**Dreaming Beyond the Flesh: Toward a Relational Adventist Ecotheology for a Global Age**

Joshua A. Méndez, M.A. Candidate in Religion: Interdisciplinary and Comparative Studies

Claremont School of Theology

“From an ecological viewpoint, everything that exists, co-exists. Everything that co-exists, pre-exists. And everything that co-exists and pre-exists subsists by means of an infinite web of all inclusive relationships.”-Leonardo Boff[[1]](#footnote-0)

**Introduction**

Leonardo Boff’s observation in his seminal *Ecology & Liberation* argues for an understanding of Creation grounded in relationality. Boff views Creation as necessarily interconnected and the flourishing of mankind intrinsically tied to that of its ecological neighbors. It is precisely this type of perspective on Creation that I dream of the Adventist church affirming. The title of my paper is “Dreaming Beyond the Flesh: Toward a Relational Adventist Ecotheology for a Global Age.” To dream beyond the flesh is a call for Adventist theology to foster and develop an ecological vision that moves past anthropocentrism and into a related understanding of the biosphere.[[2]](#footnote-1) By anthropocentrism I mean the social, cultural, political, and religious imaginaries that emphasize the human person above all other created beings. As environmental degradation and climate change continue to seriously impact poor and marginalized communities as well as plant and creaturely life throughout the globe, it is time for the Seventh-Day Adventist church to re-evaluate its ecological commitments.

My research primarily considers how two Adventists beliefs, (1) Christian Behavior, specifically our affirmation of the health message, and (2) understanding of the Sabbath, must go beyond a hierarchical dualism that sustains a problematic ethic of stewardship and inadequately centers and favors the human individual above its ecological counterparts. This stewardship model perpetuates an understanding of nature/Creation as something “out there,” but, as Timothy Morton notes, this is increasingly problematic, “Putting something called Nature on a pedestal and admiring it from afar does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of Woman. It is a paradoxical act of sadistic admiration.”[[3]](#footnote-2) I argue that this human-nature dualism is only dissolved by turning to the ecological implications of key Adventist beliefs. Since time does not permit me to go through every single Adventist belief, I focus on the two mentioned above -- the health message and the Sabbath.

To construct an entire ecotheology is well beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I hope that this analysis will reveal the possibilities for such a project. My methodology develops in three major steps — (1) I will interrogate the Adventist health message in light of its anthropocentrism and its ecological promise, (2) I turn to the Sabbath and analyze the concept of rest and time a/part in relation to economic systems and land, and (3) I conclude by outlining some of the steps I think are necessary in moving forward with the full development of an Adventist ecotheology. It is my dream that with a related model of Creation, the Adventist church, with its global network and resources, will become more involved in projects of ecological sustainability and development. This relational[[4]](#footnote-3) ecotheology remains distinctly Adventist and advances a collective interest in ecological alternatives while aiming to disrupt the systematic destruction and manipulation of Creation.

**The Health Message and Creation**

The 22nd Adventist fundamental belief addresses Christian Behavior and makes healthful living one of its vital components. The benefits of adopting this Adventist health message are well documented.[[5]](#footnote-4) A lifestyle characterized by a vegetarian diet, abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, and daily exercise have been proven by both Adventist and non-Adventist studies to lead to a longer lifespan and a significant reduction in health complications. However, the health message is not only concerned with dietary habits; it has an irreducible spiritual dimension. Ellen G. White writes, “The body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character.”[[6]](#footnote-5) White’s underlying notion here is holistic and relational -- the body, the mind, and the soul cannot exist apart from each other and are inherently connected. What happens to the body impacts the soul, and vice-versa.

This holistic model is compelling and useful for circumnavigating the problematic dualistic underpinnings of the Cartesian tradition. But the development and contemporary application of the health message that this theological anthropology informs maintains only the human as its sole subject of interest. The human is seen as a subject interacting within the objective realm of Creation instead of as a becoming subject in relation to a plenitude of Other becoming subjects. As process-relational theologian Mayra Rivera reminds us, “Our encounter with the Other touches and is touched by realities that transcend us both: the traces of other Others and the communal realities that we embrace.”[[7]](#footnote-6) For Rivera, the human person cannot exist in isolation from the rest of Creation. The following section hopes to move the health message beyond anthropocentrism by addressing (1) ethics -- the normative contributions of Peter Singer and his concern for animal rights, and (2) theological anthropology -- the relational underpinnings of the health message its meaning for the whole of Creation.

