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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

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SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN SEXUALITY: A THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

ZOLTAN SZALOS-FARKAS, Ph.D.

Adventist Theological Institute, Cernica, Romania

The purpose of this paper is to probe into the theological and anthropological foundations of spirituality in relation to human sexuality. In the biblical context the humanness and spirituality of human sexuality are closely interlinked and firmly rooted in the creation purposes of the human within the covenantal bounds of marriage. The study will show that human sexuality resides in the ongoing workings of the Holy Spirit in the union and oneness of human beings (Gen 5:1-2) as male and a female in their covenantal relationship (Gen 2:24).

Key words: Spirituality, sexuality, image of God

1. Introduction: Definition of the Concept of "Spirituality"

In the postmodern intellectual context the concept of spirituality is associated with a wide range of notions such as culture, art, religion, and ethnicity.¹ Above all, the term has been employed to denote those practices that are rooted in the doctrines of Eastern philosophies. Tai Chi, Hinduism, Buddhism, New Age, tantra yoga² are but a few of the wide

¹ See Akintunde Dorcas Olu. (*sic*) and Ayantayo J. K., "Sexuality and Spirituality: Possible Bedmates in the Religious Terrain in Contemporary Nigeria" (Unpublished paper, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2005), available from <http://www.arsrc.org/downloads/uhsss/akintunde.pdf>, accessed 7 February 2012.

² Tantra yoga, adapted to the *couleur locale* engendered by the sexual emancipation within Western societies and also in European post-communist societies, is mainly a spiritualist *medium* that promotes sexual super-performance on the basis of "spiritual" exercises specific to the type of yoga, about which the yoga guides of tantra say that it "combines yoga and meditation in order to integrate sensuality with spirituality," available from <http://www.eternity-yoga.com/sex-and-yoga.html>, accessed 29 January 2012.

spectrum of oriental modes of spirituality present in European and American cultures.³

The impact of the above-mentioned Eastern ideologies has led to the emergence of a new global "religion" of postmodernism. Its nature and essence are comprised in the term "spirituality." At a fundamental level, spirituality has been understood and practiced as a way to facilitate what has been coined a "pilgrimage" inside the human soul. The pilgrimage occurs when postmodernists, both secular and religious, embark on spirituality through various spiritual exercises such as meditation, contemplation, yoga, hesychast prayer and mantric incantation. The result is expected to be bidirectional: (1) reinvigoration of the human psyche by counteracting tiredness and exhaustion caused by job- or career-related stress; and (2) self-transcendence by charging up the soul with the energies of the Universe. It is obvious that this definition of spirituality, very much en vogue today, is one that is most general and relative. It is so broad, ambiguous and neutral as to allow a dialogue between Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, New Age, Islam, secularism and any other religion. However, in the current study I will apply a radically different instrument of research, a definition of spirituality much more specific to the biblical understanding as the topic of investigation.

In the biblical concept "spirituality"⁴ is a term that designates a certain way of life both personal and collective that is brought about by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:12-15; Gal 6:1). This means that the Holy Spirit unites human beings with Jesus Christ (1 John 4:13; Rom 8:9-11; Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:3) by faith in the Word of God revealed in the Scriptures (Rom 10:17; 1 Pet 1:23). It is in then in a progressive manner that the Holy Spirit transforms the moral character of the believer to emulate the moral character of Jesus Christ. As a result of the aforementioned inner working of the third person of the Godhead human deeds, plans and intentions will be motivated by love, hope, and faith in the triune God (1 John 4:8-16). Such motivation will prove its authenticity through the believer's determination to promote the glory (honour) of God the Father (John 15:8; 1 Cor 10:31) while serving both the eternal and transient welfare of fellow

³ Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 6-13. Downey has surveyed the postmodern semantic spectrum and varied manifestations of what he calls "spirituality" in its generic use, and has concluded that from the mass fascination with apparitions of Virgin Mary to Voodoo, from New Age to feminism, everything falls under the umbrella concept of "spirituality."

⁴ For a more detailed exposition of what spirituality is in relation to lived experience and certain academic disciplines such as systematic theology and ethics, see Zoltán Szalós-Farkas, *A Search for God: Understanding Apocalyptic Spirituality* (București: Editura Universitară, 2010), 18-58.

human beings (Matt 22:39), of whom one's marriage partner is by far the most important.

This definition of spirituality is the methodological tool of this research. It transcends the semantics and applied aspects of ethics. This means that it is interested not only in the morality of acts, practices and behaviours, but equally and especially in the trinitarian motivation of acts, practices and behaviour of Christians in their sexual existence.⁵ Therefore, what this study attempts to achieve is to identify and analyse the concepts that define both the theological and anthropological basis of human sexuality.

2. The Origin, Nature and Purpose of Human Sexuality

This study will approach the topic of human sexuality by using the term "human" in its qualitative and attributive sense without the connotations of a Freudian anthropo-psychological perspective. The adjective human implies the idea that human sexuality is – in its non-physiological aspect – radically different from the sexuality of other animated beings capable of sexual intercourse such as animals (mammals), for example. The radical difference between human sexuality and animal sexuality will be clarified by means of exegetical and theological analysis of pertinent biblical data.

According to Gen 1 and 2, humans were created with social skills of both general and special nature. The special nature of human social aptitudes is absolutely novel in all of God's Creation. As social beings humans are unique in the nature and specificity of their sexual partnership in that such is tied to a creational given, their sexual distinction and differentiation into "male" and "female" (Gen 1:26-27). Moreover, Gen 1:26-27 allows one to postulate an apparent relational uniqueness in that the Edenic male and female's marital partnership has an explicit paradigmatic dimension. Paradigmatic is a concept that has been derived from the root meaning of a *koine* Greek verb: *paradeiknymi*. The root meaning of the term is: "to point beyond." Utilizing this root meaning of the verb, I argue for the paradigmatic nature of the Edenic

⁵ The current study differs from Helmut Thielicke's, *Theological Ethics* (vol. 3; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), which has looked into the biblical view of spirituality, but has not approached human sexuality from the perspective of ethical studies with their socio-cultural, contextual or even theological methodology. This is not to say that Thielicke's work has had no impact on the current study; on the contrary, I have made full use of Thielicke's insights and have included them into the methodological approach, in which the concept of spirituality is one that integrates, but also transcends, the ethical and ethics.

marital relationship. This means that the Edenic marriage points by itself beyond itself. In other words, Adam and Eve's marital partnership illustrates in a sense that is more than mere metaphoric representation the divine reality. In other words, the paradisiacal marriage of a male and a female points by itself to the mystery of the spiritual relationship within the inner life of the Godhead constituted of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Further, the Edenic marital partnership receives its fascination and mystery from the dynamics of human life marked by gender differentiation into male and female, a distinction that is divinely assessed as being "good" (Gen 1:31). The term "good" is used by God when referring to all the elements of Creation in the complexity of their mutual relationships. But it has to be noticed that after the creation of Adam, biblical protology records that there is one non-existent element, a state that is divinely ascertained as "it is not good" (Gen 2:18). Here the text records a paradox of an absolutely perfect Creation that has not been completed yet. The social concept of "human" (אָדָם) (Gen 5:1-2) was missing. The absence manifested itself in the missing sexual complementarity (duality) within Creation as a constitutive element of the very existence of "human" as a collective entity (Gen 5:1-2). God's conclusion regarding human monosexuality is לֹא טוֹב, that is, "not good" (Gen 2:18). What does this "not good" mean?

2.1. How Is This Paradox Solved?

The problem contained in the "not-good" is solved the moment the woman is created with all her feminine psycho-physical endowments. She is the result of a divine act of creation (Gen 2:21-23). The woman as a complex universe of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and sexual features is the divine solution for the "not-good" of monosexuality, unfulfillment and aloneness. Stated differently, the woman and femininity represent "the good" that complements the man and masculine, thus fully achieving the collective idea of "human being" (Gen 5:1-2).

Fashioning ("building")⁶ the woman (Gen 2:22) and the feminine is an act whereby God completed the Creation, whose crown is "the human being" created "in God's own image and likeness" (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1). It is obvious that the human being, according to biblical anthropology, is a collective, social entity, differentiated as "male and female" (Gen 5:2a). The two complementary parts in their socio-conjugal unity were given the collective name of "human" (Gen 5:2b), a binitarian entity (Gen 5:1).

⁶ In the Hebrew text of Gen 2:22 the term to denote the woman's creation is "build," an artistic procedure specific to the constitution of architectural masterpieces.

2.2. The Image of God in the Binitarian Man

It is this very social aspect of the collective man made up of a male and a female that represents the image of God in the human being (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-2).⁷ The biblical evidence compels one to assert the reality of a God who is not "alone." This is one of the reasons why he did not create man to be "alone" either. The idea of a plurality of persons within the Godhead is clearly stated in the Scriptures (Gen 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7; Isa 6:8 [cf. John 10:30]; 1 John 4:8, 16). God reveals himself in the unity of mutual love of three distinct persons (1 John 4:8, 16 [cf. Isa 42:1]; Isa 48:16; 61:1-2; 63:7-14 [cf. Matt 28:19]; Luke 4:17-18; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4-6; Rev 1:4-6). The trinitarian unity and distinction is reflected in the marital love relationship of the binitarian man made up of two distinct persons meant to be "one" (Gen 2:24; cf. 5:1-2).⁸

The biblical basis of a socio-relational understanding of God is grounded in the eternally mutual and dynamic love of the divine persons within the Godhead (1 John 4:8, 16). The unity and distinction of the divine persons were to be reflected in the creation of humans. And indeed, the unity of and distinction between Adam and Eve constitute the very "image" of God in the human being. Moreover, the unity and distinction of the divine persons within the Godhead are revealed in the dynamic love relationship between one man and one woman within their marriage partnership meant to last a lifetime (Gen 2:24, Song 7:10; 8:6-7; cf. Matt 19:4-6).⁹

2.3. Why is Human Sexuality Good?

By a divine act of creation, the man and the woman become capable of an exclusive creative togetherness. It must be exclusive, because it is

⁷ The way in which Moses uses the two terms "image" and "likeness" in the book of Genesis (1:26-27; cf. 5:1-2) allows one to consider them interchangeable from the point of view of their basic meaning.

⁸ For further study on the theological issue of the "binitarian man" as the "image" of the "Trinitarian God," see Sakae Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex* (Nashville, TN: Review & Herald, 1980), 23-26.

⁹ The thesis that runs through and structures the systematic thinking about God of Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: God as Trinity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2011), 28-29, 43-53, is the "eternal relationship" of love within the trinitarian life of the Godhead, the mystery of which is revealed in the ongoing relationship of love between Adam and Eve, husband and wife, in their marital unity rooted in the "flame [love] of Yahweh" (Song 8:6-7). See also Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendricson Publishers, 2007), 630-631.

sexual in its essential nature. If the human being were asexual, they could cohabit with multiple partners without the indictment of adultery. But, since the human being is a binitarian entity made up of two persons who are sexually differentiated into male and female their togetherness must take place in the framework of an exclusive covenantal relationship (Mal 2:14; Prov 2:16-17) called marriage. If their sexual intimacy takes place within the framework of a covenant, and if it functions on the basis of the principle of mutuality, God characterises it as being “very good” (Gen 1:31). What does this divine qualification mean?

The divine qualification expressed by the adjective “good,” interpreted with respect to the sexual differentiation and the sexual relationship between a man and a woman means two things, functional good and ethical and moral good.

2.3.1. Functional good

From God’s perspective, “good” is any entity or thing that functions according to the purpose assigned to human beings within the divine plan of creation. Therefore, the concept of the functional good refers to the full realisation of the purpose for which a being, an institution or a thing within the Universe has been created. The marital-sexual partnership of a woman and a man is good as long as their sexual intimacy functions according to the laws of biology and physiology so as to achieve the purpose and the reason why God created sex and endowed us with a sexual nature differentiated into male and female.

2.3.2. Ethical and moral good

Besides the above-mentioned functional aspect, there is also the ethical and moral goodness. Our sexuality is good when it meets the divine expectations not merely functionally but also relationally; that is, when it meets the requirements expressed in God’s moral law and in the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles (Exod 20:1-17; Lev 18:1-24; 20:10-22; Matt 5:28, 31-32; 19:3-9; 1 Cor 5:15; 6:12-20; 7:1-40).

The two fundamental aspects, the functional and the moral, of human sexuality differentiated as male and female are complementary. What does this complementarity mean? It means that sex can be pleasant because the partners function well physiologically and biologically. But from a moral point of view, it is not permissible if practiced before marriage¹⁰ or outside of it.

¹⁰ On presenting the current paper in a seminar setting, in front of about one hundred students, I came across an interesting idea, popular in postmodern Adventism.

2.4. The Purpose of Human Sexuality

In what follows, I will probe into the question of whether the purpose of human sexuality is the same in both the order of creation and the order of salvation.

2.4.1. *The Order of Creation*

From the perspective of Gen 1 and 2,¹¹ the purpose of human sexuality is clearly defined in a creationist thought-culmination in Gen 2:24. It is clear from v. 24 that the purpose of human sexuality is to be found in the oneness of the two marriage partners, male and female. Such oneness of two sexually differentiated human beings is an outworking of their marital spirituality specific to the order of creation. Within this order, the permanence and depth of their marital relationship are grounded in the selfless (as opposed to selfish) love of the two Edenic partners. Their ever-growing relational unity is conveyed by the fact that the two were naked (v. 25). That is, they are totally transparent, having nothing to hide from

Some argued that premarital sex is not prohibited by God in the seventh commandment (Exod 20:14), provided the unmarried couple are motivated by genuine love for one another, grounded in a deep mutual respect of the *I-Thou* type. One easily realizes that such is a postmodernist ethical idea which is founded on two arguments, one of which is lexical-biblical and the other one relational-philosophical. The former capitalizes on an alleged semantic difference, unjustifiable linguistically and exegetically, between two Greek verbs: *μοιχεύειν* and *πορνεύειν*. It has been argued that the first verb has been translated into both the Hungarian and Romanian language to mean an act of illicit sexual intimacy of spouses outside the marriage bond, whereas the second verb merely denotes promiscuity and lasciviousness, which, in our opinion, is based on a interpretation that goes clearly against its meaning in Matt 5:27, 28, 32. The second argument, the relational-philosophical, is founded on the lexical one, to which there has been added an ethicist interpretation of Martin Buber's existentialist philosophy presented in his book entitled, *I and Thou* (trans. Walter Kaufmann; New York: Touchstone, 1970), 53-86. Without being contentious, we must point out that such an idea, which is incongruent with biblical ethics and biblical spirituality, is undermined by the fact that Joseph knew – on the basis of Old Testament Scriptures (Exod 20:14) – that he and his fiancée, Mary, could not engage in premarital sexual intimacy without the indictment of adultery, not even during the period of their engagement (Matt 1:18-20). If premarital sex had been accepted as ethically blameless in first-century Judaism, Joseph would have had no reason to worry about Mary's pregnancy. However, biblical data prove the opposite (Matt 1:18-19).

¹¹ Richard M. Davidson, "The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1-2," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26.1 (1988): 5-21, upholds the idea that a fundamental theology of human sexuality must be based on the normative, biblical material of Gen 1 and 2.

God and from each other under the circumstances of paradisiacal moral innocence. So, in the order of creation, the Edenic partners have sex¹² to deepen their dynamic relationship of marital oneness. Their conjugal relationship, by virtue of its paradigmatic nature, points beyond itself, to the unity and oneness of the divine persons of the trinity, who are reciprocally communing with each other within their immanent fellowship that is rooted in their perfect love (1 John 4:8,16). In this context, "immanent" means the trinitarian relational life within the Godhead.

2.4.2. The Order of Salvation

The order of salvation of interest for this study is within the post-Fall context starting in Gen 3. It is a domain tainted by the sin of the Edenic spouses. In spite of radical changes caused by the Fall, Jesus Christ has reaffirmed the paradisiacal purpose of human marital sexuality in Matt 19:3-6. Even in the context of sin and salvation from sin, the primary purpose of marital sexuality, from God's perspective, is the deepening of the oneness and communion of the spouses. At the same time, one could argue based on Jesus' statement (Matt 19:3-6) that the coital act itself comes as an evidence of an already existing spiritual communion between the covenantal partners. Quoting Gen 1:27 and 2:24, Christ has firmly established the continuing validity of the paradisiacal purpose of marital sexuality: husband and wife become "one," though they are "two" distinct entities (Matt 19:6).

Therefore, one can conclude that both within the order of creation and the order of salvation, the purpose of human sexuality is one and the same. It is the realisation of the qualitative mystery of the unity between two human partners in marital covenant distinct in their sexual ontology (man and woman). Their continually renewed commitment to God amidst sexual temptations will be played out in their continued faithfulness to each other in the framework of a permanent marital covenant. Such faithfulness, when motivated by their determination to promote the glory of God, will give their sexual encounters the sort of

¹² The biblical material in Gen 1 and 2 does not offer us a description of the sex life of the Edenic couple, Adam and Eve, before the Fall. However, a considerable number of theologians (Richard Davidson, Nicholas Ayo, Francis Landy, Jill M. Munro, David Blumenthal) agree with the thesis that the detailed description of marital love in the *Song of Songs* represents an inspired disclosure of sexuality in Eden before the Fall, with subtle textual allusions to the postlapsarian context within which the *Songs*, a Hebrew lyrical poem of marital sexual love, was composed. See the theology of paradisiacal sexuality in Davidson's seminal work, *Flame of Yahweh*, 552-632.

spiritual quality that is specific to acts of devotion (1 Cor 10:31).¹³ This is why their conjugal vow makes their sexual intimacy to be not a mere union of two bodies of flesh, but this union involves them completely, wholistically, serving God's glory. It is only in this way that one can assert that their union points beyond itself, being a revelation of the spiritual unity and oneness of reciprocal love within the trinitarian Godhead.

Consequently, from a biblical perspective the demographic purpose of producing children (reproduction) may be understood as a secondary purpose of human sexuality. Procreation is not necessarily included in the concept of the image of God. This is evident in the statements about animals who are to be "fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:22) but are not created in the image of God. Nevertheless, they were blessed with the same ability to procreate as Adam and Eve (vv. 22, 28).¹⁴

The biblical concept of the secondary nature of the demographic purpose of human sexuality leads one to be aware of and apply to the married life what in today's world is understood as family planning. Ellen G. White stresses the God-given responsibility of husband and wife to procreate only as many children as they are able to bring up in their family so that the children will be useful members of society while also rendering spiritual service to the faith community. This means that the husband and wife are to make decisions as to the size of their family by taking into account the socio-economic, psychological, medical, educational, and spiritual condition in which they live. If conditions are adverse, White unambiguously stresses the need for married couples to consider the consequences of those conditions on their future offspring, and refrain from growing the size of their families.¹⁵

¹³ Within the biblical worldview the ethical value of marital faithfulness among non-Christians and unbelievers is to be recognized as the result of the cooperating of such people, although unawares, with the Holy Spirit's workings through good parental or even formal education, community values and cultural givens. However, we need to point out, based on our definition of biblical spirituality, that the spiritual quality of marital sexual encounters is not by the sheer morality of acts and deeds, but by the willful determination to act in a way that ordinary activities such as eating and drinking turn into devotional acts to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).

¹⁴ On the basis of biblical evidence, Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex*, 16, 20, clearly affirms the "primary" purpose of marital sex to be "the relationship" between the two, not "procreation."

¹⁵ It appears from Ellen G. White's writings that she held family planning to be a personal marital responsibility of every adult man and woman, in general, and of every member of the Adventist Church, in particular; see Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home: Counsels to Seventh-day Adventist Families As Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1993), 162-166. White justifies

2.5. The Humanness of Human Sexuality

The human being is a psychophysical indivisible unity of body and soul (Gen 2:7). This anthropological given requires to study the human being under the following two aspects of existence in order to define how the above-discussed primary purpose of human sexuality is achieved: (1) the human being in his/her immanent existence as one who in his/her respective ontological self is known as a person; and (2) the human being considered in his/her ability to function sexually, that is, viewed in his/her dynamic existence as a sexual person.

2.5.1. Human Identity and Personhood

The human being, as a personal being, is aware of himself or herself. In other words, the human being possesses a sense of self-consciousness and self-identity. But human self-consciousness in order to bring a clear sense of self-identity necessitates another distinct personal entity with whom to be in relationship. This other one functions as a mirror. That is, by looking in the "mirror"—at another personal entity—the individual human being comes to know self as male or female, man or woman. Adam could not recognise his own identity while looking in the "mirror" of impersonal beings such as the animals that passed in front of him (Gen 2:19-20). He came to a full realisation of his true identity, that is, of his male humanness, when he stood facing Eve, another self-aware being, possessing the status of a person endowed with female human sexuality (Gen 2:22-23).

2.5.2. The Human Value of Singles

However, the human being, in his or her own personal and ontological self, does not receive the dignity of human being—man and woman—from being married. That is, human dignity does not reside in the one standing vis-à-vis (the spouse), to whom one relates as to the one complementing oneself. Both the man and the woman in their singleness acquire individual human dignity from the One who has created them; moreover, who has created them for a relationship with Himself. However, singleness, while perfectly justifiable within the post-Fall conditions of life (1 Cor 7:25-40), did not serve God's paradisiacal purposes (Gen 2:18). So, He created humans also for their mutual relationship of love as man and woman within a marital partnership that was meant to point beyond itself. But again, the source of the each one's

the relevance of family planning by the adverse circumstances of life after the Fall into sin.

individual human dignity was to be the trinitarian God. Therefore, human dignity of singles, believers as well as unbelievers, is first the result of divine creation. Second, individual human dignity is the consequence of the relationship between the Creator and the creature. Within a marital relationship of a man and a woman human dignity is only derivative, as personal entities possess differentiated and distinct sexual identities.

The relationship with God, the Creator of sexual persons, effects not only the dignity of the human being, but also the capacity of the male and the female to bear multiple responsibilities and to be the recipient of infinite values in their own ontological self as personal beings, singles or married. It is in this way that one can understand why the dignity of a woman and of a man, namely their dignity as personal beings with differentiated sexuality, can become an end in itself.¹⁶

2.6. The Human Being in the Exercise of Sexual Function

In the dynamics of their sexual function human beings do not undermine their human dignity. This is to say that the dignity of being human is not harmed by the sexual intimacy between spouses (1 Cor 7:3-5; cf. Heb. 13:4). On the contrary, their sexuality, differentiated as masculine and feminine, serves this ultimate purpose. In other words, personal dignity is upheld and deepened by sexual intimacy. Consequently, the functional perspective cannot be detached from the human ontological aspect, according to which human beings are meant to function sexually in their conjugal relationship, which is rooted in the divine love of their Creator. This creative fact constitutes the reason of being responsible for and bearing responsibilities in one's sexual relationship. This statement requires further clarification.

The exercise of our sexual functions places an enormous moral responsibility upon us precisely because we, in our immanent human self, own personhood. This explains why one can speak of sexual spirituality and sexual ethics with particular regard to human beings. However, this further raises the following question: In what sense does our capacity to

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* (trans. by Mary Gregor; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4:435, claims that the human being is an end in itself due to their rational, autonomous capacity of being moral by themselves. We may go along with Kant's idea in the sense that human beings in the post-Fall situation can not claim dignity in and by themselves. Yet, as creational realities human beings can possess dignity even when they are damaged or may be considered as "lost" because of their rejection of the saving relationship with the trinitarian God.

function sexually place a major moral accountability over us? The answer to this question may be given in terms of the earlier reference to the functional and moral goodness of sex. "Good" sex excludes the use of the woman as man's means for self-satisfaction. Likewise, the man should not be exploited as a means for the woman's self-achievement. It can reasonably be argued that self-promotion or the achievement of personal gain is not the duty or the task of human sexuality. However, within post-Fall contexts, self-promotion and personal gain do seem to have become a task of sexual activity (Gen 38:12-26). But, in attending to personal ends, sex unavoidably becomes depersonalised, a commodity to make the individual happy (2 Sam 11 and 13).

Sex as a biological function and sex as an essential aspect of humanness cannot be separated without damaging personal dignity. It is from this interconnectivity between sex as a biological function and sex as a dimension of human personhood that the responsibility of choosing one's marriage partner originates. And it is also from this interconnectivity that the responsibility of proper behavior before, during, and after the act of marital sexual intimacy towards one's spouse can be argued for.

If the aforementioned interconnectivity is so overwhelmingly important, one should wonder: What does it mean? It means that when I choose my marriage partner I must be aware that I am obliged to be involved not only as a sexually functioning being, but most importantly as a being with personhood, who has been endowed not with any kind of sexuality, but with human sexuality. If sexuality involved merely the functional, that is, the biological and physical aspects without the total involvement of one's personhood, then 'partners would be interchangeable. We would be like the spare parts of a car engine. The part once broken or worn out everybody expects to be exchanged with a new one. The only important thing would be to keep the engine functioning. The practice of changing partners, with rare exceptions,¹⁷ is specific to the animal kingdom, because animal sexuality, on account of its sole purpose of reproduction, only has functional, physical and biological aspects. It is precisely because of the impossibility to separate the functional aspect of sex from the personal one that the sexuality of human beings becomes "human."

¹⁷ Only three percent of mammals are monogamous; see Patricia Beattie Young and Aana Marie Vigen, eds., *God, Science, Sex, Gender: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Christian Ethics* (Chicago, IL: The University of Illinois, 2010), 156; also Michelle De Haan and Morgan R. Gunnar, eds., *Handbook of Developmental Social Neuroscience* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), 272.

What made this study venture into the research of the spirituality of human sexuality has been the current deconstructionist phenomenon that is obvious from the general depersonalisation of sex within both liberal-secular and religious-conservative cultures, albeit in different ways. Sex has become an industry, an efficient marketing means, and a source of entertainment via the mass-media.¹⁸ When it comes to sexuality, deconstructionism results in the dehumanisation of the human being. Dehumanisation comes to the fore, among other things, by changing sexual partners and the industrialisation of sex. Polygamy and the objectification of women in certain religious cultures are also forms of dehumanisation. But it is beyond the scope of this study to deal with the latter forms of dehumanisation.

It is the widespread secular depersonalisation of sex, which has met only a feeble social and governmental resistance, that turns Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) and Giacomo Casanova (1725-1798) into representative figures of the human race on its way to dehumanisation. And indeed, the super-sexualisation and the excessive eroticisation of the mundane have become, not an aspect of a subculture, but the generalised cultural *Zeitgeist* in postmodernism. This fact may be the reason for not being taken seriously as a researcher interested in looking into sexuality as an essential aspect of genuine biblical spirituality. However, the very need to counteract social deconstructionism compelled this study with regard to the "magic" ingredient causing the depersonalisation of sexuality.

3. *Eros* in the Context of Human Sexuality

It is truly surprising to see the accuracy with which the Bible describes in Prov 5, 6, and 7, the nature and the implications of the sexual impulse in the human being, which it calls *erōs* (7:18).¹⁹ A careful analysis of the whole narrative will reveal the destructive psycho-behavioral manifestations induced by *erōs*. From the very beginning of chapters 5, 7,

¹⁸ The three terms are placed in inverted commas because we intended to underline the contexts in which sexuality has become radically depersonalised. These are the porn industry, the advertisement industry and the mass-media: the press, movies, and the erotic-pornographic Internet sites.

¹⁹ In preclassical Greek (800-500 B.C.), *erōs* appears as a "spiritual," not "carnal," element. In other words, the term expresses the human attitude towards Greek deities. In this study, the term is used with the meaning of "sexual impulse," a meaning already present in Plato, see Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros* (London: SPCK, 1954), 49-52. In the *koine* Greek (300 B.C. to A.D. 600) of the Septuagint (LXX, approximately 200 B.C.) the term *erōs* already appears with its full sexual semantic load (Prov 7:18; 30:16).

and 8, we are presented with a type of wisdom (5:1-2; 7:1-5; 8:1 ff.) which a sexually mature male, vulnerable to the destructive force of erotic instinct, desperately needs. The narrative is extremely outspoken: the solution to male (and female) erotic vulnerability is Yahweh's personified "wisdom" (chapters 5 and 7, but especially chapter 8).

Scholars have come to a remarkable consensus regarding the interpretation of the idea of wisdom in Prov 8. In light of Ps 2:6-7, Prov 8:22-31 is a clear metaphorical allusion to the second person of the trinity.²⁰ Solomon's concept of "wisdom" has been inter-textually employed by Paul to mean Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:23-24; 2:6-8). In Paul's theology, Christ is God's wisdom (1 Cor 1:23-24). It is him who makes one wise to successfully tackle issues emerging from the sexual relationship of males and females (1 Cor 1:23-24; 2:6-8; cf. 6:12-20; 7:1-40). Both Solomon and Paul argue that God's wisdom is capable to "protect" a man from "somebody else's wife" or from the "stranger" engaged in the art of erotic seduction (Prov 7:4-21; 1 Cor 2:6-8). The highly erotic language of the book of Proverbs creates an atmosphere full of lustful drama: "Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning; let us solace ourselves with loves [*erōs*] (Prov. 7:18; cf. 6:32, KJV).²¹

It is obvious that without God's wisdom *erōs* is characterized by the writer of the book of Proverbs as being the main motivation that defines a way of life within which sexual intimacy has been totally depersonalised and, thus, deprived of spirituality. Unstoppable and limitless lust and licentiousness dominate the scene described in chapter 7. This fact seriously questions the nature and usefulness of human sexual impulse.

²⁰ It might be helpful to notice that Yahweh's "wisdom" is a personification behind which one can identify, on the basis of a rigorous exegesis of Prov 8, the second person of the trinity, Jesus Christ; see Richard M. Davidson, "Proverbs 8 and the Place of Christ in the Trinity", *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17.1 (2006): 33-54.

²¹ We want to underline the radical incompatibility between the Christological concept of "wisdom" in the Hebrew thinking of the book of Proverbs and of Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians and the discursive, speculative and erotic "wisdom" in the philosophical and social thinking of ancient Greece. The Greek "lovers of wisdom" (*philo+sophoi*, the philosophers or the men of letters) such as Theocritus, Achilles Tatius, Solon, Aristophanes, but especially Socrates and Plato, *Symposium* (trans. by R. E., Allen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 248b5-c2; 252e1-5; 254a2,a5-7,b1,b2-3,b5-7,b7-c3,e5-7; 255e5-7; 257b6, were promoting the art of homosexual erotic seduction (pederasty) as a "philosophical" act of reaching the pure aesthetics of ideas by means of *erōs* (sexual relations) with a youthful disciple and partner in philosophical disputations, usually an unmarried young man or a boy; in the social practices of 5th century BC, pederasty in Athens could involve a boy who had not yet reached puberty.

We wonder whether *erōs* could possibly have any positive, constructive aspects to it, too. The answer seems to be affirmative if we think of the kind of love that permeates another book by the same author, the *Song of Songs*.

3.1. Human and Animal Sexual Impulse

By human sexual (erotic)²² impulse we mean the kind of inward desire, the onset of which is linked to puberty; and thus it is related to the hormonal-physiological processes of our bodies. However, sexual impulse can instantaneously be generated by the action of the human faculty of imagination. So, fantasy-driven sexual impulse motivates us into wishing a somatic (bodily) involvement (union) with another human being of the opposite (or same) sex and, consequently, it is usually associated with *erōs*, that is, lustful, sensuous love (Prov 7:18).

