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Contents

Presidential Address

Jean Sheldon, Pacific Union College

Jerusalem and Babylon—A Tale of Two Cities: Biblical Theology in Conversation

Devotional

Dave Taylor, Loma Linda University

When it Doesn’t Make Sense

Paper Session I: Violence in Scripture and Theology

Ben Holdsworth, University of Durham, England

Economic Disruption: A Catalyst for Violence in Communities of Faith in Roman Syria

Roy Gane, Andrews University

Israelite Genocide and Islamic Jihad

D. J. B. Trim, Newbold College

The Theology of Calvinist Internationalism in Early-Modern England and the European Wars of Religion

Don Pate, Between the Lines

The Nazareth Precipice: The Anomaly of Violence as Religious Duty

Paper Session II: Violence and Adventism

Doug Morgan, Columbia Union College

The Beginnings of a Peace Church: Eschatology, Ethics and Expedience in Seventh-day Adventist Responses to the Civil War

Jon Pauline, Andrews University

The Matrix of Adventism

Charles Scriven, Kettering College of the Medical Arts

Pillars for Peacemaking

Why the Sabbath and the Second Coming Matter
Julius Nam, Pacific Union College
(Objecting to What? A Checkered History of Seventh-day Adventist Conscience Objection

Andy Lampkin, Oakwood College
(Minority Scholar of Religion What Must We Do...?
Some Un-intellectual musings

Panel Discussion

Julius Nam, Pacific Union College
(The Peacemaking Remnant: A Review)
BABYLON AND JERUSALEM—A TALE OF TWO CITIES
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY IN CONVERSATION
Jean Sheldon, Ph.D.
Presidential Address

From the early decades of the discipline, biblical theologians have tended to look at the texts deductively, from outside of them, instead of inductively, from within them. Consequently, the Hebrew Bible has been studied using various methods, many of them presupposing that the method will unveil a unified theme or central theology which will draw the various Hebrew writings together. Consequently, most Old Testament theologies fail to be all-inclusive of the texts. If the Old Testament were something of a system of thought, more clearly and succinctly (or perhaps tidily) stated, such attempts would be satisfactory. As sacred text, much of the Old Testament meanders from topic to topic, much like a river or a mountain stream. Its natural thematic coherence can best be seen from within and even then, only by open and thorough familiarity with it in its entirety.

At the same time, biblical theologies often reflect an external myopia—the lack of perception of Israel’s unique theological contributions. These can better be seen if diligently compared and especially contrasted with contemporary or even chronologically prior literatures among those of nearby ancient cultures. This paper rests upon the assumption that each Semitic culture can be shown to have a least a few uniquely nuanced perspectives ideologically, whether Amorite (Mari), Hittite (Hattusa), Canaanite (Ugarit), or Mesopotamian. In addition, it seems that the historic developments of theology do not remain quite as fixed as some seem to think. Finally, most biblical theologies do not appear to resolve the many theological tensions in the Old Testament, particularly those which face us squarely at this time of both widespread tolerance and increased tendencies toward violence and oppression.

Because of these dissatisfaction, I am about to propose a new method of biblical theology which is not systematic or highly structured but rather moves along the texts as they ebb and flow. Even when in conflict with one another, they inform and teach. The best way I can depict this is metaphorically in another way as conversation.

In the process of persisting on some level in a canonical reading of the Bible, I have come to believe that the Hebrew Bible is a multi-faceted discussion. A conversation naturally presupposes several voices. The Old Testament is not a monologue or even a dialogue (with merely human and divine voices). The voices are many: the prophetic voice that seems to adapt to time and place; the legal voices of civil, moral, and cultic cases; the voice of wisdom that questions; the voices of “the others”—aliens, outsiders, enemies; the voices of oral tradition, the narrators, and final editors; and finally, the most important one of all, the reader’s, whose voice dominates the text, putting past, upbringing, education, and personal preferences into it.

As a result, the conversation is anything but an idealistic, carefully worded statement about God and his people. At times the prophetic voice seems to reach a new height of idealism (“He has shown you, O human, what is good...”),

1 In Walter C. Kaiser’s words: “Traditionally, it has been commonplace among biblical theologians to find the justified warning against the all-too-prevalent temptation to impose one’s own philosophical grid or theological framework over the text.” Toward an Old Testament Theology, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978), 22.


3 Perhaps this lies in part behind Walter C. Kaiser’s words: “No discipline has struggled more valiantly to fulfill its basic mission but with such disappointing results as OT biblical theology”, 20. Hasel (Theology, 49) notes that “virtually all OT theologies have had difficulties in dealing with the wisdom writings.” Because of W. Zimmerli’s and C. Westermann’s proposal that the wisdom texts fit within the theme of creation (Hasel, Theology, 84) considerable work has been done in this area. See Leo G. Perdue, Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).

4 Comparative method has often been limited to “interpretive comparison,” (see David P. Wright, The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature [SBLDS 101; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 6-7) a form that interprets the Bible and the ancient Near East together, with the assumption that the general system of beliefs were the same, so that what was believed and practiced among the Assyrians could fill in information gaps regarding what was practiced among the Canaanites.

5 An example of a use of comparative method between Israeliite, Mesopotamian, and Hittite rituals in terms of removing impurity is David P. Wright, The Disposal of Impurity (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press/SBL, 1987).

6 Anonymity seems best regarding those current scholars who persist in ignoring theological differences between time periods (i.e., in Mesopotamia).

7 What we get from the text often reflects more about us and our past than it does about the text itself.
but far more frequently it descends rapidly down to the murky reality of a world trapped in sin ("can a leopard change its spots?"). If we are to truly understand the Bible, and the God within it, we must allow the human and the divine their rightful places in the text—in real, difficult situations, not in utopia.8

In all conversations, major and minor voices contribute to the trajectories of thought. Sometimes a major voice becomes minor and at other times minor voices are accentuated or stressed in such a way—usually through conflict (i.e., going against the currents of popular thought or tradition)—as to highlight their unique significance. The one outstanding characteristic of minor voices is that they stand out uniquely in contrast to the louder, more acceptable major voices that speak for the majority or mass group.9

Often, however, if only major and minor voices are allowed to join, the conversation turns into a contest. Major voices naturally carry both speakers (writers) and listeners (readers) along because they reinforce what already is considered true, do not challenge their audiences to change their views, and require no personal sacrifice. Minor voices also may seek to dominate, in which case a debate, argument or power struggle ensues instead of healthy conversation. Minor voices, which remain soft and gentle, can easily become lost to speakers and listeners, resulting in a monologue of viewpoints (the authoritarian command model).

In cases where dominant voices seek to control and minor voices seek to be understood, the only hope for keeping the conversation from deteriorating into monologue is for intermediary voices to join in. These speakers have a gift for translation and for metaphorical approximations that mediate cultural limitations and thus can bridge the gaps of misunderstanding, conditioned thinking, and cultural biases. These mediating voices can serve as an incarnate meeting between the human and the divine.

The purpose of this study is to engage readers with part of the Old Testament conversation, part of it—chiefly Genesis 1:1-11:9—because of time constraints.10 The guides in the ferreting out of the various voices include Robert Alter's use of rhetorical analysis and the application of contrastive comparative method.11 The first highlights the authors' editors' carefully nuanced literary voices while the second enlarges the conversation to include several of the many voices from the ancient Near East.12

Let the conversation begin.

A. The Conversation of Creation

The preamble to the canonical Hebrew Bible begins with a murky interchange of color and design, with a subtle literary allusion to cosmic uneasiness: tohu wabohu (willy-nilly, helter-skelter, topsy-turvy) typifying the darkness covering the

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8 I have not left historical critical and traditional exegetical methods completely out, but to recognize the limitations of these methods to understand the Bible in its canonical form. It has been my observation that internally traditional critical methodology seems "to work," but outside the texts, in comparison with the ancient Near East, conflict and contradiction emerge. For an interesting historical evaluation of the problem see Peter Machinist, "The Old Testament in Comparative Perspective: The Case of Julius Wellhausen and Assyriology" (paper presented in a Special Session at the international meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Cambridge, England, 22 July 2003). The redactors and writers all entered as voices into the conversation and the results may not be as intentionally directed as we suppose. That they had certain agendas, we can be sure, but the result in the texts themselves may actually be unconscious rather than deliberate.

9 In Hebrew narrative, this is especially true. Often what is said is more important than what is done because the spoken words define the actions. See Roy E. Gane (Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 3-24) for an excellent treatment of the problems with interpreting rituals [as one type of action] and his choice of theory for interpreting them. Once we can interpret actions, they provide not only a concrete basis for conversation but even be part of the conversation itself.

10 Regrettably time and space does allow me to deal with the many themes I found in this segment of the Hebrew Bible. One of the most significant is that of the Noachian covenant which, because of its enormity and ties to all other biblical covenants, I hardly touched at all. In brief I would say that covenant making, from a canonical perspective, is a human invention and the divine voice seems to mediate it in stages, first as a promise of grace without requirement for human response, then, when Abraham expresses some doubts, a covenant with a sign requirement human response is initiated. One can continue the covenant motif from there to Sinai (Ex. 20-24) in which the human is more involved than the divine and from there to the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) which is once again a promise of grace to put the law within the heart. If studied from a historical perspective, the covenant starts out weighted to the human response and finally becomes one of grace.


12 Due to the limitations of a single paper, this study is to be considered a work-in-progress.
Yet even there the divine interacts with these cosmic mythopoeic images, as a wind from God (or is it his breath or maybe his spirit?) moves back-and-forth over the watery expanse.

God speaks and nature responds by coming into existence. When humans are created, the speaking changes to conversation: “Let us make human in our image and according to our likeness.” The verb then used three times to describe that creation is bara’. In terms of creation as separation, the context suggests that God separates human beings (from the rest of the animals created at the same time) into his image (emphasized by restatement) and then subsequently splits that image into two separate parts—male and female. Conversation is not, therefore part of the natural inanimate world or the non-human life forms; rather God’s conversation with himself governs only the creation of human beings. Though God commands all of these various types to “be fruitful and multiply,” the literary implication is that only one has the ability to converse in humble parity with the Creator: humankind.

This theme of creation as speech is the framework for Genesis 1:1-11:9. In the Tower of Babel story, the same kind of conversational wording is used for human invention: “Come, let us make bricks; . . . let us build ourselves a city, and a tower, . . . and let us make a name for ourselves.” To put it another way, if a creator could speak life into existence, could human beings speak and by their words shape realities of their own?

By speaking things into existence, a relationship is already beginning between God and the world: this is creation, the first theme and framework of Genesis. Creation in and of itself, however, is not enough. God looks at almost every element on earth and sees that it is good. This provides the start of the second theme: good (and evil). Carried through chapter 9, this theme may best be stated as a question: “Is it good?”

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13 See Excursus 1 below for an explanation of my stance on dualism.
15 See Excursus 1 and following.
16 Gen. 1:22, 28.
17 Gen. 11:3, 4, RSV.
18 The priestly creation is not concerned with scientific concerns, yet I must point out that if there should be a physical connection between speech and creation, then we may be dealing with a conceptualized process instead of perceived time. In terms of the priestly creation, time marked by divinely ordained events.
19 One could see it as chiefly the framework of Gen. 1-11 were it not that with the call of Abraham, the change of Jacob’s name to Israel, and the testimonies of Jacob, we have the creation of a new people, Israel.
20 The theme of creation spanned 1:1-11:9 while the theme of good and evil seems to stop with ch. 9. This has made me question the “priestly” nature of the “first” creation story and to consider it in terms of wisdom literature (also which contains the theme of creation).
Excursus I: Creation, Monotheism, and Dualism

Scholars have long debated the problem of dualism in the priestly creation stor. The best accepted stance is that the priestly creation greatly mutes the mythopoetic elements of chaos and order (what Gunkel called Chaos und Schöpfung) for the sake of monotheism. Since the worship of one deity creates ultimate divine sovereignty, dualism is greatly reduced or eliminated altogether. No supreme monotheism would allow for an opposite power to contest his rule. In this viewpoint, Yahweh is the slayer of all chaos elements or, more often than not, is responsible for evil himself.

Serious flaws may be found in this argument, flaws which stem from unsound presuppositions. First, all deities of the ancient Near East are generally understood to be responsible for evil. For example, Lamaštu, the demon responsible for infant deaths, is the daughter of Enil. Prayers invoke mercy from Marduk who is believed to have punished the victim of illness. Gods and demons work in tandem to inflict punishment (seen as gods handing people over to the demons). Only in the Maqlu and similar texts on witchcraft do we see the insertion of evil as stemming more from the witch than from the god. Even here, however, the personal god’s anger—while not coherently connected to the

21 Hermann Gunkel, Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Enzzeit (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1895).
24 E.g., “A Literary Prayer to Marduk” and Ludul bêl nêmegi (sometimes called, “The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer”). The latter may be found in Benjamin R. Foster, Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature (vol. 1; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993), 308-325.
30 See En El II:120-129; cf. III:131-138; IV:1-33; cf. Tablet VII where Marduk is given 50 names.
31 This is the stance taken in a philological study by David Toshio Tsumura, Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005). However, a philological study does not necessarily negate literary functions of words in texts.
32 As George W. Coats (Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature [FOTL 1; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983], 46) notes: “It is clear that the imagery of the unit derives from a common tradition in a large cultural context. Particularly v. 2 projects images that were at home in the mythological heritage of Babylon and Canaan. The darkness, if not also the void and formlessness, may derive from a similar context. Does the Hebrew term ‘deep’ ( tahôm ) not capture the imagery of Ti’amat and her struggle with Marduk, the creator? These images lie beneath the surface of this unit; yet, at some stage in the process of formulation the unit has recast those images. There is no longer a struggle between God and some opposing force.”
33 Mythopoetic imagery may have preceded the workings of myths; see e.g., Raphael Kutscher, Oh Angry Sea ( a-ab-ba ḫu-luḥ-ha): The History of a Sumerian Congregational Lament. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975.
witch’s activities—has not been edited out of the text.\textsuperscript{26} Thus it is possible to conclude that generally in the ancient Near East, whether in polytheism or in a monotheistic trajectory, the gods were responsible for both good and evil.\textsuperscript{27}

Secondly, monotheism does not necessarily negate dualism. One only needs to think of the increase of dualism during the later second temple period literature such as Tobit or the Dead Sea Scrolls, or the rise of Zoroastrianism in an earlier period to recognize this point: monotheism tends to breed a sharper dualism than does polytheism.\textsuperscript{28}

Thirdly, the basis of divine sovereignty is itself a kind of dualism, known as the “combat myth.” Baal, for example, cannot build a palace and thus reign until he slays Yam.\textsuperscript{29} Marduk agrees to conquer Ti’amat on condition that he is given supremacy over all the other gods; in addition, he expects to be considered as all other gods.\textsuperscript{30} It is therefore problematic to attribute the muting of the mythopoetic chaos elements in the priestly creation story to supreme monotheism (especially considering the use of Elohim and the plural pronouns). One could equally (though not necessarily) say that if the combat myth is minimalized so too, perhaps, is the emphasis on divine sovereignty based on that myth.

The imagery is used in the priestly creation can no doubt refer on one level as concrete aspects of the creation—literal darkness, sea, the deep, wasteland.\textsuperscript{31} Hebrew is a very concrete language and thus can easily be taken literally. However, those same concrete realities evoked imagery leading to abstractions so that the audience, familiar with the ancient Near Eastern views of chaos and creation, would not doubt link the concrete elements to their mythopoetic elements.\textsuperscript{32} The opening lines—contrasting as they do chaos and darkness with the entrance of light—convey a stark image to the reader that would likely not be missed by the ancient mind.

The problem of dualism is much more complex than has been assumed. In the first place, we have no clear working definition of what we mean by the term dualism. Do we use it in an absolute sense—of two equally powerful powers contending for supremacy? If so, perhaps there never has been a formal dualism in all of human thought. Do we use it as an extension of war—its likely source in Mesopotamia? If so, then it may have been understood only as a practical mythopoetic image in the first place.\textsuperscript{33} For this reason, though the priestly creation’s dualism may be more muted or entirely passive (especially compared to the divine speeches in the book of Job\textsuperscript{34}), it nonetheless is present, only to be dispelled by the voice of God.

Though many believe that the priestly creation does not in any way include dualism, let alone theology, I would suggest, from a literary viewpoint, that the divine attention to the “good” has a specific role—that of separating chaos from order. The verbs used in terms of “creating” are selected carefully to convey a pattern of separation. The Hebrew verb “to create” (bārā’) has another possible meaning based on the Semitic form b/pr—which means “to splice” or “split” which by extended meaning would imply “to separate.” It is clear that the writer intends a possible double entendre, if not this secondary meaning, for he consistently applies the verb only in cases where separation is involved; whereas he uses the verb “to make” (āṣā) in all cases where it is not.\textsuperscript{35} In addition, specific elements are said to be separated—light from darkness, day from night, sky waters from earth waters; and earth waters gathered together to allow the appearance of dry land. As noted above, the verb bārā’ is used govern humans separate from animals and male from female. Since human beings are created in the image of God, their separation from the animals surely implies a holier order of beings.

However, there is a difficulty, that of the absence of a divine pronouncement of “good” regarding the creation of human beings.\textsuperscript{36} Two other elements of creation also do not receive this pronouncement: darkness and waters (firmament and seas). These two easily fit within the framework of chaos elements, but what would deprive humankind of the assessment that it was good? Unlike all other elements of creation, human beings are created in the divine image. When Elohim (P) creates, he speaks and something supernatural is discerned to happen. And when he speaks he acts freely of his own choice.

To speak and create, therefore, is to choose. God is not subject to some other power. The trajectory to monotheism does provide the singular presence above which there is no other.\textsuperscript{37} Therefore, the Creator of the Hebrew


\textsuperscript{36} This was suggested by Prof. Jacob Milgrom of the University of California, Berkeley, in his seminar in Leviticus, Fall, 1987.

\textsuperscript{37} Absolute monotheism is not always present in the Hebrew Bible and probably one should speak in terms of henotheism or monolatry. For a ground-breaking overview of Hebrew monotheism, see Mark S. Smith, \textit{The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
Bible is free to choose. When he speaks, the natural elements respond to his choice. When it comes to the creation of humans, however, God does not speak to the earth as he does when creating animals, but says, “Let us make...” Since humankind is created in God’s image, the foregone conclusion is that human beings will, like God, choose to create. They will choose what they create, when they create it, and how. Furthermore, what they create will continue to change them. Their existence defies closure; as creatures that choose their own realities, they are an unfinished aspect of creation. And so the question remains: are they good or evil? Is this something God can pronounce? Is it not their choice to make?

This power of choice is reinforced by the role given to humanity. The human being is made to rule over the rest of creation. He is not ordered into existence but is made to order. Given that violence is otherwise missing in the immediate context, the overall intent seems to be to establish the appropriate creation order. The dominion granted humans sets them apart from creation and puts them on par with one another. Creation order is clearly maintained only as God remains the “proto-being” with male and female made equally in his image. Neither was to rule over the other; nor were they to submit to the rest of creation.

The splitting of the divine image into male and female, then, is not a division between good and evil, but a suggested implication that good is dependent upon a balance of non-dominant, non-hierarchical relationships between male and female partners with a dominant relationship between them both and the natural world. The theme is alluded to in a different way in the JE story. Yahweh decides that it is “not good” for man to be alone and makes “a helper for him like his counterpart.” The wording is decidedly one of equality. This need for a relationship, the extension of conversation, with another like oneself is foundational to maintaining the image of God (if combined with the priestly creation). The resulting union is described by two important terms—“cling to” (dbq) and “one flesh.” The former is used of the close attachment of one’s skin to the rest of one’s body. The theme, then, of JE is not separation but intimacy. Anything that comes between the relationships or lifts one higher than the other is the agonizing flaying of the “one fleshliness.” In the priestly creation, the splitting of the divine image into male and female suggests diversity, the uniqueness of male and female, and personal choice. When the two stories are put together, the resulting combination is that of chosen loyalty, intimacy, and complementation. Only domination by one over the other or chosen separation can change the picture. In the priestly creation, then, separation is good and not only sets boundaries between chaos and order, but also creates organization of a universe in which function and purpose do not create dominance that seeks to control.

In priestly texts, separation is the foundation of holiness. In terms of creation, this theme is unique, since the Babylonians preferred mixtures in their creation stories. Ti’amat (salt water) and Apsû (fresh water) commingle together in order to create progeny. Human beings are created from a mixture of clay and the divine blood of a slain god. Instead of being a mixture of human and divine, human beings, “sculpted” in the image of God and made from clay are not living until Yahweh breathes into them the divine breath.

The combined traditions of Genesis suggest that human beings are not mixtures but rather separate beings. The denouement of separation, however, is not found here but in Sabbath. The only aspect in the priestly story clearly sanctioned (equals “set apart”) is not an object of creation but rather a pause in time of the Creator upon completion of his artistry:

And the heavens and the earth and all their hosts were finished.
And God finished on the seventh day his work which he had made.
And he ceased the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

38 A point touched upon by Prof. Jacob Milgrom, Seminar on Leviticus (Fall, 1987).

39 One of the verbs (kôf) used to depict this reflects a major voice in the Old Testament: it is violent and is applied to forcing someone into slavery and rape; the other (râh) is milder and suggests the roaming of a shepherd with a flock. This verb means essentially, “to rule.” HALOT’s (1190) comment—that “the basic meaning of the verb is not to rule; the word actually denotes the traveling around of the shepherd with his flock”—does not fully encompass the meaning it later derives. The earliest and most prominent metaphor used in ancient Mesopotamia was that of a shepherd. See Sabina Franke, “Kings of Akkad,” in CĀNE (vol. 2; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995), 833. In his Prologue to his laws, Hammurabi refers to himself as “the shepherd, selected by the god Enil.” Martha T. Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor (SBLWAWs 6; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 77.

40 For this choice for kênêdâ, see Gerhard F. Hasel, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3,” in The Role of Women in the Church (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1984; repub. Boise, Id.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1995), 16. HALOT (666) suggests either “that which is opposite, that which corresponds.”

41 Note that ‘êzer is used of God and his relationship with Israel (see Ex. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29). This point is well made by Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 175-176.

42 See Job 19:20.
And God blessed the seventh day and set it apart as holy
because on it he ceased from all his work which God separated to make. 43

In Sabbath, the themes of conversation come together: creation, the goodness of that creation, divine cessation from
work, and separation-holiness. If, at this point, we listen to the voices of ancient Mesopotamia, the uniqueness of this
conceptual arrangement is profound.

In one of the Babylonian traditions, in an effort to pacify the rebel gods, human beings are created to be a
substitute work force to relieve the overworked gods of their load. Indeed, the conception prevailed throughout most
time periods that human beings were destined to be slaves of the gods. By contrast, the priestly creation portrays the
divine work, not as hard labor (šč) or servitude (šbd), but as creative handiwork (mlk). 44 The word indicates a
kind of work that conveys meaning. Sabbath, then, stands for meaningful exchange—not merely Elohim’s words, but his
creative actions as well. 45 In this sense, human creation, in the image of God, ordained to rule over the natural world,
would model the divine maker by pausing in their creation with meaningful conversation. A day of ceasing to work
would provide the time for rest, reflection, discussion, and harmony.

In contrast to a substitute workforce, priestly human beings quell no revolt, but are the crowning act of creation.
In JE, human beings—even their slaves and work animals—rest on Sabbath with God. 46 The point is clear: in a
relationship unmarked by domination, Yahweh has no slaves for slaves never can rest, especially with their master.
Consequently, the Babylonians must build Marduk’s temple so that he and the other gods can rest. Lullu-man will never
join him in relief from the daily toil of taking care of his needs. Indeed, according to Batto, in Babylonian thought, sleep
or rest was “a motif of divine sovereignty.” 47 Yahweh, on the other hand, invites all creation to Sabbath rest. 48 In the
priestly creation, therefore, the sanctification of the Sabbath is a crowning denouement of the most important creation
message: all human beings are to be “a kingdom of priests, a holy people,” able to converse with God. 49

B. A Trickster Joins the Conversation

The JE creation story leads us gradually toward the first dialogue in Genesis with foreshadowings of its treacherous
nature: human beings are created from the ground to labor the soil, a suggestion of the curse in Genesis 3. In addition
Yahweh does not speak as does Elohim; but his first words to the man are a command: “You shall not…” This abrupt
change—from conversational word to an authoritarian one—suggests, not only something about the writer, 50 but also
his divine perceptions of evil.

The command is explicit and unwavering. The man can eat of any tree in the Garden but he is not to eat of the tree
in its heart—the tree of knowledge of good and evil—because if he does he will die. These words significantly change
the outlook on the creation, for they shift the reader from the pronouncements of good alone in the P creation to a
mixture of good and evil. Though some speculation has taken place regarding its meaning, the context makes it clear
just what “evil” is. If creation of life is “good” and eating of this tree will bring death, the knowledge of good and evil is
the experience of life and death.

This command—given only to the man before the woman is created—foreshadows a trauma that will fray their
fleshly oneness. 51 The reader, however, is unprepared for the medium through which the conversation about good and

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43 Gen. 2:1-3. “Separated to make” is more sensible than the tautologous “created to make” for bārāc elohim laCāšāt.
44 This word is from the same root as mlk.k.
45 Psalm 19:2/1 seems to suggest the same theological motif for creation:
The heavens are recounting the glory of God
And the firmament reports his work.
48 This is distinctly a concept of JE; see Ex. 20:8-11.
49 Exodus 19:6. The very concept of “kingdom of priests” denotes a lack of rulership: if everyone is a priest,
holy and set apart, no one rules in a spiritual sense.
50 Possibly a redactional voice intending to make Yahweh’s words major and to eliminate divine blame.” The
term sw’ does not seem to have an ancient history and thus one can presuppose that an editor updated it during the post-
exilic period.
51 Flaying was a punishment executed on rebel vassal governors or kings by the Assyrians (H. W. Sagsg,
Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria [London: B. T. Batsford, 1965]), 109; Barbara Nevling Porter, Trees, Kings, and
evil will take place: a serpent. In the ancient East, the serpent, or even the dragon, was not always viewed as evil. However, during the Akkadian periods, particularly in the latter part, the dragon, as a symbol of the storm-god, came to belch fire and to represent kingly power. In the encounter with the woman, the serpent is neither fully hostile nor conquered.

A creature of choice, the snake symbolizes royalty and his life in a tree forms a paradox with the eagle of Etana who lived with his young in the top of the poplar tree while the serpent inhabited the base with its offspring. In Etana, the eagle is the wise one; in the Garden of Eden, the serpent is the wisest of all the creatures Yahweh has made. In this myth, the eagle devours the serpent’s progeny and is banished to a pit, having its wings clipped by the serpent. While there, after its wings grow back, it becomes the deliverer of a childless human known as Etana. On the eagle’s back, Etana is borne to the heavens where before the gods, he is apparently (the text is broken off at the end) granted his request for children. The irony, of course, is that the slayer of the serpent’s children becomes the savior of humanity.

The Epic of Gilgamesh also connects the royal serpent with a king’s request for immortality. After the death of his best friend Enkidu, King Gilgamesh goes north to find Utapištîm, the Babylonian Noah who is understood to have been granted immortality by the gods. Gilgamesh begs to know Utapištîm’s secret. Eventually, Gilgamesh is given a plant which, if he can take it back to his home, will grant him eternal life. Happily, Gilgamesh heads for home clutching the plant, certain of his success. The journey is long and while Gilgamesh crosses the desert, he comes across an invitingly cool pool of water. Since no one is around, he leaves the plant on the ground and takes a dip. When he is refreshed, he reaches for the plant just in time to see a serpent glide away with it in its mouth. The king is forced to return home without the immortality he craves.

While the Babylonian serpent keeps human beings from immortality, the Edenic serpent robs them of it by claiming that they will have it if they will do opposite to God’s instructions. In the priestly creation, no mention of death is found: chaos powers are separated from those that give life. In the JE creation, death is introduced in the command of Yahweh to the man and, as shown above, equals evil. In this first of dialogues of Genesis 1-11, the serpent introduces the concept of immortality as the reversal of creation. With his words, he tears down the basis of the first human beings’ relationship with God: 1 the ability to know for certain God’s will (“Has God said...?”), a constant Babylonian uncertainty; 2) a deliberate ambiguity (has God said, you shall not eat of any or of all the trees?); 3) the ability to

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52 During the early periods, the dragon is shown in art as “an independent fertility symbol” who was not portrayed as hostile but rather as a “benign and peaceful influence” (Alberto R. W. Green, The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East [BJS 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 28-30. Even in the Akkadian work, Etana, the serpent is the victim of ultimate abuse by an eagle and goes to Šamaš, the god of justice for compensation. In Chinese tradition to this day, the dragon is viewed as the superior king of all beasts.

53 Green, The Storm-God, 81-87. The concept of the snake as hostile to deity and needing subduing comes from Anatolia and is reflected also in Syrian art; in the later periods, the portrayals reveal a fully subdued serpent (Green, The Storm-God, 116-120), in keeping with the general tone of the priestly creation.


55 The ancient mind had little concept of “eternal life.” One lived on in one’s descendants; consequently, barrenness was considered a terrible calamity.

56 There are several translations of this myth. For example, see Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago, 1949).

57 Even in Etana, the hero’s ride to heaven is potentially undermined by the serpent getting permission from Shamash to cease the eagle, deprive him of his pinions, and leave him in a pit.

58 One of the features of this unit is the notion of “firsts”: the first creation, first human beings; first naming (which, interestingly, parallels the invention of writing which began with lists of names of objects), first marriage, first dialogue, first temptation, first conversation with God, first birth of a child, first murder/homicide/fratricide, first act of revenge, first flood, first boat, first rainbow, first war hero, first postdiluvian city, etc.

59 In Babylonian belief, this ability to know the will of the gods was unavailable. It is the basis of a constant tension in a variety of ancient Mesopotamian texts. See, for example, the Babylonian Theodicy, in which the sufferer wishes he knew just what the gods wanted because nothing he tried seemed to have any effect.
know for certain exactly what God has said; 4) the presentation of an incestuous, uninvited intrusion between the relationship by an outsider who has a “different viewpoint;” 5) a direct contradiction of what God has said (“you shall not surely die”); 6) a false promise of a new experience, a reality created solely by words without a basis in substance (“you shall be like god(s) knowing good and evil”).

When a trickster enters the conversation, everything changes. In healthy conversation, in which openness and trust flow freely, the different voices will both be respected (listened to) and discerned. Not all voices have the truth, but in the community of a common belief system, the different speakers can help to correct one another. Furthermore, openness and respect predispose candid caution and discrimination so that while every speaker is appreciated and valued, not every idea presented is equally cherished or assumed to be true. The process toward the ideal God intended in the Garden is thus a community effort.

Community conversations change dramatically when one of the voices ceases to be forthright. In Genesis 3, the serpent uses crafty speech. The word “subtle” (RSV) is the first of the frame of this pericope because it suggests a mixture. The concluding thought is that God knows good and evil. To be sly, cunning, crafty, or tricky—all meanings of this same word—is to use indirect speech with the intent of leading someone astray. Even more significant, subtle talk is the utilization of words for some goal other than truth and in such a way as to allow them more than one sense. Such a “mixture” of language and meaning, truth and non-truth is the opposite of the priestly creation order in which separation of chaos and order are a central feature.

By the time the first woman perceives that her imagination has been kidnapped by an trickster, she has been thoroughly duped into believing that 1) God does not say what he means; 2) he does not mean what he says; and 3) that believing and obeying what the serpent says instead can create a whole new reality for her: she would become like God knowing good and evil.

Without asking questions of her enchanting conversationalist, Eve accepts the gift of fruit from his hands. This fruit, she believes, is magical: it has supernatural qualities to change her internally from the outside in, to give her the wisdom of the gods, to enable her to know good and evil, and to make her in God’s image. This construct is reminiscent of the kings of “cosmic rebellion”: the King of Babylon in First Isaiah and the Prince of Tyre (Ezek. 28).

Excursus 2: The King of Babylon, the Prince of Tyre, and the Serpent

The myth that no myth of rebellion was in existence in ancient times has been shown to be potentially false by Hugh Page in The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion. In his book, he shows support for a commonality in Ugaritic mythology for the two mythic figures, the King of Babylon (Isaiah 14) and the Prince of Tyre (Ezekiel 28). By using similar constructs (see below) to describe this rebellion, the serpent—as a perfect, most wise (an ancient correspondent for the term translated “more subtle” might be that of Atrahasis: watamasis “very wise”; literally, “wide of ear,”) creature made by God to the lowest of reptiles made to crawl in the dust—becomes the prototype of these two rebellions. It is for this reason that I believe the final redactor of Genesis 1-11 to be of the wisdom tradition. (This tradition nowhere else encompasses both JE and priestly traditions so this is possibly not a tenable position. Perhaps this is why, from an ancient Near Eastern scholarly perspective, it is necessary to revisit the entire validity of the Documentary Hypothesis.)

Westermann, shows extensive parallels between Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Genesis 2-3. Parallels between Genesis 2-3 and other ancient Near Easter literature such as the Adapa myth and the Enkidu pericope of the Gilgamesh Epic are also noted. Westermann goes so far as to state:

This text [Enkidu] shows that it is certain that Gen 2-3 had a pre-history both in Israel and in the Ancient Near East. Though the thesis of many interpreters that there is no direct parallel to Gen 2-3 still holds, it must nevertheless be modified. It is not merely a case of single motifs, but of the same succession of similar motifs which occur in several other texts.

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60 With the term kol, the phrase can have two different meanings: 1) “any tree in the garden”; 2) “all the trees of the garden.” If the first is correct, then, the implication is that all of the trees must be avoided by the woman for food; if the second is correct, then one or some of the trees must be avoided by the woman.


63 Westermann, Genesis, 245-248.

64 Westermann, Genesis, 247.
The first seeks ascendancy to the ancient Near Eastern assembly of the great gods,\textsuperscript{65} the second “corrupted his wisdom for the sake of his beauty”—\textsuperscript{66}—the exchange of the internal for the external. Beauty cannot be the issue here since the prince is not only said to have been made beautiful but is extolled for his beauty. The heart of the human-to-god complex is that in their attempt to become divine, human beings seek power and economic prosperity instead of true wisdom and in turn devalue their true internal worth, as made in the divine image.

The woman’s belief in the serpent’s words lead her to take the fruit and now the original creation plan is reversed. The original layout was of human equality under God and over animals with plants being

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
GOD & maintained as food for both animals and human beings. The woman has listened to (i.e., obeyed) an animal (over whom she was to rule), and as a result has eaten a plant divinely commanded not to be eaten or death would ensue. As a result of listening to the serpent’s “wisdom,” the woman has entered a new reality, in which the promise of reaching divinity is shattered by the realization of nakedness. This nakedness is not merely the result of eating “forbidden fruit,” but is the result of listening to false wisdom.  \\
\hline
MALE & FEMALE &  \\
\hline
ANIMALS &  \\
\hline
PLANTS &  \\
\hline
GROUND &  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Depending on their intent (the speaker), their meaning (the listener), and their genuine basis in reality (the truth), words have the ability either to create wholeness and peace (verily, the image of God: human beings...shall live by every word that proceeds by Lord’s mouth\textsuperscript{67}) or nakedness and shame. Words based on actions of human harmony have power to create enduring bonds of trust among people. But words without substance, such as lies and deception, strip people of their dignity and self-respect while promising eternal life of unending personal fulfillment. Such words completely leave the woman vulnerably naked of a true reality: the serpent, with the most artful cunning, assumes that she has not yet become “like God knowing good and evil.” \textit{Thus with a word, she who with the man was created in the image of God has been stripped of that image.}

The result is that for the fruit eaters reality has completely changed. A top-to-bottom unraveling of relationships takes place in creation. The woman gives to the man; who can refuse a gift when that is all human beings have known up to this time (when creation economy is that of giving and receiving and giving again)? But the gift is destined to split apart the one-fleshliness of the couple’s union. The absence of the male voice from the dialogue at the tree of knowledge suggests an unfair conversation. According to the Hebrew text, the man was “with her” and yet he does not speak.

