



3. THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY IN THE SDA CHURCH: THE MISUSE OF THE BIBLE

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2010 GENERAL CONFERENCE



2010

GENERAL CONFERENCE

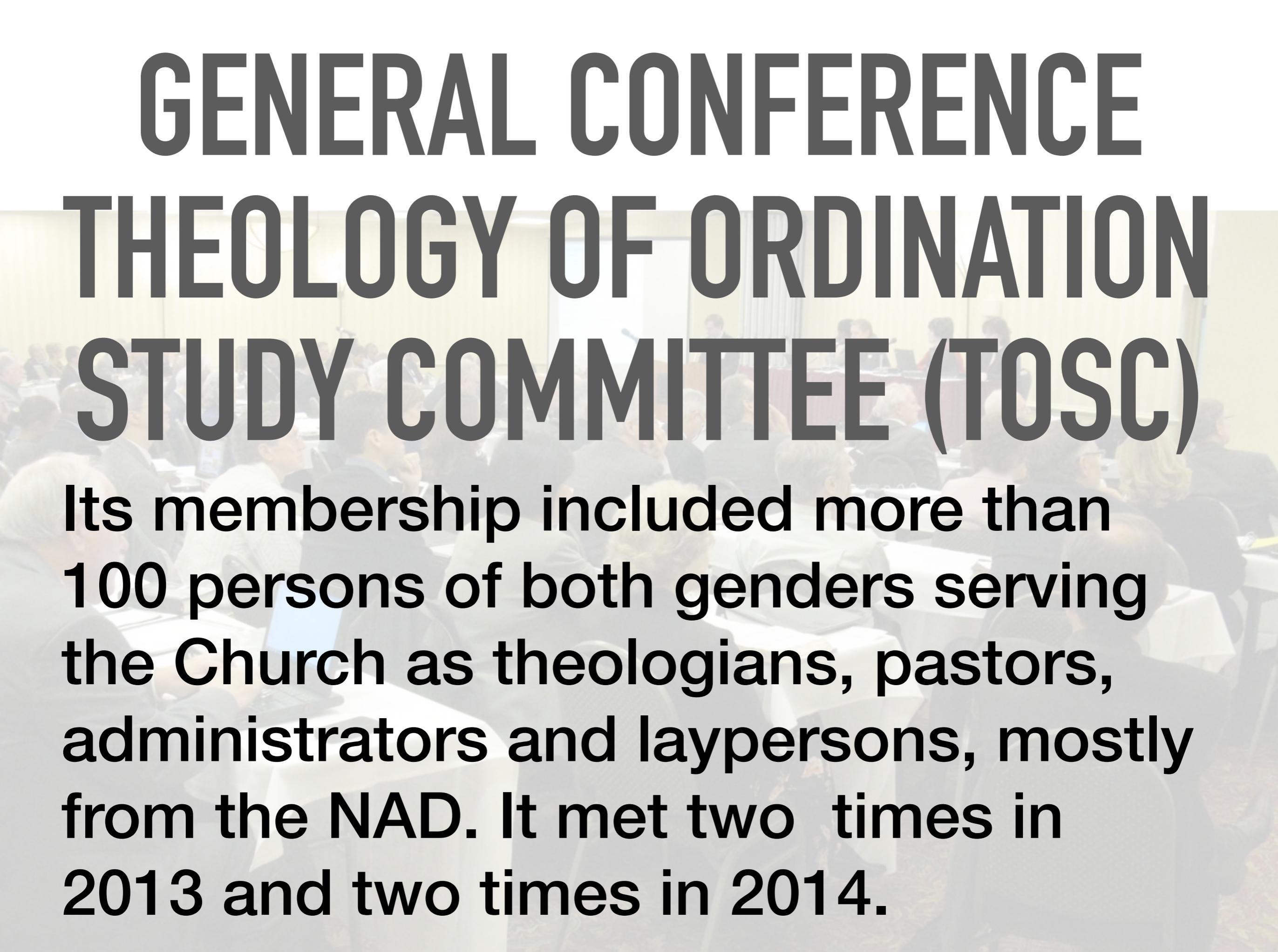
At this session there was a request for an official Church study of ordination.

The General Conference administration informed the Session of its commitment “to establishing a process to review the subject of ordination and will report back to Annual Council during this quinquennium (2010-15).”

It was “an attempt to bring about an understanding of what our theology of ordination was.” (p. 8)

2013-2014 TOSC





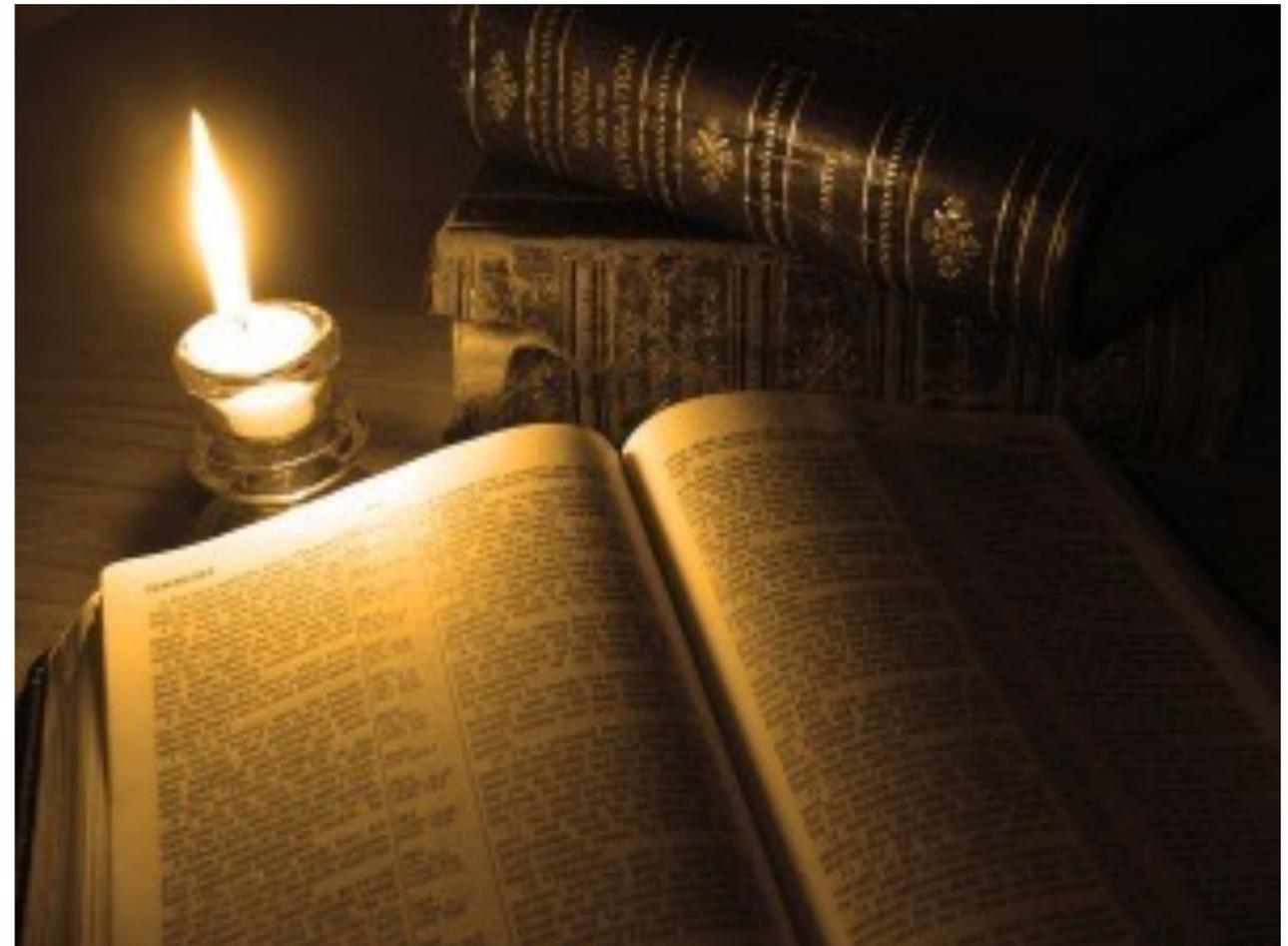
GENERAL CONFERENCE THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION STUDY COMMITTEE (TOSC)

Its membership included more than 100 persons of both genders serving the Church as theologians, pastors, administrators and laypersons, mostly from the NAD. It met two times in 2013 and two times in 2014.

