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What's in a Name?

► “Muslim stamp”

This exhortation to boycott a stamp came from two sources on the same day:



USPS 44-Cent Stamp Celebrates Muslim holidays Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha.

If there is only ONE thing you forward today ... let it be this!

REMEMBER to adamantly and vocally BOYCOTT this stamp, when you are purchasing your stamps at the post office.

All you have to say is “No thank you, I do not want that Muslim stamp on my letters!”

To use this stamp would be a slap in the face to all those AMERICANS who died at the hands of those whom this stamp honors.

REMEMBER the MUSLIM bombing of Pan Am Flight 103!

REMEMBER the MUSLIM bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993!

REMEMBER the MUSLIM bombing of the Marine Barracks in Lebanon!

REMEMBER the MUSLIM bombing of the Military Barracks in Saudi Arabia!

REMEMBER the MUSLIM bombing of the American Embassies in Africa!

REMEMBER the MUSLIM bombing of the USS COLE!

REMEMBER the MUSLIM attack on 9/11/2001!
REMEMBER all the AMERICAN lives that were lost in those vicious MUSLIM attacks! Pass this along to every Patriotic American that you know and get the word out! Honor the United States of America!

Reply: A few observations concerning the “Muslim stamp”:

1. It was first issued a decade ago as part of a series on holidays, including Christmas. 2. You will not have to boycott it. It is a specialized stamp available only upon request. 3. More importantly, we need to avoid blaming a whole group of people for the behavior of a radical minority. Do you remember the Christian shootings (with a Ruger rifle) in two abortion clinics in the Boston suburb of Brookline in the mid-nineties? The Christian shooting through a window of an abortion doctor? The Christian massacres on college campuses? We would rightly protest blaming the actions of fanatics on Christians in general. Most Muslims, both cultural Muslims and true believers, disapprove of the actions of the fundamentalists. My daughter-in-law, a native of Afghanistan, points out that most Afghans consider the fundamentalist Muslim regime to be worse than the Russian invaders who preceded them. 4. American Muslims know well — terrorism is hardly in their best interest.

► “aeon” — eons upon eons

The purpose here is to acquaint the reader with the word and its significance. It is not a comprehensive treatment.

Αἰών, ὠνοσ τὸ πρ a period of time of significant character; life; an era; an age. ... (Perschbacher 10).

Noun

1. A period of immeasurable duration; also, an emanation of the Deity. See Eon.

2. An immeasurable or infinite space of time; eternity; a long space of time; an age. (mydictionary.com)

Αἰών (*aion = aeon = eon*) is a key word in the debate about the nature of final punishment for unbelievers. The passage most referred to in opposition to conditional immortality is the parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31 – 46). The goats are sentenced to *the age long fire (to pur to aionion; τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον; v. 41; see also 18:8) and to age long punishment (eis kolasin aionion; εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον)*. The verdict for the sheep is *age long life (eis zoen aionion; εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον; v. 46)*.

1. *Aion* may refer to a reality existing or a process taking place over a long period of time. 2. Or it may refer to a one time event with enduring consequences. Jude gives an example of the first: Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire which lasted a long time (*puros aionion; πῦρὸς αἰώνιον (7)*). Zechariah spoke of the classical prophets of ages past; “from of old” (NIV, NRSV, ESV); “since the world began” (KJV; *ἀρ'αἰonos ἀπαιωνος*; Luke 1:70). On the other hand, salvation, redemption, and judgment are called *aionic* (Hebrews 6:2, 5:9, and 9:12 respectively). In this context, salvation, redemption and judgment are not actions repeated over a long period of time but accomplished realities that have lasting consequences.

Revelation 20:10 is an example of 1: The devil, the beast, and the false prophet (and probably many of their human accomplices) will be tormented for a long time (*eis tous aionas ton aionon; εἰς τοὺς αἰωνας των αἰώνων*; into the ages of ages; for ages). Similar is Revelation 14:11 where the smoke rising from hell continues for a long time (*eis aionas aionon; εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων*). Matthew 25:46 is an example of 2: the verdict of the divine judge is not subject to review; it is final — life for one group, death for the other.

* * * * *

► “Israel” — Descendants of Jacob? Northern kingdom? Christian church? A Modern State?

Does ethnic Israel, the Jews, still have a place in God’s plans for humanity? Evangelicals answer this question variously.

1. According to Reformed theology generally, the Christian Church, the “Israel of God,” has replaced ethnic Israel as the people of God. 2. According to Dispensational theology, national Israel is central to God’s plans, both historical and spiritual. The establishment of Israel as an independent state in 1948 and the six-day war during which Israel captured Jerusalem in 1967 are the fulfillment of divine promises via the prophets to restore Israel in Palestine.

Dispensational futurists accuse the Reformed of spiritualizing Scripture. The Reformed accuse futurists of wooden literalism. 3. Might a middle way be possible, which takes seriously the New Testament picture of a unified people of God saved through faith in the Messiah but which also maintains God’s continuing faithfulness to his promises concerning the biological descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Let’s first sketch the scriptural teaching about the one way of salvation and the one people of God. Then we will search the Scriptures to see if they indicate a continuing place in God’s plan for ethnic Israel.

Solus Christus: One Way of Salvation

Significant here are all the passages which maintain that salvation comes only through Christ (all NIV):

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Sola ecclesia: One People of God

The church, the body of Christ, is the one people of God. This oneness is expressed most emphatically and clearly by the apostle Paul.

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men) — remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. ... His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two. ... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. (Ephesians 2:11 – 19)

In the next chapter Paul calls this union a mystery revealed by the Holy Spirit:

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:6).

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

A mystery — but there are some foreshadowings of this one way. Abraham and his descendents were charged with main-

taining the worship of Yahweh until “the time had fully come” (Galatians 4:4).

Then the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Genesis 18:17 – 19)

The prophets remind Israel of its calling.

I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6)

He says: “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. (Isaiah 49:6)

The devout, elderly Simeon understood the baby Jesus in terms of these scriptural expectations. Jesus will be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

In his sermon to the people of Pisidian Antioch, Paul interpreted the Christian message in the same terms: “For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth’ ” (Acts 13:47). He repeated the theme in his address to Agrippa: “ ... the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to

the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23). He wrote similarly to the Galatians: “The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you’ ” (Galatians 3:8). Now the Holy Spirit has made it clear that Jew and Gentile are equal “sharers together in the promise” (Ephesians 3:6).

Two Pictures: Woman, Olive Tree

This unity is set forth pictorially in two places, an apocalyptic one in Revelation 12 and parabolic one in Romans 11. The cast of characters in Revelation 12 is the dragon, the woman, and the manchild. The imagery in this passage is relatively clear. The woman is the people of God — Israel to start with. She gives birth to the manchild “who will rule the nations with an iron scepter” — unmistakably the Messiah, Christ. The dragon (Satan) pursues the woman — the people of God, the Church. The woman is divinely protected, but Satan turns to make war against the rest of her offspring — individuals who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. In 90 A.D. (close to the likely date for the writing of Revelation), the church was made up of an extensive number of Jews and Gentiles.

In Romans 9 – 11, Paul deals with the puzzle of Jewish unbelief in the Messiah. Some believed (chapter 9); the message has gone out far and wide, so they have heard (chapter 10); but more is in store (chapter 11). In chapter 11 the olive tree stands for the people of God. Some of the branches (unbelieving Jews) have been lopped off. Wild branches (believing Gentiles) have been grafted in. The branches that were removed (presumably dry and dead) may be grafted back in if they believe.

Thus far we see an evangelical consensus: one way of salvation, one people of God who are redeemed and will enter the kingdom. Since 70 AD has Israel had any distinctive place in God’s eternal purpose? Have all the prophecies concerning Israel been fulfilled long before the twentieth century?

According to Genesis, God called Abraham to leave his country, Ur of the Chaldeans, to migrate to a certain land where God would bless him and make him a great nation. The land was to be his and his heirs forever. God told him, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:1 – 4; see also 12:7, 35:12). “The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, ‘Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever’ ” (Genesis 13:14 – 15).

What implications does this have for the present state of Israel? It at least has the right to exist, to defend itself, and to live peacefully on the land it occupies. Its allies (especially the United States) are right to be its advocates in the face of its enemies (especially fundamentalist Muslims). The allies would also do well to temper aggressive responses that are counterproductive and to discourage development in traditionally Palestinian areas. The boundaries, if they are to be extended, will be so in connection with divine action at the end of the age, during the millennium, or in the eternal kingdom. As Isaiah points out, God will arrange it.

... in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste. The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious (Isaiah 60:10 – 14 and throughout Isaiah 60 – 66 ESV).

Concerning the spiritual restoration of the Jewish people, Romans 11 is a key chapter (See further “Remember ‘the Rest,’” *Henceforth ...* 31 (2004):83 – 96). Paul expects that eventually

“the remnant” [*leimma*], which now believes, will be joined by “the rest” [*loipoi*] and thus “all Israel” [*pas Israel*] “will be saved” (11:26).

The chief reason for believing that ethnic Israel still has a distinctive place in God’s eternal plan, one which Reformed theology ought to be the first to proclaim, is that **God does not go back on his word**. “... as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable” (11:25 – 26).

CONTRIBUTORS

We thank the following veteran Advent Christian pastors for their contributions to *Henceforth ...*: David W. Davis (Deer Isle “Sunshine,” Maine); David Patterson (Windham, Maine); and Mark Woolfington (La Grange, Illinois). Also to Tom P. Warner for many contributions. He is involved in various ministries in Boise, Idaho.

ARTICLE

SATAN'S WRATH, YES; GOD'S NO

David Patterson

Jesus is coming soon! This is a wonderful hope and expectation that every Christian has. Until Jesus comes, what can the Christian expect to see and experience? Much of this question falls under the study of prophecy and the study of the end times. Many sermons have been given and books written on this topic and related issues.

