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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary (JAAS)* is a biannual peer-refereed academic journal that publishes, in the context of a faith community, quality biblical-theological research, including studies in biblical theology, archaeology of the biblical world, systematic and historical theology, applied theology, and missiology. *JAAS* is indexed in *Index Theologicus* (Universität Tübingen, GERMANY), *International Review of Biblical Studies* (Brill, NETHERLANDS; Universität Paderborn, GERMANY), *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, *Old Testament Abstracts*, *New Testament Abstracts*, *BiBIL* (Bibliographie biblique informatisée de Lausanne, SWITZERLAND), *Bulletin de Bibliographie Biblique*, *THEOLDI* (Theological Literature Documented in Innsbruck, AUSTRIA) and *RAMBI* (Index of Articles on Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, ISRAEL). The ideas expressed in the articles, research notes, book reviews, and thesis and dissertation abstracts are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the thinking of the Theological Seminary of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies.

EDITORIAL

CRISTIAN DUMITRESCU

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

Welcome to a special issue of *JAAS*. It is my pleasure to introduce the authors and their scholarly contributions to you.

Let me begin with Zdravko Stefanovic who invites us to revisit the concept of Advent in the Hebrew Bible. Using Mowinckel's work on the Advent in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially in the prophetic books, Stefanovic notices that the Jewish messianic expectations were rooted in the royal ideology of the ANE. Based on this ideology, the Messiah was expected to be a ruler, the adopted son of God, in contrast with the Son of Man and the Servant title that was considered incompatible with the ANE picture. Stefanovic shows that the coming of a liberator in the OT begins in Genesis, and that the concept of Advent should be broader than strictly that of the coming of Jesus the Messiah. At the same time, he argues that the four Isaianic chapters describing the work of the suffering servant are placed between the Book of Judgment and the beautiful description of a restored earth, actions that could be performed only by a divine savior, not by the Israelites. Stefanovic recognizes the same pattern in Dan 7 where the messianic Son of Man stands between the judgment and the liberation of God's people.

Edwin Reynolds, who teaches at Southern Adventist University, explores the use of Gen 1 and 2, the biblical record of origins, by Jesus and the apostles in the NT, as well as in the rest of the Scripture. Reynolds states his assumption that the Bible is its own interpreter in order to discover the proper hermeneutic necessary to correctly understand Gen 1 and 2. He shows that Jesus referred to Gen 1 and 2 as to a literal record, as subsequently did his disciples. Reynolds brings to our attention not only the hermeneutics used to refer to Gen 1 and 2, but also some of the theological discussions surrounding the NT references to Genesis. This is a wider topic that needs more attention especially to the context in which such theological arguments and conclusions are born. Hermeneutics is more than textual analysis; it depends crucially on the context that often is missing and that requires much more effort to uncover.

Another article, written by Gheorghe Razmerita, addresses hermeneutics when reading history. It is crucial for him to see the way early Christians received and perceived Paul, the apostle. Razmerita attempts to discover a more integrated understanding of Paul in Early Christianity as an argument against the picture of Paul proposed by the Tübingen school, the New Perspective, and the Jesus Seminar. He cannot agree that Paul was poorly or wrongly understood by his original audience and followers as these three schools claim. Razmerita looks for answers in the writings of the apostolic fathers, in the works of Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, as well as in the documents of the heretical movements of the second century, such as the Gnostics and the Marcionites. Razmerita highlights the context that helps us integrate historical and theological statements of the first centuries about Paul.

JAAS includes, again, several contributions to the Seventh-day History, especially on the African church history and mission. Emmanuel Orihntare Eregare brings to our attention the Nigerian development of mission in his qualitative study. Eregare focuses on the European missionaries' contribution to planting the Seventh-day Adventist churches and message, highlighting the challenges to convert Nigerians (especially Islam and the African Traditional Religions) and the strategies used in their arduous enterprise. He reminds us that the Adventist message in West Africa was planted by Hannah More, a lay person turned missionary, while the message took hold mainly in rural areas. Strategies, such as education, Dorcas societies, and literature printing and distribution are among the ones used in Nigeria at the beginning of the century. Eregare concludes that American missionaries' strategies were based on a centripetal approach, while European missionaries preferred centrifugal strategies.

Gabriel Masfa continues his research on Seventh-day Adventism in Africa by looking at one of the most sensitive missionary issues, the encounter with the African Traditional Religions and its impact on African Adventist identity today. He reminds us how the lack of knowledge about African religions, and the assumptions that Africa had no previous religion, led to the neglect to address the issue that disappeared from view but remained alive and well in people's worldview. Masfa looks at how Africans relate to traditional medicine, to magic, sorcery, and divination, and to witchcraft practices. He also shows the resulting damage of such beliefs and practices on Seventh-day Adventist communities. Masfa surveys the church's responses to these challenges in the past, and makes broad recommendations.

I take this opportunity to thank you, our readers, for your interest in the scholarly work published in JAAS. This issue of the journal marks the end

of my editorial responsibilities at JAAS. I am deeply indebted to my associate editors, to our reviewers, to the copy editors, and to the assistants and secretaries for the diligent work, time, and skills devoted to producing each issue of this fine journal. At the same time, it is my pleasure to introduce my colleague, Dr. Kenneth Bergland, as the new editor of JAAS. I am convinced he will not only continue the sound scholarship developed by previous editors of the journal, but will make it more attractive and enriching for you. And for the Glory of God. *Mabuhay!*

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF THE ADVENT IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

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Abstract

The concept of the divine Savior who comes into the world is central not only to the message of the New Testament but also to the teaching found throughout the books of the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible.

Keywords: Advent, Savior, Servant, Christ, and Son of Man

1. Prologue

Every time when year-end holidays are approaching, Christians, and others who may not even be Christian, remember Jesus Christ's (first) coming to earth.¹ *Advent* appears to be the buzzword in many parts of the world during this season. While Christ's Advent is described in detail in the New Testament (NT), this crucial event is grounded in God's promises that are recorded in many pages in the Old Testament (OT), also known as the Hebrew Bible. This brief article presents some reflections on the concept of Advent as it is found in the books of the Hebrew Bible.

All serious overviews of the topic of the Advent in the Bible begin with the classic monograph titled *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old*

¹ While the Christmas season in the West covers the last weeks *before* the New Year, in the East it is in the first weeks *after* the Year New. People in the Philippines like humour, so they like to say that every month that has the letter "r" in its name (September–April) belongs to the season of Christmas.

Testament and Later Judaism written by the late Scandinavian biblical scholar Sigmund Mowinckel. Born in 1884 to a Lutheran family in Norway, he died in Oslo in 1965 following a brilliant academic career that began at the age of 33 with an appointment to a university teaching position.² Mowinckel's impressively productive career led to a full professorship sixteen years later when the chair in Oslo became vacant. Those among us who have had pastoral experience may be interested in knowing that he was also an ordained Lutheran minister.

The English translation of the book *He That Cometh* was first published in 1956, and its reprint was done in 2005. In the book Mowinckel argues that the messianic ideal was derived from royal ideology via the connecting concept of the "anointed one," which took place after the collapse of Israel's monarchy. He endeavored to demonstrate that there is a continuity between the royal ideology of the ancient Near East and Jewish messianic expectations. In Mesopotamian traditions, for example, after the fall of Babylonian kingship, there were expectations of the coming of an ideal future ruler. Another noteworthy conclusion reached by Mowinckel was that the king in Israel was regarded as the Lord's adopted son. This conception is supported by a number of biblical passages (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; etc.).

The backbone of Mowinckel's work is his extensive study of the chapters from the second part of Isaiah's book that describe the prophetic figure of the Servant of the Lord. Similarly, the climax of his work focuses on the figure of the Son of Man from Daniel 7. The Servant's task was to bring Israel back to the Lord, not as a victorious king but through his suffering and death. From the Jewish point of view, a "suffering Messiah" is a contradiction in terms, but for the Christian church, Jesus Christ is the true fulfillment of these prophetic predictions.

Unfortunately, Mowinckel could not reach the same conclusion regarding the identity of the Son of Man in Daniel 7 because, according to him, the Son of Man ("the Man," an ideal Man or divine Anthropos) is not an individual, personal Messiah but a pictorial symbol of the people of Israel. He admits, though, that Jesus Christ laid claim to the title "Son of Man" because

² In the field of biblical studies, Mowinckel is mostly known by his Form Critical study of the Psalms first published in six volumes. This work secured him a prestigious place among top European biblical scholars, though, as John J. Collins says in the foreword to the book, "Mowinckel was primarily an historian of religion rather than a theologian." See Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1956; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), xvi.

this figure from Daniel was the model of the Messiah.³ To this day, *He That Cometh* is considered to be the authoritative text on the roots of messianic expectations, yet many scholars are still struggling to identify the Davidic Messiah (cf. 2 Sam 7; Ps 2) with the Son of Man from Daniel 7.

2. Divine Advents

The faiths practiced in many parts of the world may be described as religious movements from down up. The attempts to move up in order to get closer to the realm of the divine stand in contrast to the story of the Bible where it is God who comes down to earth to get closer to human beings. If we accept the view that the Hebrew Bible⁴ is an inspired record of God's acts in history, we are likely to conclude that the early portions of the Bible present a series of divine Advents into the world. Beginning with the stories from Genesis, the reader of the Bible can see the Lord who time and again comes down to earth not only to redeem the lost and the oppressed but also to discipline the arrogant oppressor.

One may picture God coming to the garden of Eden to look for Adam and Eve (Gen 3). The same God is filled with grief as He is pondering what to do with the violence that threatened to destroy the world that He had created (Gen 6). The Lord intently watched the ambitious human project which attempted to unite the world by constructing a city in the shape of a tower as tall as the sky (Gen 11).

In Gen 15 we see the Lord coming down to give encouragement to His friend Abram. He walks between pieces of slain animals that Abram had prepared for a covenant-making ceremony. God also visits Abram near Hebron,⁵ where He enjoys a delicious meal and repeats the promises made before. He then explains to His friend how He is on a fact-finding mission that will determine the destiny of the five cities of the plain (Gen 18).

In Exodus the Lord hears the cries of His enslaved people, and He comes to fulfill His promises by convincing Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt (Exod 2). At Sinai, God came to reestablish the covenant relationship with Israel (Exod 20). Once this covenant is broken, it is the Messenger of the Lord

³ Years after Mowinckel's death, a fragment of an Aramaic text from Qumran (4Q246) was published containing a prediction about the Advent of One of whom it was said would be called "Son of God" and "Son of the Most High" (cf. Luke 1:32, 35).

⁴ The acronym *TaNaK* is used by the Jewish readers of the Bible (cf. Luke 24:44).

⁵ Called in this text Mamre and elsewhere in the Bible Kiryat Arba (Gen 13:18; 23:2).

(Messenger of the Covenant) who tries again and again to repair the damage caused by the unfaithful nation.

During a very sad and chaotic period of Israel's history, this divine Messenger is portrayed as coming to Bokim⁶ and speaking to people in such an emotional manner that it moved them all to tears and loud weeping (Judg 2). In contrast to this, there are many poetic parts of the Bible, such as the Psalms, that describe God's coming to earth as a most joyous event, filled with song and dance. Not only the city of Jerusalem but the whole earth is jubilant in welcoming the Lord of the universe.

This universalistic outlook of the Advent is also found in the Hebrew prophets, though much of what they said was addressed primarily to the leaders of Israel. Their ministry may be viewed as one more form of the divine Advent toward the people of God. The prophets did not come to bring a new message, only to call people back to their God and the Torah, given to them through Moses at Sinai. They comforted the weak and the oppressed and confronted the oppressors regarding their two main sins: idolatry (against God) and social injustice (against fellow humans). They announced death to the unfaithful nation and hope to the faithful remnant. This proclamation was centered in the One that would come as the Shepherd of God's people (Isa 40).

3. The Advent of the Lord's Servant

Isaiah ben-Amoz was a professional keeper of royal archives in Jerusalem in the eighth century. He is better known as a Hebrew prophet and is closely associated with one of the three longest books of the Bible. As one of the most gifted poets of Israel, Isaiah was a master of metaphors. In the first chapter of his book, he compares society around him to a human body whose head is ailing: the heart is sick; from head to toe no spot is sound; all is covered by bruises, welts, and festering sores not pressed out, not bound up, and not softened with oil (Isa 1:5–6 JSB).⁷ God's fair daughter Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field; she is comparable to Sodom, another Gomorrah.⁸

⁶ In Hebrew the name *bokim* means "place of weeping" (Judg 2:1, 5), while *baka* is simply "weeping" (Ps 84:6).

⁷ Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸ This low point in the history of Israel has parallels in the kingdoms of the ancient Near East. Destructions of famous cities in the ancient world were usually explained as

Would not a just God, the Judge of all the earth, do justice (cf. Gen 18:25) by making the punishment fit the crimes committed in Judah? Is He not expected to bring comparable judgment for comparable wickedness? Of course, He would! He is capable of doing that very thing, but He can do even better than that. His Advent to Earth would show how much He cares for lost humanity. The Book of Immanuel (Isa 7–12) is the best-known promise about the Savior's Advent to our world.

Divine discipline is not just punitive, it is also redemptive. This is evident from Isaiah's book of which the first thirty-nine chapters are often called the Book of Judgment (cf. OT), while the last twenty-seven make up the Book of Consolation (cf. NT). The two parts of the book ("Isaiah of Jerusalem" and "Second Isaiah") balance each other. For example, the Song of an Unfruitful Vineyard (Isa 5) is balanced by the Song of a Fruitful Vineyard (Isa 27). Where is then the passage that can balance Isaiah's metaphor of a sick/dying human body? The answer is in one of the four Songs of the Lord's Servant who will bring light, healing, deliverance, and restoration, *Urbi et Orbi*, not only to Zion but also to the rest of the world.

Four passages in Isaiah are called the Servant Songs, with the first three (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–9) leading to a climax in the fourth (52:13–53:12), descriptively titled the "Suffering Servant of the Lord." Most scholarly discussion has focused on the identification of the tragic figure of this Suffering Servant from Isaiah 53. This is one of the most difficult and contested passages in the Bible, vigorously debated by ancient, medieval, and modern scholars. Does the Servant represent the nation of Israel, or is he an individual such as a new Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Moses? Are the Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible⁹ (Targums) right when they identify him as the Messiah? When the apostle Peter told the early Christians that Jesus Christ bore our sins in his body and that by His wounds we have been healed (1 Pet 1:24), did he intend to quote Isa 53? One thing is clear, throughout Christian

signs of divine displeasure and abandonment that resulted from human misbehaviour. The eighth-century Babylonian text known as the Myth of Erra and Ishan tells of the destruction of cities whose population had rejected justice and mercy and practiced atrocities and oppression. Because of injustice, Erra intends to devastate cities, turn them into a wilderness, destroy cattle and produce, wipe out the population, place a fool on the throne, bring a plague of wild beasts, and level the royal palace. See John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

⁹ Known as the *Targumim* or the Targums.

history this passage from Isaiah has convinced more Jews that Jesus is the Messiah than any other text(s) from the Bible.¹⁰

The Advent of the Suffering Servant is complicated by a huge paradox which compelled the prophet to wonder: “Who would believe our message?” Could someone whose coming signifies the Advent of the Lord be compared to a tender shoot growing out of dry ground? He had nothing in appearance that would attract us to him, yet he suffered and died for a very specific purpose. This purpose is first noticeable in the choice of words used by the prophet.

A careful consideration of the Hebrew lexica in Isa 53:4–8 shows that this passage has several words shared with Isa 1:5–6, words like *sickness, suffering, plague, smitten, afflicted, wounded, crushed, bruises*, etc. (JSB). I suggest that through this similarity the book communicates a clear message: the city of Jerusalem and the land of Judah in the time of Isaiah’s ministry were as sick as a body covered with wounds and bruises. Yet, the Song of the Suffering Servant declares that the Lord’s Servant would take all these infirmities upon him so that by his wounds God’s people may be healed. His suffering and death make possible a future when all that is wrong on earth will be set right.

Furthermore, the Advent of the Lord’s Servant who suffers, dies, and comes back to life results in blessings and healing, not only for God’s people but leading to universal and cosmic consequences. For this reason, the book of this gospel prophet does not end with the image of the Suffering Servant. Rather, Isaiah goes on to describe a wonderful life in a new heaven and Earth (Isa 65–66) that was made possible by the Servant’s supreme sacrifice.

4. The Advent of the Son of Man

There is a consensus among scholars that Dan 7 occupies the central place in Daniel’s book, and that is why the revelation that it reports should be considered as *the* vision in the book.¹¹ The same agreement among scholars is lacking when it comes to the question of the background of the imagery

¹⁰ This observation was made by Joseph Wolff, the son of a rabbi, whose interest in Christianity started when he was still a boy and was related to a comment about Isaiah 53 made by a Christian neighbour. See Zdravko Stefanovic and Gil G. Fernandez, *Bridging East and West: Joseph Wolff’s Vision of a Global Advent Mission* (Silang, Philippines: 100 Missionary Movement, 1992), 5.

¹¹ Arthur Ferch, *The Son of Man in Daniel 7* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983).

that dominates this chapter. Some have argued for a Mesopotamian origin;¹² others have proposed that its background is an image of the Canaanite mythological pantheon.¹³ Today many scholars maintain that while the animals from Dan 7 resemble the figures of ancient Near Eastern art, these same creatures are very much like the ferocious predators from the judgment scenes described by biblical prophets such as Hosea (13:7–8). The most attractive suggestion is that the vision of Dan 7 is built on a retelling of the Creation Story from Gen 1.¹⁴

Daniel 7 is dated to the first year of Belshazzar, a time of great political uncertainties for the Neo-Babylonian kingdom, which were aggravated by the transfer of power from the last king of Babylon, Nabonidus, to his son, Belshazzar. As a high-ranking imperial official, Daniel must have been pondering big questions about the purpose of world history and the ultimate destiny of the human race. The vision given to Daniel presents a rather pessimistic perspective on earth's history¹⁵ because the powers of this world appear as unrestrained wild beasts. They receive the authority to rule (Aramaic *sholtan*) for a limited time; they misuse and abuse it for their own selfish ends until they are subdued by a stronger power and are ultimately destroyed. The angel interpreter explains the vision in a concise way: "These great beasts, four in number, stand for four kingdoms that will arise out of the earth; then holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom, and will possess it forever and ever" (Dan 7:17–18 JSB).

Three times in this chapter, Daniel says: "In my vision at night, I saw ..." The first time the prophet sees the four winds of heaven, the sea, and the beasts (Dan 7:2). The second time he introduces in this way the fourth and

¹² The seventh-century Akkadian text *A Vision of the Netherworld*. See Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and Eschaton* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 205–13. Wilfred G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 5–133. For a good overview of literature, see John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 280–94.

¹³ The warrior god Baal "Rider of the Clouds" comes before the supreme god El "Father of Years" after his (Baal's) slaying of the sea monster. See John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan*, *Vetus Testamentum Suppl.* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1957), 71, 208; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 280–94.

¹⁴ Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007), 256.

¹⁵ Mervyn Maxwell calls it a "one-sided" view of history. See Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 1 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1981).

the most destructive beastly creature (Dan 7:7). When he uses this same formula for the third time (Dan 7:13), he no longer sees a beastlike being but a humanlike being. This person comes accompanied by the clouds of heaven that are a visible sign of the divine Presence, and he approaches the Ancient of Days. In contrast with the oppressive earthly powers, such as Belshazzar, beasts, and horns whose authority is only for a limited time,¹⁶ this being receives dominion, glory, and kingship forever. Also, in contrast to the power-hungry and ruthless character of the earthly establishments, this person shares with the saints—the people of the Most High—the kingship, dominion, and grandeur under the whole of heaven (Dan 7:27). The saints who used to be oppressed and persecuted are now vindicated and glorified.

The earliest Jewish traditions saw in this humanlike being a heavenly figure, such as Michael, who will exercise judgment. A good number of intertestamental Jewish writers used the title “Son of Man” in a clear messianic sense. In later Jewish tradition, this messianic view faded, and the Son of Man was understood to represent Israel. Christians, based on Christ’s own statement before the Sanhedrin (Matt 26:64), have seen this passage as a prediction of Jesus’ Advent as a heavenly Son of Man. Jerome wrote that “none of the prophets has so clearly spoken concerning Christ as has this prophet Daniel.”¹⁷

According to the Gospel writers, the title “Son of Man” was Christ’s favorite way of expressing His ministry, His destiny, and His Second Advent to Earth. Toward the end of his monumental work, Mowinckel concludes that there is a “great and incomprehensible innovation in Jesus’ view of Himself as the Son of Man. It is an original and essential element in His thought, that the Son of Man will be rejected, and will suffer and die before He comes in His glory with God’s angels and sits down on the judgment seat.... The death of the Son of Man, who is also the Servant, creates a new possibility that ‘the many’ may be saved.”¹⁸

Since Dan 7 belongs to the genre of apocalyptic literature, sometimes called “crisis literature,” it is appropriate at this point to present a few re-

¹⁶ Carol Newsom says that the stories from Dan 1–6 show that God “is in control of history” and that He “delegates and eventually takes back sovereignty over the earth.” See Carol Newsom, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 33.

¹⁷ Newsom, *Daniel*, 248. See also Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

¹⁸ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 448–49.

mindings pertinent to this topic. In her commentary on Daniel, Carol Newsom says that the imagery of Dan 7 articulates “the classic apocalyptic response to the mystery of evil. It is understood as never fully autonomous but as playing a designated role in a divine drama, a drama that leads to evil’s ultimate destruction and elimination.”¹⁹ Christopher Wright proposes that the purpose of apocalyptic visions is more than making predictions. It is, in the first place, “unveiling” or showing “the reality of what is going on in the present. The timeless reality is that God is still on the throne.”²⁰ Wright followed Daniel Block, who earlier had cautioned his readers that the purpose of apocalyptic texts is “not to chart out God’s plan for the future so future generations may draw up calendars, but to assure the present generation that—perhaps contrary to appearance—God is still on the throne ... and that the future is firmly in His hands.”²¹

5. Conclusion

It is safe to conclude with Fleming Rutledge that the concept of “Advent is not for the faint of heart.”²² The coming of the kingdom of God in the person of the Savior is anticipated throughout biblical prophetic passages where the language about the future Redeemer goes way beyond Old Testament historical reality. There is a good reason why the Old Testament can be called “the Bible of Jesus.” As Christopher Wright aptly says: “These were the stories He [Jesus] knew. These were the songs He sang, the stories He heard read, and the prayers He prayed every Sabbath.... This was the God He knew as Abba, Father. For us, the more we get to know the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the closer we will come to the mind and heart of Jesus Himself.”²³

6. Epilogue

In closing I would like to suggest that no word can better express the biblical concept of Advent than the greeting “*Maranatha*” that was common among

¹⁹ Newsom, *Daniel*, 221.

²⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Hearing the Message of Daniel: Sustaining Faith in Today’s World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 167.

²¹ Daniel I. Block, “Preaching Old Testament Apocalyptic,” *CTJ* 41 (2006): 52.

²² Fleming Rutledge, *Advent: The Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

²³ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 162–63.

the early Christians. The Greek transliteration²⁴ of this Aramaic word is found at the end of the apostle Paul's first letter to the believers in Corinth (1 Cor 16:22).

Maranatha is a compound Aramaic word, made up of three parts: *Mar* ("Lord") – *an/anna'* ("our") – *'athal/ta* ("came/come"). Due to the intricacies of the Semitic verbal tenses,²⁵ there are no less than three ways in which the word can be understood: (1) *Maran-'atha* ("Our Lord has come"); (2) *Maran-'atha* ("Our Lord is coming"); and (3) *Marana-tha* ("Come, our Lord!)."

In summary, this short greeting encapsulates a rich, dynamic, and timeless perspective on God's kingdom on earth. The Lord's Advent is an event that is firmly grounded in the past. It is also a hopeful yearning for the immediate future. And, last but not least, it is an earnest prayer for the present: "Maranatha. Come, our Lord, come! May Your kingdom quickly come, may Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven!

²⁴ Transliteration in this case means that the word is Aramaic, but it is written in Greek letters.

²⁵ The verbal tense in Semitic languages very often expresses the quality of an action rather than its temporality.

GENESIS 1–2 IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS AND THE APOSTLES

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Abstract

Many Bible scholars suggest that the creation account in Gen 1–2 is not a trustworthy account of the origin of life on earth. Some view it as just a poetic way of expressing the fact that God was the originator of life, but it is not a literal, historical account of how God created life on earth. Others view it as merely a mythological story that pre-scientific people believed, but it is not to be believed today. But the creation account has been validated not only elsewhere in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament. Jesus and the apostles clearly believed and taught the Genesis creation account to be a true account of the origin of life on planet Earth. This article reviews the New Testament evidence for their convictions about Gen 1–2.

Keywords: Creation, Gen 1–2, origin(s), teaching, hermeneutic, NT

1. Introduction

The key issue in the study of origins is hermeneutical. The more important and critical question for all parties, whether in science or in faith, is not “What are the data?” but “How should the data be interpreted?” This study deals with the biblical data and its interpretation for people of faith.

Too often, in the debate on origins, scholarly arguments revolve primarily around the issue of the account in Gen 1–2.¹ Much to-do is made over whether the Gen 1–2 account should be understood literally, metaphorically, or mythologically, even whether or not Gen 1 and 2 represent different accounts altogether. Much of this debate could be avoided simply by listening to and accepting the testimony of the balance of Scripture regarding the Gen 1–2 account. How is this account understood by those subsequent biblical writers who refer to it or utilize aspects of the account for theological purposes? Is not consistent subsequent use by the canonical writers indicative of how we should read and understand the account today? Certainly, their use and understanding should be instructive regarding how we ought to interpret the passage today.

It is the purpose of this paper to explore the use of Gen 1 and 2 by Jesus and the apostles in the NT in order to establish a biblical hermeneutic for approaching the passage. If Jesus and the apostles read and understood the passage in a literal, historical way, we should have serious reservations about trying to read and understand it differently today. If Scripture is its own best interpreter, then the NT use of Gen 1 and 2 should provide a hermeneutic for our reading of it today.²

This paper not only intends to establish a biblical hermeneutic for interpreting Gen 1–2, but it also hopes to provide further evidence for the biblical teaching on origins that may not be found in Gen 1–2. It would be foolish to assume that the biblical teaching regarding origins would be limited to Gen 1–2, so it should be fair to ask the question, how does the rest of Scripture expound the Gen 1–2 account? Or even, if the account in Gen 1–2 were lacking, what would we know about origins from the rest of Scripture?³ This paper does not intend to address the rest of the OT evidence, but we will consider what Jesus and the NT writers teach about origins that may

¹ Ron Minton, "Apostolic Witness to Genesis Creation and the Flood," in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, ed. Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008), 347–48, points out that both old-earth creationists and those creationists who espouse Intelligent Design "have generally neglected the witness of the Apostles" in their discussions of the issue of origins.

² This principle applies to the whole disputed passage of Gen 1–11, but it is not possible to include more than Gen 1–2 in a study of this limited extent.

³ Lambert Dolphin, "New Testament Scriptures and the Creation," <http://www.ldolphin.org/ntcreat.html>, argues that we cannot formulate a Christian view of Creation if we consider only the first three chapters of Genesis.

interpret and supplement the Gen 1–2 account. External limitations prevent an exhaustive survey, but this study will attempt to be representative of the NT teaching.⁴

2. The Teaching of Jesus in the Gospels

Jesus claimed to be “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). In the same context He stated (v. 10), “The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.” In v. 24 He added, “These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.” It is inconceivable, then, that the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels would be anything other than the truth from God. His interpretation of the Genesis creation account must be considered the truth about the question of origins. He sets the standard for our understanding of how to interpret Gen 1–2.

In Matt 19:4–5 Jesus quotes from Gen 1:27 and 2:24, respectively, in response to a theological question asked of Him by the Pharisees regarding the legality of divorce. He introduces His quotations by asking, “Haven’t you read ... ?”⁵ showing that He was referring to the written Scriptures, namely, the Genesis account that they were familiar with. He further made explicit reference to the Creator (*ὁ κτίσας*) and to human origins when He asked, “Haven’t you read that the Creator from the beginning ‘made them male and female’?” In this way He demonstrated His belief in the literal account of the creation of Adam and Eve by God at the beginning of life on this earth as recorded in Gen 1:27, where “God created man in his own image” on the sixth day of creation. Jesus went on to quote further from Gen 2:24 the very words of the Creator Himself, indicated by the phrase, “and [the Creator] said,” followed by the dictum: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” Clearly, Jesus understood this account to be a literal, historical account and part of the same account of the human creation recorded in Gen 1:27. He drew from this passage a theological conclusion: “So they

⁴ The Faith and Science Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists lists forty-four NT passages as “unambiguous references to the act of creation or the creation story” (Faith and Science Council, “The Creation Bible,” 2014, <https://grisd.org/the-creation-bible.pdf>). We cannot survey all of these passages here. Only twenty-four of these passages, along with several other probable allusions to Gen 1–2, are discussed in this brief paper.

⁵ Scripture quotations in this paper are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt 19:6). The theological conclusion reflects a literal understanding of the Gen 1–2 account, including the formation of man, the creation of woman from his rib, and the union of the man and woman by God in the marriage relation. There is nothing in these words of Jesus that can possibly be construed as not taking seriously the literal, historical account of the creation of man and woman and their union in marriage by God at that time.

Mark 10:6–9 records the same account of Jesus' teaching using similar wording but clarifying in v. 6 that "at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'" The beginning is not just the beginning of Adam and Eve but the beginning of creation.⁶ In other words, God created Adam and Eve during the creation week as recorded in Gen 1–2, which describes the beginning of life on this planet. It was not millions of years after the creation of life-forms on earth that God chose to make Adam and Eve, but it was at the beginning of God's creative activity, during the initial creation week, after which Gen 2:1 declares, "Thus the heavens⁷ and the earth were completed in all their vast array."

In Mark 2:27 Jesus declared, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." In this statement Jesus pointed out the sequence of the creation account in Gen 1–2, that man was made first, on the sixth day of creation, prior to the establishment of the Sabbath on the seventh day. Although the Genesis account does not explicitly state that the Sabbath was made for man, the inference can certainly be drawn from the fact that it was only after the creation of man that God established the Sabbath as a sacred weekly twenty-four-hour day of rest. It was not for God that the weekly rest was created, but for mankind,⁸ as the fourth commandment of the Decalogue makes explicit by forbidding mankind to work on the seventh day

⁶ Terry Mortensen, "Jesus' View of the Age of the Earth," in *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, ed. Terry Mortensen and Thane H. Ury (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008), 321–22.

⁷ The "heavens" here seem to refer not to the starry heavens of the universe but to the sky or atmospheric heavens that were created on the second day (Gen 1:6–8) as a part of preparing for life on earth beginning on the third day. Genesis 2:1 is a summary of what happened on the six days.

⁸ Ekkehardt Mueller, "Creation in the New Testament," <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents.htm#science>, points out that by saying that the Sabbath was made for man, Jesus assumes that God created not only the Sabbath but also humanity; further, by saying that He is the Lord of the Sabbath, He is laying claim to being the Creator of humankind and of the Sabbath.

in honor of God's creative work. Thus, Jesus affirmed the Genesis account as a literal, historical account to be understood as a delineation of events that took place in a literal week of seven twenty-four-hour days ending with the Sabbath day as a day of rest for mankind in honor of the work completed during the previous six days.

In Mark 13:19 Jesus announced that there would be a time of "distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world." Jesus is clearly referring to the creation account in Gen 1, which begins, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." His reference tells only that "the beginning" is defined as "when God created the world," but we can see that Jesus takes the creation account for granted, that "the beginning" involved the seven days during which God created the world, according to Gen 1.

3. The Teaching of the Apostle John in His Gospel

John, in the prologue to his Gospel, informs us that Christ, the Word, was the active agent in the creation of all things: "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3; cf. v. 10). This information is not given in the creation account of Gen 1–2, but it is in harmony with widespread NT teaching (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16–17; Heb 1:2,10), as will be shown further below. In this regard, John contributes additional information to the Genesis creation account. John's manner of expression, however, confirms the Genesis record of how things came into being, since "the Word was God" (John 1:1), the One who created the heavens and the earth in Gen 1:1. John adds that nothing was made without Him. In other words, there is no room in John's theology for any creative activity apart from the personal creative activity of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, who spoke all things into existence by His creative word.

4. The Testimony of the Book of Acts

In Acts 4:24, Luke records that when Peter and John were released by the Sanhedrin after their arrest for preaching Jesus and the resurrection of the dead, the believers prayed to God, saying, "Sovereign Lord, you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them." Then, as evidence of God's power to accomplish what He had willed and prophesied, they cited a prophecy from Psalm 2 about the rejection of the Messiah and its fulfillment in the life of Jesus (vv. 25–28), and they asked God to stretch out His hand "to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders" through

the name of Jesus (v. 30). These believers were convinced of the sovereign power of God to create all things according to His will, as recorded in the creation account in Genesis and in subsequent authentication of that account by the OT prophets, and to accomplish whatever else His will should ordain. On that basis they could request His power to accomplish His continuing will to restore the creation damaged by sin through the powerful and holy name of Jesus, which had so recently restored the lame man at the temple gate (3:1–10; 4:22). They believed that the same word which spoke in the creation of the world and in OT prophecy was also powerful to recreate the lame, the sick, the deaf, and the blind in the time of the early Christian church. They did not doubt the literal truth of the Genesis account.

Most of the other major testimonies from the book of Acts come from the teaching of Paul, so it will be treated in the next section.⁹

5. The Teaching of the Apostle Paul

Paul is the major theologian of the NT, and most of the NT references to Gen 1–2 come from his teaching. We begin to survey Paul’s teaching from Luke’s record of his preaching in the book of Acts. When Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra on their first missionary journey, Paul healed a lame man, and the crowd began to acclaim Paul and Barnabas as Hermes and Zeus, respectively (Acts 14:8–12). When the priest of Zeus prepared to offer sacrifices to them, Paul and Barnabas began appealing to the crowd to stop, since they were only men. Paul, “the chief speaker” (v. 12), argued that they were just bringing them good news, telling them “to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them” (v. 15). He went on to justify this statement by saying that God “has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy” (v. 17). Paul argued that God’s gifts of rain, crops, food, and joy are testimony to the fact that He is a living God and is the Creator of all things. While the expression, “God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them,” an almost exact parallel to Acts 4:24, may be closer to the actual text of Exod 20:11¹⁰

⁹ There are other passages throughout the NT, like Acts 7:50, that refer to God’s creative work without any apparent allusion to Gen 1–2. These are not considered in this study.

¹⁰ Minton, “Apostolic Witness,” 350, states that the wording in Acts 14:15 “is identical to the wording of the Greek translation of Exodus 20:11 found in the Septuagint....

than to the Gen 1–2 account, Exod 20:11 is still a clear attempt to summarize the main points of the Gen 1 account. So, everything ultimately goes back to an understanding of the Genesis account which takes it at face value as the way things happened in the creation of the world. There is no attempt to explain it in any other way.

In Acts 17, Paul addressed the Greek philosophers at the Areopagus in Athens. He referred to “the Lord of heaven and earth” as “the God who made the world and everything in it” (v. 24), equating “the world and everything in it” with “heaven and earth.”¹¹ In v. 25 Paul described God as the One who “himself gives all men life and breath and everything else,” probably an allusion to Gen 2:7, in which “the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” Then Paul announced that “from one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth” (v. 26), referring to the creation of Adam in Gen 1–2 and to the command to Adam and Eve in Gen 1:28, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.” Although few details are given from the creation account, it is clear that Paul clearly understood the creation account as a factual record of the origin of mankind from one man, Adam, and his wife, Eve, as they became the progenitors of the human race, as recorded in Gen 1 and 2.

5.1 The Epistle to the Romans

In Paul’s epistles, there are many quotations from and allusions to the Genesis account of origins. In Rom 1:20 Paul alludes to the creation account in an important passage discussing the rejection of God’s revealed truth about Himself. He states first that God’s wrath “is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them” (vv. 18–19). Then he explains how God has made it plain to them: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood by what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him” (vv. 20–21). Paul makes clear that it is a rejection of

That exact wording is used nowhere else in the OT. So, Paul was clearly quoting from that verse.”

