

**HOLINESS COMMUNITIES IN PAUL: THE INSIDER  
OUTSIDER QUESTION AS ADDRESSED IN GALATIANS 2-3  
WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ADVENTIST DOCTRINE  
OF THE REMNANT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is a multicultural and multi ethnic, worldwide community. However, traces of its North American origins are still found in the manner in which it conducts its business. Everything from liturgy to the programme time, which were originally agreed upon in order to accommodate the mostly rural American pioneers, during the mid 1800's, bears witness to the fact that, though it is a worldwide movement, it remains steeped in the traditions of its origins. This uniformity and cultural hegemony, is often branded "The Adventist way of doing things, with some even suggesting that there is a superior culture known as the Adventist culture, in order to convince adherents to abandon their cultures and adopt what is essentially, white American culture.

This dynamic, has often made me, as a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Southern African Seventh Day Adventist, feeling alienated and more of an outsider, as nothing in my community of faith communicates anything positive to my cultural and ethnic background. I have found variances in the manner in which Paul dealt with a similarly diverse community of faith and how the Seventh Day Adventist church has gone about it. In this study, I have sought to bring the two communities into dialogue with each other, by applying a methodology borrowed from the social sciences. By bringing Galatians 3:26-28 and my community of faith into conversation, I hope to highlight the need for a conversation on the need for a socio sensitive hermeneutic.

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# CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

## 1.1 Introduction

The origins of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, have played a big role in the formulation of the community's self designated identity as the end time Remnant. Starting from the days of William Miller's preaching of Christ's imminent return, with a specific date announced, people have been called out of their respective, established communities, to flee from their slumber and apparent lack of awareness of Christ's return. Even when Christ did not return on this predicted and publicized date of 22 October 1843, nor at an even time known as 'the Great Disappointment', the community, while undergoing an evolution as it sought to redefine and rebuild itself, did not abandon its missiological approach.

This missiological approach, however, was and is still based on an understanding that the community has been erected to save others from sure damnation unless they adhere to the beliefs and practices of the Remnant, which God has called out for this specific purpose. It is this sentiment that forms the bedrock of my hypothesis, as I believe that this has led to our approach to missiology being riddled with, and reminiscent of, colonialist tendencies, where: 1.) Otherness is in reference to outsiders deemed inferior in their understanding of the Bible, 2.) Acceptance into the community requires an abandonment of everything reminiscent of your former community and total adoption of everything that is prescribed by the Adventist community. This is seen in the value placed on uniformity, where the tacit message is that Adventist culture and norms are the standard. This has come at a great cost of not only depriving the community of the cultural richness that comes with diversity but also, it has seen the limitation and curtailing of human agency.

It is from within this context that I begin my study, which is aimed at initiating a discussion around these questions. I have, on the other hand, found Paul's treatment of identity and community, in the book of Galatians, especially fascinating in this context. I believe that bringing the two communities into dialogue with one another will make for some interesting outcomes. My hypothesis is that Paul's letter to the Galatians may enable Adventists to re-evaluate questions of identity formation within the community and in sympathy with its fundamental traditions.

These questions around which I hope to have this discussion:

- 1.) Can there be a co existence between the need for self preservation and the demands of a missiological mandate within the same community?
- 2.) How can a redefined self designation help the Seventh Day Adventist church move towards an inclusive ecclesiology?
- 3.) How should the Seventh-day Adventist church interact with Paul's 'dangerous game' of boundary renegotiation, especially in the letter to the Galatians?
- 4.) Does Paul's approach to community construction in Galatians benefit or pose a threat to a missiological community with strict boundary markers?
- 5.) Is the present self understanding of Seventh-day Adventism as "God's end time Remnant" conducive to or detrimental to the community's appropriated missiological mandate?

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

I will be using the African Contextual Biblical Hermeneutic approach as a theoretical framework. This approach is extremely important since I am dealing with what I consider to

be two communities and contexts in dialogue with each other, whose appropriation will result in finding meaning which will address some of my questions. This approach makes a case for an honest reading and application of the biblical text, whilst allowing the reader to remain sensitive and aware of their own context.

Through it, the reader looks to the text in context for new insights to questions about her or his own context. This approach is especially relevant to this research as it will aid me to examine the community which produced the text and how they dealt with what I consider to be similar challenges that the Adventist community is facing. This theoretical Framework has three phases, the Distantiation phase, the Contextualisation phase and the Appropriation phase.<sup>1</sup>

### *1.2.1 Distantiation*

Draper (2015:11) calls this “the analytical pole of the Tripolar theoretical framework.”<sup>2</sup> This is the phase where the reader admits that the text was not written with them and their context in mind. This allows the reader to see the text for what it is, as far as possible, independent of our prejudices and contextual lenses. This process involves both the suspension of one’s pre-suppositions, “allowing the text to be strange, unexpected and even alienating”, and allowing the integrity of the text to stand out on its own (Draper 2002:17). This is where the reader admits that there is a distance between them and the text, an honest admission of unfamiliarity with the nuances, geography, rhetoric and metaphors etc, within the text. This would then call for a socio-historical and narrative analysis of the text, which allows us to understand as best we can the text as it would have been understood by its intended

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<sup>1</sup> Draper points out that these do not follow any particular order “as long as all three steps are undertaken.” (Draper 2015:3).

<sup>2</sup>A term used interchangeably with African contextual biblical hermeneutic.



audience.<sup>3</sup>

Draper further states that, “the model allows for the adoption of any specific methodology which provides a moment of autonomy for the text over against the reader” (2015:9). It is this need to preserve the autonomy of the text which necessitates this phase. This is an implicit acknowledgement of the text’s existence apart from the its reader, such that when a reader approaches a text, they are confronting an entity that is separate and has a life and context of its own which is different from that of the reader.<sup>4</sup>

The reader must allow the text to be “the other which expresses itself to us, not as an object but as a subject in relationship with us” Draper (2015:10). This emphasises the importance of a dialogical approach, which Draper has adopted from Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989), in the interpretation of the text where the reader and the text are in constant dialogue with each other seeking “not the instantiation of a general law but something historically unique” (Gadamer cited in Draper 2015:10). While the model acknowledges the impossibility of the reader approaching the text objectively, which is why it also gives the reader an opportunity to declare his or her interest in the text, in the contextualization phase. Draper (2015:14) points out that the reader can, “voluntarily seek to give the text its moment by a “willing suspension of disbelief””.

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<sup>3</sup> Draper recommends the utilization of “the insights from anthropology and sociology because they moved beyond the individual (and pietism) towards the community and the economy” as a methodology to apply the framework (Draper 2015:7).

<sup>4</sup> It is a widely held view amongst scholars of hermeneutics that there is a distance of time, geography, and context between the reader and the text. Acknowledging this, gives the text a voice which speaks “over the hubbub of our own voices” (Draper 2015:14).

### *1.2.2 Contextualization*

There seems to be consensus, amongst scholars of hermeneutics, when it comes to allowing the text to speak for itself, as well as the need for a transformative outcome as a product of interaction with the text<sup>5</sup>, divergent views arise when it comes to how the two worlds should interact. This phase seeks to address the sometimes overlooked need for the reader to examine the lenses that may colour his or her reading of the text (Draper 2015:5). This is the process where the reader admits and perhaps confronts their own pre suppositions and possible influences upon their interpretation of the text. This is to say that as we approach the text, we are neither neutral nor objective.

Draper states “our social location determines what questions we ask the text” (2002:16). This implies that for an honest reading of the text, the reader needs to be aware of not only which questions they are asking the text but also a familiarity with what brings these questions about. An understanding of the text requires us to go through the contextualization process to determine how we’ve come to understand the text the way we have. This phase of the theoretical framework requires that the context of the reader be explored and interrogated critically. This is particularly important because, “failure” to do so leads to a breakdown of genuine dialogue between a text and a reader from the outset....and is likely only to confirm the reader’s prior commitments and reassure his or her prejudices” (Draper 2015:14). It follows that when the reader confronts his or her prejudices and ideo-theological orientation, it can result in a meaningful and possibly life changing dialogue with the text, for the reader<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> An observation made while listening to dialogue of biblical scholars around a paper by G. West (2010) on African Biblical Hermeneutics, in which he outlines various hermeneutic models, highlights their strengths and areas of improvement. See also Hyde (1974).

<sup>6</sup> Draper (2015:14).

Draper (2002:16) emphasises the importance of this phase by constantly pointing out the reader's bias towards his or her own context, a position determined by his or her "social, economic, political and cultural contexts", a situation which may lead to a hegemonic reading of the text, since the reader is in position of power vis a vis the text.<sup>7</sup> The reader chooses already *which* text to read and why s/he wants to read it! The text itself is mute until summonsed by the reader into a dialogue on the reader's terms.

Since the goal of this model is a new praxis for the reader, borne out of an interaction between the text and a reader, with this interaction taking the form of a conversation between two independent world views, it is incumbent upon the reader to ensure a responsible interpretation by declaring his or her own interest, because "interpretations have consequences in practice"<sup>8</sup>

### *1.2.3 Appropriation*

After this comes the third phase known as *appropriation*. This is the goal of the framework. It is at this phase where the two worlds, world of the text and reader, which had been hitherto investigated separately, converge. This phase is the consequence of the reader accepting the text as the "other" and sees the text as an "epiphanic space" (Draper 2015:15). This means that the goal of the dialogue between the text and the reader is more than gaining a new understanding of the Bible: it is the transformation of the reader which leads to the transformation of the reader in and for society (Draper 2002:18).

It is in this phase that the sacred text is allowed to play its role in the social construction of reality, which leads to transformative praxis which Draper also sees as "being more than just

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<sup>7</sup> Draper points to the way Western Enlightenment had an impact in shaping Western Academy's hegemonic approach to hermeneutics. Draper (2002:16).

<sup>8</sup> Draper (2002:18).

direct action but also a change of consciousness” (2015:16). It must be stressed that this would not be possible or as meaningful without the reader allowing the text to be strange and alienating, in the distantiation phase, and the “willing suspension of disbelief” by the reader, in the contextualization phase.

### **1.3 Methodology**

#### *1.3.1 Introduction: Mary Douglas and Pierre Bourdieu*

As a liberation hermeneutic, it is natural for the African Contextual theoretical framework to be community oriented. Its insistence on meaning, as opposed to history, as a goal, necessitates a closer investigation of both the community of the text and as the interpreting community. To accomplish this, a methodology that will enable us to examine both these communities independently, at first, with the intention of bringing them into dialogue with each other, is essential. For this purpose, I have been drawn to the work of Mary Douglas on Grid and Group, which she set out, initially in her theory on the body as a social map, laid out in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), further developed in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (1969) and further developed in *Cultural Theory* (1982).<sup>9</sup>

Due to the determinism in the structuralist nature of Douglas’s work, the casualty is the possibility of human agency. This is made impossible by the view, as held by structuralism, as summarized by her famous dictum, “if you want to change the culture, you will have to start by changing the organisation”<sup>10</sup> In other words, within structuralism, the appropriation

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<sup>9</sup> W. Domeris, “The farewell discourse, An Anthropological perspective”, *Neotestamentica* 25(2), 1991, has been particularly helpful in setting out the progression of Douglas’ work. While I have gone through the work of Mary Douglas, as cited above, I would have inadequately referenced my sources, if I failed to mention the influence of the lectures of my supervisor Prof Draper, in explaining and applying her theory to the New Testament.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas, M. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved February 17, 2016, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marydougl237176.html>.

phase of our framework, does not take place at an individual level, change comes through everything being negotiated ad hoc and upon the consensus of the group. In defining the theory of cultural bias, Douglas further supports this point by stating that “cultural bias....is the idea that a culture is based on a particular form of organization. It can’t be transplanted except to another variant of that organization”<sup>11</sup>

It is this shortcoming within structuralism that has forced me into what has proved to be problematic for my research, and led me to incorporate the work of another social anthropologist to compensate for the glaring absence of agency. For this purpose, I have turned to the work of Pierre Bourdieu in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), with a special focus on his concept of field. His work is particularly helpful in aiding the reader to understand human action as independent but not completely objective, on the one hand yet also subjective but “not a free project of a conscience positing its own ends and maximising its utility through rational computation” (Draper 2011:2).<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3.2 Pierre Bourdieu and the field

Bourdieu sees the field as a site of “endless change” in which, “every field constitutes a potentially open space of play whose boundaries are dynamic borders which are the stakes of the struggle within the field itself” (Draper 2011:3). The field consists of two realms or dimensions. The first of these is the *doxa*, which is the universe of the unknown in which those things that are readily accepted by the community and are never contested, because they are unknown, exist. Bourdieu (1977:98) And on the other, *opinion* which is the universe of discourse, where everything within this universe is up for discussion and is open for

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<sup>11</sup> <http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/douglas1.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Pages numbers refer to Draper’s unpublished paper which was published after this thesis was completed: J. A. Draper, “Pierre Bourdieu and the Role of the Spirit in Some Zulu/Swathi African Initiated Churches”. Pages 35-69 in Magnus Echter and Asonzeh Ukah (eds.), *Bourdieu in Africa*. Leiden: Brill [SRA 44].

change, because “it becomes the known.”<sup>13</sup>

“The contest takes the form of argument over what is accepted (orthodoxy) and what is rejected (heterodoxy)—which despite appearances, is never fixed or defined as if it were as system of rules or laws.” Draper (2009:4). The individual “players” enter these contests with some form of capital, namely, according to Bourdieu, economic, cultural or social, with the latter being the most important. He argues that social capital both enables and limits the spontaneous human agency of a given “socialized body” in the collective “socialized body”.

