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EDITORIAL BOARD

Journal of Philippine Adventist Studies (JPAS) is a peer-reviewed journal published annually by the Adventist University of the Philippines. It welcomes scholarly articles on biblical studies, theology, church history, applied ministry, and related fields. JPAS seeks to promote Adventist scholarship that is both academically sound and relevant to the mission and life of the church in the Philippines and beyond.

EDITORIAL

Dan Namanya
Adventist University of the Philippines

We are pleased to share the first issue of the *Journal of Philippine Adventist Studies (JPAS)*. This inaugural issue marks an essential step for Adventist scholarship in the Philippines. The journal aims to offer a place where biblical study, theology, and ministry meet in thoughtful and practical conversation. Our goal is simple: to encourage reflection on Scripture and practice, deepen our understanding of faith, and support the church's mission through careful study and writing.

This issue features seven articles that look at key themes in biblical interpretation, theology, and pastoral life. Each writer brings both scholarship and a genuine concern for ministry. Together, their work reflects a growing community of Filipino Adventist thinkers who seek to connect faith with understanding and belief with daily life.

Glenn Jade V. Mariano opens the issue with "The Continuity of God's People: The New Covenant Church in Hebrews 8:7–13." He explores how the new covenant completes the old, showing the steady and faithful relationship between God and His people. Glen Mar Manalo De Lana follows with "Identity, Meaning, and Implications of the Phrase 'I Will Be a Lying Spirit' in 1 Kings 22:22–23." His study takes on one of Scripture's most difficult texts, inviting readers to think about God's will, human choice, and the truthfulness of prophecy.

In "Concepts of Healing in the Old Testament, Its Relevance to the 21st Century," Andresito P. Fernando explores the Old Testament view of healing as a balance of body, mind, and spirit. He shows how this view still speaks to our ministry and health practices today. Cerelito Cadao's "Child Dedication: Its History, Theology, and Practice for Adventists" takes a closer look at this meaningful Adventist tradition, tracing its roots and explaining how it strengthens the bond between parents, the church, and God.

Jazel Diaz and Dan Namanya contribute "Baptized Too Soon? Early Baptism and Church Retention among Philippine Seventh-day Adventists." They examine the practice of early baptism and its impact on long-term commitment to the church. Their article encourages deeper pastoral care, stronger mentoring, and a more intentional process of discipleship for young believers.

In "Church Discipline in a Filipino Context: Biblical, Cultural, and Practical Insights," Francis Gayoba studies how discipline can reflect both truth and grace. His

article shows how biblical principles can work within Filipino culture to bring restoration rather than division.

The issue closes with Danny Endriga's "The Mission of the Paraclete in the Gospel of John: Implications for Pastoral Counseling in the Philippine Context." His article reflects on the Holy Spirit's role as counselor and comforter, reminding us that the Spirit still guides and strengthens those who serve in ministry.

Together, these seven studies form a strong beginning for *JPAS*. They show that thoughtful scholarship can serve both the church and the academy, joining careful study with sincere faith. As we release this first issue, we thank all the authors, reviewers, and supporters who helped make it possible. We hope this journal will continue to grow as a space for reflection, dialogue, and collaboration among Adventist scholars and ministers in the Philippines and beyond.

The Editorial Team

The Continuity of God's People: The New Covenant Church in Hebrews 8:7–13

Glenn Jade V. Mariano

Abstract

The Christian church is the New Covenant Church. The new covenant promise (Jer 31:31–34) that is fully quoted in Heb 8:8b–12 (and partially quoted in 10:16–17) is the conceptual framework for understanding the nature, message, mission, and authority of the Christian church. Jesus, both High Priest and King, fulfills that promise and establishes the new covenant church. His church is the continuation of God's spiritual people from the OT times. However, there is no consensus among biblical scholars and theologians regarding the relationship between Israel and the church. Hence, this paper examines the relationship, continuity, and discontinuity between the church and "the houses of Israel and Judah" in Heb 8:8–10. It provides some pieces of biblical evidence in Hebrews that prove the continuity between Israel and the church in a Christological sense.

Keywords: Israel, church, first/old covenant, new covenant, continuity

Introduction

To understand the relationship between Israel and the church is to understand the relationship between the first/old covenant and the new covenant and vice versa. They are interlocking topics. Yet, they postulate some crucial issues regarding the continuity and/or the discontinuity between Israel and the church, as well as between the first and the new covenants: Israel is for the first covenant, and the church is for the new covenant. Further, others argue that both covenants are only for Israel, while the church only receives blessings from the latter. Also, biblical scholars and theologians disagree on whether all or some terms, conditions, and stipulations under the first covenant, including the Decalogue (as a package of all Mosaic laws), are already obsolete and no longer binding for the church under the new covenant.[1]

[1] See the discussion in, e.g., Carl B. Hoch, Jr., "The New Covenant: Its Problems, Certainties and Some Proposals," *Reformation and Revival* 6.3 (1997): 55–76; Michael Duane Morrison, "Rhetorical Function of the Covenant Motif in the Argument of Hebrews" (PhD

Further, various views regarding the relationship between Israel and the church are prevalent. Dispensationalists, who believe in the distinct time periods of salvation history,[2] argue that the church is different from Israel as the chosen nation of God due to their rejection of Jesus.[3] The new covenant theologians concur that Israel was not the church in the OT; instead, the church replaced Israel as the true church and the people of God, inaugurated at Pentecost.[4] However, some believe that Israel's existence continues as God's nation, awaiting total transformation, with the fulfillment of the new covenant promise still in the future. Consequently, the church is not fulfilling any part of the Jeremaic new covenant promise,[5] but it is still in the future.[6] Covenantalists, who adhere to Covenant Theology (CT),[7] maintain that the church is the continuation of Israel as the true people of God[8], or the remnant of Israel.[9] Progressive covenantalists[10] view the relationship between Israel and the church in a typological sense, centered on Christ.[11] In sum, there are five main views about the relationship between Israel and the church:

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diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2006), 167; Michael J. Vlach, "New Covenant Theology Compared with Covenantalism," *TMSJ* 18.1 (2007): 204–5.

[2] C. I. Scofield explains, "a dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to his obedience to some specific revelation of God." C. I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Study Bible*, (afterwards *NSB*), (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 3. Hence, "dispensationalism denotes the dividing of salvation-history into distinct time periods." Norman R. Gulley, "Dispensational Biblical Interpretation: Its Past and Present Hermeneutical Systems," *JATS* 4.1 (1993): 67.

[3] See e.g., Charles C. Ryrie, "Update on Dispensationalism," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, ed. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1994), 20, 132, 154.

[4] Vlach, "New Covenant Theology Compared," 212, 217–18.

[5] "Jeremaic new covenant" is an expression regarding the new covenant promise that is mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah.

[6] See John R. Master, "New Covenant Considerations," online article, September 2009, pp. 1–15, http://www.bbc.edu/council/documents/John_Master_New_Covenant_Considerations.pdf.

[7] The Covenant Theology (CT) is "the Reformed position that sees history through the lens of covenant, specifically the unfolding/expansion of God's covenant of grace. CT holds that salvation is best understood through continuity, thus the New Covenant is essentially an expansion of the Abrahamic Covenant, and the church is an expansion/continuation of Israel." Jesse Johnson, "Covenantalism vs. Dispensationalism (part 1): Covenantalism," *Cripplegate* (2022): para. 4, https://thecripplegate.com /covenantalism-vs-dispensationalism-part-1-covenantalism/.

[8] See the discussion in Vlach, "New Covenant Theology Compared," 204–5; Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MA: New Covenant Media, 2002).

[9] See the Adventist concept of continuity between Israel and the church (remnant) in e.g., Richard M. Davidson, "Israel and the Church: Continuity and Discontinuity–1," in *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), 2:375–400; Richard M. Davidson, "Israel and the Church: Continuity and Discontinuity–2," in *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013), 2:400–27.

[10] Or Progressive covenantalism "argues that the Bible presents a *plurality* of covenants that *progressively* reveal God's *one* redemptive plan for his *one* people which reaches its fulfillment in Christ and the new covenant." Stephen Wellum, "What Is Progressive Covenantalism? Part 1," *A Primer on Progressive Covenantalism* (2023): para. 1 under "Distinctive Points," https://christoverall.com/article/longform/what-is-progressive-covenantalism-part-1/#:~:text=Progressive%20covenantalism%20argues%20that%20the,Eph (emphasis in original).

[11] See Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism: Charting a Course Between Dispensational and Covenantal Theologies* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016); Brent Evan Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern: A Theological Critique of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017).

(a) the traditional covenantal view (i.e., CT), (b) the traditional dispensational view (i.e., Dispensationalism), (c) the progressive dispensational view,[12] (d) the progressive covenantal view, and (e) the new covenant theology.[13]

Due to various views and ongoing debate on the relationship between Israel and the church as well as on the old and the new covenants, this paper sees a further investigation on the new covenant promise in Heb 8:7–13 into three topics: (a) the nature of the new covenant church[14] and its relation to the houses of Israel and Judah; (b) understanding the first/new covenant into two dimensions (moral and ritual); and (c) the new covenant promise as the basis of understanding the message, mission, and authority of the church.[15] Consequently, the study on the new covenant is divided into three separate series of studies.

This paper focuses on the first series of studies that deals with the nature of the new covenant church and its relationship to Israel, based on the immediate and broader contexts of Heb 8:7–13. It proposes that the new covenant church is the natural continuation of the true people of God (like Israel) from the OT times, based on the Christological and spiritual sense. Such a concept is built up from the analyses of (a) the historical-literary setting of Heb 8:7–13; (b) the fulfillment of the new covenant promise; and (c) the relationship between the house of Israel/Judah and the church.

Setting of Hebrews

In the Book of Hebrews, the word *ekklēsia*, "assembly," "congregation," "church,"[16] only occurs twice (2:12 and 12:23). The word *ekklēsia* is directly and indirectly applied to the original recipients of the Book of Hebrews, where the new covenant promise is applied to them. The two occurrences of the word *ekklēsia* are expounded under the nature of the church. Meanwhile, this paper briefly discusses the historical and literary contexts of Hebrews to see the setting of the new covenant promise.

[12] It is a theological view that "emphasizes continuity throughout the Bible's history while recognizing distinct dispensations and viewing the Church as an extension of Israel." Factbook, "Progressive Dispensationalism," *Logos Bible Study* 45.1 (2025).

[13] See Chad O. Brand, ed., *Perspectives on Israel and the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015). The new covenant theology can be classified with the supersessionism (replacement theology). Regarding Israel and the Church, "the NT church supersedes, fulfills, or replaces the nation Israel as the people of God." Vlach, "New Covenant Theology Compared," 217.

[14] The expression "new covenant church" refers to the Christian church in general that was established by Jesus Christ and His disciples under the new covenant. It is not referring to a particular church of some religious organizations, for example, the "New Covenant Church" in Humble, Texas, USA (see https://www.newcc.org/#/) or in North Carolina, USA (see https://www.newcovenantchurch.com/).

[15] This paper sees that various views between Israel and the church base their understanding on the Jeremaic new covenant. Yet, it sees a certain gap in knowledge regarding the new covenant promise as the core message and basis of understanding the nature, message, mission, and authority of the church in the context of Hebrews.

[16] Danker, Concise BDAG, s.v. "*ekklēsia*"; Mounce, *Mounce Greek Dictionary*, s.v. "*ekklēsia*."

Recipients of Hebrews

The author of Hebrews (likely Paul)[17] sent his epistolary sermon to his intended readers, likely a mixed group of Jewish (majority) and Gentile Christian readers in Rome, before AD 70. These Christians were referred to as "Hebrews." The author mentions that they belonged to *ho laōs tou Theou*, "the people of God" (i.e., Israel, 4:9),[18] for they were His *oikos*, "house" (3:6). He exhorted and called them as *adelphoi* (*hagioi*), "(holy) brethren."[19] These designations indicate that the readers were a local congregation that belonged to the whole people of God.

Purpose of Hebrews

The Book of Hebrews has a twofold purpose: to warn against apostasy and to exhort the readers. The situation of the readers' faith was seriously challenged and undermined[20] by "the contempt and hostility of the surrounding society (12:2–4; 13:3, 13, 18–19)."[21] The author warned "them against the danger of total apostasy (6:4–8, 10:26–31, 12:15–17)."[22]

Kim Papaioannou clarifies the notion of apostasy because the early Christians (Jews or God-fearers) were also practicing the OT teachings and considered themselves a sect of Judaism. He asserts that "the real danger *was not apostasy to Judaism, but a return to the temple and its sacrificial ritual*. . . . Such a danger is not difficult to understand."[23] He also elucidates, "The sanctuary/temple had been a focus of Israel's faith for 1,500 years, ever since Moses first built the tabernacle in the wilderness."[24] "Yet, for the writer of Hebrews, any attraction to the earthly temple services now appeared inappropriate."[25] The main point is that the faith of Christian readers in Christ and His work of salvation was waning, leading them to return to the first covenant ritual system (see Heb 8–10).

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[17] This paper assumes Pauline authorship of Hebrews with the idea of having an amanuensis. See the various views and discussions on the authorship of Hebrews in, e.g., David L. Allen, Lukan Authorship of Hebrews, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology 8 (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010); David Alan Black, *The Authorship of Hebrews: The Case for Paul* (Gonzalez, FL: Energion, 2013); Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 637.

[18] Erhard H. Gallos contends, "The best reasons seem to support a mixed ethnic background. . . . The author calls the ancestors—'fathers' rather than 'our fathers.' The epistle never mentions Jews or Christians, the Temple or circumcision, never makes negative references to Jews or Gentiles, and refrains from divisive references to Jews or Gentiles. The important group to belong to is the λαός of God. If credibility is attributed to R. Brown, then all types of Christianity were a mixture of Jewish Christians and their Gentile converts." Erhard H. Gallos, "Κατάπαυσίς and Σαββατισμός in Hebrews 4" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2011), 62–3.

[19] Heb 3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22.

[20] See Heb 12:1–2, 5:11–14, 6:12, 10:25.

[21] "The Epistle to the Hebrews," under "Audience," in Jon L. Dybdahl, ed., *Andrews Study Bible* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 1599.

[22] Dybdahl, *Andrews Study Bible*, 1599; cf. Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews*, NICBC (Peabody, MA: Henrickson, 1990), 11.

[23] Papaioannou, "Sanctuary, Priesthood, Sacrifice," 23. Emphasis mine.

[24] Papaioannou, "Sanctuary, Priesthood, Sacrifice," 23. Emphasis mine.

[25] Papaioannou, "Sanctuary, Priesthood, Sacrifice," 23. Emphasis mine.

Next, the danger that the Hebrew Christians faced was returning to the first covenant cultic system with the Levitical priesthood. The first covenant system came to its fulfillment when Jesus inaugurated the real covenant, the new covenant, and its new system through His sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension/enthronement.[26] The concept of the cessation of the first covenant is perceived in the typological fulfillment. The author exhorted readers to remain faithful in Christ and His new covenant, warning them against reverting to the first covenant sanctuary system.

Based on the historical setting, Heb 8–10, particularly 8:7–13, can be vividly understood. The issue lies between the first and the new covenants, with the first covenant being typologically fulfilled when Jesus inaugurated the new covenant. The purpose of Hebrews is connected to the concept of the new covenant relationship with Jesus, specifically a Christ-centered covenantal relationship. This covenantal relationship is realized between God/Christ and His church. The fulfillment of the new covenant promise is particularly applied to the Christian readers of the Hebrews. The new covenant is established with the intangible heavenly sanctuary and God, allowing those with faith and hope in Jesus to see without barriers. Jesus, the perfect sacrifice and high priest, is the goal of the ritual system and the link between the two covenants and between Israel and the church.

Structure of Hebrews 8:7–13

Hebrews 8:1–10:18 is the central section of the Book of Hebrews, the covenant section. Hebrews 8 is the introduction to the covenant section. Verses 1 and 2, along with the explanatory section (vv. 3–6), serve as the hinge of the book and the basis for introducing the new covenant promise. Verses 7–13 introduce the fulfillment of the new covenant promise by quoting Jer 31:31–34 and conclude the obsoleteness of the first covenant. In Heb 10:15–18, the new covenant promise is quoted again (Jer 31:33–34), wrapping the exposition of the covenant theology in Heb 9:1–10:14 in its ritual dimension—the superiority of the new covenant ritual system over the obsolete first covenant ritual system for the forgiveness and perfection of the worshipers.[27]

Literary device. Hebrews 8:7–13 consists of the prologue (vv. 7–8a), OT quotation (vv. 8b–12), and epilogue (v. 13). The unit can be outlined by an *a-b-a'* structure as shown

[26] See Felix H. Cortez, "'The Anchor of the Soul That Enters Within the Veil': The Ascension of the 'Son' in the Letter to the Hebrews" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2008), 324–26.

[27] See further discussion on the structure of Heb 8:1–10:18 in Glenn Jade V. Mariano, "The Newness of the New Covenant: An Exegetical-Intertextual Analysis of Hebrews 8:7–13" (PhD diss., Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 2019), 99–123. Some of the discussions on the new covenant promise and the relationship between Israel and the church are excerpts from my PhD dissertation with modifications.

by the linguistic and thematic connections between *a* and *a'*, which are uniquely different from *b*:[28]

a—Prologue (vv. 7–8a): The faultiness of the first covenant and the people

b—OT quotation (Jer 31:31–34; vv. 8b–12): The new covenant promise

a'—Epilogue (v. 13): The obsoleteness and disappearance of the first covenant

The prologue and epilogue of the OT quotation (Jer 31:31–34) in Heb 8:7–13 serve as literary devices to help understand the OT citation. They are markers or indicators of the author's primary purpose[29] and how he understands and applies the text to the context of his sermon. The prologue and the epilogue of specific OT quotations in the epistolary sermon are typical of the author of Hebrews.[30] The author respects, quotes, and explains many OT scriptures in his sermon.[31] When he introduces and states his proposition of a particular theme, he cites, quotes, or even alludes to an OT passage as his scriptural basis; he discusses it accordingly (often with other OT passage/s); then, he repeats that quotation (once or more) for emphasis with further comments as he closes his exposition for or before its hortatory application.[32] Hence, the prologue and the epilogue indicate the author's understanding of his use of the OT quotation in the context of his theological discussion.

Old Testament quotation. The OT quotation consists of prose and poetry sections. The first half of the new covenant prophecy (vv. 8b–10a/Jer 31:31–33a) is a prose section, while the second half (vv. 10b–12/Jer 31:33b–34) is a poetic one.[33] The prose section indicates the future establishment of the new covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah to fulfill the first covenant (Jer 31:31–32; vv. 8b–9). The poetic section states the new covenant promise with (a) the premise/reiteration to establish it with the house of Israel and (b) its fourfold descriptive promise. In sum, Heb 8:7–13 can be outlined by the following:

A. *Prologue*: The faultiness of the first covenant and the people (vv. 7–8a)
B. *Prophetic proclamation of the new covenant (Prose)*: The future establishment of

[28] The linguistic connections between the prologue and epilogue are the following:

1. *hē prōtē* (*a*) = *tēn prōtēn* (*a'*)
2. deuteras (*a*) = *kainēn* (*a'*)
3. *legei* (*a*) = *legein* (*a'*)

[29] Fred A. Malone, "A Critical Evaluation of the Use of Jeremiah 31:31–34 in the Letter to the Hebrews" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 177.

[30] See the discussion on the quotations and their list in Hebrews in Martin Karrer, "The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Septuagint," in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 53:337–38.

[31] "The author had a deep knowledge of and respect for the Old Testament. No other New Testament document quotes the Old Testament as many times as Hebrews does." Dybdahl, *Andrews Study Bible*, 1599.

[32] See some OT quotations (e.g., Pss 2:7; 8:5–7; 22:22; 45:6–7; 95:7–11; 101:1, 4, 26–28; Isa 8:17–18) in Heb 1:1–14; 2:1–18; 3:1–4:13; and 4:14–7:28, recognizing their prologue and epilogue.

[33] See William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26–52*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1989), 197.

the new covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah to fulfill the first covenant (vv. 8b–9)

C.
D. *Nature of the new covenant (Poetry)*: Divine statements describing the fourfold new covenant promise (theocentric, vv. 10–12)[34]
   1. Inward placement of God's laws—mind and heart (v. 10a, b)
   2. Mutual relationship: Divine–human lordship and ownership (v. 10c, d)
   3. Knowledge about the Lord (v. 11)
   4. Divine mercy and forgiveness (v. 12)
E. *Epilogue*: The obsoleteness and disappearance of the first covenant (v. 13)

In summary, the literary context and structure of Heb 8:7–13 reveal that the new covenant promise centers on Jesus's Davidic kingship and high priesthood. Jesus inaugurates the new covenant through His death, resurrection, and enthronement in heaven as King and High Priest. Because of His superiority, the new covenant, which is legislated on better promises (v. 6), is also superior to the first covenant. The prologue and epilogue of the OT quotation highlight the faultiness of the first covenant, rendering it obsolete and on the verge of disappearing (v. 13). Consequently, the new covenant is established in response to the shortcomings of the first covenant and Israel. It is described with the fourfold promise to God's people with a long-lasting effect—the basis of understanding the nature, authority, and mission of the church. The fulfillment of the new covenant promise and its establishment with the houses of Israel and Judah are the focus of the following sections.

Fulfilling the New Covenant Promise

Richard M. Davidson categorizes the OT predictive prophecy into three categories: "(1) Messianic prophecies; (2) oracles against the foreign nations; (3) and covenant-centered kingdom promises/prophecies given to Israel as a geopolitical entity, including end-time prophecies involving the final worldwide showdown between Israel and her enemies."[35] The prophecy of Jer 31:31–34 directly falls on the third category—a covenant-centered kingdom promise. This category addresses the future of Israel in relation to its divine mission and covenant promises. Analyzing the passage in this category helps in the understanding of the fulfillment of the prophecy, particularly of the new covenant to be (re)established with the houses of Israel and Judah (depending on their loyalty).

[34] See also Zane C. Hodges, *Hebrews*, BKC (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 800.

[35] Richard M. Davidson, "Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 1:185.

Three Stages of Eschatological Fulfillment

Concerning the eschatological fulfillment of the OT kingdom (Israel) prophecies, which classical prophecy uses to identify the covenant recipients with their divine mission, the three stages must also be kept in mind. These three stages of OT eschatological fulfillment are the following:

> (1) *inaugurated eschatology:* the basic fulfillment of the OT eschatological hopes, climaxing in the earthly life and work of Jesus, the Representative Israelite, at His first advent; (2) *appropriated eschatology:* the derived spiritual aspects of fulfillment by the church (made up both of Jews and of Gentiles), the body of Christ in the time between Christ's first and second coming but lacking the national aspects of fulfillment; and (3) *consummated eschatology:* the aspect of final universal fulfillment by the eschatological Israel (all the redeemed, including both Jews and Gentiles) in connection with ushering in the age to come at the second advent of Christ and beyond, which includes not only the spiritual but also the literal dimensions of fulfillment.[36]

In sum, the prophecy of the Jeremaic new covenant should be approached and interpreted as a classical prophecy. As a classical prophecy, it belongs to the category of a covenant-centered kingdom promise. Its eschatological fulfillment has three stages: (a) the first advent of Jesus (inaugurated eschatology), (b) His church life and mission between His first and second advents (appropriated eschatology), and (c) His second advent and beyond (consummated eschatology).

Fulfillment of the New Covenant

The new covenant promise begins with the temporal pronouncement: "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the Lord" (Jer 31:31a).[37] This imminent temporal pronouncement on the fulfillment of the new covenant is an eschatological formula, which is also used in Jer 31:27–30, 38–40.[38] This proclamation is a clear and direct statement that captures the

[36] Davidson, "Interpreting Old Testament Prophecy," 1:200. Emphasis mine.

[37] Heb. *hinnê yāmim bāʾim nᵉʾum-yhwh*; Gr. *idou hēmerai erchontai, phēsin kyrios* (LXX). The temporal expression *hinnē* (+ *bāʾim*) denotes a future imminent action. See Gary Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 149–50.

[38] George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 971. The English phrase "days are coming" appears (15x) in Jer 7:32; 9:25; 16:14; 19:6; 23:5, 7; 30:3; 31:27, 31, 38; 33:14; 48:12; 49:2; 51:47, 52. In the LXX, the Greek phrase *idou hēmerai erchontai*, "behold, days are coming" appears 20 times and mostly in Jeremiah (7:32; 9:24; 16:14; 19:6; 23:5, 7; 28:52; 30:18; 31:12; 37:3; 38:27, 31, 38—13x). Outside of Jeremiah, the phrase appears in 1 Sam 2:31; 2 Kgs 20:17; Amos 4:2; 8:11; 9:13; Zech 14:1; Isa 39:6. The context of each occurrence indicates the nature of prophecy with a future fulfillment. Yet not all occurrences refer to the same future fulfillment, namely, not all are eschatological ones.

listeners' attention.[39] It urgently refers to the appointed time of the prophetic fulfillment of the new covenant—to the many days to come, which relates to the certainty of the new covenant's fulfillment.[40] It is chiastically parallel to the expression *meta tas hēmeras ekeinas*, "after those days" (v. 10), which refers back to the coming days (v. 8) that followed the establishment of the new covenant.[41] It is implied that the fulfillment of *hēmerai erchontai* refers to the time when the author and his readers had lived, namely, in *eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn*, "these last days" (Heb 1:2).[42] The "Old Testament prophetic revelation has now received its end-time climax through God's Son."[43]

Moreover, the temporal proclamation connects to the future completion and effectiveness of the new covenant. The first conjunction ***kai*** "expresses a temporal designation . . . [and] means 'when.'"[44] It connects to the verb ***syntelesō***, "I will carry out, fulfill, accomplish." The verb ***syntelesō*** means "to carry out or bring into being someth[ing] that has been promised or expected."[45] It denotes the completion or perfection (from *teleioō*, "to perfect"),[46] existence, establishment (ESV), and/or ratification[47] of the covenant. The Lord Himself (*legei kyrios*) will carry out His promised *diathēkē kainē*, "new covenant," into existence after those coming days and then inaugurate the eschatological days in conjunction with its completion—the New Age (eschatological period).

By His initiative and intervention in salvation history, God fulfilled His promise by establishing the new covenant at the appointed time, when Jesus first inaugurated it with His disciples during the Last Supper.[48] The pursuit of the place of the new covenant and its fulfillment are closely connected. This new covenant, then, is eschatological, a final covenant. The existence of the new covenant signifies the termination of the first covenant's existence and function. The first covenant is temporary. Hence, it is provisional, while the new covenant is permanent and eternal (cf. 13:20).

