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**Seventh-day Adventism and the Sanctuary Doctrine:
Deconstructing Adventist Identity via a Soteriology of Hospitality**

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of the degree of Master of Religious Studies

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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ABSTRACT

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Title: Seventh-day Adventism and the Sanctuary Doctrine: Deconstructing Adventist Identity via a Soteriology of Hospitality

The purpose of this dissertation is to upset exclusive and sectarian tendencies in the Seventh-day Adventist Church via an application of Jacques Derrida's notion of hospitality to Adventist soteriology.

The Adventist Church has, since its inception, had an understanding of the Gospel that revolves around the Mosaic Sanctuary. The Sanctuary Doctrine has focused on what has been termed a "pre-Advent" or "investigative" judgement that is said to have commenced in 1844. The doctrine has frequently been interpreted as an amendment to the atonement of Christ at Calvary and, as such, has not only been viewed with derision by non-Adventists, but has also tended to rob adherents of the assurance of salvation. Since it is bound to the actual identity of Seventh-day Adventism, attempts by influential Adventist theologians to withdraw the doctrine have failed.

By focusing on the Sanctuary as God's house – a place where one is made welcome - it is possible to apply Derrida's notion of hospitality in order to upset exclusive principles that the Sanctuary Doctrine has produced. Coupled to this hospitality can be shown to be central to the ethos of the Bible and, hence, has credibility in a Seventh-day Adventist context.

Specifically, the biblical injunction "love your neighbour as yourself" can be legitimately used as the standard of the pre-Advent judgement, prioritising the theme of hospitality. Additionally, since Christ identifies with the stranger, whomsoever they may be, the idea of the messianic (the "advent") is not restricted to the precisely determined figure of Jesus Christ. A soteriology of hospitality viewed in this way urges adherents to be welcoming to all strangers without the agenda of proselytising. The advent of the stranger coupled with the church imperative to extend hospitality while banishing sectarianism also destabilises church identity. Since this soteriology is rooted in a uniquely Adventist understanding of the Sanctuary, it simultaneously preserves the identity that is threatened.

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is, firstly, to challenge and destabilise exclusive principles within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church and to broaden the horizons of the church to be welcoming and affirming of those who are perceived to be “other” or “different.” Secondly, this project aims to strengthen SDA identity by making this destabilising idea – hospitality – the essence of SDA identity. The SDA Church, which is defined by a fairly rigid, though not inflexible list of creeds, tends to resist anything that is not more of the same. And so, in order to be effective, a project of this nature needs to strike at the heart of Adventism: its soteriology.

Adventism has always had an understanding of the Gospel that revolves around the issue of personal sin. The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ has the sole function of solving the problem of sin. Adventism does not have a single, unified voice on this and, within the church, there are two principal understandings of soteriology. The first I will refer to as Harvest Adventism and the second as Evangelical Adventism. I will examine both of these with an emphasis on their understanding of the doctrine of the Sanctuary which has a special significance dating back to the roots of the church in 1844.

I will outline SDA history in order to demonstrate exactly why any novel approach to soteriology *must* also incorporate the Sanctuary Doctrine on a fundamental level. Furthermore, the conflicts that have frequently accompanied theological reflection on the Sanctuary Doctrine provide insight into what elements of this doctrine are inflexible, as well as the points on which there is theological room to manoeuvre.

In the second half of the dissertation, I will argue for a soteriological model that rests on the notion of hospitality. This is an intrinsically inclusive metaphor that urges believers to be welcoming to others. This will be done with reference to the deconstructive thought of Jacques Derrida. Since deconstruction has often been challenged as nihilistic and, one might say, anti-religious, I will justify the use of deconstruction and answer some of these more frequent critiques. Secondly, I will invoke key elements of deconstruction. These include Derrida’s notions of justice, the messianic and hospitality. In this regard, I have also depended quite centrally on the

work of John D Caputo, whose writings provide an obvious theological point of entry for Derrida's work in a Christian context.

The ideas of Sanctuary – God's dwelling place - and hospitality are naturally connected. As the key principle that governs the Sanctuary Doctrine, hospitality supplies an *inclusive* focal point for a uniquely Adventist understanding of soteriology. This will mean a constant redefining of church boundaries as the church moves to accept the other for the sake of hospitality. This, in turn, will undermine church identity, but since the church's identity is primarily grounded on this destabilising principle, to do otherwise would be a denial of itself.

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2 Seventh-Day Adventism and the Sanctuary Doctrine

2.1 Brief Historical Background

In the early 1800s, a Baptist evangelist named William Miller preached Christ's imminent return.¹ The basis for this was Daniel 8:14: "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the Sanctuary be cleansed" (King James Version). The Millerites employed a hermeneutic that had two conclusions. The first was that the endpoint of the 2300 days was calculated to 22 October 1844. The second stated that the "cleansing of the Sanctuary" would occur when Christ returned on this date. The "Sanctuary" was interpreted to be this earth while the "cleansing" meant the removal of all sin. Miller concluded that sin could only be removed by the coming of Christ and hence had what he believed to be the definitive interpretation of the text.

The failure of Christ to return on this date has been dubbed the "Great Disappointment." Most adherents abandoned all association with the group and accepted that Millerite calculations with regard to the date were as fallacious as was the associated conclusion that Christ would return on this date. It is true that further dates for Christ's return were proposed, the first in the fall of 1845 and then further predictions in 1846, 1849, 1850, 1851, 1854, 1858, 1866 and 1877.² These did not gain widespread acceptance and certainly nowhere near the support that the prediction for 1844 had gained. A small group of Millerites formed the nucleus that was to become the SDA Church. These held that the date – 22 October 1844 – was a correct calculation and only the event – Christ's return – was erroneous.

Founders of the SDA Church, Hiram Edson, Joseph Bates and James and Ellen White, up until around 1852, held to the "Shut Door" theory. This suggested that salvation was only open to those who had accepted the Advent message as it was

¹ The history surrounding this event has been extensively documented and it is not necessary for me to laboriously reiterate these details here. Various dates were suggested, but the date that stuck for the group of Millerites that were to become the SDA Church was 22 October 1844. For further information on William Miller and the Millerite movement of the early 19th century see Francis D Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites Who Mistakenly Believed that the Second Coming of Christ Would Take Place in the Year 1844* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1944) and LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1971).

² Everett N Dick, "The Millerite Movement, 1830-1845," in *Adventism in America*, ed. Gary Land (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 41.

preached prior to 22 October 1844. At this date the “doors of probation closed”, precluding further entry.³ As time elapsed and Christ did not return, the theory became increasingly difficult to sustain.

A second interpretation was suggested. This was to fundamentally define Seventh-day Adventism. The “cleansing of the Sanctuary” was a work that took place in the “Heavenly Sanctuary.”⁴ On 22 October 1844 Christ entered the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary and began a work of judgment. This work of judgment was to become known as the “investigative judgment” and, simply put, involved Christ determining exactly who would be saved and lost. The belief claims that once Christ has determined who he is coming to redeem, he will return. Having established the “actual meaning” of Daniel 8:14 these Millerites crystallized into a group and began the preaching of this new message.

The movement gained impetus and other distinctive doctrines were gradually added. By 1860 the church name “Seventh-day Adventist” was adopted. This was followed in 1861 by the organization of specific church congregations into a conference. By 1863 various conferences had been instituted resulting in the formation of the General Conference setting “the Advent Movement on a coordinated, organized course.”⁵

2.2 The Sanctuary Doctrine in the Latter Part of the 20th Century

The doctrine that evolved around the “cleansing of the Sanctuary” has not only been brought into question by other Christian groups, but has also been particularly controversial within the church itself. The belief is currently labeled “fundamental belief #23: *Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary.*” The following serves as a pertinent excerpt:

There is a Sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. . . . In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of

³ Ibid., 40.

⁴ SDAs do not believe that a person either ascends to heaven or is damned at the moment they die. SDAs believe that all people “rest” in the grave until the Second Coming of Christ. Resurrection occurs at the Second Coming of Christ once judgement is complete. This belief is outlined in fundamental belief #25 (*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 16th ed. (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 18).

⁵ *Church Manual* (2000), xix.

investigative judgment. . . . The investigative judgment reveals to Heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and . . . who among the living are abiding in Christ. . . .⁶

Despite the precise wording of this doctrine, it is not etched in stone. The *Church Manual* asserts before the presentation of the beliefs the following disclaimer:

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. *Revision of these statements may be expected* at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word [emphasis supplied].⁷

In fact, there has been considerable movement on the wording of the doctrine in the past fifty years.

In the current *Church Manual* – the 16th edition revised in 2000 – there are, in all, twenty-seven fundamental beliefs.⁸ Fundamental belief #23 is the *only* belief that mentions the Sanctuary and the 2300 day prophecy concluding in 1844. The *Church Manual* revised in 1959⁹ however, had far more emphasis on this particular belief. The fundamental beliefs have been substantially amended since this time. In 1959 there were only 22 beliefs and the Sanctuary Doctrine was embodied in four of these fundamental beliefs.¹⁰ In short, the *direction* of the church over the past few decades is to reduce or dilute the impact of this doctrine without actually *removing* the doctrine.

An addition in the 2000 version is significant. It is almost in the form of a disclaimer as it introduces the belief: “There is a Sanctuary in heaven. . . . In it Christ ministers on our behalf, *making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross*” (emphasis supplied). The italicized phrase is indicative of the controversy and, indeed, embarrassment that the SDA Church has suffered as a consequence of this belief. It is an attempt to deflect the accusation that if Christ commenced a ministry of atonement in 1844, then this implies an addition to the atonement Christ accomplished on the cross. This leaves the inescapable conclusion that Christ's work in resolving sin at Calvary was deficient. This reasoning, along with the more standard accusation - that since SDAs insist on Sabbath observance, they are legalists - has led to a generally held perception among

⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁸ It is true that a twenty-eighth fundamental belief was added at the General Conference Session in 2005. Since this new belief is irrelevant to this dissertation and its wording has not yet been finalized, I will make reference to the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs of the SDA Church and ignore this recent development.

⁹ *Church Manual: Issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 1959* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing, 1959).

¹⁰ *Church Manual* (1959), 32-3.

the Christian world at large that the SDA Church, despite its profession of belief in Jesus Christ, is not a Christian community per se, but a “cult” or “sect.” For many SDAs, this is grave cause for concern.

2.3 Questions on Doctrine: The Birth of Evangelical Adventism

The general perception of Evangelical Christians that SDAs could not be legitimately recognized as members of the Christian community was addressed by the SDA Church in the 1950s in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*.¹¹ The book was commissioned by the SDA General Conference and the title page declares that it was “prepared by a Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, Bible Teachers and Editors.”¹² *Questions on Doctrine* – as it became known – was the outgrowth of SDA dialogues with certain Evangelical Christians, most notably, Donald Barnhouse, a Presbyterian minister from Philadelphia, and Walter R Martin, the director of cult apologetics for Zondervan Publishing. Martin was eager for the dialogues since he wanted to gather material for a book he had been commissioned to write *against* Adventists.

Questions on Doctrine endeavored to outline exactly why Adventists, despite certain distinctive beliefs, should nevertheless be regarded as Christians. Some two hundred of the seven hundred page book are devoted to 1844 and the cleansing of the Sanctuary, indicating exactly how vociferous the objections were to this doctrine. In contrast, the more generally perceived and well-known objection related to legalism was addressed in a mere thirty-five pages.

The SDA Church of the time, to some extent at least, achieved the desired outcome since Martin’s book turned out to be something of a defense of Adventism. It was entitled *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism*¹³ and in the final chapter Martin writes:

In the providence of God and in His own good time, we trust that evangelical Christianity as a whole will extend the hand of fellowship to a group of sincere, earnest fellow Christians,

¹¹ *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957).

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ Walter Ralston Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960).

distinguished though they are by some peculiar views, but members of the Body of Christ and possessors of the faith that saves.¹⁴

This attempt to align Adventism with Christianity as a whole has not been uniformly accepted within the church and at the heart of the debate is the Sanctuary Doctrine.

2.4 The Ford Controversy

In the 1960s the General Conference appointed a committee to address problems associated with the Sanctuary Doctrine with particular reference to the church understanding of Daniel 8:14. Unfortunately the “Daniel Committee” – as it was dubbed – was unable to reach consensus and as a consequence no report was ever issued from these discussions.¹⁵ This was an indication of turmoil to come although Adventist publications still continued to produce articles insisting that the creed as it was traditionally understood was fundamental to Seventh-day Adventism.¹⁶

Desmond Ford, a respected theologian in the SDA Church, was awarded his PhD in 1972 at the University of Manchester for his thesis “The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology” - a topic that has its origins in Daniel 8:13 and is very “Adventist” in its content. In 1978, Ford added to his prestige as an Adventist scholar of note with the publishing of *Daniel*.¹⁷ This book was very closely aligned with traditional SDA expositions of Daniel. It contained one of the best defences for the much maligned year/day principle that was employed for deducing the date 1844 as the conclusion of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14.¹⁸

Just one year later, on 27 October 1979, Ford challenged the Sanctuary Doctrine and “rejected its traditional formulation in a lecture to the Adventist Forum at Pacific Union College.”¹⁹ Local opposition arose immediately, the culmination of which was that Ford was given six months to prepare “a documented statement on the topic of the Sanctuary and related issues.”²⁰ This decision was taken with the hope that Ford might resolve the Sanctuary Doctrine in a manner that would satisfactorily

¹⁴ Martin, 236-7 as cited in Keld J Reynolds, “The Church under Stress, 1931-1960” in *Adventism in America*, ed. Gary Land (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 187.

¹⁵ Gary Land, “Coping with change, 1961-1980,” in *Adventism in America*, ed. Gary Land (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 223.

¹⁶ For example, Donald F Neufeld, “No Sanctuary, No True Adventism,” *Adventist Review* (9 November 1978), 20-21.

¹⁷ Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978).

¹⁸ See Ford, *Daniel*, 300-305.

¹⁹ Land, “Coping with change,” 223.

²⁰ Kenneth Wood, ed., “Teacher given leave to prepare doctrinal paper,” in *Adventist Review* (20 December 1979), 23.

resolve the exegetical problems – something that the “Daniel Committee” a decade earlier had failed to do.

The outgrowth of Ford’s hiatus was a manuscript entitled *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment*.²¹ Ford candidly addressed what he called “inconsistencies and incongruities in our eschatological presentation” and claimed that “over the years it had become apparent that most of the research scholars of the church shared my discomfiture but had concluded that little could be done.”²²

Ford’s manuscript is very carefully argued and for many Adventist scholars, pastors and laity of the time was incontrovertible. Ford initially appeals to the history of the doctrine and cites a myriad of Adventist authors dating back as far as 1846, including doubts penned by James White, one of the founding fathers of the church and the first SDA General Conference president. In fact, the list is an impressive collection of Adventist scholarship over the years. Ford shows how the understanding of the doctrine has changed over the years. For example, Uriah Smith writing in the late 1800s had claimed “Christ did not make the atonement when He shed his blood upon the cross. Let this fact be forever fixed in the mind.”²³ This position was clearly no longer held. As already noted, the current fundamental belief #23 asserts that atonement on the cross was “offered once for all.”²⁴

In these opening chapters, Ford was merely leading up to his actual exegesis. This maintains that the date 1844 is not sustainable on the basis of the biblical evidence and the idea that Christ entered the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary at this time is patently absurd. In fact, Ford contends that the idea of a literal Heavenly Sanctuary is biblically untenable. These conclusions hit at the very foundation of SDA identity.

Ford’s document was circulated to members of a group known as the “Sanctuary Review Committee” who met 10-15 August 1980 at a denominational campground in Colorado called Glacier View. The Glacier View meetings effectively rejected Ford’s conclusions and reaffirmed the traditional position. Raymond Cottrell, a participant at the meetings, condemned the committee action with the following

²¹ Desmond Ford, *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment* (Casselberry: Euangelion Press, 1980).