One of the related issues is the matter of Christians suffering, especially in the last days. Tim LaHaye, noted pretribulationist, has penned a popular series on this belief. The first 10 books of the “Left Behind” series sold more than 55 million copies. Four of the books debuted at number 1 on the New York Times best seller list. *Desecration*, book number 9, was the bestselling book in the world in 2001.¹ Those that read the series, though fiction, are led to believe that they will be raptured out of the end times tribulation. With the meteoric sales of the “Left Behind” series, there seems a growing belief that Christians will not have to endure much, if any, suffering. Together with the ease of life many Christians have in this western society and the “health and wealth” theology many televangelists dish out, people find it hard to accept that they will face any great deal of hardship. They are insulated against what much of the rest of the world experiences. Is this realistic? Moreover, is it biblical?

In the “Left Behind” series, the Christians are taken out of this world in an event called **the rapture**. It occurs just before the start of **the tribulation** — a seven-year period where the antichrist rises to power and God’s wrath is poured out on

¹ _____. 2006. Left Behind Series. <http://www.leftbehind.com/channelbooks.asp?channelID=95> (accessed 2/28/06).

the unbelievers. Believers are spared from the judgments God brings upon this world. While many of these details can be debated, for the sake of the arguments set forth here, the author will consider the pretribulation point of view presented in the “Left Behind” series.

One of the key passages pretribulationists use to bolster their belief in a rapture which takes believers out of this world before the suffering starts is 1 Thessalonians 5:9. It reads “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The pretribulationist will argue that the only way the Christian can avoid the great tribulation is to be completely removed from it. Pretribulationist author John F. Walvoord states: “The wrath of God will be poured out upon the world during the great tribulation. Revelation 6:17 states, ‘For the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?’ The only way one could be kept from that day of wrath would be to be delivered beforehand.”²

Most will agree that God will bring judgment and his wrath upon this world. And Romans 5:8 – 9 clearly states, “But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him.” Does this mean that the only way to escape the wrath of God upon this world is through the rapture? Does this also mean Christians will be spared any suffering?

There are a couple of things to keep in mind in looking at this matter. One is the harmony of the Scriptures. Dr. Edwin Gedney in establishing rules for the study of prophecy states, “All Bible prophecy is from one source — God — and is therefore inherently harmonious.”³ Any teaching on a pretribulation-

² John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1979) p. 69.

³ Edwin K. Gedney, *A Primer of Prophecy*, 2 vols. (Concord, N.H.: Advent Christian Publications, Inc., 1964), 1:69.

al rapture and on Christians suffering must keep this principal in mind. One must take into account what the Bible as a whole says on the subject.

Second, the purpose of biblical prophecy is to foretell events that will encourage and bring hope to the believer and warn the believer and unbeliever alike about the way they lead their lives. Are there warnings in biblical prophecy that the Christians should consider in regard to the subject of suffering? While a pretribulation rapture would certainly encourage and bring hope to the believer, are there warnings that are being glossed over in light of this belief?

First, one must be aware that not every tragic event is an act of God's wrath. During the aftermath of the recent hurricane Katrina, a leading Christian television personality declared that this was God's judgment upon the United States. He said that God was pouring out his wrath on our land. Similar claims were made by some after the September 11 attacks. While God certainly has the right and power to do so (the flood during Noah's time stands as a fine example), and he may have done so during hurricane Katrina, not every destructive act of nature is an act of God's wrath. Jesus said in Matthew 5:45, "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Second, we live in a creation that has been scarred by sin. Innocent people (innocent by our standards, for in God's sight no one is truly innocent) suffer daily. Because we live in a fallen world, tragic events happen. This is not God's wrath, it is just the consequences of sin. Were it not for God's grace and abounding mercies, things could be much worse. In fact, many tragedies are directly the result of man's folly. With this being said, will there be a rapture to remove Christians from the tribulation as presented by the pretribulationists?

One of the first objections to this belief is what happened to the children of Israel when they were in bondage in Egypt. God brought his wrath to bear upon Egypt to move Pharaoh to release his people. In Exodus chapters 7 through 11, 10 plagues

fell upon the land. Scripture states the plagues of the water turning to blood, the frogs, the gnats, the flies, the boils and the locusts fell on the Egyptians. No mention is made that the children of Israel suffered these plagues. One would think if the Israelites suffered, say, the plague of boils, Scripture would have recorded their grumbings against Moses and God, for they grumbled over far less than boils.

In the plague of the livestock dying, Scripture states that God made a distinction between the Israelite's cattle and the Egyptian's cattle. None of the Israelite's cattle died. In the plague of hail, the Bible says none fell on the land of Goshen where the Israelites dwelled. In the plague of darkness, the Israelites had light. And in the plague of the firstborn son dying, it is well known that the angel of death passed over the houses with blood on the lintels. While God effectively brought judgment upon the Egyptians, moving Pharaoh's hand to release his people, the Israelites were spared. If God performed this once, he is certainly able to perform it again. Jesus said in Mark 10:27, "... all things are possible with God." Escape from God's wrath is not found in the rapture but in a faith relationship with him. God is able to and will save his people.

Another argument against the pretribulational rapture is the Great Commandment and Jesus' discourse in Matthew 24 on the signs of his return. Jesus commanded in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." He also states in Matthew 24:14, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." It makes sense, if Christ's disciples' task is to preach the gospel to all creation, that the end will come when that task is completed. It makes no sense whatsoever to pull out your workers before the task is complete. 2 Peter 3:9 assures us that "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." Again, if God is not willing that any should perish, why remove his witnesses before the end of days?

While the pretribulational rapture seems unlikely, is it possible that Christians will suffer in these last days? While God has not destined his own to experience his wrath, is that the only source of suffering? Again, from looking at Scripture, the possibility is there. Look at the example of the children of Israel in their captivity in Egypt. When God struck the Egyptians with the plagues, sparing Israel, Israel still experienced some suffering. While it may seem a contradiction of what was previously argued, this suffering did not come from the hand of God. It came from the hand of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. In Exodus chapter 5, after Moses had confronted Pharaoh, Pharaoh required the Israelites to make bricks without the usual provision of straw — without reducing their daily quota. When they failed, they were beaten. The Israelites cried out to Aaron and Moses, who, in turn, cried out to God. While they were spared God's wrath, those that felt God's wrath afflicted the Israelites.

Should Christians expect the same in the last days? Even Solomon said that there is nothing new under the sun. As Israel was in a struggle, so are Christians today and even more so in the very last days. The Bible vividly portrays the struggle between good and evil. While the conclusion is never in doubt, the battles are real and the enemy relentless. It would be well for the fair weather Christians of today to take to heart the passage that speaks of Satan as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Another area of suffering, also from the hands of Satan, is the area of testing. In the book of Job, Satan petitioned God to afflict Job to demonstrate that Job was only faithful while God blessed him. Satan took Job's children, his material wealth and even afflicted his body with sores. Job ended up surrounded by discouraging friends and a less than supportive wife. While Job prevailed, he suffered intensely. In Luke 22:31 Jesus warns Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. ..." Peter, though boastful of his dedication to Christ, was tested and failed miserably in denying Christ. While he was restored to service, Peter probably suffered much

over this. With Old Testament and New Testament examples to serve as a warning, it is reasonable to believe that Christians today are tested.

The Christian should be prepared to suffer for Christ's sake. As this age draws to a close and we approach the final battle between good and evil, our enemy will grow more frenzied in his attacks knowing his time is short. Our Savior was not immune to his attacks, and we are foolish to think we will be either. Jesus said quite plainly in John 15:18 – 20,

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

Jesus suffered greatly at the hands of men and at the hands of the evil one. One can only expect that Christ's disciples can face the same.

When Jesus was giving the signs that would herald his return in Matthew 24, he prophesied in verses 9 – 10, "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another." While this occurred shortly after Jesus ascended, it has continued throughout history to this day. The western culture is among the few places that have been shielded from this. Already intolerance towards Christians is growing in this country. One only has to recall Cassie Bernall from the Columbine shooting to recognize that. Christians would do well to remember that we are strangers in a strange land.

Revelation was originally written to the early Church, which, at the time, was enduring persecution. John's words were sent to encourage them and to warn them to live right. In the letters to

the seven churches, Jesus says to each one “to him who overcomes.” What are they overcoming? Pertaining to suffering, the passages call for perseverance, enduring tribulation, suffering poverty, prison and death. These are words that certainly speak of suffering. And while they were addressed to the early church, they still hold warning for us today. Little has changed since then.

Looking at the broad scope of the Bible, it seems unlikely that there will be a pretribulation rapture. And it seems very likely that Western Christians will experience hardship and suffering as the end grows near. But with 12 books in the main “Left Behind” series and numerous spin-offs, much of our society has been inundated with this popular rapture notion. What will be the effect, though, of believing a teaching of a pretribulation rapture or the fanciful notion that Christians will be spared suffering as the end of time approaches?

There are a number of areas in which one needs to be concerned. First is disillusionment. What will happen when millions of Christians around the world who hold this belief come to the realization that they are in the tribulation and they have not been raptured? In Advent Christian history there is a date, October 22, 1844, which is now fondly referred to as the “Great Disappointment.” William Miller and associates predicted that Jesus would return on that date. He did not. More than 150 years later, the title of the “Great Disappointment” lingers. But as Dr. John Roller said in an address at the 2005 Eastern Regional Conference, all who have accepted Christ since that date are certainly not disappointed that our Lord tarried a while longer.

This author believes that the disappointment that follows the lack of a rapture will far overshadow the “Great Disappointment” of 1844. Many will undoubtedly feel betrayed and misled. Once that tenet of their beliefs is called into question, there is the danger they will question whether the rest of the beliefs they have been taught are untrue as well. Betrayal could quickly lead to anger and retaliation against the church.

