The Church *Within* Oppression:
The Ethical Challenge of the Messianic Apocalyptic Movement

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper faces a challenge that the problem of oppression poses to Christian ethics and seeks to respond to it with an apocalyptic ethics. Firstly, I present the ethical challenge. Secondly, I articulate my perspective on apocalyptic ethics. Thirdly, I present my response to this specific ethical challenge from the perspective of apocalyptic ethics.

2. THE CHURCH *WITHIN* OPPRESSION

Many works that constitute the world's cultural legacy are symbols of oppression. In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, in Thesis VII, the twentieth-century writer Walter Benjamin refers to "cultural treasures" as documents "of barbarism," "spoils" "in the triumphal procession" of victors and rulers who "step over those who are lying prostrate."[1] Although I would not apply such description to all cultural legacy without distinction, there is evidence for oppression in the production and transmission of many so-called "cultural treasures" and in the ideology they promote.[2] Examples include buildings, architectural structures,[3] sculptures, paintings, musical pieces, flags, and other constituents of cultural legacy that result from,[4] celebrate, and promote oppression, even if not overtly. These symbols of oppression testify to its pervasiveness in our world.

The problem of oppression is systemic, pervading society and culture. Much of contemporary life, with its comfort, sophistication, privileges, and advancements, be they artistic, scientific, technological, technical or economic, is at least partially built on past and ongoing oppression.[5] Political and military violence and subjugation result in revenue, larger territory and the propagation of privileges for those on the winning side.[6] Oppressive systems of production feed the economic system with products that are often repackaged, outwardly sanitized, and presented as morally clean. In turn, products deriving from these systems both meet personal and collective needs, and supply the process of education, research and technological advancement. Therefore, the innumerable factors that inform, nurture and equip us include the results of a complex network darkened by oppressive practices, conditions, and ideologies. Furthermore, while we may recognize this pervasiveness of oppression and its implications, it is humanly impossible to completely identify and trace the taint of oppression. Therefore, it is virtually, if not actually, impossible to completely and absolutely avoid and detach oneself from these oxymoronic fruits from oppression.[7] We inescapably receive benefits and privileges that are at least partially actualized through oppressive processes. It is in this sense that I use the expression *fruits from oppression* throughout this paper.

We live *within* oppression. We are not only surrounded by it, or living amidst it, we are deeply and inescapably involved in the network of oppression and liberation, power and resistance.[8] Instead of merely othering oppressors and oppressive systems and cultures, it is important to recognize one's part, role and moral responsibility in this reality. This scenario poses a challenge to Christian ethics, the challenge to the possibility of an ethical Christian life within oppression. How is the Church within oppression to respond to this reality? How are Christians to live ethically while they benefit from fruits from oppression? How should I respond

when many factors that contribute to my well-being, such as food, clothes, electronics, real estate, and others are at least partially produced, achieved, or maintained through oppression? While I admit that I personally struggle with that challenge, this is itself a reason for pursuing answers to that anguish instead of shying away in fear of critical cries of "*Tu quoque!*" While such pursuit may sound quixotic, unrealistic, is there any other way? This is a problem that cannot be ignored.

3. APOCALYPTIC ETHICS

Christian *apocalyptic ethics*[9] is: (1) responsive to God's influence and intervention;[10] (2) fundamentally grounded in apocalyptic theology; (3) transcendental, or unbounded;[11] (4) ethics in the context of apocalyptic experience and identity; and (5) ethics in which discernment and valuation are informed by an apocalyptic perspective.[12] For this discussion, I use a model for the exercise of Christian moral agency[13] that involves at least the following nine factors: God's influence and intervention; will, or volition; character; identity;[14] faith; theology; existential situatedness;[15] discernment;[16] and moral reasoning.[17] The sum of these factors and their reciprocal interactions results in moral decisions and judgments. In the following paragraphs, I articulate some of these factors from the perspective of apocalyptic ethics.

Apocalyptic theology,[18] as found in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament,[19] or grounded in these texts, is characterized by being: (1) fundamentally grounded in divine revelation; (2) theology within a covenantal context; (3) theological expression within a context of tension, conflict, displacement or exile; and (4) transcendental, unbounded, both temporally and spatially, and "both dimensionally and axiologically."[20] Apocalyptic theology stems from divine revelation, unveiling and discussing understandings and extents of reality that are only accessible through revelation. It speaks in a context of both covenant and tension, or

displacement, in which divine revelation engages human covenantal expectations, urges faithfulness and seeks to strengthen trust in the fulfillment of God's promises.[21] It unveils the current conflictive state of reality, with its corruption and injustices, and also expresses hope of restoration[22] and retribution, which includes rewards and punishment.[23] Apocalyptic theology is dimensionally transcendental or unbounded, both temporally and spatially, in that, through revelation: (a) it has access to the future, it is eschatological;[24] (b) it speaks of otherworldly places; and (c) it transcends commonly visible reality.[25] Axiologically, it is temporally and spatially unbounded in that: (a) it understands history eschatologically, that is, as moving "toward an end";[26] and (b) it also has transcendental points of reference for value, morality, justice,[27] ethics and aesthetics.[28] Using Cyril O'Regan's terminology, a theology that fits this definition might be said to be a pleromatic apocalyptic theology that is highly concerned "with justice."[29]

Apocalyptic identity is another factor in the exercise of moral agency in apocalyptic ethics. I define it as one's identity from God's perspective (an apocalyptic perspective), with reference to God, and within an apocalyptic context, including that person's side in the apocalyptic conflict.[30] The recognition of one's apocalyptic identity has ethical implications. Furthermore, personal identity according to apocalyptic parameters takes precedence over perceptions of identity informed by other parameters, such as ethnic, national and socioeconomic.

Exercising moral agency apocalyptically also involves apocalyptic discernment.[31] Apocalyptic discernment includes seeing, interpreting, valuating and judging according to an apocalyptic perspective,[32] informed by divine revelation.[33] The moral agent is to see beyond

what is visible[34] and valuate in accordance with the transcendental axiological points of reference of apocalyptic theology.

Apocalyptic ethics is a narrative ethics.[35] First, the meta-narrative that divine revelation and theology convey provides an apocalyptic perspective of history that informs moral discernment and calls for personal decision. Those who are enlightened by the apocalyptic message are to live their lives according to this meta-narrative in which they play a role.[36] Second, *apocalyptic moral norms*, such as principles and rules,[37] are conveyed not only through propositional statements or moral imperatives, but also through narrative.[38] That is very clearly the case in texts that fit the genre apocalypse. For example, the Book of Revelation presents what I call *apocalyptic moral types*, that is, characters in the narrative that serve as moral examples. One may analyze whether an apocalyptic moral type is positive or negative by using parameters such as: (1) the apocalyptic identity of the character; (2) revealed divine perspective on the character's decisions and actions; (3) analysis of the character's moral example in light of the moral norms that the text clearly teaches; and (4) the ultimate consequences of that character's decisions and actions or the final eschatological retribution to that character. For example, the twenty-four elders function as positive apocalyptic moral types[39] and Jezebel functions as a negative apocalyptic moral type. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus is the main and ultimate positive apocalyptic moral type. In Christian apocalyptic ethics, Jesus is the ultimate ethical paradigm.

