

THEOLOGY AND THE ROLE OF REASON

By Frank M. Hasel

Ph.D. Candidate, Systematic Theology

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Andrews University

Introduction

The role reason plays in theology is crucial. It is one of four sources, or foundations, upon which theologies are constructed: namely, Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. The authority we assign to any one of these four sources determines the character and the outcome of our entire theology.

For Bible-believing Christians, as we Adventists are, the present question arises: Should the church continue with a theology that has Scripture as its determining source, or should it retreat to tradition, experience, or reason to determine the hermeneutical keys for the exposition of Scripture and for the construction of its theology? At stake is whether Adventists will maintain the "Sola Scriptura" principle of the great Protestant reformers and of the Adventist pioneers or whether we will turn to sources other than Scripture alone as the final norm and determining authority in theology.

We cannot understand and evaluate any theology unless we know the foundation upon which it is built. A discussion of the foundations of theology should be considered as vital in any theological enterprise. But, unfortunately, there is a natural tendency to take foundations for granted. This holds true for physical buildings as well as for theological constructs. Most of us have never seen the foundations of the houses we live in. We may repair the

walls and roof or simply rearrange the furniture; but we presuppose solid foundations. Often the only way we can tell whether the foundations are sound is by looking at some cracks in the superstructure. For if the foundation of a building is unsound the superstructure will be unsound, too.¹

When we look at current issues in Adventist theology,² we notice certain cracks in the superstructure. In not a few instances some walls that current arguments seek to erect are not solidly connected to the foundation of our theology, namely the Holy Scriptures, the written Word of God. Rather than simply to rearrange the furniture in our house of Adventist theology, it seems necessary to look closely at the cause of these cracks in order to clarify the very foundation on which our theology must be grounded and constructed.

My objective is to look at *one* foundational issue that is crucial in the shaping of any theology, namely the role of reason. According to the evangelical scholar Donald Bloesch, the relationship between faith and reason is "probably the single most important issue in a theological prolegomena."³ The role of reason in theology should be of particular interest to Adventists, because we traditionally have held to a "reasonable-faith,"⁴ even though we are yet to articulate in any complete manner our understanding of this phrase and of the relationship of faith and reason in theology.⁵ We shall address the issue briefly in this article.

Much has been written on the relationship between faith and reason in theology, and I do not wish to bother the reader unduly with the long and intricate history of this debate.⁶ But in order to understand some of the cracks in our Adventist-house of theology, a brief overview of some basic issues in this debate is necessary and helpful.

After this preliminary review, we will look at what Scripture says on the role of reason. If Scripture is the only norm for Adventist theology, as we profess at the beginning of our *Fundamental Beliefs*,⁷ and as Ellen White repeatedly insists upon,⁸ then it is logical to expect Scripture to be the sole source of its own exposition on this important question too.

On the basis of our findings in Scripture we will finally draw some implications for the role of reason in theology, and Adventist

theology in particular. Thus, we are attempting to develop a Scriptural answer to a philosophical question (What is the role of reason in constructing our theology?), thereby choosing to be informed *and formed* by the Scripture's own presuppositions. With that in mind let us now turn to our brief overview of the role of reason in the history of theology.

The Role of Reason

The question of the role of reason in theology has received several different answers throughout history. Since it is not possible to deal with these in detail, I will simply list the following helpful summaries as suggested by Erickson:⁹

1. In the first type, no relationship at all is possible. Here one is reminded of Tertullian's famous words: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between Heretics and Christians?"¹⁰ and also of Martin Luther's statement that "reason is the devil's whore."¹¹

2. In the second type, theology can be elucidated by reason. Here Augustine could be cited as an example. He stressed the priority of faith and the acceptance of biblical revelation, but he also insisted that philosophy may help us to understand better our Christian theology. Augustine adopted Neo-Platonic thought.

3. In the third type, theology is sometimes established by reason. Thomas Aquinas, for instance found such a basis in Aristotle's philosophy which he "baptized" into Christianity.

4. In yet another type, theology may be judged by reason, as in Deism and rationalistic theology.¹²

5. In some instances reason may even supply the content of theology.

The classical Greek concept of reason that gained entrance into Christian thought and that shaped much of our Western philosophical thought can be characterized by its passively receiving the pre-existing, timeless forms that always exist.¹³ Detached from the flow of history, the mind alone is considered capable of participating in the eternal truths by receiving those pre-existing forms through a sudden illumination. This, however, is something entirely different from the Biblical faith, as we shall see later.¹⁴ Due

to space limitations we cannot develop this concept of reason in more detail. However, we turn to survey another aspect of reason that has become very influential in contemporary theology, namely autonomous reason.

Autonomous Reason. The role of autonomous reason has become very influential in modern times.¹⁵ The emphasis on "autonomous reason" is characteristic of the period of the Enlightenment¹⁶ or the "Age of Reason" as it is also being called, and after it for most of the intellectual discussion of modern times.¹⁷ Through the turn to the individual which began in our modern period with René Descartes,¹⁸ man became the point of reference where truth is decided.¹⁹

In 1784 Immanuel Kant wrote an article in answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?" Kant defined Enlightenment as the spirit's determination to exercise its intellectual faculties in unfettered integrity. Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage, that is, his inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Enlightenment is man's rise from the immaturity which caused him to rely on such external authorities as the Bible, the church, tradition, etc., to tell him what to think and do. The motto of the Enlightenment, therefore, was: Have courage to use your own thinking.²⁰ In its self-sufficient autonomy reason assumed that authority which truly belongs to God and His revelation alone.²¹

The case of the rationalistic Socinians²² as well as the rationalistic theology of the English Deists²³ amply demonstrates the results of reason as final judge over the content of Scripture. Even in Protestant Orthodoxy, where the principle of Scripture alone was still maintained, we can detect a subtle but crucial shift towards an underpinning of the authority of Scripture on rationalistic terms. Rather than providing its own evidence of divine authority, Scripture was increasingly sustained through arguments from reason.²⁴ This unfortunate process is well described by J. K. S. Reid who says:

The primacy of faith gives way, first to an equality of faith with reason; faith must at least be intelligible. But the equality is difficult to maintain. The faith is intellectually conceived, and then it is reason

and not faith that moves up into the dominant position. The authority of Scripture is compromised and made equivocal.²⁵

As soon as reason became an indispensable means, it took over the additional role of a criterion. But even more, in that the Scripture principle had become rational, it was now rationally refutable.²⁶ Therefore, theology was increasingly challenged rationally, historically, and otherwise during the following period of the Enlightenment.

The irony of all this is that it has been established since Kant, "that reason only perceives that which it produces after its own design. . . ."²⁷ This means that autonomous reason was and is never capable of leaving its immanent boundaries, and, therefore, cannot arrive at a true knowledge of God naturally on its own. God has to reveal Himself and by means of His revelation compels assent and produces insight which is lacking before.²⁸

The Collapse of Autonomous Reason. The house that autonomous reason tried to build in the bold endeavor to ground truth in the reason of each person did not secure the hoped for "sure" foundation. Rather, the attempt resulted in the loss of all supernatural reality, metaphysics, and actually the loss of truth itself.²⁹ The very thing that man daringly tried to take upon himself in his self-declared "freedom," namely to master the world by means of autonomous rationalistic criticism, in the end has become master over man. Autonomous man was and is not able to fill the role that he has denied God to occupy since the Enlightenment.