Jesus said in the Matthew 24 discourse, verses nine through 13,

Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

Could Jesus be describing a falling away that was the result of Christians being disappointed in the hope to escape the tribulation and suffering? How horrible it will be if such an event were to transpire.

Besides finding out that there is no rapture, many Christians will be unprepared mentally and spiritually for the suffering that may follow. In Luke 14 Jesus speaks of those who would be his disciples to count the cost and to carry their own cross. If a person has not adequately considered these issues and come to a conviction on them, one is likely to choose the easier way out. Faced with death or physical harm, a person can find self-preservation a powerful force. For one to be willing to suffer or die for their convictions, they must have been thoroughly considered and well-rooted in their life. For those believing they will be spared these things because of the rapture, they will find themselves unprepared for the decisions that may be required of them and may choose poorly.

Aside from the question of the rapture, many Christians today in this society are not biblically versed on the subject of suffering. This pastor has seen many who quickly question their faith when they endure hard times. Many assume they must be doing something wrong to be enduring suffering. This thought was popular all the way back in Job's day and remains strong today. And many think once they are saved, all their problems will be removed from them. They question if God really loves

them for these troubles to be present in their lives. While they profess head knowledge of the battle between good and evil, they fail to expect to realize it in their own lives.

2 Timothy 3:16 – 17 (NLT) says,

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. *It is God's way of preparing us* [italics mine] in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

Prophecy plays a major role in this task. Christians need to be aware of prophecy concerning what they can expect before Jesus returns. They need to be prepared to meet these situations. Suffering, though undesirable ordinarily, is sometimes the price one pays to enjoy better things.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that “... Jesus, ... for the joy set before Him, endured the cross. ...” Acts 5:41 states that the disciples, after they were flogged and ordered not to speak of Christ again, left “rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.” And Paul says in Romans 8:18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Christians should realize that suffering may be a part of our Christian walk in a fallen world that is ruled by an enemy bent on our destruction. In doing so we identify with our Master.

Tim Lahaye’s “Left Behind” series may be flying off the shelves, but Christians will not be flying off this world in a pretribulation rapture.

* * * * *

Adventist Heritage Review

Two Advent Christian “women in church work” (to use the Library of Congress subject heading) unknown here-to-fore but not henceforth.

Usually in this column we feature something notable from the past. This time it seems appropriate to introduce two current contributors to the heritage introduced by David A. Dean in “The Role of Women in the Early Adventist Movement” (*Henceforth ...* 33 [2007], 54-68). They are not new to ministry — they have been at it for some time — but they have not previously been brought to the attention of the denominational constituency.

Lucy Lincoln became well acquainted with Advent Christendom through David A. Dean and Freeman Barton when she was a student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She is a native of Connecticut, and she has lived for extended periods elsewhere in the United States and overseas. She is a graduate of the University of Oregon and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She plans to enroll in the Doctor of Ministry Bible translation track at Gordon-Conwell. She is a member of the Portsmouth Advent Christian Church and anticipates receipt of ministerial credentials from the AC Eastern Region.

Lucy’s chief ministry is translating the Bible into the language of a formerly unreached people group. Her expertise in translation theory is indicated by her article, “Translating Hebrews 9:15 – 22, In Its Hebrew Context” in the Summer Institute of Linguistics’ *Journal for Translation and Textlinguistics*, 12 (1999), 1 – 29. Note also her articles, “Two Gardens” (a detailed exegesis of John 20, focusing on the redemption of women and their status in church and society), *Christians for Biblical Equality’s Priscilla Papers*, 21/1, 2007; and “Hebrew & Greek Terms For Sheep & Goats,” *United Bible Societies, Technical Papers*, 47/3, 1996 (UK: United Bible Societies): 322 – 335 (<http://www.ubs-translations.org/tbt/1996/03/TBT199603.html?num=322&num1=&x=13&y=13>)

Kirstin Ward grew up in the Advent Christian Church in Seattle. She graduated from the University of Washington in 1997 and immediately began ministering with Campus Crusade

for Christ on various campuses. She has worked in Phoenix, Arizona, at various high schools, and in Budapest, Hungary, in Eastern Europe. She has moved recently from working with high school students to students at the University of Washington. (Kirstin Ward, Campus Crusade for Christ, Seattle Metro Area, 425-241-7524.)

Kirstin has double roots deep in Advent Christian soil with both sets of grandparents active in their respective churches. Kirstin explains it:

Growing up in the Seattle Advent Christian church was such a huge part of my spiritual formation. My grandparents Jack & Eunice Carlson attended the AC church in Seattle as well as being the camp cooks at Camp Nooksack for many years. My other grandparents, Clyde & Esther Ward, were founding members of the AC church in Chillum, Maryland, where my father, Bill Ward, was baptized and married. Bill also attended Aurora College. So it was no surprise that, when my parents moved to the Seattle area when I was three, we would join my grandparents at the Seattle church. It was here that I first made a decision to follow Christ with my life in a Sunday school class and was baptized when I was 12 years old. It was also here at the Family Camp that God began to draw me to a life of following him wholeheartedly.

[Editor: My wife and I have been contributing a small amount each month to help support the ministry of these good and faithful servants of the Lord. I can supply contact information if you wish to join us.]

* * * * *

CONDITIONALIST REVIEW

► AEONS IN MATTHEW 25

Tom Warner

It seems to me that the FINALITY of the separation/judgment is one main point of Matthew 25:31 – 46. It will be no temporary judgment; it will have eternal results. R.E. Nixon comes to the same conclusion in *The New Bible Commentary*:

The division [of people into sheep and goats] is absolute between inheriting *the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (v.34) and going *into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (v. 41; not [originally intended] for men). Eternal punishment and eternal life (v. 46) are not necessarily the same in duration. Eternal (Gk. *aionios*) simply refers to the age to come and makes the point that the division is final for men's destiny. (846; Nixon's emphasis)

Here we have a scholar in a standard commentary by a reputable evangelical publishing house, which denies that Matthew 25:46 presents an open-and-shut case for unending conscious torment. However, I think Nixon is probably mistaken when he says that *aionios* does not refer to duration. While *aionios* may point to a quality of punishment, i.e., it is a punishment having to do with the age to come (rather than the kind of punishment that we are familiar with in this present age), I think it is difficult to argue that duration is not also addressed by the term. No need for an either/or choice.

But, that raises another question: If the duration of the punishment is everlasting, what is the nature of the punishment? The nature of the "punishment" is not fully defined in Matthew 25. Part of its nature is being denied entry into the future kingdom and, instead, being sent into the "eternal fire" (25:41). But it is not exhaustively discussed in that passage. Other passages

add to our understanding of the nature of the punishment. For example, Matthew 10:28 describes its nature as consisting of the destruction of body and soul. So, even if we admit that “eternal” describes the duration of the punishment, all we’re admitting is that the “destruction” will never be reversed.

Edward Fudge also points out that when “eternal” is joined with a word that indicates some kind of action, the action need not continue forever, but the consequences do (44). That is how most interpreters would understand “eternal judgment” (Hebrews 6:2), “eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12), and “eternal sin” (Mark 3:29 NIV). So, we have good reason to argue similarly for “eternal punishment” (Matthew 25:46).

If we want to understand Matthew’s view of final punishment, we should take into account all he says about it. Cf. Mt 3:10,12; 5:22, 29 – 30; 7:13, 19, 24 – 27; 8:11 – 12; 10:28, 39; 13:30, 40 – 43, 48 – 50; 18:8 – 9; 22:13; 24:50 – 51; 25:30, 41, 46.

Addendum

I don’t think we need necessarily defend our view of hell by arguing that the “eternal fire” (of Matthew 25:41) eventually goes out, or by insisting that the devil and his angels must also be destroyed along with condemned mortals. Revelation 20:10 makes it a difficult to argue that, though not impossible. “And the devil ... was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever” (ASV), literally “unto the ages of the ages.” However, for debating purposes, we might be wise to concede that fallen angels might exist forever; and, then, focus on the real question: whether mortal human beings will be able to live in eternal fire.

Note Isaiah 33:14, where the question mentioned in the first paragraph may be raised as a rhetorical question, assuming a “no one” answer — barring the miraculous transformation of people into immortal beings, which is not under consideration by Isaiah. Also see Luke 20:36, which says that the resurrection

of redeemed people to immortality will mean that “they cannot die anymore, for they are equal to the angels,” implying that angels (even fallen angels, one might assume) are immortal.

But, what is eternal fire? After comparing a lot of biblical passages that deal with the final judgment/appearing of the Lord, I tend to think the fire will be the unveiled glory of God, which will consume the unrepentant. See further Titus 2:13 where it says we are “looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (ASV); and 2 Thessalonians 1:7 – 9. The English Standard Version footnotes 2 Thessalonians 1:9, with the alternate translation of “from” — “eternal destruction that comes from the presence of the Lord.” In other words, the idea that “from” means “away from” is an interpretive translation, which may be wrong. The ESV translators were honest enough to admit that in their footnote. “Presence” in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 is literally “face” — as in the old ASV: “who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” This, I think, is an allusion to Exodus 33:18 — 20, where Moses asked to see the LORD’s glory, and God responded, “You cannot see my face; for no man can see me and live.” YHWH would not reveal his face (his full glory) to Moses, because Moses was mortal, and it would have killed him. At the end, the full glory of God will be revealed, and the “man of lawlessness” (among others) will be “destroyed with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). The redeemed, however, will be given immortal, glorified bodies, so they will be able to “see his face” and live (Revelation 22:4). What a sight that Beatific Vision will be!

So, even if the “eternal fire” burns forever, it seems to me that the unsaved will be resurrected as mortals and will not be able to live (or exist) in the presence of that unveiled glory of God. Incidentally, if we concede that Revelation 20:10 teaches that the devil might exist “forever and ever,” we should point out that Revelation 20:11 – 15 says no such thing when it discusses the final condemnation and punishment of human beings.