4. APOCALYPTIC ETHICAL LIVING *WITHIN* OPPRESSION

The incarnate Jesus lived *within* oppression and, as the evidence seems to suggest, took part in the pervasive and unavoidable *fruits from oppression*. In order to save, He became part of our world and was deeply involved in our conflict. As part of His mission, He lived in

circumstances, engaged with systems (e.g., the economic system),[40] and took part in activities (e.g., social events)[41] that were at least partially actualized through oppression.[42] However, instead of being defined or determined by oppression,[43] Jesus conquered. He was a liberator,[44] proclaiming the truth of freedom,[45] opposing falsehood, living subversively,[46] and loving and serving self-sacrificially. Furthermore, differently from us, Jesus lived a perfect life, "without sin."[47] Therefore, Jesus is the ethical paradigm for living *within* oppression.

While living *within* oppression and inevitably benefitting from fruits from oppression, Christians are to follow Jesus and His example, living as liberators. Christians are to refuse to be defined by oppression,[48] or to be oppressors.[49] Instead, sharing in God's character and embracing their apocalyptic identity, they are to participate "in God's own apocalyptic work,"[50] living as liberators according to the ethical paradigm they have in Jesus, conquering according to His victorious example.[51]

The Church's participation in God's work of liberation is to be informed by an apocalyptic perspective.[52] First, instead of presenting history from either the perspective of oppressive victors, or those they oppress,[53] Christian apocalyptic theology presents it from the perspective of the ultimate liberator and conqueror, Jesus Christ, and those who conquer through Him.[54] Second, apocalyptic theology unveils an overarching conflict that encompasses all of the earthly conflicts.[55] It redefines the dynamics of the problem of oppression as more than the resistance and strife of the oppressed against their oppressors. In fact, oppressors are oppressed themselves, since they serve as instruments of evil[56] in the hands of the great apocalyptic oppressor. Third, apocalyptic theology points to an eschatological final resolution of the current conflictive state of reality. However, this is not to lead to neglect of current oppressive circumstances.[57] An apocalyptically informed exercise of moral agency discerns that these are

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part of the apocalyptic conflict and, in consistency with apocalyptic identity and the sharing in God's character, leads to caring and self-sacrificial liberating service in the here and now.[58] Furthermore, Christians are to seek the liberation of all who are apocalyptically oppressed, considering not only political, military, social or economic oppression, but oppression from an apocalyptic perspective. Christians are to seek the liberation even of those who are oppressors themselves.[59] In the next paragraphs, I briefly present some strategies for the liberating mission of the Church.

The Christian apocalyptic message plays a central role in the Church's liberating mission. First, the Church is to proclaim the message of freedom of the gospel of Christ, communicating hope and contributing to apocalyptic liberation.[60] Second, apocalyptic theology provides the Church with a perspective from which to resist oppression, seek justice[61] and advocate for those who are physically, socially, economically, politically oppressed. Third, apocalyptic theology is a suitable paradigm for social, cultural and political critique, and should inform Christian confrontation of oppressive systems and ideologies.[62] The apocalyptic texts in Scripture also provide valuable example on how to confront oppressive systems of power.[63] For example, the intersection between the visionary record in the Book of Revelation and first-century culture seems to indicate that, as it communicates its message, the Apocalypse engages with culture both positively (or constructively) and polemically.[64] I suggest that both constructive and polemical cultural engagement are useful in the Church's confrontation of oppressive ideologies. For example, Christians may not only convey the apocalyptic message in ways that intersect with the general culture, both constructively and polemically, but may also engage in an *apocalyptic aesthetics of resistance*,[65] producing art that promotes the apocalyptic message of liberation and opposes artistic symbols of oppression.[66]

Another way to face the ethical challenge that oppression poses to Christians is to live subversively, as to undermine the systems of oppression.[67] Christians might ethically respond to the pervasiveness and inevitability of fruits from oppression with an approach that is at least twofold: (1) while complete avoidance of these oxymoronic benefits is impossible, Christians might partially avoid them through intentional and subversive engagement with the complex network that actualizes them (e.g., subversive engagement with the economic system through ethical consumerism); and (2) Christians might use unavoidable fruits from oppression to resist against the very oppressive systems behind them.[68] More than seeking detachment from fruits from oppression, Christians are to live as to undermine or counter oppression.[69] Furthermore, Christian communities are to exemplify alternative social norms that are not oppressive, and Christians are to self-sacrificially serve the oppressed.[70]

5. CONCLUSION

While living within oppression and inevitably benefitting from fruits from oppression, Christians are not to be defined or determined by oppression. As part of a messianic apocalyptic movement, Christians should have in Jesus the ethical paradigm for how to live *within* oppression. They are to live as liberators, resisting and confronting oppression with an apocalyptic message and a subversive life. The Church is a movement of liberation.

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[1] According to Walter Benjamin, these "cultural treasures … owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries." For Benjamin, "barbarism taints also the manner in which … [these treasures are] transmitted from one owner to another." Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 2007), 256. Michael Löwy points out that Benjamin articulates "culture (or civilization) and barbarism … dialectically as a contradictory unity." For Löwy, "Thesis VII has a more general significance: high culture could not exist in its historical form without the anonymous labour of the direct producers – slaves, peasants or workers – themselves excluded from the enjoyment of cultural goods. These latter are, therefore, 'document[s] of barbarism' insofar as they are the products of class injustice, social and political oppression and inequality and because they are handed down by way of wars and massacres. … the ruling elite appropriates the preceding culture either by conquest or other barbaric means and integrates it into its system of social and ideological domination. Culture and tradition thus become, as Benjamin emphasizes in his Thesis VI, 'a tool of the ruling classes'." Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, trans. Chris Turner (New York: Verso, 2016), 50-51, 54-55. My understanding of Benjamin's *Theses* is informed by Löwy's commentary on them.

[2] For example, writing on "the imperial cult," Craig R. Koester states that "the art and rhetoric associated with the cults emphasized Roman military victories, which established Rome's rule over the world, along with the peace and prosperity that Rome provided for its subjects." Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 38A:93-94.

[3] One might refer to such buildings and architectural structures as being, morally speaking, *substructiones insanae*, which, while promoting the ideology of its devisers, along with broadcasting their power, lead to moral bankruptcy. See Robert Burton's use of the expression *substructiones insanae* (I have adapted the use of the expression from Burton's use of it, closely taking into consideration Burton's meaning),which he coined in Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy: What it is, with all the kinds, causes, symptoms, prognostics, and several cures of it. In three partitions. With their several sections, members, and subsections, philosophically, medically, historically opened and cut up. By Dem*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia, NY: J. W. Moore, J. Wiley, 1850), 74, 180. See also *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Substructiones Insanae," accessed November 7, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Substructiones_Insanae. Löwy comments that "triumphal arches are a notable example of monuments of culture that are at the same time, and indissociably, monuments of barbarism celebrating war and massacre. Benjamin's interest in this kind of architecture, its origins in ancient Rome, its political and ideological function, is attested by *The Arcades Project*." Löwy, 51. See also Ibid., 49. Another architectonic example Löwy gives is "the Palais de l'Opéra erected, under Napoleon III, by the defeated workers of June 1848." Ibid., 51, 54.