Voiceless individuals in the Hebrew Bible are seen as victims of abuse.\textsuperscript{68} Just as it is deemed “not good” by God in the JE creation story that man should be alone, so it is “not good” by inference that woman should have to deal with a trickster alone. Nevertheless, this highlights the equally uneven absence of the woman in the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge. Has the man failed to tell her? Was this his role to do so? The text does not answer this problem, yet it purports that such an unequal dialogue not only puts the woman at a severe disadvantage, but creates an even greater opportunity for dialogue to end and two monologues to take place instead. Between the serpent and the woman, however, there \textit{seems} to be a free-flowing exchange. What could possibly go wrong?

The answer is very simple: one voice dominates and controls. It asks questions that trip the listener; it spews out contradictions. Conversation is not taking place at all because the \textit{intent} of the serpent is not to communicate honest

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{65} Isaiah 14:13-14.  \\
\textsuperscript{66} Ezekiel 28:17.  \\
\textsuperscript{67} Dt. 8:3.  \\
\textsuperscript{68} I have shown this on a number of occasions when presenting such stories as Hagar, Manoah’s wife, and the Levite and the Concubine. See Jean Sheldon, “The Exaltation of Hagar and Manoah’s Wife: God Challenges Society,” presented at Women of the Word, Berrien Springs, Mich., October 14, 2004. Also, ibid., “Reading the Bad in Our Story: A Prerequisite to Redemption (A Study of Judges 19-21),” paper presented November 21, 1997, at the annual Adventist Society for Religious Studies Meeting in San Francisco, California.
\end{flushright}
opinions or truth with words understood readily to his audience, but rather to persuade the woman to do something which her creator has cautioned the man will lead to death. Persuasion with empty words is to create new realities for people in which they become the victims of the persuader’s control. When control is the object, all conversation ceases. When words are used chiefly to control another, the words are deprived of their truest meaning. The resulting manipulation, lies, and deception form the heart of verbal violence.

This reversal of creation is further established when, in the Taggeist, their Creator calls to them, “Where are you?” Now embarrassed over their transition from a reality of simplicity of innocence (naked but not ashamed) to that of denudedness, they attempt to hide. The sexual connotations cannot be overlooked: to be simple in innocence is to be able to enjoy the demands of a physical union without loss of personhood; whereas to be denuded is to be stripped by another of one’s sense of wholeness and personal control.

Why has this horror been applied to the relationship of the man and woman to their creator instead of to themselves? Or does it play a dual role—and if so, why is it applied to God?

The best answer comes from two areas—the law and the prophets. In the earliest to the latest prophets (Hosea to Ezekiel) marriage is the metaphor for Israel’s relationship with Yahweh. In Hosea, this is particularly applied in the contrast between baal as both a lordly deity and the legal term for husband and Yahweh as Israel’s ‘ish. The latter term denote the notion of “husband” as a peer equal to the wife (‘issah) and is used by JE to help establish the equality between the man and the woman. Applied to God by Hosea, it suggests that the relationship of God to his people is to be one of unilateral non-dominant relationship. This is further inferred by the second commandment of the Ten Words (also JE) not to make anything in God’s image for worship. From a literary perspective, the imperative—“you shall now bow down to them”—is parallel to the seventh commandment not to commit adultery. Thus prostitution is forbidden, not only as an act of worship but as a perception of theology. It is part of the slavery, Yahweh wishes Israel to avoid.

By receiving the serpent’s words and ingesting them like food into her mind, the first human beings shift their perceptions of themselves and of God from a relationship devoid of violence to one soon to be characterized by terms denoting managerial force. A new reality has dawned.

C. A Foursome Conversation

The next conversation involves four voices: God, the man, the woman, and the serpent. God calls to the man and the woman, “Where are you?” When the truth finally comes out—they hid because they were naked, the divine response to the man’s excuses for hiding part of the conversation between the woman and the serpent was left out: “Who told you you were naked?” The term “told” (ngad) or “reported” belongs to the sphere of divination, prophecy, and the like. Did the magical fruit they ate give them this information? Or did the serpent? The narrator has already stated that they were naked from the day of their creation, but, he adds, “they were not ashamed.” These words highlight the possibility that the serpent’s voice has stripped them of their lack of shame; otherwise they would not feel the need to hide.

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69 It may be possible that the ruah hayyōm connotes the cool time of day (perhaps either morning or evening) when the western breeze can turn the tide in the toils in vineyard, orchard, or field. This time of day provides the appropriate ambience for conversation; in the morning this often took place in terms of cases at the city gate; in the evening, it is possible that parties and family gatherings were found. See the book of Ruth as an example of speaking of Taggeist.


71 The Ten Words refer to articles of a divine set of laws. These articles are comprised of fourteen imperatives (the actual “commands” of the Decalogue). Seven of these imperatives govern the relationship of human beings to God; the other seven govern it with one another. When placed in parallelism, one can readily see that the commands of each side reflect those of the other in the same order. Since this is planned as a future paper/published article, I am footnoting it here to reserve it for that purpose.

72 The Ten Words begin with the statement that Yahweh is bringing Israel out of the house of slavery. The stipulations that follow in this covenant (often likened by scholars to an ancient suzerainty treaty) have to do with cultic and spiritual abuses often found in the other religions of the ancient Near East.

73 Gen. 3:11.

74 Gen. 2:25
In the ancient Near East, nakedness is a symbol of death.\textsuperscript{75} The body that came out of the womb—winkled red, covered with blood, and decidedly devoid of clothing—often returned to the dust (earth womb) the same way.\textsuperscript{76} This is not so portrayed in the details of dying in Qoheleth, but rather as the denuding of bodily functions, chiefly the senses of hearing, smelling, touch, taste, and sight.\textsuperscript{77} The scenes portrayed by the flaying of Job,\textsuperscript{78} may have to do with the hundreds of bodies strung naked along the desert floor between Palestine and Assyria/Babylon. War prisoners often knew that they would be handcuffed \textit{naked} to the prisoner ahead of and behind them; they would then be dragged and goaded along across miles of hot dirt, deprived of adequate food, water, and rest, only to perish, their bodies kicked out of line and left to lie on the dust to darken in the hot sun beside the bleached bones of victims before whose families could not afford the trek to recover their bodies.\textsuperscript{79} The concept of "dust-to-dust" was very real in that setting.

The setting, then, may be that of prisoners of war who were taken captive to serve as war slaves for the conquering nation. Since both images of war and hard labor are present in Genesis 3,\textsuperscript{80} we can suppose that the JE writer (or perhaps a later editor) saw the interchange between the serpent and the woman as the stripping of human autonomy and dignity and the transference from P's creation order to its reverse. This is outlined in the divine responses to each conversant. The once silent man blames the woman and infers that she was not a "good gift" from God but a pawned object who led him into his current state of mind.

Yahweh does not judge him then, but immediately turns to the woman who rightfully but also irresponsibly blames the trickster serpent. The first curse falls, without allowing the perpetrator room for speech—not on the woman or the man, but the serpent. Yahweh does not curse those who fall into deception and trickery. Nor is he eager to pronounce a curse on people. One of the outstanding features of curses in the Hebrew Bible is that, unlike those of the ancient Near East in general, the biblical curse is never accomplished by God, but rather by some other mysterious force. While the curse shall not causeless come, its cause was never admitted to be God.\textsuperscript{81}

In ancient Near Eastern thought, a curse or a blessing was understood to create new realities on whom the blessing or curse was placed. A person's words were considered to possess power to do what was said.\textsuperscript{82} A blessing or curse could not easily be retracted and consequently, when Isaac gives Esau's blessing to Jacob, it is more binding than a modern will. Modern legal documents could be altered, but words could not be taken back no matter how desirous it might be. Jephtha's vow is therefore not a legal statement but an invoking of higher powers if he does not carry it out. For this reason, later laws suggest that exceptions may be made for women whose husbands wish to rescind their vows.\textsuperscript{83}

The first curse in this segment of "firsts" is placed on the serpent.

\begin{quote}
Because you have done/made this,
you are cursed
more than all the beasts and creatures of the field.
On your belly you shall go
And dust you shall eat
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{75} E.g., In Inanna's descent into the netherworld, she does not immediately die, but is stripped first of everything on her person and finally is reduced to tainted meat. Her nakedness is a visual manifestation of her death.

\textsuperscript{76} Job 1:21.

\textsuperscript{77} Qoh. 12.

\textsuperscript{78} "Naked I came…naked I shall return" (Job 1:21). This nakedness is more metaphorical than real in Job: when he says "without my flesh" (Job 19:26), he is using hyperbole.

\textsuperscript{79} The ultimate disgrace in ancient cultures was to remain unburied. See 1 Sam. 31:8-13; 2 Kings 9:25-37; etc.

\textsuperscript{80} The word \textit{šālep} in Gen. 3:15 is certainly a war term.

\textsuperscript{81} An excellent example of this contrast is found in Moshe Weinfeld, \textit{Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School} (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 129n. See also S. Gevirtz, \textit{The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible}, I, 750, cited in ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} Thus a spoken prophecy had the ability to create the collapse of a government (Jeremiah), or the release of war prisoners (Isaiah); God's word went forth and prospered wherever he sent it (Isaiah 55:11); a blessing or a curse spoken had the effect of the words upon the person to whom it was directed. Though this was, perhaps, more evident in Israel than in the rest of the ancient Near East, it can be said generally that spoken word was power. Perhaps this was truer also in a less literate society and thus harks back to a time of oral tradition.

\textsuperscript{83} See Num. 30:1-15.
All the days of your life.
Long-standing enmity I will put
Between you and the woman,
Between your progeny and her progeny.
He shall crush you, the [cunning] head.

While you shall crush him [at] the heel.\textsuperscript{84}

The play on the words—cunning (\(C\) arûm), cursed (\(C\) ärûr), and naked (\(C\) arûm)—suggests a playful emphasis on the concept that the nakedness of the first man and woman left them vulnerable to cunning; their surrender to that cunning brought a curse and left them open to the death which nakedness in the ancient Near East represented.\textsuperscript{85}

To crawl in the dust was to end up abjectly demoted; to eat dust has strong literary overtones of 1) consumption of human beings who were created from dust; 2) death within the soon-to-be acknowledged “neotruth”: dust-to-dust; human sacrifice, offered as burnt offerings in which gods/God was understood to “eat” or “consume” the human offerings in order to be appeased. This last is the first literary hint of what will eventually emerge into a major theme that culminates in the Tower of Babel story.

Just as the serpent is demoted from supremely wise to utterly degraded, so the woman continues the rest of the reversal of creation order: 1) she will find herself a victim of pain in childbirth. The very role for which women have been esteemed (or undervalued if non-producing), will cause her intense pain. Furthermore, she will now find man dominating her. The image evoked by mšl is that of comparing two halves with each other; rather than allowing them equality. No motive clause is established for this loss of equality; its absence is unique to the woman but not to the man—a factor which suggests that the woman was not told of the command not to eat. She therefore is suffering the inherent consequences of succumbing to the serpent’s cunning.

Because the man listened to the voice of the woman and disobeyed God’s command, he is now to complete the reversal of creation order. Because of him, the other curses rest upon the ground and only indirectly on him who was made from it. From now on, he will do the work for which men the world over have been valued—through hard toil which would bring sweat to his brow. The thorns and thistles would multiply and threaten his sustenance and thus human life until finally he would succumb to the ground. The ultimate dominating factor, then, would be his origin, the \(C\) adémá. The \(C\) adémá plays a major role from Genesis 2 on, as if to underline the emphasis on the effects on the earth from sin. While this may be an overtone from an early belief in the “womb of the earth,” it moves beyond that into the realm hardly conceivable to the rest of ancient human thinking—cause and effect relationships.

| GROUND | Thus the reverse order of creation places the ground as the now most dominating force, due to the surrender of human dignity and will to a plant, in imagination that it possess magical powers to create wisdom; and the woman will be subjugated to the man because of listening to an animal.\textsuperscript{86} The narrator does not inform us of God’s role in all of this except in one place: God promises to put enmity between the woman and the serpent in an ultimate battle in which the woman’s progeny would crush the cunning head of the serpent with its wisdom, and the serpent would only crush her Achilles’ heel, perhaps a symbol of her having walked toward false wisdom.\textsuperscript{87} |
| PLANTS | |
| ANIMALS | |
| MAN | |
| WOMAN | |
| GOD | |

\textsuperscript{84} For help on this difficult poetry, I have relied on U. Cassuto, \textit{A Commentary on the Book of Genesis; Part I: From Adam to Noah} (Israel Abrahams, trans.; Jerusalem: Magnes; Hebrew University, 1961), 161.

\textsuperscript{85} On a more practical level, perhaps this wordplay was created as a mnemonic device for educational purposes.

\textsuperscript{86} In support of this perception is Paul’s perception of the results of divine wrath in Romans 1:18-32.

\textsuperscript{87} Definite overtones exist in both the P and JE stories of creation and the fall which belie a disdain for false gods. The six days of creation may be attempts to lower the level at which various elements such as sun and moon, the tannin, and other creatures, even plants were worshipped. In JE, the rulership of human beings over the \(C\) adémá is made especially clear lest anyone think that human beings were to worship orders lower than themselves. Here the tree of knowledge is false wisdom, symbol familiar to Proverbs 5-9 in which true Lady Wisdom bears the fruit of faithfulness to one’s spouse while Lady Folly is likened subtly to Asherah, the consort of El, chief of the Canaanite pantheon of gods.
Excursus 3: The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Tree of Life, and the Rise of Domination

The symbolism of Genesis 2-3 suggests strongly that human beings were created to be royalty, god-like in both role and function. This is symbolized by the garden—a place in the Bible for human sexual union (Song of Songs), for receiving wisdom, as well as a dwelling place for gods (Ezekiel 28:13). The motif of a tree (supposedly by Wyatt to be a two-sided tree—life on one side and knowledge on the other—as in Christian iconography) is overwhelmingly representative of royalty as well as wisdom.

The tree as a symbol of kingship is found in Daniel 4 where the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s bout with insanity is represented by the cutting down of the tree symbolic of Nebuchadnezzar’s prowess. The language used to describe the tree is very reminiscent of that ascribed to the King of Uruk via the messenger in Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta. In Assyrian iconography, the tree is intended to represent the king’s prowess and ability to maintain fertility throughout the land. In the Neo-Assyrian Period, the tree was replaced “with scenes of warfare.” These scenes were intended to persuade the visitors of state to accept the obvious “benevolent power” of the Assyrian king and to recognize that if one did not submit to that power, one could expect terrible punishments, but if the vassal nation maintained its tribute, it would be treated well. The effect was no doubt the same as that on visitors to the Hampton Court of William and Mary of Orange.

The fact that the tree represented Ninurta, the deity of kingship and the prototypical persona of royalty, suggests a strong correlation between “tree” and “king.” As the god of kings, Ninurta was also the deity of the royal hunt, the engagement of which was intended to demonstrate the king’s prowess (if he could wrestle with lions, why not with other kings?). The insertion of Nimrod into the post-Biblical genealogy of Genesis 10:8-10 is no accident, but rather, the name Cush (Ethiopia) is a literary allusion to Kish, the ancient Mesopotamian seat of kingship and a city that lay just southeast of later Babylon. Many Mesopotamian kings proclaimed their universal power by referring to themselves as “king of Kish,” a name that had almost equal significance to “king of the four corners of the earth.” Nimrod, then, was not an Ethiopian, but rather is related to the ancient Assyrian site of Nimrud. Just what the correlation might be is difficult to tell, apart from tradition. Nevertheless, the name Nimrod in the Bible seems rather clearly to be a theological perversion of Ninurta, since its meaning in Hebrew is “we shall rebel” or if read as a cohortative, “let us rebel,” and its Semitic consonantal roots are the same as those of Ninurta. The fact

90 Lapinkivi, Sumerian Sacred Marriage, 225.
92 Barbara Neveling Porter, Trees, Kings, and Politics: Studies in Assyrian Iconography (OBO 197; Fribourg: Academic Press/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 26-27. Though she takes exception to Simo Parpola’s views (“The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy,” JNES 52/3 [????]: 161-208) of the tree as justification of the king’s absolute power on the basis that it drops out of iconographic materials in the later period, she admits that economic changes took place that allowed for this change in light the tree’s earlier ties to “ideas of agricultural abundance.” One can easily see how an intellectual change from agricultural prosperity to political prosperity would allow for the tree to be replaced by force of arms as the telling symbol of a king’s prowess.
93 Porter, Trees, 81-97.
94 The first room of state contained huge wheels comprised of retired-from-war rifles on its walls. From there the treatment of visitors was cordial and welcoming.
95 Annus, The God Ninurta, 156-159.
96 According to Joan Oates (Babylon [rev. ed.; London: Thames and Hudson, 1986], 10), Kish was “one of the earliest ‘seats of kingship’.”
97 Ibid., 28
98 The consonants t and d interchange in Semitic languages.
that Nimrod’s empire extends over both Assyria and Babylon suggests that the author/redactor was not predisposed to write history as much as to delineate the ideological ties between Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. That this figure is legendary is supported by the eponymous designation of “mighty man before Yahweh.” If symbolized by a tree, the placement of Nimrod/Ninurta at this juncture in the overall schemata of Genesis 1-11 makes a fitting frame for an inclusion between Genesis 2:9 with the planting of two trees by Yahweh, and Genesis 10:8-10 with the human planting of the royal king of ancient Mesopotamia. The fact that Nimrod has no progenitors strengthens his ideological significance to the passage. This highlights the perception, then, that royalty is built upon choosing life and true life is found in wisdom.

In addition to its symbolism of royalty, the tree recalls an ancient story, Inanna and Šuakletuda, in which Inanna descends from heaven and earth to the mountain (KUR) with the purpose of creating judgment—discriminating between truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, perpetrator and innocent victim. In the garden of Šuakletuda, there grew a sacred tree—an enormous popular which provided unending shade throughout the day. At the base of that tree, Inanna, wearied with her goings about, falls asleep. By sleeping there, Inanna appears to become a part of that tree. When the gardener, Šuakletuda, finds her, he seizes the belt of seven me's (symbolic of acquired power for judgment or serving the destinies) on her vulva and rapes her while she is asleep. The results of this terrible act are effected on the land and it takes Inanna three trips to her father for help to finally assuage her wrath by first wreaking vengeance on the land and finally finding the rapist and sentencing him to death.99

The correlative elements of this story and the Genesis 3 telling of the serpent and the woman are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garden of KUR</th>
<th>Garden of Eden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacred tree</td>
<td>Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inanna</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardener Šuakletuda</td>
<td>Cunning serpent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seizes her me’s (powers of judgment)</td>
<td>Gives her fruit to make her wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardener rapes Inanna</td>
<td>Serpent tricks her of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardener must be found</td>
<td>Woman and man hide from God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident that the Bible minimizes the intensity of the terrible deed of the serpent for the purpose of showing that redemption is possible. Nevertheless, to trick someone is to rape their mind and rob it of truth. This is more serious than readers of the story in Genesis 3 have been willing to concede. The perception of the tree as symbolic of royal power and authority makes this deed all the more significant. If the gardener is the owner of the tree, he is then the king (on par with the notion of king as shepherd). Surely, he could have awakened Inanna and attempted to persuade her to marry him. The fact that he seizes the me's, rapes her, and then attempts to hide from her suggests a telling aspect of rape—that indeed this act is not about sexual reproduction, fertility, or the like but rather an act of power and subjugation.

Interesting is the stylistic similarities between this story and those of the Enheduanna cycle.100 One can wonder if it is possible that the story is an ancient “feminist” version of the Sacred Marriage ritual.101 To a king in power, the cohabitation of a virgin (goddess) for several days would be elevating and sacred, but to the maiden, might it seem more like rape? What were the thoughts of a young woman in such circumstances? These are unanswerable questions, subjective as they are and without documentation to verify a woman's viewpoint. Nonetheless, in Assyrian iconography, we have a representation of such an act as a sacrificial offering. A woman is lying on an altar with the man clearly about to thrust himself into her. The sacrificial demeanor on the part of the woman, combined with visual portrayals of the faces, suggests from a man's viewpoint glorious power while from the woman's standpoint it is rape.

Herein lies the fruit of domination to which the final redactor of Genesis 1-11 is totally opposed. To be the most cunning, or the brightest among God’s creatures, to be the most powerful in the Garden of Eden, or the most beautiful, or the most perfect (Ezekiel 28) is to become an anti-god. The king of Babylon

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100 Sargon appointed Enheduanna to be high priestess of Nanna. According to J. N. Postgate ("Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad," in *CANE* [vol. 1; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995], 401), “we don’t in fact know if there was an old tradition of placing the ruler’s daughter in this role, but it seems likely.”
101 The “sacred marriage” ritual was a time when Sumerian kings cohabited with a virgin who represented Inanna in order to secure the divine authority of kingship. Two works helpful to understanding this ritual are Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage* and Gwendolyn Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994).
typifies this best in his attempts to be above, most, supreme, in short to be like the Most High. Such dominance-seeking is only occasionally condemned in the Hebrew Bible and thus constitutes a minor voice. Yet, unlike the major voices of control, supremacy, and power which run throughout from our impressions of the flood story to the plagues of Egypt to Sinai and through the prophets, this minor voice finds its strength in clear, concise statements which are unequivocal in nature.

Despite the fact that the first king of Israel has a father named Kish, and that Davidic tradition pits him against the giant/monster Goliath (whereas the historical tradition ascribes the killing of Goliath to David’s nephew) and brings in his previous hunting exploits while playing shepherd (and, anciently, all good kings were shepherds!), the prophetic voice through Samuel clearly warns Israel that to have a king like the nations around was tantamount to selling themselves into slavery—a breach of loyalty to the original Sinai Covenant whose stipulations were to be a bond toward Yahweh’s having released them from bondage. This underlies what I have found to be the chief concern in the theme of equality in Genesis 1-11: sin itself is a breakdown in on par relationships; the Elohim of creation practices Sabbath rest as among equals (unlike the Babylonian voice which states that rest is only for gods and not human beings who are created to be slaves of deity). The reversal of creation order suggests that sin inevitably results in someone taking the lead and ruling over others. This is the “foundation deposit stone” for the later Tower of Babel story.

False wisdom is the desire for supremacy. Such a desire changes the way we use words and the way we use words, in turn, changes the way we see reality and all of this ultimately affects our choices for or against eternal life.102 The woman was promised to be like god knowing good and evil. Yet in that promise lurked a lie—that godliness involved both good and evil. Does God really know evil? And from whom end—the perpetrator or the victim?103

Perhaps this is a question that can serve as one of the greater themes in the Old Testament. In various stories and within the prophets, one of the unique features of the Hebrew Bible is that human beings are allowed to question God and that God actually questions himself from time to time.104 Direct dialogue between human beings and God is understood to fade gradually throughout time to be replaced by the prophetic voice.105 In the Garden, there is no response by the couple as they are forced from their initial home. The divine discussion in the heavenly council smacks of a defensive attitude on the part of Yahweh; yet if it were true that evil would be eternally perpetuated by the first humans’ eating of the tree of life, the statement is made for everyone’s sake, not just God’s. On the other hand, if we are dealing in the author’s imagination with a two-sided or Siamese twin tree of knowledge and life, the issue is far more complex than we have heretofore thought. Whatever our interpretation of Yahweh’s words, the fear of humankind living forever with that knowledge is very real. They are therefore sent from the Garden toward death.

D. Dialogues and Destruction: the Cain and Abel Story

102 This is brought out in the Adapa story, according to Shlomo Isre’el, Adapa and the South Wind: Language Has the Power of Life and Death (MC 12; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 107-149.

103 How can we say that a comment about “good and evil” is really not to be taken seriously, especially when—as I have shown—the theme of good (and evil) is clearly a reductionist tie to the various stories that make up Genesis 1-11? In an attempt to be comprehensive, if not also traditional, within a small space the recent work, edited by Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Theodicy in the World of the Bible [Leiden: Brill, 2003]), hardly does justice to the story of the theme of good and evil in Genesis 1-11. Particularly the story of the tree of knowledge gets only passing treatment because of a smattering of other works (e.g., Qohelet, Psalms, Apocalyptic/early Jewish, Romans, Revelation) that deal with it. Cornelis Houtman’s fairly brief chapter, “Theodicy in the Pentateuch,” deals mostly with JE (though not particularly deliberately), but only mentions Genesis 3:22 once in conjunction with Genesis 11. Once again, his focus is deductively (rather than inductively) thematic; such a method allows for a selectivity in treatment of Hebrew biblical texts. Perhaps, however, the lack of treatment is historical; for example P. C. Beentjes (“Theodicy in the Wisdom of Ben Sira,” in Theodicy in the World of the Bible [Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 2003], 524) notes that “it is rather striking that nowhere in the Book of Ben Sira the problem of theodicy is related to Gen. 2:8-3:24.” Though theodicy has been kept out of most biblical theologies, this has more to do with century-old prevailing views of dogma than it has to do with the nature of the Bible itself. It may well be (though predictions are always dangerous in the scholarly realm!) that when the question of theodicy is ferreted out of the Hebrew Bible, we who delight in assumptions that it really is there will be able to demonstrate that it is an underlying theme of the entire corpus.

104 This is one of the results of my dissertation (Sheldon, Book of Job, 210-250), in which I show that the divine speeches of the book of Job are indeed Yahweh’s defense.

Lest one think that we now have a break in the continuum of Genesis 1-11, a literary foreshadowing is placed at the end of the story of the fall,\textsuperscript{106} that of skin. The story states that before sending the first human pair out of the Garden of Eden, Yahweh clothes their nakedness with skin. The metaphor of skin has a clarifying significance within the story. Most commentators assume thatanimal skins are provided and thus this is the allusion to the first animal sacrifice—one of the hallmarks of ancient societies. Yet the text provides us with “skin” (קֵרֵן) and thus also with the conclusion to the play on words inclusio mentioned above.\textsuperscript{107} In the mind of the artist, to receive skin is to admit of nakedness and exposure (again with an element of death, since the word for “sepulcher” comes from the same root). Skin, therefore, may not be a blessing and may actually hide the vulnerable, natural relationship the first humans have with each other and with God. Instead of being transparent, they now will forever hide beneath their protective skin.\textsuperscript{108}

The notion of clothing with skin has an additional bearing on the Cain and Abel story, especially if one assumes that Abel brought the appropriate sacrifice—a burnt offering or sin offering of a male lamb or ram. Skin would then allude to the idea that it was God who initiated the first sacrifice in order to clothe Adam and Eve.\textsuperscript{109} This is especially appropriate if one catches the allusion of Eve’s having given birth to Cain. She states about her firstborn: “I have acquired [גְּנִית] a man with Yahweh.” Scholars have debated the meaning of גְּנִית. Essentially it is thought to have two roots and thus may mean either “to purchase” or “to procreate.”

If, with Westermann and Cassuto,\textsuperscript{110} one takes the latter as the more likely, one has still several choices. In her statement, “I have acquired a man with Yahweh,” Eve may mean 1) that she is finally gotten her husband because together they have produced an offspring and it took Yahweh’s being with her to get her through it; or 2) that she has given creation to a (future) man with divine help.\textsuperscript{111}

In either case, she has indirectly put Adam in his place, by suggesting that he was not a “helper” with her but rather she reigned on Yahweh who gave her this son. One can readily find a literary suggestion that Eve has taken the promise of Genesis 3:15-16 personally (not theologically!) and expects that this firstborn son will indeed deal with the serpent’s deception. The problem is that not only does she lash out indirectly at Adam but it is equally possible that she uses the verb to apply to childbirth in the sense “to acquire.”

According to Psalm 127:3,\textsuperscript{112} “sons are inalienable property from Yahweh; the fruit of the womb is a reward/wage.”\textsuperscript{113} The notion of children as acquisitions, property, chattel, is a very ancient one; in Eve’s mouth it conveys the extent of the serpentine deception: children are no longer little human beings created in the image of God (or even in the image of their parents who were created in God’s image\textsuperscript{114}) but rather are payment for toil. Solomon furthered this philosophy even more by fulfilling the prophecy of Samuel and reducing all aiens (if not some who were native sons of Israel) to his labor corvée in order to support his building projects.\textsuperscript{115} In the Ur III Period, a high

\textsuperscript{106} Some exist prior to this, but due to this being a paper and not a book we will have to skip them

\textsuperscript{107} See above. The word “skin” (קֵרֵן) comes from a root that looks similar to that of “curse” and which comes from the same root as the word for naked.

\textsuperscript{108} The concept of skin as human skin, not animal skin and the related concepts outlined below regarding Abel’s sheep as not an animal sacrifice but rather merely an offering was first brought to my attention by Linda Dale of Brookings, Oregon. Her study of these elements was solid and convincing and as I attempted at first to defend the traditional view, I was moved to change my mind by the evidence.

\textsuperscript{109} Since the first man and woman now are called by proper names, it seems appropriate to make this transition here.

\textsuperscript{110} Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 290; Cassuto, A Commentary, 199-200.

\textsuperscript{111} Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 290.

\textsuperscript{112} A psalm apparently in Solomon’s collection. In Hebrew, psalms attributed to persons do not necessarily denote authorship but rather, in the case of the king, that the psalm was written in honor of the king by courtiers or priests. It could also mean that the king collected psalms from various cultures and had them adapted for temple use.

\textsuperscript{113} The translation “inalienable property” for the noun nahālat is taken from HALOT 687. This noun refers to an inheritance that cannot be taken by force to pay indebtedness.

\textsuperscript{114} See the introduction to the first genealogy: Genesis 5:1-5.

\textsuperscript{115} See 1 Sam. 8:10-17; cf. 1 Kgs. 9:15-22.
percentage of children were put into slavery and prostitution for no traceable reason (such as war, famine, economic collapse) other than to use them like credit cards.  

As was noted above, the original societal structure was built upon principles of giving and serving. After the serpent changed the realities of Adam and Eve, a shift took place that realigned personhood with economic value. For Eve to state that she has acquired a man with Yahweh is tantamount to suggesting that Yahweh has enabled her, through childbirth to provide the solution to the serpent with strongly economic overtones. This will set the stage for what follows. It leaves open several questions: 1) Was Eve getting back at her absentee husband and suggesting that she would be childless were it not for Yahweh’s intervention? 2) Was Adam an absentee father as well as husband? 3) Was Cain named “acquisition” to reinforce that he was payment for her sin? 4) Was Cain’s upbringing (as well as Abel’s) affected to any degree by this kind of thinking?

These are not literary questions, but from a literary standpoint, we cannot afford to ignore the link between the economic value system (as opposed to the divinely appointed giving/grace system) established by human beings and the subsequent fall of Cain. Cain treats his brother not unsimilarly to the way his mother voices her view of him. The entire story is loaded with economic and political layers. Abel is mentioned first in a society that revered the firstborn. This is a foreshadowing of the entire patriarchical narrative which asserts that the firstborn always fails (perhaps Jesus drew on this in the parable of the prodigal son) and it takes the second born to accomplish the divine plan. In truth, however, these are dismantling of hierarchial traditions and are attempts to undermine a “first come first served or better served” mentality. God’s creation is about grace, not works or right of birth.

Just as skin was needed to protect human beings from their vulnerability, so relationships needed more than words and actions. Gift-giving broke down barriers when communication with words became difficult. Gift-giving turned easily into offerings to those who were offended and to God against whom one had sinned. From very primitive times and places, such offerings were made. Eventually, gift-giving became reciprocal (whether with gods or human beings), then a kind of expected exchange (as in “exchanging gifts”), then as outright barter, and finally full-fledged economics. Interestingly, however, the way early transactions took place appeared more closely to resemble gift-giving, as Claus Wilcke testifies:

And neither does one party “buy” nor does the other “sell,” rather one of them
Provides goods labeled “price (of the object)” and the other accepts (literally:
eats) it. This act of acceptance changes the object’s legal status: the provider of
the price may take possession....

It is only in later times that the concept of “consumer” developed. In the end the correlation between sacrifice and economy are indissoluble. It is impossible to know for sure which came first—economics or sacrifices. What this suggests, though, is that two institutions, one religious, the other secular—sacrifices and economics—arose out of a desire for making up with an offended party by means of giving a gift, something human beings are still prone to do today. It is this background that is necessary to understand the “sin-offering” of Cain.

Contrary to most translators, scholars, and general readers, there is only one term that can be taken in a purely sacrificial sense in the Cain and Abel story. The terms used to depict what they brought to God are the same. Both Abel and Cain brought a minhah. A minhah is an offering; in the Hebrew cult, it can be joined with a burnt offering or a sin-offering and thus burnt together with it, but alone, a minhah is a gift; in political settings, it is a tribute. There is nothing clearly stated in the text that would lead the reader to suppose that Abel offered a lamb as a sacrifice in obedience to an earlier divine command to bring sacrificial offerings. Even further, there is less evidence that the divine displeasure over Cain’s offering had anything to do with its being fruit instead of a blood-sacrifice. Only if one were to read into the text the entire priestly cult, and even then with a fair liberty at stretching the meanings, could one come up with the traditional reading of this story.

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117 These are found in the wording of the priestly creation story: “after its kind”; “behold, I have given you every...” See Gen. 1:11,12. The concepts are also reflected in the gift of perpetual food to human beings (Gen. 1:29-30).


The closest reassurance of this tradition I have been able to find in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is the book of Hebrews’ denunciation of Cain’s sacrifice over against Abel’s. The verb used there is prospērho and refers to the offering of a sacrifice such as a burnt or sin offering. The inference that it was Abel’s faith that made his sacrificial offering more acceptable than Cain’s, could lead us to suppose that had Cain had more faith, he would have offered a lamb. However, further evidence for the gift idea, comes from the middle part of the verse which states that God bore witness by accepting his gifts (the Greek word here is the plural dative form of dōrōn). Thus even the author of Hebrews recognizes that gift giving lies at the heart of both Cain’s and Abel’s offerings. The LXX is even more difficult and emphasizes the possibility that we have long listened to a speaker not part of the Cain and Abel story: while Abel offers a gift (dōrois), Cain offers a sacrifice (thysia)! The divine acceptance is not stated dramatically: God accepts the giver, Abel, and his gifts.

Cain’s response to God’s lack of notice is visual rather than auditory: Cain was angered (the Hebrew makes it clear from Cain’s perspective that God’s lack of attention to his sacrifice caused his anger) and his face fell. At this juncture, God enters the conversation verbally and asks: “Why have you gotten angry and why has your face fallen?”

So far, when God dialogues with his creation under moments of duress, he does so by asking questions. Indeed, divine questioning remains the hallmark of the Old Testament God (one need only look at the longest dialogue in the Hebrew Bible—an argument between Moses and God at the burning bush—or the divine speeches in the book of Job to see the same pattern). This God is a dialoguiste par excellence. Only when one asks thoughtful, caring questions, can we be certain that dialogue (not dual monologue) is taking place. When one asks sincere questions, one is not just speaking but also listening.

But God doesn’t stop with gentle questions; he reaches into the heart of the matter and probes deeply: “If you did not do what is good, should it be acceptable? And if you did not do what is good, sin is a beast crouching at the entrance; its desire is for you but you must rule over it.” These words are pregnant with meaning. They recall Micah 6:8 (“he has shown you O man what is good…”); they suggest that doing good is more important than bringing an offering to make up for bad deeds; and thus they remind us of another prophetic voice:

Does Yahweh take as much delight in the burnt offering
and sacrifices as in obedience to Yahweh’s voice?
See, to obey is better than sacrifice
and to listen carefully than the fat of rams.