¹¹ Minton, “Apostolic Witness,” 351.

what may be known about God's power and deity through a study of His created works that leads to the condemnation of men who would rather suppress the truth than honor the Creator. God has revealed Himself in His creation sufficiently that there is no excuse for anyone to be condemned to suffer the wrath of God who is willing to learn the truth He has revealed.¹²

Paul's reference to "the creation of the world" in Rom 1:20 is to the Genesis account, not to some other account of creation.¹³ He accepts the creation account as factual and does not permit any deviance from what God has therein revealed about Himself. He distinguishes clearly in vv. 23 and 25 between "the glory of the immortal God," "the Creator," and "mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles," the "created things." And he contrasts the sexual behavior of those "fools" who have rejected their knowledge of God along with the original plan for sexuality as revealed in Gen 2. He says, "God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another" (v. 24). Further, "Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (vv. 26–27). In other words, Paul presents a clear contrast between this perverted form of sexuality based on lust and the Gen 1–2 account of God's plan for human sexuality based on a loving male-female union that results in progeny (1:28). One would be hard pressed not to see in these teachings a firm support for the Genesis account of origins and a stern warning against the dangers of not taking the Genesis account seriously.

In Rom 5:12–19 Paul seems to allude to the story of the Fall in Gen 3, but it could be that he is alluding also to Gen 2:17, where God first warned man of the consequence of disobedience: "But you must not eat from the tree of

¹² Eugene F. Klug, "Creation in the New Testament" (paper presented at the Bible Science Seminar, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, IL, 10 June 1969), available from Concordia Theological Seminary Library on p. 3, observes that Paul here "seems to indicate that there is some cogency to" the argument and thrusts of the rational proofs for God's existence, though our knowledge of God and His creation is finally dependent on His special revelation, Scripture.

¹³ Minton, "Apostolic Witness," 352, points out that Paul's wording here—"since the creation of the world"—"indicates that man is as old as the creation itself, and that people have been able to observe God's witness to himself in creation right from the very beginning of creation."

the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” This verse is an important link between the story of creation in Gen 1–2 and the story of the Fall in Gen 3. Paul treats the entire account as a factual record of the origin of sin and death on this earth. In Rom 5 he repeats seven times the fact that sin with its consequences came into the world through one man, namely, Adam (v. 14), by his trespass¹⁴ of God’s explicit command, given in Gen 2:17. That one act of disobedience left the world under the pale of sin, condemnation, and death, requiring God’s intervention with the plan of salvation. Apart from the Genesis account of creation and the Fall, the record of God’s acts in history as revealed in the rest of Scripture would not be comprehensible. It is Gen 1–3, taken literally as an accurate record of real events, that gives meaning to everything else since that time until the final consummation, when the heavens and the earth will be recreated and sin and its consequences will be eradicated forever—in other words, to the essential gospel message.¹⁵ In Rom 5 Paul attempts to explain the plan of salvation in light of the events of Gen 1–3: “For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ” (v. 17).

In Rom 7:2 Paul states that “by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage.” The same principle is mentioned again in 1 Cor 7:29, but without reference to the law. When Paul refers to “the law of marriage,” or, literally, “the law of her husband,” he is most likely referring to the command of God in Gen 2:24 that a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and “they will become one flesh.”¹⁶ Jesus interpreted this statement to mean that the union was permanent: “So they are no

¹⁴ Greek *παράπτωμα*, “a falling aside, stepping aside, deviation, transgression, or violation,” whether intentional or unintentional (vv. 16, 17, 18, 20). Paul also refers to Adam’s sin in v. 14 as *παράβασις* (“going aside, transgression, deviation,” somewhat synonymous with *παράπτωμα*) and in v. 19 as *παρακοή* (“turning aside the hearing, refusal to heed, disobedience, disloyalty”).

¹⁵ Russell Grigg, “What Does the New Testament Say about Creation? Special Creation, Theistic Evolution, or Progressive Creation?” <http://creation.com/new-testament-creation>, states: “This Gospel has its foundation in the literal, historical truth of Genesis. Christians who tamper with this foundation undermine and sabotage the very Gospel itself.”

¹⁶ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 240, says, “The law assumed to be known is surely the written law of the Old Testament, particularly the Mosaic law.”

longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt 19:6). The Mosaic law contains no clearer statement regarding the permanence of the marriage relationship, so it is reasonable to assume that Paul is citing the original command of God rather than a later Mosaic command which is not as clear. This seems to be supported by Paul's statement in 1 Cor 7:10–11, "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.... And a husband must not divorce his wife." By ascribing this command to the Lord, Paul may be alluding to the Gen 2 command. Again, we see that Paul takes the Gen 2 account of the creation of Adam and Eve and their marriage as an authentic account that constitutes "the law" for marriage.

5.2 The Corinthian Correspondence

In 1 Cor 8:6, as pointed out above, Paul credits Jesus with the creation of all things, a concept not found explicitly in the Genesis account but not out of harmony with it either. In the first part of v. 6, God the Father is the one "from whom all things came," while in the second half of the same verse, the Lord Jesus Christ is the one "through whom all things came and through whom we live."¹⁷ In other words, both the Father and the Son were involved in the creation, but with slightly different roles (cf. John 1:3; Col 1:16–17; Heb 1:2; Rev 4:11). There is a hint to this effect in Gen 1:26, where God said, using the first-person plural, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." Paul will elaborate more fully elsewhere on Christ's special role in creation.

In 1 Cor 11:7–9 Paul cites the facts of creation as a theological rationale¹⁸ for his argument regarding head coverings in worship, which he introduced in v. 3 with the discussion of role relationships within the Godhead, between the Godhead and humans, and within humanity. He then turns to his discussion of women covering the head as a sign of submission in the presence of God and men. His rationale reads, "A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory

¹⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 268, avers, "In Greek, the words *all things* signify the totality of things without any exclusion; God has made everything in all his creation.... Thus, God the Father has created all things through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ."

¹⁸ Kistemaker, *Exposition of First Epistle*, 373, states that "the first word, the causal conjunction *for*, connotes that the entire present passage is an explanation of the preceding verses (vv. 5–6) that alludes to the creation account (Gen 1:26–27; 2:18–24)."

of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman came from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” Without entering into the issue of gender roles, one can see that Paul takes the creation story of Gen 1–2 literally. His reference to man being the image and glory of God comes no doubt from Gen 1:26–27, where God decides to make man in Their own image, which would imply that man will also reveal some of God’s glory. Although Gen 1:27 includes both male and female as being made in the image of God, Paul also draws on Gen 2 to point out that it was the man that was first formed in God’s image. Because Adam was alone, without a suitable mate (2:20), God declared in 2:18, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” So, God made the woman for man, from a rib from Adam’s side (2:22). Thus, the woman was made for the man, to be a helper for him, for his glory, as Paul expresses it. Paul takes the Gen 1–2 account seriously and draws a theological argument from it that became a rationale for contemporary practice in the church (1 Cor 11:16) as it related to the principle of role relationships.

In 1 Cor 15:45–47 Paul again refers explicitly to the creation of Adam, citing the Genesis account with the words, “So it is written....” Then he paraphrases from Gen 2:7: “The first man Adam became a living being.” In v. 47 he adds, also from Gen 2:7, “The first man was of the dust of the earth.” There can be little question but that Paul accepted the Genesis account of creation as an authentic account of the origin of man, and he uses it here to make a theological point about the contrast between the natural, earthly body, which goes into the grave as dust, or minerals from the soil, and the spiritual, heavenly body, which comes forth changed, immortal and incorruptible, at the resurrection (1 Cor 15:35, 42–44, 48–53).

In 1 Cor 6:16 and Eph 5:31 Paul, like Jesus, quotes from Gen 2:24, God’s statement of the unity that is to exist in marriage between man and woman.¹⁹ In 1 Cor 6:16 the context is sexual immorality. Paul says that the Christian should maintain his or her body sexually pure. A Christian should not be joined with a prostitute because the two, when joined, become one flesh, as the Scripture says, and the Christian belongs to Christ and should be one with Christ in spirit (v. 17), not one in flesh with a prostitute. In Eph 5:31 the context is the way in which the love relationship bet-

¹⁹ Carl P. Cosaert, Hyunsok John Doh, and Rubén Muñoz-Larrondo, “First Corinthians,” *Andrews Bible Commentary: Light. Depth. Truth. New Testament*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2022), 1627, assert that Paul “connected the present life with the creative intention of God by referring to the marriage of Adam and Eve.”

ween a husband and wife should model the relationship between Christ and His church, represented as His body. Paul quotes Gen 2:24 in this context to show the closeness of the relationship that should exist between Christ and the church: they should be united in love. Paul's use of Gen 2:24 in both passages suggests that he takes the text literally and uses it to teach a theological truth. Were there not a literal reality behind the Gen 2 account, Paul would not be able to draw upon the account as a concrete historical basis for teaching a profound lesson for practical application by the church. His argument in v. 28, "He who loves his wife loves himself," is shown to be valid because God declared that when a man leaves his father and his mother and joins himself to his wife, the two become one flesh. And "no one ever hated his own flesh" (v. 29 ESV, NASB, NKJV), Paul hastens to add.

In 2 Cor 4:6, Paul paraphrases Gen 1:3, adding that God spoke the words, "'Let light shine out of darkness.'" He cites this incident as a parallel to the event of the coming of Jesus as a light into the world: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."²⁰ In this statement Paul indicates his belief in the Gen 1 account of a fiat creation, in which God spoke and things came into existence at His command. That reality is just as real as the work that He accomplishes in our hearts in the sending of His Son as a light into the world.

5.3 The Prison Epistles

Paul's paean to the Son of God in Col 1:15–20 is another source of NT teaching about the active involvement of Jesus Christ in the creation of the universe. Paul first affirms that "He is the image of the invisible God,"²¹ a reminder that God said in Gen 1:26, "Let us make man in our image," including more than one divine Person in what constitutes the Creator God. Secondly, Paul states that the Son is "the firstborn over all creation," a statement of rank, according to v. 18, where "firstborn" is used again to show Christ's supremacy over all things. As "firstborn over all creation," the Son

²⁰ Cf. John 1:9, 14: "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

²¹ This seems to be parallel to the statements in 1:19 and 2:9, respectively, that "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him" and that "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."

of God is implied to be the Creator, which is made explicit in the very next verse. Continuing with the creation theme in vv. 16–17, Paul announces regarding the Son, “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Thus, he agrees with John that “through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). And he affirms the creation of heaven and earth by One who is not only the very image of God but who is the Word of God and who is God (John 1:1).

Another reference to mankind’s creation is found in Col 3:10, where Paul speaks of putting on the new person, which is being renewed in knowledge “in the image of its Creator.” Here Paul clearly alludes to Gen 1:26–27, where the Godhead made the man and the woman in Their own image. Because of sin, this image had been marred and almost totally eclipsed, but God wants to renew mankind in His own image, if we will cooperate with Him. Thus, this text is a reminder not only of the original creation but also of the Fall and the promise of restoration through the gospel. Paul clearly takes seriously the history of creation and the Fall.

5.4 The Pastoral Epistles

Paul’s teaching in 1 Tim 2:13–14 parallels his teaching in 1 Cor 11 in part but goes beyond it. In arguing for the proper role of women in terms of teaching authority in the church (vv. 11–12), he appeals to the order of creation as given in Gen 2 as one rationale: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (v. 13).²² Then he adds a second rationale in v. 14: “And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” While the latter is from Gen 3 rather than Gen 1–2, it supports Paul’s literal, factual interpretation of the Genesis accounts. He is able to develop a theological argument from the detailed facts of biblical history as precedent for how believers in the church should relate to one another in their own first-century situation. This would not be feasible if the biblical account were not to be taken seriously as a real record of how things were from the beginning. Clearly, Paul believed that the accounts were true and constituted real precedent for later Christian teaching and conduct.

²² Félix Cortez, “1 Timothy,” *Andrews Bible Commentary: Light. Depth. Truth. New Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2022), 1791, states, “It is important to note that Paul is talking about what happened not after the fall but before.”

5.5 The Epistle to the Hebrews

There are at least three places in the Epistle to the Hebrews²³ where Gen 1–2 is either paraphrased or alluded to. The first is Heb 1:2,10. Verse 2 by itself is not a clear allusion, though it does identify the Son of God as the One through whom God made the universe, in agreement with John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; and Col 1:16. However, along with v. 10, it does seem that Paul had the Genesis creation account in mind. Verse 10 quotes God as saying of the Son, “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.” This is an almost exact quotation from Ps 102:25–27, but the psalmist is speaking there. By placing the saying in the mouth of God, Paul is making the psalmist God’s mouthpiece to express His thoughts. The allusion is ultimately to the Genesis 1–2 creation account, in which the Son of God was the LORD God (*Yahweh Elohim*) who made the heavens and the earth. Hebrews 1:3 describes the Son as “the exact representation” of God’s being or essence. Further, not only did He create the heavens and the earth, but 1:3 also says that He sustains all things by His powerful word. It seems apparent that, while crediting the creation to the Son of God as the active agent in the creation, Paul takes the creation story at face value, with no hint that it should be understood in any way other than as a literal, historical account.

The next place where Paul points to the Genesis creation account is Heb 4:4, which paraphrases Gen 2:2 after introducing it as a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures in defense of the statement in v. 3 that God’s “work has been finished since the creation of the world”: “For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: ‘And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.’” Paul here reveals that he accepts the testimony of Scripture regarding the creation week, in which God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day from all His work. He does not teach an ongoing, progressive creation but a creation that was complete, a finished work, after which God rested on the seventh day from all His work. The mention of the seventh day implies the six days of work which preceded it and from which He rested. There is nothing to suggest that Paul

²³ Although there is much discussion regarding the authorship of Hebrews, it was generally considered to be Pauline until modern criticism questioned its authorship because it is not internally attested and the style and content is different from the other Pauline epistles. Some have included it with the General Epistles, but increasingly evidence is being adduced for its Pauline authorship. It was always included as a part of the Pauline Corpus. I am treating it as such here, assuming Pauline authorship.

understood anything other than a literal week of six consecutive twenty-four-hour days just like the seventh.²⁴ In fact, he makes the point quite clear when he states subsequently in v. 7, “Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today,” in which God’s people were to enter into His rest by resting from their own work “as God did from his” (v. 10).²⁵ By saying that “God again set a certain day,” namely, “Today,” he invalidates any argument in favor of a day as a long era of time. “A certain day” cannot be a long age. “Again” signifies that the “certain day” is just like the seventh day of the creation week when God rested. “Today” is a 24-hour period in which there is an opportunity to make a decision to rest in God’s finished work for our salvation.²⁶

The third passage in Hebrews is very specific in its content. In 11:3 we are told, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” Here the author is clear not only that creation took place by God’s fiat, and that God was not dependent on pre-existing matter in the creation, but also that faith is a necessary condition for understanding creation, that we will never be able to prove scientifically how the universe came into existence.²⁷ Although there is no quotation or citation of the Gen 1–2 account, the allusion is obvious, parallel to the psalmist’s declaration, “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.... For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (Ps 33:6, 9). These Scriptures allude to the Gen 1 account, in which God repeatedly declared, “Let there be ...,” “Let the water ...,” “Let the land ...,” and so forth,

²⁴ Minton, “Apostolic Witness,” 359, noting that the Greek word for “rested” is *aorist*, concludes that God’s “act of creating for six days and resting one are not ongoing; the seventh day ‘rest’ was an historical event that lasted one 24-hour day like the other six.”

²⁵ This is another allusion to Gen 2:2. It is not a reference to another day of the week for rest and worship but to a day of opportunity (“Today”) in which to come to belief (3:12–13, 19; 4:2–3). Belief in God’s plan for our salvation through Christ permits us to rest from our own work and trust in His completed work for us, just as God rested from His completed work.

²⁶ Donald A. Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition*, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 74, observes, “Every day is a new ‘today’ offering the prospect of God’s rest.”

²⁷ Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, 144, points out that “the word” (NIV: “command”) of God here is from *rhēma*, signifying the spoken word, rather than from *logos*. “It was when God spoke, and not from anything that could be seen, that the creation came into existence (Gn 1:3; cf. Ps 33:6, 9).”

and what God commanded took place. The author of Hebrews takes the Genesis account very seriously and expects his readers to take it very seriously, for “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Heb 11:6). The same faith that accepts the reality of God’s existence without scientific proof and the reality of coming judgment and reward without proof is required to believe without scientific proof that God spoke the universe into existence, creating matter out of His pure energy by divine fiat, and with immediate results. Any other theory of origins is excluded by the author of Hebrews, no matter what scientists and philosophers may expound regarding their theories of origins.²⁸

6. Creation in the General Epistles

6.1 James

James 3:9 alludes to Gen 1:26–27, which records God’s decision to make man in His own image. James tells his readers that they use their tongues both to praise God and to “curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness.” James seems to believe that mankind was a unique creation, not descended from lower life forms but purposefully created in the image of God Himself. He believes that the creation story in Gen 1–2 describes a real, historical event, and that God’s purposeful creation of man in His image gives him a dignity which forbids being cursed.

6.2 Peter

Peter’s account of origins is perhaps one of the clearest in the NT. In 2 Pet 3, he directly ties the theory of origins to the prophecies concerning how the world will end. He begins by calling attention to the teaching of the OT prophets and of Jesus: “I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles” (v. 2). Then he begins to explain the skepticism that will prevail in the last days regarding the promise of Christ’s return: “First

²⁸ R. T. France, “Hebrews,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 13: *Hebrews–Revelation*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 150, notes, “It is only ‘by faith’ that we, guided by the scriptural account, are able to see behind the scenes, to find in the visible world a testimony to ‘what we do not see,’ the God who made it. The point is important. When all the philosophical arguments have been rehearsed and refined, it remains in the end a matter of faith.”

of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’” (vv. 3–4). Next, he points out the crux of the matter: “But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed” (vv. 5–6). Finally, he draws a parallel regarding the final judgment, which they also scoff about: “By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (v. 7).

Several things in this passage are noteworthy. First, those who scoff at the idea of the coming judgment are described as ungodly or impious (*ἀσεβῶν*) men who are following their own evil desires and so bring judgment upon themselves. Second, they adopt the theory of uniformitarianism,²⁹ essentially an application of the historical-critical principles of correlation and analogy, saying that there can be no coming cataclysmic judgment or new creation because there has been no precedent for it in history, since “everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation” (v. 4).³⁰ Third, this conclusion, Peter says, is a direct result of the fact that this truth willfully (*θέλοντας*) escapes their notice or is lost sight of by them (*λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς*) that “long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water” (v. 5), and further, that “by these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed” (v. 6). The desire to deny or ignore these two great facts of history, which demonstrate God’s creative and juridical intervention in the past, results in forming an unbiblical theory that God has not intervened in the past and will not intervene in the future. This is done out of willful rejection of God’s revelation because of their own evil desires not to be accountable to God. Fourth, Peter affirms that the same powerful word that created the heavens and the earth and brought a flood of water to deluge and destroy the earth is keeping the

²⁹ Cf. Minton, “Apostolic Witness,” 365.

³⁰ This does not imply that they believe in the Genesis creation account, but that since the origin of the universe (perhaps in a “big bang”) there has been no cataclysmic destruction of the sort prophesied to occur at the “Day of the Lord” (cf. v. 10). The attempt is to deny personal accountability, as J. Daryl Charles, “2 Peter,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 13: *Hebrews–Revelation*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 406, asserts. He adds, “Peter’s opponents, in essence, are denying any intervention in human affairs.”

present heavens and earth reserved for fire on the day of judgment and destruction of these ungodly persons. God's actions in the past provide the evidence that His promises of future judgment are also certain.³¹ Denying God's actions in the past may offer some assurance to those who are willingly ignorant that God will not call them to account in a future judgment, but this does not invalidate the facts of history or of prophecy.

Peter goes on to assure the reader that although God's promises may seem to have been delayed because of his desire to save as many as possible (2 Pet 3:8–9),³² yet "the day of the Lord will come like a thief" (v. 10)—unexpectedly, for those who are not watching and waiting (Matt 24:42–51)—and "the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare" (2 Pet 3:10). In other words, Peter affirms the need for faith in the reality of God's actions in the past as described in the Genesis accounts of creation (Gen 1–2) and the universal flood (Gen 6–9) in order to maintain faith in His promise to act in the future to put an end to sin and sinners and the old creation and to undertake a new creation. Peter goes on to describe this new creation in v. 13: "But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."

It would be impossible to understand Peter in any other way than to affirm the literal, historical interpretation of these Genesis accounts as a necessary precedent for believing God's promises to intervene in earth's history in the future. One cannot merely reinterpret the Genesis record of creation without considering the warnings of Peter that those who attempt to do so are ungodly people following their own evil desires to scoff at the idea of coming judgment, by proposing a theory of uniformitarianism that

³¹ Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood," in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John T. Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 88–89, argues that both the historicity of the flood as well as its universality are assumed in Peter's typology that points to an imminent end-time worldwide judgment by fire.

³² Against those who would use 2 Pet 3:8 to propose a day-age theory, Minton, "Apostolic Witness," 366, reminds the reader that close attention to the text reveals that it cannot be used in such a way. Rather than establishing a principle for interpreting the length of days at creation, Peter "is saying something about the timeless nature of God and that He does not work in the world according to our timetable of when events should occur." See also Dave Bush, "Non-Literal Days in Genesis 1:1–2:4: Exegetical or Hypothetical?" in *Creation According to the Scriptures: A Presuppositional Defense of Literal, Six-Day Creation*, ed. P. Andrew Sandlin (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon Foundation, 2001), 94–95.

denies God's dramatic actions in history in order to assure themselves that they will not be held accountable by God in a future judgment. While this scenario may apply more to the proponents of natural or materialistic evolution than to those who argue for theistic evolution or progressive creation, the reinterpretation of Gen 1–11 as either mythological or theological metaphor leaves the interpreter without the protection from such conclusions that a literal, historical reading offers. Peter solemnly warns the believer against interpreting the Genesis account in any way other than an accurate account of literal, historical events in the past. His conclusion in 3:17 is noteworthy: "Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position."

7. The Teaching of the Book of Revelation

In Rev 4:11 John describes a hymn of praise to God who sits on the throne, with the twenty-four elders laying their crowns before Him and saying, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." This hymn is not explicit about the manner of creation other than to say that the creation and existence of all things is attributable to the will of God. However, the implication is that the creation took place as the Bible consistently testifies, and it everywhere affirms the veracity of the Genesis account. In 10:6 the mighty Angel, who has the physical characteristics of the glorified Christ similar to those described in 1:14–16, "swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it." The One "who lives for ever and ever," according to 4:9–10, is God the Father, the One who sits on the throne. In 15:7 it is God from whom wrath issues from the heavenly temple. God the Father, who sits on the throne, is portrayed in Revelation as the One who created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. A similar reference in 14:7 calls for all who live on the earth to "Fear God and give him glory," and to "Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water." The language in both 10:6 and 14:7 is strongly allusive of the Fourth Commandment in Exod 20:11,³³

³³ Regarding the implications of the allusion in Rev 14:7 to Exod 20:11, see John T. Baldwin, "Revelation 14:7: An Angel's Worldview," in *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John T. Baldwin (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 19–33.

which in turn comes, as noted above, from the Gen 1–2 account. These texts serve as evidence that the last book of the NT contains the same teaching regarding the creation as that found in Genesis and throughout the Scriptures, including the teaching of Jesus and the other apostles.

There is a very significant warning in Rev 22:19 that “if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” The tree of life that is “described in this book” is the one mentioned in 2:7 and 22:2, 14, but it is also an allusion to the one in Gen 2 and 3, and the threat of loss of the share in the tree of life is a clear reminder of the original loss by Adam and Eve because of their fall into sin (3:22) after having first been given access to eat of it in 2:9, 16. In Rev 2:7 and 22:14 the overcomer is promised the right to eat once again from this tree of life, which will be restored to the new earth as described in 22:2. The dire warning against adding to or subtracting from the words of God is parallel to similar warnings in Deut 4:2 and 12:32. Those who think to alter the straightforward meaning of the words of God, whether in the book of Revelation, in the Pentateuch, or anywhere else in Scripture, will incur the curse of God and will lose the right to the tree of life and to entering into the holy city of God in the new earth. It behooves the reader to take these warnings very seriously.

8. Conclusion

We have surveyed most of the major NT passages that address the matter of origins or that allude to Gen 1–2, and we have seen that there is a consistent understanding of the Genesis account of creation as a literal, real, historical account of how things came into existence. There is no hint or suggestion that either Jesus or the apostles, or even any NT believers, interpreted the Genesis account metaphorically, allegorically, mythologically, or in any way other than literally. If this is how Jesus and the apostles understood the Genesis account, it would be theologically hazardous to attempt to understand it in any other way. It would require that the teaching of Jesus and the apostles be rejected as theologically invalid. One cannot reinterpret the Gen 1–2 account of origins without considering the NT teaching reviewed above.

We have also seen that the NT adds something to the Genesis account, namely, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, functioned as the active agent in creation. Whereas God the Father was the authority who ordained the creation, He accomplished it through the active power of Christ, the divine

Word, who, according to Ps 33:9, “spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.” The creation of the heavens and the earth are consistently understood by the Bible writers to be a fiat creation, ordered by the will of God and effected by His divine power in six literal days followed by a seventh day set apart as a weekly day of rest as a memorial of God’s creative work in the six preceding days.

One other conclusion derives more from what is not said than from what is said. There is no evidence for any discrimination between the account of Gen 1 and that of Gen 2. While many scholars attempt to draw distinctions between the accounts in Gen 1 and 2, Jesus and the NT writers did not seem to recognize any such distinctions. They show no awareness that there were two separate creation accounts or any conflicts between the Gen 1 account and that in Gen 2. They do not see one account as more authentic than the other or both accounts as merely traditional material with no revelational authority. They believe, as Paul states in 2 Tim 3:16–17, that “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

PAUL IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY: RECEPTION AND PERCEPTION

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Abstract

Modern and contemporary studies of Paul, such as the Tübingen School and the New Perspective, have advanced different interpretations of Paul and his theology vis-à-vis Jesus, the Jews, the Gentiles, the church, and salvation. All these schools, and especially the New Perspective, have dismissed the Paul that, allegedly, was “poorly” or “wrongly” understood by the early Christian tradition as represented by various early Christian theologians, who, in turn, influenced the Protestant Reformers. But how did the early Christian church understand Paul? How important was Paul for early Christianity? What Pauline theological themes did the Early Christians highlight or use in constructing their theology? To find answers to these questions, this article studies the perception and reception of Paul in early Christian theology, both in heretical and mainstream Christian theologies, with the purpose of reconstructing the image of Paul in this period of the Church. A more integrated understanding of Paul in Early Christian theology does not only enrich historical theology as a discipline, but especially contributes to the current discussions on Paul.

... and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which there are some things that are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

(2 Pet 3:15–16, NASB)

Keywords: Paul, reception, perception, early Christians, Gnostics, and Marcionites

1. Introduction

Modern critical studies of Paul, such as the Tübingen School, the New Perspective on Paul, and the Jesus Seminar have advanced different interpretations of Paul and his theology on Jesus, the Jews, the Gentiles, the Church, and salvation. Influential theologians from these theological movements have argued that the traditional Christian portrait of Paul must be dismissed on accounts of “poor” or “wrong” understanding of Paul by the early Christian tradition. Recently, the New Perspective movement rejected the Reformation’s understanding that the essence of Pauline theology resides in the Christian concept of justification by faith as opposed to the intertestamental Jewish justification by works.¹ Although the theologians of the New Perspective do not agree on the exact details of Paul’s new theological portrait, they would generally agree that Paul’s revolution did not spring out of his call to justification by faith. Rather, his radicalness resides in something else. N. T. Wright, for instance, thinks that the essence of Paul’s theology was not his individual soteriology, but rather his proclamation of the New Covenant with the Messiah Jesus of Nazareth and an invitation to all, Jews and non-Jews, to sit at the covenant table, in the new community of humanity, the church. Thus, as the New Perspective alleges, the Paul of the justification by faith was an interpretation of early Christianity that developed and culminated in Augustine’s individual soteriology.

This situation raises again several basic questions. How did the early Christians receive and understand Paul? How important was Paul for the

¹ Although these ideas were already present in the 19th century. For instance, Matthew Arnold thought that Paul can be understood only “with the sort of critical tact which the study of the human mind and its history ... without preconceived theories to which we want to make his thoughts fit themselves. It is evident that the English translation of the Epistle to the Romans has been made by men with their heads full of the current doctrines of election and justification we have been noticing; and it has thereby received such a bias, of which a strong example is the use of the word atonement in the eleventh verse of the fifth chapter, — that perhaps it is almost impossible for any one who reads the English translation only, to take into his mind Paul’s thought without a colouring from the current doctrines” (Matthew Arnold, *St. Paul & Protestantism: With an Essay on Puritanism & the Church of England; And, Last Essays on Church & Religion* [New York: Macmillan, 1883], 240).

early Christianity? What impact did the Pauline theology have upon the formation of early Christian theology? What implications does that understanding have for the studies of the origins of Christianity? To find answers to these questions, this article studies the perception and reception of Paul in early Christian theology, such as the apostolic fathers, in heretical movements of the second century, and among major theologians of the second and third century such as Irenaeus and Tertullian. A more integrated understanding of Paul in early Christian theology does not only enrich historical theology as a discipline, but especially contributes to the current discussions on Paul.

Ever since the angle of Pauline research initiated by Baur, a wealth of literature has been published on a large variety of subjects. Given the limited scope of this research, only several works are mentioned, directly related to the current study. In his chapter, "Understanding Paul and His Letters during the Past Twenty Centuries, with Particular Attention to His Letter to the Christians at Rome,"² Richard N. Longenecker explores the understanding various theologians during early church history had of Pauline writings, but especially of Paul's letter to the Romans.³ Paul has been studied extensively and profoundly in old and recent theology. However, the study of Paul in the early church is less complete.⁴

2. Paul in Apostolic Writings

Historical theologians define "apostolic fathers" as the church theologians

² Richard N. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 267–380. Richard Longenecker is professor emeritus of New Testament at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto.

³ Longenecker, *Paul*, 268–300.

⁴ Perhaps several additional works relevant to the current study could be mentioned here such as Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); William Mitchell Ramsay, *Pauline and Other Studies in Early Christian History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Paul the Apostle* (New York: Crossroad, 1983); Peter Richardson and David M. Granskou, eds., *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Paul and the Gospels*, vol. 1 of *Studies in Christianity and Judaism* (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986); Patrick Gray, *Paul as a Problem in History and Culture: The Apostle and His Critics through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016); Kevin L. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist: Paul, Biblical Commentary, and the Development of Doctrine in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005); David R. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistle Collection and the Christian Canon* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007).

who lived and wrote between the end of the first and the middle of the second centuries. As these writers have either encountered the apostles themselves or lived within the next one or two generations after the apostles,⁵ their works are essential for the understanding of the early historical, ecclesiastical, and theological developments in Christianity. Among the apostolic fathers, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna dominate the horizon of the period. Other pieces of literature of the time such as *Didache*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *Barnabas* are considered part of the group, although these works do not have known authors and do not have relevant information on Paul.⁶ This section studies the reception and perception of Paul in Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna.

Writing a few decades after the death of Paul, these apostolic fathers addressed approximately the same churches Paul founded and/or wrote to. For this reason, given the similarity in the socio-geographic (same regions/churches), temporal contexts (close timeframe), and occasion (persecution, faithfulness, local problems), it is rather expected that the apostolic fathers assumed that their audiences knew Paul, his writings, his style, and theology. Therefore, the apostolic fathers did not spend time on introducing Paul; rather, they used his style and reputation to promote their own ideas and theology.

2.1 Clement of Rome

Dated by most scholars at approximately 96 AD, the *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (or *1 Clement* (*1 Clem*))⁷ is the only uncontroversial book attributed

⁵ For more discussion on the origin and development of the term “apostolic fathers,” see Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1890), 1:3. See also, David Lincicum, “The Paratextual Invention of the Term ‘Apostolic Fathers,’” *JTS* 66 (April 2015): 139–48.

⁶ See, e.g., Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite, eds., *Apostolic Fathers and Paul* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). In this book, Clayton N. Jefford, in his article “Missing Pauline Tradition in the Apostolic Fathers? *Didache*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Papias*, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and the *Epistle of Diognetus*” (pp. 41–60) concludes that Paul is not overwhelmingly evident in the writings mentioned in the title of his chapter. In another chapter of the same book, Paul Foster, “The Absence of Paul in *2 Clement*” (pp. 61–78), struggles with the uncertainty whether Paul is known to the author of the *2 Clement*.

⁷ The references to the apostolic fathers and Irenaeus in this article are taken from *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, vol. 1 of *The Apostolic Fathers*,

to Clement of Rome (35–99 AD). Clare K. Rothschild concludes that *1 Clement* “relies on 1 Corinthians as both substructure and warrant,” although “Clement never descends to slavish copying; the two letters certainly possess important differences.”⁸ Then, Rothschild explains the two-fold way 1 Corinthians determines *1 Clement*. On the one hand, *1 Clement* “relies on structural elements of 1 Corinthians, including its epistolary form and rhetorical species, its prescript and postscript, and its occasion, the outbreak of a faction.”⁹ On the other hand, Clement’s epistle “echoes seminal content of Paul’s first letter to Corinth, citing or alluding to it, including one allusion to the letter *qua* letter.”¹⁰

However, Clement seems to go beyond Paul’s 1 Corinthians. For instance, in his epistle, Clement highlights the perennial problem of the Corinthians, divisions, addressed by Paul himself in his epistle to them (*1 Clem* 47). But in tackling the Corinthian factionalism of his days, Clement uses other Pauline texts as well, such as Ephesians and Romans: “Why are there strifes, and tumults, and divisions, and schisms, and wars among you? Have we not [all] one God and one Christ? Is there not one Spirit of grace poured out upon us? And have we not one calling in Christ? [Ephesians 4:4-6] Why do we divide and tear in pieces the members of Christ, and raise up strife against our own body, and have reached such a height of madness as to forget that we are members one of another? [Romans 12:5]” (*1 Clem* 46).

Several points related to Paul emerge from *1 Clement*. First, Clement exhibits a special appreciation for Paul’s personal reputation. Himself bishop of the church in Rome, Clement paints a heroic Paul who suffered persecution. Paul, in Clement’s perception “obtained the reward of patient endurance, after being seven times thrown into captivity, compelled to flee, and stoned” and eventually suffered martyrdom and left for “the holy place” (*1*

Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (New York: Christian Literature, 1885). Henceforth, this section will use parenthetical references to the corresponding citations.

⁸ Clare K. Rothschild, “The Reception of Paul in 1 Clement,” in *Apostolic Fathers and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 102.

⁹ Rothschild, “Reception of Paul,” 102.

¹⁰ Rothschild, “Reception of Paul,” 102. Following a serious exegetical work on *1 Clement* and on Polycarp’s epistle to the Philippians, Paul Hartog, “The Implications of Paul as Epistolary Author and Church Planter in 1 Clement and Polycarp’s Philippians,” in *Apostolic Fathers and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 20–40, concludes that Paul is definitively well remembered in the works of both Clement and Polycarp.

Clem 5). Later in his epistle, Clement acknowledges Paul with the reverential address “the blessed Apostle Paul” (*1 Clem* 47).

Second, Clement’s Paul is the divinely-inspired preacher who preaches “both in the east and west” of the Roman Empire, teaching “righteousness to the whole world” (*1 Clem* 5). To the Corinthians, according to Clement, Paul wrote “under the inspiration of the Spirit” “at the time when the gospel first began to be preached” (*1 Clem* 47). Third, Clement does not perceive any division in the early Church, between Peter and Paul, referring to both Peter and Paul as “the greatest and most righteous pillars” and “illustrious apostles,” who “have been persecuted and put to death” (*1 Clem* 5).

Fourth, echoing Paul’s centrality of justification by faith, Clement calls the church to experience God’s salvation or justification. To receive God’s blessing, Clement explains to the Corinthians, “let us think over the things which have taken place from the beginning. For what reason was our father Abraham blessed? Was it not because he wrought righteousness and truth through faith?” (*1 Clem* 31). In the same way as the offspring of Abraham “were highly honoured, and made great, not for their own sake, or for their own works, or for the righteousness which they wrought, but through the operation of His will,” Clement explains, so “we, too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (*1 Clem* 32).

