

4-1-2000

## A Basic Mission of the Adventist Theological Society (The President's Page)

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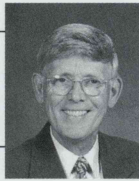
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### Recommended Citation

Gulley, Norman R. (2000) "A Basic Mission of the Adventist Theological Society (The President's Page)," *Perspective Digest*: Vol. 5 : No. 2 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pd/vol5/iss2/2>

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Norman R. Gulley

**T**he Adventist Theological Society promotes the high view of Scripture officially approved by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in its Fundamental Beliefs No.1. As voted at the General Conference Session of 1980, it reads, in part, "The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His [God's] 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." Six years later (1986), the Annual Council approved the "Methods of Bible Study Document," in which the church rejected "even a modified use" of the historical-critical method as inconsistent with the teachings of Scripture itself.

The place of Scripture in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is crucial not only to its mission but also its very survival. The Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture. Holy men of God were moved by the Spirit to write the Word of God (2 Peter

## A BASIC MISSION OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

1:21). There is a union of the divine and the human in the written Word as there is in the Living Word, Jesus Christ. Both come to us in an indissoluble union, so that divine content is present in human expression and human flesh. Scripture is not a witness to revelation, nor does it merely contain revelation; it is revelation as truly as the man Jesus is God. Scripture is no more culturally conditioned—to alter truth—than Christ was. We must come before both Words of God in humility, to be judged, taught, and fitted for heaven. We dare not come as critics to judge Scripture, anymore than we dare come to Christ and judge Him. To judge Scripture is to judge its divine Author and His authority, and in so doing to separate ourselves from the Holy Spirit, who alone can take us through final events to heaven.

We need to come under the judgment of the Word rather than judge it. We are either doing one or the

other, and our eternal destiny depends on which. If we resist the authority of the Holy Spirit as Author of Scripture, how can we receive Him in the Latter Rain (Joel 2:28)? The Jews rejected the living Word, Jesus Christ; in rejecting the written Word of God as His authoritative word, we follow in their steps.

### Providential Protection

God authored the Bible over 16 centuries through 40 writers. Because He is the God who providentially watches over all human events, we would expect that He watched over the writing and preservation of His book. We can then come to it in its final form as a trustworthy and infallible revelation of His thoughts, even though communicated in human language. To have less than an authoritative revelation in Scripture calls in question the providential power of God. And given the cosmic controversy, certainly God would superintend the process of writing and preservation so that His revelation could counteract the influence of Satan. Scripture is a sure word from God that gives insight, strength, and purpose for victorious Christian living in a world that has largely joined the rebellion against God. Loyalty to God's Word reveals our loyalty to Him.

We can either interpret Scripture as a "book from below," applying all the critical procedures, or we can

come to it as a "book from above" with study methods appropriate to its divine authorship. This is not to suggest that the Bible fell from heaven written in flawless human language that has survived hundreds of translations. That's impossible. There is a human element in the communicative medium, but the Bible is divine revelation through human language, however limited the human words. Though finite language can never do justice to infinite revelation, it is the only way that revelation can take place and be understood as such by humans in a fallen world.

Scripture is God's holy revelation. We listen to Him in its pages, as the Holy Spirit reveals the meaning of His Word. When Jesus asked who His disciples thought He was, Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven" (Matt. 16:16, 17, NIV). Even as Jesus, though the living Word of God, could not be understood without divine illumination, neither can the written Word of God.

### The Searching Test

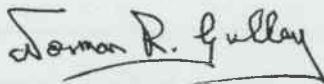
The fact that biblical meaning is inaccessible without divine illumination makes it imperative that we approach it in company with the Holy Spirit. To look on it as simply another human book, to approach it

with historical-critical scissors, is to empty Scripture of its divine content. Eternal life is not the product of such an approach, for Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think that you have eternal life, but they . . . testify of Me” (John 5:39, NKJV). To remove divine content from either Christ or Scripture is to do disservice to Christ’s divine revelation in His person and in His Word.

Christ is coming soon. Our church will be thrust into the final challenge before a world that does not love the truth. The result: “None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I

obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God’s immutable word?” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593, 594).

May we say with David, “Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors. . . . Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. . . . I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life. . . . you are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word” (Ps. 119:24, 89, 93, 114, NIV). □



## R E L I G I O U S S Y M B O L S

**T**he elementary school teacher decided that since it was the holiday season, it would be a good idea to have the children learn about different faiths. She asked each one to bring something that would represent his or her faith.

On the appointed day the children were all excited. The teacher began by asking who wanted to go first. Bernie raised his hand and the teacher said, “OK, Bernie, introduce yourself, tell us your faith and what you brought to show us.”

Bernie replied, “My name is Bernard Schwartz. I’m Jewish, and I brought a yarmulke.”

Next was Mary Katherine, who introduced herself and said, “I’m Roman Catholic, and I brought a rosary.”

Next was Betty Lou, who said, “My name is Betty Lou Jones. I’m a Seventh-day Adventist, and I brought a casserole.”—*Retirees Journal*.