

## THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

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Theological Seminary

Title: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY AND FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

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Christian *praxis* in the area of financial stewardship seems not to have benefitted much from the dynamic imaginative tableaux of biblical eschatology. The connection that exists between eschatology and financial stewardship remains unexplored. This is shown by the observation that Christian authors seem to assume without providing convincing evidence that eschatology and financial stewardship are related. Hence, the question; is there a relationship between biblical eschatology and financial stewardship that can set the believer's and the church's work in a proper perspective?

Fundamentally, the study preoccupied itself with understanding the liaison that exists between biblical eschatology and financial stewardship. As a philosophical research, the study tracked down different authors that combine eschatology and financial stewardship from the Ante-Nicene Fathers to the present. Lexicons, Bible dictionaries, commentaries and other theological books are used in this research.

This study concludes that eschatology has ethical implications on financial stewardship, namely, Accountability (*object*) and the rewards principle (*impetus*). Thus, eschatology both provides expectations and incentives to Christian stewards. Jesus revealed that how Christian stewards deal with the wealth entrusted them by God has a bearing on their final destiny.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY  
AND FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

A thesis  
presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by  
Ruwell Maphuzukunotha-Nkonzo

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To my wife and my daughters

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

Eschatology is generally understood as a doctrine that deals with last things including the end-time prophecies, death, resurrection, millennium, judgment and the Second Advent etc. Charles M. Horne is convinced that “eschatology is the controlling thematic in dogmatic theology.”<sup>1</sup> For Jurgen Moltmann eschatology is not merely an element of Christianity, but it is the vehicle of Christian faith as such, the essential in which everything in it is set, the brightness that suffuses everything here in the purview of the *eschaton*.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Holmes Rolston suggests that “the convictions which a man holds concerning the ultimate meaning of human life will affect the way in which he lives in this world.”<sup>3</sup> He continues, “If men believe that life here is a period of testing and preparation for the time when they must stand before the judgment bar of Christ, they will seek to live in such a manner that they will be ready to meet their Lord.”<sup>4</sup> Evidently, Church history shows that in the pre-Constantine period eschatology strongly influenced early Christian societies that shared those ideas or views.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles M. Horne, “Eschatology-The Controlling Thematic in Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 13 (Winter 1970): 53.

<sup>2</sup>Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London, England: SCM Press, 1967), 16.

<sup>3</sup>Holmes Rolston, “Paul’s Philosophy of Stewardship,” in *Stewardship in Contemporary Theology*, ed. T. K. Thompson (New York, NY: Association Press, 1960), 59.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Helen Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty, and Early Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy, 2012), 51.

On the other side, financial stewardship refers to the understanding that the monetary resources that the Christians have are entrusted to them by God.

Consequently, believers are to be prudent in their use of finances because God will make them accountable for how they used the riches that were entrusted with.

Accordingly, Christians generally acquiesce that stewardship, inclusive of financial matters, is a necessary element of faith<sup>6</sup> and that as God's trustees, humans should sacrifice of their means to furthering their Redeemer's cause in this world out of cheerfulness, regularity, proportionality and gratitude.<sup>7</sup>

Although, several pieces of literature have been written on eschatology and financial stewardship as independent subjects, there is evidence that the two have some form of relationship. For instance, Don Fanning asserts that every belief system of eschatology has a dynamic effect of molding, guiding and motivating for service, sacrifice and manner of living.<sup>8</sup> From what Fanning claims, eschatology is a determinant of Christian *praxis*. Also, Warren A. Quanbeck observes in the gospels "because of the eschatological urgency of discipleship, the teaching of Jesus stresses necessity of being ready, of counting the cost, of exercising diligence in stewardship."<sup>9</sup> In the same vein, Douglas Hall asserts that 1 Peter 4:10, 17 stresses the looming judgment that awaits the steward.<sup>10</sup> Yet he does not give convincing

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<sup>6</sup>Charles E. Bradford, "Stewardship," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 651.

<sup>7</sup>John H. Leith, ed. *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1982), 522.

<sup>8</sup>Don Fanning, "Eschatology and Missions," *Themes of Theology that Impacts Missions*, Paper 8 (2009):1. [http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgm\\_theo/8](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgm_theo/8). Accessed July 20, 2016.

<sup>9</sup>Warren A. Quanbeck, "Stewardship in the Teaching of Jesus," in *Stewardship in Contemporary Theology*, ed. T. K. Thompson (New York, NY: Association Press, 1960), 49.

<sup>10</sup>Douglas John Hall, *The Steward* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990)

evidence, that the judgment that is referred to in 1 Peter 4:17 really concerns stewardship.

Similarly, T. N. Kantonen presumes that Christian theology places “the church and its work in the eschatological setting of the gospel.”<sup>11</sup> According to him, stewardship like other the Christian doctrines finds its ultimate purpose or end in eschatology. However, Kantonen seems only to assume that stewardship should find its end in eschatology but he does not prove the basis of his assumption.

Beside noting that stewardship is an essential element of faith, Charles Bradford observes that the whole concept is heightened by the eschatological pronouncement of Revelation 14:7- “Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgement has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the and the fountains of water.” This gives impetus, urgency and timeliness of the doctrine of stewardship.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, there are indications that eschatology and financial stewardship may be related. Nevertheless, the connection remains obscure. Therefore, a quest for the relationship between eschatology and financial stewardship is not only justified but called for.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Is there any connection between biblical eschatology and financial stewardship? There seems to be a gap as to what the liaison of financial stewardship in biblical eschatology entails.

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<sup>11</sup>T. N. Kantonen, “Stewardship and Christian Doctrine,” in *Stewardship in Contemporary Theology*, ed. T. K. Thompson (New York, NY: Association Press, 1960), 180.

<sup>12</sup> Bradford, “Stewardship,” 65

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study seeks to discover and understand the relationship between biblical eschatology and financial stewardship. Essentially, the study seeks to understand how the two are connected and how they influence each other.

### **Significance of the Study**

The importance of the study lies in the fact that, if a connection between biblical eschatology and financial stewardship really exists, then people living in the end-time should not only exhibit faithfulness in other spheres of Christian behavior but also in financial stewardship.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

The study concerns itself solely with determining the relationship of financial stewardship and biblical eschatology. That being the case, the only pieces of literature this study reviews are those that speak directly to the relationship of the two. Bible texts are also consulted for their thematic relevance to the topic under study. Hence, the study does not preoccupy itself with materials that are not relevant to what is being considered in this research.

### **Methodology**

Methodologically, this study coalesces a historical, biblical, extra-biblical and theological approach. On the one hand, the historical part traces from the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers to the present the different writers who saw a link between financial stewardship and biblical eschatology. This track down allows the research to discover not only the contribution of different epochs to the subject under study but also the developments thereof. On the other hand, the theological component reviews, analyzes and synthesizes Bible texts and passages that relate biblical eschatology to

financial stewardship. By so doing, the study gets to grips with the authoritative voice of the Bible as the final word on the matter.

However, it should be noted that the composite nature of the methodology has its down side of making the research too wide at the expense of a potential in-depth study that is afforded by a noncompound methodology.

### Overview of the Study

Chapter 1 begins with the background of the study. It is followed by the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance or justification of the study, delimitations, and the methodology employed. Finally, an overview of the study is the last aspect in this section.

Chapter 2 concerns itself with the review of literature. Subsequent to the previous is a survey of authors from the Early Church to the Postmodern Church who propose that there are connections between biblical eschatology and financial stewardship. Lastly, the main points are summarized and conclusions are drawn.

Chapter 3 begins with the meanings and foundations of financial stewardship and eschatology. What follows is an examination of biblical and extra-biblical passages where a correlation of biblical eschatology and financial stewardship is present or alluded to. Next, is consideration of how eschatology and financial stewardship relate with each other. Since Norman R. Gulley suggests that it is important for all theological findings to be evaluated against the cosmic conflict metanarrative, the study does the same.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003), 1:168.

In Chapter 4 is demonstrated how the findings can be applicable to real life situations. Thereafter, the findings of the study are summarized, highlighting the principal points of the research. From this précis, conclusions are drawn and that will mark the end of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section appraises the views of different authors on the liaison between financial stewardship and biblical eschatology. This review follows a historical approach that begins from the Ante-Nicene epoch up to the present. At the end a summary and conclusions are drawn from the findings.

#### **Authors Coupling Eschatology with Financial Stewardship**

The historical trace of authors that have written about financial stewardship and biblical eschatology begins from the Apostolic Fathers to recent authors on the subject under consideration authors.

#### **Early Church Epoch**

There is evidence that a number of Apostolic Fathers in this epoch wrote about financial stewardship. For instance, Ignatius of Antioch (AD 39-108) and Polycarp (AD 69-155) linked almsgiving with soteriology. Christians were admonished to give alms either so that God would deliver them from death<sup>14</sup> or that their sins would be forgiven them as Ignatius.<sup>15</sup> Irenaeus on the other hand distinguished Jewish tithe giving from Christian voluntary giving.<sup>16</sup> However, Hermas (1<sup>st</sup> and mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) seems to have been the earliest to link his eschatology to financial stewardship.

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<sup>14</sup>Polycarp *Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians* 10, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 1:35.

<sup>15</sup>Ignatius *The Epistle of Ignatius to Hero, a Deacon of Antioch*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 1:114.

<sup>16</sup>Irenaeus *Against Heresies*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 1:484.

Hermas designated the eschatological Church as the cosmic tower under construction whose completion would come after the master had tested it when he brings the *eschaton*.<sup>17</sup> Hermas saw wealth as precarious to its owners and therefore incompatible with the Christian religion. He saw the danger of riches as lying in attaching the owner to this world such that when persecution comes the owners would not be able to detach themselves from them. Also, the rich stood a great chance of neglecting to care for the poor.<sup>18</sup> He admonished the rich to use their wealth to care for the poor so long as time permitted, since the cosmic tower was still under construction, for if they lost the chance of doing so they would “be shut out...beyond the gate of the tower.”<sup>19</sup> Also, he exhorted the rich to dispense with the vanities of their riches if they would be allowed entry into the kingdom of God.<sup>20</sup> He also emphasized the urgency with which the rich were to dispense with their wealth. They were supposed to repent quickly if they would be saved. The response of the rich was to be expedited because the master would come unexpectedly.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, this study concludes that Hermas did not condemn riches *per se* but warned about the dangers of riches with regards to the coming eschatological judgment. He also stressed the need for the rich to understand the duty they have toward the poor in the sight of God. However, Hermas’ emphasized on the duties of the rich at the expense of the financial duties of the poor. He made it appear as if the poor have no financial duty before God with respect to eschatology.

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<sup>17</sup>Hermas *Similitudes* 9.5, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 2:44.

<sup>18</sup>Hermas *Visions* 3.6, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 2:15,16.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Hermas *Similitudes* 9.31 (ANF, 2.53).

<sup>21</sup>Hermas *Similitudes* 9.7 (ANF, 2.45).

For Tertullian's (AD 150-225) eternal life is gained through keeping the commandments of God and doing charitable work. His blending of eschatology and financial stewardship can be deciphered in his response against Marcion's idea that Jesus had abrogated the Ten Commandments and his explanation of the parable of the ten talents. Tertullian refers to the dialogue of Jesus and the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23). He argues that in this text, Jesus clearly that He came to abolish the God's law but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17). According to Tertullian, Jesus showed it by directing the rich man to the keeping of the commandments and charity if he was to gain eternal life. Tertullian deduces that Jesus wanted the rich young ruler to understand that the one whom he called Good was actually God, since God alone is good, and that everlasting life and the treasure in heaven were at his disposal to give to those who take his command.<sup>22</sup> Also, for Tertullian, charity stands as a "supplementary precept" that was given by Jesus which is as enduring as the Ten Commandments. Therefore, it may be said that, for Tertullian only those that practice Christian charity, alongside keeping the commandments, are entitled to "everlasting life and the treasure in heaven."

Also, Tertullian gathers from how the master rewarded his ten servants (Luke 19:11-27) that God is "a God of judgment—even a God who, in strict account, not only bestows honour, but also takes away what a man seems to have."<sup>23</sup> Hence, the fact that God is the rightful owner of money teaches Tertullian that he ought to be fruitful in his spending.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Tertullian *Against Marcion* 4.35, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 3:410.

<sup>23</sup>Tertullian *Against Marcion* 4.36 (ANF, 3.412).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

To sum up, for Tertullian securing the treasure of heaven is indispensable with Christian charity. Again, the understanding of a coming judgment with God as both the owner of money with which the steward was entrusted and as judge should lead the steward to wise spending.

Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) warned the Christians of his time that the love for earthly treasure was incompatible with the spirit of earnest waiting for the *eschaton*. He was preoccupied with how the rich Christians could be saved. He conceived the present world and the one to come as diametrically opposed.<sup>25</sup> For him, the proper conduct by Christians in the present world with regards to material things would result in their coronation in the next world.<sup>26</sup> Thus Christians were discouraged from pursuing the riches of this world because it would result in them fixing their hearts upon the material things. As far as Clement was concerned spirituality and wealth were mutually exclusive.<sup>27</sup>

Contra those that had their minds fixed on wealth, Clement describes those that are rich in Christian virtue in the following words “he then is truly and rightly rich who is rich in virtue, and is capable of making a holy and faithful use of any fortune.”<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, Clement propagated that since earthly riches were antithetical to God, they were to be cast away by Christians. Almsgiving was the way to cast them

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<sup>25</sup>Clement *Homily* 6, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 7:518.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 20 (ANF, 7.523).

<sup>27</sup>Clement *Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved?* 17, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 2:595.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 19 (ANF, 2.596).

away in preparation for the coming judgment.<sup>29</sup> According to him almsgiving ranks above prayer and fasting and as necessary as repentance.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, according to Clement financial stewardship is tied to judgment. How the rich dealt with their wealth will be subject to judgment. Thus, if the rich are not to be found wanting, they should do away with their carnal riches by helping the poor through almsgiving. Again, whilst wealth is not evil for Clement, setting one's desire upon wealth is.

Cyprian of Carthage (AD 200-258) is another Apostolic Father who merged eschatology and financial stewardship. However, J. P. Burns suggests that Cyprian's views on eschatology and morality were widely influenced by the persecutions that were propagated by Decius (250-251) and Valerian (257-258), and the dreadful plague of 252-254 CE.<sup>31</sup>

Cyprian assured the Christians who were losing their earthly treasures at the hands of their persecutors, that heaven was by the corner and the Christians would soon be compensated with heavenly riches. He interpreted those times as the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning last day events as predicted by Jesus Christ (Matt 24; Luke 21). In light of the fulfillment of the end times prophecies Cyprian exhorted the believers not to concern themselves with earthly riches.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, Cyprian exhorted Christian believers to be cheerful givers. The motivation for giving was that Christian giving was watched by God and the angels in

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<sup>29</sup>Clement *Homily 20* (ANF, 7.523).

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., (ANF, 7.522).

<sup>31</sup>J. P. Burns, "Cyprian's Eschatology: Explaining the Divine Purpose," in *The Early Church in its Context: Essays in Honor of Everett Ferguson*, ed. A. J. Malherbe, F. W. Norris, and J. W. Thompson (Leiden, NY: Brill, 1998), 59-73, quoted in Rhee, *Loving the Poor*, 76.

<sup>32</sup>Cyprian *On the Mortality 2*, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 5:496.

heaven.<sup>33</sup> Also, he said, if they failed to give, Satan would denigrate Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. According to Cyprian, Satan would brag that his subjects serve him freely even without him having to die for them or promise them any heaven.<sup>34</sup> On that pretext, Christians were supposed to be motivated to give more than the tithes that are stipulated in the Bible. They were to exhibit vigor in their giving to God.<sup>35</sup> Alongside his emphasis on giving to God, he also propagated almsgiving.<sup>36</sup> Also, his belief in the second coming of Jesus led him to develop ascetic tendencies towards riches.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, according to Cyprian, Christians were not to bemoan their loss of property at the hands of their persecutors but were supposed to count it as joy because their persecution was proving the nearness of the Second Advent. Instead, those that had wealth were to get rid of it through giving to God and almsgiving. By so doing they would be making Christ their partner in earthly riches so that He in turn would make them “fellow-heirs with Him the heavenly Kingdom.”<sup>38</sup>

Like his predecessors, Lactantius (AD 250-325) in his *Divine Institutes* advocated that the only means of getting entitlement to the heavenly treasures was despising the earthly riches. Christians were expected by him to cut themselves off the allurements of earthly treasures. His expectation of the reversal of fortunes for the

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<sup>33</sup>Cyprian *On Works and Alms* 21& 22, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 5:482.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Cyprian *On the Unity of the Church* 26, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 5:429.

<sup>36</sup>Cyprian *On Works and Alms* 5 (ANF, 5.47).

<sup>37</sup>Cyprian *On the Lapsed* 35, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 5:447.

<sup>38</sup>Cyprian *On Works and Alms* 9 (ANF, 5.479).

saints at the eschaton was incomparable and unequalled.<sup>39</sup>Also, Lactantius advocated that liberality be shown to the poor.<sup>40</sup>

In conclusion, Lactantius emphasized that Christians are guaranteed of their joy in heaven and should despise earthly wealth and focus on the heavenly riches. God as the righteous Judge will not fail them if they have a right perspective on wealth. For him, the best way of dealing with earthly riches was giving them to the less-privileged.