Clement does not discard the importance of good works. “We see, then, how all righteous men have been adorned with good works, and how the Lord Himself, adorning Himself with His works, rejoiced. Having therefore such an example, let us without delay accede to His will, and let us work the work of righteousness with our whole strength” (*1 Clem* 33). However, Clement sets the good works in the framework of grace: “Let us attend to what is good, pleasing, and acceptable in the sight of Him who formed us. Let us look steadfastly to the blood of Christ, and see how precious that blood is to God which, having been shed for our salvation, has set the grace of repentance before the whole world” (*1 Clem* 7).

2.2 Ignatius of Antioch

Sometime between 110 and 117 AD, Ignatius of Antioch (35–107 AD), the second bishop of Antioch after Peter, was joyously making his way to martyrdom in Rome. During the journey, he addressed epistles to the

churches/leaders in seven cities of the empire¹¹ where Paul had ministered earlier on. As expected, Paul's marked influence on Ignatius is evident.¹²

Not only is Ignatius's language, and even theological concepts, steeped in Pauline epistolary style and theological themes, but Ignatius makes two direct references to Paul in his letters to two churches Paul himself had written to, Ephesus and Rome. In a passage echoing Paul's contrasting style (1 Cor 4:10), Ignatius uses reverent terms to remind the Ephesians of their knowledge of the Gospel received from Paul himself: "You are initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel with Paul, the holy, the martyred, the deservedly most happy, at whose feet may I be found, when I shall attain to God; who in all his Epistles makes mention of you in Christ Jesus" (*Eph* 12).

To the Romans, Ignatius wrote to beg them not to prevent his martyrdom so as to allow him to become "a disciple of Christ" and "a sacrifice" (*Rom* 4). Then, Ignatius explains to the Romans that he does not "as Peter and Paul, issue commandments" to them, because they "were apostles" while he was "but a condemned man" (*Rom* 4; *Trall* 2-3). These statements reveal Ignatius's high regard for Paul, but also his understanding of the equal status and collaboration of Paul and Peter.

Ignatius's difference from Pauline theology comes in his ecclesiology. While displaying respect for apostolic authority, Ignatius sets this concept in the framework of his three-tier church structure: bishop-presbyter-deacon. In his letters to the Magnesians and the Trallians, he described the bishop presiding "in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the assembly of the apostles" (*Mag* 6; *Trall* 2-3). The apostles, in turn, are the source of ecclesiastical authority together with Jesus Christ: "Study, therefore, to be established in the doctrines of the Lord and the apostles" (*Mag* 13). Elsewhere, Ignatius explains: "It becomes every one of you, and especially the presbyters, to refresh the bishop, to the honour of the Father, of Jesus Christ, and of the apostles" (*Trall* 12).

Ignatius also discusses the subject of law and the gospel, of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Jews and the

¹¹ Eusebius, *Church History* 3.36 (NPNF 2:2-4).

¹² For examples of comparative studies in Paul and Ignatius, see Harry O. Maier, "Paul, Ignatius and the Thirdspace: A Socio-Geographic Exploration," in *Apostolic Fathers and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 162-80; Todd D. Still, "Ignatius and Paul on Suffering and Death: A Short Comparative Study," in *Apostolic Fathers and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016) 136-42; David J. Downs, "The Pauline Concept of Union with Christ in Ignatius of Antioch," in *Apostolic Fathers and Paul*, ed. Todd D. Still and David E. Wilhite (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 143-61.

Gentiles. In his letter to the Philadelphians, he explains that the “priests indeed are good, but the High Priest is better; to whom the holy of holies has been committed, and who alone has been trusted with the secrets of God. He is the door of the Father, by which enter Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the Church. All these have for their object the attaining to the unity of God. But the Gospel possesses something transcendent [above the former dispensation], viz., the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, His passion and resurrection. For the beloved prophets announced Him, but the Gospel is the perfection of immortality. All these things are good together, if you believe in love” (*Philad* 9).

2.3 Polycarp of Smyrna

Known as the bishop of the Church in Smyrna who had met Apostle John in person,¹³ Polycarp (c. 69–155 AD) was considered the embodiment of morality and faithfulness during the first half of the second century. Polycarp’s only existing letter, *Epistle to the Philippians* (Pol. *Phil*), is taken as authentic by most scholars. It was written and/or published sometime between 130–155 AD,¹⁴ and exhibits ample knowledge of Paul. As Paul Hartog states: “Questions about a *Corpus Paulinum* may remain ‘superfluous’, but clearly Paul and his letters carry religious authority in the Pol. *Phil*.”¹⁵ The “strong roots” of the faith of the church in Philippi, of which Polycarp writes in the opening of his letter, stretch back “in days long gone by” (Pol. *Phil* 2). Evidently, those were the days of the “blessed and glorified Paul” (Pol. *Phil* 3).¹⁶ Though now Polycarp is writing at the request of the Philippians, he acknowledges that “neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of” (Pol. *Phil* 3)¹⁷ that glorified Paul, one of the apostles (Pol. *Phil* 9).¹⁸

¹³ See, e.g., Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3.3.4; Tertullian, *Praescr.*, 32. Henceforth, Tertullian’s references are taken from ANF 3.

¹⁴ For more discussion on Polycarp’s letter, see Paul Hartog, *Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23–50. For aspects related to the unity of the letter, see Percy N. Harrison, *Polycarp’s Two Epistles to the Philippians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 15–17.

¹⁵ Hartog, Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians, 67.

¹⁶ See also Polycarp, *Philippians*, 11.

¹⁷ See also Pol. *Phil* 11.

¹⁸ In the same passage, Polycarp exhorts the Philippians “to exercise all patience” seen “in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles.”

According to Polycarp, Paul is known to the Philippians, both in person and in writing, because “[h]e when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter” (Pol. *Phil* 3). Evoking Paul’s concepts and terms, Polycarp notes that Paul’s letter contains “the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour, is the mother of us all” (Pol. *Phil* 3).

However, in identifying faith as the very core of Christian theology, Polycarp builds it upon a united Petrine-Pauline Christological-soteriological foundation, showing that the two apostles were not perceived to be in conflict. Already in his first chapter, Polycarp uses a series of Petrine discourse elements and texts, such as Acts 2:24; 4:10 and 1 Pet 1:3, 8, 21; 3:18 to collage the portrait of the “Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death, [but] whom God raised from the dead, having loosed the bands of the grave. In whom, though now you see Him not, you believe, and believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (Pol. *Phil* 2). Polycarp concludes the same sentence with a Pauline text, taken from Eph 2:8–9: “which joy many desire to enter, knowing that by grace you are saved, not of works, but by the will of God through Jesus Christ” (Pol. *Phil* 2).

After laying his theological core—salvation by faith, not by works—upon the substitutionary death and the resurrection of Christ, Polycarp uses 1 Pet 3:9 to connect Christ’s resurrection with sanctification: “But He who raised Him up from the dead will raise up us also, if we do His will, and walk in His commandments, and love what He loved, keeping ourselves from all unrighteousness, covetousness, love of money, evil speaking, false witness; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing or blow for blow, or cursing for cursing, but being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching” (Pol. *Phil* 2).

In an allusion to Rom 13:8–10, Polycarp relates the law and grace with faith, hope and love: “For if any one be inwardly possessed of these graces [faith, hope, love], he has fulfilled the command of righteousness, since he that has love is far from all sin” (Pol. *Phil* 3). Likewise, Polycarp sees a harmonious relationship between the NT and the OT. “Let us then serve Him in fear, and with all reverence,” Polycarp concludes, “even as He Himself has commanded us, and as the apostles who preached the Gospel unto us, and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of the Lord” (Pol. *Phil* 3). Ultimately, the bishop of Smyrna could conclude with Paul’s Eph 2:20 that the church is built upon “the foundation of the apostles and the

prophets” and thus to understand Jesus and Paul requires the knowledge of the prophets.

3. The Heretics’ Claim on Paul

The second century opened with a conflict between the apostolic fathers and those they deemed as “heretics.” Ignatius warned against judaizers (Ignatius, *Mag* 10; *Philad* 6), schismatics (Ignatius, *Philad* 3), and both him and Polycarp warned against Docetists (Ignatius, *Trall* 10, *Smyrn* 2–7; Pol. *Phil* 7). Throughout the century, heresies developed and diversified into two polarized groups, the Ebionites and the Gnostics. The Ebionites were generally Judaism-leaning Christian heretics who taught that the OT God created the world, Jesus is His Messiah, although on adoptionist terms, and that the truth is found in the Gospel of Matthew, rejecting the writings of Paul (Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.26.2).

At the other end of the heretical spectrum, considered by defendants of Christian orthodoxy such as Irenaeus and Tertullian as the most dangerous, was Gnosticism and Marcionism.¹⁹ It is with the representatives of these groups that the most fierce conflict over Paul ensued: while the Orthodox Christians were confident that Paul was the apostle of Christianity, the Gnostics/Marcionites claimed him to be their apostle too.²⁰ The following sections probe into the reasons and ways the Gnostics and the Marcionites claimed Paul and his theology as their foundation.

3.1 Gnosticism

Till the middle of the 20th century, Gnosticism was known mostly from the writings of their Orthodox Christian opponents, the leading bishops and theologians of the time, such as Tertullian of Carthage and Irenaeus of Lion.

¹⁹ Irenaeus *Adversus haereses*, traces Gnosticism from Simon the Magician of Samaria (1.23.1–4) and Menander of Samaria (1.23.5.), to Saturnius of Antioch/Daphne (1.24.1–2.) and Basilides of Alexandria (1.24.3–7.) to Carpocrates (1.25.1–6.), to Valentinus (1.1.1–3.), Cerdon (1.27.1.) and Marcion (1.23.2–4.).

²⁰ See, e.g. James D. G. Dunn, “The Apostle of the Heretics: Paul, Valentinus, and Marcion,” in *Paul and Gnosis*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and David Yoon (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 108. The Valentinians claimed a direct line of apostolic succession, as Valentinus was the disciple of Theuda, allegedly a disciple of Paul. Elaine H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters I* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1992), 5–7, examines the Gnostics’ claim to Paul through the prism of the Gnostic idea that Paul’s epistles could be interpreted both in the Orthodox or Gnostic ways.

The Nag Hammadi library, discovered in 1945, reveals that these critics of the Gnostics, generally, understood and described the Gnostics accurately.²¹ A syncretistic mixture, the so-called Christian Gnostics, developed an alternative and competitive worldview and soteriology to the classic Christianity by re-interpreting some Judeo-Christian concepts in terms closer to Platonic/Neo-Platonic philosophy and Zoroastrism.

According to Irenaeus, Gnosticism posited an antagonism between the Father, the spiritual god living out his life in the Pleroma and the Demiurge, the inferior god who created the material universe (*Adv. haer.* 1.23.1–4). The Demiurge himself was created by Achamoth’s fear, perplexity and misjudgment (*Adv. haer.* 1.5.1–2).²² As the OT has a distinct description of God the Creator, the Gnostics identified Him with the Demiurge and rejected the OT, re-interpreted it (*Adv. haer.* 1.19.1; 1.20.1), or used some of its names and concepts to populate its sophisticated cosmos, material, or spirituality. Consequently, the Gnostics developed a docetic Christology, teaching that Christ has come not from the Demiurge, but from the Father and from the spiritual Pleroma, and, therefore, was above matter. Salvation or “redemption” in Gnosticism is by attaining to “perfect knowledge” that leads to regeneration “into that power which is above all” and re-admission into the

²¹ In view of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library, some scholars launched the hypothesis that early Christianity represented a diversity of competing Christian views and communities, with the Gnostic-like views widely spread in Christianity. See, e.g., Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979); Marvin W. Meyer, *The Gnostic Discoveries: The Impact of the Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009); Nicola Denzey Lewis, *Introduction to Gnosticism: Ancient Voices, Christian Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Richard Smoley, *Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009). Accordingly, some of these scholars, sought to construct a neutral—if not an altogether positive—view on the Gnostics. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel, 2nd ed. (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler, 1996) proposed that what contemporary Christianity regards as heresy, was, in fact, simply another or even a more original form of Christianity, later suppressed with the help of Rome. For an evaluation of the “Bauer Hypothesis,” see, e.g., Paul A. Hartog, ed., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015). In this book, a group of scholars refuted the Bauer hypothesis by noting, for instance, that Irenaeus’s description of Gnosticism is accurate and that the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945 did not challenge that description.

²² Following this passage, Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.5.2–6, continues to explain that the Demiurge fashioned the universe ignorantly, in an emanationist fashion, in the image of the Pleroma, while remaining ignorant of both the existence of the universe and the existence of his mother and of the Pleroma.

Pleroma and “into the depths of Bythus” (*Adv. haer.* 1.21.2). For the Gnostics, the NT writers who could be associated with these ideas were apostle Paul, and for some, apostle John. While Marcion went as far as forming his own Pauline NT canon, generally, the Gnostics accepted most of Paul’s epistles, but rejected 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Philemon, which include rejections of Gnostic teachings.²³

The claim on Paul as their apostle was vital for the so-called Christian Gnosticism and Marcionism. As Longenecker puts it, the Gnostics “thought of themselves as followers of Paul, who was widely acclaimed among early Christians (both ‘mainstream’ and ‘sectarian’) as ‘The Divine Apostle’ – with the Gnostic believers in Jesus also speaking of him as ‘The Gnostic Initiate and Teacher Par Excellence.’”²⁴

The Nag Hammadi library contains at least two documents attributed by Gnostics to Paul. In the first document, *The Prayer of the Apostle Paul*,²⁵ dated between the second half of the second century and the end of the third century, the supposed “Paul” starts his prayer by asking God to grant him mercy, redemption, generation (birth), and the ineffable perfection. The basis for these requests is the author’s awareness of belonging to God, having “come forth from” God.²⁶

Then, the praying person asks for the “gifts” in the name of Jesus Christ, “exalted above every name, [the Lord] of Lords, the King of the Ages,” using Pauline language from Phil 2:9, 1 Tim 1:17 and 6:15. The author of the prayer also invokes the “Evangelist” in asking for “authority,” claiming apostolic authority, “healing of the body,” redemption of the “eternal light soul,” and the revelation of “the First-born of the Pleroma of grace” to be revealed to his mind. These invocations border on the magic, while concepts such as the “First-born of Pleroma” are clearly Valentinian.²⁷

The third part of the prayer contains the most direct allusions to Paul: “Grant what no angel eye has [seen] and no archon ear (has) heard and what

²³ Longenecker, Paul: Apostle of Liberty, 270–71.

²⁴ Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 270.

²⁵ See James Robinson, “The Prayer of the Apostle Paul,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library: The Definitive Translation of the Gnostic Scriptures Complete in One Volume*, trans. Dieter Mueller (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 27–29.

²⁶ Robinson, “Prayer of the Apostle Paul,” 27.

²⁷ Dieter Mueller, “Introduction,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library: The Definitive Translation of the Gnostic Scriptures Complete in One Volume*, trans. Dieter Mueller (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 27–28. See also Madeleine Scopello, “Introduction,” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, ed. Marvin W. Meyer, (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 15–17. For more background on Valentionian Gnosticism, see below.

has not entered into the human heart which came to be angelic and (modelled) after the image of the psychic God when it was formed in the beginning, since I have faith and hope. And place upon me your beloved, elect, and blessed greatness, the Firstborn, the First-begotten, and the [wonderful] mystery of your house."²⁸

The reference to Paul's 1 Cor 2:8–9 is evident; however, while in this passage Paul refers to the fulfillment of the promise of Isa 64:4 in the gospel preached in the world by the apostles, the Gnostic prayer applies this Pauline text to the Gnostic transcendent cosmology.²⁹ Where Isaiah and Paul simply say "no eye" and "no ear," the Gnostics re-interpret the text to say that the angels' eyes and ears have not seen or heard or that the human heart became angelic.³⁰ Therefore, the prayer requests of the Gnostic Paul have nothing to do with the biblical Paul and the worldview he describes in his canonical letters. Rather, those requests are a heavy distortion of some of his canonical expressions and concepts. Paul's Gnostic prayer surges out of a Valentinian spirit,³¹ attempting to harness Paul's fame, erudition, and authority.

The other Gnostic work attributed to Paul is *The Apocalypse of Paul*,³² a second-century Gnostic apocalyptic writing added to an entire series of apocalyptic documents. George W. MacRae and William R. Murdock briefly summarize Paul's *Apocalypse*:

Paul begins with a narrative of Paul's encounter with a small child on the "mountain of Jericho" en route to Jerusalem. The child, who is Paul's guiding spirit or interpreting angel, sometimes called the Holy spirit in

²⁸ Mueller, "Introduction," 15–17.

²⁹ See also, Scopello, "Introduction," 16–17.

³⁰ Scopello, "Introduction," 16–17.

³¹ Mueller, "Introduction," 27.

³² George W. MacRae and William R. Murdock, eds., "The Apocalypse of Paul," in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, trans. Dieter Mueller (New York: HarperCollins, 1990) 257–59. See also, Madeleine Scopello and Marvin W. Mayer, eds., "The Revelation of Apostle Paul," in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, ed. Marvin W. Mayer (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 317–20. Other versions of Paul's journey to the heavens circulated under a similar writing, *The Vision of Paul*, although the details are different, the idea behind that work was to exploit Paul's lack of a direct description of what he had seen in the Paradise, according to 2 Cor 12:2–4. This Gnostic *Apocalypse of Paul* should be distinguished from the later (arguably fourth century) *Apocalypse of Paul*. For the latter *Apocalypse*, see Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 288–96.

the text, takes him to the heavens to meet his fellow apostles, who accompany him during his further ascent. In the fourth heaven Paul witnesses the judgment of souls; in the fifth, angels driving souls to judgment. The sixth heaven is illuminated by a light from above, and in the seventh Paul meets an old man on a shining throne who threatens to block his further ascent. He continues, however, into the Ogdoad and the ninth and tenth heavens, and when he reaches the last he has been transformed so that he greets, no longer his fellow-apostles, but his fellow-spirits.³³

The Apocalypse of Paul alludes to the experience and teachings of Paul, especially in (1) Gal 1:11–17, wherein he presents himself as being called from his mother's womb to reveal Christ; (2) Gal 2:1–2, wherein Paul talks about his ascension to Jerusalem to meet the apostles; (3) Eph 1:18–22, wherein Paul prays for his listeners' eyes to open to see Christ's power over the dominions and authorities; and (4) 2 Cor 12:2–4, wherein Paul describes himself as being taken to the third heaven. However, the Gnostic *Apocalypse* gives the experience of Paul a Gnostic twist. Thus, whereas in Gal 2 Paul talks about the ascent to Jerusalem to meet the apostles, in the *Apocalypse* the apostle ascends to the eighth heaven to meet them and to the tenth heaven to meet the spirits. While in 2 Cor 12 Paul writes about being taken to the third heaven or Paradise, in the *Apocalypse* his journey only starts in the third heaven and goes on to reach the tenth heaven. In addition, while in Eph 1, the Apostle distinguishes Christ as God above any earthly and celestial powers, the Gnostic text attributes the dominions and powers to the spheres that comprise the Pleroma. Besides the grim depictions of the punishment of the souls of the wicked and the blissful fate reserved for the soul of the righteous, the Gnostic writing heavily emphasizes the concept of the transmigration of the soul and the Gnostic way of salvation by special knowledge and symbols.³⁴

As the two books studied above seem Valentinian, it would be appropriate to have a look at the Valentinian view of Paul. In Longenecker's view, the Valentinians, "probably the most significant" of the Gnostic groups and the "'closest' to the 'catholic' Christianity ... claimed succession to the apostle Paul through Theudas, who was believed to have been both a disciple of Paul and the instructor of their teacher Valentinus."³⁵

³³ MacRae and Murdock, "Apocalypse of Paul," 256.

³⁴ See also Scopello and Mayer, "The Revelation of Apostle Paul," 313–16.

³⁵ Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 270. On the same page he writes: "During the second and third centuries of Christian history there also appeared a number of

Valentinus (c. 100–c. 160 AD), who had studied Middle Platonism in Alexandria, became so eloquent and popular in the church of Rome that, around 140 AD, he expected to be elected bishop of the capital of the Roman Empire. However, according to Tertullian, when someone else was elected, Valentinus focused on developing his own, “Platonic,” school.³⁶ As only a few fragments of Valentinus’ writings have been preserved, various other sources help reconstruct this school of “Christian” thought.³⁷ According to Longenecker, “the primary feature in a Valentinian understanding of Paul’s teaching was the insistence that the apostle divided all of humanity into two groups of people: (1) the psychics, who are bound to the demiurgic god of the Old Testament, to the Mosaic law, and thus to spiritual death; and (2) the pneumatics, who have been reborn by the true God through the work of Christ to a new law and a true knowledge.”³⁸

3.2 Marcion of Sinope

The son of a bishop, Marcion of Sinope/Pontus (c. 85–c. 160 AD), joined the Church in Rome in the 130s, only to return to Asia Minor in 144 AD after the Church in the eternal city excommunicated him for heretical ideas. Apparently, his own father had rejected his ideas too and Marcion asserted that he was the heir of the Apostle Paul’s teaching and mission to proclaim to the world the essence of Christianity. Marcion’s Christianity was found in a canon that comprised the *Evangelikon*, the Gospel of Luke, and the *Apostolikon*, as well as 10 epistles of Paul: “Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans (Ephesians?), Colossians, Philippians,

groups of people professing to be ‘Christ followers’ who produced a variety of teachings and writings that were viewed by more mainstream Christians as ‘Gnostic’ or ‘heretical’ in their interpretations of Paul. Some of the better known of these groups were the ‘Sethians,’ the ‘Ophites’ or ‘Nassenes,’ the ‘Simonians,’ the ‘Basilidians,’ the ‘Marcosians,’ the ‘Narcellians,’ the ‘Carpocratians,’ and the ‘Cerinthians.’”

³⁶ Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 4. See also Tertullian, *Praescr.* 7, 30.

³⁷ Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 270, mentions 3 major sources for the study of Valentinus: “(1) from certain extant fragments of their writings, (2) from various refutations of their views by Irenaeus in his *Adversus Haereses*, by Hippolytus in his *Refutationes Omnium Haeresium*, by Tertullian in his *Adversus Valentinianos* (*Adv. Val.*), by Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata* 7 and his *Excepta et Theodoto*, and by Origen in the many anti-Valentinian comments throughout his commentaries and homilies on Paul’s letters, and (3) from certain Nag Hammadi texts that are generally considered today to be Valentinian in their contents, particularly the so-called *Gospel of Truth*.”

³⁸ Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 271.

and Philemon.³⁹ Tertullian believed that Marcion declined 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus because they “treat ... ecclesiastical discipline,” which Marcion rejects because his supreme god does execute judgment (*Adv. Marc.* 5.21).

However, according to Irenaeus and Tertullian, even the *Evangelikon* and the *Apostolikon* were seriously revised and redacted by Marcion to suit his theology (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 3.1, 2, 6, 7; 5.16, 5:21).⁴⁰ Irenaeus notes that Marcion “dismembered the Epistles of Paul, removing all that is said by the apostle respecting that God who made the world, to the effect that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also those passages from the prophetic writings which the apostle quotes, in order to teach us that they announced beforehand the coming of the Lord” (*Adv. haer.* 1.27.2).

Although Marcion’s theology can be reconstructed only from his Orthodox critics, the discussion on Gnosticism above generates confidence that these critics described Marcion accurately. Several elemental concepts constitute his theology. First, a contrasting reading of the OT and NT made him conclude that the God of the OT was not the same as the God of the NT, the Father of Jesus Christ. According to Tertullian, one of the reasons Marcion created his ditheism was reading Isa 45:7 (“I [God] create evil”) as pointing to God as the originator of evil (*Adv. Marc.* 1.3). Marcion viewed the God of the OT as “judicial, harsh, mighty in war” and the God of the NT as the Creator, “mild, placid, and simply good and excellent” (*Adv. Marc.* 1.6; 5.4).

According to Tertullian, “Marcion’s special and principal work is the separation of the law and the gospel.... Marcion’s *Antitheses* ... which aim at committing the gospel to a variance with the law, in order [to] contend for a diversity of gods also” (*Adv. Marc.* 1.19). A direct consequence of the law-gospel dichotomy, Marcion’s spiritual “god could not have been known” (*Adv. Marc.* 1.19). Marcion insists that it was not him who invented the law-gospel dichotomy; rather, he claims to have recovered this separation from the apostolic times, when Paul rebuked Peter and other apostles for faltering in the gospel (Gal 2) (*Adv. Marc.* 1.20). For this reason, Marcion “holds in derision” the OT (*Adv. Marc.* 5.5) and, referring to Romans 10:2–4, affirms “that the Jews were ignorant of the superior God, since, in opposition to him, they set up their own righteousness—that is, the righteousness of their law—not receiving Christ, the end (or finisher) of the law” (*Adv. Marc.* 5.14).

³⁹ Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 273. See also Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 3.14.

⁴⁰ In Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 5.13, Tertullian notes: “But what serious gaps Marcion has made in this epistle especially, by withdrawing whole passages at his will, will be clear from the unmutilated text of our own copy.”

Marcion taught a Docetic Christology, preaching that Christ had a “phantom body” (*Adv. Marc.* 3.40),⁴¹ rejected the resurrection of the body (*Adv. Marc.* 5.10), and “wholly prohibits all carnal intercourse to the faithful” (*Adv. Marc.* 5.7). Salvation in Marcionism is for the soul only, not for the body (Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 1.3; Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 1.27.2).

4. Paul in the Polemists

The polemists are the early Christian theologians who have confronted various heresies, such as Marcionism and Gnosticism. In their refutation of heretic’s use or interpretation of Paul, the polemists revealed their own understanding of the apostle. This section will summarize the view on Paul of two major polemists, Irenaeus and Tertullian.

4.1 Irenaeus of Lyon

Irenaeus (130–202 AD) wrote his *Adversus haereses* sometime around 180 AD mainly to refute Gnosticism. Already in the preface to his extensive work, Irenaeus states that the heresies are being “brought in” and therefore are not part of a church with a diversity of competing opinions. For this reason, the heretics “falsify the oracles of God,” not only failing to correctly interpret Scripture, but proving “themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation” (*Adv. haer.* 1.1.1).

One of Irenaeus’s main concerns about the Gnostics is that the Gnostics mis-interpret Paul’s texts as well. For instance, the Pauline doxology in Eph 3:21 (“to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever,” NIV) is interpreted by the Gnostics as referring to “these Æons” and even in their specific order (*Adv. haer.* 1.3.1). After describing the Gnostic understanding of the Savior as “derived from all the Æons” and being “everything” for the “suffering Æon, when it had been expelled from the Pleroma,” Irenaeus continues:

And they [the Gnostics] state that it was clearly on this account that Paul said, And He Himself is all things [Col 3:11]; and again, All things are to Him, and of Him are all things [Rom 11:36]; and further, In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead [Col 2:9]; and yet again, All things are gathered together by God in Christ [Eph 1:10]. Thus do they interpret these and any like passages to be found in Scripture (*Adv. haer.* 1.3.4).

⁴¹ See also Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 3.40, 42, 43; 5.5.

Noting that Gnosticism was never included in the OT prophecies, in the teachings of Jesus or in the writings of the apostles (*Adv. haer.* 1.8.1), Irenaeus declares that Christian theology is not based on human speculation or wisdom. Rather, Christian “faith” springs out of three sources: revelation, tradition, and catholicity (*Adv. haer.* 1.10.1–2). Revelation of the true, omnipotent One God (*Adv. haer.* 2.1.1–5) comes from “the apostles themselves, and from the discourses of the Lord ... [and the] utterances of the prophets” (*Adv. haer.* 2.2.5).⁴²

For this reason, proper hermeneutics is imperative, for a theological “system does not spring out of numbers, but numbers from a system” (*Adv. haer.* 2.25.1). The foundation of the correct interpretation is found in Paul himself. This foundation is love, because “knowledge puffs up” (1 Cor 8:1) (*Adv. haer.* 2.26.1). As our epistemology is human, it is limited. Therefore, attaining perfect knowledge is impossible. Some things we do not understand now (*Adv. haer.* 2.28.1–2), some knowledge is simply reserved for God alone. For this reason, we must follow Paul’s advice in 1 Cor 13:13 and seek primarily after faith, hope, and love, thus excluding knowledge from the essential things necessary for salvation, for now we know in part and prophecy in part (1 Cor 13:9) (*Adv. haer.* 2.28.3–7).

Otherwise, if knowledge, nature, and substance are the essential factors for the salvation of the souls, the Savior’s incarnation, righteousness, and faith in Him are superfluous. Irenaeus does not discuss here how we obtain righteousness. However, the context associates it with Christ’s incarnation and faith, although he also insists that the bodies are essential as well, as they are the medium of exercising righteousness (*Adv. haer.* 2.29.2–3). Again, what is important for Irenaeus in approaching God, is love. In discussing Paul’s vision of the third heaven, Irenaeus concludes that it is not important whether Paul was taken into the third heaven in his body or without it. What is important is that he is “permitted even without the body to behold spiritual mysteries which are the operations of God, who made the heavens and the earth, and formed man, and placed him in paradise, so that those should be spectators of them who, like the apostle, have reached a high degree of perfection in the love of God” (*Adv. haer.* 2.29.7).

Perfect knowledge came to the apostles from the power of the Holy Spirit. Under this power, they orally preached the gospel to the entire world, but also committed their knowledge of salvation to written text in the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which present one and the same God,

⁴² The apostle he immediately quotes is Paul and his text from Eph 4:6.

the Creator and Savior (*Adv. haer.* 3.1.1). Irenaeus has trust in the message of the apostles because they did not proclaim a message that the public wanted to hear (*Adv. haer.* 3.5.1–2). The heretics, however, would not accept them as God’s revelation and sources of truth, claiming that God reveals His truth to them directly; but the truths that Basilides, Marcion, Valentinus and others claim to have thus received, are so different and unreliable (*Adv. haer.* 3.2.1–2).

Against the heretics, Irenaeus uses the argument of apostolic succession: “For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to the perfect apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men” (*Adv. haer.* 3.3.1).⁴³

The true knowledge of salvation the gospels proclaimed is knowledge of Jesus the Christ, who was prophesied by the prophets of the old, who were sent by the same God the Creator. With the beginning of the proclamation of the gospel, the world “entered upon a new phase, the Word arranging after a new manner the advent in the flesh, that He might win back to God that human nature which had departed from God; and therefore men were taught to worship God after a new fashion, but not another god, because in truth there is but ‘one God, who justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision by faith’” (Rom 3:30) (*Adv. haer.* 3.10.2).

The teaching of the gospel and of Paul was preached by all the apostles. Peter was always preaching the same God of the OT who now sent Jesus the Christ for our salvation. Therefore, Peter frequently appeals to the OT in his proclamation or decisions (Acts 1:16; 2:37–38; 3:12; 4:2, 8; 24) (*Adv. haer.* 3.12.1–4). Irenaeus notes that

Peter, together with John, preached to them this plain message of glad tidings, that the promise which God made to the fathers had been fulfilled by Jesus; not certainly proclaiming another god, but the Son of God, who also was made man, and suffered; thus leading Israel into knowledge, and through Jesus preaching the resurrection of the dead [Acts 4:2], and showing, that whatever the prophets had proclaimed as to the suffering of Christ, these had God fulfilled (*Adv. haer.* 3.12.3).

⁴³ For more of his argument in favor of apostolic succession and the church as the depository of apostolic truth, see Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 3.3.1–3; 3.4.1–3; 4.26.1–5; 5.20.

When preaching to Cornelius, a God-fearer, Peter could have preached freely to the Gentiles, that the God of the Jews was indeed one, but the God of the Christians another.... But it is evident from Peter's words that he did indeed still retain the God who was already known to them; but he also bore witness to them that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the Judge of quick and dead, into whom he did also command them to be baptized for the remission of sins; and not this alone, but he witnessed that Jesus was Himself the Son of God, who also, having been anointed with the Holy Spirit, is called Jesus Christ (*Adv. haer.* 3.12.7).

However, Irenaeus also observes that Peter, James, or Paul abrogated circumcision under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (*Adv. haer.* 3.12.15).

To the Marcionites "who allege that Paul alone knew the truth, and that to him the mystery was manifested by revelation" Irenaeus responded:

One and the same God wrought in Peter for the apostolate of the circumcision, and in himself for the Gentiles [Gal 2:8]. Peter, therefore, was an apostle of that very God whose was also Paul; and Him whom Peter preached as God among those of the circumcision, and likewise the Son of God, did Paul [declare] also among the Gentiles. For our Lord never came to save Paul alone, nor is God so limited in means, that He should have but one apostle who knew the dispensation of His Son (*Adv. haer.* 3.13.1).

After all, in quoting Isa 52:7 in Rom 10:15, Paul "shows clearly that it was not merely one, but there were many who used to preach the truth" (*Adv. haer.* 3.13.1).

According to Irenaeus, Luke was the faithful and helpful co-laborer with Paul and the other apostles, writing down the details of their journeys all the way to Paul's imprisonment in Rome (*Adv. haer.* 3.14.1–2). However, Irenaeus is aware that Luke's Acts of Apostles is being challenged and his Gospel is being redacted by the Marcionists and others. To this, Irenaeus responded with the principle that Luke-Acts is a unit: if someone rejects Acts, should reject the Gospel too. Luke's Gospel records unique and significant details of the life and sacrifice of Jesus (John the Baptist's genealogy, the shepherds in the fields, various unique sayings of Jesus, Zacchaeus, etc.) (*Adv. haer.* 3.14.3). The Marcionists use some of these stories but reject others. But by so doing, Irenaeus notes, they

must either receive the rest of his narrative, or else reject these parts also. For no persons of common sense can permit them to receive some things recounted by Luke as being true, and to set others aside, as if he had not known the truth. And if indeed Marcion's followers reject these, they will then possess no Gospel; for, curtailing that according to Luke, as I have said already, they boast in having the Gospel [in what remains]. But the followers of Valentinus must give up their utterly vain talk; for they have taken from that [Gospel] many occasions for their own speculations, to put an evil interpretation upon what he has well said. If, on the other hand, they feel compelled to receive the remaining portions also, then, by studying the perfect Gospel, and the doctrine of the apostles, they will find it necessary to repent, that they may be saved from the danger (*Adv. haer.* 3.14.4).

The problem of the Gnostics, concludes Irenaeus, is that they, "having been set against the Mosaic legislation, judging it to be dissimilar and contrary to the doctrine of the Gospel, have not applied themselves to investigate the causes of the difference of each covenant.... Ignorance of the Scriptures and of the dispensation of God has brought all these things upon them" (*Adv. haer.* 3.12.12). Since Paul proclaimed Jesus as the Christ based on the OT Scriptures or prophecies,⁴⁴ he cannot be understood as proclaiming a different God or apart from the OT Scriptures (*Adv. haer.* 3.16.3–5).

For Irenaeus, the interpretation of the NT should be done in the light of and in harmony with the OT. It was the patriarchs and the prophets of the OT that prepared the faithful and the entire world for the first advent of Christ. The faithful of the NT accepted Christ in the light of the OT and even Christ presented himself as the fulfilment of the OT promises (*Adv. haer.* 4.23.1–2).⁴⁵ The center, the treasure of all Scripture is Christ (*Adv. haer.* 4.26.1–2). Paul's entire theology is based on the OT. Commenting on Rom 1:17, Irenaeus points out that Paul's pivotal theological aspect is in fact taken from the OT, Hab 2:4 (*Adv. haer.* 4.34.2). These prophets were certainly inspired by the Holy Spirit because they all gave various details that have all been fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of one person, Jesus of Nazareth. No other single person in the antiquity could claim to have all these details in his life (*Adv. haer.* 4.34.3–4). A balanced and correct interpretation of both the OT and NT will reveal that God is the same God of mercy in both

⁴⁴ Irenaeus refers to passages such as Rom 1:1–4; 9:5; Gal 4:4–5; Col 1:14–15 (cf. Mark 1:1; Luke 1:32; 2:29; 24:25).

⁴⁵ See also, Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 4.32.1–2; 4.33.1–2.

testaments, but also the God of judgment in both testaments (*Adv. haer.* 4.28.1–2).

