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A Search for Clarification: Contemporary Views of the Inspiration and Authority of the Bible in Seventh-day Adventism

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A Search for Clarification:
Contemporary Views of the Inspiration and Authority of the Bible in Seventh-day Adventism

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Abstract

Within Seventh-day Adventism there is recognizable theological diversity on a wide variety of issues. One major reason for that has to do with the different ways Adventists view the inspiration and authority of the Bible with particular presuppositions. In order to elucidate the given problematic, I will present a comparative analysis of four thinkers and outline their respective perspectives: Fritz Guy, Alden Thompson, Fernando Canale, and Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. As I will suggest, each thinker represents either a *progressive*, *moderate*, *traditional* or *literalistic* approach to interpreting the Bible. By clarifying their positions I will investigate their views of inerrancy, their perception of the influence of cultural determinism and historicism in Scripture and contemporary interpretations, and their willingness to consult sources besides the Bible for their theological thinking. I will demonstrate that their hermeneutical methodology shapes how they think about and develop doctrines, beliefs, and practices.

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1. Introduction

Within Seventh-day Adventism there is a noticeable diversity in how individuals think about and approach different doctrines, beliefs, and practices. Those who engage in even a superficial reading of Adventist history will discover that this has been the case from the movement's inception, ranging from debates over the Trinity to contemporary discussions about women's ordination. This variety is demonstrated, for example, by the recent deliberations over the doctrine of creation and the different approaches present in how believers think about this issue.

I propose that one of the main reasons for such a theological diversity has to do with different opinions of how Scripture should be read and interpreted. For instance, thinkers who view the nature of biblical inspiration differently are prone to drawing different conclusions from their reading of the Bible. As one thinker puts it,

> no matter what biblical topic is being discussed be it homosexuality, ordination of women or the age of the earth; no matter what is being debated in the realm of Christian ethics, morality or behavior; no matter what is being argued in the area of theology be it the nature of Christ or the perfection of the saints; the bottom line always comes back to the Nature of Inspiration - how one is to view and interpret the Scriptures. This is . . . the most critical issue facing the church today.[1]

In this paper I analyze four Adventist theologians' perspective on the inspiration and authority of the Bible: Fritz Guy, Fernando Canale, Alden Thompson, and Samuel Koranteng-Pipim. Fritz Guy, Research Professor of Philosophical Theology at La Sierra University, represents a progressive approach to biblical interpretation. Alden Thompson, Professor of Biblical Studies at Walla Walla University, practices a moderate method of reading Scripture while Fernando Canale, Professor of Theology and Philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist

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[1] Donna Haerich, "Critiquing Biblical Hermeneutics," Spectrum Blog, http://spectrummagazine.org/article/column/2011/01/28/critiquing-biblical-hermeneutics.

Theological Seminary, typifies a traditional view of Scripture. Finally, Samuel Pipim, an independent scholar, holds a literalistic view of the Bible.

Specifically, there are three areas of confusion I attempt to clarify. First, I hope to highlight the different theological methods each theologian uses. Second, I plan to identify specific variations in how the thinkers being discussed here view scriptural inerrancy, the influence of culture on Scripture and how it applies to contemporary culture, and how much influence other sources of knowledge have on Adventist theological thought. Third, I hope to discover some similarities in their hermeneutical approaches and the presuppositions that inform their investigation of Scripture.

It is important to highlight what I do not aim to do. In an effort to remain neutral I analyze the views of each theologian without preference for any of their positions. In addition, I do not engage in any specific theological issue beyond contemporary discussions of the authority and inspiration of the Bible. Rather, I analyze their views in order to demonstrate the range of perspectives on Scripture that exist within the church. Finally, I do not claim to have any absolute definition for categorical terms such as *progressive, moderate*, *traditional*, or *literalist* as used in common parlance nor do I intend to use them as labels of divisiveness.

This paper can be outlined as follows: after clarifying the meaning of terms commonly used throughout the paper, I begin by surveying the historical development of the Adventist view of Scripture from the era of the Enlightenment to the present. Following this, I explore the definition of the historical-critical method and its shortcomings from the perspective of its adherents, evangelicals, and Adventists. I then analyze how each thinker views the inerrancy of the Bible. Later, I compare and contrast how each theologian perceives the cultural influence on the Bible and how Scripture should be interpreted from a contemporary perspective. Then, I

consider the extent to which they value and include other sources of authority, such as philosophy and science, in their theological thinking. I conclude by summarizing my findings in the form of a taxonomy that I use to analyze the similarities and differences between the Adventist thinkers discussed here.

2. Definitions

It is first essential to clarify what exactly is meant by the use of categorical terms like *progressive, moderate, traditional,* and *literalist*. I recognize that categorizations of any form are incomplete and incomprehensive in describing any individual's thinking. Furthermore, the nature of categorizing is truly subjective. Lael O. Caesar helpfully points out, "although personal presuppositions do not determine what reality is, they define the way an individual experiences that reality."[2] Raymond Cottrell adds that the usage of any categorical term "tends to be a slippery, free-wheeling, Alice-in-Wonderland term; it means whatever the speaker intends it to mean."[3] That is to say, categorical terms used throughout this paper are completely based on my own perceptions and represent the reality as I see it. I only use these terms in a technical, theological sense and as a means of reference in referring to each theologian's position.

To exemplify the lack of consistency in how categorical terms are defined, I present here how different individuals use the terms *progressive* or *liberal*. Madelynn Jones-Haldeman defines a progressive Adventist as "one who dares to ask questions about everything and who does not need to have all the answers."[4] Angel Manuel-Rodriguez defines progressives now as

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[2] Lael O. Caesar, "Hermeneutics and Culture," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 271.

[3] Raymond F. Cottrell, *Toward a Definition of the Term "Liberal"*, Raymond Cottrell Manuscripts, 1.