The current discussion over modernity and post-modernity³⁰ with the deconstruction of the rationalistic ideal shows that even secular philosophy has finally come to admit that the kingly role of reason has its own ambiguities, to echo the words of revisionist Catholic scholar David Tracy.³¹ Looking back on the developments of history since the Enlightenment we have to acknowledge that there is no secure ground in autonomous reason. As Gerhard Noller recently stated in a noteworthy book, the human subject is not and has never been the unshakable foundation of reality.³²

The New Importance of Tradition. One interesting side effect from the failure of autonomous reason to provide a secure foundation for its house of rationalistic theology is highly significant for theological method. It is the new importance that *tradition* has

begun to play in theology.³³ Since autonomous reason alone has been unable to provide a secure basis for theology and has lapsed into the chaotic subjectivism of the individual interpreter, some stabilizing element is needed to safeguard continuity in the act of interpretation. This is found today in a new listening to the voice of tradition.³⁴ Tradition, however, is not understood in any traditionalistic sense. Rather, it is being defined as an ever new re-interpretation and application of the biblical message through the fusion or the correlation of the two horizons between the Bible text and the contemporary situation, where the contemporary questions determine the answers that are sought in Scripture.

This new emphasis on tradition as a hermeneutical key has been recently suggested within Adventist circles by Richard Rice in his book *Reason and the Contours of Faith*.³⁵ According to Rice "doctrines arise, not from the Bible alone, but from the dynamic interplay between the Bible and the living experience of the church, . . ."³⁶ Besides the Bible (which for Rice has only "central authority" but no longer is the final authority) and the present experience of the Christian community, we are told we "must also take into account Christian tradition, or the doctrines which the church has already formulated."³⁷

According to Rice the *sola scriptura* principle, that is, Scripture alone, should be understood merely as *prima scriptura*, the primacy of Scripture, that is, "the superiority of the Bible to other authorities,"³⁸ among them ecclesiastical officers, church councils, previous doctrinal formulas,³⁹ and also tradition⁴⁰ and experience⁴¹ Thus, the Bible, although a fundamental authority, is no longer the final authority and is neither "the only place where theological reflection originates nor the direct source from which all theological positions arise."⁴²

Such statements from an Adventist author and published by an Adventist institution raise serious question whether some of today's Adventist scholars are building on the same foundation our pioneers used. The latter stated unequivocally that "the Bible is our chart—our guide. It is our only rule of faith and practice, to which we would closely adhere."⁴³ It seems to me that some are not merely rearranging the furniture in our house of Adventist-theology but, are in fact rebuilding it on a different foundation. Let me explain.

One decisive difference between the Adventist church today and the believers at the beginning of the Advent movement is the following: Our pioneers started with the common foundation of accepting the Bible alone as the only norm and final authority in matters of faith and practice. On this mutually accepted basis Adventist pioneers stood united, and, therefore, could work together toward a common goal. They could maintain and gain a *Biblical unity* in Spirit and theological thought, because they were united in their submission to the written Word of God. On this "common ground" they could then rearrange some Christian furniture in the newly forming Adventist house of theology so as to bring it into even greater harmony with the Scriptures.

Today we face an entirely different situation in our church. Rather than building on a common foundation (that is, Scripture alone) and working from there towards a biblically grounded unity, some of us have begun to build walls on foundations other than the Bible and are in the very process of rebuilding and reinterpreting our theology in the light of other accepted authority. Rather than merely rearranging some furniture as our pioneers did, some are building up walls on an entirely new foundation. It is, therefore, no surprise that we face an increasing doctrinal pluralism⁴⁴ within our church—a pluralism that threatens to destroy our theological and spiritual unity which was erected on and can be maintained only by adherence to God's Word alone.

Could it be that in trying to make faith understandable to reason some of us are committing the same mistakes that Protestant Orthodoxy committed, when it tried to underpin the authority of Scripture on rationalistic terms. Because Orthodox theology did not search for biblical answers but tried to make faith understandable to reason by meeting it on reason's own ground, it started down a road that eventually ended in the death of God theology and atheism.⁴⁵ If we want to avoid repeating the same blunders, we have to look carefully to the testimony of Scripture. To this we will turn now.

Reason in Scripture⁴⁶

It may come as a surprise to learn that there is no equivalent term in biblical Hebrew or Greek for our word "reason."⁴⁷ It seems

illegitimate, therefore, to attach to the English word "reason," (conditioned through our western philosophical heritage) certain Hebrew or Greek words from the OT or NT. What is needed, instead, is a clearer understanding of the different thought-worlds,⁴⁸ which are expressed in different words and contexts.

Man Made in the Image of God. We begin our investigation into the role of reason in Scripture with creation. That is where Scripture itself begins. Man's creation in the "image of God" (*imago Dei*) has important implications for the role of reason in theology. Different attempts have been made to explain the meaning of the "image of God." Often it has been reduced to man's reasoning powers. This leaves open the possibilities of a rational or natural theology. Scripture, however, reveals that more is involved in the "image of God" than just the rational aspect in man.

Alberto Soggin has shown the close relationship between the terminology used in the creation account (*imago Dei*) and the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.⁴⁹ To be created in the image of God needs to be understood in a two-fold way. On the one hand man is a "copy" of God Himself, and, therefore, carries a very high value. On the other hand, being a copy, clearly shows that man cannot stand independently from God as the "original" and can never assume an autonomous position outside his relationship with God. Hence, an independence in knowledge and understanding from God as the source of all true knowledge is impossible. Because of his dependence on the Creator, man's knowledge and understanding in anything is correct only insofar as it is informed and guided by God's revelation, embodied supremely in Scripture.⁵⁰ Created in the image of God, we have been granted the gift of reason. This means (in biblical anthropology) a limited use of reason if employed independently of God. This was true even for man in his unfallen state! What was the nature of knowledge before sin entered the world, we have to ask? Was it possible for Adam and Eve before the Fall to gain an independent knowledge of God and His will on their own? No, even in the most perfect environment they were dependent upon the Word of God to inform and guide them. How much more do we need God's Word today when our minds and reason are perverted by sin.

In other words, the Creator's gift of reason can be used proper-

ly only in faithfulness to God and His will, or it will be used (unfaithfully) against Him. The biblical concept of reason is "faithful reason," that is, it is full of faith, because it trusts God and obediently follows His revealed Word. This has important implications for the role of reason in theology to which we will turn in a moment.

But let us now look at a few key words in Scripture that are used in the context of knowledge and understanding and are connected with different mental activities. From a survey of the terms we may learn more about the biblical presupposition for the foundations of human knowledge and understanding. Since there is not merely one appropriate translation for the English words "reason," "understanding," or "knowing" in the Hebrew and Greek equivalents, we will try to establish a semantic word-field that includes the main Hebrew and Greek expressions relevant to our investigation.

Hebrew and Greek Words for Knowledge. We will begin our investigation by looking at a few important Hebrew words, and their respective Greek equivalents.

Yada' (to know). Forms of the Hebrew *yada'* (to know) occur more than 1119 times in the OT.⁵¹ In light of this frequent occurrence we are faced with some pragmatic limitations in our investigation. Although the different usages of the term cannot be sharply distinguished, we can detect at least five aspects of its meaning that are worth noticing. They are the cognitive aspect, the establishing aspect, the contact aspect, the communicative aspect, and the constitutive aspect.⁵² Because of space limitations we will explore just a few pertinent usages of this word.