### **Medieval Church Epoch**

Great changes are evident in this epoch with regards to both eschatology and financial stewardship. In eschatology, the belief of the Ante-Nicene epoch in a premillennial Advent which would in turn bring about the utopia was superseded by amillennialism and post-millennialism.<sup>41</sup> “It became the official policy of the state-church to bring about the universal millennial utopia of a church controlled world state at any cost and by any means.”<sup>42</sup> Due to the influence of Augustine’s (387-430) *City of God* the Church was equated to the Kingdom of God.<sup>43</sup> For Augustine, the Second Advent of Christ would only come subsequent to the church becoming more dominant in transforming the nations of the world. As a result, Augustine’s quest for a

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<sup>39</sup>Lactantius *Divine Institutes* 7.27, trans. Alexander Roberts and James Donald (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 7:222.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (1916; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 2:614.

<sup>42</sup>Fanning, “Eschatology and Missions,” 22.

<sup>43</sup>Philip Schaff, ed., *Augustine’s City of God and Christian Doctrine* (New York, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1890), 2:429, 430.

tripartite kingdom; political, judicial and religious, became the goal of the Middle Ages.<sup>44</sup>

Augustine's theological power to sway was also felt in the area of faith and wealth. In the Ante-Nicene period Gnostic tendencies were prevalent such that some Christians tried to separate themselves from the world. They held that everything material was bad and as a result they got rid of their possessions.<sup>45</sup> The coming of Augustine strengthened Clement's (of Alexandria) view that the riches were in of themselves not a hindrance to salvation. Augustine pointed out that wealth was a good part of God's creative work. Instead, the attitude of the soul is the problem.<sup>46</sup> Thus Augustine suggested three economic pillars for the Christian thought; first, wealth is good to be worked for and possessed, second, wealth is to be used but not enjoyed, and finally, he encouraged monasticism by promoting destitution to a higher post than being comparatively wealthy- doctrine of supererogation.<sup>47</sup>

Augustine stated that almsgiving equivalent to a tithe on one's income secures one's pardon in the judgment and is a way of transferring one's riches to heaven. He showed himself in line with the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus) and the Greek speaking Fathers in Rome (Ambrose and Jerome) who advocated the sharing of any superfluous wealth that one had.

However, Augustine went a step further by coupling eschatology with

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<sup>44</sup>Fanning, "Eschatology and Missions," 22.

<sup>45</sup>John Schneider, *Godly Materialism: Rethinking Money and Possessions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 2

<sup>46</sup>Aurelius Augustine "The Confessions of St. Augustine 12.8," *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Edinburg, TX: T & T Clark, 1886), 1:178. Justo L. Gonzalez, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1990), 97.

<sup>47</sup>Schneider, *Godly Materialism*, 32.

financial stewardship. He argued from James 2:13 that almsgiving as a charitable gesture would lead one to be pardoned on the Judgment Day. For him, charity was equivalent to forgiveness. Thus when Jesus said forgiveness for one's men trespasses, is dependent upon how we forgive others (Matt 6:14, 15), He also meant that those that do charitable work like almsgiving will be pardoned on the Judgment Day.<sup>48</sup> He also warned Christians to transfer their wealth to heaven through almsgiving and he suggested that the alms amount to a tenth or tithe.<sup>49</sup> He also advised Christians to wary of approaching doom's day of this world and to hasten to transfer their riches out of this world to everlasting heaven.<sup>50</sup>

In the mid fifth century Salvian of Marsellailles taught that what counts at the judgment bar is almsgiving. His theological convictions stood opposed to those Augustine. For Salvian, the fact that many Christian keep their wealth for the inheritance of their children instead of giving it to the poor was sufficient evidence of the feebleness of their eschatological faith.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, Salvian constantly appealed for his hearers and readers to exhibit more consideration for others, strictness of manners and moral aptitude.<sup>52</sup> He often preached against greed which to him was the principal vice. He reminded his hearers to look forward to eternal rewards that the judgment would bring. He reiterated that

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<sup>48</sup>Schaff, ed., *Augustine's City of God*, 2:668.

<sup>49</sup>Aurelius Augustine "Sermon: Psalm 146," *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Edinburg, TX: T & T Clark, 1886), 8:668.

<sup>50</sup>Gonzalez, *Faith and Wealth*, 217.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>52</sup>Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Portchester, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 154.

what counts before the judgment seat of Christ is only innocence of heart and a generous disposition.<sup>53</sup>

Pope Leo the Great (bishop of Rome 440-461) propagated that the coming judgment would be based on works of mercy and piety as shown in Matthew 24 and 25. With that in mind, he exhorted Christians to be generous and to repent from a general neglect.<sup>54</sup> He exhorted those that wish to be spared by Christ at His judgment to have mercy on the poor.

Therefore, it is evident that the Post-Nicene Fathers, Augustine, Salvian and Pope Leo, continued to encourage the Christian believers of their times to engage in charity especially giving alms in view of the judgment that would be brought about by the *eschaton*.

## **Reformation Epoch**

Martin Luther and John Calvin are noted for their contribution in the area of faith and wealth notwithstanding the fact that they did not couple their ideas with eschatology. They both emphasized the dignity of labor and the right of ownership of property by Christians. For Luther, Christians could own private property but he warned against attachment to earthly riches. While owning property, the Christian was to avoid being inseparably bound to his personal possession or to anything else in this world. Instead, he advocated that Christians should be prepared to lose or sacrifice their possessions with joy in conflict and in persecution for the sake of the gospel.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>55</sup>Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1972), 105, 106.

Similarly, Calvin believed that Christians have the right to property ownership. Alongside, the ownership of property, Calvin promoted a faithful life. By a faithful life he referred to “soberness, righteousness and godliness.”<sup>56</sup> For him “soberness” meant the symbiosis of purity and thrifty use of one’s temporal resources.<sup>57</sup> He suggested that the key word of life is stewardship. Calvin believed that the essence of stewardship is generosity and liberality towards the needy.<sup>58</sup>

However, Andreas Bodenstein Carlstadt and Thomas Muntzer took a militant stance in their way of reformation. They severed relations with Luther. Hence, they were labeled as Radical Reformers together with their followers. These Radical Reformers showed resurgence to the pre-millennial eschatology of the Early Church, questioned the private ownership of property, and condemned tithing.<sup>59</sup> Philip Schaff reveals a contrast between the Reformers and the Radical Reformers in the way they related to the existing Christian church and the state, and also what they purported to achieve.<sup>60</sup>

Among Radical Reformers, George Haug and John Hut believed that theirs were the last days and were at the brink of the fulfillment of the promise of the outpouring of the sevenfold Spirit (Isa 11:2). They denigrated the holders of benefices and clerical beneficiaries of forced tithing.<sup>61</sup> For them, the outpouring of the latter rain

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<sup>56</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1967), 692.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 695. Schneider, *Godly Materialism*, 34, 35

<sup>59</sup>George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1962), 124, 388. Schneider, *Godly Materialism*, 32, 79, 80.

<sup>60</sup>Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 7:49.

<sup>61</sup>Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 79, 80.

of the Holy Spirit was supposed to be preceded by a righteousness that revealed itself in voluntary giving as opposed to tithing.

It may be concluded that the Reformation managed to do away with monasticism and also to promote that Christian be true stewards who were not attached to earthly possessions. On the other hand, the Radical Reformers went against Augustine's position that the alms were supposed to be equivalent to a tenth. They propagated eschatological beliefs that were contra tithing.

### **Modern Epoch**

Germany in the nineteenth century and thereafter, developed a different kind of eschatological beliefs are skewed towards being more philosophical than historical. For instance, Freidrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) promulgated an eschatological moral kingdom in man, through moral devotions as Christ lives in one's life.<sup>62</sup> Like Schleiermacher, Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) advocated that man should bring about the utopia instead of waiting for one that Christ would bring about.<sup>63</sup> The two are charged with razing biblical eschatology.

Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) and Karl Barth (1886-1968) brought about a resurgence of eschatology.<sup>64</sup> A. L. Moore describes Schweitzer's 'consistent eschatology' as a response against immanentism and liberalism of the nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, Barth attempted to silence the critics of biblical

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<sup>62</sup> F. Lichtenberger, *History of Germany Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. and ed. by W. Haste (Edinburgh, TX: T. & T. Clark, 1889), 47, 48.

<sup>63</sup> Albrecht Ritschl, *A Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Edinburg, TX: T & T Clark, 1902), 27.

<sup>64</sup> Schweitzer suggests that Jesus' eschatology always anticipated an imminent end. However, he deems that to have been a deception on the part of Jesus. [Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (1911, repr., Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005), 369.]

<sup>65</sup> A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden, NY: Brill, 1966), 35-48.

eschatology by denying both the belief that Jesus ever entered into human history through incarnation and that there was ever to be a Second Advent.<sup>66</sup>

Later, Charles Harold Dodd's (1903) "realized eschatology" proposed that Jesus established his kingdom at His first Advent, thus there was no need for expecting a future kingdom.<sup>67</sup> The other representatives of this view are A.T. Robinson, Joachim Jeremias, and Ethelbert Stauffer.<sup>68</sup> Akin to Dodd's view was the 'symbolic eschatology' of Paul Tillich (1886-1965).<sup>69</sup>

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) propagated for an "existential eschatology."<sup>70</sup> For Dodd, the Advent was in the past, whereas for Bultmann was in the present. Unlike Dodd and Bultmann, Jurgen Moltmann's<sup>71</sup> 'proleptic eschatology' that he propagates in his *Theology of Hope* takes into account the Second Advent of Christ.<sup>72</sup> However, his eschatology is skewed towards the future at the exclusion of the past and the present.

Of the scholars mentioned above, Moltmann, though a twentieth century scholar and in spite of futuristic eschatological belief, believed that the sense of

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<sup>66</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. III-3, *The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. G. W. Bromiley and R. J. Ehrlich (Edinburgh, TX: T. & T. Clark, 1960), 82.

<sup>67</sup>C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936), 7, 28, 38, 39, 46, 63, 93, 128, 206, 232.

<sup>68</sup>Horne, "Eschatology-The Controlling Thematic in Theology," 60.

<sup>69</sup>Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:274-275.

<sup>70</sup>Bultmann proposed that the Second Advent occurs in the present as the Christian encounters the Holy Spirit in everyday life. For him, the second coming of Christ is in the present instead of being in the future. [Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology: The Gifford Lectures 1955* (Edinburg, TX: University Press, 1957), 155.]

<sup>71</sup>Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16, 41, 85, 179.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 16, 192.

expecting the coming kingdom influences obedience, discipleship and Christian love which may be displayed in Christian financial stewardship. Moreover, though he does not explicitly state that there is a relationship between financial stewardship and eschatology, he however implies it because he realizes that there is a relationship between the coming kingdom and Christian conduct. He asserts that the Christian doctrine of conduct must be developed within the domain of the expectation of the coming kingdom of God.<sup>73</sup> For Moltmann, only Christians who have lost their sense of eschatological mission are content with present circumstances of the present world.<sup>74</sup>

### **Postmodern Epoch**

Samuel Dickey shows that there is a relationship between financial stewardship and a sense of eschatological preparedness. He posits that in the parable of Mark 13:5-37 Jesus addressed eschatology and warned His hearers about the need for preparedness. Dickey interprets the parable of the Fig Tree (Mark 13:28-29) in the light of the parallel passages in the synoptic gospels (Matt. 24:32-33; Luke 21:29-31). These three passages of scripture thus give in vivid depiction three cautions in view of the impending end; hearty preparation of spirit and life, faithfulness and liveliness in service, and love toward all those who need us in any way.<sup>75</sup> Dickey also notes that the validity of the parable is eternal rather than temporal. Therefore, according to him their eschatology is still fresh and Christians out keep in their minds that wealth, culture, national positions, social systems, and civilization are transient.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 334.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid

<sup>75</sup>Samuel Dickey, "Three Warnings Concerning Jesus' Second Coming," *The Biblical World* 36, no.4 (1910): 273.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

Warren Quanbeck stresses the idea that a disciple is equivalent to a steward and eschatological urgency of stewardship. For him stewardship involves not only readiness to suffer for the master but also to die for his cause. Besides, the life of a disciple stresses the immediacy in decision making because human beings do not know when their lives will end in this life. Therefore, he concludes “Because of the eschatological urgency of discipleship, the teaching of Jesus stresses the necessity of being ready, of counting the cost, of exercising diligence stewardship.”<sup>77</sup>

Robert P. Roth is of the opinion that there are two errors that affect the understanding of the eschatological significance of stewardship. First, he states that the Greek tradition God appear as an absentee landlord. The notion destroyed the idea that humans can be in partnership with God and that God has the ultimate purpose for the world.<sup>78</sup> On the other side, the Hebrew tradition observed that human beings are in partnership with God. However, he shows himself against keeping of the seventh day and the practice of tithing by the Hebrews. He argues that Sabbath keeping and tithing brought in legalistic tendencies into the eschatological significance of stewardship.<sup>79</sup> Roth reveals pantheistic tendencies when he suggests that Christians should handle material possessions as if they are handing Christ Himself.<sup>80</sup>

T. N. Kantonen presumes that Christian theology places “the church and its work in the eschatological setting of the gospel.”<sup>81</sup> According to Kantonen, stewardship like other the Christian doctrines finds its ultimate purpose or end in

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<sup>77</sup>Quanbeck, “Stewardship in the Teaching of Jesus,” 50.

<sup>78</sup>Robert Paul Roth, “A Twentieth Century Conception of Christian Tithing,” in *Stewardship in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Association Press, 1960), 14

<sup>79</sup>Roth, “A Twentieth Century Conception of Christian Tithing,” 148.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>T. N. Kantonen, “Stewardship and Christian Doctrine,” 180.

eschatology. He argues from Ephesians 1:9-10 that God's redemptive scheme is a stewardship plan that has its centre in Christ. He sees another confluence between eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15. He argues that Paul assurance to the Corinthians that their labour for God would not be in vain (I Cor 15:) and his exhortation for collection of offering for the poor in Jerusalem were done within the echoes of the eschatological context of 1 Corinthians 15.<sup>82</sup>

In the same vein, Francis E. Williams suggests that the parable of the Unjust Steward admonishes hearers to deny themselves certain worldly advantages in the hope of obtaining reward at the *eschaton*.<sup>83</sup> He also argues for similarities between Luke 16:10 and Matthew 25:21, 23 and Luke 19:17 basing on the statement "He who is faithful in the least is faithful in much also." He concludes that the parable of the Unjust Steward was specifically intended to promote almsgiving.<sup>84</sup> Though Williams' conclusion on almsgiving is questionable, what cannot be taken away from him is that he sees a connection between eschatology and financial stewardship.

Similarly, Richard H. Hiers, from the same record of the Unjust Steward, gathers that Jesus is teaching that in soon coming Judgment, the fate of Christians will depend on how they responded to the needs of others.<sup>85</sup> Also, he suggests that those that wish to be in the Kingdom should gain wisdom from the sons of this world who prepare for tomorrow.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>83</sup>Francis E. Williams, "Is Almsgiving the Point of the "Unjust Steward"?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83 (September 1964): 293.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 296.

<sup>85</sup>Richard H. Hiers, "Friends by Unrighteous Mammon: The Eschatological Proletariat (Luke 16:9)," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 38, no.1 (1970): 34.

<sup>86</sup>Hiers, "Friends by Unrighteous Mammon: The Eschatological Proletariat (Luke 16:9)," 36.

Karl Paul Donfried is of the opinion that the parable in Matthew 25:1-13 shows clearly that there is need for the Christian experience to be characterized by good works in anticipation of the coming judgment. He begins his argument by noting that Jesus had warned His disciples about the waning of love in Matthew 24:12 and promised that the one who would “endure to the end will be saved” (Matt 24:13).<sup>87</sup> He goes on to show that Matthew 24 and 25 talk about coming of Jesus-the master, and the eschatological judgment.<sup>88</sup> He concludes that the parable of the Ten Virgins is eschatological. From the Midrash he deduces that the “oil” which wise virgins had and the foolish did not have are “good deeds.”<sup>89</sup> His final conclusion is that Matthew 25:1-13 is teaching ethics and eschatology.<sup>90</sup> It is most likely that Donfried has acts of mercy or even alms in mind when he is talking about “good deeds” which possibly shows a link between eschatology and financial stewardship (as part of ethics).

Douglas Hall sees a coupling of stewardship and eschatology in the parable of the Unjust steward and in the judgment of 1 Peter 4:17. According to Hall, the consciousness of the End and the accountability implications pervades the parable of the Unjust Stewards.<sup>91</sup> He concludes that stewards are to be faithful and blameless. Similarly, he perceives from 1 Peter 4:17 that the notion of the judgment beginning with believers implies that failure to give much when one had received more is viewed as a heinous offense.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Karl Paul Donfried, “The Allegory of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13) as a Summary of Matthean Theology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, no.3 (1974): 421.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 427.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 419

<sup>91</sup>Hall, *The Steward*, 48.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

Richard J. Dillon suggests that though Matthew 6:25-33 does not directly address eschatology or financial stewardship, it presents principles that not only have an all-time application but are imperative in an eschatological context. He affirms that “the coherence of eschatology and ethics in Jesus’ teaching thus imposes itself with special clarity in the anxieties instruction.”<sup>93</sup> How Jesus envisioned the kingdom of God is the sole reason why we should not be anxious our earthly need and also to prioritize spiritual needs.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, Dillon reveals a very important principle that affects financial stewardship. For one to be a faithful steward he or she needs to trust that God can handle the future on their behalf and thus they need not to be anxious about anything.<sup>95</sup> Only those that have surrendered their future to God can be faithful in times of tribulation as predicted in eschatology (Rev 13:16, 17).