[4] Madelynn Jones-Haldeman, "Progressive Adventism: Dragging the Church Forward," *Adventist Today* January/February 1994, 10.

"*radicals* who are actively involved in an open attack against many of the biblical truths that we have been called to proclaim."[5] Raymond Cottrell defines *liberal* as anyone to the left of your own subjective criteria.[6] Ron Corson describes progressive Adventists as those who hold a lower view of Ellen White, of the investigative judgment, and those who have a more inclusive view of who comprises the remnant.[7] Finally, Fritz Guy provides perhaps the most helpful perspective:

> 'Conservative' implies a preference for orthodoxy . . . 'liberal' implies a willingness to move beyond orthodoxy . . . 'progressive' identifies those who want to retain the values of the past as they advance toward a future they know will be significantly different, and who want to understand historic religious beliefs in relation to contemporary, secular knowledge.[8]

As Ron Corson puts it, "there are enough differences . . . that each may regard the other as an apostate. Inside the Seventh-day Adventist church the same dynamic often occurs, because of differences in the way people approach the Bible."[9] In short, there remains a lack of congruency on what categorical terms actually mean.

Moreover, even theological terms are defined differently. Some various definitions of *inspiration* and *authority* are compared here. For instance, Alden Thompson defines revelation as "a visible or audible intervention by God" and inspiration as "the Spirit's special urging of a messenger to speak or write."[10] By comparison, Pipim understands revelation as "a divine act by which God discloses himself, enabling the prophet to come to an understanding (about someone, thing, or event) that the prophet could not have discovered or fully understood on his/her own," and inspiration as "a divine act by which God enables the prophet to grasp and communicate in a

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[5] Angel Manuel-Rodriguez, "Book Notes," *Reflections: The BRI Newsletter* January 2011, 6.

[6] Cottrell, *Toward a Definition of the Term "Liberal"*, 1.

[7] Ron Corson, "Progressive and Traditional Adventists Examined," *Adventist Today* November/December 2002, 18.

[8] Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1999), 27-29.

[9] Corson, "Adventists Examined," 18.

[10] Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1991), 57.

trustworthy manner that which has been revealed to him/her in divine revelation."[11] For

Fernando Canale, revelation is "the cognitive process through which the Bible and its manifold

contents were originated,"[12] and inspiration means "the linguistic process through which the

content originated by means of the revelation process as expressed in oral or written forms."[13]

Again, the differences in how individuals define even common theological terms differ widely.

With this in mind I present my definitions:

Theological Terms:

Authority – A document, resource, or body of knowledge regarded as a highly reliable source that can be consulted in the formulation of doctrines, beliefs, or practices. Such resources may be considered as containing some elements of divine inspiration, such as the works of Ellen White.

Culture – The worldview, historical context, ways of reasoning and understanding, traditions, and heritage that characterize the period in which an individual lives.

Inerrant – The state of being without error or mistake.

Inspiration – The influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit on the biblical writers, prophets, and others who have been called to present a divine message.

Revelation – A personal or direct encounter with the triune God where an audible or visual message is received through speech, visions, or dreams.[14]

Taxonomy of Perspectives:

Literalist – Individuals who view the Bible as an inerrant, infallible, and perhaps even a verbally inspired revelation of God's will for humanity. For them, Scripture is the only reliable source of authority safe for use in the development of doctrines, beliefs, and practices. They believe the Bible contains elements of biblical culture, but believe it is nonetheless applicable to contemporary culture in its entirety

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[11] Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word: How New Approaches to the Bible Impact Our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle* (Ann Arbor: Berean, 1996), 275-276. It should be noted that Jud Lake has produced a comparison of the definitions of *revelation* and *inspiration* in his recent work on Ellen White. In it he defines revelation as a horizontal manifestation by God to individuals in their context and inspiration as a horizontal process in that the recipients of a divine message relayed it to others. See Jud Lake, *Ellen White Under Fire: Identifying the MIstakes of Her Critics* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2010), 91-96.

[12] Fernando L. Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundation of Christian Theology in a Postmodern World* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), 57.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Thompson, *Inspiration*, 57.

Moderate – Individuals who hold a *prima scriptura* view of Scripture and who are possibly open to certain elements of the historical critical method and its presuppositions. They believe portions of Scripture can be culturally conditioned and sometimes even irrelevant to modern readers. For them, sources besides Scripture can be consulted for developing doctrines, beliefs, and practices but are viewed as subordinate to the Bible.

Progressive – Individuals who believe Scripture contains errors and consider other areas of knowledge somewhat equivalent to the Bible in developing doctrines, beliefs, and practices. Examples of other areas of knowledge include philosophy, science, and contemporary culture in general. They can sometimes be loosely described as following a *prima scriptura* model but their strong openness to other sources of knowledge, as well as their belief that portions of Scripture are irrelevant to contemporary culture, distinguish them from moderates.

Traditionalist – Individuals who hold a *prima scriptura* view of Scripture and the historical-critical method, particularly its presuppositions. For them, other sources of knowledge can be consulted with suspicion and with the understanding that the Bible is the highest source of authority. Also, they are hesitant to dismiss portions of Scripture as irrelevant to contemporary culture too quickly but view the Bible as culturally conditioned.