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[39] The word *idou* is a prompter "of attention, which serve also to emphasize the following statement—'look, listen, pay attention, come now, then.'" Louw and Nida, *GELNT*, s.v. "*idou*; *ide*; *age*."

[40] Ἔρχονται [*erchontai*] is an indicative (present, middle, 3rd, plur.) that represents the mood of reality. The use of present tense emphasizes "the certainty of the future event." Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 533.

[41] The word *hēmera*, "day" here refers to "an extended period, *time*." Bauer, BDAG, s.v. "*hēmera*." Emphasis in original.

[42] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 206. The connections (direct and indirect) between Jer 31:31 and Heb 1:1–2 deal with the following: first, the author of Hebrews quotes the OT passage in the context of the *eschaton—ep' eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn*, "in these last days" (Heb 1:2)—indicating that, upon the expiration of the coming days, God will fulfill His promises including the new covenant promise (Jer 31:31). Second, there are linguistic connections between the two texts (Jer 31:1 and Heb 1:1): both books relatively mention *tois patrasin* (ancestors of Israel and Judah) and *hēmerai erchontai*/*ep' eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn*. Third, God is the main author of both revelations or prophecies (Jeremiah and Hebrews): He uses the prophets to speak for His people during the OT times while He speaks through His Son (Jesus) in the last days.

[43] Hodges, *Hebrews*, 781. Emphasis in original.

[44] Robert Hanna, *A Grammatical Aid to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 407.

[45] BDAG, s.v. "*syntelesō*."

[46] Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, Sacra Pagina 13 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2007), 168.

[47] See Mounce, *MCED*, s.v. "*syntelesō*."

[48] The Synoptic Gospels and a Pauline epistle (1 Corinthians) narrate that Jesus instituted the new covenant during the Last Supper with His apostles in connection to His death (see Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).

In brief, the new covenant promise in Hebrews is already fulfilled in Jesus and the life of His church (appropriated eschatology). Yet, the full realization of the new covenant will be fulfilled at His second coming and beyond (cf. 9:28). Citing the new covenant promise with its elaboration in connection to the forgiveness in Jesus in Heb 9–10, with the interpretative affirmation in the epilogue that the first covenant is already obsolete (8:13), is proof of fulfillment. Therefore, the promise of the new covenant is already fulfilled even at the inauguration of the church of Christ.

Relationship Between the New Covenant Church and the Houses of Israel and Judah

Notable evidence in the Book of Hebrews reveals that the inaugurated new covenant church of Jesus represents the households of Israel and Judah. The promise of the new covenant to be established with Israel/Judah is fulfilled in the church. In other words, the readers of Hebrews, as part of the whole Christian church, are related to the house of Israel/Judah. This section explores the relationship between Israel and the church in a Christological and spiritual context, highlighting the true nature of God's people from the time of the first covenant to the new covenant.

Readers of Hebrews: New Covenant Church

The author of Hebrews incorporates himself with the intended readers (i.e., the home church) by using the first-person plural pronouns "we," "us," and "ours."[49] He is not distancing himself as well as detaching them from the households of Israel/Judah, but the other way around. He applies the OT promises in Jesus to them as the recipients.

In Heb 8:1, for instance, the author states, "We have such a High Priest." This High Priest (Jesus) is a minister in the heavenly sanctuary (v. 2). "He is also mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises" (v. 6, NKJV). Then, the author explains that the first covenant is faulty. He quotes Jer 31:31–34 to prove that the first covenant is defective and becomes obsolete (vv. 7–8a, 13) and that there is a need for a second/new covenant with better promises. Because Jesus is already seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly sanctuary as their High Priest, Minister, and Mediator of the better covenant, the promise of the new covenant is already fulfilled in them. Jesus, from

[49] For example, the personal pronoun "we" alone in Hebrews occur 52 times (NKJV): Heb 2:1 (3x), 3 (2x), 5, 8, 9; 3:6 (2x), 14 (2x), 19; 4:3, 13, 14, 15 (2x), 16; 5:11; 6:3, 9 (2x), 11, 18, 19; 7:19; 8:1 (2x); 9:5; 10:10, 26 (2x), 30, 39; 11:3; 12:1, 9 (3x), 10, 25 (2x), 28 (2x); 13:6, 10, 14 (2x), 18 (2x). The "us" occur 29 times and the "ours" 15 times. There are some instances that not all "we" passages are referring to both sides of the author and the readers but a distinction between the two parties. See e.g.,

the tribe of Judah, serves as the connector between the home church and the houses of Israel and Judah, to whom the new covenant promise is to be fulfilled (vv. 8, 10). Hence, they are the New Covenant Church.

Relationship of the House of Israel to the Church

The word *ekklēsia* in Heb 2:12 is quoted from Ps 22:22. The OT quotation states that the Lord's name be proclaimed to David's *adelphoi*, "brethren." The word *adelphoi* is parallel to *ekklēsia*. David's brethren/assembly are the descendants of Jacob—Israelites (v. 23). The passage is applied to Jesus[50] and those who are being sanctified through His death as His brethren (vv. 9–11, 17). Consequently, the author of Hebrews calls and exhorts the readers as his "(holy) brethren" in Jesus (3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22). He also tells them that they have come "to the general assembly and church [*ekklēsia*] of the firstborn who are registered in heaven" (12:23, NKJV). These brethren belong to Jesus's church.

Further, the new covenant is promised to be established with "the house" of Israel (Jer 31:31, 33; Heb 8:8, 10).[51] The house of Israel and the church are related. Based on the discussion on the recipients of Hebrews above, they belonged to "the people of God" (i.e., Israel, 4:9) for they were His "house" (3:6; 10:21). Under the first covenant, Moses was the faithful leader of the house of Israel, but God was the founder of all things (3:2–5). Under the new covenant, Christ is even more faithful to God's house than Moses. His house is pointing to Christian readers—"whose house we are" (v. 6). Christ is even the "High Priest over the house of God" (10:21). The same God founds the houses of the two covenants. Hence, the church is not merely the continuation of the house of Israel; rather, the church itself is the house of Israel with a new leader, Jesus.

Continuity and Discontinuity Among God's People

This paper argues that the church is a spiritual group of people, the natural continuation of the faithful Israel from the OT times, based on the spiritual dimension. As far as God is concerned, the covenant relationship between Him and His people is a spiritual matter. The concept of continuity and discontinuity is applied to the recipients of the new covenant, namely, biblical-historical Israel (comprising both faithful and unfaithful individuals),

[50] David Peterson, *Hebrews*, NBC: 21st Century Edition (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1327.

[51] The two houses represent the two kingdoms of Israelite nation: Northern kingdom (10 tribes of Israel—defeated by Assyrians and some were exiled in 722 BC) and southern kingdom (tribes of Judah and Benjamin—exiled in Babylon from 605 to 539 BC).

depending on their spiritual response (faith) that affects their soteriological and missiological calling.[52]

First, the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles represent the covenant people of God in both covenants. Jesus, a true Israelite (Hos 11:1, Matt 2:13–15) and the son of David from the tribe of Judah,[53] chose the twelve apostles/disciples who were biologically Jews (see Matt 10:1–4, John 6:70). The apostles represented the twelve tribes of Israel.[54] They were the twelve pillars of the new covenant people of God (cf. Gal 2:9). During the Passover meal, Jesus instituted the new covenant in His blood with the Twelve (Luke 22:14–22, 1 Cor 11:25). The apostles were the first recipients of the new covenant promise, fulfilling the completeness of the houses of Israel and Judah (cf. Rev 7:4–8; 21:12, 14). The Jewish multitude, who were led and influenced by the Jewish theocratic leaders, finally rejected and crucified Jesus as their Messiah,[55] the initiator of the new covenant; hence, they failed to receive and actualize it. Yet, the twelve apostles (except for Judas Iscariot) actualized the new covenant promise and were multiplied into ten: 120 disciples were added before Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:4–26). During Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, more Jewish disciples (even some of those who shouted to crucify Jesus) were converted and added to them until the inclusion of the believing Gentiles (see chaps. 2–11).

Second, if the basis of the true and faithful Israel being the covenant people of God is genealogy (the lineage of Abraham)—though it matters in the missiological/messianic aspect—then Christ and Paul would not argue with their fellow Jews regarding the true descendants of Abraham and the true children of God (John 8:37–47, Rom 9:6–9). A covenant between God and humanity posits a spiritual relationship, for God is Spirit (John 4:24). From the Creation to the re-creation of the world (Rev 20–22), the covenant between the Creator and His creatures is beyond any physical, social, political, or ethnic covenant. Any covenant between God and human beings (e.g., the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Davidic covenants) is a spiritual covenant. The promise that God would make Abraham and Israel His nation, to be a blessing to other nations, denotes a spiritual aspect that affects all dimensions of life.[56] Becoming an ethnic, literal, or physical nation due to genealogy is a secondary result of the covenantal relationship with God. Hence, it seems wrong to say that

[52] See further discussion on the ecclesiological interpretation of Israel's remnant in Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 98–123; cf. Davidson, "Israel and the Church–1," 375–400. The missiological and the soteriological aspects are intertwined. The missiological aspect of God's calling deals primarily with the church/Israel as a whole community or nation. The soteriological aspect deals primarily with the individual persons in the church/Israel and the other people groups. Yet, the individual members of God's people have/should have the sense of both soteriological and missiological calling.

[53] See Matt 1:1–17, Luke 2:4–5, 3:23–38, Heb 7:14, Rev 5:5.

[54] See LaRondelle, *Israel of God in Prophecy*, 101; Matt 19:28, Luke 22:29–30, cf. Jas 1:1. "James addresses his letter to *the twelve tribes in the Dispersion*. 'The twelve tribes' no longer existed physically, but the title had become a way of describing the regathered and spiritually renewed Israel that God would create in 'the last days' (see Ezek. 47:13; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 7:4–8; 21:12)." Douglas J. Moo, *James: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 60. Emphasis in original.

[55] See, e.g., Matt 26:57–68; 27:1–2, 12, 15, 20, 24, 39–44; Acts 3:12–15; 4:8–11, 25b–26; 7:51–53.

[56] See, e.g., Gen 12:1–3, 15:1–21, 17:1–21, Exod 19:3–6.

Israel is the literal/ethnic Israel, and the church is spiritual Israel; two different communities exist side by side.

Third, in contrast to the view that the new covenant promise is only for ethnic Israel or the church, the new covenant is applied to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, by blood—spiritual Israel/Jews.[57] The addressees of Hebrews consist of Jewish and Gentile believers representing "the house" of Christ/God (Heb 3:6; 10:21) and "the people of God" (4:9). In connection to the faithful people of God in Heb 11, likewise, the author of Hebrews exhorts the Christian readers to run the race that is set before them by looking to Jesus (12:1–2). Such a notion implies that they are spiritual people of God who should run the race of faith like the former faithful runners. The NT is unequivocal that there were Jews by blood whom Jesus did not consider as Abraham's descendants but as of the devil.[58] Regardless of the nationality, the genuine and natural children of Abraham/God (children of the promise) are those who believe in Him (Gal 3:26–29; Nathaniel, a true Israelite, "in whom there is no deceit," John 1:47, NASB).[59] They are converted believers of Jesus—"But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God" (Rom 2:28, NASB).

Based on the analogy in Rom 11, there is only one olive tree of Israel: the biblical-historical Israel. The unfaithful branches of Israel are broken off (v. 20), the faithful ones who believe in Jesus remain, and the branches of the wild olive tree (Gentiles) who believe in Jesus are grafted into the olive tree to replace the unfaithful Israel (vv. 19–24). Because there is only one olive tree with two kinds of branches, "all Israel [i.e., all who believe in Jesus—inclusive] will be saved" (v. 26a, NKJV). All those who will be saved constitute the faithful remnant of Israel and the believing Gentiles. In other words, ethnicity will only remain if spirituality remains intact. Spirituality is the bottom line that transcends the genealogical aspect, even in the God-human relationship; true faith in God/Jesus makes someone a natural and faithful descendant of Israel.

Fourth, the concept of continuity and discontinuity is applied among God's chosen people. The concept of discontinuity is only applied to the people of Israel in connection to the rejection of Christ and His gospel, hardening of the heart, disobedience, spiritual blindness, and unbelief, whereas the idea of substitution is only applied to the unbelieving Israel and the believing Gentiles (see Rom 9–11; cf. Heb 3–4). The unfaithful Israelites are broken off from the olive tree and substituted by the believing Gentiles, who "are legally

[57] See Rom 2:28–29, 10:12, Col 3:11, Gal 3:28–29. See the discussion on Israel as the covenant people in Ikechukwu Michael Oluikpe and Kim Papaioannou, "Israel as the People of the Covenant and Dispensationalism: A Biblical Evaluation," *JATS* 28, no. 2 (2017): 50–77.

[58] John 8:37–47; cf. Rom 9:6–9; Eph 2:2; 3:5; 5:6.

[59] See the discussion on the true Israel in Papaioannou, *Israel, Covenant, and Law*, 20–42. See a different interpretation of "all Israel" in Rom 11:26 in, e.g., William Chi-Chau Fung, "Israel's Salvation: The Meaning of 'All Israel' in Romans 11:26" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004).

incorporated in the olive tree, the covenant people of God, and share in the root of Abraham."[60] Likely, the cutting off of the unbelieving ones in Israel denotes God's rejection of them (11:20) but salvation for the Gentiles (v. 11); yet, the door of grace is still open for them individually (vv. 23–26). His rejection of Israel is not total in an inclusive sense, for He only rejects the unbelieving ones (majority) and not the faithful remnant (few). The statement "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew" (v. 2, NKJV) is referring to the faithful remnant of Israel who are elected according to grace (vv. 3–6). Thus, the idea of continuity in Israel as His chosen people rests on their faithfulness and acceptance of Jesus, while discontinuity rests on unbelief. The believing Gentiles who are grafted into the olive tree are joined with the faithful remnant of Israel. In short, they become "fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household" (Eph 2:19, NET); together, they constitute the new covenant church.

Finally, the inclusion concept of God's people (Israelites and non-Israelites) is evident even in the OT times.[61] During the establishment of the covenant, Abraham's servants were also included in his household (Gen 17:12–13, 26–27). Some non-Israelites who marched out of Egypt with the Israelites were part of the people of God in the wilderness, such as the "mixed multitude" (Exod 12:38). Rahab, Ruth, and others became part of the Israelite community. Like Abraham's household with foreigners (Gen 17:23–27), those who worshiped and served the God of Israel were considered His people.[62] Yet, those people who broke His covenant and remained unfaithful to Him were cut off from His community (e.g., people who worshiped the golden calf; Exod 32:25–28). In Heb 3:16–18 and 4:2, 6, those rebellious people did not enter God's rest (*sabbatismos*) because of their unbelief and disobedience.

Under the new covenant, the inclusiveness of God's people highlights the restoration of humanity, which has fallen, into one nation. There was only one family of God from the beginning—Adam and Eve (Gen 1–2). After the flood, there was only one family (Noah's family) from which all nations came (Gen 7–10). Hence, the new covenant aims to restore the fallen members of God's family in Christ Jesus. As a general prophecy, a dual fulfillment of the new covenant to God's people applies to the Christian church. The post-exilic Jews (in general) do not realize the first fulfillment due to their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. The second one is the faithful remnant of the post-exilic Israel/Jews (Jesus's disciples) and, later, some believing Gentiles. The church (Jews and Gentiles) is chosen as His holy nation to preach the gospel to all nations (Matt 28:19–20, 1 Pet 2:9). The complete fulfillment of such prophecy will be realized by all nations (i.e., "all Israel,"

[60] LaRondelle, *Israel of God in Prophecy*, 126.

[61] See Davidson, "Israel and the Church–1," 379–80.

[62] See e.g., 1 Kgs 8:41–43, 2 Chron 6:32–33, Isa 56:1–7.

Rom 11:26) who will join Christ until He comes again. Thus, the faithful church is "the natural continuation of Israel, a true Israel,"[63] from the OT times.

Conclusion

The analysis of the new covenant promise in Heb 8:7–13, particularly its new covenant making with the houses of Israel and Judah (OT) in connection to the NT church, points out that both groups of God's people are related and in continuity based on God's plan (ecclesiological and missiological). The new covenant elucidates the nature of the church as the continuing spiritual people of God from the OT to the NT times, emphasizing their spirituality that leads to belief and following Jesus Christ. The church is the New Covenant church, the recipients and actualizers of the New Covenant promise to the house of Israel/Judah. Hence, the relationship between Israel and the church posits continuity in election, promise, and faithfulness with the covenant of God through the promised seed, Jesus Christ—the bridge between Israel and the church, as well as between the first and the new covenants. The concept of discontinuity among God's people refers to the unfaithfulness and rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. The true members of Israel/the church (Jews or Gentiles) are the faithful believers of Christ.

In Christ, there is no racial discrimination: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28, NASB). Filipinos and other people groups who believe in Jesus equally belong to the family of God—Abraham's descendants (v. 29). They are all brothers and sisters in Christ, continuing God's chosen nation/family from the OT. True faith in God/Jesus makes someone a natural and faithful descendant of Israel. The Filipino concept of (extended) family and adoption is closely related to the faithful Jews (branches of the olive tree) and the believing Gentiles (branches of a wild olive tree), who are adopted (grafted) into God's family (the olive tree). Hence, the church's mission to make others Jesus's followers and be part of His new covenant church can be easily understood and achieved.

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[63] Papaioannou, *Israel, Covenant, and Law*, 22. See "Continuity Between the Synagogue and the Church" in Peter Damian Akpunonu, *The Vine, Israel and the Church*, SBL 51 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2004), 190–94.

Identity, Meaning, and Implications of the Phrase "I Will Be a Lying Spirit" in 1 Kings 22:22–23

Glen Mar Manalo De Lana

Abstract

The vision of the heavenly council in 1 Kgs 22:19–23, where a "lying spirit" deceives Ahab's prophets, raises a perennial question about the relationship between divine sovereignty and deception. Some interpreters contend that God Himself employs lies to accomplish His purposes, while others argue that the spirit is a divine agent or personification of deception. This article argues that the lying spirit is best identified with Satan acting under divine permission, a conclusion that safeguards divine integrity and clarifies the narrative's theological thrust. Using the historical-biblical method, this study examines the lexical and narrative dimensions of the words *šeqer*, "falsehood" and *rûaḥ*, "spirit" situating the vision within the broader literary and theological context of the Deuteronomistic History and the biblical tradition of divine council scenes (e.g., Job 1–2; Zech 3). The analysis demonstrates that the text depicts God as a sovereign judge who permits deception as a form of judgment against the wicked, but who does not originate falsehood. By distinguishing between divine permission and divine causation, the article contends that 1 Kgs 22 presents God as a God of integrity who cannot lie (Num 23:19; Titus 1:2) yet remains sovereign over all spiritual powers, including Satan. This reading contributes to ongoing debates about divine veracity, prophetic authority, and theodicy within the Old Testament.

Keywords: Lying spirit, divine sovereignty, deception, Satan, prophetic authority

Introduction

The vision of the heavenly court in 1 Kgs 22:19–23 has long provoked debate about the relationship between divine sovereignty and deception. In the narrative, a "spirit" volunteers to become a "lying spirit" in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, thereby ensuring the king's downfall. The text confronts readers with difficult questions: Does God employ deception to accomplish divine purposes? Is God the source of lies, or does He merely permit deception through an intermediary? The episode is theologically troubling because

it seems to compromise the integrity of God's character, who is elsewhere described as the one who "does not lie" (Num 23:19; Titus 1:2).

Scholars have offered three major views regarding the identity of the "lying spirit." Some argue that the spirit should be identified with Satan or a satanic agent. R. A. Torrey contends that Satan is "the father of lies," and thus the natural identification of the spirit in 1 Kgs 22:22–23.[1] Matthew Henry likewise connects the episode with satanic deception.[2] Others hold that the spirit represents permitted lying, where God authorizes deception as a form of judgment without directly lying to Himself. Daniel I. Block emphasizes the ambiguity of Israelite prophecy and argues that God allows such deception to reveal the consequences of rejecting truth.[3] Esther Hamori likewise interprets the *rûaḥ* in this passage as a divine messenger whose specific purpose is to deceive.[4] A third view maintains that the spirit is in fact God Himself or God's Spirit. John Gray associates the spirit with the Holy Spirit, insisting that divine deception was a legitimate instrument in the ancient theology of kingship.[5] Walter Brueggemann similarly reads the text as evidence that God is directly involved in deception to bring about Ahab's demise.[6]

Each of these views raises further theological problems. To identify the spirit with God appears to implicate Him as the author of lies, which conflicts with the biblical testimony of His truthfulness. To regard the spirit merely as a messenger of permitted deception raises questions about divine justice and integrity. And while identifying the figure with Satan seems to solve the problem of divine deception, critics note that this assumes a developed demonology earlier than the exilic period.[7] The interpretive dilemma, then, centers on whether the text presents God as a deceiver, as a permissive judge, or as a sovereign over a satanic agent.

This study argues that the lying spirit is best identified with Satan acting under divine permission. Such a reading accounts for the lexical and narrative features of the passage while preserving the theological integrity of God. The key terms *šeqer,* "falsehood" and *rûaḥ*, "spirit" consistently appear in contexts of false prophecy and personal agency, suggesting the figure is not an abstraction but an adversarial being. Moreover, the heavenly court imagery in 1 Kgs 22 parallels other biblical scenes in which Satan appears among the divine council as an accuser or deceiver (cf. Job 1–2, Zech 3:1–

[1] R. A. Torrey, *Difficulties in the Bible: Alleged Errors and Contradictions* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 39–40.

[2] Matthew Henry, ed., *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 2:703.

[3] Daniel I. Block, "What Has Delphi to Do with Samaria? Ambiguity and Delusion in Israelite Prophecy," in *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society*, ed. Piotr Bienkowski, Christopher Mee, and Elizabeth Slater, LHOTS 426 (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 189–91.

[4] Esther Hamori, "The Spirit of Falsehood," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 72 (2010): 15–30.

[5] John Gray, *I and II Kings: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1971), 452–53.

[6] Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Kings* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 280–81.

[7] Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings*, AB 10 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 492.

2). In these cases, Satan acts within boundaries set by God but never as God's equal or as a co-author of divine action.

By identifying the lying spirit with Satan, the narrative emphasizes both divine sovereignty and human culpability. Ahab rejects the truth of Micaiah's prophecy and is therefore handed over to the deception he desires. In this way, divine justice is executed without compromising God's integrity. God remains the God of truth, who does not lie, while permitting Satan's activity as an instrument of judgment upon those who spurn His word.

The article proceeds as follows. First, the historical and literary context of 1 Kgs 22:22–23 is examined to situate the passage within the theology of the Deuteronomistic History (the narrative framework of Deuteronomy through Kings, understood here as a theological corpus shaped by covenant and prophetic themes rather than a single exilic authorial work). Second, the lexical features of the phrase *rûaḥ šeqer*, "lying spirit" are analyzed in light of parallel usage in the Hebrew Bible. Third, intertextual connections with other divine council scenes are explored, particularly in Job and Zechariah. Finally, the theological implications are discussed in relation to divine sovereignty, prophetic truth, and the role of Satan.

Review of Related Literature

The episode of the lying spirit in 1 Kgs 22:22–23 has generated significant debate among biblical scholars and theologians. The question of the spirit's identity and role has been approached in three primary ways: (a) the spirit as Satan, (b) the spirit as a divine agent of permitted deception, and (c) the spirit as God Himself or God's Spirit. Each interpretation seeks to reconcile the tension between divine sovereignty and falsehood, though each has distinctive theological implications.

The Spirit as Satan

One line of interpretation identifies the lying spirit with Satan. R. A. Torrey argues that Satan is the "father of lies" (cf. John 8:44) and thus the natural identification for the deceiving spirit in Micaiah's vision.[8] Matthew Henry similarly regards the lying spirit as satanic, noting that Satan has always been active in corrupting prophecy and leading God's people astray.[9] This perspective preserves divine integrity by assigning deception to an

[8] Torrey, *Difficulties in the Bible*, 39–40.

[9] Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2:703.

adversarial being rather than to God Himself. Yet critics of this view sometimes object that it presupposes a developed demonology earlier than the ninth century BCE, raising questions about its historical plausibility.'

The Spirit as Permitted Deception

A second approach interprets the lying spirit as a divine messenger whose deception is permitted by God but not directly authored by Him. Daniel I. Block argues that the ambiguity and delusion present in Israelite prophecy serve to test the people's fidelity to Yahweh.[10] According to Block, the lying spirit demonstrates how God allows deception to expose the consequences of rejecting truth. Esther Hamori likewise understands the *rûaḥ* in 1 Kgs 22 as a divinely commissioned agent whose explicit task is to deceive.[11] This view maintains that the spirit functions within God's sovereign plan, though without implicating God as the direct source of falsehood. Still, some contend that the distinction between divine permission and divine causation remains theologically unsatisfying, since the spirit acts only after Yahweh's invitation for volunteers (v. 20).

The Spirit as God Himself

A third interpretation identifies the lying spirit with God Himself or His Spirit. John Gray associates the spirit with the Holy Spirit, suggesting that divine deception was a legitimate instrument within the theology of kingship in ancient Israel.[12] Walter Brueggemann similarly reads the passage as evidence that God directly employs deception to accomplish His purposes, emphasizing Yahweh's absolute sovereignty over all events, even false prophecy.[13] This view underscores the uncompromising nature of divine rule but raises profound theological difficulties. If God Himself deceives, His integrity as the God of truth (Num 23:19; Titus 1:2) seems compromised, a conclusion at odds with the larger biblical witness.

[10] Block, "What Has Delphi to Do," 189–91.

[11] Hamori, "The Spirit of Falsehood," 15–30.

[12] Gray, *I and II Kings*, 452–53.

[13] Brueggemann, *First and Second Kings*, 280–81.

Assessment

While each of these approaches contributes important insights, none fully resolves the theological tension. Identifying the spirit with God compromises divine truthfulness. Viewing the spirit as a mere agent of permitted deception risks blurring the line between divine permission and causation. Identifying the spirit with Satan best preserves divine integrity, but has been criticized on historical grounds.