Yada' can be used parallel to "seeing" and other knowledge gained in various ways by the senses.⁵³ In the OT the expression "you shall know that I am the LORD your God," occurs frequently.⁵⁴ In this context *yada'* is linked with God's acts of self-revelation.⁵⁵ This knowledge of God is not an abstract, speculative kind of knowledge that is merely obtained intellectually. Rather, it is a knowledge that is discovered through God's acting in history, and that is gained through a practical experience and relationship with Him.⁵⁶

By emphasizing the relational aspect of knowledge we do not

want to convey the impression that the cognitive dimension of knowledge in the Bible is excluded. This cognitive aspect is present and includes the aspect of knowledge as acknowledging⁵⁷ what God has revealed about Himself. Thus, for mankind in both the fallen and unfallen states there is no "natural" or "neutral" way to come to a true knowledge of God. In other words, knowledge is not gained in a vacuum or a self-detached position but only in a transforming relationship with Him. The wise shall not boast of his own wisdom, but in that he knows God (Jer 9:23-24).

In order to know the searcher for truth must be positioned into the right relationship. Proverbs 1:7 states the biblical epistemology in a nutshell. Here, "the fear of the Lord" is the beginning of true knowledge. (cf. Prov 9:10, where it is the beginning of wisdom; 15:33; Ps 111:10; Job 28:28). This "fear of the Lord" is not a frightening emotional or psychological threatening form of experience, but is more akin to our concept of "commitment to" or "trust in" God⁵⁸ who establishes and faithfully keeps his covenant.⁵⁹ The fear of God involves service, love, obedience, worship, and total surrender to God.⁶⁰ This means that the attitude of total commitment to the Lord is the starting point, the inception of any and all real knowledge.⁶¹ In other words, faith as trust and commitment to God, does not hinder and obstruct the knowledge of reality; but rather, faith sets free the real knowledge of God and His world.

Ginosko (to know). In the LXX (Greek Septuagint) words from the Hebrew root of *yada'* are generally translated by the *ginosko* word group.⁶² Basically, the term means to notice, perceive, recognize a thing, person or situation through the senses, particularly the sight.⁶³ Even in secular Greek *ginosko* has been used in some instances for knowing in a personal way and as an expression of a trusting relationship between persons.⁶⁴ This is in sharp contrast to the philosophical view where sense knowledge is only "opinion" (*doxa*) but never true knowledge. Although the LXX and the NT use Greek terminology, it appears they do not incorporate Greek philosophical concepts with them. Rather, the translators use the Greek terms in a continuation and further unfolding of the OT meaning.⁶⁵

The NT writers take over the personal aspect of knowledge

from the OT. This is especially the case when the term *ginosko* refers to the knowledge of God (cf. Rom 11:33). Just as in the OT, the NT frequently speaks about the knowledge of God (Rom 11:33; 15:14; 2 Cor 2:14; 10:5; Col 1:10) and about the knowledge that God gives to his followers (Mark 4:11). This God-given knowledge is not intended to make a person arrogant (1 Cor 8:1), because it is embedded in and derived from the right relationship with God,⁶⁶ a relationship characterized by mutual love and faithful obedience to His revealed will.

Knowledge and understanding in the NT is not something that lets the wise boast about him/herself. Rather "let him who boasts, boast of the Lord," (1 Cor 1:31; cf. 2 Cor 10:17; Jer 9:23). When the Apostle John writes that Christians "know all things" (1 John 2:20, NKJV), this knowledge (1 John 2:21; 3:2, 5, 14; 5:13, 15, 18-20; 3 John 12) is not a philosophical omniscience but results from a close relationship between Christians and their God and from the giving of the Holy Spirit in this relationship (cf. 1 John 2:20a; John 14:26).⁶⁷

The polemic against "the opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge'" (1 Tim 6:20, NASB), and Paul's persistent critique of a purely cognitive ideal of knowledge in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 8:1-2; 13:2, 8, 12; cf. 1 Cor 1:18-23) and elsewhere (Eph 3:19; cf. Eph 1:17-18) shows that the NT takes over from the OT the concept of knowledge and understanding as a reality that is possible only in the right relationship.

This means that the knowledge of God and His world is not possible in an abstract manner, from a neutral and secure distance. Rather, it comes about only by allowing our lives to be renewed and transformed in and through a relationship with the Giver of all knowledge, that is, God. Thus, the knowledge of God is a gift from Him and not something that human beings have or obtain naturally on their own.⁶⁸

Bin (to discern). Another very important Hebrew word that is usually translated by "understanding" or "insight" is the verb *bin*.⁶⁹ The root is connected with the substantive *bayin* which means "interval" or "space in between." From this the original meaning, "to distinguish" or "to separate," is commonly derived.⁷⁰

The essential idea of the verb is, therefore, "to discern," (cf. 1 Kgs 3:9).

The kind of knowledge alluded to by this Hebrew term is superior to the mere gathering of data. It includes the concept of distinguishing. *Bin* describes the power of judgment and perceptive insight that is demonstrated in the use of knowledge.⁷¹

However, in this ability to judge and perceive, man remains depended upon God, the Giver of discernment and understanding. The OT presents this kind of moral understanding as a gift from God and not the fruit of empiricism,⁷² (cf. 1 Kgs 3:9, and 1 Kgs 4:29-30, where God gives Solomon wisdom and understanding and largeness of mind).

Synesis. The closest Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *bin* that is used in the LXX and the NT is *synesis* and its derivatives.⁷³ "The OT idea that insight is a gift of God and is linked with his revelation reappears in the NT usage."⁷⁴ Time and again "insight" is understood as a gift from God, and any lack of "insight" as a sign of man's rejection of God from within his deepest being (Rom 1:21).⁷⁵ This is a very provocative thought that certainly merits closer meditation and investigation.

Leb (heart). In the Hebrew Bible the seat of insight is the heart (*leb*). The terms *leb* and *lebab* as parallel terms appear some 853 times⁷⁶ and constitutes the central anthropological term of the OT. The heart encompasses all dimensions of man's existence. It is also the seat of the understanding and knowledge as well as the seat of the will.⁷⁷ Depending on the context *leb* can denote the capability of understanding, the receiving or hearing heart or "reason" (1 Kgs 3:9-12), insight, knowledge, and understanding (Prov 18:15; Isa 42:25), etc.⁷⁸ The heart discerns the works of God, shows fear of God, and puts into practice righteousness and justice (cf. Prov 2).⁷⁹ Thus, the mental activities are not isolated but the heart encompasses all dimensions of man's existence.

Kardia (heart). The LXX renders *leb* predominantly by *kardia*, (heart), and more rarely by *dianoia* (understanding), *psyche* (soul, life), and *nous* (mind).⁸⁰ The different terms used to translate *leb* into Greek show several things: (1) In contrast with the central role of the word *nous* (mind) in classical Greek, the term is used sparingly in the Bible;⁸¹ (2) There is no single term employed to denote

the meaning of "reason."⁸² It is difficult to differentiate between the terms.⁸³ In their general usage they stand in continuity with the OT employment of *leb* (heart). As in the OT, *kardia* stands for the whole of the inner being of man.⁸⁴

Thus, we may conclude our brief investigation into the role of "reason" in Scripture by saying that the Bible does not know an abstract, autonomous reason capable of arriving at truth on its own. Rather, the natural man indulges in the desires of the flesh *and of the mind* (Eph 2:3). The sinfulness of man has affected his reason. Hence, sinful reason stands in need of conversion just as the rest of man needs to be renewed. Human beings become truly "reasonable" in the biblical sense when "we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5, NASB).

