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The Book of Deuteronomy contains a recurring refrain that Moses addressed to the people on the borders of Canaan: Beware lest you forget the way the Lord has led you! (see Deut. 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7). Ellen White echoes this refrain in addressing God's remnant people: "We have nothing to fear for the future except as we forget the way the Lord has led us" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 31). What is true for ancient Israel and for God's spiritual remnant is also true for those among the remnant who have sensed God's special leading in the formation of the Adventist Theological Society.

Though a charter member of ATS, I have never publicly recounted the story behind the birth of the Society. As I begin my two-year term as its president, I believe it may be helpful to share my personal reflections.

I remember with special fondness

The Story Behind

ATS: A Personal Reflection

the first informal meeting of the SDA Theological Seminary professors in Boston in the fall of 1987. As we sipped piña colada in a tiny downtown cafe, we resolved to seek a venue through which scholars sharing the hermeneutical presuppositions of Bible-believing Adventism could gather for spiritual fellowship, constructive theological discussion, and presentation of papers. At the same time we felt that the venue's scope should include centrist Adventists beyond the confines of academic specialists in biblical scholarship.

Divine "Coincidence"

During the next school year we met a number of times to conceptualize the nature, function, and purpose of the organization. After making significant progress, and feeling the need of input from a wider arena than Andrews University, we voted to call colleagues at Southern College (now Southern

Adventist University). However, the very day we were planning to call, we received a call from them: Their religion department faculty had been doing the same kind of brainstorming we had, and without any knowledge of our project, they had felt strongly impressed to invite Andrews seminary professors to join them in an organizational meeting at Southern College. What striking evidence that the Holy Spirit had been at work on both campuses prompting and leading and timing events!

So it was that in the fall of 1988 a van-load of Andrews professors traveled to Southern College to meet with their religion department faculty for an unforgettable—and, I believe, historic—weekend. During our discussions, I sensed a unity of spirit, a depth of spiritual fellowship, a clarity of purpose, and efficiency of organization unequalled in any gathering I have attended. The Holy Spirit took charge in a way that I can liken only to the meetings of the early pioneers of Adventism. By week's end, the Adventist Theological Society was born, complete with constitution and bylaws, and its nucleus of charter members was ready to spend and to be spent in unapologetic support of the society's mission.

That mission, which appears as a preamble to the ATS Constitution, clearly expresses the convictions and

vision of the charter members: ATS would be an international, professional, nonprofit organization established to foster biblical, theological, and historical studies supportive of spiritual revival and reformation within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The society would seek to do this by: upholding the fundamental biblical beliefs of the church; promoting sound, centrist, biblical scholarship and interpretation among Adventist biblical scholars and all other SDA members; creating a spiritual and intellectual atmosphere for the exchange of ideas among members and offering them moral support and collegiality; providing opportunity for reading, discussing, and disseminating scholarly papers through ATS meetings, seminars, and publications.

Doctrines Under Attack

Charter members in that first organizational meeting also recognized the need to focus upon key biblical doctrines under attack within Adventism and the Christian church at large. These were incorporated into the preamble to the ATS Constitution and the criteria for ATS membership as well. They included: Christ's substitutionary sacrifice; the authority of Scripture; rejection of all hermeneutical methods—including the historical-critical method—that undermined *Sola Scriptura*; the role and authority of the Spirit of

Prophecy; the literal reading of Genesis 1-11; the biblical teaching on the heavenly sanctuary and the pre-advent investigative judgment beginning in 1844; identification of the SDA Church as the remnant movement called to proclaim the three angels' messages to prepare the world for the soon and literal return of Christ; and faithfulness to the SDA Church, by supporting it through personal effort and influence, as well as tithes and offerings.

By His Grace

During the past eight years the developing ATS has implemented these basic goals outlined by the charter members under the direction, I believe, of the Spirit of God. By His grace, and under the able leadership of presidents Jack Blanco, Gerhard Hasel, Ray Holmes, and Ed Zinke, the society has grown from a fledgling organization to an international network of nearly 1,500 members. Included are seminary professors and college Bible teachers; General Conference officers; division, union, and conference presidents and other officers; scholars from the Biblical Research Institute and the Geoscience Research Institute; pastors, teachers and editors; physicians, lawyers, other professionals; and a host of lay thinkers interested in biblical-theological issues.

Yearly international conventions

have provided an atmosphere of joyful spiritual fellowship around the world. In *Perspective Digest* No. 2 Ed Zinke reported on this year's convention held at Montemorelos University, with all SDA pastors of Mexico in attendance and presenters representing 20 countries.

Scholarly Meetings

In the fall of each year, scholarly meetings held in connection with the Evangelical Theological Society have provided not only time for SDA scholarly collegiality but also opportunity to fellowship with, and dispel misconceptions and subsequent prejudice of, Evangelical scholars who often attend our sessions. Regional chapters of ATS are active throughout the Americas as well as in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Russia. In connection with our fall scholarly meetings, we have also begun to hold Bible conferences, co-sponsored by the Biblical Research Institute and local conferences, intended for pastors and lay members interested in studying the Bible in greater depth than most Sabbath services afford. All ATS conventions and Bible conferences are professionally recorded and videotaped—available from International Learning Systems (Andrews University) and American Cassette Ministries (1-800-233-4450).

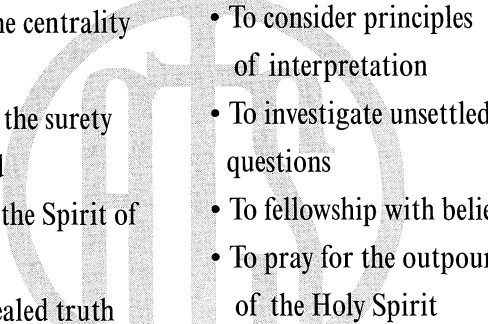
ATS also sponsors a number of special projects. Roy Gane, semi-

nary Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages, spearheads an ongoing project utilizing doctoral students in the preparation of a comprehensive annotated bibliography of Adventist theological writings. Another project provides scholarships for graduate students. Another raises funds for Ellen White CD-ROM's for Adventist colleges and seminaries worldwide. ATS provided nearly \$43,000 to purchase land for a new seminary in the Czech Republic. Under the general supervision of Randy Younker, seminary Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Archaeology, ATS produces a num-

ber of publications, including the scholarly *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* and a series of monographs, occasional papers, and dissertations. Norman Gulley, Southern Adventist University Professor of Systematic Theology, edits a biannual newsletter, and Roland Hegstad edits our new quarterly venture, *Perspective Digest*.

As I begin my term as president of ATS and consider the way God has led in the birth and growth of the society to be a significant factor in furthering the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I can only joyfully exclaim, "What hath God wrought!" □

GOALS OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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- To affirm the centrality of the cross
 - To reaffirm the surety of the Word
 - To confirm the Spirit of Prophecy
 - To seek revealed truth
 - To consider principles of interpretation
 - To investigate unsettled questions
 - To fellowship with believers
 - To pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

See page 70 for information on how to become a member of ATS and to receive its publications.