Contribution of the Present Study

The present article argues that the lying spirit is best understood as Satan acting under divine permission. This interpretation accounts for the lexical evidence of *šeqer* and *rûaḥ*, the intertextual parallels with Job and Zechariah, and the theological necessity of preserving God's integrity. It situates the narrative within the broader framework of the Deuteronomistic History, which consistently presents Yahweh as the sovereign judge who permits, but does not produce, deception as judgment on the rebellious. In this way, the study builds upon but also moves beyond prior scholarship by clarifying how divine sovereignty and truth cohere in the episode of the lying spirit.

Historical-Literary Context of 1 Kings 22:22–23

Authorship and Composition of Kings

The books of Kings form part of the Deuteronomistic History, a theological interpretation of Israel's monarchy from Solomon to the Babylonian exile. The Deuteronomistic historian, generally thought to be a single compiler or a school of editors working during the exilic period, portrays Israel's downfall as the direct result of covenant infidelity.[14] The literary unity of Kings and its use of prophetic and royal sources underscore its theological purpose: Yahweh's faithfulness stands in stark contrast to Israel's repeated disobedience.[15]

[14] Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1987), 2–3.

[15] Marvin A. Sweeney, *I and II Kings: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 5–6.

Date, Setting, and Purpose

The Book of 1 Kings was most likely finalized during the exile, around the mid-sixth century BCE, though it draws upon earlier traditions.[16] The specific setting of 1 Kgs 22:22–23 reflects the waning days of Ahab's reign in the ninth century BCE. His alliance with Jehoshaphat of Judah and the proposed campaign at Ramoth-gilead form the narrative backdrop. This episode underscores the dangers of rejecting the truth spoken by Yahweh's prophets and trusting instead in false assurances. The purpose of the narrative is to illustrate how covenant violation inevitably leads to divine judgment. Micaiah's vision of the heavenly court provides a theological explanation for Ahab's downfall: God remains sovereign, yet human rejection of truth leaves one vulnerable to deception.

Genre and Structure

The pericope belongs to a prophetic confrontation narrative. Such narratives frequently employ vision reports and heavenly court imagery to validate the true prophet's authority.[17] Micaiah's vision fits this pattern: summoned reluctantly, he at first echoes the consensus of the royal prophets, but then discloses a vision of the divine council that explains why the king's advisors are deceived. This vision parallels other biblical scenes in which Yahweh presides as judge over heavenly beings who serve as agents of divine will (cf. Job 1–2, Isa 6:1–8, Zech 3:1–2).

The Setting of 1 Kings 22:22–23

In its immediate context, the narrative depicts Ahab's consultation with prophets before battle. Four hundred prophets unanimously assure him of victory, yet Jehoshaphat insists on hearing from a prophet of Yahweh. Micaiah ben Imlah is summoned and ultimately reveals that a "lying spirit" has enticed Ahab's prophets, ensuring the king's defeat. The irony lies in Ahab's rejection of the true word of Yahweh in favor of deception. The vision demonstrates that while deception operates under God's sovereignty, God Himself is not the originator of falsehood. Instead, deception functions as an instrument of judgment upon those who persistently resist divine truth.

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[16] Sweeney, *I and II Kings*, 7; cf. Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 21–22.

[17] Block, "What Has Delphi to Do," 189–91.

Theological Significance of Context

Within the broader Deuteronomistic framework, the Micaiah episode reinforces two theological themes. First, it highlights the primacy of prophetic truth: Yahweh's word, mediated through His prophet, is reliable, while alternative voices prove deceptive. Second, it affirms divine justice: Ahab's consistent rejection of true prophecy results in his exposure to deception. The lying spirit thus serves not to compromise divine integrity but to enact judgment upon covenantal unfaithfulness.

Lexical and Exegetical Analysis of the Lying Spirit

Structure of 1 Kings 22:13–28

The larger unit, 1 Kgs 22:13–28, presents the confrontation between Micaiah and the royal prophets. The narrative is marked by irony: Micaiah initially mimics the majority, only to reveal the accurate word of Yahweh in the form of a heavenly vision. The structural climax occurs in vv. 19–23, where the prophet discloses the divine council scene. This vision explains the unanimity of the royal prophets—they are animated by a "lying spirit" sent to entice Ahab. The term *rûaḥ šeqer* thus becomes the exegetical key to the passage.

The Term *Šeqer*

The Hebrew noun *šeqer* generally denotes "falsehood," "deception," or "lie." It appears frequently in prophetic literature to describe the activity of false prophets. Jeremiah denounces those who prophesy "the deceit (*šeqer*) of their own hearts" (Jer 14:14, 23:26). Ezekiel likewise condemns prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations (Ezek 13:6–9). The semantic range of *šeqer* emphasizes intentional deception, particularly in contexts of prophecy and speech.[18] Thus, when paired with *rûaḥ* in 1 Kgs 22:22, the phrase signals not merely an abstract quality of falsehood but an active agent of deception aligned with the phenomenon of false prophecy.

[18] James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect upon Israelite Religion*, BZAW 124 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 84.

The Term *Rûaḥ*

The term *rûaḥ* is among the most versatile in the Hebrew Bible, denoting "wind," "breath," "spirit," or "disposition." In many cases, it refers to the Spirit of Yahweh empowering prophets or leaders (e.g., Judg 6:34, 1 Sam 16:13). Yet, *rûaḥ* may also describe harmful or adversarial spirits. In 1 Sam 16:14, an "evil spirit from Yahweh" torments Saul. In Judg 9:23, God sends a "spirit of ill will" between Abimelech and the leaders of Shechem. These passages show that *rûaḥ* can denote a personal, malevolent force permitted to act under divine sovereignty.[19] The "lying spirit" of 1 Kgs 22:22 fits this category: a spirit whose function is hostile, yet whose agency is limited by God's permission.

The Phrase *Rûaḥ Šeqer*

The combination of *rûaḥ* with *šeqer* occurs explicitly in Zech 13:2, where Yahweh promises to remove "the spirit of impurity" and "the spirit of falsehood" from the land. Here, *rûaḥ šeqer* clearly designates a malignant spiritual force associated with false prophecy.[20] The parallel suggests that in 1 Kgs 22:22, the "lying spirit" is not a mere metaphor for human disposition but an identifiable spiritual entity that influences prophetic speech. This parallelism supports the view that the lying spirit is best understood as a satanic agent.

Intertextual Parallels

The heavenly council imagery in 1 Kgs 22:19–23 resonates with other texts that feature adversarial figures acting under divine oversight. In Job 1–2, "the Satan" appears among the heavenly beings, seeking permission to test Job. In Zech 3:1–2, Satan stands as accuser against Joshua the high priest, restrained by Yahweh's rebuke. These parallels clarify the role of the lying spirit: a hostile spiritual being who operates within the boundaries set by divine sovereignty. The "lying spirit" in Micaiah's vision functions in much the same way, deceiving Ahab's prophets as part of divine judgment.

The lexical evidence shows that *šeqer* consistently denotes false prophetic speech, while *rûaḥ* can designate both divine empowerment and malevolent spiritual agency. Together, the phrase *rûaḥ šeqer* points to a personal, hostile spirit that deceives under divine permission. The intertextual parallels with Job and Zechariah further confirm that

[19] Stephen L. Harris and Robert L. Platzner, *The Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 90.

[20] Hamori, "Spirit of Falsehood," 15–30.

the lying spirit of 1 Kgs 22:22–23 should be understood as a satanic agent, not as God Himself nor merely as a metaphor for human disposition.

Theological Implications of the Lying Spirit

Divine Integrity

The central theological question raised by 1 Kgs 22:22–23 is whether God can be implicated in deception. Some interpreters, such as John Gray, argue that the spirit in the passage is none other than the Spirit of God, concluding that God Himself engages in deception as a means of judgment.[21] Walter Brueggemann likewise claims that God plays an active role in deluding Ahab, suggesting that divine sovereignty extends even to acts of deceit.[22] Such views, however, stand in tension with biblical affirmations of God's truthfulness: Yahweh "is not a man, that he should lie" (Num 23:19), and the New Testament declares that God "never lies" (Titus 1:2). To preserve divine integrity, the lying spirit must be understood not as God Himself but as a hostile agent permitted to act within divine boundaries.

Satan's Role

Identifying the lying spirit with Satan accounts for the narrative's logic and its theological coherence. As Torrey noted, Satan is "the father of lies," making him the natural candidate for the deceiver in this text.[23] Matthew Henry similarly interprets the lying spirit as satanic, emphasizing that God allows Satan to carry out deception as part of divine judgment.[24] This reading harmonizes with intertextual parallels in Job 1–2 and Zech 3, where Satan appears before Yahweh's council, requesting permission to test or accuse. In each case, Satan acts as an adversarial agent, constrained by divine authority. So too in 1 Kgs 22, the lying spirit's deception is not autonomous but operates within the limits established by Yahweh's sovereignty.

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[21] Gray, *I and II Kings*, 452–53.

[22] Brueggemann, *First and Second Kings*, 280–81.

[23] Torrey, *Difficulties in the Bible*, 39–40.

[24] Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2:703.

Prophetic Authority and Truth

The narrative highlights the contrast between false and true prophecy. The four hundred prophets, empowered by the lying spirit, unanimously affirm Ahab's success, while Micaiah alone declares the truth of impending defeat. The vision thereby validates Micaiah as the true prophet of Yahweh. Daniel Block emphasizes that prophetic ambiguity and delusion were features of Israelite prophecy, serving as tests of fidelity.[25] By disclosing the heavenly council scene, Micaiah exposes the deceptive nature of the other prophets' message and reinforces the principle that the word of Yahweh, even when politically inconvenient, is the only reliable guide.

Judgment on the Rebellious

Theologically, the lying spirit functions as an instrument of divine judgment. Ahab's rejection of Yahweh's word and his consistent hostility toward true prophecy (cf. 1 Kgs 18:17–18; 21:20) result in his being handed over to deception. Esther Hamori observes that the *rûaḥ* in 1 Kgs 22 serves the specific purpose of deceiving.[26] Yet this deception is not arbitrary: it falls upon one who has persistently resisted the truth. In this way, divine justice operates through the agency of the lying spirit. Ahab receives the very message he desires, but that message becomes the means of his downfall.

The theological implications of 1 Kgs 22:22–23 may be summarized as follows. God remains sovereign over the heavenly court but does not author lies; His integrity as the God of truth is preserved. Satan, identified as the lying spirit, operates under divine permission, carrying out deception as a form of judgment. Prophetic authority is thereby vindicated, for Micaiah's vision reveals the contrast between false and true prophecy. Ultimately, the narrative demonstrates that divine justice allows those who reject truth to be ensnared by falsehood, a theme consistent with the broader biblical witness.

Summary

The vision of the heavenly court in 1 Kgs 22:19–23 presents one of the most difficult theological problems in the Deuteronomistic History. At the heart of the text lies the question of whether God Himself engages in deception or whether deception is mediated through another agent. The interpretation of the lying spirit has divided scholars into three

[25] Block, "What Has Delphi to Do," 189–91.

[26] Hamori, "Spirit of Falsehood," 15–30.

camps: those who see the spirit as Satan, those who understand it as permitted deception, and those who identify it directly with God's Spirit. Each view attempts to address the tension between divine sovereignty and falsehood, but not all adequately preserve the integrity of God's character.

The lexical analysis of *šeqer* and *rûaḥ* demonstrates that the phrase *rûaḥ šeqer* refers not to an abstraction but to a hostile spiritual agent, particularly associated with false prophecy. Parallels in Zech 13:2 confirm this usage, while intertextual connections with Job 1–2 and Zech 3 clarify the adversarial role of such a spirit within the divine council. These features indicate that the lying spirit is best understood as Satan or a satanic emissary functioning under divine permission.

Theologically, this interpretation safeguards divine integrity. God remains the God of truth, who neither lies nor contradicts His own nature (Num 23:19, Titus 1:2). At the same time, the narrative affirms God's sovereignty: even the forces of deception operate within the parameters He sets. The lying spirit's deception of Ahab's prophets serves as an act of divine judgment. By rejecting the truth of Yahweh's word through Micaiah, Ahab becomes susceptible to the falsehood he prefers. Thus, the lying spirit functions as a judicial means through which divine justice is executed upon the rebellious.

This reading also reinforces prophetic authority. The vision legitimates Micaiah as the true prophet, exposing the deception of the four hundred royal prophets. It illustrates the Deuteronomistic conviction that fidelity to Yahweh's word, even when politically costly, remains the only safeguard against destruction. The narrative thereby warns against preferring the voices of false assurance over the inconvenient truth spoken by God's messenger.

Conclusion

1 Kings 22:22–23 portrays the lying spirit as Satan acting within limits permitted by Yahweh. This identification preserves the integrity of God's character while explaining how deception functions within His sovereign purposes. Far from depicting God as the author of lies, the text presents Him as the righteous judge who allows falsehood to ensnare those who reject His truth. The passage thus contributes significantly to biblical theology by clarifying the interplay of divine sovereignty, prophetic truth, and the reality of evil.

Concepts of Healing in the Old Testament: Its Relevance to the 21st Century

Andresito P. Fernando

Abstract

This study explores key Old Testament concepts of healing and their significance for contemporary Christians, particularly within the Philippine context. Using a biblical-theological and historical-grammatical approach, it analyzes selected passages to clarify how the Hebrew Scriptures portray healing as fundamentally theocentric—rooted in God as Yahweh Rapha—and closely linked with sin, redemption, and covenant faithfulness. While acknowledging the value of medical practice, the study highlights the Old Testament view that true healing flows from God and anticipates ultimate restoration in the coming Messianic kingdom. These insights offer hope and guidance for Filipinos living in a time of widespread illness, grounding health, suffering, and eschatological expectation in a biblical framework.

Keywords: Healing, Yahweh Rapha, messianic promise, eschatological hope, holistic health

Introduction

Healing is a significant theme in the Old Testament. It is a part of the great plethora of divine activities recorded in the Hebrew scripture.[1] The events and promises of healing are closely associated with several motifs in the Old Testament, including the ontology of sickness, pain, suffering, and God's merciful dealings with human beings.[2]

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[1] These divine activities includes divine revelation, anthropomorphic appearances, acts of judgment, supernatural manifestation, miraculous deliverance, and healing. There are not less than 12 occurences of individual healings (cf. Gen 20:1–18, Num 12:1–15, 1 Kgs 13:4–6, 17:17:17–24, 2 Kgs 4:8–17, 5:1–14, 20:1–7, 1 Sam 1:9–20, 2 Chron 32:24–26, Job 42:10–17, Isa 38:1–8, Dan 4:34–36).

and 3 corporate healings (cf. Num 16:46–50, 21:4–7, 2 Sam 24:10–25) recorded in the Hebrew scripture.

[2] See Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 11.

P. R. House points out that despite God's judgment over human sinfulness, the Old Testament teaches the loving nature of God, who can sustain and heal. He sees in the action of God in the Old Testament a blend of God's justice, power, and goodness.[3]

Healing is also included in God's covenant promises with His people. Exodus 15:26 introduces God as "Yahweh Who heals you." This passage consists of the basic elements of a covenant. It contains three major components: First, God is the Healer of His people; second, the promises and blessings of health; third, the stipulation, which is grounded on obedience to God's commands and decrees.[4] Comparing Exod 15:26 with the Hittite treaty, Jon L. Dybdahl rightly points out that Exod 15:26 is a foretaste of the Sinaitic covenant.[5]

Healing in the Old Testament is also associated with the Messianic promise. It is embedded in the Messianic expectations and the promise-fulfillment theme in both the Old and the New Testaments.[6] This promise has been made more pronounced when Jesus closely linked the healing promises of the Old Testament to Himself. In the event in Nazareth (cf. Luke 4:16–30), Jesus appropriated to Himself the prophetic fulfillment of Isa 61:1, 2.[7] With the Messianic promise-fulfillment concept that ushers in the dawn of the last days, healing is also a significant part of the eschatological hope of God's people, prophesied by the Major and Minor Prophets of the Old Testament.[8] Hence, the concept of healing in the Old Testament has a profound meaning and impact on contemporary times, as the global community of the 21st century continues to face the same issues of sickness, pain, and suffering inherent in human life and, at the same time, seeks healing and hope beyond human struggles and life experiences.

Diverse Understanding of the Ontology of Sickness and Healing

The human quest to understand the fundamental issues of sickness and healing has led to various interpretative options from naturalists and religious circles. The metaphysical and ontological views of sickness and healing have been seen in several perspectives. Naturalists consider sickness in terms of physiological and biological malfunction that causes the deterioration of life. Healing happens when such a malfunction has been

[3] House, *Old Testament Theology*, 11.

[4] This passage has the basic components of Hittite Zusereignty Treaty that includes the introduction of the Zusereign and the beneficiary party, the stipulations of the treaty, and the blessings and curses of the Zusereign.

[5]Jon L. Dybdahl, "God Provides in the Desert," *Exodus, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier*, ed. George R. Knight (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1994), 148.

[6]This paper adheres to the maximalists view that "there is always a Messianic hope embedded in the (OT) text." Joseph Shao, "Messianic Hope in the Old Testament for the 21st Century," in *Jesus Among the Nations: Christology in Asian Perspective*, ed. Federico G. Villanueva and Stephen T. Pardue (Manila, Philippines: Asian Theological Association, 2017), 66–67.

[7]The healing work of Jesus in fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1–2 has been defined as the reversal from confinement and bondage towards the experience of release or liberation. See Christopher R. Bruno, "Jesus Is Our Jubilee . . . But How? The OT Background and Lukan Fulfillment of the Ethics of Jubilee," *JETS* 53.1 (2010): 81–102.

[8]cf. Isa 29:18, 33:24, 35:5–6, 53:5, 61:1–3, Ezek 47:12, Mal 4:2.

appropriately treated.[9] On the other side, the constructivists see sickness from a more philosophical and social point of view. For constructivists, diseases are based on normative judgment; thus, sickness is any behavior or condition that breaks the norms and fails to accord with the existing values of a particular person or community.[10]

Major non-Christian religions in Asia view sickness and healing in various ways. The doctrine of *karma* among the Hindus appears to link illness with wrong actions. Pain and suffering satisfy the debt incurred for past negative behavior. Ultimate healing will happen when a person finally reaches *moksha*, the complete release from the cycle of rebirths.[11]

Buddhists, on the other hand, view illness as the consequence of either of the two underlying causes—an unhealthy lifestyle at present or the bad *kamma* in their past lives. *Kamma* is the law of cause and effect. It is an impersonal, natural law that operates in accordance with one's actions. It is a law in itself and does not have any lawgiver. *Kamma* operates in its own field without the intervention of an external, independent, ruling agent.[12] While sickness due to the former can be cured with appropriate treatment and lifestyle modification, illness as a consequence of the latter cannot be cured until the *kammic* effect is exhausted.

For Muslims, sickness and healing are decrees and blessings from Allah.[13] In the Islamic religion, illness is either a call to remain faithful to the Islamic faith, an expiration of sin, or a test to confirm a Muslim's commitment to Allah. This test would improve a Muslim's rank, give him rewards, and elevate his degree in Paradise. Healing takes place as determined by Allah.[14] In both sickness and healing, the appropriate Muslim's response is the fatalistic acceptance of Allah's will.

The Old Testament scripture, as the basis of Christian faith, presents healing in a theological rather than medical perspective. It has a distinct voice compared to naturalists, constructivists, and non-Christian religions. Some commentators see a parallel between the Old Testament concept of healing and the Ancient Near Eastern culture. As early as the Neolithic period (ca. 8500–4300 BC) onwards, there is evidence of healing practices as part of an ancient health care system in Syria-Palestine. Along with the use of remedies,

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[9]See Kitcher, P. *The Lives To Come: The Genetic Revolution and Human Possibilities*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 208–209. Here Kitcher usess the term objectivists but the idea is basically naturalists.

[10]See Phil Brown, "The Name Game: Toward A Sociology of Diagnosis," *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 11.3–4 (1990): 385–406.

[11]For more discussions on the view of hinduism regarding sickness and karma, see Madhavi Rathod, "The Relationship of Karma to the Disease Process," *Ayurveda Today* 10.3 (1997): 50–80.

[12]See Ven Ledi Sayadaw, *The Manual of Insight* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1992), 110–11.

[13]Quran states, "And if God touches thee with affliction, none can remove it but He: if He touches thee with happiness He has power over all things" (Quran 6:17). "And when I am ill, it is [God] who cures me." Ash-Shu'ara (The Poets 26:80)—A supplication of Prophet Abraham.

[14]Islam does not discard the use of conventional medicine. But healing comes only from Allah.

there was a belief that Ancient Near Eastern societies were the sources of healing. These deities include El, the supreme god at Ugarit; Eshmun, the healing god in Sidon, Tire, and Phoenicia; and Resheph, a Canaanite deity who brings both diseases and healing. However, these gods must be placated to bring about the desired healing, which is far different from the Old Testament picture of God, whose desire is to heal and restore.[15]

In the Hebrew scripture, God is both the source and center of healing. While healing has been customarily defined as a process that often involves medical, surgical, or psychiatric treatment of a pathological condition, the fundamental concept of the Old Testament affirms that healing comes only from God. The Old Testament mentions the use of available means to treat diseases, such as bandages (Ezek 30:21), mandrakes (Gen 30:14), figs on the sores (2 Kgs 20:11–7 and in Isa 38:1–2), and balm from Gilead (Jer 46:11). Yet, healing comes only through the direct action or intervention of God. God as the healer of diseases has been emphasized in the Pentateuch (cf. Gen 20:17, Exod 15:26, 23:25), Historical books (cf. 2 Kgs 5:1–13, 20:1–11), Wisdom Literature and Psalms (cf. Ps 30:2, 107:19–21, Job 4:3–4, Prov 4:20–22), and in the Major and Minor Prophets (cf. Isa 19:22, Jer 17:14, 30:12–17, Hos 6:1, 7:1, Mal 4:2).

Another Old Testament perspective on healing is its holistic concept, which includes the total well-being of a person.[16] This holistic conception is the essence of the biblical view of health. The idea of wholeness and completeness forms the basic content of the Hebrew word *šālôm*, which can be translated as "wholeness,"[17] "completeness,"[18] and also "peace."[19] Secondly, the emphasis of healing in the Old Testament is not so much on human sickness, pain, and suffering but on who God is—His nature, attributes, and His just and merciful dealings with human beings. Thus, the Old Testament concept of healing is theocentric rather than anthropocentric.[20]

Another important aspect of healing in the Hebrew scriptures is its future dimension. Healing points to the eschatological hope that God's people look forward to. The New Testament descriptions of the New Heaven and the New Earth (cf. Rev 21 and

[15]See Richard S. Ascough, "Illness and Healthcare," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 628–31.
[16] The term holistic includes the physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being.

[17] Holladay, ed., "*šālôm*," *CHAL*, 371.

[18] BDB, s.v. "*šālôm*"; Koehler and Baumgartner, *LVTL*, s.v. "*šālôm*."

[19] BDB, s.v. "*šālôm*."

[20] Some scholars using the principles of higher criticism deviate from the view that the concept of sickness and healing in the Old Testament is theocentric. Jonathan Redding for example, points out that what happened to Job denigrates the picture of God as capricious, bully, pompous, arrogant, and frightening. Relegating the story of Job to the realm of fiction rather than historical, Redding argues that the Book of Job simply shows the author's reflection of recent catastrophes, notion of divine omniscience and justice, and the humanity's insignificant place within creation. Thus the book reveals the limited view of God and the world, humanity's limited understanding of the past, and its idealist perception of the present. See Jonathan Redding "The Troubling Theology of Job and Its Place in Contemporary Life," in *Global Perspective on the Bible*, ed. Mark Roncace and Joseph Weaver (New York: Pearson, 2014), 174–75. This study assumes that the Book of Job is historical and the focus of the story is God's fairness, justice and mercy.

22), where tears, pain, and death have passed away, allude to and echo the Old Testament promise of healing (cf. Isa 25:8, 35:10, 65:19).[21]

Healing and the Messianic Promise in Genesis 3:15

The Book of Genesis opens with the description of the perfect creation of God (cf Gen 1:31) and how sin entered and caused a degenerative process that includes the presence of illness, suffering, and death. The first known concept of healing in the book of Genesis is embedded in the first Messianic promise, known as the *protoevangelium* (cf. Gen 3:15). Although there are discussions regarding the meaning of *zera* and the antecedent of the pronoun *hu*[22] in Gen 3:15, it is grammatically and contextually sound to view the verse as Messianic.[23] The Messianic understanding in this passage is pivotal because it is an expression of divine grace in the midst of God's judgment over sin. The divine judgment has been portrayed in the reversal motif shown in the chiastic constructions of Gen 2 and 3. While Gen 1 states the perfect nature of God's creation, Gen 2 and 3 depict the excellent reversal motif in both the macro- and microstructure of the two chapters. Gerhard Hasel rightly points out that such reversals through illness and death are not part of God's plan. He cites,

> Humankind was itself created as a total entity in a perfect state (Gen 2:7, 21–22). Gen 1–2 depicts a world totally different from the one which existed after the fall (Gen 3), where the sin-caused degenerative processes sap the life forces until death comes about. Thus, a central concept of biblical religion is that health and well-being are the design of God and that illness in whatever form it appears is not an established part of the divine order of reality.[24]

Two chiastic structures are visible in Gen 2 and 3, both of which show the reversal theme in those two chapters. The chiasm between Gen 2 and 3 could be diagrammed as follows:[25]

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[21] See Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary of the Book of Revelation* (Michigan: Andrews University Press, 2002), 578.

[22] Claus Westermann, for example, rejects the Messianic connotation in Gen 3:15. See Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 350.

[23] For some discussion of the concept of *zera* and the antecedent of *hu* in Gen 3:15, see Jack P. Lewis, "The Woman's Seed (Gen. 3:15)," *JETS* 34.3 (1991): 299–319; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 197–200.

[24] Gerhard F. Hasel, "Health and Healing in the Old Testament," *AUSS* 21.3 (1983): 191.

[25] For detailed discussion of the chiastic structure of Gen 2 and 3, see Zdravko Stefanovic, "The Great Reversal: Thematic Links Between Genesis 2 and 3," *AUSS* 32.1–2 (1994): 53.

