

# Taming Historical Criticism: Adventist Biblical Scholarship in the Land of the Giants

by Jerry Gladson

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When the Israelite spies returned from reconnoitering the land of Canaan, almost to a man they bore the woeful tidings: “The land, through which we have gone, to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature . . . We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we” (Numbers 13:32, 31, RSV).

I felt the same way when I entered Vanderbilt University to take up graduate studies in Old Testament. This was certainly the “land of the giants,” and I wasn’t sure my backwoods theology would be sufficient to slay the giant intellects who inhabited it. I saw in each professor a formidable adversary. In order to survive, I thought, I must be able intellectually to impale him upon the logic of my theological position. Since every professor was an avowed historical critic, I was tempted to transfer my insecurity into an adversarial attitude toward the historical-critical method. Could this be the weapon “that devours its inhabitants”?

That was 17 years ago. Since then I have had numerous opportunities to observe the potential, methods, and results of historical criticism. I be-

lieve now, as I did then, that only one who has actually used the historical-critical method really has any idea of its advantages or limitations. Historical criticism may be compared to a complex surgical technique: only the surgeons who use it are competent to judge its potential—or its dangers. That was one reason I chose graduate education outside denominational schools. I wanted to find out what the method could do in an environment not prejudiced against it, under those skilled in its use.

During that same 17 years the controversy in the Adventist church over the historical-critical method has heated up, died down, and now seems to be heating up again. The Annual Council recently voted (1986) to accept the report of the Methods of Bible Study committee. This committee had been reviewing the historical-critical method and its effects on biblical authority for more than three years before the report was rendered. The report, which will be discussed briefly below, struck at some of the harsher aspects of historical criticism in words like these: “The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments . . . [and] de-emphasizes the divine element in the Bible as an inspired book . . .”<sup>1</sup> In view of the recent concern over this method at the higher levels of the denomination, I wish to take a fresh look at the historical-critical method as it relates to Adventist biblical scholarship. Does it constitute the danger envisioned by many in the church and reflected in the Methods of Bible Study re-

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port? Are we justified in all the ado we are making over historical criticism? Is there something we can find in the method which will help us in our mission? Or must we totally reject it out of hand as a tool of the devil to distract and confuse our faith in Scripture?

## The Rise of Historical Criticism

Historical criticism is generally acknowledged to have two main roots.<sup>2</sup> One of these developed out of the general interest in antiquity during the Renaissance period. As if awakening from a stupor (renaissance means “rebirth”), 14th-century people rediscovered the past. Not only did classical art and literature fascinate them, but in the religious realm, manuscript collection and the searching of the biblical text in its original languages piqued their intellectual curiosity. The Protestant Reformers, influenced by this return to the sources, broke with the massive tradition of the church and began a quest to recover the literal text and meaning of Scripture. Modern biblical scholarship can be said to have begun with this Renaissance/Reformation emphasis on the literal, historical meaning of the text.

The second and most controversial root came later with the 18th-century rise of rationalism in the period known as the Enlightenment. With René Descartes (1596-1650) and others, the locus of authority shifted from Scripture (Protestantism) and tradition (Roman Catholicism) to human reason. Reason became the arbiter of truth, and the Scripture, like everything else, came under the dominance of a radical, rational analysis.<sup>3</sup> People looked away from a remote God to the activity of the human mind. Scholars of this period began to apply to the Bible the same rational approaches they would to ordinary literature. Thus to the historical study of Scripture was added this “critical,” rational principle. It became historical *criticism*. Since the word *critical* in this context has a different meaning than usually associated with it, we should clarify this term before going further.

*Criticism* in biblical study does not mean an attack on the Bible. Rather, to cite the dictionary,

it signifies the “art, skill, or profession of making discriminating judgments and evaluations, esp. of literary or other artistic works.”<sup>4</sup> *Historical criticism means to make careful and discriminating historical judgments about the biblical text.* The kinds of discriminating judgments one makes about the Bible will be determined, in part, by the presuppositions he or she brings to it. One inclined to rule out all supernatural intervention in the affairs of humanity, as did the Cartesian rationalists, will discount those elements in Scripture; one open to such divine activity will not. In other words, the particular judgments made about the Bible are the result, not of historical criticism per se, but of the interpreter’s own psychological<sup>5</sup> or philosophical orientation.

From the 17th century on, it must be admitted, historical criticism was employed by those who doubted or denigrated the transcendent in religion. Philosophically, they accepted an empirical naturalism, especially visible in the work of David Hume (1711-1776), which precluded any supernatural causation. They linked the histori-

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cal-critical approach to this rationalistic assumption. They therefore used the method in ways that, from the orthodox point of view, led to radical conclusions. For example, instead of crediting the Pentateuch to Moses, it was traced instead back to the folklore of tribal campfires. Isaiah was carved into three or more parts and credited to authors much later than the eighth-century prophet. The historical Jesus became an elusive, legendary mirage.

Such conclusions elicited strong resistance from orthodox Christian (and Jewish) circles, not only to the results, but to the method with which they were obtained. The method came to be confused with the conclusions. “Historical criticism,” in many people’s minds, stood for an attack on the historicity and authenticity of the

Scriptures. What was not so apparent was that empirical philosophical presuppositions were being confused with a basically historical methodology.

At this time, most scholars used historical criticism in ways that reinforced these conclusions. In his research into the relation of history to religion, the German theologian, Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), identified three principles that have become the hallmark of this kind of historical criticism:<sup>6</sup>

1. Because historical records, including those of religion, only achieve probabilities, not certainties, one has to critically evaluate all history. Biblical history per se cannot be accepted as authentic. This is known as the principle of methodological doubt.

2. In this evaluation, present experience provides the criterion by which the past is to be judged. Events of biblical history must be measured by what occurs today. This is the principle of analogy.

3. History, like the natural world, proceeds through complex chains of cause and effect. For every effect within history, therefore, there are one or more immanent causes, which can be further explained through antecedent immanent causes and effects. Troeltsch called this the principle of correlation.

The Troeltschian principles identify historical criticism with a strict scientific method applied to the historical texts. Pursued in pure Troeltschian fashion, we would have to agree that historical criticism would eventually reduce Scripture to the level of human literature.