In his landmark work, *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer argues for an ethics that abolishes the hierarchical separation that favors human life over animal life.[[8]](#footnote-7) Singer’s utilitarian approach proposes what is known as the argument from marginal cases which contends that if human beings can retain moral status while lacking full cognition (i.e. infants, the comatose, and the developmentally disabled), then animals, despite their cognitive level, must also retain the same moral status. Singer’s argument from marginal cases adequately identifies the moral bias of what he deems as speciesism -- the belief that a being’s given species grants them better treatment than any other. Singer hinges this thesis on the ability of animals, like humans, to suffer and feel pain, “If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration.”[[9]](#footnote-8) A similar sentiment is expressed by Ellen G. White, “The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and hear and love and fear and suffer.”[[10]](#footnote-9) The implication in both Singer and White is that a human person’s consciousness is not of a different kind than that of animals, but of a different degree. Given this criticism, the speciesism Singer describes is not restricted to meat consumers, but may also apply to anthropocentric vegetarian discourses that still relegate the animal below the human by only focusing on the effect abstinence from meat has on the individual person.

Although the health message advances the importance of a vegetarian diet, it remains curiously grounded in the physical and spiritual nourishment it provides the human individual and this generates a dualism. As the *Seventh-Day Adventist Believe* volume states, “By abstaining from unclean foods, God’s people demonstrated their gratefulness for their redemption from the corrupt, unclean world around them.”[[11]](#footnote-10) This is not a uniquely Adventist problem, but, as Singer himself notes, one that is intimately tied to the Christian tradition itself, “Humans, and only humans, are made in the image of God, and given dominion over the animals.”[[12]](#footnote-11) While Adventism has attempted to correct this by transitioning from “dominion” to the, albeit better, “stewardship” model, there still remains a hierarchy that places the human person above animals, “It was as God’s representatives that man was placed over the lower created orders. The animal kingdom cannot understand the sovereignty of God, but many animals are capable of loving and serving man.”[[13]](#footnote-12) The status of animals as a lower created order and their utilitarian purpose, “serving man,” do not differ all that much from a paradigm of dominion. Dorothee Soelle and Shirley A. Cloyes rightfully maintain, “All these dichotomies are based on a distorted understanding of creation...On the contrary, it is the human being who belongs to the earth, and to belong means to live in mutual dependence.”[[14]](#footnote-13) Under the pretense of this dichotomy, the moral status of animals can be disregarded in light of the service they can provide humans. The hierarchy can remain even when the language is slightly shifted.

However, I believe that a closer look at the Adventist health message causes us to unearth a deeper ethical commitment by provoking us to take the moral status of animals seriously and to oppose behavior that is detrimental to their creaturely flourishing. White herself aptly understands this connection and even manages, although only implicitly, to profess the moral status of animals, “Think of the cruelty to animals that meat eating involves, and its effects on those that inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God.”[[15]](#footnote-14) I am suggesting that, by grounding it in the ethical, affirming a vegetarian diet as a crucial element of Christian behavior is a powerful first step in a relational model of Creation that abandons the speciest, anthropocentric confines. The health message lures us into a space that transforms the pre-existing hierarchies between human creatures and animals by suggesting a relational component that extends individual moral actions beyond human subjectivity. Next, we will see how an appeal to Adventist theological anthropology maintains and develops this relationality.

