

# A SYMPOSIUM ON BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Edited by  
Gordon  
M.  
Hyde

*" . . . rightly handling the word of truth."*

Prepared by the  
Biblical Research Committee  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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Dedicated to

*W a l t e r E. R e a d*

Chairman, Biblical Research Committee

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

Throughout their short history Seventh-day Adventists have thought of themselves as people of the Book--people of the Bible. They have accepted its authority in the tradition of the Protestant Reformation, which arose on the wings of the "Bible only" principle--that Scripture is to be interpreted by itself rather than by external traditions or philosophies.

The general membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church may have been only dimly aware of the challenges to this principle that have come from various forms of biblical criticism. Recent generations of the Church, however, in their quest for advanced education have had increasing exposure to the presuppositions and methodologies that have challenged the Protestant principle. This fact has led the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in recent years to concentrate its work in the areas of (1) revelation-inspiration--the ground of the Bible's authority, and (2) biblical hermeneutics--the principles by which to derive the intended meaning.

Some two years ago the North American Division of the General Conference decided to call a series of Bible Conferences in 1974 for the benefit of the pastoral, evangelistic, and Bible-teaching ministries in particular. The Biblical Research Committee and its officers were drawn into the planning of these conferences. They suggested that the agenda of the Bible Conferences be built around the revelation-inspiration and hermeneutical issues.

It was about that same time that the Biblical Research Committee had a series of papers in progress dealing with biblical hermeneutics, and it was decided that these be drawn into a symposium to be printed prior to the Bible Conferences as resource material prepared to meet the particular needs of the ministry.

*A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics* presents the God-to-man downreach of the processes of revelation and inspiration as the foundation of the Bible's authority. It proceeds then to 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.

For the guidelines provided, consideration is given to the ways in which inspired writers use and interpret earlier inspired writings. The *Symposium* then moves to a review of the principles by which the Seventh-day Adventist Church (following largely in

the Reformation tradition) interprets the Bible. The presentation of general principles undergirds consideration of such categories of biblical literature as prophetic, typological, symbolic, apocalyptic, eschatological, poetic, wisdom, and historical.

The chapters of this *Symposium* are essentially a series of essays, with the limitations of space, a minimum of quoted materials, and the general absence of footnoting and full documentation. For the guidance of the minister-reader particularly, an introductory annotated reading list representing various points of view is provided at the end of most of the chapters. Although the individuality of the several contributors is evident, there is an essential consensus on accepted presuppositions and principles that gives a unity of perspective to the *Symposium*. This consensus reflects to a considerable degree the work of the Biblical Research Committee.

The chapter on the application of hermeneutic principles to the work of preaching is indicative of the hope of all of the contributors to this *Symposium* that the ministers and Bible teachers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a result of their study of this volume, will be even more confident of the authority of the Bible, of the integrity of their biblical exposition, and of the urgency of their divine mandate to "preach the word."

The steady erosion of confidence in the authority of the Bible as God's revelation to man may give unique significance to the following prediction that was made early in Seventh-day Adventist history:

(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.-- Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

--Gordon M. Hyde

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### ABBREVIATIONS

OT Old Testament  
NT New Testament

JB *Jerusalem Bible*  
LXX *The Septuagint*  
MT *Masoretic Text*  
NAB *New American Bible*  
NASB *New American Standard Bible*  
NEB *New English Bible*  
RSV *Revised Standard Version*

AA *The Acts of the Apostles*  
CT *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*  
DA *The Desire of Ages*  
Ed *Education*  
Ev *Evangelism*  
FE *Fundamentals of Christian Education*  
GC *The Great Controversy*  
MH *The Ministry of Healing*  
PK *Prophets and Kings*  
PP *Patriarchs and Prophets*  
TM *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*

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## P A R T I

### INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS

#### 1. Revelation, Inspiration, and Hermeneutics

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The Bible holds an eminent place in the history of mankind and in the life of Christians. There have been and still are other influential religious writings, known and venerated by large groups of people. We could mention for their long-lasting role Islam's Koran, the Hindu Vedas and Brahmanas, the Buddhist Writings, and the Taoist Principles. Unquestionably, however, none of these has known a dissemination comparable to that of the Christian Scriptures, scattered today all over the world and translated into almost every language of any importance. No other volume has aroused so universal an interest nor left so profound an impact.

Even so, such considerations are of but little value to the Christian. Even if it were ignored by the rest of mankind, the Bible would remain in his view what he knows it to be. To Christ's disciple the Bible is not merely one of man's outstanding religious productions but also a book of unique dimension that keeps it distinct within the category of all religious realities: it is the Word of God. The Bible is the place where God is encountered, where His message is spoken and His will is proclaimed.

#### Interpreting the Scriptures

God has spoken! But what has He said? Every utterance, every written document, demands interpretation. And the need increases in proportion to the distance the text stands in time and

culture from our own. The more remote the writer is in time and place from his hearers and the more the opinions and circumstances of his age and country differ from ours, the more there is need for specific rules to understand his statements. A gap is to be bridged and obstacles to understanding are to be removed. This is precisely the purpose and aim of hermeneutics, or hermeneutic--the distinction between the two forms of the word is immaterial. Although somewhat unfamiliar, the term is derived from a Greek word that means to interpret, to explain. Biblical hermeneutics is the science of correctly understanding the Scriptures, of observing principles whereby God's Word can be correctly and profoundly read. Its object is to determine the thought the biblical writers had in mind and expressed in words under specific circumstances.

Interpreting Scripture, I believe, is a stewardship we have from God. It is part of "the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4), as exemplified by the Lord Himself. Indeed, in Luke's account of the walk of the risen Christ with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus this Gospel writer tells us that Jesus, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted [*"diērmēneusen"*] to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Lu 24: 27, RSV).

Hardly any study could be more important than the science of hermeneutics as applied to the Scriptures, for they alone are able to instruct us for salvation. In its absence, a crass literal interpretation of the Bible without regard to idiom, context, or literary form in which a statement has been made is often the result, the outgrowth of a misguided determination to cling to a superficial understanding of the Bible at all cost, even the cost of real understanding. Thus, for lack of a sound hermeneutic, scriptural statements more than once have been uncritically and unrealistically applied to Christian morality. Because the patriarchs practiced polygamy, some have claimed, we may practice it too; or because the Scriptures make certain remarks about the suffering of woman in childbirth we are not to approve any method of easing the pain.

How can we ascertain what God has declared in Scripture? How can we determine the meaning of what He has said? Also, how will we actualize the biblical message and translate it in such a way that it becomes contemporary while faithfully proclaiming the gospel once for all delivered? How does one distinguish between the proper sense of Scripture and the different ways in which it may be applied? Is there a literal sense and a mystical one? Which considerations should guide us in the interpretation of prophecy? How can we understand the biblical view of time and event and discern how past and present and future are related?

These questions--and many more--point to the extraordinary importance of the hermeneutical question. Indeed, the history of the church can be seen as an ongoing effort to interpret God's Word and make the gospel meaningful to contemporary man. Our generation is no exception.

### Hermeneutic and Its Presuppositions

At this point we find ourselves in a dilemma arising from the nature of the matter. To set our rules of interpretation means asking the question: What are the methods of interpretation that are best fitted to the whole of the biblical message? In fact, we must already understand this message as a whole before we can set our rules for interpreting the single texts. In other words, the interpreter's understanding of the whole message of Scripture and his view of the nature and authority of the Bible largely determine his hermeneutical methods. Does not this approach show a lack of objectivity? In any discipline, I believe, the student without any presuppositions is essentially an abstraction who never existed in the past, does not exist in the present, and from all we know of human beings will not exist in the future. When one attempts to deal with such questions as are raised in the effort of interpreting the Bible, he approaches them from the viewpoint of a particular heritage.

Roman Catholics, identifying the church with its Lord, therefore declare that what the Bible says and means cannot be discovered outside the declarations of the teaching office of the church. With equal earnestness, other Christians, taking the Scriptures as evidence of the historical evolution of religion from a primitive religiosity up to Jesus, have emphasized the ethical side of Christianity. Here relations with the Bible remain fundamentally loose or indeed "free," since one is not to be bound by the letter of the Bible. The neo-orthodox is likewise devoted to basic assumptions, which control his study of Scripture. It is not therefore a peculiarity of Adventist interpreters that they are guided in their study of the Bible by what they think of it. Presuppositions there must be, and presuppositions there are. But ideally, the basic difference between our presuppositions and those of many other groups is that those of the Adventist are provided by the Scripture itself, whereas I fear many of those of the other groups are not.

The basic presupposition of Adventist believers--which they share with evangelicals in general--is that the Bible as God's Word demands an approach set in reverence and faith. From within Scripture itself we meet more than once with the assertion that

faith is essential to understanding. This attitude does not imply any preconceived notion of what the Bible ought to contain but merely anticipates that the object investigated will be given a chance to speak for itself, that the Book will be studied for what it has to say. And what it does say is that it is God's testimony to man, the revealed Word of God.

This fact leads us to two basic questions that will occupy our attention in the remainder of this chapter. First, in which way did the revelation come to the authors of the various books of the Bible? Second, what can we say regarding its inspiration? Both questions are at the very heart of the current theological debate.

### Revelation, Proposition or Encounter?

From its beginnings Christianity has considered itself to be a revealed religion. And divine revelation was formally defined as the supernatural communication of truths in propositional form. Until the modern period everyone from scholastics to deists, from pietists to rationalists, operated on the basis that the content of revelation is knowledge about or from God in the form of propositions; that is to say, of statements that affirm truths necessary for salvation. Revelation was regarded as the imparting of knowledge or information. This propositional concept of revelation has been challenged by contemporary theology, which in so doing has introduced a startling new chapter in the history of the interpretation of revelation. Drawing upon the "I-Thou" concept as a central category in its exposition of the Christian faith, encounter theology seeks to elaborate the understanding of revelation as lying *beyond* the "information barrier." Revelation is understood to be the personal self-disclosure of God to man, not the impartation of truths about God. It is an "I-Thou" encounter with God, the full presence of God in the consciousness of the believer. Its content is not *some thing* about God, but *some one*, God Himself, addressing the soul and calling for a response.

Encounter theologians do not think they are advocating something new, but rather that they are promoting a return to pristine Christianity. The biblical view, they say, is "truth as encounter" over against "truth as proposition." From this point of view, of course, the Bible is no longer revelation nor God's revealed Word, but a witness to revelation. Its content is merely the result of later rational reflection by its authors upon God's self-manifestation. Its function is not to pass on doctrinal information that only God knows but to bear witness to and provide a promise of revelation. It points beyond itself to an event to which it bears

witness and which is not the Bible itself but God's personal disclosure or revelation to the individual Christian soul.

### Word, Event, and Meaning

Does revelation consist of facts, truths, or knowledge? The issue is sensitive indeed. It is crucial for many aspects of the Christian gospel, and it has important implications for one's hermeneutics of Scripture. God, to be sure, is not Someone we find by our own efforts. In order for man to come to any true understanding of Him, he needs a revelation from above. Such a revelation of God exists. And it is described in Scripture as taking place and unfolding within history. What characterizes the OT revelation is that God has freely chosen to enter into a personal relationship with man, and that history is understood as the medium within which He reveals Himself. Thence, the Jewish faith in a self-revealing God focuses its attention on particular localities and periods--on Creation and the Flood, Abraham and Jacob, the Exodus from Egypt, and a covenant made at Mount Sinai. These events, of course, remain accessible to every man's natural perception, and although acts of God, they may be explained away by the analogy of history. As divine acts, however, they are full of theological meaning. Therefore, by His grace God does reveal their meaning. The "word of the Lord" that raises Creation out of nothingness (see Gn 1; Ps 33:6, 9) is also the divine discourse of truth. It is salvific event and interpretation. The Word of God brings to pass salvation-history events; it also interprets their meaning, taking from them the anonymity of meaningless strokes of fate.

The prophetic ministry, therefore, is the other form of historical revelation. What distinguishes the biblical prophet is the fact that he has been the object of a privileged experience. He is the man in whom the word of the Lord resides, in whose mouth it has been placed or has come (see Jer 1:9; 5:13, 14). He is the man of the word (see Jer 18:18).

Without ceasing to be a living word, the prophetic word in time becomes more and more a written word, and the prophet's message written on a scroll will have the fixed character of a divine decree. Ezekiel, for instance, is the minister of an irrevocable word, which announces events and makes their accomplishment infallible (see Eze 12:25-28; 24:14). The word of the Lord is no longer exclusively an event but also a message; even more, a command. It is not enough to hear the word; it must be obeyed. Better, it must be lived (see Eze 33:30-33). According to whether divine revelation is accepted or refused, it becomes for man grace or judg-

ment, life or death (see Is 1:20; Jos 1:7, 8). Revelation undoubtedly is the revelation of someone, but it also aims at addressing all men, asking them questions, and making them partners in God's plan with a view to their salvation.

### Christ the Revelation, Event and Meaning

In contradistinction to the cyclic conception of time, the OT revelation announced that the continuous succession of temporal events embracing past, present, and future was unfolding toward a goal. And in fact history as a personal dialogue between God and man reached a definitive peak in the incarnation of the Son of God. Christ, the incarnate Son, did not simply bring another revelation. He *is* the revelation, God revealing and revealed. It does not follow, however, that revelation is identified only with the event of the Incarnation. Its meaning, as in olden times, needed to be declared. Thus, it is through the words of Christ addressed to us in explanation that the event and meaning of the Incarnation as divine self-revelation is unveiled for us. Here again, as in OT times, the Word of God made Himself known in two related ways: In meaningful events that were parts of the unfolding of salvation history and in words that made the meaning of these events explicit.

At the same time, however, the apostles occupy a unique place in the process of divine revelation. Their role is unrepeatable. Having experienced in their lifetime the Man who was God in person, they were commissioned to represent Him among their fellows. They were to be His witnesses (see Acts 10:41)--witnesses first of all to the Risen One (see Acts 26:16), but in fact to everything they had seen and heard of Christ (see Acts 4:20); witnesses to the whole of Christ's person and work, event and interpretation. This proclamation of God's message would have been impossible without the mediation of objective propositional statements and judgmental formulations. And it is the apostles' consensus that this development took place under the movement of the Spirit (see Eph 3:5; Acts 4:8, 31, 33).

As the Lord tarried, a time came when the need for a *written* testimony became increasingly obvious. What had taken place in the Incarnation and was being proclaimed by the apostles was never to be surpassed. But neither was it to cease, because it had happened for all men until the end of time. Thus, in order to help coming generations of Christians sift authentic truth about Christ from the spurious, and above all to ensure that the revelational experience in Christ would be continued, a written deposit of the apostolic testimony was developed. Their written word--like their preaching--although not identical to the divine Word Himself, is



the only reliable source of firsthand witnessing concerning the Person through whom God revealed the saving knowledge of Himself to the world. As in the days of the prophets and the apostles, today's believers are those who have come to "believe . . . through their word" (Jn 17:20).

#### A False Dichotomy

It is not difficult to see what contemporary writers on revelation are dissatisfied with. They are opposed to revelation defined in terms of a certain number of truths to be believed. They tend, for that reason, to set revelation-encounter over against revelation-doctrine. But the disjunction between the God who acts or meets and the God who speaks is not so obvious to me, at least on biblical grounds. It is true that the understanding of revelation developed in this chapter may be characterized as an intellectual and rational concept. And it must be admitted that more than once we Adventists have indeed given the impression that revelation is identical with a set of divinely authenticated truths. Revelation has tended to be thought of as correct doctrine. But I wonder whether this rightly describes what we really believe. On the basis of scriptural data I conceive of revelation as primarily the self-disclosure of God Himself giving man a brief glimpse of the mystery of His being and love. But I do not wish either to dispute or deny that it makes sense to speak of the content or the truths of revelation. God's sovereign activity in history does not become intelligible as revelation unless it is accompanied by the Word that expresses its meaning.

Faith, man's answer to God's self-disclosure, is directed toward a Person. It is first a personal response to the revealed intentions of a personal Being. It is acknowledgment before being knowledge, "belief in" before "belief that," although both aspects, in each instance, are indissolubly linked to one another, and difficult to distinguish. Thus the fourth Gospel exhorts us to believe in Christ (see Jn 1:12; 10:26), receive Christ (see Jn 5:43), come to Christ (see Jn 6:35, 37, 44, 65), abide in Christ (see Jn (see Jn 15:4, 7), receive His Word (see Jn 12:48; 17:8), receive His testimony (see Jn 3:11), and abide in His Word (see Jn 8:31). Thus, faith in Christ is at the same time adhering to Him *and* to His Word, receiving Him and believing everything His envoys say (see Jn 5:43; 20:31), for like the person of Christ His Word is life and truth.

As a student of Scripture I must underline that revelation is an event, an encounter. But one's encounter with Christ is effec-

ted only through hearing the prophetic and apostolic proclamation consigned to Scriptures. These fragile words of Scripture passed down to us from the OT and the NT writers are intrinsic to the revelational process. They are as true as the Christ event they explicate, and they share in the "once-for-all" character of the divine revelation. This explains why the apostles, as the prophets of old, expected those who received their message to recognize it as authoritative, as "the word of God," "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Th 2:13; 1 Cor 14:37; see 2 Th 3:14). It is this apostolic doctrine--or truth--entrusted to him as a deposit that Paul, for instance, wants to see preserved (see 1 Ti 4:6; 2 Ti 1:13, 14).

It is evident by now that encounter theology does not go far enough in its understanding of the role of propositional elements in revelation. True doctrine as expressed in Scripture, far from being potentially detrimental, is, in fact, indispensable for a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. It is the instrument through which God works in human life. The words of Scripture are not merely a record of or a witness to a prior revelatory event; they are intrinsic to the revelational process and contribute to its constitution. It should be obvious, therefore, that if the text of Scripture is to be revelatory of God it will be approached by the Christian in an attitude of total trust in all it teaches. The conviction that the Bible is God's written Word, having its origin in divine acting and speaking, can but deeply affect our entire hermeneutical approach.

#### What About Inspiration?

The pattern of divine revelation makes it possible to address ourselves briefly now to the issue of inspiration, another tenet of historic Christianity also challenged by modern thought. The issue is quite clear: Once God had revealed Himself to His servants the prophets, as we noticed, did He exercise any determining influence on the writers of the OT and NT in order that they might proclaim and set down in an exact and trustworthy way the message they had received from Him? Or were the Scriptures written by men who wrestled with the problem of interpreting God's self-disclosure to their inner souls in terms relevant to the concrete historical situation of their own day?

For hundreds of years, in fact until approximately the beginning of the nineteenth century, Scripture was traditionally understood as a divine communication to man cast in written form under the express inflow of the Holy Spirit. The whole picture has changed considerably during the past hundred years. This turn of events is due mainly to the rise of modern scientific literary and

historical criticism and its application to the Bible. Until then it was generally believed that the Bible was a unique book, written down by human writers at the dictation of the Holy Spirit, which gave it an unquestionable normative value.

### The Age of Enlightenment

The age of enlightenment questioned all things, including the idea of a divinely dictated body of inspired writings. By the beginning of the nineteenth century it began to insist that there was no essential difference between the Bible and any other literary production. It said that far from being unique, the Bible ought to be interpreted by the same critical-grammatical and historical methods as any other book.

A genuine interest in resurrecting the past had brought about progressive refinement of historical criticism, of methods of historical research. This effort eventually had also reached the two testaments. Although not in itself directed against the Christian church, this perfectly legitimate undertaking developed independently of the church, with its own methods and with no intention of serving the church.

It was shortly taken up by thinkers who joined to it a philosophical criticism completely detached from the Christian faith, in the name of which they presumed to stand in sovereign judgment over the content of the Bible and sometimes over religion itself. Opposed in principle to the very idea of revelation and inspiration in the biblical sense, rationalist philosophy took over literary analysis, historical criticism, and the conclusions of both sociology and the history of religion. It made them instruments in its attacks on all forms of Christian dogmatism.

The theories thus constructed claimed to be independent of any preconception and of any faith. In fact, however, tacitly admitted before any investigation, is the principle that the values appearing in the course of one's study of the biblical documents were the products of purely human factors, neither more nor less transcendent than any other religious society. The Bible is merely the record of man's growing experience of God and man's progressive response to God. As such, it is a religious book of inestimable value but devoid of the supernatural dimension that faith acknowledges in it.

The influence this view exercised and continues to exercise on the biblical hermeneutic of not a few of our contemporaries is well known.

### Assets and Liabilities

This new attitude toward the Scriptures brought about by the application to them of the methods of literary and historical criticism has provided us with a flood of light on our "background" knowledge of the Bible. We are much better informed today than before on the period in which the various books of the Bible were written, the kind of men they were written by, the particular problems the writers faced, and the historical conditions under which they lived. But its tendency to regard the Bible as only one record among others of the evolving human religious consciousness has been carried too far. No longer, goes the argument, does modern scientific study of the Bible support the theory that the Scripture came by way of visions and voices or that the prophets and apostolic writers reached their message by the passive acceptance of words dictated while their rational and critical faculties were asleep. The inspiration of the Bible is not different in *kind* from that of other religious writings but only in *degree*.

### The Existentialist Approach

Many, in fact, accept the same postulates, even when they attempt to avoid their consequences through their existentialist interpretation of the biblical record. Thus has it frequently been said that when we speak of the inspiration of Scripture we ought to speak no longer in terms of a composition taking place under the constant direction and inflow of the Holy Spirit, but we ought primarily to mean that men who were progressively deepening their experience of God and had come to call Him holy, righteous, and Father wrote the Scriptures. These men actually were engaged in thinking out the given problems of a concrete situation in the light of certain historical happenings and experiences that, through the inward illumination of the Spirit of God, had brought to them a new understanding of man's nature and destiny. Their experience was not different from that of Christian teachers in subsequent ages, including many Christians in our own time. The biblical writers possessed no supernatural faculty of knowing divine truth and enjoyed no experiences different from those of Christians of later generations. Nor need their writings any longer be regarded as produced in any manner generically different from that which gave birth to the wide range of Christian literature produced since the days of Christ. The latter can appropriately be described as inspired by the Holy Spirit in precisely the same formal sense as were the books of the Bible.

### The Testimony of Scripture

This modern approach to the issue of inspiration, which developed out of an ongoing dialogue between philosophy and theology, has been so preoccupied with the study of the Bible as a human document that it has been unable to show convincingly that it is also God's Word. It is, to be true, on biblical grounds that the Christian Church has traditionally attributed to all the books composing the Bible the special character of being inspired. Here the Bible is presented as the Word of God addressed to men, the Word in writing. This idea in any case is contained in the various expressions used by the biblical writers to describe the ministry of the prophets and their particular endowment. Or could it be that in these days we should not accept the testimony of Scripture regarding itself? Yet to refuse its testimony is really to be unscientific, for the first requisite of science is to take each thing for what it is, and not for another thing. This means within the limits of our discussion, to make the attempt at least to accept the Bible at its own evaluation and with its own presuppositions. I wonder whether in the end that process does not make more sense than any alternative method.

What, then, is the biblical testimony on this particular point? If one listens to what the Scriptures have to say he soon will discover that the people of the OT believed that God guided them in a miraculous and supernatural way. They believed that the great figures who shaped their heritage--Abraham, Moses, and the prophets--acted and spoke under the Spirit. Abraham was God's friend (see Is 41:8); God appeared to him at Mamre (see Gn 18:1). Moses received the revelation of God's name (see Ex 3:1-15), and God spoke to him face to face (see Num 12:4-8). The Spirit of the Lord came upon His prophet (see Is 61:1) and His word was upon His servant's tongue (see 2 Sa 23:2). Surely, adds Amos, the Lord "does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7, RSV). God's Spirit moved men to speak, not necessarily to write, though we must recognize that very early in Israel's life much must have been written (see Ex 17:14; Jos 1:6-8; 24:26). No wonder Judaism came to believe that the books of the OT were from God, inspired by His Spirit.

This belief also became part of the Christian faith, as indicated by the NT, which continually cites the OT and affirms its divine origin. "It is written" is a typical way in which Jesus referred to the OT (see Mt 4:4, 7, 10; 11:10; 26:24), as do Paul (e.g. Rom 9:13) and Peter (1 Pe 1:16). It was really God who spoke through David (see Acts 4:25), and "the Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet . . ." (Acts 28:25, RSV). The text of the Scriptures was so habitually

identified with the utterances of God that it had become natural sometimes to interchange the terms God and Scripture: "And the scripture . . . preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham . . ." (Gal 3:8, RSV; cf. Gn 12:3); "as God said . . ." (2 Cor 6:16, RSV; cf. Ex 25:8; see Heb 1:5-7; cf. Ps 2:7, 2 Sa 7:14). So long as the words are in the OT they are attributed to God, the Holy Spirit, or Scripture without distinction. Peter sums it up by declaring that "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pe 1:21, RSV), Paul asserts that "all scripture is inspired by God" (2 Ti 3:16, RSV). These "oracles of God" (Rom 3:2) call for man's response, that is to say, faith. For if God speaks man listens.

Non-Christians certainly may choose to hold that the experience the biblical writers had was falsely interpreted by them, that some other interpretation is more plausible. But at least this was how the experience appeared to the men who underwent it, and who, after all, were in a much better position to estimate its significance than those who never had it.

#### By Way of Conclusion

The Bible is a book, a document. This book is the Word of God because men spoke and wrote from an impulse that came from God. Does that fact indicate that in our attempt to understand and to interpret it no human method of studying documents is relevant to it? Not in the least.

God is the author of the Bible, but in terms of its composition it is a collection of human writings. It actually was written by men not suspended between heaven and earth but firmly established on this earth, men of a definite race, born on a definite date, following a definite occupation. The Bible is involved in the flux of human events. It is part of history. It also has its geography. This being so, there is in the Bible--considered as a human document--an area in which philologists, historians, and archeologists, for instance, may freely practise their competencies. For a personal study of these matters we need methods and guidelines, a hermeneutic that will help us toward a correct understanding of the biblical text.

But we need more than that. It is always possible to treat the Scriptures as an ordinary document and to regard the history of Israel as a history like any other. In one sense this is legitimate, and in this way we can obtain real knowledge about Israel, valid at its own level and in its own order. But both that level and order are inadequate to explain what God really effected in Israel and expressed in the Bible.

There is another approach, proceeding from our inner resources, that might be summed up as "seeking God"--if it were not for the fact that *He* sought us first. We need divine illumination, the interior grace that moves man to give his free assent to the external Word that confronts him. A grace that invites belief, moves to faith, and makes us eager to find God, to obey Him and to be faithful to Him. This is a light not from below but from above, which enables us to read the Bible with fresh and ever deeper understanding, precisely because it has been received as the revealed and inspired Word.

When we approach the Bible in this way, with the inner resources of a profound Christian awareness, its text seems to be lighted from within. The Word of God no longer confronts me as external to myself, as an object to be analyzed and dissected. It is a living arrow that pierces my heart, a sharp sword that penetrates to the joints and the marrow (see Heb 4:12). The Word of God ceases to be an object, a thing. I see it as something alive. In and through the Word, God addresses me personally, not simply as an echo of the past but as a Word speaking now. I find words in the Bible I no longer simply read but that speak to me, introducing me to the crucial drama of life, the conflict between truth and falsehood, life and death, and communicate the message that God redeems those who trust in His mercy.

These two levels in the reading of the Bible are not contradictory. The ideal would be to assemble into a unity our knowledge of the biblical environment, a good translation, an explanation of the literary forms and human contexts in which the books were written, and ensure reverential and receptive reading. And, if possible, to check one stage by another.

From what we have seen it can be said that in the proper Christian sense of the term revelation is the decisive and first event of Christianity. In biblical interpretation anything depends on revelation, and everything goes back to it. At the same time, the meaning of inspiration for me is that I recognize that God's revealed message has been sent to the world with my name and address on it. It all means that God's Word claims me, my faith, my trust, and my obedience. In the midst of the many voices that solicit my allegiance today, such an understanding of revelation and inspiration can but have a determining influence on my biblical hermeneutic, on the basic principles I shall follow in interpreting and rediscovering the Word of God.

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## P A R T I I

### HISTORY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

#### 2. Jewish Interpretation in the Apostolic Age

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All people who believe that the Bible is God's Word and a norm according to which they must regulate their lives are forced to interpret its teachings, precepts, and laws. We need interpretation because the books of the Bible were written many centuries ago by and for people who lived in cultural and environmental situations and spoke languages different from ours. Although the Jews of the apostolic age lived much closer in time to the writers of the OT than we do, their circumstances differed sufficiently from those existing several centuries earlier that they needed to interpret the OT precepts and teachings in a manner relevant to their time and situation. This was not done uniformly by all classes of Jews because of the variety of their educational and cultural backgrounds, surroundings, and outlooks. Jews living in the Hellenistic world outside Palestine interpreted the Scriptures differently from the way those who lived in their homeland did; and Jews who belonged to strict sects such as the Pharisees or Essenes regarded their Scriptures differently from the way their more liberal compatriots regarded them, of whom the Sadducees are good examples.

#### The Sources

We are well acquainted with the methods of interpretation as practised by orthodox Jews, mainly the Pharisees. Their written interpretation of the Pentateuch has survived in the Talmud. Some

parts of the Talmud can be traced back to the 2d century B.C. They were handed down orally and augmented from generation to generation as the needs arose until the end of the 2d century A.D., when Johanan Ha-Nasi wrote them down. This monumental work, consisting of sixty-three tracts, became known as the Mishnah, or Second Law. In the course of time the Mishnah itself became the subject of a written interpretation, the Gemara, and these two works combined are generally known as the Talmud. The Talmud, next to the OT, has formed the authoritative rule of life for all orthodox Jews to the present day. On the other hand, any works of an interpretative nature produced by liberal-minded Jews of apostolic times, such as the Sadducees, are lost. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the cessation of priestly functions caused the Sadducees, who were largely Temple personnel, to lose their influence, identity, even their existence, and whatever literary works they may have produced.

Of the religious works of Jews living in the diaspora, the works of Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.-A.D. 50) have survived as examples of their interpretation of Scripture. They give us an excellent insight into the methods of biblical interpretation employed by Jews who lived far from their homeland. These writings show how strongly their interpretation of Scripture was influenced by the allegorizational and philosophical methods employed in the Hellenistic world.

Thanks to the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls at Qumran, we have some religious works, including commentaries of biblical books, from the Essenes of Christ's day. The Qumran scrolls are the remains of the literature of a strict monastic Jewish sect that used the Scriptures as a basis of and justification for its existence and its teachings, rules, and expectations.

#### Interpretation of Scripture by Orthodox Jews

During the age when the NT came into being the Jewish tradition, concerned chiefly with exegesis of the Scriptures, flourished in an oral manner. It used the biblical text to find inspiration and direction for daily applications. The Jewish rabbis distinguished between *peshaṭ*, the "clear" (literally, naked or undressed), unambiguous meaning of a Bible passage, which needed no interpretation, and the *derush*, the "searched" meaning of a scriptural passage. From this word was obtained the noun *midrash*, "exegesis." The exegesis dealing with historical or dogmatic subjects was called haggadic Midrash--*haggadah* meaning "expression"--indicating that this sort of exegesis made a biblical passage more understandable. Here theological and inspirational thoughts are of primary

importance, and they are often conveyed by the use of imaginative stories and legends. On the other hand, exegesis dealing with legal matters was called halakic Midrash, since *halakah* has the meaning "advance." Thus the halakic Midrash provides advanced, or up-to-date, legal information based on the biblical laws.

Before looking further into Jewish interpretation it should be pointed out that a certain amount of scriptural information does not need any learned interpretation and can be applied as given. This fact was recognized by the rabbis and was stressed in their writings (Chullin 6a). On the other hand, there were many situations in life that were not covered by clear biblical statements. Hence rules of interpretation were needed to find scriptural guidance for all kinds of situations in life as well as support for popular ideas and teachings.

In many cases interpretative conclusions were drawn from texts that went far beyond the actual scriptural statements. An example is Gn 26:5, which simply states that Abraham "obeyed my [God's] voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." The official Jewish interpretation of this passage was that Abraham had known and kept the law of God in its totality as the Jews knew it in the days of Christ. This meant that he was acquainted with all regulations regarding ceremonies of cult, sacrifices, washings, and civil and moral issues, whether or not they were contained in the Decalogue, in the other laws of Moses, or even in the oral law, which the NT calls "Tradition" (Qiddushim IV.14).

In some cases an allegorizing interpretation was given to scriptural passages if they contained expressions that were considered to be either offensive or trivial. The Mosaic law, for example, permitted an officer to excuse a man from serving in the armed forces if he was "fearful and fainthearted" (Dt 20:8), so that he would not undermine the martial spirit of his comrades. The Jewish political and religious leaders of the Maccabean and later ages evidently found this regulation unacceptable, and thus interpreted it to apply only to men who feared death because of certain grave sins they had committed and for which they had not yet found forgiveness (Soṭa VIII.5).

Sometimes a play on words was applied to texts, resulting in a more colorful meaning than was obvious in the original. In this way the passage of 1 Sa 2:2, "[there is no] rock like our God," was interpreted to mean that there was no "fashioner" (or "creator") like the God of the Jews, for the Hebrew word *šur*, "rock," sounded similar to the word *šayyar*, which has the meaning "fashioner," etc. (Mêkhilta on Ex 15:11).

How far from literal interpretation the Jews went in their search for proof texts to support certain beliefs shows in their use of Amos 9:6, where the statement is made that God "builds his upper chambers in the heavens, and founds his vault upon the earth" (RSV). Because it was held that God's presence is always accompanied by His *Shekinah*, a Jewish term meaning "divine glory," the *Shekinah* was said to be present wherever three men sit together studying the Torah. The number three in this interpretation is obtained from the number of consonants that make up the Hebrew word *earth*, "*'ereṣ*" (Aboth III.2).

The later Jewish writings attributed to Hillel, the great sage and Pharisee of Christ's time (died ca. A.D. 9), outlined seven hermeneutic rules, which will be explained by examples so that one can see how the Scriptures were understood and taught by orthodox Jews in the apostolic and succeeding ages. Later, in the early second century A.D., Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha increased Hillel's seven rules to 13. They were applied by orthodox Jews throughout their later history. Although it is not absolutely certain that all seven rules of interpretation attributed to Hillel were actually promulgated by that famous rabbi and thus applied in the time of Christ's ministry, some of them can be traced to that time. We will list them here with some examples of application to show the reasoning of Jewish religious thinking in Christ's time.

1. Inference From Lighter to Heavier Meaning (*qal waḥomer*).

This means that any rule applicable to an item of inferior quality must be applied much more strictly to a superior item. To give an example: Because the weekly Sabbath was considered to be more important than other festival days, a restriction made with regard to an annual festival was considered to be much more applicable to the Sabbath (Baba Kamma II.5).

This rule was even further extended, as the following example shows: Ex 23:19 forbids boiling a kid in its mother's milk. But this prohibition was enlarged to apply to the boiling of any kind of meat in any kind of milk, and finally came to mean that the combined use of any meat and milk products during any meal was counter to the law (Chullin 115b). This regulation is the well-known basis for one of the *kosher* laws of orthodox Jews.

2. Analogy of Expressions (*gezîrah shawah*). This expression was used to indicate that a certain ambiguous passage of Scripture can be explained by another passage in which the same expression occurs in a clearly understood way. Lev 16:29, for example, requiring that Jews "afflict [*'anah*] your souls" on the Day of Atonement, does not define the nature of their affliction. However, in Dt 8:3 the verb *'anah* ("to suffer, afflict") is used in connection

with hunger, for which reason the rabbis interpreted Lev 16:29 to mean that the Jews had to abstain from food on the Day of Atonement.

Another somewhat ambiguous passage is Ex 21:2, where the expression 'ebed 'ibri can be rendered "Hebrew slave" (RSV), meaning either that the slave was a Hebrew or "the slave of a Hebrew man," not indicating the nationality of the slave. On the other hand, the parallel passage of Dt 15:12 is clear in this respect by calling the slave your Hebrew brother. Hence, the first-mentioned translation of Ex 21:2, "Hebrew slave," must be applied, according to the rabbis.

3. Application by Analogy With One Provision (*binyan 'ab maktōb 'ehad*). According to this rule, texts were applied to cases that were not expressly mentioned in the texts, although they dealt with situations of a similar nature. The result was that in some cases where this interpretation was applied the text was used as basis for reasoning not mentioned in the text. For example, in Dt 19, among other things, regulations are given with regard to a man who accidentally killed his fellow worker in a forest while both were engaged in cutting down trees. The killer was consequently allowed to flee to a City of Refuge, where he could not be apprehended by the avenger of the dead man, if it was proven that he had not intentionally killed his friend.

The rabbis explained that this judgment can be similarly applied to any accidental death resulting when two men were building a wall or doing other work in a public place (as the forest mentioned in the text was public domain). This, then, means also by analogy, according to the rabbis, that an accidental death occurring on the killer's private property is not punishable, because the dead person presumably had no business being on that property when his accidental death occurred (Maccoth II.3).

4. Application by Analogy With Two Provisions (*binyan 'ab mishnê ketûbîm*). This rule of exegesis is closely related to the previous rule except that the analogy is strengthened by some kind of near repetition. Ex 21:26, 27, for example, provides that a servant would gain his freedom if his master had destroyed one of his eyes or one of his teeth. In this case two provisions are made--one concerning the eye and another concerning the tooth. Although they are different in use, both eye and tooth are essential parts of the body that cannot be replaced if destroyed. The rule therefore was extended to all other parts of the body, thus explaining the force of the text as saying that if a man mutilates or destroys any member of his servant's body he must set him free as a consequence of that brutal treatment (Kiddushim 24a).

5. The Effect of General and Particular Terms (*kalal weperet*).

This rule was actually used in two different ways, depending on whether a general term was followed by a specific designation, or whether a specific designation was followed by a general term. Two examples will make clear how the rabbis applied this rule.

(a) Dt 22:11 (RSV) decrees that mingled stuff, namely wool and linen, should not be worn together. The general term "mingled stuff" was followed by the specific explanatory statement "wool and linen." This statement meant that it was this particular combination that was prohibited. The explanatory statement therefore was considered to restrict the general term "mingled stuff" to only this specific mixture, and that any other combinations of fabric would be permissible (Khilayim X.1).

(b) On the other hand, when specific terms were followed by a general term, the opposite rule of interpretation had to be given. An example is Ex 22:9, which states that if a man lends another man an ox, ass, sheep, garment, or any other thing, and the loaned thing is lost, double restitution must be made. Here the generalizing term "any manner of lost thing" shows that ox, ass, sheep, and garment are to be taken only as examples and that therefore any borrowed thing, living or dead, if lost, must be refunded in double value (Mêkhilta on Ex 22:9).

6. Analogy Made From Another Passage (*kayōṣe' bō mimeqōm 'aḥar*). This rule was similar to that of No. 2, already explained, as the following example will illustrate. The law provided that the Jews had to keep the Passover "at its appointed time" (Num 9:2, RSV). Hillel was asked whether this meant that the Passover lamb had to be killed even on a Sabbath if the 14th of Nisan, the Passover eve, fell on a Sabbath day. He replied that the law expressly decreed that the "daily" sacrifices had to be offered also on the Sabbath (Num 28:10). Consequently, the expression "at its appointed time" means, by analogy, that the Passover lamb had to be slain on the 14th of Nisan, whether that day fell on a Sabbath day or on any other day of the week.

7. The Explanation Obtained From the Context (*tabar hiḥmad me'anīnō*). This rule decreed that a passage should not be interpreted as an isolated statement, but only in the light of its context. For example, the statement of Ex 16:29, "let no man go out of his place on the seventh day," taken out of its context could be interpreted to mean that no man was allowed to leave his home for any reason whatsoever on the Sabbath. However, a reading of the preceding and following passages clearly shows that this prohibition applied to those gathering manna in the wilderness, saying that the Israelites should not go out on the Sabbath day to



look for manna, which they would not find anyway on that day (Erubin 51a).

### Philo's Interpretation of the Scriptures

The Jewish rabbis in Palestine actively resisted the philosophical and cultural influences of the Hellenistic world and did everything in their power to shield their people from these influences. But the diaspora Jews, especially those living in cities that were centers of intellectual Hellenistic life, such as Alexandria, were strongly influenced by Greek philosophy, especially Stoicism and allegory. This is already noticeable in the Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint, produced in the third and second centuries B.C., which carefully tried to change gross anthropomorphic or anthropopathic statements about God into a language more acceptable to intellectuals influenced by Greek reasoning and thinking. For example, the statement made by God according to Gn 6:7, "It repenteth me that I have made them," is translated in the Septuagint, "I am angry that I have made them." According to the Greek thinking, gods could not be visualized as regretting their acts but could be angry about their products.

The Greek philosophers used allegory to justify deeper and hidden meanings in the rather blunt and often bawdy stories about their gods that revealed human character traits, weaknesses, and passions. In some apocryphal and pseudepigraphic Jewish works these allegorizing methods of the Greeks are applied--mostly, however, in a rather timid and careful way--so that orthodox Jews would not be offended.

However, Philo of Alexandria, a prolific Jewish writer and exegete, used allegory with great force. Many of his commentaries on biblical books have survived, and they provide a clear picture of his methods of interpretation in which allegory played a major role. The title of his commentary on the Pentateuch, "Allegorical Exposition of the Holy Book of the Law," speaks for itself. Here Philo explains that the trees of knowledge and life in paradise had not really existed but were rather symbols, just as the serpent who seduced Eve to sin was actually a symbol of lust (Leg. alleg. III.21). Philo stated that whenever a text presented difficulties, made no sense, contained contradictions, or was unworthy of Scripture, the literal meaning should be given up in favor of an allegorical interpretation. He called this type of interpretation the "laws of allegory" (On Abraham, 68). Philo also rejected any idea of visualizing God in human form because doing so would lead to the conclusion that God was also subject to human passions--a monstrous idea (On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain, 95).

The result of this sort of interpretation was that very little of the biblical stories was retained as fact in Philo's commentaries. Everything was spiritualized and allegorized in a philosophical language appealing to the educated intellectuals of the Hellenistic world. Philo more than any other non-Christian writer influenced the Greek-speaking church fathers for centuries. It took the church a long time to rid itself of the allegorical interpretation of Scripture inherited from Philo.

### The Qumran Sectarian Interpretation of Scripture

Through the discoveries of the Qumran scrolls and the excavation of the remains of the community center at Khirbet Qumran we have gained a rather good insight of a strict monastic Jewish sect of Christ's time. It is now almost universally admitted that this sect was the Essenes, described or referred to by Josephus, Philo, Strabo, and other ancient writers. We learn that these people were avid students of the Bible, of which many copies have come to light--although most of them in fragments--in the caves around Qumran. Furthermore, a large number of extrabiblical books, mostly religious in nature, were found in the Qumran area. Several of these are commentaries on biblical books, mainly on those of a prophetic nature. Among them the commentary on Habakkuk from Cave 1 is the best preserved, but also fragmentary copies of commentaries on Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and the Psalms from Caves 1 and 4 have thus far been published.

These commentaries clearly reveal that the Essenes were an eschatological sect, convinced they were living in the last days of this world's history, with the expected Messianic age just around the corner. All predictive prophecies were applied to situations of their time, some referring to the general political conditions, others to the history of the sect.

The commentaries usually quote a brief passage of one to three verses of the biblical text, called the *dabar*, "word," which is followed by the phrase "Its *pesher* is" (*pesher* meaning "interpretation"). For this reason some scholars have suggested that the term *Midrash pesher* should be used for this sort of eschatological Jewish interpretation; although the majority of scholars simply call it *Pesher*. Even though it is difficult to recognize any hermeneutical rules in the interpretation of Scripture in the Qumran literature, some scholars have attempted to list recognizable rules of interpretation used by the Essenes.

The following examples are typical of interpretations used by the Essenes: the "righteous" of Hab 1:4 is the "Teacher of Right-

eousness," the founder of the sect, whose name is nowhere recorded in Qumran literature. His authoritative teachings are reflected in all the nonbiblical writings found at Qumran. He was persecuted, perhaps even killed, by the "Wicked Priest" or "Man of Lies" --probably one person. This explanation is also recognized in the sect's interpretation of Hab 1:4, which says that "the wicked surround the righteous" (RSV). The Chaldeans of Hab 1:6 are the Romans, who appear under the name Kittim in the sect's literature. The lion and his whelps of Nah 2:12 are interpreted to be a Demetrius and an Antiochus of the Seleucid rulers who lived in the Maccabean period, as well as their successors down to the appearance of the rulers of the Kittim (the Romans).

On the other hand, some interpretations of the Qumran sectarians have been helpful toward a better understanding of certain biblical passages, although the total theological harvest in this respect has been rather meager. One beautiful expansion of a scriptural passage is the Aaronitic blessing of Num 6:24-26, used by the Essenes in their meetings, as recorded in their Manual of Discipline. In the following translation the Essene additions are in italic:

May he bless you *with every good,*  
 and keep you *from all evil,*  
 and may he shine [into] *your heart with wisdom of life,*  
 and be gracious to you *with eternal knowledge,*  
 and may he lift up his *merciful* face upon you,  
 for *eternal* peace (Manual of Discipline, II.2-4).

### Conclusion

A study of the voluminous ancient Jewish religious literature shows that, just like modern Christians, the Jews of the apostolic age wrestled with problems of interpreting their sacred writings. This was not done in a uniform way, as the foregoing pages and examples show. From these examples one can clearly see that some of the hermeneutic principles employed by the Jewish teachers of the apostolic age were sound and valid. They can still be applied to enhance our correct understanding of the Scriptures and to make their teachings relevant for the situation in the twentieth century. On the other hand, the Jewish writings also reveal that the rabbis frequently employed farfetched interpretations and made the Scriptures say things they hardly implied, much less said, in order to make them practical to first-century Judaism.

Thus the orthodox Pharisees manipulated the texts in order to obtain a scriptural basis for their teachings dealing with every

detail of daily life and thought. The Jews in the Hellenistic world, on the other hand, allegorized the Bible to make it palatable to the Greek mind, whereas the eschatologically oriented monastic Essenes read into the texts things they desired to find there. To one trained to apply sound principles of scriptural hermeneutics, the resultant interpretations often seem absurd. Whether they originate with the ancient orthodox rabbis of Palestine, the intellectual Hellenists of Alexandria, or the monks of Qumran, many of these interpretations cannot be accepted by modern students of the Bible.

It is in the light of these frequent ancient Jewish misinterpretations of the Bible that we can understand that Jesus said to the Pharisees, "For the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God" (Mt 15:6, RSV), and to the Sadducees, "You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (Mt 22:29, RSV).

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*[For biographical sketch of Dr. Kenneth A. Strand, please see p. 88.]*

3. Interpretation of the Bible in the  
Early and Medieval Church

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Biblical interpretation among the early church fathers tended to follow the lines indicated in the NT use of the OT and to utilize some of the contemporary Jewish rabbinic modes of dealing with the Bible text. Certain of these church fathers leaned toward the Philonic allegorization mentioned in the immediately preceding chapter. During the Middle Ages there was a heightening of the tendency to allegorize. However, there was also somewhat of a return toward literal interpretation, which kind of interpretation finally found a more complete revival in the work of the major Protestant Reformers.

In this short chapter it is impossible to give more than the briefest survey of Scripture interpretation during the early-church and medieval periods. Therefore, rather than trying to be comprehensive we simply will look at a few individuals or groups as representing some of the prominent tendencies.

Early-Church Use of Scripture  
for Purposes of Exemplification

A good deal of scriptural quotation or allusion to Scripture in the early-church period--particularly in letters, sermons, and treatises intended for Christian readers--utilizes the Scripture texts or passages as illustrations of what Christians should be or do in the particular circumstances before them. This use of Scripture is evident, for example, in epistolary materials from some of the earliest fathers, such as Clement of Rome.

Clement wrote to the Corinthian church possibly as early as A.D. 95 exhorting it to unity in view of its schismatic tendencies. In his letter he uses OT Scripture freely to illustrate such matters as the evil of jealousy; the value of repentance; and the need for

humility, unity, orderliness, and respect for regularly constituted authority. As an example of humility he refers to David and quotes the first seventeen verses of Ps 51, and as an illustration of how sedition regarding the priestly office was averted in ancient Israel he calls attention to the experience recorded in Numbers 17 about Aaron's rod that budded. He alludes to NT writings as authoritative too, even though at this early time the NT canon had not yet been declared. There are a number of reflections from various of the Gospels and epistles, and special mention is made of "the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul," in which "under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you." (For the above illustrations see chaps. 18, 43, and 47 of Clement's epistle. Most translations herein are from *Ante-Nicene* and *Nicene-Post-Nicene Fathers*.)

Clement represents the way in which the earliest Christian writers used Scripture for hortatory purposes, namely, to draw illustrations for application to the practical matters at hand. Not only in letters but also frequently in homilies and in doctrinal, disciplinary, and polemical treatises a like use of Scripture occurs.

#### Use of Pagan Sources in Apologies and in Other Early Christian Literature

A type of early-church literature that sometimes may be puzzling because of its references to pagan writers is the apologetical works of the 2d and 3d centuries. Among the more important of various apologists are Justin Martyr, whose extant writings are dated to about the middle of the 2d century; and Tertullian of Carthage, who wrote his famous *Apology* about A.D. 197. Indeed, Tertullian was a prolific writer, producing a number of polemical, doctrinal, and practical treatises as well.

Tertullian's *Apology* illustrates the manner in which Christian apologists endeavored to defend Christianity against its heathen persecutors by repudiating false charges, asserting the superiority of Christian literature over pagan literature, and explaining Christian belief and practice to those not familiar with the true nature of Christianity. Frequently non-Christian writings are mentioned for no other reason than to prove them inferior to the sacred Scriptures of the Christians.

There are examples of the use of such writings to explicate Christian doctrine. Tertullian when explaining Christ's spiritual nature refers (chap. 21) to the Stoic philosopher Zeno's teaching



about the *logos* and also to Cleanthes' ascription of Creation to an all-pervasive spiritual essence. Such use of pagan sources represents communicative concern rather than adoption of Greek thought. Indeed, Tertullian utilizes concepts from Greek philosophical thought, too, in such a polemical work as *Against Praxeas*, again from the standpoint of their being a communicative vehicle.

It should be noted that inasmuch as apologists were addressing pagans they naturally incorporated language and concepts familiar to the intended readers. This represents a hermeneutical consideration of first rank akin to that faced by modern-day missionaries who carry the message of the Bible to peoples whose backgrounds are quite alien to the Christian tradition.

For present-day missionaries, terminological problems may be severe; for how can one make meaningful the term "Lamb of God" to people who have never seen sheep and lambs, or "whiter than snow" to persons who have never seen snow?

The communication problem of the early apologists was not entirely dissimilar. Although it is true that some of these writers had absorbed certain Greek notions (including immortality of the soul), most frequently their mode of expression was simply the result of an honest effort to put the Bible message and an explanation of Christian practice into terms heathen addressees could understand.

#### Tertullian's Use of a Christian Extrabiblical Source

Tertullian in some of his writings illustrates an interesting use of a Christian extrabiblical source. This church father first became converted to the Catholic mainstream branch of Christianity late in the 2d century, but during the first decade of the 3d century moved his allegiance to a stricter wing, called Montanism. This wing was considered by many as some sort of offshoot of the universal church. The group originated about the middle of the 2d century in Phrygia in Asia Minor, where the "prophet" Montanus and the "prophetesses" Priscilla and Maximilla had had visions they considered to be manifestations of the era of the Holy Spirit (their own time) in contrast to earlier periods of supposed lesser light--the era of the Father (the OT period), and the era of the Son (the NT period). Tertullian as a Montanist accepts the new revelations (or new prophecy, as he calls it) as authoritative. In his treatise *On the Veiling of Virgins* he utilizes it as a solid basis for belief in addition to Scripture.

Indeed, the Montanist revelations also had their effect on his understanding of the biblical text itself, as may be noted in regard to his interpretation of the descent of the holy city New Jerusalem (in *Against Marcion*, Book III, chap. 25). Among the Montanist "revelations" was one claiming that the New Jerusalem would *very soon* descend in Phrygia. Although Tertullian shifts the scene of its descent to Palestine, he places that descent at the beginning of the millennium instead of at the end of the 1,000 years, as would be indicated by a literal understanding of the 20th and 21st chapters of Revelation. The influence of the Montanist extrabiblical source in modifying the interpretation of the biblical text is evident here.

#### The Use of Allegorization in the Early Church

Generally, the various early church fathers had at least a tendency toward allegorization of Bible references. One may take as an example Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was a disciple of the apostle John. In his famous *Against Heresies*, written about A.D. 185, he referred (Book V, chap. 8, sec. 4) to the OT description of clean and unclean animals as figuratively delineating classes of mankind: Those animals that "have a double hoof and ruminant [chew the cud]" are clean. They represent the true Christians, "who make their way by faith steadily towards the Father and the Son" as "denoted by the steadiness of those which divide the hoof," and who meditate "day and night upon the words of God" as indicated by chewing the cud. The "unclean" fall into three classes: (1) the Gentiles, who "neither divide the hoof nor ruminant" ("those persons who have neither faith in God, nor do meditate on His words"); (2) the Jews, "represented by the animals that chew the cud but lack the double hoof"; and (3) heretics, indicated by the animals that have split hooves but do not chew the cud.

A more pervasive form of allegorization than that of Irenaeus had appeared in the Epistle of Barnabas (written as early as about A.D. 130, probably from Alexandria). This Barnabas, now generally recognized by scholars as *not* the companion of the apostle Paul, seems to have endeavored to heighten a tendency toward allegorization, noticeable in Gal 4:22-31, where the apostle uses Sarah and Hagar and Isaac and Ishmael as representatives of old-covenant and new-covenant concepts. This sort of illustration (it is referred to as "allegory" in Gal 4:24) does not deny the reality of the original experiences to which reference is made but, rather, draws a relevant Christian lesson from them.

Barnabas' departure from Paul's methodology in this respect

is twofold: (1) Barnabas allegorizes profusely; and (2) his kind of allegorization is such as often to deny or at least minimize the original intent of the OT Scriptures. We may notice his reference (chap. 10 of his book) to what he calls three doctrines in Moses' mind when Moses spoke of unclean animals: (1) The prohibition of swine's flesh means that God's children should refrain from the company of "men who resemble swine" (who in time of pleasure forget their Lord, but in time of want acknowledge Him); (2) the mention of certain birds of prey signifies the need to avoid association with persons who "know not how to procure food for themselves by labour and sweat, but seize on that of others"; (3) the command not to eat "the lamprey, or the polypus, or the cuttlefish" means that one should not join himself "or be like to such men as are ungodly to the end, and are condemned to death," just as those fishes "make their abode in the mud which lies at the bottom" of the sea.

Barnabas thinks that although the Israelite people in general understood Moses' statements as referring only to literal meats, David in the first Psalm grasped the real meaning of the "three doctrines": "'Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly,' even as the fishes [referred to] go in darkness to the depths [of the sea]; 'and hath not stood in the way of sinners,' even as those who profess to fear the Lord, but go astray like swine; 'and hath not sat in the seat of scorers,' even as those birds that lie in wait for prey."