They are said to experience a “second death” rather than being tormented forever and ever.

And, as for the beast and false prophet in Revelation 20:10, we should point out that Revelation 13 seems clearly to present the two beasts as apocalyptic personifications. The first beast — with seven heads and 10 horns, rising up out of the sea — is an anti-God system of government. Compare the four beasts of Daniel 7. The second beast of Revelation 13 — with two horns like a lamb and speaking like a dragon — seems to be a religious power that mimics Christ, but actually speaks for the devil (thus, it is also called a “false prophet” in Revelation 20:10). For the two beasts to be thrown into the lake of fire would mean the destruction of that anti-God government system and that anti-Christ religious power.

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► **Hell in The Areopagus Journal**

The complete September/October 2008 issue of *Areopagus Journal: the Journal of the Apologetics Resource Center* (except for four pages about an archaeological find and three of book reviews) is devoted to “hell.” The cover depicts a raging inferno. It elicited the following response from a reader and a reply by one of the authors, both published in the January/February 2009 issue of AJ (8 – 9).

Three observations on your recent issue on hell:

1. Mr. Clendenen in his description of conditional immortality says, “God only raises the dead who have followed him and ... he punishes unbelievers by just leaving them as they are, dead and gone, no longer existing.” He attributes this view to Edward Fudge. Doubtless there are people who hold this view, but Fudge does not, and neither does any of the evangelical conditionalists whom you cite — Stott, Wenham, Pinnock, Hughes. They all believe in the resurrection of both believers and unbelievers. Conditionalists “look for the resurrection of all men, followed by a just sentence according to the deserts of each, which will mean anguish (but not unending torment) for those outside Christ, finally terminating in the second death” (John Wenham, *The Goodness of God*, 34 – 35).

2. You refer to “a small number of respected evangelical theologians who struggle with the philosophical dilemma over the fairness of a loving God who would establish an eternal state of horrific punishment for people who are far less hideous and deserving than Hitler or Stalin” (4). True enough, but one might infer from this statement that advocates of conditionalism begin with this “secular sentimentalism” (Packer). With the exception of Pinnock, they begin with the exegesis of Scripture, including “the vocabulary of destruction.” As Wenham states, “The nub of the whole debate is the question of the natural meaning of the texts” (“The Case for Conditional Immortality,” in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron, 181). Packer eventually acknowledged this point. Concerning Stott and Wenham, he says, “Both men adopted annihilationism, in which they may be wrong, but they embraced it for the right reason — not because it fitted into their comfort zone, though it did, but because they thought they found it in the Bible” (*Reformation & Revival Journal* 6:2 (1997), 43; [documentation omitted in the original by oversight]).

3. Is there not a striking discontinuity in the traditional view between the price that Christ paid for the believer’s sin and the price that the unbeliever pays for his own sin? Traditionalists

and Conditionalists believe firmly in substitutionary atonement — “Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said” (1 Corinthians 15:3 – 4). Christ’s literal physical death was prefigured in the Levitical sacrificial system in which the animals were killed, not tortured. But the unbeliever according to the traditional view pays a very different penalty. I have not found an explanation of this point in Packer, Peterson, the Areopagus Journal, et al.

Freeman Barton Via email

Dr. E. Ray Clendenen responded. 1. He admitted that he should have described conditionalist views “more carefully.” 2. He quoted Stott and Wenham on their abhorrence of the idea of eternal torment, then cited J. I. Packer in favor of the view that conditionalism is the result of “secular sentimentalism.” Of 3 Clendenen says, “This is an excellent question, and one I have pondered a lot.” His response is not a very incisive answer to the discontinuity. (Permit to reprint requested, response received no answer.)

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► **Body, Soul, and Stem Cells**

This title belongs to a two page column by Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, Professor of Psychology and Philosophy, Eastern University. It deals with the nature of human kind, particularly with the soul-body relationship, in a way thoroughly compatible with Advent Christian theology — and with Scripture. She protests the extremes of the dualism common among Christians and the materialistic reductionism of many unbelievers. She deals with the former picturesquely:

The 1940s gospel song, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passin’ through,” may help those struggling in difficult circumstances to maintain hope fostered by the biblical promise that God will, in the end, “wipe every tear from their

eyes” (Rev. 21:4). But to the extent that the song suggests humans are just angels driving around in automobile — whose spirits will eventually shed their inferior material carriages forever — it is both bad creation theology and a misunderstanding of the biblical hope for fulfillment.

She highlights the goodness of God’s material creation and the coming of new heavens and a new earth.

Believers should be involved in “the public square” as those who anticipate resurrection and a future life of justice and peace.

Van Leeuwen, Mary Stewart. “Body, Soul, and Stem Cells.” *Capital Commentary*, November 29, 2004. Copyright (c) Center for Public Justice. (A request to reprint the column went unanswered. You can find it easily at [http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader\\$1230](http://www.cpjustice.org/stories/storyReader$1230).)

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BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

William Miller: Adventism’s Greatest Hero

David W. Davis

God’s Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World, by David L. Rowe. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. xxii, 249 p.

According to Middle Tennessee State University’s web site, “Dr. [David L.] Rowe is Professor of History at MTSU where he has taught for 25 years. American Religion is his specialty, focusing on the 19th and 20th centuries.” You can learn more about him at: <http://mtsu32.mtsu.edu:11074/>.

Dr. Rowe has given Christians, who view themselves as Adventists of whatever name (Advent Christian, Seventh Day Adventists, Church of God of Abrahamic Faith, etc.), a tremen-

dous gift in *God's Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World*. This gift is a fair and balanced account of the man Miller, his charisma and leadership in the Adventist Awakening (and in shaping Adventist denominations) and the way he handled disappointment when his predictions proved false. Through the pages of this book, the author brings us face to face with the man Miller and God's use of him during the Advent Awakening.

Every movement has its heroes, and undoubtedly, William Miller is the greatest among Christian Adventists. Unlike other authors that have glossed over Miller's blemishes by removing most of his faults and struggles (Sylvester Bliss or Francis D. Nichol), or those that have attempted to discredit him by stating half-truths and by using inflammatory language. Rowe humanizes William Miller and at the same time redeems him as an effective evangelist used of God to cause sinners to ponder the coming judgment and one's standing with Jesus. Rowe states this best in the closing lines of the Epilogue where he writes, "Indeed, this changing of lives was [Miller's] ultimate task, and his greatest success" (xi). This book provides a realistic answer to one of the great mysteries in the American history of Christianity: How did a self-taught farmer's biblical calculations about the impending End of the World become so convincing to so many other pious, Bible-loving, and faithful Christian people?" (xi)

Rowe begins to answer that question as he piques one's curiosity in the Introduction,

Focusing directly on Miller necessarily leaves other parts of the story indistinct. The reader will not find here the history of the Millerite movement per se; that has been told already. ... Eschewing our own preoccupations, we must let Miller speak for himself, to identify for us his deepest concerns, most nagging fears, and greatest hopes." (xix).

True to his word, Rowe sets out in Chapter One with Miller at his desk, reflecting on the Great Disappointment. This section of the book then goes on to recount the history of Miller's

family, his desire for learning and education, and finally how he met and fell in love with Lucy Smith. Upon his marriage to Lucy, he settled with her in Poultney, Vermont, where they would be with her family. When the reader comes to the end of this section, s/he feels s/he knows the young man William Miller.

Rowe interestingly notes, however, “Bill got everything he wanted, but for that he would pay a high price in spiritual cynicism and shattered family relationships. In a real sense, Bill’s first world — or at least his innocence — came to an end” (23).

“The Society of a Superior Class of Men” begins with a few lines about how Lucy’s parents settled in Poultney, but then continues with the early history of William and Lucy as well as Miller’s association with the Masonic lodge. Rowe also recounts William’s political ambitions, his deism and commission as lieutenant in the Vermont militia — proving Miller a true Patriot that dearly loved his country. He finishes the chapter by stating, “Ultimately, though, [William Miller] would find in the experience of war the assurance he craved, not about human nature but about himself. Battle would challenge his courage, force him to confront difficult truths, and finally provoke a crisis of identity” (45).

“War offered Miller the chance to test his character and to discover those nobler qualities of human nature that had so far eluded him in his study of history” (46), writes Rowe in the second paragraph of chapter three (46), the part of the book that shows Miller’s leadership abilities. These pages also reveal William’s struggle with “self-doubt” and his “suspicion of others.” Nevertheless, God used Miller’s war experience — and the closeness with death that conflict brings — to cause Miller to reflect on his own standing with God, and especially his deism. Rowe records that though Miller was shackled by his rebellious past — especially his rejection of his parents and their ways — he opens his life to Jesus Christ and experiences true conversion as a result of being asked to read a sermon in the absence of the pastor. Ironically, the sermon was about parental responsibility. Rowe writes, “Conversion gave [Miller] a new way of thinking

about God as a parent and Jesus as a friend. Obviously, his heart had changed, too” (68).

“A Feast of Reason” is Rowe’s choice for the name of his fourth chapter. A chapter that describes the young United States and the religious dynamics that were at work in the early days of our Republic. David L. Rowe points out the struggle between the Congregationalists and Presbyterians and the Methodists and Baptists — the former losing ground to the latter. Miller was converted during this insurgence of evangelicalism in America. The author shows Miller being driven to the Bible with only a concordance, but also documents William Miller’s increasing interest in eschatology. Noted also are the many “teachers” that circulated in the Northeastern United States peddling their ideas of the “Last Days.”