²² *Ibid.*, i.

²³ Uriah Smith, *Looking unto Jesus*, 237 as cited in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 73.

²⁴ *Church Manual* (2000), 17.

insight on the proceedings: "In the thinking of the majority at Glacier View, Adventist tradition was the norm for interpreting the Bible, rather than the Bible for tradition."²⁵

Ford's ministerial credentials were removed since he was seen to hold views that could not be reconciled with church beliefs. There was opposition to this action within the church and many members left the church while ministers were either fired or resigned after publicly opposing the Ford decision. Clearly, Adventism was theologically fragmented and although much has been written over the intervening twenty-five years with regard to 1844 and the cleansing of the Sanctuary, no scholar who wishes to remain in church employ would publicly admit to any significant divergence.

2.5 More Recent Adventist Approaches to the Sanctuary

Shortly after the Ford controversy, the General Conference appointed a committee of prominent SDA scholars called "The Daniel and Revelation Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists." During the years 1982 to 1992, this committee was responsible for producing five books, three on the book of Daniel and two further volumes dealing with the book of Revelation. The volumes consist of numerous independent articles authored by individuals on the committee and the opening introduction admits:

Symposia naturally suffer certain limitations from multiple authorship. In order to permit an essay to stand complete in itself no effort was made to delete overlapping. Nor was there a conscious attempt to harmonize the authors where they differed on minor points. However, the essentials of the several presentations represent a consensus of those present who participated in the work of the Committee.²⁶

This lukewarm admission that the authors "differed on minor points" and agreed on "the essentials" is really indicative of the status of Adventist theology, particularly with regard to 1844 and the Sanctuary. The symposia, in general, though voluminous, are merely a reaffirmation of traditional church understandings. Of course, no other possible interpretation could be given in the wake of recent events and certainly not by a committee appointed by the General Conference.

There have been various defences of the traditional position since. For example, in 1994, Johan Japp, who is currently lecturing in systematic theology at

²⁵ Raymond F Cottrell, "The Sanctuary Review Committee and its New Consensus," *Spectrum 11* (November 1980), 2-26 in Land, "Coping with change," 225.

²⁶ Frank B Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), xii.

Helderberg College, the seminary for SDA pastors in South Africa, submitted a Masters thesis at the University of South Africa called “A Study of the Atonement in Seventh-day Adventism.” The first sentence of his opening synopsis clearly indicates the apologetic nature of the work as well as the climate on the issue within the SDA Church:

The tension between the all-sufficient atonement of the cross and a so-called ‘final’ atonement during the pre-Advent judgment, prophesied in Daniel and Revelation, are resolved when the nature of these two moments of atonement are seen in their biblical setting.²⁷

2.6 The Impact of the Investigative Judgment on Believers

The Sanctuary Doctrine as it was traditionally understood focused very heavily on the investigative judgment. The idea presented was that God would open the “books” recording the details of each individual’s life and determine whether or not they were “worthy” (a word that is still present in fundamental belief #23) of heaven. The consequence of this doctrine is to rob believers of their assurance of salvation.

Among the friends and critics of Seventh-day Adventism nothing has aroused more discussion and opposition than the teaching of an investigative judgment in heaven reserved for the people of God prior to Christ’s return. For many this doctrine seems to shatter the possibility of assurance here and now and leaves uncertain one’s standing with God. How can a Christian in this life be sure of his [sic] destiny and future with God until the pre-Advent judgment has laid bare the fact of each person and judgment is pronounced?²⁸

This quote by Edward Heppenstall is significant. Firstly, Heppenstall has never been an opponent of Seventh-day Adventism, but rather was a respected theologian who spent the majority of his career lecturing at SDA colleges and universities. In essence, Heppenstall emphasises what believers within the SDA Church have always known (experientially, if not, cognitively), that the traditional understanding of the investigative judgment induces fear for one’s eternal destiny and drives one toward a works oriented religion as one strives to “prove oneself worthy.”

There is also an allusion in this quote to the shift in emphasis within the church with regard to this belief. Heppenstall refers to the “investigative judgment” – as one would expect – but he also uses the term “pre-Advent judgment.” In recent years, “pre-Advent” has been favoured over the more traditional “investigative.” The word “investigative” – although still used and, indeed, present in fundamental belief #23 – is perceived as a threatening term, while “pre-Advent” is more neutral and does not intrinsically suggest that God is scrutinising every detail of the believer’s life.

²⁷ Johan Adriaan Japp, “A Study of Atonement in Seventh-day Adventism” (M.Th.-diss., UNISA, June 1994), unnumbered title page.

²⁸ Edward Heppenstall, *Doctrinal Discussions*, 202 as cited in Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, 19.

This shift in terminology is indicative of the church's theological shift from that advocated in the 1940s and 50s, from a legalistic and subjective soteriological approach to an objective soteriology that is concerned to bring assurance to believers. Theologians and preachers in their efforts to move the church in this direction have been forced to confront the Sanctuary Doctrine and its emphasis on the investigative judgment. Ford, as I have noted, tackled the doctrine head on and discovered that the identity of the church was too closely tied to the events surrounding 1844 for the church to accept a complete withdrawal of the belief.

It is evident when one examines material written more recently on the Sanctuary that while many of the fundamental "facts" of the doctrine are left intact, most notably the actual date 1844 and the *idea* of the "cleansing of the Sanctuary" beginning at this time, the theological significance is more fluid.

Siegfried J Schwantes in "'*Ereb Boqer* of Daniel 8:14 Re-examined"²⁹ in the recently commissioned *Symposium on Daniel* devotes considerable space to asserting that the 2300 days are years that culminate in 1844 as well as acknowledging that there is indeed a Heavenly Sanctuary where Christ ministers. '*Ereb Boqer* merely refers to the literal rendering of the time expression in Daniel 8:14: "And he said unto me, Until evening [*'ereb*] morning [*boqer*] two thousand and three hundred. . . ."³⁰

The same adherence to tradition is not evident when the actual work of Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary is addressed. There is a considerable shift away from the dreaded "for" or "against" judgment implied by the investigative judgment.

In "Translation of *Nisdaq/Katharisthesetai* in Daniel 8:14", Niels-Erik Andreasen, after a very careful exegesis, concludes that the words "shall be cleansed" (*nisdaq* in the Hebrew and *Katharisthesetai* in the Septuagint and derived from the root *sdq*) are best interpreted as "restored," "restored (to its rightful state)," or "have its rights restored" as well as including the ideas of "purification/cleansing" and "vindication/elevation".³¹ These ideas of "vindication" are reiterated by Gerhard Hasel:

The language employed in Daniel 8:14 about the 'cleansing' of the 'Sanctuary' evokes cultic associations, particularly those which deal with the day of Atonement, including such

²⁹ Siegfried J Schwantes, "'*Ereb Boqer* of Daniel 8:14 Re-examined," in *Symposium on Daniel*, ed. Frank B Holbrook (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), 462-74.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 462.

³¹ Niels-Erik Andreasen, "Translation of *Nisdaq/Katharisthesetai* in Daniel 8:14," in *Symposium on Daniel*, ed. Frank B Holbrook (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), 495-6

associations as the cleansing, setting right, justification, and vindication ideas which involve both Sanctuary and people.³²

According to Andreasen and Hasel, the investigative judgement is not a “for or against” decision that Christ makes with regard to each person’s salvation, rather it is *vindication* of the saints. One need not fear that one’s life is being scrutinized at some point during the investigative judgment since the very appearance of one’s name is assurance of salvation. “The pre-Advent investigation involves the saints. God will deliver only those who have their names written in the book. . . .”³³ In other words, the criteria for salvation are established elsewhere and have nothing to do with the investigative judgment. This was a crucial move away from earlier formulations of the doctrine.³⁴

2.7 SDA Soteriology and the Sanctuary: Two Theological Strands

Soteriological implications of the Sanctuary Doctrine from an SDA perspective are, in a sense, inescapable. Daniel 8:14 was the historical starting point of the SDA church and the hermeneutics employed tied this text to the Levitical Day of Atonement, which, itself, was merely a prolepsis of the antitypical Day of Atonement commencing in 1844.

This connection with the atonement has virtually compelled SDA writers to connect soteriology with the Sanctuary Doctrine. Since SDAs today generally agree that atonement was made at the cross, the following statement is typical of how the atonement at Calvary is reconciled with the atonement of the investigative judgment: “The pre-Advent judgment is part of the unfolding in salvation history of what Christ accomplished at the cross.”³⁵

Understandings of Adventist soteriology are not uniform. There are two soteriological models that have dominated Seventh-day Adventism and continue to divide believers within the church although very few members in the church would be

³² Gerhard F Hasel, “The ‘Little Horn,’ the Heavenly Sanctuary, and the Time of the End: A Study of Daniel 8:9-14,” in *Symposium on Daniel*, ed. Frank B Holbrook (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1986), 456.

³³ Norman Gulley, *Christ is Coming: A Christ-Centered Approach to Last-Day Events* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing, 1998), 434.

³⁴ It is only *approximately* accurate to assert that *earlier* formulations of the investigative judgment (say prior to the 1970s or even the 1950s) tended to present a judgment of condemnation as opposed to acquittal, since advocates across the spectrum – no matter what their viewpoint – have *claimed* an adherence to historic Adventism.

³⁵ Gulley, 435.

able to articulate the source of their differing opinions. Differences are usually considered with regard to their effects and labelled accordingly as conservative versus liberal or legalism versus cheap grace. In fact, these differences are governed by very different approaches to soteriology. The first I have called Harvest Adventism and the second Evangelical Adventism.³⁶

2.7.1 Harvest Adventism

This soteriological model has a specific understanding of the nature of sin, is a subjective soteriological model, and has conclusions that are directly derived from a very specific understanding of the Sanctuary.

Probably the most influential proponent of this view is Herbert E Douglass. He was an associate editor to the *Adventist Review*³⁷ during the 1970s and worked at various SDA colleges in both teaching and administrative positions.

To understand Douglass' theology and soteriology one needs to appreciate that the governing principle can be traced to Christ's return and more specifically to the delay in the fulfilment of this event. This is tied to what Douglass calls the "harvest principle." According to Douglass, "the harvest principle explains why the day and hour of Christ's return cannot be predicted and what it is for which our Lord waits."³⁸ Douglass describes the origin and basis for its importance in the following manner: "Jesus compared the end of this world to a farmer's harvest. . . . In His masterful way He compared the focal point of the plan of salvation to an earthly harvest."³⁹

Douglass takes as his primary source and foundation for this approach in a few words from the book *Christ Object Lessons* by Ellen G White, who has prophetic

³⁶ These terms are not original and were used in my undergraduate Doctrine of Salvation courses (at the time called Reconciliation I and Reconciliation II) conducted by Dr John Webster at Helderberg College in 1997.

³⁷ Eric Webster makes the following statement concerning this publication: "The *Adventist Review* has a long history in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Appearing every week since 1850 this magazine is considered the official mouthpiece of the church and has considerable weight in influencing theological thought in the church." Eric Webster, *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology* (New York: Peter Lang Pub. Inc., 1984), 349.

³⁸ Herbert E Douglass, "Men of Faith – The Showcase of God's Grace," in *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1975), 18.

³⁹ Douglas, 18.

status in the SDA Church:⁴⁰ “When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”⁴¹

For Douglass the equation is very simple. For Jesus to return to this earth there must first be a people that are “perfect” just as Jesus was perfect. Although Douglass accepts that human beings have mental and physical weaknesses, he nevertheless asserts that “in the moral area of character development, perfection is possible and expected.”⁴² This perfection will eventually be reflected in God’s people and will prompt Christ’s return. It is this perfection that Christ is seeking to identify in the investigative judgment. Eric Webster in *Crosscurrents in Adventist Christology* outlines the logic of Douglass’s position:

... it is held that Christ began His High Priestly ministration in the first apartment of the Heavenly Sanctuary at His ascension and in 1844, at the close of the 2,300 day period of Daniel 8:14, Christ moved into the second or most holy apartment and began the second phase of His ministration. This corresponds to the “cleansing of the Sanctuary” and points to a work of judgment. Douglass would see this second phase of priestly ministration focusing on the ark of the covenant, the law of God and the judgment. During this antitypical Day of Atonement when man faces the solemnity of the judgment he is to seek to come into an experience of total perfection.⁴³

Since the earthly Sanctuary contained the Ten Commandments, so too must the Heavenly Sanctuary. Coupled with the proof-text “Sin is transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV), Douglass identified the standard for the judgement. Hence, when Christ discovers a people who perfectly keep the Ten Commandments he will return to this earth.⁴⁴

The level of perfection that is required by this theology is uncompromising and rigorous. However, one should also note that the standard that is required is the Ten Commandments. This is a finite and precise list of injunctions. In fact, notwithstanding more rigorous appeals to the “spirit” of the law which suggest more indefinable and unachievable requirements such as “love your neighbour as yourself,” most people could probably claim a certain level of success in keeping the Ten

⁴⁰ Ellen G White’s prophetic role within the church is never questioned, but certainly how her writings are to be applied is the source of much debate. Despite her status, the Bible is nevertheless the basis for SDA doctrine.

⁴¹ Ellen G White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington DC: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1900), 69 as cited in Douglass, 18.

⁴² Douglass, 28.

⁴³ Webster, 370-1.

⁴⁴ This reasoning, though highly contrived, has proven to be a compelling argument for many SDAs. It has also been highly effective in convincing people from other Christian denominations to join the SDA Church. Although Douglass’ views are not officially accepted by the church, it is quite possible to preach this theology without fear of recrimination. Douglass’ theology often *dominates* evangelism programmes because of its success in gaining converts.

Commandments. After all, many people manage to get through the day without killing some-one or stealing something! In other words, although Douglass' theology requires "moral" or "character" perfection, this is perceived to be attainable.

The background to Douglass' theology is the Great Controversy in heaven where Satan challenges God, claiming that God is unjust and God's laws are unfair: "Although Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed by either sinless or sinning beings, Jesus proved that man [sic], even in his [sic] fallen human nature, could keep God's law."⁴⁵ Jesus became a human being with Adam's *post-fallen nature* in order to demonstrate that God's law can be kept. Christ keeps the law perfectly, thereby proving that it can be done. This leaves "fallen human beings without excuse." Since Jesus has a "sinful nature" but cannot be sinful, Douglass needs to harmonise this with Christ's purity and sinlessness. Hence everyone is in a "state of innocence and purity at birth." The difference between Christ and human beings is in act not state.⁴⁶

And so Douglass advances the following conclusion of his logic:

The example of Jesus, the God-man, stands before us all as the viable goal that will be achieved in a remarkable demonstration by the last generation of advent-oriented Christians. The basic spiritual equipment that guaranteed the triumph of Jesus has always been available to mankind, but it will be the last generation which will one day prove its power and effectiveness.⁴⁷

The Christological focus of Harvest Adventism is Christ our example. Christians should emulate Christ and the degree to which they are successful will determine how they will fare in the investigative judgment. Douglass refers to Christ as our "substitute and example"⁴⁸ but he uses these words synonymously:

The error begins when Christ's role as man's Substitute is misunderstood, and it is perpetuated over the years in the tragic misunderstandings of righteousness by faith. If Jesus is only man's Saviour and not truly his *Substitute or Example*, thus proving that all men can do what he did if they too would live a life of faith, then the challenge to do what He did is immeasurably reduced [emphasis supplied].⁴⁹

These theological views are totally inconsistent with Evangelical Adventism, that not only espouses penal substitution as the primary metaphor toward an understanding of the atonement, but also rejects Harvest Adventism's theological understanding of the Sanctuary.

⁴⁵ Douglass, 36.

⁴⁶ Webster, 421.

