



JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

By C. Raymond Holmes

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Andrews University

This presentation is in two parts: The first part consists of a report on the "State of the Society" that will provide accurate and dependable information. Included are responses to some questions that have been raised. The second part is an introduction to the theme for this convention.

The State of the Society

None present for the first organizational meeting in the autumn of 1988 imagined that ATS would grow so rapidly and be engaged in major publications of theological literature in just five short years. This phenomenal growth and reception of ATS we attribute to the leading and blessing of God. It is to Him that we give thanks and praise!

Financially the Society is solvent, and so far has received sufficient funds to maintain operations as voted in business sessions and in executive committee actions. This is credited to the faithful submission of annual dues, as well as generous gifts, by our members. I would like to express my personal appreciation for this support. It is very encouraging to have members, who in this manner demonstrate their confidence in the goals and purpose of ATS. I might add that none of the elected officers of the Society receive remuneration of any kind, and there are no salaried employees. Some of the routine office work is contracted, and we appreciate the competent services we receive.

A theology that cannot be preached or practiced has little value. From its beginnings ATS has been determined to focus not only on the theological enterprise but also on outreach and church growth. This is reflected in the large contribution the Society was able to make to the construction of the seminary in Prague; in the E. G. White CD-ROMS it has made available to seminaries in Africa and Eastern Europe; in substantial gifts to the Geo-Science Research Institute and Griggs University (formerly Home Study Institute), both operated by the General Conference; and in some financial assistance provided to doctoral students in religion/theology. In this connection let me call your attention to the Enoch Oliveira scholarship fund for hispanic doctoral students, for which the Society is soliciting contributions.

ATS has been generally well-received and appreciated throughout the world Church, and it enjoys the confidence and support of leaders on the General Conference, Division, Union, and local Conference levels. We are confident that such support will continue as long as ATS remains faithful to the message and mission of the Church, and to the Society's stated purpose and membership criteria.

I recall vividly, during the initial planning and organizational meeting, the unanimity in our resolve to begin publishing a respectable, professionally designed, edited, and printed, journal of theology just as soon as possible. It was not imagined that the first volume would be in print within the first year. To date seven issues of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (JATS), the first volume of *Occasional Papers*, the first volume of the *Monograph Series*, and the first volume of the *Dissertation Series*, have been published. These publications constitute the best information source ATS can provide, and your continued prayers are requested for the support of this publishing venture. These publications would not have been possible without the editorial work of Leo Van Dolson, C. Mervyn Maxwell, and Frank Holbrook who is the current editor of JATS, as well as others who have assisted from time to time with editorial and other time-demanding tasks. We are presently working towards the publication of JATS in a number of languages.

The ATS network of chapters is expanding, with several chap-

ters functioning within the United States, in Western Europe, and in Africa. Additional chapters will no doubt be organized as the purpose and work of the Society becomes better known.

Four successful and well-attended International Conventions have been held: Lincoln, Nebraska (89), Indianapolis, Indiana (90), Keene, Texas (91), Loma Linda, California (92), and now the fifth here in Berrien Springs, Michigan (93). In 1994 we will convene at Southern College, and by executive committee action in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in 1995, the first convention outside of the USA. Well-attended scholars' meetings have been held each November, and this year their meeting will convene in Washington, D.C.

At the first meeting of the ATS, the principle of publicly stating in the *Constitution and Bylaws* the Society's belief in the historic doctrines of Adventism, and of addressing theological issues of concern and interest to Seventh-day Adventists and others in a responsible and respectable manner, was adopted. ATS resolved not to engage in diatribe, vitriol, name-calling, or in character assassination with respect to anyone who may not agree with the Adventist theology the Society represents. Meetings and publications have demonstrated the resolve of ATS to maintain that principle, while at the same time not hesitating to focus on relevant theological issues vital to the Church.

It may prove helpful if I comment at this point on specific aspects of ATS so as to clarify its role to the world membership of the church. I will touch on ten items briefly:

1. ATS is not a formal organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is not a Church entity, was not organized to be one, and does not pretend to be. The word *Adventist* in the name of the society, does not imply such a formal relationship, any more than does Association of *Adventist* Forums or Association of *Adventist* Women. It simply identifies ATS as a society established by and for Adventists, as opposed to Baptists or Lutherans, etc.

2. The word *Theological* in the society's name is intended to indicate clearly and unambiguously that the society exists for the express purpose of engaging in the theological enterprise.

3. The name Adventist Theological Society does not imply that it is exclusively for professional theologians. The name is not *Adventist Society of Theologians*, which would be misleading. The

term “professional” as used in the Constitution refers to those who “engage in a pursuit or activity professionally,” (Webster) which is interpreted as engaging in the purpose and activities of the society in a responsible, professional manner. Thus ATS is exactly what it claims to be.

4. The broad-based membership of ATS, including members of professions such as ministry, medicine, law, teaching, etc., as well as others interested in theology such as local elders and Sabbath School teachers, etc., is based on the New Testament, Reformation, and Adventist principle that the theological enterprise is the responsibility of the whole Church and not just of professional theologians. It became apparent early in the organizational meeting that for a theological society to be truly *Adventist*, it would require a broad base, as the responsibility for expounding and guarding our precious theological heritage is a responsibility of all members. Furthermore, it illustrates and demonstrates the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

5. It is not the intention or goal of ATS to impose anything on the Church. Seventh-day Adventists do their own thinking, based, of course, on God’s Word and the Spirit of Prophecy. ATS seeks to elucidate, strengthen, enrich, and support the theology of the Bible which is so dear to Adventists. It provides, in the midst of current theological confusion in the Christian world, a venue for the views of conservative theologians, Bible scholars, and others, to be presented and discussed. Because ATS is seeking to strengthen the Church, its studies are made available to Adventists through publications such as JATS. Without apology, ATS seeks to contribute to the theological stability and growth of the Church that at times is pressured to turn to the right or the left theologically.

6. Anyone may request membership in ATS. However, membership is contingent upon subscription to the criteria for enrollment as indicated in the Constitution. This procedure is used in many societies who find it necessary to assure that their purposes and goals are maintained and reached.

7. The founding of ATS constitutes an invitation to dialogue, and dialogue especially concerning the eight Criteria for Membership stated in the *Constitution*, is welcome. The publications of ATS are dialogical in that they discuss relevant theological issues that

impinge on the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which it is dedicated to support and uphold.

8. ATS is not organized to perpetuate the hermeneutics of any single member. Speaking personally, I need to say that the method of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics) espoused by ATS—based as it is on the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s belief that the Bible is God’s inspired, infallible, unerring revelation, and in harmony with the Church’s rejection of the historical-critical interpretation of Scripture—was my method long before I became a Seventh-day Adventist. That method is rooted in the Protestant Reformation, and finds support in the Spirit of Prophecy. The 1974 Bible Conferences, together with the adoption of the “Methods of Bible Study Committee Report” by the 1986 Annual Council, reaffirmed my confidence that I had found the true Bible-believing Church.

9. The reasons for the existence of ATS, and its objectives, are clearly and forthrightly stated in the *Constitution and Bylaws*. The reasons are summarized as follows:

- (a.) To uphold the fundamental beliefs and piety of the SDA Church,
- (b.) To promote sound conservative and centrist Biblical scholarship and interpretation,
- (c.) To create a spiritual and intellectual atmosphere for the exchange of ideas among members,
- (d.) To provide the opportunity for the reading, discussion, and dissemination of scholarly papers by its members.

The objectives are summarized as follows:

- (a.) To affirm the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross,
- (b.) To uphold the Bible as the Word of God—the inspired, infallible revelation of propositional truth, and the unerring standard for doctrine,
- (c.) To endorse the use of historical-grammatical Biblical interpretation, and reject any form of the historical-critical method,
- (d.) To uphold the value of the writings of Ellen G. White for illuminating Scripture and confirming Church teaching,
- (e.) To affirm the literal reading of Genesis 1-11 as an objective, factual account of earth’s origin and early history,
- (f.) To affirm a literal sanctuary in heaven and the pre-advent judgment beginning in 1844,

(g.) To affirm the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant movement called to proclaim the three angel's messages of Rev. 14:6-12, in preparation for the return of Christ, and

(h.) To affirm faithfulness to, and financial support of, the Seventh-day Adventist Church with tithes and offerings.

ATS is pledged, by the grace and power of God, to remain faithful to these reasons and objectives and welcomes into membership all who would join in that pledge.

10. ATS is not a wedge that separates, but an entity that supports. It exists for one purpose, and one purpose only, to assist in supporting the historic biblical doctrines and theology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and by so doing add strength to the Church's determination to remain true to that doctrine and theology and the mission they inspire.

With respect to ministry, God has granted me two great gifts for which I shall always be grateful. One is the privilege of participating in the training of ministers for my Church, in the Philippines, and for the past eleven years on the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary—Andrews University. The other is the privilege of participating in the founding and establishing of the Adventist Theological Society.

During the Lutheran phase of my ministry I was a parish pastor who could only witness momentous theological events from the sidelines, with no platform from which to speak other than my own pulpit. As a Seventh-day Adventist minister I believe I am morally obligated to identify with the reasons and objectives of ATS. I cannot again stand on the sidelines watching helplessly as God's remnant movement, which has welcomed me so warmly into its ranks and given me a spiritual home, confronts theological issues similar to those faced by Lutheranism some decades ago.

ATS provides a forum for those who believe they need not be converted to extremist theological views, or to culturally-conditioned, humanistic, historical-critical interpretations, before they can speak with contemporary relevance. Therefore, I am unashamedly proud to be identified as a charter member of ATS and to serve this term as its president. I pray that the God of our fathers, with His great power and might, will protect ATS from any deviation from the basis upon which it was established.

Introduction to Convention Theme: Theological Method

Now, I would like to say a few words by way of introduction to the general theme of this convention: "Seventh-day Adventist Theological Method." (Most presentations of this convention are provided in published form in this issue of *JATS*.)

The editors of *Time* magazine, in a special Fall 1992 issue, entitled "Beyond the Year 2000: What to Expect in the New Millennium," made a series of apocalyptic predictions. They predicted that, along with the trashing of the traditional family, the discipline of theological study will disappear during the next century. Generations of educated people will have no knowledge of spiritual things, and little or no interest in God or the Bible. A major factor producing that sad development will be "The triumph of feminist religion [that] will cause many Christians and Jews to shun references to God in personal terms (no more Lord or Heavenly Father). This in turn will strengthen the groups that worship a mysterious nature-force to seek to deify the self." This last, of course, is a reference to the new age.

There is both truth and falsehood in this apocalyptic prediction. Truth in the sense that its details could very well fit into the "time of trouble such as has not happened from the beginning of nations" (Dan 12:1). There is falsehood in that the editors of *Time* were not writing out of the context of faith in God and trust in the message of the Bible. There will be a "great multitude that no one could count" crying out in loud voices "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev 7:9-10). The white-robed ones, garbed in the righteousness of Christ, "come out of the great tribulation" (7:14). God wipes every tear from their eyes! (7:17) "There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets" (10:6-7). For God's redeemed people woe becomes worship! That's our belief, our hope! Why? Because Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have said so!

Jesus says to His own, when people faint from terror and apprehension, "When these things begin to take place, *stand up and lift up your heads*, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28, emphasis mine).

That's what we do when we faithfully support the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and when we engage in the theological enterprise. We are standing up! We are lifting up our heads! Yes, the *Time* predictions may very well come to pass for American and/or world society. If that's the social context in which the next generation of believers must bear its witness, that is their historical destiny under the sovereignty of God. But we are God's people, members of His kingdom, and as such are salt and yeast. Our duty is clear: to preach the truth, evangelize, and defend the truth. To preserve for that next generation the legacy of faith that rests on the unshakable foundation of God's written revelation.

Francis Schaeffer said to evangelicals what we Adventists should be saying to ourselves: "There are hard days ahead of us—for ourselves and for our . . . children. And without a strong view of Scripture as a foundation, we will not be ready for the hard days to come." Unless we allow the Bible to have full authority "the next generation of Christians will have nothing on which to stand. Our . . . children will be left with the ground cut out from under them, with no foundation upon which to build their faith or their lives."¹ "Here," he says, "is the great evangelical disaster—the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth. There is only one word for this, namely *accommodation*: the evangelical church has accommodated to the world spirit of the age."² First, accommodation on Scripture, in that the truth of all the Bible teaches is no longer affirmed. Second, accommodation on issues, in that no clear stands are taken on matters of life and death. "Holding to a strong view of Scripture or not holding to it is the watershed of the evangelical world."³

Something is radically wrong when those who uphold the full authority of the Bible are branded as "obscurantists," "fundamentalists," or part of the "lunatic fringe." How does one respond to this? In our present duty there are only three possible responses, as Schaeffer points out: "1) unloving confrontation; 2) no confrontation; 3) loving confrontation. Only the third is biblical."⁴

I am one who believes that the present Adventist malaise in certain quarters of the world church is not a problem of evangelism and church growth but of theology. What sensible person will commit his/her life and financial resources to the theologically

tentative? If we expect to restore vitality to our Church, theological issues have to be addressed forthrightly.

To say that all that matters is Jesus Christ, that doctrine and theology are irrelevant, is to speak nonsense. The moment the name of Christ is uttered, doctrinal/theological questions immediately pose themselves: Who was He? What was His origin? Why did He appear? What did He teach and why? What was the meaning of His life and work? What is His relationship to the Bible? What is His relevance to our times? It is not possible to evangelize, to bring persons into the kingdom of God and the Church, without talking about doctrine and theology.

O. F. Blackwelder, in *The Interpreter's Bible*, observes:

Some advocates of extreme religious tolerance hold that what a man believes is his own business. They insist that. . . every man's religion is larger than he can define; that life is more definitive than theology. . . . [But] It is from men like Paul and books like Galatians that contenders for the significance of doctrine get their ammunition. Such men and books sharpen the church's conscience to perform its historic function of being the custodian of truth. Such men cannot understand the morals of, nor will they have fellowship with, those who are tolerant of doctrinal looseness or unconcern; because what a man in his heart believes, soon or late he begins to be and do. (Vol. 10, pp. 450-451)

Theological pluralism's indifference toward, and intolerance of, strong doctrinal affirmations ought to be unacceptable to Seventh-day Adventists. The inevitable consequence of theological pluralism is fragmentation and loss of mission. Mission is lost when more than one message is preached. The result is confusion regarding organization and polity, as well as membership decline, reduction in financial contributions even in a time of affluency, and finally loss of enthusiasm for evangelism. You cannot make an empty sack stand! Constituents need to be made aware that theological pluralism hides behind the euphemism of "unity amidst diversity." If we are to remain true to the three angels' messages there can be no such thing as parallel Adventist belief systems.

Paul admonishes us not to be "infants. . . blown here and there by every wind of teaching [doctrine]" (Eph 4:14). "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings" (Heb 13:9). We are warned

that "the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine" and will "turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Tim 4:3). He warned, "After I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!" (Acts 20:29-31).

Theology is the most ancient of disciplines, once referred to as the queen of the sciences. Theologians (as teachers) are God's gift to the Church along with prophets, pastors, and evangelists. Yet it is no wonder that, in the contemporary climate, church members and others are skeptical about theology and theologians. Because we perform the theological task in the confessional context of the church's faith, and are accountable, they have the right, the obligation, to question us.

Thielicke was right when he said to theologians, "Do not assume as a matter of course that you believe whatever impresses you theologically and enlightens you intellectually."⁵ He was also right in his distinction between sacred and diabolical theology, determined by whether or not the theologian is a "man of the Spirit."⁶ He was also right in reminding us of the "deadly wounds" inflicted upon the faith of young theologians by the historical-critical study of the Bible.⁷

Therefore, we are obligated to be concerned about the methods used in fulfilling the theological task. Methods that will not allow us to be blown here and there, so that we will not turn aside to myths or distort the truth. Is it possible to avoid the dangers and pitfalls of theological pluralism? While the richness of the fabric of the Church allows for individual thinking, and while there are certainly different perspectives, are there certain basic theological principles that must be shared by all in order for us to be the custodians of the truth? Furthermore, are there distinctives that clearly identify Seventh-day Adventist theological method? These questions, and others, are explored by the contributors to this issue of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*.

Endnotes

1 Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1984), pp. 46-47.

2 Ibid., p. 37.

3 Ibid., p. 51.

4 Ibid., p. 143.

5 Helmut Thielicke. *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 31.

6 Ibid., p. 36.

7 Ibid., p. 37.

THE THEOLOGIAN AS CON- SCIENCE FOR THE CHURCH*

By George W. Reid

Director of the Biblical Research Institute

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

It is no accident that the middle word in our society's name refers to Theology. Christ the Redeemer lies at the heart of our interests, and Christ is in a unique way the revealer of God. But does a theologian sit at the door of the church to review all that goes in and comes out? That idea is caricature.

Theology As a Measure of All Knowledge

Perhaps, we should begin with the simplest of definitions. Despite the American penchant for Madison Avenue image-management, at the most fundamental level the theologian is a person who seeks a knowledge of God. This understanding carries a variety of ramifications. Our first premise accepts God as the central fact of all the universe. This means there is no way we can exaggerate His importance.

For this reason theology becomes in one sense a kind of monitor beside which all other knowledge must pass. If this idea does not challenge us with the widest possible sweep, I know no way it can be done. Beyond being one of the professions, even the most time-honored among them, theology's radical position sets God as the measure of all and gives meaning in the human experience.

Should not a person tremble to step into the glare of such a work? Who is worthy? Yet God has seen fit to set in these vessels of clay the unlimited treasures of contact with His creatures.

*Keynote Address given at the International Annual Adventist Theological Society Convention, April 15, 1993, at Andrews University.

In the shadow of this fact, we must note that theologians have not done so well in the past. Despite our efforts, far too many of the world's citizens, among them many Adventists, have only the most tenuous grasp of the cosmic dimensions involved. Too often theologians have not given a certain sound, and increasingly their hearers have written them off as more or less irrelevant.

Practical Theology: Primary Assignment

To this point our discussion has almost suggested that theology is a preserve of professionals, steeped in academic pursuits, dusty tomes, thick-lensed glasses, and Omega conjugations; who pursue marginal glosses and canonical history and are expected to emerge as mythic renaissance persons. If our assignment is as broad as suggested, here lies a kernel of truth.

We find in the Scriptures a *people* doing theology, the church as a whole kneaded by Spirit-given messages from God. It is striking that most spokesmen and women for God were selected not at all from the intellectual elite, but from among ordinary people caught up from the common paths of life. To be sure we can cite an exceptional Moses, Jeremiah, or Paul. But upon looking at the full sweep of those chosen we discover commoners prevail. Even Jesus' selection of disciples reinforces the point.

Could it be that to prepare a people, equipped with spiritual abilities to identify truth, to sort from life's mixture that which is of God and that which is counterfeit, is among our primary assignments? If this is in fact a part of our task, we are not doing so well.

Biblical Research's assignment calls us to wrestle with troublesome matters, but what is surprising is the degree of confusion among our believers. When persons of trust and responsibility can read a tract or book, culled from the blizzard of unmonitored publications about us, a document tintured with substantial errors, then call to ask weakly, "Do you think there is any problem with this publication?" something is missing. This scenario is alarmingly common.

We recognize that self-flagellation is unproductive, but we have much room for improvement. We must make opportunities to help our believers learn to do theology. Our standing must not be measured by advanced degrees, ability to juggle arcane ideas, or

skills in performing fancy footwork in hermeneutics, but by the ability to help our people become rooted and grounded in the truth of God, which we have long titled "present truth."

We must help our people develop a fascination with the Word of God. If our premise is true, that in all things God's message is the measure, we should be able to make a significant difference and persuade many that the most important thing of all is to know God and to walk with Him.

How to Meet Our Challenges?

How do we go about such a task? At least two score models come to mind. Perhaps we can think of ourselves as theological explorers, whose high privilege it is to lead the people of God from crest to crest, from each height unfolding a new panorama that fills hearts with awe and shows the pursuit of God to be the most rewarding of all enterprises. In this we appear not as puffed up experts, but servants of God, standing among a people we love, side by side leading onward to Christ and the Holy City. But we must be the people of faith that looks beyond mountain ranges. God's truth merits it and our task requires it.

What of the idea of our serving as conscience for the church? Should anyone undertake to be conscience for anyone else? Does this not suggest an intrusion into the place of the Spirit of God? Not really, for the conscience must be set in tune with the Word of God. And that is our assignment.

How can we honor our mandate to fulfill Jesus' assignment, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"? We must never think of this task as usurping the freedom of others to choose. We are in the values business but not the brain-washing business. Ours is not a Waco mentality, where trust becomes unreasoning obsession.

In the midst of the Branch Davidian ordeal I received a telephone call from Livingston Fagan, direct from the McLennan County Jail in Waco. He was one of those who left the Branch Davidian Shepherds Rod compound early on. I was intrigued that he would want to talk with someone in Adventist circles, especially when I discovered he had attended Newbold and for a time was in the Adventist ministry in the British Union.

What would be Fagan's attitude now? The question was soon answered, for my ear was bombarded with an artesian repetition of the ideas of Howell, about the coming Davidic kingdom, the seven seals, which he argued began February 28, 1993, and Koresh's standing as a reincarnation (that was his term) of Jesus of Nazareth. Here was a prime specimen of brainwash.

We are sobered by remembering that of the roughly 90 persons remaining to the end in the compound, virtually all were once Seventh-day Adventists, many being persons of education. There is little to suggest they were not there willingly, and if Fagan serves as example, they were conscience driven. But the driving cannot be of God.

Where does responsibility lie in a case such as this? Is this merely a collection of aberrant minds beyond the pale of reason, or have we in some way done less than we could as these people passed by us? Are we prepared to cope with the fact that the majority of the people inside the Waco compound have attended our schools and passed under the influence, whatever that may have been, of our Bible teaching?

I am not suggesting that we are wholly responsible, for we must reckon with the freedom of the will; but honesty requires us to ask ourselves, what could we have done better?

We can talk of the collective conscience of the church, and it is imperative that we think in such terms when we conceive of overall, telos-oriented strategies. But such talk becomes glib. The real task of theology must be to permeate the whole of the body of Christ, and that requires a one-by-one ministry. Although it is draining, it is our work. It was Jesus' principal way of ministry. To take the vision of the collective and transmit it to each struggling Christian must be a major part of our assignment.

Facing Shifting Paradigms

If we were faced with a fixed understanding of God and His will, to be shared with people of fixed needs, our task would be easier. We need not dabble in process thought to observe that we take a growing understanding of God to a body of believers themselves in perpetual transition. It mandates an adaptability that at the same time honors the truth about God and a true understanding

of Him. It becomes especially important in a world marked by shifting paradigms in world views, values, and theology.

Today we are faced with a bewildering variety of options in all three of these areas. Of all fields, theology seems most vulnerable to paradigm shift, especially because of its ties to meaning.

When the Enlightenment transformed theological thinking from normative to descriptive, its implications were not clearly identified by its theological leaders. Christians noticed that around them the world seemed to be losing interest in things religious. New theories arose to explain mysteries, and solid study of the Bible seemed to decline, giving way to a subjective religion.

But the public was not alerted to the reason for all this. Theologians seemed preoccupied with debating one another while the world marched by, quietly consigning them to respected irrelevance. A new world grew up, in which religion is honorably imprisoned, released on weekends for those who savor it, but was of little special meaning to most.

For much of the developed world today this is an accurate statement of the case. The study of God metamorphosed into a branch of science, absolutes vanished, pluralistic attitudes became fashionable, and while maintaining a presence in the western world, religion lost its place. Gerhard Hasel traced important elements of its impact on theology in books published 1978 and 1992.

Today we observe a resurgent supernaturalism of such character that observers talk in terms of a major paradigm shift. Now marching through the minds of today's sophisticates come forms of eastern mysticism, pantheistic world spirits, and a host of similar phenomena. Most university curricula already reflect the changes, and the alert watcher sees the concepts surface in the world of entertainment, where the new ideas are touted by much-admired Hollywood, rock, and sports figures.

A great deal of this also surfaces under the guise of multiculturalism, concern for the environment, animal rights activism, and similar causes. Alongside legitimate concerns each is infiltrated increasingly by a philosophical structure investing nature with a form of divinity. Today's self-development movement speaks consciously in terms of infused powers.

Generations of people, long assured that science had dispelled

all elements of transcendence, have concluded that all along they did not quite believe it. Now resurgent forms of belief in the supernatural emerge while the membrane between fact and fiction fades. Even children's cartoons pioneer the new way.

But what has all this to do with theology? Much in every way, especially for Adventists. Always we have maintained that the final events of history would take place in a climate of profound supernaturalism. Revelation's chapters 12 to 14 describe commanding religiopolitical forces driving events immediately prior to Christ's return. While theologians have listened uneasily, critical of speculative scenarios of final events described to be fulfilled in physical and political terms, we have been only dimly conscious of paradigm changes in the belief and value system that controls behavior. Already we have reached the time when a Christlike apparition could appear and attract not only the traditionally religious, but innumerable people newly sensitized to such possibilities. We are rapidly shifting to an age of new irrationalism.

New Approaches Are Needed

Who more than theologians are in position to track the developments just described? But my observation is that few of us are doing so. Our magazines have little or nothing to say along these lines. Nor are these developments often discussed from our pulpits.

If in any sense we are vested with the role of conscience, we have work to do. What do we mean when we speak about the commanding primacy of Christ in a postmodern era? Are our believers being taught how to trace the sources of their values and decide what options are compatible with the Bible? We have too long focused only on behaviors—where we go and what we do or don't do.

Many of the unmonitored publications circulating among us call for a return to standards. But the deductive approach to standards no longer registers with the bulk of our members today. Do our members know why? Are we helping them understand how unsuspected value-forces are largely determining their choices?

Do they recognize that in the West, at least, an abnormal reverence for individual autonomy undercuts self-sacrificing concern for others? Are they aware of the impact upon us exerted by

70 years of a value-free public education plan that exalts non-judgmentalism as the sole virtue? Do they see how the clamor for pluralism heard so loudly among us in some quarters is largely the offspring of the contemporary nonjudgmental ideal, despite strained efforts to anchor it in the Scriptures?

Increasingly it is clear that as the power of Christ's message through the Word diminishes, a sense of vague uncertainty develops. Once-held truths are privatized and reduced to the level of opinion. Our church is confronted by this phenomenon today, and confusion on a scale not previously known is taking a bitter toll.

As responsible Adventist theologians, what then is our response? We acknowledge Christ's penetrating dictum: To whom much is given, much is expected. It will not do merely to wring our hands, decry and condemn. This is the tack of some, but by no means all of the private ministries. Their following grows largely from the vacuum created when they fail to hear the ring of certainty once heard among us.

Others promote alternatives: the pursuit of novelty in worship, entertainment cast as worship, and forays into the social sciences in pursuit of fulfilling relationships. We may not like to hear this, but again it will not do for us simply to call for the authority of the Word, as correct as that is. We must face the fact that while there are certain hearers, a majority of the church in the first world is no longer listening to that call.

Given the invasiveness of contemporary values, our former didactic approach is ever less effective. Theologians loyal to Christ's Word must construct new ways that not only instruct but teach our people how to discern among widely-accepted value systems that compete for their loyalty. This work is scarcely begun, but I can bear personal witness that it can cast trite old discussions into new channels, resulting in new insights and spiritual progress.

Let me cite a case in point. Each year a class from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington's American University visits the General Conference. Early on comes the inevitable question: What is different about Adventists? Our visitors expect a promotion of Sabbath observance, a vegetarian diet, or for the alert, something about the pre-advent judgment or Ellen White.

For the past two years I have avoided all the above with the simple response, "We are a people with a unique world view of cosmic proportions. Jesus Christ is central: Originator of all things, Redeemer, and coming King." Then follow a few sentences about how our comprehensive vision, described as a great controversy, integrates everything in the Scriptures as well as what we find in nature. Then I tell them, "If you find unusual things about us, which you will, it is because we measure everything by the biblical world view, and accept only what is found in harmony with it."

This simple response releases a vigorous discussion. What comprises our world view? Can it really integrate all things? One by one our truths slip into niches in ways they never imagined. When the group departs, each time several students remain for intense personal inquiries about the Adventist faith that indicate interest beyond the academic.

This is only one example, but the challenge lies before us. All too often those of us with a high level of trust in the historic Adventist message have left creativity in the hands of others, by default forfeiting influence we could have had. We need to chart new waters for God. In so doing we fulfill both the work of conscience and salvaging souls. And in these we bear faithful witness to the Saviour's commission.

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FAITH AND THEOLOGY

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The question is sometimes asked, "Does a theologian need to have faith in God to do theology?" The answer is an unequivocal, "Yes!" As the Scripture says, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is" (Heb 11:6). Two much more difficult questions to answer are: "What kind of faith should a theologian have?" and "What should be the object or the focus of his or her faith?" Throughout this article we will consider three aspects of faith which give at least a partial answer to these two important questions. First, let us look at the nature of faith.

The Nature of Faith

The Object of Faith. When we speak of faith, we recognize it has no meaning in itself apart from what it can trust. If the theologian wrestled with theological concepts that made no claims, the question of whether faith is needed would never arise. But the claim of Scripture to be the Word of God given to man, and the claim made by Jesus Christ about Himself as recorded in Scripture, is what raises the question about the kind of faith the theologian should have, and what the focus or object of his faith should be.

If, for example, Jesus only claimed to be a prophet or a teacher, it would not require much faith to accept His claim. But when He claims to have preexisted Bethlehem, to have been born of a virgin, and to be God in the flesh, faith in Him becomes more difficult, because more ground is given for questions to be raised concerning such claims.¹ This was the case with Nicodemus when Christ said, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye

believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12). "If Nicodemus could not receive Christ's teaching, illustrating the work of grace upon the heart, how could he comprehend the nature of His glorious heavenly kingdom?"²

The more theology and history we study, especially the turbulent history of the Christian church, the more important faith becomes. The more we consider the various opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the decisions of ecclesiastical councils—with their discordant voices—the more our faith needs to reach out for certainty.³

Faith, therefore, must continue to clarify the relationship to its object. Does this mean that the task of faith is to reshape its object, in the light of the latest research, to make it more palatable to modern man and that this responsibility belongs to the theologian? Considering the claims of God's revelation, the answer is "No." To the contrary, faith does not mold its object, but is itself molded by it. Faith is determined by Scripture and the claims of Jesus Christ as written. Faith is a response to its object, and the object of biblical faith is Jesus Christ. He calls for an ever-present childlike faith, to which many are not willing to risk the commitment.⁴

The Primacy of Faith. One reason for such hesitancy lies in faith's recognition of the role of reason, and her reluctance to place trust beyond reason's claimed sphere. To exercise faith requires an acknowledgment of the limitations of reason and the recognition of the boundary of reason's competence. If reason is such that it demands nothing less than absolute certainty before it will trust, then faith is excluded and the demands of reason have become excessive. Theology has no need to fear the proper function of reason, for it is a gift of God. What theology does have to fear is a view of reason that claims total competence for itself.⁵

Faith is the acceptance of an authority beyond the natural bounds of reason, and in that sense it involves the individual's willingness to be subject to something or someone outside of himself or herself. Submission to an authority outside of oneself is, therefore, inherent and vital to biblical faith. This does not mean that once submission is present no more problems regarding faith can exist. Faith is never stationary or static, it demands constant as-

assessment of its relationship to the claims of Scripture. If reason alone were sufficient to determine what one believes, the problems of self-will and pride would not arise.⁶

The perception and appreciation of truth depend less upon the mind than upon the heart. The truth of Scripture must be received into the soul. If the truth of Scripture could be submitted to reason alone, pride would be no hindrance to its reception. The theologian's advantages for obtaining a knowledge of the truth, however great, are of no benefit to him unless they are accompanied by a conscientious surrender to clearly stated biblical principles and a renunciation of every sin that the Spirit of God points out to him. The Pharisees were not seeking to know the truth, but some excuse for evading it; Christ showed that this was why they could not understand His teaching.⁷

Self-will and pride are challenged by the authority Scripture claims for itself. It is obvious, particularly in this last generation, that something is needed that man does not and cannot produce of himself. If self-will and pride are in the heart, faith becomes powerless. Faith means commitment to what reason may be able to present but can never guarantee. Therefore, the constant opposition of the claims of authority and self-will guarantees that there will always be present a challenge to maintain one's faith, particularly for the theologian.⁸

The Function of Faith. Faith cannot function in isolation. It can only be understood in relation to Scripture, and to function in relation to the community of faith. Rugged individualism may be an admirable human quality, but faith is not strictly a private matter. While the decision to believe may focus on the individual, if it leads to preoccupation with self—instead of self-forgetfulness in the service of others—it is not the kind of faith the Scriptures speak about. Although an individual struggle of faith is essential to decision-making, a slothful faith becomes the devil's workshop, which he uses to turn in upon itself.⁹

When faith turns in on itself, believers begin to trust in their faith for salvation. They likewise begin to focus on keeping up a name for being persons of faith. This in turn leads them to protect their reputations within the community of faith.

If such persons have reputations for being gifted theologians

or preachers, successful evangelists or administrators, persons of prayer or special devotion, there is danger that they will make shipwreck of their faith. Often a great effort is made to maintain the reputation. If such live in the fear that others do not appreciate their value, they are certainly losing sight of Christ.

True faith leads believers to look away from self to Christ, even to look away from their own faith in Christ, to the Object of their affection, to their Savior and Lord. As theologians we may go through the whole formal round of study and research, we may even pride ourselves on our faith in Scripture, but unless Christ is woven into all that we say and do, we will be working for our own glory. Our faith will have become our god!¹⁰

For faith to survive it must become part of that special "community of faith" that began with righteous Abel and continues to our own day. While faith stands in primary relation to God, it also stands in relation to the community—the living community as well as the written one. The living community is not here to pacify its own concerns and engage itself in conversation with its own kind alone, but to be externally oriented—attempting to serve the needs of an alien and hostile world.¹¹

The Witness of Faith. To expect faith of itself to hold steady and to focus on Christ and the community of faith without wavering is to lose that faith by misunderstanding its nature. How quickly Peter's faith fled between the time of his affirmation, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and his triple denial, "I do not know Him!" (Matt. 16:16; 26:69-75). His loss of faith in Christ should be a constant warning to us that the possibility of our loss of faith stands as near to us as does our present possession of it!

Daily we need to direct our faith toward Jesus Christ, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. When our lives are at stake—as was Peter's—then the depth of our faith will be seen for what it is. If it is rooted in Christ, it will stand; but if rooted in self, in some form of theological idolatry masking the self, then it cannot stand.

There comes a time for faith fearlessly and yet responsibly to give witness to its object. To keep our faith focused solely within an intellectual context, forming a kind of cloistered community, is to seal its doom. It is not so much the baptism of water that tests our faith in Jesus Christ—although in some instances it may—but the

“baptism of fire” we may face from time to time and ultimately in the end-time persecution. It will either melt our faith in Christ or make it more precious than ever.¹² The words of William Bathurst express it very well when he says:

O for a faith that will not shrink, though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink of poverty, of poverty or woe;
That will not murmur or complain beneath the chastening rod,
But in the hour of grief or pain, of grief or pain can lean upon its
God;
Lord, give me such a faith as this, and then, whate'er may come
I'll taste e'en here the hallowed bliss, the hallowed bliss of an
eternal home.¹³

The more we study theology the more we need to affirm a childlike faith in Jesus Christ according to Scripture (1 Cor 15:1-4). Faith freely and willingly takes the risk of total commitment, recognizes the limits of reason, prompts the believer to surrender self-will and pride, becomes involved in the community of faith, and is fully aware of its vulnerability. Faith is tested by opposition and at times by the fires of persecution. We need to continue to do theology, but it must be done by faith in the Christ of Scripture in order to be able to stand (Luke 18:8). Let us now consider the second aspect of faith, faith in Scripture.

Faith in Scripture

Faith in Revelation. When we speak of Scripture we speak of revelation. And by revelation we mean that which man by his own unaided reason cannot know. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14). God’s intentions must be disclosed to us. If there were no revelation from God, and if men could gather on their own everything they needed to know, then the humanistic approach to truth would be legitimized. And the church with its claim to be established by revelation, would be a travesty of truth, serving as a mere opiate of the people.¹⁴

1. Revelation always comes unexpectedly. It is not part of the historical process as man understands it, because God’s intentions

cannot be understood solely from a study of the natural order of things. Revelation is a special breaking into history, an extra-historical disclosure of God’s intentions for this sinful planet on which you and I live, and there is no way of knowing what His intentions are for us except by revelation.¹⁵

2. Revelation is the Word of God. This means that God has communicated His intentions to us in ways we can understand. Now, if this communication from God has no more inherent power than comparable human words, then revelation would not be taken seriously. The Word of God has power to do what ordinary human words cannot do. However, the revelatory quality of words does not come from the words themselves, but from their Source.¹⁶

3. Revelation is directional. It tells us where to look. The difficulty that sometimes confronts faith is to know whether what was waited for has actually arrived, and that what was foretold has entered history at a specific point in time. That point in time is always a time of opportunity. To embrace that opportunity means salvation, but to neglect it means disaster.

The Exodus revealed God’s plan at a specific point in history, a time of opportunity to respond in faith, and it created Israel. The coming of the Son of God to this earth was another time of opportunity to respond in faith, which proved disastrous for Israel as a nation but proved good news to those who believed. Revelation enables man to see and understand those moments in time which historical study alone is bound to miss.¹⁷ Today is another such moment in history when neglect of the revelatory signs of the end will spell disaster.

Faith, therefore, acknowledges that God’s revelation can be seen—as in the case of Jesus Christ—and that His words recorded in Scripture can be understood. Faith sees those special moments in time when God acts, accepts those revelatory insights through His prophet that God gives, and responds accordingly.

Faith in the O.T. Man is always free to say “Yes” or “No” to God. But faith is man’s, “Yes” and never his “No.” The Hebrew term for faith comes from the root *'mn*. An adverb form carries the familiar meaning: amen, verily, truly. The Bible writer usually employs the Hiphil form of the verb to express human trust or belief

in God (for example, Gen 15:6). Nothing was so sure to the Hebrew, so permanent or so reliable as God.

Faith is declaratory not causative. Its basic religious meaning passes into the moral one of "resolution," especially in the face of danger.¹⁸ One reason why the meaning of faith in the OT is conveyed in verb forms is because the Hebrews regarded faith not as something that a person has, but rather something a person does. It is not a possession, it is an activity.¹⁹ This is why James says, "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

The objective fact of what a man believes is the ground of the Hebrew faith, not how a man feels. Man stands before God as a creature in relation to the Creator. He accepts the fact of God and his own dependence on God. His faith also recognizes the gulf that exists between him and God because of sin. Therefore, penitence and obedience are emphasized, that is faithfulness to God, rather than faith as a quality of belief directed toward God.

For the Israelite, the moral aspect of faith took precedence over the intellectual and emotional aspect. Faith is trust in the God of the covenant who, in His providence, brought Israel into special relationship with Himself. The Hebrews' trust in the God of the covenant also included the fear of God. To the Israelites these two basic attitudes of trust and fear were not incompatible. The only intellectual activity that mattered to them was that which began from the presupposition of faith—a faith that stood in awe before the living God whom they trusted.²⁰

Faith in the N.T. For Jesus, faith in God was the foundation of His ministry. His intimacy and communion with the Father reveals the depth of His faith. Faith in God meant that He saw God's presence and endorsement of His ministry and that the kingdom of God was at hand.

This was also true of the apostolic church. To have faith meant to have faith in God's decisive activity for the redemption of man. This was not just a general belief in God or even in the proclamation of the saving activity of God, but rather faith in what God had done for them through Jesus Christ. It was faith in God as Father and Ruler, and in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.²¹

According to Paul, only if a man has faith is he in right relationship with God and able to understand himself and to act

rightly. Faith is not the goal of man's religious development, as we find with Philo and also some Christian philosophers, but the beginning of man's development.

For Paul there are no ethics apart from faith in Jesus Christ. This is the opposite of Socrates' answer to man's dilemma when he said that virtue is knowledge and if people know what the good is, they will naturally do it. Paul speaks of conformity to God's will as revealed in the moral law of the Ten Commandments (Rom 13:8-10). For him, faith meant to hear and obey—as well as the motivation to do so out of a sense of gratitude to God for all that He had done for him.

Paul saw no reason why man should not keep all the commandments; and though this was not always easy, it was not impossible. For him faith leads man to recognize his sinfulness, his inability, his helplessness to do the will of God without Divine help. Faith abandons self-sufficiency and welcomes dependency. Through faith man is freed from his former self, and is empowered by the Spirit to live a new life in Christ. Faith does not produce an overscrupulous anxiety, but conviction and certainty of relationship with Jesus Christ and with things not yet seen.²²

While faith expresses our trust and confidence in the Person of Christ and does not simply assent to a doctrine or a creed, to believe what the Scriptures say about God and about Jesus Christ is to accept their doctrinal content. As Paul said, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3, 4). Faith is not independent of doctrine as some are inclined to think.²³

Faith means to live by the truth it receives from God in His Word, and, resting on God's promises, gives thanks for His grace by working for His glory. Faith involves the right belief about God, His character, and His purpose for man as revealed in Scripture. It knows that God cannot lie, that He is trustworthy, and therefore accepts the divine testimony as totally reliable.²⁴

Faith and the Reformation. During the patristic period the concept of faith became narrowed. Through the formulation of orthodoxy—though there was need for this in order to counter

heresies—as well as the intellectualism of Origen and others (who regarded faith as an inferior substitute for *gnosis* or knowledge) faith became identified with credence. Consequently, faith came to mean little more than a vote of confidence in the theological hierarchy of the church.

The Reformers changed this. Luther rediscovered in Scripture the rich significance of biblical faith. The Reformers insisted that faith is more than orthodoxy, not merely *fides* (belief), but rather *fiducia* (trust)—personal trust and confidence in God, in His mercy to us through Jesus Christ. This took faith out of the realm of meritorious works and made it an appropriating instrument, an empty hand outstretched to receive the free gift of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ. Again faith is seen not merely as an acceptance of theologically formulated doctrines, as essential as these are, but also as trust in Christ's accomplished work climaxed at Calvary as the only and all-sufficient ground of man's salvation.²⁵

Faith and the Modern Mind. "Each theologian's view of the nature and saving significance of faith will depend on the views he holds of the Scriptures, and of God, man, and of their mutual relations."²⁶ Unfortunately, there are some aspects of modern Protestant theology in which faith in Christ has become a human work upon which man's salvation depends. This, in effect, has become the Protestant version of human merit.²⁷ It must be remembered that faith, like all the gifts we receive from God, is also a gift. Therefore, those who exercise faith do not deserve any credit for doing so.²⁸ "Faith is not our Savior. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits."²⁹

Protestantism has also allowed liberalism to psychologize faith, reducing it to a sense of contented harmony with God through Christ. Faith is understood as an optimistic confidence in the friendliness of God, apart from Scripture. Too often it is nothing more than a religious state of mind.³⁰ Faith is seen as personal development, as "stages" of faith oriented to oneself and arising out of an effort to translate experiences into meaningful propositions, without the suppressed "error" of identifying faith with certain beliefs.³¹

However, to talk of faith in such generic terms without its being rooted in Scripture—not just sprinkled with Scripture—is

not true faith. A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him as the Savior of the whole world, or which is only an intellectual assent to truth, can never bring healing to the soul. "It is not enough to believe *about* Christ, we must believe *in* Him." Faith is not merely a favorable opinion we hold about Christ. Faith will benefit us only if we accept Him as our own personal Savior. Saving faith is a transaction by which we join ourselves in covenant relation with God. This is the kind of faith by which the soul becomes a conquering power.³²

The mighty acts of God through Jesus Christ cannot be properly understood apart from Scripture. Faith in God and faith in the veracity of Scripture need to be taken in tandem. There can be no absolute certainty concerning these acts apart from the Word and from faith in the Word. As Calvin says, "Take away the Word and no faith will remain."³³ Faith does not mean that we take the raw material of secular history and give it the significance of salvation history. If faith is based only on its own significance, defined in terms of its own supposed divinatory faculty, its own interpretive power, or its own charisma of investing it with meaning, then it is not biblical faith.³⁴

Sin has so blinded modern man that he cannot understand how the Scripture can be God's Word, or even reliable in regard to the realities about which it speaks. Nor can he see the necessity to renounce self, and, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, permit himself to be drawn to Christ as his Savior and Lord. Man does not seem to understand that faith is a gift of which God Himself is the Author.³⁵ In some measure faith is given to every human being and enables men and women to receive God's other gifts. But this precious gift can only grow as exercised by continually appropriating the Word of God. Faith is strengthened only as we bring it in contact with what is written.³⁶

If there is no confidence in Scripture, it is hard to see how there can be real faith either in God or in the testimony about Him. It is by our believing the words and works of Him as recorded in Scripture that Jesus Christ is received and believed. If faith comes by hearing or reading the Scriptures as Paul says (Rom 10:17), it comes by hearing what is written as the Word of God by the illumination of the heart and mind through the Holy Spirit. That is why faith

can be so confident, because it is a trust in God evoked by God. This also is why faith is so total and so powerful.³⁷

Faith and the Reorientation of Life. Biblical faith sees life from the perspective of eternity. It is an inward compulsion born of gratitude not only to trust God but to obey Him, to do exploits in His name, to be faithful, and to bring forth fruit unto righteousness.³⁸ Faith is not merely a human response, it is a work of the life-giving Spirit, and as such it is a living and acting faith. Justification and sanctification cannot be separated. While faith alone justifies, the faith that justifies is never alone. The fruits of faith are fruits of righteousness.³⁹

Some point to a supposed dispute between Paul and James over the function of faith, but when rightly understood there is no conflict between these two inspired writers. The whole Bible has one Author, One who cannot lie, and who certainly will not contradict Himself. James addresses a situation in which antinomianism threatened the church because the strong soteriological interest of Paul regarding faith had been misunderstood and misapplied.⁴⁰ As James said, The devils also believe there is one God and tremble, but show me your faith by your works. Without works faith is dead (see James 2:18-19, 26).

Biblical faith is not double-tongued. But there are—and always will be—men and women throughout Christendom who teach one thing in the classroom and preach another in the pulpit. They may be devout Bible students and put forth much effort in the quest for truth, but they preach vigorously from the very texts they deny in the classroom. Students begin to wonder at this *volte-face*, this about face, that takes place when their teachers enter the pulpit.⁴¹ Such unethical, unprofessional, un-Christian approach to biblical truth in the face of Jesus Christ who taught what He was and was what He taught, is inexcusable and the height of hypocrisy. Christ's words not only expressed His experience, but His character.⁴²

It is one thing to treat the Bible as a book of good moral instruction, to be listened to as far as is consistent with the spirit of the times, but it is another thing to accept the Scripture for what it really is—the Word of the living God—the Word that is our life, that molds our actions, our words, our very thoughts. To hold God's Word as anything less than this is to reject it, and this very rejection

by teachers who profess to believe it, is one of the foremost causes of skepticism and infidelity among our students.⁴³

“Those who feel at liberty to question the Word of God, to doubt everything where there is any chance to be unbelieving, will find that it will require a tremendous struggle to have faith when trouble comes. It will be almost impossible to overcome the influence that binds the mind which has been educated in the line of unbelief.”⁴⁴ Wrong habits of thought, especially thoughts of unbelief, become a despotic power that fasten the mind as in a grasp of steel.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, in spite of the dishonesty of some and the heresies and misrepresentations of others, the Remnant Church will not lapse from any part of her biblical faith. God will maintain His truth and will not allow man to deny it forever. Faith in the truthfulness of what is written will be sealed by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all of God's people who unreservedly commit themselves to Scripture.⁴⁶

Theological Idols

Lastly, let us consider the third aspect of faith, making theological idols. Whenever we restrict Scripture and confine it to our own wishes we have fashioned an idol for ourselves. In essence there is no difference between today's theological idols and the ancient forms of idolatry against which God warned His people. Again and again He spoke through His prophets and told the Israelites how irrational it was for them to fashion idols from the same wood they used for cooking and from which they made a fire to warm themselves. How then could they bow down and worship these wooden idols as if they were gods (Isa 44:12-20)? Are we any different? I submit for your serious consideration five of the more prevalent theological idols currently being worshiped, not only in the theological community but also by men and women in the pew.

Catholicism. Thomas Sheehan says that at the dawn of her third millennium the Christian church is undergoing a theological crisis. The crisis grows out of a belief, now freely asserted by both Catholic and Protestant theologians and exegetes, that the historical data indicate that Jesus did not think He was divine and died without intending to found the religion we call Christianity. The

crisis is between who Jesus apparently thought He was, a special human prophet, and what Christian believers now take Him to be, the divine Son of God.

According to Sheehan Christianity begins not with Jesus but with Simon Peter, whose faith acknowledged Him to be the Christ; therefore, Christianity maintains itself throughout history by staying in continuity with that first great believer and is present wherever someone traces his or her faith back to him and to those first believers. The essence of Christianity is its historical continuum with Peter and the apostolic church rather than directly with Jesus of Nazareth. Those who choose to preserve this continuity with Peter's evaluation of the prophet from Galilee can then lay claim to be called a Christian. Jesus' understanding of Himself is not essential to Christianity, but Peter's is.⁴⁷

This perversion of Scripture makes man's faith—traced back to Peter's faith—the rock on which the church is built and the redeeming factor in our salvation. It puts man's faith at center stage in place of Jesus Christ. For all intents and purposes Scripture is set aside and becomes an adjunct to the continuum of man's faith rather than having his faith rooted in the Christ of Scripture. The golden image of man's faith has been set up in the modern Plain of Dura, and these exegetes are admiring their own workmanship.

Fundamentalism. If by Fundamentalism we mean those who believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, that each word was inspired by God, then B. B. Warfield would be considered one of the ablest upholders of this concept.⁴⁸ Some extreme verbal inspirationists believe that every book in the Bible, every chapter of each book, every word of Scripture, every syllable, and every letter is the direct utterance of the Most High.⁴⁹

Too often, however, the spirit found among extreme verbal inspirationists is not the spirit of Scripture and certainly not the spirit of Jesus Christ. For some, doing theology means taking on a militancy that becomes a matter of subduing their enemies. In their hands Scripture becomes the zealot's knife.