During this time, the Millers left Poultney and moved to Hampton, where Miller once again became politically active and involved in the local Baptist Church. Rowe also spends time elaborating on how Millennial Fever began to grip the nation shortly after the War of 1812 as well as the anti-Masonic movement in the Northeastern United States in the 1820s. As a result of the latter, Miller resigned from the lodge in 1831. It is interesting to note, however, that Miller had ascended the ranks of the Lodge to become Grand Master (93). The author also includes the famous tale among Adventists of how Miller’s nephew arrived on the very afternoon that William Miller had agreed to “Go and tell it to the world” should God give him the opportunity. The chapter ends in the 1830s, where Miller has concluded a doctrine of End Times from his study as well as his interaction with others concerning his ideas. Rowe states, “Discovering the imminent end of the world had been God’s gift to him ... Going public would raise the stakes. Predicting the end of the world would make Miller the godfather of untold hopes and dreams” (100 – 101).

Chapter five, “Go Tell It to the World,” finds William Miller perplexed. He feels he has discovered truth from God’s world — and the sinner needs to be warned, but he continues to struggle with the thought that he is the one to share it. Yet, William Miller resigns himself to “Tell It To the World.” As Rowe points out,

“When Miller promised to tell it to the world, he had family, church, and locality in mind, the only world he knew” (102). The chapter continues to document Miller’s year for a day hermeneutic, his biblical exposition and homiletic linking fulfilled prophecy to earth’s history.

Once Miller began speaking of his discoveries at the local Baptist Church, opportunities were given for him to present his theories at its affiliated agencies. As a result, Miller was awarded a license to preach and officially became Rev. William Miller. The chapter continues to document how Miller’s message spread; how invitations were sent for Miller to come and share his message with others outside the immediate area; and the effects of Miller’s extended absences on his family and health. Finally, Rowe recounts how Miller’s lectures found their way into print as well as the new dilemmas that emerged as a result. Father Miller and Millerism itself were gaining traction and their time in the limelight led to ever-increasing scrutiny.

In the sixth chapter Rowe shows Miller’s reaction to the increasing scrutiny. William Miller had to face his anger, paranoia, and self-doubt. Rowe states, “So prevalent was the hostility surrounding him that he almost despaired of seeing faithful souls at the end” (134). The chapter proceeds with some of Miller’s predictions and his wrestling with matters of theology, such as “the end of probation” and the increasing antagonism from an unbelieving world. After speaking about the religious climate in America and its affects upon the nation and Miller, the author ends with Miller’s desire to see his message expand to the masses. Rowe writes, “By the end of the decade Miller had taken his message of warning and hope to thousands ... Throughout the campaign Miller had been praying for God to send workers for the harvest, and as the new decade dawned, God responded” (156 – 157). After all, 1844 was fast approaching!

In “I Am Coming On ... ” David L. Rowe brings the Millerite Movement to its climax, and he describes its transformation into Adventism. “While preaching at Vermont conferences in

1838 and 1839, Miller met the men who would transform Millerism into Adventism — Josiah Litch at a Methodist conference in Bethel and, at a Christian Connexion conference in Calais, L. D. Fleming of Portland, Maine, Timothy Cole of Lowell, and Joshua Himes, pastor of the Chardon Street Chapel in Boston (158). Out of them all, undoubtedly God orchestrated Miller's relationship with Himes.

One cannot read this chapter without seeing that it was Himes and his mastermind that caused Adventism to invade the thoughts and conversations of millions. What is more, it was Himes who was the check and balance that kept Miller in line and coordinated his speaking schedule. One marvels at the resourcefulness of Joshua V. Himes, especially in light of the many Adventist publications that he produced and sent not only around the states, but literally around the world heralding the Second Advent of Jesus Christ! In regard to this the author states, "Hime's exhaustive efforts enabled Adventism to reach people who had never heard of the approaching apocalypse — in western New York, Ohio, and Michigan, south to Baltimore and Washington, and across the Atlantic to England." Even though Himes was working with Miller in "getting the message out," he also became fond of William Miller and considered himself Miller's "spiritual son."

The chapter continues by outlining the negative results that date setting had on the Adventist Movement as well as by delineating the various teachings that supported each date. Finally this section ends with a disappointed band of followers who waited ... waited ... and waited on the 22nd day of October in 1844. Despite the excitement and the anticipation, Jesus did not come. "Eventually even the most faithful, those who yearned for Christ to come, even Miller himself, had to confront reality. Painfully, at their own time and in their own way, each had to confess themselves and then, later, admit to each other: Not now" (191).

The author begins chapter eight in a sobering way, "For Miller and many of his followers, the world did indeed come to

an end on October 22, 1844, not melted in divine fire but dissolved in bitter tears. Hope did not necessarily die, but expectation did” (192). For a good many, this was the end of the line of their involvement in Adventism. The emotional roller coaster they rode as a result of date-setting, unfulfilled predictions, and the resulting disappointments were just too much to take. Now that it was apparent that Christ was not coming in the immediate future and that winter was setting in, they had work to do — they had property to recover and crops to harvest.

Despite the countless loss of many Adventists, Himes and other leaders acted immediately to control the damage. They took reasonable steps to hold as many Adventists together as possible. Yet while Adventist leaders were working hard to encourage the Adventists, skeptics and other non-believers were ridiculing, humiliating and harassing the disappointed throngs. Some Adventists were even expelled from their churches. Miller’s silence was deafening, and his slowness to respond to the Great Disappointment is perplexing. Rowe comments, “Himes, Bliss and Litch could not afford patience. While Miller was protected from the storms swirling about the movement, they were in the thick of it, and they needed his help. Millerism was not only exploding, it was imploding as well” (199).

The chapter goes on to recount how the Adventist leaders deciphered what — if anything — happened on October 22, 1844, as well as how Himes’ actions and intervention brought Miller to the Albany Conference,* thus saving Adventism. The chapter ends with Miller’s death and its effect on Himes, the Miller family and the Adventist movement. Rowe quotes Himes with a fitting ending, “Mr. Miller’s character and abilities have not been understood by the church or the world” (225).

In his Epilogue, Rowe states Miller’s greatest disappointment that “he would not be among the living saints who would join Jesus in the air at the second coming” (226). Rowe recounts the disbursement of Miller’s property, the splintering of the movement into several modern-day denominations, and the steps that Himes took to be sure that Adventism’s history would not

be lost. As was his intent, Rowe concludes this outstanding historical work on the man Miller by awarding him his rightful place in Christian history by venerating him as a great soul-winner — “Indeed, this changing of lives was [William Miller’s] ultimate task, and his greatest success” (235).

Dr. Rowe’s historical work on William Miller and Miller’s influence on his followers, the Millerites/Adventists, is outstanding. It is a must read for anyone interested in Adventist history or in understanding the Millerite/Adventist Movement. One cannot read this work without coming to know the man William Miller. What is more, Rowe humanizes Miller by naming his faults, identifying his struggles, showing his frailties and recounting his conversion and ultimate calling from God. Rowe proves that William Miller was not insane or demented, but was instead a sincere man on a quest to warn sinners of their ultimate fate, should they not repent and prepare to meet Jesus before the Second Advent. Toward that end, Rowe elevates Miller as one of the most effective evangelists of his day. *God’s Strange Work* undoubtedly proves that God used William Miller — despite himself and his outright disobedience by date-setting — to bring many into God’s eternal kingdom, and to restore to modern Christianity the “Blessed Hope.” For this, all Adventists will be forever grateful.

[*The Albany Conference was a meeting of the moderate leaders of the Millerite/ Adventist movement in Albany, N.Y., April 29 – May 2, 1845. It promoted peace among the Adventist adherents, encouraged continued proclamation of the imminent second coming, repudiated extremes (such as an invisible coming of Christ in 1844), and set forth 10 “important truths,” which helped maintain a degree of unity in the movement. (ed.).]

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Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society

Mark Woolfington

Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society, by E. Earle Ellis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. xv, 182 p. pb

E. Earle Ellis is a well-known scholar in the field of Pauline theology. Dr. Ellis holds advanced degrees from Wheaton Graduate School and the University of Edinburgh. Since 1985 he has served at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as research professor of theology. He has authored several books and numerous articles on the Apostle's life and work. This paper will summarize and critique one of them. *Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society* derives from a series of lectures that Ellis has delivered at various theological schools around the world.

Specifically, there are five topics discussed in the book:

the concept of ministry in Paul's writings;
its source in the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
the role of women in ministry;
church order and status; and
the social status of the local congregation in the Greco-Roman world (ix).

Each of these topics is explored in the five chapters. There is some overlap in each of the chapters, as the subject matter of each relates to the others. For example, Ellis contends that Paul views ministry in the light of spiritual gifts, and then, in the next chapter, he goes on to explore fully the role of the gifts of the Spirit in ministry.

The opening chapter is titled, "Ministry for the Coming Age." Here Ellis begins to examine Paul's understanding of ministry and its implications. He maintains that Paul's view of ministry was influenced by two sources: his Jewish background and the

life and ministry of Jesus. Within Judaism, ministry was understood in three ways: priests, prophets and scribes or rabbis (2). In the Early Church, and in Paul's thought, ministry was "patterned on Jesus' ministry," which served as a "model and archetype" (3).

Ellis argues that ministry to Paul is closely related to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For example, ministry cannot be limited to any one specific activity since there are many gifts of the Spirit for ministry. He also contends that true ministry can only be done to those within the body of Christ. He spends considerable time contrasting those who are "in Christ" with those "in Adam." This is one of the dominant themes in Paul's theology according to Ellis. In light of this distinction between the members of Christ's body and the unsaved masses, ministry "facilitates a shift of identity from the sphere of Adam to the sphere of Christ" (13). Ellis raises a valid question: "Is Sociopolitical Action Ministry?" He is limited by space from fully critiquing the so-called Social Gospel. He is quick to point out, however, that Paul did not believe in the perfection of human society apart from the work of God. The discontinuity between those in Christ and those in the world is too great (21).

To summarize the first chapter, Ellis writes that Paul views ministry as the manifestation of the kingdom of God, and it is an activity in the body of Christ and not the secular world.