It would appear that Barnabas had a high regard for Scripture in view of the extent to which he uses it throughout his epistle. However, the way he treats the OT in an effort to give it Christian meaning leaves little doubt that he is on a dangerous hermeneutical track. With his kind of exegesis and interpretation each exegete or interpreter can become virtually a law to himself.

#### Origen's Threefold Interpretation

The Epistle of Barnabas is the earliest extant Christian witness for a tendency particularly prevalent in Alexandria that crops up again in the writings of later church fathers from there, such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the late 2d century and first part of the 3d century.

The latter, who for some years succeeded Clement as head of the catechetical school in that city, can be considered to represent the pinnacle of allegorical-type interpretation in the early church. This church father concluded that Scripture has a threefold meaning comparable to body, soul, and spirit in the human

being. Imbued with Platonic or Neo-Platonic concepts, he viewed matter negatively.

Likewise, for his Scripture interpretation he placed the least significance on the corporeal ("literal" or "material") meaning, attributing increasing value to the "soulish" ("psychical") and especially "spiritual" meanings. He did not reject the idea that the literal, or corporeal, is present in much of Scripture and that it has a certain degree of value, but he concluded that the "spiritual" significance is the most important and that Scripture sometimes includes "material" or "literal" falsehood in an effort to provide "spiritual" truth.

In Book IV, chapter 1, of his *On First Principles*, where he treats the subject in detail, he says, for example, that "the principal aim being to announce the 'spiritual' connection in those things that are done, and that ought to be done, where the Word found that things done according to the history could be adapted to these mystical senses, He made use of them." On the other hand, where "in the narrative of the development of super-sensual things, there did not follow the performance of those certain events," the Scriptures incorporated in the account "some event that did not take place; sometimes what could not have happened; sometimes what could, but did not."

As an illustration of Origen's "spiritual" interpretation, one may note his reference (in *Series of Commentaries on Matthew*, chapter 50) to the "second advent" of the Word as a "daily" experience in "the prophetic clouds"--in "the writings of the prophets and apostles," which reveal Christ.

Origen obviously represents a heightened and more sophisticated form of the tendencies already apparent in Barnabas. Origen, moreover, incorporates Greek concepts into his theology as an integral part of that theology rather than as simply the sort of communicative tools noticeable in the writings of other Christian apologists. He thinks, for example, of universal salvation and a form of metempsychosis (transmigration of souls) akin to Platonic philosophy. He also holds Greek notions regarding the relationship of form and matter.

Origen's exegetical method and interpretational results were far from universally accepted in the early church. Nevertheless, touches of his influence lingered on; and his threefold interpretation was later expanded into a fourfold one that became standard during the Middle Ages. This kind of interpretation, which will be treated in more detail later, conceived of Scripture as embracing "literal," "allegorical," "tropological," and "anagogical"

meanings. It was a method even Martin Luther used in his early theological lectures at the University of Wittenberg, but from which the Reformer soon broke away in favor of a grammatical-historical approach.

### The Role of Augustine

The early-church father who undoubtedly had the greatest influence in molding both doctrine and hermeneutic for the entire medieval period was Augustine of Hippo (d. A.D. 430). Although his system of allegorizing was not precisely like that of Origen, similarities may be noted. Like Origen he imbibed Neo-Platonic concepts that led him toward his allegorical interpretation and influenced some of his doctrinal positions.

Illustrations of the way in which he allegorized Scripture appear in Book XX of his *City of God*, where he propounds the "amillennial" view, which became standard Christian interpretation of Rev 20 for many centuries. In his opinion, the "thousand years" could be understood in two ways: either "the sixth thousand of years" of earth's history, or "the whole duration of this world." Thus, the "1000 years" of Rev 20 are considered as applying either to a part or to the whole of *this present earth's history*, not to a future millennial age.

Two illustrations of Augustine's mode of interpreting some of the specifics of Rev 20 must suffice here: The "bottomless pit" or "abyss" into which Satan was thrown represents "the countless multitude of the wicked whose hearts are unfathomably deep in malignity against the church of God; not that the devil was not there before, but he is said to be cast in thither, because, when prevented from harming believers, he takes more complete possession of the ungodly." The "fire out of heaven" that devours the wicked, he says, "is well understood of the firmness of the saints, wherewith they refuse to yield obedience to those who rage against them"; by God's grace "the saints become unconquerable, and so torment their enemies."

Augustine was not always consistent in his Scripture interpretation. He had once been a premillenarian, but apparently his distaste for the grossly materialistic earthly millennium propounded by the chiliasts (or premillenarians of his day) led him toward his amillennialist position. Among various factors influencing his hermeneutic was his changing attitude in view of what he deemed to be the needs of the times. One may note, for example, his early attitude of seeking to win Donatists to the orthodox church by "discussion, reasoning, and persuasion," in contrast to

his later attitude of compelling them by force, for which (as noted in his epistle 93) he thought he had Scriptural support in the words "compel them to come in" (Lk 14:23).

### Synopsis of Early-Church Developments

The patristic writers often used hermeneutical principles in which great dangers inhered, but what has been said above should not be taken to mean that all treatment of Scripture during the early-church period was basically unsound. As has already been noted, a good deal of the use of Scripture by church fathers in addressing Christian readers was for the purpose of providing practical example. Also, the apologetical works utilized the sound principle of making the Bible message and Christian practice understandable to non-Christians. Works of the kinds just mentioned, plus various polemical writings, frequently reveal an extensive use of Bible texts accompanied by analysis and exegesis well thought out and solid.

One may think, for example, of Irenaeus, to whom reference has already been made in illustrating an allegorizing tendency quite generally prevalent among the church fathers. But certainly he is to be remembered, too, in his significant role as a champion of the cause of Christianity against various Gnostic heresies that were endeavoring to split the church apart. In refuting the Gnostic claim that the Saviour, who descended from heaven, did not have a real body, Irenaeus used such texts as Mt 1:18 and Jn 1:13, 14, plus several passages from Paul's epistles, to show that a "Divine Christ" was not a distinct entity from a "human Jesus," as Gnostics would claim; but rather that the "Son of God was born of a virgin, and that He Himself was Christ the Saviour whom the prophets had foretold."--*Against Heresies*, Book III, chap. 16.

We may think also of Tertullian, who championed the cause of Christianity against Gnostic heresies and against Marcion. Moreover, in his *Against Praxeas* he dealt with a Monarchian view that had taken hold of part of the church itself; namely, that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit represent simply one divine Person who manifested Himself in different ways at different times. To this, Tertullian aptly responded with various passages of Scripture, asking, for example, the question as to whether if this were really so, to whom did Christ pray when He said, "Our Father which is in heaven"?

Finally, in closing this section, we may again mention Augustine, who although he provided medieval interpreters with a hermeneutic of somewhat allegorical nature, also gave a good deal of

sound interpretation in various of his works. His treatment of the relationship of grace and law in his treatise *On Spirit and Letter* is beautiful, and was influential on Martin Luther at a crucial point in the Reformer's career. For purposes of illustration we note one conclusion therein, relating to Rom 3:24. "It is not, therefore, by the law nor is it by their own will," that men are justified. Rather, justification comes freely by God's grace, "not that it is wrought without our will; but our will is by the law shown to be weak, that grace may heal its infirmity; and that our healed will may fulfill the law, not by compact under the law, nor yet in the absence of law" (chap. 15).

### The Place of the Bible in the Middle Ages

The Bible was the most studied book in the Middle Ages, and Bible study represented the highest branch of learning. Yet in the opinion of one scholar, there is not much in medieval interpretation that is strikingly novel (see Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, p. 245).

So in approaching the subject of medieval exegesis it is our desire to highlight the salient principles of interpretation employed by the medieval theologians in the exposition and discovery of the message of the Word of God. Hopefully, these principles will provide a fruitful basis for our understanding of the hermeneutics of this period.

Insofar as the interpretation of the Bible is concerned the medieval period can be described as a period of transition from patristic emphasis on exegetical theology to the divorce between biblical interpretation and theology, which becomes most noticeable in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. As will be seen, Aquinas insisted on the literal interpretation as having primary importance, upon which all other interpretations are based. Although the men of the Middle Ages developed their own technical aids to study their auxiliary sciences of textual criticism and biblical languages, the material of biblical study remained the same. As Farrar remarked, "We find very little exegesis except the glimmerings and decays of patristic expositions." They give us volumes of dogma, morality, and system that profess to be used in Scripture but for the most part have no real connection with the passages to which they are attached (see Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, pp. 245ff.). One might suggest that the reason for this practice and its result is the interpreters' assumption that revelation not only is expressed in Scripture but also is hidden in it, and this assumption led them to perceive a multiplicity of senses or meanings in Scripture.

### The Allegorical Method of Interpretation

As already noted, during the later patristic period and in the Middle Ages a system of allegorization was developed according to which four meanings were to be sought in every text. Sometimes, indeed, there were as many as seven, but the more normal number of senses was four: the allegorical, which sets forth what should be believed; the literal, which is the plain evident meaning; the tropological, which is the moral sense, telling men what to do; and the anagogical, which centers in what Christians are to hope.

From the beginning of our period (*ca.* A.D. 600), allegory held a dominant place in the minds of medieval theologians. Indeed, severe criticism of Catholic exegetes has arisen because they made so much use of the allegorical interpretation. However, these exegetes did not intend in any way to question or reject the historical foundations of Scripture. On the contrary, their purpose was to find a symbolic value in history.

Claudius of Turin points approvingly to this practice. The Word of God, he declares, is incarnate in Scripture, which like man has a body and a soul. The body is the wording of the sacred text, the "letter," the literal meaning; the soul is the spiritual sense. To explain the literal sense is to expound *litteraliter vel carnaliter*; *littera* is almost interchangeable with *corpus*.

Beryl Smalley in her book *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* observes that if in rare moments of skepticism a medieval scholar questioned the truth of Scripture, he never doubted that it had letter and spirit; he only feared that the spirit might be bad. Naturally, then, he understood relationship between letter and spirit in the same way as he did the relationship between body and soul.

What we now call exegesis based on the study of the text and of biblical history, in the widest sense belongs to the literal exposition. The spiritual exposition generally consists of pious meditations or religious teachings for which the text was used merely as a convenient starting point. It is obvious that picking meanings out of the Bible like this, rather than on the basis of context, can lead far astray. But the *modus operandi* of medieval interpretation of Scripture is founded on the belief that all things created can find a basis in Scripture in the sense of being sacred words or signs of divine things.

Thomas Aquinas expresses this view most clearly in his writings. "Physical creatures," he declares, "signify something sacred,



namely the divine wisdom and goodness"; and "by means of the likeness of the physical things in divine Scripture, scriptural things are described for us."--*Summa Theologica*, III, a60, art. 3, and 1.

According to this premise and other related ideas, all things are considered to have sacramental significance that leads to God. This is, in fact, the secret of medieval interpretation of the Bible. It is evident in Bonaventura's view of the relationship between the interpretation of the Bible and theology. For him theology has its foundation in Scripture, which is divine revelation made evident through the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Bible contains the words of eternal life, written not only that we may believe but also that we may possess eternal life. It is hardly surprising, then, that the medieval theologians and exegetes seemed mainly interested in finding in the Word of God what they thought was spiritual nourishment for the people. In fact, so firmly established was this approach to Scripture that it had a direct and lasting influence on medieval eucharistic teaching.

#### Examples of Allegorization

The modern reader may be tempted to ask: Can it be true that the preachers and the faithful were taught that the word *mountain* in Holy Scriptures is to be interpreted primarily to mean "virgin," or in the plural to stand for "angels," "apostles," "precepts," or the "Testaments"?

By looking at a few more examples of allegorizing we begin to realize the complexity of the interpretation of Scripture in the medieval period. According to the allegorical sense, the raising of Lazarus signifies a man in mortal sin who repents, confesses, and receives absolution. This is quite a common interpretation. After the raising of Lazarus it was said to the disciples, "Loose him." This was taken to mean that God quickens a repenting sinner but that he is never loosed except by the ministers of the church.

The use of allegory is also shown in the example of the word *sea*, which could be understood in seven different ways. It could mean a gathering of water, Scripture, the present age, the human heart, the active life, heathen, or baptism. The allegorical interpretation survived largely in preaching. But for a rational, almost rationalistic, theological method, such a subjective attitude toward Scripture could not prove satisfactory.

The Influence of the Universities  
and Religious Orders

It is of extreme importance to bear in mind that the movement for understanding and interpreting the Bible derives from the universities and the new religious orders. According to Miss Smalley, "If we are looking for a critical approach to interpretation in the 12th and 13th centuries, we must go to the new religious orders, Cistercians, Canons Regular, Friars Preacher and Minor, all zealots for the faith and the papacy."--*Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, p. xx.

We must follow the centralization of studies at Paris, the development of classroom equipment, the *Gloss* (standard commentary) and its uses, and the development of academic functions supplementary to the lectures--the university sermon and the disputation. These exercises determine the form and to an extent the content of medieval exegesis.--*Ibid.*, p. xv.

At the universities all interpretations were based on the multiple senses of Scripture. The reason for this method seems to have been twofold. In the first place, for the leading scholars and writers in the early Middle Ages (and for many writers even later) the problem of the relation of revelation to reason posed particular hardship. The fact is that throughout the patristic period theology had been largely a matter of exegesis. Theological systems were attempts to interpret as broadly as possible the words of God in Scripture. But as Professor Grant points out, natural theology was used as rarely as possible.--R. M. Grant, *The Bible in the Church*, p. 102. In view of this fact, the one thing necessary was to discover what was predicted and prefigured in Scripture as insights given by God for His people. Thus Cassidorus affirms that the Psalms are full of the liberal arts.

The second reason relates to the influence of the Greek fathers and the "vitality of Platonism," which reached the medieval scholar largely through Augustine. These influences determined the world view of the medieval thinkers; and it was ordinarily believed, as Miss Smalley expresses it, that "Scripture, like the visible world, is a great mirror reflecting God, and therefore all and every kind of truth."--See R. M. Grant, *The Bible in the Church*, p. 102.

The question was always raised: What is God saying in His Word? Did He intend to conceal His meaning or did He intend to express it? The Aristotelian exposition of nature, which was gaining currency among the newer theologians, did not take seriously the idea of symbolism. And in view of this, one begins to

see emerging a new emphasis on interpretation, namely, the literal.

### Some Medieval Interpreters of Scripture

Enough has been said to indicate the variety of interpretation in the Middle Ages. We must now look briefly at some of the more important figures concerned with the interpretation of the Bible. From the galaxy of well-known expositors we may choose the following as among the more important: Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugo of St. Victor, Andrew of St. Victor, Langton, and Aquinas.

Bernard (ca. 1091-1153) was famous not only for his preaching but also for his interpreting. Among his extensive written works are 86 sermons on the Song of Songs. Bernard utilizes a traditional threefold sense--historical, moral or figurative, and mystical--and interprets the Song of Songs as an allegory of the relation between Christ and the soul of the individual Christian. His way of studying and interpreting Scripture seemed more congenial to life within the cloister than to the world outside. He engaged in fanciful and exaggerated interpretation, but his overriding concern was always to be practical. Bernard's aim was to encourage morality and deepen the spirituality of the faithful.

A notable example of his interpretation is reflected in his treatment of Song of Songs 1:2: "Thy love is better than wine." Here the maid addresses her beloved. According to Bernard, these words refer to Christ, and they mean his patience and clemency. The following verse states, "Therefore do the virgins love thee." Bernard interprets the word *virgins* as "angels," and then he proceeds to discuss the nine orders of angels.

Hugo of St. Victor (1097?-1141) was one of the most learned interpreters of Scripture. Although his tendency was in the direction of the Alexandrian threefold principle, he distinguished himself for his emphasis on the literal sense. However, for him the literal sense was more than the bare word; it was indeed the meaning of the word, despite the fact that the meaning could be figurative. It is asserted that although Hugo lived more than a hundred years before Aquinas, he seems to have grasped the Thomist principle that the clue to prophecy and metaphor is the writer's intention; the literal sense includes everything the sacred writer meant to say.

A remarkable advance was made in biblical interpretation by Andrew of St. Victor, a student of Hugo's who flourished in the second half of the 12th century. He learned from his master the ability and the importance of utilizing all available knowledge

in interpretation. His methodological principle was to treat selected portions of the Bible, to aim at removing hindrances to a literal interpretation, and to leave aside both the spiritual and the theological aspects.

When Andrew dealt with controversial passages he made use of a twofold exegetical method. One was based on the Vulgate with a Christian explanation; the other was based on the Hebrew text with a Jewish explanation. This methodology is illustrated in his treatment of Is 7:14-16: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive," etc. Here Andrew accepts the Jewish interpretation because it is the literal one, and he seems to doubt the adequacy of the Christian interpretation. Andrew was criticized for finding too-easy agreement with Jewish exegetes. Nevertheless, one of the valuable results of his work is the interest he aroused in the original sources.

Stephen Langton (1150-1228), Archbishop of Canterbury, was another significant interpreter of the Bible. Quite apart from his reputation as an interpreter, he is credited with introducing the present system of chapter division. Langton displayed a practical bent in his work on the Bible. He aimed at ensuring a sound text. His energies were spent in attempting to clarify the distinction between literal and spiritual interpretations. Consistent with the prevailing concept of his time was his belief that the spiritual interpretation was superior to the literal. But even during his lifetime a change was already noticeable in the conception of the spiritual meaning. In the 12th century the spiritual interpretation exerted a greater influence on preaching. It became a means for instructing the ordinary simple Christian in a concrete and pictorial form. Instead of explicating the Bible text in terms of abstract virtues and vices as these struggle within the human soul, interpretation came to deal with "the behaviour of groups, of types, and religious and social abuses."--Smalley, *Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, p. 245.

Langton, who was at the center of ecclesiastical and political affairs, took an active part in this change in interpretation. For him the one test in interpretation was simply conformity with the Christian faith. If the interpretation was in accordance with the faith, it could be accepted. To be sure, Langton found greater freedom in spiritual meaning, as distinct from literal. Nevertheless, the spiritual sense had to be based on what is signified by the Word.

We now come to the greatest of all the scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas, who by his emphasis on rational philosophical arguments was foremost in setting forth an early

speculative form of "natural theology." It is interesting to note that Aquinas approached the interpretation of the Bible as a philosopher-theologian rather than as a biblical scholar in the more specific sense, and there were several basic tensions in his position. The meaning of Scripture was of tremendous significance to him, and yet he engaged in philosophical reasoning and discussion perhaps more than any of his contemporaries. Again, while he took the position of defending the primacy of revelation as contained in Scripture, his use of Scripture, like his utilization of philosophy, was also for the confirmation of ecclesiastical dogma.

It is of great importance, Thomas contended, to understand what the Bible says. To be sure, Scripture uses metaphors, he knew, but these can be understood easily and naturally: "It is natural to man to attain intellectual truths through sensible objects, because all our knowledge originates through sense; hence in Holy Scripture spiritual truths are fittingly taught under the likeness of material things."--*Summa Theologica*, 1.1:9.

Aquinas defends the view that the literal sense of Scripture is the basis for the other senses, which can be built upon it. He resists all who would argue that it is possible to have several senses in Scripture. His thought on this idea proceeds along three main lines. The first is the most serious. He observes that "many different senses in one text produce confusion and deception and destroy all force of argument. Hence no argument, but only fallacies, can be deduced from a multiplicity of propositions. But Holy Scripture ought to be able to state the truth without any fallacy." (Cf. Grant, *The Bible in the Church*, p. 106.)

His second objection merely points to the confusion and lack of system in the allegorical method and raises questions about use of this method. The third objection focuses on the fourfold division, and is severely critical. Aquinas maintains that the literal sense is concerned with the meaning of words, which can be used both properly and figuratively. The literal sense is not the figure but the thing that is meant. Thus, the literal meaning of "the arm of God" is not that God has an arm, but the meaning of the expression "operative power." Aquinas concludes with the succinct remark that "nothing false can even underlie the literal sense of Holy Scripture."--*Ibid.*, p. 107.

Thomas uses the story of the garden of Eden as an example of his literal interpretation of Scripture. He says that "the things which are said of Paradise in Scripture are set forth by means of an historical narrative. Now in everything which the Scripture thus sets forth the truth (of the story) must be taken as a

foundation and upon it spiritual expositions are to be built."-- Cf. Grant, *The Bible in the Church*, p. 107. At the same time, Thomas by no means stood clear of the allegorical method as did the Protestant Reformers later.

#### Consequences of the Medieval Developments

It is obvious that there was not very much noticeable change in interpretation in the Middle Ages. Yet what there was is important. Largely due to Aquinas, a somewhat clearer understanding developed as to what was meant by the literal interpretation. The consequences of this particular medieval insistence on the literal interpretation of Scripture were incalculable. In the first place, an immediate impetus was given to the study of Hebrew and the production of literary and historical commentaries on the OT. More important was the measure of rejection of the patristic theological method with the divorce of theology from exegesis. The divorce was immediately followed, if not preceded, by the remarriage of theology to philosophy.

But as Professor Grant has noted, there still remained children of the first marriage who were not content with their new father. This becomes evident when one realizes the slow development of Scholasticism. Another factor in this connection can be seen in the work and influence of Nicholas of Lyra, who in his commentaries wrote about the spiritual as well as the literal sense. He did so when the need for allegorization seemed absent. And the final influence was the Reformation, which insisted that its concerns were directed toward a return to the method of theology through exegesis.

Side by side with this emphasis on historical studies was the claim to objectivity. The interpreter's claim to direct inspiration by God in his exegesis became less and less credible. The argument took the other direction; that is to say, all knowledge comes through the senses, and scriptural interpretation requires no special inner grace. Indeed, in the medieval claim to objectivity we discover the genesis of modern scientific and critical study of the Bible.

#### Summary and Implications

We have seen that the early church illustrates practicality as an important criterion in use of Scripture for Christians themselves; and that it reveals, too, an effort to make the gospel message understood and appreciated by non-Christian addressees

through allusion to concepts familiar to those addressees. Certainly, this attitude toward and treatment of Scripture has relevance for today as well as in the past.

However, the patristic tendency to allegorize eventually led to widespread devaluation of the literal significance of the text and became the bane of early-church hermeneutic. It was an ill heritage passed on to the Middle Ages, and was heightened by the medieval church. Certain medieval theologians saw the danger inherent in allegorization and raised their voices against it. In spite of this and in spite of the fact that the Protestant Reformation in particular brought a wide-scale return to emphasis on the literal significance of the Scriptural text as a base for drawing spiritual lessons, we can recognize that in our own day there has been a reversion to emphasis on meaning sometimes without adherence to adequate literary and historical foundations for projecting that meaning. In this respect some of the hermeneutic of today bears a strange resemblance to the hermeneutic embodied in Origen's "threefold interpretation" and in the "fourfold interpretation," which was so popular during the Middle Ages. And, of course, the dangers inherent in the procedure exist today as much as they did in those earlier times. Indeed, the vagaries of the allegorical method as illustrated in the early-church and medieval-church periods serve as a stern warning against any hermeneutic that would destroy the historical foundations of Scripture or subordinate them to a cult of meaning *per se*.

On the other hand, the correctives brought by the literal and objective approach to Scripture led to a more consistent and stable mode of Scripture interpretation, as we have seen. Even here, however, a caution must be lifted against the sort of methodology that in the hands of certain critical scholars has virtually destroyed present-day relevance of the Bible message by overemphasizing purely historical and linguistic concerns as ends in themselves. The spiritual message of Scripture must not be lost sight of. The important thing is to base that spiritual message on solid historical and linguistic foundations rather than on mere speculation--a need made abundantly clear by developments in the early and medieval periods of church history.

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4. Hermeneutical Principles and  
Biblical Authority in Reformation  
and Postreformation Eras

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Formative Decades

When Martin Luther at the trial in Worms, 1521, made his points of defense irrevocable by the words "Here I stand! I can do no other!" his decision became, as Lord Acton wrote, "the most pregnant and momentous fact in our history." Even though the Reformation has been viewed--and with good reasons--from the particulars of political, social, rationalistic, liberal, and economical forces at work, it was essentially religious in character. Within the sphere of religion the primary issue was religious authority and how to articulate the true meaning of Scriptures. The Reformation began with a reappraisal of the principles of biblical interpretation and grew into a revolt against current hermeneutics and the creation of new exegetical tools by which true biblical theology and NT Christianity could be restored. In the light of the history of the Christian Church and its theology, which is the story of how the Scriptures were interpreted (a fact that is often overlooked and sadly neglected), the Reformation became a real re-formation and re-orientation in the field of hermeneutics. The crux of the religious issue at Worms was positively stated by Luther when he claimed: "I am bound by Scriptures . . . and my conscience is captive to the Word of God."

As in the first quarter of the 16th century and also in the 20th century, the role of biblical authority and a reexamination of exegetical principles occupy the minds of Catholic and Protestant theologians. It is our purpose in this chapter, first, to point out the factors that created the platform on which Protestant authority could be built and to define the principles of exegesis that emerged; next, to give a bird's-eye view of the various phases through which Protestantism passed in order to show how men reacted and related themselves to the doctrine of biblical authority held by the early Protestant Reformers. Thus it is hoped to

create a theological vantage ground from which present-day hermeneutical issues can be seen in a true historical perspective.

### The Christian Humanists

Since the 14th century the Italian humanists had been at work recovering the culture of ancient Greece and Rome. The awakening of an interest in classical literature gave birth to new intellectual inquiries and revived interest in the study of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages. In the first quarter of the 16th century the Christian humanists availed themselves of the linguistic advances in grammar and syntax and made them useful in the study of the Bible. Thus prior to the Reformation we find a biblical humanism that became a *preparatio evangelia*. The Christian humanists in their historical and philological approach sought to ascertain what a given text actually meant in the context of Christ's teaching and primitive Christianity. The chief early representative of Christian humanism was John Colet (1466-1519). After having imbibed the spirit of the new learning in Italy he returned to England, 1496-1497, and began to give his famous lectures, first on the epistle to the Romans, and then on 1 Corinthians. His objective was to bring out the practical meaning the apostle Paul sought to convey to his readers; therefore, he illustrated his sermon with comments on the life of the apostles and references to the historical conditions in which the epistles were written. He delivered his sermons in English and rejected the allegorical and mystical exegesis of the scholastic theologians.

In 1498 Erasmus (1467-1536) arrived in England and attended Colet's lectures, and encouraged by them, he took up biblical studies, the fruitage of which is seen in his Greek NT (1516); his *Annotations*; and his *Paraphrases* of the Gospels. Erasmus' NT became the basic tool for Luther during the polemic and formative years of the Reformation. After the Diet of Worms Luther withdrew to Wartburg Castle, and by the help of the Greek NT he translated the NT into German within eleven weeks. Later the OT was translated into German from Hebrew. A better understanding of the OT had been made possible by a profound study of the Hebrew language by Johann Reuchlin, an uncle of Philip Melancthon. It seemed that medieval scholasticism was being supplanted by a new hermeneutic more akin to that of the first expositors of the NT.

Because the Christian humanists relied on the Hebrew and Greek texts, they denied the canonical value of the OT Apocrypha. The Apocrypha was first included in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the OT. Indirectly they repudiated the ecclesiastical tradition. In their historico-grammatical method of interpreta-

tion the humanists renounced the fourfold exegetical system of medieval scholasticism and replaced it with the literal principle of interpretation, which concentrated on finding the literal meaning of a passage. In doing this, they dethroned the significance of the Vulgate, the Latin vocabulary of which was the vehicle for a medieval theology and the organ for ecclesiastical authority and tradition.

At the Council of Trent, which met in twenty-five sessions from 1545 to 1563, the Counter-Reformation creedalized its denials of the tenets of the Protestant Reformation. The fourth session (April 8, 1546) decreed concerning the Bible. The canonical Scriptures, including the OT Apocrypha, and the ecclesiastical tradition were to be received and venerated "with an equal affection of piety and reverence," they said. It was also declared that the Latin Vulgate edition, "which, by the lengthened usage of so many ages has been approved of in the Church, be, in public lectures, disputations, sermons, and expositions, held as authentic; and that no one is to dare, or presume to reject it under any pretext whatever." The same was restated more than three centuries later at the Vatican Council of 1870, where the question of ecclesiastical tradition was further reinforced by the dogma of Papal infallibility and absolutism.

Roman Catholicism tried to undo the influence of the Christian humanists, who sought to go back beyond Thomist-Aristotelian Christianity by replacing scholastic theology with biblical theology.

### Biblical Authority and Individualism

The significance of biblical authority and its impact on Christian thought ever since can be fully appreciated only in the light of some basic philosophical concepts that dominated medieval theological thinking.

In Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) medieval scholasticism attained its clearest expression, and Aquinas became the foremost typical exponent of the Roman Catholic mind. His *Summa Theologia* is the standard of Catholic orthodoxy and the basis of theological instruction. On the other hand, the Reformers spoke of Aquinas as the fountain of all heresy and error. Aquinas represented the scholastic philosophy termed realism. For the purpose of our study all that is necessary to state is that medieval realism maintains the powers of being that transcend the individual, as in all totalitarian systems. Aquinas was an Aristotelian, and with Aristotle he believed that the best government of a multitude is that ruled by one. In the religious life it means that the

church comes before the individual, as in Roman Catholicism where the episcopalian concept of Cyprian that "the bishop is in the church and the church in the bishop" attains its summit in the pope. Consequently, the pope has absolute temporal and spiritual jurisdiction, and Boniface VIII (1294-1305) could say, "All law is locked within my breast," and in *Unam Sanctam* declare "that submission on the part of every man to the bishop of Rome is altogether necessary for his salvation."

The 14th century reacted strongly to realism and the *Unam Sanctam*. It is in this reaction that we find not only the theological roots of biblical authority but also the beginnings of the democratic principles of the right of the individual. Notice that the theological and philosophical principle undergirding the Reformers' concept of authority ties together democracy and Protestantism, whereas Aquinas binds together totalitarianism, collectivism, and Roman Catholicism in the rule by one.

William of Ockham (1300-1349), who owed his reputation to his theological and political theories and his definition of the Bible as the final authority, became a distant voice of the Reformation. Ockham countered medieval scholastic theology as it was represented by Thomas Aquinas. He represented what we call nominalism and fiercely attacked realism. For nominalism only the individual object exists, and contrary to realism it emphasizes the value of the individual. This is the basis for true democracy and Christian individualism as found in Protestantism. It is essential for the doctrine of biblical authority and true individualism. As a nominalist, Ockham finds the source of power in the people. This idea undermined papal authority and made the Scriptures the final source of authority.

It is characteristic of Ockham to appeal to the Bible constantly. No doctrine incapable of being proved from Holy Scripture was to be acknowledged as catholic and necessary to salvation; neither the church nor the pope could make new articles of faith. In this way he contributed to the unsettlement of the medieval theory of the source of authority and assailed the traditional doctrines of his time.

Luther's reference to the Bible as the source of religious authority and the sacredness of the conscience of the individual is reminiscent of Ockham, but this view was only to be expected, for most of Luther's university professors were Ockhamists and Luther himself called Ockham "my dear Master."

The late Cardinal Bea, who became the first director of the Secretariat for the Promotion of the Unity of Christians during

the Second Vatican Council, perceived the Protestant concept under discussion and at the same time underscored the great difference between Protestantism and Catholicism on this point both in the past and in the present. Wrote Bea:

In days gone by, Protestantism, especially in its Lutheran form, had a distinctly individualistic character. ... He [man] was to live in God's sight quite simply, reading and interpreting the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who enlightened him and directed his life. ... [Roman Catholicism] places them [the doctrines] in the great current of tradition. Fundamentally it is the method of the Catholic Church, which is anti-individualist. ... The whole Reformation world rejected in principle any authority in the Church which could oblige the consciences of the faithful to follow it. From this stems a very practical obstacle to all efforts at unity.--*The Unity of Christians*, pp. 144, 176-177.

According to the Reformers each Christian has not only the privilege but also the duty to examine and judge Christian beliefs and practises on the basis of the Bible. Wrote Luther: "To ascertain and judge about doctrine pertains to all and every Christian; and in such a way that let him be anathema who injures their right by a single hair."--Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, p. 331.

### Biblical Authority in Faith and Reason

The element of rationalism was prevalent in early medieval scholasticism but was held in check by Augustinian Neo-Platonic mysticism. For Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) the teaching of the church laid down in the Bible and the creeds of the ancient church possessed full authority; however, he sought to establish a defense of Christian teaching on the sole basis of human reason. It was Aquinas who made the medieval synthesis of reason and revelation by teaching "that one could reason his way through natural theology (philosophy) to revealed truth (faith)." It was the rationalism of Anselm and Aquinas that Ockham sought to overthrow by holding that divine revelation rather than human reason is the source of theology.

As a student in the school of *Via Moderna* (which was the name of Ockham's school) Luther in his training developed appreciation for biblical authority and deprecation of reason in matters of faith. Being an Augustinian monk he was undergirded by an Augustinian theology of God, sin, depravity, predestination, and grace. At Worms Luther not only said: "Unless I am convinced by testimony

from Scriptures" but also added "or evident reason." Here reason is not used in a Thomistic or later rationalist sense, but in the sense of clear deductions from the Bible. Correct reason is bound by the Word and enlightened by faith and the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

#### The Personal Encounter With *Sola Scriptura*

Before the Reformers began to use the Bible in their task of calling the church to renewal they themselves had been transformed by a personal encounter with the Bible. Zwingli relates how he removed himself from the influence of theology and philosophy and under the influence of the Spirit of God became sensitive to God's Word. Luther sought the Bible when he had "lost hope in himself" and continued to study the Bible until it became to him the sole authority in soteriology.

The Reformers, as already noticed in the case of Luther, were among the best-educated men of their age. They were steeped in ancient and medieval philosophy, thoroughly acquainted with the church fathers, handled with ease all the knowledge and tools made available by the renaissance and the humanists (and let us be thankful for that), but they did not have peace with God. They were engaged in an inner soul struggle. The Bible gave the answer to the quest of their souls. Through the medium of the *sola scriptura* (the Bible alone) principle, divine grace was found, and thenceforward the Bible was central in the Reformation. Thus the belief was firmly fixed that God in His present redemptive work meets man in and through the Scriptures. It was as biblical theologians and preachers of the Word that some Christians in the 16th century became reformers.

#### The Personal Encounter With *Sola Fide* and *Sola Gratia*

Luther's acceptance of the literal, or historico-grammatical, principle of interpretation (mentioned earlier in this chapter) instead of the fourfold one of medieval exegetes meant in general that a given Bible passage had but one meaning. In his difficulties in understanding the relationship between the justice and righteousness of God on the one hand and justification on the other, Luther took the true (that is, the simple and literal) meaning of the biblical phrase "The just shall live by faith" (Rom 1: 17) as the imputation of the "righteousness of God" by sheer grace through faith. This *sola fide* (by faith alone) and *sola gratia* (by grace alone) principle became a hermeneutical tool by making the OT and the NT a unified witness to Christ (*Christuszeugnis*)

and a divine record of God's redemptive acts in history (salvation-history). Luther describes his inner struggle for clarification and for the final victory by grace and faith alone in these words:

Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the "justice of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.--Bainton, *Here I Stand*, p. 65.

This newfound faith with its hermeneutical consequences made its protest against the Catholic concept of salvation and works. The Council of Trent reaffirmed Roman Catholic belief. Canon XII of the sixth session (Jan. 13, 1547) reads: "If anyone saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema."--Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 2, p. 112.

In the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification the Reformers saw the heterogospel that the apostle Paul wrote against in the epistle to the Galatians. Consequently, the understanding of the right relationship between law and grace was a vital point in order to comprehend and interpret the Scriptures correctly. In Reformation thought in general a twofold use of the law was held (or a threefold use, depending on definition). The first function of the law is civil, being a means by which society should be organized and discipline exercised. The second function is spiritual, and it has two aspects. First, it is a "mirror" or a "tutor" by which man sees his sins and is led to Christ as his refuge. Thus, the law and the gospel are not contrary to each other. Second, the law is a standard for Christian living. When dealing with biblical authority, Luther dethroned reason and favored faith, a faith that had experienced the dynamics of *sola gratia*. We may therefore speak of the *sola gratia-sola fide* principle of interpretation. The significance of this principle then and now is clearly defined by a present-day Catholic theologian:

... The Catholic does not say in the first instance, What does the Book say? Rather he asks, What does the teaching Church say? ... Over the Book stands the Church,

while according to the Reform conception, over the Church stands the Book. ...--Weigel, in Fremantle, *The Papal Encyclicals*, p. 11.

A new era in biblical interpretation and in theological development began with the Reformers challenging the traditional theological positions in the light of a simple but positive message of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*.

### Sola Scriptura

Although the doctrines "by faith alone" and "by grace alone" constituted the material principle of the Protestant Reformation, "the Bible alone" was its formal principle, and it became a constitutive and corrective norm of Christian doctrines and practices. The exegetical rules of the Reformers in stressing the literal meaning and the self-interpretation of Scripture and their practical usage can be understood only in the light of that principle.

Sola Scriptura and the Holy Spirit. The Reformers based the *sola scriptura* principle on a twofold activity of the Holy Spirit. They maintained that the same Spirit that inspired the prophets must penetrate the hearts of those who read the prophets.

The relationship between the *sola scriptura* concept and the Holy Spirit is similarly expressed by Luther. Inasmuch as the church is the creation of the Bible and not vice versa, the Spirit governs the church only through the Scripture. No new revelation is necessary, he maintained, because the work of the apostles was adequate.

"The Holy Spirit speaks" is an often-repeated statement. The Bible is considered the proclamation of the Holy Spirit, and the sole medium through which the Holy Spirit speaks. The intrinsic validity of the Scriptures with all inherent truth is recognized and confirmed by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

For the Reformers the Bible became the only reliable source of authority. The Catholics, on the other hand, confirmed inherent truth by the authority of the church. The humanists settled doctrinal questions by rational disputation. The Reformers did not repudiate use of reason as such but did make it clear that its scope was limited. The Spirit cannot be inconsistent with Himself, and He will never bring any doctrinal instruction not already found in the Bible. This was the Reformers' argument against both the radicals and the Catholics. The inspired Bible and the testimony of the Holy Spirit became respectively the external and in-



ternal principles on which correct interpretation rested. It also made the Scriptures sufficient in themselves.

*Sola Scriptura* and the Creeds. The early formative period of the Reformation began with a personal "discovery" of the truth that man is "justified by faith alone." It was followed by a formulative period in which the Christian faith sought to be purged of heretical teaching. In order to save the center of Christian theology, confessional statements of faith were drawn up. It was, however, clearly understood that such statements should grow out of the Scriptures and continually be under their tutorage. It was further recognized that there is increased light as history moves on to consummation and that some facets of biblical truths may suddenly take on new significance. Any creedal statement, therefore, was only a relative authority, but the Scriptures were the absolute authority. The Bible was sufficient in itself, hence Scripture interprets Scripture, letting obscure passages be compared and collated with less obscure passages. This common concept is well expressed in the *First Basel Confession of Faith* (1534). It concludes with this sentence: "We submit this our Confession to the judgment of the divine Scriptures, and hold ourselves ready, always thankfully to obey God and his Word if we should be corrected out of said holy Scriptures."--Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 1, p. 387. Accordingly, the Bible for the Reformers was an unregulated regulator. The following early Adventist statements are in full accord with early Reformation thought:

Christianity has a much broader meaning than many have hitherto given it. It is not a creed. It is the word of Him who liveth and abideth forever. It is a living, animating principle, that takes possession of mind, heart, motives, and the entire man. Christianity--oh, that we might experience its operations! It is a vital, personal experience, that elevates and ennobles the whole man.--Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 421, 422.

The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union.--Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 416.

*Sola Scriptura* and the Canon. The churches of the Reformation on the one hand limited the *sola scriptura* to the canonized books of the Bible and on the other hand emphasized the unity of the same. The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England are representative when they state:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to

salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.-- Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, p. 489.

It is characteristic that Luther over and over refers to "all Scripture," "all of Holy Writ," and "the entire Bible," and appeals to "the constant and unanimous judgment of Scripture." Scripture is not against itself but "is in excellent agreement with itself and is uniformly consistent everywhere."

One additional point should be mentioned. Having accepted the canonical Scriptures as authoritative, the Reformers always recognized that any theological conclusions should be drawn from the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT, which generally were placed for reference at the table when they had their disputations.

*Sola Scriptura* and Catholicity. The relationship between *sola scriptura* and catholicity, which we define as faithfulness to the early ancient church in life and doctrine, was twofold. On the one hand the Reformers demonstrated that what they taught (based on *sola scriptura* as a constitutive norm of doctrine) had been held by the ancient church. On the other hand the Scriptures became also a corrective norm, because much in the traditions, the fathers and the councils were not rooted in the "Bible alone. . ."

The Reformers sought to maintain a vital sense of continuity with the past. The early creeds were accepted by Luther not because they had been accepted by the fathers and the church but because he found them in conformity to the Word of God. Late in 1517 he wrote some explanations to his Ninety-Five Theses:

First, I testify that I desire to say or maintain absolutely nothing except, first of all, what is in the Holy Scriptures and can be maintained from them; and then what is in and from the writings of the church fathers and is accepted by the Roman Church and preserved both in the canons and the papal decrees.--*Luther's Works*, XXXI, 83.

Luther considered the Scriptures the touchstone, the yardstick, to be used for the evaluation of the writings of the fathers and the decisions of the church.

*Sola Scriptura* and Preaching. Before the Reformation a clergyman's main performance was at the altar, but after the Reformation it was in the pulpit. Accordingly, his name was changed from

priest to preacher, gospeler, minister of the gospel. The preaching of the Word was the basic function of the ordained ministry, and it grew out of the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. The Reformers were great preachers of the Word. Luther left behind him more than 2,000 printed sermons.

The Reformers' preaching was never a movement from men, from situations, or from problems to the text, but it always advanced from the text to men and problems. The sermons were basically expository, and they were subject to Scripture throughout; otherwise, the truths of the doctrine of *sola scriptura* could not be realized. The written word had to preserve the oral word--the proclamation--from error. Further, the Holy Spirit can work with preaching only when both are united in the *sola scriptura* principle.

If the Reformation era teaches us anything, it is that Christian theology, in order to be true to its task, must be biblical theology; likewise, Christian preaching must be biblical preaching. True is the famous dictum of William Chillingworth: "The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants."

#### Summary of the Reformers' Hermeneutical Principles

The Reformers' unified doctrine of *sola scriptura* dictated the common principles of hermeneutics, which may be listed as follows:

A passage should first be understood in its literal or obvious (simple) meaning.

The text should be studied in its context by means of the historicogrammatical method, which takes into consideration the conditions of the times and the people to whom the Scriptures were first written. The Hebrew and Greek texts of the OT and the NT should be consulted.

Scripture is to be used to interpret Scripture, the canonical Scriptures being a self-sufficient authority in religious matters.

The Christocentric rule, which makes Christ the focal point in the Bible, is to be applied.

Understanding the correct relationship between law and gospel and the threefold usage of the law is basic to the interpretation of the Scriptures.

The interpreter should be illuminated by the Holy Spirit and a personal *sola fide* and *sola gratia* experience.

The significance of the Reformers' contribution to the study of the Bible is epitomized by F. W. Farrar. Speaking about Luther, he writes: "And he not only gave them the open Bible, but taught them and all the world how best it might be interpreted."--*History of Interpretation*, p. 323.

### Postreformation Developments

Since the formative decades Protestant theology has passed through many phases and zigzag movements. It was God centered, man centered, and Christ centered. The feelings, the power of reason, and the moral values were singularly important in different periods. There were great contrasts, such as intellectualism in contrast to emotionalism, transcendentalism versus immanence, the religion of divine sovereignty as against inward conscience. All together and each separately influenced in different ways during various periods the Protestant concept of biblical interpretation and authority.

### Protestant Orthodoxy

During the latter half of the 16th and the early decades of the 17th centuries Protestantism entered a period of dogmatism, attempting to purge the Christian faith of all errors. The doctrinal controversies among the Protestant bodies as well as their common defense against Catholic beliefs, especially after they were defined at the Council of Trent, accentuated the need for confessional statements of faith. Thus the basis was laid for Protestant orthodoxy with its emphasis on correct doctrinal beliefs. In this necessary task the authority of the Bible as the inerrant Word of God was taken seriously. However, there developed within Protestantism a greater concern for the orthodoxy of the letter over against the piety of the heart. People were asked to believe statements of faith, but the faith they were meant to safeguard often took second place. The Bible was approached mainly as an arsenal of proof texts for Christian doctrines, and a mechanical inspiration of the Bible was endorsed. The *Formula Consensus Helvetica* (1675) even asserted that the vowel points in the Hebrew text of the OT were as much inspired by God as the words of the Bible. This dogmatic approach resulted in coining the term Protestant scholasticism. "Scholasticism . . . essentially means an intellectual temper which may invade any subject in any age; in religion, it is the spirit of law overbearing the spirit of the

Gospel."--Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth*, p. 9.

### Pietism

Protestant scholasticism had assumed a rational spirit and an argumentative nature, resulting in religious formalism. Pietism, which had its beginning in Germany in the seventeenth century, sought to renew a living faith from a rigid and legalistic orthodoxy. The Pietists, generally, did not attack any of the doctrines of the Protestant system, but their emphasis on the personal experience of conversion and practical works of piety was a kind of protest of individualism against institutionalism and theological dogmatism. The conversion experience took on a certain normative role with respect to basic religious consciousness. Accordingly, all doctrines were not of the same value and importance to them. Such Pietist leaders as P. J. Spener and A. H. Francke sought to reduce the traditional doctrinal system to a few important doctrines, the measuring rod being their role in the act of conversion and their influence on the practical religious life of the Christian.

A hierarchical arrangement of Christian doctrines was at variance with the fundamental tenets of Protestant orthodoxy. Here a doctrine had to be accepted because it came from God. To consider some doctrines of less importance than others would therefore be to show contempt for the Giver. The Pietists approached their study of the Bible from an ethical and devotional point of view. Although this approach was necessary to counteract the negative influence of Protestant orthodoxy, its emphasis held the dangers that (1) the doctrinal structure of the Christian faith would be weakened, that (2) in the quest for a devotional interpretation the historical and literal meaning of Scripture passages would be obscured by typological and allegorical exegesis, and that (3) practical religious life rather than the Word of God would become the authority.

One fruit of Pietism deserves notice in the valuable contribution made to the history of exegesis by J. A. Bengel (1687-1752), who published a Greek NT in 1734 and was the first to stress the genealogical method, namely, the classification of NT manuscripts into families on the basis of evident kinship, thus introducing a new principle for the authority of a given biblical passage. He also renounced the idea of mechanical inspiration, and as a true Pietist he rejected the concept of the Bible as a collection of doctrinal truths. Accordingly, his biblical studies were directed toward a continuous exegesis of the entire Bible, which for him

was a divine record of God's acting in history for the purpose of man's salvation rather than an exposition of doctrines.

### Theological Rationalism

The characteristic notes of modern thought had their beginning early in the 17th century. They may be listed as (1) refusal to be bound by tradition in any form, (2) emphasis on reason, and (3) acceptance of the method followed in natural science as the norm for all investigation, including Christianity. In biblical studies it meant rejection of the authoritative *sola scriptura* principle and affirmation of an individualistic spiritual independence anchored in reason as the ultimate norm of religious truth. Philosophy was challenging the claim of biblical authority in the name of reason through the writings of René Descartes (1596-1650), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), and John Locke (1632-1704).

In the thinking of Descartes the beginning of all knowledge was doubt. Consequently, he raised doubt regarding the authority of Scripture. All concepts had to be proved with the certainty of mathematical demonstration. In this philosophical framework Hobbes suggested methods for critical study of the OT and challenged the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible. Spinoza disputed the validity of the miracles recorded in the Bible and claimed that the Scriptures should be treated as any other book. Locke asserted in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* that the message of the Bible cannot be contrary to reason but must be in accord with natural religion; accordingly, he had little regard for mystery. The Deists (a group of English intelligentsia who emerged during the latter part of the 16th and the 17th centuries) made use of questions raised by natural science and the arguments of the philosophers.

The aim of the Deists was to find a religion that all would want to recognize, a "natural" religion, which might serve as a common denominator for a critical examination of supernaturalism in any form. Significantly the subtitle of the Deistic Bible, by Matthew Tindal, reads: "The Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature." If Christianity teaches more than is contained in natural religion, the additions belong to the realm of superstition or to corruption of true religion. Perfect in itself, natural religion cannot be augmented by revelation, making reason man's ultimate guide and challenging the traditional view of the authority of the Bible and the redemptive uniqueness of Christianity.

In Germany the counterpart of English Deism was found in the

Enlightenment, as the group named itself. After the period of Pietism during the 18th century this movement shaped a new religious and philosophical atmosphere, in which the individual conscience became the ultimate norm in deciding religious truth. All through the history of Christian thought there has been the problem of right relationship between revelation and reason. Emphasis in the one or the other direction has a bearing on the principles of exegesis.

In the historical development of Rationalism the accent was placed more and more on reason, which gradually became the ultimate authority. In the first phase of Rationalism, the Bible was to settle religious matters but reason was a very important guide. However, even in this form it was easy to allow reason to create concepts that become *a priori* in one's exegetical endeavors. A rationalistic approach to Scripture was apparent in the 16th century among the Socinians with their stress on the humanity of Christ and their denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. The fall of man was replaced by a mere inclination to evil, and the satisfaction theory of the atonement was considered absurd and immoral. In other words, the basic soteriological and christological facts of Christianity, as in the time of the apostle Paul, became a stumbling block for one's reason. With its rationalizing impulses Socinianism appeared as Unitarianism in England, where it was strengthened by the Deistic movement. After the decline of the latter, Unitarianism lingered within many Protestant churches in the English-speaking world and distorted the soteriological and christological scriptural passages. During the early decades of its history, Seventh-day Adventism was not exempted from this rationalistic influence, but was rescued to fidelity to scriptural authority by the writings of Ellen G. White, especially those published during the last two decades of the 19th century.

The real founder of theological Rationalism was Christian Wolff (1679-1754). He did not deny a Christian revelation but required it to be in accord with natural religion. A more extreme Rationalism was expressed by Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768), who denied special revelation. The Deistic concepts are fully expressed by him, for he made natural religion the only criterion for Christianity. Accordingly, he sought to undo historical Christianity and the revelatory authority of the Bible. G. E. Lessing (1729-1781) in his book *Education of the Human Race* submitted the theory that the Bible had been helpful in past stages of human development, but mankind, which now found itself in its manhood, was to be guided by reason. Judaism and early Christianity were consigned to an inferior and past period of human development.

To the Rationalists Christ was no more than a moral teacher and an ethical example, as His life and death were nothing else than historical events. Everything that was to develop within liberal theology and destructive biblical criticism in the 19th century had been initiated by Rationalism.

### The Wesleyan Revival

In the life and preaching of John Wesley (1703-1791) Deism was effectively contested. The best of the German Pietist movement is seen in the Wesleyan revival, which met the need of society and the church. The power of the gospel made itself evident in the lives of men and women challenging the spiritually barren disputations of the Deists. The enthronement of human reason and the belittlement of the divine authority of the Scriptures were combated by a preaching anchored in the belief that God's Word is absolute authority. The veracity of the Bible was confirmed by the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Wesley was more orthodox in his view of the Bible than Spener and Francke and allowed no separation between Scripture and Christ. No matter how much he emphasized the conversion experience, the biblical note remained strong. He was not an innovator in the history of exegesis, but he read the Bible as orthodox Christians generally did in the Church of England.

The Wesleyan revival demonstrated anew that in man's search for God the gospel "is the saving power of God for everyone who has faith" (Rom 1:16, NEB), recognizing that "the world failed to find him [God] by its wisdom," but God "chose to save those who had faith by the folly of the Gospel" (1 Cor 1:21, NEB). Here lies the highest proof for biblical authority. Wesley revived the material and formal principles of true Protestant hermeneutics, namely, "by faith alone," and "the Bible alone."

The Wesleyan emphasis on sanctification (which also characterized Calvinism and Puritanism) plays an important role as a personal quality of the exegete. A progressive biblical understanding depends on the interpreter's obedience to light already given. Christ said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (Jn 7:17, KJV).

Looking at the Wesleyan revival in historical perspective, it should be noticed that whereas German Rationalism followed the age of Pietism, in England the situation was the opposite. When the 19th century opened, the religious life in England was marked by a note of spiritual fervor, which was not the case in Germany.



The latter was in no small degree a factor in making Germany the mainspring of liberal theology.

### Nineteenth Century Liberal Protestantism

A twofold legacy was passed on to the 19th century, namely, Pietism and Rationalism. Religiously they took new forms. The subjective side of Pietism was developed to the point that a person's existential experience within the framework of religious feelings and intuition became the seat of religious authority as cold reason had been in Rationalism. Rationalism, which had been occupied partly with criticism of the Bible, now concentrated its main effort on the same. With reason no longer the center for religious authority, any result higher criticism might arrive at could not be embarrassing to or a disturbing influence on a person's religious experience. Thus basically the latter was made independent of historical research, science, and philosophy but also of biblical authority as understood by orthodox Protestantism. A new distinction was made between faith and knowledge.

Before the turn of the 19th century Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) criticized religion that moved within the bounds of reason only, but it was Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who, more than anyone else, changed the theological climate and became the founder of modern liberal Protestantism. Having been educated in both pietistic and rationalistic circles, he brought together the two tendencies, and under the influence of Kant he gave theology a new base, as defined above.

Schleiermacher does not begin with God's attributes as the great first cause but with the feeling within people of absolute dependence on a power outside themselves. All advances in religion are greater and greater manifestations of the human feelings (*Gefühl*) or the consciousness of the immanent God. Therefore sin is not, as with the Reformers, a rebellion against the divine will but a disturbance of the harmony between man's natural powers, which hinders the assertion within him of his relation to God.

A person's God concept expresses his religion (and specifically his soteriology) more clearly than anything else, and has a direct bearing on his view and interpretation of the Bible. The Reformers believed in a transcendent God, who is absolute, personal, and holy, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and the Redeemer of mankind. This makes an objective God-to-man revelation necessary (as opposed to a man-originated subjective concept of revelation). Transcendancy and objective revelation are correla-

tive ideas. In Deism God was pushed far back into the universe, leaving this world and man to be ruled by inherited laws and man's reason. Here no revelation was needed; on the contrary, it would destroy the God concept. The doctrine of the immanence of God taught by Schleiermacher created a complete new orientation in Protestant thought, and pressed to its extreme led to Pantheism, which also flourished in the 19th century.

The concept of an immanent God makes an objective revelation unnecessary. All advances in religion as seen in the soul of the individual, in society, in history, and in nature are in a true sense revelations. This God concept accounts for the outlook of liberal theologians and the characteristics of liberal Protestantism as, for example, the humanity of Christ, the dignity of man, and the optimism of social progress. The immanent God was at work not only in man and society but also in nature, thus the evolutionary theory was in accord with the new Protestantism. In the light of all this it is understandable that biblical authority became subordinate to the "revelations" of the immanent God.