3. A Historical Background on Adventist Perceptions of Scripture

Much of the debate existent in the church today began in the era of the Enlightenment when examiners of Scripture proposed using scientific presuppositions and historical-critical methodology in interpreting the Bible. The origins of historical-criticism can be specifically attributed to several thinkers, but Baruch Spinoza is credited as the first individual to formally propose historical-criticism. Other thinkers like Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Friedrich Schleiermacher, David Friedrich Strauss, Ferdinand Christian Baur, Ernst Troeltsch, Rudolf Bultmann, and Ernst Käsemann are nonetheless considered formative thinkers who were active in the development of the historical-critical method.[15] Higher criticism diminished the miraculous and divine elements of Scripture and prompted a reactionary response from conservative Christians, known as Fundamentalists and Evangelicals, who were determined to preserve a high view of the Bible. According to George Marsden, these movements endorsed a

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[15] For a thorough analysis of these thinker's contributions to historical-critical methodology, see Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Theology and Historical-Critical Method from Spinoza to Käsemann*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

literalistic interpretation of Scripture as a reaction specifically against the claims of higher criticism, modernism, and contemporary culture.[16] Fernando Canale describes the general evangelical Christian response to historical-criticism:

> The conservative wing of evangelical theology . . . did not welcome the new conception of Scripture because it was considered to be a serious programmatic departure from orthodox Christian teachings. . . .The traditional doctrine of the supernatural origin of Scripture was reaffirmed as an apologetical tool against modern and postmodern interpretations of Scripture.[17]

In particular, Fundamentalism had an influential effect on Seventh-day Adventism as it became prominent in the early 20th century because both movements promoted a high view of the Bible and were suspicious of Darwinian science. Gary Land depicts Adventism's sympathies for Fundamentalism as an attempt to distinguish the church from modern Christians who endorsed evolutionary theory and higher criticism.[18] The influence of Fundamentalism became evident at the 1919 Bible Conference where the inspiration of the Bible and the nature of Ellen White's inspiration were hotly debated. George Knight writes that A.G. Daniells, the General Conference president at the time, endorsed a verbal inspiration model that depicted the Bible as verbally inspired.[19] In contrast, William White and others who personally knew Ellen White and the nature of her inspiration depicted Scripture as a product of thought inspiration and as a document prone to human error, both in its composition and its interpretation. However, as younger leaders replaced those who were close to Ellen White, they presented both inerrancy and verbal inspiration as the official Adventist position on the Bible. This, in turn, had a significant

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[16] George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 56.

[17] Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration*, 50.

[18] Gary Land, *Adventism in America: A History*, Revised ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 135.

[19] George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*, Adventist Heritage Series (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 133.

influence on the denomination throughout the first half of the 20th century.[20] In fact, an inerrant and verbally inspired view of Scripture was officially espoused as late as 1957 when the church produced the work *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* in order to ease Evangelical concerns about Seventh-day Adventism. The work contained a literalistic view of the Bible that was defended with statements like "Paul reminded his converts that when they listened to the Scriptures being read, they were hearing, not the words of men, but in truth, the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13),"[21] as well as the claim that we are to "take the Bible in its entirety, believing that it not merely *contains* the word of God, but *is* the word of God."[22]

After the writing of *Questions on Doctrine,* a variety of approaches to Scripture seemed to multiply. Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart point out that Adventists became more academic in their interpretation of the Bible and subsequently rejected elements of fundamentalism after the 1960s.[23] They describe theologians as being more open to exploring issues of textual criticism, the history of translation, and to the possibility that aspects of Scripture are human and even erroneous.[24] Since that time, several major writings, statements, essays, symposiums, and other discussions have been a prominent feature of contemporary Adventist theological dialogue.

For instance, by the 1980s, the literalistic view of the Bible that characterized Adventism in the early 20th century had waned, as demonstrated by two official church statements. A document composed by the General Conference Executive Committee titled *Methods of Bible Study* claimed that all Adventists believe Scripture is composed of God's ideas put in human

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[20] Ibid., 137.

[21] Bible Teachers A Representative Group of Seventh-day Adventist Leaders, and Editors, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, Annotated ed., Adventist Classic library (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2003), 25.

[22] Ibid., 26.

[23] Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 34.

[24] Ibid.

form. It went on to say that Adventists believe the Bible was written primarily through thought inspiration, that it is transcendent of its historical context and relevant to all time periods, and that it is historically accurate and in harmony with the general revelation of God through nature.[25] At the same time, the first fundamental belief was written ambiguously, perhaps, to accommodate the variety of views of Scripture existent in Seventh-day Adventism:

> 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.[26]

Presently, no common approach to Scripture exists within Adventism beyond the general principles laid out in *Methods of Bible Study* and in the fundamental belief provided above, though many have claimed otherwise.[27] In particular, George W. Reid, former director of the Biblical Research Institute, claims, "prior to 1950 there was substantial unity on the essentials."[28] "The essentials" Reid refers to include a literalistic interpretation of the Bible and a view of it as the "final court of appeal."[29] Other essentials include the claim that Scripture is enhanced

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[25] General Conference Executive Committee, "Methods of Bible Study," Seventh-day Adventist Church, http://adventist.org/beliefs/other-documents/other-doc4.html.

[26] General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 2nd ed. (Boise: Pacific, 2005), 11. Please note that the word *infallible* is worth an entirely new research project in itself. Suffice it to say the term can be just as ambiguous as any of the other theological terms discussed here.

[27] Those interested in further study can begin by consulting Fernando Canale's proposed historical-cognitive model, Ekkehardt Mueller's reflection inspiration and authority, and Peter Maarten van Bemmelen's dissertation on biblical inspiration. See Canale, Back to Revelation-Inspiration, 127-160; Ekkehardt Mueller, "Authority of Scripture – Approaching Revelation and Inspiration," Biblical Research Institute, http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/documents/Inspiration.htm; and Peter Maarten van Bemmelen, Issues in Biblical Inspiration: Sanday and Warfield, vol. 13, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Studies Series (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1987).

[28] George W. Reid, "Another Look At Adventist Hermeneutics," Biblical Research Institute, http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/Adventist%20Hermeneutics.htm.

[29] Ibid.

through the study of history and archaeology, as well as the statements of Ellen White.[30]

Nonetheless, a diversity of views have been espoused that do not conform to Reid's description

in its entirety including the perspective of the thinkers discussed here.