### *1.3.3 Towards a unified methodology*

Douglas’ model represents a systematic classification of an individual within society against two social dimensions, grid and group where “Grid represents a system of classifications shared by the individual with his/her society or social unit, such as norms and religious beliefs” (Domeris 1991:2). Grid would be the regulations within a community to which the individuals must adhere. “As a dimension, it shows a progressive change in the mode of control” at the strong end, there are visible rules about space and time related to social roles; and at the other end “the formal classifications fade and finally vanish”<sup>14</sup>

Every community has tangible or visible signs, which use the individual body as a social map, through which the individual displays their adherence or commitment to the community. This commitment is measured on the grid axis. If the commitment of the individual is extremely high, then they would fall on the upper axis of the grid. Grid measures the amount of social pressure and structural constraints placed upon the individual. As stated, earlier, these are played out on the individual’s body, which serves as a social map of the community at large. It is the grid axis that gives us an idea of what the community might

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<sup>13</sup> Draper (2009:4).

<sup>14</sup> Douglas (1978:8).

consider to be dangerous or dirty<sup>15</sup>.

While the grid measures the individual's adherence to the structural pressures of the community, the group axis measures the general boundary around the community.

“The group dimension measures how much of people's lives is controlled by the group they live in. An individual needs to accept constraints on his/her behaviour by the mere fact of belonging to a group, “for a group to continue to exist at all there will be some collective pressure to signal loyalty”<sup>16</sup> It is within these set boundaries that the individual's commitment to the group is confined.

So while grid measures the individual's adherence to the requirements of the group, the group axis measures the fence within which these are played out (Douglas 1973:12). It is within the group axis where we are able to place the individual's proximity to either danger or purity<sup>17</sup>. Those that are closer to zero on the grid axis, within a community with high group, as most religious groups tend to be, are cast out to exist on the margins of the community as they are deemed dangerous to the community, and the converse is also true, where those who score high on the grid axis within a high group community, are given a certain status of respect or acceptance.<sup>18</sup>

It might be prudent, at this stage, to acknowledge the many criticisms levelled against the structuralism nature of Douglas' approach to studying communities. However, her work cannot be summarily dismissed as without containing any useful insights. Therefore, the work of one of the fiercest critics of structuralism anthropology, Pierre Bourdieu, will be

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<sup>15</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1969.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas in <http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/douglas1.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Domeris *The farewell discourse, An Anthropological perspective*, Neotestamentica 25(2): 1991

<sup>18</sup> Douglas in <http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/semiotics/cyber/douglas1.pdf>.

utilised to compensate for the much vaunted shortfalls and limitations of Mary Douglas' work. I dare not assume the arrogance of labelling the work of Bourdieu as merely compensatory to the limitations of the work of another, as it is a complete and accomplished body of work on its own. In fact, as pointed out, the two scholars are often at variance with each other. However, I believe that an attempt to merge their work, albeit not in its entirety, is not an effort without merit.

Bourdieu deploys the metaphor of a "game" to convey his understanding of a social life. By game he understands "the experience of being passionately involved in play, engaged in a struggle with others and with our own limits, over stakes to which we are deeply committed" (Calhoun 2000:696). With the use of the metaphor, Bourdieu then introduces the concept of a field, to stand for the various social spaces within which human interaction takes place. So for Bourdieu, the game represents the entirety of the social universe, the structure of society, while the fields in which the game is played, vary in nature with certain skills valued in other fields more than in others, thereby ensuring the success of the individuals that possess them, in that particular field. "The social world can be conceived as a multidimensional space that can be constructed empirically by discovering the powers or forms of capital which are or can become efficient for the appropriation of scarce goods" Bourdieu (1990:116).

These "skills" are what Bourdieu calls capital. This sheds some light on a characteristic of Bourdieu's explanation of social life as "an intimate intermixture of objective and subjective factors, or of structure and agency." Bourdieu (1990:117).

This is further pointed out by Calhoun in his comment, "Thus individuals, though struggling alone within the game, also recognize that they are part of something bigger than themselves" (2000:714). While the individuals may play the game, the fact remains that they had no part



in designing the game or laying out the rules of the game, that is, they themselves are products of a structure. However, though we may be part of something greater, we are not entirely helpless nor are we limited by this in living out our individuality.

The marriage of the objective, as evidenced by the former and the subjective, within which we find the opportunity for agency, were Bourdieu's attempts to run away from emphasizing the formal patterns underlying all reality, as seen in structuralism and the highly individualistic approach to human experience, which emphasized the autonomy of human experience, of existentialism. Thus for Bourdieu, human agency is possible because individuals are at liberty to accumulate various resources that will aid them to gain an advantage, in the fields that they are in, thereby granting them a certain status which can be used to effect change.

## CHAPTER 2: ENGAGING WITH THE TEXT

### 2.1 Exploring the terrain

The danger of reading the Pauline corpus, especially in Galatians, as a collection of theological themes, robs us of the opportunity to appreciate the core of Paul's concerns and subsequently, his Theology<sup>19</sup>. Many discussions on Paul, whilst recognising his concern of arguing for the acceptance of Gentiles into a new community of faith, tend to treat this as a secondary concern to his definition of theological themes<sup>20</sup>. Stendahl along with Draper and Segal seem to suggest that Paul not only fought for the acceptance of gentiles into the community of faith but also for the recognition of a new hybrid<sup>21</sup> community, where "membership" would be determined by recognition of or submission to the authority of the messiah, which is spiritual in nature as opposed to allegiance through body/visible markings.<sup>22</sup> It is this interest and mission that is the driving force behind Paul's theology.<sup>23</sup> For these scholars, and I am sure for many others, a recognition of Paul's social dilemma should take precedence over seeking to explain his understanding of the theological concepts he presents.

Stendahl argues that the Paul's theology was shaped by his social concern and not the other

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<sup>19</sup> Stendahl (1976:3) is of the view that Paul's concern was chiefly the relation between Jews and gentiles and such a shift in focus and perception blocks our access both to the original thought and the original intention of Paul.

<sup>20</sup> Stendahl sees the failure of modern scholarship to accept that "the Bible speaks about real Jews, and not about some emasculated prototype of legalism", as the reason behind this shift in focus.

<sup>21</sup> This term as used by Coetzee (2011), allows for the harmonious co existence of different racial and ethnic groups, in a setting where they can accommodate each other whilst not compromising their individual identity. Hybridity is recommended as a more appropriate and progressive alternative to achieving this harmonious existence as opposed to homogeneity, assimilation and exclusive independent existence. Although the paper was mainly looking at a new way of approaching reconciliation in South Africa, its use of a multicultural setting as a context, may be helpful in aiding us to appreciate Paul's dilemma.

<sup>22</sup> Draper (2011, 221-251), asserts that the presence of this polemic opposition between Spirit and flesh, is largely due to the presence of the Two ways tradition with which Paul may have been familiar.

<sup>23</sup> Stendahl (1976:3)

way around. In other words, his discussion on justification and righteousness by faith finding their full meaning and fulfilment in Christ is meant to alleviate the burden of expectation of keeping the yoke of the Torah from the Gentiles, so that they can become members of his community (1976:9).

Stendahl asserts that reading Paul as a collection of theological themes robs us of a perspective that can only be enjoyed if we viewed his writings for what they were, the use of theological themes to settle a social problem (1976:4). The problem was not in reconciling two ideologies of Legalism as represented by the Jews by arguing for liberal existence through the vilification of the law, the main thrust and focus of Paul's discourse was to ensure "the relation between two communities and their coexistence in the mysterious plan of God" (1976:4).

Stendahl is of the view that Paul's dilemma starts with his calling. Paul refers to his superior calling to those of his opposers, and the reason for this is because he was called, directly by the resurrected Christ (Gal 1:11-12). His authority is not derived from man or by conforming to the traditions of man, but it is given to him by Christ. The nature of Paul's call for Stendahl "brings him to a new understanding of his mission, a new understanding of the law which is otherwise an obstacle to the Gentiles. His ministry is based on a specific conviction that the Gentiles will become part of the people of God without having to pass through the law" (1976:9). Thus, in Stendahl's opinion, the boundary marker of Paul's community would be submission to the authority of Christ. The law comes 430 years after the promise of the "seed" to Abraham, thus the promise of the Gentiles being part of God's people, predates the law, thus the law cannot disqualify them from being God's people (1976:19). This then led to Paul seeking to construct his community without using external boundary markers but by erecting new internal ones.

The problem with this, however, is that the Jews had treated the law as a boundary marker in identifying a special people who enjoyed God's grace (Das 2003:10). To be part of a community that included the Jews, the Gentiles would have to submit to these ritual laws if they wanted to be included among God's people (Gal.4:17). Thus the dilemma for Paul would be to reconcile this expectation with the nature of his calling which did not submit to any human authority. Paul responds to this, according to Das, by drawing differently the boundaries identifying God's people, the boundary marking God's people is no longer the ritual laws but rather an existence in Christ. Although there is an obligation placed upon members of this new dispensation, they are not as easily discernible and quantifiable as the ritual laws of the Jews.

Segal enters this debate and adds a new dimension to Paul's dilemma by pointing out that the context within which Paul sought to erect his community was steeped in a culture of strong boundary markers. These practices, which served as boundary markers, functioned to raise commitment of the individuals belonging to these communities (Segal 1990:150). Segal's observation adds an especially interesting dimension to the debate, as up to this point adherence to purity laws has been seen as a means of maintaining the purity or holiness of the community. This is not to say that the addition of commitment as a reason for conformity nullifies the former, however, its introduction sheds some light onto why Jewish practices would appeal to the Galatian gentiles. Conforming to these practices, for the Gentiles, was a matter of an outward display of commitment with the intention of securing belonging. Segal reasons that Gentile conformity to Jewish ritual was further made appealing because "the Pauline gentile community was more difficult to maintain than either the Pharisaic one or the minimally Jewish one, because it did not have at its boundaries the same easily understandable markers for this reason, many Jews who accepted Jesus as the messiah were

still sceptical of Gentile Christianity” (1990:150). This was because and for reasons stated above, that the gentile’s state of liminality, whose propagation Paul seems to be advocating, was considered dangerous by the community’s Jewish constituent.

The letter to the Galatian community, as Draper (2011) has already argued, is steeped in the two ways tradition, while it is not the interest of this work to give evidence of this, however this paper will only be limited to investigating how Paul uses this tradition to his advantage in order to deconstruct the tradition of body-centred religion as boundary markers for the community, which had led to the marginalisation of the Gentiles.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the *Didache*’s attitude towards Gentiles would have been problematic for Paul and perhaps there might be room to argue that Paul’s challengers would have been aware of or heavily influenced by the *Didache* or a tradition similar to it.<sup>25</sup> The community of the *Didache*, as Draper (2011:225) argues, is also one which is aware of the two ways tradition, when engaging in polemic against those who advocate for lawlessness and through their disobedience bring about danger upon the community. This sets the stage for a confrontation of Paul’s sympathy towards gentiles as well as the Jewish focus on the preservation of the community’s purity.

Draper (2011), offers what I consider, although unintentionally<sup>26</sup>, to be a very strong case for a socially sensitive reading of Galatians by highlighting the social dynamics at play, behind the theology discussed in the letter. This he achieves by bringing Paul and the *Didache* into

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<sup>24</sup> Nanos (2002:7), is of the view that Paul’s language in reference to this particular community “implies several groups who are meeting in several towns, cities and villages who are suffering marginalization for considering themselves already full members of the larger Jewish communities as though they had already completed proselyte conversion.