While Schleiermacher emphasized the *Gefühl* (human feelings) as the seat for our God consciousness, Albert Ritschl (1822-1889) considered Christianity to be based on value judgment; the ethical side, or moral value, of Christianity was stressed. Thus, not the feeling or the intellect but the will was of paramount importance. Here moral consciousness is the seat of authority. An important Ritschlian was the great church historian Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), who exercised great influence in liberalism. In the book *What Is Christianity?* he urged a return to the religion of Jesus, not the religion about Jesus. That religion is very simple, and it is found in the synoptic Gospels after they have been purged of the mythological framework of the first century, as, for example, apocalypticism, demons, and miracles. In his monumental work *History of Dogma* he maintained that the religion of Jesus had been obscured and distorted by hellenization (reflected in the Gospel of John and most of the epistles), Christian dogmatism, and institutional Christianity. Harnack was in great sympathy with Marcion, of the 2nd century. He reduced the biblical authority to the personality of Christ and His simple teaching of the fatherhood of God and His kingdom, the infinite value of the human soul, and the law of love and higher righteousness as exemplified in the life of Jesus.

The magnitude of liberal Protestantism can best be perceived when seen in the light of its rejection by Karl Barth (1886-1968). As Schleiermacher created a new epoch by stressing the immanence of God, Karl Barth became the great theologian of the 20th century by reestablishing God's transcendency, and a "new realism" of the

Bible followed. Barth was called neo-orthodox by liberal theologians; however, his biblical "realism" is not that of 16th-century Protestantism.

In the present discussion of immanence versus transcendency it becomes crystal clear that a true God concept is a basic premise for a sound understanding of biblical authority and for correct hermeneutic. The issues presented and the picture drawn of Protestant thought with special reference to biblical authority will be clarified further in the light of the history of biblical studies during the last two centuries.

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## 5. Postreformation Critical Biblical Studies

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Biblical studies in the past two centuries were concerned largely with determining the method by which the Bible received its present content and form. This concern was motivated and guided by philosophical presuppositions based largely on naturalism and evolutionism.

This paper purposes to trace the hermeneutical principles developed by recent biblical studies, noting particularly their presuppositions in the light of those outlined in chapter 1--those touching on the transcendence of God, His activities in human history, and His objective self-revelation in the Bible.

As we have already seen, diverse interpretations of the Bible are largely the result of the philosophical presuppositions of the interpreter and his attitudes toward revelation-inspiration and the resultant authority of Scripture. Because presuppositions of 19th century liberalism continue to influence the methods used in contemporary biblical studies, it will be helpful to review briefly their presentation in the previous chapter, beginning with the tracing of some of their main roots.

### Major Roots of 19th Century Liberalism

Protestant liberalism developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, in part as a reaction against the rigidity of Protestant orthodoxy with its narrow dictatorial concept of inspiration. Liberalism then went to the other extreme by rejecting all concepts of an objective revelation.

Protestant liberalism had its beginnings in several streams of thought. Among them was rationalism, which attempted to reduce Christianity to a religion of reason rather than of revelation. Another line of thought came from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who as a part of the "enlightenment" reacted on the one hand against

Protestant orthodoxy and on the other against rationalism, placing his emphasis on the voice of conscience for the discovery of truths that cannot be seen either from the viewpoint of "pure reason or from divine revelation." Religion for him was closely identified with morality.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), probably the most influential theologian of Protestant liberalism, sought the essence of religion in general and that of Christianity in particular in experience. Religion for him was based on intuitive feeling rather than on objective revelation or dogma. The subjective element became dominant.

Empiricism or historicism contributed to the methodology of biblical studies in Protestant liberalism, the methods of strict historical observation. Another contribution was philosophical idealism, which in G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) reaffirmed that reality is reasonable and described the process by which the immanent "absolute spirit" attained self-awareness in mankind, namely, by way of an evolutionistic process in which pure reason (thesis) is subjected negatively to actual experience (antithesis), which results in a new reality (synthesis) as a result of the opposing elements (thesis and antithesis) acting on each other in the flux of history.

Up to this time theology had dominated the scholarly scene even in secular studies. But now such categories as reason and experience were dominating both secular studies and theology.

#### Crucial Presuppositions of 19th Century Liberalism

As can be seen from this brief sketch of some historical roots of Protestant liberalism, there are within that movement many diverse elements drawn from the thinking of different individuals and schools of thought. We shall attempt a characterization of their crucial presuppositions.

The basic *a priori* tenet of liberalism was that the origin and development of the Bible was the same as that of any other human document and thus it must be studied and interpreted in accordance with the standards of scholarship in science, philosophy, and other disciplines. The Bible, then, was to be interpreted in the same way as any other literature, such as the Greek classics. In the place of the Bible, the liberal outlook preferred the scientific method and the ethical standards of educated people as the standard for faith and doctrine. For example, because Reformation understanding of the biblical concepts of sin and salvation offended

the moral sensibilities of the liberals, these doctrines were rejected by them. (Sinfulness often was regarded as a lack of knowledge or insight, and salvation as simply the supplying of this lack of understanding.)

The concept of a transcendent deity was substituted, *a priori*, totally by a concept of God's immanence. The idea that God acts in any supernatural or miraculous way in the history of mankind was rejected. If the miraculous in the classics must be rejected by scientific judgment so it must be in the Scripture. In either case let it be treated as folklore or mythology.

Religious liberalism likewise rejected the concepts of revelation-inspiration, which asserted that God had revealed Himself objectively and normatively to man in Scripture. Authority of individual thought or experience was substituted for authority of the Word of God. Thought or experience was not evaluated by Scripture. Each had its own value as being individual, a manifestation of the divine Spirit immanent in all things. Biblical writings had value only as a record of remarkable manifestations of religious experience. In the end God was dethroned and man became a law unto his own thinking or feeling self. Reason or experience became autonomous and was placed above scriptural revelation. The doctrinal content of the Bible was no longer binding for faith or practice.

Rejection of the revelatory aspects of the Bible caused not only denial of its normative aspect but also disregard for its unity. This result effected a method of study that tended to fragment the Bible.

Protestant liberalism studied the religion of Israel and the form and content of the Bible on the basis of the human-progress theory. As a result, the biblical sequence was rearranged to present a neat evolution of religious thought. The substitution of the wholly immanent God for the transcendent God, with its implications for revelation-inspiration and acceptance of the principle of the progress of man, gave rise to the "history-of-religions" school. This system of thought no longer recognized the historical uniqueness of Christianity but, rather, saw it as one religion among other religions. Whereas this school recognized Christianity as the highest manifestation of religion, it also considered the possibility of its being superseded. Religious truth, therefore, could best be studied comparatively by placing the Bible alongside all other books of religion, poetry, history, and experiential or rational truth.

Liberalism tended to disregard the historical events in which

God acted on behalf of mankind. The uniqueness of Christianity came to be seen in its profound understanding of God; of man, in his relationship with other men; of the moral example of Jesus; and the effect of these concepts upon the progress of society, rather than in its portrayal of God's activities in history. The Bible was interpreted by a thoroughgoing historical-critical method, not so much for the purpose of painting its historical backdrop as to explain the development of its content and form without recognition of the guiding hand of God.

In liberalism the origin of Scripture was explained on the basis of the evolution of religion, buffeted by such social conditions as created a climate favorable to the development of specific theological concepts. The task of the interpreter, then, was not to study God's message to mankind but to understand the historical conditions that supposedly had molded the Scriptures--the surrounding religion, culture, and political units--not with the intent of clarifying the context in which God revealed Himself but to understand the process by which religious concepts in the Hebrew culture and early Christian faith were borrowed, restructured, brought together, and purified.

Liberalism's method of studying Scripture in the 19th century was based on the presuppositions and categories of contemporary philosophical movements. Unfortunately this forcing of the Bible into various philosophical frameworks distorted its message and reduced its declared power to transform human lives. There have been reactions to the excesses of the liberal position, even from within liberalism itself. Stronger reactions have come from the neoorthodox group, as represented by Karl Barth (1886-1968) (see the previous chapter) and more so from evangelical and fundamentalist groups. Nevertheless, the presuppositions and concepts concerning the nature of God, religion, and the Bible as generally held by Protestant liberalism have had a major effect on the fast-developing method of that category of biblical studies known as biblical criticism.

#### Biblical Criticism

The method of biblical criticism is the application of modern literary and historical-critical methods to the study of the Bible to establish, as far as possible, the manner and date of its composition, including its sources, authorship, and literary development. One of the primary questions asked by biblical criticism is: By what process and at what time did this passage or book receive its present content and form?



For the layman the term "biblical criticism" may give the connotation of depreciation of the Word of God, but its specific intent is rather appreciation through a fuller understanding of its literary history and message. At the same time, this appreciation is not concerned to lead readers to conviction, faith, and action but simply to discriminatory understanding of the people, culture, history, and religion from which the book arose. Thus the basic motives of biblical criticism are similar to the motives of other disciplines; for example, music criticism, which attempts to develop appreciation of a particular type or piece of music; and historical criticism, which attempts to reconstruct a historical event.

Historically, biblical criticism has developed along several interrelated and interdependent lines. Higher criticism attempts to deal with the literary history and meaning of the text through such disciplines as literary criticism, form criticism, and tradition criticism. Literary, or source, criticism attempts to discover the documents or sources presumed to lie behind the present record. Form criticism attempts to discern the structure and the life setting that required or produced a given kind of structure. Tradition criticism considers both the history of the development of a passage and the final editorial work on it.

The questions asked by biblical criticism are: How are we to *explain* what is contained in the final biblical record? What is the psychological framework in which this sort of writing would be feasible? What are the anthropological and sociological forces that would lead to the formation of a particular concept or to the use of a particular literary style? What are the molding forces of the literary style? What is the matrix of political and historical forces which would cause this or that interpretation to be placed on an event in history? Why does the record have the theme it has? Is it advocating a political or a religious cause, or has it been influenced by any combination of such forces? What part does this document play in the history of man's religion as he moves toward a more mature religion?

#### Developing Stages of Biblical Criticism 17th and 18th Centuries

The 17th and 18th centuries saw the formation of that aspect of biblical criticism known as literary criticism. Men such as Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677), and Richard Simon (1638-1712) began to lay the groundwork for a study of Scripture that analyzed and scrutinized the Bible just as one would study any other literature. For

example, the concept of Hobbes that the Bible is not itself the revelation of God, but that it merely contains the record of men who received that revelation led to the study of Scripture as a merely human book. Simon, arguing from the standpoint of the authority of church tradition, stated that the Christian faith could be sustained without the Scriptural record. As the result of such thinking men began to doubt the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, seeing these books as rather the result of a long process of compilation and redaction (the work of many editors).

### Old Testament

Jean Astruc (1684-1766), a French physician, by pulling together the observations of many before him provided the basis for the documentary theory of Pentateuchal composition. Astruc (predecessor of source criticism) claimed that Moses in writing Genesis drew on two major sources. To substantiate this claim he pointed to (1) the distribution of the Hebrew names for deity, Elohim and Yahweh, (2) the repetition of similar stories, and (3) what he considered to be chronological confusion in the book of Genesis.

The movement in OT studies toward the humanistic insight which claimed that the OT should be subjected to the same principles of careful scrutiny as were applied to secular writings was crystallized by J. G. Eichhorn (1752-1827), who brought together in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* the results of OT criticism to that time. He rejected concepts of divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures on the basis that the OT displayed more of the flavor of the Hebrew national literature than would be expected of a divinely inspired book. He extended the source or literary critical concept of Astruc by pointing out that underlying sources could also be discovered in other portions of Scripture by giving close attention to diversities of literary style and by identification of words or phrases characteristic of documents previously categorized.

### New Testament

The influences of rationalism and deism were strongly felt during the formative period of NT criticism. The antisupernaturalism of the 18th century dominated the scene to the extent that even the miracles of Christ were considered to be superstitious wonder tales. Liberal Protestant thought was developed largely in German universities, which being rather free from church control became advocates of the "enlightenment." At the same time

pietism was working within the German churches to break down orthodox dogmatism and to inject religious life into formalized religion.

The works of H. S. Reimarus (1694-1768), published anonymously after his death, brought rationalistic and deistic philosophy to bear heavily on the study of the NT. Reimarus found faith and reason to be irreconcilable. For him the real Jesus of history was not the Jesus described in the NT writings. The supernatural events in the life of Jesus and the portrayal of His divine nature were to be accounted for on the basis that the disciples falsified the story rather than on the basis of actual historical fact. Although Reimarus' extreme positions have been accepted by only a few, nonetheless he enunciated what are still considered to be the major problems in a reconstruction of the life of Jesus.

### 19th Century Biblical Criticism

The 19th century mood was dominated by the development of the natural sciences, the latter half of the century by Darwin's theory of evolution particularly. Man's feeling that he had become autonomous in his study of nature led him to a greater feeling of autonomy in the realm of religion. As indicated earlier, the predominant philosopher was Hegel and the most influential liberal theologian was Friedrich Schleiermacher.

### Old Testament

As a result of the increasing influences of philosophic approaches to critical biblical studies, there was by the middle of the 19th century general acceptance of the theory of a second Isaiah and the dating of much of the biblical material late in the history of Israel. The book of Daniel, for example, was now firmly assigned to the 2d century B.C. A number of source hypotheses were introduced that built models of biblical interpretation dependent on sources, compilers, and redactors (editors) acting over a long period of time as the basis for the final stage in which the Bible now appears.

As a result of the work of Karl H. Graf (1815-1869), Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891), and others a hypothesis emerged recognizing four sources in the Pentateuch with placement of the priestly source after the Babylonian exile and reconstructing Israel's history in accordance with such a late dating. Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) became the most noted and brilliant exponent of this theory and the most influential in winning its acceptance.

Wellhausen, working on the foundation of literary criticism, added the dimension of a historical criticism based on evolutionistic philosophy. The history of the religion of Israel was seen in the light of the development of a natural religion rather than a revealed religion. The influences at play were the evolution of man's religion, modified and redefined in terms of the Hegelian concept of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Thus, the portions of the Pentateuch that demonstrated supposedly more advanced religious characteristics had to be dated at a later period of history. This dating resulted in the claim that the patriarchs, and even Moses himself (if they even existed), were not monotheists, and that the documents referring to monotheism early in the history of Israel were the result of theological and literary activity after the Exile. Even Israel's contact with the Canaanite religions was seen as a factor in Israel's development of monotheism.

According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 151, 152, the Graf-Wellhausen theory consists of the following scheme:

The Bible writer called Jahvist (J), a citizen of the southern kingdom of Judah, wrote his source material, among which, for example, are the patriarchal stories from Abraham to the Exodus, in the middle of the 9th century B.C. A century later the writer called Elohist (E), living in the northern kingdom of Israel, wrote his account. These two documents were cleverly combined into one book, JE, by a redactor or editor (R<sup>JE</sup>) about 650 B.C. In 621 B.C. the book of Deuteronomy (D) was produced, although not in the form we know it. This book was worked over by another redactor (R<sup>D</sup>) about 550 B.C. Between the years 500 and 450 B.C. a priestly writer (P) wrote the legal and religious parts of the Pentateuch, which were then incorporated into the other books of a presumed Mosaic origin by another redactor (R<sup>P</sup>), who did his final work of editing about 400 B.C. or a little later. Since that time, according to the theory, the Pentateuch has not experienced appreciable modification.

Wellhausen himself had little to add to the critical conclusions of his predecessors. Yet his work as an able spokesman was a climax in the critical investigations of liberalism. He had brought together a system that was both simple and "scientific," and upon it many scholars have built in applying those principles to every portion of the OT. Although there have been reactions by evangelicals against this scheme, and even by liberals against its excesses, the major results of Wellhausen's studies are given abiding value by many.

A major presupposition of the literary critical method is well stated by J. Coert Rylaarsdam, editor of the Fortress Press series on OT biblical criticism: "This movement assumed that the production of Scripture was conditioned historically not only by the fact that it had combined documents with a prior history of their own but also that wider movements in human life had influenced their contents. Implicit questions about revelation and inspiration of Scripture were made more pressing."--*Literary Criticism of the Old Testament*, p. iv. This major presupposition has been a standing one with the majority of critical biblical scholars to the present time.

The following presuppositions, also found in other areas of critical biblical scholarship, have crucial implications for conservative biblical studies: (1) A widespread skepticism regarding the trustworthiness of the biblical accounts that narrate earlier, noncontemporaneous events; (2) the tacit assumption that the culture and religion of ancient peoples, including Israel, evolved gradually from early and primitive forms to later and developed ones, thus assuming unilinear evolution; and (3) an *a priori* rejection of all miraculous or supernatural elements, which are explained away in natural ways, if at all possible.

### New Testament

During the 19th century, as in the case of the OT, NT studies were generally controlled by antismiraculous assumptions. An illustration of the mood of the time was liberalism's quest for "the historical Jesus." It was felt that there was a radical difference between the Jesus described by the NT and the "real" Jesus of history. By a careful analysis of the Gospels it was argued that the NT church's fanciful claims regarding Jesus--for the purpose of providing a rationale for her existence--could be laid aside so that the actual facts of the life and character of Jesus could be ascertained. Such reconstruction attempts were made by D. F. Strauss (1808-1874), who reduced the historical Jesus to a mere Jewish wiseman, by F. C. Baur (1792-1860), who saw the history of Christianity through the philosophical principle of thesis, antithesis, synthesis (where the *thesis* was a primitive Jewish concept in which Jesus was only a human teacher, the *antithesis* was the Pauline concept of the supernatural Jesus, and the *synthesis* was the early church concept of the dual nature of Jesus), and in the extreme by Bruno Bauer (1809-1882), who denied the historical existence of Jesus, and Wilhelm Wrede (1859-1906), who stated that Jesus never thought of Himself as the Messiah (a concept still widely accepted).

Those seeking the "historical Jesus" tried to explain on "scientific" grounds the events in the life of Christ, or to picture Him as an individual who received a greater than usual, though not unique, measure of spiritual power. The result was that the "historical Jesus" was little more than the ideal man of 19th century liberalism.

Albert Schweitzer's book *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, which came early in the 20th century, marks the end of liberalism's voluminous search. Schweitzer (1875-1965) maintained that Jesus cannot be separated from the eschatological teachings attributed to Him by the Gospels. Schweitzer, in fact, depicted Jesus as a radical eschatologist who went so far as to precipitate His own death, thinking that it would bring about His own second coming and the kingdom of God. Schweitzer's extreme interpretation, known as "consistent eschatology," although modified, is still influential in critical NT studies.

### 20th Century Biblical Studies

#### Forces Preparing for Change

As biblical criticism entered the 20th century, there were forces preparing it for change. One of these was inherent within literary criticism itself. The attempt to discover sources behind the biblical material became such an obsession to some that they sought the sources behind the sources behind the sources. Reactions to these excesses created a climate in which literary criticism itself could be scrutinized.

Archaeology had produced new data on the historical and linguistic backgrounds of the Bible. This new information at times called into question the results of previous literary critical studies. Although many of its positions were thus modified, literary criticism in general was by no means making a return to orthodoxy. Even though it was beginning to take a more careful look at itself, biblical criticism was still operating on the basic presupposition that the Bible must be interpreted and explained on the same bases as any other literature.

Literary criticism had also raised a number of questions for which it could not provide acceptable answers. For example, although there was general agreement that the Pentateuch was built from four sources, there was disagreement as to which portions belonged to which sources. There were also questions as to whether these sources themselves were based on other sources; and if so, whether the underlying sources could be detected. There were questions about the role of the redactors in the final

edition of the Pentateuch and whether their role could be clearly determined.

### Form Criticism of the Old Testament

Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932) thought that a new approach would be necessary to the literary history of the OT. This new approach involved the study of comparative religions and form criticism. Gunkel's work rested on the presupposition that much of the OT literature developed first of all in an oral form as folk literature--just as similar types of literature had supposedly developed in other cultures. He was thus interested in trying to set up categories of types or genres (the hymn, the blessing, the oath, the legend, or the lament) of biblical literature in order to note the influences of other religions and cultures on them and to discover the setting that produced a particular genre. (A modern example of a genre would be the rather fixed format of a business letter.)

Gunkel was interested in conjectural study of the preliterate and oral stages behind the final literary works that make up the OT. He also concentrated on the particular setting or *Sitz im Leben* out of which a particular literary type or genre originated. (The *Sitz im Leben* is the situation, such as the school, the cultic activities, the home, or the customs of royalty, which produced and maintained respective literary types--this, more than the historical period.) In doing so, Gunkel also compared the genres of Hebrew literature with the cultic and mythological motifs of the religions of Egypt and Mesopotamia in order to determine whether and how Israel was indebted to and also reacted against these religions.

In addition to the form or structure and "setting in life" of each genre, Gunkel also sought the special intention or function of each genre for the original author, community, and collector or redactor, and the particular mood or tone appropriate to the genre as well as its content, which he felt was similar through the genre. In establishing form criticism, Gunkel opened up and outlined a discipline that has contributed to the development of both OT and NT studies.

Among those who have followed Gunkel in OT form criticism is Sigmund Mowinckel (1884- ). Both Gunkel and Mowinckel made their primary contributions on the book of Psalms. The emphasis of Mowinckel, however, differed from that of Gunkel in that the latter considered the Psalms to be essentially personal and private compositions. He was therefore more interested in the thought of the author than in the cultic setting in which the Psalm

supposedly was used. Mowinckel, on the other hand, assumed that the Psalms were written specifically for their role in ceremonial worship rather than as a means of expressing the experience of an individual. He was more interested, therefore, in determining the setting in which he thought a particular form was used and the role the form played in that setting. Mowinckel has thus conjectured numerous stereotyped settings in the life of Israel, such as a New Year festival or an enthronement festival.

An illustration of form criticism will be taken from G. E. Mendenhall's study of the covenant. Mendenhall (1916- ) discovered a supposed parallel between the form of the Hittite suzerainty treaty and the form of the Decalogue. This parallelism, for Mendenhall, explained the unity "of such a diverse group as Israel." Others have used this parallelism to the extent that they have built a covenant theology based on the Hittite treaty form and life setting rather than on the OT.

What is of interest to us is that the basic presupposition of OT form criticism is that the Bible must be studied on the same bases as any other literature since its origin is supposedly the same as that of any other literature. Rylaarsdam has indicated that form criticism presupposes that the people of Israel during their history contributed to the making of the Bible by virtue of their having had a communal existence as Israelites. (See *Literary Criticism*, p. vi.)

The method of form criticism as applied to the OT is not without crucial deficiencies. Because oral units were assumed to be short, the criterion of brevity was developed. This led to the assumption that the shortest accounts are necessarily the oldest and that they grew by later accretions. Archaeological discoveries effectively challenge this assumption. On account of the assumption of the growth from small to large complexes and narratives, it is believed that objective elements of history cannot be found in the OT. Finally, the assumption of form criticism that a particular genre is firmly linked to a particular institution has led to gross misconceptions. A basic problem of form criticism is that it carries within itself tendencies of evolution such as from small to large and from primitive to advanced.

#### Form Criticism of the New Testament

Form criticism of the NT was developed primarily by K. L. Schmidt (1891-1956), Martin Dibelius (1883-1947), and Rudolf Bultmann (1884- ), who built on the method of Gunkel in OT



studies. It is the form criticism of Bultmann that we shall notice here. His form criticism of the Gospels attempts to trace the oral preliterate stage of the Gospels. Its approach is based on several assumptions--the most fundamental being that the Gospels are built basically on individual sayings and narratives. They were developed as oral folk literature composed of many small units circulating effortlessly as separate units for a period of time before they were brought together in the sources used in the formation of the gospel. Added to this basic presupposition is another--that the *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospels is the church and not the life of Jesus; that is to say, the picture of Jesus presented in the Gospels is largely the creation of the imaginative community of believers. The contents of the gospel then reflect more the developing life and needs of the Christian community than the life of Jesus. The concern of the early church, it was presupposed, was not literary or historical but evangelistic. This interest in preaching cultivated and formed the traditions regarding the life of Jesus.

On the basis of these presuppositions it was only natural that Bultmann should feel that a genuine biography of Jesus was impossible. For him the community out of which the Gospels (the only primary source for the life of Jesus) arose was not concerned to transmit biographical information. It transmitted instead individual sayings and narratives that had been formulated for the community's own purposes.

The presuppositions of NT form criticism led to the position that the Gospels result from an imaginative community, reflecting its own life-style and need. Not only does this method counter the evangelical concept of revelation-inspiration but it also fails to take adequate account of the presence of eyewitnesses in the early church. It is likewise not in harmony with more recent understandings of the development of folk literature which indicate that this type of literature cannot be accounted for on the basis of the creative imagination of a community.

### Tradition Criticism

Another recent development in biblical studies is that of tradition criticism, which attempts to come to grips with the questions raised by source criticism and left unanswered by form criticism. Thus it is a new attempt to tell the whole story about the origin and development of the Bible.

Source criticism dealt primarily with the supposed literary sources. Form criticism dealt with individual literary units and

the setting of these units in the life of the people. Tradition criticism presupposes and leans heavily on both source and form criticism as it makes a new attempt to trace the development of the Bible from its conception through its oral and literary history to its final form.

Tradition criticism is interested in the history that has been involved in the formation, modification, and/or synthesis of the original oral and written sources that eventually were brought together to form the Bible. And it is interested in knowing the unique motivation--whether theological, political, or social--for the various stages of this history.

#### Old Testament Tradition Criticism

For the OT, Ivan Engnell (1906-1964) and Martin Noth (1902-1968) who amplified and popularized the views of Albrecht Alt (1883-1956) are examples of pioneers in tradition criticism. The work of Noth and Engnell illustrates some of the differences in emphasis within tradition criticism itself. Engnell, working from the perspective of the Scandinavian "Uppsala School," rejected the Wellhausen idea of anonymous redactors, explaining the formation of biblical materials rather on the basis of circles and schools of tradition, working both from oral and written materials. Noth, on the other hand, placed more emphasis on the written material.

An illustration of Noth's method can be drawn from a single facet of his attempts to show how Israel's complex traditions were made to serve the unification of the twelve tribes. For him, the nation developed slowly by unifying unrelated small clans and tribes, brought about, in part, by the development of a common store of traditions. The story of Jacob, for example, is assumed to be derived from several strands of tradition representing ancestors of different North Palestinian groups of people. Assuming unification, from a common ancestry, to be a major goal, Noth sees it met by such a development of the tradition of the journey of Jacob as to unite the several strands in one account. But the ancestral heroes of the southern tribes were Abraham and Isaac. By the development of the tradition that Jacob was in the line of descent of Abraham and Isaac it was possible for unity to exist among the southern and northern tribes.

Again of interest to us is the fact that the basic presupposition of tradition criticism is that the Bible must be treated on the same bases as any other literature, for the reason that its development is the same. As Rylaarsdam again has indicated, tra-

dition criticism is based on the recognition that the very existence of the community gives shape to the tradition and results in handing it on to one generation after another.

### New Testament Redaction Criticism

The term "redaction criticism" is more generally used to describe the NT discipline because it concentrates on the final edition, the time span for the development of the tradition being much less in the NT than in the OT. NT redaction criticism has been interested in the author's theological motivation for the collection, arrangement, and modification of traditional material in its final form. This interest in theological motivation is not, however, an interest in the theology of a book or of the Bible. It is concerned more with the way in which the theological emphasis of one author differs from that of another. By a comparison of the similarities and the differences of the Gospels in their final form, in their use and omission of sources and in their comments, it is felt that it is possible to identify the unique theological motives that compelled the author to bring the material together in a particular way.

NT redaction criticism has built largely on the work of Bultmann in that he was more concerned for the motivational factors involved in the final form. NT redaction criticism developed under the work of Günther Bornkamm (1905- ), Hans Conzelmann (1915- ), and Willi Marxsen (1919- ). The work of Conzelmann on the Gospel of Luke will illustrate briefly the types of conclusions reached by redaction criticism. Conzelmann completely broke with the view that Luke was the first church historian. By his analysis of the Gospel of Luke, noting the sources in the Gospel, Conzelmann came to the conclusion that Luke was a self-conscious theologian rather than a church historian because the details of his composition could be shown to have been theologically motivated.

### Recent Developments in Biblical Studies

As a result of recent archaeological discoveries and other correctives to the Wellhausen theory, OT scholarship has moved away from the most extreme liberal views of the 19th century. The trustworthiness of the biblical materials and the early date for the many traditions recorded in that material are now more generally recognized. The uniqueness and grandeur of Yahwism is generally respected, and it is recognized that this religion did not develop along the lines of a neat evolutionary scheme. The 8th century prophets are no longer considered the originators but

rather the heirs of a monotheism that in some forms could have reached back to the times of the patriarchs. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls has brought about more respect for the previously available OT texts. It also helped to illuminate the history of the intertestamental period and provide background material out of which the NT could be more fully understood.

NT studies have often tended to move away from extreme approaches. The Gospel of John, for example, is more frequently placed in the first century A.D. and by some is considered to be reasonably trustworthy historically, as also the book of Acts. The letters traditionally attributed to Paul (with three or four exceptions) are becoming more widely accepted as Pauline. Great strides have also been made in textual critical and linguistic studies.

Biblical studies, and NT studies in particular, are still wrestling with the questions raised by the hermeneutical approach of Bultmann. This approach is an apologetical approach that attempts to demythologize the Bible in order to make its message acceptable to modern man. To demythologize means to reinterpret mythological terms as those that are existentially (using particularly the categories of the German existential philosopher Martin Heidegger) relevant to man's understanding of his own existence. In turn, for Bultmann mythology is anything not acceptable to the modern scientific world view. Anything bordering on the supernatural (such as miracles, divine intervention in human history, angels, Satan, or heaven) is considered mythology. While stripping off the mythology Bultmann desires to maintain the kerygma--the essential message--that which is existentially relevant to man's understanding of his existence.

Bultmann believes that it is possible and proper to demythologize the Bible because he sees the Bible writers as portraying their understanding of their own existence rather than recording an objective reality. (For a discussion of the propositional and objective aspects of Scripture, over against concepts that consider it to be purely subjective, see chapter 1.) Bultmann thus thought that it is possible to relate the functional aspects of the myth had for the author to contemporary man's understanding of his existence.

Bultmann approaches biblical eschatology and Creation, for example, as myths. He sees the concept of the end of the age through supernatural intervention (accompanied by a final judgment that assigns destinies) as an absurd superstition to contemporary man. History, contends Bultmann, will not come to an end through some supernatural means. If an end should come, it will be by such a natural means as war or a change in the sun's

radiation patterns. Yet the essential message of the eschatological "myths" is not unrelated to contemporary man's existence, for every man is destined to die. There is urgency, then, in making decisions about one's own personal existence in that every moment contains the possibility of being the eschatological moment. Bultmann considers the "myth" of Creation not as a fanciful account of the world's origin but as a description of the creaturely dependent state of man.

Bultmann, in his approach to the Bible, has brought together systematically and apologetically many of the more important recent trends in theological and philosophical thought. Not only does Bultmann have roots in 19th century liberalism but also in dialectical theology. He has capitalized on the form critical method and 20th century existentialist thought, while remaining aware of contemporary philosophies of history. Not only did he combine these theological interests but also he had the modern communicative interest of attempting to speak to contemporary secularized man, whose living and thinking has been conditioned by modern science.

The hermeneutical approach of Bultmann recognizes one aspect of the biblical picture, and that is man in his relation with God; however, it denies God's transcendence as well as His ability to act in the events of history. Similarly, the biblical message, it should be noted, not only speaks about man in his relation to God but also about God apart from man, and about God's divine acts in history. (The concept that the biblical record of God's activities in history--as for example in the Resurrection of Christ--must be taken seriously has recently been championed by W. Pannenberg.) Many scholars of the Bultmann school, as well as others, have stressed that Bultmann's approach leads to a serious reduction of the Christian message to a subjectively controlled bare minimum.

In recent years there has been reemphasis in both OT and NT studies on biblical theology. Critical methods have a tendency to deal only with parts of Scripture or even with certain phases of a specific Scripture, such as the linguistic phase or the historical phase. Thus critical methodologies themselves do not deal with what might be considered the essence of the biblical material. Biblical theology, on the other hand, is an attempt to understand the biblical message as a whole. It has the potential of studying the biblical message from the standpoint of the Bible itself rather than from that of some external philosophical model. Thus it can move in the direction of a more constructive and useful approach to the understanding of the message of the Bible. The usefulness of this approach in the future, however, will depend on the willingness to lay aside those presuppositions that make the

Bible only a human book and to accept the Bible's self-understanding, namely, that it is also the Word of God.

Implications of Biblical Criticism  
for Adventist Biblical Studies

The more careful approach to the study of the Bible in this century should not be taken as an uncritical return to Protestant orthodoxy or to concepts of revelation held by the Reformers. Although liberal critical studies have reexamined many former positions due to the availability of new information and the application of new methodologies, they have not abandoned the original presuppositions of liberalism. Critical biblical studies are not in general moving in the direction of recognizing the Bible as the Word of God to mankind and thus they do not give the impression of moving in the direction of attempting to bring about a fuller understanding and acquaintance with the God of the universe.

Modern critical studies explain the content and form of biblical material on the basis of the natural outworking of the forces of history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, politics, and the laws of literature as seen through the eyes of naturalistic and evolutionistic philosophies rather than as the outworking of God's efforts to speak objectively to mankind. The Bible is seen as a resultant of these forces among and within nations and societies rather than as the record of the activity of God in history and the giving of an inspired message. It is an individual or a community speaking to itself rather than God speaking to that individual or community. It is dominated by a study of the religion, culture, and history of a people rather than a study of God's plan in history to reconcile mankind to Himself. It is the study of pieces of Hebrew and early Christian literature rather than a unified body of revelation.

Rylaarsdam, writing within the general framework of biblical criticism, affirms that the basic presupposition of modern criticism is that the Bible has developed historically according to the same laws of history that have governed the development of other ancient national traditions.

This, he insists, is what makes the criticism "modern." It had to make its way cautiously against the long-standing "traditions of dogma and confessional authority" that saw the language of Scripture as the vehicle of the divine absolute. This modern criticism, by contrast, saw the contents of the Bible as conditioned by the same human limitations and situation as modified

any other kinds of historical tradition. (See *Literary Criticism*, pp. viii and ix.)\*

The presuppositions of modern biblical studies, then, are radically different from those outlined in the first chapter of this symposium. The Bible, having been reduced to the level of a mere human book, is no longer the normative, authoritative Word of God recording His will and purpose for mankind. God's transcendence and His acts in history are denied or radically transformed on the assumption that these concepts conflict with the mood of modern man and his evolutionistic scientific outlook. The Bible thus contains man's reflections about God rather than God's message to man.

Due to space limitations it has not been the intention of this chapter to deal with every major trend or development in the history of critical biblical studies. It has been our purpose primarily to trace some of these developments in order to show the basis on which these critical studies are founded in order, again, that their value in conservative biblical studies might be seen.

Although declaring so plainly that the underlying presuppositions of biblical criticism are contrary to those on which the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is founded, this writer recognizes that certain aspects of modern biblical studies have done much to establish an accurate text of the Bible and to sharpen our understanding of the language of the Bible. They have greatly illuminated the background and climate in which God revealed Himself to His people. They have also at times provided new dimensions for interpreting the biblical message. Although liberal criticism has contributed in its own way to an understanding of the Bible, the question must be raised as to whether the presuppositions can be separated from the method without destroying the latter. This issue must likewise be considered whether one is formulating or applying a valid methodology in the study of Scripture. It is undeniable that the developments outlined above depreciated the authority and function of the Bible in Christianity. Over against these effects, the binding function and authoritative nature of the Bible must be reasserted, for the Bible is, after all, the Word of God, the norm by which is revealed to man God's character and will and His plan for reconciling man to Himself.

\*Grateful acknowledgment is made to Fortress Press for permission to quote from *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament* by Norman Habel, edited by J. Coert Rylaarsdam, 1971.

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6. Modern Protestant Conservative  
Biblical Studies in America

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At the beginning of the twentieth century Protestant conservative Bible scholarship in America was generally held in high esteem, but between the two world wars it neglected to keep pace with liberal scholarship in producing carefully researched publications; consequently it experienced serious loss in influence and prominence. However, recent years have witnessed a change of emphasis whereby conservatives are again beginning to regain distinction by their serious efforts in biblical and theological research, and a brief description of certain recent trends among them will be worthwhile here.

In treating the specific question of the hermeneutical concerns of modern Protestant conservative Bible scholarship in America it will be necessary first to define what is meant by the term *conservative*. This designation, like the term *liberal*, covers a great variety of attitudes and approaches. In conjunction with the need for definition, a brief historical survey will be necessary. After treating these preliminary matters, we will proceed to a discussion of hermeneutical questions as they relate to four main areas of concern among conservatives: (1) The matter of inspiration of Scripture, (2) the question of utilizing modern scholarly tools and techniques in Bible research, (3) the question of the Bible in relationship to modern scientific discovery, and (4) trends in the field of biblical eschatology. Although other topics could well claim our attention, space necessitates limiting the discussion; and these four areas will serve to focus on the major issues germane to the subject.

The "Conservatives":  
Definition and Brief Historical Survey

Conservative Christianity as we know it today is a variegated phenomenon. Not only does it represent a variety of views among

its adherents but also it often crosses denominational lines, to include various groups of Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and others. In some cases the conservative wing of a particular denomination or confession represents a small minority of the adherents of the affiliation or confession; but in other cases, entire denominations may lie within the framework of conservatism--as is the case, for example, with Seventh-day Adventists. Conservatives of today vary greatly with respect to such matters as social concern, some taking a real and active interest along these lines and others virtually neglecting this area of service. There are also degrees of openness to scientific discovery and to using methodologies in vogue in biblical and theological studies.

Just who, then, are the conservatives? What characteristics bind them together?

In a general way it may be said that conservatives, in contrast to liberals, (1) emphasize the Bible as directly the revelation of God, inspired by Him, and put more emphasis on propositional truth than liberals do; (2) place revelation as a source of knowledge of God above such things as reason or intuition; (3) proclaim the deity of Christ as traditionally held and stress Jesus' virgin birth and the miracles He performed during His ministry; (4) emphasize the reality of Christ's resurrection from the dead; (5) look forward to His second advent; (6) stress the redemptive nature of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross; (7) take both sin and salvation from sin by grace seriously, attaching great significance to the conversion experience of the individual; (8) believe in predictive prophecy; and (9) recognize God's supernatural activity in Creation and at various times in history as recorded in Scripture. In addition, conservatives of our time characteristically have held a more negative and pessimistic view of modern culture than have the liberals. (It should be noted that the term *conservative* as used herein is a broad designation that includes fundamentalists, new evangelicals [or new conservatives], and other groups, as will become more clear as we proceed.)

Throughout the Christian era there have been numerous conservative Christians. The major Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century should be classified as such, of course. More recent roots from which modern American Protestant conservatism has stemmed may be found in Pietism, in English Puritanism, in the Wesleyan revival, and in other similar movements that in due course crossed the Atlantic. The Great Awakenings on the North American continent itself provide still further backgrounds. However, an especially critical development that has been basic to

the formation of major trends in present-day American conservative Protestantism is the liberal-fundamentalist controversy and its aftermath. In order to defend traditional Christian views on such matters as the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Christ, and the supernatural activity of God in Creation and redemption, some twelve volumes entitled *The Fundamentals* were published from 1910 to 1914. About three million copies of these volumes were distributed throughout the English-speaking world; and a number of other works repudiating liberalism, higher criticism, and modernism appeared. There were attacks on science and on the scientific method, especially because of uniformitarian and organic-evolution theories propounded by scientists and accepted by the modernist Christian theologians.

Because of the significance of the set of volumes entitled *The Fundamentals*, the name fundamentalist became attached to the defenders of the faith whose views were represented in these volumes. From that day to this the so-called fundamentalists have tended to be rigid in their doctrine of scriptural inspiration, and often place great emphasis on adherence to certain traditional or orthodox doctrinal positions. On the other hand, they frequently have been accused of failing to make the Bible message relevant to modern man and of failing also to become involved in the area of social concern. Doubtless fearful of the connotations of the social-gospel movement, they have shrunk from meeting the needs of society, and in this respect have revealed a strange departure from the truly strong social concern of many of their forerunners in the nineteenth and earlier centuries.

During the 1920's and 1930's various literary battles and oral confrontations took place between outstanding liberal and fundamentalist representatives. It seemed for the most part that liberal scholarship repeatedly gained ground and that the overrigid stance of the fundamentalists was seen as untenable. Whereas during those decades the liberals had many qualified scholars, fundamentalists could boast but few. In fact, fundamentalists often took a rather defensive position against advanced education.

In large part, the fundamentalist regression came about through loss of seminaries for training the ministry, failure to reach the general public, and a tendency to become so exclusive as to bring about not only isolation from liberals but also division within fundamentalism. It is pertinent to say that in addition to the fundamentalist movement as such there is a fundamentalist mentality, and that the latter bears within it the seeds of divisiveness. As Edward J. Carnell points out, the mentality of fundamentalism is characterized by such things as ideological thinking (which is "rigid, intolerant, and doctrinaire"), intel-

lectual stagnation, and negative ethic (see *The Case for Orthodox Theology* [1959], pp. 113-125).

By the 1940's and 1950's a concerned group of conservative Christian scholars within the fundamentalist movement endeavored to infuse new life into it. Adhering to the traditional fundamentals of the Christian faith--including belief in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, acceptance of the deity of Christ in its historically accepted sense, and other basic tenets of the fundamentalist position--they were more flexible than some of their colleagues with regard to such matters as the findings of science and the use of newly developed tools and methods for Bible study. Frequently they manifested real concern for society and its needs--without, of course, denying the necessity of the individual conversion experience.

An early harbinger of this new attitude may be found in discussions that created the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action in 1943, a group referred to as new evangelicals (to distinguish these particular conservatives from the fundamentalists, from the evangelicals of earlier times, and from evangelicals in other parts of the world). The National Association itself was to be interdenominational, and it had a test of fellowship covering only doctrines held to be most essential (a list of seven basic teachings is conveniently quoted by Bruce Shelley in his *Evangelicalism in America*, pp. 71, 72). A softening attitude toward society and its needs was seen in the work of affiliated organizations such as The World Relief Commission and The Commission on Social Action. Although the relief and welfare work of these new evangelicals may be comparatively modest, it reveals a significant break from the attitude of older fundamentalism.

Perhaps one of the most striking steps in the division between fundamentalism and the new evangelicalism came in 1947, when one of the prominent leaders of the new movement, Carl F. H. Henry, published his book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. According to his preface Henry did not intend to deny any of the fundamentals of doctrine; but he was quite critical of the position fundamentalism had taken with regard to meeting the needs of society. The following year Edward J. Carnell published his *Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, which is sometimes considered a major turning point in conservative endeavor to dialogue with modern philosophers and with theologians of nonconservative stance.

A further significant step in the history of the new evangelicals was the establishment of the Evangelical Theological Society for mutual association and discussion among biblical scholars and

theologians of conservative viewpoint. Further treatment of the position of this society with respect to the question of inspiration of Scripture will be given in our next section, where we will discuss the society's doctrinal basis which was adopted as part of its constitution in 1951.

So the older fundamentalism has now been divided by the emergence of the new evangelicalism, but it is not always simple to differentiate between the two groups because of the variety of belief within each. Indeed, positions held by the more liberal fundamentalists may well tend to merge with those held by the more conservative new evangelicals. However, a distinction usually can be made between the two groups on the basis that the new evangelicals show a greater openness toward dialogue with the modern world, including an attempt to make the gospel message more relevant to modern man in both theological presentation and social action.

Not all present-day conservative Protestant Christians are to be classified as either fundamentalists or new evangelicals, as has been indicated earlier. This terminology, in the first place, is most appropriate to the North American scene. Present-day conservatism in England and on the continent of Europe, for example, has for the most part a somewhat different line of development. But even in America there are conservative groups, such as the Seventh-day Adventists, that cannot easily be classified as either fundamentalists or new evangelicals.

### Inspiration of Scripture

One of the most basic concerns of conservative theologians relates to the question of the inspiration of Scripture. The old fundamentalists took a rigid position that the Bible was verbally inspired. Not all fundamentalists would see eye to eye on this matter, but for some the total effect of their position has been to suggest that Scripture was given virtually by a dictation method. Even though the term *dictation* is often repudiated by them, some seem to say that God inspired not only the men but also the very words in which the divine messages were transcribed by prophets and apostles. A few fundamentalists would carry the point as far as to claim that the English King James Version was uniquely authoritative or inspired. There has also been some skepticism toward any type of study relating to the text and the history of Bible books or of Bible passages. The difficulty in establishing the exact views of inspiration held by the new evangelicals may be somewhat represented by Wick Broomall's book entitled *Biblical Criticism*, produced in 1957. In it he points out (pp. 23, 24) that many liberal scholars equate "verbal inspiration with dictation"

and thereby endeavor to make the conservative position look ludicrous. But he goes on to say that "whatever may be the unjust caricature of the conservative view, the Bible most deliberately teaches the verbal inspiration of its documents." He even goes so far as to say that "the modern idea that only the thought (but not the words) was inspired is utterly foreign to the Scriptures and absolutely obnoxious to any true view of inspiration." Broomall, on the other hand, recognizes the value of using certain tools for better understanding of the text, and he emphasizes the need to be well versed in biblical languages.

There is growing evidence that the new evangelicals have broadened the concept of inspiration held by the fundamentalists. An indication of this tendency is seen in the newer attitudes toward the use of tools by which to gain a better understanding of Scripture. Edward Carnell, for example, in his *Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (pp. 192-194) in 1948 made a distinction between the acceptability of lower criticism, which deals with the state of the biblical text, and higher criticism, which deals with the application of secular scientific historical methodology to the study of the biblical text. He believed that the former was legitimate but the latter was not. By 1959, however, he was willing in his *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (p. 97) to go as far as to declare that "any investigation that throws light on the literary and historical background of the Bible" would be welcomed by orthodoxy. Bernard Ramm had earlier expressed a similarly favorable view toward the use of both lower and some aspects of higher criticism in his *Protestant Christian Evidences* of 1953 (see pp. 19-21). Indeed, Ramm notes that the "factuality of the Bible as a document" would be vindicated by proper use of such methods.

We more specifically now come to the question of what inspiration of Scripture signifies to the new evangelicals. Again, it is difficult to generalize their mainstream position, but their basic understanding of inspiration at an early stage of development was perhaps characterized by the constitution of the Evangelical Theological Society, adopted January 1, 1951. In Article III, entitled "Doctrinal Basis," we find the following statement: "The Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs." All members of the society were required to subscribe to this doctrinal basis yearly. It seems evident that this particular statement, although it broadens somewhat the position of the earlier fundamentalists, adheres basically to a verbal-inspiration theory, sometimes referred to as plenary inspiration. The matter of verbal inerrancy is safeguarded in the phrase "inerrant in the autographs."



Apparently the new evangelicals were quite ready to recognize the obvious fact that different extant Bible manuscripts vary somewhat, but in 1951 they may have wished to maintain the idea of an original God-given *wording*. Be that as it may, the decade of the 1960's brought about a breach within the society itself and among evangelicals in general over this matter. Especially important was Dewey M. Beegle's publication *The Inspiration of Scripture*, which appeared in 1963. In Beegle's opinion conservatives have erred in using a deductive approach to the question of inspiration, based on the postulate of God's sovereignty. They have deduced that a sovereign God must needs have revealed Himself inerrantly. However, the very fact that extant manuscripts often differ has shown that not all of them can be error free, and thus there has had to be a further deduction that the *autographs* must have been error free.

Beegle himself would break with this sort of reasoning and use an inductive approach to the question of inspiration. Instead of beginning with generalities from which a series of deductions are drawn he thought it better to go to the Scriptures themselves to see what they say about the manner in which they are inspired. According to Beegle, the Bible does proclaim for itself inspiration and authoritativeness, but it does not proclaim a doctrine of inerrancy. In fact, one should remember that when Jesus and the apostles appealed to Scripture they utilized the manuscripts of their time, not the supposedly inerrant autographs. Beegle also points out the problem of whether human language is really capable of giving inerrant communication from God.

Beegle is not the only scholar among the new evangelicals who seems to have broken with the view given in the 1951 "Doctrinal Basis" of the Evangelical Theological Society, but he perhaps represents as radical a departure from that position as any first-rate new evangelical scholar (obviously not all aspects of his position have been treated here). Moreover, although some of the original excitement within evangelical circles on the question of inspiration has subsided, probably the debate is not yet over. Nevertheless, in spite of mutual disagreements on the matter, evangelicals of rather differing views can--and still do--live within what is to them a generally acceptable conservative confraternity.

Although on the North American scene a great deal of prominence has been attached either to the fundamentalist viewpoint or to the somewhat similar evangelical attitude toward the question of the inspiration of Scripture, it should be noted that not all conservatives have accepted either a strict or a modified verbal-inspiration theory. In fact, the more recent indications are that

some evangelical positions--although retaining the expressions *verbal* or *plenary* inspiration--may be close to that held by the Seventh-day Adventists, among others, as stated in the introduction to the book *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White (pp. vii-ix):

The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language. . . .

The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine with the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. . . .

The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

Reasons for the unacceptability of the inspiration theory implied in the "Doctrinal Basis" of the Evangelical Theological Society have been aptly discussed by a Seventh-day Adventist scholar, Dr. Raymond F. Cottrell, in a series of editorials in the *Review and Herald* during 1966. On the one hand Cottrell points out that the wording "the Bible alone" imposes a limitation on God's ability to reveal Himself--a limitation that Seventh-day Adventists cannot accept. Cottrell calls attention to the fact that Scripture itself mentions other inspired writings that have not been included in the canon, and he warns against the danger of closing the door to the possibility of God's revealing Himself any further after the last material in the canon was produced. Such a limitation obviously would preclude God's choosing to reveal Himself in any special way today. (See *Review and Herald*, February 17, 1966, p. 13.)

Cottrell has also challenged the usefulness and meaningfulness of the statement "inerrant in the autographs" because of its by-

passing "the real question--can we have confidence in the Bible as it exists today?" As Cottrell clearly points out, "The state of the original text is irrelevant to faith today, but it does make all the difference in the world whether we can have confidence in the adequacy of the text of Scripture that has come down to us, as a means to salvation." Such adequacy of the present text Cottrell, of course, fully accepts. (See *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1966, p. 13.)

The position enunciated above regarding the divine-and-human nature of God's Word, together with the conviction that God has indeed preserved in the transmission of His Word all that is essential to salvation, provides a truly sound basis for a genuine conservative approach to the question of inspiration--one that harmonizes with the Scripture's own testimony regarding inspiration and revelational method.

#### Utilization of New Tools and Techniques in Biblical Studies

We have already briefly mentioned that as twentieth-century conservative Christianity moved generally in a direction away from strict fundamentalism to new evangelicalism, there was also greater acceptance of scholarly techniques and of tools for use in biblical and theological studies. Indeed, from a very early time, archaeology was recognized by conservatives as a useful aid in the study of the Bible. Although fundamentalists tended to use archaeology to "prove" the Bible, most conservatives today would rather call attention to the remarkable confirmation that archaeological discovery has made at many points with regard to historical data recorded in Scripture. Conservatives have been among the foremost, for example, to hail the value of such discoveries as the Nuzi Tablets for the light they shed on patriarchal times and for numerous other findings that illuminate the backgrounds of the OT and the NT.

As briefly noted above, conservatives have also become increasingly willing to enter into dialogue with nonconservatives (although the nonconservative response has not always been enthusiastic), and they have shown themselves to be generally adept in biblical languages and in knowledge of the history and transmission of the biblical text. They have come to the place where they are often quite ready to look seriously at the methodologies of literary criticism, form criticism, and other approaches used by modern liberal scholars in treating the Bible text. We may note that a number of fairly solid studies by conservatives have been forthcoming to deal with critical questions pertaining to the OT

and NT books. Various conservative publications such as Edward Young's *Introduction to the Old Testament* and Donald Guthrie's *New Testament Introduction* carefully weigh the strengths and weaknesses of the various modern methodologies in common use, and they are also fairly substantial works in their own right. Men such as Young and Guthrie, in their critiques of biblical criticism, give occasion for the question to be raised as to whether a student of the Bible can adopt the methodologies of critical biblical scholarship without embracing consciously or otherwise the presuppositions on which those methodologies are built. (See chap. 5.)

The historical introductions, grammars, and linguistic-lexicographical tools of high quality that have been produced in recent years by conservative scholars are too numerous to mention here. But it may be noted that conservative scholarship has taken on an air of less bitterness toward the position of the liberals; furthermore, that where conservatives have adopted some of the newer methodologies their use of them is frequently more balanced than has been the case with liberals. The latter altogether too often have tended to carry one methodology or another to extremes. Indeed, it is important to observe that the incisive critiques often given by conservatives of the methodologies used by liberals are well worth pondering by liberals and conservatives alike. Whether the liberal scholar recognizes it--and it appears that some such scholars are beginning to do so--conservatives have often brought a wholesome corrective into the field of present-day biblical and theological study. Wherein the conservative thus far generally has failed is in not having sufficient creativeness to develop new methodologies and approaches that would enhance our understanding of the biblical text and its message.

With regard to hermeneutic itself, conservative scholars have been giving increasing attention to the need for work here too. Moreover, representative publications by evangelical scholars in this area have not neglected historical antecedents nor been unaware of contemporary trends. One may note, for instance, A. Berkeley Mickelsen's *Interpreting the Bible* (1963) as well as the symposia edited by John F. Walvoord, *Inspiration and Interpretation* (1957), and by Carl F. Henry, *Revelation and the Bible* (1958). Also worthy of mention are Clark H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation* (1971); the paperback reprint of Section 3 of *Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology* (1967) under the title *Hermeneutics*; and the series of essays in Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Bible: The Living Word of Revelation* (1968).

In closing this section it may be useful to notice one striking example of the kind of recognition that conservative scholars have begun to gain. The lengths of reign and synchronisms of the

kings of Israel and Judah as recorded in the OT have long baffled scholars because of apparent inconsistencies and contradictions, but a Seventh-day Adventist scholar, Edwin R. Thiele, unraveled the mystery in his book *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. In this book, first published in 1951 by the University of Chicago and Cambridge University presses and again in a revised edition in 1965 by the Eerdmans Publishing Company, Thiele shows the reliability of the biblical text. A liberal scholar, William A. Irwin, states in an introduction to Thiele's volume that the "unique feature of Professor Thiele's work is that he has attained his results by the most rigid application of scholarly facts and methods." Indeed, Irwin goes so far as to declare that "it is a matter of first-rate importance to learn now that the Books of Kings are reliable in precisely that feature which formerly excited only derision" (rev. ed., pp. xxi, xxiii).