If Cain does what is bad, God cannot accept his gift. To give someone a gift as a substitute for being a genuinely loving, reasonable human being is to undermine the image of God. To attempt to pay God back by killing one of his creatures for his benefit (food) is very much like a cat bringing its owners their pet canary and laying it dead at their feet. It suggests that we human beings and our relationships with one another are only as valuable as the gift we

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120 Heb. 11:4.
121 Hamilton (Genesis, 223) notes that even though Cain did not bring firstfruits in harmony with Lev.2:14, “the text does not indict Cain for not presenting the firstfruits.”
122 Here and in v. 7 the phrase “his face/your face fell/fall” is literally “his cheeks fell/your cheeks fall.” The noun pānāh is literally “cheeks” and thus requires a plural verb.
123 Gen. 4:7.
124 The problem with the question is that it can be translated more than one way. The way I have chosen seems to fit most literally with the Hebrew.
125 Again, unless all the other pieces of a “sacrifice” are present it is unfair to the text to assume that what Cain did wrong (sic! badly) was to offer fruit instead of a sacrificial lamb.
126 1 Samuel 15:22.
127 Not “wrong” in the rule-based sense. The most mature levels of morality are concerned with “goodness” rather than “rightness.”
128 Psalm 50:7-15 makes it clear that God does not eat the offerings that they bring, indicating that this was the conceptual practice for many in the Israelite community.
wish to use in substitution for genuine reconciliation. This is the heart of the difference between economic appeasement and real reconciliation or a cleansing of the relationship.129

In the story of Cain, it is Cain—not God—whose spirit waxes hot with anger and whose face falls. God’s reaction to his offering is one of indifference, not disdain. God simply does not notice. This is strong and suggests that there is no basis for a relationship. The fact that God attempts to enter into conversation with Cain and pleads with him to turn around suggests that God longs for loyal companionship with this first-born son of Adam and Eve. If Cain will not come humbly to God as he is, his gift will mean nothing either to him or to God. Instead sin is crouching like a demonic foe at the entrance of Cain’s mind. The final words recall creation and the disobedience of Cain’s parents: Its desire is for you (the same words used of Eve regarding Adam) but you must master it (the original rulership given to human beings over the world).

The most significant and troubling word in the conversation is “sin.” Of course, it means sin, but in other, cultic, contexts it often means sin-offering. Indeed, in usage throughout the Hebrew Bible, it is tied so intimately to “sin-offering,” that one can raise the question regarding whether the sin-offering was not an enactment of the deed by the sinner, since the atonement was effected by the priest after the slaying of the animal. A further problem involves the grammar of the text: the term “sin” (hatta‘i) is feminine; the participle, possibly denoting a demonic foe,130 is masculine.131 While one could simply emend the text, it still raises a question about what the writer had in mind.

Is it possible that several voices wrestled with a literary device to suggest to the reader that Cain is meditating something in his heart against his brother Abel that is viewed by God as more than mere murder? If one takes the various voices of the Hebrew Bible seriously, one could well ask whether the origins of the sin-offering might be that of blood sacrifice or even human sacrifice. Though this could only be by literary allusion, it is a foreshadowing of things to come.

In response to God’s injunction that sin/sin-offering is crouching at the door but Cain must master it, Cain takes open action in rebellion. His injunction to Abel—“Let us go out to the field”—is the middle point of the inclusio that begins—“Let us make human in our image…”—and ends— “Let us make bricks…” His words, seemingly innocuous, form the end of conversation. Abel and Cain will never speak to one another again. The question remains: Why does he wait to slay his brother until they are in the field?

The field could refer to where Cain grows his crops or it could be the place where Abel feeds his flocks. Is Cain angry because the sheep have eaten some of his own grain? Is the demon crouching at the door, lying like a sheep,132 or waiting hungrily like some predator? Or is he merely upset over divine disapproval of his offering and thus himself?

The response to God’s desire is one of open rebellion. Instead of mastering the demon within, Cain rises up against his brother and slays him. This is clearly a depiction of “the first homicide.” It is also the “first fratricide.” The elements in the story suggest all the things that lead to such an act—jealousy, anger, misunderstanding, perceived favoritism, self-pity, selfishness. Nevertheless, this is the first in a series of violent acts, the outcome of which cannot be reversed. Cain cannot bring Abel back to life. As the narrative unfolds, this appears to be the first human death. Was Cain prepared to see his brother lying dead from his own hand? What could lead to such a heinous act—a first-time response?

We will not know until the earth has become filled with violence and then cleansed of it. Then it is that the narrator clarifies in the first law against homicide. The motive clause suggests that when one takes a life, one destroys the image of God in humanity.

Whoever sheds the blood of a human,
by a human shall his blood be shed;
or God made human beings in his own image.133

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129 In the New Testament, the term for atonement is katallagē (“reconciliation”); in the Old Testament, it is kipper (“to wipe off” or “cleanse”). The latter is a better choice than the older meaning “to cover,” based on an Arabic cognate. Since then, scholars have been more logically attracted to the counterpart in Akkadian. Both verbs are the same form (Hebrew, Piel; Akkadian, D-form) and the same meanings work well in each of the respective texts in which the verbs are found.

130 Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 210.

131 Cassuto (From Adam to Noah, 210) mentions the problem in passing but does not attempt to solve it. For a review of solutions, see Hamilton, Genesis, 225-227.

132 Inspired by Hamilton’s (Genesis, 227) note that the verb “to crouch” normally means “to rest” and is used of sheep in the sense of lying down in Gen. 29:2.

133 Gen. 9:6, NRSV
The principle can work either way: a murderer must first have the image of God destroyed in him/herself before he/she can take a life. By taking another’s life, the murderer also destroys the image of God to the self and to all others aware of the deed. As in all victim stories, Abel’s voice is the only one not heard. He never responds to his brother except to submit to his commands. When slaughtered, another voice speaks, the voice of his blood crying from the ground. It is God who brings this voice to our attention. He tells Cain:

- What have you done?
- The voice of your brother’s blood
- is crying to me from the ground.
- And now you are cursed by the ground
- Which has opened its mouth
- To receive your brother’s blood from your hand.
- When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength;
- You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.

This is the silent voice of judgment: the earth cannot bear the blood of a human being because its role up to now has been to give life. In the ancient Near East, blood was significant as a means of carrying messages. Understood by Mesopotamians to be a seat of intelligence, it was a vehicle for conveying divine interpretations of future and present events through liver divination. Thus, to its ancient hearers, blood had a voice that could speak.

Curiously, it is the New Testament commentary on Israelite sacrifices, the book of Hebrews, which interprets the voice of Abel for us:

You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, . . . and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

The usual explanation is that Abel’s blood cries out for revenge, but this is only a partial interpretation. If Abel’s blood cries out for revenge than Jesus’ blood does not. Nevertheless, in anti-Semitic assaults, some Christians have been acting as if Jesus’ blood does cry out for revenge. Perhaps it is understood that sprinkled blood (i.e., blood that doesn’t touch the ground) is atoning blood whereas murdered blood soaks into the ground, leaving a barren waste behind. Yet the writer of Hebrews seems to see Aaronic concepts as beneath those of the true Messiah who did not come after the Aaronic order of things but after Melchizedek, who ironically never is stated to offer a blood sacrifice, but rather accepts tithe from the father of all spiritual members of God’s family. His intent is not to fix the eyes of his hearers on the temporal and touchable, but rather on the enduring and transcendent.

It seems that one more link needs to be recovered to complete our understanding. By inference, the writer of Hebrews accepts the perception that Abel’s sacrifice was the origin of human sacrifice. To contrast the blood of Jesus with the blood of Abel, in however a limited way, is to point out a commonality—that of sacrifice. When the pieces of the puzzle are put together—including Cain’s thrust at God: “Am I my brother’s [sheep] keeper?” and God’s possibly punned response, that a demonic desire is lying at the entrance like a sheep—it would appear that the use of hatāʾ is intended to suggest to the reader that Cain came to see his brother as the enemy and slew him in defiance of God. This may have become the origin of human, if not also, animal sacrifices.

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**Excursus 4: Interpreting the Priestly Cult**

Nothing has been recovered to date in the Bible that suggests that sacrifices were instituted by God as an ideal plan for humanity. By the time the Bible forthrightly recognizes God’s institutionalization of the priestly cult, people had already making sacrifices in various parts of the ancient Near East for many centuries. God initiates first a Passover celebration of his deliverance. This involved swabbing the doorposts with blood and eating the roasted lamb within the

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134 See Enel IV:131-132.
135 Interesting is the fact that the liver is the bloodiest organ in sacrificial animals.
137 Children were not the only human sacrifices; sometimes prisoners or war captives apparently were used. For an overview of early practices of human sacrifices, see Alberto R. W. Green, *The Role of Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (ASORDS 1; Missoula, Mt.: Scholars Press, 1975). Re: Cain cf. conceptually, Hyam Maccoby, *The Sacred Executioner: Human Sacrifice and the Legacy of Guilt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 11-26.
confines of family and home. The only “priest” is the male head of the household. The blood covers the firstborn, a prize when it came to human sacrifices.  

When Israel meets with God at the foot of Sinai, his first thought is not sacrifices (though Moses uses that as a means of barter with Pharaoh\(^{139}\)) but rather covenant. The prophetic voice, looking back makes this clear:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought them out of Egypt, I did not speak to them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.’”\(^{140}\)

The prophetic voice continues, pointing out that Israel in her stubbornness would not do as God commanded but went backward instead of forward. Ultimately not only did they offer animal sacrifices but their own sons and daughters “which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.”\(^{141}\)

Indeed, a close look at the “conversation” of texts indicates that the prophetic voice is correct. God only initiates a sanctuary because the people in fear beg for a mediator through Moses and refuse to listen to God’s voice or to converse with him directly. The slaughter of the three thousand by the tribe of Levi, is not directly commanded by God, but rather Moses seems to take it on himself in response to perceiving God as angry.\(^{142}\) In the subsequent interchange between him and God, the latter seems to plead for mercy on the people while Moses seems more inclined toward vengeance.\(^{143}\) In the ordering of the texts, the elaborate institutionalization of sacrifices and priests is a response to the golden calf incident. This is reinforced by the fact that it is Moses who bestows the priesthood on the Levites,\(^{144}\) and the commands about sacrifices and offerings are clearly given in a context of what is already being practiced by the people.\(^{145}\)

The mediating voices (mostly the interpreters of the Bible) will take one of two sides: 1) God worked through Moses and everything Moses said was directly from God;\(^{146}\) 2) Moses cooperated with God according to how he saw him revealed and though not always speaking ideally for God, his was the chief mediating voice and as God’s servant and friend, God stood behind him as any administrator would an employee. The latter is the stance I have chosen in my interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. It helps to explain most, if not all, of the difficult problems.

It seems clear to me that the ideal divine plan was never to have any animal or human sacrifices. The story of Cain and Abel is a reference point for how human (and possibly animal) sacrifices came into being. However, the conversation does not end here. Cain is clearly shaken by the message from God that the ground will no longer produce for him its vegetation. Rejected, angry, and shamed, he complains to God that anyone who sees him will kill him. This statement is a reference to the origins of tribal blood feud in which retaliation took place on the murderer by the clan of

\(^{138}\) Micah (6:1-8) points this out.

\(^{139}\) He shifts from arguing “‘Let my people go, that they may serve me,’ (Ex. 9:1, 13) to “we must hold a feast to Yahweh” (Ex. 10:9b) to “You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God… We do not know with what we must serve Yahweh till we get there” (Ex. 10:25-26).

\(^{140}\) Jer. 7:21-23, RSV.

\(^{141}\) Jer. 7:31; cf. vv. 24-34.

\(^{142}\) See Ex. 32:25-29; God later sends a plague (v. 35).

\(^{143}\) Though at first God seems angry, the wording seems to suggest rather that he was testing Moses for his response to the people’s faithlessness (Ex. 32:7-14). The sin required firm parental discipline (Ex. 32:30-34; 33:1-3), but it is God who also speaks for mercy without mentioning justice (33:18-19). In the ancient Near East, to look on someone in the face was usually to show favor, unless otherwise qualified. To turn the back would by contrast be to show one’s displeasure or anger. The irony of the Exodus 32:34 story is that to look upon God’s face (mercy) would be fatal to human beings while looking at his backside (anger) is not (33:20-23). Nevertheless, even that, reflected in Moses’ face to the people was more than they could bear (34:29-35; cf. 2 Cor. 3:7-18).

\(^{144}\) Ex. 32:29.

\(^{145}\) God is not portrayed as saying, “These are the sacrifices you are to offer me,” but rather the entire book of Leviticus discuss, “when you bring...”

\(^{146}\) See Ex. 33:7-11; Num. 12:7.
the victim. The mark God places on Cain protects him but also isolates him. Still rebellious, Cain proceeds to do the opposite of what God warned he would become, a wanderer on the earth: he settles down and builds a city, and calls his first-born son, “Dedicated.”

This name should alert us to the sad possibility that his son, despite his age was viewed in some way as sacrificed for the sake of the building of the city. Hyam Maccoby finds a correlation between human sacrifice and “some good consequence” that will be seen to flow from the slaying: a city will be founded, or a nation will be inaugurated, or a famine will be stayed, or people will be saved from the wrath of the gods, or a threatening enemy will be defeated. Such good consequences are exactly the results that were hoped for by the performance of human sacrifice.

Human sacrifice, then, may not be as far removed from penalty, punishment, retaliation, war, and all other manifestations of violence as we might think.

This trajectory toward wholesale violence takes an additional step in the story of Lamech, one of Cain’s descendants. Angered someone having wounded him (with or without cause, Lamech does not tell us), Lamech kills the man and then boasts to his two wives that if God protected Cain, how much more will he protect Lamech. Murder as retaliation for injustice brings in a new element. It suggests a worldview in which justice is retaliatory in nature rather than preventative or mediatory. When dealing with this perception, we usually pay high tribute to Hammurabi, sixth king of the First Dynasty of Babylon, whose laws seem to operate on a substitutionary principle known in the Bible as “eye-for-eye, tooth-for-tooth.” Yet the Genesis 1-11 suggests that retaliation is rooted in human nature before the deluge. Perhaps the focus of the text and its internal conversation would tell us that this principle more than any other led to the necessity of cleansing a blood-saturated earth.

E. The Flood: Sabbath from Violence

Unlike other flood stories of the ancient Near East, the biblical reason for such a catastrophe is equal to the horrors of a deluge. In Atrahasis, the flood is sent (among other life-destroying plagues) in an effort to lower the population and to allow the gods some rest from all the noise “when the land bellowed like a bull.” While it is true that the reference may be to war, it is also evident that only one deity, Enlil, Lord of the Air, seems to have a particularly vindictive attitude toward humanity. He sends the flood by getting the other gods to agree with him. Later, the gods accuse Enlil of not only depriving them of food offerings (and threatening them thereby with starvation) but also of killing their own offspring. The flood in Babylonian mythology is viewed with disdain and it is finally wise Ea who comes up with a solution to the problem of overpopulation by designing fewer births, more miscarriages, infant deaths, and so forth. This will eliminate the need for so many plagues.

In the biblical story, the flood is salvation. Three different portrayals of the problem—giants from the cohabiting of “the sons of God” with “the daughters of men,” wickedness of human thinking and imagination, and the earth becoming filled with violence—suggest that the world had become unsafe, and that if left to itself, every last human being would finally succumb to violence. This is reinforced if one translates Genesis 6:13 literally, as Robert


148 Intriguingly, the firstborn of Jared, a descendant of Seth is also named “Dedicated.” And he leaves society completely because God “took him.” Was he also a human sacrifice? The Hebrews commentator (11:5) states not—rather he did not see death. A distinction, then, can be made between a descendant of a murderer and a descendant of a righteous line.

149 A problem with this view is that Enoch (ben Cain) lived long and had offspring; on the other hand the name may represent some other symbolic sacrifice or the wish that he not be sacrificed.

150 Maccoby, The Sacred Executioner, 8.

151 See Green, The Role of Human Sacrifice, 201-203.


153 It is hard to imagine the reality of such a scenario, except that one exists in American history: the Pleasant Valley (Arizona) wars of the late 19th century when two large extended families—the Grahams and the Tewksburys—
Alter does: “And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with outrage by them, and I am now about to destroy them with the earth.’ The intent is clear: human beings are about to be brought to extinction by their own hands. In contrast to the anger of Enlil, Yahweh is grieved to his heart that he created human beings in the first place; if human; if they are going to destroy themselves anyway, he might as well blot them from the earth.

Into this “conversation” of violence enters a man whose name means “one who rests.” The link seems to be between his name and his planting of a vineyard, thus bequeathing to human beings the wine that delights the hearts of human beings and gods—or allows the poor who toil endlessly a few moments of forgetfulness. Yet this does not completely explain the significance of his name.

In Akkadian, one of the purposes of the verb nāhu is to soothe or appease. It is used in this manner only rarely (primarily in Ezekiel) in the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless in Mesopotamia, the appeasement of gods was the supreme purpose of the entire cult (indeed, of humanity, created merely to be the gods’ slaves). If the human slave devotedly gave his master-god enough food, beer, incense, clothing, incantations, songs, and prayers, the god would rest in peace and not hurl some malevolent misfortune upon him or her. To rest the heart of the gods was the goal of Babylonian religion, especially in the middle to later periods. “To rest the heart” (of human or deity?) was the meaning of one of the most significant holy days in Mesopotamia, the fifteenth day of the month, the day of the full moon, sapattu. This has an interesting twist in the story. Whereas in Babylonia, the gods needed rest from the human beings they had created and thus Enlil sent the flood, in the JE story, Yahweh wants the earth to cease from violence. When the flood ends, Yahweh promises never again to destroy the earth. The text then lapses into poetry:

As long as all the days of the land
seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,
summer and winter, day and night
shall not cease (sābat).

Through the backdoor, the Hebrew text infers that the flood had been a sabbath from the cycles of nature and farming. It takes only a small step to recognize that, in order to bring the violence on the earth to an end, a Sabbath must be imposed upon nature. From the murder of Abel, to Lamech’s unreasonable slaughter of one who wounds him, to the whole earth becoming filled with violence, the earth has wept, cried out, and screamed as it opened its mouth to receive the blood of the first homicide, the blood of the wounders, the blood of vengeance. The land has become filled with violence until, saturated with human blood, it must be cleansed by water—thoroughly washed for forty days and nights and then rinsed slowly for many months before all the chaos of evil was blotted out.

It is then that Noah’s name comes into play again as the ark comes to rest (vatānāh) upon the mountains of Ararat. The violence of the earth is mirrored in the violence of the storm and in the violence of the boat sent up and down and to and fro in powerful cadences of terror. It is the reversal of creation order, as the mountains of deep” (ṭĕhôm) of a pre-creation time open up to send the earth once again from order to chaos. The storm becomes a metaphor of the ancient Near East for war, war that once began with words in psychological battle and eventually downgraded into shouts and screams of anger and brute force that sent many victims to their graves and into slavery.

When it is over, a recreation is enacted. The seven-day cycle is mentioned as the dove is sent out each seventh day to search for dry land. Eventually dry land appears, then vegetation. Finally, the animals come off the boat, even the creeping things, after their kinds. Thus creation begins anew, perhaps not a stately or as grand as in Genesis 1, but recreation, nonetheless. Noah, the one to make rest for the earth, comes off too to ground cleansed of bloodshed—only to build an altar voluntarily and offer burnt offerings from every clean animal and bird. For the first time, in Genesis 1-11,

154 Westermann, Genesis I-11, 359-360.
155 Though Gerhard F. Hasel (“Sabbath” ABD V:850) denied any linguistic connection between the Hebrew šabbat and Akk. sapattu, there is an etymological connection, though no functional connection (HALOT 1410).
156 Genesis 8:22.
157 A favored verb of the story (see Gen. 6:7; 7:23)

fought each other off to the last Graham (female) and Tewsbury (male). These were summoned to Mesa courthouse for trial at which Mrs. Graham tried to dispatch Mr. Tewsbury with a handgun concealed in her muff. She would have succeeded had her handkerchief not gotten caught in the trigger.
we come close to appeasement, because God smells the pleasing odor and responds. A case can be made for this being a true act of appeasement with many more pleasing odors to follow from Sinai on.

Whatever Noah (or the voice of the writer) is making it to be, the acts of violence cannot be diminished. These are the animals who have ridden out the terrors of the flood, who have had to depend on Noah for food, shelter, and safety. And the first thing that happens to their kind as soon as they are set free from their imprisonment is slaughter. Once again, blood soaks into the ground.

The divine response is usually passed over and ignored or credited with a tacit “Amen” that fits our biases. It should be taken more seriously just as it reads:

And when Yahweh smelled the soothing (hannihôôh: note the play on Noah’s name) smell, Yahweh said to his heart, “I will not again curse the ground because of human, for the formations of the heart of the human is evil from the youth on. And I will not again destroy all life as I have done.”159 Yahweh doesn’t speak to Noah but to himself. His words indicate distress over what Noah has done, rather than adulation. It seems that human beings are now bent on slaughter and slaughtering more of them will not change the bent of their ways. Once again, viewing the Hebrew text as conversation has clarified for us a very old tradition of sacrifice and divine desire. Human beings prefer to give gifts, even to shed blood, rather than to humbly seek Yahweh for repentance and trust once again. During the many days and nights of the flood, apparently the handful of human beings left rolled about in terror, fearful for their lives. During the subsequent months, they had spent long hours in a false reality, wondering if life would ever return to normal again. Yahweh understands and does not rebuke the appeaser. Once again, he indirectly takes responsibility for the actions that caused the fear and seems grieved over more bloodshed. The consequences will prevail: instead of trusting dependence on human beings, animals will be afraid and will have to depend on another for food; likewise human beings will depend on animals for food, for demonstrations of kingly prowess (the royal hunt), and for sacrifice.

F. The Tower of Babel: Mixed Conversation between Creation and Sacrifice

Now the whole land was of one tongue and one words.
And when journeying from the east, (some) found a wide plain
in the region of Shinar and they settled there.
And each man said to his neighbor, “Come, let us build bricks,
and let us burn for burnings
and let there be bricks for stone and let there be bitumen for mortar:
And they said, “Come let us build for ourselves a city
and a tower whose head is in the heavens
And let us make for ourselves a name
lest we be scattered over the face of all the earth.”160

The confusion of speech on the plain of Shinar, begins with the desire to make a substitute for stone, to use a substitute for mortar, and to make a mountain in exchange for a plain.161 Once human beings began to realize that x could equal y—not through any inherent logic but simply by pronouncing it so (command speech)—they began to invent a virtual reality. Early on, substitution apparently became the vehicle through which gift-giving could become gift-exchanging and grace could turn into economics. Through barter, three goats could equal one donkey, then four goats, then five (if one were old), then six donkeys, once cost accounting came into being during the Old Babylonian

159 Gen. 8:21.
160 Gen. 11: The plural adjective for “one” as in “one words” has given rise to some interesting renderings: “the same words” (NRSV, TNK), “few words” (RSV), “a common speech” (Bruce K. Waltke with Cathi Fredricks, Genesis: a Commentary [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001], 178), “single words”/“one language” (U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis; Part II: From Noah to Abraham [Israel Abrahams, trans.; Jerusalem: Magnes, Hebrew University, 1964], 239)
161 J. P. Fokkelman (Narrative Art in Genesis [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975], 15) notes ingeniously that the word “confuse” is a possible “sound-chiasmus” since the order of the consonants for “brick” (lbr) are flopped in the verb “confuse” (nbl). Cited in Hamilton (Genesis, 355-356) In Palestine, the cradle of the Hebrew Bible, one did not need to manufacture a home. One needed primarily one building substance and it was the most plentiful natural element there: stone. In the alluvial plains of southern Mesopotamia, rocks were not so plentiful. The ingenious Sumerians came up with a substitute: mud bricks, not merely sun-baked, but hardened in a fire that burned very hot.
period. Once donkeys came to be valued according to how much they worked, so could human beings. It is no accident that myths retell how slavery was invented because of a need for a substitutionary work force to quell the revolt of the employees who revolted.

Once substitutionary devices begin to supply the demands of people, words increase to keep communication flowing. Words of barter lead easily to argument, and argument to war. In a Sumerian myth, the original ambience is that of a country without dissension, a utopian place, perhaps related to ancient antediluvian Dilmun, in which there is no fear, no predator, and in which human beings "had no rival." All were in unison (equality, similar to that of Genesis 1 and 2) until Enki, the supreme prince, lord, and king, "changed the speech in their mouths, [brought] contention into it, into the speech of man that until then had been one." 

Excursus 5: Early Civilization

Just as southern Mesopotamia had little materials for masonry, so it also had no natural mortar. On the plain of Shinar (probably Hebrew for Sumer), there were no mountains, and the cultural background of the Sumerians apparently included mountains as a place where the great gods dwelt and the entrance to the netherworld. The weather in this area near the Persian Gulf was as hot then as now, if not hotter, making living in tents less than desirable. What the Sumerians did, then, was to create a simulation of all that they lacked, using bricks for stone, bitumen for mortar, cities (with thick walled brick houses) for safety from ravishment from their enemies, and towers (quite likely ziggurats) for mountains. This allowed them to harness the Euphrates River to prevent crop salinization and at the same time to provide irrigation for the growing of barley and other cereals. This development of technology, in turn, brought about further adaptations to an artificial reality. Instead of being dependent upon the Gulf for fish, or upon natural resources such as wild barley or date

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162 For a fine overview of seed mensuration and how cost accounting came to be used, see Marvin A. Powell, "Late Babylonian Surface Mensuration," AJFO 31 (1984), 32-66.

163 The myth Atrahasis gives this view; Enuma Elish assumes a prevention of revolting gods.

164 Reprinted in "I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood"; Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11 (R. S. Hess and D. T. Tsumura, eds.; SBTS 4; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 278-282; cited in Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, eds., Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 71. Kramer refers to this famous epic poem, "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta," as "the first of its kind in world literature." It brings us to what may be the underlying intent of both this epic poem and the Tower of Babel story—to outline the kinds of political maneuvers that ultimately gave rise to mortal combat. This may not be the best translation; cf. also Thorkild Jacobsen, The Harps That Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 288-290.

165 See Samuel Noah Kramer, The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). Since I am not a Sumerologist, I will leave the puzzlement about who the Sumerians were and where they came from and their possible predecessors, the Ubaid people to the experts. I start with the Sumerians because of the influence of their inventions on the rest of the world including that of the Hebrew Bible and western culture. For a discussion on this, see ), J. N. Postgate (Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History [London and New York: Routledge, 1992], 22-25.

166 See the epic poetry of Damu/Damuzi in Jacobsen, The Harps, 1-84.

167 According to Postgate (Early Mesopotamia, 19), "A global warming to some 1-2° C above present levels also affected the Near East in the period roughly 5000-2000 BC."


169 As early myths such as Adapa seem to suggest.

170 This is perhaps what lay behind the story mentioned above, Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta.

171 Dominique Collon ("Depictions of Priests and Priestesses in the Ancient Near East," in Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East [Kazuko Watanabe, ed.; Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999], 17-60) suggests that this the "priest" and "priestess" may have come from the hunting society in Indo-European Anatolia where women stayed home to "keep the home fires burning" while the men went out to hunt. This hunting was also a rite of kingship.
palms as did their ancestors, the hunters and gatherers, they now could make a surplus against hard times. Furthermore, those inclined to be organizers and efficiency experts could ply their trade by organizing a work corvee and taking on a new role—an extension perhaps of the concept of “patriarch”—of boss. Since trade had been in existence for many centuries, it was easy also for various towns to consider plying their crops as trade for things that could not be manufactured: gold, silver, and precious stones, for instance.  

Of course, as cities began to spring up for protection against wild animals and enemies, organization of the work force, and economization of resources, so did leaders. Someone was needed to lead out in religious affairs (a kind of “priest-king” to lead out in war (the hero or in the Hebrew Bible, the “mighty man” Nimrod), and to lead out in international (or cross-cultural) political affairs. Thus leadership came increasingly to move from a rather assembly-driven (pre-democratic) process to that of a single leader with many followers. The root of this all is clearly the development of technology and with it economics.

When words are wielded to control, they are deprived of their meaning and true force. They become taken over increasingly by those who invoke the most fear and thereby attract the greatest following. Those who can control others, who can marshal them into troops for defense, become the heroes. The road to power—kingship, conquest—is a complex one, but two of its greatest causes was economics and war. Ultimately power was substituted for genuine relationships and, in consequence, it increased transactions between individuals whose words could not be trusted. To solve this problem writing was invented. As noted above, the serpent had many trickster descendants and these also necessitated some kind of formal control in order to protect the property rites of individuals. These came to be known as laws, though they were never really laws but rather verdicts.

The conversation of technology and commerce together provided a rich civilization that became the basis for western culture, but it also created a very different reality from the one described in the Genesis creation stories. Instead of equality among human beings, top-down management became the prevailing reality. Instead of unchanging natural principles, the reality of the priestly creation, words created artificial boundaries that were arbitrarily set and enforced by whoever had the greatest power and could be changed once that power was overturned by another.

This mixing of human power and nature together gave rise to a name (character) different from the image of God. This in turn led to the mixing of speech, ideas, things in incoherent ways. The Hebraic slur on Babel/Babylim as linked to the root *bll* “to mix” is no accident. The author was attempting to sharpen the distinction between Hebrew theology and Babylonian theology. One of the prime metaphors of Babylonian beliefs was that of mixtures, whereas the most essential metaphor of the Israelite cult was that of separation. (Perhaps this is why substitution is minimized in Hebrew theology to the point where a clear word for “substitute” is not readily available, in contrast to the four choices of Akkadian terms for the same.) In the Hebrew Bible, the profane and the sacred were kept as far apart as possible. Human inventions had their effect upon religion through a mixture of human (profane) and divine (holiness), through the conversation between human creation and sacrifice.

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172 Saggs (*Everyday Life*, 145), states: “What we have been referring to as ‘the laws’ of Hammurabi are not in the stele itself called by a word meaning ‘laws’, and indeed there is not even a word for the conception ‘law’ in the language of the period concerned. The ‘laws’ are in fact referred to by a term which means ‘judgements’ or ‘legal decisions’.”

173 In the Hebrew Bible—as in Asia to this day—name signifies “character” (see Ex. 33:17; 34:5-7); it thus subtly reminds the reader of the “image” and “likeness” of God (Gen. 1:26-27), but it also alludes possibly to the words of the serpent: “you shall be like god knowing good and evil.”

174 The basic Hebrew word for (lit.) “one (plural) words” is *dābōr*, a word that can mean “subject matter,” “idea,” “word,” or even “thing.”

175 Babylonian mixtures occur frequently—in Enuma Elish, salt water (Ti’amât) and fresh water (Apsû) commingle together to produce life; mixtures occurred in demons, prophylactic figures (geweschen “mixed beings”) such as the “lion-man” or “scorpion man.” In demonology, theology itself was mixed since one could speak of good and bad demons within the same breath. In both Atrahasis and Enuma Elish, human beings are created from a mixture of divine blood and earthy clay. Perhaps one of the most outstanding mixtures and/or substituents accomplished in Babylonian literature is that of Marduk’s usurpation of all other deities—something for which he was punished yearly in Assyria. In the work devoted to him, Enuma Elish (sometimes called The Babylonian Creation), Marduk is proclaimed supreme over all the gods and it is to be assumed from henceforth that whenever any deity is invoked, it is actually Marduk who is prayed to. Any offering made to any other deity is to be considered as made to Marduk. One cannot but see the rather ego-centric twist on the principle Jesus uttered, “As you have done it unto the least of these my brothers and sisters, you have done it unto me.”
Since both economics and sacrifices are known to archaeologists before writing was invented, it is nearly impossible to know for certain which came first. According to the story of Cain in Genesis, it was sacrifice—the "sacrifice" of Abel—that led Cain to develop a city (in defiance of God's promise that he would be a wanderer) and his descendants to develop antediluvian technology. If this is the case, it is possible to suppose that distortions about the way God did things and what he wanted from human beings preceded civilization. In any case, human sacrifice seems to play a vital role in the advancement of civilization, since, as Maccoby has noted, most important institutions were marked by it.

This may be indicated by the wording describing the burning of the bricks. Since the Sumerians made their bricks of clay, and since clay is identified in Babylonian myths with the creation of human beings (as it is in the JE creation story), one may suppose a literary subtext employed by the writer similar to the one nuanced in Genesis 3 with the dust-eating serpent. The phrase—"let us burn them thoroughly" (wēnišrēpā lēšrēpā)—is used of human sacrifices in a number of places. The notion of clay bricks being burnt with the same kind of fire as used in human sacrifice seems to me to be an allusion to the practice of human sacrifice in relationship to the invention of the ziggurat. Since human sacrifice seems to have been practiced in early Sumer, the possibility seems even greater that there is some correlation between human inventions and sacrifice. Of course, metaphorically, the sacrifice of human beings through hard labor (work corvée), induction into war, and simply the devaluation of the human for the sake of the material cannot be overemphasized.

Substitution seems to have been the core of how the conversation between human inventions and human sacrifice could take place. If one can obtain goods through exchange, could not one make peace with someone else through gift giving as a substitute for real reconciliation? And thus one could appease anyone they angered—whether spouse, neighbor, boss, master, king, or god. The only one not requiring appeasement would be the person below the self in the caste established so well by Hammurabi. Indeed, in the micro layers of appeasement of deity rest upon the substitutionary assumptions developed in the exchange of bricks for stones. It was believed that gods could be placated by substitutes and transfer of one's illness, misfortune, disease, or evil omen to an object. While substitution might be the mechanism by which some form of sacrificial appeasement could take place, the necessity for it stemmed from the perceived wrath of the god.

As a result of the three great institutions of Babylon and their theological adaptation, there developed over time a core perception that dominated the theological landscape of the ancient Near East: gods could get angered easily and thus must be appeased. Once hierarchical structures were accepted (boss-employee; master-slave; king-subject) as the way the gods ruled the universe, it was easy to let power (instead of trust in real relationships) dominate and control human interactions with one another and with the gods. Just as bosses, masters, and kings multiplied, so did gods and the dominant way each got control was through anger. The anger of the king became so proverbial that it became interlinked in prayers of those whose fate had become to be punished by the sovereign. It also became a proverb: "The wrath of the king is a messenger of death and whoever is wise will appease it." (Prov. 16:14). According to the myth Atrahasis, human beings were created to slaves—the etiology for the institution of slavery—in an effort to appease angry gods who were weary of toiling in order to have food and clothing. Sacrifices became the means of feeding the gods so that they would not get angered so easily. Incense, prayers, hymns, incantations—indeed all matters of the cult were established to effect the soothing of the gods. Even the "evil days" (āmī lemniBU?) were sacred for the purpose of not doing something that would offend the gods.

Among the many things done for appeasement, libations were also significant. The blood of the grape was the joy juice of the gods. If nothing else could keep a potentially angry deity tranquil, this could. Thus mythology is replete with happy celebrations of divine supremacy in which gods would drink all they could hold of beer and wine. Of course, there is not only a color coordination between certain wines and blood, but the celebration with intoxicating beverages only took place after the blood of a monster or instigator had been shed in order to create the world and/or people. In

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176 See above.
177 Dt. 12:31, 1 Kgs 13:2; Amos 2:1; Jer. 7:31; 19:5.
178 From as early as the Larsa Period (earlier yet to the north) according to Green, The Role of Human Sacrifice, 190.
179 Every time misfortune (especially illness) befell a Babylonian in the later periods, it was viewed as a divine punishment for some sin committed. A favored recourse was to take a figurine, called a dānu (a legal term for "substitute"), ritualistically transfer the disease to the figurine and then discard or burn it. During the Assyrian periods, the substitute king ritual effectuated the same thing for a king whose future was darkened by omens—especially an eclipse—indicating that the gods were angry with him and were planning to depose him. In the case of the human šar pāhī, the hapless substitute forfeited his life. See Jean Bottéro, Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods (Zainab Bahrami and Marc Van De Mieroop, trans.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 138-155.
Atrahasis, the gods rejoice for nine days after human beings have been created from the slain blood of Wê-ila and clay. In Enuma Elish, rejoicing takes place several times: a) when Marduk promises success in his mission against Ti'amat so that the gods give him what he wants: divine supremacy; b) when Marduk severs Ti'amat's arteries (lit., “streams”) and sends her blood via the north wind to the gods; c) after victory over Ti'amat’s warriors; and d) after the building of Babylon, particularly the Esagila (house of the lifting of the head with its ziggurat. At this juncture, a full banquet is served:

They set down a mug of beer; they sat at the festival.

Then they made merry music in its midst.

Ultimately, the heart of Babylonian theology was that of reconciliation to one's god through appeasement offerings, substitutionary rituals, and anything else that might keep the mood of one's god in a soothed state. The metaphoric wine of the wrath of Babylonian fornication took place in the illicit ideological union between the earthly kings who were often angered by their subjects and the gods who resembled them.

Jerusalem was intended to keep from Babylon. In contrast to Nimrod who engages in conquest and rulership, Abram is called out of Ur of the Chaldees to be the father of a great nation. In his life, we see a blend of the human and the divine and the ultimate story of the binding of Isaac deserves yet another paper of its own. Nevertheless, kingship is not welcomed by the prophetic voice of the Old Testament. Neither is appeasement. Nowhere is this better observed than in the lack of psalms which attempt to appease divine wrath. Nowhere in all of Genesis is God said to be angry; the use of the terms for an angry God in the Bible seems to stem from the monarchy as representative of divine justice, just as it does in Mesopotamian religious history.

