

Hasel, Frank M., ed. *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*. Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute/Review and Herald Academic, 2020. 488 pp. Paperback. USD 14.95.

Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach grew out of a request made at the 2015 General Conference session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in San Antonio, Texas. It was there noted that “we have a world church looking at the same Scriptures and coming up with very different interpretations.... The world church should take time to study and to bring together what our hermeneutic really is, because we’re using two very different ones” (2). The General Conference Steering Committee agreed to work with the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) to address this issue, and the result is the present volume, which builds on four prior BRI publications on hermeneutics (*A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics* [BRI, 1974], *Biblical Interpretation Today: An Analysis of Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation and Proposals for the Interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God* [BRI, 1985], *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* [BRI, 2005], and *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers* [BRI, 2010]).

This latest attempt at defining Adventist hermeneutics contains a brief sketch introducing the book’s twelve contributors, all noted scholars in their field, followed by a general introduction by Frank M. Hasel and fourteen chapters. Because knowledge is always an interpretation of reality, and interpretation always contains biases, the book appropriately commences with Kwabena Donkor’s chapter on “Presuppositions in Hermeneutics.” Donkor explores the micro-, meso-, and macrohermeneutical levels, offering helpful examples of each class. The macrolevel—which he terms theoretical biblical presuppositions—includes one’s view of God, humans, the world, and knowledge. Donkor also notes nontheoretical presuppositions, which center on personal attitudes influencing one’s interpretation; these may be negative (pride, doubt, and alienation from God) or positive (faith, humility, and submission to the Holy Spirit’s guidance). Donkor advocates for a continual hermeneutical spiral between reader and text and between the parts and whole of the text. In this way, “the interpreter gets closer and closer to preventing nonbiblical presuppositions from being imposed on the text” (29).

Chapter two, Frank Hasel’s “Elements of Biblical Hermeneutics in Harmony with Scripture’s Self-Claims,” addresses the normative role of Scripture from the perspectives of the Old and New Testaments and of Christ Himself. Hasel also underscores the Christological analogy of Scripture, which calls for an attitude of humble obedience on the part of the reader and a hermeneutic of faith that reads Scripture from a literary, historical-grammatical (as opposed to a literalistic) perspective. Hasel ends with four necessary presuppositions for approaching Scripture: (1) God’s existence, (2) his supernatural nature, (3) and his actions in time and space as (4) a personal

Trinity. In the book's final chapter, Hasel revisits certain hermeneutical issues in more detail (such as reader-response approaches).

In "Variants, Versions, and the Trustworthiness of Scripture" (ch. 3), Clinton Wahlen addresses a common question—Which version of the Bible is the best? After looking at variants, he notes that Bible translations appear on a continuum: (1) formal word-for-word translations (ESV, NASB, NKJV, RSV); (2) functional translations aiming at faithfulness but not strictly literal (CSB, NRSV); (3) dynamic translations restructuring the language to convey the same meaning in the target language (NIV11, NLT); (4) culturally sensitive versions (NEB, TEV); and (5) paraphrased translations, where one person presents the content in a culturally clear way (LB, MSG, TCW). Wahlen provides a helpful chart of all these versions, noting their translation type (formal, literal, paraphrase), source of the text (MT, Textus Receptus, etc.), as well as accuracy, beauty of style, clarity, weaknesses, and strengths. He concludes that the Bible is "by far the most carefully transmitted and preserved book in history" (99), and while there is no perfect version, an attentive study of the text and context, comparison of several different versions, and faith in its divine origin will garner great results.

In chapter four, "History, the Bible, and Hermeneutics," Michael Hasel addresses the tension between *Historie* (history as fact) and *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history), which sees biblical history as theologically meaningful yet not necessarily factual. Hasel presents scholars who have questioned or rejected the historicity of Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon. But does the lack of extrabiblical evidence determine the lack of Scripture's historicity? Hasel offers five reasons suggesting that "both the presence and lack of evidence must be tentative and provisional" (122). Hasel then proposes four ways to approach the Bible historically. Among other things, he questions the assumption that approaches Scripture as guilty until proven innocent. He acknowledges that Christian historiography "requires divine revelation to interpret and explain history" (124). Ultimately, if the events of Scripture are not as recorded, then neither can the promises it contains be trusted. Any critical method that treats Scripture as literary fiction cannot call itself Christian, for "fiction does not engender hope" (129). The only God that can be known is the God who acts in history. Thus, it is important to view history from a prophetic perspective.

