calling people out of Babylon (chap 18)
Μετὰ ταῦτα, "After these things" (19:1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I heard (ἤκουσα) the voice singing Alleluia (19:1 – 10) • I saw (εἶδον) the Rider on the White Horse and the fate of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (19:11 – 20:15) • I saw (εἶδον) the new heaven and the new earth (21:1 – 22:5)

Table 5: Uses of *μετὰ ταῦτα* in Revelation with *εἶδον* and *ἤκουσα* – Continued

From the table above, there are several things to be observed. John receives his first vision on the Lord's day (1:10). Afterward, he uses *μετὰ ταῦτα* accompanied by an audio-visual verb to mark the sequence of the visions he saw (4:1; 7:1, 9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1). First John saw Jesus Christ and the seven lamp stands—the seven churches, and heard the messages to those churches. Second, he saw the whole vision of the seven seals. After he saw the sealing of the saints, he saw the series of the seven trumpets and the great conflict described in chaps. 12-14. After that, he saw the series of the seven last plagues. Subsequently, he saw the rise and fall of Babylon. Next, he saw the celebration of the saints of their victory against Babylon. Finally, John saw the new heaven and the new earth.

John uses a time sequence marker with a verb of perception every time he introduces a series of seven: the series of the seven churches is introduced by "on the Lord's day" (1:10); the series of the seven seals is introduced by *μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον* (4:1); the series of the seven trumpets is introduced by *μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον* (7:9); and the series of the seven last plagues is introduced by *μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον* (15:5). This is perhaps the way John highlights the importance of each series of seven. It is also of interest to note that he uses seven time sequence markers to indicate the chronology of the visions he saw.

3.4 *Μετὰ Ταῦτα* with Apocalyptic Use

There are another two occurrences of *μετὰ ταῦτα* to be discussed, in Rev 9:12 and in 20:3. The phrase *μετὰ ταῦτα* in 9:12 refers back to just the apocalyptic events portrayed in the fifth trumpet also the events of the

previous five trumpets.⁴² There is no verb of perception employed here. The phrase does not indicate the sequence of the vision but the sequence of the apocalyptic events—the woes, from one to another.

In 20:3, *μετὰ ταῦτα* appears with the same function as it had in 9:12. Although there is no audio-visual verb attached to it in 20:3, John does “see” an angel in the introductory verse of the vision (20:1). *Μετὰ ταῦτα* is used to mark the sequence of the apocalyptic events portrayed in the vision; what an angel does to Satan, described in a series of verbs.⁴³ Compared to *μετὰ ταῦτα* in 9:12 and 20:3, *μετὰ ταῦτα* in 1:19 and 4:1 have two special characteristics that do not appear in 9:12 and 20:3: (1) *μετὰ ταῦτα* in 1:19 and 4:1b occurs within a direct sentence by the same speaker,⁴⁴ and (2) *μετὰ ταῦτα* in 1:19 and 4:1b occurs with the infinitive verb *γενέσθαι* “to take place.”

There appears to be a special role for the verb *γίνομαι* in the book of Revelation. Of the twenty-nine occurrences of this verb,⁴⁵ only ten are used in a direct sentence (1:19; 2:10; 3:2; 4:1b, 11:15; 12:10; 16:17; 18:2; 21:6; 22:6), with half of them spoken by Jesus or by God (1:19, 2:10; 3:2; 4:1b; 21:6). And among these five direct sentences, only in three of them is *γίνομαι* used to portray a past or future event (1:19; 4:1b; 21:6).⁴⁶

The function of *γίνομαι* (*γενέσθαι*) in 1:19 and 4:1b has already been discussed above in relation to *μετὰ ταῦτα*. The combining of *γενέσθαι* and *μετὰ*

⁴² In Rev 8:13, just before the blowing of the fifth trumpet, the word *οἶαι* is mentioned three times. It is also said in 9:12, “The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.” Connecting these two verses, it may be argued that the fifth trumpet is the first woe, the sixth trumpet is the second woe, and the seventh trumpet is the third woe (11:14).

⁴³ “And he laid hold (*ἐκράτησεν*) of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound (*ἔδησεν*) him for a thousand years, and threw (*ἔβαλεν*) him into the abyss, and shut (*ἔκλεισεν*) it and sealed (*ἐσφράγισεν*) it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released (*δεῖ λυθῆναι*) for a short time” (Rev 20:2, 3). The five verbs used to describe the seizing of Satan serves as a series of events that happen before the *μετὰ ταῦτα*.

⁴⁴ In 1:19 (cf. 1:8), the voice comes from “I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!” In 4:1 the voice comes from “the voice I [John] had first heard” referring to 1:19.

⁴⁵ In the book of Revelation, the verb *γίνομαι* occurs twenty-one times in aorist indicative *ἔγένετο* (Rev. 2:8; 6:12 [3x]; 8:1, 7, 8, 11; 11:13, 15; 12:7, 10; 16:2, 3, 4, 10, 18 [3x], 19; 18:2), two times in present imperative *γίνου* (2:10; 3:2), four times in aorist infinitive *γενέσθαι* (1:1, 19; 4:1b; 22:6), and two times in perfect indicative singular *γέγονεν* (16:17) and plural *γέγοναν* (21:6).

⁴⁶ The other two uses of *γίνομαι* in direct sentences are in the imperative *γίνου* (2:10, 3:2) that is used to instruct the church to be faithful (2:10), and to wake up (3:2).

ταῦτα creates a time sequence marker of what will happen after “things which are” (1:19; cf. 4:1b). However, γίνομαι appears in 21:6 without μετὰ ταῦτα. The Alpha and Omega simply says to John, γέγοναν “they have taken place.”⁴⁷

At this point, the original readers would have understood that they had just finished reading about the things that must take place (4:1), the historical and the eschatological section of the book—from ἃ εἰσὶν “things which are” (1:19), through ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι “things that must take place” (4:1), until γέγοναν “they have taken place” (21:6).⁴⁸ The final question is whether the sequence of the apocalyptic events is parallel to the sequence of the visions.

3.5 Comparing the Two Sequences

After reading the three sequences of seven churches, seals and trumpets which “have dominated John’s visions almost from the start,”⁴⁹ the original readers were shown an account of the great conflict between Christ and Satan as described in 11:19-15:4.⁵⁰

While 4:1 introduced the original readers to future events, a question could be raised why the vision in 11:19-15:4 is inserted, which goes back to the beginning of the conflict in heaven and then forward to the singing of the victorious song of the Lamb by the conquering saints by the sea of glass.⁵¹ This section contains events that already happened from the perspective of the original readers.

⁴⁷ In 16:17 there is also a voice saying, γέγονεν “it has taken place.” This word is singular, while γέγοναν (21:6) is plural. Therefore, γέγονεν could not refer to ταῦτα “these things” (1:19; 4:1). It refers particularly to the series of the seven last plagues, because it occurs exactly in the seventh plague, the last of the last plagues. Moreover, γέγονεν is not spoken by the Alpha and Omega but by the seventh angel of the last plagues.

⁴⁸ Although after 21:6 there is additional explanation about the New Jerusalem (21:7-22:5), this explanation does not point to another event. The event is already introduced in 21:1, 2.

⁴⁹ J. Ramsey Michaels, “Interpreting the Book of Revelation,” *Guides to New Testament Exegesis*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 63. The three sequences of seven are the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets.

⁵⁰ For a discussion on the central piece of the structure of the book, see Richard Sabuin, *Repentance in the Book of Revelation: The Significance of Repentance from the First Century A.D. up to the Eschaton* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Publishing, 2010), 50-59.

⁵¹ Revelation 11:9 and 15:1-4 are included in this section because 11:19 mentions the opening of the temple of God to introduce the vision that begins in 12:1 and 15:1-4 presents the song of victory of those who conquer the beast (chap. 13), and is a

It's insertion has interrupted the plot of the apocalyptic narratives that had been established in the minds of the readers. Instead of continuing the narrative of the previous chapters, the central piece of Revelation covers the account of the great conflict: which started in heaven (11:19-12:12), continued on earth (12:13-14:13), and ending at the eschaton with a celebration in heaven (14:14-15:4). This section could be seen as the thematic key to the whole book or as "the micro-apocalypse within the macro-apocalypse."⁵²

The case above serves as an example that the sequence of the apocalyptic events portrayed in the visions does not parallel the sequence of the visions itself. Although the visions in Rev 12-14 come after the vision in chaps. 10-11, they picture an earlier phase of salvation history.

The same is the case of Rev 17 and 18. These chapters present God's judgement against Babylon (17:1-18) and the fall of Babylon (18:1-24). However, this presentation is only an elaboration of the wrath that had already been poured upon Babylon. This wrath had already been mentioned in the seventh plague: "God remembers Babylon the Great, and is ready to pour His wrath upon it" (16:19). These two chapters belong to the series of the seven last plagues, particularly the seventh one. Therefore, although the visions of Rev 17 and 18 were received by John after the vision in chap. 16, the apocalyptic events portrayed in Rev 17 and 18 do not happen after the events in 16:19.⁵³

4. Conclusion

The book of Revelation contains two narratives: the narrative of John's reception of the visions, and the narrative of the apocalyptic events presented in those visions. Both narratives are sequential and marked by the

celebration after the great harvest of the earth (14:14-20). See also Edwin Reynolds, "Ten Keys for Interpreting Revelation," *Journal of Adventist Theological Society* 11 (2000): 265, who recognizes that the vision in chaps. 12-14 "points all the way backward to the beginning of rebellion in heaven and points forward to the glorified redeemed standing victorious with the Lamb on Mt. Zion."

⁵² Joel N. Musvosvi, "The Issue of Genre and Apocalypse Prophecy," *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 5 (2002): 54.

⁵³ I consider the two examples of a comparison between the sequence of the apocalyptic narrative and the sequence of the visions are adequate to prove that the two sequences are not parallel. There is a need of a more detail discussion about the structure of the book of Revelation in order to display the time sequence of the apocalyptic events shown in the visions of the Apocalypse.

time sequence marker *μετὰ ταῦτα*. The sequence of the narrative of the receiving of the visions follows naturally the sequence of the chapters of the book. It begins with the vision described in 1:10-11 and ends with what John sees and hears about the new heaven and the new earth (21:2-3). The sequence of the apocalyptic narrative begins with the "things which are," (19:1), continues with "things that are about to take place after these things" (1:19; 4:1b), and ends with "they have taken place" (21:6).⁵⁴ This sequence involves some interruption and elaboration within the sequence of the visions. Some visions that John receives afterward unfold the apocalyptic events already portrayed by the previous visions. Therefore, both sequences are not parallel.

By beginning the apocalyptic narrative in Revelation with "things which are" (Rev 1:19) and ending it with "they have taken place" (21:6), John probably follows the sequential pattern of his Gospel that begins with "in the beginning" (John 1:1), and ends with "it is done" (19:30). Combining his Gospel and the Apocalypse, it seems that John has presented a complete narrative of salvation from "in the beginning" up to the final climax when there will be a new heaven and the new earth.

⁵⁴ When the original readers read *γέγοναν* "they have taken place" (21:6), they would understand that the local, historical, and eschatological events have ended. The additional explanation about the New Jerusalem (21:9-22:5) is also given by "one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues (21:9). One of the seven angels who poured out the seven last plagues is also given the responsibility to give a revelation about the New Jerusalem. The original readers would understand that the last events would cover a series of events from the seven last plagues to the coming down of the New Jerusalem to the earth. Therefore, these events are eschatological. What lies beyond the eschatological events is revealed by the words that God's people "shall reign for ever and ever" (22:5).