⁴⁷ Douglass, 43.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

2.7.2 Evangelical Adventism

There is no single voice that is necessarily linked with Evangelical Adventism. Certainly, Leroy Edwin Froom – who was one of the principal (unacknowledged) authors responsible for *Questions on Doctrine* – was a significant figure. Also Edward Heppenstall was an influential scholar who advanced a version of Evangelical Adventism.

Arguably the person who was most responsible for bringing this theology to SDA congregations was Morris Venden.⁵⁰ In *95 Theses on Righteousness by Faith*⁵¹, Venden presents a precise version of this theology. The title is a deliberate parody of Luther's 95 theses. It attempts to inform SDAs that they are part of the Protestant Christian tradition and *not* a sectarian or separatist movement. His intent is clear: SDAs may differ on certain doctrinal issues, but the essence of what SDAs believe falls within the gamut of what is generally understood to be "Christian." This agenda is consistent with what the church had attempted to accomplish thirty years earlier in the SDA discussions with Donald Barnhouse and Walter R Martin and the subsequent publishing of *Questions on Doctrine*.

Evangelical Adventism proposes unequivocally that "the vicarious, atoning death of Jesus Christ, once for all, is all sufficient for the redemption of a lost race."⁵² Evangelical Adventism takes as its primary understanding of the cross, penal substitution or the satisfaction model of Anselm of Canterbury. Johan Japp quotes several significant contemporary SDA sources – Roy Adams, Norman Gulley, Hans LaRondelle and Richard Davidson are named, all of whom advocate variations of Evangelical Adventism. Japp summarises their unified position that the atonement, "grounded in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ's death, is not just one of the steps in the redemption of the soul, but is the pivotal concept that pre-eminently unites within itself all the variegated facets of redemption."⁵³ Reiterating the point that Evangelical Adventism is in harmony with mainstream evangelicals, Japp also quotes Anglican priest and prominent evangelical theologian John Stott:

⁵⁰ This point is difficult to establish owing to the vast array of theologians within the church who subscribe to this theology. Certainly Venden (who is from the United States of America) has proven hugely influential in the South African context. In addition to the publishing of numerous books he made several visits to South Africa during the 1980s as a guest preacher.

⁵¹ Morris Venden, *95 Theses on Righteousness by Faith* (Boise: Pacific Press Publishing, 1987).

⁵² *Questions on Doctrine*, 22.

⁵³ Japp, 278.

John Stott says that while “propitiation,” “redemption,” “justification” and “reconciliation” are NT images or metaphors that graphically portray what God has done in and through Christ’s death, substitution, however, “is not another image: it is the reality which lies beneath them all.”⁵⁴

Substitutionary theology causes Evangelical Adventism to be strongly cross-centred. It is an objective theology accenting what Christ has done for us, rather than what we need to do to secure our salvation. Nevertheless, “perfection” – like Harvest Adventism – is still understood to be the basis for salvation; it is just that perfection is understood differently. The focus is shifted to one’s relationship with God, rather than behaviour. Good behaviour is perceived to flow from the person who has a “right relationship with God.” For instance, Edward Heppenstall states: “Properly understood, we contend for the Biblical doctrine of perfection: the perfecting of a right relationship to God.”⁵⁵

Hans LaRondelle expresses the same idea while emphasising the objective dimension of Christ’s righteousness that is imputed to the believer: “Man’s [sic] relation to God is determined by his [sic] relation to Christ. Through faith and baptism the believer participates legally and dynamically in the perfection of Christ. Man [sic] has no perfection in himself [sic].”⁵⁶

Evangelical Adventism has the express goal of bringing assurance to believers and tends to escape the accusation of legalism so often levelled at Harvest Adventism. This is not to say that Evangelical Adventists are not concerned with behaviour. In fact, within the SDA community one of the primary concerns of Evangelical Adventists is that they are not antinomians.

Evangelical Adventists have a broader definition for sin than Harvest Adventists. Roy Adams states: “After discussing at least 12 different terms for sin in the Old Testament, the *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* notes that even that did ‘not exhaust the vocabulary of sin in the OT.’”⁵⁷ Of course, Adams is merely demonstrating that Harvest Adventism’s sin definition - “transgression of the law” - is deficient and it is only for this reason that sinlessness or perfection is perceived as humanly possible.

⁵⁴ John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leister: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 338-9 as cited in Japp, 277-8.

⁵⁵ Edward Heppenstall, “Let us go on to perfection,” in *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1975), 64.

⁵⁶ Hans K LaRondelle, “The Biblical Idea of Perfection,” in *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1975), 136.

⁵⁷ *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. R-Z, 361 as cited in Roy Adams, *The Nature of Christ: Help for a Church Divided over Perfection* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994), 90-1.

Evangelical Adventism has taken at least two significant steps away from the doctrine of the Heavenly Sanctuary and the investigative judgment. The first is to acknowledge the all sufficient atonement of Christ on the cross, where Harvest Adventism would insist that the atonement of the cross needs to be augmented by Christ's work in the Heavenly Sanctuary. Secondly, by defining sin in broader terms than "transgression of the law" Evangelical Adventists have stepped away from the literalistic portrait of the Sanctuary painted by Harvest Adventism. What is overlooked is that Harvest Adventism *does not* primarily derive its definition for sin from 1 John 3:4. This verse merely acts as supporting evidence. The reason "transgression of the law" is the "correct" definition is that *the Ten Commandments are in the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place where Christ is doing the judging*. When Evangelical Adventism defines sin in these "broader terms" as Adams puts it, they are simultaneously arguing that the Sanctuary itself is deficient as a soteriological type or symbol for the atonement. In fact, from the point of view of soteriology, Evangelical Adventism has very little use for the Heavenly Sanctuary and the investigative judgment.⁵⁸

The battleground for the conflict between Harvest Adventism and Evangelical Adventism has not been their understandings of the Sanctuary; the focal point has been the nature of Christ. Evangelical Adventism insists that Christ had the pre-fall nature of Adam while Harvest Adventism advocates the post-fall nature of Adam. It is difficult to overstate the level of controversy this issue has generated in recent years within the SDA Church. This, despite the fact that the fundamental beliefs of the church do not define Christ's nature beyond the following: "Forever truly God, He became also truly man."⁵⁹

Evangelical Adventism recognises that Christ on a certain level shared human weaknesses, but this never implies that there was ever any taint of sin upon his character:

He sojourned on this earth, was tempted and tried, and was touched with the feelings of our human infirmities, yet he lived a life wholly free from sin. . . . He was the second Adam,

⁵⁸ It is true that Evangelical Adventists have recourse to the Sanctuary in order to support penal substitution, but this should not be confused with the pre-Advent judgement which is, at best, an appendage to penal substitution. There is certainly no *obvious* connection. In any case, it is fair to say that if the pre-Advent judgement were laid aside as an Adventist creed, Evangelical Adventists would not be required to significantly adapt their theology. The same cannot be said of Harvest Adventism.

⁵⁹ *Church Manual* (2000), 10.

coming in the “likeness” of sinful human flesh (Rom. 8:3), but without a taint of its sinful propensities and passions.⁶⁰

Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness, connected with God and beloved by God. *He began where the first Adam began.*⁶¹

This position cannot be surrendered by Evangelical Adventism, because the idea that Christ is primarily an example for us to emulate misses the main point of the incarnation: “[Jesus] came not merely to set us an *example*, but to be our *Saviour*.”⁶²

Part of the reason that Evangelical Adventism tends to uphold penal substitution as its primary Christological understanding is that it agrees with Harvest Adventism that “perfection” is required in order for a person to obtain salvation, but at the same time it acknowledges that no human being can accomplish this. Since a person cannot accomplish sinlessness in and of themselves, it is achieved vicariously.

2.7.3 The Problem of Church Identity

I am convinced that the debate within Adventism on the nature of Christ is merely a façade that masks the actual issue at stake: the identity of the SDA Church.

When a “representative” group of SDAs – R Allan Anderson, LeRoy E Fromm, Walter E Read and T Edgar UnRuh – met with non-SDA evangelical Christians, Donald Barnhouse and Walter Martin, it was immediately met with opposition. Respected SDA minister and theologian, M L Andreasen was vociferous in his objections to the meetings. Andreasen “wanted Adventist leaders to ‘stand tall’ and not compromise their commitment to the church’s traditional beliefs.”⁶³ He was of the opinion that these conversations “represented a capitulation – a sell out – on the part of Adventist Church leadership.”⁶⁴ The political might of the Evangelical Adventists was demonstrated when Andreasen had his ministerial credentials suspended. The justice or injustice of this action is not my concern, rather, that Andreasen’s objections were based upon a fear that the SDA Church, in being accepted by non-SDA evangelicals as “fundamentally Christian and brethren in Christ,”⁶⁵ would lose its distinct identity.

⁶⁰ *Questions on Doctrine*, 52.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 650.

⁶² Adams, 71.

⁶³ David R Larson, “Sanctuary,” in *Remnant and Republic: Adventist Themes for Personal and Social Ethics*, ed. Charles W Teel, Jr. (Loma Linda: Loma Linda University Center for Christian Bioethics, 1995), 67.

⁶⁴ Adams, 41.

⁶⁵ Fromm, 480.

Despite the controversy surrounding the nature of Christ, the origin of Harvest Adventism is neither a postlapsarian view of Christ's nature, nor is founded on the soteriological necessity of human perfection with the Ten Commandments as a measure. Both of these are an outgrowth of the historical and theological origins of Seventh-day Adventism. These origins are based on Daniel 8:14 and the fact that Christ entered the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary in 1844. This act of Christ was seen by the Adventists of the time as being of *cosmic and soteriological importance*. The difficulty for SDA theologians is simply that it is too risky to debate or, indeed, bring into question the Sanctuary Doctrine. Ford discovered this. In his article on the Sanctuary, David R Larson commented: "[It] is not surprising that some contemporary Seventh-day Adventists distance themselves from all current discussions of the 'Sanctuary message'."⁶⁶

To put this another way, the traditional understanding of the investigative judgment as it is derived from Daniel 8:14 gives birth to legalism. Since legalism is recognised in the SDA Church as being unacceptable, SDA theologians can attack all theologies of this nature with impunity, but to take a step back into the Sanctuary and the origin of these theologies may well be career suicide.

Harvest Adventists, on the other hand, cannot accept the alternative views on perfection and the nature of Christ as advocated by Evangelical Adventism because to do so is perceived as resigning one of the core pillars of Seventh-day Adventism. This they cannot do. That stalwart of Evangelical Adventism, LeRoy Edwin Froom, himself, could have been quoting the concerns of Harvest Adventism when he said:

Indeed, if there is no Sanctuary in heaven, and no ministering Great High Priest serving therein; and if there is no Judgment Hour message to herald from God to mankind at this time. Then we have no justifiable place in the religious world, no distinctive denominational mission and message, no excuse for functioning as a separate church entity.⁶⁷

SDA writer Steven G Daily in *Adventism for a New Generation*, after taking the time to write out SDA fundamental belief #23 (the Sanctuary Doctrine) word for word, makes the following comment:

If you made sense out of that, congratulations. The Sanctuary Doctrine, with its emphasis on an investigative judgment, has been challenged and questioned more than any other Adventist belief throughout the history of the church *It has generally had little meaning of practical relevance – except in a negative sense [emphasis supplied]*.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Larson, 67.

⁶⁷ Froom, 542.

⁶⁸ Steven G Daily, *Adventism for a New Generation* (Portland: Better Living Publishers, 1993), 160.

Daily writing from a perspective that is far removed from Harvest Adventism brings into question the relevance of the Sanctuary Doctrine and from the point of view of Evangelical Adventism this is a legitimate point. Yes, the Sanctuary is inevitably addressed by Evangelical Adventists, but only because it is indispensable to the identity of SDAs, not because it has any special relevance to their soteriology.

The problem with the Sanctuary Doctrine, itself, is the investigative judgement. It has been argued that the investigative judgment is only inferred from the idea of the “cleansing of the Sanctuary” and is not a genuine identifying feature of the church at all:

It is essential that we . . . not confuse the “cleansing of the Sanctuary” with “the Investigative Judgment.” The former is a landmark, but the latter is not. . . . The Investigative Judgment is not among [the landmarks], and they were all formulated by 1948. . . . It took another decade for our peculiar view of the pre-advent judgment to become a “pillar” of the faith.⁶⁹

While this argument may have some validity, it does not particularly help the crisis of church identity that is generated by Evangelical Adventism. While one may affirm that the “cleansing of the Sanctuary” is the landmark belief and not “the investigative judgment,” one is nevertheless faced with deciphering exactly what this landmark belief is. If the cleansing of the Sanctuary is not the investigative judgment, then what exactly is it?

Even though Evangelical Adventism threatens to erode and dilute the identity of the SDA Church as it increasingly begins to mirror Christian churches outside its walls and its so-called “landmarks” lose relevance, Harvest Adventism itself has little to commend. Harvest Adventism is founded on principles of exclusion. These are derived and supported by the Hebrew Sanctuary as an exclusive space where no-one is ever welcome, except the High Priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. If the Sanctuary and the Levitical Sanctuary services are viewed as types that anticipate and approximate the atonement as it is presented in Jesus Christ, then redemption in Christ is founded on principles of inhospitality and exclusion.

These exclusive principles have led SDA believers to fear that they too may be excluded. The consequence of this is that Adventist soteriologies have caused believers to be obsessed with overcoming their own shortcomings as their primary Christian duty.

⁶⁹ Ford, *Daniel 8:14*, ii.

2.8 The Seventh-day Adventist Preoccupation with Personal Sin

2.8.1 Harvest Adventism

There is a particular detail of the investigative judgement as it is taught by Harvest Adventism that highlights a preoccupation with personal sin. There is a moment that Christ is said to leave the Most Holy Place and the Sanctuary. This signifies not only the completion of the investigative judgement, but also the end of Christ's intercessory ministry. This moment is called the close of probation. Since Christ is no longer interceding on our behalf, all sins committed after this point cannot be forgiven. Christ's people must have perfected themselves. To support this view, Harvest Adventists make use of the rather dubious proof-text: "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy" (Revelation 22:11, NIV).

Donald Karr Short in *Then shall the Sanctuary be Cleansed* elaborates:

We have long talked of the time when God's people would be sealed and live without a mediator or an intercessor as they face the time of trouble in the end. The very fact that a mediator is needed at any time indicates there is a problem. That problem is sin and when the day comes that no mediator is required, it means that the problem has been removed.⁷⁰

In this context, Short has very little, if any, interest in corporate sin. His concern is that each individual examine themselves and eradicate all traces of "sin" from not only their lives but from their character:

The answer for the Seventh-day Adventist is that all rebellion and everything that is alien to God must be eradicated from the heart before anyone can stand in God's presence. This means that even the unconscious mind must be cleansed before the final generation is ready for translation. Therefore the only way to cleanse the unconscious mind is to make it conscious.⁷¹

Short argues that once believers discover "the evil of their nature" they have managed to make "conscious" what was "unconscious." Having thus identified their own sinfulness they should repent of it, stop sinning and thus perfect their characters. Once God's people collectively accomplish this, then Christ will come.

And so, Christ's Second Coming is catalysed in the process of *self-examination*. Harvest Adventism is fundamentally self-centred and self-focused. Not that Harvest Adventism does not exhort people to "love others" but these injunctions

⁷⁰ Donald Karr Short, *Then Shall the Sanctuary be Cleansed* (Paris, USA: Glad Tidings Publishers, 1991), 38.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

are purely secondary and only required as part of the “self-perfecting” process. “Others” are only important inasmuch as they constitute the remainder of the number that need to be perfected to usher in the Second Coming of Christ.

It is true that certain Harvest Adventist theologians have called for the corporate repentance of the SDA Church. Robert J Wieland’s *True Corporate Repentance* is solely dedicated to this.⁷² This call for repentance, however, merely reflects a frustration with the evangelical movement in Seventh-day Adventism, which, in Wieland’s opinion, has turned the church away from God’s true message. According to Harvest Adventists, the Adventists are sole custodians of the “truth” and it is the faith of members within the denomination that will catalyse the Second Coming of Christ. Hence, it is vital that the church repent of their “evangelical” ways and return to the “truth.”