#### Religion and Science

As noted earlier, one of the basic characteristics of early fundamentalism was inherent antagonism toward the sciences--antagonism largely connected with the fact that theories of uniformitarianism and biological evolution not only were strongly promulgated by scientists but also were adopted by liberal theologians into their "modernist" theology. The new evangelicals have endeavored to be true to the orthodox position, but they also have taken a more open attitude toward scientific discovery. Frequently, new evangelicals have produced defenses of fiat Creation, the biblical account of the Flood, and similar matters. There is even an effort by many conservatives to become adept in various of the sciences by advanced study in these disciplines.

An interesting new development among certain prominent individuals of evangelical persuasion is a posture toward scientific theories that would, in the opinion of many of their brethren, lead away from a genuine Bible position. Many evangelicals still hold a chronology of Creation based on the genealogies in Genesis as given in the Masoretic text. Others, while retaining a relatively low chronology, either point out that genealogy should not be treated as chronology or utilize the somewhat longer LXX chronology. Still others tend to dismiss chronological concerns when they deal with the early chapters of Genesis. It still would be incomprehensible, of course, that any of the new evangelicals would deny fiat Creation, but some have made unusual concessions to the theory of biological evolution. Bernard Ramm, for example, speaks favorably of theistic evolution, although he would rather classify himself as a progressive creationist, for his feeling is that "in progressive creationism there is the best accounting for

all the facts--biological, geological, and Biblical" (see his *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* [1954], pp. 292, 293). He claims that many evangelicals would place the origin of man about 10,000 B.C., "whereas others are willing to admit that man is hundreds of thousands of years old"--*Ibid.*, p. 347.

Parallel to his posture toward the origin of man, Ramm has also argued against an anthropologically universal Flood--a position challenged in a 1961 publication by John C. Whitcomb, Jr., and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (see pp. 36ff.). Various articles in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* foster the concept of a universal Flood, together with a low chronology of that Flood as well as of Creation.

Many well-informed conservatives continue to hold a relatively low chronology for Creation and the Flood. They recognize that newer types of scientific time clocks are yielding results out of harmony with their own concept of biblical time, but they also tend to stress that tentativeness should be attached to the findings of such time clocks. What may appear to some researchers as scientific certainty may in reality be quite tentative, they would suggest; and as one interesting example, they can point to developments on the Isle of Surtsey, which island appeared and took shape in 1963-1964 through volcanic action in the North Atlantic Ocean near Iceland. Although scientists have suggested that sandy beaches require millennia or even millions of years to develop, a sandy beach appeared on Surtsey in a matter of a *few weeks!* (See Sigurdur Thorarinnsson, *Surtsey*, tr. by S. Eysteinnsson [1964], p. 39.) Although this phenomenon cannot be considered quite parallel to the more sophisticated time clocks, it does indicate the appropriateness of a critical attitude toward supposed scientific knowledge.

#### Biblical Eschatology

In the field of biblical eschatology, the Augustinian amillennialism dominated the scene for centuries, even until after the Protestant Reformation. But early in the eighteenth century a view called postmillennialism was set forth by Whitby and Vitringa. It was soon espoused by such religious leaders as Jonathan Edwards, and it found wide circulation through such famed Bible commentators as Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, Thomas Scott, Matthew Henry, and David Brown. Eventually, in the early nineteenth century there was a resurgence of premillennialism. This went hand in hand with the widespread proclamation of the soon-expected second advent of Christ and was similar to the premillennial views held among most of the early church fathers prior to Augustine.

Whereas the amillennialists looked upon the thousand years of Revelation 20 as a figurative or symbolic number that depicted the Christian dispensation of this earth's history, the postmillennialists thought of the millennium in terms of a sort of utopian thousand years (not always taken to be a literal figure) that was to come before Christ's second advent. The premillennialist view is that Christ's second coming will be prior to the thousand-year period of Revelation 20. Premillennialists so generally believe in an *earthly* millennial reign of the Jews that Seventh-day Adventists, because of their differing view on the millennium, are sometimes thought to be amillennialists. However, Seventh-day Adventists do believe in a *premillennial* second advent of Christ and a real millennium, and hence are indeed premillennialists. They obviously do not hold the amillennialist position.

The aforementioned varying views regarding the millennium relate specifically to interpretation of the 20th chapter of Revelation. As for interpretation of the whole book, there has been a tendency--especially from the time of the Protestant Reformers onward--to regard various of its prophecies as finding fulfillment in the course of this earth's history, especially during the Christian era.

From small beginnings of such historical-type interpretation, wherein isolated prophecies were treated as having historical fulfillment, there eventually arose full-fledged historicist, or continuous historical, expositions. Most frequently these looked upon the prophetic messages in the book of Revelation as signifying a sequence of historical events in a straight line down through the centuries, culminating in Christ's second advent and subsequent events. Among adherents of this straight-line historicist interpretation were such outstanding expositors as Albert Barnes and E. B. Elliott.

Some historicists, such as Uriah Smith, also viewed the book of Revelation as being for the most part fulfilled in historical events during the present age; but instead of seeing a straight line through the book, these expositors found evidence of repeated sequences throughout Christian history. In other words, the prophetic messages of the churches, seals, trumpets, and so forth, gave *recapitulation* of history from the NT period to the grand eschatological climax.

Among some premillennialists of the early nineteenth century a futuristic outlook emerged. It was similar to that of the Jesuit scholar Ribera, who fostered such a concept during the late sixteenth century. To futurists virtually the entire book of Revelation, except possibly the messages to the seven churches

and the material in the final few chapters, is thought of as referring specifically to a short period of time near the close of this earth's history. The message to the seven churches could be taken as relating either to the churches in John's own day or to the church down through the ages (or to both). Otherwise, history virtually was left out of the book except for a short period just before Christ's second coming. To this period almost the entire book up to 19:11 is supposed to address itself.

A particular variety of futurism known as pretribulationism originated early in the nineteenth century through the work of John Nelson Darby and various of his colleagues in the Plymouth Brethren movement in the British Isles. This view is also premillennialist, but inserts an additional secret second coming of Christ seven years prior to Christ's open and visible second advent. The term *pretribulationism* stems from the belief that at this secret second coming, all true Christians are raptured and taken to heaven so as to escape the great tribulation that is to take place during the closing scenes of earth's history. The rapture aspect of the doctrine is popularly known as the secret rapture.

Followers of the Darbyian pretribulationism are also often referred to as dispensationalists, because of their belief that earth's history may be divided up into a number of eras or dispensations wherein God has used different means in dealing with His people and in testing them with respect to obedience. In the words of one of their spokesmen, William Trotter, in his *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects* these so-called dispensations "have run, are running, and have yet to run their course, so widely different in their character, that what is simple obedience and for the glory of God in one dispensation, may be entirely foreign to the character of another."--p. 401. He states further "that what God sanctions under one dispensation, may be so diverse from the spirit and character of another, as to be the subject of rebuke to those who desire to imitate it."--p. 402.

Pretribulationism originated in Britain, as we have noted, but then it spread to America, where by the last two decades of the nineteenth century it began to enjoy rather widespread popularity. The Scofield Reference Bible, which was first published in 1909 and has sold widely, helped greatly to foster the spread of the movement, especially among laymen; and today in America this variety of conservative eschatology appears to be the most widespread of any conservative position on the subject.

The question may well be asked, Why should this particular view take such firm hold in North America? Certainly the popularity of the Scofield Reference Bible, just mentioned, accounts



to a considerable degree for this. But there may also be another important factor, especially as far as the early years are concerned; namely, that conservative Christians tended to see this premillennial position as more biblical than postmillennialism, and accepted it in reaction against the latter. This possibility has been suggested by George Eldon Ladd in his book *The Blessed Hope*.

Pretribulationists, of course, cannot provide any strong biblical evidence for their secret-rapture idea. Rather, this idea comes by *inference* from texts relating to deliverance from tribulation, as well as from a peculiar interpretation of such Bible passages as "one shall be taken, and the other left" (Mt 24: 40, 41). Also, a frequent practice of adherents of this particular viewpoint is to utilize Revelation 4:1, where John is bidden to "Come up hither," as an indication of the so-called secret rapture of the church!

According to the pretribulationists-dispensationalists, the prophecies of the book of Revelation from 4:1 to 19:11 deal specifically with events that are to occur during a still-future seven-year period of earth's history just prior to Christ's visible advent. It is further believed by them that this seven-year period is the "70th week" of the prophecy of Daniel 9. The first 69 of the 70 weeks of years allotted to the Jews in that prophecy extended to Christ's first advent. Then came an interlude in the form of the Christian dispensation. Finally this 70th week--seven literal years--will find fulfillment after the secret rapture of the church. At this time the Jews will again become prominent in fulfilling God's purpose. During this 70th week a personal anti-christ will at first favor the Jews but in the middle of the week will turn against them and persecute them. Finally, at the close of this seven-year period Christ will come and will set up an earthly millennial kingdom for the Jews. This kingdom, pretribulationists think, is in reality the kingdom promised to the Jews by the OT prophets and then by Christ Himself, but which was never fulfilled because of their rejection of Him as Messiah. But God is true to His word; He does not fail His promise: therefore finally the kingdom will be given the Jews, in the millennial age!

In addition to the tenuousness and unbiblical nature of the secret-rapture and dispensation ideas of the pretribulationists, other difficulties in their hermeneutic may be mentioned here. In the first place, the concept of such a literalistic and unalterable fulfillment of prophecies about ancient Israel, regardless of conditions and circumstances, flies in the face of the Bible's own principles. One may refer, for example, to Jeremiah's prophecy about two directions Jerusalem might take and which would lead to

very different consequences (see Jer 17:24-27). Also important is the fact that the NT looks on certain OT prophecies regarding ancient Israel as finding fulfillment in connection with God's new Israel, the Christian Church (see *e.g.*, Acts 15:13-16 and Gal 3:26-29).

In the second place, pretribulationists draw unwarranted distinctions regarding certain terminology in the Scriptures. They differentiate, for example, between Christ's use of the expressions "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God." The former is supposed to indicate the kingdom promised to the Jews and eventually to be set up as the millennial kingdom, whereas the latter is taken to depict God's over-all rule in the universe. In this regard, serious question may be raised inasmuch as there is no biblical evidence to substantiate such an application of the terminology. Even more crucial are the facts that the context of the statements frequently defies such differentiation and that the two terms are used interchangeably by the Gospel writers.

This leads us to a further point of great hermeneutical significance--the pretribulationist contention for the need of "rightly dividing the word of truth" so as to distinguish in the Gospel records between things pertaining to the Jews and things pertaining to the Christians. For example, it is a common dispensationalist belief that Christ's Sermon on the Mount is a message for the Jews, not the Christians. What basis can there be for this kind of arbitrary treatment of the text, except that it arises as a natural consequence from other unwarranted and unfounded presuppositions?

By no means have all conservatives in America adopted dispensationalism. There are nondispensationalist premillenarians, among whom Seventh-day Adventists stand out as a prominent group. There are also a number of amillennialists, especially in Christian Reformed and Dutch Reformed groups and among conservative Presbyterians. Certain amillennialists, such as Floyd Hamilton in his *Basis for Millennial Faith* and Oswald Allis in his *Prophecy and the Church*, have given critiques of dispensationalism. Perhaps even more important is the work of George Eldon Ladd, a one-time pretribulationist who has moved away from that position to a general kind of premillennialist futurism. Ladd, who is more impartial than might be expected from one who has left the movement, analyzes fairly and quite extensively in his book *The Blessed Hope* the weaknesses of dispensationalist theology on the matter of eschatology. He also provides some excellent chapters on the same topic in his *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God*. There seems little doubt but that dispensationalist-type hermeneutic has brought a certain amount of disrepute to conservative biblical scholarship,

and it has become a point of attack from conservatives who do not share such a hermeneutic.

A further word may be said about futurism in general. Even futurists who are not pretribulationists tend to claim that the earliest church fathers held the futurist position. And, in fact, many church fathers of the first several centuries did speak of a personal antichrist who would dominate for 1260 days at the close of time rather than an antichrist system that would rule for 1260 years. But it must be remembered that by virtue of the very time in which they lived, those church fathers were of *necessity* futuristic in their outlook concerning fulfillment of the prophecies of the book of Revelation. After all, most of Christian history was still ahead, and there was no concept of how long that history would last. The end was felt to be rather near, and hence a so-called "futuristic" outlook would have been natural. But were those church fathers truly "futuristic" in their *basic perspective*? Perhaps this perspective is better revealed by their attitude toward the book of Daniel, and here the common interpretation of the major prophecies was in a *historicist* vein!

One might just add from the biblical evidence that texts in 1 John 4 and 2 Thessalonians 2 already imply *more than* a personal antichrist who was to reign for 3 1/2 literal years, for the concept of a "spirit" of antichrist is set forth--something already in evidence as early as apostolic times.

In closing this section, it should be noted that in recent years conservatives have begun to take an interest in the presence and meaning of apocalyptic in the synoptic Gospels--an area of study that heretofore has been dominated by liberal biblical scholarship. As indicative of this new thrust one may just mention the appearance in 1964 of George Eldon Ladd's *Jesus and the Kingdom* and in 1972 of Leon Morris' *Apocalyptic*.

#### Summary and Conclusion

We have traced briefly the history and the main trends that relate to the hermeneutical stance of present-day conservatives, especially in North America. We have noted the basic issues and questions relating to the inspiration of Scripture, and in this connection also have provided the essence of the Seventh-day Adventist position as enunciated by Ellen G. White. Furthermore, we have noted the growing respect for and use of scholarly tools for Bible study among conservatives. We have looked, too, at changing conservative attitudes toward scientific discovery and even scientific theories. Finally, we have touched briefly on

conservative biblical eschatology, with primary attention given to dispensationalism.

In all this we have been able to observe that there has been a strong tendency for pendulum swings among conservatives. But *balance* should be a key word for sound Christian hermeneutic. The balance in such hermeneutic may readily be realized in the position enunciated by Ellen G. White with regard to revelation and inspiration as we noted earlier. This position safeguards against the extremes of the liberals on the one hand and protects from the extreme views of verbal-inspiration adherents on the other hand.

With respect to scientific discovery, here again it is necessary for the conservative Christian to find balance by keeping his mind fully open to truth from both of God's books that reveal Him--the Bible and the book of nature. The Christian must take care not to become overly enamored of his own theological views and presuppositions; on the other hand, he should not be hasty to reject long-held theological positions simply because of a supposed scientific discovery of the moment. While he needs to avoid the overly critical and sometimes injudicious attitudes of old-line fundamentalism, he should beware lest he subordinate his biblical understanding to certain scientific theories, as some new evangelicals now appear to be doing. It is important to be cognizant of the revelational intent of biblical passages, and not to seek scientific understanding from Scripture where such scientific understanding is not intended. Equal care must be taken to shun any methodology or approach that would make the biblical text subservient to whatever scientific theories and scientific world view might be in vogue at any particular moment. God's truth transcends all of that!

Finally, our quick glance at pretribulationism-dispensationalism has been given, first of all, because adherents of this belief are so numerous that most gospel workers who deal with conservative Christians to any significant degree are highly likely to encounter the view. Moreover, importance may be attached to the fact that the dispensationalist-type hermeneutic provides an example not only of the manner in which unsound principles can lead to erroneous conclusions but also of the way in which discredit can be brought upon conservatives when they lack sound scholarly methodology in their work. Finally, the history of dispensationalism portrays, once again, the tendency of the pendulum to swing too far--this time away from the postmillennialism so popular in some conservative circles when Darby's ideas reached America.

There is always the danger of moving too far and too fast in any direction. The history of conservative Protestant Christianity

in America unfortunately illustrates this fact. However, many conservative Protestant Christians in America do recognize that God is a God of balance, and they seek to be established by Him "in every good word and work" (2 Th 2:17).

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## 7. Biblical Interpretation in the Advent Movement

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The hermeneutics of prophecy will be discussed first because the early unique emphasis of the Adventist movement was on prophecy. General principles of hermeneutics will then be examined.

### Hermeneutics of Prophecy

In the restricted sense, an Adventist is a member of the Adventist (or Millerite) movement, or of one of the bodies that sprang from it. In its broad sense, the term is sometimes used to describe one who believes that the personal Second Advent of Christ is near. Today the term is used almost exclusively in its restricted sense. This is the sense in which it is used in this chapter. Of the emergent bodies, only the largest--the Seventh-day Adventist Church--will be considered.

As one aspect of the general Advent expectation of the early 19th century, the Adventist, or Millerite, movement flourished in America from 1840 to 1844. The leader of the movement was William Miller (1782-1849), a farmer and a Baptist preacher. He was joined by other ministers, notably Josiah Litch (a Methodist minister) and Joshua V. Himes (a minister of the Christian Connection). Estimates run from 200 to 800 ministers who during the height of the movement were identified with it. Estimates of followers range from a conservative 50,000 to a million.

The principal feature of William Miller's preaching was the interpretation of apocalyptic Bible prophecy and the resulting announcement that the second coming of Christ was to occur in the "Jewish year" 1843, which would end in the spring of 1844. He based his argument for the expectation on several lines of prophecy, principally the prediction of Dan 8:14, which stated, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." By applying to this time period the year-day principle, a principle already in use among interpreters for centuries, he arrived at a period of 2300 years. The beginning date he found in Dan 9:25, "The commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem,"

which he applied to Artaxerxes' decree issued in 457 B.C. Simple subtraction brought him to his "Jewish year" 1843. To the cleansing of the sanctuary he gave the primary interpretation of the cleansing of the earth at the Second Coming of Christ.

When the "Jewish year" 1843 passed without the realization of the Second Advent, and the more specifically determined date of October 22, 1844, projected in the summer of that year, also passed, it became evident that there had been some basic error in interpretation. Miller and most of his followers of that time concluded that they had been mistaken in their calculation of the time, and they continued looking for the Advent to occur shortly. A group of his followers spiritualized the Advent and held that it had actually occurred on the anticipated date. Restudying the Millerite positions, another group concluded that whereas they could find no error in the calculations by which October 22, 1844, had been derived, there was some mistake in the event expected. Some from this group, concentrating on the term *sanctuary*, became convinced that there was no biblical evidence for the Millerite assertion that this earth was the sanctuary to be cleansed by fire at the Second Advent. This little handful became the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Tracing the word *sanctuary* in the Scriptures, this minority group noted that the Bible speaks first of an ancient sanctuary, or tent, at which the Israelites worshiped in the wilderness. This portable tent was later replaced by Solomon's Temple and still later by Zerubbabel's. But Zerubbabel's temple, enlarged and beautified by Herod the Great, was destroyed in A.D. 70, and with its destruction the Israelite sanctuary passed out of existence. Hence this sanctuary could not be the sanctuary designated in Dan 8:14 to be cleansed in 1844, the terminal date for the 2300 years.

But they noted that the Bible speaks of another sanctuary, one in heaven, after which the earthly had been patterned, to which Jesus Christ ascended after the resurrection and in which He functions as High Priest. This, they concluded, must be the sanctuary of Dan 8:14, for it was the only sanctuary mentioned in the Bible that was in existence in 1844. In the book of Hebrews, where this heavenly sanctuary is described, they noted a reference to a cleansing (Heb 9:23), a work they concluded the heavenly High Priest commenced in 1844. In a brief but unspecified time they expected Him to return to the earth to gather His people.

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church had its roots in Millerism, the church took a direction of its own. Nevertheless "they [members of this group] regarded themselves as the true



successors of the movement, as retaining and carrying on to completion the main principles of Millerite doctrine and correcting and clarifying the misunderstanding that had caused the disappointment and had resulted in the repudiation of the 1844 message by the leaders."--*SDA Encyclopedia*, p. 796.

Turning now to our investigation of the hermeneutics (prophetic and general) of Adventists, we begin with that of the Millerites, then follow with that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Millerite movement was an interdenominational movement. Its adherents came from many churches and, although embracing Miller's teachings, continued to hold membership in their churches if so permitted. The rallying point in Millerism was belief in an imminent advent and the ending of human probation at that advent. In other doctrinal positions, adherents held generally to the teachings of their respective religious bodies. Thus there was no unified doctrinal position among the Millerites.

By what hermeneutical principles did Miller arrive at his conviction that the Advent was to be expected about the year 1844? Three schools of prophetic interpretation were in existence when the Millerite movement began to flourish: (1) Preterism, the belief that the major portion of the book of Revelation was fulfilled long ago; (2) historicism, the belief that the events of Revelation have been fulfilling all through history, with some having been fulfilled, others being fulfilled, and still others yet to be fulfilled in the future; and (3) futurism, the belief that what is predicted from Rev 4 onward is yet to take place; nothing has been fulfilled, nor will it be fulfilled until just before the end of this age.

Futurism originated with Ribera, the Spanish Jesuit who in 1590 published a commentary of Revelation. In the early 19th century futurism took root among Protestants. Today it dominates the portion of the Protestant scene that is most vocal in the area of prophecy and its fulfillment.

Miller belonged to the historicist school. He looked in history for fulfillments of the various features of the visions of John the revelator and, for that matter, of Daniel also. He believed that both prophets gave an outline of history from their day to the end of time. He did not originate the historicist system; many scholars before him had followed this system, and many in his day held it.

In fact, the Reformers were historicists. George Eldon Ladd says that "this 'historical' type of interpretation with its application of the Antichrist of papal Rome so dominated the Prot-

estant study of prophetic truth for three centuries that it has frequently been called 'the Protestant' interpretation."--*The Blessed Hope*, p. 32.

Albertus Pieters calls historicism "the standard Protestant interpretation."--*Studies in the Revelation of St. John*, p. 43.

In other words, although initially independent, Miller and his associates actually built on the work of their predecessors, retaining much of what had already been developed by a methodology that had been practiced for centuries. Into the general pattern, which had already been established, they inserted a few unique ideas.

This building on the past has been abundantly demonstrated by L. E. Froom in his four-volume work *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*. He lists scores of interpreters who expected the end of the 2300 days sometime around 1844 or 1847, although they differed as to the events to be expected at that time.

In his discourses Miller frequently referred to the rules by which his conclusions were reached. He firmly believed that only if correct principles of interpretation are applied can correct conclusions be arrived at.

A discussion of Miller's rules appears in his introduction to his printed lectures *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, about the Year 1843*. His 1836 edition contained 16 lectures; his 1840 edition, 19. Following is a summary of his rules:

1. Much of the message of prophecy is communicated by symbols. For example, beasts represent kingdoms; and water, people.
2. All figures have both a literal and a metaphorical meaning. Thus, literally, a beast would represent a kingdom; but metaphorically, for example, if it were a lion, the power to rule.
3. The literal meaning of a figure is discovered by finding other Scriptures to explain the figure. Scripture must be compared with Scripture.
4. There is unity in the Scriptures. One prophecy complements another. "There never was a book written that has a better connection and harmony than the Bible."
5. The biblical student must select and bring together every part of the subject he wishes to investigate.

6. The smallest unit, the word, must be given its scripture meaning.

7. The larger unit, the sentence, must have its proper bearing.

8. The word and sentence must have their proper bearing in the grand whole.

How did the Millerites in particular or how do historicists in general determine which events in history are fulfillments of specific prophecies? They examine closely the specifications of prophecy, then study secular and religious history to find a corresponding event. To verify whether the true historical event has been discovered Miller suggested the following:

"If you find every word of the prophecy (after the figures are understood) 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 doth agree, so that the true believing children of God may never be ashamed."--*Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*, Selected from Manuscripts of William Miller with a Memoir of His Life; by Joshua V. Himes, 1841, p. 22.

Besides requiring a thorough knowledge of Scripture, the historicist method demands also a thorough knowledge of history. Group effort bringing together minds skilled in various disciplines is important. But it should be remembered that by the time Miller did his work the basic interpretations of the books of Daniel and Revelation had already been set forth by various expositors in commentaries or in works on prophecy. After his initially independent study, Miller criticized his own conclusions and examined all objections. On the basic outlines of prophecy, for example, the four beasts of Dan 7, he found himself in agreement with the expositors. But he reached certain independent conclusions. Thus he stood on the shoulders of his predecessors. His associates in turn stood on his shoulders and corrected and clarified some of his positions.

In turn the Seventh-day Adventist interpreters later corrected and clarified earlier prophetic positions. So far as apocalyptic hermeneutical principles are concerned, Seventh-day Adventists introduced few if any new principles, though they enlarged and systematized the interpretation particularly of the two apocalyptic biblical books Daniel and Revelation. In 1882 they published a book entitled *Thoughts Critical and Practical on the Book*

of *Daniel and Revelation*, which had already appeared as two separate volumes, the one on revelation first printed in 1867, and the one on Daniel in 1873. The author, Uriah Smith (1832-1903), became a Sabbath-keeping Adventist about the end of 1852 and in 1855 became one of the editors of the primary church publication, *The Review and Herald*, and served as editor for many years. He also authored several other theological books. The book has gone through many editions and some revisions.

The book takes the historicist principle for granted. The introduction of the 1897 edition argues against those who spiritualize prophetic fulfillments.

"There are two general systems of interpretation adopted by different expositors in their efforts to explain the sacred Scriptures. 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 which has thus far been made in the reformation from error to truth as taught in the Scriptures. According to the first system, every declaration is supposed to have a mystical or hidden sense, which it is the province of the interpreter to bring forth; by the second, every declaration is to be taken in its most obvious and literal sense, except where the context and the well-known laws of language show that the terms are figurative, and not literal; and whatever is figurative must be explained by other portions of the Bible which are literal.

"By the mystical method of Origen, it is vain to hope for any uniform understanding of either Daniel or the Revelation, or of any other book of the Bible; for that system (if it can be called a system) knows no law but the uncurbed imagination of its adherents; hence there are on its side as many different interpretations of Scripture as there are different fancies of different writers. By the literal method, everything is subject to well-established and clearly-defined law; and, viewed from this standpoint, the reader will be surprised to see how simple, easy, and clear many portions of the Scriptures at once become, which, according to any other system, are dark and unsolvable. It is admitted that many figures are used in the Bible, and that much of the books under consideration, especially that of the Revelation, is clothed in symbolic language; but it is also claimed that the Scriptures introduce no figure which they do not somewhere furnish literal language to explain. This volume is offered as a consistent exposition of the books of Daniel and the Revelation according to the literal system."--*Daniel and the Revelation* (1897), p. 4.

In 1953-1957 the church published the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, a commentary on the entire Bible. This commentary in the main endorses Smith's positions on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, at the same time enlarging and clarifying some of the interpretations. But the historicist principle remains.

With futurism dominating Protestant prophetic interpretation, Seventh-day Adventists today are almost the only ones championing the historicist view. Characterizing the current Protestant scene in prophetic interpretation, Bernard Ramm does not even make specific mention of the historicist school. He says, "Among Protestants three principal schools stand out: there is the premillennial school that follows a literalistic method of prophetic interpretation; the amillennial school which is spiritualistic in its interpretation; and the post-millennial school that is midway between literalism and spiritualization. It is axiomatic that the 'root of their differences lies in the method of Biblical interpretation.'"--*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 155, 156.

While Seventh-day Adventists are premillennialists so far as the literal meaning of the term is concerned (that is, they believe that the second coming of Christ precedes the millennium) they do not belong to the premillennial school that Ramm describes. Ramm's premillennialists look for the Temple to be rebuilt at Jerusalem, the Jews to turn in large numbers to Christ, and for probation to continue through the millennium. His amillennialists spiritualize many of the prophecies.

This observation is significant in that it may show why current Adventist prophetic interpretation is largely ignored by current scholars in the field of prophetic interpretation.

One point of difference between the Adventist position and contemporary literalist premillennialism deserves attention. Whereas Miller and later Adventists affirmed that human probation ends at the time of the Second Advent, literalist premillennialists look for a millennium during which the Jews, restored, not only to Palestine, but also to God's favor, will rule over mortal kingdoms.

Against these literalist notions the Adventists contended from the beginning. Their opposition was evident, for example, in a recommendation of the twelfth Millerite Second Advent Conference (1842), from which literalist premillennialists were excluded: "All persons who reject the doctrines of temporal millennium and the restoration of the Jews to Palestine, either before or after the Second Advent, and who believe the Second Advent of Christ and the *first* resurrection to be the next great events of prophetic history, be invited to enroll their names as member[s] of this conference."--*The Signs of the Times*, 3:69, June 1, 1842.

The conference also affirmed: "No portion of the New Testament scriptures give[s] the most indirect intimation of the literal restoration of the Jews to old Jerusalem; we believe that the arguments drawn from the Old Testament prophecies are based on a mistaken view of those prophecies."--*Ibid.*

Concerning the millenarian view, Miller declared, "There is not a text, promise, or prophecy, written or given of God" to support the idea that the OT prophecies require a future restoration of the Jews.--*Views of . . . William Miller*, ed. 1842 by J. V. Himes, p. 233.

Among the earliest clearest explanations of this viewpoint were several articles in the *Review and Herald* in 1856 and 1857 by J. H. Waggoner. In a book on the subject he said, "All of God's purposes of grace to man, are conditional, [and] as the blessings set before them [the Jews] were conditional, they could *claim* them only on the fulfillment of the conditions. . . . We consider that this was conditional prophecy, the promises of which have been forfeited."--J. H. Waggoner, *The Kingdom of God* (1859), pp. 87-109.

"This [the old] covenant was made at Horeb, and was conditional, as recorded in Ex. xix. The Lord said to them, 'If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, *then* ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.'"--J. H. Waggoner in *Review and Herald*, 9:77, Jan. 8, 1857.

Adventists looked for the ancient prophecies to be fulfilled in principle in the Christian Church. The Boston Second Advent Conference (1842) affirmed that "the Old Testament prophecies . . . have been fulfilled in what the gospel has already done, or remain to be fulfilled in the gathering of all the spiritual seed of Abraham into the New Jerusalem."--*The Signs of the Times*, 3:69, June 1, 1842.

Ellen White stated the principle as follows: "The glorious purposes which he had undertaken to accomplish through Israel were to be fulfilled. All who, through Christ, should become the children of faith, were to be counted as Abraham's seed; they were inheritors of the covenant-promises."--*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 476.

"That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today."--*Prophecies and Kings*, pp. 713, 714.

The concept that prophecies may be conditionally stated is consonant with the general Adventist view--that man's will and

action may alter the manner in which God's purposes are carried out.

On the other hand, literalist premillennialists emphasize the sovereignty of God and maintain that since God cannot go back on His promises to Abraham, Abraham's literal descendants in the future must experience fulfillment of the glorious promises.

### General Hermeneutical Principles

We turn now to a consideration of general hermeneutical principles followed by Adventists. The Millerite contribution was largely in the area of prophecy. In general principles the Millerites represented the various churches out of which they came, which usually followed the Protestant hermeneutic.

The group of Millerites that organized itself into the SDA Church also represented diverse backgrounds. This group faced the task of unifying its beliefs not only in the area of prophetic interpretation but also in the area of doctrine. This process went on over a period of some ten years, from 1844 to about 1855. During this time the leaders of the embryonic SDA Church conducted private Bible study groups and held numerous conferences. Arriving eventually at uniformity of belief, they organized themselves in 1860.

Although no one set himself to the task of formulating a systematic hermeneutic by which Scripture interpretations were arrived at, certain principles were assumed or carried over from their Protestant denominational heritage. The nature of these principles became evident as doctrines were adopted and defended.

Although no thorough and complete survey of Adventist hermeneutic has yet been attempted, a modest survey of the literature of the formative period reveals many references to principles.

1. Sola scriptura. In the fifth issue of the earliest periodical published by the group--*Present Truth*--edited by one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, James White (1821-1881), appears this affirmation: "The Bible is our lamp, our guide. It is our rule of faith and practice."--P. 40.

This same issue reaffirms the Bible's paramount position: "The Bible is our chart--our guide. It is our only rule of faith and practice, to which we would closely adhere."--P. 46.

When in 1850 the *Review and Herald* succeeded *Present Truth*,

it too affirmed the primacy of the Bible: "Every Christian is therefore duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts."--1:70, April 21, 1851.

Chiding Protestants for adopting the rule of the Romanists--the Bible and tradition--J. N. Andrews (1829-1883), a prominent early minister, in a later issue enjoins: "We answer, make the word of God your *only* rule, receive what is written therein, and reject all beside. That the Protestant world now cherish an institution without foundation in Scripture, which was established by the gradual development of the great apostasy [sic], can only be accounted for by the fact that Protestants have adopted the rule of the Romanists in the place of their own."--*Review and Herald* 1:88, May 19, 1851.

The question constantly raised by those who formulated the system of belief was "Is it sustained by the Word of God?" With respect to a certain unacceptable interpretation of Rev 1:10, the blunt denial was made, "We object to this view, because it is not sustained by the Word. In fact it is entirely destitute of support from the Holy Scriptures. Others may refer to the 'Fathers;' but we appeal to the Word of God."--*Review and Herald* 1:76, May 6, 1851.

In the face of conflicting views they would "take the Bible alone as the sure detector, as that which will discover unto us the truth."--J. N. Loughborough, *Review and Herald* 7:33, Sept. 4, 1855.

And again: "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."--*Review and Herald* 12:196, Nov. 11, 1858.

2. The unity of Scripture. The unity of Scripture is affirmed in a reprint from *American Messenger*: "Throughout the whole Bible, there runs one great idea--man's ruin by sin, and his redemption by grace; in a word, Jesus Christ the Saviour. This runs through the Old Testament, that prelude to the New."--*Review and Herald* 27:123, March 20, 1866.

This assumption of the unity of Scripture is evident throughout these early writings, where one part of Scripture is constantly made to explain another. Unity of authorship is assumed.



3. Let Scripture explain Scripture. This principle is a corollary of the principle of the unity of Scripture. The principle is appealed to, for example, in an 1851 editorial by James White: "Scripture must explain Scripture, then a harmony may be seen throughout the whole."--*Review and Herald* 1:62, April 7, 1851.

4. The words of the Bible must be given their proper meaning. An unsigned filler in an 1855 issue states, "To ascertain what any passage says, consider what the words mean, according to their common acceptation and according to their usage elsewhere in the Scriptures; if they have more meanings than one, consider their connection and subject of discourse."--*Review and Herald* 7:38, Sept. 4, 1855.

This rule was expanded, at least in practice, to include the definition of words from the original languages. Thus Hebrew and Greek terms are frequently quoted, and authorities cited as to meanings of the original terms. Those not versed in the original languages frequently resorted to various translations in order to clarify the meanings of words.

5. Attention to context and historical backgrounds. With reference to Paul's writings in Romans 14:1-6 the direction is given: "If we would rightly understand the words of the Apostle we should first learn the subject of his discourse."--*Review and Herald* 1:68, Apr. 21, 1851.

This rule is repeatedly demonstrated as the question is raised, What was the Bible writer speaking about, what was he saying, and what did he mean by what he said?

6. The Bible must be interpreted according to the plain, obvious, and literal import unless a figure is employed. This rule was a recurring theme at a time when critics attempted to demolish the positions taken by the Adventists. D. P. Hall sets forth the problem:

"I never realized the importance of being governed by correct principles of interpretation more fully than at the present time, just having had an interview with a minister of one of the popular denominations, who denied the literality and tangibility of everything taught in the Bible. The second coming of Christ, death, resurrection, and in fact everything taught as the foundation of faith and hope, are by this mysticism swept away, and the past, present and future all thrown into chaos, and left without form and void. But there is a remedy for all this jargon and confusion, and it is to be found in the use of the literal principles of interpretation. Interpret the language of the sacred writers as you

do the language of all others, and this difficulty would be speedily obviated."--*Review and Herald* 6:17, Aug. 29, 1854.

J. N. Loughborough (1832-1924) dealt with the same problem: "The beauty of Divine Revelation has been shut away from the minds of the common people, by their being taught, and supposing that the Bible does not mean what it says, or that the sense of the scripture writers is not contained in the scriptures themselves, but that they are mystical and have a hidden meaning. If this be a fact, we inquire, How shall we arrive at just conceptions of that word and its true interpretation?"--*Review and Herald* 7:34, Sept. 4, 1855.

He continues: "We admit that figures are there used, and explained, but must claim that a plain statement should be understood the same as when made in any other book. We can form no just conceptions of God's character as revealed in the word, if this be not the truth of the matter. If God had revealed his will in such a manner that man cannot understand it, and then pronounced in that word condemnation and death to those who did not obey his will, we should at once conclude that he manifested none of the character the word represents him as possessing."--*Ibid.*

As to the mystical meaning and its source, Uriah Smith speaks of it as that "hidden, spiritual and mystical interpretation of the word of God, which was introduced by the fathers of the speculative philosophy, and has been continued by their successors to the present time. Of these persons Mosheim (*Church Hist.* Cent. ii, part 2, chap. ii, S5) thus speaks: 'They attributed a *double sense* to the words of Scripture; the one obvious and literal, the other *hidden* and mysterious which lay concealed as it were under the veil of the outward letter. The former they treated with the utmost neglect, and turned the whole force of their genius and application to unfold the latter; or, in other words, they were more studious to darken the Scriptures with their idle fictions than to investigate their *true* and *natural* sense.' But for this course on the part of early commentators, views opposite to the obvious and literal teaching of the Scriptures would undoubtedly never have obtained in the church."--*Review and Herald* 15:4, Nov. 24, 1859.

This antipathy to a hidden mysterious meaning was not intended to rule out typology, or amplification of literal meanings, that a later inspired writer might bring out. The rule of permitting Scripture to explain Scripture took care of the latter.

7. The typological principle. Perhaps the earliest clear statement of this principle after 1844 is the following by O. R. L. Crosier, who wrote on "The Law of Moses" in a *Day Star* Extra, Feb.

7, 1846. He said, "The Law should be studied and 'remembered' as a simplified model of the great system of redemption containing symbolic representations of the work begun by our Savior at his first advent, when he 'came to fulfill the Law,' and to be completed in 'the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory.' Redemption is deliverance purchased by the payment of a ransom, hence it cannot be complete till man and the earth shall be *delivered* from the subjection and consequences of sin; the last act of deliverance will be at the end of the 1000 years. To this the shadow of the Law extended."--P. 37.

There are repeated instances of the application of the typological system with reference to the ancient ritual services. The key for the application, as noted earlier, the Seventh-day Adventist founders discovered in the book of Hebrews, which speaks of a heavenly sanctuary where Jesus Christ ministers as priest. With reference to cleansing, it is stated that "it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb 9:23).

#### Midstream Confirmation of Formative Hermeneutic

As indicated earlier in this chapter, no complete survey of the Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutic from 1840 to the present has yet been attempted. The need for such a work may well be pointed up both by this chapter and this book.

Some clues to the general principles of interpretation recognized in the formative period have just been given. The tentative thesis that there has been little change in these principles may find some confirmation in an editorial appearing in two successive issues of *The Signs of the Times* (an Adventist church publication of evangelistic intent) from the pen of E. J. Waggoner, who was to play a significant role in the epochal 1888 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

In the second of these editorials (Jan. 6 and 13, 1887) Waggoner summarized the principles of interpretation, which were the subject of the first:

We noted first, that the Bible is absolute truth and that anything that disagrees with it in the slightest particular must be false. Second, that the Bible, though composed of many books, is one Book with one Author; that there is perfect harmony in all its parts. Third, that the Bible contains all truth, because that by it a man

may be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" and that therefore it must be its own interpreter. Fourth, that one part of the Bible cannot be fully understood if taken out of its connection, or without reference to the Bible as a whole. There is no book in the Bible upon which light is not thrown by every other book in the Bible. . . .

Lastly, we showed that a term used in one place in the Bible must have the same meaning in every other place where it occurs, especially if the same subject is under consideration.

Waggoner concluded the second editorial with cautionary comments on the selection and use of commentaries.

Hopefully, an outgrowth of this present symposium on hermeneutics may be the careful and complete survey of the extensive denominational literature in order to trace the evidence for the church's hermeneutic.

#### Hermeneutics Applied to Sabbath

A demonstration of early Adventist hermeneutical principles may be seen in the Seventh-day Adventists' defense of the seventh-day Sabbath, one of their cardinal doctrines.

During the Millerite movement of the 1840's the "Sabbath" was discussed, but there was no widespread agitation. Sabbath-keeping among Millerites seems to have begun in Washington, New Hampshire, in 1844, when certain members of the Christian Church there read literature distributed by Rachel Oakes (later Preston), a Seventh Day Baptist. T. M. Preble, a prominent Millerite minister, living not far from Washington, New Hampshire, probably learned of the Sabbath through contact with the Sabbathkeepers there. He published a tract on the Sabbath, which was read by Joseph Bates (1792-1872), one of the founders of the SDA Church. Convinced, Bates himself wrote two tracts on the Sabbath, the second of which was studied by James White, the principal founder of the SDA Church, and his wife. Both began keeping the Sabbath in 1846. White and Bates were both strong leaders, and from them the Sabbath doctrine spread to other Adventists by means of conferences held in various areas, and through publications advocating the Sabbath.

When the embryonic church began publishing a periodical in 1849, *The Present Truth*, the first three issues--the first published in July, 1849, and the next two in August, 1849--dealt almost exclusively with the Sabbath.

Their argument was that the Scriptures enjoin the keeping of the seventh day of the week, not the first day. They noted that the Sabbath was instituted at the end of Creation week (Gn 2:2, 3) and was made for man, generic man, not merely the Jew (Mk 2:27). It was embodied in the Decalogue (Ex 20:8-11) but originated before Sinai, as evident not only from Gn 2:3 but also from Ex 16, which describes the incident of the giving of the manna, which occurred some 30 days before Sinai.

From such texts as Mt 5:17-33 they showed that the Decalogue is permanently binding and must not be confused with the ceremonial law, which was temporary. Turning to the NT they showed how the Sabbath was enforced there as well.

These same issues of *Present Truth* examined the various Scriptures usually quoted to prove the abolition of the Sabbath. It is in the examination of these that hermeneutical principles are appealed to, such as attention to historical backgrounds, importance of context, importance of the meaning of words and sentences, and analogy of Scripture.

Another article examined the evidences presented for the first-day sabbath and found each one of them lacking when the accepted Protestant hermeneutic is applied.

A reprint from Tract No. 6 of the American Sabbath Tract Society lists 20 reasons for keeping holy in each week the seventh day instead of the first day. Its reason No. 17 appeals directly to the *sola scriptura* principle:

"17. Because, if the fundamental principle of Protestantism be right and true, that 'the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants,' then the Seventh Day must be the true and only *Sabbath of Protestants*; for, unless that day of the week be kept, they have no *scriptural* Sabbath at all."--*The Present Truth*, Aug., 1849, p. 21.

Number 18 chides the Protestants: "Because the pertinacious observance of the First Day of the Week, in the stead of the Seventh, has actually given occasion of great scandal to the Protestant faith; it has caused the Papists to declare that Protestants admit the *authority of human tradition* in matters of religion; and it has led to intolerance and persecution."--*Ibid.*

In a reference to the Reformers' position, number 15 says: ". . . the leaders of the Reformation never claimed for the First Day the name of the Sabbath, and never enforced the observance of that day by any other authority than that of the Church."--*Ibid.*

### Summary and Conclusions

A preliminary examination of the hermeneutical principles followed by the Adventists reveals that they worked within the established Protestant system and did not introduce new rules of interpretation. They appealed constantly to the Bible and the Bible only as their rule of faith and practice. They defended their faith by presenting what they frequently referred to as "Bible evidence." So strongly was their faith rooted in the Bible that they refused to write a formal creed, maintaining that the Bible was their creed.

In the area of prophetic interpretation they followed, in general, the historicist system, the standard Protestant interpretation. Today, it appears, they are almost the only champions of the system and of the conditional nature of God's promises to literal Israel.

By the time the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized in 1860 the over-all doctrinal system had been established. Since that time there have been clarifications and amplifications but no changes in doctrine.

The same may be suspected concerning hermeneutical principles. These, inherited from a Protestant background, still serve the church today. As the church developed its educational system and established its seminary in 1934, these principles were reassessed, and they began to be more clearly and systematically stated. This present symposium is the church's first attempt to set forth in detailed and more complete form its present system of hermeneutics. Lesser attempts were made in the past, notably in the book *Problems in Bible Translation*, published in 1954. This work, although designed primarily to deal with translation problems in the newly published Revised Standard Version, had several chapters dealing with hermeneutical principles: "The Transmission and Preservation of the Bible Text," "A Survey of Translation Problems," "The Place of Biblical Languages in the Life of the Church," "Principles of Biblical Interpretation," "Application of Old Testament Prophecies to New Testament and Later times."

When the church produced a commentary on the Bible (1953-1958) it was necessary to have a clearly understood system of hermeneutics as the base for the comments. Although this system was not formally stated except in part, various of its principles are appealed to and demonstrated in the various comments. But it remained for this symposium to attempt to set it forth in an organized way. In the light of the continuing conflict between the liberal and the new conservative branches of theology, it may prove a most timely attempt.

The founders of the church laid the foundation well. None of them possessed advanced educational degrees. But their work has stood the test of the years and the scrutiny of scholarly minds. The doctrines they formulated are still the doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They stand on sure footing, having now stood the test of the decades and the application of constantly refining disciplines in the area of biblical studies.

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## P A R T   I I I

### INSPIRED WRITERS' INTERPRETATION OF INSPIRED WRITINGS

#### 8. New Testament Uses and Interpretation of the Old Testament

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No serious interpreter of the Bible can fail to recognize the significance of the principles by which the NT writers interpreted the OT. Although the principles are seldom explicitly stated, they can be derived by careful analysis. Such an attempt is made in this paper. It is considered a vital link in the hermeneutic chain as an attempt is made to discover inspired writers' use of inspired writings.

Even a casual reading of the NT will impress the reader with the fact that it is replete with OT citations and allusions, although scholars will differ on the count of direct quotations. The writings most often cited are the Psalms, located in the third division of the Hebrew Scriptures. Of the books of Moses, Deuteronomy is the most often directly quoted. Isaiah is the favorite prophet. Some OT statements such as Is 6:9, 10, are repeatedly cited. If Is 53 were to be lost, it has been suggested that the gist of its message could be recovered by means of NT citations and allusions.

The book of Revelation makes no direct citations to the OT. An analysis of its contents, however, reveals it to be saturated with OT imagery. For an example the reader may wish to compare the language John uses to describe mystic Babylon (Rev 14-19) and the prophetic statements regarding ancient Babylon as penned by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. (See charting, SDA BC, Vol. VII, 866-896).

### Some Basic Presuppositions of the NT Writers

1. The OT is authoritative for faith and practice. The NT writers in harmony with the viewpoint of Christ regarded the OT as normative Scripture, the "oracles of God" (*logia tou theou*), "living and active" (Rom 3:2; Heb 4:12, RSV). (All citations herein after are from the RSV). Peter views the Word of God as vital seed, "imperishable," "living and abiding" which, if planted in the heart, will bring about a new life (see 1 Pe 1:23). Paul refers to the OT as "holy scriptures" (*graphais hagiiais*) and "sacred writings" (*hiera grammata*) (Rom 1:2; 2 Ti 3:15).

The NT writers do not see the OT as ever diminishing in value for the Christian. "For whatever was written in former days," declares the apostle Paul, "was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4). With reference to the experiences of ancient Israel he says, "They were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11).

2. The Holy Spirit is the divine author of the OT. The NT writers acknowledge that there is but one Author behind the many human writers who wrote. "The scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David" (Acts 1:16). "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says. . . ." "By this the Holy Spirit indicates. . . ." (Heb 3:7; 9:8). "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pe 1:21). In one instance the apostle Peter asserts that the Spirit who moved the prophets to write of the Saviour's sufferings and glory was "the Spirit of Christ" (1 Pe 1:10, 11).

3. Divine revelation is progressive in nature. Although the NT writers recognize and acknowledge the divine authority of the OT, they are conscious of the Holy Spirit's witness also through themselves (see Eph 3:5). The OT was promise and shadowy outline. NT writers were witnessing to the glorious fulfillment of the promise in Jesus of Nazareth, whom they declared to be the long-looked-for Messiah (see Acts 17:3). The apostle Paul proclaimed to his listeners, "We bring you the good news that *what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus*" (Acts 13:32, 33).

That the NT writers recognized the principle of progressive revelation--a gradual unfolding of the divine plan through successive ages--is seen by the opening statement in the epistle to the Hebrews. "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to

us by a Son" (Heb 1:1, 2). In the Son they perceived God had given mankind the fullest disclosure of Himself, the capstone to the edifice of revealed truth.

4. There is unity between the OT and the apostolic witness.

The NT writers do not view their witness as a new gospel or as a new religion different from that taught by the OT. Rather, they assert an inseparable unity between the witness of the OT and their own. Christians are admonished to "remember the predictions of the holy prophets *and* the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Pe 3:2).

The NT writers supply both historical facts and spiritual insights that supplement and illuminate the OT. For example, Paul notes the names of the magicians with whom Moses contended in Pharaoh's court (see 2 Ti 3:8). Genesis does not state that Noah preached to his contemporaries about the coming Flood with a call to repentance. But the NT informs that he was "a herald of righteousness" and taught righteousness by faith (2 Pe 2:5; see Heb 11:7). The OT sets forth the fact that the earth was created by a personal God. The NT writers illumine this truth by observing that God created the world through the agency of Jesus Christ (see Heb 1:1, 2; Jn 1:1-3, 10). Were it not for the illumination provided in the book of Hebrews, the ancient ritual of Israel's tabernacle and temples would be largely meaningless. But viewed in the light of the NT the ancient ritual reflects back a broader understanding of the entire plan of redemption.

The movement is in both directions. Salvation from sin through Jesus Christ would not be meaningful without the OT account of the fall. The two Testaments are like two acts of a play. They provide insights into each other, but the whole drama is more fully understood in the light of the conclusion--in this instance the NT.

5. The historical records of the OT are accepted as genuine.

The NT writers refer to numerous incidents for didactic purposes, but they never question their historicity. Some examples are the creation of Adam and Eve; the temptation of Eve by the serpent; the fall of man; the murder of Abel; Noah and the Flood; the sufferings of Job. Many incidents are noted from the long history of Israel, including the miraculous experiences of Balaam, Elijah, and Jonah.

6. The moral and spiritual truths of the OT are of permanent value. "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction. . . ." (Rom 15:4).

7. Christ is the focus of all divine action in the OT whether it be through historical experience, prophecy, or ritual worship. "To him [the Christ] all the prophets bear witness," states the apostle Peter (Acts 10:43). The whole Hebrew economy pointed forward to Christ. He was the confirmation and the consummation of "the promises given to the patriarchs" (Rom 15:8).

8. Christianity is the new Israel, composed of born-again persons whether of Gentile or Jewish origin. "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, *upon the Israel of God*" (Gal 6:15, 16).

9. In Christianity there is a discontinuity with the typical system of Judaism. In the perspective of the NT writers the ritual types of the ancient worship have met the antitype in the person of Jesus Christ. The shadow has vanished in the illuminating presence of the Substance. "For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never . . . make perfect those who draw near. . . . For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. . . . But . . . Christ . . . offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:1-4, 12).

10. God's Word is valid in translation. This presupposition is evident in that the NT writers felt free to use different versions of the Scriptures that were available to them. For this reason a reader of the NT may be puzzled by the form of a quotation when he compares it with the original statement in the OT. He may note that at times it does not read exactly as the verse reads in the OT. He also may be disconcerted by the fact that at times he cannot even find the NT citation in his OT. For example the quotation, "Let all God's angels worship him" (Heb 1:6) is not found in our common versions of the OT.

The NT writers were a part of a multilingual environment. Archaeological evidence indicates that the three languages-- Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek--were used by the Jews in first-century Palestine. Our knowledge is sketchy, but it may be that the NT writers or their amanuenses could speak and read in one or more of these common tongues, and the OT was available to them in Hebrew, Greek, and the interpretative Aramaic translations known as Targums. Although the variants between these several sources seem to have been of no concern to the NT writers (who were more interested in the general thrust of the statement), a word about each of them might be of help in explaining how citations from these sources would vary at times from the Masoretic Hebrew text type (abbr. MT), from which our English and other translations of the OT are made today.

(a) Greek. Sometime during the 3d to the 2d centuries B.C. the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into the Greek language for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews. This Greek version, known as the Septuagint (abbr. LXX), became the version that Christians used as they carried the gospel to the Greek-speaking peoples of the Mediterranean world. Most of the OT quotations cited by the NT writers are drawn from the LXX. This does not mean that a given quote is identical in every detail with the LXX, but it appears to be largely, if not entirely, derived from this version. The citations by Luke and those in the book of Hebrews are the most closely related to the LXX.

Some reasons why LXX citations may vary from the MT are as follows: (1) The LXX translator may have read the unpointed (without written vowels) Hebrew text differently from the way the later Masoretes did. For example, in the OT statement: "Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed" (Gn 47:31), the consonants for *bed* are "mṯh." The LXX translators read the term as *matteh*, "staff," but the later Masoretes read it as *mittah*, "bed." Consequently the OT reads bed (based on the MT), but the book of Hebrews, drawing from the LXX, reads that Jacob bowed "in worship over the head of his *staff*" (cf. Gn 47:31; Heb 11:21). (2) Evidence from the Qumran materials indicates that some LXX translators apparently worked from a Hebrew text type, which differed from what the Masoretes copied. (3) The NT writers may have derived some of their citations from non-Septuagintal versions of the OT in Greek.

(b) Hebrew. Before Rabbi Aqiba and his associates established a Hebrew text (ancestor of the MT) at the beginning of the 2d century A.D. there were evidently several Hebrew text types in circulation. Some OT citations are, of course, in agreement with the MT. In a few instances an OT citation seems to agree better with the Samaritan Pentateuch than with the MT or the LXX. This does not necessarily mean that the NT writer cited the Samaritan Bible directly, but it may mean that he cited a Greek non-Septuagintal OT that preserved a reading from a Hebrew text type similar to the Samaritan form.

Earlier it was noted that the statement "Let all God's angels worship him," could not be found in the OT of our versions. The substance of the quotation, however, is to be found in the LXX (Dt 32:43), an English translation of which reads in part:

Rejoice, ye heavens, along with Him,  
 And *let the sons of God worship Him*;  
 Rejoice, ye nations, with His people,  
 And *let all the angels of God be strong in Him*. . . .

Although this passage is not in the MT, it was based on a Hebrew original, as is now evidenced by the discovery of this chapter of Deuteronomy in Hebrew at Qumran, which corresponds closely to the LXX. The citation in the book of Hebrews appears to be a conflation of the two italicized phrases.

(c) Aramaic Targums. It became a postexilic practice in the synagogues to render Scripture readings into Aramaic, which had become the common language of the people. These interpretative translations were eventually written down. A few are now known to have been written in pre-Christian times, others later. Some OT citations in the NT seem to have been influenced by these Targums, either in written or oral form.

For example, Mark depicts Jesus citing the familiar passage of Is 6:9, 10, regarding Israel's spiritual dullness. The last part of the citation reads: "lest they should turn again, *and be forgiven*" (Mk 4:12). The LXX, however, has "and I shall *heal* them." The MT has also the term for *heal*. But the phrase in Mark's gospel is the same as is used in the Targum of Jonathan. Another example is Paul's application (Eph 4:8) of Ps 68:18 to Christ's ascension in which the last phrase reads: "and he *gave* gifts to men." Both the LXX and the MT have the word *received* instead of *gave*. But the Targum on the Psalms reads, "Thou *hast given* gifts to men."