[4] For example, a royal palace funded by financial exploitation or constructed with forced labor.

[5] Benjamin's *Theses* and Löwy's comments on them have been very helpful in perceiving this problematic, the pervasiveness of oppression and the taint of evil in so-called progress. Commenting on Benjamin's Thesis VIII, Löwy writes that "Benjamin is … contrasting two conceptions of history, with clear political implications for the present: on the one hand, the cosy 'progressive' doctrine, for which historical progress, the development of societies towards more democracy, freedom or peace is the norm, and, on the other, the one for which he himself argues, which takes as its standpoint the tradition of the oppressed for whom the norm or rule of history is the oppression, barbarism and violence of the victors." Löwy, 58. In his Thesis IX, Benjamin compares progress to a storm. See Benjamin's Thesis IX in Benjamin, 257-258. See Löwy's interpretation of Benjamin's Thesis IX in Löwy, 60-68. See also Ibid., 44. For Ante Jerončić Benjamin's "thought, among others, takes on various kitschifications of history and society and faults them for their intellectual prevarications. His Theses on the Philosophy of History, in particular, present a distancing from any narration of historical events that scrubs away the tragic underside of history and stifles the memory of the down beaten. In its place, Benjamin argues, we need a form of redemptive historiography, he says, that dispels our collective amnesia and normalizes various forms of collateral damage." Ante Jerončić, "Unkitsching Reality: Towards an Adventist Philosophy of History" (paper presented at the Adventist Theological Society 2014 Spring Symposium, Collegedale, Tennessee, April 18, 2014). See David Toole's discussion on Michel Foucault, memory and resistance in David Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo:*

Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy, and Apocalypse, *Radical Traditions: Theology in a Postcritical Key* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998), 185.

[6] Löwy refers to "the advantage of today's leaders, the local and multinational financial elites that have inherited the power of the old conquistadors." Löwy, 56.

[7] The oxymoronic character of fruits from oppression is seen when one receives some benefit that, while, in a sense, good, has been at least partially actualized through oppressive processes. For example, while a shirt might be very useful and benefit the one who wears it, if it has been produced and distributed in a way that is exploitative, oppressive, it is an oxymoronic fruit from oppression.

[8] Foucault discusses the dynamics and the pervasiveness of power, with "its capillary existence," and resistance. See Toole, 171-188. See Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 39.

[9] R. H. Charles writes that "prophecy has always been recognized as the greatest ethical force in the ancient world. Such also was apocalyptic in its time … Apocalyptic was essentially ethical. To use the mixed metaphor of St. Paul, it was rooted and grounded in ethics, and that an ethics based on the essential righteousness of God." R. H. Charles, "Introduction to Volume II," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books*, vol. 2, *Pseudepigrapha* (1913; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1963), ix. See Ibid., x. See also Dale C. Allison Jr., "Apocalyptic Ethics and Behavior," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 297. Rolf J. Pöhler writes that "Apokalyptik und Ethik sind also keineswegs unvereinbar, wie dies häufig angenommen wurde." He writes that "Jürgen Kerner hat gezeigt, dass die in der Forschung verbreitete These von der Unvereinbarkeit von Apokalyptik und Ethik nicht haltbar ist *(Die Ethik der Johannes-Apokalypse im Vergleich mit der des 4. Esra: Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Apokalyptik und Ethik.* Beihefte zur ZNW 94. Berlin: deGruyter, 1998)." Rolf J. Pöhler, "Kein ewiger Himmel ohne Jüngstes Gericht? Biblische Apokalyptik und christliche Hoffnung," in *Apokalyptik und apokalyptisches Lebensgefühl*, ed. Bernhard Oestreich, Spes Christiana Beiheft 5 (Friedensau: Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, 2001), 21-46. You may find a copy of Pöhler's text at http://www.thh-friedensau.de/wp-content/uploads/Spes-Christiana2.pdf. See page 16 for the quotes I have included here. See Roy Branson, "Ethics, Adventists and the Apocalyptic Consciousness" (paper presented at the Andrews Society for Religious Studies, Atlanta, GA, 1986), 2-3, 10-11. With regard to the Book of Revelation, ethics is central to the book. See Ranko Stefanović, *Plain Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2013), 13. See Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 59. See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 171, 184. See Olutola K. Peters, *Studies in Biblical Literature,* vol. 77, *The Mandate of the Church in the Apocalypse of John* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 141.

[10] See Richard H. Niebuhr's discussion of responsibility and the responsible self in Richard H. Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 60-61. Niebuhr writes that "The idea or pattern of responsibility … the idea of an agent's action as response to an action upon him in accordance with his interpretation of the latter action and with his expectation of response to his response and all of this is in a continuing community of agents." Ibid., 65.

[11] I adopt the terminology of "unboundedness" from Michael E. Vines' discussion of the genre apocalypse in *Semeia Studies* 63, where he writes of "the temporal and spatial unboundedness of apocalypse" Michael E. Vines, "The Apocalyptic Chronotope," in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies*, ed. Roland Boer, Semeia Studies (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 63:113, http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.cc.andrews.edu/lib/andrews/detail.action?docID=10210718.

[12] Instead of a separate system, or "a total ethic" in itself [see Jim Walters, "Response to Roy Branson's Apocalyptic Ethics Essay" (paper presented at the Andrews Society for Religious Studies, Atlanta, GA, November 21, 1986), 5.], in contrast to other theological ethical systems, I consider the expression Christian apocalyptic ethics as a qualifier that might refer to any Christian ethics that is apocalyptic. I consider it useful to consider the contribution of apocalyptic to Christian ethics.

[13] My definition of apocalyptic ethics and the model for Christian moral agency that I use here are informed by David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen's "four dimensions of character" in the first edition of their book *Kingdom Ethics*, Ante Jerončić's adaptation of their model, and the recent update of Gushee and Stassen's model, which is called the "four-dimensional model of moral agency" in the second edition of *Kingdom Ethics*. In the first edition of Gushee and Stassen's *Kingdom Ethics* (2003), there is a diagram on "the four dimensions of character." These four dimensions are: "Way of Reasoning;" "Basic Convictions;" "Loyalties, Trusts, Interests, Passions;" and "Way of Seeing." According to that model, the dimensions of "Basic Convictions" and "Loyalties, Trusts, Interests, Passions" interact and inform the dimensions of "Way of Reasoning" and "Way of Seeing." Then, a "particular decision" is reached from "Way of Seeing" and "Way of Reasoning," and there is "feedback." Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 59. Ante Jerončić has adapted this diagram. His adaptation includes, but is not limited to changing "Basic Convictions" to "Beliefs" or "Orienting Beliefs," "Loyalties, Trusts, Interests, Passions" to "Existential Situatedness" and "Way of Seeing" to "Discernment." He has also used the term "Application" instead of "Particular Decision" and has indicated the reciprocal interaction between "Discernment" and "Way of Reasoning." Ante Jerončić (course, Theological Ethics, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, Spring, 2016). In the second edition of *Kingdom Ethics*, the diagram is called "the four dimensions of moral agency (the 'Four-Box Diagram')." In this diagram, all four dimensions (instead of "Loyalties, Trusts, Interests, Passions," the expression "Embodied Context" is used) reciprocally interact and from all of the dimensions and their interactions results a "particular judgment or action," and there is "feedback." David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 173, 188.