Sheer erotic "appetite," known as *libido* by its Latin name, kindles in the one experiencing it a sort of inward unrest. This, in turn, motivates the human being to initiate sexual activity, the purpose of which is sexual satisfaction. If satisfaction is sought for by involving another partner, and if the one experiencing heightened *libido* focuses on satisfying "one's own need," then it is likely that personal attention will be directed towards the physical components of the partner's being. In this case, human sexual impulse is not different from the copulative instincts of animals. This further means that the onset of heightened libidinal states urging one to look for purely physical release with or without the involvement of a partner cannot be explained on the basis of the definition of spirituality used in the current study. In other words, the copulative instinct, whose only motivation is *erōs*, is insufficient to differentiate between human and animal sex. Judged from the perspective of the sexual impulse human eroticism and animal sexual activity present the same characteristics, and this is the reason why it is used in the Scriptures to describe human moral decadence (Ezek 23:19-20; "animalism").

Anthropologically speaking, there is, however, a significant difference between human and animal sexual functioning. Animals are not capable of sexual self-stimulation by the use of fantasy, whereas humans are able to trigger sexual arousal by stimulating hormonal activity through imagination. Lacking imagination, animals depend on external stimuli²³

²² Besides the relevant biblical material, Thielicke's work, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 3, 35-44, has constituted the basis of our analysis of the nature and role of *erōs*.

²³ A rigorous quantitative study done in the United States on Hereford bulls has shown that a bull which had been exposed to visual sexual stimuli for 30 minutes, having the role of a spectator of the mating activity of other bulls, presented higher quantifiable parameters of sexual excitation and copulative performances than the

("images"), while human imagination provides men with internal stimuli in the form of images. This is to say that fantasy is able to create mental images of sexual scenes that are empirically inaccessible at a certain moment in time. But, in spite of being empirically inaccessible, these mental images intensify human libido. Unlike humans, animals depend for sexual arousal on internal instincts and external images, which are seasonal and hormone-bound (mating season, Gen 30:41). However, human imagination, imbibed in sex, leads to the rule of basic instincts. And there where only instincts are at work, we cannot speak of spirituality and romantic capacity, but merely of raw "carnality."

The imaginative capacity of human beings, being deliberate and readily available, significantly increases their vulnerability and, at the same time, their responsibility regarding the exercise of this particular mental capacity. Thus, sexual impulse triggered by imagination or by other methods, for that matter, does not make humans any different from animals, because under the impact of the impulse men and women are prone to looking for a sexual partner, and in their quest for such a partner they may fail to appreciate the human dignity of the other person. In other words, the personhood of the partner may be irrelevant. But the question comes with the force of necessity: why is personhood going to be irrelevant? The answer should not be one that is simplistic. To avoid this, in the next section of the study I will try to highlight the anthropological framework within which the answer is hoped to make sense. But, before turning to the next section, I need to include a brief subsection dealing with the question: what to do if tempted by "animal passion/propensity"?

3.2. Sexual Impulse Management

Postmodern social ethos tends to expose one, even encourage to expose oneself, to varied sexual temptations. And thus, it facilitates the immense blurring, within social and individual consciousness of the distinction between licit marital sexual love and illicit "animal passion" or lust.²⁴ Under such circumstances, sincere Christians might wrestle with the question: how can one cope with sexual temptations and propensities triggered by exposure to socially sanctioned eroticism? The answer is

bulls that engaged into copulative acts without any previous exposure to visual stimuli. See D. R. Mader and E. O. Price, "The Effects of Sexual Stimulation on the Sexual Performance of Hereford Bulls", *Journal of Animal Science* 59.2 (1984): 294-300.

²⁴ "Animal passion/propensities" is used by Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery and Divorce* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1980), 110, 111, 113, 115, to denote sexual impulse which is incompatible with humans.

almost culturally conditioned and resides in what we call the socially, morally and even religiously widely accepted and recommended “quick fix.” This is male and female masturbation, a readily available sexual arousal management technic that has been morally and medically accepted by religionists and secularists alike as being innocuous.²⁵

However, this study holds that the trinitarian view of God and the binitarian understanding of the human being, from which the paradigmatic nature of the believers’ marital sexual spirituality issues, precludes one from theoretically, let alone applicatively, accepting the solitary management of sexual impulse. This is to say that the binitarian concept of the human being is radically incompatible with the solitary practice of human sexuality.

It is the one overarching characteristic of “animal passion,” as opposed to marital sexual attraction, that it easily settles for sexual self-relief via masturbation or the “use” of a partner. Neither of these is compatible with biblical theology and biblical anthropology. And this is so because the trinitarian love relationship within the Godhead is not going to be illustrated by such an act. Furthermore, one’s own personhood and personal dignity as well as the personhood and dignity of the partner will be irrelevant to someone motivated by “animal passion.” In other words, from the perspective of lustful *erōs*, neither the one needing sexual relief nor the one giving it, will be able to avoid depersonalisation of sexuality. Irrespective of whether the relieved and the reliever is one and the same individual, or whether they are two different people, one could reasonably view their act as being depersonalised. As has been said earlier, depersonalisation has metaphorically been described as animal sex in the book of Proverbs because lust behaves and also treats others as one of the “members of the herd” (Prov 7:22).

Managing our sexual urges requires, first of all, a committed pursuit of biblical spirituality. This involves a consistent maintenance of mental hygiene (Phil 4:8; cf. Matt 5:27-31) via a biblically sustainable practice of meditation and contemplation, the object of which are ideas gleaned from a well-structured and methodologically sound study of Scriptures. The Scriptures do recognise the divine gift of marital sexual attraction and love being approved of (Eph 5:28; cf. 1 Cor 7:4-5; cf. Heb 13:4) and even kindled by the trinitarian God (Songs 8:6; ASV, ESV). Such sexual love and libidinal state is called *agapē* in the Song of Songs (2:7; 3:5; 8:4-6; LXX), whereas in the book of Proverbs the seemingly same state is called *erōs* (7:18; LXX). Why is there such an outstanding distinction between what

²⁵ Robert Crooks and Karla Baur, *Our Sexuality* (eleventh ed.; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2011), 231-235.

could be viewed as one and the same human emotion? This question leads us to the next section of the paper.

3.3. Anthropology and *erōs*-based Human Sexuality

Raw sexual impulse, experienced by humans (2 Sam 11), does not lead one to seek a psycho-physical union involving a soul-body holism of the parties engaged in sex. It is apparent from 2 Sam 11 and Prov 5, 6, and 7 that raw sexual impulse resulted in a purely somatic encounter. However, while sexual physicality is natural when it comes to animals, it is unacceptable with regard to humans because it lacks sexual spirituality. Biblical anthropology backs up the aforementioned. Scriptural data supports the idea that God considered David's sexual encounter with Bathsheba immoral on account of its lack of spirituality on David's part.²⁶ What this means needs further clarification.

Sex based solely on *erōs* does not take into account the binitarian concept of man defined in Gen 1:26-27; 2:24; 5:1-2; cf. Matt 19:3-6. As argued earlier in this paper, man's binitarian existence is grounded in God's creative act whereby the '*echad*' ("the two become one") nature of marital sexuality is established. This is why marital sexuality is meant to point beyond (paradigmatic) to the mystery of the asexual trinitarian '*echad*' within the Godhead. Whenever this pointing beyond does not occur in human sexual encounters, sexual spirituality is absent. Therefore, sex—even between spouses—without spirituality is "animalism,"²⁷ the involvement of bodies to the detriment of the soul. This begs the question: what do we mean by the phrase "to the detriment of the soul"? In order to answer this question, we need to take some further steps towards the crystallisation of a certain understanding of the human being that is biblically sound. In other words, we need to expound an anthropology that would faithfully reflect the biblical doctrine of man.

The Hebrew concept of man, unlike the Greek-Hellenistic one,²⁸ upholds a wholistic (integrative) view of the human being. That is, the

²⁶ Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 523-532, has convincingly argued for Bathsheba's innocence based on exegetical-narrative facts present in the text of 2 Sam 11; these exegetical and narrative givens point to "The [biblical] narrator's indictment of David, not Bathsheba (v. 27)" (p. 530).

²⁷ It is interesting to note that Ellen White's thoughts on human sexuality frequently refer to the rule of "animal passion" both within and outside marriage; see White, *The Adventist Home*, 121-128.

²⁸ Socrates and Plato's anthropological dualism, disseminated in Christianity by Origen and Augustine, views the human being as a bipartite entity, possessing an immortal soul and a disintegrable matter/body; see Plato, *Phaedo*, in Robert M. Hutchins, ed., *Great Books of the Western World* (vol. 7; London: Encyclopedia

human being subsists as an indivisible composite of matter and breath of life, called a "living soul" (Gen 2:7). In this Biblical context, the word "soul" has the clear connotation of "person" (see Gen 2:7; cf. 1 Pet 3:20). From this, one may conclude that for our sexuality to be human in its essential nature, sexual fellowship implies the involvement of the whole person. This further means that in order for sex to be human it needs to be personal requiring the investment of the whole "soul" in the marital sexual partnership. But, *erōs* is not interested in the "soul." It does not have any regard for the entirety of the human self of which personhood is an essential aspect. Such attitude goes against the scriptural understanding of man as person. Its implications are wide-ranging.

As an example of its implications, we may refer to how a *erōs*-driven choice of a sexual partner occurs. *Erōs* is an intense inner motivation stemming from a heightened emotional state that, first of all, urges one to satisfy the sexual need by means of a sexual partner, who may well be one's spouse. On account of its satisfaction-seeking nature *erōs* impacts significantly upon our comprehension and appreciation of one's personhood, limiting us to a dangerously reductionist concept of the human being. This is perceived only in functional terms. He or she is the one we deem functionally (not morally) "good" for an enjoyable erotic experience due to the biological and physical parameters they possess.

Consequently, the danger of *erōs* is that it makes us interpret and treat the person without seeing him or her from the perspective of a relational understanding of the human self. A relational view of the human self states that one's real identity is constituted by being in relationship with the Creator and Redeemer of mankind. Denying the alien self,²⁹ with which we are born, in favour of the genuine self, involves a personal decision to accept a redemptive relationship with Christ (Matt 16:24-25). Thus, being in a redemptive relationship with God gives humans a real sense and appreciation of personal value and dignity.

However, even if someone is not yet in a redemptive relationship with God, this does not mean that he or she lacks value and dignity. In such cases, dignity still resides in God's creating each human being in his own image and likeness, which the Fall has not altogether obliterated. Image and likeness have been transmitted to Adam's post-Fall descendants (Gen 5:1-3). So, divine image and likeness are the foundation of a creation- and

Britannica, 1952), 220-251; Origen, *On First Principles*, II 8.1-5 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936); Augustine, *Confessions*, 6.19; 7.26 (trans. Henry Chadwick; Oxford: University Press, 1992).

²⁹ "Alien self" refers to the human identity that is rooted in self-consciousness which is marked and dominated by the general ontological proneness of post-Fall humans to self-centredness, selfishness and self-sufficiency (Rom 8:8; cf. 7:18; NIV).

salvation-grounded understanding of human dignity. But *erōs* may cause one to be insensitive to this creative and/or redemptive dignity residing in all human beings. If this is the case, one still might allow for the potential sexual partner or spouse some dignity that, however, is going to be proportional to his or her "importance to me."³⁰

It is true that the "importance to me" may turn out to be a little bit greater than the exclusively functional benefits residing in the sexual services rendered by the spouse (partner). But even so, the erotic narrowness of my perspective and horizon makes me unable to see a human being's importance to God (Isa 43:4; cf. 1 Pet 1:18,19; John 3:16). This personal incapacity, in turn, is going to shape my attitude and behaviour towards people, in general, and my spouse, in particular. Why? The reason is that the erotically defined "importance to me" is most likely to decrease proportionally to the partial or total loss of the physical and biological functions of the spouse, a loss caused by various personal circumstances such as sickness, accident or age. And the loss of the "importance to me" of the spouse is not merely a physiological issue, nor is it entirely ethical, either. It is mainly a spiritual issue because it has to be interpreted and explained motivationally. This means that the decrease of the spouse's importance to me must be judged from the perspective of its motivation. Any motivation invoked would turn out to be very different from the one we have identified as one of the essential components of the definition of spirituality we have been using in the current study.

Therefore, at this concluding point of our search for an anthropological and theological understanding of the spirituality of human sexuality we need to remind ourselves of the definition of biblical spirituality, especially its motivational specificity. Biblical spirituality is nothing else than a certain way of life, which is the result of the inner working of the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Due to his inward working, our deeds, plans and intentions will be motivated by the love of, hope for, and faith in the triune God (1 John 4:8-16). Such motivation will prove its authenticity through the believer's earnest determination to promote the glory (honour) of God the Father (John 15:8; 1 Cor 10:31), while selflessly serving both the eternal and transient welfare of fellow human beings (Mat 22:39), of whom the believer's spouse is by far the most important.

In light of the above definition of spirituality, one may conclude that there is only one alternative for having a "very good" (Gen 1:31) marriage partnership throughout life, namely, the trinitarian love of God (*agapē*;

³⁰ In discussing the idea of "importance to me," I have relied heavily on Thielicke's research, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 3, 26-27.

Gal 5:22; cf. 1 John 4:8,16). And indeed, the anthropological and theological evidence that has been considered in this study shows that the consistency of one's faithfulness to the fiancé/e or the spouse is rooted in *agapē* and not in *erōs*.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of the current study has been to probe into the theological and anthropological foundations of the spirituality of human sexuality. To secure the reliability of the outcome, the research needed a definition of the concept of spirituality which would avoid, as much as possible, the many ambiguities of current understandings of the concept. This is why the main perspective for a definition of spirituality has been the one offered by the Scriptures' doctrine of God and doctrine of the human being. In other words, biblical theology and biblical anthropology have aided us in limiting the semantic field within which the definition of the fundamental meaning of "spirituality" has been given.

By applying the abovementioned methodological tool in the current research, we have reached the conclusion that the humanness and spirituality of human sexuality are closely interlinked, and are firmly rooted in the first and foremost of the two creationist purposes of human sexuality within the covenantal bounds of marriage. This is to say that the spirituality of human sexuality resides in the ongoing achievement and deepening wrought by the Holy Spirit on behalf of the trinitarian God of Scripture, of the oneness and union of the binitarian man (Gen 5:1-2) made up of a male and a female in their covenantal relationship (Gen 2:24). But, the source of their individual human dignity is always the trinitarian God. Therefore, we need to stress the idea that the intrinsic value of the individual human being and, hence, the human dignity, is the result, first of all of God's divine act of creation. Then, the deepening of one's sense of personal value is the consequence of the redemptive relationship between the Creator and the creature. And it is only derivatively the result of the marital relationship between him and her, as personal entities possessing differentiated and distinct sexual identities.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND SCRIPTURE

EKKEHARDT MUELLER, Th.D.

Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland

Homosexuality is a very controversial issue. Its practice and the ongoing debate affect not only society but also the church. The issue is: how should Christians relate to persons practicing homosexuality including homosexual clergy? While some churches have ordained and/or installed homosexual pastors and bishops, others are reluctant. Church members are divided on the issue of homosexuality, and some denominations are on the verge of splitting or have already split.¹ This article focuses on the official position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the biblical teaching on homosexuality along with practical implications.

Key words: homosexuality, church, Seventh-day Adventist

1. Defining Homosexuality

Homosexuality is defined in different ways and may include different phenomena. R. E. O. White describes it as "sexual desire directed toward members of one's own sex. Female homosexuality is frequently called lesbianism . . ." ² E. A. Malloy suggests the following definition: a "person, male or female, who experiences in adult life a steady and nearly exclusive erotic attraction to members of the same sex, and who is indifferent to sexual relations with the opposite sex."³ Whereas R. E. O. White focuses on the phenomenon, Malloy directs his attention to the person. In his opinion certain persons are not true homosexuals even if they are involved in homosexual acts, namely teenagers, adults who are bored with heterosexuality and get involved with members of the same

¹ See Andreas J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical*

² R. E. O. White, "Homosexuality," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), 528.

³ E. A. Malloy, *Homosexuality and the Christian Way of Life* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1981), 11.

sex, also called "contingent homosexuals," and so-called "situational homosexuals" who for the lack of heterosexual encounters "resort to homosexual outlets."⁴ Malloy's definition fits the "constitutional homosexuals" or "inverts" whose homosexuality is said to be permanent.

Some scholars suggest that people can be placed on a continuum between the two poles of heterosexuality and homosexuality.⁵ Some are closer to heterosexuality with some homosexual tendencies whereas others are almost exclusively found close to one pole or the other. Normally, "inverts" claim that their homosexuality is preordained, natural, normal, and irreversible.⁶ The suggestion to distinguish between homosexual orientation and homosexual acts and to allow for the first but not for the second, which would mean to live a celibate life, is rejected by the homosexual community "as a grossly unfair consequence of their condition."⁷ Nevertheless, even some within the homosexual community acknowledge a difference between homosexual acts versus a homosexual orientation. Homosexual acts can find expression in pederasty, the involvement with children of the same sex, rape, violence, prostitution, promiscuity, to name some, or in a life committed to one partner of the same sex. It is the latter, a permanent homosexual love relationship or partnership, which is claimed to be in harmony with Scripture.

⁴ Ronald M. Springett, *Homosexuality in History and the Scriptures* (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, 1988), 2.

⁵ A. C. Kinsey, W. B. Pomeroy, and E. E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1965), 650-651. See, Springett, 26-27.

⁶ Jack Rogers, *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church*, revised and expanded edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 79, notes: ". . . most psychologists 'view sexual orientation as neither willfully chosen nor willfully changed.'" Talking about causes Aubyn Fulton, "Response; Science and Sexual Orientation," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 2, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 47, states: "The evidence about concordance rates for homosexuality in identical twins, discussed by Kemena (P2-14), are significantly higher than the general population, but nowhere near 100 percent (the concordance rates have been reported to be between 20 and 50 percent). This almost certainly means that, although as many as half of the determiners of sexual orientation are genetic; at least half are nongenetic. . . . It is important to understand that this is not the same as saying that sexual orientation is partly determined and partly chosen; rather, it says that some of the causes of sexual orientation are biological and others are nonbiological (for example, psychological or social)."

⁷ Springett, 4.

2. The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Statements on Homosexuality

Within Christianity today there are three major positions with regard to homosexuality: (1) Only marital heterosexuality is acceptable for Christians. (2) Homosexuality, also called covenant homosexuality, is acceptable for Christians, if the two partners have equal status, are consenting adults, and if the relationship is permanent and monogamous. (3) Casual adult homosexuality, that is, homosexuality in any form is acceptable for any member of society.⁸

The official Seventh-day Adventist Church's position is the first option. In the document "Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality" the Church affirms:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NIV). Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7-21; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: "'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one"' (Matt. 19:4-6, NIV). For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace

⁸ Cf. William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 28.

to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.⁹

Another official statement, voted on March 9, 2004, deals with same-sex unions. The statement reaffirms Christian marriage within the context of the debate as to whether or not same-sex unions should be regarded as equal to marriages of heterosexual couples and should receive the same rights and privileges. Since then some nations have legislated that homosexual marriage are equal to homosexual marriage. While the document deals with family and marriage, it does address homosexuality:¹⁰

Seventh-day Adventist Response to Same-Sex Unions – A Reaffirmation of Christian Marriage. Over the past several decades the Seventh-day Adventist Church has felt it necessary to clearly state in various ways its position in regards to marriage, the family, and human sexuality. These subjects are at the heart of many pressing issues facing society. That which for centuries has been considered to be basic Christian morality in the marriage setting is now increasingly called into question, not only in secular society but within Christian churches themselves.

The institutions of family and marriage are under attack and facing growing centrifugal forces that are tearing them apart. An increasing number of nations are now debating the topic of “same-sex unions,” thus making it a world issue. The public discussion has engendered strong emotions. In light of these developments, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is clearly restating its position.

We reaffirm, without hesitation, our long-standing position. As expressed in the Church's Fundamental Beliefs, “marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship.”¹¹ Though “sin has perverted God's ideals for marriage and family,” “the family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred of any human relationship,” and thus “families need to experience

⁹ “Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality,” available from http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/main_stat46.html. This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, October 3, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

¹⁰ “Seventh-day Adventist Response to Same-Sex Unions – A Reaffirmation of Christian Marriage,” cited from http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/main_stat53.html. This document was voted by the General Conference Administrative Committee, March 9, 2004.

¹¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe—A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, Doctrine 22 on “Marriage and the Family.”

renewal and reformation in their relationships" (*An Affirmation of Family*, 1990).¹² God instituted "marriage, a covenant-based union of two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as "one flesh." "The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is . . . the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression." "Any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal" (*An Affirmation of Marriage*, 1996).¹³

Homosexuality is a manifestation of the disorder and brokenness in human inclinations and relations caused by sin coming into the world. While everyone is subject to fallen human nature, "we also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word" (*Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality*, 1999).¹⁴

We hold that all people, no matter what their sexual orientation, are children of God. We do not condone singling out any group for scorn and derision, let alone abuse. However, it is very clear that God's Word does not countenance a homosexual lifestyle; neither has the Christian Church throughout her 2000 year history. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the biblical teaching is still valid today, because it is anchored in the very nature of humanity and God's plan at creation for marriage.

This later document reaffirms the earlier document and quotes it together with Fundamental Belief 23¹⁵ and two other statements. The position of the Adventist Church on the issue of homosexuality is unequivocal. The Church is opposed to any homosexual activity. The Adventist Church does not accept homosexual partnerships although they may be approved by different governments and cultures regardless of whether their status may be equal or similar to heterosexual marriages in certain societies.

Nevertheless, the question is: Do these statements correctly reflect the biblical texts dealing with homosexuality? Before examining biblical

¹² Public Statement, *An Affirmation of Family*, released July 5, 1990, at the General Conference Session, Indianapolis, Indiana.

¹³ Statement voted by the General Conference Administrative Committee on April 23, 1996.

¹⁴ Statement voted by the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, October 3, 1999.

¹⁵ Doctrine 22 has become number 23 after a new fundamental belief was added in 2005. See *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (17th edition; Silver Spring: Secretariat of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 17.

evidence, we must first examine why so many different interpretations exist.

3. The Problem of the Diversity of Interpretations

Interpreting the Bible depends on certain presuppositions. The way people view Scripture, culture, science, tradition, and the human being will influence their approach to interpreting the Bible.

3.1. Various Presuppositions

The so-called contemporary historicism stresses that there is no absolute or timeless truth, that there is no divine revelation, and that revisions and reformulation of older beliefs are necessary to fit the prevalent culture. Theology is understood merely as a cultural analysis and critique investigating the evolution of religion.¹⁶

The Bible is considered to be culturally conditioned, that is, it has spoken to a certain situation in the past but must be reinterpreted today.¹⁷ It is held that “. . . our modern world view includes advances and discoveries unknown to ancient peoples, making biblical pronouncements on homosexuality incomplete and even erroneous.”¹⁸ The Greco-Roman culture becomes the yardstick and determines how New Testament texts

¹⁶ See Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Historicism: The Once and Future Challenge for Theology*, (Guides to Theological Inquiry; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 160-164. Walter Wink, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 47, holds: “Where the Bible mentions homosexual behavior at all, it clearly condemns it. I freely grant that. The issue is precisely whether that biblical judgment is correct.” Daniel A. Helminiak, *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* (New Mexico: Alamo Square Press, 2000), devotes an entire chapter to the issue of how to interpret Scripture (29-41), opts for the historical-critical method and concludes: “The Bible does not condemn gay sex as we understand it today” (131).

¹⁷ Cf. Wink, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” 35, 42; Rogers, 69-70; Webb, 161. On page 168 Webb points out: “Homosexuality advocates appeal to the menstrual-intercourse law as an example of a sexual taboo that is culturally relative.” Rodgers talks about Lev 18 and 20 as “an ancient culturally conditioned code that is not applicable to them [homosexuals] or their circumstances” (70).

¹⁸ James B. De Young, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined in the Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2000), 11. On pages 10-11, he lists a number of views held in favor of a homosexual lifestyle. See also Springett, 49-51. Soards, 55, cautions: “Our cultural perspective is not inherently superior to the worldview(s) and attitude(s) of biblical culture(s).”

must be interpreted.¹⁹ It is said that “the Bible opposes prostitution and idolatry in conjunction with homosexuality not homosexuality, as such”²⁰ and that Scripture does not address the position of monogamous, permanent same-sex relationships,²¹ because supposedly Scripture is not aware of innate or inverted homosexuality²² and refers to exploitive homosexuality only, for instance, pederasty,²³ rape, perversion, promiscuity or excess of passion.²⁴ On the other hand, only those persons of the same gender that are involved in a caring relationship are considered to be homosexuals. In other words, true homosexuals are only inverts, not so-called perverts.²⁵

In addition, it is suggested that the Bible is “pluriform and multivocal,” contains “an irreducible pluralism,” a “biased” conversation, and is “inadequate and distorted” at least in certain aspects.²⁶ Others choose the

¹⁹ Cf. Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1983), 16, 127-128.

²⁰ Springett, 51, although this is not his own position. Gary Chartier, “Love, Subsidiarity, Equality, and Inclusiveness,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 5, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 58, writes: “. . . same-sex sexual relationships that are not exploitative, unfair, or uncaring do not qualify as sinful.”

²¹ See Springett, 50; Vincent J. Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love: Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality* (2nd edition; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 277, 296. Ellen F. Davis, “Reasoning with Scripture,” *Anglican Theological Review* 90/3 (2008): 518. Rogers, 89, talks about “the wonder . . . that so many lesbian and gay people have formed long-term monogamous partnerships . . .”

²² Cf. Scroggs, 28.

²³ Scroggs, 84, argues: “The homosexuality the New Testament opposes is the pederasty of the Greco-Roman culture; the attitudes toward pederasty and, in part, the language used to oppose it are informed by the Jewish background.” On page 121 he even limits Paul’s statement to certain exploitive forms of pederasty and not to pederasty in general.

²⁴ Cf. David E. Fredrickson, “Natural and Unnatural Use in Romans 1:24-27: Paul and the Philosophic Critique of Eros,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 197-222.

²⁵ See Maria Harris und Gabriel Moran, “Homosexuality: A Word Not Written,” in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches*, (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 74; and Springett, 3. On the other hand, Morton Kelsey and Barbara Kelsey, “Homosexualities,” in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 64, admit: “There are as many different kinds of homosexual relationships as there are heterosexual. They range from permanent, deeply caring unions to short-term relationships, to one-night stands, to rape.”

²⁶ Phyllis A. Bird, “The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation Concerning Homosexuality: Old Testament Contributions,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the*

"christological principle" which they consider to be in conflict with certain biblical statements.²⁷ That means, they start with a specific biblical doctrine which becomes normative and the center of the canon or the canon within the canon that overrules other biblical statements.²⁸ Therefore, it is claimed that the church moved by the Holy Spirit can accept or reject divine laws.²⁹ The biblical text is supposedly in need of the church, and the authority of Scripture is only relative.³⁰ Others go a step further claiming to follow the Holy Spirit individually, even if their conclusions contradict the teachings of Scripture.³¹

"Plain Sense" of Scripture (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 144-145.

- ²⁷ Cf. Rogers, 15, 53-55. On page 66 he notes that the Bible contains eight texts dealing with the topic of homosexuality. "Together they cover a maximum of twelve pages in the Bible. None of these texts is about Jesus, nor do they include any of his words." See also Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 47-48. William Sloane Coffin, "Liberty to the Captives and Good Tidings to the Afflicted," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 107, points out: ". . . not everything biblical is Christlike."
- ²⁸ Nancy Duff, "Christian Vocation, Freedom of God, and Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality, Science, and the "Plain Sense" of Scripture* (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 261-277, shifts the focus to God's freedom as the context of the doctrine of vocation. She suggests that some may be called into heterosexual relationships, others into celibacy, and again others into homosexual relationships. To reject such a call is a kind of sin. Absolute laws cannot dictate our vocation and restrict God's freedom. Scroggs, 124, states: ". . . the Bible is not completely unified in its thoughts, that there are, in fact, contradictions about what is true and right within its pages. . . [This] does allow some space for a search for a center, for the Gospel (as Luther maintained) which might overrule some specific sections of Scripture not seen to be consonant with such a center. And this in turn means that it is conceivable that specific injunctions of the Bible may be disallowed because they do not meet the essential core of the Gospel."
- ²⁹ Cf. Marion L. Soards, *Scripture and Homosexuality: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 17; Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 42-44.
- ³⁰ Richard Treloar, "'Come Out and Stay Out!' Hermeneutics, Homosexuality, and Schism in Anglicanism", *Anglican Theological Review* 90.1 (2008): 54-55. On page 58 he writes: "Anglicans can resist the Bible's 'plain teaching' in this matter, as we patently already do with regard to much else. . . 'with' Scripture. . . at times we must read 'against' Scripture." "The Bible . . . is not directly equivalent to God's word . . ." (61).
- ³¹ Cf. James A. Forbes Jr., "More Light from the Spirit on Sexuality," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 6-8. Ken Sehested, "Biblical Fidelity and Sexual Orientation: Why the First Matters, Why the Second Doesn't", in *Homosexuality and*

Some have a problem with the law and pit the gospel against the law.³² Love is what counts, not the law.³³ It is said that the Spirit of Scripture and the concept of love must be recognized which supposedly override narrow interpretations of a few biblical texts. Being called to love homosexuals would include accepting their lifestyle.³⁴ "The primary question before us today is not whether a sexual deed is right or wrong, but whether the relationship of which it is a part is right or wrong. . . . (1) Scripture everywhere condemns homosexual deeds, and (2) it nowhere addresses those that occur in loving relationships."³⁵

Some regard their personal experience as normative and base on it their decision to reject or accept specific biblical statements. This is a pragmatic approach.³⁶ Others give priority to science, humanities, and reason rather than Scripture³⁷ or suggest that we have to use as final authorities Scripture plus science/reason—e.g., biology, sociology, and

Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 59; Richard Rohr, "Where the Gospel Leads Us," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 85-88.

³² Soards, 17, states, "Grace, not law, governs Christian life."

³³ Cf. Rogers, 61. Lewis B. Smedes, "Exploring the Morality of Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 82, thinks that homosexuals "are called to achieve the best moral relationships of love that are possible for them within the limits of a condition they did not choose."

³⁴ Cf. Thomas Sören Hoffmann, "Zur aktuellen Diskussion um die ethische Bewertung der Homosexualität," *Informationsbrief* 198 (2000): 4-11; Webb, 182. Dale Martin, quoted in Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 37, concludes: "If the church wishes to continue with its traditional interpretation it must demonstrate, not just claim, that it is more loving to condemn homosexuality than to affirm homosexuals."

³⁵ David R. Larson, "Christian Sexual Norms Today: Some Proposals," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 5, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 6, 8.

³⁶ Cf. Paul Wennes Egertson, "One Family's Story," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 23-30; Bird, 143; John B. Cobb Jr., "Being Christian about Homosexuality," in *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (ed. Walter Wink; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 91-93; René D. Drumm, "Interaction and Angst: The Social Experiences of Gay and Lesbian Seventh-day Adventists," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 3, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 20.