The Irenaean soteriology builds upon the same law-gospel, promise-fulfillment pattern. Against Marcion, he argues that the OT Abraham was saved by faith, as testified by both Paul (Rom 4:3, Abraham believed God, and this was imputed to him as righteousness) and Jesus (Luke 13:28, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are going to be in the kingdom of heaven). Those who reject God's salvation by faith are excluded from God's kingdom; God "introduces, through Jesus Christ, Abraham to the kingdom of heaven, and his seed, that is, the Church, upon which also is conferred the adoption and the inheritance promised to Abraham" (*Adv. haer.* 4.8.1).⁴⁶ When Christ healed the bleeding woman, "a daughter of Abraham," Christ "loosed and vivified those who believe in Him as Abraham did." By doing so on a Sabbath, "He [Christ] did not make void, but fulfilled the law, by performing the offices of the high priest, propitiating God for men, and cleansing the lepers, healing the sick, and Himself suffering death, that exiled man might go forth from condemnation, and might return without fear to his own inheritance" (*Adv. haer.* 4.8.2). It is true that Jer 31:31 announces the new covenant, however, "one and the same householder produced both covenants, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke with both Abraham and Moses, and who has restored us anew to liberty, and has multiplied that grace which is from Himself" (*Adv. haer.* 4.9.1).

Irenaeus also explains his understanding of grace and works. Christ will, "in the exercise of His grace, confer immortality on the righteous, and holy, and those who have kept His commandments, and have persevered in His love" (*Adv. haer.* 1.10.1). When Christ was revealed, the people, who "make progress through believing in Him, and by means of the ... covenants, should gradually attain to perfect salvation. For there is one salvation and one God; but the precepts which form the man are numerous, and the steps which lead man to God are not a few." In this circumstance, Irenaeus reasons that if it "is allowable for an earthly and temporal king ... to grant to

⁴⁶ Elsewhere, Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 4.5.4., compares Christians to the Abraham following God's word: "Righteously also the apostles, being of the race of Abraham, left the ship and their father, and followed the Word. Righteously also do we, possessing the same faith as Abraham, and taking up the cross as Isaac did the wood, Genesis 22:6 follow Him. For in Abraham man had learned beforehand, and had been accustomed to follow the Word of God. For Abraham, according to his faith, followed the command of the Word of God, and with a ready mind delivered up, as a sacrifice to God, his only-begotten and beloved son, in order that God also might be pleased to offer up for all his seed His own beloved and only-begotten Son, as a sacrifice for our redemption."

his subjects greater advantages at times: shall not this then be lawful for God ... to confer a greater ... grace upon the human race, and to honour continually with many gifts those who please Him?" (*Adv. haer.* 4.9.3). In the same way, Christ's "advent has brought in a fuller grace and greater gifts to those who have received Him, it is plain that the Father also is Himself the same who was proclaimed by the prophets" (*Adv. haer.* 4.11.4).

Appealing to his extensive reading of Paul, Irenaeus excludes the possibility of salvation by works: "For as it was not possible that the man who had once for all been conquered, and who had been destroyed through disobedience, could reform himself, and obtain the prize of victory; and as it was also impossible that he could attain to salvation who had fallen under the power of sin—the Son effected both these things, being the Word of God, descending from the Father, becoming incarnate, stooping low, even to death, and consummating the arranged plan of our salvation" (Rom 10:6–7, 9; 14:9; 1 Cor 1:23; 10:16) (*Adv. haer.* 3.18.2).

The problem of the Jews, in Irenaeus's view, was that they abandoned God's law for the human tradition that was against the law of Moses: "desiring to uphold these traditions, they were unwilling to be subject to the law of God, which prepares them for the coming of Christ" (*Adv. haer.* 4.12.1). But Christ, as the One who descended from the same Father, the Creator described in the OT, taught that "when He says that the entire law and the prophets hang upon these two commandments" [love God and the neighbor] and "renewed this very same one to His disciples, when He enjoined them to love God with all their heart, and others as themselves." This teaching, then, was confirmed by Paul in his statement: "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom 13:10) and that "the greatest of all is love" (1 Cor 13:13) (*Adv. haer.* 4.12.2).

Irenaeus seems to agree that God "promulgated particular laws adapted to each" testament. However, "the more prominent and the greatest [commandments], without which salvation cannot [be attained], He has exhorted [us to observe] the same in both," for "as in the law, therefore, and in the Gospel [likewise], the first and greatest commandment is, to love the Lord God with the whole heart, and then there follows a commandment like to it, to love one's neighbour as one's self; the author of the law and the Gospel is shown to be one and the same" (*Adv. haer.* 4.12.2).

Christ, continues Irenaeus, "did not throw blame upon that law which was given by Moses, when He exhorted it to be observed, Jerusalem being as yet in safety; but He did throw blame upon those persons, because they repeated indeed the words of the law, yet were without love. And for this reason were they held as being unrighteous as respects God, and as respects

their neighbours” (referring also to Isa 29:13). Quoting Rom 10:3–4, Irenaeus explains by way of a question: “And how is Christ the end of the law, if He be not also the final cause of it? For He who has brought in the end has Himself also wrought the beginning” (*Adv. haer.* 4.12.4). As “the law did beforehand teach mankind the necessity of following Christ,” Christ taught Christians “that they should obey the commandments which God enjoined from the beginning, and do away with their former covetousness by good works, and follow after Christ” (*Adv. haer.* 4.12.5). In His discourse on the Mount, “the Lord did not abrogate the natural [precepts] of the law, by which man is justified, which also those who were justified by faith, and who pleased God, did observe previous to the giving of the law, but that He extended and fulfilled them” (*Adv. haer.* 4.13.1).

The difference between the law and the gospel is that the precepts of the law were given to “instruct the soul by means of those corporeal objects which were of an external nature, drawing it, as by a bond, to obey its commandments, that man might learn to serve God” while the gospel teaches that the “body should be willingly purified” through the Word and “should follow God without fetters,” not as slaves, but as children, having “greater confidence” (*Adv. haer.* 4.13.2). Irenaeus continues:

Now all these [precepts], as I have already observed, were not [the injunctions] of one doing away with the law, but of one fulfilling, extending, and widening it among us; just as if one should say, that the more extensive operation of liberty implies that a more complete subjection and affection towards our Liberator had been implanted within us. For He did not set us free for this purpose, that we should depart from Him (no one, indeed, while placed out of reach of the Lord’s benefits, has power to procure for himself the means of salvation), but that the more we receive His grace, the more we should love Him. Now the more we have loved Him, the more glory shall we receive from Him, when we are continually in the presence of the Father (*Adv. haer.* 4.13.3).

Quoting 1 Cor 10:11, Irenaeus concludes that “for by means of types they learned to fear God, and to continue devoted to His service” (*Adv. haer.* 4.14.3). Thus, for the Jews the law was “a course of discipline, and a prophecy of future things” (*Adv. haer.* 4.15.1). Thus,

all natural precepts are common to us [Christians] and to them (the Jews), they had in them indeed the beginning and origin; but in us they have received growth and completion. For to yield assent to God, and to follow His Word, and to love Him above all, and one’s neighbour as one’s self (now man is neighbour to man), and to abstain from every evil

deed, and all other things of a like nature which are common to both [covenants], do reveal one and the same God (*Adv. haer.* 4.13.4).

In Irenaeus' understanding, in the beginning, God gave Israel only the natural precepts or the Decalogue (referring to Deut 5:22). However, when Israel proved to be a hardened people, God had to "enact" additional laws for them to keep them in school of slavery that will educate them the need to and how to follow God. It is for the same reason that in the NT Paul gave Christians additional, guiding laws (1 Cor 7:6, 12, 25) not from the Lord, but out of considerations of human frailty (*Adv. haer.* 4.15.1-2). Thus, God gave circumcision "not as the completer of righteousness, but as a sign, that the race of Abraham might continue recognisable." However, circumcision did not have only a literal meaning applicable only to Abraham; rather, "the circumcision after the flesh typified that after the Spirit" (referring to Col 2:11) (*Adv. haer.* 4.16.1). In the same way, the Sabbath was given to us so that we will be "ministering continually to our faith, and persevering in it, and abstaining from all avarice, and not acquiring or possessing treasures upon earth" (*Adv. haer.* 4.16.1).

For this reason, people are "not justified by these things"; rather, circumcision and the Sabbaths were given as signs of salvation, because "all the rest of the multitude of those righteous men who lived before Abraham, and of those patriarchs who preceded Moses, were justified independently of the things above mentioned, and without the law of Moses" (*Adv. haer.* 4.16.2). The "righteous fathers had the meaning of the Decalogue written in their hearts and souls, that is, they loved the God who made them, and did no injury to their neighbour. There was therefore no occasion that they should be cautioned by prohibitory mandates (*correptoriis literis*), because they had the righteousness of the law in themselves. But when this righteousness and love to God had passed into oblivion, and became extinct in Egypt, God did necessarily, because of His great goodwill to men, reveal Himself by a voice, and led the people with power out of Egypt, in order that man might again become the disciple and follower of God" (*Adv. haer.* 4.16.3).⁴⁷ Irenaeus, thus, thought in terms of promise-fulfillment, not law abrogation. To him, the natural law is the moral law in the sense that it belongs to human nature, because humans were created free as the image of God (*Adv. haer.* 4.14.1).⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See also, Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 4.17.1-6.

⁴⁸ In *Adv. haer.* 4.4.3, Irenaeus elaborates: "But man, being endowed with reason, and in this respect like to God, having been made free in his will, and with power over himself, is himself the cause to himself, that sometimes he becomes wheat, and sometimes

But what is the role of obedience? Irenaeus answers that God created humans

not as if He stood in need of man, but that He might have [some one] upon whom to confer His benefits.... Nor did He stand in need of our service when He ordered us to follow Him; but He thus bestowed salvation upon ourselves. For to follow the Saviour is to be a partaker of salvation, and to follow light is to receive light. But those who are in light do not themselves illumine the light, but are illumined and revealed by it: they do certainly contribute nothing to it, but, receiving the benefit, they are illumined by the light. Thus, also, service [rendered] to God does indeed profit God nothing, nor has God need of human obedience (*Adv. haer.* 4.14.1).

Both the Jews and the Gentiles are called to the same Gospel, according to Irenaeus. Quoting Gal 3:5–9, he concludes that Abraham was the “father of those who from among the Gentiles believe in Jesus Christ, because his faith and ours are one and the same: for he believed in things future, as if they were already accomplished, because of the promise of God; and in like manner do we also, because of the promise of God, behold through faith that inheritance [laid up for us] in the [future] kingdom” (*Adv. haer.* 4.21.1). Due to their knowledge of the OT, it was easier for the Jews to accept the message of the coming of the Messiah. Quoting 1 Cor 15:10 (“I labored more than they all”), Irenaeus concluded that Paul, as the apostle of the Gentile had to work much more to convert the Gentiles (*Adv. haer.* 4.24.1; see also 4.24.3), preaching that

that the gods of the nations not only were no gods at all, but even the idols of demons; and that there is one God, who is above all principality, and dominion, and power, and every name which is named [Eph 1:21], and that His Word, invisible by nature, was made palpable and visible among men, and did descend to death, even the death of the cross [Phil 2:8] also, that they who believe in Him shall be incorruptible and not subject to suffering, and shall receive the kingdom of heaven (*Adv. haer.* 4.24.2).

If the Gnostics or the Marcionites are correct, then

chaff. Wherefore also he shall be justly condemned, because, having been created a rational being, he lost the true rationality, and living irrationally, opposed the righteousness of God, giving himself over to every earthly spirit, and serving all lusts.” See also Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 4.37.1–7; 4.39.1–4.

the advent ... of Him whom these men represent as coming to the things of others, was not righteous; nor did He truly redeem us by His own blood, if He did not really become man, restoring to His own handiwork what was said [of it] in the beginning, that man was made after the image and likeness of God; not snatching away by stratagem the property of another, but taking possession of His own in a righteous and gracious manner (*Adv. haer.* 5.2.1).

Maybe Irenaeus did not understand some details from Daniel's prophecy (*Adv. haer.* 5.26.1–2) or the Antichrist and the Apocalypse (*Adv. haer.* 5.28.1–3; 5.30.1–3), but he clearly understands that Paul must be understood in the light of the OT and entire Scripture, and also in the framework of preaching the only one gospel of salvation by grace and by faith, not by works.

4.2 Tertullian of Carthage

According to Tertullian (155–240 AD), Marcionism was such a considerable danger to Christianity that he decided to respond with a five-volume work, *Adversus Marcionem*, to refute the great heretic. As one of the major problems of Marcionism is its Luke-Paul NT canon, in this work, Tertullian concentrates his response on and uses material from these NT books. He dedicates an entire volume, the fourth, to the study of the Gospel of Luke, in which he highlights that the criteria for identifying the true gospel is antiquity and apostolic succession (*Adv. Marc.* 3.4–5). In doing so, Tertullian insists that Marcion's teaching was a novelty (*Adv. Marc.* 1.19; 3.5), not another, original, competitive version of Christianity. Then, Tertullian focusses on details from the Gospel of Luke, demonstrating that Christ came from the Creator God: the demons acknowledged the Creator God ("The Holy One of God," Luke 4:33–34) (*Adv. Marc.* 3.7), that the miracles were true (*Adv. Marc.* 3.20, 26), that Christ prohibited divorce (vs. the Law of Moses) (*Adv. Marc.* 3.34, 39), that Luke presents Christ in His Coming in judgment (*Adv. Marc.* 3.35), and various details in the Gospel corroborated, more or less successfully, with OT passages (*Adv. Marc.* 3.8–12).

In the fifth volume, Tertullian undertakes a thorough investigation of Paul, Marcion's "favourite apostle" (*Adv. Marc.* 1.15), and developed his theological perspective vis-à-vis the issues raised by Marcion. Tertullian begins by questioning Marcion's criteria for selecting Paul over all the other apostles. Marcion's criteria are weak, Tertullian notes, because Marcion ac-

cepts Paul as an apostle, as an authoritative source of revelation and theology based on his own claim. Tertullian, on the contrary, accepts Paul based on both his own claim, but also based on a verifying principle, the extra-Pauline sources confirming Paul as an apostle. One of these sources is the OT, such as Gen 49:27, which prophesied the advent of Paul as a wolf devouring in the morning and distributing food in the evening: “In the early period of his life he would devastate the Lord’s sheep, as a persecutor of the churches; but in the evening he would give them nourishment, which means that in his declining years he would educate the fold of Christ, as the teacher of the Gentiles” (*Adv. Marc.* 5.1).⁴⁹ In Tertullian’s understanding, had Christianity professed a different God than Judaism, Paul would have taught a new and different God. However, Tertullian observes, Paul did not reveal any new God, he never rejected the Creator God of the OT. Therefore, Paul proclaims the same God of Christ and of the OT (*Adv. Marc.* 5.1).⁵⁰

Tertullian, then, enumerates and studies the most significant Pauline epistles. He starts with the most “anti-Jewish” epistle, Galatians. The Epistle to the Galatians, Tertullian reasons, understood “that faith in Christ ... was obligatory, but without annulling the law, because it still appeared to them a thing incredible that the law should be set aside by its own author” (*Adv. Marc.* 5.2). However, Tertullian notes, had Paul announced to them that a new and different God should be worshiped, they would have hardly gotten into the problem Paul is dealing with in Galatians, that is, keeping both the faith in Christ and the old law. This is the essence of Tertullian’s biblical and Pauline interpretation.

One of Tertullian’s hermeneutical principles is “let us only attend to the clear sense and to the reason of the thing, and the perversion of the Scripture will be apparent” (*Adv. Marc.* 5.3). But Tertullian’s main hermeneutical principles are Scripture interprets Scripture and *Tota Scriptura*. According to him, all Scripture is interconnected, the NT being the fulfillment of the OT prophecies. For instance, in Eph 1:13 Paul states that Christians have been sealed with “His Holy Spirit of Promise.” Tertullian is quick to ask and then answer: “Of what promise? That which was made through Joel: In the last days will I pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, [Joel 2:28] that is, on all

⁴⁹ In *Adv. Marc.* 5.6., Tertullian interprets Isa 28:16 to predict the advent of Paul, the wise master-builder (1 Cor 3:10) to lay the foundation of the Christian church.

⁵⁰ In *Adv. Marc.* 1.14., referring to 2 Corinthians 12, Tertullian notes that Christ, the superior God of Marcion, has come down from the “third heaven” to die for this very creation and use its elements such as water and oil to establish the sacraments, thus proving its worthiness.

nations. Therefore, the Spirit and the Gospel will be found in the Christ, who was foretrusted, because foretold" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.17). Thus, the connecting principle between the two dispensations, the OT and the NT, is that both dispensations have the same God and that the prophets in the old dispensation announced the coming of the other dispensation (Isa 2:3, 4; 11:1; 43:18-19; 55:3) (*Adv. Marc.* 4.1)!

This brings Tertullian to the law-gospel relation. By building his theology upon the law-gospel antithesis, Tertullian notes, Marcion became the "the author of the breach of peace between the gospel and the law.... a peace, which had remained unhurt and unshaken from Christ's appearance to the time of Marcion's audacious doctrine" (*Adv. Marc.* 1.19). To the Marcionite argument that Paul's rebuke to Peter was the sign of the radical separation between the law and gospel, Tertullian responds by explaining that Paul rebuked Peter for a momentary compromise in their conduct siding with the Jews in a particular situation. However, Tertullian notes that, later, Paul would embrace this type of compromise "himself to become in his practice all things to all men, that he might gain all—to the Jews, as a Jew, and to them that were under the law, as under the law" (1 Cor 9:20) (*Adv. Marc.* 1.20).⁵¹ However, Tertullian insists, when "touching their public doctrine ... they had ... joined hands in perfect concord, and had agreed also in the division of their labour in their fellowship of the gospel, as they had indeed in all other respects: Whether it were I or they, so we preach" (1 Cor 15:11) (*Adv. Marc.* 1.20).⁵² In his *De Præscriptione Haereticorum*, Tertullian notes that the relationship between Paul and Peter should not be indicative of a "weaker" Peter "lacking" original Christianity that was later supplied by a "fuller knowledge" of Paul, as this idea would justify further new revelations by the heretics (*Praescr.* 23). Paul himself was teaching the church in Corinth (1 Cor 1:10) not to have divisions among themselves (*Praescr.* 26).

Paul was in fact a peacekeeper between the law and the gospel. According to Tertullian's Paul, Christians are called to "perpetuate the teaching of

⁵¹ See also *Adv. Marc.* 4.3; *Praescr.* 24.

⁵² Elsewhere, in *Praescr.* 23, Tertullian explains that Peter and Paul "arranged among themselves a distribution of office, not a diversity of gospel, so that they should severally preach not a different gospel, but (the same), to different persons, Peter to the circumcision, Paul to the Gentiles." Tertullian perceives complete harmony between Peter and Paul, not only from the Book of Acts (which some heretics reject), but also from Paul's Epistle to Galatians (which most of the heretics accept): Paul met Peter in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18) because "of a common belief and preaching," the apostles "'glorified the Lord'" (Gal 1:24) and gave Paul "'the right hand of fellowship'" (Gal 2:9) "as a sign of their agreement with him."

the law." The problem was not with the law, but with the Jews who maintained "circumcision, and observing times, and days, and months, and years, according to those Jewish ceremonies which they ought to have known were now abrogated, according to the new dispensation purposed by the Creator Himself," in such OT passages as Isa 43:19, Jer 4:4 and Hos 2:11 (*Adv. Marc.* 1.20).

On the other hand, Tertullian did acknowledge a sense in which the law was "abrogated." But Tertullian argues that this change occurred not because Paul decided to do so, but because the Creator God had announced it in the OT (Isa 42:6, 9; 52:7) that it would be changed and the Creator's Christ determined that John the Baptist would be the border between the two dispensations (Luke 16:16). Christ came at the fulness of time (Gal 4:4), brought by God of the OT, the God of Prophecy, God the Creator "to whom belonged the end of time no less than the beginning" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.4). By contrast, the Marcionite god of the OT does not have relevance to prophecy and therefore to time, nor to the fulness of time.

However, Tertullian explains that by 'abrogation' he does not mean the abrogation of the entire law. Rather, a part of the law was "retained" and another one was "erased," such as the Sabbath and the Jewish festivals and the circumcision (referring to Gal 4:9–10; Isa 1:13–14; Amos 5:21; Hos 2:11) (*Adv. Marc.* 5.4). But the most important part of the law that was "erased" was circumcision: "All those ... who had been delivered from the yoke of slavery he [God] would earnestly have to obliterate the very mark of slavery—even circumcision" (referring to Gal 5:1, 6; Deut 10:16; Ps 2:2–3; Jer 4:4) (*Adv. Marc.* 5.4). The most important aspect of this discussion is that the law was commanded by the God of the OT and abrogated by the same God.

Now, the part of the law that was "retained" is in actuality "all the law" (Gal 5:14), "the gist of it all being concentrated in this one precept," the law of grace and love to God and to humans, law given by the Creator and confirmed to remain valid by the Liberator (Lev 19:18; Deut 6:5; Gal 5:14) (*Adv. Marc.* 5.4). This "old-new" law is the law of the Creator and the Law of Christ. Referring to Rom 7:7, Tertullian declares that "the apostle [Paul] recoils from all impeachment of the law.... [for there is] no acquaintance with sin except through the law" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.13). Citing Rom 7:13–14, Tertullian concludes that the law "is prophetic, and that it is figurative.... Christ was predicted by the law but figuratively, so that indeed He could not be recognised by all the Jews" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.13).

Christ "has made the law obsolete by His own precepts, even by Himself fulfilling the law ... it is impossible to make an adversary of the law out of

one who so completely promotes it" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.17). Thus, Tertullian thought the abrogation of the law or the difference in the law-gospel dispensations was rather helping his argument that there was the same God, the Creator, and Jesus, His Christ (*Adv. Marc.* 5.2). Commenting on Col 2:16–17 (ceremonial days and Sabbaths), Tertullian notes:

the apostle here teaches clearly how it has been abolished, even by passing from shadow to substance—that is, from figurative types to the reality, which is Christ. The shadow, therefore, is His to whom belongs the body also; in other words, the law is His, and so is Christ. If you separate the law and Christ, assigning one to one god and the other to another, it is the same as if you were to attempt to separate the shadow from the body of which it is the shadow. Manifestly Christ has relation to the law, if the body has to its shadow (*Adv. Marc.* 5.19).

Salvation, for Tertullian, springs out of the cross of Christ. According to Tertullian, Christ came into the world “to redeem them that were under the law” [Gal 4:5], to “make the crooked ways straight, and the rough places smooth, as Isaiah says” [Isa 40:4], and so “that we might receive the adoption of sons [Gal 4:5] that is, the Gentiles, who once were not sons” “that we may have ... the assurance that we are the children of God” (Gal 4:6) (*Adv. Marc.* 5.4).

Marcion’s Docetism, he argues, dismisses the power of God in the cross of Christ (1 Cor 1:18). If the cross of Christ represented the love of a new God, the Creator God of the OT could not have known about the cross! But the God of the OT “predicted the incidents of the cross,” including the fact that the very cross will be a stumbling block for His people (referring to Isa 8:14; 28:16) (*Adv. Marc.* 5.5).⁵³ This stumbling block is perpetuated by Marcion’s Docetism, for “what is that weakness of God which is stronger than men [1 Cor 1:25], but the nativity and incarnation of God? If, however, Christ was not born of the Virgin, was not constituted of human flesh, and thereby really suffered neither death nor the cross, there was nothing in Him either of foolishness or weakness” (*Adv. Marc.* 5.5).

Moreover, using 1 Cor 2:7, Tertullian contrasts Marcion’s OT god who does not know the future to Paul’s Creator God who pre-ordained salvation “in the counsels of God before the ages.” These pre-ordained ordinances of the Creator “were publicly instituted in Israel; but they lay overshadowed

⁵³ In *Adv. Marc.* 5.7, Tertullian refutes Docetism based on Paul’s presentation of Christ as our Passover (1 Cor 5:5, 7, 13). See also, 5.10–11; 5.14. See also 5.15., on resurrection, and 5.20., on Philipians 2.

with latent meanings, in which the wisdom of God was concealed, to be brought to light by and by among 'the perfect', when the time should come" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.5). However, "that which He both fore-ordained and revealed He also in the intermediate space of time announced by the pre-ministration of figures, and symbols, and allegories" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.5).

The Scripture's emphasis on salvation does not reject God's status as a Judge. In Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Tertullian notices that God is presented as a Judge and Avenger. Paul "ascribes both the gospel and salvation to Him who ... I [Tertullian] called the *just* God, not the *good* one" ("righteousness of God," Rom 1:16–17). "It is He who removes (men) from confidence in the law to faith in the gospel—that is to say, His own law and His own gospel" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.13, italics in original). This God, the Creator, reveals His wrath from heaven against the unrighteousness of men (Rom 1:18) to revenge the truth. God, according to Tertullian's understanding of Paul, will judge the sinners "'by Jesus Christ'" (Rom 2:16) (*Adv. Marc.* 5.13).

Tertullian's study of Eph 2:11–12 takes him to the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles in the church, made possible by Christ. He notes that Marcion modified Paul's text (Eph 2:15) again, by writing "in flesh" instead of "in His flesh," in support of his Docetism, to avoid saying that Jesus had flesh: "But Marcion erased the pronoun His, that he might make the enmity refer to flesh, as if (the apostle spoke) of a carnal enmity, instead of the enmity which was a rival to Christ" (*Adv. Marc.* 5.17).

Tertullian develops yet another contra-Marcion argument by quoting Eph 2:17–20: the Church is "'built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets,'" although Marcion erased the phrase "and the prophets," "forgetting that the Lord had set in His Church not only apostles, but prophets also.... the apostle himself never fails to build us up everywhere with (the words of) the prophets. For whence did he learn to call Christ the chief corner-stone [Eph 2:20] but from the figure given him in the Psalm?" [118:22] (*Adv. Marc.* 5.17).

This brings Tertullian to the renowned argument of apostolic succession: "No other teaching will have the right of being received as apostolic than that which is at the present day proclaimed in the churches of apostolic foundation" (*Adv. Marc.* 1.21). Commenting on 1 Tim 1:14, 18; 6:13, 20, Tertullian insists that "there is no mysterious hint darkly suggested in this expression about (some) far-fetched doctrine, but that a warning is rather given against receiving any other (doctrine) than that which Timothy had heard from himself [Paul], as I take it publicly: Before many witnesses is his phrase" (*Praescr.* 25). These many witnesses are the church members, not

the heretics (*Praescr.* 25). Both Jesus and the apostles have always taught the gospel and its teachings publicly (*Praescr.* 26). Paul handed his entire knowledge to the church and, for the very reason, expected the church to be mature, not foolish (Gal 3:1), not to stumble (Gal 5:7), not carnal, not babies (1 Cor 8:2) (*Praescr.* 27).

The true church “reposes its Christian faith in the Creator” (*Adv. Marc.* 1.21). But even “if the churches shall prove to have been corrupt from the beginning,” continues Tertullian, “where shall the pure ones be found? Will it be among the adversaries of the Creator? Show us, then, one of your churches, tracing its descent from an apostle, and you will have gained the day” (*Adv. Marc.* 1.21). Yes, the heretics, “are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles,” but they have to “produce the original records of their churches; let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning” (*Praescr.* 32).

On the other hand, it could be demonstrated that the heretics were present in the apostolic times. But rather than being present as the true, Orthodox church, they were present in the apostolic times as a heresy. Paul predicted the rise of heresy and the “necessity” of heresies (1 Cor 11:19).⁵⁴ But he signaled their seminal presence already in his time: “In his first epistle to the Corinthians, [he] sets his mark on certain who denied and doubted the resurrection” (1 Cor 15:12), a teaching that “is maintained by Marcion and Apelles and Valentinus” (*Praescr.* 33). In “Galatians, he inveighs against such men as observed and defend circumcision and the (Mosaic) law” (Gal 5:2), which “runs Hebion’s heresy” (*Praescr.* 33). In 1 Tim 4:3, Tertullian sees Paul rebuking Marcion’s and Apelles’s prohibition of marriage and in 1 Tim 1:4, he sees Paul rejecting Valentinus’s “endless genealogies” or “Æons” (*Praescr.* 33–34).

Having defeated the heretics with Paul’s help, Tertullian concludes: “Our system is not behind any in date; on the contrary, it is earlier than all; and this fact will be the evidence of that truth which everywhere occupies the first place. The apostles, again, nowhere condemn it; they rather defend it” (*Praescr.* 35). And Tertullian summarizes that “system”:

⁵⁴ Tertullian, *Adv. Val.* 5. In Tertullian, *Praescr.* 4, Tertullian explains that by saying the words in 1 Cor 11:19, Paul “does not mean that those persons should be deemed approved who exchange their creed for heresy; although they contrariously interpret his words to their own side.”

One Lord God ... the Creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus (born) of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God the Creator; and the Resurrection of the flesh; the law and the prophets she unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith... [which the church] "seals with the water (of baptism), arrays with the Holy Ghost, feeds with the Eucharist, cheers with martyrdom, and against such a discipline thus (maintained) she admits no gainsayer (*Praescr.* 37).

5. Conclusions and Implications

Several conclusions arise from this study. First, while it is true that later ecclesiastical developments have used many of the polemist's newly proposed concepts, such as apostolic succession and catholicity, the original concepts must be understood in the context of the debate with the Gnostics/Marcionites. During the second and third centuries, these concepts were used as efficient theological and ecclesiastical arguments against the Gnostics. As an application for contemporary situations, we should be careful in generating new theological and ecclesiastical concepts and practices, which, when applied in new contexts, would become unbiblical traditions or dogmas. Conversely, when seeking theological and ecclesiastical solutions, church leaders need to look for the biblical foundations for that solution, and not merely build a tradition or doctrine on a historic precedent.

Second, Paul is not a new battle fought by the theologians of the 19th through the 21st centuries. While the first century Church in Corinth saw a factionalist conflict over Paul as an apostle and as a leader, the second and third centuries witnessed a fierce battle over the control of Paul's theology. This controversy, which has raged for centuries till the 21st century, was not only over securing the honor of having Paul as the founder or champion of their movement, but especially to control Paul's interpretation and teachings. This study of Paul in early Christianity does not only reveal the considerable extent of the knowledge Christians had about the apostle and his teachings or about his role as the teacher of Christianity, but the essentiality of the interpretation of his teachings. For both the apostolic fathers and for the polemist, Paul was a historical person, a first century Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, honored apostle, the inspired writer of the epistles to the Christian Church, the apostle called to work at laying the foundation of the Orthodox, Catholic church. This foundation was the Gospel, the teaching that we are saved through the faith in the grace of God historically manifested in the crucified Christ, who was the fulfilment of God's promise in the OT

given to Adam and Abraham. For the heretics, Gnostics and Marcionites, Paul was the divine apostle of the God of the NT, the teacher of gnosis who has access to the pleroma and to the seven heavens or æons, who taught the gospel of the new era of the spirit that came to defeat the works of the Demiurge in a Gnostic worldview.

Third, not all Pauline writings are being mentioned by the early Christians and Gnostics/Marcionites. However, the reasons for some absences are radically different. The apostolic fathers and the polemicists used as many writings from Paul as they knew or needed for their purpose. The Gnostics and the Marcionites consciously, explicitly, and intentionally used a limited Pauline corpus, determined by their theological framework. This triggered the process of the establishment of the NT canon.

Fourth, the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library and the study of Gnosticism has significantly raised the level of trust and respect for the early Christian theologians such as Irenaeus. These theologians were not propagandists with a nefarious agenda of falsifying the truth, of taking down an opponent by misinformation or disinformation. Rather, they valued the truth in the best form they could understand it based on the entire Scripture. They themselves were shocked and disturbed by the heavy cuts and redactions their opponents applied to the biblical text in general and to Pauline texts in particular. For this reason, these theologians, starting with Polycarp and ending with Irenaeus and Tertullian, cannot be perceived as redactors or ghostwriters of the Pauline letters or the gospels. On the contrary, they not only quoted Paul as a theological authority, but perceived him as an inspired author and themselves as under his authority.

Fifth, some theologians may have a point in noting that the early Christian theologians won the battle and told the story. However, looking at Irenaeus—and the others—the important questions are why and how did they win the battle over Paul against the Gnostics? Here are several factors.

1. The context of the persecutions. The early Christians did not and church history in general does not perceive the early Christian theologians as conspiracy theorists working with political or violent means to destroy their opponents and to impose an artificial unified theological interpretation. As Christian leaders, the early fathers were ready to give their lives for the sake of the teachings of the Scriptures. They, therefore, did not have the luxury nor the interest in erring about or misconstruing the identity and teaching of Paul. The Chris-

tians who were reading the writings of the early Christian theologians trusted them because of their personal and moral integrity and faithfulness to God and the teachings of the Scriptures.

2. The apostolic fathers and the polemistis strove to have both a complete and objective perspective on Paul. They did not look at Paul in isolation but studied him in the larger context of Scripture and of the history of salvation revealed in the Holy Book. The writings of the early fathers inspired a sense of objectivity and seriousness, producing a convincing impression. They had their own copies of Scripture; they knew history, both the history of the Bible and the history of the Roman Empire; they knew philosophy and logic; they knew their theological opponents and their theological positions and arguments and were ready to point out their theological and philosophical problems. The early fathers were not trying to hide the theological debates and dissident positions. On the contrary, they described in detail the teachings and the practices of the heretical movements in their published books for everyone to read and then engaged in a theological and rational debate and refutation.
3. When confronted with the Marcionite canon, the polemistis reacted in a two-fold way. On the one hand, Irenaeus and Tertullian did not limit their responses to that truncated canon but worked with the entire Scripture to counter Marcionism, emphasizing that Luke and Paul are in complete harmony with the rest of all Scripture. On the other hand, the polemistis did sometimes accept the challenge of their opponents and worked from within the limitation of the Marcionite canon to prove their points anyways.
4. The most considerable strength but also contribution of the early fathers was their hermeneutics applied to the Pauline epistles. Sometime called the “Irenaeian reading” of Paul, this hermeneutical approach included the concepts of *Tota scriptura* and Scripture interprets Scripture. The heretics were able to depict Paul as a proto-Gnostic only when they used some of his passages in isolation and placing them in a Gnostic context. But the early church fathers proposed to read Paul’s epistles not only in the entirety of a given epistle, but in the context of the whole Pauline corpus, in the context of the entire NT, and especially in the context of the OT, apart from which Paul cannot be understood correctly. Certainly, these early theologians erred in some facts, forced applications of some OT texts, and developed some erroneous theological concepts. For instance, Tertullian

saw Paul literally fulfilling some OT texts or Irenaeus saying that Jesus was more than 40 years old when He died. They also differed in various theological aspects, such as minute details of the relation between the Torah and the new covenant. But they understood very clearly that the only way Paul could be correctly understood is in the context of the entire Scripture.

Sixth, this study, reveals what the early fathers perceived as Paul's foundational theological principles and core teachings of the apostle.

1. While the dissident movements (Ebionites, Gnostics, Marcionites) as well as contemporary studies build their interpretation of Christianity on a division between Peter and Paul or even between the Old and New Testaments, the early fathers did not perceive or accept such a theological division among the apostles or founders of Christianity. Although Peter and Paul did have practical disagreements, they were perceived as having the same message and the same gospel of salvation through the substitutionary death of Christ and the same ministry and mission. The early fathers understood this Pauline and Petrine message in the complex but focused framework of grace-faith, justification-sanctification, law-gospel, old-new covenants, Jews-Gentiles. But the early fathers emphasized that this complex understanding of Paul's teaching is to be accomplished only in the context of the entire Scripture.
2. Thus, in the theological perception of the early fathers, Paul is described significantly through the prism of his teaching of salvation and righteousness by grace and not by works, although they understood clearly that grace and faith did not preclude sanctification and the personal involvement of the individual. This theme occupied a considerable amount of their discussion of Paul.
3. Also, in the early fathers' perception, Paul placed his main theme of salvation by grace and faith in the context of the old-new covenants or law-gospel. Indeed, they treated Paul in the context of their response to the Gnostic division between the OT and NT, but the early fathers used this opportunity to summarize and develop their understanding of Paul. The logic of the law-gospel or old-new covenants relationship was promise-fulfilment. God fulfilled in Christ what He had determined in His plans and what He had revealed and promised in the Israelite economy.
4. In the early fathers' theological perception of Paul, the themes of the law-gospel and of the old-new covenants are further related to the

themes of the Jews and Gentiles as partaking to the same table of the new covenant, which was the fulfilment of the promise of the old one. However, these themes are inseparably connected to the theme of salvation or righteousness by faith and grace. This message was urgently needed by both the Jews and the Gentiles, as, during the time of Paul, both groups were stuck in the atmosphere of the religion of salvation by works.