The movement to the theological provides us with the language necessary to advance a relational view of Creation by considering the relationality already intrinsic in Adventist theology’s holistic interpretation of the human person. Adventist theological anthropology posits that the human person is a living soul -- an unity between body, soul and spirit. This implies that -- instead of existing in isolation -- body, soul, and spirit transcend the limits of corporeality by remaining intimately connected with one another. The interdependence of the human person, however, does not exist in isolation from the rest of reality. The harmony of this internal union is not only actualized internally, but in response to the external Creation as well.[[16]](#footnote-15) That is to say, although Creation is made up of a multiplicity of “others” that differ from the human person, “The Other’s difference is inseparable from her/his relations to other Others: other persons, other places, others who are no longer living and not yet living, with the cosmos. In her relation to Others, a person’s boundaries extend in-finitely.”[[17]](#footnote-16) This means that the lifestyle choices promoted by the health message are not only of great importance because they nourish the soul and spirit, but because they are also collective in the sense that they impact the entities that constitute the wider Creation itself. For example, abstaining from meat exhibits this relational component because it impacts the lives of actual animals. By having an effect on the lives of actual animals, the wider environment these same creatures inhabit is also affected. The choice is not only an internal one, it remains collective in its shaping of reality. As Ivone Gebara’s ecofeminist approach suggests about the human person, “This collective dimension is not only anthropological but also cosmic. And in this collective dimension the most important thing is neither autonomy nor individuality, but relatedness.”[[18]](#footnote-17) Our response to the ‘external’ may transcend within the threefold union, but it also transcends back into the immanent, wider Creation and continues to shape the whole of reality through a manifold of relationships.

Humans, along with every other living thing, experience this reality and makes choices within a complex web of relationships. Humans maintain these types of relationships with other humans, animals, plants, the air, water, the cycles of the moon and rotation of the sun, far away planets, and even farther away stars. What we might call reality is definitive of this co-existence, “Relatedness, or the interdependence among all beings, is a constitutive experience of the very universe in which we live.”[[19]](#footnote-18) I contend that the underlying notion here, much like the theological anthropology that informs the health message, is radically holistic. But it extends the relational transcendence expounded in the health message between body, spirit, and soul back out into the whole of Creation problematizing any sort of human/nature dualism. This is not to say that humans are the same entity as plant or animals, but that life on Earth, in whatever form, is able to continue its existence because of these relationships. Jürgen Moltmann captures the implication of this well, “We no longer desire to know in order to dominate, or analyse and reduce in order to reconstruct. Our purpose is now to perceive in order to *participate*, and to enter into the *mutual* relationships of the living thing” [emphasis added].[[20]](#footnote-19) For Moltmann, the human person is an irrevocable member of Creation that, like its other many members, continues to shape and direct it.

In White we find a similar connection between what we normally classify and divide as nature and the human person. She highlights how the processes of nature are integral to the becoming person:

Through the agencies of nature, God is working, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, to keep us alive, to build up and restore us. When any part of the body sustains injury, a healing process is at once begun; nature's agencies are set at work to restore soundness. But the power working through these agencies is the power of God.[[21]](#footnote-20)

White notes that nature’s agencies are manifest in the healing and becoming process of human persons. Given this understanding, I advance that humans and the other creatures that populate the world are, through the Divine touch, powerfully intertwined despite our differences. The otherness of nature’s numerous beings do not indicate that humans are completely separated or cut off from its processes. The ethical and theological implications of the health message in this sense are two-fold; the former insists on questions about the moral status of animals and the latter reminds us that the human person, through the power of God, exists only in relation to the rest of Creation. However, this understanding cannot stand apart from another crucial element of the health message and Adventist theology as a whole -- Sabbath rest.

**Time A/Part: The Sabbath and Creation**

On the one hand, I have argued above that to exist as a human person means participation within the larger macrocosm of Creation. But on the other hand, resting on the Sabbath may appear to imply a disruption in this participation with the rest of the world since God called Creation good, but set the Sabbath apart by resting on the seventh day and calling it holy.[[22]](#footnote-21) In Adventism, the Sabbath has been primarily analyzed through a soteriological and eschatological lens. While I acknowledge the importance of these two dimensions, the potential of the Sabbath, like the health message, remains mostly restricted to the human person with this approach. Although the official doctrine briefly mentions the inclusion of animals, and Ellen G. White discusses experiencing Sabbath outdoors, the Sabbath itself offers a much more profound vision of interdependence through rest. I suggest that this setting apart of the Sabbath within the seven day framework does not necessarily problematize an interrelated understanding of Creation. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel calls the Sabbath a “sanctuary in time” which suggests that any analysis of the Sabbath must contend with the setting apart of time, not just of space. As Moltmann observes, “But what is blessed on the sabbath is not any living thing, but a time: the seventh day.”[[23]](#footnote-22) This means that God’s rest sanctified a particular temporality instead of any object or being. In the following section I will (1) briefly analyze the Sabbath’s relationship to land in the Hebrew Bible, and (2) how the Sabbath as a time a/part disrupts our contemporary linear model of human history along with the systems of ecological exploitation that this linearity engenders.[[24]](#footnote-23)