³⁷ Bird, 168; Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 46; Rogers, 35-36.

psychology³⁸–tradition,³⁹ and experience in order to make informed decisions.⁴⁰ Dan O. Via maintains: “I have tried to show that if we look at a number of biblical themes in the light of contemporary knowledge and experience, we can justifiably override the unconditional biblical condemnations of homosexual practice.”⁴¹

Furthermore, it is assumed that the sexual drive in humans must be lived out and cannot be controlled.⁴² Therefore, representatives of this position have also no problem with premarital sexual relations,⁴³ divorce and remarriage,⁴⁴ adultery, and even polygamy.⁴⁵ R. Schwartz goes even

³⁸ Cf. Ben Kemena, “Biological Determinants of Homosexual Orientation,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 2, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 16-19; Harry C. Wang, “Psychiatry, Antihomosexual Bias, and Challenges for Gay and Lesbian Youth,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 2, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 40; Fulton, 48-49; Sherwood O. Cole, “Biology, Homosexuality, and the Biblical Doctrine of Sin,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (July-September 200): 348-361. This view would be opposed to the *solus scriptura* principle and is rejected by Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, “The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Science in the Ecclesiastical Homosexuality Debates,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 120; and Christopher Seitz, “Sexuality and Scripture’s Plain Sense: The Christian Community and the Law of God,” in *Homosexuality, Science, and the “Plain Sense” of Scripture* (ed. David L. Balch; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 177-196.

³⁹ Paul G. Crowley, “Homosexuality and the Counsel of the Cross: A Clarification,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 637.

⁴⁰ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 29; Soards, 55, points out: “Experience must inform theological reflection, but a theology of experience is dangerously subjective.” On page 64 she adds: “Reason aids us in our attempt to comprehend the Bible, but reason cannot replace the scriptures in a life of Christian devotion to God.”

⁴¹ Via and Gagnon, 38.

⁴² Springett, 25, stresses that human sexuality is different from “the instinctive reflexive mating of animals” and means “that human beings can control and are, therefore, responsible for their sexual expression.” They have a choice. Cole, 360, notes: “Any attempt to reduce people to genetic or biological entities distorts human identity from a biblical perspective.”

⁴³ Cf. Larson, “Christian Sexual Norms Today,” 13, states: “The guideline of ‘nothing before’ and ‘everything after’ is neither realistic nor wise. . . . We should not ask whether to allow loving heterosexual and homosexual unions to exist; they already do. . . . We should do everything we can to sustain them and to support people who are in them. . . . We should also find ways to honor them in appropriate Christian ceremonies.”

⁴⁴ Rogers, 43-44.

further and talks about “a virulent biblical abhorrence to incest, which resonates with what she describes as the general biblical hysteria about, and its explicit horror of, homosexuality.”⁴⁶

Representatives of an evolutionary origin of Scripture do not only deny direct creation by God and an order of creation, but also the Fall. They claim that God has “created” homosexuals as such and that homosexuality is a gift of God, not a consequence of the general fallenness of humanity.⁴⁷

3.2. An Example for Working with Presuppositions

An example of working with certain presuppositions is Fritz Guy in his article “Same-sex Love: Theological Considerations.”⁴⁸ The article begins with a list of seven theological affirmations: “1. Physical pleasure and sexual intimacy belong to the created goodness of humanness. 2. Sexual intimacy symbolizes a profound personal and moral relationship. 3. The moral quality of physical intimacy does not depend on the sex of the partners. 4. Scripture does not condemn all same-sex love. 5. Same-sex love is not ‘unnatural.’ 6. Antagonism toward same-sex love has deep psychosocial roots. 7. Christians should affirm caring, committed same-sex love.”⁴⁹ Obviously, the first two criteria are foundational to his system, and the others are derived from it. When discussing his third affirmation, he refers back to the previous two and states: “. . . these criteria do not involve the *sex* of the partners.”⁵⁰ This is true, if we follow his first two affirmations exclusively, but the first two criteria are his own criteria based on some biblical statement while omitting others – for instance, the creation account and Jesus’ statement about marriage and creation in Matt 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-9. By disregarding all biblical statements about who is supposed to have sexual relations with whom, Guy can conclude that the gender of those involved in an sexual act does not count⁵¹ and that

⁴⁵ Rogers, 82; Treloar, 50.

⁴⁶ Treloar, 51, referring to Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 107.

⁴⁷ Rogers, 81.

⁴⁸ Fritz Guy, “Same-sex Love: Theological Considerations” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 4, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 43-62.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵¹ “. . . the moral quality of physical intimacy is determined neither by the sex of the partner nor by the factors involved in the choice, but only by the moral quality of the intimacy itself, as defined by the kind of criteria identified above.” *Ibid.*

Scripture does not condemn homosexual activity. One also notices that he uses a social-psychological approach.

Consequently, same-sex love "is neither a sin nor a sickness. It is not a psychological, moral, or spiritual aberration, much less a 'perversion.' It is a 'problem' only because of the widespread and profound prejudice against it."⁵² Homophobia "leads to social contempt and moral condemnation. . . . same-sex love is often felt . . . as profoundly threatening to the social order . . . The primary . . . locus of vulnerability is the almost universal tradition of hegemonic masculinity . . ."⁵³ He also suggests that one should take "as morally normative broad scriptural principles rather than specific prescriptions."⁵⁴

3.3. Presuppositions Shared by the Majority of Seventh-day Adventists

Typically, Adventists believe that "the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. . . . The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history"⁵⁵ (Isa 8:20; 66:2—*sola scriptura*). Adventists accept the self-testimony of Scripture and regard the Bible as reliable revelation of God. Although written by human beings, it is not only the word of humans, but also the Word of God. Principles of interpretation have to be derived from Scripture and should not be forced upon it. Deductions from the fields of philosophy, psychology, and sociology that contradict Scripture have to be rejected. In addition, tradition and natural sciences should not be allowed to determine matters of faith. Scripture is its own interpreter. There is agreement, harmony, and clarity in Scripture. Clear texts may shed light on difficult texts. The Holy Spirit is needed in the process of interpretation, but the Holy Spirit does not override previous revelations.

3.4. Conclusion

It is generally acknowledged that the real issue in the homosexuality debate is the nature, authority, and interpretation of Scripture.⁵⁶ W. Wink

⁵² Ibid., 50.

⁵³ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 9.

⁵⁶ Cf. Rogers, 1-65; Helminiak, 29-41; Soards, 1-14; Via and Gagnon, 2.

has correctly stated: "The real issue here, then, is not simply homosexuality, but how Scripture informs our lives today."⁵⁷ J. White talks about "a controversy about the authority and interpretation of the Bible"⁵⁸ and Rogers about the problem that nothing separates the Presbyterian Church as much as the question on how to interpret Scripture.⁵⁹ M. Soards reminds us: ". . . the decision one makes about the validity of homosexual behavior for members of the Christian community is effectively a decision about the authority of the Bible in the life of the church."⁶⁰ An awareness of the divergent premises used in interpretation affect the outcome. Such an awareness of presuppositions helps maintain consistency of interpretation and avoid the pitfall of misinterpretation of the biblical text.

4. Homosexuality in Scripture

4.1. Homosexuality in the Old Testament

The Old Testament contains several texts, which refer directly to homosexuality. Indirect references are also found.⁶¹ Among the direct references to homosexuality two or three passages occur in legal material, whereas the others are found in narrative/historical accounts.

Israel did not live in isolation but was surrounded by the nations of the Ancient Near East. These nations were idolatrous. Sexuality and fertility cults played an important role. The Old Testament historical background has been described by a number of authors. They deal with sexuality and homosexuality among the Egyptians, the Babylonians and Assyrians, the Hittites, and the Canaanites.⁶² Sacred prostitution, homosexuality between

⁵⁷ Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 33.

⁵⁸ Cf. James R. White und Jeffrey D. Niell, *The Same Sex Controversy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2002), 15.

⁵⁹ Jack Rogers, "Presbyterian Guidelines for Biblical Interpretation: Their Origin and Application to Homosexuality," *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 37.4 (2007): 179. He also mentions four models of biblical interpretation (174-175) and five different views on inspiration in Presbyterian circles (180).

⁶⁰ Soards, 73.

⁶¹ Cf. Springett, 69-88.

⁶² See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 134-142; Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 44-56; Springett, 33-48; Donald J. Wold, *Out of Order: Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 43-61.

consenting partners, transvestite behavior, and bestiality, all of this can be found among Israel's neighbors. However, the Old Testament is opposed to all these practices. It challenges the other gods and rejects homosexuality.⁶³

4.1.1. Old Testament Narratives

Genesis 1-2. Although the creation account (Gen 1-2) does not talk about homosexuality, it sets the stage for all subsequent sexual relations. Webb comments by saying: "Obviously, this pattern does not sit well with homosexual relationships, whether the covenant or casual type."⁶⁴

God created the first man and the first woman, Adam and Eve, and joined them in marriage. The creation account does not only point to the beginning of marriage, it also portrays the ideal for human sexual relations. However, authors supporting homosexual partnerships suggest that the male-female combination was chosen, because the multiplication of the human race was divinely commanded (Gen 1:28) and was necessary in the beginning. Yet, because the situation has changed and overpopulation is rampant, it is claimed that homosexual partnerships are even more in tune with the needs of the world today than are heterosexual relationships,⁶⁵ and therefore—supposedly—Gen 1 and 2 cannot be used to proscribe one form of human sexuality.

The problem with this argument is that heterosexual relationships are reduced to the function of procreation only. Gen 1 and 2 does not portray this idea. Man and woman are created in the image of God. It appears likely that the image of God has to do with humanity being God's representative on earth as well as standing in an intimate relationship with God. In addition, Gen 5:1-3 may also suggest that the image of God included a resemblance of human faculties and the entire human being with the Lord of the universe. This image of God is found in both genders who are blessed (Gen 5:2) and is expressed in different kinds of relationships, not only procreation.⁶⁶ Springett states: "Mankind as male and female are not created simply for the purpose of procreation.

⁶³ Cf. Webb, 81.

⁶⁴ Webb, 131.

⁶⁵ Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 4, suggests: "In an age of overpopulation, perhaps same sex-orientation is especially sound ecologically!"

⁶⁶ Cf. Ekkehardt Mueller, "The Image of God in Gen 1:16-17," *Reflections: A BRI Newsletter* 3 (2003): 5-6; Miguel Gutierrez, "L'homme créé à l'image de Dieu' dans l'ensemble littéraire et canonique - Gen 1-11" (Th.D. dissertation, Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, 1993).

Procreative ability is carefully removed from God's image and shifted to a special word of blessing."⁶⁷

The creation account is also interested in the concept of complementation. When Adam noticed his lack of a companion, God created for him the woman "suitable to him." Adam and Eve complemented each other. This complementation is holistic because God is holistic. Its expression is found in heterosexual marriage.

According to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus affirmed the creation account and the permanence of marriage. Jesus understood Gen 1 and 2 not only as a historical account but also as a text, which is normative for humanity at all times, disapproving all homosexual relationships. Genesis 1 and 2 remains as the foundational text to describe divinely ordained human sexual relationships.

Genesis 19 and Judges 19. Whereas narratives that deal with homosexuality such as the Sodom narrative (Gen 19:4-10) and the outrage in Gibeah (Judg 19:22-25) are interpreted in such a way as to avoid homosexual connotations, homosexuality is read into other passages such as the stories of Ham's sin (Gen 9:20-25),⁶⁸ the friendship of David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18, 20, 2 Sam 1), and the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship between Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1).

Some theologians suggest that the story dealing with Sodom is about a lack of hospitality⁶⁹ rather than homosexuality and that the term "to know" means "to get acquainted" rather than "to have coitus with." "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them" (Gen 19:5). The NASB translates "to have relations with them" (cf. Gen 4:1, 17, 25) which seems to be the meaning required by the passage, especially verse 8, the context in Genesis with the various sexual problems, and the intertextual connections with Judg 19 and Ezek 16.⁷⁰

Although homosexuality was one of the sins of the inhabitants of Sodom, it was not the only one, and the city was destroyed because of its many and grievous sins including homosexuality. The text is rarely cited by Christian homosexuals today because they suggest that the problem with Sodom was not with homosexuality *per se* but with a violent type of gang rape, which has nothing to do with covenant homosexuality. This is

⁶⁷ Springett, 53.

⁶⁸ For a discussion of this incident see Davidson, 142-145; Wold, 65-76.

⁶⁹ See Rogers, 67; Helminiak, 43-50.

⁷⁰ Wold, 89.

also true for the story that happened in Gibeah.⁷¹ Yet “. . . the authors of Jude and 2 Peter undoubtedly understood a key offense of Sodom to be men desiring to have sex with males.”⁷²

Alleged Homosexual Relationships. The interpretation of David's relation to Jonathan or Ruth's relation to her mother-in-law as a beautiful expression of homosexuality is far-fetched at best.⁷³ Men embracing and kissing each other and holding hands is common even today in the Near East. This has nothing to do with homosexuality. "In this context it is not out of place to suggest that the word love has political rather than sexual overtones."⁷⁴ The transfer of clothes from Jonathan to David has royal overtones suggesting a legal symbolism relegating the privilege of succession willingly to David. In this setting Jonathan moves beyond personal feelings of a friendly disposition and makes a solemn 'covenant' . . .⁷⁵ Scholars are aware that arguments from silence may be extremely weak and should be used in exceptional cases only. Nevertheless, F. Guy does not only speculate about physical intimacy between David and Jonathan but also about the Roman military officer who asked Jesus to heal his boy, thereby suggesting that this boy was a valuable slave and sexual partner of the officer, and about the Ethiopian eunuch as a potential homosexual.⁷⁶ He adds: "These possible instance are, of course, highly conjectural . . . None of the stories contains an explicit recognition, much less an endorsement, of same sex love."⁷⁷ So far so good, but then Guy turns around and asserts: "Given what we know about human nature and same-sex love, statistically it is highly probable that *some* of the figures in the scriptural narratives were participants in same-sex erotic relationships."⁷⁸ Such an approach has nothing to do with sound biblical interpretation.⁷⁹ While homosexuality is read into texts that do not speak

⁷¹ For a more detailed discussion of both passages, see Davidson, 145-149, 161-162; White and Niell, 40-51, Köstenberger, 204-208. Davidson concludes his passage on Sodom by saying: "That the opprobrium attached to the Sodomites' intended activity involved not only rape but the inherent degradation of same-sex intercourse is confirmed by the intertextual linkages between Ezekiel and the sexual 'abominations' mentioned in Levitical legislation" (149).

⁷² Via and Gagnon, 59.

⁷³ See Davidson, 164-167.

⁷⁴ Cf. 1 Kgs 5:1.

⁷⁵ Springett, 73. This is supported by Webb, 102.

⁷⁶ Guy, 52-53.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Davidson, 165, speaks about speculation.

about it, it is explained away or limited to violent types of same-sex relations only in texts that address homosexuality.

4.1.2. *The Mosaic Laws*

Leviticus 18 and 20. Leviticus contains two texts that clearly address homosexuality. Lev 18:23 reads: "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination." Lev 20:13 goes farther by warning against the consequences of homosexual activities: "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

One theologian suggests that "the Old Testament limits the prohibitions against same-gender sexual behavior in Leviticus 18 and 20 to the ritual or cult of Israel . . . These passages have no impact on the New Testament/Christian moral code."⁸⁰ Rogers concludes that "our challenge is not to maintain culturally conditioned law, but rather, with Jesus, to love God and love our neighbor (Matt. 22:36-40). When these texts in Leviticus are taken out of their historical and cultural context and applied to faithful, God-worshiping Christians who are homosexual, it does violence to them."⁸¹ "It is also proposed that the context is purity and holiness, which supposedly is irrelevant to the New Testament church – Israel had to separate from the pagan neighbors."⁸² And Helminiak asserts: "The single text in the Hebrew Scriptures that talks about homogeneity forbids it—but precisely because it is 'unclean,' not because it is wrong in itself. The Christian Scriptures insist that cleanness and uncleanness do not matter."⁸³

It is true that in the immediate or larger context terms referring to purity and holiness as well as idolatry occur. Still, the question must be asked whether or not these references limit the warning against homosexuality to specific situations only? I argue ten reasons why this is not a valid interpretation:

- a. *These two texts describe and condemn male homosexual activity.* No exceptions are mentioned. Obviously they are opposed to any homosexual activity.⁸⁴ However, it is very likely that they also

⁸⁰ De Young, 10.

⁸¹ Rogers, 69. In the context of Lev 18 and 20 and the discussion on homosexuality, Helminiak, 66-67, calls people to break away from conventions and taboos because they are "unreasonable and oppressive" (67).

⁸² See Rogers, 69.

⁸³ Helminiak, 72.

⁸⁴ Cf. Springett, 63.

included lesbianism. "The Mosaic legislation in general is considered from a man's (male's) perspective. Even the Decalogue is addressed in the masculine singular, but this certainly does not mean that it applies only to the male gender. The masculine singular is the Hebrew way to express gender-inclusive ideas . . ." ⁸⁵

- b. Although they are found in the context of holiness and purity, *they have a moral quality as seen, for example, by their usage in the New Testament*. Kaiser states: ". . . there is a category of temporary ceremonial laws, but I do not agree that homosexuality is among them. Nothing in its proscription points to or anticipates Christ, and the death penalty demanded for its violation places it in the moral realm and not in temporary legislation."⁸⁶ R. Kane dwells on this point by showing that there is a difference between ritual impurity, which can be done away with by ritual purification, and moral impurity, which is not remediable. ". . . the impurity of homosexual practice was not ceremonial, but moral. . . The laws of Leviticus 18 and 20 are not like circumcision, the temporary ethnic covenant marker. This is confirmed by the fact that in Acts 15, which releases Gentile Christians from circumcision, the 'Holiness Code' prohibitions against meat offered to idols, sexual immorality (*porneia*; not only adultery, and meat from which the blood is not drained at the time of slaughter (vv. 20, 29; compare Lev. 17-20) remain in force for Gentiles."⁸⁷ "Any attempt to draw hard distinctions between sin and impurity is doomed to failure. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the Holiness Code is that it incorporates ethics under the rubric of purity; that is, sin and impurity merge" (Lev 18:24-30; Eze 18:22, 26).⁸⁸
- c. *They deal with more than exploitive situations*. The two persons involved in these acts of immorality are men, obviously not an adult and a boy. Both of them were to be punished because both of

⁸⁵ Davidson, 150.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus* (The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 247. Similarly, Webb, 177.

⁸⁷ Roy E. Kane, "Same-sex Love in the Body of Christ?," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), part 4 - 67-68.

⁸⁸ Via and Gagnon, 66; and Wold, 119, adds: "The sex crimes of Leviticus 18, with the possible exception of Molech worship, were not cultic in nature. . . . the term *tô: bâ* [abomination] shows no distinction between intrinsic wrong and ritual impurity as suggested by Boswell."

- them are responsible for their acts. It is an abomination.⁸⁹ Obviously, both were involved in this activity by mutual consent.⁹⁰
- d. *These laws extend beyond the Israelite community and were also applicable to the stranger (Lev 18:26).*⁹¹ W. Webb points out that the lists of Lev 18 and 20 together with other vice and virtue lists “reflect transcultural values.”⁹² They are also based on the creation order and therefore not limited to the people of Israel.⁹³
- e. *“The reason why male-male intercourse is wrong is implicit in the proscription itself: ‘lying with a male as though lying with a woman.’ Male-male intercourse puts a male in the category of female so far as sexual intercourse is concerned. Because sexual intercourse is about sexual completion, it requires complementary sexual others.” In addition people should not have “sex with too much of an ‘other’ (bestiality) or too much of a ‘like’ (incest, male-male intercourse), and not disrupting the one-flesh bond of a legitimate sexual union (adultery).”⁹⁴ The violation of this law is an abomination. “. . . in the entire Pentateuch, the only forbidden sexual act to which the word *tôbâ* is specifically attached is homosexual intercourse.”⁹⁵*
- f. *W. Webb provides a reason for the inclusion of child sacrifice in the list of seventeen intercourse prohibitions in Lev 18: The fifteen prohibited sexual relations preceding child sacrifice may all produce offspring, the following two, homosexuality and bestiality, do not. The chapter is concerned with appropriate sexual boundaries between male and female. “Such a structural perspective speaks against any type of homosexuality today.”⁹⁶*
- g. *The context of the law against homosexual activity in Lev 18 and 20 includes to some extent Lev 19. In Lev 19:18 the commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself is found. This commandment is not abolished, although others in the immediate context are or may be (Lev 19:21-25, 27). It is stressed again and again in the New Testament. Therefore, when a decision has to be made whether or not a specific regulation is still normative for Christians, it has to be*

⁸⁹ The term *bdelygma* is discussed by Wold, 118.

⁹⁰ See Davidson, 149.

⁹¹ See Davidson, 154-155; White and Niell, 68

⁹² Webb, 196. See also pages 192-196.

⁹³ See Wold, 130.

⁹⁴ Via and Gagnon, 64-65.

⁹⁵ Davidson, 151.

⁹⁶ Webb, 200. See also pages 197-200.

made on a one at a time basis and by consulting the New Testament. The law against homosexuality cannot be discarded easily.

- h. *In Rom 1:26-27 and 1 Cor 6:9-10, Paul alludes to Lev 18 and 20 and makes his own statement about homosexuality.* The law was still valid in Paul's time, and Paul did not indicate that it was abolished, on the contrary.
- i. *A specific case of fornication, namely incest, is related in 1 Cor 5.* The act of having sexual intimacy with one's stepmother is called *porneia*. The case of 1 Cor 5:1 is clearly spelled out in Lev 18:8. Leviticus 18 discusses unlawful sexual relations. First of all, it is evident that Paul considered Lev 18 or at least parts of it as still valid for Christians. So do we in the case of incest and bestiality as well as child sacrifice. Secondly, the term *porneia* clearly stands for incestuous relations and may include all unlawful sexual activities spelled out in Lev 18, that is, different forms of incest, sexual relations with a woman during her period, sexual relations with the wife of another man, homosexuality, and sexual relations with animals.⁹⁷ As incest is still to be shunned, so is homosexuality.
- j. *The issue of fornication was discussed and decided upon at the Jerusalem Council – Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25.* Gentile Christians were ordered to abstain from fornication. Obviously, the Jerusalem Council did not discuss the validity of the Decalogue. The term that they dealt with was *porneia*, whereas the Ten Commandments use the verb *moicheu* (LXX). The other three items from which the gentile Christians had to abstain from were things polluted by idols, from what is strangled, and from blood. All four activities that were to be avoided by gentile Christians remind of similar prohibitions for Israelites and strangers in Lev 17:8-15 and 18:24-27.⁹⁸ It seems quite certain that the delegates to this Council and especially James had

⁹⁷ Oftentimes, the New Testament when it alludes to or quotes an Old Testament text does not only refer to the specific text but also to the entire context. When, for example, in Rev 12:5 the male child is mentioned, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, the reference is not just Ps 2:9 but the entire Ps 2. This principle, so often found in the New Testament, may apply also to 1 Cor 5:1 and its Old Testament source, Lev 18.

⁹⁸ Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols., The International Critical Commentary; London: T & T Clark International, 2006), 734; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 506-507; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 253.

in mind Lev 18.⁹⁹ Paul then followed the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem in the case of the Corinthian man. *Porneia* was referring to a broad range of sexual deviations, including incest, prostitution, and homosexuality.

Deuteronomy 23. Deut 23:17-18 states: "None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute. You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God." Springett suggests that homosexuality may have been involved in the terms used in these verses, namely the terms translated "cult prostitute" and "dog."¹⁰⁰ The term "dog" may, in contrast to the cult prostitute, describe non-cultic male prostitution. Davidson points out that it "is found in the section of Deuteronomy that elaborates upon the seventh commandment; this indicates that any homosexual activity is a violation of the Decalogue."¹⁰¹

4.1.3. Summary

The Old Testament contains clear texts, especially in the legal material, rejecting any form of homosexual activity. These texts were referred to in the New Testament and considered binding. Other texts are not as clear, and one should be careful not to read wishful thinking into Old Testament narratives and exploit texts, which say nothing about homosexual activities in order to support a homosexual agenda. However, Wold is correct, when he affirms: "All the references to homosexual acts in the Old Testament are negative—wether in narrative (Gen. 9:20-27; 19; Judg. 19) or law (Lev. 18; 20)—and carry heavy sanctions . . ."¹⁰²

4.2. Homosexuality in the New Testament

The New Testament contains about three explicit texts dealing with the issue of homosexuality. Before we approach them, we will take a look at the position of Jesus.

⁹⁹ This is, for example, supported by the margin of Nestle-Aland's Greek New Testament as well as their list of Old Testament quotations and allusions. When discussing the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, Bruce refers back to Lev 18. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 315.

¹⁰⁰ Cf., Springett, 63-65.

¹⁰¹ Davidson, 160.

¹⁰² Wold, 162.

4.2.1. Jesus and Homosexuality

Although Jesus has not made a direct statement dealing with homosexuality, his position on the issue is recognizable.¹⁰³

Jesus and the Law. Jesus did not abolish the law but pointed out its real meaning and its implications. The Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5 contains a long section in which Jesus discusses the law. In Matt 23:23 he talks about the "weightier matters of the law" but does not let go of the principle of tithing. R. Gagnon makes an interesting comment on Mark 7: "The saying in Mark 7:15-19 about what defiles a person is often cited as proof that Jesus abolished the food laws. It is more likely that Jesus intended a hyperbolic contrast: what counts most is not what goes into a person but what comes out . . . If Jesus did not abrogate even such things as food laws and meticulous tithing, then it is impossible that he would have overturned a proscription of sexual immorality as serious as that of male-male intercourse."¹⁰⁴

Jesus and Sexuality. Jesus was not tolerant with regard to various forms of sexuality other than a marriage relation between one man and one woman. Although he mingled with sinners and cared for them, he did not condone their behavior. This is quite clear in the cases of three women who had committed sexual sins, the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 who anointed him, the Samaritan woman with her different life partners in John 4, and the woman caught in adultery in John 8:3-11. "Go. From now on sin no more" (John 8:11). Their lives were turned around. The prostitutes believed him and will enter the kingdom of God (Matt 12:31-32). In the Sermon on the Mount he spent two antitheses on dealing with sexual issues. He deepened the law. Adultery would already begin with our thought processes. The bill of divorce is abolished and divorce and remarriage are no longer options apart from the possible exception of fornication. In Matt 19:18 and Mark 10:19 Jesus again confirmed the seventh commandment. "Jesus was virtually without peer in his radical insistence on limiting the number of lifetime partners to one."¹⁰⁵

Jesus and Homosexuality. According to Matt 19 and Mark 10 Jesus had a discussion with the Pharisees on the question of divorce. In this context he referred back to the creation account and quoted Gen 1:27 and 2:24.

¹⁰³ Gagnon has devoted a number of pages to Jesus and the issue of sexuality. Cf. Via and Gagnon, 68-74. Wold, 161-175, devotes an entire chapter to "Christ and the Homosexual."

¹⁰⁴ Via and Gagnon, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Via and Gagnon, 71.

Two human beings, male and female, become one flesh. Unity is stressed, but a unity, which consists of a marriage between one husband and one wife. In the Hebrew text the term "two" is missing. It is found in the LXX. By stressing that only two beings and beings of the opposite sex become one, Jesus rejects polygamy as well as homosexuality. Obviously, for Jesus the creation account is not only descriptive but also prescriptive. A little later, Jesus mentioned three groups of eunuchs (Matt 19:12): (1) those who are eunuchs from birth,¹⁰⁶ (2) those who have been made eunuchs by men, and (3) those who for the sake of the kingdom of heaven have made themselves eunuchs. The last group probably does not refer to literal eunuchs but to people such as John the Baptist who remained unmarried for the sake of their ministry. This would imply that humans have the ability to postpone sexual intercourse indefinitely, which is true for persons with heterosexual as well as those with homosexual inclinations. According to Matt 19:1-12 Jesus allowed for two alternatives only, namely being married to a person of the opposite sex or staying single. As for Jesus divorce is not an option, neither is homosexuality.

In Mark 7:21-23 Jesus mentioned that out of the heart comes evil, and he specifies among other sins three sexual transgressions, namely *porneia* (fornication), *moicheia* (adultery), and *aselgeia* (sensuality, licentiousness, wantonness).¹⁰⁷ *Porneia* has a wide range of meaning as mentioned above, including homosexuality. "No first-century Jew would have spoken of *porneiai* (sexual immoralities) without having in mind the list of forbidden sexual offenses in Leviticus 18 and 20, particularly incest, adultery, same-sex intercourse, and bestiality."¹⁰⁸ Jesus also mentions Sodom (Matt 10:15; Luke 10:12).¹⁰⁹

Jesus is concerned with keeping the commandments, which includes following a Christian lifestyle that also includes proper sexual

¹⁰⁶ Some attempt to read into this phrase the issue of homosexuality. Rogers, 78-79, refers to M. Nissinnen who "suggests that in our contemporary context those who are eunuchs from their mother's womb might well include people who are homosexuals, because they simply lack sexual desire for people of the opposite sex." This statement seems to be carefully crafted, not claiming that in biblical times eunuchs included homosexuals. The emphasis seems to fall on the "contemporary context" in which some people would like to include homosexuals with the eunuch. In this case, "eunuch" had to be understood figuratively.

¹⁰⁷ Wold, 167-170, shows that *aselgeia* may include homosexuality.

¹⁰⁸ Via and Gagnon, 73.

¹⁰⁹ However, his use of the term "dogs" in Matt 7:6, although reminding us of the dogs of Deut 23:17-18, that is homosexuals, does not seem to refer to homosexuals in this context.

relationships. Indirectly, homosexuality is addressed and rejected. Soards comes to the conclusion: "Thus, judging from both Jesus' words and actions, we may conclude that marital heterosexual unions and abstinence from sexual involvement are the options for human sexual behavior that accord with the will of God."¹¹⁰

4.2.2. Paul and Homosexuality

The three major Pauline texts dealing with homosexuality are Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; and 1 Tim 1:10.

Romans 1:26-27. "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

Whereas a number of Christian theologians hold that these texts describe homosexuality, which they reject in all forms. Still others acknowledge that the text is dealing with homosexuality. They suggest that the issue in Paul is idolatry or pederasty, and that Paul could not have taken in account sexual orientation as we know it today.¹¹¹ In other words,

¹¹⁰ Soards, 29.

¹¹¹ Cf. Everett R. Kalin, "Romans 1:26-27 and Homosexuality," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30 (2003): 423-432. Scroggs, 121-122, states: "Only in Romans 1 is there a negative judgment made on both female as well as male homosexuality which could be considered a general indictment. Even here, the entire cumulative evidence we have looked at throughout this book suggests that despite the general language Paul, with regard to the statement about male homosexuality, must have had, *could only have had*, pederasty in mind. That Paul uses here the argument from nature might, mean, of course, that he would have made the same judgment about *any* form of homosexuality. No one can legitimately conclude, however, that he would have done so. We just do not know." This is a remarkable statement by a scholar who obviously superimposes the Greco-Roman culture on Paul and still has to acknowledge that Rom 1:26-27 sounds like "a general indictment." Wold, 185-186, briefly summarizes the "revisionist interpretations" and draws his own conclusions which differ widely from Scroggs' conclusions. Similar but more elaborate Springett, 121-122. Soards, 48, asserts: "Yet Scroggs' contention that pederasty was the only model of homosexuality known in antiquity is simplistic and misleading." Wink, "Homosexuality and the Bible," 36, claims: "No doubt Paul was unaware of the distinction between sexual orientation, over which one has apparently no choice, and sexual behavior, over which one does." Cf. John R. Jones, "In Christ There Is Neither . . . : Toward the Unity of the Body of Christ," in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 4, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 23.