A – Created and Settled (Gen 2:5–8)
B – Blessings and Order (Gen 2:9–17)
C – Woman Created (Gen 2:18–23)
C – Woman Tempted (Gen 3:1–13)
B – Curses and Disorder (Gen 3:14–21)
A – Judged and Expelled (Gen 3:22–24)

The chiastic structure of Gen 3:9–19 is more focused on the pronouncement of God's judgment presented in the reverse order:[26]

A – The Sin of Man (Gen 3:9–11)
B – The Sin of Woman (Gen 3:12)
C – The Sin of the Serpent (Gen 3:15)
C – The Judgment on the Serpent (Gen 3:14–15)
B – The Judgment on the Woman (Gen 3:16)
A – The Judgment on the Man (Gen 3:17–19)

Letters B and C on the second level of the chiasm show the consequence of human disobedience. The pronouncement of "pain"[27] to Eve and Adam, respectively, the cursing of the ground, and the ultimate death mentioned in verse 19 imply that pain, suffering, and death would become inherent in human experience after sin.[28] The Messianic promise in Gen 3:15 is pivotal because it addresses and provides a solution to the whole reversal theme embedded in Gen 3. God's pronouncement that "He [the seed of the woman] shall bruise you [serpent] on the head, and you [serpent] shall bruise him [seed of the woman] on the heel,"[29] shows the ultimate triumph of the offspring of the woman over the serpent.[30] This victory would alter the reversed human condition resulting from sin. Thus, the idea embedded in the Messianic promise in Gen 3:15 includes both healing and restoration.[31]

The healing and restoration theme embedded in the Messianic promise was preceded by the description and action of God walking in the garden (cf. Gen 3:8). The

[26] See Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 196.

[27] The Hebrew word here has been translated pain in Gen 3:16 and variously translated as pain or toil in Gen 3:17. For Eve, it refers to the woman's whole process of conception until birth (Gen 3:16). Adam's share of toil and pain is related to tilling the ground for food (v. 19). Although John Walton sees the pain in Gen 3:16–17 as mental or psychological anguish, yet he does not exclude physical pain. See John H. Walton, "Pain in Childbearing (Hebrew Corner 8)," *Zondervan Academic* (2008), https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/pain-in-childbe/. The inclusion of physical pain in Gen 3:16 and 17 is warranted because a noun related to it includes both mental and physical pain (cf. Job 9:28, Ps 16:4, Prov 10:10, 15:13). See Stephen D. Renn, ed. "Sorrow, Sorrowful," *EDBW*, 917.

[28] The verbal root עצב (*ʿṣḇ*) has a wide range of meaning that includes pain, agony, hardship, worry, nuisance and anxiety.

[29] *Zera* is in the singular form giving the verse a messianic overtone. The messianic significance of the passage is fully confirmed in the New Testament allusion of the text in Rom 16:20. See Harold H. Stigers. *A Commentary on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 78.

[30] Cornelis Van Dam explicitly said that the full victory stated in Gen 3:15 was initially fulfilled in Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. The final fulfillment that is coming is mentioned in Rom 16:20, Rev 12, 20:9–10. Cornelis Van Dam, "*zera*," *NIDOT*, 4:67.

[31] In relation to the *protoevangelium*, Hasel rightly points out that In the description of the future Servant-Messiah in Isa 53:5, healingappears in connection with both sin and sickness, with healing and forgiveness. See Hasel, "Health and Healing," 202.

concept of walking has a profound and deep meaning in the Old Testament scriptures. James M. Hamilton Jr. rightly points out that despite human sinfulness, the covenant-keeping God initiated His self-disclosure and presence with His people.[32] The "walking" motif appears frequently in the Book of Genesis; Enoch walked with God (cf. Gen 5:22, 24), Noah walked with God (cf. Gen 6:9), and both Abraham and Isaac walked before God (cf. 17:1, 24:40, 48:15). The concept of walking with God in the Bible contains two basic elements—the divine initiative and the human response. Human response includes faith and a kind of life that pleases God. This concept of walking is shown in the Septuagint translation, which uses the word "pleased" instead of "walked" in the accounts of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac.[33] However, the weight of the statement points to God, who took the initiative. In the cool of the day, God walked in the garden. Because of sin, Adam and Eve severed their relationship with their Creator and lost His presence. God walking in the garden implies His initiative to restore His bond with His creatures. Thus, the concept of healing and restoration in the Messianic promise of Gen. 3:15 is founded on God's initiative and desire to reestablish His covenant relationship and presence with human beings.

Yahweh Rapha

In the Book of Exodus, God introduces Himself as the healer of His people. Exodus 15:26 points to God, which in the Hebrew language could literally be translated as "Yahweh your healer," "doctor," or "physician."[34] It is a covenant name based on the stipulation embedded in the text. Obedience to the Lord would prevent God from bringing diseases upon His covenant people (cf. Exod l5:26).

The root of the Hebrew word transliterated as *rapha* occurs 67 times as a verb and 19 times as a nominal derivative in the Old Testament.[35] In many of its usages, it points to God as the One who causes healing. This word is fundamental in the concept of the Old Testament since it always points to God as the sole healer of diseases. The first occurrence of *rapha* in the Qal stem shows God who healed Abimelech (cf. Gen 20:17), and the Psalmist prays in his trouble. The Lord "healed him" (Ps 107:20) or "healed me" (Ps 30:2). Psalm 103:3 introduces God as the One who "heals all your diseases," and He "heals the

[32] James M. Hamilton, Jr. "God With Men in the Torah," *WTJ* 65 (2003): 114.

[33] Septuagint uses the Greek verb (to please) in Gen 5:22, 24; 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15. It carries the idea that to walk with God means to please Him. For a discussion of the meaning of "walked with God," see Timothy J. Cole, "Enoch, A Man Who Walked With God," *BSac* 148 (1991): 288–96.

[34] Holladay, ed., "*Yahweh Rapha*," *CHAL*, 344. See also Dick Purnell, *Experiencing God by His Name* (Oregon: Harvest House, 2011), 11–15. The names of God in the scripture points to God's nature, attributes, actions, and His dealings with human beings.

[35] For the discussion of *Rapha*, see R. Liwak, "*rapha*," *TDOT* 13:598–614.

brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds" (Ps 147:3). Prayer for healing is addressed to the Lord (Ps 6:2, 41:4).

The concept that God is the only healer stands in sharp contrast with the existing belief of the surrounding peoples of the Old Testament. Literary and pictorial materials have shown that in Egypt, priests served as physicians who performed their healing through magic and superstition.[36] The same is true in ancient Mesopotamia, where priests, known as diviners, bring deliverance from diseases and demon possessions.[37] In the Old Testament, Asa, king of Judah, is a vivid example of the tragedy of not trusting God for healing. In the 39th year of his reign, he contracted a fatal disease in his feet. The description of the event in 2 Chron 16:12–13 contains three central ideas: first, the Lord is the only source of healing; second, the story implies a stern rebuke against consulting physician-diviners instead of the Lord; third, only God is worthy of human trust. It affirms the Old Testament teaching that God is the Lord over life and death (cf. Deut 32:39, 1 Sam 2:6). God's lordship includes His power and authority over sickness. This sovereignty of God was highlighted when Naaman was healed of his leprosy and exclaimed, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (cf. 2 Kgs 5:15)

Healing as Holistic

Closely associated with *Yahweh Rapha* is the holistic view of health in the Old Testament. An essential aspect of biblical healing is its holistic nature, physical, moral, and spiritual. A survey of the meaning of healing in the Old Testament shows that it includes physical, moral, and spiritual restoration. The Old Testament narrative reveals that physical healing is associated with repentance and religious experience. Miriam's leprosy, for example, was healed when God forgave her sin through repentance and the intercession of Moses (cf. Num 12:9–16). Hezekiah's healing was also associated with his coming to God. (cf. 2 Kgs 20:1–11)

In the Book of Psalms, the prayer for healing is joined with the confession of sin (cf. Ps 41:3–4, 30:3–6). Yahweh heals broken hearts (cf. Psalm 147:3), and in Jeremiah 3:22, Yahweh heals the backsliding of His people. Jeremiah also uses the word "healing" to describe God's restoration of Judah after the time of captivity (cf. Jer 33:6–8). The promise in 2 Chron 7:14 includes both forgiveness and healing *(rapha)* of their land. Through the prophet Hosea, God assures His backslidden people of healing their apostasy if they will heed God's call to return to Him (cf. Hos 14:4). In Malachi, the great promise

[36] R. K. Harrison, "Disease, Bible and Spade," *BA* 41 (1978):185–86; R. K. Harrison, *ZSBE*, 2: 641. Cf. J. V. Kinnier Wilson, "Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. Tomoo Ishida (Winona Lake, ID: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 337–47.

[37] K. A. Kitchen, "Magic and Sorcery," *NBD*, 770.

of healing is joined to the theme of righteousness: "But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings" (Mal 4:2). Thus, Hasel rightly points out that "healing is not merely physical restoration but it includes the deeper dimension of forgiveness and restoration into fellowship with God."[38]

Healing and the Eschatological Hope of God's People

The future dimension of divine healing in the Old Testament served as the foundation of hope among God's people. The promise of healing in the Book of Isaiah is closely associated with the dawn of the Messianic age and the coming of the Kingdom of God.[39] The healing motif in Isaiah is linked to the eschatology, identity, and work of the Messiah.[40] The book points to the restoration of Israel (cf. Isa 49:8–16), the gathering of the Gentiles (cf. 56:6–8, 66:18), and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth (cf. 65:17–20). The promise of the new heaven and the new earth in Isa 65:17–25, characterized by holistic healing and restoration, should be understood not only in the context of its immediate fulfillment in the national experience of God's people in the Old Testament but also in its broader eschatological perspective explicitly alluded to in the New Testament, particularly in Rev 21 and 22.[41] The absence of death, sorrow, crying, and pain in Rev 21:4 is an allusion to Isa 25:8, 35:10, and 65:19. The assurance that God will make all things new in Rev 21:5–6 was quoted from Isa 43:18–19, and the promise of the water of life in Rev 22:17 is an allusion to Isa 41:17–18.

The prophets of the Old Testament incorporate the motif of healing into their emphasis on the day of Yahweh and their prophecy of future restoration. The eschatological day of judgment in the Book of Malachi will be the time of the destruction of the wicked and the time of restoration of the community, who will enjoy righteousness and healing (cf. Mal 4:1–3).[42] This experience of healing and restoration is also part of the prophecies in Isaiah and Ezekiel (cf. Isa 29:18, 33:24, 35:5–6, 53:5, 61:1–3, Ezek 47:12).

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[38] Hasel, "Health and Healing," 201.

[39] See Richard Beaton, "Isaiah in Matthew's Gospel," in *Isaiah in the New Testament: The New Testament and the Scripture of Israel*, ed. Steve Motise and Maarten J. J. Menken (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 63–77.

[40] Cf. Isa 53:4, 5; 42:1–4; 29:18–19; 35:5–6; 42:7, 18; 61:1. For the New Testament concepts of healing in relation to the Messianic fulfillment and the Kingdom of God, see Andresito P. Fernando and E. Fernando, "Healing Ministry in Luke: A Model Approach to Minister with Those Who Are Suffering," *11th International Scholars' Conference* 11.7 (2024): 1748–58.

[41] See the exegetical analysis of Anne E. Gardner, "The Nature of the New Heavens and New Earth in Isaiah 66:22," *Australian Biblical Review* 50 (2002): 10–27.

[42] For the discussion of the eschatological day of the Lord in the book of Malachi, see Blessing Onoriode Boloje and Alphonso Groenewald, "Malachi's Eschatological Day of Yahweh: Its Dual Roles of Cultic Restoration and Enactment of Social Justice (Mal 3:1–5; 3:16–4:6)," *Old Testament Essays* 27.1 (2014): 53–81.

Snyder rightly points out that all the promises of restoration in the Old Testament prophets are evidence that the broad concept of salvation includes the future healing of all creation.[43]

Theological Reflections and Contemporary Application

Knowing the concepts of healing in the Old Testament is vital for today's generation, where sickness, pain, and suffering remain unresolved despite remarkable advances in medical science. Modern society, including the Philippines, often approaches disease from naturalistic or social-constructivist frameworks that downplay the spiritual and moral dimensions of life. In contrast, the Old Testament explicitly roots sickness in humanity's disobedience to God and presents healing as part of His redemptive initiative. This understanding affirms that life is purposeful and governed by divine principles; deviation from these principles inevitably brings pain and suffering.

Since Old Testament healing is theocentric, it reveals the balanced character of God—both righteous and merciful. Immediately after the fall, God, in the midst of His judgment, made the pronouncement of the coming Messiah who would bring healing and restoration to the human race (Gen 3:15). God Himself "walked in the garden" (Gen 3:8), signifying His initiative to restore the broken relationship and reverse the dreadful effects of sin.

In a world where life is often compartmentalized, the Old Testament vision reminds us that health is holistic. It is not merely the absence of physical disease caused by pathological agents but also the restoration of the spirit and relationship with God. Forgiveness and healing stand side by side in Scripture (e.g., Ps 41:3–4, 2 Chron 7:14). True healing integrates the physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of life.

For Filipino Christians, especially within the Adventist tradition, these biblical insights hold significant contemporary implications: Adventist Health Ministry—The vision of Yahweh Rapha supports the Adventist mission of promoting holistic health care that blends medical excellence, lifestyle reform, and spiritual renewal. Physicians, nurses, and health missionaries can view their practice as an instrument of God's healing, never the ultimate source.

Pastoral and Congregational Care—Local churches can draw from the Old Testament link between repentance, forgiveness, and healing to guide prayer ministries, counseling, and visitation, providing spiritual support alongside medical treatment.

Navigating Medical Pluralism—Philippine society hosts a broad mix of health

[43] Howard A. Snyder and Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), 100. See also Steven L. James, "Territorial Pecularity in New Creationism," *New Creation Eschatology and the Land: A Survey of Contemporary Perspectives* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 95–120.

beliefs, including traditional healers, faith healers, herbal medicine, and modern biomedicine. The Old Testament provides a balanced framework: it affirms responsible use of medical means while keeping God as the trustworthy source of life and restoration, helping Adventists engage local practices without compromising biblical faith.

Finally, the future dimension of healing remains a wellspring of hope. While not all prayers for physical recovery are answered in this life, the Old Testament consistently points to the eschatological promise of a new creation where sickness, pain, suffering, and death will be no more (Isa 25:8, 65:17–25, Rev 21–22). This vision sustains Filipino believers facing incurable illnesses or systemic health inequities, inspiring compassionate service now while looking forward to God's ultimate restoration.

Conclusion

The Old Testament vision of healing offers profound comfort and direction to a world still grappling with disease and despair. While diverse philosophical, medical, and religious systems attempt to explain and treat illness, the Hebrew Scriptures reveal a God whose name is Yahweh Rapha—the covenant-keeping healer who takes the initiative to restore broken humanity. Healing in the Old Testament is theocentric and holistic, embracing the physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of life and pointing toward ultimate redemption in Christ.

For Filipino Christians, this vision is deeply relevant. In a society where medical pluralism thrives—where modern biomedicine, traditional remedies, and faith healing coexist—the Old Testament provides a balanced theological framework. It affirms the proper use of medical science but reminds believers that healing is ultimately an act of God's mercy and covenant faithfulness.

Within the Adventist tradition, these insights encourage a robust health ministry that integrates lifestyle medicine, compassionate medical care, and spiritual nurture. They also equip pastors and lay leaders to provide holistic pastoral care, addressing not only physical illness but also sin, guilt, and the need for a restored relationship with God.

Finally, the Old Testament's eschatological hope remains essential. While physical healing in this life is temporary and sometimes withheld, Scripture assures believers that sickness, suffering, and death will be abolished in God's coming kingdom. For Filipinos enduring chronic disease, poverty-related health struggles, or systemic inequities, this hope sustains faith and inspires compassionate service while awaiting the ultimate restoration promised in Christ.

Child Dedication: Its History, Theology, and Practice for Adventists

Cerelito Cadao

Abstract

This article examines the history, theology, and practice of child dedication, particularly within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The practice developed as an alternative to infant baptism, which became prominent in the Catholic Church due to beliefs about original sin. Protestant groups that rejected infant baptism introduced ceremonies of thanksgiving, catechumenate enrollment, and consecration, eventually shaping the child dedication service. Adventists, influenced by Baptist and Wesleyan traditions, gradually adopted this rite as a way to acknowledge God's gift of life, affirm parents' vows to raise children in faith, and recognize the church's responsibility to nurture them. Theologically, child dedication differs from infant baptism in origin, purpose, and meaning. Adventists hold that baptism requires repentance and personal faith, which infants cannot express, whereas dedication is an act of worship, blessing, and commitment. Biblical precedents such as Hannah's dedication of Samuel and Jesus' blessing of children support the practice. Practical considerations include the proper venue, the role of sponsors, and how to make the service more meaningful. The article concludes that while child dedication is not original to Adventism, it is biblically sound, theologically valid, and pastorally significant, enriching worship and discipleship when conducted with care and intentionality.

Keywords: Child dedication, infant baptism, Seventh-day Adventist, theology, worship

Introduction

For more than nineteen years as a local church pastor, I encountered many questions concerning child dedication. They are significant since the questions relate to how this service is performed in a meaningful way. One inquiry is historical: how this practice developed in Protestant churches and was adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist church. Some questions are biblical and theological: whether the practice is supported by scripture or if the service is merely an imitation of the traditional rites of infant baptism. Some

inquiries are more on applied theology: the appropriateness of holding it inside the church,[1] the contextualization issue of getting spiritual guardians like godfathers and godmothers, which may be controversial in some cultural contexts within the Seventh-day Adventist church, and how this service can be performed in a more solemn, meaningful way and not just as a filler in between services during Sabbath worship.

These questions may seem ordinary, but they are worth discussing because understanding the history of child dedication and its adoption by the Seventh-day Adventist Church will help members appreciate its importance and significance. Secondly, to guard the theological soundness of church ministries, we need to examine their biblical foundations and verify that they have not been adulterated. This limits the doubts that may creep into the minds of church members and assures that this practice is not an imitation of erroneous teachings and that moral standards have not been lowered. Finally, this article may help our church pastors, elders, and leaders make the child dedication ceremony more meaningful and impactful for both the witnessing congregation and the families of the children being dedicated.

This study employs a historical-theological approach. It first surveys the development of child dedication from early Christianity to contemporary Protestant and Adventist practice, drawing on primary historical sources and denominational documents. It then engages in a biblical-theological reflection on key scriptural passages (e.g., 1 Sam 1:27–28; Luke 2:22–40; Mark 10:13–16) to examine their relevance to the practice. Finally, it synthesizes historical and biblical insights to propose practical guidelines for Adventist ministers. The method is descriptive and interpretive rather than empirical; it aims to clarify the rite's theological meaning and pastoral application rather than to collect new field data.

Historical Development of Child Dedication

The Emergence of Infant Baptism

Tracing the historical development of child dedication is challenging and complicated. In a nutshell, the development of "child dedication rites" is historically linked with the practice of infant baptism. Historians differ on when infant baptism exactly started,[2] yet many agree that for several decades in the fourth century, the children of most Christian

[1] Clifton L. Taylor, "Blessing and Dedicating Babies," *Ministry* 17.11 (1944):14–15

[2] Constance M. Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites for Wesleyans: Some Models for Contemporary Practice," *WTJ* 53.2 (2018): 63.

parents were not baptized in infancy.[3] Records show that there is no certain evidence of this practice before the 2nd century, for the ancient baptismal liturgies were all intended for adults.[4] Nevertheless, infant baptism gradually became more established after the death of Augustine in the 5th century.[5] John Henry Newman also reveals that "Infant Baptism was not at first enforced as afterwards."[6]

The rationale for infant baptism was attributed to the belief that baptism is a "sacrament of grace necessary to forgive original sin or as a seal to signify that the infants of Christian parents are in God's covenant of grace."[7] A belief that children were born with original sin led to the understanding that if unbaptized infants were to pass away, they could not enter heaven. Thus, baptism was necessary for cleansing infants from the guilt of original sin. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "children also need the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called."[8] Further, Redmond asserted that justice, filiation, inheritance, and the grace to be brothers and members of Christ and to become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit will be realized if an infant is baptized. Later, it was even believed that the practice of infant baptism was an infusion of faith into children.[9]

When infant baptism became part of the practice in the Catholic church, leaders were not in complete agreement. This was even considered a crisis by some. For those who believed that infant baptism was unacceptable, "Jesus' blessings of babies" became an option.[10] They were considered Catechumen children, which meant that they were under the responsibility and instruction of godly and faith-committed parents. Out of these children emerged prominent and distinguished church leaders. Augustine's parents themselves did not subject him to baptism until he became old enough to decide for himself, yet he became known as a church father and theologian.[11] It is historically clear that when infant baptism was being implemented, a catechumenate or child dedication ceremony was also being practiced.

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[3] David F. Wright, "Infant Dedication in the Early Church" in *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church, Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R. E. O. White*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 353.

[4] Michael David Knowles, "Baptism," *Britanica* (2025), para. 4, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Roman-Catholicism/Baptism.

[5] Norskov Olsen, "How the Doctrine of Baptism Changed," *Ministry* 51.7 (1978): 14.

[6] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: James Toovey, 1845), 8.2.11.

[7] Arthur B. Patzia, "Baby Dedication in the Believers' Church," *American Baptist Quarterly* 3.1 (1984): 64.

[8] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., (1997), 1250.

[9] Richard X. Redmond, "Infant Baptism: History and Pastoral Problems," *Theological Studies* 30.1 (1969): 80–83.

[10] David F. Wright, "Infant Dedication in the Early Church," 353–60.

[11] Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose and Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Cassian, and one can add others, such as Ephraem Syrus, Paulinus of Nola, Rufinus of Aquileia, quite possibly Ulfilas, similarly born to Christians but baptized as adult believers. Wright, "Infant Dedication," 361–62.

Alternatives to Infant Baptism

Constance M. Cherry identifies three rites that historically emerged into customary practice "with varying degrees of popularity and historical documentation" for those rejecting infant baptism.[12] These rites differ from what the Catholic Church teaches and have become common among some Protestant and Evangelical churches. The first is the liturgical practice of thanking God for the birth of the child.[13] There are more than fifty Bible references that indirectly and directly encourage believers to thank God for the miracle and wonder of birth.[14] While it is possible that there were various settings and methods, historians agree that no baptism occurred in these rites. Instead, it was just a "service of thanksgiving for the birth of a child."[15] David himself declared that "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Ps 127:3, NASB). Hence, godly parents thank God for the miracle of birth during this ceremony.

The second historical model is "the enrollment of infants in the catechumenate, with baptism to follow upon personal declaration of faith during adulthood."[16] This model sounds more comprehensive, as it calls for a commitment not only from the parents but also from church leaders to help train the child and nurture them to know Jesus. It emphasizes the church's responsibility to act as the parents' partners in raising a godly person. It is like parents covenanting with God to enroll their babies into the school of God at a very young age. Though it is not the same as the school of the prophets in the Old Testament, it shares the same purpose: to know Jesus and be His servant.[17]

The third rite that emerged is that of "dedicating infants—even before birth—to lives of virginity for vocational service to the church."[18] It is dedicating a child, either boy or girl, to a monastic life and a vow of celibacy for full-time vocational service to the church. Though there were no cases in the Bible of a person dedicated to celibacy or monasticism, the case of Samuel, when Hannah brought him to the temple (1 Sam 1:27, 28), and when Joseph and Mary presented the infant Jesus to the Lord in the temple (Luke 2:22) are acts of dedicating them to the Lord for His purpose and service.[19]

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[12] Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites," 64.

[13] Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites," 64.

[14] E.g., Gen 18:13–14; 29:31, 1 Sam 1:20, 27–28; 2:20–21, 2 Kgs 4:14–17; Pss 8:3–5; 119:73; 127:3; 139:13–18; Luke 1:13–14.

[15] Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites," 64.

[16] Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites," 64–5.

[17] See Ira M. Price, "The Schools of the Sons of the Prophets," *The Old Testament Student* 8.7 (1889): 244–249; Jack P. Lewis, "The Schools of the Prophets," *Restoration Quarterly* 9.1 (1966): 1–10.

[18] Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites," 65.

[19] The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2009), 185.

The Emergence of Child Dedication

In response to the normalized practice of infant baptism within Christianity for centuries, some Christian groups began to oppose its validity based on their understanding of Scripture. With this, they began to practice child dedication instead of infant baptism. Some historians suggest that the practice of infant dedication originated with a religious group called the Paulicians (6th–12th centuries), who refused to baptize infants and instead conducted a dedicated service.[20] In the 17th century, it became common practice among English General Baptists, and one pastor named John Clifford (1836–1932) can be given credit for popularizing it. Though he initially conducted a simple child dedication ceremony in the home, it was later done in the church.[21] Today, child dedication is practiced in churches that oppose infant baptisms, including various Baptist churches, Christian Churches of Christ, Assemblies of God, Pentecostal groups, and other denominations that adhere to some of John Wesley's teachings.[22] The Seventh-day Adventist Church also practices child dedication. These denominations adopted this practice due to a strong desire to assimilate children born to Christian parents into the church's fellowship, as well as its training, nurturing, and teaching ministry.[23]

Child Dedication in Adventist History

There is no clear record of how Adventists came to practice child dedication. The practice seems to have developed gradually among Seventh-day Adventist church pastors.[24] Since the practice in the Adventist Church shares some similarities with and was largely influenced by Wesleyan and Baptist churches, child dedication may have been adopted from them. The practices outlined in the Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual are pretty similar to how Wesleyans emphasize them.[25] Some of the central doctrines that Adventists strongly believe have been inherited from others—love for the Word of God, need for obedience, salvation by grace, Christian baptism, holiness, second coming, Sabbath-keeping, state of the dead, and health. Adventists must acknowledge that influences from other religious groups have shaped beliefs and practices that existed before they became Adventist teachings. The same is also true of child dedication.

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[20] Patzia, "Baby Dedication," 64.

[21] Patzia, "Baby Dedication," 64.

[22] Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites," 65.

[23] Patzia, "Baby Dedication," 66.

[24] *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed. (1996), s.v. "Child Dedication."

[25] For practices and procedures, see *Seventh-Day Adventist Minister's Handbook*, 186–88.

The Adventist ceremony thanks God for the miracle of the child's birth, includes parental vows to raise the child in the knowledge of God's love, affirms the church's responsibility as co-parents in training the child to know God, and blesses, commits, and dedicates the child to the Lord.[26] "The purpose is to acknowledge with gratitude the goodness of God, who has brought the children into Christian homes; to help parents recognize the serious responsibility of teaching and training the children from earliest years for the service of God, and to acknowledge the claim the children have upon the prayers and the services of the church."[27]

Theological Issues

While child dedication is among the significant ceremonies encouraged in the Seventh-day Adventist church, its orthodoxy and theological soundness can still be challenged. Some question whether Scripture sufficiently supports the practice. Some also argue that it is simply an imitation and adherence to the traditional rites of infant baptism.