<sup>25</sup> Nanos argues that “Paul’s argument is directed throughout to Gentiles who have become “known by God” in view of the faith of/in Christ (4:8-9), but who remain, somehow, unsure of their place apart from conformity with the traditional communal norms for attaining the identity for righteousness (3:1-4:9; 4:21; 5:1-12; 6:12-13). Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians* (2002:80).

<sup>26</sup> The point of the paper was to bring the *Didache* and Paul into dialogue with each other in discussing their application of the Torah in their discussion of eschatological hope using the Two Ways catechetical tradition. (Draper 2011:221).

dialogue with each other, Draper (2011:228) succeeds in setting up Galatians as a literary response to the traditions of the *Didache* by deploying the same literary tool. Paul seems to use the Two Ways tradition to his advantage by contrasting Spirit and flesh, where following the flesh leads to destruction or brings about a curse while the way of the Spirit leads to life (Draper 2011:225). Consequently, Paul also manages to re negotiate the boundaries of the community, in order to rescue the gentiles from this state of liminality that they found themselves in. The *Didache*, while a Christian document has a strong Jewish influence,<sup>27</sup> one which would have found Paul's discourse in Galatians polemical; however Draper sees Paul and the *Didache's* use of the Two Ways tradition as two communities pursuing different but related agendas (2011:225).<sup>28</sup>

Segal (1990:195) and to a greater extent Draper (2011:232), points out that Gentiles were not under any obligation to keep the whole letter of the Torah, to be considered righteous before God. This could explain Paul's dismay at his "foolish" Galatians converts' conformity to what he calls a new gospel that has "bewitched" them (Gal 3:1), in that they are placing themselves under the blessings for keeping and the curses for breaking the covenant with Israel (Deut 28; 29:20-21; 30) unnecessarily. In Paul's understanding the new covenant inaugurated by Christ the Messiah benefitted both the Jews and Gentiles, by faith just as the consequences for corporate disobedience were applicable to all Jews, in the old covenant, the difference being that in the Christ inaugurated covenant, the Gentiles are included without being required to submit to the Torah.<sup>29</sup> It may be plausible to suggest at this point that in Galatia, Paul's dilemma is not just a construction of a new community but rather to defend an already existing one, whose greatest threat is its member's need to belong to a community with easily

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<sup>27</sup> Draper, *The attitude of the Didache to the Gentiles* (2011), is careful enough to point out that the Jewishness of the *Didache* is not accepted by all, but also mentions that "many scholars of the *Didache* take it as an early Jewish Christian or a Christian Jewish text". I find the arguments for the latter more compelling.

<sup>28</sup> Draper (2011:225)

<sup>29</sup> Draper provided this clarification of his interpretation in my own discussions with him.

discernible boundaries. However, for Paul, those who introduce this gospel are first accursed (*ἀνάθεμα*) Gal 1:8,9) and subsequently submission to it brings about a curse (Gal 3:10).<sup>30</sup>

Paul seeks to etch out his community's identity by erecting ethical or internal boundaries that are not easily discernible thereby creating ambiguity. However, this poses a problem to the Jews whose boundaries are external as for them the issue is not the erection of new boundaries but the adherence to already existing boundaries to maintain the purity and holiness of the community, as deviation from this would result in danger. For Stendahl, Paul solves this problem by arguing that the promise of the gentiles being a part of God's people predates the law. Thus boundaries cannot be erected by relying upon what the law says, especially when these boundaries serve to exclude the "seed" whose promise came before the law. The greatest boundary marker, for Paul, is belonging, or submission to the Messiah, who should be the only authority over all (Roetzel 1997:34-37). While this sounds like a polemic against Torah keeping Christianity, it is quite plausible to suggest that since Paul's intention was to erect new boundaries around his community, to accommodate the Gentiles, the intended meaning may have been that submission to a Torah keeping Christianity would represent regression, especially for the Galatians. This would perhaps shed some light on why then Paul's addressees are "foolish" (Gal 3:1) or not having the ability to discern this compromise of their state of purity. He then goes even further in labelling his opponents "witches", thereby confirming their status as impure and dangerous to the purity of his addressees.

Draper sees Paul arguing for the maintenance of his community by deploying the same *topos* as his opposers. In light of Douglas's theory, for Draper, the solution is in Paul re interpreting

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<sup>30</sup> Robertson traces the use of the word to its use as "restricted to the Hebrew conception of an offering devoted under a solemn vow to death and destruction" thereby making this a religious curse.

the community's ritual symbols, making dangerous the pure and the pure dangerous; in the process he creates ambiguity, in that the community's boundaries are no longer easily identifiable. In doing this, Paul seeks to portray Torah obedient Christianity as the real danger to his addressees. For Paul, Torah obedience, when opposed with living in the Spirit, is tantamount to ritual impurity which then disqualifies those that follow this prescription, thereby rendering them "foolish".

In discussing Paul's sociologically influenced interpretation of theological issues, there has been an implied identification of those that Paul is addressing and those whose idea of community he is opposed to. The implied understanding is that both Paul's addressees and his opposers are members of the same community, which comprised of Christ believing Jews and Gentiles. There are indeed various views on the identity of the groups involved in this discussion, as can be seen in the discussion between Nanos (2002) and Esler (1998).

In his assessment of the Antioch narrative as told by Paul in Gal 2:11-14, Nanos (2002:285) identifies three different types of Jewish groups as named by Paul: These are 1) certain ones from James, 2) the ones for circumcision and 3) the rest of the Jews (who joined Peter in his hypocritical behaviour). He asserts that these were not all members of the same Christ believing Jewish community, but rather as evidence of firstly, a diverse Christ believing Jewish sub group, but secondly, and most significantly, proof of a dialogue between intra and inter Jewish groupings. (2002:288). He suggests that it is quite plausible that the first and third group, were part of the same Christ believing Jewish sub group, which he later suggests may have been in the minority at Antioch when compared to the other Jewish sub groups, most of whom were not Christ believing. However, the second group, and for various reasons, he identifies as possibly representative of a larger Jewish sub grouping within Antioch, Jews in the Diaspora, desperate to hold on to and protect the integrity and identity of



their culture/religion.

At the centre of the tension here was not whether the food being offered adhered to Jewish dietary norms nor was it, in fact that Peter was eating with gentiles. The central issue for Nanos, is the status of these Gentiles within this Christ believing Jewish sub group. It would appear that there was a consensus amongst the Christ believing Jews on the status of the Gentiles, within the community. That is, “it was the way that these Gentiles were being *identified* at these meals” that was a problem. They could be accepted as equals because their faith in/of Christ rendered as equals, without conditions, to the circumcised Christ believing Jews. The belief was that in Christ, the eschatological age where all would stand before and worship God, as equals, had already come. However, within the larger Jewish community, this interpretation of tradition was unacceptable and even impossible without the gentiles completing all the rites that would make them proselyte Jews. It is in the context of this discussion between the Christ believing Jewish sub group and the larger Jewish sub groups that Paul’s letter to the Galatians is written.

For Nanos, the dynamics of the Antioch situation serve as a micro representation of what was at stake in the relationship between the Christ believing Jews, who were in dialogue with the larger Jewish community regarding the status of Gentiles within their community, whose belonging to their community had not required them to adhere to the rituals that would render them proselyte Jews. However, in light of what would have been considered a grave compromise by the larger body of Jewish sub groups, the fundamental issue for Nanos, is the status of the Christ believing Gentiles before the eyes of the Jews. The tension at play here was that, to force the Christ believing Gentiles into compliance with the ritual requirements that would render them proselyte Jews, would be a huge theological compromise of denying that the coming age had come, a position which had implications on the status of Christ

within their community. However, to persist with this position also meant that the Gentiles within their midst would never be fully accepted as equals by the other Jewish sub groups.

For Nanos, the status of the Gentiles as equals posed yet a greater challenge for Jews outside of this community of Christ believing Jews. In that their righteousness on the basis of faith in/of Christ, apart from proselyte conversion, only gained them the status of being candidates for proselytism. That is, they could only be considered as liminals on their way from idolatry moving towards righteousness. But this state of ambiguity could not be a permanent one as it is deemed dangerous to the purity of the community. It is this state of ambiguity and liminality that may have seduced the Gentiles in Paul's Galatian community, to the message of his opposers, as they were in search of belonging.

It is within this socio religious context that Nanos sets Paul's response to the Galatians. Nanos believes that Paul had left this small group of Christ believing Gentiles from Antioch, as a minority amongst other Jewish sub groups. It was their desire to be accepted by these other Jewish sub groups, as equals that led them to being susceptible to what Paul considered a corrupted gospel. To regard Paul's opposers or what he calls "influencers", as Christ believing, Torah observant Jerusalem Jews, is to prematurely assert that the sectarian identity of "Christianity" was already institutionalized at this time (2002:401). Nanos finds it more plausible to suggest that these were outsiders to the Christ believing Jewish sub group. This is because this group shows a clear disregard for what he considers an evident consensus reached by the Jewish component of the Christ believing community, that they were living in the time of the coming age, wherein all, Jews and Gentile, could worship God as equals.

However, this was not the view held by the other Jewish sub groups, who believed that unless the Gentiles fulfilled the requirements of being proselyte Jews, they could not be regarded as equals. Nanos then reaches the conclusion that Paul's opposers/ or influencers of his Galatian believers are "most likely proselytes within larger Jewish communities, but not members of the Christ believing sub groups.

Esler (1998) agrees with Nanos on several issues regarding the internal dynamics and tensions within the Galatian communities. They agree that the central issue was the status of the Gentiles, and consequently, the manner in which the Christ believing Israelite members of their community related to them. There is also an agreement that this pressure came from the external wider Israelite community, although they are at variance as to the consequences of this pressure. The general agreement is that the internal tensions were a result of dialogues between the Israelite members of the Christ believing communities, concerning their anomalous boundary violation with Gentiles (Gal 6:12-13), and the wider Judaic community (Esler 1998:143).

For Esler, this external pressure resulted in the internal tension, between the Christ believing Israelites and Paul. The identity of those advocating for circumcision is betrayed by several factors. The first being that they describe their position as gospel because "they must be maintaining that it (their position) does not entail the gentiles abandoning Christ" (1998:73). Paul's retort is also quite telling, in that he castigates their gospel as a perversion of the real gospel, which means that these advocates of the circumcision were aware of the importance of Christ to these Gentiles but also they were acquainted with Paul's gospel, well enough to know how to corrupt it.

Paul's biggest problem though, according to Esler, was that his Galatian converts were at risk of being convinced by the Israelite Christ followers "since they were the Israelites with whom they had the closest dealings", that they could be made righteous through circumcision and acceptance of the Law. The key issue being the understanding and application of righteousness to the uncircumcised Gentiles, by Paul versus the traditional application designating the Israelites as God's righteous people.

"In this perspective righteousness was inextricably connected with being an Israelite, with an identity to match, which included the possession of a collection of superior ethical norms which were very distinctive in the Greco-Roman world" (Esler 1998:144). That Paul's Gentile converts are seduced by this alternative gospel, is a result of the Israelite believers holding up righteousness as the desirable end product produced by circumcision and adherence to the law. Paul agrees with this view of righteousness as something to be desired, but what he takes issue with is his opponent's recommended method of acquisition or achievement of righteousness as he feels that it nullifies the significance of Christ's death.

Paul here is not arguing for the acceptance of the Gentiles into the community, that seems to have been agreed upon already, but rather his concern is to enhance or even perfect their existing membership. "As far as Paul is concerned, the issue does not relate to how people 'get in' but deals with the issue of their ongoing membership, with 'staying in'" (Esler 1998:145). Another indication that this was an internal struggle, for Esler, is Paul's assertion in Gal 6:12. Those seeking to have his addresses circumcised are doing so to avoid "being persecuted for the cross of Christ". For Esler, this serves as a clear indication that they may have some association with the cross of Christ.

Paul's opponents were members of the Christ believing Galatian communities who were faced with external pressures, either from Israelite Christ followers from elsewhere or by local Galatian Israelites or by a coalition of both these groups. They were being 'taken to task' about their seeming lax application of the stringent requirements of the rules that would qualify Gentiles to associated with Jews, as equals.

While I enjoyed and found Nanos' analysis of the community and of the issues at play, I found it difficult to agree with his conclusion in identifying Paul's opponents as an external group. I found Esler's argument for an internal group, more convincing.<sup>31</sup> His position will form the starting point of our interpretation of Galatians.