Chapter two is titled, "The Spirit and the Gifts." In this chapter Ellis more fully explores the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the gifts of ministry. He distinguishes between the Holy Spirit's role in creation and ministry by contrasting the Spirit's activity in the Old Testament and the life and ministry of Jesus. He then examines the Pauline literature and its teachings concerning the functions of the Holy Spirit, the characteristics of the gifts for ministry, the implementation of those gifts in the Church, and finally, Paul's view of the fruit of the Spirit.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit plays two important roles. He is present at creation and in the ministry of the proph-

ets. This second role is similar to the role of the Spirit in the New Testament. He is present and active in the life and ministry of Jesus. Indeed, Jesus is seen as the mediator of the Holy Spirit (30). Ellis then distinguishes the four functions of the Spirit in the Pauline literature: baptism in the Spirit, fruit of the Spirit, the gifts, and finally the regeneration of both individual believers and of creation in the eschaton (30). These gifts are then explained. Their characteristics may be summarized as follows: the gifts of the Spirit are Christological in focus, turning one's attention not to the recipient of the gift but to Jesus, and they are divine in origin. The gifts are two-fold — the gifts of miracles and the gifts of prophecy. Finally gifts are given to individuals but only for the common good (35 – 37).

These gifts bring about unity in the body through their diversity. Before turning to the relationship between gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, Ellis explains three aspects of Paul's view of ministry. Paul understood ministry to be eschatological in nature, that is, it is a manifestation of God's kingdom in this age. Ministry is a gift, not a result of one's own abilities. It is to be used, not for one's own gain, but for the good of the community. The charismatic gift is to be distinguished from ecstatic utterance (49). In the final section of this chapter, the author concludes that for Paul the fruit is of greater significance than the gifts. This priority is nowhere more evident than in 1 Corinthians 13.

This conclusion is based on three points. First, the fruit of the Spirit corresponds to Christ's character and the gifts to Christ's ministry. Second, the fruit is eternal while the gifts of ministry are for this age. Finally, all Christians should have the fruit, but the gifts are given to selected individuals (52). Once again, we see the theme of the individual believer and the corporate nature of humanity. The main thrust of this chapter is summarized thus: In Paul's writings "the gifts of the Holy Spirit are the essence of Christian ministry, and apart from these gifts ministry ... does not take place" (52).

"Paul and the Eschatological Woman" is the subject of the third chapter. Ellis handles this sensitive area in two ways. First

he presents four theological principles and how they relate to the status and role of women. These four principles are:

Man: Corporate and Individual (55 – 57),
Equality and Subordination (57 – 61),
Mutuality and Obligation (61 – 62), and
Unity in Diversity (62 – 65).

The first of these principles, the corporate nature of humanity, is the foundation of Ellis' arguments. When an individual accepts Christ, his or her corporate identity is shifted from Adam to Christ. However the individual believer still lives in the society of Adam, as the kingdom of God awaits its full manifestation in Christ's Parousia. In the meantime, they still live under the present order of male dominance and female subordination (56). Ellis explains this relationship with his next principle.

According to the author, the idea that equality and subordination are opposing concepts is a modern phenomenon (57). Instead, he argues that Paul considered them complimentary. The relationship between husband and wife is to be that of Christ and the church, and Ellis points out that Christ's dominance was exhibited through service, and not coercion (61).

The third principle is mutuality of obligation, the term that Ellis gives to the reciprocal relationships that Paul and the New Testament call for. This is closely related to the previous principle. For example, the husband is to love his wife as his own body. Finally Ellis explains the principle of unity in diversity. God has created men and women differently, yet believers are united in Christ. These four principles are fundamental elements in Paul's theology (64).

The chapter then turns to three major texts. The first is 1 Corinthians 14:34 – 35, the passage concerning women keeping silent in the churches. Ellis qualifies this passage with several points. Paul directs this instruction to married women, not women in general, it applies to believers only, and only in the case of women whose husbands are present during worship

(68 – 69). Next, 1 Timothy 2:9 – 3:1 is examined. The conclusion is that while Paul did restrict women from participating in some forms of ministry, he affirmed them in other areas. Ellis presents an interesting question: “Should the church today do less?” (78).

The third and final text that is examined is Galatians 3:28. Paul teaches here that while there are distinctions among believers based on physical characteristics, as part of their corporate nature in Adam, their corporate nature in Christ overcomes these distinctions and unites men and women, Greek and Jew. By looking at these three sometimes controversial passages in the light of the principles that Ellis presents, the reader is able to reconsider his/her positions concerning women in ministry. Ellis brings a fresh voice to this ongoing debate, without bringing a social agenda to the table.

The role of women in the church is closely related to Ellis’ next chapter: “Ministry and Church Order.” Ellis explains Paul’s views on two subjects: order within the church and the status of some members as clergy. There are several divisions in this chapter: Charism and Office, Ordered Ministries in Paul’s Churches, Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, The Regulation of Worship, and Implications for the Church Today, which is followed by a brief conclusion.

Some have speculated as to the development of church order and hierarchy. Ellis takes the view that the earliest Christians allowed for both unstructured ministry and worship and an ordered clergy. The church was greatly influenced in its structure by the Jewish synagogue (92). Ministry in Paul’s day consisted of the collection of offerings, teaching and preaching, and the oversight of the church. Ellis then shows that ministers were paid in the Pauline churches, a development that suggests the existence of an appointed class of ministers (99). This refutes the contention of some that the ministry was not a paid position in the New Testament era.

The next section of this chapter concerns church order in the Pastoral Epistles. Ellis deals with the regulation of worship,

especially Paul's teachings concerning the place of tongues, the observance of the Lord's Supper, and the role of prophecy. The implications of these teachings and their meaning for the church today comprise the remainder of the chapter. The writings of Paul on these subjects provide the modern church with its best yardstick for judging what is of God and what is not (121).

In sum, for Paul the appointed ministry had its origin in the life and ministry of Jesus. The prerequisite for service was the gifting of the Holy Spirit. Those ministers whom God had gifted to lead the congregation were responsible for several different activities, such as teaching, preaching, and charitable acts. Paul provided important instructions for the "brothers" who joined him in the work of the church concerning the Lord's Supper, prophetic utterances and speaking in tongues.

In the final chapter, "Pauline Christianity and the World Order," the author explores the relationship between the body of Christ and the secular world. This subject is examined in two sections:

1. The Social Place of the Church in the Roman World; and
2. Paul's Ministry in Greco-Roman Society.

In the first section, he compares and contrasts the local Christian congregations to the Jewish synagogues, and the other social clubs of merchants and craftsmen. All of these groups observed rituals, provided burial services for their members, and exercised discipline over them. From time to time, all were banned by the Empire. Ellis effectively argues that the Christian church would have been seen as just another of these social clubs, or, more likely, a Jewish sect. As proof of this, he refers the reader to the incident recorded in Acts 18, where the Roman government refuses to interfere in the conflict between Paul and the Jews, thinking it to be a dispute within Judaism (132). Paul would then be viewed as a rabbi or, as Ellis describes him, an "apostolic rabbi in a different kind of synagogue" (151).

In the final pages of the book, Ellis reviews Paul's stance on ministry in society. He reminds the reader of the eschatological focus of Paul's ministry. This focus led Paul to use Scripture in a non-political application. He was apparently more concerned with winning people to Christ than redeeming human society. This conclusion has two implications for the church today:

1. First, liberation theology that emphasizes the political aspects of the kingdom of God over the spiritual can be rejected.
2. Second, the church is reminded that she is to love God first and then her neighbor.

There are several important points in *Pauline Theology* that Ellis brings out, yet there is one that seems to stand head and shoulders above the others. The corporate nature of humanity is perhaps the central idea in Paul's thought. One is either in Adam or in Christ, and there can be no middle ground. It is important to remember when reading Paul that he is writing to those in Christ only and not to society in general. When this is properly understood, his teachings concerning women can be seen in a more positive light than many have been willing to admit. This discontinuity between those in Adam and those in Christ also influences Paul's theology of ministry and spiritual gifts. Ministry is based on the gifts and empowerment of the Holy Spirit for the good of the church. Therefore, ministry can only be done in the church.

Another dominant theme of the book is unity in diversity. This is found in the sections concerning the gifts of the Spirit, and women in ministry. God gives many different gifts, yet unites the church through this diversity. Men and women are created differently, yet they can become one in Christ. This is closely linked with the corporate nature of humanity. The age to come will see this unity completed.

The strength of this book lies in its unity. Many of the ideas presented are closely related to other themes. Ellis provides generous Scripture references to support his claims through extensive footnotes. This adds to the book's thoroughness. It is

written in a concise style that makes it easy to follow, no doubt due to the material's original presentation as lectures. However, this also leads to a major weakness. Ellis is forced by space limitations to generalize several opposing points. For example, both feminist and liberation theology are dismissed with little discussion. He writes in the preface that he supports the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, and returns to this theme in his chapter on church order. Unfortunately, space does not permit a fuller exploration of the questions concerning the authenticity of these letters.

In conclusion, this is a well researched, thorough explanation of Paul's views of ministry and society. The issues discussed are as relevant for our day as they were in the time of the Apostle.

► *Burn Morey (his book, that is)*

Death and the After Life, by Robert A. Morey. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984. 315 p. \$9.95; used \$1.50 up.

Robert Morey is an evangelical scholar of repute. He is a prolific writer who provides a list of impressive evangelicals who praise his work, including this book. *Death and the Afterlife* is a quarter century old, and a lot of water has flowed under the theological bridges during that period. The eternal destiny of unbelievers has been a major topic, with much literature, well done and otherwise, representing both the traditional view of eternal conscious punishing and the view of conditional immortality. Why review this book now? It is still in print, and it is promoted on Morey's website, faithdefenders.com. It is still cited as authoritative, so a "heads up" is in order.