RESULTS OF TOSC

Disagreement:

**The Study Committee
did not agree on
a biblical position
or Ellen G. White's
counsel**



**Or whether or not ministerial ordination
should include male and female.**

It was inconclusive on ordination

RESULTS OF TOSC

Agreements:

It did reach a high degree of accord concerning a biblical theology of ordination. It agreed about ordination as practiced in the early Church in the New Testament

1) that “Seventh-day Adventists understand ordination, in a biblical sense, as the action of the Church in publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global Church ministry”,

2) that “while ordination contributes to Church order, it neither conveys special qualities to the person nor introduces a kingly hierarchy within the faith community.”

TOSC: THREE POSITIONS ON ORDINATION

**Position 1: Only
men can be
ordained
throughout the
world church.**



TOSC: THREE POSITIONS ON ORDINATION

Position 2: Women ministers may be ordained according to the will of the various entities responsible for hiring pastors



TOSC: THREE POSITIONS ON ORDINATION

Position 3: It is a compromise between Positions 1 and 2. It supports the headship or leadership of the man in the home and church. But in special situations, exceptions can be made for women to be ordained. This decision should be left to the leadership “at a proper level” to determine whether ordination “may be appropriate for their area or region.”



THE TOSC REPORT PRESENTED AT THE 2014 ANNUAL COUNCIL

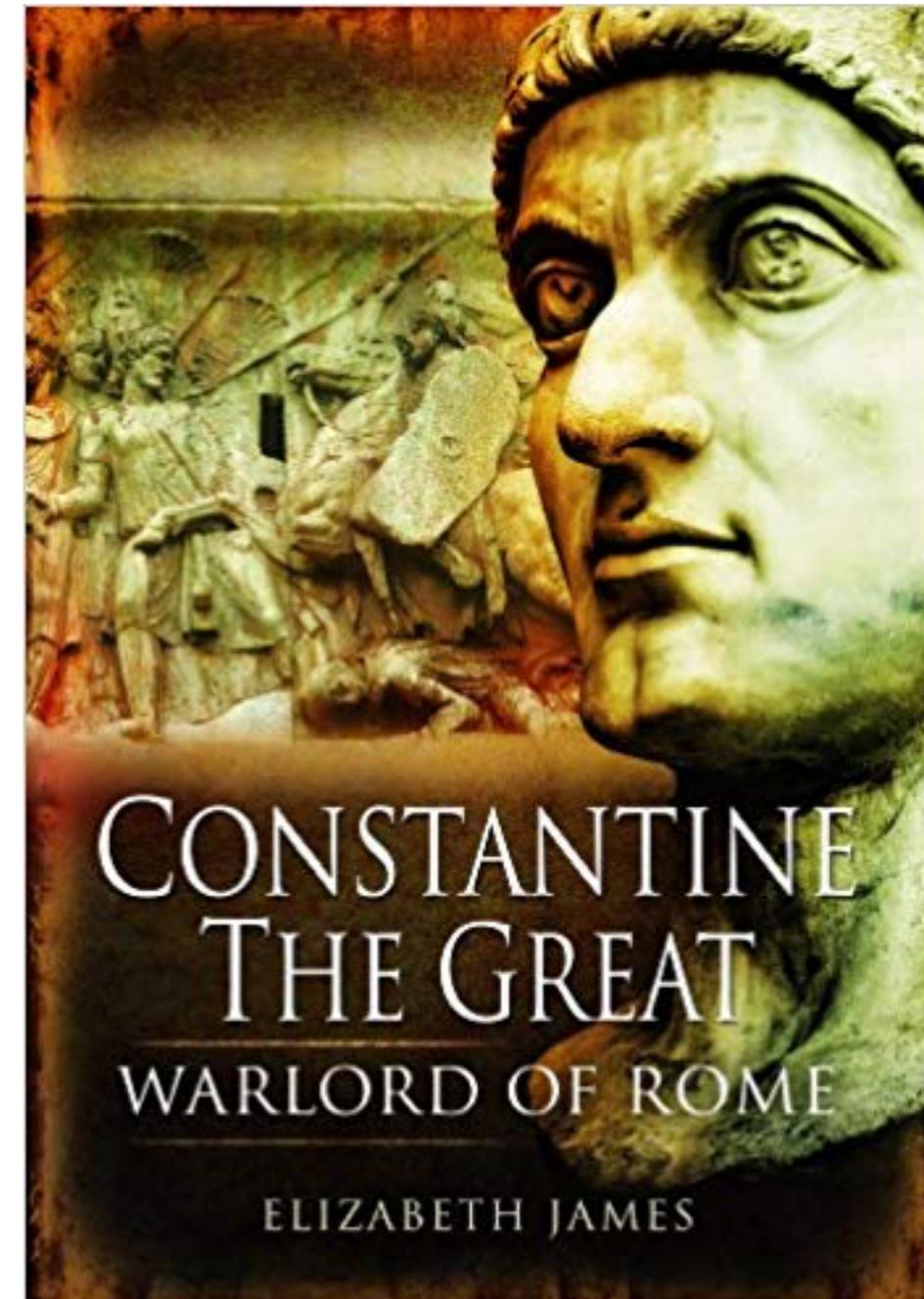
This report included three theological and hermeneutical reasons for conclusions on each position. TOSC suggested three ways forward but did not make a consensus recommendation concerning the practice of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**ORDINATION ISSUE
COMES DOWN TO “HOW
SHOULD WE INTERPRET
THE BIBLE?”**

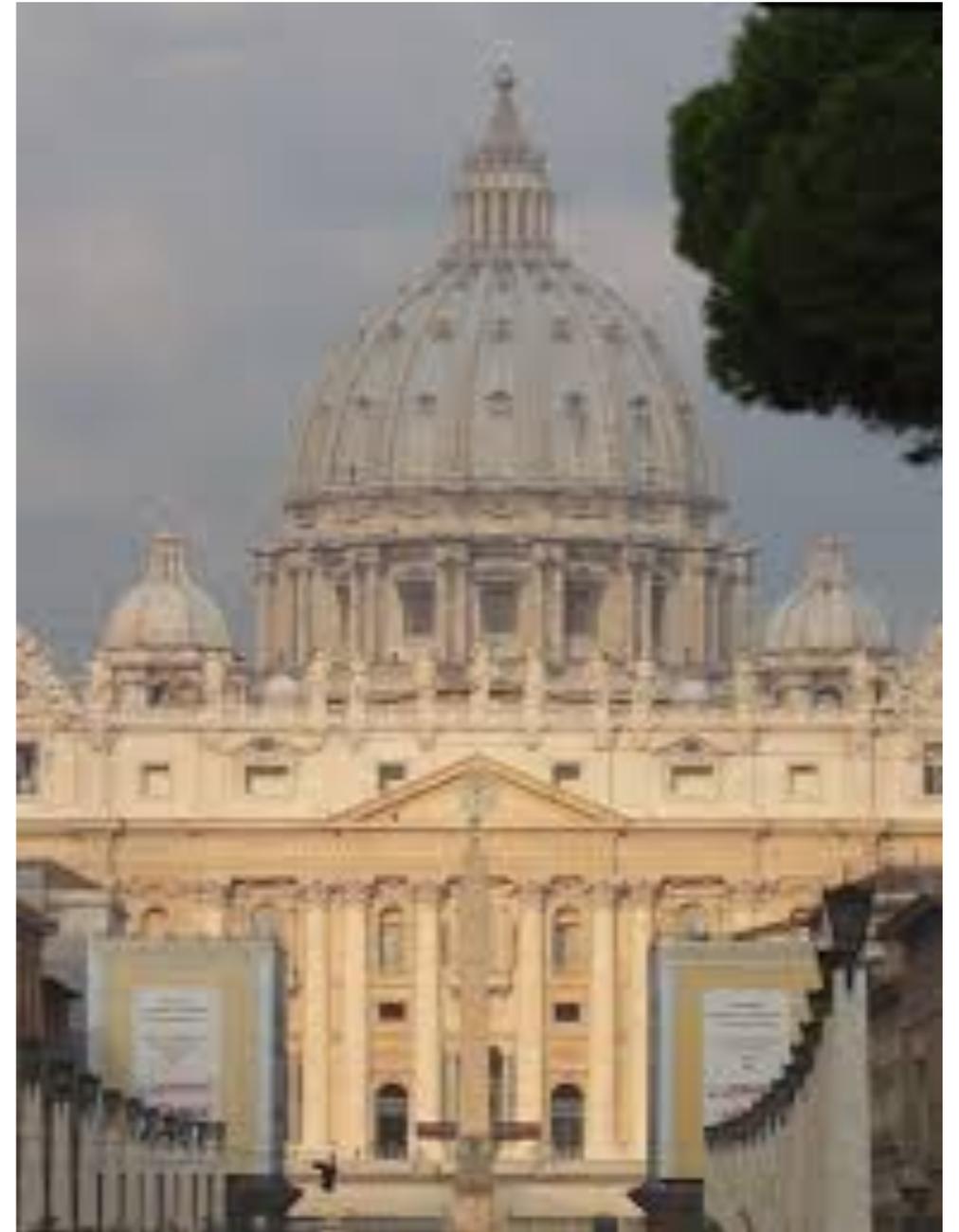
PROPHECY OF COMING APOSTASY

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. . . .