4.   The Historical-Critical Method Today

Historical-criticism can be applied in different ways but shares several common

characteristics. Alister McGrath defines it as "an approach to historical texts, including the Bible,

which argues that their proper meaning must be determined on the basis of the specific historical

conditions under which they were written."[31] Richard Davidson believes it is based on the

presupposition that Scripture must be read using the principles of secular-historical science and

that the idea that the Bible must be critiqued from the human perspective rather than judged by

the claims Scripture has for itself.[32] Other presuppositions include the claim that present

experience can be used in judging the possibility of a historical occurrence and the belief that the

Bible is not equivalent to the word of God but merely contains it.[33] L. William Countryman has

likewise espoused the view that the human element of the text is emphasized because "the mere

use of human language means that no canonical text," regardless of the nature of its revelation

and inspiration, "escapes its human ties."[34] These descriptions are nonetheless too broad to

describe particular applications of the methodology. McGrath mentions some of the different

ways in which historical-criticism has been used: the rational approach in which all supernatural

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 468.

[32] Richard A. Davidson, "Revelation/Inspiration in the Old Testament," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, ed. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, *Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers* (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 1992), 107.

[33] Ibid.

[34] L. William Countryman, *Interpreting the Truth: Changing the Paradigm of Biblical Studies* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2003), 26.

elements of Scripture are denied as actual occurrences, the historical approach in which supernatural explanations for Christianity's origins are ignored, and the literary approach in which literary genres found in the Bible are considered in interpretation.[35] In short, the historical-critical method in itself can be applied in a diversity of ways, but is based on several common presuppositions.

In recent times, historical-criticism has endured some disapproval from its own adherents. Roy A. Harrissvile and Walter Sundberg admit that despite the method being essential in their view it can foster "a tendency to treat the Bible as an atomized reality."[36] Furthermore, they believe that excessive focus on to leap the historical context of any given passage can be a "forbiddingly difficult attempt to find a way across the great chasm of time that separates the present from the biblical era."[37] Because of these weaknesses, Karl Barth considered rejecting the method and opting for the doctrine of inspiration instead.[38] While these criticisms represent the negative perceptions of higher criticism, there have been attempts to address them. Countryman observes that scriptural interpretation is becoming increasingly complex as even historical-criticism is replaced "as the dominant paradigm by the much more diffuse and varied practices of 'postmodern' scholarship.'"[39] Despite these modifications, the idea that Scripture is divinely inspired continues to be diminished.

Suspicion of this method continues to be present as Evangelical and Fundamentalist positions continue to be espoused. For instance, Merrill C. Tenney, former dean of the Graduate School at Wheaton College, expressed his affirmation that the "Word is revelatory and

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[35] McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 134-135.

[36] Harrisville and Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture*, 10.

[37] Ibid., 11.

[38] Ibid., 13.

[39] Countryman, *Interpreting the Truth*, 1.

authoritative," in the same time period in which *Questions on Doctrine* was written.[40] More

recently, Stephen J. Nichols and Eric T. Brandt have proposed an evangelical approach to

Scripture in a modern age and advocate for a continued acknowledgement of the Bible as divine

while interpreting it using a "historical-grammatical-cultural-rhetorical method."[41] Similarly, in

Adventism there is a continued advocacy for an approach to the interpretation of Scripture that

takes into consideration its literary and cultural elements while still perceiving it as the word of

God. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee summarizes

Adventist's concerns about historical-criticism:

> The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His
> commandments. In addition, because such a method de-emphasizes the divine element in the
> Bible as an inspired book (including its resultant unity) and depreciates or misunder-stands
> apocalyptic prophecy and the eschatological portions of the Bible, we urge Adventist Bible
> students to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated
> with the historical-critical method.[42]

These concerns continue to be expressed as historical-critical methodology, now

considered obsolete in contemporary Christianity, continues to challenge the Adventist approach

to Scripture. It is within this context that the Adventist dialogue has occurred.

5. Inerrancy: Is Scripture Perfect?

Having briefly examined the context within which the thinkers developed their personal

perspectives of Scripture, I now turn to their views of inerrancy. Among Adventist theologians it

has become increasingly uncommon to make the claim that the Bible is completely flawless.

Nonetheless, Samuel Pipim argues that God represents truth and, hence, his spoken word is

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[40] Merrill C. Tenney, ed. *The Bible: The Living Word of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), 27.

[41] Stephen J. Nichols and Eric T. Brandt, *Ancient Word, Changing Worlds: The Doctrine of Scripture in a Modern Age* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 129.

[42] Committee, "Methods of Bible Study".

perfect and "must speak the truth."[43] He pays considerable attention to highlighting what he believes to be progressive Adventist's fundamental error: a selective reading of what parts of Scripture are flawed. In particular, he critiques Thompson's work, *Inspiration,* in claiming that Thompson "makes a dichotomy between saving acts and factual statements, so that in scriptural accounts some things are 'essential and others are 'debatable.'"[44] For him, this line of reasoning is flawed because it places the burden on the human reader to determine what is erroneous and what is reliable. As a result he takes a strong stance in saying that the Bible is inerrant and free of factual error whether scientific, historical, or supernatural.

By contrast, Alden Thompson claims it is essential to view the idea of inspiration from a practical rather than a theoretical approach, warning readers "we have been preoccupied with the logical and theoretical concerns of the Enlightenment. The experiential and practical aspects of the Bible have been neglected in favor of the cold rationality of logical and scientific proofs."[45] By the practical approach, he means that the Bible is written in the imperfect language of humanity. In other words, the idea that Scripture contains errors is acceptable because humans were involved in its composition and reproduction. From this, he concludes that the Bible does indeed contain factual errors and circumvents the idea that it must be perfect, "the Bible presents a *practical* perfection rather than an *absolute* one."[46] He believes that the interpreter's task is not to prove that everything in Scripture is right but is, rather, to derive the divine truths contained within it.

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[43] Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word*, 106.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Thompson, *Inspiration*, 140.

[46] Ibid., 141.