Cultural bias is the theme of chapter five, "Culture, Hermeneutics, and Scripture: Discerning What is Universal," coauthored by Clinton Wahlen and Wagner Kuhn. They note that prelapsarian Eden had a vertical (God-oriented) culture and a horizontal (human-oriented) one. However, after the fall, Cain developed a purely human-oriented culture. Yet through Seth God sought to restore the divine image by the "understanding and practice of the elements of the culture exemplified in Eden" (139). The authors also explore biases in reader-determined interpretations, offering examples of gay and trans

readings. In addition, they look at human-originated cultural issues, showing that Scripture either rejects them (child sacrifice), reveals their absurdity (idol worship), adapts them (kingship), or corrects them (polygamy and slavery). In contrast, God-oriented culture derived from Eden is universal (Sabbath and monogamous marriage). Regarding God-oriented culture established after Eden, the authors offer a helpful chart of laws relating to circumcision, ritual washings and baptism, food laws, and slavery—showing their scope, function/meaning, and intercultural application. They conclude that culture is “intrinsically good and beautiful to the extent that it reflects the intention of God for human beings” (169).

Scientific bias is explored in Leonard Brand’s chapter, “Faith, Science, and the Bible” (ch. 6). Brand acknowledges the amazing discoveries of science but laments that these have given science a false prestige. Biases are inevitable, and scientists are not “neutral truth-finding machines” (184). Students of science are often warned, “Half of what we teach you is wrong. We just have to wait for more discoveries to know which half is wrong” (184). As such, scientific findings are a mere “progress report.” Brand concludes that both creationists and evolutionists have biases, and both must be open to having their views corrected by the evidence, which will ultimately uphold the *sola Scriptura* foundation, for “the book of nature and the written Word of God, rightly understood, each shed light on the other” (208). Biases are again noted in Ekkehardt Mueller’s “Principles of Biblical Interpretation” (ch. 7). Mueller uses John 7:45–52 to reveal fallacies in biblical interpretation—biases, appeals to human authority, *ad hominem* arguments, the argument from silence, and ignoring the complexity of truth. A correct hermeneutical approach allows Scripture (and other believers) to correct our biases and encourages us to humbly rely on the Holy Spirit’s guidance. The bulk of the chapter centers on his excellent exegesis of 1 Cor 9:5. Besides exegesis, Mueller looks at the study of biblical themes (such as Sabbath) and offers a brief example of Christology in the book of Revelation. He concludes by noting how to address modern challenges and ethical issues.

In the eighth chapter, “Inner-Biblical Hermeneutics: The Use of Scripture by Bible Writers,” Richard Davidson explores how biblical writers interpreted Scripture. Davidson notes seven characteristics of intertextuality (originally suggested by Gerhard Hasel). These are the continuous history of God’s people, quotations and allusions, key theological terms, the unity of major themes, typology, promise/prediction and fulfillment, and finally, the big picture of salvation history. Using these parameters, Davidson revisits various texts accused of eisegesis and exonerates each, revealing the hermeneutical approaches of each writer and concluding that the biblical writers were indeed “careful, sophisticated, precise exegetes and theologians ... [who] consistently remain faithful to the Old Testament’s intention” (263).

In chapter nine, “Understanding Biblical Apocalyptic,” Gerhard Pfandl looks at principles for interpreting apocalyptic prophecies. First, he differentiates apocalyptic from classical prophecy, then offers characteristics and describes five interpretative approaches—historicist, historic-preterist, historical-critical (modern-preterist), futurist-dispensational, and idealist. Pfandl then reviews the apotelesmatic principle (dual fulfillment of a prophecy), noting its possibility only in classical prophecies, never apocalyptic, which have just one fulfillment. He reviews Desmond Ford’s position (seeing multiple fulfillments of apocalyptic prophecy) and Glacier View’s rejection of it.

Chapter ten continues looking at prophecy, in this case, “Conditional Prophecies About Israel: Some Hermeneutical Considerations” by Elias Brasil de Souza. Classical or dispensational premillennialists see a literalistic and unconditional fulfillment of prophecies concerning Israel. Yet de Souza shows how Jesus and the NT writers interpreted these prophecies of the HB as fulfilled in Jesus; how the NT redefines land, city, and temple; and how the final consummation of the covenant (at the end of time) will not only fulfill but intensify all covenant promises for God’s people.

In chapter eleven, Michael Hasel explores “The Genesis Account as a Test Case for Biblical Hermeneutics.” Hasel suggests that the first three chapters of Genesis are essential to understanding the rest of Scripture. He unpacks how these chapters reveal, among other things, (1) the authority, unity, and inspiration of Scripture; (2) God’s character and moral accountability; (3) the origin and nature of humanity; (4) the origin of the Sabbath; (5) marriage and family; and (6) the origin of sin, death, and the plan of redemption. In short, “protology is the key to eschatology” (324). Hasel concludes by highlighting the absolute centrality of creation just as the Bible presents it. “Belief in creation gives us the assurance of a new creation that is close at hand. It encourages us to nurture our environment. It gives us the incentive to endure the trials and tribulations of today (2 Cor 4:16–17), and to live pure and upright lives, which give us the joy and certainty of our reward tomorrow (Matt 5:12)” (347).