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work. . . . And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thess 2:3, 7, 8).



THE RCC AND BIBLE INTERPRETATION



THE RCC AND BIBLE INTERPRETATION

Interpreters in the Middle Ages saw a multiplicity of meanings in the text.

They saw that the text was subject to a fourfold interpretation.

The interpretation could have a literal, allegorical, moral, or anagogical meaning.



THE RCC AND BIBLE INTERPRETATION

The **literal** is the plain meaning,
the **allegorical** shows what
persons are to believe,
the **moral** meaning tells them
what to do,
and the **anagogic** sense is what
they are to hope for.

This fourfold method of
interpreting the text had a
confusing influence on
believers and took away the
certainty of its meaning.



FOURFOLD INTERPRETATION OF SABBATH

Literal is a rest on the 7th day,
the **allegorical** shows that we
are to believe in a spiritual rest;
the **moral** meaning is we must
rest one day out of seven;
and the **anagogical** sense
symbolizes the future millennial
rest

The fourfold method of looking
at the Sabbath confuses
people about the need to keep
the seventh day.



OUR PROTESTANT HERITAGE



OUR PROTESTANT HERITAGE

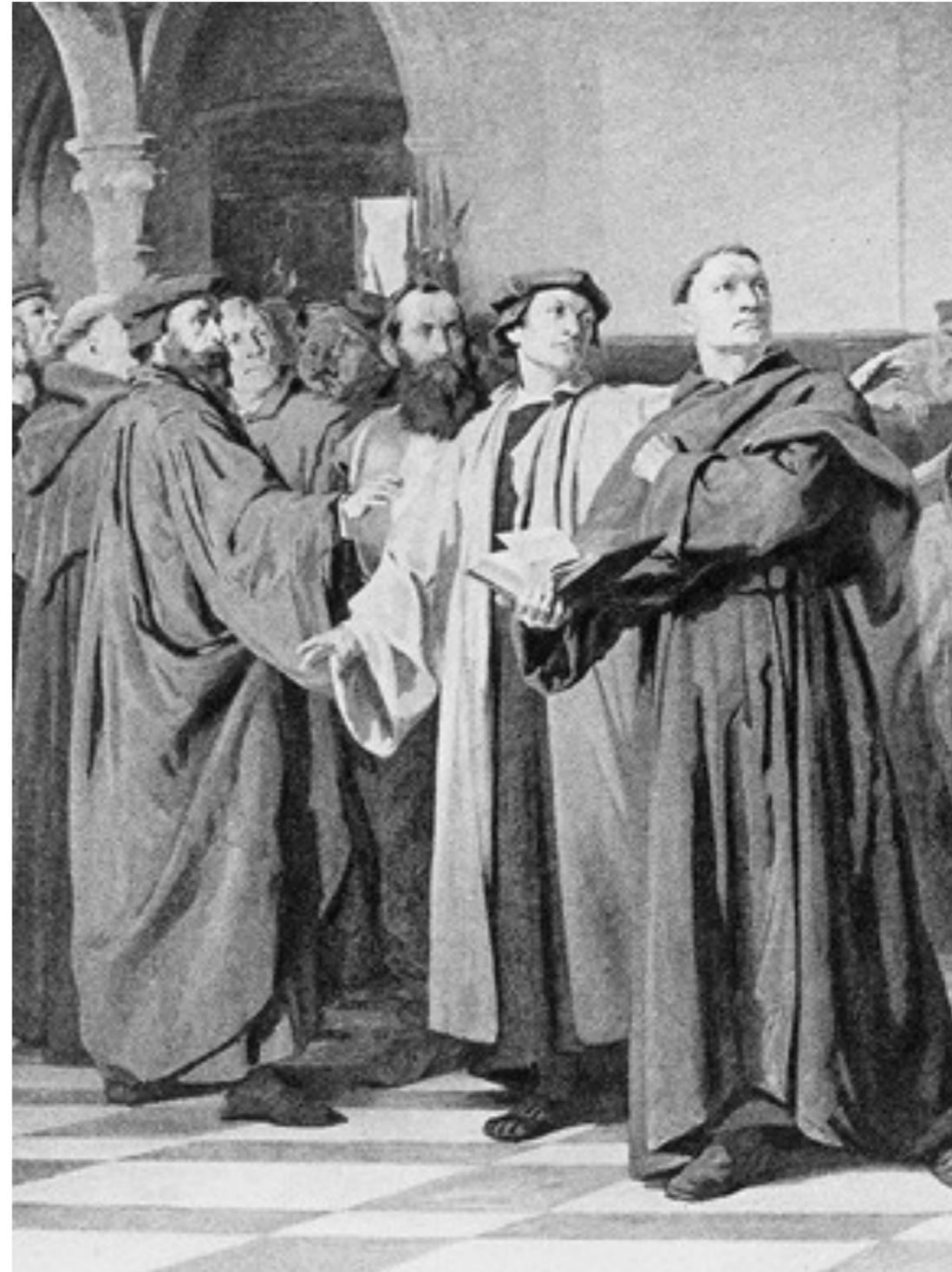
Principles of Bible interpretation by the Reformers removed the uncertainty

1. Bible is the **norm** for faith and **authority** (Bible and the Bible only)
2. **Infallible revelation** of propositional truth
3. **Prayer** is indispensable
4. Bible is **clear and sufficient**
5. **Interpretation for everyone**



OUR PROTESTANT HERITAGE

6. Focus on the **single literal** sense of the text, not the allegorical and mystical sense
7. Bible stories are **accurate** history
8. **Christ-centered** approach to the Bible
9. **Scripture is its own interpreter**
10. Analogy of Scripture principle (**comparing** Scripture with Scripture) and **typology**
11. Necessity of the **Holy Spirit** in Bible study



**THE GREAT
ADVENT
MOVEMENT OF
THE 1840S ON
INTERPRETING
THE BIBLE**



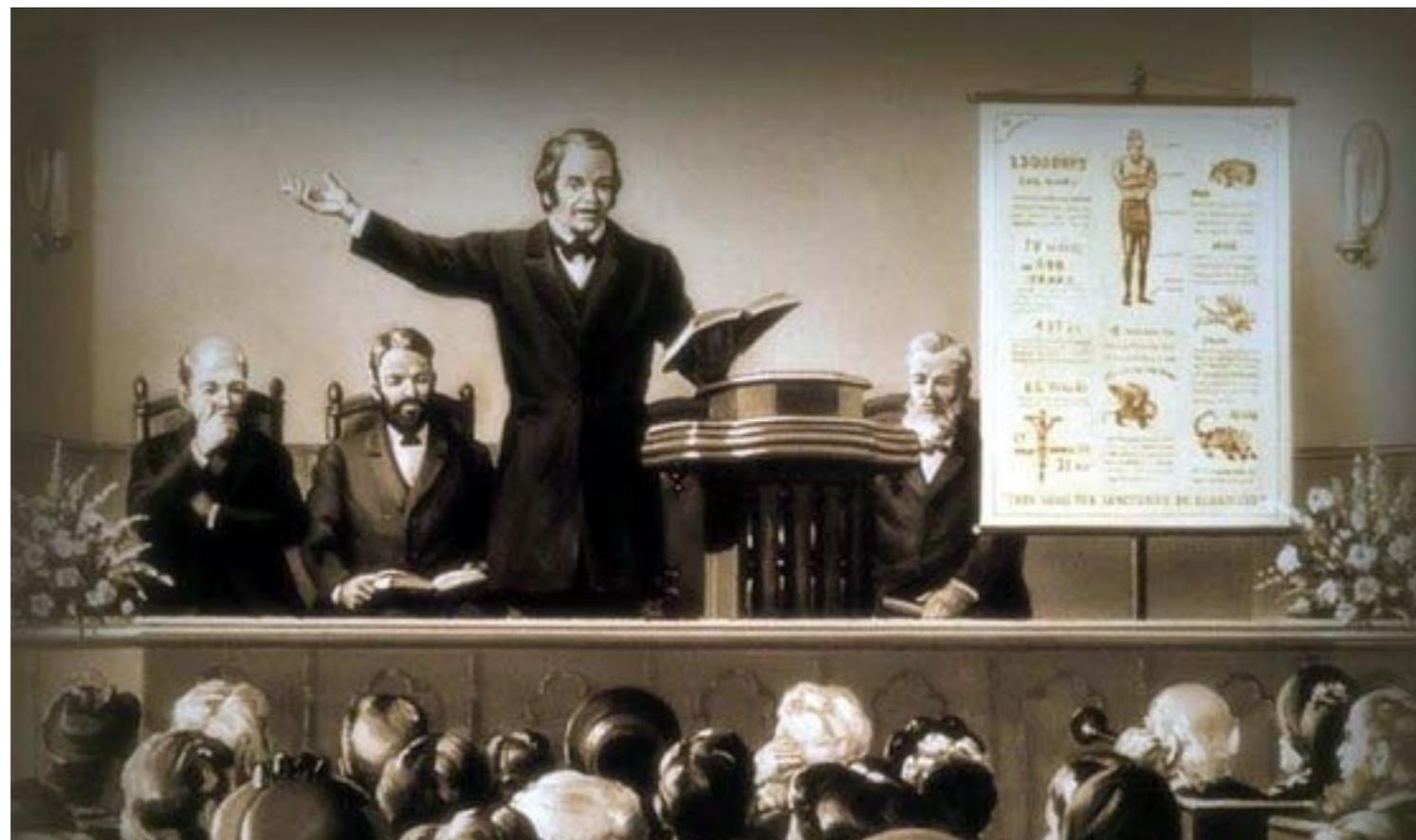
THE GREAT ADVENT MOVEMENT OF THE 1840S ON INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

