

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON SUFFERING: PROLEGOMENA TO AN ADVENTIST APPROACH

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Resumen

Este artículo explora la posible contribución que la Teología Adventista puede hacer para resolver el impase emergente entre la concepción de un Dios de amor y un mundo de maldad y sufrimiento. El autor presenta una hermenéutica alternativa para resolver la paradoja de Epicuro y para entender la realidad que nos es propia.

Palabras clave: Hermenéutica adventista - Romanos 8 - Sufrimiento - Teología adventista - Teología paulina

Abstract

This article explores the possible contributions that the Adventist Theology can make to resolve the emergent *impasse* between the conception of a God of love and a world of evil and suffering. The author presents an alternative hermeneutics to solve the “paradox of Epicure”, and to understand the reality that surrounds us.

Key Words: Adventist hermeneutic - Adventist theology - Pauline theology - Romans 8 - Suffering

INTRODUCTION

The age-old problem of an omnipotent and compassionate God who permits human suffering is a persistent theme in theology.¹ The

1 There is a large bibliography on the subject. See mainly, John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Oliver Leaman, *Evil and Suffering in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge Studies in Religious Traditions 6; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Peter Koslowski, ed., *The Origin and the Overcoming of Evil and Suffering in the World Religions* (Netherland: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 2001); Anthony J. Tambasco, ed., *The Bible on Suffering: Social and Political Implications* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2002); Sarah Katherine Pinnock, *Beyond Theodicy: Jewish and Christian Continental Thinkers Respond to the Holocaust* (Albany: University of New

conceptual *impasse*² is called “theodicy” (θεός, “God” and δίκη, “justice”). This term, coined by Gottfried W. Leibniz in 1710, is use like reference mark for the rehearsal of answers.³ As Alvin Plantinga notes, “when theist (or any person) answers the question ‘Whence evil?’ or ‘Why does God permit evil?’ he is giving a theodicy”.⁴ Perhaps, the proposal of Leibniz lies in the ontological and theological dilemma outlined by Epicure (341 B.C. - 270 B.C.): “Is he willing to present evil, but no able? then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?”⁵ However, the image of a fair God cannot be reducing as a philosophical extrapolation. The theodicy, as theological project, it grows to the shade of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan and it is as old as this.⁶

York Press, 2002); Fred Berthold, *God, Evil, and, Human Learning: A Critique and Revision of the Free will Defense in Theodicy* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2004); Warren McWilliams, *Where is the God of Justice?: Biblical Perspective on Suffering* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005); Donald Mowbray, *Pain and Suffering in Medieval Theology: Academic Debates at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth Century* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2009).

- 2 In the context of this article, we will use the term *impasse* referred to a problem without apparent solution.
- 3 See his, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 1990). For a classical study on this matter see John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1968).
- 4 Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 10. The interpolation is mine.
- 5 David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 108-109. See Kenneth Surin, “Theodicy?” *Harvard Theological Review* 76.2 (1983): 225. Cf. James Keller, *Problem of Evil and the Power of God* (Great Britain: MPG Book, 2007), 7-30.
- 6 About theodicy in the Greco-Romans thought see Roman Garrison, *Why Are You Silence, Lord?* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). For Judaism perceptions on this topic see Jacob Neusner, “Theodicy in Judaism”, in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible* (ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor; Bilingual Concordance to the Targum of the Prophets Series; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 685-727. On Qumran perspective see James A. Sanders, *Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-biblical Judaism* (Colgate Rochester Divinity School bulletin 28; Rochester, N.Y.: Colgate Rochester Divinity School, 1955); Jean Carmignac, “La théologie de la souffrance dans les hymnes de Qumrân,” *Revue de Qumran* 3.3 (1961): 365-386. For the specific rabbinic reflection on human suffering, see the magisterial study of David Charles Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

This article explores the possible contributions that the Adventist theology can make to resolve the emergent *impasse* between the conception of a God of love and a world of evil and suffering. Finally, we will present an alternative hermeneutics to solve the “paradox of Epicure”, and to understand the reality that surrounds us.

SOME DEFINITIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In this brief reflection, we prefer the phrase “suffering theology” instead of “theodicy”, as platform for the obtaining, and consequent development, of answers. We deduce that the image and the concept of God are the necessary hermeneutic paradigm for a correct understanding of the Christian doctrines in general and of this topic in particular. We understand for “image” the particular perception that each believer has of God and for “concept”, the different approaches and definitions, at diachronic level, in the Christian theology. As result, the theodicy is a constituent piece of the suffering theology.