## **2.2 Exegetical section: Introduction to textual engagement**

Galatians 3:25-28 forms part of a narrative that begins with 3:1 through to 4:11.<sup>32</sup> In this section Paul discusses the implications of law obedience as taught by his opposers, and juxtaposes these with the benefits, which his Galatian recipients are now willing to abandon, when living life under the *πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (Hays 2002:113). Draper (2011) has already observed Paul's use of the two ways method, to dissuade the Galatian converts from abandoning the blessing of a life under the Spirit in exchange for life in the flesh, the latter being brought about by law observance with the intention of being justified. For Paul, trying to attain their goal through law observance is tantamount to foolishness (3:3). The concern for Paul is that the Spirit had been responsible in aiding them to see Christ clearly portrayed as being crucified (3:1). This Spirit which they received by believing what they had heard (3:2), in Paul's eyes, sets his listeners on the same field as Abraham. The formula is simple,

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<sup>31</sup> See also De Boer (2012).

<sup>32</sup> See Hays (2002). De Boer (2011, 176), on the other hand, believes that it ends at 4:7.

according to Paul, there can be no reception of the promise through obedience to the law as this is only possible ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

These rhetorical questions set the tone for Paul's assault on the message of his opposers, by, as we have already seen, showing how it is a regression to follow their message, he also shows how faith leads to blessings like Abraham, and how seeking to be δικαιούται παρὰ τῷ θεῷ through law keeping leads to a curse (3:9-11), by showing that the promise of the blessing upon the faithful in Christ, as the one seed of Abraham precedes the demands and dictates of the law (3:11-17), the inheritance that is dependent upon the promise (3:18), consequently seeking to meet their ἐπιτελέω through law keeping does away with the inheritance. Paul's message to the Galatian congregation is quite clear, that to abandon the gospel he had preached to them, is a regression that is full of curses and one which will result in a loss of their inheritance.<sup>33</sup>

I must point out that Paul does not seem to be hostile towards the law, but rather he takes exception to its use as a means of being justified before God, which seems to be the accepted goal of believers. This is seen in 3:21, where Paul then almost appears to contradict himself when he states that the law is not opposed to the promises of God. His assertion is that righteousness does not come through the law. Is this really a contradiction or a way of being

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<sup>33</sup> Note that this is, ironically, covenantal language derived from the "covenantal nomism" of Deuteronomy 28, 30. If the people of Israel kept the Torah given to them on Sinai, then they would be blessed and would inherit the land of promise! If they did not keep the Torah, then they would be cursed and they would be driven out of the land of promise into exile, until they repented and sought the Lord and returned to the way of Torah. So Paul is using the language of covenantal nomism against being saved by the Torah from Sinai. Of course Gentiles were not obligated to keep Torah from Sinai as the Special Law was only applicable to Israel, but only the Universal Laws. It seems that Paul envisages the New Covenant of Jeremiah in terms of a covenant in the Messianic times, which he understands as the reference of Deuteronomy 30, which was written on the hearts (Deut 30:6) and which was not far from them or too hard to keep (Deut 30:11) and which one does not have to go up to heaven or down to the depths of the sea to reach (language which Paul uses in Romans) and not the Torah given on Sinai, which is of the flesh, but the new covenant and its terms which were applicable to both Jews and Gentiles through Jesus as the Messiah. But if the Sinai covenant is of the flesh, it is under a curse, and leads to death. Paul is treading a tight-rope of exegesis." Draper (2014)

inclusive of his opposers in this community he is attempting to construct?

I am persuaded, in light of what I consider to be the apex of this narrative, to believe that the latter is the case. It is important to note that nowhere does Paul state that the law brings about a curse, but that seeking to be justified before God through human effort, does. So the law while it does not give life and does not justify, is not opposed to the promises of God. Draper clarifies this point by stating “He cannot say that it is opposed to the promises of God, since God gave it on Mount Sinai and promised that if the people promised to keep it as the terms of entry into the land of promise then they would live” (Draper 2014). So the law becomes a conduit through which God delivers the promise to the children of Israel.

Paul here is disputing the claim made by his opponents about the law as a life giving and thus justifying instrument (De Boer 2011: 233). A belief he further disputes with the rhetorical statement in 21b.

*εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη νόμος ὁ δυνάμενος ζωοποιῆσαι, ὄντως ἐκ νόμου ἂν ἦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη*

Note again how the dispute centres on the claim that the law is a life giving entity (Hays 2002:113). Paul has already placed the law on the same side as God, potentially referring to God as its originator (Hays 2002:199). So essentially, Paul saw no problem with the law, but rather its understanding as a life giving entity. Paul did not attempt to offer a critique of the Law but rather to offer an explanation on what he believes to be God’s purpose in giving the Law, given its inefficacy for salvation (Boyarin 1997:137).

This distinction is important as it helps to see that his discourse does not lend itself to being

read as an exclusive polemic against his opposers, but rather as a systematic creation of ambiguity in order to reconstruct a new identity for this Christ believing Jewish community which is inclusive of Gentiles living without the Torah, that is, the Special Laws given on Sinai.

Paul seems to dabble frequently with this creation of ambiguous spaces. Not only is his goal the creation of a universal and tolerant community that is erected after an iconoclastic discourse but he also begins by throwing everyone into a space of equality, when he declares that the Scriptures have *συνέκλεισεν* “all things” (3:22).

According to Rodgers (1998), *συνέκλεισεν* can be translated to mean “to lock up together, to shut up on all sides. The verb indicates no possibility of escape.” The use of the adjective *πάντα* which is in the accusative neuter and plural with no degree, extends the boundaries of those locked up by the scripture to include everything on earth, animate and inanimate<sup>34</sup>. So Scriptures<sup>35</sup>, that seem to have been held in high regard by both Paul’s opposers and the Galatians, declare that all things, including Paul, his opposers and the Galatians, had been locked up together in this space with no possibility of escape. Paul’s agenda is best served when he traces the condition of all parties back to a similar conundrum. Prior to the arrival of the promise, they are all imprisoned by sin, thereby setting the tone to suggest a common liberator for all.

To better highlight Paul’s discourse, I have found Roetzel’s (1999) assertion quite helpful. He states that Paul’s growth within and exposure to a Hellenized and cosmopolitan

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<sup>35</sup> There was no agreed set of Scriptures acknowledged by all in Paul’s time, other than the Torah, ie. the Pentateuch. Certainly nothing besides the Pentateuch would be accepted by ALL Jews, let alone all Gentiles. However, evidence seems to suggest that Paul may have used the Greek Septuagint of the Pentateuch even though he seems to be conversant with the Hebrew Text (Draper 2015).



environment,<sup>36</sup> as well as his instruction under a reputable Jewish rabbi, made it easy for him to argue for the accommodation of Gentiles into the early Christ believing Jewish community but also impossible for him to argue against Judaism<sup>37</sup>. Paul's problem seems to have been with the exclusivist attitude towards law keeping of some Jews, not Judaism as a religion or as an ethnic group<sup>38</sup>. Galatians 3:26-29 plays a central role in Paul's discourse as it stands at the peak of his argument.

### *2.2.1 Exegetical Section: Engaging the Text v26*

Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ·

We have already discussed Paul's use of the adjective Πάντες which can be read as inclusive of his opposers, provided the view that they were members of the same Christ believing Jewish community is accepted. Paul's intention here is to begin a double pronged attack that addresses the vacillation of the Galatian converts as well as the exclusivist attitude of his opposers towards the new converts. Only those who reject this sonship, by refusing to be such by faith in Jesus Christ, can exclude themselves from the ambits of those included in this collective adjective.

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<sup>36</sup> This environment was marked by extensive interaction between Jews in Diaspora and the Gentiles. Roetzel (1999) ,states that The Septuagint's stories of Israel and its nuanced translations of the Law and the Prophets provided for a protocol of fruitful interaction between the Jewish community and the dominant Hellenistic culture. In that Diaspora context, daily interactions with representatives of the majority culture was inevitable.

<sup>37</sup> Roetzel (1999:16) It is also important to note that during the period after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, there was no one brand of Judaism. Draper (2015). It is quite possible that Paul's upbringing may have occurred under the tutelage of a different Jewish community to the one he found himself in opposition to within the Galatian context. And so it seems befitting that when one speaks of Judaism in this context, it would be a brand that seemingly is in Diaspora and which is also opposed to certain elements of the teaching of this new Christ believing Jewish community. The elements of disagreement are self evident from the text and they seem to have centred on law keeping and circumcision. So these would be Jews in Diaspora, who demanded that the gentile proselytes be circumcised law keepers.

<sup>38</sup> A.Das (2003:29) . I need to also add here that This is exactly the problem: could these things be separated? Partially perhaps, since there were many Gentiles who wanted to become Jews—but then they had to go through a ritual process to become ethnic Jews by adoption?! Could one cease to be an ethnic Jew? Even if you abandoned Yahweh you would still be a Jew. This problem is still with us, as any look at the divisions and complexities of modern Judaism and the State of Israel show. Draper (2015)

They are sons of God ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. The scope of this work will not extend to discussing the theological implications of this statement as has been done by De Boer (2011), Hays (2002), Boyarin (1997) and others. My reading of the text tends to lean more towards Hays' interpretation; which makes the observation that Paul's use of πίστις in v23-25 seems to differ significantly from his use of it elsewhere in the letter. Faith seems to be a quasi-personified entity whose appearance is followed by certain outcomes and or implications that affect members of his community (2002:199). In v25, it comes as a liberator of those who were under the supervision of the παιδαγωγόν. Here πίστις appears to mark the end of the pedagogue's task thereby insinuating their coming of age. Which is precisely Paul's gripe with his opposers and those, from the Galatian congregation who had fallen victim to their preaching, that submitting themselves to the law represented a regression into childhood, when God through Jesus Christ, had matured them into children of faith, no longer in need of supervision but now under the tutelage of God. In vs.26 πίστις is introduced as an entity that both transforms Paul's addressees into sons of God and also places them under the tutelage of Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.<sup>39</sup>

Hayes in quoting Betz states that the implications of the above observation “describe the occurrence of a historical phenomenon, not the act of believing of an individual.” (Hays (2002:200). It is important to note that Paul's labelling of the law as pedagogue is not meant to be derogatory but it aids him to illustrate the growth of this community of Christ believing Jews from children in need of supervision and into adults under the tutelage of God, through faith is the Christ.

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<sup>39</sup> While a discussion on the mechanics of such a relationship fall outside the scope of this work, I feel it may be helpful to insert the basis of my agreement with Hays on the matter. Hays argues that Christ is not the “object” of faith as some commentators have argued, but rather Christ is the “ground” of faith. His “coming” establishes faith as a new means of access to God. Christ then becomes the ground of faith, with πίστις being the object of his work, because in fulfilling the prophecy he lives evk pi, stewj. He becomes the promised seed of Abraham, acting as a universal representative figure enacting ἐκ πίστεως which then determines the existence of others. See Hays (2002).

It is also interesting to note that Paul here employs Christ's full Messianic title Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, "the Anointed Salvation of YHWH". In most cases throughout the letter, before this point, Paul deploys four titles for the Messiah; he uses Lord, Son of God, Christ and Christ Jesus. The title Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, is mainly used to point to an event that is of great significance either to him as an individual (1:1), (1:11) or to the community as a whole (2:4), (2:16), (3:2), however, the common thread is that the title is credited with a deliverance event; from being a persecutor to being an apostle (1:1), explicitly having freedom in Him (2:4) and being liberated from ignorance when He is revealed before their eyes (2:16).

It is of little surprise therefore to see that Paul would, in conjunction with the objectifying of faith, also credit this to Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, a figure he has set up as a liberator or deliverer. It also explains why this name features when the period of the pedagogue's supervision ends, an event that ends at the beginning of their (Pauls's addressees) declaration as sons of God. "All of these considerations urge upon us the conclusion that for Paul, the coming of πίστις (vv. 23, 25) is virtually identified with the coming of Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ Himself" (Hays 2002:202) which also happens to be the end of the pedagogue's role as supervisor and guide.

It is hard to read that the Πάντες excludes his opposers. Paul had intended for his opposers to read or hear what he had written to the Galatian community (Das 2003:30). Paul's message was not only intended to save the Gentile believers from the deception of the message preached by his opposers but also to help his opposers see the error of their ways as they were also part of his community (Das 2003:24). It seems more plausible to read this as an inclusive phrase that is meant to include Pauls's opposers. They are included in the list of those who are υἱοὶ θεοῦ because of their πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

It would be a contradiction of Paul's central concern to suggest that this phrase could be exclusive in any way, while he is in the process of arguing for the inclusion of Gentiles. The exclusivist Torah based requirements placed upon Gentiles for entry and acceptance into this fledgling Christ believing community, centred on the body or the flesh. Much of Paul's contestation has been the fact that the flesh cannot help them reach their goal. As stated earlier, the contrasting of the flesh with the Spirit is meant to highlight the danger of reliance on the flesh as it is not able to transform them into sons of God. They cannot be the children of the promise by compliance with bodily rituals as this status is only by faith in Christ Jesus.