“The word of God was the only testimony accepted by the preachers of the advent truth. ‘The Bible, and the Bible only,’ was their watchword” (*Great Controversy*, p. 335).



THE GREAT ADVENT MOVEMENT OF THE 1840S ON INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

Principles how to interpret the Bible are explained in Wm. Miller's rules of Bible interpretation. See P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the SDA Message and Mission*, pp. 299. 300)

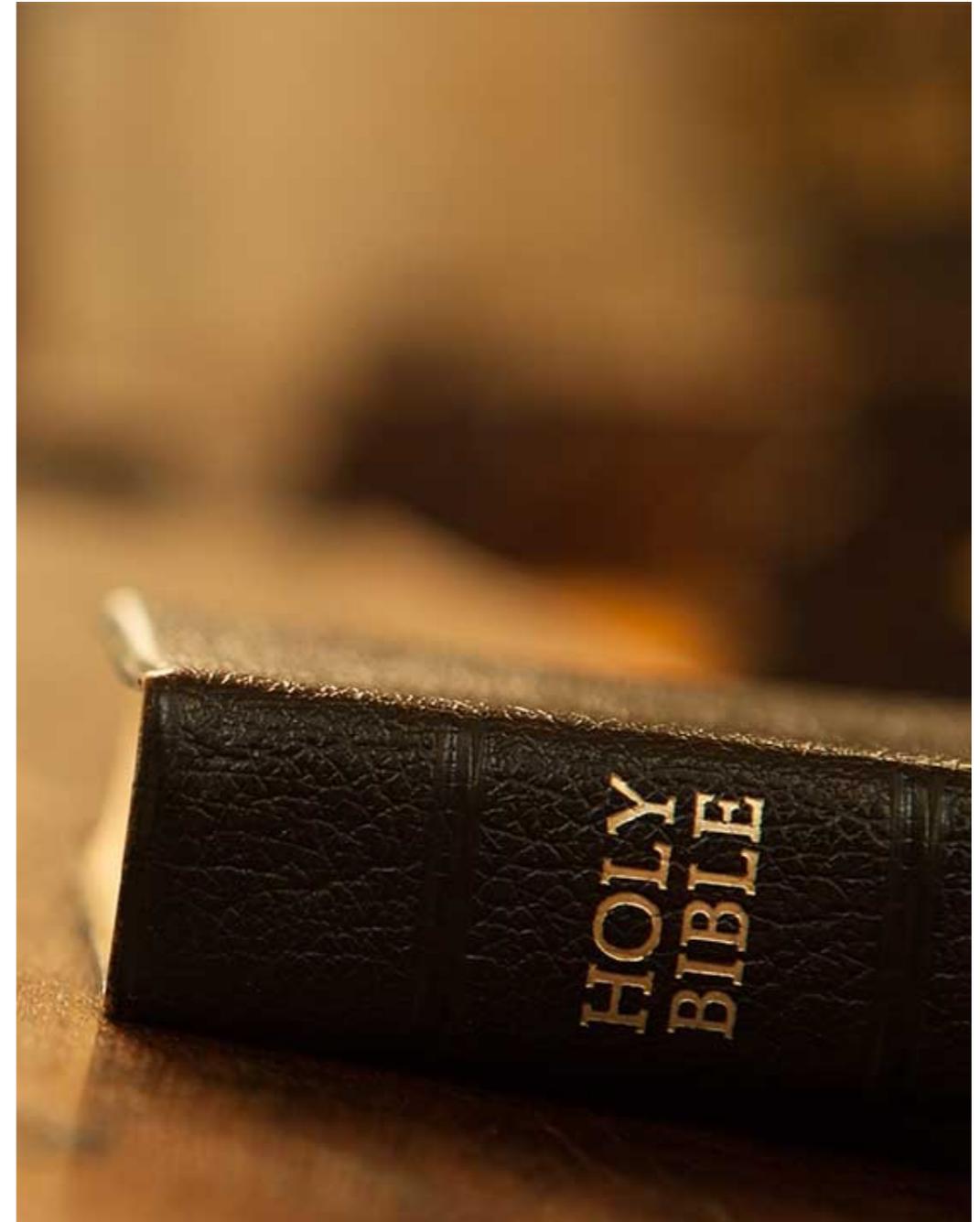


ADVENTIST PIONEERS ON INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

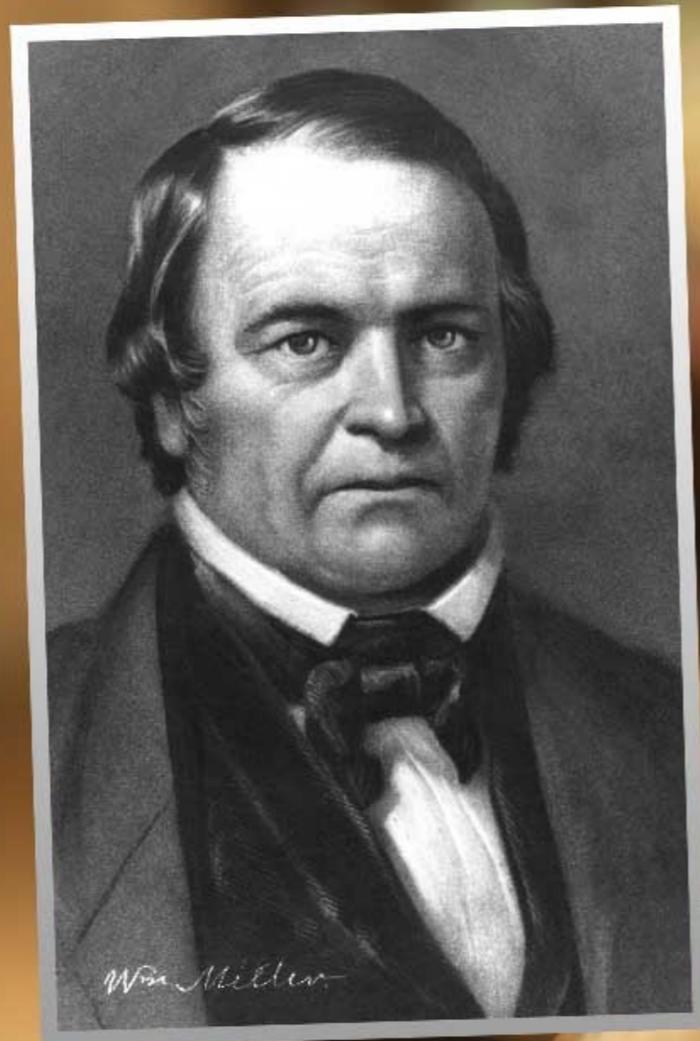
“We then [in 1844] took the position that the Bible, and the Bible only, was to be our guide; and we are never to depart from this position.” —

Letter 105, 1903.