It appears, therefore, that the biblical understanding of knowledge is never separated from the relational aspect between man and God. Biblical knowledge includes the whole person, including the actions, and never just the mental capabilities as it is commonly held in Greek and much of Western philosophy.

The result of our investigation of these biblical terms will shed some light as to what the role of reason should be in theology.

Implications for the Role of Reason in Theology

Faithful Reason. In contrast to autonomous reason the biblical concept of reason could be termed "faithful, or obedient reason." Whereas autonomous reason exalts itself into a god or falls back on tradition and experience as guides to truth, the faithful reason of Scripture is informed by God's Word and acts obediently according to God's written revelation. Faithful reason is centered neither on autonomous man nor on the testimony of tradition (whether living or dead) but on God, the Creator of man. The biblical role of reason is not an assertive independence from God. Instead the believer is to use God's revelation as the basis and authoritative norm for all of his/her reasoning.

From the Scripture itself we know that this divinely assigned role for human reason is not its natural tendency. Not just irrational factors need to be overcome in man. That is, it is not just a question of rationality or irrationality that we face in the issue of the role of reason in theology. There are noetic effects of sin on

reason. What needs to be changed is man's basic resistance to God Himself. Without this fundamental change—call it conversion if you please—no harmony, no solution to the relationship between faith and reason will be possible. Unconverted reason will always strive to dominate not only the contours but also the content of our faith. Obedient reason, however, subordinates itself to God and His gift of revelation, and is willing to be guided by God through His written Word.

The Integration of Reason into Faith. It is not simply that unconverted reason produces *results* that are disturbing to faith. Rather, unconverted reason carries with it *presuppositions* that from the very outset destroy all possibilities of an harmonious integration of reason into faith. It cannot and does not joyfully submit to what is revealed to man by God.

Furthermore, the issue is not between trusting God on the one hand and thinking carefully about our beliefs on the other, as some seem to suggest. Faithful reason is not a sacrifice of the intellect, *but the integration of reason into faith.* And here the wording and the word-sequence is of crucial importance, because the integration of reason into faith implies that faith has priority. It is not an integration of faith into reason. In that case, reason would have the final say. Nor is it an attempt to balance faith and reason.⁸⁵

In trying to balance two things no unity is gained. If equality is the ultimate goal in the issue of the relationship between faith and reason, no true unity is possible. Whenever we focus on having equal shares, this very focus tends to bring the two into an antagonistic relationship. Equals are not together, they stand on opposite sides of the equation, constantly watching that the other side does not get ahead. They are not united but in contest with each other.

In trying to balance faith and reason, who finally decides how to balance one with the other? Who finally "keeps the balance?" History has shown that every time reason tried to support faith, it was reason that finally decided on the content of faith and changed and adapted God's revelation to the current ideology of the day. In the words of Walter Köhler "reason in theology has always had the tendency to change or shift its position from minister (Diener) to magister (Herr),"⁸⁶ from servant to master, from helper to ruler.

This is also the case in R. Rice's approach, where Scripture cannot interpret itself anymore but needs outside help in order to identify its own intellectual contents. This external help is supplied by the historical-critical method which attempts to distinguish between the essential and nonessential contents of the biblical message.⁸⁷ Rather than beginning with reason and then speaking about the contours of faith, the biblical position would be to start with faith and from there to look at the contours of reason! The true antithesis, therefore,

is not between faith and reason, as if believing and thinking were mutually exclusive, but between a faithful and a faithless use of reason. The question is not whether we should think, but how we should think; whether or not our thinking should be controlled by our faith.⁸⁸

It is therefore misleading to say that revelation supplements or adds to reason or that faith and reason complement each other,⁸⁹ because that implies they are equals. What is needed is not a quantitative addition but a qualitative change, not a building upon the old but a conversion to the new.⁹⁰ This leads us to our next point, namely to the meaning of the use of sanctified reason in theology.

Sanctified Reason

It is sometimes claimed that even Scripture encourages us to use "sanctified reason" as a means to understand God and His Word (cf. Isa 1:18, "come now, and let us reason together"),⁹¹ and that it is, therefore, perfectly legitimate to do so, albeit in "dialogue with the Spirit"⁹² (however one wants to understand such an expression). Is this interpretation of the Isaiah passage warranted? What does it mean to use "sanctified reason"? Furthermore, aren't we doomed to use our *own* reason, no matter what has been said about the role of reason in Scripture, because we have to make "reasonable" decisions about unclear passages in Scripture?

As far as the passage in Isaiah 1:18 is concerned, we can readily discern from the context that this is a rhetorical question that relates to the issue of salvation. Prior to verse 18 God pointed out the unfaithfulness of Judah which had led to their loss of knowledge! His challenge, to come and reason with Him, must be

understood as an ironic hint to show Judah her ignorance in respect to her own limitations, at least as far as salvation is concerned. From other biblical data it could very well be applied also to Judah's limitation in knowledge as such. For these reasons it seems inappropriate to use Isaiah 1:18 to make humankind into an equal dialogue partner with God, who by means of their own reason are able to understand and apply the truth of Scripture.⁹³

However, we need more than a mere orientation of reason towards Scripture, even if this is done from a position of a converted person. It is not enough just to orient oneself towards the Word of God while reason still maintains its independence and autonomy. What is needed is nothing less than the submission, the subordination of reason to the higher authority of God's Word. Ellen G. White has put it in these words:

God desires man to exercise his reasoning powers. . . yet we are to be aware of deifying reason which is subject to the infirmity of humanity. . . when we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM.⁹⁴

What is needed is the transformation of "natural reason" through God's Word, where it is informed and formed by it. For that is sanctification after all.

This is by no means a "sacrifice of the intellect," as it is often alleged. If it were the sacrifice of reason, reason would no longer exist. What needs to be sacrificed is not reason but the *autonomy* of reason. Thus, rather than being "a sacrifice of the intellect," it is the sacrifice of the assertive autonomy of (my) reason that is at stake, acknowledging that there is no such autonomy, but that true freedom of reason comes only through submission to the Word of God. What Scripture calls for is sanctified reason under the higher authority of the Word of God. This surrender is not a "blind obedience" that accepts an inevitable destiny or fate that cannot be changed. Blind obedience lacks the aspect of willing surrender, which cannot be divorced from true obedience, and it also excludes all attempts to understand God's Word more fully.

But having said all that, how do we respond to the view that we are in fact doomed to use our *own* reason in making "reasonable" decisions about questionable or unclear passages in Scripture.

Without claiming to have all the answers let me, nevertheless, make the following observation:

In order to answer the above mentioned charge we have to point out certain presuppositions on which Adventist theology has functioned so far. One of these basic presuppositions of Adventist theology has been and still is: the clarity of Scripture! In doing theology, in using Scripture as the source and norm for our theology, Adventists have accepted the fundamental Reformation principle of the clarity of Scripture.⁹⁵

The clarity of Scripture is inseparably connected with belief in the unity of Scripture⁹⁶ and is in harmony with Scripture's self-testimony, namely, that God is the ultimate author of all Scripture. God, as Creator, is perfectly capable of communicating clearly with man who is created in His image.⁹⁷ Thus, the clarity of God's Word to man is a fundamental ingredient in God's effectual communication with humanity.