To borrow another's words, "time would fail me to" delineate the trajectory of humanity's sojourn—in the story of just one of many nations who did essentially the same—from creation to human proflation of the sacred through sacrifice—from the adoption of kingship, to practicing divine sovereignty with Baal worship, to offering children as burnt offerings to Yahweh near Jerusalem. The prophetic voice crying out against these practices often sounds angry—angry against a false angry god. Though the exile would bring them from human sacrifices to substitutionary rituals, many of them returned with a different set of models for governance and a more complete view of sacrificial appeasement. Ultimately, it would culminate with a rejection of One who "desired mercy, not sacrifice," who "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by Satan." Ultimately, substitutionary penal atonement would

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180 III:131-IV:34.
181 EnEl IV 131-134.
182 V 70-86. There may be one other point between b and c but the tablet is too fragmentary to be definitive.
183 EnEl VI:75-76.
184 In Revelation 17-18, Babylon, the mother of harlots, is a symbol of the opposite of the New Jerusalem. She is therefore to be viewed as symbolic of those who choose the old Jerusalem, patterned after Rome. Her fornication takes place with kings and those who weep over her include the merchants and great men.
185 One only needs to examine the chronologically placed hymns, prayers, and other works from earlier periods to later periods to see the gradual tendency toward divine anger and appeasement. It seems that the more power kings were given, the more angry gods became. This is to be supported by a lack of direct pleas for appeasement in the Psalms—in contrast to the similar literature in the later Babylonian/Assyrian periods (note these examples from Foster, Before the Muses (vol. 2): “To Any God” [685-687]; “Who Has Not Sinned?” [644-645]; “The Piteous Sufferer [642-643]; “To a Personal God” [640-641]). In the Babylonian cult, everything contributes to one goal: the appeasement (or prevention of anger) of the gods. In order for this to be present in the Hebrew cult, God must clearly at some point be the object of kipper, yet he almost never is. Instead, sin is what is to be dealt with, not divine anger. Some scholars assume that God must be the object, but the Day of Atonement suggests that only the goat for Azazel may be tied to anger. Wright (The Disposal of Impurity, 49) comments: “The biblical scapegoat rite, though having a general scheme like that of the Pulisa rite, significantly contrasts with it. One of the main differences in the biblical rite is the lack of the appeasement motif. In Lev 16 as it is presently constituted, there is no angry deity to appease... The Hittite rite, on the other hand, is wholly devoted to the appeasement of an angry deity mentioned repeatedly as an active agent throughout the ritual.”
186 Even in biblical usage, the “wrath of God” often connotes allowing people to have their preferred will. This is not wholly unlike Babylonian perceptions of divine wrath; deities who got angry often “left” their cities to the opposing forces.
undergird every bit of blood shed from Abel to Zachariah, from Jesus’ crucifixion (“it is better that one man die than that the whole nation perish” [John 11:50]), to Augustine with the Donatists (if persuasion does not work, then force), to Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* written less than a century before the establishment of the Inquisition, to... has that road ultimately ended?

For those who allow the ever gracious God Jesus revealed to do the work of atonement in their hearts a “more excellent way” begins from one of the ancient gates leading out of Ur, stops briefly at Haran, before heading south toward the Promised Land. That same road becomes a diminished trail at times, barely recognizable except to those initially rejected—prophetic voices, rebels against kings and authorities, Jesus and his followers. Indeed, the path is sometimes slippery with the blood of the slain:

Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. (Matthew 23:34-35, NRSV)

But this is not the end: Babylon falls. Just as the Day Star King of Babylon who “laid the nations low” “is brought down”, just as the Prince of Tyre who in the abundance of his trade became filled with violence and was cast down; just as the flood came to end the violence; so Babylon falls because of violence:

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘With such violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down, and will be found no more;... for your merchants were the magnates of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery, and in you was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth.” (Revelation 18:21, 23b, 24, NRSV)

The path doesn’t end there, it moves on to the bride and the Lamb, and to another city:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first Heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, Death shall be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4)

The voice of free-flowing conversation between grace and truth, between Jew and Greek, bond and free, between male and female, now dominates the new heaven and new earth.
WHEN MINISTRY DOESN'T MAKE SENSE
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2 Corinthians 4: 1-8

But we have this treasure in earthen-vessels, so that the power which surpasses all things may be seen to be of God and not of us. We are sore pressed at every point, but not hemmed in. We are at our wit's end but never at our hope's end. We are persecuted by people, but never abandoned by God. We are knocked down...but not knocked out. In our bodies we have run the same risk of death as Jesus Christ did, so that in our body the same life as Jesus lived may be clear for all to see. (William Barclay, The Letter to the Corinthians)

Thesis
Because things do not make sense to us in ministry, does not mean they don't make sense at all.

Introduction

In these days of voice-mail, e-mail, pagers, fax machines, and other kinds of instant communication, one form of personal correspondence is on a dramatically sharp decline: the personal letter. Yet if the sender is someone special to you, nothing compares to the texture of a letter in your hands as you read three-day-old news. It is still difficult to electronically dot “I’s” with hearts. You can't perfume a faxed message. And cold, exact fonts have removed the individuality of personal hand writing styles. Yes, it's the thought that counts, but sometimes the thought seems extra special if handwritten on stationary in a personally addressed envelope.

We have read the eyewitness accounts of Jesus by those who gave a “synopsis” and another a “non-synopsis” account in the gospels, and we've had a “quickie” history lesson in the activities of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His daughters and sons. Now in the Epistles of the New Testament, most, one will notice, were “written” by the Apostle Paul. Paul's itinerant ministry took him to far away places with strange sounding names, and he attempted to keep in touch with what was going on in churches by letter when he couldn’t be there in person.

Context of Corinth

First-century Corinth is really a tale of two cities. As a political entity, Corinth goes back to the eighth century B.C., and it flourished as a Greek city-state until 146 B.C., when it was destroyed by Rome. Corinth lay in ruins for more than a century, until Julius Caesar Reestablished the city in 44 B.C. As a Roman colony; which it once again quickly rose to prominence. By the first century, Roman Corinth had roughly eighty thousand people with an additional twenty thousand in nearby rural areas. In Paul's day, it was probably the wealthiest city in Greece and a major multicultural urban center.

Thus, by Paul's day, Corinth had become a pluralistic melting pot of subcultures, philosophies, lifestyles, and religions. This is reflected in the various Jewish, Roman, and Greek names mentioned in 1 and 2 Corinthians, E.G., the Jews: Aquila, Priscilla and Crispus: the Italians: Fortunas, Quartus, and Justus: the believers in Corinth were still slaves. However, most of the church was apparently from the middle, working classes of tradesmen, with only a few wealthy families (1 Corinthians 1:26, 27). Since no landed aristocracy existed in Roman Corinth, an “aristocracy of money” soon developed both among those who had wealth and those who wanted it, with a fiercely independent spirit.

Against this backdrop Paul and his ministry would have been viewed in Corinth by outlining the ways in which contemporary Greco-Roman culture evaluated social status and the value of religion for everyday life. In regard to sizing up one's peers in Paul's day Greco-Roman society stressed: (1). A rugged individualism that valued self-sufficiency; (2). Wealth as the key to status within society; (3) A self-display of one's accomplishments and possessions in order to win praise from others; (4) A competition for honor that viewed boasting as its natural corollary and (5). A pride; in one's neighborhood as a reflection of one's social location. These values combined to create a populace for which self-appreciation became the goal and self-gratification the reward. (The NIV Application Commentary 2 Corinthians, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002.

Because things do not make sense to us does not mean that they don’t make sense at all

Notice how the preacher/theologian responds to this challenge. In 2 Corinthians Paul begins more plainly to become practical and to speak of what it means to be a minister. Paul is not writing “to” preachers. He is writing “about” preachers to people who were not professional preachers.
The letter of 2 Corinthians is a follow-up letter and probably the “most personal” of Paul’s letters. It was a difficult one for him to write. In his previous one, Paul had exhorted the Corinthians to correct some of the abuses that had infiltrated the church. However, some false teachers were antagonized by Paul’s rebuke and rejected his warnings. As a result, Paul was forced to defend his character and more importantly, his apostolic gift. More than any other book in the Bible, his defense reveals the trials and tribulations and the problems and the pressures of his itinerant ministry.

Paul tells us of some things that happened in his life that are revealed only in this letter:

- His escape from Damascus in a basket (2 Corinthians 11:43,33).
- His experience of being caught up to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:104).
- His thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7).
- His unusual suffering (2 Corinthians 11:23029).

He told none of these until he was compelled to, to prove that if he wanted to boast, he had good reason.

Illustration

Imagine Jesus walking the streets in our communities in the twenty-first century and meeting those who are looking for help and healing. He meets a lady who is weeping because she is crippled by the inhumane blows of society and its insensitivity to her needs. He touches her and she is made whole. He comes upon a street person standing at an off ramp crying with a cup clinched tightly by arthritic fingers and tears streaming down his dirty cheeks he is blind because of health disparities. Jesus cups his face in his hands and rubs his eyes with His thumbs and the cataracts dissolve. He and the man rejoice. Coming aside to rest awhile in the park, He notices a man and woman weeping as they embrace each other. Jesus inquires and they inform Him they are a Seventh-day Adventist family and had just been fired by the church. Jesus sat with them and wept with compassion because He knows what it is to be rejected.

The letter Begins with comfort: “Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:3). In the Middle we find the reason for comfort: “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work, (2 Corinthians 9:8.) It Closes with comfort: “Finally, brethren and sisters, good by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you, (2 Corinthians 13:11.) The Source of this comfort is: “My grace is sufficient for you.” (2 Corinthians 12:9.)

Because some things do not make sense to us now does not mean that they never will

God put Paul in the ministry. He did not choose it for himself. He always considered he received that honor as an act of mercy and grace. (1 Timothy 12:13.) His ministry offered life for death (3:7), Justification for condemnation (3:9) and something permanent for the temporary (3:11) and transitory, (2 Corinthians 4:1.)

The false teachers in the church at Corinth had stooped to low levels in their efforts to discredit Paul’s ministry. Paul’s critics even handled the Word of God deceitfully, in a distorted manner. They adulterated it, as the wind sellers of the day who weakened his merchandise by diluting it with water.

By contrast, Paul openly proclaimed the truth of the gospel. He stated its concepts plainly with no intent or attempt to deceive or trick anyone. He used nothing deceptive or secretive. As he explained in his defense before Agrippa; “This thing was not done in a corner.” (Acts 26:26.)

Sincere ministers of the gospel have nothing to hide. They preach no esoteric truths understood only by the initiated, as Paul’s enemies claimed. The apostle needed to do no more to recommend himself to those of a sincere conscience. Certainly such ministerial conduct left him acceptable and commendable in the sight of and before the presence of God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)

Though some of Paul’s critics at Corinth accused him otherwise, he exerted every effort to see that people heard the unadulterated truth of the gospel. He was careful that his behavior did not nullify the message preached. (2 Corinthians 4L3)

Many of Paul’s ministerial contemporaries longed for eschatological restoration of Adam’s pre-fall glory. Paul however, leaves no room for the veneration of Adam: “In Adam all die... in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22: Romans 5:12-21.) Christ has supplanted Adam in the apostle’s eschatology. Paul doesn’t look back to the garden but ahead to Christ’s return and the complete conformation of the believers to the image of Christ. (Philippians 3:21) Willful blindness can become penal blindness when the minds are darkened.
The false apostles at Corinth apparently promoted themselves to a shameful degree. They chose a poor substitute in focusing on their own example rather than that of Jesus. By way of contrast, Paul constantly identified himself simply as a servant (doulos, a ‘slave’ in contrast to a hired servant) or the Lord and of His people.

Once again Paul is carefully distinguishing himself from many of the popular teachers of his day. Whose pretentious oratory served mainly as an exercise in vanity, Epictetus. (AD 50-120) the Sophist, implored his listener. “But praise me! Cry out to me Bravo or Marvelous!” Seneca. (4 BC-AD 65) is equally scornful of those orators whose “ostentatious gate” and “desire to show off” rendered their trivial discourses useless for the common good. “But speech that deals with the truth should be unadorned and plain.” In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul writes, “Let no person so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” (1 Corinthians 4:1)

God had performed a miracle in Paul’s life like that of the Creation. In the beginning God said, “Let there be light; and there was light.” (Genesis 1:3). The Creator had also commanded the light to shine in the darkness or the heart of the former Saul of Tarsus symbolized by the bright light he saw the moment of his conversion (Acts 9:3). It brought him the knowledge of the glory of God that radiated from the face of Jesus. (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The Lord committed the treasure of the gospel to the apostle for careful management as a steward of God. People of that day some times kept priceless objects in earthen jars. Of all the things held in store, the truths of the gospel were the most valuable. Also implicit in this word picture is the irony of inestimable fortune concealed in a common clay jar. With that analogy Paul recognized the greatness of the message committed to him as stancing in sharp contrast to his frailty as its container. God arranged it that way so that ministers/theologians would realize the extraordinary quality of what Paul possessed was of the Lord and not of people. Paul ministered by the power which God gave, so the Lord was glorified in all (1 Peter 4:11).

**There is a higher viewpoint from which things don't make sense to our ordinary reasoning can make sense to our spiritual understanding even now.**

Among the many charges brought against Paul by the opposition at Corinth was the claim he lived a life of relative ease as a preacher. The defense that builds as this letter unfolds makes that increasingly clear. The raise teachers told tales of their hardships to make them appear as the true ministers and Paul the doubtful one. To explain, the apostle used a series of paradoxes in which he reveals he knew something and someone (2 Corinthians 4:8).

**Conclusion**

- A couple enjoying a drive in the county and what didn’t make sense to them after a mishap
- Jesus. You are the Center of my life.
- 2 Corinthians 4:1-8
ECONOMIC DISRUPTION: A CATALYST FOR VIOLENCE AMONG COMMUNITIES OF FAITH IN ROMAN SYRIA FROM 37-64 CE

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Introduction

While the theme of our conference is the dynamics of theology and violence in communities of faith, I have chosen to examine whether economic disruption is an underlying catalyst that fuels theological politicization, and how it may impact violence within and between communities of faith. To demonstrate this supposition, I have selected pre-Revolt Roman Syria as fertile ground for our consideration.¹

What is economic disruption? For this paper, economically disruptive events are categorized as: 1) natural events, such as drought and resultant famine, or 2) human-initiated events, such as taxation; military, insurgent, or factional conflict; famine induced by grain seizure or destruction; or religious enforcement.

I propose the politicization of theology, to legitimize or minimize violence, tends two directions: 1) as claims and counter-claims of religious purity or propriety within and between communities of faith, in terms of observance of Mosaic Law or Judean ethnic purity or superiority, or 2) extremist application of eschatological or apocalyptic theology, despite Rajak’s contention that messianic, eschatological, or apocalyptic presumptions were not predominant in pre-Revolt Judean thought.²

Primary sources, such as Josephus, Suetonius, Philo, or Tacitus contain numerous problems, biases, and personal goals in their propagation.³ However, despite McLaren’s minimization of Josephus’ historical reliability, archaeological evidence and substantial similarities in Josephus’ accounts consistent with insurgency theory seem a strong defense for general historical validity for the purposes of this paper.⁴

Furthermore, I use the term ‘Judean’ for the traditional label “Jew,” and Samaritan, Roman, or ‘non-Judean,’ to identify other ethnicities.⁵ Ideally, we would approach this topic chronologically, however, given time constraints, I will summarize two examples to address several session questions. The longer, chronologically-argued paper is available to those interested.

¹ The term ‘Roman Syria’ encompasses numerous provincial districts, such as Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and others. While the internal cultural variety within and between these areas has been long-established, my emphasis is not on specifically any one area or group. E. M. Meyers, (ed.), Galilee Through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999).


⁵ See Philip Esler, Conflict and Identity in Romans (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2003), 54-74.
The Beginning: Roman and Judean cordiality

Initially, Roman and Judean relations in Syria reflected cordiality. In 37, Vitellius, the Roman governor, returned Pontius Pilate to Rome due to Judean complaint, traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost with Herod Antipas, and offered sacrifices to God and returned control of high priestly robes to Judeans. At Tiberius' death, Vitellius administered the oath of Roman loyalty in the temple, and witnessed a willingly-offered burnt sacrifice of 100 bulls for Gaius' imperial accession.6

During 39/40, the events surrounding Gaius' attempt to situate his statue within Jerusalem's temple portray Roman governor Petronius working in conjunction with Judeans to thwart Gaius' plan; with a Judean leadership who politically advocated theologically-based, non-violent mass civil disobedience, including a refusal to plant crops, which, exacerbated by a drought, dramatically lowered grain yields and threatened food supplies. Roman cordiality continued with Claudius' appointment of Agrippa I as Judean king from 41 until his death in 44, and even after his reign. Yet, Roman Syria was impacted from 41-46 by widespread drought and resultant grain shortage as prophesied by Agabus, that triggered the onset of economic disruption which fueled the spiral of theologically-derived violence.7

Which theological/biblical views may foster violence?

Josephus described the Galilean, Judas, as founder of the "fourth Judean sect." Judas opposed Roman taxation, espoused Judean independence from foreign rulers, and adhered to a Pharisaic interpretation of the law, affirming only God as Lord, and not any person.8 Most of these "political" positions had obvious theological rationale as noted by Paltiel.9 In his account, Josephus provided insight into the theological, political, and economic motivation of those he termed "robbers," "brigands," or "leistai." This facilitates interpretation of the relationship between economic disruption and development of theological violence within and between communities of faith. Horsley proposes these groups to be "social bandits," espousing an agrarian social revolution against urban centers, peasant fighters in favor of social justice from excessive taxation, without identity; in short, small groups of economic raiders.10 Grünwald rejects Horsley's hypothesis as I do.11 This fourth Judean sect espoused an idealized theological policy of militarized violence. Its growth and success was influenced by economic disruption that separated or united various social groups in economic competition intertwined with desire for, or in opposition to, violent theological change.12 Fundamentally, for this Judean sect, asymmetrical warfare was a legitimate means for achieving theological objectives.

Does economic disruption create violence that affects theology?

I suggest it does. In 53/54, Felix ordered the assassination of the former high priest Jonathan over their dispute regarding the procurator's counterinsurgency campaign. Jonathan's death accelerated the Sicarii's organization as religio-political assassins who transformed Judean factional unrest from mostly a rural, inter-ethnic conflict to urban terrorism during religious festivals.13 This festival-focused unrest was heightened by "prophets" associated with the "robbers" who rallied many away from Jerusalem and the Temple and into the wilderness, in pietistic theological and eschatological pursuit, chasing signs of messianic, and apocalyptic fulfillment, intermingled with fomentation of Judean religio-political

8 Josephus, Antiquities 18.4.3-4; 23-24.
9 Paltiel argues the exceptions that were non-theologically justifiable from Judean sources were refusal to call a person "master," participate in the census, or pay taxes, Roman or Judean. However, reading the OT further for its stories of David and the Psalms may provide that rationale. Eliezer Paltiel, Vassals and Rebels in the Roman Empire: Julio-Claudian Policies in Judea and the Kingdoms of the East (Bruxelles: Revue D'Evudes Latines, 1991), 79-80.
13 Josephus, Antiquities 20.162-165; Wars 2.254-257.
independence. Leading pilgrims away from Jerusalem instigated human initiated economic disruption by reduced tithes, offerings, and taxes, essential to the temple’s economic, religious, and political vitality, which challenged Judean high priestly leadership. The robbers’ prophets profit instead of Jerusalem.

This assembly of pious apocalyptic religious groups with quasi-military aims naturally triggered a Roman response – offensive action to disperse followers, and capture and punish leaders. Roman military response to insurgent action further fueled Judean calls for revenge, divine intervention, increased piety, and triggered the antagonists’ dispersion. However, the prophets and robbers distributed themselves among the Judean population forming insurgent “robber” groups who encouraged open political and theological revolt against Jerusalem and Rome. Judeans who resisted the ideologically extremist religious insurgency were killed, estates of Judean elite, many from Jerusalem, were destroyed, and villages that refused to accept the revolt’s theological tenets were slaughtered and burnt. The result was disruption of trade, travel, and an end to ruined estates and villages’ agrarian activity, leaving survivors few choices for continued existence – to flee to a city, another province, or join the brigands. These events closely intertwined theology, violence and economic disruption.

The insurgent-inspired village destruction led to a precipitous decline in grain production and an inflow of rural refugees that swelled Jerusalem’s population. The drop in grain availability triggered famine in Jerusalem. The decline was so severe, high priests and businessmen engaged in open paramilitary violence over resources. Consequently, Jerusalem’s priests confiscated the rural priesthood’s tithe grain, abandoning them to starvation. This grain seizure enabled Jerusalem’s priesthood to honor Mosaic Law by supply of an estimated 40-ton burnt grain offering at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which preserved Jerusalem’s covenental piety and averted God’s wrath for potentially breaching the covenant relationship. In this act, we perceive extreme competitive piety in which apocalyptic or messianic hopes and honoring Mosaic Law was widely expressed through intra-communal Judean violence derived from economic and theological competition between insurgents and high priesthood. These events roughly correspond with Paul’s collection for the Jerusalem church in Romans 15:25-27.) Roman military, Judean paramilitary, and insurgent interaction was a response to economic disruption which evolved and revolved around competitive Judean theological standpoints.

Is there a fully interactive relationship between economic disruption, theology, violence, and communities of faith?

This becomes clear in the last years of Roman procuratorships which witnessed almost continuous violence between Romans and insurgents, Judeans and non-Judeans, and Judean factions. Most significant was Florus’ actions in 64 to collect delinquent provincial Judean taxes from a damaged economy. With the imperial costs of the just-concluded conflict with Parthia, and Rome’s conflagration and necessary reconstruction, tax collection was imperative. While Florus roughly acquired eight talents from Caesarea, and 17 talents from the Jerusalem temple with high priestly help,

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15 The example of the Egyptian Judean false prophet, who led a reported 30,000 to divinely assault and free Jerusalem, of whom Felix slaughtered 400 and captured 200, is one of Josephus’ examples of such “brigand” and “prophet”-led groups, but it also may demonstrate Roman restraint, for deaths are comparatively few. Josephus, Antiquities 20.167-172; Wars 2.261-263.
16 Josephus, Antiquities 20.172; Wars 2.264-265.
18 The rural priest’s starvation provides oblique evidence of rural economic hardship, for Judean villagers who had already paid tithe had no more grain for their own priest’s survival; Josephus, Antiquities 20.179-181; Thomas Grünewald, Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality. John Drinkwater (trans.), (New York: Routledge, 1999, 2004), 91; See Deut. 14:27-29; Number 18:21-32.
19 Josephus, Antiquities 3.320-322; 1 Hebrew Cor = 10 ephahs or 220 liters, 1 deal = .22 liters; in Greek NT measures, 1 Greek Cor = 525 liters, 70 Cor = 36,750 liters, 1,042.88 US bushels (bu) or 1,010.5 UK (bu) of grain offered as sacrifice at feast of Unleavened Bread; D. H. Wheaton, “Weights and Measures in the New Testament” in Wood, D. R. W., Wood, D. R. W., & Marshall, I. H. (eds.), The New Bible Dictionary, 3rd Ed. (Downers Grove, IN: InterVarsity, 1996), 1237.
the remaining shortfall was highlighted by Agrippa II as the cause of Roman aggression.20 Tribute payment would end Florus' interference and resultant economic disruption, curtail Roman threat to the temple, and reduce religious friction between Judean communities of faith.21 In resolution of this situation, the Judean elite, high priests, and Sanhedrin did not supply the tax shortfall from their own or temple resources, but scoured Judea to forcibly collect the uncontributed balance of 40 talents or 400,000 denarii.22 This economic action heightened theologically driven violence, given the exhaustion of rural resources through intra-ethnic Judean conflict.

The beginnings of revolt

When the first moments of open, organized revolt against Rome unfold in Jerusalem, it is expressed in Judean religious terms: a theological debate over enhanced temple purification by rejection of non-Judean temple entry, worship participation, and sacrifice, and rejection of burnt offering to God on behalf of Nero Caesar. This cessation was proposed and supported by Eleazar, high priest Ananias' son and temple governor; defended by his own armed faction, he opposed his own kin to seize power.23 The theological response by high priesthood, scribes, and Pharisees was a refutation of this dangerous tampering with temple practice and ritual purity, which they contended from the Torah and especially, Mosaic Law, in public assembly in the temple.24

These final moments of pre-Revolt Jerusalem are telling. The theological politicization of religious purity and propriety in observance of Mosaic Law became the final dispute to set the stage for revolt. It was competitive Torah interpretation by divergent factions of Judean leadership. The high priesthood was involved until the last in pre-Revolt formation, debate, and defense of a Judeanism not opposed to Roman rule, and desperately worked to remain in power in conjunction with Rome and Agrippa II25 Yet this final struggle’s underlying focus may have been economic as much as religious – the control of provincial taxes forcibly collected by Judeans awaiting payment to Rome, or to finance a theologically-driven revolt.

The capacity of high priest-interpreted theology to restrain Eleazar’s temple-based faction and the Judean multitude was at end. Traditional high priestly authority was rejected by this rival descendent of Ananias. Eleazar and his supporters refused to participate in high-priest-led temple ritual and imposed revolutionary change. The high priesthood and its factional militia were ejected from the temple, and appealed for Agrippan military support to reassert control, as Josephus commented, “....from those who profaned it,” presumably by cessation of Roman imperial honoring sacrifice and usurpation of illegitimate authority.26 Ananias’ militia and Agrippan cavalry forces engaged in week-long intra-Judean combat with Eleazar’s temple-based militants, but were defeated when Eleazar was reinforced by the Sicarii.27

20 Yet, as Paltiel argues, the Judean priesthood had always been responsible for temple security, payment of tribute to Rome, and the region’s loyalty to Rome or its other rulers, in conjunction with the governor. The removal of 17 talents must have had the high priest’s consent. Eliezer Paltiel, Vassals and Rebels in the Roman Empire: Julio-Claudian Policies in Judea and the Kingdoms of the East (Bruxelles: Revue D’Etudes Latines, 1991), 267.
21 Josephus, Wars 2.402-404.
22 Or it may have been equal to 240,000 denarii, 960,000 sesterces or 90 kilos of silver in weight. See Marvin A. Powell, “Weights and Measures” in D. N. Freedman (ed.), The Anchor Bible Dictionary (New York: Doubleday, 1996, c1992), Vol. 6, 907; for 1 talent = 10,000 denarii, Eliezer Paltiel, Vassals and Rebels in the Roman Empire: Julio-Claudian Policies in Judea and the Kingdoms of the East (Bruxelles: Revue D’Etudes Latines, 1991), 59-60. If converted to grain equivalents assuming 2 denarii purchased one seah, then it may be equivalent to 880,000 liters of grain collected or potentially 968 tons of grain. The assumption is that 1 liter equals 1 kg. For price per seah see Daniel Sperber, Roman Palestine 200-400: Money and Prices (Ramat-Gan, Bar-Ilan, 1974), 102. Also, the temple would have received at least 1 million denarii from the annual half shekel tax, Magen Broshi, “The role of the temple in the Herodian Economy,” Journal of Jewish Studies, 38 (1987), 30-37.
26 Josephus, Wars 2.424.
27 Josephus, Wars 2.422-424.
Victoriously torched economic, theological, and political targets included the high priest Ananias’ residence, Agrippa II’s palace, and tax, debt, and records archives which had enabled the Sanhedrin and high priesthood to maintain power.\textsuperscript{28} Economics, theology and violence were visibly intertwined in these events. The Judean population’s arson was an action of retaliative economic warfare, not only against Roman and imperial taxation, but also their own Judean elite who had exercised control over the flow of goods, services, tithes, and taxes in relation to temple, province, religion, and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{29} The final act of realignment was the execution of Ananias and the other high priests.\textsuperscript{30}

The theological disruption resulted in a Judean civil war between communities of faith – of faithful Jews loyal to God, high priesthood, and Rome, in opposition to the insurgents, who asserted faithfulness to God, supplanted the high priesthood, and rejected Rome.\textsuperscript{31} For the insurrectionists, this was an economic revolt expressed as theological jubilee by debt liquidation and rearranged economic and theological political power structures, in similitude to awaited celebrated eschatological liberation – the “prophesied” redemption and purification of Jerusalem from former high priestly, royal Judean, and Roman power.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, the theological, economic, and political developments of revolt are not only “anti-Roman,” but also Judean factional conflicts – rural and urban, poor and elite, and elite and elite.

Conclusion

As demonstrated, natural and human-initiated economic disruption resulted in heightened theological politicization and rivalrous interaction within and between ethnic groups in Roman Syria. The theological politicization tended in two directions – first as claims and counter claims of religious purity within and between communities of faith, often related in terms of observance of Mosaic Law, Judean ethnic purity, or superiority; secondly, as extremist application of eschatological theology to legitimize violence.

Theologically-driven violence was an attempt to propagate a faction’s position, or defend it in relation to others. Given this interaction of economics, theology and violence, I suggest economic disruption was a catalyst for theologically-derived conflict and violence within the Judean community of faith, and between it and others – ethnically, economically, politically, and theologically expressed in Judean and non-Judean territories of pre-Revolt provincial Syria.

\textsuperscript{30} Josephus, \textit{Wars} 2.428-429, 441-442.
\textsuperscript{31} Eliezer Paltiel, \textit{Vassals and Rebels in the Roman Empire: Julio-Claudian Policies in Judea and the Kingdoms of the East} (Bruxelles: Revue D’Études Latines, 1991), 300-301.
Israelite Genocide and Islamic *Jihad*

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On their way to the land of Canaan after wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites wiped out a major segment of the Midianite population and totally annihilated the people of Arad, as well as the subjects of Sihon and Og (Num. 21, 31; Deut. 2-3). These massacres were just a preview of what they were commissioned to do to the inhabitants of Canaan:

However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them — the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites — as the LORD your God has commanded you (Deut. 20:16-17; NIV).

**Israelite Genocide and the Problem of Theodicy**

Such destruction can only be described as systematic, divinely mandated genocide. How can a God of love (compare 1 John 4:8) be so merciless? We cannot simply blame the Israelites; they were the Lord’s agents. Instead of destroying the peoples of Canaan by fire as he did Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24-28), he used the Israelites as his terrible swift sword, at least partly to teach them faith through the discipline of war (compare Judg. 3:2, 4).

Some scholars refuse to accept the possibility that God—at least the God revealed by Jesus—could have ever commanded genocide under any circumstances. So they must posit radical discontinuity between Israel’s God and the God of the New Testament and/or interpret the Old Testament as misrepresenting God’s true character. Those of us who accept the entire Bible as the Word of God have no choice but to admit that God sometimes gives up on groups of people and chooses to destroy them (Gen. 6-7, 19; Rev. 20), and during a certain phase of history he uniquely delegated a carefully restricted part of his destructive work to his chosen nation of ancient Israel, which he tightly controlled and held accountable under theocratic rule.

It will only be with the frank acknowledgment that ordinary ethical requirements were suspended and the ethical principles of the last judgment intruded that the divine promises and commands to Israel concerning Canaan and the Canaanites come into their own. Only so can the conquest be justified and seen as it was in truth—not murder, but the hosts of the Almighty visiting upon the rebels against his righteous throne their just deserts—not robbery, but the meek inheriting the earth.

It is pointless either to defend or condemn God (compare Job 40:2). Our attempts at theodicy—justifying God’s character—are stimulating exercises, but in the final analysis we can only stand back and let God be God, admitting that our reasonings are flawed by inadequate perspective. Ultimately, our acceptance of his character is a matter of faith. He has given us plenty of evidence to trust him, but not enough to penetrate all the mysteries of his ways (compare Deut. 29:29 [Hebrew v. 28]).

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1 Adapted (with very few changes) from R. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 771-7.

2 Compare on Lev. 27 regarding *herem* devotion to God for destruction.


There are some clues that the Lord's treatment of the peoples in Canaan was in harmony with his character of mercy and justice. 7

1. He gave them ample opportunity to know him through witnesses such as Abraham and Melchizedek (e.g. Gen. 14:17-24).

2. He kept his people of Israel waiting in Egypt until the end of four centuries of probation for the Amorites (Gen. 15:13, 16). This is more than three times the 120 years he gave the antedeluvian world (6:3).

3. Depraved inhabitants of Canaan practiced gross immorality (e.g. Lev. 18:3, 27-28) and child sacrifice (e.g. Deut. 12:31). If God hadn't destroyed them, he would have owed the people of Sodom and Gomorrah an apology (compare Gen. 18:19).

4. As exemplified by what happened at Shittim (Num. 25), idolatrous and immoral men and women in close proximity to the Israelites would inevitably corrupt them and thereby cause their destruction (Deut. 7:4; 20:18). The Lord's ideal for the Israelites and the Canaanite environment were mutually exclusive.

5. The fact that the Lord threatened to treat unfaithful Israelites like Canaanites (Lev. 18:28; Num. 33:55-56; compare on 16:1-35, “Bridging Contexts”) shows that his vendetta was against wickedness, not ethnicity. Those who rebel against him are subject to “equal opportunity punishment.”

Genocide, Jihad, and Theocracy

An ardent pacifist, Albert Einstein wrote: “Heroism on command, senseless violence, and all the loathsome nonsense that goes by the name of patriotism—how passionately I hate them! How vile and despicable seems war to me! I would rather be hacked in pieces than take part in such an abominable business.” 8 Unfortunately, Einstein's twentieth century witnessed war and genocide on an unprecedented scale, with the annihilation of millions of Armenians, Jews, Gypsies, Tutsis, Hutus, and others just because they belonged to certain groups.

For us, genocide evokes revulsion and instant condemnation. But then we read the Bible and find that God's chosen people carried out on their enemies—of all things—genocide! Not only does the Bible condone this behavior; God commanded holy wars of extermination and punished his people for rebellion if they failed to shed the last drop of blood (Num. 33:55-56; 1 Sam. 15).

The brutal question is: How is genocide by the Israelites different from all other genocides? What gave them any more right to massacre entire populations, including women and children, than other “holy warriors” through the centuries? After all, “Christian” Crusaders in the Middle Ages, who piously perpetrated unbelievably bloody atrocities, and their Islamic opponents both acted in accordance with sincere beliefs that they were engaged in holy war approved by their respective deities. Hans Küng pointedly observes:

Many massacres and wars not only in the Near East between Maronite Christians, Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, between Syrians, Palestinians, Druse and Israelis, but also between Iran and Iraq, between Indians and Pakistanis, Hindus and Sikhs, Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus, and earlier also between Buddhist monks and the Catholic regime in Vietnam, as also today between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, were or are so indescribably fanatical, bloody and inexorable because they have a religious foundation. And what is the logic? If God himself is ‘with us’, with our religion, confession, nation, our party, then anything is allowed against the other party, which in that case must logically be of the devil. In that case even unrestrained violation, burning, destruction and murder is permissible in the name of God. 9

Today, Islamic militants view themselves as simply continuing an international jihad, “holy war.” When Yassir Arafat rallied his supporters by yelling, “jihad!” he appealed to a kind of divine mandate. However Americans and their Western allies may characterize the so-called “war on terrorism,” those on

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the other side have consistently said that it is a religious war motivated by zeal to carry out (their interpretation of) commands enshrined in their “holy books.”

If the jihad of firebrand groups such as Al-Qaeda, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hizbollah involves indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, children, and the elderly, why is anyone surprised? Shocked, dismayed, angered, of course, but why surprised? This is the way their kind of “holy war” works. Those whom we despise as kooks, fanatics, and serial murderers are idolized as heroes and martyrs by those who share their religious world-view. If ancient Israelite holy war does not disturb us the way modern Islamic jihad does, it is at least partly because the carnage of the former is chronologically removed from us. CNN and Time magazine do not assault us with the visual impact of corpses and mangled wreckage in ancient Arad, Heshbon, and Jericho (Josh. 6).

