

THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY AND ITS BIBLICAL HERMENEUTIC

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This evaluation of the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) and its biblical hermeneutic was prompted by the new (1992) ATS publication Issues in Revelation and Inspiration¹ (IRI), which was, in turn, an instant response² to Alden Thompson's 1991 book Inspiration.³

ATS entered the arena of Adventist biblical studies in 1988; its hermeneutic did so nineteen years before that.⁴ Inasmuch as ATS exists for the express purpose of advocating its hermeneutic as normative for the church, and inasmuch as biblical hermeneutics has been a special area of my interest and study for fifty years,⁵ a few comments are appropriate.

This study consists of five parts: (1) The Adventist Theological Society, (2) A Synopsis of Adventist Hermeneutics, (3) Prehistory of the Adventist Theological Society, (4) The Adventist Theological Society Biblical Hermeneutic, and (5) Summary and Conclusions.

PART I: THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Adventist Theological Society (ATS) was organized in 1988 at Collegedale, Tennessee by the religion teachers of Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists and several teachers from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Jack J. Blanco, head of the Religion Department at Southern since Gordon Hyde retired in 1987, was the principal convener. Dr. Blanco was elected first president of the Society for a two-year term (1988-1990). He was followed by Gerhard F. Hasel of the Seminary (1990-1992). C. Raymond Holmes, also of the Seminary, is president for the 1992 to 1994 term, and E. Edward Zinke, formerly a staff member of the Biblical Research Institute, is president elect. Originally located at Collegedale, ATS offices are now in Berrien Springs.⁶

ATS membership, now a little more than 1,100, includes approximately one-sixth of the 120 religion teachers in the three universities and nine

colleges the church operates in North America (most of them at the Seminary and Southern College), and a number of church administrators. The others are lay persons interested in its objectives. There is no ATS presence at two of the universities and five colleges. ATS conducts a number of local chapters in North America, Europe, and Africa. Regular membership fees are \$25 per year.

ATS convenes two meetings annually, an "International Convention" and a "Research Session." Conventions held thus far have been at Lincoln, Nebraska; Indianapolis, Indiana (in connection with the 1990 session of the General Conference); Keene, Texas; and Loma Linda, California. The research sessions, primarily for Bible scholars, are held in connection with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion / Society of Biblical Literature, or that of the Evangelical Theological Society.

ATS publishes the semi-annual Journal of the Adventist Theological Society.⁷ The publication program also includes a series of Monographs beginning with Speaking in Tongues by Gerhard Hasel,⁸ and Occasional Papers, the first being Issues in Revelation and Inspiration,⁹ a compendium of eight papers responding to Alden Thompson's book Inspiration.¹⁰

The ATS Constitution and Bylaws includes a "Statement of Mission/Purpose"¹¹ and "Criteria of Membership." Candidacy for membership begins with a written recommendation initiated by two endorsing members. The Executive Secretary sends the candidate a set of Society documents. The prospective member signs an application form promising "unqualified commitment to the Society's Criteria of Membership as presented in the Preamble [to the Constitution]."¹² These Criteria specify acceptance of the twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists and the "Methods of Bible Study Report" (MBSR) voted by the 1986 Annual Council of the General Conference and published in the January 22, 1987 Adventist Review.¹³ The Executive Committee considers the application, may require additional information about the applicant, and approves or rejects the application.¹⁴ Signed recommitment to MBSR must accompany the payment of annual dues each year.

An Evaluation of the Adventist Theological Society

The name ATS implies that it is either an official entity of the church or a professional organization inclusive and representative of the Adventist

community of Bible scholars and theologians. ATS is neither of these, and those who selected the name were certainly well aware of this anomalous and misleading ambiguity. ATS thus claims to be what it is not, and the name appears to be an intentionally misleading misnomer designed to express what ATS aspires to be and wants unwitting people to think it is rather than what it really is--a private organization conducted by individuals representing a relatively minor segment of Adventist theological understanding. The fact that at least four-fifths of Adventist Bible scholars refuse to join ATS, some of them after repeated personal invitations to do so, reflects a clear consensus of disapproval on the part of Adventist "brethren of experience" in biblical studies and theology.

Two additional facts reflect a holier-than-thou aloofness on the part of ATS--its exclusive membership requirements and its unwillingness to dialogue with its peers in the Adventist community of Bible scholars and theologians, even after repeated invitations by their professional organization, the Andrews Society for Religious Studies (ASRS), to do so. The name ATS implies that it is an open society--supposedly open to all qualified Adventist Bible scholars and theologians who might wish to join--but its membership criteria identify it as a closed society and preclude at least four-fifths of its peers--equally competent and dedicated Adventist Bible scholars and theologians--from doing so (because they cannot conscientiously sign the required loyalty oath affirming compliance with ATS membership criteria).¹⁵

Why is ATS unwilling to dialogue? Or is it afraid to do so? As in a marital war of words involving differences of opinion, willingness on the part of both sides to dialogue as equals and to listen objectively in an endeavor to ferret out the facts and find a viable basis for consensus is essential to unity and harmony. If either or both refuse to dialogue or do so with a predetermined, unalterable agenda, and are unwilling to listen objectively, unity and harmony are impossible. The inevitable result is separation and eventually divorce--or, with ATS and the church, confrontation and schism.¹⁶

Having inserted their own loaded phraseology into the Preamble to MBSR, those now speaking for ATS use it as an authoritarian weapon with which to challenge the integrity of the majority of Adventist Bible scholars, who reject it because of loaded phraseology added to the Preamble after the committee had completed its work.¹⁷ Some members of the committee that drafted

the Report refused to sign their names to it because of the loaded phraseology.¹⁸

The way in which ATS now uses that loaded Preamble is reflected in its publications. For instance, the lead article in the 1991 spring issue of the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (JATS) states that in approving the MBS Report the General Conference "condemned officially" the hermeneutic the majority of Adventist Bible scholars have followed for more than fifty years, and takes note of "the strong opposition" they manifested.¹⁹ On page 1 Gerhard Hasel, writing as president of ATS, assures readers that the Journal "reflect[s] the convictions and goals of the Society." The fact that ATS requires all members to reaffirm agreement with the MBS Report, annually, is clear evidence of the importance it attaches to the document.

The 1992 ATS book Issues in Revelation and Inspiration (IRI) refers to General Conference approval of the MBS Report as a "directive" and severely criticizes the majority of Adventist Bible scholars for "ignor[ing]" it.²⁰ One ATS writer finds it "shocking" that the Report "is not even mentioned" in Alden Thompson's (1991) book Inspiration.²¹ Why should it be?

The use ATS makes of the MBS Report, whose Preamble was intentionally crafted to reflect what is now its stated position on biblical hermeneutics, is a prime example of the way in which ATS refuses to dialogue directly with its peers (who are able to evaluate it on the basis of intrinsic merit), in an endeavor to reach a reasoned consensus, and instead solicits the authority of administrators (who are not able to evaluate it on the basis of intrinsic merit) as a means by which to impose its particular hermeneutical agenda on everyone.

Lay persons on the MBS Committee are to be commended for their labors. But should theological lay persons be impanelled as a jury to direct trained Bible scholars on how to go about their study of the Bible? (The document specifically addresses itself to "trained Bible scholars" as well as "to all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.") What would we say if the administration of Loma Linda University Medical Center were to rely on a jury of lay persons (medically speaking) to diagnose a case on which doctors disagreed and to prescribe what the doctors should do? How much confidence would the doctors have in such a verdict? And, implementing it, would the Medical Center not thereby expose itself to malpractice litigation?

According to the Good Book there is safety in a multitude of counselors²²--in an authentic consensus reached through free dialogue under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, among persons competent to weigh the evidence objectively and to form conclusions based on the weight of evidence. According to Ellen White it is when people "become conservative" that they "seek to avoid discussion."²³ (Note that ATS claims to be "conservative.")

During a somewhat extended conversation with a JATS editor in April 1991 I asked why ATS had been formed, inasmuch as the Andrews Society for Religious Studies already served as the professional organization of Adventist Bible scholars. In reply he cited the removal of Gerhard Hasel as dean of the Theological Seminary a few months before ATS was formed (because of what his colleagues describe as his "excessively high-handed style of administration," an attempt to gain exclusively control of the Seminary, inability to relate amicably to the president of Andrews University, forcing numerous highly qualified teachers to leave, and "documented plagiarism.")

ATS is not what it appears to be. It is theologically exclusive and unwilling to live at peace with its peers, who do not accept its hermeneutic. It aspires to be the sole theological voice of the church, to dictate its hermeneutical principles and procedures, to control its theological processes, and to determine its understanding of Scripture--irrespective of the consensus judgment of the decided majority of equally competent and dedicated Adventist Bible scholars. In effect it denies their integrity as genuine Adventists. It is unwilling to dialogue with them on the basis of mutual respect and confidence, in an endeavor to provide the church with an informed, authentic, reliable, theological consensus. It is unwilling to participate in that which it cannot control. Instead of dialogue it aspires to patrol the theology of the church by manipulating church administrators into enforcing its hermeneutical agenda (the MBSR Preamble is a prime example).

If ATS were honest with the church it would have chosen a name that reflects what the organization really is rather than what it aspires to become and what it wants people to think it is. If ATS were in reality what its name implies it would welcome all bona fide Adventist Bible scholars without requiring them to sign an oath of loyalty to its hermeneutical opinions. If ATS sincerely intended to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the quest for an ever clearer understanding of truth it would be willing to dialogue openly and on a basis of equality with all qualified Adventist Bible scholars,

with full confidence in their integrity as dedicated Adventists, and let the Holy Spirit impress minds, their own included, with "all truth"²⁴--rather than choosing to dialogue only with itself and soliciting administrative authority to enforce its hermeneutical ideas upon other people (as some of its leading members did with the MBS Report Preamble).²⁵ Or do the leaders of ATS honestly believe that the end justifies the means, whatever that may be--that the Holy Spirit has called ATS to be His vicar on earth, and that He winks when it or its leaders resort to tactics unworthy of the Holy Spirit?

On July 28, 1991 I sent the original edition of this evaluation of ATS to thirty college and university religion teachers and presidents, all personal friends of mine. Not one took exception to it. Their unsolicited replies included such comments as: "an excellent critique"; "I completely agree with you"; "Your observations are entirely valid"; "I am frankly surprised that the GC has allowed it to use the name [ATS]"; "I was invited twice to become a member. I declined"; "I am appalled to read the endorsements of A.T.S. given by Spangler, Falkenberg and other conference officials"; and "You are quite right that control of the church is the ultimate goal of the mafia we are dealing with."

The raison d' être of ATS is the promotion and establishment of its so-called "high view" of the Bible and its biblical hermeneutic as the official method of Bible study for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to the exclusion of every other method and the blacklisting of every Bible scholar who does not conform. What is this hermeneutic, and why do at least four-fifths of competent, dedicated Adventist Bible scholars reject it?

PART II: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF ADVENTIST HERMENEUTICAL HISTORY

A biblical hermeneutic is a set of principles and procedures for understanding the Bible. The really important things in the Bible--about the way of salvation in Jesus Christ and the way we should relate to one another, for instance--are so plain that anyone can understand them without being concerned about rules of interpretation. But many things in the Bible are not all that plain, and that is when rules become very important--just as they are in mathematics, a baseball game, or traffic.

The same is true with respect to the American Constitution, our national "bible." We all agree about the really important things such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But the way in which these fundamental principles apply to some questions today--abortion, for instance--is not always that plain, and we look to the Supreme Court for an answer. We may not always agree that the nine justices come up with the right answer, but we accept it and try to live with it. And how do they interpret the Constitution? Each justice has what we might call a "hermeneutic," a set of principles (his or her basic understanding of what life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are all about) and certain procedures he or she follows.

So it is with the Bible. We can all find the really important information we need without any "rules." But for some things "rules" are extremely important.