Paul did not know about inverted homosexuals. Furthermore, it is argued that the reference to nature should be understood in the following way:

In describing homosexuality as 'against nature' (Rom 1:26 KJV), Paul does not condemn homosexual orientation or any committed mutual relationship. Instead, he condemns perversion of what comes naturally. It is 'against nature' for homosexuals to practice heterosexuality or for heterosexuals to practice homosexuality. Paul does not condemn people for having been born homosexual, nor does he condemn the homosexual orientation (inversion).¹¹²

Therefore, the issue is whether or not Paul talks about homosexuality at all and whether or not homosexuality in Romans 1 includes all forms of homosexuality thus achieving universal scope. The answer is found in the context of the text.

- a. *The larger context is universal in nature.* Whereas Rom 1 shows that all Gentiles are sinners—Paul presents a catalogue of vices (Rom 1:21-32)—and Rom 2 points out that the Jews are also sinners, Rom 3 concludes that all people are sinners and all are dependent on God's grace as revealed in Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. Rom 5 elaborates on the fact that all of us have been slaves to sin but in Jesus are free from it. Also the Fall is clearly referred to in Rom 5:12-19. Paul's argument is not limited to humanity in the first century A.D. but encompasses people at all times while dealing with creation, the Fall, sin, and salvation.¹¹³ Therefore, the list of vices, including homosexuality, is not limited to a special period of time either but is still applicable today.¹¹⁴
- b. *Paul's background for the discussion of idolatry and homosexuality is creation.*¹¹⁵ In Rom 1:20 the creation of the world and God's created

¹¹² De Young, 10; Cf. Rogers, 74.

¹¹³ Cf. Springett, 124.

¹¹⁴ White and Niell, 134, note: "The basis of Paul's discussion in Romans 1 . . . gives us no hint that the author intends his words to be limited geographically or temporally. The concepts he present reach back to creation itself, apply over and beyond all cultural boundaries, and speak to men and women at the very level of their existence, not merely in their cultural climate."

¹¹⁵ Rogers, 76, argues that "Paul's condemnation of immoral sexual behavior is not appropriately applied to contemporary gay or lesbian Christians who are not idolaters. . ." Even if idolatry should be the overarching theme of Rom 1, the statements on homosexuality have to be taken seriously and cannot be discarded. Furthermore, it would be wrong to contend that "idolatry, the worship of statues or images, is the necessary prerequisite for homosexuality," so Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 285. Although idolatry may find an expression in homosexual activity, sinful passion does not need to grow out of idolatry. It comes out of humanity's sinful nature. The problem is that some advocates of a homosexual

works are referred to. Evidently Paul's argument is that God can be known through creation. But although the Gentiles "knew God, they did not honor him as God" (Rom 1:21). They "exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (Rom 1:23). God was replaced by gods which were nothing more than images of created beings, whether humans or animals. The list of animals, the mention of humans, and the concept of "likeness"/"image" suggest that Rom 1:23 echoes Gen 1:24-26. In addition, Rom 1:25 points out that the Gentiles worshiped created things instead of the creator. Furthermore, Rom 1:26-27 seems to echo Gen 1:27 by concentrating on the same terms, namely "male" (*arsen*) and "female" (*thelys*), instead of using the terms "man" and "woman."¹¹⁶ Since creation is so clearly referred to in the preceding verses homosexuality must be understood in the context of creation. "Idolatry and same-sex intercourse together constitute an assault on the work of the Creator in nature"¹¹⁷ no matter which form of homosexuality it is. The creation account points out God's intention for man and women, which is monogamous heterosexual marriage.

lifestyle deny that the Fall occurred or that the Fall is related to homosexuality. Rogers, 77, points to homosexual animals and claims that "examples from the animal kingdom seem to show that God pretty clearly did intend to create homosexual animals. Furthermore, the best scientific evidence also seems to show a genetic influence on sexual orientation, as well as biological differences between homosexual and heterosexual people. This data suggests that homosexuality is indeed part of God's created order" (81). Genesis 2:20 indicates that the cattle, the birds, and the beast of the fields had "helpers," while Adam did not have "a helper suitable to him." For Adam this "suitable helper" was Eve, the missing female partner. Similarly, the Flood story mentions male and female animals only: "You shall take with you [into the ark] of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female" (Gen 7:2). Genesis does not indicate that God created homosexual beings. D. Martin, "Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-32," *Biblical Interpretation 3* (1995): 338, complains: "Modern scholars read the Fall into Romans 1 because it renders the text more serviceable for heterosexist purposes." Although the Fall is not directly mentioned in Rom 1, creation is, and the Fall's mention in Rom 5 reveals that it forms part of the background of Paul's theology, even in Rom 1.

¹¹⁶ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 37, states: "With every indication of his loathing, the apostle now pictures how the Gentiles profane themselves (in a sinful reversal of Gen. 1:27f.) in lesbian love and sodomy. . . . What the Gentiles do is contrary to creation and characteristic of their fallen state of guilt."

¹¹⁷ Via and Gagnon, 78.

- c. In dealing with the historical context, *the question is raised as to whether or not it is possible that the ancients may have had an idea of inverted homosexuality?* If the number of invert homosexuals among the general population amounts to somewhere between three to ten percent¹¹⁸ and “has remained relatively constant for hundreds, even thousands of years,”¹¹⁹ as it is claimed, it would be quite strange, if loving and caring homosexual relationships were formed only in the 20th and 21st centuries and that the ancients were completely ignorant of this phenomenon.¹²⁰ References to homosexuality are not only found in sources dating back to centuries before Christ, but also in Greco-Roman society and the church fathers. The ancients did not only know what has been called “contingent homosexuality” and most probably “situational homosexuality,” but most likely had some idea or concept of “constitutional homosexuality.” At least the notion that a person is attracted to the same sex because of his or her constitution is found in Plato’s androgynous man-woman myth as summarized by Springett:

In this myth Plato explains that primal man was dual. He had four hands, four feet, two faces and two privy parts, that is, like two people back to back—the faces opposite directions. Some of these dual, primal creatures were male in both parts, others were female in both parts and yet others (a third sex) part male and part female. These primal creatures were so strong that they became insolent, attacking the gods. Because of their continued insolence, Zeus divided these dual four-legged creatures into two-legged creatures. A dual male became two males, a dual female two females and the male-female (androgynous) became a male and a female. On this basis he accounts for the differing sexual desires apparent in society, for each creature searches out its own or opposite kind, according to its original orientation. When dual parts encounter each other they fall in love. By the creation of this myth Plato attempts to explain the attraction some men and women have for persons of the same sex.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ See Kemena, 10; and Fulton, 48.

¹¹⁹ Mitchell F. Henson, “Ministering to Gays within the Church Community,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (part 5, ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), 27.

¹²⁰ Cf. White and Niell, 128-129.

¹²¹ Springett, 97-98. Cf. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 353-354. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (The New International Greek Testament

It is hardly possible that Paul, who was an educated man and who even quoted Greek authors (e.g., Acts 17:28; Tit 1:12) would not have known Plato's myth and the concept of innate homosexuality.¹²² Therefore, to suggest that Paul was referring to violent or exploitative homosexuality or pederasty only but not to a permanent caring one-partner same-gender relationships because they supposedly were not known at his time, cannot be shown.¹²³

- d. *Finally to the text itself.* Although Paul lived hundreds of years after the giving of the law through Moses, obviously this law is – in his opinion – still applicable during New Testament times. The mention of the adult-adult homosexual intercourse in Rom 1:27 is dependent on Lev 18:22 and 20:13.¹²⁴ Leviticus 18 and 20 are in view in Acts 15 and are declared binding for gentile Christians. Paul refers to Lev 18:8 when he sharply criticizes incest in the church of Corinth (1 Cor 5), indicating that for him Lev 18 and 20 are still valid. Paul goes even a step further by including female same-gender activity (Rom 1:26), which was not directly spelled out, though included among male homosexuality, in the Old Testament.¹²⁵
- e. *Dealing with the suggestion that Rom 1 "identifies a temporary Jewish purity rule rather than a universal moral principle,"* De Young remarks: "God cannot consign the Gentiles to punishment for breaking a Jewish purity law."¹²⁶ Since he does bring about punishment or

Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 452, declares: "Paul witnessed around him *both* abusive relationships of power or money *and* examples of 'genuine love' between males. We must not misunderstand Paul's 'worldly' knowledge."

¹²² White and Niell, 128, 129, state: "Therefore, the assumption that he [Paul] did not know of people who professed to be homosexual as their primary 'orientation' is simply farfetched unless one is willing to say that in essence no one really 'knew' about this until the past few decades or centuries. . . . Plato's writings make reference to male homosexuality, lesbianism, the claims of some to be born as a willing mate of a man, the concept of mutuality, permanency, gay pride, pederasty, 'homophobia,' motive, desire, passion, etc. One would have to assume Paul a very poor student *and* a very poor observer of the culture around him to be unaware of these things."

¹²³ See Via and Gagnon, 81.

¹²⁴ These chapters are also found in a kind of universal context. See Lev 18:24-30; 20:2,23.

¹²⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Word Biblical Commentary 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), 76, notes: "That Paul simply takes it for granted that the Jewish abhorrence of Gentile sexual license is still the appropriate ethical response of the Gentile believer in Christ means that he recognizes at least one distinctive element of Israel's covenant righteousness which remains unchanged within the wider freedom of the new covenant."

¹²⁶ De Young, 159.

permits negative consequences (Rom 1:27), the laws of Lev 18 and 20 must have a moral quality and be universal in nature. This is what Jones denies. He strongly argues for Lev 18 and 20 to be culturally and nationally bound and overcome in Jesus.¹²⁷ He also distinguishes between a level of “moral evil” and a level of “ceremonial impurity” in Rom 1, assigning vv. 24-27 – the passage dealing with homosexuality – to the ceremonial level. He builds his argument on the use of *adikia* (unrighteousness), *poneria* (evil), and *asebeia* (godlessness, wickedness) in Rom 1:18, 29¹²⁸ and *akatharsia* (uncleanness) in Rom 1:24, reasoning that the former three terms have a moral quality, while *akatharsia* is ceremonial in nature. His point seems to be: Homosexuality belongs to the level of ceremonial impurity, not to the level of sin. It does not affect Paul’s original audience, and it does not affect us today, because Paul uses a rhetorical device. He speaks with a pre-Christian voice in order to drive his point home with the Jews, that is, to help them realize that they are also sinners.¹²⁹ In his review of Jones’ article, Gane points to the problem of defining impurity as cultic or ceremonial only. Already in the Old Testament impurity had at times a moral quality.¹³⁰ However, a closer look at the New Testament reveals that *akatharsia* (impurity) is found next to terms such as *anomia* (lawlessness, Rom 6:19), *aselgeia* (licentiousness; Eph 4:19), and *porneia* (fornication; Eph 5:3). According to 2 Cor 12:24 people should have repented of their *akatharsia*. The deeds of the flesh include among others, such as idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, also *porneia*, *akatharsia*, *aselgeia* (Gal 5:19-20). “. . . those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:21). A similar list occurs in Col 3:5 and includes *akatharsia*. “For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience.” Thus, *akatharsia* has a moral dimension with Paul. Christians are called to stay away from it, because a lifestyle of practiced *akatharsia* excludes people from the kingdom of God (see also 1 Thess 4:7).¹³¹

¹²⁷ Jones, 4-7.

¹²⁸ These terms are found in a longer list of vices, but are not a heading or summary of these other vices.

¹²⁹ Jones, 13-22.

¹³⁰ See discussion above; and Gane, part 4, 66-68.

¹³¹ White and Niell, 120, add: “. . . the fact that a ‘penalty’ or ‘punishment’ is attached to the ‘error’ of performing these ‘shameful deeds’ reinforces the understanding that these are sinful deeds . . .”

- f. The argument that the phrase “the natural intercourse” and its opposite “against/contrary to nature” (*para phusin*) in Rom 1:26-27 are describing what is natural to an individual is unsubstantiated.¹³² Nowhere is the term *phusis* used in such a sense. In Romans itself the noun is found seven times,¹³³ however, the phrase *para phusin* just twice (Rom 1:26; 11:24). In Rom 11:24 there is a wild olive tree “by nature” (*kata phusin*). From this wild olive tree, branches were cut off and “against nature” (*para phusin*) grafted into the cultivated olive tree. *Kata phusin* means to exist in harmony with the created order. On the other hand, *para phusin* refers to what is in contrast to the order intended by the Creator.¹³⁴ This corresponds with Rom 1, where creation is clearly the background for the discussion of idolatry, homosexuality, and other vices. Here, activities and behavior described as being “against nature” imply a negative moral judgment. “. . . homosexual practice is a violation of the natural order (as determined by God).”¹³⁵ Obviously, this includes all forms of homosexuality.¹³⁶ Jones’ attempt to explain what is natural on “conventional grounds,” which was located in the Greco-Roman world of the first century A.D.,¹³⁷ does not fit well Paul’s argument, who argues biblically rather than from the perspective of the Greco-

¹³² See the quotation above.

¹³³ Rom 1:26; 2:14, 27; 11:21, 24.

¹³⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (The Anchor Bible 33; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 286, suggests: “. . . in the context of vv 19-23, ‘nature’ also expresses for him [Paul] the order intended by the Creator, the order that is manifest in God’s creation or, specifically in this case, the order seen in the function of the sexual organs themselves, which were ordained for an expression of love between man and woman and for the procreation of children. Paul now speaks of the deviant exchange of those organs as a use *para phusin*.” Wold, 182, concurs: “. . . according to Paul, nature is the created order of male and female in the image of God, regulated by conscience and law.” Cf. De Young, 156-157; and Köstenberger, 48.

¹³⁵ Dunn, 74; Cf. Via and Gagnon, 79-80.

¹³⁶ Springett, 130, 131, declares: “If homosexual acts could gain divine approval in any sense, surely Paul would have indicated how and drawn the distinction . . . An interpretation of his words that allows homosexual activity would have to allow also any sin in the list of vices which follows.”

¹³⁷ Jones, 17; Smedes, 80-81, first seems to argue for a cultural understanding of “unnatural,” but then admits “to be a traditionalist; I do believe that having babies is the teleological bent of sexuality. And my traditionalism leads me to suppose that homosexuality is a product of nature sometimes gone awry. But this, in turn, leads me to assume that God wants gay people to make the best life they can within the limits of what errant nature gives them. . . . Would not God also see same-sex partnerships as a morally worthy improvisation on the ‘unnatural’?” (81).

Roman culture. The same is true for J. Boswell's effort to explain "unnatural" as unexpected or unusual but not immoral behavior.¹³⁸ Gagnon suggests: ". . . Paul in effect argues that even pagans who have no access to the book of Leviticus should know that same-sex eroticism is 'contrary to nature' because the primary sex organs fit male to female, not female to female or male to male."¹³⁹ ". . . Paul was thinking of 'nature' not as 'the way things are usually done' (i.e., cultural convention) but rather as 'the material shape of the created order' . . ."¹⁴⁰

- g. *The fact that Paul adds lesbianism to male homosexuality supports the previous point.* "Lesbian intercourse in antiquity normally did not conform to the male pederastic model or entail cultic associations or prostitution."¹⁴¹ It was not exploitative. Therefore, non-exploitative but caring homosexual partnerships are included in the sins mentioned in Rom 1. However, there are those who hold that Rom 1:26 does not talk about lesbianism. Rogers writes: "The text does not say that women had sex with other women. They could have been condemned for taking the dominant position in heterosexual intercourse, or for engaging in non-procreative sexual acts with male partners."¹⁴² Helminiak suggests that Rom 1:26, referring to "female sexual relations that are 'beyond the ordinary' could mean many things. It might mean sex during menstruation, sex with an uncircumcised man, oral sex, heterosexual anal sex, having sex while standing up, or anything that would not be considered the standard way of having sex. . . . There is no need to read homogeneity into the *para physin* of verse 26."¹⁴³ In other words, according to these authors Rom 1:26 may describe any sexual deviation, but not lesbianism. However, v. 26 is linked to v. 27 by the term "likewise," and the homosexual male behavior is

¹³⁸ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 112.

¹³⁹ Gagnon, 254; Cf. Gane, part 4 - 65.

¹⁴⁰ Gagnon, 256. He shows that this conclusion is valid by elaborating on the context in Rom 1. Discussing Rom 1:18-20 he reasons: "In other words, *visual* perception of the *material* creation that God has made . . . should lead to a mental perception about the nature of God and God's will. Similarly, the reader should expect that the appeal to nature in 1:26-27 has to do, at least primarily, with the visual perception of male-female bodily complementarity . . ." (257).

¹⁴¹ Via and Gagnon, 80.

¹⁴² Rogers, 75

¹⁴³ Helminiak, 87.

compared to the female behavior. The case is very clear.¹⁴⁴ Since gay males are mentioned in v. 27, so there are also lesbians mentioned in v. 26. In order to avoid this conclusion, the term “likewise” has to be reinterpreted. Gagnon has dealt with this issue extensively.¹⁴⁵ But even Helminiak himself concedes that his interpretation may not be correct: “But even if this interpretation is wrong, even if verse 26 is a reference to lesbian sex, the general conclusion argued below must still apply: Romans may refer to same-sex acts, but it intends no ethical condemnation of them.” We have argued that he is even wrong in his last assertion.

- h. *That Paul was not so much concerned with coercion in a homosexual relationship can be derived from Rom 1:27: “. . . men . . . burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”* Obviously in such a homoerotic union, both partners lust for each other.¹⁴⁶ Both of them consent to the homosexual relationship, both are responsible for their actions, and both of them receive the penalty. God is not unfair that he would punish a boy who has been forced to play the female in a homosexual relationship, whether by being raped or by being forced into a pederastic relationship.¹⁴⁷ However, if the Paul is even opposed to a relationship of consenting

¹⁴⁴ Cf. White and Niell, 117.

¹⁴⁵ Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 297-299. James E. Miller, “The Practices of Romans 1:26: Homosexual or Heterosexual?” *Novum Testamentum* 37 (1995): 1-11, has argued that “likewise” in Rom 1:27 does not force us to parallel male same-sex intercourse with lesbianism. He quotes *T. Naph.* 3:4-5 in order to show that “likewise” can be used in a loose way (3-4): “. . . [do] not become like Sodom, which changed the order of their nature. And likewise also . . . the Watchers changed the order of their nature.” The inhabitants of Sodom engaged in homosexual behavior, the angels in heterosexual. But Gagnon, 298-299, correctly points out: “Neither clause [in *T. Naph.*] specifies what the ‘order of nature’ was changed for, which makes possible a loose comparison. However, Rom 1:27 is quite explicit about what “the natural use of the female” was exchanged for: sex with members of the same sex. For the ‘likewise’ of 1:27 to be appropriate, both the thing exchanged and the thing exchanged *for* must be comparable.”

¹⁴⁶ Wink, “Homosexuality and the Bible,” 36, claims: “Likewise the relationships Paul describes are heavy with lust; they are not relationships between consenting adults who are committed to each other as faithfully and with as much integrity as any heterosexual couple.”

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 80-81; De Young, 158.

adults, it can safely be assumed that he would be opposed to all other homosexual relationships.¹⁴⁸

Homosexuality in Rom 1 is not limited to a certain time, culture, or even limited to certain homosexual forms. Paul clearly understands it as sinful behavior.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10. "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." Again it is claimed that Paul does not refer to monogamous homosexual relationships of mutual respect but condemns pederasty, homosexual prostitution, and exploitive and dehumanizing forms of homosexuality.¹⁴⁹ If this is true, not all male-male intercourse would be prohibited.¹⁵⁰ This does not seem to be the case. We will not go in details in this section, because similar arguments were already discussed in the passage dealing with Rom 1.

- a. *The immediate context of 1 Cor 6:9-10 reaches from 1 Cor 5 to 1 Cor 7, dealing with the issue of human sexuality.* In chapter 5 Paul mentions a case of incest in Corinth. Paul accepts as binding Lev 18, which discusses incest and homosexuality, and urges the Corinthian church to disfellowship the church member involved in an incestuous relationship with his stepmother. Toward the end of chapter 5 he presents a short list of four different categories of people involved in vices (v. 10), the first one being fornicators. This list is enlarged in the next verse by two additional groups of people. Christians must separate from church members who practice such vices. In 1 Cor 6:9-10 Paul expands his list to ten groups of people.¹⁵¹ This list seems to consist of two parts.¹⁵² The first five groups of

¹⁴⁸ Köstenberger, 217, argues: "There was a clear and ambiguous Greek word for pederasty, the term *paiderastis*. We have every reason to believe that if Paul had wished to condemn, not homosexuality at large, but only pederasty, he would have used the appropriate Greek term for this practice. . . . The attempt to limit Paul's condemnation to pederasty . . . is contradicted by Paul's reference to the male partner's *mutual desire for one another* in Romans 1:27 ('consumed with passion for one another')."

¹⁴⁹ Cf. the examples listed by Köstenberger, 216.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. De Young, 10-11.

¹⁵¹ In all these lists *porneia* is mentioned first.

¹⁵² The following outline of 1 Cor 6:9-10 indicates that the unrighteous, who will not inherit the kingdom of God are the same as the subsequent ten groups of evildoers, who also will not inherit the kingdom of God. It is possible that the ten groups of

people are idolaters and sexual offenders discussed in 1 Cor 5-7. The problem with the next five groups is to some extent addressed in 1 Cor 11. In the first part, probably two groups describe persons involved in heterosexual misconduct, while the next two describe people engaged in homosexual misconduct. "Adulterers" applies to married people, while "fornicators" may refer to singles, if the term is not used in its broader sense encompassing all other groups of sexual misbehavior. The rest of chapter 6 warns against a relationship with a prostitute. In 1 Cor 6:16 another creation text is quoted, namely Gen 2:24. Chapter 7 goes on to describe heterosexual marriage, singleness, and divorce.¹⁵³ In order to avoid *porneia*, "each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband" (1 Cor 7:2). There is no room for homosexuality. If people "do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion." Paul is clearly referring to heterosexual marriage.

1 Cor 6:9-10 is part of this larger context, which is based on Lev 18, the creation account, and Jesus' exposition of it. Although the Corinthian church with its problems pertaining to sexuality is addressed, the issue is broader. The interconnectedness of 1 Cor 5-7 as well as its Old Testament background imply a universal dimension, again not limited to time, culture, or certain forms of homosexuality only. The entire passage is prescriptive and not just descriptive. Thus, Thiselton suggests that 1 Cor 6:9-10 is "an even more important and foundational passage than Romans 1. . ."¹⁵⁴

vv. 9b-10 can be divided in two major parts, because four of the first five evildoers are committing sexual sins.

| | |
|---|---|
| "Or do you not know that the unrighteous | <i>will not inherit the kingdom of God?</i> |
| Do not be deceived; | |
| (1) neither fornicators, | |
| (2) nor idolaters, | |
| (3) nor adulterers, | |
| (4) nor effeminate, | |
| (5) nor homosexuals, | |
| (6) nor thieves, | |
| (7) nor the covetous, | |
| (8) nor drunkards, | |
| (9) nor revilers, | |
| (10) nor swindlers | <i>will inherit the kingdom of God."</i> |

¹⁵³ Cf. Thiselton, 447, 451; Via and Gagnon, 84-87.

¹⁵⁴ Thiselton, 447,

Practicing homosexuality permanently excludes people from the kingdom of God, as does any of the other vices mentioned by Paul.

- b. The two terms dealing with homosexuality in 1 Cor 6:9 are *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*.¹⁵⁵ *Malakoi* has been rendered "effeminate," "those who make women of themselves," "boy/male prostitutes," "(pervert) homosexuals," and "catamites." The term normally means "soft" or "luxurious" and appears four times in the New Testament (Matt 11:8 [2x]; Luke 7:25; 1 Cor 6:9). The Gospel references depict the same event and describe persons in soft clothes. The word must be determined by its context. Jones points to later Christian literature (1 Cor 6. Polycarp) where the term describes an unworthy person and could easily be seen as effeminate¹⁵⁶ and admits: "None of this, of course, negates the possibility that the term *malakos* included male homosexual behavior."¹⁵⁷ Those called *malakoi* are not just soft, mild, or weak men. The majority of the interpreters agree that in 1 Cor 6:9 this term refers to homosexuals, especially to partners who play the female role in a homosexual relationship.¹⁵⁸ In v. 9 *malakoi* is surrounded by other terms referring to sexual and homosexual behavior, which makes it clear that this word also has a sexual meaning. However, to restrict it to children and pederasty is quite speculative.¹⁵⁹

The term *arsenokoitai* helps to define the *malakoi*. It is a unique term and in the New Testament found with Paul only.¹⁶⁰ It may actually have been invented by Paul. It clearly goes back to Lev 18:22 and 20:13 (LXX). There the two terms *arsen* and *koitai* that Paul

¹⁵⁵ They have been hotly debated. Example, David F. Wright, "Homosexuals or Prostitutes: The meaning of ARSENOKOITAI (1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10)," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 38/2 (1984): 125-153, has shown that John Boswell's claim in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* that *arsenokoitai* means male prostitutes, not male homosexuals, is groundless. William L. Petersen, "Can ARS_ENOKOITAI Be Translated by 'Homosexuals' (I Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1.10)," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 40/2 (1986):187-191, has responded to Wright. Basically, he hold that the modern concept of homosexuality does not correspond with the one prevalent in the antiquity.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, 9.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Fitzmyer, 287, and Springett, 134. See also Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 93, understands *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* as "the passive and active partners in homosexuality."

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Thiselton, 449.

¹⁶⁰ In his book, De Young devotes an entire chapter to the discussion of the term. De Young, 175-214.

has joined together, now forming one term only, are found separately.¹⁶¹ A literal translation would describe a man lying with a man in bed/homosexual intercourse. Its meaning is not restricted to pederasty. The *arsenokoitai* in 1 Cor 6:9 may be the active partners in any kind of homosexual relationships.¹⁶²

- c. *The severe penalty* for being a *malakos* or an *arsenokoitos*, namely exclusion from the kingdom of God, indicates that the two terms refer to adult males who of their own free will – whether by innate orientation or not – have homosexual intercourse with each other.¹⁶³

The backgrounds of creation and Lev 18 and 20 in 1 Cor 6 as well as the other reasons mentioned above suggest that in 1 Cor 6:9 homosexuality includes all forms of homosexual activity and transcends application to the Corinthian church only.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Cf. Köstenberger, 216.

¹⁶² Cf. Thiselton, 448-450; Via and Gagnon, 83. Springett, 136, suggests: "If Paul was condemning only a crude form of homosexual activity here, by implication allowing other types, he surely would have been more explicit." Paul comes from a Jewish background, and the Jewish verdict on homosexuality is unequivocal. On the other hand, Jones, 12, acknowledges that *arsenokotai* "almost certainly" has to do with homosexuality, however, "of an exploitive sort." David E. Malick, "The Condemnation of Homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993): 479-492, summarizes his article on page 492 by saying: "While Paul's choice of the words *ἀρσενοκοίτης* and *μαλακός* allows for an application to the abuse of pederasty in his day, the words actually denote a broader field of reference including all men who have sexual relations with men. The illogical presuppositions that (a) all sexual relationships are equal before God, (b) Paul's descriptions are of excessive practices, and (c) homosexuality is a biblically approved expression of sexuality, are necessary prerequisites to the popular conclusion that Paul was discussing only 'abuses' in homosexual behavior. The Apostle Paul condemned all homosexual relationships in his vice-list in 1 Corinthians 6:9 as he addressed the need for the Corinthians to judge those within their midst."

¹⁶³ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 82. De Young, 192, states: "Such researchers as Wright and Henry Mendell have definitely shown that *arsenokoitai* must be defined broadly. One cannot limit *arsenokoitai* to pederasty or to active male prostitution. It also includes same-gender orientation, condition, and mutuality."

¹⁶⁴ Thiselton, 452, writes: "On the basis of the distance between the first and twentieth centuries, many ask: 'Is the situation addressed by the biblical writer genuinely comparable to our own?' The more closely writers examine Greco-Roman society and the pluralism of ethical traditions, the more the Corinthian situation appears to resonate with our own. . . What is clear from the connection between 1Cor 6:9 and Rom 1:26-29 and their Old Testament backgrounds is Paul's endorsement of the view that idolatry, i.e., placing human autonomy to construct one's values above covenant commitments to God, leads to a collapse of moral values in a kind of domino effect."

1 Timothy 1:8-10. "But we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching."

The same term *arsenokoitai* is found in 1 Tim 1:10 that has already occurred in 1 Cor 6. The same background of Lev 18 and 20 is prevalent. This time, however, the term seems to be broader than in 1 Cor 6 because the *malakoi* are not mentioned. A distinction between passive and active partners is not made. Probably, the *arsenokoitai* are all those who are involved in any type of homosexual activity.¹⁶⁵

The contribution of 1 Timothy to this discussion is that homosexuality is set in the context of the law, and this law remains binding. Furthermore, "homosexuals" are part of one of the longest lists of vice in the New Testament with a total of fourteen vices. Within these fourteen vices, eight form four pairs of two, whereas the remaining six describe individual categories of sinners.¹⁶⁶ "On closer analysis, the organization of the vices on this list is determined by the order of the precepts of the Decalogue."¹⁶⁷ At least the last half of the list of vices corresponds clearly with the Ten Commandments: "those who kill their fathers or mothers" – fifth commandment, "murderers" – sixth commandment, "immoral men and homosexuals" – seventh commandment, "kidnappers" – eighth commandment, and "liars and perjurers" – ninth commandment.¹⁶⁸ The phrase "whatever else is contrary to sound teaching" may relate to those commandments that are not directly referred to. Understood in this way, homosexuality is also a violation of the seventh commandment.

The Pauline passages that deal with homosexuality show that homosexuality is not limited to just violent and promiscuous activity, nor is it restricted to pederasty. All homosexual activity is against the creation order and therefore against the divine law and is thus sin, which needs to be repented of, forgiven, and given up. Both Old Testament and New Testament address the present situation.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 87.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus* (The New Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 31.

¹⁶⁷ Collins, 30.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Via and Gagnon, 87.

4.2.3. Other New Testament Texts on Homosexuality

There are other New Testament texts, which seem to include homosexual activity. For this discussion they are less important than the previous texts. 2 Peter 2:6-10 goes back to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and their sins. Lot is mentioned, who suffered from the lifestyle of the inhabitants of Sodom. Among others, licentiousness, lawlessness, and corrupt desires are mentioned in this passage, obviously encompassing all sexual sins, including homosexuality.¹⁶⁹

In Jude 7-8 the Sodom episode is referred to again. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah "indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh . . . Yet in the same way these men [the heretics of Jude's time], also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties." Again, more than homosexuality seems to be included.¹⁷⁰

In Rev 22:14-15, "dogs" are mentioned among those who will not enter the gates of the New Jerusalem. "Dogs" may refer to gentiles (Matt 15:26), Judaizers (Phil 3:2), heretics (2 Pet 2:22), or male prostitutes (Deut 23:18).¹⁷¹ Aune suggests: "It may be that . . . 'dog' . . . is used more specifically here for male homosexuals, pederasts, or sodomites since the term on the parallel vice list in 21:8 . . . is . . . 'those who are polluted.'"¹⁷²

Rogers compares the numbers of references to the concern for the poor and oppressed in Scripture with those on homosexuality. Whereas the first category contains several thousand references, homosexuality has only few, and—according to Rogers—none of them refer to contemporary Christian homosexuals.¹⁷³ It seems that he wants to point out that the topic "homosexuality" is irrelevant. While such a conclusion does not fit with the biblical data, we acknowledge that indeed there are not many direct references to homosexuality in Scripture. Such a statement is misleading at best. Biblical doctrines are not determined by the quantity of direct references. There is no biblical principle that would require a certain number of texts to be reached in order for an issue to be relevant.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Springett, 142-144.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Springett, 144-148.