Since the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem was coupled with the end of the world (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 21), Brent Kinman argues that the lesson of the cursed fig tree teaches financial stewards in the end-time to bring forth fruit in righteousness by being useful to God and men. He observes that the cleansing of the Temple is flanked by the two-parts fig tree narrative (Mark 11:15-18; 21-25).<sup>96</sup> Also, he takes those accounts as related. He also notes that the fig tree narrative in Mark is a pointer to the destruction of Jerusalem and Temple in 70 CE by the Romans and Jesus

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<sup>93</sup>Richard J. Dillon, “Ravens, Lilies, and the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:25-33/Luke 12:22-31),” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53, no.4 (1991): 626.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 627.

<sup>96</sup>Brent Kinman, “Lucan Eschatology and the Missing Fig Tree,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no.4 (1994): 669.

lamented it in Luke 19:41-44.<sup>97</sup> It was because the Jews as God's people had failed to bear fruit that the City and the Temple were destroyed in 70 CE. This eschatological prediction has a lesson for all times. A life of selfishness that was portrayed by the Fig tree (Jews) is not tolerable with God.

J. Ramsey Michaels sees a connection between almsgiving and the Kingdom in Luke 17:21. Mainly, he makes his conclusion from Tertullian's interpretations. He gathers from Tertullian that when Jesus said to the Pharisees "the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21) He meant that the kingdom was within their jurisdiction just like personal wealth is.<sup>98</sup> Thus, Michaels conjectures that by that statement, Jesus was telling the Pharisees that if they want to enter into the kingdom of God they should give alms and "everything will be clean" about them (Luke 11:41).<sup>99</sup>

However, this kind of interpretation seems unlikely given that the Pharisee were ready givers of money or material possessions (Matt 23:23; Luke 18:9-17). In spite of his faulty interpretation, Michaels sees a connection between eschatology and giving in that when the Pharisee asked a question on eschatology His eschatological response was to His disciples (Luke 17:23-18:8).<sup>100</sup> He only answered the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-17 when He was contrasting the Pharisee's and publican's prayers. Michaels fails to realize that even the basis of the acceptance of the publican had nothing to do with what he possessed. Even though Michaels sees a connection between eschatology and giving, the connection seems both questionable and far-fetched.

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 678.

<sup>98</sup>J. Ramsey Michaels, "Almsgiving and the Kingdom Within: Tertullian on Luke 17:21," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60, no.3 (1998): 481.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 48.

Julie Ma challenges Christians that are waiting for the second coming of Jesus to devote more of their money to the accomplishment of God's mission. She argues for Christians to adopt simple lifestyles or even still volunteer to lower their lifestyles against the tide of the world's materialistic tendencies.<sup>101</sup> She reasons that if Christians avoid being like non-Christians in their financial expenditure, they would have more resources with which to finance the gospel ministry. She stresses that more resources should be available for the salvation of if the church is serious with its missionary call.<sup>102</sup>

In his study of Luke 12:1-13:9, Christopher M. Hays argues that the pericope is a clarion call for the proper eschatological use of wealth.<sup>103</sup> He shows himself against the notion of dividing the pericope thematically into two parts; wealth ethics (Luke 12:1-34) and eschatological comments (Luke 12:35-13:9), at the expense showing how the two are related. Hays maintains that Luke 12:35-13:9 underscores a tight grip between eschatology and ethics.<sup>104</sup> He concludes that, in Luke's gospel, faith alongside faithfulness, and confession at the side of charity, are counterparts.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Julie Ma, "Eschatology and Mission: Living the 'Last Days' Today," *Transformation* 26, no.3 (2009): 195.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>103</sup>Christopher M. Hays, "Slaughtering Stewards and Incarcerating Debtors: Coercing Charity in Luke 12:35-13:9," *Neotestamentica* 46, no.1 (2012): 41.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup>Hays, "Slaughtering Stewards and Incarcerating Debtors: Coercing Charity in Luke 12:35-13:9," 58.

From her historical study of early Christian views of wealth and poverty, Helen Rhee concludes that because of the eschatological nature of Christian texts and earlier Christian practices today's Christians are called to have an enlightened position concerning their attitude and use of wealth both individually and corporately.<sup>106</sup>

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Tracing Christian literature from the Ante-Nicene period to the present shows that not only is faith related to wealth but also that the eschatological issues such as the Second Advent and the Judgment influence the *praxis* of financial stewardship. There is agreement among authors that the coming *eschaton* demands that Christians be found ethically correct with regards to financial matters. Almsgiving and sharing with the poor are mainly the methods of handling wealth that have proposed by authors over time.

Although there is agreement on the need to share with the poor very little has been said about financing missions and how eschatology influences what one gives to God in terms of tithes and offerings. Again, much emphasis has been placed on how others are obliged to the poor at the expense of how the poor are obliged to God and themselves. Moreover, much of what has been said about wealth and faith is from the perspective of New Testament eschatology, generally Old Testament eschatology has contributed little to the discussion.

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<sup>106</sup>Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 219.

## CHAPTER 3

### A BIBLICAL, EXTRA-BIBLICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ESCHATOLOGY AND FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The study begins with a synopsis that establishes the meaning and theological foundations, of financial stewardship and biblical eschatology before attempting to relate the two.

Subsequently, the study seeks to establish the relationship of eschatology to financial stewardship. However, the task of establishing or understanding the relationship between financial stewardship and biblical eschatology demands specific steps be taken. Since eschatology and financial stewardship (a branch of Christian stewardship) belong to two separate theological categories then it seems logical to begin with ascertaining what relates the two. In other words, there is need to find common grounds for eschatology and financial stewardship in both testaments of the Bible and the inter-testamental writings.

Having determined the points of relation between the two, the next step would be to understand how they are linked. By this, the study intends to discover in what ways they connect or the kind of connections that are exhibited by the financial stewardship and biblical eschatology.

The final step would be to evaluate the findings against the overarching Bible theme of the cosmic conflict. Through this step the study seeks to show and justify how the findings are relevant to the bigger picture of the cosmic conflict between the forces of good and evil.

## Meaning of Stewardship

Since financial stewardship is a subset of stewardship in general, it seems logical to move from the general to the particular in attempting to derive the meaning of the former. Again, the basic unit of the word “stewardship” is the word “steward.” Hence, understanding the word steward becomes the starting point.

### Concept of Stewardship

Though the etymology of the English word *steward* is said to have its derivation from two medieval roots, *stye* (pig stye) and *ward* (keeper, warden)<sup>1</sup> and in Anglo-Saxon times a *steward* was a person who took care of someone’s pigs, the Old Testament concept of a steward is not derived from pig rearing as the patriarchs and Jews regarded such animals as unclean and did not keep them. It seems imperative to begin with how the Old Testament understood the concept of stewardship.

In the Old Testament the concept of stewardship is present but not explicit. For instance, it is implied in Genesis 43:19. The text reads;

“וַיִּגְשׁוּ אֶל-הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עַל-בֵּית יוֹסֵף וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלָיו פְּתַח הַבַּיִת:” “And they came near to the one who was over the house of Joseph.” The preposition “over” in this case does not imply bodily location, rather it is descriptive of a responsibility, a duty or office held by the man. This is so because the next complimentary clause tells us that they spoke to the man while at the entrance of the door. The text therefore suggests that the man was a *steward* over the house of Joseph. And by implication this may have included financial matters. Thus, in this Old Testament text can be found the existence and practice of stewardship as a concept. Stewardship therefore seems to be a biblical concept as evidenced in this text. More texts could be looked at, however these

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<sup>1</sup>T. K. Thompson, ed., “Introduction,” in *Stewardship in Contemporary Theology*, ed. T. K. Thompson (New York, NY: Association Press, 1960): ix.

include but not limited to Isaiah 22:15 in which the expression “שָׂרֵבֶטֶן”<sup>2</sup> is used and can be translated “steward.”

In the New Testament the word rendered as “steward” is translated from two Greek words; ἐπιτρόπος (Matt 20:8; Gal 4:2) and οἰκονομος (Luke 16:2-3; 1 Cor 4:1-2; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 4:10). The former refers to “one to whose care or honor one has been trusted.”<sup>3</sup> Thus it means a curator or a guardian. The latter describes a function of delegated responsibility (Matt 20:1-16 and Luke 16:1-13). It therefore refers to a manager or a superintendent. Hence, οἰκονομία refers to the task of an οἰκονομος (steward) in superintending a household, thus “stewardship.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, according to New Testament word study, stewardship is a Christian responsibility were Christians are Christ’s executors.<sup>5</sup>

Conceptually, stewardship encompasses, but is not limited to, the responsible administration of God’s resources and the growth and worthwhile use of those resources (Gen 2:15; 1:28).<sup>6</sup> Another important aspect of biblical stewardship is the willingness and preparedness to honor God with those resources in tithes and offerings (Mal 3:8-12) and sharing the less-privileged (Isa 58:5-8; Mic 6:8; Luke 10:27-34).

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<sup>2</sup>The word’s root is “שָׂרֵבֶטֶן” parsed as article plus adjective masculine singular, and it has several meanings, “be of use, service, benefit,” and the BDB specifically states Isa 22:15 and translates it as “servitor” or “steward,” as one of the meanings. [BDB, s.v. “שָׂרֵבֶטֶן”] The full translation for the word “שָׂרֵבֶטֶן” used in Isa 22:15, with its article is best translated “the steward.” This is another OT text that evidences the concept of stewardship in the Bible.

<sup>3</sup>Duncan, “Steward,” 1:1134.

<sup>4</sup>J. H. Farmer, “Steward, Stewardship,” *Hastings Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. James Hastings (Harrington, DE: Delmarva, 2014), n. p., accessed March 9, 2017, <https://www.studydrive.net/dictionaries/hdn.html>.

<sup>5</sup>Duncan, “Steward,” 1:1134.

<sup>6</sup>J. Ochorokodi, “Biblical Concept of Stewardship as Portrayed in the Creation Narrative,” *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 4, no.2 (2023): 146.

## **Theological Meaning of Stewardship**

Stewardship represents man's response with his whole life to God.<sup>7</sup> As rightfully observed by Dick Hansen, stewardship details and identifies what a relationship with Christ looks like.<sup>8</sup> It involves the administration of available resources in the recognition that God is Owner and Provider of all things (Ps 24:1; Job 41:11; Hag 2:8).<sup>9</sup> Before God, the Christian notion of stewardship concerns time, talents, possessions, and self.<sup>10</sup> Faithfulness is required by God from the stewards.

## **Meaning of Financial Stewardship**

Financial stewardship refers to how a Christian deal with his/her God-given money. Stewardship in this regard regulates a Christian in matters of receiving, earning and expending.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, it spells out the responsibility that follows a Christian after receiving financial benefits from God. This Christian duty is dual; to God and man.<sup>12</sup> They have to give generously and cheerfully to support God's cause on earth and at the same time help their fellow humans.

However, despite the fact that there is agreement among Christians that financial stewardship is an indispensable aspect of faith,<sup>13</sup> David Croteau observes that the Christian view on this subject is not monolithic and an absolute declaration is

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<sup>7</sup>Kantonen, "Stewardship and Christian Doctrine," 158.

<sup>8</sup>Dick Hansen, "The God-Centered Business," *Dynamic Steward*, January-March 2013, 10.

<sup>9</sup>Tremper Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 1578.

<sup>10</sup>C. U. Wolf, "Steward, Stewardship," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 4:443.

<sup>11</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 7:293.

<sup>12</sup>Ronald B. Allen, "Ma'aser," *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason I. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 704.

<sup>13</sup>Bradford, "Stewardship," 651.

wanting.<sup>14</sup> Disparity looms large on the financial obligation a Christian has to God. On the one side those who believe that a Christian is obligated to God in tithes and offerings.<sup>15</sup> On the opposite side are those that believe in voluntary giving contra tithing.<sup>16</sup> However, it is observable that the positions taken by authors on both sides of the debates are wholly influenced by the theological system they subscribe to.<sup>17</sup>

Although this study does not concern itself much with the debate about the continuity or discontinuity of tithing for the Christian, the researcher is of the position that tithing continues in the Christian epoch. The major reasons for taking such a stance are that; (1) although the Old Testament basically is thematically Theocentric and the New Testament Christocentric,<sup>18</sup> there is progression between the two Testaments with respect to the “promises of God, the two-fold definition of Israel (biological and non-biological), in the theology of the remnant, in the One people of God, in One Way of Salvation, in Christocentric Focus, of the Covenants, and in Eschatology.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>David A. Croteau, “A Biblical and Theological Analysis of Tithing: Toward a Theology of Giving in the New Covenant Era,” (PhD Dissertation, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, 2005), xiii.

<sup>15</sup>Tremper Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 1579. Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 1:52, 443. Gary North, *Tithing and the Church* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1994), 2. Knox Chamblin, “The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Covenants*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester: Crossway, 1988), 183.

<sup>16</sup>Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7:293. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Themes: 52 Vital Doctrines of Scripture Simplified and Explained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie, 1974), 253. Wick Broomall, “Tithes,” *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1960), 525. Charles C. Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life: Biblical Principles for Wholesome Living* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969), 89.

<sup>17</sup>Covenant Theologians advocate tithing whilst Dispensationalists are contra tithing.

<sup>18</sup>Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology* (1972; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 174.

<sup>19</sup>Richard M. Davidson, “Israel and the Church: Continuity and Discontinuity 1,” in *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013): 388-400.

To sum up, financial stewardship as it is presented in the Bible condemns; an arrogant attitude of not acknowledging God as the source of wealth, trusting in riches and making money the center of one's life, tightfistedness, greed and hoarding of money, and dishonest gain (Deut 8:17-18; 15:8; 2 Kings 5:26; Ps 52:7; 62:10; Prov 11:26; 13:11; Jer 17:11; Amos 2:6; 8:4-5; Mic 3:18; 6:12; Luke 12:15-21; 1 Tim 6:17-18).<sup>20</sup> It approves a God-centered view of wealth, generosity, sacrificial giving, thanksgiving, and supporting God's mission (Job 1:21; Prov 11:24; 28:27; Matt 6:24; 6:25-34; Luke 12:31-33; 12:32-34; 2 Cor 9:12). Most importantly, financial stewardship conscientizes people about their duty to acknowledge God through the giving of tithes and offerings ((Gen 14:20; 28:22; Lev 27:30-33; Num 18:21-32; Deut 12:6; 14:22-29; 26:12-15; 2 Chron 31; Neh 10:37, 38; 12:44; 13:5, 12; Amos 4:4; Mal 3:8,10; Matt 23:23 and Heb 7:8).

### **Theological Foundations of Financial Stewardship**

The *praxis* of financial stewardship hinges on a proper understanding of who God is. Beyond all doubt, without a sufficient understanding of who God is, it is virtually impossible for one to execute properly the duties or expectations of a steward. These truths about God are the foundation of financial stewardship.

First, God is eternal and self-sufficient. From Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 it is clear that the very God who performed the creative work was already in existence. Angel M. Rodriguez refers to this concept as the "wasness of God."<sup>21</sup> The Bible assumes the existence of God which shows that He has no beginning. Thus, God is

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<sup>20</sup> Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1578-1579. Gerald M. Bilkes, "Money, Coins," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine D. Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 4:136, 137.

<sup>21</sup> Angel M. Rodriguez, *Stewardship Roots* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1994), 7.

eternal. Since He existed before everything was, it implies that He is self-sufficient. He exists outside and in spite of everything. A proper understanding of stewardship should be in consonance with the conviction the God is eternal and self-sufficient and that our management of what He entrusted to us does not make him any richer.<sup>22</sup>

Second, God is Creator. This means that God is unequalled, supreme, and original.<sup>23</sup> This also indicates that He is the provider and owner of everything. Notably, in the whole creation account (Gen 1; 2) God is referred to as אֱלֹהִים (*'Elōhîm*) which means “the true God,” and the “object of all true reverence and fear from men.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, financial stewardship submits to the fact that God is the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the universe, thus He is the absolute Lord over His creation.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, His ownership as Creator spells out the limited nature of our role in the created order.<sup>26</sup>

Third, God is owner. Psalm 24:1 proclaims that God owns everything that is in this world inclusive of the people that live in it. He also owns a cattle upon a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). The silver and gold is His (Haggai 2:7). In light of these assertions, our mindset towards ownership must change to obey God’s will involving our wealth. Deuteronomy 8:18 states unequivocally, “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which he swore to your fathers, as it is this day” NKJV.

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<sup>22</sup>Rodriguez, *Stewardship Roots*, 8.

<sup>23</sup>Benjamin C. Maxson and Jean-Luc Leaeau, *Strategic Church Finances: A Biblical Approach* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), 10.

<sup>24</sup>TWOT, s.v. “*'Elōhîm*.”

