

Sanctuary Debate: A Question of Method

by Raymond F. Cottrell

Time and again competent non-Adventist Bible scholars have acknowledged that there is a biblical basis for cardinal points of Adventist faith such as the Sabbath, the second Advent and the nature of man. But without exception, and often in the most emphatic terms, they denounce our interpretation of Daniel 8:14 as eisegesis of the worst sort, that is as reading *into* Scripture concepts that cannot, by any fair application of generally recognized principles of interpretation, be drawn *from* Scripture. Seventh-day Adventists identify the sanctuary mentioned in Daniel 8:40 as the sanctuary in heaven referred to in the book of Hebrews, and they understand its cleansing as the blotting out of the confessed sins of God's repentant people during the course of an investigative judgment, on an antitypical day of atonement that began in 1844.

Upon more than one occasion, Adventist teachings that cluster around Daniel 8:14

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have proved to be an impassible barrier to the thoughtful consideration of the Advent message as a credible, authentic message from God for our time. This comment by Dr. Harold Lindsell in *Christianity Today* ten years before he became editor of that journal is typical:

SDA claims its teachings are based upon the Bible. But an examination of its "Fundamental Beliefs" published in the volume *Questions on Doctrine* reveals some interesting exceptions. "Fundamental Beliefs" contain 22 propositions, beginning with a statement on the Scriptures and the Trinity, then moving through the gamut of theology. In each instance the biblical passages are listed at the end of each statement showing the grounds on which their convictions are founded. Without biblical backing, however, are statements 13, 14, and 15. These deal with one of the touchiest segments of Adventist teaching — the 70 weeks and 2300 years and the cleansing of the sanctuary. The date 1844, which involves the 2300 years and the cleansing of the sanctuary, are pivotal of SDA faith. Destroy these and certain conclusions are self-evident. There would be no adequate basis for the existence of SDA.

But there are *no* definite statements in the Bible which support the view of SDA on this point. Their conclusions are derived from the teachings of Mrs. White, which, in turn, are the result of her *interpretation* of the Bible.¹

The invariable rule appears to be that the more a non-Adventist knows about the Bible, the less disposed he is to look with favor on the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 or to become a Seventh-day Adventist.² The fact that no competent non-Adventist Bible scholar, whatever his position on the conservative-liberal spectrum, has ever accepted the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 should be a matter for sober reflection on our part. It also suggests the desirability of (1) a careful reexamination of the basic assumptions and the principles of exegesis on which we have based our interpretation of this — for Adventism — indispensable passage of Scripture, (2) the formulation of a valid, adequate hermeneutic, if such be possible, and (3) an application of this hermeneutic to the passage in question.

My personal quest for an acceptable hermeneutic for Daniel 8:14 began when a series of events culminated in 1958. I first became aware of the problem while teaching the class in Daniel and the Revelation over a period of years prior to taking up editorial work in 1952. However, there seemed to be no pressing reason at that time for an in-depth study of Daniel, especially in view of the fact that during those earlier years I was involved in a series of major Bible study projects focusing on the book of Revelation and on sound principles of biblical interpretation.

The first major incentive to devote serious attention to the problem in Daniel 8:14 arose during the course of editing the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, between 1952 and 1957. It came into sharp focus for the first time as we were preparing Volume 4 of the *Commentary* (which includes comment on the Book of Daniel) for publication. The editors' basic principle was to be faithful to the meaning of each passage of Scripture, as determined by its own language, context and historical setting. The endeavor to apply these

principles to Daniel 8:14 made the *Commentary* editors more keenly aware of the problem than we had been before. However, the rigorous publication schedule prevented further consideration of the matter at that time.

Within a few months after the publication of Volume 4 of the *Commentary* came the series of protracted doctrinal discussions with Walter R. Martin and Donald Grey Barnhouse. The editors of the *Commentary* were not directly involved in those discussions, but those who were — not having a knowledge of biblical languages themselves — came to us almost daily over a period of several months for assistance on a wide range of matters of biblical interpretation, including Daniel 8 and 9. This made us still further aware of problems in the book of Daniel.