The Adventist Theological Society did not burst suddenly into existence in 1988 like a thunderstorm out of a clear blue sky. The storm clouds had been gathering, unnoticed by most Adventists, for nineteen years--ever since 1969.²⁶ ATS and its hybrid hermeneutic cannot be fully understood without first surveying those nineteen years. First, it will be helpful to look, however briefly, at Adventist hermeneutical history from 1844 to the present.

Adventist Study of the Bible, 1844 to 1935

In their diligent study of the Bible the pioneers of the church followed the proof-text method and God abundantly blessed their consecrated labors. That was the usual method more or less generally followed by everyone, Adventist and non-Adventist alike. The essentials of salvation are crystal clear whatever "method" a person uses in reading the Bible. For much of Scripture the proof-text method is adequate for coming to a reasonably accurate understanding of its import. But the method is inherently inadequate for some things and as a result not altogether reliable, and may lead a person, unwittingly, to wrong conclusions.

Over these years Adventists looked to their administrative leaders and to Ellen White for their understanding of the Bible. Even such persons as J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, E. J. Waggoner, and W. W. Prescott were self-trained and followed the proof-text method. And what is the proof-text method?

The Proof-text Method of Bible Study

Most Seventh-day Adventists who have not had the opportunity for training in biblical studies still tend more or less to follow the proof-text method. Those who do so read the Bible subjectively, from the modern reader's perspective of salvation history (as if the Bible were addressed primarily or exclusively to our time), and with the modern reader's presuppositions interpreting the statements of Scripture. They read the Bible as if it were verbally inspired and inerrant even when they may sincerely believe that they are not doing so. They tend to base their conclusions on an English (or whatever) translation of the Bible, a concordance, and the meaning of the English words as defined by an English dictionary. They tend to give inadequate, if indeed any, attention to the literary and historical context of a statement or passage and sometimes remove it completely from its context. This method relies heavily on analogy, that is, on interpreting one passage of Scripture by another passage where the same English words occur, even when the Hebrew or Greek words are different and have different meanings and the contexts of the two passages preclude using one to explain the other.

During the early decades of the twentieth century principles underlying the proof-text method of Bible study found expression in a movement known as Fundamentalism. Webster defines Fundamentalism as "a militantly conservative movement in American Protestantism originating around the beginning of the 20th century in opposition to modernist tendencies and emphasizing as fundamental to Christianity the literal acceptance of the absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures"--a perfect definition of ATS, by the way. Benjamin B. Warfield of Princeton University was the patron saint of Fundamentalism. Its classic expression was a series of twelve booklets under the title, The Fundamentals, whence the designations "Fundamentalism" and "fundamentalist."²⁶

Harold Lindsell's The Battle for the Bible, published by Zondervan in 1976,²⁷ marked a revival of the fundamentalist concept of inerrancy. In his book Lindsell, for many years editor of Christianity Today and one of the founders of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, takes the Seminary severely to task for rejecting the fundamentalist concept of inerrancy, and later that year the Seminary responded with a special issue of its Theology, News and Notes.²⁷

Inerrancy was the basic issue that took the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod into schism in 1976.²⁸ It is likewise the basic issue that increasingly threatens the Southern Baptist Convention. Though ATS writers seldom use the term because of its pejorative connotation, it is likewise the basic issue with which the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic confronts our church today.

Higher Criticism. Fundamentalism with its inerrancy concept of inspiration was an allergic over-reaction to the humanistic view of Scripture that became popular in the late nineteenth century. Higher critics denied any divine factor in the writing of the Bible; Fundamentalism denied any human factor. Both were based on presuppositions about the Bible, not on the internal evidence the Bible itself provides. Higher criticism, also called historical criticism, was, in turn, a reaction to the proof-text approach to the Bible. Whereas the proof-text method views the Bible more or less exclusively from the modern reader's point of view, the historical method²⁹--which recognizes a balance between the divine and the human factors--takes into account what it meant to the writers and their intended reading audience in order to understand, more accurately, its meaning for our time. In the hands of those who approach the Bible with humanistic presuppositions the historical- or higher-critical view of the Bible, on the other hand, deals with it exclusively as a human product of the time when it was written.

Strictly speaking the word "critical" in the expression "higher criticism" does not imply a critical attitude toward the Bible, but--according to Webster's dictionary--"the scientific investigation of literary documents (as the Bible) in regard to such matters as origin, text, composition, character, or history." "Lower criticism," on the other hand, refers to a "study of the Bible that aims at reconstructing the original biblical texts" (Webster) and, like higher criticism per se, is altogether in harmony with the most conservative view of Scripture. The same is true of analytical--that is, discriminating--"criticism." On the other hand, disparaging criticism of the Bible grows out of the presupposition that it is not an inspired but a strictly human document--a view Adventist Bible scholars reject, all ATS statements to the contrary notwithstanding. ATS statements about the presuppositions of some scholars who use the method are altogether correct, but its statements denigrating higher criticism per se are inaccurate and misleading. Incident-

ally, it was the fundamentalists who coined the expressions "high view" and "low view"--of Scripture, that is--which ATS has adopted.³⁰

According to Webster the word "criticism" may mean either (1) "fault-finding disapproval and objection" or (2) "careful judgment or judicious evaluation." As used in the expressions "higher criticism" and "historical criticism" it has the second of these two shades of meaning, but popular use among conservative Christians in general and by Hasel-ATS in particular attributes to it the first of the two. As a matter of fact the pejorative connotation of these terms derives from the humanistic presuppositions of persons who reject the divine dimension of the Bible and is not inherent in the terms themselves. Anyone using either of these expressions should point out their latent dual meaning and indicate the sense in which he or she is using them. The fact that Hasel-ATS neglect to do so infects their written and oral discussion of biblical hermeneutics with an ambiguous semantic virus that appears intentionally designed to confuse and deceive the unwary reader or listener and lead him or her to conclusions they would reject if they knew and understood all of the relevant facts.

It is worthy of note that Ellen White uses the word "critical" in its correct sense when she commends "a most critical examination of the positions which we hold. God" she says, "would have all the bearings and positions of truth thoroughly and perseveringly searched, with prayer and fasting."³¹ And if Ellen White commends a "critical" (discriminating) examination of the Bible evidence for what we believe, why should Hasel, ATS, or anyone else condemn it?³² Hasel and ATS to the contrary notwithstanding, NO Adventist Bible scholar follows "the historical-critical method . . . as classically formulated"³³ or subscribes to the humanistic presuppositions of Ernst Troeltsch, founder of historical criticism, or anyone else.³⁴ The implication that any Adventist Bible scholar accepts the humanistic presuppositions of Troeltsch is a reprehensible canard worthy of the witch hunters of Salem, Massachusetts in colonial times.

In the strict sense of the expressions "higher" and "historical criticism," the introduction to every book of the Bible in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC) is an exercise in higher criticism--without in any way challenging either the inspiration or the authority of the Bible.³⁵ On the other hand the hundreds of notations in SDABC concerning the textual evidence of ancient Bible manuscripts constitute lower criticism,³⁶ again

in no way questioning either the inspiration or the authority of the Bible. Strictly speaking higher criticism is concerned only with such matters as authorship, date, place of origin, and historical circumstances--factors which all reputable Bible scholars, including those of ATS, take into consideration.³⁷

Adventist Hermeneutics, 1935 to the Present

In 1932 the General Conference decided that ministers needed more adequate training. Simultaneously, in order to maintain its own accreditation the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University) found it necessary to require that students it accepted for the medical course be graduates of accredited colleges, and this in turn required Adventist colleges to qualify for accreditation. These two factors led, respectively, to founding the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in 1936, and advanced education for college Bible teachers. Heretofore largely if not altogether self-trained, these teachers became proficient in such areas as biblical languages, antiquities, archeology, ancient Bible manuscripts, and the history of theology. This contributed to a much more accurate understanding of the Bible, especially in terms of the meaning its writers intended their words to convey, that is, in terms of its historical context.

Among Seventh-day Adventists this approach to the study of the Bible came to be known as the historical method, which approaches the Bible in its historical context and as objectively as possible. Unlike those whose presuppositions lead them to consider the Bible to be altogether human, and the proof-text method which tends to emphasize the divine factor in the revelatory process and to overlook the human factor, the historical method recognizes both and endeavors to keep them in balance--as Ellen White recommends.

The Historical Method of Bible Study

The historical method of Bible study reads the Bible objectively, that is, for the meaning the inspired writers, guided by the Holy Spirit, intended their words to convey, from their perspective of salvation history and within the historical context in which they wrote. Instead of proceeding deductively, from the modern reader's a priori presuppositions as his or her norm for

evaluating evidence and drawing conclusions, it proceeds inductively, accepting the evidence of Scripture as it reads, modifying presuppositions as the evidence requires, and basing conclusions on the weight of evidence. It accepts the Bible as thought-inspired (rather than verbally inspired), and recognizes the balance between divine and human elements in the revelatory process the Scriptures themselves demonstrate. It defines words according to their meaning in the original language and the context in which they are used. It understands a statement or passage of Scripture in harmony with its historical and literary context. It uses the analogy of Scripture cautiously, with full respect for the import and context of both passages. It looks for the enduring principles involved in a passage and applies these principles to our time and circumstances. As a matter of fact it is far more reliable and conservative than the free-wheeling proof-text method.

The proof-text method and the historical method are both in use in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today, the historical method primarily by a decided majority of teachers trained in its use, and the proof-text method generally by persons not thus trained, with many using elements of both.

PART III: PREHISTORY OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY HERMENEUTIC

In this resume of ATS prehistory it will be necessary to mention names, but let it be absolutely clear that this is in no sense an attack on these persons. They are sincere, dedicated Seventh-day Adventists who truly believe what they affirm, but they are unwitting captives of their presuppositions and are doing the church we all love and to which we have dedicated our minds, our hearts, and our labors a major disservice. Would it be possible to give an intelligible account of the recent war in the Persian Gulf without mentioning Saddam Hussein and his role in the conflict, or the American Revolution and the founding of the United States of America without mentioning George Washington? Pari passu, it is necessary in this brief pre-history of ATS, to recount the role of those whose policies and planning conceived and gave birth to ATS after a gestation period of nineteen years. We do so, however, with charity for all and malice toward none. I think of them all as friends, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The facts here recounted for the years 1969 to 1980 are a matter of direct personal knowledge and are drawn from extensive original file documents dating from those years. They are not based on a fading memory. Ever since 1943 I was directly involved in the mainstream of Adventist biblical studies and theology, and, for the years 1943 to my retirement in 1977, an active participant in every biblical-theological procedure of the church at the General Conference level. I was there. I know whereof I write.

The prehistory of the Adventist Theological Society consists largely of the careers of three persons from what is now Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, and the interplay of their roles in the General Conference and the Theological Seminary. Without any one of the three it is not likely that ATS would exist today. These three are: (1) Robert H. Pierson, president of the General Conference from 1966 to 1979, (2) Gordon M. Hyde, personally selected by Elder Pierson to direct the General Conference office of Bible research and the Biblical Research Committee (now Biblical Research Institute) from 1969 to 1979, and (3) Gerhard F. Hasel, a teacher at the Seminary from 1967 to the present (1992) and its dean from 1980 to 1988.

Robert H. Pierson was a gracious person, a dedicated Christian, a gentleman in every way. He graduated from Southern Junior College (now Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists) in 1933 and entered the gospel ministry in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. In 1936 he responded to a call to service overseas and served with distinction in India, the Caribbean, and South Africa for the next thirty years, until his election as president of the General Conference in 1966.

Schooled in the proof-text method, with a relatively limited education, used to administrators deciding matters of doctrine, and skeptical of the historical method and those who followed it--by this time practically all Adventist Bible scholars--Elder Pierson sincerely suspected them of having departed from the faith delivered to the saints. Repeatedly he expressed his conviction and policy that, as the "brethren of experience" in such matters, administrators and not Bible scholars should deal with biblical, theological, and doctrinal matters.