<sup>25</sup>Kantonen, “Stewardship and Christian Doctrine,” 177.

<sup>26</sup>Rodriguez, *Stewardship Roots*, 8.

Therefore, stewardship has to do with how much authority we do give God over our possessions.

Fourth, God is Savior. God's love is shed broadly by His salvific work. Thus, God in Jesus Christ came to the rescue of human predicament. Therefore, who Jesus was and what He did shows itself fundamental for the whole body of theology and for the theological basis of stewardship.<sup>27</sup> In the end, for Christian stewards, Christ is the sovereign Lord over every area of life, and they exist to give a witness to His lordship.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, God is Sanctifier. For humans to be restored to their rightful place as proper stewards and in the right sense of the word, they need the constant sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. T. A. Kantonen submits that the Holy Spirit alone makes the reality of a new life in Christ possible. Consequently, the truths and expectations of Christian stewardship are only realized in one whose heart is an abode for the Holy Spirit.<sup>29</sup>

## **Meaning of Eschatology**

### **Concept of Eschatology**

The word eschatology comes from two Greek words; *eschatos* "last" and *logia* "discourse." Thus, it literally means 'a discourse about last things.' Although the word "eschatology" is a modern word which was coined by scholars for the sake of convenience, the concept seems to be ancient.

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<sup>27</sup>Kantonen, "Stewardship and Christian Doctrine," 178.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 178.

In the Old Testament the word eschatology is not used explicitly but the concept is implicitly present as evident in Genesis 49:1 and several other texts.

Genesis 49:1 reads:

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֶסְפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא אֲתֶכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

“that I may tell you the things that shall befall you in the end of days or time.” The phrase “in the end of time” has eschatological connotations. Jacob is telling his sons what shall befall them in the future on the basis of the characters they have exhibited and are currently exhibiting. Thus, from Jacob’s prophecy concerning the future of his sons, eschatology is shown to be three dimensional. Eschatology is past, present and future. The prophecy stretches up to the ideal or Messianic future when Shiloh wields the scepter.<sup>30</sup> In the light of Genesis 49:1, eschatology seems to be a biblical concept.

Among other New Testament texts, Hebrews 1:2 sets the eschatological tone of the book by noting that God’s definitive speech to humanity in the Son who sat down at the right hand of God was uttered “in these last days” (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν). Also, the exaltation of Christ “in these last days” is the perspective from which Hebrews should be read. That the last days have already begun is even clearer in Hebrews by the addition of the demonstrative adjective “.” Gerhard Kittel et al reveal that the above-mentioned clause carries the effect of the Old Testament prophetic “day of Yahweh.”<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, like in the Old Testament, New Testament eschatology is three dimensional. From Hebrews 1:2 the end has already begun with the coming of Jesus Christ. The end is present through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17). Yet it is

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<sup>30</sup>BDB, s.v. “יָמִים.”

<sup>31</sup>Gerhard Kittel, Friedrich, Gerhard and Bromiley, Geoffrey William, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995, c1985), s.v. “ἐσχάτος.”

equally true that the end is still in the future.<sup>32</sup> The triad nature of eschatology is also revealed in Jesus' prophecy and commission on the preaching of the gospel (Matt 24:14; 28:18, 19).<sup>33</sup>

### **Theological Meaning of Eschatology**

As shown above, the word "eschatology" is not a biblical term but a theological label with contents that are identified by that label. This label comprises discussions on the state of the dead, last day events such as judgment, the Second Advent, death, resurrection, the millennium, and the new heavens and the new earth together with the hope that accompanies such subjects.

### **Theological Foundations of Eschatology**

Eschatology, like stewardship, has its basis in God. Without God who will consummate all things at the end there can be no eschatology. Thus, eschatology is not about what happens at the end but it is about God who has the final say about the cosmos.

First, the creatorship of God is foundational to eschatology. Since God has the sole prerogative to create (Gen 1:1) then He alone can re-create and make all things new (Rev 21:1-4). Further, Emil Brunner rightly points out that the God who made this world knows the end for which and to which He created it.<sup>34</sup> For Geoffrey W. Bromiley, the *eschaton* is the final end of that plan.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>*TDNT*, s.v. "ἔσχατος."

<sup>33</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter, Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BADG), 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1042.

<sup>34</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1947), 127.

<sup>35</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "Eschatology: The Meaning of the End," in *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 75.

Last but not the least, the beginning and the end of the planet is in the hands of a Sovereign of God. Both the events of the former and the latter show God's direct involvement and actions. For Claus Westermann there is an unequivocal link between the beginning on the one side and the end on the other.<sup>36</sup>

To sum up, only the Creator is the due King of the cosmos and He can rightfully judge His creatures, resurrect the dead and create the new heavens and the new earth for their abode.

### **Common Grounds for Financial Stewardship and Eschatology in the Old Testament**

The Old Testament presents several subjects or themes that connect financial stewardship with biblical eschatology. Those particular themes and subjects are identified, presented and discussed below.

#### **The Theocentric Nature of the Old Testament**

Gerhard F. Hasel argues that the centre of the Old Testament is God just as Christ is the centre of the New Testament.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, J. Lindblom consents that indeed the Bible corpus is God centered.<sup>38</sup> Among other things the OT depicts God as the God of; creation (Gen 1; 2; Exod 20:9-11; Ps 33:6, 9), the covenant (Gen. 6:17, 18; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:20), and eschatology (Isa 56-66; Ezek 36:22-36; 40-48; Hag 1:8; 2:6, 7; Zech 6:10-15; Mal 1:11; 3:1-5, 13-18; 4:1, 2).

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<sup>36</sup>Claus Westermann, *Beginning and End in the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1972), 22.

<sup>37</sup>Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 168.

<sup>38</sup>J. Lindblom, *The Bible: A Modern Understanding* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1973), 168.

With respect to eschatology, the Old Testament depicts the future to be entirely in God's hands.<sup>39</sup> In Isaiah 65:17 God says הִנְנִי בּוֹרֵא שָׁמַיִם הַדְּשִׁים "I create the new heavens and the new earth." Similarly, in Isaiah 66:22 God uses the same first person to indicate that He has the sole capacity and prerogative to create and recreate. Also, God is the ultimate judge of Israel and the universe (Gen 18:25; 1 Samuel 2:10; 1 Chron 16:33; Ps 110:6; Isa 33:22). Thus eschatology is shown to be in His hands. The Old Testament reveals God to be the Creator and thus He claims ownership of the earth. On that pretext, from the financial resources that God lends to humans, He demands tithes (Lev 27:20; Num 18:21; Ps 24:1; Hag 2:8; Mal 3:8, 10). Failure to duly render to Him His tithes is understood to be a failure to recognize Him as the rightful owner of everything.

Therefore, the fact that both eschatology and financial stewardship stem from the same immutable God implies that they cannot be separated. The former is a promise by God to bring about the *eschaton* whilst the latter is an obligation to God who owns everything. Both testify to the Supremacy of God. Hence, in the same God created everything in the beginning so will He make all things new at the *eschaton* and financial stewardship anticipates and acknowledges that fact.

## **Sabbath**

The human obligations of keeping the Sabbath and returning tithes and offerings to God have their foundation in that God is the Creator (Exod 20:8-11; Lev 25:23; 27:30). The verb וַיִּקְדָּשׁ "vay<sup>e</sup>godash" in Genesis 2:3, shows that from the beginning God "set apart as sacred, consecrated, dedicated"<sup>40</sup> one day in seven.

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<sup>39</sup>Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup>ed. (New York, NY:T&T Clark, 2000), 123.

<sup>40</sup>BDB, s.v. "וַיִּקְדָּשׁ."

Hence, He reserved for Himself a seventh in time. Consequently, seventh day or the Sabbath is designated as holy or withdrawn from ordinary use throughout the Old Testament (Exod 20:11; 31:14; Deut 5:12; Neh 9:14; 13:22; Isa 58:13; Jer 17:22, 24).

In a similar manner, God set apart the tithes for Himself. The Old Testament clearly states that the tithe belongs to God and it is holy (Lev 27:30; 2 Chron 31:6). Besides tithes, the different offerings that were given to God were also holy. One of the Hebrew words for offerings is *terûmāh* which means a “tribute or contribution” (Exod 25:2; Mal 3:8).<sup>41</sup> This feminine noun comes from the verb *rûm* meaning “to be high or to lift up.”<sup>42</sup> It refers to a gift or an offering set aside for God outside the sanctuary, then brought to the sanctuary and lifted up or given to God.<sup>43</sup> By demanding tithes and offerings, which were direct products of the land, God showed Himself to be the owner of the earth.

Furthermore, the concept of the seventh year Sabbath and the Jubilee interlace God’s claims on both time and space. The fact that God has jurisdiction over time and space implies that the obligation to tithe and to keep the Sabbath is entwined.<sup>44</sup> John Simpson argued that since Abraham and Jacob returned tithes, and Sabbath-keeping and tithe-paying are correlated, therefore, the tithe should be as old as the Garden of Eden.<sup>45</sup> On the relationship between tithe and the Sabbath, Richard Banks’ conclusion that both tithe and the sabbath are attested by ancient history, one is old as

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<sup>41</sup>HAL, s.v. “תרמה.”

<sup>42</sup>Warren Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament (CWSD)* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), s.v. “תרמה.”

<sup>43</sup>Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 474.

<sup>44</sup>A. W. Miller, *The Law of the Tithe, and of the Free-Will Offering* (Columbia, SC: Presbyterian, 1873), 6, 8-9.

<sup>45</sup>John E. Simpson, ed., *Into My Storehouse: A Treasure Chest of Stewardship Materials* (New York, NY: Revell, 1940), 119, 121-122.

the other and one exists as long as the other does- both are holy, seems judicial (Gen 2:2, 3; Lev 27:30).<sup>46</sup>

Equally, the sabbath has eschatological intimations, for it points forward to the fulfillment of the purposes of God both in creation and redemption. The prophet Isaiah states that “from one sabbath to another” in the earth made new people will come together to worship God (Isa 66:22,23). Edward Zinke rightly points out that the sabbath is a great arch traversing perfect creation and perfect recreation.<sup>47</sup> The sabbath tells of a perpetual acknowledgement of God as creator in eternity. Humans will never cease to be dependent creatures as God will never cease to be creator and owner. Stewardship as a response to who God is will remain in eternity. Hence, stewardship and eschatology find mutuality in the sabbath.

### **Blessings and Curses**

In Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30 is detailed the blessings and the curses that would attend Israel as a nation if they were obedient or disobedient respectively. As Meredith Kline proposes, the blessings and curses that are outlined in Deuteronomy 28 appear to be forestalled in the promises and threats of Leviticus 26.<sup>48</sup> The curses included economic failure, diseases, misfortunes and being sent to exile. On the other side, God promised them blessings upon repentance. He would bring back the captives from exile, give them back the land of promise, and reverse their misfortunes and economic challenges (Lev 26:33-45; Deut 27-33).

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<sup>46</sup>Richard Edward Banks, “The Place of the Tithe in New Testament Stewardship,” (MA Thesis, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1942), 127, 128.

<sup>47</sup>E. Edward Zinke, “A Theology of the Sabbath,” *Journal of Adventist Theological Society* 2, no.2 (1991): 15

<sup>48</sup>Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 124.

The covenant blessings and curses seem to have eschatological significance. In Leviticus 26:30-45 as in Deuteronomy 28:64-68, God warns that if Israel would remain stiff-necked, in spite God's milder corrections, He would send them captives to a foreign country. They would lose their Covenant land. Thus, only covenant faithfulness would make them continue to be landholders or regain the Promised Land.<sup>49</sup> Hence, from the onset, Israel through heeding the discourses on the blessings and curses or not could determine their destiny. Not only were they the masters of their own destiny with regards to their earthly inheritance but also of ultimate salvation. Put differently, the final judgment or the Day of the Lord will be about the ultimate blessings or curses.

Through the discourses on covenant blessings and curses God seem to have had a bifurcated intent. On the one hand, He desired Israel to have a proper estimate of Him as YHWH and thus maintain a right attitude toward Him. They were to love Him supremely and serve Him wholeheartedly. This could only be demonstrated by them as they adhered to the covenant stipulations like observing the first tablet of the Decalogue, and giving Him tithes and offerings honestly, among other things.

On the other hand, God showed that observing all religious rites without due care to the neighbors would not be acceptable to Him ((Isa 1:10-17; Mic 6:6-8).). They were to be merciful to the orphans, widows, strangers and the other less-privileged classes in the society. Neglecting or mistreating the lower class of the society was tantamount to land one in curses.

The last prophet in the Old Testament showcases how the curses and blessings are effected by God for failure to take care of or ill-treating the widows, orphans and

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<sup>49</sup>William D. Barrick, "The Eschatological Significance of Leviticus 26," *TMSJ* 16 (Spring 2005): 9.

servants and for neglecting to give to God honest tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:5, 9-12). Specifically, they were cursed for robbing God in tithes and offerings.<sup>50</sup>Clay Ham and Mark Hahlen rightly conclude that Malachi 3:6–12 urges the Yehudites to return to faithfulness with respect to covenant norms, through supporting the temple.<sup>51</sup>On the other side, God promises them blessings on condition of repentance (Mal 3:10, 11). The juxtaposition of blessings and curses, which had an eschatological import, and tithes and offerings, is indicative of a liaison between financial stewardship and eschatology.

### **Personal Relationships**

In the Old Testament God emphasized that the people of Israel as a community were interrelated. For instance, the people were dependent upon the Levites for spiritual guidance. The Levites were employed to take care of the covenant relationship between God and His covenant people. In return the Levites were beneficiaries of the tithes and offerings that the people gave to God (Num 18:21). Thus, there was a collaborative bond between the Levites and the laity in Israel.<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, God exhorted His people to take care of the disadvantaged. They were to care for the poor, widows, and orphans. The poor were beneficiaries of the second tithe (Deut 14:23, 29; 16:11-14). Also, the gleanings of the vineyard, orchard, and field were left for the less-privileged (Lev 19:9, 10; Deut 24:19-22).

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<sup>50</sup> F. C. Fensham, "Common Trends in Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and Kudurru-Inscriptions Compared with the Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah," *ZAW* 75 (1963): 173, 174.

<sup>51</sup> Clay Ham and Mark Hahlen, *Minor Prophets* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2001), 562.

<sup>52</sup> TWOT, s.v. "מעשר."

A close tie between financial stewardship and eschatology is witnessed in how Malachi 3:5 refers to the ill-treatment of the disadvantaged that are mentioned in Deuteronomy 28. It is noteworthy that those that are shortlisted as being mistreated by the wicked who are condemned in Malachi 3:5 are similar to those that are mentioned in Deuteronomy 28. Malachi uses the same Hebrew words as those that are used in Deuteronomy 28.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, Malachi 3:5 clearly shows that those that neglect and mistreat the less-privileged will be condemned at the final judgment.

### Second Jerusalem Temple

The Second Jerusalem Temple had strong eschatological connotations. First, like the Solomon's temple, it showed connections with the creation story.<sup>54</sup> Second, it was skewed towards reconciliation and the reinstatement of Israel to God. Third, the designation of Second Temple as *hêkal* "temple, palace, throne"<sup>55</sup> (Mal 3:1) instead of *'ohel* ("tent"), or *bă-yiṭ* ("house"), or *mish<sup>e</sup>kkan* ("tabernacle") and *ναός*<sup>56</sup> instead of *ἱερόν* in the LXX<sup>57</sup> is suggestive of two facts. One, it suggests that the Messiah who is referred to as coming into His *hêkal* (Mal 3:1) has the goal of His journey as the

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<sup>53</sup>Use of same terms *almanah* "widows," *yatom* "the fatherless" (Mal 3:5; Deut 27:19); *calah* "not destroyed" (Mal 3:6; Deut 28:21).

<sup>54</sup>Eric W. Baker, "The Eschatological Role of the Jerusalem Temple: An Examination of Jewish Writings Dating from 586 BCE to 70 CE" (2014), *Dissertations* 13, 23-25, accessed November 16, 2016. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/13>.

<sup>55</sup>W. J. Dumbrell, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), s.v. "*hêkal*." Ludwig Koehler, Baumgartner, Walter, Richardson, M. E. J Stamm, Johann Jakob, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Leiden; NY: E. J. Brill, 1999, c1994-1996), s.v. "*hêkal*." Martin Probstle, *Where God and I Meet: The Sanctuary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2013), 19.

<sup>56</sup>Joseph Thayer reveals that *ναός* was used to refer to the temple in Jerusalem but, more specifically, the Holy place and the Most holy place. [Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Edinburgh, TX: Clark, 1951), 94-95.]

<sup>57</sup>A. Rahlfs, ed. *Septuaginta*. Stuttgart, Germany: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1965.

“throne room” in heaven.<sup>58</sup> Two, if that is accepted then there is proof that the earthly temple was interactively, applicably and anatomically related with its heavenly counterpart.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the Second Temple was also a tool for evangelizing the whole world and it would bring about the destruction of the wicked and the utopia (Ezek 47:1-12; Hag 2:8; Zech 5:3-8; 8:4, 5; 14:21; Mal 1:11).

