

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF THE *SOLA SCRIPTURA*
PRINCIPLE IN ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL THINKING AND
PRACTICAL ACTION; WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE ZAMBIAN CONTEXT**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA – *African Affairs*
AR – *Adventist Review*
AUSS – *Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BK – *Bible Knowledge*
C - *Churchman*
CM – *Church Manual*
CNTOT – *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*
HSDAT – *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*
IOT – *Introduction to the Old Testament*
JATS – *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*
LF – *Lutheran Forum*
LW – *Luther's Works*
JBV – *Journal of Beliefs and Values*
JPC – *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*
NBD – *New Bible Dictionary*
NDBT – *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*
NDT – *New Dictionary of Theology*
NIV – *New International Version*
PD – *Perspective Digest*
QOD – *Questions on Doctrine*
RE – *Religious Education*
RI – *Religious Instruction*
RR – *Reformation and Revival*
S - *Spectrum*
SSBSG – *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*
SDABD – *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*
SDABCS – *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary series*
T – *Touchstone*
WMJ – *Westminster Theological Journal*

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DECLARATION

I declare that “A *CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE APPLICATION OF THE SOLA SCRIPTURA PRINCIPLE IN ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL THINKING AND PRACTICAL ACTION; WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ZAMBIAN CONTEXT*” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this work has not been submitted to any university for the purpose of obtaining a degree.

Signed _____
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SUMMARY

Theological divisions are threatening the Seventh-day Adventist Church's unity and focus on mission. Some Adventist theologians suggest that the cause of these divisions is a departure by other Adventist theologians from adhering to and applying the *sola Scriptura* principle. This study analyzes this problem.

Chapter one presents reasons for a call during the 16th century, to reform the church to its apostolic purity. Martin Luther and other Protestant Reformers argued against the medieval church, popes, and church councils' claim for authority to properly interpret and teach Scripture and Tradition. Differing views of reforming the church sparked divisions among the Protestant Reformers, creating two main streams, the magisterial and the radical Reformers. The Roman Catholic Church responded to the Protestant Reformations with a Counter-Reformation.

Chapter two discusses Seventh-day Adventism's application of the *sola Scriptura* principle. Although Adventism claims to descend from the radical wing of the Protestant Reformations, its acceptance of Ellen G. White's prophetic ministry and her non-canonical inspired writings departs from a radical application of the *sola Scriptura* principle.

Chapter three presents Biblical evidences for God's use of multiple media of communication beside the Bible. Therefore Adventism needs to clearly define its understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle to accommodate other theological sources in addition to the Bible.

Chapter four presents Scripture in Zambian Adventist context, tracing Adventism's use of the Bible in evangelization. Adventism's responses to changing socio-political and religio-pluralistic trends which threatened to marginalize Bible Instructions, and the development of, but failed attempt to implement an Adventist Bible-based Religious Education syllabus at Rusangu Secondary School are presented.

Chapter five gives the general summary, conclusion and recommendations.

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Passmore Hachalinga

KEY WORDS

Sola Scriptura, *Prima Scriptura*, Protestant Reformations, Seventh-day Adventism, Ellen G. White's writings, Biblical Canon, Bible Instruction/Knowledge, Religious Education, Tradition, Apocrypha, Theological Sources/Authority.

INTRODUCTION

From their early beginnings up to the present, Seventh-day Adventists have held a view of the Bible as their only rule of faith and practice. This is evidenced by statements made by several key leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. James White, one of the founders of the Adventist movement wrote in a pamphlet entitled *A Word to the 'Little Flock'*, “The Bible is a perfect and complete revelation. It is *our only rule of faith and practice*”.¹ Lately, Peter van Bemmelen maintained, “The principle of the supreme authority of the Scriptures is often expressed in the Latin phrase *sola scriptura*, ‘by Scripture alone’. In other words, only in the Scriptures has God committed to the human race in written form the supreme and authoritative revelation of Himself and His will, by which everything else is to be tested. No other holy books, sacred histories, ancient traditions, ecclesiastical pronouncements, or creedal statements may be accorded equal authority to that of the Bible”.² Richard Davidson calls the *sola Scriptura* principle, “the battle cry of the Reformation, *sola Scriptura* – the Bible and the Bible only as the final norm for truth”.³ Van Bemmelen even suggests that the principle of the supreme authority of the Scriptures was also upheld by the Lord and His apostles.⁴

In their reference to Scripture, Seventh-day Adventists mean the “sixty-six books which make up the canonical Scripture of the Old and New Testaments”.⁵ Thereby, the Seventh-day Adventists statement of fundamental beliefs, as revised in 1980, affirm the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. In the preamble to the summary of these beliefs, it is stated, “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teachings of the Holy Scriptures”.⁶

¹ White, J. *A Word to the Little Flock*. 1847: 13.

² Van Bemmelen, P.M. ‘Revelation and Inspiration’ in: R. Dederen (Ed.). *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12. Commentary Reference Series. Hagerstown, MD: 2000: 42.

³ Davidson, R. ‘Biblical Interpretation’ in: R. Dederen (Ed.). *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Vol. 12. Commentary Reference Series. Hagerstown, MD: 2000: 61.

⁴ Van Bemmelen, P.M. ‘The Authority of Scripture’ in: G.W. Reid (Ed.). *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*. Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. 2006: 80.

⁵ Hasel, G.F. ‘The Totality of Scripture’ in: *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 2. No. 1. Spring 1991: 38.

⁶ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (17th ed.). Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005: 9.

Looking forward to the end of time just before the second advent of Jesus Christ, Ellen White⁷ predicted,

“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. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority – not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support”.⁸

This is the teaching Seventh-day Adventists apply to themselves and wish to maintain in matters of doctrine and practice. Although Seventh-day Adventists hold the writings of Ellen G. White in high esteem, and use these writings extensively, the relationship of her writings to the Bible is viewed as follows, “While Adventists hold the writings of Ellen G. White in highest esteem, yet these are not the source of our expositions. We base our teachings on the Scriptures, the only foundation of all true Christian doctrine”.⁹ But Herbert E. Douglass argues that in the earliest period of Adventism’s history, “God’s last-day revelations through Ellen White were formally recognized by the church as having theological authority”.¹⁰

In their desire to align themselves with the Protestant Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*, Adventists state, “Seventh-day Adventists hold the Protestant position that the Bible and

⁷ Ellen Gould Harmon (later known as Ellen G. White) was born on November 26, 1827 in Gorham, Maine, USA. She and her parents were members of the Methodist Church. Her schooling only reached the third grade and had to be discontinued due to a face injury caused by an irate school mate who threw a stone into her face while coming home from school at the age of nine. She grew up as a frail girl but with a deeply religious experience. At the age of 16 she heard William Miller preaching the second coming of Christ about 1843-44. After having accepted the advent message, she and her parents were expelled from the Methodist Church. She experienced the October 22, 1844 Millerite disappointment with many others when the expected advent of Christ failed to take place as predicated. In December of that year she saw her first vision on the Millerite movement. She would receive approximately 2000 visions and dreams during her next 70 year-long ministry. In August 30, 1846 she married James White, one of the Millerite preachers. She raised four children of which only two survived, Edson and Willie. Together with her husband and a few others they founded the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the early 1860s. She later visited Europe (1885-1887) after the death of James White in 1881. She also visited Australia from 1890 – 1900. She was believed to be a prophetess of the Lord, although she considered herself as the Lord’s Messenger. During her 70 year long ministry she would write more than twenty books and thousands of letters and articles on various topics commenting on Scripture, health, education, etc. she died on July 16, 1915 at her Elmshaven home in California at the age of 87. She left a tremendous impact on the Seventh-day Adventist Church which she helped to establish, develop and guide. Several biographies have been written on her life and ministry.

⁸ White, E.G. *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950: 595.

⁹ Knight, G.R. (Ed.). *Questions on Doctrine: Adventist Classic Series*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003: 82.

¹⁰ Douglass, H.E. *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998: 428.

the Bible only is the sole rule of faith and practice for Christians. We believe that all theological beliefs must be measured by the living Word, judged by its truth, and whatsoever is unable to pass this test, or is found to be out of harmony with its message, is to be rejected.”¹¹

1. Statement of the problem

A review of theological debates raging among Adventist theologians reveals that the Adventist community is not at peace theologically. In the spring of 1991, the late Gerhard Hasel warned the Adventist church when he said,

“A major threat to Seventh-day Adventists is a departure from the totality of the authority of the Bible as the Word of God. Such departure threatens to change the direction of the church. It undermines that which informs and gives direction to the mission of the Adventist movement. It accommodates the Adventist church to the world”.¹²

More than a decade later, Fernando Canale claimed that “at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Adventism is administratively united but theologically divided”.¹³ In commenting on the causes of this division, he pointed out that “the divisions reach the very foundations of theological thinking....Forgetting [the *sola Scriptura* principle] is not only making inroads in the scholarly community but also in the pastoral and lay communities as well”.¹⁴ On such divisions, a Kenyan scholar has said, “All scriptural religions are held together by common scriptures. Paradoxically, the scriptures which bind together the religions derived there-from, are also a source of tension and division”¹⁵. In his view, it is “the divergences in the interpretation of the Bible [that] have made the Christian Holy Scripture a major divisive factor in Christianity”.¹⁶ The Bible is at the center of the divisions in the Adventist movement.

The divisions affecting the Adventist community is said to consist of the shifting of the ground upon which the Adventist system of beliefs was built. Canale argues that, “By the end of the

¹¹ G.R. Knight (Ed.), 2003: 26.

¹² G.F. Hasel, 1991: 32.

¹³ F. Canale, ‘From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology Part I: Historical Review’, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. Vol. 15. No.2, 2004: 37.

¹⁴ F. Canale, 2004: 37.

¹⁵ J.N.K. Mugambi, ‘The Bible and Ecumenism in Africa’, in: Kinoti, H.W. & Waliggo, J.M. (Eds.). *The Bible in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology*, pp68-85. Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 1997: 76.

¹⁶ J.N.K. Mugambi, 1997: 76.

twentieth century, a sector of the Adventist theological community abandoned the *sola Scriptura* principle on which early Adventists built their theological system, replacing it with the multiple sources upon which Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians constructed their theological views”.¹⁷ He further charges that, “Perhaps the writer that has formulated this shift with greatest clarity and scholarship is Fritz Guy”.¹⁸

But Fritz Guy maintains, “Speaking strictly, the Reformation motto *Sola scriptura*, ‘By scripture alone,’ popularly interpreted as ‘the Bible and the Bible only,’ has always been a polemical exaggeration. Historically and experientially, a more accurate motto is *prima scriptura*, ‘By scripture first of all’, perhaps even better would be an affirmation of something like the ‘Wesleyan quadrilateral’ consisting of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience”.¹⁹

Frank M. Hasel argues against the option of accepting *prima Scriptura* saying,

“To affirm that Scripture is the sole final source for its own exposition is more than to uphold the primacy of Scripture....This is what the Protestant Reformers protested against when they affirmed *sola Scriptura*....To opt merely for the primacy of Scripture, rather than for Scripture alone as the final norm and ultimate authority for faith and practice, is to part ways with the Protestant principle that Scripture alone is the final norm of theology and the sole source of its own interpretation. Protestantism claimed more than the superiority of Scripture over against other sources, or even its priority. Otherwise Scripture no longer can be the final authority in theology”.²⁰

Canale reveals that “even though the abandonment of the *sola scriptura* principle is more divisive than Ford’s views on the Sanctuary doctrine, the Adventist church has not yet officially addressed this shift and its theological implications as outlined in Guy’s theological methodology. Yet, a growing number of Adventist intellectuals are building their theological views along these lines”.²¹ Further, Canale warns of the far reaching implications of the abandonment of the *sola Scriptura* principle. He says, “The shift from the *sola Scriptura* to the multiplex of theological sources from which progressive Adventist thinking proceeds requires a complete reshaping of

¹⁷ F. Canale, 2004: 20.

¹⁸ F. Canale, 2004: 20.

¹⁹ F. Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press. 1999: 137.

²⁰ F.M. Hasel, ‘Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture’, in: Reid, G.W. *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*. Vol. 1. Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD: 2006: 43.

²¹ F. Canale, 2004: 22.

Adventist theology and practice. If accepted, this shift, will accelerate and intensify deep divisions in the Adventist community around the world”.²² Thus debates rage on.

At present, there are more Seventh-day Adventist church members living outside North America, the birth place of the Adventist church. Nevertheless, much of theological activity in Adventism is still the domain of western scholars. As such, it is difficult to tell to what extent the issues that are rocking the Adventist church in the west, may also be impacting Adventism in regions like Africa where there is little evidence of Adventist theological dialoguet. To assume that such debates as the alleged abandonment of the *sola Scriptura* principle referred to above, have not affected the Adventist church outside North America, and Zambia in particular, may be presumptuous. This study seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of how the Protestant Reformers understood and applied the *sola Scriptura* principle, how Adventism also understands and applies this principle, and examine if the debates prevailing in American Adventism impact Zambian Adventism as well.

2. Purpose of the study

The purposes of this study therefore is (1) to review the understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle among the Protestant Reformers, Martin Luther in particular, and (2) then examine the Adventist understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in the Adventist Church’s theological thought. And finally, (3) to assess the application of this principle in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible education system in Zambia, and at Rusangu secondary school in particular. In the past, Seventh-day Adventists were claiming to be “the people of the Book.” But how important the Bible is to Seventh-day Adventists today begs for a fresh study. In order to fulfill the objectives of this study, an examination of the origins of the *sola Scriptura* principle in the Protestant Reformation will be done. Further analysis will be made to discover how Adventism adopted and applied the *sola Scriptura* principle during the past centuries. Finally we shall look at the situation of Bible instruction in the Zambian Adventist church’s education system. The decision

²² F. Canale, 2004: 22.

for selecting Rusangu Secondary school as the general focus of this study is that it is located at Rusangu mission station, the birth-place of Adventism in Zambia. The Zambian Adventist church celebrated a century of its existence and ministry in Zambia in 2005. By the end of that year, the number of baptized church members in Zambia neared 500,000. Today there are almost 700,000 Adventist baptized church members in Zambia under the care of more than 150 pastors.²³

3. Scope and delimitations of the study

This study will examine the understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in Protestant circles, and the debates over the adherence to, versus the abandonment of the principle in the Adventist church. The purpose is to ascertain the Protestant Reformation meaning and application of the principle so as to compare how the same principle is understood and applied in Seventh-day Adventism. The study will seek to understand the cause of the alleged theological divisions in Adventism in relation to the *sola Scriptura* principle. The research will also examine how Bible instruction/education has survived in Zambian Adventism and Rusangu Secondary school in particular. Rusangu Secondary school was the first Adventist secondary school and has been the highest level of educational institution run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia. Secondary school education years also provide most young people the opportunity to embrace a religious faith and to make decisions for future life.

While the findings of this study will not be assumed to represent the picture of the Adventist church worldwide, it is hoped that this study will shed some light on how the Zambian Adventist Church has attempted to provide Bible-based education for its members in the spirit of adhering to the *sola Scriptura* principle at an institution which has been Adventism's stronghold for the last 100 years.

²³ Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division Secretariat mid-year report, 2010:9.

4. Justification of the study

Christians generally constitute about one-third of the world population. Although the Roman Catholic Church generally has the largest following, Protestant denominations comprise a significant percentage of Christian believers. The Seventh-day Adventist Church belongs to the Protestant wing of the Christian Church. One of the key principles the Protestant denominations have been known for is their adherence to the Bible as the ultimate authority for faith and religious practice. Whether most Protestants are still fervent Bible believers as their Protestant Reformation forebears remains a big question.

Adventist voices in theological circles, particularly in North America, suggest that the Adventist theological boat is rocking as far as the adherence to the *sola Scriptura* principle is concerned. Allegations of promoting the adoption of multiple sources of theological authority are rife, posing a threat to the unity and mission of the Adventist Church in the world. If Adventists are to continue being known as “the people of the Book”, something must be done to ensure that the Bible remains the Church’s most sought after book. The present study seeks to ascertain the place of the Bible in Adventist theological thought and practical action. It is an attempt to contribute positively, from an African perspective, to theological discussions for the purpose of creating theologically a sure and spiritually firm footing for believers who love the Lord Jesus Christ whom the Holy Scriptures reveal.

5. Methodology of the study

This study begins with a literary study of documents produced by twenty-first century English speaking non-Adventist Protestant authors, as well as Adventists authors on the *sola Scriptura* principle. Both primary and secondary sources will be examined, to provide historical-theological context and perspective. The main focus of this background study centers around (1) the views published in Protestant and Seventh-day Adventist literature on the *sola Scriptura* principle and the Bible as the sole norm and final authority for faith and practice; and (2) a focused study of Bible instruction/education in a Zambian Adventist educational institution setting. Minutes

of the Church's executive committees will be analyzed to ascertain the thinking and planning of the church leadership with regard to Bible instruction/education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia during the last one hundred years. A questionnaire will also be used to aid in the collection of the required information. Other relevant government documents, such as Religious Education policies and syllabuses will be analyzed to give a broad external context.

6. Design of the study

The introduction identifies the problem, gives the purpose, the scope and delimitation of the study. It also provides the justification, and the methodology of the study.

Chapter 1 surveys the origins and development of the *sola Scriptura* principle in the Protestant Reformations. A brief analysis of the Protestant Reformers' attitude toward the early church councils, the fathers, the medieval church and the radical Reformers will be presented. The role of Scripture, Tradition, the biblical canon and the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Protestant Reformations will be examined too.

Chapter 2 examines the relationship of the Adventist Church to the sixteenth century Protestant Reformations. It analyses the understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in Adventist theology during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the Adventist Church's efforts to uphold the *sola Scriptura* principle as a foundation and guiding principle in its theology. This chapter includes a discussion on the role of the Ellen G. White writings and the divisions among Adventist theologians with reference to the application of the *sola Scriptura* principle. Adventism's position on the biblical canon is also examined.

Chapter 3 examines Biblical internal evidence for its place in the history of God's self revelation to humanity. Multiple ways through which God revealed His will to humanity in addition to the Bible are surveyed. The development of the biblical canon and other parallel writings such as the Apocrypha are examined. The purpose of this survey is to assess the presence of Scriptural evidence for the application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in a context replete with multiple media

of divine self-revelation and communication with humanity. It is hoped that this assessment will clarify the place of the Bible in theological matters.

Chapter 4 analyzes the progress and challenges of Bible instruction/education in Zambia during the past century. The study examines the ways in which the Adventist Church attempted to remain faithful to the *sola Scriptura* principle as it is applied in an educational system as a tool for evangelizing the Zambian population. The impact of changing socio-political contexts on a biblically-based Christian Adventism's education system is analyzed.

Chapter 5 gives the general summary, conclusion and suggestions. An Appendix and a bibliography of the sources consulted are provided at the end.

CHAPTER 1

SOLA SCRIPTURA IN PROTESTANT REFORMATIONS THOUGHT

Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the different ways the *sola Scriptura* was understood and applied in Protestant thought. This is done by examining the Protestant Reformers' views on the early church councils, the fathers, the medieval church and the application of Scripture, Tradition, reason, and apocryphal writings when advancing the *sola Scriptura* principle. A reflection on the impact of the Renaissance, the political context of the middle ages, and the state of the church prior to and after the commencement of the Protestant Reformations in the sixteenth century are analyzed. Since it is impossible to rewind the clock so that we can personally visit the Protestant Reformations period, we therefore rely on contemporary research to inform us about the issues that gave birth to the *sola Scriptura* principle.

The purpose of this reflection is not to introduce new information to the development of Christianity, but to re-examine the context which forms the precursor of what Seventh-day Adventists considers their founding roots. Merlin Burt maintains that "Adventists are Protestant Christians who believe in *sola Scriptura*."¹ For this reason, it is necessary to understand the background and reasons for the rise of the Protestant Reformations in general and the development of the *sola Scriptura* principle in particular. Understanding how the Reformers in general, and Luther in particular, defined and applied the *sola Scriptura* principle helps in ascertaining whether the contemporary Adventist understanding and application of this principle are in accord with the Reformers' views and purposes.

Finally, by reviewing the implications and challenges of the *sola Scriptura* principle in the Reformations period, contemporary Christians may properly understand what they inherited from the Protestant Reformations. The challenges of embracing and applying the *sola Scriptura* principle

¹ M. Burt, Ellen G. *White and Sola Scriptura*. Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly PC (USA). 2007: 1.

in the church's life should be compared and/or contrasted with the experience of the Protestant Reformers.

1.1. The Protestant Reformations

Christianity in general and Christian theology in particular, underwent major developments and transformations during the middle ages. A.E. McGrath argues that “the most significant development was the period of reformation within the western European church, as a result of movements which sought to return the western church to more biblical foundations in relation to its belief system, morality, and structures”.² Just as there were many Reformers such as Martin Luther (1483-1546), Huldrych³ Zwingli (1484-1531) and John Calvin (1509-1564), McGrath suggests that we should be talking of Reformations⁴, beginning in Germany universities, and spreading to other cities and states of western Europe. It was a complex and heterogeneous movement whose agenda went beyond church doctrinal reform, addressing fundamental social, political, and economic issues of the early sixteenth century and beyond.

Protestant Reformation historians indicate that “in its strictest sense, the term ‘Protestant’ refers to the group of German princes and cities who ‘protested’ in April 1529 against the re-entrenchment by the Diet of Speyer of the Diet of Worms’ active policy of persecution of Lutheranism and Zwinglianism (1521)”.⁵ This represented the break away of European states from papal domination. B. Thompson indicates that the Reformation began in Germany and throughout its first generation was a peculiarly German institutionally based.⁶ Nevertheless, Grenz and Franke remind us that the genesis of this Reformation debate between Catholics and Protestants about the relationship between Scripture and tradition is rooted in historical developments that took place

² A.E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. (4th). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007: 43.

³ A.E. McGrath points out that considerable variation may be encountered by readers in the spelling of Zwingli's forename, with “Ulrich” and “Huldrych” often being used in preference to “Huldrych”, 2007: 56.

⁴ A.E. McGrath identifies six reformation movements: the German reformation (Lutheranism), the Swiss reformation (Calvinism), the radical reformation (Anabaptism), the English reformation (Anglicanism), the Catholic reformation (Counter-Reformation), and the Second reformation with Protestantism. Hence the term “Reformation” is used to refer to all these movements, 2007: 46.

⁵ A.E. McGrath cited in: A.E. McGrath & D.C. Marks (Eds.), *Historical Contours of Protestantism*. Malden, MA: 2004: 2; A.E. McGrath, 2007: 47.

⁶ B. Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers: A History of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996: 376.

before the sixteenth century.⁷ Thompson maintains that, “the German world into which Luther was born was a world on the verge of upheaval.”⁸ He suggests three reasons for the rise of the Reformation, namely, (1) nationalism and the rise of national states of Europe, (2) economic disaffection especially by the German peasants, (3) the weakness of the papacy, and (4) the depressed state of the Latin Church⁹. As this study traces the origins of the *sola Scriptura* principle, the beginning place therefore is in the German Reformation, whose chief proponent was Martin Luther. Luther, a German ordained priest belonging to the Augustinian Order, who later became a Professor of Biblical Studies, is dubbed the ‘instigator’ of the Protestant Reformations.¹⁰ Although Luther grew up during the period of the northern humanism, Thompson suggests that Luther was not formed by humanism. The Renaissance¹¹ was viewed by Luther to be the preparatory work comparable to work of John the Baptist. McGrath even points out “that the Reformation itself is now increasingly regarded as an integral part of the Renaissance, rather than a separate movement in its own right”.¹² Without the linguistic, philological, and historical skills of the Renaissance, the “gospel” – by which Luther always means the essential Christian message – could never have been recovered. His training at Erfurt, a “modernist” or Ockhamist university, under the last great Ockhamist teacher, divine Gabriel Biel (1420-95), stamped upon Luther the will to do one’s very

⁷ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 95.

⁸ B. Thompson, 1996: 378.

⁹ B. Thompson, 1996: 373, 374.

¹⁰ G. Tomlin, ‘Shapers of Protestantism: Martin Luther’ in: A.E. McGrath & D.C. Marks, *Historical contours of Protestantism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004: 40.

¹¹ McGrath maintains that “a central element of the humanist agenda was the return to the original sources of western European culture in classical Rome and Athens. The theological counterpart to this element was the direct return to the foundational resources of Christian theology, above all in the New Testament. This agenda proved to be of major significance....One of its most important consequences was a new appreciation of the foundational importance of Scripture as a theological resource. As interest in Scripture developed, it became increasingly clear that existing Latin translations of this source were inadequate. Supreme among these was the “Vulgate,” a Latin translation of the Bible which achieved widespread influence during the Middle Ages. As revision of the translations, especially the Vulgate, proceeded, it became clear that theological revision was inevitable. Some teachings seemed to be based on faulty translations, Cf. B. Thompson, 1996: 384.

The rise of humanist textual and philological techniques was to expose distressing discrepancies between the Vulgate and the texts it purported to translate – and thus to open the way to doctrinal reform as a consequence. It is for this reason that humanism is of decisive importance to the development of medieval theology: it demonstrated the unreliability of this translation of the Bible – and hence, it seemed, of the theologies based upon it. The biblical basis of scholasticism seemed to collapse, as humanism uncovered error after error in its translation”, 2007: 40-41.

¹² A.E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1990: 103.

best. Hence, Luther protested against the abuse of indulgences in 1517 by the Roman Catholic Church.

The political aspect of this reform should not be understood as having been based on spiritual goals. But political leaders were prepared to align themselves with even religious organizations in order to attain their political interests, free of ecclesiastical restriction. Luther and Zwingli equally became prepared to ally themselves with civic leaders in order to resist the papacy. Luther appealed to the German nobility while Zwingli to the Zurich city council for reform, pointing to the benefits which would accrue to both as a consequence. It is clear that the papacy neither had the interest nor the ability to bring about the needed reform to the church¹³.

What was it that needed to be reformed? McGrath identifies Western European Christianity to have been in urgent need of drastic reform. The medieval church had become notoriously inefficient and corrupt.¹⁴ J. Pelikan says that Luther's discerning reading of history produced a conclusion that in the history of the Christian church men and women had very early begun to use their prayers, services, and Sacraments as a way of making atonement to God. When they did this, the church moved from its early apostolic purity into the corruption that Luther believed he was called to purge out of it. The date of the fall of the church varied considerably in Luther's thinking. Only rarely did he date it as the radical Protestants tended to put it at the end of the first century.¹⁵ Often the seventh century or even a later century was taken as the dividing line. Yet the Renaissance popes seemed more interested in secular than spiritual matters in order to achieve the highest levels of "avarice, venality, immorality and spectacularly unsuccessful power politics".¹⁶ For critical observers such as Luther, the church had lost its intellectual heritage.

Luther demanded reform. The reformer demanded for the church to return to its age of spiritual purity on the basis of Scripture. But McGrath, and Grenz and Franke say that the

¹³ B. Thompson, 1996: 408.

¹⁴ A.E. McGrath, *Reformation thought: An Introduction*. (3rd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999: 3.

¹⁵ J. Pelikan, *Luther's Works: Introduction to the Exegetical Works, Companion Volume*. Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1959: 240.

¹⁶ A.E. McGrath, 1999: 3.

Reformers did not originate the cry of ‘Scripture alone’.¹⁷ Rather, they were echoing the Renaissance’s great cry of the humanists - ‘back to the sources’ (*ad fontes*), back to the Golden Age of the church, in order to reclaim its freshness, purity and vitality in the midst of a period of stagnation and corruption. C.R. Hogg shows that, “after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the growing awareness of the Greek language and its authors brought about an increased desire to read the Greek authors, no longer through the lens of medieval Latin translations, but from Greek itself”.¹⁸ It was these humanists, namely Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536), John Colet (1467-1519) and Thomas More (1478-1535), whose emphasis established the priority of Scripture over later commentaries on its text, particularly those of the middle ages. Their desire was to approach the Scriptures directly rather than through a complicated system of glosses and commentaries. This humanism north of the Alps, according to B. Thompson, “taught that if one could discover the real sources of Western Christian civilization – the Bible, the church fathers, the classics – one could purify Christianity of its medieval accretions and corruptions, thus restoring it to its pristine form”.¹⁹ As can be seen, Hogg argues, the first place among the *fontes* of theology for the Reformation was given to the Scriptures.²⁰ Luther and Melancthon made extensive studies on the biblical text in its original languages of Hebrew and Greek. Prominent among these important texts was Erasmus’ Greek New Testament which came off the press in 1516.²¹ But the *fontes* of theology also included other writings besides the Scriptures – the writings of the early church fathers. But the supremacy of Scripture is something treasured in Protestant Christian circles to this day. Although Scripture’s role in theology has however remained a challenge.

One instance shows that, after carefully examining Francis Pieper’s massive *Christian Dogmatics*, Hogg makes a very important observation on what *sola Scriptura* means as used today: “Scripture is the sole source and norm of all Christian teachings. Nothing else may be added to it as

¹⁷ A.E. McGrath, 1999: 149; S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001: 99.

¹⁸ C.R. Hogg Jr., ‘What do we mean by *sola scriptura*? *Lutheran Forum*, Vol. 36, No.1, Spring 2002: 99.

¹⁹ Cf. B. Thompson, 1996: 333.

²⁰ Cf. C.R. Hogg Jr., 2002: 29.

²¹ Cf. B. Thompson, 1996: 342.

source or norm”.²² This differs from the teaching of the Formula of Concord²³, that the Bible is the pure source and sole norm of Christian theology. Hogg notes that contemporary Lutheran dogmaticians tend to use the terms “source” and “norm” interchangeably. On the other hand, in their Confessions, Lutheran dogmaticians uphold the doctrine that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus; and that the Confessions say that Mary and the saints in heaven pray for us; and that the Confessions teach that prayer for the dead is not objectionable, and not without benefit. Hogg concludes that while Scripture is understood as “sole” or “unique” source of doctrine, it means that it allows for churchly traditions and that such teachings stand because there is no Scripture rejecting them. In contemporary American Lutheranism, Hogg argues that “those who claim *sola Scriptura* in the loudest voices do not practice it in reality; they supplement it with the latest Reformed theological notions, or worse, the current fashion in psychology or sociology”.²⁴ This is why it is important to review Luther’s understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle, if it is going to serve as a continuing guide for theology and church life today.

1.2. The Role of Scripture in the Protestant Reformations

In the use of Scripture, D.H. Kelsey indicates that to call a text “Christian scripture” means that it functions in a certain way or does certain things when used in certain ways in the life of the Church.²⁵ This means that the Reformers wanted Scripture to function in a certain way in the life of the church. Kelsey also observes that the concept of “Scripture” brings with it a concept of “authority,” for to call a set of writings “Scripture” is to say that they ought to be used in certain normative and ritual ways in the common life of the church.²⁶ In this, Protestants believe that Scripture creates the church and alone is “authority” over her. But the central purpose of the Bible is

²² C.R. Hogg Jr., 2002: 26.

²³ The Formula of Concord is contained in the *Book of Concord*: Fortress, 2000, in which is stipulated the Lutheran Missouri Synod Confessions.

²⁴ C.R. Hogg Jr., 2002: 31.

²⁵ D.H. Kelsey, *Proving doctrine: The uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999: 90.

²⁶ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 94.

not to provide raw material for erecting a theological edifice, but for the community of faith to seek to discern the Spirit's voice through the appropriated text.²⁷

For others, *sola Scriptura* is generally called one of the catch phrases of the Reformation, along with other *sola* formulae, '*sola fide, sola gratia, solo Christi, soli Deo Gloria*'.²⁸ What did the Protestant Reformers mean by *sola Scriptura*? This is an important issue in an attempt to understand the role of the Scriptures in the Protestant Reformations. G.C. Berkouwer suggests that, "the Reformation *sola Scriptura* was not meant to be separatistic and isolating. It called for the battle for the true tradition and implied an hermeneutical appeal of the first order for the life of the church."²⁹ Kelsey maintains that what the Reformers understood to constitute *sola Scriptura* is the occasion for the presence of the revealed word.³⁰ In this they meant that the only activity (*sola Scriptura*) which allowed the "proper" use of Scripture is its use in preaching and sacramental acts.

Berkouwer notes however, that "the Reformers [Luther in particular] did not wish to endanger the principle of tradition; rather, they wished to protect it. Hence its function remains, not only in the face of dangerous "tradition" of others or oneself, but also against dangers of interpretations (one's own and others) that might be considered to be "additions" in the course of time. The *sola Scriptura*, therefore, will only have significance when it is not used in terms of a theoretical axiom for polemics, but when it takes on visible and concrete forms, showing to what extent the entire church is prepared to take every objection captive to obey Christ (II Cor. 10: 5). Without this preparedness every polemic loses its power".³¹

Lane found that there are also various ways in which we may understand the meaning of *sola Scriptura*. Some of the ways given by him include the following: "Scripture, although supreme, is neither the sole resource nor the sole source of theology. While the material sufficiency of Scripture is a part of what is meant by *sola scriptura*, it is not the whole. Scripture is not the sole

²⁷ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 84.

²⁸ G.A. Cole, 'Sola scriptura: Some Historical and Contemporary Perspective' in: *Churchman*, Vol. 104. No. 1, 1990: 21.

²⁹ G.C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture: Studies in Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975: 312.

³⁰ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 96.

³¹ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 313.

authority for theology. But the essence of the *sola Scriptura* principle is that Scripture is the final authority or norm for Christian belief.”³²

Lane warns against taking too far such rhetoric as the frequently recited statement of Chillingworth who says, “The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of the Protestants”.³³ According to Lane, for the Reformations and for evangelical theology, Scripture remains the final authority to which one can appeal against all ecclesiastical authority. Along this line of reasoning, C.D. Allert³⁴ suggests that an appeal to ‘the Bible and the Bible alone’ should be applied only to the magisterial Reformers.³⁵ This has since changed, with some theologians³⁶ opting for the Spirit speaking in or through Scripture as the final authority for Christian belief and practice. They believe that bringing the Spirit and the Bible together provides the foundation for understanding in what sense the Bible is the norming norm in theology.

Grenz and Franke are careful to say that the Bible does not function as Scripture when we hear the voice of the Spirit speaking through it. On the contrary, they say that “the Bible remains objectively scripture whether we hear the voice of the Spirit speaking through it or not because it is the book of [for] the church”³⁷ Nevertheless, Grenz and Franke seem to contradict themselves when they say that it is the corporate confession of the Bible as “Scripture” that forms the context for our hearing the Spirit’s voice in its pages. Rather, it would seem better to say that the possibility of

³² A.N.S. Lane, ‘*Sola scriptura?* Making sense of a post-Reformation slogan’, in: P.E. (Ed.). *Pathway into the Holy Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994: 297.

³³ A.N.S. Lane, 1994: 326.

³⁴ C.D. Allert, ‘What are we trying to conserve? Evangelicalism and *sola scriptura*’, *Evangelical Quarterly*. Vol. 76, No. 4, 2004: 329.

³⁵ McGrath maintains that “magisterial reformation” refers to the mainstream Reformation. This “draws attention to the manner in which the mainstream Reformers related to secular authorities, such as princes, magistrates or city councils. Whereas the radical reformers regarded such authorities as having no rights within the church, the mainstream argued that the church was, at least to some extent, subject to the secular agencies of government. The magistrates had a right to authority within the church, just as the church could rely on the authority of the magistrates to enforce discipline, suppress heresy, or maintain order. The phrase ‘magisterial Reformation’ is intended to draw attention to this close relationship between the magistracy and the church, which lay at the heart of the reforming programme of writers such as Martin Luther or Martin Bucer”, 1999: 5-6

³⁶ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 65, 67.

³⁷ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 68.

hearing the Spirit's voice occurs when we confess the Bible to be Scripture. Hence for them, reading the Bible theologically becomes an antidote to mistaken uses of Scripture.³⁸

On the other hand, Luther was not intending to substitute Scripture for the pope and the church. Greenslade pointed out that the common assertion that the Reformers dethroned the pope and enthroned the Bible is not valid.³⁹ P.P. Kuenning, in agreeing with this position says that "the Reformation cry of 'Scripture alone' was not intended to substitute an infallible book for an infallible church or pope, but to insist that the Holy Scriptures held absolute primacy as the source of the living Word of God in Christ."⁴⁰ Hence Luther insisted that "the Scriptures are neither of men nor from men but from God".⁴¹ Grenz and Franke maintain that the biblical text provides the basic parameter for understanding the interface between exegesis and theological reflection.⁴² This interface must continue because "we must never conclude that exegesis alone can exhaust the Spirit's [God's] speaking to us through the text".⁴³

Greenslade argues that "a book cannot replace a man [sic]. A book has to be interpreted".⁴⁴ McGrath concurs with Greenslade's position. McGrath's view, too, is that texts need to be interpreted. There is little point in treating a certain text as authoritative or normative if there is serious disagreement concerning what it means.⁴⁵ V.L. Walter adds that if authority ends in the

³⁸ While Grenz and Franke do well to link the Spirit with the Bible, it seems like stretching the point too far to say that the Bible is only authoritative because it is the Spirit who speaks through it. The Holy Spirit does not speak through the Bible independent of the entire Trinity. It is the God-head or the Trinity that speaks through the Bible. Jesus indicated the unity of the Trinity when He spoke about the work of the coming Spirit. In John 16: 13-15 Jesus indicated that the Spirit will not speak on his own, but he will speak only what he hears. The Spirit was to bring glory to Christ by taking from what is Christ's and making it known to them. And all that belongs to the Father is Christ's. So God (the Trinity) speaks through the Bible, which is what gives it authority. Rather than asking "what is the Spirit saying to the church? (Rev. 2: 11)," the church when reading the biblical text should ask, "What is God saying to the church?" (2Tim 3: 16-17), S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 65, 74, 89.

³⁹ S.L. Greenslade (F.B.A.), (Ed.), *The Cambridge history of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the present day*. Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1963: 1.

⁴⁰ P.P. Kuenning, 'Sola scriptura and the Ecumenical Endeavor', *Dialog*, Vol. 29. 1990: 202.

⁴¹ E.T. Bachmann (Ed.). *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament*, Vol. 35. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960: 153.

⁴² S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 84.

⁴³ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 74.

⁴⁴ S.L. Greenslade, 1963: 2.

⁴⁵ A.E. McGrath, 1999:157.

printed page (be it Scripture or dogmatic history) the Protestant house will be lifeless and bare, and contemporary Protestants will find themselves as Pharisees reborn.⁴⁶

In acknowledging the distance between the world of the text and our world in reading the Bible theologically, Grenz and Franke suggest that it leads to a realization that the goal of our theological reading of Scripture is not to alter the text to fit our world. That would merely undermine the integrity of the text. There should neither be intent on our part to alter ourselves to fit into the world of the text.⁴⁷ But the meaning of the text must be ascertained.

In order to understand the meaning of the text, the world of the text carries a certain primacy over our world; in a sense the text “absorbs” the world of the reader. Karl Barth argues that “the church must always admit the free power of the Holy Scripture’s proclamation over the church. The church enters into the succession of the prophets and apostles in their office of proclamation. Although the *antecessor*, the prophets and apostles may long be dead, they are regarded as alive and having power over the church, the successor, causing a living succession of their proclamation, since their proclamation was fixed in writing and therefore it is acknowledged that they still have life and free power over the church today in this written word of theirs”.⁴⁸

Barth maintains that the written nature of the canon gives it autonomy and independence over the church. Otherwise,

“it could have pleased God to give His church the canon in the form of an unwritten prophetic and apostolic tradition propagating itself from spirit to spirit and mouth to mouth....If it had pleased God to make this unwritten spiritual-oral tradition the canon of His church, the canon would be as little distinguishable from the life of the church as the blood of our fathers coursing through our veins is distinguishable from our own blood. Thus the church would be left alone and referred to itself, to its own validity. Whatever there may be of such spiritual-oral tradition in the church, since it does not have written form it obviously cannot have the character of an authority irremovably confronting the church. In unwritten tradition the church is not addressed; it is engaged in dialogue with itself.”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ V.L. Walter, ‘Beyond sola scriptura: Recovering a more balanced Understanding of Authority’, *Touchstone*, (US). Vol. 4, Spring 1991: 17.

⁴⁷ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 89.

⁴⁸ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Vol. 1. Part One., G.W. Bromiley (Trans.). Edinburgh, 59 George Street: T&T. Clark, 1975: 104.

⁴⁹ K. Barth, 1975: 104-105.

But Barth further argues that,

“The fact that it is written does not make it the norm. There are other texts about which much the same might be said regarding their exegesis or free power residing within them. But it is canon because it imposed itself upon the church as such, and continually does so. The Bible is canon just because it is so. It is so by imposing itself as such. With regard to its content, the Holy Scripture – the prophetic and apostolic word is the word, witness, proclamation and preaching of Jesus Christ. The promise given to the church in this Word is the promise of God’s mercy which is uttered in the person of Him who is very God and very man and which takes up our cause when we could not help ourselves at all because of our enmity against God”.⁵⁰

Here it seems problematic for Grenz and Franke to insist that “it is not the Bible as a book that is authoritative, but the Bible as the instrumentality of the Spirit; the biblical message spoken by the Spirit through the text is theology’s norming norm”.⁵¹ That seems to suggest that the Bible as a book is not authoritative until the Spirit speaks through it. The Bible was never found in a situation as that. Rather it came into being because God spoke. And it therefore remains authoritative because it is the voice of God to humanity, and therefore the biblical message is the norming norm for theology.⁵² And yes, “The Spirit [God] speaks to us today through the appropriated biblical text”.⁵³

Barth further observes that by the Holy Scripture the church is summoned and directed to its proclamation and empowered for it, which implies that the Holy Scripture, too, is the Word of God.⁵⁴ For Barth, God’s Word becomes an event in the human word, by God’s own will. The Bible becomes God’s Word to the extent that God causes it to be His Word, to the extent that He speaks through it. But is there a time when God ceases to speak through His written Word? God is always speaking through the Word whether men and women hear it or not.

⁵⁰ K. Barth, 1975: 107.

⁵¹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 69.

⁵² S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 72.

⁵³ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 75, 77.

⁵⁴ K. Barth, 1975: 109.

1.3. A Question of the authority to interpret Scripture in the Church

The main point of argument for the magisterial Reformation, according to McGrath⁵⁵ and Kuenning⁵⁶, was on who should interpret Scripture? Doctrinal confusion and disagreement reigned over the nature and location of theological authority in the late medieval period making it far from clear as to who had the ultimate authority to interpret Scripture. Luther asserted that the Scriptures were self authenticating; meaning that they interpreted themselves⁵⁷. For Barth the undeniable concrete authority of the Bible in its written form, gives it an authority whose pronouncement is not the church's dialogue with itself but an address to the church. In its writtenness as "Bible" it must be distinguished from and given precedence over the purely spiritual and oral life of ecclesiastical tradition.⁵⁸

John Calvin also maintained that, "the Scriptures are the only records in which God has been pleased to consign his truth to perpetual remembrance. The full authority which they ought to possess with the faithful is not recognized, unless they are believed to have come from heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them".⁵⁹ In order to understand its meaning, the clearer portions of Scripture should be used to explain the difficult and obscure passages.

What if there are disagreements on the Bible passage's meaning? J. Barton argues that although earlier forms of Judaism (such as the Qumran community, or later rabbinical Judaism) did not easily tolerate discrepancies between different parts of the Bible on matters of *halakhah*, in all other areas Jews have tended to be far more relaxed than Christians about the diversities within the canon.⁶⁰ Because the real and effective authority for the practice of Judaism is the oral law, not the text of Scripture, it does not matter very much if there are different points of view and even factual disagreements between different parts of the biblical text. Catholicism has similarly in practice not

⁵⁵ A.E. McGrath, 1999: 161-162.

⁵⁶ P.P. Kuenning, 1990: 202.

⁵⁷ N.R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003: 694.

⁵⁸ K. Barth, 1975: 106.

⁵⁹ J. Calvin, *Institute of the Christian Religion*. H. Beveridge (Trans.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989: 68.

⁶⁰ J. Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology: Collected Essays of John Barton*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007: 62, 63.

been very concerned about inconsistencies within the text, because it is the church's magisterium, not the contexts of the Bible that directs what shall be believed.⁶¹

It is Protestant Christians for whom the shoe pinches most, because for them Scripture is the ultimate court of appeal and has to act as its own interpreter, there being no higher court which can adjudicate when it seems to give an uncertain judgment. It is perhaps this Protestant attribution of all authority to the Bible that leads to the need to find a 'canon within a canon'⁶², to take over the role that traditional authoritative teaching plays in both Judaism and Catholicism.

J.N.K. Mugambi observes that all Scriptural religions are held together by common Scripture. And paradoxically, the Scriptures which bind together such religions are also a source of tension and divisions. Scriptural religions are torn apart by differences in interpretation of the same Scriptures which are commonly believed to be the source of divine inspiration. Non-scriptural religions, however, do not face that problem because their doctrinal teachings are fluid, flexible and spontaneous within a generally accepted worldview.⁶³

For Luther, Kuenning observes, the surest and safest way to understand Scripture was in its literal or historical sense.⁶⁴ Pelikan indicates that the centrality of the Scriptures in Luther's thought and the primacy of the Word of God in Luther's thought came together in his exegesis. Luther was so saturated with the language and thought of the Bible that he often quoted it without even being conscious of it.⁶⁵ Barth therefore admits that the Biblical canon is constantly exposed to absorption into the life, thought and utterance of the church inasmuch as it continually seeks to be understood afresh and hence expounded and interpreted. Exegesis is always a combination of taking and giving, of reading out and reading in.⁶⁶

⁶¹ J. Barton, 2007: 63.

⁶² This refers to Luther's Christological principle in determining the Scriptural canonical writings, that is, the principle of "what manifests Christ" has been called by some scholars as Luther's "canon within a canon", G.F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today*, Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985: 4.

⁶³ J.N.K. Mugambi, 'The Bible and Ecumenism in African Christianity', in: H.W. Kinoti & J.M. Waliggo (Eds.). *The Bible in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology*. Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers, 1997: 69.

⁶⁴ P.P. Kuenning, 1990: 202.

⁶⁵ J. Pelikan, 1959: 49.

⁶⁶ K. Barth, 1975: 106.

Thus exegesis, without which the norm cannot assert itself as a norm, entails the constant danger that the Bible will be taken prisoner by the church, that its own life will be transformed into the authority of the church, in short, that it will lose its character as a norm magisterially confronting the church. Here lies the question of the actual place of theological authority.

All exegesis can become predominantly interposition rather than exposition and to that degree it can fall back into the church's dialogue with itself. To avoid one-sidedness in the application of *sola Scriptura*, Berkouwer says that, "The confession of "Scripture alone" does not begin with the "alone" as a general principle, but with Scripture. For the meaning and weight of the "alone" can be perceived only along that route. Only in this way is it possible to suppress the inclination to a one-sided reaction and to a personally biased preference".⁶⁷

D.M. Beegle proposes that,

"The core meaning of "Scripture alone" is that the canon is the only place where one can go to find the authoritative gospel of Christ. Notwithstanding all the difficulties of the Bible, it presents the clearest picture of Jesus and God his Father. The writings of the postapostolic fathers are valuable, and Protestants have not given them the reading and study they deserve. Certainly the biographies of Christian saints are inspiring and contribute to the fullness of Christian experience. But the vast majority of ecclesiastical tradition resulted from the Holy Spirit's working through the canonical books. For this reason, Calvin's doctrine associating the Holy Spirit directly with the Written Word is a more accurate assessment of biblical teaching. This is also why there can be no constitutive tradition outside of the biblical canon. Once the apostolic period was closed, ecclesiastical tradition could never be the criterion for the truth".⁶⁸

But Barth counsels that "the exegesis of the Bible should rather be left open on all sides, not for the sake of free thought, as Liberalism would demand, but for the sake of the Bible. Here as everywhere the defense against possible violence cannot do, namely, maintaining its own life against the encroachments of individual or total periods and tendencies in the church, victoriously asserting this life in ever new developments, and thus creating recognition for itself as a norm".⁶⁹

As Barton appeals, "The Bible ought once again to become the church's book, to which we go for

⁶⁷ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 306.

⁶⁸ D.M. Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973: 121.

⁶⁹ K. Barth, 1975: 106.

inspiration and revelation, and should cease to be seen as the proper province of rationalist critics”.⁷⁰ That is to say, the Bible belongs to the church context.

Although Barth argues further that to acknowledge that a canonical text has the character of a free power, suggests that, “after any exegesis [has been] propounded in it [the church], even the very best, it [the church] has to realize afresh the distinction between text and commentary and to let the text speak again without let or hindrance, so that it will experience the lordship of this free power and find in the Bible the partner or counterpart which the church must find in it if it is to take the living *successio apostolorum* seriously”.⁷¹ Therefore, Barth seems to uphold the authority of the Scripture above the interpreting authority of the church.

1.4. Dating the development of the *sola Scriptura* principle

P.A. Sandlin argues that against the commonly held view that the Reformers introduced *sola Scriptura* in Western Christianity, but that there was wide acceptance of *sola Scriptura* in certain sectors of the late medieval church.⁷² Equally, Greenslade asserts that “Luther was not entirely original in his assertion that the Scripture is the ultimate resource, and that the pope is not the sole interpreter”.⁷³ English Franciscan, William of Ockham (1285-1349) had previously demonstrated the audacity to accuse the pope of error and to scandalize Christendom by quoting the Scriptures against the papacy.⁷⁴ Luther, too, gave a sharper edge to this position previously taken.⁷⁵

Thus contemporary scholars attempt to suggest different dates for the origins of the *sola Scriptura* slogan. For instance, Lane claims that *sola Scriptura* as a formula or a slogan post-dates the Reformation.⁷⁶ This suggests that it was coined and promoted after the Reformations period. But Berkouwer argues that,

“It should be recognized that the phrase *sola Scriptura* was not coined by the Reformers; it occurs already in the literature of the Middle Ages in various connections. It all depends on the

⁷⁰ J. Barton, 2007: 34.

⁷¹ K. Barth, 1975: 107.

⁷² P.A. Sandlin, ‘Two Paradigms for adherents of sola Scriptura.’ *Reformation & Revival*, Vol. 4. No. 4. Fall 2000: 37.

⁷³ S.L. Greenslade, 1963: 2.

⁷⁴ B. Thompson, 1996: 61-62.

⁷⁵ S.L. Greenslade, 1963: 2.