If Scripture is intrinsically unclear, then we are thrown back to the Roman Catholic position that an extra Scriptural source is required as a hermeneutical key to interpret Scripture authoritatively for us, be that tradition, reason, or experience. To hold to the intrinsic "un-clarity" of Scripture makes us dependent on other authorities such as the teaching magisterium of the church or the "priesthood of the historians," the latter making us dependent on a small elite of historical-critical scholars⁹⁸ who tell us authoritatively what is acceptable in interpretation and what is to be dismissed.

To maintain the clarity of Scripture is to free the Bible once more for the "common people." If Scripture is allowed to be its own interpreter, to be the sole source of its own exposition, we have Scriptural guidelines that will guide, direct, and shape our investigation of God's Word.⁹⁹

Conclusion

The point of departure in an authentic Adventist theology is not reason, nor is it experience, nor is it tradition, nor is it the majority vote. Rather, it is the divine revelation of God's written Word, Holy Scripture. The criterion for Adventist theology is not derived from immanent factors, be it some form of inner ex-

perience¹⁰⁰ or one's own reason, but from God's Word which comes to us from without, and which is to be followed faithfully.

This means that our theological method is built on faith and faithful reason, that is, reason which is faithful to God's Word. This position leaves behind fideistic and rationalistic reductions in their different forms. Unlike the blind leap of Existentialism, where faith is disconnected from reason, biblical faith is a leap into the hands of God. It is a trusting submission to the Word of the living God, who speaks and who waits for our obedient response.

In different forms of rationalistic theology reason is not seen to be affected by sin, and, therefore, deems itself capable of judging "objectively" what is right and what is wrong. But Adventist theology does not elevate reason to the point where it becomes the arbiter of truth. This distinguishes Adventist theology from liberal theology and as well as from Fundamentalism.

It seems that Fundamentalists by and large have accepted inductive scientific rationalism to defend the trustworthiness of Scripture and their position.¹⁰¹ This "scientific," rational approach to Scripture, however, has the tendency to judge the truth of the Bible in terms of its correspondence to scientifically established data. Thus, as Mark Corner has aptly observed,

Despite its overt hostility to 'liberalism' it could be claimed that fundamentalism shares with its opponent a reductionistic, scientific mentality, and that in some ways both come from the same stable. One uses science to reject the Christian faith as traditionally perceived, the other uses it to prove it; neither is sufficiently aware of problems concerning the nature and limitations of its particular scientific approach.¹⁰²

Instead of abandoning reason Adventist theology holds to the renewal of reason through the converting power of God, making reason faithful and willing to follow the higher authority of the revealed Word of God.

But does the obedience to the Word of God inhibit the freedom of reason? On the contrary, Scripture establishes it. Scripture clearly teaches that true freedom is found only in obedient submission to the Word of God—otherwise man is captive to sin. By submitting to Scripture only in part—as far as reason will allow—our minds are not wholly free for truth.¹⁰³

As Adventists we have repeatedly emphasized that our faith includes more than mere "doctrines." It includes a wholistic lifestyle which involves the entire person. This is not restricted only to the things we eat and watch and do or don't do, but also includes the way we think, the way we do research, the way we use our intellect. We have rightly taught that man is a unity, where the spiritual, physical and mental aspects are interconnected and influence each other. But it appears that too often we have emphasized only the spiritual and physical aspects and have cut off the intellectual aspects in our theology. We often emphasize "mental excellence," but rarely talk about "mental obedience" to the Word of God.

Scripture adduces many examples where people of God have demonstrated this mental excellence by being faithful to the word of God. Let me ask you: How reasonable was it for Moses to guide the Israelites in the Exodus? How reasonable was it for Abraham and Sarah to expect a son? How reasonable was it for God to become man? How reasonable was it for Jesus Christ to be resurrected from the dead? How reasonable is it for God to forgive our sins and give free salvation? How reasonable is it to expect Christ to return in the clouds of heaven for a second time to take us home?

God's love for us cannot be explained naturally! It goes to show that we need to *remember* what kind of God we serve. This will help us to put things back into the right perspective, namely, to follow the example of the biblical heroes of faith and of Jesus Christ who built their theology on the only foundation on which Adventist theology can maintain its Scriptural mandate: on the Word of God alone.

Endnotes

¹ This illustration is taken from David R. Hall's delightfully corrective book *The Seven Pillories of Wisdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), vii, in which he critically examines seven popular arguments of the historical-critical method that have been used by scholars during the last century and a half and that have often been uncritically perpetuated in good faith by their followers to this very day.

² Cf. the examples mentioned in Raoul Dederen, "On Inspiration and Biblical Authority," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, eds. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers, vol. 1 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), p. 91. Hereinafter this book will be referred to as *Issues*.

³ Donald G. Bloesch, *Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 35.

⁴ Cf. E. Edward Zinke, "The Pilgrimage of a Believer," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 3/2 (1992): 111-122.

⁵ In recent times two major attempts have been made by Adventist scholars to wrestle with the question of the role of reason in theology: Fernando Luis Canale, "A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions," Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 10 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), and Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1991). Strangely, Rice does not even mention Canale's book. Neither does he take up nor interact with the substantial contribution of Canale on this issue.

⁶ From an Adventist perspective see the compact but penetrating presentation by E. Edward Zinke, "A Conservative Approach to Theology," Supplement to the *Ministry* 50 (October, 1977): 24A-24P. This article is still available by writing to: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A.

⁷ "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word." Article One: "The Holy Scriptures" reads as follows: "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history." Quoted in *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1992* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992): 5. Cf. also the presentation in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), p. 4, esp. pp. 11-14, which does not mention the preamble, however.

⁸ "But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, . . . not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 595. On Ellen White's relation to the Bible she is equally clear that the Bible alone remains the standard: "The testimonies of Sister White should not be carried to the front. God's Word is the unerring standard. The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word. . . . Let all prove their positions from the Scriptures and substantiate every point they claim as truth from the revealed Word of God." Letter 12, 1890, in Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), p. 256.

⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), pp. 39-58, esp. pp. 40-42. Erickson's typology on the relationship between theology and philosophy can equally be applied to reason, since philosophy is the product of reason.

¹⁰ "On Prescription against Heretics," 7, *The Ante-Nicean Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 3: 246. Hereinafter this work will be referred to as *ANF*. Tertullian's statement, however, should not be interpreted to mean that he was a blind irrationalist. His belief that some things, like the crucifixion, are simply too wonderful to be understood is not a general claim that belief is irrational. Cf. Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, 3 vol., revised edition (Nashville, TN: Abigdon Press, 1989), 1:175, with further literature. Yet even Tertullian who wanted to affirm nothing that went beyond faith admitted Stoic thought into theology, for example, by conceiving God and the soul as special kinds of bodies. "Ad Praxean," 7 *ANF* 3:601f.

¹¹ Cf. *WA* 51, 126, 6-8; 127, 10; 128, 2f; 129, 10. Such statements, need to be seen in the

light of Luther's whole thinking on the role of reason which appears to be more balanced. Cf. the detailed studies by Bernhard Lohse, *Ratio und Fides. Eine Untersuchung über die RATIO in der Theologie Luthers* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958); B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); and Friedrich Beiser, "Luthers Urteil über die 'Vernunft'," *Theologische Beiträge* 15 (1984): 150-162.