Thompson and Pipim's disagreement stems from different presuppositions about the Bible. While Pipim views Scripture as perfect, Thompson recognizes human elements like imperfect language and imprecise modern translations.[47] At the same time, Thompson does not believe the Bible's divine message is somehow diminished by these human elements. On the contrary, Thompson believes that principles can be derived from the Bible that go beyond the blind obedience he attempts to refute. For him, the correct approach is to read the Bible as a family letter, or as a personal letter from God, and not be concerned with identifying imperfections.[48]

It should be noted that Thompson has been widely discussed since the publication of his book, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*. Robert K. McIver highlights a common accusation against Thompson's work in that his book is perceived "as the archetypical product of historical-critical methodology."[49] Examples of this concern are found in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration.* For instance, in refuting Thompson's willingness to claim that portions of Scripture are not written as a directly revealed message, Raoul Dederen cautions that it is not the reader's task to distinguish between direct revelation and general inspiration, nor to assert that all of the Bible might be the result of revelation.[50] Moreover, Richard Davidson expresses his suspicion that Thompson's view is based on the presupposition that the "principles of criticism, analogy, and correlation are still very much in place."[51] However, a careful reading of *Inspiration* will reveal that he in no way diminishes the divine element but, rather, uplifts it. He

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Robert K. McIver, "The Historical-Critical Method: The Adventist Belief," *Ministry Magazine*, March 1996, 15.

[50] Raoul Dederen, "The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon According to the Bible Writers," in *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, ed. Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, *Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers* (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 1992), 28.

[51] Davidson, "Revelation/Inspiration," 108.

readily expresses his recognition of Scripture as the highest authority and recognizes the divine elements found within it.[52] The present struggle is mostly a result of common misunderstandings about Thompson's discussion of the human element in the Bible.

Fernando Canale's position on inerrancy is best explained by reviewing the foundational presuppositions of his *historical-cognitive model*. He believes that God's actions in time are temporal in that they are characterized by the historical context in which he acted.[53] God relates specifically to the cognition, worldview, and understandings present in the historical context in which he reveals himself.[54] Because of this, the Bible is not infallible because it can contain erroneous understandings of reality from the point in history in which God acted.

Similarly, Fritz Guy believes that what readers consider erroneous is subject to conceptions of reality.[55] What may be considered wrong in a contemporary perspective may not have been wrong for the biblical writers. Guy also recognizes the imprecise nature of terms like *infallible, inerrant,* or *reliable* when he states that these concepts "tend to be mischievous when they are used to characterize Scripture."[56] He dismisses the discussion of infallibility altogether and sees it as a nonissue because, again, the Bible may not have been erroneous from the perspective of its writers. In other writings, he takes a more direct stance against biblical literalism in saying, "reading the Bible–really reading it–thoughtfully and intelligently, document by document (the way it was written and was originally intended to be read), letting each document speak in its own distinctive voice–leads a person from biblical literalism to biblical

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[52] Thompson, *Inspiration*, 56.

[53] Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration*, 130.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 144-146.

[56] Ibid*.,* 147.

literacy."[57] Furthermore, he believes that the bible is only useful to the extent that it is used for spiritual and theological thinking.[58] It is not so much that the Bible contains factual errors that diminish the divine message but, rather, it does not even discuss certain issues. The Bible simply does not address the modern questions of science and readers cannot seek to answer modern questions that were not asked by the biblical writers or answered by God.[59]

To summarize, Guy readily fits into the most progressive category because he believes the Bible does not even address all of humanity's questions and views Scripture as containing mistakes. Thompson is moderate in that he holds a high view of the Bible, saying "all Scripture came by way of inspiration,"[60] but believes it contains errors. He readily recognizes the distinct process of revelation and inspiration and views it as the highest source of authority in the development of theology. Canale, though presenting a new hermeneutical model, represents the traditional position by simultaneously recognizing the historical limitations of the Bible and also believing the Bible can be consulted in answering even our modern questions. Samuel Pipim takes the strictest approach in holding the view that the Bible is factually infallible and an unquestionably reliable resource for discerning God's will for all aspects of our lives.

6. Culture: Does the Bible Still Apply to the Present?

In addressing the problematic, it is also important to consider the issue of cultural determinism and historicism. After all, even if one grants that Scripture is a perfect final product in terms of inspirational inerrancy, it still may be seen as applying only to certain time periods or

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[57] Fritz Guy, "A More "Liberalized" Adventist Future," *Spectrum Magazine* July 1994, 19.

[58] Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 147.

[59] Ibid., 147-149.

[60] Thompson, *Inspiration*, 56.

even particular individuals. Fritz Guy again represents the most progressive approach among the thinkers. In his discussion of sources of authority, he states, "the effectiveness of our witness regarding Scripture depends not on the extravagance of the claims we make for it over against other sources of knowledge but on the respect we show for all knowledge."[61] Later, he presents a *tripolar thinking model* in which the gospel, Adventist heritage, and contemporary culture are a continuing presence in our modern theological thinking.[62] Scripture represents the cultural presuppositions of the biblical writers because God reached down into their historical context. However, Guy goes further by recognizing contemporary culture as an authoritative factor that can be just as authoritative as the cultural characteristics of biblical times.[63] At the same time, he refutes the line of reasoning that disqualifies the Bible as a reliable source of authority because of the influence of culture in its composition. He claims that such a view is an *argument by projected consequences*, explaining, "it is sometimes claimed . . . that acknowledging the cultural conditioning of the authors of Scripture leads to an erosion of its moral, spiritual, or theological authority. But this line of reasoning confuses an *erosion* of authority with an *understanding* of it."[64] For him, it is important to remain aware of the biblical authors' culture, even if certain elements are now irrelevant, because such texts exemplify his belief that God reaches down into culture. He advocates a continuing re-evaluation of theology on the basis of modern cultural needs and presuppositions, a process he calls *present truth*.[65] In this way, certain passages of Scripture can be regarded as only applicable to the people of biblical times but not binding for modern believers.

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[61] Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 147.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 154.