Seventh, while the early fathers may have erred in some details or applications of the teaching of Paul, to conclude that the early fathers misunderstood Paul's central message or had a simplistic understanding of the apostle is simply incorrect. This study reveals that the early fathers had a complex, but balanced and focused perception and understanding of Paul, his mission, and core teaching, perception and understanding based on a complex study of the entire Scripture. Rather than pitching Paul's teaching about the righteousness by faith against Paul's teaching about the inclusion of the Gentiles at the table of the new covenant, the early fathers understood Paul to be preaching the unbreakable gospel of righteousness by grace and faith brought about by the new covenant (the cross of Christ) and preached to both the Jews and Gentiles. Rather than fragmenting or reducing the apostle's teaching, following the early fathers' complex and rich approach to Paul will prove fruitful to modern and contemporary theology.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN AFRICA (1914–1940): A NIGERIAN NARRATIVE

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Abstract

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) missionary enterprise in Africa achieved commendable success in Nigeria between 1914 and 1940. The SDA is a protestant Christian faith that grew out of the Protestant conviction of *Sola Scriptura*. Its original outreach to Nigeria comprised only of European missionaries. In this article, I explore the planting of the SDA Church in Nigeria, the challenge of converting Nigerians to Seventh-day Adventism, and particularly the missionary strategies. From all indicators, this has not been adequately researched in existing literature. This missiological study is qualitative in nature and it employed a historical research methodology, focusing on descriptive analysis. This study shows that the European SDA missionaries contributed immensely to the growth of the SDA Church in Africa, particularly in the Nigerian context.

Keywords: Missionary enterprise, Nigeria, converts, and indigenous people

1. Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) missionary enterprise in Africa attained groundbreaking success particularly in Nigeria between 1914 and 1940

through European missionaries.¹ The concept of “missionary” derives from the word “mission,” which is part of the term *missio De* (“work of God”). This terminology has its root in the New Puritan tradition.² The missionary movement in Nigeria was based on the apocalyptic-eschatological theology found in Rev 14:6–12. This text focuses on the message of the three angels, which had been central to the European SDA missionary movement into Africa, particularly the Blacks in the Sub-Saharan Africa.³ Studying the SDA missionary enterprise in Nigeria involves examining the fascinating origins, missiological strategies, legacies, and weaknesses in the national planting of the Adventist mission and message. Nigeria is located on the western coast of Africa and has a varied geography and people. The people speak over 400 hundred languages. Nigeria is a country that is blessed with abundant natural resources, notable large deposits of petroleum and gas.⁴

The origin of the Seventh-day Adventists is linked to the Millerite Movement in America that was a White Movement founded in mid-19th century. The SDA church was established by a group of Millerites after their great disappointment in October 1844. This breakaway Millerite group comprised the pioneers that consequently formed the SDA church in 1863.⁵ The name “Seventh-day Adventist” was chosen to reflect the belief and practices of the evolving denomination.⁶ The SDA church is known for its biblical Seventh-day of the week (Saturday) Sabbath observance, and the belief in the imminent Second Coming of Jesus Christ, among others.⁷

This study focuses on the planting of the SDA church in Nigeria, their missionary activities, the challenges they found on the ground and how

¹ “Official Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventist Church,” <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/>.

² R. Pierce Beaver, “American Missionary Motivation before the Revolution,” *Church History* 31.2 (1962): 218, doi:10.2307/3162512. Gerard P. Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1977), 165.

³ Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, 165.

⁴ J. F. Ade Ajayi, “Milestone on Nigerian History,” *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria>.

⁵ “Seventh-day Adventist Church Pioneers,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventist_Church_Pioneers. George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists*, 3rd ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2012), 15.

⁶ Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, 40.

⁷ Amanda Casanova, “10 Things Everyone Should Know About Seventh-day Adventists and their Beliefs,” <https://www.christianity.com/church/denominations/10-things-everyone-should-know-about-seventh-day-adventists-and-their-beliefs.html>.

they resolved them. The year 1914 marked the origin of the SDA mission in Nigeria while 1940 marked the beginning of the restrictions of the SDA European missionary activities in Nigeria.⁸ This study is divided into five major parts: (1) The review of the major existing literature on the SDA history in Nigeria, (2) Tracing the conversion of the Blacks into the SDA Church in America, (3) SDA missionary activities in West Africa before 1914, (4) Other religious and missionary enterprise in Nigeria before 1914, and (5) European SDA missionary methodologies in Nigeria (1914–1940).

2. Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Enterprise in Nigeria: A Literature Review

The foremost work on the missionary enterprise in Nigeria was written by David A. Agboola, titled *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888–1988): A Mustard Seed*.⁹ This study examined the foreign and indigenous missionary enterprise in West Africa particularly noting their efforts in Nigeria. It also surveyed how the foreign missionaries worked and handed over the work to the indigenous workers strategically through a thematic study.¹⁰ David O. Babalola's book, *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers*, surveyed selected biographies of a few of the foreign and indigenous missionaries between 1905 and 1992. The study focused more on the sacrifices they made, especially in Western Nigeria.¹¹ In another book, *Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria Since 1914: An Impact Analysis*, Babalola probes the humanitarian and community services of the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries: road construction, water, medical, health care services, and social development in Nigeria in the early 20th century.¹² In *The Compass: The Success Story of Babcock University*, Babalola attempts to map the SDA contributions to Nigeria's educational development through the activities of Babcock University.¹³

⁸ David T. Agboola, *The Seventh-day Adventists in Yoruba Land (1914–1964)* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Day Star, 1987).

⁹ David A. Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa (1888–1988): A Mustard Seed* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Lasob, 2001).

¹⁰ Agboola, *The Seventh-day Adventists in West Africa*.

¹¹ David O. Babalola, *Sweet Memories of Our Pioneers* (Lagos, Nigeria: Emaphine, 2001).

¹² David O. Babalola, *Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria since 1914: An Impact Analysis* (Nigeria: Babcock University, 2010).

¹³ David O. Babalola, *The Compass: Success Nigeria Story of Babcock University: One of the First Private Universities in Nigeria* (Nigeria: Olarotayo, 2002).

Adekunle A. Alalade's book, *Limiting Factors to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa: The Nigerian Case Study*, explores how the foreign missionaries dealt with the African culture, based on a Western theological framework, thereby condemning Africans and their cherished traditions from 1913 to 2007.¹⁴ Enebiemi Eko discusses how the indigenous missionaries evangelized the indigenous people with the Christian tenets and salvation through faith in Christ Jesus without any compromise. Enebiemi concludes that Christian theology could be adopted in any indigenous cultural milieu.¹⁵ Emmanuel O. Eregare examines the SDA missionary enterprise in the mid-western region of Nigeria between 1948 and 2012. Eregare's research focuses on missionary activities, personal lives, challenges from other religions, and indigenization of Christianity, among others.¹⁶ M. C. Njoku's notable dissertation, *A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Igboland*, covers the missionary enterprise, prospects, and challenges in the growth of the SDA faith in the Southeastern region, especially among the Igbo of Nigeria.¹⁷ Ayuba Mavalla's book, *Conflict Transformation: Churches in the Face of Structural Violence in Northern Nigeria*, addresses the role of the SDA missionaries, the sacrifices, and the risks they took bringing succor to the displaced persons between 1992 and 2001, especially during the religious conflicts that plagued the Northern region of Nigeria.¹⁸

Based on the studies by David O. Agboola, David O. Babalola, Adekunle A. Alalade, Enebiemi E. Eko, Emmanuel O. Eregare, and M. C. Njoku, the Nigerian missiological enterprise can be described as growing historiography and these studies serve as groundwork. Though the works are thorough, they are rather regional or sectional in nature. Although the studies reflect some missionary activities in the various regions covered, they do not focus purely on the national analysis of the European missionary enterprise. In addition, the studies above hardly examined in any detail the SDA

¹⁴ Adekunle A. Alalade, *Limiting Factors to the Success of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa: The Nigeria Case Study* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Agbo, 2008).

¹⁵ Enebiemi E. Eko, *African Evangelization: Problems and Prospects* (Enugu, Nigeria: Vickson, 2010).

¹⁶ Emmanuel Orihantare Eregare, *An African Christian Church History: Seventh-day Adventist Cosmology in Edo/Delta Field States 1948–2012 and Ecumenical Initiatives* (Lagos, Nigeria: Christ Coming Books, 2013).

¹⁷ Chidi M. Njoku, "A History of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Igbo Land (1923–2010)" (PhD diss., University of Nigeria, 2014).

¹⁸ Mavalla G. Ayuba, *Conflict Transformation: Churches in the Face of Structural Violence in Northern Nigeria* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2014).

church's missiological methodologies, landmark sustainable development, and other missionary point of references to the growing missionary enterprise in Africa, particularly in Nigeria.

3. Tracing the conversion of the Blacks into the Seventh-day Adventist Church from America

The centripetal force is necessary to keep an object moving in a circular path pulling it toward the center of rotation, while the centrifugal force pushes an object away from the center of rotation.¹⁹ The Seventh-day Adventist methodology to convert the Blacks in its founding home in America could be described as a centripetal methodology.²⁰ The date when the first Blacks joined the church was not clearly established in the developing SDA record-keeping and a dearth of record management in Africa.²¹

The first notable Black SDA was William Foy who later became a gospel minister and missionary in America.²² The conversion of the Blacks into the SDA church began in North America as far back as 1863 before it spread to other continents. In 1864, the Adventist message moved from North America to Europe through an unofficial missionary, Michael B. Czechowski, who settled in the Waldensian Valleys, Tramelan, in Northern Italy. In 1867, Czechowski moved to Switzerland to continue spreading the SDA message. In 1874, the General Conference of the SDA sent John Nevins Andrews as the first official missionary to Europe and he settled in Switzerland to continue the work of Czechowski. As a result of this later missionary, Switzerland became the cradle of European Adventism. In 1882, the missionary enterprise in Europe was guided by the Council of the SDA mission and it was headed by the Vice President of the General Conference, Ludwig Conradi.²³

The SDA mission from the coast of America to other continents can be understood by its immediate and remote causes. The immediate cause was

¹⁹ "Centripetal Forces and Centrifugal Forces," <https://byjus.com>; "Newton Laws of Motion," Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/Newtons-laws-of-motion> on the 24th of June, 2021.

²⁰ Knight, *A Brief History*, 81.

²¹ Angela Nwaomah and Sampson Nwaomah, "Perceptions and Challenges on Church Records Management among Seventh-day Adventist Pastors," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 23 (2021): 64–82.

²² Knight, *A Brief History*, 81.

²³ Chigemezie Wogu, "Seventh-day Adventist Inter-European Division," <https://eud.adventist.org>.

based on the apocalyptic-eschatological motif in Rev 14:6–12 which depicts the globally-oriented missionary movement.²⁴ The remote cause was revolutionary and focused on the global Christian's missionary movement through the sending of tracts containing the Gospel truth. The period for the Christian global expansion coincided with the SDA desire for expansion into other parts of the globe.²⁵ This initiative to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ through tracts led to the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in West Africa around 1888.

Tracing the conversion of the Blacks, especially in America, offers three major advantages to this study, although no records show that any of those Blacks worked in Africa or particularly in Nigeria. First, it traces the origin of the Black converts from America. Second, it negates the assumption that the SDA mission and message was only for the Whites. Third, it implies that there was no racial barricade to the Seventh-day Adventist mission and message. Last, in the African context, the conversion of the Blacks on the American soil makes null and void the wrong notion that the SDA mission and message should have been passed to Africans by inculturation. Consequently, the study also shows that even the Blacks, especially Nigerians, identified with the SDA mission and message.

4. Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Enterprise in West Africa before 1914

Before the First World War, SDA African missions were under the supervision of the European divisions based on the affiliation of their various colonies. The Seventh-day Adventists in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, were probably under the British as the colonial master. In 1888, the first SDA missionaries arrived in West Africa. The foundation of their work in West Africa was laid through a lay missionary, Hannah More. Ms. More took in 1863 the spreading of the Sabbath message as her duty to the Gold Coast, the present-day Ghana. The record shows that she put her work aside for God's work. She consequently lost her job because she was so passionate about spreading the Seventh-day Sabbath truth in West Africa.²⁶ The method she

²⁴ Knight, *A Brief History*, 81.

²⁵ Christian G. Baëta, "Christianity in Tropical Africa" (paper presented and discussed at the Seventh International African Seminar, University of Ghana, April 1965); David B. Barrett, *Schism & Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

²⁶ C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World: The Story of the Seventh-day Adventist* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1977), 177.

employed was tract sharing; she was supplied with tracts by Stephen Haskell, her spiritual mentor. Hannah worked along the coasts of Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa. She served wholeheartedly as an unofficial worker for the SDA church. It took Hannah about 30 years groundbreaking mission work from 1863 to the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in West Africa, when Hannah's little light lit up the missionary enterprise beyond the shores of Africa to Australia. Hannah's dedicated missionary activities converted Alexander Dickson, who later took the Adventism to Australia.²⁷ Hannah's foundational work also yielded the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Liberia in 1893. During Hannah's missionary enterprise, the use of tracts was trendy, and was led by the International Tract Society. This society's primary duty was to send tracts to prospective or practicing Christians all over the globe.²⁸

Through this tract evangelistic method, Francis I. U. Dolphijn got converted in 1888. Since 1888 there had been various missionaries visiting Africa, especially Ghana, such as Lawrence Chadwick and a few other persons in 1892. History recorded that Dolphijn and a few believers took care of the Seventh-day Adventist believers in Ghana until the official missionaries, K. G. Rudolph and Edward L. Stanford arrived in Ghana in 1894.²⁹ The special appeal for sending missionaries in official capacity was made at the General Conference of the SDA by Chadwick.³⁰ On their arrival, Rudolph carried out his missionary activities through literature evangelism—selling books on health and other Adventist truths. Stanford, on the other hand, died of malaria,³¹ a dreadful African sickness that made the Europeans describe Africa as a Whiteman's grave.³²

²⁷ Agboola, *The Seventh-day Adventists in West Africa*, 9.

²⁸ Agboola, *The Seventh-day Adventists in West Africa*, 9–10.

²⁹ Kofi Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism: A History* (Accra, Ghana: Advent Press, 2005); *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook for 1894* (Battle Creek, MI: General Conference Association of the Seventh-day Adventists, n.d.), 86, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1894.pdf>.

³⁰ George E. Bryson, "The Beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana, Gold Coast (1888–1905)" (term paper, Andrews University, 1975).

³¹ William H. Dawley, Jr., "Washington, D. C.," *Kansas City Sun* (November 15, 1919): 2; in reports of his extensive travels during 1919 published in the *Review and Herald* (issues dated February 20, 1919; August 14, 1919; September 11, 1919; September 25, 1919; October 23, 1919; November 27, 1919; and January 22, 1920).

³² Toyin Falola et al., *History of Nigeria*, vol. 3 of *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century* (Nigeria: Learn Africa, 1991).

In 1895, an action was taken by the Foreign Mission Board of the General Conference of the SDA church to send Dudley Upton Hale of Texas, G. P. Riggs of Florida, and G. T. Kerr with his wife, a nurse, to join Karl Rudolph. This group of missionaries had health workers in their company too. This added health services to the gospel ministry. The missionaries lived in mud houses and were selfless in carrying out their activities. They never sought comfort as their rooms were opened to all that needed Christ any time of the day and even at night.³³ The records show that G. T. Kerr left his family for a two-year missionary enterprise and returned home in 1897.³⁴

By 1902, however, there was a preparatory shift for the foreign missionaries to be replaced or to work hand in hand with the indigenous missionaries. This was evident in the England Conference where A. G. Daniels, the General Conference president, J. D. Hayford, and other Ghanaian indigenous converts attended the conference. Daniels took four men with him to train them to support the Adventist mission in Ghana. By 1910, the SDA missionary method shifted to education under the guidance of the West African Council meeting that called for training missionaries from the various West African regions.³⁵

The European Division was located in Hamburg, Germany, as an arm of the General Conference of the SDA in 1913. The European leaders decided to spread the SDA mission to other parts of the continent, particularly West Africa.³⁶ By 1914, European SDA missionaries moved the missionary work to Nigeria and at the same time to Sierra Leone through the missionary work of David Caldwell Babcock and H. B. Myers with their families respectively.³⁷

Between 1888 and 1914, the Seventh-day Adventist movement was established in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, and these became the earliest regions with SDA presence in West Africa. There is a dearth of records on the total number of memberships that joined the church within this period. W. H. Green discovered that by 1909 the number of Blacks that joined the church rose to about 900 from the organization of the church.³⁸ Douglas

³³ D. U. Hale, "African West Mission," *Review and Herald* 12 (1895): 762.

³⁴ Francis M. Wilcox, *Review and Herald* 73 (1896): 284.

³⁵ Agboola, *The Seventh-day Adventists in West Africa*, 31–32.

³⁶ Wogu, "Seventh-day Adventist Inter-European Division," 1.

³⁷ Hale, "African West Mission," 762.

³⁸ W. H. Green, "Negro Department Survey," Fall Council, October 20–31, 1920; W. H. Green, *North American Negro Department Circular Letter to Fellow Laborers*, April 19, 1921; Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-*

Morgan noted that around 1914 there was a notable increase in the number of Blacks in the SDA church worldwide. Morgan further added that during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the growth of the SDA Blacks took place through the planting of Black churches in the major cities of the United States of America which raised the number of the Black Adventists to about 5,000.³⁹ These statistics showed that the Black race were receptive to the SDA mission and that the SDA mission was not only for the Americans but for all races on earth, particularly Blacks in Sub-Saharan Africa. These statistics could be decoded that this reception was one of the forces for the advancement of the SDA mission, particularly in West Africa.

5. The Missionary Enterprise in Nigeria Before 1914

There were three major religions in Nigeria before the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They were the African Traditional Religions, Christianity (other denominations), and Islam.⁴⁰ By the time D. C. Babcock arrived in Nigeria in 1914, the predominant religion of the indigenous people was the African Traditional Religions, which existed before the coming of other religious groups organizations. The traditional religions in Nigeria were not universal. Each religion was restricted to tribal groups or groups of communities. They neither underwent any renewal or reforms nor converted others or engaged in any missionary enterprise. They were usually found around the group(s) of people where it existed across Nigeria.⁴¹

The Islamic religion came to the shores of Africa in the eighth century but arrived in Hausaland in the twelfth century, particularly in the northern region of Nigeria. The success could be attributed to the Islamic missionaries, based on their work as African trading agents, the establishment of various trading centers in Africa, and to Muslim scholars. These scholars established Islamic schools to educate the indigenes which led to Arabic being the first international language in West Africa and Nigeria.⁴²

day Adventist Church, rev. ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 322–23.

³⁹ Green, "Negro Department Survey." See also Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

⁴⁰ Emmanuel G. K. George, "Influence of Foreign Religion on Nigerian Culture," in *Nigerian People and Global Culture*, ed. Babatunde Adeyemi (Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria: Babcock University Press, 2001), 119–27.

⁴¹ Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis* (London: Longman, 1966).

⁴² George, "Influence of Foreign Religion," 120.

Christian missionaries came to Sub-Saharan Africa in 1482, with the Portuguese as pioneers. However, this first attempt at planting Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa was a failure because of many reasons, including language barrier. The missionaries tried to speak limited English to pass across their messages to the indigenous people or made it simpler for their interpreters to understand and pass the message in their local languages to the people.⁴³ Another factor that contributed to the failure of the first missionary enterprise in Nigeria was the indigenous resistant movements against the foreign missionaries which they suspected had come to take advantage of the territories and cart away their natural resources.⁴⁴ Christianity resurfaced in 1842 and survived through the establishment of European technology, schools, and health facilities, to mention just a few.⁴⁵ John Mbiti stated that the European missionaries assumed that the African Traditional Religions were evil. Based on these convictions, they advanced their missionary activities alongside their political, economic, and, particularly, religious agendas.⁴⁶

6. European Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Methodologies in Nigeria (1914–1940)

Before the First World War, the African fields of the SDA mission were under the European SDA Division, a division of the General Conference of the SDA church.⁴⁷ Therefore, the early part of the missionary activities of the SDA in Nigeria also was pioneered by the European missionaries. After concentrating for a two-decade and half on the Gold Coast (Ghana), the SDA message arrived in Nigeria on March 7, 1914.⁴⁸

T. Falola et al. suggest that at the time D. C. Babcock came to Nigeria in 1914, the colonial masters were driven by empire-building, economic ex-

⁴³ Ifeyinwa Obiegbo, "Language and Culture: Nigerian Perspectives," *African Research Review* 10 (2016): 1.

⁴⁴ Jacob. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1842–1891* (London: Longman, 1965).

⁴⁵ Michael Popoola, "British Conquest: Colonialism and Its Impacts," in *Nigerian People and Global Culture*, ed. Babatunde Adeyemi (Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria: Babcock University Press, 2011), 62. See also Falola et al., *History of Nigeria*, 6.

⁴⁶ John. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Botswana: Heinemann, 1969), 7.

⁴⁷ W. McClement, *Review and Herald*, November 4, 1948, 12; See also, Authur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1962), 4:7–11.

⁴⁸ Agboola, *The Seventh-day Adventists in West Africa*, 7.

ploitation, particularly cultural imposition, and their love to share the western religion with the indigenous people through missionaries.⁴⁹ Christianity (including the Seventh-day Adventist Church) was viewed as a western religion since it came from the western world, as westerners explored and expanded into Africa, and particularly in Nigeria.⁵⁰

Shortly before the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist missionary to Nigeria, the British had assumed authority over the independent territories in the Niger area through diplomatic and military methods.⁵¹ The British authority then focalized its goals by January 1, 1914 on total control over the Niger area and the economic activities through the policy of unification of the two halves of Nigeria—the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, which was described as amalgamation.⁵²

On the international scene, the year 1914, when the Adventist missionaries arrived in Nigeria, also marked the beginning of the First World War.⁵³ Amidst the political instability on the international arena and the stabilization of British colonialism in 1914, D. C. Babcock, the first official missionary to Nigeria and his team, arrived in Lagos. They moved to a nearby village, Erunmu, Oyo State, located in the defunct Protectorate of the Southern Nigeria (present-day Western Nigeria).⁵⁴ Babcock and his team left Sierra Leone for Nigeria in February and arrived on the Nigerian shores with a boat on Saturday, March 7, 1914. In 1915, Babcock and his team moved through evangelizing rural settlements to another rural mission station which was about seven miles northward of Ilorin, in the present day Kwara State, then called Shao (Sao).⁵⁵ The reason why Babcock decided to start his missionary activities in a rural setting is not clear.

Five possibilities could be gleaned as reasons why Babcock started his missionary movements in rural settings. First, there was the possibility that the indigenous people could be better reached in their homelands, which was the most conducive setting for mission. Second, the cities with their hustling and bustling might pose some challenges reaching the indigenous

⁴⁹ Falola et al., *History of Nigeria*, 51.

⁵⁰ *SDA Encyclopedia*, 867.

⁵¹ Popoola, "British Conquest," 62.

⁵² Emmanuel O. Ojo, "Nigeria, 1914-2014: From Creation to Cremation," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 23 (2014): 67–91. See also, Falola et al., *History of Nigeria*, 6.

⁵³ Falola et al., *History of Nigeria*, 6; Popoola, "British Conquest," 65.

⁵⁴ Babalola, "Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria," 2–40.

⁵⁵ Babalola, "Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria." See also E. A. Ayandele, *Holy Johnson: Pioneer of the African Nationalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), 33.

people. Third, rural evangelism might be key to urban mission due to the rural-urban migration, searching for better living and civilization, that characterized the colonial urban settings.⁵⁶ Fourth, according to Eregare, taking mission to the natives in their rural settings, that were the laboratories and depositories of the African Traditional beliefs and practices, would make evangelizing the urban settlement easier. Henry Venn, as cited in F. Ade Ajayi's work, added that mission to the rural settings could be likened to creating local congregation that would be self-governing, self-supportive and self-evangelizing. Last, Babcock could have been directed by the Lord through an invitation from a tribal chief.⁵⁷

7. A Western Region of Nigeria Perspective to SDA Missionary Enterprise

The SDA foreign-based mission in Nigeria had its headquarters in Ibadan. The first SDA missionaries encountered language challenges when they came to Africa. Based on this major challenge, Babcock and his team, on their arrival in Erunmu, employed local interpreters as it was customary to missionary practice during this age. The first set of indigenous missionaries they employed were from the natives that were literate who could serve as interpreters and teachers. They were Samuel Oyeniyi and Jacob Alao. Oyeniyi was one of the children of Baale of Erunmu. He was a gifted personality who spoke many indigenous languages of Nigeria.

Babcock and his team acquired and provided basic amenities. They bought some land and also received some properties as donations. They erected buildings, provided well water, and constructed paths, roads, and bridges within the developmental stage in Western Nigeria of the early twentieth century. The record further shows that in 1914 the missionaries had baptized seven members into the church. Within a reasonable period, the missionaries constructed a bridge which was opened for the use both by common people and government officers. As a result of building this first bridge, the missionaries won a contract to build another bridge for the colonial government. The bridge they built for the government was called "Amilegbe Bridge."

⁵⁶ Derek Byerlee, "Rural-Urban Migration in Africa: Theory, Policy and Research Implication," *The International Migration Review* 88 (1974), 543–66. See also F. Ade Ajayi, "Christian Mission in Africa, 1841–1891," *Journal of the Historical Research of Nigeria* 3 (1966): 577.

⁵⁷ J. F. Ade Ajayi, "Milestone on Nigerian History," n.p.

In 1915, Babcock and his team traveled to another village being invited by some members of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Ipoti-Ekiti to establish the SDA mission station which was then about 120 kilometers southeast of Ilorin and 352 kilometers northeast of Lagos. This call to serve must have been made possible by their services and the uniqueness of the Gospel that they preached.

While planting a mission station in Ipoti Ekiti, there were certain cultural practices that the SDA European missionaries encountered that they needed to understand better before making converts of the natives. In a personal interview with Michael Omolewa, whose father (Daniel Omolewa) was one of Babcock's converts in Ipoti-Ekiti, he enumerated five major challenges they faced. M. Omolewa narrated that polygamy was one of the issues the European SDA missionaries had to face. Second, while some natives were on the verge of deciding to become members of the SDA faith, the Sabbath message was a challenge, especially because of opposition from the existing Christian churches. Third, the idea that no polygamists could hold a leadership position or be a missionary especially to the converts was another challenge. Fourth, the idea that polygamists would not be baptized was another subject of controversy. Evidence of the above scenarios were gleaned from the experiences of Daniel Omolewa, among others, who was a polygamist and the first Sabbath School Secretary at Ipoti church. He had been a Christian polygamist for nineteen years before the coming of the SDA missionaries into Ipoti-Ekiti.

After Daniel Omolewa's conversion in 1915, he was intimidated to renounce the Sabbath and return to the CMS Sunday worship. He refused to abandon the Sabbath message and worship. Nonetheless, Omolewa was disqualified from being an ordained minister, as did a few of his friends, because he had married more than one wife. He was accepted into the SDA church with three wives by 1915 and married up to five wives by 1940. After a while, the SDA church gradually responded to the issue of polygamy. The SDA missionaries then ensured that the indigenous missionaries and church workers were never to marry more than one wife.⁵⁸

Further, Babcock and his team embarked on the establishment of a primary school to educate the people, and as a medium to properly reach the indigenous people with the Gospel and to mentor indigenous missionaries. Babcock and his team did not only teach the converts or indigenous people Bible lessons, but they also empowered them through entrepreneurial skills,

⁵⁸ Interview with Michael Omolewa, an Emeritus professor of History at Babcock University in Nigeria, on July 1 and 5, 2021.

so that they could improve their standard of living, and to raise a congregation which would be able to support mission financially. Babcock made use of all the available means of transportation, such as railways and pathways to reach the people in Erunmu, Sao, and Ipoti-Ekiti.⁵⁹

By 1926, another strategy was employed by the European missionaries of the SDA Church. This involved the establishment of women's ministry called "Dorcas," particularly pioneered by Mary McClement, the wife of William McClement. She collaborated with some indigenous women with the goal to reach out to the poor. This went a long way in removing the prejudice of the indigenous people for the message, who otherwise might not be interested.

In 1939, the publishing ministry was inaugurated through the missionary activity of W. T. B. Hyde, who purchased a small printing press machine for the production of tracts in Nigeria. The manual press machine was to produce tracts in the indigenous language. The press was built in Ibadan, where tracts were produced in collaboration with Stanborough Press in England. The European missionaries did not wait till they had everything, but started the press in a garage. Their goals were achieved. Through the publishing ministry, tracts were produced to reach out to indigenous people of Nigeria which generated great results.⁶⁰

Reports show that McClement continued the work of Babcock. Although there is a scarcity of literature on the strategies McClement employed, it is recorded that the church during his tenure grew speedily. McClement used a rural setting approach to establish churches within the adjoining villages around the major stations (Erunmu, Sao, and Ipoti-Ekiti), which were established by Babcock and his team members. Through McClement, the responsibility of the work was shared between a few foreign ordained ministers and evangelists who worked in the new stations, opened during this second phase of the work in the western region of Nigeria. Two indigenous missionaries were trained by McClement during his missionary enterprise: pastors A. Balogun and J. B. Oriola.⁶¹

8. SDA Missionary Enterprise in Eastern Nigeria

Historical records show that the eastern region of Nigeria was characterized by Christian denominational rivalries which lasted for decades before the

⁵⁹ Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa*, 25.

⁶⁰ Byerlee, "Rural-Urban Migration in Africa," 25.

⁶¹ Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa*, 25–26.

arrival of the SDA missionaries in 1923.⁶² In Eastern Nigeria, Adventist missionaries registered their presence through Jesse Clifford and his wife at a time of relative peace. The duo arrived from England to Aba in 1923.⁶³ They trained two indigenous missionaries who assisted Jesse Clifford and his wife. These were Philip Onwere and Robert Nwosu who eventually became the first ordained Gospel ministers in eastern Nigeria.⁶⁴

The second notable evangelistic strategy employed by the European missionaries in the eastern region was in the form of camp meetings. Through camp meetings prospective converts would be invited and baptized into the membership of the SDA mission.⁶⁵ In 1936, the European missionaries and a few Africans combined efforts to grow the mission in the eastern region. They carried out their mission by opening an educational institution for girls in Aba. In 1927, W. J. Newman was sent to assist the missionaries in the Union Territory, including Aba, and he specialized in Sabbath School and Missionary Volunteers (Youth Ministry). The record shows that the SDA mission grew faster and stronger in this region. The membership was about 8500 in 1936. Eva Raitt and D. Fraser were among the foreign missionaries that assisted in taking care of the girls' school in Aba. After about fifteen years of training through Bible studies, the first camp meeting was held in 1938 and yielded a high number of converts.⁶⁶

During the Second World War the coming of Europeans to Africa was restricted for many reasons. First, the period was characterized by the Africans' desire for self-rule and independence from colonial powers. Second, it was also a period when the British became aware they could no longer rule Africa forever. This was followed by the Africans' declarations of self-determination and self-rule. Last, there was also an economic depression in Europe which led the British to collaborate with Africans, especially the chiefs, to control African territories.⁶⁷ The emigration of the Europeans to their homelands because of the Second World War led to the recruitment of indigenous missionaries for the mission stations in Africa on September 3,

⁶² Felix. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857–1914* (London: Frank Cass), 1.

⁶³ Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa*, 24–29.

⁶⁴ W. McClements, "The Outlook in Nigeria," *The Advent Survey* 8 (1936): 4; J. T. Robison, *The Advent Survey* 10 (1939): 2.

⁶⁵ L. Edmonds, "The Rising Tide in South-East Nigeria," *The Advent Survey* 9 (1937): 4–5; W. McClements, "Progress in Nigeria," *The Advent Survey* 9 (1937): 1–2.

⁶⁶ Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa*, 46.

⁶⁷ South African History Online. "The Effects of World War 2 in Africa," SAHO, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/effects-ww2-africa>.

1939. This change required the use of the indigenous missionaries to communicate the Advent Message to the peoples of Africa. The restriction to the British missionaries opened up opportunities for the North American SDA missionaries to come to Africa in the 1940s.⁶⁸

9. A Northern Region of Nigeria Perspective to SDA Missionary Enterprise

The SDA missionaries, in the early days of their work in both the Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria, were restricted because of the influence of Islam. This restriction was a result of the agreement signed between the British and the emirates that Christianity would not be given a free rein in the region. By the 1930s and 1940s, the leprosy epidemic stormed the indigenous peoples of the northern Nigeria. In trying to curb the epidemic, the government and the emirates invited the Christian missionaries to help and were given the possibility to preach to the lepers. The Christian missionaries entered the Northern region through the health ministry.⁶⁹

In this context, the first set of the official SDA missionaries to the northern region of Nigeria were J. J. Hyde and his team. They took the Adventist faith to the northern region through health ministries. In December 1931 they settled in Jengre which was their first mission station. Records further show that Hyde first built a dispensary station where the indigenous people who had jigger infection were being cared for by dressing their wounds. Hyde's wife, who was a nurse, pioneered the work to aid her husband. Thereafter, Hyde focused on the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the indigenous people. In their missionary enterprise they had two converts, Lamba Kakwi and Kaji Dariya, who were baptized by W. McClement in 1936. The two converts eventually became missionaries and assisted Hyde and his wife in their mission to people of various ethnicities within the Plateau region and a few parts of Zaria.⁷⁰

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

This article examined the European missionary enterprise in Africa, particularly of the European SDA mission in Nigeria, from 1914 to 1940. This missionary movement was foundational and yielded sustainable developments

⁶⁸ Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa*, 26.

⁶⁹ J. J. Hyde, "Doors Opening in Nigeria," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 114 (1937): 13–14.

⁷⁰ Agboola, *Seventh-day Adventist History in West Africa*, 26.

through the establishment of educational institutions and basic amenities like water, roads, and bridges, to mention a few, to alleviate the standard of living of the indigenous people. The European SDA missionaries arrived in Nigeria to encounter a complex society undergoing political subjugation of their territories. There was also the challenge of multiple ethnic groups with the accompanying multiplicity of indigenous languages and religions.

The SDA mission was established in a period of uncertainty at the national and international levels. This involved the Amalgamation and the commencement of the First World War. They were also plagued by health issues (such as malaria). Despite these challenges that the Europeans encountered, they were able to establish the SDA mission, making converts and caring for their well-being. These challenges ended the first phase of the SDA missionary movement in the Nigerian field. While the Americans used a centripetal theory for missionary enterprise in America to get the Blacks into the church, the European SDA missionaries used the centrifugal theory in Nigeria. The Europeans moved with their best devotion to Africa from their homeland, particularly to Nigeria, establishing SDA missions.

This article suggests that the contemporary Nigerian SDA leaders and laities should learn from the SDA European missionaries by starting from a very little beginning without waiting to have everything before going on a mission. Second, contemporary native missionaries should learn to leave their comfort zones for missions in the suburbs or villages or rural areas. Third, the SDA native missionaries should learn to carry on the work of their predecessors without ethnic or personal bias. Fourth, the native missionaries should also learn to take risks, making sacrifices and providing basic amenities that could open unlimited access for mission. Last, the SDA missionaries should stand for the position of the church on the issue of polygamy without wavering and yet meeting individuals in love. Scholars in Church history could pick up any gap created in this study for further study in Nigeria and beyond.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM IN AFRICA: THE ENTANGLEMENT DEBATE

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Abstract

Seventh-day Adventism in Africa finds itself in a complex context of maintaining its identity within traditional African religious systems. This identity struggle is partly linked to the failure of early Adventist missionaries who brought the gospel to Africa without much knowledge of African traditions. Some missionaries believed that no religious heritage existed prior to their arrival in Africa. Such an approach to missionary activities created a setback in the process of contextualizing the Christian message in the African continent. This article reflects on the identity crisis in African Seventh-day Adventism today by analysing the belief systems of African Traditional Religion and how and why many Seventh-day Adventists in Africa still find themselves entangled in traditions long after their conversion to the Adventist faith. The article presents some recommendations on how the Seventh-day Adventist Church can address the identity crisis in the denomination in Africa.