¹⁷¹ Cf. David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22* (Word Biblical Commentary 52C; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1223; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, (New International Commentary on the Old Testament, rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 408; and Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 701; Springett, 148-150.

¹⁷² Aune, 1222-1223.

¹⁷³ Rogers, 86.

Footwashing and Millennium occur clearly only once each in Scripture. This does not hinder stop the practice of footwashing or change the concept of the Millennium. The references on homosexuality in Scripture are enough to reveal to us God's will.

5. Summary

The situation in the New Testament is comparable to that of the Old Testament, and the two parts of Scripture agree with one another. The Old Testament contains texts that clearly deal with homosexuality, as does the New Testament. Both sets of texts are not limited in scope and time and include all homosexual activity across all times. They spell out that homosexual behavior is a sin that needs to be repented of and forgiven. The Pauline text in 1 Cor 6:9-10, especially v. 9, demonstrates that Scripture condemns all forms of homosexual activity. Verse 11 adds: "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." After this list of vices, Paul concludes that some of the Corinthian church members have been involved in these sinful activities, including homosexuality, but they have given that up and live a different life. Such an interpretation affirms the voted statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

6. Implications for the Church

6.1. Suggestions

Where should the Church go from here? Köstenberger, professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, suggests for the Christian church in general:

To be sure, the church's clear proclamation of the biblical teaching on homosexuality must be coupled with the proclamation of God's love for all people, including homosexuals. . . . Homosexuality is not the unpardonable sin, and forgiveness is always available (1 Cor. 6:11). But forgiveness implies repentance, and repentance implies admission of wrong.¹⁷⁴

R. Rice has listed five different possibilities and discusses their problems, pointing out that options 2 and 5 are opposed to the biblical witness:

¹⁷⁴ Köstenberger, 223.

1. Same-sex relations are sinful and so is same-sex attraction. People with same-sex orientation should seek to reverse it.
2. Same-sex relationships are perfectly natural. They fulfill the essential purpose of sexuality just as well as heterosexual relationships do. . . . The Church should welcome into membership people who are involved in loving, committed same-sex relationships.
3. Although the Church must condemn same-sex behavior, it should not exclude people simply because they have a same-sex orientation. To the contrary, it should welcome them into membership and open to them positions of leadership, with the important proviso, however, that they remain celibate. . . .
4. Homosexuality is not part of the order of things that God intended, and the Church cannot give to same-sex relationships the official approval it gives to heterosexual marriage. Nevertheless, people in committed relationships should not be excluded from Christian fellowship. . . .
5. . . . let's affirm each other as fellow believers and together pursue a clearer understanding of this difficult issue.¹⁷⁵

He comes to the conclusion that approach 3 "may have the widest appeal in the Church" and can see approaches 4 and 5 as a middle course, although it may leave those opposed and those affected unsatisfied.¹⁷⁶

6.2. Adventists and Homosexuals

Adventists respect all people, whether heterosexuals or homosexuals. They acknowledge that all human beings are creatures of the heavenly Father whom he loves and whom they also want to love. Each person is extremely valuable in God's sight. Therefore, Adventists are opposed to hating, scorning, or abusing homosexuals. They distinguish between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity. Although they do not condone the sin of homosexual activity, they treat each individual with respect and compassion, knowing that all people are sinners and are dependent on God's grace, yet are also called to serve Christ and separate themselves from sin. While upholding the biblical witness, they support those who wrestle with homosexuality. Of Rice's five options, approach 3 comes the closest to the Adventist position.

¹⁷⁵ Richard Rice, "Is the Church Ready for Same-sex Sex?" in *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*, (ed. by David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David R. Larson; Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2008), part 4 - 82-83.

¹⁷⁶ Rice, 84-85.

PERPETUA'S ASCENT: POPULAR CHRISTIANITY AND THE AFTERLIFE IN NORTH AFRICA

ELIEZER GONZALES, Ph.D.
Macquarie University, Australia

The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* provides evidence of popular North African Christianity having more affinity with Jewish/Christian apocalyptic literature than with the teachings of the early church fathers. This paper identifies the *Passion of Perpetua* as the earliest datable Christian text describing immediate post-mortem ascent. Affinities between the visions described in the *Passion of Perpetua* and in other Jewish/Christian apocalyptic works, as well as points of difference, will be examined, particularly in terms of understanding of the afterlife. This text therefore provides a better understanding of the nature of Christianity at the beginning of the third century. More specifically, this study highlights the key mechanisms by which the Christian communities embraced the idea of immediate post-mortem ascent of believers.

Key words: Passion of Perpetua, ascent, afterlife

1. The Significance of the Function of Perpetua

The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* is significant in the history of early Christianity for several reasons. One that has not previously been recognized is likely the earliest *description* of an immediate post-mortem ascent of the *soul* to heaven. In a broader sense, it is one of the first Christian texts that clearly articulates the popular understanding of the afterlife common during that time period, apparently preceding the acceptance of this notion into more formal Christian thought. This paper not only identifies the *Passion of Perpetua* as the earliest reasonably datable Christian text to describe the immediate post-mortem ascent, but also argues that this understanding of the soul to heaven comes from the Graeco-Roman *topos*. Thus this text reveals a great deal about the nature of the Christianity during which it was produced.

The visions of Perpetua and Saturus are visions of the ascent of the *soul* to heaven. The eminent scholar of Graeco-Roman and early Christian religion, Jan N. Bremmer observes that “our martyrs expect to go straight to heaven after their execution.”¹ The deaths of these martyrs are described in Platonic terms including separation of body and soul. Saturus writes:

Passi, inquit, eramus, et exiimus de carne...

“We had suffered,” says he, “and we were gone forth from the flesh...”²

There appears to have been an early tradition, reflected in *1 Clement*³ and in Polycarp,⁴ that all martyrs were transferred into the presence of God immediately after their death. Tertullian, a contemporary of Perpetua, held precisely the same view.⁵ The martyrs were *exceptions* because they were perfected through suffering. By being exceptions, they demonstrated the validity of the general rule (for which the apostolic and earlier fathers argued) that *all of the other* righteous dead had to wait for the general resurrection before ascending to heaven and enjoying the presence of God.⁶ No one except the martyrs came immediately at death into the Lord’s presence in heaven.⁷

In describing the martyrs as coming into the presence of God at death, the *Passion of Perpetua* furthermore uses concepts and descriptions of ascent after death for which there were earlier Jewish and Graeco-Roman models.⁸ However, what makes the *Passion of Perpetua* stand out is that it

¹ Jan N. Bremmer, “The Motivation of Martyrs: Perpetua and the Palestinians,” in *Religion im kulturellen Diskurs: Festschrift für Hans G. Kippenberg zu seinem 65 Geburtstag* (ed. B. Luchesi and K. von Stuckrad; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 548.

² *Perpetua* 11.2, “The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas,” in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (trans. by H. Musurillo; London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 4.1, 119.

³ *1 Clement* 5:4, 7; 6:2.

⁴ Polycarp, *Letter to the Philippians* 9.2.

⁵ See J. B. Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 69.

⁶ See, however, the comments by Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 123–124, 133.

⁷ Russell, *Heaven*, 67–68.

⁸ In the Graeco-Roman tradition, see Plato’s tale of Er in the tenth book of the *Republic*; the *Somnium Scipionis* in Cicero’s *De re publica* 6.9–29; Plutarch’s *De sera numinis vindicta* 22–31 (*Moralia* VII.44) and *De genio Socratis* 21–22. Within the Jewish tradition, see the Enochic literature generally, and more specifically to post-mortem ascent, *The Life of Adam and Eve*, and the *Testament of Abraham*.

assumes that the righteous Christians who had died previously also made the same journey of ascent. This is evident in Saturus' vision, in which there are many others who are not martyrs in heaven. Clearly, this is not a reference to an intermediate state, since these others are found at the end of the ascent. In fact, the martyrs themselves seem to be the minority, mentioned apparently as an afterthought:

Et coepimus illic multos fratres cognoscere, sed et martyras.

But then we began to recognize many brothers and sisters, even some martyrs.⁹

2. Popular Carthaginian Christianity

It is difficult to ascertain the popularity of the *Passion of Perpetua*. If the *Passion* was merely the expression of a small sectarian or even Gnostic form of Christianity, then it may have had marginal influence, or the converse may be also possible as representing the views of at least a significant section of North African Christianity.

The *Passion of Perpetua* appears to have been written in the context of the impending deaths of the martyrs, and most scholars accept both the early dating of *Passion* and the claims of the editor.¹⁰ Indeed, Robeck notes both that the redactor of *Perpetua* apparently expected that the readers included eye witnesses of the events described in the text,¹¹ and that Tertullian mentions *Perpetua* in his work *On the Soul*, which is typically

⁹ *Perpetua* 13.8, *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*, in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice* (trans. by Maureen Tilley, ed. Richard Valantasis; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 394. On the compelling linguistic and contextual argument for this "exclusive" translation of *sed et*, see Jan N. Bremmer, "The Vision of Saturus in the *Passio Perpetuae*," in *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst* (ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez, Gerhard P. Luttikhuisen and Anton Hilhorst; Leiden, Brill, 2003), 70.

¹⁰ See Brent D. Shaw, "The Passion of Perpetua," in *Studies in Ancient Greek and Roman Society* (ed. Robin Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 306; Emanuela Prinzivalli, "Perpetua the Martyr," in *Roman Women* (ed. A. Fraschetti; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 119; and Maureen Tilley, "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary* (vol. 2, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 832–833. However, for a contrary view, see Stephanie L. Cobb, *Dying to be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 95, citing J. W. Halporn, "Literary History and Generic Expectations in the *Passio* and *Acta Perpetuae*," *Vigiliae christianae* 45 (1991): 224–231.

¹¹ *Perpetua* 1.6.

dated to approximately 207 CE.¹² The *Passion of Perpetua* appears to have been an “extraordinarily popular” and influential work, particularly in North Africa,¹³ and valued by both the orthodox and the heterodox.¹⁴ This widespread use suggests, as Bremmer notes, that these visions were “widely acceptable as valuable representations of the life to come.”¹⁵

The earliest firm evidence for Perpetua’s commemoration is the liturgical Calendar of Rome in 354.¹⁶ At the end of the fourth century, Augustine provided evidence of Perpetua’s commemoration in three sermons.¹⁷ Augustine also refers to a text of the Perpetua that was read in his basilica,¹⁸ and to the *Dies Natales* of Perpetua and Felicitas as “a celebration of such universal devotion.”¹⁹ The rapid spread of the cult of Perpetua is materially demonstrated by the depiction of the martyrdom of Perpetua on one of the faces of the magnificent Sarcophagus of Brivesca in Burgos, Spain.²⁰ For all of these reasons, we can accept that by the mid-late fourth century, the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* was widely circulated in Western Christianity, which points to the popularity of this text.

¹² Cecil M. Robeck, *Prophecy in Carthage: Perpetua, Tertullian, and Cyprian* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1992), 13.

¹³ See Moss, *Ideologies of Martyrdom*, 99, 137; and D. Frankfurter, “The Legacy of Jewish Apocalypses in Early Christianity: Regional Trajectories,” in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp, 1996), 168.

¹⁴ J. E. Salisbury, *Perpetua’s Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 158.

¹⁵ Jan N. Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London: Routledge, 2002), 58. See also Salisbury, *Perpetua’s Passion*, 176.

¹⁶ R. S. Kraemer and S. L. Lander, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” in *The Early Christian World* (vol. 2, ed. P. F. Esler; London: Routledge, 2000), 1053. Canon 47 of the Council of Carthage allowed such non-canonical texts to be read.

¹⁷ Augustine, *Sermones* 280–282.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Sermones* 280.1, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (vol. 8, trans. by Edmund Hill; New York: New York City Press, 1994), 72.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* See also Kraemer and Lander, “Perpetua and Felicitas,” 1053, 1063; Salisbury, *Perpetua’s Passion*, 170.

²⁰ José María Blázquez Martínez, “Posible Origen Africano del Cristianismo Español,” *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 40 (1967): 41–42. The sarcophagus is held in the Burgos Museum.

3. Perpetua and the Fathers

Where does Perpetua fit within the wide tradition of the early church Fathers? In the main, the early Fathers (up to and including Tertullian) broadly developed an emphasis on an eschatological resurrection of the flesh as the primary hope of the believer. This was the emphasis of the canonical New Testament, which predominantly reflect the post-mortem aspirations of earliest Christianity as being focussed on an eschatological resurrection of the body within the context of a monistic anthropology.²¹

If we accept that martyrologies can allow a glimpse into popular Christian belief of the period, in contrast to more establishment views by ecclesiastical and intellectual figures, then the *Passion of Perpetua* presents an interesting perspective. The *Passion of Perpetua's* perspective of what happens to the righteous when they die is noticeably different to the general thrust of the views championed by both the New Testament and authors such as Justin Martyr, Tatian,²² Theophilus,²³ Octavius Minucius, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus.²⁴ Each of these writers present varying perspectives on the afterlife, yet they all broadly continue an emphasis on the importance of an eschatological resurrection of the body as the principle hope of the righteous, as indeed does Tertullian, Perpetua's contemporary and fellow Carthaginian.²⁵

None of these establishment authorities *describe* nor explicitly refer to an ascent to heaven in any form. In fact, to the contrary, although Judith

²¹ L. R. Lanzilotta, "One Human Being, Three Early Christian Anthropologies: An Assessment of Acta Andreae's Tenor on the basis of Its Anthropological Views," *Vigiliae christiane* 61 (2007): 419; J. Clark-Soles, *Death and the Afterlife in the New Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 67; A. F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 411; E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 555; M. J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: The Relation Between Resurrection and Immortality in New Testament Teaching* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), 140; E. W. Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of Final Punishment* (Houston: Providential, 1982), 55–56; R. Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 448–449; and Oscar Cullman, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1958). See, e.g., Matt 24:29–31; Luke 14:14; John 5:21–54; 11:23–24; 1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4.

²² See Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 15.

²³ See Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.7.

²⁴ See Hippolytus, *Against Plato* 2.

²⁵ See Tertullian, *De resurrectione* 62; and *Apologeticus* 18.3–4. See also Russell, *Heaven*, 67–68.

Perkins argues the point that there is no physical body in the *Passion*, there is still not even a hint of the resurrection of the body within the text.²⁶ With such an allowance, as Bremmer notes, “Perpetua was not a systematic theologian,”²⁷ a different type of discourse seems to have come into play in describing the Christian afterlife.

However, in this context, Augustine’s interpretation of Perpetua’s afterlife is helpful as a contrast. In the final book of the *City of God*, in a chapter titled “Whether the Bodies of Women Shall Retain Their Own Sex in the Resurrection,”²⁸ he explicitly describes the resurrection of women in real female bodies. It also seems that Tertullian has Perpetua and Felicitas in mind in this description, since the title of the last chapter of this book, “Of the Eternal Felicity of the City of God, and of the Perpetual Sabbath” (*De aeterna felicitate civitatis Dei, sabbatoque perpetuo*),²⁹ is based on an extended pun on the names of the two female martyrs.

However, there are several reasons why Augustine *would not* give an interpretation of the *Passion of Perpetua* that aligns with that of the original authors. Augustine considered the ideology and anthropology reflected within the text to be highly problematic. This is why he questions the authorship of the text, described as being “the saint herself, or whoever it was that wrote the account” (*nec illa sic scripsit, vel quicumque illud scripsit*).³⁰ This is also implied through Augustine’s repeated subversion of the intention of the text,³¹ in what Edmund Hill describes as Augustine’s “thoroughly sexist” sentiments.³² Augustine was embroiled in a debate

²⁶ Judith Perkins, *Roman Imperial Identities in the Early Christian Era* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 166–167.

²⁷ Jan N. Bremmer, “Perpetua and Her Diary: Authenticity, Family and Visions,” in *Märtyrer und Märtyrerakten, Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolloquium 6* (ed. Walter Ameling; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 111.

²⁸ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 20.2.17, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (First Series, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. by Marcus Dods; New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1890), 495.

²⁹ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 20.2.30, *Patrologia Latina: the Full Text Database* (vol. 44.801, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, trans. Dods; Ann Arbor: ProQuest, n.d.), no pages, available from <http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk.simsrad.net>, accessed 27 May 2012.

³⁰ Augustine, *De anima* 1.12, *On the Soul and its Origin Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (First Series, ed. Peter Schaff, trans. by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis; Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), 615.

³¹ Augustine, *Sermones* 280.1; 281.1–3; 282.1; 282.3; 394.

³² *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (vol. 5, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill; New York: New York City Press, 1994), 76, note 4. See Augustine, *Sermones* 280.1, 72. See also Petr Kitzler, “*Viri mirantur facilius quam imitantur: Passio Perpetuae* in the Literature of Ancient Church (Tertullian, acta

over a treatise written by Vincentius Victor, in which the key text discussed anthropology just as in the *Passion of Perpetua*.³³ It seems reasonable to suggest that Augustine should not be relied on to give an impartial and accurate interpretation of the afterlife in the *Passion of Perpetua*. Furthermore, the textual history of *Perpetua* reinforces the notion that the *Passion of Perpetua's* presentation of all the righteous in Paradise was considered subversive even from early times.³⁴

In Perpetua's case, the depiction of her immediate afterlife does not appear to represent an interim state, or some stage in the journey to total blessedness or final fulfilment. In fact, there remains nothing in order that Perpetua's joy may be complete.³⁵ In *Perpetua*, there is no anticipation at all of an end-time, final, change of status in the joy of the righteous, who already are in heaven. This is demonstrated by Saturus' dialogue with Perpetua after the ascent: "Then the elders said to us, 'Go and play.' And I said to Perpetua, 'You have your wish.' And she said to me, 'Thanks be to God. However happy I was in the flesh [*quomodo in carne hilaris fui*], I am happier here and now."³⁶ The immediate context of this dialogue supports the idea that the afterlife depicted here does not include a resurrection of the body. The reference to being "in the flesh" (*in carne*) while alive on this earth by contrast demonstrates the incorporeal conception of the afterlife, in that it is the *soul* that has ascended to God.

This observation must be placed within the context that, as Dale Martin has demonstrated, "Greco-Roman constructions of the body were significantly different from our own" so that terms such as "soul" or "body" had a much different meanings from what some modern people expect.³⁷ This is in large part due to Descartes, who constructed the body/soul dualism as ontological, positing that these two things belonged to completely different realities. As Martins argues: "this was a system of which the ancients knew nothing."³⁸ There were, in reality, a "multiplicity of philosophical views of the body,"³⁹ even within the Greek and Hebrew

martyrum, and Augustine)," in *Christian and Jewish Narrative* (ed. Judith Perkins, M. Futre Pinheiro, and R. Pervo; Barkhuis: Eelde, 2011), 8.

³³ Augustine, *De anima* 1. See also Mary Sirridge, "Dream Bodies and Dream Pains in Augustine's 'De Natura et Origine Animae,'" *Vivarium* 43 (2005): 213–215, 248.

³⁴ Bremmer, "Vision of Saturus," 70–71.

³⁵ Compare with Augustine, *Sermones* 280.5.

³⁶ *Perpetua* 12.6–7, 394.

³⁷ Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), 3.

³⁸ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7

traditions. Aristotle, for example, did not consider "incorporeal" to be the equivalent of "non-material" as some later interpreters do.⁴⁰ Epicureanism understood that "all entities that act or are acted upon are bodies" ⁴¹ so that entities such as the mind and spirit must necessarily also be corporeal. Stoicism, which was highly influential in the period of the emergence of Christianity, taught that "everything that 'exists' is corporeal" and only things that were imagined could be said to be incorporeal.⁴² Even Plato himself dealt with "something more like a spectrum of essences than a dichotomy of realms," rather than the radical ontological Cartesian dichotomies.⁴³ For these reasons, Martin suggests that in broad terms, we should think of a "hierarchy of essence" rather than necessarily "ontological dualism" when considering anthropological terms in the ancient conception.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the ancients distinguished the notion of a "body" from the idea of the "flesh." This is an important distinction that Jerome succinctly explained:

Flesh is defined one way, the body another: all flesh is body, but not every body is flesh [*alia enim carnis, alia corporis definitio est: omnia caro est corpus, non omne corpus est caro*]. Flesh is properly what is comprised in blood, veins, bones, and sinews. Although the body is also called flesh, yet sometimes it is designated ethereal or aerial [*aethereum vel aereum*].⁴⁵

This is a distinction that is demonstrated by Tertullian by describing Jesus as being "possessed of flesh and of body" [*[c]arneau enim atque corporeum probantes eum*].⁴⁶

The question then is to which anthropological discourse does the *Passion of Perpetua* belong? Tertullian gives the clearest glimpse of the situation among the Christian communities of North Africa in the early third century. He probably wrote *On the Resurrection*, as well as other

⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁴¹ Ibid. 9.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁵ Jerome Letter 57.26 ("To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem"), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Second Series, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. by W. H. Fremantle; Edinburgh: T & T Clark; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 424–448, 438. Latin text from Vallarsi's edition, in Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., vol. 23.355–396, 379B of *Patrologia Latina*.

⁴⁶ Tertullian, *De Resurrectione* 2.6 (*Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection*) (trans. by Ernest Evans; London: SPCK, 1960), 6, 17.

works, in opposition to the views of Gnostics and Valentinians.⁴⁷ Tertullian describes the Valentinians as “the most commonly encountered group amongst the heretics” (*frequentissimum plane collegium inter haereticos*).⁴⁸ He is therefore referring to a *number* of *collegia* among the “heretics.” It is within this context that Charles Hill aptly remarks that “Tertullian knows Christian opponents... who are neither Valentinians... nor Marcionites,” and who profess the doctrine “that the saved no longer need visit Hades but may ascend immediately to Christ’s heavenly presence at death.”⁴⁹ However, while Hill seemingly refers to these opponents as “orthodox,”⁵⁰ it is significant to note that Tertullian, from the perspective of the established patristic and apologetic tradition, refers to them as *haereticos* and *ex apostatis veritatis*.⁵¹

The labels of “Valentinian” and “Gnostic” seem to be far too narrow to classify the views that Tertullian opposed. The case in point is that the *Scorpion’s Sting* may also be viewed as being in polemical opposition to the views presented in the *Passion of Perpetua*, although *Perpetua* can hardly be called “Gnostic.” It seems that Tertullian confronted popular views within North African Christianity that had common tendencies, and that he uses the term “Valentinian” broadly as a convenient polemical label.

Two key elements that these views had in common was the disparaging of the flesh, and a belief in the immediate ascent of the soul after death (doubtless within a spiritual body). Indeed Tertullian devoted much of his literary output to combatting these views.⁵² It is within this specific anthropological discourse that the *Passion of Perpetua* takes place. Having died and their souls having left the flesh (*carnis*), it appears that the righteous dead now possess spiritual bodies, since they experience a seemingly full range of sensations in heaven.⁵³ However, resurrection of

⁴⁷ See Segal, *Life After Death*, 569.

⁴⁸ Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 1.1. See also Q. S. Fl. Tertulliani, *Adversus Valentinianos: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Ph.D. diss., Stanford, 1971), available from http://www.tertullian.org/articles/riley_advval/riley_00_index.htm, 27 May 2012.

⁴⁹ Hill, *Regnum Caelorum*, 31.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Tertullian, *Adversus Valentinianos* 1.1., ed. Riley.

⁵² See Tertullian’s impressive statement in *De resurrectione* 57.6.

⁵³ It is the *physical* senses of *taste* (in Perpetua’s vision, 4.10) and *smell* (in Saturus’ vision, 13.8) that serve as connections with the afterlife. In both Saturus’ and Perpetua’s vision, the act of waking is characterized as a sensory transition from one world to the other. Even more than this, the lingering sweetness in Perpetua’s

the flesh is not in view; neither does it seem to be at all required. Perpetua's afterlife is achieved through an immediately and fully realized eschatology in spiritual form.⁵⁴

A text from approximately the same period has similar themes as the *Treatise on Resurrection*, from the Nag Hammadi corpus. Dated to the late second century,⁵⁵ the author argues for a concept of the resurrection that is significantly removed from that which Paul or the early church fathers would have understood,⁵⁶ in spite of New Testament citations. In the conception of the *Treatise on Resurrection*, believers participate proleptically in Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension,⁵⁷ and immediately upon death, they are spiritually resurrected and restored to the Pleroma via ascent,⁵⁸ in the form of a spiritual body.⁵⁹ This connection with Gnosticism, through the idea of an immediately realized spiritual resurrection upon death,⁶⁰ provides a connection to some key texts in the Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition, since Gnosticism itself, among the many streams of thought that influenced it, had deep roots in the Jewish apocalypses.⁶¹

mouth when she awakes strongly suggests that the sensation of taste whilst in the soul is identical to the sensation of taste whilst in the body.

⁵⁴ "Spiritual" does not necessarily mean incorporeal. Note that Tertullian considers the soul to be corporeal in nature. See *De resurrectione* 17. On this, see Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 10–24.

⁵⁵ Birger A. Pearson, "Current Issues in the Study of Early Christianity in Egypt," in *Gnosticism and Christianity in Roman and Coptic Egypt: Studies in Antiquity and Christianity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 67. So too H. Attridge, "The Treatise on Resurrection," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 145–146), who also notes that although the *Treatise* is of unknown geographic provenance, most scholars believe the author belonged to the Valentinian Gnostic School.

⁵⁶ *Treatise on the Resurrection*, 45.23–46.2; *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (trans. Marvin Meyer; New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 53.

⁵⁷ The "spiritual ascent" of believers in *life* is described in *Treat. Res.* 45.23–46.19, 53.

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 44.30–35 (trans. Meyer, 52).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 47 (trans. Meyer, 54).

⁶⁰ See as another example the *Gospel of Mary* 8.10–24 (another clearly Gnostic text).

⁶¹ Frankfurter, "Legacy," 151; Ithamar Gruenwald, "'Knowledge' and 'Vision': Towards a Clarification of Two 'Gnostic' Concepts in Light of their Alleged Origins" *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism*, Beitrage Zur Erforschung Des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1988), 65–123, 97; Francis T. Fallon, "Gnostic Apocalypses," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, *Semeia* 14 (1979): 123–47. See also Birger A. Pearson in "Jewish Sources in Gnostic

4. Literary Sources: General Remarks

If the *Passion* is a reflection of popular Christianity (in contrast to the more formal views of the church fathers), it is pertinent to attempt to identify the sources that informed this Christianity. The canonical Scriptures are an obvious source,⁶² but there are also indications of non-canonical sources.⁶³

Robinson made an important connection when he noted that "our dreams can frequently be traced back to... our recollections."⁶⁴ In this context, it should also be noted that Perpetua had only been converted to Christianity for a short time, as she is identified as a catechumen at the time of her arrest.⁶⁵ The implication is that whatever Perpetua recollected, and which therefore became part of her visions and dreams, must have been quite prominent in the catechetical teaching of the church at Carthage in the very early third century.⁶⁶ So what may have Perpetua, Satorus, and the redactor of the *Passion* remembered? What were these influences prevalent in early Carthaginian Christianity?

Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, (Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum 2.2; ed. M. E. Stone; Assen: Van Gorcum/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 471; and Guy G. Stroumsa, "Gnostic Secret Myths," in *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 56.

⁶² See Maureen Tilley, *The Bible in Christian North Africa; The Donatist World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 42; and earlier, J. A. Robinson, "The Passion of S. Perpetua," in *Texts and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), 26–27.

⁶³ Note comments by Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion*, 100–101. Also Roebeck, *Prophecy*, 27; P. Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter oder Bilder des Bösen im frühen afrikanischen Christentum* (2nd ed.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004) 85–90; and Fritz Graf, "The Bridge and the Ladder: Narrow Passages in Late Antique Visions," in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (ed. R. S. Boustan and A. Y. Reed; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32.

⁶⁴ Robinson, "S. Perpetua," 26.

⁶⁵ *Perpetua* 1.1. See also C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 398.

⁶⁶ On the length and instructional content of the North African catechumentate, see Henny Fiskå Hägg, "Baptism in Clement of Alexandria," in *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 176, ed. David Hellholm, Tor Vegge, Øyvind Norderdal, and Christer Hellholm; Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 974–976.

4.1. Jewish Apocalyptic Sources

Regardless of whether the *Passion* is of Montanist origin, or the identity of the editor,⁶⁷ two things are evident. First, the *Passion* was written within a Christian community, at a time and place in which involvement in mystical experiences and the reception of divine revelations from God were both sought and highly valued. Second, as revealed by the "apologetic" tone of the preface, the *Passion* was written in the context of some dispute with regard to these mystical and revelatory experiences.⁶⁸

Within this broader context Jewish apocalyptic writings were valued by Christian communities. The many apocalyptic elements in the visions of *Perpetua* are "genuinely apocalyptic in character because they reveal sacred time and space."⁶⁹ In Daniélou's view, these apocalyptic elements illustrate a popular Christianity in North Africa that had strong and evidently Jewish roots.⁷⁰

Frankfurter notes that the preface to the *Passion of Perpetua* evokes the revelations of the ancients in order to attempt to deliberately reformulate Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁷¹ He comments that it is not surprising that the accounts of the visions of ascent in the *Passion* reflect "a deep acquaintance with Jewish apocalyptic traditions."⁷² Frankfurter sees the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* as

⁶⁷ Supporting Tertullian as the redactor, see Robinson, "S. Perpetua," 47; and W. Farina, *Perpetua of Carthage: Portrait of a Third-Century Martyr* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2008), 26. For the contrary view, see Kraemer and Lander, "Perpetua and Felicitas," 1054; and Tilley, "Perpetua and Felicity," 832.

⁶⁸ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 446. See also Teresa Sardella, "Strutture temporali e modelli di Cultura: Rapporti tra Antitradizionalismo storico e Modello martiriale nella *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," *Augustinianum* 30 (1990): 263; Jan Den Boeft, "The Editor's Prime Objective: *Haec in aedificationem ecclesiae legere*," in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Marco Formisano; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, Forthcoming), 178; and Fannie J. LeMoine, "Apocalyptic Experience and the Conversion of Women in Early Christianity," in *Fearful Hope: Approaching the New Millennium* (ed. C. Kleinhenz and F. LeMoine; Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 202.

⁶⁹ J. Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, trans. D. Smith and J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 59.

⁷⁰ Daniélou, *Latin Christianity*, 139–176. . See also Frankfurter, "The Legacy," 141–142; and Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 402. For a summary of the debate surrounding this issue, see Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (London: Routledge, 2004), 13.

⁷¹ Frankfurter, "The Legacy," 137.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 137–138. See also Daniélou, *Latin Christianity*, 59–26 and Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 396–402.

representing "the continuity and use... of the textual self-consciousness of Jewish apocalypses."⁷³

The influence of early Jewish apocalyptic literature is most prominent in the vision of Saturus. This may be because Saturus was Perpetua's catechist, and thus presumably more grounded in the Christian tradition. In Saturus' vision, there are a number of clear parallels with *1 Enoch*. Rowland observes that the vision calls for appropriate clothing for coming before God, which is a motif found in the Jewish apocalypses, for example, in *1 Enoch* 62:15.⁷⁴ Another connection is the mention of the "perfumes of Paradise" in Saturus' vision,⁷⁵ which is also found in *1 Enoch*. On the basis of the similarities between this section of the *Perpetua* and *1 Enoch* 32.3, Rowland comments that "it is difficult to resist the impression that there may be some direct knowledge of this text."⁷⁶ *1 Enoch* enjoyed a privileged position of authority within the early Christian community for centuries.⁷⁷ This is particularly evident in the writings of Tertullian. Tertullian unequivocally calls *1 Enoch* "Scripture,"⁷⁸ and mentions it frequently in his own writings,⁷⁹ exhibiting an extensive knowledge of the text.⁸⁰

4.2. Contemporary Judeo-Christian Apocalypses

It is also evident that more recent apocalyptic influences were incorporated into the *Passion*. There are similarities between *Perpetua* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*, for example, with regard to the difficulties that attend the ascents.⁸¹ For example, when Isaiah reaches the seventh

⁷³ Frankfurter, "The Legacy," 137–138. See also Phillip Munoa, "Jesus, The Merkavah, and Martyrdom in Early Christian Tradition," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 323.