⁷⁶ A.N.S. Lane, 1994: 328.

context in which the words are used. The function of the *sola Scriptura* in the Reformation was to focus attention on God's Word as a principle of interpretation over against human arbitrariness. At the same time, this clarifies the fact that there was no intention of shaking off all traditions, nor of returning to the source, with the idea that the source contained water of the purest kind. A general preference of this kind for what is "ancient" and "original" is often found in humanism and in the Renaissance, with their calls for a return to the "sources" and to the "classics," but different and deeper motifs impelled the Reformers."⁷⁷

Other theologians such as D.H. Williams claim that the principle of *sola Scriptura* was never intended to function in isolation from the historical tradition of the church.⁷⁸ Williams observes that Biblical interpretation, on the grounds of the Bible alone, becomes liable to heretical exegesis. For example, Luther, in his debates with the papists, found himself driven to challenge the authority not only of the pope but also of councils as interpreters of Scripture. In August 1518, Luther contended that the pope may err, so too may councils.⁷⁹ It is therefore difficult to ascertain a precise date for the coining of the *sola Scriptura* principle. It must have developed over a period of years.

1.5. Luther faces the radical application of the *sola Scriptura* principle

Building upon Luther's reform, as G. Tomlin⁸⁰ observes, zealous Protestant Reformation colleagues like Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1483-1541) progressed further than Luther had envisioned, in instituting anti-clerical and iconoclastic reforms by force if necessary. Luther showed reluctance to replace Catholic legalism with a new evangelical form of the same thing. Luther insisted that such changes be delayed until the reasons for the changes had been fully understood by the people. Luther taught that the private Christian's true weapons to be used in their reform were prayer, confession and suffering, not swords and clubs. This may be in line with Luther's two kingdoms⁸¹ view.

⁷⁷ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 306.

⁷⁸ D.H. William, 'The search for sola Scriptura in the early Church.' *Interpretation*. Vol. 52. No.4, 1998: 354.

⁷⁹ J.W. Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology: The validity and relevance of Historic Lutheranism vs. its Contemporary Rivals*. Vol. 1. (2nd ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc.; B. Thompson, 1996: 402.

⁸⁰ G. Tomlin, 2004: 44.

⁸¹ While Seventh-day Adventists may not strictly adhere to Luther's two kingdoms view, they have inherited the principle of separation of church and state from the Reformers, which is believed to be supported by Christ's teaching recorded in Matt. 22:21. Cf. T.G. Tappert (Ed.). *Luther's Works: Table Talk*. Vol. 54, 1981: 199. B. Thompson, 1996: 406.

M.G. Baylor noted that, “as a popular movement, radicals stood at the center, not at the periphery of the Reformation[s]. But the commoners’ cause was not the whole Reformation. The radicals came to differ with other, more moderate, “magisterial” reformers over matters of scope and strategy, as well as in their underlying attitude toward the popular movement and the prevailing structure of politics. The magisterial reformers rejected traditional authority but did not question the authority of existing secular governments. They wanted reform with the approval and backing of princes and urban magistrates.”⁸² Pelikan shows how in addition to defending the medieval church against Karlstadt and Zwingli, Luther also defended his interpretation of the church fathers against them. He wanted to rescue the fathers from what he regarded as the distorted interpretation that had been foisted upon them.⁸³

On these grounds Luther was charged by the radical Reformers of being unwilling to pay the price of reform. So when Luther failed to stop the zeal of the grassroots movement under the leadership of von Karlstadt and the fiery Thomas Muntzer, in their demand to overthrow the dominant structures of society and the church, he appealed to the nobility to put down the rebellion using force where necessary. Luther’s siding with the aggressive and unjust nobility, who struck down the peasants by the thousands at the battle of Frankenhausen in 1525, damaged his reputation in his work of reform.⁸⁴

D.H. Williams concludes, therefore, that a Scripture-only principle was found to create greater problems which have plagued Christianity ever since.⁸⁵ Hence C.D. Allert⁸⁶ suggests that when an appeal to ‘the Bible and the Bible alone’ is made, it should only be applied to the radical (Anabaptist) wing of the Reformation, because the ‘magisterial Reformers’⁸⁷ had a different understanding of the *sola Scriptura* principle from the one held by the radical Reformers.⁸⁸

⁸² M.G. Baylor, *The Radical Reformation*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1991: xii-xiii.

⁸³ J. Pelikan, 1959: 120.

⁸⁴ B. Thompson, 1996: 407-408.

⁸⁵ D.H. Williams, 1998: 356.

⁸⁶ C.D. Allert, 2004: 340.

⁸⁷ See note 5.

⁸⁸ C.D. Allert, 2004: 338.

Allert admits that Luther's writings before 1522 show a decided emphasis on the authority of the Bible over papal decisions. He goes on to say that relying on Luther's pre - 1522 writings without the proper ecclesiological context which is brought in by Lane⁸⁹ can cause one to misunderstand that true tradition was not equated with ecclesiastical decisions in Luther's eyes. But a reading of Luther's *On the Councils and the Church*, written in 1539, shows a significant amount of reference to and preference for St. Augustine throughout the document, thus indicating a trust in the heritage passed down from the great western father. Luther claimed that St. Augustine in many places exalts the Holy Scriptures above the statements of all teachers.⁹⁰ Allert comments that, *On the Councils and the Church* shows that the argument was not about the acceptance of the early church's creeds and doctrines, but about who has the right to claim them as authorities. Luther singled out the papacy in this document because he believed it was playing off the councils and fathers against scripture in order to legitimize decisions founded on the claim of tradition.⁹¹

Hence Luther⁹² claimed that it was a miracle of the Holy Spirit that he wanted to give the world all the books of the Holy Scripture, of both the Old and the New Testament, solely through Abraham's people and seed, and that he did not have a single book composed by Gentiles, just as He did not intend to choose the prophets and apostles from among the Gentiles. Therefore Gentiles must not value the writings of the early fathers as highly as Holy Scripture, but as worth of a little less; for they are the children and heirs, while Gentiles are the guests and strangers who have come to the children's table by grace without any promise. Luther found it absurd that the Roman papacy usurps the authority to change Scripture arbitrarily solely to suit itself, without any regard for apostles and prophets.

It becomes clear that, the issue Luther was fighting against was not rejecting tradition, but the authority of the contemporary church to teach. Kelsey argues that since 'Scripture' and 'tradition' are not logically on par, it is misleading to contrast them as alternative and competing

⁸⁹ A.N.S. Lane, 309.

⁹⁰ E.T. Batchmann (Ed.), 1960: 150.

⁹¹ C.D. Allert, 338.

⁹² E.W. Gritsch, (Ed.). *Luther's Works: Church and Ministry III*. Vol. 41. (American ed.), Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966: 51

authorities for the church's forms of action and speech.⁹³ On the other hand Luther was not calling for a return to the tradition which the medieval church had corrupted, but for a return to Scripture as the final arbiter, not the church. This is because for Luther, God was present among the faithful only in the mode of proclamation. Therefore the "proper" use of Scripture is its use in preaching and sacramental act.

In the post-Reformations period, Kelsey identifies a range of decisions theologians make about how to use Scripture to help authorize their theological proposals. He contends that to suggest that Scripture might serve as a final court of appeals for theological disputes is misleading because there is no one, normative concept "scripture".⁹⁴ Instead, there seem to be a family of related but importantly different concepts "scripture".⁹⁵ For instance, Kelsey found that G. Ernest Wright took the view that the Bible is not primarily the Word of God, but the record of the Acts of God, together with the human responses thereto.⁹⁶ He therefore emphasizes that the recital of God's acts is more theologically basic than the doctrine.

Kelsey suggests that "to call a text 'Christian scripture' is that it functions in certain ways or does certain things when used in certain ways in the common life of the church".⁹⁷ For instance, he suggests that, "part of what it means to call a text 'Christian scripture' is that it functions to shape persons' identities so decisively as to transform them".⁹⁸ Therefore, Berkouwer says, "The phrase *sola Scriptura* expressed a certain way of reading Scripture, implying a continual turning toward the gospel as the saving message of Scripture. The Reformers were therefore aware of being confronted with the original and canonical gospel, not because it was ancient as such, but because of this concrete and qualitative "originality." In this light it may be said that the term *sola Scriptura*

⁹³ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 96.

⁹⁴ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 2.

⁹⁵ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 14-15.

⁹⁶ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 33.

⁹⁷ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 90.

⁹⁸ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 91.

represented “the struggle for the genuine tradition”.⁹⁹ All this aims at understanding how Scripture functions in the life of the church.

Grenz and Franke consider the Scriptural texts to hold primary status at all stages in the life of the church because they embody a foundational identity.¹⁰⁰ The Spirit is said to author this new identity in believers by appropriating the biblical text with its narrative of the past and its vision of the future.¹⁰¹ So, when the church acknowledges that just these writings are sufficient as her canon that is part of the church’s self-description. In this way, Berkouwer maintains that the *sola Scriptura* first became a thesis and then received a polemical and hermeneutical function in the actual life of the church. On the basis of *sola Scriptura* it remains true that the church stands under the authority of the Word, and only thus will it remain the church. It may be concluded that the Reformers were deeply bound to remain faithful to the pattern of the New Testament. For in it there is a radical boundary (an emphatic *sola*) that could not be transgressed.¹⁰² The idea was not to condemn the past of church but to claim that belief in a self-evident continuity ought to be placed on the touchstone of the gospel. They desired to stand in the light of tradition themselves; this is evident from Calvin’s high regard for the doctrinal decisions of the early councils. But the critical function of the Word of Scripture was respected *within* this context, not only theoretically but practically, with a clear freedom regarding the ancient church and the manner in which it had spoken of salvation in Christ. Hence the Reformers’ conviction must be seen against the background of the critical closure of the canonical gospel to which they pointed. It is striking that Rome and the Protestant Reformations disagreed concerning the canon but not concerning the acceptance of the canon of Scripture itself, in spite of Rome’s view that the fixation of the canon was based on the authority of the church. It is difficult to deny that the acceptance of the normative canon presupposes as its subjective correlate a submission to Scripture as God’s Word. There is good reason to ask whether the idea of the canon does naturally imply a recognition of the sufficiency of

⁹⁹ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 306.

¹⁰⁰ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 79.

¹⁰¹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 83.

¹⁰² G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 307,308.

Scripture in view of the factual recognition of the canon, and, moreover, whether the concept of tradition as “addition” is thereby not excluded. Therefore Scripture remains supreme over the church.

1.6. The *sola Scriptura* principle as applied to the canonical writings

At this junction, F.F. Bruce reveals that, “with the revival of serious biblical study in the early Middle Ages, fresh attention was paid to questions of canonicity. Nowhere was this revival more marked than in the Abbey of St Victor at Paris in the twelfth century. In the school attached to the Abbey Hebrew sources were explored and a new emphasis was placed on the literal sense of Scripture”.¹⁰³ During the sixteenth-century Reformations the issue came more sharply to the fore. When Luther, in his debate with John Eck, maintained the authority of Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) over against that of the church, this quickly raised the question of what precisely constituted ‘Scripture alone’.¹⁰⁴ Beegle notes that “Eck was a fighter by nature, and he penned many articles against Luther and the Reformation[s]. At first he had a moderate view of Cajetan. Since Christ had empowered the apostles, not the popes, to publish the gospel, Sacred Scripture was to have first place....When Luther took ‘justification by faith’ as his standard of the gospel, he was ready to ignore James as a “very strawy epistle”.¹⁰⁵ Luther’s ‘canon within a canon’ disturbed Eck a great deal such that he began to change his views in order to counter Luther. He argued that God had revealed the gospel through Jesus Christ, who in turn passed it on to the apostles. The gospel was written in the hearts of the church; as a result the church had authority over written sources, both Scripture and tradition. Finally, in order to keep from misinterpreting Scripture, which was a sin against the Spirit, Eck concluded that Christians must yield to the church because it was the only true interpreter of the gospel.”

¹⁰³ F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1988: 99.

¹⁰⁴ B. Thompson, 1996: 400-401.

¹⁰⁵ D.M. Beegle, 1973: 98.

When Luther was challenged to abide by his principle of ‘Scripture alone’ and concede that Scriptural authority for praying for the dead was found in 2 Macc. 12: 45f¹⁰⁶ (where praying for the dead, ‘that they might be delivered from their sin’, is said to be ‘a holy and pious thought’), he found a ready reply in Jerome’s ruling that 2 Maccabees did not belong to the books to be used ‘for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas’. That is the apocrypha.

Consequently Beegle notes that, “The strict “Scripture alone” of Luther and Calvin evoked the opposite claim “the Church alone” (*sola ecclesia*) by Albert Pigge (1490 – 1542), a strong apologist for Roman orthodoxy. Scripture here is limited to the canonical books, but it needs to be supplemented by tradition, “the apostolic message of the primitive Church, handed down through the succession of Fathers and Bishops, whether that message has been written or not in the Holy Scripture. Recognition of this all-important body of tradition raised the question as to how Christ had assisted the church in defining, conserving, and passing it on”.¹⁰⁷

We have seen that the medieval Renaissance which matured into the Protestant Reformations brought along an emphasis of studying the patristic classics and the Scriptures in the Greek and Hebrew languages. The emphasized practice of studying the writings of the fathers in these, as opposed to do so through their Latin translations reveal the inadequacy of and erroneous doctrines which resulted from these translations and commentaries. This necessitated, as noted earlier, a reform in the church’s theology and church sacraments. At the center of these Reformations was Martin Luther. However, Luther faced resistance from the medieval Roman Catholic church and in addition to that, he was criticized by those (radical Reformers) who wanted to go beyond where Luther envisioned. Luther’s insistence on the teaching and application of the Scripture principle (*sola Scriptura*) also revealed Luther’s limited view of the canon of Scripture – his use of the Christological principle. The Roman Catholic Church challenged Luther’s appeal to the doctrines of the early councils and the fathers. His understanding and application of the church’s tradition is what we now turn our attention to.

¹⁰⁶ B. Metzger gives helpful background information on this issue, 1963: 147-150.

¹⁰⁷ D.M. Beegle, 1973: 100.

1.7. The role of Tradition in the Protestant Reformations

A variety of definitions of church tradition exists. For instance, McGrath points out that according to Irenaeus, “What had been handed down was [sic] merely the biblical texts, but a certain way of reading and understanding those texts”.¹⁰⁸ Grenz and Franke also maintain that, “the Christian tradition is comprised of the historical attempts by the Christian community to explicate and translate faithfully the first-order language, symbols, and practices of the Christian faith, arising from the interaction among community texts, and culture, into the various social and cultural contexts in which the community has been situated”.¹⁰⁹ But Beegle defines tradition as the Gospel passed on from bishop to bishop, and from teacher to teacher. The list of the men and women through whose care it has been kept undefiled in each local church is what the early fathers termed the *paradosis* or tradition of the church. The sum total of these traditions forms *the* Tradition of the universal church.¹¹⁰

In addition, Kelsey maintains that when used as a theological concept, tradition names a process that embraces both the church’s use of Scripture and the presence of God which, in a dialectical inter-relationship, are together essential to the church’s self identity. But more precisely, tradition is used as a theological concept to refer to the handing on of the *kerygma*.¹¹¹ However, concretely speaking, tradition both refers to the handing-on and as what is handed-on, such as creedal and liturgical formulae and specific ritual acts – the Apostolic tradition – which is essential to shaping and preserving the church’s identity because it provides the mode in which God is present among the faithful. Considered as a product of the historical circumstances and forces that have shaped it, Christianity is to a significant degree regarded as a tradition.¹¹² The message of the church and its practices find themselves dressed in cultural manifestations of the places and times that surround and transmit them.

¹⁰⁸ A.E. McGrath, 2007: 136.

¹⁰⁹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 118.

¹¹⁰ D.M. Beegle, 1973: 122.

¹¹¹ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 95.

¹¹² S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 94.

Further, Luther's indebtedness to the 'church's tradition'¹¹³ is observed by Pelikan that Luther could not have been the exegete he was without the help of the church's tradition. That tradition gave him the help and footing on which he could and did move and shift, but which he never lost. But this was so because he believed that under this footing was the foundation of the Scriptures and also as a son of the church he was to receive it gratefully.¹¹⁴ Bloesch¹¹⁵ maintains that tradition as the amplification and interpretation of the Word in the community of faith is to be respected and honored, but it is not to be accepted uncritically. Every interpretation in church tradition must be measured in the light of the transcendent meaning of the gospel that shines through Holy Scripture. Tradition can be misused and corrupted by leaders or clerics who seek to advance themselves or secure power for themselves. That is why Jesus warned that the consciences of men and women must not be bound to purely human traditions (Mark 7: 8). He castigated the Pharisees who for the sake of their tradition made void the Word of God (Matt. 15: 6). Human traditions therefore should not be used to substitute the claims of God's Word.

On the other hand Berkouwer¹¹⁶ argues that the confession of *sola Scriptura* has often been criticized for being an isolating and one-sided concept. In choosing one source instead of two, this objection should not be superficially ignored. One must also be concerned with the problem of tradition. Otherwise, one would fail to realize that the church, in its relationship with God's Word, has always been informed by traditions. The mere confession of *sola Scriptura* does not safeguard the church in the least from traditions that become interpretations which become attached to the life of the church in the course of time to the extent that practically they have the features of the sovereignty Word of God. We become aware of this at once when we consider the confessional

¹¹³ Luther was brought up, trained and worked as an Augustinian monk and professor of biblical studies prior to his confrontation with and consequent excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church. His reformation agenda was aimed at riding the church he loved of corrupt practices and planting it on the firmer foundation of Scripture and the early church fathers' doctrinal pronouncements.

¹¹⁴ J. Pelikan, 1959: 88.

¹¹⁵ D.G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1994: 151.

¹¹⁶ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 304, 305.

divisions. Because of this danger there must be noted a deeper and continued consideration and critical testing flowing forth directly from the *sola Scriptura* itself.

Allert¹¹⁷ who takes the position that the Protestant Reformers did not reject tradition also says that they did not accept it without judging it against the final arbiter of Scripture. While they viewed tradition as useful in helping the church understand Scripture, it was not a normative interpretation of Scripture. Once the church started contradicting Scripture, tradition became corrupt, making it impossible to identify the 'true tradition'.¹¹⁸

Therefore the Protestant Reformers needed to distinguish true tradition from corrupt tradition, and that this could only be done by testing all tradition according to its faithfulness to Scripture. Grenz and Franke observe that from the patristic era through the Middle Ages, theologians acknowledged the primacy of Scripture, while simultaneously granting a certain importance to tradition.¹¹⁹ Grenz and Franke take this view because they conceive that in patristic era, Scripture and tradition were not seen as mutually exclusive but as co-inherent. This conception of the co-inherence of Scripture and tradition came as a result of the assumption that both issued from the common source of divine revelation.¹²⁰

Therefore Beegle commends the early fathers saying, "the ancients were just as astute as we at this point. In fact, the word 'canon' means rule, standard".¹²¹ The selection of the canon was precisely to have a basis for checking religious teaching from that moment on. Knowledgeable leaders of the church had seen too much distorted gospel making the rounds of the local churches and they determined to restore the purity of the gospel as much as possible. In the light of the historical evidence the assumption of undefiled transmission of tradition is wishful thinking. In fact, the selection of the canon was the responsible use of authority to correct previous failure to exercise

¹¹⁷ C.D. Allert, 2004: 336.

¹¹⁸ True tradition, McGrath indicates, refers to 'the guarantor of faithfulness to the original teaching, a safeguard against the innovations and misrepresentations of biblical texts on the part of the Gnostics.' It is a living transmission of the Gospel, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, from generation to generation. This idea of 'a certain way of interpreting certain texts of Scripture, which went back to the time of the apostles themselves' was begun by the Second-century patristic theologian, Irenaeus of Lyon., A.E. McGrath, 2007: 136, 138.

¹¹⁹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 64.

¹²⁰ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 95.

¹²¹ D.M. Beegle, 1973, 122; Cf. A.E. McGrath, 2007: 136-140

authority. The only difficulty was the problem of deciding which one of the fathers was most accurate when two or three of them disagreed.

Allert insists that the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* was not primarily directed against tradition, but against the teaching of the contemporary church.¹²² But the elevation of *sola Scriptura* by the European humanists effectively set the agenda for what became the Protestant antitraditionalism.¹²³ This was not to suggest that the *sola Scriptura* principle was used by the magisterial Reformers to argue that the church had been in error since the second century, as presumed by the radical Reformers¹²⁴, but that the magisterial Reformers were concerned to establish an historical link to the apostolic age, to establish their pedigree. Magisterial Reformers did not intend to sever themselves entirely from the Christian past. For example, Melanchthon, testified of Luther's agreement with the fathers and the councils in his teaching. What Luther had done was nothing else than to call people back to the Scripture and also to those fathers who came the closest to the meaning of Scripture.¹²⁵ Melanchthon reasoned that if one compares St. Augustine's books against Pelagians, such a one will see that they agree on the sum of the matter. And it will further be seen that Luther had taught more things than could be found in the writings of the fathers. It was not until the post Tridentine Catholic position, which espoused the primacy of the church, and its position on tradition arising from a response to *sola Scriptura* that the hardening of the Protestant attitude toward tradition was occasioned.¹²⁶

¹²² C.D. Allert, 2004: 337.

¹²³ Cf. S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 99.

¹²⁴ Baylor, in summary form, indicates that the radical Reformers exhibited a more cohesiveness than the 'magisterial Reformers' [See note 5 for definition]. They thought of themselves as a unified movement or informed party. In their reformation strategy, they did not want to rely on the support of secular authorities and on postponing change until it was won, they were theorists and executors of immediate Reformation through direct action from below. They rejected a hierarchical conception of politics in which legitimate authority, whether secular or ecclesiastical, devolved from top down. The radicals stood for the right of each local community to hear the gospel preached in pure form and regulate its life according to the gospel. The radical Reformation also advocated community control over the local church, including the rights of each congregation to choose its own minister and to control the use of ecclesiastical payments. They were opposed to infant baptism, Luther's sharp division between spiritual and worldly kingdoms, the right of self-defense, meeting violence with counter-violence, and espousing many other radical, revolutionary views which supplied justification for violent rebellion; 1991: xiv-xxi.

¹²⁵ P. Melanchthon, *Melanchthon: Selected Writings*. C.L. Hill (Translator). Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1962: 74-76, 80.

¹²⁶ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 102.

Berkouwer also suggests that the Protestant Reformations' viewpoint will not be understood if it functions only in a polemic with Rome. He argues that,

“The *sola Scriptura* did indeed function in the history of the controversy concerning Scripture and tradition in the Roman Catholic Church. However, this must be understood in a wider context, embracing the polemic against all additions that influence the life of the church, even where the *sola Scriptura* is not an issue at all. The sufficiency of Scripture is a confession implying the responsibility to keep an open perspective on the message of Scripture. It is as clear as daylight that the Reformers did not separate this calling from the *sola Scriptura*: with deep conviction and an urgent pastoral admonition they witnessed to *sola Scriptura* and Scripture's sufficiency in mind”.¹²⁷

Within this vein Luther and the radical Reformers demanded that the medieval church be reformed because it had clearly contradicted Scripture in some of its teachings and practices. This meant that some elements in the doctrinal teachings of the church had to be soundly rejected. But as Luther was very much aware of the problems associated with private judgment, the rejection of this corrupt teaching authority of the church did not mean that the individual had the right to interpret Scripture as the radical Reformers would have it.

Unfortunately Luther's application of the Scriptures in the reform process was not uniform. This was due to the different approaches applied to the church's tradition. Since the medieval church regarded both Scripture and unwritten tradition as a basis for doctrine, Luther's emphasis on the Scripture principle (*sola Scriptura*) brought tradition in question. But how did the Protestant Reformers define tradition?

According to Heiko A. Oberman,¹²⁸ and McGrath,¹²⁹ two different concepts of tradition could be identified circulating in the late Middle Ages, known as 'Tradition 1' and 'Tradition 2'. Tradition 1 is understood to mean a *single-source* theory of doctrine: the kerygma contained in Scripture. And 'Tradition 2' refers to a traditional way of interpreting the kerygma in Scripture, or as Oberman puts it, Tradition is “the handing down of that same kerygma contained in the Scripture in the living form”.¹³⁰ The living form is the visible Body of Christ, inspired and vivified by the

¹²⁷ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 305.

¹²⁸ H.A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and late Medieval Nominalism*. Cambridge, MT: Harvard University Press, 1963: 365-369.

¹²⁹ A.E. McGrath, 1999: 146, 154.

¹³⁰ H.A. Oberman, 1963: 366.

Holy Spirit. ‘Tradition 2’, in this case is a *dual-source* theory of doctrine: the understanding that both Scripture and unwritten tradition issue from the same source: the Word of God, Revelation. McGrath reveals that the Council of Trent, which was charged with stating and defending the Roman Catholic position against the threat posed by the Protestant Reformations, argued that “Scripture and tradition alike were to be regarded as inspired by the same Holy Spirit, and safeguarded and handed down by the same catholic church”.¹³¹

McGrath suggests a third definition of tradition which he designates as ‘Tradition 0’ – which allocates no role whatsoever to tradition.¹³² The three are thereby summarized as follows:

- Tradition 0: The radical Reformation
- Tradition 1: The magisterial Reformation
- Tradition 2: The Council of Trent

That is how there were different definitions of tradition during the Reformations era. Today, however, although Lane¹³³ and Williams¹³⁴ suggest that to talk of Scripture *alone*, implies the exclusion of rivals, theologians use several sources such as Christian tradition, Christian experience, the phenomenon of prophecy in the church today, human reason, philosophy, science, psychology, sociology, politics, archeology, ancient history, and culture. These have played and continue to play a significant role in theology. Lane therefore concludes that it was the use of any of these sources in addition to Scripture in the theological enterprise that distinguished the various classes of Reformers from others.¹³⁵ Walter counsels that thinking Protestants must defend the authority of Scripture and the authority of the historic conciliar dogmatic norm as their bases for dogma or doctrine. He asserts that only the heretic is apt to be found arguing for ‘Scripture alone’.¹³⁶ This shows that the Reformers, like the Roman Catholic Church, recognized their dependence on more than just the Scripture alone in doing their theological reform.

¹³¹ A.E. McGrath, 2007: 139.

¹³² A.E. McGrath, 1999: 154.

¹³³ A.N.S. Lane, 1994: 298.

¹³⁴ D.H. Williams, 1998: 355.

¹³⁵ A.N.S. Lane, 1994: 299.

¹³⁶ V.L. Walter, ‘Beyond *sola scriptura*: Recovering a more Balanced Understanding of Authority’. *Touchstone*, (US). Vol. 4, Spring 1991: 17.

McGrath argues that “Christian theology, like most disciplines draws upon a number of sources”.¹³⁷ He acknowledges four main sources within the Christian tradition: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience. McGrath concedes that though these are not regarded as of equal importance, each of these sources has a distinct contribution to make within the discipline of theology. Grenz and Franke also maintain that “the biblical message is the norming norm for theology”.¹³⁸ They go on to say, “we affirm with the church throughout its history that God has acted and spoken; the biblical texts bear witness to God’s acting and speaking to the communities of faith in the biblical era. But God acts and speaks today too, and the Bible is the Spirit’s chosen vehicle for speaking authoritatively to us”.¹³⁹ This gives the Scripture a superior position above all other sources.

1.8. Luther’s view of the early church councils and the early church fathers

Allert¹⁴⁰ who points back to the ‘Arian controversy’¹⁴¹ and the proceedings of the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) demonstrates another extreme use of the *sola Scriptura* principle. Arius is well known for his Christology that denied the eternity and deity of Jesus based on an appeal to Scripture alone. Having denied a doctrine which the Nicenes held as essential made the Council to charge Arius as sinfully misusing Scripture. Although Luther never denied the existence of contradictions in the Holy Scriptures, he held that the council of Nicaea did not invent the doctrine that Christ is God or establish it as something new as though it had not previously existed in the churches, but rather defended it against the new heresy of Arius.¹⁴²

Mugambi observes that Christianity as a Scriptural religion suffers from time to time from accusations of heresy when conventional interpretations of sacred Scripture are challenged by

¹³⁷ A.E. McGrath, 2007: 121.

¹³⁸ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 72.

¹³⁹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 73.

¹⁴⁰ C.D. Allert, 2004: 343.

¹⁴¹ McGrath indicates that ‘Arius argued that Christ was supreme among God’s creatures. His opponents, such as Athanasius, retorted that this Christology was totally inconsistent with the way in which Christians worshiped. Athanasius stressed the theological importance of the practice of praying to Christ and worshiping him. If Arius was right, Christians were guilty of idolatry, through worshiping a creature, rather than God. Whereas Arius believed that theology should criticize liturgy, Athanasius believed that worship patterns and practices had to be taken into account by theologian’. Arius was condemned by the Council of Nicaea in 325 as a heretic, 2007: 140.

¹⁴² E.W. Gritsch. (Ed.), 1966: 41/54.

theologians with new insights, correct or otherwise.¹⁴³ Mugambi therefore concludes that, “it is clear, then, that while the Bible is affirmed to be the point of convergence for all Churches and all Christians, it is also the source of differences, owing to the wide variety of attitudes towards it, and because of the great diversity of possible interpretations of its many books, chapters, authors and historical contexts”.¹⁴⁴ This is nothing strange as the apostle Paul warned of heretics who would arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20: 30).

For the Nicene fathers to finally reject the heretical teaching of Arius, Allert indicates that there was a need to appeal to a ‘rule of faith’,¹⁴⁵ which for Tertullian and Augustine, was the guide to proper interpretation of Scripture delivered by Christ, spread by the Apostles and finally deposited in and safeguarded by the apostolic church.¹⁴⁶ Grenz and Franke maintain that the awareness of those thinkers whose ideas about theology and Christian faith have been rejected as heretical by the Christian community remains instructive for contemporary theology. But this tradition of proper doctrine was the rule, or standard, or right belief, which, for Tertullian was the guide to proper interpretation of the Scriptures, not the Bible itself.¹⁴⁷ Allert insists that if the rule of faith safeguarded orthodoxy’s biblical interpretation, it is inaccurate to make the claim that the Bible and the rule of faith should be seen as one and the same. He challenges evangelicals to responsibly understand the historical and theological context to which they appeal when talking of *sola Scriptura*.¹⁴⁸

From St. Augustine’s debates with Maximinus, Williams indicates that “it became clear to second and third century writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus, that any appeal to the Bible alone for maintaining pure doctrine was impossible. While affirming the eminence of Scripture, Tertullian found it necessary to bypass Scripture, for the authority of the historic

¹⁴³ J.N.K. Mugambi, 1997: 69.

¹⁴⁴ J.N.K. Mugambi, 1997: 73.

¹⁴⁵ C.D. Allert defines the ‘rule of faith’ as a “tradition of proper doctrine that was delivered by Christ, spread by the Apostles and finally deposited in and safeguarded by the apostolic church. This tradition of faith was the rule or standard or right belief.” In other words, it is the proper way of interpreting Scripture, 2004: 345.

¹⁴⁶ C.D. Allert, 2004: 343.

¹⁴⁷ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 122.

¹⁴⁸ C.D. Allert, 2004: 343.

teaching, because Scripture was itself the point of contention. To establish the true interpretation of Scripture, Tertullian, in his *On the Prescription of Heretics*, proposed that they first look for where true Christian teaching and faith were evident. There, true Scripture, the true interpretations, and all the true Christian traditions will be found”.¹⁴⁹

For Luther and the other Reformers such as Calvin, the application of *sola Scriptura* did not constitute the most radical call for reform. J.R. Beck argues that these Protestant Reformers merely subordinated tradition. The authority of all councils and other theologians was made subordinate to that of Scripture.¹⁵⁰ Luther viewed the Scriptures as “the very words, works, judgments, and deeds of the majesty, power, and wisdom of the most high God”.¹⁵¹

While Luther appealed to the readers of his German translation to “think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored”,¹⁵² he and the other Reformers also appealed to the early Church fathers, to tradition, and philosophy in their debates with the medieval Catholic Church. They retained such doctrines as the *Trinity* which had been developed by the councils and were seen to be consistent with Scripture. These Reformers accepted the councils because, “it was these councils which defined the cardinal doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the nature of Christ Jesus, the relationship of atonement and Deity, and marked out that plethora of early Church heresies which were to be shunned. It is the doctrinal decisions of these ecumenical councils which Protestantism accepted as historic orthodoxy”.¹⁵³

Unfortunately Luther also retained some aspects of tradition such as infant baptism, one extreme example of a teaching with more of an anchor in tradition than in Scripture. Luther’s reasoning in accepting infant baptism is explained by what he said in his sermon in 1528 that “you cannot hold the opinion that baptism is a human invention, but it is God’s command”.¹⁵⁴ In the Fall

¹⁴⁹ D.H. Williams, 1998: 361.

¹⁵⁰ J.R. Beck, *Sola scriptura: Then and Now. Journal of Psychology and Christianity*. Vol. 16. Winter 1997: 299.

¹⁵¹ E.T. Bachmann (Ed.). 1960: 35/236.

¹⁵² E.T. Bachmann (Ed.). 1960: 35/236.

¹⁵³ V.L. Walter, 1991:16.

¹⁵⁴ J.W. Doberstein (Ed.). *Luther’s Works: Sermons*. Vol. 51. (4th Reprint). Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980: 183.

of 1532, Luther again argued that, “the text, ‘[Let the children come to me,...for] to such belongs the kingdom of God’ [Mark 10: 14], is the promise to Abraham. This text clearly speaks about children. One can’t get around it. The text doesn’t speak of adults, such as the apostles now were. Moreover, it says of children, ‘to such belongs.’ That is, ‘I’m their Christ; I’ve been promised to them. I’ve also been promised to you adult Jews, but you’ve become too clever.’ Thus we have a promise and command for the baptism of children, because Christ said, ‘Preach to all nations,’ as if he would say, ‘I wish to the God of all’¹⁵⁵ [sic].

Again in the Fall of 1533, Luther said, “the church has baptized infants for a thousand years, and God had given the Holy Spirit to those who have been baptized as infants....Second, for more than a thousand years the church has baptized infants. Moreover, because the church never existed except among the baptized, and it was necessary that the church always exist, therefore infant baptism is true baptism”.¹⁵⁶ Such were Luther’s views of the teachings of the early church councils and the early fathers.

1.9. Luther’s appeal to Scripture and reason

Luther is also shown, by Greenslade and Beck to have appealed to philosophy in his famous statement, “Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason, I cannot and I will not recant”.¹⁵⁷ Gulley defends that “Luther saw reason as a gift from God. Reason is a gift from the Holy Spirit that comes through the Word, and so is dependent on the Holy Spirit for understanding”.¹⁵⁸ Gulley maintains that, “So Scripture is more important than human reason unaided by the Holy Spirit. But ‘Spirit-guided reason’¹⁵⁹ is essential in interpretation. Applying the historical-grammatical rules call

¹⁵⁵ T.G. Tappert (Ed.), 1981: 54/55.

¹⁵⁶ T.G. Tappert (Ed.), 1981: 54/113.

¹⁵⁷ S.L. Greenslade, 1963:4; J.R. Beck, 1997:298.

¹⁵⁸ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 544.

¹⁵⁹ Generally Adventist scholars disagree with the Reformers because of their alignment with the early church fathers, whom they believe to have founded their theological formulation on Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical foundations. In recognition of the important role of reason in theological formulations, Fernando Canale has suggests an alternative Biblically-based theological philosophy. He says, ‘The analysis of the Biblical context, as represented in the original reflection on the Ground of Being that Exodus 3: 14 expresses, shows that Biblical rationality does address itself to foundational ontology as it explicitly puts Being into words. Thus, Exod 3: 14 seem to provide the necessary ground, even the intellectual justification, for a Biblical philosophy that can stand independent from Greek traditions of

for such reason. Ideally, tradition should be a deposit of interpretation that is Spirit-guided. But the only way to check whether reason, tradition, or experience is authentic is by Scripture. Above the Spirit-guided reason is the Spirit-guided revelation/inspiration in Scripture with internal indicators and controls that illumine meaning. These are not only prior but primary in biblical interpretation”.¹⁶⁰

Again, Luther’s indebtedness to the Scripture, the early fathers, and to philosophy is clearly stated by Kolb saying, “their [Luther and other Reformers] call for the reform of education and life was grounded upon the conviction that true learning and piety had to be based upon knowledge of the biblical texts and other ancient works, whether Christian or philosophical Greek. Many scholars in this movement were influenced by the revival of Platonic and Neo-platonic ideas. Though devout and dedicated to biblical learning, these theologians often let presuppositions from the spiritualizing traditions that proceeded from Plato’s thought determine their reading of Scripture”.¹⁶¹

Luther’s inherited patristic dependence on Greek philosophy is further explained by McGrath who maintains that “it may be noted that the Christological debates of the early church took place largely in the eastern Mediterranean world, and were conducted in the Greek language, and often in the light of the presuppositions of major Greek schools of philosophy. In practical terms, this means that many of the central terms of the Christological debates of the early church are Greek philosophical tradition”.¹⁶² This may not have been a major problem for Luther¹⁶³ who wanted to maintain his link with the teachings of the early fathers, since his main objective was to reform the medieval church. He failed to escape the Greek philosophical influence. Therefore his view and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle was a broader one.

philosophy. In other words, it seems that we could speak of two different philosophical traditions—namely, the Parmenidean and the Mosaic-Biblical traditions’, 1983: 392.

¹⁶⁰ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 708.

¹⁶¹ R. Kolb, ‘Martin Luther’s Understanding of God’s Word’. *Reformation and Revival*. Vol. 9. No. 4, 2000: 48-49.

¹⁶² A.E. McGrath, 2007: 16.

¹⁶³ J.M. Frame argues that “Protestantism at its best has typically avoided opposing *sola Scriptura* to human reason as such. Reason is that God-given faculty which applies the norms of Scripture to the data of experience. Therefore, the Reformers saw no conflict between *sola Scriptura* and high standard of scholarship. Luther and Calvin were scholars, and their theological distinctives were the result of careful scholarly exegesis, 1997: 280.

In his work of reforming the church, Luther was not only criticized by the Roman Catholic Church on the basis of his appealing to the early councils and the fathers to maintain his *sola Scriptura* principle. He received criticism from the left wing – the radical Reformers – as well, for reasons we now turn our attention to.

1.10. Luther and the radical Protestant Reformers

In Luther's work of reforming the church, B. Hall maintains that,

“Luther was like someone who dynamites an old house to clear the way to build a new one, without thinking of the effects on adjoining properties, and is then astonished to see how many more houses come tumbling down – for Luther's teaching was immensely explosive, to his own surprise, at just that period of time and in that country. Luther had never intended what occurred during his enforced absence in the Wartburg after the Diet of Worms in 1521, the sharp radical trend of Carlstadt's [sic] innovations at Wittenberg, where Melancthon trembled before the prophets of judgment from nearby Taborite-influenced Zwickau who were stirring the citizens to new heights of excitement”.¹⁶⁴

These radical Reformers went far beyond what Luther envisioned the Reformation to accomplish. He now had to face the results of his reformation work as adopted by others.

The Protestant Reformers who took the option of excluding all the other resources in the application of Scripture are referred to, as Ritchie maintains, radical Reformers, or ‘Anabaptists’. The Anabaptists arose around Zurich in the 1520s after the reforms of Zwingli. Distinction must be made between the ‘revolutionary Anabaptists’ led by Zwickau prophets, Thomas Muntzer (1490-1525), and the later violent Muntzerites, and the ‘evangelical Anabaptists led by Conrad Grebel (1498-1526), Hans Hut (d. 1527), Pilgrim Marpeck (d. 1556), and Menno Simons (1496-1561).¹⁶⁵

To the radical Reformers, reform meant the shunning of any doctrine which was not sanctioned or ordained by Scripture. Even today, Allert sees a principle of *sola Scriptura* at work that is equally decidedly different than that of Luther.¹⁶⁶ But Baylor reasons that “Reformation radicalism must be considered in the fluid context of this powerful social movement. The radicals

¹⁶⁴ B. Hall, *Humanists and Protestants: 1500-1900*. Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T. Clark, 1990: 98.

¹⁶⁵ M.S. Ritchie, *The Protestant Reformation: The Anabaptist and other Radical Reformers*. [Internet]. Available from: WWW.ritchies.net/p4wk4.htm [accessed September 19, 2007, 1999: 1.

¹⁶⁶ C.D. Allert, 2004: 341.

are commonly viewed as a fringe element in the Reformation – “marginal” reformers or “reformers in the wings”.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless these raised a challenge which could not be ignored.

Modern evangelical scholars who claim that the Reformers chose Scripture over tradition in propagating and manifesting the *sola Scriptura* principle are actually making Luther into a radical Reformer. This is not correct as Luther and the other magisterial Reformers were working to conserve the traditional doctrines of the church like the Holy Trinity. The magisterial Reformers believed that the traditional understandings of the ecumenical councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) were correct interpretations of Scripture.

Luther was somewhat radical when he ascribed a lower status of the councils by saying that there is neither a council nor a father in which one could find, or from whom one could learn, the whole of Christian doctrine.¹⁶⁸ For example, Luther argues that the Nicene council dealt with only the doctrine that Christ is truly God; the one at Constantinople, the Holy Spirit is God; the one at Ephesus, that Christ is not two natures, the human and the divine. Yet these are four great principal councils; they dealt with no more than these four articles of doctrine. But that is still not the complete teaching of the Christian faith. Luther concluded that even if you put them all together, both father and councils, you still will not be able to cull from them all the teachings of the Christian faith, even if you culled forever. So if it had not been for the Holy Scripture, the church, had it depended on the councils and fathers only, would not have lasted long. It may be such sentiments which led the radical Reformers to go the direction they went.

Melanchthon was of the view that St. Augustine did not feel that the authority of the church is greater than that of the Word of God, nor did he feel that the church could abolish articles of faith handed down in the Word.¹⁶⁹ In other words, according to Melanchthon, St. Augustine did not concede to the church the authority of decision contrary to the Word of God, or of establishing new articles of faith. But Grenz and Franke consider the suggestion to separate Scripture and the church

¹⁶⁷ M.G. Baylor, 1991: xii.

¹⁶⁸ E.W. Gritsch. (Ed.), 1966: 41/51-52.

¹⁶⁹ P. Melanchthon, 1962: 144, 145.

by the Protestant slogan of *sola Scriptura* as an oxymoron, since such a separation was certainly not the intention of the Reformers.¹⁷⁰ Tshaka's counsel may be helpful in this aspect when he maintains that "the limit evident in ecclesial authority as well as the mediate, formal and relative authority which is implicit in confessional documents does not imply that confessional documents are not to be taken seriously".¹⁷¹

The radical Reformers accepted only those things explicitly taught in Scripture. Baylor indicates that "radicals held that the common man, rather than the monk or priest, was a better Christian, a model of simple but genuine piety, better able than the clergy to understand the essential message of the gospel".¹⁷² For such views, Walter rejects the Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrinal slighting of the Trinity. He argues that the Jehovah's Witnesses take the slogan of *sola Scriptura* utterly literally. Thus using selected words of Scripture, they teach that Jesus Christ was the first created being and the Holy Spirit is divine influence rather than Divine Person.¹⁷³ This is one example of a radical application of the *sola Scriptura* principle which Luther never countenanced. It is rather an extreme way of applying the *sola Scriptura* principle.

1.11. The Roman Catholic Church Reformation and the *sola Scriptura* principle

The Roman Catholic Church responded strongly to both the radical and the magisterial Protestant Reformers' principle of *sola Scriptura* and its varied applications. Bloesch indicates that, "In the polemics of the Reformation[s] period many Catholic theologians appealed to the church over Scripture in order to safeguard the treasures of church tradition that were being threatened by the reforming movement".¹⁷⁴ The Council of Trent (1545-1563), as Beck observes, directed much of its energy toward the refutation of *sola Scriptura*. The Council treated both sources of doctrine,

¹⁷⁰ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 117.

¹⁷¹ R.S. Tshaka, 'The essence of ecclesial authority in our treatment of reformed confessions.' *NGTT: Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif*. Deel 46. Nommers 3&4. September en Desember 2005: 589.

¹⁷² M.G. Baylor, 1991: xii.

¹⁷³ V.L. Walter, 1991: 16.

¹⁷⁴ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 144.

Scripture and tradition, with equal reverence but stopped short of stating that tradition can even yield truth not based on Scripture.¹⁷⁵

Grenz and Franke indicate that “Catholic theologians at Trent almost unanimously agreed that the canonical scriptures were not in themselves sufficient as a source of doctrine”.¹⁷⁶ Two specific areas upon which the Council of Trent criticized the Protestants were that a complete detachment from tradition would put such doctrines as the Trinity and the Person of Christ at a greater risk since both these doctrines were forged at the great councils of Nicaea and Chalcedony. But Gulley charges that “the ‘Counter-Reformation’,¹⁷⁷ in the Council of Trent, attempted to restore tradition above Scripture”.¹⁷⁸

The ‘magisterial Reformers’¹⁷⁹ answered by stating that they had no intentions of dismantling the theological structures that the early Christian church had constructed. They viewed these doctrines as coherent with the Scriptures. But while the Protestant Reformers did not jettison church tradition, Bloesch maintains that they definitely relegated it to secondary status on the grounds that Scripture has primacy (*sola Scriptura*).¹⁸⁰ Luther had contended that even the council of Nicaea did not establish any new articles of faith; again this furnishes no proof that councils are vested with the authority to foist new doctrines on Christendom, for the doctrine of the deity of Christ is far more abundantly and firmly grounded in Scripture (John 5: 27).¹⁸¹ This reflects a polarization between the Roman Church and the Protestant Reformers.

Luther held that, because the council too is bound to hold to Scripture, for him Scripture was far more reliable than all the councils.¹⁸² He contended that even if you have all the councils you are still no Christian because of them; they give you too little. If you also have all the fathers, they too

¹⁷⁵ J.R. Beck, 1997: 300.

¹⁷⁶ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 100.

¹⁷⁷ McGrath refers to this as The Catholic Reformation, a term used to refer to the revival within Roman Catholicism in the period following the opening of the Council of Trent (1545). The Roman Catholic Church developed means of combating the Protestant Reformation, in order to limit its influence. It also involved a reformation within the Roman Catholic Church, in order to remove the grounds of Protestant criticism, 2007: 49.

¹⁷⁸ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 564.

¹⁷⁹ See note 5 for a definition.

¹⁸⁰ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 145.

¹⁸¹ E.W, Gritsch, (Ed.), 1966: 41/118.

¹⁸² E.W, Gritsch, (Ed.), 1996: 41/119.

give you too little. You must still go to Holy Scripture, where you find everything in abundance, or to the catechism, where it is summarized, and where far more is found than in all the councils and fathers.¹⁸³ While Luther, Calvin and other Reformers frequently appealed to the fathers and doctors of the early Church for support, they were keenly aware that much in the interpretations of these men was purely cultural and subjective.¹⁸⁴

In cautioning about councils or synods, Melancthon says,

“The synods of the church which, while disputing about the Word of God, do teach and admonish us, are to be heard. But let judgment be used and when they yield us things that are true, let us believe them because of the Word of God. For example, the Synod of Nicea piously and usefully taught and admonished all posterity about the Son of God, but we must believe the article, not because of the synod, but because we see it has been so transmitted in the Word of God. But other things which are outside of the Scriptures are not to be so embraced, such as when the Synod of Nicea instituted the canons of penance, which are human traditions outside of the Scriptures and have been the seeds for a multitude of superstitious opinions”.¹⁸⁵

It seems clear that the position maintained by the magisterial Reformers¹⁸⁶ was fraught with tensions. This created opportunity for the Roman Catholic Church to challenge their views.

1.12. Reasons for which the Protestant Reformers were criticized

In the centuries since Trent, Grenz and Franke argue that Catholic theologians have continued to explore the principle of the primacy of the Church and the role of the ecclesiastical magisterium.¹⁸⁷ Beegle observes a lack of a unified voice in the church,

“As noted in the survey of the Roman Catholic tradition, there have been varying points of view at every stage of the church’s development. In fact, the most crucial issues have not been resolved yet. Alternative opinions have continued on in tension, one point of view in ascendancy for a while only to be suspended by another when conditions changed and a more charismatic exponent appeared on the scene. This is precisely the Achilles heel of the Roman definition of tradition. In practice there has seldom been a unified speaking of the Spirit through the church; therefore it has been necessary to resort to some authoritative voice, either the pope and his advisors or the councils. Pope Pius IX convinced the majority at Vatican I that there was only one answer to the plurality of voices in tradition – he and his successors would speak infallibly for God”.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ E.W, Gritsch, (Ed.), 1996: 41/136.

¹⁸⁴ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 145.

¹⁸⁵ P. Melancthon, 1962: 144.

¹⁸⁶ See note 5 for a definition.

¹⁸⁷ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 101.

¹⁸⁸ D.M. Beegle, 1973: 122-123.

The Protestant Reformers were also criticized for writing and following their own confessions. If they were consistent with their claim of taking Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) as sufficient rule of faith, then they needed to forego the adding of new ‘Confessions of Faith’¹⁸⁹ to which all clergy must conform. To the conservative heirs of the Reformation, Grenz and Franke raise a pertinent question, “Why should the innocent believer continue to read the Bible when the biblical truth – correct doctrine – is more readily at hand in the latest systematic compilation offered by the skillful theologian?”¹⁹⁰ Could Scripture really be taken alone?

Some have presumed that “these past creeds, confessions, and theological formulations are not binding in and of themselves. They are helpful as they provide insight into the faith of the church in the past and as they make us aware of the presuppositions of our context”.¹⁹¹ For Grenz and Franke, the tradition of the Christian community provides the context in which to hear the Spirit’s voice speaking through the canonical texts of Scripture in continuity with the church universal. To understand the tradition of the church as providing a hermeneutical trajectory is to acknowledge the importance of tradition without elevating it to a position of final authority. The Christian tradition provides a historically extended, socially embodied context in which to interpret, apply, and live out the communally formative narratives contained in the canonical texts.¹⁹² That means, in addition to Scripture, other resources are helpful and vital.

To emphasize the importance of tradition, John Calvin justified his writing of the *Institute of Christian Religion* by saying that his object was to prepare and train students of theology for the study of the sacred volume, so that they might both have an easy introduction to it, and be able to proceed in it, with unflinching step. This was to give a summary of religion in all its parts for any one who is rightly acquainted with it to ascertain both what he ought principally to look for in

¹⁸⁹ McGrath suggests a differentiation between creeds and confessions. He indicates that, “a ‘confession’ pertains to a denomination, and includes specific beliefs and emphases relating to that denomination; [while] a ‘creed’ pertains to the entire Christian church, and includes nothing more and nothing less than statement of beliefs which every Christian ought to be able to accept and be bound by. A ‘creed’ has come to be recognized as a concise, formal, and universally accepted and authorized statement of the main points of Christian faith”, 2007: 14.

¹⁹⁰ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 63.

¹⁹¹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 124.

¹⁹² S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 126, 128.