Keywords: Seventh-day Adventism in Africa, African Traditional Religion, Adventist missionaries in Africa, contextualization

1. Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa is one of the Christian denominations that struggle to contain the influence of traditions and African Tra-

ditional Religion (ATR) on their members.¹ Africans who join Adventism often come from families devoted to traditional religious systems which the white missionaries literally combatted. African traditions permeate the psyche of Africans to the point that when they accept Christianity they are unable to relinquish their traditional beliefs for the adoption of the demands of their new found faith. They struggle to brazenly and absolutely conform to the tenets of their new faith.² Perhaps, what brought about this unfortunate development is not simply the attractive benefit that traditions offer, but the failure of the white missionaries to clearly define the point of divergence and convergence between African religious beliefs and Christian dogmas. When the missionaries came, they presumably concluded that Africans had nothing in the “religions” of their traditions upon which they could build the new faith. Nehemiah M. Nyaundi argues that “missionary misunderstanding of ATR viewed the religion as actually non-religion.”³ When Africans accepted Christianity, they soon woke up and found themselves within the strands of Christianity and African traditions.⁴ Converts to Christianity more often reverted “to the traditional ways of dealing with existential concerns.”⁵ Adventist missionaries, just like other Christian missionaries, “approached ATR from a common European attitude that viewed native religions as savage, heathen, satanic, and animistic, among other ne-

¹ Important studies on African Traditional Religion (ATR) include: Jacob K. Olupona, *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando, and Bolaji Bateye, eds., *African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Emerging Trends, Indigenous Spirituality and the Interface with Other World Religions, Essays in Honour of Jacob Kehinde Olupona* (London: Routledge, 2016); Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM, 1973); John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1969); John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1970); John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1975).

² Nehemiah M. Nyaundi, “Adventists and African Traditional Religion.” Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=5I81&highlight=Adventists|and|African|Traditional|Religion>.

³ Nyaundi, “Adventists and African,” <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=5I81&highlight=Adventists|and|African|Traditional|Religion>. ATR is an abbreviation for African traditional religions.

⁴ Nyaundi, “Adventists and African,” <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=5I81&highlight=Adventists|and|African|Traditional|Religion>. See also, Benjamin C. Ray, *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 3.

⁵ Nyaundi, “Adventists and African,” <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=5I81&highlight=Adventists|and|African|Traditional|Religion>.

gative terms.”⁶ In such circumstances, the converts to Christianity (Adventism) had no manual from where they could draw insights to creatively and effectively shun the attractions from African traditions. They nevertheless expressed their genuine attention to abide with the promises of Christianity and its benefits for human existence.

2. Major Aspects of African Traditional Religions

In the following pages, I will briefly discuss major aspects of ATRs (within the setting of Sub-Saharan Africa) and their belief systems. After this first section, I will examine how the Seventh-day Adventist Church, just like other Christian bodies in the African continent, finds herself in a difficult arithmetic dance as to how to maintain her identity in the midst of competing ideologies from traditions all assuring Africans of salvation here and now.

2.1 Nature of ATR

ATRs are a set of beliefs that cuts across ethnic religions and traditions. These beliefs are preserved through revered traditional practices which include festivals, rituals, and songs. The belief in a higher god does not nullify an allegiance to a lower god and other beings of exceptional traditional significance such as the ancestors. The ATRs compete among themselves in terms of beliefs, but seemingly do not necessarily contradict one other.⁷

While there are various types of African traditional religious beliefs, most of them can be termed animistic. Animism is a belief in spiritual beings that animate the material world. This belief encompasses the activities of mystical powers that influence human beings either by harming them or bringing to them good luck in day-to-day happenings.⁸ Sir Edward Burnett Tylor was the first scholar to survey animistic beliefs with his pioneering study *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Art and Customs* (1871). Generally, animism emphasises the worship of nature, ancestor, and belief in an afterlife. Thus, it can be argued that the

⁶ Nyaundi, “Adventists and African, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=5I-81&highlight=Adventists|and|African|Traditional|Religion>. See also, Nehemiah M. Nyaundi, “African Traditional Religion in Pluralistic Africa: A Case of Relevance, Resilience and Pragmatism,” in *Traditional African Religions in South African Law*, ed. Tom W. Bennett (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2011), 16.

⁷ See these valuable studies: Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*; Mbiti, *Concepts of God*; Idowu, *African Traditional Religion*.

⁸ See Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

various religious traditions of Africa are intrinsically linked by animistic beliefs. The belief in spirits and ancestors constitute the most important element of African religion. Gods are usually viewed as self-created; they are spirits that are worshipped by the people.⁹

Ancestor veneration may be considered as central to the worldview of African religious traditions. Ancestors are an integral part of everyday life, and some people even believe that they became powerful supernatural beings with equal powers to the self-created deities. Ancestors are believed to be spirits and therefore occupy a strategic position in the African psyche more than living human beings. They are invested with metaphysical and mysterious powers that give directions to people's lives. They are believed to possess the abilities to bestow either blessings or disease upon their living descendants.¹⁰

2.2 Traditional Medicine

Directly connected to Traditional African Religions is the concept of Traditional African Medicine.¹¹ It is simply understood as a healing method founded on the use of important components of traditional values which include herbal medicine, ecstatic healing, hydrotherapy, spinal manipulation, psychotherapy, and therapeutic occultism. Thus, African Traditional Medicine is divided into two major types: the physical and the metaphysical healings. The first usually benefits from plants, vegetable, animal, and mineral substances as means to administer healing. The second, the metaphysical, is based on some sorts of incantations and prayers with the associations of mysterious forces.¹²

2.3 Practice of Magic and Witchcraft

Another characteristic of ATRs is the practice of magic and witchcraft. These two phenomena constitute some mystical powers that are prevalent in African societies. Magic is based on a two-fold principle referred to as princi-

⁹ See Glenn S. Holland, *Gods in the Desert: Religions of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

¹⁰ Olupona, *African Religions*, 20–38.

¹¹ Karen E. Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, and Competition in South Africa, 1820–1948* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2008).

¹² Isaac Sindiga, Chacha Nyaigotti-Chacha and Mary P. Kanunah, eds., *Traditional Medicine in Africa* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995).

ple of similarity and the principle of contagion.¹³ According to James Frazer, the principle of similarity is based on the concept of “like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause” while the principle of contagion is based on the idea “that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed.”¹⁴ The principle of the law of similarity and the law of contagion help the magician to produce effects he desires. From the first principle, “the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it,” while from the second, the magician “infers that whatever he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not.”¹⁵ In the African context, the practitioner of the principle of similarity usually is an expert in African Traditional Medicine. He usually “prepares an effigy (image) with cotton wool, mud, wood, or with any other material.”¹⁶

The effigy is subsequently hurt with a knife, thorns, needles, dangerous chemicals, rope, or other weapons. In the end, whatever damage is done to the effigy is expected to harm the enemy whom the effigy represents. If the effigy is destroyed completely, then the life of the individual in question also comes to an end.¹⁷

The principle of contagion on the other hand presupposes that once there has been a contact between things or persons, they can continue to influence each other. According to Frazer, “the most familiar example of Contagious Magic is the magical sympathy which is supposed to exist between a man and any severed portion of his person, as his hair or nails; so that whoever gets possession of human hair or nails may work his will, at any distance, upon the person from whom they were cut.”¹⁸ The magician can also make use of the following items: clothing, footprints on the soil, urine, blood samples, and other related things related to a human body so as to produce an effect on an enemy.

Witchcraft is the invocation of supernatural power to harm people, control events, or cause misfortune to people. Witchcraft, involves the work of

¹³ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion* (New York: Cosimo Classic, 2005), 11.

¹⁴ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 14.

¹⁵ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 14.

¹⁶ Philemon O. Amanze and J. A. Kayode Makinde, “Mystical Powers and How Some Africans Get Involved,” in *The Church, Culture, and Spirits: Adventism in Africa*, ed. Kwabena Donkor (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2011), 25.

¹⁷ Amanze and Makinde, “Mystical Powers,” 25.

¹⁸ Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 34.

wicked individuals who meet at night, commune with the devil, indulge in cannibalism and perform evil acts referred to as black magic in contrast to white magic, which is used for good result such as protection against evil forces, misfortune through the use of charms, amulets, incantations, and cuts in the body among other elements.¹⁹ Thus, magic and witchcraft are both concerned with the intent of producing effects on people through the use of supernatural forces.²⁰

2.4 The Supreme God

ATRs are best described as complex, because they are centred on religious traditions and beliefs of the Africans. Some African Religions have a clear idea of a creator. The Yoruba, for instance, do have a concept of a supreme being, called Olorun or Olodumare. This is the creator of the universe. He is invested with special power by the various deities (Orisa) to create the world and sustain it including those who live in it. The Mouyang in Cameroon do also have a concept of a supreme being who is called Melefit, and is a self-created god with unimaginable omnipotence and omniscience to care for those who worship him and protect them from the misfortune of life.²¹

African cosmologies are characteristic of African spirituality. It is assumed that beliefs and practices inform every facet of human life; as such, religion and mundane life are in a symbiotic relationship. For instance, misfortune is not solely a function of one's inability to achieve one's goal, but also a corollary of a discrepancy between one's social life and the fulfilment of the demands of the ancestors.²²

2.5 ATR and the Abrahamic Religions

Adherents to ATRs in sub-Saharan Africa have been in decline since the coming of Islam and that of Christianity in the early 18th and the beginning

¹⁹ Jacob Olupona, interview by Anthony Chiorazzi, October 6, 2015 at Harvard University, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/10/the-spirituality-of-africa/>.

²⁰ For an in-depth discussion on the concept of black magic see Jared L. Miller, "Practice and Perception of Black Magic among the Hittites," *AoF* 37 (2010), 167–85; Happy Baglari, "The Magic Art of Witchcraft and Black Magic," *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 5 (2015): 8–13.

²¹ Masfa Jean, "An elder among the Mouyangs in Baka," interview by the author, April 2022.

²² Olupona, *African Religions*, 1–20.

of twentieth century. Islam and Christianity draw their adherents from the ATRs. However, as of today, there are over 100 million adherents of African Traditional Religions in Sub-Saharan Africa alone.²³ Seemingly, the two Abrahamic religions, Islam and Christianity, appear to attract the minds of Africans. While this observation is true, especially viewed from the angle of daily converts to Islam and Christianity, the adherents of these new religions combine in everyday life the practices of ATRs with that of Abrahamic religions to determine their means of survival in the society.²⁴ Thus, Islam and Christianity are accommodated within the context of African culture and belief systems.

The religious demography of Africa shows a close competition between the two Abrahamic religions, as noted earlier. Christianity and Islam, each representing about 40 percent of the African population, are the two largest religions on the continent. ATRs, even though they are extant in almost all of the sub-Saharan Africa, they are mostly very strong in the central and western parts of the continent.²⁵ Countries such as Benin, Togo, and Gabon record large numbers of devotees to African religious traditions.²⁶ Christianity is dominant in the south, while Islam is dominant in the north.

The bottom line then is that Africans who still wholly practice African indigenous religions are only about 10 percent of the African population, a fraction of what it used to be only a century ago, when indigenous religions dominated most of the continent. I should add that without claiming to be full members of indigenous traditions, there are many professed Christians and Muslims who participate in one form or another of indigenous religious rituals and practices. That testifies to the enduring power of indigenous religion and its ability to domesticate Christianity and Islam in modern Africa.²⁷

²³ J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009).

²⁴ Elijah Obinna, "‘Life Is Superior to Wealth?’: Indigenous Healers in African Community, Amasiri, Nigeria," in *African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Emerging Trends, Indigenous Spirituality and the Interface with Other World Religions, Essay in Honour of Jacob Kehinde Olupona*, ed. Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando, and Bolaji Bateye (London: Routledge, 2016), 135–48.

²⁵ Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 253–60.

²⁶ Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 254–55.

²⁷ Olupona, interview by Anthony Chiorazzi, interview by Anthony Chiorazzi, October 6, 2015 at Harvard University, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/10/the-spirituality-of-africa/>.

2.6 ATR and the African Diaspora

ATRs are also spreading around the world. Some developed countries in Western Europe and North America witness the presence of African diaspora religions. The Haitian voodoo, the Yoruba and the Zulu religions have fast spread across the globe.²⁸ African religions have been resilient in the face of exponential growth of Christianity and Islam among Africans in the African continent, as well as in the diaspora because there is sense of beauty in African traditional religious systems that attract the devotees. Africans who have travelled abroad are able to seek spiritual care from healers, charms, talismans, and from men and women who make use of traditional medicine to do more exploit in securing a good fortune.²⁹

Thus, ATRs are now globally seeking to accommodate other religious beliefs from world religions. This is because, apparently, there is no contradiction between African spirituality and other faiths, as long as the devotee is able to secure basic needs to respond to the existential needs. This is one of the reasons why there is a greater sense of revival and rapid global spread of African religions in spite of scientific exploration that questions their promises rooted in supernaturalism. Even among Africans in the western world one is still able to observe that ritual sacrifices and witchcraft beliefs are rampant.

3. Influence of African Traditional Religions on Seventh-day Adventism in Africa

After conversion to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Africans coming from families devoted to African traditional religious systems find themselves still within a system of attraction to their former religious beliefs. Practices from African religions continue to be observable among the converts to the Adventist faith. In most cases, these practices seek to meet existential needs such as protection against witches, invisible enemies, diseases, and the desire for food security. Although there has not been a systematic study that analysed all the attractions from ATRs and their influence on converts to the Adventist faith, there have been several recent significant studies that looked at specific practices. One of the most important studies is the

²⁸ Mambo C. Taan, *Haitian Vodou: An Introduction to Haiti's Indigenous Spiritual Tradition* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn, 2012).

²⁹ Olupona, interview by Anthony Chiorazzi, interview by Anthony Chiorazzi, October 6, 2015 at Harvard University, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2015/10/the-spirituality-of-africa/>.

work edited by Kwabena Donkor titled *The Church, Culture and Spirits: Adventism in Africa* (2011). This is a clear and in-depth study that seeks to respond to a specific problem in African Adventism—the challenge of spiritualistic manifestations such as ancestor worship, witchcraft, divinations, magic, and the rampant influence of practitioners of traditional medicine. This study is a product of collective efforts among the three divisions, namely the West-Central Africa Division, the East-Central Africa Division, and the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division of Seventh-day Adventists, major hierarchical structures of Seventh-day Adventism’s leadership in Africa, with a two-fold objective. First, the church sought to provide “an Adventist biblical response to these spiritualistic phenomena.” Second, the church sought to formulate practical “guidelines that would assist the church in dealing with spiritualistic manifestation within the African culture.”³⁰ It was during the same timeframe that a set of guidelines was voted in each of the three divisions in Africa as a way to provide a collective response to a cultural phenomenon. One document that is especially significant to be noted is “Spiritualism and the Adventist Church in Africa: Guidelines and Recommendations.”³¹ This document provides the church with a global response to some of the most challenging issues that threaten her identity, especially within the context of African Adventism.

Several other parallel studies provided further insights into understanding and suggesting adequate response to specific practices in the African religions that influence the faith of Adventists in Africa. Most of these studies have been published in two prominent journals: *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* and *The Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*. Among the most relevant papers one can refer to are the following series of publications in 2017: “What Attracts People to Occult and Witchcraft Practices?” by Pardon Mwansa; “The Cosmology of Witchcraft in the African Context: Implications for Mission and Theology,” by Samuel Lumwe; “Witchcraft Accusations: Destroying Family, Community, and Church,” by Boubakar Sanou; and also two important publications by Kelvin Onongha in 2007 and 2012 respectively “African Pentecostalism and Its Relationship to Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations: Biblical Responses to a Pernicious Problem Confronting the Adventist Church in Africa,” and “The Missiological Dilemma of

³⁰ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, preface to *The Church, Culture, and Spirits: Adventism in Africa*, ed. Kwabena Donkor (Hagerstown, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2011), ix.

³¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Spiritualism and the Adventist Church in Africa: Guidelines and Recommendations,” in *The Church, Culture, and Spirits: Adventism in Africa*, ed. Kwabena Donkor (Hagerstown, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2011), 227–39.

Sorcery and Divination to African Christianity.”³² These materials explain ways in which African evil practices such as witchcraft, divination and magic present serious threats to the advancement and maturity of Adventist faith in Africa.

Onongha noted in 2007 that “sorcery and divination present a serious challenge to Christian missions in the African continent.”³³ Onongha outlines three major reasons behind the practice of such spiritualistic manifestations. The first reason is connected to “the niche they fill.” The second one is linked to the “function they perform.” The third reason is related to “the worldview yearnings they satisfy in the lives and experiences of the people.”³⁴ These reasons are attractive to African Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists. Onongha gives an account of a story of a church whose members invited a witchdoctor to perform the rituals of divination to settle a case of sorcery. He writes:

At a pastoral retreat a few years ago, a couple shared the story of a harrowing experience in their ministry. They told how the minister’s wife had been accused of practicing witchcraft. Elders in the area hired the services of a local witchdoctor to confirm their allegations. Fortunately, the witchdoctor absolved the pastor’s wife, but indicted some of the conspirators. However, the minister eventually lost his position in that district and it took several years of pain and anguish before the issue could finally be laid to rest.³⁵

A story of this kind popularizes the patronage of witchdoctors and the practice of divination in African collective mind, and consequently in Christianity.

³² Pardon Mwansa, “What Attracts People to Occult and Witchcraft Practices?” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 13 (2017): 14–19; Samuel Lumwe, “The Cosmology of Witchcraft in the African Context: Implications for Mission and Theology,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 13 (2017): 83–94; Christopher R. Mwashinga, “Relationship between Social and Economic Status and Witchcraft in Africa,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 13 (2017): 23–32; Boubakar Sanou, “Witchcraft Accusations: Destroying Family, Community, and Church,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* (2017): 33–45; Kelvin Onongha, “The Missiological Dilemma of Sorcery and Divination to African Christianity,” *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 7 (2012): 47–57; Kelvin Onongha, “African Pentecostalism and Its Relationship to Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations: Biblical Responses to a Pernicious Problem Confronting the Adventist Church in Africa,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 13 (2017): 45–54.

³³ Onongha, “The Missiological Dilemma,” 47.

³⁴ Onongha, “The Missiological Dilemma,” 47.

³⁵ Onongha, “The Missiological Dilemma,” 48.

Onongha further tells another story where a witchdoctor was invited to a divine church service to make incantations and divination for the identification of witches in Nigeria.³⁶ Similarly, Samuel Lumwe, in his “Cosmology of Witchcraft,” gives a narrative of three events that were linked to the practice of witchcraft in his community in Kenya. His accounts point to the reality of witchcraft and the fatal nature of the attack of witches. Witches eat human flesh; they kill even their close relations to satisfy their desire for human meat.³⁷ They can also cause misfortune in business and school progress. Their actions could also lead to barrenness, miscarriage, and lack of employment. Witches are invested with mystical powers to cause harm. Mitchell argues that a witch “is believed to have an inherent power to harm other people.”³⁸ Unfortunately, Christian communities seem to contain a large number of witches in their midst. Cases similar to the ones highlighted by Onongha and Lumwe are frequent in several African Christian communities.

Sanou also notes that in Africa, it is “widely believed that all forms of misfortune, such as crop failures, poor spending, barrenness, addiction, sicknesses, accidents, and death, are caused by witchcraft.”³⁹ I remember a case where an entire village was forbidden to attend worship on Sabbath morning in Baka, a village in Northern Cameroon. The village was accused of hiding witches who damaged the reputation of the church they attend. Although there was an attempt to solve the issue without calling upon a witchdoctor, several church members abandoned the faith and joined their earlier traditions by securing protective mystical devices against the attacks of invisible enemies.⁴⁰

Beliefs in sorcery, divination, magic, and witchcraft have damaging impact on the Adventist communities. After the conversion of some Africans to Adventism, they still feel they are “entitled” to some sense of protection obtained within their traditions. Pardon Mwansa argues that people are attracted to witchcraft because by so doing, they would find answers to human needs such as the need not to die but to live, the protection against enemies, the desire to be loved, and meeting daily physical needs such as

³⁶ Onongha, “The Missiological Dilemma,” 48.

³⁷ Lumwe, “The Cosmology of Witchcraft,” 89–90.

³⁸ Cameron R. Mitchell, *African Primal Religions* (Niles, IL: Argus Communications, 1977), 67.

³⁹ Sanou, “Witchcraft Accusations,” 34.

⁴⁰ Personal Experience of the author in the village of Baka, in the Sub-division of Tokombere in Far North Region of Cameroon.

food security.⁴¹ Because Africans believe in the existence of spiritual beings who have potentiality to influence the course of their lives, their outlook and experiences in life are therefore hugely shaped by such beliefs.⁴² John S. Mbiti noted that “belief in the function and dangers of bad magic, sorcery and witchcraft is deeply rooted in African life, and in spite of modern education and religions like Christianity and Islam, it is very difficult to eradicate this belief.”⁴³

4. An Adventist Response to Practices Derived from African Traditions

Adventist scholars from Africa as well as established missiologists in the Seventh-day Adventist Church have made several suggestions and recommendations as to how the denomination should respond to the practices rooted in African traditions and religious systems.

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in cooperation with the three divisions of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa was able to come up with some sorts of official responses to some of the practices of ATRs that are detrimental to the Adventist faith. A helpful document as providing an official response appears as an appendix in the book, *The Church, Culture and Spirits*, already referred to, and which was published by the Biblical Research Institute of Seventh-day Adventists. These guidelines are divided into five sections: 1) Guidelines in the case of demonic possession, 2) Guidelines as reactions to the practice of ancestors’ veneration, 3) Guidelines as responses to witchcraft, magic, and sorcery, 4) Guidelines in the case of traditional healing, and 5) Guidelines as response to the practice of rites of passage. They provide helpful recommendations on how to confront the African religious beliefs that counteract the Adventist faith.

The recommendations are somehow analysed in the book *The Church, Culture and Spirits*. This volume is a significant scholarly contribution to the issues of spiritualistic manifestations in Adventism in Africa. Diverse scholars from the three divisions in Africa have examined how the church should be pragmatic and provided biblical substitutes to the practices of ATRs. Although the intention of the authors was to provide pragmatic responses to the challenge posed by belief in the spirit world, the twelve-chapter book

⁴¹ Mwansa, “What Attracts People,” 18.

⁴² John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 2nd ed. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1991), 81.

⁴³ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religions*, 165.

essentially focused on the admittance of the existence of the spirit world and spiritualistic manifestations in Africa. Nonetheless, virtually all the chapters contain practical suggestions and recommendations on how the church could help members who are entangled in the struggles with spiritualistic manifestations. These guidelines centre on the role of prayer and fasting, developing faith in the power of God, and inculcating appropriate doctrinal teachings in church members. Illustrating this observation are chapters by Lameck Miyayo, Mkombe Canaan, Vida Mensah and Nathaniel Walemba, which are based on their personal reflections and experiences.

The most significant chapters that provide detailed responses are the ones by Kwabena Donkor and Sampson M. Nwaomah. While Nwaomah acknowledges the importance of anointing as a practice rooted in biblical teachings, he mostly provided a critique of the use of oil for anointing subjects totally different from the biblical experience. He summarized his views by arguing that “the biblical motif of anointing with oil for healing is a very popular practice in African Christianity.” But he noted that the practice of anointing in certain circles in Nigerian Christian population “portrays gross perversion” of the biblical models.⁴⁴

Donkor, in his notable chapter, “Ancestor Worship, Biblical Anthropology, and Spiritualistic Manifestations in Africa” discusses not only the pervasive influence of African worldviews? shaped by the belief in ancestors, but also examines theological and practical Adventist responses to African traditions. After presenting biblical foundational arguments in favor of the origins of humanity, the composition of humans, the destiny of humans, the state of the dead, among other themes, he proposed theologically how Seventh-day Adventists should respond to the challenge of ancestor worship. He presents a three-dimensional approach as adequate responses. The first he termed “the response of withdrawal.” It simply means, “the refusal to allow one’s life to be defined in any shape or form by the cult. It is a withdrawal from ideologies and practices that hitherto defined and shaped one’s life, but, which by the virtue of Christ’s death, have been denied that function.”⁴⁵ This first response appeals to believers to abandon their fears as they seek protection in Christ Jesus. The cult of ancestors should therefore be replaced with the teaching of the kingdom of God and God’s family.

⁴⁴ Sampson M. Nwaomah, “Anointing With Oil in African Christianity: An Evaluation of Contemporary Practices,” in *The Church, Culture and Spirits: Adventism in Africa*, ed. Kwabena Donkor (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2011), 190.

⁴⁵ Kwabena Donkor, “Ancestor Worship, Biblical Anthropology, and Spiritualistic Manifestations in Africa,” in *The Church, Culture and Spirits: Adventism in Africa*, ed.

The second theological response provided by Donkor is the response of defence. Seventh-day Adventists must recognize that they live in a setting of a cosmic conflict in which the reality of spiritual powers should not be contested. The Bible affirms that human beings fight against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, and not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:10–18). The Christian is to hold to the spiritual practices listed in this text. These are the following: the truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation in Christ, the reading of the word of God and the belief in God's promises of protection, security, love and care, and the belief in the power of prayer.

The third response to ancestor worship suggested by Donkor is the response of offense. He argues that "the response of offense foresees situations in which the Christian deliberately engages the powers."⁴⁶ In a situation where a member is confronted with the worship of ancestors, an offensive response can be duly recognized as to uphold the biblical and Christian worldview. The three theological responses to the worship of ancestors as highlighted here are significant and can be used by Adventists in Africa.

Added to the responses contained in *The Church, Culture and Spirits*, other scholars such as Onongha, Sanou, Bauer, and Lumwe in their various publications came up with suggestions from missiological perspectives. All of them agree that the process of nurturing Seventh-day Adventists in Africa requires an in-depth understanding of the African worldview.⁴⁷ A clear understanding of the African worldview leads to what Sanou refers to as a balanced approach to the truth in Christianity.⁴⁸ The fact that most converts to Adventism in Africa come from ATRs or have family members who are devoted adherents to practices of ATR, their interpretation of the Christian message is informed or shaped by the ATR worldview. In this regard, it is expected that at the point of conversion to the Adventist faith, a readjustment to a Christian worldview should be visible.⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that the

Kwabena Donkor (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2011), 87.

⁴⁶ Donkor, "Ancestor Worship," 88.

⁴⁷ Onongha, "The Missiological Dilemma," 47–60; Sanou, "Witchcraft Accusations," 33–44; Bruce Bauer, "A Response to Dual Allegiance," *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* 44 (2008): 340–47; Lumwe, "The Cosmology of Witchcraft," 83–97.

⁴⁸ Boubakar Sanou, "Truth, Allegiance, and Power Dimensions in Christian Discipleship: From a Language of Priority to a Balanced Approach," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 9 (2013): 45–56.

⁴⁹ Bruce L. Bauer, "Conversion and Worldview Transformation among Postmoderns," in *Revisiting Postmodernism: An Old Debate on a New Era*, ed. Bruce L. Bauer and Kleber O. Gonçalves (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2013), 85.

change of worldview must be exhibited through the demonstration of God's power to heal the sick, the blind, the leper, to cast out demons just as in the Apostolic era, and to perform miracles through visible acts.

The converts to the new faith long to testify with visible demonstration that the Christian God is indeed powerful to confront the spirits, to protect against the power of sorcerers, and provide daily food for His children.⁵⁰ Because we believe in the reality of the Great Controversy, there should be a steady and systematic discussion on witchcraft and the power of God to conquer evil powers in training programs both for church leaders, seminarians, and church members. Onongha suggests other practical steps which are:

To seek to understand the function these practices fulfil in the worldview and logic system of the people. (2) A contextual analysis of the religion, culture and society of the people in order to discover functional substitutes to replace those unbiblical practices with biblically appropriate ones. (3) The development of various theologies necessary to respond to these challenges; such as theologies of dynamism, divination, discernment, communalism, reconciliation, suffering and evil, and the cross. These theologies should then be taught and applied to respond to the needs and fears of the people. (4) Rather than regard education and civilization as the means by which such practices shall be brought to cease, this challenge must be viewed in the context of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan which shall continue until the second coming of Christ. (5) The role and power of prayer in personal and corporate life needs to be emphasized especially among such people whose worldview already acknowledges the potency and efficacy of this vital spiritual tool. (6) Narrative theology, which recognizes the value of understanding the people's myths, proverbs, wisdom, and poetry, as well as the heuristic nature of scriptural narratives, should receive greater emphasis among African cultures.⁵¹

The Great Controversy doctrine and its place in responding to the problem of suffering is another way to solve the deadlock of discontinuity between ATR and new converts to Adventism. Religious scholars, theologians and missiologists, and historians should develop an appropriate theology that provides better explanations for human suffering from the perspective of Scriptures—a theology more convincing than that of ATR which views

⁵⁰ Bauer, "A Response to Dual Allegiance," 342.

⁵¹ Onongha, "The Missiological Dilemma," 57.

spirits (deities), ancestors, witches and witchdoctors as agents offering solutions to the problem of suffering and evil. Adventist pastors should more than ever before, demonstrate the healing power invested in their ministry just like in the days of the Apostles. The display of supernatural power by Adventist pastors could solve the problem of being attracted to miracle workers who popularize the African traditional religious systems. This sort of power was instrumental in transforming the early pagan societies into centres of Christian evangelisms. Ephesus, Athens, Colossae and many other pagan cities were transformed into cities of Christian influence in this way.⁵² Onongha is right when he argues that “the time has come to act, for the Adventist Church in Africa to lead the way in applying and demonstrating a theology that is contextually developed, which responds to the twin challenges of intransigent witchcraft beliefs, and the warped, syncretistic methodologies of African Pentecostalism.”⁵³

5. Biblical Functional Substitutes to African Traditional Practices: A Proposal Based on the Role of 28 Adventist Fundamental Beliefs

The contextualization of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Africa can be meaningfully integrated if the fundamental beliefs are not only explained but contextualized.⁵⁴ Even though these beliefs are not creeds, they represent Adventist thought and expression of the interpretation of the Scriptures in the context of its identity. These beliefs are usually grouped into six.

The first grouping is under the category of the doctrine of God, which comprises among other important doctrines, the teachings on the sovereignty of God in Creation, His sovereign government in the universe with divine uncommunicable attributes such as His eternity, infinity, immensity, omnipotence, immutability and omniscience. Also in this group is the doctrine of the Godhead, underlying the belief in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Bible states: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1 NIV). This understanding of God with attributes expressing His closeness and accessibility to human

⁵² Daniel Berchie, “Miracle-Working among African Seventh-day Adventists: Biblical Phenomenon?” *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 4 (2011): 3–25.

⁵³ Onongha, “African Pentecostalism,” 53.

⁵⁴ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Silver Springs, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005).

beings is a solution to issues of members who think that God is far removed from His children, and that He can only be sought through mediums that can communicate with supernaturalism. God has not left the world to the spirits. He is in control of the lives of His children of all races on earth. A clear understanding of the doctrine of God provides a solution to syncretism and double allegiance in African Adventism.⁵⁵

Second, the doctrine of humanity, which focuses on the creation of man by God in His image, is crucial to the African context. “So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27 NIV). God who created man did not intend to see man suffer. Troubles and sufferings did not originate from God; rather, from the evil plans of an angel of light, Lucifer, who became Satan. God has empowered human beings not to fear the devil and the demons. Human beings have to call upon Him, the Creator, for their existence in the midst of demons who seek to destroy lives and instigate panics on behalf of Satan. Man was created a sinless being in a sinless world before the Fall. It was because the devil tempted him and led him to sin that death and sufferings came upon the world. All sufferings and depravity are linked to the work of Satan. There will be a day when Jesus will put an end to the existence of wicked people who, through their actions, follow the devil and the demons to cause sufferings to Africans. Seventh-day Adventism should therefore emphasize the right concept of humanity.⁵⁶ A clear explanation of the doctrine of humanity is the solution to the problem of man’s struggles with sins and wickedness in Africa.

Third, there is the doctrine of salvation. This is fundamental to counteract the worship of ancestors in Africa. The atoning death of Jesus Christ, a blameless Lamb of God, is sufficient for the redemption of humanity. One must teach that, “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12 NIV). The *juju* (spiritual belief system incorporating amulets and spells), *maraboutage* (an action to bewitch) and fetishes are not important to God’s children. These practices are evil and counterfeits God’s original power destined to those who accept Him. Christ also is concerned for the wellbeing of those who pray to Him, and that one day, He is coming to take His faithful servants to paradise, a place where all sufferings will end and diseases will disappear. Salvation through Christ is by grace alone, through faith in His blood. *Juju* practices, magic, fetishes cannot offer even temporary salvation. Human beings are therefore justified by grace and not by works.

⁵⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 11–77.

⁵⁶ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 79–111.

The fourth is the doctrine of the church. The entrance into Seventh-day Adventism, which marks the beginning of a new life in Christ by baptism, leads to a regeneration, or the new birth. The believer is sanctified not by works, but by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Man is sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as he endeavours to serve God in the church. The church is of Christ. It is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Eph 2:20 NIV). The believers are protected by Christ who won victory over Satan, the originator of evil.

The fifth is the doctrine of Christian living. It is the highlight of the fact that devilish practices, rituals, cultural practices against the Bible are not heavenward. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17 ESV). The Bible provides further reference in Col 3:5-8 (ESV):

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Those who accept to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church choose to be citizens of heaven even though they are still in the world. Their lives become a light to the world. Thus, struggles against the practices of ATR should be viewed within their understanding of their own Christian identity. While they live in the world, yet they are protected by heavenly angels because they are also citizens of heaven.

The sixth is the doctrine of restoration. The current human suffering will go away. All those who go through pains, troubles, and distresses and remain faithful to God will be glorified at their resurrection, when Jesus Christ returns. Christ "will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:4 NIV). The wicked will be judged and punished for the sufferings they imposed on God's people. There is for now, no world where our souls go after death. Once one dies, he/she is laid in the tombs. He/she knows nothing of what could be going on in the world. But at the return of Christ, the righteous person who died in Christ will live eternally with Him. All griefs imposed by evil spirits will end.

Among the 28 fundamental beliefs, one that is expressive of the reality of the battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil is the doctrine of the Great Controversy. This doctrine explains why the whole world is

involved in a war between the agents of the devil (demons, witchcrafts, divinations, etc.) and the angels of God who protect believers in Christ. The forces of evil in African worldview have plausible explanation in the doctrine of cosmic conflict.

All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the global flood, as presented in the historical account of Gen 1–11. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated.⁵⁷

The world is now an arena of a conflict that involves everyone, including the believers in Christ. Answers to hard existential questions such as related to death, food and protection can be better examined within the framework of this battle. Thousands of evil angels who work for Satan use various mediums including African magic and sorceries to impose infortune on Africans. The Christian God has, however, promised to assist His people. "Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation."⁵⁸

The belief in the Great Controversy is complemented by the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary. Its meaning within the African context is highly rewarding. This doctrine redefines the African worldview by reshaping it from a biblical perspective. The concept of a 'high priest' is not that new to Africans. In their communities, they meet and appreciate the work of local priests who stand as mediums through which they can repulse the evil to befall them. Their magical incantations, local priests are believed to have considerable power to influence the course of events in human societies. From this traditional understanding of priestly ministry, one is able to draw the attention of the African mind to the heavenly priesthood.

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle that the Lord set up and not humans. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. At His ascension, He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and,

⁵⁷ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 113–20.

⁵⁸ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 113.

began His intercessory ministry, which was typified by the work of the high priest in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary.⁵⁹

For African Adventists, Christ is their Priest and Advocate mediating on behalf of His people before His Father. Therefore, there is no need of other mediums through which we can reach God. Prayers offered to God through Jesus go directly to Him. African Adventists can come to Him in prayer to seek divine protection from evil forces, to repel the activities of demons and ask for daily forgiveness of sin. In the Heavenly Sanctuary, Jesus vindicates His followers in saving them from danger and snares of the evil eye. Jesus promises that those who remain loyal to the ministry of His priesthood shall receive the Kingdom of God (Lev 16; Num 14:34; Ezek 4:6; Dan 7:9–27; 8:13, 14; 9:24–27; Heb 1:3; 2:16, 17; 4:14–16; 8:1–5; 9:11–28; 10:19–22; Rev 8:3–5; 11:19; 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:11, 12).