⁷⁴ Noted by Rowland (*Open Heaven*, 401). See also *Ascension of Isaiah* 9.9; 9.30.

⁷⁵ *Perpetua* 11.5–6; cf. *Apocalypse of Paul* 24. See also Daniélou, *Latin Christianity*, 62, citing Erik Peterson, *Frühkirche, Judentum, und Gnosis: Studien und Untersuchungen* (Fribourg: Herder, 1959), 291.

⁷⁶ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 400. See also, Robeck, *Prophecy*, 75, citing *1 Enoch* 32.2–6 and *2 Enoch* 42.3.

⁷⁷ Daniélou, *Latin Christianity*, 162, 167.

⁷⁸ Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum* 3.3.

⁷⁹ Daniélou, *Latin Christianity*, 162, 167.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁸¹ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 398.

heaven, he first sees "a wonderful light."⁸² This is similar to Satorus' vision, in which the author writes:

*Et liberato primo mundo iam uidimus lucem immensam...*⁸³

"And when we were free of the world, we first saw an intense light."⁸⁴

In Satorus' vision, he writes of heaven that "there we began to recognize many of our brethren, martyrs among them."⁸⁵ The *Passion of Perpetua* is therefore the first Christian text to describe the immediate post-mortem ascent of the soul, but must be distinguished because it may be not the first Christian text to describe the righteous as *all actually being* in heaven immediately after death since this is depicted in the *Ascension of Isaiah*. When Isaiah reaches the seventh heaven, he sees there all the righteous from Adam onwards ("the holy Abel and all the righteous").⁸⁶ Then he sees all the righteous draw near to worship Christ: "Adam, Abel and Seth and all the righteous approached first, worshipped him and praised him, all with one voice..."⁸⁷ Rowland calls the *Ascension of Isaiah* the "earliest apocalypse from the beginning of the Christian era," resembling the Jewish apocalypses "in including a fictitious setting and attribution to a figure of Israel's past."⁸⁸ Gieschen comments that "[t]he author of the *Ascension of Isaiah* was certainly familiar with Jewish mysticism."⁸⁹ This is evident in the clear links with Jewish mystical traditions, particularly in terms of Christology and Pneumatology.⁹⁰ The very least that may be said

⁸² *The Ascension of Isaiah* 9.6, *New Testament Apocrypha* (vol. 2, trans. by C. Detlef and G. Müller, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher and R. McL. Wilson; London: James Clarke & Co., 1992), 615.

⁸³ *Perpetua* 11.4.

⁸⁴ *Perpetua* 11, trans. Musurillo, 119.

⁸⁵ *Perpetua* 13, trans. Musurillo, 123.

⁸⁶ *The Ascension of Isaiah*, 9.8, trans. Detlef and Müller, 615. Cf. Lorenzo Perrone, ed., *Ascensio Isaiae: Textus*, in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum* 7, (trans. Enrico Norelli; Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), 100. The Italian is as follows: "e là vidi Abele il santo e tutti i giusti."

⁸⁷ *The Ascension of Isaiah*, 9.28, trans. Detlef and Müller, 616; cf. Norelli, 106. The Italian is as follows: "e Adamo, Abele, Set e tutti i giusti per primi si avvicinarono, e lo adorarono e lo lodarono tutti a una sola voce."

⁸⁸ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 386–387.

⁸⁹ C. A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 239.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 244. See also M. Jensen, "The Genesis of Hell: Eternal Torment in the Consciousness of Early Christianity," *The Reformed Theological Review* 65 (2006): 142; Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 62; and Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 386–387.

is that there is a more than superficial relationship between the *Passion of Perpetua* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Even if the *Ascension of Isaiah* does not predate the *Passion of Perpetua*, we may have some confidence that the concepts it expresses must have been well known in the Carthaginian Christian milieu in which Perpetua and Saturus lived.

Another obvious source is the *Apocalypse of Peter*. In Perpetua's vision, when the martyrs reach the top of the ladder, Perpetua sees a great garden. Rowland comments that "it is difficult to resist the conclusion" that this is a reference to Paradise. Indeed, it is significant that *both* Perpetua and Saturus see a garden at the apex of their ascents. In this, Salisbury sees the influence of the *Apocalypse of Peter*.⁹¹ In fact, based on Perpetua's first vision, Salisbury is of the view that the Christian communities in Carthage "owed more to Peter's Apocalypse than to that of John, which later became canonical."⁹²

A critical and striking feature of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which betrays itself, the *Passion of Perpetua*, and the *Ascension of Isaiah* as belonging to similar traditions, is that each of them portray all of the righteous as already being in heaven. Peter sees utterly beautiful beings, and he asks the Lord who they are. The Lord tells Peter "[t]hese are your righteous brethren the righteous whose appearance you wished to see."⁹³ Peter then asks the Lord further about the condition of the righteous. The Lord answers in a description that has unmistakable parallels with Saturus' vision in the *Passion of Perpetua*:

And the Lord showed me a very great region outside this world exceedingly bright with light (κόσμου υπέρλαμπρον τῷ φωτί),⁹⁴ and the air of that place illuminated with the rays of the sun (ἀκτίων ἡλίου καταλαμπόμενον), and the earth itself flowering with blossoms that do not fade, and full of spices and plants, fair-flowering and incorruptible, and bearing blessed fruit (καὶ τὴν γῆν αὐτὴν ἀνθοῦσαν ἀμαράντοις ἄνθεσι καὶ ἀρωμάτων πλήρη καὶ φυτῶν εὐανθῶν καὶ

⁹¹ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 398. See also Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion*, 102, following Robinson, "S. Perpetua," 37-43; also Richard J. Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter: An Account of Research," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 4738.

⁹² Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion*, 102. See also Bauckham, *Research*, 4713, 4739, 4741; and Daniélou, *Latin Christianity*, 11.

⁹³ *The Apocalypse of Peter*, in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (trans. by J. K. Elliot Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 610.

⁹⁴ Compare this with the "boundless light" (*lucem immensam*) of Saturus' vision (*Perpetua* 11.4).

ἀφθάρτων καὶ καρπὸν εὐλογημένον φερόντων).⁹⁵ And so great was the blossom that the odour thereof was borne from there to where we were.⁹⁶ And the inhabitants in that place were clad with the raiment of shining angels,⁹⁷ and their raiment was like their land (ἐνδεδυμένοι ἦσαν ἔνδυμα ἀγγέλων φωτεινόν, καὶ ὅμοιον ἦν τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτῶν τῇ χώρᾳ αὐτῶν).⁹⁸

It is important to observe that key aspects of the eschatologies of the Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition represented by texts such as the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the *Apocalypse of Peter* were aligned with Gnostic understandings. This was particularly the case with regard to the idea of an immediately realized, personal eschatology for the righteous.

4.3. The *Passion of Perpetua* and Graeco-Roman Influences

4.3.1. *The Imagery in Perpetua's Dreams*

Although some scholars have typically looked to Jewish and other early Christian writings, especially the canonical Scriptures⁹⁹ for sources of the imagery in Perpetua's visions, the texts also appear to point to still other sources.¹⁰⁰ Taking, for example, the image of the ladder in Perpetua's first

⁹⁵ This is to be compared with the vast garden (*factum est nobis spatium grande*) that Saturus sees in heaven, with "rose trees and every kind of flower" (*quod tale fuit quasi uiridarium arbores habens rosae, et omne genus floris; Perpetua* 11.5–6).

⁹⁶ The parallel in the *Passion* is found at 13.8, where it is said: "We all felt as if we were nourished by an incredible scent, which satisfied us" (*universi odore inenarrabili alebamur, qui nos satiabat; trans. Tilley, 349*).

⁹⁷ In Saturus' vision, the angels "clothed those who entered with white robes" (*vestierunt stolas candidas; Perpetua* 4.2). Translation by Luke Dysinger; see *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*. Available from http://ldysinger.stjohnsem.edu/CH_583_Patr/05_%20mar_ign-pol-per-cyp/00f_st_per.htm. Note that Musurillo (121) renders this as the angels being those "who entered in and put on white robes." The former seems to be the better translation, even in spite of the variation in the manuscript tradition at this point. See Jacqueline Amat, *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité: suivi des Actes* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1996), 146–7. Amat herself translates this as "quatre anges qui nos revêtirent."

⁹⁸ *The Apocalypse of Peter* (Akhmim) 15–19, trans. Elliot, 610–611.

⁹⁹ A. P. Orbán, "The Afterlife in the Visions of the *Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," in *Fructus centesimus: Mélanges offerts à G. J. M. Bartelink à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire*, *Instrumenta Patristica* 19 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 269.

¹⁰⁰ Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion*, 101.

vision, Robeck observes that the differences between Perpetua's ladder and Jacob's ladder are "at least as important as the similarities."¹⁰¹ Correspondingly, Dronke asserts that "the ladder Perpetua sees must not be equated with Jacob's ladder."¹⁰² Although Graf feels "less comfortable" with positing these other oriental sources for the ladder in Perpetua's dream, he still acknowledges the "vital" differences between Perpetua's ladder and the ladder of Gen 28, remarking that "[i]t is all the more surprising that it found no following; no other martyr texts take up the image..."¹⁰³ Amat calls Perpetua's ladder *l'archétype le plus ancien de l'ascension*,¹⁰⁴ and importantly argues that Perpetua's vision should not be understood simply as an expression of dogma, but also as a window into her psychology.¹⁰⁵ It is reasonable to see that Perpetua's psychology as formed by the conceptual world in which she had been educated.

The same may be said of other key imagery in Perpetua's visions. For example, her striking transformation into a man in the vision in which she fights with the Egyptian.¹⁰⁶ This gender transformation is not a Biblical image, yet it is far from unique. Renzo Petraglio argues that this motif has ancient roots prevalent in both Greek and Latin cultures.¹⁰⁷ It seems that *Perpetua* simply draws on the store of common images, metaphors, and indeed gender values that were available through the Graeco-Roman tradition, some of which overlapped with "Christian" images, and others did not.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Robeck, *Prophecy*, 27. See also Salisbury, *Perpetua's Passion*, 100–101.

¹⁰² Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (203) to Marguerite Porete (1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 6.

¹⁰³ Graf, "Ladder," 32.

¹⁰⁴ Jacqueline Amat, "Images du Martyre dans les Passions Africaines du IIIe Siècle," in *L'imaginaire Religieux Gréco-Romain* (ed. Jöel Thomas; Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 1994), 277. See also Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter*, 85.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 277–278.

¹⁰⁶ *Perpetua* 10.7. With regard to social and gender subversion, see, for example, Helen Rhee, *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries – The Apologies, Apocryphal Acts and Martyr Acts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 154.

¹⁰⁷ Renzo Petraglio, *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis, Stile narrativo e Sfondo biblico: La Narrativa cristiana antica*, (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 50; Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1995), 188, 190.

¹⁰⁸ See also Anders Kostergaard Petersen, "Gender-bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Texts," in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom* (Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 8, ed. Jakob Engberg, Uffe Holmsgaard

Similar considerations apply to the image of the huge dragon at the foot of the ladder in Perpetua's first vision. While the Scriptural allusions here seem more difficult to minimize,¹⁰⁹ many commentators have seen perhaps oriental influences in this vision. Habermehl, for instance, argues for a possible Egyptian source for the image of the dragon in Apophis, the dragon of darkness.¹¹⁰

Altogether this suggests that rather than looking for a single source for these images there is a complex interplay and mediation of traditions. Within this more complex milieu the "canonical" references gave the images deeper authority within Christian communities, while at the same time the images also had deeper resonances with other traditions found at that time. Francesco Corsaro argues this perspective when he observes that evidence of Graeco-Roman civilization is clearly discernible in the *Passion of Perpetua*, especially in Perpetua's dreams.¹¹¹ The text of the *Passion of Perpetua* was shaped by a thought-world in which canonical Jewish imagery was merged with imagery drawn from the Jewish apocalyptic texts. These were in turn mediated by ideas drawn from traditional popular culture in Roman Carthage. If the latter is true, then the education of Perpetua's takes on more significance.

Paul McKechnie asserts that the description of Perpetua provided by the editor as *liberaliter instituta*,¹¹² meaning that she enjoyed a literary education, and taught by a *grammaticus*. Accordingly, "most of [her] curriculum was poetry and Greek, starting with Virgil and Homer," and "[a]s a minimum Perpetua studied verse literature, both in Latin and Greek."¹¹³ McKechnie considers that Perpetua's education progressed

Eriksen, and Anders Kostergaard Petersen; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 251–256.

¹⁰⁹ Moss, *Ideologies of Martyrdom*, 98. See also Robert Godding, "De Perpétue a Caluppan: Les premières Apparitions du Dragon dans l'Hagiographie," in *Dans la Gueule du Dragon* (ed. J. M. Privat; Sarreguemines: Editions Perrion, 2000), 146. In addition, see Tertullian's concept of the ladder in *De Fuga* 1.4.

¹¹⁰ Habermehl, *Perpetua und der Ägypter*, 89–90.

¹¹¹ Francesco Corsaro, "Memorie Bibliche e Suggestioni Classiche nei Sogni della *Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," in *Gli Imperatori Severi: Storia Archeologia Religione* (ed. Enrico dal Covolo and Giancarlo Rinaldi; Roma: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1999), 271–272. However, Corsaro still seems to give too much weight to the Christian background of the imagery and the language used in the text.

¹¹² *Perpetua* 2.1.

¹¹³ Paul McKechnie, "St. Perpetua and Roman Education in A.D. 200," *L'Antiquité Classique* 63 (1994): 280–281. Contra McKechnie, see Walter Ameling, "Femina Liberaliter Instituta—Some Thoughts on a Martyr's Education," in *Perpetua's Passions: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer

beyond the study of the poetic classics since rhythmical prose composition was taught at an advanced stage in education.¹¹⁴ He also suggests that Perpetua was trained in formal argumentation.¹¹⁵

Walter Ameling takes a considerably more pessimistic position about Perpetua's presumed education, largely based on the educational opportunities that may have been possible in her birthplace, Thuburbo Minus; and because of her father's position, a town magistrate who may have belonged to the *ordo decurionum*.¹¹⁶ Both positions are articulately argued.¹¹⁷ In all probability it seems likely that the truth may be somewhere between these two extremes. Certainly, the *Passion of Perpetua* reveals the author to be thoroughly versed in the thought and imagery of popular Graeco-Roman culture. Whatever the precise nature and level of Perpetua's education, we may be sure of one thing: she came from a thoroughly pagan background, and as such, her education was likewise correspondingly pagan.¹¹⁸ In terms of what Perpetua "remembered" whilst processing her experiences and transmitting them in writing, this characteristic of her education should be given its due weight.

4.3.2 *Perpetua's Intercession in its Graeco-Roman Context*

Perpetua's intercessory powers take on new meaning within this broader context. Although the sharp focus on intercession in early Christianity is probably influenced by Christianity's apocalyptic Jewish background,¹¹⁹ the explicit teachings of Jesus and Paul in this regard should not be

and Marco Formisano; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 87. However, Glen W. Bowersock's convincing arguments tend to support McKechnie's view on this matter. Glen W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34.

¹¹⁴ McKechnie, "Education," 281, referring to W. H. Shewring, "Prose Rhythm in the *Passio S. Perpetuae*," *Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1928): 56.

¹¹⁵ McKechnie, "Education," 282–4.

¹¹⁶ Ameling, "*Liberaliter Instituta*," 83–84.

¹¹⁷ Ameling's position is perhaps overly minimalistic.

¹¹⁸ Tertullian complains about the close relationship between education and pagan worship in *De idololatria* 10. See comments in Ameling, "*Liberaliter Instituta*," 94.

¹¹⁹ See Bremmer, *Afterlife*, 65–66, citing Richard Bauckham, "The Conflict of Justice and Mercy: Attitudes to the Damned in Apocalyptic Literature," in *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Boston: Brill, 1998), 136–148. Bremmer notes here that "in both Jewish and early Christian apocalypses exemplary figures, like Ezra or Paul, intercede on behalf of the damned."

underestimated.¹²⁰ However, it is important to note that the idea of intercession was certainly not unknown in the Graeco-Roman traditions either, particularly in terms of intercession by the dead. Fontaine remarks that “[t]he cult of the dead, the ancient veneration for the *mediae potestates*, which literally “intercede” between the human beings and the divinity, were beliefs and ritual forms too profoundly anchored in Roman spirituality for the laity to be able to content themselves with basilical liturgies.”¹²¹ Indeed, the notion of the dead as having intercessory competence was an important aspect of the traditional cult of the dead,¹²² and was itself of great antiquity.¹²³

However, Graeco-Roman afterlife was rather diffuse in its conception. This is readily apparent from the common dedication on Roman tombs, *Dies Manibus* (“To the Spirits of the Dead”). Intercessory competence was therefore generally diffused among one’s ancestors. While the living could offer the dead *refrigerium* in return for benefits, the notion of deriving particular personal benefits from a specific deceased person outside of one’s ancestors seems to have been unknown. This was the difference between Christianity and traditional Roman thought. For the notion of a “major intercessor,” the authors of Perpetua therefore must have drawn on their Judaeo-Christian roots.

It is of course as a result of her visionary ascent as a confessor that Perpetua comes into her intercessory power, inaugurated through her eating of the cheese at the hand of the great shepherd.¹²⁴ The linking of ascent and intercessory power appears to be a particularly Judaeo-Christian idea,¹²⁵ evidenced by the Enochic literature, and of course, the intercessory power of the ascended Christ.¹²⁶ Perpetua sees Dinocrates “going out from a dark hole [*exeuntem de loco tenebroso*], where there were

¹²⁰ For example, John 14:13 and Rom 8:34.

¹²¹ Jacques Fontaine, “The Practice of Christian Life: The Birth of the Laity,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (World Spirituality 16, ed. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and Jean Leclercq; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 468–469.

¹²² Jon Davies, *Death, Burial, and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 18.

¹²³ We also find it, for example, in ancient Egypt, where *akhs* were thought to be able to intercede with the gods on behalf of the living. To this end, family members left food offerings for the *akh* in the afterlife. See Emily Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 150–8.

¹²⁴ *Perpetua* 4.9.

¹²⁵ See, e.g., 1 *Enoch* 4:22; 13:3–4; and 15:2.

¹²⁶ See, e.g., Rom 8:34; 1 Tim 2:5; and Heb 7:25.

many others with him, very hot and thirsty, pale and dirty."¹²⁷ The text does not explicitly articulate what this place is.¹²⁸ Certainly, the medieval notion of purgatory is anachronistic if applied to this text.¹²⁹ Dinocrates must have been in a post-mortem existence that the readers of *Perpetua* presumably would have recognized. In this regard, Judith Perkins rightly observes the affinities between Dinocrates' fate and that of Tantalus, in that they were both unable to drink in the underworld.¹³⁰ Even Orbán, who prefers to ascribe the imagery to Jewish sources, acknowledges this as a probable allusion to the Greek Hades.¹³¹ Indeed, Dölger's view should still stand: that the *locus tenebrosus* in *Perpetua's* dream simply refers to the traditional Graeco-Roman conceptualization of Hades.¹³² More broadly, Dölger's view that *Perpetua's* account of Dinocrates should be understood within the context of *antikem Brauch und Glauben*¹³³ appears to be borne out by the text.

Referring to Dinocrates, the text states that "he had the wound on his face that he had when he was dying [*quod cum moreretur habuit*]."¹³⁴ This underscores the notion that Dinocrates' fate and location has its basis in traditional Greek ideas, since Bremmer notes that the appearance of the person at the moment of death had great significance, pointing to the description of the dead warriors in Homer's *Odyssey*, who, at the entrance to Hades, are still "wearing their blood-stained armour" (ἄνδρες

¹²⁷ *Perpetua* 2.3 (trans. Musurillo, 115). Dysinger translates *loco tenebroso* as a "gloomy place."

¹²⁸ See Bremmer, *Afterlife*, 63.

¹²⁹ Bremmer, "Authenticity," 108; and Alan E. Bernstein, "Named Others and Named Places: Stigmatization in the Early Medieval Afterlife," in *Hell and its Afterlife: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (ed. Isabel Moreira and Margaret M. Toscano; Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 65.

¹³⁰ Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995), 108–9.

¹³¹ A. P. Orbán, "The Afterlife in the Visions of the *Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis*," in *Fructus centesimus: Mélanges offerts à G.J.M. Bartelink à l'occasion de son soixante-cinquième anniversaire* (Instrumenta Patristica 19, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1989), 274.

¹³² Franz Joseph Dölger, "Antike Parallelen zum leidenden Dinocrates in der *Passio Perpetua*," in *Antike und Christentum 1* (vol. 2, Kultur und religionsgeschichtliche Studien; Aschendorff: Verlag Aschendorff Münster, 1930), 38–39.

¹³³ Dölger, "Parallelen," 38.

¹³⁴ *Perpetua* 7.4 (trans. Tilley, 398).

ἀρηϊφατοι, βεβρωτωμένα τεύχε' ἔχοντες).¹³⁵ Clytemnestra's *eidolon*, in a similar way, also displays her death wounds.¹³⁶ As far as Dinocrates is concerned, within the Graeco-Roman tradition, "prematurely deceased children were thought to receive a separate place in the underworld"¹³⁷ and "were not thought to enter fully into the world of the dead."¹³⁸

This belief impacted the Christian community in Carthage appears evident from the fact that Tertullian felt the need to emphasize in his *Treatise on the Soul* that even "the souls of infants" (*animas immaturas*)¹³⁹ found their resting places in Hades after death. In spite of Tertullian's statement, the strength of this tradition is reflected in the burial practices in 5th to 7th century cemeteries in Carthage. Susan Stevens observes that "the differential treatment of children in cemeteries, though manifested in various ways, continued unabated from the fifth through the seventh century."¹⁴⁰

As a result of Perpetua's intercession, Dinocrates' condition is improved; however, it is important to note that he is still in the same place.¹⁴¹ Perpetua clearly specifies that "I saw the place I had seen before" (*uideo locum illum quem retro uideram*).¹⁴² Dinocrates' location is not an *interim* destination; he remains there. This little accords with notions of an interim state or of hell. It is not necessary to understand the Dinocrates' location, and the imagery used to describe it, in the context of a Christian conceptualisation of Hades.

¹³⁵ Homer, *Odyssey* 11.37, *Homer: The Odyssey* (trans. by A. T. Murray LCL, vol. 2; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 403.

¹³⁶ Jan N. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 83, citing Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 94. See particularly Plato's explanation of this concept in *Gorgias* 524d.

¹³⁷ Bremmer, "Authenticity," 108.

¹³⁸ Bremmer, *Soul*, 73.

¹³⁹ Tertullian, *De anima* 56.8, *A Treatise on the Soul*, in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian* (vol. 3, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, trans. by P. Holmes; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 233.

¹⁴⁰ Susan T. Stevens, "Commemorating the Dead in the Communal Cemeteries of Carthage," in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context* (ed. Laurie Brink and Deborah Green; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 103. However, Bremmer also points out that an analysis of nearly fifty-five funerary stones indicates that "early Christians were much more likely than their pagan contemporaries to erect monuments to children." Bremmer, "Authenticity," 109.

¹⁴¹ Jan N. Bremmer, "The Passion of Perpetua and the Development of Early Christian Afterlife," *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift* 54 (2000): 108.

¹⁴² *Perpetua* 8.1 (trans. Tilley, 392).

Franz Dölger has discovered parallels in pagan funerary inscriptions with Perpetua's vision of Dinocrates,¹⁴³ which provide evidence of pagan beliefs in the efficacy of intercessory prayer for the dead to alleviate their condition in Hades.¹⁴⁴ As support for this he cites a funerary inscription to Julius Faustus on the Via Labicana in which Fortuna is petitioned as *sanctissima mater*.¹⁴⁵ Dölger also cites the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* as evidence for the transferal of the pagan notion of intercessory prayer for the dead in Hades into popular Christianity.¹⁴⁶ On the basis of Tertullian's reference to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the text may have been known in North Africa around the year 200 CE.¹⁴⁷ In the text, Falconilla, Trifina's recently-deceased daughter, appears to her mother, and intercedes for Thecla, saying,

Μῆτερ, τὴν ξένην τὴν ἔρημον ἐκέκλαν ἔξεις εἰς τὸν ἐμὸν τόπον, ἵνα εὐξῆται ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ καὶ μετατεθῶ εἰς τὸν τῶν δικαίων τόπον.¹⁴⁸

Mother, receive this stranger, the forsaken Thecla, in my place, that she may pray for me and I may come to the place of the just.¹⁴⁹

5. Conclusion

The *Passion of Perpetua* should be considered a significant text in the early Christian corpus as the first datable Christian description of an ascent to heaven, which occurs immediately after death. In its view of the destiny of the righteous, the *Passion* differs markedly from the general position

¹⁴³ Dölger, "Parallelen," 1–80.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1–15.

¹⁴⁵ *Anthologia Latina sive poesis Latinae supplementum* (vol. 3; ed. Franz Buecheler, Alexander Riese and Ernst Lommatsch; Lipsiae: B.G. Teubneri, 1895–1926), 2121, cited by Dölger ("Parallelen," 1–2).

¹⁴⁶ Dölger, "Parallelen," 13–16.

¹⁴⁷ See Tertullian, *De baptismo* 17. However, on the textual problems with this passage, see T. Mackay, "Response," *Semeia* 38 (1986): 145–146; and Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7, note 20. On the late second-century dating of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, see Davis, *Thecla*, 8, esp. n.22; and Jeremy W. Barrier, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla: A Critical Introduction and Commentary* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 29.

¹⁴⁸ *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 28.11–15.

¹⁴⁹ *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, in *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader* (trans. by J. K. Elliot ed. Bart Ehrman; 2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 200), 181.

held by previous and contemporaneous church fathers and apologists. In this sense, the *Passion* provides a rare literary glimpse into the worldview of Christians in North Africa in the early third century, a time in which Judeo-Christian sources for this text were heavily mediated by the thought-world of Graeco-Roman culture.

The *Passion of Perpetua* anticipates, at a popular level, the views of the fate of the righteous at death, which were to be formalized in the succeeding centuries by thought-leaders within Christianity. The very existence of this text gives a window into the social processes through which Christianity morphed and adapted itself within its cultural environment. As far as the afterlife was concerned, it appears that the perspective of Augustine ultimately won the day.

WHAT IS IN A NAME? IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND DENOMINATIONAL DESIGNATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

STEFAN HÖSCHELE, Ph.D.

Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, Germany

The names adopted by Christian denominations customarily express elements deemed crucial for their identity. This article uses the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a case study. It traces the initial debate over the necessity of a name, discusses the conflict regarding "biblical" names, and describes the decision process that led to the denomination's official self-designation. In most cases, it was subsequently translated into other languages in a literal manner, but there are also noteworthy modifications, especially in Europe. Several factors contribute to the stability and changeability of church names and the concomitant identity construction dynamics: theology, history, context, and language.

Key words: Seventh-day Adventist, church name, identity

1. Introduction

What name should a Christian denomination bear? In established ecclesiastical organizations this question hardly arises, but in new movements, mission contexts, and church mergers it may be, and has been, answered in divergent ways. While many Christians view denominational names as an *adiaphoron*, some traditions regard the issues involved as being of considerable importance, and there are a few movements in which naming issues are believed to carry quasi-doctrinal weight.¹ Whatever position is taken, names given to churches evidently

¹ This was the case in part of the Stone-Campbell Movement; see footnote 7 and Rice Haggard, *An Address to the Different Religious Societies on the Sacred Import of the Christian Name* (Lexington: Joseph Charles, 1804; reprint: Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954). Other examples are various groups, which chose the designation "Church of God."

often witness to sentiments which lie at the heart of religious persuasions. Like most other social groups,² Christians use names to construct specific identities.

From the time when followers of Christ were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26), such a vast number of terms have been employed to name them that an attempt at collecting these designations would entail enormous challenges. At the same time, such an endeavour would bring to light a fascinating variety of aspects. Even a cursory overview of denominational names³ reveals traces of (1) founders, (2) particular doctrines, (3) historical or geographic origin, (4) patterns of church administration, (5) typical activities, (6) sociological dimensions, (7) theological currents, and, of course, (8) various ways of expressing a relationship to God and Christ. Clearly, this diversity would justify a study of its own.⁴

When one particular tradition is being studied, the variety of designations can be particularly illuminating. Both continuities and innovations are easily discerned and reveal identity negotiation processes that religious organizations cannot avoid as they travel through time and space. By focusing on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this article provides a case study of naming dynamics in a global Christian tradition. It discusses the origin of the denomination's name as well as various other designations associated with this church, particularly in Europe, where a certain diversity of terms developed.

² For a discussion of the central importance of names for group identities in a systems theory perspective, see Jan A. Fuhse, *Unser "wir": Ein Systemtheoretisches Modell von Gruppenidentitäten* (Stuttgart: Universität Stuttgart, 2001), 8–9.

³ See, for instance, the churches listed in J. Gordon Melton, *American Religious Creeds* (3 vols.; Detroit: Gale Research, 1991), or in Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (4 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

⁴ Little attention has been given to denominational names so far in the theological discourse. Among the few items in the literature are Arthur R. Kelley, "The Changing Name of the Church," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 6 (1964): 69–74; J. Robert Wright, "Anglicanism, Ecclesia Anglicana, and Anglican: An Essay on Terminology," in *The Study of Anglicanism* (rev. ed.; ed. Stephen Sykes, John Booty, and Jonathan Knight; London: SPCK, 1998), 477–483; Zandra Wagoner, "What's in a Name: Scavenging among the 'Brethren' for the Sisters," *Brethren Life and Thought* 44.3 (1999): 55–73; and Peter Vogt, "Brüdergemeine: Das theologische Programm eines Namens," *Unitas fratrum* 48 (2001): 81–105.

2. To Name or Not to Name?

When a religious movement arises, crosses frontiers, or reorganizes itself, it is soon given some designation by its environment or chooses a name itself. Although in some cases this choice is a rather unemotional matter, such moments may also imply heated debate and at times lead to schisms. For many adherents of sabbatarian Adventism, which grew out of the North American Millerite revival of the 1830s and early 1840s, the choice of a name was a delicate matter.⁵ Several factors contributed to sentiments of opposing the choice of a particular name and, finally, to resistance against the choice of “Seventh-day Adventists.” Among them—probably the major factor—was the origin of a considerable number of sabbatarian Adventists in the Christian Connection, which was part of the broader Restoration Movement.⁶ Restorationists rejected denominationalism, and many Connectionists, like the Restorationist tradition at large, insisted on “biblical” names for congregations formed by followers of Christ such as “Christian Church” or “Church of Christ.”⁷ It is no surprise that these concepts likewise lurked among sabbatarian Adventists; various other aspects of Restorationist heritage in Seventh-day Adventism are also well documented.⁸

An important issue related to a rejection of “unscriptural” names for believers was the idea that the formal organization of a group of

⁵ A detailed account of the steps that led toward the adoption of the name “Seventh-day Adventists” is provided by Godfrey T. Anderson, “Make Us a Name,” *Adventist Heritage* 1 (1974): 28–34. Anderson does not discuss historical antecedents and theological issues connected with the initial rejection and the ultimate adoption of the denominational name.