The term “hermeneutics”, it evokes a plurality of meanings; nevertheless, in the context of this study we will take the following definition: “The act of understanding involved in theological thinking goes beyond the interpretation of texts to include the cognitive process through which theologians reach their conclusions and formulate their views”.⁷ The expression “suffering” refers to the being’s alteration of the constituent thing. We could clarify this with the words of Debashis Guha: “Normally, pain is thought to give rise to suffering. However, suffering is not simply our reactions to physical pain. It is our reaction to many kinds of events and circumstance of which physical pain is the one and generally, not the most dreadful”.⁸

At last, a fundamental consideration on this topic is that any definition of God that includes evil is a heresy. The religious tentative

7 Cf. Fernando L. Canale, “Evangelical Theology and Open Theism: Toward a Biblical Understanding of the Macro Hermeneutical Principles of Theology?” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12.2 (2001): 19-20.

8 Debashis Guha, *An Inquiry into the Cases of Pain and Suffering* (New Delhi, India: Concept Publishing Company, 2007), 98.

of establishing some type of correspondence between God and the evil is, to a certain point, an attack to its *ipseidad*. God cannot be “good” and “bad” simultaneously. Such a derivation is evidently inexact.

AN OVERVIEW ON SUFFERING

Through history, the theologians have presented different conjectures, in detriment of the image of God. Gloria L. Schaab literally states that “the attribution of immutability, impassibility, and unmitigated omnipotence to God is no longer theoretically defensible, theologically viable, or pastorally efficacious in view of the insidious and multifaceted presence of pain, death, and suffering in the human and nonhuman cosmos”.⁹ Possibly this is because the different proposals, in diverse levels, have been elaborate from an anthropological perspective.¹⁰ The different approaches, in various cases, have raised serious theological conflicts, to the point of questioning the same existence of God. The Bible, honorable just by lips, it occupies the second place in the search of answers for this theological *impasse*. The traditions, so much religious as social, have become in the new canon. It is in this pluralistic context, with a clear anthropocentric shade -that excludes the divine and non-human reality- that the non-biblical positions find fertile land, and the image and the concept of God are adulterated.

Even among the theologians exists a strong and constant dichotomy between divine and human suffering,¹¹ ignoring or underrating the rest of the creation. In this context, some ask; is it

9 Gloria L. Schaab, *The Creative Suffering of the Triune God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13. For an excellent work, that combines historical, theological and literary analysis of the patristic theological reflection on this subject see Paul Gavriluk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

10 See George O’Brien, “Prolegomena to a Dissolution to the Problem of Suffering,” *Harvard Theological Review* 57.4 (1964): 301-323. Compare here the comments of Gordon D. Kaufman, *God the Problem* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 171-173.

11 For more information on this see James F. Keating and Thomas J. White, *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009).

possible to reconcile in a reasonable way the statement of God with the existence of suffering and evil?¹²

Johan Christian Beker, professor of Biblical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, works with hope-suffering binomial. In his book, *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament*,¹³ Beker presents God's redemptive act in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the hermeneutical key: "By now it should be clear that the death and resurrection of Christ provide the most adequate norm for dealing with our experience of suffering and hope. Indeed, the permit interrelation of Jesus' death and resurrection provides the basic model for an integration of suffering and hope".¹⁴ According to Beker "the promise of the gospel, based on God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ, therefore constitutes the interpretative norm for Christian reflections on suffering and hope".¹⁵

The Old Testament scholar James L. Crenshaw, professor at Duke University Divinity School and pro-life writer,¹⁶ takes a systematic and synchronic approach on God and human suffering. His work, entitled *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil*,¹⁷ identifies -with high academic level- the different approximate from the "Hebrew Bible" to the problem of evil and suffering. Apparently, Crenshaw,

12 Cf. Fernando Bárcena, et al., *La autoridad del sufrimiento: silencio de Dios preguntas del hombre* (Barcelona, España: Anthropos Editorial, 2004), 10.

13 Johan Christian Beker, *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994).

14 Ibid., 117.

15 Ibid. For example, in *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*, John Bowker states: "Thus the fact of a state of separation from God (i.e. sin) required the fact of something to restore relationship; in a sacrificial victim, hence Christ the Victim. But at the same time, the strong sense of personal activity on the part of the devil required personal activity against him, hence Christ the Victor." Cf. John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World*, 82. These two visions of Christ, as victim and victor, are two different ways of understanding human sufferings. See also Graham Ward, "Suffering and Incarnation", in *Suffering Religion* (ed. Robert Gibbs and Elliot R. Wolfson; New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 163-180.