The writers of Scripture were not God's pen, but His penmen. The words they used were their own, but the thoughts were those given and directed by the Holy Spirit. The words of the Bible are not inspired, but the men who wrote them were.⁵⁰ While the Bible

uses the language of men, it is nevertheless an infallible revelation of God's will, a union of the divine and the human, the same kind of union we find in Jesus Christ.⁵¹

We need to remember that "those who bring to the investigation of the Word a spirit which it does not approve, will take away from the search a spirit which it has not imparted."⁵² There can be no more conclusive evidence that we possess the spirit of Satan than the disposition to destroy those who do not appreciate our theological ideas.⁵³ It is a Jehu-spirit which says, "Come . . . see my zeal for the Lord" (2 Kings 10:16). This kind of spirit is gratifying to self and gives a sense of false assurance, yet all the while the soul is defiled with the plague-spot of unsubdued, uncontrolled selfishness and self-worship.⁵⁴

Descriptive Theology. According to K. Stendahl the "history-of-religions school" felt the need to make Jesus more palatable to the contemporary mind. It emphasized the distance between biblical and modern times, and what emerged was a descriptive approach to the study of Scripture. The fact of the Exodus or of the resurrection of Jesus was not so much their concern as was the significance those events had for the writers and readers who lived at the time. The "Sitz im Leben" view became the way to study Scripture. Soon biblical theology was swallowed up by the study of the history of biblical thought. As a result the gap between the Bible and our time was widened and the question of scriptural meaning was split into two tenses: "What did it mean to them?" and "What does it mean to us today?" The "history-of-religions" school, with its embrace of descriptive theology, denuded the Scripture of its normative authority.⁵⁵

Descriptive theology, it is said, can be carried out by believer and agnostic alike. They can work side by side as historians since no other tools are called for than those involving the description of the text. The question which descriptive theology cannot answer is: "Who was right about Christ—the Jews or the Christians?" When descriptive theology attempts to answer such questions, it is no longer descriptive theology. Those, therefore, who commit themselves to using this method of studying Scripture must remain neutral and limit themselves to what the text meant in its own setting and no more. As a result, descriptive theology will never be normative

regardless of attempts to make it so. For descriptive theology to be true to itself it can only focus on what the Scriptures meant in the past and consequently, for them, the Bible becomes a book of the past with little practical meaning for today.⁵⁶

The prophets spoke less for their own time than for the ages that followed and for our own time.⁵⁷ But the descriptive approach to Scripture makes the Bible little more than a story book with good moral lessons and examples of religious heroism. Thus the theologian can easily sweep aside any normative application that he wishes to discard as being unpleasant or unacceptable to his thinking. He can mold Scripture into whatever image he wishes to create.

But the Scriptures were intended to be normative throughout time, for they were given for our admonition (1 Cor 10:11). This is especially true of the Decalogue, which was not conceived by the Israelites nor with meaning only for them, but is normative for us as well. Whether our theology has become descriptive and is simply handed down as an Adventist tradition, or is normative for all peoples for all time will soon be seen. When theology confines Scripture to fit its own contemporary convenience and destroys people's faith in the Scriptures as God's normative revelation, it has set up another idol to worship.

Neoorthodoxy. Karl Barth's *Romans* grew out of concern for his parishioners at Safenwil for whom he rejected the prevailing liberalism of his mentors at Marburg and Berlin. Barth's focus became the Word of God.⁵⁸ He saw Scripture as a witness to the revelation of the triune God as the Revealer, the Revealed, and the Revealedness.⁵⁹ He holds this understanding of Scripture as an alleged barrier against the concept of the Scriptures' being a corpus of fixed propositions which can be systematized into a theology. The Word of God, Barth says, is the Person of Jesus Christ, who is not bound by the verbal form of Scripture but speaks to us again and again in the form of proclamation—for He is the ever-present Word of God. Thus, it is Christ Himself, the Living Word, who becomes the great obstacle to those who wish to reduce the propositions of Scripture to a human system which they can control. God's faithfulness consists of His freedom to come to us through the ever-present Christ and to do this as often as He wishes.⁶⁰

According to Barth Scripture is only the depository of proclamation of the Living Word from the past by the mouth of man. Therefore, what is written is simply a record of the church's proclamatory history and not of divine revelation. Scripture as witness then and proclamation now are the same continuing event. Barth sees Jeremiah and Paul back there and the preacher of the Gospel today as one and the same proclamation of and witness to the Living Word of God.⁶¹

Thus, neoorthodoxy makes an encounter with the Living Word more important than Scripture itself, which means that God's revelation becomes little more than an existential event. Personal encounter even supersedes the need for the comprehension of the truthfulness of biblical facts.⁶² What neoorthodoxy fears—making the Scriptures more important than Christ—is a legitimate concern which we ought to share. It is not impossible to grasp the facts of revelation and yet not know the One of whom the Scriptures speak (John 5:39-40).

But as Carl F. H. Henry points out, the loss of the concept of revelation as something to be grasped and understood has had devastating consequences. To deny the rational intelligibility of divine revelation is to forego the connection between faith and adherence to explicit beliefs. Neoorthodoxy rejected the objective, verbal character of revelation and simply made it a human—though apostolic—interpretation of the deeds of God and an existential inner response to a spiritual confrontation. Yet Jesus, in His own teaching endorses the view that revelation takes conceptual-verbal form. He not only identified His words as revelation but also identified the Word of God in terms of what stands written.⁶³

Henry rightly decries the fact that the emphasis on divine self-disclosure as a personal but non-cognitive confrontation of man has become too widely entrenched. Neo-Protestant reconstruction of the doctrine of divine revelation, he says, has eliminated its external and objective features and focused on personal encounter. Consequently cognitive revelation has been forfeited and transmuted into an inner awareness of forgiveness and into a subjective relationship with God, while the issue of objectively valid truth is bypassed.

What Barth inadvertently did was to repudiate a prophetic-

apostolic deposit of truth identical with the sacred texts, and made the so-called present Word-event become more important than Scripture. The claim that divine revelation is personal rather than propositional makes faith in Christ something different from an acceptance of the truth about Him as stated in Scripture. The Bible, Henry says, gives no basis for the theory that the Word of God must be something different from what is written.⁶⁴

The theological significance of the neoorthodox position has grave eschatological consequences. We need to put the Living Word—Jesus Christ—and the written Word in proper perspective. Without a doubt, Christ is more important than a book, even more important than Scripture. On the other hand, it is Christ Himself who directs us to the primacy of Scripture and Christ comes to us through Scripture.

It was the resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus who withheld His self-disclosure to the two disciples and directed them to the written Word as their assurance. He began with Moses and the prophets and showed them all things concerning Himself (Luke 24). Had He first made Himself known to them, their hearts would have been satisfied and they would have hungered for nothing more. But it was necessary for them to understand that their faith should be established upon what was written. It was the written Word that would keep their faith strong when in a few short years they would have to face the overthrow of Jerusalem.⁶⁵ The basis of their faith needed to have some rational content concerning who Christ was, not simply an experience with Him, not just three cheers for a resurrected Lord!

The crowning act of eschatological deception will come when Satan personates the "Living Word." Many will believe that Satan is the expected Christ who has come to save the world. Then, in his assumed character of the "Living Word," he will claim to have changed what is written. He declares that those who listen to the written word and persist in keeping the seventh day are blaspheming his name. But the people whose faith is rooted in what is written will not be misled. They will see that the teachings of this false christ are not in harmony with the Scriptures.⁶⁶ They will not accept the personation of the "Living Word" to take precedence over the written Word. Some, however, will see this as blasphemy, as

bibliolatry, the worship of a book over the Person of Christ. It will be said of those who rely on what is written—as it is already being said—that they need this kind of external authority to lean on to bolster their faith, because they do not have a mature relationship with Christ, as if a relationship with Christ is contrary to faith's reliance on Scripture. It will be believed that such alleged bibliolatry must be rooted out, especially if it denies the world the promised blessing from the one whom they believe is the "Living Christ." The theological idol of neoorthodoxy will be believed and worshiped, and not a few will be deceived.

Relevancy. Under this heading are numerous theological attempts to make Scripture more acceptable to modern man. The demythologization approach by Rudolph Bultmann would be one such example as he attempts to free from the NT accounts the real, underlying biblical message. He wants to avoid coming to the present generation with the demand that it accept what he regards as an outworn view of the world. According to Bultmann it is unnatural for us to demand that contemporary man accept as true the biblical framework of stories which made up the biblical writers' own thought-world. Modern man can only do so at the expense of sacrificing his intellect, he claims.⁶⁷

This kind of approach de-emphasizes the authority of the biblical text and shifts the focus of authority in the direction of man's judgment over Scripture. Bultmann argued that it is impossible to do exegesis without coming to the text with modern presuppositions. The interpreter must come to the text with relevant questions or with a specific way of raising questions.⁶⁸ However, the kinds of questions we bring to Scripture often predetermine the answers we seek, and in turn these answers are accepted as Scriptural truth. Scripture will, however, redefine our questions.

The incarnational view of Scripture is still another means of molding the Word of God into a "golden image." According to this approach the Bible is seen as providing case studies from which lessons can be drawn to make the Word of God more "practical." The loci of such theological constructions shift from an authoritative Scripture to the needs of the current community, from the author-text to the reader. Scriptural authority becomes a "classic text" in the sense that it speaks with power to all peoples and is

flexible and open to a wide variety of interpretations as most case studies are.⁶⁹

This kind of cognitive bargaining, with the desire for a more acceptable Christian lifestyle, has brought about a subtle shift from an emphasis on being born again (with resultant conformity to the will of God) to the marketability of the text by making it more palatable for contemporary society. Consequently, adjusting to our intellectual surroundings becomes more important than shaping our surroundings by the biblical message.

The attempt to make Scripture more palatable to contemporary society employs a hermeneutic by which the diversity of the individual writers is emphasized to the exclusion of their deeper unity. So what we have is the theology of Isaiah or of Luke or Paul, the canon within the canon, progressive revelation, the "maturity theory" by which later passages become more reliable than former ones instead of simply clarifying them, and the symbolic or metaphorical expression of God's redemptive activity. All of these in one way or another destroy the underlying unity and reliability of propositional revelation.⁷⁰

In his reply to David Edwards, John Stott says that an a priori resolve to believe and obey whatever Scripture may be shown to teach, means to be committed to Scripture in advance to whatever it may be found to say. As he points out, such an open, unconditional commitment to Scripture is no longer acceptable to some. Their biblical selectivity often rejects the plain Scriptural teaching on the atonement, miracles, or homosexual partnerships on the basis that such teachings are unbiblical, because they are unacceptable to today's society.⁷¹ This gives supremacy to man's reason, experience, or whatever else over Scripture. This conflict, Stott says, goes back to Luther when he said to Erasmus, "The difference between you and me, Erasmus, is that you sit above Scripture and judge it, while I sit under Scripture and let it judge me!"⁷²

When men fashion revelation to form their own little theological gods and bow down to worship them and be warmed by the glow of the acceptance of these gods, they have fallen into the lowest form of idolatry that can be conceived. They use the Word of God to fashion their own idols. This is not faith, but the greatest presump-

tion. This is not worship of the God of Israel, but blatant self-idolatry.

Conclusion

The time is fast approaching when the Sabbath of the fourth commandment will become the fulcrum, the pressure point, if you please, which will divide Christians between those who believe what is written and are willing to stake their lives on it, and those who believe Scripture can be legitimately molded into the image they want for their own survival.

In the light of our eschatological considerations, it is imperative that we reach out in faith and hold on to Scripture as instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life for us so we need not perish but receive eternal life (John 3:16). There can be no greater insult to God's unbounding grace than to make light of the provisions made for our salvation as delineated in Scripture. Out of the deepest appreciation for what the Son of God has done for us, let us hold on to what is written as He did when He was here (Matt 4:1-11).

In some quarters there is skepticism as to what the Scriptures say. Human reasoning and imaginings are undermining the inspiration of the Word of God. That which should be received as granted, is surrounded by a cloud of unbelief. Nothing is beyond attack. Nothing stands out in clear and distinct lines. This is one of the signs of the last days. Satan is determined to place everything connected with the Word of God under a cloud of suspicion and doubt. But the Lord has preserved the Bible by His own miraculous power in its present shape and given it to us to be our guide.⁷³

We keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment not because of the authority of the community, not because it is our tradition, not because of a "Sitz im Leben" theology, not because it has been voted by the church, and not because it is a matter of demonstrating our own strong faith. It is not for any of these reasons that we worship God on the seventh-day. We worship on that day out of grateful obedience for what God, the Father, through Jesus Christ, has done for us, and that is the reason why we submit ourselves body and mind to the written Word under the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit.

There will always be subjects in the Bible too difficult for us to understand. But this is no reason to doubt the Word of God and to fashion it into the image that we want it to be. Too often a certain pride is mingled with doing theology, and it is too humiliating for us to admit that we do not always understand the inspired words. We feel that our unaided human wisdom is sufficient to enable us to comprehend whatever is written. Too often we feel no need of submission to the Holy Spirit's leading, no need of faith in His unseen hand that stands ready to guide us.

Without the Holy Spirit, however, we are continually liable to misinterpret the Scriptures. Without prayer and faith, the heart is not in tune with God and in the very study of the Bible doubt and skepticism may grow, and Satan stands ready to suggest interpretations that are not correct. Our vision may become distorted, and that which is plain may be covered with doubt and unbelief. And too often the real cause of our doubts and questionings is the love of self and sin.⁷⁴

As we near the end, men will arise with interpretations of Scripture which are to them truth, but which are not truth. One after another will claim to have new light which contradicts the light that God has given us under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We are not to receive the teachings of those who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith. They gather together a mass of Scripture and pile it as proof around their theories of truth, which is something that has been done again and again throughout our history.⁷⁵ They select portions of Scripture and misapply them to support their erroneous theories and by doing this place both Scripture and the testimony of Jesus Christ in a framework of error. Those who do this, do not have the proper faith either in the Scriptures or in the testimonies of Christ no matter what they say.⁷⁶

Too often we are caught up with concern about how inspiration works, how the Word of God was transmitted, what the process was by which the Word of God came to us, and soon we begin to process the Word. This is all the more tempting in an age of technology and computers. We are living in a generation when everything must be analyzed and torn apart until nothing can be accepted at face value, not even the Scriptures.

We define and define until the gospel dies the death of a thousand definitions, and our faith finds no reliable footing and begins to die. We end up dissecting the Word of God, when we ourselves need to be dissected to expose the wickedness of our own hearts (Jer 17:9; Heb 4:12). Too often we are tempted to exercise power over the Word of God, and in the process we think we are making it more the Word.

The Word is the Word in and of itself. It is the Word of the living God. It stands over against us, calling us to faith, strengthening our faith, bringing it to culmination. Too often we forget that not the most eloquent in speech, not those who are the best versed in theology, are the most light-bearing Christians, but rather, those who work humbly and dependently for the Master.⁷⁷ There is need of the infusion of the Spirit of God. Too often we depend more on our own learning than upon Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord.⁷⁸ "The ability to give a reason for our faith is a good accomplishment, but if the truth does not go deeper than this, the soul will never be saved."⁷⁹

There must be silence in the soul. Our thoughts must be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. Our pride and boastfulness of scholarship, our self-sufficiency, must stand rebuked in the presence of the Word of God.⁸⁰ We must understand that the Scriptures do not depend on the process of man's reasoning to bring people from darkness to light, from sin into the kingdom of God. It is faith that accepts the divine, God-given testimony that the Scriptures are the great power of God which under the Holy Spirit bring men and women to the foot of the cross.⁸¹ The more we search the Bible, the deeper grows our conviction that it is the Word of the living God, and as we turn its sacred pages, we bow in humility before the majesty of God's revelation.⁸²

Faith seeking understanding, that is the theological task before us. Human thought seeking to understand what God has revealed. Does the theologian need faith to do theology? The answer is an unequivocal, "Yes!" but a faith that is always trusting what is written in Holy Scripture and with humility and awe is continuously seeking to understand.

Endnotes

- 1 Frederick Sontag, *How Philosophy Shapes Theology*, Problems in the Philosophy of Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 290-293.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), p. 173.
- 3 White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 595.
- 4 Sontag, p. 294.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 297.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 299.
- 7 White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 455-456.
- 8 Sontag, p. 301.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 302-304.
- 10 White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 7:958.
- 11 Sontag, pp. 305-309.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 310-312.
- 13 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), Hymn No. 533.
- 14 Sontag, p. 320. Sontag points out that God's intention through revelation is to disclose by special events that which is not observed by all men at all times. Therefore, "if one demands 'universality' as a criterion for all valid knowledge, revelation is ruled out from the start as an unacceptable and provincial source. Or, if the epistemology in use denies all transcendence of either natural modes of knowledge or existence, revelation is excluded, since it is meaningful only as a communication from a higher order and as a form which exceeds natural modes," p. 321.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 322.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 323-326. See also White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957). "There are some that may think they are fully capable with their finite judgment to take the Word of God, and to state what are the words of inspiration, and what are not the words of inspiration. . . . There is no finite man that lives, I care not who he is or whatever is his position, that God has authorized to pick and choose in His Word." 7:919.
- "I would have both my arms taken off at my shoulders before I would ever make the statement or set my judgment upon the Word of God as to what is inspired and what is not inspired. How would finite man know anything about that matter? . . . Never attempt to search the Scriptures unless you are ready to listen, unless you are ready to be a learner, unless you are ready to listen to the Word of God as though His voice were speaking directly to you from the living oracles. Never let mortal man sit in judgment upon the Word of God or pass sentence as to how much of this is inspired and how much is not inspired, and that this is more inspired than some other portions. God warns him off that ground. God has not given him any such work to do." *Ibid.*
- "Do not let any living man come to you and begin to dissect God's Word, telling what is revelation, what is inspiration and what is not, without a rebuke. Tell all such they simply do not know. They simply are not able to comprehend the things of the mystery of God. What we want is to inspire faith. We want no one to say, 'This I will reject, and this will I receive,' but we want to have implicit faith in the Bible as a whole and as it is." *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 334-335.
- 18 E. C. Blackman, "Faith, Faithfulness," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2:222-223. Hereinafter listed as *IDB*.
- 19 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 3:938-22.
- 20 *IDB*, 2:225-227.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.
- 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 230-232.

23 Gresham J. Machen, *What is Faith?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), pp. 46-48.

24 The first Fundamental Belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms just such a position: "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history." (See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981), 31. See also White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911). "The warnings of the word of God regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us to-day. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy do destroy faith in the Scriptures, so to-day, by the pleasing sentiments of 'higher criticism,' evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths. To many, the Bible is as a lamp without oil, because they have turned their minds into channels of speculative belief that bring misunderstanding and confusion. The work of 'higher criticism,' in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God's word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives," p. 474.

25 J. I. Packer, "Faith," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), pp. 400-401. Hereinafter noted as *EDT*. "Since the doctrine of justification was not understood, the soteriological significance of faith was misconceived, and faith (understood as orthodoxy) was regarded simply as the passport to baptism (remitting all past sins) and to a lifelong probation in the church (giving the baptized opportunity to make themselves worthy of glory by their good works).

"The scholastics reproduced the equation of faith with credence, distinguishing between *fides informis* ("unformed" faith, bare orthodoxy) and *fides caritate formata* (credence "formed" into a working principle by the supernatural addition [sic] to it of the distinct grace of love). Both sorts of faith, they held, are meritorious works, though the quality of merit attaching to the first is merely *congruent* (rendering divine reward fit, though not obligatory), and only the second gains *condign* merit (making divine reward due as a matter of justice). Roman Catholicism still formally identifies faith with credence, and has added a further refinement by distinguishing between "explicit" faith (belief which knows its object) and "implicit" faith (uncomprehending assent to whatever it may be that the church holds). Only the latter (which is evidently no more than a vote of confidence in the teaching church and may be held with complete ignorance of Christianity) is thought to be required of laymen for salvation. But a mere docile disposition of this sort is poles apart from the biblical concept of saving faith," p. 401.

See also "Faith," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), Volume Two. Hereinafter listed as *ISBE*. In this article G. W. Bromiley points out that "the patristic age, for all its magnificent achievements, quickly lost sight of the essential element in NT faith and tended to subsume faith under 'the faith,' or assent to the faith. This was not without reason, for the early Church had to face heresies that might easily have destroyed its message. There was need both to formulate the orthodox faith and to regard assent to it as an important element in true Christian profession. . . . A transformation of life was expected as part of conversion to Christianity. Yet a trend toward intellectualization of faith is plainly to be seen.

"It was Martin Luther supremely who rediscovered the doctrine of justification by faith and therewith the rich signification and significance of faith in a biblical sense. His own lack of assurance and his intensive biblical study brought him to this epoch-making understanding, which had dogmatic and practical ramifications far beyond anything he himself had first envisaged. . . . Faith is a looking away from all human merit to the unique merit of Christ Himself. In this sense it is not a first step which must be followed by other steps if there is to be justification. It embraces the whole life of the Christian, so that there can be abiding assurance of forgiveness in spite of postbaptismal sin," p. 272.

- 26 Ibid., p. 402.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 White, "The Training of Workers," in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, December 1, 1904), p. 7.
- 29 White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 175.
- 30 EDT, p. 402.
- 31 James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith, The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), pp. 10-13. Although Fowler admits to revelation, grace, and faith as a gift, he is more nearly neo-orthodox in his view of Scripture with its emphasis on encounter than he is with the Reformation position of Scripture. As he says, "Faith development studies confirm the judgement that human beings are genetically potentiated—that is to say, are gifted at birth—with readiness to develop in faith." 303. However, "the idea that it is necessary only to develop the good that exists in man by nature, is a fatal deception." White, *Steps To Christ* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1908), pp. 18-19.
- 32 White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 347.
- 33 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), III/2.6
- 34 Helmut Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 1:157.
- 35 ETD, p. 400.
- 36 White, *Education* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), pp. 253-254.
- 37 G. W. Bromiley, "Faith," *ISBE*, 2:271.
- 38 Ibid., p. 272.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 IDB, 2:234.
- 41 J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), p. 124.
- 42 White, *Education*, p. 78.
- 43 Ibid., p. 260.
- 44 White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1992), 68-69.
- 45 White, "Words to Teachers and Students," in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, March 12, 1908), p. 8.
- 46 Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, p. 124.
- 47 Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming, How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), pp. 5-8. "The apparent difference between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith' is not a new problem in Christianity. Since the last century liberal Protestant scholars like Adolf von Harnack and agnostics like Ernest Renan have tried to strip away what they thought were the church's divinizing embellishments of Jesus of Nazareth so as to arrive at the 'real' (that is, the human) prophet of Nazareth.
- More recently Roman Catholic exegetes and theologians have joined the discussion. With the encouragement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Catholic scholars now teach that the Gospels are not accurate 'histories' of Jesus but religious testimonies produced by the second and third generations of Christians, whose faith that Jesus was the their savior colored their memory of his days on earth. Thus, even though all Catholic biblical scholars believe that Jesus is God, they do not necessarily maintain that Jesus Himself thought He was the divine Son of God, who had existed from all eternity as the Second Person of the Trinity," p. 6.
- "Christians have at their disposal only the same public evidence about Jesus that everyone else has—but they interpret the data differently. That is, Christianity is a 'hermeneusis,' or interpretation. Its beliefs and doctrines are but one of many possible and equally valid ways of understanding the universally available empirical data about Jesus of Nazareth. Christians may claim that their faith is based on revelation, but as far as one can tell empirically, such revelation is a name for the historically relative and culturally

- determined hermeneutical process in which Christians, confronting the humanly available information about Jesus of Nazareth, choose to interpret him as their savior, who reigns with God in heaven," p. 7.
- 48 C. T. McIntire, "Fundamentalism," in EDT, 433-435; and I. S. Rennie, "Verbal Inspiration," pp. 1138-1140.
- 49 G. C. Berkhouwer, *Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), p. 23. While Berkhouwer does not disparage the childlike acceptance of Scripture by the fundamentalists and their defense of the trustworthiness of revelation against an overemphasis of Scripture's human nature, he does point out with the critics that there is danger of an incorrect connection between certainty of Scripture and certainty of faith. Some consider the theory of verbal inspiration as an attempt to make the basis of certainty of faith immovable by substituting an infallible book for an infallible pope. 21-35. For a brief historical overview of the concept of inerrancy of Scripture, the application to Scripture of higher and lower criticism, and the fundamentalist response see Alan Richardson's article, "Scripture, Authority of," in IDB, 4:248-251.
- 50 White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 1:19-23.
- 51 White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. v-vii.
- 52 White, "The Word of God," in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, August 22, 1907), p. 8.
- 53 White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 487.
- 54 White, "The Right Use of Talents," in *The Signs of the Times* (Oakland, California: Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, November 20, 1884), p. 1.
- 55 Whether the facticity of Scripture is relegated to the past by the "history-of-religion" school or superseded by an existential meaning above the facts of history, the objective is the same—to make the Scripture more palatable and acceptable to modern man. See R. C. Roberts, "Bultmann, Rudolf," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 180. For Bultmann the world view of the Bible is impossible for modern man to believe. He points out that there is an alternative to demanding the literal acceptance of the biblical world view or rejecting it out of hand. The key, he says, is to view the New Testament with an eye for the self-understanding as expressed by the primitive Christian community. The word "historie" refers to the events on the ordinary level of history which are open to investigation, but "geschichte" refers to a level of true occurrence, the timeless meaning which is supposed to be above history. See also Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 133-140.
- 56 K. Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1:418-425. Stendahl continues in his article to speak to the hermeneutical question as raised by descriptive theology which is beyond the scope of this paper. See also, Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology* (Revised Edition), Basic Issues in the Current Debate (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 35-39.
- 57 White, "Heart Piety Essential," in *The Signs of the Times* (Oakland, California: Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, April 2, 1896), p. 5.
- 58 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Author's Foreword (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), I/1: vii-xiv.
- 59 Ibid., p. 339ff.
- 60 Ibid., p. 156ff.
- 61 Ibid., p. 114ff.
- 62 Emil Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), pp. 66-74.
- 63 Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1976), 2:12-13. Henry also points out that critical scholarship tends to undermine God's revelation by minimizing the original inspiration of Scripture by giving the impression that contemporary scholars are divinely inspired whereas the biblical writers at best are credited with only a high degree of insight coupled with extensive fallibility. "As a result both

the legitimate basis of the canon and the reliability of the revelation are clouded. Ministerial students are indoctrinated in the decisive importance of such alleged sources as J, E, D, P, Q and Ur-Marcus, postulated sources for which the critics have adduced neither actual original sources nor extant fallible copies," pp. 13-14. See also Eta Linnemann, *Is There a Synoptic Problem? Rethinking the Literary Dependence of the First Three Gospels*, Translated from the German edition, *Gibt es ein synoptisches Problem?* by Robert W. Yarbrough (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992).

64 *Ibid.*, 3:248-249 and pp. 482-483.

65 White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 796-800. See also White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 1:20-21. "Prepossessions, prejudices, and passions have a strong influence to darken the understanding and confuse the mind even in reading the words of Holy Writ. The disciples traveling to Emmaus needed to be disentangled in their interpretation of the Scriptures. Jesus walked with them disguised and as a man He talked with them. . . . He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. How quickly He straightened out the tangled ends and showed the unity and the divine verity of the Scriptures."

66 White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 624-625.

67 Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, editor, *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), p. 135. (For a more complete discussion see the entire section on Bultmann by Robert D. Knudson, pp. 131-162.)

68 David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), pp. 166-167.

69 Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991), pp. 10-11.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 289.

71 David L. Edwards, *Evangelical Essentials*, A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue With a Response from John Stott (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988), pp. 104-105.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

73 White, *Selected Messages*, 1:15.

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75 White, *A Call to the Watchman* (pamphlet, no imprint, 1910), 14-15.

76 White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 2:83.

77 White, "The Work In Oakland and San Francisco," in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, November 29, 1906), p. 7.

78 White, "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord," (*Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1906), p. 12.

79 White, *Last Day Events*, p. 70.

80 White, "The Word of God," in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, August 22, 1907), p. 8.

81 White, "The Southern Field," *The Southern Watchman* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, April 24, 1902), p. 5.

82 White, *Education*, p. 170.

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SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY

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Introduction

The subject of "Scripture and Theology" has had my conscious interest ever since my student days. As part of my graduate work I took a major in Systematic Theology for the M.A. degree in the Theological Seminary at Andrews University. I could not leave this area of interest and subsequently took a cognate in Contemporary Theology as part of my my Ph.D. program at Vanderbilt University, while majoring in Biblical Studies. I continued to work and read, write and publish, lecture and teach with a mind toward both Scripture and theology.

It may be said from the start that this subject of "Scripture and Theology" is at the heart of the modern crisis in theology. And there is a crisis in theology in Christianity at large as has not existed at any time before. Since the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a microcosm of the larger world around us, we are not immune to the larger crisis of theology.

It is a truism to say that modern theology at large is like a boat floating in the unchartered waters of a stormy ocean without anchor or compass. Has this reality of theology in the larger sphere of Christendom become a reality in the Seventh-day Adventist Church? If it is not a reality yet, or if we are on the way for it to become a reality within the Advent movement, then it is high time to think together about the impact these powerful forces can have on Adventist theology and teaching.

An indisputable fact of our time is that modern theology is plagued by an unimaginable pluralism. Anything goes. This is

evidenced by multiple and radically divergent approaches, contextualizations, methodologies, systems and types of theology,¹ which are rather confusing to the uninitiated person and even to the initiate.

This essay aims to provide basic knowledge regarding the issues on the relationship of "Scripture and Theology" as it exists at present. We will survey five divergent theological approaches. In the last part we will provide proposals for a Scripture-based theology that will continue to sustain God's people in the end-time. We believe that Scripture challenges all theological proposals and methods, pointing the way for theology that needs to be explored and travelled.

The Issue of Authority

The most fundamental issue in theology (the study and science of God, man, and world) and "theological method" (the approach used to explicate matters relating to God, man, and world) revolves around and centers in the issue of authority. What holds authority in theology? What is the source or what are the sources of authority in religious thought, and in our case in Christian and Adventist thought?

Secularized Authority

Since western mankind lives in a secularized and humanistic world in which man is the focus of all that counts, we have to ask some foundational questions. Is man—his thinking and planning, his aims and goals, his interests and well-being, his way of doing things—the highest authority for life and faith? Is there a higher authority than man himself? These and related questions cannot be avoided; they must not be brushed aside. These questions and issues define both the structure of one's theology and the meaning of life.

It is pointed out by many theologians that the secular understanding of reality (the prevalent mode of thinking in our own time) is based on the autonomy of humankind. When we speak of the autonomy of humankind, we reflect the Enlightenment view of man as a being who has no longer any higher norm than himself. Man has created his own autonomy and has become his own authority

in all matters. In this view humans are in need of no external norm, higher authority, or anything that is beyond them.

Modern Secularity

The influential liberal theologian Langdon Gilkey, Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago, has analyzed the modern theological scene with such great adeptness that we can follow many of his assessments in our descriptions of what is happening today. He summarized the issue of authority in effective terms, defining "modern secularity" by stating that "modern secularity is, therefore, the autonomy and freedom of man, his inalienable birthright and, fortunately, his innate capacity to know his own truth, to decide about his own existence, to create his own meaning, and to establish his own values."² In this sentence he summarizes the modernistic conception of the total freedom and autonomy of man and his complete and full independence from anything beyond himself.

Overthrowing Sacred Orders

This way of perceiving secularized humanity implies, writes Gilkey, "the toppling of sacred orders inherited from the past, . . ."³ The "toppling of the sacred orders" includes what every believing Christian holds dear. It means, as Gilkey continues to explain, that "many of the historic forms of religion, with their traditional authorities of various sorts stemming from the distant past, their requirements of faith, obedience, submission, and self-surrender, and their insistence that man is fulfilled when he patterns himself according to the divine image"⁴ is to be abandoned.

Furthermore, it means that every human being has to subscribe, if he or she wishes to be in tune with modern culture, to the spirit of modernity, a secular spirit, without any moorings in divine authority or in God as a superior Being. Accordingly there is no longer any divine Reality that informs human beings about the best and most successful way of life in the here and now as a way of preparation for a future eternal life. The eternal is the now, the present existence, and there is no future eternity beyond the here and now.

This secularized view of reality and life is what theologians

and philosophers describe as modernity. Our own time is a time of modernity. Humans are making themselves into gods, deciding on their own what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, and what is acceptable and unacceptable. Humans set their own standards on their own terms. In this age of modernity there is no authority or norm beyond what humans decide by themselves.

Autonomous Man

Ultimate authority, in modernity's way of viewing reality, is rooted in humanity alone. In this sense man is to be understood as "autonomous man"⁵ with "autonomous reason." "Autonomous reason" is the capacity of the human mind to make its own independent decisions which are the ultimate norm. It is a given among modernistic, liberal theologians to view reason, the human capacity to use the rational faculty of the mind, as an independent source of knowledge untouched by sin and its influences. Thus, reason is seen as a superior source of knowledge, more than anything else. "Autonomous man" is rationalistic in this sense of the reliance on reason as the final norm for thought, life, and theology.

The phrase "God is dead," in what has become known as the Death of God theologies⁶ of the 1960s, summarizes the secularized cultural mood and the rejection of any norm or authority beyond that created by mankind. "God is dead" means that the traditional picture of a personal God who has revealed Himself in history and who is known through the Word of God has died in the mind of persons belonging to modernity. The God of historic Christian faith is dead. In this radical theology religion is seen without theology and theology without God.⁷

These brief introductory remarks on the issue of authority reveal that in modernism, in the present age of modernity, authority is based on man and his thinking and not on God and His revelation. The latter view, namely that there is a God who has revealed Himself in Scripture, is considered as outdated. Scripture is but the thinking of the pious of the past and largely part of the outdated tradition of the Church.

Authority in Theology

As we turn to the matter of authority in theology, it is incum-

bent on us to address the roles of the four classical sources of theology: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. What role does each source have in theology? Should one source have the role of highest authority? Should it function in a norming role, that is, as ultimate authority in a theological system?

From the viewpoint of modernity and its self-autonomous spirit, it is not surprising that there are theologians (large numbers of them, working in differing systems of modern thought) who consider these questions strictly out of order. Many of these modern theologians have opted for a correlation approach in which all four foundational sources (and others) are used without any single one of them functioning in a norming role. This way of thinking is characterized by the very nature of our age; relativism is the rule of all systems of thought.

A significant number of theologians opt for a combination approach in which two or three of the sources, namely, tradition, reason, experience (all of which are based on human endeavor) are given the highest norming role in theology. Far from denying any roles for the sources of tradition, reason, and experience in the theological enterprise, it has to be admitted that the historical revelation known as Scripture has functioned heretofore as the *primary role* in classical Protestant and orthodox theology.⁸

Our brief paragraphs on modernity's secular spirit above reveal fully that this classical view no longer holds sway in liberal theology in general. Fundamental changes have taken place in modern theology over the last two centuries, particularly in recent years, that involve a paradigm change⁹ from classical orthodox models where Scripture reigned supremely for the theology of the Church to the models of relativism in authority of the present age.

Do Christians have to give up or give in to the spirit of modernity? Is it possible that at the end of the twentieth century God will have a believing people who will be loyal to Him at all costs? A people of complete and full faith who will pattern their lives and their belief system on the basis of the divine revelation of God Himself as embodied in the Bible as the sufficient Word of God? Do all believers have to conform to modernity's way of viewing reality? Can there be believers who are not transformed by modernity, who are not conformed to modern ways of thinking, but who are in-

formed and transformed by what God has shown to be His way and His will for the best good of humanity?

We will investigate below how and why different theological systems use Scripture in an unauthoritative manner. This way of using Scripture has been described as the "functional" use of Scripture in theology. We will reflect on its implications for a theology that seeks to be faithful to the internal witness of the Bible. We will also suggest some proposals for a theology that is based on the internal claims of Scripture itself.

Defining Scripture and Theology

It is necessary to define what we mean by "Scripture" and "theology" since we are dealing with the relationship of the two. The definitions will clarify how we will use the terms in this essay.

Scripture

When we refer to "Scripture" in this essay we mean the Bible, consisting of sixty-six books. Protestants continue to use only the books of the Old Testament which composed the Hebrew Bible used by Jesus and the apostles and early Christians in New Testament times.¹⁰

Scripture is taken to be the "inspired Word of God." By this we mean every book of the Bible shares in being fully inspired (see 2 Pet 1:19-21; 2 Tim 3:16; John 10:35; Heb 1:1-3).¹¹ We will come back to the topic of inspiration and the claims made for it in the Bible in the last part of this essay.

Full Inspiration of Scripture. The Biblical books are written in human languages by human agents, but still remain the product of full and complete inspiration. Such full and complete inspiration is called "plenary inspiration," full inspiration. There is no doubt on this issue. In this sense the Bible has God as its Author, while it is written by inspired human writers who reveal their own styles and modes of expression. Inspiration involves the superintendence of the Holy Spirit so that what the human writer puts down in written form is a fully trustworthy expression of what God wished to communicate in His Word.

Poetic Inspiration of Liberalism. This understanding of the Bible is characteristic of liberal, neo-Protestant, theology. In liberal

theology universal, poetic or general inspiration is claimed to be the common heritage of humankind. "Poetic inspiration" is the inspiration common to all human writers regardless of whether they are religious or not. This is the position of neo-Protestant theology.¹² The designation "neo-Protestant" theology is a substitute for liberal theology.

Personal Inspiration of Neoorthodoxy. In neoorthodoxy (a system of theology rooted in Karl Barth and his followers) inspiration is limited to a so-called "personal inspiration." It is claimed that the Bible writer is inspired in the sense that he has a personal encounter with God, but without any transmission of content from God through the Holy Spirit. What he has written is only the result of an encounter which results in some numinous insight gained by human reflection in which no information was communicated from God. The writings of the Bible are but the witness to the personal numinous encounter. The word "witness" used much in theological writings of encounter theologians communicates that the biblical writings are not inspired, but that the writers had a divine-human encounter void of any content. Thus, what is written by those who are said to have had this encounter does not carry the stamp of inspiration. The encounter model of inspiration which is empty of divine content is widely accepted today.

This concept of "personal inspiration" as just depicted is the standard model in "moderate historical criticism"¹³ of more recent times.¹⁴ In this view, inspiration is fully subjective; it is person-oriented but not Scripture-oriented. Whatever such "inspired" persons write is not the result of divine inspiration or guidance in which actual information is passed on and put into writing.

We must be fully aware of the fact that this so-called "moderate historical-critical" view claims that the writers of the Bible did not receive any content in the experience of inspiration. We have to stress again that in this view the Bible is written in the same manner as any other written document of the past or the present. It can, therefore, be investigated in the same manner and by the same historical-critical method that is used for any other ancient or modern written work.

The limitation of inspiration to the subjective level is a convenient invention of modernity. It makes possible to understand

and interpret the Bible as fully time-bound and historically conditioned by the past and cultures of the past. It robs the Bible of its authority as the Word of God valid for all times, all places and circumstances within the guidelines of its internal structures.

It is of great importance to recognize additional implications of this so-called "moderate" view, sometimes referred to as the "post-critical" view. Since, according to this view, the Bible is not inspired, it is not and cannot be considered as the Word of God. Therefore, the Bible is redefined as a "witness" to the Word of God. The theologically sensitive reader will give careful attention to the widely used term "witness," and the significance it holds in this system of neoorthodox theology. In the theological system known as neoorthodoxy the claim is made that the Bible can "become" the Word of God. This may happen when a person is subjectively touched by what is written and in this subjective and personal encounter which is occasioned by the words of the Bible the latter "becomes" the Word of God for that person. Despite such a subjective experience the Bible itself is *not* the Word of God.

Scripture's View of Inspiration. The informed Christian recognizes that 2 Timothy 3:16 contains another view of inspiration. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, . . ." Here the biblical text maintains that Scripture itself is inspired.¹⁵ "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21, NKJV). The Bible writers were inspired and the Scripture they produced "is given by inspiration of God." It is "God-breathed" (*theopneustos*). Thus, the writings of the Bible themselves are inspired by God. We will develop this in more detail in the last part of our essay.

This does not mean that Scripture is verbally inspired in the sense of mechanical dictation theory as has been held by some Roman Catholics¹⁶ and Protestants¹⁷ in the post-Reformation period. Rather, the Holy Spirit has given by revelation in a variety of forms and ways (Heb 1:1-3) to the writers who wrote the books of the Bible actual information. And these inspired writers in turn, again under the superintendence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). Since "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim 3:16), what is written in Scripture is the authentic and trustworthy Word of God, delivered to us in a trustworthy form, providing actual and proposi-

tional truth from God. It can be understood fully and correctly only through the illumination of the Holy Spirit and by Scripture interpreting itself, that is, *sola Scriptura*¹⁸ in the sense that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

Theology

How shall we define "theology," since there is such a plethora of models, types, and definitions? We are faced today with an unsurpassed pluralism of theologies and methods for theology. We can barely find a path through the multiplicity of approaches and systems which are available.¹⁹ However, the basic question still remains, What is theology?

Biblical Theology. Restricted to the Bible itself, we may speak of Old Testament theology,²⁰ New Testament theology²¹ and Biblical Theology.²² These three areas of theology belong properly to the field of study known as Biblical Studies. We do not refer to them when we speak of "theology" in the strict sense, although they too are theologies.²³ When we speak of "theology" in this essay, we do not refer to these disciplines in Biblical Studies or to their relationship to dogmatic/systematic theology.²⁴ The focus of this essay is systematic/dogmatic theology.

Systematic/Dogmatic Theology. The term "theology" generally refers to the discipline of systematic theology or dogmatic theology. Although a distinction can be made technically speaking between systematic and dogmatic theology,²⁵ we will consider both systematic and dogmatic theology as a single category.

"Theology" in the sense of systematic/dogmatic theology means for our purpose the construction of a theological system of beliefs regarding God and man, sin and salvation, the view of the world from the perspective of the divine, the present church and the future kingdom to come. This definition of "theology" implies the explication of the Christian message in a systematized, coherent, constructive, and orderly way.

We are not narrowing systematic theology to such modern theological systems as "existentialist theology,"²⁶ "process theology,"²⁷ "theology of hope,"²⁸ "liberation theology,"²⁹ "feminine theology,"³⁰ "black theology,"³¹ and other such systems or subsystems which have emerged in recent years.³²

As already stated at the beginning, "theology" is the study or science of God in relation to who He is, to creation, revelation, humanity, to humankind's present sinful condition and divine salvation provided, and to the entire divine plan of redemption which ultimately climaxes in a new heaven and a new earth.

Sources and Norms for Theology

Anyone who seeks to construct a theology is confronted with two major questions: (1) What sources shall be used in the development and presentation of theology? The second major question is equally important, because it touches on the essence of the theological enterprise as a whole: (2) What normative value is to be given to any of the sources which are employed in the theological system? Does any single source, or do any combination of sources, have greater weight than another source or other sources?

The traditional four sources of theology, as they have been known in typical Protestant systems of theology over the centuries, are Scripture, tradition, experience and reason. Let us briefly turn our attention to each one of them.

Scripture

The first source consists of Scripture, which, if understood as the inspired Bible, has a quality different from the other three sources. Scripture, or the Bible, considered on its own terms, has been historically taken to be the Word of God, and as such it has had the role of a norming function, at least in orthodox Protestant theology in the past and the present.³³

This historical, norming function has placed Scripture in a category by itself. This is not the case in historical-critical theology, as we shall see further on. In historical criticism Scripture is humanized and relativized to the extent that it is not more than a human word among other human words. The entire goal of historical criticism is to make the Bible human and nothing but human,³⁴ so that one can distinguish between the "Word of God" and the "Word of Man,"³⁵ the latter being the Bible.

We have seen that this is true also in "moderate" historical criticism where inspiration is acknowledged as a personal encounter by the followers of neoorthodoxy. No divine information is

communicated in this way of understanding Scripture. This kind of inspiration is incapable of saying and uninterested in declaring that Scripture is inspired. It retreats to the view that "none of Scripture is objectively Word of God, yet held that any of it can *become* Word of God through a personal divine confrontation."³⁶ The Word of God is personalized and identified with Jesus Christ. Aside from this Scripture is a "witness" to the Word of God.³⁷

The presentation of the self-testimony of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, in the last section of this study will provide an overview of the picture of the nature of Scripture as understood by Scripture itself.

Tradition

Before we turn to a discussion of each of the three remaining historic sources of theology, we do well to reflect on the difference of these three sources as a group as compared to Scripture. Tradition, experience, and reason, have a common denominator. They share with each other the human element, a non-divine aspect. What we wish to state clearly is that tradition is a product of man; experience is what humans experience on the horizontal level of existence; and reason is the capacity inherent in human beings to think and use logic and all the other elements of reflection and thinking of the human mind. In short, Scripture, while the product of human writers, is more than the product of men. It is divine revelation. On the other hand, tradition, experience, and reason are elements of humanity which are the product of human activity. They share in common the purely human and non-divine elements of existence, thought and reflection.

Tradition can have different meanings. In Roman Catholicism the decisions on Scripture and tradition of the Council of Trent on April 8, 1546,³⁸ have become the norm of Roman Catholicism.

Those who disavow the role of tradition in theology entirely may listen to the president of a Baptist seminary who "once said with tongue in cheek: 'We Baptists do not follow tradition. But we are bound by our historic Baptist position!'"³⁹ We do not say too much, if we admit that every community of faith, church, or denomination has some tradition of its own in addition to that of Christianity at large. While tradition need not be denied, the ques-

tion is, What role that is assigned to it? The tradition of the Christian church at large and the tradition or heritage in which we ourselves function needs to be recognized for what it is: tradition!

What authority or norming function will tradition hold in theology and life? Will it stand side by side with Scripture? Will tradition *and* Scripture together function as final norms for theology?

The Roman Catholic Church has assigned to tradition a place of domination in theology. The "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" as voted at the Second Vatican Council in 1965 declares regarding the two sources of Scripture and tradition that through "tradition the Church's full canon of sacred books is known" and that "it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which had been revealed."⁴⁰ This affirms the teaching of Roman Catholicism that Scripture is always understood and interpreted in the light of her continuous tradition.⁴¹

Tradition plays an ever increasing role in liberal and neo-Protestant theology.⁴² Some Protestants may suggest that there is no tradition. When the informed Protestant deals with tradition, will he give it a place equal to Scripture? Will he give in to the Catholic model of giving tradition a dominating place? We hope not! In the historic Protestant understanding "tradition will give way to Scripture."⁴³ The Catholic view of "not from sacred Scripture alone"⁴⁴ is opposed by the Reformation principle "by Scripture alone" (*sola Scriptura*). This can only be the case, if Scripture has not been "demythologized" along the lines of presuppositions based in a modern, secular world view, "de-inspirationized" on the basis of the norms of modernity, "relativized" on the basis of modernity's understanding of man and reality, and so on.

Reason

Our statements on reason (and experience) will be brief. In our subsequent investigation of some theological systems we will recognize how reason is used in theology today and what role reason plays. We are reminded, however, that since the onset of the age of rationalism (about two hundred years ago) reason has taken on an ever increasing role and has been employed in many instances as

the superior norming agent. This is true not only of the liberal tradition of doing theology in neo-Protestantism and the Thomistic and neo-Thomistic systems of Roman Catholicism, but seemingly even in some evangelical theologies.

There is a constant temptation to use "autonomous reason," which is the reason of the man of modernity who makes his own rules and norms, the reason which is by design uninformed by divine revelation as it given to us in the Word of God. "Autonomous reason" is used in many systems of modernistic theology as a source which surpasses all other sources of theology.

We believe that God has given man his reason as a gift to be used appropriately. Like any other gift God has given to mankind, reason is to be informed by the superior revelation of God, is to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, and is to be used as a servant in theology. In this sense we may speak of reason as a tool sanctified by divine activity.

Experience

Experience has played a major role in liberal systematic theology over the last two hundred years. We will point this out when the system of Friedrich Schleiermacher is investigated as a major system below.

Evangelicals or conservative theologians and Christians, however, are by no means aloof from experience. The current emphasis on experience as the highest norm of authority is manifested in the charismatic movement. The role of so-called "Spirit baptism" in classical Pentecostalism is one case in point.⁴⁵

The "second" and "third" waves of the charismatic movement need to be brought into the picture with its emphasis on healing and modern prophecy, in order to recognize the power of experience in current theology and life.⁴⁶ The response so often given by charismatic Christians is that a particular teaching of the Bible (clear and often acknowledged to be a genuine biblical teaching) cannot be followed until the Holy Spirit tells them to. Here, the personal experience of charismatics asserts itself as the highest norm for faith and living.

Contemporary Models of Theology

A prominent theologian describes the contemporary situation in theology as follows: "To begin, I have to say with virtually all the other interpreters that modern theology is incredibly pluralistic and diverse."⁴⁷ This is no overstatement. Theological pluralism has reached unprecedented proportions in our own time.⁴⁸ We have to admit that the argument for pluralism among some vocal Adventists reflects this trend.

For our study on the relationship of Scripture and theology, a decision had to be made among the many models and systems. It was felt best to select the two most influential theologians of the last two hundred years: Friedrich Schleiermacher, the father of liberal theology, and Karl Barth, the most prominent theologian of neoorthodoxy (dialectical theology). They are recognized as trailblazers, bringing about shifts in the theological paradigms that have remained permanent. An Adventist teacher, Richard Rice, who has recently published a major book after twenty years of reflection on reason and faith, deserves to be heard on the same subject of "Scripture and Theology." These practitioners of the theological craft belong to the non-evangelical world of theology.

But the evangelical world of theology must not be neglected. The best known living evangelical theologian is Carl F. H. Henry, who has produced six massive volumes on theology in recent years, deserves to be heard. It also seemed appropriate to pay attention to a rising but moving star, Clark Pinnock, who considers himself as a "moderate" theologian. He wishes to be understood as an Evangelical.

The reader who is totally unfamiliar with systematic theology may find this section of the paper to be particularly challenging. Indeed, we have to cover much ground and are unable to unpack all technical language and every new concept. This is an inevitable hazard in an essay where space is limited. But we hope that it will be informative and helpful, even with these limitations.

To those who have some familiarity with the issues involved, we hopefully will bring new insights to the subject. In addition, there are many eager minds who would like to learn something foundational about what is happening in theology today, and they will benefit from this next section. Let us be reminded that Adven-

tists reflect many influences from ideas published beyond our own faith community. It may be helpful to thought leaders in the pew and elsewhere, if they gain some additional understanding and insight into theological systems that have left or may be influencing Adventist beliefs, thought and life.

Liberal and Neoorthodox Models of Theology

Friedrich Schleiermacher and Experience Theology. We begin with the father of modern liberal theology, Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), because he departed from previous theological methods, particularly the classical orthodox approach, setting out a radical new course for theology. Many other minds have followed this new course, each in his/her own way, or are fundamentally indebted to it, to the present.

This German theologian was brought up in a conservative Moravian home and himself once held Bible-informed views. But his theological education weaned him away into new thought patterns. He sought "to avoid the alternatives of an orthodoxy based on revealed truth and a natural theology based on abstract speculation," writes Colin Brown quite correctly.⁴⁹ What did Schleiermacher do that was so radically different?

In the year 1799 Schleiermacher published his famous work entitled, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*.⁵⁰ The publication went through four editions⁵¹ in 32 years, revealing its long-range popularity. Students of theology read it to this day. In the words of Rudolf Otto, himself a major figure of liberal theology in our century, this work is the "main gateway to the intellectual world of the later renovators of Protestant theology."⁵²

Schleiermacher presented his full system of theology in his monumental work, *Glaubenslehre*, which appeared first in 1821/22, and was translated under the title, *The Christian Faith*.⁵³ Since Schleiermacher broke radical new ground in the theological scene, we need to ask what did he depart from and where did he lead theology?