#### Hermeneutical Principles Employed by NT Writers

Having examined some of the presuppositions of the NT writers, we may now attempt to induce and elucidate a few of the principles they used to interpret the message of the OT.

1. Grammatical-historical principle. This principle indicates that a passage is to be understood in its historical context and its natural grammatical sense. Christ and the apostles make many citations from the OT on this principle as they draw lessons of encouragement, warning, or reproof. For example, Jesus warns that the situation among men at the Second Advent will be similar to that in the times of Noah and of Lot. (And He cautions, "Remember Lot's wife" (see Lk 17:26-30, 32). James encourages believers to greater patience and earnest prayer by citing the examples of Job and Elijah (see Jas 5:11, 17, 18). Jesus corrects the Pharisees' view of divorce on the basis of the concession of Dt 24:1-4 because of the nation's low spiritual condition at the time of the Exodus by citing God's original purpose for permanency in the marriage relationship, as illustrated by the union of Adam and Eve at the beginning (see Mt 19:3-9 citing Gn 1:27; 2:24).

Such statements indicate that Jesus and the NT writers were accepting the Scriptures in their natural sense and context.

The apostle Peter's citation of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28, 29) was in harmony with this principle. Joel had predicted that in some subsequent age God would pour out His Spirit upon mankind in a marked manner. In the events of Pentecost the apostle saw its fulfillment. "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16).

2. Analogy of Scripture principle. The unity of Scripture is found in the Holy Spirit, who spoke through all the writers. Hence, what He revealed in one passage on a given subject may be compared by the reader with what He disclosed in another on the same topic in order to ensure full understanding of the subject.

Jesus used this principle to establish the truth of His Messiahship. "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. . . . Then he said to them, 'These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, 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. . . ." (Lk 24:27, 44, 45).

A good example of the operation of this principle is Paul's citation in Rom 3:10-18 of six different passages to indicate the universal sinfulness of man and of the Jews in particular (Ps 14:1-3; 5:9; 140:3; 10:7; Is 59:7, 8; Ps 36:1).

Related to the analogy of Scripture principle and certainly based on the same assumption of the Holy Spirit's authorship is the NT writers' practice of sometimes conflating, or fusing, two or more OT passages into a single quotation. In Rom 9:33 Paul says, "It is written,

'Behold I am laying in Zion a stone  
[that will make men stumble,  
a rock that will make them fall;]  
and he who believes in him will not be put to shame.'"

In this citation the apostle conflates Is 28:16 and a portion of Is 8:14, which is noted approximately by the brackets.

Sometimes a quotation and an allusion may be combined. When Jesus said, "'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? [But you have made it a den of robbers]'" (Mk 11:17), He was not only citing Is 56:7, but He

may also have been alluding to Jer 7:11 (enclosed in brackets). The latter passage reads: "Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?"

A citation may be made by a NT writer which is not a direct quotation but represents the gist of two or possibly more statements. For example, John writes, "For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'Not a bone of him shall be broken'" (Jn 19:36). This statement combines the thought of Ex 12:46 regarding the Passover lamb, "you shall not break a bone of it," and Ps 34:20 applied Messianically, "He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."

3. New-Israel principle. Passages of Scripture that once had significance but have lost that significance because of their conditional nature and nonfulfillment are applied to new situations by the NT writers. This principle is particularly employed in applying the prophecies about ancient Israel to the new Israel, Christianity.

The author of Hebrews appeals to the prophecy of Jer 31:31-34 as a divine prediction of a new order. "'The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. . . .'" (see Heb 8:8-12). But God was not able to renew His covenant with the Jewish people, for they rejected the divine rule (cf. Lk 19:14). Nevertheless Christ became "the mediator of a new covenant" made with a new Israel to whom have been transferred the spiritual privileges and responsibilities that once belonged to the Hebrew people (Heb 9:15; see Mt 21:33-43; Gal 3:27-29).

The apostle Peter, as another example, appropriates the ancient names and titles to the new Israel, and alludes to Hos 1:10; 2:23 (which originally applied to ancient Israel) as finding particular fulfillment now in the new community of Christians.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy (1 Pe 2:9, 10).

4. Enlargement principle. A NT writer under inspiration may expand or extend the meaning of a given passage without denying or abrogating the permanent truth set forth in the original meaning. An example of this principle may be found in the famous



passage of Hab 2:4 to which Paul appeals twice in support of the doctrine of righteousness by faith (see Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11). "The righteous shall live by his faith."

In the original prophecy, God informs Habakkuk of His design to permit the Babylonians to devastate sinful Judah. But though impending destruction is about to sweep over the nation God encourages His loyal ones to live calmly, trusting in Him. The NT writers are not ignorant of this context or its general truth, for the writer to the Hebrews makes a similar application of the passage to his readers. "For you have need of endurance . . . 'For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry; *but my righteous one shall live by faith*, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him'" (Heb 10:36-38).

The apostle Paul under inspiration enlarges this faith principle enunciated in Habakkuk to include not only trust in God during physical calamity but also trust in God for spiritual salvation. The Christian lives by faith in God in all aspects of life.

The RSV translation of the Habakkuk citation in Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11 reads, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." This translation of the Greek is grammatically possible, and it fits Paul's argument, but it is arbitrary, as is evidenced by the fact that the same translators render the same Greek phrase in Heb 10:38 as "my righteous one shall live by faith" and footnote both references in Romans and Galatians with an alternate reading, "The righteous shall live by faith." The citation need not read differently from Habakkuk's original statement for the apostle to make his point on the faith principle.

5. Augmentation principle. Under inspiration the NT writers often supply details to OT accounts that are not explicitly set forth in the original writing. For example, the OT does not inform us as to how Abraham resolved the terrible conflict in his mind regarding Isaac. God had promised descendants through his only son, but God also had commanded Isaac to be offered as a sacrifice. The writer to the Hebrews augments the account by observing that Abraham proceeded to carry out the command because "he considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead" (Heb 11:19).

6. Accommodation principle. The NT writers were steeped in the language and imagery of the OT. It would be but natural for them at times to borrow the phraseology of an OT passage to express a truth. Some believe that Paul's use of Dt 30:12-14 in Rom 10:6-9 is a case in point. In the OT context Moses was exhorting Israel to obedience, and observed that the nation was not ignorant of God's

will, neither need they search for it, for it was near, even "in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it." Since it is also true that righteousness by faith is not difficult to obtain, the words of Moses with some adaptation nicely express the language of faith:

But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

7. Adaptive translation. The practice of interpretative translating of the Hebrew Scriptures in the synagogues was common among the Jews in postexilic times, as we have noted earlier. The resultant translations were known as Targums.

An example of a targumic rendering may be the priests' citation of Mic 5:2 to Herod the Great regarding the birthplace of the Messiah. "And you, O Bethlehem, . . . are *by no means least* . . ." (Mt 2:6). In context the statement actually says the opposite: "But you, O Bethlehem . . . *who are little* . . ." Rendering the passage interpretatively, the priests see the town's smallness in size evolving into its greatness in distinction as the birthplace of the Messiah, the great King.

The Christian, Paul, apparently gives a similar adaptive translation of the 5th commandment: "'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may be well with you and *that you may live long on the earth*'" (Eph 6:2, 3). The phrase that is in the parentheses is an injected commentary, but the italicized phrase is an interpretative rendering of the commandment.

As spoken from Sinai the Ten Commandments were addressed to the nation of Israel, and so the commandment reads in part: "that your days may be long *in the land which the Lord your God gives you*" (Ex 20:12). That land was Canaan, as far as Israel was concerned. But the Decalogue is applicable to all mankind in that it defines a man's duty toward God and his duty to his fellows. Consequently the apostle catches the spirit of the 5th commandment as it relates to all persons and renders this part: "that it may be well with you and that you may *live long on the earth*" (Eph 6:3). Adaptive translations by NT writers may help to explain why some citations in the NT differ from the OT originals.

8. Christ principle. Christ asserted that there was a definite aim and focus in the OT. It was more than just a record of Israel's apostasies and religious experiences. Of the OT Scriptures He affirmed: "they . . . bear witness to me" (Jn 5:39). Thus the NT writers see the supreme purpose of the OT to be the revelation of the Messiah by means of its prophecies, rituals, and precepts.

(a) Prophecy. All direct Messianic prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. "To him all the prophets bear witness" (Acts 10:43). An example is Jesus' own citation of Is 61:1, 2, which foretold the ministry of God's Servant. Jesus' assertion to His townsmen of Nazareth was startling: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:16-21).

(b) Ritual. The book of Hebrews evidences the fact that the NT writers regarded the tabernacle-temple sanctuaries, the sacrifices, and the Levitical priesthood as types and shadows of the heavenly sanctuary, the atoning death of Christ, and His high-priestly ministry in the presence of God. The festivals also had typical significance, as Paul observes: "Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7).

(c) Precept. The NT writers see that the divine plan for the salvation of man was disclosed in the OT as well as in their own witness. (Salvation was by faith then as well as now.) Noah is designated "a herald of righteousness" (2 Pe 2:5), who because of the destruction of the Flood became "an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith" (Heb 11:7).

The assertion of the book of Hebrews is that "good news came to us [Christians] just as to them [Israel]; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers" (Heb 4:2). Paul argues in Romans that "the law and the prophets bear witness to it," that is, to the doctrine of righteousness by faith, and cites Israel's great heroes, Abraham and David, to show he is advancing no new doctrine (Rom 3:21; 4:1-8). Jesus expresses apparent surprise at Nicodemus' ignorance of the concept of the new birth. "'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand this?'" (Jn 3:10).

9. Typical principle. A large proportion of NT citations seem to be torn from their original settings. This is particularly true of passages that are applied to Christ. We must not think the NT writers move irrationally through the Scriptures blindly selecting here and there. They must have moved on some valid hermeneutical principle. The evidence would suggest that the NT writers at times used the principle of types.

The Israelite was taught to take historical events seriously and to catch their spiritual overtones. For example, the forty years of manna in the wilderness were intended to teach Israel more than the simple fact that God could supply their daily bread. Moses points out the spiritual dimension God designed for them to grasp from this physical experience: "He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; *that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord*" (Dt 8:3).

The NT writers saw certain persons and events as historical types foreshadowing some aspect of Christ. For example, Paul sees in Adam "a type [*typos*] of the one who was to come" (Rom 5:14). Inasmuch as Adam is so characterized, it would be natural for the NT writers under the illumination of the Holy Spirit to see in the anointed prophets, priests, and kings--and even in the chosen nation of Israel itself--*God-intended* types of the ultimate Anointed One--*the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Overcomer.*

In making these links between the OT and Christ it would appear that the NT writers employed the interpretative principles commonly used by the rabbis of Qal Wahomer (inference from minor to major) and Gezerah Shawah (construction of analogies) (see earlier chapter by Siegfried Horn, "Jewish Interpretation in the Apostolic Age").

For example, in Heb 1 a number of OT citations are applied to Christ. Two may be noted for the sake of illustration. The first citation is, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee" (Heb 1:5; see Ps 2:7). The overtones of the psalm are very Messianic, but it also may have applied to David in a local setting, for the Lord is described as saying, "'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill'" (Ps 2:6) (cf. Acts 4:25 on Davidic authorship). But the NT writer using the principle of types may cite this passage with propriety as a reference to Christ. He sees David, the anointed king of Israel, as a type of Israel's ultimate King, the Messiah. Here is an analogy between David and his dynastic Heir. Furthermore, if David the king may be termed God's "son," how much more appropriate for God to designate David's greater descendant "my Son."

The second passage cited reads, "'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son'" (Heb 1:5). The quotation is from 2 Sa 7:14 and is God's statement to David regarding the establishment of David's dynasty. The words actually refer to Solomon, who succeeded David on the throne. Again an analogy may be made and the Qal Wahomer principle applied. If God regards the

anointed king, Solomon, who builds His physical Temple as "son," how much more does He regard as "Son" the Messiah, who is greater than Solomon, and who will build the spiritual temple of the Lord.

Robert Gundry concludes from his analysis of both the formal citations and allusions in the Gospel of Matthew that many of them which are applied to Jesus rest on the following typical pattern. This may also be the pattern used by the other NT writers:

Jesus is the greater Moses.  
 Jesus is the greater Son of David.  
 Jesus is the representative prophet.  
 Jesus is the representative Israelite.  
 Jesus is the representative righteous sufferer  
 rejected by men.

Perhaps the difficult passages in Matthew--such as his citation of Is 7:14 (1:22, 23), Hos 11:1 (2:15), and Jer 31:15 (2:17, 18), as well as Paul's citation of the civil law pertaining to oxen in Dt 25:4 (1 Cor 9:8-10)--may be best explained by suggesting that the writers were employing the typical principle with those of analogy and of inference from minor to major.

10. Ethical principle. The NT writers saw in the OT a precious storehouse of materials for moral instruction in Christian living. Human nature being the same in all ages, what was valid and permanent moral instruction in one age would be valid in another age if a similar situation arose. "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 Ti 3:16, 17). Consequently, under the Holy Spirit they continually applied the moral instruction to Christian living. Matthew recorded Christ's Sermon on the Mount, the Saviour's great exposition of the Decalogue. Both Paul and John spoke with regard to the principle of impartial love as fulfilling the obligations of the second table of the law (Mt 5-7; Rom 13:8-10; 1 Jn 3:14, 15). The counsels on practical godliness that may be found in the epistle of James and that generally make up a part of each of Paul's letters, have roots in the OT.

### Conclusion

The above sketch is an attempt to induce from the NT the basic presuppositions with which the NT writers approached the OT scriptures, and the hermeneutical principles they employed in interpreting its contents to the church and to the world.

It must not be forgotten that in such a study we are analyzing men who themselves were being moved by the Holy Spirit to transmit the fullness of the gospel, which was but outline and shadow in the OT. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit they saw divine harmonies that the uninspired expositor might not be able to perceive with his limited comprehension.

The Christian expositor would be in harmony with the basic presuppositions of the NT writers. But with the NT writings also vouchsafed to him, he will be obliged to view the OT through the further illumination, enlargement, and clarification of the NT witness.

As an uninspired investigator of the Scriptures the Christian expositor will be largely limited to the grammatical-historical and analogy of Scripture principles of interpretation. He may accommodate a passage in order to present, perhaps, a universal truth, but his audience should know he is not giving an exposition in context. Adaptive translating as apparently done by the NT writers is similar though not identical to paraphrasing. A paraphrase of a scriptural passage can often be helpful in explaining its meaning. And of course the Scriptures are the minister's authority for the presentation of truths related to Christian ethics.

With reference to the principles of enlargement, augmentation, types, as well as the Christ principle and new Israel principle, the uninspired expositor must limit himself to searching out what the inspired writers themselves disclosed. In this task and privilege his constant prayer to the Author of all truth must ever be: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps 119:18).

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9. Ellen G. White's Evaluation and Use of the Bible

RAYMOND F. COTTRELL

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Ellen G. White understood her primary role to be that of God's special messenger to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her task as she saw it was to point men and women to the Bible as the inspired, authoritative Word of God, to apply its principles to the experiences the church and its members encounter in the world today, and to guide them in their preparation for Christ's return.

Attitude Toward the Bible

Ellen White's attitude toward the Bible as reflected in many statements such as these is fundamental to a correct understanding of her use of it:

The Bible is God's voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears.--  
*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 393.

The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will.  
--*The Great Controversy*, p. ix.

The Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine.  
--*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 126.

In our time there is a wide departure from their [the Scriptures'] doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant principle--the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty.--*The Great Controversy*, pp. 204, 205.

The Spirit was not given--nor can it ever be bestowed--to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard

by which all teaching and experience must be tested.  
--*The Great Controversy*, p. ix.

### Concept of Her Relation to the Bible

Ellen White considered her mission to be in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, particularly the promise of Joel 2:28, 29, repeated in Acts 2:17, 18:

I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. God has, in that Word, promised 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.--*Early Writings*, p. 78.

She conceived of her ministry as a lesser light to lead men to the greater light, the Bible. She did not look upon her writings as superseding the Bible or as an addition to it or as "new light" but as clarifying the Bible and showing its relevance to the needs of God's people today:

The *Testimonies* were not given to take the place of the Bible. . . .

The *Testimonies* [are not] an addition to the word of God. . . . [But] God has seen fit in this manner to bring the minds of His people to His word, to give them a clearer understanding of it.--*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 663.

The Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.--*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 125.

Ellen White describes one way in which, during the early years of the church, she became "a lesser light" to enable men to understand the Bible:

When they came to the point in their study where they said, "We can do nothing more," the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me, I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me, with instruction as to how we were to labor and teach effectively. Thus light was given that helped us to understand the scriptures in regard to Christ, His mission, and His priesthood.--*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 206, 207.

While acknowledging the primacy of the Bible, Ellen White claimed for her writings the same inspiration she attributed to it and insisted that there is basic harmony between the two:

The Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and the author of the Spirit of Prophecy.--E. G. White Letter 92, 1900.

"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."--*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 661.

The writings of Ellen White are as thoroughly permeated with Scripture as the air is with oxygen. They testify to her profound knowledge of the Bible, and when she encourages other people to study it with diligence and care she does so from the depth of her own experience. Whatever the subject, she thought--and wrote--in the language and thought forms of Scripture.

#### Attitude Toward Truth

In Ellen White's counsel to others we may see a reflection of her attitude toward truth. Among the qualities of mind she commends are sincerity of purpose in seeking truth, dedication of mind and life to it, willingness to live in harmony with it, an earnest desire for it, willingness to learn, an open mind. She commends diligent, persevering systematic study; patient reflection; and where necessary exercise of suspended judgment:

The spirit in which you come to the investigation of the Scriptures, will determine the character of the assistant at your side.--*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 108.

The perception and appreciation of truth, He [Christ] said, depends less upon the mind than upon the heart.--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 455.

His [the seeker's] affections and all his capabilities must be consecrated to the search.--*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 112.

Whenever men are not seeking, in word and deed, to be in harmony with God, then, however learned they may be, they are liable to err in their understanding of Scripture. . . . And it is only those who are following

the light already given that can hope to receive the further illumination of the Spirit.--*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 705.

### Objective Frame of Mind

The student of the word should not make his opinions a center around which truth is to revolve. He should not search for the purpose of finding texts of Scripture that he can construe to prove his theories, for this is wresting the Scriptures to his own destruction. The Bible student must empty himself of every prejudice, lay his own ideas at the door of investigation, and with humble, subdued heart, with self hid in Christ, with earnest prayer, he should seek wisdom from God.--*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 463.

If there is a point of truth that you do not understand, upon which you do not agree, investigate, compare scripture with scripture, sink the shaft of truth down deep into the mine of God's word. You must lay yourselves and your opinions on the altar of God, put away your preconceived ideas, and let the Spirit of heaven guide into all truth.--*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 476.

The sin that is most nearly hopeless and incurable is pride of opinion, self-conceit. This stands in the way of all growth.--*Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 199, 200.

### Exacting Investigation

Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support.--*The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

We should never allow ourselves to employ arguments that are not wholly sound. . . . We should present sound arguments, that will not only silence our opponents, but will bear the closest and most searching scrutiny.--*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 708.

[God calls for] 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. Believers are not to rest in suppositions and ill-defined ideas of what constitutes truth.--*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 40.

### Diligence With Patience

The most valuable teaching of the Bible is not gained by occasional or disconnected study. Its great system of truth is not so presented as to be discerned by the careless or hasty reader. Many of its treasures lie far beneath the surface, and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort.--*Signs of the Times*, Sept. 9, 1906.

There must be patient study and meditation and earnest prayer.--*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 108.

### The Holy Spirit's Guidance

Men must themselves be under the influence of the Holy Spirit in order to understand the Spirit's utterances through the prophets.--*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 114.

No one is able to explain the Scriptures without the aid of the Holy Spirit. But when you take up the Word of God with a humble, teachable heart, the angels of God will be by your side to impress you with evidences of the truth.--*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 411.

### Concept of the Nature of Scripture

Prerequisite and basic to a viable hermeneutical methodology is an accurate understanding of such matters as the relationship between the divine and the human elements in Scripture, the nature of inspiration, the text and canon of Scripture, the progressive nature of revelation, and the unity of Scripture:

"The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the

several writers. The truths revealed are all 'given by inspiration of God' (2 Tim. 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language. . . ."--*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 25.

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. --*Ibid.*, p. 21.

#### The Nature of Inspiration

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.--*Ibid.*

#### The Text and Canon of Scripture

The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess. It came fresh from the Fountain of eternal truth, and throughout the ages a divine hand has preserved its purity.--*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 52.

God had faithful witnesses, to whom He committed the truth, and who preserved the Word of God. The manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have been preserved through the ages by a miracle of God.--E. G. White Letter 32, 1899.

Revelation Progressive

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. There is "first the bud, then the blossom, and next the fruit," "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This is exactly what the Bible utterances are to us.--*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19, 20.

The Unity of Scripture

The books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.--*Ibid.*, p. 25.

Ellen White's Biblical Hermeneutic

Hermeneutical principles and procedures followed today by conservative Bible scholars were not in general use during Ellen White's lifetime. She nevertheless recognized these principles, advocated their use, and demonstrated them in her own exposition of Scripture. For instance, she commends attention to such things as the historical setting, the writer's personal characteristics and cultural background, his literary form and purpose in writing, the words, the context, the analogy of Scripture, textual variants, inaccuracies of translation, and literal/figurative language. When her purpose in writing and her mode of expression are taken into account, her use of Scripture comports both with the way in which later inspired writers of the Bible made use of earlier inspired writings and with sound contemporary biblical scholarship.

Although an exhaustive analysis has yet to be made of the biblical hermeneutic commended and practiced by Ellen White, certain facets of it are clearly stated and illustrated in her pub-

lished works. One factor that could well be given priority in any future study is an occasional exposition of Scripture in which she attributes to a passage a meaning that is not readily apparent from an application of the hermeneutical principles she herself commends--a practice demonstrated at times by the Bible writers themselves.

What we might call Ellen White's biblical hermeneutic takes note of:

1. The Historical and Cultural Setting. She recognized the importance of the historical and cultural setting and the meaning a passage of Scripture had for those to whom it was first addressed, as prerequisite to correct understanding of the passage. In her own exposition of Scripture--notably in the Conflict of the Ages Series--she habitually devotes considerable attention to these factors.

An understanding of the customs of those who lived in Bible times, of the location and time of events, is practical knowledge; for it aids in making clear the figures of the Bible and in bringing out the force of Christ's lessons.--*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 518.

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 deeper lessons.--*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 1.

2. The Cultural Background and Personal Characteristics of the Writers. She recognized that the differences between one writer and another with respect to cultural background and personal characteristics have a bearing on understanding what each wrote:

The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. . . .

Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. . . .



As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, 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.--*The Great Controversy*, pp. v, vi (1950 ed.).

The Lord gave His word . . . through different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history. . . . They do not represent things in just the same style. 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. The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity. . . .

It is seldom that two persons will view and express truth in the very same way. Each dwells on particular points which his constitution and education have fitted him to appreciate.--*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 21, 22.

3. Word Meanings. She stresses the importance of word meanings and implies the need for ascertaining as accurately as possible the meaning of the words of Scripture in the sense intended by the writer:

Human minds vary. The minds of different education and thought receive different impressions of the same words, and it is difficult for one mind to give to one of a different temperament, education, and habits of thought by language exactly the same idea as that which is clear and distinct in his own mind. Yet to honest men, right-minded men, he can be so simple and plain as to convey his meaning for all practical purposes. . . .

The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. Different meanings are expressed by the same word; there is not one word for each distinct idea. The Bible was given for practical purposes. . . .

Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his

expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind.--*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19-21, *passim*.

By earnest attention and prayerful thought he [the Bible student] must learn the meaning of the words of truth, and drink deep of the spirit of the holy oracles.--*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 60.

4. The Context. Ellen White implies the importance of construing a passage in harmony with its context:

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.--*The Great Controversy*, p. 521.

[Judas] would introduce texts of Scripture that had no connection with the truths Christ was presenting. These texts, separated from their connection, perplexed the disciples, and increased the discouragement that was constantly pressing upon them.--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 719.

5. The Analogy of Scripture. Although recognizing differences in time, historical background, literary skill, cultural perspective, and individual characteristics between one Bible writer and another, Ellen White nevertheless perceived an over-all unity in this diversity and affirmed that passages of Scripture dealing with different aspects of the same subject should be brought together in order to form a more complete understanding of the subject as a whole. She mentions also the progressive nature of revelation, which should be borne in mind when correlating various passages of Scripture.

The books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.--*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 25.

The truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all circumstances and experiences of life.--*Ibid.*, p. 26.

I saw that the Word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another.--*Early Writings*, p. 221.

Scripture must be compared with Scripture. There must be careful research and patient reflection.--*Review and Herald*, Oct. 9, 1883, p. 2.

The Bible is its own expositor. One passage will prove to be a key that will unlock other passages, and in this way light will be shed upon the hidden meaning of the word. By comparing different texts treating on the same subject, viewing their bearing on every side, the true meaning of the Scriptures will be made evident.--*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 187.

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. There is "first the bud, then the blossom, and next the fruit," "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This is exactly what the Bible utterances are to us.--*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 19, 20.

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with Scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts.--*Education*, p. 190.

6. Textual Variants. Ellen White's recognition that changes have been made in the text of Scripture by copyists, editors, and translators implies that attention should be given to an evaluation of the textual variants. She mentions also the importance of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

Some look to us gravely and say, "Don't you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?" This is all probable . . . [but] all the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble, that would not manufacture difficulties from the plainest revealed truth.--*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 16.

I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition.--*Early Writings*, pp. 220, 221.

God had faithful witnesses, to whom He committed the truth, and who preserved the Word of God. The manuscripts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have been preserved through the ages by a miracle of God.--E. G. White Letter 32, 1899.

7. Literal Meaning; Figurative Language. Ellen White insists on the obvious, literal meaning of a passage of Scripture unless the context makes evident that figurative language is being used, and that when such language is used the Bible is to serve as its own interpreter:

The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or a figure is employed.--*The Great Controversy*, p. 599.

Others, who have an active imagination, seize upon the figures and symbols of Holy Writ, interpret 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 God's word.--*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 344.

The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers.--*The Great Controversy*, p. 598.

#### Modes of Using Scripture

More than 500 pages of Ellen White's books were read specifically for the purpose of evaluating her use of Scripture. Each quotation from or allusion to the Bible was analyzed and classified. Only an exhaustive analysis of all of her published works with this objective in view could provide a definitive answer to the question of how she used the Bible. Such a study would be eminently worth while. However, the following illustrations will

provide a fair sampling of the various ways in which she makes use of Scripture. These were arranged in twelve categories, some of which could be subdivided still further. In a general way the order is from the simple (which pose little if any exegetical problem) to the complex, some of which--especially the last--do present some problems.

Category assignments were made on the basis of the import of the Bible passage in terms of its own context, and a similar determination was made of Ellen White's use of that particular Bible passage in the context in which she uses it and as to her evident purpose in using it. For each category one or more illustrations are given. Almost any two of the thirteen categories have certain elements in common, and often one passage cited as illustrative of a category might also serve to illustrate one or more other categories. In such instances assignment is more or less arbitrary although usually made on the basis of the most noteworthy factor involved.

1. Direct Quotation, in which she narrates an event or discusses a passage of Scripture in context by quoting a portion of the passage:

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." The words of Mark are still more significant. He says, "Immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts." "And in those days He did eat nothing."--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 114.

2. Indirect Quotation, in which she narrates an event or discusses a passage of Scripture in context by rephrasing it, often using some of the same words:

So with Elijah, who had stood undaunted before King Ahab, who had faced the whole nation of Israel, with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal at their head. After that terrible day upon Carmel, when the false prophets had been slain, and the people had declared their allegiance to God, Elijah fled for his life before the threats of the idolatrous Jezebel.--*Ibid.*, p. 120.

3. Actual Conversation, in which she recounts a Bible incident in her own words but quotes conversation:

Pointing to the stones which strewed the desert, and which had the appearance of loaves, the tempter said, "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

Though he appears as an angel of light, these first words betray his character. "If Thou be the Son of God."  
--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 118.

4. Hypothetical Conversation, in which she either puts words of Scripture from an altogether different context on the lips of men or supernatural beings, or creates speeches for them more or less in her own words:

The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as God's special gift, and therefore called forth no gratitude to his Creator. . . . "Why," questioned this mighty angel, "should Christ have the supremacy? Why is he honored above Lucifer?"--  
*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 37.

5. Amplification, in which she augments a Bible narrative by providing additional factual or circumstantial information such as an eyewitness might give, to illuminate the narrative by making it more vivid and meaningful:

The Lord directed Moses to turn aside into a rocky defile, and encamp beside the sea. It was revealed to him that Pharaoh would pursue them, but that God would be honored in their deliverance.

In Egypt the report was spread that the children of Israel, instead of tarrying to worship in the desert, were pressing on toward the Red Sea. . . . Their great men, recovering from their fears, accounted for the plagues as the result of natural causes. . . .

The king himself, attended by the great men of his realm, headed the attacking army. To secure the favor of the gods, and thus insure the success of their undertaking, the priests also accompanied them. . . . The Hebrews were encamped beside the sea, whose waters presented a seemingly impassable barrier before them, while on the south a rugged mountain obstructed their further progress.--*Ibid.*, pp. 283, 284.

6. Insight, in which she provides factual information beyond that which an eyewitness could give, in order to make clear the significance of the event:

One of the most powerful of the angels, he says, has been banished from heaven. The appearance of Jesus indicates that He is that fallen angel, forsaken by God, and deserted by man.--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 119.

Through the gifts of the magi from a heathen country, the Lord supplied the means for the journey into Egypt and the sojourn in a land of strangers.--*Ibid.*, p. 65.

7. General Biblical Principles applied to a specific Bible situation:

[Abraham's] conduct illustrates the inspired maxim, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."--*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 136.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Abraham had honored God, and the Lord honored him, taking him into his counsels, and revealing to him his purposes.--*Ibid.*, p. 139.

8. Homily, in which she draws lessons from a passage of Scripture:

[Crossing the Red Sea] The great lesson here taught is for all time. Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before, and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, "Go forward."--*Ibid.*, p. 290.

Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels' song. . . . To us in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near. Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God's command.--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 48.

9. Borrowing words, phraseology, and thought forms of Scripture to express her own thought, without implying an attempt to explicate Scripture:

God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. . . . In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life

for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach onto.

In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. "His strength setteth fast the mountains." "The sea is His, and He made it." Ps. 65:6; 95:5.--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19, 20.

10. Prophetic Fulfillment, in which she identifies a predictive prophecy with a specific historical situation of Bible times:

That day completed the history revealed to Abraham in prophetic vision centuries before: "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance." The four hundred years had been fulfilled. "And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies."--*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 281, 282.

11. Messianic Fulfillment, in which she applies an OT passage to the person and mission of Christ:

Among the Jews there were yet steadfast souls, . . . [who] strengthened their faith by dwelling upon the assurance given through Moses, "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you." Acts 3:22. Again, they read how the Lord would anoint One "to preach good tidings unto the meek," "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives," and to declare the "acceptable year of the Lord." Isa. 61:1, 2. They read how He would "set judgment in the earth," how the isles should "wait for His law," how the Gentiles should come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising. Isa. 42:4; 60:3.--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 34.

The quiet homes of the city of David witnessed those



scenes of horror that, six hundred years before, had been opened to the prophet. "In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."--*The Desire of Ages*, p. 65.

12. Extended Application, in which she applies a Bible statement in a sense not apparent from its original context or applies a Bible prediction to a historical situation not clearly evident from the immediate context:

"Affliction shall not rise up the second time" (Nah 1:9). In context, Nahum's declaration, "He will make a full end; he will not take vengeance twice on his foes" (Nah 1:9, RSV), specifically refers to the destruction of Nineveh, which God purposed to destroy so thoroughly that the process would never have to be repeated. But Ellen White applies Nahum's prediction to the permanent annihilation of all evil at the end of the age, in a universal eschatological sense (see *The Great Controversy*, p. 504). The parallel is perfect: the permanent destruction of Nineveh mutely witnesses to the fact that one day God also will permanently annihilate all evil.

"The vision is yet for an appointed time" (Hab 2:3). When the Lord told Habakkuk to "write the vision, and make it plain," that it was "yet for an appointed time," and "though it tarry" to "wait for it," He spoke of the divine purpose, stated in chapter 1, that the Chaldeans were to be an instrument in God's hand to punish the Jews. In *Prophets and Kings* Ellen White comments on this passage in its historical context (pp. 386, 388), but in *The Great Controversy* she applies it to the experience of the Advent believers during the "tarrying time" between the two disappointments of 1844 (p. 392). The patience and faith God commanded to Habakkuk, helped the Advent people of 1844 relate to the delay in the fulfillment of their hopes.

The law in Galatians. The law concerning which Paul wrote to the Galatians was the Jewish religious system ordained at Sinai as the way of salvation in OT times. But, says the apostle, salvation is now by faith and not by "the works of the law" (Gal 3:2), that is, the ritual requirements prescribed by the law of Moses. When Ellen White deals with Paul's message to the Galatians historically she comments on the law in its original context. But in applying the epistle homiletically to our day she defines the law as "both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments" and adds

that--to us--"the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law." Her comment in *The Acts of the Apostles* is accurate exegesis--an exposition of what the apostle intended to say (pp. 383-388)--whereas that in *Selected Messages*, book 1, is an inspired homily on how God would have us apply the same principle in our day (pp. 233-235). The Galatians were not to seek salvation through mechanical observance of the ceremonial law; we are not to seek salvation through mechanical observance of the moral law--or any other law, for that matter.

Ellen White's application of a passage of Scripture in a sense not apparent from its original context is comparable to the practice of NT writers in applying OT passages in a sense not always apparent from the OT context:

Abraham's "seed." In its OT context the "seed" (Gn 22:18) promised Abraham referred to Isaac primarily and by projection to all of Abraham's posterity. But Paul specifically excludes Isaac and restricts the prediction to Christ, who was *the* "seed" promised to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (see Gal 3:16).

"A virgin shall conceive" (Is 7:14). Contextually, Isaiah's "young woman" (Is 7:14, RSV) might have been either his wife or some member of the royal family. In the LXX and in Matthew the term *young woman* is rendered "virgin" (Mt 1:23), and Matthew applies the passage to Mary (vs. 18). Authority for the Messianic import of the statement rests on him as an inspired writer coming later than Isaiah, rather than on Isaiah.

"Out of Egypt . . . my son" (Mt 2:15). In Hosea the "son" God brought forth from Egypt is a figure of speech for the Hebrew people at the time of the Exodus, but Matthew uses the statement as a prediction of Jesus' return from Egypt. Christ was God's Son in a personal sense as Israel was in a corporate metaphorical sense. Matthew rather than Hosea is the authority for this application.

Oxen threshing out grain. Moses' command not to muzzle oxen threshing out grain had to do with literal oxen on Palestinian threshing floors (Dt 25:4). But Paul twice indicates that the instruction given to Moses by God had a concern beyond the literal oxen. Paul applies the command to the support of the gospel ministry and declares that God had this in mind when He spoke to Moses about the oxen (1 Cor 9:9, 10; 1 Ti 5:18). The principle is the same, but it is given a parallel and extended application. Paul, however, should be recognized as the inspired authority for the application made of Moses' inspired words.

As these illustrations indicate, NT writers often quote from or allude to OT passages, amplifying their import beyond what is readily apparent from the statement in its original context. Both are authentic authoritative statements of truth inspired by the Holy Spirit.

### Conclusion

Ellen White was God's appointed messenger to the church in our day--even as the prophets of old represented Him to the covenant people in the long ago. Her role was to convey a message from God appropriate for our time. She considered it her task to direct men and women to the Bible as the inspired, authoritative Word of God, to apply its principles to the problems the church and its members encounter in the world today, and to guide them in their preparation for Christ's return.

In her writings Ellen White constantly refers to and quotes from the Bible in a wide variety of ways. As the preceding illustrations indicate, she often does so in context to illuminate a passage of Scripture in its historical setting, and often homiletically to apply a Bible principle to a modern situation.

Perhaps the most noteworthy impressions resulting from this relatively preliminary sampling are: (1) The extent to which Ellen White's own thinking and expression were bound up with the Bible, and (2) the great variety of ways in which she uses the Bible.

Rightly understood Ellen White's use of the Bible comports with sound, recognized principles of interpretation, which she sets forth at length. We may assume that she purposed to follow the principles she commended to others. When her voluminous use of the Bible is taken into consideration, her literary faithfulness to it is remarkable.

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## PART IV

### PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

#### 10. General Principles of Interpretation

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Biblical interpretation is both a science and an art based on a clearly defined methodology that works with a set of principles primarily derived from and adequate to the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

The knowledge that the Bible is in need of interpretation is as old as the Bible itself. The issue of interpretation comes through in the question of Philip, who spoke to the eunuch reading in the book of Isaiah: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" and the answer was definite: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:30, 31).

The need for interpretation rests in the fact that the Bible was written in a different culture, separated from our time by the distance of many ages, and that it arose under certain specific situations. The fact that the Bible was written in languages other than our own calls for translation, and the variety of versions (translations) compounds the need of interpretation. Interpretation is necessary on the one hand in order to discover the original meaning of the Bible writers and on the other hand to understand the Bible's relevance for our time. The major discussion of this chapter dealing with general principles of biblical interpretation finds its basis in the foundations of biblical interpretation.

## A. Foundations of Biblical Interpretation

### I. The Uniqueness of the Bible and Interpretation

#### 1. A Divine Author and Human Writers

At the heart of Christian faith is the certainty that God Himself has spoken in Scripture. Thus the Bible contains the divine revelation of God's will and purpose in words and deeds recorded in human language over a period of some 1,500 years. As inspired revelation the Bible has God as its Author. This divine origin is attested by the testimony that "no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pe 1:21, RSV). Paul has written that "all scripture is inspired by God" (2 Ti 3:16, RSV). The divine origin of the Bible is the most basic fact and fundamental reality of Christian faith.

God has chosen to unfold truths about Himself in human language despite its dimensions and limitations in order to speak to us. This twofold origin with its divine and human dimensions requires of the interpreter of the Bible that he develop and employ sound and adequate principles of interpretation based on this twofold origin of Scripture.

The self-revelation of God as embodied in Scripture possesses an authority superior to any other source of knowing God. This fact has definite implications regarding biblical interpretation. The nature of biblical inspiration and scriptural authority demands that the Bible be regarded as the "unerring standard" (*MH*, 462) by which human ideas--whether in the realms of philosophy, science, or tradition--are tested. Although it is true that modern critical study of the Bible could not have arisen without the radical break of the Reformers from medieval principles of interpretation, it is equally true that the methods of modern critical interpretation of Scripture have come into existence in the age of rationalism, and thus have broken away from the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. By the end of the 18th century the rational-critical study of the Bible was fully developed, and it led to full-fledged historical criticism under philosophical presuppositions that in one way or another determined and determine to this day the methodologies of critical investigations of the Scriptures. Modern rational-critical study of the Bible employs admittedly external keys that deny in principle the self-interpretation of Scripture, and thus undermine the authority of the Bible. Proper recognition of the uniqueness of the Bible with its divine authorship and human writers demands that it not be interpreted by external means such as tradition, philosophy, science, and the like

but be allowed to function as its own interpreter.

## 2. The Christian Canon as the Context for Biblical Interpretation

God's providence provided the origin of the sixty-six biblical books and their selection and preservation over a long period of time. Hence, the number of OT and NT books is what it is; no more and no less. Although the historical investigation of development of biblical canon is important in itself, in the final analysis the authoritative bodies that had a part in the formation of the biblical canon did not provide the Bible with its authority. The Bible is self-authenticating. It was the content and message of the inspired writings functioning authoritatively within the communities of believers that determined the acceptance of those writings in the biblical canon. In tying their faith to an authoritative body of Scripture, the communities of believers sought to establish the truth of their faith in terms of its historical and theological continuity with that of the prophets and the apostles.

The affirmation of the canon as the proper context for interpreting the Bible implies that Christian faith is tied to a particular historical witness or set of writings adjudged to contain the "rule of faith" (*regula fidei*) for the life of the community of faith. In the formation of the canon the community of faith acknowledged that God continues to make known His will and purpose to His church through the medium of Scripture, which is not merely a memorial of the past but also the bearer of life for the present and the future. Implicit in the use of the canon as a context for interpreting the Bible is rejection of the method that would imprison the Bible within a strict context of the historical past. Appeal to the scriptural canon is based on the position that the Bible is a vehicle of divine reality, which indeed encountered an ancient people in the historical past but continues to confront the church and men through its pages.

Recognition of the canon of Scripture as the context for interpretation of the Bible has extraordinary hermeneutical implications. It is to be acknowledged that today man no longer stands in basic harmony with biblical faith, and thus he conducts his investigation from a universe constructed outside the realities of faith. A major break from early Protestant interpretation of the Bible came through the development of the historical-critical method, beginning with the age of enlightenment. This change has brought about a relatively new relation of man to the Bible.

The historical-critical method works on three basic principles:

(1) Correlation, (2) analogy, and (3) criticism (E. Troeltsch). On the basis of the principle of correlation it is argued that no event or text can be understood unless it is seen in its historical context. This means that no critical investigator can make use of supernatural intervention as a principle of historical explanation, because this approach shatters the continuity of natural events as to cause and effect. Thus the historical-critical method understands history as an unbroken series of causes and effects in which there is no room for God's activity. Accordingly, historical events must be explained by earlier historical causes and understood in terms of other historical experiences. On the other hand, the Bible's claim of God's supernatural intervention in history involves depths of historical experience and reality that the historical-critical interpreter is unable to fathom (G. von Rad).

The second basic principle of the historical-critical method is the principle of analogy, or the claim that the present and the past are analogous. It is asserted that there must be similarity or there cannot be dissimilarity. If the principle of analogy is employed in this rigorous sense, Christian faith is confronted with a serious problem, because there is no room in this setting for the uniqueness of Jesus Christ's virgin birth, death on the cross, and resurrection.

The principle of analogy cannot be accepted in an uncritical manner, first because the historian has to construct his analogies on his knowledge of the present, and it is not to be assumed that the present is known completely by any individual. Furthermore, man's total present experience as to varieties of cultures and societies is complex. In addition, the presupposition that the past has to conform to the present is to be denied (R. G. Collingwood). It is well known that the ancient Greeks and the Romans controlled the size of their populations by exposing newborn infants. This fact has no analogy to our present experience, but it must not thus be rendered doubtful. A sound hermeneutic cannot be bound by the principle of analogy, because there is evidence not only for similarity but also for dissimilarity.

The third principle of the historical-critical method is the principle of criticism, according to which any historical assertion is only a statement of probability. According to some philosophers of history one is to apply the principle of criticism psychologically according to the varying mental states of the document's author. It determines (a) what he meant, (b) whether he believed what he said, (c) whether his belief was justified. Inasmuch as any statement of probability is subject to revision, one cannot, for example, avoid skepticism concerning many events described in the Gospels.



The lengthy and heated discussion as to whether the resurrection was an actual event illustrates the problem the historical-critical method raises. Many present-day theologians claim that the resurrection of Jesus is a "non-historical" happening. Some (K. Barth, W. Pannenberg, W. Künneth, A. von Campenhausen), however, insist on the historicity of the resurrection.

The careful interpreter recognizes that a consistently applied historical-critical method cannot do justice to the Bible claim to truth. The transcendent, or divine, dimension of the Bible as the Word of God cannot be adequately dealt with by the historical-critical method. If it were true that all historical events by definition must be explained on the basis of cause and effect on the physical level, there would be no room for God to act in history, because God is not a historical individual for whom there is an analogy. A methodology that rules out *a priori* the divine action in history through word and deed is unable to deal adequately and properly with the manifest testimony of the Bible. Because the reality expressed in the biblical texts testifies to a divine dimension, which goes beyond the self-imposed limitations of the historical-critical method, there must be employed a hermeneutic adequate for the Bible to account for both the divine and human dimensions.

## II. The Self-interpretation of Scripture

### 1. The Scripture Principle

The classical understanding for the self-interpretation of Scripture is the famous Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*--"the Bible only"--often referred to as the Scripture principle. The Scripture principle--the formal affirmation of the position that the Bible is its own interpreter--is based on its divine-human origin. It involves the supreme authority of the infallible Holy Scriptures to the exclusion of all human authority in matters of doctrine and salvation. It is based on the Bible's inspiration, unity, canonicity, and supreme authority.

Jesus illustrated this principle when, beginning with the writings of Moses and continuing through the remaining writings, He "explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Lk 24:27, NASB). Adventist interpreters of the Bible generally have accepted this principle and maintained that the Bible only is our infallible rule of faith, doctrine, reform, and practice.

Proper understanding of the *sola scriptura* principle--that is,

the Scripture principle--militates against the well-known hermeneutic whereby the Bible is interpreted by the intelligence of the individual at his own discretion. The Bible may not be subjected to private interpretation, nor may it be interpreted under the domination of an external ploy such as philosophy, science, or tradition.

An additional aspect of the Scripture principle requires that a difficult passage of the Bible be interpreted by a clear passage or clear passages. Obviously, this procedure must not be followed indiscriminately. It would be a mistake to bring just any passage to bear on any other passage. In the process of comparing text with text, scripture with scripture, one needs to let one text on a given subject interpret another text on the same subject (see *FE*, 187). By viewing the bearing of passages or texts on the same subject on every side, the interpreter of the Bible is expected to arrive at the true meaning of the text (see *Ev*, 581; *GC*, 521). A distortion of this principle would be to take the opposite route, namely, to interpret a clear passage with an obscure or difficult one.

## 2. The Bible its own Interpreter

The principle of self-interpretation of Scripture rests not only on the Scripture principle but also on the principle that Scripture is its own interpreter. The Reformation principle of Scripture its own interpreter is endorsed by Seventh-day Adventists (see *Ed*, 190; *GC*, 521; etc.). The consistent admonition, Make the Bible its own expositor (see *GC*, 511), comes in full recognition of the principle of the Bible as its own interpreter. This principle implies that one portion of Scripture interprets another. As one passage of Scripture on a given subject is the key to another passage on the same subject, so the OT interprets the NT and the NT the OT.

The most adequate context of the interpretation of various sections, passages, or texts of Scripture is the whole Bible according to the analogy of faith. God as the Author of both testaments saw the end from the beginning; He foresaw the future in a way the human author did not, and thus He had cognizance of this future in inspiring the human writers to write the documents that are recognized as Scripture. Although God spoke to the generations contemporary to the writers of the biblical books, He saw to it also that the reader of these books in the future would find therein depth of meaning and relevance beyond the local and limited circumstances in which and for which the original was produced. The prophets are not to be understood merely as

spokesmen of God for their own times (with a divinely given foreknowledge of God's plan of salvation for the immediate future) but also they must be understood to have predicted events in the distant future (see 1 Pe 1:10-12).

It is evident that the Bible contains a fuller import and deeper meaning than is on the surface. For example, the prophet Isaiah emphasizes a connection between the Exodus from Egypt and the return from captivity. Such parallelism is based on the understanding that God's actions on behalf of His people follow a pattern of fidelity in which the Lord shows Himself the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8). What is expressed here is that behind each verse of the Bible there stands not only the mind of the man who contributed to its writing but in a special way the mind of God who thus intended to communicate truth for all peoples and all times.

In letting the Bible be its own interpreter, the person engaged in biblical interpretation is compelled to attempt to the best of his ability bringing together all that is said about a particular subject from different times and varied circumstances as revealed in Scripture. Also although it is strongly insisted that the various passages on the same subject be compared and studied together, the fullest meaning of Scripture will not be made evident unless the respective passages from the same and other biblical writers of various times and circumstances are brought together. This procedure is justified on the basis of recognition of the divine dimension of Scripture as the inspired Word of God. Properly applied, it does not do injustice to the varied aspects of the subject as brought out by the several inspired writers.

### 3. Objectivity and Interpretation

Anyone who engages in biblical interpretation has willingly or unwillingly a certain preunderstanding. It is a well-known truism that absolute objectivity is not available. It is equally true that one cannot apply the so-called empty-head principle, whereby it is supposed that one can drop all preconceived notions and opinions, come to the text from a completely neutral ground, and engage in biblical interpretation. Although this procedure may sound reasonable it is hardly dependable because if an interpreter of the Bible knows the biblical languages, for example, he obviously must have learned the meaning of words and gained an understanding of grammar that generations of scholars have helped to determine. And he comes to the text with this "full head" to find to the best of his ability the meaning God has in the text.

It is a mandate that the interpreter seek to be objective. He must attempt to silence his subjectivity as much as possible if he is to obtain objective knowledge. The more he is aware of his own preunderstanding and presuppositions the more he is in a position to control them. These requirements make good sense insofar as they are taken to mean that the interpreter has to silence his personal wishes with regard to the outcome of the interpretation.

The interpreter of the Bible must remember that he is dealing with "living oracles" (Acts 7:38) of God, which fact imposes on him the requirement to possess religious insight and sympathy for the biblical text. It must be constantly recognized that it is God Himself who through the Bible and the Holy Spirit creates in the interpreter the necessary presuppositions and the essential perspective for understanding Scripture. The more comprehensive the interpreter's experience spiritually and otherwise; the deeper and fuller the development of his understanding; the more detailed his knowledge of the milieu, the time, and the background of the work he is to interpret, the better balanced will be his judgment and the greater will be the likelihood that he will discover precisely what the text means.

### III. The Goal of Biblical Interpretation

On the basis of the foundations of biblical interpretation outlined above, i.e., the nature of the Bible, its uniqueness, authority, and unity, with its hermeneutical corollaries of "the Bible only" and "Scripture its own interpreter" we formulate the objective of biblical interpretation as follows:

Proper and adequate biblical interpretation seeks (1) to determine what the inspired biblical writer as God's chosen instrument understood himself and meant to communicate to hearers and/or readers; (2) to comprehend and expound the fuller import and deeper meaning intended or implicit in the words of the prophet, whether or not he himself was aware of it; and (3) to translate and transmit these aspects to modern men, making them relevant to the historical situation of our times.

#### B. General Principles of Interpretation

##### I. The Original Text of Scripture

It is a well-known fact that although no autographs of any book of the Bible are preserved, the text of the Bible has been preserved in thousands of manuscripts. The NT alone is known in

whole or in part in about 5,500 manuscripts. No other ancient document has been preserved in more manuscripts than has the Bible.

Knowledge of the procedures and methods of textual studies is needed for recovery of the original text or closest approximation of the various books of the Bible. The following three steps are essential: (1) Collection and arrangement of readings in the preserved manuscripts, (2) Examination of the various readings, and (3) Determination of the correct or most likely reading. A full and proper use of the text can best proceed on constant reexamination of the readings in manuscript form, which involves comprehensive understanding of the history of the text and the rules for deciding questions of textual criticism.

## II. The Matter of Translation

The fact that God has chosen to let His divine thought become incarnate in human languages other than our own calls for translations. The Bible is written in three different languages--Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It must be recognized that these languages have to be understood and analyzed in the same manner as any other ancient tongues. The inspired writers using the languages of their day employed terms that had particular meaning in the historical context in which the writers lived. These words were employed to communicate divine thoughts to men.

The main object of the work of translation is to achieve a new presentation of the original message. The translator must strive for equivalents rather than literal identity. He must seek to reproduce as accurately as possible the original meaning in the language of the here and now. Because most of the readers of this book will not engage in translation practices, it is not necessary to dwell on this subject longer except to say that it must not be expected that any single translation will be perfect. Various good translations complement each other because no translation can capture every nuance of the semantic emphasis of the original.

## III. Understanding Words

### 1. Literal Meanings

It is natural to expect that the person engaged in seeking to understand Scripture begins with the smallest entity of communication, namely, words. It can hardly be emphasized enough, however, that words do not come isolated. Words are joined to other words to make up phrases and sentences. Sentences are joined to

make paragraphs, units, and chapters to form the individual scriptural books which together compose the Bible. According to the hermeneutic circle we cannot grasp the meaning of a word unless we look at the word in its grammatical and syntactical setting in the sentence. This is to say that the word is receiving its particular contextual meaning and makes its contextual contribution within the sentence. On the basis of linguistic semantics it is recognized that each sentence with its surrounding context is the setting that determines the meaning of the particular word or term, just as each word or term in a sentence defines by its content, grammar, and syntactical structure the meaning of the clause or sentence of which it is a part. This means that a particular term, despite its etymology, can mean different things in different contexts or sentences. We can also put it this way: Whatever a particular term may mean cannot be arrived at exclusively on the etymology of the term, but only from the connection or context of the sentence in which it is used and the mutual relationship of word to sentence and sentence to word.

From the vantage point of modern semantics it is inadmissible to overlook contextual meaning of a word in the phrase, sentence, or paragraph in which it is used. On the one hand, it serves as a much needed corrective against the tendency to read root meaning into all contexts, which makes it impossible to recognize that a biblical writer may have used the term with his own connotation and semantic emphasis. This is what has been called root fallacy and etymologizing (James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* [London, 1961]).

On the other hand, according to the hermeneutical circle one can grasp the whole only through the single parts, as the individual parts contribute to the whole. This implies a self-correcting process of understanding that spirals into the meaning of the whole by letting each new part fill out, qualify, and amplify the understanding reached in reading the earlier individual parts.

At times scholars have placed great emphasis on the "etymological" meaning of a word. Etymology is concerned with the origin and derivation of words from previous forms. In other words, it is a historical investigation of the history of a term during its usage in a language, or even from prior forms in other languages.

On the basis of new understanding it must be recognized that the history of a word and its etymological origin is no infallible guide to the meaning of the word in a given context. This fact is illustrated by the hundreds of words in the King James Version that have changed their meaning radically and in today's

usage have completely different semantic ranges. These considerations lead us to the formulation of the following principle: The proper determinant for the meaning of a word is the immediate context in its clause or sentence. This contextual priority has a determining function for the meaning of this word, no matter what its root meaning or etymology may be. A sound principle of interpretation is to avoid superimposing etymology and root meaning on a word regardless of its usage in a particular context. An important aid in the study of the meaning of a word is to see its relation to metonyms, synonyms, and antonyms.

It is not infrequent that a particular word in the Bible is used rarely. In these cases it is difficult to determine the meaning of the respective word. Lexicographers have therefore resorted--and rightly so--to the study of this particular word and related terms in cognate languages of available nonbiblical literature. Although these methods and procedures have proved helpful, they are by no means without serious problems. For example, if a particular Greek word is used only once in the NT, how do we find its respective meaning? It was customary in the past to turn to Greek literature to determine its meaning. In a good number of instances such words are used or found only in classical Greek, separated from the Greek used in the NT by several centuries. But does it follow that the meaning of a word in classical Greek is the same as the meaning of the word centuries later? Is the use of a word by Plato necessarily the same as its use by a NT writer? It is obvious that great caution must be exercised in the study of such terms.