For me, a believer in the divine authority of the Bible, Israel’s holy wars were unique because that nation was a true theocracy acting on the basis of direct revelation from God and carrying out retributive justice on his behalf. When God tells you to do something, you do it, even if it is unusual and unpleasant. A towering example of such obedience was carried out by Abraham, the father of the Jews and Arabs and the spiritual father of the Christian faith. When God commanded him to offer his son as a human sacrifice, he set about to do this painful deed and was stopped only by another divine command (Gen. 22).

The problem is that other groups also claim to be theocracies acting on commands from God/god(s)/Allah. We immediately think of the Taliban in Afghanistan or the Shiite regime of Iran, which have attempted to enforce on modern civil society the rules and penalties stated in the Koran and other sources as if Allah were uttering direct commands today. Historically speaking, Christians have not been immune from this approach. For example, the medieval church claimed divine authority and in some respects the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony tried to live as a theocracy, enforcing authoritative biblical revelation as binding on their society.

None of the groups just mentioned have been theocracies in the sense that Israel was because they have lacked the resident, manifest Presence of the divine King in their midst and the powerful checks and balances that go with his ongoing, intimate control. With Israel, the Lord was operating the brakes as well as the accelerator, making sure that his people carried out his orders and then stopped. Thus he commanded the Israelites to wipe out the inhabitants of Canaan, but not people of other nations (Deut. 20) and especially not relatives of Israel (Num. 20; Deut. 2), unless their hostility made them dangerous (Ex. 17; Num. 21, 31; Deut. 2-3). When King Saul, in his misguided zeal, broke Israel’s sworn treaty with the Gibeonites (Josh. 9) by attempting to wipe them out like other peoples of Canaan, God held him and his family seriously accountable (2 Sam. 21).

The Lord’s goal was to provide a spiritually and physically secure home for his people within a limited geographic area so that they could flourish in their own land without being destroyed by idolatrous, corrupt, and predatory neighbors. By sharp contrast with Islam, Israel was not commissioned to use military force anywhere in the world for propagating the faith and attempting to destroy polytheism.10

Religious Belief and “Holy War”

Of course, my belief that ancient Israel was a theocracy is precisely that: a belief, which is based upon the same holy book produced by that theocracy. The Israelite holy wars were commanded by the Lord of the Bible. For Muslims, their jihad is authorized by Allah of the Koran. In spite of all the similarities between our monotheistic deities and all of our attempts at ecumenical “bridge-building,” respect for other religious groups, and postmodern “political correctness,” if we are not Muslim, we do not accept the Koran as authoritative revelation from the true God. Conversely, Muslims do not accept the Bible the way we do.

We confront the hard reality that our approach to the ethics of “holy war” genocide depends upon our answer to a religious question: Which deity is true and therefore has ultimate authority over human life? Problems such as the Middle East and its political and ideological environment will never be satisfactorily and permanently solved at any conference table as long as moral attitudes and ethical judgments are founded on different religions the way they are. If we could agree that because theocracy no longer exists on Planet Earth, there is no such thing as “holy war” in the 21st century and therefore indiscriminate slaughter is unconscionable, inhumane, and universally condemnable, we have a solid basis

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for resolution of conflict. The catch, however, is that this is a religious statement alien to the world-view of many Muslims.

Given that we have different religions, we must ask: “Can people with fundamentally different truth claims live together without killing each other?” Hans Küng argues in the context of gruesome modern history that “there can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. In short, there can be no world peace without religious peace.” The prognosis looks bleak indeed unless until some kind of dramatic change occurs. Pope John XXIII was on target when he said, “The world will never be the dwelling-place of peace, till peace has found a home in the heart of each and every man, till every man preserves in himself the order ordained by God to be preserved.”

Jonathan Swift, the British satirist, wrote that we have just enough religion to make us hate but not enough to make us love one another. This reminds me of a Schnauzer named “Bear.” His owners enrolled him in a training course for guard dogs with two parts: the first to develop aggression and the second to control it. Bear passed the first with flying colors but flunked the second.

Obviously we cannot force other people to change their world-views, but we can improve our own contribution to world peace. A first step is to get acquainted with those of different persuasions as human beings. Philip Yancey describes his reaction to a conference in New Orleans between Muslims, Jews, and Christians:

Suffering sometimes serves as a moat and sometimes as a bridge. The Muslim who fled from the soldiers at Deir Yassin years later had an automobile accident in the United States. It was a Jewish nurse who stopped, tied a tourniquet with her scented hanky, and painstakingly plucked glass from his face. He believes she saved his life. The Muslim man’s wife, a physician, went on to say that she had once treated a patient with a strange tattoo on his wrist. When she asked about it, he told her about the Holocaust, a historical event omitted from her high school, college, and graduate school education in Arab countries. For the first time, she understood Jewish pain.

Why do human beings keep doing it to each other? Yugoslavia, Ireland, Sudan, the West Bank—is there no end to the cycle of pain fueled by religion? As Gandhi observed, the logic of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” cannot sustain itself forever; ultimately both parties end up blind and toothless.

Our meeting in New Orleans did not, rest assured, change the Middle East equation, or make peace between three major religions any more likely. But it did change us. For once we focused on intersections and connections, not just boundaries. We got to know Hillel, Dawud, and Bob, human faces behind the labels Jew, Muslim, and Christian.

As Christians, what we need is not less of religion, but more of truer religion (compare Matt. 5:20) that is permeated by Christ’s self-sacrificing love. Leaving vengeance up to God to administer according to his wisdom (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30), our mandate from our Lord is to love others as ourselves (Lev. 19:18; Matt 22:36-40; John 13:34-35; Rom. 13:8, etc.). The holy war that we are to wage is love.

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12 Küng, Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic, 76.


14 Yancey, Finding God in Unexpected Places, 54-5.
THE THEOLOGY OF CALVINIST INTERNATIONALISM IN EARLY-MODERN ENGLAND AND THE EUROPEAN WARS OF RELIGION

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The century and a half from 1525–1659 in Europe has rightly been described by historians as an age of religious war.1 In this period Calvinists were more responsible for religious warfare than any other Protestant movement. The Anabaptist revolution at Münster in 1534-5 rightly appalled Europe (and is wrongly dodged by many modern apologists for Anabaptists), but thereafter, despite some conspiracies, the Radical Reformation was mostly peaceful. The wars between the Holy Roman Emperor and the Lutheran princes in Germany in the 1540s and early 1550s did not truly polarize the confessions and they were conducted on the whole without massacres or outrages (at least by 16th-century standards); the opposite obtained in the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48), but Lutheran-Catholic conflict was only part of the mix that produced this conflict and made it one of the most destructive and brutal wars in history. Calvinists were an important ingredient in that conflagration, but in addition, the utter refusal of Reformed communities either to submit to persecution or to accept compromises of the cuius regio eius religio type, which secured over sixty years of peace in Germany (1554-1618), resulted in the French Wars of Religion (1562-1629)2 the Dutch Revolt against Spain (1568-1609) and the British Civil Wars (1639–53), as well as revolts and civil wars in Scotland and Transylvania. Even an era of religious violence, Calvinists were remarkable for their willingness to take up arms and to maintain a struggle, even in the most unpromising of circumstances.

There is no simple explanation for this. Doubtless it resulted partly from a sense of spiritual elitism or exultation, resulting from the doctrine of predestination—from being, as it was thought, singled out by God from (depending whether one was pre- or post-lapsarian) the dawn of time or even before the dawn of time. This meant Calvinists could wage war with confidence and conviction in conditions that would have seemed hopeless to others. However, apocalypticism is often advanced as the most important causal factor. There is no question but that most early-modern Calvinists believed themselves to be living near the end of time; nor is there any doubt that most Calvinists shared the opinion of the Elizabethan Archbishop of Canterbury who, in his personal study notes on 1 John chapter 2, observed ‘Papa est antichristus’.3 However, it is not clear if, by this, Calvinists meant that a particular pope was literally the Antichrist or the Beast; or rather that the institution of the Papacy was an antichrist, or antichristian in its characteristics; indeed by the early 17th century English Puritans were labeling the institution of episcopacy in the Church of England as antichrist. The actual meaning of the Calvinist identification of the Pope as antichrist has therefore been the subject of some scholarly debate.4 It is difficult to argue that it was chiefly because Calvinists regarded their Catholic enemies literally as servants of the Beast that the Reformed Churches so often waged such resolute and recalcitrant religious war.

In this paper, which forms part of the research for a book on international Calvinist militancy in early modern Europe, I argue that this issue is not really that important, because Reformed militancy arose from the Calvinist interpretation of the Old, as much as of the New Testaments.5 On the basis of a typological hermeneutic, Calvinists conceived of themselves as a latter-day spiritual Israel—this justified, indeed mandated, military action on behalf of co-religionists throughout Europe, across national borders since all were brethren in prophetic terms. The collective self-conception of the Reformed Churches as, typologically, the 12 different tribes of Israel meant that, when they waged war, they received help from other Reformed communities across Christendom, and this helped to make up for their

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3 Cambridge University Library [hereafter CUL], MS FF.i.9, f. 62v.
5 Reinforcing a point made by, e.g., J. F. Wilson, Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism during the English Civil Wars 1640-1648 (Princeton, N.J., 1969), 143.
generally being outnumbered and outgunned. But the sense of unity engendered by Calvinist readings of the Old Testament did more than motivate and organize action across national borders. The interpretation of early-modern religious wars as prophetic counterparts to the wars of the Israelites impelled Calvinists to wage war, not only transnationally, but also without mercy or compromise; this goes a long way towards explaining the prolonged duration and brutal nature of the European wars of religion.

The subject of Calvinist internationalism in early-modern Europe is of course a vast one, but close reading of key texts opens up the thinking that underpinned the Calvinist international. For the rest of my time this morning I will analyze one such text, The Defence of militarie profession by Geoffrey Gates—both an apologist for and active participant in military aid to Continental Calvinists. The rest of my paper briefly compares Gates to other veterans of Huguenot and Dutch service, drawing on a larger research project in which I have analysed 370 English and Welsh military commanders (based on records in archives in Britain, France and the Netherlands). This comparison reveals that Gates was not unique in subscribing to a conception of Calvinism that mandated aiding fellow believers, regardless of political circumstances.

The Defence of militarie profession (published in 1579) is, despite its title, mostly not about the military profession. Gates praises not career soldiers per se but rather the ‘gentlemen and worthy people’ who ‘have pursued the defensory wars’ fought by Protestants against oppression by idolatrous enemies. Gates defended the military profession because soldiers were the defenders, indeed the preservers, of true religion; the status of the military profession is otherwise tangential in this book. Now, to Gates, the wars of Lutherans as well as Calvinists were part of ‘the worke the Lord is entred into by Armes in these last dayes of the worlde’. His particular interest was, however, in the wars fought by Calvinists. He singles out for praise Maurice, Frederick and John of Saxony, Philip of Hesse, Albert of Brandenburg, and Christopher of Wurttemberg—but ‘above them all’, he wrote, was ‘William, Earle of Nassau, the vertuous, good, and happie Prince of Orange.’ Gates summarizes the outcome of religious wars in Germany and Switzerland, but supplies no detail and declares that ‘a greater work than all these [is] nowe a doing ... for the freedom of true Religion in lowe Dutcheland’. A detailed history of the war in the Low Countries ensues. France and the Netherlands, of course, were strongholds of Calvinism; Gates does not dwell on the French wars of religion as much as on the Dutch revolt, but he twice calls La Rochelle ‘the fortress of [God’s] sanctuary’.

The wars fought by Calvinists were not only those that most interested Gates; they were wars in which he believed English Calvinists ought to fight. This becomes clear when we consider his use of an unusual term to describe the Dutch wars—Jacob’s wars.

Gates uses the expression three times, referring to (1) ‘Jacob ... his warres; (2) ‘the wars of Jacob’; and (3) ‘the enemies of Jacob’. Each of these is used when referring to actual conflicts, so there is no question of this being simply a spiritual metaphor for the personal struggle of every Christian. The reference to ‘Jacob his wars’ introduces a

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8 Gates, p. 58 (cf. pp. 16-17, 21-26).

9 Gates, p. 21.

10 Gates, pp. 16, 22, 42.

11 Gates, p. 42.

12 Gates, pp. 16-17, 22, 42, 53.

13 Gates, p. 22.


15 Gates, pp. 16, 22.


17 Tempting though such a reading is, given that, in Genesis, Jacob fights no wars. The only ‘battle’ for which he is, or in sixteenth-century England was, known is his wrestling match with an angel (or God). See N. Morgan, ‘Old Testament Illustrations in Thirteenth-Century England’, in The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and
description of the first and second Dutch revolts in 1568-9 and 1572-6. The reference to 'the enemies of Jacob' concludes a narrative of the great Dutch victory at Rijmenam in 1578, in which Gates fought:9 Only the 'wars of Jacob' reference does not refer to a specific passage of conflict in the Netherlands, but it does introduce the summary of Protestant warrior princes that concludes by putting William of Orange above all.20 For Gates, then, it was real wars, wars of his own time, waged by Calvinists against Spanish Catholics, that were comparable to the wars of Jacob.

Now, inasmuch as Jacob was not a warrior, what was Gates actually saying? Jacob was renamed Israel by God, or God's angelic messenger.21 So in referring to Jacob and his wars, Gates is not referring to Jacob/Israel personally, but rather to wars fought by the Israelites, who bibliically are both metaphorically and literally the Children of Israel. Other usages by Gates of 'Israel' and 'Jacob'22 make it plain that, for him, 'Jacob' means the Israelites—or rather, the Israelites at a particular point in their history. At a certain stage in the Old Testament, 'Jacob' ceased to be a general poetic term for Jacob's descendants and took on a particular significance. Calvinists believed that that era in Biblical history had particular relevance for the time in which they were living. So when Gates uses 'Jacob' he means it in the way it was used in Scripture—and this had great significance.

Calvinists interpreted scripture analogically, as Augustine put it, or typologically as modern theologians would say. Calvinists believed more than that Old Testament prophecies or concepts might have spiritual fulfills or counterparts in the New Testament; they also believed that Old Testament 'types' (a concept they interpreted freely) might have anti-types even in the 'latter dayes'—in which period Calvinists believed they were living. Christians had always identified the church as the spiritual Israel, but Calvinists took themselves to be the anti-type of Israel. French, Dutch and Eastern European Calvinists applied to themselves the language used in the Old Testament about the ancient Hebrews, and saw many parallels between themselves and the Israelites.24

English Calvinists did likewise.25 Nor was it only literary men or theologians that did so; men in military circles—the men who fought alongside European Calvinists—did, too. One military chaplain, Thomas Adams, explained to his congregation in one sermon that he interpreted Israel 'not topically, but typically'—that is, as the type of 'the Israel of God'. He went on to declare: 'Israel & England, though they lie in a divers climate, may be said right Parallels; not so

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18 Gates, pp. 23-34.
20 Gates, p. 42.
21 Gen. 32:28.
22 Gates, p. 13 and compare p. 4.
25 This is a subject that has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. I am currently preparing a detailed study of this subject, but see e.g. H. Kohn, 'The Genesis and Character of English Nationalism', Journal of the History of Ideas, 1 (1940), pp. 73-90; C. Hill, The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution (London, pb edn, 1993), pp. 264-5; cf. W. Haller, The Elect Nation: the Meaning and Relevance of Foxe's Book of Martyrs (New York, 1963).
unfit in Cosmographically, as fit in Theologicall comparison. But English Puritans went farther than their Continental counterparts—and again, their interpretations would have been known in military circles. Anthony Gilby, author of the first English Protestant commentary (on the Book of Micah) was a close associate of a number of officers who served in the Huguenot army in 1562 and in the royal army that aided the Huguenots in 1563 (in which Gates probably served);27 Gilby wrote described England, not just as, Israel, but as ‘the chosen Israel’, or remnant of Israel; and he was not unusual in such a statement.28

Such language referred readers to the period of Israelite history in which the Davidic kingdom was split, with the Israelites comprising Israel, in the north (with ten tribes) and Judah, in the south (with two). Because Judah alone remained faithful, it was God’s chosen Israel—so Gilby and others like him were implying that England was the anti-type of Judah. This was explicated by the Puritan pamphleteer John Stubbs—a cousin of Englishmen serving in the Netherlands and himself later a soldier in France—and by Dean (later Archbishop) Toby Matthew, a patron of veterans of the Netherlands.29 Stubbs in 1579 referred to Queen Elizabeth as ‘her of Judea’, while Matthew in a sermon of 1588 explicitly compared England to ‘Judah and Jerusalem’.31 So England was the end-time equivalent of the faithful remnant of Israel, rather than of the twelve tribes as a whole. This made sense: since the Church was the spiritual Israel, the church in one country could not be the whole of Israel. But if England was Judah, then it alone was not Israel—that meant there were other tribes of Israel out there. And indeed, Englishmen identified the other Calvinist national churches with other tribes of the children of Israel.32

England’s correspondence to Judah did not mean that other Calvinists were reprobate, as the northern kingdom of Israel had been; the spiritual Israel could avoid the historical Israelites’ unfaithfulness. Englishmen, with their insular vanity, simply thought that England was especially dear to God and thus was Judah; not that other Calvinists were corrupt. As Thomas Adams put it, Jerusalem (Judah’s capital) was as sinful as Samaria (Israel’s capital) and so ought not to vaunt itself over its fellow; the Geneva Bible’s marginal gloss on Adams’s text conveyed a similar message.33 Nor did Calvinist expositors allow Judah to ignore the other ten tribes. Adams was explicit about England’s responsibilities to co-religionists, in terms of Judah’s relationship to Israel as all descendants of Jacob; rhetorically asking why false religion had ‘thrust Christianity out of her seat’, he answered that it was because

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26 T. Adams, Englands sickness, comparatively conferred with Israels. Divided into two sermons (London, 1615), pp. 5, 1. Anthony Gilby, whose A Commentary upon the Prophet Mycha (London, 1551) was one of the first commentaries published by an English Protestant, similarly observed that he interpreted the prophecies ‘precedentially’, ie, as precedents for the present day.


28 Gilby, sig. Kiir (italics mine). For similar sentiments see Hill, English Bible and Seventeenth-Century Revolution, p. 265, citing a work of 1567-8; J. Stubbs, The discouerie of a gaping gulf Whereunto England is Like to be Swallowed by an other French mariage, if the Lord forbid not the banes, by letting her Majestie see the sin and punishment thereo (London, 1579), sig. A7v; and T. Gataker, Gods eye on his Israel or, a passage of Balaam, out of Numb. 23,21, Containing matter very seasonable and suitable to the times (London, 1645), p. 93.

29 Stubbs was cousin of the Wingfields and Veres, families of soldiers who served with the Dutch, on whom see Trim, ‘Mercenaries’, pp. 368-70, 374-5, 480-1; Stubbs died on active service in France.


32 E.g., J. Stubbs, The Discoverie of a Gaping gulf ... (London, 1579), in John Stubbs’s Gaping Gulf with Letters and Other Relevant Documents, ed. L. E. Berry (Charlottesville, Va., 1968), 79; J. Williams, Great Britain’s Saloman. A Sermon Preached at the Magnificent Funerall, of the most high and mighty King James, the late King of Great Britaine, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. At the Collegiat Church of Saint Peter at Westminster, the seventh of May 1625 (London, 1625), repr. in A collection of scarce and valuable tracts, on the ... history and constitution of these kingdoms. Selected from [...] libraries; particularly that of the late Lord Somers, 2nd ed, rev. and ed. Walter Scott, vol. 1 (London, 1809), pp. 33-53, at 39, 49.

33 Adams, Englands sickness, p. 11; Geneva Bible, marginal note to Micah 1:5.
‘Israel is not true to Judah, the renting of the ten tribes from the two, hath made both the two, and the ten miserable.’ In this, Adams reflected wider opinion, as expressed in political tracts, not just theological discourse.34

Now, all this is significant because Gates in *The Defence* reflects this conception of Calvinist internationalism. In the period when both Hebrew kingdoms still existed and were beleaguered by Assyria or Babylon (with whom the Papacy and Spain were, of course, frequently identified by early-modern Protestants), ‘Jacob’ was used in scripture as a term for both kingdoms. ‘Israel’ had a specific meaning, so Jacob became the literary or poetic term to describe all twelve tribes of the Children of Israel. Ephraim, whose story in the Bible is a parallel to that of Jacob, but in reverse, was used poetically for the northern kingdom, as Calvin observed (on Hosea 4:17).35 ‘Jacob’ was thus a metaphor for all of God’s chosen, or elect, people and this is how it was interpreted in Calvinist biblical exposition of relevant Old Testament books: for example, by Calvin in his lectures on Hosea 12:1-2; and by Giby in his early, influential commentary on Micah.36 Gates’s knowledge of church history and scripture is quite formidable, so he may well have encountered Calvin’s opinion, even at second-hand; it is probable that he encountered Giby’s; and he would have seen the relevant marginal notes in the Geneva Bible, in which occurrences of ‘Jacob’ in pertinent texts are interpreted as being a type for unity among believers of the diverse tribes; the notes on Isaiah 44:1-5 even declare: ‘Out of all quarters they shall come into the Church and be counted as citizens.’37 So for the glossgraphers of the Geneva Bible, and thus for all English Calvinists, ‘Jacob’ was used to refer to God’s people of different earthly nations.

Thus, in using ‘Jacob’, instead of ‘Israel’ (which he uses only once, in a foreshadowing of the last judgment rather than a military context),38 Gates was making an important point. He is clear that the Dutchmen and Frenchmen were part of spiritual Israel, for he identifies them as God’s elect—declaring, for example, that William of Orange and his soldiers brought ‘the gospel ... to the elect children of God’.39 English Calvinist congregations addressed letters to Huguenot counterparts as ‘brethren’—that is, among God’s chosen people.40 So Dutch and French Calvinists were anti-types of Israel: not of Judah, perhaps, at least not from an English point of view, but of the Israelites even so, to whom antitypical Judah owed the duties of fellow descendants of Jacob. In calling the Dutch wars ‘wars of Jacob’, Gates was saying that the conflict in the Netherlands was the concern of not just one part of God’s people, but of the whole—the concern of the English as well as other nations. In *The Defence* of militarie profession, then, Gates reveals a clear conception of Calvinist internationalism as a brotherhood that transcended national divisions—a conception derived from Calvinist hermeneutical principles that had clear, internationalist implications for Englishmen about the wars being fought elsewhere in Europe.

Moreover, in comparing the wars fought by Calvinists to those fought by the Old Testament Israelites, Gates was also saying something about the enemies in these wars. He explicitly declared that Catholics were given over to superstition and Idolatrie. The implication was clear, for had not the Israelites, too, been God’s chosen people—His elect!—surrounded by idolatrous peoples? Gates was confident that, as ‘The Lord God of hostes procedeth in his warres [...] so shall hee confounde and consume al his enemys from the face of the erth’. More, just as the Israelites had been the divine agents for the destruction of the pagan peoples of Palestine, so the agents for God’s destruction of his latter-day enemies would be His ‘faithfull Souldiers’—‘the speciall martialis the Lord God of hostes, by whose Armes, he did put in foot to fight with Sathan in plain battell, for the recoverie of his holy Sanctuary.’41 Again, Gates was by no means exceptional. An assembly of the Puritan ministers of London in late 1588, asked for advice about a proposed attack on Spain by Sir Francis Drake, compared the war against Spain with the Israelites’ war against the Philistines and concluded that ‘it is not [...] a question of Choise for the people of Englane to have wars with the Pope, but God hath

36 Ibid., p. 416; Giby, sigs Kir-Kir.
37 Geneva Bible, marginal note.
38 Gates, p. 17.
41 Gates, pp. 5, 34-5, 42; and NB pp. 38-40, which places William of Orange and other Protestant leaders in the tradition of Old Testament kings.
laid it upon them [...], which they must either undertake, or endure the depth of his high displeasure". The theology of Calvinist internationalism thus not only dictated transnational military action; it dictated that there could be no shrinking from the task, no compromise with the enemy.

Gates was probably unique among English soldiers in explicitly expressing the Calvinist theology that justified international military action, but was not alone in being motivated by it to fight, or having his conduct in war shaped by it. This could be the subject of a whole other article, but I will provide some summary evidence that the theology of Calvinist internationalism was a major factor in the motivation of the English soldiers who fought in Europe's wars of religion.

Sir Arthur and Henry Champernowne, veterans of service with the Huguenots in the 1560s, are shown by their wills to have been zealous Calvinists, but in addition Sir Arthur revealed the influence of the biblically based conception of Calvinist internationalism in a letter to Queen Elizabeth after the St Bartholomew's massacre (1572):

We be embarked all in one ship, shall we lye still, whyle they stryve against ... this common tempest? Or if they ... make a wrack, may we be safe? ... [Y]our highnes may see Flushing [and] the Flemmyngs ... in good labor [and] La Rochell and the perseughted Frenchmen at hard point ... we be made up with them in one band together.

And Henry Champernowne was a patron of radical Puritan clergymen. Sir Henry Killigrew served with the Huguenots in 1562, when he thought some might think him 'over holly for a soldier', so great was his zeal 'to banysh idolatrye out of this Realme [i.e., France]'—but, as he observed, he was serving among 'a great number of christian soldiers who be of that opinion.' Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who led the English troops in Dutch employ at Flushing in 1572, as well as regarding the Spanish as anti-Christian (characterizing them as 'enemies of the Christian cause'), also conceptualized his role in terms of the ancient Israelites' wars, declaring himself ready at all times 'to taeke any thynge in hande with Gedion's fayete.'

As we have seen, John Stubbs was among the expositors to interpret England as the anti-typical Judah, with all the implications that has. Lord Willoughby d'Eresby (captain of horse in Dutch pay before becoming in 1588 the royal Lieutenant General in the Netherlands) employed Stubbs as his secretary and dictated a strongly Calvinist preamble to his will, in which he instructed that he be buried 'avoyding superfuous chardge'. One of Willoughby's chaplains characterized the war in the Netherlands as being between 'the people of Israel, and their enemies of Egypt, Canaan and Assiria', exhorting his fellows therefore 'to be strong in the lord, and of good courag, nott fearing ... the smoking firebrand of Spaine.' Captain Richard Chaderton, who died serving in the Netherlands in 1581, was related to the Puritan theologian Laurence Chaderton, who in his lectures at the University of Cambridge insisted that 'he is no lively member of the mystical body of Christ which hearing that his fellow member is cut off will have no compassion on him'.

Other evidence reveals more general Calvinist influence on the English military profession to have been widespread. Among several soldier cousins of John Stubbs and Lord Willoughby was Sir Horace Vere who, while commander-in-chief of English troops in the Netherlands, protected Puritan ministers obliged by their radical Calvinism to flee Jacobean England. Vere's protégé, Edward Harwood, did likewise, while Harwood was also praised by the celebrated Puritan minister, Hugh Peter, for his godly behavior and anti-Arminianism. Sir Edmund Uvedale, a long-term veteran of the Netherlands was related to another firebrand Puritan, John Udall, and, like Willoughby and the

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44 Killigrew to Cecil, 4 Oct. 1562, The National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA] SP 70/42, f. 71r.
47 CUL, MS Dd.xi.76, f. 21r.
48 Trim, 'Mercenaries', p. 416; Lake, p. 113, citing Pembroke College Cambridge, MS IC, ii, 2, 164, f. 16v.
Champernownes, left a will that reveals Calvinist faith.\(^50\) Similarly, Sir Richard Bingham in the Netherlands in 1578 sought a Calvinist chaplain for his troops, and in Ireland in the 1590s had a 'godly and learned Minister' as his own chaplain.\(^51\) Sir Robert Sidney, while Governor of Flushing and his deputy-governor, Sir William Browne, were both strong supporters of a Puritan chaplain of the garrison who instituted Presbyterian reforms in the church. Sir John Ogle, the man whom the States General trusted to crush Arminian dissent in Utrecht in 1610, in the 16-teens had a Presbyterian regimental chaplain.\(^52\) William Russell (later Lord Russell of Thornhaugh), who in the 1570s fought for the Calvinist Elector Palatine and in the 1580s served in the Netherlands, had an intense personal Calvinist faith and 'was a very diligent reader of the Bible', who heavily annotated his copy of the scriptures.\(^53\) Sir Thomas Holles, who served the Dutch from the 1590s to the 1630s, was known to his fellow-officers as 'a religious soldier [who] would not swear an oath', and was an embarrassment to the next generation of his Anglican relatives because of his reputation for 'Calvinistical discipline'.\(^54\)

Finally, let us consider Sir John Norreys, who from 1567 on served with first the Huguenots and then the Dutch. His English troops fighting in the Netherlands were known for 'especially [searching] Cloisters and Religious places', especially saints' shrines, and then profaning or destroying Catholic vestments, icons, relics and chalices.\(^55\) In other words, his troops were known for targeting what Calvinists regarded as idolatrous, pagan religious objects. In 1588 Norreys took advice about a planned military campaign from a group of Puritan divines, identifying himself as 'a professor of the true Reformed Religion'.\(^56\) That Calvinism was not just his personal faith but also his motivation for military service is evident in his categorical counsel to Queen Elizabeth a year earlier, to help the Dutch because they were not just fellow Protestants fighting Papists: they were 'no other religion but the Reformed'.\(^57\)

In sum, where we know anything about the religion of the English soldiers who fought on the Continent up to c.1640, regularly they turn out to have been Calvinists. These men in turn were often the sort of men who, by connections, inclination, or both, would have been aware of the theology of Calvinist internationalism that we find in Gates; moreover, in many cases, the evidence for why they decided to fight in foreign wars reveals the influence of the theology of Calvinist internationalism, based on Old Testament typology, that not only made it imperative to fight on behalf of other Reformed Churches, regardless of earthly nation, but also motivated harshness towards enemies, as agents of idolatrous, indeed apostate, religion.

To conclude, then, this paper argues that Calvinist internationalism exacerbated and perpetuated religious hostilities because the theology underpinning Calvinist internationalism engendered international intervention in national conflicts, and also portrayed those conflicts as wars between good and evil—the anti-type, or prophetic equivalent, of the holy wars of the Israelites, as well as the first stage of the final apocalyptic conflict.

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\(^{50}\) Trim, 'Mercenaries', p. 304.


\(^{55}\) T. Churchyard, A Plaine or moste true report of a daungerous service by English men & other soldiers, for the takynge of Macklin (London: 1580), sig. C4; Trim, 'Mercenaries', p. 303.

\(^{56}\) CUL, MS Hh.vi.10, f. 1v.

\(^{57}\) 'A Discourse ... Concerning the Lowe Countrieys', endd. 1588 [actually 1587], Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. C. 836, f. 6r.
The Nazareth Precipice
The Anomaly (?) of Violence as Religious Duty

Don Pate
Between the Lines

With all due respect to W.D. Davies (may be be remembered with honor) I know I will gravitate back to my normal inclinations as I consider this issue.

Well do I remember that day in the basement of the Bright Divinity School at Texas Christian when that venerable little Welshman put his hands up on my shoulders and said, “Mr. Pate, you must continue in this field. But I also have to warn you that, for you, it will never be easy. You have a passion to make things simple and history is never that clean.”

Still, as I consider the magnitude of this concept I do, inherently, find myself struggling to find the lowest common denominators. Why? Why does religion seem to, so very often, engender attitudes of division and posturing and aggressive defense that all too often move to proactive attacks? Why is it that; what should be an insidious anomaly eventually seems to become “norm” or the expected trajectory?

Why is there enough of this pattern so that people like David Sukhdeo can come to the conclusionary claim, “Violence can be said to be inherent in religion”? Why are there enough supporting evidences so that Michael Stoltzfus can actually get away with linking the two seemingly contradictory elements (religion and violence) under the banner of a “disturbing alliance” in his course description at Valdosta? The preponderance of life-evidence gives substance to the claims of people like René Gerard and his mimetic themes. Voices like William Edelen’s can be heard categorically stating, “Today, in our time, it is those countries without religion that are the LEAST violent.”

Where is the “re-ligamenting” nature of religion? And, in all honesty, is “anomaly” really an inappropriate term when you have “violence” and “religion” in the same phrase?

As I researched volumes of discussions on this I became increasingly aware of several things-

1) This whole discussion is much more intrinsic than simply the debates regarding “just war.”

People like Jacques Ellul are just scratching the surface by focusing on that first layer.

2) Not surprisingly, the volume of essays and books and lectures on this has exploded exponentially since the attacks of September, 2001. Solemn, creative titles represent the gamut of concern expressed by theologians, psychologists, social commentators and the like.

3) Distrust and finger-pointing are the natural “step-children” of the various heritage faiths. “Since they don’t see it our way they are the source of the problem!” Christians easily express disdain at Islamic Jihad and all too soon forget pogroms and crusades and inquisitions. (This is a fair, and expected, issue of scrutiny by folks like Brumley and Melton.)

4) Honest observations DO remind us that claiming a “similarity” or “equality” between “Mosaic Judaism” and “conquering Islam” is not, in reality, surprising. The Bible does leave this door open for skepticism.

5) Some reasoned thinkers look beyond mere carnality to see larger concerns. As Juergensmeyer stated, there is always “…the propensity to absolutize and to protect images of cosmic war.”

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2 Valdosta State University catalogue, course REL 4700 A.
4 Edelen, William, Religion is the Cause of Violence, 1999 (cited at infidels.org/library/modern/William_edelen/religionviolence.html)
6 There is an extensive listing of available writings compiled by Charles Bellinger at wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/hedgehog_viol+bib.htm. Literally scores of titles are listed that represent literary concern of this topic in the large bibliography available there.
7 Sukhdeo, pg. 2
invokes “the great controversy theme.” Evangelization can gravitate toward “illegitimate coercion” all too easily because of the underlying issues that seem to be at stake.9

6) These “cosmic issues” inherently bring a greater degree of internal response from loyal adherents than a boundary dispute or trade misunderstanding might. Why? Because “believers” recognize that they are eternally on the spot; when it comes to issues of “compromising the will of God.”10

As a lad, the magnitude of this issue began to dawn on me when Hani Zahren came to our house for Sabbath lunch. After the meal we queried how long it had been since he’d seen his family in India and when he might return to see them again. His response shook a boy of 12 as he replied, “Oh, I can never go home. My family would be under obligation to kill me for I have accepted Jesus.”

To me, that begins to approach the core of the problem. And that leads me to the Nazareth precipice.

It’s far beyond the scope of this short discussion to deal with the issues of criticism regarding the historicity and import of the little village as recorded by the gospeler.11 (Apologies to James D. Tabor for personal conversations at supper in October of 2003, but I’m not yet convinced.) We will just work from the story as recorded because my mind moves on to more questioning. “Why is it Nazareth? Why are they the first to turn to violence against Him, one of their own? Why are they so quickly ‘offended?’” (Mark 6:3) Why are they the first to align in violence to silence Him, to deal with Him, by any means necessary?” (Luke 4:16-20)

What, within the human psyche, so easily transforms what decency should be able to call “malignant and destructive violence” into “benign, beneficial violence” in our self-evaluations?12 Obviously there could be many phrases to encapsulate some of the issues at play: “exclusivist nucleus” or “choseness,” “aggressive Messianism,” or “mission” as conquest. These ideas all add to the discussion but (with apologies to Professor Davies) I might be more simplistic.

Bundled in all of the ramifications of the Nazareth experiences we might discover one simple thread. He was their mess. They were responsible for Him and what He was potentially going to foist upon the heritage of Judaism. The sacred Text gave them justification AND, potentially more importantly, the obligation to deal with one of their own who was dangerous to the house of faith. (Consider such passages on the rebellious child or the heretic teacher in Deuteronomy 13:6-10, Deuteronomy 21:18-21, etc.) I shouldn’t be at all surprised that the violence had to begin in Nazareth. Only my naiveté would have expected otherwise.

Your homefolk aren’t just there to love you, they are responsible for you too!

His clan-folk had the primary and greatest obligation to move to “linear, cosmic violence from the root of the Biblical God” as Douglas Cowan describes this whole large issue in his “Sociological Look at the Dark Side of Faith.”13 I do sense a lingering shadow behind this, but let’s spend a moment more on this horizontal, human level.