Toward the close of the Martin-Barnhouse discussions, it was decided to publish Adventist replies to their questions about our beliefs, under the title, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*. Members of the editorial committee appointed by the General Conference officers to shape the material for publication likewise consulted at length with the *Commentary* editors on matters of exegesis. Walter Martin had asked for an official statement of Adventist beliefs to which he could refer in his book, and *Questions on Doctrine* was intended to come as close to being such an official statement as an unofficial publication could be.³

Finally, in 1958, it was necessary to prepare new plates for the book *Bible Readings*, inasmuch as the old plates were worn out. It was desired to bring *Bible Readings* up to date and, wherever necessary, into harmony with the recently published *Bible Commentary*. For this reason, the work of revision was assigned to the editors of the *Bible Commentary* — F. D. Nichol, Don Neufeld and myself. Quite by accident, the portion of *Bible Readings* Elder Nichol assigned to me included the section on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. With the statements by Lindsell, Barnhouse, Martin and others ringing in my ears, I cast about for a more effective and convincing way of presenting our beliefs related to Daniel 8:14, in order — if possible — to surmount the barrage of criticism that had come

to focus on our interpretation of this text. The 1958 edition of *Bible Readings* reflects this attempt. I was well aware of the inadequacy of what appears there, but it was the best that could be done at that time.

While editing *Bible Readings*, and in counsel with Elder Nichol as chief editor of the revision, I wrote to 27 leading Adventist Bible scholars for their response to a series of six carefully formulated questions designed to bring the best contemporary Adventist biblical scholarship to bear on the question. All 27 responded, many at considerable length. A careful analysis and synthesis of their replies provided no additional help with respect to the problems arising from our interpretation of Daniel 8:14, and made evident that we had no satisfactory answer to the criticisms being directed against our interpretation of this key Adventist passage. Thirteen replied that they knew of no other valid basis for making such an application; seven based it on analogy; five, on the authority of Ellen White; two, on what they referred to as a “fortunate accident” in translation.⁴ Not one of the 27 believed that there was a linguistic or contextual basis for applying Daniel 8:14 to the heavenly sanctuary, an antitypical day of atonement, or 1844.

As a result, Elder Nichol brought the results of the questionnaire to the attention of the president of the General Conference and the General Conference officers, who appointed a select “Committee on Problems in the Book of Daniel” and assigned it the task of giving careful study to the problems centering around Daniel 8:14.⁵ Members of the “Daniel Committee,” as it came to be called, were in agreement with respect to key Adventist teachings on the heavenly sanctuary and its cleansing, the investigative judgment and the 1844 experience.⁶ There were, however, decided differences of opinion as to a valid hermeneutic, or interpretation, on which to base these conclusions, and eventually two basic patterns of interpretation emerged. The majority considered it possible to establish the Adventist exposition of Daniel 8:14 directly from the Bible, chiefly by analogy with Genesis 1:5, Leviticus 16 and

Hebrews 9. To the minority, these were not valid analogies, from the viewpoint of biblical exegesis, and Ellen White’s confirmation of the explanations given and her reinterpretation were necessary as well.⁷ The majority and the minority both reached the same conclusions, but by different routes.

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The majority proposed, finally, that the traditional hermeneutic and interpretation be accepted as the consensus of the committee and as the basis of its report to the General Conference officers, along with inspirational and practical lessons designed to strengthen the faith of our people in the sanctuary doctrine as taught by Seventh-day Adventists. The report they suggested would mention neither the problems nor the minority hermeneutic as a possible solution to them.

To the minority, the proposed report would vitiate the original intention of the General Conference officers in setting up a committee they had designated, “Committee on *Problems* in the Book of Daniel.” Those to whom the traditional hermeneutic seemed so inadequate did not wish their names attached to it.

The minority, with a sincere desire not to stand in the way of the majority, but to be as cooperative with their expressed wish as possible, suggested four possible alternatives to the proposed report: (1) preferably, that a report be prepared fairly setting forth both points of view, or (2) that the proposed report be published without the names of the committee members attached to it, or (3) that members of the committee be authorized to submit papers for publication under their own names, without reference to the committee, or (4) that the minority, as a last re-

sort, be permitted to withdraw from the committee, thereby permitting *de facto* unanimity and the report the majority desired.