Scripture. In this way the pious reader will be saved much trouble and weariness, provided he comes furnished with knowledge of the present work as an essential prerequisite.¹⁹³ Thus Protestant Reformers were warned that the removing of tradition and the authority of the church from the sphere of authority along with Scripture and merely substituting individual interpretation of Scripture would open themselves to developments of heresy espoused by the Arians centuries earlier.¹⁹⁴

Another issue that troubled the Protestant Reformers was what to do with those issues on which the Bible is silent. Were they to take it that the Bible permits what it does not explicitly prohibit? R.K. Soulen presents the different positions contemporary Protestants take on these issues,

“Lutherans and many Anglicans have tended to answer “yes,” holding that such customs are neutral or indifferent (*adiaphora*), that is, permissible so long as they are not required for salvation. But for Puritans and many pietists have tended toward the opposite view: what the Bible does not explicitly allow it prohibits. In sum, the Reformation program of *sola scriptura* has had paradoxical results. It unites Protestants by differentiating them from Catholics and Orthodox Christians. But it has proven to be a continual source of fragmentation within the Protestant movement itself.”¹⁹⁵

Hence, Luther could teach that it is certainly true that one should teach nothing outside of Scripture pertaining to divine matters, which means that one should teach nothing that is at variance with Scripture. But one should not use more or other words than those contained in Scripture – this cannot be adhered to, especially in a controversy and when heretics want to falsify things with trickery and distort the words of Scripture. It thus becomes necessary to condense the meaning of Scripture, comprised of so many passages, into a short and comprehensive word.¹⁹⁶ But when context changes, such is no longer possible.

The Protestant Reformers have also been criticized of being ignorant of other religions, apart from that of the Jews.¹⁹⁷ The founding figure of modern missiology, Gustav Warneck (1834-1910) claimed that Protestantism lacked any resemblance of missionary activism and was equally devoid

¹⁹³ J. Calvin, 1989: 21.

¹⁹⁴ J.R. Beck, 1997: 300.

¹⁹⁵ R.K. Soulen, ‘Protestantism and the Bible’, in: A.E. McGrath & D.C. Marks (Eds.). *Historical Contours of Protestantism*, 2004: 255.

¹⁹⁶ E.W. Gritsch, (Ed.), 1966: 41/83.

¹⁹⁷ W. Ustorf, ‘Protestant and mission’, in: A.E. McGrath & D.C. Marks, *Historical Contours of Protestantism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004: 393.

of even the slightest obligation to undertake missionary work, unlike Catholicism. Protestantism in defense gave its 'missionary potential' through Christian governments that came to the support of the Christian life and the influence of the congregation on its own context. This was thought so, after examining Luther's case of the missionary impact of the *sola Scriptura*, the word of God in the vernacular. Protestant Reformers' initial target had been reforming the church. The missionary movement awaited the heirs of the Reformations in later centuries.

In other developments, Grenz and Franke observe that "one of the most significant components of the Christian tradition is the history of worship and liturgy. The content and form of Christian worship throughout the history of the church provides an understanding of the context in which theologians have worked".¹⁹⁸ What has recently become clear is that theologians have not worked in isolation from the church when producing systems of theology. Theologians are part of the community that prays and worships, and this context informs the nature and shape of their theological reflection. This realization has made contemporary theologians to recently develop a renewed interest in the relationship between worship and theology.

Berkouwer also notes that, "with their emphasis on *sola Scriptura* regarding the sufficiency of Scripture, the Reformers were often upbraided for thinking unhistorically. It was said that their view of the life of the church was too much abrupt, too contingent, and too vertical, while the tradition and process of "handing over" itself being slighted".¹⁹⁹

Berkouwer thinks, however, it is clear and generally admitted that such a characterization is all too simplistic and does not do justice to the real situation. The Reformers did not close doors to the past by glorifying the present in which the church lived. Rather, they devoted a good deal of attention to continuity with the ancient church and its councils.²⁰⁰

Berkouwer also observes that,

"The sharp criticism of the Reformers was closely related to their deep central concern for the gospel. From the Catholic viewpoint, as is well known, this *sola* [*Scriptura*] was regarded as

¹⁹⁸ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 120-121.

¹⁹⁹ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 300.

²⁰⁰ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 300.

quite one-sided. In Rome's opinion, it was not merely accidental that not only the *sola* [*Scriptura*] was uttered but also accompanied by *sola fide* (faith alone), *sola gratia* (grace alone), and *solo Christo* (Christ alone). Of course, it is quite difficult to level the charges of "one-sidedness" at *sola gratia* and *solo Christo* in view of the gospel, for in Scripture itself we are clearly confronted with this *sola* (I Tim. 2: 5; Acts 4: 12). Nevertheless, it was thought that the frequency of this "alone" indicated an exclusiveness that hid the perspective of the fullness and multifaceted nature of salvation, which had entered our human reality".²⁰¹

Therefore, indeed, it cannot be denied that the *sola Scriptura* of the Protestant Reformations is exclusive and radical.

This exclusive and radical use of Scripture was felt in the early centuries too. Beegle reasoned that "finally, it cannot be stressed too much that the fact of the canon proves that the early church, sensing what God had done, drew a line between apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions. If the gospel had been in a pure, stable form carried on by oral tradition within the succession of bishops, there would have been no concern over a collection of books. That they did form a canon shows that they put their trust more in written sources and, moreover, that they wanted to separate the authentic reports of the gospel both from the spurious accounts and from later interpretations".²⁰²

Berkouwer continues to argue that, "the Reformation viewpoint will not be understood if it functions only in a polemic with Rome. The *sola Scriptura* did indeed function in the history of the controversy concerning Scripture and tradition in the Roman Catholic Church. However, this must be understood in a wider context, embracing the polemic against all additions that influence the life of the church, even where the *sola Scriptura* is not an issue at all".²⁰³

1.13. Implications of the use of the *sola Scriptura* principle in theology

The problems resulting from the application of the *sola Scriptura* principle are laid squarely on Protestants themselves by Soulen.²⁰⁴ He observes that Protestant Christians today use and interpret the Bible in a bewildering variety of ways. Soulen charges that time has shown that the

²⁰¹ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 302.

²⁰² D.M. Beegle, 1973: 119.

²⁰³ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 305.

²⁰⁴ R.K. Soulen, 2004: 255.

Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* possesses a messy fecundity, giving generation after generation of overlapping and often clashing communities of biblical interpretation.

Protestants have generally looked on tradition with considerable suspicion since the sixteenth century. As a result Grenz and Franke observe a loss of tradition in Protestant theology.²⁰⁵ The greatest attack against tradition is said to have been launched in the Enlightenment, during which the appeal to reason, as characterized by the Age of Reason, provided a powerful acid that effectively dissolved the role of tradition in theology.²⁰⁶

Beegle is of the view that,

“It should be recognized at the outset that it is impossible to practice the use of “Scripture alone” in an absolute sense. Even Martin Luther did not understand it that way. Those who take Scripture seriously are hardly consciously dishonest, yet the prejudices of religious training and cultural environment often conspire to prevent clear understanding of the truth in the text. Moreover, since the biblical writers eliminated many details because their intended audience had the information, a simple reading of the Bible cannot bring out the nuances of the message as given in its original context. For this reason, a thorough comprehension of Scripture necessitates knowledge of biblical languages, history, and background”.²⁰⁷

Another tendency Protestants share today, is deploring the ways many of their fellow Protestants use and interpret the Bible. Meanwhile, they and their institutions were the first to embrace the historico-critical study of the Bible in a programmatic way, and they were the first to insist that future clergy be taught to understand and use the results of biblical criticism. Soulen charges Protestants for also contributing to the divisions of the Western church, and finally to the ongoing divisions of the Protestant movement itself as a result of inheriting and modifying the ways of using the Bible to worship God and interpreting it.²⁰⁸ Grenz and Franke observe that the emphasis in Bible study by an individual reader encourages reading according to subjective interests, which enslaves the Bible to the whims of individual readers whose only interest is in the “meaning” of the text for their particular situation.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 102-103.

²⁰⁶ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 104.

²⁰⁷ D.M. Beegle, 1973: 119.

²⁰⁸ R.K. Soulen, 2004: 255.

²⁰⁹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 109.

Hence Beck notes that the removal of the authority of the church to interpret Scripture made unity to become the first victim, allowing the diversity of theological thought to rule among Protestants.²¹⁰ Apart from the division between the radical Reformers and the magisterial Reformers noted above, further divisions take place in each Protestant camp. Could this explain the phenomenon taking place in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today?

Grenz and Franke observe that Protestant liberalism not only inevitably led to the denigration of the entire tradition prior to the Reformation, but as well as the Reformation itself in terms of material concerns, thus removing commitment to the centrality of Scripture.²¹¹ This is because a liberal theological paradigm is characterized by its commitment to reason as an independent authority set over against Christian theological tradition, Scripture and the church. Grenz and Franke argue that, “in many evangelical contexts, the emphasis in Bible study is often primarily on the question of the meaning of the text for the individual reader. Although such an approach may well stimulate a greater interest in individual Bible study, it also encourages reading according to subjective interests. In such circumstances the Bible can be enslaved by the whims of individual readers whose only interest is in the ‘meaning’ of the text for their particular situation”.²¹² Thus individual Bible study can have negative outcomes.

Greenslade admits that *sola Scriptura* proved to be the harbinger not of peace but a sword of such sharpness to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow of Protestantism.²¹³ This could be because, as Williams suggests, biblical interpretation on the grounds of ‘the Bible alone’ becomes liable to heretical exegesis.²¹⁴ But if the Bible is to be read knowing that the Spirit speaks through Scripture, appropriating the text so as to create a communal world through it, Grenz and Franke suggest that the goal must always be to read Scripture theologically.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ J.R. Beck, 1997: 301.

²¹¹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 106, 107.

²¹² S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 109.

²¹³ S.L. Greenslade, 1963: 178.

²¹⁴ D.H. Williams, 1998: 354.

²¹⁵ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 85.

McGrath and Marks observed the limitations of the radical Reformation in America. Its emphasis upon the separation of church and state limited its impact upon the development of Western culture. This was the fruit of Anabaptisms instinctive attitude of social disengagement in order to focus on spiritual and social issues within their own communities.²¹⁶ Grenz and Franke seem to support this line of thinking when they say that “one crucial goal of Bible reading is spiritual formation”.²¹⁷ Through the act of appropriating the biblical text, the Spirit creates the community that seeks to live the paradigmatic narrative of the Bible, which focuses on the story of Jesus.

Sola Scriptura is also often accused of giving birth to feminism. C.L. Rigby, in reference to the work of Blaisdell (1985: 21-8) found that “Protestant feminist thinking was born and nurtured in a context where this principle of *sola Scriptura* was in play. With Protestant emphasis on reading Scripture in the vernacular and teaching children the Bible and catechism at home, there was both opportunity and incentive for women to study and rehearse Scripture”.²¹⁸

The rise of feminism is thus observed to have appeared during the period of the Protestant Reformers, by way of a woman named Marie Dentriere who lived in Geneva at the time of Calvin. She felt called to write and speak knowing full well that these roles were neither ecclesiastically nor culturally approved for women. Rigby quotes Dentriere’s own words saying, “If God then has given graces to some good women, revealing to them by his Holy Scriptures something holy and good, will they not dare to write, speak or declare it one to another?”²¹⁹ Rigby notices that “as women read and interpreted Scripture for themselves, and many became convinced that patriarchal paradigms that subordinated women to men were unbiblical. Invited by the Reformers to read with a critical eye, feminists in centuries following went on not only to assess patriarchal interpretations of Scripture, but the patriarchal character of the biblical text itself. Hence, the ongoing question for

²¹⁶ A.E. McGrath & D.C. Marks (Eds.), 2004: 3; This too, often limits Adventism’s impact on its surrounding socio-political cultures.

²¹⁷ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 87.

²¹⁸ C.L. Rigby, ‘Protestantism and Feminism’, in: A.E. McGrath & D.C. Marks, *Historical Contours of Protestantism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004: 335.

²¹⁹ C.L. Rigby, 2004: 335.

Protestant feminists who embrace *sola Scriptura* is: how do we read the Bible as women, simultaneously recognizing both the ways it liberates us and the way it oppresses us?"²²⁰ This is not to mean that this understanding is negative per se. It has even had positive results in liberating women from indiscriminate male domination and abusive practices.

Another challenge facing Protestantism has to do with the evangelical supporters of an inerrant Scripture, like Harold Lindsell who says,

"The Bible is authoritative....It is the Christian's only rule of faith and life, and all the opinions of men and women are to be tested by it. What contradicts it we need not believe. For the problem areas for which we have no clear answer at the moment, we are to be content to wait until all the evidence is in. Apparent discrepancies are no more than that. Additional information in a thousand instances has proved that the Bible's critics were wrong".²²¹

Although this is a topic that occupied Evangelical Christians during the second half of the twentieth century, a thorough discussion of the issues involved lie outside the focus of this present study. But suffice to say that the inerrant reading of Scripture also arose in Protestantism.

On the contrary, G. Bray points to the unity which resulted among Protestants, with the Puritan new translation of the Bible which was completed in 1611, the King James Bible.²²² Following its authorization for use in church worship, it immediately replaced all earlier translations, to become the classic Bible of the English-speaking world. This was so important that it launched the tradition of nondenominational Bible study and translation which has continued in England to the present day. Although English Protestants may differ in one way or another, they are one in their study of the Scriptures. This is important for a Church which defines its faith as grounded on Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). This has given Protestants a unity and cohesion which has served to counteract the sometimes sharp denominational divisions experienced in the Church.

Tomlin applauds Luther's legacy of exerting a powerful influence on Protestant thought since his death in 1546.²²³ Although his sacramental and political ideas never had lasting impact on wider Reformations, his placing of Scripture as the supreme authority for the Church (*sola*

²²⁰ C.L. Rigby, 2004: 335.

²²¹ H. Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979: 39.

²²² G. Bray, 'English Protestantism', in: A.E. McGrath & D.C. Marks, *Historical Contours of Protestantism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004: 101.

²²³ G. Tomlin, 2004: 51.

Scriptura), his articulation of the doctrine of justification by faith as central to the gospel, the denial of human merit in justification, and the move to a vernacular liturgy and Scripture, have been stamped indelibly on Protestant consciousness from his time onward. Other aspects of his contributions to Protestant theology have continued to spring up like seeds planted in past centuries.

Similarly, McGrath considers John Calvin's contribution to the placing of the Bible within Protestant theology and spirituality to have been made through his series of biblical commentaries, dealing with virtually every book of the Bible, and aimed at a variety of readership, both clergy and laity. His sermons at Geneva developed the practice of continuous preaching through a Scriptural book, rather than on a lectionary chosen by the preacher.²²⁴ Bruce indicates that "Calvin accepted the New Testament canon as it had been handed down. For him the authority of the New Testament, like that of all Scripture, rested not on any church decree but on the self-authenticating quality of what was written, attested in the receptive heart by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit".²²⁵ Hence Barton charges that "Christian theologians do have an obligation to take account of the Bible, because it is an acknowledged source of authority within Christianity".²²⁶

Finally, Calvin's *Institutes*, allowed the readers to gain an appreciation of the theological coherence of Scripture, by bringing together and synthesizing its statements on matters of theological importance. Other areas of Calvin's contributions to modern Protestantism lie in the development of modern capitalism, the emergence of the natural sciences, and the shaping of modern views of human rights, in spite of the continuing scholarly debate over the nature and extent of his influence.

In England, one of the most outstanding developments resulting from Calvinism was the Puritan movement.²²⁷ A Puritan of the 16th and 17th century England was any person seeking "purity" of worship and doctrine, especially the parties that rejected the reformation of the Church of England, and those who justified separation from the Church of England following the

²²⁴ A.E. McGrath cited in: A.E. McGrath & D.C. Marks, 2004: 57.

²²⁵ F.F. Bruce, 1988: 246.

²²⁶ J. Barton, 2007: 42.

²²⁷ B. Thompson, 1996: 641-674.

Elizabethan Religious Settlement. Some Puritans were however in favor of separating from the English Church, which was currently under King James I.

Most Puritans only wanted to change certain aspects of the church. Those who sought for separation from the English Church shared a belief that all existing churches had become corrupted by practice, by contact with pagan civilizations (particularly that of Rome), and by the impositions of kings and popes. They all argued for a restructuring and ‘purifying’ of church practice through biblical supremacy and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.²²⁸

Starting with Luther’s call for vernacular Bible translations and church services, to the Puritans who believed in biblical supremacy, having a Bible was of paramount importance. Popular among the Puritans, was the Geneva Bible,²²⁹ with its anti-royalists translations and interpolated revolutionary notes. The words of the Bible were the origin of many Puritan cultural ideals, especially regarding the roles of men and women in the community. Puritans also held a notable belief with an emphasis on private study of the Bible. Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) was held as the final authority.

Soulen also observes some positive results of the Protestant Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*, from the Reformation times onward; even though he acknowledges the problems *sola Scriptura* created which bedeviled Protestants from the onset. He asserts that,

“*Sola Scriptura* simplifies and concentrates divine authority in a way that has had huge consequences for the church and Western culture generally. The principle confers dignity on voices of dissent by establishing a court of appeal that towers above all mere human authority, whether of pope, emperor or king. It offers a loft vantage from which to survey and judge inherited tradition. Finally, it offers all this to everyone, or at least everyone who can read the Bible. While this last may not have been Luther’s intention, it was inference many drew from his example”.²³⁰

With whatever challenges arising from the *sola Scriptura* principle, some theologians still uphold the supremacy of Scripture. Bloesch contends that “the Bible takes precedence over the church not as a historical record or written code but as the Word of life and redemption that comes directly

²²⁸ B. Thompson, 1996: 642.

²²⁹ B. Thompson, 1996: 45.

²³⁰ R.K. Soulen, 2004: 255.

from God. It is this Word, which existed before the writing of the Bible and brought about this writing into existence that has preeminent authority in the life of the church. This Word is not only the ruling criterion in the church but the creator and judge of the church. This Word calls people to faith and obedience, and this Word directs people of faith on their earthly pilgrimage”.²³¹

1.14. Lingering challenges of the *sola Scriptura* principle in the post-Protestant Reformations period.

In this period after the Protestant Reformations, Bloesch rightly observes that, “while both the churches of the Reformation and the church of Rome acknowledge Scripture as a ruling norm, which no Christian, can circumvent, in the Roman view “a distinction is ...made between Scripture as *regula fidei remota* – the distant rule of faith – and the interpretation of Scripture by the Roman Church, i.e., by the magisterium of the Church, as *regula fidei proxima* – the proximate rule of faith. Because it is the church that determines how the distant rule of faith is to be interpreted and applied, scriptural authority seems dangerously compromised”.²³²

Grenz and Franke also observe that Christians are a “people of the book”.²³³ Their communal identity is bound up with a set of literary texts that together form Scripture. As heirs of the Protestant Reformations, who hallmark *sola Scriptura*, Protestants especially recognize the foundational role Scripture plays in their lives. But Kuenning appeals for an admission that neither Luther, nor any other Reformer, church, or denomination has succeeded in discovering interpretive principles that are either above criticism or universally acceptable within Christendom. He suggests that the search for such principles must continue.²³⁴ Grenz and Franke even hear a consistent complaint aired by thinkers across the theological spectrum about the ominous silence of Scripture in the church today. And the culprit in the undermining of the Bible’s status in the church is said to have been modern theology itself. This is because the world has become imbued with Cartesian

²³¹ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 151.

²³² D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 152.

²³³ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 57, 58.

²³⁴ P.P. Kuenning, 1990: 203.

skepticism, resulting in theologians following philosophers.²³⁵ Bloesch observes that “in modern Protestantism there seems to be a movement away from *sola Scriptura* to a view that coincides with a sectarian Catholicism that denigrates Scripture by elevating church authority”.²³⁶

In a paper by G.A. Cole entitled ‘*Sola Scriptura: Some Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*’, he expresses fears that “the classical Protestant doctrine of the Holy Scripture is in trouble”.²³⁷ Cole observes that in the post-critical age *sola Scriptura* is not only under considerable strain, but under siege, whether viewed as source, norm or foundation, because the perfections of Scripture themselves are contested. Grenz and Franke consider Vatican II as the watershed in the renewed ecumenical discussion between Catholics and Protestants. The contexts in which Scripture is still being challenged include those like John Macquarrie who recommends a multi-stranded approach to the question of the source and norm of theology; those like John Hick who viewed the Scripture as culturally authoritative only in the imperialistic West, and Vatican II which still challenged the clarity of Scripture since the Reformations period, fearing the splintering of Christendom into innumerable shards of warring sects.²³⁸ Cole says,

“Vatican II, for example, insisted that the interpretation of Scripture finally was a matter for the church as guardian of the Word of God. In fact, Scripture is part of holy tradition which has its true locus in Roman church. Para-scriptural traditions such as the Immaculate Conception, the bodily Assumption of Mary and papal infallibility are to be judged not by any appeal to *Sola Scriptura* and its clarity, but by the *magisterium* of the church. On this view, Scripture needs the interpreting church if its meaning is to become clear”.²³⁹

Roman Catholic scholars of Vatican II maintain, contrary to the traditional Protestant understanding of *sola Scriptura*, that Christians read the Bible in the context of the church, and in the understanding of the use made of it by the church.²⁴⁰ Others like Kuenning see problems arising from ecumenical dialogues which threaten *sola Scriptura* today. He fears that,

“On the one hand, there has surfaced a strong resistance to the recommendations for intercommunion contained in the most recent Lutheran-Reformed dialogue, *An Invitation to Action*. The primary rebuttal is based upon intricate differences on interpretation regarding the

²³⁵ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 58.

²³⁶ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 146.

²³⁷ G.A. Cole, 1990: 20.

²³⁸ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 113.

²³⁹ G.A. Cole, 1990: 27.

²⁴⁰ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 114.

precise nature of the real presence in the Eucharist, with arguments lifted almost entirely from the confessional writings. On the other hand, in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue there appears to be willingness to compromise or at least severely limit the doctrine of *sola scriptura* in order to arrive at some common meeting ground with Roman Catholic concepts of churchly authority infallibility”.²⁴¹

Kuenning’s concern is based on the fact that after a series of meetings between the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran theologians, the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* was neither rejected, nor was it clearly affirmed. He finds it curiously illogical that the dialoguing parties practically equated the canonical Scriptures with the ‘confessions’.²⁴² But it was not the ecumenical dialogue he was opposed to. Rather, he says that, “the point here is not that ecumenical dialogue with one group is preferred over that with another. The Holy Scriptures, and the gospel itself, fully commit all Christians to the ongoing effort to realize that unity on the basis of arcane articles of confessional books, while approving it at the cost of compromising a clear allegiance to absolute authority of the Scriptures”.²⁴³

The point here is that unity should be achieved on no other basis than the authority of the Scriptures. But regarding a threatening failure to attain this ecumenical unity on the basis of Scripture, Grenz and Franke observe that, the resultant tendency among evangelicals has been in the name of unity, to relegate the insignificance of the differences among the particular theologies and church traditions represented in the coalition, which has given evangelicalism its transdenominational character.²⁴⁴

On the contrary, Mugambi views that, “throughout its history the modern ecumenical movement has affirmed the centrality of the Bible in the Christian faith, even though there have been differences of opinion as to how the Scriptures should be appropriated for the edification of the Church.”²⁴⁵ Interest in Bible study seems to rise and fall from time to time, from place to place.

²⁴¹ P.P. Kuenning, 1990: 204.

²⁴² P.P. Kuenning, 1990: 206.

²⁴³ P.P. Kuenning, 1990: 206.

²⁴⁴ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001.

²⁴⁵ J.N.K. Mugambi, 1997: 70.

In Britain, this ebb and flow led to the formation and promotion of Christian groups antagonistic to one another, depending on their respective attitudes to the Bible. And these differences of attitude became exported to Africa by the modern missionary enterprise, together with the cultural and ideological baggage which each missionary society and agency has carried in addition to the Bible.

African converts to Christianity thus found themselves divided along denominational and sectarian lines, participating in conflicts which have more to do with partisan interests of the missionaries than with authentic African response to the Scriptures. Yet, for most African Christians, the Bible remains the central point of convergence. Hence the World Council of Churches is the most inclusive of all Christian organizations. As the basic source of authority, the Bible is the unifying focus of the Christian faith. Hardly any Christian would dispute the affirmation that with regard to the essence of Gospel, the Bible is the final authority for reference and appeal.²⁴⁶

Conclusion

The principle of *sola Scriptura* is important in Protestant history and theology. But how it has been understood and applied in the church brought challenges that have caused divisions among Christians right from the dawn of the Protestant Reformations to the present. These challenges arise from a misunderstanding of what the Protestant Reformers meant and how they applied the *sola Scriptura* principle. The understanding of the relationship of the *sola Scriptura* principle to tradition determines how it is applied. An understanding of what constitutes tradition also determines how the principle is applied.

The discussion above has revealed that the Protestant Reformers were not replacing tradition with Scripture. Tradition is understood to mean a traditional way of interpreting Scripture used by the early Fathers who developed such doctrines as the trinity, the Deity of Christ, and other doctrines. Luther, Calvin and their followers recognized the significance of the contribution of the early church fathers and the councils. This they upheld and encouraged their followers to accept.

²⁴⁶ J.N.K. Mugambi, 1997: 73.

But because of the abused teaching authority of the medieval church, the Protestant Reformers promoted an individual right and duty to know what the word of God says to them. By and large Luther held to a broader view of the *sola Scriptura* principle, in contrast with the radical Reformers.

Unfortunately, radical Reformers went to the other extreme in promoting this individual right and duty to interpret Scripture. The splintering of the church was the result, into as many sects as there were personal views held. Although there were several positive developments brought about by the Protestant Reformations, the cause of the unity of the church has remained a challenge that is hard to achieve. The uplifting of the value of Scripture for the church was a worthy cause to pursue. But the interpretation and application of the teachings of Scripture remains a challenge for the church to properly sustain.

The Seventh-day Adventist church rose among churches that uphold the *sola Scriptura* principle. The history by how the Adventist church has sought to uphold and apply this principle, without reaping the divisive consequences experienced by Protestantism is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

SOLA SCRIPTURA IN ADVENTIST THEOLOGY

Introduction

The Seventh-day Adventist church began around 1860 in the eastern part of the United States of America. Founders of the Adventist church came from other Protestant denominations such as the Christian Connexion¹, the Methodist Church and others. They became part of the Millerite movement² which predicted the second advent of Christ about 1844. After the failure of the fulfillment of that prediction, a few of them went back to their Bibles to seek to understand what had gone wrong. A series of Bible conferences which took place during the next two decades finally brought about the organization of a new small denomination, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Studies by P. Gerard Damsteegt,³ Andrew G. Mustard,⁴ and George R. Knight⁵ document the movements which led to the organization of the Adventist Church.

From their beginnings, Seventh-day Adventists regard themselves as heirs of the Protestant Reformations.⁶ While holding to doctrinal beliefs generally held by other Protestant denominations, Adventists adhere to certain teachings which make them a separate movement. As heirs of the Protestant Reformations, one of the fundamental principles Seventh-day Adventists inherited from the Protestant Reformers is the *sola Scriptura* principle. Recently, Merlin Burt made the following

¹ Christian Connexion or Christians, is a religious denomination which originated about the year 1800 in the United States of America. It recognizes no individual as its leader or founder. Rather groups of people sprung up almost simultaneously in different and remote parts of the country, without any preliminary interchange of sentiments or concerted plan of action. One of their doctrines, among others, is to make the Bible their only guide; Cf. < <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/jvhimes/CC-ERK.HTM>>. [Accessed on September 9, 2007].

² This was a Christian movement which rose toward the middle of the nineteenth century in North America under the leadership of William Miller (1782-1872). Miller and his followers predicted and preached about the second advent of Christ about 1843-44. It experienced a bitter disappointment when Jesus did not come on October 22, 1844. Several Christian groups succeeded this movement, one of which became known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church organized in 1863; Cf. E.N. Dick, *William Miller and the Advent Crisis, 1831-1844*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994.

³ P.G. Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977.

⁴ A.G. Mustard, *James White and the Seventh-day Adventist Organization: Historical Development, 1844-1881*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987.

⁵ G.R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of the Adventist Church Structure*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001.

⁶ L.E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny*. Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971: 27-28; W.L. Emmerson, *The Reformation and the Adventist Movement*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983: 7.

affirmation, “Adventists are Protestant Christians who believe in *Sola Scriptura*”.⁷ This chapter seeks to analyze how Seventh-day Adventists understand and apply this principle in their theological thinking and practice. They claim that the Scriptures are foundational to all that the Seventh-day Adventist church stands for.

2.1. The Adventist movement and the Protestant Reformations

L.E. Froom⁸ and W.L. Emmerson⁹ link the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the great Protestant Reformations movement of the sixteenth century. Froom considers the spiritual ancestry of the Adventist movement to even go beyond the Protestant Reformation times to the apostolic period of the Christian church. He states that the Adventist movement should be seen as part of the last-day segment of God’s chosen line of witnesses spanning the entire Christian era. That is, Adventism should be viewed as an actual, inseparable part of God’s continuing sevenfold Church encompassing the entire Christian era, with its lot simply cast in the final or “Remnant” section.

Some authors¹⁰ justify the appearance of the Adventist movement in the later part of the Protestant Reformations era. Branson argues, “But those early Reformers did not receive a full and complete revelation of all the truths which had been lost sight of during the Dark Ages, when the church was in apostasy....The uncovering and unfolding of the truths of the gospel in the last days is a matter of prophecy, and it is progressive. ‘The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’ Proverbs 4: 18. The Reformation continues”.¹¹

Gerhard F. Hasel points to the Protestant Reformations as the first radical break from medieval principles of interpretation. The second major break from early Protestant interpretation of the Bible came after the development of the historical-critical-method, which began with the age of

⁷ M. Burt, *Ellen G. White and Sola Scriptura*. Paper read at the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Presbyterian Church USA Conversation. Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly PC (USA), 2007: 1, 11.

⁸ L.E. Froom, 1971: 27-28.

⁹ W.L. Emmerson, 1983: 7.

¹⁰ Cf. W.H. Branson, *In Defense of the Faith: The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists, A Reply to Canright*. Takoma Park, Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1933: 388.

¹¹ W.H. Branson, 1933: 388.

the enlightenment.¹² Norman R. Gulley says that, “Scripture as authority places it above all things human, including the rational. This means that reason must be informed by Scripture. It also indicates that the historical-grammatical method of biblical interpretation allows Scripture to interpret itself (*sola Scriptura*)”.¹³ In all this, Adventist scholars like D.E. Rebock¹⁴, V.N. Olsen¹⁵ and G.F. Hasel¹⁶, see the link between the Protestant Reformers and the Adventist movement, to be with the early Reformers such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others.

Olsen grounds the commencement of the Protestant Reformations in the trial of Martin Luther in Worms, in 1521, at which he made his famous defense reflected in these words, among others, “Here I stand! I can do no other!” Olsen reiterates that the primary issue of the controversy was religious authority and how to articulate the true meaning of Scriptures.¹⁷ This point is clearly reflected in Luther’s claim at Worms when he pleaded, “I am bound by Scriptures....and my conscience is captive to the Word of God”. This was however, not wearisome bondage, for Luther elsewhere declared that “the Scriptures liberate consciences”.¹⁸ Even in his theology, Luther’s theology was a theology of the Word of God. He lived by the Word of God; he lived for the Word of God.¹⁹ Meanwhile Gulley charges that “the Catholic Church stood between Scripture and its members, as well as above Scripture in its interpretation. The Protestant Reformation was launched to restore Scripture to its rightful place above the church and in the hands of people”.²⁰ Luther was the first major scholar to radically challenge the Catholic confinement of Scripture to the

¹² G.F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today*. Washington DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985: 1.

¹³ N.R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003: 377.

¹⁴ D.E. Rebock, *Believe His Prophets*. Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956: 15.

¹⁵ V.N. Olsen, ‘Hermeneutical Principles and Biblical Authority in Reformation and Post reformation Eras’, in: G.M. Hyde, *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*. Washington DC: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974: 47.

¹⁶ G.F. Hasel, 1985: 4.

¹⁷ V.N. Olsen, 1974: 47.

¹⁸ E.T. Batchmann (Ed.), *Luther’s Works: Word and Sacrament*, 1960:35/153.

¹⁹ J. Pelikan, *Luther’s Works: Introduction to the Exegetical Works, Companion Volume*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959: 48.

²⁰ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 534

hermeneutics of tradition.²¹ The Reformers revolted against tradition as a tool in biblical interpretation; they looked to Scripture as its own interpreter”.²²

The matter of Bible interpretation in the Adventist church, and in confessing Jesus Christ as the unifying theme of the Old and New Testaments, and the redemption that centers in Him, are viewed by H.K. LaRondelle²³ and G.F. Hasel²⁴ as in fundamental agreement with the *sola Scriptura* principle of the sixteenth century Reformations in Europe. Gulley claims that *sola Scriptura* is found in Scripture. Here, he maintains, “Biblical passages, throughout the Scriptures, are such words, and a comparison of relevant ones give a fuller insight into the Spirit’s teaching on any given subject. This is *sola Scriptura*”.²⁵ Gulley also claims that *sola Scriptura*, “hermeneutically speaking, ... means Scripture interprets itself rather than any other authority, whether a church or an individual”.²⁶ For these Adventist theologians, the distinction between Adventists and the early Reformation theology lie in the field of eschatology, particularly the second advent of Christ. Seventh-day Adventists claim their distinction to be found in the continuation of the largely Protestant and historicist interpretation of apocalyptic Bible prophecies as generally presented by Froom in his four volumes of the *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*.

The point at which the Adventist movement differs from Luther is on the issue of the canon of the Bible. While Luther is commended for unflinchingly calling for the Bible to be its own interpreter, his use of the Christological principle, that is, the principle of “what manifests Christ”, became for Luther a canon within a canon, which failed to grant every book in the Scripture with the same rights. G.F. Hasel observes that Luther made a distinction between the chief books of the

²¹ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 544.

²² N.R. Gulley, 2003: 564.

²³ H.K. LaRondelle, ‘Interpretation of Prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology’, in: G.M. Hyde (Ed.), *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*. 1974: 225.

²⁴ G.F. Hasel, ‘General Principles of Interpretation’, in G.M. Hyde (Ed.), *A Symposium on Hermeneutics*. 1974: 164.

²⁵ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 113.

²⁶ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 372: Gulley concedes that ‘there is interpretation in Scripture, where teachers were commissioned to interpret, but more importantly where biblical writers and Christ demonstrate how to interpret. Scripture has its own internal interpretive tools such as Scripture interpreting itself through comparing Scripture with Scripture, through typology, aesthetics, and chiasms. Behind these tools is the dependence of the interpreter on the Holy Spirit’, p706. .

New Testament and those he held in lesser status such as the book of James, Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation.²⁷ J. Barton suggests that,

“The theory that there is a ‘canon within a canon’ represents the ‘deletion’ approach in a more nuanced form. The less important parts of the canon are not rejected, but a hierarchy is established whereby Scripture has a core surrounded by a penumbra of decreasing value. Judaism may be said to operate in practice with such a theory, in that the Torah is of vastly greater importance for the religion than the rest of the Bible: indeed, Mishnah and Talmud matter considerably more than (say) Kings or Chronicles. While as a conscious theory the ‘canon within a canon’ has been prominent in particular types of German-language theology, it may reasonably be said that almost all Christians informally espouse such an approach. Most people who read the Bible have an ‘effective’ canon which is smaller than the theoretical one”.²⁸

J. Pelikan explains that Luther’s attitude toward the canon was a critical one. He did not accept a book as eternally binding upon him and the church simply on the grounds that it had been accepted as binding for a long time. For this reason, both his Roman Catholic and his extreme Protestant opponents chided him for this viewpoint.²⁹ Gulley warns that “there is a danger in giving primacy to only a part of the revelation of Christ in Scripture. As rightly understood, Christ is the center of all Scripture, and all Scripture should be read in the light of His life, death, resurrection, and continuing ministry”.³⁰ Gulley seems to suggest that while Luther’s *sola Scriptura* is partial and critical with regard to the canonical Scripture, Adventism’s *sola Scriptura* is all-inclusive. He argues that “Luther did not consider the entire Bible as authentic”.³¹ Therefore, Gulley asserts that “Christ is the center of Scripture but not the criterion over Scripture”.³² This position runs contrary to Luther’s Christological principle.

Such conflicting claims support Kelsey’s “irreducible variety of kinds of wholeness that may be ascribed to the texts”.³³ For Grenz and Franke this means a reading of the Bible as a whole. Reading the Bible theologically includes both acknowledging the integrity of the text within its world even though that world might appear strange to us, as well as acknowledging the distance that

²⁷ G.F. Hasel, 1985: 4.

²⁸ J. Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology, Collected Essays of John Barton*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007: 57.

²⁹ J. Pelikan, 1959: 87.

³⁰ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 113.

³¹ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 545.

³² N.R. Gulley, 2003: 251.

³³ D.H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999: 100.

stands between our world and the world of the text. Reading the Bible theologically, then, entails reading the Bible as a whole, confident that the Spirit appropriates the text to create the eschatological world according to God's intentions as indicated in the Bible.³⁴

In support of a unified view of the Bible, Sabbatarian Anabaptist Reformers like Oswald Glait and Andreas Fischer also regarded the Old and New Testaments as inseparable and indivisible. Seventh-day Adventists, like these radical Reformers, accept all the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty seven books of the New Testament.³⁵ M.E. Walsh argues for the acceptance of only sixty-six books, saying that, "THE SIXTY-SIX books of the Bible harmonize because the same divine Spirit inspired each writer....Neither Christ nor the apostles quoted from the books of the Apocrypha".³⁶ The Bible however shows that they quoted from the apocryphal writings (e.g. Matt. 7: 7: Acts 17: 28; Jude 14, etc.). Adventists however accept all the sixty-six books of the Bible.

Luther and the other Reformers differ with the radical Reformers in such doctrines as baptism and the Seventh-day Sabbath. The radical Reformers earned themselves a nick name as "Sabbatarian Anabaptists" because they stood for a reform in these doctrines as well. This resulted from their strict application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in their teachings.³⁷ G.F. Hasel places the Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the sixteenth century within the radical Reformation itself, a left wing of the Protestant Reformations.³⁸ The Anabaptists, like the earlier Reformers, stood for *sola Scriptura*, that the Word of God alone is the authority and weapon of the faith. The magisterial Reformers,

³⁴ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001: 88.

³⁵ *Bible Readings for the Home*, Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1951: 19; C.B. Haynes, *The Book of All Nations*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1950: 188; G.F. Hasel, 'Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, Part II', *Andrews University Seminary Studies*. Vol. VI, 1968: 28; A.S. Maxwell, *Your Bible and You*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1959: 28.

³⁶ M.E. Walsh, *The Apocrypha*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1968: 13, 14.

³⁷ G.F. Hasel, 1968: 28; W.L. Emmerson, 1983: 11.

³⁸ G.F. Hasel, 'Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, Part I,' *Andrews University Seminary Studies*. Vol. I, 1967: 101.

although claiming adherence to *sola Scriptura*, were charged of undermining this by placing themselves to be under the authority of the state.³⁹

2.1.1. The radical Reformation roots of Adventism

W.L. Emmerson identifies the Adventist movement with the radical Reformation, which he defines as “evangelicals”, in contrast with magisterial Protestantism.⁴⁰ To differentiate these radical Reformers from the spiritualizing and more revolutionary Reformers, Emmerson calls these radical Reformers “Biblical evangelicals”.⁴¹ In order to further clarify the differences between the radical Reformers and the magisterial Reformers, it is necessary to recap the causes of their break away from the mainstream Reformation movement. At the head of these ‘evangelical Reformers’ was Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, who followed Luther at the beginning of the Reformation, but later became the foremost to emphasize the supremacy of Scripture as the rule of faith and life, and in affirming the divinity of all Scripture.

Karlstadt differed with Luther, according to Emmerson,⁴² on several doctrinal teachings such as the canon of Scripture, the purpose of law, infant baptism, the mass, and having images in the church. Kelsey explains that “insofar as differences in senses in which Scripture is “authority” over the church’s life are a function of differences in judgment about the type of phenomenon over which it is authority, those differences bring with them differences in the way Scripture bears on theological proposals”.⁴³ The Reformers’ disagreement led to the increasing division among them in the years that followed. The close resemblance of Karlstadt’s teachings with those of Zwingli and Oecolampadius lends him to be called the pioneer of the Reformed tradition⁴⁴, which is distinct

³⁹ A.E. McGrath writes that ‘although Zwingli professed faithfulness to the *sola scriptura*, ‘by Scripture alone,’ principle, Grebel argued that he retained a number of practices – including infant baptism, the close link between church and magistracy, and the participation of Christians in warfare – which were not sanctioned or ordained by Scripture. In the hands of such thinkers as Grebel, the *sola scriptura* principle would be radicalized; reformed Christians would believe and practice only those things explicitly taught in Scripture’, 2007: 48.

⁴⁰ W.L. Emmerson, 1983: 27.

⁴¹ W.L. Emmerson, 1983: 11.

⁴² W.L. Emmerson, 1983: 22.

⁴³ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 150.

⁴⁴ The tradition and theological framework that grew out of the teachings of John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli, as distinct from the Lutheran and Anabaptist traditions. Reformed theology focuses foundationally on God’s glory and often

from the Lutheran tradition. Because the radical Reformers differed from those Protestants who welcomed conformity and uniformity, this brought upon them brutal suffering, being perpetually maligned, opposed, and suppressed to the extent that they later became largely obliterated from the records of history. Without the modern research⁴⁵ which has reconstructed the story of this evangelical movement and their contribution in upholding the *sola Scriptura* principle, they could have remained unknown and unappreciated. Karlstadt is therefore said to have set the course of truly Biblical evangelical reform which was to advance to reach its fullness in the “everlasting gospel” now preached by the Adventist movement.

Seventh-day Adventism today cannot fully be likened to the radical Reformation. George R. Knight recalls how he faced the threat of a court-martial in the summer of 1961, in the midst of the Berlin Wall crises. Although he was a trained infantry soldier, after becoming interested in Adventism, although still a confirmed agnostic up to that time, knew about the Adventist Church’s noncombatant position because the church had aggressively and consistently publicized its position. But then the draft ended, and the publicity stopped, Adventism neglected the topic and eventually forgot its history. As of 2007 the United States military had some 7,500 Adventist volunteers, virtually all of them (except chaplains) having enlisted as combatants. Sometimes a church loses its history and needs to remember what it stands for.⁴⁶

In upholding the superiority of Scripture over the church, Gulley argues that “the community did play a subsidiary role in selecting books for the canon, and it does play a subsidiary

emphasizes divine sovereignty as a crucial beginning point for theological reflection, cf. S.J. Grenz, D. Guretzki & C.F. Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1999: 101.

⁴⁵ G.F. Hasel, 1967: 101; 1968: 28; W.L. Emmerson, 1983: 27.

⁴⁶ G.R. Knight, *Lest We Forget*. (A Daily Devotional). Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008: 182. Also, recently the 2008 Annual Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists which met in Manila, Philippines, voted a recommendation to the General Conference Session that ‘Deaconesses may be ordained in divisions where the process has been approved by its executive committee’. Although a biblical reference (Rom. 16: 1, 2) as a preamble to this recommendation, there is no explicit Scriptural command that deaconesses should be ordained upon election to the office. ‘2008 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee’. *General Actions*. Action 420-08GS DEACONESS – CHURCH MANUAL AMENDMENT, Manila, Philippines, October 10-15, 2008: 101: Earlier on Samuel Koranteng-Pipim wrote against the Ordination of Women to the Gospel Ministry, ‘The lack of biblical precedent for ordaining women to the headship role in the church, combined with the Bible’s prohibitions of the practice, raises some questions....Ultimately, the issue of ordination of women raises questions about the Bible’s authority and the appropriate method for biblical interpretation’, in: *Searching the Scriptures: Women’s Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity*. Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Affirm: 1995: 16..

role in deciding fundamental beliefs. But a theological method true to Scripture will emphasize that Scripture determined which books should be in the canon, and which are fundamental to a community”.⁴⁷ But how such a claim can be practiced in real life is hard to understand.

What should not be forgotten are Jesus’ farewell words to the disciples. Christ pointed to the Spirit when He said, “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you” (John 16: 12-15). That seems to suggest that Christ would speak through the Spirit to the apostles the truth which they were later to put into written form.

Again George R. Knight links the Adventist movement to the radical wing of the Protestant Reformations. Knight says,

“North American Protestantism of the nineteenth century was a child of the sixteenth-century Reformation. Many Adventists are aware of that fact but have mistakenly concluded that their church is an heir of those branches of the Reformation initiated by Martin Luther, John Calvin, or Ulrich Zwingli. While it is true that Adventism’s concept of salvation by grace through faith came through the mainline Reformers, the theological orientation of Adventism really finds itself most at home with what church historians call the Radical Reformation or the Anabaptists”.⁴⁸

The evangelical Anabaptists were one of the several branches of radical Reformers who went further than the mainstream Reformers, having arisen out of the Renaissance and Reformation. As indicated in the previous chapter, the Anabaptists originated in Zurich in the 1520s as a result of the teachings of Zwingli. But they believed that Zwingli did not go far enough in the work of reform.⁴⁹ At first they were attracted to Zwingli’s emphasis on *sola Scriptura*. Being guided by Scripture, they sought to restore the church back to its New Testament pattern and practice. C. Good reaffirms that prior to 1523 there was no distinction between those who were later to be

⁴⁷ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 114.

⁴⁸ G.R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000: 30.

⁴⁹ M.S. Ritchie, *The Protestant Reformation: The Anabaptists and other Radical Reformers*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.ritchies.net/p4wk4.htm>>. [accessed on September 19, 2007], 1999: 1.

known as “radicals” and the more conservative Zwinglian Reformers in Zurich. All were known simply as the “Brethren”.⁵⁰

As early as 1521, most of the radical Reformers were still studying under Zwingli who led them as friends. It was during the Second Disputation of 1523 concerning the reformation of the church in Zurich that Zwingli backed away from his earlier call for the council to act immediately to abolish the Mass, failure to which he would act on his own. But Zwingli took a more compromising position by not acting without the council’s authorization. This was in line with the council’s willingness to embrace reform, though at a pace which the whole Canton of Zurich could support. To Grebel, Mainz and the other radicals, such a concession was undermining Zwingli’s own principle of *sola Scriptura* as the sole authority in matters of faith. It was from this concession that the radicals’ disillusionment with Zwingli’s reform started. M.G. Baylor indicates that the radical Protestant Reformers were driven by a fervent, impatient desire to see sweeping reforms made on the basis of religion. The radicals also insisted that reformation meant much more than changes in devotional practices and ecclesiastical institutions; public life as a whole was urgently in need of Christianization.⁵¹

Baylor shows that Luther, Zwingli and other magisterial Reformers, following their rejection of the traditional ecclesiastical authority, clung more firmly to existing secular authority, which they held to be ordained by God.⁵² But they distrusted the common man – radicals – and feared that their participation in politics would lead to anarchy. They were however willing to go only as far as political authorization would allow. This radical reformation was thus, in the first instance, “internal dissent” within the Reformations, opposition to the paradigm for change set forth by such magisterial Reformers as Luther and Zwingli.

These Anabaptists agitated for a truly biblical reform, especially on the believers’ baptism, thus refusing infant baptism, which they called the greatest and first abomination of the pope. Their

⁵⁰ C. Good, *The Anabaptists and the Reformation*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www.rbc.org.nz/library/anabap.htm>>. [Accessed on September 19, 2007], 1998: 2.

⁵¹ M.G. Baylor, *The Radical Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991: xii.

⁵² M.G. Baylor, 1991: xv-xvi; xviii.

Bible-only (*sola Scriptura*) emphasis became one of the greatest contributions made to history. This Bible-alone emphasis became a mark of the free churches everywhere, even those who still practiced infant baptism. But for the Anabaptists, anything that seemed to contradict the Bible, they rejected. Baylor adds that, in contrast to the magisterial Reformers' reliance on the support of the secular authorities and postponing change until it was won, the radical Reformers were the theorists and the executors of immediate reformation through direct action from below. They embarked on a campaign of reformation through provocation: shouting down sermons by those they held to be preaching something other than the pure word of God; engaging in iconoclastic assaults on images and shrines they regarded as embodying blasphemous practice and superstitious belief; transforming old usages and initiating new ones without asking the permission of superior authorities. Some refused to have their children baptized or to pay tithes and other duties, demanding that laws be changed so as to conform to the gospel.⁵³

This radical view and use of Scripture confirms what Kelsey asserted when he said “to call a set of texts ‘scripture’ is, in part, to say that they ought to be used in the common life of the church as to nurture and preserve her self-identity. However, the way the texts are to fill this role can be described in terms of several quite distinct functions. Differences in the type of function ascribed to the text bring with them differences in the sense in which the text is ‘authority’ in the church’s life”.⁵⁴ This was the root cause of the practical differences among the Protestant Reformers.

Luther used *sola Scriptura* to fight the papacy, but Gulley considers it to be “paradoxical when one realizes that Luther believed in the *sola Scriptura* principle”,...but he applied the *sola Scriptura* principle christologically instead of canonically. That is, he confined the principle to most of Scripture (that speaks of Christ) but not to all of it.” Additionally, Gulley reveals the resulting implications of Luther’s hermeneutic as reflected in the Lutheran New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), who judged Scripture through demythologization of so-called prescientific

⁵³ M.G. Baylor, 1991: xv-xvi; xviii.

⁵⁴ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 150.

biblical language. Demythologization was interpreting the supernatural elements (myths) in Scripture not in a literal way, but by existential categories”.⁵⁵

On the other hand, unlike the spiritualizers, as C. Good indicates, the evangelical Anabaptists sought for an obedient and visible expression of their faith in the context of a congregation of believers, united through baptism, which they enforced by church discipline (the “Ban”).⁵⁶ Adventist church historian, George R. Knight maintains,

“Whereas the mainline Reformers retained such beliefs as infant baptism and state support of the church, the Anabaptists rejected both doctrines as being unbiblical. In their place they called for a believer’s church in which baptism followed faith and which stood for the separation of church and state. While the mainline Reformers developed the concept of *sola scriptura* (the Scriptures only), the Anabaptists viewed the major Reformation churches as not consistent in that belief. Anabaptism sought to get completely back to the teachings of the Bible. For them it was wrong to stop where Luther, Calvin, or Zwingli did theologically. Anabaptism at best was a move away from churchly tradition and creedal formulations and a shift toward the ideals of the New Testament church”.⁵⁷

Baylor⁵⁸ maintains that the radicals were convinced of the righteousness of their cause and, like the popular Protestant Reformations for which they spoke; they assumed that collective forms of decision-making would bear them out. But despite their image as wild-eyed fanatics, some radical Reformers held to the view that everything need not be changed at once. The strategic difference between the magisterial and radical Reformers was symptomatic of a more fundamental difference in their politics, especially in their attitudes toward the authority of existing secular rulers. Above all, what gave the radicals their coherence as the Reformation’s “left wing” was the rejection of a hierarchical conception of politics in which legitimate authority, whether secular or ecclesiastical, devolved from the top down. Instead, the radicals’ vision of politics was rooted in notions of local autonomy and community control which also implied egalitarianism. The radicals were the most articulate theorists of a “grass-roots” paradigm of reformation, one based on principles of communalism that grew out of the late Middle Ages. In addition to asserting traditional communal rights to administer certain local affairs, the radical Reformation stood for the

⁵⁵ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 548.