As we do, we discover logical gradations that are justified from the demands of Scripture by many different religious heritages. Dealing with the divergent soul demands a certain passive/aggressive-to-aggressive progression in corporate responsibility in the minds of some.14

That pattern of progression might be expressed as-

1) The group’s duty to confront. (Matthew 18:15-17)
2) Active demarcation with the wandering one. (Romans 16:7, II Thessalonians 3:14-15)
3) Official separation from the fallen. (I Corinthians 5:9-12)
4) Shunning (Old Order Amish), Disconnection (Scientology), Excommunication (Catholicism) would come next. (II John 9-11 or II Timothy 3:5)
5) Labeling as “Anathema.” (I Corinthians 16:22, Galatians 1:9)
6) Finally, silencing the discordant voice. (Deuteronomy 13:6-10, II Chronicles 15:13)

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9 Clapis, Emmanuel, “Violence and Christian Theology”, pg. 1, at goarch.org
11 “An imaginary city for an imaginary god-man.”- Kenneth Humphreys in “The Town That Theology Built” at jesusneverexisted.com/nazareth
13 From catalogue description on his course on “Religion and Violence” at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.
14 Articles available from the Catholic Encyclopedia are particularly interesting on this progression. One such entry would be on “Anathema” at newadvent.org/cathen/01455c.html
Along the way, somewhere, the Bible skeptics will find fodder for critique here. They will make claims such as “countries without religion are the least violent”\textsuperscript{15} or “Jihad is a Biblical practice before it is Islamic.”\textsuperscript{16} History will, for some, reveal a pattern that Christianity has codified violence both by fiat\textsuperscript{17} and by the resulting practice.

But, what of that shadow that still lingers behind this discussion? What is the true ultimate baseline issue to be confronted? Pfau and Blumenthal touch on it in their extended correspondence when they verbalize it as “the struggle of the dark side of God.”\textsuperscript{18} That heavy, looming negative discomforts us with the fact that honesty does remind us that His Text tells us that our God “is a man of war”, (Exodus 15:3), He despoils His enemies (II Chronicles 15:13) and, ultimately, purges His opposition by means of violence. (Revelation 20:9)

There, I said it. This, finally, is the bottom line of my questioning.

I don’t like the Nazareth “faithful” turning upon-their-own. I don’t like Christianity when it doesn’t turn the other cheek. I am not comfortable with the “select” dealing decisively with those who are not part of the inside group, with those who don’t get the inside jokes. I want religion and violence to be mutually exclusive elements in experience.

But, I can’t be honest to the Word without having to deal with that deepest layer. A bloody cross confronts me and I see the Father of Isaiah 53 standing behind it. It is God Himself who, at times, demands more than a passive, gentle response. And, eventually, it is God who will model the ultimate, conclusionary violence in the eradication of evil and those who would rather be enemies of the throne than sane, loyal subjects.

Which leads to my last layer of questioning: How do I face this full picture of Him and His expectations and still affirm that His ways are “just and true” with the rest of the reasoned universe? (Revelation 15:3) How do I accept all of the pieces of the puzzle to be worthy of the claims of the plague-throwing angels when they respond to the violence that He precipitates, “Thou art righteous, O Lord... because thou hast judged thus... Lord, God, Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments”? (Revelation 16:5, 7)

Eventually it comes around to the simple choice of faith.

Are there enough slivers and chips in the Divine mosaic given to us so that I can include the darker pieces in the scene and still stand back in awe and admiration? Do I need to control the image of God? Does my inherent desire to sanitize some of the pieces of the puzzle actually only reveal my own personal struggle with idolatry?

It is my prayer that my faith is maturing to view the whole picture of God. I can’t control the human perversion of what He largely calls us to do, but I can make a choice about honoring Him even when I can’t explain it all or justify it all. That ball is in my court.

\textsuperscript{15} Edelen, William, \textit{Religion is the Cause of Violence}, 1999 from “Distracting Voices” at infidels.org
\textsuperscript{16} answering-christianity.com/jihad_in_bible.htm
\textsuperscript{17} Ellul, Jacques, \textit{Reflections from a Christian Perspective}, pg. 3
THE BEGINNINGS OF A PEACE CHURCH:
Eschatology, Ethics, and Expedience in
Adventist Responses to the Civil War

Douglas Morgan
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Despite a long tradition of “noncombatancy,” neither “pacifism” nor “peace church” has ever gained prominence in descriptions of Seventh-day Adventist identity. The distinction that made a good Adventist a noncombatant but not a pacifist became commonplace during the twentieth century, and came to be associated with “the faith once delivered to the saints.” When we look closely at the church’s founding era, however, the distinction looks more like an innovation than a pioneer legacy, for we see much evidence that Seventh-day Adventism in fact began as a peace church.

It was during the middle decades of the twentieth century that church publications began issuing sharp denial of Adventists were pacifists or antimilitarists or anything of that ilk. While wishing to sustain the long-standing norm that Adventists as individuals could not in good conscience bear arms, American church leaders wanted the sharpest possible distinction drawn between their “noncombatant” position and that of movements advocating disarmament and world peace in the political realm, often perceived as subversive by ruling authorities.

During this same era (1930s-1950s), the Church of the Brethren, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and the Mennonite churches, each long known for conscientious objection, faced similar pressures. For each, conscientious objection to military combat had long been a prominent mark of identity. Many in these churches also wanted to make clear the difference between their nonresistant discipleship and political pacifism or disloyalty to the nation. Toward that end, representatives of these denominations adopted in 1935 the term “historic peace churches” to designate their shared “official witness that peace is an essential aspect of the gospel” and their rejection of “the use of force and violence.” With regard to the military draft, the historic peace churches worked with the government in establishing civilian alternative service programs.

Seventh-day Adventists, meanwhile, gravitated toward the term “conscientious cooperator” to designate eagerness to do their part as patriotic Americans during wartime. If drafted, they would enter military service as medics or in other roles that would not involve carrying or using weapons.

Was it something at the core of their tradition that predisposed, even predetermined, Seventh-day Adventists to take this turn, that set them on a course now demarcated more sharply than before from that of the historic peace churches? That question is the impetus for this historical exploration of the 1860s. It was of course the great sectional conflict of the 1860s that confronted Adventists with the question of what their radical faith meant for the moral dilemma of war. The first conference (Michigan) organized in October 1861, six months after the Civil War began. The first General Conference session met in May 1863, near the war’s midpoint.

The Civil War and its challenges comprise a relatively familiar topic in Adventist history. Yet the historical narratives to which we are indebted for that familiarity have also obscured crucial dimensions of the story.

Think, if you will, of an episode titled “Adventists and the Civil War, 1861-1868.” Though part of a series, this episode can stand alone. Thus, it is worthwhile to think about where things stand at the end of this episode before going on to the next one in the larger story.

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1 Church policy recognizes pacifism as one way that conscientious Adventists might work out the implications of their faith, but it is not widely regarded as normative; “Recommendations of General Interest from the Autumn Council, 1972 – 1,” Review and Herald (30 Nov. 1972): 20.

2 Carlyle B. Haynes, a leader of the denomination’s agencies for handling matters pertaining to military service for several years, seemed particularly adamant on this point. See for example, “Conscription and Noncombatancy,” Review and Herald (10 Oct. 1940): 10.


4 The Medical Cadet Corps was formed to prepare Adventist young people for more effective military service and positive witness for their faith if drafted. Everett N. Dick, “The Adventist Medical Corps as Seen by Its Founder,” Adventist Heritage 1 (July 1974): 19-27; Douglas Morgan, Adventism and the American Republic (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 89-96.
So, let us go directly to some decisive scenes toward the end of this episode.  

May 17, 1865, a month after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox, the third annual General Conference session passes a resolution that concludes:

While we thus cheerfully render to Caesar the things which the Scriptures show to be his, we are compelled to decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed as being inconsistent with the duties enjoined upon us by our divine Master toward our enemies and toward all mankind.

May 1867, the fifth General Conference resolves

That the bearing of arms, or engaging in war, is a direct violation of the teachings of our Savior and the spirit and letter of the law of God. Yet we deem it our duty to yield respect to civil rulers, and obedience to all such laws as do not conflict with the word of God. In the carrying out of this principle we render tribute, customs, reverence, etc.

May 1868, the sixth General Conference declares

That we feel called upon to renew our request to our brethren to abstain from worldly strife of every nature, believing that war was never justifiable except under the immediate direction of God, who of right holds the lives of all creatures in his hand; and that no such circumstance now appearing, we cannot believe it to be right for the servants of Christ to take up arms to destroy the lives of their fellow-men.

Some Adventist historical treatments do make mention — usually of the first — of these resolutions. They do not, however, make much of the fact that the church made definitive and repeated declarations of pacifism during its first decade of organized existence. I propose that the resolutions of 1865-1868 support the generalization that Seventh-day Adventism began as a peace church.

The two contemporary Adventist historians who have written with the greatest skill and acumen on this topic, Ronald Graybill and George Knight, conclude that beneath the unequivocal resolutions of the 1865-1868 General Conferences, Adventists remained quite unsettled about questions of war and military service. In their accounts, expedience seems much more prominent than ethical conviction in prompting Adventists to go on record with their emphatic, sweeping statements against participation in war.

Graybill points to a shift of emphasis in the statements of church leaders, from hostility to the “nonresistant position” early in the Civil War to espousal of it toward the end of the war, and concludes:

Early on, Adventists were suspected of being Southern sympathizers, so James White insisted on the church’s support of the Union, and condemned those who resisted the draft. By the end of the war, however, Adventists were struggling to prove that they were really eligible for the privileges accorded those who were conscientiously opposed to war and the bearing of arms. Consequently, they gave full play to their nonresistant sentiments.

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5 The resolutions quoted below may be found in the “General Conference Session Minutes, 1863-1888” in the Online Document Archive, Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics (GCA) www.adventistarchives.org.


7 Peter Brock includes Adventism in the category of “separational pacifism” in which renunciation of violence is one of the features that distinguish their community from the general society; Freedom From Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 270-72. In an analysis that identifies at least twenty-five different types of religious pacifism, John Howard Yoder cites Seventh-day Adventists as the foremost example of the “pacifism of cultic law” — absolute, unquestioning adherence to the letter of divine law; Nevertheless, 96-98. I hope to show that this categorization does not do justice to the Adventists of the Civil War era, at least.

8 That is, they did bear “official witness that peace is an essential aspect of the gospel” and explicitly enounced “the use of force and violence.”

9 “This Perplexing War,” 3.
James White’s statement of his position early in the war (August 1862) triggered an extended debate in the *Review*, in which participants advocated a wide range of actions — from taking an armed, Sabbath-observing regiment into the righteous crusade against slavery, to uncompromising nonviolence, whatever the penalty. While this debate was animating the church paper in 1862-1863, however, it remained possible to purchase exemptions from military service without gaining official governmental recognition as a conscientious objector.  

When changes in the draft law during the summer of 1864 left no other means for avoiding regular combat duty, Adventist leaders, as characterized by both Graybill and Knight, rushed to declare for public consumption a unanimity in their church that did not actually exist. They did this, not so much out of dedication to peace, but principally to serve an interest of much greater importance to them: avoiding conflict with the authorities over Sabbath observance.

In presenting documents for that purpose to government officials, denominational spokesman indulged in “a great deal of exaggeration,” says Knight, with the claim that their movement had always been unanimous in conscientious opposition to bearing arms. Had not considerable disagreement just been publicly aired in the *Review* only months before? As for the resolution adopted by the General Conference of 1868, Knight judges that while it gives appearance of unanimity on the “military question,” in reality opinions in the church remained quite divided.

The central point one draws from the portrayal of the “Adventists and the Civil War” episode by these historians is that during these years, no clear, well-grounded position was formulated from which the church could take orientation when military conscription next became a major problem. The conflicts and changing trends with regard to military service in twentieth-century Adventism thus emerged out of widely diverse views that had been there from the beginning, but had been officially papered over in order to get through the crisis of the Civil War.

I question this interpretation on several grounds. Here are two.

First, the evidence that the Adventists compiled in attempting to prove the legitimacy of their claim to be noncombatants warrants greater recognition. They published this early in 1865 in a pamphlet entitled *Compilation or Extracts, from the Publications of Seventh-day Adventists Setting Forth Their Views of the Sinfulness of War, Referred to in the Annexed Affidavit*. Knight makes no mention of this pamphlet. Graybill accurately observes that only a handful of articles and excerpts written by Adventists themselves could be found from their first fifteen years of publications to include in the anthology. By no stretch of the imagination does the compilation show peace and nonresistance to be central themes for Adventists in the 1850s, any more than was health reform. But the presence of a few original articles, along with reprinted material, is at least as striking as the absence of more. It provides clear evidence of a widespread assumption or disposition favorable toward nonviolence as a feature of authentic Christianity at a time when Adventists were indeed preoccupied with other matters.

The pamphlet contains letters of endorsement from prominent citizens which the Adventists included in the materials submitted to state governors and the U.S. Provost Marshal to document their religious convictions against engaging in war. One of the letters, addressed to Illinois governor Richard Gates, affirms the Adventists to be “as truly non-combatant as the Society of Friends.” 16 Brock points out that in the legislation enacted during the Civil War period, the term “non-combatant” designated all religious conscientious objectors. Use of the term “noncombatancy” for service in the military in roles not requiring the bearing of arms in contrast to “pacifist” refusal of military service, is a product of the twentieth century.

The affidavit annexed to the pamphlet offer even more striking evidence, particularly for the definitiveness with which Adventist leaders, “duly sworn,” declare participation in warfare and bloodshed to be violations of their core beliefs. Uriah Smith’s statement refers to the “Church Covenant” adopted by the Michigan Conference in 1861 as indication that Seventh-day Adventists had always “taken as their articles of faith and practice, ‘The Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus Christ.’” Smith elaborated that Adventists explain “the commandments of God to mean the

11 Knight, 164.
12 Knight, 166.
13 My perspective owes much to the work of Peter Brock, particularly *Freedom From Violence*, 230-58.
15 EGWE DF 320.
16 *Compilation or Extracts*, 15.
17 Brock, *Freedom From Violence*, 301.
ten commandments of the moral law, and the faith of Jesus Christ to be the teachings of Christ in the New Testament.” James White stated that he had been a minister of the “denomination” since 1847 and “that during all of that time, the teachings of that church have been that war is sinful and wrong, and not in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Scripture.”

Finally, I interpret a letter G.I. Butler wrote to J.N. Andrews in March 1868 in a much different light than have others. The General Conference session of May 1866 had voted to request Andrews “to prepare an article setting forth the teachings of the Scripture on the subject of war.” When called to account at the following year’s session, Andrews reported that the project was “in an unfinished condition” due to a “want of time.” Still not off the hook a year later, the scrupulous scholar reported his finding that the subject required “much research and study” and thus still was not done. It’s not that he wasn’t trying. Earlier in the year Andrews had sent a letter asking Butler for his views on the subject. Butler’s reply makes a case from the Bible for war as necessary and proper in some instances as an instrument of the divinely-ordained institution of government. Graybill and Knight both lean heavily on the Butler letter as evidence for a very divided state of Adventist belief on the issue at the end of the 1860s, the resolutions adopted at the General Conferences notwithstanding.

The letter does show that the subject was not closed, and that desire existed for a fuller and deeper biblical exposition on which to ground the church’s position. Indeed, the very fact that it seemed necessary to re-affirm the church’s position on the sinfulness of war at the 1867 conference and yet again in 1868 must mean that questions continued to be raised.

I do not believe, however, that Butler’s letter sustains Knight’s conclusion that the Seventh-day Adventist community came out of the Civil War-era in a fragmented and uncertain state with regard to war. Rather, it provides quite valuable evidence for the genuine prevalence of a consensus at this point. In the first place, Butler himself regards his theories to be on the margins of Adventist thought, recognizing “that the mass of our people are leaning rather to the non-resistant side of this subject.” He opened his lengthy epistle with a teasing affectation of surprise that Andrews would request light from him – a known skeptic about the prevailing view. “I wish I could have seen whether there was not a roughish twinkle in your eye when you penned that sentence,” he wrote.

The future General Conference president congratulates himself for having succeeded in urging that Andrews be appointed to write the article on war rather than someone like Roswell F. Cottrell, who would have “treated” readers to a rehash of non-resistance theories with no consideration of the other side.” It is here that Knight sees conclusive evidence that nothing like unanimity existed. Unanimity was indeed lacking, particularly on how to work out the biblical rationale for the refusal to bear arms. However, Butler’s letter takes as a starting point that a consensus – a basic position agreed upon by delegates duly elected as representatives of the church body – had been established. He does not expect – I doubt even hoped – that Andrews’ research would show that Adventists had gotten it all wrong three years before in declaring themselves noncombatant, that the Bible actually does approve participation by the remnant in warfare for a just cause, so they really need not have stressed themselves so much about the draft, after all.

Rather, Butler dissents from the general acceptance of the “non-resistance theories” that had been set forth as a definitive basis for the Adventist position. He wanted Andrews commissioned to write on the subject because he was confident that Andrews would give thorough and fair consideration to all sides of the issue, and was the one best-positioned to formulate a convincing case that does justice to the full range of scriptural testimony.

Butler doesn’t want more of the same from Cottrell. He’s already heard it and found it unconvincing. He wants more solid ground – “rock bottom, not shifting sand” – on which to stand when faced with “the test on this subject” in the future, as he expected to be. He wants truth so deeply convincing as to enable him to “go to prison or anywhere else, with firmness and resignation.”

Then, after making his ponderous case against biblical nonresistance, Butler in the end declares that he is nevertheless already firm in his own commitment never to participate in war. How can this be? It’s not that the sixth commandment is an eternal prohibition against Christians engaging in war under any circumstances in any historical context; rather, it is because a new and final epoch in God’s saving plan for history has begun. Butler can “justify war” in some cases during past ages where liberty was at stake.

But now the circumstances are changed. A mighty, special truth to accomplish a special work, a preparation for the captain of our first allegiance who is coming to put out of the way these secondary institutions which have so sadly abused the privileges and responsibilities which He has committed to their hands, and which are becoming more rotten every day, and of whom there can be no rational hope of reforming, to put in their place His own just and beneficent government – is being preached.

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18 George I. Butler to J.N. Andrews, 24 March 1868, EGWE DF 320.
19 GC Session Minutes, 16 May 1866, 14 May 1867, 12 May 1868.
Butler cannot enlist in the United States military because he is already under commission for the "truly mighty work" of uplifting to the world the supremacy of God's government and law. Engaging in war, he reasoned, would compel Adventists to violate the Sabbath of that law, and thus directly contradict their own distinct message by "giving honor to the creature earthly governments, which in this of all ages we should give to the Creator." 

Thus, though a self-described lonely voice on the far right fringe of early Adventist thought regarding war, Butler finds himself driven to pacifism by the logic of the movement's eschatological proclamation. The priority he places on Sabbath observance as a signifier of loyalty to the reign of God that is about to come crashing in absolutizes his resolve never to make war on behalf the earthly governments that are plunging irreversibly into rebellion against God.

J.N. Andrews was never able to complete the study on war assigned him in 1866. Without it, George Knight observes, Adventists did little to develop a stronger ideological foundation that might have upheld a more consistent response to war and military service in the twentieth century. I do not believe, however, that the church lacked definite historical moorings from its founding decade.

When the American church next faced military conscription in 1917, the North American Division executive committee found the precedent from the "Civil War" episode of Adventist history clear enough. The church's public statement affirmed, "We have been noncombatants throughout our history," and then quoted the General Conference resolution adopted in 1865. In sum, the Adventist church, during its formative era, understood the "remnant" vocation as a call to utter seriousness about the biblical mandates against taking human life and for loving enemies. They believed that the prophetic witness to "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ" for which their movement came into being required their doing so when the overwhelming majority of Americans in the era of Protestant empire would not.

What their stand means for us would, of course, be another matter. In any case, the Seventh-day Adventist church began as a peace church.

Affidavits Filed by Church Leaders in March 1865

Copies in Ellen G. White Estate, DF 320

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21 Butlerian pacifism comes close to that later developed by the Jehovah's Witness, which Yoder labels the "pacifism of eschatological parenthesis" (Nevertheless, 115-16), except that Butler gives no hint of expecting the saints to join in the violent overthrow of earthly governments at the last day, as the Witnesses anticipate.

23 Knight, 166.

“The Matrix of Adventist Eschatology”

by Jon Paulien
Andrews University

Introduction

“The Matrix is everywhere. It’s all around us. . . . It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth. . . . Like everyone else, you were born into bondage, kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste, or touch. A prison for your mind.”1 “What is the Matrix? Control. The Matrix is a computer-generated dreamworld built to keep us under control.”2 Morpheus, in The Matrix

Violence, ultimately, is about power and control. It is the last resort when negotiation, manipulation and other means fail to keep things “under control.” It is a tool by which the powerful control the weak. It is a tool by which the weak manipulate the powerful.3 But violence has an evil twin, deception.4 Communism and Nazism, for example, exerted authority with force, the governmental use of violence. But their propaganda machines also used deception to blind their people to the oppression they were suffering.

Violence and Deception in The Matrix
The Matrix movies portray a similar mixture of violence and deception.5 These movies connected

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3I am told that C. S. Lewis said something similar, but I haven’t been able to verify that.

4Through deception oppressors can get others to willingly choose the very behaviors that they would otherwise have to be forced to do. Matt Lawrence, Like a Splinter in Your Mind: The Philosophy Behind the Matrix Trilogy (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 57-59.


While the Wachowski brothers claim the trilogy includes a critique of media violence, the message is largely lost in the violent medium that conveys it. Cf. Frances Flannery-Dailey and Rachel L. Wagner, “Stopping Bullets: Constructions of Bliss and Problems of Violence,” in Jacking In to the Matrix Franchise: Cultural Reception and Interpretation, edited by Matthew Kapell and William G. Doty (New York: Continuum, 2004), 104-111.
powerfully with the first post-modern generation. According to Adam Gopnik, “The first film struck so deep not because it showed us a new world, but because it reminded us of this one.” Read Mercer Schuchardt called it “a new testament for a new millennium.” The subplot of the movies is a war between the human race and the machines that they have created to serve them.

Projecting into the future, machines had come to the place where their intelligence was superior to that of humans and constantly on the increase. They were self-replicating and self-sustaining, fueled by the power of the sun’s rays. In a desperate attempt to avoid being subjugated by their own creation, the humans blotted out the sun’s rays to deprive the machines of their power source. The machines nevertheless won the battle and succeeded in enslaving the human race.

The humans were placed in liquid vats, connected to the machine network by cables. Their bodily processes were farmed to provide energy for the machines. In essence, humans had become batteries replacing solar power on a darkened planet. To keep the humans from rebelling against this arrangement, the machines created a computer-generated simulation that gave the human batteries the illusion of meaningful life, a “virtual community.” In the “Matrix,” as the program was called, humans think they are walking around and making a difference, while their minds are radically deceived and their bodies are being exploited for energy. The program works because most humans truly believe that the Matrix is reality, even though it only exists in the minds of those trapped in it.

Through the Matrix the oppressive and demeaning role of the human race is sugar-coated through an illusion of freedom and significance. To the average person in the Matrix, it seems to be the ordinary world of 1999, not a post-apocalyptic hell of darkness and destruction. Only a few human beings have discovered the truth. They see that deception and control are working hand in hand. Only when the deception is exposed for what it is, can the true fight for freedom begin.

The Matrix trilogy raises interesting questions regarding reality. In the words of Morpheus again, “What is

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7. The power of The Matrix, Lord of the Rings, and similar movies is the fact that people are disillusioned today with “cold, hard facts.” In reaction, they are much more open to the big, mythological truths. See Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture, Engaging Culture series, edited by William A. Dymess and Robert K. Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 38, 303-504.
real? How do you define ‘real’? If you’re talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain.”

13 By questioning the reality of what people see, hear and touch, Morpheus seeks to free the human race from the violence of the machines. Violence and deception are evil twins.

For Morpheus, the “real” is that which has independent existence outside of our minds. The unreal, by contrast, is that which exists only in our minds. 14 The unreal has no existence independent of electrical signals picked up and interpreted inside our brain. Morpheus’ ship the Nebuchadnezzar, on the other hand, is real because it would exist whether or not Morpheus was aware of its existence. But whether or not the outside world is real, the brain experiences whatever the incoming electrical signals indicate it should experience. 15

The idea that the human race could be living in a dream world has a long philosophical history. Christopher Grau, a philosophy professor at Florida International University, notes the fundamental importance of René Descartes, the seventeenth-century French philosopher. 16 In an attempt to provide a firm foundation for knowledge, Descartes began his Meditations by casting doubt on everything he believed, looking for that which is absolutely certain beyond all doubt. 17 He came to question whether what we perceive as reality could actually be an extended form of dreaming. He wrote, “There are no conclusive indications by which waking life can be distinguished from sleep.” 18 Ultimately, according to him, all any of us can directly experience is the content of our own minds. 19

Descartes would ask us today whether we can completely rule out that we are dreaming even as we sit here

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15 The original Matrix movie operates on the assumption that the heros have escaped deception and found reality. But the first sequel, The Matrix Reloaded, takes the matter a step further. The Architect tells Neo that he is a dupe, a false hope that springs among a tiny group of rebels who are looking to him for salvation. Neo actually has had five predecessors, and their roles were all programmed by the Oracle, “the mother of the Matrix.” The ideas and actions of the movie’s heros are built right into the Matrix at a deeper level. The myth of a redeemer may have been deemed necessary by the Architect to sustain the whole elaborate system constructed by the machines. The final sequel, however, The Matrix Revolutions, suggests that Neo’s death somehow overcomes the programming and truly restores the human race. For the purposes of this paper, it is the first movie that raises most of the pertinent philosophical questions. According to the New York Times (nytimes.com, November 7, 2003), the sequels failed to live up the provocative quality of the first movie.


17 My choice of words in this sentence is dependent on Matt Lawrence, Splinter, 21-22.


together, discussing Revelation. How do we know that our disagreements over the meaning of the Apocalypse are not the vicious plot of a malicious demon? Can we know for sure that we are not brains in vats wired to some computer that is feeding us this experience for some controlling purpose of its own? Descartes’ own answer is that we cannot doubt our own existence. “I think, therefore I am.” All thinking presupposes a thinker.

We like to think that the world around us is exactly as it appears to us to be. But this kind of realism is naive. Our perceptions often deceive us. In a sense, deception is built into the very fabric of the world we live in. The sun certainly seems to be moving across the sky. The ocean certainly looks flat to the eye along the shore. It has been a fundamental task of both science and philosophy to free humanity from the deception of perception and from the enslavement that often goes along with deception.

Why do most viewers of The Matrix identify with Neo, Morpheus and Trinity? Why should their bleak existence on the Nebuchadnezzar be considered superior to the safe and comfortable dream world of the Matrix? Brooklyn College philosopher Iakovos Vasiliiou argues that we identify with the heroes of The Matrix because we are repulsed by the idea that the human race would be enslaved and deceived. People prefer some freedom of action even though they are severely constrained by the limitations of flesh, gravity and death. People prefer to know the truth, or at least have the right to know the truth, even if the truth is unpleasant.

Vasiliiou argues that for a person, or a group of people, to purposefully keep others in the dark about something is to diminish the respect in which they are held. To deceive others even “for their good” is condescending and paternalistic. Such deception is a method of control as powerful as violence. By nature humans reject attempts at control, when they are aware of them. So oppressive powers not only need to withhold the truth, they have to keep their victims unaware that they are being deceived.

**Violence and Deception in the Apocalypse**

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20 Descartes, 22.


22 Descartes, 23-28.


27 I'm sure it is not a coincidence that Nebuchadnezzar was a Babylonian king obsessed with dreams (Detweiler and Taylor, 169).


29 Vasiliiou, paragraph 6.
Such is the picture we find at the heart of the Book of Revelation. Violence in the Apocalypse has been a recurring theme in recent scholarly study. What has gotten less attention in recent study, however, is how the hostile powers in the document combine deception and counterfeit with violence to gain control over the inhabitants of the earth.

I agree with Elizabeth Fiorenza that the central core of the Apocalypse’s message is found in the combat scenes of Revelation 12-14, especially the vision of the 144,000 (Rev 14:1-5) and the three angelic proclamations that follow (Rev 14:6-13). In the great conflict between the dragon and the remnant, violence plays a major role. “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints (Rev 13:9-10, NIV, cf. Rev 12:17; 13:7, 15).” But I would like to point out that deception is just as central to the evil powers grab for control as violence.

Revelation 12:17 describes the two key players in a great eschatological battle; the dragon and the remnant of the woman’s offspring. The dragon’s war against the remnant is described in chapter thirteen, while the remnant’s response to the dragon’s attack is detailed in chapter fourteen.

The dragon prepares for war by going to the “shore of the sea” (Rev 13:1, NIV). From that position he calls up a pair of allies; a beast from the sea, and a beast from the land (Rev 13:1, 11). The idea of a malicious trinity echoes Revelation’s repeated use of threes in relation to God (Rev 1:4-5, 8, 4:8). So the dragon, the sea beast and the land beast could be seen as counterfeit of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the early Christian tradition (cf. Matt 28:19; Rev 1:4-5).

This apparent counterfeit or parody is carried out in considerable detail. First of all, the dragon seems to be the counterfeit of God the Father. He precedes the others in the narrative, precipitates their arrival, and is the one who has authority and can delegate authority to the others (Rev 12:17; 13:1-2). While the parallel is a bit tenuous with regard to the dragon, it is much clearer with the sea beast (Rev 13:1-10).

The sea beast is a parody or counterfeit of Jesus, the Lamb who joins His Father on the heavenly throne in chapter five (Rev 3:21; 5:5-8). In Rev 13:1, the sea beast is described as having seven heads and ten horns, just like

30 Greg Easterbrook of The New Republic notes that apocalyptic is no longer confined to Revelation, comic books and sci-fi movies but has seeped into the broader arena of talk radio and earnest TV documentaries; “We’re All Gonna Die,” Wired, July, 2003, 152.


33 Fiorenza, 181-189.
the dragon (Rev 12:3). As strange as the dragon looks, the sea beast looks just like him. Johannine Christians would likely have been familiar with the saying attributed to Jesus in John 14:9 (my translation): ‘The one who has seen me has seen the Father.’ The relation of the sea beast to the dragon parodies the relationship of Jesus with His Father.

Rev 13:2 describes the sea beast receiving his authority from the dragon. There are a number of places in the New Testament where the authority of Jesus is derived from the authority of God (Matt 28:18; John 5:36; 8:28; 14:11-12; 17:1-2). So once again the sea beast relates to the dragon in the same way that Jesus relates to His Father.

Rev 13:3 describes one of the sea beast’s heads being “slaughtered to death” and then healed. The sea beast counterfeits the death and resurrection of Jesus! That this parody is intentional is made explicit when the author uses the same specialized Greek word for “slaughter” (evsagme,nh, evsagme,nou) with reference to the Lamb in 13:8.

Other aspects of Rev 13:1-10 further support the idea of a counterfeit Christ figure. Not only is the dragon designed as a counterfeit of God the Father and the sea beast as a counterfeit of God the Son, the land beast is portrayed in terms of a counterfeit Holy Spirit. He has two horns “like a lamb” (Rev 13:11). The word lamb occurs 29 times in the book of Revelation, 28 of those occurrences refer to Jesus, and the other occurrence is here. But this parody does not lead in the same direction as the previous one.

In John 14-16 the Holy Spirit is called “another Paraklete” or counselor (John 14:16-17). The Spirit is sent to continue the mission of Jesus after His departure from the disciples. The Spirit is another counselor because this role was anticipated in the ministry of Jesus for His disciples. To use the terminology of the Apocalypse, the Holy Spirit is “like the Lamb.” So is the land beast of Revelation 13.

In verse 12 the land beast is not interested in promoting himself but rather the power and interests of the sea beast (cf. Rev 13:14-15). The Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel does not speak of Himself but rather of Jesus (John 16:13-14). The role of the Spirit is to promote Jesus rather than Himself, the role of the land-beast is to promote the sea-beast, the counterfeit of the Lamb.

Likewise, the greatest act of the Spirit was to bring fire down out of heaven at the time of the original Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). The greatest act of the land beast is to bring fire down from heaven to earth in a great counterfeit of the Spirit’s work. According to Rev 13:13 (NIV): “And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men.” This parody of Pentecost is designed to deceive the world regarding the true nature of the counterfeit trinity. I would conclude that the dragon, the sea beast and the land beast together are portrayed as a deliberate parody or counterfeit of the true godhead.

What we have in Revelation 13 is a cartoon parable that portrays the controlling power of evil in terms of deception as much as violence. The entire world is caught in a Matrix-like web of deception in which the true God appears to be false and the counterfeit appears to be true. The intimidation of violence and persecution (Rev 13:15-17; 17:6; 18:20, 24) plays a role in the drama, deception and counterfeit actually take center stage. As in the Matrix, things are not what they seem.

The theme of eschatological deception is not limited to Revelation 13, it is taken up again in the sixth bowl,

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34 Beside the explicit derivation texts listed above are the numerous “session” passages where Jesus is depicted as sitting down at the right hand of the Father. These are distributed in a wide variety of New Testament traditions (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:22-36; Rom 8:31-34; Col 3:1-4; Heb 2:5-9; 1 Pet 3:18-22, etc.). Cf. Roger Lucas, “The Time of the Reign of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 in Light of Early Christian Session Theology” (Ph.D. dissertation: Andrews University, 1997).

35 The phrase “who is like the beast?” (Rev 13:4: ti,j o’moioj tw/| qhrw|) recalls the Hebrew meaning of Michael (Rev 12:7-9), which may be a reference to the heavenly Christ. The 42 months (Rev 13:5) may be a reference to the approximate length of Jesus’ ministry from baptism to death.

36 The scene of John 14-16 is of a farewell gathering of Jesus and His disciples, just before the crucifixion. The disciples are depressed because Jesus has told them that He is going away to a place where they cannot follow (John 13:33,36-38; 14:1-3). But Jesus promises that his role in their lives will be replaced by another who in some ways will be even more effective (John 16:7). The Spirit, therefore, plays a Christ-like role after the departure of Jesus.
Rev 16:13-16. The dragon, beast and false prophet of Rev 16:13 echo the counterfeit trinity of Revelation 13. Out of the mouths of each of these characters comes an evil spirit that looks like a frog. The three frogs recall the plagues of the Exodus, where Pharaoh’s magicians duplicated several of the plagues to confuse Pharaoh regarding the nature of Yahweh’s claim on his obedience. In fact, the plague of frogs was the last one that the magicians were able to copy.

The function of the frogs within the narrative of Revelation is to gather the kings of the whole inhabited world to the great eschatological battle (Rev 16:14, 16). The frogs function in the story as the demonic counterparts of the three angels of Revelation 14. Both groups of angels have a mission to the whole world (Rev 14:6; 16:14), one trio calling the world to worship God, and the other seeking to gather the people of the world into the service of the unholy trinity. This battle is to occur at a place called “Har-mageddon” (Rev 16:16). Much speculation has been invested in this enigmatic term.

My work on the “Armageddon” article for the Anchor Bible Dictionary led me to the conclusion that the best way to understand the word Armageddon, in the light of the Biblical evidence, is as the Greek form of a couple of Hebrew words that mean “Mountain of Meggido.” Meggido was a city on a small elevation at the edge of the Plain of Jezreel. Looming over the place where the city of Megiddo was, however, is a range of mountains called Carmel.

What counts for the narrative of Revelation is that Mount Carmel was the place where the great Old Testament showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal took place (1 Kings 18:16-46). On that occasion God answered Elijah’s prayer with fire from heaven to prove that Yahweh was the true God, not Baal. The cryptic reference to Mount Carmel in Revelation 16 recalls the account of an earlier showdown between the true God and a counterfeit.

If this reading of Rev 16:16 is correct, the concept of eschatological deception is heightened even further. In contrast to the Mount Carmel narrative, the fire from heaven is precipitated by the land feast, not by some eschatological Elijah figure. As in The Matrix, the full evidence of the senses combine to convince the inhabitants of the world that they have a true picture of the eschatological battle.

The interaction between violence and virtual reality, therefore, turns out to be a common theme in both the Apocalypse and The Matrix. I believe that a comparison of the two helps us gain a deeper insight into the role that deception plays in oppressive systems. Since The Matrix describes the deceptive condition as a dream world, I would like to examine what we can learn from the physiology of dreams before I draw a few conclusions.

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37 Elsewhere in the New Testament two other passages parallel the concern expressed in the counterfeit of Revelation 13. 2 Thes 2:8-12 and Matt 24:23-27 mirror the language of deceptive signs and wonders. Matthew speaks of “false Christs and false prophets” and Paul talks about a “lawless one” that has characteristics similar to the beasts of Revelation 13.