We must also emphasize the influence the language of the OT (both the Hebrew and the Septuagint Greek) had on the creativity of the NT writers. For the reason that Christian belief and practice was not identical to Jewish or Hellenistic background, a "new content" was expressed by the same words, sentences, and complexes used by NT writers. This means that the "new content" given to NT words may have been foreign to the Hellenistic background and ethos. Still the "new content" was expressed in words and sentences used in the Greek language, which means that a different semantic function and value was given to the Greek word or words. This "new content" can be recovered only by analysis of the basic unit of communication--the sentence. This recognition leads to methodological necessity to study with great diligence the multilayered cultural and religious situation of a Greek word in extrabiblical literature so as to avoid reading a content from one situation and usage into another situation and usage.

Individual words must not be torn out of their religio-cultural moorings and treated in isolation from the total context

in which they are found. To treat them in isolation of theological context and phenomenological conception is to run the danger of reading elements of one culture and religion into the terms of another, with inevitable distortion. This would mean that we could read a pagan notion into a biblical idea. With these methodological precautions, we are able to venture into studying the background of words used by biblical writers without opening ourselves up to misrepresenting and misinterpreting biblical thoughts. It must be constantly recognized that the biblical writers expressed a "new content" in words whose usage can be determined only on the basis of the context in which they are found in Scripture. Therefore, the following principle of interpretation seems sound: The careful student of Scripture studies the similarities *and* differences of identical words in the extrabiblical and biblical languages but seeks to avoid reading the content of extrabiblical religion and culture into the biblical usage, because he is aware that the biblical context may indicate a "new content" for these respective words as used in Scripture.

What we have stated so far applies not only to the NT but also to the OT. In the case of the OT the situation is even more complicated than of the NT, because the OT is written in Semitic languages, which differ in their structures and norms from the Indo-European languages to which Greek belongs.

To this problem is added another one, namely, that we have relatively few extrabiblical texts in the Hebrew language from OT times. It is for this reason that scholars have been relying heavily on cognate Semitic languages in determining the meaning of words in the Hebrew OT. From the last century onward, millennia of human history have been recovered in the life of entire civilizations restored to view. When the spade of the archaeologist uncovered important cuneiform archives of the Assyrians, Sumerians, and Hittites, the brilliant discoveries at Ugarit, and the archives from Mari, ancient civilizations were resurrected. In the last century the Egyptian hieroglyphs and Mesopotamian cuneiform were deciphered, and in this century the languages of the Hittites, Canaanites, Hurrians, and others were added. The resurrection of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Anatolian civilizations has thrown an unusual amount of light on the cultural and religious background of the OT. The recovery of all this background material has brought with it a revolution in the understanding and evaluation of the OT.

In many respects these phenomenal finds from the ancient world have overthrown well-established critical theories. The views of Wellhausen, which dominated the scene of biblical interpretation at the turn of the century, no longer are held in their



classical form. The implications of many facts indicate that the Pentateuch--five books of Moses--as a whole could have originated in the second millennium B.C., that Samuel actually could have issued the warnings recorded in 1 Sa 8, and that the first few chapters of Proverbs (1-7) are something more than what a late scribe could do. It is therefore obvious that the importance of the archaeological finds can hardly be overestimated, and it is equally obvious that the collateral evidence available today makes the OT more intelligible.

It certainly is correct that the world of the OT is that of the ancient Near East, whose geography, history, and culture have been recovered by archaeology in a most unusual fashion. Humanly speaking, the OT is a part of this world of the ancient Near East, with its literature, history, and culture. Therefore, the history, literature, and culture of the ancient Near East does have a bearing on related aspects in the OT. Likewise the OT shares, at least to a certain degree, in the context in both space and time of the related ancient Near Eastern materials. However, if conceived correctly, the OT is not on a par with the extrabiblical materials that have been recovered from the same historical era. Inasmuch as the OT is inspired Scripture it has a share in the unique biblical context, and whereas it uses words that can be found in extrabiblical cognate materials, there still is the "new content" that the OT authors thought to express.

This may be illustrated by means of a word found in Gn 1:2. To the present day there are interpreters who suppose that there is a direct relationship between the word *tēhôm*, "deep" (Gn 1:2), and the term *Tiamat*, the female monster of the Babylonian national epic *Enuma elish*. On this basis some scholars maintain that *tēhôm* in the biblical creation account contains "an echo of the old cosmogonic myth." This means that the description of creation in Gn 1:2 is read in terms of the so-called Babylonian creation epic.

On the basis of comparative Semitics as known today it no longer can be maintained that the Hebrew word *tēhôm* derives from the Babylonian term *Tiamat*. The implications of these new insights are crucial for an understanding of the usage of the term *tēhôm* in Gn 1:2. The word *tēhôm* does not suggest that there is a latent conflict between a monster of the abyss and the Creator, if interpreted in terms of its own context. In this biblical verse *tēhôm* is nothing but a passive, powerless, and inanimate element in God's creation. To interpret the word *tēhôm* in Gn 1:2 in terms of a cognate word in Babylonian mythology means to read into the thought content of the Hebrew term a notion that is alien to it.

This example emphasizes again that whereas the cognate Semitic

languages prove extremely useful in bringing about more complete insights of Hebrew words, sound hermeneutical methodology requires that religio-historical parallels be considered against the total phenomenological conception of the literature in which such parallels appear (cf. C. Westermann, *ThLZ*, 40 [1965], 489-496).

With due recognition of the limitations indicated, the careful interpreter of the Bible can with profit carry on comparative studies by recognizing the similarities and differences between the terminology, religion, culture, and social patterns of biblical writers and those of their neighbors. The interpreter will always be most sensitive to the "new content" of words, which is predicated on biblical faith and reality. On the basis of these principles of interpretation one can recognize more clearly where the inspired writers have forcefully rejected what they felt irreconcilable with their faith and understanding of reality and the revelation that came to them supernaturally. To take seriously the meaning and limitations of parallel phenomena is to shield one's self against reading elements of one religio-cultural setting in terms of another. Inasmuch as the method of comparative philology is still not refined to a degree that makes its conclusions sure beyond the shadow of a doubt, one must apply the principle that terms for words of the biblical languages can be enlightened by cognate languages only when the recovered meaning is in harmony with the immediate linguistic context in the Bible and the context of the biblical message as a whole. The application of this principle makes it possible to avoid reading elements of one cultural setting into another.

## 2. Nonliteral Meanings

The basic principle of biblical interpretation is to take words always in their literal sense unless there is an unmistakable contextual indication to the contrary. Words in biblical languages as well as in all the other languages certainly have meanings assigned to them that are very different from a primary literal one. For the sake of convenience such meanings may be called nonliteral meanings.

Idiomatic expressions or idioms, which are a semantic unit of their own, have a meaning that is more than the sum of their individual parts. For example, the idiom "horn of salvation" (see 2 Sa 22:3; Ps 18:2; Lk 1:69) means "great Saviour."

Metaphors and similes are figures of speech that express with their words figurative or nonliteral meanings. The same is true of the figure of speech of personification, which is used

both in the OT and in the NT. The Bible also knows hyperbole (see Dt 1:28; Jn 1:25).

Without attempting to be exhaustive in our delineation of nonliteral meanings, we also may refer to symbols, which belong to the class of terms or category of words with figurative or nonliteral meanings. The symbol of the pillar of cloud was indicative of divine guidance (see Ex 13:21) and glory (see Ex 16:10). Examples of other objective symbols could be multiplied.

In interpreting symbols the guiding principle is to let the Holy Spirit, who provided the symbol, be also the guide in identifying the symbol. With regard to symbols the interpreter must exercise care so as not to fall into the trap of allegorical interpretation, where the Holy Spirit does not explicitly provide guidance. A sound principle for the interpretation of words with figurative or nonliteral meanings is to avoid interpreting figures of speech beyond the meaning they seek to communicate.

A basic principle of interpretation with regard to words is to investigate the same word or term in its usage in the same book, by the same author, and then beyond in the remaining writers of the Bible. As this is done the interpreter takes into account the various immediate contexts of the word and its sentence combination. He is constantly aware of the purposes and developments of thought in a particular writer and among the various inspired Bible writers.

#### IV. Understanding Sentences

We have already affirmed that the individual word is properly understood within the sentence and the sentence by means of its words. This reciprocal relationship we have referred to as the hermeneutical circle (spiraling out from word to entire Bible), which is a structural law of understanding. There is mutual dependence of the general knowledge on the particular knowledge and the particular knowledge on the general knowledge. This means, again, that the individual word, sentence, unit, book, and biblical author can be understood properly only within the hermeneutical circle of the entire witness of the scriptural canon and *vice versa*. This is the fundamental structure of hermeneutical methodology adequate to Scripture as the Word of God, with its divine *and* human dimensions.

In the interpretation of the biblical writings the hermeneutical circle takes on specific emphasis: The understanding of the sentence, unit, chapter, author, or whatever form is possible only

on the basis of a preunderstanding of the biblical witnesses in their totality, their origin, and their kerygmatic intention. Contrariwise, the total understanding of the biblical witnesses is constantly corrected, enlarged, and amplified by means of the interpretation of the single part.

The exegete in interpreting the sentence will use the most up-to-date knowledge available to him in grammatical, syntactical, stylistic, etc., analysis. An understanding of the grammar involves a knowledge as to whether the original language is analytic or agglutinative, i. e., whether the language basically stresses word order or the meaning is understood only partially by word order and much more by word endings or case endings. An understanding of inflection, declination, conjugation, and other forms is basic.

Grammatical understanding usually is more easily perceived than syntax understanding is. Syntax considers the relationship of words to one another. Hebrew and Aramaic, much as in the case of the English language, lost their case endings at an early period, and so depend largely on position for syntactical function. The significance of word order in Hebrew and Aramaic has not been fully appreciated.

In syntax, attention must be given to the syntax of the noun, with its relationship of number, gender, and case. The syntax of the verb pays attention to the tense or aspect, the voice, the theme or stem, and so on. Equal attention must be given to the syntax of prepositions, adjectives, numerals, pronouns, articles, and particles. Finally, one must speak of the syntax of clauses. An understanding of the syntax of the Greek of the NT must be seen in relationship to the syntax of classical Greek and to that of the Septuagint, the Apostolic Fathers, the papyri and inscriptions, and modern Greek.

Outstanding among the recent contributions that ancient Semitic languages have made to a better understanding of the Hebrew language has been that of Ugaritic in the rediscovery of grammatical forms and syntactical usages of biblical Hebrew, which had gone unrecognized and so had given rise to textual difficulties. For example, the isolation of a particle consisting of the letter *m* plus a vowel (*-i* or *-a*) in Ugaritic as a stylistic device has led to its rediscovery in biblical Hebrew (enclitic *mem*).

Another example may be found in that the letter *w* sometimes appeared in the Hebrew of the OT in unexpected places before words where its presence seemed superfluous. In the past this fact often led scholars to excise the offending letter or reinterpret the

sentence with or without more drastic emendation. However, recent studies have shown that this apparently superfluous, or pleonastic, *w* is a stylistic device used for emphasizing a word or for variety in style. Other examples, where Ugaritic has helped, relate to the use of prepositions.

The syntactical and grammatical contributions of Ugaritic to the understanding of Hebrew are of great significance. Any careful scholar and interpreter, of course, will not fall into the trap of reading Hebrew through the eyes of Ugaritic. That this danger exists can be abundantly demonstrated.

When speaking about the interpretation of the sentence one cannot avoid speaking about poetry. It is a well-known fact that fully 40 per cent of the OT is written in poetry, as is reflected in more recent translations (RSV, NEB, NAB). It is not possible here to go into the ramifications of the proper understanding of Hebrew poetry, but it has to be pointed out that earlier critical scholars denied the antiquity of Hebrew poetry and considered many poetic passages in the OT to derive from late periods. The rationale for this procedure was based not on the evidence as actually found but on a philosophical system of unilinear religious evolution. But now it has been demonstrated that both poetry and prose go back to earliest times in the Hebrew Bible and that one can no longer maintain that the earliest poetry followed the oldest prose in the OT. Here the finds from Ugarit, which go back to 1400 B.C. and before, have aided in an unusual manner in rediscovering the complex patterns of repetitive style in Hebrew poetry. (See W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* [Garden City, New York, 1968], pp. 1-52.)

Whereas the understanding of Hebrew poetry--especially its repetitive style but also other features--has been aided to an unusual degree by ancient Near Eastern texts (especially those from Ugarit), it is not to be assumed that the procedure of comparative study of poetic literature is not without its problems. There is the constant danger that biblical poetry will be read through the perspectives of nonbiblical poetry. Although it is true that Hebrew poetry has many similarities to non-Hebrew poetic literature, it must not be assumed that this means identity. Thus a great deal of meticulous study, with careful attention paid to the similarities as well as the dissimilarities between Hebrew poetry and the poetry of ancient West-Semitic literature, must go into these so-called parallel phenomena. Some have reminded recent biblical scholars that there is today the danger of pan-Ugariticism just as there was earlier emphasis on pan-Babylonianism. These warnings do have their place and need to be heeded.

Because the smallest poetic unit is the sentence, the fundamental formal feature of the poetry of the OT is the correspondence of thought in successive lines, known as parallelism of members (*parallelismus membrorum*). The thought content may be repeated, contrasted, or advanced in synonymous (see Ps 59:1), antithetic (see Ps 1:6), or synthetic parallelism (see Ps 55:6). The parallelism may be both within lines and between lines. Thus in Hebrew poetic parallelism there is a balancing of thought against thought, phrase against phrase, word against word, according to the habit of the Hebrew author. (See "The Poetry of the Bible," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 17-28.)

The Hebrew poet had a keen ear for the texture of words and knew how to model them into brilliant effect with devices of alliteration, assonance, paronomasia, and onomatopoeia. An understanding of these devices of Hebrew poetry is essential for interpretation of the Hebrew sentence.

#### V. Understanding Units

A unit is a larger whole that is made up of a series of sentences or clauses, and it deals with a particular thought or an aspect of a larger thought. The understanding of the units has a spiraling effect on the understanding of the larger whole.

In our discussion of the sentence, which is the next smaller component of the unit, we have noted that in Hebrew poetry certain structures are used (parallelism of members and meter). The poetic phrases and sentences are grouped into longer strophic divisions. Accordingly, each strophe is the next larger unit. Symmetrical articulation of the thought at times argues strongly for the division of poetic sections into strophes. We may choose Isaiah's famous "Song of the Vineyard," which falls naturally into four subdivisions: (a) The care bestowed on the vineyard, Is 5:1, 2; (b) the appeal for judgment between the owner and his vineyard, vss. 3, 4; (c) the announcement of the vineyard's destruction, vss. 5, 6; and (d) the interpretation, vs. 7. Strophes are not all of uniform length by any means. Also they do not manifest a particular regularity. The attempts of scholars to achieve regularity by deletions and rearrangement of the lines as well as strophes must be judged subjective. Emendations and reshuffling of the text (as has been introduced recently in Bible translations such as NEB and NAB) have no textual evidence to go on. They are also contradicted by Ugaritic poetry, with its analogous freedom of form.

Since we are dealing with units and their interpretation it

is inevitable that we touch on what has become known in English as form criticism, also known as form history (*Formgeschichte*). This is not the place to discuss the rise of this methodology in biblical studies from H. Gunkel (1862-1932) to the present. The fundamental insight underlying this methodology that is widely applied in OT and NT studies today is the premise that folk memory--the vehicle of tradition--operates supposedly with small units, often no larger than a single couplet of poetry. A scrutiny of irreducible units of primitive tradition came on the basis of German folklore, which recognized and defined the differences between folk tale, myth, saga, and legend (J. and W. Grimm). On the basis of this study the assumption arose that similar units reappear--similar not so much in content as in structure, length, and tendency.

The assumption of a unilinear evolution from small literary units to large more complex entities is now proved to be a fallacy. This can be demonstrated with regard to the OT on the basis of comparative study of ancient Near Eastern literature from about 2500 B.C. onward (cf. K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* [Chicago, 1966], pp. 131f.).

The various assumptions and premises of form criticism as applied to the OT and NT are based on the investigations of folk memory, as we have indicated in Germanic philology. It is highly significant, therefore, that the results of recent investigations of folk memory by folklorists have called into question the earlier assumptions taken over by biblical scholars (cf. Th. Boman, *Die Jesus-Überlieferung im Lichte der neueren Volkskunde* [1967]).

Nevertheless, form criticism has brought about a greater awareness of external forms and has emphasized and stimulated the appreciation of literary units. Objective criteria must be looked for that will aid in identifying a unit on internal grounds. Great discrimination and discernment must be applied in order to avoid a reading of one literary form, one basic unit, from one type of literature or tradition into another.

Perhaps before leaving this section on units it may be appropriate to add a word parenthetically with regard to the function and purpose of Bible commentaries. Among Bible commentaries there is great and distinct variety in terms of quality and outlook. In consulting commentaries the interpreter must never assume that there is an infallible one that is correct in every instance. As a matter of fact, the interpreter must always evaluate for himself a variety of points of view and the evidence presented, which requires not infrequently great skill and technical knowledge. Commentaries written by individuals who have a high view of divine

inspiration and who manifest a firm belief in the trustworthiness and practical relevance of Scripture are to be preferred to those written on the basis of different presuppositions.

The person who seeks to understand Scripture must constantly keep in mind that commentaries should be taken for what they are and not as instruments that dictate what the Bible says. It is a truism that infallibility eludes any commentator and every commentary. The earnest student of Scripture will rely on the commentaries that not only are most thorough and abreast of up-to-date scholarship but also loyal to the Scriptures as God's authoritative self-revelation. Good commentaries do indeed have a place for the one who seeks to understand Scripture, although they must be used with discretion.

#### VI. Understanding Books and Authors

Biblical books by the various authors form the next larger wholes, and they are made up of a series of units. The understanding of books and authors depends on the understanding of the units of which the books are composed. The units in turn are better understood through the total outlook and meaning of the authors and the books. To speak again in terms of the hermeneutic circle, each of the words, phrases, sentences, and units contributes to an understanding of the total end product. But at the same time the end product aids in the interpretation and understanding of the single part. Understanding the single part spirals to constantly higher levels on the basis of the understanding of the book, and *vice versa*.

Undoubtedly every interpreter begins from the viewpoint, interests, and concerns that he had prior to studying the particular text or book. It must be emphasized that the study of a text of Scripture is a process of learning. In the process of learning one discovers more and more the questions that concerned the author of the particular biblical book, the issues that confronted him, the problems he was trying to solve, and the material and methodical resources that were at his disposal for solving them. This is to say that ideally one comes finally to put aside one's own initial interests, concerns, and viewpoints and comes to share those of the author by coming to recognize ever more clearly the context of the author's thought and speech under divine inspiration.

From the investigative vantage point the context of the word is the sentence, unit, book, or books by the same author. Beyond this the context of each of the books of the NT is the canon of the NT and the canon of the OT is the context of each of the books



of the OT. Finally the entire Scripture is the context for each word, sentence, unit, and other division.

When we speak of the context of the entire inspired Scripture we do not mean to imply that the individual human writers of the scriptural books do not have their own nuances, emphases, and various contributions to make to the total revelation as presented in the Bible. It is imperative, indeed, to respect the message and theology of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and not to confuse them with one another, just as it is imperative to respect the message and theology of Paul and not to confuse them with those of John, Luke, or any other NT writer. Each writer of the Bible must be studied in and for himself. This emphasis, however, is not meant to imply that there is no unity of the biblical message; it is not meant to imply that NT theology is impossible; it is also not meant to imply that contradictions are to be expected between the OT writers and the NT writers. The Bible bears witness to a faith in one God, one Lord, one baptism (see Eph 4:5, 6), and a presentation explaining that *one* faith is not an impossibility. But its presentation will be so much the richer if the nuances, emphases, and special contributions of the individual biblical writers are respected and allowed to form a unity within the diversity. The Bible must be viewed as a whole in order that the relation of its parts may best be seen.

A proper understanding of the biblical writers' thought thus can grow only on the basis of the intrinsic methodology of biblical interpretation outlined so far. The guiding principle can thus never be an extrinsic or external one, whether it be tradition, philosophy, or anything else. Any external or extrinsic principle of interpretation will lead to some distortion of the biblical message.

Although the interpreter in attempting to discover what the biblical writers meant employs carefully developed rules of interpretation, he differs from the historian of religion (be he agnostic or believer) in that he is convinced that through the biblical authors an inspired message is communicated for modern man. The fundamental presupposition is the inspired character of the canon of Scripture to which Scripture testifies. It is important to emphasize that the meaning for the faith of men today cannot be something completely different from the meaning intended by the biblical writers for their contemporaries. Any attempt to understand the biblical authors that fails to recognize a basic homogeneity between the interpreter's meaning "now" and the meaning of the message "then" fails to bring their inspired messages to men of today.

A valid and normative interpretation of the message of the biblical authors, therefore, must ascertain first of all what they meant, and to this degree it must be a descriptive presentation. The means to achieve this are not the logic or the metaphysics of a philosophical or scientific system foreign to the biblical writers, however interesting this mode of interpretation might be for other purposes. The methodology is, rather, that of the self-interpretation of Scripture, with its emphasis on the literal meaning of the text (unless a figure, symbol, etc., is used) and due emphasis on philological, historical, and theological research joined to empathy for Christian faith.

On the basis of what we have said so far it is clear that a hermeneutic adequate to the Scriptural witness must have its hermeneutic starting point in the principle of the self-interpretation of Scripture based on the biblical teaching of inspiration and on recognition of the total canon as the valid context for the interpretation of Scripture. It has its basis in the recognition that God is the author of all Scripture and that He has chosen human authors to communicate His truths in human language.

#### VII. Understanding Scripture as a Whole

The final aim of all biblical interpretation is not only to understand the single parts of the Scripture, whether words, phrases, clauses, sentences, units, books, or entire blocks of writings with their interrelationships but also to understand God's will and purpose in the Bible as a whole. We have been counseled to "learn to view the word as a *whole*, and to see the relation of its parts" (*Ed*, 190).

The emphasis throughout this chapter has been not only to understand what the inspired writers intended to say but also to understand precisely what God intended to say in, with, and through the words of the inspired prophets. Peter wrote, "The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look" (1 Pe 1:10-12, RSV). Peter indicates that the prophets of the past to whom these great scenes were revealed "longed to understand their full import" (*PK*, 731). This indicates that the inspired writers themselves recognized that their words had a deeper level of meaning and a fuller import,

which they sensed but did not fully comprehend themselves. "The prophets who were favored with the special illumination of the Spirit did not fully comprehend the import of the revelations committed to them" (GC, 344).

The fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture is a meaning that is intended or implicit in the words of the Bible whether or not the inspired author is aware of it. The fuller import and deeper meaning is not a reading into the literal sense and meaning of ideas alien or extraneous to it. The fuller sense or fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture is not something that is alien to the intent of the biblical words. To the contrary, it is a characteristic of the fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture to be homogeneous with the literal meaning and sense; that is to say, it is a development and outgrowth of what the original inspired writer put into words. It seems to be clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that the fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture has nothing to do with a threefold or a fourfold sense of scripture of medieval times or with the allegorical method of exegesis. A basic principle of interpretation applicable in the discovery of the fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture is to let an inspired writer function in the recovery of the full meaning of the words of inspiration.

In speaking on the subject of the fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture, the contention that the interpreter may understand the text more fully and more accurately than the author himself needs to be qualified. The interpreter may gain a more comprehensive understanding than the author had on the basis of the context of the entire inspired revelation, allowing the entire inspired Scriptures to illuminate the meaning of a particular text. "The scriptural canon can be expected to fulfill its hermeneutical task only if it is allowed to become active in its totality with regard to the interpretation of the single book and author." --K. Frör, *Biblische Hermeneutik* (Munich, 1967), p. 65. This hermeneutical function of the canon as a whole also prevents that selective treatment of Scripture known as a "canon in the canon."

The understanding of the text by the original author, on the other hand, is more complete in the sense that his word spoke to the concrete historical situation of the people of the time when he wrote. This aspect of the text cannot be better understood by any interpreter than by the inspired author himself, because the interpreter presumably cannot have a firmer grasp of all the details and circumstances that were known by the inspired writer himself.

Christ himself showed a fuller import and deeper sense of

Scripture when He talked to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, as recorded by Luke, "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all scriptures" (Lk 24:27, NASB). The divine thoughts communicated to the prophets by inspiration were embodied in human words, the full import and deeper meaning of which these inspired writers themselves longed to know. Through further inspired revelation God opened up the fuller import and deeper meaning of the earlier words of Scripture.

In speaking of further revelation it must not be assumed that the Holy Spirit ceased to communicate light after the biblical canon was closed. The OT knows of prophets named and unnamed who received revelations in order to give counsel and instruction, warning and encouragement, in matters in no way relating to the giving of the inspired Scriptures. There are numbers of instances in which prophets spoke forth during OT and NT times whose words were not recorded and embodied in the canon of Scripture. In like manner, when the biblical canon was closed the Holy Spirit did not cease to work in enlightening the understanding and opening to the mind of sincere seekers of truth the deep things of God's inspired Word. When Jesus gave the promise of the Comforter, He said, "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; . . . and He will disclose to you what is to come" (Jn 16:13, NASB). It is apparent that the Holy Spirit will continue to work until the end of time.

Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of *revelation* in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:17, 18, NASB). Paul here expresses his belief that God gives guidance to the community of believers in the understanding of revelation and in providing understanding with regard to the deeper things of Scripture. God does this through the Holy Spirit on a personal level through illumination. The person illuminated by the Holy Spirit is always bound to the further revelation of the deeper sense of Scripture as contained in all inspired writings.

The fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture originates with God. The words of Scripture contain divine thoughts, and it is natural that an understanding of these divine thoughts, which could bear fuller import and deeper meaning, could most properly be gained by further revelation. A safe guide to lead to the right understanding of the fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture is another inspired writer. This criterion and

principle is a safeguard against subjectivity on the part of the individual interpreter. Let us now turn to a number of examples that are illustrative of the fuller import and deeper meaning of Scripture.

### 1. Typology

Typology is based on historical connections and is bound to the historical sense of Scripture. In biblical typology the typical sense of words, descriptions, events, actions, institutions, and persons becomes fully apparent through the later antitype. Thus the type is always incomplete until the antitype brings out the fuller import and deeper meaning of the type. God as the author of Scripture placed within the type a prefiguration of what is later identified as antitype. The fuller import and deeper meaning of the type is discerned most adequately through further inspired revelation.

We find the correlation of type and antitype already in the OT. Isaiah speaks of the eschatological return to paradise (Is 11:6-8; 65:17-25); Hosea looks back to the congregation of Israel in the wilderness as a type of restored Israel (Hos 2:16ff.). The ideal time of the Davidic reign is a type of future unity in Amos 9:11ff.

There is a strong typological relationship between the OT and the NT. Stephen pointed to Moses as a type of Jesus, the "Redeemer" or "Deliverer" (Acts 7:20-40). Paul develops a typology built on the Exodus (1 Cor 10:1-13). The history of Israel in the Exodus is a type of spiritual Israel (1 Cor 10:11). Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish is a type of Christ's resurrection (Mt 12:40).

The prophetic saying of Hos 11:1 may be seen as applied to Jesus in terms of typology (Mt 2:15). The passage in Hosea appears to refer to the Exodus from Egypt and a speaking of Yahweh to ancient Israel. The quotation of this passage by Matthew indicates that Jesus, the antitype, is in part at least, the new Israel. Just as ancient Israel placed itself in the hands of God, so the Messiah, Jesus, placed Himself under the words of God, which are also fulfilled in Him (C. H. Dodd; G. W. Grogan).

The correlation of "type" to "antitype," which is of scriptural origin, indicates how the understanding of Scripture as a whole is enhanced by the application of the principle of "Scripture its own interpreter." The typical sense becomes fully apparent with the antitype. Thus the type is always incomplete until

the antitype brings out the fuller import and deeper meaning of the type. The fuller import and deeper sense of Scripture as expressed in typology is brought forth by the larger context of inspired revelation. Thus it must be concluded that God as the author of Scripture placed within the type a prefiguration of what is later identified as antitype.

## 2. Prediction and fulfillment

The pattern of promise or prediction and fulfillment is a category of biblical thought that contains crucial elements of a fuller import and deeper meaning (1 Pe 1:10-12). On the basis of the assurance that the Lord's word is not "vain" (Dt 32:46, 47), there is an all-prevailing correspondence between the promissory, or predictive, words of the Lord spoken through His servants the prophets and their fulfillment in the historical events of the OT and the NT.

Repeatedly the importance of the context of the whole Bible has been emphasized. For the NT writers the OT provided the key to recognition of Jesus as the Messiah predicted by the prophets of old. The OT thus is the key to unlock the NT (see *Ev*, 579) as the NT unlocks the Old (see *CT*, 462f.). Each testament is essential to the understanding of the other. And both shed light upon each other for mutual understanding and self-interpretation. The well-known OT scholar W. Eichrodt expressed his convictions as follows: "In addition to this historical movement from the Old Testament to the New there is a current of life flowing in reverse direction from the New Testament to the Old. This reverse relationship also elucidates the full significance of the realm of Old Testament thought."--*Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1961) I, 26. The concept of the larger context is likewise affirmed (although each holds his own view) by the famous G. von Rad (*Old Testament Theology* [London, 1965], II, 369) and also by the OT scholar H. W. Wolff, who maintains that "in the New Testament is found the context of the Old, which, as its historical goal, reveals the total meaning of the Old Testament."--"The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament," *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. C. Westermann (Richmond, Va., 1963), p. 181.

Crucial for the goal of the self-interpretation of the text is the interpreter's willingness that the remaining scriptural testimonies throw light upon the meaning of the individual text (cf. H. Diem, *Was heisst schriftgemäss?* [Gütersloh, 1958], p. 38). The fuller import and deeper meaning of the pattern of promise or prediction and fulfillment is not to be found behind, beneath, or above the biblical text. It is inherent in the texts themselves.

The pattern of prediction and fulfillment is found within the OT itself and is not only between the OT and the NT. A prediction that Pharaoh would not listen to the Israelites (Ex 4:21; 7:3) is noted to have been fulfilled in Ex 7:13. The Lord had predicted that the murmuring congregation at Sinai should die in the wilderness (Num 14:29, 32-33). Later it is reported that "among these there was not a man of them that were numbered at Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness" (Num 26:65). There is an all-prevailing correspondence between the Word of the Lord and its fulfillment in historical events as noted in the books of Kings (2 Sa 7:13=1 Ki 8:20; 1 Ki 11:29ff.= 1 Ki 12:15b; 1 Ki 13=2 Ki 23:16-18). Many additional examples could be cited.

The pattern of promise and fulfillment also exists between the OT predictions and its NT fulfillments. It must be clearly recognized that the basis of legitimacy for invoking the NT in the determination of prophetic fulfillments lies in commitment to the unity of the Bible. If the same God inspired with the same Holy Spirit both testaments, then He must possess the right to explain to us in one what he meant in the other. Recognizing the unity of the entire Bible the OT predicts the coming, mission, and death of the Messiah, which the NT describes as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The NT writers maintain consistently that in and through Jesus Christ the word spoken in the OT in its predictions has received its complete fulfillment. Paul clearly expresses this in 2 Cor 1:20, "For all the *promises* of God find their Yes in Him" (RSV). The heart of the NT gospel was the proclamation of the fulfillment of the OT promises. The NT's commitment to the truthfulness of the Word of God demands an interpretation of prophetic fulfillments that is harmonious with God's truth as understood elsewhere in Scripture.

The first of the famous quotations of fulfillment in the Gospel of Matthew states that the virgin birth of Jesus took place in order "to fulfill what the Lord hath spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel'" (Mt 1:22f., RSV). The Hebrew word under discussion in the original prediction in Is 7:14 is *calmāh*, which means "a young woman of marriageable age" and who generally would be a virgin. The word chosen by Isaiah could imply virginity and allow that the mother-to-be was unmarried, and a woman of good rather than ill repute. Various recent translations read in Is 7:14 "young woman" (RSV, JB (margin), NEB), which does not deny virginity, whereas other translations continue with a traditional rendering of "virgin" (NAB, NASB).

The translators of the LXX chose the Greek term *parthenos*,

meaning "virgin," which was not a mistranslation of the Hebrew term picked up from one of its several possible semantic connotations. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew, in turn, quoted from the LXX, which was the authorized version of his day. According to this line of connection God included within this OT prophecy the reference to the virgin birth of Christ, even though the possibility exists that the prophet himself may not have been aware of it. There is a basic homogeneity between Is 7:14 and Mt 1:22f., which indicates Matthew neither read a new meaning into the Isaianic prediction nor misapplied it. Under inspiration the NT writer was guided to unfold a fuller import and deeper meaning of the original prediction. Inspiration is a sure guide to the fuller import and deeper meaning of a part of Scripture.

The fuller import and deeper meaning in a scriptural passage usually follow the characteristic of homogeneity. The writer of Hebrews quotes the phrase, "'Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee'" (Heb 1:5, RSV). Although the reference in Ps 2:7 may have been used at times in the celebration of the enthronement of the king of Judah in the Davidic line (cf. 2 Sa 7:14), the words of the Psalm refer to the ideal future king, which can be most clearly seen on the basis of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews. The fuller Messianic import and the deeper sense of this passage are identified by further inspired revelation. Here again there is a basic homogeneity between the Psalmist's words and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Although there was never a time when the Father could not say to Jesus, "Thou art my Son," there came a day in time, namely, the "today" of Ps 2:7, when by the resurrection in glorified humanity Jesus Christ was begotten to a status He had never had before (Acts 13:33; Rom 8:29). Examples illustrating this principle of interpretation could be multiplied many times over. For the purpose of this discussion it has, however, become apparent that the fuller import and deeper meaning of the Bible do not constitute a second sense in distinction or contradiction to the intent of Scripture. The literal meaning of the Bible with its fuller import and deeper sense share a basic homogeneity and congruency that bind them together.

It should be emphasized that one must not assume that every single text must be expected to have a fuller import and deeper meaning. A genuine and normative fuller import and deeper meaning as intended by God through divine inspiration is unveiled most properly by another inspired writer. This means that there is no room for any subjective and private interpretation of the Bible, because this principle secures the self-interpretation of Scripture that we have emphasized throughout.



### 3. Patterns of Unity

The unity of the Bible, of both testaments, has its source in certainty that it is inspired by the same Holy Spirit who originates in the triune God. The Christian interpreter maintains the unity of both testaments, but he recognizes that within this unity there is diversity. But the diversity is not emphasized to such a degree that the inner, underlying unity of Scripture is destroyed. The messages of the various Bible writers belong so intimately together that neither one can be fully understood without the other, just as the OT cannot be fully understood without the NT, and the NT without the OT.

The interpreter of the Bible will always work to the utmost of his ability to interpret the Scriptures with a view to the whole. All books of the Bible can be expected to fulfill their hermeneutical task only if they are allowed to become active in their totality in interpreting the single book or part within it as each part or book functions hermeneutically in the interpretation of the whole.

#### READING LIST

James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961. 313 pp.

An exceedingly helpful volume that analyzes some widely used methods employed in word studies in current biblical lexicography, with special attention to the linguistic and theological principles involved.

Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950. 169 pp.

A Reformed theologian outlines the history of hermeneutical principles among Jews and Christians and develops his methods of grammatical, historical, and theological interpretation.

E. C. Blackman, *Biblical Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957. 212 pp.

The author provides a helpful overview of the development of hermeneutics from rabbinic exegesis to the present, with more extensive attention to the period of modern criticism and its influence on present methods of interpretation from a neo-orthodox perspective.

- T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960. 224 pp.

An elaborate study based on full knowledge of the relevant literature, contrasting Israelite ways of thinking with Greek thought in such a way as to create a maximal logical and psychological contrast that has a definite bearing on biblical interpretation.

- Kurt Frör, *Biblische Hermeneutik*. 3d ed. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967. 408 pp.

A comprehensive work on the nature and structure of biblical hermeneutics with emphasis on the function of the historical-critical method, the hermeneutical circle, canon, literary form, context, unity of Scripture, etc., written from a moderately liberal perspective.

- J. C. K. von Hofmann, *Interpreting the Bible*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publ. House, 1959.

This work (first published posthumously in 1880 in German) has become a classic in the field of conservative works on hermeneutic.

- Simon Kistemaker, ed., *Interpreting God's Word Today*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970. 313 pp.

A symposium of seven articles written by an international team of evangelical scholars focusing on the historicity of Genesis (esp. chs. 1-11), event and interpretation in the OT, the interpretation of the Gospels and the resurrection, and the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

- A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1963. 425 pp.

A careful presentation of general and special principles of interpretation by an evangelical scholar who believes that much of the variety in interpretation by liberals and conservatives is good.

- Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation. A Textbook of Hermeneutics*, 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1970. 298 pp.

A widely used conservative textbook on methods and procedures of biblical interpretation that provides concise critical evaluations of the hermeneutical views of scholars of liberal persuasion.

- James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., eds., *The New Hermeneutic*. New York: Harper and Row, 1964. 243 pp.

An introduction to recent developments on hermeneutic

in contemporary liberal theology based upon the foundation of historical-critical scholarship, the philosophy of the later Heidegger and the thought of Bultmann. The introductory essay on "Hermeneutic Since Barth" (77 pp.) is of significance for understanding the position of liberal theologians subscribing to the "new hermeneutic."

J. D. Smart, *The Interpretation of Scripture*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960. 317 pp.

An extensive discussion of problems of the interpretation of Scripture in twentieth-century critical biblical scholarship with special emphasis on the unity, inspiration, and authority of the Bible written by a liberal scholar.

John F. Walvoord, ed., *Inspiration and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1957. 280 pp.

Ten leading evangelical scholars discuss the methods of biblical interpretation of Irenaeus, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Sanday, Rowley, and Niebuhr and provide an essay on the revelation of Scripture.

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11. Interpretation of Biblical  
History, Wisdom, and Poetry

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Within the rich variety of literature available in the Bible, a hermeneutic for the categories of history, wisdom, and poetry is the concern of this chapter.

The Jewish canon of Scripture recognizes the law (*Torah*), the prophets (*Nebī'īm*), and the writings (*Kethubīm*), and arranges its books according to these classifications. The Christian Church has followed the Hebrew canon from Genesis to Judges, but then has preferred to bring together the remaining specifically historical books, thus compassing Ruth to Esther. It has then grouped the books Job to the Song of Solomon in a combined wisdom-poetry category, and completed its OT with the major and minor prophets.

In the twenty-seven books of the NT, subdivisions are easily defined. The first five books concern themselves with history, then come the twenty-one letters, and one piece of apocalyptic literature--the Revelation of John--brings the entire canon to a close.

This cataloging, no matter how convenient and attractive for general purposes, does not entirely meet our needs here, where we are considering the principles that govern our interpretation of biblical history, wisdom, and poetry. *History* is a term that has two distinct applications: first, to the successive events of which life is composed; and, second and somewhat more narrowly, to the record and assessment of those events. The Bible contributes to both kinds of history. Its production and compilation are part of the historical process, and its pages chronicle millennia of events that furnish the warp and woof of recorded history while themselves forming part of the substance from which additional written history is compiled.

The part of this chapter that deals with history will confine itself to the second definition, to the written record that pur-

ports to pin down a report of events that actually occurred in time. It must be remembered, however, that the Bible ranges beyond time, delves into eternity, both past and future, and thus penetrates awe-inspiring areas where merely human capacities cannot adequately operate. This concept must necessarily deal with a philosophy of history as well as with the records that comprise history.

Such thoughts introduce the idea that history in the Bible cannot be corralled within those books that obviously contain the chronological record of happenings that took place in the lives of certain men and peoples. It must be broadened to include the sections of biblical literature--such as poetry, prophecy, and epistles--that are themselves raw material from which formal history can be quarried. This approach makes the entire Bible a historical source book that must command the serious attention of those who claim to interpret history.

In a similar though less significant way poetry occupies large sections of books that are not primarily regarded as poetical--Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and most of the minor prophets. Similarly, the distinctive Semitic production known as wisdom literature crops up in unexpected places. Those who wish to study each subject in depth must therefore dig in many areas and not restrict their attentions to the formal groupings but embrace the whole canon of Scripture in their research. Here, however, limitations of space demand that we concentrate on the broad divisions indicated in our chapter heading. Furthermore, other contributors to this symposium have ably covered general and introductory material, leaving us free to build in specific areas on their foundation.

### History

Although we accept the division of the Bible into the OT and NT, we must remember that they are but parts of a whole and claim the one God as their Inspirer. As John Marsh observes: "In both Testaments the same God offers the same salvation by the same Saviour through the same actions."--*Biblical Authority for Today*, p. 189. We therefore need to look at the whole and not create an artificial barrier between its two main parts.

Adventist interpretation is built on some definite presuppositions. They are outlined in chapter 10 under the title "General Principles of Interpretation." Here they need only be summarized.

The Church accepts the entire Bible as the inspired Word of God delivered through human instrumentality under the guidance of

the Holy Spirit. This position, based on an act of faith supported by reason, deeply affects one's approach to biblical history. It formulates attitudes to areas that are beyond the unaided reach of man--creation, eternity, and heaven--and also to the more proximate reaches of man's own doings on national and personal levels. The acceptance of the biblical canon involves value judgments and declares that the accepted books agree with this overview of world history. When such convictions are established, the groundwork is laid for the outworking of their implications in the historical records contained in both Testaments.

Belief in the inspiration of Scripture, however, does not relieve the interpreter of the obligation to examine the records rigorously. This calls for textual criticism to establish the reliability of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts; for literary criticism to reach an understanding of what each author has written; for word study to determine the significance of key words in their context; and for grammatical exegesis to utilize the results of such study. But these disciplines are not conducted in an intellectual vacuum. They are influenced by hermeneutical principles applicable to inspired writings: by the need to permit the Holy Spirit to guide the understanding of the records, by recognition of the overriding spiritual intent of the writings, by acknowledgment of their unity, by agreement to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, by acceptance of the concept of supernaturalism, and by drawing theological conclusions from the documents that are studied.

Biblical history raises and answers some of life's profoundest questions. Whence came man? When came man? Why came man? Is man going up or down? What will be his end? Is he his own judge, or is he responsible to an infinitely higher power? Whence came the earth? Is it the result of natural or divine law, of chance or design? What is its age? What of its future? Is time endless, or will it end in a timeless eternity?

The Bible grapples with these mind-shaking questions; it does not evade them, it confronts them. It categorically declares: "In the beginning God . . ." (Gn 1:1). On this platform it builds its whole philosophy; from it stems the Judeo-Christian approach to the past, present, and hereafter. We may reject that approach, but we cannot justly deride or ignore it. It commands a most thoughtful, positive respect and eventual acceptance or rejection.

The problem confronting the Bible student today differs only in degree and not in kind from that which has always faced mankind, namely, how to relate to unbelief in his contemporaries who have access to the same sources of faith as are open to him. There never has been universal acceptance of biblical claims, not even

during such peaks of faith as the Apostolic, Reformation, and Evangelical ages. We do well, therefore, to remind ourselves that the validity of teaching does not depend on its espousal by all who meet it. Truth is proud. It is no cringing suppliant currying popular favor. It must be evaluated on its own intrinsic merits, and its devotees must have the courage to champion its cause irrespective of the numbers who keep them company. "If the Lord be God, follow him" (1 Ki 18:21), and face the skeptics honestly and courageously.

### Old Testament

Many hermeneutical methods have been and still are being used in OT study. They range through the allegorical, mythical, mystical, pietistic, naturalistic, rationalistic, moralistic, apologetical, grammatical, and historical--with the last two being most frequently used by the Adventist interpreter.

The range of OT history is vast, unmatched by any comparable document. It covers a minimum of four thousand years in dealing with human history and impinges on eternity in its references to Deity. It looks at the Creation scene, visits Eden, Ararat, Ur, Bethel, Raamses, Sinai, Jericho, Shiloh, Salem, Babylon, Shushan, and Jerusalem, and penetrates beyond history into an eternity to come. Because its approach is creationist, it is also eschatological. Its pattern is set by its theism, by its consequent creationism, by its insistence that the eternal God is at the center of all history. The student must recognize this OT philosophy and determine his attitude toward it, for it is the keystone around which succeeding biblical history is built. If fiat creation as revealed in Genesis 1 is rejected, one is at odds with all the records that follow (e.g. Ex 20, Dt 5, 1 Ki 8, Job 38, Ps 19, Is 40, Hab 3, *et al.*). At the same time it must be recognized that Gn 1 is not given as a complete scientific explanation of the creation of our world and its solar system. It seeks to introduce God as the Prime Cause, the Creator, the Lord of the universe and of mankind. It sets the stage for Adam and Eve as prominent figures in the divine plan for a sinless eternity, enabling us to measure their abbreviated history against that eternal background. It also establishes a vital element in theology: God's word is the creating factor. No matter how that word functions, embodied in the Word once made flesh, it is the agent that creates everything that is made (Jn 1:1).

The Exodus is a second focal point around which much biblical history revolves. Its events are central to Israel's history. It cannot be excised from Scripture without leaving a gaping wound



that only its restoration can heal. Furthermore, its typological significance, involving the person and work of Christ, makes it of vital importance to Christian doctrine. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that its relation to secular history still poses problems, that some critical questions remain to be answered, and that caution is preferable to dogmatism until some vexing historical conundrums are settled.

Agnostics spend comparatively little time dissecting prophecy, poetry, or the didactic and spiritual elements of Scripture. They focus their fire on the historical sections, especially the Pentateuch, with its records of Creation, the Flood, the tower of Babel, Egyptian bondage, the Exodus, and the settlement of Palestine. This focus gives prominence to the historical books and makes it imperative for the conservative interpreter to be a master of their contents, well able to defend their authenticity. Their study should sharpen legitimate critical faculties, encourage use of linguistic tools and grammatical insights, promote a grasp of the total scope of history, and lead to a God's-eye view of the temporal scene. "Reason is a divine, not a devilish gift to man, and piety needs to use it properly, not to spurn it."-- E. C. Blackman, *Biblical Interpretation*, p. 33.

The exercise of reason will remind us of the many centuries that have passed since the latest OT words were penned and of the further centuries that flowed by before the canon was fixed. There was ample opportunity for the editing of original documents before they took the form in which we now know them.

It will also be acknowledged that Scripture is selective: it does not attempt and indeed could never succeed in telling the whole story (see 1 Chr 29:29); neither does it contain God's total revelation. It records all that God saw necessary to lead men to salvation. When considering that revelation we need to allow for the divine silence, reserving room for what has not been said as well as giving diligent attention to all that has been preserved. We shall also be conscious of the loose mold into which the Bible record is cast, and never cease to marvel at the thoroughness with which the Lord conveys essential knowledge in so diffuse a form. This discursive style is the manner in which the Lord of history *chose* to convey His revelation.

Part of our task is to discover the master pattern through Spirit-guided study, constructing a unified picture out of the heterogeneous pieces supplied in the OT. This can be a fascinating occupation, tantalizing at times, but faith nourishing not faith destroying, holding out and satisfying the prospect of spiritual discovery.

It has been customary to lay great stress on the traditional authorship of the OT books. Where such writers are named in the NT the question of authorship is clearly important because it involves the reliability of Scripture; but apart from such instances (e.g. Christ's citing Moses) the question is not always vital to a correct interpretation of a given book. The authors of Joshua and Judges are nowhere identified in the Bible, yet this silence does not detract from the value of the books. Recognition of multiple authorship and the work of compilers is quite consistent with lofty views of inspiration (see the Psalms). One should therefore refrain from making unsubstantiable claims that will create unnecessary difficulties for the orthodox and call down ridicule from the critics. Generally it will suffice to accept the OT's own claim that it records the speech, thoughts, and designs of the Almighty (e.g. Gn 3:9-19; 22; 12:1-3; 32:24-30; Ex 3; 20; 1 Sa 3:11-14; 2 Sa 23:1-3; 1 Ki 17:2-4; Job 1:6-12; Is 1:10-20; 8:1; 51:16, 22; Jer 1:4-19; Eze 6:1; and throughout the minor prophets). (See also chapter 1, p. 11.

Further consideration of the selective nature of OT history reveals that it has a common thread running through its component parts—God's covenantal purpose. One event is chosen for inclusion in preference to another because of its bearing on the development of the covenant theme, God's plan for His people and its fulfillment through Israel and Israel's Lord. Yet this does not produce a solely Israelitish, or, as some would say, Jewish history. The Bible has an outlook that embraces all mankind (Gn 1:1, 26; 3:15; 12:1-3; Ps 72:17-19; Jn 3:16; Rev 11:15).

This line of thought is neatly summarized by the German term *Heilsgeschichte* ("salvation history"), the concept that suggests, among others, that the criterion for the selection of biblical material is the relationship of individual events to the total plan for mankind's redemption. We take this in its broad rather than narrow sense, for we believe in the historicity of the events recorded in the Bible, and do not reduce them to the status of myths. We distill *Heilsgeschichte* from the records rather than straitjacketing biblical history into the mold of *Heilsgeschichte* as if it were conforming to a set literary pattern. Correctly conceived and rightly used, the biblical approach to its own necessarily limited fields of history can be the touchstone for evaluating all history. This thought suggests that there is no purely secular history: it is possible to view all history as *Heilsgeschichte*, even that which is distinctly secular (*geschichte*). But unaided man cannot accurately perceive this salvation element. He needs God's revelatory word to keep him ever conscious of the redemptive direction in which all history is moving. That word is richly present in the OT historical books (e.g., Gn 3:15; Abel's

sacrifice, Gn 4:1-8; Noah and the Flood, Gn 6-8; the Exodus, Ex, Num, Dt; Rahab, Jos 2, 6).

A defined, limited concept of progressive revelation is inherent in biblical history. There is an increasing brightness of revelation as conveyed by man though not as seen by God. The Almighty is not subject to progress. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever"; "I am the Lord, I change not" (Hb 13:8; Mal 3:6). But man's understanding of God's ways progresses as he studies the way the Lord has led his predecessors. Revelation provided through experience is cumulative, and thus progressive, and we may legitimately look for an increasing, though not always even, intensity of illumination on the continuum of history, while remembering that "Yonder all before us lie, Deserts of vast eternity." The great themes of creation, redemption, and eschatology are as icebergs with their tips showing above the surface of conventional history while their bulk lies hidden below.

An important hermeneutic field is OT foreshadowing of Christ, but it is fraught with pitfalls, most of which are dug by hindsight. Care must be exercised lest more prophetic message than the inspired writers received or intended to convey is read into passages whose primary intent is local rather than futuristic. Nevertheless, granted the inspiration of Scripture, it is reasonable to expect that the Father would share news of the coming of His Son. The devout student is not disappointed: he finds the historical books rich in types and symbols that realize their further *raison d'être* in the NT recording of the incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension, priesthood, return, and reign of our Lord. Examples are: the provision of a ram that spared Abraham from making a sacrifice of Isaac--Gn 22; Joseph as the savior of his people--Gn 42-47; the institution of the Passover, foreshadowing Calvary--Ex 12:1-28; the sanctuary and its services--Ex 25-40; the history of Ruth and Boaz as a link in God's redemptive chain--Ruth 1-4. He traces the working of God's hand in history, sees Him preparing the way for the New Testament era.

### New Testament

The general hermeneutical principles applied to the historical writings of the OT are also valid for similar sections of the NT, and should be faithfully employed. In addition, the unique nature of the record calls for other special considerations.

The four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles may be said to be a natural outcome, recorded by inspiration, of the experiences on which they are based. A few men worked with the most extra-

ordinary Person who ever lived among men. They came to believe He was God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Ti 3:16), they worshiped Him, and felt impelled to share with their fellows the news that the Son of God had been with them, had died for their redemption, had risen and ascended, and was ministering as High Priest on man's behalf. The proclamation spread throughout the Roman world and led to the establishment of churches whose members needed, in addition to verbal reports, written records of the events that had given birth to Christianity. That need was met by the writing of the Gospels and the Acts.

Few if any documents have been so carefully analyzed as have the Gospels. Every scrap of manuscript purporting to carry any part of the four accounts has been minutely and expertly examined and the findings incorporated into the total picture of the textual criticism of Christian records. The work continues.

The Adventist attitude toward these documents is one of informed confidence, with recognition that although not all questions of origin, dating, and related matters are yet solved, and that the Synoptic and fourth Gospels still pose problems, the present state of knowledge justifies acceptance of the Gospels as trustworthy records of the life and ministry of our Lord. At the same time, their limited objective is acknowledged: none of them attempts a full biography of its Subject; each is highly and purposefully selective, choosing from the multitudinous events of a short Palestinian life some of the features that illustrate the central thesis, that "in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king" there was born "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Mt 2:1; Lk 2:11). The resultant story reveals One who is "so great that He must be real," and that reality declares that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory . . .)" (Jn 1:14).

The focal point in the record is the Resurrection of Him who undeniably died on a cross. This is to the NT what the Exodus is to the OT, but it has fared worse from the pens of the critics (if that be possible!) than has its predecessor. We cannot accept the theology that reduces the Resurrection to a subjective experience, denying the reality of the defeat of death, the empty tomb, the risen Lord, the revitalized disciples, the power-filled apostles, and the victorious church. Without the Master's literal Resurrection the NT becomes a record of false hopes, a movement based at best on a profound misunderstanding, at the worst on a deceit. We see in the separate and apparently even divergent accounts trustworthy reports of the central event in salvation history. Yet it is not an isolated event, out of character with what goes before and after. It is in comfortable harmony with the Incarnation and

the Virgin Birth, with Creation, the Exodus, and all the mighty acts of God. It is indeed the supreme miracle, but it has excellent supportive company in the other miracles set forth in both testaments.

Had there been no Resurrection there would have been no Acts of the Apostles, for its recital is a testimony to the reality of the risen Christ. The book succinctly records the rise of the Christian Church as a Resurrection-based phenomenon powered by Christ's representative, the Holy Spirit. But it also is selective: "It is a few acts of a few apostles at a few places during a few years."--Bernard Ramm, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, p. 170. In common with the rest of Scripture, and especially with the Gospels, it possesses, in J. B. Phillips' apt phrase "the ring of truth" and is largely self-authenticating.

The NT pentateuch presents its readers with specific reports of many miracles--at least 35 in the Gospels, with another 12 in Acts, plus innumerable others to which collective references are made. These miracles are often seen as obstacles that delay or prevent acceptance of the Christian message. There is no doubt about their serving as nails from which great weights of skepticism are hung, but this role is neutralized by the greater miracles of the Resurrection of Christ and the new birth, which changes a sinner into a saint. The God who can effect such wonderful works as these has more than enough power to heal lepers, restore sight, and feed five thousand people. "With God all things are possible" (Mk 10:27). Such ability belongs to Deity by definition. If it be not granted, God is no longer seen as the Almighty, and the ultimate basis for belief in Scripture is removed. Faith is called for, but it is closely associated with verifiable fact, and Christians can accept the narratives given in the Gospels and Acts in quiet confidence, knowing that they are demonstrably reliable.