(Councils to Writers and Editors, p. 145)



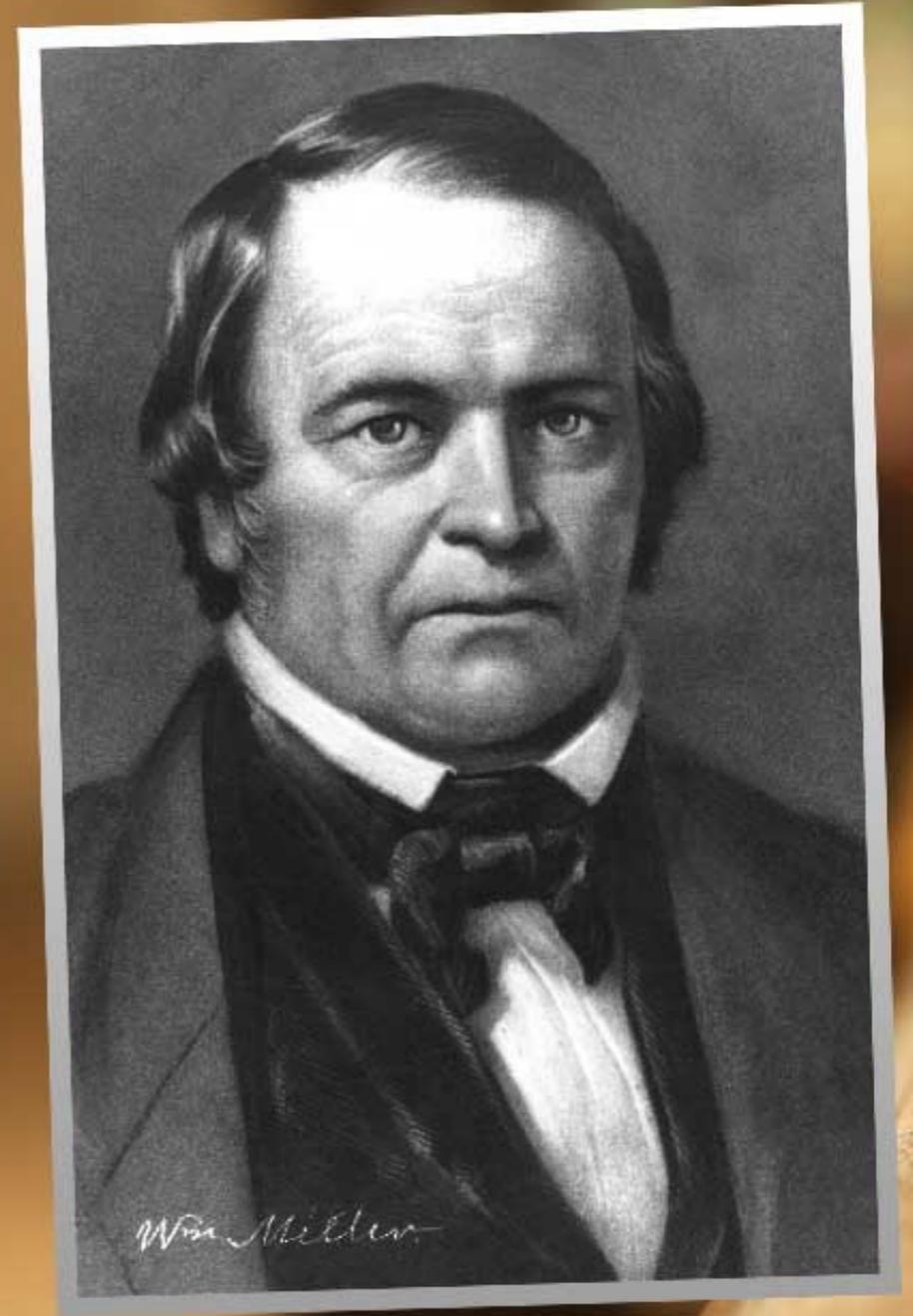
ELLEN WHITE'S EVALUATION OF WM. MILLER'S RULES OF INTERPRETATION



ELLEN WHITE'S EVALUATION OF WM. MILLER'S RULES OF INTERPRETATION

“Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel’s message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. In the little book entitled ‘Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology,’ Father Miller gives the following simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation:”

(Review and Herald, November 25, 1884).



ELLEN WHITE ENDORSES WM. MILLER'S RULES

- “1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible;**
- “2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study;**
- “3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering;**

ELLEN WHITE ENDORSES WM. MILLER'S RULES

“4. To understand doctrine, bring all the scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence; and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in error;

ELLEN WHITE ENDORSES WM. MILLER'S RULES

**“5. Scripture must be its own expositor,
since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on
a teacher to expound to me, and he
should guess at its meaning, or desire
to have it so on account of his
sectarian creed, or to be thought wise,
then his guessing, desire, creed, or
wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible.”**

ELLEN WHITE ENDORSES WM. MILLER'S RULES

“The above is a portion of these rules; and in our study of the Bible we shall all do well to heed the principles set forth.”

(Review and Herald, November 25, 1884)

WHAT IS THE SDA POSITION ON INTERPRETING THE BIBLE TODAY?



“METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY”

Methods of Bible Study

Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods

1. Preamble

This statement is addressed to all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the purpose of providing guidelines on how to study the Bible, both the trained biblical scholar and others.

Seventh-day Adventists recognize and appreciate the contributions of those biblical scholars throughout history who have developed useful and reliable methods of Bible study consistent with the claims and teachings of Scripture. Adventists are committed to the acceptance of biblical truth and are willing to follow it, using all methods of interpretation consistent with what Scripture says of itself. These are outlined in the presuppositions detailed below.

In recent decades the most prominent method in biblical studies has been known as the historical-critical method. Scholars who use this method, as classically formulated, operate on the basis of presuppositions which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible. Even a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.

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 misunderstands 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.

In contrast with the historical-critical method and presuppositions, we believe it to be helpful to set forth the principles of Bible study that are consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures themselves, that preserve their unity, and are based upon the premise that the Bible is the Word of God. Such an approach will lead us into a satisfying and rewarding experience with God.

2. Presuppositions Arising From the Claims of Scripture

a. Origin

- (1) The Bible is the Word of God and is the primary and authoritative means by which He reveals Himself to human beings.
- (2) The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers with thoughts, ideas, and objective information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore

RIO

DOCUMENT

“METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY”

“Methods of Bible Study” document, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, 1989 Annual Council. (8 pages)

It promotes the **historical-grammatical method** and warns against the “historical-critical method” of Bible study. **“Even a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.”**

The Bible is “the **clear, infallible revelation of God's will and His salvation**. The Bible is the Word of God, and it alone is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested”

“METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY”

**Bible Study: Its Presuppositions,
Principles, and Methods**

“This statement is addressed to all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the purpose of providing guidelines on **how to study the Bible, both the trained biblical scholar and others.”**

“METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY”

It is important to stress that these guidelines of interpretation are for all people. This perspective is endorsed by Ellen White: “The **Bible was written for the common people** as well as for scholars, and is within the comprehension of all” (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 23).

“The Bible with its precious gems of truth was **not written for the scholar alone**. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 331).

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION TOSC

ADAPTATION OF “METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY”

Reason for the adaptation:

“The ‘Methods of Bible Study’ document was written and voted 27 years ago, and as such does not address a whole new movement in biblical studies which the last twenty years have seen.”

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION TOSC

ADAPTATION OF “METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY”

Focus of the adaptation

1. Thought Inspiration: Consider that the Bible is both divine and human.

2. Historical Approach: Use extra biblical
historical and cultural sources to

understand the text, and grammar and sentence construction of the document

3. Affirm three authorities: Bible, writings of Ellen White, the 28 Fundamental Beliefs

TWO MAJOR WAYS

Diametrically Opposed

Historical-Grammatical Method

Plain, natural & literal meaning of words

**Preferred by
opponents of
women's ordination**

Principle-based Reading Method

Principle and trajectory of Scripture accounted for

**Preferred by
proponents of
women's ordination**

THE HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL METHOD

Is this necessary after the chart in slide 40??

- focuses on the **plain, natural, and literal** meaning of the text;
- Its is also called “the common sense approach.”
- usually **avoids using extra-biblical sources;** and uses the **Bible and the Bible only** as the only source (*Sola Scriptura*) to interpret the text.
- assumes that the **Bible is inerrant** (without mistakes) not only in salvation and theology, but also in science and history.

Conclusion: “With this plain, literal approach to the Bible, the ordination of women’s not possible unless there is a clear biblical mandate.”

THE PRINCIPLE-BASED READING METHOD

What is principle-based? Contextual?
Linguistic? Historical cultural?
How does it really differ from historical
grammatical? Sounds like semantics
here.