The eschatological Second Temple had also financial issues tied to it. The prophet Haggai testifies that because the Yehudites had been negligent on sacrificing their resources to build the temple as a result God had cursed them (Hag 1:5, 6). Paul Hanson perceives that “because the people had not carried out Ezekiel’s temple program, the blessings bound up with the temple were countermanded by the covenant curses.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the day they would start building the temple is depicted as central to their history because of the blessings it would attract (Hag 1:8, 9).<sup>61</sup> Like in Exodus 25:2 where a *terûmāh* “liberal contribution for building the tabernacle,”<sup>62</sup> Haggai also exhorted the expatriates to change their ways and bring financial resources for the building of the eschatological temple (Hag 1:5, 1:7; 2:15, 2:18).

Similarly, Malachi urged the Yehudites to bring the tithes and offerings to the storehouse (Mal 3:10-12). It is most likely that the storehouse which Malachi was referring to was located at the temple. Verhoeff considers it highly probable that the

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<sup>58</sup>David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 288.

<sup>59</sup>Elias Brasil de Souza, “The Heavenly Sanctuary/Temple Motif in the Hebrew Bible: Function and Relationship to the Earthly Counterparts,” (PhD Dissertation, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2005), 494, 495.

<sup>60</sup>Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979), 175.

<sup>61</sup>Seth Sykes, *Time and Space in Haggai-Zechariah 1-8: A Bakhtinian Analysis of a Prophetic Chronicle* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2002), 30.

<sup>62</sup>William E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), s.v. “תרומה.”

storehouse that Malachi was referring to was located at the temple.<sup>63</sup> The Israelites were exhorted to repent and bring their tithes and offering to that storehouse so that God would bless them (Mal 3:10-11).

Boloje and Groenewald rightfully conclude that in Malachi the temple is an embodiment of Israel's eschatological hope, in which Yahweh's final judgment will be decided and the victory of God's people conferred.<sup>64</sup>

Again, they also highlight that the temple in Malachi is "treated as an economic centre of the community: a centre and well-spring of gladness from which the divine benedictions are made manifest."<sup>65</sup> Thus the Second Temple connected eschatology with financial stewardship.

### **Tithes and Offerings**

Besides tithes and offerings being required by an immutable God and them being holy (Lev 27:30), Malachi 3:1-12 [Masoretic text (MT)] connects a discussion on eschatology with financial stewardship. Malachi 3:1-5 is an eschatological discourse whereas Malachi 3:6-12 is not. On that basis, the disparity between the two has been emphasized to the point of not recognizing or even denying any relations between them.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 306.

<sup>64</sup>B. O. Boloje, and A. Groenewald, "Malachi's Vision of the Temple: An Emblem of Eschatological Hope (Malachi 3:1-5) and An Economic Centre of the Community (Malachi 3:10-12)," *Journal for Semitics* 23, no.21 (2014): 377, 378.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> [Leander E. Keck, ed., "Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature: Daniel and the Twelve Prophets," *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 7:870. Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 298, 313. Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary (WBC) 32, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Baker (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 331.

However, a careful analysis of Malachi 2:17-3:21 (MT) proves otherwise. Malachi 3:6-12 is structurally and syntactically associated with Malachi 3:1-5<sup>67</sup> and thematically to Malachi 3:13-21 (MT).<sup>68</sup> As the returnees were asking where the God of justice was (Mal 2:17), God shows them that by robbing Him in tithes and offerings (Mal 3:8) they rendered themselves ill-prepared for the judgment they were seeking. So, what they needed was a judgment of cleansing (Mal 3:2-4) before the final judgment (Mal 3:5).<sup>69</sup> A connection between eschatology and financial stewardship is revealed here. It is evident from that discussion between God and Israel that what was not acceptable to God during their day and age would not be acceptable at the final judgment.

Malachi 3:13-18 (MT) shows the response of the two groups that emerged as a result of God's call to repentance and transformation.<sup>70</sup> The wicked, despite the fact that God had promised blessings to those who would return tithes and offerings (Mal 3:10, 11), said it was futile to serve Him. They seem not to have believed that God

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<sup>67</sup>*Biblia Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1990. Rex Mason, "Malachi: Theology of," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 4:928.

Syntactically, the conjunction כִּי "ki" (Mal 3:6) introduces a causal clause and should be rendered as "because, for, or since." Thus Malachi 3:6-12 as it is introduced by that conjunction is explaining why and how the Yehudites are not prepared for the final judgment (Mal 3:5). Instead they need of a judgment of cleansing (Mal 3:1-4) because of their failure to return tithes and offerings to God. [TWOT, s.v. "ki."]

<sup>68</sup> B.O. Boloje and A. Groenewald, "Antithesis between YHWH Fearers and the Wicked: Malachi 3:13-21 [MT] as a Reconciliation of YHWH's Justice with Life's Inequalities," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 36, no.1 (2015): 4.

<sup>69</sup> Francis I. Andersen and A. Dean Forbes, *A Systematic Glossary to the Andersen-Forbes Analysis of the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2006), s.v. "qārah."

<sup>70</sup> Boloje and Groenewald identify the two groups as the YHWH fearers and the wicked. Ellen G. White also acknowledges that the message on tithes and offerings produced two antithetical groups. She says, "In the third chapter of Malachi two parties are brought to view. Here the Lord denounces against His professed people who are not faithful sentinels. The charge and challenge of God against this people is marked and decided [Mal 3:5-12 quoted.] [Ellen G. White, "Ellen G. White Manuscript 56, 1899," Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).]

fulfills what He promises. Diametrically opposite those that were arrogant to God stood those that feared Him, who spoke honorably, and had their names registered in a book of remembrance (Mal 3:16). They show themselves to have taken God at His word by heeding the call to repentance and espousing His promises.

### **Preparation for the Day of the Lord**

It is observable that the eschatological subject of the Day of the Lord looms large in the Old Testament prophets (Isa 13:6; Jer 46:10; Joel 2:31; Zeph 1:14-2:3).<sup>71</sup> Malachi reveals three points that have to do with preparation for the Day of the Lord. First, he mentions that the group of God fearers (Mal 3:16-18) that came about as a result of their response to God's message of restoration on condition of repentance in the area of tithes and offering (Mal 3:6-12) would be distinguished from the wicked on the Day of the Lord (Mal 4:1). This implies that before the Day of the Lord comes there is need for revival in the area of tithes and offerings. Also, the fact that God fearers are written in the book of remembrance suggests that they are acquitted in the Pre-Advent Judgment because the mere mention of the book of remembrance has connotations to the Pre-Advent Judgment as depicted in Daniel 7:9-14.<sup>72</sup> Second, in view of the Day of the Lord, Malachi exhorted believers to "remember the Law of Moses" (Mal 4:4). Finally, Malachi promises them the coming of the eschatological Elijah (Mal 4:5, 6) who will restore filial relations in families and most likely in the 'church community' also.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Robert L. Alden, Malachi, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 7:72.

<sup>72</sup>Angel Manuel Rodríguez, "The Heavenly Books of Life and of Human Deeds," *Biblical Research Institute* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2001), 14.

<sup>73</sup>Roy E. Gane, "The Gospel According to Moses and Elijah," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 48, no.1 (2010): 15.

It may be concluded that since Malachi related the coming of the Day of the Lord with the fearers of YHWH, the Law of Moses, and worship (the eschatological Elijah) it is evident that financial stewardship and eschatology are not divorced from each other.

### **The Remnant in Malachi**

The remnant in the Old Testament can be identified as those who are beneficiaries of God's grace as shown by the fact that they outlast a spiritual or physical devastation, and thereafter inherit the covenant promises, and have a precise mission to be repositories of the knowledge of God and how He should be worshipped.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the returnees from the Babylonian exile constitute a remnant despite the fact that they consist of both the faithful and the unfaithful.

However, in Malachi, the remnant are not merely those who outlived the Babylonian exile, but those that are faithful to Yahweh in the postexilic society and as a result will survive the coming Lord's Day (Mal 3:16–18).<sup>75</sup> To such is God's commitment (Mal 4:6).<sup>76</sup> Ronald Pierce emphasizes that Malachi assures his hearers that God loves them (Mal 1:2) but that does not negate obedience to the divine law.<sup>77</sup> For them to be considered the remnant, in the truest sense of the word, they all need to go through some form of spiritual metamorphosis. Among the aspects in which they needed to change was the area of tithes and offerings. As a consequence, according to

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<sup>74</sup>Tarsee Li, "The Remnant in the Old Testament," in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 27.

<sup>75</sup>Boloje and Groenewald, "Malachi's Eschatological Day of Yahweh: Its Dual Roles of Cultic Restoration and Enactment of Social Justice (Mal 3:1–5; 3:16–4:6)," *OTE* 27, no.1 (2014): 60.

<sup>76</sup>William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 130.

<sup>77</sup>Ronald W. Pierce, "A Thematic Development of the Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi Corpus," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 211 (December 1984): 410.

Malachi, the true remnant are those who among are things are faithful in returning tithes and offerings to God (Mal 3:16-18).

Accordingly, the coupling of the remnant motif with the message of faithfulness in returning tithes testifies to the fact that the financial stewardship and biblical eschatology go hand-in-glove. Among other areas that needed reform, the message of tithe and offerings acted as a centrifuge (sieve) for determining the true remnant worshippers of God.

### **Common Grounds for Financial Stewardship and Eschatology in the Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls**

#### **Personal Relationships**

The *Pseudepigrapha*, like the Old Testament, shows a common ground for eschatology and financial stewardship in personal relations. The apocalyptic and eschatological framework of the inter-testamental period predicted God's intervention into the wrangle between the poor and the rich through exonerating of the righteous poor and the condemning of the wicked rich.<sup>78</sup> Generally, in the *Pseudepigrapha* the poor are considered as righteous whilst the rich are labeled as wicked.

*Jubilees* 23:18-19 forecasts the destruction of the rich on account of their victimizing the poor. God will allow the wicked rich to strive against each other at the last day as a way self-destruction. *I Enoch* 96.6-8 condemns the rich for fixating on acquiring more and more riches through sinful ways and also at the expense of their relationship with God. He assures the rich who do such things that they will perish in the judgment. *I Enoch* 98.8 states that all the oppressive acts that the rich do are recorded in heaven and will used as reference for their condemnation. *I Enoch* 99:7 foresees the destruction of those who worship their wealth.

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<sup>78</sup>Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 219.

*1 Enoch* 104, like *1 Enoch* 99:10, promises blessings to those who walk in righteousness. In *1 Enoch* 104:1-6 the righteous are encouraged to expect the “great reversal” at the *eschaton*. The sixth verse reads: <sup>6</sup> “And now fear not, ye righteous, when ye see the sinners growing strong and prospering in their ways: be not companions with them, but keep afar from their violence; for ye shall become companions of the hosts of heaven.”

Similarly, *Psalms of Solomon* continues with the notion of viewing the poor as righteous. *Psalm of Solomon* 10:6-7 speaks of the mercy that God shows to the poor in His judgments. Also, in *Psalm of Solomon* 18:1-3, the poor are portrayed as being objects of God’s mercy. God hears the prayers of the poor.

Thus, though there is mention of the obligation that the rich have on the poor (*Jubilees* 16:22-25; *Judith* 8-16; *Sirach* 3:30-31; 4:1-10; *Tobit* 1:8; *Wisdom* 19:14-15.), the struggle between the rich and the poor and their fate in the judgment bulks large in the *Pseudepigrapha*.

### **Communal Ownership of Property**

A common ground for eschatology and financial stewardship is revealed in Qumran community’s communal ownership of property. They committed themselves live “in the expectation of eschatological salvation and in an attempt to mirror the form of life God would bring about with the coming age.”<sup>79</sup>

Essenes were an extremely conservative Jewish sect who lived for hundreds of years along the coastlines of the Dead Sea. The reason for their pulling out of society

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<sup>79</sup>Rhee, *Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich*, 31. Gerhard Kittel and Friedrich Gerhard, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), s.v. “πτωχός.”

was to prepare for the coming end through maintaining purity.<sup>80</sup> Thus they designated themselves as the Community of the New Covenant.<sup>81</sup> They studied the Scriptures diligently with the help of the Teacher of Righteousness whom they considered to be an inspired expounder of the hidden things on the prophecies.<sup>82</sup> The Teacher of Righteousness taught them that the latter days that the prophets of old predicted had finally arrived. He submitted to the Essenes that the latter days would be characterized by the abounding of evil that would bring severe trials on the faithful.<sup>83</sup> Thus they pulled out of society to be by themselves on the shores of the Dead Sea. They expelled any from the community for violating the Torah (1QS 8.21-23).<sup>84</sup>

Their strong eschatological ascent led them avoid private ownership of property and vie for communal ownership. Philo (ca. 20 BCE–50 CE), a Jewish philosopher, described the Essenes as living together in brotherhoods sharing food and clothes, and shunning a life of luxury.<sup>85</sup>

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, concurs with Philo. He admires the Qumran community for scorning riches, their communal ownership of property, and that among them there is neither grinding poverty nor excessive wealth.<sup>86</sup> Josephus also gathers from the *Manual of Discipline* that it took the Essene Congregation two

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<sup>80</sup>James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 142.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 108, 109.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 142.

<sup>84</sup>Florentino García Martínez and Tigchelaar, Eibert J. C. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (Transcriptions)* (Leiden, NY: Brill, 1997-1998), 1:90.

<sup>85</sup>A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essenes Writings From Qumran*, trans. G. Vermes (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973), 24, 25.

<sup>86</sup>Josephus *Jewish War* 2 (trans. Thackeray, LCL, 2:122-123).

years to approve a novice for eligibility for the communal meal. The first year was reserved for the assessment of one who had spent a year living within the community with regards to his or her understanding and keeping of the Law. If the individual was successful in the first test, he or she would be required to surrender his or her possessions to the steward of the group. Only upon further examination after the second year would one be accepted into the fellowship meal (1QS 6.18-23).<sup>87</sup>

## **Common Grounds for Financial Stewardship and Eschatology in the New Testament**

### **The Christocentric Nature of the New Testament**

Financial stewardship and eschatology have a confluence in Jesus Christ who is focal point of the New Testament (John 20:31; Rev 1:1). On the one hand, in John 1:3, He is presented as the *Logos* through whom everything was made. John says that πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο “all things became through Him.”<sup>88</sup> John uses the verb ἐγένετο which is in the inceptive aorist and the preposition δι' “through” to denote that the created world or all things owe their existence to Jesus Christ.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, in Colossians 1:15 Paul uses a figurative Messianic title for Christ. He designates Christ as “πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως” “firstborn of all creation” which means that Christ is before all creation and superior to all creation.<sup>90</sup> In Colossians 1:16, Paul uses the

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<sup>87</sup>García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1:84. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 109.

<sup>88</sup>All Greek texts are from *Greek New Testament*. 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994.

<sup>89</sup>Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 558, 559.

<sup>90</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. electronic ed. (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1996), s.v. “πρωτότοκος.”

dative of agency<sup>91</sup> ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη “by whom all things were created” to denote that Christ is agency of creation. Therefore, Christ is the maker and Owner of the universe. Similar notions are found in Revelation 3:14; 5:12, 13.

On the other hand, in His eschatological discourses, Jesus is shown to be both the coming King and the one who will require accountability from the stewards ((Matt 24:44-51; 25:13-30; Luke 19:11-27). Whilst other passages do not explicitly identify Jesus as the master who leaves his servants in charge of His possessions, Matthew 24:44, by referring to the “Son of Man,” plainly indicates that the master who will require accountability on the servants at his return is Jesus Himself. In the parable of Luke 19:11-27, the nobleman gave μνᾶς “*minas*” to his servants with which to do business until his return. According to Barbara Friberg et al a “*mina*” was understood “in the Old Testament as a unit of weight equal to 100 shekels and in the New Testament as a Greek unit of money equal to 100 drachmas or one-sixtieth of a talent.”<sup>92</sup> Thus the actuality that a *mina* was a unit of money reveals that, among other things, Jesus is concerned with how His followers or stewards relate with financial matters. Hence, as Judge ((Act 10:42; 17:31; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1, 8) of the world and Owner of all things, He brought eschatology and financial stewardship together.

## **Sabbath**

In Mark 2:28 Jesus is called the Lord of the Sabbath. The text reads ὥστε κύριός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τοῦ σαββάτου “Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” By making κύριός a predicate of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου shows His accusers that He has prerogatives of the Deity because the word κύριός in

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<sup>91</sup>Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (ANLEX), electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), s.v. “ἐν.”

<sup>92</sup>ANLEX, s.

this context means that He “has full control of”<sup>93</sup> the Sabbath. It can be deduced from Mark 2:23-28 that, according to Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath, the institution of the Sabbath, though set apart, was not meant to be against human life or good deeds.