As Adventists approach the splendour of the Most Holy Place they move toward a crisis. If we cling to the typical nature of Evangelical orthodoxy and are content with the routine substitutionary gospel of forensic, legal justification, we too will find ourselves rejecting the final work of the High Priest which is to minister salvation from sin.⁷³

The cry for corporate repentance is merely an attack on Evangelical Adventists and “salvation from sin” refers to the personal sins that need to be cleansed and rectified in each individual’s life. The reaction of Evangelical Adventists to this call for corporate repentance reveals a similar preoccupation with personal sin.

2.8.2 Evangelical Adventism

Existentially, the crucial aspect of Christianity for the Evangelical Adventist is one’s relationship with Christ. *Questions on Doctrine* states: “We believe that *Christianity is a real experience with Christ. Christianity is a relationship to a Person.*”

Hans LaRondelle claims that if one has a “saving” relationship with Christ, one’s character will be “perfected” by “God working in us.”⁷⁴ Similarly, Morris Venden states:

But we do not have to wait until heaven for one kind of perfection. God has also promised perfection of character – and that is to be developed here. God has promised perfection, *commanded* perfection. . . . Perfection is important; perfection is possible; perfection is necessary for the Christian. But never forget that perfection is *God’s* work, not ours.⁷⁵

⁷² Robert J Wieland, *True Corporate Repentance: Plea of the True Witness* (Berrien Springs, Glad Tidings Publishers, 1992).

⁷³ Short, 87-8.

⁷⁴ Venden, 281.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 282.

Most advocates of Harvest Adventism would agree that “perfection is God’s work, not ours” in the sense that it is accomplished in us by the power of God.

When one actually examines the two theologies there is very little difference in their intent. For both, sin is the problem that Christ comes to resolve. For each individual, this is reduced to personal sin. Whether personal sin is overcome because one develops a “personal relationship with Christ” by faithfully praying and studying the Bible or by assiduously observing the Ten Commandments is neither here nor there. *Both* Evangelical Adventism and Harvest Adventism are self-centred struggles to secure one’s own salvation.

One of the factors in Seventh-day Adventism that tends to exacerbate the focus on law-keeping and behaviour is the Sabbath. The Sabbath has been presented as being valid since it is among the Ten Commandments and since Seventh-day Adventism has such a drive toward proselytising, it is vital to assure prospective converts that as Christians they are bound to keep the Ten Commandments – if not in order to be saved (Harvest Adventism) then as evidence that they have been saved (Evangelical Adventism). The consequence is that SDA soteriological models tend to be sin-saturated and compel members of the church to turn inwards in guilt and self-examination.

3 An Invocation and Application of Deconstruction to Adventist Soteriology

Deconstruction is a blessing for religion, its positive salvation, keeping it open to constant reinvention, encouraging religion to reread ancient texts in new ways, to reinvent ancient traditions in new contexts. Deconstruction discourages religion from its own worst instincts by holding the feet of religion to the fire of *faith*, insisting on seeing things through a glass (*glas?*)⁷⁶ darkly, that is, on believing them not thinking that they are seeing them. Deconstruction saves religion from seeing things, from fanaticism and triumphalism. Deconstruction is not the destruction of religion but its reinvention.⁷⁷

My invocation of deconstruction is for the sake of reinventing the nature of Seventh-day Adventism and is not an attempt to further damage the fragility of an already divided community. It has been suggested that deconstruction intimates not only a world limited to words and language, but is nihilistic, signifying a removal of all foundations for ethical behaviour. It is, therefore, necessary for me to answer these critiques before drawing on specific strands of deconstruction. I believe that these ideas provide the tools that will serve to retrieve and reapply the essence of SDA Church identity.

3.1 Why Deconstruction?

3.1.1 "There is nothing outside the text"

Jacques Derrida's statement "There is nothing outside the text"⁷⁸ has caused some to question the validity of deconstruction as a theological enterprise, at least, and has been interpreted "as a denial of reference, as if Derrida thinks there *is* nothing other than words and texts."⁷⁹ John D Caputo dismisses this critique, since if Derrida actually believed this it would be "incoherent on its face" since "texts are, after all, material objects in whose materiality – graphic spacing, copyrights, the power of publishers etc. – Derrida takes great interest."⁸⁰ According to Caputo, arguments of this nature fundamentally misunderstand the intent of Derrida's statement "there is

⁷⁶ Caputo is referring to Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1974). *Glas* is a French word that translates to either "a bell that is tolled at funerals" or "a death-knell." This meaning supplements the more obvious (in English and German, for example) meaning of "glass", which is transparent. The implication is that the eye of deconstruction is always an unseeing eye of faith and is the death of claims to certainty.

⁷⁷ John D Caputo, *Deconstruction is a Nutshell* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 159.

⁷⁸ Jacques Derrida, "'... That Dangerous Supplement ...'," in *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 158.

⁷⁹ John D Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 16.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

nothing outside the text” and to judge deconstruction on the basis of this misunderstanding is not valid.

Derrida, himself, categorically rejects the idea that deconstruction reduces reality to language: “I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language; it is saying the exact opposite.”⁸¹ Caputo points out that Derrida is very conscious of the “constructedness of what we call the ‘reality’ of the ‘extra-linguistic’” and brings into question the dominant discourse “of the system of exclusions that is put in place when a language claims to be the language of reality itself, when a language is taken to be what being itself would say were it given a tongue.” Derrida’s suspicion is not in order to trap one in a strange linguistic dimension, but is borne out of “a hypersensitivity to the other of language.” To say “there is nothing outside the text” is merely to acknowledge that the significations of discourse cannot be escaped, *not* to say that the “text” or language contains or limits the boundaries of reality. Derrida is concerned to break open the limits of discourse by pointing out the “limits under which we labor.”⁸²

More recently, certain defenders of Derrida have observed that “there is nothing outside the text” is a poor and misleading translation. Alex Callinicos, writing shortly after Derrida’s death in 2004, noted in “Obituary: The Infinite Search” that the original French – “*Il n’y a pas de hors-texte*” – is more literally translated: “There is no outside-text.” Callinicos then notes that Derrida is not subscribing to a kind of “super-idealism” where everything is reduced to language.

Rather he was saying that once you see language as a constant movement of differences in which there is no stable resting point, you can no longer appeal to reality as a refuge independent of language. Everything acquires the instability and ambiguity that Derrida claimed to be inherent in language.⁸³

In fact, as far back as 1992, in the book *Acts of Literature*, which contains a series of articles by Derrida, the phrase is translated: “There is no outside-the-text.” The editor, Derek Attbridge, then supplies the following footnote:

This is my literal translation of *Il n’y a pas de hors-texte*, one of Derrida’s notorious, and notoriously misunderstood, formulations. It does not mean “the things that we usually consider to be outside texts do not exist” but “there is nothing that completely escapes the general properties of textuality, *différance*, etc.” – that is, as Derrida goes on to explain, no

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 17.

⁸³ Alex Callinicos, “Obituary: The Infinite Search,” in *The Socialist Review*, November 2004, <<http://www.socialistreview.org.uk/article.php?articlenumber=9101>> (26 July 2006).

“natural presence” that can be known “in itself.” But it is also true that there is no inside-the-text, since this would again imply an inside/outside boundary.⁸⁴

3.1.2 Deconstruction is Being Open to the Other

Deconstruction has also been compared to nihilism, which Derrida rejects: “I totally refuse the label nihilism. . . . Deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness towards the other.”⁸⁵ It is this openness to the other that is central to deconstruction.

Caputo is particularly concerned to debunk this charge against deconstruction since if, indeed, it has any truth “Derrida’s work would surely be of no use for understanding biblical faith and tradition.”⁸⁶ For Caputo, deconstruction avails us of “special skills . . . awakening us to the demands made by the other” and for this reason, far from being destructive to theological reflection has a special relevance that addresses and offsets destructive and oppressive tendencies that are often inherent in *apparently* harmless theologies.

Caputo suggests that the “watchword of deconstruction, one of them at least, is the open-ended call *viens!* Come, let something new come.”⁸⁷ This notion of the “coming” of the other - the “advent” - is provocative for a religion that has its foundation in the hope of the coming of Christ.

It is true that this call “*viens!*” within Seventh-day Adventism is a very defined and calculated call and perhaps the expected “*tout autre*” is largely a reflection of an image created by the SDA Church. Still, these failings are not the intent of the church and can, at least, be addressed as failings. Part of the intent of this dissertation is to suggest certain threads from deconstruction that can assist the church in smashing the idols it has constructed in the hope of genuinely opening the church to the coming for which it so fervently yearns.

Seen thus deconstruction is not the sworn enemy of faith or religious institutions, but it can cause a lot of well-deserved trouble to a faith . . . that has frozen over into immobility. Deconstruction is a way to let faith function more ad-ventfully, with an enhanced sense of advent and event, gladdened by the good news of alterity by which we are always and already summoned. Beyond that, deconstruction is *itself* a form of faith, a faith in the *viens*, a hope in what is coming, one which says we are always a little blind and it is necessary to believe.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Jacques Derrida, “. . . That Dangerous Supplement . . .” in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 102.

⁸⁵ Jacques Derrida as cited in Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 16

⁸⁶ Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 16.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Since deconstruction insists that faith not descend into a series of truth claims, it will inevitably disturb anyone who believes their faith to be the absolute truth - which they thoroughly understand - as though it were their final destination or resting place beyond which there is nothing (eternal life?). In this sense, deconstruction and, hence, this thesis, would upset any SDA who perceives their faith in this way. But this “upsetting” or “destabilising” is not for the sake of destroying faith, but rather in order to preserve the integrity and, indeed, the *validity* of the very notion of faith. It is the claim to certainty that surrenders faith, not deconstruction.

Acknowledging that deconstruction need not be viewed as the enemy of faith, there is another dimension to an *institution* such as the SDA Church. This is that its established creeds and tenets tend to formalise and control the church. Derrida speaks of the “instituting moment” when something new begins. This transmits a legacy which calls members who become a part of the institution at a later date to be “true to the memory of the past, to a heritage, to something we receive from the past, from our predecessors, from the culture.”⁸⁹ This inbreaking of something new or this instituting moment was only permitted by a willingness to break, to some degree at least, with pre-established norms. It is this openness to the advent of something new that needs to be retained by an institution.

SDAs of today, then, should retain the *instituting* attitude that was held by those who began the SDA Church. The church founders maintained a continuity with the established norms of Christianity, but there was also a reinvention of their faith. As Derrida phrases it: “That is what deconstruction is made of: not the mixture but the tension between memory, fidelity, the preservation of something that has been given to us, and, at the same time, heterogeneity, something absolutely new, and a break.”⁹⁰

Without this approach the church cannot be faithful to its own identity and it cannot be open to the advent of anything new. The identity of the SDA Church is tied directly to the idea of advent. In other words, one of the foundational axioms – for want of a better term – of the church is deconstructive in nature. What is instituted is a need to be open to the stranger who is coming.

⁸⁹ Jacques Derrida, “The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida,” in Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 6.

⁹⁰ Derrida, “The Villanova Roundtable,” 6.

3.1.3 Deconstruction is Concerned with Ethics

Seventh-day Adventism is very concerned with behaviour. Harvest Adventism insists on a strict adherence to the Ten Commandments while Evangelical Adventism, although wanting to put a certain distance between our “right doing” and soteriology, is also concerned that Christians “stop sinning.” With such a focus on morality and ethical behaviour, it would be remiss not to at least mention what has been termed “the most frequent criticism of Derrida’s philosophy . . . that it offers no serious basis for any kind of ethical or moral claim.”⁹¹

Jonathan Roffe, writing in 2004, while addressing this very question makes the following affirmation of Derrida’s work:

Derrida’s texts have been, since the very beginning, *overtly concerned with topics we normally consider to be moral and ethical, fundamentally oriented in an ethical way, and increasingly centred on ethical themes.* The first of these three claims is obvious to anyone who spends even the smallest amount of time examining Derrida’s work. . . .⁹²

Peter Pericles Trifonas concedes that “Derrida is not an ‘ethical’ philosopher” by which he means that Derrida “does not expound a theory of ethics with respect to articulating a ‘philosophy of action’ or a way of *being-in-the-world.*” However, Trifonas qualifies this comment: “Derrida has always been concerned with ethics as the responsibility we bear to recognize the difference of the other.”⁹³

Further to this, it is my purpose to apply deconstruction to the fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventism in such a way as to make a grave ethical demand on adherents that may well be more challenging than the current self obsessed attempts to become perfect. These ethical demands, unlike those currently at work in Adventism, force the direction of one’s gaze to move outwards to the other.

Deconstruction is primarily oriented towards a relation to the other, whether this be

other persons . . . other meanings of a text, the other ways of seeing things, other races, other genders, another time (such as the future, the messianic), other languages, other traditions, and so forth. If we claim that deconstruction is ethics, it is because of its constant commitment to all of these others.⁹⁴

Whether one wishes to insist on a reading of deconstruction that results in the obliteration of all ethical considerations – and I would question the validity of such a hermeneutic – these are nevertheless irrelevant to this dissertation. The strands of

⁹¹ Jonathan Roffe, “Ethics,” in *Understanding Derrida*, ed. Jack Reynolds and Jonathan Roffe (New York: Continuum, 2004), 37.

⁹² Roffe, 37.

⁹³ Jacques Derrida, *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy*, trans. Peter Pericles Trifonas, ed. Peter Pericles Trifonas (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), ix.

⁹⁴ Roffe, 44.

deconstruction that I am invoking are intended to have ethical consequences for SDA Church members in order to enhance their relation and attitude to those that do not call themselves Seventh-day Adventist. This will be more easily understood by my emphasis on the biblical axiom “love your neighbour as yourself.”

3.2 Community

Applying concepts from deconstruction and the ideas of Jacques Derrida to the SDA Church may appear to be a hopeless task, particularly in the light of the fact that the SDA Church is such a *bounded* community with very carefully defined parameters as outlined in the twenty-seven fundamental beliefs. Further to this “Derrida is troubled by, and wants to make a certain trouble for, the word community.” Even if the SDA Church had the intention of being an *open* community, according to deconstruction it would nevertheless fall short.

Derrida objects to the “connotations of ‘fusion’ and ‘identification’” and points out the word “community’s” etymological connection with the word “munitions” and its suggestions of a kind of fortress that seeks to defend itself against all who fall outside its walls. In fact, “outsiders” are a danger who constantly threaten invasion. It carries with it the notion that there are those who identify with the community who stand over against those without (strangers or foreigners).

Derrida favours the term “hospitality” (which I will examine more closely later) which also contains its own antithesis: “The word hospitality derives from the Latin *hospes*, which is formed from *hostis*, which originally meant a ‘stranger’ and came to take on the meaning of the enemy or ‘hostile’ stranger.”⁹⁵

Hospitality, etymologically, presents a kind of inverted conundrum. The host (*hostis*) is not usually perceived to be the stranger – the visitor or the guest – and yet the extending of absolute hospitality, could result in just this. Though the visitor or guest never becomes the owner (or host) and though s/he may apparently receive a limitless endorsement of free expression hidden in the words “make yourself at home”, there are nevertheless boundaries which the guest may not transgress unless the host were to “make an absolute gift of [her/his] property, which is of course impossible.”⁹⁶ And so a host will always set boundaries to their hospitality, since to not do so would result in them becoming the visitor or guest – the stranger. And so,

⁹⁵ Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 110.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

when the guest steps beyond the extended hospitality of the host, the host's attitude turns to one of *hostility*.