## *Historical Criticism Today*

In its earlier development, historical criticism was basically text-centered. It started with the written text and made little reference to extrabiblical epigraphic or artifactual evidence. To do this, it developed a series of methods: text criticism (deciding the most original reading in a text); source or literary criticism (identifying oral and literary sources used by biblical writers); form criticism (discerning life settings and their impact on the use of Scripture

portions); tradition criticism (tracing the development of motifs and forms in biblical history); and redaction criticism (studying the way biblical writers have integrated their materials into wholes). Many scholars tend to limit historical criticism to these literary methods, with the exception of text criticism.<sup>7</sup>

The study of the Bible, however, has witnessed further refinement in this text-centered, historical-critical methodology. Rhetorical/aesthetical criticism, while not new, has been applied with great vigor to the Bible, revealing the subtle patterns of style and rhetorical function within the biblical text. Canonical criticism draws attention to how the arrangement of books and individual texts within books have been received and function within the believing communities. Structuralism, on the other hand, links text-centered methodology with social and psychological context by exploring the relationship between the language of a text and the social and ideological depth structures that give rise to it.

Often these newer literary approaches—structuralism, canonical, and rhetorical criticism—are divorced from the earlier and more historical disciplines—text, source, form, tradition, and redaction criticism.<sup>8</sup>

To these literary, text-centered approaches have been added in the course of the development of modern biblical scholarship other supplemental, nontextual methods. Here may be included archaeology and the study of ancient history; sociology; anthropology; and the history of religions (comparative study of biblical and other ancient religious systems).

With this confusing array of methodologies we really need to ask: What is currently meant by historical criticism? This definitional problem confuses the sorting out of the many intricate hermeneutical issues involved. Therefore, it would be well to indicate the different directions that are being taken, as the issue of defining the historical-critical method looms large in the Adventist debate over the method.

A number of scholars, such as Gerhard Hasel, dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, limit this term to the original, literary methods described above

(with the exception of text criticism), and the Troeltschian presuppositions usually attached to them.<sup>9</sup>

We may call this the classical definition of the method.

Other scholars retain the term *historical-critical* as a rubric under which all methods that embody historical as well as critical insight (in the sense of careful analysis using various humanistic models) are grouped. By this definition, all methods above would be included in what we might describe as historical and critical approaches.<sup>10</sup>

The problem, however, is that the historical-critical method has been too closely bound to the naturalistic assumptions reflected in Troeltsch. Is

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it possible to free historical criticism from these assumptions, and thus use it in a more theological context? I join a number of contemporary biblical scholars in believing it is possible. At least two assumptions sometimes attributed to the historical-critical method need to be distinguished.

First, the historical-critical method assumes that biblical religion—text and experience—followed a developmental pattern normally seen in ancient and modern religious experience. We may speak of this assumption as the “developmental” hypothesis. It is sometimes linked to a second, rationalistic one: the development of the Bible and its faith can be accounted for in strictly natural terms, without resort to transcendence. We can call this the “naturalistic” hypothesis. When these two assumptions are held together, biblical faith is robbed of its vital power. It is this that the churches oppose.

But the two assumptions need not be held together. It is possible to acknowledge certain elements of the developmental hypothesis as valid—especially those documented by the con-

vergence of biblical and nonbiblical sources—without adopting the idea that these developments are purely natural in origin. One can hold that whatever the development of biblical religion, God worked in and through the process; that there was divine superintendence of the historical matrix of the holy faith we treasure. This would be in keeping with normative Christian ideas of divine providence.

Let me illustrate how the two assumptions can be kept distinct. If we argue that Ellen White’s borrowing of literary materials is justified by literary conventions current in her day, and that inspiration still works in and through these conventions, we will also have to allow that biblical materials originated in accordance with literary conventions of antiquity and that inspiration has worked in and through these as well. We might put this in the form of a syllogism: In harmony with the literary conventions of her day, Ellen White used literary sources in the composition of her works. Ellen White is an inspired writer. Therefore, conformity to accepted literary conventions is not evidence that a writer is not inspired.

Classical historical criticism has made us aware of a number of such ancient literary conventions. For instance, ancient documents were more commonly shaped by the community than by single individuals, so modern ideas of strict authorship do not fit well with ancient texts; even sacred documents were commonly edited;<sup>11</sup> reinterpretation and typological assignment frequently took place.

These literary conventions at work in the Bible are discovered by comparing the Bible with ancient nonbiblical documents. Such investigations help us see if there is objective evidence of similar literary conventions in the Bible. In the same way we examine the literary customs of Ellen White’s day and then peer into her corpus to see to what extent she has followed them. The identification of a literary process in a contemporary culture outside the Bible text will alert us to the possibility that such may have also occurred within Scripture.

The question is not whether some of these conventional practices took place in Scripture.

Today, that is probably beyond argument. One does not have to agree with all the scholarly theories about the way these conventions operated in Scripture to recognize some legitimacy to them. The question, as in Ellen White, is whether we can see divine transcendence operating in and through them. Is there room for inspiration operating in, through, and under ancient literary conventions? This is the real issue at stake in the use of historical criticism or any other biblical criticism. If one accepts the inspiration of Scripture in principle, then he or she can recognize both a continuity with ancient literary practices and, at the same time, an element that goes beyond them.

In the same way, one can recognize Ellen White as a literary child of her age, while acknowledging that the divine inspiration of her work transcends her time. Nor does this way of looking at historical criticism dispose one to accept any and all hypothetical reconstructions of the origin and development of biblical materials. One is free to reject any theory, as for example, the document hypothesis of the Pentateuch, on the grounds of its highly speculative character and lack of objective biblical support, while at the same time recognizing that ancient inspired writers did, in fact, use sources for their writings and adapted them—sometimes not so consistently—to their purposes.

Such a view in no way negates the inspiration of Scripture. Precisely the opposite, it shows how the process of inspiration takes what is human and infuses it with the divine, the “Word in the word.” We thus can see light in some of the dynamics historical criticism talks about, and still affirm wholeheartedly the presence of the Holy Spirit in inspiration. It is not necessary to accept the narrow, Troeltschian model of historical criticism to make use of the insights of this method. We can divorce historical criticism from rationalist presuppositions and employ it in the service of our Lord.