In order for humans to enter into Sabbath rest, the relationships they maintain with the rest of Creation must also be taken into account. Exodus 20:10 reminds us that the Sabbath law not only demanded human rest but also required the animals of any given household to cease their labor. Even more profoundly, the covenant made at Sinai went beyond animal life by also affording rest to the land occupied by Israel. In Leviticus 26:34, in a warning against disobedience, God reminds the Israelites of the importance of land rest, “Then the land shall enjoy its sabbath years as long as it lies desolate, while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its sabbath years. As long as it lies desolate it shall have the rest it did not have on your sabbaths when you were living on it” (NRSV). Here, God emphasizes to the Israelites that entering into covenant with the Divine also includes the land which they occupied. If the land was not afforded rest every 7 years, it would find the rest it deserved with the exile of the occupying Israelites. Just as humans need rest from their labor, God wanted to remind the Israelites that the land could not be ceaselessly cultivated and exploited. As Kathryn Schifferdecker suggests, “The sabbatical year, which provides rest for the land as well as its inhabitants, points to a holistic understanding of the relationship between humanity and the earth.”[[25]](#footnote-24) Long before the industrial revolution and the neoliberal technocracy of our own era, the inspired Biblical authors understood the importance of rest not just for humans, but for the community of Creation.

The Bible reflects another significant component of this rest for land in Leviticus with the Jubilee year. The Jubilee, like the Sabbath for the land, discloses the powerful connection between humans and the land they inhabit by reminding the Israelites that this land did not belong to them, but to God. Like the release of slaves during the Jubilee year, the incorporation of land rest into the Sabbath declares God’s vision of justice. Schifferdecker rightly maintains, “The Land belongs to God. The people belong to God. And God gives Sabbath as a gift to both land and people...Jubilee also means that no one is left without land and the means to provide for themselves and their families.”[[26]](#footnote-25) Leviticus uses the metaphor of tenants to characterize the relationship between humans and the land they occupy, but, as seen above, if the land is not afforded the rest it deserves, God promises to act justly in favor of the land by removing the Israelites from it. Here, the holiness of the Sabbath and the temporality it engenders offers a rest concerned with both renewal and justice. I advance that the relationship between land and humans reflected in Leviticus is better understood as one of kinship instead of dominion or even stewardship. Instead of the top-down hierarchical dualism, the Jubilee year shows that the human person and the land sustain each other because they are interdependent. Next, we will wade across the ripples of history in order to see the promises this rest holds for the time and space of our contemporary setting. Adventism, given the Christian covenant, does not ascribe to the Levitical laws, but the rest for land still communicates a penetrating truth about the Sabbath’s role in this global age.

In order to understand the subversive potential of the Sabbath for us today, we must first analyze the linear concept of time. Paul Gillen and Devleena Ghosh argue that modernity has theorized time as a linear historical movement, “Linear time provides the basis of the historical and national consciousness of modernity.”[[27]](#footnote-26) Critics like Enrique Dussel and Walter Mignolo note this modernist conception of time implies a supposed progressive and deterministic movement that is totalizing in its eclipse of the Other.[[28]](#footnote-27) Yet it is not only humans who are subjected to the domination of linear time -- the rest of Creation, made up of plant and creaturely life, may also be exploited for the sake of “human progress.” Although the postmodern moment implies the overcoming of modernity itself, modernity’s fruit, as Dussel suggests, has ripened in the form of contemporary capitalism and its self-regulating market.[[29]](#footnote-28) Liberation theologians Néstor Míguez, Jung Mo Sung, and Joerg Rieger argue that capitalism aims to transcend the boundaries of the social, political, and cultural by ascribing value to the temporalities in which labor, production, and consumption operate across every facet of creaturely life.[[30]](#footnote-29) “Moreover, the primary orienting object of capitalism remains,” they maintain, “the search for more money as the ‘supreme good,’ that is, as the transcendental value.”[[31]](#footnote-30) The search for this ‘supreme good’ in capitalism can only happen in the present in order to open up the future for economic growth. More work, despite the toll this labor may have on the person at an individual and social level, is celebrated along with a higher rate of consumption of material goods.