Moreover, Jesus alluded to the enduring nature of the Sabbath on His prediction about the destruction of Jerusalem. In Matthew 24:20 Jesus said “Pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a Sabbath.” By this statement, though Jesus was not teaching on manners of Sabbath keeping, He however indicated that Sabbath observance would still be in force by the time Jerusalem would be destroyed in AD 70. Samuele Bacchiocchi rightly observes that Jesus was just urging His disciples to pray for advantageous circumstances for their flight when Jerusalem would be destroyed. He also argues that “the fact, however, that Sabbath keeping is taken for granted, presupposes, on the one hand, that Christ foresaw the permanence of its observance.”<sup>94</sup>

Notably, in Mark 11:11-14 Jesus seemed to symbolize the fate of Jerusalem by the cursing of the fig tree the day after His triumphal entry to Jerusalem. In Luke 13:6-9 Jesus told the parable of the fig tree whose owner want it destroyed for not bearing fruit. Upon the pleading of the vine dresser the owner gave it another year to see if it would produce fruit after which it would be destroyed if it failed to give fruit. Luke 13:5 shows that Jesus spoke that parable to illustrate the fate of Jerusalem if the Jews did not repent. By that token, cursing of the fig tree in Mark 11:14 seems to be a prophecy against Jerusalem. Interestingly, in Mark, the cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:15-18) is sandwiched between the narratives of the cursing of the fig tree

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<sup>93</sup>F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), s.v. “κύριός.”

<sup>94</sup>Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Early Christianity*, (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1999), 50.

(Mark 11:11-14) and the drying of the fig tree (Mark 11:21-25) which suggests that the three might be related. Brent Kinman attests the same.<sup>95</sup> If that be true, it means that the Jews were rejected for failing to produce the expected returns to God.

Besides cleansing the Temple and cursing the fig tree, Jesus on His last teaching in the Temple before the Passover during which He was crucified sat watching people as they were putting offering money into the treasury. Of all the givers that participated that day, the widows offering attracted His attention and commendation. Though gifts in the kingdom of God are not evaluated monetarily yet in the widow's offering Jesus discerned the moral value of the giver which to Him who looks at the heart is the grand thing.<sup>96</sup> Thus the widow was a true worshipper in the Temple that stood waiting for destruction in 70 CE for want of worshippers who produce fruit to the satisfaction of its Owner.

### **Blessings and Curses**

In the same time that Jesus was teaching in the Temple before His crucifixion, He uttered several woes to the Scribes and Pharisees. The word οὐαί which is rendered as “woe or alas!” is a particle of interjection and it expresses tremendous or severe displeasure and invites for vengeful pain on someone or something.<sup>97</sup> Hence, it is equivalent to a curse.

In Matthew 23:23 Jesus condemns the Scribes and Pharisee for obeying the law of tithing to its minutest detail, yet negligent in being just and merciful in their

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<sup>95</sup>Brent Kinman, “Lucan Eschatology and the Missing Fig Tree,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, no.4 (1994): 669. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).

<sup>96</sup>Ezra Palmer Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (New York, NY: C. Scribner's sons, 1922), 239.

<sup>97</sup>ANLEX, s.v. “οὐαί.”

dealings with others. Jesus showed Himself consistent with the Old Testament teaching that God is not interested in money but in a converted mind.

Consistent with the Old Testament and Himself, Jesus uttered beatitudes that convey the same principle. In Matthew 5:7, He said “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”. In Matthew 24:47 “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing” giving food to fellow servants in due time. In Acts 20:35 Jesus is quoted to have said “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Thus, the principles of exercising justice and mercy to the lower classes of the community and thereby showing faith in God are as enduring as the second tablet of the Decalogue. As a result, they weld together eschatology and financial stewardship.

### **Personal Relationships**

The New Testament seems to have assumed the Old Testament stance on community relations. Jesus instructed the young ruler to sell his possessions and donate the proceeds to the necessitous (Matt 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:21). Likewise, the principle of living to render service to others is depicted in the ordinance of foot-washing. In John 13:15 Jesus by washing the feet of the disciples he set an ὑπόδειγμα “example, model, pattern.”<sup>98</sup> The disciples were thus called upon to follow the example of the Master whose earthly life was characterized by altruistic service to humanity.

In the same way, Jesus in the parable of the sheep and the goats taught that the worth of one’s life would be measured by how much he or she was helpful to the needy (Matthew 25:31-46). Christ says He ἀφορίζει “separates” the sheep from the goats. The verb that was used by Jesus literally means “to strictly mark off by

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<sup>98</sup>James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament* (DBL), electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. “ὑπόδειγμα.”

boundary.”<sup>99</sup> Thus acts of mercy are a duty that serves as a centrifuge that will determine one’s destiny. It seems that through the parables of Matthew 25 Jesus meant to “urge the Christians...not to lessen their performance of good deeds”<sup>100</sup> in spite of the fact that the love of many wanes (Matt 24:12) and the *parousia* seems to delay. Essentially, in the New Testament helping the poor is expected of those that await the second coming of Christ.

### **Tithes and Offerings**

The New Testament seems to assume tithing and hence it does not assert it. In Matthew 23:23 Jesus, referring to tithing, said the Scribes and Pharisees “these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.” Thus, He affirmed the principle of tithing. William C. Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva’s conclusion that Jesus told His audience in Matthew 23 to continue with tithing because they were leaving in the days erstwhile the cross,<sup>101</sup> seems inaccurate.

Noticeably, Matthew 23:24 shows what really the emphasis of Jesus’ speech is. The Scribes and Pharisees were accused of οἱ διῦλίζοντες τὸν κώνωπα, τὴν δὲ κάμηλον καταπίνοντες “straining the gnat but swallowing the camel.” The two phrases οἱ διῦλίζοντες τὸν κώνωπα “straining the gnat” and τὴν κάμηλον καταπίνοντες “swallowing the camel” are antithetical because of the conjunction δὲ. The whole clause “straining the gnat but swallowing the camel” is, however, a hyperbole.<sup>102</sup> According to Leviticus 11:4, 22, 23 both a gnat and camel were unclean animals

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<sup>99</sup>ANLEX, s.v. “ἀφορίζω.”

<sup>100</sup>Karl Paul Donfried, “The Allegory of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13) as a Summary of Matthean Theology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, no.3 (1974): 421.

<sup>101</sup>William C. Kaiser, Jr., and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 255

<sup>102</sup>W. D. Davies, and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004), 326.

which the Israelites were not supposed to eat. For someone to make sure they do not eat the smallest (gnat) but gulp at the largest (camel) was indeed hypocritical.<sup>103</sup>

Hence, the argument is about going infinitesimal in tithing and gross negligence on justice, mercy, and righteousness. So, tithing is presupposed in the New Testament and not repealed.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, if it be granted that Jesus' message to the Scribes and Pharisees was that they were supposed to do tithing inter alia justice, merciful deeds and faith then tithing should be as enduring as its counterpart principles. For that reason, tithing as part of financial stewardship is relevant in biblical eschatology.

### **The Rich Young Ruler**

Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler provides a common ground of eschatology and financial stewardship (Matt 19:16-23; Luke 18:18-25). The young ruler asked Jesus how he could attain eternal life. His question was expressive of an eschatological interest. He desired a good end for his life. To such an important quest and desire Jesus pointed to financial stewardship. The rich ruler was directed to sell all his belongings, share the proceeds with the poor and follow Jesus. Unfortunately, the narration ends up the young ruler's ego wounded for failure to comply with the conditions of the demand.

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<sup>103</sup>“Strain at” [Matt 23:24], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 5:521.

<sup>104</sup>Knox Chamblin, “The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Covenants*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester: Crossway, 1988), 183.

## End-Time People as Covetous

Paul predicts that during the last days Christians, among other things, will be φιλάργυρος (*philargyros*) “fond of money, avaricious”<sup>105</sup> and φιλήδονος (*philēdonos*) “used in a bad sense of what is against God and spiritually destructive to oneself intent on pleasure, abandoned to (sensual) pleasure, pleasure-loving”<sup>106</sup> (2 Tim 3:2, 4). Similarly, Jesus indicated that the final days of earth’s history will be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot in Sodom when people loved pleasure (Matt 24:37, 38; Luke 17:26, 27, 28, 29).

If the state of affairs in the last days is to be thus, then Paul’s exhortation to Timothy against loving and trusting in riches seems most relevant for such times (1 Tim 6:6-17). Again, David McConaughy opines that though is money temporal, it involves uncommon and timeless consequences. Similarly, Maxson and Leaeau reason that “because of selfishness, the struggle over money is at its core a spiritual battle” and “this battle takes place in the world, the workplace, the home, and in the church.”<sup>107</sup> For McConaughy stewardship is the divine nursery methods of developing human characters and giving is God’s remedy for man’s selfishness.<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, it can be concluded that financial stewardship is an essential element of biblical eschatology. Not only is financial stewardship essential in the last days but it is a rightful antidote come in time.

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<sup>105</sup>Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), s.v. “φιλάργυρος.”

<sup>106</sup>ANLEX, s.v. “φιλήδον.”

<sup>107</sup>Maxson and Leaeau, *Strategic Church Finances*, 23.

<sup>108</sup>David McConaughy, *Money the Acid Test: Studies in Stewardship, Covering the Principles and Practise of One’s Personal Economics, for Use in Bible Classes, Discussion Groups, Young People’s Societies, and Similar Gatherings* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1860), n.p.

## Message of the First Angel of Revelation 14:6, 7

Financial stewardship and eschatology are suggested in the call to worship Him “who created” and Whose “judgment is come” respectively (Rev 14:7). Thus, just as Malachi prophesied the coming of Elijah to restore filial relations and thereby enhance worship, the first angel’s message addresses worship. Financial stewardship, as it reviewed from obligation of tithes and offerings, is an expression of worship. First, in the Old Testament God explicitly forbade the Israelites from coming to worship Him empty-handed (Deut 16:16). It was probably on the same principle that the poor widow acted in Luke 21:1-4. Lastly, the tithes and offerings were brought to the place that God would choose as a worship place (Deut 26:2). The same thing happened during the reform of Hezekiah (2 Chron 31) and was expected in Malachi’s time (Mal 3:10).

Relatedly, Erika F. Puni observes tithing as an act of worship and also a “personal expression of our faithfulness to God and the covenant relationship He initiated with us in Jesus Christ.”<sup>109</sup> In the same vein, Paul Pellandini exhorts believers that giving tithes is both a deed of submission and worship.<sup>110</sup> Further, Kantonen distinguishes Christian giving from other forms of giving, on the grounds that giving to God is foremost an act of worship.<sup>111</sup>

Also, the contrast of two groups of people; τοὺς καθήμενους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς “those who live on the earth” (Rev 14:6) and οἱ τηροῦντες τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ “those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus” (Rev 14:12) are suggestive to the subject under consideration. In the Apocalypse the

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<sup>109</sup>Erika F. Puni, “Blessed To be a Blessing,” *Dynamic Steward*, April-June 2015, 4.

<sup>110</sup>Paul Pellandini, “How Holy is the Sacred Tenth?” *Adventist Affirm* 20 (Summer 2006): 27.

<sup>111</sup>Kantonen, “Stewardship and Christian Doctrine,” 172.

phrase τοὺς καθήμενους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς “those living or sitting on the earth” (14:6) and its synonym τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς “those dwelling on the earth” (8:13) is a technical phrase. It does not merely refer to people who have their abode on planet earth. It refers either to unbelieving idolaters (3:10; 6:17) or to those that are judged or deceived “implying that this group intractable in their antagonistic stance toward God (Rev 3:10; 6:17; 8:13; 11:10a, 10b; 13:8, 12, 14a, b; 17:2, 8).”<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, Beale indicates that the substitution of “those sitting on the earth” (14:6) for “those dwelling on the earth” (8:13) “emphasizes even more the permanent and self-confident nature of commitment to the worldly value system (so also perhaps “sitting”, with respect to Babylon, in 17:1 and 18:7).”<sup>113</sup> Lichtenwaller describes this group as people of “this-world-only perspective or worldview.”<sup>114</sup> They trust the earth for “security, ultimate meaning and welfare.”<sup>115</sup> Hence, in other words, they worship creation instead of the Creator. Lichtenwaller’s description of this group makes the message of Revelation 14:6, 7 relevant to financial stewardship.

Diametrically opposed to the worshippers of creation, John presents another group. This latter group comprises “those keeping the commandments of God and faith in Jesus” (14:12). Beale describes these for their “faithfulness, discernment of evil, and resistance to compromise”<sup>116</sup> (Rev 13:10, 18). They remain faithful and loyal with respect to the “holistic reference to the objective of revelation of the old and

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<sup>112</sup>G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 74.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup>Larry L. Lichtenwaller, “Worldview Transformation and Mission: Narrative, Theology, and Ritual in John’s Apocalypse,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 21, no.1-2 (2010): 216.

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup>Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 767.

new covenants.”<sup>117</sup> Also, they “reproduce Christ’s faithfulness to his Father in face of enticements to trust in the world’s ungodly norms of living.”<sup>118</sup> In other words, they are watchful against allurements to compromise.

Therefore, it may not be surprising for eschatology and financial stewardship to have a place in the Apocalypse. Although evidence about eschatology is glaring in Revelation, stewardship (including financial stewardship) is not absent.

### **How Eschatology relates with Financial Stewardship**

The Scriptures reveal that God is responsible for bringing about the *eschaton*.<sup>119</sup> Thus God is the one who owns this world and equally responsible for its ultimate purpose. The fact that eschatology speaks to the ultimate purpose of God for the world means that in one way or the other eschatology influences all doctrines of theology. In that regard, T. N. Kantonen asserts that all Christian doctrines find their full meaning within the purview of the ultimate end.<sup>120</sup> Not only does biblical eschatology affect Christian theology but it also influences Christian ethics.

Moreover, it is vital to note that the scriptures speak about matters that have to do with financial stewardship in ethical terms. For instance, failure to return tithes and offerings to God is termed robbery “*yik<sup>e</sup>bba*” against Him (Mal 3:8). As part of

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>God is in charge of the; Day of the Lord (Isa 13:6; Jer 46:10; Joel 2:31; Zeph 1:14-2:3), Pre-Advent Judgment (Dan 7:9-14; 8:14; 1 Pet 4:17; Rev 14:6, 7), Final Judgment (Act 10:42; 17:31; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1, 8), and Utopia (Rev 21:1-4). Norman Gulley states that “the kingdom, like salvation, rests in the hands of a sovereign God.” He is actually surprised that “the Reformers, who taught the doctrine of salvation by Christ alone, did not follow through with the doctrine of the kingdom by Christ alone.” “The Kingdom of glory is just as much the work of God as is the kingdom of grace.” [Norman R. Gulley, *Christ is Coming* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 250.] Thus in the OT times people hoped “not in the future but in God.” [George E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1964), 61.] Oscar Cullmann perceives that “the ‘end’ as the meaning of redemptive history, however, is Jesus Christ, who has already appeared.” [Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, trans. Floyd V. Filson (London, England: SMC, 1962), 140.

<sup>120</sup>Kantonen, “Stewardship and Christian Doctrine,” 180

Christian ethics; greediness, hoarding wealth, tightfistedness, and setting one's heart on riches are berated (Deut 15:8; 2 Kings 5:26; Amos 2:6; 8:4-5; Mic 3:18; Luke 12:15-21; 1 Tim 6:17-18). Contrarily, generosity or service to mankind and God through money is highly commendable (Prov 11:26; 13:11; Luke 8:1-3; Acts 4:34-37; 1 Cor 9:7). The Apostle Paul calls generosity the "grace" or "virtue" of giving (2 Cor 8:6, 7).

Therefore, in the light of the foregoing, it may be concluded that biblical eschatology has ethical implications for financial stewardship. However, on the same pretext, one may ask if an eschatologically motivated ethical action for financial stewardship that takes into account that the future is entirely in the hands of God and yet perceives implications for human behavior in the present can be defined. If the answer to question is a "yes," the following question would be "how?"

### **Jesus and the Ethical Implications of Eschatology for Financial Stewardship**

The answer seems to lie in the Christological-eschatological nature of the Scriptures and the worldview of Jesus.<sup>121</sup> First, the Scriptures present a "Christological eschatology" which implies that the subject of final events is more concerned with the One who is coming than the coming events.<sup>122</sup> Eschatology as it is presented in the Scriptures has its center in Christ. Therefore, there is consistency and continuity in the ethics of the kingdom because the same Christ who came at the incarnation or the First Advent (inaugurated eschatology), is

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<sup>121</sup>Carl E. Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1974), 110.

<sup>122</sup>Jacques Doukhan, "The Tension of Seventh-day Adventist Identity: An Existential & Eschatological Perspective," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 26, no.1 (2015): 35.

spiritually present through His Spirit (appropriated eschatology), and will physically come at the Second Advent (consummated eschatology).<sup>123</sup>

Two points are of special note with reference to Jesus and His eschatological ethics. First, Jesus relates with the Old Testament as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the coming of the Messiah (Gen 3:15; Num 24:17; Isa 7:14, 15; 9:6; 53; Dan 9:25-27). At the same time as representative of True Israel who shows how the Jewish nation as the “son of God” should have conducted himself.<sup>124</sup> Thus the ethical principles that Jesus lived by were not different from what was expected of Israel.

This means that, if Jesus is indeed the pattern of what Christian ethical life is then there is some form of continuity with Old Testament revelation with respect to ethics. In other words, eschatology does not change ethics but influences it. In the same light, eschatology influences financial stewardship but does not change it from what the Old Testament reveals.

Lastly, the worldview of Jesus which in turn influenced His life and ministry portrays thought-provoking eschatological consciousness (Luke 2:49; 9:58; John 4:31-34; 9:4; 17:4; 19:30). Thus, Jesus is pictured as “a plant that grew up in the soil of eschatology.”<sup>125</sup> Similarly, Warren Quanbeck perceives in the gospels the awareness of the eschatological urgency of discipleship made the teaching of Jesus

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<sup>123</sup>Richard M. Davidson, “Israel and the Church: Continuity and Discontinuity II,” in *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013): 422, 423.