CHALLENGES TO THE ADVENTIST INTERPRETATION OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

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Challenges to established doctrines and Adventist prophetic interpretation have to be expected. Probably all Christian denominations and even non-Christian world religions have to live with the phenomenon that their tenets are being questioned by parts of their own communities. To a certain degree this may be beneficial, because it is good that people wrestle with theological issues and are not just indifferent or accept established doctrines with blind "faith."

Key Words: apocalyptic literature, symbolism, prophecy, historicism, interpretation, year-day principle

1. Introduction

Truth must stand the test. Sometimes challenges to biblical interpretations may be correct and better explanations need to be formulated. Furthermore, challenges to Adventist interpretations have often led to further research and have confirmed and strengthened the position of the Church. Thus, there are positive aspects.

However, we also detect negative sides. It makes quite a difference, if someone wrestles with issues and is open to counsel, if someone in all humility suggests another interpretation of a biblical passage without being dogmatic about his or her insights or if someone vehemently criticizes the Church. If major positions of the Church are attacked, it can be quite discomfoting. It may lead church members astray, unduly occupy pastors, administrators, and theologians, and distract the Church from her mission, including the proclamation of her message.

In this paper we will limit ourselves to challenges to the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy in the Adventist church, although we take a brief look at outside influences. There is more to be said about challenges to prophetic interpretation at large, as, for instance, found in classical prophecy, but this issue must wait for another paper. Adventists are strongly interested in apocalyptic prophecy. Therefore, it may be justifiable to limit ourselves to this aspect of prophecy.

2. Theological and Quasi-Religious Influences from Outside the Adventist Church

The Adventist Church and Adventist theology do not live in a vacuum. Society and its philosophies, as well as Protestant theology, to some degree Catholic theology, and even non-Christian religions exert their influences on the Adventist Church. Some Adventists think these influences must be welcomed and espoused. Others are opposed to them. Still others hold that they may contain a kernel of truth, which has been blown out of proportions. The good should be kept and what is not helpful discarded.

2.1 General Influences

Before moving to theological influences, there is a need to turn for a moment to current trends and philosophies encountered, especially in Western societies. These trends are able to exert an enormous influence on Christians. The problem is that these philosophies are seldom directly promoted or discussed. Yet, one is confronted by them and subconsciously may accept them. They are espoused by the vast majority of the people—even within a Christian setting, including Adventist congregations—and have become part of the cultural heritage. Therefore, it is not easy to be opposed to them. Some of these current philosophies and trends may directly influence the interpretation of prophetic literature:¹

(1) *Individualism*. People are mainly interested in their own world and tend to disregard the corporate aspect of the body of Christ. They are driven by the desire to be absolutely autonomous. Norms and regulations imposed on them by others are normally rejected.² Therefore, they may not listen to others even while attempting to interpret Scripture. They may want to get approval of their theses by the Church or her institutions but disregard suggested corrections.

(2) *Pragmatism*. This philosophy is interested in what is feasible and doable and what benefits the individual.³ Knowledge about historical developments may seem to be less important than what currently happens. Therefore, interpretations of prophetic texts may read the present political, economic or ecclesiastic situation back into a biblical text, even if the text indicates otherwise.

¹ See, Peter Schmiechen, *Christ the Reconciler: A Theology for Opposites, Differences, and Enemies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 14-15, 54-55.

² This may contribute to the lack of interest in biblical doctrines and theological topics.

³ In applied theology the danger is to "baptize" and accept non-Christian models and methods without studying whether or not Scripture and theology allow for them, because they seem to work.

(3) *Pluralism*. According to pluralism all views are equal. This includes religious views and various interpretations of biblical and especially prophetic texts. Therefore, a number of different approaches to apocalyptic prophecy are simultaneously applied to a biblical book. For instance, some people subject the Book of Revelation to a two layers interpretation, that is, a historicist approach and a futurist approach, although such a procedure violates the very nature of apocalyptic literature.

(4) *Ecumenism*. Those who follow an ecumenical agenda shrink back from associating certain prophetic images with religious entities of our days and try to maintain political correctness.

(5) *Emotionalism*. Emotionalism is in vogue. Decisions are made on the basis of what feels good, not on the basis of what may be right or good.⁴ What counts are personal experiences. This may also directly or indirectly affect prophetic interpretation. Personal experience can certainly be helpful, but they should not be used against Scripture to force a so-called relevant interpretation upon the Bible.

2.2 Theological Influences

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, liberal Protestantism dominated theology. Revelation and inspiration were rejected. Scripture became a purely human product. Miracles and a physical resurrection from the dead became unacceptable. Such a view strongly affected prophetic interpretation.

Liberalism was followed by Neo-Orthodoxy. At that time the historical-critical method, which had already started in the 18th century, continued to flower and was also reinforced by the Catholic Church, while the *sola scriptura* principle was being rejected.⁵ Some evangelicals have reacted against historical criticism by rejecting it completely.⁶ Many others, however, decided to use it in a modified form. In the document "Methods of Bible Study" the Adventist Church dismisses even a moderate use of this method.⁷

⁴ This affects also Christian worship and especially Christian lifestyle. Biblical positions are less important than personal feelings.

⁵ See, Jörg Hausteiner, "Die Interpretation der Bibel in der Kirche: Zum neuen Dokument der Päpstlichen Bibelkommission vom April 1993," *Materialdienst des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts Bensheim* 4 (1994): 73-77.

⁶ Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990); Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977); Idem., *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994).

⁷ "Methods of Bible Study," October 12, 1986, General Conference Committee, Annual Council. See http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/other_documents/other_doc4.html.

Today we find a plurality of even contradictory theologies and a multitude of hermeneutical methods in biblical studies. Although many differ from the historical-critical method, the basic presuppositions of these various methods remain largely the same. These include the insistence on naturalism, which rules out any supernatural influence, an evolutionary approach to the formation of Scripture, the cultural or historical conditioning of Scripture,⁸ and the principles of methodological doubt, analogy, and correlation.⁹

The critical approach to prophetic interpretation has espoused preterism in which apocalyptic prophecy is fulfilled during the time in which it is written. On the other hand, conservative Christians often favor futurism as the preferred approach to interpreting apocalyptic prophecy. The historicist approach is discredited these days. One reason may be that historicist interpreters have come up with fanciful ideas that can hardly be justified with the biblical text. Also historicism requires a high view of Scripture.

3. Challenges from within the Adventist Church

In this section we will use some examples to illustrate the challenges to the interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy that have come up in the Adventist Church. More could be cited, but the ones being used are representative for many other and similar approaches. The challenges to Adventist prophetic interpretation from within the Church include the following: (1) departure from the historicist interpretation, (2) time setting for the second coming of Jesus Christ, (3) opposition to the concept of recapitulation, (4) arbitrary switching from symbolic to literal interpretations, (5) abandonment of the year-day principle, (6) multiple fulfillments of apocalyptic prophecy, (7) a local geographic scenario, and (8) interpretations not derived from Scripture. There are others, but we will focus on these.

⁸ This is challenged by William J. Larkin, Jr. *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 199; Frank M. Hasel, "Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 208-209; and Kwabena Donkor, "Is Scripture Historically Conditioned?" *Reflections: A BRI Newsletter*, April 2006, 3-5.

⁹ A classic work to describe the historical-critical method is Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989). See also Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments: Eine Hermeneutik*, Das Neue Testament Deutsch, Ergänzungsreihe, Band 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

3.1 Departure from Historicism

Toby Joreteg, M.D., Ph.D., and a church member, has published a book with the title "Revelation."¹⁰ It is a kind of commentary on the Apocalypse. In this book he apparently uses a mixture of preterism and futurism. While according to his understanding the seven trumpets are still in the future and should not be understood in the historicist way, the time spans of 1260 days or 42 months mentioned in Rev 11-13 are understood literally and placed in the first century A.D. The woman that is in the desert because she is persecuted by the dragon for three and a half times or 1260 days (Rev 12:6, 13-14) is understood as referring to the house of Israel. The time span is supposed to last from A.D. 31 to A.D. 34. "When the time of the Jewish nation as a chosen nation was over in A.D. 34 the devil targeted his attacks on the Spiritual Israel, the faithful Christians, here called the 'offspring.'"¹¹ The sea beast of Rev 13 is understood as the Roman Empire.¹²

Adam Cirkic, a church member from Croatia, writes: "The General Conference has clearly stated that the trumpet prophecies have to be applied to the last days, that is to the time after the 144,000 are sealed. Thus the trumpet prophesy [sic] was understood as a prophecy with double meaning."¹³ However, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has not issued a statement on the futuristic interpretation of the seven trumpets.

Margaret Sturgill Jeys also interprets the trumpets futuristically. She understands the fire associated with the first trumpet in connection with a nuclear blast, which places this trumpet at least in the 20th century.¹⁴ The second trumpet would be "a terrible eruption of a volcanic island or chain of islands."¹⁵ The "man-made star" – as she calls the star of the third trumpet that fell from heaven – points to missiles launched from space platforms.¹⁶ The fourth trumpet may refer to "the depletion of the ozone layer."¹⁷ With the fifth trumpet she shifts to a symbolic understanding. ". . . at this time, multiplied thousands of demons will descend like a swarm of locusts upon the earth."¹⁸ "Satan receives permission to loose his demons upon the world in visible form . . . They torture their own subjects

¹⁰ Toby Joreteg, *Revelation* (Brushton, NY: Aspect Books, 2001).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 210. See also, 193-194, 209.

¹² *Ibid.*, 229.

¹³ Adam Cirkic, *Great Light Has Lighten up the Prophecy about Seven Seals* (n.p. and n.d.), 2.

¹⁴ Margaret Sturgill Jeys, *The Revelation: A Gift to the Bereans*, vol. 1 (n.p., 2005), 94-95.

¹⁵ Sturgill Jeys, 99.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 100-102.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 104, and also 106.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 109

for five months" – she takes the time span literally. "Satan's purpose is to prepare the wicked psychologically to enact and execute a death decree against the one hundred forty-four thousand."¹⁹ The sixth trumpet has to do with the death decree. "From the mouths of the horses—wicked human beings—comes 'fire, smoke, and brimstone,' which symbolize the death decree against God's saints."²⁰

Franklin S. Fowler Jr. is a medical doctor who publishes the journal *EndTime Issues* and maintains his own ministry. Here again one encounters futurism. For instance, in his interpretation of the seven heads of the scarlet beast of Rev 17 he rejects the view that they are major political or religious-political powers of the past and identifies them with the popes that have reigned since 1929. The five heads that are fallen are, according to his view, Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul I.²¹ Thereby he disregards also the biblical testimony that heads represent powers and not individual rulers. When it comes to the seven heads historicists tend to agree that they represent empires rather than individual kings.²² For Fowler, the "one who is" represents John Paul II – Fowler wrote this in 1999. The seventh pope's reign will be short. The eighth is the papacy.²³ But so is the beast. "The woman (the Catholic Church), the beast (the papacy, the Holy See, the Vatican state) and the heads (the popes, leaders of the Holy See) are all next to each other."²⁴ But Fowler suggests also that the eighth is Satan. Protestantism supposedly represents the ten horns consisting of "orthodox churches, Evangelicals

¹⁹ Sturgill Jeys, 111-112.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

²¹ Franklin S. Fowler Jr., *The Final Years of the Papacy: Revelation 17* (Granite Falls, WA: Christian Heritage Foundation, 1999), 9.