- includes “**principle-based**, **linguistic** and **historical-cultural** reading strategies . . . at the heart of their biblical approach.”
- involves the use of non-biblical sources.

“This approach, consequently, sees most of the so-called controversial passages (about WO) in the ‘context of family relationships, [and] some emphasize a two-way submission.’”

With the use of this approach, no conclusive evidence prohibiting the ordination of women can be found in the Bible.”

WHICH METHOD SHOULD WE USE?

NAD TOSC: “Both methods fit within the broad range of what the ‘Methods of Bible Study’ document approves” for the Adventist church.

Text

“A plain and literal reading strategy would be sufficient to understand most of the Bible. Yet

the committee believes that there are occasions when we should employ a more complex reading strategy. The passage calls for

an understanding of the historical and contextual settings.”

“The text determines which method may be more appropriate for interpretation.”

Or Reader?

WHICH METHOD SHOULD WE USE?

NAD TOSC:

“The general rule of thumb is that when two or more interpretations are claimed for a passage, the one that works with all information gathered should serve.”

HOW DO THESE METHODS COMPARE?

Example of 1 Tim 2:12, 13:

“I suffer not a women to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man. . . .

For Adam was first formed, then Eve.”

EXAMPLE OF HOW METHODS COMPARE

Historical-Grammatical Method	Principle-based Reading Method
<p>Paul explains the relationship between male and female before sin and shows there was a difference in roles before fall.</p>	<p>Paul addresses only local situation in Ephesus. Before sin there was a total equality in nature and functions. Adam and Eve were both rulers and priests in the sanctuary of Eden.</p>
<p>Adam was formed before Eve in the order of Creation and God designed him to be leader. Application universal.</p>	<p>Paul opposes the gnostic heresy associated with goddess Diana that the woman was created first. Application local—only for Ephesus to fight heresy.</p>

EVALUATION OF THE “METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY” DOCUMENT

Issue: How can two opposite methods of interpretation leading to opposite conclusions on WO be approved by the SDA standard document for biblical interpretation?”

EVALUATION OF THE “METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY” DOCUMENT

Issue: Who becomes the ultimate decider of which interpretation to use in a given passage?

Bible is no longer arbiter, the human being is.

HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL METHOD AND THE “METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY” DOCUMENT

The historical-grammatical method upholds the Bible as the supreme standard and authority for truth.

The ‘Methods of Bible Study’ document claims that the Bible is “the clear, infallible revelation of God's will and His salvation. The Bible is the word of God, and it alone is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”

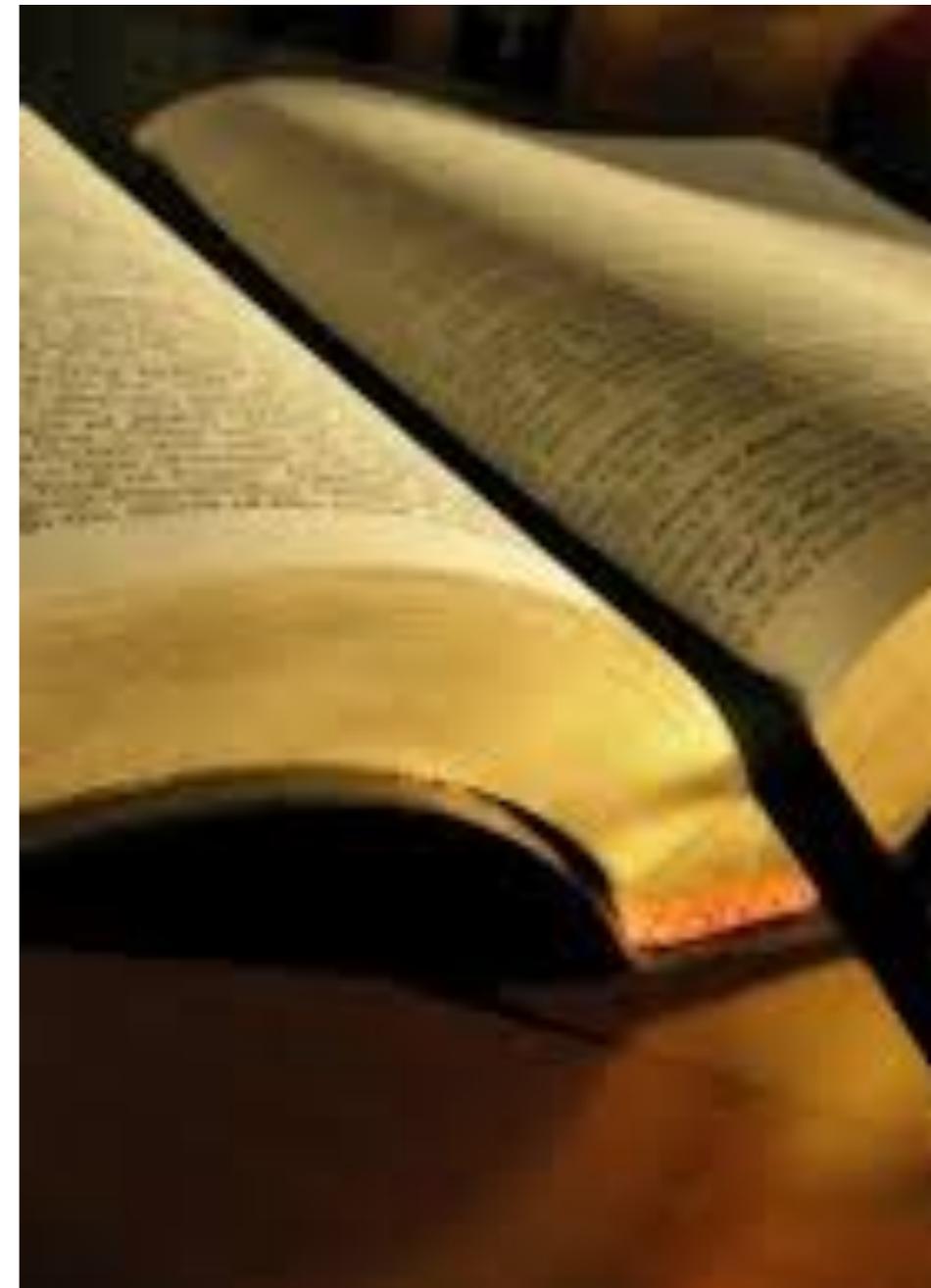
I don't understand this slide.

Does the chart mean this one is unnecessary?

Conclusion: Everything needs to be tested by the Bible. This means that the document is in full harmony with the historical-grammatical method that the Bible is the final authority to determine what is the truth on WO.