16 See, for example, James L. Crenshaw, *Theodicy in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

17 James L. Crenshaw, *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

perceive some -artificial- dichotomy when declares: “By admitting vulnerability in the deity, one risks the possibility that the reason for religious allegiance has at the same time been jettisoned”.¹⁸

Jae Hyun Chung, professor of Systematic Theology at Yonsei University in Seoul, begin asking, “Why do we suffer?” and conclude that “cannot be answered properly because of its unintended but inevitable distortions”. He formulates and proposes the question: Who is/are suffering? and how/what should we do for/with them? Bases on his correlational view, that include communal solidarity, Chung concludes with this remark: “Therefore, we dare to suggest the correlational or dialogical view of suffering not only for confronting ourselves with the reality of suffering adequately but also for accepting the Christ’s suffering and divine passion in the genuine sense”.¹⁹

Bart D. Ehrman, specialist in New Testament studies and chair of the department of religious studies at the University of North Carolina, introduces the main problem of suffering from an agnostic’s perspective.²⁰ In *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer our most Important Question-Why We Suffer?*,²¹ he explores critically the different biblical responses to suffering and concludes his book dismissed “all” available biblical options.

One thing seems certain, this *impasse* call for a biblical-theological review. Frederick W. Schmidt Junior, author of *When Suffering*

18 Ibid., 194.

19 Chung Jae Hyun. “A Theological Reflection on Human Suffering: Beyond Causal Malediction and Teleological Imposition toward Correlational Solidarity,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 20.1 (2006): 14. See also Isaiah M. Dau, “Following Jesus in a World of Suffering and Violence,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31.4 (2007): 358-368; Arthur Kleinman, “Everything That Really Matters: Social Suffering, Subjectivity, and the Remaking of Human Experience in a Disordering World,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90.3 (1997): 315-335.

20 The agnostic perspective of Bart D. Ehrman impregnates all his works. See, for example, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2005).

21 Bart D. Ehrman, *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer our Most Important Question-Why We Suffer?* (New York: Harper One, 2008).

Persists,²² provides seventh reason that justifies the elaboration of a suffering theology: (1) a necessary counterpoint to our culture of denial; (2) an important exercise for people of faith; (3) a means of negotiating the tensions between our experience of suffering and the assumptions we make about the way in which God works; (4) a corrective to the logic of the health and wealth gospel; (5) a means of nurturing emotional and physical well-being; (6) a means of nurturing moral responsibility; (7) a necessary resource, because we are all the authors of our own triage theology.²³

The plexus of influences in the classic formulations of the Christian traditions, in connection with the image and the concept of God, it has rebounded in dismal and rash conceptions of God. Therefore, should be admitting that turned critically important, for the Christian theology in general, the elaboration of biblical hermeneutic principles in this field of the theological knowledge.²⁴ As synthesis Abdulaziz Sachedina, professor of religious studies in the University of Virginia and the contemporary referent in Islamic studies, comments:

Thought recorded history religious leaders and medical practitioners have collaborated in trying to understand why human beings suffer. This quest to explain suffering is rooted in the human mind's inherent tendency to question the discrepancy between the ideal and the real, especially in glaring cases such as the suffering of children and the poor, or the prosperity of the wicked. Such meditations have given rise to theodicy, the attempt to justify the omnipotence of God in the face of earthly evil and suffering.²⁵

22 Frederick W. Schmidt Jr., *When Suffering Persists* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2001).

23 Ibid., 17-38.

24 In consonance with this concern, the Adventist Collegiate Theological Society (ACTS) organized recently a symposium on theodicy called "Dialogue about God & Suffering". The program count with the participation of physicist Gary Burdick, and Old Testament scholar Roy Gane.

25 Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Principle and Applications* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81.

WHY DOES GOD PERMIT SUFFERING?

The suffering is a common denominator or inherent feature to the fall human race, it is one of the paces that build are daily reality. As Pannenberg notes: “The problem is unavoidably much more pressing for Christian thinking, which believes in the one God as the God of world-reconciling love”.²⁶ We need defined and understand the *impasse*. Fernando Canale observes: “Theological controversy takes place when various parties understand the same issues in different, even mutually exclusive, ways”.²⁷

From a biblical perspective, the question is not if God is good or not, the classic formulations lose their protagonist character at the mercy of the biblical theology. The real question here is why does God permit suffering? Even this is the main question in the “paradox of Epicure”. Added this, it is necessary to highlight that the suffering cannot only be explain or reduced to the use and abuse of the “free will” and its respective consequences. This position would not be only partial but also minimalist.