²² Kenneth A. Strand, "The Seven Heads: Do They Represent Roman Emperors?" in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 177-206. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 875, states, "The attempt to identify the seven kings with particular respective world empires may be more successful [than the attempt to identify the heads with Roman emperors], since it is more in keeping with the 'seven heads' in Dan. 7:3-7 which represent four specific empires. The first five kings, who 'have fallen' are identified with Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece; Rome is the one who 'is,' followed by a yet unknown kingdom to come." On page 560 he had stated: "Just as the kingdoms with seven heads in Dan 7:4-7 spanned history from Babylon to the end, so the seven-headed beast in Revelation 17 likewise spans many centuries and likely all of history . . ." Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 471, holds that "the seven hills point to world powers that have their place in history."

²³ Fowler, 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

(including Assemblies, Pentecostals, Four-Square), Episcopal/Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Christian Reform, Jehovah's witnesses, Church of the Nazarine."²⁵ It should be noted that the Orthodox Churches are not Protestants, neither are the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Ralph Myers came up with a specific interpretation of the number 666. His assumptions are: The beast of Rev 17 is the Papacy and is the same as the sea beast of Rev 13. The heads of this beast are not individual popes but names of popes. The number 666 and the seven heads of Rev 17 are combined in order to come up with a new interpretation of this cryptic number. The seven heads are portrayed in Rev 17:10-11: "And they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is of the seven, and he goes to destruction." Apparently, since 1798 only seven papal names have been used, namely Pius, Leo, Gregory, Benedict, John, Paul, and John Paul. During the entire history of the church until the time when Myers wrote his article these papal names were used as follows: Pius 12 times, Leo 13 times, Gregory 16 times, Benedict supposedly 14 times, John supposedly 21 times, Paul 6 times, and John Paul 2 times. Some adjustments have been made by Myers while counting the papal names, since some popes had been deposed. By adding $1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9+10+11+12$ for the twelve times that the papal name "Pius" has been used throughout church history one comes up with the number 78 for the name "Pius." For "Leo" one has to add $1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9+10+11+12+13$ which makes 91, because the papal name Leo has been used thirteen times. Doing the same with all seven papal names and adding the figures results in the number 665. Consequently, Myers considered John Paul II to be the seventh head having received a deadly wound (the attempt to assassinate John Paul II) from which he recovered. He claimed that one pope would still be missing. When he would come, he would use a name not employed by any pope before him and would be the antichrist and the eighth head. Therefore, his name would be counted as "one." This would complete the number 666. If the new pope, however, would take a name used previously, as Benedict XVI has done, he would be an "antipope" who would be deposed and would be followed by the real antichrist. Then the end would come. Needless to say that such a scenario is based on speculation and reminds one of a soft time setting. In the meantime, holding that the present pope is an antipope Myers teaches that "Joseph Ratzinger, AKA Benedikt XVI (XV) will be deposed, and attacked by an angry mob in the

²⁵ Fowler, 13-15.

Vatican courtyard and trampled to death. I have no idea when this will happen. It was in the vision."²⁶

Employing a completely different approach, Reinder Bruinsma, an Adventist scholar and retired administrator, thinks that the Adventist understanding of prophecy, as it relates to the Roman Church, is wrong and has to be changed.

The rapidly growing church is still remarkably united, both organizationally and theologically, but it manifests an increasing pluralism. Unfortunately, this seems to lead to a significant degree of polarization. Where one current seeks to find ways of making Adventism more relevant to this generation, others insist that "the old landmark" of the Adventist faith must be zealously guarded and are unwilling to re-think or modify traditional views. These more conservative Adventists insist that Adventism must continue to subscribe to its traditional interpretations of prophecy, with the corresponding condemnation of Roman Catholicism and other Christian churches. The more "progressively" inclined are increasingly open to emphasizing the common bond with other Christians and tend to feel uncomfortable with traditional attitudes.²⁷

Sometime soon the Church must decide unequivocally whether it is a Christian church – with its own unique witness – amidst other Christian churches, or whether it must stand alone over against all other Christian bodies.²⁸

Steve Daily adds, "It is a sobering and scary thought to conclude that our eschatology has been built on an unsound foundation, and that it has ultimately done us more harm than good."²⁹

3.2 Opposition to the Concept of Recapitulation

The seventh seal of Rev 8:1 mentions silence in heaven for half an hour. Joretég understands this time reference according to the year-day principle and calculates it as seven literal days associating it with the trumpets.³⁰ Since in his opinion the seven trumpets are contained in the sev-

²⁶ Available from <http://english.sdaglobal.org/research/666beast.htm>, accessed October 25, 2009.

²⁷ Reinder Bruinsma, *Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes Toward Roman Catholicism 1844-1965* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994), 301.

²⁸ Reinder Bruinsma, "Adventists and Catholics: Prophetic Preview or Prejudice?" *Spectrum* 27.3 (1999): 52.

²⁹ Steve Daily, *Adventism for a New Generation* (Portland: Better Living Publishers, 1993), 314.

³⁰ Cf. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2002), 7:787.

enth seal, the trumpets last about seven days. They depict God's wrath during this short period.³¹ "During that time the saints were on their way to their reward in heaven."³² This approach does not allow the seals and the trumpets to be parallel and the trumpets to recapitulate the seals from a different perspective. In other words, the trumpets are not referring to the period from the first century A.D. to the final consummation. They depict only the very last events that will take place in one week.

On the other hand, Joretég assumes that the seven trumpets and the seven plagues are the same.³³ But in spite of close similarities the trumpets have to be distinguished from the bowls. With the trumpets mediation is still happening as depicted in their introductory scene (Rev 8:3-5), while with the bowls the sanctuary can no longer be entered (Rev 15:8). The trumpets largely affected a third, while no such limitation is given with the bowls. With the bowls the wrath of God is completed (Rev 15:1). The trumpets are found in the historical section of Revelation (Rev 1-14), while the plagues belong to the eschatological section (Rev 15-22).

When it comes to the seven trumpets Sturgill Jeys follows a futuristic approach, which does not allow the trumpets to recapitulate the seals. One gets the impression that for her the trumpets and plagues take place simultaneously, with the plagues being God's counter attacks against the evils brought about by humanity. God must protect the 144,000. If however, the seals are not followed by the trumpets chronologically, a quite different understanding of history and the end time emerges.³⁴

³¹ Joretég, *Revelation*, 129-130.

³² *Ibid.*, 194.

³³ *Ibid.*, 307-308.

³⁴ Sturgill Jeys, 90-130. Some support their futuristic approach by a reference to Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 3 (Washington: Review & Herald, 1958), 426, when she states, "The battle of Armageddon will be fought. And that day must find none of us sleeping. Wide awake we must be, as wise virgins having oil in our vessels with our lamps. The power of the Holy Ghost must be upon us and the Captain of the Lord's host will stand at the head of the angels of heaven to direct the battle. Solemn events before us are yet to transpire. Trumpet after trumpet is to be sounded; vial after vial poured out one after another upon the inhabitants of the earth." This quotation shows that Ellen G. White used many and various allusions to biblical passages. Her writings and speeches were filled with biblical references. However, this does not mean that she interprets, for instance, the trumpets. In this case, she does not treat the trumpets exegetically. On the other hand, in *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press 1950), 334-335, it looks as if she would support J. Litch's historicist interpretation of the trumpets.

3.3 Arbitrary Switching from a Symbolic to a Literal Interpretation

Sturgill Jeys understands, for instance, the first trumpet in literal terms and in order to support her claim argues as follows:

"Hail," "fire," "blood," "earth," "trees," "green grass"—all these words name literal entities and may be taken literally. When God shows His prophets representations such as, for example, a lion with eagle's wings . . . the Bible student knows they are symbolic and are to be taken symbolically. On the other hand, literal representations are to be taken literally. The disaster predicted to follow the blowing of the first trumpet is given in literal terms, and therefore, it is to be taken literally.³⁵

Unfortunately, she overlooks that typically symbolic passages contain a mixture of symbolic and non-symbolic elements. While in Dan 7 the various beasts and the little horns are symbolic depictions of earthly powers, the myriads of the heavenly court are not symbolic. Furthermore, trees, green grass, and even the earth are used as symbols, even in the Old Testament.

3.4 Abandonment of the Year-Day Principle

Cirkic maintains,

150 days or [5] months from Revelation 9:5 should be understood as a time period still placed in the future, because the fifth trumpet, like all others, is still a future event. According to this the 150 days or [5] months should be understood as the literal five months.³⁶ "Revelation 9:15 never suggested the use of the day-year principle. This text is meant to discern the exact moment in history. It looks like that from this moment (that is the start of the sixth trumpet) we should start to count the 1260 period (the witnessing of the two witnesses), and add the 1290 period (the human authority placed over God's authority, the little horn, the Sunday's law in its mild and severe form) and the period 1335 after that the freeing God's voice is heard and Christ is about to come (nobody knows about the day and hour). At the end of 1335 days Daniel resurrects and receives his heritage with all the save.³⁷

Joreteg interprets the 42 months in the following way:

During 42 months, the three and half years of Christ's ministry on this earth, the Two Witnesses were rejected in a very special way. This time

³⁵ Sturgill Jeys, 90.

³⁶ Cirkic, 11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12. Editorial changes have not been made to the text.

period was from A.D. 27–A.D. 31. The 1,260 days is the time period from A.D. 31–A.D. 34, which is the time when the Two Witnesses were mourning. The Word of God and the Spirit of God were rejected by the Jewish nation.³⁸

This is not astonishing since he has laid the foundation for this interpretation in his book on Daniel. There he mentions the three and a half times of Dan 7:25 almost in passing, moving quickly to Revelation and stating that there are three and half years. However, he spends more time on the 1290 days of Dan 12:11 and the 1335 days of Dan 12:12. He understands them as literal days, abandoning the year-day-principle. Daniel 12:11 states, "From the time that the daily (sacrifice) is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days." Here is his commentary:

According to the text above, 1,290 days will pass, and then the abomination will be set up. That means the Gentiles will be accepted 1,290 after the death on the cross. When Stephen was stoned, step two in this process was fulfilled. God not only divorced His bride [Israel], but He also accepted the unholy, the primarily nonchosen, the Gentiles. In other words, the abomination is set up. This means full acceptance of the unholy woman, the unmarried woman. The unmarried woman or the Gentiles were now adopted instead of the Israelites . . . If we rephrase verse 11 in Chapter 12 of Daniel, we will find the following: "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished (Christ's death on the cross) and the abomination (the unholy) that causes desolation (the unmarried woman/Gentiles) is set up, there will be 1,290 days." These days represent 3 and ½ years plus one month, to be very accurate.³⁹

From the death of Jesus in A.D. 31 he counts the 1290 days which brings him to the year A.D. 34. He understands this as the second part of the seventieth week of Dan 9. The difference between the 1,290 days and the 1,335 days, namely 45 days, are added to this time span. He suggests that during this time span most likely the Samaritans received Jesus, the Ethiopian eunuch and Paul were converted, and the Gentiles became Christians. This was "happening to open the way for salvation to the Gentiles."⁴⁰ When it comes to the 2,300 evenings and mornings, he takes this time element as 1,150 literal days or three years, two months, and ten days and understands them as the duration of the ministry of Jesus beginning after his 40 days in the desert following his baptism and his visits to Nazareth and Capernaum.⁴¹ Others who apply the time prophecies found in

³⁸ Joretteg, *Revelation*, 193.