The radical break with previous theology was intended, writes theologian Peter C. Hodgson of Vanderbilt University, to "free the believer from the external and arbitrary authority of a supernaturally mediated revelation and verbally inspired religious texts

[viz. Bible].⁵⁴ Thus, Schleiermacher did not base his theology on the foundation and authority of the Bible as the inspired Word of God. He rejected this approach outright, refusing to acknowledge the Bible as authoritative and normative for theology, faith and life.

Schleiermacher broke through the old debate between rationalism, which denied the supernatural (namely, miracles, God entering history in Christ, the virgin birth, Christ's bodily resurrection, etc.) any place in theology, and the supernatural, which was still adhered to in orthodox Protestant theology. Having decided not to base his theology on the Bible nor on so-called "natural theology" with its various proofs of God based on extra-Biblical thought—which Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in his volume, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), had criticized⁵⁵ in a powerful way—Schleiermacher based his system on experience.

In basing his theology on experience, Schleiermacher used a descriptive analysis of the experience of man. He claimed that religion is "a sense and taste for the Infinite."⁵⁶ Religion is a matter of "feeling." Schleiermacher says, "Feeling is piety, in so far as it expresses . . . the being and life common to you [humanity] and to the All."⁵⁷ Feeling is "the operation of the world upon you."⁵⁸ It is easily seen that Schleiermacher is pantheistic in his definition of "feeling."

Religion is something in man which "is infinite, not only because something new is ever being produced in time, by the endless relations both active and passive between different minds and the same limited matter; not only because the capacity for religion is never perfected, but is ever being developed anew, . . . is ever entering deeper into the nature of man."⁵⁹ It follows that God is not out there somewhere in the universe communicating with man on earth. Rather the "immediate and original existence of God [is] in us through feeling."⁶⁰ Here God is seen in man and not as something outside of man.

Schleiermacher does not develop a theology without God, but one where God is in man. Thus, he developed an "anthropological method" for theology,⁶¹ one which is based on experience with the "feeling of absolute dependence."⁶²

Karl Barth, the father of neoorthodox theology, described Schleiermacher's new theological system which employs argu-

ments from ethics, philosophy of religion and apologetics,⁶³ as a "theology of feeling, of awareness."⁶⁴ It is the awareness and feeling which resides inside humanity and is common to all humanity.

Schleiermacher needs no Scripture for his theological system. His theology of feeling and human awareness turns away from supernatural revelation embodied in the Bible as the highest norm and authority for theology. He bases his theological system of thought instead on anthropology, using the analysis of man as the norming factor for his theology. In Schleiermacher's system man is the ultimate norm for theology.

In his view Christianity needed to be interpreted within the limits of human experience, "making humanity itself the source and arbiter of Christian truth," as Clark Pinnock points out.⁶⁵ This meant that Schleiermacher could no longer call his system a "systematic theology," and he gave it instead the name of *Glaubenslehre*, "the teaching of faith," human faith found in Christianity.

Schleiermacher could not call his theology the "doctrine of God," as Paul Tillich notes,⁶⁶ because his theology of human faith "is the description of the faith as it is present in the Christian churches."⁶⁷ It is not a faith described and legitimized in Scripture.

The anthropological foundation for this new liberal theology has many dimensions and implications. One dimension is that "Christianity becomes a religion among other religions. There are other religions besides Christianity."⁶⁸ For Schleiermacher it meant that "the Spirit [which is not the Holy Spirit but the universal Spirit] reveals Himself in all human history."⁶⁹ Therefore, there could not be simply one true religion.⁷⁰ Christianity is for him merely "the highest order" of religion.⁷¹ While Christianity is for Schleiermacher the "highest, the truest, the most fulfilling of all religions,"⁷² he is directly succeeded by Hans Küng, David Tracy, John Hick, A. Kidder, and others in our own time who suggest that Christianity is but one religion that brings salvation aside from the other religions in the world which also lead to salvation. This modern trend has had and continues to have profound influences on missions, its redefinition, and reorientation.

We cannot pursue every angle of criticism that is to be levelled against Schleiermacher and his anthropological theology. This has

been done by many others.⁷³ But we need to recognize the significant turning point which his system brought about, a turning point that made "humanity itself the source and arbiter of Christian truth. It made belief in God, as [liberal theologian Ludwig] Feuerbach noted, sound a lot like a human projection of its own desires and aspirations."⁷⁴ In Schleiermacher's system theology dwells in man rather than God.

Schleiermacher's system of theology does not use Scripture in any sense as a norm for theology. It breaks with Protestant orthodoxy on the use of Scripture for the construction of theology. Scripture is rejected as a binding source for theology, because it was merely as an expression of the believing community. Scripture is replaced by what Schleiermacher has called "feeling." Thus, Schleiermacher is the father of modern theology in the sense that he produced a theology "from below."⁷⁵ He brought about a "paradigm shift" in theology,⁷⁶ providing the classical model for liberalism which has spawned theologies in many differing directions in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Karl Barth and Neoorthodox (Dialectical) Theology. The term "neoorthodoxy" is a designation for a major development in twentieth century Protestant theology. Another designation for this new direction in theology is "dialectical theology." It is most directly associated with the theology of Karl Barth (1886-1968), which he began to develop from the 1920s onward, although Emil Brunner (1889-1966) played a major role besides others (namely, Eduard Thurneysen, Friedrich Gogarten).

Neoorthodoxy was a reaction against the liberal theology developed by Schleiermacher and his followers during the 19th and early 20th centuries and which reduced Christian faith to general religious truths and moral values manifested in theologies "from below." In the wake of World War I, and with the failure of liberal Christianity, neoorthodoxy attempted to recover certain biblical perspectives without turning back to classical Protestant orthodoxy and its normative view of Scripture.

The major giant in the beginning of the neoorthodox (dialectical) theology was the Swiss theologian, Karl Barth. He wrote over 500 books, articles and papers and has the credit of producing a monumental theology which he entitled in English, *Church Dog-*

matics,⁷⁷ eschewing the designation "systematic theology" which he associated with the system of Schleiermacher and his followers. Barth's influence on subsequent theology is immense and continues into the present. It has also affected the thought of some Adventists.

1. *Redefinition of Word of God.* Barth developed a new understanding of the Word of God. Historically, the Word of God designated the inspired Bible. Not so for Barth. In his view the Word of God has three forms:

(a) It is the Word proclaimed. This means that the preaching, the proclamation of the Christian (pastor) is the Word of God.⁷⁸ The proclaimed Word is no empty word but an active Word, which is contemporaneous, dominant, and bringing about decisions.

(b) The Word of God is the Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Word of the Father, the Word revealed.⁷⁹ The concept of the Word of God is in this way personalized. The Word of God is not a book; it is not the Bible; it is a person, Jesus Christ.

(c) The third form of the Word of God is the Word written. The Word of God is not a thing, an object, the Bible, but God Himself speaking. Scripture is not direct revelation from God as had been held previously in orthodox Christianity.

God speaks to humans through the Bible as through a witness.⁸⁰ In this sense the Bible is a "witness" to the Word of God which is Jesus Christ. When the Bible or a part of the Bible speaks to an individual in a transforming way, then this "witness" becomes the Word of God. In this sense, the Bible, or parts thereof, can become the Word of God.

2. *The Bible as Witness.* The Bible has the character of "witness" primarily in neoorthodox (dialectical) theology. In the past, among orthodox Protestant theologians, the Bible, or Scripture, was seen as an objective revelation containing truth content. But for Barth, the Bible is only a "witness" to God's revelation that can speak to us in some given circumstances. For this reason, in the theology of Barth and in neoorthodoxy, the Bible is no longer the Word of God; it can become the Word of God when it speaks to a human person in a revelatory or transforming way.

Carl F. H. Henry's analysis of Barth is incisive and correct: "Scripture is a fallible witness through which God in Christ per-

sonally encounters the trusting reader or hearer. Scripture is authoritative not because it communicates divinely given information about God and his ways but because 'it provides our normative link with God's self-disclosure'.⁸¹

3. *The Functional Use of Scripture.* Barth also provided a new way of using Scripture in theology. David H. Kelsey in his magisterial tome, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (1976), reveals perceptively that with Barth's new definition and understanding of the Word of God and a new way for the use of Scripture in theology emerged.

Kelsey identifies seven different uses of Scripture in modern theology, but these fall essentially into two major categories. In the first category it is held that Scripture contains God's actual revelation. The Bible is divinely inspired and, therefore, it contains true doctrine, real truth, authoritative teaching which the church needs to follow. This view is held by orthodox Protestant evangelicalism (see, for example, B. B. Warfield).⁸²

The second category, Scripture usage is viewed only as functional, according to Kelsey. The functional use of Scripture is manifested by Barth and followed by many others. He is the first one of a long line of theologians for whom "the authority of scripture is understood in *functional* terms."⁸³

What does the "functional" use of Scripture here mean? It means that the authority of Scripture does not rest in the fact that the Bible is inspired and contains actual revelation from God. It does not mean that the Bible is the Word of God either in its entirety or in certain parts, because Barth and his followers do not hold this view. It does not mean that the Bible is the divine depository of God-given truth, that its content is doctrinal or that doctrine can be derived from it in a direct way. It does not mean any of these things which are basic to orthodox Christianity. The "functional" use of Scripture means that Jesus Christ may reveal Himself through our confrontation or encounter with the Bible. "God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, says Barth, was an event in which God reveals himself and 'speaks as *I* and addresses as *thou*'."⁸⁴ Thus, Scripture is not authoritative by virtue of any inherent quality or content. The authority of Scriptures is "by virtue of a function they fill in the life of the Christian community."⁸⁵ For

Scripture to have *functional* authority means that its authority "consists in its functioning to 'author' or shape decisively communal and individual entities."⁸⁶

"Functional" authority may be contrasted with "objective" authority. In the view of genuine Protestant thinking of the past Scripture had "objective" authority in the sense that authority actually rested in Scripture itself whether the reader acknowledged or recognized it. The modern view of "functional" authority, on the other hand, means that Scripture can become an authority in a Christian community, in a religious communion, or in the life of an individual, depending on subjective or communal circumstances. But Scripture does not have standing authority within itself whether it is recognized by a community or by an individual. In other words, the "functional" use of Scripture means that Scripture can "*become*" the Word of God under certain circumstances for an individual or a community, but in itself and of itself the Bible is not the Word of God.

This "functional" authority of Scripture is obviously a radical change in the way in which Scripture had been used and understood in historic Christianity. Barth's use of Scripture in functional terms is "a watershed for modern theology."⁸⁷ It indeed is that. It is also revolutionary, not because it puts us on the right course, but because it has become the prevailing mode of much modern theology.⁸⁸ In the past Scripture had authority in itself. It was saying something authoritatively, because it was God's Word. This is no longer so in neoorthodox (dialectical) theology.

4. *"Casebook" Use of Scripture.* Based on the functional use of Scripture with its limited role of authority, the Bible can be understood as a "casebook"⁸⁹ which may be used toward a specific end. The "cases" of the past, embodied in Scripture may be guidelines, concepts, or models on the basis of which one can allow the church at present to be shaped. The differing circumstance in various cultures and places may allow the biblical cases to have relevance in the present or to provide principles that may be applied. In other situations this may not be the case. The "casebook" approach is based on the limitation of biblical authority and the "functional" use of Scripture. The "casebook" approach to Scripture does not

recognize that Scripture has inherent authority for all cases regardless of time, cultures, and circumstances.

In short, the "functional" use of Scripture has relativized the Bible, robbing it of its inherent claims to be the Word of God. It has relegated the Bible's role to a word, as any other word, that may function in a meaningful way for a person or a community. In other words, the Bible no longer has any inherent authority. It can, however, be used as a "casebook" from which theologians may abstract principles that may be helpful in modern life. These principles can be joined with other principles from other sources or can be redefined by other sources in respective socio-cultural settings.

Richard Rice and Rational Theology. Richard Rice of La Sierra University (formerly La Sierra campus of Loma Linda University) has written a book entitled, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (1991). It describes the various contours of faith in modern progressive and liberal theology as well as that of reason, giving reason a powerful role. The work is an apology for a reason-grounded and reason-oriented faith, a modern form of natural theology which gives the impression of having a neo-scholastic orientation. His book is in conversation primarily with and dependent on progressive liberal theologians. Evangelical alternatives are hardly reflected.

We are particularly interested in the role of Scripture in Rice's work, since he is an Adventist teacher and theologian well read in modern, neo-Protestant and some Catholic theology. This is also important since historically Adventists have prided themselves as being a "people of the Book," whereby they meant to base their teachings on the Bible as the primary source for doctrine. The inclusion of this tome by Rice has particular relevance because he addresses, and is extensively interested in, the interrelationship of reason and faith in theology. In the chapter, "Reason and Responsible Belief,"⁹⁰ the subject of "Evidence and the Sources of Knowledge" is under discussion. While this section does not speak of the role of Scripture, the author concludes that "we are entitled only to beliefs that we can support with adequate evidence and valid arguments."⁹¹ The "valid arguments" are understood to mean rational arguments.

Rice understands theology, among other things, "as an applica-

tion of reason to the contents of faith, or the beliefs of a particular religious community."⁹² He holds that "doctrines arise, not from the Bible alone, but from the dynamic interplay between the Bible and the living experience of the church, . . ."⁹³ This statement is explicit on the way doctrines are to arise: "The dynamic interplay between the Bible and the living experience of the church."

Adventists have historically held, and still hold, that the Bible is the source and norm for Adventist doctrines. In the first of the twenty-seven "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" it is stated, "The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history."⁹⁴

Rice seems to posit another way for doctrines to be developed. For Rice theology is the result of "the dynamic interplay" between the Bible *and* the church's living experience. This "and" reveals that the Bible is no longer determining the final shape of theology. The Bible *and* experience calls for "a parallel characterization of theology."⁹⁵ This leads Rice to define "theology as an attempt to formulate a coherent exposition of Christian doctrine that is faithful to the authority of the Bible and responsive to the experience of the Christian community."⁹⁶ What does this "and" without a qualitative priority mean for Rice's theologizing? He does not present the Roman Catholic model for theology, which is the two-source theory of "Scripture and tradition." Roman Catholicism has another "and." But Rice has also an "and." He speaks of a dynamic interplay in theology of the sources of the Bible *and* experience. We have seen that Rice can and does say that Christian doctrine is to be "faithful to the authority of the Bible. . . ." This explanation could give the impression that the Bible has a unique "authority" in theologizing. But this is not the case, because he qualifies it by emphasizing that Christian theology needs to be "responsive to the experience of the Christian community." Rice gives the impression so far that he holds to a two-source theory with the sources of Scripture *and* experience as equal sources for theology. He claims that "theology involves bringing the church's experience to bear on the Bible and bringing the Bible to bear on the experience of the

church."⁹⁷ This is a kind of correlation approach to theology reflective of Paul Tillich.

However, this is not the end of the story in Rice's theological system as outlined in his recent book. The Bible is viewed by means of the experience of the community's understanding of truth, viz. tradition and its present experience. On the other hand, the church scrutinizes its "formulation of truth in light of the Bible."⁹⁸ But the "effort to hear what the Bible says directly," and on its own terms without the mediation of tradition, is designated as "futile."⁹⁹ He maintains that doctrines need to be brought "into harmony with the concrete experience of Christians."¹⁰⁰

In contrast to this position the "concrete experience of the Christian" has to be informed and shaped by the divine revelation of the written Word of God, Holy Scripture. It is the all-encompassing and all-sufficient norm that provides the foundation, structure and shape of a Scriptural theology for Adventists as the "people of the Book." For Rice, however, doctrines or the church's teachings are influenced by tradition, harmonized on the basis of the church's concrete experiences and reason. Scripture, or the Bible, has in Rice's system no supreme authority over other sources of theology such as experience, reason and tradition; it is subject to the community's experience and other norms. The Bible's authority is thus subordinated to the human sources of experience, reason, and tradition.

As noted, Scripture does not function as a primary norm in the model of theology as presented by Rice. The final arbiter of what is appropriate to the faith of a given community is "the application of reason to the contents of faith, or the beliefs of a particular religious community."¹⁰¹ Evidently, Scripture is not viewed as the depository of divinely revealed teaching which is authoritative and normative for the faith of the church so that the other sources such as reason, community, experience and so on are ultimately judged by it.

For Rice the entire Bible is not even equally authoritative. What counts is the "authority of the Bible [that] lies in its conceptual content."¹⁰² In historic, orthodox Protestant theology "what is authoritative about Scripture is its doctrinal content, and this content is revelation itself—of direct divine origin, inspired fully in all its parts, infallible with respect to matters of doctrine or belief,

to be translated without alteration into theological propositions."¹⁰³ Rice's theological system does not conform to such a view of Scripture.

There is a vast chasm between Rice's "conceptual content" of the Bible which has authority and the authority of the "doctrinal content" of the Bible. For Rice it is only the "conceptual content" and the "intellectual content of the Bible that interests them [theologians]."¹⁰⁴ The "conceptual content"¹⁰⁵ of Rice seems to be the same as the functional use of Scripture outlined by Kelsey.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, Rice can speak of the Bible as having "fundamental authority for Christian theology," while he insists that the Bible "is not the only place where theological reflection originates nor the direct source from which all theological positions arise."¹⁰⁷

We need to keep in mind that the functional use of Scripture professes nondiscrimination toward other views, but it excludes the view of the Bible as the revelational depository of "objective truth."¹⁰⁸ But this is the very claim Adventists make for the Bible along with scores of other Bible-believing Christians.

The theologian also needs to make a decision as to what "patterns" of the Bible are most important. In the view of Rice not all beliefs in the Bible are equally important.¹⁰⁹ Thus, "it is appropriate to distinguish levels of doctrinal significance and search for a thematic center for the Bible."¹¹⁰

Rice seems to be aware that the search for the center of the Bible involves a "canon within the canon" which was first introduced into Protestant theology by Schleiermacher.¹¹¹ The idea of a "canon within the canon" means that there is a higher norm within Scripture on the basis of which other parts of Scripture are assigned a lesser place or are said to be of lesser importance for life and teaching. Rice employs the idea of a center, precisely in the sense of liberal theology,¹¹² as a means to "distinguish levels of doctrinal significance." Rice places himself with these limiting qualifications of the role of Scripture into the camp of theologians who recognize the Bible only in its functional role and use.¹¹³

We need to point to some implications of the theological model as Rice has outlined it in his recent publication. If the "living experience of the church" functions as a (or possible *the*, if it is not reason) major norm for theology, as he maintains, then it seem

inevitable that regional and national theologies, ethnic and liberation theologies, and so forth, will not only arise within Adventism, but they will be viewed as normal and a healthy demand in theology. These theologies could be seen as precursors of the development of independent, regional Seventh-day Adventist churches similar to that of Lutheran, Baptist and other communions. In any case, if the Rice approach to theology becomes a model that is followed, pluralism in Adventist theology will experience a big boost. Theological pluralism seeks the least common denominator. It is known to lead to disunity, disfunction, and a loss of mission.

Neo-Evangelical and Evangelical Models of Theology

Clark Pinnock and Moderate Theology. Clark Pinnock is a well-known, self-designated "moderate" theologian from Canada, who is on the move (to the left of center in the theological spectrum).¹¹⁴ He sees himself among "postconservatives"¹¹⁵ who have moved from the conservative camp of theology to what others call the camp of "neo-evangelicals."¹¹⁶ The latter espouse historical criticism¹¹⁷ and no longer view the Bible as having ultimate authority for theology. Pinnock is clearly a neo-evangelical theologian who defected from the historic evangelical camp.

In the chapter entitled "Sources of the Story,"¹¹⁸ in his book, *Tracking the Maze*, Pinnock lists and discusses the four sources for theology: Scripture, tradition, experience and reason. He expresses himself rather clearly on the relationship of these four sources to each other. "These various sources of theology," he writes, "ought to be held in creative tension as responding in their different ways to the revelation of God. . . . To overemphasize one source to the exclusion of the others is like having a table with uneven legs."¹¹⁹

For our topic on the relationship of "Scripture and Theology," we are informed that in his system the four sources stand next to each other without any single source being assigned a higher norm than another source. Each one, as it were, is a leg of equal length needed for constructing a theology. They are related to each other in a "dialectical way." None of them, Scripture included, is an "objective source of timeless propositional truth existing independent of and external to any other [of the sources] in their own right."¹²⁰

Pinnock designates his theological system as a "moderate" theology in contrast with liberal models of theology, which Pinnock calls "progressive."¹²¹ "Moderate" is a designation selected to keep himself somewhere without taking the Bible as the final authority for theology.

For Pinnock "moderate" is contrasted with (1) "progressive" (namely, "liberal") theologians such as Gordon D. Kaufmann, Edward Farley, John Hick, Schubert Ogden, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and other theologians of the liberal tradition¹²² and with (2) "conservative" theologians such as Abraham Kuyper, Cornelius Van Til, G. C. Berkouwer, Carl F. H. Henry, the Old Princeton theologians, and others.¹²³

Pinnock defines "conservative theology" as "essentially a theology of authority, based on a putatively heaven-sent cognitive revelation that is supreme over all the earth-bound philosophies and experiences of humankind."¹²⁴ For Pinnock, the Bible is no longer "the objective Word of God exalted above all that is merely human and historical."¹²⁵ He held a conservative view as late as around 1970,¹²⁶ but had abandoned it by the time he wrote his book, *The Scripture Principle* (1984), taking an "empirical approach."¹²⁷ In Pinnock's theological system the "empirical approach" holds the key to his theologizing.

Carl F. H. Henry and Rational Evangelical Theology. Carl F. H. Henry, the acknowledged giant of evangelical theologians of our time, published his six-volume systematic theology under the title, *God, Revelation and Authority* (1976-1983). His first volume is devoted to "preliminary considerations" of theological prolegomena.¹²⁸ Henry is in conversation, dialog, and debate on the major issues confronting theology in the modern context of secularism. He takes "Christianity. . . to be a logically consistent system of revelational truth"¹²⁹ and a "rational religion."¹³⁰

Henry's "criteria of theology" include the roles of revelation, reason, Scripture, consistency and coherence.¹³¹ Considering that "theology is a rational discipline,"¹³² he states that "divine revelation is the source of all truth, the truth of Christianity included; reason is the instrument for recognizing it; Scripture is its verifying principle; logical consistency is a negative test for truth and coherence a subordinate test."¹³³

Much can and should be said about Henry's role of reason and rationality. He is considered to be an evangelical theologian in whose system reason plays a key role. Donald Bloesch has noted incisively that "the method of Gordon Clark and Carl Henry is deductive, deriving conclusions from given rational principles."¹³⁴ Bloesch, on the other hand, holds that revelation is not at the disposal of human reason. Bob E. Patterson has stated that "revelation, not reason, must be the final authority; . . ."¹³⁵

If revelation is first tested for truth by reason, then reason is greater than revelation. Even if, as has been maintained by Henry, "revelation is a disclosure of truth that stands in continuity with rational truth,"¹³⁶ it is certain that the revelation embodied in the Bible is not given the highest norming function in theology.

It is clear that in Henry's system "Scripture" plays an important role as a source of theology, but it hardly has the role of being in and of itself the final norm for theology. It seems that this role is ultimately assigned to reason. This is brought out in illuminating statements on the power of reason. "The Christian religion assigns a critical and indispensable role to reason,"¹³⁷ says Henry. "Christian theology unreservedly champions reason as . . . a logical discriminating faculty competent to test religious claims."¹³⁸

Would this not mean that the religious claims of the Word of God are included? Evidently Henry assigns in practice a role to reason as a higher arbiter than Scripture itself. Thus, in his theological system Scripture holds the role of a "verifying principle," but reason holds the place of highest arbiter for religious truth because Scripture is placed in a rationalist framework. "Henry . . . [is] placing Scripture in a rationalist rather than an idealist framework, . . ."¹³⁹

It is surely correct that Henry is indebted to the conservative philosopher-theologian Gordon H. Clark¹⁴⁰ and his use of rationality.¹⁴¹ This connection reveals that human reason is the final norm of what is reasonable. Since reason is a "logical test for truth" and reason is "the instrument for recognizing it [the truth of Christianity]," Henry cannot free himself from having replaced reason for faith.

At this point we must break off our discussion. It would be interesting to investigate other evangelical theological systems as

those of Donald G. Bloesch,¹⁴² Millard J. Erickson, James Montgomery Boice,¹⁴³ G. C. Berkouwer,¹⁴⁴ Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest,¹⁴⁵ J. Rodman Williams,¹⁴⁶ among others. While this cannot be done here, it is hoped that the theological systems selected and discussed have served to illustrate how varied is the relationship between Scripture and theology among the various major theologians. Hopefully it has illumined and will assist in understanding the role of Scripture in some strands of modern theology.

It is evident from our survey that the role of Scripture in theology is perceived in a variety of ways. None of the systems presented employ Scripture in a manner similar to the best of classical orthodox Protestant theology. It is astonishing to find Scripture's role diminished and relativized even in the forms of neoevangelical and evangelical theology which we considered last!

There is a task yet to be done. We need to reflect anew on the role of Scripture for theology based on Scripture's own internal testimony. This is important since Scripture makes claims for itself that cannot be brushed aside without harm to church and society, to the gospel itself and the mission of the church.

Scripture as Authoritative Norm of Theology

It is a given that theology, as any other discipline, has to be studied and presented "from somewhere." It is impossible to study and to present theology as a system or as an orderly presentation "from nowhere." Therefore, as outlined above, there are two major approaches that have emerged over the centuries of thought in Christianity. They are historically described as (1) theology "from above," which takes the divine and unique revelation of God as embodied in Scripture, which is the Word of God, as the ultimate norm for theology, and (2) theology "from below," which takes other sources such as tradition, reason, experience and so on as the determinative norm and authority for theology.

Orthodox Protestant theology has historically taken the stance as a theology "from above," that is, as a theology oriented to the highest authority: derived from and grounded in Scripture. But theology has been transformed over the last two hundred years into a theology "from below"; a theology where human norms carry

ultimate authority. This is true not only in the neo-Protestant theological tradition of which Schleiermacher is the father, but also in other major systems. Liberal theology over the last two hundred years is engaged in a "revolt against Biblical authority."¹⁴⁷ And it is evident from the major voices of our survey of evangelical theology that some evangelical theological systems are likewise beginning to move away from the certainty of Scripture in the construction of their theological systems. It is evident from the history of theology that liberal theologies breed more liberal theologies and evangelical theologies which are not solidly based on Scripture tend to move towards the liberal camp. If one stretches the little finger of the hand of theology towards liberal theology "from below," whether in the form of experience, reason, or tradition, then the dragon of liberalism snatches up the entire hand of theology. Theology can only be safe, if engaged in on the foundation of a high view of Scripture as the Word of God and by assigning it the highest norm for theology.

Foundations for a Scripture-based Theology

There is a genuine need to return to full and unrestricted biblical authority in a true theology "from above." In this section of our consideration of the relationship of "Scripture and theology," it is imperative to state in a number of theses, or major summary statements, foundational propositions on the nature, role, and function of Scripture in the enterprise of theology.

Theology is not a building without foundations.¹⁴⁸ The foundations have to be laid soundly for the building of theology to survive the storms of theological conflict and the shaking caused by the earthquakes of intense inquiry. The structure of theology has to stand the test of time. Historically, as we have observed above, the sources, or may we say foundations of theology, have been Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. Other foundations have been added or the traditional ones have been refined and enlarged. Unless we have the "right" foundation, we will not have the "right" theology. We argue that the "right" foundation of theology is Scripture in its entirety. Scripture rightly understood within its own framework (namely, *sola Scriptura*) is the foundation and norming norm for theology to be biblical and adequate for

the life of the believer, the faith of the church, and the mission to the world.

Theology is the motor that drives the church. A motor that sputters and breaks down will not get the vehicle to its destination. If the Adventist church is to have a conveyance that will not break down, then it needs to have an engine that is of divine origin. The Bible, as the Word of God, contains all the divine parts needed for our engine, a theology "from above." Such an engine will make the church arrive at its God-appointed destination.

The remainder of our essay will outline the Scriptural foundation of theology. We intend to enumerate some foundational conceptions regarding a theology which is both postcritical and postmodern¹⁴⁹ as well as postprogressive and postfundamentalist. These conceptions would serve as foundation for a constructive theology, a genuinely Bible-based systematic/dogmatic theology faithful to the genuine Reformation heritage of *sola Scriptura*.

1. Theology, if true to its name as "the study/science of God," is to be a science "from above" and not "from below." It is to be a science grounded in the Bible as its supreme, authoritative source and ultimate norm, transcending and informing all other sources from whatever field of human endeavor they derive. Scripture is to function as this norm, because it is derived "from above" in the sense that it is God's unique and authoritative, comprehensive and inclusive horizon of revelation.

A theological system that is "from above" is a system that must be based on Scripture as the highest and most authoritative norm for theology. All other sources for theology have to be informed, mediated and controlled by Scripture as the Word of God. It has been stated with insight by Clark Pinnock that in modern theology "the term *liberal* suggests the removal of practically all the constraints of Scripture and tradition from a position of authority for theology and a virtual surrender of the continuity of Christian doctrine, which ends in a rudderless, open-ended, infinitely flexible stance."¹⁵⁰

Theology, and work in theology, must have a rudder. Without a rudder theology is adrift like a boat afloat in a never ending ocean. Furthermore, theology cannot be without an anchor. Scripture functions as an engine and as rudder, giving direction and setting

the goal, and as an anchor, providing the needed certainty and foundation for theology.

Theology is to be perceived as a supra-subjective enterprise. This can be had only if there is a supra-human revelational norm that is above all other norms and on the basis of which human subjectivity is controlled and overcome. The supra-subjective and supra-human norming agent is given to humanity in what we call Scripture. Although there is a subjective element in everything humans do, the agent controlling subjectivity must come "from above." It is provided in the Word of God that calls us to surrender to Him who is the Author of Scripture.

Theology is to be more than merely the best of human contemplation, construal, and thinking. It is to be more than the best of all that is "from below." It is to be more than the best of universal experience of humankind. It is to be more than the best of human reason individually or collectively. If it is really and truly theological science—not merely some sort of anthropological science—then there is no option but to perceive it as deriving its norming norm "from above," from the God-given revelation embodied in the entirety of Scripture.

In deriving its norming norm (*norma normans*) "from above," and given its subject matter as the study of God and His ways with both man and world, theology calls for a foundation and grounding in that which God has provided as His unique revelation and disclosure of Himself. That revelation and self-disclosure is most uniquely and directly incarnated in Scripture, the Word of God, given through "men who spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Peter 1:21).

2. The illuminating power of the Holy Spirit is to guide the theologian in his theological task. The same Holy Spirit which inspired the Word of God gives illumination to each seeking human being. Each sincere seeker, so illuminated, can understand, appreciate and appropriate God's revealed knowledge and will.

The Holy Spirit acts as a transforming agent in the life of the seeker, providing a light for the divinely ordained path and theological pilgrimage leading from earth to heaven. There is no true knowledge from God unless it comes by means of the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God.

Without the Holy Spirit's continuing work, contained in, guided by, and directed through the divine revelation of Scripture, theology is bound to deteriorate into human thinking "from below." In the latter case, it would not make much difference whether reason, tradition, or experience becomes the norming norm.

3. Scripture is the inspired Word of God. It carries within itself the self-authenticating and norming authority for the faith and life of the church and its theology.

The statement that "Scripture is the inspired Word of God" is based on the self-testimony of Scripture. It is the self-claim of the Bible that it is the Word of God. This is the consistent testimony of both Jesus Christ and the apostles. It is contained and communicated in various forms and multiple ways in the Bible itself.

Peter notes emphatically that "no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21, RSV). "Prophecy" is Holy Spirit originated. It is not the fruit of human imagination, thought, or genius. It never came "by the impulse of man" but has its origin in God, who by means of the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets with His message.

"Prophecy," as the term is used in 1 Peter, is not restricted to the so-called prophetic parts of Scripture alone. Moses was designated a "prophet" (Deut 34:10; 18:15, 18) and Moses is credited with having written the Pentateuch, the first Five Books of Scripture (Josh 1:7-9; 24: 25, 26; 1 Kgs 2:2-4; Ezra 7:23-26; etc.) which are authoritative Scripture.

David expressed his conviction that his words originated from the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue" (2 Sam 23:2, NASB). The entire Bible of both Testaments is conceived of as deriving from "prophets."¹⁵¹

Daniel recognized that the book of the Jeremiah was "the word of the LORD" (Dan 9:2, KJV) and the angel Gabriel refers to the "scripture of truth" (Dan 10:21, KJV).

Jesus appeals to Bible of his day, the Old Testament, as the word of authority as He combats the Devil at his temptation. Jesus resisted the Devil by stating, "It is written," and quoting Scripture (Matt 4:4, 7, 10). Satan responded by misconstruing Scripture to which Jesus replied again, "It is written."

Jesus repeatedly appealed to "Scripture" as the Word of God

which is fulfilled (Lk 4:21; Mk 12:10; Matt 26:54; John 7:38; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24; etc.). Scripture comes by the "prophets" (Matt 26:56) and they are understood to speak by the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:2; 16:26).

The Bible supports the spiritual gifts given to the church, including the gift of prophecy which is a special mark of God's true end-time remnant (1 Cor 12-14; Rev 12:17; 19:10). The gift of prophecy (viz. the writings of Ellen White), always subject to the norming norm of Scripture, functions in association with Scripture in theology and not as an addition to the biblical canon.

Paul shows that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim 3:16). Thus, "all Scripture" is "God-breathed," which is the literal translation of the Greek term *theopneustos*. "All Scripture" derives from God Himself. Jesus Christ Himself maintains that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35, NASB), maintaining its unity and coherence.

A detailed study of the Acts of the Apostles reveals time and again that "Scripture" (Acts 1:16) is that "which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David" (vs. 17, NASB). When Joel, the "prophet" (Acts 2:16) spoke, it was "God" speaking (vs. 17). So "God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time" (Acts 3:21, NASB) and Moses is the first one cited (vs. 22). God "announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that Christ should suffer, . . ." (Acts 3:18, NASB). The "Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of our father David Thy servant" (Acts 4:25, NASB) quoting from Psalm 2. Stephen introduced an Old Testament quotation with the words "God spoke" (Acts 7:6).

This brief and limited conspectus of the identity of God who spoke through the Holy Spirit by the mouth of the prophets (who are the Bible writers) is the consistent self-testimony of the Bible. The process of revelation is that God "reveals" Himself (Deut 29:29; 1 Sam 3:21; Isa 22:14; Dan 2:22, 47; Eph 3:3-5) "by the word of the LORD" (1 Sam 3:21). Thus, we conclude that the consistent picture in the New Testament is that the Old Testament is the "Word of God" which came through the Holy Spirit by means of his servants the prophets. They, in turn, wrote it down (Exod 17:14; 24:4; Deut 31:9; Josh 24:26; 1 Kings 2:3; Ezra 3:2; Jer 30:2; cf. Rom 15:15; 1

Cor 4:14; 2 Cor 2:3; 1 Pet 5:12; 2 Pet 3:1; 1 John 1:4, 2:12, 26; Jude 3; etc.).¹⁵²

Sometimes the question is raised whether the New Testament is also understood as the "word of God." A brief consideration of 1 Timothy 5:18 reveals that the introduction "for the Scripture says" (NASB) refers to a passage from the Old Testament *and* a saying of Jesus recorded in Luke 10:7: "The laborer is worthy of his wages" (cf. Matt 10:10). It has been suggested that Paul refers to the canonical Gospel of Luke as Scripture. We cannot be certain about this, but the wording affirms that a saying of Jesus (or a collection of his sayings in gospel form) had the status of "Scripture" for Paul.¹⁵³

The preaching of "the good news" by Philip is "the word of God" (Acts 8:12, 14). The proclamation of the gospel is to those who receive it "the word of God" (Acts 11:1; cf. 12:24; 13:46; 17:13; 18:11; 19:20). This reveals that the apostolic preaching and teaching is "the word of God."

The apostle Paul makes reference to "the mystery of Christ" which was not made known in previous ages "has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets" (Eph 3:4-5, NKJV). This give evidence that the apostolic preaching and writing is Spirit-originated in the same way as the words of the prophets in the pre-New Testament age. This is in harmony with the claim of Paul that "the gospel which was preached by me. . . came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 3:11-12, NKJV).

John the Revelator maintains that "I was in the Spirit" (Rev 1:10) when he was given "the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and all the things that he saw" (1:2).

The reference to "the rest of the Scriptures" in 2 Peter 3:16 within the argument concerning the letters of Paul "in which some things are hard to understand" indicates that Peter's use of "Scriptures" here "places Paul's writings on a level with other inspired Scripture."¹⁵⁴ The Pauline letters are here reckoned as belonging to "the other Scriptures."¹⁵⁵ This manner of referring to Paul's letters as "Scriptures" alongside the Old Testament indicates that they have been recognized as being on the same level as the OT Scriptures.

The term "Scripture" is used as a term for the authoritative

Word of God. It is authoritative not because man placed any authority in it, but because God had it produced by means of "inspiration of God" (2 Tim 3:16) through the Holy Spirit. Thus, it seems undeniable that the New Testament, as the Old Testament before it, is clearly given by means of the Holy Spirit. This is the consistent testimony of the apostles Peter, Paul and John in what they write.

4. Scripture derives its authority from God and the work and function of the Holy Spirit and not from the church. The church is the result and creation of the Word of God, Scripture, and not vice versa.

Protestantism and Catholicism have been divided for centuries on the question of the origin of the Bible's authority. Protestants have typically maintained that the Bible has an authority that is vested in itself, and that it is not derived from the church.

Since the Counter-reformation, Catholicism has maintained that the authority of the Bible is derived from the church. The influential three-volume work of the Italian Jesuit and cardinal Robert Bellarmine, *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos* (1586-1593), which was reprinted more than a hundred times in five decades, argued strenuously that the Bible is the gift of the church to Christians. If this position is maintained, it follows logically that the church with its tradition is the highest norm for theology.¹⁵⁶ Tradition from Rome includes both the post-New Testament tradition and the Bible. In Vatican II the "Word of God" is specifically identified with Scripture and tradition,¹⁵⁷ inclusive of papal pronouncements.¹⁵⁸

Modern, liberal Protestantism has come to view the development of the canon of the Bible also as the result of a purely historical process.¹⁵⁹ It is suggested that the Old Testament was recognized as canonical by not later than the third century B.C.¹⁶⁰ It cannot be overlooked that while among the criteria of New Testament canonicity are apostolicity, antiquity, catholicity, orthodoxy, inspiration¹⁶¹ and traditional use,¹⁶² Bruce Metzger writes in his magisterial tome, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (1987), that "the church did not create the canon, but came to recognize, accept, affirm, and confirm

the self-authenticating quality of certain documents that imposed themselves as such upon the Church."¹⁶³

Metzger is correct in pointing again to the self-authenticating nature and inherent quality of the Bible. Inspiration is a criterion which is not limited to persons who wrote biblical books, but every biblical book qualifies because of inspiration. Because of inspiration "the words of Scripture are God's own words."¹⁶⁴

The fact of the self-authenticating quality of the biblical books moves Scripture beyond the authenticating function of the church. The real picture is that Scripture, written by the "apostles and prophets," created the church and not vice versa. The letter to the Ephesians insists that the church is the household of God, having been "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the corner stone" (Eph 2:20, NASB).

5. Scripture must impact on theology in its full authority based on its inherent claims and quality. Scripture must not be reduced to a mere functional role or be considered as merely a source which can become the Word of God. Scripture is the very Word of God.

The functional role of Scripture for theology has been outlined by a variety of modern scholars. Professor David Kelsey has shown that the authority of Scripture is severely limited in modern theology, even among such figures as Karl Barth not to speak of Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich among many others.¹⁶⁵

The functional use of Scripture in theology, as previously discussed above, means it does not inherently contain doctrine that calls for exposition. The functional use of Scripture looks for concepts,¹⁶⁶ narrative recital,¹⁶⁷ religious symbols,¹⁶⁸ and so on, which "may not be directly translated into theological concepts," write modern liberal theologians. They continue by stating that "theology rather has the task of 're-describing' what has been expressed biblically. . . , employing, for these theologians at least, a philosophical conceptuality (whether process, idealist, or existentialist) and an 'imaginative construal' of what Christian faith is all about."¹⁶⁹

Over against this kind of "doing theology" in the liberal tradition, it has to be maintained that the authority of Scripture derives from its actual truth content and not from any reduction of its subject matter to concepts, symbols, images, patterns, and so on that need to be re-described by mean of any philosophical system.

Scripture possesses divinely given truth content based in and provided by revelation.

Scripture possesses its own philosophy of reality. As such Scripture is trans-cultural despite the fact that it is written in languages of the past by people of that past. Its divine origin makes it authoritative for every place and at any time. Whereas the functional role of Scripture claims that "the *patterns* in scripture, not its 'content,' . . . make it normative for theology,"¹⁷⁰ the Bible itself, Jesus Christ, and the apostles show time and again that it is the "content," the very words that express the content, that is authoritative and normative. "The Bible *inherently* has authority,"¹⁷¹ because of its divine origin and its truth-content.

6. The enterprise of theology needs of the entire Bible. The theological enterprise must not be imprisoned by a center, focal point, core idea, major theme, basic concept, a part of the Bible whether the New Testament, the writings of Paul, or the like.

Theology cannot be oriented on the basis of any single theme, center, *Mitte*, focal-point, basic concept, or the like.¹⁷² One of many reasons for the "centered" approaches is to limit the content of the Bible to what may be considered the most relevant in a given time or at a given place. If there should be a center, some theme, topic, idea, or a combination of them, then it is inevitable that other things are assigned a marginal place, and invariably varieties of Scriptural truth are sidestepped in favor of others that are established or lifted up to a degree that they do not have when viewed from the entirety of the Bible.

The text insists that "all Scripture," and not part of Scripture, "is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16, 17 NASB). God has given "all Scripture" for "teaching." The Biblical emphasis on "all Scripture" reveals the wholistic concept of the Bible. A theology faithful to Scripture needs "all of Scripture."

The ongoing search for a center of the OT, the NT, or the entire Bible is made necessary because of the limitation in authority that is accorded to the Bible by liberal and neoorthodox scholars. The need for a "center" is eliminated as soon as the entire Bible is recognized to have inspired status and divine authority. If the Bible

is understood for what it really is, namely the revelatory Word of God, then the quest for something of central importance ceases. Jesus Himself taught "all" and in giving the Great Commission He maintained that His followers are to teach "them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20).

Every theologian who is looking for a center, maintaining that there needs to be a center, inevitably has made the decision that "it is appropriate to distinguish levels of doctrinal significance. . . in the Bible."¹⁷³ Scripture itself does not give any evidence for levels of doctrinal significance. Jesus Christ himself rejected the question which was the greatest law by summarizing and emphasizing immediately that "the second is like it" (Matt 22:37-39).

The multiplicity of centers that have been proposed¹⁷⁴ reveals among other things the subjective nature of the enterprise. The Bible does not reveal any single center, not even multiple centers, because the triune God Himself is the center¹⁷⁵ and both Testaments have the same God as the driving force of revelation.

7. A theological undertaking in which Scripture has full play cannot be focussed on a "canon within the canon." The phrase "canon within the canon" refers in simple language to a norm or idea within Scripture which is assigned a higher place than other parts of Scripture.

The idea of a "center" is linked to the idea of a "canon within the canon." The latter notion is emphasized ever since Schleiermacher.¹⁷⁶ The search for a "canon within the canon," that is, the quest for a higher norm within Scripture, has engaged theologians intensely for the last two hundred years.

It is an attractive notion, because it allows the individual theologian to emphasize a particular theme, or topic, or a specific concept as the focal-point or central idea of all of Scripture. Among such "canons within the canon" the concepts of covenant, kingdom of God, reign of God, law of God, righteousness, and so forth, have been proposed.

Martin Luther had the theological concept of "what points to Christ" (*was Christum treibet*) as a "canon within the canon" on the basis of which he could pronounce the letter of James in the New Testament an "epistle of straw." Luther did not find that James pointed to Christ.

Now the quest for a "canon within the canon" can be pronounced to have been unsuccessful.¹⁷⁷ Scholars and theologians cannot agree on what it is and from where it is to be taken.¹⁷⁸ The enterprise of finding a norm that is above all other biblical norms is recognized as a failure of a subjective undertaking.

The Bible itself does not provide such an internal key for its meaning. Here again the entirety of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation manifests itself as the Word of God. It cannot be "divided." Humans are not entitled to make their own Word of God. All of God's Word is given to the church for its well-being.

In concluding our remarks on the relationship of "Scripture and Theology," we affirm that a true Scriptural theology is one in which the theological proposals themselves are to be derived from the Bible. When the theological proposals derive from another source, whether it is reason, tradition, experience, or some combination of them, then the theological nature of the enterprise has compromised Scriptural authority in favor of another norm, a human one. Normative theology for the church and by the church has to be a theology that is based on and grounded in the normativity of Scripture, the Word of God, and its revelatory truth-content. Such a theological undertaking will revitalize the church as the community of the faithful and propel it forward to the completion of its God-given mission. Such a theological undertaking will evaluate reason, tradition, and experience on the basis of the divine norm, finding their appropriate places in a Scriptural theology.

Endnotes

¹ See Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, eds. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith. Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989); idem, *Professing the Faith. Christian Theology in North American Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1993).

² Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Comp., 1969), p. 58.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶ G. Vahianian, *The Death of God* (New York: George Braziller, 1961). There are such writers as T. J. Altizer, W. Hamilton, P. M. van Buren who are usually identified as Death of God theologians.

⁷ See Kenneth Hamilton, *Revolt Against Heaven* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 143-165.

⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 1:17-125.

⁹ Robert C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology. After Modernity . . . What?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990). An informative essay on "paradigm change" and its meaning is provided by Frank M. Hasel, "Scientific Revolution: An Analysis and Evaluation of Thomas Kuhn's Concept of Paradigm and Paradigm Change for Theology," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 2/2 (1991): 160-177.

¹⁰ Protestants have used the Bible of Jesus and the apostles, that is, the books of the Hebrew canon. However, the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church has more books than these, because it includes the so-called deuterocanonical (apocryphal) books of Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, and the Additions to Daniel as voted to be part of the Bible in the Council of Trent. See H. Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* (London, 1961), pp. 52-98. The Russian Orthodox Church excluded the deuterocanonical books. In the Greek Orthodox Church questions have been raised about the use of the deuterocanonical books for several centuries and no final ecclesiastical decision has been made.

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion on inspiration, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* "Adventist Library of Christian Thought, Vol. 1" (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1980), pp. 66-82.

¹² A typical example is provided by Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion. Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. 114, defines inspiration in terms of human "productivity." It is an "outgoing of man into the world" (*ibid.*). He explained that inspiration "is simply the general expression for the feeling of true morality and freedom. . . . It is that action which springs from the heart of man, despite of, or at least regardless of, all external occasion" (*ibid.*, p. 89). These statements reveal that for Schleiermacher "inspiration" is not something that comes from God but something that issues from the heart of man without any "external [viz. divine] occasion."

¹³ On "historical criticism" and the "historical-critical method," see Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991); Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publ. House, 1977); Thomas C. Oden, *Agenda for Theology: After Modernity . . . What?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990); Jon D. Levenson, "The Bible: Unexamined Commitment of Criticism," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 30 (Feb. 1993): 24-33; idem, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1993); Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985). Linnemann, Oden and Levenson are three current witnesses of liberal scholars who have been raising most serious questions about the historical-critical method and who have turned against the method which has proven to be so devastating to the internal claims of the Scripture.

¹⁴ By "moderate historical criticism" is meant the study of the Bible by modernistic, progressive scholars of the historical-critical school who do not wish to deny that the Bible writers themselves could have been inspired in some form or another, but who deny that the Bible itself is the direct product of inspiration. This view, as shown above, is known as "personal inspiration," that is, the inspiration of persons which is separated from the inspiration of Scripture since in this view the latter, i.e., Scripture, is not perceived to be inspired. "Personal inspiration" without the inspiration of Scripture has been propounded since Schleiermacher. See Gerhard Maier, *Biblische Hermeneutik* (2nd ed.; Wuppertal und Zurich: R. Brockhaus, 1991), pp. 89-91.

¹⁵ A careful study of this text and its meaning is provided in Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God*, pp. 68-70.

¹⁶ The Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) wrote in his *Disputations Concerning Controversies of the Christian Faith Against the Heretics of Our Time* (1586-1593) that "Scripture is the immediately revealed word of God, and was written as dictated by God. . . . There can be no error in Scripture, whether it deals with faith or with morals, or whether it states something general or common to the whole Church or something particular and pertaining to only one person. . . . In the Scriptures not only the opinions expressed but each and every word pertains to the faith. For we believe that not one word

in Scripture is useless or not used correctly." (*De controversiis* II, II, 12, cited in Richard J. Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible* [Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991], p. 31).

17 In the Swiss Reformed *Formula Consensus Helvetica*, the so-called Second Helvetic Confession (1566), it was held that also the very letters of the Bible were inspired. Matthias Flacius (1567) and a few others in the seventeenth century supported a view of verbal dictation. See J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. 84-86.

18 J. I. Packer, "'Sola Scripture' in History and Today," *God's Inerrant Word*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), pp. 44-45.

19 See the title of the recent book by Clark H. Pinnock, *Tracking the Maze: Finding our Way Through Modern Theology from an Evangelical Perspective* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990).

20 This discipline has been comprehensively described from its beginnings by Gerhard F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (4th ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1992). See also Ben C. Ollenburger, Elmer A. Martens, and Gerhard F. Hasel, eds., *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992); J. H. Hayes and F. Prussner, *Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985) and Henning Graf Reventlow, *Problems of Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

21 See the comprehensive survey of Gerhard F. Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1982). Note also Hendrikus Boers, *What is New Testament Theology?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990).

22 Henning Graf Reventlow, *Problems in Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); John Reumann, ed., *The Practice and Promise of Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

23 We may here only refer to the most recent tomes which have just come forth in the last few years such as Hans Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 2 vols. (vol. 3 yet to appear) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990, 1993); Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1991, 1992); Gisela Kittel, *Der Name über alle Namen*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989, 1990); Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Band 1, Grundlegung: Von Jesus bis Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), vol. 2. is to be published shortly.

24 Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Relationship Between Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology," *Trinity Journal* N.S. 5 (1984): 113-127.

25 See Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* (New York: Harper & Row 1959), pp. 319-354.

26 John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

27 "Process theology" has had its flowering and renaissance since the 1960s. Its key figures are John B. Cobb, Jr., Schubert M. Ogden, Norman Pittenger, Daniel Day Williams, Bernard Loomer, H. N. Wieman, David Ray Griffin, Peter Hamilton, Ewert Cousins, aside from many others. The theological system of "process theology" is built on the philosophical system of Alfred North Whitehead and also Charles Hartshorne. Among some general studies of "process theology" are D. Brown, et al., *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill, 1971); Ewert Cousins, ed., *Process Theology* (New York: Newman, 1971); and a critical evaluation from an evangelical perspective is found in Ronald Nash, ed., *Process Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987).