The minority felt that it would be dishonest on their part to agree to their names being attached to a report that would, in some circles, be acclaimed as a definitive solution to the problem by a blue ribbon committee and in others as an obscurantist whitewash of the problem, and which would in fact leave matters precisely where they had been when the committee took up its task four years earlier. As a result of this impasse, the committee finally agreed to issue no formal report, and authorized individual members to present papers on the subject for publication under their own names.⁸

About the time the revision of *Bible Readings* was complete—in 1958—I began a thorough investigation of Daniel 8:14, for my own information and in the hope of being able to provide something that would be useful to the church in view of the exegetical impasse. My 900-page manuscript entitled *The Eschatology of Daniel* is a report of this protracted study, which occupied a major part of my spare time over a period of nearly 15 years.⁹ The purpose of this study was not to *interpret* the eschatological passages of Daniel nor to *apply* them to the recorded events of history, but to ascertain as accurately as possible, from the words, the context and the historical setting Daniel himself provides, what the angel and the prophet intended readers of the book of Daniel to understand.

This study involved many steps. I first memorized the entire eschatological text of Daniel in Hebrew, until it flowed as freely and smoothly through my own mind, hopefully, as it had through the mind of Daniel. There followed an exhaustive word study of every significant Hebrew word (150 of them) that occurs in the eschatological text of Daniel, in every occurrence throughout the Old Testament but with special attention to its use by other Bible writers more or less contemporary with Daniel (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai,

Zechariah), and most particularly by Daniel himself in the context in which he uses it. These Hebrew terms were placed in their own immediate context, and in analogous contexts in the other eschatological passages of Daniel. Daniel's own thinking as he contemplated the information the angel revealed to him in vision was studied against the background of the eschatology of the entire Old Testament. This entire study formed the background for a paraphrastic translation that seeks to reflect the authentic import of what Daniel and the Holy Spirit intended his messages to convey, but avoids any attempt to ascertain or determine their import beyond what Daniel actually wrote.

It was necessary to formulate a method of interpretation by which to attain as accurate an understanding as possible of the import of the eschatological passages of Daniel for our time.¹⁰ This document of 200 pages is based on a detailed, inductive investigation of every passage of Scripture that sheds light on such matters as the manner in which God enters history to effect the plan of salvation, His relationship to ancient Israel under the covenant, the nature of predictive prophecy, the eschatology of the Old Testament, and that of the New Testament and Ellen White.

This exhaustive study of the eschatological text of Daniel, and a hermeneutic for understanding it, concluded that the exegesis of apocalyptic predictive prophecy is susceptible to historical-linguistic-contextual norms rigorously applied, as a necessary means by which to determine as precisely as possible what the inspired writer meant by what he wrote. Furthermore, when interpreting apocalyptic predictive prophecy, it is essential to consider the nature and purpose of apocalyptic as a literary genre, and to let the inspired writer himself determine the meaning of his symbolic figures and cryptic expressions. Thus, apocalyptic predictive prophecy should be understood in the terms of the historical situation that called it forth and to which it was originally addressed. Any application beyond that historical situation should be determined by later inspired writers. All predictive prophecy applicable to events within probationary time constitutes a declaration of the divine *purpose* and is al-

ways conditional on the cooperation of God's covenant people.

The study also recognized that the eschatological sections of Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 10-12 are all parallel, each with the others, and that each traces the future from Daniel's time down to and including the eschaton. Yet, two fundamental, discrete prophetic cycles appear in Daniel, one consisting of chapters 2 and 7, and the other of chapters 8-12. The vision of chapters 8:1-14 constitutes the basis for the explanatory passages of chapters 8:20-27, 9:24-27, and 11:1 to 12:13. The second cycle, consisting of chapters 8-12, constitutes a disclosure of the divine purpose with respect to ancient Israel for the restoration era designated as 70 weeks of years. Thus, the eschatology of Daniel, originally given within the historical setting of Israel as God's covenant people and the chosen instrument of His purpose in salvation history, was originally intended to apply strictly and exclusively to ancient Israel under the covenant relationship, and that everything Daniel wrote was originally to have been fulfilled to

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them within the 70 weeks of years of the restoration era following the Babylonian exile.