Morey claims that his "research has involved every Conditionalist work, in or out of print, that is accessible today" (204). He has not. Granted, the surface indications are impressive — 315 pages, the use of Greek and Hebrew, and citation of the church fathers and rabbinic material. It has extensive notes, a large bibliography, and an index. Roger Nicole, Vernon

Grounds, and Walter Martin write glowing blurbs for the book. One has high expectations, then, that a book like this one will be carefully written, accurate, logical, fair to opposing viewpoints and honest. *Death and the Afterlife* is none of these. The purpose here is not to defend, even less prove, views which Morey opposes. The intent is to dispose of this superficially weighty but actually illogical, inaccurate and dishonest book in favor of more valuable resources on either side of the debate. Robert Peterson (*Hell on Trial*, etc.) much better represents the case for Morey's view — *eternal conscious punishing*.

The book is replete with these phenomena:

Overheated rhetoric

Hyperbole — “all,” “always,” “never,” “obvious,” “absurd.”

Misrepresentations

Faulty logic

Ad hominem attacks on the intelligence of opponents

Overheated rhetoric

One need not read far in this book to discover that it fits better the ethos of the current political campaigns than the realm of dispassionate pursuit of truth. It is a diatribe against universalism and conditional immortality (“annihilationism”). It begins with emotive caricatures and guilt by association. It repeatedly links conditionalism with universalism and the cults (15). People need to be instructed “that here is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain” (16) — as if conditionalists denied the reality of hell and the future life. “Bible-believing Christians” affirm “eternal, conscious torment of the wicked” (16), contrary to “the annihilationists [who] have invaded the Christian Church just as the Philistines invaded Israel” (16). Colorful, but scholarly? John Stott, Philip Hughes, E. Earle Ellis, Stephen Travis, Clark Pinnock, Michael Green, et multi are Bible-denying Philistines? Come now, Dr. Morey!

Hyperbole — “all,” “always,” “never,” “obvious,” “absurd.”

Morey maintains that Leroy Froom did the basic work with

his *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*. “All subsequent works in favor of conditionalism have been pale summaries of his massive work” (204). “Those who teach ‘soul sleep,’ i.e., man is extinguished at death or passes into an unconscious state, have *always* sought to restrict the meaning of the word *nephesh* to the principle of physical life” (47). He cites no sources. “The conditional immortalists have *never* wrestled with the patently clear passages, which speak of a dualism or contrast between the physical life of the body and the transcendent life of the soul or spirit” (64; emphasis in each case is mine).

Concerning soul sleep, Morey claims that “the concept of death as a state of nonexistence is *patently absurd*” (40). Soul sleepers do not necessarily maintain that death is a state of nonexistence. “It is *always* argued that the mere fact that the Bible refers to death by the word ‘sleep’ is absolute proof that there is no conscious life after death” (206). I wonder if this argument is *ever* used in a scholarly work.

Even small acquaintance with the literature proves otherwise for all of these allegations.

Misrepresentations

Morey is right that hermeneutics is important. We grant that Scripture is generally clear, revelation is progressive, the original languages, context and grammar are important, and figures of speech need to be interpreted with care. It is caricature, however, and probably dishonest, to say that Seventh-day Adventists and other conditionalists “give a ‘secret’ or ‘inner’ meaning to Scripture which cannot be found in the grammar, syntax or context of the passage” (20). Do any conditionalists “try to demonstrate that ‘everlasting’ does not mean everlasting and ‘torment’ does not mean torment” (22)? This is rabble-rousing rhetoric, not honest scholarship.

Need more? “A survey of their [Jehovah’s Witnesses and Adventists] literature reveals an almost total dependence on Old Testament texts to support their theory of soul sleep and annihilationism” (23). I cannot speak for Jehovah’s Witnesses,

but the statement is easily proved false for the Adventists. Conditionalism is based almost entirely on the New Testament. Interestingly, at this point Morey quarrels with those who hold his traditional view on eternal torment when he denies that the Hebrew sheol and the Greek hades are fundamentally synonymous (24).

Again Morey is ignorant (or dishonest) when he says of those who consider the account of the Rich Man and Lazarus to be a parable therefore dismiss it as “not teaching anything” (30). I have done quite a bit of work on that parable, and I have never encountered any one who thought it had no meaning. Another intra-traditionalist quarrel arises concerning figurative language. Morey ridicules those who take the fire of hell literally (compare Walvoord, *Four Views*).

Faulty logic

When Morey states that sheol/hades (apparently here referring to the same reality) cannot be the grave because it means unseen and graves can be seen (74, 75, 83), it is he, not the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who is confused, being unable to distinguish between “the grave” (the generic realm of death) and a grave (individual burial spot).

Morey gives a quite attractive picture of humans as creatures bearing the divine image (37). Then he descends to the ridiculous by saying that conditionalism is impossible because it maintains that “man’s death can be reduced to the death of brute beasts” (38).

Morey objects (rightly) to death necessarily being non-existence. “... the concept of death as a state of non-existence is patently absurd” (40; he likes the word absurd). Since mainstream evangelicals who advocate an unconscious intermediate state (“soul sleep”) do not maintain that the person is non-existent, the argument is a red herring.

... annihilation is an idea that makes hell less than what it was intended to be by having it mean nothingness. In

fact, if hell is nothingness, what mental images can be called upon to conceive of it? There is no mental image for “nothing” (31).

As his fellow traditionalist, Robert Peterson, observes, “The quality of Morey’s argumentation is not always commensurate with its quantity” (*Presbyterion*, Reviews of Nixon, Gerstner, and Morey, 59).

Ad hominem attacks on the intelligence of opponents

“The failure to avoid reductionistic and simplistic definitions is based on the hidden assumption that once the meaning of a word is discovered in a single passage, the same meaning must prevail in every other occurrence of the word” (44). He accuses conditionalists of doing this with the words for soul (*nephesh*, *psyche*). No sources are cited. (Compare, for example, Barton, *Heaven, Hell, and Hades* 24 – 29.)

“Annihilationists are guilty of circular reasoning when they arbitrarily assume that if an author describes the fate of the wicked as being cast into the fire, this automatically means the wicked pass into nonexistence. Instead of arriving at the text with preconceived definitions, we should try to see how an author uses his terms and if he explains himself in another passage. Even though an author may use such words as ‘destroy’ or ‘perish,’ this does not mean that he taught annihilationism. The author may simply be using biblical phrases and words that do not exegetically in Scripture imply annihilationism” (57). The procedure just set forth in sentences two through four is essential — as any scholarly annihilationist would agree. Morey does not provide any examples of this circularity in conditionalist literature. (Is he really describing circular reasoning? His syntax is sometimes awkward.)

Was it true in 1984 that “the doctrines of soul sleep and annihilationism are primarily propagated among evangelicals by cultic groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and denominations

such as the Seventh-Day Adventist Church” (202, etc.)? Jehovah’s Witnesses? Evangelical? Fudge’s *The Fire that Consumes* is a covert Seventh-Day Adventist work, “a brief summary of Froom’s massive work”? John Wenham accepted conditionalism due to the influence of Froom and of liberalism? This noted scholar’s research was “grossly inadequate” (203; the same expression appears twice)? InterVarsity Press was conceding to “the liberal *zeitgeist*” by publishing Wenham’s *The Goodness of God* (203)? The answers are demonstrably negative.

This book is problematic at numerous additional points. Enough! Many very scholarly books are poor books. Alexander Hislop’s *The Two Babylons* is an example. So is Morey’s *Death and the Afterlife*. It is full of scholarship handled in a prejudicial, illogical, and sometimes dishonest manner. For a higher level advocacy of eternal conscious punishing, consult Robert Peterson.

Addendum

I had nearly completed this review article when I went to the internet to see if I could find out what Morey is doing now, a quarter century after the publication of *Death and the Afterlife*. *Wikipedia* was most helpful. Morey is still at it. He started his own church, his own publishing company, and his own apologetics organization. He gloats that his book, *Is Eastern Orthodoxy Christian?* offends Orthodox clergy. Particularly telling is a review of Morey’s *The Moon-god Allah in the Archeology of the Middle East* by a Muslim cleric, Shabbir Ali. Here is his summary:

I found the author using a number of deceptive tactics to prove his foregone conclusion that Allah is not the God of the Bible but rather the Moon-god of pre-Islamic Arabia whose worship is now perpetuated within Islam. I will classify his deceptive methods under five broad headings for simplicity of discussion.

- Misquoting authorities.
- Concealing evidence.

- Filling pages with irrelevant information thus giving a false impression of establishing something.
- Using logical fallacies to establish conclusions, and
- Drawing conclusions for which no evidence was even suggested, much less established.

Morey claims to have read every book in the Library of Congress on Islam (7000+). Source: <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/f12.html>. This link also includes a critique by Waleed Nassar, a Christian and leader of a mission to Muslims, of Morey's *Islamic Invasion*. I also found a very helpful review of *Death and the Afterlife* by Edward Fudge (just google robert morey edward fudge). When I reached the end, I discovered that it had been published originally in *Henceforth ...* 14:1 (1985)!

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BOOK REVIEWS

► A great sadness

The Shack: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity, by William P. Young. Newbury Park, Cal., 2007. 264 p.

How this semi-autobiographical explicitly evangelical account became a bestseller is an interesting story of its own. The author originally intended it only for his children. Three friends interested in publishing it formed their own publishing company, and it became a number one bestseller.

This is a fascinating fictional account of a man named Mackenzie Allen Phillips — Mack. The book deals basically with Mack's Great Sadness. Four years before, his young daughter Missy had been kidnapped and killed. He was dominated day and night by her death. "He ate, worked, loved, dreamed and played in this garment of heaviness, weighed down as if he were wearing a leaden bathrobe — trudging daily through the murky despondency that sucked the color out of everything" (19). Then one nasty winter day he found a note in his mailbox from "Papa," his wife's favorite name for God. It invited him to meet at the shack, the place where Missy's bloody clothes had been discovered. The rest of the book is the story of Mack's encounter with God at the shack.