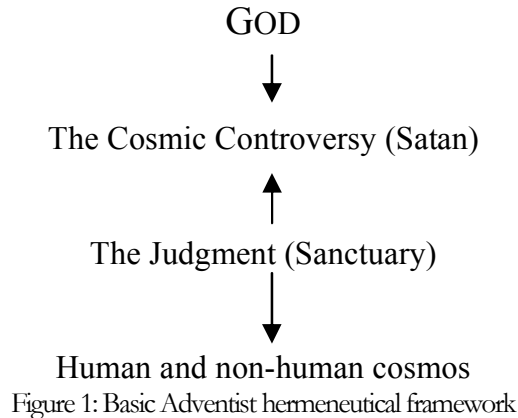
Starting from the Bible, we understand this theological construction in an order different to that of the classic theological formulations (scholastic). In addition, we consider that an accurate suffering theology it should be outline starting from three stadiums: (1) divine suffering; (2) human suffering and (3) no-human suffering (the rest of the creation). We need to have an inclusive vision on this subject. Linzey observer: “We cannot continue to privilege (adult) human suffering, as if it stands alone as unique source of moral concern”.²⁸

26 Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (trad. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991-1998), 3:632.

27 Cf. Canale, “Evangelical Theology and Open Theism,” 24.

28 Cf. Andrew Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology and Practical Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 42. See also Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1995); *Animal Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000); Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 55-77.

These three stadiums are developing inductively in the mark of the “cosmic controversy” and the “final judgment”. Thereby they obtain their intrinsic and collective sense (see figure 1).



*THE COSMIC CONTROVERSY*²⁹

The origin of the evil is celestial and not earthly (cf. Rev 12:7-9). Lucifer revealed against the character of God, with all that this supposes theologically (cf. Isa 14:13-14).³⁰ This aspect, far from being a detail, is the epistemic context from which we will approach to this *impasse*. It would not be prudent -from an Adventist hermeneutics- to obviate the comments of Ellen G. White on this matter. In *The Great Controversy*, elucidate the theological synthesis of the conflict between God and Satan. White exposes the enemy’s of God *modus operandi* with the following words:

It is Satan’s constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law, and gives men license to sin. At the same time, he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God, so that they regard him with fear and hate, rather than with love. The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is embodied in systems of religion, and

29 For more information on this see Frank B. Holbrook, “The Great Controversy”, in *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology* (ed. Raoul Dederen, Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), 969-1008 (hereafter *HSDAT*).

30 Cf. Luk 21:12-19; Rom 13:11-14; 2Co 6:1-10, 10:2-5; Eph 6:10-18; Heb 10:32-39; 1Pe 5:8-10; etc.

expressed in modes of worship. Thus the minds of men are blinded, and Satan secures them as his agents to war against God.³¹

White also points out:

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known.³²

In addition remarks: "*show that it is not God who causes pain and suffering, but that man through his own ignorance and sin has brought this condition upon himself*".³³ Ed Christian rightfully states that "The Great Controversy model suggests that much suffering happens simply because of the nature of things in a war zone".³⁴ Frank B. Holbrook carries out a very interesting declaration: "The blame for human suffering does not lie at the throne of God; rather, it issues from *the rebellion and activity of Satan and his angels and depraved humanity*".³⁵ God create thinking and morally free beings. In this sense, are morally responsible for their decisions and respective consequences. Interwoven, in this brief thought, it underlies the idea

31 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1950), 568.

32 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 1982), 22. See footnote 45.

33 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 1855), 6:280, emphasis supplied.

34 Cf. Ed Christian, "The Great Controversy and Human Suffering," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10.1 (1999): 92. See also Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 29-49. This is against the Calvinist perspective, "permissive will" or "decretal will". See the comment of Christian in footnote 15. Cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "If God is good and Sovereign, Why lament?" *Calvin Theological Journal* 36.1 (2001): 42-52.