⁵⁶ C. Good, 1998: 12.

⁵⁷ G.R. Knight, 2000: 30.

⁵⁸ M.G. Baylor, 1991: xvi.

right of each local community to hear the gospel preached in pure form and regulate its life according to the gospel. The radical Reformation also advocated community control over the local church, including the rights of each congregation to choose its own minister and to control the use of ecclesiastical payments. In 1522 Luther had indicated support for this kind of communal Reformation; but by 1524 he opposed it.

Again, because of their radical stance, the Anabaptists and other similar groups were persecuted cruelly by the Catholics and Protestants alike. C. Good observes that the Anabaptists had been persecuted from the earliest days.⁵⁹ To the Catholics, they opposed the Church and tradition; while to the Reformers, they threatened the reformed social order which Protestant Reformers hoped to establish. The Anabaptists were seen to be a threat because, in their denial of infant baptism and insistence on a voluntary body of the faithful, they denied the whole foundation for the state-church system that had existed for centuries. The magisterial Reformers believed that allowing freedom of different viewpoints would result in social chaos. So, the Anabaptist Kingdom of Munster (1533-1535) in Westphalia, Germany, where the actions of the Anabaptists became more debauched, fanatical and cruel, proved to be a disaster for the Anabaptist movement. The later Anabaptists groups included the Hutterites and Mennonites. Such of course are not the present characteristics of Adventism today in spite of its claim to have descended from the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation.⁶⁰

2.1.2. The Restorationist roots of Adventism

While Anabaptism never made much of an institutional impact on early nineteenth-century American religion, the spirit of Anabaptism literally permeated the evangelical denominations of the day. Nowhere was that more true than in what George Knight⁶¹ refers to as Restorationism. Merlin Burt claims that “Adventists have historically followed the Restorationist approach to

⁵⁹ C. Good, 1998: 16.

⁶⁰ Cf. Note 46 above for a detail comment.

⁶¹ G.R. Knight, 2000: 30.

scripture that rejects creeds and tradition as authoritative”.⁶² The Restoration movement (also known as the “Stone-Campbell Movement) had its beginnings in the 18th and 19th centuries in the United States during the Second Great Awakening, with Barton W. Stone (1772-1844) of Kentucky, and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) as the leading figures. The other leaders were Thomas Campbell (1763-1854), Walter Scott (1796-1861), James O’Kelly (1735?-1826) of North Carolina, Rice Haggard (1769-1819), Elias Smith (1764-1846), and Dr Abner Jones (1772-1841) of Hartland, Vermont. One of their key principles was that creeds divide, but Christians should be able to find agreement by standing on the Bible itself. As such, the Christians Restorationists did not owe their origin to some individual Reformer of the prominence of Luther or Calvin or Wesley. They rose nearly simultaneously in different sections of the United States, remote from each other, without any pre-concerted plan, or even knowledge of each other’s movements.⁶³

George R. Knight reveals that the goals of the Restorationist movement in relation to the Protestant Reformations were, to complete the unfinished Reformation, and to espouse a radical view of *sola Scriptura*. The Bible was to be their only guide-book in faith and practice. When the Scriptures spoke they would speak, and where the Bible was silent they would remain silent. The Restorationist movement was also anti-creedal. It held to no creed but the Bible itself.⁶⁴

Knight further argues that “the spirit of the Restorationist movement set the stage for a great deal of the theological agenda for the majority of American Protestants in the early nineteenth century....One branch of the Restorationist movement had special importance to Seventh-day Adventists: the Christian Connexion. James White and Joseph Bates (two of prominent founders of Adventism) were members of the Christian Connexion”.⁶⁵

It is through the Restorationist movement that the Seventh-day Adventist Movement views its connection with the Protestant Reformations. Knight shows how they understood their work as continuing/completing the Protestant Reformations. He says that “the pioneers of the Seventh-day

⁶² M. Burt, 2007: 2.

⁶³ Cf. D. Millard, *History of The Christians, Christian Connexion*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/dmillard/HCCC.HTM>> [accessed on September 9, 2007], 1848: 3.

⁶⁴ G.R. Knight, 2007: 30.

⁶⁵ G.R. Knight, 2007: 30.

Adventist Movement came from various Protestant church backgrounds, most of them having been active in the Millerite Adventist Movement. They considered themselves Bible-believing Christians in the full tradition – or concept – of the Reformers of the sixteenth century”.⁶⁶

Fernando Canale refers to Adventist theology as “a radical challenge to the ‘systematicity’ of classical and modern Christian theologies”.⁶⁷ He maintains this in connection with Adventism’s close application of the *sola Scriptura* principle and the understanding of eschatology, salvation, and the whole system of theology. It is along this line of reasoning that Adventists link their heritage to the radical Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

2.2. The *sola Scriptura* principle and the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs

George Knight indicates that William Miller (1782-1849), the founder of the Millerite movement, upon his conversion from Deism focused his attention on studying the Bible and urging others to preach, prove all things, talk, exhort, pray, and love the Bible. Knight claims that “Millerism was definitely a movement of the ‘Book’. The Bible, as far as Miller and his followers were concerned, was the supreme authority in all matters of faith and doctrine”.⁶⁸

Like their Protestant Reformation ancestors, “early Adventists rejected tradition, church authority, and even the gifts of the Spirit in their doctrinal formation. They were a “people of the Book”.⁶⁹ Knight found that deism gave Miller a characteristic of rationalistic approach to everything including religion. This made Miller to use a logical approach in his study of the Bible. In his intellectual approach Miller aimed at the head rather than the heart. Merlin Burt also maintains that, “from the very beginning of their movement Seventh-day Adventists have decisively looked to the Bible alone [*sola Scriptura*] to settle questions of doctrine and practice”.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ G.R. Knight, 2007: 30.

⁶⁷ F.L. Canale, ‘From vision to system – Part II’, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. Vol.16. No. 1-2, Spring 2005: 137.

⁶⁸ G.R. Knight (Ed.), *Questions on Doctrine: Adventist Classic Library series. (Annotated ed.)*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003: 38, 42.

⁶⁹ G.R. Knight, 2000: 60.

⁷⁰ M. Burt, 2007: 2, 4.

One of the followers of Miller, James White boldly stated in a pamphlet entitled, *A Word to the "Little Flock"*, "The Bible is a perfect and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice".⁷¹ George Knight further indicates that "four years later, James White wrote, 'Every Christian is therefore duty bound to take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts'".⁷²

Several Adventist leaders have made similar claims. For instance, W.H. Branson argues that "a 'Thus saith the Lord' is the only foundation for our faith, and the Word of God is so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein, (See Isaiah 35:8)".⁷³ T.H. Jemison equally claims that Seventh-day Adventists contend that the fullest, clearest, and most specific revelation of God is the Bible.⁷⁴ C.B. Haynes also claimed that "the Bible embodies and preserves the revelation of God in its clearest, its purest, its fullest form".⁷⁵

Others still, like L.E. Froom wrote, "From that day to this Seventh-day Adventists have consistently proclaimed to the world that their message is based on the Bible, and that they are in full harmony with the Reformation leaders in insisting on the Bible and the Bible only as the foundation of doctrine and guide for Christian duty and practice". Froom referred to the repeated public statements in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* since 1898 in which Seventh-day Adventists unvaryingly stressed the "*Bible only*" among their "Fundamental Principles" or as later called, "Fundamental Beliefs".⁷⁶

Thus, Seventh-day Adventists have consistently claimed the Bible to be their only standard.⁷⁷ This general understanding caused Seventh-day Adventists not to develop any official

⁷¹ J. White, *A Word to the 'Little Flock'*, May 30, 1847: 13.

⁷² G.R. Knight, 2000: 60.

⁷³ W.H. Branson, 1933: 380.

⁷⁴ T.H. Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1959: 7.

⁷⁵ C.B. Haynes, *The Book of all Nations*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1950: 132.

⁷⁶ L.E. Froom, *The Movement of Destiny*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971: 92.

⁷⁷ A. Thompson, 'Adventists and the Bible', in: W.G. Johnsson (Ed.). *AnchorPoints: Adventists tell why they hold fast to our fundamental beliefs*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993: 45.

statements of beliefs until 1931. Prior to this time, James White⁷⁸ and Smith were the only leaders known to have pointed to the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice. Smith's unofficial statement of Fundamental Principles appeared regularly in the *Yearbooks* published between 1889 and 1914. The statement on the Holy Scriptures read as follows: "That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of His will to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice".

Up to the 1930s, Seventh-day Adventists fundamental beliefs had not yet been officially voted by the church. Then, following a request in 1930 from the African Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, where Wright presided as president, an action was recorded in the minutes of the General Conference on December 29, 1930 authorizing the formulation of a *Yearbook* Statement indicating what Seventh-day Adventists believed, so as to help government officials and others to have a better understanding of their work. Accordingly, Adventist historian, F.M. Wilcox, who was the editor of the Church paper, the *Review*, drafted the statement which later received common consent by the denomination's committee. Article 1, of the accepted Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, from 1931 onward read: "That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain an all sufficient revelation of His Will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice".⁷⁹

In the 1950s, Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders engaged in a dialogue with other evangelical leaders, which culminated in the publication of the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* in 1957. In his editorial of the 2003 annotated edition, George R. Knight entitled the answer to Question 2 of the nearly 50 other such questions addressed, "The Bible, Only Rule of Faith and Practice".⁸⁰ In their answer, Seventh-day Adventists stated their position on the

⁷⁸ J. White, 18437: 13.

⁷⁹ F.M. Wilcox, cited in E.L. Froom, 1971: 92-93; Cf. Kwabena Donkor maintained that 'Seventh-day Adventists have also emphasized the need for correct doctrine and truth, as expressed in their adoption of a statement of fundamental beliefs....Rather, the fact that the church has taken a definite stand on certain biblical fundamental beliefs reflects its responsible commitment to the sola scriptura principle and its continuing trust in the Bible as the inspired Word of God', 'Why a Statement of Beliefs', *Perspective Digest*. A Publication of the Adventist Theological Society, Vol. 11. No. 3. 2006: 41..

⁸⁰ G.R. Knight (Ed.), 2003: 25.

Bible, saying, “We recognize the Bible as the ultimate and final authority on what is truth”. Further down in the same answer they stated, “Seventh-day Adventists hold the Protestant position that the Bible and the Bible only is the sole rule of faith and practice for Christians.” Their position on the canon of the Scriptures says, “We take the Bible in its entirety, believing that it not merely *contains* the word of God, but *is* the word of God”.⁸¹

Another book summarizing the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs stated that the “statement of twenty-two fundamental beliefs, first published in 1931 *Yearbook*, stood until the 1980 General Conference Session replaced it with a similar but more comprehensive summary in twenty-seven paragraphs, published under the title, ‘*Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventists*’”.⁸²

Since 1980 the Seventh-day Adventist statement of fundamental belief on the Bible reads:

HOLY SCRIPTURES:

“The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through 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. (2Pet 1:20, 21; 2Tim 3:16, 17; Ps 119: 105; Prov 30:5,6; Isaiah 8: 20; John 17:17; 1Thess 2:13; Heb 4:12).⁸³

The word “only” does not appear in the statement. Its absence however does not signify a change of position by the Adventist movement in its relation to the Bible. Rather, it is because the word “only” now appears in the preamble to the fundamental beliefs, as introduced during the 1980 revision. The preamble to the statement of fundamental beliefs reads:

“Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of the Scriptures. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word”.⁸⁴

⁸¹ G.R. Knight (Ed.), 2003: 26.

⁸² *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005: v.

⁸³ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual. (Revised edition)*. Silver Springs, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005: 9.

⁸⁴ *Church Manual*, 2005: 9; Cf. K. Donkor argues that ‘not only does the church see its statement of fundamental beliefs as grounded in the Bible, but it explicitly and purposefully subordinates the statement of beliefs to the Bible by giving the Bible magisterial oversight on its future expressions’. Donkor adds that ‘it seems clear from these statements that

Merlin Burt clarifies that “though Adventists now have a statement of fundamental beliefs, they do not view it as creedal⁸⁵ but rather representative of their views. Over the years their statement of beliefs has been revised and enlarged”.⁸⁶ In addition to the need to give expression to what Seventh-day Adventists believe, and to give a better understanding of the nature of their work, the statement of fundamental beliefs fulfilled another need when the official “Baptismal Certificate”, containing the “Baptismal Covenant” and Baptismal “Vow”, were developed and adopted in 1941. These documents contained 12-point summaries of the Fundamental Beliefs which had been voted in 1931. The Certificate was to be used by all ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as the approved “profession of faith” for all candidates seeking admission and membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church through baptism.⁸⁷ The 5th point of the doctrinal summaries reads, “The Bible is God’s inspired word, and is the full, the sufficient, and the *only* basic rule of faith and practice” (2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:19-21; Ps 119:9, 11, 105, 130; 1 Thess 2:13; Isaiah 8:20; Jere 15:16; Heb 4:12).⁸⁸

The 2005 edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* contains a 28-point summary of the now 28 Fundamental Beliefs. This was developed for use in the instruction of candidates for

Adventists’ resistance to a creed taking the place of the Bible arises from the realization that only the Bible as God’s inspired word, and not a creed, albeit a sound one, is able to address expressed concerns’, 2006: 39-40, 41.

⁸⁵ McGrath suggests a differentiation between creeds and confessions. He indicates that, “a ‘confession’ [or fundamental beliefs] pertains to a denomination, and includes specific beliefs and emphases relating to that denomination; [while] a ‘creed’ pertains to the entire Christian church, and includes nothing more and nothing less than statement of beliefs which every Christian ought to be able to accept and be bound by. A ‘creed’ has come to be recognized as a concise, formal, and universally accepted and authorized statement of the main points of Christian faith”, 2007: 14.

⁸⁶ M. Burt, 2007: 2.

⁸⁷ L.E. Froom, 1971: 420-421: Cf. K. Donkor, 2006: 36, maintains that ‘the use of a statement of fundamental beliefs as instruction implies some measure of sameness with regard to belief within the group’.

⁸⁷ K. Donkor presents that ‘at a popular level within the community of faith, the statement of beliefs is an invaluable pedagogical aid. It has often been noted that the sheer volume of the Bible presents challenges of comprehension for many believers. The statement of beliefs, by compiling, systematizing, and summarizing biblical teaching on many subjects, makes it easier for the church to fulfill its instructional mandate within the faith community.

Yet, it is important to observe that its pedagogical role should not eclipse the role of Scripture, in which case it would begin to smack of creedalism. In this regard it is worth drawing attention to the format of the statement of fundamental beliefs as presented, for example in the *Church Manual*. At the end of each statement is a list of Bible texts that serve as an invitation to a personal, biblical exploration of the particular doctrine. In a unique sense, the statement of beliefs in performing its pedagogical role functions as a sign pointing to the Bible...The value of a statement in facilitating biblical education is premised on the fact that a growing understanding of the Bible comes with reading it, systematizing it, and applying it. The statement of fundamental beliefs, as a distilled exposition of biblical themes as understood by the faith community, facilitates education in Scripture’, 2006: 50-51.

⁸⁸ *Church Manual*, 2005: 9.

baptism. The 5th point of the doctrinal summaries reads, “The Bible is God’s inspired word, and is the full, the sufficient, and the *only* basic rule of faith and practice.” (2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:19-21; Ps 119:9, 11, 105, 130; 1 Thess 2:13; Isaiah 8:20; Jere 15:16; Heb 4:12.).⁸⁹

The General Conference Annual Council of the Seventh-day Adventists which met in Manila, Philippines, in October 2008, however, voted to delete the section of summarized points from the *Church Manual*⁹⁰ since, among other reasons; the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventists are also a summary statement of the Church’s understanding of Scripture. But question 5 of the *Baptismal Vow*, which reads, “Do you believe that the Bible is God’s inspired Word, the *only* rule of faith and practice for the Christian? Do you covenant to spend time regularly in prayer and Bible study?” was retained in the *Church Manual*.⁹¹ The *Church Manual* also stipulates that a denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the cardinal doctrines of the church, or teaching doctrines contrary to the same, is ground for removal of a member from fellowship in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁹²

Nevertheless Donkor acknowledges that “history shows that both creedal and non-creedal churches are equally exposed to division and controversy. The reality seems to be that the statement of fundamental beliefs, although imperfect, is an indispensable instrument of the church as it seeks to accomplish its mission in an imperfect world”⁹³

Thus while it took almost 70 years (1863-1931) for Seventh-Adventists to finally vote an official statement of fundamental beliefs, they still claim that the Bible is their only rule of faith and practice. The fundamental beliefs are understood to be a summary of their understanding of the

⁸⁹ *Church Manual*, 2005: 9.

⁹⁰ Cf. Action 417-08, *2008 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee: General Actions*. Manila, Philippines. October 10 – 15, 2008: 104-107.

⁹¹ *Church Manual*, 2005: 32.

⁹² *Church Manual*, 2005: 195; Cf. K. Donkor stated that ‘closely related to the role of the statement of fundamental beliefs as an indicator of the community’s hermeneutical concern is its role in the detection of doctrinal error. Traditionally, the rise of heresy was one of the reasons for creeds. The statement of beliefs provides a standard by which to judge new teachings arising in the church. Of all the roles that a statement of beliefs may play, this attracts the greatest fear and concern. The history of the Christian Church is filled with inquisitions and persecutions on the basis of creedal formulations. Fear of the critical use of a statement of beliefs is well-founded....Donkor also admitted, ‘The point is that a statement of fundamental beliefs has a legitimate juridical role in settling doctrinal disputes as well as even possibly avoiding them’, 2006: 46, 48..

⁹³ K. Donkor, 2006: 53.

doctrinal teachings of the Bible, which they adhere to. These fundamental beliefs may be revised from time to time by the General Conference session of Seventh-day Adventists.⁹⁴ But a denial of any of these fundamental beliefs is taken to be a denial of the teachings of Scripture as understood by the Seventh-day Adventists, and therefore a ground for removal from the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

2.3. The relationship of Ellen G. White's writings to the Bible in Adventism

The delegates to the General Conference Session of Seventh-day Adventists which met in Utrecht, the Netherlands, voted on June 30, 1995 to approve *A Statement of Confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy*, which read in part, "We consider the biblical canon closed. However, we also believe, as did Ellen G. White's contemporaries, that her writings carry divine authority, both for godly living and for doctrine".⁹⁵ Adventists have not found anything in the Scriptures that precludes the possibility of prophets appearing after the closing of the Biblical canon. One of the founders of Adventism and husband of Ellen G. White, James White based his reason for accepting the legitimacy of post-New Testament prophetic manifestation on his understanding of Scriptural passages such as Joel 2: 28-30 and Acts 2: 17-20.⁹⁶

V.N. Olsen later wrote, "Our history testifies that as individuals and as a people, our blessings and successes have been in direct proportion to our adherence to Bible teaching and the Spirit of Prophecy counsel".⁹⁷ This shows that Seventh-day Adventists do not radically limit the basis of their faith and practice on Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). But, Burt maintains that "Ellen [G.] White wrote extensively on the relationship of her writings to the Bible and on the role of the Bible in faith and practice. She categorically subscribed to the tenet of *Sola Scriptura*".⁹⁸ According

⁹⁴ A General Conference session of Seventh-day Adventists is a quinquennial official gathering of representatives of the world body of Seventh-day Adventist believers meeting to transact the business of the whole Church.

⁹⁵ 'A Statement of Confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy' in: *Statements, Guidelines & other documents*. A 2005 Compilation of the Communication Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Springs MD, p105.

⁹⁶ M. Burt, 2007: 3.

⁹⁷ V.N. Olsen, 'Ellen White: Defense against error and Apostasy', *Adventist Review*, October 14, 1982: 12.

⁹⁸ M. Burt, 2007: 4, 7.

to his count, Burt found that “in all, Ellen [G.] White’s published writings contain the phrase “Bible and the Bible only” forty-five times and “Bible and the Bible alone” forty-seven times”.⁹⁹

Denton E. Rebok maintains that “the doctrinal truths held by Seventh-day Adventists thus come from the Bible and not from Ellen G. White”.¹⁰⁰ He explains that, “Let it be clearly understood that Seventh-day Adventists did not get their system of theology from the writings of Ellen G. White. Our system of theology comes from the Scriptures alone.” T.H. Jemison maintains a similar position held by Rebok, saying, “The Bible is explicit in indicating its place as the standard of truth and the basic guide of life. No other message or writings can ever take the place of the word of God. It is the standard by which all who claim to have truth are to be tested”.¹⁰¹

Some of the responses to “Question 9” in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*¹⁰² elaborate on this issue as shown below:

- “Seventh-day Adventists uniformly believe that the canon of Scripture closed with the book of Revelation. We hold that all other writings and teachings, from whatever source, are to be judged by, and are subject to, the Bible, which is the spring and norm of the Christian faith. We test the writings of Ellen G. White by the Bible, but in no sense do we test the Bible by her writings. Ellen G. White and others of our writers have gone on record again and again on this point.”
- “We have never considered Ellen G. White to be in the same category as the writers of the canon of Scripture.”
- “Among Seventh-day Adventists she was recognized as one who possessed the gift of prophecy, though she herself never assumed the title of prophetess.”
- “Seventh-day Adventists regard her writings as containing inspired counsel and instruction concerning personal religion and the conduct of our denominational work.”
- “It is significant that in her counsels, or “testimonies,” the attention of the reader is constantly directed to the authority of the Word of God as the sole foundation of faith and doctrine.”
- “While Adventists hold the writings of Ellen G. White in highest esteem, yet these are not the source of our expositions. We base our teachings on the Scriptures, the only foundation of all true Christian doctrine. However, it is our belief that the Holy Spirit opened to her mind important events and called her to give certain instructions

⁹⁹ M. Burt, 2007: 6.

¹⁰⁰ D.E. Rebok, *Believe His Prophets*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956: 168-169.

¹⁰¹ T.H. Jemison, 1955: 364.

¹⁰² G.R. Knight (Ed.), 2003:79-84.

for those last days. And inasmuch as these instructions, in our understanding, are in harmony with the Word of God, which Word alone is able to make us wise unto salvation, we as a denomination accept them as inspired counsels from the Lord. But we have never equated them with Scripture as some falsely charge.”

- “While Seventh-day Adventists recognize that the Scripture canon closed nearly two thousand years ago and that there have been no additions to this compilation of sacred books, yet we believe that the Spirit of God, who inspired the Divine Word known to us as the Bible, has pledged to reveal Himself to the church through the different gifts of the Spirit.”
- “It is not our understanding that these gifts of the Spirit take the place of the Scripture of truth. On the contrary, the acceptance of God’s Word will lead God’s people to a recognition and acceptance of the manifestations of the Spirit. Such manifestations will, of course, be in harmony with the Word of God.”
- “Briefly then, this is the Adventist understanding of Ellen G. White’s writings. They have been for a hundred years, to use her own expression, “a lesser light” leading sincere men and women to “the greater light.”

While accepting the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts and a belief that the gift of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church, Seventh-day Adventists do not exclude or remove from membership any person who does not recognize clearly the doctrine of spiritual gifts and its application to the Adventist movement.¹⁰³ Ellen G. White counseled in her book *Testimonies for the Church* that “there should be no trial or labor with those who have never seen the individual having visions, and who have had no personal knowledge of the influence of the visions. Such should not be deprived of the benefits and privileges of the church, if their Christian course is otherwise correct, and they have formed a good Christian character”.¹⁰⁴

In regard to her relationship to the Bible, Ellen White advised, “I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that word we are to be judged”.¹⁰⁵ And Jemison confirms that throughout her writings, Ellen G. White fully recognizes and emphasizes the primacy of the Scriptures. She indicates that her writings are to be tested by the Bible.¹⁰⁶ In *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* she emphasizes that “the Bible and the Bible alone,

¹⁰³ G.R. Knight (Ed.), 2003: 84.

¹⁰⁴ E.G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 1. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950: 328

¹⁰⁵ E.G. White, *Early Writings of Ellen G. White*. Washington DC: The Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, 1963: 78.

¹⁰⁶ T.H. Jemison, 1955: 365.

is our rule of faith, and that the sayings of men are not to be a criterion for our doctrines or actions”.¹⁰⁷ Again in her book, *The Story of Prophets and Kings* she admonishes, “The words of the Bible, and the Bible alone, should be heard from the pulpit”.¹⁰⁸ It is clear from these and other statements that Ellen G. White repeatedly pointed Seventh-day Adventists to the Bible as the final authority. But how are these and many similar statements understood and applied on the relationship of Ellen G. White’s writings with the Bible?

Arthur L. White, a grandson of Ellen G. White, and Secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate at the time, sought to clarify the relationship of her writings to the Bible in the setting of the Visions. He said that “though James and Ellen G. White from time to time reiterated this position ‘of the Bible and the Bible alone,’ they often did so in the very setting of the argument for accepting the visions. At no time did they see this position as excluding the visions in arriving at truth in a study of doctrine or an understanding of duty”.¹⁰⁹ Arthur L. White provides the following four points as guidelines:¹¹⁰

1. That at no time was this phrase employed to exclude the binding obligation to respond to the visions as light which God has given to His people.
2. That in most instances the words are employed in the setting of contrasting the teachings of God’s Word with tradition or man’s theories or a false Sabbath, etc.
3. In several cases these words are used in defining our position on the visions with the explanation that to follow the Bible enjoins the acceptance of the Spirit of Prophecy as binding upon all who accept God’s Word which forecasts the appearance of this gift in the last days.
4. That through the visions God has led us to a correct understanding of His word and has taught us and will continue to do so. Further we must ever recognize our obligation to accept this leading of God.

Finally, Arthur White explains that, J.N. Andrews, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist movement and a contemporary of Ellen G. White, explained that the Adventist movement’s basis for using the visions or writings of Ellen G. White within the context of the

¹⁰⁷ E.G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1900: 84.

¹⁰⁸ E.G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915:626.

¹⁰⁹ A.L. White, *The Position of “The Bible, and the Bible Only” and The relation of this to The Writings of Ellen G. White*. Washington, DC: The Ellen G. White Estate, 1971: 5.

¹¹⁰ A.L. White, 1971: 5.

ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Christian church is provided for in the Scriptures.¹¹¹ If believers followed the direction in which the Bible pointed, they would be led to recognize the continued ministry of the Holy Spirit until the end of time, and this ministry includes the gift of prophecy. Holbrook argues that it is the providence of the Holy Spirit to be both the author and the revealer of the Holy Scriptures. The Spirit and the Scriptures must never be separated.¹¹² Roy E. Graham believes that the Bible supports the ministry of the Holy Spirit in all ages down to the close of this earth's history.¹¹³ Herbert E. Douglass too compares the union of Ellen G. White with the Seventh-day Adventist Church to that of the Anglo-Saxon languages in the formation of English speech.¹¹⁴

But Jemison argues that the Bible and the gift of prophecy serve two different purposes, although they serve as a unit to convey God's will to His people. He indicates that "the Bible and the Ellen G. White writings were given for two closely related purposes. Each stands alone in its appointed sphere".¹¹⁵ Jemison disclaims, "the writings introduce no new topic, no new revelation, no new doctrine. They simply give additional details and round out subjects already a part of the Scripture record. There is no need for more to be added".¹¹⁶ F.D. Nichol also argues that it is incorrect to conclude that Ellen G. White placed her writings on par with the Bible or above it. Nichol states that "she [Ellen G. White] made no claim to have given another Bible. She ever pointed to the Scriptures as the one source of truth and light, the book that should be the Christian's first and chiefest [sic] source of spiritual instruction".¹¹⁷ Finally, Merlin Burt affirms that "Ellen [G.] White believed that her visions and writings would not have been necessary if professed believers had been diligent in their study of the Bible".¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ J.N. Andrews, cited in: A.L. White, 1971: 11.

¹¹² Cited in A.L. White, 1971: 5.

¹¹³ R.E. Graham, 'How the gift of prophecy relates to God's Word'. *Adventist Review*. October 14, 1982: 16.

¹¹⁴ H.E. Douglass, 'Ellen White and Adventist Theology. *Dialogue*. Vol. 10. No. 1, 1998: 13.

¹¹⁵ T.H. Jemison, 1955: 365, 371; Cf. H.E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998: 416.

¹¹⁶ T.H. Jemison, 1955: 365, 371.

¹¹⁷ F.D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics: An Answer to the Major Charges that Critics have brought against Mrs Ellen G. White*. Takoma Park, Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1951: 87.

¹¹⁸ M. Burt, 2007: 6.

In another sense, Herbert E. Douglass considers Ellen G. White the foremost contributor to Adventism's uniqueness. While he denies that Adventist doctrines derive from Ellen G. White's writings, he affirms that the Bible is the undeniable well-spring. Ellen G. White's unique contribution lies in the integrating principle that derives from her *Great Controversy theme*.¹¹⁹ In agreement with this theme, Norman R. Gulley indicates that he constructed his system of theology using this *Great Controversy theme*.¹²⁰ Ellen G. White is therefore used as a theological basis for Gulley's system of theology just as the Bible is. Note also how Douglass affirms that "Seventh-day Adventists have believed for more than a century that Ellen G. White was inspired in the same manner and to the same degree as Biblical prophets".¹²¹ This shows that the writings of Ellen G. White have had an influence on Adventist theology, which should be obvious.

In an attempt to draw a difference between the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings, Burt explains that "while Seventh-day Adventists do not see a difference in the nature or character of Ellen G. White's inspiration compared with the Bible writers, they are very clear on the difference between the role and function of Bible and her writings. Adventists would compare her writings to non-canonical prophets such as Enoch, Huldah, Deborah, Miriam, Elijah, Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, Iddo, John the Baptist, and disciples/apostles of Jesus who did not write portions of scripture".¹²² Their status as true prophets of God is never disputed.

Burt continues to say that "Nathan in particular is a good example of a non-canonical prophet with a similar role as Ellen [G.] White. He is called a prophet, he wrote an inspired book, yet his book is not included in the Bible. Nevertheless his prophetic role was recognized by David (who was himself a canonical prophet), cf. 1 Kings 1; 1 Chronicles 17: 1-15; 29: 29; 2 Chronicles 9: 29; Psalm 51: 1. Hence Burt concludes, "Thus Adventists and Ellen [G.] White clearly ascribe fundamental authority to the canon of scripture and do not see modern prophetic visions and dreams

¹¹⁹ H.E. Douglass, 1998: 13.

¹²⁰ N.R. Gulley, 2003: xxii-xxv.

¹²¹ H.E. Douglass, 1998: 416.

¹²² M. Burt, 2007: 8.

as additional scripture.” Beegle has called this, “‘second revelation’ or ‘post apostolic tradition’, which is “helpful but it is qualitatively different from the gospel of Jesus”.¹²³

On matters of doctrine, Burt maintains that “it can be historically demonstrated that Ellen [G.] White’s writings were not the source of any Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. Her counsels have enriched Adventist doctrinal study and provided a correcting and unifying influence, but her writings have never been the basis for fundamental doctrine or Christian experience”.¹²⁴ But Cindy Tutsch contends that “early Adventist leaders formally recognized God’s revelations through Ellen [G.] White as having theological authority”.¹²⁵ It should therefore be expected that since the same Spirit inspired the Bible and Ellen G. White’s writings, both literary products should bear the theological authority of God. The same God spoke through both pieces of writings with equal authority although during different times and to different audiences and cultures.

Kelsey says that “to call scripture ‘authority’ for theology in any sense of authority is to acknowledge the *normative* status of scripture in relation to theology.” [But] “to be sure, ‘normativity’ is relative to a specific activity, viz., doing theology”.¹²⁶ Scripture’s authority is in this sense applicable to every sphere of knowledge or activity. For example, Gulley maintains that “Scripture is the sole basis of systematic theology and the thesis of his system”.¹²⁷ Kelsey concludes therefore that “Scripture is ‘authority’ precisely in relation to the specifically *Christian* character of proposals”.¹²⁸ It therefore follows that “to say, Scripture is authority for theology is to commit oneself to engaging in doing theology under a rule that requires one to use scripture in certain ways”.¹²⁹ But only when one gets quite straight on how Scripture is authority can one be sure of

¹²³ D.M. Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973: 118.

¹²⁴ M. Burt, 2007: 9.

¹²⁵ C. Tutsch, *Ellen White on Leadership: Guidance for those who influence others*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2008: 11; Cf. H.E. Douglass, 1998: 428.

¹²⁶ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 152.

¹²⁷ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 166, 174.

¹²⁸ H.D. Kelsey, 1999: 153.

¹²⁹ H.D. Kelsey, 1999: 154; Cf. K. Donkor, who maintained, ‘The nature of a statement of beliefs, the community’s reading of Scripture points to one of its key roles: as an indicator of the community is declaring that “this is the way we read Scripture.” Furthermore, the statement of beliefs, as a system of beliefs, becomes collectively the principle or framework of interpretation for the community in organizing the disparate data of Scripture....In this way, the statement not only declares the interpretational stance of the community in the past, but also provides a guide for present

developing theological proposals that are truly in accord with Scripture, and so aptly Christian.¹³⁰

Here Gulley is emphatic when he says that “*sola Scriptura* is the norm, and not one norm, or even the supreme norm, among many norms. There can only be one norm, and that is Scripture itself”.¹³¹

This survey of the Seventh-day Adventist literature reveals a diversity of positions and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in connection to the writings of Ellen G. White. In general, there are those who view the Bible as the “primary” authority in matters of faith and practice. Then there are those who take it to be the “only/sole” rule of faith and practice. The third group speaks of the Bible as the “final” authority in matters of doctrine and Christian living. It should be admitted that for some, adjectives such as “primary”, “only/sole”, and “final” are used interchangeably. Gulley argues that “history is replete with examples which show that unless Scripture is sole authority, it becomes a lesser authority to human reason. However, “the primacy of Scripture over tradition is better than the reverse position of Catholic theology”.¹³² To put it another way, Douglass maintains, “Thus *sola scriptura* means that all claims to divine authority must meet the standard of previously accepted prophetic messages....The slogan, ‘The Bible and the Bible only!’ means that every later prophet would have his or her messages judged by their faithfulness to earlier messages. Further, this phrase means that all that the Bible has taught is to be honored, including its declaration that the “gift of prophecy” would continue to the end of time. Thus *sola scriptura* does not mean that God does not intend to add information to men and women through the “gift of prophecy” – for that would be a non sequitur; it would deny a Biblical principle”.¹³³

Osadolor Imasogie elaborates well on this line of reasoning in his criticism of African theology. He says that the “objective sources of theology can be subdivided into primary and secondary segments. The Holy Scriptures, being the inspired book or the primary record of human witness to the divine self-disclosure in history, is the primary objective source of theology....The

interpretational efforts....It should be evident that in fulfilling the foregoing role, the statement begins to function as a “rule.” Anti-creedalism takes some of its objections from this role of officially defined doctrinal system’, 2006: 44.

¹³⁰ H.D. Kelsey, 1999: 214-215.

¹³¹ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 373.

¹³² N.R. Gulley, 2003: 373.

¹³³ H.E. Douglass, 1998: 378.

Holy Bible becomes the primary objective medium by means of the Living Lord, through the Holy Spirit, continues to disclose God to us. Our theology must, therefore, be authenticated by the Bible....Any failure to recognize the crucial role of these “givens” in Christian theologizing in Africa will only result in the production of African anthropology rather than African Christian theology”.¹³⁴

The general position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with regard to the relationship of Ellen G. White’s writings to the Bible, as revealed above, is that the phrase “the Bible and the Bible only” (*sola Scriptura*), excludes these writings. But this is in no way an attempt to deny the divine authority of these writings, but to indicate that they are not a basis for doctrine. Nevertheless, the impact of these writings on Adventist theology cannot be denied.

2.4. The relationship of the *sola Scriptura* principle to other sources in Adventist theology

In recognition of the Methodist background of some of the founders of Adventism, such as Ellen G. White, W.W. Whidden wrote that “the most immediate and essential influence on Adventism has been the Wesleyan tradition”.¹³⁵ One year later, Whidden wrote in the *Andrews University Seminary Studies* journal to demonstrate how those in the Wesleyan tradition have sought to come to terms with the problems raised by the application of the *sola Scriptura* principle. After examining the bewildering doctrinal pluralism prevalent in North America, Whidden suggested a quadrilateral (*Holy Scriptures, tradition, reason, and experience*) alternative.¹³⁶ Whidden argues that “it seems that one of the best ways to begin the exodus out of this embarrassing, pluralistic impasse is the judicious application of the methodology inherent in the so-called Quadrilateral – especially as it was practically modeled by [John] Wesley”.¹³⁷ He proposes what he thinks would be the best replacement for *sola scriptura*, namely, *Prima Scriptura*.

¹³⁴ O. Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*. Achimota, Ghana, West Africa: Africa Christian Press, 1983: 72, 73, 74.

¹³⁵ W.W. Whidden, ‘Ellen White and John Wesley: Wesley and his American children laid the foundation for the core of Adventist teachings of Salvation’. *Spectrum*. Vol.25. No.5, September 1996: 48.

¹³⁶ W.W. Whidden, ‘*Sola Scriptura*, Inerrantist Fundamentalism, and the Wesleyan quadrilateral: Is “No Creed but the Bible” a workable solution?’ *Andrews University Seminary Studies*. 1997: 215.

¹³⁷ Whidden, 1997: 216.

David Larson too observes that “Wesley was painfully aware, for instance, that the Protestant expression *sola scriptura* is often used, not only to promote the primacy of the Bible, but also to protect particular interpretations of Scripture, interpretations that frequently work to the advantage of some at the expense of others”.¹³⁸

Whidden proposes that “the major implication of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral would be *prima scriptura*. I would urge that such slogans as *sola Scriptura* and especially “No creed but the Bible”, be laid aside and that a renewal of theological discourse be sought within the *prima scriptura* framework”.¹³⁹ In response Norman Gulley argues that this is “a backward step from Luther, Calvin, and Turrentin, and a position not much different from the Council of Trent.” Gulley goes further to claim that, “This Wesleyan Quadrilateral, as it came to be known, lowered Scripture from its sovereign position, a move that shook the church to its foundations in the Protestant Reformation and beyond”.¹⁴⁰

Whidden justifies his proposal by saying that “the Quadrilateral enables the biblical interpreter to be more honest and self-critical about what is actually going on in the theological development”.¹⁴¹ He judges that, “persons working in this Wesleyan mode are better prepared to be candidly realistic about their experiences, but they also know that no love relationship arises out of some “virgin-born” conditions”. In order to demonstrate a greater level of honesty, Fritz Guy also argues that it is better to recognize that “Scripture never functions in a solo role. It must always be witnessed to by the Spirit in the setting of earnest individual and collective experience”.¹⁴²

Whidden suggests that implementing the Wesleyan Quadrilateral allows us to focus on the *message*, and not on the *medium*. “The Wesleyan methodology allows a greater focus on the

¹³⁸ D. Larson, ‘Wesley keeps Dad and Me Talking: Rediscovering Wesley’s loom of faith (faith, tradition, reason, and experience) can reknit the Adventist Community’. *Spectrum*. Vol. 25. No. 5, September 1996: 44.

¹³⁹ W.W. Whidden, 1997: 216.

¹⁴⁰ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 557: It seems that Gulley’s concept of tradition differs from that defined by Oberman and McGrath and which Luther and the other Reformers had to deal with. His concept of tradition is linked to the Jewish traditions which Jesus condemned (Cf. Matt. 15:9; Mark 7: 6-7; N.R. Gulley, 2003: 707-708); Cf. note 79..

¹⁴¹ W.W. Whidden, 1997:217.

¹⁴² F. Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999: 220.

message of Scripture. Perhaps the time has come to concentrate the theological spotlight on the *message* of the Bible rather than on the Bible as *medium*".¹⁴³

Guy equally calls for the adoption of the *primacy* of Scripture in theological thinking. This is because he believes that "Scripture is not the only ingredient in Christian, including Adventist, interpretation of faith".¹⁴⁴ What would be better for him is "an affirmation of something like the "Wesleyan quadrilateral" consisting of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience".¹⁴⁵ Guy argues that "the multiplicity of theological ingredients is often overlooked, and sometimes denied, by theologians as well as by other Christians." His reason for saying that *prima Scriptura* is appropriate for Adventist theologians in thinking their faith, is that "the extraordinary ministry of Ellen White in the Adventist community of faith should function not as another norm, another "rule of faith and practice," but in a quite different way – namely, as a theological motivation and guide in the service of scripture".¹⁴⁶

Larson maintains that "the Wesleyan Quadrilateral can help clarify another important issue for Adventists – how the writing of Ellen White ought to relate to Scripture. Two approaches that seem less than promising in opposite ways are those of elevating these publications to the doctrinal authority of the Bible, on the other hand, or relegating them to the status of mere devotional use, on the other. There are many advantages, I believe, in following the English Reformation and the Methodist Revivals in understanding *sola scriptura* to refer to the primacy, not the exclusive, of biblical authority".¹⁴⁷

Davidson too speaks of the *primacy of Scripture* principle in determining truth.¹⁴⁸ Such a position is not new in the Adventist literature as revealed by F.D. Nichol who wrote that "Mrs. White is also clearly on record as to the primacy of the Bible and the relation of her writings to

¹⁴³ W.W. Whidden, 1997: 217.

¹⁴⁴ F. Guy, 1999: 137.

¹⁴⁵ F. Guy, 1999: 137.

¹⁴⁶ F. Guy, 1999: 123.

¹⁴⁷ D. Larson, 1996: 43.

¹⁴⁸ R.M. Davidson, 'Biblical Interpretation', in: R. Dederen (Ed.), *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Hagerstown, MD: 2000: 60.

it”.¹⁴⁹ Nichol further says that “we thank God for the Bible, blessed Book that guides our feet along the path of life. We thank Him also for the manifestation of the Spirit of prophecy in these last days, to enlighten our minds to better understand that Book”.¹⁵⁰

Although Ekkerhardt Mueller does not mention the term ‘*prima Scriptura*’, he recognizes other resources useful for interpreting Scripture. Starting with Scripture, Mueller suggests that biblical interpreters can use commentaries, Ellen White literature, concordances, and the community of believers. He advises that “if we find new ideas and interpretations that differ from the accepted understanding, it is crucial to check with others, especially with those with expertise in interpreting Scripture. Furthermore, we must be willing to abandon our interpretations or pet opinions if others show our interpretations are questionable”.¹⁵¹

Fernando Canale too seems to find room for the use of ‘*prima Scriptura*’ to understand theological and scientific disciplines, in addition to the *sola-tota scriptura* principle.¹⁵² Adventist theologians¹⁵³ seem to have embraced the use of this principle in their writings. In addition, Canale argues that Adventist theologians cannot choose not to use philosophical ideas, but can only ask how they are going to interpret them. Canale seems to find it the most comprehensive way of viewing Scripture using the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura*.¹⁵⁴

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim’s controversial book, *Receiving the Word*, holds to the traditional, conservative Adventist view of Scripture. Koranteng-Pipim wrote that “Seventh-day Adventists generally have always upheld the sole authority of Scripture. Believing that the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are the clear, trusty-worthy revelation of God’s will and His salvation, Adventists hold that the Scriptures alone constitute the standard on which all teachings and

¹⁴⁹ F.D. Nichol, 1951: 88.

¹⁵⁰ F.D. Nichol, 1951: 90.

¹⁵¹ E. Mueller, ‘Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture’, in: G.E. Reid (Ed.), *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist approach*, 2006: 131, 132.

¹⁵² F. Canale, *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005: 99.

¹⁵³ F.M. Hasel, ‘Presuppositions in the interpretation of Scripture’, in: G.E. Reid (Ed.), *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist approach*. Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006: 38, 42; R.M. Davidson, 2000: 61; F. Canale, 2006: 76.

¹⁵⁴ F. Canale, ‘From Vision to System: Finishing the Task of Adventist Theology, Part III Sanctuary and Hermeneutics’. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. Vol. 17. No. 2. Autumn 2006: 36-80.

practices are to be grounded and which they are to be tested (2 Tim 3:15-17; Ps 119:105; Prov 30:5,6; Isa 8: 20; John 17:17; 2Thess 3:14; Heb 4: 12).”¹⁵⁵ But he does not deny the value of extra-biblical data in the theological enterprise, since “the Bible itself teaches that God has revealed Himself in nature, history and human experience (Ps 19; Rom 1 & 2; Heb 1-2). Adventists may learn from extra-biblical sources such as science, history, tradition, psychology, and archaeology”,¹⁵⁶ he says.

Koranteng-Pipim has not escaped the *prima scriptura* view of Scripture when urging that “Scripture must always be the sole authoritative source of human knowledge – above knowledge from nature (science), human experience (psychology), human history, church tradition, etc....If data from extra-biblical sources accord with the teaching of the Bible, they should be accepted; otherwise they should be rejected”.¹⁵⁷

There are other Adventist theologians who use the term ‘supreme’ or ‘superior’ authority.¹⁵⁸ This means that “conscience, reason, feelings, and religious or mystical experiences are subordinate to the authority of Scripture. [While] these may have a legitimate sphere,...they should constantly be brought under the scrutiny of the Word of God (Heb 4:12).”¹⁵⁹ Frank. M. Hasel suggests that the *sola Scriptura* principle was intended to safeguard the authority of Scripture from dependence upon other sources, such as the church, including the possibility that the standard of its interpretation could come from outside. But even F.M. Hasel acknowledges the value of other resources in the interpretation of Scripture. He says,

“To understand *sola scriptura*, in this sense, does not exclude the reality of cultural influences or the reality of religious experience. To maintain that the scripture interprets scripture does not negate the insight from other fields of study, such as biblical archaeology, anthropology, sociology, or history, which may illumine some biblical aspects and the background of scriptural passages, contributing to a better understanding of the meaning of the biblical text. Nor does it exclude the help of other resources in the task of interpretation, such as biblical lexicons, dictionaries, concordances, and other books and commentaries. However, in the proper

¹⁵⁵ S. Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word: How new Approaches to the Bible impact our Biblical faith and Lifestyle*. Ann Arbor, MI: Berean Books, 1996: 105.

¹⁵⁶ S. Koranteng-Pipim, 1996: 110.

¹⁵⁷ S. Koranteng-Pipim, 1996: 111.

¹⁵⁸ P.M. van Bemmelen, ‘Revelation and inspiration’, in: R. Dederen (Ed.), *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Vol. 12. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000: 42; F.M. Hasel, 2006: 43.

¹⁵⁹ P.M. van Bemmelen, 2000: 42.

interpretation of the Bible, the text of Scripture has priority over all other aspects, sciences, and secondary helps”.¹⁶⁰

Edward E. Zinke approaches the *sola Scriptura* principle from a foundational perspective. For him the foundation for our worldview and faith must come solely from the Bible, the Word of God; hence the Protestant Reformation concept, *sola Scriptura*, “by Scripture alone”.¹⁶¹

Further still, other Adventist theologians refer to the Bible as the ‘final’ authority.¹⁶² George W. Reid argues that “most Evangelicals appeal to the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura* but it appears the reformers meant by this expression that as the court of final appeal they would accept the Bible alone”. Unlike other denominations, Reid maintains that, “Adventists have heretofore placed the Bible – the full 66 books – in commanding position”.¹⁶³

Commenting on Ellen G. White’s call for “The Bible and the Bible Only” in the book, *The Great Controversy*,¹⁶⁴ Reid says that “Mrs. White is not here denying value to other channels of learning; instead she is identifying the Scriptures as the sole final voice in matters of religious faith”.¹⁶⁵ Thus Davidson concludes that, “a fundamental principle set forth by Scripture concerning itself is that the Bible alone (*sola scriptura*) is the final norm of truth”.¹⁶⁶ It is therefore clear that while Seventh-day Adventist theologians hold a high view of the Bible, they acknowledge the value of other resources for use in the theological enterprise. With the Bible serving as the final norm, *prima Scriptura* becomes the logically applicable principle rather than *sola Scriptura* (the Bible only, or by Scripture alone).

¹⁶⁰ F.M. Hasel, 2006: 36.

¹⁶¹ E.E. Zinke, ‘The Role of the Centrist Theologian in the Church’. *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. Vol. 2. No. 1, Spring 1991: 54.

¹⁶² G.W. Reid, *Is the Bible our Final Authority*. Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, [n.d.]; R.M. Davidson, 2000: 60.

¹⁶³ G.W. Reid, n.d. 1.

¹⁶⁴ E.G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950: 595.

¹⁶⁵ G.W. Reid, n.d. 1.

¹⁶⁶ R.M. Davidson, 2000: 60.

2.5. Adventism and the canon of Scripture

Norman Gulley defines the canon as “a select group of inspired writings that is definitive and closed. God sent many prophets to His people, and many of them put their message in written form”.¹⁶⁷ Gulley argues that the “Jewish leaders did not decide which books were from God. One needs to come to the Christian church for that. Not until the end of the second century A.D. did study begin toward choosing the Old Testament canon, and the debate lasted until the fifth century A.D. The New Testament canon was not fully agreed upon even in the fifth century. Hence during most of its first four centuries, the church had Scripture, but no canon. So it took a long time for the church to officially make a decision on the canon”.¹⁶⁸

But Gulley rejects the apocryphal books on the basis that the Jews never accepted these writings as Scripture; and that they were not found attached to the Hebrew Bible. However, they are attached to Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint (LXX). The first Latin Bible, translated from the Greek in the second century, also included the Apocrypha. Jerome resisted their inclusion in the Latin Vulgate, but the Council of Carthage (397) accepted them as suitable for reading. Equally, the Council of Trent accepted all the Apocrypha, except 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasses. This shows that both Jewish and early Christian leaders had a role in the formation of the canon of the Bible.¹⁶⁹

Gulley indicates that “there are a number of canons in history....Beginning with contemporary times, there are two major canons of Scripture. The first is the Protestant canon, which contains the books found in major versions such as the King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, and the New International Version, to name a few. These contain thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament, a total of sixty-six

¹⁶⁷ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 318.

¹⁶⁸ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 319.