It is this idea that points to the problem of the word "community":

. . . while the word sounds like something warm and comforting, the very notion is built around a defense that a "we" throws up against the "other," that is, it is built around an idea of *inhospitality*, and idea of *hostility* to the *hostis*, not around hospitality. Thus, a "community" is subject to the same "self-limitation" as "hospitality". . . . In hospitality I must welcome the other while retaining mastery of the house; just so, the community must retain its identity while making a stranger at home. If a community is too welcoming, it loses its identity; if it keeps its identity, it becomes unwelcoming.⁹⁷

While it is true that the SDA Church wishes to "welcome the stranger" into its community, this is always on the understanding that the person adhere to the norms of the church. People who threaten these norms are labelled "subversives" or "radicals" or "unbelievers" and are either viewed with suspicion or, in extreme cases, actively made to feel unwelcome. This "self protective closure of 'community'" as John D Caputo points out "would be just about the opposite of what deconstruction is, since deconstruction is the preparation for the incoming of the other."⁹⁸

The dilemma is evident, since communities always have an inside and an outside, this precludes the possibility of a "universal community" where no-one is excluded, so how is it possible to retain one's identity as a community and at the same time be welcoming to the stranger?

In answering this question, Derrida has recourse to the "messianic" - which I discuss elsewhere - and an openness to the future and a "community without community which barely deserves the name of community."

[Derrida] dreams of a . . . community without identity, of a non-identical community that cannot say I or we, for, after all, the very idea of community is to fortify (*munus, muneris*) ourselves in common against the other, to draw ourselves together (*com*) in a circle against the other.⁹⁹

Elaborating a little further on what Derrida's community without community might be, particularly with regard to varying faiths, whether they be Judaic, Christian or otherwise, Caputo refers to what in Christian circles would be called "spiritual sight" or "spiritual blindness." Everyone who accepts a new faith will claim that they can now see whereas previously they were blind: "But what they mean is that, no longer seeing what they previously believed, they now have faith in what they presently do not see."

⁹⁷ Ibid., 113.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 108.

⁹⁹ Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 231.

The danger for “determinate” or “positive” religions – which would certainly not be a groundless accusation that could be levelled at the SDA Church - is that they “confuse seeing and believing and forget that the eyes of faith are blind.” The problem is that as far as these communities are concerned it is always the outsiders who are blind and do not see. Those inside are the enlightened: “The Christians think the Pharisees are blind to love, while the Jews think that those who saw the risen Christ are seeing things, while Islam thinks that it is the Koran that sees things aright.” Over against the claims for “true vision” Derrida suggests a community – “if it is one” - that is blind.¹⁰⁰

For Derrida this blindness is not an infirmity from which we should desire to be healed. It is the positive movement of faith that advances without certainty but nevertheless moves forward. This faith in the dark is the yes that is uttered to the one who is to come, the stranger, the other that we do not yet recognise. The faith that is expressed by a bounded community can only welcome those that they recognise and it is only possible to recognise those that reflect what this community already understands and knows. The irony for the Seventh-day Adventist community is that its very name – Adventist – yearns for the coming of the “stranger” – Jesus Christ – but its boundaries demand that Christ be expelled since he would not be recognised and would certainly not submit to assimilation.

In this regard, I would like to make reference to the perennial conflict in Seventh-day Adventism that is preoccupied with the nature of Christ. This conflict is very revealing of the attitude of the church, in general, with regard to issues of faith. There is an effort to precisely define exactly who Christ is. There is a constant effort to move faith from its apparently dubious position of *believing* to the superior position of *knowing*. While the SDA Church yearns for the coming of Christ, there is simultaneously a striving to exactly identify the person of this advent. The consequence of this debate is not a better understanding of Christ – as one would have hoped - but a more confused portrait of faith.

Derrida’s invocation of the “Tower of Babel”¹⁰¹ narrative gives insight into this dynamic as well as supplying a neat biblical basis for suggesting that this debate be immediately curtailed. On the one hand, Babel, as even the most cursory reader of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 313.

¹⁰¹ Jacques Derrida, “*Des Tours de Babel*,” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. by Gil Anderson (New York: Routledge, 2002).

the Bible knows, signifies confusion. On the other hand, drawing from Voltaire, Derrida points out that the etymology of the word “Babel” is *Ba* (father) and *Bel* or *El* (God). Babel is literally the city of Father God or, perhaps, the Holy City. This city becomes the byword for confusion, because it is here that God confuses the language of the people – those who had hitherto understood one another, being of one language.

The reason that God confounds their understanding is at least twofold. They firstly wished to “ascend to the heavens” – one might say they wished to gain an “objective” view of God in order to accurately identify and *name* God. Secondly, they wished to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). In achieving the first, they would presumably also accomplish the second. But the effort to name God or identify God has the unexpected consequence of confusion. This confusion is expressed in a multiplicity of languages. Not only do they not understand God – his name (Babel) is now confusion – the people also do not understand each other. The consequence is alienation and estrangement not only from God, but also from each other.¹⁰²

Thus the debate on the nature of Christ – founded on a striving to more accurately identify Christ - will not serve to enhance the church’s understanding of Christ (even if the debate is won by one side or the other), but will only further muddy the church’s dim vision of Christ and, possibly, fracture the church community – something it has done to a certain extent already.

The SDA Church needs to distance itself from rigid dogmatism. This, I do not believe can be accomplished by challenging the fundamental beliefs as they are now outlined. Any effort to lay these beliefs aside would be futile – but at the same time it should also be realised that even though the very idea of 27 fundamental beliefs *does* sound like a very rigid creed, in reality they do not necessarily function in this way. In the first place, the beliefs are rather general in their formulation allowing for considerable latitude in their interpretation. Secondly, they are subject to revision at a General Conference Session.

The early SDA Church did not see the necessity of formalising the church beliefs and system of governance into a church manual. In 1883 the very concept of a church manual was rejected at the General Conference Session, even though the church had been an official institution for twenty years. The reason given was that the members “feared that it would possibly formalize the church and take from its

¹⁰² Ibid., 104-133.

ministers their freedom to deal with matters of church order as they might individually desire.”¹⁰³ This particular admission is found in the introduction of the current *Church Manual*. The first *Church Manual* was published as late as 1932 and it was only by an action of the General Conference Session in 1946 that the *Church Manual* was recognised as “expressing the authority of a duly assembled General Conference session.”¹⁰⁴ It would not be inaccurate to state that historically the church initially functioned and developed for over one hundred years (from 1844 to 1946 – accepting that the *organised* church was formed in 1863) *without* the aid of a manual instructing members what to believe. It is perhaps for this reason that in many congregations across the world the *Church Manual* as it is published by the General Conference is not very highly regarded and its recommendations are frequently ignored in local church practise. Indeed, it is rare to find a member who owns a copy of the *Church Manual*, much less one who has read it.

The SDA Church community is, in some ways, very rigidly defined, but in others it is flexible. The purpose of this dissertation is to use the foundational doctrine of the church, the Sanctuary, as a soteriological basis to break open the community every time it tries to close in on itself.

3.3 Justice and Law

“*Deconstruction is justice.*”¹⁰⁵ Caputo suggests that “Deconstruction is a passion for justice, for the impossible.”¹⁰⁶

With regard to law and justice Derrida delineates three propositions. The first is that the “deconstructability of law (for example) makes deconstruction possible.” The second is that the “undeconstructibility of justice makes deconstruction possible.” The consequence of these two gives a third proposition which states that deconstruction “takes place in the interval that separates the undeconstructibility of justice from the deconstructibility of law.”¹⁰⁷

Laws can be deconstructed, but without “a call for justice we would have no interest in deconstructing the law.” Hence the “condition of possibility of deconstruction is a call for justice” and justice cannot be reduced to the law or legal

¹⁰³ *Church Manual* (2000), xx.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Jacques Derrida, “The Force of Law,” in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 243.

¹⁰⁶ Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 173.

¹⁰⁷ Derrida, “The Force of Law,” 243.

systems. This speaks directly to Seventh-day Adventism's frequent pre-occupation with the Ten Commandments.

As I have noted at some length, Harvest Adventism goes so far as to equate the very concept of "perfection" with a keeping of the law of God (the Ten Commandments). The law of God, in this understanding, is considered to be irreducible and above reproach in *all* contexts. Justice has been very carefully calculated and defined as an enactment of the Ten Commandments. These ideas cannot be reconciled with deconstruction.

Verdicts in court do not mean that "justice is done." The verdict and justice are not synonymous. We may *act* in accordance with particular norms, but to *judge* is not so exact. "Justice is always incalculable." Derrida supports the definition of Levinas: "justice is the relation to the other" and this relation cannot be reduced to law or legal structures.¹⁰⁸ Deconstruction operates for the sake of justice and challenges existing structures, institutions, not in order to destroy them, "but to be just with justice, to respect this relation to the other as justice."¹⁰⁹

The law (the Ten Commandments in an SDA context) is a very careful calculation. It is *constructed* and as a construction it is deconstructible. But laws should not be arbitrarily deconstructed, but rather they should be deconstructed in the light of justice, which cannot be deconstructed. And so we have the following provocative quote: "Justice itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond the law, is not deconstructible. No more that deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. *Deconstruction is justice.*"¹¹⁰ – which is where I began.

3.3.1 The Standard for Judgement

Since Seventh-day Adventism and Harvest Adventism, in particular, equates the Ten Commandments with justice, a reflection on the story of the actual giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai is instructive: "When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, [God] gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18, NIV). And yet, the opening words of this testimony read: "You shall have no other gods before me, You shall not make for

¹⁰⁸ Derrida, "The Villanova Roundtable," 16-8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹⁰ Derrida, "The Force of Law," 243.

yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below” (Exodus 20:3-4, NIV).

It is hard to escape the irony of a law that commands that no idols be constructed and is then given to Moses in the form of a “graven image” (Exodus 20:3, KJV). Further to this, when Moses descends from Mount Sinai and sees the Israelites worshipping the golden calf “his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them into pieces at the foot of the mountain” (Exodus 32:20, NIV). In this action, Moses indicates the limitation of law. He is never rebuked for breaking the tablets. The law does not equate to God, nor does it provide justice.

There are other pertinent questions that could be asked. When Moses breaks the tablets, is he not keeping the command to refrain from making graven images? Is this not iconoclasm? Even accepting that the tablets “were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, *graven*¹¹¹ upon the tables” (emphasis supplied), (Exodus 32:16, KJV), this does not alter the point. Nevertheless, the tablets are not God and the fact that they are “made” by God, makes them all the more likely to be idolised.

The fact that these tablets can be *remade* – “I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke” (Deuteronomy 10:2, NIV) - indicates their constructedness. Certainly, Harvest Adventism could be accused of constructing an idol out of the Ten Commandments. This highlights the need to deconstruct the Ten Commandments. The fact that Moses can smash the tablets without fear of rebuke should go some way, at least, to silencing fundamentalist fears in this regard.

This is not a case of suggesting that the Ten Commandments should be cast aside by the church, but there is nevertheless an obvious limitation. Harvest Adventism claims that the standard for the judgement is the Ten Commandments. This is verified by the fact that the “court” or “location” for judgement is the Sanctuary wherein one will find the Ten Commandments. While there is logic to this, it does not alter the fact that justice is not necessarily done by a blind application of law. The Ten Commandments are relevant to the judgement but they do not equate to justice.

¹¹¹ This word “graven” (*charath*, meaning “to engrave”) is not the same as the word for “graven image” (*pesel*, meaning “carved or graven image” translated “idol” in the NIV) in the KJV formulation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, but the irony is not avoided by the absence of identical terminology.

It is not possible to be faithful to the SDA Church and deny that there is at least “some sort of a judgement” taking place in the Heavenly Sanctuary. I would, however, like to suggest that the standard of the judgement while hinted at in the Ten Commandments, is more explicitly defined in Matthew 25 and is more dependent on justice than law. Although quite lengthy, it is necessary that this passage be quoted in full since it gives a biblical point of departure for the central thrust of this dissertation:

³¹When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in Heavenly glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”

⁴⁰The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

⁴¹Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.”

⁴⁴They also will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?”

⁴⁵He will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

⁴⁶Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life (Matthew 25:31-46, NIV).

The judgement scene presented gives a far more indeterminate standard of judgement. Firstly, the distinction between the sheep (the “righteous” – verse 37) and the goats (unnamed as “they” – verse 44) is not obvious, since even the most “righteous” among the “sheep” would also have to concede that they would also fall into the “goat” category. Further to this, both the sheep and the goats fail to recognise Christ. There is no perception on the part of the “righteous” that Christ has ever been the intended recipient of their *gifts* as though this were the motivation for their charity, nor have the “goats” accurately identified Christ with the stranger. On both sides of the judgement there is a professed ignorance. Neither have managed to successfully identify Christ, both are blind, but this does not assuage their guilt or reduce their righteousness.

Contrary to the advocates of Harvest Adventism and Evangelical Adventism, the movement towards “eternal life” (verse 46) is not accomplished by internally

checking one's "obedience to the law" or making oneself "right with God" but is rather achieved by moving towards the stranger – the one who appears materially less fortunate, the one I do not know or recognise, the one outside of my tightly confined circle of friends and acquaintances.

3.3.2 Aporiai of Justice

Justice addresses the fact that "every 'case' is different; every case is more than a case, a *casus*¹¹² – a falling from or declension of universality."¹¹³ To universally apply laws is to ignore the singularity of each event. A computer can blindly apply laws, but this is not justice. A judge, on the other hand, is not free to put aside the law and make decisions without reference to the law: "A just decision is found in the distance between a blind and universal law and the singularity of the situation before us."¹¹⁴ This is the first of three aporiai of justice and law "which might also be described as three axioms of Derrida's 'inventionalism'"¹¹⁵ – this first aporia being named "The Suspension of Law."

The second is "The Ghost of Undecidability." This undecidability refers to the fact that since justice goes beyond calculation, a decision has to be made, but this decision cannot be precisely determined as the right decision (unlike a law where there is no decision, only application). But the decision *has* to be made: "A just decision . . . goes eyeball to eyeball with undecidability, stares it in the face (literally), looks into that abyss, and then makes the leap, that is, 'gives itself up to the impossible decision.'"¹¹⁶

The third aporia is named "urgency" - the fact that justice demands that a decision be made *now*. To defer action is a decision not to act and a decision in favour of continued injustice. But to act justly, requires that one act being cognisant of all the facts of a case, which one will never have. Actions are taken in "the night of non-knowledge and non-rule."¹¹⁷ The knowledge of which one is cognisant is surely taken into account, but even "if somehow a situation was saturated with knowledge" justice

¹¹² The Latin word *casus* means "falling or fall" and Caputo immediately translates.

¹¹³ Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 137.

¹¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, "The Force of Law," trans. Mary Quaintance, in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell et al (New York: Routledge, 1992) as cited in Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 137.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹¹⁶ Derrida, "The Force of Law" as cited in Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 137.

¹¹⁷ Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 138.

would not arise from careful calculation of all the facts, but would nevertheless “require a leap from the accumulation of cognition to the act.”¹¹⁸

These three aporiai of justice and law may well be of assistance to an understanding of the SDA understanding of justice and law. All too often SDA Church theologians, particularly those more closely aligned with Harvest Adventism, have tended to fall back onto a very legalistic approach to their faith that has demanded the universal validity of the Ten Commandments. Justice is reduced to determining whether these laws were obeyed or not. But this requires an auditor, not a judge. In this way, Harvest Adventism dispenses with the need for the just judge: Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, justice may demand the “suspension of law.” This is acknowledged by Evangelical Adventists, who would argue that laws are determined by underlying principles. These principles are considered to be more universally valid. For instance, Evangelical Adventists would argue that the Ten Commandments are founded on love (“love your neighbour as yourself” and “love the Lord your God”) and hence if obedience to a command is not deemed to be loving it ceases to be binding. This is very similar to Derrida’s “suspension of law” which uses justice as the principle that dictates the manner of application of particular laws as they apply to particular situations.

The “Ghost of Undecidability” really relates to something that is fundamental to Evangelical Adventism which merely states that all our actions, no matter how well intentioned, always fall short of “perfection” but this in no way relieves the Christian from the responsibility of acting justly.