In 1969 Pierson selected Gordon Hyde to direct the General Conference office of Bible research and the Biblical Research Committee. With a degree in speech from the University of Michigan, Dr. Hyde protested that he was not a theologian, but Pierson assured him that that skill was not necessary for

his new assignment: he was to function as an administrator, not as a Bible scholar. During Hyde's first two or three years at the General Conference he offered his not being "a theologian" as an explanation for not always having the ready answers people sometimes expected of him. Suffice it to say that Gordon Hyde entered upon his new assignment with the full support of Elder Pierson.³⁸

As his mentor and authority on biblical-theological-doctrinal matters Gordon Hyde, who had become Gerhard Hasel's first hermeneutical convert while they were teaching together at Southern College, selected Hasel, who was now on the Seminary faculty. While at Southern Hasel had been working on a doctoral program at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, from which he received his degree in 1970 three years after transferring to the Seminary.

The ATS hermeneutic originated with Gerhard Hasel during the course of his doctoral studies under the supervision of Walter Harrelson of Vanderbilt, as the result of the encounter of his proof-text presuppositions with the historical-critical method and humanistic presuppositions. During this encounter he mated his proof-text principles and presuppositions to selected historical-critical method procedures he learned there. This hybrid hermeneutic, in effect a sophisticated variant of the proof-text method with fundamentalist overtones, made it possible for him to retain proof-text conclusions under the camouflage of profound erudition.

Over the decade 1969 to 1979 this triumvirate--Pierson, Hyde, and Hasel--maneuvered with a high degree of success to implement Hasel's newly discovered hermeneutic and make it normative for the church. Mild-mannered as he was, Pierson nevertheless ruled the church with a firm hand and supported Hyde, who based his administrative decisions on Hasel's counsel.³⁸ Hasel's role was to provide the hermeneutical ideology. Hyde's role was to manipulate administrative processes designed to implement that ideology. Pierson's role was to protect Hyde and Hasel whatever they might decide to do. In retrospect it was a very real and effective conspiracy, and during those years the trio earned the sobriquet "architects of crisis"³⁹--the twin crises associated with the names Desmond Ford and Walter Rea at the close of the decade of obscurantism. Their objective was to neutralize the accomplishments of Adventist biblical scholars over the preceding forty-five years.

The first major project designed to implement the plan to make Hasel's hybrid hermeneutic normative for the church was the series of three North

American Bible Conferences planned for Southern College, Andrews University, and Pacific Union College in the summer of 1974. The second was reorganization of the office of Bible research and the Biblical Research Committee into the Biblical Research Institute in 1975. The third was a plan to make Hasel dean of the Seminary, where he would have the opportunity to indoctrinate the next generation of Adventist ministers and teachers in his hermeneutic.

My first encounter with the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic took place in February 1971 when Gordon Hyde, as director of the Biblical Research Committee, asked me to evaluate three papers Gerhard Hasel had written on the first chapters of Genesis. I had never met him and knew nothing about him. In a number of instances the weight of the evidence he considered did not support the conclusions he based on it. The quality of his writing and the impressive extent of his footnotes were those a person would expect of a scholar. But how could so well educated a person fall, repeatedly, into the non sequitur trap? I wondered. When I asked Gordon Hyde about this hermeneutical anomaly he suggested waiting until I became acquainted with Hasel. Fair enough.

A day or two later, at a Biblical Research Committee meeting in Berrien Springs, the opportunity came during a brief recess period following the presentation of a paper on "Historical Conditioning in the Bible and the Writings of Ellen White" the Committee had asked me to prepare. His response to the paper was, "If I believed that I would not be a Seventh-day Adventist!" At that point the meeting was again called to order and I was left wondering what prompted that comment. That was on the occasion of Hasel's first appearance at a BRC meeting.

Upon various occasions in subsequent BRC meetings Hasel made the comment "You can't be objective." But the alternative to being objective is being subjective, that is, giving one's presuppositions and opinions priority over the weight of evidence considered. How could a "scholar" say that?

Another cue to Hasel's hermeneutic came in October 1971, during the course of a colloquium of Adventist scholars attending the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta, Georgia. At one point the conversation turned to the difference between what Scripture meant when it was written and what it means today. Hasel commented that there is no difference. Again I was puzzled, but said nothing.

My first real opportunity to discuss hermeneutics personally with Hasel took place one day in January 1973, at the week-long meeting of the ad hoc

Charismatic Committee appointed by the General Conference. One noon hour I invited him out for a long walk during which I plied him with one question after another--on hermeneutics, of course. His presuppositions were the controlling factor in his evaluation of evidence and in drawing conclusions. The Holy Spirit built divine foreknowledge into everything the prophets wrote, with the result that whatever a later inspired writer wrote could be read back into what a former inspired writer wrote, even when context might indicate otherwise! This endowed Scripture with an artificial unity that took priority over any and every difference from one writer to another as determined by context.

The 1974 North American Bible Conferences

In 1972 Gordon Hyde, as chairman of the Biblical Research Committee, began planning the 1974 series of North American Bible Conferences. It became evident that the purpose of these conferences was specifically to promote Hasel's hermeneutic. The theme of the conferences was to be biblical hermeneutics, and although Hasel was a very junior member of the Adventist community of biblical scholars, the Seminary faculty, and the Biblical Research Committee, Hyde appointed him as presenter of the theme paper on hermeneutics and assigned him a leading role in all conference activities such as panel discussions. Bypassed almost altogether, or at best assigned relatively minor roles, were the senior members of the Seminary faculty.

For distribution at the conferences a 271-page book was prepared, A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, with Gordon Hyde as editor and final arbiter of what each author would be permitted to say, and Gerhard Hasel assigned the key chapter, "General Principles of Interpretation."⁴⁰

Papers to be presented at the conferences were prepared and reviewed by the Biblical Research Committee more than a year in advance. Hasel's theme paper was considered at a meeting of the Committee in April 1973. It consisted of three sections the first two of which, on hermeneutics in general and "The Literal Meaning of Scripture," more or less reflected the consensus of BRC members. The third section, however--"The Hidden Meaning of Scripture"--presented Hasel's method for reading into a passage of Scripture ideas (hidden meanings) not apparent from the passage itself, in violation of context and the sola Scriptura principle. The fact that the "hidden meaning"

section was nearly as long as the "literal meaning" section made evident the importance Hasel attached to it.

This "hidden meaning" hermeneutic followed the deductive reasoning process of assuming certain ideas as normative, a priori absolutes by which to evaluate a Bible passage and determine its import. It set human reason (its presuppositions) above Scripture in its contextual setting. This methodological trojan horse is the key principle of the ATS hermeneutic and a major threat to the doctrinal integrity of the church. It reasons deductively in a circle from its presuppositions to conclusions that must conform to them irrespective of what a given passage of Scripture actually says. Following the Calvinistic principle of divine sovereignty and predetermination, it assumes divine foreknowledge as the controlling factor in the revelatory process, to the effective elimination of any human influence in the process. The result is an artificial concept of the unity of Scripture contrary to what the Scriptures themselves demonstrate and to Ellen White's clear affirmation of the balance between the divine and human components of the process. The fundamental problem was that this method of interpretation made it possible for a person to read into a passage of Scripture whatever (hidden) meaning his presuppositions might dictate, irrespective of what an inspired writer actually said!

To make matters worse, at eight points in his "hidden meaning" hermeneutic Hasel slyly ridiculed anyone who failed to see light in it. And all this was, presumably, to be set forth at the 1974 North American Bible Conferences as normative for the church!

Following the reading of Hasel's theme paper one morning at the April 1973 meeting of the Biblical Research Committee I suggested the desirability of a more balanced presentation that would emphasize points on which we could all agree, that would minimize the debatable section on the "hidden meaning" of Scripture, and that would eliminate the critical ad hominem remarks. Elder Bernard Seton, ranking General Conference representative present, asked Hasel if he would be willing to make appropriate adjustments, but he categorically refused to do so.

That afternoon I typed out a four-page critique of the "hidden meaning" hermeneutic, requested, and was granted, permission to present it that evening, which I did. Subsequently Hasel was required to eliminate all but a page or two of the "hidden meaning" section of his paper, including all eight

of its pejorative ad hominem statements, in which revised form it was eventually presented at the 1974 conferences.⁴¹

In retrospect it is obvious that the 1974 North American Bible Conferences were specifically designed to promote acceptance of Hasel's hybrid hermeneutic and to elevate him as the supreme authority on theological matters in the church. During his numerous opportunities to speak at the 1974 Bible conferences he commented on various aspects of his hermeneutic, and as a result many heard it for the first time. Two who trace their adoption of the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic to his presentations at the Conference at Andrews University are Richard M. Davidson⁴² and C. Raymond Holmes,⁴³ both of whom Hasel later added to the Seminary faculty. Holmes is president of ATS for the 1992-1994 term.

Gerhard Hasel as Dean of the Seminary

Gerhard Hasel came to the Seminary in 1967 under the deanship of W. G. C. Murdoch and became a member of the Biblical Research Committee in 1971. Prior to the January 1974 meeting of the Andrews University board it became known that an attempt would be made to have Hasel appointed dean. In personal conversation a few months prior to the Board meeting the three veteran teachers--W. G. C. Murdoch, Siegfried Horn, and Edward Heppenstall--all expressed opposition to his appointment, citing as reasons his conduct over the seven years since he joined the faculty.

The reasons they cited were: (1) his interference with established Seminary protocol, (2) his meddling in affairs not properly in his assigned area, (3) his collusion with Gordon Hyde at the General Conference contrary to the consensus of the Seminary faculty and administration, and (4) his insufferable dogmatism--or "pretentious theological omniscience" as one General Conference officer expressed it. For these reasons, prior to the January 1974 Board meeting the faculty unanimously opposed his appointment as dean. As a compromise Tom Blincoe became dean, with Hasel as his associate.⁴⁴

Prior to the 1980 meeting of the Andrews University Board Blincoe announced that he must resign for health reasons and it became known that a second attempt would be made to appoint Hasel as dean. Again the faculty protested, and university President Grady Smoot promised to respect their united opposition. When the Board met, however, he recommended Hasel because

he personally opposed the General Conference desire that Richard Leshner serve as dean. Hasel thus became dean of the Seminary and devoted the next eight years to consolidating his control of it.

During those years Hasel made it necessary for a number of competent and dedicated Seminary faculty members to seek employment elsewhere and replaced them with persons committed to his hermeneutical perspective (Richard Davidson and Raymond Holmes for example). One Andrews University faculty member later said that Hasel "simply sentenced [them] to internal exile or sandbagged" them. As a result of the purge Larry Geraty became president of Atlantic Union College, Fritz Guy of La Sierra University, Sakae Kubo of Newbold College, and Werner Vyhmeister of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in Manila. Ivan Blazen joined the religion faculty at Pacific Union College. George Rice left for the White Estate, and William Shea for the Biblical Research Institute. Still others accepted assignments elsewhere.

Hasel's attempt to gain more complete control of the Seminary, however, eventually led to his removal as dean in 1988. It was his plan to place the Seminary under a board separate from Andrews University in order that he would not have to be responsible to Richard Leshner, who had become president of the university. At first the General Conference offered him another appointment elsewhere, and upon his refusal asked for his resignation.⁴⁵ Because of tenure he remains on the faculty. Hasel's removal as dean was a severe setback to his plans to gain complete control of Adventist theology, and it was this setback--according to an ATS person who occupies a major post in the organization--that led to the founding of the Adventist Theological Society in 1988.