Among other things, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach* engenders a renewed appreciation for the gift of Adventism’s unique engagement with Scripture. Denis Kaiser’s chapter, “A Survey of Seventh-day Adventist Presuppositions, Perfections, and Methods of Biblical Interpretation (1845–1910),” generates a sense of wonder at the way God led this denomination in its formative years of Bible study. Kaiser highlights that while some early Adventist interpreters (such as A. T. Jones) felt that the Bible should be read literalistically (without interpretation), most of its leaders (such as J. N. Andrews) were students of modern and ancient languages and realized the need for a careful biblical reading. Ellen G. White herself did not approve of using her writings as the interpretive key to Scripture but emphasized the Bible as its own interpreter.

In line with this last point, John Peckham's chapter (ch. 13), entitled "The Prophetic Gift and *Sola Scriptura*," highlights the normative role of the biblical canon as ruling authority (which he terms magisterial), contrasting it to the subordinate (or ministerial) role of Ellen G. White. Peckham compares White to other noncanonical prophets—Enoch, Huldah, Nathan, Gad—who are divinely inspired yet noncanonical. Peckham underscores that all true prophets, whether canonical or noncanonical, are authoritative, yet the latter must be judged by the former. "As prophetic, Ellen G. White's writings are authoritative, but as noncanonical their authority is a ministerial authority that is functionally subordinate to that of the biblical canon—the only rule of faith and practice" (403).

Frank Hasel's concluding chapter, "Recent Trends in Methods of Biblical Interpretation," traces how the biblical hermeneutic of faith was replaced by the historical-critical method's hermeneutic of suspicion. Hasel traces the history leading to the modern "age of criticism" and explores Troeltsch's three principles of the historical-critical method: (1) criticism, (2) analogy, and (3) correlation, which reject the supernatural. While recent literary approaches rightly emphasize the genre, context, and verbal factors, "by focusing on the biblical 'story,' the historicity of biblical persons and events is often bracketed and neglected" (458). Postmodern approaches also correctly note the hermeneutical role of the reader, yet they neglect or outright reject authorial intent—including that of the assumed divine author. Hasel rightly wonders what hope is offered by biblical criticism since "biblical hope [such as the miraculous resurrection] is not grounded in wishful thinking but in the faithful promises of God" (460).

Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach is a book of great value, and I have already recommended it to several friends. Although it is targeted to an Adventist audience, I believe its biblical grounding will garner the appreciation of Bible students across denominational lines. The tome is reader-friendly and filled with helpful charts and graphs, clear section divisions, and summative conclusions. Aside from the wealth of information currently offered, a future study on hermeneutics might also delve more into the area of macrohermeneutics, exploring the nature, location, and history of hermeneutics as a philosophical discipline. A future study might also offer a comparison of Christian macrohermeneutics and the implication for biblical interpretation. Fernando Canale has proposed the following divisions: (1) the classical model of Augustine and Aquinas, (2) the Protestant model of Luther and Calvin, (3) the modern model of Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Gadamer; and finally (4) the postmodern model of Fernando Canale via Heidegger. The latest model explore how deconstruction (an area within hermeneutics) using Scriptural parameters can be utilized to critically analyze other models of Christian hermeneutics.

In conclusion, I believe this book has the potential to deepen the reader's appreciation for the process of retrieving the biblical text, provide handy tools and examples of responsible exegesis, and underscore important elements within biblical hermeneutics—particularly the need to continually revisit Scripture to correct and deepen one's views. Above all, I believe this volume will renew the reader's reverence and love for the divine author who continues to preserve his word and guide the humble seeker into greater and greater light.

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Herr, L. G., D. R. Clark., and L. T. Geraty. *Madaba Plains Project 9: The 2004 Season at Tall al-Umayri and Subsequent Studies*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2020. xiv + 374 pp. Hardcover USD 99.95.

This is the ninth in a series of volumes on the excavations at *Tall al-Umayri*. It is an in-depth analysis of the tenth season (2004) of excavations. *Tall al-Umayri* is located in the southern region of Amman, on the western side of the airport highway near the exit to the Amman National Park. The site is large and tall, surrounded by an artificial glacis, with remains from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age (as well as some ephemeral remains from the Classical Periods) on the mound and earlier remains largely from the Early Bronze Age just off the tall in the valley to the west. Excavations were carried out by codirectors Larry G. Herr and Douglas R. Clark and were sponsored by La Sierra University in a consortium with several other colleges and universities.

The volume consists of three parts: an overview, *Tall al-Umayri* (a section focusing on the different fields excavated), and subsequent studies. Chapter one is an overview of the 2004 season—placing the site in its geographical context, mentioning goals for the season, and listing all of the members of the team. This chapter concludes with an extensive bibliography of the site, an important resource to include for a project that spans thirty years. Chapter two is written by Larry Herr and places the results of the 2004 excavation season within the context of the previous seasons of excavation. This placement is important because the *Umayri* team publishes each excavation season as its own individual volume. Publishing each season hypothetically leads to detailed information being available as soon as possible. However, with the logistics of publication, this is not always the case, and so the 2004 season was published sixteen years later in 2020. Thankfully, the directors have made much of the raw data available for all seasons at www.umayri.opendig.org (the site is currently down as of submitting this review for publication). So