¹⁶⁹ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 317.

books. The Catholic canon, as found in the Jerusalem Bible, contains an additional thirteen books considered to be apocryphal by Protestants”¹⁷⁰

Gulley vehemently argues, “I believe the canon is not the result of any church declaration. How could a church declare Scripture to be authoritative and still maintain its own authority to so judge? As Paul Jewett so perceptively says, ‘First of all, to say that the church establishes the canon is a circular piece of reasoning. A final authority (the church) cannot establish a final authority (Scripture) over itself’”.¹⁷¹ Gulley refers to Turrentin, “Turrentin makes a distinction between the ministerial and magisterial function of the church in relation to the canon. The church does have a ministerial role, to defend Scripture, but it does not have a magisterial function over Scripture”.¹⁷² Gulley maintains that “the church does not bestow canonicity on Scripture. It recognizes it within Scripture itself”.¹⁷³

With regard to the Old Testament canon one finds a difference between the Jews and the Samaritans. For Christians, J. Barton inquires,

“Is the canon of the Christian church the Hebrew Bible or the Greek Bible, or even the Latin or Ethiopic Bible?...Even if we leave aside the last possibility as too complicated to contemplate at the moment, it remains true that the official canon for Catholics is the Latin Bible, which corresponds much more closely to the Greek than to the Hebrew. When Catholics interpret the Hebrew rather than the Latin text of those books that exist in Hebrew, that is, those books that are in the Hebrew Bible, they are doing so on the historical grounds that the Hebrew represents the *original* text. But if we are to press instead for the *final* text, I cannot see how we can justify appeal to the Hebrew rather than to the Greek or Latin. The Vulgate, after all, is certainly the Bible as it has been received in Catholicism, and the final form of the Bible for a Catholic reader is therefore the Latin text of the Vulgate, just as for the Orthodox Christian it is the Greek Bible. We cannot simultaneously insist on the final form as what the Church has received and insist on the MT of the Hebrew Bible because it is more original; that is an attempt to eat one’s cake and still have it”.¹⁷⁴

Kelsey observed that to call a text or sets of texts ‘scripture’ is also to ascribe some sort of wholeness to the text or sets of texts. However, there is an irreducible variety of kinds of wholeness

¹⁷⁰ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 317.

¹⁷¹ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 319.

¹⁷² N.R. Gulley, 2003: 321.

¹⁷³ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 322; While it was the church which determined what is or is not canonical, it seems reasonable to say that just like a nation develops laws to govern its citizens, once a statute or bill is signed into law, it must be obeyed. The only deference is that Scripture is revealed, inspired and received from God, making it unlawful to disobey it or change it. Government laws may be repealed by parliaments that made them..

¹⁷⁴ J. Barton, 2007: 189.

that may be ascribed to the texts.¹⁷⁵ This suggests that there must be delimitation to the number of books that should constitute a given Scriptural canon. This in turn will also be evident, in the actual practice of appealing to Scripture in the course of doing theology, because there turns out to be an irreducible logical diversity of ways the texts are concretely construed as ‘whole’ or ‘unity’.¹⁷⁶

Since adopting a text as ‘Christian Scripture’ decisively shapes people’s identities when used in the common life of the Christian community, therefore to adopt a ‘canon’ as authority for the common life of the church is to adopt the particular way of being ‘Christian’.¹⁷⁷ This explains why many divisions prevail in Christianity which rise among different denominational groups adopting different sets of canonical books as authoritative in the common life of their church. Seventh-day Adventists also adopted a specific canon which they consider to be authoritative in the common life of their church, which also serves to shape their particular identity. Kelsey therefore concludes that both ‘Scripture’ and ‘authority’ are best understood in functional terms without compromise to their normativity.¹⁷⁸ In the same way both Scripture and authority can be best understood in regard to ‘doing theology’ in functional terms without loss to their ‘normativity’.¹⁷⁹

Hence Adventist authors indicate that Adventists, like most Protestants, only accept the 66 books of the Bible, without the Apocrypha.¹⁸⁰ This does not mean that they do not read the Apocryphal books. Hugh Dunton argues that “although Jerome included the Apocrypha in his Latin translation, the Vulgate, he drew a distinction between the ‘church books’ (*libri ecclesiastici*) and the canonical books. The former could be read for edification, but not for confirmation of doctrine”.¹⁸¹

Gerald A. Klingbeil admits that defining valid criteria for the process of canonization is not an easy task, but he suggests that a high view of revelation and inspiration is helpful in providing

¹⁷⁵ H.D. Kelsey, 1999: 100.

¹⁷⁶ H.D. Kelsey, 1999: 101, 102.

¹⁷⁷ H.D. Kelsey, 1999: 91.

¹⁷⁸ H.D. Kelsey, 1999: 207.

¹⁷⁹ H.D. Kelsey, 1999: 212.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. A.S. Maxwell, *Your Bible and You*. Washington DC: 1959: 28; G.F. Hasel, 1985: 102; D. Marshall, *The battle for the Bible*. Autumn House, Grantham, England: Stanborough Press, 2004: 31.

¹⁸¹ H. Dunton, *Bible Versions: A consumer’s guide to the Bible*. Autumn House, Grantham, England: Stanborough Press, 1997: 49.

some guidance. He says that “the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the canon and of the text is based upon a clear understanding of inspiration. The same Holy Spirit who inspired authors in different time periods, in different historical contexts also has remained actively involved in the conservation and transmission of Scripture. One of the main features of the biblical canon is the self-authenticating nature of the texts, since they were ‘inspired’”.¹⁸²

As it was with the Protestant Reformers, unfortunately Seventh-day Adventists have not been spared from controversies arising from the interpretation of the Bible. Hence Fernando Canale laments that “at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Adventist theology stands divided...The nature of Adventist pluralism is methodological. It generates from disagreements on the basic principles from which we interpret scripture and understand Christian doctrines. It seriously endangers the unity, ministry, and mission of the church”.¹⁸³ For maintaining denominational unity, K. Donkor proposed that “the statement of fundamental beliefs serves as a rallying point for those who make the same confession of the truth...Nevertheless, dependence of denominational unity on doctrine cannot be denied, since theological matters usually create separate denominations in the first place. Herein lies the importance of affirming the statement of fundamental beliefs. It is one of the strong evidences of the unity of the church”.¹⁸⁴

Earlier, Jack Provonsha noted that the tensions in Adventism are not peculiar to Adventists alone. He maintains that “the tensions that have developed in Adventism because of this pluriformity are not unique to the Adventist Church. They are, however, heightened in Adventism compared with other analogous movements by the exclusive intensity with which Adventists, at least in the past, have stressed their ‘peculiarity’ as a ‘called’ people”.¹⁸⁵

E. Mueller too admits that a crucial and very practical issue today involves the question of which method should be employed to interpret Scripture, for interpretation is necessary, as pointed

¹⁸² G.A. Klingbeil, ‘The Text and The Canon of Scripture’, in: G.W. Reid (Ed.), *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, 2006: 107; Cf. G.F. Hasel, 1985: 102.

¹⁸³ F. Canale, 2006: 36.

¹⁸⁴ K. Donkor, 2006: 48; Donkor emphasizes that ‘the role of a statement of belief in preserving the church’s theological unity is significant because that unity contributes to the promotion of the mission of the church. Clearly, community effort is better performed in an atmosphere of homogenous faith’, p49.

¹⁸⁵ J.W. Provonsha, *A Remnant in Crisis*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993: 8.

out even by Jesus (Luke 24:27).¹⁸⁶ Gerhard F. Hasel's survey reveals that there are three major methods of biblical interpretation that have been in use almost 2,000 years, namely: the allegorical method in the pre-Reformations period, the grammatical-historical method in the Reformations period, and the historical-critical method in the post-Reformations period.¹⁸⁷

G.F. Hasel further reveals that although the Antiochene school promoted a literal-grammatical method of interpreting the Bible in the Pre-Reformation Period, it became eclipsed by the allegorical method of the Alexandrian school. But the sixteenth century Protestant Reformers such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and many of the Anabaptist radical Reformers, broke with the medieval allegorical method of interpretation. The grammatical-historical method became the main method of the Protestant Reformers. Unfortunately, influences stemming from the age of the Enlightenment and rationalism ushered in the historical-critical method which has dominated the post-Reformations period.

Canale criticizes the Protestant Reformers and subsequently Evangelical theologians for failing to apply the *sola Scriptura* principle consistently, because they constructed their theology by using hermeneutical and doctrinal guidelines drawn from Augustine. In doing so, the Reformers and Evangelical theology failed to depart from Roman Catholic's dependence on Greek (Platonic) ontology which characterized Augustinian theology.¹⁸⁸ But Kenneth A. Strand and Walter. B. Douglas reason that the early fathers used Greek philosophical notions merely to prove them inferior to the sacred Scriptures of the Christians and as an honest effort to put the Bible message and an explanation of Christian practice into terms heathen addressees could understand.¹⁸⁹ Theirs was a Greek philosophically dominated context.

With regard to the prevailing postmodern ontological divide, which is affecting Adventism, Canale reasons that even in this day evangelical theologians have not consistently applied the *sola Scriptura* principle, as many implicitly or explicitly construct their theologies using multiple

¹⁸⁶ E. Muller, 2006: 111.

¹⁸⁷ G.F. Hasel, 1985: 1-6.

¹⁸⁸ F. Canale, 2005: 100-101.

¹⁸⁹ K.A. Strand & W.B. Douglas, 'Interpretation of the Bible in Early and Medieval Church', in: G.M. Hyde, *Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*. Washington DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1974: 30, 31.

theological sources, which are conceptually integrated in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral?¹⁹⁰ He charges that “evangelical theology¹⁹¹ was created when the magisterial theologians of the [P]rotestant [R]eformation defied tradition from the authority of biblical ideas”.¹⁹² But he also recommends that “a scientific approach to the investigation of the epistemological origin of Scripture should be built on the basis of a total commitment to the *sola Scriptura* principle from which both the pre-suppositional structure and the data for a new model of revelation and inspiration must flow”.¹⁹³ The Seventh-day Adventist Church categorically, rejected not only the historical-critical method, but also its modified version during its Annual Council of the General Conference in October 1986 in Rio de Janeiro, when it adopted a document entitled, *Bible Study: Presuppositions, Principles, and Methods*.

Discussion of the *sola Scriptura* principle always extends to many other issues related to the doctrine of Scripture. On the issue of Scripture, Seventh-day Adventists claim to hold to the *sola Scriptura* principle, especially as applied by the radical Reformers such as the Puritans, and the Anabaptists. The key issue in the application of the *sola scriptura* principle included (and still does) the definition of tradition, the authority to interpret Scripture, and the relationship of the Reformation to the early church fathers, councils and their doctrinal formulations. Seventh-day Adventists accept the doctrinal formulations achieved by the early church councils, such as the nature of Christ and the trinity.

On the matter of tradition, Kwabena Donkor has proposed that “it is important to distinguish tradition as the teaching and practice of a church from tradition as defined, for example, by the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). No denomination can exist without tradition in the

¹⁹⁰ F. Canale, 2005: 19.

¹⁹¹ S.J. Grenz, D. Guretzki & C.F. Nordling maintain that “in its most general sense *evangelical* means being characterised by a concern for the essential core of the Christian message, which proclaims the possibility of salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Most specifically, *evangelicalism* has been used to refer to the transdenominational and international movement that emphasizes the need to experience personal conversion through belief in Christ and his work on the cross, and a commitment to the authority of Scripture as the infallible guide for Christian faith and practice”, 1999: 48.

¹⁹² F. Canale, 2005: 19.

¹⁹³ F. Canale, ‘Revelation and Inspiration: The Liberal Model’. *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Vol. 32. No. 3, Autumn 1994: 195.

former sense. Whereas the former may be a helpful, even an unavoidable and indispensable theological resource, the latter has been rejected by Protestants as contrary to the *sola scriptura* principle. Even within an acceptable view of tradition, care ought to be taken to avoid a ‘rule of faith’ sense of tradition in which the church’s interpretation of Scripture equates with Scripture”¹⁹⁴

It seems clear that the two main issues of contention have to do with who has authority to interpret Scripture, and whether Scripture should be the only rule of faith and practice. On the first issue, the Reformers protested against the medieval church’s claim to interpret Scripture. Seventh-day Adventists too claim that Scripture is its own interpreter, hence *sola Scriptura*. But Davidson maintains that “the NT witness is clear that the interpretation of Scripture is the task of the entire church, not restricted to a few specialists (see Acts 17:11; Eph. 3:18, 19; 5:10, 17)”.¹⁹⁵ He further argues that “the need for interpreting Scripture arises because of the finite human mind in contrast with the infinite God who reveals Himself, and because of the darkening of the human mind through sin. The necessity for the interpretive process is further mandated by our separation in time, distance, language, and culture from the scriptural autographs”.¹⁹⁶

With regard to the question of source for truth and doctrine, the several adjectives that are attached to Scripture such as ‘primary’, ‘supreme’, ‘final’, recognize that Scripture is not the ‘only’ source of truth and doctrine. God has revealed truth through other media besides Scripture. What will be helpful is to measure or test truths coming through other sources by the authority of Scripture. In that case *sola Scriptura* should not be understood to mean that Scripture is the ‘only’ source of the truth and doctrine. Rather, Scripture should be accorded the final or supreme say or authority on what should be accepted as doctrinal truth.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Seventh-day Adventists claimed to be heirs of the sixteenth century Protestant

¹⁹⁴ K. Donkor, 2003: 43.

¹⁹⁵ R.M. Davidson, 2000: 60.

¹⁹⁶ R.M. Davidson, 2000: 58.

Reformers, as well as descendants of the early church apostles. From the Protestant Reformation, particularly from the radical Anabaptist wing, Seventh-day Adventists claim to have inherited among other doctrines, the Seventh-day Adventist Sabbath, baptism by immersion, the foundational authority of the Bible in the *sola Scriptura* principle.

Although holding to a conservative view of Scripture, Seventh-day Adventists have developed a summary statement of their fundamental beliefs. Seventh-day Adventists also believe that one of the identifying marks of God's last day movement is the presence of the gift of prophecy, as revealed in the ministry and writings of Ellen G. White. These writings are not an addition to the sacred canon of Scripture, which is believed to have closed. The ministry and writings of Ellen G. White is seen within the framework of other non-canonical prophets mentioned in the Bible.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Bible should be the only source of doctrine, and that its interpretation should be by the Bible itself (*sola Scriptura*). Adventism's acceptance of the sixty-six books of the Biblical canon makes them differ with Martin Luther who held on to a so-called 'canon within a canon', meaning that he accepted a fewer number of books than are contained in the biblical canon. Like most Protestant denominations, the role of tradition and the apocryphal writings have no significant place in Adventism. While some Adventist scholars refuse to allow the Bible to be classified among other sources of theology such as tradition, reason, and experience; there are other Adventist scholars who recommend *prima scriptura* as the most practical option for use in the development of theology. However, even those who are opposed to *prima scriptura*, admit the fact that there are other sources that do contribute in the development of Christian theology.

Seventh-day Adventists constantly promote the study of the Bible among the members of the church. But there is none, or limited use of the writings of the early fathers and the apocryphal writings among Seventh-day Adventists. Meanwhile they promote the reading of the writings of Ellen G. White for the edification of the members. A conservative understanding and application of

the *sola Scriptura* principle in Adventism creates a subtle conflict for the effective reading of the writings of Ellen G. White which are non canonical. That is why some Adventist scholars promote the use of *prima Scriptura*, and especially using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, comprising Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. After all, other extra-biblical sources contribute to the theological enterprise.

In the administration of the church it became evident to the founders of Adventism that they could not limit themselves to practicing only those things that are explicitly taught in the Bible. James White, in his promotion of the organization of the Adventist church was led to take the position that what the Bible does not forbid, it allows. That seems to be a principle that is still being practiced by Adventism when they authorize certain practices in the administration of the church today such as the ordination of women elders and deaconesses – practices which have no explicit biblical support. In this aspect Adventists are more in line with Zwingli's position than that of the radical Reformers.

CHAPTER 3

THE PRIMACY OF SCRIPTURE

Introduction

Chapter 1 examined the Protestant Reformation roots of the *sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone) principle. The chapter revealed that magisterial Reformers such as Martin Luther, unlike the radical Reformers, accepted the doctrines developed by the early church councils and the early fathers such as the deity of Christ and the trinity, while they subordinated tradition and the apocryphal writings. Chapter 2 examined Adventism's connection to the Protestant Reformation, and its acceptance and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle. Although Adventism claims to have arisen from the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation, it accepts the inspiration of non canonical writings of Ellen G. White. Meanwhile Adventists, like other Protestant Christians, believe in a closed biblical canon.

This chapter 3 argues that if the understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle maintained by Martin Luther and Adventism is to be sustained, Scripture should be viewed as the supreme/ultimate or primary authority in matters of doctrine and practice for Protestant Christians. It is therefore not the only theological resource for doctrine. There are other secondary sources. Luther, while contending for the supremacy of Scripture above the church, popes, and councils, acknowledged the doctrinal contribution of the early councils and the writings of early church fathers. Adventists too, believe in the supreme authority of Scripture, but they accept the divine inspiration of the writings of Ellen G. White.

Chapter 3 therefore argues that God's self revelation and ministry to humanity is not restricted or limited to the medium of Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). After all, before Scripture was written "God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son..." (Heb 1:1). The writers of the Old Testament books, the Gospels and the Epistles acknowledge that the canonical writings do not contain everything that was inspired or what Jesus did (1Chron 29: 29; John 20:30, 31; 21:25). A

variety of divine media functioned before, during, and after the writing of the Bible books, that is from Moses to the apostle John – author of the last book of Revelation.

Beyond the close of the biblical canon, the apostles reveal that the coming of the Holy Spirit, through whom spiritual gifts were to be given, God would continue to speak and minister to the Church (John 16:12, 13; Acts 2: 38, 39; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4: 11-13). Therefore Christians are admonished, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thess 5:19-21). Adhering to the supremacy/ultimate or primary authority of Scripture enables Christian believers to benefit from the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit, including the ministry and the inspiration of the Ellen G. White writings, which are tested by the authority of Scripture (Acts 17: 11).

3.1. God’s self-revelation: A Confirmation of the primacy of Scripture in theology

Adventist scholar, Gordon Hyde introduces his little book entitled *God Has Spoken* by saying, “Scripture is God’s chosen channel in which divine revelation and inspiration have made known God’s character and His will for man and the universe, and Christianity is a revealed faith, not something man has created in his evolutionary development”.¹ He continues, “without a prior act of revelation on God’s part, faith – it is held – would have no basis and no object; and without faith the whole edifice of Christian existence would collapse”.²

Scripture however, has not always been God’s only channel of His self revelation. Before the Scriptures were written, God used other modes of revealing Himself to humanity. After creating the world and its inhabitants, God spoke to Adam and Eve, (Genesis 1:29, 30), and the LORD visited them from time to time (Gen 2:8). After the entrance of sin into this world, sin brought a separation between God and humanity (Isa. 59:1, 2). But God did not wait for humanity to find Him

¹ G.M. Hyde, *God has Spoken*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1976: 8.

² A. Dulles, *Models of Revelation*. (4th Print.). Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996: 4.

and communicate with Him. God took the initiative (Gen 3:8). Hyde says that God “as Source and Sustainer, He alone initiates and makes possible any conversation and any communication”.³

T.H. Jemison maintains, “Without divine aid the human mind can no more discover the things of God than it can solve the problems of life. We know about God only [by] what He has seen fit to disclose to us”.⁴ Moses confirms, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deut 29:29).

R.W. Yarbrough states that “revelation is the disclosure by God of truths at which people could not arrive without divine initiative and enabling”.⁵ The phenomenon of revelation is considered to be “the first and foremost biblical doctrine. . . . It is undeniably the cornerstone of our grasp and sharing of God, of the way we talk about God. Revelation is unquestionably the keynote for theological thinking today”.⁶ Although modern scholars reject the idea of revelation, Avery Dulles observes that “the Christian Church down through the centuries has been committed to this revelation and has sought to propagate it, defend it, and explain its implications”.⁷ This is because, it is maintained, “the idea of revelation is pervasive in the Bible and in the theology of the early centuries”.⁸

Clark Pinnock classifies revelation as, *General Revelation* – one which is universally available, and *Special Revelation* – a particular disclosure about how humankind can find favor with God.⁹ Through both means of revelation God has communicated His will to illiterate and literate generations of humanity. This upholds the argument of this thesis that while the Bible is of

³ G.M. Hyde, 1976: 10.

⁴ T.H. Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1959: 3.

⁵ R.W. Yarbrough, ‘Revelation’, in: T.D. Alexander & B.S. Rosner (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000: 732.

⁶ R. Dederen, ‘The Revelation – Inspiration Phenomenon According to the Bible Writers’, in: F.B. Holbrook & L. van Dolson (Eds.), *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*. Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Papers, 1992: 9.

⁷ A. Dulles, 1996: 3.

⁸ A. Dulles, 1996: 3-4.

⁹ C.H. Pinnock, ‘Revelation’, in: S.B. Ferguson & D.F. Wright (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005: 585.

prime importance in knowing the will of God, there are secondary means through which God is known. One such means of knowing God is general revelation in nature.

3.1.1. *Prima Scriptura* as confirmed by general revelation in nature

To show that God is accessible and knowable in spite of the entry of sin in the world, the apostle Paul argued that, “What may be known about God is plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Rom 1:19, 20). David also wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims the work of his hands” (Ps. 19:1). This revelation through nature is what theologians call general or natural revelation.¹⁰ Other theologians have called it anonymous revelation.¹¹

Avery Dulles has however argued that “because of the transcendence of God and the devastating effects of sin, human beings do not in fact succeed in attaining a sure and saving knowledge of God by natural revelation or natural theology”.¹² The limitations of general/natural revelation are clearly shown in the Bible. Humanity’s failure to obtain a saving knowledge brought depravity and consequently the wrath of God (Rom 1:18-32; Gen 6:5-7, 11-12, 17). But this is just a misuse of God’s revelation. The Bible indicates that God has never left himself without a witness (Acts 14:17).

There are some people who turned to the true God as a result of general revelation. Clark Pinnock speaks of “the Melchizedek factor”¹³ (Gen 14:18-20) which is evident in Scripture of those who turned to the true God through general revelation. Some like Job (Job 42:5) progressed from hearsay to personally appropriated knowledge of God. But other writers (e.g. Karl Barth) denied the universally present and ascertainable reality of the Word of God. Barth argued that the Word of God is an act of God which takes place *specialissime*, in this way and not another, to this or that

¹⁰ A. Dulles, 1996: 37.

¹¹ E. Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology: Revelation, Tradition and Theological Reflection*. Vol. 1. London: Sheed & Ward Ltd, 1987: 7.

¹² A. Dulles, 1996:37.

¹³ C.H. Pinnock, 2005: 586.

particular man.¹⁴ Hence J.B. Webster accused Barth of severely expounding a negative evaluation of natural revelation.¹⁵

Ellen G. White maintains that “during the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation. Those who had been taught of God, communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down from father to son, through successive generations”.¹⁶ During this period, God’s revelation took various ways (Heb 1:1) like the theophany-angelic appearances (Gen 16:7), divine dreams (Gen 20:3), visions (Numb 12:6) and miracles.¹⁷ Yarbrough argues that the “means of God’s revelation are more complex and vast than we can comprehend (much less reconstruct in detail). They encompass a history and involve people of which we know only some parts”. Before Scripture came into being God maintained an active relationship with humanity.

3.1.2. *Prima Scriptura* as confirmed by special revelation in Scripture

At least more than two millennia passed before the Word of God was put in written form. Adventist theologian Leo R. Van Dolson says that the “written revelation [was] not given until the time of Moses”.¹⁸ Ellen G. White maintains “the preparation of the written word began in the time of Moses”.¹⁹ Prior to Moses’ time God’s laws, promises and the memory of his acts were passed from one generation to another through oral tradition. This does suggest that there was word from God before the time of Moses. Grenz and Franke rightly note that the biblical message as the “word of God” – and hence revelation – precedes the Bible.²⁰ In other words, God spoke even before His word was put into written form. But contrary to what Grenz and Franke claim that the “word of God” can therefore be differentiated from the text, the biblical text is as much the “word of God” as

¹⁴ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*. Vol. 1. Part One. G.W. Bromiley (Translator). Edinburgh, 59 George Street: T & T. Clark, 1975: 159.

¹⁵ J.B. Webster, ‘Karl Barth’, in: *New Dictionary of Theology*. S.B. Ferguson & D.F. Wright (Eds.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005: 78.

¹⁶ E.G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950: v; Cf. L.R. van Dolson, ‘Studies on Revelation and Inspiration: God Shows and Tells’. *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*. (Teacher’s edition). Jan. Feb. Mar. 1999: 41.

¹⁷ R.W. Yarbrough, 2000: 734.

¹⁸ L.R. van Dolson, 1999: 53.

¹⁹ E.G. White, 1950: v.

²⁰ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001: 71.

it was before it was put in written form. That is what makes the Bible as Scripture – the written word of God. Hence, yes “we ought not to posit too great a disjunction between the two” [God’s word and the biblical text].²¹

Karl Barth considers the Holy Scripture as not the primary, but the second order of the Church’s proclamation. He claims that the Holy Scripture is the deposit of what was once proclamation by human lips. In its form as Scripture, however, it does not seek to be a historical monument but rather a Church document, written proclamation. The two entities may thus be set initially under a single genus, Scripture as the commencement and present-day preaching as the continuation of one and the same event, Jeremiah and Paul at the beginning and the modern preacher of the Gospel at the end of one and the same series. Barth maintains a dissimilarity between the Holy Scripture and present-day proclamation, giving the former supremacy, and absolute constitutive significance above the latter – the present-day proclamation.²²

With regard to the beginning of writing the biblical books, some scholars suggest that Moses as author of the Pentateuch wrote the books of Job and Genesis when he was in Midian.²³ Van Dolson maintains that the book of Job may have been the first to be written.²⁴ However, there is lack of unanimity on Moses’ authorship of the book of Job. But most scholars generally agree on the authorship of the Pentateuch by Moses. Van Bemmelen adds that “under the impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit, prophets and apostles not only proclaimed but also recorded what God revealed to them. Under the guiding hand of providence, their writings were eventually put together to form the OT and NT”.²⁵

Biblical scholars indicate the period and process which were involved in the formation of the Bible. William Barclay maintains that “earliest parts of the Bible were written three thousand

²¹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 72.

²² K. Barth, 1975: 102.

²³ Cf. R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*. (Reprint.). Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004: 268.

²⁴ L.R. van Dolson, 1999: 32.

²⁵ P.M. van Bemmelen, ‘Revelation and Inspiration’, in R. Dederen (Ed.). *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. Vol. 12. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000: 30.

years ago; there is no part of the Bible which is less than eighteen hundred years old”.²⁶ Gleason L. Archer acknowledges that “we no longer have access to the infallible originals [manuscripts] of the various books of the Hebrew Scriptures. The earliest copies which have been preserved to us are in some instances no closer than a thousand years to the time of original composition”.²⁷ Peter M. van Bemmelen also maintains that “according to the biblical writers the Scriptures come to us as the word of God. That was the conviction of prophets and apostles and of the Lord Jesus Himself (see Dan 9:2; Matt 4:4; Mark 7:13; Heb 4:12”.²⁸ In his second letter to Timothy, Paul declares that, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). Peter also writes, “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20-21). While not dictating word for word, the Holy Spirit chose the writers and guided their minds in what to speak and what to write.²⁹ At times the prophets dictated words to a secretary who wrote on their behalf (Jere. 36:4, 27, 32). “But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human”.³⁰ Thus the production of the Bible, though through human instrumentalities, was the plan of God.

God’s purpose for putting his word in written form was for it to serve as warning for later generations (1Cor 10:11). Israelite kings were expected to read a copy of the Law of the Lord all the days of their lives so that they would learn to revere the Lord God (Deut 17:19). Others like Joshua were strongly warned not to let the Book of the Law to depart from his mouth; he was to meditate on it day and night, so that he may be careful to do everything written in it (Josh 1:8). This suggests the importance God attached to the human studying of His Word. It is expected that even today the Bible is to be taken seriously.

²⁶ W. Barclay, *Introducing the Bible*. (3rd Reprint). London: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 1981: 11; Cf. E.G. White, 1950: v.

²⁷ G.L. Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament Introduction*. (Rev. ed.). Chicago: Moody Press, 1974: 37.

²⁸ P.M. van Bemmelen, 2000: 30-31.

²⁹ Cf. E.G. White 1950: v; G.M. Hyde, 1976: 47; L.R. van Dolson, 1999: 45.

³⁰ E.G. White, 1950: vi.

Unlike today when books are printed on paper, William Barclay indicates that in the ancient world literary works were written on rolls. The Old Testament books were written on skins.³¹ The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language, except for some chapters in the books of Ezra, Daniel, and one verse in Jeremiah which are written in Aramaic.³² Thus the production of Scripture was culturally sensitive.

R.K. Harrison indicates that the three-fold classical definition of the sequence of the Hebrew Scriptures, according to the Babylonian *Baba Bathra 14b*, was the *baraita* (unauthorized gloss according to the Talmudic tractate *Baba Bathra*), which comprised of 24 books,³³ while the later versions contained 39.³⁴ But “the text was exactly the same as the 39-book version of the later times”.³⁵ W.J. McRae indicates that “it is obvious that the thirty-nine books of our Old Testament constitute only a small part of the literature which came from the pen of the children of Israel before Christ”.³⁶ Many other writings known as the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, etc. do exist. But these do not form part of the generally accepted canon. Most scholars maintain that those which are included in the canon are those which are believed to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. It should be remembered that there are other inspired writings that have not been included in the canon.

Van Dolson states that “inspiration refers to the means by which God safeguarded the production and preservation of the Bible in order for it to become an infallible and sufficient guide to salvation”.³⁷ Harrison contends that “from a Jewish standpoint only those works which could claim prophetic authorship had legitimate right to canonicity”.³⁸ This act of bringing specific books together, according to Grenz and Franke, gives the Bible a single voice. This singularity of voice does not arise however from the church’s decision as to which books are canonical, but from the

³¹ W. Barclay, 1981: 20.

³² D. Marshall, *The Battle for the Bible*. Autumn House, Grantham, England: Stanborough Press, 2004: 16.

³³ R.K. Harrison, 2004: 268, 271.

³⁴ W.J. McRae, *The Birth of the Bible*. Scarborough, ON, Canada: Everyday Publications Inc., 1984: 106; L.R van Dolson, 1999: 57.

³⁵ L.R. van Dolson, 1999: 57.

³⁶ W.J. McRae, 1984: 103.

³⁷ L.R. van Dolson, 1999: 30.

³⁸ R.K. Harrison, 2004: 268.

Spirit who speaks through the texts.³⁹ The Bible is thereby given ultimate authority above other religious writings.

Debates have existed with regard to the canonicity of some books of the Bible. The church, Grenz and Franke argue, has never been in complete, uncontroverted agreement on which books are canonical.⁴⁰ Dulles claims that “the canonical books of Scripture, then, are the books in which the Church has heard the word of God, and in which she expects to hear it again”.⁴¹ But Harrison indicates that some of the books which were included in the Hebrew canon were doubtful; these are Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Those that have been accepted for inclusion into the Scriptures are grouped into three divisions: the *Law*, the *Prophets*, and the *Writings*.⁴² It is doubtful if ever an attempt would be made to drop out of the canon any such controverted books.

Van Dolson observes that “the first Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, is the source of the four-group organization [*Pentateuch, History, Poetry, Prophecy*] of the Latin and the modern English version”.⁴³ McRae and Harrison indicate that the final decision with regard to these divisions was finally settled by the Jewish Council or Synod of Jamnia or Jebnah in A.D. 90.⁴⁴ But Harrison however, expresses doubt if ever there was such a council. He presumes that a Rabbi probably drew up the canon of Scriptures.⁴⁵ It seems more plausible to believe that the drawing of the canon was the work of a Council.

John Barton questions, “Which Bible do we have to open to find the final form of the text?” In answer to this question he suggested that “the final form is the Masoretic Text [MT] as we have received it. B. S. Childs specifically states that this is the case, and gives as the reason that the MT

³⁹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 90.

⁴⁰ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 90.

⁴¹ A. Dulles, 1996: 198.

⁴² R.K. Harrison, 2004: 278.

⁴³ L.R. van Dolson, 1999: 57.

⁴⁴ W.J. McRae, 1984: 108; Cf. R.K. Harrison, 2004: 277, 278.

⁴⁵ R.K. Harrison, 2004: 1186.

is the form of the text which has come to be accepted in the Jewish community, which was the community principally responsible for transmitting the Hebrew Bible”.⁴⁶

Avery Dulles however, maintains that “in the [Roman] Catholic form of the propositional model of canon of Scripture does not rest with Scripture alone but, at least partly, on the teaching of the Church which identifies the canonical books with the help of tradition. The Bible is not sufficient source of doctrine, for there are some revealed truths (including the list of canonical books) known only through tradition. The Bible, moreover, cannot be rightly understood outside the Church, which is divinely commissioned and equipped to give an authoritative interpretation. The Bible, therefore, is not to be left to the private interpretation of individuals”.⁴⁷ But this is what the Protestant Reformers demanded for. They hoped to give the Bible ultimate authority.

With regard to the reliability of the Scriptures, G.M. Hyde attests that “although the transmission of a reliable Scripture tells us nothing of the process of revelation-inspiration per se, it can set our minds at rest that what we read today in a standard version of the Bible is essentially the message as prophet and apostle gave it, despite translations and the tedious copying processes by which it has reached us”.⁴⁸ Care is however exercised in ensuring that the Bible does not become corrupted through the production of new translations. This however is a daunting task for scholars and the Christian Church.

3.2. Special revelation and the Old Testament

With regard to the Old Testament, T.H. Jemison found that “the expression, ‘the word of the Lord came’, ‘thus saith the Lord’, ‘the Lord said’, or their equivalent appear more than 3,800 times in the Old Testament”.⁴⁹ Within the Old Testament Scriptures there are frequent indications of the recognition of the authority of one book by another – Joshua 1:7,8; Neh 8:1; Dan 9:1, 2, 11, 13; Zech 7:12; Mal 4:4. John Bright argues for the authority of the Old Testament (while recognizing

⁴⁶ J. Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology, Collected Essays of John Barton*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007: 187.

⁴⁷ A. Dulles, 1996: 194.

⁴⁸ G.M. Hyde, 1976: 51.

⁴⁹ T.H. Jemison, 1959: 10.

those who rejected the Old Testament, like Marcion) simply because “the Old Testament is in the Bible”.⁵⁰ To maintain such a claim for the Bible, is made with a view that “in the mainstream Protestantism, that the Bible is the final authority to be appealed to in all matters of faith and practice. The Bible must be the final authority; nothing else can safely be accorded that position”.⁵¹ This is important for the Christian Church, particularly as it gets further from the time of the Scripture’s authorship. For those doing biblical theology, Gerhard F. Hasel suggests that “for every Christian theologian OT theology is and must remain a part of the Biblical theology”.⁵²

3.3. Special revelation and the New Testament

The prophecies contained in the Old Testament books anticipated fulfillment. This was to take place largely during the new era inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah. Confirmation of the Messianic prophecies is made by the Gospel writers and the rest of the books which form the New Testament canon. British Bible scholar F.F. Bruce acknowledges that,

“Jesus wrote no book: he taught by word of mouth and personal example. But some of his followers taught in writing as well as orally. Often, indeed, their writing was a second-best substitute for the spoken word. In Galatians 4: 20, for example, Paul wishes that he could be with his friends in Galatia and speak to them directly so that they could catch his tone of voice as well as his actual words but, as he could not visit them just then, a letter had to suffice. The letter to the Hebrews has many of the features of a synagogue homily....We in our day may be glad, for our own sakes, that Galatians and Hebrews had to be sent in writing; but their authors were not thinking of us. But “there was an occasion when Paul cancelled a planned visit to Corinth and sent a letter to the church of that city instead, because he judged that, in the circumstances, a written communication would be more effective than anything he could say (2 Cor. 1: 23 – 2: 4)....Some of the New Testament documents were evidently designed from the outset to be written compositions, not substitutes for the spoken word. But in the lifetime of the apostles and their colleagues their spoken words and their written words were equally authoritative. For later generations (including our own) the spoken words are lost; the written words alone remain (and by no means all these), so that we have to be content with fragments of their teaching.”⁵³

Since Jesus wrote no books, what he said was treasured and repeated by those who heard him and by their hearers in turn. To those who confessed him as Lord his words were as authoritative as those of Moses and the prophets. They were transmitted as the most important

⁵⁰ J. Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*. (5th Reprint). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980: 17.

⁵¹ J. Bright, 1980: 31.

⁵² G.F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*. (4th ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991: 172.

⁵³ F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1988: 117.

element in the ‘tradition’ of early Christianity, together with the record of his works, his death and his resurrection. These were ‘delivered’ by the original witnesses and ‘received’ in turn by others not simply as an outline of historical events but as the church’s confession of faith and as the message which it was commissioned to spread abroad. It was by means of this ‘tradition’ that the Christians of the first two centuries were able to understand the Old Testament documents as the Scriptures which bore witness to Christ.⁵⁴ The ‘tradition’ implied here is the single-source theory of theology upheld by the mainstream Reformation.⁵⁵

The perpetuation of the words and deeds of Jesus could not be entrusted indefinitely to oral tradition of this kind. It was desirable and inevitable that the oral tradition should be committed to writing if it was not to be lost. Christians, F.F. Bruce maintains, believe that the New Testament, is the written deposit of the special fulfillment of the words of Christ in the life and witness of His apostles.⁵⁶ It is this apostolic witness to the life and teachings of Christ that needed to be preserved in written form. Even today, a history that is not preserved is lost and will not be beneficial to future generations.

With regard to how Scripture was viewed from the New Testament period and beyond, Van Bemmelen maintains that “the Scriptures are the oracles of God. That was the conviction of the apostle Paul [Rom 3:1-2] and has been the belief of untold millions of Jews and Christianity through the ages; and still is today”.⁵⁷ This is the fruit resulting from the preservation work made possible by the Holy Spirit, the one who inspired the apostles, the writers of the New Testament books.

3.4. Special revelation and Jesus’ view of the Scriptures

Jesus regarded the Hebrew Scriptures as the word of God. For Him Scripture was the Word of God that cannot be broken (John10:35). Edward J. Young maintains “that our Lord believed the

⁵⁴ F.F. Bruce, 1988: 117.

⁵⁵ A.E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. (4th ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007: 138.

⁵⁶ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*. (Rev. ed.), Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1963: 105.

⁵⁷ P.M. van Bemmelen, ‘The Authority of Scripture’, in: G.W. Reid, *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Perspective*. Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006: 75.

Scriptures to be trustworthy and to possess an authority that was absolute is a fact that cannot be gainsaid”.⁵⁸ Jesus repudiated the temptations of the devil with a decisive ‘It is written’ (Matt 4:4, 7, 10.). He frequently appealed to the Scriptures as forecasting His Messianic ministry (Luke 17-21; John 539-47), and after his resurrection, He explained from the Scriptures to His disciples the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27)”.⁵⁹ John Wenham affirms that “to Christ the Old Testament was true, authoritative, inspired. To him the God of the Old Testament was the living God and the teaching of the Old Testament was the teaching of the living God. To Him [Jesus] what Scripture said, God said”.⁶⁰ Thus, Jesus consistently treated the historical narratives as straight-forward records of fact. As such he used the Old Testament as the court of appeal in matters of controversy. He never called into question the Pharisees and Sadducees’ appeal to Scripture, but rather rebuked them for their failure to study it sufficiently so they could believe in him. But Wenham goes so far as to claim that Jesus taught verbal inspiration of the Scriptures.⁶¹ Verbal inspiration is however generally repudiated by most scholars today.

The Christian Church too, particularly Protestant Christians, have held to a high view of Scripture, both the Old and the New Testaments. In referring to the entire canon of Scripture, G.C. Berkouwer reiterates the church’s acceptance of the canon – albeit in many variations. It is a recognition which is extended to the Old as well as to the New Testament as a trustworthy testimony regarding the acts of God in history, as his Word and deeds in Israel. The Old Testament is viewed as a testimony which, in accordance with its own promissory church did not merely mechanically connect the New Testament to the Old Testament. The New Testament cannot be understood apart from the Old; it continually points to the Old Testament, to the trustworthy *graphe*, to that which has been written. Essential to this tie of the church to the Old Testament was the word of Christ that Scripture testifies of him (John. 5: 39).⁶² His words to the travelers to

⁵⁸ E.J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth: Some thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration*. (Reprint.). Murrayfield Road, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991: 48.

⁵⁹ P.M. van Bemmelen, 2006: 76.

⁶⁰ J. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible: The Christian view of the Bible*. Vol. 1. Guilford, Surrey: Eagle, 1993: 17.

⁶¹ J. Wenham, 1993: 33.

⁶² G.C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture: Studies in Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975: 68.

Emmaus and his interpretation of the Old Testament are also important. Beginning with Moses and the prophets, Christ pointed out ‘in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’ (Luke 24: 27). Norman Gulley maintains that “during the time of the apostles interpretation was *sola Scriptura*, which means the New Testament writers built on the foundation of the Old Testament”.⁶³

The acceptance of the New Testament as Scripture did not mean disregarding its warning that we should not in any way “go beyond the things which are written” (I Cor. 4: 6, ASV). Rather, Berkouwer suggests that “the canon was accepted by the church only as it became aware of an historical progression which it had not expected. The church bridged the gap between itself and time as it stretched out “with the help of links connecting it to later era”.⁶⁴ The Church is still encouraged not to “treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good”, (1Thess 5: 20, 21).

3.5. Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation of God

Above the divine revelation contained in Scripture, New Testament writers believed that God fully revealed himself through Jesus Christ. Bruce believes that the crowning revelation of God was conveyed in Christ through the words He said and the deeds He performed.⁶⁵ The author of the letter to the Hebrews says, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word” (Heb 1:1, 2). Jesus Christ maintained that the Scriptures testify of Him (John 5: 39).

A.M. Hunter also reiterates that “God has made a final revelation of himself through his Son”.⁶⁶ Hunter argues that “Christianity is the final religion because, through Christ’s sacrifice, it secures that access which Judaism could only shadow forth. With the fact of Christ we pass ‘out of

⁶³ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 525.

⁶⁴ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 74.

⁶⁵ F.F. Bruce, 1963: 105.

⁶⁶ A.M. Hunter, *Introducing New Testament Theology*. (5th Impression). Bloomsbury Street, London: SCM Press, 1973: 118.

the world of shadows into the realm of reality”⁶⁷. The apostle John asserted that his Gospel was written that we “may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” and that by believing we may have life in his name (John 20: 31). Hence, even Scripture testifies to the superiority of Jesus Christ.

3.6. The writing and inclusion of the New Testament into the Bible

It is important for us to now briefly reiterate the formation of the New Testament. William Barclay observes that the making of the New Testament took more than three hundred years to complete.⁶⁸ Nevertheless it is evident that the work of God progressed while the compilation of the New Testament canon was still in the making. Donald G. Bloesch argues that, “We know that before the books of the Bible were written an oral tradition existed that was passed down through generations. We are told that Jesus did many things not recorded by his disciples (John 20: 30; 21: 25), and we can presume that an oral tradition emerged from the apostolic times as well, exerting a certain influence on the thinking of the early church.

Scholars suggest that the first book to be written, probably Galatians, was written about A.D. 48 - 49 and the Second Letter of Peter, probably the latest to be written was authored about A.D. 120.⁶⁹ But R.P. Martin places the date of Second Peter earlier, somewhere after A.D. 65 and not necessarily in the second century.⁷⁰ Some scholars suggest that among the Gospels, Mark may have been the first of the four to be written,⁷¹ as Martin dates in the decade A.D. 60 – 70.⁷² It is generally accepted that it took about seventy years to write all the books. The compilation of the New Testament in its final form, as it is today was completed by A.D. 367. Again this may demonstrate that God’s work is never incapacitated by the slow process of producing documents.

⁶⁷ A.M. Hunter, 1973: 121.

⁶⁸ W. Barclay, 1981: 45.

⁶⁹ D.G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1994: 142.

⁷⁰ R.P. Martin, ‘The Acts, The Epistles, The Apocalypse’. *New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983: 384.

⁷¹ Cf. William G. Johnsson, ‘The Influence of Jesus’, in: B.W. Ball & W.G. Johnsson (Eds.), *The Essential Jesus: The Man, His message, His mission*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2002: 26.

⁷² R.P. Martin, ‘The 4 Gospel’, *New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students*. Vol. 1. (Reprint). 1979: 213.

William Barclay listed several reasons why there was a delay in committing the New Testament message into the written form. These include: (i) Christianity was born into a non-literary civilization, that is before the invention of printing, (ii) Christianity made its first impact on the poorer and the more uncultured classes, (iii) Writing materials were not cheap, costing about a day's wage to buy a single sheet of the best papyrus, (iv) The presence of the original apostles alive made for little demand for written books, (v) The belief in the imminence of the Second Coming.⁷³ Some of these conditions still prevail in undeveloped regions of the world. Yet people in such places may be found to be more religious and spiritual than those of the developed affluent countries. Samuele Bacchiocchi noted the religious state of the once 'heartland of the Reformation' Europe:

"There's no doubt about the dismay the Reformers would feel. The reformatory movement they began at great personal sacrifice has long ended. The great Protestant cathedrals stand virtually empty on Sundays, silent monuments to a heritage lost. Protest is no longer mounted against theological heresies and moral abuses. Instead, the descendants of the Reformation reject the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith for the anti-Christian values and worldviews of humanism, secularism, materialism, and agnosticism. Sola Scriptura has been succeeded by *sola cultura*; belief in God abandoned for belief in self, and self's ability to construct a better tomorrow without a divine intervention in human history. Indeed, for most citizens of Western Europe, God is dead – or, if alive, irrelevant to their lives".⁷⁴

Yet this is happening where there is no shortage of the availability of the Scriptures.

With regard to the main factors which made the production of New Testament literature inevitable, Barclay suggests the following: (i) The death of the apostles and of those who had been eye-witnesses, (ii) The entry of Christianity out of Palestine into the larger world, particularly when Christianity made contact with Roman culture and civilization which was literate and literary, (iii) Christianity's being a missionary religion from the beginning, (iv) The entry of people into the Church who had strange and dangerous ideas, (v) The delay of the Second Coming of Christ made a written literature a necessity.⁷⁵

⁷³ W. Barclay, 1981: 48, 49.

⁷⁴ S. Bacchiocchi, 'Monuments to a Heritage Lost', in: *Perspective Digest: A Publication of the Adventist Theological Society*. Vol. 7. No. 1. 2002: 40-41.

⁷⁵ W. Barclay, 1981: 49, 50, 51.

Another reason that necessitated the production of the New Testament writings, as Bloesch observes, “The apocryphal Gospels that circulated called into question the veracity of the church concerning its message about Jesus and his saving work. The church was compelled to submit to the norm of the apostolic canon in order to safeguard the integrity and purity of its proclamation. It was impressed on the fathers of the church that without a superior written norm her teaching office could not preserve the pure apostolic tradition”.⁷⁶

In its completed form, Bruce confirms, the New Testament is composed of 27 documents or books: the four Gospels, the historical book of Acts, a series of Letters written by Paul, James, Peter, John, Jude and others, and one Apocalypse.⁷⁷ Meanwhile Marcion is said to have been the first person to publish a fixed collection of what is called the New Testament books.⁷⁸ The main qualification for a book to gain entry into the Church’s list of supremely sacred books was whether or not it was written by an actual apostle, or at least by an apostolic man. The main reason for making apostolic authorship the standard for acceptance of any book as one of the Church’s sacred and authoritative books was that Christianity is an historical religion which took its origin and power from an historical person, Jesus of Nazareth.

Once the Gospels and the Letters had taken their place as the books of the Church securely, they began to be read at the public worship of the Church. However, not all the 27 books received universal acceptance at the same time. Those which became universally accepted first included the four Gospels, Acts, the Letters of Paul, including Hebrews, 1 John and 1 Peter. The Revelation hovered between the universally accepted and the disputed. Those which were disputed include James, Jude, 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John. David H. Kelsey observes correctly when he says that “in the actual concrete practice of using scripture to help authorize theological proposals, each of the different ways of relating the use of the Old with New Testament materials will itself vary depending on how uses of the sub-parts of each Testament are inter-related. Each constitutes a

⁷⁶ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 142.

⁷⁷ F.F. Bruce, 1963: 105.

⁷⁸ F.F. Bruce, 1988: 134.

different way of orchestrating the ensemble; each is a different concrete kind of “whole” for the “canon”.⁷⁹ To call each “canon” is to say something significantly different in each case. While John Barton refers to a ‘canon of meaning’ apart from just a list of books, others⁸⁰ maintain that the only way the Bible is one canon is when it is read as Christian Scripture and that provides an interpretive center for reading both Testaments together.⁸¹

The first time the books of the New Testament became listed as they are today was in the thirty-ninth of the forty-five Easter letter of Athanasius to his people in the year 397 A.D.⁸² This was an epochal date which marked the closure of the New Testament. In the Western church the limits of the canonical books along the lines approved by St. Augustine were laid by the council of Hippo in 393 A.D. and finally approved by the provincial council of Carthage in 397 A.D.⁸³ As such, Berkouwer observes that “there is...a discernible – and to a degree traceable – process of growth leading to the official ecclesiastical closing and fixation at the synod of Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.)”.⁸⁴

3.7. The Protestant Reformers and the New Testament canon

Once the early church established its position on the New Testament canon, no further variation was seen until the Reformation period when Martin Luther questioned the authenticity of the books of James, Hebrews, Jude and the Revelation.⁸⁵ Bloesch suggests that Hebrews was admitted to the canon because it was mistakenly attributed to Paul. Roman Catholics argue that because the Holy Spirit is continuously at work through the ages, the church is invested with the authority to determine what books are binding on the faithful.⁸⁶ But, against the Catholic position, the Reformers emphasized the primacy of Holy Scripture (*prima Scriptura*) over the church and

⁷⁹ D.H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, International, 1999: 108.

⁸⁰ J. Barton, 2007: 3, 19.

⁸¹ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 90

⁸² Cf. D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 149; F.F. Bruce, 1988: 77.

⁸³ F.F. Bruce, 1988: 97, 232-233.

⁸⁴ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 70.

⁸⁵ E.T. Batchmann (Ed.), *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament*. Vol. 35. (American ed.). Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960: 396-398.

⁸⁶ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 149.

religious experience. At the same time they maintained that Catholic tradition amply testifies to the truth of the priority and primacy of the Holy Scripture.

Bloesch, as well as Grenz and Franke, argue for the active role of the Spirit. These believe that “for the Reformers only the Spirit of God authorizes the canon, but the church was led to recognize and accept what the Spirit had already determined. It is the Spirit who authenticates the Bible, and the church confirms this work of the Spirit by looking to the Bible as its ruling norm and source”.⁸⁷ For them, the Reformation theology of the Word of God, the message of Scripture, comes from God, and is prior to the community of faith, which is created by this Word. They therefore maintain that the community of faith is historically prior to the compiling and canonizing of Scripture.