<sup>124</sup> Davidson, “New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” *Journal of Adventist Theological Society* 5, no.1 (1994): 20, 21.

<sup>125</sup>Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 10.

stress the need for readiness, a cost and benefit analysis of discipleship, and of exercising thoroughness in stewardship.<sup>126</sup>

For instance, in Matthew 24:31-52, Jesus likens His Second Advent to the coming of a thief in the night and unknown to the householder or steward. Thus, He told the disciples of the need to prepare for His coming so that it would not catch them unawares. Jesus exhorted His disciples, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὑμεῖς γίνεσθε ἕτοιμοι “for this reason you also must become ready” (Matt 24:44). The verb γίνεσθε is in the imperative mood indicating that Jesus was commanding them and not making a suggestion. He coupled an imperative with the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς to emphasize the point that He was making.

Further, γίνεσθε as it was used by Jesus carried the connotations that the disciples were “to possess certain characteristics, with the implication of their having been acquired.”<sup>127</sup> This suggests that the work that Jesus left for His disciples was that of developing their characters such that they are ready for His Second Advent. This verb denotes a state of being rather than a once off action. The present tense of the imperative testifies to the fact that they were to be in that state continuously so that the coming of Jesus would not come upon them as a thief. They were to become ἕτοιμοι “ready or prepared”<sup>128</sup> for the *eschaton* since they did not know what hour Jesus would come.

In this case it is shown that eschatology has an imperative nuance on ethics. It says what should be done given that the *eschaton* is coming. Eschatology indicates that it has an *object* relationship with ethics. “By *object* is meant *what* eschatology

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<sup>126</sup>Quanbeck, “Stewardship in the Teaching of Jesus,” 49

<sup>127</sup>Louw and Nida, s.v. “γίνομαι.” BAGD, s.v. “γίνομαι.”

<sup>128</sup>CWSD, s.v. “ἕτοιμος.”

says human beings can and should be doing in the world.”<sup>129</sup> So, eschatology has “givens” for Christian ethics. Hence, this means that preparedness is a must if anyone wishes to be on Jesus’ side when He comes the second time.

However, Jesus did not stop at saying that people need to be prepared for His coming, He went on to give an analogy of preparedness. He used the analogy of a slave or servant who was left in charge of other servants. Though Jesus did not use the word steward, it seems to be implicit in what he said. He said the servant who is the subject of the discourse was ἐπὶ “over” the household, the preposition ἐπὶ “over” in this case is used with the genitive of place and the place is not a physical location but a position of “authority, power, and control.”<sup>130</sup> This portrays a picture of a steward who is in charge of his master’s servants while the master is away.

This servant’s duty was to take care of the other servants, giving them what they need in a proper time. The word τροφήν refers to both physical and spiritual nourishment.<sup>131</sup> It is possible that Jesus referred to both because He has entrusted His disciples with both physical wealth and the gospel. The disciples are expected to be faithful and wise in discharging their business.

Moreover, He highlighted the rewards that the honest and wise servant would get. He referred to the faithful as μακάριος “blessed.” Jesus congratulates the servant who will be found doing his duties faithfully.<sup>132</sup> That servant is promised to be entrusted with all the possessions of his master. By this promise Jesus seems to be wetting the appetites of His disciples. They are given an incentive of doing the work

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<sup>129</sup>Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 125.

<sup>130</sup>Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, s.v. “ἐπὶ.”

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, “*oikonomos*.”

<sup>132</sup>Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “μακάριος.”

of stewards well. He is motivating them not only into action but He is stimulating them into increased activity. Therefore, Jesus provided another ethical implication of eschatology which is *impetus*. The disciples are given the reason why they should be doing as the command exhorted. There is a reward that awaits them if they prove to be faithful stewards.

However, Jesus presented a wicked or bad steward and his fate. Jesus says that this steward διχοτομήσει will be “cut into pieces” figuratively meaning that he will be severely punished.<sup>133</sup> Thayer notes that this might be a reference “made to that most cruel mode of punishment, in use among the Hebrews (1 Sam 15:33) and other ancient nations.”<sup>134</sup> In this case Jesus gives a threat to those who might think that unfaithfulness in stewardship might be an option. His threatening is sure as the promise. As a consequence, Jesus provides another form of impetus for ethical implications of eschatology, which is that eschatology acts a presage. He intends to warn the transgressors and deter or daunt disciples from becoming potential transgressors.

From the study above we can deduce that the relationship of eschatology and financial stewardship borders around the accountability and reward principles. Thus, eschatology makes ethics attractive and obligatory because of its promises and threats.<sup>135</sup>

### **Accountability: The Eschatological Object for Financial Stewardship**

Since a steward is one who manages the affairs of another then it follows that accountability is the watch-word for stewards. Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:2 states that it

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<sup>133</sup>ANLEX, s.v. “διχοτομέω.”

<sup>134</sup>Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “διχοτομέω.”

<sup>135</sup>Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 127.

is imperative for stewards to be found faithful. The same is attested in the parable of the talents. Relatedly, in the parable of Matthew 25:31-52, accountability mandates Christians to announce, anticipate, and approximate the coming kingdom and its ideals in light of the review at the judgement.<sup>136</sup>

### **Annunciation**

To begin with, the ministry of Jesus was characterized by announcing the kingdom.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, Luke records that during Jesus' course of "proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God" certain women inclusive of Mary Magdalene, Joana the wife of Chuza, Susanna and many others *αἴτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς* "were ministering to Him from their substance" (Luke 8:3).

With the commission of the apostles (Matt 28:19) and the fact that Jesus always had the Christian church in mind when He was addressing His disciples (Mark 13:37; John 17:29). Christians are expected to finance the mission of God as they await the Second Advent. In Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians supporting God's mission or those that are engaged full-time to the gospel ministry is likened to supporting an army that is in battle (1 Cor 9:7). Ma Julie's study calls for Christians, in view of the eschaton, to invest more resources toward outreach ministry.<sup>138</sup> She advocates for Christians to live simple lifestyles or voluntary downward lifestyles in a world rampant with materialism so that they can better finance the mission of God.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics*, 110.

<sup>137</sup>In the trend of John the Baptist who said "for the kingdom of heaven is near" (*ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*) (Matt 3:2), Jesus also announced and sent His disciples to announce that the kingdom was near (*ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*) (Matt 4:17; 10:7). As part of the signs of His coming, Jesus predicted that the preaching of the gospel will be the last sign of His appearing (Mat 24:14).

<sup>138</sup>Ma, "Eschatology and Mission: Living the 'Last Days' Today," 186, 194.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*, 195.

Similarly, Ellen G. White speaks largely on the need for believers (SDAs) to participate in supporting mission work. She called on believers to imitate Christ life of self-selflessness and altruism, to take interest in the great work of saving and serving the fallen race.<sup>140</sup> She identified those that sacrifice for God's mission as those that deny themselves of some pleasures in order to make means available for the work of God.<sup>141</sup> Arthur Pearson concurs that the second coming of Jesus has a refining influence on character and also molds the atmosphere of missions. It makes people to relax their grasp upon material possessions and earthly pleasures.<sup>142</sup>

Second, Christians are exhorted to “do business or to occupy” until Jesus comes back (Luke 19:11-27). In the parable the nobleman called his servants and gave them minas to trade with. The same principle is depicted in the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-28).

According to Friberg et al a “*mina*” was understood “in the Old Testament as a unit of weight equal to 100 shekels and in the NT as a Greek unit of money equal to 100 drachmas or one-sixtieth of a talent.”<sup>143</sup> Thus it was a unit of money. They were to invest for heaven with this money while they awaited His second coming.

Noticeably, the word used for the servants is (*doulous*) which suggests subservience. Usually, such laborers normally worked in spite of their own wills and were most likely not paid. Hence, the master's or nobleman's gesture is unthinkable. He gives his slaves money and freedom to act on his behalf. During his absence they

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<sup>140</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).

<sup>141</sup>White, *Early Writings*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).

<sup>142</sup>Arthur Tappan Pierson, “A Word on Missions and Eschatology,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 5 (January 1988): 98.

<sup>143</sup>ANLEX, s.v. “*μνᾶ*.”

will work of their volition for him. By these words Jesus was painting a picture that should be cherished by all His disciples throughout all ages. Believers owe everything to Him. He changed their status from slaves to stewards who are invested with freedom and capital to transact His business.

Moreover, in Luke 19 the nobleman is said to be going to a far country to receive the kingdom for himself to return. Since this was in reference to Jesus' ascension, reception of the kingdom and His return, Daniel 7:13, 14 give an important nuance. In Daniel 7:13,14 the Son of Man is seen coming to the ancient of Days during a court session (Dan 7:9, 10) and He obtains an everlasting dominion and kingdom (Dan 7:14). In Malachi 3:1 the Lord is revealed as coming to His temple or the throne room or palace (*hêkal*).<sup>144</sup> An intertextual study of Daniel 7, Malachi 3 and Luke 19 shows that there would be a point in time when judgment (pre-advent) is at session and the servants are taking care of the Lord's finances. The thought of what kind of embassy or testimony will be given by records of heaven (Dan 7:10; Mal 3:16) about how the servants (Christians) are doing the Lord's business on earth is sobering.

Upon his return, the nobleman demanded to know from each servant what he had gained by trading. Two were rewarded for the good work whilst the other one was condemned for his. As in Malachi, it is noticeable in Luke the message of financial stewardship produced two groups (Mal 3:13-18; Luke 19:15-25).

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<sup>144</sup>White states that "The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi, are descriptions of the same event; and this is also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25." [White, *Great Controversy*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).]

It can be concluded that in Luke 19:11-27 Jesus presented a parable that was intended to help His hearers understand that they needed, as stewards of God's grace, to make themselves ready to get into the consummated kingdom of God. In this way Jesus coupled eschatology with financial stewardship.

Third, Christians are urged to engage in acts of mercy as they wait for the second coming of Jesus (Matt 25:33-46). In Matthew 25:33 the criterion for segregating the sheep from the goats is whether those that were waiting for the Second Advent were taking care of the less privileged. Hence, the question in the grand finale would be whether one was willing to part with they had in order to serve others.

Fourth, the Christian community is expected to give tithes and offerings (Mal 3:8-12). It can be concluded from the study of Malachi 3:6-12 that the returning of tithes and offerings by God's worshippers is an index to their healthy relationship with God and the opposite was also true.<sup>145</sup> When humans rob God they show themselves to be bad stewards who cannot acknowledge to whom they owe their existence and what they possess.<sup>146</sup> Thus, if failure by the Jews to return tithes and offerings attracted God's censure in their days, Christians would be condemned for the same in Day of the Lord.

Finally, Christians should give glory to God in the way they relate to and deal with the finances that God has entrusted to them. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to do everything for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). In the Revelation, the first angel of chapter 14 exhorts the idolaters to give glory to the Creator-Judge. From the

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<sup>145</sup>L. H. Moretsi, "An Exegetical Study of Malachi 3:6-12 with Special Reference to Tithing," (MTh Dissertation, North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa, 2004), 77.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., 72.

command “fear God and give glory to Him, because His hour of judgment is come”  
(φοβήθητε τὸν θεὸν καὶ δότε αὐτῷ δόξαν, ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα τῆς κρίσεως αὐτοῦ)

Stephen Smalley concludes that “the ‘moment of God’s judgment’ in verse 7 describes what is eternally true: that divine criticism of human wrongdoing and injustice persists, while an answering response of repentance and faith on the part of believers remains a perpetual possibility.”<sup>147</sup> Thus, repentance and faith are also expected in the area of financial stewardship.

### **Anticipation**

The excitement and eagerness, which often comes along with the feeling of looking forward, work a good deal especially for those that await the return of Jesus Christ. Pearson asserts that anticipation “makes all time seem short and the whole world seem small; dwarfs the present age into insignificance and lifts the peaks of the age to come into loftier altitudes, on a nearer horizon, in a clearer view.” He continues, “It so magnifies the approval of the coming Lord as to make present compensation for service and sacrifice appear trifling.”<sup>148</sup>

Looking forward to the Second Advent leads to humility. William H. Shea observes that “To know that the present time will end leads to a proper evaluation of this world's riches. Wealth in itself is not to be condemned, but to think only of earthly matters is enmity to the cross (Phil. 3:18, 19).”<sup>149</sup> A Christian who understands the transitory nature of this life is led to invest for heaven and to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (1 Cor. 7:30, 31; Matt 6:19, 20, 33).

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<sup>147</sup>Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation of John* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 363.

<sup>148</sup>Pierson, “A Word on Missions and Eschatology,” 98.

<sup>149</sup>Shea, “Creation,” 454.

Anticipating that Jesus is coming again helps Christians understand and gives them time to demonstrate that only God's ways work. Christians live in a world that is characterized by consumerism, materialism, competition, and secularism and they stand a great chance of being influenced by the world in which they live. Julie Ma is of the opinion that "Christians live with more than one faith system: often with secularism, materialism, or other religions in addition to Christianity."<sup>150</sup> Christians, living in such a world, have to affirm that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Also, anticipation of the coming of Christ and "the riches of the glory of God's inheritance reserved for the saints (Eph. 1:18)"<sup>151</sup> help the Christian to bring eternal factors into earthly choices.

### **Approximation**

Christian eschatology portrays life in the hereafter or the Second Advent picturesquely. The *eschaton* promises the utopia (Isa 25:6, 9; Mic 4:3; Nah 1:9; Rev 21). Thus in one way or the other Christians become obliged to order their present life after the pattern of life at the *eschaton*. Though it is close to impossible for them to fully match their lives with life in the new heavens and the new earth they can, however, make their present lives an approximate of that ideal life.

In that regard, White exhorts believers to continually make effort to imitate the heavenly society they await soon to join; namely, that of unfallen angels of God.<sup>152</sup> Actually Gowan labels it hypocrisy for anyone to "consider doing anything that is contrary to, or at cross-purposes with, or even neutral with respect to, what one's

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<sup>150</sup>Ma, "Eschatology and Mission," 194.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid.

<sup>152</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:216.

eschatology affirms to be the ultimate purpose of God.”<sup>153</sup> The *eschaton* is depicted as a great reversal of the present unfortunate circumstances (Isa 26:19; 33:24; 65:17; Luke 6:20-25; Rev 21:1-4). Therefore, Christians are motivated to act on the basis of love knowing that life as it is on earth ought not to be so, with some wallowing in abject poverty whilst others enjoy a superfluous life. However, Christians love not because Jesus has called them “to love more earnestly because of the nearness of His second coming, but the Second Advent gives love consistency.”<sup>154</sup> Such love will be shown in fair business transactions, in shunning methods of getting wealth that are oppressive, and in sharing with the poor.

### **Rewards Principle: the eschatological Impetus for Financial Stewardship**

In the parables of the kingdom, Jesus made it clear that whilst the unfaithful stewards were to be condemned the faithful ones would receive rich rewards partly in this life and fully in the life to come. In the same spirit, Paul exhorted servants at Colossae to work heartily for their human masters as working for the Lord Jesus knowing fully well that they would receive rewards at the end (Col 3:23, 24). The fact that faithful stewards will be rewarded provides incentives for living by the kingdom values.

### **Obligation**

First, eschatology motivates Christians to do their best “to avoid doing anything contrary to what God is doing, and to be directed in our actions by our understanding of the direction of God’s work.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup>Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 127.

<sup>154</sup>Shea, “Creation,” 454.

<sup>155</sup>Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 128.

For instance, Christians are not merely to give their tithes and offerings but their giving should surpass that of the Jews simply because they enjoy more privileges than the Jews. First, they have greater light than the Jews. Again, they no longer participate in the sacrificial system which in the Old Testament was supported by what the Hebrew people owned. According to Jesus Christ, the more privileges one has over the people, more is expected from him (Luke 12:48). A.T. Robinson argues that, because of the peculiar privileges that the Christians enjoy and the mission to be accomplished, “likewise the amount” given by Christians to God’s cause “ought really to be increased.”<sup>156</sup> Thomas Powers concluded from his historical study of tithing that “So sincere, in the beginning of Christianity, was the devotion of believers that their gifts to the Evangelical priesthood far exceeded what the tenth would have been.”<sup>157</sup> Similarly, Chamblin, like Ellen G. White, believed that Christians should exceed what the Jews gave.<sup>158</sup>

Also, in doing mission for God, Christians are motivated to do their best. For Don Fanning, believers who await the Second Advent should be inspired to individually sacrifice for the gospel commission counting it a privilege to serve God.<sup>159</sup>

Furthermore, eschatology brings along into mission work a sense of urgency. The sense of urgency is infused both in doing the work of evangelizing the world and

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<sup>156</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Five Times Five Points of Church Finance* (Chicago, IL: Western Publishing House, 1885), 111, 112.

<sup>157</sup>Thomas J. Powers, “An Historical Study of the Tithe in the Christian Church to 1648,” (PhD Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, 1948), 34.

<sup>158</sup>Chamblin, “The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ,” 198, 199. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 527-529. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 337.