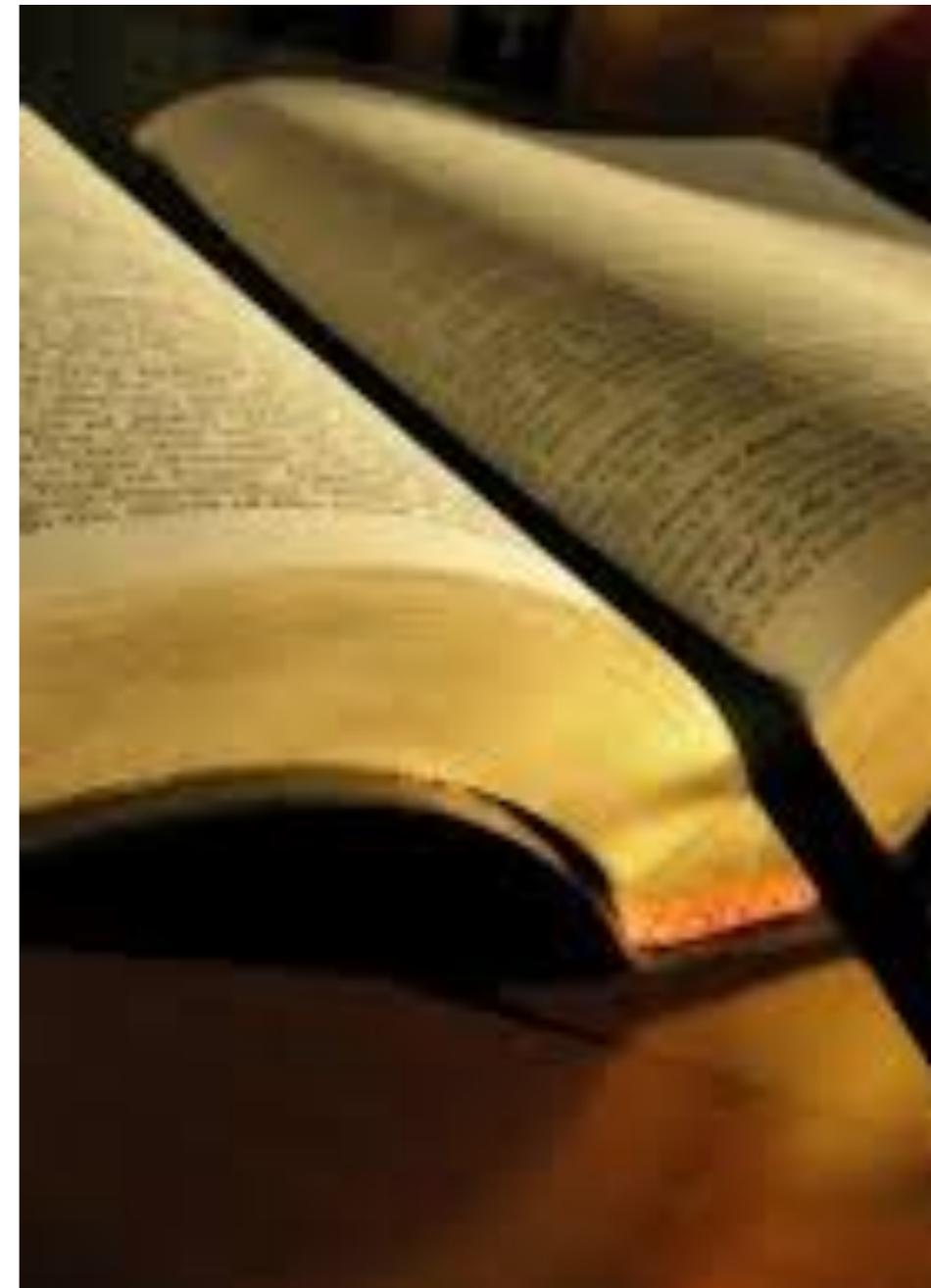
WHAT IS THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE ON SOLVING CONTROVERSIES?

During 1888, when Adventists were involved in major controversies, Ellen White emphatically stated, “It is the word of the living God that is to decide all controversies.” She explained, “The word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine and practice. We must study it reverentially” (1888 *Materials*, pp. 44, 45).



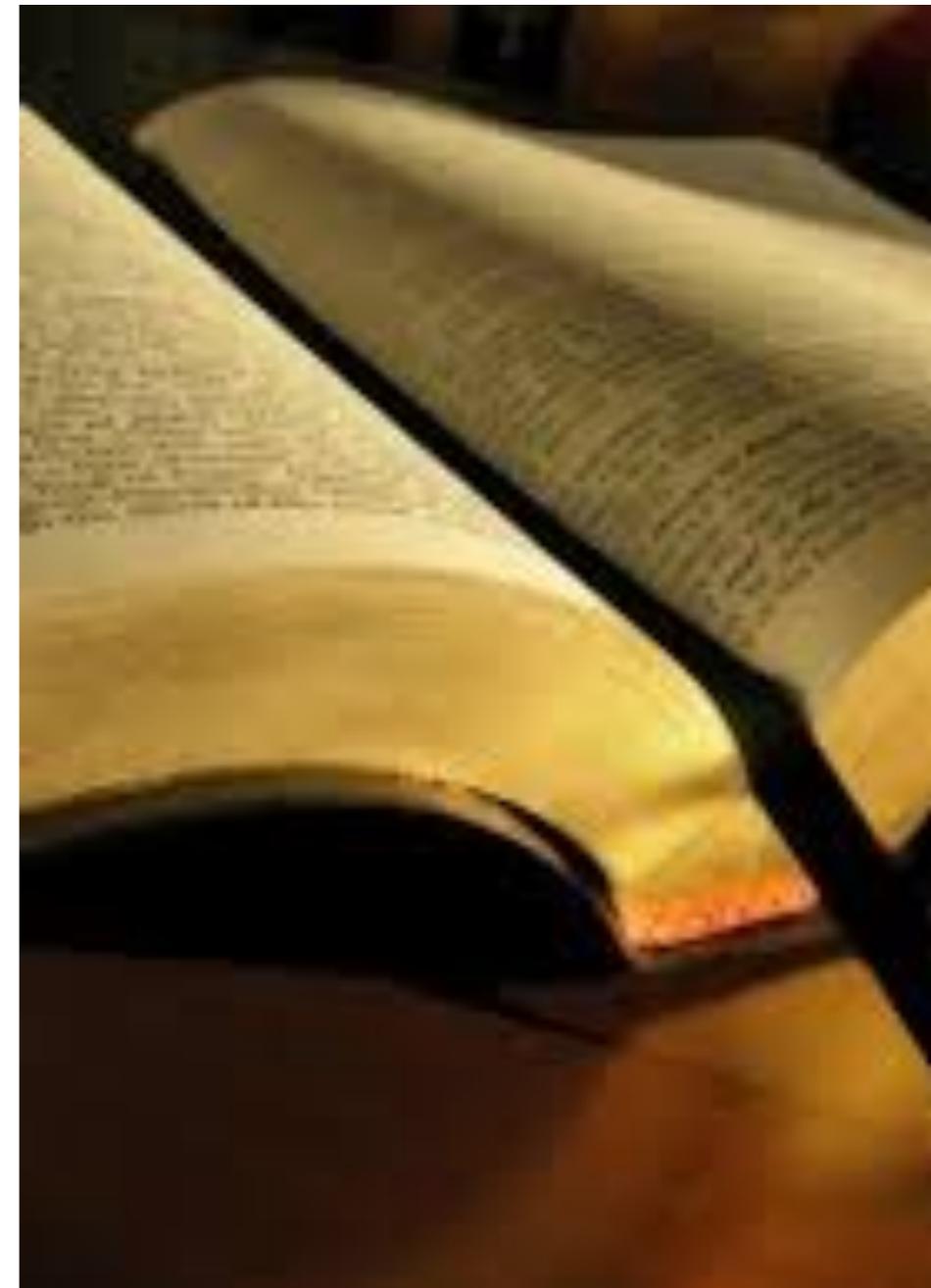
THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE ON SOLVING CONTROVERSIES

The Spirit of Prophecy considers the Bible the only truly objective authority of history. Ellen White says that “here only can we find a history of our race unsullied by human prejudice or human pride.”



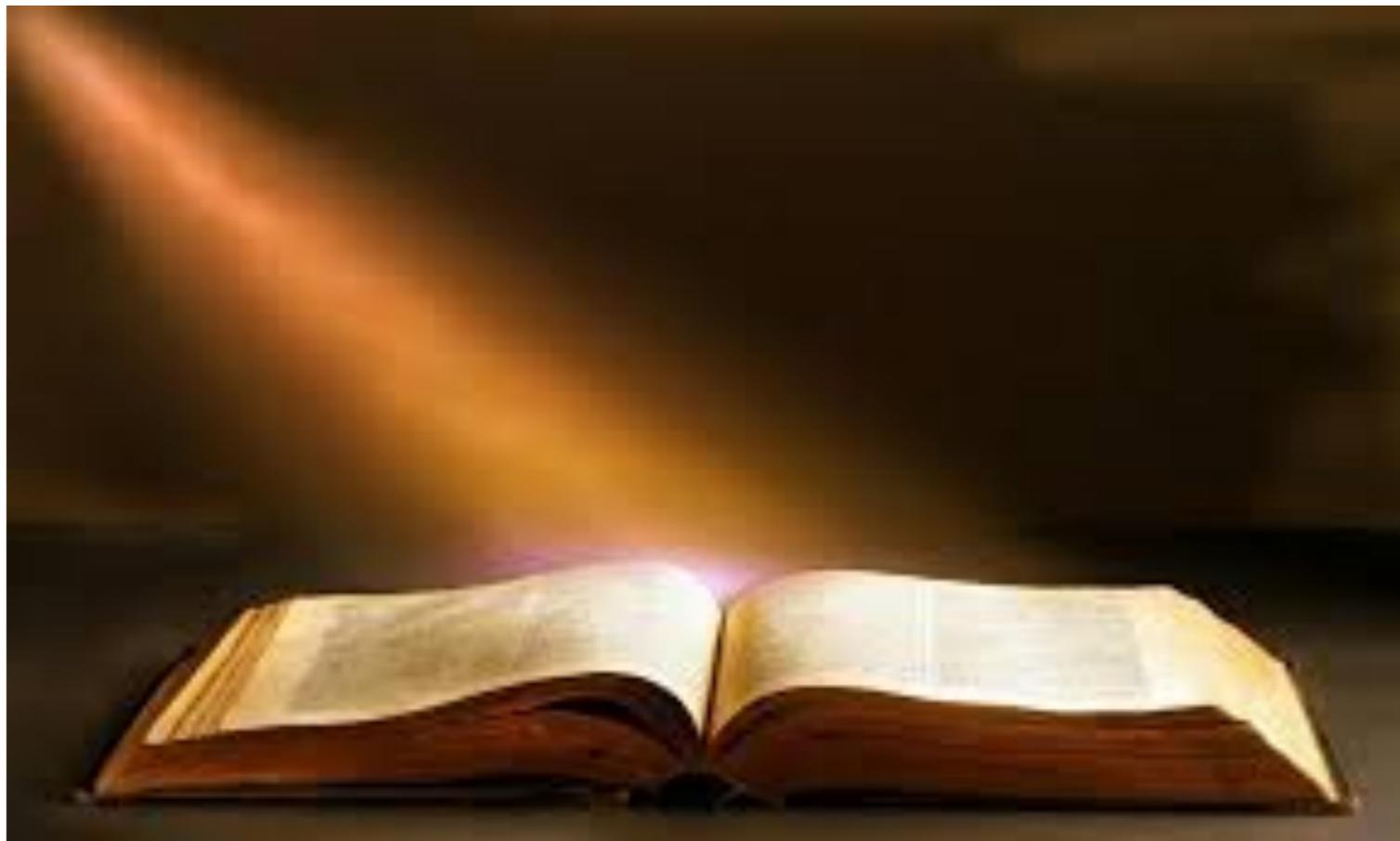
THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE ON SOLVING CONTROVERSIES