It then makes sense that Paul would erect a new boundary or qualification, which is not dependant on the flesh but rather on the *πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*. This phrase is best understood in light of the preceding verse, where Paul calls the law a pedagogue, whose period of supervision was to end at the age of Faith. For Paul, the advent of Christ is a form of a growth event for those who believe in Christ, as it brings about an end to their subjection to the supervision of the law and ushers in a new age of faith and freedom in Christ (Schreiner 2010:249). Furthermore *διὰ τῆς πίστεως* is widely considered to be a Pauline addition to a traditional baptismal formulation, thereby "designating a new age, principle or power which has now come" (Hays 2002:155).

While it is difficult to agree with Hays (2002:155) on this section being part of a baptismal formula, I do however agree with the suggestion that this clause designates an ushering in of a new age. Paul's intention is to declare *πίστις* as this new principle or power through which salvation or admittance into the community is actualized. Paul's intention is to name *πίστις* as this new principle or power through which salvation or admittance into the community is

actualized (Hays 2002:155). This then means that the law can no longer be used as a determinant or qualifier for entrance into the community, as its time in charge has lapsed, thereby making the community easily accessible and inclusive. So this faith has made all, including his opponents, sons of God.

### *2.2.2: Exegetical Section: Engaging the text v.27*

It should be quite clear by now that Paul's agenda here is not to simply argue for the Gentile believers to be accepted into this community of faith, but to also do this through negotiating the identity of this strand of Christ believing Jews. For his agenda to be successful, he iconoclastically introduces a new understanding of sonship. To do this successfully, he must provide a systematic account of how this is possible. The text under discussion is a continuation or rather an exposition of what he has stated as fact above. We have established that the status of sonship becomes possible at the advent of the quasi personified *πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*. V27, so that it becomes an extension of the thought which has been begun above, but it also introduces the next line of his reasoning.

This text has led many to believe that Paul was invoking a baptismal formula, with minor additions to best present his argument. However, I find that the ideas that Paul is introducing are radical and are based on an interpretation of Jewish theology as they are targeted at unbundling the misplaced Jewish sense of superiority over the Gentiles and as Lategan (2012:278-80) has argued, an appeal to a pre Pauline source rather contradicts the above mentioned radical conclusion.

I cannot, however, dismiss the argument that the inclusion of baptism by Paul in the discourse was not without any intent to appeal to some form of commonly understood theology on baptism that would lead his hearers to a place of agreement with him.

So despite not agreeing with the pre Pauline source theory I am, nevertheless, persuaded to agree that the mention of baptism is not unintentional.

It is important to note the continuation of Paul's inclusive language even up to this point. However, this time it is a bit more pointed and limited to the Christ believing Jewish community. The introduction of εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθη firstly serves to re interpret the idea of baptism in the minds of his traditional Jewish hearers that baptism is εἰς χριστόν and not a proselyte's first lustration as initiation into full membership of the community. This has the following implication: "baptism" into Christ" is baptism "into His death" (Rom.6:3-4); it relates believers to Christ's redemptive action, so that Christ's death was their death; it entailed an end to the life of estrangement from God and the beginning of life in Christ". (Verbrugge 2000:85). So all who have been baptized, not circumcised, have put on Christ and have subsequently ended their estrangement from God, and have now become sons of God.

Secondly, Paul seems to be addressing the Gentile Galatians who are physically marking themselves in circumcision, so as to gain acceptance into the community. Paul, after outlining that a right standing with God is through Christ only, then elevates baptism and not circumcision into a position of being a conduit into the eschatological community of the new covenant, in contrast to the Rabbinic requirement that a Gentile convert was required to undergo circumcision if he or she wished to become a Jew, together with a ritual bath and

sacrificial offering.<sup>40</sup> The decisive event for proselytes was circumcision and not baptism (Verbrugge 2000:85).

The assumption that the participants of this discourse had already undergone baptism, which has now become the new principal requirement and not circumcision, serves to further show the foolishness of trying to attain admission through circumcision when the principal requirement for membership has already been accorded them at baptism. This continues Paul's systematic attack on the use of body markings and instruments through which one gains access to the community. So instead of putting a marker on one's body as a qualifier for entry into the community, an individual is better off having put on Christ as a corollary of their baptism.

The clothing in Christ seems to be carrying on the thought of full immersion into the water, and just as one is fully covered by the water when baptized so too does Christ cover the baptised individual, as a garment envelops and defines the appearance of the one who wears it (Rogers 1998:427). Paul here is constructing a community that is not defined by the markings on their body, but rather by who they have put on.

### *2.2.3: Exegetical Section: Engaging with the text v28*

Οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγ, οὐκ ἐν δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἐν ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἶς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

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<sup>40</sup> While the date of the Babylonian Talmud and the Minor Tractate *Gerim* are unknown, it is not implausible to suggest that the practice of its precepts or a derivative thereof may have been prevalent in the first century C.E.

We have already established that Paul's agenda here, is the construction of an inclusive community, which faces opposition from members of a Christ believing Jewish sect. I have noted above that Paul achieves this by re interpreting and calling into question those elements that had occupied the doxalogical plain of his opposers' "field". This he does by i.) Re-interpreting the purpose of the law and its role in the new dispensation under Christ. ii.) Erecting a new boundary marker, *πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ* as the only requirement that needs to be met in order for anyone to be admitted into the community; iii.) changing the rules of engagement to elevate baptism into Christ as the decisive event for proselytes into this Christ believing Jewish community and not circumcision. In doing so Paul has entrenched Christ as the central figure in the community's self identity. Therefore any matters relating to admission and boundary marking will be based on their relation to the figure of Christ.

Paul in v 26 and 27, has been skillfully building up to the climax of his argument. If vs 26 and 27 are theological discussions v28 then becomes the ethical and practical implication of the conclusion reached in the mentioned preceding verses<sup>41</sup>. If *πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, and not circumcision has become the main boundary marker and if the believers have been *εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθη* and consequently have put on Christ, the logical implication, for Paul is that within the new community of faith, there can no longer be any discriminatory ethos found within its boundaries. Lategan (2012:282-283) captures this quite nicely when he says, "In place of the received understanding of the promise of God and the privileged position of the Jews as historical descendants of Abraham an alternative symbolic universe emerges which empowers Gentile believers to accept their equal status before God and to act

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<sup>41</sup> Lategan (2012:283) also states that "v28 is the climax of a carefully constructed theological argument and not merely an afterthought lifted from an obscure baptismal formula. It is consistent with the precepts of an alternative symbolic universe and prepares the ground for the ethical implications for believers that will be elaborated in chs. 5-6".



accordingly”. So the theological discourses have practical implications for the believers but most importantly, as implied by Lategan, the discourse is meant to assist the Gentile believers to see themselves as equals in this community.

This however, may only serve to explain the nullifying of distinctions within the first pairing of the three pairs in this verse i.e. the Jews and Gentiles. It is also quite easy to understand this inclusion in light of the circumcision debate and the tension between the Jewish and Gentile believers that permeates the letter. However the slave and free as well as male and female pairs are difficult to locate in this letter.

As I have already outlined, my preference for a position that opposes the notion that this section was lifted from a pre Pauline source, with the common consensus being that this source was a baptismal formula, I must then deal with the difficulties that this raises of trying to explain these pairs that are not catered for if this is to be taken as a conscious and intentional Pauline formulation. The difficulty in locating these pairs in Pauline thought is a result of “divergent views in other Pauline and Pauline-related literature. For example, the attitude towards women in the Corinthian correspondence and the advice given to slaves in the Pastoral Letters are hardly consistent with the lofty ideals expressed here” (Lategan 2012:283). So while it is easy to explain the presence of the first pair in this verse given that the whole letter centers around the creation of a community in which the two groups can co exist, it is also easy to find consistency in Pauline thought in the manner in which the Jewish-Gentile friction is treated. However, with the slave and free as well as the male and female contrasts, not only is there no evidence of them being dealt with in the letter but also in this instance, they appear to be inconsistent with other Pauline sources.

Betz attempts to deal with this inconsistency by suggesting that the Galatian ideal went through a change that saw Paul change his mind in 1Corinthians and subsequently sees him drop the whole matter in Roman. (1979:200). Lategan on the other hand sees this as a formulation in the same vein as a constitution which carries the scars of its origin and consequently contrasts this with an idealistic future. This statement then becomes an “expression of a serious principle intended to provide guidance in concrete situations when required. The successful internalization and implementation of principles and values are part of a dynamic process. As far as the practice of inclusivity is concerned, Paul seems to find himself at different stages during his ministry” (2012:283). So this phrase is first used by Paul in Galatians and the absence of its sentiments in other Pauline sources is a reflection Paul’s struggle to replicate and live up to the ideal which he has set in Galatians.

I must point out, however that the slave and free motif is not completely absent from the letter. Yes, the slave and master pairing as a social distinction, is completely lacking but, as De Boer has pointed out, “Paul makes metaphorical use of the language of slavery and freedom for theological ends (cf. 1:10; 2:5; 4:1-7; 4:21-5:1)” (2011:244). The general theme in all these passages is that an attempt to gain acceptance to the community of faith through the subjection of the flesh or via the works of the flesh is tantamount to slavery one which is most vividly seen when the believers were enslaved by the law until Christ came to deliver them from its dominion. Since the time of the pedagogue has ended and a new dispensation of faith has begun, and since all have put on Christ, there can no longer be any slaves. If we adopt the view that the slave and free tension is metaphoric, then the nullifying of slaves either as a title or self imposed limitation on a group of believers seems to be directed at the Gentile believers who seemed to have fallen victim to the gospel of Paul’s opposers, but

perhaps even more impressive is how it also includes Paul's opponents. They are slaves, who seek to gain sonship through the workings of the flesh.

With this understanding, the contrasting "free" would then be those who are doing the right thing by appealing to the faith in Jesus Christ and consequently the workings of the Spirit to gain access into the community. This perhaps should not be read as Paul nullifying or opposing the attitudes of those he considers to be free, but rather he seeks to avoid a situation whereby a discriminative hierarchy, based on theological understanding, is created. This insertion serves a double edged purpose, which liberates the gentiles from seeking to subject themselves to the demands placed upon them by the preachers of the false gospel, but then also not excluding the self same opponents by a creation of this non threatening space where they cannot be considered inferior as a result of their theological failings.

This is not unique to Galatians as Paul uses the same line of reasoning in Romans 11:20-24, where Paul, after laying out the reasons for Israel's dethroning as a people of God, then admonishes his gentile believers to shun arrogance over this fact, followed by a quotation of a promise from Scripture that Israel will also be saved. Paul seems to be aware that to achieve the creation of a new social universe in which there are no lines of discrimination, he cannot be seen to favour any group over another in order to achieve his goal of a hybrid community that includes both Jews and Gentiles. So this creation of an ambiguous space within which none can be discriminated against either as a result of their gender, ethnicity or theological leanings, is only possible if Paul does not show a bias towards any group by painting them as the ideal or standard.

### **2.3 Implications of exegetical section**

Paul is a missiologist, whose goal is to see Gentiles included as equals in this community of Christ believing Jews. To make this happen he treads on very dangerous theological grounds which at times appear as polemic against the Jewish element of this community. However, to believe this would be to nullify Paul's efforts, as his intention is not to exclude the Jews so that the Gentiles can be accommodated in their place, but rather through a process of negotiating the boundaries of the community through robust iconoclastic theological engagement, he seeks to erect a new community in which all can be accommodated regardless of gender, race or theological bend. So Paul elevates the boundary to be Christ-centric, with admission gained through "faith in his faith" (De Boer 2012, 242), which then has the implication of making baptism into Christ the pre-eminent outward display, over circumcision, for entry into the community. So all those who are baptized into Christ have now put him on and consequently since all have put him on, none can use their identity to discriminate against others, whether in the right or wrong. The goal of this is that those who have put on Christ are the promised seed of Abraham and consequently heirs of the promise. It is this dangerous engagement that fascinates me and which I believe can be helpful in aiding the multi-cultural Seventh day Adventist community with its diverse theological positions on a plethora of issues, to create an all inclusive hybrid community in which hierarchal discriminatory elements play no role in its boundary construction. I am not arguing for an ambiguous space with no boundaries but rather for a creation of new boundaries through a process of dialogue about those elements of our faith which have been traditionally deemed sacrosanct but have proven counterproductive to our missiological agenda. I believe that Paul holds the key to doing this dangerous undertaking in a safe manner. I will then proceed to do a re-reading of the doctrine on the Remnant as understood by Seventh day Adventists and its implication to Adventist understanding of the role of the law in the construction of the community. I will then proceed to highlight the problem with what I deem

to be exclusivist elements within the self understanding as the Remnant and its adverse impact on the way the SDA church understands of its mission.

## CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUALIZATION

### 3.1 Re reading of the doctrine of the Remnant

In this section, I will seek to offer a re-reading of the doctrine of the Remnant within Seventh Day Adventism in the light of our analysis of Paul's letter to the Galatians. While there is a temptation to do this re-reading through a critique of the hermeneutics employed to reach the position of formulating the doctrine, I consider it a more fruitful exercise to explore the statement as found within the community. Doctrines or statements of fundamental beliefs, like most creedal statements, tend to be treated as sacrosanct and are often elevated to occupy what Bourdieu calls the *doxa* of every society or community. This is rather ironic as these are formed through a process of dialogue and negotiation, however once agreed upon they then move from the field of contestation and into the realm of the readily acceptable and ultimately into the realm of the taken for granted hegemonic regulator of behaviour.

The doctrine of the remnant is such a creed within the ranks of Seventh Day Adventism. While it is a product of discourse and discussion as evidenced by its development over the years<sup>42</sup> leading to its final form, currently found in the Statement of Beliefs, it has become something that is taken for granted and readily accepted as is. Due to its nature as a corporate identifier of the community, it also carries with it the majority of what proves to be the boundary markers of the community, meaning that many of the community's practices and ideologies of the community are normally justified by what the community holds as self evident in the form of its identity as the remnant.

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<sup>42</sup> *The handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology*, 857 (2000).

There have been accusations from various quarters that the doctrine makes Seventh Day Adventist sound triumphalist and consequently exclusivist. It is my belief that such accusations do not necessarily challenge the validity of the doctrine's biblical foundation but rather they are borne out of a misconception created by issues of diction, phrasing and emphasis. The aspects that are often emphasised, perhaps even at the expense of the principal missiological element of the doctrine, do give the impression of triumphalism and can be exclusivist.<sup>43</sup>

I will proceed to highlight the emphasised aspects of the doctrine and their interpretation. I will then highlight the problems with the current phrasing that has resulted in the above mentioned criticism of triumphalism and being exclusivist. In the appropriation phase, using Paul's method of boundary negotiation through challenging those beliefs that are held in the *doxa* of the community and bringing them into the field of contestation, I will then make recommendations of how the statement of belief can be better phrased to highlight the main purpose of its existence which is to keep the Adventist community grounded on its missiological purpose and not as a tool to defend the institutional existence of the church.<sup>44</sup>

### **3.2 Overview of the contextualization material**

The following statements are taken as they appear in the Seventh Day Adventist church manual:

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<sup>43</sup> *The handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology*, 857 (2000). The doctrine is often discussed in the same breath as the three angels message as can be seen in the handbook of SDA theology, or with the remnant as subjects of a mission, as can be seen in the statement of fundamental beliefs.

<sup>44</sup> *The Handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology*, 9 (2000). Several pioneers of the Seventh Day Adventist movement were opposed to anything that might appear institutional as they felt it was not in line with their missiological existence; added to that they feared that organization per se was "Babylon".

### 13. Remnant and Its Mission:

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to *keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*. This remnant *announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent*. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21:1-14.)"

### "18. The Gift of Prophecy:

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. *This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen. G. White*. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts.2:14-21; Heb.1:1-3; Rev.12:17;19:10.)"

<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>

I have written in bold italics those parts that are emphasized about the doctrine. According to statement no. 13 of Fundamental Beliefs, these are (a.) Commandment keeping, (b.) To alert the world of the imminent second advent of Christ using the Rev 14 model of the three angels, (c.) It is the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is read to be the Spirit of prophecy or the gift of prophecy within Seventh Day Adventism, a result of proof text reading of Revelation 12:17 and Rev. 19:10. The latter is also the expounded upon in belief no. 18, where the gift of prophecy is believed to have manifested itself in the ministry of Ellen G. White (1827-1915).



A reading of the first line of fundamental belief 13, reveals that Seventh Day Adventists , whilst they see themselves as part of a larger group, the universal church, they also see themselves as a minority within the group who have been “called out”, as a result of widespread apostasy. This could easily be construed to mean that the larger universal church has apostatized and therefore needs to be shown the way back to faithfulness to its covenant with God. The inclusion of the apostasy element, immediately gives the impression that the greater universal church is considered thus because they have gone astray from what they once believed and thus the remnant have been called out as agents that will bring about a return to this. The emphasised aspects of the statement also speak to this as I will show below.

### *3.2.1 The history of the remnant and its mission*

Many Adventist scholars are in agreement that the remnant idea is not unique to the New Testament, but rather what we find in the New Testament is a continuation of a theme from the OT. The remnant are considered to be divided into three phases; 1.) The historical remnant understood to be ancient Israel who are deemed to have been set apart by God, for the benefit of the nations around them, 2.) The invisible or faithful remnant, this is the universal Christian church, who have been called out of the darkness of sin, from all nations and into the marvellous light of a relationship with Christ and a knowledge of God, who are also given the commission to be Christ’s missionaries into all the world and finally 3.) The eschatological or visible remnant, nuanced as God’s exclusive community of believers, set apart in the last days as a consequence of the apostasy of the invisible remnant or universal church. Seventh Day Adventists see themselves as a modern day manifestation of the latter group.

Various parallels can be drawn between the three communities, with just two seemingly consistent, throughout. All three communities are expected to show their allegiance to God through i.) Obedience, by adhering to a set code of moral laws namely the Decalogue and ii). Enjoying the guidance and ministry of prophets. Israel was handed these commandments on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20), by a prophet, Moses. They also have a long history of prophets among them. Christ affirmed these to his new community of faith (Matthew 5:17-18), and the eschatological or visible remnant also has a similar obligation to the Decalogue and there is an indication that a prophetic ministry is found amongst them (Rev.12:17). Therefore, through all three communities, while occupying different spaces within history, there is a marked consistency in their formation for a missiological purpose, which I will outline below, as well as the presence of what I consider to be tools to facilitate this missiological purpose, namely Commandment keeping and the guidance of prophets.

### *3.2.2 Commandment keeping*

I will now outline my case for the afore stated proposal by highlighting the nature of commandment keeping as a facilitating tool for the remnant that is engaged in a missiological endeavour with God. This is done with the hope of establishing an understanding that negotiable boundary lines do not threaten the identity or existence of the community, as its identity is shaped by its taken for granted *doxa*. I have chosen to focus especially on commandment keeping as it is also a subject that Paul deals with in Galatians. In keeping with the theoretical framework, I believe that the re-reading of the commandments and Paul's understanding of the same, would make for an interesting interaction in the appropriation phase of this work.

*The Handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology*, 887 (2000), perhaps gives the clearest evidence of how Seventh Day Adventists see themselves as a unique part of the greater universal church. While mentioning that Seventh Day Adventists as the remnant church “emphasize the restored gospel truths of justification by faith in Christ Jesus and sanctification in willing obedience from a redeemed heart to the covenant law of God, the law by which God will judge His covenant people (James 2:12; Rom. 2:13; 2 Cor.5:10)”, it also then proceeds to highlight that the emphasis on command keeping is not generic but rather specific to the seventh-day Sabbath which it accuses the post-apostolic church of altering into Sunday-Sabbath. “They view the restored Sabbath as a providential testing truth to counteract the modern dogma of evolution, one of the key heresies of the end time”.

“To them the Sabbath celebration is not an isolated test of the correct day of the week but an appointed sign of true worship of the Creator by a redeemed and sanctified people.” The aspect not only reveals the belief that the universal church is in apostasy as a result of conforming to the Sabbath alteration but it also shows that the remnant are not only to call the universal church into conformity but also to combat what it deems to be heresies within secular society<sup>45</sup>. The belief is that the role of the remnant church is to restore a worship of God as Creator through a restoration of the seventh day Sabbath as a memorial of creation.<sup>46</sup> The statement that, “They summon God’s children in all churches to flee from the historic apostasy to escape punishment for Babylon’s sins”, reveals yet again the understanding that the remnant are to serve as the conscience for the apostatising universal church to return to a faithful covenantal relationship with God.

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<sup>45</sup> *The Handbook of Seventh day Adventist Theology* 880 (2000), lists evolution as a secular heresy that seeks to challenge the validity of God’s creation of the earth. See also

<sup>46</sup> *The Handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology*, 887 (2000).

Seventh Day Adventists also hold that the life of Christian is a life of liberty.<sup>47</sup> The Christian life is designed to liberate from the bondage of “sinful passions” as well as a life of slavery to the law through a legalistic attitude to keeping it.<sup>48</sup> Thus law keeping is viewed as a means of experiencing this liberation, while the law is not seen as a saving agent; it is however seen as a requirement that must be met to serve as a marker of the existing covenantal relationship between the believer and God.<sup>49</sup> It is my opinion therefore that law keeping is a facilitating tool for missionary purposes, as it liberates the obedient (Heschel, 1951:12-91).

So according to Seventh Day Adventists, the law serves the dual purpose of reminding humanity that they have a Creator and that our existence is not by chance. This purpose is especially made more visible through the fourth commandment, which is deemed to force humanity to acknowledge God as Creator. The second benefit is that the commandments are seen both as a marker and facilitator of Christian liberty. Therefore, it is safe to suggest that due to the understanding that the commandments are given to benefit God’s people, they serve as instruments to preserve the integrity and liberty of the group. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness.<sup>50</sup>

The results of law keeping are positive for the obedient and also serve as a marker of concern for our fellow man. This is to say that the task of the remnant missiologists would not be to ensure the preservation of the law by securing more adherents, but rather to live out this

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid 473.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid 473, “When God gave the law to Israel, God wanted to be united with them in will. But there was in the law the danger of legalism, which made the law and not God, the deciding moral power in life”.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid 473.

<sup>50</sup> *Fundamental belief 19 in the Seventh Day Adventist Church Manual (Hagerstown, Maryland; Review and Herald Publishing Association 2010) 14.*

efficacy of the law as a preserving agent so that they can carry out their task as agents of change. As stated by Dederen, “Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men.”<sup>51</sup>

The commandments are not the gospel that is they are not the content of the message of the missiologist, but rather they serve to preserve the missiologist. We will return to this during our appropriation phase, as this point stands at the centre of my thesis, that law keeping as well as the presence of divine counsel amongst the remnant, should not be used as an identifying mark but rather the nature of their mission is what identifies the remnant as such.

### *3.2.3 Announce the imminent second advent of Jesus Christ using the three angels’ model of Rev.14*

The expectation of the imminent second advent of Christ was actually the basis upon which the church was formed. The teachings of William Miller were geared towards validating his calculations that Christ’s return at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel, falls in October 1843 initially, a date later changed to October 23, 1844, a day known as the Great Disappointment. While the church was organised in 1862, after many doctrinal developments, the belief that Christ’s second return was imminent has remained prominent in the psyche of Seventh Day Adventists, even forming a major part of the group’s self identity, as can be seen in the name. It is also the belief that Christ’s return is imminent that gives the church its missiological impetus.

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<sup>51</sup> *Handbook of SDA Theology*, Dederen (475:200).

The calls of the three angels are accepted and understood as: 1. God's end time call for reform in worship and true preparation for the Second Advent of Christ, 2. to come out of Babylon, with fleeing Babylon seen as an abandonment of false worship and 3. keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. Thus for Seventh Day Adventists, preparation for the second return of Christ is by the keeping of God's commandments, fleeing the false worship of Babylon and possession or adherence to the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Seventh Day Adventists do not merely see themselves as announcers of the second advent of Christ, but also as a "prophetic movement called to prepare a people in all parts of the earth to be ready for Christ's appearance." This preparation is also coupled with various reforms that include worship on the seventh day Sabbath, health reforms as well as recognition of neglected biblical truths. "Hence, according to Seventh Day Adventist theology, accepting the Seventh Day Sabbath implies acceptance of the eschatology of the threefold message of Rev. 14". (Dederen 475:200)

The Second Advent and its imminence necessitate a call for certain reforms and a return to some neglected bible truths, as practiced by Seventh Day Adventists. This then makes the remnant agents of change within a society that faces gross manipulation by a system identified only as Babylon. It would make sense therefore that such a group would need an alternative lifestyle that insulates them from the seduction of Babylon.