[14] Stanley Hauerwas writes that "… questions of what we ought to be are necessary background for questions of what we ought to do." Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 21.

[15] In Gushee and Stassen's model, this dimension, which is labelled as "the embodied-context dimension," includes one's "passions and interests," "trusts, friends, and mentors," "community loyalties" and "ultimate loyalties." "… in a basic sense … everything about one's personality and affect comes to bear" "in particular moral judgments or acts." Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 2nd ed., 177-181. Here, I am using the terminology from Jerončić's adaptation of Gushee and Stassen's model.

[16] Niebuhr also includes discernment in his conceptualization of moral responsibility. Niebuhr, 65.

[17] According to Gushee and Stassen, "Christians (and, in fact, all people) organize and communicate their moral convictions – technically known as moral norms – at four different levels: the particular judgments/actions level, the rules level, the principles level, and the basic-convictions level." See Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, 2nd ed., 64-70.

[18] Both my definition of apocalyptic theology and my definition of apocalyptic ethics are informed by the following definitions of the genre apocalypse: (1) the definition presented in *Semeia* 14; and (2) Michael E. Vines' Bakhtinian understanding. See John Joseph Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: the Morphology of a Genre*, Semeia: An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism 14 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979). See Vines, *The Apocalyptic Chronotope*. While apocalyptic theology might be expressed through different genres, there is much in common between the genre apocalypse and apocalyptic theology (common concerns, sentiments, language, grounding and perspective). First, in a recent article, John J. Collins, who edited *Semeia* 14, discusses the definition of the genre as presented in that volume and the work of the group behind it. Focusing on "Jewish and Christian texts composed between 250 B. C. E. and 250 C. E., approximately," the resulting definition of apocalypse was "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world." John J. Collins, "The Genre Apocalypse Reconsidered," *Journal of Ancient Christianity* 20, no. 1 (2016): 22, 25. Collins quotes the definition from *Semeia* 14, 25. According to Collins, "this definition was based primarily on Jewish and Christian writings from the period 250 BCE to 250 CE, but also included analysis of Gnostic, Greco-Roman, Persian, and some later Jewish writings." John J. Collins, "What Is Apocalyptic Literature?," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2. Collins notes that "a follow-up volume on Early Christian Apocalypticism, in *Semeia* 36 (1986) emended the definition by adding that an apocalypse is 'intended to interpret

present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.' This formulation is considerably more abstract than the idea that an apocalypse is addressed to a group in crisis, which is true of some apocalypses but not all." When referring to *Semeia* 36, Collins specifically cites the following contributions: "Adela Yarbro Collins, "Introduction," *Semeia* 36 (1986): (1−11) 7. Cf. David Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986): (65−96) 87." Collins, *The Genre Apocalypse Reconsidered*, 33-34. Second, using a Bakhtinian approach, Michael E. Vines brings attention to the genre's "ideological framework." Vines, 112. For Vines, "it is not that the formal approach is fundamentally wrong. It is rather that attention to literary devices does not go far enough in uncovering the essential unity of apocalypse as a literary genre. If we look at apocalypse through the lens of chronotope we begin to discern this essential unity." Ibid., 116-117. According to him, from a Bakhtinian perspective, an essential aspect of a genre is its "worldview, or chronotope." For Vines, "we should be able to point to something distinctive in the worldview, or chronotope, of the apocalypse if it is a distinct genre." Ibid., 116. On Bakhtin's perspective, Vines explains that a genre is comprised of "patterns of ideological expression" Ibid., 111. Vines does seem to assume the use of narrative, but wants to emphasize the worldview that informs and is communicated by the text. For Collins, "Vines, in effect, equates genre with worldview." Collins writes that, from the perspective of the analysis of *Semeia* 14, "the content of the genre implies a distinctive worldview. In this respect, our analysis is quite similar to the Bakhtinian approach proposed by Michael Vines … We differ from Vines, however, insofar as we hold that this worldview can also find expression in other genres. According to Vines, a 'Bakhtinian approach to the problem of genre suggests that this cannot be the case. …' … In our approach, the literary form of revelation remains essential to the genre, while the worldview can be expressed in other ways." Collins, *The Genre Apocalypse Reconsidered*, 28. When quoting Vines, Collins is drawing from Vines, 113, 116. For Ferguson, "one should distinguish between the literary character of an apocalypse and the world of ideas in apocalyptic literature." Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 475. I agree that an apocalyptic perspective may be expressed through different literary genres. On the other hand, I consider Vines' analysis of great value for its exploration of the apocalyptic worldview or, as I prefer to call it, apocalyptic perspective. Vines points out that "the time and space of apocalypse transcends the boundaries of this mundane world both dimensionally and axiologically." He adds that "dimensionally, the temporal and spatial boundaries of apocalypse are permeable and limitless. … The normal temporal boundaries of human life are suspended to make room for revelation." For him, such "unboundedness … affords a divine perspective on human activity." Vines adds that "the purpose of apocalypse would therefore seem to be to gain a God's-eye view on human history and activity" Vines, 112-113. What I mean by apocalyptic perspective is an understanding of reality that is informed by an apocalyptic message, that is, by revelation (whether professed or actually divine revelation). Therefore, an apocalyptic perspective is one that is only accessible through revelation. In a sense, it is an understanding of reality from God's perspective, or informed by "a divine perspective" (Vines' language of "a divine perspective is useful for its broad applicability; Vines, 113). According to Vines' Bakhtinian analysis, "apocalypse is an essentially 'finalizing' genre: an attempt to fix the axiological position of human activity and then measure it in relation to divine standards of justice." He adds that, "within the world of the apocalypse there is no room for rebuttal or justification. Invariably, the cosmos is found to be deeply, if not fatally, flawed. Apocalypse is not interested in deliberating over the guilt or innocence of the cosmos. What it wants to explore is how the sovereign creator God intends to deal with a flawed creation. The past is filled with errors and the present appears irredeemable. What then will God do about the future? The hero of the apocalypse is invited to view the cosmic situation from God's point of view and learn the mysteries of God's hidden plan." Vines, 116.

[19] Both the genre apocalypse and apocalyptic theology are expressed in many other places and there is a variety of streams of thought that one might label as apocalyptic. However, this definition of apocalyptic theology focuses on apocalypticism as expressed in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, or grounded in these texts.

[20] In his discussion of the genre apocalypse in *Semeia Studies* 63, Vines speaks of "the temporal and spatial unboundedness of apocalypse." Michael E. Vines remarks concerning apocalypses that "the time and space of apocalypse transcends the boundaries of this mundane world both dimensionally and axiologically." Vines, 113, 112. See also Collins, *The Genre Apocalypse Reconsidered*, 28.