28 The father of the "theology of hope" is the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann who published a book under the title, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). See also Joseph Pieper, *Hope and History* (1969); Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (1969), among many others. Moltmann took his inspiration from the work of the Marxist

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INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE: AN HERMENEUTICAL "DECALOGUE"

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Introduction

In the early 20th century the eminent Neo-Orthodox theologian, Karl Barth, emphasized how "every theology stands or falls as a hermeneutic and every hermeneutic stands or falls as a theology."¹ Midway through this century Rudolf Bultmann and his followers also emphasized the role of hermeneutics as a concern of crucial theological significance. In the last two decades prominent Evangelical theologians have expressed their judgment that the "key intellectual issue" in theology is the "persistent problem of authority" which concerns "especially the problem of hermeneutics."²

Within Seventh-day Adventist discussions of theological method during this latter period, attention has increasingly focused upon the question of hermeneutics, that is, the theory and practice of biblical interpretation.³ For me personally, the discussion on this topic at the 1974 Seventh-day Adventist Bible Conferences changed my whole perspective on Scripture and theology.⁴ Recent developments in theological thought in the church have pointed up how a given hermeneutic directly and dramatically affects the end-product of the theological enterprise.

With what hermeneutic shall we conduct our theological investigations? A bewildering array of past and current hermeneutical theories confronts us. These range from the allegorical

hermeneutic of the Alexandrian school and the medieval Catholic Church to the literal-historical and typological hermeneutic of the Antiochene school and the Protestant Reformers; from the anti-supernatural, rationalist (historical-critical) hermeneutic of the Enlightenment to Schleiermacher's hermeneutic of subjective understanding; from the neo-orthodoxy of Barth and Brunner to the existentialist models of Heidegger and Bultmann; from the metacritical hermeneutical theories of Gadamer and Pannenberg to the hermeneutic of suspicion and retrieval of Paul Ricoeur; from the hermeneutics of socio-critical theory (including liberation and feminist hermeneutics) to the new literary-critical hermeneutical approaches (rhetorical criticism, New Criticism, structuralism, semiotics, narrative theory, etc.); from reader-response criticism to radical deconstructionism.⁵

In the face of this plethora of suggested hermeneutical methods, how shall we proceed? It appears evident that without specific divine revelation on the subject of hermeneutics, we will never be able to find our way through the maze of human theories. On the other hand, if we believe in the full authority of Scripture, should we not also expect to find in Scripture the divine guidelines on how to interpret Scripture? Just as we go to Scripture to find the doctrines of God, of man, of the Sabbath, of the sanctuary, etc., so it is appropriate, yes, essential, that we should go to Scripture to discover the doctrine of Scripture, and in particular, to learn the Scriptural teaching on hermeneutics as a basis for constructing a theology that is faithful to Scripture. A theology that is to be fully biblical depends upon a totally biblical hermeneutic.

Of course, we come to Scripture acknowledging our own biases, our own pre-understandings; but we come willing, and claim the divine promise that the Spirit will bring our presuppositions ever more in harmony with the biblical presuppositions (see John 16:13; 14:16, 17, 26, etc.). In the following sections of our study we will summarize the main contours of the Scriptural presuppositions and principles of hermeneutics as they emerge from a study of the biblical passages that speak to this topic.

An Hermeneutical "Decalogue"

A discussion of the hermeneutical process, as it emerges from

Scripture's own testimony, may be outlined in rough comparison with the biblical Decalogue of Exodus 20. Just as the first "table" of four commandments deals with the divine-human (vertical) relationship, so there are four *general* principles arising out of the divine-human nature of Scripture which constitute foundational presuppositions undergirding the entire hermeneutical endeavor. Similarly, just as the second table of six commandments in the Decalogue encompasses human (horizontal) interpersonal relationships, so the *specific* hermeneutical guidelines for the interpreter may be organized under six basic headings. (Unlike the Decalogue of Exodus 20, this outline is not infallible!—but represents one way of organizing and synthesizing the fundamental principles of biblical hermeneutics.)

General Principles (The First "Table")

I. The Bible and the Bible Only (*sola Scriptura*). A fundamental hermeneutical principle is that of *sola Scriptura*. This principle constituted the battle cry of the Reformation. Against the church traditions and speculative philosophies of medieval Catholicism, the Reformers rallied under the banner of *sola Scriptura*—the Bible and the Bible only as the final authority for truth.

This principle was not invented by the Reformers; it is rooted firmly in Scripture. The classical text which expresses this fundamental biblical premise is Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (NKJV, and hereafter, unless otherwise noted).

Two corollaries are implicit in this principle: the *primacy* and *sufficiency* of Scripture. The New Testament affirms the first corollary by insisting that Scripture is the supreme and final authority, to be accepted over tradition (Matt 15:3, 6), human philosophy (Col 2:8), human reason, experience, knowledge, or science (1 Tim 6:20; cf. Gen 3:1-6; Prov 14:12). The sufficiency of Scripture is likewise affirmed by the biblical self-testimony: Scripture provides the framework, the divine perspective, the foundational principles, for every branch of knowledge and experience, and all additional knowledge and experience, or revelation, must build upon and remain faithful to, the all-sufficient foundation of Scripture (2 Tim

3:15-17; Ps 119:105; Prov 30: 5, 6; John 17:17; 2 Thess 3:14; Heb 4:12).

The appropriate human response to Scripture is not a critique of its contents, but a total surrender to its ultimate authority. Isaiah records God's perspective: "This is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and *trembles* at my word" (Isa 66:2, RSV, emphasis supplied).

II. The Totality of Scripture (*tota Scriptura*). A second biblical principle of hermeneutics must be coupled with the first. It is not enough to affirm the *primacy* and *sufficiency* of Scripture; we must also accept the *totality* of Scripture. Reformers, such as Martin Luther, and later interpreters who have failed to accept fully this latter principle have been led to reject or devalue certain portions or even whole books of Scripture. This has resulted in a "canon within a canon."⁶

The self-testimony of Scripture is clear: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16, 17, RSV). The term Scripture includes both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures (see 1 Tim 5:18; Deut 25:4; Luke 10:7; 2 Pet 3:14-16). All Scripture is of divine origin.

Peter concurs with and expands upon Paul's statement: "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Spirit" (2 Pet 1:19-21, NIV). Here Peter underscores the trustworthiness of Scripture, because it does not originate in the prophet nor does the prophet intrude his own interpretation.

A corollary of *tota Scriptura* follows: the Bible does not just *contain* the Word of God, but *equals* the Word of God (see 2 Chr 36:15-16; Matt 4:4; Rom 3:2; 1 Cor 2:13; 1 Thess 2:13; Heb 1:5-13; etc.). Even though the prophet is the human instrumentality used by God to deliver the divine message, with his own unique per-

sonality, individuality, style, and perspective, yet in the divine thought inspiration the Holy Spirit so "carries along" the biblical writers that what they present is the utterly reliable Word of God, the prophetic word made more certain.

A second corollary of the *tota Scriptura* principle is also implicit: just as Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, was fully God and fully man (John 1:1-3, 14), so the written Word of God is an inseparable union of the human and the divine.⁷ As Jesus' humanity was sinless, so the Scriptures, though written by men, are fully trustworthy.

III. The Analogy (or Harmony) of Scripture (*analogia Scripturae*). Since all Scripture is inspired by the same Spirit, and all of it is the Word of God, there is a fundamental unity and harmony among its parts (see, for example, Matt 5:17; John 5:39; Rom 3:10-18). This principle has three main aspects:

1. *Scripture is its own expositor (Scriptura sui ipsius interpres).* Because there is an underlying unity among the various parts of Scripture, one portion interprets another, becoming the key for understanding related passages. Jesus demonstrated this principle on the way to Emmaus when, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27, RSV). Later that Resurrection night, He pointed out "that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45, RSV). Here Jesus gives a practical example of how all that Scripture says about a given topic (in this case the Messiah's work) should be brought to bear upon the interpretation of the subject. Other Scriptural passages clearly support this principle (see 1 Cor 2:13; Heb 1:5-13; 2:6-8, 12, 13; Isa 28:10, 13).

2. *The consistency of Scripture.* Jesus succinctly stated this aspect of the analogy of Scripture: "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Since Scripture has a single divine Author, the various parts of Scripture are consistent with each other. Thus Scripture cannot be set against Scripture. While the different human biblical writers may provide different emphases upon the same event or topic, this will be without contradiction or misinterpretation. For example, each of the four writers of the

Gospels recorded what impressed him most under the inspiration of the Spirit, and each facet of the whole is needed in obtaining the full and balanced picture.⁸

3. *The clarity of Scripture.* A third aspect of the analogy of Scripture is that the meaning of Scripture is clear and straightforward, able to be grasped by the diligent student (see Luke 1:3-4; John 20:30-31; Acts 17:11; Rom 10:17; Rev 1:3). The Bible is to be taken in its plain, literal sense unless a clear and obvious figure is intended (see Jesus' own distinction between figurative and literal language in John 16:25, 29). There is a single truth-intention for each passage, not a subjective multiplicity of meaning (see Acts 3:17-18, 22-24; Dan 7:16-27; 8:15-26; Matt 13:18-23, 36-43; etc.).

More difficult or obscure biblical passages are to be interpreted by the clearer passages. So in 1 Pet 1:10-12 the apostle indicates that the OT prophets may not have always clearly understood all the Messianic aspects of their prophecies. He implies that additional clearer revelation became a key to understanding the less clear passage or vision. The Bible presents an increasing spiral of understanding as later passages illuminate earlier, and earlier illuminate later.⁹

IV. Spiritual Discernment (*spiritalis spiritualiter examinatur*). A fourth general principle of biblical hermeneutics is set forth by Paul: "For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. . . . The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:11, 14, RSV).

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Since the Bible is not the product of man's mind but of the mind of God revealed through the Spirit (see 1 Cor 2:12-13), it is not possible to separate "what it meant" to the human author—to be studied without the aid of the Holy Spirit, from "what it means"—to be applied by the help of the Spirit. The Bible cannot be studied as any other book, coming merely "from below" with sharpened tools of exegesis and honed principles of interpretation. At every stage of the interpretive process the Book, inspired by the Spirit, can only be correctly interpreted "from above," by the Spirit's illumination of the mind

of the sincere seeker after God whose life has been spiritually transformed through that same Spirit (see John 7:17; Ps 119:33; Prov 2:3-7; 2 Chr 20:20; John 5:46-47).

Specific Guidelines (The Second "Table")

The specific guidelines for interpreting biblical passages arise from and build upon the general principles we have observed in Scripture thus far. These guidelines encompass essentially the grammatical-historical method. We may argue that they are simply dictated by common sense, and most evangelical writers merely list the various interpretive steps. But in actuality, all these guidelines explicitly or implicitly arise from Scripture itself.

We may interject here that many modern scholars do not consider the Bible writers' own hermeneutical practice a very helpful place to go for guidance in developing a sound hermeneutic. It is claimed that the NT writers often follow the first-century prevailing Jewish methods of exegesis that are often not faithful to the original meaning of the OT text. But the recently published dissertation by David I. Brewer (which may be destined to rock the presuppositions of current critical scholarship regarding first-century Jewish exegetical methods) demonstrates that "the predecessors of the rabbis before 70 CE did not interpret Scripture out of context, did not look for any meaning in Scripture other than the plain sense, and did not change the text to fit their interpretation, though the later rabbis did all these things."¹⁰

Brewer's work calls for a fresh examination of NT exegetical methods in light of these conclusions. This "fresh examination" of the NT has already begun in recent decades. A number of studies of various NT passages have concluded that NT writers were careful to represent faithfully the original plain meaning of the OT texts for the NT readers.¹¹

This is not to say that every time a Scripture is referred to in passing, that the NT authors are providing a full-fledged exegesis. Just as we might say: We escaped "by the skin of our teeth" without exegeting Job 19:20, so the biblical writers are steeped in OT language and imagery, and may use Scriptural language without intending to exegete the passage alluded to. We refer rather to those

NT instances where the biblical writer is clearly expounding the meaning of OT passages.

Let us now consider the basic interpretative guidelines emerging from the Bible writers' own hermeneutic.

V. Text and Translation. Since the focus of the hermeneutical enterprise is upon the written Word, it is of great importance that the original text of the Bible be preserved as far as possible. The Bible itself underscores the vital necessity of preserving the words of sacred Scripture (see Deut 4:2; 12:32; Prov 30:5, 6; Rev 22:18-19; cf. Deut 31:9-13, 26). The principles of textual study must be carefully controlled from within Scripture.¹²

The Scriptures also give numerous examples of the need for a faithful translation of the words of Scripture into the target language (Neh 8:8; Matt 1:23; Mark 5:41; 15:22, 34; John 1:42; 9:7; Acts 9:36; 13:8; Heb 7:2; etc.). The translation of Scripture should remain as faithful as possible to both the form and content of the original.¹³

VI. Historical Context/Questions of Introduction. The Old Testament is largely a history book. The accounts of Creation, Fall, Flood, Patriarchs, emergence of Israel, Exodus, Conquest of Canaan, Judges, Kings, and Prophets of the United and divided Monarchy, Exile, Return, rebuilding of the Temple—all the persons, events and institutions of the Old Testament are presented as straightforward history. The OT prophets, Jesus, and the NT writers continually refer back to the earlier OT accounts, using these as historically reliable descriptions of God's real space-time interrelationships with His people. The historical context of biblical narratives is accepted at face value as true, and no attempt is made to reconstruct history in a different way than presented in the biblical record.

The NT writers and other early Christians, in their interpretation of the OT, show a remarkably clear acquaintance with the general flow and specific details of OT history (see, for example, Stephen's speech in Acts 7; Paul's discussion of the Exodus in 1 Corinthians 10). The typological arguments of the NT writers assume the historical veracity of the persons, events, and institutions that were types; in fact, the whole force of their typological

argument depends upon the historicity of these historical realities.¹⁴

In the inner-Scriptural hermeneutic of biblical writers mention is often made of various questions of introduction, and these questions sometimes become crucial to the Bible author's argument. In each case, the plain declaration of the text is accepted as accurately portraying the authorship, chronology, and life setting for the text. For example, the Davidic authorship of Psalm 110 (as stated in the superscription of the psalm) is crucial to Jesus' final clinching, unanswerable argument concerning His Messiahship (Matt 22:41-46). Again, Davidic authorship of Psalms 16 and 110 is also crucial to Peter in his Pentecost sermon to convince the Jews of the predicted resurrection of the Messiah (Acts 2:25-35).

The life setting (*Sitz im Leben*) of Abraham's justification by faith in the Genesis account is very significant in Paul's argument to the Romans. He shows that Abraham was justified before he was circumcised (Rom 4:1-12). For Paul there is no need to reconstruct a hypothetical life setting to explain this account. The apostle—and all the other biblical writers—consistently accept the life setting that is set forth in the biblical text.

Thus by precept and example Scripture underscores the importance of interpreting the biblical material in its literal, historical sense, including details of chronology, geography, and miraculous divine interventions in history. For the illumination of the historical background of a given passage, it is helpful to consult appropriate Bible dictionaries, atlases, commentaries, surveys of biblical history and archaeology, etc.

VII. Literary Context and Analysis. For the biblical writers the literary context of the Scriptures was no less important than the historical context. Scripture is not only a history book, but a literary work of art. Recent study is giving increasing attention to the literary characteristics and conventions of Scripture.¹⁵

Scripture itself gives us countless explicit and implicit indicators of the presence of its literary qualities and the importance of recognizing these as part of the hermeneutical undertaking.

One of the first tasks in interpreting a given passage in its immediate literary context is to determine the limits of the passage, in terms of paragraphs, units, or stanzas. The paragraph and

chapter divisions of our modern versions of the Bible have been added much later than biblical times. But the Bible writers often provide indicators of passage limits and in their spirit-guided interpretation of antecedent Scripture show awareness of these discreet units of Scripture.

The book of Genesis, for example, is divided neatly into ten sections, each identified by the phrase "the generations [*toledôth*] of . . ." In the Psalms, along with the superscriptions introducing individual psalms, a number contain (a) stanzas that naturally divide the sections of the psalm (see, for example, Ps 42:5, 11; 43:5), or (b) the word "selah" (71 times in the Psalms: see, for example, Ps 46:3, 7, 11), or (c) an acrostic (see Psalm 119, with each succeeding block of eight verses starting with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet).

The Bible writers repeatedly identify their written materials in terms of specific genres or literary types. A few samples include: "history" or "account" (Hebrew, *toledôth*, Gen 2:4, plus 12 more times throughout Genesis), legal material (Exod 21:1; Deut 4:44, 45; and throughout the Pentateuch), covenant making and renewal (for example, the whole book of Deuteronomy; see Deut 29:1, 14, 15), riddles (Judg 14:10-18), court chronicles (for example, 1 Kgs 9:1), psalms (with various subdivisions of types of psalms, indicated in the superscriptions) or songs (Cant 1:1), proverbs (Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1), prophetic oracles or "burdens" (Hebrew, *massâ*, Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1; Mal 1:1), visions (Dan 8:1-2; Obad 1), covenant lawsuit (Hebrew, *rib*, Isa 3:13; Hos 4:1; Mic 6:1), lamentation (Hebrew, *qinah*, Ezek 27:32; Amos 5:1; Lamentations), gospels (Mark 1:1), parables (Mark 4:2), "figures" (Greek, *paroimia*; John 10:6; 16:25), epistles or letters (Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 5:9; 2 Pet 3:1, 16), and apocalyptic prophecy (Greek, *apokalypsis*, Rev 1:1).

Each of these genres has special characteristics that emerge from a careful study, and these characteristics are often significant in interpreting the message. Literary form and interpretation of content go hand in hand.

In a more general depiction of literary genre, the Biblical materials separate themselves into poetry and prose. The poetic sections of Scripture (some 40% of the OT) are characterized particularly by various kinds of parallelism ("thought rhyme") and to

a lesser degree by meter and stanzas (or strophes). The prose may be of various kinds, such as narrative, legal and cultic material.

The literary structure, both on the macro-structural and micro-structural levels, is a crucial part of the analysis of a passage, often providing a key to the flow of thought or central theological themes. Bible writers have structured their material by such devices as matching parallelism (see the book of Jonah¹⁶), reverse parallelism (or chiasm, for example, the books of Leviticus¹⁷ and Revelation¹⁸), inclusio or "envelope construction" (see Ps 8:1-9; 103:1, 22), acrostic (Psalms 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145), *qinah* (3+2 meter, as in the book of Lamentations¹⁹), and relationships with suzerainty treaty components (as in the book of Deuteronomy²⁰).

Many other literary techniques and conventions, and stylistic elements are utilized by the biblical writers. We find the employment of irony, metonymy, simile, metaphor, synecdoche, onomatopoeia, assonance, paronomasia (pun/play on words), etc. All these literary features are important for the biblical writer as they contribute to the framing and forming of the message. They also assist the interpreter as he/she seeks to understand the meaning of a given passage.

VIII. Grammatical/Syntactical/Semantic Analysis. Scripture, and in particular the NT interpretation of the OT, provides evidence for engaging in the analysis of the grammatical forms and syntactical relationships, with attention to the meaning of words in context, in order to arrive at the plain, straightforward, sense of the passage being interpreted.

A classic example of grammatical sensitivity on the part of the NT writers is Paul's interpretation of the word "seed" in Galatians 3. Citing Genesis 12:7, 22:17-18 and 24:7, Paul recognizes that the singular form of "seed" narrows in meaning to single "Seed"—the Messiah—(Gal 3:16). A few verses later (Gal 3:29) he correctly points to the collective plural aspect of this same term in its wider context.²¹

A vivid example of the apostle's syntactical sensitivity is in the citation of Psalm 45:6-7 in Hebrews 1:8-9: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

Therefore God, your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." The syntax of the Hebrew original points to One who is God, who is also anointed by God, thus implying the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Godhead.

Numerous examples in NT writings reveal care in representing faithfully the meaning of crucial words in the original OT passage. See, for example, the use of "the just shall live by *faith*" (Rom 1:17 citing Hab 2:4²²); the selection of the LXX *parthenos* ("virgin") to best represent the Hebrew *'almāh* of Isaiah 7:14 ("A virgin shall conceive . . .," Matt 1:22-25, RSV²³); and Christ's use of the word "gods" in John 10:34, citing Psalm 82:6.²⁴

Numerous other examples may be cited, where the NT quotation of an OT passage involves the NT writer's recognition of the wider context of the OT citation. This larger OT context is frequently the key to understanding the interpretation drawn by the NT writer. For example, C. H. Dodd has shown how Peter alludes to the larger context of Joel 2 in his Pentecost sermon, and how Matthew's interpretation of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15 is not taking the OT passage out of context, but rather is seeing it in the larger context of the eschatological/Messianic New Exodus motif in Hosea and other eighth-century prophets.²⁵

The grammatical-syntactical and semantic-contextual analysis often becomes more involved for us today than for those whose native tongue was the living biblical Hebrew/Aramaic or *koine* Greek languages. It is wise now to make judicious use of appropriate grammars, lexicons, concordances, theological wordbooks, and commentaries.

IX. Theological Context/Analysis. The biblical writers provide abundant evidence for the need to ascertain the theological message of a passage as part of the hermeneutical enterprise.

For examples, Jesus lays bare the far-reaching theological implications of the Decalogue in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:17-28). The Jerusalem Council sets forth the theological import of Amos 9:11-12—that Gentiles need not become Jews in order to become Christians (Acts 15:13-21). Paul captures the theological essence of sin in various OT passages (Rom 3:8-20) and of righteousness by faith in his exposition of Genesis 15:6 and Psalm

32:1-2 (Romans 4). Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2) delineates the theology of inaugurated eschatology found in Joel 2, and his first epistle explores the theological dimensions of the Messiah's atoning work as set forth in Isaiah 53 (1 Pet 2:21-25).

The theological messages of the NT writers presuppose, build upon, and stand in continuity with, the major OT theological themes such as God, Man, Creation, Fall, Sin, Covenant, Sabbath, Law, Promise, Remnant, Salvation, Sanctuary, and Eschatology.

The NT writers also place their theological analyses of specific passages within the larger context of the multiplex "grand central theme" of Scripture as set forth in the opening and closing pages of the Bible (Genesis 1-3; Revelation 20-22²⁶): creation and the original, divine design for this world, the character of God, the rise of the cosmic, moral conflict (Great Controversy), the plan of redemption-restoration centering in Christ and His atoning work, and the eschatological judgment and end of sin at the climax of history.

The theological thought-patterns of NT writers, though expressed in Greek, stay within the trajectory of biblical Hebrew thought, and do not imbibe alien thought-forms of the prevailing culture such as Gnosticism and Platonic dualism.²⁷

In their exploration of the "deeper" theological meaning of Scripture—for example, the typological fulfillment of OT persons, events, and institutions—the NT writers do not read back into the OT what is not already there. Rather they remain faithful to the OT Scriptures, which have already indicated which persons, events, and institutions God has divinely designed to serve as prefigurations of Jesus Christ and the Gospel realities brought about by Him.²⁸ The NT writers simply announce the antitypical fulfillment of what had already been verbally indicated by the OT prophets.

The NT writers do not give an exhaustive list of OT types, but show the hermeneutical procedure, controlled by the OT indicators, for identifying biblical types. Furthermore, NT writers provide a theological (salvation-historical) substructure for interpreting the eschatological fulfillment of OT types. Based upon a clear theological understanding of the theocratic kingdom of Israel and the kingdom prophecies within the context of covenant blessings and curses, the NT reveals a three-stage fulfillment of the OT types and

kingdom prophecies: (1) in Christ, (2) in the church, and (3) in the apocalyptic concluding events of salvation history. Each stage has a different modality of fulfillment based upon the nature of Christ's presence and reign.²⁹ Thus the NT writers have worked out a sound hermeneutic for interpreting the types and kingdom prophecies of the OT, built upon solid controls arising from the OT Scriptures.

X. Practical Application. For the NT writers, the contemporary application arose naturally out of their theological interpretation of OT passages. We have just noted how the application of the types and kingdom-prophecies of the OT emerged from understanding the three-stage fulfillment within salvation history. All the promises of God have their yes and amen in Christ (2 Cor 1:20). Likewise all the OT types find their basic fulfillment in Him; and if we are spiritually part of the body of Christ, we share in the fulfillment of those prophetic and typological promises and yet await their final, glorious, literal, end-time apocalyptic fulfillment. These basic hermeneutical principles dealing with the fulfillment of Israel-centered prophecies in the NT provide a Christocentric approach which safeguards against dispensationalism and literalism.

The biblical writers insist that the message of Scripture is not culture-bound, applicable only for a certain people and a certain time, but is permanent and universal. Peter, citing Isaiah 40:6-8, forcefully states, "having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you" (1 Pet 1:23-25).

Most of the ethical instruction in the NT gospels and epistles may be seen as the practical application of OT passages: for example, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, (Matt 5:17-32) applying the principles of the Decalogue; James' application of the principles of Leviticus 19 throughout his epistle;³⁰ and Peter's ethical instruction building on "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet 1:16, citing Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7).

Of course, it is true that certain parts of the OT, in particular

the ceremonial/sanctuary ritual laws and of Israel's civil/theocratic laws, are no longer binding upon Christians. As I have shown elsewhere,³¹ the NT writers do not arbitrarily (by a casebook approach to Scripture) decide what laws are still relevant, but they consistently recognize the criteria within the OT itself indicating which laws are universally binding.

The general principle, then, articulated and illustrated by the NT writers in their practical application of Scripture, is to assume the transcultural and transtemporal relevancy of biblical instruction unless Scripture itself gives us criteria limiting this relevancy. As William Larkin states: "All Scripture, including both form and meaning, is binding unless Scripture itself indicates otherwise."³²

The final goal of interpreting Scripture is to make practical application of each passage to the individual life. Christ and the NT apostles repeatedly drove home the message of the gospel contained in the Scriptures in order to bring the hearers or readers to salvation and an ever closer, personal relationship with God.

At the Exodus God articulated a principle: Each succeeding generation of Israel should consider that he/she personally came out of Egypt (Exod 12:26-27; 13:8-9), and this principle of personalization was repeated many times, both to OT Israel (Deut 5:2-4; 6:20-21; Josh 24:6-8) and to spiritual Israel (Gal 3:29; Rev 15:1-2; 2 Cor 5:14-15, 21; Rom 6:3-6; Eph 1:20; 2:6; Heb 4:3, 16; 6:19; 7:9, 10; 10:19-20; 12:22-24). The Scripture should ultimately be read, and accepted as if I were the participant in the mighty saving acts of God—"I was there!"—as if God's messages were personally addressed to me (cf. Gal 2:20). They are God's living and active Word to my soul.

Biblical Hermeneutics: Past and Present

The hermeneutical approach we have seen emerge from Scripture, was continued in the early church, largely in the school of Antioch. Typical Antiochene interpreters were concerned to uphold the plain, literal-historical sense of Scripture. Their hermeneutic was founded upon the same basic presuppositions as we have set forth from Scripture, and their exegesis followed essentially the same specific guidelines as those we have found utilized by the biblical writers in their hermeneutic of antecedent Scripture.³³

Unfortunately, this hermeneutic was overshadowed by, and finally, officially eliminated in favor of, the allegorical approach popularized by the Alexandrian school. For a thousand years the Alexandrian *Quadrige* (the "four-horse chariot" of the allegorical method) held sway in the Roman Catholic Church, although there was always a minority that, often despite persecution, accepted the full and supreme authority of the Scriptures in its plain and literal sense.

The Reformation interpreters broke with the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, and returned to the biblical hermeneutic of historical-literary-grammatical-theological analysis that became known as the grammatical-historical method. This method has had able proponents since Reformation times, although in the wake of the Enlightenment, the historical-critical method, with human reason or human experience as the final authority instead of Scripture, has often overshadowed and even eclipsed the biblical hermeneutic of the Reformation in many circles of Scripture study.

The Millerite movement had its inception in the preaching of William Miller, and Miller developed a simple set of 13 rules for interpreting the Bible.³⁴ These hermeneutical rules simply represent the historical-grammatical approach to interpretation as set forth in Scripture and practiced by the Reformers, and give special attention to the interpretation of prophecy. All early Adventist pioneers used these principles. In 1884 Ellen White could write: "Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted."³⁵ After quoting the first four of these rules, that summarize basic hermeneutical principles, she adds: "in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth."

The Adventist Theological Society unashamedly affirms the hermeneutic of the biblical writers, and their successors over many centuries—the grammatical-historical approach toward Scripture, and rejects the allegorical method of Alexandria and medieval Catholicism and the historical-critical method of the rationalistic Enlightenment and its successors.

In so doing, we also maintain the Reformers' (and Millerites') historicist hermeneutic of apocalyptic prophecy, which has been eclipsed in virtually all of Christendom today except the Seventh-

day Adventist Church. Seventh-day Adventists are the hermeneutical heirs of the Bible writers, the Reformers, and those who followed them.

The historic Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutic, reaffirmed by ATS,³⁶ is not mere traditionalism, an outmoded approach to Scripture held by Christian interpreters from a by-gone age. Nor is it a "hybrid" hermeneutic seeking to combine some of the old "proof-text" methodology³⁷ with more scientific tools of biblical research.

As we have documented here in this study, the grammatical-historical, or historical-biblical approach to Scripture, is none other than the approach based on the biblical writers themselves. It is the hermeneutic of Scripture according to the Scriptures.

Conclusion

Our study calls for a radical decision on the part of those who are willing to hear. It calls for nothing less than a conversion experience—I call it a third conversion experience. The first conversion experience is conversion to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; the second conversion experience is the conversion to the teachings of the Bible as given by the Holy Spirit (for many believers the second conversion unfortunately comes before the first); the third conversion experience is conversion to the hermeneutic of Scripture. Are we willing not only to accept Jesus, not only to accept the teachings of Scripture, but also to accept the *way* of interpretation of the inspired biblical writers—their divinely guided hermeneutical presuppositions, principles and procedures? Only this third conversion will allow us to function with a radically ("back to the roots") biblical hermeneutic. And only such an hermeneutic will provide a solid foundation for a theology that is utterly faithful to God's Word.

Endnotes

1 J. I. Packer, "Infallible Scripture and the Role of Hermeneutics," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), p. 325, provides this summary statement of Barth's position.

2 Carl F. H. Henry, "American Evangelicals in a Turning Time," *The Christian Century* 97/35 (5 November 1980): 1062, cited in Packer, p. 325.

3 See Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985); Gordon M. Hyde, ed., *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*

(Washington, DC: Biblical Research Committee, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974).

⁴ Richard M. Davidson, "The Authority of Scripture: A Personal Pilgrimage," *JATS* 1/1 (1990): 39-56.

⁵ See Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) for an overview of these hermeneutical approaches.

⁶ See, for examples, recent discussions of the atonement that have emphasized only one aspect of Christ's work and have thereby truncated the gospel, or discussions of God's character which have emphasized only the mercy of God without His justice, thereby vitiating His holiness.

⁷ See Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. vii, and idem, *Selected Messages*, Book 3, pp. 68-70.

⁸ Cf. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 8, and idem, *Selected Messages*, Book 1, pp. 21, 22.

⁹ See, e.g., Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 134-140; Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7-12*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), pp. 155-306.

¹⁰ David I. Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), p. 1.

¹¹ See Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982); George B. Caird, "The Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 5 (1959): 49-51; Richard M. Davidson, "Typology in the Book of Hebrews," chapter 7 in *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 4, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), pp. 121-186; idem, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), pp. 99-130; idem, "Revelation/Inspiration in the Old Testament: A Critique of Alden Thompson's 'Incarnational' Model," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers, vol. 1, ed. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), pp. 105-135; Charles H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures; The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Collins, 1952), pp. 59, 60; R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament; His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), pp. 38-80; Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985); Lester J. Kuypers, *The Scripture Unbroken* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978); Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1983); R. M. Moody, "The Habakkuk Quotation in Rom 1:17," *ExpT* 92 (1981): 205-208; etc.

¹² For a summary of the basic principles of textual analysis, see, e.g., Bruce K. Waltke, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), pp. 211-228; Gordon D. Fee, "The Textual Criticism of the New Testament," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), pp. 419-433; C. F. Sitterly and J. H. Greenlee, "Text and MSS of the OT," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 4:798-822.

¹³ For a discussion of the basic principles in translation method, see Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating, with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964); John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God, With Scripture and Topical Indexes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974); Sakae Kubo and Walter F. Specht, *So Many Versions? Twentieth Century English Versions of the Bible*, rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI:

Zondervan Publishing House, 1983); and Jack P. Lewis, *The English Bible from KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991).

¹⁴ Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typos Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981).

¹⁵ Unfortunately, however, this frequently comes at the cost of ignoring the historical nature of the material; Scripture is often treated in the same way as a modern work of fiction, with its own fictive story world. See, e.g., Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); idem, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, pp. 471-514; Meir Weiss, *The Bible from Within: The Method of Total Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1984).

¹⁶ Gerhard F. Hasel, *Jonah, Messenger of the Eleventh Hour* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1976), p. 101.

¹⁷ William Shea, "Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus," chapter 5 in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy, Daniel and Revelation* Committee Series, vol. 3, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), p. 149.

¹⁸ Kenneth A. Strand, "The Eight Basic Visions," chapter 2 in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), pp. 36, 37.

¹⁹ William H. Shea, "The *qinah* Structure of the Book of Lamentations," *Biblica* 60/1 (1979): 103-107.

²⁰ Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963).

²¹ Note in particular the usage of *zera'* in Gen 22:17, where the first occurrence of the word in the verse clearly has a plural idea in the context of "the stars of the heaven" and "the sand which is on the seashore," whereas the second occurrence of *zera'* in vs. 17b narrows to a singular "Seed" in the context of "his [singular] enemies." This usage parallels Gen 3:15, where in a similar way the word *zera'* moves from collective/plural to singular in meaning. See O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), pp. 93-103.

²² See Moody, pp. 205-208.

²³ See Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 266-268.

²⁴ See *ibid*, pp. 373, 374.

²⁵ Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, pp. 59, 60; cf. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, pp. 43-53.

²⁶ Cf. Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 125, 190.

²⁷ For analysis of Hebrew thought, see, e.g., Claude Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, trans. Michael F. Gibson (New York, NY: Desclee Company, 1960); Jacques B. Doukhan, *Hebrew for Theologians, A Textbook for the Study of Biblical Hebrew in Relation to Hebrew Thinking* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), pp. 191-218; and Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, trans. Jules L. Moreau (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970); Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960) (whose basic thesis has not been overturned despite criticisms of some lines of argumentation by James Barr, *A Semantics of Biblical Language* [London: Oxford University Press, 1961]). See also G. E. Ladd, whose *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) has shown the consistent biblical salvation-historical, inaugurated-consummated eschatological pattern throughout the NT. This is also true with regard to the book of Hebrews, despite numerous claims for Platonic dualism in the book. See Ronald Williamson's decisive refutation of these claims in *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970).

²⁸ See Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," pp. 106, 128.

²⁹ See *ibid*, pp. 106-108, 129, 130, and Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*, Andrews University Monographs, Studies in Religion, vol. 13 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1983).

³⁰ See Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, pp. 221-224.

³¹ Davidson, "Revelation/Inspiration in the Old Testament," pp. 119-125.

³² See William J. Larkin, *Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), p. 316, who lists various possible criteria for nonnormativeness within Scripture: "limited recipient, limited cultural conditions for fulfillment, limited cultural rationale, or a limiting larger context." Even these cases, Larkin argues, involve only the form, and not the meaning of Scripture, and call for the reduction of the cultural-specific form to a principle, and the substitution of a contemporary form compatible with it. See Larkin, pp. 316-318, for illustrations drawn from the way the NT writers used the OT.

³³ See David Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), pp. 103-128.

³⁴ See the reprint of these in P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 299, 300.

³⁵ *RH* 11/25/1884.

³⁶ See George W. Reid, "Another Look at Adventist Hermeneutics," *JATS* 2/1 (1991): 69-76, for analysis of the traditional SDA hermeneutic as essentially the same as upheld by ATS, in opposition to the new historical-critical paradigm shift in the Seventh-day Adventist Church starting in the 1950's.

³⁷ What some describe in a distorted way as "proof-text" method is simply the principle of "the Bible as its own expositor" discussed as IIIA above and utilized by Jesus and all the NT writers. There is, of course, an illegitimate "proof-text" approach which takes biblical passages in isolation without regard for their original context, and makes them "prove" what in fact they do not teach. This illegitimate usage of biblical texts has been a pit into which proponents of the historical-critical method have fallen no less often than those following the historical-grammatical approach.

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ELLEN WHITE ON THEOLOGY, ITS METHODS, AND THE USE OF SCRIPTURE

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Seventh-day Adventists consider Ellen White (1827-1915) one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its most influential writer. The following discussion focuses on how she views theology, theological method, and its use in advancing divine truth. First we will look at her attitude toward theology. Then we will investigate what she has to say about theological methods.

Ellen White distinguishes two types of theology. The theology she approves of she calls "true" or "sound" theology. Theology she warns against is popular or objectionable theology.

Ellen White's Attitude Toward Theology

Characteristics of True Theology. Ellen White would like to see "in every school" a theology characterized by "the most simple theory."¹ The Bible contains a "system of theology and philosophy" that is both "simple and complete,"² yet "sublime."³ It is so profoundly simple that even a child can understand it. Yet at the same time, so profoundly sublime that it baffles the intellectual giant.⁴

Scripture's "grand central theme" consists of "God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption."⁵ The "central truth" of a vital theology is the "atonement of Christ;" thus, students will be exposed to "the wonderful theme of redemption."⁶ Its purpose is to make "us wise

unto salvation." It reveals "the love of God as shown in the plan of redemption" and provides the essential knowledge of Christ as our Savior.⁷

A vital theology is to be "saturated with the love of Christ." Its effect produces in believers a practical wholistic lifestyle: The diffusion of this love throughout the body "touches every vital part,—the brain, the heart, the helping hands, the feet," enabling people to stand firmly for God.⁸ It brings true vitality to the church and leads "to the doing of works that will bear fruit after the similitude of the character of God."⁹

True theology, as stated by Wycliffe, centers around the "distinctive doctrines of Protestantism—salvation through faith in Christ, and the sole infallibility of the Scripture."¹⁰ It continues the process of reform that began with the Protestant Reformation to lead people away from a dependence on human and ecclesiastical traditions. Among proponents who gave leadership to a vital theology she lists individuals in the Reformation heritage such as Wycliffe,¹¹ Luther,¹² Zwingli¹³ and Wesley.¹⁴ This she places in sharp contrast to Satan's strategy in directing people's attention to the "opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, . . . the voice of the majority" for deciding what is truth for faith.¹⁵

Characteristics of Popular Theology. Popular theology is characterized by false interpretations of Scripture. The origin of many of these errors may be traced to the "ages of papal darkness, that is the Dark Ages."¹⁶

The nature of this theology is speculative. It exalts human theories based on philosophy and theology above the Word of God and stands in sharp contrast to the eternal truths taught by the Bible writers.¹⁷ Its presence is widespread. "To a large degree," Ellen White writes, "theology, as studied and taught, is but a record of human speculation."¹⁸

Objectionable theology mixes religion with harmful amusements. She specifically rejects a theology which advocates that it is necessary for the health of patients to play cards and dance as a "pleasurable excitement to keep their spirits up."¹⁹

Major errors. Throughout her writings she comments on many errors in popular theology. Among the most prominent are the

doctrine of natural immortality,²⁰ the ministering spirits of the dead,²¹ the everlasting punishing in hell,²² the consciousness of the dead,²³ the transference of the biblical day of worship from Sabbath to Sunday,²⁴ and the abolition of God's moral law, the Decalogue.²⁵

Results of erroneous theology. The problem with erroneous theology is its detrimental effects on mind and judgment which exposes believers to temptations. The study of these speculations confuses the mind.²⁶ Says Ellen White, it "perverts the judgment and opens the door to temptation, and through its influence Satan seeks to turn hearts from the truth." For a defense she recommends "an intelligent love for the truth" which "sanctifies the receiver, and keeps him from the enemy's deceptive snares."²⁷

The theological errors which were introduced into the church during the ages of papal supremacy had a devastating effect. They created "an erroneous conception of God"²⁸ which led many to doubt and skepticism about the Bible as the Word of God.²⁹ "Thousands upon thousands" have become skeptics and unbelievers.³⁰

Unsound theology confuses the intellect and disqualifies a person for teaching. Speaking of Dr. Kellogg, she says, his "theology is not sound; his mind is confused, and unless he sees his danger, his foundation will be swept away when the test comes. Unless he sees his danger and makes a decided change, he can not be endorsed as a safe, all-round teacher."³¹

Incorrect approaches. There are two dangers against which Ellen White especially warns. One is a "scientific theology" which had come into the Battle Creek church in 1906. Its impact led people away from a true faith in God and raised questions about her writings.³²

The second danger is the work of higher criticism, also called historical criticism. It is the use of the historical-critical method for the study of the Bible. This approach she characterizes as "dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing" the Scriptures. The result is the destruction of faith in Scripture as the Word of God.³³ She considered it to be one of Satan's tools of deception. Through its "pleasing sentiments," she says, "the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths."³⁴

The reason for her strong opposition to higher criticism is that

it "is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation; it is robbing God's word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives."³⁵ She compares its influence to the destructive effect of tradition and rabbinical teaching in Christ's days.³⁶

In a sermon she ironically contrasts the higher critics, whom she identifies as "poor, finite man on probation," with the true Higher Critic, "the Lord God of the universe who has spread the canopy of the heavens above us, and has made the stars and called them forth in their order."³⁷

Motives for Studying Theology

Too often the study of theology is pursued with an incorrect motive: "An ambition to become acquainted with philosophers and theologians, a desire to present Christianity to the people in learned terms and propositions."³⁸ This is contrary to the true theology of Scripture with its emphasis on clarity and plainness.

Correct motives are directed by a desire to nourish food for both mind and soul.³⁹ When it comes to motives for studying theology in non-SDA institutions Ellen White calls attention to the motives of the Waldenses studying in Roman Catholic institutions. The purpose of their study was evangelistic: sowing "the seeds of truth in other minds" while getting an education. However, this mission was not for all young people and leadership is to handpick those qualified. It was only for those who possessed the special spiritual qualifications: "Strong young men, rooted and grounded in the faith" with "a living connection with God."⁴⁰

Today's objectives for such a study would be similar: Students "would have a wider field for study and observation," be associated "with different classes of minds," and obtain "an acquaintance with the workings and results of popular methods of education, and a knowledge of theology as taught in the leading institutions of learning." This education will prepare students for the specific mission of laboring for "the educated classes" as well as combating "the prevailing errors of our time."⁴¹

The Objectives of Theology

Researching and interpreting the Bible is a delicate occupation. Ellen White points out that "all who handle the word of God

are engaged in a most solemn and sacred work."⁴² The objectives of this important work that Ellen White sees follow.

Use Correct Principles of Interpretation. One of the foremost objectives for those engaged in theology is finding the correct principles to interpret the Bible. These principles are found in "the Bible and the Bible only." There students will discover the vital principle that "the Bible is its own interpreter."⁴³ This principle she fully endorses in her account of the conflict between the Protestant reformers and the papacy.⁴⁴ The principle of the Bible interpreting itself, one part of Scripture interprets another⁴⁵ within its own biblical context⁴⁶ is basic for all interpretation.

Acquire Sound Wisdom. A correct interpretation of Scripture requires the possession of sound wisdom. This wisdom comes only with much personal effort. "We cannot obtain wisdom without earnest attention and prayerful study."⁴⁷ The study of Scripture generates the quality of wisdom necessary for successful discovery of truth.

Search for Salvation. God desires that all should obtain salvation. This salvation "depends on a knowledge of the truth contained in the Scriptures." It is, therefore, obvious that one of the most important tasks of individuals engaged in theology is to "search the precious Bible with hungry hearts."⁴⁸

The Bible, she remarks, "contains the science of all sciences, the science of salvation."⁴⁹ The quest for truth, therefore, should never stop. "The more we study the Word with a simple, trustful heart, the more we understand the path we must travel in order to reach the Paradise of God."⁵⁰

Study Qualifies for Soul-winning. Again and again we are impressed with Ellen White's stress on the practicality of Bible research. The gospel truths must be shared.⁵¹ It is through digging "deep in the Scriptures of truth," with weeping, fasting and praying that a person becomes qualified "to go forth and watch for souls as they that must give an account."⁵² Thus Bible study is crucial in the development of soul-winning strategies.

Concentrate on the Biblical Text. Another objective of theology is to understand the biblical text. Ellen White encourages a search to discover the meaning of difficult passages. Some Scriptural passages "are easily understood," but "the true meaning of

other parts is not so readily discerned."⁵³ This underscores the need for serious Bible study so as to grasp the meaning of these difficult passages.

There is the need to discover the deeper meaning of Bible passages. In the words of Scripture there lies a significance that must be discovered, going beyond the surface. In reflecting on Christ as "the truth," she says, "His words are truth, and they have a deeper significance than appears on the surface."⁵⁴

Ellen White warns against a shallow understanding of the truth. "We must not be satisfied with superficial knowledge," but "seek to learn the full meaning of the words of truth, and to drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles."⁵⁵ This enterprise, demands "careful thought as to the meaning of the sacred text."⁵⁶ Much searching of the Bible, therefore, is an indispensable requirement for its understanding.

Understand the Historical-Cultural Setting. A realistic picture of the historical, cultural context of biblical episodes leads to an improved understanding of both the past and the present. To achieve this Ellen White suggests going back in our minds to the original scene. She illustrates this by an episode from the life of Christ, inviting the readers to "enter into the thoughts and feelings" of His disciples. "Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deep lessons."⁵⁷ In doing so, Ellen White does not endorse the view that the key to the knowledge of the Bible is its socio-cultural context of the surrounding religious, political, and social institutions. The proper and supreme context of the Bible for understanding is the revelation of God embodied in the Bible itself.

Separate Truth from Errors. Ellen White challenges the researcher to rescue God's truth from the erroneous interpretations that have accumulated throughout the centuries: "There is a great work to be done by the earnest Bible student; for gems of truth are to be gathered up, and separated from the companionship of error."⁵⁸ Errors have crept into theology over many centuries, but the Bible will be the guide to separate error from truth. "There are errors and inconsistencies which many denounce as the teaching of the Bible that are really false interpretations of Scripture, adopted

during the ages of papal darkness."⁵⁹ What looks like an inconsistency or error does not seem to be one in fact for those who "cling to the Bible as it reads, and stop. . . criticisms in regard to its validity."⁶⁰

Bible Study: Medium of Communication. Ellen White says that "the Bible is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ."⁶¹ She encourages digging deep into this most precious mine to gather its magnificent gems. "The study of the Scriptures is the means divinely ordained to bring men into closer connection with their Creator, and to give them a clearer knowledge of His will." Such study "is the medium of communication between God and man."⁶²

Avoid Criticism: Affirm God's Character. In colorful terms she addresses those trying "to correct the errors of the Bible:" "In seeking to make plain or unravel mysteries hid for ages from mortal man, they are like a man floundering about in the mud, unable to extricate himself and yet telling others how to get out of the muddy sea they themselves are in."⁶³ Confidently she adds, "No man can improve the Bible by suggesting what the Lord meant to say or ought to have said."⁶⁴ Instead of criticizing the Bible we must reveal to the world God's true character.⁶⁵

Recognize Unfolding Nature of Scripture. Bible truth is progressive. It "is an advancing truth."⁶⁶ It is true that "we have some understanding of the inspired books of the Old and New Testament," but "there is much that even in our day we do not see and comprehend."⁶⁷ There is "need of deep research"⁶⁸ to discover "new aspects of truth in both the Old and New Testament," and see "the exceeding breadth and compass of truths which we imagine we understand, but of which we have only a superficial knowledge."⁶⁹

There is a "need for thorough and continuous searching of the Scriptures for greater light. We must watch with earnestness that we may discern any ray of light which God shall present to us."⁷⁰ "We are to catch the first gleamings of truth," she says, that "through prayerful study clearer light may be obtained, which can be brought before others."⁷¹ It is God's will that His people "should be ever moving forward, to receive the increased and ever-increasing light which is shining for them."⁷² "We must walk in the increasing light."⁷³ It is obvious that the new light and advanced

truth brings new responsibilities that will profoundly effect the behavior and mission of the church.

Examine the Foundations of Our Faith. Ellen White indicates that the new light God has given to Seventh-day Adventists should “lead us to a diligent study of the Scriptures, and a most critical examination of the positions which we hold. God would have all the bearings and positions of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting.” Its purpose being that the believers’ faith should “be firmly founded upon the word of God so that when the testing time shall come and they are brought before councils to answer for their faith they may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.”⁷⁴

Ellen White encourages an open-minded attitude towards the traditional Seventh-day Adventist interpretations, saying that “there is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error.”⁷⁵

She warns against the idea that all teachings of the church are infallible. The fact that certain doctrines have been held “as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.”⁷⁶ She says that “in closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth, in comparing scripture with scripture, we may discover errors in our interpretations of Scripture.” She confidently promises that if such a “search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value will be found. The word of God is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ.”⁷⁷

“Truth is eternal,” she says, “and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength. . . . If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it.”⁷⁸ This “investigation,” however, should follow the proper principles of interpretation.

Principles Underlying Methods of Theology

Ellen White bases the methods of theology on three characteristics of the Bible: uniqueness, authority and unity.

The Uniqueness of the Bible. *Authorship.* The Bible is

different from all other books. Its uniqueness rests in its divine authorship. “The Bible,” Ellen White says, “points to God as its author.”⁷⁹ All its revealed truths are “given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Yet this awareness does not come without thoughtful study. “The evidence of the truth of God’s word is in the word itself.”⁸⁰ This means that one must become personally acquainted with the Bible. “A settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures,” she writes, comes “through personal experience,” in “a knowledge of God and His word.”⁸¹

Infallibility and Trustworthiness. When theologians deal with the Bible they must have confidence in its accuracy and reliability. Assurance in its accuracy is associated with the understanding of inspiration. Ellen White views inspiration as a process. First, God qualifies persons to communicate His truth.⁸² Then, He guides “the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write.”⁸³ She observes that the Bible has been written in human language and “everything that is human is imperfect.”⁸⁴ But although God communicates His testimony “through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God.”⁸⁵ It is important not to forget the function of the Bible: It “was given for practical purposes.”⁸⁶ Human language, therefore, imperfect though it may be, can still function as an accurate and trustworthy vehicle for communication of eternal truths.