The eschatology of Daniel is consonant with all other Old Testament eschatology, particularly that of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah. A study of Old Testament eschatology as a whole clarifies, and is essential to, an understanding of Daniel's eschatology. We must realize, however, that Israel's withdrawal from the covenant relationship at the cross rendered the fulfillment of the eschatological predictions of Daniel moot, and that—like everything else related

to God's covenant with Israel — reinterpreted by a later inspired writer was necessary in order to reactivate the predictions and to ascertain their fulfillment within the new historical setting with the church as the covenant people and chosen instrument of the divine purpose. For example, Christ and the New Testament writers envisioned His return and the fulfillment of the eschatological predictions of Daniel within their own generation. Also, Christ (Matthew 24), Paul (2 Thessalonians 2) and John (Revelation 12-20) provide a reinterpretation of Daniel for New Testament times, and Ellen White provides a continuing reinterpretation appropriate for our time.¹¹

My study also concluded that in their original intent the he-goat, its four horns and its little horn were all originally intended to continue down to, and to include, the eschaton; that *Ereb-boqer* in Daniel 8:14 and 26 originally referred to the daily morning and evening ritual worship services in the temple; that each of these ritual services, in and of itself, constituted a complete and discrete unit, one each morning and another each evening; that 2,300 ritual services would be conducted over a period of 1,150 literal days which Daniel, in chapter 9, assigns to the last half of the seventieth of the 70 weeks of years. Furthermore, the study showed that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 is the same sanctuary referred to in verses 11-13, that is, the ancient temple in Jerusalem; that the “cleansing” or “restoration” of the temple to its “rightful state” constituted its purification and rededication after desecration by the little horn tyrant as described in verses 9-13; that chapter 9:24-27, in its entirety, parallels Daniel 8:9-14 and explains it; that the decree of chapter 9:25 is identical with the decree of verse 23, which “went forth” at the moment Daniel began to pray—as the angel explicitly told Daniel that the 70 weeks of years thus commenced in 538/7 B.C., when the 70 years of Daniel's exile terminated; that Daniel 9:27, in its entirety, describes the career of the tyrant “prince who is to come” set forth in verse 26, and that this conclusion is required both by the context and to com-

plete the parallel between chapters 8 and 9.

I believe that the hermeneutical principles outlined above provided an adequate inspired basis for applying the 2,300 evenings-mornings to 2,300 literal years terminating in 1844, the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 to the sanctuary and Christ's ministry in heaven, and its cleansing to a pre-Advent judgment commencing in that year. These principles of interpretation give faithful attention to the original import of the eschatological sections of Daniel according to accepted historical-linguistic-contextual norms, and at the same time provide an equally consistent reinterpretation in terms of their historic interpretation by Seventh-day Adventists. This hermeneutic thus preserves both the historical-contextual exegesis of Daniel, and the historic Adventist interpretation, each in its full and undiminished integrity and with complete harmony between the two.

Let it be clearly understood that the hermeneutic here proposed in no way alters the teachings we have traditionally based on Daniel 8:14. It does not affect the *content* of these teachings, but the *method* by which they are established as truth—present truth—for our time.

In view of all of this, how did the church arrive at its traditional interpretation, and how did our present incipient crisis arise?

Seventh-day Adventism grew out of the concept of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as the true explanation of the 1844 experience, which had been based on a particular interpretation of Daniel 8:14. This and the seventh-day Sabbath proved to be the unifying factors that transformed a mere handful of scattered believers into "the little flock" that later adopted the name "Seventh-day Adventists."

In arriving at these conclusions, William Miller and other early Adventists basically followed the proof text method in their study of the Bible. This method assumes—correctly—that the Bible is God's word addressed to us today, but in practice it forgets that the messages of the Bible were originally addressed to ancient Israel and applied to

them within the covenant perspective of salvation history. It operates on the basis of a false concept of the unity of Scripture that, for practical purposes, ignores the human aspect of Scripture and the different points of view expressed by the various inspired writers. The proof text method considers Bible truth to be propositional, with the result that it often isolates Bible statements from their literary as well as historical context. An English translation of the Bible, preferably the King James Version, is considered as normative, and its words and statements are understood in a sense meaningful to modern readers—from our perspective of salvation history. Definition of Bible words are taken from an English dictionary. The proof text method is unaware that the same Hebrew or Greek word may have different meanings, which can be determined only by the context in which they are used, or that the translators may have rendered it by different English words, and that different Hebrew and Greek words are sometimes rendered into English by the same English word. It commonly applies the analogy of Scripture — "comparing scripture with scripture" — primarily on a verbal level, with inadequate, if any, endeavor to ascertain the meaning of each statement in its own literary and historical context.