[21] For Jacob Taubes, "alienness or exile [*die Fremde*] is the first great base word of apocalypticism." Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, trans. David Ratmoko, *Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 26. The Book of Daniel, for example, was written from a context of exile, which itself resulted from a covenantal historical development. Another example, the Book of Revelation, was written when John was away in

the island of Patmos, in a context of displacement. The book also deals with clearly covenantal themes, such as faithfulness, and divine promises. In the case of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the historical context to these epistles serves as an example of social displacement or conflict without geographical removal (see 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5; Acts 17:1-9). Furthermore, these texts unveil a perspective of reality beyond mere visible evidence. Ultimately, apocalypticism deals with conflict and alienness, to use Taubes' terminology, that transcend visible reality. It recognizes an apocalyptic conflict, that revelation unveils. See also Ibid., 16-24. See Beatrice Neall, Darcom, vol. 6, 246, 249. See Anathea E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 382, 387. See also R. H. Charles, x. See N. T. Wright, "Putting Paul Together Again: Toward a Synthesis of Pauline Theology (1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon)," in *Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*, ed. Jouette M. Bassler, Pauline Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 198. See Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 477-478. John Anthony Dunne states that "apocalyptic hope often arises in the absence of the realisation of covenantal promises and expectations; a covenantal disconnect is created and aggravated by crises and hardships of various sorts, hence the need for apocalyptic hope." John Anthony Dunne, "Suffering and Covenantal Hope in Galatians: A Critique of the 'Apocalyptic Reading' and Its Proponents," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 1 (2015), 1, http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0036930614000866. See also Ibid., 10-12. For example, writing about 4 Ezra, P. Richard Choi comments that, "… at the time of the writing, the tension-filled history of Israel—a frustrating history of promise and nonfulfillment—had finally collapsed." P. Richard Choi, "The Intra-Jewish Dialogue in 4 Ezra 3:1-9:25," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 2 (Autumn 2003), 239 Dunne points out that "apocalyptic appears to be the medium for wrestling with crisis *and covenant*." He adds that, "far from being the antithesis to covenant, apocalyptic is centrally covenantal, and seeks to address the disconnect created by unmet expectations related to covenantal promises. In other words, suffering creates cognitive dissonance with covenantal promises, and apocalyptic provides covenantal hope in the midst of suffering." Dunne, 11-12. On the other hand, given the variety of theological expressions and streams of thought that might be labeled as apocalyptic, it is important to recognize that, broadly considered, apocalyptic thinking is not necessarily covenantal. Apocalyptic thinking is not necessarily covenantal, and vice versa. On the other hand, from the perspective of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, it might be said that apocalyptic thinking is a subset of covenantal thinking, or that it arises in that context. I suggest that it might be useful to understand covenant and apocalyptic as theological and literary features that, in varying degrees, may play a role in different theological expressions.

[22] Dale C. Allison, Jr. writes that "the hope that the end would, in various ways, witness a return to the beginning is well attested in both Jewish and Christian sources (e.g., 4 Ezra 7:20; 2 Bar 3:7; Rev 22:1– 2; Barn 6:13). …" Allison Jr., 306.

[23] See, for example, Branson, 11.

[24] Strictly speaking, there is a distinction between apocalyptic and eschatology, which means that a system of thought might be apocalyptic without being eschatological and vice versa. However, within the Hebrew Scriptures, and the writings of the New Testament, apocalyptic and eschatology are kept together. Therefore, it is valid to define their respective expressions of apocalyptic theology as being eschatological, as seen in the definitions of the genre apocalypse discussed above. See Everett Ferguson's clarification of the distinction between these two concepts. Ferguson, 475.

[25] Anathea Portier-Young states that "in an age of foreign domination, war, and terror, early Jewish apocalypses prompted their readers to look through and beyond visible, familiar phenomena to apprehend God's providential ordering of space, time, and created life. …" Portier-Young also states that "apocalyptic faith maintained that what could be seen on the surface told only part of the story." (Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 382, 389) See also Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 155.

[26] Jacob Taubes points out that "the eschatological chronology assumes that the time in which everything takes place is not a mere sequence but moves toward an end." Taubes, 33. With regard to apocalyptic eschatology, Everett Ferguson states that "events are marching toward a predetermined goal; but while history is under divine control, individual decisions are not. …" Ferguson, 476.

[27] In his discussion of the genre apocalypse, Vines writes, "apocalypse is an essentially 'finalizing' genre: an attempt to fix the axiological position of human activity and then measure it in relation to divine standards of justice." Vines, 116.

[28] In apocalyptic theology, good and evil are defined in light of the apocalyptic revelation, which conveys the divine perspective that, being transcendental, takes into account the whole of reality, such as cosmic conflict, divine promises of liberation, covenantal expectations, and the creaturely longing for restoration. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes that "the question of good can only find its answer in Christ." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. Ilse Tödt et al., trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott, vol. 6, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 49.

[29] Cyril O'Regan classifies the different expressions of "modern and contemporary apocalyptic theology" according to "spaces [that] arrange themselves along two different axes: an epistemic and an ethical axis, which correspond very roughly to … the concern with Christian identity and the concern with justice." Cyril O'Regan, *Theology and the Spaces of Apocalyptic*, The Père Marquette Lecture in Theology 40 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 26-27. In his system, "a space of apocalyptic suggests a constellation of discourses that bear close family resemblances to each other." Ibid., 26. O'Regan explains that "with respect to the epistemic axis, the issue is how full is the disclosure of divine reality and its relation to the world and history and how directive is it of specifically Christian practices and forms of life." Ibid., 27. He establishes three spaces along "the epistemic axis," which he labels: (1) pleromatic; (2) metaxic; and (3) kenomatic. Ibid., 27, 29. Pleromatic Apocalyptic Theology "is a visionary form of apocalyptic theology which discloses a great deal about God's intention for the world and what God has done, is doing, and is going to do for it, and unveils our place in the movement of history and its destination." Ibid., 27. On the other hand, Kenomatic Apocalyptic Theology, according to O'Regan, "is, from the point of view of content, much more minimal …" Then, Metaxic Apocalyptic Theology "falls between the maximalist and minimalist options …" Ibid., 28. With regard to "the ethical axis or the axis of justice," O'Regan writes that "in terms of emphasis at least, it seems sensible to hypothesize that the axis of superordinate-subordinate tends to go in the opposite direction to the epistemological. …" Ibid., 30-31. "… *Prima facie* the ethical concern seems to cut across all three spaces. …" Ibid., 31-32. However, I suggest that truly pleromatic Christian apocalyptic theology should have a high "concern with justice," as is true of biblical apocalyptic texts. See Ibid., 26-31.

[30] In her dissertation, Edith McEwan Humphrey deals with apocalyptic texts and the concept of *apocalyptic identity*. She writes that "the apocalyptic perspective urges the reader to consider life from a different stance in time (temporal), and in space (spatial), it also suggests that the reader may adopt a transformed perspective by becoming, as it were, *someone else*, someone more in tune with the mysteries he or she is viewing (the 'identical'). This is suggested explicitly in the Apocalypse, just as there is a New Jerusalem, there is also a 'new name' provided for its inhabitants." Edith McEwan Humphrey, "The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas" (diss., McGill University, 1991), 147-148. For Humphrey, "the theme of identity is informative since it makes explicit the function of the transformations, and provides a link between the literary world and the world of the author/reader/community. Identity is one of the themes proper to the apocalyptic genre, since it is a revelatory theme corresponding to the question, 'Who?'" Ibid., 144. The concept of identity "may well be integral to the genre" Ibid., 147. See also Portier-Young, 382.