38 The frogs are defined as the “spirits of demons,” which are the satanic counterparts to the angels of God in NT thought. See Werner Foerster, “daemon, daemonion,” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, volume 2, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated and edited by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 16-19.


41 The Mount Carmel interpretation of Armageddon appears to have originated with Ernst Lohmeyer, Die Offenbarung des Johannes, Handbuch zum neuen Testament, 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1926), 133-134.

42 Detweiler and Taylor (168) note that both The Matrix and the Bible are also driven by the search for a savior and the fulfillment of prophecy.
The Physiology of Dreams

Andy Clark is a professor of both philosophy and the cognitive sciences at Indiana University. He offers an analysis of what a matrix-like dream world would require.\(^{43}\) When we are awake, the “executive” portion of the brain, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, organizes our thinking, critically assesses our “gut” responses and maintains at least a modicum of “top-down” control. But in the dream state, profound changes in neurochemical activity occur.\(^{44}\) These changes compromise the executive brain’s “critical self-awareness.” The result is that even though the events in most dreams would cause us to suspect trickery or to question our sanity, in our dreams we simply accept them as normal, as real life. Helena Bonham Carter, the movie actress, once described a dream she had while pregnant:

“I dreamed I gave birth to a frozen chicken. In my dream, I was very pleased with a frozen chicken.”\(^{45}\)

The reason we usually don’t know we are dreaming is not because the dream simulates waking reality, but because we are cognitively diminished in ways that block voluntary attention and critical engagement. We accept things at face value that we never would in a wakeful state. In dream sleep we are, so to speak, drugged witless by our own brains!\(^{46}\)

Scientists call the dream-state where people’s ability to detect illusion or deception is diminished or destroyed “uncritical dreaming.” In the words of Harvard neurophysiologist J. Allan Hobson, “In dreaming, you are not only out of control, you don’t even know it.”\(^{47}\) So one way to keep people under control is to put them in a state where they are out of self-control. With this in mind, I would like to draw some conclusions from this brief analysis of the intersection between the Apocalypse and The Matrix.

John’s Apocalyptic Matrix

1) Evil as System

The Matrix described in the movie is more than just a program, it is a network. If a mere program were the problem, one could erase it. If an individual were the problem one could seek to persuade that person or to remove him or her from power. But when evil resides in a network the problem is compounded. How could one switch off the Internet, for example? It is almost completely out of human control, even today. What if a network like the Internet were able to seize control over the human race?

When evil is in control we like to personify it. We have a hard time believing that a group or a nation can

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\(^{44}\) It is the amine/choline balance that determines how signals and information will be dealt with and processed in the brain. When we are awake the balance favors the amine-based system. We are rational, alert to our surroundings and able to critically appraise our situation and our actions. When the balance favors the choline based system our focus shifts inward, emotion begins to dominate and critical control wanes. In dream sleep the amine-based systems are totally deactivated and the choline-based systems are hyperactive. See Clark, paragraph 18.

There are occasions, however, when we become aware that we are dreaming and have the ability to exert some control over our dreams without waking up completely. This state is known as “lucid dreaming” in contrast to “uncritical dreaming.” It may be that small amounts of amine are introduced, enough to create a modicum of critical awareness, but not so much that the dream state is lost. See Clark, paragraphs 21-23; McGinn, paragraph 7.

\(^{45}\) Clark, paragraph 16.

\(^{46}\) Clark, paragraph 20.

collectively go astray. We want to believe that there is a person behind it all. In World War II, it was not so much Germans or Germany that the allies were fighting, but Adolf Hitler. In the war on terrorism, it is bin Laden that must be captured or killed before the West can live in safety. Yet in The Matrix we find a more realistic scenario. The network itself has become an enslaving and deceiving force that must be resisted at all costs if the human race is to survive in any meaningful way.

Why did people go along with Hitler in Nazi Germany and why do people go along with the system in the book of Revelation? Because it is the natural human tendency to believe what the group believes and to conform to the behavior of the majority. As noted by Nietzsche, human beings in large groups tend to obey a herd instinct that leads downhill to the lowest common denominator. Ultimately, according to Revelation and The Matrix, destructive human systems are largely of our own making. Violence and deception are aided and abetted by the human lack of courage to stand alone in the face of serious consequences. To put it another way, many of the systems that control us have no power of their own, except that which we give to them.

The message of Revelation that resonates in The Matrix is this: The greatest safeguard against systemic violence and deception is a willingness to speak the truth regardless of the immediate consequences. John encourages us to believe that it is the non-conformists and the “difficult” ones among us that foil the plots of human systems. When people stand for unpopular causes in the face of death decrees and economic boycott (Rev 13:15-17) they become the bulwark against violence and its evil twin, deception.

2) Evil as Deception

But is deception really the worst thing that could happen? Is a Matrix really such a bad place to be? Aren’t the victims of the Apocalypse better off to go along with the system? Princeton philosopher James Pryor notes the relative comfort and security of the Matrix and questions whether its enslavement and deception are such bad things. Like Cypher in the movie, wouldn’t most humans prefer a Matrix to a life of suffering, rejection and misery? Why does the viewer sympathize with Neo’s choice of the red pill rather than Cypher’s choice to remain in deception?


49 In the two sequels to the first movie (The Matrix Reloaded, and Matrix Revolutions) an individual does emerge behind the Matrix (the Architect). But the Architect is portrayed as relatively berevolent in intention and in the end the network and its fate are beyond even his control. Ford (5) believes that the film series’ skepticism about institutional control may explain its popularity for young adults. He feels (6) the Matrix myth may carry more influence with many young adults than the traditional religious myths of our culture.

50 Dreyfus and Dreyfus, paragraph 24.


52 Ford (4) points out that in The Matrix the deceptive system that controls the human race is the ultimate consequence of artificial intelligence that humans created. In Revelation 13 the beast from the sea bears all the marks of the kingdoms of Daniel 7. According to Daniel, human oppression is the unintended (and sometimes intended) consequence of the human desire for glory and power (Dan 4:30).

53 Stephen Faller, Beyond the Matrix: Revolutions and Revelations (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 63, 68-82.

Why do most of us hope we are not in a Matrix right now? Pryor suggest three reasons human beings would reject a Matrix should the choice be offered, three reasons why viewers sympathize with the premise of the movie. 1) Human beings value scientific knowledge. Physicists in the Matrix would have many false beliefs about the makeup of their world. For most people, the truth about such matters is important. All other things being equal, we’d rather have a true picture of our universe than a false one.

2) Human beings place a lot of value on interactions with other people. When another person expresses affection or admiration toward us, we want those feelings to be real, not deceptive. We want the important people in our lives to be real, not a programmer’s construct, like the woman in the red dress that the character called Mouse adores in The Matrix. All other things being equal, we want the important people in our lives to be real.

3) The humans in The Matrix are all slaves. They’re not in charge of their own lives. They may be contented slaves, unaware of their chains, but they are slaves nonetheless. What seems most awful about the Matrix is how deception gives the enemies of the human race so much control over what happens to everyone. The Matrix in the movie has immense power over the human race. As long as it suits the program’s purpose, it will manage human lives in a pleasant way. But human beings would have no choice in the matter regardless. Human beings want to be in control of their own futures, even if those futures are small and relatively meaningless. We want our efforts to be meaningful to some degree and we want our choices to be truly free. We don’t want to be living out someone else’s plans for our lives. An illusion of freedom is not enough, we want the real thing. For the author of Revelation, true freedom involves standing against oppressive systems.

3) Evil as Hubris
One philosophical classic that lies in the background of The Matrix is Plato’s Allegory of the Cave. According to John Partridge, The Matrix, like the Cave, dramatically conveys the view that ordinary appearances do not depict true reality and that gaining the truth changes one’s life. For Socrates and Plato, the most crucial philosophical discovery is the discovery of oneself. Human success is based on the knowledge of one’s own human limitations.

In Revelation 13 human limitations are expressed in relation to God. The attempt of any human or any human system to arrogate to itself God-like powers is to live in a world of self-created illusion. While the evil trinity seeks to craft an image of god-like power, it is, in the end a victim of its own deception. In seeking to deceive others the unholy trinity in the long run deceives itself, leading to its own destruction (Rev 17:16). When violence and deception are used as tools of power and control, they also plant the seeds of self-destruction in systems that use them (Rev 13:9-10). Those who practice violence and deception become victims of the same.

For Plato and Socrates, as well as The Matrix the key to meaning and salvation is a true knowledge of self, a clear understanding of the position humans find themselves in. The author of Revelation would not disagree at a basic level. But I believe he would take the issue one step further. Meaning and salvation ultimately are found, not in self-understanding, but in God-understanding. For the author of Revelation, it is a knowledge of God and a higher reality (heaven) that provides the true interpretation of earthly reality. In this sense the visions of The Matrix and of the Seer of Patmos are radically different.

4) Implications for the Academic Study of Religion
In The Matrix, the choice between the blue pill and the red pill is a choice between self-deception and the


56Pryor, 15-17.

57Matt Lawrence, Splinter, 4-6; but cf. Lloyd, 86-88.

chance to live in a higher, more authentic reality. Would that the battle against self-deception were so simple! Even as scholars, the temptation to follow the crowd, to attain a position of influence, to publish and be respected, can interfere with the search for a true picture of reality, not to mention ultimate reality.

The critical work of the Frankfurt School reminds us that it is necessary to search for hidden, unstated interests on the part of scholars as they undertake their research and publication. Undeclared interests can exert considerable influence on the outcome of scholarly research in religion. The need to publish can cause us to state things in ways that deviate from our authentic convictions. The need to develop some new hypothesis can subtly drive us toward bizarre conclusions. We cannot be content to probe into what we think as religion scholars, we must ask ourselves why we think it.

The things at stake in the academic enterprise may seem relatively trivial when compared with violence and deception on a global scale. Yet I think the principles may be more alike than it seems at first glance. Revelation and The Matrix suggest that violent and deceptive evil are systemic and institutional. They imply, therefore, that combating violence and deception requires the willingness to go against the grain, to stand alone if necessary in the face of something bigger and more powerful than ourselves. The skills that enable human beings to stem the tide of evil on a global scale are learned by focused action at a local level. It is unlikely that the academy is exempt from the systemic slide toward coercion and deception. The solution according to Revelation and The Matrix? Take the red pill.

Living a meaningful life in the face of violence and deception means seizing our freedom to construct an authentic view of reality and accept responsibility for the consequences of that view. Any step away from that responsibility in the name of comfort and conformity means opting for the blue pill. That way is easier, but results in a diminished level of humanity. I suspect the authors of The Matrix would agree with the words attributed to Jesus, “Small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matt 7:14). Sounds like the red pill to me.

\(^{59}\) Detweiler and Taylor, 169.

\(^{60}\) Alister E. McGrath, The Mystery of the Cross (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1988), 57.

\(^{61}\) McGrath, 58-60.

Pillars for Peacemaking
Why the Sabbath and the Second Coming Matter

by Charles Scriven

Peace lies at the heart of the Gospel vision, but is often on the margins of Christian memory. Consider Christmas. The story of Jesus’ birth is one of the keys to the church’s understanding of the Gospel vision, and it puts great emphasis on the coming of peace—the coming of the Prince of Peace, the coming of peace on earth. Yet the trappings of Christmas—relentless shopping, rich food, bright packages—make the story behind the season hard to hear. And peace, in the deep sense of Scripture, is often unremembered, like old rain.

Peaceable motifs appear early in the story of Adventism, and in some ways receive radical interpretation. But understanding of peace does not come to full flower, neither in the past nor, judging from official documents, in the present. Through the years peace is remembered, or at least some themes associated with it, but the memory is incomplete, or even wrongheaded and misleading. A Review and Herald article, published during World War II after presentation as a morning Bible study at the 1941 General Conference, equates peace—just equates it—with inner serenity. The article contains no reference, nor even an allusion, to the war then rampaging across Europe, and nothing at all to suggest that the biblical peace, or shalom, is a joyful and sweeping wholeness of life, life vivid and abundant for all, life prosperous, honest and just.ii

If all men and women called to be the Remnant are called to be peacemakers, how can the memory of peace—peace in the deeper, biblical sense—become clearer to them? How can the knowledge of peace—and of peacemaking—come to full flower? And how can the practice of this knowledge tend toward the full faithfulness the Remnant is meant to exemplify?

In the Gospel vision, Jesus is the bearer of peace, and he is the one who pronounces a blessing upon peacemakers and explains the meaning of their vocation.

At the beginning of Luke’s gospel, Zechariah, whose son will become John the Baptist, prophesies the arrival of a “dawn from on high” that will “give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.” That light, he declares, “will guide our feet into the way of peace.”iii The Gospel then tells of Jesus’ birth—the beginning of that dawn and that light—and of shepherds who hear “a multitude of the heavenly host” exclaiming: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace...”iv For Luke, the coming of Jesus is the coming of the Peacemaker.

Matthew’s Gospel carries this theme from the birth story into the heart of Jesus’ spoken ministry. Here, shortly after gathering his disciples, Jesus declares to them the blessings of discipleship. He is speaking at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, and one of these blessings is for those who walk in the way of peace just as he does. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” he says, “for they will be called children of God.”v

The Sermon continues with Jesus telling the disciples that when they are true to their calling, they become salt and light on earth. Like salt, they enhance what would otherwise be tedious and flat. Like light, they chase darkness away—expose fraud and make-believe, point the way to what is truly good and beautiful. And they accomplish all this through a witness to the love of God, who, according to Jesus, spreads sun and rain on his friends and enemies alike, and whose resistance to evil is both hard as crystal as soft as velvet. The divine censure is unmistakable, and the divine forgiveness without measure. In God, whom disciples must resemble, truth and forgiveness come together, neither effacing the other, neither compromised, both fixed on human transformation—or the possibility, in a word, of peace.vi

As the stories in Luke and Mark continue, the bearer of peace lives an observant and creative Jewish life. For one thing, he worships in the synagogue, and understands the Sabbath as God’s gift for the enhancement of human life. For another, he sees himself distant from the dominant
surrounding culture—from its indifference, from its ruthlessness—and yet he proclaims a hope of final victory for the ways of God, a hope as fierce as fire and as astonishing as the greening of the earth that follows winter.

If Jesus is the bearer of peace, and the bearer of peace a keeper of the Sabbath and a preacher of hope, can these latter two convictions—both basic in the consciousness of Adventism—assist in bringing the memory of peace into sharper focus? Can the Sabbath and the Second Coming help the knowledge and practice of peacemaking come to full flower?

It will depend, perhaps, on whether the trappings of orthodoxy—intellectualism, futile preoccupations, endless attention to the husk at the expense of the kernel—get in the way of the deeper Gospel vision, and of its meaning for the conduct of life. But in order to be clear about why all this matters, it well to see how peace has fared in the church’s official documents.

Organized Adventism began in 1861 when a group of Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Michigan banded together as a legal association. Delegates to the meeting embraced this pledge: “We, the undersigned hereby associate ourselves together as a church, taking the name, Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting together to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ.” Adventists had begun, long before organizing formally, to interpret their lives in terms of God’s call for a “remnant,” a faithful minority who would commit themselves to keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus. And from the beginning this had meant, in part, allowing the whole life, teaching and character of Christ to illuminate true faith. Now, with the onset of the Civil War, they would face a test.

In true peacemaking fashion, early Adventists were passionately opposed to slavery. They had also embraced the Sermon on the Mount, with its call to a love so generous and transformative that it includes enemy and friend alike. They knew, however, that resistance to military service on the side of the North could be interpreted as support for the slave system, if only indirectly. What was to be done?

Conversation ensued, with Ellen White taking the position, in 1863, that “God’s people...cannot engage in this perplexing war...” By 1865 General Conference resolutions on Adventists and war began to appear.

The 1865 statement affirms the “sinfulness” of war. It also says that Adventists recognize “civil government as ordained of God.” Nevertheless, the statement goes on, Adventists “are compelled to decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed as being inconsistent with the duties enjoined upon us by our divine Master toward our enemies and toward all mankind.” This marked the beginning, in official documents, of what may be called an ethic of noncombatancy.

Another statement, issued at the 1867 session of the General Conference, calls “the bearing of arms, or engaging in war,” a “direct violation of the teachings of our Savior.” A year later still another General Conference session, again affirming support for “those in authority,” repeats the point about engaging in war: “we cannot believe it to be right for the servants of Christ to take up arms to destroy the lives” of their fellow human beings.

Adventist leaders, including George Irwin, the General Conference president, spoke out against their nation’s involvement in the Spanish-American of 1888-1889, but this war did not occasion, it seems, the publication of any official statements.

During World War I the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists made an official appeal to the American authorities. The appeal affirms (as it says) the position “taken during the Civil War,” and petitions these authorities to allow church members to “serve our country” in a manner consistent with obedience to the law “contained in the Decalogue, interpreted in the teachings of Christ, and exemplified in His life.” By “serve our country” in accordance with this law, however, the appeal refers to serving in the military without bearing arms, i.e., as
noncombatants. The Division’s document thus baptizes, for the first time, the idea of participating in
the military without using weapons or intending to kill (or having to break the Sabbath).

Following the war, talk of “conscientious cooperation” arose—the language lessened the
distance between the Adventist ethos and the ethos of the dominant culture—and by 1942 the
Adventist Medical Cadet Corp had come into being. Now Adventists were being trained for war, or
a medical role in war, by Adventists. What did remain, however, was the strong conviction that
bearing arms was unacceptable.xi

The General Conference session of 1954 gave support at the highest level to this evolution in
Adventist understanding. The statement of that year calls for loyalty to civil government, and
encourages service in a civil or military role during war—with the proviso that Adventists may save
human life but not take it. The ethic of noncombatancy, if not the 1867 view that “engaging in war”
violates the teachings of Christ, was alive, and was still unambiguously official.

That changed. The 1954 position was essentially repeated in still another statement, issued
by the General Conference in 1972, but this time it was with a difference. Now a sentence at the
end, altogether new, says that the statement is not meant to be “rigid”; it is “guidance,” and the
“individual member” may “assess the situation for himself.” Ekkehardt Mueller, who has analyzed
the noncombatancy tradition in Adventism, interprets the new sentence as authorizing church
support not only for noncombatants and pacifists, but also for members who take up military
weapons.

This is certainly plausible, or, given the proliferation of Adventists who are now volunteering
to bear arms in war, more than plausible. Over time the ethic of non-combatancy seems clearly to
have softened, or drifted, or otherwise changed from what it was. As Mueller points out, writers of
no less eminence than William Johnsson of the Adventist Review and Angel Rodriguez of the
Biblical Research Institute have said since 1972 that the historic church position is non-combatancy.
Still, the most recent official expression of that position is not the one taken during the Civil War,
nor even the one taken during World War II.xii

Beginning with the 1921 Annual Council in Minneapolis, another strain of thinking on these
matters began to take shape. Formal church statements started to invoke the idea of peace, and to
trace the outlines, at least, of an ethic of peacemaking.

The 1921 statement, “An Address to President Harding” issued not long after the end of
World War I, congratulates the president for his success in convening an international conference on
naval disarmament. Church leaders, the statement declares, are in “hearty accord” with his initiative
on behalf of “international peace and tranquility.” What is more, they “strongly favor a limitation
of armaments” and “believe that the teachings of Christ are opposed to war, and that their design is
to promote peace and good will among all who dwell upon the earth.” Finally, they say that they are
encouraging the entire Seventh-day Adventist church to pray that the “vast sums spent for
armaments” may be diverted instead to “the amelioration of human woe and to the advancement of
peaceful pursuits.”xiii

At the 1980 General Conference in Dallas, Texas, church leaders took up this same theme in
a “Statement on the Peace Message to All People of Good Will.” They said that in a world
imperiled by exploitation, hostility and terror, Adventists must pray and work for peace, must be
known as “peacemakers and bridge builders.” People of every land should assist, the statement says,
in creating an atmosphere of “cooperation and brotherhood” among the “different cultures and
ideological systems” of the world.

The resolution of discord came up against during the 1985 General Conference Session in
New Orleans. There the church’s President, Neal C. Wilson, released a “Statement on Peace”
written in “consultation” with sixteen world church vice presidents. The statement calls the nuclear
arms race, with its potential to “destroy civilization” and its “colossal waste” of human resources,
“one of the most obvious obscenities of our day.” It is “right and proper,” the statement continues, “for Christians to promote peace,” and in the spirit of Isaiah to urge every nation to beat its “swords into ploughshares” and its “spears into pruning hooks.” The statement quotes Jesus’ blessing upon peacemakers, and says that the “Adventist hope” must, while awaiting the return of Christ, express itself in “deep concern for the well-being of every member of the human family.”

Seventeen years later, in the spring of 2002, this theme again came to official expression. Now the assault on New York’s World Trade Center was in the background, and the General Conference Executive Committee issued “A Seventh-day Adventist Call for Peace.” In this document church leaders pay heed to the emergence of God-invoking terror networks, and discredit their religious justifications for violence. These justifications “wholly fail” to represent divine love, and turn God into “an idol of evil and violence.”

The true solution to “division” in society, the true means to “lasting peace,” is not violence but “dialogue, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.” Through a “culture of forgiveness” that “absorbs” injury “without retaliating,” the church performs a “ministry of reconciliation” and helps to break “the vicious cycle” of resentment, hatred and revenge.

The 2002 statement, longer than the others, affirms “the uncoercive harmony of God’s coming kingdom.” It goes on to link peacemaking with the “well-being of our planet” and the overall “quality of life,” and quotes Isaiah 58 to set forth the ideal of repairing “the breach” and restoring “the streets in which to dwell.” Then the statement asks Adventist schools, colleges and churches to focus on “cultural awareness, nonviolence, peacemaking, conflict resolution, and reconciliation” as a specifically Adventist contribution to “a culture of social harmony and peace.”

Church leaders allow at the end that peacemaking may seem “a forbidding task,” but invoke, too, “the promise and possibility” of transformation. The Christian hope assures, after all, that the “Prince of Peace” will renew the world and put an end to the “vicious cycle of war and terror.” So those who live by this hope must here and now embrace “the golden rule,” here and now love God and “love as God loves.”

These four statements from Adventist church leaders nowhere define peace; nowhere say what shalom, the Hebrew word for peace, actually means. But, taken together, they set forth a vision of shared well-being, blessing that reaches out to everyone, and they imagine God spreading this blessing through the witness of a people at once forgiving, peaceable and just. In outline, at least, this is precisely the vision of peace and peacemaking given in the Bible.

Except for the first of these statements, however, none makes an unmistakable connection between peacemaking and historic Adventist refusal of warfare. Even though it was at the heart of early Adventist reflection on war, the ethic of noncombatancy makes no explicit appearance.

With respect, then, to official Adventist comment on matters of war and peace, the picture is confusing and inconsistent. The ethic of noncombantancy seems, in official documents, to be in full, or at least palpable, retreat. With that in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that American Adventist churches now regularly drape themselves in the flag during wartime, or that shortly after the September 2001, terrorist attacks, a Veterans Day service at the Sligo Church, near Washington, D.C., featured a military honor guard marching to the platform with “bolt-action rifles gripped to their chests.”

As for the ethic of peacemaking, it has appeared in official documents, and understanding of peace has deepened in certain respects, and opened the door to further conversation. But here, too, the retreat of ethic of noncombatancy has an effect: these documents nowhere refer to noncombatancy, and nowhere say how peacemaking and enemy love relate to participation in the military.

Yet these matters lie at the heart of the Gospel vision, which was first articulated, after all, under conditions of political brutality and discord, and which led early Christians to a centuries-long refusal of warfare. So again, how can Adventist understanding come into sharper focus? How, in
particular, can the Sabbath and the Second Coming—two key features of Jesus’ life, and also of Adventist life—help the knowledge and practice of peacemaking come to full flower?

Consider first the Sabbath. Here the trappings of orthodoxy can be distracting, as when the link between Sabbath and the divine creation of the world becomes the occasion for endless squabbling over the age of the earth. But when attention goes to the kernel, it becomes clear that the Sabbath inspires earthward passion—and the kind of earthward passion—that facilitates exertion on behalf of peace. The Sabbath reminds every worshipper that God’s creation is good, that work on earth is good, that liberation from oppression is good. It tells every worshipper that mere religiosity is no substitute for commitment to human flourishing, and that God’s will on earth is human prosperity and delight.\textsuperscript{xvi}

All this is protection against the resignation and otherworldliness—and loony “Left Behind” apocalypticism—that steal into Christian consciousness when the church’s Jewish heritage is diminished or rejected.

Consider now the Second Coming. Here again the trappings of orthodoxy may get in the way, as when the Christian hope veers toward a pointless guessing game about the time and the place of Christ’s return, and the precise signs and events that foreshadow that return. Yet here, too, when attention goes to the kernel, it becomes clear that an apocalyptic—or better, bibliically apocalyptic—frame of mind can facilitate the peacemaking Jesus envisioned.

What matters here is that the apocalyptic frame of mind keeps Jesus at the forefront, and prevents drift into the ethos of the dominant surrounding culture. In saying Jesus is the world’s final leader, it relativizes every other claim to human attention. From the Second Coming standpoint, there can be no church-state alliances, no embrace of the status quo, no confidence that any human leader or human institution can control the future. And from that same standpoint, with that same conviction that Jesus is the world’s final leader, hope stays alive; forgiveness stays alive; the creative energy that the times require stays alive\textsuperscript{xvii}.

All this is protection against the blandishments of conventionality. Just as the Sabbath makes peacemaking imperative and plausible, the Second Coming makes Jesus’ approach to peacemaking imperative and plausible. And so two key convictions—defining convictions—of Adventist life can, in fact, help to put peace at the center of consciousness, where it belongs, and then can nourish human efforts, under God, to build that peace on earth.

Again, the protection is lost unless the deeper meaning of the Sabbath and Second Coming are what receive attention. Distractions simply distract, and when mysteries cannot be resolved, or answers could have no bearing on the making of peace, it is best to redirect attention.

The blessing, after all, is for the ones who…do something
OBJECTION TO WHAT?
The Checkered History of Adventist Conscientious Objection

Julius Nam
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It is a well-known and accepted fact that Seventh-day Adventist Church discourages its members from enlisting into the military and, if drafted, encourages them to seek noncombatant assignments with the military. The Adventist position reaches back to the time of the American Civil War when the option of seeking the conscientious objector status was made available by the United States government to members of those religious entities, the so-called “peace churches,” who were opposed to the bearing of arms or engaging in duties in support of war. This provision represented the culmination of the struggle that Quakers and other peace churches had had with conscription since the colonial period.

When the Civil War erupted in 1860, Adventists had been still preoccupied with church organization and building theological consensus that they had not formed a coherent position on war and military service. In fact, the discussions of Adventists writing in Review and Herald in 1862 reveal that Adventists were very much divided, if not confused, on how they were to view the war and the impending draft. The views printed in Review and Herald range from just-war militarism to pacifism.

However, by April 1863 when the draft finally became a reality, Adventists had arrived at the consensus that military service (which, given the historical situation, automatically meant wartime military service) posed too great a difficulty for Adventists for commandment-keeping. Having defined their identity as the eschatological remnant who keep the commandments of God (i.e., the Decalogue), they could not reconcile the obvious demands of military service with the duty to observe the commandments governing Sabbath-keeping and killing. At the same time, Adventists felt constrained to live consistently with the New Testament command to obey earthly rulers and governments which were established by God. With these New Testament injunctions on church-state relations and the pragmatic need for the survival of the nascent church in mind, James and Ellen White, in particular, became very concerned that Adventists’ refusal to join the military might translate to “sympathizing with the Rebellion [i.e., the Confederacy].” Thus, the couple urged obedience to the laws of the land as much as possible. This translated to Adventist young men being encouraged by church leaders to choose the substitute draftee or $300 payment option that the 1863 draft law provided for and the noncombatant provision that the 1864 revision of the draft law offered for conscientious objectors. For Adventists who wanted to remain loyal, and be seen as loyal, to the government and avoid violation of God’s commandments, the noncombatancy option of 1864 brought them an ideal solution.

Although Adventists found refuge in the same noncombatancy provision that was meant for the historic peace churches, the reasoning that Adventists used to petition for the conscientious objection status was very different from those churches. Whereas Quakers, for example, were opposed to the very idea of war—to the extent that many of them refused even to take the $300 payment option that was previously available because the money would go toward the war effort, Adventists by 1863 were focused almost exclusively on avoiding commandment-breaking. This position is clearly illustrated in Ellen White’s remarks in January 1863: “God’s people, who are His peculiar treasure, cannot engage in this perplexing war, for it is opposed to every principle of their faith. In the army they cannot obey the truth.

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5 Romans 13:4; 1 Peter 2:13, 14; 1 Timothy 2:1, 2.


7 Wilcox, 57-73.
and at the same time obey the requirements of their officers. There would be continual violation of conscience." 9 Though this quotation has been taken as an anti-war statement, it must be noted that White is not making a statement against the war per se, but engaging in the war, as it would present a challenge to commandment-keeping. In fact, elsewhere in the same article, she writes against those Adventist pacifists who "were ready to become martyrs for their faith." 10 It appears that Adventists in 1863 were not pacifists at all, but "legalists"—those who hold a deep concern for strict, literal adherence to the law, in this case God's law. 11

A careful reading of the petitions that Adventists brought before state governments and the United States War Department betrays the same conclusion. For example, the centerpiece of the argument brought by John Byington, J. N. Loughborough, and George W. Amadon (members of the General Conference Executive Committee) to Austin Blair, governor of Michigan, is that "the law of the ten commandments, which [Adventists] regard as the supreme law, and each precept of which [Adventists] take in its most obvious and literal import" are "contrary to the spirit and practice of war." Therefore, the three Adventist leaders claimed, Adventists had no choice but to be "conscientiously opposed to bearing arms." 12 This letter, whose wording served as the model for other Adventists petitions submitted to governmental authorities during the Civil War 13 made it clear that the primary concern for Adventists in relation to the war was the keeping of God's law for individual Adventist draftees. The essence of the Adventist objection to war and conscription had to do with the limitation that would be placed upon free exercise of their faith, rather than the evil or sinfulness of war itself. To put it differently, it was their quest for religious and theological self-preservation that drove Adventists to conscientious objection, not a quest for peace.

The war represented indeed a real threat to the survival of the newly organized Adventist church. The church was still a fragile network of small churches spread out across the North. Adventists had not caught the vision for aggressive evangelism among non-Christians and mission to foreign lands, and their primary mode of growth was convincing other conservative Christians of the correctness of the distinctive Adventist beliefs—among which the seventh-day Sabbath and the perpetuity of the Decalogue lay at the center. The law and the Sabbath, of course, were also central to the Adventist self-understanding as the eschatological remnant. Any type of a compromise on commandment-keeping would have meant a serious threat to the Adventist self-definition and theological survival. Furthermore, the leaders of the newly organized church were sensitive to how Adventists were viewed by society in general and the government in particular. They were concerned that even the appearance of disloyalty to the government would lead to the discrediting of the movement. "One freak of fanaticism, at such a time as this," wrote J. H. Waggoner, "would work more injury to the cause than could be undone in years." 14 Thus, the twin concerns of command-keeping and keeping the church in good standing with the government led Adventists to embrace the noncombatancy option. This provision would serve as a means of survival not only for individual Adventist young men, but also for the denomination as a whole.

A telling illustration of the church leaders' preoccupation with self-preservation can be found in the declaration of a denomination-wide four-day period of prayer for March 1-4, 1865. Released by the General Conference Committee in the February 21, 1865, issue of Review and Herald, the declaration called for all Adventist churches and members to set apart the four days to pray for the cessation of the war so that the Adventist church's work of spreading the third angel's message may be accomplished without interference. Adventist leaders, ever-consumed with the sense of eschatological calling and mission, make absolutely no mention of the horror of the war and the human toll that it was incurring. There is not even a passing, perfunctory call for peace. Rather, the leaders' call is all about the church's work—that the war may result in good in opening the door of the truth" to the people of the world. 15

The Adventist response to the American Civil War and the draft revelation yet another trait of early Adventism: its reactive nature. Adventism in the nineteenth century was for the most part a movement that reacted to events as they came rather than worked proactively to create and to innovate. One such example can be found in the way the Adventist missiology developed. In the aftermath of the Great Disappointment, the doctrine of the shuts door prevented Adventists

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9 Ellen G. White, Testimonies, 1:357.
10 Ibid., 356.
11 The term "legalism" in the way I'm employing it here has nothing to do with theological or soteriological legalism which I define as "an attempt to gain salvation by the keeping of the law."
12 John Byington, J. N. Loughborough, and Geo. W. Amadon to Austin Blair, August 2, 1864, as reproduced in Wilcox, 58.
13 Wilcox, 58-65, contains reproductions of these petitions.
15 James White, "The Time Has Come for the Fulfillment of Revelation 7:3," Review and Herald, February 21, 1865, as reproduced in Wilcox, 70.
from engaging in active evangelism among those who did not embrace the Second Advent message of Millerism prior to October 22, 1844. It took individuals who had never been part of the Millerite movement joining their community in around 1850 to lead Adventists to crack open their evangelistic target to non-ex-Millerites. Then, it took the request by Swiss Adventists—who had embraced Adventism through M. B. Czechoowski, a missionary who, once rejected by Adventist leaders, sought and received sponsorship from the Advent Christian Church—for the Adventist church in North America to catch a vision for world mission. Even in the final breakthrough they made in the 1890s for worldwide mission to every nation, Adventists were essentially reacting to Dwight Moody’s Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions. While their willingness to allow experience to change their theology and practice is laudable, early Adventists were consistently reactive in the formation of their missiology.16

Adventists in the 1860s exhibited the same reactive nature in the path to the noncombatancy position. Rather than crafting a position on war and military service through internal study, dialogue and prayer, Adventists arrived at their noncombatancy stance by simply responding to the options given to them by the government. First, Adventists chose the most favorable option given to them with the institution of the draft: legal avoidance of military service through payment or substitution. Then, when the noncombatancy provision was enacted, they chose that option. Rather than fashioning a position in a proactive manner, Adventists responded to the situations as they arose and chose the best option available.

Early Adventism’s reactive nature in relation to war and conscription is closely tied to their preoccupation with self-preservation. Because it was concerned more with survival and self-preservation, Adventism could not offer a creative vision and life-changing influence to the world. It had no choice but to merely react to changing circumstances and hope for the best outcome. This is not to say that Adventists in the 1860s were nineteenth-century precursors to situation ethics; rather, they were ethical absolutists for whom Scripture was their creed and unchanging standard. But when placed in an ethical quandary involving conflicting biblical mandates and survival of the movement, Adventists were not able to innovate but followed the least problematic route offered by the government.

In the tradition of good Adventist preachers, I must make one more observation to complete the list of three. Thus far, I have argued that the motivation for the noncombatancy position was self-preservation and that the method of arriving at that position was reaction to choices given by the government. My third observation concerns the context in which these decisions were made. Like many other lifestyle standards of Adventism, the advocacy of noncombatancy was a distinctly American solution. The American-ness of the solution was, of course, a direct consequence of the reactive method used by Adventists to come to the solution. When the noncombatancy position was taken in 1864, Adventists had no way of knowing how context-driven and context-specific their decision was. They would ultimately discover the deep contextuality of their position as well as the untenability of the position during World War I when Adventists were found all over the world on both sides of the conflict.

Much has been made of the strongly worded resolutions on war that the Adventist church voted in 1865 and again in 1868. In May 1865, the Adventist leaders meeting in their annual General Conference session declared: “We are compelled to decline all participation in acts of war and bloodshed as being inconsistent with the duties enjoined upon us by our divine Master toward our enemies and toward all mankind.”17 The General Conference session in 1868 went a step further in its denunciation of war: “War was never justifiable except under the immediate direction of God... [W]e cannot believe it to be right for the servants of Christ to take up arms to destroy the lives of their fellow-men.”18 What is ironic about these two resolutions is that they were declared after the Civil War with the first one voted just one month after the conclusion of the war. One wonders why the sudden turn toward pacifism after the war? Did these resolutions represent the true convictions of the church at large, or simply peacetime wishful thinking? Could it be that, with the ethical/moral tension of war and the need for self-preservation no longer at play, Adventists found the “courage” to speak more boldly against war? Given the position that Adventists had embraced just a year earlier to attain noncombatancy status with the government, it is difficult not to be cynical about how it took the end of the war and conscription to lead Adventists to the objection of war itself.