12 Cf. Gerald R. Cragg, *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1964), pp. 62-92.

13 Pannenberg has called this "receiving reason." Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Faith and Reason," in *Basic Questions in Theology*, transl. by George H. Kehm (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983) 2:57-59. A brief overview of the Greek concept of reason can be found in Thomas Whittaker, "Reason," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 10:593-595. For an in-depth analysis and critique of the Greek concept of reason which has permeated much of theology see Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason*, esp. 285-387.

14 So also Pannenberg, "Faith and Reason," 58.

15 Canale has shown that despite a different emphasis on reason in modern times, the basic primordial presupposition of Greek reason has remained the same. Canale, *A Criticism of Theological Reason*, 19-159.

16 The term "Enlightenment" is a self-designation which was used by the followers of this movement. In the English speaking world it is sometimes also identified with the "Age of Reason." The Enlightenment covers roughly the period from the mid 1600s to the late 1700s and is of crucial importance to the issue under investigation because during this period one can notice a revolution in the understanding of the role of Scripture in theology. The literature on this period is immense. For a helpful introduction to the Enlightenment as it relates to theology and philosophy see Rainer Piepmeier, "Aufklärung: I. Philosophisch," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, eds. Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 4:575-594; and Martin Schmidt, "Aufklärung: II. Theologisch," in *ibid.*, 4:594-608 with further literature.

17 "The ideal of the Enlightenment is the duty of not entertaining any belief that is not warranted by rational evidence, which means by the assent of autonomous reason rather than biblical or ecclesiastical authority." James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 3. Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith: A Historical Sketch from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), p. 44, observes that today "reason has taken over the place of revelation."

18 René Descartes is almost universally considered to be the originator of modern philosophy. According to Laurence J. LaFleur he has far surpassed any other individual or event in the extent of his influence in determining the characteristics of modernity. One major element of his influence can be seen in his disbelief in authoritarianism and a belief in the unique adequacy of each individual's reason for the discovery of truth. Laurence J. LaFleur, "Introduction," in René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, transl. by Laurence J. LaFleur (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), vii-viii.

19 Friedrich Beiser, "Irrwege und Wege historisch-kritischer Bibelwissenschaft," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 15 (1973): 195, 200.

20 Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" transl. and ed. by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1959): 85.

21 The supremacy of the rational became absolute when reason alone was given normative authority. As early as 1675 Glanville argued in his book *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* that reason is "in a sense, the Word of God. . . written upon our minds and hearts; as Scripture is that which is written in a Book." He concludes by saying: "Follow reason, for no article of faith can contradict it, and every article of faith must agree thereto." The quotation is taken from H. D. McDonald, *Theories of Revelation: An Historical Study 1700-1960* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), pp. 35-36. Later John Locke, the founder of rational theology in England said that "reason must be our last judge in everything." John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, sect.

14, as quoted in McDonald, pp. 41-42. Nothing contrary to reason was accepted on the supposed authority of revelation. Rather, revelation itself must have the approval of reason. Cf. McDonald, p. 42; and Gragg, pp. 62-154.

22 On the Socinians, see Klaus Scholder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology: Origins and Problems of Biblical Criticism in the Seventeenth Century*, transl. by John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 26-45.

23 On the Deist's, see Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, transl. by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 289-410; Gragg, 62-92; and McDonald, pp. 33-62.

24 This is shown in the following studies: Paul Althaus, *Die Prinzipien der deutschen reformierten Dogmatik im Zeitalter der aristotelischen Scholastik* (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1914; reprint: Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), pp. 201-273, esp. 268, 271; Hans-Martin Barth, *Atheismus und Orthodoxie: Analysen und Modelle christlicher Apologetik im 17. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), esp. pp. 314-315; and Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism: A Study of Theological Prolegomena* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), p. 303.

25 J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture: A Study of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible* (London: Methuen & Co., 1957), p. 94.

26 So Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, transl. by Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:119-120. Orthodoxy did not produce the Enlightenment, as Otto Weber has pointed out, but "Orthodoxy prepared the way for rationalism as the preferred and characteristic thought structure of the Age of Enlightenment, especially theological Rationalism." *Ibid.*, 1:129.

27 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. by J. M. D. Meiklejohn (Everyman's Library, 909) (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1950), p. 10.

28 Here Paul Ricoeur's recent proposal to return to a so called "second naïveté" is no help either because this Ricoeurian "second naïveté" is not a return to a faithful listening to God's revelation in Scripture but remains within the limits of historical reason alone. Paul Ricoeur proposes the idea of a "second naïveté" in basic form in the last chapter of his book *The Symbolism of Evil*, transl. by Emerson Buchanan (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 347-357, also 19. Ricoeur himself states that he aims at a "second naïveté in and through criticism," and further elaborates on this by saying that "all criticism 'demythologizes' insofar as it is criticism; that is to say, it always adds to the separation of the historical (according to the rules of the critical method) and the pseudo-historical." *Ibid.*, pp. 351, 352, emphasis added. For Ricoeur, the text decontextualizes itself and distances itself from the original intention of the author as the context of reading changes. This is delineated in his influential little book *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976). This "surplus of meaning" that according to Ricoeur is characteristic of every text makes it impossible for the Biblical text to function in an authoritative way in any objective or propositional sense, "since the openedness of hermeneutics compels the interpreter to deconstruct the text of any claim to changeless original meaning and to reconstruct it within contemporary contexts that are continually subject to the dynamics of change. . . . This means that the original semantic signs of Scripture are not normative as the inspired and unchanging Word of God for all historical contexts. Ricoeur's hermeneutical method requires that the present meaning of a biblical text, as it exists for me existentially and for the church corporately in worship, is not tied referentially and objectively to its original historical context." Royce Gordon Gruenler, *Meaning and Understanding: The Philosophical Framework for Biblical Interpretation*, *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), pp. 103-104. In this Ricoeur's hermeneutical work functions, in his own words, "not at all as a rejection of Bultmann or even as a supplement to his work, but as somehow a foundation supporting it." Paul Ricoeur, "Preface to Bultmann," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. with an Introduction by Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 72. In the words of Gruenler, "Ricoeur allows the presuppositions of the critical ego to demythologize the Scriptures of their claim to objective theological authority . . ." so

that it is "in fact the autonomous self who controls the rules of the game." Gruenler, 105-106. For a sympathetic criticism of Ricoeur's approach see the recent studies by Werner G. Jeanrond, *Test and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking*, transl. by Thomas J. Wilson (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 37-72; and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁹ Beisser, "Irrwege und Wege historisch-kritischer Bibelwissenschaft," p. 197. More recently this has been pointed out by Gerhard Noller, *Metaphysik und Theologische Realisation. Das Ende der metaphysischen Grundstellung der Neuzeit und die Neubestimmung auf die theologische Wirklichkeit der Bibel* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1990).