The sacred text has been remarkably preserved by God throughout history in spite of the work of some copyists, who, influenced by tradition, when copies were few, have tried to improve the text “when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain.”⁸⁷

The Bible is “to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will.”⁸⁸ “Man is fallible,” she states, “but God’s Word is infallible.”⁸⁹ The Bible is “the unerring standard” by which all ideas must be tested.⁹⁰

Ellen White rejects the claim that the Bible contains contradictions. Such a conclusion derives from a “superficial knowledge” of the Bible.⁹¹ Rightly understood it reveals “perfect harmony.”⁹²

The Authority of the Bible. *Source.* Like its uniqueness, the authority of the Bible is rooted in God’s authorship. It is “God’s voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with

our ears."⁹³ Consequently the Bible is the "only infallible authority in religion."⁹⁴ Humans are to receive it as the "supreme authority."⁹⁵

Extent. Its authority extends over faith, doctrine, experience,⁹⁶ history,⁹⁷ science,⁹⁸ human wisdom,⁹⁹ and extra biblical revelation.¹⁰⁰ Ellen White always recognizes the Bible as the supreme norm by which everything, including her own works, ought to be tested.¹⁰¹

Although not in favor of creeds, she urges people to adopt a creed for their lives: "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed."¹⁰²

In speaking about the extent of its superiority, she states that "God's holy word needs not the torch light glimmer of earth to make its glories distinguishable," because "it is light in itself—the glory of God revealed, and beside it every other light is dim."¹⁰³ Therefore she warns: "Never let mortal man sit in judgment upon the Word of God."¹⁰⁴

This view has far reaching implications for the theological approach to Scripture. It means that a study of the Bible itself is far more valuable than the study of the great writers of theology.¹⁰⁵

The Unity of the Bible. Fundamental to the unity of the Bible is its divine authorship.¹⁰⁶ This view has profound implications on the nature and relationship of the books that make up the Scriptures.

Harmony of Scripture. A unique characteristic of the Bible is the harmony that exists between the books that compose it. Although written by various persons, each writer, "under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all."¹⁰⁷

Many do not see this unity. First, it requires divine illumination. Ellen White points out that only "the illuminated soul sees a spiritual unity, one grand golden thread running through the whole but it requires patience, thought, and prayer to trace out the precious golden thread."¹⁰⁸ Second, biblical harmony is discovered through a thorough research of the Scripture. Said she, "He who earnestly searches the Scriptures will see that harmony exists between the various parts of the Bible; he will discover the bearing

of one passage upon another, and the reward of his toil will be exceedingly precious."¹⁰⁹

Progressive revelation. An understanding of the concept of progressive revelation as the unfolding of previous divine revelation is important in perceiving the unity of the Bible. This concept is a divine design that is carefully interwoven throughout the Scriptures. Ellen White writes that "the Scriptures were given to men, not in a continuous chain of unbroken utterances, but piece by piece through successive generations, as God in His providence saw a fitting opportunity to impress man at sundry times and divers places. Men wrote as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost."¹¹⁰

Progressive revelation can be illustrated with the ancient prophets. They received special illumination from the Spirit, but they did not fully comprehend "the import of the revelations committed to them. The meaning was to be unfolded from age to age, as the people of God should need the instruction therein contained."¹¹¹ These new insights "unfolded from age to age" were always in full harmony with previous revelations.

Ellen White saw a striking example of progressive revelation in the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. She states: "The Old Testament is the gospel in figures and symbols. The New Testament is the substance. One is as essential as the other."¹¹² This intimate unity explains her statement that "the Savior is revealed in the Old Testament as clearly as in the New."¹¹³ "The New Testament does not present a new religion; the Old Testament does not present a religion to be superseded by the New. The New Testament is only the advancement and unfolding of the Old."¹¹⁴

Divine revelation in the lives of the Bible writers brought about unique literary productions characterized by a harmonious unity in diversity, not uniformity. She wrote: "The Lord gave His word. . . through different writers, each having his own individuality. Each has an experience of his own, and this diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of varied minds."¹¹⁵ Consequently "the thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold, making the very hearing monotonous. In such uniformity there would be a loss of grace and distinctive beauty."¹¹⁶ The distinctive-

ness of the different Bible books are needed for the biblical message to penetrate human hearts.

Limitations of Theology

Theology as practiced by human beings has serious limitations. "In the Word of God many queries are raised," Ellen White writes, "that the most profound scholars can never answer."¹¹⁷ The reason for this is that the "word of God, like the character of its divine Author, presents mysteries that can never be fully comprehended by finite beings."¹¹⁸ In the research of the Scriptures one may go as deep as possible, "and yet there is an infinity beyond."¹¹⁹

To keep human achievements in theology in their proper perspectives she brings out that it must "be emphasized, and often repeated, that the mysteries of the Bible are not because God has sought to conceal truth, but because our own weakness or ignorance makes us incapable of comprehending or appropriating truth. The limitation is not in His purpose but in our capacity."¹²⁰

The differences between the finite creature and the infinite Creator should always be kept in mind by the researcher and interpreter. This difference, Ellen White says, makes it impossible "for created beings to attain to a full understanding of God and His works."¹²¹ "The depth of human intellect may be measured; the works of human authors may be mastered; but the highest, deepest, broadest flight of the imagination cannot find out God. There is infinity beyond all that we can comprehend."¹²²

Illustrating the magnitude and grandeur of the Word of God, she writes, "It is impossible for any human mind to exhaust even one truth or promise of the Bible. One catches the glory from one point of view, another from another point; yet we can discern only gleamings. The full radiance is beyond our vision. As we contemplate the great things of God's Word, we look into a fountain that broadens and deepens beneath our gaze. Its breadth and depth pass our knowledge. As we gaze, the vision widens; stretched out before us we behold a boundless, shoreless sea."¹²³

This view of human limitations should keep persons humble in their theological statements.

Proper Methods of Theology

Miller's Principles Endorsed. William Miller's principles of interpretation, which underlie the foundations of SDA theology, Ellen White fully endorses. Said she: "Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted." His method consisted of "simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation."¹²⁴

The successful use of these methods is intimately connected with the exercise of genuine faith: "Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering."¹²⁵ Several of the following concepts can be found among Miller's principles.

Bible only. In light of the general departure from Bible truth Ellen White stresses the "need of a return to the great Protestant principle—the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty."¹²⁶ She states that "searching the Scriptures alone will bring the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."¹²⁷

In the quest for an understanding of Bible truth it is not imperative to study extra-biblical sources while they may illuminate certain backgrounds, the divine revelation in the Scriptures is fully adequate. "All that man needs to know and can know of God," she says, "has been revealed in His Word and in the life of His Son, the great Teacher."¹²⁸

The whole canon of the Scriptures should be the context in which the student operates. The student "should learn to view the Word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts."¹²⁹ This view cautions against the practice of using a "canon within a canon" that draws conclusions from a constricted Bible in which a certain topic is elevated to function as most important theme at the expense of equally important other themes.

The Role of the Spirit of Prophecy. The relation between the Bible and the operation of the Spirit of Prophecy at the end of time (Rev 12:17; 19:10) is carefully defined. The Bible, Ellen White writes, assures true believers continual guidance by the Holy Spirit. God also has promised in the Bible to give "visions in the 'last days;' not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to

correct those who err from Bible truth."¹³⁰ The reason for this role of the Holy Spirit in the end-time is because "little heed is given to the Bible." Through the Spirit of Prophecy "the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light."¹³¹ Ellen White makes the following comparison: "In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the testimonies of His Spirit."¹³²

The Testimonies. What is the relation of Ellen White's messages or testimonies to the Bible? They are not an addition to the Bible, but an aid in its understanding. "God," she said, "has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it."¹³³ They are not to give "new light" but "to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed." She emphasizes that "additional truth is not brought out; but God has through the *Testimonies* simplified the great truths already given and in His own chosen way brought them before the people to awaken and impress the mind with them, that all may be left without excuse."¹³⁴

Although these testimonies are not new light, they contain light that corrects errors and defines truth: "The Lord has given me much light that I want the people to have for there is instruction that the Lord has given me for His people." She adds that "this is now to come before the people, because it has been given to correct specious errors and to specify what is truth."¹³⁵

The establishment of the foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church shows the intimate relationship between the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Often Ellen White's visions would confirm the results of the Bible studies of the Adventist Sabbathkeepers during the formative years. However, there were a few times when the Bible conferences were stalled and her visions broke the deadlock and guided the believers to the correct biblical solution. The truth—"especially concerning the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and the message of Heaven for these last days, as given by the angels of the fourteenth chapter of Revelation," she says, "has been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord." It is God Himself, she declares, who "through His Word and the testimony

of His Spirit" has revealed the permanence of these "fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority."¹³⁶

Definition of the "Bible only." An analysis of Ellen White's use of the phrase "the Bible and the Bible only" reveals that she contrasts it with human "views and ideas,"¹³⁷ erroneous traditions on the Sabbath and the Law of God,¹³⁸ mistaken opinions of scholars, scientists, theologians,¹³⁹ "sayings and doings of men,"¹⁴⁰ "human wisdom,"¹⁴¹ false visions,¹⁴² views of the churches steeped in "popular theology" from which the early Adventists separated themselves,¹⁴³ the "religions of fable and tradition," "imaginary religion," "a religion of words and forms," and "tradition and human theories and maxims."¹⁴⁴ These phrases show that she uses the "Bible only" to contrast biblical truth with the *unbiblical* positions of religious traditions, experience, ecclesiastical position and human reason.

The expression the "Bible only" was never contrasted with her own writings. In Ellen White's mind there was perfect harmony between the Bible and her writings because "the Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and the author of the spirit of prophecy."¹⁴⁵ Therefore, "it is impossible that the teachings of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word."¹⁴⁶

This unique relationship between the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy has given the latter a place above all extra-biblical sources. Consequently in the study of the Bible the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy (Ellen White) hold a superior position over other research tools. Ellen White maintains that her writings while in harmony with the Bible are not to be added to the Bible. As noted above she maintains that the Spirit of Prophecy writings are the "lesser light to lead men and women to the great light [the Bible]."

The Use of Non-Inspired Christian Writings. As to the religious value of non-inspired Christian sources, she says, "the opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority,—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith."¹⁴⁷

On the value of commentaries she remarks that "many think that they must consult commentaries on the Scriptures in order to

understand the meaning of the word of God." She does not object to their use, stating, "We would not take the position that commentaries should not be studied," but cautions that "it will take much discernment to discover the truth of God under the mass of the words of men."¹⁴⁸ She says, "many think it essential to acquire an extensive knowledge of historical and theological writings" because "they suppose that this knowledge will be an aid to them in teaching the gospel" but "their laborious study of the opinions of men tends to the enfeebling of their ministry, rather than to its strengthening."¹⁴⁹

Bible: Self-interpreting. Ellen White believes that Scripture is the key to understand Scripture and to unlock the treasure house of truth. She recommends Miller's rule: "Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound it to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom, is my rule, not the Bible."¹⁵⁰

In explaining her position she remarks, "we are not to accept the opinions of commentators as the voice of God" because "they were erring mortals like ourselves. God has given reasoning powers to us as well as to them. We should make the Bible its own expositor."¹⁵¹ The operation of this method she places within the broad perspective of Christ's role within the great controversy between good and evil.¹⁵²

Theological methods, therefore, must be derived from the Bible. The two following methods are the result of this rule.

The Analogy of Scripture. For the understanding and development of doctrine Ellen White endorses Miller's method of the analogy of Scripture: "To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error."¹⁵³ This method teaches that to understand Bible doctrine correctly, it is first necessary to collect all Scripture passages on a certain subject, and then to try formulating the doctrine without the slightest contradiction.

She explains it as follows: "Make the Bible its own expositor, bringing together all that is said concerning a given subject at

different times and under varied circumstances."¹⁵⁴ "Compare verse with verse, and you will find that Scripture is the key which unlocks Scripture."¹⁵⁵ One passage of Scripture will prove "a key to unlock other passages, and in this way light is shed upon the hidden meaning of the word, By comparing different texts treating the same subject, viewing their bearing on every side, the true meaning of the Scriptures will be made evident."¹⁵⁶

This method began to be extensively used during the Protestant Reformation¹⁵⁷ and is still to be employed. She not only recommends this method of Bible study in a general way but recommends the use of this method to understand difficult passages.¹⁵⁸ It is the method on the basis of which the Bible student discovers the hidden or true meaning of the text,¹⁵⁹ to gain new insights,¹⁶⁰ to correct misinterpretations,¹⁶¹ and to solve theological disagreements and perplexities among believers.¹⁶²

Typology. The second approach again derived from Scripture is the typological method. It is intended to reveal the true meaning of the type and the fulfillment of its antitype. Ellen White fully endorses the typological method as legitimate in the formulation of doctrine.

Its importance she illustrates by the experience of Christ's disciples whose faith was founded on the testimony about Christ in "the types and prophecies of the Old Testament."¹⁶³ Christ the "originator" of the Jewish ceremonial system of worship of types and symbols designed it to teach "spiritual and heavenly things"¹⁶⁴ and important truths concerning the atonement.¹⁶⁵ Its ritual, pointing to "future redemption,"¹⁶⁶ represented the "gospel in symbol."¹⁶⁷ "Great truths" are revealed by this system which has as its "central object" to point people to "the Lamb of God that was to take away the sin of the world."¹⁶⁸ The scope of the typological method is immense for it pertains not only to Christ's sacrifice at the cross but also to His heavenly priesthood which lasts till the end of the world.¹⁶⁹

Contextual Considerations. Ellen White approves of Miller's method that "every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible."¹⁷⁰ This means that each word of a particular subject must be in harmony with the context of the whole Bible.

She opposes the proof text method, which disregards the proper context, warning against the practice of some who "in order to sustain erroneous doctrines or unchristian practices" use certain "passages of Scripture separated from the context, perhaps quoting half of a single verse as proving their point, when the remaining portion would show the meaning to be quite the opposite."¹⁷¹ Her personal use of texts indicates that she has no objection against using a string of texts to prove a point provided they are in harmony with the whole Biblical context on the subject.

Lifestyle and Theology

Using proper methods in theology will not automatically guarantee sound theology, new truth, proper insights, concepts, or discoveries. The lifestyle of the theologians is crucial to the value and quality of their theology.

The successful outcome of correct methods of theology Ellen White links intimately with the spiritual condition of the interpreter. Correct theological discoveries, therefore, come only as the results of diligent and prayerful study of the Bible.

Persons engaged in the pursuit of theology, be they professionals or laity, must have a vital connection with Christ,¹⁷² daily growing in grace,¹⁷³ and living a righteous life.¹⁷⁴ Their lifestyle has to be characterized by walking obediently in the present light,¹⁷⁵ including the light of health reform,¹⁷⁶ and involves purging sin from their lives.¹⁷⁷ Humility instead of pride should dominate their attitudes¹⁷⁸ and a willingness to accept and apply old truths.¹⁷⁹ Chosen and illuminated by the Holy Spirit,¹⁸⁰ they will constantly advance in proportion to the light¹⁸¹ and recognize the Spirit of Prophecy as a continuing source of truth.¹⁸²

When any of these lifestyle characteristics are absent there is no assurance that the result of their theological study is sound or can be trusted.

Finally, it is important to realize that it is a lifestyle of cherishing Christ's principles which is the determining element in the judgment.¹⁸³ "Those whom Christ commends in the Judgment, may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them."¹⁸⁴ Among the saved will be

persons who have had "no opportunity to understand the philosophy of theology"¹⁸⁵ as known in the popular theology of the world.

Endnotes

- 1 MS 156, 1898 (*Evangelism*, p. 223).
- 2 *Special Testimonies on Education*, p. 53.
- 3 *That I May Know Him*, p. 8; see "The Bible a Means of Both Mental and Moral Culture," *Review and Herald*, Sep. 25, 1883.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Education*, p. 190.
- 6 MS 156, 1898 (*Evangelism*, p. 223).
- 7 *Special Testimonies on Education*, 53. See also, *Counsels to Parents, Students and Teachers*, p. 422; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 129.
- 8 "Principles of Service," *Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1910.
- 9 "What God Is," *Southern Review*, Jan. 1, 1901.
- 10 *Great Controversy*, p. 89; Cf. *ibid.*, p. 102.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 79-96.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 120-170. Luther's hope for the success of true theology was the younger, not the older generation for they had not yet been educated in error (Ellen G. White, "Summoned to Augsburg," *Signs of the Times*, 06-28-83).
- 13 *Great Controversy*, pp. 171-184.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 253-264.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 595.
- 16 *Testimonies*, 5:710,711.
- 17 *Great Controversy*, p. 126. See also Ellen G. White, "Luther at Wittenberg," *Signs of the Times*, June 7, 1883.
- 18 *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 380.
- 19 *Manuscript Releases*, 5:380. This view was the result of the theology of Dr. Jackson.
- 20 *Great Controversy*, p. 551.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 *Spirit of Prophecy*, 4:356.
- 23 *The Faith I Live By*, p. 174; White, *Great Controversy*, p. 546.
- 24 *1888 Materials*, p. 780.
- 25 *Great Controversy*, pp. 260-264.
- 26 *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 380.
- 27 "The Christian Pathway," *Signs of the Times*, Mar. 6, 1884.
- 28 *Testimonies*, 5:710,711.
- 29 *Great Controversy*, p. 525.
- 30 *Testimonies*, 5:710,711.
- 31 *Battle Creek Letters*, 87.
- 32 "Hold Fast the Beginning of Your Confidence," *Review and Herald*, Aug. 9, 1906. See *The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters*, p. 66; White, MS 61, June 3, 1906.
- 33 *Education*, p. 227.
- 34 *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 474. His other tools are "evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism (*ibid.*).
- 35 *Education*, p. 227.
- 36 *Ministry of Healing*, p. 142.
- 37 MS 43a, 1894.
- 38 *Ministry of Healing*, p. 442.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 *Testimonies*, 5:583, 584; Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 1:354.
- 41 *Testimonies*, 5:584.

- 42 MS 4, 1896 in *Manuscript Releases*, 4:55.
 43 See e.g., *Great Controversy*, p. 173. Cf. *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 106.
 44 *Fundamentals of Education*, p. 187.
 45 *Child Guidance*, p. 511.
 46 See *Great Controversy*, pp. 102, 126, 132, 173.
 47 *Christian Education*, p. 58.
 48 *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 111.
 49 *Ibid.*, p. 107.
 50 *Upward Look*, p. 54.
 51 See MS 4, 1896 in *Manuscript Releases*, 4:55, 56.
 52 "My People Have Committed Two Evils," *Signs of the Times*, Oct. 2, 1893.
 53 *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 108.
 54 *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 110. See *Christian Education*, p. 59; *Steps to Christ*, pp. 90-91.
 55 "Search the Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, Oct. 9, 1883.
 56 *Ibid.*
 57 *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 1.
 58 "The Bible Our Guide," *Bible Echo*, Oct. 15, 1892.
 59 *Testimonies*, 5:710.
 60 *Selected Messages*, 1:18.
 61 *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 107.
 62 *Great Controversy*, p. 69.
 63 *Selected Messages*, 1:16.
 64 *Ibid.*
 65 *Testimonies*, 5:710.
 66 *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 33.
 67 "Imperative Necessity of Searching for Truth," *Review and Herald*, Nov. 15, 1892.
 68 *Ibid.*
 69 "Bible Our Guide."
 70 *Testimonies*, 5:708.
 71 *Ibid.*
 72 *Ibid.*, pp. 708-709.
 73 *Writers and Editors*, p. 33.
 74 *Testimonies*, 5:708.
 75 "Christ Our Hope," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 20, 1892; White, *Writers and Editors*, p. 35.
 76 *Ibid.*
 77 "Treasure Hidden," *Review and Herald*, July 12, 1898.
 78 *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 107.
 79 *Great Controversy*, p. v.
 80 *Testimonies*, 8:157.
 81 *Ministry of Healing*, p. 462.
 82 *Selected Messages*, 1:26.
 83 *Ibid.*
 84 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 85 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
 86 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
 87 *Early Writings*, pp. 220-221.
 88 *Great Controversy*, p. vii.
 89 "A Missionary Appeal," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1885.
 90 *Ministry of Healing*, p. 462.
 91 *Selected Messages*, 1:20.
 92 *Christian Education*, p. 194.
 93 *Testimonies*, 6:393.
 94 See *Great Controversy*, p. 238. Cf. *ibid.* p. 177.
 95 *Testimonies*, 6:402.

- 96 See *Great Controversy*, p. vii.
 97 *Bible Echo*, Aug. 1891; White, *Christian Education*, p. 65. Here she said that in the Bible only can we find "the history of our race unsullied by human prejudice or human pride."
 98 *Fundamentals of Education*, p. 181.
 99 See *SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:1079.
 100 *Selected Messages*, 2:85-100.
 101 *Ibid.*
 102 *Selected Messages*, 1:416.
 103 *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 111.
 104 *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:919.
 105 "Bible Study," *Review and Herald*, Jan. 11, 1881.
 106 *Great Controversy*, p. v.
 107 *Ibid.*
 108 *Selected Messages*, p. 20.
 109 "Bible Our Guide," Cf. "Searching for Truth."
 110 *Selected Messages*, 1:19-20.
 111 *Great Controversy*, p. 344.
 112 *Selected Messages*, 2:104.
 113 *Desire of Ages*, p. 799.
 114 *Testimonies*, 6:392.
 115 *Selected Messages*, 1:21-22.
 116 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 117 *Ibid.*, 3:310.
 118 *Steps to Christ*, p. 106.
 119 "Bible Study."
 120 *Education*, p. 170.
 121 "The Mysteries of the Bible a Proof of Its Inspiration," *Bible Echo*, July 15, 1889.
 122 *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 113.
 123 *Education*, p. 171.
 124 "Notes of Travel," *Review and Herald*, Nov. 25, 1884.
 125 *Ibid.*
 126 *Great Controversy*, p. 204, 205.
 127 *Fundamentals of Education*, p. 415.
 128 MS 124, 1903 in *Bible Commentary*, 6:1079.
 129 *Education*, p. 190.
 130 *Early Writings*, p. 78.
 131 "An Open Letter . . .," *Review and Herald*, Jan. 20, 1903.
 132 *Testimonies*, 5:661.
 133 *Ibid.*, p. 663.
 134 *Ibid.*, p. 665.
 135 Letter 127, 1910 in *Selected Messages*, 3:32. The published source has a typographical error. It refers to Letter 117 instead of 127.
 136 *Selected Messages*, 1:208.
 137 "Missionary Appeal."
 138 *Great Controversy*, p. 448.
 139 *Ibid.*, p. 595.
 140 *Counsels on Sabbath Work*, p. 84.
 141 *Fundamentals of Education*, p. 200.
 142 *Selected Messages*, 2:85.
 143 *Writers and Editors*, p. 145.
 144 *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 624-626.
 145 Letter 92, 1900.
 146 *Great Controversy*, p. vii.
 147 See *Great Controversy*, p. 595.
 148 *Fundamentals of Education*, pp. 187-188.
 149 *Ministry of Healing*, p. 441.

- 150 "Notes of Travel."
 151 *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 106.
 152 See *Education*, p. 190.
 153 "Notes of Travel."
 154 "Search the Scriptures."
 155 *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 437.
 156 *Fundamentals of Education*, p. 187; cf. *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 437.
 157 See e.g., *Great Controversy*, p. 203.
 158 *Christian Education*, 59; *Steps to Christ*, p. 90-91.
 159 *Fundamentals of Education*, p. 187; "Bible Study" *Signs of the Times*, Sept. 26, 1895.
 160 See, *Testimonies*, 4:499.
 161 MS 4, 1896 in *Manuscript Releases*, 4:56.
 162 *Great Controversy*, pp. 354, 423; cf. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 476.
 163 *Desire of Ages*, p. 799.
 164 *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7:933.
 165 *Great Controversy*, p. 420.
 166 *SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:1094.
 167 *Prophet and Kings*, p. 489.
 168 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 594.
 169 *Ibid.*, 365; *Great Controversy*, p. 352.
 170 "Notes of Travel."
 171 *Great Controversy*, p. 521. Cf. Judas' approach in White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 719.
 172 *Writers and Editors*, p. 35; *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 130-131.
 173 *Testimonies*, 5:706.
 174 *Writers and Editors*, pp. 34,35.
 175 *My Life Today*, p. 310. Cf. *Testimonies*, 2:67.
 176 *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 70-71.
 177 *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 464-465.
 178 "Be Zealous and Repent," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 23, 1890.
 179 *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 127; *Testimonies*, 5:369.
 180 *Gospel Workers*, p. 297; "Be Zealous."
 181 *Testimonies*, 5:534.
 182 See, *Life Sketches*, pp. 198-200.
 183 *Maranatha*, p. 320.
 184 *Desire of Ages*, p. 638.
 185 "Ye Did It To Me," *Signs of the Times*, August 7, 1893.

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THE INFLUENCE OF PHILOSOPHICAL AND SCIENTIFIC WORLD VIEWS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY

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Next year (1994) marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Great Disappointment (October, 1844) and the subsequent development of the Seventh-day Adventist church.¹ Since this time the denomination produced a Bible commentary (7 volumes),² a Bible Dictionary,³ a couple of Sourcebooks,⁴ and an Encyclopedia,⁵ as well as major books on various biblical topics.⁷ It has not as yet published a full-fledged systematic theology in which all doctrines unfold in an inner coherence to form a system true to Scripture.⁸

Traditionally, Seventh-day Adventists consider themselves a "people of the Book." They believe in the Bible as God's word. It is a reliable presentation of divine thoughts in human language, and is best understood when Scripture interprets Scripture (*sola Scriptura*). Furthermore they believe that all of the Bible (*tota scriptura*) and only the Bible (*prima scriptura*) is the foundation of doctrinal truths.

But this has not been the customary method of approach throughout the history of theology. Rather, throughout much of the Christian era, theologians have relied upon extra-biblical sources to inform and interpret biblical truths. This reaching beyond the Bible has often distorted the comprehension of biblical truths. Such a method could do the same to Adventist theology if we ever lose

sight of the supreme and unique place of Scripture in our quest to understand truth.

The danger is especially present as we come to the end of the second millennium for, even among some Adventists, videos, tapes and pamphlets are often gaining more attention than the Bible. These Adventists could become vulnerable to repeat history. Moreover, today some Adventist scholars use historical critical methods. These are extra-biblical tools that alter the biblical message just as surely as some of the philosophical and scientific views we will mention in this article. So, in contemporary Seventh-day Adventist experience, both on a popular and scholarly level, the Bible is often removed from its place of primacy, and substituted by human ideas and methods. Those trapped in the David Koresh phenomenon in Waco, Texas, represent what can happen to any person who turns away from the Bible's authority to follow human ideas.

The names of the scholars and their contributions discussed in this article may be unfamiliar to some readers of *JATS*. Yet the unfolding saga, of which they are a part, is important for us to know. It is well that we know history, so that we will not repeat its mistakes. In this article we will briefly consider some of the major philosophical and scientific influences on the development of Christian theology.

Because of space limitations the present article will be confined to: 1. Theological method in the pre-modern era. 2. Theological method in the modern era. 3. The contribution of science to theological method in the 20th century. Of necessity, we will be selective, and consider only a few of the main influences. We will not consider evolutionary science, as it deserves an article by itself.

Theological Method in the Pre-Modern Era

In speaking about theological method, we will confine ourselves to the way Christian theology related to philosophy and science, and how the world views of the latter influenced it. A world view determines the way we look at reality, the way we look at God, humanity, nature, Scripture and even theological method.⁹ For example, is God far removed from humankind, or immanently within the race? Is the world flat or round? Is the universe a

three-decker cosmos with heaven above the earth and hell beneath it, or is our planet just a part of a great system related to other systems in the vastness of space?

At the end of the twentieth century we find a plurality of world views. There are at least thirteen world views classified under three major types: Material (Naturalism, 5 kinds), Spiritual (Transcendentalism, 5 kinds) and a Personal God (Theism, 3 kinds).¹⁰ But it was not always this way.

For centuries things were much more simple. There seemed to be a unified world view. Not that everyone thought alike, or agreed on everything. No, some of the most vehement theological debates took place in the early centuries over the nature of Christ and the reality of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the same way of looking at reality was shared by the majority. The world view of the pre-modern (pre-sixteenth century Reformation) was largely a unified one, based upon the thinking of Aristotle (Greek philosopher, d. 322 B.C.), Ptolemaeus (Alexandrian astronomer, 2nd century A.D.), and broadly accepted biblical interpretations.¹¹ Another authority that contributed to the unified world view was the Roman Catholic church. For centuries the authority of the Roman Catholic church was virtually unchallenged before the Greek Orthodox exodus from it in A.D. 1054, the Protestant Reformation revolt against it from A.D. 1517 on, and the challenge of science beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹²

Another contributor to this unified world view was a conscious bridge-building (synthesis) between Greek ideas and biblical data. The following shows how indebted Christians became to Greek thinking. For example, the early church fathers, in their evangelistic zeal to convey the meaning of Christianity to those steeped in Greek philosophy, sought to express biblical truths in their philosophical categories. This kind of synthesis has a background in Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.-42 A.D.). Philo, a Jewish philosopher, "blended Old Testament thought with Greek Stoicism and Platonism. Much early Christian exposition of scripture was influenced by his work."¹³

Origen allowed Platonic thought to influence his theology more than he realized.¹⁴ His *Dei Principiis* (On First Principles, 220-230 A.D.) was the first Christian system of theology.¹⁵ August-

tine, whose theology was the foundation for the Church for a millennium, "remained under the control of Neo-Platonism."¹⁶ So leading defenders of the faith and the first two of the greatest theologians (Origin and Augustine) all reached beyond the Bible in order to interpret and communicate biblical truths. In this way the Bible was removed from its place of supremacy.

Toward the end of the twelfth century (A.D.) the discovery of long lost works by Plato, Aristotle and Ptolemy, among other Greek writers, together with Jewish and Arabian commentaries on these works, gave renewed impetus to synthesize the Greek world view with the biblical world view. The ultimate result was the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Thus, the two main theological systems that undergird Catholic theology (Augustine and Aquinas) were dependent to a large degree upon the philosophical and scientific world views from ancient Greek philosophy. The use of philosophical categories was not without effect on the biblical data. Rather than helping to communicate biblical truth, Greek categories often hindered its communication.

In his encyclical letter, prefacing the theological system of Thomas Aquinas, Pope Leo XIII affirms: "philosophy is great, in that it is reckoned a bulwark of the faith, and as a strong defence of religion."¹⁷ Even in our time, Vatican II (1963-1965) encourages a study of philosophy as prerequisite for an understanding of theology.¹⁸ But is philosophy really a bulwark for theology and an aid to its understanding?

If theology leans on philosophy, what happens when that philosophy is outmoded? This question confronted the Catholic church when the Aristotelian world view collapsed. Theology built on a world view derived from subjective speculation is no match for a world view derived from scientific observation.¹⁹

The theology of the Catholic church was built upon a foundation that was waiting to be challenged. And the challenges came from several scholars, including Galileo (d. 1642), and it took the church until 1992 to admit officially his contribution.

It is time to mention some specific adverse effects of philosophical world views on theology. The influence was not merely on peripherals, but altered central truths. For example, the truth about God. Platonic²⁰ and Aristotelian philosophy perceived the

world of the gods (*noetos*) as the real world, but the world of humans (*aisthetos*) as merely a shadow of the real world. Between these two worlds was an unbridgeable chasm (*chorismos*).²¹

Now, if the gulf between God and mankind is unbridgeable, then Christ's two advents would be impossible. Consequently, these biblical truths were rejected, because they did not fit into the confines of the Greek world view. This same dualism was also found in Ptolemaic cosmology that posited a gulf between two realms: the realm above the moon (supralunar) and the realm below the moon (infralunar).

This basic philosophical dualism between gods and humans found its way into medieval theology with God as an unmoved Mover transcendent beyond the race. Dualism continued in Newton's mechanistic science (17th century) with a Deistic God separated from humans. It is found in Kant's philosophy (18th century), with its distinction between the spiritual (noumenal) separated from the observed (phenomenal), so that God, as He is in Himself, is removed from human knowledge, which is confined to the observable. Dualism is a fundamental world view in the "closed universe theory" of the NT scholar Rudolf Bultmann (20th century), where the supernatural is separated from the natural, so that there is no inbreaking of the supernatural into space and time. In this closed universe the incarnation, miracles and second advent are events that could never take place.²²

Dualism has had an even wider influence on one doctrine held by nearly all Christians throughout the Christian era, and even today. This is the Greek dualism of an immortal soul and a mortal body, which lies behind the theory that the soul survives death in an immediate passage to heaven.²³ This one example shows to what extent philosophy has influenced biblical truths, distorting them rather than communicating them. In this way Greek philosophy ended up doing the very opposite of what it was intended to do. It became a hindrance rather than a help. It distorted Scriptural truth.

It seems clear that non-biblical world views, ancient and medieval, philosophical and scientific, used by theologians in an attempt to do justice to biblical truths, have only done the opposite. Likewise, those in the Seventh-day Adventist church who use

historical-critical methods, or the casebook method, do so to interpret and communicate biblical truths. But critical methods hinder rather than help in the interpreting and communicating of truth just as surely as do extra-biblical philosophical and scientific world views in which they are rooted. The classic modern example is Bultmann's drive to communicate the essence of the Gospel. But his philosophical world view actually jettisoned that essence, so that he had little left to communicate.

The ideas of Aristotle concerning the impassibility (changelessness) of God impacted theology for centuries, and are another form of dualism in positing an unnecessary distinction between what God and humans experience. Thus Augustine rejected the changeableness of God, Aquinas believed God was incapable of suffering, and Calvin said He was "not sorrowful or sad, but remains forever like Himself in his celestial and happy repose."

What these theologians failed to think through was the changeableness in God, demonstrated by the incarnation, and the suffering of God, demonstrated by the crucifixion. This dependence upon Greek categories unwittingly opened up the way for Process theology (twentieth century) that challenges the impassibility of God, at the cost of making God dependent upon the world and unable to know the future. The biblical world view shows a God who is not dependent upon the world, knows the future, and is not dependent upon Greek thinking to be understood. After all, incarnation and crucifixion are incredible moments of revelation of what God is like.

Theological Method in the Modern Era

Science (Darwin) and philosophy (Descartes, Hume, Kant, Heidegger) have had a profound influence upon modern and post-modern theology, and some biblical interpretation.²⁴ We need to review some of the history leading up to this fact. The modern world view issues out of the Renaissance of the sixteenth century, the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and scientific discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will give a brief overview of some of the roots that fashioned the twentieth century milieu in which we must work out a theological method.²⁵ Only major representatives of this period will be con-

sidered—Rene Descartes (1596-1650), David Hume (1711-1776), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and Albert Einstein (1879-1955). Preceding these thinkers was a largely unified medieval world view. We now need to penetrate deeper into that world view as a background for understanding the contributions of these four men.

The medieval world view perceived the earth as the center of the universe (geocentric). This view dominated western thought from Plato (427-347 BC) to Copernicus (1401-1464),²⁶ although some ancient Greeks believed the sun was its center (heliocentric: for example, the Pythagorean school). The medieval world view, which had adopted the Ptolemaic geo-centric world view of post-NT times, was questioned by Copernicus. The revolution begun by Copernicus was continued by Galileo (1564-1642) and Newton (1642-1727). Galileo built a telescope in 1609 and began to document what Copernicus theorized. He also discovered that the moon was not smooth but contained mountains and valleys and the Milky Way was full of stars. His scientific discoveries threatened earlier Greek philosophical teachings, whose world view formed the basis of Catholic theology.

In 1638 Galileo published his *Dialogues on the Two Sciences*, "on motion, acceleration, and gravity, and furnished the basis for the three laws of motion laid down by Sir Isaac Newton in 1687."²⁷ Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, 1687) is "generally considered one of the greatest single contributions in the history of science. The book includes Newton's fundamental laws of motion and theory of gravitation. It was the first book to contain a unified system of scientific principles explaining what happens on the earth and in the heavens."²⁸ Newton's influence reached beyond science to effect theology.

The scientific discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton overthrew the earlier Greek "scientific" world view which had influenced Catholic theology. The earlier Greek world view was in large part dependent upon philosophical speculations. By contrast, the new world view was based upon scientific observations. The Catholic Church opposed the new science for more than two hundred years. The Church clung to an outmoded and false world view and held onto a theological method and content indebted to it.

That history is a sorry example of basing theology and theological method on extra-biblical and philosophical sources.

When experimental science exposed the fallacy of philosophical science (Aristotle) that undergirded Catholic theology, the church as well as its theology was affected. The scientific revolution brought a revolt from the authority of church and Scripture. When the philosophical foundation of the church crumbled from the advances in science, the church scrambled to keep its authority. Its decree in 1616 did not repudiate the new findings of science. Rather, exponents "were condemned not so much because they defended the heliocentric theory but because they claimed that this theory was consonant with the teaching of Scripture."²⁹ Yet Galileo opposed Aristotelian ideas found in Catholic theological tradition, rather than opposing scripture.³⁰ Because the Aristotelian foundation of church theology was shown to be in error by the new science, the wisdom and authority of the church was called in question. By extension, the Bible as the proper basis for church theology was also called in question. For the revolt against all authorities included a revolt against biblical authority.

With the challenge of science to church authority, and by extension to biblical authority, the floodgates opened for other authorities.³¹ The Bible was an innocent victim. The new science had rightly exposed the inadequacy of the foundation of Catholic theology, but it had not discovered any inadequacy in a biblical foundation for theology. Rejection of Aristotelian authority was legitimate. Rejection of biblical authority was illegitimate. This rejection of biblical authority has had profound affect on subsequent biblical scholarship and the development of the historical-critical methods. Besides this, rejection of authorities does not make sense, because it undermines the ability of scientists to do science. Every scholar, in whatever discipline, must accept the work of authorities in the discipline, because it is impossible for any one person to verify all that has been researched by others.

Today humans depend upon many authorities. In fact, "Most of what we believe, we believe on authority."³² It is obvious that modern science could not function without its own belief in scientific authority.³³ "The method of disbelieving every proposition which cannot be verified by definitely prescribed operations would

destroy all belief in natural science."³⁴ It is important to note that science had not shown the Bible to be invalid. It exposed as false the method used to interpret the Bible from an Aristotelian and Ptolemaic perspectives. Biblical interpretation was at fault, not the Bible itself. The same problem was to be repeated when Darwin published his *Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). His theories opposed the teaching of the Church rather than the teaching of Scripture. The sad fact is that the Bible would not have become suspect if the church had developed its theology inductively from Scripture alone. For the biblical world view is not at odds with the new discoveries from nature.³⁵

Rene Descartes (1596-1650).³⁶ Known as the father of modern philosophy,³⁷ Descartes wanted to be the new Aristotle for the Church, by providing it with a philosophical substructure to replace the Aristotelian. He believed the new science also needed a new philosophy. He set out to sever natural theology from cosmology, that is, to separate faith from knowledge. Rather than looking to nature for evidences of God (as practiced in medieval theology), he proposed looking within human experience to an innate God. He believed this would take theology away from the domain of natural science and protect it from further scientific attacks.³⁸

Descartes wanted to protect the church and theology from any future onslaughts from scientific observation. The problem was that he attempted to be another Aristotle for the church. He thought he could supply a replacement philosophy to undergird Catholic theology. His philosophy was different, but the method was the same—dependence of theology on philosophy instead of upon Scripture alone.

Descartes sought certainty through a method of doubt. He methodically doubted everything except that he could doubt. That he was the one doubting demonstrated to him the fact that he existed. If he did not exist, then he could not doubt. He said, "*Cogito, ergo sum*" ("I think, therefore I exist"). In a slightly different way, this idea had been expressed by Augustine (354-430) in his words "*Si fallor, sum*" ("If I am deceived, I exist").³⁹

Descartes concluded that the only locus beyond the clutches of doubt (and by extension—safe from scientific critique) is the human mind. He looked to individual consciousness as the ultimate

criterion of truth.⁴⁰ He would develop a complete system upon a self-evidential basis without presuppositions.⁴¹ He "developed a method of demonstrating truths according to the order demanded by the exigencies of reason itself."⁴² Whereas Aristotle looked to human reasons (philosophical speculations), Descartes looked within human experience. Influences on theology from both mitigated against the fundamental basis of theology in Scripture alone.

Descartes' focus on human thought profoundly influenced philosophy and theology. His inward look was to influence Kant, Kierkegaard, Schleiermacher and subsequent Existentialism (focus on human existence), with an impact on biblical interpretation and theological method. His pathway to knowledge (epistemology) moved from man in an attempt to get to God (theology "from below"). So to an even greater degree than under Aristotle, theology was impacted by philosophy as it had already become impacted by science. Theology was impacted now by science and philosophy to a degree not realized in ancient and medieval times. Hitherto theology had always set the ground rules for science and philosophy. "Now this situation was reversed, and the findings of science were setting the problems for philosophy which in turn was beginning to define new rules for theology."⁴³

Much of modern theology has forgotten that authentic theological method turns Cartesian (Descartes) method upside down. Instead of "I think, therefore I exist" (Descartes), true theological method says, "God is, therefore I think."⁴⁴ The Bible says "In the beginning God" (Gen 1:1; cf. John 1:1). The Bible begins with God, and presents a movement of God to man, rather than the reverse. These methods move in opposite directions.

Not only is the pathway to knowledge opposite in these two methods, but a change of focus has taken place too. Ontology (ontic, being) was the focus of medieval and ancient theology.⁴⁵ Now thought (noetic) was to take precedence. In other words, the focus has slipped away from God to man, with the methodological starting point in man and not in God. As Thielicke notes, "Looking at his (Descartes) system we find pointers to whole stretches of philosophical and theological history. There is an increasing depersonalizing of God, whether as substance or idea."⁴⁶

Seventh-day Adventists need to ask what pathway to knowledge (epistemology) they should take. When studying the nature of Christ, should Adventists start from the human side and work up to the divine (called a Christology "from below"), or should they begin with the divinity of Christ and work down to His human nature (called a Christology "from above")? In the study of last day events, should Adventists begin with the newspaper and then go to Scripture, or should they begin with Scripture and interpret it on the basis of itself, independently of the daily news? In biblical interpretation should Adventists begin with cultural or sociological considerations and then move to Scripture, or should they begin with Scripture and allow its propositions to judge the passing cultural or sociological scene?

Descartes looked within. Theology became a study of man's experience, albeit Christian experience, rather than a study of God and His revelation in Scripture. Should Adventists look within as a criterion for truth rather than look to Scripture, which alone can judge any passing experience? Should Adventists judge Scripture by human reason (as in historical critical methods) or should they judge reason by Scripture, using sanctified and transformed reason?

Whereas Aristotelian philosophy was cosmocentric, Cartesian (Descartes) philosophy was anthropocentric. This set the stage for Hume and Kant, for reason (rather than nature) had become the principle instrument for obtaining knowledge. "Descartes initiates movements which come to full fruition only in the 18th and 19th centuries and which still have an incisive and pregnant impact upon the history of theology today."⁴⁷ Pre-Kantian philosophy is divided into two main types: rationalist in continental Europe (from Descartes to Wolff) and British empiricism down to and including Hume.⁴⁸ Both were a primary focus on human reason or experience apart from Scripture.

David Hume (1711-1776). Sometimes described as the father of empiricism⁴⁹ and positivism,⁵⁰ Hume sought to develop a science of human nature patterned after Newtonian science. In his *Treatise* he says, "In pretending, therefore, to explain the principle of human nature, we in effect propose a complete system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the one upon which they

can stand with any security." He claimed that all contents of the mind enter through experience. There are no innate ideas, no *a priori* thoughts, and all classical evidences for God's existence are jettisoned, including belief in metaphysics. Our look at Hume is brief, because he serves as an introduction to Kant's thinking which had an enormous impact on all subsequent thought.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant launched a veritable revolution in philosophy comparable to that caused by Copernicus in science.⁵¹ He did so by making a systematic investigation of reason's functions.⁵² Though Hume influenced him in some respects,⁵³ Kant reversed Hume's empiricist view that our ideas come only from experience.⁵⁴ For Kant "the human intellect does not draw its laws out of nature but reads them into nature,"⁵⁵ "so that those objects must in some sense conform themselves to the mind."⁵⁶ Whereas, for Plato, objects in the sense realm are but images of the non-physical realm,⁵⁷ for Kant "the objects of thought are none other than the products of thought itself."⁵⁸

How does this affect theology, or our knowledge of God? As Richard Grigg says, "Kant's analysis of *how* we know leads to a momentous conclusion about *what* we can know. We may be able to form an idea of God, but we can never be certain that anything in reality corresponds to that idea. The idea must always remain empty."⁵⁹ Compared to Aristotelian philosophy, not only was the pathway to knowing reversed by Descartes, but now the source of knowing God (from Scripture) was changed by Kant. God was not given in revelation. He was a construct of human thought, or at best a categorical imperative on which human thought depended.

Kant further reversed Hume's thesis by denying that things can be known "in themselves." Kant's position was that things can only be known as they appear (phenomenal), but never as they are in themselves (noumenal). As Torrance observes, "So far as Jesus Christ is concerned, it means that all knowledge of Jesus Christ in himself must be ruled out of account as mere pretence, for all that may be known of him derives from his appearance to his contemporaries or rather from what they made of his appearance for themselves; but in the nature of the case what they made of Jesus' appearance for themselves is not something which can be known in itself for we can do no more than claim to know what we can shape

for ourselves out of their objectifying operations. That is the devastating effect that Kant's inversion of the Newtonian mode of scientific knowing has had on so much New Testament scholarship in modern times."⁶⁰

Like Descartes, Kant was a Catholic and believed in God. He wanted to save religion and the Enlightenment.⁶¹ He opposed Rationalism that put so much focus on the ability of reason. He set out to demonstrate the limits of reason, and ended up with a limited God. At the age of seventy he wrote *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*.⁶² Religion was all that he could know within rational confines. Theology, however, can only be known from revelation.

"One of the major influences of Kant's thought upon Protestant theology was accordingly a gradual but increasing turning away from the propositional understanding of revelation and developing of other ways of understanding the nature and meaning of revelation."⁶³ This led to a non-cognitive understanding of revelation as seen in much of modern theology, represented by Schleiermacher (feeling), Brunner (encounter), Bultmann (preaching/*kerygma*) and Barth (Christ), just to name a few. Here, the very essence of biblical revelation was jettisoned through dependence upon Kantian philosophy. So Kant and Descartes, like Aristotle, presented different but human substitutes for the supremacy of Scripture.

Kant's influence led, in 1975, to a call for a new theological method. That year the American Academy of Religion published "An Essay on Theological Method" by Gordon D. Kaufman.⁶⁴ In it he asserts that the task of theology is not "to be restricted to the parochial confines of the church"⁶⁵ (an opposite position to Karl Barth).⁶⁶ Kaufman includes the world with all its cultures and religions as the broader context for doing theology.⁶⁷ Following Kant, Kaufman believes that the concepts or images of God are constructs of the human mind rather than objectively given to human thought,⁶⁸ and thus more subjective in origin. He concludes "that the distinctive and proper business of theology is neither interpretation of the vagaries of religious experience nor the exposition of the particularities of scripture or of church doctrines but analysis, interpretation and reconstruction of the concept and

images of *God*, as found in the common language and traditions of the West."⁶⁹

Kaufman calls for a "radical reconception of both the task of theology and the way in which that task can be carried out."⁷⁰ He calls for a new paradigm in theological method, which is really the logical outworking of the methodology of Kant, Schleiermacher and Hegel.⁷¹ As Clark Pinnock notes, "Kaufman has constructed an entire theology on the basis of relativity."⁷²

Consider the implications. If God is a mere construct of the human mind, then how can we arrive at a unified understanding about Him? Particularly, if all world cultures and religions are to contribute to an understanding of God. As no single mind can determine which construct is authentic, and thus act as normative, every mind is left to do its own constructing. The result is a pantheon of gods as numerous as the minds engaged in the task. This is pure relativism and idolatry. No meaningful understanding of God can arise from such an approach, let alone a unified comprehension necessary for doing theology.

This is one dead-end of Kantian method. It demonstrates how bankrupt theological method is when it leaves the firm ground of Scripture to build upon the sands of other sources. No human construct can replace the revelation of God in Scripture and still be called Christian, whether it be from Plato, Aristotle, Newton, Descartes, Hume, Kant or anyone.

Contribution of Science to 20th Century Theological Method⁷³

The new science⁷⁴ of the twentieth century caused a Copernican revolution in epistemology⁷⁵ comparable to that made in science and philosophy.⁷⁶ Albert Einstein's (1879-1955) work on relativity theories, quantum logic and field theory has, made him a foremost exponent of the new science. Newton's self-contained system "gave stability and intellectual guidance to science for nearly two hundred years," until the beginning of the twentieth century, when theoretical physics outgrew Newton's system."⁷⁷

Consider the world view of the new science.⁷⁸ Clerk Maxwell's (1831-1879) research in the microsphere discovered that light waves are electromagnetic and not mechanical.⁷⁹ His *Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* (1873) became the foundation for

electromagnetic theory.⁸⁰ Building on Maxwell's work, Einstein theorized the dynamic relativity between space and time.⁸¹ Einstein's relativity theory (special, 1905; general, 1915) is a theory of the mind, just as Newtonian physics and Kantian logic. But it penetrates deeper into the reality of the phenomenal world.

For example, the relativity theory rejects the Newtonian absolute space and absolute time for a one unified absolute space/time continuum. Thus a clock moving at near the speed of light would run slower than one on the ground, as seen by one on the ground; whereas a 200 foot spacecraft flying at 9/10ths the speed of light would appear as less than 100 feet long from mission control at Houston. As physicist Russell Stannard put it, "Depending on their relative motion, different people have different spaces and different times."⁸² Concerning movement in the cosmos, a planet travelling around the sun chooses the "shortest possible path throughout the four dimensional world" (general relativity), not because of the sun's gravitational force, as in Newton.⁸³ "Really, it's a new way of explaining gravity," says Adventist physicist Ray Hefferlin.⁸⁴

Einstein's theory of relativity and Planck⁸⁵/Bohr's quantum mechanics⁸⁶ constitute new world views in physics, hitherto dependent on Newtonian science and Euclidian geometry. The new world view is what Pannenberg calls an open universe,⁸⁷ in which the absolute laws of Newtonian physics can no longer deny divine miracles. The German physicist Werner Schaaffs notes that "even the physicist must officially concede the possibility of intervention by God."⁸⁸ Whether the theoretical possibility is translated into actual reality is a rather different issue in the mind of the scientist.

Besides this, natural philosophers believed fundamental concepts and postulates of physics were deduced from experience by abstraction. Einstein says that, "a clear recognition of the erroneousness of this notion really only came with the general theory of relativity, which showed that one could take account of a wider range of empirical facts, and that, too, in a more satisfactory and complete manner, on a foundation quite different from the Newtonian."⁸⁹

Einstein explains his method. "I am convinced that we can discover by means of purely mathematical constructions the concepts and the laws connecting them with each other, which furnish

the key to the understanding of natural phenomena. Experience may suggest the appropriate mathematical concepts, but they most certainly cannot be deduced from it. Experience remains, of course, the sole criterion of the physical utility of a mathematical construction. But the creative principle resides in mathematics."⁹⁰ Einstein believed that guidance by pure mathematics is essential because "the physical experience of the experimenter cannot lead him up to the regions of highest abstraction."⁹¹ Here Einstein goes beyond the confines of mere subjective thinking to mathematical objectivity.