[31] Here, I am informed by both Haruerwas' use of the concept of "seeing" in ethics and Jerončić's adaptation of Gushee and Stassen, in which he articulates discernment in terms of "seeing" (he engages with the work of Hauerwas here), interpretation, valuation, and judgment. Jerončić (course, Theological Ethics). On Hauerwas' concept of seeing in ethics, see Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 16, chapters 1-2. Jerončić states "… a biblically shaped apocalyptic consciousness ought to determine our understandings of reality, specifically the nature of human existence, the exertions of different powers in our world and the workings of divine providence in the face of evil. Now, by apocalyptic consciousness, I refer to, primarily, not just beliefs, but to a range of intellectual, ethical and spiritual sensibilities. In other words, a way of seeing and valuating and responding to trends, ideas, structures, events and other cultural givens shaped by the eschatological dimension of the Adventist faith." Jerončić, "Unkitsching Reality.

[32] For example, with regard to the ethics of Colossians, and on being "directed by Christ's heavenly rule at the right hand of God.' … [and] allowing the liberating rule of Christ to transform every dimension of your life. …" See Walsh and Keesmaat, 155.

[33] Apocalyptic ethics is an ethics of suffering. Christians are to interpret the world, including their own suffering, from an apocalyptic perspective. See Niebuhr's discussion of "ethics of suffering" and interpretation of suffering in Niebuhr, 59-60, 67. Niebuhr writes that "Israel is the people that is to see and understand the action of God in everything that happens and to make a fitting reply. So it is in the New Testament also. …" Ibid., 67.

[34] Walsh and Keesmaat write that "… if there is one thing any empire wants you to believe, it is that 'what you see is what you get.' … Praxis requires vision and orientation. But if all the maps are provided by the empire, if all the reality we can see is what the empire has constructed as reality for us, then our praxis will never be creative, and it will never be subversive to that empire." Ibid., 155-156.

[35] In their evaluation of the ethics of Colossians, Walsh and Keesmaat state that it "is a *narrative* ethic" Ibid., 156. See Ibid., 158-159. My use of the concept of narrative for ethics in this discussion is also informed by Hauerwas. See Hauerwas, chapter 2. Hauerwas writes that "we must learn to see the world as Israel had learned to understand it—that is, eschatologically. … to view the world eschatologically is to see it in terms of a story, with a beginning, a continuing drama, and an end. … Jesus' announcement of the kingdom … he came to announce an end that, while not yet final, nonetheless provided a necessary perspective for our continuing life in the world." "To learn to see the world eschatologically requires that we learn to see the life of Jesus as decisive for the world's status as part of God's kingdom." Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 82-83. See also Stassen and Gushee, 60.

[36] In 1986, Branson stated that "the scope of moral action for the Apocalypse [of John] is global, indeed cosmic." Branson, 11.

[37] For Gushee and Stassen's discussion of moral norms, see Gushee and Stassen, 2nd ed., chapter 4.

[38] On Matthew 25:31-46, see Allison Jr., 297. See Branson, 2-3, 7, 11-12. See also Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 387.

[39] They are on God's side in the apocalyptic conflict, they exemplify moral norms which are clearly taught in the text (e.g., worship), and their situation resembles the promised rewards of Revelation 2-3.

[40] For example, Jesus engaged with the economic system as a carpenter (Mark 6:3).

[41] For example, Jesus attended a wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) and a banquet at Levi's house (Luke 5:29). Jesus also ate at the house of Zacchaeus, who had amassed wealth through oppression. Jesus' participation in social events helps to illustrate how He faced oppression in a liberating way. See the rest of the discussion below.

[42] Jesus' high engagement with society, His travels, education (we have sufficient evidence that Jesus at least learned how to read and write; Luke 4:16-20) also lead to the conclusion I defend here.

[43] Kerr explains "what … [Yoder] calls Jesus' 'independence'. In its most basic sense, to speak of Jesus' 'independence' is to say that Jesus lives, concretely and in history, a life-story that is entirely free from and irreducible to any pre-given 'historical' coordinates, any general or 'meta' principle that might serve to range the complexities and contingencies of his history within any universalizable scope or logic. …" "Christ *challenges* the pretensions of the powers by living in history a life that is irreducible to the powers at both an operative and constitutive level." "… the powers recognize in Jesus a concrete life that their previously operative logic is unable fully to determine." According to Kerr, for Yoder, "Jesus' identity … cannot be captured by any of the universalist 'human' categories by which we seek to 'control', 'manipulate', 'cause', 'effect', and 'sustain' life and death." Nathan R. Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission*, Theopolitical Visions 4 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 131, 139, 140, 143. See also Ibid., 137, 141, 144-145, 149, 150. It might be said, to use John Howard Yoder's language, that Jesus lived independently of the systems and ideologies of oppression.

[44] Christian apocalyptic theology presents Jesus as a liberator (see, for example, Revelation 5:5). Because of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection, all oppression will end.

[45] See Luke 4:17-21.

[46] Walsh and Keesmaat write of subversive praxis informed by "vision and orientation" informed by revelation. See Walsh and Keesmaat, 155-156.

[47] See Hebrews 4:15; 9:14; 1 John 3:5. If my argumentation is correct, it follows that benefitting from fruits from oppression, along the lines I am discussing in this paper, is not always or necessarily a sin. Any quotation from the Bible in this paper, unless otherwise noticed, is taken from the Lexham English Bible (LEB).

[48] See endnote 43. A Christian should ultimately be defined apocalyptically, not by human systems or language that characterize oppression. See James H. Cone on self-definition in the face of oppression in James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 3, 12.

[49] In 1986, Branson stated that "the central question for the Apocalypse is which empire will you serve, the economically unjust, physically oppressive, arrogant empire of Rome or the just empire of God?" Branson, 11.

[50] Douglas Harink, "Partakers of the Divine Apocalypse: Hermeneutics, History, and Human Agency after Martyn," in *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Joshua B. Davis and Douglas Harink (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 74. See also Kerr, 159-160. Kerr writes of "our own participation in *God's singular, revolutionary action, …* the *living* Christ being made visible in the very political 'unhanding' of history as it occurs in those converted by and to the inbreaking of God's reign into their own actual and contemporary-contingent histories."

[51] On the Book of Revelation, Beatrice S. Neall writes that "the primary meaning of the mark of the beast and the seal of God (consisting of the names of God and the beast) stamped upon every individual is that everyone in the final conflict is conformed to the image of God or the image of Satan. Everyone bears the character of the divine or the demonic." Beatrice S. Neall, *The Concept of Character in the Apocalypse with Implications for Character Education* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983), 150. For the connection between the concepts of character and the seal of God on the forehead (or the mark of the beast on the forehead), see Ibid., 149-155. See also Beatrice S. Neall, "Sealed Saints and the Tribulation," in *Symposium on Revelation: Introductory and Exegetical Studies, Book 1*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 6:254-256. See also Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary On the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 448. While the beast has an oppressive character, the Book of Revelation presents God and Jesus Christ as liberators. Sharing in God's character includes sharing in a tendency or inclination towards freedom and love, that seeks liberation. On apocalyptic literature as resistance literature, see Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 382. See also Anathea Portier-Young, "Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature," 154. See also Dunne, 10-11.