These encounters with Gerhard Hasel's hermeneutic between 1969 and 1974 lead me to conclude that it originated with him. As secretary of the Bible Research Fellowship (1943-1952);⁴⁶ an editor of the SDA Bible Commentary⁴⁷ and the Adventist Review, and Review and Herald book editor (1952-1977); and a member of the Bible Research Committee and every other General Conference committee dealing with biblical-theological matters I was personally acquainted with every Adventist Bible scholar of the time and with the practice of Adventist hermeneutics. I know that no one before Hasel made open--if indeed any--use of this hermeneutic, or advocated it. Anyone who claims otherwise should produce a document dated prior to 1969 as evidence.

PART IV: THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY HERMENEUTIC

In view of the fact that ATS exists for the purpose of promoting the biblical hermeneutic it inherited from Gerhard Hasel, as normative for the church, it is essential to understand that hermeneutic and its rationale. The following analysis is based on several ATS publications which, it is assumed, accurately represent its hermeneutic.⁴⁸ For instance, in its Journal⁴⁹ Gerhard Hasel, in his role as ATS president, says that "you may expect it to reflect the convictions and goals of the Society."

The following analysis deals with three key aspects of the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic:

1. Its epistemology: the relationship between faith and reason in the study of the Bible, the relative merits of inductive and deductive reasoning, and the role of presuppositions.

2. Its concept of the authority of Scripture: the relationship between inspiration and revelation and between divine and human factors in the revelatory process.

3. Its resultant concept of the unity of Scripture and what it means by "unity."

EPISTEMOLOGY

Research-level Bible study motivated by a sincere desire to understand the information and the principles therein set forth in order to integrate them into one's belief system and philosophy of life, requires the exercise of faith and reason. No such study can proceed without both. The only question is their relationship to each other and the appropriate balance between them.

Faith and Reason in the Study of the Bible

One of the first things a person encounters in the quest to understand the ATS hermeneutic is its apparent denigration of reason. One writer ex-

presses doubt about the use of one's "God-given reasoning ability" objectively.⁵⁰ In a discussion of the role of reason in relation to Bible study Gerhard Hasel expresses "serious" concern lest reason be given "priority over divine revelation"⁵¹ and objects to the idea that revelation and reason can work together--to reason being "in dialogue with the Spirit."⁵² All will agree with Hasel that human reason must not be given "priority over divine revelation,"⁵³ but he seems to imply that reason should be subordinated to faith. Is that what the Creator intended, or was it His purpose that they be used in balance and "in dialogue" with each other?

What is the right relationship between reason and faith in Bible study? I addressed this question in my 1972 commencement address at Andrews University. In brief:

The Creator endowed us with a capacity for both faith and reason which, together, enable us to relate intelligently and wisely to our total environment, both natural and supernatural. Each has its proper sphere of operation, and neither should preempt the role He intended for the other. Faith enables us as finite beings to rise above our finite limitations and to relate intelligently, rationally, morally, and responsibly to the ultimate reality of which we are part, despite our limitations. Faith needs reason to make it practical and to prevent it from deteriorating into credulity, superstition, and obscurantism. Conversely, reason needs faith in order to keep it from being blind to ultimate realities and to enable it to rise above its finite limitations.

Operating together and in coordination with each other, faith and reason are two avenues to truth, to ultimate reality. The question is not one of choosing between them or of subordinating one to the other, but of coordinating them, each with the other. The inherent tension between faith and reason is not only desirable but indispensable, something like the centrifugal and centripetal forces which, in tension with each other, keep the earth in its orbit about the sun. Without centrifugal force we would plough right into the sun and instantly be incinerated; without centripetal force we would spin off into the deep freeze of outer space. To downgrade either faith or reason would make it impossible to arrive at truth, whereas in balance and under the aegis of the Holy Spirit they are not only compatible but essential.

Faith and reason may be compared to a pair of terrestrial coordinates--latitude and longitude--which make it possible to pinpoint any spot on earth.

On a map they appear to be at cross purposes with each other, but it is this very fact that makes navigation possible. Faith and reason are complementary, not contradictory. Faith can be reasonable and reason can be faithful.

In its artificial definition of inspiration, in its virtual elimination of the human factor in the revelatory process, and in its resulting artificial concept of what it calls the unity of Scripture, Hasel-ATS subordinate sanctified reason to what they assume to be faith--on the basis of human reason masquerading as faith, as it does in their presuppositions.

Induction and Deduction in Bible Study

ATS writers protest use of the inductive method of reasoning in the study of the Bible.⁵⁴ In the context of Bible study, what is the difference between the two? Induction analyzes and evaluates the biblical data--"in dialogue with the Holy Spirit" who inspired the Bible writers--and draws conclusions based on the weight of evidence. Deduction evaluates the biblical data with one's presuppositions in control and reasons in a circle to conclusions that must comport with the presuppositions, irrespective of the weight of evidence. It was this trait in Gerhard Hasel's three papers on the first chapters of Genesis that puzzled me before ever I met him. It is the first of two major flaws in the ATS hermeneutic. Curiously, the ATS hermeneutic decries the use of reason in the study of the Bible yet begins with certain presuppositions about the Bible that are a function of human reason!

Presuppositions about inspiration and the nature and extent of its operation in the revelatory process are not inspired as Hasel and ATS appear to insist. They are strictly a process of uninspired human reason. The only reliable way by which to determine what the Bible means by the word "inspiration" and the balance between divine and human factors in the revelatory process is to let the Bible itself demonstrate that meaning and that balance.

Presuppositions in the Study of the Bible

Writing for ATS Raoul Dederen rightly observes "that no one can read the Bible without presuppositions."⁵⁵ Another ATS writer, Norman Gulley, is right when he deplores "presuppositions not in harmony with Scripture."⁵⁶

The Preamble to the "Methods of Bible Study Committee Report" (MBSCR) was crafted under the guidance of persons now associated with ATS, which it acclaims and requires as normative for ATS membership, correctly warns against "use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the historical-critical method" employed by non-Adventist Bible scholars (who presuppose a strictly human origin of the Bible). Those who crafted the Preamble to the MBS Report, however, are in error in their implied indictment that Adventist Bible scholars are guilty of these humanistic presuppositions.

Ellen White specifically declares that in our study of the Bible we "should subordinate all preconceived opinions" to the Bible itself, taken at face value.⁵⁷ Instead, Hasel-ATS unwittingly give their uninspired presuppositions--an exercise of human reason--control over what the inspired writers of the Bible meant by what they wrote, as demonstrated by context.

There are at least two major non sequiturs in the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic. The first of these is the application of Bible claims to inspiration such as those of 2 Peter 1:19-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16 to the human artifacts of Scripture as well as to its revealed message, in the sense that they were revealed and thus as fully authoritative as what was revealed, rather than in the sense that God permitted them to be incorporated into the canon of Scripture.

By a parity of reasoning, to accept the Bible claim to inspiration, ipse dixit, one would have to accept similar claims made by other documents such as the Koran and the Book of Mormon. The Bible itself is inspired, but the Hasel-ATS presuppositions about the Bible are not inspired--and not a proper exercise of faith.

The second questionable presupposition assumes (again by a non sequitur process of human reason) that Bible claims to inspiration require the all-inclusive artificial unity the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic postulates, a priori. All Seventh-day Adventists will agree that God's message revealed throughout the Bible is "indivisible"; there is unity. But the extension of absolute unity to all of the human artifacts of Scripture is not implicit in the Bible claim to inspiration. Such a claim is uninspired. It is a non sequitur. Furthermore, it rationalizes Ellen White's explicit statements regarding unity and diversity in the Bible. The Hasel-ATS imposition of this artificial unity on passages of Scripture in contradiction of context is doubly offensive to the integrity of Scripture.

AUTHORITY

According to the editors of Issues in Revelation and Inspiration "the very authority of the Scriptures and the continued existence of the Seventh-day Adventist people as a Bible-centered, Bible-based movement and church" are "at stake" in the debate about inspiration.⁵⁸ The question of biblical authority revolves around two closely related concepts: (1) the nature of inspiration and revelation and their mutual relationship, and (2) the relationship between the divine and human factors in the revelatory process.

Inspiration and Revelation

In describing its view of Scripture the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic usually avoids the words "inerrant" and "inerrancy" and the explicit claim that the Bible is "verbally inspired" as expressing its concept of the authority of the Bible, yet they resolutely affirm these concepts. It is reasonable to suppose that they avoid this terminology because it would identify them as fundamentalists, in the pejorative connotation of the word. At least one ATS writer, however, acclaims "God's verbal propositional revelation."⁵⁹ Generally speaking they are content with such expressions as "the Bible writers' unanimous affirmation" of "the absolute truthfulness of every statement in Scripture"⁶⁰ and "the Bible equals the word of God."⁶¹ Another writer comments that the Bible "is fully trustworthy in what it says. . . . [It] does not give wrong information--intentionally or unintentionally. . . . Scripture is trustworthy in everything that it touches upon."⁶²

Statements such as these confuse inspiration with revelation, seemingly oblivious to the fact that "revelation" has to do with the substance of what is revealed, and "inspiration" with its quality. But much of Scripture consists of historical and cultural information to which the inspired writers had access without "revelation," and in such instances "inspiration" consists of divine approval of its inclusion in the canon of Scripture and does not imply that the information was either "revealed" or necessarily accurate. In such instances "inspiration" means that the information is an accurate record of what people believed to be true, or the human reaction to revealed truth.

There are at least three non-sequiturs in the Hasel-ATS presuppositions about inspiration. These have to do with (1) validation of the Bible's claim

that it is inspired, (2) the nature of its claim to inspiration, and (3) the relationship between inspiration and the unity of Scripture.

1. In such passages as 2 Peter 1:19-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16 the Bible lays claim to inspiration, that is, to being vested with supernatural authority. Hasel and ATS accept the Bible's claim a priori, that is, solely on the basis that the Bible makes this claim. But the Koran and the Book of Mormon, as we have noted, also make this claim. By a parity of reasoning and without objective validation of the Bible's claim, the ATS presupposition regarding inspiration would apply with equal credibility to every other document that makes the claim! By claiming more for the Bible statements on inspiration than, without validating evidence, the statements in and of themselves warrant, the Hasel-ATS presupposition about inspiration proves to be a non sequitur that invalidates the "crucial" deduction they base on it regarding what they call the "unity" of Scripture.

Objective evidence that the Bible is inspired consists of the accuracy of its diagnosis of the human dilemma resulting from the obvious existence of both good and evil in the world, of the principles of human behavior it enunciates, and of the fact that universal acceptance of these principles would provide a complete and perfect solution to the human dilemma. For instance, if everyone in the world were motivated by Christ's admonition to care about other people and relate to them as we would like them to relate to us, we would have an instant remedy for all of the war, crime, and injustice in the world. We would literally have heaven on earth. The very fact that these principles and ideals are altogether alien to human desire and ambition in its natural state, and thus humanly unattainable, constitutes objective and convincing evidence that they are supernatural in origin, and therefore that the Bible is inspired.

2. As the above ATS statements make evident, the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic assumes that inspiration is coextensive with revelation and equates the two but provides no objective evidence for this assumption. The word "revelation" inherently applies to the content of information communicated supernaturally; "inspiration," to the quality of information thus imparted. This Hasel-ATS assumption attributes inerrancy to every word of the Bible--another non sequitur.

ATS repeatedly insists on taking such Bible statements as 2 Peter 1:19-21 and 2 Timothy 3:16 at "face value" but objects to taking obviously human passages of Scripture at face value.⁶¹ Instead of letting the Bible itself demonstrate inspiration at work ATS imposes its own equation of inspiration with revelation on the Bible. The entire Bible is said to be "God's verbal propositional revelation"; "the Bible equals the Word of God."⁶⁴

In his book Inspiration Alden Thompson aptly calls attention to the fact that (in the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic) "inspiration becomes almost synonymous with revelation."⁶⁵ The entire Bible is "inspired" in the sense that it comes to us just as God wants it to come, but "The Bible does not say that all Scripture was given by revelation."⁶⁶ "Inspiration? Always. Revelation? Sometimes--and most certainly when the Bible tells us so."⁶⁷ But "Let the Bible--all the Bible . . . determine our theory of inspiration rather than bringing a predetermined view of inspiration to the Bible,"⁶⁸ he pleads. Thompson is altogether correct in these observations.