However, if the human person takes a rest from this consumerism and production, they step outside the market’s hegemony, outside its linear and homogenous temporality,[[32]](#footnote-31) and obstruct capitalism’s *telos* -- a “supreme good” grounded on what has been revealed to be an oppressive quest for economic growth and expansion.[[33]](#footnote-32) Here, participation in the market is advanced as a moral imperative while cessation is interpreted as morally corrupt because it hinders the market’s concern for the “common good.” Creation can be exploited, even sacrificed, for the sake of this “supreme good.”[[34]](#footnote-33) As John Cobb accurately observes, “According to economists, we really cannot say that food for the hungry yields more utility than a third TV set in a rich family’s second house.” [[35]](#footnote-34)This temporality, a product of human economic and political systems, generates a new moral language and is precisely that which the Sabbath is a/part from. Rabbi Heschel understood this well and notes the promise the Sabbath holds not just for humans but for Creation itself:

To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we should not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow men and the forces of nature -- is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for man’s progress than the Sabbath?[[36]](#footnote-35)

At any moment, human persons can be both complicit in, and victims of, this homogeneous model and its totalizing economic and political structures. But the Sabbath’s weekly arrival creates the opportunity for an alternative through rest.

The Sabbath disrupts and transforms this totalizing model by inviting the human person to experience their interdependence with the rest of Creation within a particular, sustaining, and transformative temporality.[[37]](#footnote-36) “It is a day on which we are called to share in what is eternal in time,” maintains Heschel, “to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.”[[38]](#footnote-37) The Sabbath is not only a celebration of the primordial act of Creation, but also a celebration of what Paul calls the “new creation” ignited by Christ that bursts forth within the midst of the old order (2 Corinthians 5:17). This “new creation” points to the interdependent becoming of heterogenous entities, through the Divine touch, that a linear model of time, with its totalization, fails to account for. Heschel rightfully contends that this primordial creation could not continue to exist without the Sabbath, “Yet its [Creation’s] survival depends upon the holiness of the seventh day. Great are the laws that govern the processes of nature. Yet without holiness there would be neither greatness nor nature.”[[39]](#footnote-38) Although time is sacred instead of space, the rest Sabbath time introduces cultivates the relationships that are violated by the contemporary brutal mechanisms of labor and consumption. It is in this temporality that, through God, the relationships that constitute existence find their rest and renewal from domination.

Still, a difficulty arises in formulating the alterity of Sabbath time and its relation to Creation. If the Sabbath is “set apart” -- different from Creation’s temporality -- how does it make itself accessible and engender transformation and renewal? I suggest that the “setting apart” of the Sabbath does not imply a static, unrelated, and far removed temporality from the one experienced by Creation. After all, this would only establish another dualism. However, if the Sabbath is understood as a time a/part, the dualism collapses into a dipolar relationality. Appearing once a week, the Sabbath is “a part,” immanent, in the becoming and continual transformation of Creation. At the same time, the sanctified Sabbath temporality is “apart,” transcendent, since the experience of the Divine through sacred time can never lose its novelty and utter difference in its encounter with Creation. “In the resting, and hence direct, unmediated presence of God, all created beings find their dwelling,” suggests Moltmann, “In the resting presence of God all creatures find their sustaining foundation.”[[40]](#footnote-39) For Moltmann, the Sabbath allows the whole of Creation to experience a piece of the future that is still to come. The eschatologization of the doctrine of Creation that Moltmann affirms remains an attractive model for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, but Moltmann does not fully expand on the correlation between the “transcendence” and “immanence” of the Sabbath that I have offered. In contrast, I suggest that the Sabbath is a/part precisely because it offers rest and transformation that, sustained by God’s love, is only actualized within the interdependence of all created things by affirming their past (pre-existence) in the manifestation of the present and the lure of the future.