⁶ On this movement, see Henry E. Webb, *In Search of Christian Unity: A History of the Restoration Movement* (2nd ed.; Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2003), and Douglas A. Foster et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

⁷ Among adherents of the “Christian Church,” which had been founded leading Restorationist James O’Kelly, one of the “Five Cardinal Principles” held from 1794 onwards was actually to use “[t]he name Christian to the exclusion of all party and sectarian names.” See Wilbur E. MacClenny, *The Life of Rev James O’Kelly and the Early History of the Christian Church in the South* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1910), 121.

⁸ Bert Haloviak, “Some Great Connexions: Our Seventh-day Adventist Heritage from the Christian Church,” available from <http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/AST/ChrConn94.pdf>, accessed 17 December, 2012; and Bert Haloviak, “A Heritage of Freedom: The Christian Connection Roots to Seventh-day Adventism,” available from <http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/AST/ChrConn95.pdf>, accessed 17 December 2012.

Christians into a denomination would entail a departure from God's design for the church, a concept that sabbatarian Adventists grappled with as well in the 1850s and early 1860s.⁹ Yet these two issues, a denominational name and church organization, became inescapable in the latter 1850s, when the number of sabbatarian Adventist believers had considerably increased, reaching about three thousand. While this nascent movement had given itself a distinct doctrinal identity in the late 1840s and had stabilized in terms of adherents in the early and mid-1850s, the end of the decade posed the challenge of defining what precise shape the crowd of believers was to have. In other words, a tangible ecclesiology was to be outlined, and integral parts of such an endeavour were the issues of church structure and of denominational identification.

It was not at all obvious that sabbatarian Adventists would ultimately form an organization and choose the name, which 17 million members were to carry 150 years later. After all, these Sabbath-keeping Adventists were little more than a regional movement, much less numerous than their Millerite antecedents, and continued to expect their Lord's return any time, even within months.¹⁰ Clearly, their intense apocalyptic persuasions were a motif that added to the Restorationist background of many of their leaders in creating an atmosphere in which adopting a church name was viewed with much suspicion. The sabbatarian Adventists felt they were the rightful heirs of an interdenominational revival: the Millerites had rejected the creation of new ecclesial structures during the peak of their movement in the early 1840s. To them, the denominations were "sectarian" and their multiplicity a sign of the end of time.¹¹ Thus there was a genuine Adventist reason to reject the organization of a new church, and connected with this anti-institutional mood, to choose an official name.

Yet in spite of its initial non-church self-conceptualization, the same movement also provided a motif that catalyzed the development of elements of church organization, and ultimately, a denominational name: the Sabbath doctrine. Here was a rallying point around which the

⁹ See Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1979), 86–103, especially 86.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the sabbatarian Adventists' handling of the seeming delay of the parousia in the context of their intense apocalypticism, see Rolf J. Pöhler, "Change in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study of the Problem of Doctrinal Development" (Th.D. diss., Andrews University, 1995), 228–230.

¹¹ Stefan Höschele, "On the Ecumenical and Separating Potential of Revivals: A Case Study of the Millerite Movement," in *Mission und Einheit: Gemeinsames Zeugnis getrennter Kirchen?—Mission and Unity: Common Witness of Separated Churches?* (ed. Peter de Mey, Andrew Pierce, and Oliver Schuegraf; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), 337–355.

emerging Seventh-day Adventist movement gathered and whose existence justified, in the view of a growing number of persons, the creation of a new ecclesial identity. Had it not been for this sabbatarian emphasis, the movement would have probably disbanded or remained stagnant, as did other bodies resulting from the Millerite revival, such as the Evangelical Adventists and the Advent Christian Church.¹² Thus it was a doctrinal innovation that triggered both a new movement and its ultimate development into a Christian denomination with a distinct identity and name.

To make this move, one major intermediate step was needed: the design of an ecclesiological framework to validate the concept that sabbatarian persuasions necessitated a distinct ecclesial body. This framework was found, understandably, in the apocalyptic parts of the Bible, which had been so important for the Millerite Movement. The "remnant" motif of Rev 12:17 with its parallel in Rev 14:12, both describing believers as those who "keep the commandments of God," was developed into a proto-ecclesiology, which stressed the importance of the Decalogue for Christian living. Soon the concept of a "remnant church" became a major ecclesiological figure of thought in the sabbatarian Adventist movement.¹³

It is not surprising, therefore, that "the remnant" appears prominently among the self-designations that were used by the Sabbath-keeping Adventists in the 1850s. Nonetheless, they also utilized a host of other terms to describe themselves in the same period: "saints," "God's people," a "company," "(advent) believers," the "(true) Israel," "brethren," "(true) children of God," a "band," the "scattered flock" or "little flock."¹⁴ Local sabbatarian Adventist congregations assemblies chose a similar variety of names, e.g., "the scattered flock," "Seventh-day people," "Advent Sabbathkeepers," "Sabbath-keeping Remnant of Adventists," "Church of Christ's Second Advent," "Church of God," or "Church of the Living God."¹⁵ This diversity of names and terms both

¹² On the Advent Christian Church, see Clyde E. Hewitt, *Midnight and Morning: The Millerite Movement and the Founding of the Advent Christian Church, 1831-1860* (Charlotte: Venture, 1983). It should be noted that Advent Christians, like Seventh-day Adventists, have strong roots in the Restorationist Movement, whence the word "Christian" in their denominational name.

¹³ For a discussion of the remnant concept in Adventist theology, see Carmelo L. Martines, "El Concepto de Remanente en la Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día: Razones Subyacentes en el Debate Contemporáneo" (Ph.D. diss., River Plate Adventist University, 2002).

¹⁴ These terms all appear in the various early Adventist publications such as the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* magazine.

¹⁵ Anderson, "Make Us a Name," 29-30.

implied that one cannot *not* name a movement, and that agreeing on an official designation became a demand of transparency at some point.¹⁶ Added was a good deal of missionary pragmatism by James White, the movement's pre-eminent leader. During the decisive conference in 1860, he declared that opposition against choosing a denominational name was to be anticipated but such a name was "essential to the prosperity of the cause."¹⁷

3. Church of God vs. Seventh-day Adventists

Having settled the question of whether or not a church name was necessary, the issue remained which one was to be chosen.¹⁸ There is a full record of the proceedings at the 1860 conference that led to the recommendation of the name that Seventh-day Adventists officially bear until today, and the discussions have been summarized in several works.¹⁹ However, one aspect that has not received much attention is that significant division developed over the name for which the conference ultimately opted. While denominational histories explain the dynamics leading to the decision for the designation "Seventh-day Adventists," they hardly note the fact that insistence upon the name "Church of God" was considered a theological issue for some and ultimately became an organizationally divisive matter.

¹⁶ Moreover, the growing congregations often needed to hold property, which necessitated incorporation, a move which in turn inevitably led to some official name for local bodies of believers who organized themselves.

¹⁷ "Business Proceedings of B.C. Conference," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (October 23, 1860): 179. The rugged individualism typical of the era and for early Adventists is visible in the White's further statements. He expected conflicts because he had experienced similar opposition "all the way along, first against publishing a paper, then against issuing pamphlets, then against having an office, then against the sale of publications, then against church order, then against having a power press." See *ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* The proceedings show that a first resolution, "That we take the name of Seventh-day Adventists" was withdrawn and the resolution "That we call ourselves Seventh-day Adventists" was voted for instead. The difference was probably to indicate that this is a humble, human-made designation, not even a real name, which is therefore not "taken" but a mere matter of convenience. Thus, something of the Restorationist heritage was upheld in that a name was not adopted officially—although the decision ultimately had the same effect.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Anderson, "Make Us a Name"; Schwarz, *Light Bearers*, 94–95; and C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1976), 143–146.

The proceedings do reveal that "Church of God" was "zealously advocated by some" and that one person dissented after the choice of "Seventh-day Adventists."²⁰ They also record that the latter was "proposed as a simple name and one expressive of our faith and position."²¹ This implies that different perspectives were represented in the two proposed names: one was an excessively biblicist outlook insisting on a particular formulation found in the scriptures, while the other arose from a missionary impulse, which aimed at transparency regarding the major tenets of the group's faith. Ultimately a new denomination arose from disaffected individuals who defended the necessity of adopting "Church of God" as a self-designation. This small church body remained strongly opposed to Seventh-day Adventists although in fact they resembled them in many ways.²²

The architecture of the name that was chosen had a clear logic: a cross-fertilization of "Seventh Day Baptists"²³ and the term "First-day Adventists," which sabbatarians used to refer to non-Sabbath keeping former Millerites.²⁴ On the surface, the distinct doctrinal content of "Seventh-day Adventists" seemed to imply a more antagonistic stance towards other Christian bodies than "Church of God." Yet the opposite was intended; in fact, a major reason for the majority to reject "Church of God" was that in addition to being used by other groups it was deemed to

²⁰ "Seventh-day Adventists" had been used very rarely and not as a name, but a description; an automated search in the digitized issues of the denomination's magazine *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* yields only three such occurrences before the 1860 conference. Even James White had advocated "Church of God" a few months before this conference but evidently changed his view later; see J[ames] W[hite], "Organization," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (June 17, 1860): 36. The importance of the term "Church of God" is also visible in the fact that the one book that had been published by sabbatarian Adventists on ecclesiological matters, Joseph B. Frisbie, *Order of the Church of God* (Battle Creek: Steam Press of the Review and Herald Office, 1859), declared on its first page: "The Name—THE CHURCH OF GOD This is the name that God has seen fit to give to his church, because it belongs to him." (Emphasis in the original.)

²¹ "Business Proceedings of B.C. Conference," 179.

²² Richard C. Nickels, *History of the Seventh Day Church of God* (Neck City: Giving & Sharing, 1999), cited from <http://www.giveshare.org/churchhistory/historysdco>, accessed 12 December 2012.

²³ The first sabbatarian Adventists had been introduced to the Sabbath by Seventh Day Baptists; thus they were well acquainted with Seventh Day Baptist doctrines and used many of their writings for their own propaganda. For the historical connection, see Russel J. Thomsen, *Seventh-Day Baptists: Their Legacy to Adventists* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1971).

²⁴ Anderson, "Make Us a Name," 30.

have “an appearance of presumption.”²⁵ It might indicate a belief that this body was the only divinely instituted Christian organization and that believers in other denominations were not Christians at all, a concept that the nascent Adventist denomination did not advocate. Thus the name “Seventh-day Adventists” was a witness to unique doctrinal positions but entailed an attempt to eschew the ecclesiastical pride that was viewed as being connected with the most popular alternative, “Church of God.”²⁶

If such a somewhat restrained approach seems unexpected for a young and self-confident organization, one should consider the fact that another significant element of caution had already become part of sabbatarian Adventist thinking in the mid-1850s. Ellen White, the movement’s prophetess, and her husband James White, applied the “Laodicea” motif to the growing crowds of sabbatarians to express their “lukewarm” condition (cf. Rev 3:14–22).²⁷ Instead of viewing themselves as the blameless “Philadelphia,” as they had done before, Seventh-day Adventists thus built into their ecclesiology a necessary measure of self-criticism. The gospel proclamation in Rev 14, with which Adventists identified, certainly enhanced a confident view of the Adventist role in God’s mission to the world, but the eschatological corrective inherent in their own designation “Adventists” and the Laodicea self-understanding always reminded them that they, like other Christians, were *simul iusti et peccatores*.

4. Unity and Diversification

Having adopted an official name, Seventh-day Adventists had created a basic pattern that would display, together with a body of doctrines and a strong denominational structure, the bond of unity between members of

²⁵ “Business Proceedings of B.C. Conference,” 179.

²⁶ It is worthy of note that Seventh-day Adventists did not include “church” in their original self-designation. “Church” was soon used alongside “Seventh-day Adventist,” but even today some entities avoid the term, such as the denominational headquarters, which are called “General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.” Unwittingly, Adventists thus partly correspond to the call of Donald Lindscoog, who suggested that “church” be omitted in denominational names in order to demonstrate that a particular movement does not represent the full Christian Church but is only a part of it; see Lindscoog, “What is in a (Church) Name?,” *ChrCent* 110.14 (1993): 445–446.

²⁷ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (vol. 2; Battle Creek: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1860), 214–215, 222–223. For a discussion of the changing understanding of the Philadelphia and Laodicea motifs by sabbatarian Adventists, see Maxwell, *Tell It to the World*, 147–151.

this growing organization in the generations to come. From a local American movement, Adventism grew into a global church as early as the first part of the 20th century. Since the denomination did not initiate independent national churches, it remained unified in a global organizational structure. Thus the relatively strong uniformity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and vestiges of its “made in America” character²⁸ have remained hallmarks of the denomination until the present. This is also reflected in the denominational name, which was not modified but simply translated in most countries where Adventists operate today—in Latin America, Africa, most of Asia, and the Pacific region.

Several exceptions to this uniformity are found in Europe. The Old World differed from other continents in that a distinct Christian heritage had existed for ages before Seventh-day Adventism arrived. Thus the emerging European Adventist movement had to present itself in ways that were understood in the respective countries where it grew, which at times also implied reformulations of the official denominational designation. Several patterns, most of which imply contextualized identity construction processes, can be observed:

1. In many cases, continuity was preserved by retaining the wording “Seventh-day Adventist” at least as part of the church name and attempting to translate “Seventh-day Adventist Church” literally.²⁹
2. In some countries, the addition of “Christian” was made to emphasize a Christian identity in a context where a minority situation easily led to the denomination’s being branded as a “cult” or an unacceptable religious option. This happened in countries with predominantly Roman Catholic or Orthodox populations, especially those with Romance and Slavic languages, such as Croatia, Italy, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, and the Ukraine, as well as Greece.
3. An opposite trend is visible in a few other cases, where a reduction took place. In countries as different as Finland, Slovenia, and Albania,³⁰

²⁸ Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 1021.

²⁹ This is the case today in, e.g., Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, and Portugal. The designations used by Seventh-day Adventists in these and other territories can be found on the official websites of the denomination in the respective countries.

³⁰ The wording here is *Kisha Adventiste Ne Shqiperi* (“The Adventist Church in Albania”), *Suomen Adventtikirkko* (“Finnish Adventist Church”), and *Krščanska Adventistična Cerkev v Republiki Sloveniji* (“Christian Adventist Church in the Slovenian Republic”).

Adventists dropped "Seventh-day" in their common designation, evidently in a pragmatic attempt to shorten what sounds like a somewhat clumsy name in many languages. Outside Europe, a different strategy of shortening was taken in Israel, where the denomination presents itself as "Seventh-day Adventists in Israel" and has discarded the designation "Church"—for evident reasons in a society where the word "church" is burdened with a long history of conflict between Jews and Christians.

The tendency of shortening the lengthy denominational name corresponds to common usage in many countries, where few persons spell out "Seventh-day Adventist" or "Seventh-day Adventist Church" in full. Rather than insisting on the complete wording, the denomination and its members are therefore usually called "Adventist Church" and "Adventists." This tendency shows how much the construction of identities depends on actual contexts: in the 1860s, when other sizeable Adventist groups existed, sabbatarian Adventists sought to define themselves vis-à-vis these other Adventists. In the late 20th and early 21st century, the denomination is characterized in the context of its relationship to the larger Christian world and beyond rather than to a historical North American phenomenon.

In one region outside Europe, in East Africa, the tendency of shortening the denominational name has given birth to a term which deserves a discussion of its own: *Wasabato*, which means "Sabbatarians," "Sabbatists," or "Sabbath people."³¹ This Swahili word, which is used in Kenya, Tanzania, and neighbouring regions, summarizes what both outsiders and East African Adventists themselves regard as central among the church's characteristics: a holy day which is different from that of other churches. Yet this term also reveals the awkwardness of denominational labels, which condense ecclesial identity in a way that has little discernible relationship with the christological center of the gospel. Different from "Adventists," which clearly refers to the coming Christ, the short designation *Wasabato* remains problematic because of its disproportionate emphasis on a particular doctrine. Although Sabbath theology is certainly a biblically based Seventh-day Adventist contribution to Christianity at large and indeed may be done in a christocentric way, the unofficial but customary self-designation as "Sabbath people"

³¹ Stefan Höschele, *Christian Remnant—African Folk Church: Seventh-day Adventism in Tanzania, 1903–1980*. Leiden: Brill, 2007, 203–204. There are about 1.5 million Seventh-day Adventists who use the Swahili language.

entails the tendency to limit the denomination's character to one peculiar theme.³²

4. A last issue in the translation of the denomination's original name was that of rendering "church" in different languages. Although the term exists in most languages, its connotations were viewed as problematic in some contexts when the American-born movement reached Europe. With established churches being extant in most regions, "church" often carried the meaning of an institutional entity rather than a body of believers, at least in the popular perception.³³ Thus Adventists had to decide whether or not the term reflected their ecclesiology and construed identity, and whether alternatives were to be preferred.

In several cases, Adventists, like other religious minorities, felt that the term "church" did not appropriately express what their ecclesiology implied—a missionary movement and a community of followers of Christ emphasizing his second coming and the commandments of God. Apart from those areas where "church" was supplemented and thus indirectly modified by the addition of "Christian," this was the case in some Scandinavian countries, where a term signifying "association"³⁴ was used in order to avoid the implication of a religious body that is part of the religious establishment, a meaning inherent in the term "church" in these cultural contexts.

An interesting similar case is German-speaking Europe, where Adventists experimented with a variety of terms. Until the early 20th century, the denomination often simply called itself "Seventh-day

³² The following reasons contributed to the common acceptance of the term: (1) The official designation, *Waadventista wa Sabato* ("Sabbath Adventists"), is easily mistaken as *Waadventista Wasabato* (Adventists-Sabbatarians). Some local churches actually spell their name like this, not knowing that it is not the official version. (2) The word *Waadventista* obviously does not carry much meaning in an African context where its root meaning is not understood. Conversely, the word *msabato* has a tangible connection with a major Adventist practice, the Sabbath, and is thus easier to remember.

³³ Erich Geldbach, "Denominationen," in *Ökumenelexikon: Kirchen—Religionen—Bewegungen* (ed. Hanfried Krüger, Werner Löser, and Walter Müller-Römheld; Frankfurt: Lembeck, 1983), 235, emphasizes the usefulness of the neutral term "denomination" as compared to "church" against the background of the traditional European distinction between "churches" and "sects."

³⁴ In Sweden, the denomination calls itself *Sjundedags Adventist-Samfundet*, and in Norway *Syvendedags Adventistsamfunnet*.

Adventists" without any word for "church."³⁵ Only in 1927 was the official designation *Gemeinschaft* (fellowship, community, association) adopted for the denomination in the process of an attempt at gaining a legal status in Germany similar to other minor Christian bodies.³⁶ This term had already been used by Pietist and Methodist groups and expressed the intended organic nature of this religious group and the intimate fellowship of its members.³⁷ *Gemeinschaft* was not commonly used by church members until after World War II;³⁸ but subsequently it was employed until the early 21st century in Germany, different from Austria and Switzerland, where *Kirche* (church) and *Freikirche* (free church) were chosen in 1993, respectively.

As early as 1988, church leaders in Germany began pondering about renaming the denomination *Freikirche* as an analogy to Baptists, Methodists, and similar religious groups. The major reason for the ultimate decision to present themselves to the public as a free church as from 2006³⁹ was that *Gemeinschaft* was hardly understandable any more as a designation for a Christian denomination, in spite of its positive connotation of close fellowship.⁴⁰ The new name was well received by members and the public; apparently they felt that it corresponds as much to the denominational ecclesiology of a

³⁵ Slightly varying versions were used in German, resulting from the fact that the original wording is difficult to translate into some languages: *Adventisten vom 7. Tage, Siebente Tags Adventisten, or Siebenten-Tag(s)-Adventisten*.

³⁶ Dirk Czuka, "Die Weimarer Republik—eine Chance? Die Bemühungen der Gemeinschaft der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten um Anerkennung als Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts in der Weimarer Republik" (Thesis, Theologisches Seminar Marienhöhe, 1985).

³⁷ Moreover, it certainly communicated more of the denomination's character than technical terms occasionally used in the public which described Adventism as a "religious society" (German: *Religionsgesellschaft* or *Religionsgemeinschaft*). These terms were used to represent the denomination to the government; see *ibid*.

³⁸ In common parlance, (*Advent-*) *Gemeinde* was commonly used even for the denomination as a whole, a term that is applied to local congregations in the established churches but which also expresses closeness.

³⁹ Karl Heinz Voigt, "Von der Gemeinschaft zur Kirche: Die Adventisten in Deutschland stehen vor einer Namensänderung," *Katholische Nachrichtenagentur—Ökumenische Information*, no. 5 (January 31, 2006): 6. German Adventists had been granted guest status in the Council of Christian Churches and the Association of Protestant Free Churches in Germany already in 1993.

⁴⁰ This development is almost opposite to English, where "community" and "fellowship" have become increasingly attractive terminological options for churches, especially on the local level.

community of believers as the former name, thus avoiding connotations of either an established church or an exclusivist sect.

5. Outside and Inside Influences

The cases in which the denomination chose to present itself to the public as a “free church” or “association,” and those in which the original name was supplemented or shortened, demonstrate that Christian churches, like other social entities, construct their identities in negotiation processes that involve both inside and outside perspectives. This is also visible in various other names applied to Christian movements and churches in earlier eras: like “Adventists,” the terms “Protestants,” “Methodists,” “Quakers,” “Baptists”—and apparently even “Christians”⁴¹—were originally coined by outsiders to express criticism, ridicule, or a rejection of core ideas in these religious groups. The fact that such etic designations subsequently changed their meaning and became customary names of well-established churches shows that discourses can change significantly once identities are connected to names.

The Seventh-day Adventist case also shows that several other factors, which relate to outside and inside perspectives play a role in the way in which identities are expressed in denominational names. One is language: the very fact that a name needs to be translated at time necessitates adaptations or modifications. Terms well understood in one linguistic setting may lack an exact translation in another, but other equivalents may be available; thus the German term for free church actually renders a “denominational” identity—the concept behind the Adventist self-identification as a “church” in mid-19th century North America—most appropriately.⁴²

Beyond language as such, various other contextual factors naturally influence the choice of church names and modes of self-portrayal. In many parts of Europe, the emphasis on a Christian identity counteracted a long history of being branded as a “cult”⁴³ or a “sect,”⁴⁴ as did the effort

⁴¹ Tim Hegedus, “Naming Christians in Antiquity,” *SR* 33.2 (2004): 173–190.

⁴² In opposition to those who rejected a definite church name, James White argued during the conference where the name issue was debated, “[I]t is objected that we shall be classed among the denominations. We are classed with them already, and I do not know that we can prevent it, unless we disband and scatter, and give up the thing altogether.” See “Business Proceedings of B.C. Conference,” 179.

⁴³ A similar attitude in some Evangelical contexts prompted characterization such as the one found in Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1963).

to present the denomination with a “free church” image in other regions.⁴⁵ Moreover, in predominantly Protestant contexts, Adventists have persistently described themselves as Protestants,⁴⁶ at times also as Evangelicals,⁴⁷ and liked to portray themselves as “heirs of the reformation.”⁴⁸

The historical nature of ecclesial identities shines through the naming decisions as well. By keeping the term “Adventist” almost universally, the origin of the denomination and the connection of today’s inheritors to the church founders is clearly marked. Likewise, this name enshrines the relationship to the spiritual precursor of sabbatarian Adventism, the Millerite advent revival, which they came to view as having arisen through God’s direct initiative. Even after 150 years, these events and developments in North American Christianity continue to be of crucial importance for the denomination’s self-understanding.

This self-understanding evidently corresponds to a theological construction of identity. It is interesting, though, that the major Adventist theological contribution to ecclesiology, the “remnant” motif, remained

This book was printed until 1989, and both the full book and the section on Seventh-day Adventism is being marketed even today in various languages.

- ⁴⁴ For a discussion of the sect vs. free church portrayal of Adventism in the German literature on the field of symbolics, see Dirk Czuka, “Gemeinschaft—Sekte—Freikirche? Konfessionskundliche Darstellungen der Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten in Deutschland seit 1994,” in *Geschichte, Gesellschaft, Gerechtigkeit: Festschrift für Baldur Pfeiffer* (ed. Johannes Hartlapp and Stefan Höschele; Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2007), 63–82. One of the few attempts at rehabilitating the term “sect,” which seems somewhat odd today, was done by an Adventist theologian in his doctoral dissertation: Johannes Schwital, *Großkirche und Sekte: Eine Studie zum Selbstverständnis der Sekte* (Hamburg: Saat Korn, 1962).
- ⁴⁵ For a critical yet sympathetic external evaluation of Adventists as a “free church,” see Erich Geldbach, *Freikirchen: Erbe, Gestalt und Wirkung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 239–240.
- ⁴⁶ The self-portrayal as Protestants was at times so strong that Adventists presented themselves as the “true Protestants”; both in North America and in Germany-speaking Europe, the denomination published magazines entitled *The Protestant* and *Der Protestant*, respectively, in the early 20th century.
- ⁴⁷ There is some discussion whether Adventists belong to Evangelicalism. Even though Adventists have mostly preferred not to be closely aligned with the Evangelical Movement, historically and theologically the denomination is clearly part of this tradition; cf. Russell L. Staples, “Adventism,” in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (ed. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 57–71.
- ⁴⁸ Cf. Hugh I. Dunton et al., eds., *Heirs of the Reformation: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists in Europe* (Grantham: Stanborough, 1997).

an "insider" concept hardly used to present the denomination in public. The fact that it was not included in the denominational name in spite of its significance for Adventists and in the Bible⁴⁹ indicates that it functions at least as much as a self-challenge as it is utilized as an ontological statement,⁵⁰ thus essentially expressing a motivation for faithfulness and referring to a mission to be accomplished.⁵¹ This missionary identity of the denomination is reflected in phraseology used even today when it is at times referred to as "Advent Movement"; historically, it is visible also in the way Ludwig Richard Conradi, the major pioneer of European Adventism, conceptualized the church he founded. He frequently called the whole denomination a "mission society,"⁵² implying that "church" and "mission" are identical.⁵³ With this way of thinking the church, Adventists anticipated an insight that has become a standard notion today: the missional nature of the church.⁵⁴ Thus even unofficial phraseology corresponds to the initial concept behind the denominational name: to express a message and a mission.

6. Conclusion

There are a variety of terms that were applied to the Seventh-day Adventism Church: official and unofficial ones, some that emphasized a Christian identity and others which stressed aspects of particular denominational teachings, unwelcome labels attached to the denomination by outsiders and terms used mainly by insiders. Most significantly, once Seventh-day Adventists adopted an official name, no major variations seemed to be possible for this self-designation.

⁴⁹ Cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1972).

⁵⁰ Cf. Richard Lehmann, "Die Übrigen und ihr Auftrag," in *Die Gemeinde und ihr Auftrag* (ed. Johannes Mager; Studien zur adventistischen Ekklesiologie 2; Lüneburg: Saat Korn, 1994), 101.

⁵¹ Cf. George Knight, "Remnant Theology and World Mission," in *Adventist Mission in the 21st Century* (ed. Jon L. Dybdahl; Hagerstown: Review & Herald, 1999), 88–95.

⁵² See, e.g., *Missionsbericht der Europäischen Divisionskonferenz der S. T. Adventisten* (Hamburg: Internationale Traktatgesellschaft, 1913), 5.

⁵³ This terminology remained part of the church's self-description in Austria and Switzerland until the recent past; rather than presenting themselves as a church, Adventists called themselves "Advent Mission" until 1993 and at times do so informally even today.

⁵⁴ Cf. Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

The limited diversity that exists can be interpreted as arising from attempts at balancing the different factors of identity construction. Some emphases of self-portrayal necessarily changed as Adventists spread over most of the world and encountered manifold cultural contexts with their particular idiomatic options of expressing a Christian and confessional identity. Along with this missionary expansion, Adventist theology developed and made finer differentiations possible in certain instances. At the same time, the major parts of the officially chosen name continued to contain key concerns found in many denominational names: the Christian identity ("Church"), the historical origin ("Adventist"), and a denominationally distinctive emphasis ("Seventh-day"). Where other designations were used or modifications were made, these were often necessary to uphold the delicate balance between these three elements.

More generally, the Seventh-day Adventist case shows that denominational names contain three related challenges. One is the challenge of interdenominational relations, which is inherent in the fact that names are used for a Christian public. Like every movement that claims a basis in the New Testament, a specific, historically grown identity with its related theological tenets and, often, a sense of a peculiar mission, must be juxtaposed with a meaningful relationship with other churches. In the case of Seventh-day Adventism, by helping us to remember the non-adoption of "Church of God," the denomination's name enshrines a check on potential ecclesial hubris that is indispensable when interacting with Christians of other backgrounds. At the same time, the self-designation implies a challenge to non-sabbatarian and less eschatologically alert traditions. The Adventist emphasis on eschatology in the denominational name is a persistent reminder to Christendom at large that the "faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12) does not function without the horizon of a hope that exceeds all human efforts. The Sabbath, likewise, serves as a reminiscence—of the centrality of God as the creator as well as of the Old Testament rootage of Christianity.

Related is a theological challenge: particular church names are often best understood by members, who comprehend the tradition behind inherited terms. At the same time, denominational components invariably stand alongside references to a general Christian identity. The relationship between these two aspects may be described in many ways: whether the denominational component interprets, intensifies, narrows, develops, or illustrates the general Christian content is a question expressing the abiding tension in the names of Christian churches and, indeed, in their identities. This tension may be fruitful when it is upheld, and when the particular and general elements are juxtaposed in a reconciled duality. By way of contrast, the dissolution of this ambivalency

would be theologically problematic because one would either relinquish the gospel or characteristic doctrinal concerns.

Lastly, a naming challenge that Seventh-day Adventists as a worldwide Christian communion must ponder like every other Christian organization is the missionary issue, which implies understandability in non-Christian contexts. Other Christians may understand the peculiarities of various denominations. Yet in the world beyond Christendom, the views of 19th century Connectionists regarding the name of the church remain a challenge to all followers of Jesus in terms of the identity with which they choose to present themselves to those who do not know Christ yet.

CHANGE OF PARADIGM IN THEOLOGY AND THE NEW ANTHROPOLOGY

MARCO BLANCO, Ph.D. student

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines

The Hellenization of Christianity has impacted the theological understanding of God and man. Early in the Twentieth Century, evangelical theology began to abandon the Greek presuppositions that had been the framework of theology for centuries. What impact has this process generated? This article presents a historical outline of the dehellenization in Protestant theology, describing how this process started challenging the timelessness of God of the classical theology, and how it impacted the understanding of human nature. In addition, this study will attempt to demonstrate that this paradigm shift offers to the Seventh-day Adventist Church a great opportunity to present its doctrinal system.