They must stand opposed to everything that Babylon stands for, whilst simultaneously offering an alternative to those who find themselves trapped within the system of darkness

i.e. those who have been made to “drink with the maddening wine of her adulteries” Rev. 14:8.

### *3.2.4 Having the testimony of Jesus*

This is based on a reading of Revelation 14:12, with the understanding that 19:10 indicating that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. This interpretation emerged in the 1850’s where the faith of Jesus was linked with the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White (Rev. 19:10). The expression Spirit of Prophecy is understood to refer to 1.) The Holy Spirit inspiring the prophet with a revelation from God. 2.) The operation of the gift of prophecy; and 3.) The medium of prophecy itself.<sup>52</sup> “This interpretation became an identifying sign of the remnant church of Revelation 12:17 and was integrated into the missionary proclamation of the Seventh Day Adventist Church”<sup>53</sup>.

The gift of prophecy within the Adventist church is seen as part of the list of spiritual gifts given by Paul in 1 Cor 12:9-11, Rom 12:4-8. The purpose of these gifts is that they are given by the Holy Spirit to every member in order to enable them to help the church fulfil its mission.<sup>54</sup> When these gifts are exercised diligently and faithfully, they will lead to the growth, unity and maturity of the church.<sup>55</sup> Therefore the gift of prophecy, along with the other spiritual gifts, is given for the benefits of the group, the remnant. The remnant stands to benefit from the divine counsel it receives by the presence of a prophet.

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<sup>52</sup> Seventh Day Adventists Believe, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise 252 (2005).

<sup>53</sup> Handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology (886:2000)

<sup>54</sup> Seventh Day Adventists Believe, Boise (239:2005)

<sup>55</sup> Handbook of SDA Theology (637:2000)

### 3.3 Problems with the current phrasing

The title of the doctrine is *The remnant and its Mission*. This gives the impression that the discussion will be around defining the mission of the remnant or highlighting the missiological responsibility of the remnant. Instead the doctrine takes on a defensive yet pious tone of seeking to legitimise the existence of the group.

Whenever work is produced on the doctrine, great amounts of time are spent defending and pointing the biblical evidence for the group's existence.<sup>56</sup> Most of the literature on Adventist ecclesiology is most concerned with examining the bible for evidence of the group's historical past in order to establish it as the eschatological community of bible prophecy. This leaves the church with no theological position on how to exist as a community and in relation to its mission.

I feel that the Adventist church is still lagging behind in terms of producing a theological, biblical based doctrine of the church that moves beyond trying to establish the church's claim to existence by divine appointment, and take it into an era wherein it can be understood as a prophetic voice that speaks authoritatively against issues of injustice. As an entity which understands itself as standing in opposition to a dark and abusive system called Babylon, it makes no sense that the church's only contribution is to point those suffering and oppressed towards the future when this power would be dismantled. A reading of the history of the remnant shows that whenever God has raised a people it has been for a present and current problem that they were meant to confront and not to draw people's attention away from the problem they have been called to combat.

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<sup>56</sup> Pfandl and Canales



This apparent lack of connection with the present is perhaps most evidenced in the attitude of the following statement. “While the remnant should have some social impact and must condemn evil in all its forms, this new approach radically redefines the concept (of the remnant) along sociological lines and neglects the fact that the biblical remnant is fundamentally a religious entity. As described in the apocalyptic literature of the bible, the final conflict is a religious conflict whose central issue is loyalty to God and true worship” (Hasel 172:2009). From the statement we can deduce that there is an understanding within the Adventist church that there is a difference between religion and concern over social issues. Secondly that the remnant identity as a religious entity means that the primary reason for their existence is exclusive of engagements that involve fighting social injustices. Thirdly, being a religious entity the remnant cannot be understood as a sociological community. The inconsistency in the last observation is rather confusing, as it is hard to fathom any grouping of people without viewing it sociologically. It would appear that the focus on defending the group’s identity as the remnant, by tracing similar markers as possessed by the Adventist church, may have led to this socially apathetic stance. It is therefore hard to imagine any entity being effective missiologists while socially un-engaged.

To tie the reason for the group’s existence to the “widespread apostasy” found in the Universal Christian church makes its existence a reaction to apostasy as opposed to having been called out for a more proactive mission. This is problematic because then the remnant can never see opportunities for growth from interacting with groups that lie outside the boundaries of what they consider acceptable. In fact, such interactions can even be taboo and deemed dangerous to the group’s doctrinal purity.

This means that those who lie outside the realm of what the group considers acceptable and not dangerous, are never seen as potential contributors of anything positive, therefore they always remain recipients of the group's intervention. Secondly, this develops an attitude of superiority akin to many oppressive ideologies, where those that belong outside of the group are seen as a threat to the purity of the group, unless they seek assimilation. Agency is difficult, uniformity becomes mandatory and the world is separated between Adventists and non-Adventists<sup>57</sup>. The "rest of the world" is understood in terms of what it is not so as to transform it into what we are; thereby setting the community on a pedestal of what others ought to aspire to be. It is this creation and constant highlighting of the "other"-which is meant to serve as evidence of the group's uniqueness- that serves to distance the group from those it has been called to serve. This creates a sense of danger about the outsiders, thus interacting with them can be deemed dangerous, even though the purpose of the remnant is to serve through interaction, those it has unintentionally labelled as "dangerous."

The three communities also share a common trait or purpose which is the nature of their mission. Ancient Israel is deemed to have been called out as "a light for the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6). The same can be said of what we have here termed the universal or invisible remnant, who are also given a missiological mandate with a Universal scope (Matthew 28:16-18, Matt. 24:14).

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<sup>57</sup> While I have not found this in any credible scholarly published works, this phrase dominates the speech of many within the domination. In fact, in its missiological expressions the call is often made to members to "evangelize the people out there, in the world". The origins of these sentiments, I believe are to be found in the nuancing of this doctrine.

The invisible remnant seems to have also been given a mission to symbolically preach the three angel's message, for people to get out of the confusion of Babylon<sup>58</sup>. This is understood to mean calling people out of a false belief system which is fraught with confusion. Adventists understand this to mean that Babylon is the visible remnant which is in apostasy, by neglecting the commandments of God, primarily the fourth which is to "hallow the seventh day Sabbath".<sup>59</sup>

Stefanovic suggests that Revelation 14, which deals with the messages of the three angels, is actually a fulfilment of what Christ had predicted in his eschatological discourse in Matthew 24:14.<sup>60</sup> So it seems as though the main purpose of Revelation 14, is to highlight the centrality of the missiological obligation that the remnant have towards God as part of their covenant with God. It is my belief that this summarised position reflects that the Remnant throughout history have always been given a mission which has been to the benefit of those who lie outside of their boundaries. The remnant has always existed as God's missiological partners.

### **3.4 Implications**

It is my contestation that the identical features of all communities outlined above were not the exclusive possession of the said communities nor were they intended to be used as qualifying markers for belonging into the group. While being an Israelite was through birth, the community was not organised along ethnic boundaries but around a covenant with God (Lev.

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<sup>58</sup> The identity of what constitutes Babylon has evolved over time. For more, see Knight (2000) and Seventh Day Adventist Church Manual (Hagerstown, Maryland; Review and Herald Publishing Association 2010), 14.

<sup>59</sup> This is understood to be the Saturday and the rest of Christianity is considered to be in apostasy because of their insistence to worship on Sunday, a practice deemed to have originated with Roman Catholics, which subsequently qualifies *Catholicism as modern day Babylon*. Dederen, R Ed. *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology*, (Hagerstown, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 887.

<sup>60</sup> Stefanovic (2002:440), *Revelation of Jesus Christ*,

26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-14). Neither commandment keeping nor ethnicity can be used as qualifiers, but an agreement to enter into a covenantal relationship with God<sup>61</sup>. La Rondelle (1998:2) further states that “Israel as a political or ethnic nation as such could never equate herself with the faithful remnant. Only those who worshiped God according to His covenant law and grace were the remnant.”

So the covenant precedes the obedience which is manifested through commandment keeping. The presence of prophets within the community was to aid the people to keep their end of the bargain in the covenant. Over arching all of this was the covenant relationship whose purpose was to, while saving the chosen community, also to be “a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles.” (Isa 42:6).” God’s purpose was to bless all nations through Israel”<sup>62</sup>

It would seem that the remnant are not called out to exist as an exclusive community whose main objective is to maintain the communal boundaries that mark them as different but rather they are called for a more inclusive purpose, as part of their covenant, to participate in God’s mission to save the world. I contend that the parallel identifiers, as discussed above, are not all equal nor should they be understood as such. It makes no logical sense to suggest that the purpose for which a community is erected ie its missiological purpose, will occupy the same ideological space as the tools, i.e. Commandment keeping and Prophecy, which the community has been given to fulfil.

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<sup>61</sup> Although Draper (2015) has pointed out that “the Torah represents the terms of this covenant to have been with Israel”.

<sup>62</sup> Moskala (2008: 48).

It is my understanding that the community's participation in the mission cannot be used as a boundary marker since boundary markers belong in the field of contestation and they are open to negotiation (Bourdieu). The missiological aspect of the community's self identity should be doxa-logical, that is it needs to be an instinctively applied worldview<sup>63</sup>. This means that the community should be understood to be a remnant that is faithful to its covenantal obligation whose faithfulness is gauged on the basis of its fulfilment of its mission.

The three communities also share a common trait or purpose which is the nature of their mission. Ancient Israel is deemed to have been called out as "a light for the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6). The same can be said of what we have here termed the universal or invisible remnant, who are also given a missiological mandate with a Universal scope (Matt 28:16-18, Matt 24:14).

The invisible remnant seems to have also been given a mission to symbolically preach the three angel's message, for people to get out of the confusion of Babylon<sup>64</sup>. This is understood to mean calling people out of a false belief system which is fraught with confusion. Adventists understand this to mean that Babylon is the visible remnant which is in apostasy, by neglecting the commandments of God, primarily the fourth which is to "hallow the seventh day Sabbath".<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Draper (2015), the things that occupy the doxa-logical plane cannot be "accepted" as they are never negotiated. We are born with an understanding that they are self evident and are taken for granted.

<sup>64</sup> The identity of what constitutes Babylon has evolved over time. For more, see Knight (2000) and *Seventh Day Adventist Church Manual* (Hagerstown, Maryland; Review and Herald Publishing Association 2010), 14.

<sup>65</sup> This is understood to be the Saturday and the rest of Christianity is considered to be in apostasy because of their insistence to worship on Sunday, a practice deemed to have originated with Roman Catholics, which subsequently qualifies Catholicism as modern day Babylon. Dederen, R Ed. *Handbook of Seventh Day Adventist Theology*, (Hagerstown, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 887.

Stefanovic (2002:440), suggests that Revelation 14, which deals with the messages of the three angels, is actually a fulfilment of what Christ had predicted in his eschatological discourse in Matthew 24:14. So it seems as though the main purpose of Revelation 14, is to highlight the centrality of the missiological obligation that the remnant have towards God as part of their covenant with God. It is my belief that this summarised position reflects that the Remnant throughout history have always been given a mission which has been to the benefit of those who lie outside of their boundaries. The remnant has always existed as God's missiological partners.

### **3.5 Towards an understanding of the remnant as inclusive missiologists**

There is what I consider incongruence in the phrasing of the statement of belief. The heading seems to suggest that a detailed position on the remnant and their mission will be discussed, yet it proceeds to highlight what is to be the mission of the remnant along with the identifying marks or boundary markers. The remnant are said to have been called out to “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent.”<sup>66</sup> The statement suggests that the remnant have been called out for the benefit of those in apostasy. Therefore the existence and self understanding of the remnant should be intrinsically tied to and understood in relation to the apostatizing group. While the “Babylonian” group does not serve to benefit the Remnant, it is not implausible to suggest that the remnant is raised for the benefit of the lost group. There is also a belief, based on the understanding of the term “the remnant” as denoting a minority and that those in apostasy are in the majority. There are several issues with this, primarily the manner in which they serve up various contradictions.

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<sup>66</sup> Statement of Adventist beliefs no. 13, as found in the church *Manual*.