[64] Ibid., 111.

[65] For an extended discussion of present truth see ibid., 65-94.

By contrast, Samuel Pipim claims that there is a danger in separating ourselves from the biblical culture both because he feels doing so could lead readers to consider the biblical culture inferior.[66] In exploring several biblical issues like dress and adornment, he demonstrates his view that everything the Bible says is applicable to our time as well. Put simply, it is incorrect to suppose that elements of Scripture should be disregarded because of cultural factors. The message of the Bible, in its general principles and its exacting statements, is applicable to modern readers as well despite the dangers associated with imposing outside cultures into our contemporary context.[67]

Fernando Canale claims that the Bible represents God's action of communicating with the people of Bible times through being analogous to their cultural and historical setting.[68] In describing his *historical-cognitive model,* he reveals his position on cultural influence. He states, "the historical interpretation of the ontological and epistemological levels of the presuppositional structure provides the necessary condition for knowledge to be generated by the divine being and received by the human agent."[69] His view of God's interaction with man presupposes that God communicates through the cultural and cognitive structures that man exists within. In short, God reaches down into culture and this is represented in the Bible because the Biblical writers can only understand the message God communicated through their own cognition and culture. While the Bible contains cultural elements, it is still the primary authority that interpreters base their theological thinking on.

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[66] Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word*, 82.

[67] Ibid., 82-94.

[68] Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration*, 130.

[69] Ibid., 131.

Alden Thompson's casebook approach to reading the Bible helps explain his view of culture. He derives the term *casebook* as used in the behavioral sciences, "a casebook *describes* a series of examples that reflect a variety of responses under varied circumstances."[70] It should be noted that he does not believe this comprises the whole of the Bible. However, he does claim that casebooks make up "much of what we find in Scripture."[71] In *Inspiration,* he recollects on a casual conversation he had after church soon after his institution had written articles on women's ordination. Throughout the conversation Thompson made statements like "Paul's counsel reflected the culture of his day, not an enduring principle" and "inspired writers always address their own culture– and culture changes."[72] In stating this he reveals his belief that the Bible is characterized by the writers' culture and that certain statements may not apply to modern readers. Hence, contemporary readers must adapt the principles found in Scripture to their contemporary context.

Each thinker acknowledges a certain level of cultural influence on the Bible in increasing succession as his view becomes more progressive. In addition, they all believe considering contemporary culture is essential in understanding the Bible whether or not all of it is applicable today. They also agree that God reveals himself within the constructs of modern culture but disagree on how to appropriate time-conditioned statements. Pipim differentiates himself from the others by taking a literalistic approach that leads him to reject the notion that any statement in the Bible can be considered temporal. On the other hand Canale, Thompson, and Guy acknowledge the temporal nature of parts of Scripture in increasing degrees. Guy holds the most progressive view in that he considers the Bible within the confines of contemporary culture and

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[70] Thompson, *Inspiration*, 100.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid., 98-99.

the culture of biblical writers, both of which he regards as significant sources of authority. His respect for other areas of knowledge demonstrates his openness to considering modern cultural factors in the interpretation of theology, as discussed later in this paper. Both Thompson and Canale agree that culture must be a deciding factor in interpreting the Bible, but they remain distinguishable in that Thompson is less defined in his differentiation between modern and biblical culture. Canale, on the other hand, goes through great lengths to explain the biblical writer's cognitive limitations and how readers must interpret Scripture according to their own cognition while at the same time being conscious of the Bible's historical context and, hence, better represents the traditional explanation of cultural determinism and historicism.

7. Authority: Is Scripture Adventism's Sole Authority?

In this final section I explore what is, perhaps, the most important and divisive factor in how each theologian approaches their theological thinking. What Adventists regard as authoritative in the development of doctrines and beliefs provides the clearest glimpse of what differentiates their positions. In addition, many of the recent theological issues have often stemmed from discussion over what should be regarded as authoritative in formulating doctrine. Because of this, the question, "*What is our authority?*" proves to be the most relevant issue in my discussion of Adventist views of Scripture.

On September 2-4, 2011, the topic of authority was discussed at a recent conference hosted by *Adventist Forums* in Chicago, Illinois. It was entitled *Genesis and Beyond: Celebrating Faith in a Polarized Age* and highlighted the differences of viewpoints on the

creation issue in Seventh-day Adventism.[73] There were three primary individuals discussing the issue: John Walton, Fritz Guy, and Brian Bull. Walton, Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College, endorses a functional view of the creation rather than a material creation. He explains it by proposing that the creation account is actually an account of the functions of nature rather than a material account of when God created the animals, the earth, and other aspects of nature.[74] Fritz Guy and Brian Bull endorse a similar view in their recent work *God, Sky and Land: Genesis 1 as the Ancient Hebrews Heard It*.[75] This view is particularly challenging for Adventists because it leaves room for the possibility of theistic evolution.

Guy sees a distinction between religious and scientific questions. He considers the "factual-research disciplines," the "creative-artistic disciplines" and the "theoretical-constructive disciplines" to be perfectly legitimate sources of authority that answer questions not asked in Scripture.[76] Moreover to this, he claims that the Bible is not written "to judge, correct, or control the knowledge that results from these disciplines."[77] For him, Scripture has a unique and exclusive role in answering religious questions including "questions about the nature of the ultimate reality, about the ultimate nature of all other reality, and about the ultimate meaning of human reality, including our own individual reality."[78] As for the questions not answered by Scripture, he is completely open to consulting science, art, and philosophy in the formation of his doctrine without stating what resource is more important than the other. Any attempts to

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[73] For an overview of the program see "Adventist Forum Conference 2011 – Genesis and Beyond: Celebrating Faith in a Polarized Age," Adventist Forum Spectrum Blog, http://spectrummagazine.org/page/adventist-forum-conference-2011---genesis-beyond-celebrating-faith-polarized-age.

[74] See John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009).