In applying the proof text method, a person's presuppositions and subjective judgment tend to determine his selection and evaluation of evidence, and his conclusions. Because he has no objective means by which to test his conclusions, it is inevitable that those who follow this method find it difficult, if not impossible, to reach a consensus with respect to the meaning of Scripture. Instead of going to the Bible and listening intently to the inspired writers in order to ascertain the meaning *they* intend their words to convey, the proof text method tends to go to the Bible with an idea, searching for statements that can be construed as providing support for that idea, and in so doing read that idea *into* Scripture. The proof text method is basically what Bible scholars call eisegesis, in contrast to exegesis.

Let it be said, however, that the proof text method *is* adequate for finding the way to

salvation in Jesus Christ, for being a real Christian, and for learning much about the will and purposes of God. But at the same time it is severely limited, at many points, in its ability to ascertain the true meaning of Scripture and to deal adequately with many important issues.

The pioneers of the Advent message followed the proof text method in their study of the Bible. It was the best they could do, and as always God accepted and blessed their dedicated efforts. It was nothing less than a miracle that our spiritual forefathers found any consensus to unite them on important points of faith, and that their conclusions have, generally speaking, endured the test of time and more adequate methods of Bible study we make use of today. That miracle was the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the person and ministry of Ellen White, to guide the infant church in its dedicated quest for truth. When the pioneers had done their best, her selective choice among the resulting alternatives determined which of the various interpretations the infant church should adopt. Whether or not this selection comported with strict exegesis of the Bible is irrelevant. The New Testament writers do precisely the same with the Old Testament. Sometimes Ellen White's choice consisted of setting forth "present truth" for our time *based* on a passage of Scripture without necessarily being the intended meaning of the Bible passage itself, but it was nevertheless *present* truth for *us* today—based on the teaching authority of the new inspired witness. Ellen White's living presence—or rather, the presence of the Holy Spirit—entrusted Seventh-day Adventists with present truth appropriate for the church today and provided the church with the unifying influence it needed to transform the "little flock scattered abroad" into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The death of Ellen White in 1915 confronted Seventh-day Adventists with a major problem in their study of the Bible. Over the next two or three decades, we would often hear someone say wistfully, "I wish Sister White were here, then we could ask her." But

she was no longer here, in person, and without her the old proof text method was no longer viable.

At the 1919 Bible conference in Washington, D.C., four years later, the Bible scholars and administrators of the church momentarily faced up to the problem, and from the transcript of their discussion¹² it is evident that the door to a solution of the problem of the relation of Ellen White to the Bible briefly stood ajar. But instead of courageously going through the open door and fully exploring the uncharted region beyond, the church timorously closed it and elected to follow an obscurantist policy that kept it closed for another 20 years or so. Instead, the church chose to accord the voluminous writings of Ellen White the same role she had filled in

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person for 70 years, and began to use her writings to determine points of exegesis. “Sister White says . . .” was supposed to settle every difference of opinion as the meaning of a passage of Scripture on which she commented, despite the fact that she had repeatedly protested against such use of her writings.¹³

The problem in using her writings to determine the meaning of Scripture lay in the fact that she used the Bible in many different modes, all the way from comment on a passage in context, recognizing its inherent meaning, to borrowing the words of Scripture to set forth truth in no way related to the original import of the words. Furthermore, the church began to apply the proof text method to her writings as it was already doing to the Bible, and the inherent weaknesses of that method often produced a vari-

ety of interpretations of what Ellen White meant by what she wrote. As a result, people could quote Ellen White on both sides of a moot question, sometimes in apparent contradiction of herself. The upshot of this unwise attitude toward the writings of Ellen White was that, whereas her living presence had compensated for the inherent weaknesses of the proof text method and was a strong force for unity in the church, this misuse of her writings—of which she herself disapproved—became a potent source of disunity. It opened up a can of theological worms, some of which are still crawling about. Willingness on the part of the church to go through the hermeneutical door that momentarily stood ajar in 1919 would have spared us many a needless doctrinal debate and many an unnecessary personal heartache in the years since then.