35 Cf. Holbrook, "The Great Controversy", 996, emphasis supplied. We should remember Jesus words, "An enemy has done this!" (Mat 13:28 NASB).

that God is not authoritarian or tyrannical in the treatment with its creatures.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

The judgment is compound for three consecutive stages that conforms a unit: (1) the pre-Advent judgment or investigative judgment,³⁶ (2) the post-Advent millennial judgment,³⁷ and (3) the postmillennial executive judgment.³⁸

The Old Testament scholar Gerhard F. Hasel mentions five aspects related directly with this topic: (1) divine justice in an unjust world, (2) retribution for sin, (3) the suffering of the innocent, (4) the resolution of the cosmic controversy, and (5) the end of sin and suffering.³⁹ As coordinating element, of these five points, clarify: “But above all, final judgment vindicates the Creator -His character, law, and governance- in the minds of all created intelligences, whether loyal or lost, thereby obtaining eternal security and peace for the universe”.⁴⁰ In harmony with this, White synthesizes the cause in the following statement:

His character is misinterpreted by Satan, and He is represented as a stern judge who causes suffering to come upon the creatures He has made. This misrepresentation of God’s character is made to appear as truth, and thus through the temptation of the enemy men’s hearts are

36 Daniel (chapters 7-9) and Revelations (14:6-15) present the timing of the pre-Advent investigative judgment. See Loron Wade, “‘Son of Man’ Comes to the Judgment in Daniel 7:13,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11.1-2 (2000): 277-281.

37 The second phase of judgment takes place during the millennium, after the second coming of Christ (cf. Rev 20:4).

38 About the purpose of this last phase professor Gerhard F. Hasel comments: “Through the executive judgment, God brings about the final destruction of the wicked. The biblical picture is not one of divine withdrawal from the wicked, who then destroy themselves as they are left without the presence of God. Those who wish to exclude God and Christ from the final victory over sin and its originator deprive the scriptural witness of an essential element of final eschatology.” Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” *HSDAT*, 848.

39 Cf. Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” *HSDAT*, 815. The Judgment is part of the sanctuary doctrine. For a full treatment see Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” *HSDAT*, 375-417.

40 Ibid. About the comments of Ellen G. White on this see Hasel, “Divine Judgment”, *HSDAT*, 853-854.

hardened against God. Satan charges upon God the very evil he himself has caused men to commit by withholding their means from the suffering. He attributes to God his own characteristics.⁴¹

Roy E. Gane, professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages at the Theological Seminary of Andrews University, observes: “In the end-time judgment, as on the Day of Atonement, God is shown to be just even when he grants mercy to those whom he forgives”.⁴² In the final judgment the grace, inspired by love -that is the essence of God-, is indivisibly linked with the divine justice.⁴³

HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN COSMOS

The “paradox of Epicure” is compound for three axioms: (1) God is love; (2) God is omnipotent and (3) the suffering exists. We are agreeing with these three declarations, the *impasse* is in the interaction of these. Nevertheless, it is solving when is locating in the context of the judgment, inside the frameworks of the cosmic controversy. Human and non-human cosmos should be interpreting in the mark of the cosmic controversy, and the apparent contradictions in the actions or allowing of God, to the light of the judgment. The divine intervention, in this world in general and in the man’s life in particular, it is regulated by a judicial context. In this sense, not all that happens in this world is the divine will. We should not infer that if God allowed it is because it agrees.

The main point is that “God’s purpose is not merely to deliver from the suffering that is the inevitable result of sin, but to save from sin itself”.⁴⁴ It is in this context that the theological synthesis of

41 Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1952), 16.

42 Roy E. Gane, “Judgment as Covenant Review,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8.1-2 (1997): 191-192. See also, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 305-378.

43 See here the important contribution by Jiri Moskala, “Toward a Biblical Theology of God’s Judgment: A Celebration of the Cross in Seven Phases of Divine Universal Judgment (An Overview of a Theocentric-Christocentric Approach),” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 15.1 (2004): 138-165.

44 Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 1896), 61.

Romans 8 has special value. We could systematize our analyses⁴⁵ in the following sketch:

Outline	Verse/s	Principle
Hermeneutical platform I The Judgment	3 y 4	Christological ⁴⁶ Holistic ⁴⁷ Eschatological ⁴⁸
Theological stadium 1 <i>non-human cosmos</i>	22	
Theological stadium 2 <i>human cosmos</i>	23	
Theological stadium 3 <i>divine cosmos</i>	26	
Hermeneutical platform II The Cosmic Controversy	38 y 39	

Figure 2: Hermeneutical perspective of Rom 8

In fact, these hermeneutical principles are understood each other and develop in the Adventist hermeneutical framework (see figure 3).