The aporia of “urgency” is vital since it short circuits the dependence on apocalyptic triumphalism which would abandon any hope for justice in the here and now as it awaits God to dispense a fearful justice on all those who are perceived to be enemies of the faith.

Derrida’s three aporiai of justice and law suggest an approach to justice and law which is not that far removed from current Evangelical Adventist understandings of law. My point really is that while Seventh-day Adventism and deconstruction may appear to be poles apart there are points of connection which may well be applied by the church with a slight shift in emphasis.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

3.4 The Messianic Hope

3.4.1 Messianicity and Messianism

It should be noted at the outset that Derrida, despite his Judaic background, does not subscribe to any particular, definable or *nameable* Messiah figure. This would be a form of *messianism* that Derrida would wish to deconstruct. Derrida's frequent recourse, for example, to the Abrahamic tradition should not be viewed as a nod towards the Bible or Judaism as an accurate portrayal of the messianic: "*The messianic dimension does not depend upon any messianism, it follows no determinate revelation, it belongs properly to no Abrahamic religion.*"¹¹⁹

It is true, of course, that whatever beliefs the SDA Church may currently hold and be prepared to adapt, the figure or the *name* of Jesus Christ cannot be effaced nor is it my intention to remotely suggest this. The point is that the SDA Church is clearly *adventist* in its orientation as, indeed, is deconstruction. In a sense Seventh-day Adventism will always be a form of messianism, but I hope to demonstrate that a certain – if limited – "messianic dimension" can form the essence of a Seventh-day Adventist messianism. This dimension will constantly strain to free the church from the exclusive principles and destructive tendencies to which an unbridled messianism is prone.

Derrida's repeated call is "*Viens!*" or, more strongly, "*Viens, oui, oui!*" – "Come, yes, yes!" This call is not a peripheral part of deconstruction: "*Viens, oui, oui* are not just two or three more words for deconstruction but words of event and advent, supplying the very opening within which words take place, opening messianic time."¹²⁰

The messianic is an opening to the *tout autre* – wholly other – and is indeterminable. Derrida's idea of messianicity as distinct from messianism "is to shatter horizons, to let the promise of something *tout autre* shock the horizons of the same and the foreseeable. Messianicity is not a horizon but the disruption or opening up of the horizon."¹²¹

Messianism on the other hand strives to determine the nature of Messiah – who s/he/it is, when s/he/it is coming, who will benefit and who will be condemned

¹¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. by Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 56.

¹²⁰ Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 70.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

by this coming. This brings into question, as I have already indicated, the messianic hopes that are proposed by the varying religions of the world, whether they be Judaic, Christian, Islamic or otherwise. These determined Messiahs – say, the carefully identified coming of Jesus Christ – seem almost by default to be consigned to an unfortunate messianism that only promise the illusion of justice and, even then, only to the chosen few. For Derrida, deconstruction, in a sense, is “a slightly ‘despairing’ Judaism [an acknowledgement of Derrida’s Jewish lineage and its inevitable influence upon him], not in the sense of giving up all hope but in the sense of giving up determinable hope, not being able to ‘count on,’ and hence to calculate, the coming of some determinable messianic figure.”¹²²

However, Derrida does not propose that God or the idea of God is alien to deconstruction. Derrida shares with Augustine, whom he names his “compatriot,” the question: “‘What do I love when I love God’ (*Quid ergo amo, cum deum meum amo*)?”¹²³ The question for Derrida is not so much whether or not we love God but rather what exactly we love when we love God. God is not a word that offers a clear understanding or meaning of her/him/itself, even though religions may glibly use the word “God” as though it is a concept or term that is clearly defined and understood by everyone. The point being that if “God” is so clearly defined, what is defined cannot be God.

Deconstruction is love, the love of something unforeseeable, unforegraspable, something nameless. Then what name shall we give to this nameless love. . . . In deconstruction the constancy of what we call “my God” goes by other names – names like justice, hospitality, testimony, the gift – and democracy. For God is the name of the other, any other, no matter whom.¹²⁴

Messianism is primarily searching to identify the Messiah. If one accepts Derrida’s position on messianicity versus messianism then there is a sad irony in the SDA preoccupation with the nature of Christ, as though anything can be resolved once this has been determined.

A story that gains significant mention with regard to Derrida’s understanding of the Messiah is one told by Maurice Blanchot in *The Writing of the Disaster*.¹²⁵ In this the Messiah is at the gates of Rome in rags. He is recognised by some-one who

¹²² Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 172.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 141-2.

asks the Messiah, “When will you come?”¹²⁶ The initial point taken from this story is that “the Messiah is always, structurally to come, so that even were he [sic] to show up we would still need to ask when we may expect him [sic] to come.”¹²⁷ Derrida notes that this imminence is offset by the presence of the Messiah.

On the one hand the Messiah – justice – is coming in the future. This imminence is critical. We desire the coming Messiah, the coming of justice, peace and so on, but we are also afraid of it. The question “when will you come?” satisfies this fear, since it holds the coming at a distance. This points to the ambiguity in the messianic structure: “We wait for something we would not like to wait for.”¹²⁸

But, Messiah is also present to hear the question, “When will you come?” This makes the question an absurdity and Messiah’s actual presence implies the arrival of justice in the here and now. Hence, “there is nothing procrastinative about deconstructive expectation.”¹²⁹

The fact that justice is something that is to come, something that is assigned to the future, does not release us from the command “to bring about justice today, to change our lives today.” This demand of deconstruction for immediate action is an answer to the critics who argue that deconstruction inhibits us, paralyses us or justifies our procrastination. “For deconstruction, if there is such a thing, is a passion, an impassioning, an impatience, for justice.

‘When will you come?’

‘Today.’

That is deconstruction in a nutshell.”¹³⁰

3.4.2 Faith

Derrida states: “For me, there is no such thing as ‘religion’.”¹³¹ For Derrida, there is a distinction between religion and faith. Religion which points to a “set of beliefs, dogmas or institutions” should be deconstructed. Faith, however, cannot be so explicitly defined and cannot be defined by any particular religion.

¹²⁶ Derrida, “The Villanova Roundtable,” 24.

¹²⁷ Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 179.

¹²⁸ Derrida, “The Villanova Roundtable,” 22-5.

¹²⁹ Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 179.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 180. Caputo uses the term “nutshell” as a form of tongue in cheek irony. This is because deconstruction is a breaking open not an enclosing into the confined space of a nutshell. Once thus defined, the nutshell would need to be smashed open so that deconstruction could escape the narrow determination contained in the nutshell.

¹³¹ Derrida, “The Villanova Roundtable,” 20-1.

Derrida describes “faith” that rejects the other, thereby introducing the possibility of “radical evil”, as an *encrypted* faith. This radical evil which institutes religion is legitimised by an ontotheology which claims *faith* (encrypted) as its authority. This notion of faith is mystified, a secret (which we may find alluring) but is also the death of faith, its tomb: “it keeps itself from the other” and hence has alienated the possibility of faith.¹³² For Derrida, it is in the addressing and acknowledgement of the other that faith has its point of entry.

The “faith” of sectarianism, a group that propagates “the truth” which may be appropriated by anyone who accepts this particular *gnosis*, has closed in on itself. It is not open to anything new, anything other and *demand*s a unitary understanding of a sacred text such as the Bible. Seventh-day Adventism, in general, has tried to identify the “truth” as a body of information to be disseminated as part of an imperative to “take the gospel to the world” and has recourse to both the Bible and the traditions established by the church founders to precisely define this “truth.” Those who reject this “truth” are homogenised into a “them” and may be loosely referred to as “being in the world”. In fact, this faith in the metaphysical, this “*encrypted* faith”, is a fundamental rejection of everything that falls outside of its carefully and rigidly defined boundaries. Hence, there can be no *justified* (within the defined parameters) encounter with the other which is not assimilation.

A “faith” that is fashioned after its own exclusivity, is a dead or dying faith, encrypted, shrouded in its own tomb, a place where not only the other is excluded, but justice. Ironically, it may look forward with hope to the coming Messiah, while denying this possibility by this self-same exclusive creed.

It is for this reason that the SDA Church, despite its many creeds and insistence on the “eternal” validity of certain “truths”, needs a primary “belief” that demands that it be open to the other. This belief can gain credence in the church when one recalls that the church’s most evident belief is in the advent of Christ – who is the stranger – the other: “Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40, NIV). But to more clearly establish this openness to the stranger, the belief needs also to be tied, as I have continually insisted, to, firstly, the

¹³² Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, eds., *On Religion: Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 64-6.

church's soteriology (the reason that most people are SDAs in the first place) and, secondly, the Sanctuary (the primary biblical symbol of SDA identity).

3.4.3 The Advent of the Stranger

If one insists that the one who is to come is Jesus Christ and that Christ and only Christ is the Messiah, then this determination could be seen to preclude a Derridean reading of the advent of the Messiah. The advent of anyone that is not Jesus Christ would then be a "false coming" or, perhaps, a non-event to be ignored rather than something that should elicit any significant response.

Certainly the manner in which SDAs have tended to "watch" (e.g. Matthew 24:42) for the coming of Christ is to make themselves "ready" through self-examination. However, once one accepts that Christ identifies with the stranger, then the very concept of "watching" is – as one would expect – a looking outwards to the one who is coming.

I have already quoted Matthew 25:31-46 where Christ explicitly identifies himself with the stranger. I am arguing that the presence of the stranger *presents* the presence of Christ. In a sense, when the stranger enters the world of the Christian they bring the *impossible* gift – Christ. It is an unintended giving, a giving for which they neither expect nor deserve credit, a gift that is usually rejected and not recognised as a gift by the recipient. No debt is incurred, but there is an *outstanding* debt that precedes the arrival of the stranger: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another" (Romans 13:8, NIV).

In his article "Hostipitality"¹³³ – a curious hybrid word tying the words "host" and "hostage" together with hospitality – Derrida makes use of the French word "hôte." This word defies translation since it could be translated either "guest" or "host." The *hôte* "is both the one who gives, *donne*, and the one who receives, *reçoit*, hospitality."¹³⁴ In this regard, Derrida makes extensive reference to Abraham who is the stranger who extends hospitality to none other than *Yahweh*. This visitation is virtually an *imposition* that so radically demands the hospitality of Abram that it alters the identity of Abram – changing his name from Abram to Abraham. To rephrase this,

¹³³ Jacques Derrida, "Hostipitality" in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. by Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 358-420.

¹³⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. by Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 356.

then, when hospitality is extended to the stranger - who *always*, in terms of the judgement, turns out to be Christ – this meeting *changes* the Christian.

The story of God visiting Abraham illustrates why the stranger is feared, why a community would rather first change (convert) the stranger into its own image, before whole-heartedly extending the hand of welcome. To do otherwise is to open itself to change – better to first remove the strangeness of the stranger or the otherness of the other. But if the advent of the stranger is viewed as a messianic moment to which the church always responds with the intent of extending hospitality – a hospitality that is self-sacrificing, then the need for assimilation and *converting* the stranger as the church imperative can no longer be paramount. The coming of the stranger is the event in itself, not a prelude to the so-called *real* event of the stranger's conversion.

3.5 Hospitality

3.5.1 Deconstruction and Hospitality

It is quite evident that there is a clear relation between hospitality and deconstruction. Deconstruction is concerned with opening up possibilities, a willingness to accept something different, a welcoming of the stranger.

If you were intent on making deconstruction look respectable, it would not be a distortion to say that deconstruction is to be understood as a form of hospitality, that deconstruction *is* hospitality, which means the welcoming of the other. Deconstruction would thus mean – again in a nutshell – ‘Let the other come!’ ‘Welcome to the other.’¹³⁵

One of the reasons that I believe that presenting hospitality – strengthened in the garments of soteriology – would be of value to the SDA Church is the basic fact that hospitality is *not* a difficult concept at all. *It is welcoming the stranger.* As Derrida, himself, points out: “It is hard to imagine a scene of hospitality during which one welcomes without smiling at the other, without giving a sign of joy or pleasure, without smiling at the other as at the welcoming of a promise.”¹³⁶

Hospitality assumes that one owns or has mastery of the location from which hospitality is extended: “A host is a host only if [s/he] owns the place, and only if [s/he] holds onto [her/his] ownership, if one *limits* the gift.”¹³⁷ The tension generated by the conflict between giving and withholding hospitality presents the aporia beyond

¹³⁵ Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 109-10.

¹³⁶ Derrida, “Hostipitality,” 358.

¹³⁷ Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 110-11.

which hospitality can really happen. And yet, when it reaches this “hospitality beyond hospitality” it is no longer hospitality because the host has made a gift of her/his home and has ceased to be the host. And so, who has ever been truly hospitable? Only the one who can no longer extend hospitality – which, of course, does not mean that homeless people have ever been absolutely hospitable – more likely, they have never been shown hospitality. And so hospitality

never ‘exists,’ is not ‘present,’ is always to *come*.” Hospitality is what is always demanded of me, that to which I have never measured up. I am always too close-fisted, too ungracious, too unwelcoming, too calculating in all my invitations, which are disturbed from within by all sorts of subterranean motivations – from wanting to show off what I own to looking for a return invitation. I am never hospitable and I do not know what hospitality is.¹³⁸

My failure to be absolutely hospitable disturbs my comfort as the host who feels giving and gracious as I extend “hospitality.” This deconstructive approach to hospitality destabilises my self-confidence about my own rightness within the walls that surround me. Hospitality has to do with reaching out to the other, the one that I do not know. This unsettles me even more. And so I must act, but I do not have the knowledge I would like to have before I act. In truth, I would rather not be hospitable, for when the doorbell rings, I will ask (with hostility), “What do you want?” – a question that implies the fear that this stranger has come to prise a gift from my hands (as if it could ever be a gift now) – or perhaps, I may be more polite and say, “Can I help you?” But too frequently, the meaning behind this is “I cannot help you, please go away!” Perhaps, at best, I will – to alleviate my own conscience – try to pay them off. And herein again is the oddity (and perhaps the reason for my anger towards the stranger): their very arrival has put me in debt. I do not know why and so I strive to get rid of them with the minimum payment.

And so, hospitality is not in my nature, except to those I already know, because they understand the rules of hospitality. They have their own homes to go to. I don’t need to give them mine. They will reciprocate. They will show the right measure of gratitude. But this is a calculated hospitality; it is determined by a precise economy of give and take. This is “domestic hospitality” and in order for a stranger to receive this “hospitality” they would have to “conform to domestic standards and remain within the closed circle of the same.”¹³⁹ But “absolute hospitality” does not succumb to communal prejudice and, though one is not privy to the stranger’s

¹³⁸ Ibid., 111-12.

¹³⁹ Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 145.

intentions, nevertheless extends the hand of welcome. As Caputo comments: “What is true of hospitality is true, too, of the gift, and of deconstruction itself: it does not come down to knowing anything, but to doing something.”¹⁴⁰

This unknowing related to the welcoming of the stranger “is a movement fraught with anxiety”¹⁴¹ since it involves upsetting the equilibrium of the home. There is the obvious risk of upsetting existing residents. This anxiety and fear is a root cause of xenophobia and racism. The question is not so much whether one will actually *like* the stranger in the sense of enjoying their company, but rather the presupposition that the stranger will injure me in some way and threaten my future by taking away the opportunities that are my right as the existing occupant of the home. This can be something as trivial as a child giving up their bedroom or, something direr, such as the threat of poverty when the foreigner “usurps” my position and “takes” my job. These fears inhibit the extending of hospitality and push genuine efforts to be “truly hospitable” to revert and settle in the relative comfort of “domestic hospitality.”

3.5.2 Hospitality as a Self-Conscious Metaphor

In suggesting that hospitality can be legitimately claimed as a major metaphor of Bible history, I am not suggesting that hospitality intrinsically demands greater priority than other more familiar metaphors. I am concerned, however, to insist that it is not a peripheral “ethic” that springs from the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a secondary consideration.