Make no mistake. There is nothing whatever wrong with Ellen White's use of the Bible *when we understand how and why she uses it as she does*, but there *is* something grievously wrong about the way in which the church began to use her writings as a norm for interpreting Scripture, and the way some continue to do today. This egregious error on *our* part, coupled with continued use of the proof text method in studying both the Bible and her writings, has been at the root of practically every theological problem that has confronted the church over the 65 years since her death. It has been at the root of the problems posed by such men as L. R. Conradi, W. W. Fletcher, Victor Houteff, Robert Brinsmead and numerous others. It is at the root of our continuing problems with Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9. Suffice it to say that by the mid-1930s we were far up a theological *cul de sac*, with no way out in the direction in which we were headed.

Curiously, as long ago at 1871 Ellen White herself had pointed the way out of this *cul de sac*, and to a resolution of the theological impasse. In that year, she wrote: "If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*."¹⁴ A careful reading

of the context makes evident that she was here speaking of practical matters of Christian conduct, but her statement applies with equal force to matters of exegesis and doctrine.

During the 1930s Adventist college Bible teachers began to make consistent use of the historical-linguistic-contextual method of Bible study, instead of the proof text method. They began consistently to study the Bible in its original languages and in its historical and literary setting. By careful attention to language and context, both literary and historical, they were able to let the Bible serve as its own interpreter, to let Scripture interpret Scripture in a safe, reliable way. The result was a much more accurate understanding of the Bible — in terms of what the Bible itself actually says rather than what the modern reader with his modern concepts and perspective of salvation history may suppose it says. At long last, Adventist Bible scholars began to do what Ellen White had counseled so many years before — go to the Scriptures and listen attentively to what the inspired writers meant by what they wrote.

The aim of the historical method is precisely that—to ascertain as accurately as possible the meaning the Bible writers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, intended their words to convey, as a basis for understanding the spiritual truth their writings have for us today. It does so by a careful study of each statement of Scripture in its own historical setting and literary context, and each word of the passage in the original language, as it is used in that particular context and elsewhere in the Bible. With the historical method of exegesis and interpretation, a high degree of accuracy becomes possible. It becomes possible, also, to test one's conclusions by objective criteria and achieve greater consensus.

The Bible Research Fellowship (1940-1952), the first professional organization of Adventist Bible scholars, encouraged its use, and out of the Fellowship grew the Office of Bible Research in the General Conference and the Biblical Research Committee, in 1952.¹⁵ The Bible Research Fellowship provided an atmosphere in which Adventist Bible scholars could work together in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence in one

another, with complete dedication to the church and the Advent Message, and above all, with complete loyalty to the Bible. The principal importance of the Fellowship to the church was the fact that it fostered the historical method of Bible study on the part of persons qualified to use it, and united the college Bible teachers of the church in much of their understanding of the Bible.

However, the General Conference administration that took office in 1966 favored the proof text method and distrusted those who made use of the historical method. It was the declared policy of the administration that administrators, and not the Bible scholars of the church, should make its theological decisions. It appointed persons who had no training, experience, or expertise in biblical studies on the research level to govern Adventist Bible research and to monitor those who engaged in it. In all of this, it was utterly and impeccably sincere, but implementation of this policy gave rise to most of the vicissitudes that overtook the Bible scholars and the biblical research program of the church over the past 14 years. It contributed to our

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inability to resolve a number of theological issues that arose during this time, and among others, our failure to reach concensus with respect to Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9.

For 25 years or more, the Bible scholars of the church have been well aware of the exegetical problems our conventional interpretation of Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9 encounters in these passages. Earlier, such men as A. F. Ballenger, L. R. Conradi and W. W. Fletcher, among others, had called attention to these problems. But the proof text method of their day had no viable hermeneu-

tic adequate to resolve them. As a result, they rejected the teaching authority of Ellen White and left the church.

Both before and since the denouement of the “Daniel Committee” in 1966, a few individuals carefully studied the exegetical problems posed by Daniel 8:14. But by the time these studies approached maturity, in the early 1970s, an atmosphere of obscurantism had settled over the biblical research program of the church. Repeated opportunities arose for the Bible scholars of the church to give consideration to the exegetical problems and to evaluate hermeneutics that were proposed for resolving them but, unfortunately, denominational policy aborted *objective* study. Over the past ten years, Bible scholars have been unable to work together effectively and reach a working consensus with respect to these problems. This is the basic reason why the present incipient crisis has caught the church unprepared.