Einstein speaks of the "stratification of the scientific system" in which there are layers or levels of reality. The lowest is what we see in everyday experience. Striving for logical unity takes the theorist up to the highest level.⁹² "Some scientists in our day have been trying to elaborate a new kind of logic on different levels, sometimes called 'quantum logic,' in order to give appropriate and adequate rational expression to the distinctive kind of connection between the geometrical and dynamic aspects of reality."⁹³ What is involved is the difference in approach⁹⁴ taken by classical physics, that observed concrete particulars and organized the data in a mechanical way, from the new science that looks at the totality "within which events, far from being isolated from one another in space and time, are already found in a field of continuous wave-like interconnections, where no single event can be apprehended adequately in indissociable relationship with the whole."⁹⁵

Some believe that the new science has opened up new ways to come to knowledge which are in harmony with theological method.⁹⁶ Theological method, if true to biblical objectivity, strives to grasp the totality of Scripture on any truth. Such a method breaks beyond the confines of a construct of the human mind to reach out to grasp reality in its own broad context. Relativity has shown that "what is observable cannot be represented with scientific precision without reference to what lies outside observation altogether."⁹⁷ Duns Scotus, Godel, Heim and Torrance speak of different levels of knowledge "which are coordinated through one another to the supreme level" in God.⁹⁸

The really decisive advance, according to Torrance, was Einstein's "establishing of mathematical invariances in nature

irrespective of any and every observer, in which he was able to grasp reality in its depth. This was decisive not only because it broke through the idealist-presuppositions⁹⁹ stemming from Kant but because it broke through the positivist concept of science"¹⁰⁰ (Positivists restricted knowledge to observational phenomena).

Karl Heim's book, *The Transformation of the Scientific World View*, speaks of the three major absolutes that have been removed.¹⁰¹ The three are: 1. Absolute object (matter and geocentric world view), 2. Absolute space and time, 3. Absolute determination of the world processes (#s 2, 3, Newtonian causal-mechanistic world view).¹⁰² All three absolutes were constructs of the human mind. They collapsed under the new science,¹⁰³ for "the absolute object lost its status as absolute when it appeared that two mutually complimentary pictures of the same object arose at the same point, varying in accordance with the condition of the subject and his means of observation, and that these two pictures could not be held together in one moment of intuition but could be related to one another only by means of non-intuitive mathematical formulae."

Newtonian absolute space and absolute time collapsed when it was demonstrated that spatio-temporal measurements are conditional on the state of the motion of the observer. Also, the position of an object and its momentum cannot be measured simultaneously. Hopper finds the new physics to reveal more of an unpredictable world than the deterministic mechanistic Newtonian world view. Karl Heim believes this is true of the microscopic realm.¹⁰⁴

Science underwent three major advances from the Pythagorean/Ptolemaic world view through the Newtonian world view to twentieth century science. What makes the new science different from the science of the previous two paradigms is its rejection of the "dualist bases of the two previous eras."¹⁰⁵ Some of these dualisms include absolute time/space, form/matter, appearance/reality, theoretical/empirical, concept/reality, explanation/understanding and subject/object. Torrance believes that the overthrow of these cosmological and epistemological dualisms constitute the new science as "one of the greatest transitions of history."¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Torrance believes the new science calls in question the historical-critical methods, because they attempt to

interpret Scripture "within a general framework that is still governed by dualist and phenomenalist assumptions which do not admit of knowledge of things in themselves or in their own intrinsic significance but only as they appear to us"¹⁰⁷ (Kantian view). And yet the historical-critical methods are still the most used in biblical study today, and even by some Adventist scholars.

The new science has made advance beyond Aristotelian/Newtonian/Kantian world views. It reveals the narrowness of previous world views. In other words, the Kantian method of imposing *a priori* constructs upon nature could never have led to the discovery of relativity and quantum physics. The researchers did not only discover the reality of the objects under investigation but also their relationship to other objects in an inter-relationship. In the same manner Bible study is not a reading of human constructs onto Scripture, but a discovery of biblical truths in their inter-relationship. This is the system of theology that still awaits to be done in the Adventists church.

Taking stock on the impact of the new science, philosopher Bernard Lonergan observes: "One might say that it has taken modern science four centuries to make the discovery that the objects of its inquiry need not be imaginable entities moving through imaginable processes in an imaginable space-time." He concludes "it was left to twentieth-century physicists to envisage the possibility that the objects of their science were to be reached only by severing the umbilical cord that tied them to the maternal imagination of man."¹⁰⁸

For our purposes it is important to realize that just as medieval theology was wedded to an Aristotelian/Ptolemaic world view, so Kant's philosophy was wedded to a Newtonian world view. Both world views, in different ways, presented an orderly (Aristotelian) or mechanistic (Newtonian) view of reality which influenced theological and philosophical formulations dependent on them. Aristotelian science posited God as the first cause for all reality, but unmoved by it. Newtonian science posited God as removed from all reality in a deistic "Wholly Other" sense. As such, one can never know Him as He is "in Himself" (Kant). Both views removed God from His proper relation to mankind and human history, and thus from the biblical perspective of creation-redemption.

In overcoming the dualism of these two world views the new science (unlike previous world views) does not pose a threat to biblical revelation. For Jesus Christ, incarnate in space and time, revealed (phenomenon) what God is like in Himself (noumenal, John 14:9). Just as Einstein used mathematics to rise beyond empirical data to grasp the depth of cosmic reality as it is in itself (opposed to Kant), so through biblical study the student transcends the confines of human experience (mysticism, rationalism, existentialism) to grasp the inner depths of the truths of God as they are in themselves in Scripture.

The great need in contemporary theological method is to begin with Scripture as ultimate authority and think through the inner coherence of truth. The great need is for a theology that is dependent upon God's cognitive revelation provided in Scripture and one that is free from all philosophical and scientific dependence. What a challenge to Seventh-day Adventists! The various essays in this issue of *JATS* take up this challenge and will contribute to it in the future.

Endnotes

¹ 1844 is the date when major pioneers of the later Seventh-day Adventist church experienced the great disappointment (Oct 22). Later the church was named in 1860 and organized in 1863.

² *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1953-1957), vols. 1-7.

³ Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1960).

⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students' Source Book*, eds. Don F. Neufeld and Julia Neuffer (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1962).

⁵ *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1966).

⁶ This includes archaeological writing as well as contributions on chronology.

⁷ Some of these include LeRoy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1950-1954), vols. 1-4. LeRoy E. Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1966), vols. 1-2. T. H. Jemison, *Christian Beliefs, Fundamental Biblical Teachings for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1959), *Questions on Doctrines* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957), *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Hagerstown, MD: GC Ministerial Dept., 1988), and various Biblical Research Institute books such as *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1974), William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (Lincoln, NE: College View Printers, 1982), *Symposium on Daniel*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington D.C.: BRI, 1986), *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy* (Washington D.C.: BRI, 1986), *Issues in the Book of Hebrews* (Washington D.C.: BRI, 1989), *Symposium on Revelation* (Washington D.C.: BRI, 1992), vols. 1-2, Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Lincoln NE: College View

Printers, 1985). There are also numerous volumes written by biblical and theological professors on biblical and doctrinal topics and volumes published by the Andrews University Seminary doctoral dissertation series.

8 Although not a full fledged systematic theology, Richard Rice has presented an attempt at a system to date, entitled, *The Reign of God, An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 1985). See my review of this book in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25:3 (1987), pp. 312-314.

9 Some books on world views include, Gordon H. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952). Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989); Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 1988); James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World* (New York: Scribner's and Sons, 1904). W. Gary Phillips and William E. Brown, *Making Sense of your World from a Biblical Viewpoint* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991); Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1953); James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988); Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984). Chapters on world views are found in William H. A. Halverson, *A Concise Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1981): "The Christian World View," pp. 21-66; James L. Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology, Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 1:70-84. For world views in theology see *Paradigms and Progress in Theology*, eds., J. Mouton, A. G. van Aarde and W. S. Vorster, (Human Sciences Research Council, 1988).

10 1. Naturalism includes Atheism, Physicalism, Humanism, Existentialism and Hedonism. 2. Transcendentalism includes Pantheism, Animism, Panpsychism, Panentheism and Polytheism. 3. Theism includes Deism, Finitism and Traditional Theism. See W. Gary Phillips and William E. Brown, *Making Sense of Your World from a Biblical Viewpoint* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), pp. 41-67.

11 See Jeffrey Hopper, *Understanding Modern Theology. Cultural Revolutions and New Worlds* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), vol. 1, p. 5. Hopper traces the impact of modern science on the modern world view.

12 The heliocentric cosmology of Copernicus (15th century) led to a confrontation between the Church and Galileo (16th century).

13 Millard J. Erickson, *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), p. 128.

14 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1990), 2:42.

15 *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 4:239-384. Origen divides his system into four parts, presented in four books, i.e., theology, cosmology, anthropology and teleology.

16 Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy* trans. James H. Tufts, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1958), 1:266.

17 Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII, in preamble to St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), 1:xi.

18 *Documents of Vatican II*, eds. Walter M. Abbott, S. J., Joseph Gallagher, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967), p. 246.

19 Some of the speculations include the thought that the world is animate, with a soul and intelligence, with heavenly bodies surrounding it in a hierarchical order in a cosmocentric cosmology. Bonaventura, for example, believed in fourteen levels in the hierarchy of the universe, with ten celestial and four elementary spheres (see N. Max Wilders, *The Theologian and His Universe: Theology and Cosmology from the Middle Ages to the Present* [New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1982], pp. 19-43). Aristotle believed that there are consecutive spheres around the world, with the bodies within each ascending sphere purer and more dignified (see Wilders, p. 23).

20 The cosmology of Parmenides lay behind the Platonic/Aristotelian dualism through

his *chorismos* (gulf) between "the sensible world (*Lebenswelt*) and the world of Truth and Reason." Fernando Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason, Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series:10 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), p. 84.

21 Not all Greek thinking posited this dualism, as seen in that period of Greek mythology in which the gods visited planet-earth.

22 Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1957).

23 For further study on this, see Norman R. Gulley, "Death: New Testament," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:110-111.

24 This includes the effect of evolutionary theory on the doctrine of creation. This deserves a separate article.

25 A Seventh-day Adventist theological system needs to unfold the meaning of Scripture to a world culture, and not just to individual cultures. To show how this can be done would take another article, but Scripture truth would be judge and guide to cultures in the system.

26 Wilders, p. 83.

27 *The Worldbook Encyclopedia* (Chicago, IL: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1972), 8:12.

28 *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 14:307.

29 Wilders, p. 139.

30 Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Give?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Rozell, 1976), p. 131.

31 See Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), p. 51.

32 Richard Swinburne, *Faith and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 42.

33 Alexander Thompson, *Tradition and Authority in Science and Theology, with Reference to the Thought of Michael Polanyi* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), pp. 24-35.

34 Michael Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p.76. Theology can only operate through belief in the authority of Scripture.

35 We are not referring to the evolutionary world view which is philosophical rather than proven science.

36 See Rene Descartes, *The Essential Writings*, trans. John J. Blom (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977).

37 Wilders, p. 149, or "the father of modern philosophy in the pre-Kantian period." Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1959), 4:152.

38 Wilders, pp. 149-152.

39 Frederick Copleston, S. J., *A History of Philosophy* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1959), 4:90.

40 See Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), pp. 49-53. Brown penetrates to a basic weakness in Descartes' method. A thought is not true because logical, but only if experience checks it as corresponding to its object. This is precisely what Descartes disallowed "driving a wedge between the mind and its thoughts on the one hand and the world and experience on the other."

41 Copleston, 4:66.

42 Copleston, 4:69.

43 Jeffrey Hopper, *Understanding Modern Theology. Cultural Revolutions and New Worlds* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 1:36. See also pp. 23-37.

44 See Helmut Thielicke, *Modern Faith and Thought*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), p. 51.

45 David Hume, *Treatise* (Oxford: University Press, 1951), p. xx.

46 Thielicke, p. 73.

47 Thielicke, p. 75.

48 Copleston, 4:15.

49 Empiricism is a philosophical theory that believes that all knowledge comes via sensory perception.

50 Positivism limits human knowledge to sense perception.

51 Kant claimed that there had been no radical changes in logic since Aristotle, and he set out to make that contribution. He influenced natural science throughout the central part the 19th century. See R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940), pp. 5-95. In fact, he dominated the 19th century. Copleston, 4:54. He practically removed all place for metaphysics, "anticipating the Romanticism of Schleiermacher, Hegelian Idealism, Ritschl's moral kingdom, and Kierkegaard's distant God." Rodney Petersen, *Continuity and Discontinuity. Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), p. 30. His three major works, *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, and *Critique of Judgment* were to be viewed as complementary approaches to knowledge, but each approach led philosophy to split up into separate "stands." His first *Critique* led partly to evolutionary positivisms, scientific positivisms, historical positivisms, sociological positivisms, humanistic positivisms, logical positivisms and linguistic positivisms. See Thielicke, p. 289; Nels Ferre, *Faith and Reason* (NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1946), pp. 102-103 and Hendrikus Berkhof, *Two Hundred Years of Theology, Report of a Personal Journey*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), p. xiii. Kant influenced Schleiermacher, Barth and Bultmann.

52 Kant wrote three major Critiques: *Pure Reason*, *Practical Reason* and *Judgment*. He worked through the principles of knowledge (thinking), morality (willing) and feeling. These examined the theoretical, practical and aesthetical dimensions of reason.

53 Hume caused Kant to awaken from his dogmatic slumbers, and also influenced him in his attitude toward metaphysics. See Copleston, 4:61, 6:194.

54 Kant said, "all our knowledge begins with experience." *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman K. Smith (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1929), p.41. Kant called such knowledge empirical philosophy, whereas "doctrines from a priori principles alone we may call pure philosophy." Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason and other works on the Theory of Ethics*, trans. Thomas K. Abbott (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1948), p.2.

55 T. F. Torrance, *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture* (Belfast: Christian Journals Ltd., 1980), p. 20. cf. Hopper's view on this, as follows. "We are always limited by the ways in which our senses and our minds condition what we perceive and conceive." Hopper, p. 55.

56 Richard Grigg, *Theology and a Way of Thinking* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 26.

57 *Evangelical Theological Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), pp. 858-860.

58 Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy, Renaissance-Enlightenment-Modern* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1958), 2:543.

59 Grigg, p. 28.

60 T. F. Torrance, *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture* (Belfast, Ireland: Christian Journals Limited, 1980), p. 21.

61 Berkhof, p. 5.

62 Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hundson (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960).

63 Hopper, p. 56.

64 Gordon D. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method* (Missoula, MN: Scholars Press, 1975).

65 Kaufman, p. 16.

66 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 1/1, 1-25.

67 Kaufman, p. 37. See also Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology. A Historical Perspective* (NY: Scribner, 1968).

68 Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, p. 23.

69 Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, p. 41.

70 Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, p. 26.

71 See Kaufman's assessment, Gordon D. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, p. 36.

72 Clark H. Pinnock, "Prospects for Systematic Theology" in *Toward a Theology for the Future*, eds. David F. Wells and Clark H. Pinnock (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971), p.102.

73 I am indebted to my colleague, physicist Ray Hefferlin, for checking over the scientific aspects of this presentation, and for valuable suggestions and insights.

74 Old science, interprets nature in terms of numbers and geometrical form (Pythagorean), new science interprets nature in terms of matter in motion. Alexander Thompson, *Tradition and Authority in Science and Theology with Reference to the Thought of Michael Polanyi* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), 1-2. The New Science can trace its more recent roots to Galileo's work on dynamics of motion. See Hopper, 1:5-30. In this section we are not speaking of the natural sciences. I agree with Clark Pinnock that "the central issue in modern theology" issues out of "a failure to confront the issue of naturalistic science properly." Pinnock, p. 116.

75 Michael Polanyi spoke of the "Einsteinian process of thought as 'a new epistemological method of speculative discovery,'" Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), p. 77. Karl Heim notes that classical epistemology was flawed with its separation of investigating subject from object of investigation. Karl Heim, *The Transformation of the Scientific World View*, (NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), p.62.

76 Nicholas Wolterstorff speaks of "radically new developments in the field of philosophical epistemology," in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, eds. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, MI: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. 1.

77 Albert Einstein, *Ideas and Opinions*, trans. Sonja Bergmann (New York: Bonanza Books, 1954), p. 257.

78 See Werner Heisenberg, *The Revolution in Modern Science* (NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1958).

79 *The World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1973), vol. 13, p. 253. Quantum research discovered that electrons and light behave as a particle and as a wave.

80 *The World Book Encyclopedia*, vol. 16, pp. 4-5.

81 T. F. Torrance sees this as transcending the "what" and "how" of classical physics, and opening up to ultimate questions of origin and end. T. F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford: University Press, 1981), pp. 75-81.

82 Russell Standard, *Grounds for Reasonable Belief* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1989), p. 35. Cf. with Kant's view of space and time, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929), pp. 67-82.

83 *The Worldbook Encyclopedia*, vol. 16, pp. 201-204.

84 Ray Hefferlin's comment on this part of the manuscript.

85 Carl Henry suggests that Planck's "projection of quantum-energy ended the classical era of physics." Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1976), 1:162.

86 Light appears to be a continuous stream, but actually is given off in units called quanta, comparable to a motion picture made up of separate frames. See *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 16:4-5.

87 Wolfhart Pannenberg, see Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh, A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), p. 110.

88 Werner Schaaffs, *Theology, Physics, and Miracles* (Washington: Canon, 1974), p. 66. quoted in Erickson, pp. 486-487.

89 Einstein, p. 273.

90 Einstein, p. 274.

91 Einstein, p. 282.

92 Einstein, pp. 293-295.

93 Thomas F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 12.

94 Epistemological as opposed to procedural.

95 Torrance, *God and Rationality*, p. 13.

96 With the collapse of the Newtonian mechanistic world view that was static, the new science of relativity, with its dynamic fourth dimensional comprehension of reality, has not only opened up new possibilities for authentic epistemology but also contributed to Process theology of John Cobb and Charles Hartshorne, based upon the philosophy of Alfred Whitehead. See Hopper, 1:93-94. For an evaluation of Process theology, see Norman R. Gulley, "An Influential Force in Contemporary Theology," *Adventist Perspectives*, 2:1, (1988), pp. 11-34.

97 T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 83.

98 Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation*, pp. 84-90; Karl Heim, *The Transformation of the Scientific World View* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), p. 76.

99 This refers to epistemological idealism and not to ontological idealism.

100 Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, p. 21.

101 Karl Heim, *The Transformation of the Scientific World View* (NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953).

102 Heim, pp. 17-24.

103 Even though Einstein was a determinist.

104 Heim, p. 127.

105 Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, p. 80.

106 Thomas F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1980), p. ix.

107 Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology*, p. 81.

108 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1978), p. xxi.

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HISTORICIZATION AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL METHOD

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"The great question is that of method, everything else follows in due course," Arthur Samuel Peake.¹

This essay discusses three epoch-making moments of historicization,² crafted respectively by Friedrich Schleiermacher, Charles Darwin, and Alfred North Whitehead, which have radically shaped not only liberal, but also aspects of evangelical Christian theological method. The study reflects upon the challenges presented by these three moments to Adventist theological method. It concludes by suggesting three methodological presuppositions needed to give shape to a fruitful Adventist approach to theology.

Schleiermacher's Impact on Method

The first moment to be considered is the remarkable historicization of Christian doctrine by the father of modern liberal theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Taking his cue in part from philosophical signals from Descartes and Kant, Schleiermacher, articulates his own turn to the subject in a theological shift which serves as the basis for a radical change in theological method still followed by many leading contemporary academic Christian theologians.

In the second speech entitled "The Nature of Religion" printed in his *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, 1799, we find the basis of Schleiermacher's theological turn to the subject in his famous definition of religion: "[R]eligion is the sense and taste for

the infinite."³ This definition turns the human being inward, as Karl Barth snorted, to some supposed innate and essential capacity to "sense and taste the infinite"⁴ as a ground for the shape and content of religious doctrine. What is the implication of this turn to the subject for theological method?

First, the inward datum becomes the ground for dogmatic propositions or Christian doctrines, which means that dogmatics must be formulated within the limits of piety alone.⁵ For example, in proposition 29 of the *Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher states, "We shall exhaust the whole compass of Christian doctrine if we consider the facts of the religious self-consciousness."⁶ And again, "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech."⁷ This means, as Brian Gerrish correctly observes, that for Schleiermacher, piety functions as a dogmatic limit "because a specific modification of piety is what dogmatics is all about."⁸

Second, by grounding dogmatics on piety, i.e., on the turn to the subject, Schleiermacher radically historicizes doctrine. This fact is made clear in the *Brief Outline On the Study Of Theology*, 1830, in which Schleiermacher tells us that dogmatic theology is the "knowledge of doctrine now current in the evangelical Church."⁹ By this he means (as stated in proposition 19 in *The Christian Faith*) that "dogmatic theology is the science which systematizes the doctrine prevalent in a Christian Church at a given time."¹⁰ By grounding doctrine on the piety of the human subject, he caused the object of theology to become "the changing consciousness of the Christian community, something continually mobile and fluid."¹¹ This implies that doctrine can also change with the changing Christian consciousness.

Thus, the task of dogmatics in the traditional Christian sense of explicating the oracles of God as delivered in Scriptures is over. Why? Because there are no unchangeable divine truths to be expounded. An oracle of God or a dogma is a permanent embodiment of divine truth. This is gone once the basis of doctrine is linked to the "changing consciousness of the Christian community." This is precisely what Schleiermacher accomplished by his turn to the subject. In this manner Schleiermacher historicized doctrine.

Schleiermacher knew perfectly well that the shift he was

making was revolutionary.¹² This is indicated by the fact that he thought his theological endeavor required a new title; hence, he called his magnum opus, *Glaubenslehre* or teaching of faith, rather than calling it dogmatics. Dogmatics as a discipline is extinct in his system of thought, because the theologian has only the changing teachings of the faith of a religious community as the basis of doctrine rather than the unchanging propositional oracles of God written in Scripture.

What prompted Schleiermacher to adopt this distinctive theological method? In the second of his two explanatory communications written to his friend Dr. Lücke, which were public letters written to the German people after the initial unfavorable reception of the *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher reveals the following significant motive which in part caused him to formulate the turn to the subject, thus historicizing doctrine:

I thought I should show as best I could that every dogma that truly represents an element of our Christian consciousness can be so formulated that it remains free from entanglements with science. I set this task for myself especially in my treatment of the doctrines of creation and preservation.¹³

This quotation shows that Schleiermacher sought to isolate Christian doctrine from the new discoveries of science which he perceived as being fatal to some Christian doctrines. He paid a very high price for this kind of harmony with science by cutting theological method loose from the absolute authority of Scripture and grounding it upon shifting Christian consciousness. The result has been the continuing differentiation of Christian doctrine to the present day.

In this connection, an observation by John M. McDermott concerning a central implication of Lonergan's theological method has equal relevance in evaluating the significance of Schleiermacher's method: "Once 'the turn to interiority' had been accomplished, it is hard to attribute primacy to any objective, historically manifested salvation. The 'touchstone' for judging the truth of doctrines has become the theologians's 'own authenticity'."¹⁴

A major implication stemming from this approach is that from Schleiermacher's day forward theologians standing in this tradi-

tion no longer practice theology after the manner of the magisterial reformers who presented what they believed God actually to have said in the Scripture. Rather, many leading modern theologians present a theology in their own name, taking, of course, into consideration all the teachings of the contemporary natural sciences. Thus, for example, a theologian such as Paul Tillich is not doing a biblical theology or telling us what God is saying to us in Scripture. Rather, Tillich is doing his own theology, a Tillichian theology. This theological autonomy is followed by liberal theologians of our day. We turn now to the second moment of historicization and its impact upon theological method.

Darwin's Influence on Theological Method

Launched opportunely in 1859 at a time when the world view within Christianity was undergoing radical revision, Darwin's *Origin of Species* effected the historicization of nature. Although evolutionary concepts can be traced to presocratic thinkers, Charles Darwin was the Julius Wellhausen of biology, the man of the hour. He not only presented a wealth of personal biological research, but also a mechanism of change, namely, natural selection, along with random change, whereby forms best suited to a particular habitat would survive. The concept basic to the Darwinian theory of nature is the acceptance of the natural mutability and development of species without divine guidance of any kind.

Heretofore, the Parmenidean notion of the permanence of the structures of nature enjoyed general acceptance over the Heraclitean notion of flux.¹⁵ However, with Darwin we have a paradigmatic shift, in Kuhn's sense, from the Parmenidean to the Heraclitean view of nature. Parmenides, of course, was the Greek philosopher of being, or of rest,¹⁶ whose orientation influenced Plato, and can be traced through the Stoics down to such modern philosophers as Kant and his Ding-an-sich.¹⁷ On the other hand, Heraclitus, a pre-Socratic philosopher, advocated the concept of becoming as the fundamental reading of the world. Everything is forever *becoming*, nothing ever is. Heraclitus made the famous claim that no one can step twice into the same river because it is always changing and moving.¹⁸ His view of flux can be traced, for example, from Aristotle through Hegel,¹⁹ and now to Darwin who

argues in effect that nature itself is fluid and ever evolving. This implies, as Stephen Toulmin perceptively remarks, that natural science, including physical theory, "is finally engulfed in the same historical flux as the human and social sciences."²⁰

What effect does this new view of reality have upon theology and its method? Langdon Gilkey pinpoints the impact in the following statement: "Our thesis, however, is that the most important change in the understanding of religious truth in the last centuries—a change that still dominates our thought today—has been caused more by the work of science than by any other factor, religious or cultural."²¹ This statement implies that the historicization of nature has influenced Christian theology more than philosophy or any other cultural force—a claim which I strongly support.

Years before Gilkey's statement, Rudolf Bultmann made the same claim in an important article entitled "New Testament and Mythology" in which he stated that "all our thinking to-day is shaped for good or ill by modern science."²² For Bultmann, Darwinian science had shown that the world view of the Bible was obsolete, a myth which must be removed. Thus, the theological method of "demythologizing" was born in large measure because of Darwin's historicization of nature.

Part of the so-called mythical framework which must be discarded, according to Bultmann, is belief in the literal second coming of Christ, and the reality of demonology. Bultmann writes about the coming of Christ as follows, "We can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air."²³ Concerning demons he states that: "It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of demons and spirits."²⁴

Schleiermacher's historicization of doctrine and Darwin's historicization of nature continue to influence not only the shape of liberal theology but also important sectors of evangelical Christianity. For example, Howard Van Till, professor of physics at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, accepts the tenets of theistic evolution in these words:

I believe that we may rightfully presume that the array of structures and lifeforms now present was not yet present at the beginning, but became actualized in the course of time as the created substances, employing the capacities thoughtfully given to them by God at the beginning, functioned in a gapless creational economy to bring about what the Creator called for and intended from the outset.²⁵

These statements briefly show the impact which Schleiermacher and Darwin's historicization efforts have had upon Christian theological method and doctrine. We turn now to a third moment of historicization, namely, to Whitehead's historicization (in some sense) of God.

Whitehead's Changed View of God

Process theology has its philosophical roots in Alfred North Whitehead's challenging work, *Process and Reality*, in which he articulates a new metaphysical construction of reality within the Darwinian evolutionary framework of the radical historicization of nature. Nature is in process. However, God and our ever changing world of nature are interdependent in a necessary metaphysical sense, which means that God is neither chronologically prior to the world, nor unchanging with the world as the following discussion indicates.

In Whitehead's words, God is "the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality. . . . Not *before* all creation, but *with* all creation."²⁶ This means, in the words of a leading process theologian, John Cobb, Jr., that "Whitehead envisions no beginning of the world, hence no first temporal creation out of nothing."²⁷ Thus, the concept of *creation ex nihilo* disappears, because of what seems to be, in a qualified sense, a historicization of God.

Gone as well are aspects of the classical Christian views of the immutability,²⁸ omnipotence²⁹ and omniscience God.³⁰ For example, Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson describe the Whiteheadian understanding of the omniscience of God as follows: "Like humans, God knows the future only as possibility, never as actuality."³¹ Thus, Whitehead leads us to the ultimate act of historicization when God, the Ultimate Reality, is finally in some sense historicized. This conclusion seems to suggest that the very essence of

God in some sense is changing.³² Little wonder that Bruce A. Ware is puzzled by the position of some process theologians who claim on the one hand that God is ever-changing, but that God remains always loving.³³

Critical Evaluation

In view of the three moments of historicization discussed in this article, namely, Schleiermacher's historicization of doctrine, Darwin's historicization of nature, and Whitehead's historicization in some sense of God, the challenge presented to the Seventh-day Adventist theologian in articulating the Three Angel's Messages, as historically understood, is clearly evident. Although limited space prevents our addressing the important issue of the truth-value of these three positions, we conclude by discussing the possible implications these shifts may carry for the shape and proclamation of the theology of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination by raising the following questions.

In what way is an Adventist pastor to preach an "everlasting gospel" (Rev 14:6) when Schleiermacher insists that there are no unchanging doctrines to be preached, i.e., that there are no truths once delivered to the saints to be passed on? Is it possible for the same pastor to be academically responsible and at the same time to proclaim the First Angel's message about the God who created the world, even in six days, in light of the fact that Darwin's historicization of nature suggests otherwise? In what consistent way may an evangelist appeal to listeners to accept the seventh-day Sabbath and to reject other days of worship as implored by the Third Angel's Message (Rev 14:9-12) in view of Whitehead's assertion that there was no creation *ex nihilo* and hence, by implication, no need of a weekly commemoration of an event which never occurred? In light of these concerns what shape should a theological method take which can function cogently with full academic responsibility as a proper foundation of the messages central to the Adventist church?

First, I suggest that an appropriate method may well take shape along the lines of an informed endorsement of basic Reformation hermeneutical principles, and so might be called a neo-classical biblical theological method. The labels one may use here are not of crucial importance, but the regulative principles are of deep

significance. In addition, the basic methodological shape, in my view, needs to be grounded upon the following three crucial presuppositions, each in distinction to the three moments of historicization evaluated above.

First, an authentic Adventist theological method should presuppose being responsibly tied to, or anchored in the supreme authority of Scripture in association with the writings of God's messenger, Ellen White, which are subject to the authority of the Scripture.³⁴ This critical relinking of Scripture to theological method reunites systematic theology to the Bible. It restores the vital connection which was severed by Schleiermacher's fatal turn to the subject and the consequent historicization of doctrine.

Second, Adventist theological method would do well to presuppose the basic permanence of the structures of reality, thus turning unequivocally from Darwin's momentous historicization of nature. This means that Adventist theological method needs to remain fundamentally Parmenidean in character and therefore ought to be fully and dynamically concordist with respect to the relation of science and religion. This position implies that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are "not merely to be taken *seriously*, but *historically*."³⁵ They are historical in nature and purpose.

Third, Adventist theological method should presuppose the fundamental ontological completeness of God as implied in the classic designation of God as the "I Am" recorded in Exodus 3:14, thereby distancing itself from aspects of Whiteheadian theological method which historicize God. In this fashion the historic identity of the Adventist message will not be compromised, but can emerge with greater depth and profundity to the glory of God.

Conclusion

It is incumbent upon the Adventist community to join in renewed, open, frank, prayerful, Christian dialogue concerning both Adventist theological method and Adventist theological doctrine. Happily, recent theological and scientific research stemming from major academic communions other than the Adventist community indirectly indicate that principles of historic Adventist theological method need not be abandoned, but that the approach

represents a viable and convincing post-modern theological method.

For example, concerning the question of the Darwinian historicization of nature and the accompanying need for adopting a nonconcordist theological method toward the relation between science and religion, the recent works of Marjorie Grene,³⁶ and Alvin Plantinga,³⁷ a world class philosopher of religion, argue convincingly, contra Darwin, of the limited explanatory power of exclusive natural selection on the one hand, and of the continuing significance of special creation on the other. Plantinga says that the biological evidence points to the need for a scientific account of life that is not restricted by "methodological naturalism."³⁸ This is a welcome, strident voice calling for strong concordism in theological method in this age of endless theological differentiation and pluralism.

These kinds of developments indicate that the time is ripe for Adventist scholars as a whole and together to articulate clearly the basic principles of a positive, Scripture-grounded, unhistoricized theological method consistent with the Adventist message. This article is intended to be one orienting step in that direction.

Endnotes

- 1 A. S. Peake, *The Bible: Its Origin, Its Significance, and Its Abiding Worth* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), p. 381.
- 2 Historicization represents the process of essential change over time. Thus, doctrine is relative meaning that the elements of doctrine may vary with temporal passage of time.
- 3 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, translated by John Oman (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 39.
- 4 Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox, 1960), p. 21.
- 5 Lecture by Brian Gerrish, Oct. 24, 1983.
- 6 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, edited by H. R. Mackintosh (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 123.
- 7 Schleiermacher, p. 76.
- 8 Brian A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 201.
- 9 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), p. 71.
- 10 Schleiermacher, p. 88.
- 11 Brian Gerrish, lecture, October 25, 1983.
- 12 The author is informed in this section dealing with Schleiermacher by an insightful lecture presented by Brian Gerrish on October 24, 1983.
- 13 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre* trans. James Duke and Francis Fiorenza Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), p. 64.
- 14 John M. McDermott, "Tensions in Lonergan's Theory of Conversion," *Gregorianum* 74:1 (1993): 137.

15 See Stephen Toulmin, "The Historicization of Natural Science: Its Implications for Theology," in *Paradigm Change in Theology* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991), p. 235.

16 William Morton Wheeler, "The Theoria Generationis," in *Defining Biology: Lectures from the 1890s*, edited by Jane Maienschein (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 198-199.

17 Wheeler, p. 199.

18 See John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 132-141.

19 Wheeler, p. 199.

20 Toulmin, p. 236.

21 Langdon Gilkey, *Religion and the Scientific Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 4.

22 Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, edited by Hans Werner Bartsch, and translated by Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1957), p. 3.

23 Bultmann, p. 4.

24 Bultmann, p. 5.

25 Howard J. Van Till, "Evolution: an Exchange," *First Things* 34 (June/July 1993): 38. The position of Van Till is illustrative of a leading sector of evangelical thinkers concerning the need for evangelical scholars to adopt theistic evolution. For a sampling of individuals sharing Van Till's orientation see the following works: J. I. Packer, "The Challenge of Biblical Interpretation: Creation" in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Interpretation 1988* (Nashville: Broadmann Press, 1988), 21-22; Clark Pinnock, "Climbing Out of a Swamp: The Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts," *Interpretation* 43: (April 1989): 143-155; For a more liberal approach see, John Polkinghorne, "God's Action in the World," *Cross Currents*, (Fall 1991): 293-307.

26 Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 521.

27 John Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 205.

28 See Bruce A. Ware, "An Exposition and Critique of the Process Doctrines of Divine Mutability and Immutability," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47:2 (1985): 175-96.

29 See Huston Smith, "Has Process Theology Dismantled Classical Theism?" *Theology Digest* 35:4 (1988): 310ff.

30 Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1992), pp. 137-138.

31 Grenz and Olson, p. 138.

32 Grenz and Olson, p. 143.

33 Bruce A. Ware, pp. 175-196. See particularly pages 191-192. See also the excellent discussion of this point in Grenz and Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, pp. 142-143.

34 In this perspective the Scriptures constitute the first or supreme source of doctrinal authority. However, the writings of God's messenger, Ellen White, need always to be placed in association with the written Word of God, not as additional Scripture, but as contemporary messages revealed and inspired by the God of the Bible, and hence of doctrinal authority subject to the Bible ("[T]he spirits of the prophets are subject to prophets," 1 Cor 14:32). Thus, while the Reformation doctrine of *sola scriptura* remains solidly valid in principle, the fact of the existence of and the place of the White corpus in relation to the *sola scriptura* principle needs to be officially acknowledged so that the *sola scriptura* concept is not interpreted in a fashion which rules out the doctrinal authority of the writings of Ellen White. This means, on the one hand, that Adventist theology has a secondary source of doctrinal authority outside the Bible, but that this source is subject to the authority of the Bible. Therefore, on the other hand, in light of the subjection of Ellen White to the Bible, Adventist theology has only one primary normative source of doctrinal authority, namely the Bible. However, both must be acknowledged together and in proper relationship in order

to remain true to the Adventist heritage, as troublesome as this may be to contemporary academic biblical and theological scholarship.

35 Thomas C. Vanden Heuvel, "Why Creation?" *Outlook* 40:6 (June 1990): 3.

36 Richard M. Burian and Marjorie Grene, "Editorial Introduction" *Synthese* 91:1-2 (1992): 6.

37 Alvin Plantinga, "When Faith and Reason Clash: Evolution and the Bible," *Christian Scholar's Review* 21 (1991): 25ff.

37 Plantinga, p. 25.

THEOLOGY AND THE ROLE OF REASON

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Introduction

The role reason plays in theology is crucial. It is one of four sources, or foundations, upon which theologies are constructed: namely, Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. The authority we assign to any one of these four sources determines the character and the outcome of our entire theology.

For Bible-believing Christians, as we Adventists are, the present question arises: Should the church continue with a theology that has Scripture as its determining source, or should it retreat to tradition, experience, or reason to determine the hermeneutical keys for the exposition of Scripture and for the construction of its theology? At stake is whether Adventists will maintain the "Sola Scriptura" principle of the great Protestant reformers and of the Adventist pioneers or whether we will turn to sources other than Scripture alone as the final norm and determining authority in theology.

We cannot understand and evaluate any theology unless we know the foundation upon which it is built. A discussion of the foundations of theology should be considered as vital in any theological enterprise. But, unfortunately, there is a natural tendency to take foundations for granted. This holds true for physical buildings as well as for theological constructs. Most of us have never seen the foundations of the houses we live in. We may repair the

walls and roof or simply rearrange the furniture; but we presuppose solid foundations. Often the only way we can tell whether the foundations are sound is by looking at some cracks in the superstructure. For if the foundation of a building is unsound the superstructure will be unsound, too.¹

When we look at current issues in Adventist theology,² we notice certain cracks in the superstructure. In not a few instances some walls that current arguments seek to erect are not solidly connected to the foundation of our theology, namely the Holy Scriptures, the written Word of God. Rather than simply to rearrange the furniture in our house of Adventist theology, it seems necessary to look closely at the cause of these cracks in order to clarify the very foundation on which our theology must be grounded and constructed.

My objective is to look at *one* foundational issue that is crucial in the shaping of any theology, namely the role of reason. According to the evangelical scholar Donald Bloesch, the relationship between faith and reason is "probably the single most important issue in a theological prolegomena."³ The role of reason in theology should be of particular interest to Adventists, because we traditionally have held to a "reasonable-faith,"⁴ even though we are yet to articulate in any complete manner our understanding of this phrase and of the relationship of faith and reason in theology.⁵ We shall address the issue briefly in this article.

Much has been written on the relationship between faith and reason in theology, and I do not wish to bother the reader unduly with the long and intricate history of this debate.⁶ But in order to understand some of the cracks in our Adventist-house of theology, a brief overview of some basic issues in this debate is necessary and helpful.

After this preliminary review, we will look at what Scripture says on the role of reason. If Scripture is the only norm for Adventist theology, as we profess at the beginning of our Fundamental Beliefs,⁷ and as Ellen White repeatedly insists upon,⁸ then it is logical to expect Scripture to be the sole source of its own exposition on this important question too.

On the basis of our findings in Scripture we will finally draw some implications for the role of reason in theology, and Adventist

theology in particular. Thus, we are attempting to develop a Scriptural answer to a philosophical question (What is the role of reason in constructing our theology?), thereby choosing to be informed *and formed* by the Scripture's own presuppositions. With that in mind let us now turn to our brief overview of the role of reason in the history of theology.

The Role of Reason

The question of the role of reason in theology has received several different answers throughout history. Since it is not possible to deal with these in detail, I will simply list the following helpful summaries as suggested by Erickson:

1. In the first type, no relationship at all is possible. Here one is reminded of Tertullian's famous words: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between Heretics and Christians?"¹⁰ and also of Martin Luther's statement that "reason is the devil's whore."¹¹

2. In the second type, theology can be elucidated by reason. Here Augustine could be cited as an example. He stressed the priority of faith and the acceptance of biblical revelation, but he also insisted that philosophy may help us to understand better our Christian theology. Augustine adopted Neo-Platonic thought.

3. In the third type, theology is sometimes established by reason. Thomas Aquinas, for instance found such a basis in Aristotle's philosophy which he "baptized" into Christianity.

4. In yet another type, theology may be judged by reason, as in Deism and rationalistic theology.¹²

5. In some instances reason may even supply the content of theology.

The classical Greek concept of reason that gained entrance into Christian thought and that shaped much of our Western philosophical thought can be characterized by its passively receiving the pre-existing, timeless forms that always exist.¹³ Detached from the flow of history, the mind alone is considered capable of participating in the eternal truths by receiving those pre-existing forms through a sudden illumination. This, however, is something entirely different from the Biblical faith, as we shall see later.¹⁴ Due

to space limitations we cannot develop this concept of reason in more detail. However, we turn to survey another aspect of reason that has become very influential in contemporary theology, namely autonomous reason.

Autonomous Reason. The role of autonomous reason has become very influential in modern times.¹⁵ The emphasis on "autonomous reason" is characteristic of the period of the Enlightenment¹⁶ or the "Age of Reason" as it is also being called, and after it for most of the intellectual discussion of modern times.¹⁷ Through the turn to the individual which began in our modern period with René Descartes,¹⁸ man became the point of reference where truth is decided.¹⁹

In 1784 Immanuel Kant wrote an article in answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?" Kant defined Enlightenment as the spirit's determination to exercise its intellectual faculties in unfettered integrity. Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage, that is, his inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Enlightenment is man's rise from the immaturity which caused him to rely on such external authorities as the Bible, the church, tradition, etc., to tell him what to think and do. The motto of the Enlightenment, therefore, was: Have courage to use your own thinking.²⁰ In its self-sufficient autonomy reason assumed that authority which truly belongs to God and His revelation alone.²¹

The case of the rationalistic Socinians²² as well as the rationalistic theology of the English Deists²³ amply demonstrates the results of reason as final judge over the content of Scripture. Even in Protestant Orthodoxy, where the principle of Scripture alone was still maintained, we can detect a subtle but crucial shift towards an underpinning of the authority of Scripture on rationalistic terms. Rather than providing its own evidence of divine authority, Scripture was increasingly sustained through arguments from reason.²⁴ This unfortunate process is well described by J. K. S. Reid who says:

The primacy of faith gives way, first to an equality of faith with reason; faith must at least be intelligible. But the equality is difficult to maintain. The faith is intellectually conceived, and then it is reason

and not faith that moves up into the dominant position. The authority of Scripture is compromised and made equivocal.²⁵

As soon as reason became an indispensable means, it took over the additional role of a criterion. But even more, in that the Scripture principle had become rational, it was now rationally refutable.²⁶ Therefore, theology was increasingly challenged rationally, historically, and otherwise during the following period of the Enlightenment.

The irony of all this is that it has been established since Kant, "that reason only perceives that which it produces after its own design. . . ."²⁷ This means that autonomous reason was and is never capable of leaving its immanent boundaries, and, therefore, cannot arrive at a true knowledge of God naturally on its own. God has to reveal Himself and by means of His revelation compels assent and produces insight which is lacking before.²⁸

The Collapse of Autonomous Reason. The house that autonomous reason tried to build in the bold endeavor to ground truth in the reason of each person did not secure the hoped for "sure" foundation. Rather, the attempt resulted in the loss of all supernatural reality, metaphysics, and actually the loss of truth itself.²⁹ The very thing that man daringly tried to take upon himself in his self-declared "freedom," namely to master the world by means of autonomous rationalistic criticism, in the end has become master over man. Autonomous man was and is not able to fill the role that he has denied God to occupy since the Enlightenment.

The current discussion over modernity and post-modernity³⁰ with the deconstruction of the rationalistic ideal shows that even secular philosophy has finally come to admit that the kingly role of reason has its own ambiguities, to echo the words of revisionist Catholic scholar David Tracy.³¹ Looking back on the developments of history since the Enlightenment we have to acknowledge that there is no secure ground in autonomous reason. As Gerhard Noller recently stated in a noteworthy book, the human subject is not and has never been the unshakable foundation of reality.³²

The New Importance of Tradition. One interesting side effect from the failure of autonomous reason to provide a secure foundation for its house of rationalistic theology is highly significant for theological method. It is the new importance that *tradition* has

begun to play in theology.³³ Since autonomous reason alone has been unable to provide a secure basis for theology and has lapsed into the chaotic subjectivism of the individual interpreter, some stabilizing element is needed to safeguard continuity in the act of interpretation. This is found today in a new listening to the voice of tradition.³⁴ Tradition, however, is not understood in any traditionalistic sense. Rather, it is being defined as an ever new re-interpretation and application of the biblical message through the fusion or the correlation of the two horizons between the Bible text and the contemporary situation, where the contemporary questions determine the answers that are sought in Scripture.

This new emphasis on tradition as a hermeneutical key has been recently suggested within Adventist circles by Richard Rice in his book *Reason and the Contours of Faith*.³⁵ According to Rice "doctrines arise, not from the Bible alone, but from the dynamic interplay between the Bible and the living experience of the church, . . ."³⁶ Besides the Bible (which for Rice has only "central authority" but no longer is the final authority) and the present experience of the Christian community, we are told we "must also take into account Christian tradition, or the doctrines which the church has already formulated."³⁷

According to Rice the *sola scriptura* principle, that is, Scripture alone, should be understood merely as *prima scriptura*, the primacy of Scripture, that is, "the superiority of the Bible to other authorities,"³⁸ among them ecclesiastical officers, church councils, previous doctrinal formulas,³⁹ and also tradition⁴⁰ and experience.⁴¹ Thus, the Bible, although a fundamental authority, is no longer the final authority and is neither "the only place where theological reflection originates nor the direct source from which all theological positions arise."⁴²

Such statements from an Adventist author and published by an Adventist institution raise serious question whether some of today's Adventist scholars are building on the same foundation our pioneers used. The latter stated unequivocally that "the Bible is our chart—our guide. It is our only rule of faith and practice, to which we would closely adhere."⁴³ It seems to me that some are not merely rearranging the furniture in our house of Adventist-theology but, are in fact rebuilding it on a different foundation. Let me explain.

One decisive difference between the Adventist church today and the believers at the beginning of the Advent movement is the following: Our pioneers started with the common foundation of accepting the Bible alone as the only norm and final authority in matters of faith and practice. On this mutually accepted basis Adventist pioneers stood united, and, therefore, could work together toward a common goal. They could maintain and gain a *Biblical unity* in Spirit and theological thought, because they were united in their submission to the written Word of God. On this "common ground" they could then rearrange some Christian furniture in the newly forming Adventist house of theology so as to bring it into even greater harmony with the Scriptures.

Today we face an entirely different situation in our church. Rather than building on a common foundation (that is, Scripture alone) and working from there towards a biblically grounded unity, some of us have begun to build walls on foundations other than the Bible and are in the very process of rebuilding and reinterpreting our theology in the light of other accepted authority. Rather than merely rearranging some furniture as our pioneers did, some are building up walls on an entirely new foundation. It is, therefore, no surprise that we face an increasing doctrinal pluralism⁴⁴ within our church—a pluralism that threatens to destroy our theological and spiritual unity which was erected on and can be maintained only by adherence to God's Word alone.

Could it be that in trying to make faith understandable to reason some of us are committing the same mistakes that Protestant Orthodoxy committed, when it tried to underpin the authority of Scripture on rationalistic terms. Because Orthodox theology did not search for biblical answers but tried to make faith understandable to reason by meeting it on reason's own ground, it started down a road that eventually ended in the death of God theology and atheism.⁴⁵ If we want to avoid repeating the same blunders, we have to look carefully to the testimony of Scripture. To this we will turn now.

Reason in Scripture⁴⁶

It may come as a surprise to learn that there is no equivalent term in biblical Hebrew or Greek for our word "reason."⁴⁷ It seems

illegitimate, therefore, to attach to the English word "reason," (conditioned through our western philosophical heritage) certain Hebrew or Greek words from the OT or NT. What is needed, instead, is a clearer understanding of the different thought-worlds,⁴⁸ which are expressed in different words and contexts.

Man Made in the Image of God. We begin our investigation into the role of reason in Scripture with creation. That is where Scripture itself begins. Man's creation in the "image of God" (*imago Dei*) has important implications for the role of reason in theology. Different attempts have been made to explain the meaning of the "image of God." Often it has been reduced to man's reasoning powers. This leaves open the possibilities of a rational or natural theology. Scripture, however, reveals that more is involved in the "image of God" than just the rational aspect in man.

Alberto Soggin has shown the close relationship between the terminology used in the creation account (*imago Dei*) and the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.⁴⁹ To be created in the image of God needs to be understood in a two-fold way. On the one hand man is a "copy" of God Himself, and, therefore, carries a very high value. On the other hand, being a copy, clearly shows that man cannot stand independently from God as the "original" and can never assume an autonomous position outside his relationship with God. Hence, an independence in knowledge and understanding from God as the source of all true knowledge is impossible. Because of his dependence on the Creator, man's knowledge and understanding in anything is correct only insofar as it is informed and guided by God's revelation, embodied supremely in Scripture.⁵⁰ Created in the image of God, we have been granted the gift of reason. This means (in biblical anthropology) a limited use of reason if employed independently of God. This was true even for man in his unfallen state! What was the nature of knowledge before sin entered the world, we have to ask? Was it possible for Adam and Eve before the Fall to gain an independent knowledge of God and His will on their own? No, even in the most perfect environment they were dependent upon the Word of God to inform and guide them. How much more do we need God's Word today when our minds and reason are perverted by sin.

In other words, the Creator's gift of reason can be used proper-

ly only in faithfulness to God and His will, or it will be used (unfaithfully) against Him. The biblical concept of reason is "faithful reason," that is, it is full of faith, because it trusts God and obediently follows His revealed Word. This has important implications for the role of reason in theology to which we will turn in a moment.

But let us now look at a few key words in Scripture that are used in the context of knowledge and understanding and are connected with different mental activities. From a survey of the terms we may learn more about the biblical presupposition for the foundations of human knowledge and understanding. Since there is not merely one appropriate translation for the English words "reason," "understanding," or "knowing" in the Hebrew and Greek equivalents, we will try to establish a semantic word-field that includes the main Hebrew and Greek expressions relevant to our investigation.

Hebrew and Greek Words for Knowledge. We will begin our investigation by looking at a few important Hebrew words, and their respective Greek equivalents.

Yada' (to know). Forms of the Hebrew *yada'* (to know) occur more than 1119 times in the OT.⁵¹ In light of this frequent occurrence we are faced with some pragmatic limitations in our investigation. Although the different usages of the term cannot be sharply distinguished, we can detect at least five aspects of its meaning that are worth noticing. They are the cognitive aspect, the establishing aspect, the contact aspect, the communicative aspect, and the constitutive aspect.⁵² Because of space limitations we will explore just a few pertinent usages of this word.