With this convergence of time, the Sabbath a/part, somewhat similar to Heschel’s own formulation, becomes an integral part of our transient, ever changing reality. As process-relational theologian Catherine Keller suggests, “Rather its [Sabbath’s] genius is to make divinity at home within the rhythmic structures of natural/historical time, even as it structures human work within a sustaining cycle of refreshment.”[[41]](#footnote-40) It would be a mistake to equate capitalism’s linear, homogenous temporality and Sabbath time as the same thing, but it would also be a mistake to suggest that the Sabbath only serves to disrupt this temporality. Instead, the Sabbath continually arrives once a week in order to, disrupt and transform human time and the exploitation it incites. Through this rest, Creation, in its longing to “transcend the given,” has the opportunity to experiences its interdependence in kinship with all living things, the land they occupy, and, most importantly, with the Divine presence.[[42]](#footnote-41)

**Conclusion: Dreaming an Adventist Relational Ecotheology**

The beautiful thing about dreams is that they do not just reveal what is, but offer a vision for what could be. I have argued above that Adventist theology must dream beyond the flesh by re-interpreting its set of distinct beliefs through a relational and ecological lens that abandons anthropocentrism. My analysis of the health message attempts to show that the flourishing of the human person is tied to the flourishing of the rest of Creation. I argue that healthful living cannot be discussed in isolation from the moral status of animals and the effects abstinence from meat have on the wider environment itself. By highlighting the collective, relational character of the human person I hope that our kinship with the rest of Creation has become more apparent. Following this brief survey, I suggest a broader and more dynamic model of the Sabbath that attempts to resolve the human/nature dualism by extending rest to animals and the land. In keeping with the spirit of Leviticus, I advocate for a rest that disrupts the linear cycles of production and engenders the transformation and renewal of the whole of Creation through the weekly experience of sacred time. Here I am drawn to White’s beautiful affirmation of the Sabbath as a time for communion with Creation, “In order to keep the Sabbath holy, it is not necessary that we enclose ourselves in walls, shut away the beautiful scenes of nature and from the free, invigorating air of heaven.”[[43]](#footnote-42) Finally, I suggest that the Sabbath offers the opportunity for a weekly reconciliation between all created beings from the alienation incited by our contemporary systems of labor and production.

The health message and observance of the Sabbath means that our dietary habits and experience on the seventh day provide the paradigms from which to actively seek the transformation of exploitative economic and political systems of domination that have materialized through globalization. My analysis above only engaged two of the 28 fundamental beliefs, but I believe that the full development of an Adventist ecotheology must continue to dream of new ecological interpretations for the others. More specifically, I think that eschatology and soteriology remain the most crucial area in need of expansion and ecological configuration given our global crisis.

Scientists have suggested that we have entered into a new geological era -- the anthropocene.[[44]](#footnote-43) Human activity on Earth has so drastically altered the world that the Holocene has perhaps come to an end.[[45]](#footnote-44) What is the role of the Adventist church during this environmental crisis? When reality is the stuff of nightmares, only the bold dreams of a community can challenge the status quo. In last year’s ASRS session, Zane Yi convincingly argued for a publically oriented Adventist theology.[[46]](#footnote-45) I want to conclude by affirming this trajectory and by suggesting that the ecological dimension remains a significant area for Adventists to engage in our concern for the public, common good. The Seventh-Day Adventist church finds itself in an unique position to become actively involved in initiatives, like those advanced by the Adventist Peace Fellowship, that seek to take environmental concerns seriously and empower the flourishing of faith communities in relation to their ecological neighbors. The Adventist church can continue to address this crisis by advancing projects that tackle food justice, environmental racism, land conservation, and animal rights. We can no longer afford to remain restricted by the anthropocentric confines of our theological language when its underlying truths offer a profound alternative -- a relational, holistic vision for Creation.[[47]](#footnote-46)