Unfortunately, much of the scriptural research of the 20th century has been conducted along Troeltschian lines, thus aggravating the opposition to historical criticism in the churches. But in the past few years, many scholars have begun to question this unfortunate union of naturalism and

historical criticism in biblical research. “The historicocritical method,” complains Brevard Childs, “is an inadequate method for studying the Bible as the Scriptures of the church because it does not work from the needed context.”<sup>12</sup> “The theory and practice of the historical-critical method,” writes Lutheran scholar Terence Fre-

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them, “is not bound to an understanding which views history as a closed continuum in which there is no room for divine activity.” Due consideration, he goes on to say, “must be given to theological intentions,” that is, to the divine dimension witnessed within it.<sup>13</sup>

Even more insistent on this point is Peter Stuhlmacher, professor of New Testament at Tubingen University. Stuhlmacher accepts the legitimacy of the historical-critical method, but objects to judgments that impinge on the theological dimension of the text. “Our hermeneutical method is not and cannot intend to be a special theological model, because God and the Holy Spirit cannot be confined to a method.” He sums up:

What we have achieved beyond the ancient church and Reformation is the possibility and freedom of making use of historical criticism where it is really productive, namely in historical analysis and description, and at the same time of transcending it where it threatens to restrict our encounter with historical reality.<sup>14</sup>

From the evangelical side, and thus closer to Adventist thinking, we note the judgment of Carl Armerding:

Is it possible to employ critical method, but reject some of the assumptions which lie beneath it? I suggest that it is—that conservative theology both permits and even demands the use of the best critical tools, but that the way these tools and methods are used may differ sharply at the point of presuppositions from the way the

same tools and methods are employed in the hands of a rationalistic critic. Our point of departure is an examination of the way in which we understand the Bible to be the Word of God.<sup>15</sup>

It is a mistake, therefore, to confuse the practice of the historical-critical method with the complete adoption of Troeltschian principles.<sup>16</sup> A number of scholars today recognize the necessity of separating the method from some of the naturalistic assumptions that have been confused with it.

## *Adventists and Historical Criticism*

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The debate over historical criticism in Adventism, as we would suspect, is largely the result of confusion over definitions and presuppositions. It is therefore crucial to ascertain in what way each scholar entering the discussion is using the expression *historical criticism*.

A few Adventist scholars think of historical criticism as inextricably bound to rationalistic presuppositions, and therefore of no use to Adventist Bible students.<sup>17</sup> Gerhard Hasel apparently supports this definition. In *Understanding the Living Word of God* Hasel characterizes critical method as a “radical attack on authority of the Bible.” This claim is based on a Troeltschian definition of the method that contains “a totally immanent view of history on the horizontal level without any vertical, transcendent dimension.” Historical criticism is built, he claims, on the three Troeltschian principles. Therefore the “theologian or exegete must not get the impression that he can safely utilize certain parts of the historical-critical method in an eclectic manner, because there is no stopping point”: one who uses it must inevitably accept all Troeltsch’s, or the naturalistic, presuppositions.<sup>18</sup>

Over and over in *New Testament Theology* Hasel repeats this claim: “The historical-critical method. . . received its classical formulation by E. Troeltsch.

“The reason for the inability of the historical-critical method to grasp all layers of depth of

historical experience, i.e., the inner unity of happening and meaning based upon the inbreaking of transcendence into history as the final reality to which the Biblical text testifies, rests upon its limitation to study history on the basis of its own presuppositions.”

“It [historical criticism] has a particular view of historical understanding illustrated in Troeltsch’s principle of correlation.”

“What needs to be emphatically stressed is that there is a transcendent or divine dimension in Biblical history which the historical-critical method is unable to deal with.”<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, because of his influence over the church’s administrators, Hasel seems to have narrowed awareness and discussion of biblical criticism to the Troeltschian model. His own writings, however, leave considerable ambiguity as to what he means by historical criticism or even biblical criticism. In places, he seems to operate with an even narrower definition of historical criticism than is usual in scholarly parlance. At the same time, he readily uses some aspects of historical criticism as well as other elements of biblical criticism. Here are some examples:

In spite of the fact his 1970 Vanderbilt dissertation, published as *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea From Genesis to Isaiah* in the Andrews University Monograph Series,<sup>20</sup> discreetly maneuvers through all kinds of historical-critical judgments without appearing to adopt them, Hasel nevertheless makes several compromising statements regarding historical-critical methodology. He insists his study of remnant will “have to be conducted with the use of *all available tools of research*.” Although I can detect no place where he actually rejects the authenticity of a biblical passage, he does write: “It will not suffice to accept uncritically any particular passage as Isaianic [from Isaiah] nor will it serve the cause of scholarly research to reject outright the critical work of past generations.”<sup>21</sup>

With this methodological caveat, Hasel opens the door for use of historical-critical methods including even rationalistic presuppositions.

In another surprising instance, he seems to approve of the form-critical and history-of-relig-

ions judgment about the Sumerian flood account from the third millennium B.C. This account, not the one in Genesis, is the “earliest,” and the “prototype of later flood stories,” including Genesis 6-9.<sup>22</sup> But most revealing of all is his claim that the “Sodom story [Genesis 19] was in its original form probably an old local tradition which was adapted into the nucleus of traditions upon which Genesis 18 in its present form is dependent.”<sup>23</sup> Here we have an unadulterated critical judgment implying the full use of tradition criticism.<sup>24</sup> Hasel’s whole dissertation, in fact, is really a tradition critical study of the motif “remnant,” sometimes called *Begriffskritik* (“motif criticism”).

These instances actually reach into the core of methods forming the soul of even what Hasel defines as historical criticism. We could perhaps excuse these instances on the grounds Hasel was writing a dissertation for a Ph.D. at an institution where historical criticism is taken for granted, but this would not explain why they are retained in the revised version of the dissertation published by Andrews University, especially by one who has so adamantly opposed historical-critical method elsewhere in the church.

In his 1974 essay, “Principles of Biblical Interpretation,” intended to downplay historical-critical method, Hasel obliquely admits to the legitimacy of some elements within it. He writes that a “consistently applied historical-critical method cannot do justice to the Bible claim to truth.” He goes on to show that the “divine dimension. . . cannot be adequately dealt with by the historical-critical method,” and advocates a hermeneutic that addresses both the divine and human dimensions of Scripture.<sup>25</sup>

What makes this statement so unusual is its tacit admission that historical-critical methods *can be employed*, so long as the divine dimension is kept in proper perspective. This amounts to nothing less than a form of historical criticism, or at least biblical criticism, as Hasel’s own scholarly writings attest. Hasel, despite his protest, thus shows that he is familiar with historical criticism, and that he feels free to use tradition criticism, form criticism, text criticism, history-of-religion, in short, “all available tools of research.” What he

takes away with one hand he gives back with the other. He is careful, however, to make sure his use of these forms of biblical criticism allow for the free working of divine transcendence.

The problem with Hasel’s approach is that he ties historical criticism inescapably to the classical formulation of Troeltsch. Hasel’s view pre-

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vents any modification of historical criticism on the ground that alteration destroys the inherent, presuppositional basis of the method itself. Therefore, Adventist scholars who use methods from within historical criticism, but who modify the presuppositions are, in his judgment, not historical critics. This explains why he himself uses methods from within historical criticism and yet publicly condemns historical-critical research.