Recent research on the Adventist experiences with war has revealed that some key Adventists in 1898 held strong anti-war, pacifist views in response to the Spanish-American War.19 George Irwin, president of the General Conference, spoke unequivocally concerning the war: “We have no business whatever to become aroused and stirred by the spirit [of war] that is abroad in the land.” He then asserted that Christ’s teachings contained in the Sermon on the Mount point to “the position of the Christian in this conflict, and what are the teaching of our Lord and Master in regard

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16 For more on the history of Adventist mission, see George R. Knight, The Fat Lady and the Kingdom (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 57-80.
18 The most in-depth look at this phase in Adventist history can be found in Douglas Morgan, “Apocalyptic Anti-Imperialists,” Spectrum 22 (January 1993): 20-27.
to war and the spirit of what comes with war.” A. T. Jones echoed Irwin’s words when he declared that “Christianity is one thing; war is another, and far different thing” and that “Christian love demands that its possessor shall not make war at all.”

Douglas Morgan has pointed out that these statements represented a clear “moral stance” that led Adventists to stand apart not only from the foreign policies of the United States government, but also the majority of American Protestants who supported the war. It appears that influential Adventists were now taking a more proactive stand against war. In spite of the unequivocally pacifist stance taken by Adventists during this war, one also wonders if they would have come to the conclusion there had been a draft, which was not the case during this war. Just as Adventists in the aftermath of the Civil War felt freer to express their objection to the war, were Irwin and Jones being essentially armchair pacifists since Adventist young men were not forced to fight in the war? Could it be that pacifism and objection to the war itself represented Adventism’s non-conscription era rhetoric, while noncombatancy and objection to fourth- and sixth-commandment-breaking—“conscientious cooperation,” as it has come to be called—represented its conscription era stance?

Unfortunately, we find that my cynicism is confirmed in the Adventist experiences with the two World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. With the introduction of the draft in the United States and elsewhere in the countries involved in World War I, all traces of pacifist sentiments disappeared from mainstream Adventism. The April 1917 statement by the North American Division declared: “We have been noncombatants throughout our history,” and defined noncombatants as those who cooperate with the draft and the military but refuse to use weapons. Though it referred to the 1865 resolution as its basis, the 1917 statement gave no explanation as to how noncombatant cooperation with the military and war efforts could be reconciled with the 1865 statement that denounced “all participation in acts of war.” The American Adventist experience with World War I would set the pattern that has been followed in those few countries that provide for the noncombatancy option. In these countries, Adventists, when faced with the draft, would consistently choose the noncombatancy option (mostly as medics), rather than take the more radical pacifist stance. Their conscientious objection, in essence, would be directed against personal transgression of the Decalogue, though they would engage in other duties to support the overall war effort.

On the other hand, Adventists in countries without the noncombatancy option reacted quite differently to the first World War. The experience of German Adventists, for example, provides a good illustration of the second approach. Germany, which had already been conscripting its young men into the military prior to the war, did not provide an alternative service provision for conscientious objects. Thus, faced with enormous pressures from the government, church leaders took the stance prior to the war that Adventist men would bear arms and serve their country even on Sabbaths in times of war. When the war began in 1914, the leaders reiterated their stance and called their young men to fulfill their patriotic duty by serving in the military as combatants. This decision, made with great pain and agony, would serve as both a lesson and a pattern for Adventists in nations did not recognize conscientious objection. In these countries, Adventists, when faced with the draft, would respond by joining the military as combatants, but not go so far as working on the Sabbath. Though there would be pockets of conscientious draft resisters or those who refuse to bear arms after responding to the draft such as in Korea, a typical Adventist young man in a nation without the noncombatancy option would choose the combatant route, rather than the more challenging pacifist-resistant, and put their energies on faithful Sabbath-keeping and on seeking “sub-combatant” assignments that would place them the farthest away from direct combat and killing. For these Adventists, their “objection” would essentially take the form of a request for these accommodations. Once enlisted as combatants, much of their commandment-keeping fate would rest of their immediate superiors.

The experience of the succession of wars from World War I and accompanying conscription showed once again that the primary concern for Adventists, as was the case in the American Civil War, has been survival and self-preservation, rather than a more fundamental objection to war and violence. With the globalization of Adventism in the twentieth century, it became quickly apparent that the noncombatancy position born out of the American Civil War experience was simply untenable in other parts of the world. This led Adventists to react differently to changing circumstances (as was the case in the 1860s) with the goal of maximizing commandment-keeping, though at times their

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22 Morgan, 22.
23 Wilcox, 113.
25 See Lawson, 48-56, for a deeper discussion on this phenomenon in global Adventism.
cultural contexts did not grant them much room. As a result, disunity and incoherence mark the Adventist attitude toward war and military service today. What further complicates the present state of Adventist relation with war and military service is the rise of a new generation of young Adventists, in countries such as the United States where conscientious objectors are recognized, who “object” to the church’s traditional stance on conscientious objection/cooperation. In the United States, many of them have enlisted in the military as full combatants (I-A classification) and have fought in the two recent wars in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere with a tacit or not-so-tacit blessing of their churches. Anecdotal accounts show that their return from combat is greeted not only with relief over their survival, but also with a hero’s welcome without any reference to the fact that there are Adventists and other Christians who were fighting on the other side of the battle, most likely against their will or better judgment.

Notwithstanding the cynicism I expressed earlier toward Adventist statements on war in 1865, 1868 and 1898, these seem to be the only bright spots of proactive, coherent thought on war and military services in early Adventist history. At these times, Adventists made strong, unequivocal statements in opposition to war and any involvement in war. The pacifist position—an admittedly impossible ideal much like the ideals set forth by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount—seems to be the only coherently Christian position to pursue in this world of incessant violence and constant warring. It is also the only position that can be consistently held by a world church which constantly has its members fighting and supporting armed forces on opposite sides of conflicts. Adventist Peace Fellowship’s publication of The Peacemaking Remnant, which we will look at closely tomorrow morning, makes a forceful case toward this end.

It seems to me that the North American Division lost a valuable opportunity in 1917 when it—as the big sister of all the world divisions—could have make a stand for the pacifist ideals set forth in 1865, 1868 and 1898. Rather than being myopically preoccupied with self-preservation and commandment-keeping (though these are ideals that we as individuals and as a community ought to retain), Adventists could have become a prophetic champion for peace and a role model for peacemaking. This stance would certainly have subjected Adventism to loss of standing in society and persecution by the state, even martyrdom in some places, but I believe it would have led Adventism to offer a powerful global testimony of Jesus, while also keeping the commandments of God, befitting our calling as the eschatological remnant.
Minority Scholars of Religion What Must We Do?  
Some Un-intellectual Musings  

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Introduction  
What must we do as minority scholars of religion-particularly those of us who work for the church? This question has plagued me for some time now. As I thought about a potential topic for this year's discussion—
I thought long and hard about what our group represents and our possible future roles as a learned professional society. In conversation with colleagues at Oakwood College, I decided on this topic: What must we do. I hope this discussion will pique your interest and generate an ongoing discussion regarding the nature of the scholar's task and our unique role (or not so unique role) as minority scholars of religion seeking to integrate our faith commitments with serious, rigorous, and critical scholarship.

As is so typical of postmodern scholarship, I am not afraid to bear my hand and acknowledge the personal and communal contexts of the musings that follow. My reflections emerge as I consider my doctoral training in religion, ethics, and society, my deep commitment to the SDA church, along with my role as a church employee. I seek to hold these considerations in tension as I proceed with this paper. As I offer this paper, reflect on your own education, scholarly dispositions, commitments, and the way in which You reconcile your faith commitments with your scholarly tasks.

Public Intellectuals  
According to Russell Jacoby's book The Last Intellectuals, the era of public intellectuals is over.
He indict the academic community for being irrelevant on public issues as they sit comfortably in the ivory towers. He and others argue this is a great loss in the intellectual tradition. Most Americans agree with one author's description of an intellectual when he says that: "By and large, American intellectuals are private figures, their difficult books written for colleagues only, their critical judgments constrained by the boundaries of well-defined disciplines. Think of an intellectual today, and chances are [she] is a college professor whose 'public' barely extends beyond the campus walls." It is painfully true that American intellectuals, for the most part, have taken a passive role as agents for the common good. The scholar / intellectual can succeed (and has served in the past) a public role in bringing to bear the critical apparatus and precision tools of scholarship to help promote the common good and the well being of humanity.

While thinking about the role of a scholar, I came across an article that appeared in The Atlantic Monthly that arrested my interest. The article was written by Robert S. Boynton, entitled The New Intellectuals, it described with precision and clarity a new breed of intellectuals, according to the author, that are "sophisticated, morally aware, and at times fiercely contentious." This breed of intellectuals, the article exclaims are "suddenly back and they're Black". I must admit I was inspired to hear that the era of the public intellectual was not over as Jacoby had proclaimed - it now seems that he had been looking in the wrong place. I also must admit that I was equally inspired, perhaps a bit more, that the new emerging intellectuals were black.

It appears that very soon after Jacoby's pronouncement of the death of the public intellectual a new group of intellectuals begins to emerge. Cornel West of Princeton, Henry Louis "Skip" Gates of Harvard, and Stephen Carter of Yale begin to appear on popular talk shows addressing some of the most important issues of our day. West discussed issues of race and the inner city, Gates addressed Black anti

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4 Ibid.
Semitism and Stephen Carter spoke on the topic affirmative action. These figures are African Americans, educated in elite academic centers, hold major academic posts, and addressed some of the most important and perplexing issues that confront blacks, minorities, and the nation as a whole.

Boynton points us to distinctive elements in the black intellectual tradition, namely the importance of giving scholarly attention to the social issues that impact the communities to which they hold membership and critical discourse regarding the social order. This is where scholarship meets public significance. This focus on public issues is not new for highly educated elites. Boynton notes that, "originally an intellectual was someone who was very much engaged in the public realm..." He goes on and says that, "to talk about an intellectual as public would have struck a late 19th century listener as tautological, if not absurd... A definition of an intellectual was already in place: he was a writer, informed by a strong sense of moral impulse, who addressed a general, educated audience in accessible language about the most important issues of the day".

These black scholars mentioned above and many others such as Toni Morrison, Nobel prize winner and best selling author, Orland Patterson, national book award winner, Shelby Steele, National Book Critic Circle award, David Levering Lewis, Pulitzer prize winner, Stanley Crouch, Patricia Williams, William Julius Wilson, Bell Hooks, Huston Baker, Randall Kennedy, Michael Eric Dyson, Gerald Early, Jerry Watts, Robert Gooding-Williams, Lani Guinier, Adolph Reed, Derrick Bell, Victor Anderson, Renita Weems, Lewis Baldwin bring considerable passion and deep conviction to their disciplines and the scholarly task which is traditionally described as a distant, dispassionate, and objective work.

What's more, is that these scholars bring their commitment to the life of the mind, genuine knowing, the tenets of scholarship, and advance academic training to press forward the cause of human flourishing and the liberation of oppressed people. I think that these scholars are on to something — they have it right! Who is better equipped to speak to the issues that confront and threaten minority communities than those who are members of those communities or have strong affinities with such communities? Who is better able to speak to issues of race, class and gender than those who have been on the wrong side of the power divide? Who is better able to speak and address medical racism than those who have a tacit knowledge of its existence? In the end, who is better able to help us understand the challenges that confront human flourishing, than those who have experienced roadblocks to human flourishing?

Although this notion of the public intellectual is exciting, it is not new; it has deep roots in the Western intellectual tradition. The notion of the public intellectual is taken for granted in the Black intellectual tradition because the issues that threatened the black community were of origins outside of the community. This is why there was a need for a public voice and a public spokesperson. This feature became an essential part of black life and remains constant to this day. The black public intellectual tradition dates back prior to Jim Crow, through slavery - consider the teachings and insights of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Alexander Cromwell, Anne Julia Cooper, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Alain Locke, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Angela Y. Davis.

This public disposition of scholars that is described above has been given careful and more rigorous treatment by Cornel West - as he addresses the notion of an organic intellectual, which captures the idea of a public intellectual as one who is an engaged social critic. Once you embrace this feature of the public nature of the intellectual task, you will agree with me and others that the term public intellectual is a tautology in the Western intellectual tradition and a near absurdity in the black intellectual tradition.

It may very well be the case that the black public intellectual tradition has emerged because black scholars could not afford the luxury of being armchair thinkers of the ivory towers, disengaged from the concerns of their communities. It may also be the case, that as members of the black community they were, like so many of us, constantly reminded to "keep it real and never forget where you come from". To be sure, the scholarly focus of these public intellectuals seems to suggest that they are "keeping it real"-that they are not forgetting where they come from. Whatever the reasons, we as Adventist minority scholars of

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 See J:ired Lee Hord and Jonathan Scott Lee, "I am Because we Are: Reading in Black Philosophy" (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995)
10 The new Intellectuals
religion can learn well from the tradition of the public intellectual (black or otherwise) as it can provide us with direction for our work.

Study of religion and critical engagement into social life

Religion is a pervasive, powerful, multifaceted, and enduring dimension of human experience. Religion and religious phenomena have shaped complex cultures and countless individual lives. They are influential in the world today and will continue to be so in the future. 11

I take the above excerpt to be true and revealing. Religion is very much a part of the fabric of human societies. How it functions in society differs from society to society and from religion to religion. It seems that religious beliefs motivated the terrorists of September 11, 2001. To be sure, it was religious beliefs that motivated the civil rights leadership to mount a mass movement in the 1960s. Religious beliefs, to be sure, influence behavior both for good and evil - promoting both benefits and harms to society and human beings. Religion influences how we choose a mate, who we sleep with and when, how we vote, what foods we eat, how we spend our money, the professions we choose, and so many other aspects of life. This being the case, the subject matter of religion is of undeniable universal significance.

How does one study such a phenomena that seems to be so endemic to human society and has such great impact on the lives of countless individuals? What is it that scholars of religion actually do? How should they approach their work? What do they hope to accomplish though their works? Who should support this kind of work? Who should study religion and what qualifications are necessary? Must one be a believer in something - in God, a higher order, Jesus Christ, in order to understand religion? These sets of questions have been enduring sorts of questions since the era of the enlightenment and the rise of the empirical sciences. They are important and need scholarly attention, but comprehensive responses to such are beyond the scope of this essay. The questions that this essay wishes to consider are - what do we study as minority scholars of religion? How do we define the scope of our work? Should our approach and concerns be different than those "majority" scholars of religion?

The academic study of religion is multidisciplinary in nature. Scholars must utilize the insights of various disciplines such as history, philosophy, social sciences, psychology, theology, Bible, and any other aspect of human learning that might shed light on the subject matter. Moreover, the study of religion is multicultural, exploring the beliefs, practices, and development of a variety of religious groups in various contexts. The academic study of religion seeks to describe and interpret the nature of religion, its meaning structures and varieties as an aspect of human culture. Therefore, whatever resources that we can bring to bear must be brought to bear if understanding and appreciation of the religious phenomena is to be achieved.

However, for those who hold ministerial credentials and are employed by the faith community, the study of religion is a two sided coin. On the one side are the expressed concerns of the faith community and employing agency. On the other, the commitment to the "light" of discovery, as partly discussed above. This, in some way, expresses the basic tension that we who teach religion find ourselves in. This tension is reminiscent of the two basic schools of thought regarding the teaching of religion in the university: academic and confessional, religious and theological studies.

In the academic study of religion, the subject is pursued from a scientific - disinterested objective point of view. The confessional approach to the study of religion assumes the position of faith and is an effort to build faith and save people from themselves. The critical distinction that may be made between the two approaches is that one is teaching about faith, belief, and religious practices and the other is teaching a faith, its beliefs and its practices. One is reflective and observational in nature and the other is devotional and sustaining in nature. These two perspectives differ tremendously in their presumptions and significance, yet for both approaches there is a lot at stake.

For the confessional approach, the goal of teaching religion is conceived as, producing serious members, perpetuation of a pure faith, and educating members in the details of faith. Confessional approaches that succeed will help adherents critically appropriate their faith commitments in light of what is actually known or thought about the world. Scholars of religion who operate in this vein must assist in the critical reconciliation of what is taught, believed, and thought about the world in light of a religious world view.

For the academic approaches, scholars contend that the study of religion must be open and unrestricted by doctrinally oriented concerns. 12 This, they argue, must necessarily be the case considering

11 www.cas.ucf.edu/philosophy/religious
that religion is a universal human phenomenon, a fundamental quality and feature of human existence. For this reason, any serious exploration must be a systemic exploration which necessarily must extend beyond the confines of any group, sect, cult, denomination, or church. Grounding their argument in the notion of the university, they remind us that "most of us [scholars of religion] work in a place called a university and such places, embodies certain notions and methodological commitments, a place of learning, commitment to reason and the tradition of rigorous and critical learning". As one author says, "as there is no ethnic physics or gender computer science' there is no private knowledge, protected under particular particularistic auspice. If we take that seriously, that which counts for knowledge cannot be labeled by the accidents of race, class, gender, or the commitments of any group. It is an epistemology that governs a common reason which exists everywhere "for all purposes, and shares definitive intellectual traits of criticism."

Notwithstanding the above, minority scholars of religion must avoid the snare of making very rigid distinctions of religious studies / academic approaches and theological studies / confessional" approaches. These as one author notes "often exist in antagonistic relationship in the realm of critical scholarship, whereas religious studies are often conceived as "abstracted from experience of living religious communities" and "theoretical studies" as narrowly parochial". While it is true that the academic study of religion is different from religious education in churches, synagogues and temples or other types of religious institutions in approach and concern, Adventist minority scholars of religion must refuse to accept this partition and grasp together the critical study of religion that often locates itself outside of particular religious communities, with the critical study of religion that operates within the religious communities.

Therefore, as Adventist minority scholars of religion we must engage in the critical task of scholarship. We should bring to bear the critical resources of scholarship and the critical dispositions that we have developed, while at the same time investing in a deep appreciation for the meaning structures and impact of faith (religion) on the believers in the faith community. We must keep an aspect of our goal, as scholars of religion, as sympathetic, but critical approach to explore the phenomena of religion as an aspect of human communal life. By this we can achieve the necessary distancing to understand, analyze and appreciate the various modes of religious being in diverse religious traditions.

Consequently, a part of the proper role of scholars of religion is to provide an understanding of the universal nature and significance of religion beyond the narrow confines of the parochial concern of sectarian institutions. Beyond the descriptive task of understanding the phenomena of religion, rituals, beliefs, and holy texts, minority scholars of religion are in an excellent position to provide leadership and direction in investigating, communicating, and even critiquing the religious dimensions of social, political, and cultural life. Additionally, minority scholars are uniquely positioned, because of their unique histories and upbringings, to provide critical intellectual leadership in charting new intellectual territory, bringing an intellectual combination of insights, breadth and depth. Just consider the feminist, womenist, liberationist, and other "listening theologies" that have literally reshaped the discipline of theology and the study of religion. Our approach must be collaborative and interdisciplinary in nature and expansive in concern.

What must we do?

I have attempted to illustrate in this paper that the Black intellectual tradition has been responsive to the real needs and concerns of the black community. I also wanted to suggest that the intellectual has a

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12 See Max Muller, Emile Durkheim, Mircea Eliade, Clifford Geertz
13 Ibid.
14 Jacob Neusner "Teaching Jewish Studies 'Under gentile auspices 'versus the academic study of religion, including Judaism" (abstract -www.findarticles.com); See also "Religious Education", Winter 2000
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid: "Religion, Social life and Critical Engagement", (Emory web site?)
17 Ibid.
18 www.illbio.edu/religious studies/", "What is Religious Studies at the College Level"
19 "Religion, Social life and Critical Engagement", (Emory web site?); This is not always easy to do
20 -the faith community must be open to such discourse.
21 See note on 12
public role beyond the classroom and scholarly audiences that is expansive in scope. By offering the above, I would like to convey that we, as Adventist minority scholars of religion, are uniquely equipped and situated to make significant contributions to the church and the world. Because of our geographical and demographic diversity we can help our church and the world through our research, writings and commitments and concerns for the well being of all people. We can do this, in part, by giving scholarly attention and quality time to addressing the issues and concerns of so many whose voices are seldom heard. Again, who is better able to understand and give voice to the many perplexing issues that confront minority communities than those of us who are members of such communities? Considering the demographic shifts of the church and global Christianity and the numerous challenges that confront human beings, those of us who enjoy multi-citizenships—must bring to bear our real selves and real interests and concerns to the scholarly task and provide leadership to the church and world.

As I conclude, I must admit that this discussion, in and of itself, does not tell us what we must do, although I think it does provide some clues. So I leave you with the question that commenced the discussion: what must we do and how should we function as a group of minority scholars of religion? Any response to this question must be a group response!
THE PEACEMAKING REMNANT: A REVIEW

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At a first glance, The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents\(^1\) is not a volume that demands respect by its appearance. To begin with, it is so tiny. Lest I offend its editor and contributors, I dare not call it a pamphlet, but the 128 pages of content, set within the 5x7 frame, is so little, is so ... pamphletesque. It could very have been an even littler book of less than 100 pages, had it not been for the generously endowed text of font size 13 or 14.

However, whatever gravitas that it may be lacking in its size, The Peacemaking Remnant makes up for it through the power of the vision and the substance of the arguments that lie within. It is a work of eight progressive Adventist thinkers who are united in their vision and deep yearning for Christ-centered transformation of Adventism into a community of peacemakers. Though the articles by the eight come from previously released materials, the book as a whole comes together beautifully to bear fresh witness to the vision of its publisher, Adventist Peace Fellowship, which is to promote restoration of “personal and social wholeness through a commitment to justice and peace.”\(^2\) In addition, the eight essays are complemented by eight historic documents of Adventism from 1846 to 2002 that affirm the main thrust of the book.

What sets the tone for the entire book is Charles Scriven’s title essay, “The Peacemaking Remnant: Spirituality and Mission for a People of Hope.” First, Scriven finds problematic the preoccupation with the end that is exhibited by what he calls the “dominant eschatology” of Adventism. According to him, this perspective, represented by Norman Gulley in his 1998 book, Christ Is Coming, tends to minimize, if not deny, the responsibility for stewardship and social engagement. Scriven goes on to offer some terrific insights arising from what he calls “deeper eschatology.” Here, he asserts that the remnant people of God are to not only look eagerily forward to the end, but also follow and embody the compassion of God by promoting peace and restoration as they await the end. This is the essence of “deeper eschatology.”

The significance of this essay cannot be understated. In essence, Scriven is calling for a broader definition of the remnant. Nowhere does he deny the traditional hallmarks of commandment-keeping and testimony-bearing, nor does he question the propriety of Adventist self-reference as the eschatological remnant. However, through the juxtaposition of the imageries found in Jeremiah 23:1-6 (God’s gathering of the remnant flock), Ezekiel 34:11-23 (God’s ministry of healing for the scattered flock of Israel), Luke 15:3-7 (the lost sheep story), and Luke 12:32 (Christ’s reference to his disciples as his “little flock”), Scriven deftly shifts the meaning of the remnant from the traditional focus on the Sabbath and the gift of prophecy to that of peacemaking ministry and social activism. In other words, the true calling of the remnant is to champion peace and healing in the midst of apocalyptic distress.

This is a move I welcome and appreciate. I agree with Scriven that what he calls “deeper eschatology” and the “deeper vision” of the remnant must be emphasized and highlighted within Adventism to bring the concept of the remnant to its proper balance. It is true that Adventism has often been fixated on the need to believe in the Sabbath and the gift of prophecy to the neglect of the need to bring true rest to the anguished and to bear prophetic testimony on behalf of the oppressed.

My only concern with Scriven is his treatment of Gulley and his perspectives on the end-time. I share Scriven’s disappointment with Gulley’s neglect of treatment on the remnant’s responsibility toward fellow human beings. I too have searched in vain for some meaningful discourse on how we should live out the great commission at the time of the creation of the earth and to live in loving relationship with others even as the end draws near. With Scriven, I am concerned that the loving, ethical “occupying till” is neglected at the expense of “he comes” in Gulley’s work. This is indeed a serious defect of Gulley’s monumental volume of 585 pages. However, for Scriven to charge that “Gulley effectively denies ... that the world is still God’s good creation and still receptive to human creativity and care”\(^3\) seems like an overstatement. Does Gulley’s neglect of creation ethic effectively signal denial of it? I am not so sure. Also, when he criticizes Gulley for discrediting “all efforts “to

\(^1\) Douglas Morgan, The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents (Silver Spring, MD: Adventist Peace Fellowship, 2005).

\(^2\) The Peacemaking Remnant, 118.

\(^3\) Ibid., 12.
change society,” scorning “the whole idea of ‘human improvement,’” renouncing “Christian involvement in ‘the political arena,’” and declaring that “the world can only get ‘worse,’” thereby “departing from the biblical point of view.” I am not certain that Gulley’s views are being represented fairly. The contexts from which these phrases have been lifted, at least in my reading, do not seem to provide a clear basis for Scriven’s criticisms. I found myself wondering if the disdain that Scriven holds toward the dominant eschatology has led him to a caricature of Gulley and others represented by him.

Now, I do not desire to over-criticize Scriven’s criticisms of Gulley. The main bulk of Scriven’s article is conciliatory and complementary. He invites readers to see his deeper eschatology as a complement to the dominant eschatology of traditional Adventism. By recovering and unearthing the deeper eschatology in the Adventist thought and self-definition, he helps us restore the healthy tension that must be resident in Adventist theology—one that is present in the words of the King in Luke 19:13, “occupy till I come.” Gulley makes an important contribution to Adventist thinking in reminding us of the coming King, but his work will not be complete without the amplification and corrective that Scriven provides on how the remnant ought to occupy till He comes.

Scriven’s re-visioning of the remnant as agents of social transformation is echoed in Zdravko Plantak’s essay, “A People of Prophecy: Recovering the Biblical Role of the Prophets” and in Kendra Halovič’s essay, “The Second Advent Hope: The Presence of the Future.” Linking the roles of the biblical prophets with those of the end-time remnant, Plantak shows forcefully how the prophets of Scripture were “social reformers and visionaries.” Out of the eight contributors of the book, it is he who makes the clearest connection between commandment-keeping (an identifying mark of the remnant) and social, political, and economic stewardship. He calls the Adventist church to “balance the proclamations about future events with calling people back to God-given principles of socio-economic justice, Christian ethics and human rights . . . .” He insinuates that without this necessary balance Adventism cannot call itself a “prophetic movement,” or, I might add, a remnant.

Whereas Plantak makes a powerful, methodical, systematic case for rethinkig our prophetic calling, Halovič’s essay is more subtle and poetic, even oblique. It is a meditation on the worship scenes of Revelation 4 and Isaiah 4. But the conclusion that Halovič draws is as delightful as it is surprising: The vision and certainty for the future must lead to a commitment to life transformation in the present. Central to this commitment is worship, like that found Revelation 4 which “calls us to see what is real, and then to act accordingly.” True worshippers of God are those who have grasped the glorious future and are working to live out that future in the present as justice-seekers, peacemakers, comforters, healers and lovers of humankind. Though she stops short of this, the link between the implications of worship in Revelation 4 and 14, as informed by Isaiah 6, is suddenly deafeningly clear. The remnant who bear the first angel’s message to call the world to a true worship of the Creator God, are justice-seekers, peacemakers, comforters, healers and lovers of humankind.

In my view, the three essays by Scriven, Plantak, and Halovič provide an indispensable centerpiece mosaic for The Peacemaking Remnant. Though some may be tempted to view their argument as undermining or

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4 Ibid., 13.
5 In his footnote, Scriven refers to pages 250, 441, and 539 in Christ Is Coming in support of his criticisms. I provide here one example of how Scriven may be over-criticizing Gulley, though I agree with the main thrust of Scriven’s criticism. On page 250, Gulley comments about the futility of attempting to establish the kingdom of God on earth through human means. Then, as he comments on the “contemporary evangelical thinking, he writes, “A great danger, I fear, lurks in all human efforts to change society. They can easily deteriorate into human attempts to build God’s kingdom. Instruction is appropriate. Being salt and light is vital. But getting into the political arena to influence the state to mandate even Christian moral and family values runs the danger of forgetting that the kingdom, like salvation, rests in the hands of a sovereign God. For after all, there is no essential difference between saving a nation/world and saving the individual” (Norman Gulley, Christ Is Coming [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998], 250). Clearly, Gulley warns readers of the danger that “lurks in all human efforts to change society,” particularly the brand that evangelical politicians and political evangelicals are promoting, but I doubt if he would agree with Scriven’s characterization that he “discredits all efforts” (The Peacemaking Remnant, 13) of social reform. I do have strong reservations about Gulley’s general pessimistic view of human history, but it does seem to me that Scriven ascribes Gulley ideas that he would not agree with.
6 Ibid., 22.
7 Ibid., 32.
8 Ibid., 69.
negating the traditional definition of the remnant and its prophetic calling, I understand the trio as persuasively arguing for the recovery of the biblical role of the remnant which has long been neglected in Adventist thinking.

This is not to insinuate that the rest of the book is not worth paying attention to. In fact, each makes a significant contribution in providing specific examples from the distant and recent past and offering practical suggestions on what life as the peacemaking remnant might look like. The essays by Ryan Bell entitled “Civil Disobedience: Daniel and the Intersection of Allegiances” and Charles Bradford entitled “Liberation Theology: The Genuine Article” offer provocative reflections on worship and the Sabbath as acts of civil disobedience and symbols of defiance. They show how what normally represents fellowship turns into a powerful instrument of justice and protest in the face of oppressive earthly powers. The two essays are potent reminders that our worship and our Sabbath-keeping have not only dimensions of personal spirituality and fellowship, but also socio-political dimensions.

Keith Burton’s essay, “God Bless Afghanistan: The Rhetoric of Justice in the Sermon on the Plain,” is a politically and emotionally charged commentary on September 11, 2001 and its aftermath. Though prepared for a non-Adventist audience, the controversial essay is strikingly Adventist in its content, providing a contemporary application of the Adventist apocalyptic vision. Unlike other essays, this does not talk about the remnant. Burton is a remnant voice that offers the uncompromising vision of a just society that eschews lex talionis and violence as a means to an end, however noble the intentions and the end might be. At the risk of seeming unpatriotic, Burton questions the notion that the United States represents the force of good, which has acted against the forces of evil by attacking Afghanistan. Arguing that no nation is more special to God or more evil than others, he projects a loud remnant cry against the use of violence as a means of achieving justice. Though many Adventists may disagree with his analysis of current events or his pacifist stance, Burton exemplifies the remnant commitment to engage in “pre-emptive pro-action” for justice and to provide a “corrective moral voice in society.”

As a student of Adventist history, I read with great interest the final two essays written by Ronald Osborn and Doug Morgan. Osborn, in his essay, “A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists in Time of War,” argues that Adventism began as a pacifist movement which has compromised its original vision in incremental steps throughout history. He observes that the original commitment to pacifism has all but collapsed in contemporary Adventism. Though he makes some very important observations in his tracing of Adventist history, I am not sure it is accurate to state, as he does in his opening statement, that “the Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded by New England pacifists . . .” The vigorous discussions that Adventists had on the pages of Review and Herald in 1862 with regard to the American Civil War and the draft indicate that there existed a wide divergence of opinion on the subject of war and military service. It is probably more correct to state that pacifism can be traced back to early Adventism, as Morgan’s essay has shown. Furthermore, in his desire to show the continuous deterioration of Adventism’s commitment to pacifism and conscientious objection, Osborn fails to address the significance of the very documents that are included in the “Historical Documents” chapter of the book, which may actually signal a resurgence of pacifist attitudes among Adventists. Moreover, what is conspicuously lacking from this essay— unlike all the other essays—is documentation of the various facts and assertions that Osborn presents which (particularly because it is a historical essay) I have found to be a regrettable feature of this otherwise delightful essay.

Morgan’s essay, on the other hand, is a balanced, thoughtful account of the roots of Adventism’s commitment to shalom, biblical peace. This essay entitled “Adventism’s Peacemaking Heritage” shows how the twin heritage of nonviolence and peacemaking can be traced back to the early years of Adventism. Morgan’s peacemaking or shalom-nurturing heroes of the 19th century Adventism are John Harvey Kellogg and David Paulson who engaged in medical/humanitarian efforts in Chicago, Ellen White who wrote prophetically about the need for educating and empowering Blacks in the South in the aftermath of the Civil War, and Eton White who rose to the challenge set forth by his mother and pioneered Adventist education and evangelism among southern Blacks. Morgan does an excellent job in outlining our “peacemaking heritage,” while offering some concrete suggestions for Adventism’s peacemaking present and future.

On the whole, The Peacemaking Remnant is a remarkably effective invitation to expand and reinvigorate our understanding of the remnant and to commit to a life of peacemaking as a community of the remnant. Peacemaking, as this book teaches us, is not merely “living in peace” with our neighbors. It involves at times social action to bring healing and justice to society and at other times offering radical dissent from the status quo or the

9 Ibid., 52.
10 Ibid., 71.
11 Ibid., 88-90.
generally accepted reality. The remnant, as this book argues forcefully, awaits the second coming of Jesus by nurturing peace, wholeness and healing. Love, compassion and service must also be thought of as the identifying marks of the remnant, not merely the Sabbath and the gift of prophecy. After all, love—the agape love—is "the fulfillment of the law." The Peacemaking Remnant may be a little book, but it is the little book that could—one that carries a great shalom vision for the present and future of Adventism.

1 Frederick Griggs, "The Kingdom of Peace," Review and Herald, June 12, 1941, pp. 257-260. As for biblical peace, see the thorough if somewhat tedious work of Perry B. Yoder, Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice and Peace (Nappanee, Indiana: Evangel Publishing House, 1987). In Ezekiel 34:25-30, the classic expression of God's "covenant of peace," all three qualities of peace appear, or are at least evoked: material well-being, just relationships, moral integrity. As for peace as integrity, or honesty, see also Psalm 34:14 and 37:37, where peace is contrasted with deceitfulness and equated with blamelessness. For the joy associated with peace, see Isaiah 52:7,8. Perry argues, on pages 19f., for "the continuity of meaning" between shalom and the Greek term, eirene, that is used in the New Testament.

2 I will assume this to be true. For my defense of this assumption, see "The Peacemaking Remnant," in Douglas Morgan, ed., The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents (Silver Spring, Maryland: Adventist Peace Fellowship, 2005), 9-20.

3 Luke 2:78, 79. All biblical quotations from the NRSV, unless otherwise indicated.


5 Matthew 5:9.

6 Matthew 5:38-48. Disciples do not "resist" by violent means—so attention to the Greek in verse 39 makes clear—but following Jesus himself, they do stand up to evil—through love and, if need be, suffering, and through the building up of a new order, as suggested by the salt and light metaphors earlier in chapter 5. On the "do not resist" phrase, see, e.g., Walter Wink, Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 11.

7 The pledge is cited in Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 310. One account of the meeting, including the discussion of creeds that preceded embrace of the pledge, is in Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: The Early Years, 1827-1862 (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1985), 453,454.

8 On this point, see P. Gerard Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977), 192-194, where the author quotes both James and Ellen White.

9 Articles by Ronald Osborn and Douglas Morgan, in Morgan, Ibid., 71-77 and 79-91, deal, the latter in more detail, with Adventist response to the Civil War.

x These statements appear in Morgan, Ibid., 96-98.

xi I rely again on the aforementioned articles by Ronald Osborn and Douglas Morgan, in Morgan, Ibid.

xii For my account of the 1954 and 1972 statements, and the reference to claims made by Johnsson and Rodriguez, I rely on a paper by Ekkehard Mueller; it is entitled "Noncombatancy" and is available from the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference.

xiii The statement to Harding appears in Morgan, Ibid., 105-107.

12 Romans 13:10, NIV.
xiv. These peace statements are from the official website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; available at http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/index.html; accessed in early January, 2005.

xv. So writes Ronald Osborn, in Morgan, Ibid., 77.

xvi. Consider Genesis 1 and 2; Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5; Isaiah 58.

xvii. These points can be inferred, to take one example, from the apocalyptic material in Matthew 24 and 25.