Cast of characters: a large African-American woman called Papa and Elousia (the Father in orthodox terminology), a small Asian woman, Sarayu (the Holy Spirit), and a middle-aged Middle Easterner called Jesus. Sophia (Divine Wisdom), "a tall, beautiful, olive-skinned woman with chiseled Hispanic features," makes a brief appearance. The view of God is relatively orthodox. In response to Mack's puzzlement, Papa tells him, "To begin with, that you can't grasp the wonder of my nature is a good thing. Who wants to worship a God who can be fully comprehended, eh? Not much mystery in that. ... We are not three gods, and we are not talking about one god with three

attitudes, like a man who is a husband, father, and worker. I am one God and I am three persons, and each of the three is fully and entirely the one” (99 – 100). The threeness is important because it makes relationship possible. But is the description of the situation at the shack sacrilegious? Here is one scene.

When Mack entered the cabin he saw that Jesus and Sarayu were already there and seated around the table. Papa was busy as usual bringing platters of wonderful-smelling dishes. ... “You don’t really have to eat, do you.” He asked, as he began to ladle something into this bowl. ... “We don’t have to do anything,” Papa answered rather strongly. ... “You need to eat, so what better excuse to be together.” “Anyway, we all like to cook,” added Jesus, “and I enjoy food — a lot.” Everyone laughed and then busily resumed passing platters and helping themselves. As Mack ate, he listened to the banter between the three. They talked and laughed like old friends who knew each other intimately. As he thought about it, it was assuredly more true for his hosts than anyone inside or outside Creation. He was envious of the carefree but respectful conversation and wondered what it would take to share that with Nan and maybe even with some friends (201 – 2).

McKenzie hears a crash from the kitchen and looks in.

Mack was shocked at the scene in front of him. It appeared that Jesus had dropped a large bowl of some sort of batter or sauce on the floor, and it was everywhere. It must have landed close to Papa because the lower portion of her skirt and bare feet were covered in the gooey mess. All three were laughing so hard that Mac didn’t think they were breathing. Sarayu said something about humans being clumsy and all three started roaring again (104).

Jesus gets a basin and washes Papa’s feet, which she appreciates. Mack observes, “So this was God in relationship? It was

beautiful and so appealing. He knew that it didn't matter whose fault it was. ... obviously, what was truly important here is the love they have for one another and the fullness it brought them" (104).

Sacrilegious? I do not think so. It is respectful — an interesting twist to make certain points. Scripture recounts a number of theophanies, although probably not as colorful as this one. This book is not systematic theology, and it should not be expected to line up point by point exactly with Charles Hodge or Carl Henry. Nevertheless some points are problematic, and in deliberations about the book, they should be kept in mind.

Max' experience is an individualistic mystical one. No hint of community appears.

The outlook appears to be universalistic, and it is definitely Arminian. Christ paid the penalty for everyone. All one has to do is to accept it. Papa tells Mack, "Honey, you asked me what Jesus accomplished on the cross; so now listen to me carefully: through his death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled to the world." Mack asks, "The whole world? You mean those who believe in you, right?" "The whole world, Mack. All that I am telling you is that reconciliation is a two-way street, and I've done my part totally, completely, finally. It is not the nature of love to force a relationship but it is the nature of love to open the way" (195). Note, however, that Papa took the initiative in helping Mack deal with The Great Sadness.

The Arminian element again:

Mack, because I work incredible good out of unspeakable tragedies doesn't mean I orchestrate the tragedies. Don't ever assume that my using something means I caused it or that I need it to accomplish my purposes. That will only lead you to false notions about me. Grace doesn't depend on suffering to exist, but where there is suffering you will find grace in many facets and colors. (188)

Does an antinomian element pop up toward the end of the book? Mack mentioned several things that Scripture suggests

Christians should do — “doing good things and avoiding evil, being kind to the poor, reading your Bible, praying, and going to church.” Sarayu replies,

The Bible doesn't teach you to follow rules. It is a picture of Jesus. While words may tell you what God is like and even what he may want from you, you cannot do any of it on your own. Life and living is in him and in no other. My goodness, you didn't think you could live the righteousness of God on your own, did you? (200).

“Are you saying I don't have to follow the rules?” Mack had now completely stopped eating and was concentrating on the conversation. “Yes. In Jesus you are not under any law. All things are lawful” (Sarayu, 205). Is this outlook parallel to Paul's statement that “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10)?

On the whole, *The Shack* is a good read, making a number of good points. God is concerned about The Great Sadness, which most of us experience at some point in life. Our assertion of independence from God is sinful and self-defeating. God should be enjoyed, as well as served. As Mack was reminded a number of times, however, God is transcendent and worthy to be worshiped. Papa says, “I'm not like you Mack. ... I am God. I am who I am. And unlike you, my wings cannot be clipped” (96).

* * * * *

► **The Shack +/-**

Finding God in the Shack: Seeking Truth in a Story of Evil and Redemption, by Roger E. Olson. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2009. 160 p., 10.98+ pb.

Olson, a professor of theology at Baylor University, presents an appreciative but critical view of *The Shack*. He starts with the basic question: How can an all good all-powerful God allow

such evil? It is the question which Young seeks to answer in his book. Olson says, “Young is theologically trained, but he hides most of that well. The reader is not assaulted by heavy theological jargon but sweetly seduced into some profound theological thinking” (10). Olson, like Young, had a terrible father, so he has considerable sympathy for McKenzie and for the issues that *The Shack* raises. He says, “*The Shack* communicates great truth about God that are both biblical and resonate with experience. But I disagree with some elements of the story” (17).

Olson agrees with Young about the Trinity, but he protests when *The Shack* puts the Trinity on the cross, rather than just Jesus (39). The two share a freewill theodicy. Contrary to Reformed theology,

The Shack says that God guides creation and nothing can happen without his permission. But ... though God is in charge, he doesn't control everything. Humans have free will. Evil is completely our doing and not part of God's plan. Again, *The Shack* affirms that God can and always does bring good out of evil. (50).

Olson thinks *The Shack* goes too far in its picture of God limiting himself (“close to Deism” 47) and that it goes off the deep end in suggesting that occasionally God submits himself to human beings (47). This book thus stands halfway between Reformed theology and process theology. “God is in charge but not in control” (53).

“What is Wrong with the World and Us?” (Chapter 5). The world is in a sorry shape. The basic problem is that human beings assert their independence from God. They seek power over one another. But God is at work, bringing good from evil. “Does God Forgive Everyone Unconditionally?” (ch. 6). Young says yes, Olson no. “What Does God Want with Us?” (ch. 7). He wants a close relationship. How do you get it? By exercising faith — by God taking the initiative with redeeming grace (Ol-

son), or by uninfluenced human initiative (Young). (But again note that Papa took the initiative with Mack.) “Will Child Abusers Be in Heaven?” (ch. 8). Yes, but Young may make it too easy.

“Where Is the Church in Experiencing God?” (ch. 10). A host of people in this country consider themselves Christians without ever going to church. Unlike *The Shack*, Olson insists that “there is no such thing as a Christianity that is purely individualistic.” Christian fellowship is essential. “Is Trusting God All Sweetness and Light?” (ch. 11). That’s the way the story ends for Mack, but it is not the norm. The Great Sadness should be lifted by trusting God, but in this life that does not usually result in euphoria.

And finally, “How Should We Respond to the Shack?” *The Shack* can be a force for good if it is read in perspective. It is a good thought-starter, but be sure to compare it to Scripture.

P.S.: For a much more critical review, see Tim Challies, “‘*The Shack*’ by William P. Young.” Challies.com. 1st ed. January 15, 2008; 2nd ed. May 20, 2008. Challies is a young (thirty-ish?) webpage designer in Toronto with considerable theological interest and knowledge. The review is followed by 73 comments by a variety of people over several months’ time.

► **For shame**

A Woman Rides the Beast: the Roman Catholic Church and the Last Days, by David Hunt. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994. 550 p.; \$5.00 and up.

According to Hunt, of all the empires of history, only the Roman will be revived. “In Revelation 13, the fourth beast clearly depicts both the revived Roman Empire and antichrist, whom all that dwell on the earth shall worship” (42). This beastly antichrist will fulfill both meanings of the word anti: he will be against Christ and will attempt to replace him.

If Antichrist pretends to be Christ and is worshiped by the world (Revelation 13:8), then his followers are of course 'Christians.' Not Communism but Christianity will take over the world, and not real Christianity but an Antichrist counterfeit thereof. ... An Antichrist "Christianity" must be created which embraces all religions and which all religions will embrace. (45)

Revelation 17 pictures a woman — the Roman Catholic Church — leading the beast. Hunt's intent is to prove in detail that the control of the future Antichrist will be held by the Roman Catholic Church. It has its roots in Babylon. It sits on seven hills. She is the mother of harlots. She is the persecutor of the saints. She has an abysmal history. The papacy is a disgrace. The church is sexually immoral. The pope put both Mussolini and Hitler in power (218 – 227) and is responsible for the Holocaust (279 – 294) and for the slaughter of the Serbs in Yugoslavia (297 – 307). The Catholic Church sets itself above the Bible. "Salvation is through obeying the church, not on the basis of the finished work of Christ upon the cross" (351). Billy Graham and James Dobson are among evangelicals who have sold out the Reformation by relating favorably to the papal Antichrist and the false church.

Hunt's work is clearly written and interesting. The combination of a historicist identification of the beast and the woman in an overall setting of futurist prophetic interpretation is striking. For shame! So much effort in such an abysmal cause. In his catalog of Catholic evils, Hunt misrepresents history and the doctrines of the church. The pope, for example, did not put Hitler in power, and Catholic doctrine does not teach that people are saved by the church, not by Christ. One does not have to be Catholic, or even sympathetic to Catholic distinctives, to recognize that this book is an example of religious prejudice.

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