With respect to "Scripture's own attestation of its inspiration," "Scripture's own claims about itself," "the specific declarations of the biblical text," ATS asks why "not first discover what the Bible says about itself?"⁶⁹ Precisely! Why, then, does ATS not base its concept of inspiration on how the Bible demonstrates inspiration in operation? Why not, as Richard Davidson says regarding the claims of Scripture about its inspiration, accept its demonstration of what it means by "inspiration" at "face value"?⁷⁰

3. A third non sequitur is the Hasel-ATS deduction that the presupposition concerning inspiration justifies its corollary assumption regarding the unity of Scripture, which in turn justifies reading one passage of Scripture into another even when the context of the two passages precludes doing so. According to Davidson, for instance, "Scripture can be compared with Scripture to arrive at biblical doctrine" because "the many human authors are superintended by one divine author."⁷¹ Certainly--for arriving at "biblical doctrine." But Hasel-ATS use expressions such as "comparing scripture with scripture," or one inspired writer being the final interpreter of another inspired writer to refer to more than "doctrine." They are euphemisms for using one inspired writer to override another inspired writer even when context precludes doing so. Presumably, their "one divine author"⁷² concept justifies this procedure.

In reading any ATS statement or one such as the 1986 MBSC Report⁷³ crafted under its influence it should be remembered that Hasel-ATS often use loaded language, with the result that an uninitiated reader will construe the words to mean something different from their usual import. Loaded language consists of ambiguous words and phraseology that can be understood in more than one way and thus mean one thing to one person and something entirely different to someone else. Hasel-ATS statements are often loaded with special meanings they read into particular words and phrases that sound good to people who are not Bible scholars, in order to win friends and influence people who do not really understand what Hasel-ATS are really saying. As a result persons who are not Bible scholars in their own right are easily misled into climbing aboard the ATS bandwagon. This accounts for the increasing support Gerhard Hasel and ATS have been able to muster among church administrators and lay persons for more than twenty years. Caveat lector!¹³

The Divine and the Human in Scripture

An objective inspection of Bible ontology--its portrayal of human existence and of the world and universe of which we are part--reveals two distinct but closely related aspects, one natural and one supernatural. The natural has to do with those facets of our existence that are susceptible to sensory experience and investigation; the supernatural, with facets that are not susceptible to sensory experience and investigation and for knowledge and understanding of which we are therefore dependent on revelation.

The divine facet includes such matters as information concerning our origin, nature, and destiny as human beings, and of the universe; concerning the Creator and His will and purpose for us and for the universe; and concerning salvation in Jesus Christ. The human facets include such matters as the language, the thought and literary forms, and cultural and historical concepts.

The Bible blends all of this together in a composite ontology of human existence that correlates the divine and the human, the supernatural and the natural, with the announced objective of enabling us to relate intelligently and wisely to our total environment, both natural and supernatural. All of this the Bible sums up in the admonition to "love [care about] the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (its

supernatural objective) and to "love [care about] your neighbor as yourself" (its natural objective).

These facts relating to Bible ontology have a decisive effect on our understanding of the inspiration of the Bible, especially with respect to the nature of inspiration. The supernatural facets of the Bible, as identified above, were revealed and thus inherently inspired, that is, guaranteed by the revealer, the Holy Spirit, to be authentic and reliable. The natural facets of the Bible--its language, thought and literary forms, and cultural and historical components (all of which are matters of human experience and knowledge and thus susceptible to direct rational investigation)--are not ordinarily revealed, and thus not inspired in the same sense as those facets which were revealed. They are, nevertheless, inspired in the sense that they provide a reliable account of the human response, in history, to divine revelation, and thus a trustworthy paradigm illustrating the results of accepting or rejecting that revelation.

This enables us as human beings, whose finite limitations do not afford an adequate opportunity to witness the ultimate results of right and wrong choices, to make informed and wise decisions in the present for which as rational, moral beings we will ultimately be held accountable.

This concept of inspiration means that revealed information and principles, rightly understood, are infallible and not debatable; acceptance of them is strictly a matter of faith. It also means that the human facets of Scripture, being human, are at least potentially fallible and therefore properly subject to rational investigation and evaluation, that is, to reason.

The fundamental flaw in the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic is its basic assumption (presupposition) that inspiration is equivalent to revelation, and the corollary assumption that "the divine and human elements in Scripture cannot be distinguished or separated."⁷⁴ It reasons that such biblical statements as "all scripture is given by inspiration of God"⁷⁵ guarantee the absolute accuracy of the human artifacts of Scripture as well as that which was revealed. No room is left for an authentic human response; even the words of Scripture are presumed to be under the direct control of the Holy Spirit.

Corollary to their elimination of any possibility of distinguishing between the divine and human elements in Scripture,⁷⁶ Hasel-ATS object to the idea that "God meets people where they are," that "He condescends to their

level of understanding, to their culture, and to their time," that "He accommodates Himself."⁷⁷ To recognize "the human side of Scripture," they say, is to take a "low view" of it⁷⁸ and to accept the historical-critical presupposition that denies its divine aspect.⁷⁹ They deny that "the human author's intent as it was understood by his contemporaries in relation to their local setting"⁸⁰ is relevant to an accurate understanding of Scripture. This concept eliminates any possible distinction between what Scripture meant when it was written and what it means today. But, we might ask, if God did not accommodate Himself to the finite, cultural limitations of those to whom He sent the prophets of old and to the specific historical environment and circumstances of their time, how could He communicate with them? Our cultural environment is vastly different today.

The denial that "God meets people where they are," that an understanding of the historical circumstances conditioned the messages of the Bible, seems to contradict Ellen White's admonition in her opening comment on Christ's Sermon on the Mount on page 1 of The Mount of Blessing:

Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountain side, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. 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.

This is what historical conditioning is all about. This is why the historical method of Bible study is essential to a right understanding of its import for our time. This is why the proof-text method often falls short of a right understanding of Scripture.

The Hasel-ATS hermeneutic is basically a sophisticated version of the proof-text method and its corollary, Fundamentalism. It often makes surreptitious use of historical method procedures and thereby achieves the appearance of sound scholarship. It would be sound if it did not denigrate the importance of this inspired information by its invalid presuppositions.

Ellen White and the Divine-Human Nature of Scripture

Christ usually referred to Himself as "the Son of man," and upon occasion acknowledged that He was also "the Son of God."⁸¹ He "was God" but "became flesh";⁸² He was "made like his brethren in every respect" and "partook of the same nature."⁸³

Toward the close of the first century Ebionite and Docetic Christians maintained that He was altogether divine and only appeared to be human, and two centuries later Arius and his followers held that He was not God in the full sense of the word. The question remained rife in the church from the Council of Laodicea in A.D. 325 to the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, which formulated what became the historic Christian understanding of the dual nature of Christ: He "was perfect in Godhood and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, . . . of the same substance with the Father according to the Godhead, and of the same substance with us according to the manhood, like to us in all respects, without sin . . ."84

Christ was truly God and truly man. The two natures co-existed together in one person, distinct each from the other. The humanity of Christ did not alter or diminish His divine nature, nor did His divinity alter or diminish His human nature. He was no less God when He became human, and no less human because He was God.

Ellen White makes the divine-human nature of Christ a paradigm for understanding the divine-human nature of the Bible, the Word of God written, even as He was the living Word of God.⁸⁵ Every bona fide Seventh-day Adventist acknowledges the divine dimension of the Bible and submits to its authority. Among Seventh-day Adventists the issue is not whether the Bible is, or is not, God's authoritative message to men and women in our time. We all believe that it is. The issue is whether its human dimension is real or imaginary. The problem is that a warped concept of its human dimension has a tendency to distort its divine message.

According to Ellen White "The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of [God's] will."⁸⁶ "The truths revealed are all 'given by inspiration of God'."⁸⁷ "The Bible is God's voice speaking to us."⁸⁸ With this concept of the divine aspect of Scripture we all agree.

Note that in these statements Ellen White is speaking of revealed truth. She is not referring to mundane matters such as historical and cultural information, human opinions expressed (as in Job and Ecclesiastes), and the record of human reaction to revealed truth.

But there is also a human aspect of Scripture: It "is not God's mode of thought and expression" but "that of humanity. . . . God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric. . . . The words receive the impress of the

individual mind,"⁸⁹ the writers' personal "characteristics" and "individuality,"⁹⁰ their "education,"⁹¹ their "mental and spiritual endowments,"⁹² their "perception and appreciation" of truth,⁹³ the "composition," the "forms of expression," and the "style,"⁹⁴ the "mode of thought," the "words" in which it is expressed," the "logic," the "rhetoric,"⁹⁵ and the degree of "unity."⁹⁶ (All this contradicts the Hasel-ATS claim of absolute unity.)

There are "difficulties";⁹⁷ some things are "not like God," and "everything that is human is imperfect."⁹⁸ Mistakes are "probable,"⁹⁹ and there are differences from one writer to another.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless there is "underlying harmony," "perfect harmony" when the "entire Bible" is taken "just as it is."¹⁰¹ There are both divine and human aspects of Scripture.¹⁰² We are not to "lament that these difficulties exist, but accept them as permitted by the wisdom of God."¹⁰³ "All the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul."¹⁰⁴

According to Ellen White the Bible is both divine and human. The human artifacts of Scripture are real and not imaginary. In Scripture, therefore, we find both unity and diversity--unity in that which is divine and diversity in that which is human. Hasel-ATS, however, reject the idea that the Bible is fully human and divine, as Christ was, and rationalize away the idea that Ellen White really meant to say what she actually wrote.¹⁰⁵

Taken at face value, what Ellen White says about the divine and human aspects of Scripture is precisely what a person finds upon reading the Scriptures objectively, at face value. An honest, open-minded reading of the Bible reveals countless examples of historical-cultural adaptation. My 92-page paper "Historical Conditioning in the Bible and the Writings of Ellen G. White," written at the request of the Biblical Research Committee, cites scores of specific examples in such areas as the cultural environment, mores and moral principles, religious life and practice, the covenant relationship and the covenant people, predictive prophecy, and messianic and eschatological predictions.¹⁰⁶

UNITY

Last in the Hasel-ATS series of interlocking presuppositions is its concept of the "unity" of Scripture. All will agree that there is "underlying harmony"¹⁰⁷ throughout Scripture. "The truths thus revealed unite to form a

perfect whole."¹⁰⁸ Note that the harmony and the unity of the Bible consist in revealed truth, that is, in its divine aspect. But there is a discordant undertone in the human dimension of the Bible. One fundamental flaw in the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic is the fact that it applies that which is true in a general sense of the Bible as a whole and in the absolute sense to that which was revealed, to its human dimension, with respect to which it is not true. In attempting to apply its "unity" rubric to the human dimension of the Bible it claims more for the Bible than the Bible itself or Ellen White does.

The Hasel-ATS unity rubric is something like the legendary Greek tyrant Procrustes who welcomed wayfarers on the road from Athens to Corinth to accept his hospitality. He insisted that each overnight guest fit his iron bed exactly, and forcibly adapted each of them to the bed by a guillotine attached to the foot of the bed (for guests who were too long) or a winch (to stretch those who happened to be too short). Hasel-ATS similarly presuppose an arbitrary, artificial rule where inspiration never intended it to fit.