I am not interested in claiming “hospitality” as an exclusive metaphor, though other metaphors are inevitably challenged. These include metaphors associated with war and hostility since these represent the antithesis of hospitality. Hence statements such as “a mighty fortress is our God,” “onward Christian soldiers” and associated metaphorical language have limited value in a soteriology of hospitality. However, these metaphors are *intrinsically present* in the concept of hospitality presented by Derrida, i.e. in its very impossibility. Since hospitality at its limit can at any moment give itself over to hostility, it can be described as being inherently self-critical and does not need to deny other metaphors of the Gospel in its own definition. Hospitality co-exists with its own “militancy” in its effort to critique this very tendency.

¹⁴⁰ Caputo, *Deconstruction is a Nutshell*, 112.

¹⁴¹ Caputo, *Prayers and Tears*, 145.

In the very act of being hospitable there is an undercurrent of hostility or *inhospitality* that shakes the host's self-righteousness. Were it not for this, I would have severe reservations in linking hospitality with soteriology, since as with the Ten Commandments, it could just revert to a subjective form of soteriology whereby the believer "saves themselves" by adhering to the particular standard – trying to be hospitable merely being a variation on trying to keep the Ten Commandments.

The very *impossibility* of successfully being absolutely hospitable forces the believer to abandon the pursuit of *being hospitable in order to be saved* and depend on the hospitality of Christ – the stranger. Hence, in a sense, hospitality is an objective model that requires the believer to place their faith in Christ – which is the fundamental requirement of Evangelical Adventism anyway. The church, therefore, strives to be hospitable as it endeavours to represent the "Kingdom of God" on earth while its failure to be just this requires that believers depend on the grace of Christ – the stranger. One need scarcely add that since Christ identifies with "the stranger without the gate" it would be well if one were hospitable: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him [sic], and he [sic] with me" (Revelation 3:20, NIV).

Hence, an objective understanding of hospitality as a soteriological model (i.e. God is hospitable to us), imposes the thought that believers should be hospitable. The question is always an open one: Am I being hospitable to God or is God being hospitable to me? Who is the guest? Who is the host? Is this truly an objective soteriological model or is it subjective? A soteriology of hospitality cannot find rest – a final place of lodging – in either of these definitions. It is "undecidable".

3.5.3 Biblical Allusions to Hospitality

Derrida's explication of hospitality fits well the events of the so-called fall of humanity in Genesis 2-3.¹⁴² The progression of the events in the story of the fall in Eden points to, firstly, hospitality; secondly, the abuse of hospitality and, finally, a resultant hostility. Considering these in order: Firstly, God establishes the extent and the boundaries of the hospitality extended to Adam and Eve in Eden: "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of

¹⁴² SDA soteriologies tend to make primary reference to the fall in Eden. The incarnation of Christ is usually perceived to be a reaction to the fall. It is for this reason that it is necessary to specifically refer to this portion of Scripture.

good and evil . . .” (Genesis 2:15-16, NIV); secondly, this hospitality is abused when the boundary is ignored in the eating of the “forbidden fruit”; thirdly, as a consequence, God’s hospitality is withdrawn and replaced with hostility: “So the Lord banished him [Adam] from the Garden of Eden” (Genesis 3:23-24, NIV). In this understanding, God is the host who sets the extent and limitation of hospitality. Adam and Eve are the guests who transgress the boundary set by God (eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil). God’s hospitality becomes hostility and God and humanity are consequently alienated from one another.

The establishing of the nation of Israel, beginning with Abraham who is “a stranger in a strange land”, the subsequent exile of Jacob’s family in Egypt, followed four hundred years later by the Exodus and conquest of Canaan, indicate the violence and suffering that the estrangement of nations and peoples causes. In fact, the entire history of Israel through the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles is a description of a nation desperately trying to cling to a home that they usurped in the first place. In the absence of hospitality all that remains is hostility.

Jesus Christ as “God incarnate” is wholly dependent on human hospitality, which generally is absent. This reality is evident, for example, in the narrative of Christ’s birth and “no room at the inn,” his ministry containing words such as “foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20, NIV), and culminating in the antithesis of hospitality, the crucifixion. Certain cherished texts of Christendom suggest hospitality as their basis: “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2, NIV); “Now the dwelling of God is with men [sic], and [God] will live with them. They will be [God’s] people, and God [Godself] will be their God” (Revelation 21:3, NIV); and “Love your neighbour as yourself” (for example, Leviticus 19:18). This final text thrusts hospitality to the fore, this being a principal component of “neighbourliness.” This hospitality, as previously noted, is not confined to the neighbour of our community, but refers to the Samaritan, the outcast, the stranger outside the gate.

In this regard, there is a text that is revealing: “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” (John 8:48, NIV). This question – or accusation – that the Jews level at Christ is intriguing, firstly, in its formulation and, secondly, in Christ’s reply. The question suggests that Christ has two fundamental faults: 1) He is a Samaritan; 2) He is demon-possessed. The equating of these two is

troubling. Apparently, being a Samaritan (a stranger, a foreigner, my neighbour or *my enemy*) is on a par with being “demon-possessed.” The order of the accusations suggests an order of precedence: “Aren’t we right in saying that you are, firstly, a Samaritan and, secondly, demon-possessed?” or, rephrasing this idea: “Aren’t we right in saying that you are demon-possessed and, what is worse, a Samaritan?” One can be healed from demon possession, but nothing can be done about “Samaritan-ness.” Since Christ identifies with the stranger, a demonising of Christ is also a demonising of the stranger, but also a demonising of the stranger equates to a demonising of Christ.

Christ’s reply to the accusation is straight forward: “I am not possessed by a demon” (John 8:49, NIV). Christ does not respond to the question of his ethnicity. Since it is fair to say that Christ was a non-Samaritan Jew – having Mary and Joseph as parents who were of the line of David – Jesus *could* have corrected this assertion. Since he did not, it is also fair to conclude that Christ would not be party to racial slurs or fuel racial intolerance by entertaining the idea on any level. This is borne out by Christ’s acknowledging of the Samaritan in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which is the definitive story for the biblical injunction “love your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:25-37).

Indeed, the aporetic nature of hospitality is indicated by “love your neighbour as yourself.” Our neighbour is the one who falls outside of our household. A neighbour is the person who is closest to threatening our boundaries – this is clearly understood when one thinks in global terms. South Africa’s neighbour is Zimbabwe. But a neighbour is also one who lives on the other side of the street, because they are nevertheless within our field of vision. The idea that the world is a global village brings all countries into our field of vision, making us aware that they are our neighbours.

One could, of course, like with hospitality, lapse into a mere “domestic neighbourliness” and love those within the confines of one’s home or community. Not that even this is that attainable, since “love your neighbour as yourself” does not reformulate that simply into “love each other” (John 15:17, NIV).

Surprisingly, the aporetic nature of “love your neighbour as yourself” is founded on the presupposition of love for oneself - the idea that it can be calculated and then extended to one’s neighbour. This is impossible enough, but there is more to this aporia. If I were to *effectively* love my neighbour as much as I love myself, I

would also have ceased to love myself (which in turn would relieve me of the need to love them). But the command is not to *transfer* the love that I have for myself to my neighbour, but to love them in equal amount. But this is an impossible calculation.

Reducing “love your neighbour as yourself” to a twenty rand note demonstrates this well enough. A simple calculation reveals that I should give ten rand to my neighbour and keep ten rand for myself, which *could* be deemed to work as a single event, but is nevertheless unsatisfying. Firstly, my neighbour’s needs cannot be paralleled with mine. But beyond this is the rather basic fact that my neighbour does not reduce to one person. So, were I to adhere to an equal economic distribution in my calculation of “love your neighbour as yourself” I would need to add all the neighbours that I can think of – say ninety-nine people – add myself and divide the twenty rand accordingly. This would leave me with twenty cents. But I could only retain this twenty cents for as long as I did not encounter another neighbour, at which point it would have to be divided again. To avoid the inevitable continued reduction of my wealth, I could possibly decide to spend my money as quickly as possible, which has the same end anyhow. A calculation of “love your neighbour as yourself” requires that I surrender everything I have and, possibly, “give it to the poor” (Matthew 19:21). One could argue that this is the implication of “love your neighbour as yourself” whether one bothers to rigorously calculate anything or not. Is it not self-evident?

If I am to love my neighbour as myself, I must – for practical purposes - surrender my love for myself. Related to this are the following provocative words of Christ: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26, NIV). Father, mother, wife, children, brother, sister and, of course, oneself, all fall within the carefully defined community which we love and care for. The neighbour is without. There is no injunction to hate them, because we are always prepared to surrender the comforts of the outsider to benefit ourselves. We are naturally inclined to hate our neighbour. “Love your neighbour as yourself” upsets this inclination.¹⁴³

¹⁴³The aporia of “love your neighbour as yourself” could be understood in terms of narcissism. The one who does not “love” their neighbour but just engages in self-love could be accused of narcissism. With reference to narcissism, Derrida states: “There is not narcissism and non-narcissism; there are narcissisms that are more or less comprehensive, generous, open, extended. What is called non-narcissism is in general but the economy of a much more welcoming, hospitable narcissism, one that is

With regard to the SDA preoccupation with the Ten Commandments it is quite possible – and totally acceptable within Seventh-day Adventist circles – to insist that “love you neighbour as yourself” is a summation of the Ten Commandments. This is immediately biblically demonstrable:

The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandments there may be, are summed up in this one rule ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law (Romans 13:9-10, NIV).

A little elaboration is possibly needed in view of Christ’s affirmation of the *two* “great” commandments:

“Teacher which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:36-37, NIV).

In the light of the incarnation of Christ, these commandments can be viewed as synonymous parallelism. Since Christ is God and through the incarnation identifies with the stranger (our neighbour), the two commands restate the same idea. Christ is God and Christ is our neighbour. It is also evident that we love ourselves with all our heart, soul and mind. Hence, we have “Love the Lord your God (neighbour) with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind (as yourself)” or “Love your neighbour (the Lord your God) as yourself (with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind.” In this, it is possible to understand why Christ claims that the second command is “like” the first, even though a cursory reading suggests that the only common thread is “love.”

My point is not that hospitality is an imperative in the Bible because it is possible to link it to one or two verses - or even one or two hundred verses. My argument is that the aporia of hospitality (as it plays off its antithesis hostility) is evident in the entire sweep of Bible history. It is not a peripheral ethic that happens to be mentioned here or there, but is the ethos of the entire Bible.

3.5.4 A Soteriological Metaphor for the SDA Church

To reiterate, it is my contention that hospitality is a central theme to the Bible narrative. This is necessary for it to be acceptable to the SDA Church. Hospitality

much more open to the experience of the other as other” (Jacques Derrida, “There is No *One* Narcissism,” in Jacques Derrida, *Points. . . Interviews, 1974-1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 199).

provides a soteriological model that fits the identity of the SDA Church. It would also serve to resolve the theological quagmire that is threatening to fracture the church. I also believe that this metaphor would challenge and expose exclusive tendencies within the church in the very process of establishing *and* destabilising the church's unique identity.

I would like to stress that I am not advocating hospitality as the pre-eminent virtue of Christian morality or behaviour or, even, as the dominant *metaphor* for morality. This does not mean that hospitality does not deserve this accolade. In *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding*, Thomas W Ogletree, writing from within the Christian tradition, suggests that morality can be defined by the following “over-arching metaphor: to be moral is to be hospitable to the stranger.”¹⁴⁴ My concern, however, is not to suggest that the SDA Church re-evaluate and redefine its understanding of *morality* in the light of “hospitality to the stranger” although I am sure that the community could gain much from such a self-reflective study. Derrida, himself, elevates hospitality above that of merely being one ethic among many:

Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one's at-home, the familiar place of dwelling, as much as the manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality*; ethics is entirely coextensive with the experience of hospitality, whichever way one expands or limits that.¹⁴⁵

I am not arguing against an ethics of hospitality, but I am also convinced that ethical injunctions within the SDA Church gain power if they are perceived soteriologically. By making hospitality an intrinsic component of SDA soteriology, hospitality will, by necessity, become part of the very ethos of Adventism. This is why the Ten Commandments have such force within the community. Obedience to the Ten Commandments has been linked to salvation – to reiterate, as a cause of salvation for Harvest Adventism and as a consequence of salvation for Evangelical Adventism. Similarly hospitality needs to be seen first and foremost as a key aspect of the doctrine of salvation and in this it will gain force as a moral imperative.

No SDA will dispute the validity of the injunction “love your neighbour as yourself” but by far and away the majority of SDAs will also assert that before they

¹⁴⁴ Thomas W Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 1.

¹⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness: Thinking in Action* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 16-17.

can do this, they need to be “right with God.” As Venden puts it, “The only *deliberate* effort in the Christian life is to seek God. Spontaneous effort toward other things will result.”¹⁴⁶ As long as these personal strivings exist as the primary Christian goal, - eradicating one’s sins or “seeking God” – secondary considerations seldom enter a person’s reality. This is why Ogletree’s “hospitality to the stranger” as an ethical or moral concern would not impact Seventh-day Adventism significantly – even if the entire church agreed with his thesis.

My concern is to invoke the central pillar of SDA identity – the doctrine of the Sanctuary. It is true that a metaphor operating at such a fundamental level would transform the SDA approach to ethics and “perfection.” Hospitality is a concept that forces one to turn the direction of one’s gaze away from oneself to the stranger who enters the church confines, as well as those on the periphery who fall within the church’s field of vision. It also forces one to consider the space that one occupies as a welcoming space rather than a list of rules to which the outsider or stranger must conform in order to be “made welcome” or “belong.”

3.5.5 Hospitality and the Sanctuary

3.5.5.1 The Exclusive Nature of the Sanctuary

The Sanctuary set up by Moses and the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness is, in a sense, the antithesis of the status in the Garden of Eden prior to the fall of Adam and Eve. In Eden, there was only one boundary or point of limitation. There were no laws to transgress – “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden” – save for one – “you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . .” The freedom in the Garden of Eden stands in stark contrast to the boundaries established in the Sanctuary. God is *nearly* completely hospitable to Adam and Eve, leaving only one point of possible hostility.

The Sanctuary can be reduced to a single point of hospitality: Only Israel’s High Priest was permitted access to the Most Holy Place within the Sanctuary and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

By the time of Christ the structure of the Sanctuary had taken on progressive levels of exclusion. On the outer perimeter was the Court of the Gentiles. “Notices in Greek and Latin warned that no responsibility could be taken for the probable death of

¹⁴⁶ Venden, 79.

any Gentile who ventured within.”¹⁴⁷ Here then, is the first line of exclusion. The first court within the temple was termed the “Women’s Court”. Beyond this is the second line of exclusion. “Men were allowed into the Court of Israel, raised above the Court of Women. . . .”¹⁴⁸ The first room of the tabernacle was called the Holy Place where the priests had access and, finally, there was the Most Holy Place.

And so the demarcated lines are progressively exclusive: Court of Gentiles (all people), Court of Women (Gentiles excluded), Court of Israel (Jewish women excluded), the Holy Place (priests only), Most Holy Place (High priest, only once a year).

3.5.5.2 22 October 1844

22 October 1844 is a date that is inseparably linked to Seventh-day Adventism. This date, as I have mentioned, is derived from an interpretation of Daniel 8:14: “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (KJV). It is this text that is the primary source of the significance of the Sanctuary in SDA theology.

The date itself is, oddly, an invariable *belief* of the church while its significance has been altered and revised over the intervening years. This has nothing to do with doctrine. 22 October 1844 is not a doctrine; rather it is the *instituting moment* of the church. At this moment, the moment that this group of Millerites realised that Christ would not return on this date, they were faced with a question that demanded a response: “What is our faith now?”