#### Wisdom and Poetry

For the purposes of this study Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes are classified as wisdom literature, whereas Psalms, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations are classed as poetry, with each group crossing into the other. Job may be treated as both wisdom and poetry, and the poetry of the Psalms contains much that may be called wisdom. Examples of each may also be identified in other parts of the Bible, making the total field a wide one. But each class conforms to acknowledged literary styles common to Semitic writing, providing aphoristic ethical wisdom. Proverbs, for instance, largely consists of *meshalim* (plural of Hebrew *mashal*, "similitude, comparison")--"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge"

(1:7); "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (4:13). Ecclesiastes contains prose, poetry, and some Proverb-like utterances--"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (3:1); "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king" (4:13). Job is generally accepted as drama cast (apart from its prologue, chaps. 1 and 2, and epilogue, 42:7-17) as dialogue in poetical form--"And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born. . . . Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, . . . who ever perished, being innocent?" (3:2, 3; 4:1, 7).

Wisdom and poetry call for a different hermeneutical approach from that used for history. History brings information and teaches by illustration, recording God's ways with man and man's response to divine guidance and commandments. The nature of wisdom and poetic literature leaves room for a freer concept of inspiration, because such books contain much of man's musing on his everyday life ("I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree" [Ps 37:35]; "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" [51:3]), and are not restricted to his thoughts about God. They display the human element in pure religion ("There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" [Pr 16:25]; "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" [Ec 9:10]). They also represent religion's marriage with morality ("Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" [Pr 6:32]). Nevertheless, they, as Scripture, also come under the Spirit's guidance. His influence ensures the high quality of spiritual benefits to be derived from the wisdom books. A thoughtful study of the Psalms can but impress the reader with a sense of wonder that such lofty concepts of God were attained in so barbaric an age as that in which the several authors composed their poems. (See Ps 103:13, 14; 139:24.)

The most prominent metrical feature of Hebrew poetry is *parallelism*, a stylistic device usually consisting of a couplet in which the thought expressed in the first line is reproduced in the second by a parallel but differing form. A simple and well-known example is found in Ps 119:105:

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,  
and a light unto my path."

Three generally recognized primary forms of parallelism occur frequently in the Bible, and are illustrated here:

Synonymous parallelism:

"Reuben, thou art my firstborn,  
my might, and the beginning of my strength" (Gn 49:3).

Antithetical or contrasted parallelism:

"The king's favour is toward a wise servant:  
but his wrath is against him that causeth shame" (Pr 14:35).

Synthetic or constructive parallelism:

"I sought the Lord, and he heard me,  
and delivered me from all my fears" (Ps 34:4).

In addition, there are secondary forms of parallelism (emblematic, climactic, and introverted) with variations on all forms mentioned here. The student is referred to chap. 10, pp. 179, 180 and for a fuller study of the subject to the *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 17-28. The various modes are listed here because of their effect on interpretation. If parallelism is ignored, it can lead to some untenable interpretations. When its presence is recognized, the writer's intention can be correctly determined.

Few books in the Bible have been the subject of so many interpretations as has the Song of Solomon. Some regard the book as an Oriental love poem or a collection of love lyrics that tell of Solomon's wooing of the Shulamite. Others see it as a poetical record of the Shulamite's rejection of the king's advances in loyalty to her shepherd lover. The traditional rabbinical view, which is still held by some interpreters, treats the Song as an allegory that portrays the Lord's love for Israel. This has been Christianized by those who see the book as a depiction of Christ's love for His church. The most useful hermeneutic is probably that which combines the secular and the sacred so that the love element is eventually transmuted into an inspired illustration of the Saviour's love for His bride, the church.

The Bible student will do well to utilize the practical nature of the wisdom and poetical books rather than to impose rigid theological uses upon them. When abused, these books can lead astray: when rightly studied, they yield rich rewards by impressing life's lessons upon the student, increasing his knowledge of the way divine planning works, elevating his understanding of God's character, and quickening his spiritual perceptions.

Conclusion

The foregoing comments on the triple subject of this chapter have sought to emphasize that each of these three sections forms

an essential part of the total corpus of Scripture and has benefited from the same creative inspiration as other portions of the Bible have. Although aware of higher critical attitudes, we cannot accept them, for we find the sections studied conducive to belief, harmonizing with the companion books of the Bible, forming part of God's overall plan of revelation, indispensably contributing to the total disclosure. We find the same God speaking throughout, guiding men into all truth toward one faith and one Lord. We recognize, however, that the hermeneutic task is never done. It has explored a few mountain ranges of Scriptural thought: vast undeveloped territories await our occupation.

But the final word must be neither technical nor professional; it must be devotional, spiritual, transcending the formalities of scholarship, opening the reader's eye to the wonders of God's ways with man, and to the demands made on Deity by man's ways with God. The Word has a continual homiletic purpose, even when handling formal history (see 1 Cor 10:11). It tries to share with men its own eternal outlook, but does so only through the intermediary work of the Spirit. Part of its uniqueness resides in the necessity of enlisting the Spirit's aid for arrival at a correct hermeneutic. The simplest historical event, the most conventional piece of wisdom, or the most modest of poetic flights can be misinterpreted without the inner directives that issue from the Holy Spirit's ministry in the mind of the reader. A spiritual partnership such as this will subject the student to Scripture's overriding objective, making him "wise unto salvation" (2 Ti 3:15).

#### READING LIST

Anderson, Bernhard W. *Understanding the Old Testament*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1957.

A study of OT history, setting it in a clear though critical outline, and enabling the reader to see it as a whole while still referring to sections of particular interest.

Blackman, E. C. *Biblical Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957.

A concentrated guide to biblical hermeneutics that distills the essence of the subject. Well written against a background of wide culture. Adventists will not subscribe to all its teaching but will find its contents generally helpful.

Bruce, F. F. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1951.

This commentary is essentially for the student of the



Greek text. The book will help in a close study of the Scripture under the guidance of a devout, well-equipped scholar. Dr. Bruce's related works on Luke and the book of Acts are also recommended.

Butterfield, Herbert. *Christianity and History*. New York: Scribner's, 1950.

A heartening look into history by a Christian scholar. History takes on new meaning when viewed in the light of his perceptive analysis.

Harrison, R. K. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969.

A comprehensive survey of OT studies fairly presenting many divergent views on interpretation and theology. A useful reference work for those who can evaluate opposing views.

Terry, Milton S. *Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, no date.

Although produced in the 19th century, this volume still merits attention. Much of its exhaustive survey is still valid, especially in reference to particular sections of biblical literature.

World Council of Churches. *Biblical Authority for Today*. Edited by Alan Richardson and W. Schweitzer. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952.

A collection of essays covering well the title's promise. The several contributors bring a rich variety of interpretation to light. The standard of writing is high, the potential benefit to the reader is great.

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12. Interpretation of Symbols,  
Types, Allegories, and Parables

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The general principles of biblical interpretation presented in chapter 10 have special applications in the various categories of biblical literature. Among these categories are symbols, types, allegories, and parables, which are the subject matter of this paper. For the guidance of the reader these categories are first defined, then described and illustrated, with guidelines on their interpretation following. It should be noted that these four categories may not be mutually exclusive in all aspects, particularly when symbols and types, and allegories and parables, are compared.

Definitions

A *symbol* is a timeless representation of something or someone. It pictures a meaning rather than expresses it in spoken or written words. Religious symbols point beyond themselves to spiritual reality. The value of religious symbols lies in their ability to make plain in compressed form great religious truths. They lend themselves to the expression of faith, and divine revelation uses them to communicate truth.

A biblical *type*, by contrast, is like a shadow cast on the pages of earlier literature, which presents a limited account of a truth, the full embodiment of which is amplified in a later revelation. A type invariably points forward in time to its antitype. Types are rooted in history yet are prophetic in nature. Their basic ideas lie in their earthly and human correspondence to a heavenly and divine reality. Genuine OT types are not concerned with unessential similarities between type and antitype (counterpart). They are realities (persons, events, things) of the OT, which later are shown by inspired writers to have a corresponding spiritual reality superseding the historical fact.

An *allegory* is a rhetorical device that sets forth a hidden

meaning not implied in the literal. It is a more extensive form of a metaphor. In allegory the historical value of the text is not so important. It is the spiritual sense that is emphasized. Often in the Scripture there is a point-by-point comparison between the allegory and the interpretation of it. Allegory reads into factual experience a heavenly significance not found in the earthly. However, allegory was seldom used by Bible writers.

A *parable* is an extended simile. It draws our attention to the purpose of God by means of a story of human example. The contents of the parable may be taken from nature, political events, or social events. It often is drawn from the surroundings of everyday life. The most familiar kind of parable is the story that illustrates one idea.

### Symbols

The word *symbol* is derived from the Greek verb *sumbalō*, meaning "to bring together." It draws together events or truths so that they can be grasped in an intelligent way and made into a coherent whole. In the Bible *symbol* is sometimes seen as the use of something visible for depicting what is invisible. It is a pictorial representation of a religious or theological idea--an object that rightly may be given a twofold interpretation. One of these is the obvious and natural meaning; the other is the veiled and often supernatural. A symbol often involves an object presented to convey some lesson. A typical example of a symbol in the OT is the rending of King Jeroboam's garment by the prophet Ahijah. This rather audacious act was to symbolize that the united kingdoms of Israel and Judah would be rent asunder by war and strife (see 1 Ki 11:29-31).

It perhaps should be noted parenthetically that biblical symbolism, as a significant aspect of Seventh-day Adventist interest in biblical interpretation, has been seen as pointing to real events in time and space. The interest of contemporary theology in religious symbolism within a philosophical framework has never been a part of Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutic or theology.

In the area of predictive prophecy, for example, to make the predictions of the Second Advent of Jesus Christ into symbolic references to a higher level of human achievement rather than references to a literal, personal event breaking into history would be seen by Seventh-day Adventists as both taking unwarranted liberty with the meaning of the language of Scripture and destroying the entire mission of the Seventh-day Adventist movement.

Examples of Symbols

Supernatural. Many supernatural symbols are found in the Bible to teach men lessons from God. The flaming sword at the garden of Eden was a symbol that man had disobeyed God and could no longer have direct communion with his Maker (see Gn 3:24). The burning bush portrayed to Moses the holiness of God (see Ex 3:2). The pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day were symbols to the children of Israel that God was leading them on their journey (see Ex 13:21, 22). Miraculous symbols of nature are sometimes employed by God to demonstrate His care for His people.

Prophets were frequently shown symbols in vision that assisted them in portraying God's message to men. Amos saw a basket of summer fruit, which was God's way of telling him the harvest of sin for Israel was ripe (Amos 8). Jeremiah was shown bad and good figs to represent two distinct classes of people (see Jer 24). Zechariah's two olive trees providing ample oil to give light indicate that God does not leave us in darkness, but light is provided for those who trust Him (see Zec 4).

Sanctuary. There is a richly developed symbolism full of spiritual lessons in the Mosaic system. The court surrounding the tabernacle enclosed the brazen altar of burnt offering and the laver of washing. Here sacrifices were made, and sinners experienced the cleansing power of the blood. Five different offerings were made upon the altar. The morning and evening sacrifice was a symbol of Christ's continual intercession for the sinner. The meat offering acknowledged God's ownership. The peace offering recognized Christ as the Prince of Peace. The sin offering symbolized the bearing of sins on the cross, and the trespass offering showed that Christ has taken care of all acknowledged guilt.

In the Holy Place the table of showbread was a symbol of Christ as the bread of life (see Jn 6:51). The incense ascending from the altar assures us that our prayers are heard in heaven (see Rev 5:8). The seven branched golden candlestick was emblematic of Him who is the light of the world (see Jn 8:12). The ark in the Most Holy Place speaks of the sacred character of God's law, and the mercy seat portrays God's mercy being extended to the repentant sinner. Over and above all, the holy Shekinah of God's presence was manifested between the cherubim, who thus have an immediate relation to God.

New Testament. In the NT the Lord's supper supercedes the Passover as a symbol, conveying to us in meaning the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. The mode of baptism is a symbol of our dying to the old life of sin and rising to walk in the

righteousness of Christ's life. Christian communion and Christian baptism must be taken seriously by the Christian. In studying the emblems of the bread and the wine, the believer understands the symbolic significance of the expression "feeding on Christ."

Apocalyptic. Apocalyptic literature abounds in symbols, and the images presented in such writings help us to interpret other objects often placed in a future or eschatological setting. There are no books of the Bible richer in symbols than the book of Daniel and the Apocalypse of John. In the second chapter of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar sees the world powers as an awe-inspiring human statue. But in the seventh chapter the prophet Daniel sees these same world empires as cruel ravenous beasts--a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a hideous nondescript. Nebuchadnezzar sees these earthly kingdoms in majesty, but Daniel sees them reduced to the level of beasts.

Often there is significance attached to the color of the symbol. John presents the four horses at the opening of the four seals as distinctive in color (Rev 6:1-8). The white horse presents the conqueror in all his purity. The red horse speaks of war and bloodshed. The black horse depicts famine. The pale horse suggests sickness, death, and Hades. The seven vials of Rev 15, 16 speak of the total destruction of the wicked. The enemy of all good is represented as a scarlet colored beast with seven heads and ten horns (Rev 17:3).

### Interpretation of Symbols

There are biblical expositors who so depreciate the use of symbols that they leave them without any theological significance, and others may grossly exaggerate their importance, but the strong presence of biblical symbols requires that the serious and conservative biblical scholar give them more than casual consideration. An effective exemplar of such scholarship is Bernard Ramm, who suggests the following rules for the interpretation of biblical symbols (*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 214, 215):

1. Symbols interpreted by the Scriptures themselves provide sure ground for all further studies in symbolism.
2. When symbolism is not interpreted by Scripture, interpretation should be sought by the following method:
  - (a) Examine the context thoroughly, for the idea corresponding to the symbol might thus be revealed.

(b) Study other references using the same symbol for a clue to its meaning.

(c) Consider the nature of the symbol for clues to its meaning. Take care not to read the expositor's cultural setting into the biblical.

(d) Compare studies of Semitic and neighboring cultures, possibly as revealed by archeology, which may reveal the meaning of a biblical symbol.

If such investigations do not reveal any clues to symbols uninterpreted in the text, Ramm advises that "it is wiser to be silent than to speculate."

3. Let the expositor be aware of possible double imagery in symbols, since the same symbol may have more than one meaning. A lion, for example, is a symbol of both Christ and Satan.

### Types

Through the centuries certain expositors have seen no relationship between the OT and NT and, like Marcion (2d cent.) in the early church, have rejected the entire OT. Others, like Origen (ca. 250 A.D.), have gone to the opposite extreme and have read into the OT unwarranted and fanciful allegorical interpretations.

To a degree the meaning given to types determines the view one places on the OT in relation to the NT. That the NT writers used OT types in their exegesis of the Word of God is without question. A notable example is found in Rom 5:14, where Paul sets forth Adam as a type "of Him that was to come" (*typos tou mellontos*). 1 Cor 10:11, RSV, cites the experience of the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings and affirms, "Now these things happened to them as a warning [*tupikōs*], but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come."

### Characteristics of Types

Types do not partake of the nature of unrealities. They are grounded in history. As the uplifted brass serpent saved those who looked upon it in faith, so all who with uplifted faith behold the Son of God on the cross may receive salvation from the deadly effect of sin (Jn 3:14). This OT event is typical of the NT event of Christ's death on the cross. Types tend to look forward to ultimate realities. They involve a higher application of meaning. The earlier events become more significant in the later. The

offering of Isaac by Abraham can be considered a type of God's offering of His only begotten Son (cf. Heb 11:17-19).

Types frequently have spiritual meaning for both the times when they were given and the future. Especially are the OT types important to interpretation of the NT, so that there is great loss in attempts to separate the study of the NT from a careful exegetical and theological exposition of the OT.

Care must be exercised to differentiate between type and prediction. Although a type has reference to the future, it is not in itself a prediction. Rather, it is recorded as a historical fact without evident reference to the future. The antitype proves to be the "body" of which the type was a foreshadowing, and thus is a more vital and ultimate reality than the type.

### Types and the Sanctuary Services

A notable example of a heavenly reality is the heavenly sanctuary. God showed Moses on Mount Sinai a *tabernâk*, or model, and asked him to construct a building on earth after the heavenly pattern (Ex 25:9, 10).

Israel's annual festivals, some of which called the nation (particularly the males) to appear at the sanctuary, had both a backward and a forward look. There was definite correspondence in these types of the coming ministry of Christ as the great High Priest, who after having offered Himself as a sacrifice for man's sins rose from the dead and ascended to heaven to continue His intercession as man's substitute.

During the Jewish year there were two groups of holy convocations--one in the spring, the other in the fall. In the first group the Passover was of outstanding importance, and in the second the Day of Atonement was preeminent. The services on these occasions are described in detail in Ex 12, Lev 16 and 23. These yearly feasts may be summarized as follows:

1. The Passover (and Feast of Unleavened Bread), to which all males were called, was a type of the death of Christ (see Lev 23:4-8; cf. 1 Cor 5:7, 9).

2. The Feast of First Fruits, or Feast of Weeks, to which all males were called, was a presentation before the Lord of the first ripe sheaf, and met its antitype in Christ's resurrection and ascension to His Father (Lev 23:9-14; cf. 1 Cor 15:20).



3. The Day of Pentecost, closely related to the Feast of First Fruits, found its first and partial typical counterpart in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the early church on that very day (Lev 23:15-21; cf. Acts 2:1-4).

These three feasts observed in the first months of the Jewish year represented important events in the ministry of Christ. The remaining special days were observed in the seventh month.

4. The Feast of Trumpets, the sounding of an alarm in view of the approaching Day of Atonement, represented the sounding of a similar alarm preceding the antitypical work of judgment led by Christ (Lev 23:23, 24; cf. Rev 14:6, 7).

5. The Day of Atonement, or the cleansing of the sanctuary, represented the concluding work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Lev 23:26-32; Dan 8:13, 14; cf. epistle to the Hebrews).

6. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Harvest Ingathering, to which all males were called, represented the final harvest and the ingathering of God's people at the Second Advent of Christ (Lev 23:33-44; cf. Matt. 13:39).

To these might be added the observance of the year of jubilee referred to in Lev 25, which represented the restoration of God's people in the new earth (Is 65:17-25).

Although these festivals were repeated year by year, they are not to be considered as cyclical in their meaning. As Von Rad comments in his essay on OT hermeneutics, "the components of every Old Testament witness, so inalienably historical in character, do not at all permit a consistently developed notion of a repetition. Indeed, one must see the basic ideas of typology less in the notion of 'repetition' than in that of 'correspondence.'"--C. Westermann, ed., *Essays in Old Testament Hermeneutics*, p. 20.

### Literal Israel a Type of Spiritual Israel

Israel was God's chosen people in the OT era. They were called to do a special work, but failed their commission. In the NT God called another people, who were free from ethnic restrictions. Their faith and commitment centered in Christ. The OT promises are now fulfilled to them who are Jews inwardly (see Rom 2:29). The commission to take the gospel to all the world will be fulfilled by them. The church (spiritual Israel) consists now of those who will proclaim Heaven's last message of mercy to the world.

### Types and the Messiah

We see a Christ-centered ideology in the OT in the many Messianic types that prefigure the Son of God coming to earth. He was to come from the seed of David according to the flesh. David, the brilliant king of Israel, was a type of the greater Davidic King who was to come. Ps 69 portrays the suffering of the psalmist, but his suffering was but a shadow of the suffering that Christ was to endure. Heb 3:1-6 depicts Moses as the leader and mediator of Israel, but a greater than Moses came as Redeemer of all mankind.

Jonah's miraculous deliverance from death (Mt 12:39-41; Lk 11:29, 30) typifies the resurrection of Christ. The "imprisonment" of both for a parallel length of time is significant.

### Exegesis of Types as Method

In employing typology in biblical interpretation, we must be careful to note how the OT type is employed by the NT writers. Not every OT type, however, meets its complete counterpart in the NT. There often remains a further eschatological significance that, being the ultimate, is extremely important for the modern interpreter. Here the temptation for the interpreter to go beyond sober exegesis and present a fanciful exposition must be resisted.

Typology can be legitimately used in interpretation of the OT to bring out the correspondence between God's methods of dealing with His people before and after the cross of Christ--thus showing that His over-all plan of salvation is one.

### Criteria for Interpretation of Types

There are certain criteria that are necessary to sound interpretation of types:

1. The specific points of correspondence must be carefully noted between the types and the antitypes.
2. The points of difference and contrast between the types and the antitypes should also be noted.
3. The points of correspondence and difference should be studied in the light of the historical context of each.
4. An attempt must not be made to discover meaning in the

minutia of detail. Here the NT is a guide as it treats the broad themes of the plan of redemption rather than the incidentals of the type.

5. Sound typology must rest on the guidance of inspired writers. When the interpreter moves out of the areas designated by inspiration to be types, he needs to acknowledge that he is moving into the realm of speculation.

6. The interpreter should seek understanding of God's purpose in giving both the type and the antitype. There should be an evident similarity of meaning between them, although the latter usually represents a more vital and broader event or principle than the former.

A genuine application of typology contributes much to the understanding of the Bible by adding to the vertical of revelation the horizontal of salvation.

#### Typology Versus Allegorism

A distinction must be made between typology and allegorism, which conceives of the Scriptures as a book composed mainly of riddles or secret puzzles to be solved. The commentator tries to find the right clues to hidden meanings. This kind of interpretation differs radically from the sober kind of typology, which has its foundation in historical events, persons, institutions, and actions.

The idea of an earthly counterpart of a heavenly reality is plainly set forth in the OT. To expound the NT in this light is true typology, and it takes away the unreality and artificiality that is characteristic of the allegorical. To set the typical in the framework of the antitypical is not allegorizing but sober typology.

One aim of allegorists was to establish Judaism as an intellectually respectable faith in a sophisticated pagan milieu. Thus they would interpret anthropomorphic biblical references allegorically. Philo, Origen, Augustine, and Jerome freely indulged in allegorical interpretation of Scripture, whereas Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin maintained that this method was too subjective.

An example of the elaborate fantasies of some of the allegorical interpreters is found in a sermon among the *Spuria* of Chrysostom on "The Massacre of the Innocents." The writer states that because the children of two years and under were murdered by

Herod while those of three years escaped, those who hold the Trinitarian view of the Godhead will be saved, but Binitarians and Unitarians will be lost.

### Allegory

A distinction must be made between allegory and allegorism. Allegory is a legitimate category of literature, whereas allegorism is a rather free method of interpretation. There is also a distinction between the allegory and the type as categories of literature. The type is rooted in the literal and historical, whereas allegory creates an imaginative event rather than being bound by the literal.

The Bible writers sometimes employed allegory to illustrate God's dealings with His people. An example of this in the OT is found in Ps 80, where Israel is likened to a vine from Egypt. This tender shoot was transplanted and took root in the Promised Land. This illustrates how God brought His people out of Egyptian bondage and took them to the land of Palestine, where they prospered and multiplied.

Christ uses a similar allegory of the vine and its branches (Jn 15:5). He desired to show His followers how dependent they were on His Father (the Gardener) and Himself (the Vine) for their spiritual sustenance and development.

Paul pointed to an allegory to illustrate the difference between the old and new covenants (Gal 4:21-31). He made the separation of Hagar and Ishmael from Sarah and Isaac illustrate the freedom Christians have in Christ's grace in contrast to the bondage of trying to earn salvation by works. Isaac was the child of faith; Ishmael the son of works. As with them, there is always a conflict between faith and works. Faith is free, works bring bondage (see also 1 Cor 5:6-8; 9:8-10; 10:1-11).

In attempting to interpret an allegory we should always bear in mind the original hearers, the author's reason for using the device, and the basic points of comparison stressed by him. Recognition of the messages for the original and present readers is vital to the interpreter.

## Parables

### Definition and Example

The word *parable* is from the Greek *parabolē*, which literally means "a placing alongside of," thus signifying a comparison or an illustration. A parable is an extended simile that employs an ordinary circumstance in everyday life to illustrate a religious truth. Jesus used this method on many occasions. Some of His most profound lessons were expressed in parabolic language. His parables vary from the brief paradoxical saying such as Mk 3:23 to the sustained comparison of the prodigal son in Lk 15:11-32.

Parables are not confined to the NT. The poets and prophets of the OT often presented their messages in parables. They could take the form of a story, as in Ez 17:2-10; an acted-out lesson, such as the seething pot in Ez 24:3-14; a popular proverb as in 1 Sa 10:12, or some dark saying calculated to escape the superficial observer, as in Ps 78:2.

It is difficult to arrange Christ's parables according to type, as they touch so many phases of life. These lessons are drawn from the field and show Jesus' interest in agriculture. He spoke of the sower and the soil, seedtime and harvest, wheat and tares. Many of His parables center in family life--the householder, the ten bridesmaids, the marriage feast, and the two sons. Other parables are taken from the business world, such as the two debtors, the daily workers, the costly pearl, and how to make wise investments.

### Purpose of Parables

The purpose of the parable is to teach by comparison, analogy, and illustration. Jesus, the master teacher, employed this method with great success. He used parables to expound deep spiritual truths. He told true-to-life stories to make clear to His hearers the true meaning of life. These brought out lessons that explained the mysteries of His kingdom. Jesus was not concerned with propounding problems. The primary function of His parable was to get a commitment from His hearers to a new life experience. He had come to earth to set up a new kingdom, and He was inviting His hearers into this kingdom. This is why many of His parables are an exposition of the virtues of the kingdom of heaven. He was eager to reveal rather than conceal the mystery of this kingdom.

Although His parables seemed clear and convincing to many

who heard them, there were some to whom His teaching was obscure. These were spectators more often than followers; they heard but did not understand. Although generally those who were willing to commit their lives to God could grasp the meaning of the parables, there were occasions when even the disciples asked for interpretation (see Mt 13:36). Men's minds were darkened because they either willfully refused to listen with open minds to the Master's messages of salvation or they distorted His message by their preconceptions.

Repeatedly Jesus would preface a parable with the words "The kingdom of heaven is like---" He taught the establishment of that kingdom and the judgment that would precede it. His kingdom will be composed of subjects who already have accepted the kingdom of grace in their hearts. The kingdom in its eschatological setting will culminate when Christ becomes victor over every opposing power. The parables illustrate the final and victorious power of Christ and His future reign over all the world.

#### Interpreting Parables

There are certain principles necessary to guide us in the interpretation of parables:

1. A parable often has one main point and one main message that it was designed to convey. Injustice is done many times to the interpretation of the parable when we introduce minutia extraneous to the central message of the illustration.
2. The parable should be examined with a view to reconstructing the circumstances that called it forth. Was the parable in answer to a question? If so, what was the nature of the question? Who were present when the parable was given?
3. The parable must be understood in terms of the historic background--the manners, customs, symbolism, and culture of the people. If the parable deals with farming, for example, we must understand the farming of its time before we can fully understand the parable. In considering the historical backdrop of the parable, the OT and its terminology must not be neglected, for it formed a real part of the lives of the people to whom the parable was spoken.
4. Parables must be studied in their context to determine whether the meaning of the parable has been given.
5. If a parable is used to mold doctrinal thinking, we must

be certain that our interpretation of the parable is grounded strictly in that given by inspired writers.

Take, for example, the often misunderstood and misinterpreted parable of the rich man and Lazarus. This story is frequently cited to prove the popular concept of the innate immortality of the soul and to give us a glimpse into the future life. In this interpretation the souls of the good are supposed to have passed on to eternal bliss whereas those of the wicked have entered into endless punishment. If this portrayal is literal, the gulf between heaven and hell is too wide for persons to cross over but narrow enough to allow them to converse. Rather, Jesus was here using an argument that His hearers believed, but to which He did not subscribe.

The contemporary Jewish concept pictured "Abraham's bosom" as a place of joy where the righteous go at death. Josephus in his "Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades" parallels closely the narrative of the rich man and Lazarus. Here we read of the righteous being within sight and speaking distance of the chamber where the wicked are tormented.

The lesson taught in this parable is not whether the wicked go to Hades at death or the righteous to Abraham's bosom, but that in this present life we have our only opportunity to make preparation for the future. There will be no second chance for any individual after death. It depends on our decision here whether we will receive immortality at the second coming of Christ or suffer annihilation.

One of the most universally appealing parables is found in Lk 15. It is called the parable of the prodigal son. A better title, however, would be the parable of the pardoning father. The father did not treat the son as he deserved. He was so pleased to see him come back that he freely forgave him all his wrong and reinstated him to sonship. He even made a great feast to celebrate the wayward boy's return.

The lesson of this parable is clear. When the sinner forsakes his sin and returns to God, his pardon is assured. His sin is forgiven and he is treated as a son of God, and God looks upon him as though he had never sinned.

A postscript to this parable is the character of the elder brother. He represents self-righteous, bigoted, and unforgiving hypocrites who feel no need of a Saviour. The parable ends with the penitent sinner inside the father's house but the self-centered, pious Pharisee outside. The father does not forsake

the elder son. He goes outside to him and pleads with him to come in to the feast.

In general, the parables illustrate how a loving heavenly Father treats His earthbound children. He is patient, kind, and forgiving, and continues to plead with them to accept the provision He has made for their salvation.

### Conclusion

This brief presentation of four of the special categories of biblical literature has served to indicate the usefulness of categorizing as a guide to the biblical interpreter. With this in mind the reader may wish to compare this chapter with those dealing with general principles, prophecy and apocalyptic, and biblical history, wisdom, and poetry.

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13. Interpretation of Prophetic  
and Apocalyptic Eschatology

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The Adventist Self-understanding

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is motivated by its self-understanding of being primarily a movement in fulfillment of biblical prophecies and arising at the providential time for reformation and revival to prepare a people for the second advent of Christ Jesus. This sense of mission was born out of the critical religious disappointment of the Millerite movement in North America in A.D. 1844, countered by the continuing study of the apocalyptic books--Daniel in the OT and Revelation in the NT.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that their divine credentials as the "remnant church" are found especially in the promise of the coming of Elijah before the terrible judgment day in Mal 4 and in the call of the three angels' messages of Rev 14 for revival of true worship of the Creator and readiness for the judgment day. This eschatological and apocalyptic awareness is reflected in the fact that close to half of their statements of fundamental beliefs are based on apocalyptic prophecies (see the *Yearbook*).

Relation to Early Protestantism

Seen in religious-historical perspective, the Adventist Bible interpretation agrees fundamentally with the *sola scriptura* principle of the sixteenth-century Reformation in Europe, i.e., the Bible is its own expositor (see L. E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny* [1971], chap. 5). In harmony with the Reformation interpretation again, Seventh-day Adventists confess that the unifying theme of the OT and the NT is Jesus Christ and the redemption that centers in Him. The distinction between Adventist and early Reformation theology does not lie in the field of soteriology (the way of salvation) so much as it does in the field of eschatology, especially that which focuses on the second advent of Christ.

The writer of this chapter is aware of the considerable revival of theological interest in apocalyptic but wishes to be understood as not reviewing that interest here nor of standing within its boundaries. He sees the Seventh-day Adventist continuation of the largely Protestant and historicist interpretation of Bible prophecy as making an inevitable distinction from the general position, as will be evident in the definitions of *eschatology* and *apocalyptic* here adopted.

This chapter uses the term *eschatology* for the fulfillment of OT prophecies ranging from the first advent of Christ to the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. The term *apocalyptic* or *apocalyptic eschatology* is concentrated on the signs of the times leading to the second advent of Christ.

Seventh-day Adventist expositors in their eschatology claim to be continuing standard prophetic interpretations of the Christian Church (see L. E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 4, pp. 1054, 1055).

Hence Adventist eschatology may be characterized by not merely its *unique* interpretations but also its retention of the standard Reformation expositions.

The continuity is basic, for the "new" is the result of further but consistent application of the Christ-centered principles of the Reformation, particularly to the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. Although Protestant churches in general gradually abandoned their historic platform on prophecy in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Great Second Advent Movement came from and resulted in a revival of prophetic interpretation and a resumption prophetically of the arrested Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries (see *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 76).

#### Consistency in Christocentric Prophetic Interpretation

This writer sees the Seventh-day Adventist prophetic interpretation as following the general principle of scriptural interpretation that honors the context of the entire Bible, not merely the immediate context. This is evident from standard works published during the past twenty years. The deeper dimension of the literal sense of the Bible can be discerned only when the dynamic interrelationship of the OT and the NT is fully honored (see chap. 10 of this book, "General Principles of Interpretation").

The NT often reveals that not all prophecies in the OT

concerning Israel and her enemies--such as Babylon, Edom, and Egypt--have found their final fulfillment. This does not mean, however, that the class of fulfilled prophecies is irrelevant for the Christian Church. The NT frequently intimates a typological relationship between the experiences of Israel as the ancient-covenant people and those of the church of Christ as the new-covenant people (see Gal 4:21-31; Heb 12:18-24; 1 Pe 2:9, 10). This correspondence of OT and NT promises and warnings finds its fundamental unity in the God of the covenant, who spoke through the OT prophets and then through Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1, 2; 2 Cor 1:19, 20; Rom 15:8, 9).

The name Israel was given by God to Jacob as representative of a God-centered life, of a guilt-ridden soul that seeks and finds God's favor of forgiving grace by a confiding trust in His promises (Gn 32; Hos 12; cf. *PP*, 195-203). This first spiritual use of the name Israel indicates the divine, and therefore deeper, meaning of the name, which conditions full participation in the blessings promised to Jacob and his literal descendants. Moses and the prophets continually stress the conditional factor in the alternative of promised blessings to an Israel that walks in the fear of the Lord and covenant curses on a disobedient Israel (Dt 27-30; Lev 26; Is 1; Mic 6; Jer 7).

Under the unique character of God's gracious covenant with Israel His promises were made conditional on true obedience for their complete fulfillment (Ex 19:1-6; Jer 18:5-10). Loving obedience to the covenant of the Lord also was a gracious gift of God Himself through the Holy Spirit (Dt 30:6; Eze 36:26-28; Jer 31:31-33).

It is essential to consider the exact time and place of the various covenant promises and curses in the historical development of Israel in order to establish the specific fulfillments in and after the Assyrian-Babylonian exile, as well as those aspects not then fulfilled due to failure to meet the divine conditions. What is of crucial importance, however, is to recognize the witness of the apostles of Jesus Christ that many OT promises of restoration of Israel and of their gathering out of exile to Mount Zion have found (and therefore are finding) their fulfillment in Christ and His church since Pentecost, which is made up of both Christ-believing Jews and Gentiles (compare Acts 15:13-18 and Amos 9:11, 12; 1 Pe 2:9 and Ex 19:5, 6; Heb 8:8-12 and Jer 31:31-33).

The OT covenant promises are not automatically fulfilled in the Church. She too is warned to take heed lest she form illicit relations with the world's powers. The sacraments are no guarantee against apostasy (1 Cor 10:1-11). On the contrary, indubitable

predictions point to apostasy that would come within the church and also to a final conflict between heaven and earth, centered on Christ and His people (e.g. Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Pe 2:1-3; 2 Th 2; Rev 17). The NT envisions final restoration of the church of Christ, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, in preparation for the second advent of the Lord Jesus (see Rev 12:17; 14:6-12). At Christ's second coming many of the OT promises of Israel's restoration will find glorious final fulfillment in the visible gathering of the saints to the returning Christ "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Th 4:17; cf. Mt 24:30, 31). Then the elect will receive the inheritance of a homeland and a city, whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10, 13-16, 39, 40; Rev 21, 22).

The consistent Christological interpretation of the OT in and by the NT has far-reaching hermeneutical implications for eschatology. Like an ellipse with its two foci, the two advents of Christ constitute the double focus of the eschatology of the NT. Christ and His covenant people of all the ages are the norm for the final fulfillment of the covenant promises and curses (Mt 7:21-23; 25:31-46).

Recognizing the progressive fulfillment in redemptive history, the Adventist hermeneutic seems to acknowledge a multiple fulfillment of the broad terms of God's ancient and conditional covenant promises to restore Israel and gather them out of the dispersion among the nations when they worship Him in Spirit and truth (Dt 30:1-10; Is 11:11-16; Amos 9:11-15; Jer 31:10):

1. Some initial fulfillments to the faithfully returning Israelites when the Babylonian captivity ended with the historic decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, in 537 B.C. (Ezr 1:1-4).

2. A NT fulfillment not limited to ethnic origins or geographical locations with regard to Jews and Gentiles who are gathered to Christ and His church through the gospel preaching since the day of Pentecost.

3. A climax in the universal gathering into the kingdom of God of all believers in Christ from all time and from all ends of the earth at His glorious second appearing, regardless of ethnic origin.

This writer's understanding is that this threefold Christocentric application of God's covenant with Israel of old constitutes the underlying hermeneutical foundation of the seven volumes of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (see vol. 4, pp. 25-38; vol. 3, p. 887, and on Is 43:5; Joel 3:2; and Amos 9:11, 15), the five books of the Conflict of the Ages Series of Ellen G. White

(see *PK*, pp. 703-721; 374, 375. *DA*, p. 106 [on Jer 31:31-37]), and *Questions on Doctrine*, pp. 205-243.

It is significant that neither Christ nor the NT writers apply the restricted territorial promises of Jerusalem and Palestine to the church of Christ, the faithful remnant of Israel (Rom 11:5). This is consistent with what might be called the Christological interpretation of the Israel of God as a spiritual nation (1 Pe 2:9). The NT covenant people are united as a people solely by the bonds of faith and baptism into Christ (Gal 3:26-29). They are the outworking of Jesus' plan for Jews and Gentiles: "So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16b, RSV). The Christological qualification of the name Israel has superseded all former religious-national boundaries and ethnic limitations (Eph 2:14-16). This has inevitable repercussions on the traditional territorial promises regarding the Middle East. Rather than being made void, however, these territorial covenant promises are extended worldwide (Mt 5:5; Rom 4:13), so that the old limited boundaries and restrictions are eliminated, in harmony with the Christological meaning of the terms embracing Israel and Judah. From this point of view, since the cross of Christ and Pentecost, there is theologically no longer a holy land, city, or mountain on earth (Jn 4:21; Mt 23:38).

Instead of being invalidated for spiritual Israel, the OT terminology and imagery are maintained in the NT with the new, universal Christological unfolding (Gal 3:29). The author of the book of Hebrews not only applies to the Christian Church the new-covenant promises made to ancient Israel and Judah (Jer 31:31-33; Heb 8) but also pictures her coming to Christ as a coming to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God (Heb 12:22). The author does not intend to spiritualize away the OT territorial promises. He realizes that the OT believers "all died in faith, not having received what was promised" (Heb 11:13a, RSV). He explains that these believers were not looking for some Middle East country as the site for the final fulfillment of the promise.

If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city (Heb 11:15, 16, 39, 40; cf. vs. 10, RSV).

The apostle Peter also points to this universal fulfillment of the old territorial promise:

But according to his promise we wait for new heavens

and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pe 3: 13, RSV).

The apocalypse shows how John saw a new heaven and a new earth, with "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev 21:2, RSV), which is the end-time fulfillment of all the covenant promises of God to Abraham and Israel. The twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel are integrated into one covenant people in one city, in one world (Rev 21:12-14).

Only then will the OT covenant promises be fulfilled completely, for God's plan of redemption is "a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10, RSV). The NT shows how crucial to one's theology is a consistent Christocentric interpretation of the OT prophecies.

The Christocentric principle of interpretation testifies to the underlying gospel truth that the OT and the NT constitute a spiritual unity in Christ, and that both testaments shed light on each other, the OT being the appointed key to unlock the doors of the NT and the NT unfolding the mysteries of the OT.

#### End-Time Eschatology

Accepting the boundaries of the biblical canon as the sole normative authority for theology, we do not consider here the many extracanonical Jewish apocalyptic writings. The realm of OT apocalyptic is concentrated specifically in the book of Daniel. Yet particular sections in the prophetic books may also be counted apocalyptic, such as Is 24-27 ("the Isaiah apocalypse"); Eze 38, 39; Joel 2, 3; Zec 12 and 14; Jer 25:15-38, and other similar portions. Many Psalms likewise possess a definite apocalyptic-eschatological dimension, having a special relevancy for the church of Christ to the end of time. (See Ps 2, 11, 18, 20, 46, 91.)

In the NT, Jesus' Olivet discourse in Mk 13 (par. Mt 24; Lk 21), and Paul's treatise in 2 Th 2 may be considered apocalyptic, together with the apocalypse of John.

Among the many attempts to spell out the unique characteristics of apocalyptic literature is that of David S. Russell in his book *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1964). He mentions among others the heightened symbolism, the deterministic outlay of future events, time specifications, angel ministries, and the cosmic dimensions of the final conflict



of good and evil between heaven and earth; a new eschatology that retains an underlying continuity with the eschatology of the other prophets (see pp. 264-271).

From an Adventist perspective, hermeneutical importance attaches to the observation by L. E. Froom that the three flourishing periods of prophetic interpretation in the Christian Church--the early church, the Reformation, and the Second Advent Awakening--recognized in the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation three unique characteristics (*The Prophetic Faith*, vol. 1, p. 164; vol. 2, pp. 783-790; vol. 3, pp. 738-743):

1. Both books contain several series of outline prophecies that unfold an unbroken sequence of events leading up to the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God.
2. The focus of these prophetic series is the perennial conflict between the nations and the Israel of God, between the Anti-christ and Christ.
3. Each distinct series reveals a repetition and further enlargement of certain parts of a previous series, always focusing on redemptive history, specifically on the final conflict of good and evil.

These characteristics set the stage for some principles of end-time prophetic interpretation. On the basis that law and order reign in the realm of biblical apocalyptic, Christ being the bright center of all covenant promises, we suggest the following as guiding hermeneutical principles for apocalyptic interpretation:

1. The OT apocalyptic and the NT apocalyptic constitute a general spiritual unity in and through Christ Jesus.
2. It is important for the gospel interpretation of the OT apocalyptic to determine, when the data permits, where each prophetic outline series passes the time of the cross of Christ, for OT terminology and imagery from that point on would receive a Christological interpretation.
3. OT apocalyptic prophecies that have remained unfulfilled, generally because of Israel's failure to meet God's conditions, will find their fulfillment in the faithful remnant people of Jesus Christ, according to the NT and its apocalyptic.
4. Interpretation of the NT apocalyptic must first consider the historical and theological root context in the OT, yet recognize

the hermeneutical weight of the wider context of both testaments.

5. Although the same symbol in different apocalyptic outline series may carry the same basic meaning, each symbol is to be determined in its precise historical application by its own immediate context, where it may have a different historical or geographical application. (This hermeneutical principle is especially relevant to a comparative study of the series of the seven trumpets and the series of the seven plagues in Revelation.)

6. As the apocalypse of John refers more than 490 times to the OT (and thus theologically, many other books of the Bible seem to meet and end in the apocalypse) it becomes a valid principle to determine how the redemptive history and message of each book find their culmination in the apocalypse.

### A Multiplex Approach

In order to understand the mysteries of the biblical apocalyptic a multiplex approach seems to be required. This writer sees at least three complementary approaches to have proved essential--a recognition of:

1. The typological structure.
2. The promise-fulfillment idea.
3. The salvation-historical perspective.

### The Typological Structure

In the NT not only the OT sacrifices--together with the priestly, kingly, and prophetic offices--are explained to be types of Jesus Christ and His office but also some historical events in the history of ancient Israel have typological virtue for Christ, His church, and His avowed enemies. It is valid that a typological structure be identified with certainty by a NT witness only. This principle protects the interpreter against allegorism and rigid literalism (see *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 37, 38).

In suggesting that typology in the Bible presupposes a redemptive history in the past, the present, and the future, culminating in the historical advents of Christ Jesus (see Heb 1:1-3), we are following the generally accepted distinctions between typological, allegorical, symbolical, and literal interpretation as spelled out by Leonhard Goppelt in his classical work *TYPOS. Die typologische*

*Deutung des alten Testaments im Neuen* (1939, 1966). A biblical typological structure is characterized, then, at once by its analogy and intensification of type and antitype. To this basic continuity belongs the religious conviction that "the God of the Old Testament is the Father of Jesus Christ and that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, that is, He who fulfills and completes the Old Testament redemptive history" (Goppelt).

On this basis Goppelt arrives at the fundamental conclusion that the OT types are expressions of a relationship with the God of the OT, whereas all NT antitypes are defined by their relationship with Christ. The OT therefore cannot be truly and fully understood apart from Jesus Christ and the NT (cf. 2 Cor 3:14-16). The indispensability of the typological approach through Christ for an exegetical methodology of the OT has been expressed well by H. W. Wolff in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* (ed., C. Westermann, 1966, p. 191).

The Christological-eschatological qualification of the type-antitype relationship was introduced by Christ Himself. He saw in the OT prophets, kings, and sanctuary cultus, types of His own Messianic mission. Revealing Himself to the Jews as the Messiah, He announced:

"Behold, something greater than Jonah is here" (Mt 12:41, RSV).

"Behold, something greater than Solomon is here" (Mt 12:42, RSV).

"I tell you, something greater than the temple is here" (Mt 12:6, RSV).

In this sense Jesus also related himself to David, Israel's greatest theocratic king (Mt 12:3, 4; 22:41-45, RSV).

David once failed miserably because of his acts of premeditated murder and adultery. In this he distorted the role of his royal office as typifying the perfect Shepherd, the Messiah. Yet David remains a type of Christ because of his true prefigurations of Christ, the shepherd king of Israel.

The Persian king Cyrus, who defeated Babylon in 539 B.C. by diverting the waters of the river Euphrates, was called by Isaiah an "anointed" one of Yahweh, and his acts in delivering Judah from Babylon were predicted accurately by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah (Is 44:28; 45:1-6; Jer 50, 51). History fulfilled these promises of deliverance for the Israel of God, together with the

paralleling doom prophecies for Babylon (see *PK*, pp. 531, 552). Although it all seemed finished then, the last Bible book surprisingly reveals that this history of Israel's suppression by Babylon and her sudden deliverance by means of the drying up of Babylon's waters has typological application to the final deliverance of the Israel of God. (See Rev 14:8; 16:12-21; 17.)

In Rev 15 the future remnant people of Christ, "those who had conquered the beast and its image" (vs. 2), are pictured as singing triumphantly "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (vs. 3, RSV). This may be seen as a reference to Moses' and Israel's song of triumph after their deliverance from Egypt and the destruction of their persecutors at the Red Sea by divine intervention (Ex 15). The implication, then, is clearly that the historic exodus experience of ancient Israel and even her song of victory have typological value for the remnant people of Christ in the end. In this way the apocalypse makes the OT relevant for God's covenant people today.

Every time the apocalypse of John mentions and applies a Hebrew name or place or refers to an OT person or event, the typological pattern calls for determination of the original redemptive-historical value of such a term in relation to God's covenant with ancient Israel. Only then can the proper Christological and ecclesiological meaning be drawn by structural analogy.

The typological principle applies not only to the name Israel but also to the names of Israel's enemies--such as Babylon, Egypt, and Edom--so that the ancient enemies of God's people function as types of the enemies of the true church of Christ Jesus (cf. Rev 19:13, 15, and Is 63:1-6). Thus the divine judgment of the ten plagues on Egypt (Ex 7-12) would seem to function as a type of the last plagues to be sent on a rebellious and impenitent world bent on the destruction of the people of Christ who await an exodus from the present age (see Rev 16:1-11). The judgment on ancient Babylon also is incorporated in the imagery of the seven last plagues (Rev 16:12, 19).

#### The Promise-Fulfillment Idea

In another dimension the relationship of the OT and NT is of promise and fulfillment. The NT proclaims the Christological fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Israel (Jn 5:39; 2 Cor 1:20). This fact implies confirmation and advanced unfolding of the OT promises in Christ (2 Pe 1:19). Consequently, the OT remains the book of hope for the Christian Church (compare 2 Pe 3:13 with Is 65:17; Mt 5:5 with Ps 37:22, 29).

In this sense the OT's unfulfilled conditional prophecies regarding Israel and her enemies remain as promises relevant to the Christian Church, the new-covenant Israel. Here applies Paul's word: "It is not as though the word of God had failed" (Rom 9:6, RSV). The book of Revelation summarizes, continues, and unfolds the OT promise that ultimately God will dwell among His covenant people, specifying them as the people who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb of God (see Rev 22:14; 7:14).

The OT curse of final destruction will be realized by the impenitent enemies of God and the Lamb (see Rev 6:15-17; 17:14; 19:11-21). The apocalypse reveals that only Christ--the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David--can secure the fulfillment of all the apocalyptic promises, for He alone conquered all evil, and therefore He is worthy to open the scroll (perhaps the title deed of the earth) and its seals (see Rev 5).

The underlying and all-important theme of the apocalypse of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:1) is that the God of Israel will faithfully fulfill His covenant promises through Christ Jesus. John sees in vision a rainbow, symbol of promise, round the throne of God! (Rev 4:3).

A better understanding of the messages of the apocalypse will result in a revival of faith, hope, and courage and awareness of how close and decided God's communion is with His people. It also will lead to faithful reformation of life in fuller obedience to God's eternal covenant (Rev 1:3; 12:17; 14:12).

A common hermeneutical failing has been to interpret the OT apocalyptic prophecies without regard for the NT Christological aspect. Such an approach, therefore, may cling to the very letter of race and geography of OT prophecies, appealing to so-called normal and natural exegesis of these passages<sup>1</sup> and yet lead to unsound conclusions.

In order to understand the Christological fulfillment of the ancient apocalyptic prophecy of Daniel (and portions of Ezekiel, Joel, Zechariah, and the Psalms), it is necessary to let the gospel of Jesus Christ and the NT apocalyptic determine in what glorious way God will fulfill all His covenant promises. This approach will acknowledge the indispensable function of the progress of salvation history, the history of divine fulfillment in Christ Jesus and His covenant people.

### The Salvation-Historical Perspective

The Bible presents itself not as a collection of moral codes and unconditional prophecies about the Jews but, rather, as the witness of God's righteous deeds, His redemptive and punitive acts in the history of Israel, and their culmination in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The conditional divine promises and threatenings, the blessings and the curses, are all embedded in certain historical situations and cannot and may not be considered in the abstract as a fixed guarantee irrespective of the religious-moral response.

Divine election demands a living faith-obedience relationship in God's covenant of grace. This is the message of Dt 28-30 and Lev 26 as reiterated in Jer 18:7-10. Even when the condition of repentance is not explicitly mentioned, as in Jonah's judgment message to Nineveh, it is implied. The judgments on Sodom and Gomorrah and on the antediluvian world, however, reveal that God is free to set limits to His grace according to His will.

The place and function of the Assyrian-Babylonian captivity looms large in the OT. Practically all the prophets have written their messages in conjunction with this captivity.

The NT proclaims that the first advent of Jesus Christ was the irrevocable test of the Jewish nation to be counted as the chosen people (Mt 21:33-43; Jn 15:1-6).<sup>2</sup> On the basis of Jesus' Messianic authority, the twelve tribes of the chosen people were to be continued in the Messianic age exclusively through the twelve apostles of Christ's own election (Mt 18:15-20; Jn 15:16).

Here lies the acid test of a Christocentric exposition of a general and end-time biblical eschatology. God has made Himself and His holy will fully and finally known through Jesus Christ (Jn 1:18; 12:48, 49). Jesus is appointed by the Father as the judge of all the earth, of both Israel and the Gentiles (Jn 5:22).

This gospel truth has hermeneutical value for the interpretation of Daniel's (and Joel's and Ezekiel's) apocalyptic prophecies and all other judgment prophecies. This Christological principle is essentially simple. All those OT prophecies that apply to the time after the cross of Christ--that is, to eschatological time--will find their fulfillment solely in and through Christ and His covenant people as the true Israel of God and in their avowed enemies. Here the NT provides the key to unlock the treasure house of the OT apocalyptic. Without this salvation-historical perspective of Christ Jesus the OT apocalyptic can be expounded only within the literalism of a Christ-rejecting Judaism. The Christian

faith finds its very substance in the confession that Jesus and the NT interpret the OT covenant promises and doom prophecies with divine authority. The God of the OT is in the NT revealed to be Jesus Christ. The majestic and awesome theophanies (appearances of Yahweh's glory) of old are explained to be Christophanies (appearances of Christ's glory).

Before proceeding to some examples in which the above hermeneutical principles are applied, this writer would indicate once again that his concept and use of apocalyptic is not typical of the current revival in apocalyptic. Many scholars might be reticent to consider as apocalyptic some of the scripture portions about to be discussed. However, on the basis of the definition presented and followed in this chapter, we shall proceed.

This may also be an appropriate juncture at which to deny that allegorizing has infiltrated the hermeneutic presented. It may be acknowledged that some of the NT links to OT prophecies are not explicitly named (as when Christ cites Daniel or when Paul cites David), but this writer believes that the evidence of quotations of or allusions to the OT by the NT apocalyptic writings--especially the allusions in Revelation--justifies the interpretations given. Some details of the interpretations may not have been generally accepted nor explicitly considered by some Adventist writers, but careful evaluation of the lines of thought, the evidence offered, and the references given is invited.

#### Relevancy of Joel's End-Time Eschatology

The OT prophet Joel announced the promise of a great outpouring of God's Spirit on a repentant Zion (2:28, 29). Was this promise fulfilled prior to the cross of Christ? The OT seems to give no evidence of it. The prophecy, therefore, still awaited its fulfillment when Jesus appeared.

On the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter applied this prophecy of Joel 2 to the dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit by the ascended and exalted Christ on the waiting Christ-believing Israelites. Peter quoted the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 and proclaimed its fulfillment at Pentecost to be on the basis of Christ's atoning death and heavenly enthronement as priest and king (Acts 2:16-21, 33). Joel, however, had connected his prophecy with the "great and terrible" judgment day, when the final remnant of Judah would be gathered together on Mount Zion in Jerusalem to receive protection and refuge (2:31, 32).

The antagonistic heathen nations besieging Mount Zion would

be outside the holy city, gathered together in the valleys around, significantly called the "valley of Jehoshaphat" by Joel (3:2, 12); that is, the valley of Yahweh's judgment. Only God's intervention would vindicate the faithful remnant of Judah and honor God's covenant to them at the moment of extremity (see ch. 3). This judgment would rescue Israel and destroy her persecuting enemies. Was this prophecy of Joel also fulfilled at the first advent of Christ? Were the nations gathered in the "valley of Jehoshaphat" and destroyed? Evidence from the NT seems rather to recognize a spiritual-eschatological fulfillment on the day of Pentecost, when many nations were represented in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5-11). Paul in Rom 10:13 quotes Joel 2:32 as applying to his gospel ministry to both Jews and Gentiles. With regard to the comparatively few Christ-believing Jews he states explicitly: "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace" (Rom 11:5, RSV).