³⁰ The so called postmodernists aim at a deconstruction of any perspective that claims absolute authority. Instead they celebrate relativism or pluralism as the nature of the human condition. The strong postmodernists like Derrida and Lyotard, for instance, seek no foundations for rationality and have doubts about the project of rationality itself. In that they actually foster a nihilistic attitude. For a helpful overview of postmodern thought as it relates to theology, see William C. Placher, "Postmodern Theology," in *A New Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), pp. 372-375; Ted Peters, "Toward Postmodern Theology, Part I and Part II," *Dialog, A Journal for Theology* 24 (1985): 221-226, 293-297; Nancey Murphy and James Wm. McClendon, Jr., "Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies," *Modern Theology* 5/3 (1989): 191-214; and Craig Van Geldern, "Postmodernism as an Emerging Worldview," *Calvin Theological Journal* 26 (1991): 412-417.

³¹ David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

³² Noller, p. 129.

³³ Cf. Reinhard Slenczka, "Schrift—Tradition—Kontext. Die Krise des Schriftprinzips und das ökumenische Gespräch," in *Evangelische Schriftauslegung. Ein Quellen und Arbeitsbuch für Studium und Gemeinde*, eds. Joachim Cochlovius and Peter Zimmerling (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1987), pp. 424-453.

³⁴ Here the famous proposal of a "hermeneutics of consent" by Peter Stuhlmacher should be mentioned, where Stuhlmacher calls for a new listening to the claims of tradition in addition and beyond the historical critical method. Cf. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik*, 2nd revised and enlarged edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), pp. 222-256; idem, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, transl. by Roy A. Harrisville (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 83-87. Cf. also idem, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Vol. 1: Grundlegung von Jesus zu Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), pp. 10-11. Christian Stawenow has shown that for Stuhlmacher it is not possible to leave aside taking into account church tradition for the interpretation of Scripture. Christian Stawenow, "Historische und Geistliche Hermeneutik bei Peter Stuhlmacher," unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Kirchliches Oberseminar Naumburg, 1986, p. 97.

³⁵ Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press), 1991.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 91.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 93.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 91.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 90, 97.

⁴² Ibid., p. 88.

⁴³ James White, *A Word to the Little Flock*, 1847, p. 13. That position was affirmed in 1849 in a statement in *Present Truth*, the earliest Seventh-day Adventist periodical: "The Bible is our chart—our guide. It is our only rule for faith and practice, to which we would closely adhere." *Present Truth*, December 1849. Similarly the Statement number three on Scripture in the *Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practices by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steampress, 1872), which reads: "That the Holy

Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of his will to man and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the words "pluralism" and "diversity" are often confused by some in our midst, apparently, because of James White's 1853 statement: "As a people we are brought together from divisions of the Advent body [the Millerites], and from the various denominations, holding different views on some subjects. . . ." (*Review and Herald* (August 11, 1853), 4:52). It must be remembered, however, that our Adventist pioneers stood united in their acceptance of Scripture alone as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice; therefore, it is more appropriate to speak of a *diversity* of opinions among them, rather than of a "theological pluralism." The difference in wording is of no small importance. Let me explain: The word *diversity* implies that there is a common basis on which different opinions can be tackled and resolved. Pluralism, on the other hand, expresses the idea that there are conflicting truth-claims that stand in competition with each other because there is no common basis, or starting point. Thus, if Adventist hermeneutic starts out pluralistic, as some are suggesting it should, the church cannot arrive at a unified understanding of truth. This may explain why today a unity on Scriptural grounds within the church is so difficult to achieve. Instead of standing united on the sure foundation of God's written Word, some are attempting to keep the pluralistic and conflicting viewpoints in the church "together" either by means of sociological or cultural reasons, or by appealing to our common heritage or tradition. Such humanly constructed solidarity (which is what pluralism really is), however, cannot hold together that which can only be achieved through the Word of God. This conclusion is supported by the above quoted statement by James White which continues with the following words: ". . . ; yet, thank Heaven, the Sabbath is a mighty platform on which we can all stand united. And while standing here, with the aid of no other creed than the Word of God, and bound together by the bonds of love—love for the truth, love for each other, and love for a perishing world—'which is stronger than death,' all party feelings are lost. We are united in these great subjects: Christ's immediate personal second Advent, and the observance of all of the commandments of God, and the faith of his Son Jesus Christ, as necessary to a readiness for his Advent."

⁴⁵ Hans-Martin Barth, pp. 314-315. Cf. Michael Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); see also Karl-Heinz Michel, *Immanuel Kant und die Frage der Erkennbarkeit Gottes. Eine kritische Untersuchung der 'Transzendentalen Ästhetik' in der 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft' und ihrer theologischen Konsequenz* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1987), 235-237.

⁴⁶ For the following section I would like to express my indebtedness to the insights gained from two unpublished research papers by my wife. Cf. Ulrike Hasel, "Das Hebräische Konzept von Erkennen bei Jesaja," unpublished research paper, Andrews University, 1988; idem, "The Biblical Presuppositions of Human Knowledge and Understanding as Derived from Hebrew and Greek Terms and Selected Passages from the Old Testament," unpublished research paper, Andrews University, 1992. The ideas presented in those papers as well as the constructive criticism of my wife during the developing stages of this article have contributed significantly to the content of it.

⁴⁷ The English word "reason" has a large number and a wide variety of meanings and uses. On the different meanings and uses of the word "reason" see G. J. Warnock, "Reason," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 7:83-85. Etymologically it is derived from the Latin word "ratio," which itself has a number of different connotations; see "Ratio," in *The Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 1575-1576.

⁴⁸ Heinz-Peter Hempelmann, "Vernunft, Verstand," in *Das Große Bibellexikon*, eds. Helmut Burkhardt et al (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1989), 3: 1635.

⁴⁹ Alberto Soggin, "Imago Dei—Neue Überlegungen zu Genesis 1, 26," in *Altes Testament und christliche Verkündigung*, Festschrift für Antonius H. J. Gunneweg, eds. Manfred Oeming and Axel Graupner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987), pp. 385-389.

⁵⁰ Gerhard F. Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1980), p. 37.

⁵¹ W. Schottroff, "jd'—erkennen," in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten*

Testament, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1984), 1: 685. Hereinafter this work will be referred to as *THAT*.

52 In this we follow Heinz-Peter Hempelmann, "Erkennen, Erkenntnis," in *Das Große Bibellexikon*, eds. Helmut Burkhardt et al (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1987), 1:326-328.

53 Jack P. Lewis, "yada—know," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:366. Hereinafter this work is referred to as *TWOT*.

54 For eg. Exod 6:7; Deut 4:35; 1 Kgs 18:37; Isa 49:23; etc.

55 E. D. Schmitz, "Knowledge, Experience, Ignorance," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 2:395. Hereinafter this work is referred to as *NIDNTT*.

56 Schottroff, p. 690. The relational aspect of *yada'* comes out most forcefully in connection with the sexual knowing of ones marital spouse.

57 Hempelmann, "Erkennen," p. 326.

58 Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 66.

59 For a further development of the relational-treaty background of the term *yada'* see Herbert B. Huffmann, "The Treaty Background of Hebrew *yada'*," *BASOR* 181 (1966): 31-37.

60 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Wisdom Theology and the Center of Old Testament Theology," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 50/3 (1978):137. Whybray summarizes the concept of the fear of God as follows: "The concept of 'fearing Yahweh' thus included every aspect of Israel's relationship to him: obedience, loyalty, worship, sacrifice and love. . . ." R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs* (London: SCM, 1965), p. 96.

61 Kaiser, p. 138.

62 Schmitz, p. 395. Cf. also Rudolf Bultmann, "*ginosko*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, transl. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:697. Hereinafter this work is referred to by *TDNT*.