<sup>159</sup>Fanning, “Eschatology and Missions,” 39.

in soliciting financial support. This sense of urgency also elicits total member participation both financially and otherwise.<sup>160</sup>

### **Attraction**

As one envisions Christ's second coming, the great reversal, people being saved eternally, the rewards of the faithful and other aspects of the utopia no better motivation can surpass the attraction of eschatology.<sup>161</sup> Amos Wilder's observations seem to be correct, he opines that eschatologies differ because of the imaginative tableaux that create them.<sup>162</sup> The Bible presents a "vivid, imminent, ethical, universal, and transcendental" eschatology that springs "from a religious apprehension that is immediate and elevated (John 14:1-3; 2 Cor 5:10, 11; Phil 3:20; Heb 11:39, 40; Rev 1:7; 21:1-4; 22:12)."<sup>163</sup> Such an eschatology is charming.

### **Warning**

The fate of the unfaithful or bad servant shows that God will indeed in the end reward each individual according and proportionate to their deeds (Rev 22:12). Therefore, God's threats are as sure as His promises. Christians are forewarned to shun the ways of the bad steward.

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<sup>160</sup>J. N. Loughborough asserts that while it always the duty of God's people to utilize their entrusted abilities to extend the work of God, it is more insistently so with those who are waiting for the imminent return of the Lord. [J. N. Loughborough, *Last-Day Tokens* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1904), 45.]

<sup>161</sup>For Gowan, attraction is "most potent aspect" of eschatology. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 128.

<sup>162</sup>Amos N. Wilder, "The Nature of Jewish Eschatology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 50, no. 3 (1931): 203.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*

## **Conclusion**

The ethical implications of eschatology on financial stewardship cannot be given excessive merit. The exemplary life of Jesus and His teaching on financial stewardship with its connection to eschatology is relevant for all times. The two main ethical implications of eschatology on financial stewardship that stand clear are accountability and the rewards principle- object and impetus.

The former spells out that Christians should; be engaged in mission, return a faithful tithe and cheerfully give offerings, do acts of mercy, and live in such a way that God is extolled by their lives. They are to anticipate the *eschaton* and pattern their lives after the ideal that they are hopeful of. The latter, motivates Christians to keep waiting, watching and working for God through life's vicissitudes. It also woos them through its attractive and pictographic presentation of the world to come.

### **The Cosmic Conflict and Eschatology and Financial Stewardship**

The cosmic conflict seems to have emerged partly because of stewardship questions that Lucifer harbored which God answered through the cross of Christ and will fully resolve at the *eschaton*. To begin with prophecies of Isaiah 14:4-21 and Ezekiel 28:12-19 highlight the origin of a controversy that began in heaven. Though this view has been denied by other scholars, especially those of the nineteenth century, it still holds in traditional Christian circles. A careful look at Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-19 shows that it is close to impossible for one to apply these texts to human rulers. The contexts of the two texts demand a heavenly setting.

Jose Bertoluci clarifies that of the five divisions or stanzas of Isaiah 14:4b-21 there is "clear delimitation...and the change of realms among them show the third

stanza (Isa 14:12-15) to be of different nature than the rest of the text.”<sup>164</sup> He observes that the middle stanza is set in a foremost position and presents an occurrence that must have taken place in the heavenly domain.<sup>165</sup> A contrast of Isaiah 14:12-15 and 52-53 shows two opposite poles. On the one hand is an extremity of pride and on the other hand is of humility. If in Isaiah 52-53 the reference is of the Messiah it makes sense to imply that in Isaiah 14:12-15 the reference is of Satan.<sup>166</sup>

It is noticeable that in Ezekiel 28:1-10 the one who is addressed by the message is the ‘prince of Tyre’ (*nagid*) (Ezek 28:2) but Ezekiel 28:11-19 addresses the ‘king of Tyre’ (*melek*). This king is described as the ordained covering cherub on the holy mount of God. Davidson describes the mount of God as the Holy of holies in the Sanctuary.<sup>167</sup> If he is right then it implies that the problem of the cosmic conflict began in the temple in heaven. The charge that is laid by God in Isaiah against this fallen angel is that of pride, autonomy, and attempting to usurp the throne (Isa 14:12-14). In Ezekiel the same fallen angel slanders the character of God out pride and jealousy. Not satisfied with slander he resorted to violence (Ezek 28:16, 17). This angel seems to have wanted to be worshipped too.

Furthermore, White comments on the charges that Lucifer leveled against God. Lucifer’s allegations were; first, the Father and Christ exhibit self-indulgence,<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>Jose M. Bertoluci, *The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy Between Good and Evil*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 17 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1985), 301.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup>Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11, no.1-2 (2000): 107.

<sup>168</sup>White, “Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, March 9, 1886,” Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999). White, “Signs of the Times, May 16, 1900,” Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).

second, God is tyrannical,<sup>169</sup> third, Christ is not self-sacrificing,<sup>170</sup> and finally, Satan “represented God as claiming all and giving nothing, as requiring men’s service for his own glory, but denying himself nothing for man’s good.”<sup>171</sup>

The allegations that were leveled against God seem to have shot directly at His sovereignty, creatorship, love, authority and being. On the other hand, these allegations are at the heart of stewardship. If the is true, it therefore means that at the centre of the cosmic conflict there is a stewardship question that demands an answer.

The presence of such questions against God somehow suggests why God had to put the tree of knowing good and evil in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9). Humans seem to have been created in the context of a cosmic conflict. If that is acceptable, then God was right to give the couple a chance to choose whom they would give their allegiance.

The account of Genesis 3 seems to indicate that Satan brought these charges against God to Adam and Eve. Thus, he deceived them to eat the tree they were forbidden to eat. Just as Satan had questioned God’s goodness in heaven, he also led Adam and Eve to do the same. From that moment the story of redemption seems to have unfolded. Throughout the Old Testament canon, the message of a coming redeemer was heralded (Gen 3:15; 49:11; Num 24:17; Isa 7:14; 9:6; 52; 53). The New Testament reveals the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as a fulfillment of the Old Testament promises. Also, both the Old Testament and the New Testament show that they anticipated the Day of the Lord when the conflict will be

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<sup>169</sup>White, *Desire of Ages*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).

<sup>170</sup>White, “The Signs of the Times, August 27, 1902,” Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).

<sup>171</sup>White, “The Signs of the Times, February 13, 1893,” Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999).

finally resolved (Isa 13:6; Jer 46:10; Joel 2:31; Zeph 1:14-2:3; Mal 3:19-21 (MT); Matt 24; 25; Luke 19:12-27; 21:34; John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess 5:4, 5; Rev 22:12).

However, the cross seems to stand central in the cosmic conflict (John 19:30; Col 2:15). The questions of the cosmic conflict were resolved there.<sup>172</sup> God showed Himself prepared to do for His creatures the unthinkable (Phil 2:5-11). As a result of the cross, stewards are given motivation to discharge their stewardship role with a sense of gratitude.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, it is not surprising that stewardship (inclusive of financial aspects) is more than relevant in eschatology. If truly the cosmic conflict has stewardship questions involved within it, then stewardship has to be one of the determining factors for the assessment of allegiance to God [Mal 3:6-21 (MT); Matt 25:14-46; Luke 19:11-27; 1 Pet 4:10-17; Rev 14:6, 7]. Furthermore, if the cosmic conflict began in heaven in the Holy of holies it is consistent for it to end in the same place (Dan 7:9-14; Mal 3:1; Rev 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17; 21:22).

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<sup>172</sup>Gulley, "The Cosmic Controversy: World View for Theology and Life," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7 (Autumn 1996): 119.

## CHAPTER 4

### APPLICATION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Application for Today**

The covenant correlation that is between a Christian and God will be consummated at the second advent of Jesus. Covenant faithfulness is expected from both God and man. Eschatology through the pre-advent and the final judgments brings a review of the covenant relationship between God and man -accountability. At the pre-advent the people of God are evaluated on the basis of their relationship with God.<sup>1</sup> When God reviews the covenant as Judge, His character is better understood. He is also subject to evaluation by His creatures.

Gerhard Hasel points out that the judgment reveals God as both prosecutor and judge. Thus, God maintains and protects the covenant relationship which tells for His righteousness, justice, and love as opposed to arbitrariness. Again, God also reveals Himself to be consistent in administering justice and mercy as shown by the curses and blessings of Deuteronomy 26-32. Finally, the judgment shows that God is holy and in Him there is no variableness (Isaiah 5:16).<sup>2</sup>

Hence, the fact that there is covenant review has implications on the practical life of a believer. Every Christian wishes to hear God saying to him or her “well done

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<sup>1</sup>Roy Gane, “Judgment as Covenant Review,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 (1997):188.

<sup>2</sup>Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Theology of Divine Judgment in the Bible: A Study of God’s Past, Present, and Future Judgments and Their Implications for Mankind,” accessed February 25, 2020, <https://adventistbiblicalresearch>.

true and faithful servant, enter into life eternal.” For that to happen, the Christian ought to take practical steps in that direction in everyday life.

First, the worldview of Christians should be heavenly. The kingdom of God should be their highest good. Their focus and actions should tell that they live according to a worldview that has to do with a world that is to come. Hence, if any among Christians has a different world view from that which has the kingdom of God as prime, it has to be revised. In other words, the way Christians get, expend, and invest their wealth should tell unambiguously that they believe that their citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20). Just as the prophet Haggai called for a change of focus and actions among the believers of his day who were anticipating the *eschaton* that the temple would bring, so are believers exhorted to change their focus and actions today in view of the Second Advent.

Second, it is expected for every Christian to participate and support financially the mission of God. No Christian should feel that others should do his or her part. Since eschatology places a sense of urgency on the preaching of the gospel it means that more means should be given urgently to the cause of God.<sup>3</sup> Actually, the gospel cause requires more means as the work widens and grows.<sup>4</sup> This calls for Christians to a true fast; when they deny themselves of certain things so that the work of the gospel may be expedited.

Third, faithfulness in tithes and offerings is still an expected of human beings by God. God requires not either tithes or offerings but both of them (Mal 3:8). This means that those that benefit directly from tithes should not be comfortable by earning a living whilst the mission of the church at local church level, which is supported by

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<sup>3</sup>Ma, “Eschatology and Mission,” 194.

<sup>4</sup>Robertson, *Church Finance*, 111, 112.

offerings, is languishing. Love for God and obedience to Him should lead Christians to give tithes and offerings since He requires them.

Finally, just as Jesus during His earthly ministry went about doing good to the people that He came across and especially the less-privileged, so should Christians devote themselves to acts of kindness. Jesus identified Himself with the low class of society in the parable of the goats and the sheep (Matt 25:33-46). He considered the acts of mercy done to them as done to Him. Thus, as the Christian values the poor in the estimate that Jesus gives to them or the worth, He came to restore upon them, he or she will better understand and better tell the story of redemption.

### **Summary**

The quest for the relationship between eschatology and financial stewardship began with the observation that in the main Christians agree that they should financially support the work of the gospel. On the other side the study observed that biblical eschatology seems to have a prominent place in Christian circles for its influence upon the entire life on a Christian. Also, the study took note of the fact that some authors have written hinting on the relations between eschatology and financial stewardship. Though such a relationship is supposed yet it remained unexplored. Therefore, the study purported to make an inquiry into the relationship between biblical eschatology and financial stewardship.

Chapter 1 concerned itself with the introduction of the study. It comprises the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitation, methodology, and overview of the study. Since the study was library based, it employed the use of Bibles, lexicons, theological dictionaries, and the theological Bible commentaries. It employed a tripartite methodology. It was

historical, biblical and theological. The historical section is found in Chapter 2 whilst the biblical and theological parts are in the third chapter.

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature that was found relevant to the study. It embarked on a historical review of different pieces of literature that speak on eschatology and financial stewardship. This trace began from the Ante-Nicene Fathers to the present time.

The study discovered that among the Apostolic Fathers that wrote on financial stewardship, Hermas (1<sup>st</sup> and mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) was first. Hermas' position was that riches, though not evil, were an impediment to Christians who await the *eschaton*. He propagated that those that had riches were to dispose them and be free from their entanglements. Tertullian (AD 150-225) advocated that obedience to Ten Commandments and the law of charity determined whether one would gain eternal life or not. Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) concerned himself with the salvation of the rich. He condemned preoccupation with riches by Christians and advocated almsgiving. For him, how the rich dealt with their wealth would be subject to judgment. Cyprian of Carthage (AD 200-258) consoled the Christians who had lost their property during persecution to be of good cheer because they would receive better rewards in heaven. He also promoted giving to God and acts of mercy through almsgiving. For Lactantius (AD 250-325) Christians were to despise their earthly wealth because they were assured of better riches in heaven. He encouraged the rich to share their wealth with the poor.

The Nicene-Post-Nicene epoch revealed a change in eschatological views. Tendencies were skewed towards a this-world mentality. Augustine (387-430) is recognized for his theological influence in the era of the Church Fathers and beyond. For him the Christian church was equivalent to the kingdom of God. He advocated a

theocracy in the Christian soil, a church-state coalition. Hence, for him the second coming became post-millennial. He viewed wealth as being on the problem of Christianity but greed. He encouraged almsgiving as a way of getting pardon at the final judgment. However, also advocated voluntary denial of the riches of this world arguing that such a gesture led to a higher level of holiness. Hence, monasticism was a child of Augustine's views. Salvian of Marsellailles (5<sup>th</sup> Century) always preached against greed. He branded those that left wealth for their children to inherit as lacking eschatological faith. Pope Leo the Great (bishop of Rome 440-461) advocated that for someone to be spared by Christ at His judgment he or she should have been be merciful to the poor.

The Reformation did away with monasticism but promoted that Christians were to be true stewards who were not attached to earthly possessions. On the other hand, the Radical Reformers went against Augustine's position that the alms were supposed to be equivalent to a tenth. They propagated eschatological beliefs that were contra tithing.

Germany scholars, in the nineteenth century and even afterwards, shifted from historical eschatology to philosophical eschatology. The new eschatological positions proved themselves lopsided. Of those that propagated a philosophical eschatology only Jurgen Moltmann, though he is a twentieth century scholar, implicitly highlighted a relationship between financial stewardship and eschatology.

The twentieth and the twenty-first centuries show authors that have their views on eschatology and financial stewardship derived from the gospels. The emphasis is more inclined to helping the poor than anything else. How eschatology influences the Christian's financial obligation to God is almost forgotten.

Chapter 3 concerned itself the biblical, extra-biblical and theological study of eschatology and financial stewardship. It took note of the fact that eschatology and stewardship (financial stewardship) belong to different categories in theology. Hence, the starting point became finding Bible of theological themes in both the Old Testament, Inter-testamental writings and the New Testament that act as common denominators for eschatology and financial stewardship. Next, the study looked for basis of the relationship between eschatology and financial stewardship in the life and the teachings of Jesus. The study found out that the life and precepts of Jesus link eschatology to Christian ethics of which financial stewardship is part. Thus, from Jesus' life, ethical references to eschatology are mainly for instruction, motivation and warning. Hence, the study established two ethical implication of eschatology on financial stewardship which are accountability and the rewards principle- *object* and *impetus*. Finally, the study also found out that the ethical concerns of eschatology on financial stewardship are relevant to the cosmic conflict.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that there is a vital relationship between eschatology and financial stewardship. The former traces the clock of the Omnipotent one and the activities that take place in the heavenly sanctuary and thus informs the latter accordingly. In turn financial stewardship makes the call for people to respond urgently in asserting the sovereignty of God and supporting His mission.

Financial stewardship also is one of the centrifuges that will determine for weal and for woe the fate of God's people in the judgment. In Malachi 3:13-21 (MT) it is clearly shown that those that responded arrogantly landed themselves in destruction on the Day of the Lord and those that responded reverently were rewarded accordingly.

Since financial stewardship was observed to be one of the covenant expectations that was present even during the time of the patriarchs, it is therefore not a one of Jewish customs that was rendered obsolete by the NT. Instead, the research argues that it is consistent with an immutable God of the covenants to maintain His requirement of tithes and offerings across all His people without exceptions. Different requirements on creatures by the same God is tantamount to making His character questionable before them.

Moreover, financial stewardship helps to starve selfishness to death. In Christ's two parables (Matt 25:14-37; Luke 18:12-27) it can be discovered that financial stewardship is an index to one's growth in sanctification. The more one denies self in order to serve other and bring honor to God the closer they are to replicating the character of Jesus Christ who did not count His equally with God as something He needed to hold on to whilst His creatures died in sin (Phil 2:5-11). Given that covetousness will be rampant in the last days of planet earth, financial stewardship stands as a timely and urgent antidote.

Also, this research concludes that if some of the original questions of the cosmic conflict had something to do with stewardship, then stewardship (inclusive of tithes and offerings) is a grid through which the Bible can be understood. If the creature that was endowed with great beauty (Isa 14; Ezek 28) and was expected to demonstrate a proper steward-Master relationship with God felt that God could not be trusted, then it means the issue of stewardship is not a peripheral one.

On the same note, this research infers that what is experienced in Christian circles on the debate for and against tithing maybe a spillover of what Lucifer began in heaven and has brought along with him on planet earth.

Finally, this study asserts that religion is both responding to God's specific commands and His love. Specific requirements of God such His commandments and tithing are not a misfit in Christianity. Actually, they are compatible with God's love as revealed Revelation 12:17 and 14:12.

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