She continues, the Bible “lights up the far-distant past, where human research seeks vainly to penetrate” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 596).



THE BIBLE JUDGES NON-BIBLICAL RESEARCH

Conclusion: The Bible is the best source to evaluate and judge the validity of all extra-biblical sources. The historical-grammatical method precisely uses this principle.



THE PRINCIPLE-BASED METHOD AND THE “METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY” DOCUMENT

The principle-based method includes “principle-based, contextual, linguistic and historical-cultural reading strategies . . . at the heart of their biblical approach.” This method includes the use of non-biblical sources.

The “Methods of Bible Study” also recommends that Bible students “in connection with the study of the biblical text, explore the historical and cultural factors. Archaeology, anthropology, and history may contribute to understanding the meaning of the text.” Yet it clearly states that the Bible is the final judge over these non-biblical sources.



THE PRINCIPLE-BASED METHOD AND THE “METHODS OF BIBLE STUDY” DOCUMENT

Conclusion: The principle-based contextual approach uses the non-biblical findings. However, it neglects the “Methods of Bible Study” stipulation that the Bible is the standard by which the correctness of these sources are to be judged. Consequently the text is interpreted by conclusions of non-biblical sources that allows room for reading the text in support of a WO interpretation.



CONCLUSIONS ON THE TWO METHODS OF INTERPRETATIONS

It is impossible that both the the historical-grammatical method and the principle-based method are in harmony with “Methods of Bible Study” document because their conclusions are diametrically opposed.

Only the historical-grammatical method is in harmony with the “Methods of Bible Study” because it is guided by “the Bible and the Bible only,” making the Bible the final authority and judge of all sources outside the Bible.

The principle-based method claims to have as its authority the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, but these are not the final judge of its conclusions. The historical-grammatical method reveals the misuse of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy by the principle-based reading.

**For
Then?**

**REDEEMPTIVE
MOVEMENT
INTERPRETATION**

**For
Now?**



REDEMPTIVE MOVEMENT INTERPRETATION

NAD TOSC:

“It is necessary to find a set of principles to distinguish that which is transcultural from that which is cultural” because the Bible is written in a particular space and time (culturally conditioned).

This means that we have to find out “what components of the biblical text have ongoing practical significance and what components are limited in application to the original audience.”

Discovering this distinction can be done by adopting a “redemptive movement hermeneutic” that is based on the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“BACK TO CREATION” INTERPRETATION

NAD TOSC:

At creation, man and woman experienced a total equality of nature and function or role. Adam and Eve were both rulers and priests in the sanctuary of Eden

At the Fall women were brought in temporary submission to men that was only to last till Christ.

Because of the redemption through Jesus Christ, this Edenic equality of nature and function/role was fully restored as described in Gal 3:28. Then men and women are to function as spiritual leaders, elders, ministers and pastors in the church. Their relationship is now reciprocal, which means there is mutual submission.

Paul's statements of male headship and creation order are limited to local situations and have no universal applications.

“BACK TO CREATION” INTERPRETATION

NAD TOSC:

“This approach looks for the redemptive spirit (or ‘trajectory’) in the text to discern what still applies today. God moves His people to the fullest realization of His will for them, that is, what is more righteous, equitable, loving, and just.” It is also called a “Creation — Fall — Re-Creation/Back to Creation Hermeneutic.”

From the perspective of the “Back to Creation” interpretation of the Bible, Galatians 3:28 is vital:

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ .” This text “shows how the Gospel calls us back to the divine ideal, which has no place for the general subordination of females to males.”

EVALUATION OF THE “BACK TO CREATION” APPROACH

This approach to the text is based on the presupposition that there is in the Bible a “trajectory” or progression in the experience of humans from Eden lost to Eden restored based on God’s plan of salvation.

This trajectory is taken as the key to interpret biblical texts to support the view of full equality between male and female such as Adam and Eve functioning as priests before and after the Fall.

The incorrect assumption is that before the Fall that the relationship between Adam and Eve was not of a nature to complement each other, but was one of total equality in nature with no distinction in functions or roles. This is a departure of the divine headship role and leadership role of the man before the Fall as Paul taught in the New Testament. It shows again a misuse of the biblical text in support of an agenda in support of WO.

WILL THE SDA LEADERSHIP FIND UNITY ON THESE POSITIONS?

Both sides claim support of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy for their interpretations.

How can there be unity when their positions on WO are diametrically opposed.

Unity is only possible when we accept the position that all our teachings are based on “the Bible and the Bible only.”

WHAT WILL BE THE OUTCOME OF THIS CONTROVERSY?

“In vision I saw two armies in terrible conflict. One army was led by banners bearing the world’s insignia; the other was led by the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust as company after company from the Lord’s army joined the foe and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God” (*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 41).

WHERE DO THESE TRIBES COME FROM?

From the true followers in Babylon:

“Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion. . . . Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for clearer light. They look in vain for the image of Christ in the churches with which they are connected.” (*Great Controversy*, p. 390).

**OUR WITNESS ABOUT THE
BIBLE AND THE BIBLE ONLY
AND
THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS
IS THE ATTRACTION FOR
GOD'S PEOPLE IN BABYLON**



EGW POSITION ON THE BIBLE

“In our time there is a wide departure from their [Reformers] doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant principle—the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty.



EGW POSITION ON THE BIBLE

“The same unswerving adherence to the word of God manifested at that crisis of the Reformation is the only hope of reform today” (*Great Controversy*, pp. 204, 205).



WHY TOSC DIDN'T SOLVE THE CRISIS

The delegates could not unite because of their different views of inspiration and methods of Bible interpretation.

All delegates were convinced that their position on WO is based on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

The world church uses the historical-grammatical method that takes the Bible as the final arbiter of its doctrines. This method shows that the principle-based method misinterprets the Bible

The only way to solve the crisis is to unite on the same methods of interpreting the Bible.



FAR REACHING EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

Women's ordination is but a mere example of how the church is divided over Bible interpretation.

Shades of evolutionary theory affect some.

LGBTQ questions lurk on the horizon

Music and worship have divided us

Discussions on the gospel, justification, sanctification, perfection, and victory over sin during the final generation.



GOD WILL HAVE A PEOPLE

“But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. . . .

Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support”

(Great Controversy, p. 595).



Documents

- Adventist News Network, “Adventist Church Sets Vote for Women’s Ordination for Next July,” Autumn Council, Oct 14, 2014
- “Method of Bible Study” document, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee, Annual Council Session, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 12, 1986
- Kyoshin Ahn, “Hermeneutics and the Ordination of Women,” in Theology of Ordination, Biblical Research Committee of the North American Division, Nov 2013 Report.
- Jiri Moskala, “Back to Creation Adventist Hermeneutic,” in Theology of Ordination, Biblical Research Committee of the North American Division, Nov 2013 Report.
- Edwin E. Reynolds and Clinton Wahlen, “Minority Report,” in Theology of Ordination, Biblical Research Committee of the North American Division, Nov 2013 Report.