Child Dedication and Infant Baptism

There are indeed some parallelisms between child dedication and infant baptism—infants as the subjects of the ceremonies, a church as the usual location, and an ecclesiastically ordained leader as the one who officiates.[28] However, the two practices are distinct from each other by origin, purpose, reasons, and foundations. By origin, the Christian church gradually gave birth to infant baptism, which became more established after Augustine connected the practice of infant baptism with the problem of original sin.[29] The rationale for this was attributed to the belief that baptism is a "sacrament of grace necessary to forgive original sin or as a seal to signify that the infants of Christian parents are in God's covenant of grace."[30] It is also believed to be an infusion of healing grace that empowers the subjects to perform "good works," which will be the avenue to earn salvation. As Michael Van Sloun says, "Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, and it has powerful and long-lasting effects. It changes the spiritual character of a person forever, and

[26] *Seventh-Day Adventist Minister's Handbook*, 196.

[27] *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed. (1996), s.v. "Child Dedication."

[28] *Seventh-Day Adventist Minister's Handbook*, 186.

[29] Olsen, "How the Doctrine of Baptism Changed," 14.

[30] Patzia, "Baby Dedication," 64. Emphasis in original. Some churches believe that infants are born with original sin. In other words, they are already sinful and guilty and must be baptized as soon as possible in order to be cleansed and forgiven.

the mark of transformation is so permanent that it is indelible; it can never be erased."[31] He further emphasizes that the sacrament of baptism, which is the gateway sacrament, paves an open way for God's divine blessings to the subjects, who then enjoy a share in the divine life of God, and receive the spiritual power and energy that provides nourishment as well as the capacity to grow in virtue and holiness. Hence, salvation can be achieved. With these rationales and purposes, infant baptism is required.[32]

On the other hand, Seventh-day Adventists, alongside other Protestant denominations, do not practice infant baptism, believing that the practice is unscriptural, which neither Jesus Christ nor His disciples commanded.[33] Adventists believe that baptism requires a certain level of understanding from the subjects. Baptism requires a recognition of lostness, repentance, faith, and conversion. Baptism must also take place after undergoing proper instruction (Matt 28:19–20, Mark 16:15–16, Acts 2:38). These requirements are not possible for infants.[34] Baptism requires awareness of right and wrong, and an indication of commitment to a new life as a believer. Candidates must be capable of making independent decisions.

Adventists should not confuse blessing children with infant baptism. These are two different terms with distinct implications and meanings.[35] One might even use the term "bless" instead of "dedicate." During child dedication, parents put their precious inheritance into God's hands and recognize their accountability for taking care of the child under God's direction, protection, and blessings. There is no concept of dealing with original sin. Child dedication does not address guilt, sin, or the salvation of the child, although there may be practical implications in this regard. While child dedication may have some historical ties to infant baptism, these are different practices.

Biblical Foundations

Another key question is whether child dedication is a biblically valid practice. As pointed out above, Jesus himself neither commanded nor initiated it. There is no indication that Jesus commanded Jewish mothers to bring their children to the synagogue to be blessed

[31] Michael Van Sloun, "Spiritual Effects and Benefits of Baptism," *The Catholic Spirit,* August 22, 2017, https://thecatholicspirit.com/faith/focus-on-faith/faith-fundamentals/spiritual-effects-benefits-baptism.

[32] Van Sloun, "Spiritual Effects."

[33] See Gerhard Pfandl, "Some Thoughts on Original Sin," *Biblical Research Institute* (2025), https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/articles/some-thoughts-on-original-sin; Edwin Harry Zackrison, "Seventh-Day Adventists and Original Sin: A Study of the Early Development of the Seventh-Day Adventist Understanding of the Effect of Adam's Sin on His Posterity" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1984); Wadie Farag, "Baptism," *Ministry* 35.3 (1962), 26–29, 42.

[34] For Adventist pre-baptismal expectations, see General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Silver Springs, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 44.

[35] Francis D. Nichol, "Dedicating Infants in the Church," *Ministry* 19.14 (1946): 32.

and dedicated publicly. Although the Israelites brought infants into the temple for blessing, it only applied to the firstborn.[36]

Some arguments could be given to support the practice of child dedication. First, Jesus welcomed parents who brought their children to be dedicated. This event was recorded by three gospel writers (Matt 19:13–15, Mark 10:13–16, and Luke 18:15–17), indicating its significance. Jesus even rebuked those who were hindering them from coming to Him (Matt 19:14). Jesus then laid His hands on them and prayed for them—a clear indication of blessing. Jesus loved to carry and bless children when parents brought them to Him, regardless of whether they were firstborn or not.

God welcomes those who want Him to bless their children. "We dedicate inanimate buildings to the Lord, with impressive public services. It would be strange reasoning, indeed, that would lead us to forbid or even discourage the dedicating of our most precious possessions of all, these babes that God gives to us."[37] Moreover, Ellen White adds, "Parents, give your children to the Lord and ever keep it before their minds that they belong to Him, that they are lambs of Christ's flock, watched over by the true Shepherd."[38]

Secondly, child dedication is an act of worship. If returning tithes and giving back offerings (lifeless material things) to the Lord is an act of worship,[39] how much more is the act of committing, offering, and dedicating the child to the Lord? When Abraham offered Isaac to God, the Bible described it as an act of worship (Gen 22:1–15). Parents thank God for the miracle of the child's birth, recognize him as a precious gift from the Lord (Psalms 127:3), and offer him back to the Lord's service. Some biblically similar incidents are when Hannah dedicated Samuel to God and the service of His house (1 Sam 1:27, 28), and when Joseph and Mary presented Jesus to the Lord in the temple (Luke 2:22).[40] Therefore, child dedication is a theologically sound and biblically acceptable practice.

Practical Considerations

There are some practical issues worth discussing. One concern is the proper venue for a child dedication service. There is also a contextualization issue of whether spiritual guardians like godfathers and godmothers are acceptable in the Seventh-day Adventist

[36] Taylor, "Blessing and Dedicating Babies," 14.

[37] Nichol, "Dedicating Infants in the Church," 32.

[38] Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 143.

[39] Erika F. Puni, "Tithe & Offerings—It's About Worship," *Dynamic Steward* (July–Sept 2015), 16–17.

[40] *Seventh-Day Adventist Minister's Handbook*, 185. "The priest went through the ceremony of his official work. He took the child in his arms, and held it up before the altar. After handing it back to its mother, he inscribed the name 'Jesus' on the roll of the firstborn." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 52.

church. Another concern is how this service can be performed in a more solemn and meaningful way, rather than just as a filler between services during Sabbath worship.

The Venue

The *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook* strongly emphasizes that, as much as possible, the church is the ideal place to hold a child dedication.[41] However, some members of the church ask if it is acceptable to keep it in other areas, such as a restaurant, home, park, or reception hall, during special occasions like a baby's birthday celebration. Some even raise the argument that it is more accurate outside the church since there is no instance of Jesus blessing children inside the synagogue.

Should a babe be dedicated in the church? I would answer this question in the affirmative. As Francis D. Nichol points out, we marry our youth in the church before they start their journey as husband and wife, and we hold the remains of the dead in the church before they are buried, as an opportunity to minister to the bereaved. So, "why should it be thought strange or out of keeping to cast the influence of the church about our children in a service of dedication when they are starting on the road of life?"[42] The ceremony itself can be used to mold a young mind. As the child grows, she must often be reminded that she was dedicated to the Lord in the church and, therefore, belongs to the Lord. This ceremony may become a strong reminder when she grows older and is tempted to leave the church.[43]

Further, as mentioned above, child dedication is an act of worship. Ellen White points out that "In her prayer, Hannah had made a vow that if her request were granted, she would dedicate her child to the service of God. This vow she made known to her husband."[44] Since the parents are making a covenant with God, it seems more appropriate that the ceremony must take place in a house of worship and during worship. Since the practice reiterates to the brethren the need for their indispensable support to build a stronger Christian home, this emphasis is better achieved if believers gather in the church. The ceremony carries more weight and significance when it is done in the church. Thus, the best place to reiterate the purposes of child dedication and perform the ceremony itself is in the church.[45] However, in special instances or cases, a parent's request to hold it in another place may be granted, provided that it is carefully conducted as an act of worship.

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[41] *Seventh-Day Adventist Minister's Handbook*, 185.

[42] Nichol, "Dedicating Infants in the Church," 32.

[43] Nichol, "Dedicating Infants in the Church," 32.

[44] Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, October 27, 1881.

[45] *Seventh-Day Adventist Minister's Manual*, 196.

Godfathers, Godmothers, or Spiritual Guardians

Another intriguing issue in child dedication is obtaining sponsors. The 1992 edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual* (later renamed a "Handbook") discouraged securing godfathers and godmothers to distance the church from Catholic practice and avoid appearing as a christening service. This practice also seemed to be incongruent with one of the purposes of child dedication, of securing the "congregation's commitment to help and assist the parents to provide facilities and support in their task."[46] Why would parents still need to get sponsors if the congregation as a whole works and acts as spiritual guardians? This guideline, however, was no longer stated in the latest edition of the *Minister's Handbook,* which could potentially lead to differing views among church leaders and members. Those who are oriented toward communicating the gospel in word and deed and establishing a church in ways that make sense to people within their local context [47] tend to contextualize, believing it makes ministry more palatable and relevant to people. As Alissa Boulton said, "We have to learn how to contextualize how we present the gospel so that it falls on ears that hear."[48] On the other hand, some could shun this practice, believing that this is following the apostate church method of securing godfathers and godmothers.

In addressing this conflicting issue, I believe that not having sponsors or guardians in child dedication remains ideal, as parenting is a responsibility that cannot be transferred to someone else. Ellen G. White reminded parents, "You carry responsibilities that no one can bear for you. As long as you live, you are accountable to God to keep His way. . . . Parents who make the word of God their guide, and realize how much their children depend upon them for the characters they form, will set an example that it will be safe for their children to follow."[49] She furtherly reiterated that health, constitution, and the development of character of children are responsibilities laid upon parents' shoulders and that no one else should be expected to fulfill this work. Hence, parents must cooperate with the Lord in educating children in sound principles.[50] Fortunately, God has already prepared the institutions necessary to support spiritual training and education.

If parents decide to dedicate their children to the Lord, it must be clear that it is a serious act of commitment; they are taking full responsibility for raising their child to love the Lord. They vow to dedicate themselves to doing their best and giving one hundred

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[46] *Seventh-Day Adventist Minister's Manual*, 196.

[47] Howard Culbertson, "What Does Contextualization in Missions Mean?" (n.d.), https://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/context.htm#:~:text=What%20does%20contextualization%20in%20missions,out%20in%20culturally%20meaningful%20ways.

[48] Culbertson, "What Does Contextualization?"

[49] Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1952), 187.

[50] White, *Adventist Home*, 187.

percent effort to raise their children spiritually. As the wisest man in the Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). Hence, parents must intentionally teach by words and by actions. To accomplish this divine purpose, God specifically instructed His chosen people to do it diligently, and that teaching must be done "when they sit in their house," "when walking in the way," "when they lay down," and "when they rise" (Deut 6:7). Interestingly, the Hebrew word for "teach" used here means "to whet" or "to sharpen." This word indicates an incisive teaching and the weighty responsibility of instructing children in matters of duty and destiny, whenever and wherever.[51] This God-given task of teaching involves various aspects such as what, when, where, and how to teach (Deut 6:3–9).

Fortunately, parents are not alone in fulfilling the serious task of spiritual education. God-established triune institutions—the family, the church, and the school—make it very possible. So, when parents dedicate their children to the Lord, they not only promise to fulfill their part diligently but also commit to bringing them to church to be taught by the Lord's teachers in both worship meetings and religious activities. Further, regardless of their life's status, they must not be deprived of Christian education and should be sent to an Adventist school whenever possible. If all these are taken seriously, these institutions serve as the best spiritual guardians.

But how about the case of godfathers and godmothers, which in some cultural contexts are called spiritual guardians or sponsors? The word "sponsor" was derived from Latin *spondere,* which means "promise." Its essence entails responsibility and obligation, promising that a child's parents are ready to help with the spiritual upbringing and growth of a child. They should encourage the child toward spiritual growth and maturity,[52] and must be an example and positive image to the child. Even if no one is perfect, if parents decide to get sponsors, the best choice is godly people with the same religious affiliation, with an ideal spiritual status, and with a perfect family life. Further, they must be informed of their serious responsibility for standing as spiritual guardians. While I believe that the harmony of the triune institutions (family, church, and school) is enough to establish a godly person, adding specific spiritual guardians for this purpose may also benefit the child.

Making the Dedication Service Meaningful

Since child dedication is a special ministry that is an act of worship, pastors and church leaders should aim to make it a meaningful experience. It must be conducted in a way that leaves an impact and lasting memory on the child's parents, family members, brethren, and

[51] "Teach" [Deut 6:7], *SDABC* 1:974.

[52] *Britannica* (2025), s.v. "godparent," https://www.britannica.com/topic/godparent.

guests. To meet this objective, the pastor and church leaders must fulfill an important role before, during, and after the scheduled occasion.

It is a good practice for the church to regularly include Sabbaths for child dedication in a calendar year. Before these dates, a series of sermons related to the upcoming occasion must be preached. At the same time, the pastor must conduct a series of seminars to educate members about the theology, historical development, essence, and purpose of child dedication. A seminar ensures understanding on the part of the church. Aside from that, the pastor must make a consecutive visit to the family to discuss all matters related to child dedication and to address any questions or concerns regarding the responsibilities of parents and family members. The goal is to teach that this event is not just an ordinary ritual or occasion but a covenant-making event. Parents should be taught to recognize their sacred responsibility and accept their divine burden from and for the Lord. Further, if there are sponsors, the pastor must meet with them and the parents to explain the real meaning of their standing as spiritual guardians.

There are also significant practices to focus on during the service to make it more meaningful. Since there are many good examples of program sequences available online in addition to the one suggested in the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook*,[53] I will no longer tell how the child dedication service should be done. Moreover, with the inspiration of God's divine Spirit, anyone may still innovate it. Still, it would be ideal if the hour of worship were devoted to this sacred ministry. The sermon should focus on the benefits of blessing the child, the importance of discipleship, and the renewal of the parents' commitment to the Lord for godly parenting. Towards the end of the sermon, the parents with their children will be called on to the platform for the dedication and commitment prayer, both for the parents, family members, and brethren. Thus, this child dedication will not just be a filler activity between any worship service.

In the act of dedication, Cherry suggests the idea of "re-thinking the emphasis of Child Dedication."[54] Re-thinking the emphasis of the ceremony will also help church leaders and pastors to hold the rites in a more interesting and meaningful way. Cherry observed that there are three different types of emphasis in child dedication. The first one is "A Service for the Blessing of a Child," which resembles Zechariah and Simeon's pronouncement of "prophetic blessing" for John the Baptist and Jesus, respectively. This dedication occurred when Zechariah received his voice again at John the Baptist's birth (Luke 1:76–79) and when Simeon, upon seeing Jesus, "took Him up in his arms" and blessed the family (Luke 2:27–35). The second emphasis is called "A Service of Welcome for the Young Disciple" and concentrates on discipleship. " Here, the purpose of the service

[53] *Seventh-Day Adventist Minister's Handbook*, 186–88.

[54] Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites," 69–72.

is to formally welcome the infant as a disciple-to-be, looking forward to a future baptism. The last one emphasizes parenting and is called a "Service for a Parental Renewal of Baptism." Instead of focusing on blessing the child and welcoming them to the church as the primary subject of nurture and care, the emphasis here is on the parents' renewal of faith and allegiance to God, enabling them to be godly parents for their child. Notably, Cherry's first and last suggestions are not connected to a future baptismal event of the child, while the second one is.[55]

In conducting a child dedication, one might choose from the three alternatives. Yet, it will be more meaningful if all of these are emphasized before, during, and repeatedly after the dedication service. The pastor should not only visit the parents to explain its significance beforehand but also repeatedly after the event to provide additional support and remind them of their sacred vow and commitment to the Lord. Further, since it identifies the child as a disciple-to-be, they must be carefully assimilated and integrated into the children's Sabbath School, where they can be mentored by godly teachers in the church. Isaiah says, "All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace (Isa 54:13). The key to fulfilling this, however, is the parents who bring and accompany the child in the church.

Conclusion

Raising questions and issues related to the church's special ministries and services is a common phenomenon among church members. Such questions are an opportunity for church leaders to revisit the foundation and theology of these practices, and to think and research for more meaningful and significant methods.

In the case of child dedication, questions also exist as to its origin, validity, essence, process, and purpose. Providing concrete answers will benefit both the leaders and members of the church. Child dedication will be better appreciated if all its aspects are properly explained, if the necessary preparations before the rites are performed, and if the pastoral process is continued even after the ceremony itself. Child dedication can nurture church members' faith and spirituality, leading to the discipleship of young ones as they grow.

Child dedication is not original in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Though it has been adopted from other Christian denominations, if properly conducted, it can still be an effective instrument for nurturing and discipleship. Its biblical and theological foundations are sound. Its purposes are significant and sacred, and therefore must be done with care and deep thought. Any contextualization to satisfy the needs of the brethren must be done

[55] Cherry, "Alternative Child Dedication Rites," 68–73.

with serious consideration and educational effort. Otherwise, it may confuse others and cause them to stumble. I hope that the concepts and principles presented in this article will help church members view this service as extraordinary and help church leaders administer it systematically with extra care and effort

Baptized Too Soon? Early Baptism and Church Retention Among Philippine Seventh-day Adventists

Jazel Diaz
Dan Namanya

Abstract

Baptism is a foundational rite in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. It symbolizes personal faith and entry into church membership. In the Philippines, baptizing children aged 6–12 during evangelistic campaigns has become widespread, particularly in schools. While this brings youthful participation, it raises concerns about spiritual readiness, doctrinal understanding, and long-term retention. This article explores the theology of baptism and the appropriate age within the SDA framework. It draws from Scripture, the *Church Manual*, and Ellen G. White's counsel on childhood accountability. The study considers child development research, noting the tension between a child's sincere faith and their need for moral and cognitive maturity. It identifies post-baptism challenges among young members, including struggles with Adventist lifestyle standards, shallow doctrinal grasp, and disengagement. It suggests that baptism may be treated more as a ritual than a conviction. To improve retention, the paper highlights the importance of discipleship, mentoring, and active family involvement. It recommends reforms such as age-appropriate doctrinal instruction, intentional post-baptism support systems, and a shift away from number-driven baptismal targets. With a Philippine context in focus, this paper urges churches to balance evangelistic enthusiasm with pastoral discernment, ensuring that baptism remains a sacred commitment and the beginning of lifelong spiritual growth.

Keywords: Early baptism, church retention, Philippine context, discipleship, mentoring

Introduction

In the Philippines, it is common for children in elementary school to participate in baptisms held during church school "Week of Prayer" programs or public evangelistic meetings. National campaigns such as "Philippines for Christ" in 2018, reported by the *Adventist Review*, recorded large numbers of baptisms across the country, reflecting the strong

engagement of young people and families in these efforts.[1] In 2024, a collaborative evangelistic initiative named "Kids for Jesus Season 2" among 106 Adventist elementary schools in the southern Philippines led to 1,153 baptisms**,** many of which involved young students publicly declaring their decision "to give their lives to Jesus."[2] These reports underscore the strong evangelistic focus of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in the Philippines, on nurturing the next generation to Christ at an early age.

Adventist education has long been regarded as one of the church's most effective evangelistic agencies. Global figures indicate that between 30,000 and 50,000 students in Adventist schools are baptized annually, often during year-end spiritual emphasis programs. This amounts to over 427,000 student baptisms worldwide between 2006 and 2015.[3] These outcomes reveal both the church's passion for youth evangelism and its confidence in the effectiveness of school-based ministry.

While early baptisms are rightly celebrated as spiritual victories, they also raise significant theological and pastoral concerns. Many children make baptismal decisions with limited life experience and an understanding of faith shaped by age-appropriate reasoning. Some church members and leaders express concern that the rate of attrition among those baptized at a young age is uncomfortably high. As these children mature, some struggle to maintain Adventist lifestyle practices, while others lose interest in church life altogether. Such trends invite scrutiny over whether young candidates were adequately prepared for the lifelong covenant that baptism represents.[4]

Nevertheless, not all experiences are negative. Many children baptized in their school years remain faithful and develop into spiritually mature leaders within the church. These contrasting outcomes suggest that the timing of baptism, while important, is not the sole determinant of long-term faithfulness. Instead, the presence or absence of intentional nurture, doctrinal instruction, and mentoring significantly affects outcomes.

This article, therefore, explores the theological and practical implications of early baptism in the Philippine SDA context. It examines the biblical and Adventist theology of baptism, the developmental question of childhood spiritual readiness, and common challenges observed after early baptism. The study aims to provide recommendations that will assist church leaders in balancing evangelistic zeal with pastoral discernment. The goal

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[1] Adventist Review Staff, "Mega Adventist Clinic Serves More Than 8,000 in the Philippines," *Adventist Review*, July 19, 2018, https://adventistreview.org/news/mega-adventist-clinic
-serves-more-than-8000-in-the-philippines/; Adventist Review Staff, "Hundreds Baptized in the Philippines After 'It Is Written' Evangelistic Series," *Adventist Review*, July 31, 2018, https://adventistreview.org/news /hundreds-baptized-in-the-philippines-after-it-is-written-evangelistic-series/.

[2] Adventist Review Staff, "Kids for Jesus Season 2."

[3] John Wesley Taylor V, "Adventist Education and Student Baptisms: Global Statistics and Reflections," *Journal of Adventist Education* 78.3 (2016): 4–9.

[4] See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1900), 6:93.

is to promote a discipleship-centered model of evangelism, in which baptism is not merely the end of a campaign but the beginning of a lifelong journey supported by the faith community.

Biblical and Adventist Theology of Baptism

Biblical Foundations

In the New Testament, baptism is instituted as the central rite of Christian initiation. Jesus' Great Commission links baptism with discipleship and instruction (Matt 28:19–20). Baptism is portrayed as the outward expression of inward conversion, symbolizing repentance, forgiveness, and new birth into Christ's death and resurrection (Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3–4). Biblical narratives show baptism following personal belief, as with the converts at Pentecost or the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:12, 36–38). Though Scripture records "household" baptisms (e.g., Acts 16:15), it never presents infant baptism. The consistent pattern is "believer's baptism." Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) theology affirms this model, holding that baptism is appropriate only when a person can personally repent and trust in Christ. Infants are dedicated, not baptized, until they can responsibly choose faith.[5]

Meaning and Mode of Baptism

Adventist theology emphasizes baptism's gravity. The *Church Manual*, citing Ellen G. White, declares: "Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world… [and] the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom."[6] Baptism represents dying to sin and living anew in Christ. It is not a casual ritual but a covenantal commitment. The Adventist mode is immersion, reflecting Christ's burial and resurrection (Rom 6:3–5). The term *baptizō* itself denotes dipping or immersing. For Adventists, immersion embodies the totality of surrender and rebirth.

Baptism and Church Membership

In the SDA polity, baptism is inseparable from church membership. Candidates, upon baptism, are received into the fellowship of the local and worldwide body.[7] Baptism in

[5] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 44.

[6] White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:91–93.

[7] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 46.

Adventism carries both ecclesial and personal significance: candidates publicly affirm vows or statements that reflect core Adventist doctrines, including key beliefs about Christ, repentance, and discipleship. In Adventist doctrine, Fundamental Belief #15 describes baptism as a public testimony of faith in Christ's death and resurrection, a confession of sin, and a commitment to walk in newness of life.[8] The *Church Manual* requires that candidates demonstrate recognition of sin, repentance, and conversion, and undergo doctrinal instruction.[9] Ministers are charged to examine candidates thoroughly, ensuring a genuine understanding and conviction before baptism.[10]

Although the Church sets no fixed minimum age, it advises caution with very young children. Requests for baptism should lead to an age-appropriate instruction program. Each case is judged individually: sincere conversion in a child is possible, but careful preparation is necessary.[11] Pastors and elders thus play a vital role in discerning readiness.

Ellen G. White's Counsel on Child Baptism

Ellen G. White affirms that children can experience genuine conversion. She observed that children aged eight to twelve may understand their sinfulness and the way of salvation when properly taught.[12] She warned against postponing spiritual guidance, noting that delaying faith instruction could deprive children of early responsiveness to Christ. At the same time, White counseled against haste: baptism is "a most sacred and important ordinance," requiring both children and parents to "count the cost."[13] Parents who consent to baptism pledge to steward their child's spiritual growth and are accountable if they neglect this duty.[14] Thus, baptism at a young age obliges both family and church to nurture faith diligently.

Spiritual Readiness in Childhood

This section considers the question of spiritual readiness for baptism in childhood. It highlights the developmental, theological, and cultural factors that influence a child's ability to make such a commitment. The following discussion draws from psychology,

[8] Seventh-day Adventist Church, Fundamental Belief # 15: "Baptism," https://adventist.org /beliefs#belief-15.

[9] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 45.

[10] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 46–47.

[11] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 47.

[12] White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:400.

[13] Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1991), 295.

[14] White, *Counsels for the Church*, 296.

moral development theory, biblical principles, and the Philippine context to provide a thoughtful framework for discernment.

Cognitive and Moral Development

Jean Piaget's model places most children under age 12 in the *concrete operational* stage, where they think in literal, concrete terms.[15] Lawrence Kohlberg's research on moral reasoning shows that children at this age usually operate within pre-conventional or conventional stages, motivated by reward, punishment, or external approval.[16] Higher levels of moral reasoning—principled choices grounded in internalized values—typically begin to emerge in early adolescence. Developmental research shows that around ages twelve to fourteen, young people increasingly shift from externally motivated behavior to moral judgments based on internal standards and principles of fairness and conscience.[17] Thus, while a nine-year-old may love Jesus sincerely, they are less likely to comprehend baptism as a lifelong covenant than a fourteen-year-old who can reflect on deeper spiritual responsibility.

The Concept of Accountability

Closely related is the theological concept of an "age of accountability." Scripture itself does not assign a specific age, though Jewish tradition recognized moral responsibility at the bar mitzvah (about age 13). The Seventh-day Adventist Church has no formal doctrine fixing an age for baptism, yet the Church Manual urges that candidates demonstrate personal understanding and commitment. Many ministers, therefore, hesitate to baptize very young children, preferring to wait until early adolescence, around age 12 or later, when moral reasoning and independent decision-making are more developed.[18] This guideline aligns with Luke 2:41–47, where the twelve-year-old Jesus demonstrated personal spiritual discernment.