The transition from the Old Testament period to the New Testament is acknowledged to not have been an easy one. Robert McIver describes the challenges faced by the early church.

“The early church faced an extraordinary number of challenges. It was an illegal, often-persecuted organization. Its transition from a Jewish sect to a worldwide movement was particularly challenging. In moving from a Jewish background into the wider Roman world, the church moved into an intellectual environment dominated by Greek ideas. This immediately brought intellectual challenges to the church, some of which are reflected in the New Testament. One of these issues that dominated internal Christian debate for some centuries concerned the nature of Jesus. The New Testament, and indeed the early church, was adamant that Jesus was the Son of God”.⁸⁸

Thus the first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels, therefore served to introduce Jesus as our Lord and God. The apostle John, who wrote the fourth gospel pointed out that not everything Jesus did is written, but what was written was intended to serve as a basis for belief in Him (John 20:30-31; 21:25). Later, the early church Councils of Nicaea (325 A.D.) and Chalcedon (451 A.D.) served to bring the Christological controversies to a rest.

Scholars acknowledge that like the Old Testament, the New Testament too does not have the original manuscripts available today. W.J. McRae maintains that “we do not need to be apologetic

⁸⁷ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 150; Cf. S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 24, 58, 64-65, 69-72, 74, 83.

⁸⁸ R.K. McIver, *The Four Faces of Jesus*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2000: 281.

about the Bible. No piece of ancient literature can make the claim to an extant original”.⁸⁹ But in order to assure us of the accuracy of the Bible, and the New Testament in particular, McRae says that “there is a vast abundance of biblical manuscripts available to us today for our study. There are over 5,300 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament alone”.⁹⁰ There are also 8,000 Latin Vulgate and more than 9,300 manuscripts of other early versions now available. The basis for the classification of the New Testament manuscripts, according to Bruce, includes date, material on which they are written, and the kind of letters employed.⁹¹

Adventist Bible teacher T.H. Jemison claims that “the Holy Scriptures are the authoritative, infallible revelation of God’s character and will. Both the authority and infallibility of the divine revelation come from the fact that the Bible is the word of God, the written expression of God’s thought concerning man”.⁹² Jemison points to Scripture itself for the source of this authoritative claim, saying, “The Scriptures claim to be divinely inspired. Many of the writers affirm repeatedly that God was speaking through them”.⁹³ Bloesch argues that “because it is the Holy Spirit who authorizes the books of the Bible, we cannot argue absolutely for a closed canon. For example, if a writing were unearthed that could be proved to be authored by Paul or one of the apostles, it would have to given serious consideration by the church. Yet any addition to the canon could be made only if the Holy Spirit directly moved the Christian community as a whole toward this act”.⁹⁴ But due to the prevailing divisions in Christendom, it is improbable that additional books may be admitted into the canon. Even those that are already included are not wholly accepted.

3.8. The Old Testament canon of Scripture: A question of its value

The Christ-event created some challenges for the early Christians with regard to the continuing value and authority of the Old Testament. One of the challenges the early church faced came from heretics who called for a total disregard for the Old Testament. William Barclay

⁸⁹ W.J. McRae, 1984: 141.

⁹⁰ D. Marshall, 2004: 71.

⁹¹ F.F. Bruce, 1963: 182.

⁹² T.H. Jemison, 1959: 9.

⁹³ T.H. Jemison, 1959: 9.

⁹⁴ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 150.

indicates that the first of these heretics was Marcion. Marcion (c. 80 – c. 160) was a Gnostic.⁹⁵ The Gnostics, according to E.M. Yamauchi, were followers of a variety of religious movements which stressed salvation through *gnosis* or ‘knowledge’. The Gnostics completely, totally and altogether abandoned and disregarded the Old Testament. For them the Old Testament was the book of the ignorant and hostile God.⁹⁶ They were not going to have any use for it.

E. Ferguson acknowledges Marcion’s contribution to the work of the text and canon of the Bible, although he was later condemned as heretic.⁹⁷ Marcion had concluded that there were two Gods: the evil creator-god of the Old Testament, the creator, who is a God of law and justice and who predicted the Jewish Messiah; and the previously unknown God of the New Testament, the Father of Jesus Christ, who is the God of mercy and salvation. It was these heretical views espoused by Marcion which accelerated the Christian church’s decision on a New Testament canon and sharpened the Church’s emphasis on certain doctrines in the rule of faith. J. Barton notes that Marcion reduced Christian Scripture by deciding that there should be only one Gospel, Luke, and no epistles except those of Paul; and even these texts he expurgated and diminished, removing from them all references to the Old Testament and all mention of the true God, the Father of Jesus, as the creator of the world.⁹⁸

Barclay observes that Paul was Marcion’s hero. Marcion had misunderstood Paul in thinking that Paul’s attack on the Jewish keeping of the Law was an attack on the Old Testament. So Marcion kept the Letters of Paul as his most sacred books.⁹⁹ Thus Marcion’s attack left the Church with two obligations. First, the Church had to define its attitude to the Old Testament, which Marcion wished completely discarded. Second, the Church had to make up its mind on which books composed the New Testament. For speeding up the formation of the New Testament canon,

⁹⁵ W. Barclay, 1981: 58.

⁹⁶ E.M. Yamauchi, ‘Gnosticism’, in: S.B. Ferguson & D.F. Wright (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2005: 272.

⁹⁷ E. Ferguson, ‘Marcion’, in: S.B. Ferguson & D.F. Wright (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2005: 411.

⁹⁸ J. Barton, 2007: 67.

⁹⁹ W. Barclay, 1981: 59.

Marcion's role in this respect is viewed positively by some.¹⁰⁰ However Berkouwer argues that "Marcion's criticism of the Old Testament did not shake the church's conscious dependence on it; rather, it served to strengthen this dependence. Despite the many questions and problems which this issue raised in church history, the church's bond to the Old Testament has determined her life. It is understandable then that many of the questions regarding the extent of the Christian canon were focused on the New Testament, for the canon was generally considered to be closed – even though it is now evident that we can hardly speak of an official synagogue closing".¹⁰¹

J. Barton also found that Marcion was probably not the only thinker in the early Church to believe that the Old Testament should be discarded, though he is the most prominent one known to us.¹⁰² The Church affirmed its faith in the Old Testament; it had no intention of jettisoning it. Thus, to put it in a somewhat exaggerated form, Barton argues that Marcion was responsible for Christians' retaining an Old Testament in the Bible.¹⁰³ Thereafter the Church faced up to the task of defining the New Testament canon.

Above all, I. Howard Marshall acknowledges that the early Christians maintained their belief in the divine origin of the Old Testament Scriptures.¹⁰⁴ However, like Marcion who criticized the value of keeping the Old Testament, there have been other biblical scholars who have exercised similar criticism of the biblical canon. Barton charges that critics like Martin Luther, Julius Wellhausen, Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Kasemann, and Adolf Harnack were 'neo-Marcionites'.¹⁰⁵ This term 'Marcionite' is sometimes used today of theologians suspected of being hostile to the Old Testament or of concentrating on salvation to the detriment of a creation theology.

Marshall observes that "there is a consensus of usage in the New Testament which shows that passages from the Old Testament generally were regarded as stemming ultimately from

¹⁰⁰ J. Barton, 2007: 68.

¹⁰¹ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 68.

¹⁰² J. Barton, 2007: 78.

¹⁰³ J. Barton, 2007: 77.

¹⁰⁴ I. H. Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration*. London, England: Holder and Stoughton Ltd, 1982: 24.

¹⁰⁵ J. Barton, 2007: 57.

God”.¹⁰⁶ Marshall articulates that “the New Testament writers regard the statements in the Old Testament as having unquestioned authority”.¹⁰⁷ For that reason they affirmed their acceptance of it. C.L. Blomberg notes that “the Hebrew Scriptures – or Christian Old Testament – permeate Matthew’s Gospel. Approximately fifty-five references prove close enough in wording for commentators typically to label them ‘quotations’, compared to about sixty-five for the other three canonical Gospels put together”.¹⁰⁸

John Bright maintains that the mainstream of Christianity has not drawn any formal distinction in value between the Testaments, but has in one way or another always declared the Scriptures of both Testaments to be the Word of God and the church’s supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.¹⁰⁹ Bright argues that “the place of the Old Testament in the Bible and in the life of the church hangs ultimately on the question of its authority”.¹¹⁰ F.F. Bruce concludes that “for Christians, however, it suffices that the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament was accepted as divinely authoritative by our Lord and His apostles”.¹¹¹ The early Christians’ defense of the Old Testament and their acceptance of the New Testament suggest the Church’s acknowledgment of the on-going work of God in the world, especially among believers.

3.9. The New Testament canon of Scripture: An inquiry for its composition.

A question may be asked as to why the New Testament canon had to be set. Was it to be understood that the inspirational work of the Holy Spirit had ceased or completed its role? D.M. Beegle supposes that “the important fact is that by setting the canon, the church set limits for its rule of faith and its teaching ministry. The restrictions imposed by the canon undoubtedly explain why the Christian understanding of the gospel was far [nowhere] nearer its pure form in the period 175-200 [A.D.] than it was 125-150 [A.D.]. Although composed by the fathers, the Apostle’s Creed is

¹⁰⁶ I.H. Marshall, 1982: 23.

¹⁰⁷ I.H. Marshall, 1982: 23.

¹⁰⁸ C.L. Blomberg, ‘Matthew’, in: G.K. Beale & D.A. Carson (Eds.), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007: 1.

¹⁰⁹ J. Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*. (5th Reprint). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980: 17-18.

¹¹⁰ J. Bright, 1980: 18.

¹¹¹ F.F. Bruce, 1963: 104.

essentially a summary of the rule of faith found in the canon. In a sense, therefore, it is apostolic. This separates it from the later creeds of the church.”¹¹² It would seem to imply that the church did not take seriously the Apostle Paul’s admonition when he said, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1Thess 5: 19-21). This has implications for the exclusion of later inspired writings to the canon of Scripture, such as the Ellen G. White’s writings, though accepted by Seventh-day Adventists to have been inspired as we saw in the previous Chapter.

Another important question on the setting of the New Testament canon has to do with the completion and closure of the canonization of the books of the Scripture. G.C. Berkouwer articulates that,

“The word *kanon* is generally defined as meaning measuring rod or line, a trustworthy norm immune to criticism. To be sure, the word was later also used to signify ecclesiastical dogmas as seen in Trent and in the “canons” of Dort. In the New Testament, “canon” signifies a standard of judgment, a norm to which every believer is subjected. Paul writes about the rule (*kanon*) by which one must walk so that by it one can determine if a man belongs to the “Israel of God” and consequently shares in its peace and mercy (Gal. 6: 16). It is clear that here no human criterion is meant, but rather a canon normative for human life. And from this vantage point one can begin to see the problem of the marks of canonicity.”¹¹³

Bloesch adds that “because it is the Holy Spirit who authorizes the books of the Bible, we cannot argue absolutely for a closed canon. In *Criticism and Faith* John Knox contended for a closed canon on the basis that only the authorized sacred writings stand in immediate historical proximity to the Christ revelation.”¹¹⁴ But Bloesch argues that the criterion for determining canonicity is not simply historical proximity, though this factor must certainly be taken into account, but the revelatory character and potential of the witness.¹¹⁵ An attitude of open-mindedness to the continuing character of the work of the Holy Spirit, as taught by the New Testament seems to suggest that the canon needed to have been left conscientiously open.

¹¹² D.M. Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973: 118.

¹¹³ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 71-72.

¹¹⁴ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 150.

¹¹⁵ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 151.

Canaan S. Banana propounds that the material contained in the Bible is but a small part of the whole gamut of God's revelation to humankind. Therefore, he reasons, to suggest that the Bible is the sole source of God's revelation limits God and God's potential in the continuing creation of the world. Room must always be left for further revelation and growth of understanding. The decision as to what is sacred and worthy of canonization was a human decision of religious leaders. Banana reiterates that most of what Jesus said and did is not recorded in the Bible. The Bible is but a bird's eye view of the life of a great man.¹¹⁶

Berkouwer also adds that one, who approaches the history of the canon from the human perspective which sharply differentiates between the divine and the human, will not even recognize the validity of speaking about a canonical problem; for in such a view the divine definitely rules out the possibility of a problem. The result is the apparent failure to appreciate the fact that the human considerations did play a large role in the formation of the canon. This is indisputably proved by the fact that the New Testament canon that we possess was not rigidly fixed from its beginning. Uncertainty and hesitance over the canon prevailed for some time.¹¹⁷

The so-called human factor in the historical process of the canon has been dealt with in diverse ways. The awareness of the fact that the canon in its concrete form is the result of an historical development, can only be credited to another fact: in human media, outside of the horizontal perspective and history. We meet the Word of God as canon precisely in the witness of the prophets and the apostles. When God spoke to the boy Samuel, his Word resounding in the sphere of human reality, the lad failed three times to differentiate between God's call and Eli's voice. Only Eli's insight brought him to the awareness, which resulted in heedful listening: "Speak Lord, for thy servant hears" (I Sam. 3: 2-10). We focus on this incident because true listening to the voice of God always involves an evaluation and differentiation. When the Word of the Lord comes to a man or woman, it confronts that person in his/her own life at his/her own level. It does not

¹¹⁶ C.S. Banana, 'The Case for a New Bible', in: L. Mukonyora, J.L. Cox & F.J. Versraelen (Co-ordinator). *"Rewriting" the Bible: The Real Issues*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1993: 18, 19, 24, 27.

¹¹⁷ G.C. Berkouwer, 1975: 70.

come in a strange extraterrestrial or supernatural manner, consequently making it unnecessary to distinguish it from other voices because it is incomparably and therefore irresistibly unique. This also happens in preaching with human speech and even more so when the Word comes to us in writing, in a human attestation. Through this medium it is absorbed into the flow of history and thus continues to reach out to humanity. Ours is a world of speech, of many words, of many written presentations of views.

Norman R. Gulley seems to de-emphasize the human role in the canonization of the books of Scripture. He subordinated the role of the church to Scripture and the Spirit when he wrote that “it is these internal indicators in Scripture that document the process of canonization, separating what was accepted from other claims (Apocrypha). It is this self-attestation of Scripture that determine which books were accepted into the canon. The Holy Spirit led in this self-attestation as He worked throughout the church. The Holy Spirit led the leaders of the church to see this self-attestation of Scripture, and so they allowed Scripture to determine which books should be in the canon. In the New Testament all apostolic books and those of apostolic associates were seen to be revelation and as such demonstrated to the church their canonicity”.¹¹⁸ Gulley argues that “the divine reality in Scripture, [is] the basis of its canonization.”¹¹⁹

3.10. The unity of the two Testaments of Scripture: A confirmation of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit

Grenz and Franke establishes that there is a certain “innate” singularity forming the various texts into one canonical Scripture when reading the Bible theologically, which means approaching the texts as embodying a unity of basic purpose. And it is the unity of purpose that brings the Old and New Testaments together as comprising one canon. Reading the Bible as one canon forms the basis of reading the texts of the ancient Hebrews as Christian Scripture, leading to the realization that the material realities given in the Hebrew Scriptures are promises of spiritual reality given first to ancient Israel and later to Christians. Emphasizing the unity of the canon is not to ignore its

¹¹⁸ N.R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003: 324.

¹¹⁹ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 320.

diversity.¹²⁰ Barton admits “that the biblical canon contains diversity is obvious to most readers; that it is nevertheless a unity is the conviction of those for whom it functions as Holy Scripture. In the history of Christian thought there have been many ways of trying to hold together an awareness of both diversity and unity”.¹²¹

Barton however also notes that “the two Testaments have traditionally had a different status in many varieties of Christianity; except in parts of the Reformed tradition, the Old Testament normally plays second fiddle to the New. This is not Marcionism, but a nearly universal Christian belief that the ultimate authority in Christianity lies with the new revelation in Christ, even though, because this revelation was ‘in accordance with the Scriptures’, the Old Testament can never be abandoned. The ‘second rank’ character of the Old Testament as Scripture is perhaps more marked in Lutheran than in other Christian thinking.”¹²²

Barton also acknowledges what he called ‘reconciliation’ of diversities. This consists in changing one or more of the texts concerned to make them all convey the same message, often by omitting passages in which there is conflict, in other words the method described above as ‘deletion and alteration’. Yet, another way to view the diversities of Scripture is to recognize that, “the texts do not all speak with a single voice, yet taken together they witness to a unified truth. In this way of understanding the Bible there is no attempt to deny the empirical evidence that shows we are dealing with many writers and points of view, and that all do not say the same thing....But it is held that, properly read, the Scriptural texts have a unity of purpose and message which is more important than their mutual tensions and disagreements in detail.”¹²³

Barton observes that “at least in modern Protestant thinking the diversity in Scripture has sometime been given a favorable spin. Diversity, after all, though it can be a source of confusion or

¹²⁰ S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 90.

¹²¹ J. Barton, 2007: 53.

¹²² J. Barton, 2007: 58.

¹²³ J. Barton, 2007: 58, 59; Cf. S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke, 2001: 90.

a sign of muddle, can also be a mark of richness and subtlety, and can point to a mystery that lies beyond precise formulation.”¹²⁴ Diversity therefore is a virtue rather than a vice.

3.11. The apocryphal writings: A confirmation of the primacy of Scripture

Apart from the sacred Scriptures, there are numerous other religious writings that exist. One such type of writings found in the Jewish/Christian community is the apocryphal writings. Although these writings were not accepted into the canon of Scripture, they were valued to a certain extent. They provide additional valuable information that may not found in Scripture. In a few instances authors of canonical books quoted from some of these apocryphal writings (cf. Jude 14). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* says, “It is commonly believed that Jude quoted from this [1 Enoch] noncanonical work, though some hold the reverse to have been the case. If Jude quoted from 1 Enoch it is because the Holy Spirit led him to do so”.¹²⁵

F.F. Bruce found that,

“Throughout the centuries from Jerome to the Reformation most users of the Bible made no distinction between the apocryphal books and the others; all alike were handed down as part of the Vulgate. The vast majority of the western European Christians, clerical as well as lay, in those centuries could not be described as ‘users’ of the Bible. They were familiar with certain parts of the Bible which were repeated in church services, and with the well known Bible stories, but the idea of well defined limits to the sacred books was something that would not have occurred to them. Even among the most literate Christians a lack of concern on such matters sometimes manifests itself.”¹²⁶

Even Luther showed his acceptance of Jerome’s distinction between the two categories of Old Testament books by gathering the Apocrypha together in his German Bible as a sort of appendix to the Old Testament (1534), instead of leaving them as they stood in the Vulgate. These were largely translated by various helpers, while he himself composed the prefaces....Luther had little regard for the Apocrypha in general, but his guidance in matters of the canon was derived not from tradition but from the gospel. In both Testaments ‘what preaches Christ’ was for him the dominant principle; in the Old Testament Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah preached Christ with special clarity, he found.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ J. Barton, 2007: 63.

¹²⁵ F.D. Nichol (Ed.), *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Vol. 7. Rev. ed. Washington D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980: 708.

¹²⁶ F.F. Bruce, 1988: 99.

¹²⁷ F.F. Bruce, 1988: 102.

The Apocrypha is regarded by some scholars to be another source of tension within the Christian family of churches.¹²⁸ It is important to note that, in the concrete practice of doing theology, theologians decide on some kind of unity of text or texts to ascribe to Scripture and not to other kinds.¹²⁹ Kelsey suggests that it may be helpful to draw a distinction between a theologian's 'working canon' and the 'Christian canon'. By 'Christian canon' Kelsey means the historical canon, 'Protestant' or '[Roman] Catholic'. A 'working canon' is not what is often called 'a canon within a canon'. While the 'working canon' is part of the meaning of 'Scripture', a 'Christian canon' is not. A theologian will make a decision regarding which biblical texts of Scripture to appeal to in authorizing a theological position, but does not appeal to all of the texts in the historical 'Christian canon'.¹³⁰ Thus some Christian denominations and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular have made a decision not to appeal to apocryphal writings in order to authorize their theological positions. But Bloesch observes that both the historical sources and the theological issues play a significant role in determining the status of the Apocrypha as divine Scripture.¹³¹

The Apocrypha belong to the Alexandrian Jewish tradition, and many were originally composed in Hebrew.¹³² Australian Adventist Bible scholar Robert McIver found that some of the Apocryphal ("hidden") books, such as the books of the Maccabees, were included in the ancient Greek translation of the Bible called the Septuagint (or LXX).¹³³ This may have been because, as R.P. Martin supposes, the Jews of the Diaspora (i.e. Alexandrian Jews) took a more liberal attitude toward the apocryphal books and therefore included a number of additional books in the Septuagint.¹³⁴ F.F. Bruce argues that this was not canonizing them, but that it was done based on a mistaken belief that they already formed part of an Alexandrian Canon.¹³⁵ This vast corpus of literature is sometimes known as "Pseudepigrapha" - (false writings or falsely entitled). The

¹²⁸ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 161.

¹²⁹ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 103.

¹³⁰ D.H. Kelsey, 1999: 104.

¹³¹ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 165.

¹³² D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 161.

¹³³ R.K. McIver, 2000: 33.

¹³⁴ R.P. Martin, 1979: 99.

¹³⁵ F.F. Bruce, 1963: 95.

Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary indicates that these writings are religious in nature, reflecting the political and intellectual movements of their times. While not generally accepted by Protestants, and thus not usually included in their Bible editions today, the apocryphal books (including the Pseudepigrapha) are considered by Roman and Greek Catholics as canonical, and may be found in Bibles used by them.¹³⁶

The Palestinian rabbis called these books ‘outside books’ to indicate their being outside the sacred collection of the Hebrew list. Bruce contends that there is no evidence that the apocryphal books were ever regarded as canonical by Jews, whether inside or outside Palestine, whether they read the Bible in Hebrew or in Greek.¹³⁷ Martin notes that the term apocrypha gradually took on a pejorative sense; and the teaching of this literature came to be regarded as questionable from an orthodox standpoint.¹³⁸

Some of the early Christian church fathers such as St. Augustine, like Jerome, inherited the canon of Scripture as something ‘given’. It was part of the Christian faith which he embraced at his conversion in 386 and, as with so many other elements of the Christian faith, he set himself to understand it, defend it, and expound it.¹³⁹ But he is charged to have been responsible for keeping the door open to the inclusion of the Apocrypha in sacred Scripture, whereas the Hebrew scholar Jerome relegated to Apocrypha to a secondary status in his Vulgate translation. In his writings, however, St. Augustine began to distinguish between the books of the original Hebrew canon and the deuterocanonical books accepted and read by the churches.¹⁴⁰

While not part of the canonical Scripture, the apocryphal books can nevertheless be appreciated by both Jews and Christians as a rich historical source.¹⁴¹ Many of these documents are valuable because they mirror with considerable accuracy the religious, political, and social conditions in Judea following the close of the Old Testament period proper. While Protestants may

¹³⁶ F.D. Nichol (Ed.), *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Vol. 5. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980: 83, 84, 87.

¹³⁷ F.F. Bruce, 1963: 164.

¹³⁸ R.P. Martin, 1979: 98-99.

¹³⁹ F.F. Bruce, 1988: 230.

¹⁴⁰ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 162, 163.

¹⁴¹ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 168.

not object to anyone reading these books at home, the apocryphal books, Barclay warns, “are not to be read in public and at public worship”.¹⁴² He however observes that the Roman Catholic Church does not call these books Apocrypha at all. Rather, they regard them as fully and truly Scripture. So, while the churches of the Protestant Reformations either discarded the Apocrypha or relegated them to secondary status, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) accepted most of the books of the Apocrypha as deuterocanonical Scripture.¹⁴³ Martin Luther followed the early Christian tradition when he included the Apocrypha of the Old Testament in his German translation, where he appended them at the end of the Old Testament.¹⁴⁴

The Apocrypha, “as employed in post-Reformation Protestant writings has designated some fourteen of fifteen documents consisting of books or parts of books that emerged in the main from the last two centuries preceding the birth of Christ and the first century of the Christian era”.¹⁴⁵ Harrison observes that “although the period between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. was marked by the production of a great many Jewish writings, large numbers of these were regarded as “outside books” in the best sense of the term”.¹⁴⁶

Bloesch indicates that “the influence of the Puritan tradition within Protestantism eventually led to the deletion of the apocrypha books from the Bible, although in contemporary Protestantism, because of the ecumenical connection, the Apocrypha are being included, but always as an appendix or a separate unit between the two Testaments. Nevertheless, conservative evangelicals generally consider the Apocrypha an unwelcome intrusion from the ancient Hellenistic world into the authorized writings of the church”.¹⁴⁷

Bloesch, on the other hand maintains that “the influence of the apocryphal books on the spirituality of the church through the ages is indispensable, in that many of the great hymns¹⁴⁸ of the

¹⁴² W. Barclay, 1981: 68.

¹⁴³ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 163.

¹⁴⁴ E.T. Batchmann (Ed.), 1960: 35/232.

¹⁴⁵ R.K. Harrison, 2004: 1175; Cf. W. Barclay, 1981: 68.

¹⁴⁶ R.K. Harrison, 2004: 1185.

¹⁴⁷ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 164.

¹⁴⁸ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 169; Bruce Metzger (1957: 212-222) makes a comparative analysis of the Apocrypha’s pervasive influence on ancient and modern great hymns.

church make allusions to the Apocrypha. Many religious artists have also found inspiration in the Apocrypha. All of the great hymns Bloesch lists in his book on page 169 are also found in the standard *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*,¹⁴⁹ even though Adventists categorically reject any reference to the Apocrypha as a basis for faith and practice. Shouldn't the Apocrypha therefore be recommended as a source of spiritual edification for Christians?

To note that the apocryphal writings made an undeniable impression on some New Testament writers and that they were frequently cited by the church fathers should be enough reason to convince us that they merit a place in Christian spirituality. Nevertheless, they must be read with care, for they contain notions that are at variance with the vision of the biblical prophets and apostles, especially in the area of the doctrine of salvation. The Reformers wisely refused to accord the Apocrypha normative status in determining matters of faith and practice, but on the whole they treated these books with respect.

Bloesch argues that the apocryphal books are certainly not the Word of God in the sense of inspired Scripture, but anyone grounded in the faith in Jesus Christ and him crucified may occasionally hear the Word of God in these books just as we may hear God's Word in the sermons, prayers and theological tracts of the people of God after the time of Christ. Bloesch reasons that the Apocrypha may not be a witness to the redemptive acts of Jesus Christ and are therefore not a doctrinal norm for the church, but they do provide an understanding of the spiritual climate into which Christ came. In this way, they throw light on the deeds of Christ and his apostles as they ministered to the Jewish community. The Apocrypha are not the Word of God, but they may lend themselves for use by the living Word of God to bring new insight and appreciation for the acts of God in biblical history. This rejection of the apocryphal books was more resolute in the Western church than among the Christians of the East by as early as 200 A.D.¹⁵⁰

But Adventist theologian Norman R. Gulley argues that "the Apocrypha must be rejected where it opposes Christ and His gospel as presented in the canonical writings. The difference in

¹⁴⁹ *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal: Word Edition*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988.

¹⁵⁰ D.G. Bloesch, 1994: 169.

quality between the canon and the Apocrypha is manifest”.¹⁵¹ This rejection of the Apocrypha on the basis of its lack of manifesting Christ and His gospel is the same principle Martin Luther used to reject some of the canonical books. But the spiritual value of the apocryphal books has been recognized already. Besides, divine knowledge is not limited to what is written in the Bible. Everything Jesus did is not written in the Bible (John 20: 30; 21: 25). Jesus himself indicated that He had much more to say to the disciples, which He left for the Holy Spirit to reveal in later times (John 16: 12-15). The *Seventh - day Adventist Bible Commentary* articulated that “the wisdom of God is infinite and cannot be exhausted. A lifetime of diligent study enables one to gain but a limited concept of the infinite treasures of spiritual knowledge.”¹⁵² So Scripture may be the supreme authority in matters of Christian doctrine, but more can still be learned beyond the covers of the sacred pages.

3.12. God’s use of other media of the communication: A confirmation of the primacy of Scripture

If the meaning and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle is taken to exclude any other source of doctrinal teaching and practice, how will the revelation of Scripture itself and the experience of believers in the history of Christianity be understood which shows that the extent of God’s involvement with His creation goes beyond the confines of canonical writings? This section presents other ways God has worked with humanity in addition to the light given in the Scriptures.

3.12.1. The Holy Spirit as giver of new life and power

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the divine trinity. For at least 2500 years before the writing of the Torah by Moses, God was at work with His creation in various ways and at many times (Heb 1: 1). The Holy Spirit’s presence and ministry in the world is mentioned at the dawn of creation (Gen 1: 2; 2:7; Job 33: 4; Psalm 33: 6). H. Young maintains that “the wonderful world in

¹⁵¹ N.R. Gulley, 2003: 605, 606.

¹⁵² F.D. Nichol (Ed.), 1980: 5/1048.

which we live is an exhibition of how God works by His Spirit”.¹⁵³ He goes on to say, “A patient search of the Old Testament reveals that the Spirit’s work is abnormal, discontinuous, ecstatic and miraculous. His power is manifest in individuals for some particular task at some special time.”¹⁵⁴ Thus we see the Spirit at work in the lives and ministry of the Judges and Kings (e.g. Judges 3: 10; 6: 34; 11: 29; 2 Kings 2: 9-15; etc.). The Spirit gave skill to the builders of the Tabernacle and the Temple (Ex. 31: 1-11; Haggai 2: 5; Zech 4: 6). The Spirit was also instrumental in the ministry of the prophets (Numb 24: 2; 2Chron 12: 18; etc.).

In the New Testament, the work of the Spirit is also evident (John 1: 33; Acts 2: 16-21, etc.). The Holy Spirit also speaks, convicts, testifies, teaches, shows, leads, guides, prompts speech, commands, forbids, desires, helps, intercedes with groans (John 14: 26; Acts 2: 4, etc.). J.I. Packer wrote concerning the doctrine and ministry of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁵

Thus before the existence of the Old Testament Scriptures and even before and after the writing of the New Testament books, God was at work on earth through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. During the period after the writing of the canonical books, the Holy Spirit has been at work in helping believers to understand the written Word of God through what is often called illumination. The work of the Holy Spirit is not restricted to the canon of the Scripture. The Spirit blows or goes where He pleases (John 3: 8) and distributes spiritual gifts among believers as He determines (1 Cor. 12: 11).

Packer argues that “the Reformers maintained that Scripture and Spirit are inseparably conjoined. *Sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone) was the Reformation watchword; the intrinsic clarity and sufficiency of Scripture for saving knowledge and faithful service of God were affirmed, and new inward revelations were denied. But without the Spirit who inspired the biblical word, authenticating and interpreting it and enlightening sin-blinded hearts so that they receive it, the

¹⁵³ H. Young, *Understanding the Holy Spirit*. Alma Park, Grantham, England: Autumn House, 1998: 26.

¹⁵⁴ H. Young, 1998: 26.

¹⁵⁵ J.I. Packer, ‘Holy Spirit’, in: S.B. Ferguson & D.F. Wright (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2005: 316-319.

word will not be understood.”¹⁵⁶ Christ’s promise to the disciples to be with them to the very end of the age is being made possible through the ever present Holy Spirit (Matt 28: 20; John 16: 7; Acts 2: 38, 39).

Osadolor Imasogie also rightly says,

“The sources of Christian theology may be described in terms of subjective and objective dimensions. Subjectively, the source of Christian theology always remains the Word of God as mediated by the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself underlines this truth in these words: ‘There is still much that I could say to you, but the burden would be too great for you now. However, when he comes who is the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but will tell only what he hears; and he will make known to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, for everything that he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine. All that the Father has is mine and that is why I said, ‘Everything that he makes known to you he will draw from what is mine’” (John 16: 12-15 NEB). “In other words, the theologian must remain tuned into the Holy Spirit, the primary source of theology, as he is faced with any human situation”.¹⁵⁷

The Spirit was also instrumental in the inspiration of the Scripture (1Pet. 1: 19-20). The same Spirit also guides believers in understanding the Bible. But even when the Holy Spirit plays important functions in the spiritual lives of believers, He does not substitute the role of the Bible, but complements it. Believers are still encouraged by Paul: “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1Thess 5: 19-21).

3.12.2. The ministry of the holy angels complements the role of Scripture

After the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, and their consequent banishment from the Garden of Eden, the presence and work of angels came into view (Gen. 3: 24). Fernando Canale maintains that “throughout the Bible angels are created beings, not to be worshiped (Col. 2: 18; Rev. 19: 10). Angelic beings have the specific task of carrying out God’s specific purposes relating to human history (Heb. 1: 14).”¹⁵⁸ Karl Barth asserts “that angels are regarded as part of the creation is not in doubt (Ps. 148: 2, 5; Col. 1: 16), but Scripture accords to angelic beings a position of unusual

¹⁵⁶ J.I. Packer, 2005: 318.

¹⁵⁷ O. Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*. Achimota, Ghana, West Africa: 1983: 72; Cf. S.J. Grenz & J.R. Franke caution, however that, “A theology of the Word and Spirit need not lapse into subjectivism, however. What leads to subjectivism is the articulation of such a theology in the context of a basically individualistic understanding of the event of revelation. In other words, the problem of subjectivism arises only when we mistakenly place the individual ahead of the community”, 2001: 68.

¹⁵⁸ F. Canale, ‘Doctrine of God’, in: R. Dederen (Ed.), *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology: Commentary Reference Series*. Vol. 12. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000: 122.

authority over the created and historical order, including responsibility for children (Mt. 18: 10), protection of God's people (Ps. 34: 7), involvement in international affairs (Dan. 10: 13; 10: 20-11:10) and participation in the judgments (Rev. 15-16)".¹⁵⁹ Although in the plan of salvation, "The life of a sinless human being or even an angel could not atone for the sins of the human race".¹⁶⁰

John M. Fowler observes that unfortunately, although "angels, like human beings, were created good, ... a falling occurred among them. The leader of these fallen angels was Satan, whom Jesus described as "a murderer from the beginning" and "the father of lies" (John 8: 44)...Jesus further said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10: 18), and the Apocalypse portrays a war in heaven in which Satan, "deceiver of the whole world," was cast out of heaven and fell to the earth (Rev. 12: 7-9)".¹⁶¹

The book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* indicates that "to assist His people in this [universal] controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation".¹⁶² The apostle Peter shows that in the work of the gospel, "Even angels long to look into these things" (1 Pet. 1: 12). This may show how interested the angels are in the positive outcome of the work of the gospel. The Bible further reveals that at second advent of Christ, "he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (Matt. 24: 31).

As the angels continue their divine ministry to humanity, the role of Scripture in determining whether the angels are good or wicked is vital. Christ overcame the tempter in the wilderness of temptation by quoting Scripture (Matt 4). This shows the ultimate importance of Scripture in the controversy with the wicked forces.

¹⁵⁹ K. Barth, 'Angels', in: S.B. Ferguson & D.F. Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2005: 20.

¹⁶⁰ *Seventh-day Adventist Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. (2nd ed.). Boice, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005: 58.

¹⁶¹ J. M. Fowler, 'Sin', in: R. Dederen (Ed.), *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology: Commentary Reference Series*. Vol. 12. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000: 241; Cf. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 2005: 100.

¹⁶² *Seventh-day Adventist Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 2005: 113.

3.12.3. Divine communication through the Urim and Thummim

Other instruments God used to communicate to His people Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness and after their settlement in Canaan were the Urim and Thummim. S.H. Horn et al describe these objects as “the two objects attached to the breastplate worn by the high priest upon the ephod (Ex 28:6; Lev 8:8)....The high priest used these 2 objects to ascertain the will of God in doubtful matters involving the welfare of the nation, usually when requested by its leaders (cf. Num 27:21; 1 Sa 22:10). The Bible does not make clear the means by which these two objects certified the divine will. After God had rejected Saul as king He refused to answer him by this method (1Sa 28:6). Ezra 2:63 and Neh 7:65 indicate that God did not communicate through the Urim and Thummim immediately following the exile, and there is no record of their later use”.¹⁶³

While there is indication of David receiving an affirmative answer while running away from king Saul (1 Sam 23:9-12), J.A. Motyer indicates that there is also a recorded incident in the Bible where a negative answer was given. There is Biblical indication also that the Urim and Thummim could not be compelled to give an answer (1 Sam 28:6; cf. 14:36-37).¹⁶⁴ On the basis of Prov 16:33, Motyer states that these stones could be taken or tossed out of the pouch to give a ‘yes’ (two Thummim) and ‘no’ (two Urim) and a possible ‘no reply’ (one Urim and one Thummim) were possible.¹⁶⁵ The diverse ways in which God ministered to His people is seen in the use of these instruments. However we know something about these instruments because they are recorded in Scripture, which gives the Bible special importance to us today. This means of communicating with God’s will come to an end but the written Word of God continues to speak to us.

3.12.4. Casting Lots

Casting lots was another means used by the Israelites when seeking God’s will. S.H. Horn et al define the casting of lots as,

¹⁶³ S.H. Horn et al, ‘Urim and Thummim’, in: D.F. Neufeld (Ed.), *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*. Vol. 8. 1960: 648, 649, 1120.

¹⁶⁴ J.A. Motyer, ‘Urim and Thummim’, in: I.H. Marshall, A.M. Millard, J.I. Packer & D.J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible Dictionary*. (3rd ed.), Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1996: 1220.

¹⁶⁵ J.A. Motyer, 1996: 1220.

“Devices employed by the selection of one item from among 2 or more, or for simply a chance selection. This method was used anciently by the heathen (Esther 3:7; 9:24; Jonah 1:7; Matt 27:35), and by Hebrews and Christians throughout the Bible times. Use of such by believers in the true God is based on the assumption that God will guide in the selection of the alternative that corresponds to His will in the matter. It is evident from Scripture that God approved this method of ascertaining His will, at least for certain purposes and certain circumstances, as for instance, the selection of the sacrificial goat for the day of Atonement (Lev 16:8-10), the tribal assignments in the land of Canaan (Numb 26:55; 33:54; 34:13; 36:2,3), and the detection of Achan’s sin (Josh 7:14). After the ascension of our Lord the apostles cast lots to select a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:26). The casting of lots seems to have been used more as a chance method of assigning certain tasks to priests, Levites, and people after the Captivity, without any apparent intention that the Lord Himself would determine how the lot fell (Neh. 10:34)”¹⁶⁶

Horn et al however caution that in view of the fact that the casting of lots has been commonly used by heathens and by unbelievers since time immemorial, and since only when God specifically indicates that this method shall be used can the chance factor be ruled out, intelligent Christians will not employ it or any other haphazard method of ascertaining God’s will. The creator has equipped man with intelligence and has set forth the principles upon which to decide the problems and issues of life. It is His purpose that men and women shall use the intelligence with which He has endowed them to apply these basic principles to the problems that confront them. The Christian has access to prayer and through it to the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit in directing the use of his mental faculties and enabling him to recognize affairs of life. The creator is honored when men and women use the facilities He has provided, and only when these are not adequate for meeting a critical situation or in the case of sincere persons who have not been enlightened, may He reasonably be expected to bless in the use of lots or other chance procedures. But intelligent Christians cannot have confidence in any haphazard method for making the decisions of life, whether great or small. To neglect the facilities God has provided for meeting the problems of life is to dishonor Him, to forfeit His guidance, and to expose oneself to deception (cf. 1Sam 28:15).¹⁶⁷

The casting of lots complemented other means of knowing God’s will. Nevertheless prayer and the study of God’s Word provide more dependable and trustworthy ways of knowing God’s will. Again with the casting of lots having gone out of use, the Scripture remains the ultimate way

¹⁶⁶ S.H. Horn et al, 1960: 662.

¹⁶⁷ S.H. Horn et. all, 1960: 662.

to know God's will. Scripture therefore remains the lasting authoritative means of discerning God's will today.

3.12.5. Theophany

Another method through which God communicated with humanity was through theophany. T. Longman wrote that "theophany refers to an 'appearance of God' to man".¹⁶⁸ The Old Testament records numerous theophanies, beginning with the early chapters of Genesis which recorded that God talked to Adam and walked in the garden (Gen 3:8). God appeared to humanity in at least three forms depending on the function of that appearance. These include an appearance as a human being, as an angel, and as a non-human. Such appearances took place when people were awake or through a dream or vision.¹⁶⁹

When God came in judgment, He appeared in a threatening guise. To Joshua, God appeared as a fierce warrior (Josh 5:13-15). Such frightening judgmental theophanies brought both a curse and fear to God's enemies and blessing and comfort to God's people (Nah 1:1-9). To Abraham, God appeared as a messenger (Gen 18:1-15). Many times when biblical writers described God, they used anthropomorphic imagery – describing God's being, actions, and emotions in human terms.¹⁷⁰

In another instance, God appeared to Manoah and his wife as an angel (Judges 13). Bible scholars generally believe that the angel of the Lord appearing or mentioned several times in the Old Testament is the pre-incarnate Christ. Such theophanies are specifically referred to as Christophanies. While Christ is never referred to as the angel of the Lord, this meaning is read backward into the Old Testament from the New Testament since no one has seen God the Father, but the Son (John 1: 18).

God also appeared to people in non-human form. To Abraham God appeared as a smoking firepot with a blazing torch (Gen 15:17). To Moses God appeared as the angel of the LORD in

¹⁶⁸ T. Longman, 'Anthropomorphism', in: S.B. Ferguson & D.F. Wright (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove, ILL: 2005: 681.

¹⁶⁹ R.B. Chisholm, 'Theophany', in: T.D. Alexander & B.S. Rosner (Eds.), *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 2000: 816.

¹⁷⁰ T. Longman, 2005: 681.

flames of fire (Exod 3:2). In several instances God demonstrated His presence and authority over the elements of nature to demonstrate that He possessed power to protect and bless His people Israel. Early Hebrew poetry depicted God as coming in the storm to conquer and judge his enemies and to deliver and protect His people. The Old Testament prophets utilized theophany imagery in describing the judgment of God. God appears in a storm and uses its elements as weapons.

God's self-revelation culminated in the form of a Christophany, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God's Son.¹⁷¹ Longman calls Jesus the theophany *par excellence*. Jesus the divine Word became flesh, and lived among the human race and revealed the glory of God (John 1:1-14; Heb 1:3). After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples many times before ascending to heaven. Even after his ascension, Christ continued to appear. Stephen, while being stoned saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). Jesus also revealed himself to Saul of Tarsus through a blinding light (Acts 9:3-5). In several visions recorded in the book of Revelation, John saw the glorified Christ.¹⁷² We have an understanding of the role of these appearances of God largely because the Bible contains a record of them. Although God has numerous ways of ministering to us, all these ways find their anchor in the biblical record. This gives the Bible supreme authority in matters of faith.

3.12.6. Divine dreams and visions

God also communicated with humanity through dreams and visions (Numb 12:6). To Moses the LORD spoke face to face (v. 7-8). Adventist Bible teacher T.H. Jemison indicates that “no clear line of distinction [or borderline, according to Thomson¹⁷³] is drawn between the prophetic vision and the prophetic dream. [A great similarity abounds between a prophetic vision and a prophetic dream.] It is recognized that there are false visions and dreams, but the terms used to describe the true prophetic visions seem at times to be used interchangeably”.¹⁷⁴ *The Seventh-day Adventist*

¹⁷¹ R.B. Chisholm, 2000: 818.

¹⁷² T. Longman, 2005: 681.

¹⁷³ J.G.S.S. Thompson, 'Dream', in: I.H. Marshall, A.M. Millard, J.I. Packer & D.J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible Dictionary*. (3rd ed.), Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1996: 63.

¹⁷⁴ T.H. Jemison, 1955: 63.

Bible Commentary defined those dreams used as one of God's ways of revealing Godself will, to be "inspired dreams", (e.g. Num. 12: 6; Joel 2: 28; Gen. 20: 3; 31: 11, 24; 41: 1).¹⁷⁵ Horn et al indicate that to the ancients a dream often had portentous significance. The meaning was not always obvious except with the help of an interpreter of dreams, particularly with respect to those dreams seen by non-Israelites.¹⁷⁶ The Bible makes mention of other non-Israelite people who believed in dreams such as the Egyptians (Gen 41), the Midianites (Judge 7:13, 15), and the Babylonians (Dan 2). They believed that this was a means of communication used by divine powers.

With regard to visions, the emphasis here seemed to be upon the ecstatic nature of the experience, and the revelatory character of the knowledge, which came to the biblical prophets and seers. Such experience pointed to a special awareness of God shared by saintly men (e.g. Jere 1:11; Dan 2:19; Acts 9:10; 16: 9). The circumstances in which the revelatory visions came to the seers of the Bible were varied.¹⁷⁷ The visions came during daylight time when the prophet was awake or at night while the prophet was sleeping. Thomson regards the visions in the book of Revelation to be a supreme set in the New Testament.¹⁷⁸

Wright observes a lack of preoccupation with dreams as a means of communication. Rather, dreams are said to derive from the activities in which the dreamer has been immersed during the day (Eccl. 5:3). There is some regard however, that whatever the origin of a dream, it may become a means by which God communicates with humanity, be they Israelites (1 Kings 3:5) or non-Israelites (Gen 20:3).¹⁷⁹

Closely related to visions were dreams. J.S. Wright identifies two kinds of dreams recorded in Scripture. The first kind consists of ordinary dreams in which the sleeper 'sees' a connected series of images which correspond to events in everyday life (Gen 40:9-17; 41:1-7). At times a prophet was taken in vision from one place to a distant locality. The prophet's physical body was

¹⁷⁵ F.D. Nichol (Ed.), 1980: 5/283.

¹⁷⁶ S.H. Horn et. all, 1960: 1120; Cf. J.S. Wright, 'Dream', in: I.H. Marshall, A.M. Millard, J.I. Packer & D.J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible Dictionary*. (3rd ed.). Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1996: 281.

¹⁷⁷ J.G.S.S. Thomson, 'Vision', in: I.H. Marshall, A.M. Millard, J.I. Packer & D.J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible Dictionary*. (3rd ed.), Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1996: 1227; Cf. T.H. Jemison, 1955: 21.

¹⁷⁸ J.G.S.S. Thomson, 1996: 1227.

¹⁷⁹ J.S. Wright, 1996: 281.

not transported to that spot, but the things the prophet saw were as real and vivid as though he/she were present in the flesh and viewing them with the natural eye. Ezekiel described several such instances.¹⁸⁰ Such biblical visions concerned both immediate situations (Gen 15:1; Acts 12:7) and far-off divine events, as the writings of Isaiah, Daniel and John testify.¹⁸¹

The second kind consists of dreams which communicated to the sleeper a message from God (Gen 20:3-7; 1 Kings 3:5-15; Matt 1:20-24). Dream-phenomena reported by the members of the covenant community were often accompanied with interpretation spoken by God, and therefore needed somebody like Joseph or Daniel to interpret. On other occasions, however, there was virtually no distinction between a dream and a vision during the night (Job 4:12; Acts 16:9; 18:9). However, dreams in which God spoke (Gen 20:3; 31:24; Matt 2:12; 27:19) rendered human intervention unnecessary.

J.S. Wright also indicates that among the Hebrews there was a close association between dreams and the function of the prophet (Deut 13:1-5; 1Sam 28:6; Jere 23:25-32).¹⁸² The prediction of the outpouring of the Spirit in Joel 2:28 linked dreams and visions. The prophet Jeremiah, however, censured the false prophets whose dreams had no divine origin for claiming the prophetic gift (Jere 23:16, 25-27, 32) while he admitted that a genuine prophet could have prophetic dreams (v. 28). Jeremiah was knowledgeable of dream forms which had prophetic inspiration (31:26). In such cases, the prophet must know that what he/she had seen was all supernaturally revealed, and not a mixture of revelation with natural impressions and dispositions. And God desired that the message received by the prophet was undistorted.¹⁸³

In modern times, Seventh-day Adventists acknowledge the spiritually beneficial ministry of Ellen G. White who received over two thousand visions and prophetic dreams during her seventy

¹⁸⁰ J.S. Wright, 1996: 281; Cf. T.H. Jemison, *A Prophet Among You*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1955: 64.

¹⁸¹ J.G.S.S. Thomson, 1996: 1227.

¹⁸² J.S. Wright, 1996: 281.

¹⁸³ Cf. T.H. Jemison, 1955: 64.

years long ministry.¹⁸⁴ Through those dreams and visions she provided guidance to the Adventist movement. Nevertheless the acceptance of Ellen G. White's ministry as a messenger of God was based on application of certain biblical tests to her experiences during the early years of her ministry. Even with those dreams and visions however, Ellen G. White directed Adventists to the study of Scripture. Scripture was to provide ultimate guidance, giving the Bible ultimate authority.

3.12.7. The ministry of prophets or seers

Then there were also prophets or seers who spoke on behalf of God. Horn et al state that "the prophet is a person supernaturally called and qualified as a spokesman for God. He/she was God's official representative to His people on earth. A prophet's call was not hereditary but came only by divine call. The prophet was chiefly a teacher of righteousness, spirituality, and ethical conduct; a moral reformer bearing messages of instruction, counsel, admonition, warning, whose work often included the prediction of future events".¹⁸⁵ Gerhard Pfandl also reiterates that "the prophet is a person who proclaims divine messages. These may relate to the past, the present, or the future and consist of exhortation, instruction, consolation, or prediction".¹⁸⁶

The prophet Amos said, "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Through Moses, the LORD promised, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account" (Deut 18:18-19). King David was guided by at least three prophets in his life time, namely Samuel, Gad, and Nathan (1Chron 29:29-30). King Jehoshaphat also encouraged the Israelites to have faith in God's prophets in order to be successful (2Chron 20:20b).

¹⁸⁴ D.A. Delafield, *Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1963: 87.

¹⁸⁵ S.H. Horn et. al, 1960: 879.

¹⁸⁶ G. Pfandl, 'The Prophetic Gift', in: *The Adult Sabbath School Study Guide*, Jan. Feb. Mar. 2009: 10.

The biblical record indicates that there were prophets from the time of Abraham (Gen 20:7). Although during the period of the Judges, the prophetic visions were rare (1 Sam 3:1), Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophetess and a judge for Israel, prior to the monarchical period (Judge 4:4-5). Horn et. al found that “the rise of Samuel the prophet at the close of this period [of Judges] was epoch-making. He was the first ‘prophet’ in the strict sense of the word, and may be thought of as a founder of the prophetic office”.¹⁸⁷

Both men and women were called to the prophetic ministry. Samuel became the last judge of Israel and was a seer/prophet who anointed Saul, the first king of Israel (1Sam 9; 10:1-8), as well as David (16:1-13). While many prophets ministered during the period between Samuel and the close of the Old Testament period, some prophets committed their messages to writing while others did not. Nevertheless, even those prophets who left no written record of their messages spoke the word of God. These are referred to as oral prophets.