Hasel must be aware that many scholars inside and outside the Adventist community do not accept his definition. Immediately after referring to the classical formulation of the method by Troeltsch, he acknowledges that today the “method is so differently practiced that it is difficult even to speak of the historical-critical method.”<sup>26</sup>

Hasel has, therefore, done a great disservice to dedicated Adventist scholars by persuading church leaders that scholars who use historical-critical methods do so only in Troeltschian terms. Actually, many of these scholars are as concerned as Hasel to avoid denying divine activity in human history. Nevertheless, committed Adventist scholars who love the church are left to languish under the suspicion of a church leadership that has been provided an inaccurate view of the methodology currently at work in biblical research.

An examination of Hasel's published works, particularly those intended for a non-Adventist audience, will show little difference between him and other Adventist biblical scholars when it comes to methods for analyzing the Bible. Although, as in any comparison, there will be a few substantive differences, the conflict between Hasel and other Adventist scholars is largely definitional and needs to be recognized as such. *All Adventist scholars use biblical and historical criticism, including Hasel.*

Early in his struggle against this understanding

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of historical-critical method, Hasel won to his side—and thus to a narrow, Troeltschian view—Gordon Hyde, former director of the Biblical Research Institute. These two men represent the major source of the controversy over biblical criticism in the church. While with the institute Hyde attempted to maneuver the Biblical Research Institute—and through it, the church—into an adversarial relation to historical criticism.<sup>27</sup> After his General Conference service, Hyde chaired the department of religion at Southern College, where he continued his assault on historical-critical methodology.

Unable to address critical method from the philosophical or theological perspective (he holds a Ph.D. in speech), Hyde has tried to deal with it politically. By systematic elimination of religion faculty known to be supportive of a modified historical-critical method, development of stringent, anticritical criteria for persons holding the recently endowed Ellen G. White Memorial Chair in Religion,<sup>28</sup> and long-range plans for departmental publications under the auspices of the

Chair, which he began to edit upon retirement in 1987, Hyde apparently hopes to eliminate completely any vestige of historical criticism from at least the Southern College religion department.<sup>29</sup>

Hyde's recent activity gives no indication he has moved from his 1976 indictment of historical criticism, in which he, like Hasel, commits the same error of defining it in strictly rationalist, or Troeltschian terms:

We wish to comment on a method that is used by those who think they see conflicts between the Bible's testimony about God and His works and the evidences of nature or science. It is a method used also to explain the teachings of the Bible that do not harmonize with the presuppositions with which men come to its study. To illustrate, if a typically modern person assumes (with the average scientist and historian) that there are no miracles, then he has to do something about the many claimed miracles in the Bible. So what does he do? He probably points out that every writer is "historically conditioned," which means that the writer reflects the prevailing views and understandings of his time and is even limited to the ideas, concepts, and language of his age. . . . So to resolve the conflict, someone must re-interpret what the inspired person wrote so that it will harmonize with present-day knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

A year later, at the Biblical Research Institute Science Council, meeting at Price, Utah, Hyde was even more direct: "There is no place for the vertical, for transcendence, in historical method or the historical-critical approach to biblical studies."<sup>31</sup> And in the new Southern College publication, *Adventist Perspectives*, he editorializes: "Some want to go part way critical. But why go any way with a system based on a principle that shuts God and creation and miracles out before you start—or at least makes them uncertain, unlikely?"<sup>32</sup>

What neither Hasel nor Hyde seems willing to recognize is that very few, if any, Adventist scholars use historical criticism in anywhere near a strict Troeltschian sense. A rationalistic view is certainly widespread among non-Adventist scholars not committed to a confessional perspective,<sup>33</sup> but not among evangelical or Adventist scholars.

Most Adventist biblical scholars recognize the necessity of divorcing the insights obtained from historical criticism from the rationalistic assumptions that too often have been identified with



them. They do not accept the Hasel/Hyde definition of historical criticism, but instead insist upon a modified version that assumes the reality of divine transcendence. In short, they combine a high respect for the authority and integrity of Scripture with skillful use of all the tools of modern analysis of the Bible.

These scholars realize that no one at work on the Bible today—including Hasel and Hyde—can avoid at least some use of critical method. Against those who deny transcendence in Scripture they insist such a view fails to grasp the essential character of the Bible as a religious text. Against those who try to avoid all critical method, they claim what such scholars actually do is to pick and choose among the various aspects of the method, and employ what is in harmony with their belief in the inspiration of Scripture. There is no way one can be totally opposed to critical method, that is, opposed to careful and discriminating judgment of the text. Every scholar today, they insist, is committed to the twin aspects of historical criticism: (1) the historical reconstruction of the world and thought of the biblical text; and (2) the rational evaluation and interpretation of that reconstruction, if only to the extent of trying to relate its message to the present-day world.<sup>34</sup>

If Adventists wish to overcome the historical distance between ourselves and the Bible, we will have to employ some form of historical criticism. It may be of comfort to know that many evangelical scholars whose advocacy of the full authority and inspiration of the Bible can't be doubted have reached the same conclusion.<sup>35</sup>

### *Taming the Giant: Historical Criticism in the Service of the Church*

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**T**he Adventist biblical scholar should make use of a modified version of historical criticism, so long as it does not remove the transcendent level or challenge the theological authority and inspiration of Scripture.<sup>36</sup> Where there is objective, biblical evidence of transmission and development of a passage (cf.

2 Chronicles 35-36, Ezra 1, Nehemiah 7:38-8:12, with 1 Esdras) the use of source materials by an inspired writer (Luke 1:1-4), the editing of texts (cf. 2 Kings 23:28-30 with 2 Chronicles 35:20-27; Jeremiah 51:64b), et cetera, the Adventist scholar must not be afraid to employ critical judgments. At the same time, he or she recognizes that, whatever may have been the processes by which inspiration has worked, the resulting text is the Word of God.<sup>37</sup>

1. *The doctrine of inspiration gives due weight to the divine and human character of Scripture and to the tension between them.*

As outlined in the Dallas statement of 1980, the Adventist view of inspiration achieves a kind of balance between the divine and human aspects. Affirming the entire canon of Scripture, Article 1 emphasizes the “infallible revelation,” which insures the Bible as “the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.”