³⁹ Tobi Joretteg, *Daniel and the Visions about the End Time* (Brushton, NY: Aspect Books, 1998), 32-33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 82-88.

Daniel 12:5-13 to the future include Marian Berry, Ronald Stickney, and Robert Smith Jr.⁴²

Another form of abandoning the year-day principle is found with the late Samuele Bacchiocchi, formerly professor at Andrews University. He spiritualized the time spans so that they do not refer to days nor to years but to a period of dominion of the antichrist and simultaneously a period of protection of God's people in time of persecution.⁴³

3.5 Acceptance of Multiple Fulfillments of Apocalyptic Prophecy

Turning to the 1,260 days that are mentioned in Rev 11:3 and 12:6, Cirikic writes, "The multiple expressions for the same period of time alone shows that there could be a multiple meaning of it." So there are 1,260 literal years but also 1,260 days which correspond to three and a half literal years.

Joretteg interprets the sea beast of Rev 13 as the Roman Empire and goes on to suggest, "The widened lesson from this part of Chapter 13 is that any secular power persecuting the offspring of the Woman, the New Testament Christians, fits under the 'Beast out of the Sea.'"⁴⁴ In his book on Daniel he states, "The interpretations given in this book do concentrate on the spiritual fulfillment of the temple but in no way exclude dual application or many applications, like fulfillment on behalf of the literal temple."⁴⁵ Obviously the abomination refers (1) to the Gentiles that may be saved after A.D. 34 and (2) to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.⁴⁶

A dramatic fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy has been suggested by Bacchiocchi. After September 11 Bacchiocchi began studying Islam. The problem of militant Islam triggered his search for Islam in Scripture. Here is his result:

The preceding analysis of the identifying marks of the prophetic Antichrist, represented in Daniel 7 by the imagery of the Little Horn and in Revelation 13 by the symbol of a Beast, has shown that both the Papacy and Islam fulfil the qualifying marks of this prophetic power. . . . We have found that both powers fulfil the prophetic identifying marks of

⁴² Marian G. Berry, *Warning!* (Brushton, NY: Teach Services, 1990), 154; Ronald Gary Stickney, *The Prophecy of Daniel 11 and Revelation* (Grand Junction, MI: Proclaim the Prophecy "Now" Seminar, n.d.); Robert N. Smith, Jr., *Sunday vs Rapture* (Ft. Worth, TX: Roheka Books, 2002).

⁴³ Samuele Bacchiocchi, "Endtime Issues No. 86: 'Islam and the Papacy in Prophecy'" (his newsletter in electronic form). For details see below.

⁴⁴ Joretteg, *Revelation*, 229-230.

⁴⁵ Idem., *Daniel*, 91.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 91-92.

the Antichrist. Both powers emerged out of the divided territories of the Roman Empire, both promoted false worship, both persecuted God's people, both attempted to change the sacred Sabbath time of worship, and both are to last until the fulfillment of the prophetic three and a half years. It is unfortunate that our Adventist pioneers did not consider the prophetic role of Islam, as the counterpart of the Papal Antichrist.⁴⁷

Such an interpretation challenges automatically the understanding of various time spans in Daniel and Revelation according to the year-day principle. Here is his comment:

Historically, our Adventist church has interpreted this prophetic period as representing the 1260 years of Papal domination from 538 to 1798. . . . This interpretation poses two major problems, which thinking Adventists have long recognized. . . . The first problem is the questionable significance of 538. . . . The second problem with the traditional interpretation is its failure to account for the basic meaning of this prophetic period, namely, a time in which God's people are persecuted on the one hand and are protected on the other hand. . . . A more satisfactory interpretation of the prophetic period of three and half years, is suggested by its symbolic usage . . . to represent, on the one hand the time of domination of the Antichrist, and on the other hand the protection of God's people in time of persecution. Why do Daniel and John the Revelator use the three and half years period to represent the persecution and protection of God's people during the time of the Antichrist? Most likely because three and half is half of seven, which is the number of God's completion and perfection. Half of seven suggests incompleteness and limitation. In other words, the forces of the Antichrist are limited, and will not reach their scope of the complete destruction of God's people. God will have the final word and triumph over the forces of evil. This is the final message of Daniel and Revelation. . . . In the light of this symbolic interpretation of the three and half year as the time of the domination and persecution of the Antichrist during which God's people will be protected, this identifying mark of the Little Horn applies equally well to the Papacy and Islam.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Bacchiocchi, "Endtime Issues No. 86: 'Islam and the Papacy in Prophecy.'"

⁴⁸ Ibid. This approach forced him to limit the authority of Ellen G. White. See Samuele Bacchiocchi, "Endtime Issues No. 87: 'The Use of Ellen White to Interpret Scripture'" and "Endtime Issues No. 88: 'Reply to Criticism, Part 2: A Plea for a Balanced Understanding of EGW's Writing.'"

3.6 A Local Geographic Scenario

A literal and local setting of end time events instead of a symbolic and universal scenario is common in evangelical circles.⁴⁹ It seems to be less frequently used by Adventists but it still occurs. Joretteg holds, "Since the four angels [of the sixth trumpet] are bound to Euphrates before they get released, it is very likely that the battle will start in the Middle East area."⁵⁰

3.7 Interpretations Not Derived from Scripture

With regard to the sixth trumpet Joretteg holds, "In these verses possibly some military machines are described, and it seems that the wicked are destroying themselves."⁵¹ Fortunately, the author remains tentative. Nevertheless, such an approach is not a biblical approach. Instead of reading modern military equipment back into the text of Revelation, one should interpret Scripture with Scripture. The question would be, What are the Old Testament and New Testament backgrounds of Revelation from which concepts and imagery were taken and again utilized in Revelation? Approaches, which use modern phenomena to interpret biblical texts are completely subjective and change with the passing of time.

Joretteg's tentativeness disappears when he comes to the beast out of the earth. He claims that this beast cannot represent a nation or power since it comes out of the earth and not out of the sea. It "mainly contains leaders of false Christian churches." The question is whether or not such a conclusion is justified and matches the biblical data. He goes on to identify the first horn of the lamblike beast with the papacy, which is a power, and the second again with "false Christian church leaders."⁵²

4. Adventist Prophetic Interpretation

4.1 The Historicist Interpretation

We propose to use the historical-biblical approach to the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation which is interested in the text as well as in history, which takes the self-testimony and the claims of Scripture seriously, and

⁴⁹ E.g., Hal Lindsay and Carole C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1970).

⁵⁰ Joretteg, *Revelation*, 151.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 251-252.

exegetes the text carefully and meticulously. This approach accepts Scripture as the Word of God and as authoritative.

After having chosen a basic method of interpretation, one is faced with additional choices. One can choose a preterist approach, a futurist approach, and idealist approach, or a historicist approach. The preterist interpretation of the Book of Daniel would locate the events depicted in the book in the second century B.C. during the reign of Antioch IV Epiphanes. A preterist approach to the Book of Revelation claims that so-called prophecy contained in it was more or less fulfilled in the first century A.D., that is, during the Roman Empire in its earlier stage. The idealist approach correctly perceives important messages in the book addressed to each new generation but denies the existence of subsequent historical developments leading to the establishment of God's kingdom of glory. In contrast to the preterist approach the futurist interpretation sees the fulfillment of Revelation's prophecy predominantly in the future and constructs an end time scenario without leaving much room for developments reaching from the first century A.D. to and beyond the second coming of Christ. Finally, the historicist approach holds that Revelation portrays the history of the Christian Church up to the consummation.⁵³

The historicist approach seems to be demanded by the books Daniel and Revelation themselves, although it is no longer common among exegetes. Dan 2 provides a paradigm of how to interpret the apocalyptic chapters of the book. Apocalyptic prophecy begins in the time of the prophet, in this case with Daniel and the Neo-Babylonian empire, and reaches to the times when all human empires will be replaced by the kingdom of God.

Revelation 1:3, 11 indicates that the book was written for people in the first century, but Revelation also mentions events that must happen "after these things" (Rev 1:19). In Revelation the paradigm for interpreting the apocalyptic part is chapter 12. In Rev 12 a woman, the church, gives birth to the Messiah, the Messiah is taken to heaven, the woman is persecuted by Satan, and finally Satan makes war against the remnant of her offspring. This final war is further described in Rev 13. Satan's activity leads to a yet future universal worship of him and the sea beast and to the persecution of God's remnant people. The vision ends with a depiction of Christ's second coming. This center of the Apocalypse clearly points out that the Book refers to events at the beginning of the first century A.D., runs through historical times, and ends with the final consummation. A

⁵³ Cf. Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 9-12. Unfortunately, he has opted for an eclectic approach which considers that parts of the book must be interpreted preteristically, others historically, and still others futuristically. We would suggest that these different perspectives are included in the historicist approach.

preterist or futurist interpretation does not do justice to the character of the Apocalypse. A historical interpretation is implied by the book itself. However, "we will need to avoid the kind of historicizing interpretation which emphasizes minute details and 'newspaper' exegesis, while ignoring the plain meaning of the symbols in their original context."⁵⁴ Such interpretations have unfortunately discredited the historicist interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy.

Some have attempted to mix a historicist with a futurist approach. They would, for instance, interpret Dan 7 historically and Dan 12 futuristically. This is inconsistent because the same terms and the same time span would have to be understood differently within the same biblical book without having a clear indication in the text that the author has shifted his meaning of certain terms and phrases.⁵⁵

4.2 The Issue of Time Setting

The Millerite movement had been engaged with time setting which led to the great disappointment. Although individual church members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have set dates, the church as a whole has not accepted fixed or soft dates for the second coming of Jesus. While Adventists count on Jesus to come soon and hope that this generation will be the final generation, they stay away from time setting.

Attempts to set dates may be well-intentioned but are typically counterproductive, discredit the message of the church, and are unbiblical. Jesus warned against time setting (Matt 24:42, 44). Christians need to know that the time of the Second Coming is near, and they need to watch, but they refrain from setting times.

4.3 The Concept of Recapitulation

The Book of Revelation resembles the Book of Daniel in using the principle of recapitulation or repetition. Daniel 2, 7, 8, 10-12 are clearly parallel, although not in every detail. But the chapters discuss world history from the time of the prophet to the end. However, recapitulation is not a mere duplication, but each time the flow of history is repeated a different perspective, with additional details, is added. For instance, Dan 2 focuses on the political aspect of world history. This aspect is still found in chapters 7

⁵⁴ Jon Paulien, "Eschatology and Adventist Self-understanding," in *Lutherans & Adventists in Conversation: Report and Papers Presented 1994-1998* (Silver Spring, MD; General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 240. This article deals also with the historicist approach to apocalyptic literature.

⁵⁵ See Gerhard Pfandl, "The Time Prophecies in Daniel 12," *Reflections—A BRI Newsletter*, Number 4, October 2003, 5-7.

and 8, but chapter 7 adds the perspective of the saints and the heavenly judgment and chapter 8 focuses on the sanctuary.