Closely related to the Priestly ministry of Christ is the belief in His return on earth. Unlike a local African priest who is a mortal being, the Christian Priest is the Saviour of the World. He will come to save His people from sufferings and death. And when “He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die.”⁶⁰ Jesus, the Christian Priest will grant eternal life to African Christians. They will live with Him in a New Jerusalem “in which righteousness dwells,” and “a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence.” In this new place, “suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever.”⁶¹

The interpretations of the 28 fundamental beliefs provide biblical substitutes to issues that threaten the identity of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Africa. The Bible, if carefully studied, contains sufficient substitutes to counteract odd practices in African cultures that are against biblical principles and Adventist teachings. The church must therefore educate members on the right understanding of these fundamental beliefs.

6. Conclusion

This article examined the complex interweavement of ATRs with African Adventism. Practical issues borne from the interactions of Adventism

⁵⁹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 347.

⁶⁰ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 371.

⁶¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 417.

with the African culture thus need continuous investigation. One should seek to understand why and how Seventh-day Adventists in Africa have faced challenges, as well as the advantage the cultural milieu offered them in terms of immense gospel mission opportunities. The ongoing tensions between African Adventism and ATRs necessitate the development of more comprehensive and pragmatic guidelines by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa. Also, scholars' reflections and suggestions should equally receive attention.

Through an investigation of the Adventists' past in Africa, one would be able to reflect on Adventism's self-identity in the midst of influx of cultures, including the western culture through which Adventist missionaries brought the Adventist message to Africans.

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced
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“The Semantic Use of the Aorist *Ebasileusen* in Revelation 19:6 in the Light
of the Verbal Aspect Theory: An Exegetical Study”

Researcher: Jean Delaneau Antoine, PhD in Religion, 2018

Advisor: Eike Mueller, ThD

The aim of this study is to find the semantic use of the aorist $\epsilon\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\upsilon$ in Rev 19:6 in light of verbal aspect theory. Temporal models result in a variety of interpretations. Therefore, there is a need to call on aspect to fill this gap. The predominant theorists on aspect are divided on important issues. The main one is whether the Greek verbal system expresses time or not.

This dissertation is searching for the best theory that fits the data within the book of Revelation. The complexity of Greek verbal aspect shows both strengths and weaknesses in all theories. The mix temporal view searches to clear the complexity by dividing the tenses into different categories while keeping time in the indicative form and denying it in the imperative and subjunctive. The aspectual view tries to accomplish the same task by stating that Greek verbs do not express time but only aspect. It uses features such as remoteness and expectation to explain the time element respectively in the imperfect and in the future. The analysis of the data shows clearly that some categories of tense express time and others are timeless within the same tense form. It happens with the present tense form and the indicative aorist. Other tense forms like imperfect and future clearly indicate time.

A major interaction with David L. Mathewson shows that his interpretation of Rev 19:6 lacks meaning because of the emphasis on aspect and the lack of consideration of the context which clearly shows that a timeless truth is impossible if the events happen between the cross and the consummation. The chiasmic structure of Rev 19:1–8 shows its relevance to the right interpretation of the aorist. Since vv. 1 and 8 form an *inclusio* that denotes a climax

within the text. God acts in salvation and judgment and He continues to act until the marriage of the Lamb. The aorist covers a process which emphasizes judgment, salvation, acknowledgment of divine beings, and marriage to the Lamb. It is not a gnomic aorist but rather it describes a future event related to the kingdom of God in the context of the end-time.

“Exploring the Spiritual Commitment of International Students in a Selected Philippine Adventist Higher Education Institution”

Researcher: Elias Artur Chandala, MA in Religion, 2018

Advisor: Dioi Cruz, DMin

Today, spirituality is a concept that covers not only religious groups but also the world at large. However, small differences exist and for religious groups, spirituality is linked with faith in God; thus, shaping the beliefs of the members and becoming one of the reasons for membership growth. Spiritual commitment is the basis of spiritual growth among Christian denominations at large and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular. When church members move to foreign countries as students, they face many challenges which impact their spiritual commitment.

This research study explored the lived experiences of 9 international students from a selected Seventh-day Adventist higher education institution. This higher education institution was located in a highly urbanized setting in the Philippines. The purpose of this case study was to explore how international students maintain their spiritual commitment while studying at the selected higher education institution. The instruments for data collection included participant observation, semi-structured interview, and documentation. The major findings led to the conclusion that international students at the selected institution perceived spiritual commitment as being consistent with the relationship with God.

The findings also showed that culture shock and complacent attitudes were the main barriers to the spiritual growth of the selected participants. The institution in general helped students grow spiritually and remain spiritually committed. However, the participants mentioned that the integration of faith and learning was not so much visible in some of the classes they had attended. According to the participants, the fact that the integration of faith and learning was not so much visible in some of the classes discouraged them spiritually. This research study helped students and church leaders understand the experiences of the international students and help them nurture their faith.

“The State of the Dead and Its Relationship to the Sanctuary Doctrine in Seventh-Day Adventist Theology (1844-1874): A Historical and Theological Study”

Researcher: Donny Chrissutianto, PhD in Religion, 2018

Advisor: Michael W. Campbell, PhD

There is a need to provide a historical-theological development of the state of the dead doctrine in the Seventh-day Adventist theology and how it relates to the doctrine of the sanctuary. This dissertation seeks to fill the lacuna by providing a chronological and historical-theological study in this denomination from 1844 to 1874. It examines the understanding of the Christian Connection group, Millerite movement, and Sabbatarian Adventists of the state of the dead based on primary and secondary documentary resources.

The result of this study shows eight important points. First, the doctrine of the state of the dead came to the Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers through the writings of George Storrs. The Christian Connection played a background role since this group provided “space” for conditionalism to exist even though this doctrine was not generally accepted among them. Second, the Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers unanimously believed conditionalism after the Great Disappointment in October 1844 and practiced it through their writings, especially when they expressed the hope of resurrection and immortality for the loss of their loved ones. Third, there was an increase influence of the state of the dead in the Seventh-day Adventist theology. It began as “truth” from 1840s to 1850s and became an “important truth” from 1851 to 1853. It turned as a present truth in 1854 and since 1872, the influence became greater since 9 of the 25 statements of belief related to the state of the dead. The increasing amount of literature devoted to this topic during 1844 to 1874 indicated the growing influence of this doctrine in this church theology.

The fourth result is that there were two external factors that led to the significance of the doctrine of the state of the dead in the Seventh-day Adventist theology. The rise of modern spiritualism and the inquiries of the uniqueness of this denomination were compared with other Adventists. Fifth, it showed the importance of Ellen White’s role in showing the significance of this doctrine against spiritualism. Sixth, Seventh-day Adventists evaluated Storrs’s idea and accepted only those that were in harmony with their biblical concept.

The seventh finding is the relation of the state of the dead with the sanctuary doctrine through the cleansing of the sanctuary, atonement for the blotting out of sin, and pre-advent investigative judgment. They are related through the decision of the fate of humanity. Eight, the Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers believed that the cleansing of the sanctuary, atonement for the blotting out of sins, and pre-advent investigative judgment were identical in work and time. Each are related to the state of the dead respectively as well as collectively.

“Church Growth Theory and the Development of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Mission in Georgia: A Case Study”

Researcher: Sergo Namoradze, PhD in Religion, 2018

Advisor: Abner Dizon, DMiss

The Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) Church growth rate in the country of Georgia is remarkably low. It has only 368 members despite its long history in Georgia. Using a qualitative case study research design, this study aimed to (a) give a historical account of the Adventist Church in Georgia, (b) identify the barriers preventing the Adventist Church from growing, (c) trace the mission and ministry approaches that worked best in Georgia, and (d) develop a model for the enhancement of the Adventist mission and church growth in Georgia.

Using the purposive sampling technique, I selected 47 participants for in-depth face-to-face interviews along with 5 focus group discussions. Field notes, documents, artifacts, and the National Church Growth Development surveys were utilized as supplementary data, in which 150 Adventist Church members participated. Historical documentary analysis revealed that persecution and loneliness were constantly pressuring Adventists in Georgia. This study discovered unknown but important individuals who significantly contributed to the Adventist mission in Georgia. Through thematic data analysis, a total of 20 themes and 54 categories emerged in an attempt to answer the 3 research questions. The external and internal barriers such as (a) social pressure, (b) Georgianness, (c) modernization and progress, (d) occupational pressure, (e) organizational disconnection, (f) frustration, (g) use of effective methods of evangelism, (h) lack of discipleship, and (i) uninvolvement of the laity all present significant hindrances to the Adventist mission and church growth in Georgia.

Despite these barriers, this study has revealed that Adventists in Georgia are able to win souls when they are successfully led through the necessary stages. These stages are depicted in 6 emerging themes: (a) focusing on responsive groups, (b) employing attractive features, (c) expanding the network, (d) earning the right to share the Gospel, (e) using effective evangelistic methods, and (f) recognizing the work done by the Holy Spirit. As such, instead of a single-step strategy, a multiple-step mission strategy is proposed. Furthermore, the Natural Church Growth Development survey analysis and the participants' reports helped identify the areas for improvement. These are (a) enhancing church health, (b) developing the appropriate mission strategy, (c) acknowledging the role of a foreign missionary, (d) adapting meaningful communication and cultural appropriateness, and (e) addressing Georgian aesthetics and the culture of prestige.

"Verbal Aspect and Eschatology in John 5:19–30: A Systemic Functional Analysis"

Researcher: David Odhiambo Odhiambo, PhD in Religion, 2018

Advisor: Eike Mueller, ThD

This dissertation carves a twofold stream: it seeks (a) to make fresh headways into the hermeneutic of John 5:19–30 and its eschatology and (b) to demonstrate the exegetical potency of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Cognitive Linguistics (CL). The methodological stream of this dissertation flows from the recent integration of modern linguistic approaches into the study of the biblical text and from the revitalization of verbal aspect as a grammatical and linguistic category. Verbal Aspect Theory (VAT) provides a needed corrective to the limited temporal view that standard grammars have imputed on the Greek verb in the last 200 years. This temporal view, equating tense-form with time, has constricted the otherwise full range of the semantic values of the Greek verb-form. This verbal description has thereby led to an inadequate appreciation of the verbal structure, semantics, and eschatology of John 5:19–30.

Besides the historical framework of Jewish apocalyptic, three perspectives on John's eschatology have been offered. Albert Schweitzer stressed future eschatology based on a temporal understanding of the Greek verb, drawing especially from the Synoptic Gospels. Charles H. Dodd and Rudolf K. Bultmann emphasized present eschatology. The majority of scholarship

has postulated present-and-future eschatology in John. All these are precarious offerings, however, being drawn from the inadequate appreciation of the Greek verb structure espoused by standard grammars.

This study offers an understanding of John 5:19–30 that better reflects the nuances of its eschatology and, through the insights of VAT, is more solidly grounded on the NT Greek verbal structure. Furthermore, SFL and CL keep the study of this exegesis sensitive to John’s use of language to embed and highlight contextual dimensions in the pericope’s linguistic units. Thus, the study shows how John linguistically portrays Jesus as the primary defining participant and conceptual foci of the pericope’s discourse and eschatology. Furthermore, the study shows how John linguistically presents Jesus’s self-understanding within the Father-Son relationship as shaping the thought world of the periscope. This study thereby demonstrates the exegetical potency of VAT, CL, and SFL offering, at the same time, a comprehensive and a minutely nuanced hermeneutic of the biblical text.

“The Sanctuary Motif in the Context of the Day of YHWH in the Book of Zechariah with Special Emphasis on Chapter 14”

Researcher: Alvaro Fernando Rodríguez Luque, PhD in Religion, 2018
 Advisor: Carlos Elías Mora, ThD

The study of the book of Zechariah has increased in the last 3 decades. In that scholarly attempt, redactional and critical perspectives have been followed including some exegetical analysis. Besides this, its eschatological content has also been pointed out; furthermore, its content reveals the use of the sanctuary motif along the book with an explicit mention of the Feast of the Tabernacles in Zech 14. This gap regarding the study of Zechariah is covered in Chapter 1, including a literature review about the understanding of Zech 14.

Chapter 2 deals with the literary analysis of Zech 14. The first issue discussed there is the genre of Zech 14 which is considered prophetic and eschatological in nature. Next, an analysis of the literary structure of the whole book is done in order to see the literary role of Zech 14 in its own literary context. Then, the literary structure of Zech 14 is developed in order to see its arrangement and literary connections to the whole book. Such analysis shows that the entire book of Zechariah intermingles eschatological events with sanctuary motifs.

Chapter 3 is focused on the syntactical analysis of Zech 14 and its contrast to the rest of the book. The first section of this chapter describes the day of YHWH in Zech 14 and how it is also reflected in the other chapters of Zechariah. The second section works with the eschatological events of Zech 14 and how they also appear in the whole book of Zechariah. Then, the last part of Chapter 3 considers the sanctuary motifs found in Zech 14 and their relationship with other sections of the book.

Chapter 4 deals with the theological analysis of the sanctuary motifs described in Chapter 3 and how they are related to the eschatological events of the day of YHWH. For that purpose, first, the day of YHWH events of Zech 14 are treated theologically and the sanctuary motifs as well. Then, the role of the sanctuary motifs of Zech 14 is described as part of the eschatological events of the day of YHWH in three stages: (a) in Zech 14, (b) within the whole book of Zechariah, and (c) within the OT. Such analysis is done to describe the uniqueness of Zech 14 in the OT.

Finally, Chapter 5 gives a summary of the findings of this dissertation. After that, a set of conclusions based on the analysis of the role of the sanctuary motif as part of the eschatological events of the day of YHWH according to Zech 14 is given. Finally, some recommendations are provided for future research studies.

“Touch Ministry for Visitors in a Korean Adventist Church through Foot Massage: A Multiple Case Study”

Researcher: Park Sang He, DMin, 2018

Advisor: Cristian Dumitrescu, PhD

Many people believe that the significance of communication is like the importance of breathing. Delivering the Gospel happens through various forms of communication. Jesus met people and showed His love and compassion through verbal and nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication can be expressed in many forms and touch is one of the most effective means of communicating feelings and emotions. Haptic communication, which is communication by touch, is the most basic and integral component in creating intimate relationships and transferring meanings between the toucher and the person touched.

A number of studies in social science demonstrate the various effects of touch. However, there are challenges coming from high sensitivity to cultural factors and touch taboos. These challenges can lead to hesitation in

implementing a touch ministry program in a particular setting. Touch is not commonly used in the field of church mission. This qualitative multiple case study endeavored to analyze the meanings, challenges, and impact on decision making and behavior changes of the implementation of touch ministry through foot massage in Paju City Adventist Church in Korea. The participants were three visitors who started attending church worship as a result of the Foot Massage Touch Ministry (FMTM). Observation notes and semi-structured interviews for the participants, therapist, and foot massage assistant were used for data collection.

The major findings from this multi-case analysis revealed that FMTM, in a specially-designed church setting, with prayer, was effective and useful as an outreach church program. First, the findings of this study helped change the participants' social and faith-based behaviors along with their perceptions of FMTM. Second, the findings improved the understanding of haptic communication between the toucher and the person touched. Third, this study also showed that the results of FMTM helped in emotional, mental, and physical healing. Finally, the results helped each participant build a relationship not only with the therapists but also with God, helping them to attend church and experience God's love. The findings of this qualitative multiple case study were generally consistent with the existing studies relative to touch—mainly haptic communication and social behavior changes—and to the theoretical foundations of proxemics, social cognitive theory, and Simon's model of decision process. The study concludes with the importance of touch ministry and recommendations for massage therapists and church leaders who desire to implement this outreach program.

“A Survey of the Major Objections and Apologetic Responses to the Seventh-Day Adventist Doctrine of the Pre-Advent Investigative Judgment”

Researcher: Mangara Juara Simanjuntak, MA in Religion, 2018

Advisor: Michael W. Campbell, PhD

A survey of major objections by challengers to the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) doctrine of the pre-Advent investigative judgment covers three main issues: biblical, theological, and historical. Opponents argue that the understanding of the pre-Advent Investigative Judgment is not supported by biblical passages. It then contrasts salvation by grace and the blotting out of sin of God's people. Objectors also add that early Adventist pioneers did not teach the doctrine of the pre-Advent investigative judgment. In response to those major critics, this thesis seeks to identify major objections

used by critics against the doctrine of the pre-Advent investigative judgment. It also examines apologetic responses used by SDA theologians.

The SDA Church asserts that the description of the pre-Advent investigative judgment is found throughout the Bible. The understanding of God's investigative judgment before granting either His reward or punishment is implicitly depicted in the Bible. The purpose of the judgment is to vindicate God's character and to affirm the salvation of true believers in front of the heavenly angels. Daniel 7:25 implies that the primary focus of the judgment is the true believers rather than the little horn.

Justification by faith is an important concept that gives believers assurance that they can confidently face God's final judgment. Judgment according to works will guard the believers to live by God's law. SDAs differentiate between the forgiveness of sin versus the blotting out of sin. This distinction can be seen between the typical daily ministry versus the yearly ministry in the earthly sanctuary, which is the typical cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. The early Sabbatarian Adventists addressed the teaching of the pre-Advent investigative judgment extensively in their writings.

"The Function of Analogy to Interpret the Biblical Records of the Person and Works of God: A Hermeneutic and Methodological Approach"

Researcher: Marcos Blanco, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Remwil Tornalejo, DTheol

The doctrine of God has been one of the most controversial topics in theology over the last two decades. The right way to interpret the language used in the Bible to describe God's being and attributes is at the center of the debate. Classical Theism (CT) has used analogy as a hermeneutical tool to interpret the biblical description of God, while Open Theism (OT) has led the opposition to analogy by replacing it with a univocal understanding of the language used in the Bible to describe God. Given this current controversy, the present research aimed to determine the function and value of analogy to interpret the biblical records concerning the person and works of God. Has analogy been used appropriately by Classical Theology? Is OT's univocity a better option? Can analogy be methodologically and hermeneutically redefined in the context of biblical canon?

In order to answer these questions, Chapter 2 analyzed and theologically evaluated the function of both analogy (CT) and univocity (OT) by high-

lighting their limitations; Chapter 3 advanced a new understanding of analogy by focusing on methodology and hermeneutics; and Chapter 4 showed how canonical analogy as a methodological and hermeneutical tool can be used to interpret the biblical descriptions of two of God’s attributes: eternity and impassibility. The aim of this study, then, was to present an alternative understanding of the function and value of analogy to interpret the biblical records concerning the person and works of God.

The methodological and hermeneutical steps proposed here include:

1. Determine that the Bible alone is the material and presuppositional source to interpret the biblical descriptions of God.
2. Perform a phenomenological exegesis in order to extract the main presuppositions that are operative in the biblical text and are necessary to elaborate the doctrine of God. Instead of borrowing these hermeneutical presuppositions from philosophy, phenomenological exegesis looks for the operative primordial presuppositions in the biblical text. Once the hermeneutical presuppositions have been drawn from the Bible, biblical theology initiates the task of biblical exegesis itself.
3. Find out the explicit equivocal and univocal sides of the canonical analogy.
4. Elaborate a basic model from the biblical data. The ultimate goal is to outline a pattern or model from the data by seeking to ensure that individual texts and isolated pericopes eventually build a broader concept about God. Thus, microhermeneutical exegesis informs macrohermeneutical presuppositions in an ongoing hermeneutical spiral.

“The Significance of the Inanna/Ishtar Myths to Revelation 17: A Comparative Approach”

Researcher: Maicol Cortes, MA in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Eike Mueller, ThD

Three explanations have been offered to clarify the identity of the abyssal beast in Rev 17. The *Vorlage* text approach leads scholars to conclude that the sea beast in Rev 13:1 is the same with the abyssal beast in Rev 17:8; therefore, *abyss* means water or sea. The mythological approach associates the abyssal beast with Nero due to the connection between the beast and Nero’s

legend. Consequently, abyss is associated with death. Finally, scholars, using the word study approach, arrive at different conclusions regarding the meaning of abyss and the identity of the beast. Although scholars identify the great mother concept in Rev 17 as an element with Sumerian roots, no one has ever considered Sumerian myths in the evaluation of the biblical text.

This study focuses on comparing two Sumerian myths, particularly *Inanna's Descent into the Nether World* and *The Sacred Marriage Ceremony* with Rev 17 using the comparative approach. In comparing Rev 17 with the abovementioned myths, this thesis employs Shemaryahu Talmon's approach. Talmon presents four principles: namely, the proximity in time and place, correspondence of social function, priority of inner-biblical parallels, and holistic approach to text and comparisons.

This thesis concludes that Rev 17 and the Inanna/Ishtar myths have some similarities as well as differences. On the one hand, the similarities attest that John writes with the background of the Sumerian myths in Rev 17. On the other hand, the differences prove that the prophet employs the Sumerian ideas in Rev 17 to highlight the uniqueness of the biblical narrative. Although the primary source of Rev 17 is Dan 7, the composite symbol of the woman and the beast is unique to Rev 17. Perhaps in the description of the harlot riding the beast, John employs the Sumerian myths. The use of the Sumerian myths in Revelation could attest to the practice of a common worldview, the great mother goddess.

It seems that John employs the Sumerian myths in juxtaposition to the biblical narrative. *The Sacred Marriage Ceremony* stresses the importance of the union of politics and religion, whereas the biblical account exposes the danger of this union. The myth *Inanna's Descent into the Nether World* declares that although the goddess and Dumuzi died, they resurrected according to the cyclical element that connects this myth with *The Sacred Marriage Ceremony*. Nonetheless, John comments that the beast/kings are resurrected to die forever.

"An Innerbiblical Study of 'Be Holy for I Am Holy' in 1 Peter 1:15, 16"

Researcher: Rafael Bampi de Oliveira, MA in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Eike Mueller, ThD

Because of the word similarity and slight nuances among Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26, the attempt to identify the textual source for "be holy for I am holy"

in 1 Pet 1:15, 16 is a difficult task. The association between “be holy for I am holy” and the call to be distinct is perceivable in Lev 19:2; 20:7, 26. Thus, it makes sense that 1 Peter uses “be holy for I am holy” as a theme from Leviticus. The command to be holy that was addressed to the Israelites then is applied to Christian believers.

The use of the intertext “be holy for I am holy” is dynamic and broader than what biblical scholars suggest. In the OT, “be holy for I am holy” occurs 6 times (Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8). Every passage addresses several aspects of Israel’s social and religious lives. In Leviticus and 1 Peter, the authors use the intertext with similar wording. However, in 1 Pet 1:15, the author redesigns the intertext. Since each use of “be holy for I am holy” has distinctive features, every passage needs an individual study.

A study that considers options of source for the intertext “be holy for I am holy” in 1 Pet 1:15, 16 enables, to a certain extent, the understanding of 1 Peter’s argument. However, further contribution will be found by addressing the development of the intertext. The dynamic use of the “be holy for I am holy” should be addressed.

This research approached the text through innerbiblical exegesis which studies how a recent text reapplies or reinterprets an earlier one. Quotations are the most studied objects of this method. The method considers terminology, structure, and theme with a special emphasis on the historical and literary aspects of the text. Innerbiblical exegesis excels in appreciating the tradition and the divine revelation of the text.

To begin with, the nature of the study and the processes involved to solve the problem were presented. After that, common and distinctive features among the uses of “be holy for I am holy” were surveyed in Leviticus. Then, these features were assessed and the issues surrounding the uses of the intertext were categorized. At the end, the use of “be holy for I am holy” in 1 Pet 1:15, 16 was theorized.

This study presented an alternative theory on the use and the source of “be holy for I am holy” in 1 Pet 1:15, 16 based on the dynamics of common and distinctive features on the uses of the intertext in Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8. Peter uses the theme of holiness from Leviticus which is embedded in the words “be holy for I am holy.” In v. 15, “as the one who called you is holy, you also be holy” is an allusion to the adaptive refrain “be holy for I am holy” from Leviticus that empowers Peter’s argumentation on Christian behavior. In v. 15, the author uses the dynamics and patterns previously applied to the intertext in Leviticus. In v. 16, “be holy for I am holy” is the basic frequently used words in God’s refrain in Leviticus. In this last

verse, “be holy for I am holy” is a reduced quotation which conveys the theme of holiness with a generic ascent.

“Rebuking the Innocent: Challenge-Riposte Exchange in Luke 13:10–17”

Researcher: Judson Chhakchhuak, MA in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Eike Mueller, ThD

Many studies have explored the dispute between Jesus and the synagogue ruler over the Sabbath healing of a bent woman in Luke 13:10–17 from form and redaction criticism, feminist/liberationist criticism, compositional criticism, intertextuality, and narrative criticism. The crux, meaning, and implication of the passage have been interpreted differently. The synagogue ruler in this passage rebukes the crowd instead of Jesus who, according to his point of view, is guilty. Although scholars have offered different suggestions as to why the synagogue ruler chooses to rebuke the crowd, there seems to be no satisfactory explanation on the motive of his rebuke.

Chapter 1 stated the problem, surveyed the previous studies on Luke 10:13–17, and explained the social-scientific methodology used in the subsequent chapters. The social-scientific methodology allows an analysis of the social and cultural aspects of the biblical passage by utilizing the viewpoints, concept, models, and data of the social sciences. So, this study employed the honor-shame model proposed by the social-scientific biblical scholars. To avoid the usual pitfalls of thought, namely, superficiality and inaccuracy, this study followed the general laws of scientific steps: (1) postulate a model; (2) test and modify, if necessary, the model; and (3) apply the model.

Chapter 2 merged and implemented the first and second steps of the scientific steps. It presented a definition and explanation of honor-shame and its components. It also analyzed the honor-shame phenomenon in the Lukan narrative to show that the honor-shame model was suitable for analyzing the text under consideration. Chapter 3 executed the third step of the scientific step. It examined the characters, events, settings, and interactions in Luke 13:10–17 in terms of honor and shame to address the problems of this study. It then presented the social-scientific perspective of Luke 13:10–17.

Chapter 4 was the summary and result of this study. The study concluded that Luke 13:10–17 displays a careful and meaningful composition. The honor-shame components influence how Luke retells and structures the

story. The social values and the nature of the challenge-riposte shed light on why the synagogue ruler rebukes the crowd instead of Jesus. Since the public opinion is the determiner of honor in a collectivistic society where this interaction takes place, the synagogue ruler challenges the claim of this honorable figure, Jesus, publicly. Therefore, by rebuking the crowd, he publicly challenges the honor of Jesus in aiming to enhance his honor.

“The Temple Scene in Revelation 7:9-17: Location and Temporality”

Researcher: Stanislav Kondrat, MA in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Eike Mueller, ThD

This thesis attempts to identify the location and the time of the temple service in Rev 7:15. The text contains a textual problem which causes a difficulty in determining the spatial and the temporal loci of the scene. This study investigates Rev 7:15 by means of a thorough and meticulous text-oriented analysis that employs linguistic, literary, and intratextual procedures.

Chapter 1 presents a survey of previous studies on Rev 7. It gives an overview of the methods utilized in studying Rev 7. In addition, it summarizes scholarly views on the time and the space of the temple scene. These two overviews pave the way for the methodology of the current research, that is, the text-oriented approach which combines linguistic (morphology, syntax, semantics, and text-linguistics), literary (style, structure, and thematic arrangement), and intratextual analyses.

Chapter 2 contains the linguistic analysis and the literary analysis in the context of Rev 7:15. The linguistic study consists of the grammatical-syntactic and the semantic analyses of key words and phrases in each clause in Rev 7:14d–17. The text-linguistic analysis determines the interclausal relations in the passage. The literary study analyzes the genre of Rev 7, determines and develops various structures, and investigates the distribution of semantic fields in the chapter. Both linguistic and literary analyses complement one another and together provide adequate answers to the formulated questions of the research.

Chapter 3 builds on the findings of the linguistic and the literary studies. It explores the overall spatial-temporal coherence between the temple scene in Rev 7 and other similar scenes in the Book of Revelation. To establish intratextuality, the chapter examines lexical, thematic, and structural correspondences between Rev 7 and other texts in Revelation. Then, the spatial

and the temporal loci of the parallel texts are independently analyzed and compared with the time and space of the temple scene in Rev 7.

Chapter 4 presents the summary and conclusions of the research. It highlights the findings in linguistic, literary, and intratextual studies. The chapter underlines main contributions and outlines the areas for future research.

The studied passage, Rev 7:14b–17, is a well-crafted literary piece, which implements a wide array of linguistic features which clarify the temple scene in 7:15. Contrary to the general opinion, the speech describes not one but three scenes. While the tribulation and the eternal consummation take place on earth, the temple service, which is the main scene, occurs in the heavenly realm during the millennium.

“Towards a Missiological Framework for Responding to Chinese Folk Beliefs and Practices: An Ethnographic Case Study”

Researcher: Liang Chuanshan, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Abner Dizon, DMiss

This study aimed to find a solution to the missiological problem caused by the reality that the Chinese Adventist Church lacks effective ways to respond to folk beliefs and practices which have extensively affected Adventist members. It explored a great deal of literature regarding Chinese folk belief, its interaction with Christianity, and gospel communication within cultural contexts. In order to reach the research goal, this study adopted a research design called ethnographic case study, focusing on a coastal town, Xiangning, in southeastern China.

The findings of the fieldwork indicate that people’s material lives are highly intertwined with the spiritual world. Asking protection and blessings, fearing ghosts, and seeking assurance for the future are the main purposes of folk beliefs and practices. At the same time, there is a generally harmonious relationship between Xiangning Adventists and folk beliefs and practices, and this harmony frequently leads to syncretism. Furthermore, the fieldwork also demonstrates that the local Adventist Church’s missional efforts still lag far behind the real needs of mission reality and there is significant room for the church to improve in promoting its gospel communication.

The interpretation of the fieldwork shows that Chinese folk beliefs and practices are undergirded by at least 6 values which extend to the cognitive,

affective, and evaluative dimensions of Chinese culture. Supported by missiological and biblical principles, this study eventually proposes a missiological framework for gospel communication as a response to Chinese folk beliefs and practices. This framework is a contour consisting of 5 main points: (1) Countercultural contextualization provides a general principle for framework construction. (2) Bidirectional construction from above and below provides a general methodology for framework construction. (3) Worldview transformation is the core and purpose of gospel communication. (4) Critical contextualization is a concrete method in choosing among accepting, rejecting, or modifying old customs. (5) The 3 dimensions of Chinese folk beliefs and practices indicate the depth in which the Gospel can penetrate a society. All these 5 points correlate with each other and form a basic framework upon which further mission studies, evangelism, and pastoral counseling may be conducted.

"The Significance of Yhwh's *'ehyeh 'immaḵ* in the Covenant Context of the Pentateuch"

Researcher: Mang Hup Luai, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Carlos Elías Mora, ThD

This dissertation attempted to establish a perspective that takes the divine covenant renewal or reconfirmation as foundational to interpreting YHWH's אהיה עמך in the literary contexts of Gen 26:1-6; 28:10-15; 31:1-3; Exod 3:1-12; and Deut 31:23. Hence, this study used an exegetical method that focuses on the context and co-text of the texts. The study aimed to discover the significance of the formula in the Pentateuch.

Scholars advance an argument that does not consider the divine-human covenant as a point of departure for discussing and ascertaining the significance of the formula. Hence, they observe that YHWH's אהיה עמך is an assistant formula or a formula of aid offered as an ad hoc assistance for the people of Israel in times of crisis. The formula's validity is also confined within the patriarchal period, especially in the wake of Israel's search for national identity. There is a clear indication that these scholars do not take the literary contexts of the formula seriously in their approach which, therefore, signals the need for another study that takes the contexts analytically.

In order to bridge the hermeneutical gap, this research analyzed each literary context of the selected texts and established that YHWH's אהיה עמך is a formula of the divine covenant promise. This promise particularly deals

with the renewal or reconfirmation of the previously established divine-human covenants to the succeeding generation of the original divine covenant recipients. The Abrahamic covenant was renewed to Isaac, Jacob, and the Israelites, and the Sinaitic covenant to the second generation of the Sinaitic covenant at the plain of Moab.

In the divine-human covenants, the promise of YHWH's presence initiates and institutes the covenant relationship in the Pentateuch. The study of the grammar, syntax, and semantics has confirmed that YHWH's אהיה עמך is the divine volitional asseveration that expresses the divine self-determination in making sure that the fulfillment of the covenant promises is fulfilled for the descendants of Abraham.

In addition to renewing and reconfirming the divine-human covenants, YHWH's אהיה עמך also initiates the covenant relationship. Although God's love is central, the formula has a relational significance in which human obligation and obedience are anticipated to maintain such a covenant relationship. Through the formula, YHWH reveals who He is and what He will do as the covenant God. At the same time, the contexts clarify that human response to YHWH's אהיה עמך in faith, obedience, and worship is vital to the covenant relationship in the Pentateuch.

"The Newness of the New Covenant: An Exegetical-Intertextual Study of Hebrews 8:7-13"

Researcher: Glenn Jade V. Mariano, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Eike A. Mueller, ThD

This study deals with the newness of the new covenant in Heb 8:7-13. Scholarship is divided over the interpretation and implications of the first and the new covenants and the author's use of Jer 31:31-34 in Heb 8:7-13. Its purpose then is to resolve the issues on the meaning of the newness of the new covenant in connection to the faultiness and obsolescence of the first covenant through a detailed investigation of the prologue (vv. 7-8a) and the epilogue (v. 13) as literary devices and the author's use of Jer 31:31-34 (vv. 8b-12) within the literary context of Heb 8 and against its intertextual backdrop. This study tackles the topic in five chapters, utilizing the exegetical-intertextual analysis in the light of the historical-biblical method of exegesis. Chapter 1 introduces the background, statement of the problem, purpose, justification and significance, methodology, and literature review on the newness of the new covenant.

Chapter 2 surveys and examines the historical-literary context of Heb 8:7-13. As an epistolary sermon, the twofold purpose of Hebrews is to exhort Christian readers to remain faithful to their Christian faith and warn them of the danger of apostasy, namely, returning to the first covenant ritual system. Its main theme deals with the reality and superiority of the new covenant based on Jesus's supremacy in Heb 8:1-10:18, the central covenant section of Hebrews. Hebrews 8:7-13 is the main introduction of the covenant section that consists of the prologue, OT quotation, and epilogue. As literary devices, the prologue and the epilogue are used to indicate the purpose and the knowledge of the author in citing and interpreting the OT quotation.

Chapter 3 deals with the exegetical analysis of the newness of the new covenant in Heb 8:7-13. It investigates the use and the meaning of the term *διαθήκη* in Hebrews. It discusses the two main dimensions of the covenant (moral and ritual) and the newness of the new covenant in relation to the faultiness and obsolescence of the first covenant in its cultic setting. It also discusses the concept of the continuity and discontinuity as well as the similarities and the dissimilarities between the first and the new covenants.

Chapter 4 deals with the intertextual analysis of the newness of the new covenant in Jer 31:31-34 in Heb 8:8-12. It clarifies and defines the term *intertextuality* in relation to the biblical hermeneutics that was utilized in this study. It discusses the original context and meaning of Jer 31:31-34, some textual differences, and the intertextual connections between Jer 31:31-34 and Heb 8:8b-12.

Chapter 5 concludes the study on the newness of the new covenant. It presents the chapter summary and some reflections on scholarship. It also provides some implications and recommendations for further study.

The newness of the new covenant refers to the continuity of the moral dimension of the first covenant and the discontinuity of its ritual dimension. The first covenant becomes obsolete due to its faultiness in the sense of the unfaithfulness of Israel to God's covenant and its ritual inadequacy in solving the sin problem. Its moral dimension (the unchanging moral principles and promises) is renewed, continuing its function in the new covenant. Its ritual dimension (the provisional ritual system) ceases its typological function when the new covenant is established with a better quality and excellent type of ritual system in providing perfection and restoring the perfect relationship between God and His people in a Christological perspective. In a nutshell, the new covenant is the renewal of God's original covenant relationship, promises, and precepts intended for His people for eternity which

are being facilitated by the new and perfect ritual system of Jesus Christ the high priest, sacrifice, and mediator of the new covenant.