1. Boff, *Ecology & Liberation: A New Paradigm*, trans. John Cumming(Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. At the same time, dreaming beyond the flesh is not a call to ignore political and cultural issues that have drastic, and often brutal, implications on the human body (i.e. race, gender, sexuality, etc.). Instead, I am implying that we can only truly talk about the flesh, the human person, by moving beyond an isolated perspective that does not take into account the complex relationships that constitute it in the first place. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Re-thinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 5. Morton argues that ecological language must move away from the concept of nature because it paradoxically sustains a romantic dualism that engenders environmental violence. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. The word “relational” refers to the process-relational philosophy first expounded by Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead himself does not play a significant role in this paper, but the metaphysics he advanced has certainly influenced many of the authors I quote. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. See: “Adventist Health Study-2 Publication Database,” Adventist Health Studies, accessed June 12, 2016, http://publichealth.llu.edu/adventist-health-studies/scientific-publications/adventist-health-study-2-publication-database. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2003), 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. It is important to note that Singer is a preference utilitarian, but citing his “argument from marginal cases” does not mean that the rest of his philosophical commitments are affirmed in this paper. I simply want to suggest that the experience of suffering makes for a compelling case regarding the moral status of animals. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Ibid., 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. *Seventh-Day Adventists Believe*, “Christian Behavior,” (Pacific Press Publishing Association: Nampa, ID, 2005), 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Peter Singer, “Engaging with Christianity,” in *God, the Good, and Utilitarianism*, ed. John Perry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. *Seventh-Day Adventists Believe*, “The Nature of Man,” 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Dorothee Soelle and Shirley A. Cloyes, *To Work and to Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. White, *The Ministry*, 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. This should not be misinterpreted as the synthetic a priori judgments famously advanced by Kant. Instead, I am suggesting that the material and mental poles are always in relation instead of isolation. They respond and interact with each other. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Rivera, *The Touch*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Ibid., 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. White, *The Ministry*, 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. Genesis 2: 1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. Moltmann, *God in Creation,* 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. The structure of the word a/part here has a double function that implies both immanence and transcendence as well as distance and proximity. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Kathryn Schifferdecker, “Sabbath and Creation,” *World & World* 36, no. 3 (2016): 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. Schifferdecker, “Sabbath and Creation,” 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. Paul Gillen, *Colonialism & Modernity* (Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press, 2007), 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. See: Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and The Myth of Modernity* (New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995), and Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). Both Dussel and Mignolo approach modernity as an epistemological system that engenders material violence. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. See Dussel, *The Invention*, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. As the old adage goes, “Time is money.” [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. Néstor Míguez, Joerg Rieger, and Jung Mo Sung, *Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2009), 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
32. It is important to clarify two things here. First, the homogenous temporality that capitalism engenders does not mean that there is only one temporality experienced by all humans. Instead, this temporality attempts to subsume all others into one by eclipsing the meanings and experiences of community imaginaries at the local level. Second, even today, there exist different forms of capitalism. For the sake of brevity, I have opted to analyze capitalism from a more generalized, abstract perspective, but there are a number of totalizing capitalist temporalities that dominate different areas of the globe. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
33. The violence of the neoliberal capitalist system is well documented, see: Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism & Global Order* (New York City: Seven Stories Press, 1999), Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2015), and Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (New York City: Simon & Schuster, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
34. A clear antecedent to this neoliberal capitalism is the sacrifice of millions of indigenous peoples during the conquest and colonization of the Americas. Through the brutal ‘encomienda’ system, the Spanish violated indigenous bodies and made them disposable for the sake of capital gain. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
35. John Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
36. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1994), 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
37. Ibid., 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
38. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
39. Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
40. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
41. Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York, NY: Routledge Press, 2003), 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
42. Soelle and Cloyes, *To Work and*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
43. White, *Testimonies for the Church 2,* 582. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
44. Scientists from the Working Group on the Anthropocene voted to the name change and have officially submitted the proposal to the International Geological Congress in Capetown. For more, see: Mahita Gajanan, “Scientists Say a New Geological Epoch Called the Anthropocene is Here,” *TIME Magazine*, accessed September 15, 2016, <http://time.com/4470514/anthropocene-geological-epoch-earth-scientists/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
45. For contemporary discussions on the anthropocene, see: Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), Roy Scranton*, Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of Civilization* (San Francisco: City Light Publishers, 2015), and *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. Jason W. Moore (Dexter, Michigan: PM Press, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
46. Zane Yi, *Christ and Culture Revisited: Toward an Adventist Theology of Culture*, Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Atlanta, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
47. I want to extend my gratitude to Rafael Reyes III, Young-Chun “Lorenzon” Kim, Mindy Bielas, and Nazia Islam for providing great guidance at the different research and writing stages of this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)