Prophets did not however substitute the written word of God, but they at times served to interpret the Book of the Law and other divine writings for people to understand God’s will (2 Kings 22: 14-16; Neh. 8: 7, 8; Dan 5: 11-17; Luke 24: 27; Acts 8: 35; 18: 26, etc.). Some of those who wrote down their prophetic messages had their writings added to the Torah authored by Moses. Horn et al indicate that the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are called the Former Prophets, while Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and “The Twelve” – Hosea through Malachi – are called the Latter Prophets. As a result 66 books of the Bible came into being, containing all the knowledge necessary for salvation.¹⁸⁸ Based on the office of the author, however, the book of Daniel was initially not included in the prophetic section. Daniel served chiefly as a statesman at the court of Nebuchadnezzar and the Medo-Persian Kings in Babylon.

After a period of 200 years of silence, during which the Apocryphal books were written, the prophetic gift was revived. Prophetic utterances were given by Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45), and Simeon and Anna (chap 2:25-38). And Christ declared John to be a prophet and “more than a

¹⁸⁷ S.H. Horn et al, 1960: 879, 1120.

¹⁸⁸ S.H. Horn et al, 1960: 1120; Cf. G. Pfandl, 2009: 93, 97.

prophet” (Matt 11:9, 10). In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul listed the prophetic gift as one of the gifts of the Spirit (1Cor 12:10), and indeed one of the greatest gifts (chap 14:1, 5). Thus the prophetic gift worked side by side with the written Scriptures and these writings of some of the prophets were added to the Hebrew Scriptures.

In addition to non-canonical prophets mentioned above, Merlin Burt suggests that the writings of Ellen White are comparable to these.¹⁸⁹ Ellen White herself never viewed her writings as an addition to Scripture. She referred to her writings as ‘a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light’. It is also in this regard that Seventh-day Adventist regard the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.

Taking a position that the Bible alone is the only source of doctrinal teaching and practice seems to restrict God’s ministry to His people. Ellen White indicated that “our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing.”¹⁹⁰ Although the Bible is God’s ultimate authoritative source for doctrinal teachings, it is not the only one. Maintaining this understanding can enrich our spiritual experience in our relationship with God.

Steve Daily sadly observes that “with the institutionalization of Christianity the religious establishment became so powerful that it not only opposed all dissent, but squelched the prophetic spirit through persecution and martyrdom. Not until Luther and the Reformation was the prophetic spirit revived sufficiently to make a dent in the abuses that had compounded because the ecclesiastical establishment had enjoyed virtually unchecked power and authority for centuries. It was in such a spirit of prophetic dissent that the Adventist church was born”.¹⁹¹ But in spite of the special regard given to the prophetic ministry of Ellen White, Seventh-day Adventism has remained a Bible centered church. The Bible is still regarded as the final authority in matters of faith and practice.

¹⁸⁹ M. Burt, *Ellen White and Sola Scriptura*. A Paper read at the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Presbyterian Church USA Conversation. Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly PC (USA), 2007: 8.

¹⁹⁰ White, E.G. *The Ministry of Healing*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905: 481.

¹⁹¹ S. Daily, *Adventism for a New Generation*. Portland, OR: Better Living Publishers, 1994: 186.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the Bible did not exist in its written form for many centuries until the time of Moses. During that time, the Lord maintained communication with the human race through other media. God was not limited in his communication by the absence of the Bible. Even after biblical books were written, God continued to communicate Godself will through various other ways such as the Holy Spirit, prophets, dreams and visions. The Bible was written to document God's mighty deeds in the past, teach or convey His will and communicate His plans for his people. It was necessary to put these messages in written form so that they could be read over and over as people are forgetful. But the Bible shows that not everything God did or said was written in the Scripture.

This chapter has also discussed the long process of the writing and formation of the Biblical canon. Challenges prevailed over the decision as to which books should be included in the canon. Christians generally believe that the canon was closed after a decision on its composition was made. But the Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Bible is still working among believers. The Holy Spirit's ministry is exhibited through spiritual gifts today while the various media of knowing God's will used in the past have largely ceased to function. Dependence on secondary means of knowing God's will is acceptable, but the safest course of action for Christians is to test everything with the authority of the Scriptures. The Bible therefore remains the final court of appeal in matters of faith and practice. The next chapter will examine the role Scripture has played in *Zambian Seventh-day Adventism* during the last one hundred years.

CHAPTER 4

SCRIPTURE IN ZAMBIAN ADVENTISM

Introduction

In the previous chapters we explored the understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in Protestant Reformation Christianity. We looked at how the Protestant Reformers, particularly Martin Luther, understood the role of Scripture in the church. We understood that Luther took the Scriptures or the Word of God as the supreme authority for Christians. Nevertheless Luther did not rule out tradition as shown by his acceptance of doctrines such as the deity of Christ, the Trinity, etc. which were developed by the early church fathers and the councils. Luther did not however view all books of the Bible as of equal standing if they did not manifest the ‘Christ principle’.

We also examined how the *sola Scriptura* principle is understood and applied in Seventh-day Adventist theology. Several adjectives such as ‘only’, ‘primary’ or ‘final’ are applied in relation to the role of Scripture in theology. Like the Reformers who referred to the accepted the writings of the early fathers, Seventh-day Adventists accept the writings of Ellen G. White whom they believe to have been endowed with the prophetic gift. Although her writings are considered to have been inspired, they are not an addition to the biblical canon, which is believed to have closed.

In chapter 3 we sought to understand how the Bible relates to the *sola Scriptura* principle. We noted that God communicated to humanity in various ways before and after the Bible was written. While the Bible is the final rule of faith and practice, there are other secondary sources used in the theological enterprise, both inspired and none inspired. The other sources are to be test by the Bible. Hence *sola Scriptura* should not be understood in the sense of being ‘alone’, but ‘supreme’ or ‘final’.

In chapter 4, we shall explore the way in which the Bible has been used among Seventh-day Adventists in Zambia. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was established in Zambia one hundred

years ago (in 1905). As one of the Protestant denominations which uphold the *sola Scriptura* principle, this chapter will examine how it has applied Bible instruction in its education system at Rusangu mission station (or Rusangu Secondary School today). Adventism's responses to changing socio-political and religious pluralism will also be examined. The goal is to find out how Adventism has applied the *sola Scriptura* principle in the Zambian context.

4.1. Establishing of Rusangu mission station: The birthplace of Adventism in Zambia

In 1902, King Lewanika of the Barotse people visited England. Upon his return he was met by W.H. Anderson in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In their conversation the king explained how impressed he was to see what the gospel had done for white men. He urged Anderson to send missionaries into his territory north of the Zambezi River so that his subjects may also be blessed by the gospel. In response to this request, Anderson requested the South African Union Conference Committee, in April 1903, to permit him to go over the Zambezi to look for a mission site for opening missionary work in that territory.¹

After making adequate preparations, Anderson left Solusi mission, accompanied by native carriers he trusted and could depend on.² They left Bulawayo by train and arrived at Victoria Falls. Then they traveled eighty-five miles to Kalomo where the seat of government was located. At Kalomo he was advised by the administrator to go into Monze District about a hundred miles farther to the north-east, to open his mission station. The administrator desired that the mission station be located in chief Monze's area so that he could do a better job of watching over him. The late Mr Cecil Rhodes had indicated that missionaries were much better for keeping the natives quiet

¹ W.H. Anderson, *On the Trail of Livingstone*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1919: 168; Cf. E.H. Berman states that "the rapid and widespread evangelization of Africa could not have been accomplished without the contribution of Christianized Africans", *African Reactions to Missionary Education*, Teachers College, Columbia University: Teachers College Press, 1975: xiv.

² J.P. Ragsdale indicates that, "Missionaries who came from other areas of Africa to work north of the Zambezi brought African assistants with them who helped with the language and with teaching. They soon realized there was no substitute for the indigenous language. The success of their work depended on their mastery of the local dialects and on their translations of the Bible and other books into vernacular. Missionaries were usually the first to compile vocabularies, dictionaries, and grammars in the vernacular. In many cases different missionary societies, working in the same tribal area but with different dialects, cooperated to in the editing of linguistic works. The first translations into this language were books of the Bible and collections of Bible stories"; *Protestant Mission Education in Zambia, 1880 – 1954*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1986: 27.

than soldiers, and certainly a good deal cheaper. On his way Anderson survived a near death experience from dysentery. He finally arrived in Chief Monze's village.³

As Anderson searched for land where he would establish the mission station, he wanted a piece of land where there was "a strong spring, which would never fail even in the driest season, and where the water was sufficient to irrigate a garden".⁴ Having promised to pay a guide who would show him such a place, Anderson and his guide traveled the next day for eight or nine miles to the southeast of Chief Monze's kraal. Anderson describes how he finally located the desired piece of land:

"Finally, in the evening, as we were walking back toward the village, I saw a large dark object in the distance, which looked like a hill, yet it was right down in the river valley. I asked my guide what it was, and he told me it was the place he was taking me to. Just as the sun was going down, we arrived at the large cluster of maestro trees which had first attracted my attention. Here we found a beautiful spring, high up on a hill-side, with about forty acres of excellent soil lying beneath it, only waiting for the furrows to be opened to make it easy to irrigate. A stream of water flowing out from this spring would almost fill a ten-inch pipe. After all the years I had spent on the dry farm at Solusi, that spring certainly looked good to me".⁵

Anderson spent the next two days pegging out the mission farm of five thousand acres, which the government agreed to sell to him at sixteen cents an acre, giving him ten years to pay for it, with no interest on the money. The soil on the farm was very much like the soil of the Huntsville, Alabama, school farm, and produced crops of corn, sweet potatoes, peanuts and cotton, very much like the farms in the South. After pegging out another farm to the west, about one hundred miles away, in case the railway might possibly pass that way, Anderson then returned to Kalomo, filed his claims and started off for home at Solusi.⁶

After two years away on furlough, Anderson and the party arrived back at Rusangu mission station on September 5, 1905. Three days later he was visited by two white men, the Jesuit fathers, who two years earlier had spotted the same farm. Having been told that the railway would pass about a hundred miles to the northwest, they abandoned the site. But by this time the railway survey had been completed, and ran past Anderson's farm. Having arrived after Anderson had already

³ W.H. Anderson, 1919: 173.

⁴ W.H. Anderson, 1919: 177.

⁵ W.H. Anderson, 1919: 178.

⁶ W.H. Anderson, 1919: 179.

occupied the farm, these men settled on a farm nearby, today called Chikuni mission, and asked to hire Anderson's wagon to transport their goods to the station, which they were granted free of charge.⁷

4.2. The Bible as Rusangu mission school's first textbook

After he had arrived at Rusangu, it was Anderson's plan to spend two years studying the native language, becoming acquainted with the people, and traveling through the country. But the very next day after arriving on the station, his plans were frustrated by a native boy who came to Anderson and said, "Teacher, I have come to school". All efforts at persuading this young man to go home and wait for a while failed. Finally Anderson's wife asked her husband if ever he heard of the Saviour's sending anybody away, and Anderson could not recall any such incident. This person became the first pupil. The next day five more young men came to enter the school. No school existed yet. All Anderson had was the ox wagon, with a few school supplies consisting of a little blackboard, a box of chalk, a number of slates and pencils. Nevertheless, this became the opening of the first Adventist mission school in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia).⁸ By 1907 girls had also joined the student population at Rusangu School.⁹

After working all day, Anderson would sit down at night with the native boys around him trying to learn the Chitonga language from them. This would enable him to tell a simple Bible story in the school the next day. It would take him three hours to prepare a story that he could tell in about three minutes. Then he would ask them to write the story on their slates. He had them read it and in that way introduced reading in the school. Thus the source book used in the school was the Bible. He also made arithmetic using figures.¹⁰

⁷ W.H. Anderson, 1919: 200-201.

⁸ M. Simuchimba states that "almost without exception, missionary groups established themselves in different areas of Zambia by building a church and starting a school", *Religion and Education in Zambia, 1890 – 2000 and beyond*. DLit et Phil Thesis, University of South Africa, 2005: 113.

⁹ M.W.H. Hazemba, *The Changing role of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Monze District*. M.A. Dissertation. Lusaka, Zambia: University of Zambia, Great East Road Campus, 2000: 23.

¹⁰ W.H. Anderson, 1919: 204.

After teaching at this school for a year, using a blackboard and slates, Anderson prepared a series of lessons in simple story form on creation, the Garden of Eden, the fall of man, etc. following the Bible story down to the time of the Flood. About forty lessons were prepared.¹¹ When the pupils began to study their first reader, Anderson at once started working on a second reader. But the pupils got through the first reader before the second was ready. So he got them to go through the first reader again, and then asked them to commit their lessons to memory. Four of them managed to do this before the second reader was ready.¹² This marked the beginning of education work at Rusangu mission station which continued to this day. Other Adventist schools were established from this station, but that is not the focus of this study.¹³ Priority attention was given to teaching Bible at the Rusangu School as is shown in the 1912 curriculum¹⁴ presented in the table below:

TABLE 1. *Showing the Rusangu School curriculum used in 1912.*

| SUBJECT | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 | YEAR 3 | YEAR 4 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Bible | Life of Christ | Acts and one Epistle of Paul | From Abraham to Captivity of Israel | Bible Doctrines, Prophecies of Daniel & Revelation. |
| Arithmetic | Simple Addition | Subtraction | Multiplication | Division |
| Geography | South Africa | Africa | World | Missionary |
| Methodology | Teaching | Teaching | Teaching | Evangelism |
| Vernacular (Either Zulu or Tonga) | Reading Writing Spelling | Reading Writing Spelling | Reading Writing Spelling | Reading Letter Writing Spelling |

¹¹ J.P. Ragsdale observed that “the use of the Bible as the primary basis of education was the foundation of this [missionary] philosophy”, 1986: 29.

¹² W.H. Anderson, 1919: 205-206; In later years, Seventh-day Adventists made use of the bookroom which had been established by the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society (PMMS) at Nanzhila, and later at Kafue, which was also used by many missions for their educational material supplies, cf. J.P. Ragsdale, 1986: 52-55.

¹³ Cf. C.M. Matandiko, *Adventism in Zambia: The beginning and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia from 1900 to 2000*. Lusaka, Zambia: Zambia Adventist Press, 2001: 46.

¹⁴ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 85.

The absence of teaching English in the 1912 Rusangu School curriculum caused a student strike. Elder Anderson regarded the teaching of English as counterproductive in the sense that it imparted a foreign culture to students. But speaking English was regarded by the students as a sign of being educated. Chikuni Mission School nearby, which was operated by the Roman Catholic Jesuits was already offering English in 1912.¹⁵

Hazemba argues that the school at Rusangu was used as a means of conversion to the Adventist Church by the early missionaries. By the end of 1905, Anderson had baptized fifteen converts all of whom were males.¹⁶ This is because the “Adventists regard conversion as a highly individual matter based on the personal knowledge and acceptance of Bible and Adventist truth by the convert”.¹⁷

Eminent African theologian, John S. Mbiti, has given the following analysis of Christian missionaries in Africa:

“Christianity has expanded rapidly in the first half of this [twentieth] century, through the joint effort of overseas missionaries and African converts. Schools became the nurseries of Christian congregations, and converts earned the name of ‘Readers’. The same buildings were used as schools from Monday to Friday, and as churches on Saturday (for catechumen lessons) and Sunday (for worship). Another point is that the missionaries who began this modern phase of Christian expansion in Africa, together with their African helpers, were devout, sincere and dedicated men and women. But they were not theologians; some of them had little education, and most of the African evangelists and catechists were either illiterate or had only little formal learning. These workers were more concerned with practical evangelism, education and medical care, than with any academic or theological issues that might arise from the presence of Christianity in African”.¹⁸

Hazemba maintains that “the Adventist missionary policy on Church growth was to regard every school as an evangelistic center”.¹⁹ This was to remain their purpose for establishing and operating schools in every part of the world to this day.

¹⁵ A.M. Mhoswa, *A study of the Educational contribution of the Jesuit Mission at Chikuni and the Adventist Mission at Rusangu, 1905-1964*. M.Ed. Dissertation. Lusaka, Zambia: University of Zambia, Great East Road Campus, 1980: 85, 86.

¹⁶ M.W.H. Hazemba, *The Changing role of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Monze District*. M.A. Dissertation, Lusaka, Zambia: University of Zambia, Great East Road Campus 2000: 23, 24.

¹⁷ M.W.H. Hazemba, 2000: 32.

¹⁸ J.S. Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy*. (Reprinted ed.). Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers, 2002: 232; Byang Kato agrees with Mbiti when he says that “it is a fact that most of the missionaries lack sound theological education”, *Theological pitfalls in Africa*. Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1975: 15.

¹⁹ M.W.H. Hazemba, 2000: 29.

4.3. Bible instruction during the missionary and colonial periods in Northern Rhodesia/Zambia (1880 – 1963): The Adventist experience

The Zambian missionary and colonial periods are normally divided into three eras: that of the British South African Company/Missionary 1890 – 24; the British Colonial Office Administration, 1924 – 1952; and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1953 – 63.²⁰ S.K. Ng'andu²¹ and J.M. Chizelu²² indicate that during the first period, education was the responsibility of missionaries. This period of the 34 years of the BSA Company rule, is classified by Melvin Simuchimba as the “missionary period because the Company had virtually nothing to do with African (formal) education”.²³ The Seventh-day Adventist method of providing Religious Education (RE) to the native Zambians was similar to that used by other Protestant missionaries. Cornelius M. Matandiko indicates that Adventist pioneers regarded other Missions as very important. It was important to keep friendship going with other missionaries in order for the work of dispelling heathenism to be accomplished.²⁴

Chizelu shows that the primary purpose of their education was to provide religious teaching, although they also included instruction in literacy, agriculture, carpentry, hygiene, and techniques of blacksmithing.²⁵ For Adventist education, Ellen G. White earlier wrote that “in the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one”.²⁶ In order to achieve their primary purpose, missionaries used the Bible as the core of their education syllabus. Children who attended a mission

²⁰ S.K. Ng'andu, 'The Evolution of Education Policy in Zambia', in: *DPMN Bulletin*. Vol. X. No. 1, 2003: 1.

²¹ S.K. Ng'andu, 2003: 1.

²² J.M. Chizelu, *Teaching Religious Education in Zambian Multireligious secondary schools*. Unpublished dissertation. University of South Africa, 2006: 45.

²³ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 113.

²⁴ C.M. Matandiko, 2001: 46, 47; Cf. J.P. Ragsdale, 1986: 44-45.

²⁵ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 45-46; Cf. M. Simuchimba indicates that “although there was a lot of similarity in the curriculum and general ethos taught by different missionary societies, some differences in the general approach to African education and in the RE syllabuses existed. For example, among Protestant missionary groups, the Free Church of Scotland Mission and the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society stood out for being more open and ready to provide education not merely as a means to conversion but as ‘a source of mobility and intrinsically valuable to the [local] individual’ (Gadsden 1992: 101). On the other hand, extreme evangelical groups like the Christian Mission to Many Lands, the South African General Mission, the Dutch Reformed Church Mission and the Baptists were only ready to provide education as a means to conversion before anything else”, 2005: 114.

²⁶ E.G. White, *Education*. (Reprinted ed.). Boice, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1995: 21; Cf. Education is defined in humanistic terms by Abdullah Muhammad Khouj who says, “Education is the transfer of human values in ways that beneficially influence human behavior. This transformation covers a wide range of processes ranging from the very objective (scientific) to the very subjective (personal)”, ‘Education in Islam’, in: N.H. Thompson (Ed.), *Religious Pluralism and Religious Education*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988: 223.

school were expected to become adherents of that mission or church's religious dogma. Thus conversion – a shift from an indigenous way of life to Christianity – was achieved by providing religious education in schools.

The aim of religious education (RE) during this era was to first convert the Zambian people from so-called paganism to Christianity through evangelism. The second aim was to prepare young converts for membership in the Christian church, in whatever way appropriate to that particular mission under a certain denomination. The main means used by all the Christian missions in evangelism was found in networks of village schools in which children of all ages could be given a very simple education in reading, writing and arithmetic, alongside the religious instruction which eventually led to baptism and church membership.²⁷ Bible reading and prayer maintained central place in the school syllabus. The Bible was the primary basis for the education syllabus and the foundation of the missionary education philosophy.²⁸

Ellen G. White had counseled that 'the Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth, and as such should be given the highest place in education'.²⁹ Even today some Christian educators still maintain, "If the Bible is what it claims to be, and it is, then education must begin with the Bible. Christ and the Word of God, placed at the center of education, can only accrue to stronger families, better governments, better churches and a quality of life that pleases the Lord. True wisdom and knowledge is centered in Jesus Christ. For Christians, education is Bibliocentric. It must grieve the heart of God when Christ-centered believers send their children to non-Christian schools where the words of Christ are literally forbidden".³⁰

Thus the content of the missionary syllabus was mainly based on Scriptural stories and other passages which could easily be memorized.³¹ "Emphases on morality based on the Bible was

²⁷ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 47.

²⁹ E.G. White, 1995: 13; Cf. A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 60.

³⁰ P.A. Kienel, 'Maintaining Distinctives that are Biblical', in: S.E. Burris & W.R. McKinley (Eds.), *Critical issues facing Christian schools*. Whittier, CA: Association of Christian Schools International, 1990: 140.

³¹ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 48, 49; Cf. J.P. Ragsdale, 1986: 29, 31; M. Simuchimba asserts that "each missionary society or church denomination had its own syllabus for RE which was taught in all schools under it or within its sphere or area of influence. Each missionary group maintained its character and identity by teaching its own doctrine, practices and

another RE content....Missionaries regarded Zambians as Christians when they behaved positively (based on Christ's behaviour) and regarded them as sinners when they behaved to the contrary".³²

The spread of Christianity, especially among the Protestant denominations, had to rely heavily on a person's ability to read and understand the Bible.³³ Chizelu observes that "although missionaries forced the Zambians to read the Bible and obey it, they forgot that there was a multitude of interpretations to the meaning of the content".³⁴ Most missionaries' primary concern was for the salvation of the souls of the Zambians based on the claims of Jesus to be the only way to God. Being messengers of God's word and modernizing agents, missionaries hoped that by using the Christian religion, especially education that centered on biblical principles, Zambians would be modernized to Western civilization. This perception led to a belief that only the Christian religion should be taught in Zambian schools, in this case Bible knowledge.³⁵ At Rusangu Mission, Cornelius M. Matandiko says that "the early pioneers followed and adhered to the principles of education as proposed by Ellen G. White, an Adventist pioneer. Adventist education was concerned mainly with character development, religious training and preparation for denominational employment".³⁶

Hazemba indicates that, "The SDA [Seventh-day Adventist] Church in Zambia in terms of organization was in 1920 still at its formative stages. In 1921 Zambezi Union Mission was divided into the Southern Rhodesia Mission and the Northern Rhodesia Mission which included the Nyasaland Field. Northern Rhodesia was therefore administered from the Zambezi Union Mission Headquarters in Bulawayo with the Field office at Rusangu".³⁷ This administrative structure was to

traditions in their syllabus", 2005: 115. This therefore allowed the Adventist mission to maintain its Bible-centered philosophy and practice. "The [BSA] Company (state) administration left the financing and provision of education to Africans entirely in the hands of the missionary societies, it had no (official) control or say on what kind of RE was offered in the different mission schools", 2005: 115.

³² J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 81.

³³ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 50; Cf. Ellen G. White wrote, "Let all join in the Bible reading and learn an often repeat God's law", 1995: 117.

³⁴ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 80.

³⁵ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 78.

³⁶ C.M. Matandiko, 2001: 49.

³⁷ M.W.H. Hazemba, 2000: 29.

serve the Adventist Church in Zambia for the next fifty years until 1972 when further reorganization was done by creating Zambia Union mission.

M. Simuchimba argues that “colonial rule proper for Zambia began on 1st April 1924 when the British Colonial Office took over administration of the territory from the BSA Company”.³⁸ During this period, Chizelu maintains that “the aims of RE in the colonial era were to convert and nurture Zambians in the Christian faith according to Western ideals, without questioning them. Zambians uncritically accepted whatever missionaries taught them in RE to help them develop moral and spiritual values. Hence, RE produced a religiously committed Zambian who appeared to be a submissive follower of Christ”.³⁹ The nature of religious education in the colonial era actually provided the foundation on which Zambia’s religious education system is based to this day.⁴⁰

With regard to general education, Ng’andu maintains that “colonial rule saw the introduction of more formal and professional control over schooling. Owing to limited resources and the unwillingness of the white settlers to promote secondary and higher education of the Africans, education was limited to lower levels of schooling. Secondary schooling was mainly introduced in order to provide teachers for primary education. During the federation [of Rhodesia and Nyasaland], segregationist and inequitable patterns of provision for African and European children persisted. In addition, the focus was on primary education, with only limited secondary teacher education for Africans”.⁴¹

M. Simuchimba indicates that “unlike the BSA Company state, the British colonial state administration was more elaborate....Accordingly, in March 1925 the Colonial Office issued its first policy memorandum called ‘Education Policy in British Tropical Africa’ which closely followed or reflected the Phelps-Stokes Commission⁴² recommendations. In April 1925, a sub-

³⁸ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 118.

³⁹ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 80.

⁴⁰ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 51; Cf. J.P. Ragsdale, 1986: 33.

⁴¹ S.K. Ng’andu, 2003: 1.

⁴² The Phelps-Stokes Commission was a missionary inspired and privately financed commission which called for partnership between missions and colonial governments to improve the provision of African Education in Tropical Africa through the Grants in Aid to voluntary schools which fulfilled certain standards of efficiency. An African Education Ordinance came into effect on 1st January 1928 which set up a Central Advisory Committee on Education.

department of Native Education, which later became a full department in 1930, was established in Northern Rhodesia. The purpose of the department was ‘to co-ordinate and supervise the education of the Native’⁴³.

The effect of this development was the establishment of primary school and secondary school curriculums, in which the missionary-controlled curriculum provided for three distinct subjects namely Church Doctrine, Bible Knowledge and Morality under RI [Religious Instruction]. The government-controlled curriculum only provided for five periods a week of RE as a single subject. This big reduction of the dominance of RE in the curriculum indicated the colonial state’s desire to move the country’s education system along the path of the Phelps-Stokes Commission’s recommendations.⁴⁴ It gave an indication to the missionary societies, that although important, RE was no longer the main subject on the curriculum of their mainly primary school system.

4.4. Introduction of Government grants-in-aid funding for mission schools during the colonial era and the Adventist response

Abraham Mhoswa indicates that the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes Commission brought about the acceptance by the Adventist Mission agency in 1925 of the government grants-in-aid system to help finance its educational programme. But the consequence of this acceptance of grants-in-aid brought the Adventist agency under the stringent control of the African Native Education Department. Among the resulting developments were the standardization of the school curriculum by the Department from 1928 onward, the sitting of government examinations by Rusangu mission school students and the certification of mission trained teachers by the government which made it impossible for the S.D.A. agency to follow a curriculum that embodies the church’s own education blue print.⁴⁵

As a result of the implementation of this commission’s recommendations, independent mission enterprises in Education became increasingly underwritten by Government money and the schools’ control equally came more and more under the Government. This led to the surrendering of almost all Northern Rhodesia mission primary schools to Government in 1955. In Tanzania, for example, the last grants were paid in 1969 when all grant-aided schools came under full Ministry of Education management, D. Nettelbeck, *A History of Arusha School, Tanzania*, 1978: 10.

⁴³ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 118, (Cf. Snelson 1974: 148).

⁴⁴ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 119.

⁴⁵ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 61, 62.

Mhoswa maintains that although the Department did not take over the management of mission schools, it came in as a unifying force for the sporadic efforts by the Christian missions to promote education among the local communities. The Department standardized mission education by issuing a common syllabus for all mission schools in the territory. The personnel of the Department conducted regular inspection tours of Missions' central and village schools. It also granted financial aid to mission agencies.⁴⁶

Perhaps the most significant shift in the provision of African Education in Northern Rhodesia came in 1939 when the African Education Ordinance was passed. Simuchimba indicates that,

“Since, by 1939, most missionary societies were receiving one form of government aid or another and many of their schools could be categorised as grant-aided, they had to adhere to the open enrolment policy and other related requirements above. For the first time since establishing themselves in Northern Rhodesia territory, missionary societies had to re-think the idea of using the school as a tool of conversion and prepare themselves to receive pupils or students who could already be converts of other (Christian) denominations, deal with pupils or students who had an official right to withdraw from RI, and generally handle pupils or students who could, at the end of the day, not be automatically counted as members of their church denominations. The definition of a school as non-catechetical nor prayer centre, and the requirement that a teacher in charge of a school be in possession of a (government) certificate dealt a further blow to purely denominational RE. Moreover, government inspection through the Department of Native Education's managers of schools was supposed to ensure that the guidelines above were followed”.⁴⁷

In spite of these requirements by the colonial administration, and due to various hindering factors, the government's authority could not be easily and fully enforced. Nevertheless, Mhoswa notes that the African Education Ordinance laid the foundation for the creation of Local Education Authorities and the Unified Teaching Service.⁴⁸ The Native Authorities were the obvious partners of the central government which through the Native Treasuries would become a new source of revenue to finance African education. By 1944 the Treasuries of the Native Authorities were

⁴⁶ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 75.

⁴⁷ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 120.

⁴⁸ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 76, 78.

reported to have provided bursaries to selected pupils to attend Standard V and VI in mission boarding schools.⁴⁹

While the provision of government grants-in-aid could be regarded as a needed assistance, it oftentimes became government intrusion in the conducting of mission work because of requirements that recipient organizations had to adhere to. John Holmes observes that “not all government intrusion comes as a result of goods, services or funds from government, but the major intrusions seem to flow from decisions to receive help from government”.⁵⁰ For instance, Mhoswa reports that the two missionaries who resided at Rusangu Mission station in 1931-1935 did not impress the official of the Department, who alleged that the missionaries were preoccupied with the religious side of the school and maintenance of the farm. The government threatened to withdraw the grant-in-aid unless a qualified educationist was appointed to take charge of the normal school.⁵¹

The Adventists did not welcome the Department’s requirements. The Director of Rusangu Mission asserted that the school was doing its best but that the Department was demanding too much. It was because of disagreements of this nature and the shortage of funds to finance the teacher training programme that the Adventists decided to relinquish the normal school at Rusangu in 1935.⁵² With regard to the remuneration of the African teachers, in 1946 the Zambesi Union committee voted to counsel the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field to pass on to African teachers any cost of living allowances provided by the government on a temporary basis for a start.⁵³

The close involvement of the colonial government in the running of mission educational institutions had an adverse impact on the missionary work in providing education. Discussions began to feature in the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field committee, prompting the Mission Field to seek the approval of the Zambesi Union to resume the provision of higher education beyond primary school level. The Zambesi Union however, preferred that the promotion as related to higher

⁴⁹ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 78.

⁵⁰ J. Holmes, ‘Avoiding Government Intrusion’, in: S.E. Burris & W.R. McKinley, *Critical issues facing Christian schools*. Wittier, CA: Association of Christian Schools International, 1990: 265.

⁵¹ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 97-98.

⁵² A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 99.

⁵³ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 48, March 1, 1946

education in Northern Rhodesia Mission Field be referred to the year-end committee for earnest study and possible appointment of a subcommittee for this purpose.⁵⁴ Finally at the year-end committee, plans were approved to re-establish the three year course at Rusangu Mission for Standard V and VI.⁵⁵ Such developments also necessitated improvement in the provision of education for girls too. In order to do that, the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field committee requested for a grant of £400 from the Government to extend girls' education work at Rusangu Mission.⁵⁶

As the requesting and receiving of government grants became more frequent, it raised questions among the missions on the appropriateness of dependence on government donations towards mission work. This necessitated asking the Southern Africa Division to provide guidelines on the matter. The Division indicated that there were instances in Bible times when God moved on heathen kings and rulers to act on behalf of God's people by giving them financial and material resources towards the conducting of God's business (cf. Ezra 6: 8-10; Neh 2: 7-8). For that reason the receiving of grants-in-aid in the mission fields was approved if in the estimation of Union and Division committees the receipt of such aid did not endanger the maintenance of high Christian standards or the evangelistic objectives of the church. When grants-in-aid were received, the mission committees were to make more earnest effort to instill in the hearts of their teachers and medical personnel a loyalty to the mission's organized work and demonstrate a true missionary spirit so that outside influences would not undermine the true objectives of the church. Where teachers' salaries were fixed by government in aided schools, the mission committees were to endeavor as far as possible to pay a comparable rate to teachers in non-aided schools or other native workers of similar training and experience.

Where grants were offered for schools or hospitals not yet receiving grants-in-aid or where mission committees wished to apply for grants for new projects, approval was to be obtained from

⁵⁴ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 107, March 1, 1946.

⁵⁵ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 233, December 2, 1946. Cf. Similar developments were approved two years later in 1948 in Barotseland Mission Field at Liumba Hill Mission (Action 24, 1948) and Lui Wanyau (Action 25, July 1948) respectively.

⁵⁶ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 242, December, 1946.

the Division committee before such grants were accepted. But when, or if government were to endeavor to interfere in the conduct of a grant-aided school or medical institution by restricting its missionary character or by seeking to unite it with another mission school or medical institution under joint administration which could cause it to lose its distinctive Christian character, the governing committee were to protest such action and claim the right under the principles of religious liberty to conduct its work unrestricted as a missionary institution and fulfill the purpose for which it was established, and further that in case such protests were unsuccessful, governing committees were to appeal such cases to higher authorities or withdraw from grants-in-aid in regard to such schools after counseling with the Division and endeavor to continue to operate the school as a non-grant aided institution under denominational support and direction.⁵⁷

With regard to the certification of teachers, the Southern Africa Division executive committee advised the Zambesi Union committee on teachers' problems in connection with Government wage scale that the issue be addressed, and that the Union Education Advisory Board give study to the preparation of a Union scale based on the plan of certification recommended by the Division.⁵⁸ A further action was voted by the Zambesi Union executive committee regarding teachers' salary rates stated as follows:

“Voted, That we authorize the officers of the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field to assess salary rates for the dissentient African teachers demanding Government rates of pay, on the Government scale and after they have drawn, that these be presented to the Field committee for consideration”.⁵⁹

The Zambesi Union committee also addressed a concern about the spiritual welfare of those students who left school after completing their Standard VI. The committee suggested that some effort be made by the Union Education Advisory Board with regard to providing a Bible course of study, containing some instruction in doctrines and Spirit of Prophecy (writings of Ellen G. White)

⁵⁷ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 450, December 31, 1948: 19, (Cf. Southern Africa Division executive committee minutes, Action 837, 1948).

⁵⁸ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 87, January 13, 1948: 16.

⁵⁹ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 100, January 13, 1948: 24; Cf. Another action (Action 292, June 22, 1948) voted later addressed the same problem of Government wage scale, reveals the Church's concession to Government requirement: “That because of the new Government regulation affecting African salary rates for teachers in Northern Rhodesia Mission Field that we recommend to the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field that they adopt wage scale as from May 1, 1948”.

before the time of their leaving school.⁶⁰ The church was keen to ensure that Bible lessons were given to students in one form or another while they were still connected to the school programme.⁶¹

After the Northern Rhodesia Government implemented the new teacher qualification/certification requirement, some missions failed to staff their schools to the level required by Government. Then Government withdrew grants-in-aid from any mission school that had less than three certified teachers. As a result of the withdrawal of Government Grants from eight three-teacher schools, the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field requested the Zambesi Union executive committee to authorize to transfer the following schools to the un-aided list and the request was granted. The eight schools were as follows:

| | | |
|-------------|-----------|----------|
| Chuungu | Gaali | Kachenje |
| Siasikabole | Kazungula | Mutama |
| Kakuba | Dimbwe | |

In order to enable the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field to operate these schools without Government Grants, the Zambesi Union executive committee voted a request to the Southern Africa Division to increase the base appropriation for the Northern Rhodesia Mission Field to £1,000. All this was due to the implementation of new regulations requiring teacher qualifications/certification.⁶²

As a way of curtailing any more withdrawal of Government grants from mission schools, due to the low levels of qualified teachers, the Zambesi Union executive committee voted in 1952 that “when in the opinion of the employing body the usefulness of an African worker could be greatly increased by advanced training, consideration be given to recommend such a worker for an educational bursary”⁶³ under stipulated conditions. Meanwhile, “where applicants for teaching positions have received their professional training in non-SDA schools, the application be dealt with on its merits, and final approval be given by the Zambesi Union committee before employing the

⁶⁰ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 87, January 13, 1948-.

⁶¹ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 87, January 13, 1948.

⁶² Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 202, August 23, 1951: 38.

⁶³ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 140, January 28, 1952: 35.

worker”.⁶⁴ Thus the Seventh-day Adventist Church struggled to maintain the spiritual character of its educational institutions by ensuring that the Bible was taught and only Adventist Christian teachers were assigned to fulfill this task.

But the crisis in the education sector that began in 1953, with the colonial government’s implementation of the Unified Teaching Service Regulation Scheme and the paying of teachers’ salaries using government grants-in-aid signaled a complete takeover of the employment and supervision of teachers in mission schools by the colonial government, Mhoswa indicates that “the church saw that its schools’ marriage with government was falling apart and [so] in July 1955 it handed over its schools to government and the Local Education Authority”.⁶⁵ He maintains that, “The role of mission societies as employers of teachers in outschools was to be terminated. The compulsory membership of all mission agency teachers in the Unified African Teaching Service broke the link between the two parties. The allegiance of the teachers was switched to the new employer, the Central government”.⁶⁶ But the African teachers at the Rusangu Mission School were not absorbed into the Unified African Teaching Service.⁶⁷ This allowed the Rusangu Mission School to continue operating as a private school. In August 1959 the Adventist Mission established the Junior Secondary School level at Rusangu.⁶⁸

By 1962, two years before Zambia’s political independence, the Religious Instruction (RI) syllabus, though now divided into lower and upper primary levels, still enjoyed the same status as a key subject with the same high number of periods (five) per week. “Government attempts to move RI beyond pure denominationalism to something ecumenical and educational had not yielded much change....Most missionary societies still believed that education and school were vehicles for evangelism”.⁶⁹ For example a survey conducted in 1968 among three Church of Christ schools in Southern Province of Zambia (Tonga region) found that “practically all of the students above the

⁶⁴ Zambesi Union executive committee minutes, Action 147, January 28, 1952: 37.

⁶⁵ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 35, 36.

⁶⁶ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 126.

⁶⁷ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 130.

⁶⁸ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 116.

⁶⁹ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 122.

age of nine years were communicant members. Almost 100 percent of the students who attended the mission schools became Christians before graduation, whether it be on the primary or the secondary level, and this has been true for at least twenty-five years”.⁷⁰

It seems to have been the practice in the Southern African Adventist mission schools up to the 1960s to share Bible classes amongst the teachers so as to build the spiritual lives of teachers. This however, was found to have often failed to help the students in high school and college classes, especially when students had the pressure of public examinations urging them to study secular subjects. Teachers also had the competition of examination subjects, or lack of interest, robbing them of thorough preparation for their Bible classes and consequently of good teaching. Some courses of study, such as science, mathematics, language, history, etc. usually had teachers who were specifically trained in those fields to instruct the students. On account of implicit instructions to the Adventist Church by Ellen G. White that church leaders should ensure that ‘schools are provided with teachers who are thorough Bible teachers and who have a deep Christian experience. [That] the best ministerial talent should be brought into schools’ (Evangelism, p. 475), it was voted that organizations responsible for the operation of high and training schools be requested to give serious consideration to the appointment in all mission schools of Bible teachers who would not only teach some of the Bible classes in a way which will inspire the students to have a desire for a deeper knowledge of God’s Word, but to also give a spiritual mould to each school so that it may be an evangelistic agency according to God’s plan.⁷¹ The evangelistic impact of these recommendations is seen in student conversions and baptisms in the Adventist schools as shown below:

⁷⁰ S. Shewmaker, *Tonga Christianity*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1970: 90.

⁷¹ Southern Africa Division Year-end executive committee minutes: Action 2697, ‘Quality of Bible Teaching’, November 9, 1965: 1022.

TABLE 2: Five-Year Growth Figures of the Seventh-day Adventist Church⁷²

| Date | Active Baptized Members |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| December 1963 | 4,699 |
| December 1964 | 4,694 |
| December 1965 | 5,390 |
| December 1966 | 5,789 |
| December 1967 | 5,736 |

When the Adventist mission education work was started in Zambia, as Matandiko indicates, W.H. Anderson aimed at establishing schools that were self-supporting. Each school had a farm and oxen to do farming. With the farm and woodwork shops the schools would sustain themselves. All teachers were expected to make sacrifices to establish more schools and evangelize as they imparted religious and secular knowledge. All teachers were known as teacher-evangelists.⁷³

The situation in Zambia and in Adventist mission schools in particular, began to change following the arrival of Zambia's political independence from colonial powers in 1964. As most of the teachers were joining the teaching profession to earn a living, production in school decreased and church schools began to depend more on mission appropriations. Low financial appropriations failed to provide adequate funds to pay teachers' salaries well. Political freedom fighters questioned the dependence on whites at the level of management in institutions. The resulting surrender of all mission schools to government in 1955 left only Rusangu Secondary School, with two primary schools under the Seventh-day Adventist administration.⁷⁴

⁷² S. Shewmaker, 1970: 70.

⁷³ C.M. Matandiko, 2001: 134.

⁷⁴ S. Shewmaker, 1970: 70; Cf. C.M. Matandiko, 2001: 134, 135; The United Church of Zambia (UCZ) primary schools were turned over to the government in 1965 and the Church then put more time and energy into evangelism, Shewmaker, 1970: 72. *Tonga Christianity*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1970: 70; C.M. Matandiko, 2001: 134, 135; The United Church of Zambia (UCZ) primary schools were turned over to the government in 1965 and the Church then put more time and energy into evangelism, Shewmaker, 1970: 72.

This takeover of mission schools by government was received with mixed feelings by missionaries. Some missionaries felt that they were no longer useful in spite of their long years of sacrifice and toil for the African people. Shewmaker however wrote that “instead of feeling rejected, we missionaries should rejoice that the national governments are now willing and quite capable of assuming the responsibility for the education and health of their own people....With the burden of schools and hospitals lifted, the Church can advance unencumbered by these subsidiary activities which sap her resources and blind her eyes to the real task at hand, that of winning respective men and women—and above all receptive groups—to Christ and allowing Him to add them to His glorious Body”.⁷⁵

The existence of Rusangu Secondary School as a private school was short-lived. In 1965 the government of the newly independent state of Zambia, urged the Adventist Mission to accept government grants at a ratio of 75 percent government and 25 percent Mission on all capital expenditure. Owing to the introduction of free education in Zambia, the operational cost became subject to a 100 percent government grant. The increased grant enabled the building of a modern Senior Secondary School at Rusangu. The Adventist missionaries retained the right to administer the day to day operations of the school. The Education Secretary of the Zambia Union mission and the Headmaster of the school were given charge of staffing the school with both locally trained Adventist adherents and missionaries from overseas countries.⁷⁶

The situation presented above reveals that throughout the missionary and colonial periods the Christian churches struggled to maintain control over the running of mission schools in Zambia. Simuchimba argues that the RE teaching was not only denominational but indoctrinative too. The missionary teachers’ understanding of RE was that it was synonymous with Christian education. There was no difference between teaching about religion and preaching Christianity or evangelizing. The colonial state also made no serious attempts to promote an open approach to the teaching of the RE subject and to protect local religious beliefs through its ordinances and other

⁷⁵ S. Shewmaker, 1970: 60.

⁷⁶ A.M. Mhoswa, 1980: 130; Cf. C.M. Matandiko, 2001: 134.

official guidelines on African education. Thus the state indirectly allowed Christian religious instruction (or RI) to go on even in the grant aided schools.⁷⁷

The missionaries' control of the RE syllabuses during the colonial period, persuades Simuchimba to acknowledge the positive contribution of mission schools in Northern Rhodesia. He admits that "it cannot be denied that despite its sectarian and indoctrinative nature, missionary/colonial education contributed greatly to the birth and development of the modern nation of Zambia. All the early nationalist leaders and founding fathers of the nation such as Dr Kenneth D. Kaunda and Harry M. Nkumbula were products of mission schools. Many other Zambians who came to hold key positions in both the public and private sector after independence also received their foundational (primary and in some cases junior secondary) education in mission schools".⁷⁸ This testifies to the positive contribution of teaching Bible Knowledge by missionaries to Africans during the missionary and colonial periods.

John S. Mbiti equally acknowledges the positive contribution of missionaries to the general spiritual and social development of Africa when he says,

"Mission Christianity is also consciously endeavoring to meet some of the needs of modern Africa. We have already seen how missionaries pioneered formal education in Africa. They and African Christians have continued to make outstanding contributions to primary and secondary education, even when schools have increasingly been taken over, organizationally and financially, by independent African governments. The Church also makes its contribution in the medical field, again pioneering this service in Africa and continuing to run hospitals and dispensaries, as well as supplying Christian doctors and nurses to work in Church, private or government establishments. In the field of literature there are Christian publications of books, tracts and magazines, as well as religious and educational programmes put on the radio by Church bodies, through arrangements with national radio stations and the two main church radio stations in Liberia and Ethiopia. There is also, but less overtly, the level of Christian ethics and morality which permeates the lives of many men and women in Africa who have been exposed to Christian teaching. Many of the leaders of independent African nations other than Muslim states are, to a certain degree, the product of Christian education; and nearly all of them have professed the Faith at one time or another. It is not hard to see signs of Christian ideals in their service for Africa; and some of them play an active part in the Church's life as laymen. There is, also, the large number of African catechists, evangelists, laymen, Church elders, nuns, deacons, pastors, ministers, priests, bishops, archbishops and cardinals, who make up the formal

⁷⁷ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 123, 124.

⁷⁸ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 124; Cf. E.H. Berman maintains that, "In addition to providing training for the future leaders of the Independent African churches, the missionary schools played a crucial role in nurturing several generations of nationalist leaders. The mission schools and churches contributed to their own ultimate demise", 1975: xv.

contingent of the Church's officials. These at least symbolize the concrete and serious presence of Christianity in Africa, and its acceptance by African peoples".⁷⁹

4.5. Bible instruction and Adventism in post-colonial Zambia (1964 – 1972)

S.K. Ng'andu argues that the education system inherited by Zambia at independence was underdeveloped.⁸⁰ Chizelu found that "before independence, there was no agreed standard syllabus for RE in schools as is current in the Zambian system today. It was the responsibility of each church or mission to teach Bible Knowledge (BK) or Bible Instruction (BI) to its members. The aim was to enable their members to be literate enough to read, write and teach Bible. Each church or mission emphasized its own doctrinal standpoint".⁸¹

After independence, as many civil servants, politicians and educators were sympathetic to religious education, being themselves Christians and Church members, the Ministry of Education chose to continue relying heavily upon religious groups in the teaching of Bible Knowledge/Instruction. But since there were so many different religious programmes in government controlled schools, it became educationally impossible to continue to teach religious instruction as a doctrinaire subject. The government called on Christian churches to prepare one joint RE syllabus that would cover other religious faiths in the country. This was an attempt to begin the educational phase of RE and to end the denominational Religious or Bible Knowledge teaching.⁸² In his promotion of *Zambian Humanism*⁸³, President Kaunda pointed out that "a humanist views it as wrong to leave the question of public morality to religious institutions alone.

⁷⁹ J.S. Mbiti, 2002: 239, 240.

⁸⁰ S.K. Ng'andu indicates that at the time of independence, there were only 107 Zambian university graduates, of whom four were female. Therefore, the First National Development Plan (1966-79) aimed at providing sufficient places to ensure that all children received at least four years of primary education. Although the government was not able to meet these targets, primary education expanded dramatically during this period, 2003: 1; Cf. J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 54.

⁸¹ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 54.

⁸² J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 54; Cf. M. Simuchimba, 2005: 129-130; B.P. Carmody acknowledges that formal education in colonial Africa resulted principally from missionary efforts. But after independence, however, missionary domination came to an end. Even when missionaries retained their institutions, they had to redefine their religious goals. As the state control of schooling increased, however, specifically missionary aims were subjected to state directives, 'Denominational secondary schooling in post-independence Zambia: a case study. *JSTOR: African Affairs*, Vol. 89. No. 355 (Apr., 1990), pp. 247-263.

⁸³ *Zambian Humanism* was a quasi-Christian human-centered philosophy promoting the values of love, equality, respect and dignity of human beings.

*The teaching of public morality and the maintenance of discipline in any given community must be the concern of all the various sections of our community in all fields of human endeavour”.*⁸⁴

In support of this view, Parliament passed an Education Bill which became the Education Act of 1966. This Act empowered the Minister of Education to exercise effective control over the implementation of the educational policy. This meant that the Minister would regulate the admission, punishment, expulsion, exclusion and transfer of pupils and the appointment of staff. The new government sought to control even the syllabuses of the subjects of instruction. The curriculum review which culminated in the Zambia Primary Course (ZPC) in 1974 enumerated the subjects of instruction which did not include RE.⁸⁵

In 1972/3 a new RE syllabus was introduced in junior secondary schools in Zambia. It was called the “Joint Syllabus” because all the major Christian churches accepted it. The syllabus was also called “*Developing in Christ*” which was adopted from the Gaba Pastoral Institute in Uganda and was taught in Forms One and Two. A Zambian Supplement was taught in Form Three. However, before long, some RE teachers complained that the Gaba language was too complex and abstract. Cecil King, a missionary, who was then at the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) was asked to write a modified version of the “*Developing in Christ*”. The Zambianised syllabus version was taught at junior secondary school level. Meanwhile, teachers from the Evangelical stream offered a course in Bible Knowledge stemming from the Cambridge University Overseas level (O Levels) at senior level (Forms four and five).⁸⁶

Simuchimba notes that by the close of the First Republic (in 1972), RE as a curriculum subject had passed from total church control to shared control under the state. Nevertheless, it was still confessional and therefore uneducational. Simuchimba argues that all the religious materials used in the curriculum review were Christian and therefore, the expected response and synthesis by pupils was commitment to the Christian faith rather than an understanding of religion in its plural

⁸⁴ K.D. Kaunda, *Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to its Implementation – Part II*. State House, Lusaka, 1974: 118.

⁸⁵ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 126.