In two places, at least, stress falls upon the human aspect. The Scriptures were “given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”; and “God has committed to many the knowledge necessary for salvation.” These terse phrases imply what Ellen White made explicit long ago: the Scriptures, the “oracles of God,” are “a guidebook” to heaven.<sup>38</sup>

Equally, Ellen White addresses the human dimension. God committed the preparation of the Bible to “finite men.” In it they express his truths in human language, but it does not represent God’s mode of thought or expression. Not the words of Scripture, but the writers, are inspired. Style, even the conception of truth, varies from writer to writer.<sup>39</sup> There is even error: mistakes in copying, intentional changes, as well as general imperfection. These imperfections were permitted by God, yet the divine and human so intertwine they are inseparable.<sup>40</sup> The whole text, including the human process by which it came into being, speaks as the Word of God. “The utterances of man are the Word of God.”<sup>41</sup>

It seems to me Ellen White concedes far more to the humanity of Scripture than many Advent-

ists do.<sup>42</sup> On a popular level—and sometimes on an administrative one—there seems to be operative a view of Scripture that differs at many important points from that reflected in the writings of Ellen White.<sup>43</sup>

What Ellen White has said about the divine-human relationship in the Bible shapes the Adventist understanding of the character of Scripture and opens the door to some form of historical

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**It is now generally recognized that Hebrew wisdom is the most universal literature in the Bible. Beyond question, it has taken up concepts and forms found in other cultural contexts and employed them in an Israelite setting.**

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criticism. Because of this understanding, the Adventist biblical scholar is much better able to appreciate the human dimension critical methods uncover than the fundamentalist who is committed to a strict inerrantist view of Scripture.

How the divine and human are intertwined in Scripture is, of course, a paradox, a mystery. But since it embodies diffusion of the divine through the human,<sup>44</sup> we expect to encounter both divine and human characteristics in the Bible.

Adventists affirm the divine inspiration of the Bible, recognizing God as the primary cause of Scripture. But there are numerous other indirect causes: human thought, historical occasion, literary forms, sociological conditions, et cetera. All these play lesser, intermediate roles in the overall divine activity producing Scripture. Multiplex causality result in the Word of God appearing in human language. Evangelical scholar Donald Bloesch put the matter simply:

Some neo-fundamentalists object to speaking of culturally conditioned words and concepts in Scripture, but we contend that if justice is to be done to the true humanity of Scripture, we must fully acknowledge the human element . . . . The Holy Spirit can accommodate to the thought patterns and language of the people of biblical times and therefore into their cultural and historical limitation. . . . we must likewise contend that because of the superintendence of the Spirit the Bible is a fully

reliable and trustworthy witness to the truth revealed in history that it records. It gives us an accurate reflection of the mind and purpose of God though not an exact duplication of the very thoughts of God.<sup>45</sup>

What distinguishes the Adventist approach to Scripture from some others is this careful subordination of the human, indirect causes to the divine direct cause. An Adventist need not feel uneasy when he or she realizes the text has been shaped by human activity. Behind it divine inspiration works both in the initial inception of the message and its preservation through whatever stages it may have required. This enables Adventists to avoid the pitfalls of a strict, naturalistic biblical criticism, while recognizing the legitimate fruits of the critical method in calling attention to the human factor.

*2. The ongoing study of biblical literature against its ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman setting constantly makes ever more clear the human dimension of the Bible.*

While we could illustrate this with a great variety of biblical genres, let us briefly note the case of Hebrew wisdom literature. Scholars have become acutely aware that these works remarkably resemble literature known in other ancient Near Eastern cultures around Israel. This was dramatized in 1923 with the publication of the ancient Egyptian text, "Instructions of Amen-em-opet."<sup>46</sup> Strikingly similar to Proverbs 22:17-24:22, Amen-em-opet represents one of the few documents whose use by a writer of Scripture can be virtually demonstrated. Parallels in this instance extend to both form and content.<sup>47</sup> Here is an example:

Do not associate to thyself the heated man,  
Nor visit him for conversation  
(Amen-em-opet)<sup>48</sup>

Make no friendship with a man given to anger,  
nor go with a wrathful man.  
(Proverbs 22: 24)<sup>49</sup> (RSV)

Proverbs, moreover, is not the only wisdom book to display such parallels. Job and Ecclesiastes have similar counterparts elsewhere in the ancient Near East. It is now generally recognized that Hebrew wisdom is the most universal literature in the Bible. Beyond question, it has taken up concepts and forms found in other cultural con-

texts and employed them in an Israelite setting. The Bible, in fact, compares its wisdom to that of other nations (1 Kings 4:29, 30). Hebrew wisdom possesses unique characteristics, but that does not negate notable parallels elsewhere in the ancient Near East.

At several places in Proverbs, as well, we encounter evidence of editorial work—a collecting and traditioning process—indicating that the book is an anthology assembled over a period of time. Note the heading at chapter 25: “These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.”<sup>50</sup> Collecting and traditioning are processes studied by *redaction* and *tradition criticism*, both elements of historical criticism.

Although wisdom appears to be very human in many respects, it nonetheless comprises part of the inspired text.<sup>51</sup> The human dimension, rightly perceived, does not block out the divine revelation. God inspires in, through, and under the human, but does not displace it.

3. *Adventist biblical scholarship has made use of some aspects of the critical method for at least 40 years. There exists therefore a precedent for the use of a modified version of this approach.*

*Problems in Bible Translation* (1954) called for careful attention to the historical, literary, and linguistic context of biblical materials, and even sketched a hermeneutical method employing such.<sup>52</sup> The *SDA Bible Commentary* implemented this suggestion, using what R. F. Cottrell calls the “historical method.”<sup>53</sup> This is not the historical-critical method in classical, or Troeltschian terms, but a modified version of it, which continues to affirm the divine character of Scripture. One is not therefore surprised to discover critical results in the *Commentary*, particularly in the area of source or redaction criticism.

The book of Samuel, to take but one example, derives not from a single author, but represents “composite authorship . . . a collection of narratives, each complete in itself.” This conclusion sounds essentially like what one might read in any standard critical introduction,<sup>54</sup> except that the writer goes on to qualify his statement by introducing the divine element: “Each writer wrote by inspiration, and all parts were eventually brought

together as a united whole under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>55</sup>

What the writer of this portion of the *Commentary* has done should not be missed. He has been led by the actual text of Samuel to a conclusion similar to that obtained by historical-critical methodology. He has found historical-critical methods useful in explaining what he has observed. At the same time, he recognized the transcendent by pointing to the divine dimension behind the human.