Key words: timelessness of God, biblical ontology, doctrine of man, Platonic dualism, constitutionalism, emergent dualism

1. Introduction

Ever since theological historian Adolf von Harnack launched the accusation that almost everything that is considered Christian Orthodoxy ("the Catholic element") is in fact the result of the "acute hellenization of Christianity,"¹ classic theology's very foundation was shaken. A well-known phrase that followed in this regard was Jürgen Moltmann's, "the Fathers baptized Aristotle."²

Since then, Protestants, and above all Evangelicals began a process of "dehellenizing" theology. What were the consequences for theology of this process of dehellenization? Did this change, which began in the early

¹ Adolph von Harnack, *History of Dogma* (trans. Buchanan; 7 vols.; vol. 1; Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1902), 48-60.

² See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM, 1982), 20-22.

twentieth century, develop further or did it end with merely good intentions? How is it related to Adventist theology?

This study will trace the historical outline of the process of dehellenization in Protestant and Evangelical theology in order to show how it affected the understanding of the idea of God, and its impact on the understanding of human nature. In addition, this article will attempt to demonstrate that this change in paradigm places the Seventh-day Adventist Church in an ideal position to present its doctrinal system.

2. The Dehellenization of God

Beginning with the understanding that theology had been built on the philosophical presuppositions of ancient Greek Hellenism, one of the first elements to be reformulated was the fundamental presupposition of the being of God. If the atemporality of God had formerly been the starting point of classic theology, it would now be radically reinterpreted by a new philosophical paradigm.

As philosophers became more familiar with the underlying temporal nature of reality, they acknowledged that temporal things could be conjectured as being real. Thus, history ceased to be an illusory copy of eternal atemporal realities, such as the one conceived by Platonic Greek philosophy and classic theism—Plato, for example. In his masterpiece, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), Heidegger rejected the atemporality as set forth by Aristotle, Parmenides and Thomas Aquinas, and arrived at the following concept: “Our provisional aim is the interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being.”³ *Dasein* (Being-in-the-world) is interpreted in terms of temporality.⁴ He conceived that the being is “grounded in temporality” and that “temporality is primordially finite”; that is, “authentic temporality.”⁵

Following this same line of reasoning, God was not seen as a Being in which there is an absence of time, but rather as a God that includes time in His Being. In this way, Oscar Cullmann rejected the presupposition of the atemporality of the being of God because it belonged to ancient Greek

³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (trans. John Macquarrie, Edward Robinson; San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1962), 1.

⁴ Heidegger also explains time as the transcendental horizon of the question of being. For definition of *Dasein* see Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 65.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 376, 379, 437. Regarding the importance of this proposition that Heidegger makes, see Gianni Vattimo, *Después de la cristiandad* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2004); John B. Cobb, *Living Options in Protestant Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1962), 199-311.

philosophy. He considered that the key lies in starting with the presuppositions of the biblical text and not with a previous understanding of what time or the being of God should be.⁶

According to Cullmann, the Hebrew mind clearly conceives that God lives in a time without limits and not in an abstract way, as if He was beyond time. In his exegetical analysis of the use of *aiôn* in the New Testament, he concludes that although Plato uses the word *aiôn* in the technical philosophical sense of atemporality,⁷ the biblical concept of eternity is not necessarily an atemporal reality,⁸ but rather an unlimited experience of time. Thus, in the early church's thinking, eternity is not atemporality, but rather time without end—linear time shared by both God and human beings.⁹

This led to a revolution in theology, with a subsequent redefinition of the God of the Bible. Charles Hartshorne, for example, adapted the philosophy of process¹⁰ to theology. His ideas, far from being filed away, still have a strong impact within today's theology.¹¹

However, although Process theology made an important step, it still depended on philosophical presuppositions foreign to the Bible, which finally led it to think of God in bipolar terms. One pole or aspect of God is seen as temporal and related to the world, and the other pole as atemporal and invariable.¹²

⁶ According to Cullmann, the textual exegesis must operate within certain limits that exclude dogmatic considerations. To approach a text from a perspective that has been generated by an understanding that remains outside the text (Barth, Bultmann) is to go beyond its limits (Martin Theodore Dorman, *The Hermeneutics of Oscar Cullmann* [Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilm International, 1990], 174). Several scholars have opposed Cullmann's attempt to modify hermeneutics and make it start directly from the biblical text's presuppositions. See, for instance, Jean Frisque, *Oscar Cullmann: Une Théologie de l'histoire du salut* (Belgica: Casterman, 1960), 213-225. However, Cullmann's concern over a theology purely based on exegesis that attempts to reproduce what the Biblical writers believed has been approved by many; for instance, K. Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *IDB* 1:418-432.

⁷ James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London: SCM, 1969), 76.

⁸ Ver Carl F. Henry, "Time," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 524.

⁹ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, (trans. Floyd V. Filson; 3 ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1964), 49.

¹⁰ Other early promoters of this philosophy were Ivor Leclerc y John B. Cobb. See Denis Hurtubise, "God and Time in Whitehead's Metaphysics: Revisiting the Question," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 24, no. 2 (2003): 110.

¹¹ Charles Hartshorne, "Redefining God," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (2001): 107-113.

¹² Actually, Hartshorne suggests a bipolar God, in which one aspect of the Being of God is totally involved with the world, and the other is totally independent from it.

According to Norman Gulley, the one who was really able to solve this bi-polar issue into a synthesis was Fernando Canale. Canale suggested, "that biblical ontology calls for an understanding of time as a primordial presupposition."¹³ Thus, Canale stated that, based on the temporal presupposition of the being of God, "a new theological system will arise, which, for the first time, will be free from extra-theological conditioning."¹⁴

John Feinberg, in his analysis of the current trends in this area, stated: "I believe, however, that anyone working within theology proper must engage in discussions about God's relation to time and eternity as we move toward the next millennium. I believe this is and will be a watershed issue for evangelical theism in the upcoming years."¹⁵

3. Doctrine of Man: The Next Step

The doctrine of man was next to be challenged and reformulated. Following Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas had taught that human beings were rational animals. In contrast to the Greek philosopher, Thomas Aquinas thought that the soul is separated from the body at death. He considered that the soul was a non-bodily lasting entity that could exist without the body during the time between the death of a person and the general resurrection.¹⁶

In this way, God suffers through His contingent nature, but remains untouchable by the world through His transcendent nature. Thus, Hartshorne is assured that God "follows the rules" of the universe and is not exempt from suffering, while at the same time He remains outside the world as the Supreme Mind that sustains everything. See Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 124; Edgar A. Towne, "The New Physics and Hartshorne's Dipolar Theism," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (2001): 114-132; Ver Denis Hurtubise, "God and Time in Whitehead's Metaphysics: Revisiting the Question," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 24, no. 2 (2003): 109-128.

¹³ Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (3 vols.; vol. 1; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), 10.

¹⁴ Fernando Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 399.

¹⁵ John Feinberg, "Doctrine of God," in *New Dimensions in Evangelical Thought* (ed. David S. Dockery; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 247.

¹⁶ ST, I, Preg. 89, art. 1. See Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Resurrection of the Body According to Three Medieval Aristotelians: Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, William Ockham," *Philosophical Topics* 20, no. 1 (1992):1-33; Straining the Limits of

One of the pioneers who attempted a reformulation of the Greek philosophical influence was Oscar Cullmann. In an essay that was originally presented in 1955 as part of a series of lectures, entitled "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament," Oscar Cullmann stated that the concept of the immortality of the soul is one of the "greatest misunderstandings of Christianity."¹⁷ He also expressed that the resurrection of the dead was anchored in the teachings of Christ, and is "incompatible with the Greek belief in immortality."¹⁸ In this sense, early Christians did not consider that the soul was intrinsically immortal, but rather that it was immortal only through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and by faith in Him. In reference to this, Cullmann also denied the duality between body and soul, belonging to Greek Platonism.

According to Cullmann, at the resurrection the whole man, who had already truly died, "is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God."¹⁹ Thus, the Christian belief in the resurrection, in contrast to the Greek belief in immortality, is linked to a complete divine process that implies liberation from sin and death.²⁰

From an Old Testament perspective, Hans Walter Wolff also came to the conclusion that there is no anthropological dualism in the Scriptures. He stated that an erroneous translation of the anthropological terminology of the Bible had "led in the false direction of a dichotomic or trichotomic anthropology, in which body, soul and spirit are in opposition to one another."²¹ According to Wolf, "the question still has to be investigated of how, with the Greek language, a Greek philosophy has here supplanted Semitic biblical views, overwhelming them with foreign influence."²²

This denial of Platonic dualism in favor of an integrated vision of man has been further developed. Currently, there are many voices from different theological lines of thought that are proclaiming a similar message. Peter van Inwagen states that the Platonic and Cartesian vision of the survival of the soul after death is "unsatisfactory, both as a

Philosophy: Aquinas on the Inmortality of the Human Soul," *Faith and Philosophy* 20, no. 2 (2003): 208-217.

¹⁷ Oscar Cullmann, "Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead: The Witness of the New Testament," in *Immortality and Resurrection* (ed. Krister Stendahl; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 9.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 19.

²⁰ Ibid., 29

²¹ Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1974), 7.

²² Ibid.

Christian and as a philosopher."²³ In this same line of thought, Baker argues that "a nondualistic conception of human persons best accords with the picture of human persons presented throughout the Jewish and Christian Bibles," and that the doctrine of the resurrection also requires a monistic vision of the human being.²⁴

Based on Luke 24:36-49, Marilyn McCord Adams states that the ideal state is not that of the disincarnate soul independent from the body, but the final objective is the resurrection of the body.²⁵ From a psychological perspective, David Myers advocates for a wholistic vision of the person. He states that the biblical vision of knowledge is based on its vision of the person as an integral entity, not as a dichotomy of mind and body.²⁶ And from a philosophy of religion perspective, based on logic as a discipline, Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann have also attempted to argue against the dualistic Cartesian view of man.²⁷

However, even though there are various theologians that deny the dualistic vision of man, they remain doubtful regarding the state between death and the resurrection. Most of them seem to lean toward an existence "with Christ" in that intermediate state. Thus, for instance, Berkouwer thinks that there is no anthropological "division" in man,²⁸ but maintains that man exists in an intermediate state with Christ after death.²⁹ Likewise, Helmut Thielicke states that there is "no division of the I into body and soul," but he also leans toward an intermediate state.³⁰ In this same sense, several scholars deny the immaterial existence of the person—the disincarnate "soul"—and favor the bodily resurrection—glorified and

²³ Peter van Inwagen, "Dualism and Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?," *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (1995): 475.

²⁴ Lynne Rudder Baker, "Need a Christian Be a Mind/Body Dualist?," *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (1995): 501.

²⁵ Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Resurrection of the Body: Luke 24:36-49," *The Expository Times* 117, no. 6 (2006): 252.

²⁶ David Myers, *The Human Puzzle* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 125.

²⁷ Eleonore Stump y Norman Kretzmann, "An Objection to Swinburne's Argument for Dualism," *Faith and Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (1996): 405-412. See the reply: Richard Swinburne, "Reply to Stump and Kretzman," *Faith and Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (1996): 413-414.

²⁸ G. C. Berkower, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 265.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Helmut Thielicke, *Living with Death* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 173. For more examples, see John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 173-195.

incorruptible bodies—although they are open to the idea of an intermediate state, although this state is neither definitive nor ideal.³¹

The constitutional view states that human beings are *constituted* by a body but they are not *identical* to the body that *constitutes* them, in the same way that a statue is constituted by bronze, but is not identical to the bronze that constitutes it.³² This means that the person is constituted by a body, in such a way that, if the body were to cease to exist, the person would do so as well.³³ What the constitutional view attempts to avoid is a merely materialistic view of man, which claims that human beings are wholly made up of common physical matter and that everything in them may be explained in materialistic terms.³⁴

Thus, Corcoran states that this position is more in agreement with the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. This author significantly points out that none of the ecumenical creeds confesses the belief in the immortality of the soul, but rather that this Christian doctrine has been understood as the doctrine of the bodily resurrection.³⁵

Similar to this view of man is what is known as “emergent dualism.”³⁶ This position accepts that human beings, as well as other organisms, initially consist of nothing more than common physical matter, organized in surprisingly complex structures. But in addition to this, the idea of emergence is added. The main idea of emergence is that, when elements of a certain type are organized in the right way, something new comes into existence, something that did not exist before.

³¹ Lynne Rudder Baker, “Material Persons and the Doctrine of Resurrection,” *Faith and Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (2001): 151-167. Baker actually discusses the idea of whether there can be continuity and identity between a person with an earthly body and the re-created one after resurrection, but that is a discussion that does not pertain to this article. To study this subject in depth, see Kevin J. Corcoran, “Persons and Bodies,” *Faith and Philosophy* 15, no. 3 (1998): 324-340.

³² Kevin J. Corcoran is one of the greatest proponents of this position. See his recent work *Rethinking Human Nature: a Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 65.

³³ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁴ See Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy y H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Joel B. Green, ed., *What about the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004). To clarify, these theologians are not naturalists: there is an existence beyond the material; God, for instance. They only apply their argument to the nature of man.

³⁵ Corcoran, 18.

³⁶ Here the Word “dualism” must not be understood in a Platonic or Cartesian way, but rather as opposed to merely material monism, which presents human beings as only animals.

This new thing is not only a restructuring of what was there before, but rather something which emerges from the being through the work of the elements that constitute it. In the case of the human being, what emerges must include mental properties such as the conscience, sensations, emotions and thought, as well as the ability to reason, the moral conscience and a relationship with God. In this sense, it is not new properties that emerge, but rather a new individual.

William Hasker, one of the proponents of this position, draws a parallel with an electromagnet. In essence, it is only a coil of wire. But when an electric current goes through the wire, something new appears: a magnetic field. This field exerts causal powers that were not there before it was created, enabling it to activate a motor or lift something. Hasker states that: "As a magnet generates its magnetic field, so an organism generates its field of consciousness."³⁷

Regarding resurrection, Hasker states that emergent dualism does not deny this Christian doctrine. Continuing with the same illustration, he asks: If the magnet (human body) is destroyed and the magnetic field (conscience/mind) disappears, does that mean that the emergent (conscience/mind) ceases to exist after the destruction of the body? The answer is "Yes," but Hasker adds that God has the ability to "retain" that emergent and clothe it with a new glorified body at the resurrection.

However, since he does not want to be confused with platonic dualism, Hasker clarifies: "So, for emergent dualism, eternal life is entirely possible, but it will come about through an amazing and miraculous act of God, not as a natural attribute of our 'immortal souls'."³⁸ And the list could go on.³⁹ Everything seems to indicate that the Greek dualistic view will continue to be challenged from multiple perspectives. The question is, where does this trend lead?

³⁷ William Hasker, "Philosophical Contributions to Theological Anthropology," in *For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Theology* (ed. James K. Beilby; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 257. Another proponent of this position is Timothy O'Connor, "Causality, Mind, and Free Will," in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons* (ed. Kevin Corcoran; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 50.

³⁸ Hasker, 258.

³⁹ Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

4. A Matter of Presuppositions

To answer this question, we must once again return to Feinberg's analysis regarding the state of contemporary theology. This author mentions several challenges that must be faced:

Those who hold the traditional view that God is atemporally eternal must not only meet the challenge of the many biblical, theological and philosophical arguments against that view but also answer process theism's complaint that the atemporal, totally immutable, absolutely sovereign and thoroughly remote God of traditional theism is utterly irrelevant to the religious needs of men and women today. On the other hand, those who believe that God is temporal are bucking tradition and a long line of arguments supporting that tradition. They must also show, since a temporal and mutable God is one of the hallmarks of process theology, how they can hold to a temporal God without capitulating to process theism.⁴⁰

Since the new view of man, which rejects the dualistic Greek view and approaches a new monistic Biblical view, is based on a temporal presupposition of the being of God, it must provide an answer to the challenge of demonstrating that it is possible to "hold to a temporal God without capitulating to process theism."

Although the so-called open theism has fiercely criticized classic theology's dependence on Greek philosophy, Canale has shown that it does then build upon a more biblical paradigm from which to draw its fundamental presuppositions. He affirms that process philosophy "has developed a bipolar ontology according to which God is simultaneously timeless and temporal. In the absence of an ontology built from biblical thought, process ontology appears as a logical candidate to ground the open view of God."⁴¹ Furthermore, he states that open theism theologians implicitly assume a dipolar ontology, typical of process philosophy.⁴²

In this same sense, Horton states, "Pinnock gives the impression in this book and elsewhere that the detection of unintended philosophical influence from the quarter of ancient philosophy disqualifies a theological model, while his own explicit dependence on modern philosophical trends is greeted practically as *praeparatio evangelica*."⁴³

⁴⁰ Feinberg, "Doctrine of God," 247.

⁴¹ Fernando Canale, "Evangelical Theology and Open Theism: Toward a Biblical Understanding of the Macro Hermeneutical Principles of Theology?," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 12, no. 2 (2002): 28.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Michael S. Horton, "Hellenistic or Hebrew? Open Theism and Reformed Theological Method," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 2 (2002): 319.

Pinnock himself has justified Hegel, Teilhard and Whitehead's choice of philosophy because "modern culture [...] is closer to the biblical view than classical theism."⁴⁴ He also states that, "as an open theist, I am interested in authors such as Hegel, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Whitehead because they make room in their thinking for ideas like change, incarnation and divine suffering."⁴⁵

Many theologians favorably view the adoption of philosophical "metaphysics" to interpret the Scriptures, since according to them, the Scriptures do not display one in particular,⁴⁶ Canale states that the Bible itself presents a certain metaphysical framework (fundamental presuppositions) that must be elaborated.⁴⁷

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, from its very beginning,⁴⁸ has held to a monistic view of man.⁴⁹ This position came about as a consequence of having moved itself from traditional theological conditionings in order to read the Bible based on its own presuppositions. Currently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church states:

Opposed to dualism is biblical monism, the position according to which all expressions of the inner life depend on the whole of human nature, including the organic system. The components of a human being function as a unit. There is no separable soul or spirit capable of conscious existence apart from the body. Thus the words "soul" or "spirit" describe intellectual, affective, or volitive manifestations of the personality.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Clark Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology," in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (ed. Clark Pinnock; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 24.

⁴⁵ Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 142.

⁴⁶ Janet Martin Soskice, "Athens and Jerusalem, Alexandria and Edessa: Is there a Metaphysics of Scripture?," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 2 (2006):149-152.

⁴⁷ Fernando Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions*, 400-409.

⁴⁸ Even one of the early "adventists," Argentinian Francisco Ramos Mexia, Sabbath keeper and believer in the Second Coming of Christ, around the year 1816 wrote a sharp comment regarding Hebrews 2:34 on the margin of his personal copy of *Venida del Mesías en gloria y majestad*, by Manuel Lacunza (III, 293): "Man, together with his soul or what you may call it, will dissolve: 'To dust thou shall return.' But he will later raise from it, Gentlemen!"

⁴⁹ Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, 2:646-740.

⁵⁰ Aecio Cairus, "The Doctrine of Man," en *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology* (ed. Raoul Dederen; Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 212.

The current theological outlook makes room for Adventist theology to play a role. Although Protestantism in its orthodox form has been built over Greek ontological presuppositions, some scholars disagree with Platonic dualism. In Kuhn's words, these are anomalies that eventually would require a paradigm shift. This paradigm shift occurred in Adventist theology. Adventist theology is able to demonstrate that it is possible to "hold to a temporal God without capitulating to process theism." As Adventist theologians, it is time to enter into the Christian theological arena and to show that Adventism has a Biblical, sound theology.

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

"Faithfulness in the Book of Revelation: its Identification and Significance"

Researcher: Myoung-Hoon Jee, M.A in Religion, 2012

Advisor: Kim G. Papaioannou, Ph.D.

Among the πίστις word-group, the adjective πιστός, "faithful" predominantly occurs in the book of Revelation. This word describes Jesus, the words of the prophecy, and the saints. In the case of the noun πίστις occurring 4 times and the negative adjective ἄπιστος occurring once, there is no consensus in translating and identifying them, due to the semantic and syntactical ambiguity of those terms. For instance, πίστις can be translated either "faith" or "faithfulness," likewise, ἄπιστος can be translated either "unbelieving" or "unfaithful." Such a different translation affects the meaning and identification. Moreover, in the case of πίστις with a noun of genitive form (the so-called "subjective-genitive" or "objective-genitive"), not only its meaning but also the relation is ambiguous.

Revelation was sent to the 7 churches in Asia, of which the saints are those who were the believers. This assumes that the message of the book was not of believing in Jesus and the Gospel. It is notable that there is neither command nor counsel to believe (have faith in)—there is actually no verb πιστεῦω, "believe" in Revelation. Interestingly John is the predominant user of the verb πιστεῦω in the NT. In his Gospel, in which the verb occurs most frequently, he demonstrates that he wrote in order to lead people to believe in Jesus Christ and have life in His name (John 20:31). However, unlike the Gospel, it is more likely that Revelation emphasizes faithfulness rather than faith (act of believing). Eight occurrences of πιστός and 2 of 4 occurrences of πίστις clearly designate faithfulness. Also, the contexts support that the rest of the occurrences of πίστις and ἄπιστος also probably designate the faithfulness of the saints. Therefore, the πίστις word-group may be translated as "faithfulness" consistently in Revelation.

The passages of the πίστις word-group and the contexts indicate the identification of the faithfulness found in Revelation: divine origination and totality. Faithfulness is not simply a means of human to be saved, but a divine character shared by Jesus Christ, which should be called “a character of totality.” The “faithfulness-victory motif” confirms the significance of faithfulness in Revelation. Jesus, the Lamb, as the faithful One overcame by faithfulness at the risk of His life; likewise, the faithful saints of God will be victorious by their faithfulness.

“Analysis of the Golden Calf Incident (Exodus 32:1–10) and its Impact on the Sinai Covenant in the Pentateuchal Text”

Researcher: Feliks Ponyatovskiy, Ph.D., 2012

Advisor: Mathilde Frey, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the golden calf incident in the Pentateuch and to analyze its impact on the covenant relationship between God and His people. The method chosen for this study is to compare Exod 19-24 with chap. 34 and with other related passages in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In the process of comparison special attention has been paid to some characteristics of the covenant such as promises, obligations, covenant formula, revelation, and ritual. As an addition to the comparative analysis, this study utilizes a literary approach in the sense of a close reading of the biblical text by concentrating on rhetorical features, syntax, structure, and context.

In the result of this study the following conclusions have been made: The golden calf incident is portrayed in the Pentateuch as a paradigmatic sin and as a serious threat to the covenant. By making the molten image and worshiping it, the Israelites failed to withstand in their relationship with God; thus, the covenant was completely broken from their side.

This study shows that the covenant was not completely restored during the events described in Exod 34, as most scholars assert. God’s promise given in Exod 34:10 marked only the beginning of the restoration process, which ended when the rituals of Lev 8-9 were performed.

This study also demonstrates that the golden calf incident greatly affected the relationship between God and His people. Before this incident the Israelite society was described as a community of holy people where every member was promised a priestly status. However, after the incident Israel is presented as a stratified society where priestly functions

are restricted to a small group of people and people's holiness depends upon their status. Nevertheless, through the keeping of the oath of Nazirite everybody in Israel society could for a short time enjoy the style of living which in many aspects resembles that of the High Priest. For this reason, the promise of becoming a kingdom of priests and holy nation can be fulfilled for everybody in Israel.

Another aspect of the Divine-human relationship that was changed is the model of revelation. The book of Deuteronomy introduces a new form of communication between God and the people—through the ministry of prophets, which should substitute the direct public manifestation of God's glory.

"A Description and Contextualized Strategies of the Muen Seventh-day Adventist Church in Shanghai Under the 'Three-Self' Patriotic Movement"

Researcher: Huang Yibing, D.Min., 2012

Advisor: James H. Park, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study is to introduce the unique context of the "Three-Self" Patriotic Movement of Protestantism under the government of the Communist Party of China in Shanghai and to determine how the Shanghai Seventh-day Adventist Church can be effective within this context. In order to accomplish this purpose, the study first examines the geography, culture, history and the religious heritage of Shanghai. Secondly, it gives an overview of the "Three-Self" Patriotic Movement in general and outlines how the Shanghai Seventh-day Adventist Church has been affected both before and after its implementation.

After enumerating some contemporary scholars' strategies about healthy church growth, this study shows that leadership, God's Word, small groups, dynamic evangelistic methods, and witnessing through social services could be effective church growth strategies which may be appropriate for the current political and social situation in Shanghai. The study also shows that contextualization is a very crucial factor for church ministry, especially in Shanghai which is faced with a unique yet challenging background given the presence of the government oversight of all church activities. Based on the findings of this study, several

effective recommendations regarding church growth are proposed for the leaders of the Shanghai Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"The Meaning of *γυμνός* in 2 Corinthians 5:3 and its Theological Implications"

Researcher: Luis Iván Martínez Toledo, Ph.D., 2012

Advisor: Richard Apelles Sabuin, Ph.D.

The image of *γυμνός*, "naked," in 2 Cor 5:3 has been understood in anthropological way to refer to the state of the human being between death and resurrection. In this view, the disembodied person survives death either conscious, or unconsciously, awaiting the resurrection. This interpretation supports the duality of the human composition. Those who have a monistic view of this composition interpret the image in a spiritual realm. The images of clothing and unclothing refer to the spiritual acceptance of Jesus justification, and being naked means to be with a sinful nature.

This dissertation takes the images and language used in the passage in an anthropological realm, as the majority of the scholars do, and according to the immediate context of the chapter and the letter. It also links the passage with 1 Cor 15:35-55, and the same concepts of resurrection and death in the OT. A comparison of the use of anthropological terms as they have been used in the LXX to translate related Hebrew terms shows the anthropological and monistic background of the passages. Therefore, the interpretation of *γυμνός* goes to a monistic view of the passage.

Γυμνός refers then to a state of nonexistence, death. The houses, which are used as clothes before and after nakedness, refer to anthropological natures. The logical conclusion is that resurrection is a new creation. The use of *γυμνός*, and its relation to other images used by Paul to refer to the same state, reveals an intention to link the identity of the person before death with the identity of the same person after resurrection. In that sense, the one who dies is the same person who will be raised, even though the nature, which is expressed as body, is different. Thus, the person who will receive the reward from God at resurrection is the same who received the promise before death.

Paul presents two processes of changing the human nature: (a) resurrection, that implies having nakedness before; and

(b) transformation without experiencing the state of nakedness, which is death. Paul groans desiring to experience the latter, but lies in the hope of resurrection if the former happens.

The image of γυμνός reinforces the monistic view of life, death, and resurrection. At the same time it highlights the continuity of the identity despite a period of total cessation of existence, and consequently life, which death represents.

CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

| |
|---|
| Andreas Schuele, <i>An Introduction to Biblical Aramaic</i> (Edwin S. Payet) 123-125 |
|---|

An Introduction to Biblical Aramaic, by Andreas Schuele. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2012. Pp. xii + 145. ISBN-13: 978-0-664-23424-9. Softcover. US\$30.00

Schuele's book is the most recent study on Biblical Aramaic. His approach is quite different from Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Aramaic*, published in 2011. It stands more as a handbook where things are said, yet in a concise manner.

The publisher's regular price is \$30. The book however can be bought about half the original price. At the time I wrote this book review, the cheapest (new copy) in Amazon was \$15. The book also exists in kindle edition for \$14.65.

In size, it is the same as the revised edition of *A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* of Alger F. Johns (1972). The content however is organized more like the book of Van Pelt or F. E. Greenspahn, *An Introduction to Aramaic*, 2nd ed. (2001). Schuele confesses to be "deeply indebted to Franz Rosenthal's seminal *Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* [7th ed.; 2006]" (p. ix), which he calls it to be his book's "big brother." In the *Introduction*, the author presents a concise access to biblical Aramaic compare to its "big brother" (p. ix).

It is mainly developed "from" and "for" a classroom setting (p. ix). Schuele presupposes that the one who wants to study Aramaic has "prior exposure to Biblical Hebrew" (p. ix). This can be seen through out the book. The abbreviations BA (biblical Aramaic), and BH (Biblical Hebrew) appear through the book. The author compares both languages when he feels necessary. He starts with the development of the specific phonemes in Aramaic compare to Hebrew (pp. 3ss.). He particularly highlights the differences between Aramaic and Hebrew vowels (pp. 17ss.). Similarly, a short comparative word list (Aramaic/Hebrew) of the most common Aramaic terms is provided (pp. 93-94). He also compares the Aramaic verbal system to the Hebrew one (pp. 40-41).

There is no chapter division but five main sections entitled "From the Phoenician to the Aramaic Writing System," "Masoretic Vowel Signs," "The Noun" (pp. 19-34), "The Verb" (pp. 35-62), and "Syntax" (pp. 63-83). The last three sections constitute the main part of the book. "The Noun" section could have been better titled as "Nominal Section" (or something of this kind) since it includes subsections on "adjectives," "prepositions," and "pronouns."

The verbs are first approached by "verbal inflections: Perfect, Imperfect, jussive and imperative." I have appreciated the complementarity between the paradigm (the final inflected form of the verb) and the structure tables (description of what consonant(s) have to be added to the root to obtain the paradigm table). Schuele then gives the basic verbal patterns in charts for each seven stems. I would have preferred charts for the 'weak verbs.' All the explanation stands in seven pages (pp. 54-60). Yet, as the author remarks, "due to the very limited number of BA texts, many of the verbal paradigms are incomplete. Especially for the so-called weak verbs, sometimes only a few examples are attested." (p. 41).

The syntax section is unique in its genre compare to Johns (1972), Greenspahn (2001), Van Pelt (2011). If Johns had some subsections entitled "uses of . . ." (perfect, imperfect, active participle, or passive participle), only Greenspahn had offered a separate section on syntax so far. Yet it had only two pages of explanations (pp.123-124). Schuele's section on syntax is therefore most welcome. Some may have prefer this section to be directly included in two previous sections ("The Noun," and "The Verb"). Yet, it has the merit to be concentrated in one place for learning, for reviewing, or for translating/researching.

The book includes a few sections such as short glossary of words to be learned ("Word List"), few "Persian and Greek Loanwords," and some "Idiomatic Expressions." Even it is not as much as Greenspahn's (2001), it has also three appendixes about some non-biblical Aramaic texts (i.e., the Zakkur inscription, some samples from Qumran). It concludes with the answers to the proposed exercises and a complete (?) Aramaic paradigm for every existing tense and stem of the Bible (pp.120-145). Since Schuele does not separate the regular verbs from the weak verbs for each person/number, it may not seem friendly at first sight. The logic of it however stands, particularly while comparing/learning particular verbal forms. This is also the intention of the author.

Schuele has come up with a fine, concise and 'user-friendly' book to study biblical Aramaic. The language used is of a pleasant and 'lecturing' style. Some particular points have caught my attention: all examples and exercises are directly taken from the Bible. If it is designed for a classroom setting, no distinctive vocabulary subsection is provided. A simple

exercise accompanies each subsection. One may sometimes think it is not enough, compare to the exercises provided by Greenspahn (2001) and by Van Pelt (2011). And in that sense, it may be difficult for a student who studies Aramaic for the first time. I have a 'slight' problem with the Aramaic font size used. For me who already wear glasses, it is too small! Yet, the book of Schuele is an excellent resource for students who know Hebrew, or who are eager to learn. His concise approach is much welcome.

Edwin S. Payet

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

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EDITORIAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Editor *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary*
AIIAS
P.O. Box 038
Silang, Cavite 4118
PHILIPPINES

editor: editor.jaas@aiaas.edu
associate editor: assoc.ed.jaas@aiaas.edu
book review editor: review.jaas@aiaas.edu
subscription manager: subscription.jaas@aiaas.edu
journal exchanges: periodacq@aiaas.edu
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