In Revelation, the center of the book, Rev 12-14, clearly points out events beginning in the first century A.D. and reaching to the final consummation. The vision of the seven seals (Rev 4-8:1) focuses on the same time period. It begins with the slaughtered Lamb, the crucified Christ who appears before God the Father. The opening of the seals is related to these events, beginning on earth in the first century A.D. With the sixth seal humanity encounters the cosmic signs of the time, the Second Coming, and the redeemed being in heaven (Rev 6:12-7:17). The seventh seal moves to the time beyond the *parousia* (Rev 8:1), most likely referring to the final judgment and/or the new creation. The seven trumpets (Rev 8:2-11:18) contain the time period of 1,260 days (Rev 11:2-3) equaling 1,260 years according to the year-day principle, which locate this vision in church history, even though there is a strong emphasis on last events. Finally, the last trumpet leads the reader and hearer again to Christ's second coming. Therefore, we find a clear case of recapitulation with the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the vision of the satanic trinity in Rev 12-14.⁵⁶ Even if details vary, the main flow of history is preserved in all these visions. The seals are more closely related to the people of God, while the trumpets refer predominantly to those who dwell on earth, a negative term throughout the book, describing the enemies of God's people. Chapters 12-14 open the view to a universal perspective, describing a heavenly and earthly conflict, which Adventists refer to as the great controversy theme.

4.4 Literal or Symbolic Interpretations

This raises the question; must Apocalypse be understood literally or symbolically? Generally speaking the Bible must be interpreted literally. Jesus' approach to Scripture, as well as that of the apostles, point to a literal interpretation. However, in Revelation the symbolical understanding is the predominant one. This may be indicated in Rev 1:1 by the use of the word *sēmainō* which points to Jesus "symbolizing" the Book of Revelation to John. Indicators in the text must be carefully studied in order to notice when a shift from the symbolic to the literal understanding takes place. For instance, the comparison of the sun with sackcloth and the falling of the stars with the falling of the figs from the fig tree in the sixth seals (Rev

⁵⁶ One of the major questions is whether Rev 8:2-6 forms the introduction to the trumpet vision and is somewhat independent of the seven seals or whether the seven trumpets grow out of the seven seals and follow the seals chronologically. If the second case would be true, there would be no recapitulation. For a discussion of the issue, see Ekkehardt Mueller, "Recapitulation in Revelation 4-11," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 9/1-2 (1998): 260-277.

6:12-13) shows that the author switches from a symbolic to a literal depiction of events.

In any case, one should be able to justify the choice of a literal or a symbolical interpretation with the text of Revelation itself. Such a choice should not depend on personal preference or current social, religious, or political developments which supposedly are found in the text of Revelation. It must also be kept in mind that normally a mixture between symbolic language and literal language prevails. If biblical texts were completely symbolical, probably it would be extremely difficult to understand them. Oftentimes God is described with non-symbolic language. Also in Revelation the letter frame comprising Rev 1-3 and Rev 22 is less rich in symbols and may be closer to classical prophecy than to apocalyptic prophecy.

4.5 The Year-Day Principle

The year-day principle for the interpretation of certain prophetic texts is clearly found in Scripture. Although texts such as Num 14:34 and Ezek 4:6 present cases where days were related to years, Adventists are not relying solely on these texts. Rather some of the chapters that contain important time prophecies include within themselves a key to understand prophetic days as years. This is true for Dan 8 where the time element begins with the Medo-Persian empire and extends to the time of the end. A literal interpretation of the 2,300 evenings and mornings does not lead anywhere.

In an article on the year-day principle, Gerhard Pfandl has listed a number of reasons in favor of the year-day principle. Here are some:

- 1) Since the visions in Daniel 7 and 8 are largely symbolic . . . , the time periods (7:25; 8:14) should also be seen as symbolic.
- 2) The fact that the visions deal with the rise and fall of known empires in a history, which extended over hundreds of years, indicates that the prophetic time periods must also cover long time periods.
- 3) The peculiar way in which the time periods are expressed indicates that they should not be taken literally. . . .
- 4) . . . Three and a half literal years for the struggle between the little horn and the Most High [in Dan 7] are out of proportion to the comprehensive scope of salvation history portrayed in this vision. . . .
- 10) In Dan 9:24-27 the 70-week time prophecy met its fulfillment at the exact time, if we use the year-day principle to interpret it. Many interpreters, who in other apocalyptic texts do not use the year-day principle, recognize that the 70 weeks are in fact "weeks of years" reaching from the Persian period to the time of Christ. Thus the

pragmatic test in Daniel 9 confirms the validity of the year-day principle.⁵⁷

4.6 Fulfillment of Apocalyptic Prophecy

Classical prophecy is found in the major and minor prophets of the OT. It contains straightforward predictions that are normally conditional and at times may have more than one fulfillment. However, apocalyptic prophecy uses extensive symbolism, frequently visions and dreams, has a cosmic sweep and a strong eschatological emphasis. It also contains striking contrasts, such as the seal of God and the mark of the beast, the marriage supper of God and the bird's supper of humans, and the virgin and the harlot.⁵⁸

Apocalyptic prophecy is not conditional prophecy and does not contain more than one fulfillment. While classical prophecy indicates what the future may look like, apocalyptic prophecy shows what the future will be. The paradigms for the interpretation of the apocalyptic sections of Daniel and Revelation, which are Dan 2 and Rev 12-14 make it clear that there is no dual fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy. There may be an application in the sense that practical and personal lessons can be learned from a specific passage, but an application is not an interpretation. To interpret, for instance, Revelation both historically and, in a second step, futuristically does not do justice to the text. Typically, such a futuristic layer of interpretation destroys at least partially the historical understanding.

4.7 The Universal Scenario

Although apocalyptic prophecy mentions various powers during world history, its end time outlook is universal and not local. References to local geographic places have to be understood as types that find their fulfillment in the larger antitype.

Judah's exodus from the Neo-Babylonian Empire becomes a model for the exodus from universal end time Babylon which demands universal worship. Cyrus, with his army who dried up the Euphrates river and liberated Judah, becomes a model for the intervention of Jesus with his army (Rev 16:12-16; cf. Rev 19b). Israel's enemies Gog and Magog of Ezek 38 and 39 become all the people that are opposed to God and wage war against the New Jerusalem (Rev 20:8-9). Armageddon is not restricted to

⁵⁷ Gerhard Pfandl, "The Year-Day Principle," *Reflections—A BRI Newsletter*, Number 18, April 2007, 2.

⁵⁸ Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis* (Naples: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1982), 18-19.

the valley of Megiddo in the Middle East (Rev 16:16) but is fulfilled when in Rev 19 the Rider on the white horse liberates his people and brings to an end the major evil powers, apart from Satan who will be judged in Rev 20. Revelation 15-22 is clearly depicting end time events culminating in a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem in which God and the Lamb are present. They are the temple and illumine the city and its inhabitants. Revelation's end time scenario is universal and not local.

4.8 Principles for Doing Responsible Exegesis

To avoid pitfalls of interpretation the common steps to do exegesis must also be applied to apocalyptic literature. They include, among others, a study of the historical context, a careful study of the literary context, and a thorough analysis of the text itself which is under investigation. Details will not be discussed here but can be found in the current literature.⁵⁹

After having employed all exegetical steps, then and only then, are expositors ready to carefully identify the symbols of the text with historical realities and developments. It is dangerous to read back into the Bible events described in newspapers and found in the internet. Shortcuts can lead to false identifications, false excitement, and fanaticism which at the end only damage the church and question the credibility of the Christian message and the authority of Scripture.

5. Evaluation and Implications

Without question the Church is challenged by misleading and strange interpretations of the books of Daniel and Revelation through church members, professionals, pastors, and some of her scholars. This is not to say that in some areas of study the Church could not gain a deeper

⁵⁹ See Ekkehardt Mueller, "Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. G. W. Reid, Biblical Research Institute Studies, vol. 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 111-134; Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 12, ed. by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 58-104; and Gerhard Pfandl, *The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture* (Wahroonga, Australia: South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.); David Alan Black, *Using New Testament Greek in Ministry: A Practical Guide for Students and Pastors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993); Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998); Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1993); and Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981).

understanding of Daniel and the Apocalypse. It could, and it should. However, it becomes problematic when approaches are used that contradict the nature of the biblical documents, in this case primarily Daniel and Revelation.

The reasons why such views are held and propagated may vary greatly. There is certainly a genuine desire among many Adventists to understand in a better and deeper way biblical apocalyptic literature. This is laudable.

Sometimes it seems that events in every-day life trigger new interpretations of Scripture. In itself not being wrong, such interpretations get out of hand, if wishful thinking replaces a sound biblical method of interpreting Scripture. Sometimes Adventists are embarrassed about the eschatology of their Church and wish it were different. Ecumenical concerns do not fit well with the Adventist end time scenario. Therefore, Adventist eschatology may be either ignored or reinterpreted. Sometimes it seems that the historicist Adventist approach has little to say to our present situation and does not satisfy the curiosity of church members. Futurism and conspiracy theories seem to open new and exiting vistas which are readily espoused by some.

This raises some troubling questions. Why are some church members more interested in interpreting the symbolism and sometimes horrifying scenes of Daniel and Revelation than in a personal relationship with the Godhead? Why can they hotly debate the number 666 and who the 144,000 are but do not proclaim to their neighbors the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ and do not live a Christlike life? It is certainly not wrong to study these issues. On the contrary! But they are no replacement for the "weightier matters."

So what has gone wrong? Certainly, the Church is not directly responsible for the decisions of her members, but one must ask, Have we sometimes laid a wrong emphasis in our pastoral and evangelistic proclamation? Was it at times too sensationalistic? Have we in our public campaigns too strongly focused, for instance, on the mark of the beast and the coming Sunday law and too little on the Lord of the books of Daniel and Revelation?

Challenges are calling us not only to defend the biblical position but to reflect on what we are doing and look out for better options. Therefore, why should we not talk about the Son of God and the Son of Man in the book of Daniel? Why should we not paint a wonderful mental picture of the Lamb in the Apocalypse before our audience? Why should we not talk about God the Father and the Holy Spirit in Revelation, about the sanctuary and the Second Coming, about salvation and ethics? If our proclamation becomes more balanced, if our sermons are fresh with new insights into the Word of God, if the message is applied in a meaningful way to

our current situation, we may ground our church members in God and his Word, contribute to their and our maturing process, and protect them against fanciful but false interpretations. From this perspective, challenges are not only problems but opportunities to be grasped and utilized

THE OMNIPRESENCE AND THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD: A RESPONSE TO THE PANTHEISTIC VIEW OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE UNIVERSE

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This article seeks to give a satisfactory, though not necessarily final answer to the question, "What is the difference between the biblical understanding and the pantheistic concept with regard to the omnipresence of God?" This article explores the biblical perspective about God's presence in His created world and His distinctiveness from His creation. The concept of pantheism, on the other hand, holds that God is not only present in the universe, but God is everything that exists. The pantheistic view of God's presence is limited to the universe.

Key Words: omnipresence, transcendence, pantheism, nature, universe.