[75] See Brian Bull and Fritz Guy, *God, Sky and Land: Genesis 1 as the Ancient Hebrews Heard It*, 1st ed. (Roseville: Adventist Forum, 2011).

[76] Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 143-144.

[77] Ibid., 144.

[78] Ibid.

prioritize sources of knowledge are irrelevant precisely because they do not address the same problems. He will state that a *prima scriptura* approach, which includes consulting other sources as well but first Scripture, is the most historically accurate position taken in general Christianity.[79] However, he also suggests that it is possible that a better approach would be to affirm "something like the 'Wesleyan quadrilateral' consisting of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience."[80]

Samuel Pipim's strong endorsement of *sola scriptura* sharply contrasts with Guy's approach. Pipim takes *sola scriptura* literally in that he believes the Bible is the only source of authority that we can safely consider in faith-related matters. Faith-related matters include questions about origins and nature that Guy would let science, rather than Scripture, answer. At the same time, Pipim will emphasize the importance of studying other sources of knowledge in saying,

> While upholding the sole authority of Scripture, Bible-believing Christians do not totally reject the value of extra-biblical data and experience in informing their understanding of inspired writ. The Bible itself teaches that God has revealed Himself in nature, history and human experience (Ps 19; Rom 1 & 2; Heb 1:1-2). Adventists may indeed learn from extra-biblical sources such as science, history, tradition, psychology, and archaeology.[81]

Some may argue that this is indeed a *prima scriptura* approach. However, such a claim is questionable because he views the Bible as the sole source of authority; anything found in disagreement with it is discarded. For example, he will claim,

> Because of the impact of sin on all of God's creation, including nature and human experience, the knowledge obtained from data outside Scripture (and scholars' interpretation of such knowledge) may sometimes be flawed. To correct such distortions, God has given the Holy Scriptures as the objective basis to evaluate extra-biblical data.[82]

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[79] Ibid., 137.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word*, 77.

[82] Ibid., 77-78.

The Bible is the answer to all fundamental questions. All other areas of knowledge are subjected to Scripture, the only resource free of error. In this sense, his position can be better described as *sola scriptura* because the Bible is the only perfect resource in existence.

Interestingly, Alden Thompson isn't nearly as focused on other sources of authority and has remained surprisingly silent on the issue. What he has discussed is the authority of Ellen White. In a sermon, he describes the process of inspiration that Ellen White went through as equivalent to the process the biblical authors experienced.[83] This does not mean that Ellen White is of equal authority to Scripture, but it does give readers an indication of his view of authority. Because he makes a distinction between Ellen White and Scripture, despite his belief that both White and the biblical writers underwent the same process of inspiration, he can be described as holding the Bible above other reliable sources of authority. Simply put, he appears to distinguish Scripture above all other sources of authority including the works of modern prophets. For instance, he also holds Ellen White in high regard and dedicated much of his early research to investigating the development of her theology, which was complemented with a study of Old Testament depictions of God and how personality-types inform theological thinking.[84] Beyond this it is difficult to ascertain his particular positions on the role of philosophy, science, and other secondary sources in developing doctrine.

Fernando Canale similarly embraces a *prima scriptura* approach, commonly perceived as the traditional Adventist view of the Bible. For instance, he claims that his *historical cognitive model* allows room for philosophy, science, and tradition but cautions that these resources "are

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[83] Alden Thompson, "The Authority of Ellen White in Adventism," Walla Walla University School of Theology, http://www.wallawalla.edu/fileadmin/user_upload/theology/Alden_Thompson/Writings/Lectures_and_Sermons/The_Authority_of_Ellen_White_in_Adventism.rtf.

[84] See Alden Thompson, *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?*, 5th ed. (Cantonment: Energion, 2012).; and Alden Thompson, *Beyond Common Ground: Why Liberals and Conservatives Need Each Other* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2009).

not to be conceived as data on which Christian theology should be built or its methodologies and presuppositional structure determined," unless used critically.[85] He goes on to emphasize that all other sources of knowledge must remain subordinate to criticism and reinterpretation. He makes this claim on the basis that Scripture alone has been inspired by God and, hence, other sources of knowledge cannot be considered as trustworthy.

Fritz Guy views can again be described as progressive because of his high regard for all sources of knowledge. He aims to have an intelligent, well-thought-out faith that takes into considers all areas of knowledge but still believes Scripture has a special role. Thompson can roughly be categorized as moderate because he retains a *prima scriptura* view while still remaining open to investigating the Bible from untraditional viewpoints, as his *casebook* approach demonstrates. Canale again represents the traditional view with his newly proposed cognitive-historical model because he is able to implement consideration for all other sources while still holding a high view of Scripture. He does so by exalting the Bible above all other sources of knowledge and by cautioning that other sources must be critiqued and judged against the Bible. Pipim represents the literalist approach in that Scripture is the only infallible and perfect resource that should be used in Adventist thought. While he values other sources as well, particularly the study of history and nature, such areas of knowledge can never compare to the perfect message revealed in the Bible and, hence, must always serve a secondary, unimportant role.

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[85] Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration*, 150.

8. Conclusion

In this work I have explored the historical context in which the contemporary discussion of inspiration and authority within Adventism has taken place. The diversity of views exemplified by the four theologians analyzed here represent the lack of consensus that exists on what exactly the Adventist hermeneutic is. Each theologian has decided for himself what model fits their perspective on Scripture and what other sources of knowledge they are willing to regard in their theological thinking.

Below I present a taxonomy that summarizes the views of each thinker. It is provided for easy and quick comparison with the understanding that the details of the information provided in it are contained in the previous sections of this paper and the conclusions that follow.