22 October 1844, in the actual experience of these Millerites, was the moment that their faith was forced to make a fundamental change. It symbolised a break with the rigidly held doctrines and beliefs of the past, but also a continuity with the traditions that had brought the Millerites to this moment. And so, 22 October 1844 serves to remind the church of its own shaky starting point, *of its inability to calculate and determine absolute truth*. This was the date the Millerites set for the return of Christ. They were wrong, leading to a necessary revision of the theological conclusions that had been so rigidly held. Initially, holding to the “Shut Door” theory – another fallacious and abandoned belief – these remaining Millerites were slow to

¹⁴⁷ John J Bimson, John P Kane, John H Paterson and Donald J Wiseman, eds., *New Bible Atlas* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 111.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

develop the Sanctuary Doctrine. Its formulation did not even approximately coincide with 22 October 1844.

An immediate outgrowth of the disappointment of 1844 was the abandoning of any date setting: “The Seventh-day Adventist Church came out of revival movements where date setting was popular. . . . The new church, from the very beginning, rejected any date-setting.”¹⁴⁹ It would be true to say that, for the SDA Church, the very acceptance of 22 October 1844 as the conclusion of the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14 simultaneously precludes the possibility that any further date can be set. It signals the end of all date-setting. When Messiah comes should not be calculated.

There is no need to debate the validity of 22 October 1844. The date is the instituting moment for the SDA Church. It was mistakenly believed that Jesus would return on this date. These two facts work together to define the hope of the SDA Church and unsettle its claims of certainty. Yes, its doctrinal formulations should be articles of faith, but this faith should not be aligned with certainty or knowledge. The origin of the church serves to remind the members of today’s church that it should be cautious in its proclamations of inviolable truth.

3.5.5.3 The Sanctuary as God’s Dwelling Place

In his article “Sanctuary”, David Larson, writing within the SDA tradition, gives three pertinent biblical quotes that I believe have the possibility of moving the church in a more useful direction. These texts pertain to the Sanctuary, but also address the theme of hospitality:

1. And let them make me a Sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them (Exodus 25:8).
2. And the word became flesh and lived amongst us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).
3. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 21:3,4).¹⁵⁰

SDA theologians have focused on the Sanctuary as the place where God resolves the problem of sin, specifically *personal* sin. This understanding is dominant in both Harvest Adventism and Evangelical Adventism. Johan Japp, writing from an Evangelical Adventist perspective (which could possibly have strayed from this sin

¹⁴⁹ *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 345.

¹⁵⁰ All texts taken from the *King James Version* as cited in Larson, 65.

focus with regard to the Sanctuary) defines this soteriological focus on sin, as typified in the Hebrew Day of Atonement services, in the following way:

1. The death of Christ (the objective atonement). His death reconciles the world to God in the sense that it made *expiation for sin*.
2. Christ's priestly mediation of His merits. His intercession *reconciles repentant sinners* to God as taught by the type (Lev. 4:30-31).
3. The investigative (or pre-Advent) Judgment, the antitypical day of atonement that commenced in 1844. In this Second Apartment phase of Christ's priestly ministry He makes final atonement for His people by reaffirming all genuine believers – *blotting out the records of their sins – and bringing the sin problem to an end* [emphasis supplied].¹⁵¹

Larson, however, does not follow this emphasis; rather he refers to the Sanctuary as God's dwelling place. Textually it can be argued that the Sanctuary is first and foremost God's dwelling place amongst the Israelites. The verse, "And let them make me a Sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8, KJV) states this explicitly. I am arguing that the Sanctuary is primarily God living among God's people and secondarily a place where sin is resolved. The same point needs to be made with regard to the incarnation of Christ. Christ becomes incarnate and lives amongst us ("God with us"). This is the first accomplishment of the incarnation; the issue of sin may also be resolved, but only as a consequence of "the word living amongst us." And again, with regard to Larson's third text (Revelation 21:3-4), the resolution of sin ("every tear is wiped away") is contingent on the primary statement: "See, the home of God is among mortals."

If the SDA Church understands the Sanctuary as God's dwelling place among humanity, then the destructive theologies that revolve around personal sin and imperfection may be abrogated and replaced with a deeper concern for addressing social injustice and the alienation of strangers.

3.5.5.4 The Sanctuary and Judgement: "The Cleansing of the Sanctuary"

The efforts of Evangelical Adventist theologians to reinterpret the investigative judgement in a manner that preserves the assurance of salvation, together with the Desmond Ford controversy, emphasise the fact that while this judgement may be reinterpreted, it cannot be dispensed with as an element of SDA doctrine. This is largely because of the Adventist deduction that the phrase "and the sanctuary shall be cleansed" refers to judgement.

The Hebrew word for "shall be cleansed" is *nisdaq* which is derived from *tsadaq* (*sdq*). A recent Adventist source gave the following commentary on this word:

¹⁵¹ Japp, 3.

The verbal root is *tsadaq* and usually means "be in the right, be vindicated, be righteous." The verbal form used by Daniel is not used anywhere else in the Old Testament. In other words, we do not have comparative material to assist us in understanding the specific meaning of the verb in this particular case. . . . We notice that the term *tsadaq* is associated with such concepts as judgment, vindication, cleansing, and salvation. The term conveys the idea of the restoration of the order established by God through a work of cleansing and judgment.¹⁵²

Adventist interpretations of *tsadaq* do not deviate significantly from those given in other non-Adventist commentaries, lexicons and Hebrew word study books. These give variations of "lawful", "just" and "righteous" as the basic meanings.¹⁵³ The forensic and legal connotations of the word are appealing to Adventist interpretations because they imply judgement. Evangelical Adventists are doubly drawn because of their affinity to penal substitution with its associated legal formulations.

I have no interest in challenging these interpretations but there is a very basic and patently obvious interpretation when one considers this phrase in the light of hospitality. In fact, the term "then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" is an almost *quaint* expression of hospitality. Since, the Sanctuary is God's house and, eschatologically, God's dwelling will be with people, the cleansing of the Sanctuary is merely the necessary *spring cleaning* that any host would do prior to the arrival of a guest.

If one recalls that the Adventist standard of judgement is the Ten Commandments which, as I have already argued, is more aporetically stated as "love your neighbour as yourself" then one not only has the standard for this cleansing but also the reason (the arrival of the neighbour). Since God's dwelling place is being prepared for the arrival of the stranger, the term pre-advent is quite appropriate. Furthermore, the stranger who is arriving is, as the one who identifies with the stranger, Christ. And so the Sanctuary is being prepared as a suitable dwelling place for the arrival of this stranger. But it is not only for a single stranger, but all strangers, all others, since Christ identifies with the stranger, whomsoever they may be.

But then, one might well ask, what form this "preparation" takes. I would like to suggest that the "preparation" is the erosion of boundaries. The perennial dilemma of neighbourliness is *space*. Generally, the reason that one is reluctant to give shelter to the stranger, is that one has limited space. Even if one is generous and extends hospitality to several people, one's hospitality has the basic limit of the space at one's

¹⁵² Angel Manuel Rodríguez, "The Sanctuary and its Cleansing" in *Supplement to the Adventist Review*, September 1994, <<http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/sanct&itscleansing.htm>> (6 August 2006).

¹⁵³ See, for example, James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979) and R Laird Harris, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

disposal. But the Sanctuary is defined in Scripture as a very limited and exclusive space. Because of its boundaries, it is by necessity exclusive. One could argue that the erosion of these boundaries is hinted at in John 14, in that the rooms of the Sanctuary are not merely two (the Holy and Most Holy Place) but are now described as “many rooms” (and indeterminate number that strives to indicate that there is enough space for all who come):

In my Father’s house [Sanctuary]¹⁵⁴ are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (John 14:2-3, NIV).

The extension of space hinted at in the term “many rooms” is a provocative restructuring of the Sanctuary when one considers how precisely the dimensions are described in the Pentateuch.

Absolute hospitality, however, needs to go further than this. Hospitality that is to be limitlessly extended to the stranger by the perfect application of the law “love your neighbour as yourself” means that the place that is prepared will no longer have walls of exclusion. Hence God’s Sanctuary (dwelling place, tabernacle) in its eschatological fulfilment has no walls as indicated by the wording of Revelation 21:3:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling [*skēnē*] of God is with men [sic], and he [sic] will live with them. They will be his [sic] people and God himself [sic] will be with them and be their God” (NIV)

The Greek word for “dwelling” - *skēnē* – is the same word that is translated “tabernacle” (or sanctuary) eight times in Hebrews 8-9 (KJV). Much of Adventist Sanctuary theology is derived from this section of Scripture where the writer of Hebrews uses this word to distinguish between the heavenly tabernacle (*skēnē*) and the earthly tabernacle (*skēnē*). In Hebrews, the writer is clearly making reference to the Sanctuary as that bounded, *exclusive* space understood by the Israelites in Mosaic history. There is *no* such bounded space in the “new heaven and new earth” (Revelation 21:1, NIV): “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22, NIV). There is God’s dwelling (sanctuary/tabernacle) with God’s people but there is no physical bounded structure (temple). The preparation that needs to be done by Christ – “cleansing of the Sanctuary” – is to make space for the stranger, to remove the walls that have hitherto kept the stranger from God’s presence.

¹⁵⁴ The term “my Father’s house” is used elsewhere by Christ, where he is clearly indicating the Sanctuary (Luke 2:9). In any case, that the Sanctuary is God’s dwelling place or God’s house is crucial to this dissertation.

When Christ enters the Sanctuary, he goes there as the one who represents the stranger – “whatever you did for one of the least of these . . . you did for me” (Matthew 25:40, NIV). This representation is the basis of the judgement (see 3.4.1 The Standard of the Judgement). When Christ enters the Most Holy Place, he enters as the representative of all strangers. If Christ is welcome in this bounded space, then so is the stranger. The stranger (*tout autre*) is dragged into God’s presence via the stranger (Christ). All that remains are those who claim to “know” Christ - “believers” – those that believe they are not strangers. These are categorised as sheep and goats (Matthew 25) – those that welcomed the stranger and those that did not - those that were hospitable and those that were not.

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4 Conclusion

A soteriology of hospitality is not a call for the church to abandon other soteriological models, although it certainly critiques the exclusive tendencies they may have. The aporetic nature of hospitality means that it oscillates uncertainly between an objective (Evangelical Adventism) and subjective (Harvest Adventism) soteriology. It forces adherents to confront their own worst instincts: to avoid anything “other” and feel comfortable with endless repetitions of “the same.”

It is obvious that any movement towards the stranger, any welcoming of the stranger, requires faith – a faith that cannot see what this advent will bring. Hence, the work of a soteriology of hospitality is, first and foremost, a work of faith.

Subjectively, it is extending hospitality to the stranger. This hospitality, ideally, requires that we give all that we have and, hence, always falls short. Objectively, it depends on God’s hospitality, which in Christ is demonstrated to be absolute in the total giving of Godself in Christ at the cross. In this way, the objective component of this soteriology overshadows the subjective response of the believer.

In the Sanctuary, this soteriology is given a foothold that enables the SDA Church to retain its unique identity in Christendom. A soteriology of hospitality on its own would thrust the community into a sea of uncertainty with no anchor to define itself. Since the basis for a soteriology of hospitality *and* the essence of the uniqueness of SDA identity is grounded in the Sanctuary, the cause for Adventist fear in this regard is also its security. Were it not for the Doctrine of the Sanctuary, the church would not welcome the stranger and were it not for the advent of the stranger, its identity would not be threatened.

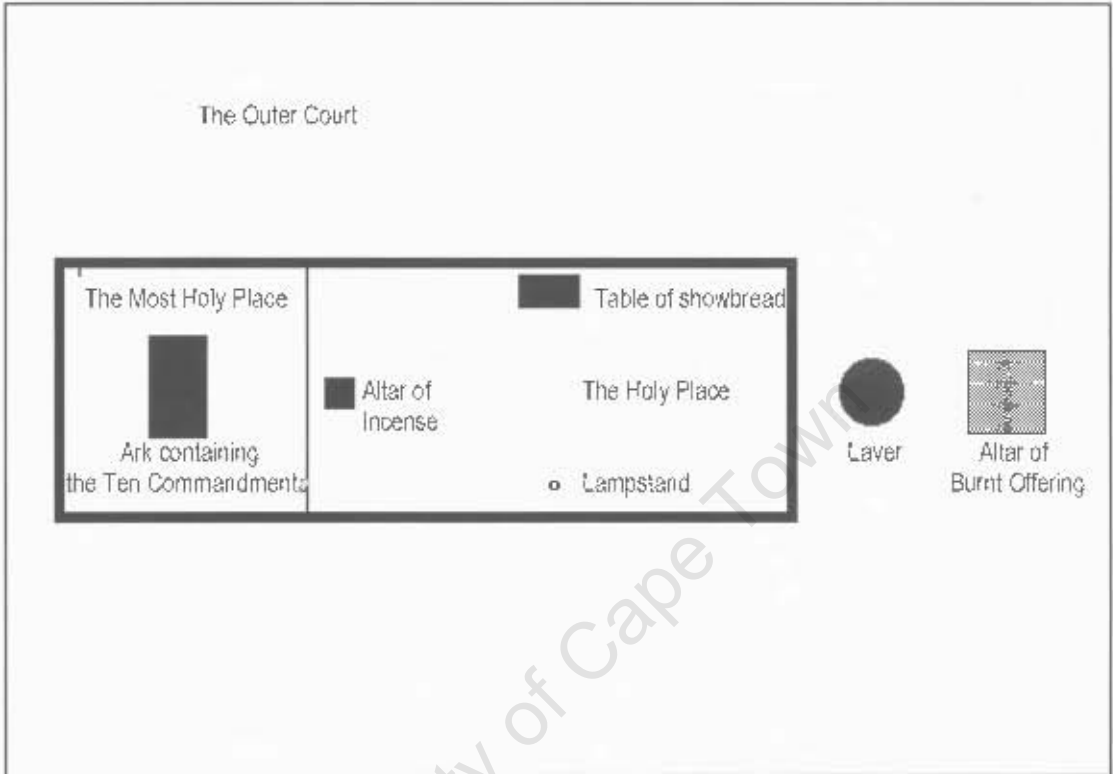
For Seventh-day Adventism, I believe that a soteriology of hospitality would carry at least the following specific implications:

1. 22 October 1844 as the instituting moment of SDA Church identity together with the Doctrine of the Sanctuary remain essential features of Adventism via this soteriology.
2. The “cleansing of the Sanctuary” is a work of judgement that rests on the principle behind the Ten Commandments: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” This principle is governed by absolute hospitality that demands the removal of all boundaries as God seeks to dwell (tabernacle) with us.

3. Hospitality is a direct expression of what it means to be an *Adventist*, since hospitality anticipates and welcomes the coming of the stranger.
4. A soteriology of hospitality challenges exclusive and sectarian tendencies of the church (Harvest Adventism) without surrendering the uniqueness of the church. As such, it can be recognised as part of the Christian community at large (the concern of Evangelical Adventism) without succumbing to assimilation (the fear of Harvest Adventism).
5. An openness to the other reminds the church that what it believes is not its knowledge, but its faith. An encounter with the other will open the church to new insights and the possibility that its current understandings may adapt and grow. This does not mean that the church need deny itself and break faith with its origins.
6. A soteriology of hospitality will urge believers to turn their gaze away from themselves and consider the plight of others. It is concerned with the devastation caused by sin and seeks to alleviate the suffering of others. It challenges models of soteriology that engender self-obsessed and futile struggles to obviate one's guilt. It confronts and upsets theologies that rob the believer of assurance by presuming that the basis of salvation is in overcoming our own weaknesses and failings.

A soteriology of hospitality means that peace is to be found in the arms of the stranger, because this is where Christ locates himself. Members feel secure within their church walls as though this is where their salvation resides. A soteriology of hospitality suggests that salvation is found not within but without, not only salvation for the individual but for the church itself.

5 Appendix: The Structure of the Mosaic Tabernacle – the “Earthly Sanctuary”



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