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[15] Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 110–13.

[16] Lawrence Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 1:120–22.

[17] Saul McLeod, "Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development," *Simply Psychology*, last modified February 2023, https://www.simplypsychology.org/kohlberg.html; Nancy Eisenberg et al., "Age Changes in Prosocial Responding and Moral Reasoning in Adolescence," *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 15 (2005): 235–260; Tera Jones, "Moral Development During Adolescence," *Lumen Learning: Lifespan Development*, 2025, https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wm-lifespandevelopment/chapter/moral-development-during-adolescence/.

[18] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 45–6; Louis Jacobs, *The Jewish Religion: A Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 38; Saul McLeod, "Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development," *Simply Psychology* (February 2023), https://www.simplypsychology.org/kohlberg.html.

Assessing Readiness Individually

Nevertheless, age alone cannot determine readiness. Some nine-year-olds display genuine faith and depth, while some thirteen-year-olds remain immature. Readiness should be measured by a child's experience with God, grasp of fundamental doctrines, and motivation for baptism.

Key indicators include:

1. **Understanding of faith and doctrine.** Candidates should at a minimum comprehend who Jesus is, what sin and repentance mean, and the significance of baptism. Simplified baptismal guides aid instruction, yet comprehension can be shallow. Many young Adventists later confess they did not fully understand church beliefs when baptized.
2. **Peer and parental influence.** Children often request baptism under the influence of friends, parents, or revival events. While encouragement is natural, pastors must discern whether the decision arises from genuine conviction or social conformity.
3. **Emotional and volitional maturity.** Younger children live in the present and struggle with long-term commitments. Baptism, however, entails lifelong discipleship. Pastors should look for consistency in devotional practices, moral awareness, and sincerity of motivation.
4. **Spiritual conviction.** Ultimately, baptism is about a personal relationship with Christ. Even a child may display genuine repentance, prayer, and trust in Jesus. When such evidence is present, readiness is stronger, though continued guidance remains essential.

Cultural Considerations in the Philippines

The Philippine context further complicates readiness. Strong family orientation may lead children to comply with parental or pastoral wishes without a complete understanding. Catholic cultural influence also contributes, as Adventist parents may desire baptism for their children early, paralleling Catholic infant baptism or first communion. "Mass baptisms" at school graduations reinforce this dynamic, sometimes turning baptism into a rite of passage rather than an expression of conviction.

Common Challenges Observed After Early Baptism

When children are baptized at a young age, their subsequent spiritual journey often reveals distinctive challenges. Entering adolescence while already bearing a public baptismal commitment can produce tension between youthful immaturity and church expectations. Field observations in Philippine congregations, supported by findings from Adventist youth studies such as the Valuegenesis project, highlight several recurring issues.[19]

Difficulty Maintaining Adventist Standards

The Seventh-day Adventist Church upholds distinctive lifestyle standards that include Sabbath observance, healthful living, modesty, and abstinence from alcohol and biblically unclean foods. For children baptized at ages eight to ten, these expectations are often maintained through parental guidance and external discipline. As adolescence introduces greater independence, however, temptations and peer influence can weaken compliance. Many young people describe feeling the weight of community scrutiny; any small lapse (like engaging in leisure activities on the Sabbath) was met with disapproval and reminders of their baptismal commitment. Without a deeply internalized faith, these standards can come to feel imposed rather than personally chosen, leading some to distance themselves from them during their teenage years.

Doctrinal Gaps and Weak Identity

Many early-baptized children receive simplified baptismal instruction but lack a deeper grounding in doctrine. Later in adolescence, they may find themselves unable to explain Adventist beliefs or defend them against questions. Some admit they "didn't make the decision" themselves, while others describe their faith as routine rather than conviction. This doctrinal weakness often translates into fragile denominational identity. Such youth may view themselves as generic Christians, vulnerable to secular or alternative religious influences when exposed to them in high school or university.

[19] Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-Year Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000); see also Jimmy Kijai, "A Synopsis of the Valuegenesis Study of Faith Maturity and Denominational Commitment," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 2.1 (1993):81–4, https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219309484770.

Routine Participation vs. Heartfelt Engagement

For some children, baptism feels like a graduation rather than the start of discipleship. Participation in church continues primarily as a routine activity. Several young adults recall that after baptism at 10 or 11, little follow-up occurred. Their religious life became simply "going to church every Sabbath . . . doing things more of a requirement." When personal devotional growth stalled, external habits could not sustain long-term faith. Many disengaged quietly once parental supervision lessened.

Identity Crisis and Immaturity in Adolescence

Adolescence is naturally a time of identity exploration. For those baptized at age 9 or 10, the teenage years often bring questions: "Did I know what I was doing? Do I really believe this now?" Some seek rebaptism later, claiming their childhood baptism lacked depth. Others continue with a "children's Sabbath School" level of faith, inadequate for adult challenges. Without intentional discipleship, baptism risks being perceived as premature and less meaningful.

Disillusionment and Attrition

The most serious outcome is attrition. Globally, the SDA Church reports that about 40 percent of baptized members eventually leave. Youth are disproportionately represented in this loss, with many who join the church in childhood disengaging during their adolescent and young adult years. Common reasons include peer influence, insufficient grounding in faith, and limited spiritual maturity. By contrast, those who remain active often point to mentoring relationships and supportive families as crucial anchors.[20]

Retention and Discipleship Implications

The challenges of early baptism highlight a crucial principle: baptism must not be treated as the endpoint of evangelism but as the beginning of discipleship. Jesus' Great Commission links baptism with continued teaching (Matt 28:20), emphasizing that formation must follow the rite. For children baptized at an early age, the role of family,

[20] John Wesley Taylor V, "Adventist Youth Retention: A Global Concern," *JAE* 78.3 (2016): 12–17.

pastors, and the local church is indispensable. True success in youth evangelism is not measured by the number baptized but by the number still walking with Christ ten or twenty years later.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Factors

Studies in Adventist contexts suggest that while many child baptisms are influenced by external pressures such as family expectations, school environments, or evangelistic campaigns, long-term commitment is more often sustained by internal motivations. Research indicates that those who remain active in church frequently point to a personal relationship with God or love for Jesus as their anchor. It highlights that conversion is progressive; baptism may initiate the journey, but genuine personal conviction often emerges later. At the same time, extrinsic supports—such as fellowship, choirs, youth groups, and friendships—play a vital role in anchoring young believers and creating the environment where faith can mature.[21]

Pastors and Mentors

Pastoral responsibility intensifies after baptism, especially for those baptized at an early age. Research shows that young people long for intentional mentorship and consistent guidance from spiritual leaders. Both the *Valuegenesis 2* survey and Roger Dudley's longitudinal study on youth retention found that adolescents who experienced ongoing pastoral care and mentoring were significantly more likely to remain engaged in church life. These findings underscore that post-baptismal nurture is as vital as pre-baptismal preparation.[22] A shift from viewing pastors merely as officiants to recognizing them as mentors is essential. In many Adventist settings, structured post-baptism discipleship initiatives that continue for several months have been introduced to help new members grow spiritually and remain connected to the church community. Adapting such models for children could provide ongoing, age-appropriate faith formation after baptism. Pairing newly baptized children with mentors like pastors, elders, teachers, or youth leaders for prayer, Bible study, and spiritual accountability would help ensure they continue developing rather than being left to navigate faith on their own.[23]

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[21] See V. Bailey Gillespie et al., *Valuegenesis 2: Adventist Church and Youth Survey 2000* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University, 2000); Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-Year Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000).

[22] Gillespie et al., *Valuegenesis 2*; Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church.*

[23] Jim Howard, "Discover the Power of Discipleship and Leave the Back Door Open!," *Elder's Digest* (First Quarter 2019), https://www.eldersdigest.org/en/2019/1/discover-the-power-of-discipleship-and-leave-the-back-door-open%21; General Conference Nurture and Retention Committee, ed., *Discipling, Nurturing, and Reclaiming: Nurture and Retention Summit Resource Manual* (Silver

Family and Parental Role

The family plays a decisive role, especially in the Philippines, where family ties are strong. Ellen G. White reminds parents that consenting to baptism obligates them to steward their child's faith: if neglected, "you yourselves are responsible if they lose interest in the truth."[24] Practically, parents can nurture retention through family worship, open faith conversations, and involving children in ministry. Families that integrate faith into daily life—rather than confining it to Sabbath—help children internalize commitment.

Discipleship-Centered Evangelism

Philippine churches often emphasize baptismal numbers, sometimes resulting in mass baptisms of elementary children during evangelistic campaigns. While zealous, this practice risks shallow commitments.[25] A discipleship-centered model would emphasize careful preparation and sustained post-baptism care over mass baptisms. In the South Philippine Union Conference, leaders have initiated research into evangelistic methods and retention strategies, indicating a growing institutional focus on long-term faithfulness.[26] In practice, this means integrating children into small groups, youth societies, or Pathfinders immediately after baptism.

Youth Integration and Leadership

Youth integration and leadership opportunities strengthen retention when young people are entrusted with meaningful roles. Many youth remain active because of involvement in music, service, or leading worship. Adventist youth programs like the **Pathfinder** and **Adventurer** clubs provide structured environments for discipleship, doctrine instruction, and service while fostering identity and leadership skills.[27] Opportunities for testimony and ministry, such as "Kids for Jesus" rallies, also strengthen

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Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2019, https://www.gcsession.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Discipling-Nurturing-and-Reclaiming-Nurture-and-Retention-Summit.pdf.

[24] Ellen G. White, *Counsels for the Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1991), 295–96.

[25] Bernardino, "Youth and the Church," 35.

[26] Quin Salarda, "Adventist Researchers Examine Correlation Between Evangelistic Practices and Church Retention within the SPUC," *Mizpah*, 2025, https://spucadventist.org/news/adventist-researchers-examine-correlation-between-evangelistic-practices-and-church-retention.

[27] General Conference Youth Ministries, "Pathfinders," 2025, https://www.gcyouthministries.org/ministries/pathfinders/; General Conference Youth Ministries, "Adventurers," 2025, https://www.gcyouthministries.org/ministries/adventurers/.

ownership of faith. When young people are given responsibility, they are more likely to stay engaged.

Responding to Struggles

A grace-filled church culture is also essential. White counseled parents not to scold or shame baptized children when they fail but to help them repent and grow.[28] Churches must extend this same spirit, creating safe spaces where struggling youth can be honest without fear of condemnation. A supportive rather than judgmental environment makes it more likely that faltering young believers will remain connected and recover spiritually.

Recommendations for Church Practice

Drawing from the reflections above, several recommendations can help the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, especially in the Philippines, strengthen the outcomes of early baptism. The aim is to ensure that children who are baptized are both adequately prepared and continually nurtured, moving the church away from a numbers-driven model toward a discipleship-centered one.

Strengthen Pre-Baptismal Preparation

The SDA *Church Manual* mandates that baptismal candidates receive "proper instruction" before admission into membership.[29] For children, this should mean age-appropriate doctrinal classes lasting several months, with comprehension checks and parental involvement.[30] Children should not be baptized merely based on a hand raised during an evangelistic call. Instead, they should complete structured lessons—such as *My Place With Jesus* or *God Loves Me 28 Ways*—and be able to articulate basic beliefs.[31] This process affirms quality over quantity and helps pastors resist pressure for mass baptisms motivated by numerical goals.

[28] Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1954), 499.

[29] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 45.

[30] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 46.

[31] General Conference Children's Ministries, *God Loves Me 28 Ways* (Silver Spring, MD: GC Children's Ministries, 2010).

Institute Post-Baptism Discipleship

Baptism should be followed by structured discipleship. Filipino churches can establish "New Believers Clubs" or post-baptism classes that continue for six to twelve months, so children review core doctrines more deeply and practice habits such as daily devotion and witnessing. In many fields, new members are also assigned to small groups or ministry teams to strengthen retention and community support.[32] A similar practice in the Philippines, such as integrating newly baptized children into Pathfinder units or Sabbath School leadership, would ensure they experience a sense of belonging and growth.

Implement Mentoring Systems

Every baptized child should be paired with a mentor, either an elder, a youth leader, or a mature member, who checks in regularly, prays with them, and models Christian living. This formal "buddy" system echoes Ellen G. White's counsel that parents and the church together pledge to guide baptized children.[33] In contexts where parents are not active Adventists, mentors or "foster families" can provide a crucial spiritual home. Older Adventist youth can also serve as peer mentors, offering a "big brother/sister" role to younger members.

Provide Progressive Faith Education

Baptismal instruction should not end at the font. Churches and Adventist schools should map a progression of faith formation: reinforcement classes for juniors, doctrinal reviews for early teens, and vow renewal opportunities for older youth. Tools like the *ChristWise* guide for teens can be helpful.[34] Annual "baptismal renewal" services, where young members consciously reaffirm their vows, may also strengthen identity. Such continuing education acknowledges that baptism at age 10 is only the beginning of a lifelong learning process.

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[32] G. T. Ng, "Every Adventist Urged to Help Stem Membership Losses," *Adventist Review*, October 10, 2016, https://adventistreview.org/news/every-adventist-urged-to-help-stem-membership
-losses/; General Conference Nurture and Retention Committee, ed., *Discipling, Nurturing, and Reclaiming*; Trans-European Division, "Nurture and Retention Recommendations," Trans-European Division Nurture and Retention Summit, November 13–14, 2017, https://ted.adventist.org/images/news
-2017/Nurture-and-Retention-Recommendations---Final-revised1.pdf.

[33] White, *Counsels for the Church*, 295–96.

[34] Troy Fitzgerald, *ChristWise: Discipleship Guide for Juniors and Teens* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2004).

Shift Evangelistic Metrics

The Philippine evangelistic approach often prioritizes the number of baptisms, sometimes at the expense of readiness. Moving forward, campaigns could adopt retention goals alongside baptism goals—such as reporting how many baptized children remain active after one year. The South Philippine Union Conference has launched research into retention and evangelistic practices, signaling a shift toward valuing long-term faithfulness.[35] Evangelists should frame baptism not as a conclusion but as the first step of discipleship, setting realistic expectations for growth.

Engage Youth in Ministry

Young members should be entrusted with meaningful responsibilities in the life of the church. Participation in choirs, Sabbath School leadership, Pathfinder activities, or community outreach fosters ownership of faith and strengthens commitment. The Pathfinder and Adventurer programs of the General Conference Youth Ministries Department intentionally cultivate discipleship through service, leadership, and spiritual growth.[36] Programs like "Kids for Jesus" campaigns, where children preach or testify, demonstrate that young believers can serve powerfully when well-guided. Engagement transforms baptism from ritual into lived discipleship.

Cultivate a Supportive Church Culture

Finally, churches must create environments where young believers are supported, not condemned, when they falter. White counsels parents not to scold but to help children "make it right again."[37] Extending this principle, congregations should treat struggles with empathy, offering encouragement and accountability. A culture of grace prevents discouragement and keeps youth connected during times of doubt or weakness.

[35] Salarda, "Adventist Researchers Examine."

[36] General Conference Youth Ministries, "Pathfinders"; General Conference Youth Ministries, "Adventurers."

[37] White, *Child Guidance*, 499.

Conclusion

Baptism in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church is a sacred covenant, signifying lifelong commitment to Christ and His body. Whether chosen at age twelve or thirty, it carries profound spiritual meaning. When children in the Philippines step forward for baptism, the church rightly rejoices. Yet such decisions also impose a solemn duty upon the faith community. Research affirms that while children can experience genuine conversion, premature baptism without discernment and nurture often leads to confusion, routine faith, or disengagement later in life. By contrast, when preparation is thorough and mentoring intentional, early baptism can ground a child in lasting discipleship.

The Philippine Adventist Church, known for its vibrant evangelism and frequent child baptisms in crusades and schools, must therefore recalibrate its practice. Evangelistic urgency must be held in tension with pastoral responsibility. Ellen G. White cautioned, "There should be no undue haste. . . . Let children and parents count the cost."[38] It is far better to delay baptism than to baptize without readiness and later lament attrition. Baptism is not the finish line of evangelism but the beginning of a lifelong journey with Christ, one that the church covenants to nurture.

Thus, pastors, educators, and families are called to adopt a more intentional model: clear preparation before baptism, affirming support at baptism, and sustained discipleship afterward. Young believers must be taught, mentored, and integrated into meaningful ministry so that baptism marks not only a public pledge but also the start of enduring growth. The Philippine Adventist Church is blessed with thousands of children in its schools and congregations; these are not statistics but future disciples. Let the guiding principle be: every child baptized, we keep.

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[38] White, *Counsels for the Church*, 295.

Church Discipline in a Filipino Context: Biblical, Cultural, and Practical Insights

Francis Gayoba

Abstract

This study examines the practice of church discipline within the Filipino Seventh-day Adventist context, offering insights for addressing open sin in the church. True discipline avoids two extremes—malpractice and non-practice—seeking instead to balance holiness and love, conceptualized as a redemptive process rather than punishment. Complicating the biblical application of discipline are Filipino cultural factors such as relational morality and the shame–honor dynamic that can undermine the biblical process. To address the problem, relevant biblical principles and practices are discussed that place the practice of discipline within the theological context of God's holiness, the church's pursuit of holiness, and the difficulties of balancing love and forgiveness with expectations of holiness. Finally, culturally attuned approaches that uphold Scripture while engaging Filipino values are proposed. Church leaders are called to understand discipline as an act of love and restoration, expressing both the holiness of God and the grace of Christ within the realities of Filipino culture.

Introduction

One of the most difficult challenges a church faces is when a member commits *open sin*, in other words, those that have become public knowledge. For a *private sin* that is unknown to the public, the situation is more easily and discreetly resolved. But in the case of sins that have become public, the situation is much more complicated to resolve, especially with various misconceptions regarding how the church should carry out discipline.

The purpose of this essay is to provide cultural, biblical, and practical insights to guide any local Filipino Seventh-day Adventist Church in dealing with its erring members, although these may be applied to other cultures as well. The focus is on dealing with open sins, but some principles may also be applied to private sins. The specific procedures of

church discipline will not be discussed here, as they can already be found in the *Church Manual*.[1]

Finding Balance

In dealing with church discipline, two extremes must be avoided. The first is the malpractice of discipline. Far too often, church discipline is done incorrectly, through an attitude of casting shame rather than extending grace, with the purpose of punishing rather than redeeming. This can lead to the erring member feeling cast aside without an opportunity for restoration. Other malpractices are casting too severe a disciplinary action for the offense, or not following the proper procedures. Such instances may lead to church members becoming wary of the disciplinary process itself.

The opposite extreme is the non-practice of discipline. While it is possible that some churches may be blessed with members who are so righteous as to make discipline unnecessary, it is far more likely that churches that do not practice discipline do not think it necessary to publicly correct their erring members. The prevalent culture of today emphasizes tolerance, forgiveness, and unlimited and unconditional acceptance of all behavior, whether moral or immoral.[2] Commonly used is Matthew 7:1, "Judge not, that you be not judged."[3] Some think that to point out any sinful behavior is to "throw the first stone" (John 8:7). The "virtue" of tolerance is held in the highest regard.[4] Some perceive discipline as unloving and prefer to just "forgive and forget," in effect ignoring or tolerating the sin that has occurred. This is true even within Adventism.[5]

This article is an attempt to address the second extreme, resulting from my personal pastoral experience. I ask the reader to keep this in mind, as this article's goal is to emphasize the need for proper church discipline, and not to correct the malpractice of

[1] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 56–68.

[2] See Dan Serns, "Is Church Discipline Still Needed?" *Adventist Review* (April 19, 2008), https://adventistreview.org/2008-1511/2008-1511-8.

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations are taken from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982). Matt 7:1, however, is not a statement against critiquing and condemning bad behavior. Instead, it is a rebuke against hypocritical criticism. A few verses later, Jesus warns against false prophets (Matt. 7:15–16). We do need to make judgment calls, discerning between true and false, and between right and wrong. Jesus even reminds us to "judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). The Apostle Paul even authorizes the church to "judge those who are inside" the church (1 Cor. 5:12). Hypocritical criticism is wrong, but righteous judgment (or discernment) is necessary.

[4] For a Christian response to the prevalent cultural notion of "tolerance," I recommend Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *The Beauty of Intolerance: Setting a Generation Free to Know Truth and Love* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Shiloh Press, 2016).

[5] In studying Adventist members who opposed church discipline, Stefan Radu observes three general positions: confusion, total neglect, or open opposition. Stefan Radu, "Church Discipline and Grace" (Andrews University, D.Min. diss, 2000), 5. I am indebted to Radu's comprehensive work, which informs much of the biblical discussion written here.

church discipline (though some suggestions are given). While the first extreme is indeed a problem that needs to be addressed, I will reserve it for a separate study.

Discipline and Filipino Culture

In a Filipino context, some cultural elements make it especially challenging to carry out proper discipline in the church.[6] Two elements deserve special attention: the relational nature of morality and the culture of shame and honor.

Relational Morality

Filipino culture is communitarian by nature.[7] Interpersonal relationships are more important than individualism. Personal identity is found not *apart* from the group but *within* the group. "The '*ako'* [I] remains linked to the '*kami'* [we]."[8] Happiness is found not in the self but within the group.[9] This identity and fulfillment based on group-oriented interpersonal relationships form a central part of what it means to be Filipino.

Ethics and moral decisions are also largely based on relationships, rather than on an objective external standard.[10] Filipino morality is not so much based on principles, but on maintaining good relationships and not offending anybody. The welfare of the family is the highest value. Decisions regarding right or wrong can be primarily based on whether it is good for the family. For example, for some Filipino Adventists, marrying a non-Adventist can be acceptable if the soon-to-be spouse is well-off and can provide financial security for the family.[11] Another example is that some Adventists can turn a blind eye to a church member working on the Sabbath because it is the only way to provide for his family. It can be challenging for a Filipino pastor to bring matters of discipline to the church because often members of the church board would rather preserve their relationship with the offending person than vote for a disciplinary procedure. For some, preserving relationships is more important than preserving moral standards. In other words, Filipino

[6] These cultural elements are not necessarily limited to Filipino culture and may be manifested in different forms in other cultures.

[7] "Everybody should fulfill his obligations to the members of his group from which, in his turn, he derives identity, reputation, security, and the satisfaction of acceptance." Niels Mulder, "Filipino Culture and Social Analysis," *Philippine Studies* 42.1 (1994): 85

[8] Jaime C. Batulao, "Hiya," *Philippine Studies* 12.3 (1964): 431. The Filipino concepts of *loób* and *kapwa* are inseparable. Jeremiah Lasquety-Reyes, "Loób and Kapwa: Introduction to a Filipino Virtue Ethics," *Asian Philosophy* 25.2 (2015): 153–157. "In Filipino, *kapwa* is the unity of the 'self' and 'others.' The English 'others' is actually used in opposition to the 'self,' and implies the recognition of the self as a separate identity. In contrast, *kapwa* is a recognition of shared identity, an inner self shared with others." Virgilio Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1992), 52. "If the Filipino wants to harmonize himself… the tendency is not to be individualistic but to blend oneself with others." Mercado, "Filipino Thought," 234.

[9] Mercado, "Filipino Thought," 233.

[10] "Conscience is located in relationships; not fulfilling obligations, not showing gratitude cause the discomfort of shame." Mulder, "Filipino Culture," 83.

[11] The examples given here are anecdotal reports from pastors, and not necessarily a widespread phenomenon.

morality is "conscience from the outside."[12] Right and wrong are primarily based on what the group believes, not on what an individual believes. Thus, in Filipino culture, morality is primarily relationship-based, not principle-based.

Because maintaining good interpersonal relationships is paramount, Filipinos are non-confrontational and will go to great lengths to maintain the "everything is okay" atmosphere of the church. It can be considered embarrassing to "rock the boat" by calling out wrongdoing. Filipinos are more used to the *parinig* approach: dropping hints about a person's wrong behavior. Filipinos feel that a direct confrontation crosses a line that makes the relationship difficult to repair.[13] Since maintaining peace with everyone—at least in the public eye—is paramount, any outright confrontation regarding sin threatens the ecclesiastical homeostasis and is avoided as much as possible.[14]

Misconceptions regarding church discipline can lead members to think that disciplinary actions primarily separate the individual from the group, which is a terrible punishment. Because "from childhood until death the Filipino is hardly alone," a separation from a group can be seen as a terrible punishment.[15] Inclusion, unity, and friendly relations must be preserved at all costs.[16]

Shame and Honor

Filipino culture is a shame-and-honor society.[17] Filipino morality can be based on how one's *amor-propio* (self-esteem) is affected by *dangal* (honor) and *hiya* (shame).[18] Being put to shame (*pahiya*) is one of the worst possible experiences for a Filipino. As the saying goes, "*Hindi bale kung hindi mo ako mahalin, huwag mo lang ako hiyain* (It does not matter if you don't love me, as long as you don't put me to shame.)"[19] Actions are acceptable or

[12] Vitaliano R. Gorospe, "Christian Renewal of Filipino Values," *Philippine Studies* 14.2 (1966): 195. Emphasis in original.

[13] "Frankness in general does not seem to be a Filipino virtue. Courteous insincerity (*dilí-dilí, paghili-hili*) belongs to Filipino etiquette. Likewise the concern for not hurting the feelings of others is approached by indirect ways and imprecise vague words." Leonardo N. Mercado, "Filipino Thought," *Philippine Studies* 20.2 (1972): 234.

[14] Even victims of abuse have difficulty confronting perpetrators, and many turn to social media as an outlet. Niña V. Guno, "With No Closure from Justice System, Filipino Victims of Sexual Misconduct Call Out Abusers Online," *Inquirer*, January 22, 2020, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1218211/with-no-closure-from-justice-system-filipino-victims-of-sexual-misconduct-call-out-abusers-online. Of course, *hiya* is also factor.

[15] Mercado, "Filipino Thought," 233.

[16] Lasquety-Reyes, "Loób and Kapwa," 167, identifies oneness or *pagkakaisa* as the goal of Filipino virtue ethics.

[17] Filipino culture shares this trait with much of the Global South (Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia). This contrasts with the guilt and innocence culture predominant in Europe and North America. Guilt-innocence cultures tend to view wrong behavior individualistically rather than collectively, and are more direct in their communication style when confronting a perceived offense.

[18] However, Gorospe points that *hiya*, "when modified, can be a potential for the Christian values of chastity and modesty, self-respect and decency, and sensitivity to the feelings of others as persons. It can be the natural basis for the Christian virtue of temperance and prudence." Gorospe, "Christian Renewal," 222–223.