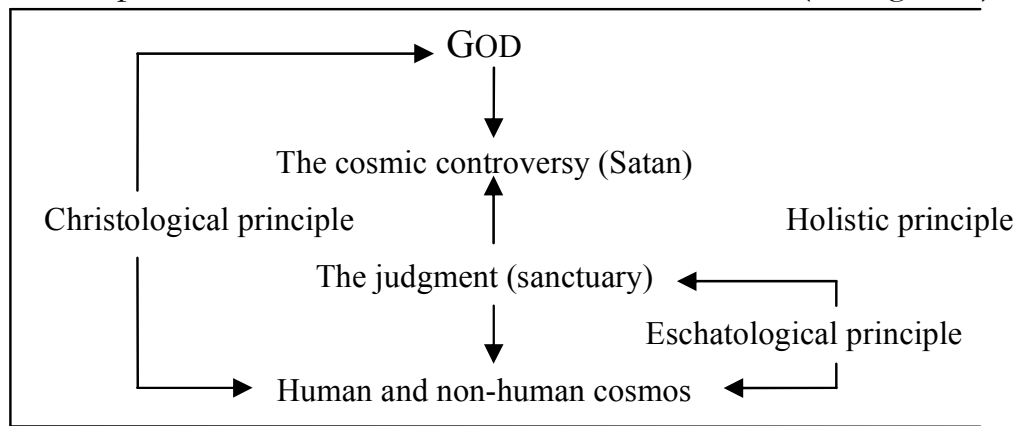


Figure 3: Adventist hermeneutical framework proposed for the divine, human and non-human sufferings

45 Cf. Leandro Velardo, “Salvifici Doloris: una aproximación al uso discursivo de γάπ en Romanos 8,” *DavarLogos* 9.1 (2010): 53-69.

46 In a remarkable way, the apostle establishes *expressis verbis* Christ’s superlativeness as revelation of the love of God.

47 Paul demolishes the attribution of immutability and impassibility of God, presenting the immanence and the transcendence like complementary qualities.

48 The end of the sin, and their consequences, also impress the divine and non-human reality.

PRAXIS

The presentation of God, from this hermeneutical perspective, would have a tremendous positive impact in the pastoral labor. Element that would rebound in a renovated social interest in God and his Word (the Bible).⁴⁹ It corresponds to us, as theologians, to restore biblically the image and the concept of God that it impregnates the life and the reflection of the believer concerning the reality that wraps it.

There is undeniable the positive repercussions in each son's of God spiritual life, product of this task. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize some of the thoughts that would be restructuring, in the daily reflection, starting from the sketched hermeneutic framework:

First, the constants assignments of theocratic properties to all kind of situations. For example, the popular maxim: "It is not necessary ask to God the why? But for what reason?" presupposing the divine will behind each lived situation.

Second, the assignment of the title "divine will", in pain and suffering contexts, having as reference the resolution. In other words, if the conflict was solved positively everything it was the will of God, even the bad thing: "They do not consider that they themselves are guilty, in a great measure, for this deplorable state of things. They generally charge their sufferings upon Providence, and regard God as the author of their woes".⁵⁰

Third, the image of a punishing God demanding obedience through the fear and do not as an answer of love. David Kraemer comment: "From the earliest canonical traditions of Israelite religion to contemporary Orthodox Judaism, suffering has been seen as punishment for the wickedness and sins of humanity".⁵¹ Nevertheless, White argues: "It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon

49 Coherent aspect with the theological concept of the "late rain."

50 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Nampa, Id.: Review and Herald, 1958), 2:411.

51 David Charles Kraemer, "Judaic Doctrines of Evil and Suffering," in *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (ed. Jacob Neusner, et al., New York: Brill, 2000), 4:1753.

disease and death as proceeding from God, as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin”.⁵²

Forth, the image of a distant God that ignores the reality of this planet and their inhabitants. White declares: “All heaven is interested in the work of relieving suffering humanity”.⁵³

Fifth, the perspective of the suffering like a “divine methodology” -*per aspera ad astra*- of “evangelism” or/and “sanctification”.⁵⁴

52 White, *The Desire of Ages*, 471.

53 Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 1923), 532.

54 “It is a mistake to entertain the thought that God is pleased to see His children suffer. All heaven is interested in the happiness of man.” Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1892), 46. Cf. Claudia Welz, *Love’s Transcendence and the Problem of Theodicy* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1-4.