63 Schmitz, p. 392.

64 Schmitz, p. 392.

65 Cf. Schmitz, p. 398.

66 Hempelmann, "Erkennen," p. 328.

67 Jesus qualifies Christians as being "friends of God," John, 15:15.

68 The above discussed meaning of *ginosko* is also essentially applicable to the Greek word "*oida*—to know," which can be synonymous with *ginosko*. Cf. Heinrich Seesemann, "Oida," in *TDNT*, 5:116-117.

69 Louis Goldberg, "*Bin*," in *TWOT*, 1:103.

70 Helmer Ringgren, "*bin, binah, tebunah*," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, transl. by John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:99. Hereinafter this work will be referred to as *TDOT*.

71 Goldberg, p. 103.

72 Goldberg, p. 104.

73 J. Goetzmann, "*synesis*," *NIDNTT*, 3:130; Hans Conzelmann, "*synesis*," *TDNT*, 7:890-891.

74 Goetzmann, p. 131.

75 Goetzmann, p. 132.

76 F. Stolz, "*leb—Herz*," *THAT* 1:861.

77 Cf. Stolz, 1:862-863; Theo Sorg, "*kardia*," in *NIDNTT*, 2:181.

78 Cf. Hempelmann, "Vernunft," 1635.

79 Goldberg, p. 104.

80 Cf. Heinz-Josef Fabry, "*leb, lebab*," in *TWAT*, 4:413-451; Sorg, 181; and Johannes Behm, "*Kardia*," in *TDNT*, 3:609-611.

81 G. Harder, "*nous*," in *NIDNTT*, 3:124.

82 Cf. Hempelmann, "Vernunft," p. 1635.

83 A striking feature of the NT use of *kardia*, (heart) for instance is the essential

closeness to the concept of *nous*, (mind). According to Sorg, 182, heart and mind can be used in parallel (cf. 2 Cor 3:14f) or synonymously (Phi 4:7).

84 Cf. Johannes Behm, "*Kardia*," in *TDNT*, 3:611-613.

85 So Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985), 5. Similarly earlier Raymond F. Cottrell, *Reason and Faith* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), pp. 18, 21, 37.

86 Walther Köhler, *Dogmengeschichte als Geschichte des christlichen Selbstbewusstseins: Das Zeitalter der Reformation* (Zurich: Max Niehans Verlag, 1951), p. 135.

87 Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith*, p. 84. In this Rice echoes the program of Johann Salomo Semler, one of the founding fathers of historical criticism. See Gottfried Hornig, *Die Anfänge der historisch-kritischen Theologie. Johann Salomo Semlers Schriftverständnis und seine Stellung zu Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), esp. pp. 84-115. It appears that the historical-critical method is per definition in principle not capable of dealing with history in all its dimensions and has an essentially a-historical character. This has recently been pointed out and criticized by Gerhard Maier in his monumental new book *Biblische Hermeneutik* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1991, second edition), pp. 232-244. It appears that those who use the historical-critical method, to use the immortal words of Irish philosopher George Berkeley, "first raised a dust and then complain that we cannot see." Quoted in Colin Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 63. We have argued elsewhere, that Scripture, in analogy to Christ's divine human nature, ". . . was given in time and space. But rather than being historically conditioned by immanent cause and effect relations, and thereby being rendered relative and not universally binding, God's written Word is divinely conditioned and historically constituted. Thus, it remains binding upon all men at all ages and in all places." Frank M. Hasel, "Reflections on the Authority and Trustworthiness of Scripture," in *Issues*, pp. 208-209.

88 J. I. Packer, "*Fundamentalism*" and the Word of God (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1958, reprint 1990), p. 140.

89 So Richard Rice, *The Reign of God*, p. 6.

90 Cf. Donald G. Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty: Toward and Evangelical Theology of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 192.

91 So George R. Knight, *Myth's in Adventism: An Interpretive Study of Ellen White, Education and Related Issues* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983), p. 23.

92 So Alden Thompson, *Inspiration*, 109. For a response to Thompson's use of so called "sanctified reason" see, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, "An Analysis and Evaluation of Alden Thompson's Casebook/Codebook Approach to the Bible," in *Issues*, pp. 43-46.

93 Ulrike Hasel, "The Biblical Presupposition of Human Knowledge and Understanding as Derived from Hebrew and Greek Key Terms and Selected Passages from the Old Testament," pp. 28-29, contra Knight, p. 23.

94 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1892), p. 115.

95 On the clarity of Scripture, see the important study by Friedrich Beisser, *Claritas Scripturae bei Martin Luther*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) esp. 168-169; and more recently the excellent study by Bernhard Rothen, *Die Klarheit der Schrift. Teil 1: Martin Luther: Die wiederentdeckten Grundlagen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

96 For an Adventist approach to the question of the unity of Scripture, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Unity of the Bible," Supplement to the *Ministry* 48 (May/1975): insert, 1U-16U.

97 Cf. the excellent article by Jack Barentsen, "The Validity of Human Language: A Vehicle for Divine Truth," *Grace Theological Journal* 9/1 (1988): 21-43; also Eckhard Schnabel, *Inspiration und Offenbarung. Die Lehre vom Ursprung und Wesen der Bibel* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 1986), pp. 130-137; and William J. Larkin, Jr. *Culture*

and *Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), pp. 242-251.

98 This term is coined by William Lane Craig, "Pannenberg's Beweis für die Auferstehung Jesu." *Kerygma und Dogma* 34 (1988): 92-93.

99 For a presentation of some Biblical Guidelines and Principles in interpretation see Richard Davidson, "A Hermeneutical Decalogue," *JATS* 4/2 (1993): 95-114.

100 It appears that a large segment of contemporary theology is reviving a new mystical knowledge of God. But as one person once so poignantly remarked: "Mysticism starts in mist—ends in schism—and is centered on the I."

101 Miroslav Volf, "The Challenge of Protestant Fundamentalism," *Concilium* (#3, 1992), pp. 101-102.

102 Mark Corner, "Fundamentalism," in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, eds. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (London: SCM Press, 1990), p. 244.

103 Packer, "Fundamentalism," p. 144.

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THE WORD OF GOD IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Miroslav M. Kis

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University

In the beginning there was the Word of God (John 1:1). This Word, infinitely more powerful and more effective than any human word ever uttered in its echo, created worlds, beings and things (Ps 33:6-9). No sooner were Adam and Eve created than God blessed them and spoke to them (Gen 1:28). Since then, through the ages, in many and various ways, God has kept open the lines of communication. Through visions, dreams, the audible voice, conscience, events in human history, and ultimately through the presence of His Son among humans, He has maintained His Word, present and active (Heb 1:1-2).

Many of these revelatory events are found, gathered under the direction of the Holy Spirit through the process called inspiration, in the document called the Bible. The Bible is, therefore, the creative and revealing Word in the form of a document. Because of the involvement of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is not just a collection of ancient, pious sayings about God, but actually is the Word of God.

My thesis is that Seventh-day Adventist ethics must have the Word of God as foundation. Any other approach, any other basis of authority is insufficient. There can be no genuine Adventist ethics where the basis is not Scripture.

Alternative Approaches

For long centuries the official Christian church made great efforts to keep Scripture away from Christians. Reading the Scriptures was considered dangerous for spiritual health, and history