Yada' can be used parallel to "seeing" and other knowledge gained in various ways by the senses.⁵³ In the OT the expression "you shall know that I am the LORD your God," occurs frequently.⁵⁴ In this context *yada'* is linked with God's acts of self-revelation.⁵⁵ This knowledge of God is not an abstract, speculative kind of knowledge that is merely obtained intellectually. Rather, it is a knowledge that is discovered through God's acting in history, and that is gained through a practical experience and relationship with Him.⁵⁶

By emphasizing the relational aspect of knowledge we do not

want to convey the impression that the cognitive dimension of knowledge in the Bible is excluded. This cognitive aspect is present and includes the aspect of knowledge as acknowledging⁵⁷ what God has revealed about Himself. Thus, for mankind in both the fallen and unfallen states there is no "natural" or "neutral" way to come to a true knowledge of God. In other words, knowledge is not gained in a vacuum or a self-detached position but only in a transforming relationship with Him. The wise shall not boast of his own wisdom, but in that he knows God (Jer 9:23-24).

In order to know the searcher for truth must be positioned into the right relationship. Proverbs 1:7 states the biblical epistemology in a nutshell. Here, "the fear of the Lord" is the beginning of true knowledge. (cf. Prov 9:10, where it is the beginning of wisdom; 15:33; Ps 111:10; Job 28:28). This "fear of the Lord" is not a frightening emotional or psychological threatening form of experience, but is more akin to our concept of "commitment to" or "trust in" God⁵⁸ who establishes and faithfully keeps his covenant.⁵⁹ The fear of God involves service, love, obedience, worship, and total surrender to God.⁶⁰ This means that the attitude of total commitment to the Lord is the starting point, the inception of any and all real knowledge.⁶¹ In other words, faith as trust and commitment to God, does not hinder and obstruct the knowledge of reality; but rather, faith sets free the real knowledge of God and His world.

Ginosko (to know). In the LXX (Greek Septuagint) words from the Hebrew root of *yada'* are generally translated by the *ginosko* word group.⁶² Basically, the term means to notice, perceive, recognize a thing, person or situation through the senses, particularly the sight.⁶³ Even in secular Greek *ginosko* has been used in some instances for knowing in a personal way and as an expression of a trusting relationship between persons.⁶⁴ This is in sharp contrast to the philosophical view where sense knowledge is only "opinion" (*doxa*) but never true knowledge. Although the LXX and the NT use Greek terminology, it appears they do not incorporate Greek philosophical concepts with them. Rather, the translators use the Greek terms in a continuation and further unfolding of the OT meaning.⁶⁵

The NT writers take over the personal aspect of knowledge

from the OT. This is especially the case when the term *ginosko* refers to the knowledge of God (cf. Rom 11:33). Just as in the OT, the NT frequently speaks about the knowledge of God (Rom 11:33; 15:14; 2 Cor 2:14; 10:5; Col 1:10) and about the knowledge that God gives to his followers (Mark 4:11). This God-given knowledge is not intended to make a person arrogant (1 Cor 8:1), because it is embedded in and derived from the right relationship with God,⁶⁶ a relationship characterized by mutual love and faithful obedience to His revealed will.

Knowledge and understanding in the NT is not something that lets the wise boast about him/herself. Rather "let him who boasts, boast of the Lord," (1 Cor 1:31; cf. 2 Cor 10:17; Jer 9:23). When the Apostle John writes that Christians "know all things" (1 John 2:20, NKJV), this knowledge (1 John 2:21; 3:2, 5, 14; 5:13, 15, 18-20; 3 John 12) is not a philosophical omniscience but results from a close relationship between Christians and their God and from the giving of the Holy Spirit in this relationship (cf. 1 John 2:20a; John 14:26).⁶⁷

The polemic against "the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge'" (1 Tim 6:20, NASB), and Paul's persistent critique of a purely cognitive ideal of knowledge in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 8:1-2; 13:2, 8, 12; cf. 1 Cor 1:18-23) and elsewhere (Eph 3:19; cf. Eph 1:17-18) shows that the NT takes over from the OT the concept of knowledge and understanding as a reality that is possible only in the right relationship.

This means that the knowledge of God and His world is not possible in an abstract manner, from a neutral and secure distance. Rather, it comes about only by allowing our lives to be renewed and transformed in and through a relationship with the Giver of all knowledge, that is, God. Thus, the knowledge of God is a gift from Him and not something that human beings have or obtain naturally on their own.⁶⁸

Bin (to discern). Another very important Hebrew word that is usually translated by "understanding" or "insight" is the verb *bin*.⁶⁹ The root is connected with the substantive *bayin* which means "interval" or "space in between." From this the original meaning, "to distinguish" or "to separate," is commonly derived.⁷⁰

The essential idea of the verb is, therefore, "to discern," (cf. 1 Kgs 3:9).

The kind of knowledge alluded to by this Hebrew term is superior to the mere gathering of data. It includes the concept of distinguishing. *Bin* describes the power of judgment and perceptive insight that is demonstrated in the use of knowledge.⁷¹

However, in this ability to judge and perceive, man remains depended upon God, the Giver of discernment and understanding. The OT presents this kind of moral understanding as a gift from God and not the fruit of empiricism,⁷² (cf. 1 Kgs 3:9, and 1 Kgs 4:29-30, where God gives Solomon wisdom and understanding and largeness of mind).

Synesis. The closest Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *bin* that is used in the LXX and the NT is *synesis* and its derivatives.⁷³ "The OT idea that insight is a gift of God and is linked with his revelation reappears in the NT usage."⁷⁴ Time and again "insight" is understood as a gift from God, and any lack of "insight" as a sign of man's rejection of God from within his deepest being (Rom 1:21).⁷⁵ This is a very provocative thought that certainly merits closer meditation and investigation.

Leb (heart). In the Hebrew Bible the seat of insight is the heart (*leb*). The terms *leb* and *lebab* as parallel terms appear some 853 times⁷⁶ and constitutes the central anthropological term of the OT. The heart encompasses all dimensions of man's existence. It is also the seat of the understanding and knowledge as well as the seat of the will.⁷⁷ Depending on the context *leb* can denote the capability of understanding, the receiving or hearing heart or "reason" (1 Kgs 3:9-12), insight, knowledge, and understanding (Prov 18:15; Isa 42:25), etc.⁷⁸ The heart discerns the works of God, shows fear of God, and puts into practice righteousness and justice (cf. Prov 2).⁷⁹ Thus, the mental activities are not isolated but the heart encompasses all dimensions of man's existence.

Kardia (heart). The LXX renders *leb* predominantly by *kardia*, (heart), and more rarely by *dianoia* (understanding), *psyche* (soul, life), and *nous* (mind).⁸⁰ The different terms used to translate *leb* into Greek show several things: (1) In contrast with the central role of the word *nous* (mind) in classical Greek, the term is used sparingly in the Bible;⁸¹ (2) There is no single term employed to denote

the meaning of "reason."⁸² It is difficult to differentiate between the terms.⁸³ In their general usage they stand in continuity with the OT employment of *leb* (heart). As in the OT, *kardia* stands for the whole of the inner being of man.⁸⁴

Thus, we may conclude our brief investigation into the role of "reason" in Scripture by saying that the Bible does not know an abstract, autonomous reason capable of arriving at truth on its own. Rather, the natural man indulges in the desires of the flesh and of the mind (Eph 2:3). The sinfulness of man has affected his reason. Hence, sinful reason stands in need of conversion just as the rest of man needs to be renewed. Human beings become truly "reasonable" in the biblical sense when "we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5, NASB).

It appears, therefore, that the biblical understanding of knowledge is never separated from the relational aspect between man and God. Biblical knowledge includes the whole person, including the actions, and never just the mental capabilities as it is commonly held in Greek and much of Western philosophy.

The result of our investigation of these biblical terms will shed some light as to what the role of reason should be in theology.

Implications for the Role of Reason in Theology

Faithful Reason. In contrast to autonomous reason the biblical concept of reason could be termed "faithful, or obedient reason." Whereas autonomous reason exalts itself into a god or falls back on tradition and experience as guides to truth, the faithful reason of Scripture is informed by God's Word and acts obediently according to God's written revelation. Faithful reason is centered neither on autonomous man nor on the testimony of tradition (whether living or dead) but on God, the Creator of man. The biblical role of reason is not an assertive independence from God. Instead the believer is to use God's revelation as the basis and authoritative norm for all of his/her reasoning.

From the Scripture itself we know that this divinely assigned role for human reason is not its natural tendency. Not just irrational factors need to be overcome in man. That is, it is not just a question of rationality or irrationality that we face in the issue of the role of reason in theology. There are noetic effects of sin on

reason. What needs to be changed is man's basic resistance to God Himself. Without this fundamental change—call it conversion if you please—no harmony, no solution to the relationship between faith and reason will be possible. Unconverted reason will always strive to dominate not only the contours but also the content of our faith. Obedient reason, however, subordinates itself to God and His gift of revelation, and is willing to be guided by God through His written Word.

The Integration of Reason into Faith. It is not simply that unconverted reason produces *results* that are disturbing to faith. Rather, unconverted reason carries with it *presuppositions* that from the very outset destroy all possibilities of an harmonious integration of reason into faith. It cannot and does not joyfully submit to what is revealed to man by God.

Furthermore, the issue is not between trusting God on the one hand and thinking carefully about our beliefs on the other, as some seem to suggest. Faithful reason is not a sacrifice of the intellect, *but the integration of reason into faith.* And here the wording and the word-sequence is of crucial importance, because the integration of reason into faith implies that faith has priority. It is not an integration of faith into reason. In that case, reason would have the final say. Nor is it an attempt to balance faith and reason.⁸⁵

In trying to balance two things no unity is gained. If equality is the ultimate goal in the issue of the relationship between faith and reason, no true unity is possible. Whenever we focus on having equal shares, this very focus tends to bring the two into an antagonistic relationship. Equals are not together, they stand on opposite sides of the equation, constantly watching that the other side does not get ahead. They are not united but in contest with each other.

In trying to balance faith and reason, who finally decides how to balance one with the other? Who finally "keeps the balance?" History has shown that every time reason tried to support faith, it was reason that finally decided on the content of faith and changed and adapted God's revelation to the current ideology of the day. In the words of Walter Köhler "reason in theology has always had the tendency to change or shift its position from minister (Diener) to magister (Herr),"⁸⁶ from servant to master, from helper to ruler.

This is also the case in R. Rice's approach, where Scripture cannot interpret itself anymore but needs outside help in order to identify its own intellectual contents. This external help is supplied by the historical-critical method which attempts to distinguish between the essential and nonessential contents of the biblical message.⁸⁷ Rather than beginning with reason and then speaking about the contours of faith, the biblical position would be to start with faith and from there to look at the contours of reason! The true antithesis, therefore,

is not between faith and reason, as if believing and thinking were mutually exclusive, but between a faithful and a faithless use of reason. The question is not whether we should think, but how we should think; whether or not our thinking should be controlled by our faith.⁸⁸

It is therefore misleading to say that revelation supplements or adds to reason or that faith and reason complement each other,⁸⁹ because that implies they are equals. What is needed is not a quantitative addition but a qualitative change, not a building upon the old but a conversion to the new.⁹⁰ This leads us to our next point, namely to the meaning of the use of sanctified reason in theology.

Sanctified Reason

It is sometimes claimed that even Scripture encourages us to use "sanctified reason" as a means to understand God and His Word (cf. Isa 1:18, "come now, and let us reason together"),⁹¹ and that it is, therefore, perfectly legitimate to do so, albeit in "dialogue with the Spirit"⁹² (however one wants to understand such an expression). Is this interpretation of the Isaiah passage warranted? What does it mean to use "sanctified reason"? Furthermore, aren't we doomed to use our *own* reason, no matter what has been said about the role of reason in Scripture, because we have to make "reasonable" decisions about unclear passages in Scripture?

As far as the passage in Isaiah 1:18 is concerned, we can readily discern from the context that this is a rhetorical question that relates to the issue of salvation. Prior to verse 18 God pointed out the unfaithfulness of Judah which had led to their loss of knowledge! His challenge, to come and reason with Him, must be

understood as an ironic hint to show Judah her ignorance in respect to her own limitations, at least as far as salvation is concerned. From other biblical data it could very well be applied also to Judah's limitation in knowledge as such. For these reasons it seems inappropriate to use Isaiah 1:18 to make humankind into an equal dialogue partner with God, who by means of their own reason are able to understand and apply the truth of Scripture.⁹³

However, we need more than a mere orientation of reason towards Scripture, even if this is done from a position of a converted person. It is not enough just to orient oneself towards the Word of God while reason still maintains its independence and autonomy. What is needed is nothing less than the submission, the subordination of reason to the higher authority of God's Word. Ellen G. White has put it in these words:

God desires man to exercise his reasoning powers. . . yet we are to be aware of deifying reason which is subject to the infirmity of humanity. . . when we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM.⁹⁴

What is needed is the transformation of "natural reason" through God's Word, where it is informed and formed by it. For that is sanctification after all.

This is by no means a "sacrifice of the intellect," as it is often alleged. If it were the sacrifice of reason, reason would no longer exist. What needs to be sacrificed is not reason but the *autonomy* of reason. Thus, rather than being "a sacrifice of the intellect," it is the sacrifice of the assertive autonomy of (my) reason that is at stake, acknowledging that there is no such autonomy, but that true freedom of reason comes only through submission to the Word of God. What Scripture calls for is sanctified reason under the higher authority of the Word of God. This surrender is not a "blind obedience" that accepts an inevitable destiny or fate that cannot be changed. Blind obedience lacks the aspect of willing surrender, which cannot be divorced from true obedience, and it also excludes all attempts to understand God's Word more fully.

But having said all that, how do we respond to the view that we are in fact doomed to use our *own* reason in making "reasonable" decisions about questionable or unclear passages in Scripture.

Without claiming to have all the answers let me, nevertheless, make the following observation:

In order to answer the above mentioned charge we have to point out certain presuppositions on which Adventist theology has functioned so far. One of these basic presuppositions of Adventist theology has been and still is: the clarity of Scripture! In doing theology, in using Scripture as the source and norm for our theology, Adventists have accepted the fundamental Reformation principle of the clarity of Scripture.⁹⁵

The clarity of Scripture is inseparably connected with belief in the unity of Scripture⁹⁶ and is in harmony with Scripture's self-testimony, namely, that God is the ultimate author of all Scripture. God, as Creator, is perfectly capable of communicating clearly with man who is created in His image.⁹⁷ Thus, the clarity of God's Word to man is a fundamental ingredient in God's effectual communication with humanity.

If Scripture is intrinsically unclear, then we are thrown back to the Roman Catholic position that an extra Scriptural source is required as a hermeneutical key to interpret Scripture authoritatively for us, be that tradition, reason, or experience. To hold to the intrinsic "un-clarity" of Scripture makes us dependent on other authorities such as the teaching magisterium of the church or the "priesthood of the historians," the latter making us dependent on a small elite of historical-critical scholars⁹⁸ who tell us authoritatively what is acceptable in interpretation and what is to be dismissed.

To maintain the clarity of Scripture is to free the Bible once more for the "common people." If Scripture is allowed to be its own interpreter, to be the sole source of its own exposition, we have Scriptural guidelines that will guide, direct, and shape our investigation of God's Word.⁹⁹

Conclusion

The point of departure in an authentic Adventist theology is not reason, nor is it experience, nor is it tradition, nor is it the majority vote. Rather, it is the divine revelation of God's written Word, Holy Scripture. The criterion for Adventist theology is not derived from immanent factors, be it some form of inner ex-

perience¹⁰⁰ or one's own reason, but from God's Word which comes to us from without, and which is to be followed faithfully.

This means that our theological method is built on faith and faithful reason, that is, reason which is faithful to God's Word. This position leaves behind fideistic and rationalistic reductions in their different forms. Unlike the blind leap of Existentialism, where faith is disconnected from reason, biblical faith is a leap into the hands of God. It is a trusting submission to the Word of the living God, who speaks and who waits for our obedient response.

In different forms of rationalistic theology reason is not seen to be affected by sin, and, therefore, deems itself capable of judging "objectively" what is right and what is wrong. But Adventist theology does not elevate reason to the point where it becomes the arbiter of truth. This distinguishes Adventist theology from liberal theology and as well as from Fundamentalism.

It seems that Fundamentalists by and large have accepted inductive scientific rationalism to defend the trustworthiness of Scripture and their position.¹⁰¹ This "scientific," rational approach to Scripture, however, has the tendency to judge the truth of the Bible in terms of its correspondence to scientifically established data. Thus, as Mark Corner has aptly observed,

Despite its overt hostility to 'liberalism' it could be claimed that fundamentalism shares with its opponent a reductionistic, scientific mentality, and that in some ways both come from the same stable. One uses science to reject the Christian faith as traditionally perceived, the other uses it to prove it; neither is sufficiently aware of problems concerning the nature and limitations of its particular scientific approach.¹⁰²

Instead of abandoning reason Adventist theology holds to the renewal of reason through the converting power of God, making reason faithful and willing to follow the higher authority of the revealed Word of God.

But does the obedience to the Word of God inhibit the freedom of reason? On the contrary, Scripture establishes it. Scripture clearly teaches that true freedom is found only in obedient submission to the Word of God—otherwise man is captive to sin. By submitting to Scripture only in part—as far as reason will allow—our minds are not wholly free for truth.¹⁰³

As Adventists we have repeatedly emphasized that our faith includes more than mere "doctrines." It includes a wholistic lifestyle which involves the entire person. This is not restricted only to the things we eat and watch and do or don't do, but also includes the way we think, the way we do research, the way we use our intellect. We have rightly taught that man is a unity, where the spiritual, physical and mental aspects are interconnected and influence each other. But it appears that too often we have emphasized only the spiritual and physical aspects and have cut off the intellectual aspects in our theology. We often emphasize "mental excellence," but rarely talk about "mental obedience" to the Word of God.

Scripture adduces many examples where people of God have demonstrated this mental excellence by being faithful to the word of God. Let me ask you: How reasonable was it for Moses to guide the Israelites in the Exodus? How reasonable was it for Abraham and Sarah to expect a son? How reasonable was it for God to become man? How reasonable was it for Jesus Christ to be resurrected from the dead? How reasonable is it for God to forgive our sins and give free salvation? How reasonable is it to expect Christ to return in the clouds of heaven for a second time to take us home?

God's love for us cannot be explained naturally! It goes to show that we need to *remember* what kind of God we serve. This will help us to put things back into the right perspective, namely, to follow the example of the biblical heroes of faith and of Jesus Christ who built their theology on the only foundation on which Adventist theology can maintain its Scriptural mandate: on the Word of God alone.

Endnotes

¹ This illustration is taken from David R. Hall's delightfully corrective book *The Seven Pillories of Wisdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), vii, in which he critically examines seven popular arguments of the historical-critical method that have been used by scholars during the last century and a half and that have often been uncritically perpetuated in good faith by their followers to this very day.

² Cf. the examples mentioned in Raoul Dederen, "On Inspiration and Biblical Authority," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, eds. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), p. 91. Hereinafter this book will be referred to as *Issues*.

³ Donald G. Bloesch, *Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 35.

⁴ Cf. E. Edward Zinke, "The Pilgrimage of a Believer," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 3/2 (1992): 111-122.

⁵ In recent times two major attempts have been made by Adventist scholars to wrestle with the question of the role of reason in theology: Fernando Luis Canale, "A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions," Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 10 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), and Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1991). Strangely, Rice does not even mention Canale's book. Neither does he take up nor interact with the substantial contribution of Canale on this issue.

⁶ From an Adventist perspective see the compact but penetrating presentation by E. Edward Zinke, "A Conservative Approach to Theology," Supplement to the *Ministry* 50 (October, 1977): 24A-24P. This article is still available by writing to: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A.

⁷ "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word." Article One: "The Holy Scriptures" reads as follows: "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history." Quoted in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1992* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992): 5. Cf. also the presentation in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), p. 4, esp. pp. 11-14, which does not mention the preamble, however.

⁸ "But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, . . . not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 595. On Ellen White's relation to the Bible she is equally clear that the Bible alone remains the standard: "The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. . . . Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God." Letter 12, 1890, in Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), p. 256.

⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 39-58, esp. pp. 40-42. Erickson's typology on the relationship between theology and philosophy can equally be applied to reason, since philosophy is the product of reason.

¹⁰ "On Prescription against Heretics," 7, *The Ante-Nicean Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 3: 246. Hereinafter this work will be referred to as *ANF*. Tertullian's statement, however, should not be interpreted to mean that he was a blind irrationalist. His belief that some things, like the crucifixion, are simply too wonderful to be understood is not a general claim that belief is irrational. Cf. Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, 3 vol., revised edition (Nashville, TN: Abigdon Press, 1989), 1:175, with further literature. Yet even Tertullian who wanted to affirm nothing that went beyond faith admitted Stoic thought into theology, for example, by conceiving God and the soul as special kinds of bodies. "Ad Praxean," 7 *ANF* 3:601f.

¹¹ Cf. *WA* 51, 126, 6-8; 127, 10; 128, 2f; 129, 10. Such statements, need to be seen in the

light of Luther's whole thinking on the role of reason which appears to be more balanced. Cf. the detailed studies by Bernhard Lohse, *Ratio und Fides. Eine Untersuchung über die RATIO in der Theologie Luthers* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958); B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); and Friedrich Beiser, "Luthers Urteil über die 'Vernunft'," *Theologische Beiträge* 15 (1984): 150-162.

12 Cf. Gerald R. Cragg, *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1964), pp. 62-92.

13 Pannenberg has called this "receiving reason." Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Faith and Reason," in *Basic Questions in Theology*, transl. by George H. Kehm (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983) 2:57-59. A brief overview of the Greek concept of reason can be found in Thomas Whittaker, "Reason," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 10:593-595. For an in-depth analysis and critique of the Greek concept of reason which has permeated much of theology see Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason*, esp. 285-387.

14 So also Pannenberg, "Faith and Reason," 58.

15 Canale has shown that despite a different emphasis on reason in modern times, the basic primordial presupposition of Greek reason has remained the same. Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason*, 19-159.

16 The term "Enlightenment" is a self-designation which was used by the followers of this movement. In the English speaking world it is sometimes also identified with the "Age of Reason." The Enlightenment covers roughly the period from the mid 1600s to the late 1700s and is of crucial importance to the issue under investigation because during this period one can notice a revolution in the understanding of the role of Scripture in theology. The literature on this period is immense. For a helpful introduction to the Enlightenment as it relates to theology and philosophy see Rainer Piepmeier, "Aufklärung: I. Philosophisch," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, eds. Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 4:575-594; and Martin Schmidt, "Aufklärung: II. Theologisch," in *ibid.*, 4:594-608 with further literature.

17 "The ideal of the Enlightenment is the duty of not entertaining any belief that is not warranted by rational evidence, which means by the assent of autonomous reason rather than biblical or ecclesiastical authority." James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 3. Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith: A Historical Sketch from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), p. 44, observes that today "reason has taken over the place of revelation."

18 René Descartes is almost universally considered to be the originator of modern philosophy. According to Laurence J. LaFleur he has far surpassed any other individual or event in the extent of his influence in determining the characteristics of modernity. One major element of his influence can be seen in his disbelief in authoritarianism and a belief in the unique adequacy of each individual's reason for the discovery of truth. Laurence J. LaFleur, "Introduction," in René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, transl. by Laurence J. LaFleur (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), vii-viii.

19 Friedrich Beiser, "Irrwege und Wege historisch-kritischer Bibelwissenschaft," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 15 (1973): 195, 200.

20 Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" transl. and ed. by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1959): 85.

21 The supremacy of the rational became absolute when reason alone was given normative authority. As early as 1675 Glanville argued in his book *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* that reason is "in a sense, the Word of God. . . written upon our minds and hearts; as Scripture is that which is written in a Book." He concludes by saying: "Follow reason, for no article of faith can contradict it, and every article of faith must agree thereto." The quotation is taken from H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study 1700-1960* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), pp. 35-36. Later John Locke, the founder of rational theology in England said that "reason must be our last judge in everything." John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, sect.

14, as quoted in McDonald, pp. 41-42. Nothing contrary to reason was accepted on the supposed authority of revelation. Rather, revelation itself must have the approval of reason. Cf. McDonald, p. 42; and Gragg, pp. 62-154.

22 On the Socinians, see Klaus Scholder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology: Origins and Problems of Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century*, transl. by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 26-45.

23 On the Deist's, see Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, transl. by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 289-410; Gragg, 62-92; and McDonald, pp. 33-62.

24 This is shown in the following studies: Paul Althaus, *Die Prinzipien der deutschen reformierten Dogmatik im Zeitalter der aristotelischen Scholastik* (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1914; reprint: Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), pp. 201-273, esp. 268, 271; Hans-Martin Barth, *Atheismus und Orthodoxie: Analysen und Modelle christlicher Apologetik im 17. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), esp. pp. 314-315; and Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism: A Study of Theological Prolegomena* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), p. 303.

25 J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture: A Study of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible* (London: Methuen & Co., 1957), p. 94.

26 So Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, transl. by Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:119-120. Orthodoxy did not produce the Enlightenment, as Otto Weber has pointed out, but "Orthodoxy prepared the way for rationalism as the preferred and characteristic thought structure of the Age of Enlightenment, especially theological Rationalism." *Ibid.*, 1:129.

27 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. by J. M. D. Meiklejohn (Everyman's Library, 909) (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1950), p. 10.

28 Here Paul Ricoeur's recent proposal to return to a so called "second naïveté" is no help either because this Ricoeurian "second naïveté" is not a return to a faithful listening to God's revelation in Scripture but remains within the limits of historical reason alone. Paul Ricoeur proposes the idea of a "second naïveté" in basic form in the last chapter of his book *The Symbolism of Evil*, transl. by Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 347-357, also 19. Ricoeur himself states that he aims at a "second naïveté in and through criticism," and further elaborates on this by saying that "all criticism 'demythologizes' insofar as it is criticism; that is to say, it always adds to the separation of the historical (according to the rules of the critical method) and the pseudo-historical." *Ibid.*, pp. 351, 352, emphasis added. For Ricoeur, the text decontextualizes itself and distances itself from the original intention of the author as the context of reading changes. This is delineated in his influential little book *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976). This "surplus of meaning" that according to Ricoeur is characteristic of every text makes it impossible for the Biblical text to function in an authoritative way in any objective or propositional sense, "since the openedness of hermeneutics compels the interpreter to deconstruct the text of any claim to changeless original meaning and to reconstruct it within contemporary contexts that are continually subject to the dynamics of change. . . . This means that the original semantic signs of Scripture are not normative as the inspired and unchanging Word of God for all historical contexts. Ricoeur's hermeneutical method requires that the present meaning of a biblical text, as it exists for me existentially and for the church corporately in worship, is not tied referentially and objectively to its original historical context." Royce Gordon Gruenler, *Meaning and Understanding: The Philosophical Framework for Biblical Interpretation*, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), pp. 103-104. In this Ricoeur's hermeneutical work functions, in his own words, "not at all as a rejection of Bultmann or even as a supplement to his work, but as somehow a foundation supporting it." Paul Ricoeur, "Preface to Bultmann," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. with an Introduction by Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 72. In the words of Gruenler, "Ricoeur allows the presuppositions of the critical ego to demythologize the Scriptures of their claim to objective theological authority . . ." so

that it is "in fact the autonomous self who controls the rules of the game." Gruenler, 105-106. For a sympathetic criticism of Ricoeur's approach see the recent studies by Werner G. Jeanrond, *Test and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking*, transl. by Thomas J. Wilson (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 37-72; and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁹ Beisser, "Irrwege und Wege historisch-kritischer Bibelwissenschaft," p. 197. More recently this has been pointed out by Gerhard Noller, *Metaphysik und Theologische Realisation. Das Ende der metaphysischen Grundstellung der Neuzeit und die Neubestimmung auf die theologische Wirklichkeit der Bibel* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1990).

³⁰ The so called postmodernists aim at a deconstruction of any perspective that claims absolute authority. Instead they celebrate relativism or pluralism as the nature of the human condition. The strong postmodernists like Derrida and Lyotard, for instance, seek no foundations for rationality and have doubts about the project of rationality itself. In that they actually foster a nihilistic attitude. For a helpful overview of postmodern thought as it relates to theology, see William C. Placher, "Postmodern Theology," in *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), pp. 372-375; Ted Peters, "Toward Postmodern Theology, Part I and Part II," *Dialog. A Journal for Theology* 24 (1985): 221-226, 293-297; Nancey Murphy and James Wm. McClendon, Jr., "Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies," *Modern Theology* 5/3 (1989): 191-214; and Craig Van Geldern, "Postmodernism as an Emerging Worldview," *Calvin Theological Journal* 26 (1991): 412-417.

³¹ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

³² Noller, p. 129.

³³ Cf. Reinhard Slenczka, "Schrift—Tradition—Kontext. Die Krise des Schriftprinzips und das ökumenische Gespräch," in *Evangelische Schriftauslegung. Ein Quellen und Arbeitsbuch für Studium und Gemeinde*, eds. Joachim Cochlovius and Peter Zimmerling (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1987), pp. 424-453.

³⁴ Here the famous proposal of a "hermeneutics of consent" by Peter Stuhlmacher should be mentioned, where Stuhlmacher calls for a new listening to the claims of tradition in addition and beyond the historical critical method. Cf. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik*, 2nd revised and enlarged edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), pp. 222-256; idem, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, transl. by Roy A. Harrisville (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 83-87. Cf. also idem, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Vol. 1: Grundlegung von Jesus zu Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), pp. 10-11. Christian Stawenow has shown that for Stuhlmacher it is not possible to leave aside taking into account church tradition for the interpretation of Scripture. Christian Stawenow, "Historische und Geistliche Hermeneutik bei Peter Stuhlmacher," unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Kirchliches Oberseminar Naumburg, 1986, p. 97.

³⁵ Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press), 1991.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 91.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 93.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 91.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 90, 97.

⁴² Ibid., p. 88.

⁴³ James White, *A Word to the Little Flock*, 1847, p. 13. That position was affirmed in 1849 in a statement in *Present Truth*, the earliest Seventh-day Adventist periodical: "The Bible is our chart—our guide. It is our only rule for faith and practice, to which we would closely adhere." *Present Truth*, December 1849. Similarly the Statement number three on Scripture in the *Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practices by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steampress, 1872), which reads: "That the Holy

Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of his will to man and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the words "pluralism" and "diversity" are often confused by some in our midst, apparently, because of James White's 1853 statement: "As a people we are brought together from divisions of the Advent body [the Millerites], and from the various denominations, holding different views on some subjects. . . ." (*Review and Herald* (August 11, 1853), 4:52). It must be remembered, however, that our Adventist pioneers stood united in their acceptance of Scripture alone as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice; therefore, it is more appropriate to speak of a *diversity* of opinions among them, rather than of a "theological pluralism." The difference in wording is of no small importance. Let me explain: The word *diversity* implies that there is a common basis on which different opinions can be tackled and resolved. Pluralism, on the other hand, expresses the idea that there are conflicting truth-claims that stand in competition with each other because there is no common basis, or starting point. Thus, if Adventist hermeneutic starts out pluralistic, as some are suggesting it should, the church cannot arrive at a unified understanding of truth. This may explain why today a unity on Scriptural grounds within the church is so difficult to achieve. Instead of standing united on the sure foundation of God's written Word, some are attempting to keep the pluralistic and conflicting viewpoints in the church "together" either by means of sociological or cultural reasons, or by appealing to our common heritage or tradition. Such humanly constructed solidarity (which is what pluralism really is), however, cannot hold together that which can only be achieved through the Word of God. This conclusion is supported by the above quoted statement by James White which continues with the following words: ". . . ; yet, thank Heaven, the Sabbath is a mighty platform on which we can all stand united. And while standing here, with the aid of no other creed than the Word of God, and bound together by the bonds of love—love for the truth, love for each other, and love for a perishing world—'which is stronger than death,' all party feelings are lost. We are united in these great subjects: Christ's immediate personal second Advent, and the observance of all of the commandments of God, and the faith of his Son Jesus Christ, as necessary to a readiness for his Advent."

⁴⁵ Hans-Martin Barth, pp. 314-315. Cf. Michael Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); see also Karl-Heinz Michel, *Immanuel Kant und die Frage der Erkennbarkeit Gottes. Eine kritische Untersuchung der 'Transzendentalen Ästhetik' in der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft' und ihrer theologischen Konsequenz* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1987), 235-237.

⁴⁶ For the following section I would like to express my indebtedness to the insights gained from two unpublished research papers by my wife. Cf. Ulrike Hasel, "Das Hebräische Konzept von Erkennen bei Jesaja," unpublished research paper, Andrews University, 1988; idem, "The Biblical Presuppositions of Human Knowledge and Understanding as Derived from Hebrew and Greek Terms and Selected Passages from the Old Testament," unpublished research paper, Andrews University, 1992. The ideas presented in those papers as well as the constructive criticism of my wife during the developing stages of this article have contributed significantly to the content of it.

⁴⁷ The English word "reason" has a large number and a wide variety of meanings and uses. On the different meanings and uses of the word "reason" see G. J. Warnock, "Reason," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 7:83-85. Etymologically it is derived from the Latin word "ratio," which itself has a number of different connotations; see "Ratio," in *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 1575-1576.

⁴⁸ Heinz-Peter Hempelmann, "Vernunft, Verstand," in *Das Große Bibellexikon*, eds. Helmut Burkhardt et al (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1989), 3: 1635.

⁴⁹ Alberto Soggin, "Imago Dei—Neue Überlegungen zu Genesis 1, 26," in *Altes Testament und christliche Verkündigung*, Festschrift für Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, eds. Manfred Oeming and Axel Graupner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987), pp. 385-389.

⁵⁰ Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980), p. 37.

⁵¹ W. Schottroff, "jd'—erkennen," in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten*

Testament, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1984), 1: 685. Hereinafter this work will be referred to as *THAT*.

52 In this we follow Heinz-Peter Hempelmann, "Erkennen, Erkenntnis," in *Das Große Bibellexikon*, eds. Helmut Burkhardt et al (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1987), 1:326-328.

53 Jack P. Lewis, "yada—know," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:366. Hereinafter this work is referred to as *TWOT*.

54 For eg. Exod 6:7; Deut 4:35; 1 Kgs 18:37; Isa 49:23; etc.

55 E. D. Schmitz, "Knowledge, Experience, Ignorance," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 2:395. Hereinafter this work is referred to as *NIDNTT*.

56 Schottroff, p. 690. The relational aspect of *yada'* comes out most forcefully in connection with the sexual knowing of ones marital spouse.

57 Hempelmann, "Erkennen," p. 326.

58 Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 66.

59 For a further development of the relational-treaty background of the term *yada'* see Herbert B. Huffmann, "The Treaty Background of Hebrew *yada'*," *BASOR* 181 (1966): 31-37.

60 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Wisdom Theology and the Center of Old Testament Theology," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 50/3 (1978):137. Whybray summarizes the concept of the fear of God as follows: "The concept of 'fearing Yahweh' thus included every aspect of Israel's relationship to him: obedience, loyalty, worship, sacrifice and love. . . ." R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs* (London: SCM, 1965), p. 96.

61 Kaiser, p. 138.

62 Schmitz, p. 395. Cf. also Rudolf Bultmann, "*ginosko*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, transl. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:697. Hereinafter this work is referred to by *TDNT*.

63 Schmitz, p. 392.

64 Schmitz, p. 392.

65 Cf. Schmitz, p. 398.

66 Hempelmann, "Erkennen," p. 328.

67 Jesus qualifies Christians as being "friends of God," John, 15:15.

68 The above discussed meaning of *ginosko* is also essentially applicable to the Greek word "*oida*—to know," which can be synonymous with *ginosko*. Cf. Heinrich Seesemann, "Oida," in *TDNT*, 5:116-117.

69 Louis Goldberg, "*Bin*," in *TWOT*, 1:103.

70 Helmer Ringgren, "*bin, binah, tebunah*," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, transl. by John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:99. Hereinafter this work will be referred to as *TDOT*.

71 Goldberg, p. 103.

72 Goldberg, p. 104.

73 J. Goetzmann, "*synesis*," *NIDNTT*, 3:130; Hans Conzelmann, "*synesis*," *TDNT*, 7:890-891.

74 Goetzmann, p. 131.

75 Goetzmann, p. 132.

76 F. Stolz, "*leb—Herz*," *THAT* 1:861.

77 Cf. Stolz, 1:862-863; Theo Sorg, "*kardia*," in *NIDNTT*, 2:181.

78 Cf. Hempelmann, "Vernunft," 1635.

79 Goldberg, p. 104.

80 Cf. Heinz-Josef Fabry, "*leb, lebab*," in *TWAT*, 4:413-451; Sorg, 181; and Johannes Behm, "*Kardia*," in *TDNT*, 3:609-611.

81 G. Harder, "*nous*," in *NIDNTT*, 3:124.

82 Cf. Hempelmann, "Vernunft," p. 1635.

83 A striking feature of the NT use of *kardia*, (heart) for instance is the essential

closeness to the concept of *nous*, (mind). According to Sorg, 182, heart and mind can be used in parallel (cf. 2 Cor 3:14f) or synonymously (Phi 4:7).

84 Cf. Johannes Behm, "*Kardia*," in *TDNT*, 3:611-613.

85 So Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985), 5. Similarly earlier Raymond F. Cottrell, *Reason and Faith* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), pp. 18, 21, 37.

86 Walther Köhler, *Dogmengeschichte als Geschichte des christlichen Selbstbewusstseins: Das Zeitalter der Reformation* (Zurich: Max Niehans Verlag, 1951), p. 135.

87 Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith*, p. 84. In this Rice echoes the program of Johann Salomo Semler, one of the founding fathers of historical criticism. See Gottfried Hornig, *Die Anfänge der historisch-kritischen Theologie. Johann Salomo Semlers Schriftverständnis und seine Stellung zu Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), esp. pp. 84-115. It appears that the historical-critical method is per definition in principle not capable of dealing with history in all its dimensions and has an essentially a-historical character. This has recently been pointed out and criticized by Gerhard Maier in his monumental new book *Biblische Hermeneutik* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1991, second edition), pp. 232-244. It appears that those who use the historical-critical method, to use the immortal words of Irish philosopher George Berkeley, "first raised a dust and then complain that we cannot see." Quoted in Colin Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 63. We have argued elsewhere, that Scripture, in analogy to Christ's divine human nature, ". . . was given in time and space. But rather than being historically conditioned by immanent cause and effect relations, and thereby being rendered relative and not universally binding, God's written Word is divinely conditioned and historically constituted. Thus, it remains binding upon all men at all ages and in all places." Frank M. Hasel, "Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture," in *Issues*, pp. 208-209.

88 J. I. Packer, "*Fundamentalism*" and the Word of God (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958, reprint 1990), p. 140.

89 So Richard Rice, *The Reign of God*, p. 6.

90 Cf. Donald G. Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty: Toward and Evangelical Theology of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 192.

91 So George R. Knight, *Myth's in Adventism: An Interpretive Study of Ellen White, Education and Related Issues* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983), p. 23.

92 So Alden Thompson, *Inspiration*, 109. For a response to Thompson's use of so called "sanctified reason" see, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, "An Analysis and Evaluation of Alden Thompson's Casebook/Codebook Approach to the Bible," in *Issues*, pp. 43-46.

93 Ulrike Hasel, "The Biblical Presupposition of Human Knowledge and Understanding as Derived from Hebrew and Greek Key Terms and Selected Passages from the Old Testament," pp. 28-29, contra Knight, p. 23.

94 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), p. 115.

95 On the clarity of Scripture, see the important study by Friedrich Beisser, *Claritas Scripturae bei Martin Luther*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) esp. 168-169; and more recently the excellent study by Bernhard Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift. Teil 1: Martin Luther: Die wiederentdeckten Grundlagen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

96 For an Adventist approach to the question of the unity of Scripture, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Unity of the Bible," Supplement to the *Ministry* 48 (May/1975): insert, 1U-16U.

97 Cf. the excellent article by Jack Barentsen, "The Validity of Human Language: A Vehicle for Divine Truth," *Grace Theological Journal* 9/1 (1988): 21-43; also Eckhard Schnabel, *Inspiration und Offenbarung. Die Lehre vom Ursprung und Wesen der Bibel* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1986), pp. 130-137; and William J. Larkin, Jr. *Culture*

and *Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), pp. 242-251.

98 This term is coined by William Lane Craig, "Pannenberg's Beweis für die Auferstehung Jesu." *Kerygma und Dogma* 34 (1988): 92-93.

99 For a presentation of some Biblical Guidelines and Principles in interpretation see Richard Davidson, "A Hermeneutical Decalogue," *JATS* 4/2 (1993): 95-114.

100 It appears that a large segment of contemporary theology is reviving a new mystical knowledge of God. But as one person once so poignantly remarked: "Mysticism starts in mist—ends in schism—and is centered on the I."

101 Miroslav Volf, "The Challenge of Protestant Fundamentalism," *Concilium* (#3, 1992), pp. 101-102.

102 Mark Corner, "Fundamentalism," in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, eds. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (London: SCM Press, 1990), p. 244.

103 Packer, "Fundamentalism," p. 144.

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THE WORD OF GOD IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

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In the beginning there was the Word of God (John 1:1). This Word, infinitely more powerful and more effective than any human word ever uttered in its echo, created worlds, beings and things (Ps 33:6-9). No sooner were Adam and Eve created than God blessed them and spoke to them (Gen 1:28). Since then, through the ages, in many and various ways, God has kept open the lines of communication. Through visions, dreams, the audible voice, conscience, events in human history, and ultimately through the presence of His Son among humans, He has maintained His Word, present and active (Heb 1:1-2).

Many of these revelatory events are found, gathered under the direction of the Holy Spirit through the process called inspiration, in the document called the Bible. The Bible is, therefore, the creative and revealing Word in the form of a document. Because of the involvement of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is not just a collection of ancient, pious sayings about God, but actually is the Word of God.

My thesis is that Seventh-day Adventist ethics must have the Word of God as foundation. Any other approach, any other basis of authority is insufficient. There can be no genuine Adventist ethics where the basis is not Scripture.

Alternative Approaches

For long centuries the official Christian church made great efforts to keep Scripture away from Christians. Reading the Scriptures was considered dangerous for spiritual health, and history

records the persecutions and executions of those who kept the Bible at home or who read it.

Under the strong influences of the Reformation, Protestantism returned to Scripture as the only authority for faith and conduct, only to be challenged in turn by liberalism. Starting with the Renaissance (16th century) and the Enlightenment (17th and 18th centuries), the emphasis turned to human reason for definition of truth, to individual conscience as the final arbiter of right and wrong, to preestablished natural law where the cosmos is a self-contained system, and finally to historical, critical verification of truth. The supernatural is sometimes tacitly excluded (Lamarck), and sometimes modified to mean that revelation adds nothing to reason (Lessing).

Scripture became the object of critical, literary, and historical study, setting aside its divine origin and inspiration. The question was, What can we find if we treat, study, and analyze the Bible as any other book? If we eliminate miracles because they are supernatural and unscientific, reject prophecies because humans cannot know the future, dismiss anything that hurts our ego, our autonomy, our freedom—such as sin, law, judgment—center only on the historical Jesus rather than Jesus Christ the Son of God, what could we discover then in the Bible? Can Scripture be relevant when it is partially or completely secularized? Some felt that the biblical message needed demythologization (Bultmann); others preferred interpretation from a Marxist perspective (Bloch); yet others urged an existential and subjective approach to its interpretation (Barth).

We must ask: Does it really matter whether we accept the Bible as the Word of God, or can Christianity maintain its identity, its unity, and its mission without hearing God's Word? After several centuries of experimentation without God's Word, we witness several developments:

First, the question now arises: If the Bible is not the Word of God, who then speaks for Him? Who is the emissary of divine authority on earth? Robert McAfee Brown points out that while in Roman Catholicism the church has the pope who has ultimate authority, in Protestantism this issue remains "the Achilles' heel."¹ The Reformers subordinated both the individual's conscience and

ecclesial authority to Scripture. But since the Bible is divested of its authority, by liberalism, does this mean that humanity is left without a word from the Word of God?

Second, we witness a proliferation of divergent views on the basic Christian doctrines, and even more importantly, the total rejection of some pillars of Christianity. Thus, the literal seven-day creation is dismissed as unscientific, the virgin birth and resurrection are myths, and the second coming and the final judgment are mere symbols.

Third, we observe the appearance of a bewildering spectrum of perspectives on the nature and the role of the Bible.

Finally, as a result of the previous three developments, substitutes for biblical authority come to prominence. But does it really matter how we view Scripture? I believe it does.

For the sake of brevity and clarity we will group the multiplicity of opinions into four categories: (1) the Bible, an ordinary book, (2) the Bible, a Counselor, (3) the Bible, the Word About God, (4) the Bible, the Word of God. We will describe these views of the Bible and note the impact each approach leaves on Christian life and behavior.

Bible, an Ordinary Book. If the Bible is just another book, we cannot expect anything more from it than what we count on receiving from any other book. Then, God does not speak through its pages, and there is no moral nor religious authority in its message. Authority may be conferred on the individual (emotivism or subjectivism) or on society and its structures (Marxism). Such a way of being, and the behavior it yields, harbors several dangerous defects.

The most important defect may be personal or social irresponsibility. When no account is to be rendered to God, even when human controls are very effective and completely benevolent (which is an impossible ideal), each does what is good in his/her own eyes (Judg 21:25). Experience shows, however, that without a clear indication of what is good and what is evil, many do not care if their actions are good in anybody's eyes. Emotivism and social democracy tend to relativism in morals and dictatorships in social life (communism). This option is not compatible with Christianity.

Bible, a Counselor. When the Bible serves as a counselor and a

teacher, the emphasis is placed on the education and nurture of the Christian community. The divine involvement in the process of inspiration may be acknowledged, however, biblical authority functions only in the role or authority of an advisor. The Bible is merely a resource book, containing a wealth of God-inspired wisdom. The role and mission of the church is to make this information vividly present, instructing its members and interpreting the message of Scripture.

There is much in this approach that commends itself to a Christian. Scripture is definitely "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16, RSV). The examples and case studies have informed innumerable lives in all ages and in all professions. The Bible is a "case book."

But the disturbing fact in this approach is that the Bible does not have the authority of the Word of God. For that reason the ultimate prerogative for faith and order is relegated to the community of faith, or its leadership. The pronouncements of the church in each age, the interpretation of the Bible by its theologians, forms a corpus of traditions which slowly take precedence over Scripture.

This was the situation in the time of Jesus (Mark 7:7-9), and it is the case with several prominent Christian churches today. Human traditions are bound to conflict, human insight is prone to biases, and the human fascination with power (especially the prospect of speaking for God) leads to compromise and corruption. This understanding of Scripture involves definite risks for the Christian life.

Bible, a Witness. Many Christians recognize that Scripture warrants greater and fuller trust. They realize that the main theme of the Bible is God and His salvific activity towards humans. He longs to enter into an encounter with His creatures, and this is seen as the supreme task of the Bible. Reading the Bible brings us into His presence where our life and our conduct are confronted with His holiness. There we can measure our hopelessness and cling to Him for grace and forgiveness.

Biblical authority is compared to that of a witness who presents to us the evidences of who God is and what He has done

in the lives of those whom He saves. The testimony is compelling and direct. It touches the innermost recesses of the soul. Such an encounter cannot pass without impacting the character and life of the human being. The Word of God comes in the privacy and subjectivity of individual existence. The Bible is only an instrument to facilitate such an experience.

But the Bible is still short of being the Word of God. In the moment of private encounter, Scripture's witness may become His word for a person, but there is no Word of God to humans in the Bible outside of this subjective "eternal moment." The message in the Bible is not God's Word per se. It is only a statement about Him. There is in fact, in this view, no objective Word of God today. God can speak only to our subjectivity. If He does not speak to us in that direct manner, our life is left without the Word.

This is a serious conclusion, indeed. If the Word of God is limited to what happens in my private experience, what happens if our private experiences contradict? Also, how do we know we have had an encounter with God and not with the tempter? Our character and our behavior have no authoritative, external, guiding system. History provides ample illustrations of tragic consequences when this is the case.

Bible, the Word of God. In distinction from these and other such views many Christians still hold the conviction that the Bible is the Word of God. It is not our task here to present the doctrines of revelation and inspiration. Rather, we focus on two main questions relevant to our subject of Christian lifestyle and behavior. First, What do we mean by the statement: the Bible is the Word of God? Second, What difference does it make in the Christian life?

When we confess that the Bible is the Word of God we mean that:

1. The biblical writers do not expound their private views, opinions, or wishes (2 Pet 1:19-21).
2. The authors do not rely on their own poetic inspiration, theological insight or literary genius as the source of biblical content.
3. The content of the biblical message reflects the divine will because it originates in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 3:16).

4. It is relevant, compelling, and authoritative independently of human acceptance or personal experience, and that implies objective and not exclusively subjective discernment of its divine nature.

For an appraisal of the importance of the Word of God in human life, and more particularly the role and influence of the written Word, we first turn to the Bible itself. We ask, What does the Word mean to such people as David, Paul, and Jesus Himself? What part did it play in their lives? What we discover is that their esteem for Scripture and their dependence on its authority exceed the esteem and dependence described above in the first three approaches. They do not regard Scripture as any other book. Here are some evidences:

1. To Joshua God recommends "this book of the law" above anything else, and above any other authority (Josh 1:8).

2. Psalm 119 is a creative ode written to magnify the law, that is, Torah, the Bible of David's time. He exalts God's word as a lamp which guides (vs 105), and a teacher who gives understanding (vs 97-100).

3. The prophets of the Scriptures testify that their message was *the Word of God* and not just a *word about* God. Evidences of this are on nearly every page of the prophetic books, and Paul and Peter unite their voices with them (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21).

4. The use of the word "scripture" in such passages as Galatians 3:22 and Acts 17:2 indicates an appeal to authority, not just a simple reference to a book.

5. Jesus also appeals to Scripture.

a. He relies on its authority in questions of teaching and doctrines (Mark 12:10-11; John 10:34-36).

b. He recognizes and affirms the prophetic nature of Scripture, setting it above ordinary writings (Luke 4:21; John 13:18).

c. He affirms the unique role Scripture must play in leading human beings to eternal life and to Him (John 5:39).

d. When a rich, young ruler inquired about guidance in daily decisions, dilemmas and actions, Jesus did not suggest expediency (utilitarianism), personal feelings (emotivism), the voice of tradition, the impact of the situation (situationism), nor did He tell him "Do whatever seems to be loving, and you are safe!!" No! He

referred him to the written Word, thus setting all the other norms under the authority of God as expressed in the Scriptures (Matt 19:17-19).

e. Jesus stands firmly on the biblical Word when confronted with temptation. Reason, human insight, situation, even personal encounters did not overshadow the Word of Scripture. "It is written," He said, and that was the conclusion no matter what the consequences (Matt 4:1-11).