1. Introduction

The Bible shows that God has basic attributes that make Him different from angels, human beings, and all other created beings. These attributes are: omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, self-existence, and eternal.¹ Pantheism "regards God as one with the natural universe,"² and denies "the transcendence of God."³

This article will focus on the biblical perspective of the omnipresence and transcendence of God in response to the pantheistic view of God's presence in the universe. "Pantheism is the idea that everything in the whole universe is God, or is part of God."⁴ In other words, for pantheism, God is not only present in the whole universe but God is one with the

¹ Aecio Cairus, *Class Handouts for THST 612 Doctrine of God*, Adventist International Institute of Advance Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, 2002, 26.

² Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 34.

³ Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1941), 61.

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 208.

material world or "God is everything that exists."⁵ This study focuses on the question: "What is the difference between the biblical understanding and the pantheistic view about the omnipresence of God?"

2. The Omnipresence Of God

God's omnipresence may be defined as follows, "God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with His whole being, yet God acts differently in different places."⁶ The concept that God is Lord of space and cannot be limited by space is evident from the fact that He created it. The creation of the material world (Gen 1:1) implies the creation of space as well. Matter and space are two things that cannot be separated. Moses reminded the Israelites with regard to the lordship of God over the universe, "Indeed, heaven and the highest heaven belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it" (Deut 10:14, NKJV).

2.1 God is Present Everywhere

God possesses the ability to be present in every place at the same time. Several biblical passages speak of God's presence in every part of the universe. Jeremiah quotes God Himself, "Am I God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see Him? Says the Lord. Do I not fill in heaven and earth? Says the Lord" (Jer. 23:23, 24).

David expresses his conviction with regard to God's omnipresence. He states, "Whither shall I go from your Spirit? Or wither shall I flee from your presence? If I ascended to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me" (Ps 137:7-10). The biblical account does not provide any indication that a part of God might be in one place and another part in another place. God is present with His whole being in every part of space, because God is one, "undivided and indivisible."⁷ Paul affirms: "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28), and, "In Him all things hold together" (Col 1:17).

⁵ Grudem, 208.

⁶ Ibid., 173

⁷ Thiessen, 89.

2.2 God is not Limited by Space

Pantheism "regards God as one with the natural universe,"⁸ and denies "the transcendence of God."⁹ In other words, the presence of God, for pantheism, is limited to the universe. The biblical account shows that God is not limited by space and can not be contained by any space, but He "transcends all spatial limitation,"¹⁰ no matter how large.

When King Solomon dedicated the temple that he had built to be the dwelling place of God, he expressed his belief about the limitless presence of God in his dedicatory prayer, "And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father. But will God indeed dwell on earth and the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You; How much less this temple which I have built" (1 Kgs 8:26, 27). The presence of God is too vast to be contained in a building, for God is beyond all boundaries of the universe and fills everything, a concept, which is beyond human thinking and knowledge.¹¹

The thought that God is present everywhere and with His whole being greatly encourages believers to worship Him and pray to Him, no matter in which place they are. Also, the fact that no place can be found that is capable to contain God should discourage one from thinking that there exists a place of worship such as a temple that holds the presence of God and, as Grudem argues, provides special access to God.¹²

In addition, the biblical account does not allow for the thought that God is in need of or exists in a spatial area even if it is larger than the universe. Such a thought would encourage the idea of God's being in spatial terms, as if He is a large being. Rather, the creation account seems to imply that before God created the universe there was no matter, thus there was no space either. Yet, God existed; He existed as a being different and far greater than one can envisage.

⁸ Thiessen, 34. Erickson stated, "In Pantheism, the nature minus God equals nothing, but God minus nature also equals nothing. He has no independent status. Creation in the traditional sense has no place in the pantheistic scheme, since, according to Pantheism, God could not have existed before the creation of natural order." Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 303.

⁹ Berkof, 61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹¹ Tony Evans, *Teologi Allah* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 1994), 171

¹² Grudem, 174

3. God is Distinct from His Creation

Pantheism holds that everything is God or that God is everything that exists: The "being of God is really the substance of all things."¹³ On the other hand, the biblical text shows that God is present everywhere in his creation, but that He is distinct from His creation. God's distinctiveness needs to be understood in the sense that He is not to be identified with His creation. The analogy of a sponge filled with water might be helpful to illustrate the biblical concept about God's distinctiveness from His creation: Water is present everywhere in the sponge, but the water is completely distinct from the sponge. The water exists separately from the sponge and vice versa.

3.1 God's Presence to Bless

When the Bible speaks of God's presence among human beings, His presence implies blessing in every way. God's request to build a sanctuary so that He would dwell among the Israelites (Exod 25:8-9) is a reference to the blessedness of His presence for the sake of His people. God had designated the specific location of His presence, above the ark of the covenant and between the cherubim (Exod 25:22; 1 Sam 4:4). This specific reference to the location of God's presence does not imply that God was not present elsewhere in the Israelite camp (see Num 2:2; 23:21), but that He manifested His character in a unique way in the location specified above the ark of the covenant in order to bring blessing to His people.

Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman communicate the blessing of worshipping God independent of the temple in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim, the mountain regarded as holy by the Samaritans. He explained that there would be a time when the believer will not come to a specific holy place to worship. Rather, the believer will approach God in different dimensions of reality, dimensions that Jesus identified as "spirit and truth" (John 4:20-24).

The book of Revelation has much to say about heaven as the dwelling place of God. As the focus of His manifestation of character and glory his presence in heaven holds divine blessings for the believer, now and for all eternity. When the city of the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven, John the Revelator hears a loud voice coming from God's throne, "Behold, the dwelling of God with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself will be with them" (Rev 21:13). It might seem misleading to say that God is "more present" in heaven than anywhere else, but it would not be misleading to say that God is present in

¹³ Berkof, 61

heaven in a unique way, present to provide His blessings and show forth His glory.

The presence of God in Christ certainly can be understood as a blessing in favor of the human being. Paul writes, "In Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9). Christ as the source of divine blessing imparts the blessing of His presence by dwelling within the believer (Rev 3:20). However, the Bible never speaks in a direct way about God's presence within unbelievers. While God "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt 5:45), His presence with the unrighteous seems to be for their life's sustenance¹⁴ and salvation.

The assurance of God's presence through the Holy Spirit is a major theme of the gospel of John: Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised that He will ask the Father to send a helper who will accompany the disciples (John 14:16). By His presence in the world and within the believer, the Holy Spirit will encourage and provide comfort to the followers of Christ until the end of age, "I am with you always even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20).

Other texts express the blessing of God's presence within the believer as follows: "If Christ is in you, . . . the spirit is alive" (Rom 8:10); "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17); "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

On the other hand, when the Bible speaks of God, as being "far away," it seems to imply that He is "not present to bless."¹⁵ Isaiah 59:2 states, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God." Proverbs 15:29 declares, "The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer from the righteous."

Herman Bavinck, in *The Doctrine of God*, aptly illustrates the practical application of the concept of God's omnipresence:

When you wish to do something evil, you retire from the public into your house where no enemy may see you; from those places of your house which are open and visible to the eyes of men you remove yourself into your room; even in your room you fear some witness from another quarter; you retire into your heart, there you meditate: he is more inward than your heart. Wherever, therefore, you shall have fled, there he is. From yourself, whither will you flee? Will you not follow yourself wherever you shall flee? But since there is one more inward even than yourself, there is no place where you may flee from God's

¹⁴ Grudem, 177.

¹⁵ Ibid.

anger but to be reconciled to God. There is no place at all whither you may flee. Will you flee from Him? Flee unto Him.¹⁶

Scripture also speaks of the blessing of God's presence in Christ who sustains and keeps the entire universe to exist and function for the sake of His creation: "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Col 1:17). In other words, Jesus, God the Son, is continually "upholding the universe by His word of power" (Heb 1:3).¹⁷

In summary, God is present in every part of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places. Furthermore, Scripture confirms that the blessing of God's presence within the believer powerfully conveys the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the reality of life.

3.2 God's Presence to Judge

The idea of God's presence in hell has something troublesome. The question seems valid, "Isn't hell supposed to be the opposite of God's presence or the absence of God?" And yet, it seems that even this question might be answered by the principle that God is present in different ways in different places in His creation. Scripture tells that God is present even in Sheol, and that His presence there is for the purpose of judgment, one could even say, for punishment:

Not one of them shall flee away, not one of them shall escape. Though they dig into Sheol, from there shall my hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, from there I will bring them down. Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search out and take them; and though they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent and it shall bite them. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword, and it shall slay them; and I will set my eyes upon them for evil not for good (Amos 9:1-4; cf. Ps 137:7-10).

4. Summary

Pantheism believes that everything is God, or that God is everything that exists. The biblical perspective, however, is that God is present everywhere in His creation but distinct from His creation. The pantheistic view of God's presence is limited to the universe; the biblical concept of God's

¹⁶ Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. By William Hendriksen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 164.

¹⁷ The present participle *pherein*, "carrying along," in Hebrew 1:3 implies that Christ's activity of "carrying along all things" is a continual activity, one that never ceases.

presence is not limited by the universe but goes beyond the material space. God is present with His whole being in every part of space because God is one, undivided, and indivisible. God is present in different ways in different places in His creation.

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

"Predestination According to the View of James Arminius and John Wesley"

Researcher: Lowel J. Domocmat, M.A. in Religion, 2010

Advisor: Woodrow W. Whidden II, Ph.D.

This study employed the historical and theological method of investigation, which is geared to ascertain the predestination views of James Arminius and John Wesley and their similarities and differences toward postulating an Arminian-Wesleyan doctrine of predestination.

Wesley scholars asserted that the Arminianism of Wesley did not come from Arminius; it was mainly the result of his readings of Anglican divines. However, in the course of this investigation, it became plain that Wesley had striking similarities with Arminius on predestination. They both held predestination as Christ-centered, based on divine foreknowledge, founded on grace, and consistent with free will.

The theological developments of Arminius and Wesley were presented in Chapters 2 and 3, with particular emphases on the circumstances that ushered in the formulation of their understandings on predestination. Arminius and Wesley lived during two different periods, places, and situations in history. But they had commonly formed their doctrines of predestination as the outcome of their intense study of the Scriptures and contests against their foes.

Arminius and Wesley both argued that the predestination doctrine must be in harmony with all the attributes of God manifested in the Scriptures. The mistake of the Calvinists, according to them, was their insistence on the sovereignty of God at the expense of His moral attributes of love, justice, and mercy.

In Chapter 4, the similarities and differences of Arminius and Wesley were examined. In spite of their apparent similarities they had disagreements, particularly on their views of unconditional election and irresistible grace. Wesley reasoned that unconditional election is also evident in the choosing of some men for distinct functions in the world and that preventive grace works irresistibly at some point in the awakening and empowering of the human will. Arminius did not adopt these views.

There are several conclusions stipulated as the result of the examination of the views of Arminius and Wesley on predestination: (1) Arminius and Wesley held apparently identical doctrines of predestination. (2) Predestination is the conditional election of classes of people—the believers and unbelievers. (3) Christ is the cause and not the result of predestination. (4) The act of predestination is based on God’s foreknowledge of the belief and unbelief of people. (5) The doctrine of unconditional election and unconditional damnation is contrary to God’s moral attributes of love, justice, and mercy. (6) The predestination views of Arminius and Wesley are consistent with the exercise of free will. And (7) there is an aspect of grace that is irresistible; it is wrought by prevenient grace in awakening and empowering one’s sensitivity and will to be able to respond to God’s salvation.