	Progressive	Moderate	Traditional	Literalist
Theologian	**Fritz Guy**	**Alden Thompson**	**Fernando Canale**	**Samuel Pipim**
Hermeneutical Model	*Tripolar*	*Casebook-Principle*	*Cognitive-Historical*	*Literalist-Sola Scriptura*
Variable 1: Inerrancy	Contains errors	Contains errors	Contains errors	Scripture is infallible and inerrant
Variable 2: Culture	Scripture culturally conditioned; some Scripture irrelevant to contemporary culture	Scripture culturally conditioned; some Scripture irrelevant to contemporary culture	Scripture culturally conditioned; must understand Scripture in contemporary context; hesitant to dismiss parts of Scripture as irrelevant	Scripture culturally conditioned; entirely applicable to contemporary culture regardless of the conditioning
Variable 3: Authority	Scripture and other sources authoritative; these sources address different questions	Prima Scriptura; oOpen to use of secondary sources	Prima Scriptura; secondary sources used with great suspicion	Sola Scriptura; concurring sources enhance Scripture but are not authoritative

Fritz Guy represents some commonalities that define the progressive perspective, though there is certainly a diversity of perspectives even within this categorization. Namely, most progressives believe that Scripture contain errors and cultural elements that may not apply to contemporary culture. They are also often the most open to consulting other sources of knowledge and may even view the Bible as limited in what questions it can answer. Nonetheless, the Bible is still the word of God expressed in human language and is special in that it can answer some of the most fundamental epistemological and ontological questions humanity has, especially those pertaining to matters of faith and experience with the divine.

Alden Thompson, the subject of much of the discussion on inspiration, represents a moderate stance in that he holds a high view of Scripture while still remaining open to a critical analysis of cultural differences between biblical times and the present. He is unique in that he adheres both to an incarnational view of the Bible and a casebook approach whereby he sees Scripture, to a great extent, as a collection of principles illustrated in stories. Though he remains unclear about what he regards as authoritative resources for theological thinking, he appears to differ from Guy in that he more willingly exalts the Bible above all other resources. He also holds a high view of Ellen White and compares the nature of her inspiration to the inspiration of the biblical prophets though he still regards Scripture as the highest authority.

Fernando Canale, in proposing a *cognitive-historical* method to interpreting the Bible, details a model that is not unlike the way in which many traditional Adventist theologians read the Bible. That is, he adheres to a *prima scriptura* view of Scripture and consults secondary sources of knowledge with great caution and with the stipulation that other sources of knowledge are always subordinate to the Bible. He recognizes cultural influence in Scripture, describing it as God reaching down into the world or cognition of the biblical writers. Also, He believes the

task of contemporary readers is to understand Scripture in light of contemporary culture but is more hesitant than Guy and Thompson to dismiss elements of the Bible as inapplicable to modern believers.

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim exemplifies a literalistic view not unlike the approach to Scripture developed by fundamentalists and evangelicals in the 19th and 20th centuries. He views the Bible as inerrant and infallible in the sense that Scripture is free of even factual errors. Like all the other theologians analyzed here, he views the Bible as culturally conditioned but believes every statement still applies to modern believers even if the statements seem irrelevant to contemporary culture. Though he is open to other sources of knowledge as an enhancement, he views the Bible as the sole perfect authority and the only useful resource in the development of doctrines, beliefs, and practices. Other resources are only useful as far as they enhance the information found within Scripture and any source that contradicts it is fallacious.

There are several main differences between each thinker that can be ascertained from this study. Each theologian has a completely distinct hermeneutical model that they use in their interpretation of Scripture. Generally, the more progressive the thinker is, the more open their model tends to be in consulting other sources as authoritative in theological considerations. Likewise, the more traditional or literalist the thinker is, the less open they are to dismissing parts of Scripture as culturally irrelevant to modern times. In addition, the more progressive the thinker is, the smaller the gap is between Scripture and secondary sources of knowledge like science, art, and philosophy. Pipim stands alone in asserting that Scripture is free of error. The other thinkers are more open to the belief that Scripture is erroneous the more progressive they are.

Despite all the distinctions that can be made between these thinkers it can also be argued that there is a surprising similarity between them all. For instance, all of them have a high view of Scripture and acknowledge the cultural conditioning of Scripture. More importantly, they all recognize the need for readers to understand Scripture in their contemporary context. Furthermore, they all view the Bible as authoritative in the formation of doctrines, beliefs, and practices. Also, though each thinker has a different term for their hermeneutical model, each thinker's model presuppose the following: the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God and is hence trustworthy for theological thinking, Scripture is the revelation of God's will for humanity, God reaches down into culture and speaks human language, God is revealed through avenues outside of the Bible that can be used in understanding Scripture, the Bible contains literary genres and metaphors that we must be careful not to take literally, the Bible contains principles and truths applicable to contemporary culture, and humans have the capacity to understand Scripture. Certainly more presuppositions could be identified but those that are listed demonstrate the common ground that each thinker shares with one another.

In this paper I have attempted to identify the views of each thinker by analyzing their perspectives on three variables related to the revelation, inspiration, and authority of Scripture. These variables, inerrancy, biblical and contemporary culture, as well as sources of authority, help define at least a part of what determines their hermeneutical methods and overall approach to Scripture. Though several differences can be identified in how they view Scripture the similarities between them, even between Fritz Guy and Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, are more significant. This commonality, discussed above, helps distinguish the Adventist view of Scripture from historical-criticism and newer postmodern approaches, such as ideological or deconstructive criticisms, that potentially diminish the divine nature and overall trust in the

Bible. At the same time, historical-criticism has challenged Adventists to consider Scripture in light of history, archaeology, and other areas of knowledge that can bring new insight into the biblical text.

Seventh-day Adventists can be grateful for the common ground that exists because it allows for both a sense of unity and the freedom to think imaginatively about what doctrines, beliefs, and practices comprise the theological identity of the church. As discussions take place within Adventism about the continued significance and relevance of the Bible in the context of new theological and scientific discoveries, there is hope that this sense of identity will be both maintained and enriched in the future by thinkers dedicated to defending Scripture as the divinely inspired Word of God.

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