To read the remnant as a minority, contradicts what the church understands to be its mission to “make disciples of all nations” and “to share the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the world” (Dederen 2000:549). Seventh Day Adventists clearly see themselves as a Universal movement with a universal mission, thereby making it illogical to identify themselves as a minority. Reading Rev 12:17 and 14:10 as referring to a minority would be to contradict the Seventh Day Adventist understating of Rev 7:1-14,<sup>67</sup> which favours a reading of the “great multitude” as including all those who have been saved. The sheer size of this group seen by John in a vision makes it difficult to locate any implications that they are in the minority.

The designation of the Remnant, therefore, speaks more to the task of the community as opposed to marking its boundaries<sup>68</sup>. Babylon should not and cannot be understood as the other which is in the majority and painted as representing dirt and thus dangerous to the purity of the remnant, but instead, Babylon must be understood as a mission field, a field wherein agents are meant to participate in the game of life, through the use of various forms of social capital in order to fulfil their covenantal obligation as agents of change. Quite understandably, the players cannot participate from outside the field, thus the Seventh Day Adventist church, needs to move towards a more incarnational model of doing mission, one which seeks to do away with the labelling and vilifying of otherness, but one where we recognize ourselves as part of the problem or context in which we must effect change.

This would make the purpose of the remnant missiological in nature; that is the community has not been raised to be different but primarily to proclaim the good news of Christ’s death, resurrection and imminent return. The “preaching of the three angels’ message”, therefore

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<sup>67</sup> See Stefanovic, R (2000:127)

<sup>68</sup> Pohler, R *The Remnant and the Others: A Reappraisal of Adventist Remnant Theology*, (5:2012)

cannot be used as one of the identifying marks, but rather as a purpose for which the remnant have been called out, in essence it is the community's primary and sole identifying marker. The Universal nature of the angel's preaching should not be read to indicate the extent of the apostasy that has engulfed the world, but rather serve as an example of the ends to which the Remnant must reach in order to preach; they ought to be "global in their outreach and perspective (catholicity/universality)".<sup>69</sup> This further impacts the manner in which the truth is presented by the remnant, in that we do not seek to colonise the world and transform it into our likeness but rather seek to contextual applications of the truth.<sup>70</sup>

We therefore conclude this section with the acknowledgement that the main purpose for the existence of the remnant is missiological. Therefore, the concern of a remnant community cannot be self preservation but rather its mission. Just like Paul, whose main agenda was the missiological task set before him and for which he believed he was called, there is a need to shift boundary markers, utilise various forms of capital in order to fulfil this mission. What can the Seventh Day Adventist church learn from Paul?

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid 8

<sup>70</sup> Pohler (2012:5) According to Pohler, "True catholicity includes not only a worldwide missionary perspective but also an attempt to present the truth in all of its theological implications and contemporary applications".



## CHAPTER 4: APPROPRIATION PHASE

### 4.1 Appropriation

The context of Galatians provides us with an insight into how a missionary, within a multicultural setting, deals with divisive issues in order to construct a community that will be accommodating of all regardless of ethnicity and theological leaning. It can be inferred that Paul's ideal for his community was one that would be some sort of uniformist entity. One which was completely devoid of the hegemony found in assimilation. I had earlier posited that Paul was creating a hybrid community, however a closer inspection has led me to believe that due to his dismissal of all social markers that preceded entry into the community, he seems to create a uniform community of individuals whose identity is marked by their baptism into and consequently putting on Christ. In light of the tensions at play in his community, it is quite understandable that Paul would settle for this less than ideal compromise. This compromise was to later be the undoing of Paul's vision for an all inclusive community as it saw a mass migration of Jews out of the community, who could not divorce themselves from their "Jewishness".

Paul was faced with a gentile community in a Galatia which had a relatively coherent largely Greek speaking population alongside the Jewish communities which had settled there. This created a rather limited field of cultural contestation, unlike the worldwide and enormously culturally diverse community of modern Seventh Day Adventism. His was also a community that was initially "accommodated" by an already existing cultural/religious group (Jews), with strong boundary markers and doxalogical practices. Jewish Christians understood themselves to be one of the larger Jewish sub groups. Paul's gentile converts who were in the minority, would have found it difficult to maintain their identity within a group with what

Mary Douglas has called such high grid and group lines, while also seeking acceptance in their new community. Thus assimilation and consequently, a new kind of uniformity was the only logical compromise that Paul could reach because his primary goal as a missionary was to weaken the boundary markers and to bring people in who would normally have been excluded from the community by his own Jewish sub-group (Pharisees). He however sought to do this not so much by removing the boundary markers altogether but by re negotiating them<sup>71</sup>. Unlike the Pauline communities, Seventh-day Adventism is not a fledgling community which seeks to accommodate recent converts from other cultural group, within a dominant cultural grouping.

While Adventism has its origins in 18<sup>th</sup> century rural America, our context differs in that we are a movement with a universal presence, with a far more diverse composition than Paul's community in Galatians. While uniformity would not have been seen as a compromise or a rejection of their identity by the Gentiles, within our current context hybridity would be more productive alternative for Seventh Day Adventism in terms of its own declared goals, or else it risks becoming a permanent and marginalized (and probably shrinking) group which is increasingly concerned with internal politics rather than a witness to the world. The American roots of Adventism are foundational and to be cherished by the church, but should not become in effect a new kind of law—the very kind of legalism which Adventism in its origins sought to oppose. Instead, Adventism needs to become a space that is open to and sensitive to the differences of the various cultural groups within its field or boundaries. We need to become a space wherein all cultural groups are appreciated in their differences, where our growth as a community is through our interaction in our differences. While there has been a call for Adventists as missiologists to familiarise themselves with the cultural norms and

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<sup>71</sup> While it may not have been his intention, Paul's proposed re negotiated boundaries may have alienated the Jewish component of his community.

practices of those they seek to evangelize, one still can't help but be concerned by the mis-recognized ethnocentric motives embedded in what Pierre Bourdieu calls Adventism's [Western] cultural capital which is deployed in the global "field of contestation" by the Adventist mission. The intention of Adventism here is to avoid offending those we hope to evangelize, in order to win them over to a pre-determined conformity, which is essentially North American in origin. Paul, although seeking to "become all things to all people" (1 Cor 10:32-33), nevertheless seeks to accommodate diversity in a way which keeps Jews and gentiles together in one community. It would be refreshing, for instance, to hear a Chinese nuanced Adventism, and not a Chinese interpretation of North American Adventism, just as we saw Paul's Gentile friendly, Galatian nuanced interpretation of Judaism.

Hybridity would be a much better option due to its elevation of all ethnic and gender groups onto a plane where they can all have an equal voice. This is essential, as one of the implications of being a universal entity is the need to contextualise our theology and involvement in our interaction with the communities that surround us. This form of contextualising, as we have learned from Paul, is a far more effective missiological tool, than say a more blanket approach wherein a method that has worked in Zimbabwe is assumed as effective in Canada.

The idea of the Remnant needs to be understood as referring to the task and responsibility of the community more than providing boundary lines along which the community is to pitch its entry points. The Remnant motif is not to be understood as a minority group but rather as a community with an all inclusive mission and universal reach. This mode of understanding can be achieved by an intentional discontinuation of negative connotations embedded in the labels used to describe those who lie outside of the community's boundaries. The continued

labelling of those that lie outside of the community's walls to be in apostasy, should be deemed a sharp criticism of the church's failure to carry out its mission of witness to the whole church (not just Adventists) as opposed to highlighting the strength of our ability to remain faithful to God's word.

It is my belief that it is this consideration of those outside of our boundaries, as dangerous that then makes it difficult to see and accept their diversity as valuable. In a hybrid community, where we believe that there's growth in the interaction of diverse groups, the backgrounds and experiences of those who join the community can be accorded to them and recognized as their cultural capital. This would stand in sharp contrast to the prevailing *modus operandi* wherein legacy and historical clout within the community, are valued forms of cultural capital.<sup>72</sup>

While Paul's arguments appeared as a polemic against his opposers, they were not intended to exclude them from his new community of faith. His challenge was with the implications of their application of theological themes, to their current experience, which was rather exclusive and repressive to the Gentile converts. So here Paul was fighting an exclusivist interpretation, therefore as an inclusive missiologist, his retort cannot be in any way exclusive. Hence the same boundary marker he re negotiates, never shuts out his opposers in that they too can be "righteoused" by faith in/of Christ in the same quintessential manner as the Gentiles. So Paul's final product would have been one that saw Jewish traditional theology benefitting, through being restated in order to accommodate the Gentiles.

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<sup>72</sup> This has always been a curious stance since as a missiological community; the possibility of being joined by new converts is very real. After having recruited them we then proceed to deny them a voice because their late entry into the community deprives them of the cultural/social capital essential to being a participant in the games of the community and consequently disqualifies them from being agents of transformation.

Nanos (2002) and Esler (1998) have already made a case for the dynamic, reciprocal relationship between Paul's social experiences and his theology. It seems as though, at times, his social experiences give him a better understanding of certain theological themes as can be seen in his evolved understanding of righteousness as a product of faith in/of Christ and not of law keeping and circumcision, when he became an evangelist to the "uncircumcised". At other times, his theology seemed to aid him in dealing with the complexities of his social context such as how he applies his Christology to firstly redefine traditional Jewish themes and then uses it to justify the inclusion of Gentiles as equals into a community that comprised of Christ believing Jews.

Within Adventism, this symbiotic relationship between social context and theology is one sided, where context and history are used to validate theology. Context is hardly ever seen as a tool to enrich our theology or as an opportunity to refine it. Adventist attitudes have reflected the fear of Paul's opposers who were more concerned with the structural integrity of their community, even to the detriment of a missiological agenda. In such instances, boundary renegotiation hardly ever takes place, even though as self-proclaimed missiologists much like Paul, our contexts of operation vary thereby necessitating a contextualized application of our theology. The alternative to this is that we then become transporters of a foreign culture, imposing it on those we encounter, while our theology ossifies.

Our theology must be used to enrich our experience as a community, while our social experience must not be dismissed as purely transitional with the eschatological age as our goal. The dismissal of our current social experience as merely transitional and therefore unimportant is no more made clear by the absence of a comprehensive Adventist

ecclesiology, this despite the fact that we've been in existence for more than a century and a half. To use the doctrine of the Remnant as another example; our self-understanding as end time remnant, has seen the bulk of Adventist scholarly work on the matter being centred around justifying how our context justifies us being called the remnant. We often rely on history to confirm our theology, or our identity as the remnant.

In a symbiotic relationship between experience and theology, there would have been a further development and perhaps even an emphasis on our self-understanding as an end time missiological community and how that impacts on how we interact with the various contexts and groupings with which we come into contact. In other words, while our context helps us better appreciate and understand our theology, we also enlist our theology to better experience our social context for growth.

As noted above, it is essential for a Universal entity to contextualise its role and consequently the manner in which it carries out its task. This process requires an honest interrogation of certain beliefs and practices whose current understanding and status, within the community, can be a hindrance to the execution of our mission and mandate.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

In this study, I have sought to show, albeit not comprehensively, how the role of certain beliefs as the gift of prophecy and the commandments can be re-read in light of the community's mission, in order to accentuate our experience as agents of change instead of having an alienating effect, as evidenced by the criticism levelled against the church. The

commandments are not the gospel, i.e. they are not the content of the missiologists' message, but rather they serve to preserve the missiologist. Just as in Paul, the law was meant to be a tutor and guide for God's people, it should also be given the same status as a preserver of the remnant as they are engaged in the mission.

Paul as a missiologist to the Gentiles, while fighting a Jewish hegemony within this new community of Christ believing Jews, was careful not to create a new hegemony that favoured the Gentiles and consequently alienated the Jewish component of the community. It is essential that in our continued dialogue and search for an identity within what would be a new space as a contemporary prophetic voice, we need to exercise the same kind of caution when dealing with a section of our community that deems the efforts of our pioneers as sacrosanct. It would be unwise to summarily dismiss the heritage left behind by our forbearers as irrelevant, but much like Paul, though in a less aggressive manner, build upon these inherited icons erected by our preceding community. It is essential to acknowledge that their reading of the Bible and its interpretation was influenced by the time and social dynamics they found themselves in i.e. nineteenth century rural America. That is, their initial understanding and application of their theology was heavily influenced by their social context.

Their understanding of what constituted the enemy is vastly different to the social ills we find ourselves surrounded by. Just as their understanding of what or who constituted Babylon, was influenced by the ills of their society, it is pertinent that we, like our pioneers find a way of contextualising the message of the sacred text in order to enrich our experience as a missiological community. To admit that, while we were not in the mind of its human agents

when it was written, dialogue with it can result in a transformative experience for our community.



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