“A Divine Call to Relationship and a Covenantal Renewal in Deut 28:69-30:20: A Syntagmatic, Syntactic, and Textlinguistic Analysis”

Researcher: Emmer Chacon, Ph.D. in Religion, 2010

Advisor: David Tasker, Ph.D.

This study uses a linguistic approach and applies syntagmatics, syntax and textlinguistics procedures to the Hebrew text of Deut 28:69-30:20 in order to assess what the linguistic information thus obtained might contribute for the understanding of the literary, structural and theological aspects portrayed in this passage.

Chapter 1 surveys the methodology that is applied to the text in Chapters 2 and 3 generating structural and theological information that Chapters 4 and 5 analyze. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a general summary, methodological evaluation, conclusions, and recommendations.

This investigation has demonstrated that in Deut 28:69-30:20 vocabulary, grammar, micro and macrosyntax, rhetoric and pragmalinguistic are highly crafted with literary cohesion and coherence to convey the theology of the text. Textlinguistics allowed identifying rhetorical strategies in Deut 28:69-30:20. These strategies seek to provide a speech that combines a high level of organization and art while conveying a message. These strategies enhance persuasion and memory. Repetition carries on motifs through the speech and portrays more than one aspect of the issue or even return to the topic after a digression. The changes in personal pronouns display harmonic patterns that allow the speaker to argue with the individual while addressing the multitude. Temporal patterns provide the presentation of a comprehensive covenantal programmatic offer for the future of the audience. This offer implies a program and a history of the

conditional program of what the Lord intends to fulfill in behalf of the audience and their descendants and the certain prophetic portrayal of what the near and future history of the people will be. The audience has the key, the final answer that the text does not register. Although the prophetic portrayal of the text shows us what their answer in the future will be. Therefore, textlinguistics has proved to be efficient in elucidating the way rhetoric, structure and theology function in the text.

“Developing a Need-Based and Wholistic Contextualized Family Ministry: The Adventist Family and Community Center of Reinach/AG (Switzerland)”

Researcher: Arnold Zwahlen, D.Min., 2010

Advisor: Carol M. Tasker, Ph.D.

How can the local Adventist Church of Reinach (Switzerland) successfully meet the needs of families of its secular community through the development of a Family and Community Center (FCC) and share the holistic message and lifestyle of the Seventh-day Adventist Church through an ongoing contextualized social service? The study explores the theological, theoretical, and organizational base for the successful development of a Family and Community Center of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Reinach (Switzerland).

A biblical and literary study of family ministry and family center work was done and theories, insights, and models for a contemporary family ministry and family center work were collected. The study also documented the local social and demographic context and evaluated its relevance for the project development. The development process was documented from January 2009 to January 2010 by chronological journaling of the records, meetings, events, and observations. Goals and objectives were set and a qualitative survey with church members and guests provided a basis for an intermediate evaluation of the Family and Community Center and its ministries.

The study of the prophetic message of Mal 4:4-6 showed that there is a strong biblical foundation for a church-based family ministry. Literary research also demonstrated that since the 1990s, a strong government-supported secular family-center movement, particularly in Germany, has developed, which provides a model for an institutional Adventist family center ministry.

The contextualized, lay-led, community-oriented, and church-based family ministry of a Family and Community Center is meeting

needs of the secular families of the community of Reinach/AG (Switzerland). A family oriented proclamation of the biblical message by Seventh-day Adventists will provide balance, strength, and increased attraction to the church and its message in a secular society.

"An Assesment of the Ecclesiology Suggested by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches from the Conservative Christian Viewpoint"

Researcher: Suryanica Aristas Pasuhuk, Ph.D. in Religion, 2010

Advisor: Kyung Ho Song, Ph.D.

The purpose of this research is to assess the ecclesiology of the FOC. It seeks to answer the question, what are the similarities and differences between the FOC's ecclesiology and that of conservative Christians?

The study reveals some similarities as well as differences between FOC's ecclesiology and that of conservative Christians. Regarding the nature and mission of the church, both hold that the church is a community called by God for a purpose; the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic; the visible and the invisible churches are not identical to each other; mission cannot be separated from the church; and the purpose of mission is to help individual sinners to repent. But they differ on the following: nature of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic church; the church as sacramental; the function of the church metaphors in the Bible; the visible and invisible churches; and the purpose of mission.

In relation to the ministry of the church, the FOC and conservative Christians have a common understanding on the calling of the whole people of God, on the view of the ordained minister, and on the succession in the apostolic tradition. But they differ on the following: the roles, pattern of ordained ministry, and on ordination as a sacramental sign. Regarding the authority of the church, they have the same view on the head and the source of authority in the church. But there are disagreements regarding the sources of church authority besides the Bible.

In relation to the ordinances of the church, both believe that baptism is a symbol, and that immersion is the most vivid expression of the meaning of baptism. But they differ on the interpretation of the symbolism of baptism, infant baptism, and rebaptism. In relation to the Lord's Supper, both agree that the Lord's Supper is a memorial and a fellowship of the faithful. But they differ on the meaning of the Lord's Supper, on the understanding of the context of Exod 24, on the practice of the ordinance of foot washing, and on Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper. Regarding church

unity, both believe that the unity of the church is important, but differ on the understanding of unity.

CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

Smart, Ninian and Frederick Denny, <i>Atlas of the World's Religions</i> (James H. Park).....	85-87
Johnson, Todd M. and Kenneth R. Ross, <i>Atlas of Global Christianity</i> (James H. Park).....	87-89
Miller, Patrick D., <i>The Ten Commandments: Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church</i> (Felix Ponvatovsky).....	89-91

Atlas of the World's Religions, (2nd edition), ed. by Ninian Smart and Frederick Denny. Oxford University Press, 2007. 272 pages. ISBN 978-0-19533-401-2. Hardcover. US\$110.00.

Ninian Smart was the editor of the first edition of *Atlas of the World's Religions* which appeared in 1999 on the verge of a new century. He created the first department in Religious Studies in England at the University of Lancaster in 1967. He also taught at the University of Santa Barbara and wrote numerous books, including *Reason and Faiths* and *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*. He served as the President of the American Academy of Religion in 2000 and passed away in 2001.

The editor of the second edition, Frederick Denny, is Emeritus Professor of Islamic Studies and the History of Religions at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He has published a number of books on Islamic Studies including *An Introduction to Islam* (3rd edition) and has also served on the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Religion for many years.

The Atlas attempts to trace the changes in the religious world since the early times through dynamic maps, pictures and well written articles. The book stresses the geographical dimension, an often overlooked aspect of the spread and hindrance of religious movements. It also notes the rise and fall of various religions in both ancient and modern times and gives an excellent overview of their history. The Atlas comes with a very valuable bibliography for further study (pp. 249-250), an extensive glossary of religious terms (pp. 240-248) and a comprehensive index to the geographical places noted in the book (pp. 251-271).

The second edition contains new cartographic as well as substantial new materials, including the spread and influence of the Charismatic Movement and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The Atlas attempts to reveal how the world has changed since the events of 9/11 as well as the process of globalization in our emerging internet age.

The Atlas begins with two introductory sections entitled Religion Today (pp. 14-25) and the Historical Geography of Religion (pp. 26-43). The first chapter gives a good overview of where the major religions are located in the world, the approximate numbers of adherents, globalization, modern pilgrimages and how different faiths are responding to the challenges of ecology. The second section attempts to look at just where and how different faiths have spread from the first organized religions to the present. In this chapter religious language, scriptures, names and places are also discussed.

The third and main section of the Atlas deals with an illustrated discussion of the ten major world religions. It begins with Hinduism (pp. 44-65) by tracing the origins of the faith in the Ganges Valley to the emergence of independent India after British rule. Next comes a good discussion of the birth and influence of Buddhism (pp. 66-79) which arose in reaction to the overt pluralism of Hinduism and eventually became the major religion in Southeast and Central Asia.

The dominant religions of East Asia (pp. 80-97), including Confucianism, Daoism, Chinese Buddhism and the spiritual heritages found in Korea, Japan and Indonesia, are discussed in the third chapter. The Pacific region (pp. 98-107) concludes the eastern spread of religion by talking about the primal faiths of Oceania, Christianity in the Pacific, along with references to Australia and the Pacific Islands.

Chapters five and six deal with religions that developed in the cradle of civilization, namely the Ancient Near East and Europe (pp. 108-127) and Judaism (pp. 128-147). The religions of Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Zoroastrianism, Greece and Rome are discussed, along with tracing the ebb and flow of Judaism from Bible times to the present, including a section on Zionism and the Holocaust.

Chapter seven is the longest in the book and details the rise, spread and influence of Christianity (pp. 148-185). A very excellent chapter on Islam follows (pp. 186-213) with relevant information on all the important historical periods. The final two chapters deal with religion in Africa (pp. 214-231), along with the Indigenous Religions (pp. 232-239).

In my opinion, this Atlas provides an extremely valuable resource for high schools, colleges, seminaries and university teachers and students. The writing is clear and of a non-technical nature. All of the subjects are covered in two large pages with excellent maps, charts and pictures to accompany the text. It was a great resource to me recently when I was given the task to teach a graduate level class on world religions here in Asia. I found that the organization, writing and illustrations in the book to be clear and very useful, a real compendium of valuable information. I would highly recommend this second edition and the publisher should be

commended for continuing to update this resource which helps us to understand more clearly past and present religious movements.

James H. Park

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Atlas of Global Christianity, ed. by Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross. Edinburgh University Press, 2009. Pp. xix + 361. ISBN 978-0-7486-3267-0. Hardcover. US\$250.00.

It is not that often you get to write the words, "Landmark," "Seminal" or "Masterpiece" related to the publishing of a new reference book. But these and more superlatives could be used to describe the unprecedented volume I have the privilege to review. I was attending a SEANET Conference on Buddhism in Chiang Mai, Thailand when Todd M. Johnson, one of the editors, introduced this invaluable reference.

Todd M. Johnson is Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Cromwell Theological Seminary and his publications include the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2nd edition) and *World Christian Trends*. The other editor, Kenneth R. Ross, is Council Secretary of the Church of Scotland World Mission Council and since 2001 has chaired the Towards 2010 Scottish Council focused on preparations for the centenary of the Edinburgh 1920 World Missionary Conference.

The basic foundation of the atlas was to trace the ebb and flow of Christianity during the last 100 years, from the landmark Edinburgh Conference in 1910 to the present. Within this volume of time, the editors have succinctly traced the fascinating role Christianity has played in relation to other religions and global issues. It is the first scholarly atlas to show the shift of twentieth century Christianity to the Global South and the first to map Christianity on the provincial level.

The book is divided into five parts. Each topic occupies facing pages and thus it is very easy to quickly grasp an overview of a large amount of information. The first section begins with a very excellent introduction in the changes of the major world religions from 1910 to 2010 (pp. 2-45). The current socio-economic and health factors provide a good introduction, before all the major "religions" from the Agnostics to the Zoroastrians are presented.

Each religion is similarly studied with an introduction, top ten list, the religion by country from 1910 to 2010, the percentage change over time, the major traditions, religion by continents, and Christian adherence and growth using the United Nations regions. This first section ends with an insightful and fascinating discussion of Religious Diversity, Growth and

Freedom and a discussion of what world religions might look like in 2050, based on the current trends.