They do so in language that sounds reasonable to unwitting auditors or readers but is loaded with meaning that sometimes contradicts what an inspired writer actually wrote as determined by context. For instance, they insist that every inspired writer must agree with every other inspired writer even when context specifies otherwise.¹⁰⁹ This is what such statements as "Scripture can be compared with Scripture" are intended to mean; or, "There is no contradiction in the writings of the Bible writers"; therefore "one inspired writer" is the "final interpreter of a passage produced by another inspired writer"¹¹⁰--even when his interpretation contradicts what the other inspired writer says (as determined by context).

The unity rubric is especially apropos in the use New Testament writers make of passages they cite from the Old Testament, with the New Testament writer being considered an inspired interpreter of what the Old Testament writer meant. The New Testament writers, Hasel-ATS say, "were doing solid exegesis of the Old Testament using sound hermeneutical principles."¹¹¹ They "are simply announcing what the Old Testament already indicates." They "are not reading back into the Old Testament something that is not there. Rather, they announce the fulfillment of that which the prophets had predicted."¹¹² They did not quote the Old Testament out of context.¹¹³ Inasmuch as "all Scripture" is "God breathed," "we should expect harmony and con-

tinuity between the Old and New Testaments, rather than 'diversity,' contradictory statements, and discontinuity."¹¹⁴

Examples of the "Unity" Rubric

Thus far we have been considering the principles inherent in the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic. A few specific examples will demonstrate how these principles affect the interpretation of Bible passages and make one Bible writer contradict another.

The ATS publication Issues in Revelation and Inspiration advertizes a monograph by Gerhard Hasel with the title Speaking in Tongues, which among other things discusses the glossolalia of 1 Corinthians 14 and uses Acts 2 as a "proof text" to identify it.¹¹⁵ The part on 1 Corinthians 14 is based on a paper Hasel presented at the week-long meeting of the Charismatic Committee in 1973.

As chair of that meeting Gordon Hyde gave Hasel a total of two hours to present and defend his paper but restricted all other presenters to half an hour each with the obvious intention of persuading participants to approve of it as the report of the committee. The committee eventually rejected Hasel's interpretation in which he applied his unity paradigm: (1) As author of the Bible the Holy Spirit would say the same thing in 1 Corinthians 14, where the nature of tongue-speaking is presumed to be unclear, with Acts 2 where it is clearly foreign languages. (2) The "clear" passage is presumed to define the unclear passage. (3) Accordingly the tongue-speaking in 1 Corinthians 14 is a foreign language.

In preparation for the Charismatic Committee I had made an exhaustive contextual-linguistic study of 1 Corinthians 14, letting Paul himself explain what he meant.¹¹⁶ I studied every word and phrase in context and every relevant passage in the New Testament, especially Acts 2. There proved to be sixteen differences between the two passages that preclude any possibility that the glossolalia of 1 Corinthians 14 could have been a foreign language. The following tabulation of these differences is taken from that paper, which I defended at the conference:

	<u>Acts 2</u>	<u>1 Corinthians 14</u>
1	The speakers: The apostles	Lay persons
2	The hearers: Unbelievers	Church members
3	Form: Preaching the gospel	Prayer, song, thanksgiving
4	Function: Evangelistic	Devotional
5	Addressed to: Men and women	God
6	Audibility: Audible	Audible and inaudible
7	As languages: Specifically said to be	Not referred to as such
8	Interpretation: Not required, to edify	Required, to edify
9	Comprehension; Hearers understood	Hearers did not understand
10	Content: Prophetic	Devotional (see 2 above)
11	As prophecy: Equivalent to	Distinct from
12	Objective: To convert unbelievers	To express gratitude to God
13	Effect: Unbelievers "amazed"	Unbelievers: "you are mad"
14	Result: Unbelievers converted	Unbelievers alienated
15	Edification: The hearer	The speaker
16	Sign value: Effective	Ineffective
17	Importance: Major	Minor

The so-called "tongue speaking" of Acts 2 apparently took place in the hearing, not in the speaking: "Each one heard them speaking in his own language. . . . How is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?" In 1 Corinthians 14 the tongue speaking took place in the speaking and no one understood--in any "language."¹¹⁷

If the tongue-speaking at Corinth was in a foreign language inspired by the Holy Spirit, how shall we account for Him condoning and participating in its use when no one benefited and the result was confusion? Furthermore, if He inspired some to speak in a foreign tongue why did He not inspire either the speakers or others to interpret what was spoken?¹¹⁸ Surely the speakers would not have access to the power of the Spirit without His approval.

If, on the other hand, the tongue-speaking at Corinth was a foreign language spoken solely on the initiative of the speakers, without the Holy Spirit, they must have known what they said and could have interpreted it, yet Paul says that no one present could interpret it. Without the Spirit they surely could not speak a foreign language they did not understand.

With Acts 2 as a "proof text" for identifying the tongue-speaking of 1 Corinthians 14 as speech in a foreign language, the Hasel-ATS "unity of Scripture" paradigm flatly contradicts what Paul actually wrote, taken in context. In effect, Hasel decides what Paul means before he listens to what Paul actually says. Shall we believe Paul, or Hasel-ATS?

New Testament Use of the Old Testament

Eleven times in his account of the life of Jesus Matthew comments that a particular incident "fulfilled" a passage in the Old Testament: His virgin birth, the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem, His return from Egypt, His being called a Nazarene, His Galilean ministry, His healing ministry, His teaching ministry, the dullness of His hearers, His teaching in parables, His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the thirty pieces of silver.¹¹⁹

On the basis of their "unity of Scripture" paradigm Hasel-ATS read Matthew's "fulfillment" passages back into their Old Testament counterparts, with the New Testament passages as "proof texts" for what the Old Testament passages presumably meant when they were written.¹²⁰

The Greek word for "fulfil" is pleroō. In Matthew 5:17 Christ says that He came to "fulfil" (pleroō) the "law" and the "prophets"--the usual Jewish terminology for the Old Testament--and gives five illustrations of what He means by "fulfil." In each instance He quotes a passage from the writings of Moses and then proceeds to "fill" it "full" of meaning.¹²¹ This is clearly not prophetic (predictive) fulfillment but an enrichment, or filling the Old Testament passage more full of meaning.

The same is true of the eleven "fulfillment" passages Matthew applies to the life of Christ. He is not citing the Old Testament passages as predictions of Christ, but as Old Testament parallels designed to help his Jewish reading audience understand and appreciate the life of Christ in terms of familiar episodes in Jewish history. When we want to know what the Old Testament says let us read the Old Testament in its literary and historical context. When we want to know what the New Testament says let us do the same with it.

New Testament writers are constantly applying Old Testament concepts and passages in a new sense different from their meaning in Old Testament times. Instead of literal Israel, for instance, there is Israel after the Spirit; instead of a literal Jerusalem on earth there is the new Jerusalem in heaven; instead of the old covenant there is a new covenant; instead of the ancient law system there is the gospel; instead of literal Babylon there is spiritual Babylon; and so on ad infinitum. God's plan for Israel set forth in the Old Testament helped the New Testament church understand and cooperate with His

revised plan for evangelizing the world in preparation for the promised return of Jesus.

A contextual-linguistic study of the eschatology of the Old Testament makes clear that the Old Testament prophets envisioned Israel as permanently the covenant people and instrument of the divine purpose for the evangelization of the world, and that what we refer to as the eschaton was to have occurred at the close of Old Testament times.¹²² A similar study of the New Testament makes evident that its inspired writers anticipated Christ's promised return and the fulfillment of the Old Testament perspective of the eschaton in their generation.¹²³ The Hasel-ATS hermeneutic ignores, or is unaware of, the clear intent of these Old and New Testament passages taken in their literary context and perspective of salvation history.

When Moses wrote "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain"¹²⁴ he was thinking of literal oxen treading out grain on an ancient Near Eastern threshing floor. Quoting this passage in 1 Corinthians 9:8-12 the Apostle Paul asks, "Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, . . . If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits?" The Hasel-ATS hermeneutic would have us believe that Paul's interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:4 was implicit in Moses' command! As a matter of fact, however, Paul is applying the same principle that applied to oxen in Moses' time, to those who proclaim the gospel. The principle is the same; the application is entirely different. In no sense was Paul's meaning latent in what Moses wrote, nor was Moses prophetic of Paul.

PART V: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Ethos of the Adventist Theological Society

1. The name "Adventist Theological Society" is a misnomer intentionally designed to mislead unwitting people into thinking of it as either an official entity of the church or a professional organization representative and inclusive of the Adventist community of Bible scholars. It is neither.

2. ATS exists for the sole purpose of promoting its biblical hermeneutic and making it normative for the entire church.

3. ATS membership requirements are designed to admit only those who already subscribe to its biblical hermeneutic or who are predisposed to do so.

4. ATS refuses to dialogue with those who do not already subscribe to its biblical hermeneutic, in an endeavor to ferret out the facts and find a viable consensus; instead, it solicits administrative coercion to impose its hermeneutical views on the church.

5. By inaccurate and misleading accusations ATS brands those who do not subscribe to its hermeneutical agenda as less than genuine Adventists and a threat to what it considers the doctrinal integrity of the church.

B. A Synopsis of Adventist Biblical Hermeneutics

6. The essentials of salvation--knowing about God, His infinite love, His infinite purpose for the human race, salvation in Jesus Christ and a living relationship to Him, and how we should relate to God and to one another--are plain to all who read the Bible with a sincere desire to live by its principles, irrespective of whether they are aware of reliable principles and procedures of interpretation.

7. From 1844 to about 1935 Seventh-day adventists relied almost exclusively on the prooftext method of Bible study, which reads the Bible primarily as the Word of God addressed to us today and without adequate attention to such matters as reliable principles of interpretation, the nature of inspiration, the balance between its divine and human aspects, the historical setting of its messages and their meaning to the writers and the reading audience to which they addressed their messages, and accurate literary analysis.

8. Beginning about 1935 Adventist Bible scholars began to use the historical method of Bible study, which gives full attention to such matters as epistemological concerns, the nature of inspiration and revelation and the balance between divine and human factors in the revelatory process, its historical setting, the canon of Scripture and its transmission, and accurate literary analysis. Adventists who follow the historical method do so with full confidence in the authority of the Bible, and dedication to its message.

9. The Hasel-ATS charge that Adventist Bible scholars who follow the historical method share the humanistic presuppositions of non-Adventists who

follow the historical-critical or higher-critical method are altogether gratuitous, without basis in fact, and irresponsible.

10. The historical-critical or higher-critical method of Bible study, as such, is inherently neutral with respect to whether it is divine or human or both. As a method it is concerned only with such matters as authorship, time and place of writing, historical setting, the writer's evident purpose in writing, what it meant to the writers and their original reading audience, and accurate literary analysis. The pejorative overtones commonly associated with the terms historical-critical and higher-critical reflect the humanistic presuppositions with which modern non-Adventist Bible scholars make use of the method, not the method itself.

C. Prehistory of the Adventist Theological Society

11. The ATS hermeneutic originated in the late 1960's with Gerhard F. Hasel, a teacher at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists pursuing a doctoral program at Vanderbilt University, as a means by which to validate his proof-text method principles and conclusions by procedures borrowed from the historical-critical method he learned there. Gordon M. Hyde was his first convert.

12. Hasel's appointment to the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist theological Seminary in 1967 placed him in a position to indoctrinate ministers in training with his hermeneutical and theological opinions. Deanship of the Seminary from 1980 to 1988 substantially enhanced that opportunity.

13. As president of the General Conference from 1966 to 1979 Robert H. Pierson, a 1933 graduate of Southern Junior College (now Southern College), placed the weight and prestige of his office at Hasel's disposal.

14. Pierson's appointment of Hyde to direct the General Conference office of biblical research and the Biblical Research Committee (1969 to 1979) placed him in position to develop and implement a strategic plan designed to make Hasel's hybrid hermeneutic normative for the church.