[19] Vitaliano R. Gorospe, "Sources of Filipino Moral Consciousness," *Philippine Studies* 25.3 (1977): 285.

unacceptable based on how they affect personal or familial honor. Filipinos are averse to confrontation for fear of hurting others' egos and bringing *hiya* upon them.[20]

Because of the fear of *hiya*, families must protect their honor from the shameful actions of a family member. Consequently, when an individual does something wrong, the rest of the family tends to protect and hide the sin, because of *hiya* upon the family. This occurs even in the church, where the natural instinct of relatives is to protect their reputation by concealing the offense, instead of openly addressing the sin. Even other church members close to the family will enable the concealment. The main reason for *hiya* is not the action itself, but how being caught affects the honor of the family.[21]

Filipinos have difficulty evaluating their personal situation (including personal sins) from an objective perspective: "the emotional personalism of the average Filipino… often violates objective evaluation."[22] Moreover, "Seldom can the average Filipino evaluate ideas and principles apart from the person expressing them."[23] Thus, when church members confront others' sins, it can seem like a personally directed insult. Within a shame-and-honor society, to attack another person's reputation can be seen as an unforgivable offense.[24] Confronting another person's sin can be interpreted as an attack upon one's ego, a direct *pahiya*.

Such Filipino cultural elements can make their way into the church dynamics and make church discipline a complicated and potentially even hostile endeavor. Thus, it is even more imperative that Filipino values and cultural elements be evaluated and redirected in the light of Scripture, especially regarding discipline.[25]

A Holy God, A Holy Church

Holiness is central to God's character, a trait He aims to instill into His created beings. He instructs Israel to "be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2), which is echoed in 1 Pet 1:15–16, an indication that holiness is still God's intention for the Christian church.

The Church that God established was created to facilitate the upward progression

[20] "What makes *hiyâ* so soul-shaking is the fact that the threatening danger is not to a mere segment of the personality, but to the ego itself. 'What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his ego?' What is being questioned is the worth of the self." Batulao, "Hiya," 426.

[21] Gorospe observes that Filipino morality is also characterized by the "'Don't-be-caught" attitude based on shame or fear of the authority figure." Gorospe, "Christian Renewal," 196.

[22] Josefina D. Constantino, "The Filipino Mental Make-up and Science," *Philippine Sociological Review* (January 1966): 23.

[23] Constantino, "Filipino Mental Make-up," 23.

[24] "When the mask is pierced and the unindividuated ego is exposed for what it is, disaster has struck. The person has been *napahiyâ* [shamed]. A hostile unmasking by another is thus the unforgiveable sin." Batulao, "Hiya," 435.

[25] This article addresses discipline from a church perspective, and thus focuses on the New Testament where ecclesiastical dynamics are more prominent. Consequently, Old Testament practices for dealing with erring brethren are not discussed here.

toward holiness. Of course, the Church is made up of sinners saved by grace. No one can claim to be righteous (Rom 3:10), but the Church is composed of sinners who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus and have committed to being distinct from the world (John 17:15–17; Rom 12:1–2). Those who have accepted Jesus have "died to sin" and now "walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:1–4), aiming for "holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1). The Church is composed of God's people, who set out to reflect His character.

Although Christians strive to be holy, however, sin is still a powerful reality in each person's life, and some members still fall into sin. The apostle Paul laments that even though he wants to do good, he continues to struggle with "the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:23). Christians who claim to no longer sin deceive themselves (1 John 1:8).

The good news for erring Christians is that if they repent, Jesus provides the means for restoration and forgiveness (1 John 2:1). However, if the person refuses to repent, hardens his heart, and continues to persist in his sin, then there can be no forgiveness (Heb 6:4–6; 10:26–29). God will not restore a sinner who is unrepentant and unwilling to return to Him.

Foundational Principles

What then is the church to do when a member commits sin? Jesus Himself outlined the steps in Matthew 18:15–17, which shows that Jesus takes sin seriously.[26] Sin is not something that can simply be ignored or forgotten. The erring person must be confronted with the gravity of her sin. If the person repents, then the problem has been resolved. But if she does not, even when brought before the church, it may become necessary to separate that person from church fellowship.

Another principle in Matt 18 is a differentiation between approaches toward private and public sins. A private sin should preferably be resolved in private. If the person repents during private conversations and makes a commitment to right his wrongs, then there is no need to bring it before the church. But if the offense has become public (open sin), then the entire church is already involved, and the process of resolution is different. It then becomes an issue of preserving the moral integrity of the church.

The principles of Matt 18 can be difficult to apply in a non-confrontational Filipino culture. At times, a church member, upon becoming aware of a fellow member's sin, opts to bring the matter to the pastor for him to deal with. It is easier to rely on the pastor to

[26] It is also important to note that Matt 18 deals directly with personal offenses, and not necessarily open sins, or public violations of the law of God which affect the entire church. However, the principles stated here apply to any case.

confront the erring person rather than confront him personally. If such a matter is brought before the pastor, it would be optimal if the pastor instead requests the observing member to bring the matter before the erring brother. This may take some coaching and encouragement, but it is possible. If the observing member feels unable to personally confront the erring member, then the pastor can volunteer to go with him, but ideally, he would make the primary confrontation, although the pastor can provide the proper wording to use.

The pastor must also emphasize that this matter should not be mentioned to any other person. The temptation to gossip is very strong in Filipino culture and must be combatted.[27] The principle of Matt 18 is to keep the matter as private as possible until it is necessary to involve other mature leaders of the church. If the observing member indeed has a loving attitude toward the erring brother, the goal is to limit the number of people who are aware of the issue. An extra layer of difficulty is added when knowledge of the issue is spread through gossipers in the church, thus converting a private sin into an open sin. The pastor must strongly emphasize the need for confidentiality.

A Case Study of the Corinthian Church

The Corinthian church faced a sin problem in its midst (1 Cor 5). Paul was made aware that there was sexual immorality going on in the church. Not only did "a man [have] his father's wife" (5:1), but cases of immorality may very well have been rampant in this church, as well as cases of covetousness, extortion, idolatry, reviling, and drunkenness (5:11).

Even more shocking to Paul was the "puffed up" (i.e., arrogant; 5:2) attitude the Corinthian Christians carried, virtually doing nothing to correct the issue. They may have been proud of dealing with him in a "loving" way. This unconditional acceptance meant that the sinner could continue in his sins without any consequences. The sinner should have been separated from the church, but still, the church did nothing. They were proud of their actions when they should have instead mourned at the sinful state of their church. Such an attitude can be found not only in many Filipino churches but also likely in Adventist churches around the world. The main concern that Paul had was not just the sin of the member, but more importantly, the attitude of the Corinthian church, which was grievously straying from God's holy ideal.

[27] See Sarah Armstrong, "Philippine Tsismis: Gossip and the Politics of Representation in Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*," *Postcolonial Text* 15.1 (2020): 1–17; Julinda Gallego, "Gossip: The Favorite Filipino Pastime," Philippine One, https://philippineone.com/gossip-the-filipinos-favorite-pastime1234.

An Individual Sinner and the Church

Why must the whole church act in dealing with an open sin? In 1 Cor 5:6–8, the apostle Paul illustrates: "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (v. 6). Just as a small pinch of yeast can affect the whole dough, unaddressed open sin can contaminate the church. Solomon noted, "One sinner can destroy much that is good" (Eccl 9:18). Proper discipline is thus an act of self-preservation.[28]

The family model can be used as an example to help family-oriented Filipinos understand the importance of discipline. If parents do not discipline a child, other children will soon exhibit the same wrong behavior. Because there are no consequences, parents are, by effect, declaring a certain behavior acceptable. Thus, the sin of one person spreads to others. Such is the dangerous contagiousness of sin.

If we don't uphold God's standards of holiness, the church could slowly become just like the world.[29] Church discipline is not only for the good of the sinner but for the benefit of the entire faith community. The whole church is therefore involved in the disciplinary process.[30] The church functions as God's instrument to help sinners come to repentance and forgiveness. When it comes to open sin, a church's tolerance and inaction are unacceptable. Even if the person has repented, the case has become public knowledge to the church. If the church corporately does not take a stand, by its silence, the church is condoning sinful behavior.

A failure to discipline open sins would also lead the church to lose its unity and integrity.[31] A church that cannot uphold moral standards falls into the slippery slope of toleration of sin. A church that carries God's name must also uphold His holy character. If a church cannot stay on the course of holiness, what use is its testimony to the world? How can the church call sinners to repentance and holiness when its own erring members are not rebuked?

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[28] "Health and purity of the church must be preserved, that she may stand before God unsullied, clad in the robes of Christ's righteousness" Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 501.

[29] "The evil must then be made to appear as it is, and must be removed, that it may not become more and more widespread." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1902), 7:263.

[30] "Church discipline is not the affair of one or a few. Even though Paul as an apostle pronounced the sentence prophetically, the sin itself was known by all and had contaminated the whole; so the action was to be the affair of all." (Gordon D. Fee, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," in F. F. Bruce, ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 7:213–14). Even in pre-Spanish Filipino barangay societies, it was the community, not the individual, that was the dispenser of justice. Gorospe, "Sources of Filipino Moral Consciousness," 284. Paul also mentions the "punishment… inflicted by the majority" (2 Cor 2:6). In a modern sense, this can be taken to mean that a majority vote of the church is needed for the decision. "Shall a few persons in a board meeting take upon themselves the responsibility of disfellowshiping the erring one? 'If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.' (Matt 18:17). Let the church take action in regard to its members" White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:262.

[31] "If there were no church discipline and government, the church would go to fragments; it could not hold together as a body" Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 2007), 3:428.

These points must be emphasized in a Filipino congregation. Often, when a fellow member sins, others feel like it is not their concern; it is a matter that the pastor must deal with. However, when members are informed that the sin of one, when unaddressed, by association becomes the sin of the entire body, they will be more motivated to deal with the issue.

What if a person, despite the efforts of the church, still refuses to turn away from sin? Paul advises Titus to "reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:10–11). In other words, if a person obstinately refuses to repent of their sinful action, the church has no choice but to separate from that person to preserve the holiness of the church.

Love, Forgiveness, and Discipline

Does discipline invalidate the value of love and relationships? Scripture again provides the answer. God disciplines those whom He loves (Rev 3:19). The purpose of discipline is corrective and redemptive. Sin is a serious matter, for its presence destroys people's lives and relationships. It leaves behind a lasting impact not only on the sinner but also on the entire church. To be indifferent toward a sinning brother or sister is the very opposite of love.

In God's eyes, a failure to discipline is a failure to love: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights" (Prov 3:11–12). It is because we love the person that we confront the sin. To exercise discipline on an erring believer is to love that person and to seek their highest good. To avoid correcting a person for fear of their negative reaction or for fear of losing the relationship is to put one's feelings above the needs of the person in error. Such fear must be addressed in a Filipino context, wherein preserving a relationship is seen as a higher moral good than confronting personal sin. Filipinos must be reminded that dealing with a person's sin *is* a loving endeavor and still aligns with the Filipino value of *pakikisama* (fellowship).

But didn't Jesus emphasize forgiveness over discipline? In the case of the adulterous woman (John 8:1–11), Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." For many, Jesus' words and actions here are proof that He is opposed to church discipline and that doing so is a violation of God's grace.[32] A closer look at the passage,

[32] Another commonly used passage is Matthew 13:24–30. Some would argue that it is not for the church to correct the tares or discipline them, which should be reserved for the judgment day. However, the context of the parable is not the church but the world: "the field is the world" (13:38). The work of the church is not to discipline evil people in the world. That is reserved for the judgment day. But within the church, members have the responsibility of upholding moral values and teachings. "For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges." (1 Cor 5:12–13).

however, shows that it is not only the woman but also the Pharisees who violated the Law since it stipulated that both the male and female adulterers should be put to death (Deut 22:22). The absence of the adulterous man indicates complicity on the part of the Pharisees. They were therefore also guilty, hence Jesus' admonition about throwing the first stone. Jesus' statement was a stern rebuke of the Pharisees' hypocrisy and self-righteousness, and they left the scene "convicted by their conscience" (John 8:9). Jesus' statements of forgiveness, therefore, "did not wipe out the discipline in the body of Christ, which the Lord Himself required to be practiced."[33]

It is indeed a Christian virtue to be forgiving toward sinners, which must rightfully be done by the church. However, forgiveness does not necessarily remove the consequences of a sinful act. God forgave Adam and Eve's disobedience but still expelled them from the garden, and the whole world was still impacted by their sin (Gen 3:16–19). God forgave the Israelites for their rebellion, but their generation was still unable to enter the Promised Land (Num 14:20–23). David was forgiven for his murder and adultery, but his child still died because of his actions (2 Sam 12:13–14). David also lost much of his moral authority with his children, which later caused a lot of problems in his family dynamics (e.g. Absalom). Even if a church member repents and is forgiven, there are still immediate and long-term consequences for their sinful actions.

On the other hand, church members must also be careful that the disciplinary process is not harsh, impulsive, or extreme.[34] We are to avoid any spirit of self-righteousness or hypocrisy. The goal of church discipline is never vindictive. We are not trying to punish people or to throw them out of the church. Instead, we aim to regain the offender. The goal is to restore, not to punish. The process must be carried out "in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal 6:1). Great care must be exerted to express the church's love and concern for the erring member. The process must be carried out in a spirit of love and truthfulness, without any malice or wickedness (1 Cor 5:8). The church, while rebuking sin, must continue to love the sinner. Church leaders should rightly utilize the natural Filipino loving and caring spirit in this regard.

To discipline harshly or impersonally is to disregard the advice of Jesus in Matt 18. I have heard stories of an erring member being brought to the front and a vote for discipline immediately being called, without any prior notice or pastoral visit. Another case is a member simply being sent a letter informing him of the church's disciplinary action. Such examples do not follow biblical principles and proper procedures. In these instances, in its zeal for calling out sin, the church has failed to be loving.

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[33] Radu, "Church Discipline and Grace," 26.

[34] Church leaders should closely follow the procedures outlined in the *Church Manual*, which aims to strike a balance between correcting sin and loving the sinner.

The work of the church also does not end after a disciplinary decision has been made by the body. Church members should continue to care for the erring member and lead her to repentance. They are to facilitate the recovery process, aiming to restore the member to regular church standing. Discipline can be an opportunity for the church to express its love and concern for the individual. Church discipline, correctly done, provides healing for both the erring individual and the church. I have even experienced church members thanking me for helping them through the disciplinary process.

In the case of the Corinthian church, it appears that good things came because the church heeded Paul's instructions. In his next epistle, Paul urges the church to "forgive and comfort" (2 Cor 2:7) a man who had sinned, perhaps the very same man in 1 Cor 5. The church had acted according to Scripture, and because the man had repented of his sin, he could now be welcomed back into church fellowship.

Some Suggestions for a Filipino Context

How then can these biblical principles be applied by a Filipino church in matters of church discipline? Even before any disciplinary issue arises, it is imperative that church members—and even those being prepared to become part of the church family through baptism—are properly made aware of the high moral standards of the church.[35] Two things must also take place, both on an individual and corporate level.

First, on an individual level, church leaders must help members achieve a personal sense of morality, based not on societal or family values and opinions, but on biblical standards. "He must learn to think for himself and make his own decisions independently of others. He must learn to make free and conscious choices, to criticize his social experience, evaluate his own motivation, form his own moral conscience, and internalize morality and religion."[36] Through Bible studies, sermons, personal discussions, etc., members must be guided to have an internalized biblical and objective morality. They must be led to have a morality based on biblical standards, not on family shame or honor. Thus, if that individual would sin, they would be more open to objective self-evaluation and would be more willing to accept their error and go through the church's process of restoration.

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[35] "When trying to develop a sense of discipline in the Filipinos, the expectations and the consequences of their behavior should be clearly spelled out well ahead of time. By doing this, the Filipino is directly responsible for his behavior. Then the consequence must follow. He who knows what is expected of him and then sees the consequences consistently learns to know that rewards and punishments are largely in his hands." Tomas Quintin D. Andres, *Effective Discipline Through Filipino Values* (Manila: Rex Book Store, 1996), 22.

[36] Gorospe, "Christian Renewal of Filipino Values," 199.

Second, on a corporate level, it would be helpful to build upon the innate Filipino value of *pamilya* (family) and transfer it to the church as a whole.[37] Leaders should aim to develop a sense of family—closeness and intimacy—among church members, so that each person has a sense of belongingness, believing that other church members genuinely care for their well-being.[38] There must be a sense of *koinonia* (fellowship) that goes beyond potlucks and social nights. "The fellowship in local communities should reflect the interpersonalism of Philippine society."[39] Through care groups, spiritual mentors and guardians, accountability partners, etc., members can truly feel that their church is indeed a *pamilya*. Thus, when an individual errs, they would feel that the matter is not just about *hiya* upon their immediate family, but also the church family. At the same time, because they know that the church cares for them and desires their ultimate good, they would be more willing to accept the church's process.

As much as possible, leaders should involve the erring person in the process. Due diligence requires a personal conversation with them before bringing the matter to the church and even after a decision has been reached. The goal of these conversations is to help them accept their mistake and seek restoration with God and with the church. Here are some suggestions for these conversations.

Clarify misconceptions. Leaders should remind members that discipline does not mean that they are loved by God or church members any less. Adventist discipline does not mean a loss of salvation, nor does it mean that they need to practice penance to earn back their forgiveness. Forgiveness is a matter between them and God, and if the church sees evidence of remorse, then restoration into regular standing is possible, just as it was in the Corinthian church. Discipline also does not mean that they are no longer welcome in church. On the contrary, whether censured or disfellowshipped, they are still welcome to attend church programs and events (unless, of course, they become disruptive).

Separate the sinful act from the person. At times, it is difficult for a Filipino to differentiate actions from the self: The sinner *is* the sin. The erring member must be shown that this is not biblical.[40] If possible, encourage the sinner by reminding them that they are not a bad person per se, but a good Christian who has done something wrong. Because Filipino culture takes serious offense toward attacks on character, leaders should present the disciplinary process not as an attack on the person himself (*loob*), but as a recognition that a sinful act was committed. Aim to minimize the *hiya* as much as possible.

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[37] "*Pakikisama* can become a positive value, if it is modified to apply not only to one's small group but to the larger community to which one really owes a deeper *utang na loob*." Gorospe, "Christian Renewal," 221. Italics supplied.

[38] There must be a "harmonious relationship in the organization. Positive *pakikisama* will not thrive in a group if there is antagonism among the members." Andres, *Effective Discipline,* 32.

[39] Mercado, "Filipino Thought," 269.

[40] In Rom 7:13–24, Paul depicts sin as something separate from himself. It "dwells in me," is "present with me, and is "another law in my members." Thus, sin is depicted as a force or power that conflicts with the self that knows what is good.

Utilize the "family council" model. Since Filipinos are very family-oriented, present the process as a family coming together to deal with the mistakes of their family member, whom they love. Discipline should be presented not as an act of condemnation, but as an act of love from family. Remind them of the care and concern that their church family has toward them, and that they will continue to care and support for them even though they have been disciplined.

Appeal to their sense of familial obligation. If erring members have experienced a sense of *pamilya* in the church, leaders can appeal to their sense of obligation to the well-being of the church. Gently remind them that their persistence in sin affects the rest of the church family and that the church's process is meant to keep the church family whole while at the same time dealing with sin.

Be kind and gentle. Remember that church discipline is redemptive, not punitive. Strive to balance the need to deal with sin with the need to recover the sinner.[41] Exude a spirit of gentleness, for discipline done in anger will only result in *sama ng loob* (ill will).[42] Church leaders must be "patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition" (2 Tim 2:24). "Show him that you're willing to help him.… Cushion the impact of your correction by consoling words to lift up his spirit."[43] Gentleness and kindness go a long way in easing the erring member through the disciplinary process.

Exercise discernment. It is very possible that disciplinary actions, even when done correctly and in love, are not successful in bringing about restoration. In extreme cases, erring members may resist repentance and harden their hearts. Even worse, some become hostile towards the church. The biblical advice for church leaders is that these individuals' "mouths must be stopped" in the church because they "subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain (Titus 1:11). These people must be rebuked "sharply" (v. 13; NASB: "severely"). Leaders must protect the church from subversive elements and must strongly oppose such people. In dealing with erring members, leaders must exercise discernment as to the attitude of the person, whether they are sincerely repentant or are hardening their hearts, and adapt their approach accordingly.

Conclusion

Whatever the specific situation, dealing with open sin always proves challenging for any local church leader and congregation. There are many considerations for which a church

[41] Walter Raymond Beach, "When Should a Church Discipline Members?" *Ministry* (March 1978): 10.

[42] Andres, *Effective Discipline*, 32.

[43] Andres, *Effective Discipline*, 36.

may be hesitant or afraid in enacting church discipline for open sin. Discipline is uniquely difficult within the cultural elements of a Filipino context.

If God takes sin seriously, so must His church. Fortunately, God has provided in Scripture a spiritual process of discipline, one that is wrapped up in a pursuit of holiness and a spirit of love for the sinner. Discipline in the church, while never enjoyable or easy, is necessary at times. Moreover, it should be loving. When done properly, it is a redemptive affair.

Filipino church leaders seeking to be faithful to the biblical mandate must be aware of the cultural elements within which they serve, navigate their pitfalls, and communicate the redemptive nature of church discipline. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Filipino churches can be a venue for family-oriented and love-motivated correction and restoration

The Mission of the *Paraklētos* in the Gospel of John: Implications for Pastoral Counseling in the Philippine Context

Danny Endriga

Abstract

This study examines the mission of the *paraklētos* within Johannine theology and its implications for pastoral counseling. By tracing the development of advocacy and intercession from the Old Testament to the New Testament, the paper situates the Johannine portrayal of Jesus as the first *paraklētos* and the Holy Spirit as "another *paraklētos*" within the larger biblical tradition. Particular attention is given to the Spirit's role in comforting, counseling, and empowering the community of believers. Drawing upon both biblical exegesis and theological scholarship, the study demonstrates how the ministry of the *paraklētos* informs pastoral counseling, discipleship, and communal fellowship. Furthermore, it explores the contextual application of this doctrine within the Philippine setting, highlighting how the Spirit's advocacy and comfort address pressing pastoral realities such as communal solidarity, family life, and responses to social crises. In doing so, the paper argues that the *paraklētos* equips the church to embody Christ's mission of counsel, comfort, and transformation in both universal and local contexts.

Keywords: *Paraklētos*, *Holy Spirit*, *Johannine theology*, *pastoral counseling*, *contextual theology*.

Introduction

The ministry of pastoral counseling has always occupied a vital role in the life of the church. Pastors are called not only to preach and administer sacraments but also to listen, guide, and walk alongside members in times of spiritual and emotional need. Within the Christian tradition, this task is not merely a practical necessity but a theological mandate grounded in the biblical witness to God's concern for the broken and the suffering.[1] The

[1] Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011). Clinebell emphasizes that pastoral care is not simply advice-giving but a ministry of healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconciling.

Johannine writings, in particular, provide a rich theological foundation for pastoral care through the motif of the *paraklētos*—a term used to describe both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in their roles as advocate, counselor, and comforter.[2]

The central claim of this study is that the Johannine theology of the *paraklētos* provides an indispensable framework for understanding and practicing pastoral counseling in the church today. The promise of "another *paraklētos*" (John 14:16)[3] suggests continuity between the ministry of Jesus and the ongoing work of the Spirit within the Christian community.[4] This study seeks to demonstrate that the mission of the *paraklētos*—rooted in advocacy, intercession, and comfort—offers both theological depth and practical guidance for pastoral ministry.

This exploration proceeds in several steps. First, it traces the concept of advocacy in the Old Testament, showing how figures such as Abraham, Moses, and Samuel served as intercessors for the people of God. Abraham intercedes for the righteous in Sodom (Gen 18:22–33), Moses pleads for Israel after the golden calf (Exod 32:11–14), and Samuel prays for the people (1 Sam 7:8–9). These figures exemplify the role of mediator, which anticipates the fuller advocacy of Christ and the Spirit.[5] Second, it examines the use of *paraklētos* in the Johannine corpus, giving particular attention to Jesus as the first *paraklētos* and the Spirit as his successor.[6] Third, it considers the implications of this doctrine for the life of the church, especially in relation to counseling, discipleship, and fellowship. Finally, it explores how the theology of the *paraklētos* can be applied within the Philippine context, where communal values, cultural traditions, and social realities provide a distinctive setting for pastoral praxis.[7]

In terms of methodology, this study employs biblical-theological analysis with a focus on Johannine exegesis, supplemented by insights from historical and systematic theology. It also incorporates pastoral theology to bridge the gap between exegesis and

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[2] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966); Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI*, AB 29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 1136–46. Raymond E. Brown notes that John uniquely applies the term *paraklētos* to both Jesus (1 John 2:1) and the Spirit (John 14–16). The translation of *paraklētos* has long been debated: "Comforter" (KJV), "Counselor" (NIV), "Advocate" (NRSV), and "Helper" (ESV) each highlight different nuances. Leon Morris argues that "Comforter" has become misleading in modern English, since it now suggests only consolation rather than empowerment. See Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 584.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

[4] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC 36 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 259. The phrase *allos paraklētos* uses *allos*, meaning "another of the same kind," which implies continuity of mission between Jesus and the Spirit. George R. Beasley-Murray provides a detailed discussion of the significance of *allos* in Johannine Christology and Pneumatology.

[5] Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine-Human Dialogue* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 68–95.

[6] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:943–50. Johannine theology develops the Old Testament background by portraying Jesus as the first *paraklētos* (1 John 2:1) and the Spirit as "another *paraklētos*" (John 14:16). Craig S. Keener discusses the distinct yet complementary roles of Jesus and the Spirit as advocates, noting how their missions overlap while remaining theologically distinct.

[7] Jose M. de Mesa, *Why Theology Is Never Far from Home: Essays on Contextual Theology in the Philippines* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian, 2003). Filipino cultural values such as *pakikipagkapwa*, "relational solidarity"; *damayan*, "mutual aid"; and *bayanihan*, "communal work" resonate with the Spirit's role as *paraklētos*, which makes this theological motif especially relevant in the Philippine context.

ministerial practice.[8] The intent is not to offer an exhaustive exegetical commentary on the relevant texts, but rather to situate the *paraklētos* motif within a broader theological and pastoral framework. By doing so, this study contributes to a contextual theology of pastoral counseling that resonates with both global scholarship and the lived experience of the Philippine church.