[52] In 1986, Branson stated that, in the Book of Revelation, John "is interested in how church members relate to the institutions around them--whether they are poor or becoming rich, whether they are receiving favors by participating in the religious rituals of the guilds and associations, or are being persecuted by an unjust regime. …" Branson, 11. See also Jerončić, Unkitsching Reality (see my endnote 31).

[53] Walter Benjamin opposes seeing history from the perspective of victors. "Against the evolutionary view of history as an accumulation of 'gains', as 'progress' towards ever more freedom, rationality or civilization, he sees it 'from below', from the standpoint of the defeated, as a series of victories of the ruling classes." Löwy, 38. See Ibid., 23, 34, 35, 38, 40, 42, 44, 45, 47 48, 49, 55, 56, 58, 59, 67. His approach to history faces the dark side of history, refusing to forget or belittle oppression. See also Jerončić, Unkitsching Reality (see my endnote 31).

[54] "Thus, while triumphal arches, such as the Arch of Titus or the Brandenburg Gate might afford nice backdrops in tourism brochures, are they not, in reality, an implicit hermeneutics that reads history through the eyes of the

conquerors? Are they not cenotaphs of amnesia rather than remembering? What intrigues me about Benjamin's observation here is how close they come, in some aspects, at least, to the critical optic entailed in Adventist apocalyptic consciousness. Like the thrust of Benjamin's Theses, but for different reasons and with different implications, apocalyptic consciousness presents a form of counter-memory, a hermeneutic orientation attentive to the underside of history and the muted voices of victims, the multitude of slain souls under the altar. It refuses to sentimentalize their death, to abandon them to the logic of historical necessity, and states of exception …" Jerončić, Unkitsching Reality. For example, using the language of Löwy in his comments on Benjamin's Thesis VI, the Book of Revelation presents history from a perspective that reveals the current conflictive state of reality and points to a reversal, "a subversion of the established order" Löwy, 44. Kerr writes that, "commenting upon Revelation 5 …, Yoder insists that the sole hermeneutic which drives the Christian vision of history is 'the lamb that was slain' …" Kerr, 151. See also Ibid., 154. See also Vines, 116.

[55] See also the concept of the Great Controversy as articulated by the writer Ellen G. White. See, for example her book titled *The Great Controversy*. My understanding of the apocalyptic conflict is informed by her work.

[56] Commenting on Benjamin's Thesis VI, Löwy writes of "the danger … of transforming both the history of the past – the tradition of the oppressed – and the current historical subject – the dominated classes, 'new heirs' to that tradition – into tools in the hands of the ruling classes. To wrest tradition away from the conformism that is working to overpower it is to restore to history … its dimension of subversion of the established order, which is toned down, obliterated or denied by the 'official' historians. It is only in this way that the historical materialist can 'fan the spark of hope in the past' – a spark which can ignite the powder keg *today*." Löwy, 44. He also writes of Fascism and "the falsification of the past on an unprecedented scale and the transformation of the popular masses into a tool of the ruling classes." Ibid., 45.

[57] "If hope for a proximate transformation sometimes served violent, revolutionary ends, at other times it encouraged political passivity, a waiting upon God rather than direct political engagement." Allison Jr., 308. Rolf J. Pöhler writes, "Dass Apokalyptik nicht passive Weltflucht, sondern aktive Weltverantwortung bedeutet, ist von Auslegern in jüngerer Zeit zunehmend betont geworden. So sehen manche Theologinnen und Theologen im Danielbuch eine politische Widerstandsschrift; andere entdecken in der Johannesapokalypse eine Spiritualität des Widerstands, die genährt wird von der politischgeschichtlichen Utopie einer gewaltlosen Umgestaltung der Geschichte und dem Aufbau einer alternativen Gesellschaft." On this last point, Pöhler refers to the following work: "Pablo Richard, *Apokalypse: Das Buch von Hoffnung und Widerstand.* Luzern: Edition Exodus, 1996." Pöhler continues, commenting that "Inwieweit solche befreiungstheologischen Deutungen dem ursprünglichen bzw. eigentlichen Anliegen der Apokalyptik gerecht werden, sei hier dahingestellt. Sicher ist, dass letztere die Motivation für soziales, politisches, humanitäres und ökologisches Engagement durchaus und nachhaltig fördern kann." Rolf J. Pöhler, "Kein ewiger Himmel ohne Jüngstes Gericht? Biblische Apokalyptik und christliche Hoffnung," in *Apokalyptik und apokalyptisches Lebensgefühl*, ed. Bernhard Oestreich, Spes Christiana Beiheft 5 (Friedensau: Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, 2001), 21-46. You may find a copy of Pöhler's text at http://www.thh-friedensau.de/wp-content/uploads/Spes-Christiana2.pdf. See page 16 for the quotes I have included here. See Branson, 3-4, 6, 10. See also Walters, 2. To compare with Benjamin's perspective (he also calls for acting in the present), see Löwy, 102. Commenting on Benjamin's Thesis B, Löwy writes, "First, Benjamin rejects the approach of those who turn to soothsayers for information, because they are enslaved by the future: if you think you know the future, you are doomed to passivity, to waiting for the inevitable to happen – and this remark applies equally to that modern form of the ancient oracle, the 'scientific predictions' of historical materialism transformed into an 'automaton'. … the revolutionary, in his present action, draws his inspiration and his fighting spirit from remembrance and in that way escapes the baleful spell of the guaranteed, predictable, assured future offered by the modern 'soothsayers'." Ibid., 102. However, apocalyptic ethics uses both the past and the future to motivate right action. See also Hauerwas, 83.

[58] With regard to Matthew 25:31-46, Dale C. Allison, Jr. writes that "those who enter the kingdom of heaven are those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit prisoners. … So here a vision of the end-time judgment instructs, in some detail, how one should behave in the present." Allison Jr., 297. In Ezekiel 9, those who are marked are those "who are groaning and lamenting about all of the detestable things that are being done in the midst of" Jerusalem (Ezekiel 9:4). See Walsh and Keesmaat on the ethics of Colossians in connection to relevance for this world. Walsh and Keesmaat, 152-156. On self-sacrificially following the example of Jesus, consider Richard Bauckham's discussion in Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies On the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993). See also Richard Bauckham, *The*

Theology of the Book of Revelation, New Testament Theology (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[59] The apocalyptically conscious is not to seek isolation from enemies. Apocalyptic ethics calls for a self-sacrificially loving engagement with enemies. While there have been violent or military uses of apocalyptic, Christian apocalyptic ethics does not prescribe armed revolution. Allison, Jr. writes that "quietism or nonviolent resistance in an apocalyptic context also appears to be reflected in Daniel, 2 Baruch, Revelation, and the Testament of Moses (Collins 1997: 191– 218; 2002; Yarbro Collins, 1977; Murphy 1985; Portier-Young 2011: 223– 79; but see Zerbe 1993b)." Allison Jr., 308. See also Ibid., 307-309. John Howard Yoder writes that "the point that apocalyptic makes is not only that people who wear crowns and who claim to foster justice by the swords are not as strong as they think – true as that is … It is that people who bear crosses are working with the grain of the universe. …" John Howard Yoder, "Armaments and Eschatology," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 1, no. 1 (January 1988): 58. This quote was taken from Kerr, 160. For Branson, "in the Apocalypse John has enlisted the believers of Asia Minor in a war against the rich, Rome and the devil. He has not called them to take up arms. The only weapons available are words. …" See Branson, 12. Prayer also plays an important role in apocalyptic ethics. G. K. Beale writes that "prayer is one of the important military tactics used by the soldiers of Christ." Beale, 463.