15. Hyde's strategic plan to secure the commitment of the church to Hasel's hybrid hermeneutic included: (1) preempting control of the annual meeting of Adventist biblical scholars that later adopted the name Andrews Society for Religious Studies (ASRS), (2) publicizing the hermeneutic by a series of Bible conferences, (3) strengthening his control of the corporate

theological processes of the church by reorganizing his office and the Biblical Research Committee into the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), and (4) giving Hasel control of training the future ministers of the church by promoting him to deanship of the Seminary. These objectives were realized in 1972, 1974, 1975, and 1980 (after a failed attempt in 1974) respectively.

16. As the theme for the three 1974 North American Bible Conferences Hyde chose the subject of biblical hermeneutics and Hasel as presenter of the theme paper, and presented him as the ranking Bible scholar and theologian of the church. Richard M. Davidson and C. Raymond Holmes, whom Hasel later, as dean, added to the Seminary faculty, both attribute their acceptance of his hybrid hermeneutic to the 1974 conferences.

17. The restructured Biblical Research Institute significantly augmented Hyde's authority over, and control of, the corporate theological processes of the church. Simultaneously he exiled from the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM) several committee members who, early on, realized the direction events were taking and sought by appropriate means to forestall them.

18. Throughout his tenure as director of BRI (1969-1979) Hyde consistently refused to dialogue with persons concerned with respect to his policies and procedures. Two unanticipated results of this refusal to dialogue were the doctrinal firestorms associated with the names Desmond Ford and Walter Rea that traumatized the church at the close of the decade. Wise leadership at the General Conference level would have resolved both issues without escalating them into major crises for the church--by meaningful dialogue.

19. During this decade Hasel and Hyde misrepresented competent, dedicated Adventist Bible scholars to Pierson and other church administrators as dangerous "liberals"--their pejorative stereotype for persons who did not accept Hasel's hybrid hermeneutic. This policy prejudiced unwitting administrators against the Adventist community of Bible scholars and theologians and led them to summon Consultations I and II in 1980 and 1981 respectively, in an endeavor to abate the tension they realized had developed. One result of Consultation II was appointment of the Methods of Bible Study Committee which rendered its report at the 1986 Annual Council of the General Conference.

20. The policies of Hyde and Hasel during the decade 1969 to 1979 also fractured the universal spirit of harmony and good will that had prevailed within the Adventist community of Bible scholars and theologians prior to their manipulation of the theological processes of the church. Their poli-

cies and procedures earned for those years the designation "decade of obscurantism," and for them the title "architects of crisis." Only those who participated in that former, happier era can appreciate the difference.

21. As dean of the Seminary during the 1980's Hasel eliminated from the faculty four highly competent and dedicated Bible scholars whose only shortcoming was that they did not accept his hermeneutic, and replaced them with people such as Richard Davidson and Raymond Holmes, who did accept it. For the same reason Hyde, as head of the Bible department of Southern College during the early to mid-1980's, eliminated three competent and dedicated religion teachers.

22. Hyde's administrative maneuvering led to his removal as director of BRI in 1979, but BRI remains under the control of ATS members. Hasel's attempt to consolidate his control of the Seminary similarly led to his dismissal as dean in 1988, but he remains on the faculty and in charge of its doctoral program. During the mid-1980's Hyde and Hasel gradually lost control of ASRS.

23. The Methods of Bible Study Committee was appointed in December 1981. It met in September 1982 at Berrien Springs and January 1983 at Loma Linda. It consisted of twenty members of whom five were Bible scholars and fifteen non-scholars. It listened to twelve Bible-scholar presenters, of whom four represented the Hasel-ATS point of view on hermeneutics. It drew up a report that accurately reflected the consensus of the committee, the Preamble of which was subsequently edited by BRI to include loaded ideological phraseology reflecting the Hasel-ATS point of view. As a result some members of the committee refused to sign their names in approval of the document in this amended form. BRI passed the report in this form on to the General Conference Committee, which gave it official status at the 1986 Annual Council in Rio de Janeiro. For the same reason that some members of the committee declined to sign it, most Adventist Bible scholars do not recognize it as valid even though they approve of the remainder of the document. ATS, however, mandates that all members sign their names affirming acceptance of it as a prerequisite to membership and thereafter each year upon renewing their membership. ATS now refers to the MBSC Report, which is addressed to "the trained Bible scholar and others," as a General Conference "directive" that "condemn[s]" all who do not submit to it--in effect, four-fifths of all Adventist Bible scholars!¹²⁵

24. ATS is thus the culmination of twenty-three years of conspiracy on the part of Hasel and Hyde to gain control of the corporate biblical-theological-doctrinal processes of the church. One ATS leader has identified their loss of control of the Seminary and ASRS (see No. 17) as the motivating factor in the establishment of ATS in 1988 as an alternate means by which to make Hasel's hybrid hermeneutic normative for the entire church. In large measure the results of their policies over the past twenty-three years remain intact, and ATS is advancing them still further in the minds of many who do not realize what ATS is all about.

D. The Hasel / Adventist Theological Society Hermeneutic

25. The Hasel-ATS hermeneutic consists of proof-text method principles mated with historical method procedures in use by most Adventist Bible scholars for more than fifty years, with the objective of validating proof-text method conclusions and fortifying their credibility. It is virtually identical with the fundamentalist hermeneutic of the early decades of the twentieth century.

26. Hasel-ATS proof-text method principles consist of a series of interlocking presuppositions about the Bible having to do with epistemology, the character and authority of the Bible, and the application of these precepts in exegesis of the Bible.

27. Whereas the Creator endowed the human mind with the capacity for both faith and reason and intended them to be used in balance, with each as a safeguard for the reliable operation of the other, the Hasel-AIS hermeneutic begins with the postulate that human reason should be excluded from presuppositions regarding inspiration, revelation, and the unity of the Bible. It is seemingly unaware of the fact that even this postulate and the series of interlocking presuppositions on which the hermeneutic is based are, in reality, a function of human reason and certainly not "inspired."

28. Instead of reasoning inductively from the weight of Bible evidence to conclusions compatible with it, the Hasel-AIS hermeneutic commits itself to reasoning deductively, in a circle from its presuppositions as normative for evaluating evidence, to conclusions which must conform to them.

29. The Hasel-AIS hermeneutic accepts Bible statements regarding its inspiration at what it calls "face value," but reads an a priori meaning into

them that conflicts with the Bible's own demonstration of inspiration as it actually operated in the revelatory process. It denies the presence of any identifiable human artifacts in the Bible and declines to take them at "face value." Only the words are human, presumably, but the Holy Spirit led the writer to choose the right words. This theory is equivalent to verbal inspiration and inerrancy--terms ATS writers seldom use though these concepts are fundamental to their hermeneutic. By a parity of reasoning, the Hasel-ATS criteria regarding the inspiration of the Bible, as stated, apply with equal validity to the Koran and the Book of Mormon, both of which also lay claim to being inspired. To be consistent with their presupposition about the inspiration of the Bible they should also accept both of these as canonical!

30. On the basis that inspiration is equivalent to inspiration, the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic denies any human factors in the revelatory process and treats the Bible in whole and in part as if everything had been revealed. In so doing it rejects the balance between the divine and human factors in that process the Bible itself demonstrates and Ellen White specifically acknowledges.

31. The Hasel-ATS hermeneutic postulates, a priori, that the Holy Spirit was so completely in control of the revelatory process as to constitute the entire Bible, as a whole and in each part, its human artifacts as well as its divine message, inspired revelation.

32. As the divine "Author" supervising the many human authors, the Holy Spirit built absolute unity into the Bible, its human artifacts as well as its divine message. This "unity" makes it possible to "compare scripture with scripture" by using a later inspired writer's comment on a passage from a former inspired writer as exegesis of it--sometimes ignoring or contradicting what he meant by what he wrote as determined by its own context.

33. This "unity" concept of the Bible presumably also justifies taking what the hermeneutic considers to be a clear statement on a given subject by one Bible writer as a "proof-text" for interpreting what it considers a less clear comment on the subject by another writer, even when the latter, considered in context, precludes doing so.

34. Hasel-ATS postulate, further, that the supposed "unity" of Scripture justifies applying Bible principles as they originally applied to a particular historical situation, to a much different historical situation today, without taking into consideration differences that may preclude making the

same application. In other words, Hasel-ATS insist that every detail of Scripture means, today, precisely what it meant at the time it was written. All will agree that the fundamental, revealed principles are eternal, but their application may vary from time to time depending upon circumstances.

35. The Hasel-ATS concept of the Bible and the hermeneutical principles and procedures by which they understand the Bible are identical with those of the movement known as Fundamentalism during the early decades of the twentieth century, as set forth in the twelve volumes entitled The Fundamentals.

D. Import of the Hasel-ATS Hermeneutic for the Church

36. Pinpointing--in the ATS book Issues in Revelation and Inspiration--what they consider to be the importance of their hermeneutic, the editors comment that "at stake is the very authority of Scripture and the continued existence of the Seventh-day Adventist people as a Bible-centered, Bible-based movement and church."¹²⁶ In his lead article introducing the first issue of the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society Gerhard Hasel refers to differences of opinion involving the authority of the Bible as "the most important crisis facing Christian churches today, . . . the major crisis of the later decades of the twentieth century, even in the Advent movement. . . . The crisis of biblical authority is so severe that we would be irresponsible not to address it . . . [It] seems to be eating away at the core of the message on which the Seventh-day Adventist church is based."¹²⁷ According to Richard Davidson ATS and the majority of Adventist Bible scholars "are locked in a life and death struggle."¹²⁸ Noting that this issue divides Adventist Bible teachers "into liberal and conservative camps" and is already responsible for "division . . . in the [SDA] Church," another writer warns that this crisis carries with it the possibility of "further polarization or division."¹²⁹ "Administration," Edward Zinke acknowledges, "plays a key role in supporting centrist theology."¹³⁰

37. It is the objective of Hasel-ATS to make their hermeneutic normative for the entire church and to limit participation in its administrative, ministerial, and teaching roles to those who comply. Over the past twenty-three years (1969-1992) they have made significant progress toward this objective.

38. Hasel-ATS reject the concept of what they call "pluralism" in biblical studies and theology, the idea that there is room in the church for any

hermeneutic other than their own. Present non-acceptance of the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic by a decided majority of Adventist Bible scholars creates "further polarization" and a "crisis" in which the very existence of the Seventh-day Adventist church is said to be "at stake."

39. If Hasel-ATS could be willing to abide by the golden rule, to enter into rational dialogue with the Adventist community of Bible scholars, to have confidence in their integrity as Seventh-day Adventists, to listen as attentively and objectively as they wish others to listen to them, and to work together toward a consensus based on the weight of evidence, the harmony that existed prior to the entrance of Hasel-ATS into the arena of Adventist biblical studies and theology could be restored.

40. In the final analysis the real issue is not with the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic at all, but with their implied insistence that Hasel-ATS alone speak for the Holy Spirit today and that He has commissioned them as His vicar on earth to make their hermeneutic normative for the entire church.

41. "Many claim that a position of trust in the church gives them authority to dictate what other men shall believe and what they shall do. This claim God does not sanction." "Let no man flatter himself that he has a correct understanding of all portions of Scripture and feel it his duty to make everybody else understand them just as he does."¹³¹

42. Consensus with respect to the hermeneutical issue would certainly be desirable but it is not essential to salvation. Other things being equal, proponents of both hermeneutics will be equally eligible to enter the pearly gates. The issue Hasel-ATS make of the nature of inspiration and exegesis of the Bible is not of the "crisis" proportions they claim for it. The idea that submission to the Hasel-ATS hermeneutic is essential is a figment of messianic imagination. If we are willing we can be the best of friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, and dedicated Adventists even if we may not see everything exactly alike. That is the way things were before Hasel-ATS appeared in the arena of corporate Adventist biblical studies, and so it can be now if they are willing to let it be so. So let there be consensus--and

P E A C E

E N D N O T E S

Inasmuch as this paper is primarily a response to ATS Occasional Papers, Vol. 1, Issues in Revelation and Inspiration, the numerous references to this volume are abbreviated IRI, followed by the page number. The Journal of the Adventist Theological Society is similarly abbreviated JATS. The many references to The Great Controversy, Selected Messages, Book 1, and Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5 are likewise abbreviated GC, 1SM, and 5T respectively.

1. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, eds., Issues in Revelation and Inspiration, Berrien Springs, MI 49103: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992, 236 pp. A compendium of eight papers responding to Alden Thompson, Inspiration: Hard Questions and Honest Answers.

2. IRI, p. 8.

3. Alden Thompson, Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers, Hagerstown, MD 21740: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1991, 332 pp.

4. See p.14.

5. Over the past fifty years I have written more than twenty papers on the subject of biblical hermeneutics. One of these appears on pages 79-127 of Problems in Bible Translation published in 1954 by the Committee on Problems in Bible Translation appointed by the General Conference in 1952 in response to many letters inquiring about the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which appeared in September 1952. My chapter, "Principles of Biblical Interpretation," had been written in 1953 at the request of the Biblical Research Committee as normative for the Committee. Parts of it appeared in Ministry. My contribution to the book also included the chapter "On Isaiah 7:14," pp. 151-169, and the end-piece charts, "Major English Translations and Their Antecedents." The article "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy" I wrote for Volume 4 of the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (pp. 15-38) sets forth basic hermeneutical principles for an accurate understanding of the messages of the Old Testament prophets. These principles were developed over a number of years in teaching the class Messages of the Old Testament Prophets at Pacific Union College. I made an exhaustive collation of approximately five thousand words, phrases, and statements in the prophets covering fifty-eight aspects of God's covenant relationship with Israel. The Commentary article summarizes this study.

6. During the presidency of Jack J. Blanco the headquarters of ATS were at Collegedale, Tennessee. When Gerhard F. Hasel became president, headquarters were moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan.

7. To non-members the regular subscription price is \$9.50 per year.

8. Gerhard F. Hasel, Speaking in Tongues, 1991, 176 pp. (ATS Monographs, Vol. 1.) 9984 Red Bud Trail, Berrien Springs, MI, 49103. See IRI, p. 237.

9. See Note 1.

10. IRI is a "speedy" response to Alden Thompson's book Inspiration (see Acknowledgement Note, IRI p. 8).

11. According to the ATS "Statement of Mission/Purpose" ATS was "established to foster biblical, theological, and historical studies supportive of spiritual revival and reformation within the Seventh-day Adventist Church." It lists four objectives: (1) to uphold the fundamental beliefs and piety of the church, (2) to promote sound, conservative, biblical scholarship and interpretation, (3) to create a spiritual and intellectual atmosphere for the exchange of ideas among members and to offer them moral support and collegi-

ality, and (4) to provide opportunity for the reading, discussion, and dissemination of scholarly papers by ATS members.

12. The Constitution specifies the process here outlined.

13. See p. 40, Item 23.

14. The basis on which the Executive Committee approves or rejects the application is said to be "confidential information." If a person's application is rejected he/she will never be informed of the reason.

15. See p. 40, Item 23. The Preamble addresses the MBSC Report to "all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the purpose of providing guidelines on how to study the Bible, both the trained biblical scholar and others." It states that "even a modified use" of the historical-critical method "that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists" and urges "Adventist Bible students to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the historical-critical method." But **NO** Seventh-day Adventist Bible scholar does so. The implication that they do is altogether gratuitous, false, and misleading. See pp. 9-11.

16. My six articles, "A Church in Crisis," in the Adventist Review, January 13 to February 17, 1977, deal in considerable detail with a very similar situation in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod that led to schism in December 1976. My purpose in writing these articles was to alert thinking Seventh-day Adventists to the course of events in our church during the decade of obscurantism, 1969 to 1979. Not a few later told me that they got the message loud and clear. Among other things these articles were based on personal interviews with Jacob Preus, Synod president, John Tietjen, president of Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis and leader of the "moderates," and were submitted to them for criticism in advance of publication. Dr. Tietjen later republished the entire series in a "Special 16-page Bonus Edition" of Missouri in Perspective (September 26, 1977) and characterized them as the best analysis of the issue that had appeared in print.

17. See p. 40, Item 23.

18. Information cited concerning the Methods of Bible Study Committee Report is based on the official minutes of the Committee and on personal conversations with Committee members.

19. JATS, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 15.

20. IRI, p. 62.

21. IRI, p. 106.

22. Proverbs 11:14.

23. Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 707.

24. John 14:26.

25. See p. 40, Item 23.

26. See Note 16.

27. Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976, 218 pp. Fuller Theological Seminary, Theology News and Notes, Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 North Oakland Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101. Special Issue 1976.

28. See Note 16.

29. See p. 11.

30. The expressions "high view" and "low view" occur many times in ATS publications. See, for instance, IRI, pp. 8, 75.

31. EGW, 5T, p. 708. Note also The Desire of Ages, p. 458: "The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate [consider critically] between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse [presup-

positions], but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture."

32. IRI, p. 108.

33. Methods of Bible Study Committee Report, Preamble. See p. 40, Item 23.

34. German theologian, 1865-1923. His three basic principles were methodological doubt (a critical evaluation of historical data), analogy (present experience as a standard for evaluating events of the past), and correlation (every cause has its effect and every effect has its cause--a naturalistic way of explaining miracles, for instance).

35. See for instance the Introductions to 1 Chronicles and Hebrews.

36. See for instance the manuscript evidence cited for Matthew 5:22; John 5:1, 3; Revelation 22:14.

37. The technical terms for these are form criticism, source criticism, tradition criticism, and redaction (editorial) criticism. As practiced by modern liberal scholars these aspects of investigation are pursued under humanistic presuppositions. Rejecting the humanistic presuppositions, Adventist Bible scholars conduct their investigation of these factors under the presupposition that the Bible is inspired.

38. Repeatedly over a period of several months in 1972-1973 I invited Gordon Hyde--orally and in writing--for the two of us to dialogue on substantive and procedural matters relating to the corporate biblical-theological processes of the church, but he was never willing to do so. Twice I requested Robert Pierson to arrange for the three of us to dialogue together, and upon both occasions Hyde refused Elder Pierson's personal request. Finally, upon four occasions between 1973 and 1975, Elder Pierson and I discussed contemporary Adventist theology and theological processes together, in a positive, constructive way without ever mentioning anyone's name. My evaluation of the course of events during the decade of obscurantism, 1969 to 1979, is based on direct personal knowledge of the facts.

39. My white paper, "Architects of Crisis: A Decade of Obscurantism," cites thirty-one specific incidents illustrative of the biblical-theological processes of the church during those ten years, and the respective roles of Robert H. Pierson, Gordon M. Hyde, and Gerhard F. Hasel.

40. Gordon M. Hyde, ed., A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, printed by the Review and Herald Publishing Association for the Biblical Research Committee, 1974, 273 pp.

41. My four-page critique of Gerhard Hasel's original draft of his paper on biblical hermeneutics for the 1974 North American Bible Conferences clearly identifies its problem areas--which are identical in principle with those of the ATS hermeneutic today.

42. JATS, Vol. 1, No. 1, spring 1990, p. 41; IRI, p. 80.

43. IRI, p. 80.

44. When Hasel's professional conduct at the Theological Seminary became known to Dr. Walter Harrelson, his major professor at Vanderbilt University, Harrelson confided to the Andrews University person responsible for his call to the Seminary that Vanderbilt would not have been willing to grant a doctoral degree to anyone who conducted himself in that manner. (In personal conversation with the Andrews university person involved.)

45. The information concerning the 1974 and 1980 Andrews university board meetings at which Hasel's name was considered for the deanship came to me directly from faculty and board members.

46. My article, "The Bible Research Fellowship: A Pioneering Seventh-day Adventist Organization in Retrospect," appeared in Adventist Heritage, Vol. 5, No. 1, Summer 1978, pp. 39-52.

47. My article, "The Untold Story of the Bible Commentary," appeared in Spectrum, Vol. 16, No. 3, August 1985, pp. 35-51. Those interested will find appended to this article the names of contributors to the various sections of the Commentary.

48. With no disclaimer to the contrary it is reasonable to conclude that the various contributors to official ATS publications reflect its point of view on the various aspects of its biblical hermeneutic.

49. JATS, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1991, p. 1.

50. IRI, p. 205.

51. IRI, p. 153.

52. IRI, p. 154.

53. IRI, p. 153.

54. IRI, pp. 34, 115-116.

55. IRI, p. 13.

56. IRI, p. 70.

57. EGW, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 433, emphasis added.

58. IRI, p. 8.

59. IRI, p. 60.

60. IRI, p. 49.

61. IRI, p. 107.

62. IRI, p. 209.

63. IRI, p. 49.

64. IRI, pp. 60, 107.

65. IRI, pp. 50, 51.

66. IRI, p. 48, emphasis his.

67. IRI, p. 49.

68. IRI, p. 316.

69. IRI, pp. 47, 105, 107.

70. IRI, p. 49.

71. IRI, p. 107.

72. IRI, p. 107.

73. IRI, p. 107.

74. IRI, p. 107

75. 2 Timothy 3:16.

76. IRI, p. 107.

77. IRI, p. 108, 203

78. IRI, pp. 75, 140; JATS, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 17.

79. IRI, p. 70.

80. JATS, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1990, p. 45.

81. Matthew 12:8; 14:33.

82. John 1:1, 14.

83. Hebrews 2:14, 17.

84. Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953, 1516 pp., p. 170.

85. EGW, GC, Introduction p. vi.

86. Ibid., p. vii.

87. Ibid., p. v.

88. EGW, 6T, Vol 6, p. 393.

89. EGW, 1SM, p. 21.

90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., p. 22.
92. EGW, GC, Introduction p. vi.
93. Ibid.; LSM, p. 25.
94. EGW, GC, Introduction p. vi.
95. Ibid.; LSM, pp. 21, 25.
96. EGW, GC, Introduction p. vi; LSM, pp. 20.
97. EGW, LSM, p. 18; 5T, pp. 700, 706.
98. EGW, LSM, p. 20.
99. Ibid., p. 16.
100. Ibid., pp. 22, 25.
101. EGW, GC, Introduction p. vi; LSM, p. 17.
102. EGW, GC, Introduction p. vi; LSM, pp. 20, 25.
103. EGW, 5T, Vol. 5, p. 706.
104. EGW, LSM, p. 16.
105. See IRI, pp. 111-115.
106. After completing the paper I felt reservations about presenting it because I knew that some would misunderstand it. I was not disappointed. But facts are facts.
107. EGW, LSM, pp. 20, 25, 26.
108. EGW GC, Introduction p. vi.
109. IRI, p. 78.
110. IRI, p. 61.
111. IRI, p. 128.
112. IRI, p. 128.
113. IRI, p. 214.
114. IRI, p. 214.
115. IRI, pp. 8, 237.
116. Raymond F. Cottrell, "An Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14," 1973, 51 pp.
117. 1 Corinthians 14:6, 8.
118. 1 Corinthians 14:3, 5, 27, 28.
119. Matthew 1:22, 23; 2:15, 17, 18, 23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21; 13:14, 15, 35; 21:4, 5; 27:9-10.
120. IRI, pp. 107, 127.
121. Matthew 5:22, 28, 34, 39, 44.
122. Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Old Testament Perspective of the Eschaton."
123. Raymond F. Cottrell, "The New Testament Perspective of the Eschaton."
124. Deuteronomy 25:4.
125. JATS, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 15; IRI, p. 62.
126. IRI, p. 8.
127. JATS, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 16, 17.
128. Ibid., p. 42.
129. IRI, p. 62.
130. JATS, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 65.
131. EGW, The Desire of Ages, p. 414; 5T, p. 533.