“A Study of the Development of Seventh-Day Adventist Historiography”

Researcher: Gabriel Masfa, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Michael W. Campbell, PhD

Even though Adventist history is a vital part of Seventh-day Adventist identity, comparatively very little reflection has been done to analyze what this history means or how it has been written. A lacuna exists to comprehensively and systematically examine Adventist historiography. In addition, a further need exists to chart the development of Adventist historiography from its earliest beginnings to the present. Exploration needs to be done as to the manner in which historical writing impacts Seventh-day Adventist theology, history, and philosophy. How and why have Adventist historians interpreted and written about the past? To what extent have Adventist historians incorporated social, political, and secular approaches to their historical narratives? This dissertation charts the growth and development of Adventist historical consciousness and thus reflects on how Adventist historians describe the past.

This dissertation describes three major trends within the development of Seventh-day Adventist historiography. First, the writing of history began as an extension of an interest in Bible prophecy and a conviction about God’s providential leading in the rise of Adventism (theological-fideist history). Second, Adventist history remained important in order to do successful apologetics, affirm the faith of church members, and provide new resources such as textbooks and affirmations of the prophetic gift through the life and writings of Ellen G. White. Third, more critical methods were gradually incorporated that challenged traditional narratives of Adventist history. These methods incorporated new and more objective ways that considered natural causation in history. Historians following this school began to look for more credible evidence to support earlier claims about Adventist history. These new critical approaches generated a wide range of responses, all of which continue to be promulgated within Adventism up to the present day.

Adventist historiography is complex. A recognition of this complexity makes it obvious that it is impossible to have a single narrative within Adventist historiography, nor should there be merely one. A wide range of

methods exists that allows for an even wider variety of historical narratives about the Adventist past. Most of these approaches serve some valuable purpose so long as there is a consistent methodology and honesty about sources. In addition, a wide variety of personalities have each brought unique perspectives and idiosyncrasies about how such narratives are told. Each approach here analyzed has contributed to the development of an acceptable methodology for interpreting history from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective.

“Jonah’s Disobedience and Elijah’s Comparable Non-Compliance: An Analog Analytical Approach”

Researcher: Watson Mbiriri, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Teófilo Correa, PhD

This dissertation focuses on the theologically disconcerting phenomenon of prophetic disobedience as manifested in the cases of two OT prophets, Jonah and Elijah. The cause, meaning, significance, and implications of Jonah’s disobedience in particular has been a subject of much scholarly reflection for centuries and yet answers remain elusive and interpretations are widely divergent. A new methodological approach (analog analysis) to the problem of Jonah’s disobedience is introduced in this dissertation. Instead of considering Jonah’s case in isolation as most studies have done in the past, this study considers Jonah’s disobedience (Jonah 1:1–3) alongside the case of Elijah’s comparable non-compliance to a divine commission (1 Kgs 19:15–21).

The study found many significant hitherto unconsidered parallels between the given cases of Elijah and Jonah. The two are the only prophets from Israel ever sent to function in their official capacity as prophets to nations outside of Israel. Intriguingly, both prophets disobeyed the commissions as given. There are many comparable exigencies in the two prophets’ rhetorical contexts. Notable among the comparable exigencies is the fact that both Elijah and Jonah were commissioned to nations that posed the greatest military threats to Israel’s existence in their respective times, Aram-Damascus and Assyria. Significant similarities in plot and verbal elements are discussed in the study along with notable dissimilarities. Most notable is the fact that this study proffers a new genre category for the Book of Jonah by identifying it as an enacted nation oracle. Although Jonah and Elijah did not initially comply with the divine commissions respectively given to them,

the commissions were eventually fulfilled. A sense of consternation accompanied both instances of the eventual fulfillment of the commissions initially given to Jonah and Elijah.

In light of all the comparative and the contrastive analyses of the different aspects of Jonah and Elijah's cases, the study concludes that Jonah's disobedience was more likely than not an expression of his sense of trepidation at his prophetic foreknowledge of the indirect implications of his commission to Nineveh upon his nation, Israel. His should be read, not as petty insubordination, but rather a case of prophetic resistance in a given revelatory context, thus an expression of his sincere but futile remonstrance against the commission given to him. For this reason, neither Elijah nor Jonah were punished as others who disobeyed God were in the OT. Jonah's actions were underpinned by his understanding, on the very least, of the commission given to him as an enacted oracle. The findings and conclusions of this study have implications on readers' understanding of nation oracles and the nature and function of the prophetic office.

"Tsaraat and Its Regulation of Purification According to Leviticus 13 and 14"

Researcher: Kim Chai Ngo, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Teófilo Correa, PhD

Leviticus 13–14 record a legislation, namely, the צָרַע regulation, which deals with the affliction of *tsaraat*. *Tsaraat* has been called the "Father of Uncleaness" and is traditionally associated with personal sin. Moreover, there are two problems that arise. (1) "What kind of uncleaness does the regulation deal with?" (2) "Are the more complex purification procedures of the regulation other than the diseases listed in Lev 11–15 an indication that צָרַע carries a moral guilt connotation and an accusation that צָרַע is a result of a sinful act?" These are taken into consideration in this study, aiming to determine the nature and the rationale behind the regulation and enrich the discussion of the topic on current opinions.

Few steps are taken in response to the questions for exploring the true intent and purpose of the regulation. The framework of the study and relevant scholarly explanations are provided and reviewed in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 presents a brief examination of the cases of צָרַע in the ANE texts and in non-Levitical narratives to grasp the significant connection between those documents with the Levitical צָרַע. The exegetical analysis of the regulation

of *עָרַע* in Chapter 3 expresses literary analysis of the regulation and the contextual meaning of several words which are considered traditional sin-related terms. However, *נִגְעַת עָרַעַת* denotes a generic name for various skin diseases in the regulation, which can be cleaned and are not associated with sin; the sacrificial offerings *תַּאֲטָה* and *שֶׁטָה* can be purificatory in the ceremonial ritual that functions to cleanse or to wipe off uncleanness. At the same time, the intention and motif to remove the uncleanness of the *עָרַע* are attested to by each step of the purification ritual.

Based on the close study of the relation between sin and disease in the context of Lev 13 and 14, chap. 4 reveals that *עָרַע* is a disease like the other diseases in the OT. It lies not only among the sick but also in their social environments and in the larger universe. *עָרַע* makes people ceremonially unclean; consequently, it causes alienation from God and fellow humans. As a result, God establishes a cleansing procedure so that those who are cleansed are reinstated and can come near and approach Him. The complex decontamination procedures are simply steps to remove the uncleanness and can only be accomplished by God alone who knows the solution of this design to provide a complete procedure. Through the *עָרַע* regulation, the interplay of God's holiness, ceremonial cleanliness, and didactic nature are revealed. Lastly, the summary of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations are given in Chapter 5.

“Sapiential Echoes of the Newness Motif in 2 Corinthians 5:11–21”

Researcher: Oswell Dzvairo, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Eike Mueller, ThD

This dissertation examines the newness motif in 2 Cor 5:11–21 by taking into consideration some sapiential notions in the text. Most studies on this subject limit their interpretation of the passage to the newness terminology in 2 Cor 5:17 and neglect other newness allusions in the passage. In addition, studies also miss sapiential notions in the text. Thus, newness allusions and sapiential notions are not accounted for. Due to such gaps, the meaning of the passage is not yet fully explored. This study attempts to attend to all the newness elements and wisdom notions in the passage.

This study employs inner-biblical analysis in cross-examining the newness motif in 2 Cor 5:11–21. Chapter 1 reviews the related literature on the subject under study, establishes the research gap, and formulates the methodology for this study. The majority of scholarship understand the newness

motif in 2 Cor 5:11–21 along three views: (a) new anthropology, (b) new cosmology, and (c) new exodus. Chapter 2 traces the conceptual background of the sapiential newness in 2 Cor 5:11–21. It establishes that OT wisdom thinking as reflected in the Wisdom Literature and some apocalyptic texts form the fundamental backdrop of Paul’s newness motif. Chapter 3 presents an inner-biblical analysis of the sapiential newness in 2 Cor 5:11–21. Chapter 4 presents some theological implications of the sapiential newness motif. It also presents a summary and conclusion of the study.

This study offers a unique understanding of 2 Cor 5:11–21 that better reflects Paul’s usage of sapiential notions to convey the newness motif. Such approach is more consistent with the paraenetic style of writing that Paul utilized in most of his writings. The study discovers that the newness motif in 2 Cor 5:11–21 is Christ-centered. In the Corinthian Epistles, Christ is wisdom personified. In that capacity, Christ is the agent of new creation as also reflected in Prov 8:22–31. He is also the agent of reconciliation and righteousness as reflected in Isa 11:1-10. Thus, the new creation in 2 Cor 5:17 denotes renewed mindset that lead believers to reflect Christlikeness in all conduct.

“Paradox and Passivity: Gaps as a Rhetorical Device in Genesis 22:1–19”

Researcher: David Vanlalnghaka Sailo, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Carlos Elías Mora, ThD

The difficulties of the narrative of Gen 22:1–19 comprises paradox and passivity. These difficulties elicit interpretative issues with the characters of the narrative. The text had been approached using different methodologies, but only few studies attempted to look at the narrative features comprehensively, especially with a specific purpose of understanding its paradox and passivity. This study attempts to contribute to a better understanding of the difficulties of the narrative using the narrative analysis method.

In Chapter 1, an overview of the literature on Gen 22:1–19 introduces the topic and describes the methodology of the study. Chapter 2 describes various narrative poetics such as the closure and scene, the plot, the narrator, the point of view, the time and action, the character, the characterization, the settings, the prop, and the gaps. Each narrative poetic description is immediately followed by the application of the poetics in the narrative of Gen 22:1–19. Chapter 3 presents the understanding of the paradox and the passivity based on the narrative analysis in Chapter 2. Brief theological insights

that emerge from the study follow. Chapter 4 presents the summary and the conclusions of the study.

The study concludes that paradox and passivity are an integral part of the storytelling technique. The paradox of the promise of progeny with the test is part of the complication of the plot that builds tension in the narrative. After Abraham's words and actions in the transforming action of the plot remove the tension, the promise of progeny is reaffirmed in the final situation of the plot. The paradox of the enigmatic words of Abraham are subtle revelations of the motive for his obedience. The unprotested obedience of Abraham is the key to removing the tension of the plot which is inspired by his belief that God will provide. The silent submission of Isaac is part of the rhetoric device that demonstrates the main plot of the narrative—Abraham's obedience to God. Since Abraham is tasked to remove the tension of the plot, other details that do not contribute to it are left out of the narrative. Thus, paradox and passivity are parts of the narrative convention that contribute to the plot of the narrative: Abraham obeys God because he believes that God will provide, and God did provide.

“Metaphors of Forgiveness in the Book of Isaiah”

Researcher: Rudi Sánchez García, PhD in Religion, 2019

Advisor: Carlos Elías Mora, ThD

The Book of Isaiah offers a variety of metaphors for forgiveness. Biblical scholars have taken into consideration these different metaphors; however, they do not evidence the methodological procedure in their analysis. Furthermore, rarely have they been studied as *metaphor* and no one has accomplished a comprehensive analysis of the entire inventory of metaphors for forgiveness in this prophetic book. Consequently, this study seeks to fill this gap by undertaking metaphorical analysis of metaphors related to forgiveness in the Book of Isaiah. The figurative language of forgiveness includes the lexemes רָפָא, מָחָה, רָצָה, שָׁלַח, נָשָׂא, לָבֵן, סוּר, דוּחַ, רָחַן, and רָפָא.

A number of these metaphorical descriptions of forgiveness are not novel in the Book of Isaiah, that is, they occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Despite this, the prophet Isaiah adds a completely different nuance to some of these metaphors. A brief survey of these metaphors is undertaken in Chapter 1. This study utilizes Eva F. Kittay's perspectival theory of metaphor to analyze the multifaceted metaphors of forgiveness in the Isaianic passages. Kittay provides the methodological basis on how to identify a

metaphor. One of the fundamental tenets of this approach is the analysis of the semantic incongruity that helps to detect if a grammatical utterance is a metaphorical utterance. The semantic incongruity or the anomalous nature of the sentence results from the association of terms from different semantic fields (for example, animate being with an inanimate object). Moreover, Kit-tay's terminologies, the vehicle and the topic, that constitute a metaphor are integrated in this study. This theoretical framework is posited in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 offers the metaphorical analysis of the metaphors. First, the identification of the metaphor is considered. Second, textual-critical issues are carried out in order to locate the presence or absence of the metaphor in ancient versions. Third, a poetic analysis to examine the different kinds of parallelism (grammatical, semantical, lexical, and phonological). Fourth, the discussion of the metaphor offers valuable analysis of each metaphor outside and inside of Isaiah.

The previous chapter paves the theological implications that are presented in Chapter 4. Mainly, it considers the metaphorical theology of the seven metaphors. Lastly, Chapter 5 offers the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

"Development of an Enhanced Bible Study Program for the Spiritual Nurturing of the Youth in Korean Union Conference"

Researcher: Hyun Jun Woo, DMin, 2019

Advisor: Prema Gaikwad, PhD

Contextualized Bible study is one of the most effective ways for spiritual nurturing, especially among the youth. However, many Christian churches continue giving traditional and not contextualized Bible study programs. Consequently, the youth lose interest, faith, and connection and finally drop out from church. In an attempt to find a solution to this negative phenomenon, a qualitative action research was conducted using a Bible study program for Korean teenagers.

The pilot study conducted in the Philippines with Korean teenagers resulted in an enhanced Bible study curriculum. This curriculum integrates Bible knowledge with professional learning theories and research-based teaching processes. This enhanced Bible study curriculum was later implemented in Korea. The data were collected from 12 participants using interviews and 10 instructors using focus group discussion.

The findings showed that the teenagers like well-prepared Bible study programs which matched well with learning strategies such as cooperative learning and practical evangelistic activities. During the implementation of this program, the participants demonstrated spiritual growth in five dimensions: (a) experience, (b) Bible knowledge, (c) faith, (d) lifestyle, and (e) witnessing. This study has implications for the development of contextualized Bible study programs that take into consideration the teenagers' qualities, and culture, appropriate teaching strategies, and interesting Bible study materials.

BOOK REVIEWS

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| Stevens, Gerald L., <i>Acts: A New Vision of the People of God</i> , 2nd ed. (Dindo C. Paglinawan) | 137–43 |
| Brown, Jeannine K., and Kyle Roberts, <i>Matthew</i> , The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Anatolii Simushov) | 143–47 |

Stevens, Gerald L., *Acts: A New Vision of the People of God*, 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019. 694 pages. Hardcover, \$104.00. Paperback, \$76.00. E-book, \$72.00.

Gerald L. Stevens’s *Acts: A New Vision of the People of God* was first published in 2016 and subsequently updated with a second edition in 2019. Alongside the refinement of discussions and correction of typographical and other technical errors, the second edition introduces an epilogue and conducts a thorough investigation into the historical narratives surrounding the death and burial of Paul. A noteworthy inclusion in this section is Stevens’s reference to the excavation of the sarcophagus at the Church of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, which unveiled bones estimated to date back to the first or second century, a dating verified through carbon analysis (p. xxiv).

In this volume, Stevens presents a new reading of the book of Acts, departing from the traditional verse-by-verse analysis commonly adopted by many commentators. Instead, he adopts a partly thematic but predominantly narrative approach. Stevens identifies Pentecost, Hellenists and Antioch, and the Saul-Paul character, as pivotal themes that propel the development of plot in Acts (p. 34). However, he contends that these themes are intrinsically tied to a more profound overarching narrative: the spread of the gospel by the eschatological messianic Israel, led by Peter (chaps. 1–7), Stephen and Philip (chaps. 8–9), and ultimately Paul (chaps. 13–28), which permeates throughout the entire book. Stevens suggests that Luke’s intention in composing Acts is to illustrate the seamless transition from the story of Jesus to the narrative of the emerging Christian church, as he puts it: “Luke’s purpose is to show that the story of Jesus becomes the story of the

church" (p. 32). Additionally, he asserts that "Acts is a new vision of the people of God" (p. 34). How is this vision understood? Stevens fundamentally points out two pivotal transformations that unfold within Acts. Firstly, Jesus transformed the national Israel into a messianic Israel, positioning them as his eschatological people. Secondly, he endowed them power with the impetus for a global mission, a narrative arc that finds its apex in the mission of Paul to the Gentiles.

After addressing the preliminary aspects, Stevens organizes the subsequent content of the volume into three distinct parts with an epilogue. Part 1 lays the foundation by exploring the thematic elements underlying the narrative, providing detailed insights into character development and plot intricacies. Part 2 delves deeper into the narrative, focusing specifically on the theme of the Spirit's empowerment within the context of the emerging messianic Israel (Acts 1–12). Finally, Part 3 addresses the broader scope of the Spirit's empowerment, particularly in the context of the global mission (chaps. 13–28). Then the book closes with an epilogue on the death and burial of Paul.

In Part 1 of his book, Stevens delves into pivotal themes in Acts. Firstly, he extensively addresses the significance of Pentecost, a topic often only briefly touched upon by other scholars. He offers an in-depth exploration, providing a profound background of Pentecost and its encompassing impact on the narratives of Acts. He argues that Pentecost serves as a foundational theme shaping the trajectory of Acts, both in the first and second half of the book. At the narrative level, Stevens identifies Barnabas as the Pentecost facilitator, while the subsequent world mission led by Paul embodies the fulfillment of Pentecost's destiny (pp. 69–71).

Secondly, Stevens discusses the emergence of the Hellenist movement and the pivotal role of Antioch within it. Drawing parallels to Luke's portrayal of Peter's involvement in the original mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, Stevens highlights the continuation of this mission by Hellenists such as Stephen and Philip, endorsed by the disciples. He underscores the significance of Antioch as a hub for believers from Jerusalem, emphasizing its unique historical context that promotes social inclusiveness, thereby enhancing the spread of the gospel.

Thirdly, Stevens addresses the complex figure of Paul, integrating insights from Stephen's speech regarding themes of "God active" and "God resisted" to elucidate Paul's role. Notably, Stevens goes beyond merely recognizing Paul's prominence in the mission to the Gentiles, acknowledging

that the apostle was not completely obedient to God's will. He cites instances such as Paul's seemingly aimless mission trip at the onset of the second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–10) and his detour to Jerusalem instead of proceeding directly to Rome (19:21) as evidence of his internal struggles with obedience. Stevens astutely observes Luke's nuanced portrayal of Paul, presenting him not as a monolithic figure, i.e., Paul as a stable character all the way through the second half of the book, but as a dynamic character, namely Saul-Paul (p. 143).

In Part 2, Stevens explores the empowerment of the Spirit within messianic Israel (Acts 1–12), asserting that it commences with the reconstitution of the twelve disciples as representatives of the national Israel. He emphasizes the pivotal role of Pentecost, noting that Pentecost serves as the moment when God's renewed people are commissioned for their mission both locally and globally, akin to Jesus's baptism that ushered him to his public ministry. Furthermore, Stevens highlights the pervading impact of the disciples' experience of the Pentecost, underscoring its transformation into a permanent reality in their lives (p. 181). At the narrative level, he observes a continuation of the Pentecostal theme in the subsequent chapters of Acts 2. For instance, in chaps. 3–5, he identifies key characters crucial to the plot's development. Barnabas emerges as a facilitator of Pentecost fulfillment in chap. 4, while Ananias and Sapphira pose a threat to the realization of Pentecost promises in chap. 5. Additionally, he highlights the significance of Gamaliel in chap. 5, whose counsel regarding "fighting against God" holds particular relevance to the character development of Saul, later known as Paul. Chapters 6–10 witness the emergence of Hellenists Stephen and Philip as prominent figures within the narrative. Stevens identifies chap. 6 as a pivotal moment in the narrative trajectory (p. 229), signifying a notable shift in focus. What distinguishes Stephen and Philip within the Acts narrative is their profound impact on subsequent events. Stevens underscores the importance of Stephen's speech, highlighting God's active empowerment of his agents but at the same time, his opposition to redirecting them to accomplish his purpose catalyzes the development of subsequent plotlines (p. 140). The mission in Judea and Samaria, spearheaded by the Hellenist movement, reached its peak when the gospel was introduced to the Gentile regions, with the conversion of Cornelius playing a significant role. Thus, Stevens contends that chaps. 11–12 mark a definitive shift in focus, with Antioch becoming a pivotal center for the realization of Pentecost (p. 284). Antioch's significance lies in its inherent social inclusiveness, which fosters the advancement of the gospel within its diverse social fabric.

In Part 3, Stevens delves into the pivotal role of the Spirit in empowering world missions (Acts 13–28), which begins with the selection of Barnabas and Saul for this purpose. Acts 13:2 serves as a good example of the Spirit's indispensable role in spreading the gospel among the Gentiles. Stevens asserts that Barnabas and Paul operated under the guidance of the Spirit in the first missionary endeavor. As the journey progressed, Saul underwent a transformation into Paul, ultimately eclipsing Barnabas in prominence. Their preaching often centered around synagogues in the regions they visited. Stevens mentions some challenges during this journey, including the Jerusalem council. He notes that the departure of Mark from the group during the first missionary journey reveals the complexity of Paul's personality. On the other hand, the Jerusalem council addressed pertinent issues stemming from the first journey, notably the insistence on circumcision by some factions, which was contrary to the will of God. The insistence on this practice as essential for salvation underscores the social sensitivity surrounding the integration of Gentile converts. Stevens contends that such opposition was tantamount to resisting God's divine plan (p. 336).

In contrast to his focused efforts during the first missionary journey—though marred by a rift with Barnabas, leading to their eventual separation—Stevens asserts that Paul initially embarked upon the second journey without a clear direction, characterizing his early endeavors as aimless (p. 345). Thus, he claims that Paul was fighting against God, with a pivotal shift back on track occurring only after a visionary experience (pp. 341–49). At the narrative level, Stevens observes a correlation between Paul's resistance to divine guidance and the emergence of narrative sections written in the first-person plural "we," a pattern evident during both the second and third journeys (p. 349). Stevens mentions some changes that occurred here. Firstly, having been separated from Barnabas, Paul now took Silas and Timothy with him. Secondly, the paradigm for gospel proclamation shifted from the synagogue to the market (p. 373). Paul's zeal persisted after the Spirit's redirection, continuing into his third missionary journey. This time, the paradigm for the gospel was the church (p. 436, especially the chart). Paul's boldness at Ephesus was remarkable, yet Stevens considers his decision to journey to Jerusalem instead of to Rome, as described in Acts 19:21, a detour from his destiny (p. 449). Thus, towards the end of the third missionary journey, Stevens claims that Paul was once again fighting against God (p. 454). From a narrative perspective, Stevens views the lengthy chapters dealing with Paul's trial in Jerusalem as a delay of God's plan (p. 469). However, God intervened by granting Paul two visions, one in Jerusalem

and the other during his voyage to Rome for trial. Only after this, Stevens asserts, did Paul cease fighting against God, embracing the divine destiny chosen for him (p. 573), and proclaiming God's kingdom even from a house prison.

In the epilogue, Stevens addresses not only the potential historicity of Paul's death and burial but also the aftermath of his imprisonment in Rome. The scarcity of evidence regarding these matters has led to various narrative trajectories, each claiming its own interpretation. Stevens asserts that Paul died during the reign of Nero, with indications pointing to the involvement of synagogue leadership in Rome in the events leading to his death. While some narratives suggest that Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment as described in Acts 28, others contend that his story ended tragically and abruptly (p. 606). Regarding his burial, speculation persists regarding whether he was interred "outside the city" or "outside the walls." With no conclusive evidence to support these claims, Stevens cautiously adheres to the account presented in Acts 28 regarding Paul's fate. However, his exploration of the various viewpoints on these matters in the epilogue offer more alternatives from which one may view Paul's death and burial.

In reflecting on the content of the present volume, it is evident that there are points of agreement with Stevens's analysis as well as areas of divergence. One aspect I concur with is his assertion regarding Peter's continuation of Jesus's ministry. The accounts of healing and resurrection within Acts indeed echo the characteristics of Jesus's own ministry. Additionally, I align with Stevens's emphasis on the themes of "God active" and "God resisted" as articulated in Stephen's speech, recognizing their pervasive influence throughout the book of Acts. I appreciate the author's perspective on the theme of "fighting against God," particularly in the context of Paul's obedience and resistance to God's will. This disposition places Paul with Saul and the many in the book, who not only opposed the gospel but also determined to kill the bearer of the gospel. Moreover, the linkage between the "we" sections in Acts and Paul's contradiction with the leading of the Spirit is a compelling observation, highlighting the nuanced narrative techniques employed by Luke. Also, I agree with Stevens's observation regarding the incorporation of visionary sections in passages depicting Paul's insistence on pursuing his own agenda. Lastly, Stevens's narrative reading of Acts 28, noting particularly the absence of characters compared to the trial of Paul in Jerusalem—implying support for Luke's overarching purpose of portraying the spread of the gospel even in Rome—also deserves mention.

Indeed, such an observation can be achieved better with a narrative approach.

Furthermore, I concur with Steven's emphasis on the theme of Pentecost, acknowledging its significance as a transformative event that empowered and emboldened the disciples throughout the book of Acts. However, I diverge from his assertion that the theme of Pentecost singularly shapes the development of the plot. While Pentecost undoubtedly permeates Acts, usually characterized by feasting on abundance and social inclusiveness, I contend that these characteristics are not exclusively tied to Pentecost, as they are also present in other parts of the NT, particularly the gospels. Therefore, Pentecost may not be as prominently featured as suggested.

Furthermore, I hold reservations regarding the characterization of Barnabas as a Pentecost facilitator. Although he undoubtedly played a significant role in the early Christian community, attributing his actions solely to Pentecost may oversimplify his contributions. Similarly, I feel the same way about the author's portrayal of the paradigm of the gospel proclamation delivered by Paul during his missionary journeys. While the author suggests a shift from synagogues to markets and then to church, I argue that Paul's engagement with synagogues remains consistent throughout his journeys, indicating a more conventional approach to his preaching locations. Moreover, I disagree with Stevens's view of conflict stories within Acts, particularly those involving Paul. While the author attributes these conflicts to Paul's contradiction to God's will, I believe that conflict is a recurring theme in Acts that extends beyond Paul's actions. For instance, Peter and Stephen also encounter conflicts with religious leaders in Jerusalem despite their obedience to God's commands.

In my evaluation of Stevens' book, I find that he has made a significant contribution to the study of Acts. A blend of partly thematic but dominantly a narrative approach employed throughout the book itself constitutes a noteworthy contribution to Acts scholarship. Particularly insightful is his emphasis on key themes such as Pentecost, "God active" and "God resisted," and "fighting against God," which shed light on crucial aspects of the narrative, although there may be points of contention among scholars. As to the feature of this volume, it is enriched by a wealth of visual aids including maps, images of archaeological artifacts, and other relevant photographs. These visual elements enhance the reader's understanding by providing additional context, particularly regarding the geographical locations visited by Paul and his companions. Another notable contribution of Stevens in this volume is the detailed exploration of Paul's extended journey

in Rome and his eventual martyrdom, which Stevens provides with thoroughness and insight. This aspect in the updated edition of his book adds depth to the understanding of Paul's later life and contributes to a more comprehensive view of the historical and literary contexts of Acts. Thus, I recommend this volume to scholars, pastors, and laypeople, particularly those interested in a narrative approach to the book of Acts. Going through the book will benefit the reader immensely, offering a nuanced understanding of Stevens's interesting observations beyond what can be gleaned solely from the limited lens of this review.

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Brown, Jeannine K., and Kyle Roberts. *Matthew*. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. xiv + 576 pages. Paperback \$51.99. E-Book, \$51.99.

This volume continues Eerdmans' The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary series, whose distinguishing feature is the accent upon theological exegesis and theological reflection. Written by the experts in their areas (Brown is a biblical scholar and Roberts is a systematic theologian), it is the result of the interdisciplinary dialogue led by them for over five years. The book consists of three main sections, only one of which, the first, represents a commentary in the strict sense of this word. The other two parts deal with the theological interpretation of the First Gospel. Nevertheless, as the authors acknowledge themselves, "The assumption that Matthew's Gospel is thoroughly theological permeates our commentary from beginning to end" (p. 3).

The exegetical section begins with a short consideration of introductory issues (chapter 1). If to summarize their view, the Gospel of Matthew has three main parts (1:1–4:16; 4:17–16:20; 16:20–28:20) and was written in AD 70–90 by a Jew (Matthew, a disciple of Jesus) to Jewish house churches in various locations involved in an intramural debate with other branches of Judaism and being at the initial stage of a mission to gentiles. To present all exegetical observations of the commentary part (chapters 2–8) here is impossible and, in fact, unnecessary. More important is to note the authors' general approach both in this section and throughout the book. Although, as it was said, Brown and Roberts consider Matthew's Gospel first of all as a theological project, they do not ignore its narrative form. On the contrary,

they are deeply interested in Matthew's literary rhetoric and the contours of his story of Jesus. For this reason, they utilize narrative criticism to disclose its beauty and richness. An indubitable advantage of that is the opportunity for the reader to look at the Gospel in its integrity and see the problem texts and themes not in isolation but within the coherent narrative tapestry. At the same time, Brown and Roberts pay serious attention to Matthew's historical context, avoiding thereby a common critique against the narrative approach. For them, the Gospel is a product of the culture. Therefore, socio-historical realities of the first-century Judaism and Greco-Roman world play a crucial role in the proper understanding of Matthew's Gospel.

Approaching the theological interpretation of the First Gospel, Brown and Roberts indicate that their endeavors, shaped by commitments to the biblical canon, the Nicene tradition, and Christian formation and practices, embody two fundamental values: a high view of Scripture's authority and the importance of realizing their own interpretive setting. Based on that, Part 2 focuses on theological engagement with Matthew. The authors admit that this process cannot be solely unidirectional—from text to theology (our assumptions, questions, and reflections still impact our reading). They also acknowledge that the evangelist was not doing systematic theology. Nevertheless, it is possible, they believe, to learn both theology itself and how to do it from him. Consequently, they consider four themes (chapters 10–13), most of which are typical for the discussion of Matthew's theology, and try to understand the import of "the Messiah's deeds" (chapter 14). In all these cases, Brown and Roberts are very careful about the narrative form of the Gospel.

Chapter 10 concerns the concept of the kingdom and shows that the newness of Jesus's message was not the apolitical character of the heavenly rule but its presence in his own kingship. Chapter 11 traces the narrative development of Matthean Christology and summarizes it in four categories: "(1) Davidic Messiah; (2) Torah fulfilled and Wisdom embodied; (3) representative Israel; and (4) embodiment of Yahweh" (p. 303). Chapter 12 on the Holy Spirit exemplifies the movement from theology to text (i.e., from the church's reflections to the exegesis) rather than vice versa. Although, unlike the post-New Testament tradition, Matthew speaks not so much about the person as about the agency of the Spirit, the First Gospel contains explicit Trinitarian intentions and stresses the role of the Holy Spirit in quiet, merciful, and just ministry of Jesus and the subsequent Christian mission.

Chapter 13 explicates what it means to be a Jesus's disciple (following Jesus and demonstrating this in just, merciful, and loving relationships with

others) and how Matthew communicates this understanding (the characterization of the Twelve, Jesus's teachings and deeds, the portrait of other exemplary characters). Finally, chapter 14 demonstrates that "gospel" includes not only Jesus's death and resurrection, but also His ministry and that the idea of corporate representation helps to minimize problems raised by traditional theories of atonement. Such classical approaches to atonement as the satisfaction theory, the substitution theory, and the ransom theory are too individualistic and contain deep ethical (punishing the Son for something he did not do) and theological (the division within Godself and the dichotomy between mercy and justice) problems. Based on Matthew's text, authors state that Jesus can be a "substitute" only in the sense that "he represented the nation of Israel *as a whole* and the gentiles ... *as a whole*" (p. 377).

In part 3, Brown and Roberts move to constructive theological engagement with Matthew. As they themselves explain, "Drawing upon contemporary interests, methods, and concerns, we engage Matthew from a variety of perspectives and with a variety of voices" (p. 381). First of all, the authors note Matthew's contribution to a New Testament theology (Wisdom Christology, the hiddenness of the heavenly kingdom, an egalitarian view of the Christian community, and Trinitarian understanding of God; chapter 16). In chapter 17, "Reading Matthew with Feminist Perspectives," Brown and Roberts demonstrate the important (though sometimes implicit) role women play in the First Gospel, rejecting at the same time radical feminist approaches to Scripture with their intrinsic hermeneutics of suspicion. Global and Liberation theology perspectives are the focus of chapter 18 highlighting Matthew's accent on the value of the oppressed, a human Jesus, and the transformation of human beings and social institutions. Chapter 19 gives a guide for reading Matthew pastorally, which should be Christological and holistic, and provides a few valuable examples (the "antitheses," Jesus's healings and exorcisms, and Church discipline). In chapter 20, the authors persuade the reader that "God's saving work in the First Gospel cannot be confined to a spiritual plane" (p. 505) but includes social and political realities. At last, chapter 21, "Reading Judaism Ethically in the Post-Holocaust Era," assigns responsibility for Jesus's death not only to the Jewish leaders but also to Pilate (Rome's representative) and states that Matthew's final word about the Jewish people is Matt 27:64 rather than 27:25.

In general, the commentary creates an impression of a well-integrated work, where different parts, despite their specific interests, ultimately complement each other and advance the reader's understanding of Matthew's

Gospel and its contemporary theological significance. To a great degree, it has become possible, as it seems, due to few themes running throughout the book and uniting it. One of them is the idea of solidarity. It plays a significant role both in the presentation of Jesus, who fully identified himself with Israel and humanity, and in depicting the disciples' response to the Gospel's message, which should include solidarity with the "last" and "least." Therefore, Brown and Roberts constantly turn to this topic, and it will not be an exaggeration to say that solidarity is the dominant concept in the commentary. This fact clearly demonstrates their sensitivity not only to the Gospel's text but also to modern-day realities.

Despite all these advantages and many valuable thoughts found in the book, there are some questions. The first one concerns the idea of divine sonship in Matthew's Gospel. The authors acknowledge that the description of Jesus as the Son of God implies his divine identity (p. 49). However, their primary focus is on the representative and royal interpretation of this title (Jesus as a true Israelite and the King). Such an approach appears to underestimate the significance of Matthew 1:18–25 forming a framework for the proper understanding of the phrase "the Son of God." That the evangelist does not lose this perspective throughout his Gospel is seen in a somewhat enigmatic pericope from Matthew 22:41–46 and Matthew 28:18–20. Thus, however important Jesus's humanity may be, one needs *constantly* to keep in mind Matthew's Christological dialectic in discussing his concept of divine sonship.

The second question relates to the interpretation of the eschatological discourse. The commentary considers Matthew 24:4–35 as referring exclusively to the fall of Jerusalem. It allows solving the problem created by Matthew 24:34. But the price, as it seems, is quite high because this reading leads to the less than convincing exegesis of Matthew 24:14, 30–31.

A final remark should be made about the attempts to level the idea of substitution, especially in its individualistic form, and emphasize the representative role of Jesus. Undoubtedly, the corporate understanding and the representation theme take a significant role in Matthew's narrative. However, Isaiah 53, a text that Brown and Roberts so often appeal to and that, as they state, was crucial for the evangelist's view of Jesus's ministry, speaks of not just representation but substitutionary representation. Therefore, in the First Gospel, Jesus represents human beings both as a priest and *as a sacrifice* (see, e.g., Matt 20:28; 26:27–28). Furthermore, it affects not only abstract humanity but also concrete individuals that receive healing (e.g., Matt 8:16–17) and forgiveness of their sins (e.g., Matt 9:1–8).

In any event, the present volume is a valuable tool for the understanding, theological appropriation, and practical application of Matthew's Gospel. Students and pastors will certainly benefit from this commentary. But even professors may find something that will enrich and deepen their approach to this New Testament book.

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The book review should contain a brief and objective description of the content of the book which is then followed by critical interaction, an evaluation of the contribution of the volume, and the audience for whom it is most suited. Ideally, 40–50% of the book review should be dedicated to critical interaction with the book's content.
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