[60] Apocalyptic ethics is a missional ethics.

[61] Apocalyptic ethics, in line with the prophetic tradition, seeks justice. See Walters' comment with regard to "the prophetic perspective" and "present social action" in Walters, 6. He states that "Isaiah is a model." See, for example, Isaiah 58:6: "Is this not *the* fast I choose: to release *the* bonds of injustice, to untie *the* ropes of *the* yoke, and to let *the* oppressed go free, and tear every yoke to pieces?"

[62] Apocalyptic ethics is an ethics of confrontation. Branson stated that "John J. Collins, Adela Yarbro Collins, Paul Hanson and Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza all agree that Christian apocalyptic did not escape its society, but confronted it with an alternative vision, or symbolic universe." Branson, 3. See also Walters, 1. According to Branson in his 1986 ASRS paper, "John is demonstrating by example what he wants the Christians to do--both those who are oppressed and those who are increasingly comfortable: Challenge the evil empire, reveal its oppressions, its ostentatious wealth, its blasphemous pretensions to ultimate authority. Christians of Asia Minor, John is saying, strip Rome of its glamour and attraction. … John employs vivid, expressive language to denounce political, economic and religious injustice. …" Branson, 8-9. For Branson, "the Apocalypse [of John] draws attention to the morality of powerful economic and political institutions, particularly when they make claims to power and authority so outrageous as to be blasphemous." Ibid., 11. See Ibid., 8-9, 11. See also Walters, 2. Apocalyptic theology may provide not only a paradigm with which to do social, political and cultural critique from a biblical perspective, but also language that might be used in social, political and cultural critique. An apocalyptic perspective should guide Christians as they engage in ideological battles with oppressive systems. See Walsh and Keesmaat, 152-183.

[63] See Branson, 8-9.

[64] According to David E. Aune, "the image of Jesus as keybearer in Rev 1:18 appears to be derived from the popular Hellenistic conception of the goddess Hekate as keybearer. Hekate both originated in Asia Minor and was very popular there during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. She is the primary mythological figure associated with the possession of the keys to the gates of Hades. … In *PGM* IV.2836–37, after Hekate is explicitly identified with Mene, Artemis, Persephone, and Selene, we read, "Beginning anti end [ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος] are you, and you alone rule all. For all things are from you, and in you do all things, Eternal one, come to their end." … The *Orphic Hymns* (probably written in Asia Minor during the second century a.d.) describe Hekate as "the keybearing mistress of the entire cosmos" (1.7). Hekate is frequently given the epithet κλειδοῦχος, "keybearer" (Orph. frag. 316; *Orphic Hymns* 1.7; cf. Kohl, *RE* 11[1921] 593–600). … Other divine beings are also thought to have custody of various keys." David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 104. In his explanation of Revelation 1:9-20, Aune writes that "In Hellenistic Anatolia, the ancient goddess Hekate was accorded universal sovereignty as mistress of the cosmos and was popularly thought to hold the keys to Hades. John therefore portrays Christ as usurping the authority of Hekate as well as that of every other natural or supernatural authority." Ibid., 116-117. See also Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 102, 106-107. Koester writes that "the vision of New Jerusalem fulfills and surpasses the ideals of a Hellenistic city (§42 Comment). John

uses language from the dominant society to critique that society, while encouraging commitment to God and Jesus." Koester, 92.

[65] Peter Weiss has written a novel titled *The Aesthetics of Resistane*. Living in a context of oppression, the characters of this narrative "meet in museums and galleries, and in their discussions they explore the affinity between political resistance and art, the connection at the heart of Weiss's novel. Weiss suggests that meaning lies in embracing resistance, no matter how intense the oppression, and that we must look to art for new models of political action and social understanding." Taken from the publisher's description at "The Aesthetics of Resistance, Volume 1: A Novel," Duke University Press, https://www.dukeupress.edu/the-aesthetics-of-resistance-volume-1.

[66] Furthermore, it may be possible to engage in a cultural work of subversive redefinition and repurposing of many cultural and artistic symbols of oppression, using them for liberating purposes. Along a somewhat similar line, but with a different purpose, "far from rejecting the works of 'high culture' as reactionary, … [Benjamin] was of the opinion that many of them were overtly or covertly hostile to capitalist society. The point was, then, to recover the utopian or subversive moments hidden in the 'cultural' heritage …" Löwy, 55. See also Ibid., 55, 81. The role of art in resistance has been recognized by many, what Toole, in his discussion of "Foucault's analysis of discourse and power in *The History of Sexuality*," refers to as "the power of literature and art to contest the order of things." Toole, 183. See also Toole, 186.

[67] Walsh and Keesmaat write of subversive praxis informed by "vision and orientation" informed by revelation. See Walsh and Keesmaat, 155-156.

[68] Much may be learned in the way Jesus and early Christians made use of the inevitable fruits from oppression to spread the Gospel. Think, for example, of Paul's use of the Roman transportation network to proclaim the Gospel. Jesus's whole life was geared towards setting people free. So, whatever benefit He may have had from fruits from oppression was actually used for a liberating purpose.

[69] To compare with Benjamin's perspective, who also was against isolationism, see his Thesis X and Löwy's comments on it. See Löwy, 68-69. Allison Jr. writes that "… the extant sources allow us to draw a few safe generalizations about how belief in a near end encouraged certain Jews and Christians to behave. Some were moved to let go of the world in dramatic ways, through sexual and dietary abstinence, or by giving up the pursuit of money. Others were led to discount marriage, or to blur gender distinctions, or to disallow divorce, or to intensify their evangelistic efforts, or to move to Jerusalem, or to dwell in the desert, or to become combatants in hope of forcing the end, or to wait quietly for God to intervene in world affairs. In varied ways, then, attachment to an imagined eschatological future played its part in shaping concrete human behavior." Allison Jr., 309. However, Christian apocalyptic theology, when properly applied, is to lead to an ethics that seeks to engage with the world in a renewed sense. While there may be times where fleeing, or separating, will be needed, this definitely does not represent the whole of apocalyptic theology.

[70] Hauerwas explores the potential and importance of community for ethics, morality and resistance. See Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*. "For Hauerwas, the term theological politics refers the vision of a countercultural community" From class slides from Jerončić (course, Theological Ethics). Church communities may be apocalyptic communities seeking to live out eschatological hopes and looking for the ultimate fulfillment of those hopes in the future. Furthermore, living a faithful Christian life in society, Christians will impact the polis, their actions will be politically meaningful and engaging. On the importance of community in ethics, morality and resistance, see also Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Bloomsbury Revelations (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 263. This is referred to in the class slides from Jerončić (course, Theological Ethics). Walsh and Keesmaat also write regarding community and ethics in their discussion of the ethics of Colossians. See Walsh and Keesmaat, 170-177.

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