Since Pentecost the nations everywhere can be considered in a "valley of decision" (Joel 3:14) about Christ and His people, some being converted to Christ through the preaching of the gospel. However, the great and terrible day of God's final and irrevocable decision has not yet arrived. Consequently Joel 2:28-32 and Joel 3 still await their dramatic final application at the second advent of Christ. Jesus Himself interpreted the terrible day of Yahweh to be His own second advent to judge the world (Mt 25:31ff.).

The most elaborate NT exposition of Joel 2:32; 3, is found in Rev 14. This chapter of the apocalypse proves to be of highest importance for the mission and credentials of the remnant church. Rev 14 consists of three parts, which are intertwined with the immediate context. Each part appears to have an OT root that serves to explain the fundamental meaning of the whole of Rev 14 in salvation-historical perspective. For our purpose it suffices to clarify briefly the application of our hermeneutical principles for biblical apocalyptic.

Revelation 14:1-5 (part 1) portrays Mount Zion and on it the Lamb (Christ) and with Him a triumphant Israel, 144,000, with Christ's and the Father's names in their foreheads, indicating to whom they belong. These 144,000 are therefore true Christians, yet also are pictured as coming from the twelve tribes of Israel (as mentioned in Rev 7). Here a link with Joel 2:32 becomes visible. Furthermore, Rev 14:14-20 (part 3) appears to be a development of the judgment scene in Joel 3. Rev 14:15 clearly refers to Joel 3:13, and then unfolds it in the details of a double harvest. This apocalyptic interrelationship of Joel 3 and Rev 14 is striking in interpreting the judgment day of the Lord in Joel as the glorious second advent of Jesus Christ, who will come as king and judge (Rev 14:14). This is the Christological interpretation of Joel's



apocalyptic judgment of Yahweh. Consequently, the faithful remnant of Judah in Joel's apocalyptic is ultimately rescued because it belongs to Christ and follows Him.

The local imagery of Joel is maintained in the background of Rev 14 (thus implying the spiritual unity of both the old and the new covenant people), and more specifically that Joel's unfulfilled prophecy will ultimately be fulfilled in Christ's followers. Clear indications are then given to confirm the universal application of Joel's portrayal. Whereas Joel pictured a literal Judah on the literal Temple mountain, the heathen nations being gathered together in the literal valleys around Mount Zion, Rev 14 stresses six times that the earth as a whole is the harvest field, both with regard to the faithful followers of Christ (the wheat harvest) and the Christ-denying people (the vintage).

The picture of Rev 14:20 shows the root relation with Joel's apocalyptic. God's wrath will fall only "outside" the (holy) city, that is, outside Christ's remnant. God's judgment is no blind fate that falls indiscriminately on all people. It means deliverance for the faithful Israel (144,000 seems to have as its key number 12, a definite symbol of the covenant people) and destruction for their avowed enemies (the 1600 stadia of blood indicate as their key number 4, symbolizing the four-cornered worldwide and complete defeat of God's enemies [Rev 7:1]). Thus Rev 14 would advance Joel's apocalyptic on a universal scale, Christ being revealed as the judge of the world.

#### Relevancy of Malachi's Apocalyptic Eschatology

Having indicated the OT root relationship of Rev 14, parts 1 and 3, with Joel's apocalyptic, we proceed to consider the root relation of Rev 14:6-13 (part 2).

This part of Rev 14, including the three angels' messages, elucidates the beliefs and mission of the 144,000 remnant of Israel (part 1). The three angels' messages are intended to prepare the whole world for the final judgment (part 3), therefore they constitute the divine credentials for the remnant church. They portray the last religious awakening and reformation in God's plan to prepare a people for the second advent of Jesus Christ, that is, the true covenant people. To establish the full import of this divine ultimatum to a rebellious and self-sufficient world, we need to search for the possible typological structure in the wider context of salvation history as recorded in the canon of Scripture.

This typological structure can be found if we consider Malachi's prophecy of the sending of Elijah to God's people (Mal 4:5, 6) in the light of the NT revelation. Inasmuch as the OT closes--or better, remains open--with this covenant promise of God, we can only look to the NT for any eschatological fulfillment. According to Christ, His forerunner John the Baptist functioned as the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy of the coming of Elijah. (See Mt 17:10-13; 11:14.)

How can this be understood? In the first place, we need to realize that Malachi's prediction of the sending of Elijah refers back to the message and work of reformation of the original prophet Elijah, who lived in the days of Israel's king Ahab and his wife Jezebel (1 Kings 16:30ff.).

It was Elijah's specific work to lead Israel back to the true and living covenant fellowship with Yahweh out of the confusion of an amalgamation of Israel's religion and Baalism. Elijah finally brought the hour of decision for Israel on Mount Carmel with his last appeal: "'How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord [Yahweh] is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him'" (1 Ki 18:21, RSV). Then God's special manifestation of His power brought all people to a final stand for or against the true God. For the faithful ones there followed showers of blessing, for the impenitent ones, execution. The essentials of the Elijah message could be summarized as:

1. Restoration of the true worship through the atoning blood (Elijah "repaired the altar of the Lord" [1 Ki 18:30, RSV]).
2. Restoration of the commandments of the Lord through a new and willing obedience (cf. 1 Ki 18:18).

When Malachi later predicts a return of the prophet Elijah, this prophecy may indicate that in a time of renewed apostasy and confusion God again will send Elijah's message of revival and reformation. This time came at the first advent of Christ, as attested by Jesus Himself and the angel Gabriel to the parents of John the Baptist (Lk 1:13-17).

John the Baptist prepared a people to meet Christ through his message and baptism of true repentance and his faithful stand for the holy law of God's covenant before Herod the tetrarch (Lk 3:3, 18-21).

Therefore Jesus saw in John the Baptist the fulfillment of Malachi's promise of Elijah, who would "restore all things" (Mt 17:11). Even the disciples of Jesus were unaware at first of the

relevancy of Malachi's prophecy. Yet Malachi's prophecy was not exhausted in this eschatological fulfillment of John's preparation message prior to the first advent of Christ, because Malachi had connected his prophecy with "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (4:5). This day is interpreted by the NT as the day of the second advent of Christ (Rev 14:14-20). Therefore it is legitimate to ask for the apocalyptic relevancy of Malachi's prophecy in connection with the final judgment day.

The people of the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6-12 function in this respect as the apocalyptic antitypical Elijah, as the predicted restoration message (*PK*, pp. 716, 227; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1184, on Mal 4:5, 6). How great, then, is the responsibility of that people which is called to be the fulfillment of the three angels of Revelation and to proclaim the Elijah message for today! Their worldwide presence constitutes the greatest sign of all that the second coming of Christ is at hand. They can be recognized by their faithful perseverance in keeping "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev 14:12).

A detailed interpretation of the three angels' messages would require a careful investigation of the immediate context of Rev 12-14, and of its wider root context in Dan 7-11. Our main purpose here has been to show how our view of the Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutic of biblical eschatology and apocalyptic respects and honors the intrinsic multiplex structure of a God-and-Christ-centered unity of the OT and NT. The dynamic interrelationship of the OT and NT is discovered in joy through a recognition of their typological structure of promise and fulfillment, acknowledging God in Christ as the decisive center of all covenant promises and prophecies.

#### Relevancy of Daniel's Apocalyptic Outline Prophecies

Jesus specifically mentioned the book of Daniel as one of vital importance for the early Christian Church (Mt 24:15). The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ by the many parallels to it emphasizes the increasing timeliness of Daniel's apocalyptic visions for the remnant church. The history of Christian expositions of Daniel shows that many times current events have been made the focus of prophetic interpretation. Groundless speculations have brought the book of Daniel into ill repute. All the more, therefore, a careful consideration and an application of apocalyptic hermeneutical principles that are qualified by the everlasting gospel, are mandatory.

In the first place, it is necessary to respect the given order of the four major visions in the book of Daniel, in chapters 2, 7, 8, 10-12. They begin with the simple outline of successive political world events (chap. 2), continue with an enlargement and amplification of religious-ecclesiastical events within the previously outlined political framework centering on the covenant people of God and their worship (chaps. 7 and 8), and finally the book ends with a complicated and detailed outline of all those political conflicts that have a bearing on the true covenant people of God from Daniel's time onward until the close of probation and the day of resurrection (chaps. 11-12:2). To approach this apocalyptic book from the end, that is from the last vision, and to work backward to explain the previous visions, has been the fundamental error of many efforts to open the mysteries of the book of Daniel that were sealed till "the time of the end" (12:4, cf. 8:17) (cf. *AA*, p. 585, *GC*, p. 356).

The book of Daniel is ingeniously constructed, and requires recognition of its structure. First, the general and simple outline in chapter 2, the so-called ABC of all further apocalyptic prophecies. Only then can the second layer, the third, and ultimately the fourth be put on. Each stratum requires the knowledge of the previous one(s).

Yet also a second fundamental principle of apocalyptic exposition must be realized: that portion of the book of Daniel relating to the last days being sealed "until the time of the end" (12:4, RSV) will be unsealed only in the time of the end, that is, by Christ Jesus and His apocalyptic, specifically in the book of Revelation (see 1:1-3) and Mark 13 (par. Mt 24; Lk 21) (cf. *TM*, p. 115).

The continuity of symbolic terminology and imagery between Daniel and Revelation has been commonly recognized. Yet not all interpret Daniel consistently through Revelation, the apocalyptic unsealing of Daniel by the exalted Christ. The kingdom of God (Yahweh) in Daniel (2:44; 7:27) is now, in the time between the two advents of Christ, revealed to be the kingdom "of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev 11:15; Ps 2:7-9). Therefore the outline prophecies of Dan 2 and 7 cover the period of time until the second advent of Christ in all glory and power.

Inasmuch as the four major outline prophecies of Daniel (chaps. 2, 7, 8, 11-12:2) begin with the world empires of Daniel's own days (Neo-Babylonia and Medo-Persia) and all four series end with the judgment day, somewhere in each series the first advent of Christ is necessarily passed. This may not be indicated explicitly in any series, but it still is of crucial importance for the Christian expositor from a hermeneutical point of view.

The NT teaches the consistent Christological application--including its ecclesiological aspect--of the whole covenant terminology and imagery of the old dispensation as far as it applies to the time after the first advent of Christ. The hermeneutical consequences of the gospel of Christ for Daniel's outline prophecies may now become evident. They would require that the theological meaning of such terms as Israel, Judah, holy land, Mount Zion, sanctuary, saints, little horn, king of the north, and king of the south would be applied Christologically and ecclesiologically from the point at which an outline series moves into the new era. When Christ thus becomes the hermeneutical key to unlock the mysteries of Daniel's apocalyptic, its profound eschatological message can be unsealed for the Christian Church without arbitrary interpretations or unspiritual Middle-East speculations.

The consistent Christological application of Dan 7 gave the first Reformation in the sixteenth century the conviction of identifying the persecuting antichrist and its desolating abomination after the cross of Christ. (For documentation, see Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, vol. 2, pp. 245-247; 254-256; 433-439). The consistent Christological application of Daniel 8, specifically with regard to the sanctuary and its cleansing (or restoration in its rightful place) for "the time of the end" (see Dan 8:14, 17), gave rise to the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the nineteenth century and gave her the conviction of a specific mandate and mission as a movement of destiny (see Froom, *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 877-905; and in *Movement of Destiny*, chap. 36).

The consistent Christological application to the terminology and imagery in the problematic chapter of Dan 11 could provide an interpretation that is not based on the shifting sands of political, racial, and territorial speculations but, rather, on the everlasting Rock Jesus Christ.

The critical question is: where in the outline series of Dan 11 does the prophetic portrayal pass the first advent of Christ and also enter into the time of the end?

The series of Dan 11 may be believed to enter the time after the cross of Christ, from verse 31 onward, because verse 31 speaks about the setting up of "the abomination that makes desolate" (RSV), profanation of the temple, the taking away of the "continual" (burnt offering) or "daily" (mediation service). Here Dan 11 reveals its repetition and enlargement of chapter 8, as is often recognized. Dan 11, therefore, basically is an amplification of Dan 8. The wicked power described in Dan 11:31-39 possesses the same characteristics as the power portrayed in Dan 8:11-13. The same terminology and imagery are used in both prophetic outlines,

each beginning with the rule of Medo-Persia: eventually a cruel, self-deifying enemy of the covenant people of God will arise, intrude the glorious land (Palestine), cast down the truth (that is, the true religious worship), trample underfoot both the sanctuary and its host (that is, the worshipers in it), and replace the truth by his own worship in "transgression," the desolating or devastating abomination.

It is self-evident that the same hermeneutical principle and consistency of application would be required in interpreting Dan 11 as Dan 8. In both outlines the wicked king arises against the Prince of the host, the Prince of princes (8:11, 25; 11:22), a seeming reference to the Messiah, the leader of the Israel of God (cf. also Dan 9:25; Jos 5:15).

The traditional interpretation by the Christian Church has applied the blasphemous king of Dan 11:36ff. to the antichrist, whom the apostle Paul saw taking his seat within "the temple of God" (2 Th 2:4)--that is, within the Christian Church (cf. Eph 2:20-22; 2 Cor 6:16) (see Froom, *The Prophetic Faith*, vol. 2, pp. 529-531, 793). This Christological-ecclesiological interpretation of Dan 11:31-39 was continued in the prophetic expositions of the Millerites (from 1831-1844), and in those of the principal Sabbatarian Adventists (from 1844-1875).<sup>3</sup> The critical issue, however, has to do with the interpretation of the final portion of Dan 11, verses 40-45; 12:1, 2; for this part is commonly recognized as still unfulfilled prophecy. Here everything depends on one's Christocentric hermeneutical principles of apocalyptic interpretation and their consistent application. But at best, there is room for tentativeness when moving beyond inspired interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy.

As soon as Christ and His true covenant people are ignored at the heart and center of apocalyptic, immediately and necessarily the focus of attention seems to be directed to such unspiritual matters as territory and race by themselves, separate from Christ and His people. Thus Christ and the NT are subordinated to the OT and consequently rejected as the superior and decisive norm of apocalyptic interpretation. Neither the Jewish race or kings as such, nor any Middle-East territory, nor some ancient national enemy of the Jewish nation such as Babylon or Egypt were ever at the heart of God's covenant with the patriarchs and with Israel. The God of the OT Himself is the center of all the promises that He will dwell among His people.

Early, the Creator of man chose Abram and later the twelve tribes of Israel for the benefit of the whole human race, that all the families (Gentiles) of the world might be blessed in

Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the world, and might worship God through Him (see Gn 12:3; Gal 3:6-29). Accordingly, all four major outline prophecies of Daniel, inspired by the God of Abraham, reveal this universal scope and significance for all Gentiles; and even climax in a final cosmic conflict between heaven and earth. This universal purpose of God's election of Abram and Israel, that God's "salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Is 49:6, RSV; 45:22-25), is now further unfolded in the gospel message of the apostle Paul (Eph 1-3; Rom 11) and in the book of Revelation as being ultimately fulfilled in the doxologies to the Father and the Son by all creatures in heaven and on earth (see Php 2:5-11; Rev 5:13, 14).

We have shown above our view that the apocalyptic portrayals of Joel and Malachi are developed in Rev 14 in a worldwide fulfillment.

It is essential to realize the the unfulfilled passage of Dan 11:40-45; 12:1, 2, must be interpreted according to the same hermeneutical principles as the apocalyptic of Joel and Malachi.

There can be only one harmonious apocalyptic in the OT, as there is only one apocalyptic in the NT. And both the OT and the NT apocalyptic are one in Christ. This implies that the OT apocalyptic (including Dan 11:40-45; 12:1, 2) will be fulfilled according to the Christological interpretation in Revelation, chapters 12 to 22 in particular. Any hermeneutic that fails to demonstrate the intrinsic theological unity of the OT and NT must be regarded as an inadequate hermeneutic.

The imagery of a faithful remnant gathered together on Mount Zion in Jerusalem surrounded by confederated enemies in the "valley of Jehoshaphat" as pictured in Joel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel (11:40-45), is not spiritualized away in Rev 14, but extended and universalized to encompass the whole world (see Rev 16:14). The matter at issue in this apocalyptic cosmic war is not race or territory but the name of God, the truth of His covenant, and the vindication of His covenant people (see Joel 3:2, 3; Eze 38:16; 39:22, 25-29; Zec 12:5-8; Rev 12:17; 14:12).

Basically this seems to be the picture of Dan 11:40-45; 12:1. The portrayal, like chapters 11 and 8, is couched in OT terminology and therefore is Palestine centered. The "king of the north" (or Babylon; cf. Jer 1:15; 25:9)<sup>4</sup> will once again (see vs. 31) invade the glorious land (Palestine) (Dan 11:41, 45) when he goes forth "with great fury to exterminate and utterly destroy many" (vs. 44, RSV). However, his aim is to conquer Jerusalem and destroy the covenant people of God gathered together on Mount Zion, where the Lord dwells in His sanctuary (cf. Joel 2:32; 3:16, 17).

And he [the king of the north] shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him. "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book" (Dan 11:45; 12:1, RSV).

This is Daniel's portrayal of the OT apocalyptic war between heaven and earth, crystallized between the faithful remnant of Israel and Babylon. The final battleground centers on Mount Zion, which is called "the glorious holy mountain" (Dan 11:45) because the Lord is dwelling in His Temple on Mount Zion in the northern part of Jerusalem (see Ps 48:1, 2).

In the portrayal of Dan 11, the last enemy of the Israel of God will besiege the city of God. Taking his seat close to the holy mountain (Zion), "between the [Mediterranean] sea and the glorious holy mountain" (Dan 11:45, RSV), he prepares for a final attack upon the holy city. Then comes the surprise--"yet"--he shall suddenly "come to his end, with none to help him" (vs. 45, RSV). The reason is given: "Michael, the great prince" (12:1) of Israel shall arise to vindicate the covenant of God at the hour of their extremity. He will at once destroy the persecutor and deliver His chosen ones.

This climactic end presents basically the same picture as the prophets Joel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah present. When Christ comes as king and judge (Rev 14:14) He will intervene on behalf of His covenant people on "Mount Zion," and destroy the persecutors "outside the city" (Rev 14:20, RSV). In this way the OT apocalyptic contains for the Christian Church at once an exhortation to be faithful to the covenant of God and a promise of ultimate deliverance for those who persevere until the end. Those who have died in hope, not having received the promise, "shall awake . . . to everlasting life" (Dan 12:2, RSV).

When thus Daniel and Revelation are connected, viewing the apocalypse of John as the advanced unfolding and Christological interpretation of Daniel, not only is the theological unity of OT and NT apocalyptic maintained and honored but also Christ is uplifted as the divine and faithful Saviour of Israel. In all eternity the covenant people of both the old and the new dispensation will join the heavenly choir in singing praises to their Creator God, who has united "all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10, RSV).



NOTES

<sup>1</sup>J. F. Walvoord, *Israel in Prophecy* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1962), p. 93. This compartmentalizing exegesis of the OT by itself in isolation from the NT can be seen in many of the presentations given at the "Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy," 1971. See *Prophecy in the Making*, edited by C. F. H. Henry (Creation House, Ill., 1971). The position of G. D. Young is typical for modern Protestant Futurism when he states: "There may be passages in the Scriptures in which the church is spoken of as the Israel of God, or even the new Israel. Our covenant is the new covenant. But it surely is a bit too much to expect that Jews could so read their Bible and believe that" (p. 163). The matter at issue is not whether a Jew reading his Old Testament could ever conclude that the church is the new-covenant people. How could he? The real issue is whether the Jew accepts through the New Testament Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah of Israel. Then, and only then, a Jew can believe that the new-covenant people are the church of Christ Jesus and His twelve apostles (see Eph 2:11-22).

A second point of misunderstanding, which is of no-less-serious nature, is the conclusion that Dt 30 foretells a return of the Jewish nation to Jerusalem after a second dispersion, or scattering, among the nations; as Young states, having quoted Dt 30:5, "and this, God said, would be their lot after an international dispersion and not merely the captivity in Egypt" (p. 164). The idea often propounded is that the later Assyrian captivity (of the ten northern tribes of Israel, since 722 B.C.), and Babylonian captivity (of Judah, from 605-536 B.C.), are not a scattering of Israel among all the nations, as the prophecies of Dt 30; Jer 30:3; 31:8-14; Eze 39:25-28; Amos 9:11-15; describe (see also J. F. Walvoord, "The Future of Israel," in *Ibid.*, pp. 336f.; cf. his *Israel in Prophecy*, esp. pp. 67-79). This evaluation of the Assyrian-Babylonian exile, however, seems untenable in view of the fact that the heathen nations were trading their captured slaves through the Phoenicians (Tyre and Sidon) to all nations in all directions, see Eze 27:13; Joel 3:2-6. For a thorough treatment of all the arguments of Futurism from the OT, see the scholarly *Het Herstel van Israel volgens het Oude Testament*, by Dr. G. Ch. Aalders (Kok: Kampen, no date given); also by same Dutch author, *De Oud-Testamentische Profetie en de Staat Israel* (Kok: Kampen, 1949).

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., W. Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," in *Essays on OT Hermeneutics*, pp. 89-122; esp. pp. 113-116. G. Ch. Aalders, *De OT Profetie en de Staat Israel* (Kok: Kampen 1949), p. 29, and his *Commentaar op Daniel* (1962), pp. 230, 234, refers

to Dan 9:27 as the prediction of the final desolation or rejection of national Israel as the true covenant people after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

<sup>3</sup>See chart 4 on the principle Sabbatarian Adventists, Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, vol. 4, pp. 1118, 1119. Uriah Smith differed from James White, Joseph Bates, Hiram Edson, and other Adventist writers in that he interpreted the "king" of Dan 11:36-39 as France during the French Revolution. Here he followed as his guiding source and authority Alexander Keith and other English premillennialists (see Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, vol. 4, p. 1113; vol. 3, p. 744, chart). The Study Report in *Ministry*, March, 1954, pp. 22-27, has indicated the incorrectness of this interpretation.

<sup>4</sup>U. Smith in 1871 suddenly changed his view on the "king of the north" from papacy to Turkey, accepting the popular interpretation of the British premillennialists. Froom observes on this matter: "In this he differed from White and certain other Adventist writers" (*Prophetic Faith*, vol. 4, p. 1121; cf. also p. 1116, note 15. See also the charts on pp. 847, 1119. On the British expositors, see chart in vol. 3, p. 744).

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## P A R T V

### INTERPRETATION IN PROCLAMATION

#### 14. Preaching and Biblical Interpretation

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This chapter is an incursion into the area known as the theology of preaching. It is intended particularly for the preaching minister, with whom I identify. The objective of this study is to explore certain theological aspects of biblical interpretation in the context of the work of the preacher. The first part of the chapter deals with recent and contemporary theories regarding preaching and biblical interpretation. For this reason, more quotations and references to authors occur than in previous chapters in this book. The second area of concern is principles of biblical interpretation as they apply to preaching. This chapter is intended as a sequel to the material presented by the other authors in this symposium.

A regrettable tension often exists between biblical scholars and preachers. The scholars think that preachers are superficial in their handling of the Scriptures, that they sacrifice accuracy and content for "inspiration." The preachers, in turn, think that scholars are so technical and philosophical that the average person cannot understand what they are saying. Unfortunately, both sides can produce ample evidence to substantiate their concerns. Lawrence Toombs observes: "The scholar goes on his way writing books for his pupils and for other scholars, and the minister marches resolutely on his, satisfied with little homilies on how to live decently, or with analyses, some acute and some banal, of the social, political, and psychological scene of the present day, which because they deal with current topics, he has deluded himself into thinking are relevant."--*The Old Testament in Christian Preaching*, pp. 13, 14.

It is important for the minister to recognize his responsibility as an interpreter of the Bible. The average parish minister may not have as much knowledge as the specialist in biblical studies, but he should have sufficient understanding of the Bible that he can rightly divide the word of truth. And he must realize that he is almost the only source from which the average churchgoer will learn the meaning and the relevance of the Bible. There was a time when common ordinary people studied the Bible for themselves. Observation would indicate that this time has largely passed.

Contemporary Viewpoints on Preaching  
and Biblical Interpretation

Thor Hall, associate professor of preaching and theology at the Divinity School, Duke University, is author of a book published in 1971 entitled *The Future Shape of Preaching*. To illustrate one of his theses he draws three circles. The first circle represents theological methodology. Eight different methodologies are indicated at 45 degree intervals on the circumference of this circle. The second circle represents hermeneutics, with eight different kinds of hermeneutics indicated at corresponding points on the circumference. The third circle represents religious language, with eight kinds of religious language at corresponding points on the circle. The author's idea is clear. Each theological methodology results in a particular hermeneutical theory, also in a specific theory of communication.

Hall's concept may be charted as follows:

<u>Theological Methodology</u>	<u>Hermeneutics</u>	<u>Religious language</u>
1. Revelational.	Revelational hermeneutic.	Logos-Word of God.
2. Secular.	Common-sense hermeneutic.	Ordinary language.
3. Dialectic.	Encounter hermeneutic.	Two-nature theology.
4. Critical.	Critical integration.	3-dimensional theory.
5. Metaphysical.	"New hermeneutic."	Metaphysical event.
6. Historical.	Historical criticism.	Linguistic analysis.
7. Correlation.	Relational hermeneutic.	Symbolic of absolutes.
8. Existential.	Existential hermeneutic.	Existential game.

This analysis tells us as Seventh-day Adventist ministers something we must never forget: *When we choose our theology, our hermeneutics and our theory of religious language come in the same package.* To be more specific, the Seventh-day Adventist who accepts "revelational theology" by definition finds himself in

trouble if he tries to use encounter or existential hermeneutic in his biblical interpretation. Conversely, if a Seventh-day Adventist advocates encounter or existential hermeneutic he should not be surprised if his theological methodology is questioned.

In Hall's analysis it is significant that the only theory of religious language that gives full recognition to the supernatural is the one that is based on revelational theology and hermeneutic. This tells us that in our communication of our message we can well heed the observation of Paul: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:12, 13, RSV).

Hall refers to what he calls "commonsense hermeneutic." This viewpoint reduces the Bible to a work of great literary worth, valuable as a source of religious ideas and moral values, but in no sense of supernatural origin. This is the language of liberalism, based on secular theology, and expressed in the everyday language of human experience. This viewpoint stands one hundred eighty degrees removed from conservative Christianity, so is not likely to influence the thinking of the Seventh-day Adventist preacher.

A bit more subtle is the existential hermeneutic, based largely on the theology of Rudolph Bultmann. This hermeneutical school demythologizes the biblical message, reducing the contents of the Bible to concepts acceptable to twentieth-century man. This viewpoint has had a profound effect on preaching. For example, I once heard John A. T. Robinson preach a sermon on Jesus' healing of the daughter of the Syrophenician woman (see Mk 7:24-30). He pictured Jesus as an ordinary mortal filled with Jewish prejudices who found it difficult to respond to the request of the mother who was appealing to Him in behalf of her daughter. Bishop Robinson's hermeneutics, as revealed in his sermon, left nothing that could not be readily believed by the humanist, the secularist, the antisupernaturalist. There was no divine Christ, no miracle-working Lord--only a great man struggling to outgrow his own weakness and prejudice. The biblical record had been reinterpreted in a completely naturalistic context.

Still more subtle is the "encounter hermeneutic," so influential in preaching circles since Emil Brunner's *Truth as Encounter*. Preachers who accept this concept look at preaching not as the interpretation of a passage of Scripture but as an encounter between God and the listener in which the preacher is a medium of

communication and the text is involved but incidental. There is an element of truth in this viewpoint. The listener *should* experience an encounter with God as the sermon is being preached. The preacher *should* be a mouthpiece for God. But when truth itself is equated with this encounter, and when experience is placed above revealed truth, those of us who accept the Bible as the Word of God must object. Although truth is bigger than propositions, it is not correct to say that truth is not propositional.

Related to the encounter theology is the charismatic movement. When the individual goes to church and receives the "spirit" and speaks in tongues and sees people healed, scriptural evidence is little likely to play a normative role for him. He has experienced an "encounter" with God, he thinks, that answers all his questions and meets all his needs.

Related to the encounter idea is the contention of Barth and others that the Bible is not in itself the Word of God but that it becomes the Word of God when it produces a spiritual impact on the life of a person. In this context, preaching is considered as itself the Word of God. This contention is espoused by Dietrich Ritschl, Ronald Sleeth, Merrill Abbey, and many others who are often identified by the neo-orthodox label. The net result of this approach is the derogation of the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. A subjective emotional existential experience, possibly induced by music, stained-glass windows, personality, and tradition may be mistaken as the voice of God. And the theological presuppositions of this school suggest that the "voice of God" heard under these conditions may be as authentic as the written Word of God. In fact, Dietrich Ritschl says: "It must be considered unbiblical to assume that a true sermon is of less power than the sayings of Jeremiah, or the words of the Sermon on the Mount, or an Epistle of Paul."--*A Theology of Proclamation*, p. 31.

Another contemporary viewpoint regarding preaching holds that it is a sacrament. P. T. Forsythe characterized preaching as "the sacrament which gives value to all other sacraments."--*Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, p. 4. Karl Barth described preaching and sacrament as "two aspects of the same thing."--*The Preaching of the Gospel*, p. 26. Domenico Grasso, a Catholic spokesman, declares: "Preaching as a vehicle of faith and grace has thus a certain sacramentality. In it, under the visible sign of the human word, a supersensible reality is present and acts just as in the sacrament."--*Preaching God's Message*, p. 251. Ronald Sleeth, of Perkins Seminary, says: "The sermon itself should be regarded as a sacramental act."--*Preaching the Word*, p. 25. And Jean Jacques von Allmen, of the University of Neuchâtel, says: "And it is by sacramental ways of thinking about homiletics, by



a sort of extension of Christology, that we shall be able to re-discover both the joy of preaching and the right of setting about it."--*Preaching and Congregation*, p. 15.

There is a certain convincing quality about these oft-repeated statements linking preaching and the sacraments. This viewpoint seems to elevate preaching to a high level of importance; and as every preacher knows preaching needs all the help it can get. But to equate or relate preaching to the sacraments tends to reduce the importance of the written Word as the subject matter of preaching. This theology tends to shift the center of preaching from an historical revelation to an existential experience.

To summarize, a generation of preachers has been brought up on Brunner's encounter theology, the Barthian concept of the Word of God, and Christian existentialism, especially as taught by Bultmann. These, of course, are not the only influences that have shaped the thinking of the clergy, but they are among the most prominent. As a whole these theologians who have influenced twentieth-century preaching have denied the Bible the place in the preacher's world that conservative Protestant theology would--or should--demand. The dilemma that has been produced by this theological trend is commented on by one of its advocates, Merrill Abbey, of Garrett Theological Seminary: "The *words* of the texts are no longer understood as authentic words of God. Since God does not convey his truth in propositions, texts are not eternal pronouncements needing only to be explained and applied. Having lost this note of direct authority as the chief interpreter of an infallible Bible, and having failed to enter into full possession of any adequate alternative of the authority of the Word, the pulpit has been left hesitant and stammering."--*The Word Interprets Us*, p. 38.

It is not hard to see the relationship between the preacher's theology and his interpretation. The principles of interpretation followed by the conservative or evangelical preacher who accepts the Bible as the Word of God will be different from those of the liberal or neo-orthodox preacher. And preaching itself is modified by the methods of biblical interpretation employed by the preacher. A man holding the encounter theology, for example, may be a biblical preacher, but he will use the Bible differently from the way the preacher who believes the Bible to be the revealed Word of God uses it. The preacher who considers the sermon as sacramental may preach from the Bible, but the authority he assigns to the Bible will be influenced by his theology.

It must not be concluded that no voices have been raised challenging the trends that have been described above. Every

Seventh-day Adventist minister should read Edmund P. Clowney's *Preaching and Biblical Theology*. He points out the changes that have taken place in the theology of preaching as a result of the impact of changing attitudes toward religious authority. "Virtually any words," he observes, "spoken in the situation may become God's Word." After reviewing contemporary attitudes he declares that "the authority of preaching is not heightened but lost if the preacher forsakes his place behind the Book. We are called to be Christ's but not Christs. The incarnation is not continued in us, so that we may declare, 'I say unto you,'" nor are we apostles or prophets, inspired of the spirit to lay afresh the foundation of the church for a new day. We are ministers of the Word; by God's grace wise men and scribes sent by Christ (Mt 23:24); evangelists, pastors, and teachers; men of God thoroughly furnished by the Holy Spirit for every good word of our calling."--p. 61.

"Christ's but not Christs." This would be a good motto for preachers. When we preach, our message is not so much a proclamation as an interpretation. We are dependent on the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Bible, but also we are dependent on the Bible, which the Holy Spirit inspired. Our sermons are not sacraments but messages drawn from God's Word. Preaching is not an "event" but an unfolding of truths already revealed. A contemporary preacher, John R. W. Stott, says: "My first and deepest conviction about preaching is that a minister is never more than the steward of goods entrusted to him and the herald of news which he has been commanded to proclaim. Therefore he is never the originator of new ideas, but only the dispenser of the old. His task is simply to explain, to interpret, and to apply God's revealed and written word."--From Roddy, *We Prepare and Preach*, p. 179.

This puts preaching in theological perspective. It does not mean that preaching is mere dry exegesis and rule-bound hermeneutics. The Bible, which the preacher is to explain, interpret, and apply, contains the good news of a Saviour who lived and died, who was resurrected from the dead, who is now our advocate, and who is coming again. The Bible is an authentic revelation of God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Bible reveals how man should relate to God. With the aid of the Holy Spirit the preacher has plenty to explain, plenty to interpret, plenty to apply.

#### Applying Principles of Hermeneutics to Preaching

The science and art of interpreting the Bible known as hermeneutics, or, by some authors, hermeneutic, is the same for the scholar, the teacher, the layman, and the preacher. The difference lies in the use that is made of the interpreted material.

The scholar may write a book for fellow scholars; the teacher may explain the meaning of the Bible to his students; the layman may hold Bible studies with a friend. But the preacher interprets the Bible in order to persuade people to become Christians and to nurture those who are already Christians.

Let us look at several hermeneutical principles that have been discussed in this symposium with the purpose of relating them to the peculiar task of the preacher.

1. There is the *sola scriptura* principle--"the Bible only." This means that all preaching must be biblical preaching. I hesitate to use the term *expository*, because there is so much confusion as to what this term means. The biblical sermon may take a number of forms. It may analyze a Bible passage, using the natural divisions of the passage as the points of the sermon. It may dwell on the theological and behavioral implication of a passage. It may deal with a subject or a human problem, using the Bible as the principal source of information on the subject or the key to the solution of a problem. This principle tells the preacher that he must never forget that the Bible is the Word of God, the standard of faith and practice for the Christian, and the basic source of preaching ideas and materials.

2. Then, there is the principle of *unity of Scripture*. This means, as has been noted in other chapters of this book, that the Bible teaches one theology, not a variety of theologies. It means, for example, that there is no *basic* disagreement between the theology of Paul and the theology of James. This unity is predicated on the presupposition that the same Holy Spirit guided all the Bible writers; therefore, despite their individual differences, a fundamental oneness persists.

What does this mean for the preacher? It means that he will understand biblical theology well enough so that his sermons on Romans will not contradict his sermons on James. In other words, his preaching will unify his listeners' concept of Scripture. This insight will be deepened by an understanding of the place of Christ in Scripture.

When a preacher plans a sermon he should always ask himself the question "How does the message of this sermon relate to the biblical message as a whole? Is it supportive or is it irrelevant?" To make this evaluation correctly, the preacher needs to know the teaching of the entire Bible about God, Christ, salvation, man, law, revelation, the future, and any other topics bearing on the relationship between God and man.

3. The third principle, "*let Scripture explain Scripture*," comes from the Protestant Reformation. It means that the ultimate criteria in determining the meaning of a portion of Scripture is the testimony of other biblical passages that deal directly or indirectly with the same subject. This principle is a corollary of the idea of unity of Scripture.

What does this imply for the preacher? It tells him that he must do thorough work in comparing his preaching portion with other related biblical passages. To do this most effectively he should have a basic knowledge of biblical languages. Whether or not he knows Greek or Hebrew he must know how to use an analytical concordance effectively. He must be willing to scuttle a "brilliant" preaching idea if he discovers it to be out of harmony with the real meaning of the text in the context of parallel or explanatory passages.

4. The fourth principle has to do with *proper interpretation of biblical words and sentences*. This principle reminds us of the language gap that must be bridged. The preacher, whether or not he is conversant with biblical languages, must find ways of determining whether the word or words he is stressing in his sermon carry the idea that the Bible writer intended. For example, the word *faith* may mean "saving faith" in the highest Christian sense; it may mean "assenting to an idea"; it may refer to faithfulness. As many as six different meanings of *faith* have been detected in Paul's epistle to the Romans.

The preacher must also be aware of the importance of sentence study. The meaning of a word is often made clear by its context in the sentence (in the original, of course) in which the word is used.

Ability to evaluate translations and paraphrases is a growing need of every minister as new versions proliferate. This evaluation must be based on sound scholarship, not on prejudices and personal preferences.

5. This principle has to do with *context and historical background*. Because liberal scholars talk about context and historical background, some conservatives have grown skeptical of the whole concept. The fact that liberals may give undue stress to this principle makes it all the more important that conservatives understand its proper use.

The preacher must relate his preaching passage to the literary unit in which the passage is found. He must be aware of the author, the circumstances of writing, the time and place of writing, and

the reason for writing. This information may not be made obvious in the sermon, but it needs to be part of the preacher's equipment as he prepares his sermon. At the same time this knowledge must not be interpreted as reducing the Scripture to the same level as man-made literature. The Scripture writers maintained their individuality and wrote in the context of their time, but they were God's penmen.

Horrible blunders have been made by preachers who neglected to acquaint themselves with the contextual and historical background, both of the Bible and of the writings of Ellen White. As preachers, we owe it to our listeners and to God to be reverently meticulous in our interpretation of God's Word.

6. Another important hermeneutical principle is that *the message of the Bible must be interpreted literally unless it is obviously figurative*. Many a preacher has succumbed to the temptation to depend too much on allegory. One of the accomplishments of the Protestant Reformation was the shattering of the allegorical method of biblical interpretation that had been popular for centuries.

The preacher has the right to draw lessons from biblical passages. He may freely say, "This text suggests---" or, "This passage may be applied---." But when he says, "This text *means---*" he had better stay close to the literal meaning intended by the writer. Deeper meanings may be suggested by the text, but to be authentic they must have the clear support of other inspired writers.

The interpretation of figurative expressions such as the symbols of prophecy presents difficult problems. Here, again, the safest procedure is to look for a clear statement from another inspired author. Preachers must exercise unusual care that they do not mislead their listeners by fanciful and unsupported interpretations. Disillusioned laymen may lose their faith if they discover that their ministers do not know whereof they speak in the area of prophetic interpretation.

The literal-figurative principle also warns against the demythologizing methodology of the Bultmann school. This method of interpretation robs the Bible of its original meaning and substitutes philosophical abstractions. The minister who follows this course is replacing God's revelation with human theories.

7. An extension of the principle just discussed is known as the *typological principle*. Typology is a legitimate approach to biblical interpretation. Many sermons have been preached by

Seventh-day Adventist preachers using passages from the epistle to the Hebrews to unlock the mysteries of the OT sanctuary service. This need not be unsafe allegory or undue spiritualizing. It is, rather, a process of recognizing the type (generally OT) that finds its counterpart in the NT antitype.

Preachers get in trouble when they use their imagination too freely in this area. Inferences must be supportable by reasonable evidence. Unsound analogies must not be employed. Unreliable authorities must not be used. "Private interpretations" shake faith in the preacher and, more tragically, in the Bible itself.

### Conclusions

Ministers who read these pages may be tempted to exclaim, "Is all this really necessary?" They may question the importance of an understanding of current trends in the theology of preaching, and they may wonder whether the rules of hermeneutics are really meant for them.

In answer to this question, Bernard Ramm, one of the most readable contemporary writers on biblical interpretation, has this to say: "It is felt too frequently by preachers that preaching is of such a nature as to exempt the preacher from close adherence to rules of exegesis. Proper exegesis is necessary for commentators and theologians but, preachers--it is argued--have a 'poetic license' with reference to scripture. This is most unfortunate reasoning. If the preacher's duty is to minister the Word of God, hermeneutics is the means whereby he determines the *meaning* of the Word of God. *To ask for exemptions from the strict rules of hermeneutics is then to ask for an exemption from preaching the true meaning of the Word of God.* This is precisely a repudiation of what a man is called to preach, namely, the truth of God's Word.

"This does not mean that preaching is nothing but public exegesis or drab commenting on the sacred text. There must be energy, life, imagination, relevancy, illustration, and passion in all preaching. Bookish, dry, technical exposition is not necessarily preaching the Word of God. But whenever scripture is used, it must be used according to sound rules of hermeneutics."  
--*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 178.

Sound hermeneutics should enhance the preacher's sermons. His messages should be more interesting, more authentic, more appealing, because they reflect more adequately the message of the Scriptures. The Adventist preacher must take seriously the following counsel from Ellen White: "The student of the Word should

not make his opinions a center around which truth is to revolve. He should not search for the purpose of finding texts of Scripture that he can construe to prove his theories, for this is wresting the Scriptures to his own destruction. The Bible student must empty himself of every prejudice, lay his own ideas at the door of investigation, and with humble, subdued heart, with self hid in Christ, with earnest prayer, he should seek wisdom from God." --*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 463.

Preaching--real preaching--is biblical interpretation supplemented by the art of persuasion, and all under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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## A P P E N D I X

### Tools of Biblical Interpretation

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The task of biblical exegesis according to Kaiser and Kümmel is "to discover the objective meaning of the text, i.e., to learn from the text what it says about the subject matter discussed in it, and what this means for me personally."--*Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook*. (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), p. 36. In order to do this, it is necessary to have a sound method and reliable tools.

The first step in the process is to determine what the *text* is. The safest thing to do is to begin with a Bible that has a reliable text in the original languages. For the OT this would be the third edition of R. Kittel, ed., *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937) until the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1968-), edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, is completed. Several fascicles have already appeared. For the NT the 25th edition of Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1963) remains the best because of its fuller apparatus. The United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (New York: American Bible Society, 1966), edited by Aland-Black-Metzger-Wikgren, has a better type face and text but its apparatus is not as full as it should be for a good study Bible. Those who do not use Greek and Hebrew should avail themselves of an English Bible that is based on a good original text such as the Revised Standard Version. The American Standard Version is quite faithful in translation, but its Greek text is not the best. On the other hand, the more recent New American Standard Bible is a revision of the American Standard Version, and its Greek text is based on the

Nestle-Aland. Those not too well acquainted with the study of the text should consult Bruce Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament* (2d ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) and the somewhat outdated but standard work of B. J. Roberts, *The Old Testament Text and Versions* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1951). The principles for determining the text in individual cases are discussed in these books.

The best way to study the Synoptic Gospels is to have the parallel passages of all the Gospels in hand. The best Greek edition is *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1964), edited by Kurt Aland. The text of the Gospel of John is included, and in the footnotes variant readings and parallels from patristic sources are found. This has been published in a Greek-English edition (1970), the English being the RSV text.

After the text has been determined, one should know precisely what the text says. Two kinds of tools are needed for this. The first of these is the LEXICON. For the OT the best lexicon in English is now William Holladay's *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), although one still needs to resort to Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (2d ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1958) for more comprehensive text citation and for nonlexical items such as etymological material, bibliographical entries, and the like. Holladay's work is mainly an abridgment of the third German edition (fascicle 1, 1967) of the latter. Two thirds of this edition was completed in manuscript form before the death of Professor Baumgartner. Material on the last seven letters is based on the 2d edition. The lexicon for the NT is Walter Bauer's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich.

The second type of tool for knowing what the text says is the REFERENCE GRAMMAR. For Hebrew, the best is that of Gesenius and E. Kautzsch, translated by A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), and R. J. Williams' *An Outline of Hebrew Syntax* is a useful tool. For Greek, there are two excellent ones: Blass-Debrunner's *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), translated and revised by Robert Funk; and Nigel Turner's *Syntax*, which is Vol. III of Moulton's *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963). Although not intending to be a thorough or systematic treatment, C. F. D. Moule's *An Idiom-book of the New Testament* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1953) is very helpful.

After we have determined how the text reads we should go a step farther than the lexical meaning by investigating more precisely the theological meaning of certain words. The best source for this in the NT (although from a liberal perspective) is Kittel-Friedrich's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-). Eight of the nine projected volumes have been translated from the German and published. Unfortunately, there is in English no such comparable work for the OT. However, there is such a work in German (from the same liberal perspective): Botterweck-Ringgren's four-volume *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1970-), which is appearing in fascicles and no doubt soon will be translated into English. Another similar work is Jenni-Westermann's *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (2 vols.; Munich: Ch. Kaiser, 1971-). Some help can be found in R. B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948). Until the German works above have been translated into English, the following two works that cover words in the OT and NT will be found useful: Alan Richardson, ed., *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan, 1959) and J. J. Von Allmen, ed., *A Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), which has the title *Vocabulary of the Bible* (London: Lutterworth, 1958) in the London edition.

Next, the immediate *context* of the verse should be closely scrutinized so that the argument and train of thought of the author will be clearly seen. The exegesis of the verse will then be in harmony with its setting. This will help one avoid falling into the error of pulling statements out of context and thus distorting them.

After the local context of the verse has been scrutinized the larger context should be brought to bear on the verse. The author's theology, style, ways of thought and expression, purpose and objective, must be carefully considered. What we need for these are several types of works: concordances, introductions, and theologies. The best Hebrew CONCORDANCE is S. Mandelkern's *Veteris Testamenti concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (3d ed.; Jerusalem-Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1956, 1959). The best Greek concordance is Moulton-Geden's *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* (3d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926). Less comprehensive though usable are Lisowski's *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1958) for the OT and Schmoller's *Handkonkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament* (9th ed.; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1951) for the NT. For those who do not read the Hebrew or Greek too well, G. V. Wigram's *Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance* (5th ed.; London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1890) and *The*

*Englishman's Greek Concordance* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1839) are available. In both of these, the words in the original languages are arranged alphabetically, each word is provided with an English pronunciation, and the passages where the word is found and a translation of the passages with the involved word in italics are given. For the English Bible (KJV), Robert Young's *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (rev. ed.; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1902) and James Strong's *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1894) are the best. Young's concordance is handier in that it lists the Greek or Hebrew word in the text and lists the passages for the word involved according to the word in the original. For instance, the English word *robber* translates six different words, five Hebrew, and one Greek. There are, then, six different listings for this one English word, one for each of the words. Young also includes as a bonus an article by William F. Albright entitled "Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands." The advantage of Strong's is that it is exhaustive in that it lists every word found in the Bible. For the Greek OT there is available Hatch-Redpath's *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1954).

Concordances are useful not only in determining the precise meaning of a word by its use throughout Scripture but also more specifically for our purpose in seeing how the author of the book we are studying uses a particular word. Through the concordance we can check all his uses of the word in the book in question. This analysis will guide us in understanding his use of this word in the text in question.

The best conservative INTRODUCTIONS to the OT are R. K. Harrison's *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) and Gleason L. Archer, Jr.'s, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Moody, 1964;) and to the NT, Donald Guthrie's *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971). Not everything can be accepted in the following liberal introductions, but much can be learned from them when they are used cautiously: Otto Eissfeldt's *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harper, 1965) and Feine-Behm-Kümmel's *Introduction to the New Testament* (14th rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966).

More useful for our purposes are THEOLOGIES that deal with the specific book we are exegeting. However, such are not always available. Some introductions provide a limited theology for each book. Unfortunately, there are no really good large theologies of the Bible written from the conservative viewpoint. Used with discrimination, one can profit from the OT theologies of Von Rad,

Eichrodt, Vriezen, and Jacob. The same is true for the NT theologies of Richardson, Jeremias, Bultmann (especially in Paul), and Conzelmann. H. D. McDonald has come out with *Living Doctrines of the New Testament* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1971), which treats separately the theologies of the different books or groups of books.

The next step in exegesis is to be acquainted with Bible backgrounds, so that knowledge of the geography, history, habits, customs, practices, thought, and religion can illuminate our understanding of the text. For such purposes we need atlases, archaeological books, histories, dictionaries, and contemporary sources. The best ATLAS is still Wright-Filson's *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956); although the student should consult Grollenberg's *Atlas of the Bible* (New York: Nelson, 1956) for the excellent photographs and the *Atlas of Israel* (2d ed.; Jerusalem and Amsterdam: Israel Government - Dept. of Surveys, Am Elsevier Pub. Co., 1970) for geographical information. For the latter purpose Denis Baly's *Geography of the Bible* (New York: Harper, 1957) is an excellent source. E. M. Blaiklock's *Pictorial Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969) has many good features and can be used with profit.

There are several fine volumes dealing with ARCHAEOLOGY and the Bible. One of the best from the standpoint of an evangelical scholar is M. F. Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament* (Zondervan, 1954). From a critical scholar, one of the best is G. Ernest Wright's *Biblical Archaeology* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962). Another good treatment is William F. Albright's *The Biblical Period From Abraham to Ezra* (New York: Harper, 1965). One that deals specifically with the New Testament, though mainly the Gospels, is Jack Finegan's *The Archaeology of the New Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). For contemporary source materials none are better than James Pritchard's two volumes, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955) and *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), both of which have been brought up to date by *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). Less comprehensive is D. Winton Thomas' *Documents From Old Testament Times* (New York: Harper, 1961). Source material for the NT is found in C. K. Barrett's *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (London: S.P.C.K., 1956). Other contemporary sources include R. H. Charles' *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913) and the *Jewish Apocryphal*

*Literature* series, edited by Solomon Zeitlin (New York: Harper, 1950-) for the intertestamental period; Millar Burrows' two volumes *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1958) for the English translation of the Qumran Scrolls; the series *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955-) contains facsimiles and translations of the scrolls but not always in English; and H. Danby's *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), *The Babylonian Talmud* (35 vols.; London: Soncino, 1935-1952), edited by I. Epstein, and *Midrash Rabbah* (9 vols.; London: Soncino, 1951), edited by H. Freedman and M. Simon, for rabbinic sources.

For OT HISTORY John Bright's *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959) is the best; Emil Schürer's *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891) remains the best for the intertestamental period; and Floyd Filson's *New Testament History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) and F. F. Bruce's book (London: Nelson, 1969) by the same title are the best for the NT period.

BIBLE DICTIONARIES are very useful tools for quick information on a subject or identification of names of persons, places, or things. They are a great timesaver for the exegete. The best Bible dictionaries from the critical point of view are *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), edited by George Buttrick; and for a more conservative approach the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1930), edited by James Orr and revised by M. G. Kyle. This work is currently under revision to be published by Eerdmans. It is expected to be the best Bible dictionary from the conservative approach. Other smaller but good dictionaries are *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), edited by H. S. Gehman; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1960), by Siegfried H. Horn, and *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), edited by J. D. Douglas.

After the previous steps in exegesis have been completed, one is ready to put into an exegesis of the passage all the information obtained through these steps. This is only a tentative exegesis of the passage.

After this has been done, and only then, should one read various COMMENTARIES to see how others treated the passage and evaluate different viewpoints presented by these commentaries. It is important to know the commentaries that are profitable for this purpose.

Of course to begin with every Seventh-day Adventist minister



will have the basic library of Ellen G. White writings and he should have the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. The Ellen G. White volumes *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Prophets and Kings* on the OT; *The Desire of Ages* and *The Acts of the Apostles* on the NT in general, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* on the Sermon on the Mount, and *Christ's Object Lessons* on the parables of Jesus; and *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation; would be basic. Without negating the principle of the Bible being its own interpreter the Seventh-day Adventist recognition of the role of Ellen White as the "special messenger of the Lord" to the church, gives to her writings a level of authority that is superior to that given to other sources and tools of interpretation. At the same time, the minister-teacher who would wish to grow in exegetical skills will want to grapple with the biblical text, following the steps outlined above, *before* turning to these or any other commentaries.

The Adventist minister should have other types of commentaries, preferably those based on the Hebrew and Greek texts. Conservative commentaries of this type are rare. The *Biblical Commentary of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872), based on the Hebrew text by Keil and Delitzsch, is old and needs updating, but because of the sparse resources available still fulfills a need. The best set of conservative commentaries is the *New International Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951-), but it is far from complete, especially in the OT. The *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, which began to appear in 1964 and are now available in a number of OT books, are written by conservative-evangelical scholars who are united in their belief in divine inspiration. The *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895-) is old and reflects a particular period in critical biblical studies, but several volumes in this series continue to prove useful, notably Romans by Sanday and Headlam, 1 Corinthians by Robertson and Plummer, and Galatians by Burton. The *Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1957-) so far has come out with two excellent commentaries--on Mark by C. B. Cranfield and on Colossians and Philemon by C. F. D. Moule. The superb commentaries of J. B. Lightfoot (Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) and B. F. Westcott (John, Hebrews, epistles of John), though old, are still unsurpassed in meticulous and careful exegesis. Several sets of moderately liberal commentaries if used judiciously will be found useful. On the OT, there is the *Old Testament Library*, published by Westminster Press, 1961-; on the NT, *Harper's (Black's in England) New Testament Commentaries* (New York: Harper, 1957-) and the *Moffatt New Testament Commentary* (New York: Harper, 1927-1959). For the entire Bible, the following are available or are in process of publication: the *Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1964-), *Hermeneia* (Philadel-

phia: Westminster, 1971-), and the *Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956). There are also some valuable individual commentaries not connected with any series. We list only a few: Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1959); John Martin Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (London: Macmillan, 1960); C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: S.P.C.K., 1960); F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text With Introduction and Commentary* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953); Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949); Joseph A. Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1914); Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (3d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1913); Francis W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter* (2d ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1958); E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1952).

After checking commentaries, the preacher is now ready to rework his exegesis. Perhaps he failed to take into consideration certain information or points of view that the commentaries have suggested. This may mean some modification in the final form of the exegesis.

The next step is to ask, What meaning has this text for me? How does it apply to my situation and circumstance today? The Word of God spoke to men not only in ancient times but also speaks to men today.

Other helpful BIBLIOGRAPHIES listing tools for interpretation are the following:

Danker, Frederick W. *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960.

This is an excellent volume that has full discussions on each of the types of tools, giving something of their history and explanation of how to use them to the fullest advantage, along with the most important tools. More detailed and comprehensive than Kelly and Miller.

Glanzman, George S., S.J.; and Fitzmyer, Joseph A., S.J. *An Introductory Bibliography for the Study of Scripture*. Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1962.

Though written by Catholic scholars, anyone will profit from this annotated list of tools for the study of the Bible. Reliable.

Kelly, Balmer H., and Miller, Donald G., eds. *Tools for Bible Study*. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1947.

Similar to, though does not completely overlap, Danker.

Another helpful bibliography although covering the broader field of theological study is *Theological Bibliography: Basic Books for the Minister's Library*, published by the Student Form of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1970, made up largely from contributions of the Seminary Faculty and edited by Sakae Kubo, Charles Sandefur, and Jim Walters.

## N O T E S