Non-Adventist critics of the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 object that it cannot be derived *from* the words of Scripture but is superimposed *upon* them. This criticism is directed, not so much at our teachings concerning the sanctuary, as at the fact that we base them on Daniel 8:14. To be sure, critics usually zero in on the conclusions, but careful analysis of their objections makes evident that the real problem, from their point of view, is our methodology. They do not object so much to our belief in an investigative judgment going on in heaven since 1844, as they do to our use of that unbiblical term, and to our insistence that any valid principles of interpretation can derive this from Daniel 8:14. The basic issue is one of method much more than it is of content. The problem is clear, especially if one remembers the unanimous acknowledgment of leading Adventist biblical scholars, clearly expressed in the 1958 poll, that there is *no* linguistic or contextual basis for our traditional interpretation of this passage.¹⁶

The validity of the method by which we reach truth is our only reliable and convincing guarantee that our conclusions are true. A

demonstrably invalid method inevitably places the conclusions to which it leads in doubt as well, and that is the crux of our critics' argument. A mathematics student may be in possession of the right answer to a complex problem, but unless he is able to demonstrate, step by step, that his method for reaching the right answer is valid in terms of recognized mathematical principles, and that his reasoning process does, in fact, lead to that solution, those who examine his paper will not only question his understanding of the problem, but also his intellectual honesty and personal integrity as well. In a similar way, the credibility and integrity of the Advent message are at stake in the way we as a church relate to the exegetical problems in Daniel 8:14 and in the hermeneutic by which we arrive at our traditional conclusions.

The issue of Daniel 8:14 is still with us because we have been unwilling, thus far, to face up to the fact that a very real exegetical problem does exist. That issue will not go away so long as we keep pretending that there is no problem, so long as we insist on holding our heads, individually and collectively, in the sand of our preconceived opinions. It won't go away until we face up to it and accord it the respect and attention it deserves. It won't go away so long as our search for truth consists primarily in looking for proof of what we already think we believe. It won't go away until we learn to listen attentively and with humble hearts to what the divine Spirit *is* saying through the words of Holy Writ, and until we do this we will continue—unnecessarily—to alienate the respect and confidence of thinking, biblically literate Adventists and non-Adventists alike.

First exposure to the fact that these exegetical problems are for real and not the product of someone's perverted imagination is understandably a traumatic experience for any dedicated, thinking Seventh-day Adventist.

But now that the issue is clearly drawn and can no longer be ignored, it would be highly irresponsible on our part not to deal objectively and fairly with it. A conclusive case for the heavenly sanctuary and a pre-Advent judgment can be made directly from Scripture,¹⁷ wholly apart from Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9,¹⁸ as most of our critics would agree. Can we not be willing to rely on these other passages, be content to affirm as the teaching of Scripture only such concepts as the Scriptures themselves *plainly* teach, and use biblical terminology to express these concepts? When we affirm more than the Bible plainly states, or use strange, nonbiblical terminology,¹⁹ we invite misunderstanding and criticism—needlessly. We object when others do so; should we not be willing to live up to the same standards we expect of them? The golden rule is fully as valid for biblical exegesis as it is for interpersonal relationships.

If we are able and willing to face up to the facts in a mature, responsible way, we will find an even firmer foundation for our faith and for the proclamation of the Advent message to the world than we have had in the past—one that will be immune to attack on biblical grounds. There *is* a way to say what needs to be said, in a way that will not lay us open to justified criticism.²⁰ The pillars of the temple need not crumble; there is no intrinsic reason why they should even shake. Their foundation will be firmer than before. Let us face the issue together and go forward in faith as fellow pilgrims in the quest for truth; let us listen attentively and with respect to one another; let us be absolutely fair with the facts and with one another; let us be willing to modify our presuppositions where the facts may indicate; and let us press forward under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with enlightened zeal to finish the task we believe God in His providence has entrusted to us.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Harold Lindsell, "What of Seventh-day Adventism," *Christianity Today*, 2 (March, 31, 1958), 6, emphasis his. A second article appeared in the April 14 issue. At the request of the General Conference, Dr. Frank H. Yost, then secretary of the Religious Liberty Department and editor of *Liberty*, prepared an extended response to the Lindsell articles, which *Chris-*

tianity Today printed in its July 21 issue. Also as a direct result of the Lindsell articles, the 1970 General Conference session added certain Bible references to statements 13, 14 and 15 of "Fundamental Beliefs," which appeared for the first time in the 1971 edition of the *Yearbook*.