It is enough for the servant to be and to behave like his or her master. Christians follow the example of Jesus when they search the Scriptures for guidance in the moral decisions of daily life. But what do we find in Scripture that is so useful in our lives? How is Scripture a basis for Christian ethics?

Bible and Standards of Behavior

While there is a general consensus that the Bible contains guidelines for human lives, there is a significant divergence of opinion as to their nature and function. In the remaining portion of this essay we focus briefly on the role of the Bible in providing standards of behavior. Inevitably, the measure of authority ascribed to Scripture and the extent to which it is identified with the Word of God will determine its relevance and importance for moral life.

Principles. Often it is admitted that the Scriptures give general, absolute and objective statements of right and wrong, frequently called principles. These are the broad outlines of God's will from which humans, more or less autonomously, can derive more concrete norms. In teleological and autonomian circles these principles tend to be very general and abstract. Thus neo-Lutheran theologians like William Lazareth speak of paradigms of love which alone should guide us in our ethical decision.

Joseph Fletcher, on the other hand, argues that the Ten Commandments are general maxims, not laws or precepts meant for obedience. They are objective generalizations which must be set aside whenever the absolute principle of love demands it. But love is also, and even more an obstruction. No one knows completely what love is except the moral agent in the given situation. It is only the context which concretizes love. Therefore, such a remote and abstract concept can lend itself to innumerable interpretations.

Whether stealing and adultery are good or bad will depend on love's decision in the concrete situation.

It must be admitted that the Bible does furnish general, objective and absolute standards of behavior. "He has showed you, O man, what is good," exclaims the prophet Micah. However, if those principles are so abstract and made to be so general that they cannot give concrete guidance, then we do not find them helpful at all. Fortunately, a more careful look at biblical principles of right and wrong reveals that all of them, without exception, are given in a concrete, real life context, to real people, for guidance in real situations. God's will does not come to us as a consensus statement of some legislative body in an effort to satisfy some remote constitution. No, the Ten Commandments, and the Sermon on the Mount are given to people focusing on their immediate life and actual needs.

God's Word affirms this saying: "For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it." (Deut 30:11-14, RSV).

Thus, we can affirm with the Word of God that God has shown us what is good in the form of principles. These commandments are general, they are absolute and objective, but they are not for that reason abstract. Rather they are near to human life, mouth and heart. This is indeed the unique beauty of God's Word in Christian Ethics, and we would do well to study it carefully as we are enlightened by this spiritual lamp in a dark place (cf. 2 Pet 1:19).

Life Stories. But Scripture does not leave Christians with principles alone. God is too concerned for our happiness and safety, too distressed when sin and evil ruin our body, mind and soul, not to provide further help and more direct guidance. This is why we can find in the Bible life stories which contain the examples of value-systems falling within the broader principles. Principles serve as codes of human behavior, while life stories provide examples of conduct. There is no contradictions between the two, as

it has been suggested sometimes. On the contrary, the strength of the principle is enhanced whether the example is that of obedience or disobedience.

One example may be sufficient. The principle states clearly "Thou shall not commit adultery" (Exod 20:14). The life story of Joseph sets the norm by saying: "Do not disobey the principle, not even if you are a slave under the orders of your masters, not even if you are single, not even if you will face a prison sentence or death." But Scripture often gives negative examples as well. Within the purview of this principle the case of David and Bathsheba comes to mind. David's sin only strengthens the principle against adultery, rather than weakening it.

It seems evident that the life stories in the Bible serve several functions in reference to the basic principles of behavior:

1. They set a norm, indicating how far we may be asked to go in our obedience (Heb 12:3-4).
2. They may serve as warnings, displaying consequences of our decisions and actions.
3. They illustrate the value-systems used by the biblical characters. The priorities of both Joseph and David are clearly displayed in the above-mentioned experiences, and this is very useful for our instruction today (1 Cor 10:11).

Yet Scripture cannot provide us with an example for every possible temptation and dilemma. We are, however, surrounded by a cloud of people who have shown us the norms, the limits to which they obeyed the will of God (Hebrews 11 and 12). A Christian will not be molded by life stories which reflect the norms of this world (Rom 12:1-2), but rather will be conformed to the will of God and stories of the Bible. Thus, there is no contradiction between codes and cases.

Rules. In His love for us God is willing to provide an additional step. He does not remain detached from our actual struggles with decisions and temptations of life. God has put in His Word not only principles and norms of behavior, but also rules. The Bible presents an important number of rules. These are direct statements of duty requiring obedience. The main reason for these is that we do not always know which way to turn and what is loving, good and just, because of our limitations and sinful learnings. The purpose for the

rules is to prevent us from harming ourselves and our neighbor with dangerous actions, or damaging consequences.

Thus, when the principle says, "Thou shall not commit adultery," and the norm (or life experience) defines the values to be safeguarded and priorities chosen ("don't do it, not even if you're forced into sin like Joseph"), then the rule will apply the principle and norm by saying what is actually forbidden: "If a man lies with . . . wife of his neighbor" . . . or with "his daughter in law" . . . they have committed an abomination (Lev 20:10-21). The rule will always seek to express the principle and honor the priorities in view of what is good and just for human life.

Christians are called to think, to pray, to sometimes agonize their decisions through, but not totally on their own. We are safe only if we base our decisions on principles found in Scripture, focusing them through norms or priorities exemplified in Scripture, and reaching our decisions through formulation of rules in harmony with those biblical principles and norms. It makes all the difference in the world if we accept Scripture as the Word of God. If we do not accept the Bible as His Word we will miss His creative Word which sustains us (Matt 4:3).

If we ignore the Bible as His Word, we will miss His statement about what is right and wrong, good and evil, given at Sinai.

If we disregard the Bible as His Word we will fail to hear His words on Calvary "It is finished," sin is defeated, you are up against a foe that has been conquered, and we may not enjoy the victorious life offered to us.

Finally, if we scorn the Bible as the Word of God we will most certainly not recognize the resurrection call as His Word, and then "we are of all man most to be pitied" (1 Cor 15:19).

To be a human being means to be able to hear the Word of God. In hearing His Word and conforming our lives with the life stories of the Bible, and trusting in God who always knows best, we set our behavior on firm ground (Psalms 112).

Endnote

¹ Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 171-172.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF ADVENTIST HERMENEUTICS

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When surveying the history of Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutics, it is helpful to distinguish the hermeneutics underlying essential characteristic doctrines from those nonessential secondary views. It is helpful also to distinguish early hermeneutics from later ones.

Protestant Heritage

In arriving at the doctrines that Seventh-day Adventists consider essential and characteristic of their theology, it can fairly be said that the precursors and pioneers of Seventh-day Adventism "followed basically the hermeneutical principles established during the Reformation that were also held by non-liberal Protestants of their time."¹ The essential characteristic doctrines include the imminence and literalness of the premillennial second coming, the holiness of the seventh-day as the Sabbath, the unconscious sleep of the dead, the presence of spiritual gifts in the end-time (specifically as seen in the ministry of Ellen G. White), and the datability of the pre-advent judgment to 1844.

Influence of William Miller. William Miller, of Low Hampton, New York, helped set the stage for later Adventists by carefully elaborating a list of 14 "Rules for Interpretation."²

Miller's first rule for interpreting the Bible was that "every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible." Miller was determined not to be satisfied with a superficial

reading of a passage or with casually guessing at its meaning. "Every word" was to be accorded "its proper bearing."

His fourth rule expanded his first one, taking in the whole Bible. "To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence."

His fifth rule put the Bible above all human commentaries. "Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself." Here in essence is the great Protestant principle, "The Bible and the Bible only."

Miller's tenth rule recognized that God gives us common sense and expects us to use it even when studying the Bible. If a conclusion we come to is both out of harmony with the rest of the Bible *and silly*, then it is obviously wrong. "The right construction will harmonize with the Bible, *and* [my italics] make good sense; other constructions will not." We'll come back to this later.

His thirteenth rule shows how very cautiously Miller searched for the fulfillment of prophecy in history. It is a rule that should be honored by every student of prophecy today. When comparing a historical event with a Bible prophecy which you think was fulfilled in that historical event, "if you find every word of the prophecy. . . is literally fulfilled, then you may know that your history is the true event; but if one word lacks a fulfillment, then you must look for another event, or wait its future development; for God takes care that history and prophecy shall agree, so that the true believing children of God may never be ashamed."

Miller's fourteenth and final rule was a spiritual one, involving willingness, by faith, to make any sacrifice Bible study might lead to. "The most important rule of all is, that you must have *faith*. It must be a faith that. . . if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth, the world and all its desires,—character [reputation], living [livelihood], occupation, friends, home, comforts and worldly honors. If any of these should hinder our believing any part of God's word, it would show our faith to be vain."

Miller's integrity and sincerity were revealed in his adherence to his own rules. He laid aside all commentaries, letting the Bible stand on its own. He used margin and concordance to let the entire Bible speak to each problem text. He used history books to help him

compare history with prophecy, and—after resisting God for thirteen years—he gave himself unstintingly, at great physical and monetary sacrifice, to the proclamation of the message his Bible study had led him to.

Men who followed Miller, and especially those who contributed conspicuously to essential characteristic Seventh-day Adventist doctrines, shared his ultimate confidence in the whole Bible as the inspired Word of God. They too required interpretations to be consistent not only with immediate context but with the entire Bible, and they rejected traditions that conflicted with the plain sense of the Bible. They also shared Miller's confidence in the historicist interpretation of prophecy, specifically perceiving the year-day principle as scriptural. Like Miller, they held that Spirit and faith are essential to discovery of Bible truth.

Apollos Hale, a leading Millerite editor, looking back early in 1845,³ felt able to say,

It was the Bible alone which produced the Advent movement. Those who embraced the Advent doctrine were distinguished, from the first, by their strict regard for the Bible. This was exclusively peculiar to them. Every question was decided by that. No fair argument has ever been brought from that [i.e., from the Bible] against their doctrine; and to this day the individual who is unfashionably familiar with his Bible, is sure to fall under the odium of their faith [i.e., be accused of being an Adventist]: . . .

Now whereas Miller felt that the Bible was clear enough for any honest student without recourse to Greek and Hebrew, O. R. L. Crosier found that reference to *ta hagia* (Greek, literally, "the holies") was essential to a correct understanding of Christ's current heavenly ministry, and later Seventh-day Adventist writers also appealed to the original languages.⁴

SDA Pioneer Writers. The basic duty of every interpreter was to learn honestly and as fully as possible what the Bible taught. Thus Uriah Smith in the *Review* in 1858, said⁵

The first question to be settled with such is the authenticity of the Scriptures themselves. But in all doctrinal questions which arise in the theological world, there must be some ground upon which we can anchor; there must be some standard by which to test and decide conflicting opinions. Such a standard is the word of God.

A maverick among early Seventh-day Adventist theological writers was G. I. Butler, General Conference President 1871-1874 and 1880-1888. Between January 8 and June 3, 1884, he had the *Review and Herald* publish a series of articles in which he meticulously argued that parts of the Bible were less fully inspired than other parts. Even though Butler himself did not abandon any essential characteristic doctrine, Ellen G. White in 1889⁶ vigorously opposed his proposal, and it does not appear to have been openly adopted by any contemporary Seventh-day Adventist writer.

In contrast to Butler and before Ellen G. White's objections were released, J. H. Waggoner supplied a list of hermeneutical principles that expressly encouraged faith in the uniform authority of all Scripture.⁷ His list included such things as

2. The Bible is absolute truth and anything that disagrees in the slightest particular must be false.
3. The Bible, though composed of many books with many authors, is really one book with one author, which is characterized by oneness of thought and perfect harmony in all its parts.
6. One part of the Bible cannot be fully understood if taken out of specific context or out of context of the Bible as a whole.
7. There is no book in the Bible upon which light is not thrown by every other book in the Bible.

Said Waggoner in another place:⁸

On every Bible doctrine Bible expressions may be found in plain, direct terms, that is, such as contain no symbols or figures, or only such figures and forms of speech as are of common use, and easily understood. These are decisive; and all our interpretations of prophecy must harmonize with them. This is 'true literalism,' and may not be dispensed with, for any consideration.

Different Conclusions from the Reformers

We have said that early Adventist writers were true to the hermeneutical principles of the Reformation; but if this is so, how did they come to some conclusions that differed markedly from those of the Reformers?

The answer is easy. Did not the Reformers come to different conclusions themselves? Uriah Smith thought he understood. He

believed that the literal interpretation of Scripture used by the Reformers was the very basis for theological advance. Said he in his famous commentary on Daniel and Revelation,

There are two general systems of interpretation adopted by different expositors. . . The first is the mystical or spiritualizing system invented by Origen, to the shame of sound criticism and the curse of Christendom; the second is the system of literal interpretation, used by such men as Tyndale, Luther, and all the Reformers, and *furnishing the basis for every advance step* [my italics] which has thus far been made in the reformation from error to truth as taught in the Scriptures.⁹

In addition to the built-in proclivity of Reformation hermeneutics to engender advancing light has been the Seventh-day Adventist usage of principles which were both compatible with the principles of the Reformers and also an extension from them.

Typology: More Extensive. For example, whereas the Reformers made enthusiastic use of the OT types of the cross, Adventist writers made richer use of biblical types and antitypes that were seen to anticipate last-day developments. Miller in 1843 observed, as others had before him, that just as Jesus fulfilled the spring types (Passover, Wave Sheaf, Pentecost) in the spring of the year designated by the 70-week prophecy, so He might be expected to fulfill the autumn types (Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles) in the autumn of the year designated by the 2300-day prophecy.

In 1844 S. S. Snow developed this concept to show that Jesus would fulfill the Day of Atonement type on the 10th day of the 7th month, October 22. Immediately after the great disappointment, Millerite editors Joseph Turner and Apollos Hale and Miller himself believed that Christ had in fact commenced the heavenly Day of Atonement on October 22. Hiram Edson, physician F. B. Hahn, and school-teacher O. R. L. Crosier¹⁰ further developed the Day of Atonement concept as they explored the heavenly aspects of the atonement. Crosier's presentation in the *Day-Star Extra* of February 7, 1846 still makes sense to most Seventh-day Adventists and for the most part remains the standard Seventh-day Adventist understanding.

Tradition: Rejection More Extensive. Although the Reformers

rejected some customs and traditions, Adventist writers manifested a sharper rejection of tradition. A statement by Crosier in the famous *Day-Star Extra* illustrates this sharpened rejection. Even on so central a matter as the location of the atonement, Crosier wrote:

But again, they say the atonement was made and finished on Calvary, when the Lamb of God expired. So men have taught us, and so the churches and world believe; but it is none the more true or sacred on that account, if unsupported by Divine authority.

Among traditions which Adventists have challenged more sharply than the Reformers have been the observation of Sunday and the assumed immortality of the soul.

Bible Authority: Complete Scripture. The Reformers insisted on the superlative authority of Scripture, yet Adventists have shown a keener appreciation for the authority of the entire Bible. Luther is well known for his tendency to reject James, make very little use of Hebrews, and set up a canon within the canon. Calvin virtually rejected the book of Revelation. The later Scottish-American reformers, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, contemporaries of the Adventist pioneers, rejected the entire OT.

But Adventists, and especially the Seventh-day Adventists, insisted on taking truth from the entire Bible. In doing this they were unconsciously in harmony with the Sabbatarian Anabaptists as viewed by Gerhard F. Hasel in an early issue of *Andrews University Seminary Studies*. Referring to Oswald Glait and Andreas Fischer, founders of Sabbatarian Anabaptism in the 1520s, Hasel said, "Both men regarded the Old and New Testaments as inseparable and indivisible. In this view they were far in advance of their time."¹¹

Fulfillment of Prophecy in Advent Movement as a Hermeneutical Tool. Luther and some other Reformers honored the historicist interpretation of prophecy, including the year-day principle; but Seventh-day Adventist pioneers, having arrived by the same route at the conviction that the second advent movement was a fulfillment of prophecy, used that fulfillment as a hermeneutical principle in the further development of their message. Once established as scriptural, the fulfillment of prophecy in the second advent movement became a hermeneutical tool for helping establish the Sab-

bath, sanctuary, spiritual gifts, true church, second advent doctrines, etc.

In a letter to Bro. and Sr. Hastings, October 2, 1848, James White announced the topics for a conference to be held in Topsham, Maine—one of the famous Sabbath and Sanctuary Conferences of 1848. The topics were to be the Sabbath and the sanctuary. He commented, "In this we honor God's most holy institution [the Sabbath] and acknowledge the work of God in our second Advent experience [leading up to Christ's new work in the heavenly sanctuary]."¹²

In naming his first enduring periodical, "*The Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*," James White summarized the concept that the time had arrived to herald the Sabbath because God had fulfilled prophecy in the second advent movement, which culminated in 1844. More precisely, the time had come to keep the commandments spoken of in the third angel's message because the Millerite second advent movement fulfilled the first and second angels' messages.

Said James White in one of the earliest issues of the *Review*:

THE 2300 DAYS.—This prophetic period has been, and still is, the main pillar of the Advent faith. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we have a correct view of the commencement and termination of this period, in order to understand our present position.¹³

Thus, once the 1844 events were seen to be a fulfillment of prophecy, they became a hermeneutical tool for evaluating other interpretations. The 1844 events served to add an eschatological dynamic to the Sabbath, second-coming, life-style, and missionary concepts of the burgeoning new movement.

Spiritual Gifts: The Ministry of Ellen G. White. The Reformers believed in *spiritual gifts*, but pioneer Seventh-day Adventists held end-time spiritual gifts in especially high regard, particularly as manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. For example, in his *A Seal of the Living God* (Jan. 1849), Bates said,

More than two years are now past since I proved them [the visions] true. Therefore I profess myself a firm believer in her visions so far as I have witnessed, and I have seen her have many. In every instance they have been in accordance with God's word: setting the promises of God, and the closing scenes around us in harmonious, scriptural

order, leaving the hearers the privilege of searching the scriptures for the proof, and also in rebuking sins of omission and commission, without partiality to friend or foe, always causing the hearts of the righteous to rejoice, and the wicked to tremble: exactly the reverse of what God taught Ezekiel was false visions.¹⁴

James White has been celebrated in certain quarters in recent years for a strong editorial of his published in the October 16, 1855 *Review*, in which, among other things, he asked,

What has the REVIEW to do with Mrs. W.'s views [i.e., visions¹⁵]? The sentiments published in its columns are all drawn from the Holy Scriptures. No writer of the REVIEW has ever referred to them [the visions] as authority on any point. The REVIEW for five years [its entire existence thus far] has not published one of them. Its motto has been, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, the only rule of faith and duty." Then why should these men [some of the movement's critics] charge the REVIEW with being a supporter of Mrs. W.'s views?¹⁶

For balance, such a statement should be read in conjunction with a repudiation of creeds found in James White's report on the "Doings of the Battle Creek Conference, October 5 & 6, 1861."¹⁷ White's point is that if we should get up a definitive statement about what we are to believe, God might confound us by directing us through the gift of prophecy to still other biblical truths.

I take the ground that creeds stand in direct opposition to the gifts [referring primarily to Mrs. White's gift of inspiration]. . . . Suppose the Lord, through the gifts, should give us some new light that did not harmonize with our creed; then, if we remain true to the gifts, it knocks our creed all over at once.¹⁸

Making a creed [White went on to explain] is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement. God put the gifts into the church for a good and great object; but men who have got up their churches, have shut up the way or have marked out a course for the Almighty. They say virtually that the Lord must not do anything further than what has been marked out in the creed. A creed and the gifts thus stand in direct opposition to each other. Now what is our position as a people? The Bible is our creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed. We take the Bible and the gifts of the Spirit; embracing the faith that thus the Lord will teach us from time

to time. And in this we take a position against the formation of a creed.¹⁹

Hermeneutics Underlying Nonessential Views

So far we have been considering the hermeneutics underlying essential, characteristic Seventh-day Adventist doctrines. When we turn to secondary views, we can find most of the same hermeneutical principles at work but not always so purely or consistently.

Prophetic Speculations. How are we to explain Uriah Smith's innovation around 1870 that Turkey was the king of the north and Armageddon a local military engagement? Note that Smith was every bit a historicist. Note also that "Turkey" signified vastly more in his day than in ours. Smith wasn't dumb. But was he, perhaps, following headlines too closely?

Following headlines has assumed at times considerable influence as a hermeneutical principle in Christian circles within and without Seventh-day Adventism. When in 1918 newspapers in Europe and America daily reported the seemingly inexorable progress of General Allenby northward to a rendezvous with the Turks at Megiddo;²⁰ and when in 1938 the British general Sir Ian Hamilton said, "I have looked carefully at the map, and the best spot for Europe to meet and throw back Asia is called Megiddo, or, on some maps, Armageddon,"²¹ it was indeed a cautious Adventist evangelist who could resist the impulses of his calling.

But those who resisted were glad. And James White, who did not share Uriah Smith's enthusiasm for Turkey but who refrained from differing with him publicly for the sake of unity on essentials, warned in the *Review* of Nov. 29, 1877, while Turkey was even then engaged in warfare with a European nation,

In exposition of unfulfilled prophecy, where the history is not written, the student should put forth his propositions with not too much positiveness, lest he find himself straying in the field of fancy. . . . What will be the result of this positiveness in unfulfilled prophecies should things not come out as very confidently expected, is an anxious question.

It was a caution that seems to have perennial usefulness.

Evangelistic Misapprehensions. In the famous 1888 controversy, both sides understood themselves as historicists and both sides

held a high view of inspiration. But for the moment, an overriding hermeneutical principle of the leading brethren who opposed the new ideas seems to have been evangelism. To change their interpretation of the tenth horn from the Huns to the Alemanns, as fiery young Jones demanded, risked rousing public doubts about the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of the eleventh horn (the "little horn," which is the same as the beast that shares the "mark of the beast"), potentially impeding evangelism. And substituting the moral law for the ceremonial law in Galatians 3, as the provokingly amiable young Waggoner urged, would greatly complicate debates with non-Adventist preachers.

Sister White said that in their exclusiveness, both sides were wrong; the schoolmaster in Galatians was both laws and the difference between the two sides was only a mote. She was right! The moral law leads us to Christ by showing us our sins, and the ceremonial law leads us to Christ by showing us that we need a sacrifice for our sins.²² The difference between the two sides was infinitesimal, for they both believed the ceremonial law was done away, that the Sabbath of the moral law is still binding, and that we cannot be saved apart from the cross. But their zeal for evangelism provided a strange hermeneutic keeping them apart and obscuring Scripture.

144,000 and Similar Speculations. If concern for soul-winning operated as a false hermeneutic in 1888, desire for Jesus to come soon in fulfillment of prophecy became an incentive for certain views leading to a burst of speculation concerning the 144,000 around the turn of the century, when Seventh-day Adventist membership was 75,000 and growing fast. For instance, S. N. Haskell and his wife Hetty, on their return from Australia, reported back to Sister White that as they toured the American camp meetings they repeatedly heard that Sabbath keepers should be adopting and giving birth to as many children as possible (the "baby craze"). Sometimes the clamor was accompanied by the argument that in bearing and adopting children, Seventh-day Adventists could the quicker complete the 144,000 and hasten the second coming. The Haskells begged the people to emphasize the three angels' messages instead.²³ Longing for the second coming has provided certain views for interpreting not only the 144,000 but also of the "genera-

tion" that shall not pass in Matthew 24:34²⁴ and the healing of the deadly wound in Revelation 13.

So far we have observed that essential, characteristic Seventh-day Adventist doctrines have been developed through the use of hermeneutics similar to and in certain ways improvements of the great principles of Reformation hermeneutics. We have also seen that some secondary, nonessential views, though basically built on (advanced) Reformation principles, have not been so purely based on such principles. We now need to look at a few criticisms raised from time to time against the major Seventh-day Adventist doctrines.

Scottish Common Sense Realism?

A criticism occasionally raised against William Miller is that he was influenced by Scottish Common Sense Realism. The accusation seems sinister in that the words used are so harmless. If something called "Scottish Common Sense Realism" is bad, it must be very bad.

A moment's reflection will show that the accusation is irrelevant.

Miller's principal contributions to Adventism were his premillennialism and his use of the year-day principle to locate the close of the 2300 days in 1843 (corrected by others to 1844), thereby dating the final judgment and triggering the first angel's message. (The concept of a *pre-advent* judgment was first published by Josiah Litch²⁵ in 1841, independently of Miller.)

To evaluate the influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism on Miller, and hence on Seventh-day Adventism, all we need do is ask whether Scottish Common Sense Realism was essential to premillennialism and to the choice of 1843/44 for the close of the 2300 days. The answer in each case is obviously No. Premillennialism was the eschatology of choice during the first three Christian centuries, long before the rise of Scottish Common Sense Realism!

As for 1843/44, LeRoy Edwin Froom has shown that Johannes Petri²⁶ came to essentially Miller's conclusion in Germany before Miller was born. Froom has further shown that the 2300 evening-morning of Daniel 8:14 was first seen to be 2300 years stretching

from Bible times to the Messiah's coming by Nahawendi,²⁷ a Jewish Rabbi living in Mesopotamia in the ninth century, a thousand years before Miller.

Scottish Common Sense Realism was invented by Thomas Reid around 1768. Are we to say that it influenced Nahawendi in the ninth century and the Christians of the first three centuries?

Miller did say, as we saw above, that an interpretation should make sense. Luther wisely did the same in 1521 at Worms, "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason. . . ."²⁸

But Miller began his Bible study when he had had enough of *mere* common sense. He had been an active, debating, widely read deist, one who rejected his mother's and uncle's and grandfather's appeals to accept a miracle-working Jesus as Saviour and who fully believed that the Bible was full of inexplicable inconsistencies.

He began his initial Bible study when he suddenly saw himself a sinner in need of a Saviour. When his deist friends reminded him of the Bible's inconsistencies, Miller decided to let the Bible speak for itself, convinced that if it was indeed a revelation from God, it would be an understandable revelation. It was now that he began his famous systematic study, beginning at Genesis 1:1 and proceeding no faster than the Bible, with the help of margin and concordance, could explain itself. In this arduous process, he says, "The Scriptures became my delight, and in Jesus I found a friend."

Seventh-day Adventists do not now, nor have we ever, accepted *all* of Miller's teachings. This observation is important. Indeed, the freedom with which post-disappointment Adventists, including the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers, pointed out Miller's errors seems energetic to the point of being disrespectful, until we remember how deeply committed they were to being biblically right.

Most certainly the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers disagreed with Miller on the day to observe the Sabbath, on the immortality of the soul, and on the location of the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14. They also disagreed quickly with his cherished interpretation of the "seven times" of Lev 26:18, 21, 24, 28 and on the location of the saints during the millennium. (Miller interpreted the "seven times" as $7 \times 360 = 2520$ years from the first deportation to Babylon which he placed in 677 B.C. to 1843; with virtually all other Christians, he placed the saints on earth during the millennium.)

Superb Bible student that he was, Miller made mistakes, some of them being mistakes that only a superb Bible student would have been in a position to make. His mistakes were corrected by his followers from the Bible, some being modified and others rejected outright. No Seventh-day Adventist fundamental belief is based uncritically on what Miller taught. Only those aspects of Millerism survived that stood the rigid test of sound hermeneutics based on the belief that the whole Bible is the Word of God.

We are happy to remind ourselves that Dr. William Shea has presented to the Daniel and Revelation committee a collection of over 20 evidences within the Bible supportive of the year-day principle.²⁹

The chief thing, then, that Seventh-day Adventists got from Miller, the interpretation of Daniel 8:14 that terminates the 2300 days in the fall of 1844, can be substantiated from Scripture without reference to Miller. It was substantiated from the Bible before Miller was born and has been done so again and again since his death. The interpretation does not depend on Scottish Common Sense Realism.

"Patchword Theology"?

Several years ago I read an article³⁰ which, in calling for Seventh-day Adventists to produce a systematic theology, complained that the bundle of doctrines we had assembled so far was a mere "patchwork theology," not bad for "fundamentalists" but "inappropriate" for the Seventh-day Adventist church of today.

The article made me wonder why, if our message is so disjointed, some of us, given an interested non-Adventist ear, tend to cover all our doctrines in a single long evening. Each doctrine seems to dovetail seamlessly into every other. Interpretation of Daniel 2 leads to the second coming, then to Daniel 7 and the 1260 days and the mark of the beast and coming Sunday laws, to the change of the Sabbath and true Sabbath keeping, then to Daniel 8 with 1844 and the cleansing of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment and the sleep of the dead as they await the judgment and the first angel's message that announces the judgment and the second angel with the fall of Babylon and Revelation 18:1-4 with the call to come out of Babylon and back to Revelation 12:17 for the remnant church to

join when you come out of Babylon and on to the Spirit of Prophecy and then to health reform and dress and entertainment standards and *Steps to Christ* with its righteousness by faith, and *The Desire of Ages* with its focus on Christ, and *The Great Controversy*, which brings us back to the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

"Patchwork theology?" The writer of *The Great Controversy* spoke of a "system" existing in her day, a century ago. "The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a *complete system of truth, connected and harmonious*, showing that God's hand had directed the great Advent Movement, and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people."³¹

"Proof Texting." We have looked at two criticisms, one involving Scottish Common Sense Realism and the other invoking "patchwork theology." A third criticism is that the pioneers and their followers based their characteristic interpretations on simplistic "proof texting."

Pejoratively, "proof texting" means basing a doctrine on a Bible verse or Bible verses in reckless disregard of context. But if by the term we mean going through the Bible and sensitively and wisely collecting together all of its statements on a particular theme, and if when we get through we have an accumulation of texts that justifiably prove a particular Bible truth, we have done nothing wrong. We have in fact helped clarify the Bible and render its message persuasive.

If we ask students to memorize key passages that justifiably help to prove a Bible doctrine, we have not only not done wrong, we have done right. There is every justification for asking people to memorize the fourth commandment as proof that the Sabbath is to be kept, and Revelation 1:7 as proof that Jesus will not come secretly but visibly, for "every eye shall see Him," and so on. As far back as the sixth century Pope Gregory the Great acknowledged that when he preached, the people asked him to provide proof texts to support his message.³² Much of the complaining I have heard against proof texts since around 1960 has come from people who have seemed unwilling to memorize God's holy Word.

Personally, I choose not to be intimidated out of the appropriate use of proof texts. At the same time, we recognize that

there is an illegitimate, out-of-context use of so-called proof texts. Even Millerite preachers saw steam trains in the flaming chariots of Nahum 2. And genuine out-of-context proof texting appears even today as an unconscious hermeneutical principle in some controversial teachings. We cite two examples.

John's statement in Revelation 21:22 that he saw no temple in New Jerusalem as it descended to earth after the millennium has been used in recent decades to prove that there is no literal temple anywhere in heaven at the present time, in spite of numerous references to it in other parts of Revelation and elsewhere.

Another passage that has undergone out-of-context proof texting is Galatians 3:28 as employed in the crusade for women's ordination at the expense of its immediate context about salvation and in spite of its larger context in Paul's writings as a whole. Thus, a century after Seventh-day Adventists argued about Galatians 3:24 they now argue about 3:28, only four verses removed!

Ellen G. White herself was no promoter of out-of-context proof texting. She complained vigorously that

In order to sustain erroneous doctrines or unchristian practices, some will seize upon passages of Scripture separated from the context, perhaps quoting half of a single verse as proving their point, when the remaining portion would show the meaning to be quite the opposite. With the cunning of the serpent they entrench themselves behind disconnected utterances construed to suit their carnal desires. Thus do many willfully pervert the word of God. Others, who have an active imagination, seize upon the figures and symbols of Holy Writ, interpret them to suit their fancy, with little regard to the testimony of Scripture as its own interpreter, and then they present their vagaries as the teachings of the Bible.³³

Sanctuary Doctrine Based on Entire Bible

In closing this article, we remind ourselves that the "sanctuary doctrine," the most distinctive of all Seventh-day Adventist doctrines, is based on the entire Bible, with careful attention paid to context at every point.

The basic teaching of the existence of a heavenly sanctuary and its need for purification are seen in Hebrews 8 and 9. The coming of Father and Son to a new location within the heavenly

sanctuary at judgment hour is seen in Daniel 7:9-14, 22, a passage directly parallel to the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14. The date 1844 for the judgment is based on Daniel 8:14 (which is in direct parallel with the judgment scene in Daniel 7); but even if the 2300-day prophecy were somehow proved misleading, the 1260-days, which also locate the judgment subsequent to 1798 (see Daniel 7:25, 26; 12:7) occur twice in Daniel and no fewer than five times in Revelation. Daniel 12:1-2 and Revelation 20:6 confirm that judgment must precede resurrection and thus must begin prior to the second coming (hence the term "pre-advent judgment").

Daniel 8:14, with its reference to the cleansing of the sanctuary (in parallel with the judgment scene in Dan 7) links the judgment with the Day of Atonement (which was a day of both cleansing and judgment) in Leviticus 16 and 23, chapters that emphasize the spiritual self-examination essential to the personal cleansing which is to accompany the cleansing of the sanctuary. In the end time this cleansing results in the Christ-centered, faith-filled commandment keeping of Revelation 14:12.

Responsible comparison of the spring types (Passover, Wave Sheaf, Pentecost) with the autumn types (Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles) points to October 22, 1844 for the commencement of the heavenly judgment. It also confirms the concept of 1844 as inaugurating the antitypical Day of Atonement.

Malachi 3:1-6 points to a cleansing of the temple and of the "sons of Levi" at some point other than Christ's first coming (which coming resulted in the abandonment rather than cleansing of the Jerusalem temple). Acts 3:19, 20 promises a blotting out of repented-for sins near the second coming, thus confirming the Day of Atonement concept of sin removal. In the wedding parables of Matt 25:1-13; 22:1-14; and Luke 12:35-40 (cf. Luke 19:11, 12) the Bridegroom comes to earth after a heavenly wedding that includes judgment. Additional wedding imagery in Ephesians 5:21-33, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Revelation 19:7-8, etc., round out the picture of Christ's purification of His corporate bride.

The three angels of Revelation 14:6-12 announce the arrival of God's judgment hour while the gospel is still available (confirming the concept of a pre-advent judgment), describe Christ-centered commandment keeping, and call for separation from fallen chur-

ches. 1 Peter 4:17 establishes the principle that judgment begins with God's people (cf. Ezek 9:6); and Matthew 7:21 and 24:13, and many other passages teach the doctrine of perseverance on which the whole concept of judgment is firmly founded.

The Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the "sanctuary" is not based on an isolated proof text but was developed from a large body of inter-related data located in both Old and New Testaments. And if this most distinctive Seventh-day Adventist doctrine is soundly biblical, we can reaffirm categorically that the other essential characteristic doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist message are also fully rooted in sound hermeneutical principles.

Endnotes

1 So R. Dean Davis, "Hermeneutical Principles of Early Adventist Interpreters" (Research paper, Andrews University, 1976), in his conclusions after looking for hermeneutical principles in Adventist writers from Miller through Uriah Smith.

2 Davis, "Hermeneutical Principles," pp. 1-6, analyzes and reorganizes Miller's 14 rules, getting 22 rules, and when analyzing Miller's writings, discovers 7 more, making in effect 29 rules.

3 Apollos Hale, "Has the Bridegroom Come?" *Advent Herald*, February 26 and March 5, 1845, reprinted as "Brother Hale's Article," *Review and Herald*, September 16 and October 7, 1851, with a warm recommendation by editor James White.

4 O. R. L. Crosier in "The Law of Moses," *The Day-Star*, Extra, Feb. 7, 1846, showed that "the most holy place" is not an essential translation of *ta hagia* in Hebrews. He was arguing that Hebrews does not teach an entry of Christ into the most holy place at His ascension, leaving room for His entry there in 1844.

5 Uriah Smith, "Miscellaneous Observations," *Review and Herald*, Nov. 11, 1858, p. 196, in Davis, "Hermeneutical Principles," p. 90.

6 See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:23.

7 See J. H. Waggoner, "A Few Principles of Interpretation," *The Signs of the Times*, Jan. 6, 1887, p. 8, in Davis, "Hermeneutical Principles," pp. 26-29.

8 J. H. Waggoner, "The Kingdom of God," p. 5, in Davis, "Hermeneutical Principles," p. 87.

9 Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1897, 1907), p. 4.

10 I recently had the helpful pleasure of working with Martin Hanna in a small doctoral seminar as he explored and analyzed Crosier's hermeneutical principles.

11 Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century: Part II," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 6 (1968): 28.

12 Cf. also Joseph Bates, *Seventh Day Sabbath*, 1st ed. (New Bedford, 1846), p. 24, "In the xiv ch. Rev. 6-11, he saw three angels following each other in succession: the first one preaching the everlasting gospel (*second advent doctrine*) [my italics]; 2d, announcing the fall of Babylon; 3d, calling God's people out of her by showing the awful destruction that awaited all such as did not obey. He sees the separation and cries out, 'Here is the patients (*sic*) of the Saints, here are they that keep the *commandments* of God and the faith of Jesus.'" Cf. also Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God* (New Bedford, 1849), pp. 34-35, "I say therefore, unless it can be clearly proved that the five messengers in vii:1,2, are angelic beings, then I have here the right exposition. If all other difficulties which I have mentioned could be removed, and that would be exceedingly difficult, yet cannot this, *unless we yield our history*, [my italics] and if we do that we shall fail to find where the sealing messengers

come from." Bates, *A Seal*, p. 17, interprets the first angel of Rev. 14:7 as fulfilled by the "Advent people" preaching in unison from the same chronological charts, in 1842 and 1844.

13 James White, "Our Present Position," *Review and Herald*, Dec., 1850.

14 Joseph Bates, *A Seal of the Living God* (New Bedford, 1849), p. 31.

15 Cf. the title of her earliest booklet, *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, long available as the first part of *Early Writings*. Cf. also Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 32, "The Lord gave me the following view in 1847, while the brethren were assembled on the Sabbath, . . ." and *ibid.*, p. 48, "The Lord gave me a view, January 26, 1850, which I will relate."

16 Facsimile available in *Witness of the Pioneers* (Washington: The Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1961), p. 9.

17 See *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1861.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

19 *Idem.*

20 The anticipated rendezvous at Megiddo never took place.

21 Quoted in a Voice of Prophecy lesson series, No. 7.

22 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:233-235.

23 Hetty Haskell to Ellen G. White, February 27 and July? (*sic*), 1900, in Laurel Ann Nelson Damsteegt, "Humble Giants: A Study of Stephen and Hetty Haskell," (Term paper, Andrews University, 1977), pp. 24-29.

24 The Greek word translated "generation" in Matt 24:34 is translated "brood (of vipers)" in Matt 23:33.

25 Josiah Litch, *An Address to the Public, and Especially to the Clergy* (Boston, 1841), p. 37, states clearly that "the Scriptures place the judgment" prior to the "resurrection." A year later Litch's *Prophetic Expositions* (2 vols., Boston, 1842), 1:50-54, insisted that "the trial must precede the execution," a proposition "so clear . . . that it is sufficient to state it." Litch cited John 5 and Rev 20, which show that some people will be resurrected "to life" at the second coming, and others will be resurrected "to death" at a later time, indicating that the judgment—which decides who is to be resurrected when—comes before resurrection.

26 LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1946-1954), 2:713-719.

27 *Ibid.*, 2:196, 240.

28 Cf. also John Wesley to "an old friend," November 27, 1750, in Richard P. Heitzenrater and Frank Baker, gen. eds, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 20:371, "I am for both [faith and reason]: for faith to perfect my reason, that, by the Spirit of God not putting out the eyes of my understanding but enlightening them more and more, I may 'be ready to give a clear', scriptural 'answer to every man that asketh me a reason of the hope that is in me'."

29 William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 1 (Washington: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982).

30 James Londis, "Can We Trust the Church's Theologians?" *Sligoscope*, April, 1981: "Right now we have a patchwork theology that is inappropriate for the main work of the church." Londis's appeal in this pastoral letter is for a theology that can answer the theological questions of non-Adventist theologians and the practical questions of ordinary people today. There is reason to believe he might now write the article differently.

31 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 423.

32 Gregory the Great, *Commentary on Job*, Dedicatory Letter, in LCC 9:185.

33 Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 132.

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DIVINE LOVE, THE DELAY OF THE ADVENT AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

By Mark A. Finley

Speaker, It Is Written Telecast

Introduction

One hot summer day a thirteen year old boy sat on a wooden barrel in the cool recesses of an old Vermont general store idly whittling on a sprig from a maple tree. At two o'clock the wind-up grandfather clock on the wall began to chime. But the mechanism jammed and the clock continued to strike. On its nineteenth stroke the dreaming lad suddenly aroused and dashing into the street began yelling out, "It's never been this late before!" It's never been this late either for students of Bible prophecy!

In his second epistle, the apostle Peter appeals for a deep heart preparation for the coming of Christ (2 Pet 3:1-13). The apostle makes three significant points: (1) How you live affects what you believe, and what you believe affects how you live; (2) The delay of the Advent has not occurred because of any failure on God's part. (3) It's possible to hasten the Advent.

Lifestyle Determines Theology

Peter makes his first significant point in vss. 3-4, "Knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" In effect, they are saying, "He is not coming." That's revealed in the last part of their query: "For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

The question, in their minds, has already been answered. They are not waiting for an answer. They are scoffers and so the question is not raised out of honest, genuine sincerity.

But note that these "scoffers" walk "*after their own lusts.*" Men and women pursuing their own desires, raise the question, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Their lifestyle determines their theology. Their morality (or lack of it) dictates what they believe, and they deny the imminence of the Advent.

This passage introduces the fact that *how* we act often will determine what we believe, while it is also true that we sincerely believe determines how we act. Thus, if I am fascinated by the lusts that captivate me on television, if sports dominate my thinking, if materialism grips me, or if my main object in life is to make money, these interests will affect my attitude toward a soon return of Christ. In addition to that, of course, what I believe about the second coming should have an impact on my lifestyle.

There is a subtle way of thinking about the Advent that can also weaken our ardor and zeal for the return of Jesus as much as a worldly lifestyle. The reasoning goes something like this: It doesn't make any difference whether Christ comes in 25 years or 50 years or 100 years or a 1,000. That's not your concern. Your concern is simply to be ready.

Now, that may sound good on the surface, but its effect can weaken church morale. It's like saying to a medical student, "Your state boards may come this year, or next year, or the year after. They may even come five years from now; just get ready." There is something about the rearranging of priorities when you look at the imminence of an event! The fact of the event conditions your behavior.

A sense of the Advent near has always spurred the church on. A sense that Christ is coming soon has always led to prayer, and commitment, and revival. The church senses an urgency and channels its time and energy and funds into evangelism and missionary activity. It channels its energy into prayer and soul winning. There is something about urgency. There is something about imminence. There is something about a soon coming Savior.

Notice who say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Scoffers. Notice who says, "My Lord delayeth His coming" (Matt 24:48).

The evil servant, not the wise servant. So those among us who say that time makes no difference, and the Lord is delaying His coming, and He may not come in 50 years or 100 years—they are not classed with the wise servant in Scripture.

Why the Delay?

Peter discusses in clear terms the delay of the Advent. He says, "But beloved be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." God's evaluation of time is different than mine.

Peter is saying that God does have a divine timetable. If you study the prophecies relating to the first coming of Jesus, you will see that Jesus came on time. "When the fullness of time was come, God has sent forth His Son" (Gal 4:4.) "In due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5:6). When Jesus is baptized in fulfillment of Daniel 9, He says, "The time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:14-15). When the prophetic clock struck the hour the Messiah came the first time. Peter says in effect, God has a prophetic time table, and when the clock strikes the prophetic hour, Christ will come.

Now Peter explains the apparent delay of the Advent, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (vs. 9). Peter says the reason there has been a delay is the long suffering nature of God.

I would like you to consider the delay of the Advent in the light of a suffering God and in the light of suffering love. When Jesus hung on Calvary, He revealed that God would rather suffer than to let you or me be lost. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses that God would rather suffer the agony of sin Himself, suffer the curse of sin Himself, suffer the second death Himself, than to let us be lost. The delay of the Advent reveals a God who suffers in love.

Too often we think of the delay of the Advent in terms of our suffering in a world of wickedness, a world where there are Bosnias and Hertzegovinas and Somalias, in a world where there is famine and heartache and children are blown up. We say, We want to be free from this suffering. But the delay of the Advent reveals that God is willing to suffer rather than to allow one person to be lost.

Think of it this way: We pass one another and often say, "How's

your day?" "Oh, my day's fine." How was God's day today? God went to 10,000 funerals today or more, and He will go to 10,000 more tomorrow. And He loves every one of those people more than you can possibly love your son or your daughter. God's heart of love suffers with every person lying in a hospital dying of cancer. In a way that I can never understand, Jesus in His sanctuary ministry above, bears our afflictions.

God bears the pain of every woman who's husband has run off with somebody else. God bears the agony of every woman who is being battered and beaten until her eyes are blackened and her nose is bloody, because her husband is an alcoholic. God bears the pain of every couple whose child is born dead. God bears the pain in a way that I can never understand of every teenager who smashes through the window of a wrecked car. And the Advent is delayed, because He would rather go on suffering than to cut short the salvation of any who could be saved. The delay of the Advent affects us, but think how it affects God.

In the great Thanksgiving Day to come God will sit at the head of the table and look for my and your place. And if that chair is empty, there will be an emptiness in His heart that is undescribable forever. The delay of the Advent is not because God is marking off time, it's because He's reaching out to people. The delay of the Advent is because Jesus in His love would rather suffer as the Intercessor for humanity and experience the corporate pain that cosmic and universal sin brings, than have people who could have been saved to be lost.

When probation ultimately closes, it is not closed because God's mercy has run out. The close of probation is rather a declaration on the part of God that if the door of the sanctuary would remain open, it would make no difference because every person is fully ripe for harvest. He that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is unrighteous let him be unrighteous still (cf. Rev 22:11). Probation's door does not close until everybody has made his/her final, complete, irrevocable decision. The Advent is delayed not because God's promises have failed, but because His love is relentless; His mercy reaches out to save men and women.

Hastening the Advent

Peter's third point is that it is possible to hasten the day of our Lord's Advent. Notice what he says, Since you are living on the verge of the Advent, since He is coming quickly, rapidly as a thief, seeing that all nature will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be? Peter says, What you believe impacts on your life. "Looking for and hasting (now the KJV is a little awkward, it says hastening *unto* the coming of the day of God). Many translations say looking for and hastening *on* the coming of the day of God. I like the translation "hastening on the coming of the day of God."

Is it possible to hasten the Advent? It is possible, but there comes a point in history when cataclysmic events unfold so that every seed goes to harvest and character more rapidly develops in a crisis hour. So, although the church can hasten the Advent, the church cannot delay the Advent indefinitely. God is sovereign. And ultimately God takes control.

There's a point beyond which the judgments of God cannot be delayed. There was a point in the days of Noah when character was fully developed. Those who were on God's side, remained so; and those that weren't, remained opposed. And the door of the ark that had been open was now shut. That action did not indicate a ceasing of God's mercy, but that every seed had gone to harvest. Every human being had made his/her final, irrevocable decision.

What can the church do to hasten on the coming of the day of God? Scripture teaches three things.

Prayer. In the Lord's prayer we are instructed to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Luke 11:2). Are you praying on your knees every day that Jesus' kingdom will come? The book of Revelation ends with that prayer of John, "Even so, come [quickly], Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

Why pray for a speedy return of our Lord? That which you pray for, you desire more. That which you pray for, (under the Holy Spirit) creates in you a desire to accomplish. As we are on our knees opening our hearts before God, there develops a kingdom consciousness. As we are on our knees seeking God, there develops a reorientation of our priorities, and we are lifted from the fog of this world.

Repentance. Now, you find the call for repentance in vss. 9, 11. The Lord desires that "all should come to repentance," and to live

godly lives. Repentance is a change of attitude about my personal condition before God. The end time call to holiness is an end time call for repentance that brings me before the Lord and says, "God, without You I'm nothing. God, without You I am going to be filled with self centeredness, and egotism. Without You I am going to be filled with criticism, and gossip, and anger and bitterness and lust. Within me there are seeds that are holding back the Advent. I seek your forgiveness and life-changing grace because I have, inadvertently maybe, perpetuated Your suffering.

Rearranged Priorities. Peter says, to rearrange your priorities so that you can reach out to a dying, lost world for Jesus Christ ("hastening the coming of the day of God," NKJV). The Master Himself said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt 24:14).

The events in Eastern Europe in recent times are not merely fortuitous events in secular history, but are part of a divine plan that indicates this is the time for the church to arise and urgently proclaim its message. This is not the time for the church to settle down in a Laodicean complacency.

In a marvelous manner God has opened doors in the world. And he will open doors in your life. Is there somebody that you are praying for? Is there somebody in the community that you have a passion for their soul? I need to be involved in soul winning, not merely for the other person's soul, but for my own.

Without involvement my own spiritual growth is stunted. Without that my own spiritual life is thwarted. Without that life becomes self centered. God is leading you and me to an end-time holiness. He is leading us to deeper prayer and deeper repentance, and to a deeper passion for souls and a rearranging of our priorities.

ATS Presents an exciting new book

ISSUES IN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

The immensely popular book *ISSUES IN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION* is edited by Frank Holbrook, and Leo Van Dolson. As a long-time member of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference Elder Holbrook (recently retired), edited the renowned seven volumes of the Daniel and Revelation Committee, published by the General Conference. Dr. Leo Van Dolson has been a missionary, Bible teacher (now teaching at Southern College) and Associate Editor of the *Review and Herald*.

ISSUES IN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION is a 236-page volume containing eight major articles on the vital subject of revelation/inspiration. This book was written to respond to and go beyond Alden Thompson's 1991 publication on revelation/inspiration. His book seems to limit the Bible's authority in key areas. Dr. R. Dederen (former Dean of the Seminary, Andrews University) writes the lead article on "**Revelation - Inspiration According to the Bible Writers.**" Other Articles deal with Alden Thompson's Casebook/Codebook approach to the Bible, his so-called "incarnational" model in the light of Scripture and Ellen G. White, the Old Testament and his view of revelation/inspiration as well as his "law pyramid" model which debunks the abiding dietary law of Lev 11 as it limits the authority of the Ten Commandments. Several articles deal with Thompson's limiting claims about numbers, genealogies, dates, issues in the trustworthiness of Scripture, and matters pertaining to ethics and lifestyle. Every article is written by dedicated, qualified Adventist scholars. All are solid experts in their fields, maintaining a high view of Scripture and genuine confidence in the Adventist mission and message.

ISSUES IN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION is the 1992 inaugural volume in the series *Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers*. Pastors, church administrators and thought leaders in numerous Adventist organizations and churches agree that this volume is a must for every serious Adventist. The issue at stake is "the very authority of the Scriptures and continued existence of the Seventh-day Adventist people as a Bible-centered, Bible-based movement and church," writes the Editors.