The next section is Global Christianity and tries to present how Christianity has moved and changed during the last century. It attempts to convey the distribution and dynamics of Christianity, along with thematic maps that outline the major Christian traditions, such as the Anglicans, Marginals, Orthodox, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Evangelicals and Pentecostals.

Section three shows Christianity by the six major United Nations regions across four pages which includes a historical essay, maps, graphs, tables and charts. This information allows the Atlas to focus on specific areas that the researcher might want to focus on, such as how Christianity has grown in China over the last one-hundred years.

Section four views the world by languages, peoples and cities. This part looks at peoples and languages in both a religious and regional context. For instance, a researcher might want to know just where Muslims as a group are residing as a people of faith. On the other hand, you could see just how Muslims compare to other groups within a continent or region. There is also an excellent presentation to all those interested in urban ministry of how Christianity has penetrated the great cities of the world.

Section five focuses on Christian mission by analyzing data on missionary finance, translation, media and other forms of evangelization. There is extremely helpful information on personal contact between Christians and non-Christians, along with the relative responsiveness of certain regions to the Christian message.

The breath of coverage, the organization of the material and the attractive graphical content would be more than enough to highly recommend this book. But there is much more. In addition to the printed material there is an outstanding CD that is included which makes available all the maps and graphics shown in the book. In keeping with the high quality of the work, the CD is one of the best interactive resources I have ever used. It is searchable, easy to navigate and any chart or map can be saved as a file and then used in a powerpoint or other presentation. The contents of the CD can be copied to your own computer and works flawlessly with both PC and Mac environments.

I do not think you have to read between the lines to feel my enthusiasm for this book. Apparently others think the same way. At the end of his presentation, Dr. Johnson offered to sell several of the newly published books for half price. I was able to purchase the last one and as I walked away I heard him express surprise that all the books had gone so quickly. It was no surprise to me and no doubt many others who will

find this brand new reference atlas a true treasure trove of mission knowledge.

James H. Park

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

Miller, Patrick D. *The Ten Commandments: Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2009. Pp. xv + 477. ISBN:978-0-664-23055-5. Alk. Paper. \$39.95.

The Ten Commandments is a new book in the Interpretation commentary series written by Patrick D. Miller, the professor of Old Testament Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. He is the editor of *Theology Today* and coeditor of the Interpretation Commentary series and the Westminster Bible Companion series.

As the author himself acknowledges, this book grew out of the course of Old Testament ethics which he taught in a seminary for a number of years, but it is not a textbook on ethics. The main goal that the author pursues is to reveal the meaning and essence of each of the Ten Commandments.

The methodology that the author uses is worth to be mentioned. Miller does not consider just the text of the Commandments, but he analyzes the Commandments from different angles such as (1) analysis of the texts (Exodus and Deuteronomy's variant and difference between them); (2) trajectory of the Commandment analyzing how each Commandment is expanded and explained in other biblical passages; (3) stories of the Commandments illustrating the meaning of the Commandments (e.g. the killing of Naboth by Ahab and Jezebel – the illustration on the theme of the 6th Commandment; Ruth's care about Naomi – the vivid explanation what it means to honor the parents); (4) formulation of the Commandment in the opposite way (if the Commandment is given in a negative way, e.g. "You shall not..." the author tries to understand how this precept could sound positively and vice versa). This approach to the exposition of the Commandments helps to avoid to fall into the trap of eisegesis or implementation of foreign ideas to the meaning of the Commandments.

The author's explanation of the third commandment includes a helpful illustration of his method. At first he mentions several translations, which reflect different understandings of the Commandment. Then, the author diligently studies the meaning of the text of the third commandment especially the meaning of the phrase "in vain." Following this analysis, Miller tries to understand how this commandment is explained within other

texts (trajectory of the commandment) and then he draws an important conclusion, that it deals not only with an oath and swear but with the piety and holiness ethics of the people of God. This analysis shows that the third commandment contains a deeper meaning than interpreters used to think. The author also considers the question of the use and misuse of the name of God including pronouncing the Tetragrammaton and the name of Jesus, an analysis that is very helpful in further understanding the meaning of the third commandment. In addition, the work of the author is highly enriched by the numerous quotations of scholarly works from the time of the Reformation until our days, which illuminate the understanding of the commandments.

Some controversial conclusions seem to be contained in this work. For example, when he discusses the Fourth commandment (Keeping the Sabbath) he very clearly explains the importance of this commandment for the Israelites, the social significance of this commandment ("providing rest for those who unable to secure it for themselves"), and moral dimension of it; he also points out that Jesus and his disciples also kept this day as holy and after that he argues that the Sabbath is still valid today. This chain of consideration is solid and logic, but when the author analyzes an issue of the transition from the Sabbath to Sunday he does not provide any biblical argument supporting the keeping of the Sunday. His reference to Rev 1:10 cannot be sufficient evidence in favor of the issue because the phrase "the Lord's day" in this verse is ambiguous and could be interpreted differently. Furthermore, the author himself acknowledges that the move from the Sabbath to Sunday is rather a question of historical studies than of the biblical theology (p. 163). Doing this he admits that there is no any biblical evidence supporting this transition. So, all his attempts to find a connection between the biblical Sabbath and the Church's Sunday are not very effective.

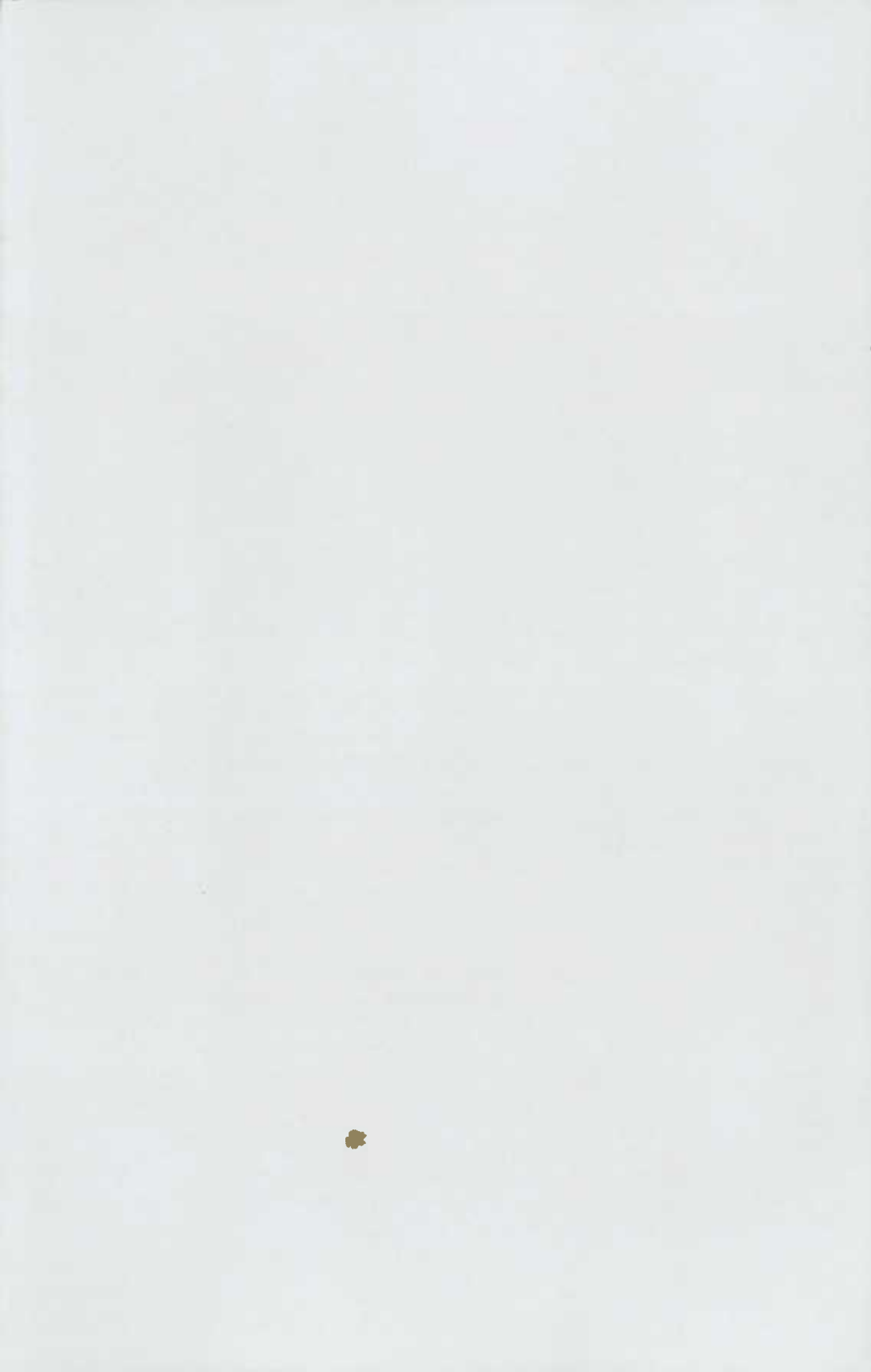
Another issue which could be mentioned here is a question of the same sex relationship. Analyzing the trajectory of the 7th Commandment the author discusses two texts from the book of Leviticus (18:22; 20:13). According to the author these verses which prohibit the homosexual relationship could not be applied to the "same-sex relations occurring within a continuing relation of affection and commitment and responsibility for each other" (p. 293) and only forbid a momentary homosexual act. Trying to prove this position the author uses two kinds of arguments. At first, he tries to make this precept not so strict arguing that it does not belong to the Ten Commandments and that is why it does not have the same force. But doing so he contradicts himself and his methodology because he analyzes this issue in the section "Trajectory of the Commandment" and it means that these texts deal with the same question. At second, he points out that this prohibition is given together with the prohibition of having

an intercourse with animals and because it is impossible to have a marriage relationship with animals he concludes that this precept forbids only sexual relationship outside a marriage. He also observes that in the Old Testament there is no any taboo for the female same-sex relationship so, he uses this fact to support his position. But all these arguments are not very convincing. The text of Lev 18:22 and 20:13 could be understood as a general prohibition; there is no any hint indicating that there could be an exception from this rule. The fact that there is no female same-sex prohibition is not important. All Ten Commandments are addressed only to the male auditorium but it does not mean that their application is limited only to men.

Although there are some ideas in the book which I cannot agree with, I appreciate the author's attitude toward the commandments: P. Miller always emphasizes that these precepts are still valid in our life and should be practiced by Christians. The book is written with a very readable language. If the author mentions some Hebrew or Greek words he explains in details their meaning and peculiarities of their usage, so even a person who does not have any knowledge of ancient languages can easily understand the issue. So, this book could be recommended to a very broad audience.

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Mathilde Frey 1-11

“The Woodgatherers’ Sabbath: A Literary Study of Numbers 15:32-36”

Grenville Kent 13-28

“Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany and the Sinful Woman of Luke 7: The Same Person?”

Richard A. Sabuin 29-47

“Μετὰ Ταύτα in Revelation: An Examination of Sequential Pattern in the Book of Revelation”

Ekkehardt Mueller 49-70

“Challenges to the Adventist Interpretation of Apocalyptic Literature”

Reymand Hutabarat 71-77

“The Omnipresence and the Transcendence of God: A Response to the Pantheistic View of God’s Presence in the Universe”

AIIAS Theological Seminary Thesis and Dissertation Abstracts 79-83

Critical Book Reviews 85-91