Some unfortunately misunderstood—or took issue with—these hints in Adventist literature of

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**[Hyde’s] attempt to link critical methods inseparably to naturalistic presuppositions overlooks long-standing Adventist practice, and runs counter to the historic Adventist view of inspiration.**

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several decades ago.<sup>56</sup> As director of the Biblical Research Institute, Gordon Hyde organized three Bible conferences on hermeneutics in 1974, one of the purposes of which was to curtail the use of the historical-critical method among Adventist scholars. In the preface to *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, a collection of the papers from these conferences, Hyde explains the focus. The volume—and the conferences—trace

the history of the principles by which the Bible has been interpreted during the Christian era. It includes a survey of the sources, courses, and effects of the presuppositions and methodologies of modern biblical criticism, especially in their impact on the authority of the Bible.<sup>57</sup>

This attempt to link critical methods inseparably to naturalistic presuppositions<sup>58</sup> overlooks long-standing Adventist practice, and runs counter to the historic Adventist view of inspiration.

The view advocated in the 1974 Bible conferences has never been the unified conviction among Adventist scholars. William Johnsson, editor of the *Adventist Review*, stated in a paper written shortly after the conferences that “the question must not be *whether* we will employ historical methods (because we already do to

some extent) but *how far* shall we rely upon them.” He then added that every method used with Scripture must be weighed carefully in the light of its results. The Adventist scholar will consequently not limit his work to the historical-critical method.<sup>59</sup>

Richard Coffen similarly approves of historical criticism, cautioning against its inherent lim-

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its.<sup>60</sup> Hans LaRondelle, to cite a recent creative use of historical-critical approach, employs source, tradition, and redaction criticism, all elements of the critical approach, in elucidating the doctrine of the millennium. Yet he carefully maintains the divine nature of Scripture.<sup>61</sup>

The 1986 Annual Council, meeting in Rio de Janeiro, October 7-14, approved the report of the Methods of Bible Study Committee, which had been at work for about three years on the question of whether historical-critical method should be used by Adventists. The report seems to approve a cautious use of historical criticism, such as that illustrated in the work of the above-mentioned scholars. This document, reflecting its committee origin, is one of diverse emphases. Very little of it actually deals directly with historical criticism. It seems mainly concerned with shoring up the church's understanding of apocalyptic prophecy and responding to specific conundrums that arise in Scripture study, e.g. the problem of Holy War in the Old Testament. To ensure biblical authority, the committee sets forth an approach to Scripture consisting of looking at a text in its literary and historical context, as well as placing it into the framework of the Bible as a whole. This approach, except for the use of Ellen White, is essentially that used by most conservative Bible students.<sup>62</sup>

When the committee addresses historical criticism, it does not condemn the method *in toto*, but warns against the adoption of naturalistic presuppositions. Although the document never calls directly for a modified historical-critical method, several statements leave no doubt this is what is meant: Adventists appreciate “reliable methods of Bible study consistent with the claims and teachings of Scripture.” The *strict* historical-critical method is singled out: “Scholars who use this method, as *classically formulated*, operate on the basis of presuppositions which. . . reject the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible.”<sup>63</sup> “We urge Adventist Bible students,” the report states, “to avoid relying on *the use of the presuppositions and resultant deductions* associated with the historical-critical method.”

These cautions go back to the conviction that the Bible is “an indivisible union of human and divine elements.” Human reason therefore must always bow to the authority of the Word, unlike what usually happens in a strict critical approach. The committee finally seeks a balance between the divine and human element:

Even Christian scholars who accept the divine-human nature of Scripture but whose methodological approaches cause them to dwell largely on its human aspects risk emptying the biblical message of its power by relegating it to the background while concentrating on the medium.<sup>64</sup>

The document does not really address the deeper issues in the interpretation of the Bible, and so does not provide assistance to biblical scholars who are working on complex problems concerning methods of interpreting Scripture.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps the main function of the report could be to encourage scholars, rather than specifically direct them, in the cautious use of a modified historical-critical approach. The report could bring greater unity into Adventist biblical scholarship by clearing the air so scholars who use a version of critical method will be able to serve the church without persistent, lingering suspicion.<sup>66</sup>

4. *A modified version of the critical method is helping the church come to terms with the genesis of the Ellen G. White writings.*

In the past few years, attention has been drawn

to the extent and number of literary sources used by Ellen White. This has proven extremely threatening to many Seventh-day Adventists. Those trained in historical-critical methodology, however, have not been so perturbed, for they know that biblical texts indicate similar processes of development. Warren Johns, one of the first to respond to the Ellen G. White crisis, employs both source and redaction criticism in accounting for her literary borrowing.<sup>67</sup> A White Estate document, issued two months later, even suggests "source criticism" as an appropriate tool:

At one time in the infancy of "source criticism" the Gospel writers were thought by higher critical writers to be little more than "scissors and paste" plagiarizers. Now critical scholars realize that literary studies are not complete until they move beyond cataloging parallel passages to be the more significant question of how the borrowed material was used by each author (redaction criticism) to make his own unique statement.<sup>68</sup>

This concept is then applied to Ellen G. White. One caution is in order: It must not be assumed that the development of the Ellen White corpus and that of the Bible directly parallel. Adventists, in their haste to resolve the Ellen White crisis, need to be careful they don't unwittingly sacrifice the integrity of the Bible on the altar of Mrs.

White. The differing cultural and literary contexts must be taken into account before theories of development in either case may be advanced. However, the use of critical approaches with Ellen White will serve to demonstrate their usefulness in the study of Scripture. Whatever the outcome of the Ellen White question, one positive result might be the church's becoming less afraid of using critical method.

In conclusion, I have suggested that the Adventist scholar may accept and use a modified version of the historical-critical method. I have specified that this view ought to give due weight to the divine *and* human aspects of Scripture, i.e., it must be historical and theological in scope.<sup>69</sup> "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it." No human attempt to understand divine truth is perfect. The time may come when the historical-critical method is replaced in whole or in part by a superior one. We must never think our methods beyond revision. But it seems imperative that contemporary Adventist scholarship employ biblical criticism cautiously and reverently in the service of the gospel, to speak Christ ever afresh to a world perishing without him.

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1. "Actions of General Interest From the 1986 Annual Council," *Adventist Review* (January 22, 1987), pp. 18-20. All citations in this study will be from this source.

2. Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), pp. 7-9.

3. A rational analysis of Scripture, which led to the awareness of external and internal inconsistencies, had surfaced sporadically long before the Renaissance. If we discount the activity of the Gnostic critics of the Christian faith, as early as 145-180 A.D., a certain Ptolemy challenged the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch. Among the Iberian Jews both Ibn Yashush (c. 1000) and Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) were convinced that portions of the Pentateuch were written in the 17th century. (cf. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969], pp. 4-7). The "critical" impulse is much older than the 17th century.

4. *American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1982), s.v. "criticism."