The Concept of the *Paraklētos* in the Old Testament

Although the noun *paraklētos* does not occur in the Hebrew Bible, it does appear once in the Greek Septuagint at Job 16:2 ("I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all"). In that context, the plural *paraklētoi* refers ironically to Job's friends as so-called comforters, a sense different from the distinctive Johannine use of the term for the Spirit and for Christ (John 14–16; 1 John 2:1). Nevertheless, the concept of advocacy and intercession is already deeply embedded in Israel's Scriptures. Various figures act as mediators, defenders, and intercessors who stand before God on behalf of others: Abraham pleads for the righteous in Sodom (Gen 18:22–33), Moses intercedes after the golden calf (Exod 32:11–14), and Samuel prays for deliverance for Israel (1 Sam 7:8–9). These narratives portray individuals who speak to God on behalf of the community in moments of guilt, crisis, or judgment, anticipating a functional role—though not in terminology—later ascribed to the Paraclete in the Johannine writings.[9]

The Old Testament also anticipates the notion of heavenly advocacy. In Job, for example, the sufferer appeals to a witness in heaven who might plead his case before God (Job 16:19–21). Later Jewish thought often expanded this into the idea of a mediating angelic figure (*malʾāk*) who could serve as interpreter, defender, or helper for humanity.[10] These traditions provide essential background for the Johannine *paraklētos*: the role of standing beside the accused, interceding for mercy, and guiding the sinner toward repentance.[11]

In addition, the vocabulary of comfort (*naḥam*) occasionally overlaps with advocacy in the Old Testament. The prophets portray God as one who comforts his people in their affliction (Isa 40:1, 49:13). At the same time, Ecclesiastes laments the absence of

[8] Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1996), 3–10. Richard B. Hays' model of combining exegesis, theological reflection, and application provides a useful template for integrating biblical studies with pastoral theology.

[9] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 381–84. Walter Brueggemann emphasizes that intercession was not marginal but central to Israel's covenantal relationship with God.

[10] G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., "*malʾāk*," *TDOT* 8:310–15. The motif of an angelic advocate appears, for instance, in Job 33:23–25, where an interpreter pleads for a person's life. This reflects the development of the mediating *malʾāk* in Jewish thought.

[11] Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, AB 30 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 225. Raymond E. Brown suggests that these Old Testament traditions of intercession and comfort shaped the Johannine understanding of both Jesus and the Spirit as advocates.

comforters for the oppressed (Eccl 4:1). Though the term is rare, the theme is significant: divine advocacy and divine comfort are closely intertwined. God both defends the vulnerable and consoles the afflicted—a dual role that prefigures the fuller revelation of the *paraklētos* in the New Testament.

The Concept of the *Paraklētos* in the New Testament

The explicit use of the term *paraklētos* is unique to the Johannine corpus. The word appears four times in the Gospel of John (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) and once in 1 John (2:1). In secular Greek, it could denote a legal assistant, advocate, or one summoned to support another in a court setting.[12] By extension, it came to describe someone who stands alongside another to provide counsel, encouragement, or defense. This legal background resonates with John's usage, where the *paraklētos* functions as both advocate and helper for God's people.

Scholars have long debated how best to translate *paraklētos*. Older English versions, such as the King James Version, preferred "Comforter," highlighting the Spirit's consoling role.[13] Modern translations vary: "Advocate" (NRSV), "Counselor" (NIV 1984), and "Helper" (ESV) each capture part of the meaning but not its fullness.[14] The challenge lies in the fact that *paraklētos* combines both legal and pastoral connotations. In John's Gospel, the *paraklētos* is not only a defender in the face of accusation but also an encourager who strengthens believers in the midst of persecution.[15]

The distinction between Jesus as *ho paraklētos* (1 John 2:1) and the Spirit as *allos paraklētos* (John 14:16) underscores continuity rather than replacement. The use of *allos* ("another of the same kind") highlights the close relationship between Christ's earthly ministry and the Spirit's ongoing work in Johannine Christology and Pneumatology.[16] The Spirit's mission is not independent but Christocentric: "he will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14). In this way, the Spirit continues the advocacy, teaching, and consoling ministry that Jesus embodied during his earthly life.

The Johannine use of *paraklētos* is also closely tied to the context of opposition and

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[12] G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v. "*paraklētos*." In forensic contexts, the *paraklētos* was one summoned to speak in defense of an accused person.

[13] C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 482. Barrett observes that "comfort" in sixteenth-century English meant "strengthen" (from Latin *cum forte*), not merely "console."

[14] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 583–85. Leon Morris prefers "Counselor," though he admits that no single English word adequately conveys the richness of the term.

[15] Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:942–50. Keener stresses that the Spirit as *paraklētos* carries both legal (advocacy) and relational (encouragement) dimensions, especially in the face of persecution.

[16] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 259.

persecution. In John 15–16, Jesus warns the disciples that they will face hostility from the world, yet promises that the Spirit will testify on their behalf and empower their witness (John 15:26–27).[17] This situates the *paraklētos* within the broader narrative of discipleship under pressure, where divine advocacy is essential for endurance and faithfulness.

Thus, the New Testament use of *paraklētos* brings together several strands: legal advocacy, intercession before God, consolation in affliction, and empowerment for mission. The term encapsulates the ongoing presence of God in Christ through the Spirit, assuring believers that they are neither abandoned nor defenseless in their calling.

Jesus as the First *Paraklētos*

The Johannine writings identify Jesus himself as the first *paraklētos*. In 1 John 2:1, the author assures believers that "if anyone sins, we have an *advocate* (*paraklētos*) with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous." This affirmation places Jesus in the role of heavenly intercessor, standing before the Father on behalf of humanity.[18] The designation underscores the continuity between Jesus' earthly ministry and his exalted role: just as he counseled, defended, and comforted his disciples during his time on earth, so he now advocates for them in the presence of God.

The Gospels portray Jesus' earthly ministry as deeply marked by acts of counsel and advocacy. His late-night conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:1–21) demonstrates his patient engagement with spiritual seekers; his dialogue with the Samaritan woman (John 4:4–26) illustrates his ability to offer hope and truth to the marginalized; and his walk with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35) highlights his role as teacher and comforter in the midst of despair.[19] These episodes anticipate his ongoing role as *paraklētos*, showing how advocacy involves not only legal defense but also pastoral presence.

In the Johannine farewell discourse, Jesus explicitly prepares his disciples for his departure by promising "another *paraklētos*" (John 14:16). This promise assumes that he himself is already functioning in that role.[20] His advocacy is not limited to heaven but also continues through the Spirit, who mediates his presence to the community. In this way, the

[17] Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 141–46. Marianne Meye Thompson highlights how the Spirit empowers the community not simply for inward comfort but for outward mission, linking the Spirit's advocacy to the church's witness under persecution.

[18] Brown, *Epistles of John*, 225–26. Brown emphasizes that in 1 John 2:1 Jesus is portrayed as the eschatological advocate who pleads the believer's case before the Father.

[19] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Image, 1979), 41–58. Henri J. M. Nouwen highlights how Jesus' ministry of presence provides a model for pastoral engagement, showing that his role as counselor and advocate extends beyond words to relational accompaniment.

[20] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 259–60. Beasley-Murray notes that the phrase "another *paraklētos*" presumes that Jesus himself is the first, thereby establishing the basis for continuity between Christ and the Spirit.

Johannine vision integrates Christology and Pneumatology: Jesus as the first *paraklētos* establishes the pattern for the Spirit's advocacy. At the same time, their roles are not identical: Jesus is the *paraklētos* "with the Father" (1 John 2:1), interceding in heaven, while the Spirit, as "another *paraklētos,*" remains with the church, guiding and strengthening it for mission on earth.[21]

For pastoral theology, Jesus' role as *paraklētos* carries profound implications. He embodies the model of a counselor who listens, guides, and stands beside those in need. His ministry demonstrates that advocacy involves both intercession before God and compassionate engagement with people.[22] This dual dimension—heavenly and earthly—provides the theological foundation for pastoral counseling, in which ministers are called to reflect Christ's own advocacy by offering presence, guidance, and intercession on behalf of those entrusted to their care.

The Holy Spirit as Another *Paraklētos*

In John's Gospel, Jesus promises that the Father will send "another *paraklētos*" (John 14:16), a clear indication that the Spirit will continue the very work that Jesus himself had begun. The use of *allos*, "another of the same kind," emphasizes continuity rather than contrast: the Spirit is not a substitute inferior to Christ but one who shares in his mission and nature.[23] This continuity grounds the church's confidence that the Spirit represents Christ's ongoing presence and advocacy within the community of faith.

The Johannine "Paraclete sayings" (John 14:16–17, 25–26, 15:26–27, 16:7–14) highlight several key functions of the Spirit as *paraklētos*. First, the Spirit teaches and reminds the disciples of all that Jesus said (14:26), ensuring that the community remains anchored in Christ's words. Second, the Spirit testifies about Jesus (15:26), reinforcing the Christocentric nature of his advocacy. Third, the Spirit convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8–11), demonstrating his role not only as comforter of the disciples but also as prosecutor of the world.[24] These functions show that the Spirit's advocacy has both an inward-facing role—encouraging and strengthening believers—and an outward-facing role—bearing witness to Christ in the world.

Scholars debate how best to translate the Spirit's role as *paraklētos*. Some

[21] Thompson, *God of the Gospel of John*, 141–46.

[22] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV/1: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 180–83. Karl Barth underscores that Christ's advocacy is at once a divine act of mediation and a model for the church's pastoral ministry.

[23] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 259. Beasley-Murray notes the importance of *allos* in emphasizing continuity between Jesus and the Spirit, over against *heteros* ("another of a different kind").

[24] Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:945–49. Keener highlights the dual role of the Spirit as advocate for believers and prosecutor of the world.

emphasize "Advocate," underscoring the Spirit's legal function in defending the disciples against accusations.[25] Others stress "Helper" or "Counselor," highlighting the Spirit's role in guiding and strengthening the community.[26] Still others argue that the term "Comforter" should be recovered in its older sense of one who imparts strength (*cum forte*) rather than mere consolation.[27] Each translation captures part of the picture but risks narrowing the Spirit's mission if taken in isolation. The richness of *paraklētos* resists reduction, encompassing defense, guidance, encouragement, and empowerment.

The Spirit's role as "another *paraklētos*" also reflects his divine identity. Jesus identifies the Spirit as "the Spirit of truth" who dwells with and within the disciples (14:17). This indwelling presence overcomes the limitations of Jesus' earthly ministry, which was bound by time and space.[28] The Spirit universalizes Christ's presence, making it possible for believers across time and place to experience his advocacy and comfort. This assures the church that the promise "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20) is fulfilled through the Spirit's ongoing ministry.

For pastoral theology, this dimension of the Spirit's work is decisive. The Spirit not only equips the church for mission but also sustains individual believers through teaching, encouragement, and empowerment. Just as Jesus stood with his disciples as counselor and advocate, the Spirit now stands with the church as "another *paraklētos*," ensuring that Christ's ministry of presence continues in every generation.

The Function of the *Paraklētos* in the Church Today

The departure of Jesus left the disciples bewildered and grief-stricken, yet the promise of "another *paraklētos*" assured them that his ministry would not cease but continue through the Spirit. The Fourth Gospel presents the Spirit as both the indwelling presence of God and the empowering force of the church's witness. Through the *paraklētos*, the risen Christ remains with his followers, guiding them in truth, sustaining them in persecution, and equipping them for mission.[29]

One of the central functions of the Spirit in the church is to teach and remind the community of Christ's words (John 14:26). This role preserves continuity with the

[25] Brown, *Gospel According to John*, AB 29A, 1136–46. Brown favors "Advocate" as the most appropriate rendering in the Johannine context of trial and testimony.

[26] Morris, *Gospel According to John*, 583–85. Morris argues that "Counselor" best conveys the Spirit's guiding and strengthening role, though he admits it is insufficient by itself.

[27] Barrett, *Gospel According to St. John*, 482. Barrett explains that "Comforter" in its original English sense meant one who imparted strength, though in modern usage it has become too limited.

[28] Thompson, *God of the Gospel of John*, 144–46. Thompson emphasizes that the Spirit universalizes the presence of Christ, enabling believers everywhere to share in his ongoing ministry.

[29] Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:944–47. Keener highlights that the *paraklētos* sayings are set in the context of Jesus' impending departure, underscoring the Spirit's role as his continuing presence.

apostolic witness while ensuring that the message of Jesus remains living and active within the church.[30] At the same time, the Spirit convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8–11). This dual function—strengthening believers and confronting the world—illustrates that the Spirit's work is both inward and outward, pastoral and missional.

The Spirit's presence also transforms the church's communal life. The early Christian community in Acts is depicted as a Spirit-filled fellowship (*koinōnia*) characterized by shared prayer, mutual support, and care for the needy (Acts 2:42–47).[31] The Spirit not only unites believers in fellowship but also equips them with diverse gifts for the building up of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:4–11, Eph 4:11–13). Counseling, encouragement, and teaching belong among these gifts, demonstrating that the Spirit enables the church to reflect Christ's ministry of comfort and guidance.

For pastoral theology, the Spirit's advocacy provides the foundation for Christian counseling and care. To counsel in the Spirit means more than offering advice; it is to participate in Christ's own ministry of presence and advocacy.[32] The Spirit empowers pastors and lay leaders to stand with those in crisis, to offer intercession on their behalf, and to guide them toward healing and reconciliation. In this sense, the church becomes a living embodiment of the Spirit's work, a community where the ministry of the *paraklētos* is practiced in tangible ways—through listening, prayer, discipleship, and communal solidarity.

Pastoral Praxis in the Philippine Context

The theology of the *paraklētos* finds distinctive resonance within the Philippine context, where cultural values and social realities shape the practice of pastoral ministry. Filipino culture is marked by a deeply relational ethos, expressed in concepts such as *pakikipagkapwa*, "fellowship or shared identity with others"; *damayan*, "mutual support in times of crisis"; and *bayanihan*, "communal solidarity in cooperative work."[33] These values align closely with the Johannine vision of the Spirit as *paraklētos*, who stands alongside the community as advocate, comforter, and helper. Pastoral praxis in the

[30] Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1991), 505–6. Donald A. Carson stresses that the Spirit's teaching is not novel revelation but a continuation and application of Jesus' words.

[31] John R. W. Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 81–3. John R. W. Stott describes *koinōnia* as a Spirit-enabled fellowship that integrates worship, fellowship, and mission.

[32] Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2011), 43–6. Howard Clinebell argues that Spirit-led counseling involves presence, empathy, and advocacy, rather than directive advice-giving alone.

[33] Jose M. de Mesa, *Why Theology Is Never Far from Home: Essays on Contextual Theology in the Philippines*(Quezon City: Claretian, 2003), 45–51. De Mesa explores how Filipino relational values offer resources for contextual theology.

Philippines can therefore be enriched by integrating the Spirit's advocacy with indigenous expressions of relational solidarity.

One significant pastoral challenge in the Philippines is the experience of suffering caused by poverty, migration, and natural disasters. Millions of Filipinos work overseas as migrant laborers, often leaving families behind, while those who remain face vulnerability to typhoons, earthquakes, and economic instability.[34] In such contexts, the Spirit as *paraklētos* assures believers of God's presence amid displacement and loss. Pastors and church leaders are called to embody the Spirit's advocacy by offering practical support, intercessory prayer, and emotional accompaniment to those experiencing separation, grief, or dislocation.

Another area where the Spirit's advocacy is particularly relevant is small-group ministry. In a culture that values relational intimacy, small fellowships provide a context where believers can share burdens, pray for one another, and experience mutual care.[35] The *paraklētos* works within such groups to convict, encourage, and empower believers for transformation. Pastoral praxis in this setting includes not only teaching and Bible study but also counseling, mentoring, and the cultivation of *koinonia* as a Spirit-led form of communal healing.

Finally, the Filipino context invites the church to extend the Spirit's advocacy to the broader community. In times of national crisis—such as natural calamities, political unrest, or public health emergencies—the church can serve as an agent of the Spirit's comforting and empowering presence. By engaging in relief efforts, promoting justice, and fostering reconciliation, the church embodies the mission of the *paraklētos* in tangible ways that address both spiritual and social needs.[36]

Thus, pastoral praxis in the Philippines demonstrates that the mission of the *paraklētos* is not an abstract doctrine but a lived reality. Through the Spirit, Christ continues to comfort the afflicted, advocate for the vulnerable, and empower the church to embody God's kingdom in contexts of suffering and hope.

Conclusion

The Johannine motif of the *paraklētos* provides a rich theological framework for

[34] Allan Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 209–11. Allan Anderson notes how migration, economic disparity, and disaster shape the pastoral challenges of Southeast Asia, including the Philippines.

[35] Melba P. Maggay, *Transforming Society: A Theology of Social Development in the Philippine Context* (Quezon City, Philippines: OMF Literature, 1994), 77–83. Melba P. Maggay emphasizes the power of small groups and communal care as vehicles of transformation in Filipino churches.

[36] Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Philosophy* (Tacloban City, Philippines: Divine Word University, 1974), 98–101. Leonardo N. Mercado connects Filipino cultural emphases on solidarity and compassion with the Christian mission of advocacy and justice.

understanding both the continuity of Christ's ministry and the Spirit's ongoing presence in the life of the church. In the Old Testament, figures such as Abraham, Moses, and Samuel anticipated the role of advocate and intercessor, prefiguring the fuller revelation in the New Testament. The Gospel of John identifies Jesus as the first *paraklētos*, whose ministry of advocacy and counsel continues after his exaltation through the Spirit, described as "another *paraklētos*." Together, Jesus and the Spirit embody the fullness of God's advocacy, intercession, and comfort for the people of God.

For the church today, the mission of the *paraklētos* has profound implications for discipleship, communal life, and pastoral ministry. The Spirit not only reminds believers of Christ's words and sustains them in times of persecution but also equips the community with gifts for mutual care and mission. Pastoral counseling, in this perspective, becomes more than a professionalized discipline; it is a theological practice grounded in the Spirit's own advocacy and comfort. To counsel in the Spirit is to participate in Christ's continuing ministry of presence, guidance, and intercession.

In the Philippine context, the theology of the *paraklētos* resonates deeply with cultural values of relational solidarity (*pakikipagkapwa*), mutual support (*damayan*), and communal work (*bayanihan*). These values provide fertile ground for contextual expressions of pastoral care, particularly in addressing challenges such as migration, poverty, and natural disasters. By embodying the Spirit's advocacy through small-group fellowships, disaster relief efforts, and community solidarity, the church in the Philippines incarnates the mission of the *paraklētos* in tangible ways.

Thus, the doctrine of the *paraklētos* is not only a theological affirmation but also a pastoral mandate. It calls the church to reflect Christ's ongoing advocacy through the Spirit by becoming a community of counsel, comfort, and solidarity. In doing so, the church bears witness that God's presence in Christ through the Spirit continues to sustain, defend, and transform the people of God in every generation and context.

The unique contribution of this study lies in its integration of the Johannine theology of the *paraklētos* with pastoral counseling, framed within the Philippine context. While much scholarship has examined the exegetical and theological dimensions of the *paraklētos*, relatively few have drawn sustained connections to the practice of pastoral care. This paper bridges that gap by demonstrating how the dual advocacy of Christ and the Spirit—both heavenly and earthly—provides a theological foundation for counseling, discipleship, and communal solidarity. Moreover, by situating this framework within Filipino cultural values, the study contributes a distinctly contextual perspective that speaks to both local and global discussions of pastoral theology.

Undergraduate Thesis Abstracts

College of Theology
Adventist University of the Philippines

TITLE: WHO HARDENED THE PHARAOH'S HEART ACCORDING TO EXODUS?

Researcher: Jezciel T. Nuqui
Researcher adviser: Francis Ray M. Gayoba, MA-R
Date completed: May 20, 2022

The study covers the question of who hardened the Pharaoh's heart in Exodus, or who was behind the hardening of the Pharaoh's heart. The research paper answers and clarifies whether it was God who hardened the Pharaoh's heart, or Pharaoh that was behind the action of hardening his own heart. The study looks into the historical context of the Book of Exodus, conducts a literary analysis, and then presents the main argument of the study. Key verses are examined, namely, those that say "I [the Lord] will harden the Pharaoh's heart" (4:21; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8) and those that say Pharaoh hardened his own heart (8:15, 32; 9:34). There have been arguments on who hardened the Pharaoh's heart. God said, "I" which shows a possibility that it is He Himself who hardened the Pharaoh's heart, but also shows some verse that says, "Pharaoh hardened his own heart." The study examines whether a God of love and justice could actually manipulate and control the decision of the Pharaoh or whether the Pharaoh's own obstinacy brought hardening to his heart.

This study concludes that it was not God that hardened the Pharoah's heart but instead it was the stubbornness and obstinacy of Pharaoh that brought hardening to his heart. Pharoah was given a chance and an opportunity to soften his heart to the Lord, but he refused to let God be in control. This is why the hardening of the heart happened. Thus, Pharaohs was the agent behind the hardening. This research could help future studies examining the hardening of the Pharaoh's heart.

TITLE: THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SEAL OF REVELATION 7:2-3

Researcher: Asher James B. Sedeño
Research adviser: Rico T. Javien, PhD
Date completed: November 25, 2022

This study deals with the seal of God in Rev 7:2-3. There are Seventh-day Adventists who believe that the Sabbath is the seal of God. Because of that belief, many Adventists are confused regarding the seals of God in Revelation. In Rev 7:2-3, John mentions the sealing of the 144,000 saints. It begs some questions: "Why does God need to seal His people in the last days?" "How does this seal in Rev 7:2-3 differ from other seals mentioned in the Bible?" Last, "What is the importance of this seal?" So, the purpose of this study is to understand properly the seal of God in Rev 7:2-3 by utilizing the contextual-theological approach.

This study finds out that the seal in Rev 7:2-3 is the end-time seal (eschatological seal) that will only be given to God's people who will be alive in the second coming of Jesus to protect them from the plagues that will occur in the final moment of earth's history. It will be placed on the forehead signifying that the recipient is a godly person reflecting God's character and is destined for heaven. The agent of the seal is the holy angels commissioned by Christ described as the Angel from the east. In the same thought, it differs from the seal mentioned in Eph 1:13 (gospel seal) in terms of agent, location, function, location, and time; yet it is complimentary. For those only who are sealed by the gospel seal will be sealed by the eschatological seal (Rev 7:2-3).

TITLE: THE MEANING OF "I CREATE EVIL" IN ISAIAH 45:7 AND ITS THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS ON GOD'S CHARACTER

Researcher: Michael Steven Magdadaro
Research adviser: Glenn Jade V. Mariano, PhD-R
Date completed: May 18, 2022

God introduces Himself in Isa 45:7 as "The One Who forms light and creates darkness, the One Who brings peace and creates evil." If God is Ultimately Good, how can He create evil? Is He trying to imply something else about Himself? This text is often understood in its literal form and used in philosophical arguments where concepts about God's goodness are argued about instead of studying the implication of the verse through the course of events in the Old Testament. Therefore, this study aims to understand the intention behind

the statement "I create evil" to provide clarity on the passage through the historical-biblical method of exegesis.

Based on the historical background of Isa 45, God is placing Cyrus into power to aid in restoring His people and revealing Himself to Cyrus as the Only One True God who is capable of establishing His kingdom and overthrowing Babylon. The message of Isa 45:7 was personally intended for Cyrus. The word *rāʿ*, "evil" does not always mean moral evil but is also used to establish other evils such as an evil that is a consequence of itself, natural disasters, unpleasant circumstances, or catastrophes. Understanding the Hebrew poetry and the word used as an opposite comparison of the word "evil" which is peace, it refers to its direct opposite meaning, namely, catastrophe. Finally, the theological implication of Monotheism could be proved by the study of Hebrew poetry and how it could affect the understanding of the intention of Yahweh to make known that besides Him, there is no other God.

TITLE: THE IDENTITY, PURPOSE, AND STATE OF THE RESURRECTED SAINTS IN MATTHEW 27:52-53

Researcher: Jomillito G. Atazar
Research adviser: Glenn Jade V. Mariano, PhD-R
Date completed: March 29, 2022

The purpose of this study is to investigate the identity, purpose, and state of the resurrected saints in Matt 27:52-53 by using the biblical-historical method of exegesis. The identity, purpose, and state of the resurrected saints after Christ's death and resurrection remain unclear whether they lived shortly and died again or ascended to heaven with Jesus. This study has addressed the three main issues: (a) There are varied methodologies (eschatological, historical, theological, and Christological) in explaining the resurrected saints. (b) The resurrected saints are believed to be the martyrs or multitudes of captives as the trophies of Christ, prophets, patriarchs, and righteous people who were ascended to heaven. On the other hand, (c) the resurrected saints have not yet ascended into heaven; their bodies remain in the tombs.

Based on the exegetical investigation on the topic, the resurrected saints are likely the following: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Zechariah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, 24 elders, and/or multitudes of captives' likely martyrs, priests, and kings who received immortal bodies and appeared to many people in the holy city of Jerusalem as Christ's first fruits and witnesses. They ascended with Christ in heaven at His final ascension. Finally, this study recommends a further study on (a) the possible meaning and identity of the phrase

"holy city" (earthly or heavenly Jerusalem) in Matt 27:53b as well as (b) the identity of the righteous men and prophets who had been buried in the tombs outside or nearby Jerusalem and the crucifixion site of Jesus.

TITLE: THE NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF "SPEAKING IN TONGUES" IN 1 CORINTHIANS 14

Researcher: Charlon L. Lavilla
Research adviser: Andresito P. Fernando, DMin, MTh
Date completed: March 25, 2022

This study investigates the nature and implications of *glossolalia* or "speaking in tongues" in 1 Cor 14 through a historical-biblical method of exegesis. Some researchers present their different understanding of the interpretation of the text, such as:

(a) Speaking in tongues is a heavenly language, angelic, prayer language; and (b) it is a human language. Which interpretation is best supported by scriptural evidence? The Holy Spirit gave the gift of tongues to the church as a means for the church's edification. However, the believers abused the gift of tongues to exalt the self, even using it in public worship services in which no one at present understands the speakers. They did not provide an interpreter for the tongue-speakers to translate the message so that it may be understandable to the listeners. As a result, Paul rebukes them regarding their speaking in tongues. In response, Paul magnified the gift of prophecy rather than tongues because it can upbuild the church. He encourages the Christians in Corinth to organize worship services in which everyone could benefit from the message they have heard from the speakers and avoid confusion among the believers. Speaking in tongues in 1 Cor 14 is identical to Acts 2 as an intelligible human language wherein the listeners understand the speakers. Finally, this study recommends a further study on the meaning of speaking in tongues of angels in 1 Cor 13:1.

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