2. See Donald Grey Barnhouse, "Are Seventh-day

Adventists Christians?" *Eternity*, 7 (September 1956), 6.

3. Only statements of doctrine approved by the General Conference in session are considered official in the formal sense of the word. For the most recent statement of Adventist beliefs, see "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," *Adventist Review*, 157 (February 21, 1980), 192.

4. The six questions were: (1) What linguistic basis is there for translating *nišdaq* as "cleansed," (2) Why did the translators of the LXX render *nišdaq* as *katharistesetai*? (3) What is the relation of *nišdaq* to its context? (4) How would you render *nišdaq* in terms of its context? (5) What linguistic or contextual reasons can you suggest for applying *nišdaq* to the services of the day of atonement and thus to the investigative judgment beginning in 1844? (6) What reasons other than language and context would you suggest for applying *nišdaq* to the services of the day of atonement and thus to the investigative judgment beginning in 1844? This questionnaire was sent to every teacher of Hebrew, to the head of every college Bible department in North America, to all biblical studies teachers at the Theological Seminary, and to several Bible scholars in administrative and editorial assignments.

5. This committee, appointed in the autumn of 1960, devoted 16 full days to the assignment between January 1962 and March 1966.

6. Appointed members were H. W. Lowe, chairman; R. A. Anderson, Raymond F. Cottrell, Richard Hammill, Edward Heppenstall, W. G. C. Murdoch, Don F. Neufeld, Leo Odom and W. E. Read. Invited members were Earle Hilgert, S. H. Horn, Alger Johns, Graham Maxwell and M. R. Thurber.

7. The minority recognized Ellen White's comment relative to Daniel 8:14 as reinterpretation by a later inspired writer, not as exegesis—as "present truth" appropriate for our time.

8. Forty-five formal papers were presented and discussed. My personal, complete file has been deposited in the General Conference Archives.

9. This manuscript has not been published and is not available. A fair knowledge of Hebrew would be necessary to make intelligent use of it in its present form. One of our publishing houses, and more recently some persons in the General Conference, have requested that it be condensed, adapted for English readers, and submitted for publication.

10. The 200-page document provides full documentation, point by point. There may be a better hermeneutical solution to the problem than the one here proposed. If so, let us have it; the church needs it. The hermeneutic here suggested is tentative, not definitive. We should examine other proposed solutions to the problem with an open mind and be willing to

make adjustments in our presuppositions as the evidence requires.

11. A comparison of the Greek text of these passages with the LXX of Daniel makes evident that all three New Testament writers are consciously commenting on the prophecies of Daniel. Inasmuch as all three are applying the prophecies of Daniel *outside* of the time limits Daniel specified, it is evident that they are *reinterpreting* Daniel for New Testament times.

12. See "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History" and "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible," *SPECTRUM*, 10 (May 1979), 23-57.

13. For example: "I request that my writings shall not be used as the leading argument to settle questions over which there is now so much controversy. I entreat of Elders H, I, J, and others of our leading brethren, that they make no reference to my writings to sustain their views of 'the daily.' . . . I cannot consent that any of my writings shall be taken as settling this matter. . . . I now ask that my ministering brethren shall not make use of my writings in their argument regarding this question ['the daily'], for I have had no instruction on the point under discussion, and I see no need for the controversy. Regarding this matter under present conditions, silence is eloquence."—Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 164.

14. Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 605.

15. Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Bible Research Fellowship: A Pioneering Seventh-day Adventist Organization in Retrospect," *Adventist Heritage*, 5 (Summer 1978), 39.

16. A poll of Adventist Bible scholars concerning Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9 is currently being taken, to ascertain their thinking now, 22 years after the first poll already referred to. The new poll lists 74 items to which a response is requested.

17. The heavenly sanctuary as presented in the Book of Hebrews; the judgment as set forth in Daniel 7; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16; 3:6; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5; Revelation 11:18; 19:11; 20:12-13.

18. Hebrews 9 is not a valid source for information on the investigative judgment.

19. In context, the judgment of Daniel 7 deals with those who oppose God's will, not with God's faithful people.

20. See Raymond F. Cottrell, *Beyond Tomorrow*, pp. 307-316, for an attempt to be faithful to context when presenting the Adventist approach to Daniel 8:14 in relation to 1844. During the 17 years since its publication, the author has received no criticism of the volume's methodology and conclusions.