5. The question of the role of an interpreter's psychology

on the results he or she obtains from biblical research has been explored by Cedric Johnson, *The Psychology of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

6. "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie," *Zur Religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik* (2nd ed.; Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1922; reprint ed., 1962), pp. 729-753.

7. So apparently Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 204-212. Hasel can criticize historical criticism for not being open to the transcendent dimension, then call for the "careful use of proper tools of historical and philological research" (p. 205), which would inevitably involve the use of methods that others might include under historical criticism.

8. Some scholars insist the newer methods start with the text as it stands rather than with theories of its development. They are synchronic (analytical) rather than diachronic (chronological), and thus not aspects of historical criticism. "Structural methods do not fit into the series of traditional

exegetical methods," insists Daniel Patte. "Text criticism, literary criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism belong together because they all assume a historical paradigm with a specific preunderstanding of the biblical text. . . the very introduction of structural methods in exegesis implies a shift in the exegete's preunderstanding of the biblical text."—*What Is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 1.

9. Cf. his *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), pp. 131-137.

10. This tendency may be seen in the Fortress Guides to Biblical Scholarship, which include introductory volumes to each method.

11. Harrison shows that ancient Near Eastern scribes revised the documents entrusted to them with great care, even those of great antiquity. This revision extended at least to grammar, spelling, and content updating. An Egyptian religious papyrus from c. 1400 B.C. had a certification with it indicating the scribes had copied, revised, and compared it with its archetype [original] (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 522, 523).

12. *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), p. 141. A similar point is made by Gerhard Hasel in *New Testament Theology*, pp. 206, 207.

13. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume* (1976), s.v. "Source Criticism, OT."

14. *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Toward a Hermeneutics of Consent* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), p. 90.

15. *The Old Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 3, 4. Emphasis supplied.

16. "The method is so differently practiced that it is difficult even to speak of the historical-critical method" (Hasel, *New Testament Theology*, p. 208).

17. See Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977), for Lutheran advocacy of this view.

18. Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1980, pp. 28, 24-26.

19. Pages 206, 209, 211. This same view appears in Hasel's recently published, "The Rise and Wane of Biblical Authority," *Adventist Perspectives* 1:1 (1987), pp. 14, 15. On this new periodical, published by Southern College, see below.

20. Vol. 5 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1972). This does not contain the full text of the original dissertation.

21. Page 46.

22. Pages 63, 382, 384.

23. Page 147.

24. In note 39 on pp. 147, 148, Hasel cites several critical scholars in support of his statement. These include Hermann Gunkel, Gerhard von Rad, and Otto Eissfeldt. Nowhere does he indicate disagreement with the essentials of their critical conclusions.

25. *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. G. M. Hyde (Washington: General Conference, 1974), p. 167. Emphasis supplied. We can see him at work with this approach in "Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels," *Andrews Uni-*

*versity Seminary Studies* 10 (January 1972), p. 120. In this article Hasel shows the radical difference between Genesis 1 and other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts. In the process, however, and without accepting rationalistic presuppositions, he makes use of comparative form criticism and the history-of-religions, both methods at the heart of classical historical criticism. In his *New Testament Theology*, Hasel likewise calls for a method that takes "into account the reality of God and his inbreaking into history" as a basis for "historical and theological interpretation" (p. 212). Despite this insight, and despite his awareness of the entire problem of definition (pp. 207-212), in the footnote to this statement, he lapses back into a univocal identification of historical criticism with the Troeltschian model (note 37). Does Hasel define historical criticism narrowly as the Troeltschian version, and all other forms of criticism as simply historical or literary in nature? There is considerable ambiguity in what he has written on this matter.

26. *New Testament Theology*, p. 208. Emphasis Hasel's.

27. Hyde's reactionary work at the Biblical Research Institute in this regard has been documented by Raymond Cottrell in an unpublished manuscript entitled, "Our Present Crisis: Reaction to a Decade of Obscurantism" (August 1981).

28. These criteria have finally surfaced in print. The relevant line reads: "the chair will *decline to follow the historical-critical method and its procedures*, including its actual and virtual rejection of miracles and other supernatural events recorded in the Bible. It will *regard as unacceptable even modified usages of this or other methods* that are not grounded in, nor in harmony with, the Bible"—"Extracts From Chair Documents," (*Adventist Perspectives*, p. 50, emphasis supplied). A source within the Southern College administration expressed to me on November 12, 1986, that college administration was concerned that, under the influence of Gerhard Hasel, Hyde would incorporate such a statement in the criteria for appointing the chair, and thus isolate Southern College from the mainstream of Adventist scholarship. This concern now appears well-founded, for unfortunately their incorporation in a formal statement has now occurred. As can be seen, the criteria repeat the fallacy of tying contemporary historical-criticism to a Troeltschian model.

29. This is evidenced in a March 24, 1987, letter to the faculty of the Department of Religion, in which Hyde calls for personal written statements from each member of the faculty on each of the 27 Articles of Belief. These statements are to be molded into a position document for the department on "Where we understand the theological lines of this Advent message" to lie. "To use one of the President's [Don Sahly, President of Southern College] recent analogies, he wishes that the religion faculty on this campus would snap the chalk line to indicate—to the various entities that are concerned, to know—where the boundaries lie for the edifice of truth which this institution—among others—is both helping to erect and also to maintain." There can be little doubt Hyde, given his preoccupation over the past 20 years, excludes here any form of historical-critical method. This is now obvious in the new departmental publication, *Adventist Perspectives*, pub-

lished in November 1987. Written statements from all the religion faculty appear, most of which repudiate any form of historical criticism, e.g. Ronald Springett: "the biblical methodologies and hermeneutics that dominate in our time—the historical-critical method of Bible study, for example, and its many variations—are based to a greater or lesser extent on the naturalist world view" ("World View," *ibid.*, p. 26).

30. *God Has Spoken* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing, 1976), pp. 25, 26. Emphasis supplied.

31. "The Divine and Human in Revelation," paper read at the Biblical Research Institute Science Council, 12, May 1977, Price, Utah, p. 4.

32. "Does it Really Matter?" p. 7.

33. Krentz, p. 71.

34. This is precisely the position advocated by Hasel: One must first understand (1) "historically and theologically what the text meant." Having done this, he or she is then (2) to "express more adequately and comprehensively what the text means for man in the modern world and historical situation" (*New Testament Theology*, pp. 212, 213). Cf. his "The Relationship Between Biblical Theology and Systematic Theology," *Trinity Journal*, n.s. 5[1984] pp. 113-127). Here he notes that a systematic approach to biblical theology ought to utilize the full range of historical, psychological, sociological, and philosophical information so long as it is subjected to the norms of biblical revelation. To carry out such a mandate would inevitably lead to the utilization of methods from within historical criticism, albeit without rationalistic presuppositions. In short, it would require a modified version of the historical-critical method.

