



# JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 4, Number 2 . . . . . Autumn 1993

## ARTICLES

- The Theologian as Conscience for the Church . . . . . 12  
*George W. Reid*
- Faith and Theology . . . . . 20  
*Jack J. Blanco*
- Scripture and Theology . . . . . 47  
*Gerhard F. Hasel*
- Interpreting Scripture: An Hermeneutical Decalogue . . . . 95  
*Richard M. Davidson*
- Ellen White on Theology, Its Methods, and the Use of Scrip-  
ture . . . . . 115  
*P. Gerard Damsteegt*
- The Influence of Philosophical and Scientific World Views on  
the Development of Theology . . . . . 137  
*Norman R. Gulley*
- Historicization and Christian Theological Method . . . . . 161  
*John T. Baldwin*
- Theology and the Role of Reason . . . . . 172  
*Frank M. Hasel*
- The Word of God in Christian Ethics . . . . . 199  
*Miroslav M. Kis*
- A Brief History of Adventist Hermeneutics . . . . . 209  
*C. Mervyn Maxwell*

## SERMON

- Divine Love, The Delay of the Advent, and the Mission of the  
Church . . . . . 227  
*Mark A. Finley*

## FEATURES

- The President's Address . . . . . 1  
*C. Raymond Holmes*

JOURNAL OF THE  
ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 4, Number 2, Autumn 1993

Editor: Frank Holbrook

Associate Editors: Gordon M. Hyde, George W. Reid, Ronald M. Springett

Editorial Executive Committee

C. Raymond Holmes, Chairman; Jack J. Blanco, Richard M. Davidson, Norman R. Gulley, Gerhard F. Hasel, Frank B. Holbrook, Gordon M. Hyde, C. Mervyn Maxwell, Ronald M. Springett, Leo R. Van Dolson, Mervyn Warren, Francis W. Wernick, Randall W. Younker, E. Edward Zinke.

Editorial Resource Board

Warren Ashworth, Samuele Bacchiocchi, Douglas Bennett, Jack J. Blanco, Thomas H. Blincoe, Paul Buchheim, Arthur Chadwick, Harold Coffin, P. Gerard Damsteegt, Laurel Damsteegt, Richard M. Davidson, Roy Gane, Norman R. Gulley, Gerhard F. Hasel, Frank B. Holbrook, C. Raymond Holmes, Hans K. LaRondelle, Leon I. Mashchak, C. Mervyn Maxwell, P. David Merling, Daegeuk Nam, James J. North Jr., Gerhard Pfandl, Siegfried H. Roeske, Angel Rodriguez, Ronald M. Springett, Loron Wade, Mervyn Warren, Pierre Winandy, Randall W. Younker, E. Edward Zinke.

Advisory Board

Bernell Baldwin, Marjorie Baldwin, Wallace Blair, Elsie Blair, Thomas H. Blincoe, Carol Buchheim, JoAnn Davidson, D. A. Delafield, Herbert E. Douglass, William Fagal, John Fowler, Erwin Gane, Rosalie Haffner Lee, Leslie Hardinge, Darrell Huenergardt, John Loo, John McFarlane, Ellsworth McKee, Sharon McKee, Cyril Miller, David Newman, Jacob Nortey, Robert Peck, Paul Robberson, Al Sines, Jane Sines, J. Robert Spangler, Joel O. Tompkins, Mario Veloso, Velile Wakaba, Lewis Walton, Jo Ellen Walton, Francis W. Wernick, Izak van Zyl.

The JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY is published twice yearly by the Adventist Theological Society. Home office: P. O. Box 551, Collegedale, Tennessee 37315. Direct all correspondence to P. O. Box 86, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103.

The JOURNAL is sent free to members of the Society whose dues are not in arrears.

The regular annual subscription price for non-members is US\$12.50 to addresses in the USA and US\$14.50 to addresses elsewhere.

The student and retiree subscription price for non-members is US\$10.00 in the USA and US\$12.00 elsewhere.

The single copy price is US\$6.00.

All items not copyrighted by their authors are copyright © 1993 by the Adventist Theological Society.

Opinions expressed in the JOURNAL are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Society. The validity and accuracy of quoted material included in articles are the responsibility of the authors of the articles.

*Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 4/2 (1993):1-11.

Article copyright © 1993 by C. Raymond Holmes.

## THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

By C. Raymond Holmes

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Andrews University

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

### The State of the Society

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The objectives are summarized as follows:

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Introduction to Convention Theme: Theological Method

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

### Endnotes

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

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

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 37.