35. *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 55, note 1. Evangelical Donald Bloesch concurs: "We need to be free to examine the Scriptures as human literature; yet we must not stop there but go on to find and hear the Word of God in and through the words of the human authors. Historical and critical studies may help to cleanse the lens of Scripture so that it is not simply an opaque medium of the Word of God" (*Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 2:274). Cf. G. E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967).

36. This assumes the view, long advocated by the White Estate, that the Bible is accurate in theology, but not necessarily in every detail of its history, science, etc. This is called *limited inerrancy*. Recently, leading evangelicals have adopted the same position, although they speak of it as a form of the *inerrantist* view of inspiration (cf. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 1:64-70; G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, Studies in Dogmatics [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], pp. 195-212).

37. Evangelical scholar Carl Armerding reaches this same conclusion: "Inspiration is seen as applying to the end product of what was in some cases a long process, while the length of the process in no way affects its authority" (*Old Testament and Criticism*, p. 99).

38. *Selected Messages*, book 1 (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1945), p. 15.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-21.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 20; *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Re-

view and Herald, 1945), pp. 220-221.

41. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

42. This was the conclusion of the 1919 Bible Conference. Cf. the transcript of this crucial meeting in *Spectrum* 10:1 (1979), pp. 27-57.

43. Cf. for example, Robert Pierson, *We Still Believe* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1975), p. 251.

44. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

45. "Theological Table-Talk: Crisis in Biblical Authority," *Theology Today*, 35 (1979), p. 458.

46. Wallis Budge, *Facsimiles of Egyptian Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, second series (1923): *The Teaching of Amen-em-apt* (1924).

47. James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), pp. 220-222.

48. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. J. B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 423b.

49. The Hebrew of this saying, given the differences between Egyptian and Hebrew, is almost identical to the Amen-em-opet version.

50. Cf. also 1:1-7; 10:1; 22:17-20; 24:23; 30:1; 31:1. The titles in these verses seem to point to separate collections of proverbs that have been brought together to form our present book. Job 8:8-10 speaks of the cultivation of a wisdom tradition that would have transmitted proverbial sayings.

51. The similarity of Hebrew wisdom to other ancient Near Eastern sources, the evidence of traditioning, and the absence of direct reference to inspiration naturally raises the question of how this literature is to be understood as divinely inspired. This is an extremely difficult question. I would suggest two considerations that affirm the transcendent dimension:

Inspiration utilizes several possible modalities. The most familiar we might call the *prophetic* mode. Here an individual receives a visionary or auditory revelation from God and is instructed to write down what he or she has seen or heard.

But at least two other modes come immediately to mind. The *editorial* mode appears in the prologue of Luke (1:1-4). Wisdom literature, I think, falls into still another category: that of the *reflective* mode. The wisdom teachers, convinced that their observations of world order were in harmony with ultimate truth found only in God, held all truth to be from God, and as such a gift or "revelation" from God. Through the order behind reality, the sages learned something of God. A certain hiddenness existed in God's self-disclosure, but the order of the world did its part to disclose, or unveil God.

The second consideration is that the New Testament itself places the arch of inspiration over the entire canon of the Old Testament and permits us—even though we do not grasp the mystery of how it all came about—to regard the wisdom corpus as inspired Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

52. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1954), p. 105.

53. "The Historical Method of Inspiration," *Review and Herald* (April 7, 1977), p. 7.

54. Cf. James L. Crenshaw, *Story and Faith: A Guide to the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 129, 130. Crenshaw speaks of "several strands of traditional

material which make up the work," but is unable to find "an overarching perspective."

55. 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953-1957), 2:448.

56. Gordon Hyde has on more than one occasion confided to me his suspicion of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* in this regard.

57. (Washington, D.C.: General Conference, 1974), p. iv.

58. In a key essay, Hasel cites the Troeltschian principles as definitive of critical method, a misunderstanding that occurs even in his recent writings. "The historical-critical method understands history as an unbroken series of causes and effects in which there is no room for God's activity" ("Principles of Biblical Interpretation," p. 166).

59. "SDA Presuppositions to Biblical Studies," paper presented to SDA members attending the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature Convention, Chicago, Ill., October 29, 1975, pp. 44, 45.

60. "Taboo on Tools?" *Ministry*, 48 (September 1975), pp. 7, 8.

61. "The Millennium: Its Old Testament Roots," *ibid.* 55 (November 1982), pp. 10-12.

62. Cf. Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

63. These judgments unfortunately lead the authors to some pejorative statements, such as "The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments." "A committed Christian will use only those methods that are able to do full justice to the dual, inseparable nature of Scripture, enhance his ability to understand and apply its message, and strengthen faith" (pp. 18, 209). My personal acquaintance with several Christian scholars who use a strict historical-critical method finds them to be, not only committed Christians, but supremely ethical and faithful as well. In church documents of this

nature, we should try to avoid categorizing other Christians in this way.

64. "Actions of 1986 Annual Council," pp. 18-20. The quotation is from p. 20. Emphasis supplied.

65. My interpretation of the committee's report is more positive than that of R. F. Cottrell, who rightly objects to its "myopic" view that the word *critical* in historical criticism "indicates a critical attitude toward the inspiration and authority of the Bible." Cottrell, who holds a view of historical criticism very similar to my own, and I would agree the limiting of membership on the committee to persons not experienced in historical criticism disposed it to an inaccurate appraisal of the method (cf. R. F. Cottrell, "The Annual Council Statement on Methods of Bible Study," unpublished paper, December 1, 1986).

66. Unfortunately, despite its current status as a "report," there is some evidence that it is instead being used against loyal Adventist scholars. It recently played a negative role in the suspension of Joseph Grieg from the Andrews University faculty for allegedly teaching "the historical-critical method." Grieg's reinstatement is extremely encouraging because it suggests that church administrators are not locked into following the Hasel/Hyde approach, but may be moving toward accepting the more enlightened view anticipated in the document on methods.

67. "Ellen White: Prophet or Plagiarist?" *Ministry*, 55 (June 1982), pp. 5-19.

68. "The Truth About *The White Lie*," insert, *ibid.* 55 (August 1982), p. 2.

69. In this I concur with Gerhard Hasel: "If the reality of the Biblical text testifies to a suprahistorical dimension. . . then one must employ methods that can account for this dimension and can probe into all the layers of depth of historical experience and deal adequately and properly with the Scripture's claim to truth" (*New Testament Theology*, p. 211).