⁸⁶ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 54, 55.

sense. Thus in reality, all that took place was a change from denominational to interdenominational Christian education; from catechesis and faith nurture leading to baptism, and church denominational evangelization leading to commitment to the Christian faith and Gospel values. He further argues that a lot still needed to be done to develop the subject to a level where it could deserve its new name of Religious Education (RE).⁸⁷

In 1972, a very important development took place in the Seventh-day Adventist Church structure in Zambia. Since 1916, the Adventist Church in Zambia had been a subsidiary organization of the Zambesi Union Mission with headquarters in Bulawayo, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).⁸⁸ After being organized into a Union mission, the first Zambia Union mission executive committee which met at Rusangu on July 5, 1972 voted “to express our heartfelt appreciation to the Zambesi Union for the loyal support given to Zambia during the past years”.⁸⁹ The organization of the Zambia Field into a Union mission also resulted in the transferring of the headquarters offices from Rusangu to Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. Funds for building the new office in Lusaka were raised through the sale of 2,200 acres of land from the Rusangu Farm to any bidder at a price of K4.00 to K5.00 (equivalent to 4 to 5 US dollars then) or more per acre.⁹⁰ The sale of Rusangu Farm land was finally offered at K5.00 per acre to the successful bidder in June 1973, Mr Peter Malambo.⁹¹ Additional sale of church owned building properties located at Chisekesi helped fund the construction of the new office in Lusaka.⁹²

About this time, the Zambia Government notified the Churches that from January 1973, it was no longer going to give financial support to Primary Boarding Schools. In response to this

⁸⁷ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 130, 131.

⁸⁸ C.M. Matandiko, 2001: 140. Cf. Two years earlier, on October 7, 1970 there was an official opening ceremony of the new Rusangu Secondary School campus. The Trans-Africa Division committee voted action 2615/1016/70 on September 28, 1970 to authorize V.A. Fenn and G.F. Clifford to attend the opening ceremony.

⁸⁹ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 29, July 5, 1972: 5.

⁹⁰ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 41, September, 1972: 10.

⁹¹ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 159, June, 1973: 63.

⁹² Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 414, September, 1974: 148.

development, the Zambia Union executive committee voted to recommend to the Fields that Boarding Departments in mission schools be closed as from January 1973.⁹³

4.6. Bible instruction and Adventism during Zambia's Second Republic⁹⁴ (1973 – 1990)

In January 1973, Zambia entered the Second Republic when it adopted the socialist one party political system, which was becoming increasingly popular on the continent in the 1970s. All political parties except the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) became outlawed. President Kaunda and UNIP promoted socialist ideas through the national philosophy or ideology of *Zambian Humanism*. This led to the introduction of humanist socialist ideas and influences into all areas of national life including education and its curriculum. During the early years of 1976, *Zambian Traditional Beliefs and Customs* became included in the Religious Instruction syllabuses moving toward making RE as a curriculum subject to conform to the principle that education should be contextual.⁹⁵ Simuchimba confirms that by “the beginning of the Second Republic in 1973, RE had shed off the ‘Cinderella’ subject status to become a respectable curriculum subject”.⁹⁶

The reforms taking place in Zambia during the 1970s did not go un-noticed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The church leadership observed that lack of understanding of the church and its institutions had frequently hindered the growth of the message and created a negative image. This prompted the Zambia Union mission executive committee to vote specific recommendations for “creating a positive image for the Church’s institutions”.⁹⁷ The committee encouraged church members to initiate a more vigorous program to improve the public image of the church and its institutions, for instance, by encouraging, church members and institutions, wherever doctrine or principle is not threatened, to identify with the legitimate hopes, plans and ambitions of their nation, city and community.⁹⁸

⁹³ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 45, 14th September, 1972: 11.

⁹⁴ Zambia’s First Republic (1964-1972) comprised a multi-party system of governance; the Second Republic reverted to a one party system.

⁹⁵ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 131.

⁹⁶ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 133.

⁹⁷ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 215, 29th November, 1973: 82.

⁹⁸ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 215. No.1, 29th November, 1973: 82.

With regard to education, the Zambia Union mission executive committee voted: “to designate [adopt] 1978 as an ‘Adventist Education Year’ in order to give special promotion to Christian education throughout the world field and secure greater support for such education by Seventh-day Adventist parents”.⁹⁹ The Union mission executive committee also voted “to reaffirm the denominational position that Seventh-day Adventist schools, both church and mission, operate with Seventh-day Adventist teachers, and that where the employment of a non-Seventh-day Adventist teacher is unavoidable, the approval of the responsible conference/mission executive committee and the union Education Department secretary be first obtained, and such appointment be only on a temporary basis. Where a school is directly under the union supervision [like Rusangu Secondary School at that time], this principle shall also apply”.¹⁰⁰ The move toward staffing Adventist schools with national workers, especially in administrative positions, became realized in February 1973 when Pastor J.M. Koko was appointed as Deputy Headmaster for Rusangu Secondary School.¹⁰¹ Government demands on behalf of national workers in mission schools affected even working conditions such as to require that homes occupied by national teaching staff be furnished as was the case in homes occupied by expatriate workers.¹⁰²

As the educational reforms were being implemented in Zambian schools, the Seventh-day Adventist Church felt a need to provide an RE syllabus to its youths which would be in line with the church’s biblical teachings. The Zambia Union mission executive committee voted on December 2nd 1974 at a meeting held at the Union mission headquarters in Lusaka, “To record TAD [Trans-Africa Division] minute 3270/851/74 reading as follows:

“To provide as far as possible through a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, religious education to Seventh-day Adventist students in non-Seventh-day Adventist schools through the following plan:

1. That the new Seventh-day Adventist religious program K-12 be made available outside of the North American Division as a plan for youth evangelism outreach to be used in places where there is no church or mission school.

⁹⁹ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 214, 29th November, 1973: 82.

¹⁰⁰ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 216, 29th November, 1973: 83.

¹⁰¹ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 99, February, 1973: 39.

¹⁰² Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 281, December 1973: 114.

2. That where adaptation and translation of materials are necessary, there be interdivision coordination and financial support for preparing the materials in specific languages.
3. That material for this project be provided by the local churches with assistance for conference evangelism funds.
4. That where pastors are not available to direct this youth evangelism outreach program, other qualified persons be selected for this purpose".¹⁰³

In 1975 a request from the South African Union (SAU) asked the Trans-Africa Division to determine the suitability of the new series of Bible materials for elementary and high schools, which the SAU had used for a year on an experimental study basis in their selected schools. The TAD Adhoc committee which met at Solusi College (Bulawayo, Zimbabwe) voted that its Bible Textbook sub-committee apply itself to the question of providing suitable Bible materials for the African schools (both English-speaking and non-English-speaking) recognizing that, on the primary level, this involves preparing materials in many different languages. After receiving the Adhoc committee's report, the TAD executive committee appointed individuals and committees to work on Bible materials for its schools, taking into account that,

- a) This material should be Bible-centered and not much dependent on sources other than the Scripture.
- b) This material will emphasize relationships rather than behaviouristic approach.
- c) The new set of Bible materials be the basis of these efforts.

The TAD executive committee also voted that the following syllabus, (based on a total of 38 weeks of school work, each year), be accepted:

- Grade –
1. Creation to Joseph
 2. Moses to Judges
 3. Samuel to Solomon
 4. Kings and Prophets
 5. Life of Jesus
 6. Parables and Teachings of Jesus
 7. The Christian Church
 8. Bible Survey (Plan of Salvation)
 9. Church History
 10. "Facing Life"
 11. Bible Doctrines

¹⁰³ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 423, December 2, 1974: 153.

12. Witnessing and “Adventist Home”

Finally the TAD executive committee referred “the report of the Bible Textbook subcommittee to the Division officers and Education secretary for the purpose of setting up guidelines and steps to be taken in the implementation of the program with the thought that it will [would] be necessary to make provision for the required materials over a period of time, covering possibly two to three grades at any particular time”.¹⁰⁴

The Zambia Union mission executive committee’s commitment to ensuring that the Bible is given highest priority in the Church’s mission work and especially in the teaching of RE in its schools was further demonstrated by committee’s appointing a “Bible Translation subcommittee (comprising J.M. Koko, W. Muhwanga and N.W. Palmer) to study the question of substituting some local words for the borrowed ‘Nsabata’ in the translation of the Bible in Zambian languages.”¹⁰⁵

On 7th June, 1976 the Zambia Union mission executive committee recorded its response to a government draft paper on Education Reforms by appointing of a sub-committee comprising: A.S. Muunyu (Education secretary), J.E. Marter, S.W. de Lange, S. Shapa and W.M. Webster to draw up the main objections to the draft paper on education reforms and prepare material to place in the hands of all district leaders and field workers.¹⁰⁶ Three days later, the executive committee accepted the report of the sub-committee and voted to authorize the Officers of the Union to submit a letter to the Ministry of Education outlining the main objections to the draft document, stating among other things that, “As fundamentalists we accept the direct instruction of the Bible with regard to the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath”.¹⁰⁷ Another action was voted that “a letter be sent to all district leaders [pastors], teachers and church elders and that Field Committees lay definite plans to mobilize all church members to write letters to their respective Members of Parliament expressing

¹⁰⁴ Minutes of the TAD Mid-year executive committee, Action 401, May 18, 1976: 154.

¹⁰⁵ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 520, April 1975: 184.

¹⁰⁶ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 143, June 7, 1976: 66.

¹⁰⁷ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 167, June 10, 1976: 72-73.

the views of the Adventist Church members” on the draft reform document.¹⁰⁸ As a result of these and other appeals made to government, the stated reforms were not implemented in full.

During the Trans-Africa Division’s November 1976 year-end executive committee meetings, the Bible syllabus prepared by the Adhoc committee was accepted by the full Division executive committee in the following revised form:

1. In the first 6 grades of school the following general syllabus was to be followed in the Union missions:

- Grade 1 – Creation to Joseph
- Grade 2 – Moses to Judges
- Grade 3 – Samuel to Solomon
- Grade 4 – Kings and Prophets
- Grade 5 – Life of Jesus
- Grade 6 – Parables & Teachings of Jesus

2. In the final 6 grades of school the following general syllabus was to be followed in the Union missions:

- Grade 7 – Early Christian Church
- Grade 8 – Bible Survey with emphasis upon the Plan of Salvation
- Grade 9 – Church History (Mainly SDA) & Spirit of Prophecy
- Grade 10- Facing the Problems of Young People
- Grade 11- Bible Doctrines
- Grade 12- Principles of Christian Witnessing & Characteristics of the Adventist Home

The executive committee outlined several details pertaining to textbook purchases, teachers’ handbooks, African School Bible teachers, Regional Sub-committees to give guidance, Bible teaching improvement, implementation, etc.¹⁰⁹ Apparently this suggested Bible syllabus does not seem to have been implemented because students were required to write RE examinations set by government, and therefore those examinations could only be based on the syllabus set by the government’s Examination Council. Nevertheless, agitations by the government also led to the formation of a Commission on Education to assess the over-all strengths and weaknesses of the Adventist philosophy of Education.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 168, June 10th, 1976: 74-76.

¹⁰⁹ TAD Year-end executive committee minutes, Action 459, November 10, 1976: 179-183.

¹¹⁰ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 203, November 30, 1976: 87.

Later on, a paper presented to the Zambia Union executive committee by R.L. Davidson of Rusangu Secondary School reporting the presence of serious problems at the school, a commission of enquiry was appointed “to study the operation of Rusangu Secondary School with the viewpoint of determining whether or not we are being required to compromise our philosophies and principles of Christian Education because of Government restrictions. The Commission is [was] to report back to the Committee its findings and to offer any recommendations necessary to correct the situation.”¹¹¹ Another letter written by “a group of Zambian workers at Rusangu Secondary School” was presented to the Union executive committee following which a committee of six was “appointed to look into the situation as soon as possible”.¹¹² These activities reveal what kind of impact the proposed government reforms exerted on the Adventist Church in Zambia and on Adventist education institutions like Rusangu Secondary School in particular in connection with the teaching of Bible Instructions.

In 1977, further Zambian Government “Educational Reforms” were formulated to move away from colonial religious education to a more multireligious education approach which affected the teaching of the RE subject. The Ministry of Education merged spiritual and moral education with the philosophy of Zambian Humanism – a hybrid of spiritual and moral values with the teaching of Christ that every person is of equal value in God’s sight and should be respected as a fellow human. The central point in this philosophy was the importance and worth of the individual.¹¹³ Although a Christian himself, President Kaunda expressed awareness of moral and spiritual values found in other religious traditions as well. After praising the teachings of Jesus Christ, Dr Kaunda added, “One should hasten to add that this teaching is not monopolised by the Christian faith alone. In fact, it runs through most known religions like a valued golden chain”.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 212, December 1st, 1976: 93; Cf. The same committee voted to require that the employment, assignment and dismissals of Primary School teachers be confirmed by the Field Committees and that the Union Education Director advise the Chief Education Officers of their actions. The Committee also voted to encourage Adventist schools to use denominational Bible textbooks where and when available. Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Actions 269, 271, December 13, 1976: 113.

¹¹² Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 222, December 1st, 1976: 95.

¹¹³ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 55, 56.

¹¹⁴ K.D. Kaunda, 1974: 120.

Consequently, the 1977 Education Reforms replaced a purely “religious Christian education” syllabus, which was in the form of Bible Knowledge/Instruction, with a Spiritual and Moral Education.¹¹⁵ Dr Kaunda believed that religion should be woven into Zambian life, that all life is sacred and that humans are the centre of God’s creation. Therefore, courses in RE should include these beliefs and attempt to bring religious values into the lives of all pupils. The Education Reforms also challenged Zambian educators to take the initiative to produce new RE educational materials locally which would be more educationally than biblically focused.¹¹⁶ All RE syllabuses developed outside Zambia were dropped completely. The two East African syllabuses (“*Developing in Christ*” and “*Christian Living Today*”) became Zambianised into the Junior Syllabus 2044 for the junior and senior levels respectively.¹¹⁷

Simuchimba alleges that “actually the seeds of and justification for the secularization and pluralisation of the RE syllabuses in the country were to be found within the 1964 and 1973 constitutions which gave every Zambian the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14) and the 1966 Education Act which ensured that the pupils’ religious freedoms were not violated through education. The movement toward secularization and pluralism in RE can also be traced back in [to] the 1969 Report on Education”.¹¹⁸ The state is seen to have taken advantage of the situation, firstly, to implement the pluralism that was already provided for or implied in the Constitution and Zambian Humanism documents, and secondly, to reduce the churches’ authority and involvement in school RE. This pluralisation appears to have been a compromise which the churches found acceptable.¹¹⁹

While the state failed to completely do away with a confessional RE syllabus, and thereby completely secularize the school system, the churches became willing to forego their continued

¹¹⁵ M. Simuchimba observes that ‘for the first time in the history of Zambian school RE, non-Christian religions [Hinduism, indigenous Zambian Beliefs and Islam] were to be included in the new RE syllabuses....He further charges that ‘this initiative came fro the state itself, through the Ministry of Education’s professionals, especially the team of tutors in the teacher training colleges’, 2005: 136, 137.

¹¹⁶ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 56, 57.

¹¹⁷ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 57.

¹¹⁸ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 137-138.

¹¹⁹ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 138.

confessional RE in schools. Simuchimba notes that “unlike before when RE was confessional and exclusively Christian, the subject was now partially phenomenological and multi-faith....Thus as mentioned above, while remaining largely Christian in content, RE adopted a partially phenomenological and comparative approach in which Christian, Traditional, Muslim and Hindu beliefs and values on a given theme or topic were studied. Child-centered and participatory ways of teaching were more emphasized than the subject and teacher-centered ways or approaches that characterised RE during the pre-Educational Reform period”.¹²⁰

President Kaunda shared his dream of cooperation between government and religious institutions in the teaching of morality and spiritual responsibility. He wrote,

“At present the Government helps religious bodies in respect of their social and educational work only. I wish a stage could be reached at which the State could support religious bodies by voting funds for their moral and spiritual work as well. In future the Party itself, the Government and all its services and institutions must work out a programme to improve the moral and spiritual qualities of the nation. But the first step is for each one of us to start along the path of Humanism. To start on that path today and to keep going along it every day until we are totally committed to the Philosophy that our example will spur others to the same decision and bring them on to the path we are treading. If we guide our children from the very earliest age in moral ways, then those children will, in turn not only have a happier life, but also be able to contribute to the well-being of the nation”.¹²¹

Studies conducted in the United States of America seem to support Kaunda’s hopes about the positive contribution of religious education to the general well-being of a nation. William Jeynes wrote,

“In fact, it is clear from the results of the data analysis conducted in this book’s series of studies that religious commitment and religious schools are often helpful in addressing some of the most serious ills that confront American education. Religious schools and/or religious commitment are associated with higher levels of academic achievement, a reduced gap between white and minority students as well as wealthy and poor students, greater racial harmony, less violence, less use of drugs and alcohol, and less violence. These are qualities of the kind of schools and the kind of people that make for productive and fulfilled American people”.¹²²

Nevertheless, RE teachers from the evangelical circles in Zambia, who were not happy with the removal of the “Cambridge Bible Knowledge” syllabus and did not like the Syllabus 2044 because of its alleged “Roman Catholic” bias and philosophy, decided to return to the old Cambridge Bible Knowledge syllabus to produce an alternative one which became Syllabus 2046. The two

¹²⁰ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 139-140.

¹²¹ K.D. Kaunda, 1974: 123.

¹²² W. Jeynes, *Religion, Education, and Academic Success*. Greenwich, CN: Information Age Publishing Inc., 2003: 238.

syllabuses, 2044 and 2046, have been taught side by side in all Zambian senior secondary schools up to the present time. The choice as to which syllabus is to be taught in each school depends on the school administration. If the administration is Roman Catholic and teachers are available, the 2044 syllabus is taught. If the administration is Evangelical the 2046 syllabus is preferred over 2044. Both syllabuses propagate the nurturing of pupils in the Christian faith¹²³ Rusangu Secondary School teaches syllabus 2046 today. Syllabus 2046 is structured as follows in summary form:

¹²³ J.M. Chizelu, 2006: 57, 58.

TABLE 3¹²⁴ *Showing RE syllabus 2046 used by Protestant Denominations.*

| GRADE | TERM | PART | UNITS | |
|--------|-------|----------|--|--|
| Ten | One | One | One: <i>Background to the Life of Jesus.</i> | |
| | | ” | Two: <i>Birth and Infancy of John the Baptist & Jesus.</i> | |
| | | ” | Three: <i>Ministry and Death of John the Baptist.</i> | |
| | | ” | Four: <i>Baptism</i> | |
| | Two | One | Five: <i>Temptation</i> | |
| | | ” | Six: <i>Apostles and Disciples of Jesus.</i> | |
| | | ” | Seven: <i>Jesus’ Power over Disease and Nature.</i> | |
| | | ” | Eight: <i>Jesus’ Power over Evil Spirits.</i> | |
| | Three | One | Nine: <i>Parables.</i> | |
| | | ” | Ten: <i>The Kingdom of God.</i> | |
| | | ” | Eleven: <i>Judgment.</i> | |
| | | ” | Twelve: <i>Jesus and the Law.</i> | |
| Eleven | One | One | Thirteen: <i>Prayer.</i> | |
| | | ” | Fourteen: <i>Jesus’ Attitude to other People.</i> | |
| | | ” | Fifteen: <i>Jesus and Family Life.</i> | |
| | | ” | Sixteen: <i>Suffering for the Kingdom of God.</i> | |
| | Two | One | Seventeen: <i>Jerusalem and the Temple.</i> | |
| | | ” | Eighteen: <i>Opposition to Jesus.</i> | |
| | | ” | Nineteen: <i>The Last Supper and the Crucifixion.</i> | |
| | | ” | Twenty: <i>Jesus’ Triumph over Death.</i> | |
| | Three | Two | One: <i>Background to the Early Church.</i> | |
| | | ” | Two: <i>Witnessing across Racial & Cultural Barriers.</i> | |
| | | ” | Three: <i>Witnessing in the Face of Opposition.</i> | |
| | | ” | | |
| Twelve | One | Two | Four: <i>Witnessing Through life Together.</i> | |
| | | ” | Five: <i>Christian Attitudes to Work.</i> | |
| | | ” | Six: <i>Christian Attitudes to Leisure.</i> | |
| | | ” | Seven: <i>Christian Attitudes to Money & Possessions.</i> | |
| | Two | Two | Eight: <i>Christian Attitudes to People.</i> | |
| | | ” | Nine: <i>Christian Attitudes to the State.</i> | |
| | | ” | Ten: <i>Christian Attitudes to Sex and Marriage.</i> | |
| | | ” | Eleven, and Revision of Part One. | |
| | Three | Revision | | <i>Preparation for the Zambia School Certificate Examination</i> |
| | | ” | | |
| | | ” | | |
| | | ” | | |

Seventh-day Adventists also, through the Trans-Africa Division Education Council held on July 13 – 18, 1978 voted “that the General Conference Department of Education be requested through its various divisional offices to gather religious knowledge syllabi from every union of the world field where Bible is written as an external subject,...[and] that these syllabi be made available to the Bible textbook conference to be held in London the following year [1979] with a view to the

¹²⁴ ‘*Spiritual and Moral Education: Syllabus for Religious Education School Certificate Grades 10, 11 and 12.* Ridgeway, Lusaka: Curriculum Development Center, 1984: 29-47.

inclusion in the international Bible book edition of any core of materials which may be found to be common to these various syllabi....[And] that a Sub-committee be set up to assemble, analyze and establish the common core of government religious knowledge syllabi in North America and similar levels within the division with a view to ascertaining the compatability [sic] of SDA Bible series to this core. Further [that] this committee shall recommend an adjustment of the Bible series to suit the eleven year school program followed in some schools within the Trans-Africa Division”.¹²⁵ Similar other recommendations regarding the holding of institutes in unions for Bible teachers to introduce the new Bible text books and the supplying of current international Bible materials for Grades 1-4 were voted.

On December 13, 1978, the Zambia Union mission executive committee responded to the appeal of the Trans-Africa Division appeal to strengthen the condition of the Adventist Education system in its territory. The executive committee voted “to appoint the following Education committee to study the needs of the schools within Zambia Union concentrating on bringing all schools into the position where all teachers shall be Seventh-day Adventist members in good and regular standing”:¹²⁶

| | |
|-------------|--------------|
| J. Marter | D. Lufungulo |
| A. Muunyu | J. Koko |
| J. Sitwala | S. de Lange |
| F. Botomani | N. Palmer. |

In 1982, the TAD executive committee again voted “to recommend to all Unions/Conferences/Fields that all SDA Primary and Secondary schools use the International Adventist Bible Curriculum, a 12-year course in Religion for schools operated by the SDA Church. The material in this has been [was] adapted from similar North American series prepared for our use”.¹²⁷ The Zambia Union mission executive committee also voted to hold a Principals/Headmasters Leadership seminar at its Union headquarters office from March 23 – 30,

¹²⁵ Trans-Africa Division minutes, Action Q1-2, November 12, 1978.

¹²⁶ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 614, December 13, 1978: 224.

¹²⁷ Trans-Africa Division minutes, Action 1362, 1982: 398.

1983 to introduce the new educational materials to them.¹²⁸ At this time, the Union mission executive committee also employed a retired Adventist teacher and former government diplomat, Mr P.B. Kopolo to serve as the Zambia Union Education secretary.¹²⁹

As more and more national workers become employed as teachers in Adventist educational institutions, matters of relational identity sometimes arose. For instance government grant-aided workers demanded to be given church teachers' credentials like those given to denominational employees to strengthen their church identities. The Zambia Union mission executive committee voted to grant their request in January 1978.¹³⁰ The program of staffing Rusangu Secondary School with national teachers also reached its climax in January 1983 when the Zambia Union mission executive committee voted "to terminate the presence of our expatriate staff at the end of 1983, replacing them with Adventist national teachers, and to embark immediately toward development of an alternative SDA system of education for Zambia, pursuing with all vigor the preparation of national SDA workers for the staffing of the system".¹³¹ But the committee seemed to exercise preferential treatment toward Religious Education at Rusangu Secondary School when they appointed an American white missionary, Dr H.E. Peters to be Head of the Bible Department at the institution as of January 1, 1984.¹³² This decision however was never implemented as Dr Peters later received another call to serve as Academic Dean at Solusi College in Zimbabwe.

In order to implement the new system, an SDA Education System Study Group comprising of: K.E. Thomas (Chair), A. Kaite, D. Katebe, A. Lopes, T. Nkungula, F. Mukula, L. Raelly, E. Sijamaundu, J. Sitwala, B. Smit, and E. Spaulding was voted, and further that the group should meet every second month in the course of investigating the current existing SDA schools in Zambia and elsewhere, examining the sites, political and legal concerns, and curriculum.¹³³

¹²⁸ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 1362, 1982: 398.

¹²⁹ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 827, July 28, 1983: 214.

¹³⁰ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 499, January 1978: 189.

¹³¹ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 611, January 11, 1983: 158.

¹³² Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 913, December, 1983: 240.

¹³³ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 612, January 11, 1983: 158.

Finally, with all teaching positions filled with Zambian national teachers at Rusangu Secondary School, the third Zambia Union mission constituency session which met on November 18, 1985 at Riverside Farm Institute in Kafue voted to accept the Education Committee's recommendation to hand over the running of Rusangu Secondary School to the South Zambia Field, whose headquarters are situated at Rusangu Mission.¹³⁴

4.7. Bible instruction and Adventism in Zambia's Third Republic (1991 to the present time)

The October 31, 1991 Zambian general elections brought to an end Kaunda and UNIP's 27 years rule since 1964. These elections which also ended Zambia's Second Republic (1973-1991) marked the beginning of the Third Republic (1991 to the present) when the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) party and Frederick J.T. Chiluba were ushered into power. Kaunda's departure was accompanied with the end of the philosophy of Zambian Humanism, leaving an ideological vacuum in the country. The country also came out of the socialist one party system of governance and entered a capitalist neo-liberal multi-party democratic system. These political, economic and ideological changes in Zambia were later to impact the religious situation and the teaching of Religious Education in Zambian schools.

At the urging of evangelical and Pentecostal Christian leaders, President Chiluba himself being a born again Christian, decided to fill the ideological vacuum prevailing in Zambia by declaring Zambia as a 'Christian Nation' on 29th December 1991. Due to the lack of wide consultation having been made before this official declaration was made, it was received with mixed reactions from various quarters of the nation's community. Simuchimba indicates that "the meaning of such a declaration in a country like Zambia generated a lot of debate in various circles, especially among the clergy and intellectuals. It was also received with mixed feelings among both Christians and non-Christian Zambians".¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Zambia Union executive committee minutes, Action 7, November 18, 1985: 9.

¹³⁵ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 149.

Simuchimba asserts that “the Christian community and churches in Zambia did not unanimously welcome and embrace the declaration of the country as a Christian nation. While those in the Evangelical, Pentecostal and ‘born-again’ traditions generally welcomed it, those belonging to the mainstream Protestant and Catholic traditions were cautious and sceptical [sic] about the whole issue”.¹³⁶ Other religious groups such as Muslims, Hindus, and Zambia Traditional Religion did not express acceptance of this declaration.

Consequent to this declaration of the country as a Christian nation, the 1996 constitutional amendment done by the MMD government inserted the declaration statement in the preamble to the Zambian constitution:

“We the people of Zambia by our representatives assembled in...parliament, having solemnly resolved to maintain Zambia a sovereign democratic republic declare the Republic a Christian nation while upholding the right of every person’s freedom of conscience or religion”.¹³⁷

Simuchimba explains that “although the declaration now constituted a policy on religion for the government, a preamble, as well-known is not part of the law and has no legal authority or force. In addition, Article 19 of the new 1996 constitution provided for exactly the same religious pluralism and freedoms as Article 14 of the amended 1991 constitution.... This in effect meant that no other part of the constitution, other laws and public policy would be changed to accommodate the declaration. Therefore, Zambia is predominantly and officially a Christian nation, but constitutionally a pluralistic and multi-faith country”.¹³⁸

Norma H. Thompson defines Religious Pluralism as “the diversity of religions..., realizing that there are usually one or a few religions within any culture which stand numerically in the majority, while all the others have minority status with its attendant problems. Some religions will be new in a culture, having been recently formed, either as a reformation of an existing religion or as a new religion not readily associated with any existing group. These new religions find different problems as they attempt to survive and grow in a religiously pluralistic society. There will be

¹³⁶ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 150.

¹³⁷ Constitution of the Republic of Zambia, 1996.

¹³⁸ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 151-152.

religions which have moved from what sociologists of religion have called “sects” to “churches,” in many instances persecuted as new fledging religious groups and moving slowly to an accepted status denomination in the society. All of these groups are embedded in the term, religious pluralism”.¹³⁹

James M. Lee differentiates Religious pluralism from Religious plurality suggesting that,

“*Religious pluralism* refers to that condition in which individuals or institutions coming from anywhere in the entire spectrum of sacral orientation interact with each other autonomously but relatedly within the boundaries of a common allegiance to the Holy. Religious pluralism is not the same as religious plurality. Religious pluralism means that members and institutions of various religious orientations not only intermingle with one another and respect each other’s faith, but also actively cooperate with each other in order to broaden their own personal and corporate religious existence so as to infuse all reality with the full actuality of the Holy. *Religious plurality*, on the other hand, is merely the coexistence of the whole range of religious worldviews without any denotation or connotation of intermingling, cooperation, or joint activities among the persons or institutions embracing various orientations toward the Holy”.¹⁴⁰

Could there be any danger lurking within a religious pluralistic context that can threaten the status of Bible instruction? The late Byang Kato warned that “the new garb that African traditional religions are putting on promotes universalism (which he defines as the belief that all men and women will eventually be saved whether they believe in Christ now or not). The respectability of these religions makes them appear to have equal standing with Christianity. They appear to give promise of a future life of happiness”.¹⁴¹ Kato maintained that “Christian leaders are now vulnerable to the tactics of ecumenism with its basic universalistic premise. Christianity must be expressed in such a way that Africans really understand and see themselves at home in Christianity. Superficiality of the Christianity of some members is the reason why many turn to their former way of life in an hour of crisis. That is why many are ending up with universalism”.¹⁴² Rather, he argues, “it is not neo-colonialism to plead the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ. It is not arrogance to

¹³⁹ N.H. Thompson, ‘The Challenge of Religious Pluralism’, in: N.H. Thompson (Ed.), *Religious Pluralism and Religious Education*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988: 12-13.

¹⁴⁰ J.M. Lee, ‘The Blessings of Religious Pluralism’, in: N.H. Thompson (Ed.), *Religious Pluralism and Religious Education*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988: 58-59.

¹⁴¹ B. Kato, 1975: 14.

¹⁴² B. Kato, 1975: 15.

herald the fact that all who are not ‘in Christ’ are lost. It is merely articulating what the Scriptures say”.¹⁴³

While moving along the path of religious pluralism defined above, a Zambia National Symposium met in August 1993 at Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka to respond to the Ministry of Education’s document entitled *Focus on Learning: Strategies for the Development of School Education in Zambia*, published in 1992. The objective of the Symposium was to review the primary school RE syllabus like other subjects. The outcomes of this Symposium included “the removal of political education from the proposed school curriculum”,¹⁴⁴ and “the integration of societal issues such as HIV/AIDS, environmental, gender and health education into the RE syllabuses”.¹⁴⁵ The effects of these changes were the revisions of the basic education RE syllabus in 1995, and the reform of the teacher education curriculum started in 1997 and completed in 2000 for all primary school teacher training colleges in Zambia. Simuchimba states that, “This major change in the teacher education curriculum inevitably meant that the primary school curriculum also had to change from a differentiated, knowledge-focused one to an integrated, competence or outcomes-based curriculum”.¹⁴⁶

Recently, G. Muleya confirmed that “as of now [2006] RE is accepted as a subject for University entrance. RE syllabus has been developed for the primary teacher training colleges where it is a compulsory subject with its own examination. RE lecturers have been appointed in these colleges. RE has been popularized in secondary teacher training colleges like Nkrumah College of Education, National In-Service Training College (NISTCOL) and George Benson Christian College with the exception of Copperbelt College of Education. These colleges have their own staff though the syllabus and examinations are always approved and moderated by the

¹⁴³ B. Kato, 1975: 16.

¹⁴⁴ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 155.

¹⁴⁵ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 157.

¹⁴⁶ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 161.

University of Zambia. The subject is also offered at the University of Zambia as a minor and major in the Bachelor of Education programmes”.¹⁴⁷

Simuchimba notes that, “although all subjects were affected by the integrated approach to the teacher education curriculum, RE seems to have been the most negatively affected. For the first time in the long history of teacher training in the country, RE was not going to be taken as a distinct subject in the colleges. From a subject that commanded great respect in the primary teacher education programme due to the predominance of (Christian) religion in Zambian society, RE would now merely contribute a few topics to a largely historical and geographical area of study, SSME [Social, Spiritual and Moral Education]”.¹⁴⁸ These reforms however failed to successfully affect the two senior secondary RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046, in spite of serious attempts made by the Ministry of Education in 1997.

In responding to the declaration of Zambia as a ‘Christian nation’, Simuchimba has unleashed a barrage of criticism which includes some of the following: He laments on the interpretation of the meaning of that declaration by Evangelical leaders who called for a return to teaching Bible Knowledge. He argues that, “The effect of this interpretation and call was that many RE teachers belonging to the Evangelical tradition [Seventh-day Adventists included] and ‘born-again’ groups were encouraged to begin adopting unprofessional, confessional practices in their work. Perhaps the most serious of these was starting RE lessons with a prayer or a reading from the Bible followed by a brief comment or sermon by the teacher before the lesson could proceed”.¹⁴⁹

He further observes,

“On the other hand, liberal RE teachers and many of those belonging to the orthodox Protestant and Catholic traditions rejected the above interpretation and calls for the reintroduction of Bible Knowledge or Christian education in schools. These religious educators insisted on continued professional handling of the existing multi-faith syllabuses because the religious freedom and pluralism in the country’s constitution and the liberal, pluralistic goals of the national policy document on education demanded so....So while confessional attitudes and practices in Zambian RE may be traced back to the 1960s and 70s, it is arguable that the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation reaffirmed these attitudes and

¹⁴⁷ G. Muleya, *The Teaching of Religious Education in Zambian schools and the role it plays in HIV/AIDS prevention: A study of Choma District schools*. Unpublished M.A. dissertation: University of South Africa, 2006: 68-69.

¹⁴⁸ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 162.

¹⁴⁹ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 167.

practices in some teachers and therefore consolidated the division of RE teachers and educators into two camps”.¹⁵⁰

A contradiction posed by the declaration of the country as a Christian nation is also noted by Simuchimba who says that,

“The declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and its effects on RE poses a few problems. Perhaps the main one of these is that the state contradicted itself by making a declaration that could be interpreted to imply the introduction of exclusive teaching of Biblical Christianity in RE and at the same time spelling out very liberal and democratic educational goals and principles in the 1992 and 1996 national policy documents on education. Although there were no official instructions to Ministry of Education technocrats to translate the meaning of the declaration into RE programmes, the fact that the declaration came from the state, which was supposed to remain consistent in promoting a liberal education system in the country meant that there was a contradiction in its role. The declaration or proclamation of the country as Christian on grounds that the majority of Zambians are Christians would have been more consistent if it came from the church whose role or interest it was to make such religious pronouncements and demands on society in general and the curriculum or RE in particular. Thus by sending contradictory signals through the Presidential declaration of a Christian nation and the Ministry of Education’s publication of liberal national education policy documents in 1992 and 1996, the state was making its own work through professional educationists and religious educators very difficult”.¹⁵¹

Simuchimba refers to a second problem posed by the declaration, when he asserts that,

“A related but slightly different problem caused by the state’s declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation was that by doing so, the state could be seen to be undermining its own efforts to promote the values of democracy, tolerance, religious harmony and inclusiveness through pluralistic RE. For apart from the reintroduction of Bible Knowledge and Christian education discussed above, another possible interpretation of the declared Christian status of the country was that churches or denominations could now establish as many Christian private schools as possible where, by law they would be free to teach only Christian beliefs, values and ethos to young Zambians. This, coupled with the state’s offer to hand back to the churches primary schools repossessed after independence, could mean taking the country back to the days of denominational and sectarian religious education, with its attendant dangers of religious intolerance, bigotry prejudice and fanaticism.

Clearly this would be the opposite of what pluralistic RE was trying to achieve and what the state wanted to avoid if it was to maintain a liberal, democratic, multi-faith and harmonious Zambia”.¹⁵²

After conducting interviews with the mainline Christian group leaders, non-Christian organization leaders and non-governmental organizations leaders to assess the adequacy of the existing two RE syllabuses 2044 and 2046, Simuchimba concluded that:

“It is clear from the data above that the Christian churches are divided over whether the existing RE syllabuses are educationally adequate or not. While the Roman Catholic Church considers the current school RE programme and syllabuses to be generally educationally adequate, the Protestant churches consider the programme and syllabuses to be generally rather inadequate. These evaluations are however made on religious (and not educational) grounds. While the Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant churches would like RE in Zambia to continue developing along the current pluralistic and multi-faith model, the Evangelical (and Pentecostal) Protestant churches would like the subject to adopt a thematic, multi-faith, but ‘Christ-centred’ model. The other religious traditions are also slightly divided over the

¹⁵⁰ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 168.

¹⁵¹ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 168-169.

¹⁵² M. Simuchimba, 2005: 169.

adequacy of existing RE syllabuses. While the Hinduism considers the school RE syllabuses to be [sic] educationally adequate, Islam, Baha'i Faith and Zambian Traditionalists consider them to be inadequate. However, all the four religious traditions would like RE in the country to continue developing along the existing pluralistic or multi-faith approach, but under a model that covers their truth-claims more than the existing syllabuses do.

Unlike the different religious traditions which are divided, the non-governmental organizations have a more united position....Like civil society or NGO leaders, Zambian educationists too are agreed that the existing RE syllabuses are educationally adequate and that they should continue developing along the existing pluralistic and multi-faith lines despite the declaration of Zambia as a 'Christian nation'".¹⁵³

In seeking to determine the adequacy or inadequacy of Religious Education syllabuses in Zambia, Simuchimba argues that "educational adequacy of RE programmes in Zambia (and any other democratic and pluralistic country) should be defined in terms of conformity to provisions and values of the country's constitution and principles of its national education policy in general and national policy on RE in particular. As can be seen from Article 19 of the Zambian Constitution, the constitutional values that come out clearly are freedom, liberty, equality, fairness and pluralism. Others are rational and moral autonomy, neutrality and impartiality....This means that for Zambian RE syllabuses to be educationally adequate, they must be democratic, pluralistic, multi-faith, and broadly based".¹⁵⁴

Simuchimba charges that "giving more coverage to Christianity simply because most Zambians are Christians is not only undemocratic but also against the spirit of religious pluralism which underlines Article 19 of the Constitution. So rather than being adequate, the current predominantly Christian RE syllabuses in Zambia are educationally inadequate as they fail to uphold the constitutional values of religious pluralism, equality, fairness and impartiality. The official status of Zambia as a Christian nation in the preamble of the Constitution has no legal authority and cannot be used by the people concerned to justify the predominance of Christianity in the syllabuses".¹⁵⁵

Simuchimba seems to forget that the majority of the Zambian citizens, who are the tax payers and are themselves Christians, do want to ensure that their government does not overlook their social and spiritual interests while seeking to adhere to the dictates of the national

¹⁵³ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 200-201.

¹⁵⁴ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 202.

¹⁵⁵ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 203.

Constitution. Besides, a moral breakdown could occur in Zambia comparable to what William Jeynes found elsewhere, when he says, “there was a moral and academic breakdown that occurred in the United States during the 1963-1980 periods. To whatever extent, America’s prior morality was based on the moral commitment of its citizens; one can also conclude that there was a religious breakdown as well. Whether the removal of prayer and Bible reading from the schools was a cause of this breakdown or a result of this breakdown, there is no question that there was a breakdown. In fact, it seems likely that the removal of prayer and Bible reading from the schools was a result of the moral and religious breakdown among the adult citizens of the United States and probably hastened the moral and religious breakdown of the youth of the United States”.¹⁵⁶

Simuchimba argues further that the current RE syllabus “is unacceptable because public school RE syllabuses in Zambia cannot not focus on the beliefs and values of any particular religious tradition when the Constitution makes it clear that all religions have equal legal status. The publicly funded education system in a democratic country like Zambia cannot be used to promote one set of religious beliefs and values at the expense of others. Therefore, rather than being a measure of inadequacy, the part coverage of other religious traditions (Islam, Hinduism and Zambian Traditional Religion) and some cross-cultural social issues (such as HIV/AIDS and environmental education) is a step towards attaining educational adequacy and should be taken even further”.¹⁵⁷

There is another view that Simuchimba argues against:

“Equally unacceptable is the view that the RE syllabuses are inadequate because they are taught by teachers who, in many cases, are not religiously committed and cannot serve as moral role models for the pupils. This view is inadequate because as a matter of policy, the only requirement and qualification for teaching RE and other subjects in schools is professional training at recognized teacher education institutions in the country. Religious commitment is clearly not one of the official requirements for RE teaching in public schools because, as the Constitution shows, Zambia is a democratic, multi-faith country where confessional and denominational approaches to the subject are unacceptable, except perhaps in private religious schools. The intention of the RE syllabuses is not just the transmission of knowledge about religious beliefs and values but the development of religious understanding, skills and

¹⁵⁶ W. Jeynes, 2003: 236-237.

¹⁵⁷ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 203.

positive attitudes which learners need in order to fit in the modern, democratic and pluralistic Zambian society”.¹⁵⁸

Therefore, he concludes, “These aims and objectives of RE mean that besides upholding the constitutional values explained above, Zambian RE syllabuses have to be in line with the principles of liberalism, inclusivism, holism, critical thinking, autonomy and problem-solving in order to be educationally adequate”.¹⁵⁹ Simuchimba categorically denies the right of religious traditions to have a role in national matters affecting RE syllabuses, as reflected in the following statement:

“Strictly speaking, then, there is no room for the involvement of religious traditions in the affairs of public school RE because that is the responsibility of the state through its professional religious educators and curriculum specialists. Being democratically elected, the state has the mantle of authority to decide for people what knowledge and values will contribute to the common good of society and which should, therefore, be promoted by the school curriculum, including RE. The fact that RE touches on the beliefs, values and practices of religious traditions does not give them the (legal) right to become involved either in teaching the subject or in preparing its teaching and learning materials. These responsibilities should remain firmly in the hands of the professionals because in modern education, RE is as a curriculum subject like any other”.¹⁶⁰

John Holmes, who reflected on similar challenges faced by Christian schools in the United States of America, counsels that, “It is best not to receive government funds in any form from the various levels of government – municipal, country, state or federal. Such help comes in various forms: outright grants-in-aid (for library, lunch, curriculum, or whatever), reimbursements for cooperation in data gathering, vouchers, certificates, or student loans, etc....If your school receives government funds, ask yourself what ‘strings’ might be attached to these funds?”¹⁶¹

Although RE in Zambia enjoyed denominational control during the missionary and colonial periods, and remaining the same during Zambia’s First Republic in the 1960s, this was to change in the decades ahead. It became ecumenical in the 1970s and pluralistic during the Second Republic in the late 1980s. The Third Republican context (1990s to present) promoted liberal, democratic and pluralistic attitudes, under the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation. While the 1991 declaration restored confessional Christian attitudes and practices among RE teachers and educators

¹⁵⁸ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 203-204; Simuchimba argues that it is a misunderstanding “that religious traditions should be more involved in the affairs of school RE because, unlike other subjects, RE is more concerned with the transformation of pupils’ moral behaviour, and that churches and other religious groups should be allowed to infuse moral values in the current RE syllabuses in order to ensure spiritual and moral growth among the learners”, 2005: 209.

¹⁵⁹ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 205.

¹⁶⁰ M. Simuchimba, 2005: 210.

¹⁶¹ J. Holmes, 1990: 266.

in Zambia, it is alleged to have created a division among them into two camps. The publication of national education policy documents in 1992 and 1996 which spelled out liberal and democratic education goals and principles on education also revealed a seeming contradictory stance within the state.¹⁶²

It is to this seeming self contradiction on the part of the state and the perceived misunderstanding by the RE teachers and educators from the religious traditions that Simuchimba challenges. He argues that religious groups should completely desist involving themselves in matters that have to do with RE syllabuses and the teaching of RE in public schools (and grant-aided private schools) because it is legally the domain of the state to decide what should be contained in the RE syllabuses and what kind of values should be propagated in Zambian society, by government's professionally qualified teachers who do not need to have a moral commitment to be able to do their jobs. It is these challenges that became a direct affront to Seventh-day Adventism which seeks to adhere to the *sola Scriptura* principle even in delivery of its educational services. These challenges may not divide Zambian Adventism but they have the potential of marginalizing Bible instruction to pave way for religious pluralism in grant-aid funded private schools like Rusangu Secondary School. Unfortunately we did not come across any reasoned Adventist theological response to either the challenge of religious pluralism or the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation. What then is the state of Bible instruction in Zambia today?

4.8. Bible instruction at Rusangu Secondary School today

Today Rusangu Secondary School, which is managed by a South Zambia Conference appointed board, has an enrollment of 940 students. About seventy-five per cent of the students are baptized Seventh-day Adventist Christians. A survey¹⁶³ conducted at Rusangu Secondary School in August 2009 revealed that the Bible is rated as very important at the school. The Bible versions used in RE class lessons and church programs include the New International Version, King James

¹⁶² M. Simuchimba, 2005: 168.

¹⁶³ The questionnaire used in the survey is given below as Appendix I.

Version/New King James Version and the Revised Standard Version. All students are required to have their own Bibles. All students are also required to take Bible classes once accepted to study at the school. The school administration ensures that all class periods begin with prayer. Bible Knowledge is generally taught four times a week. Nevertheless Rusangu Secondary School utilizes a government supplied Bible-based RE syllabus 2046. RE textbooks utilized by the pupils are published and distributed by the Ministry of Education. At the completion of their study period all students write a government Religious Education examination prepared by the Examination Council of Zambia.

The teaching of Bible at Rusangu Secondary School is done not only for the purpose of preparing to pass the government examination. The school's statement of mission aims: "To harmoniously develop the physical, mental, social and spiritual powers of the students for the joy of service in this world and for higher joy in the world to come". All the 44 teachers, who are baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, were recruited and appointed by the management board. There are eight Bible teachers, four of whom are degree holders while the other four are diploma holders. Only one of these eight Bible teachers has been trained at a Seventh-day Adventist tertiary institution.

To care for the spiritual needs of teachers and students at Rusangu Secondary School, the South Zambia Conference which administers the school has seconded a pastor who serves as a school Chaplain a full time basis. Two times a year the school conducts a week-long spiritual emphasis program. Church attendance is compulsory for all students. The impact of the spiritual and evangelistic church programs conducted at the school in addition to the academic program, is evidenced by the conversions and baptisms figures recorded below for the last five years:

TABLE 4: *Showing conversions and baptisms recorded during the years, 2004-2008.*

| YEAR | CONVERSIONS | BAPTISMS |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 2008 | 405 | 167 |
| 2007 | 400 | 156 |
| 2006 | 350 | 130 |
| 2005 | 208 | 98 |
| 2004 | 150 | 86 |
| Totals | 1,513 | 637 |

These figures indicate that while the Rusangu Secondary School is a government grant aided institution, and even though the Church has not succeeded in instituting a church-provided Religious Education syllabus for the teaching of Bible in the school, the institution is still fulfilling the Adventist Church's evangelistic purposes.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a historical overview of the role of the Bible in Zambian Adventism, within the context of the Religious Education. It has shown how Christian missionaries in general, and Adventists in particular, carried out their evangelization of Africans using Bible instructions in the school setting. Throughout the missionary period (1880-1924) evangelistic endeavors were conducted through the means of establishing and running mission schools like Rusangu.

During the colonial period (1925-1963) the colonial government attempted to unify the provision of the primary education system operated by missionary agencies through the introduction of a unified curriculum, provision of grants-in-aid, and Unified Teaching Service scheme. These stringent government requirements led to the surrendering of almost all mission operated primary

schools to government in the mid 1950s. Nevertheless the teaching of RE remained a prerogative of individual Christian missionary agencies.

The chapter has also shown how during Zambia's First Republic period (1964-1972), the teaching of RE continued to be predominantly provided by Christian missionary agencies. But as Zambia entered the Second Republic (1973-1990), the Republican President, Dr Kenneth Kaunda's education reforms pushed for the teaching of political education and the philosophy of Zambian Humanism in all schools, and substituting the Bible-based RE syllabus with Spiritual and Moral Education. Dr Kaunda sought to promote an ecumenical approach to the teaching of Religious Education, which embraces Christian and non-Christian religious traditions and values. But the refusal by Evangelical Christian denominations resulted in the development, adoption and implementation of two Religious Education syllabuses 2044 (by Roman Catholic) and 2046 (by Evangelical Protestant) denominations, especially for the senior Secondary school level. This chapter also indicated how repeated efforts by the Adventist Church's administrative committees to implement a Seventh-day Adventist Bible curriculum failed to substitute the government provided syllabus due to the acceptance of government grants-in-aid funding. Hence up to this day, Seventh-day Adventist schools, like Rusangu Secondary School utilize the government provided Bible-based syllabus 2046 for the teaching of Religious Education.

During Zambia's Third Republican period (1991-to the present) the promotion of liberal democracy in Zambia created a pluralistic, multireligious context which provided for the existence and practice of Christian and non-Christian religious traditions. However the declaration of Zambia as a 'Christian Nation' by President Frederick J. T. Chiluba, in December 1991 provided for a revival of Christianity's dominant role in Zambia. Thus the place of the Bible in the teaching of Religious Education received a new impetus.

Seventh-day Adventists, through their largest and oldest educational institution, Rusangu Secondary School, continue to give the Bible a high functional role. The school is still utilized as an evangelistic center for the conversion of youths to the Adventist faith, just as the founding

missionaries intended to. How the Bible will be utilized as a theological resource through the recently (2003) established Zambia Adventist University on Rusangu mission station, remains to be seen.

GENERAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Seventh-day Adventist Church grew out of the off springs of the Protestant Reformation denominations. Its theological system upholds the conservative Bible-based flavor of the Protestant Reformation theological systems. Its guiding principle for the interpretation of Scripture and the development of doctrinal beliefs centers on the *sola Scriptura* principle (the Bible only). But Adventism's adherence to and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in its faith and practice has become a source of theological divisions which threaten its unity and focus on the mission at the dawn of the third millennium. A study of the understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle reveals a similar trend of theological divisions among the denominations which arose out the Protestant Reformations.

SUMMARY

Chapter 1 of this study entitled "Sola Scriptura in Protestant Thought" surveyed the significant causes of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformations of the Christian church. History reveals the vital role of the Renaissance toward a return to the study of early centuries' classics in their Greek and Hebrew languages. A study of the Christian Scriptures in their original languages revealed some aberrant theological doctrines and ecclesiastical practices being taught and practiced by the medieval Roman Catholic Church. Dr Martin Luther, in the company of other European Bible scholars attempted to restore the Church to its New Testament purity. In pursuant of this mission, they appealed to the authority of Scripture rather than to popes and contemporary church councils. Some Protestant Reformers like Luther believed that the early church councils and the early church fathers stood by a proper interpretation of Scripture and therefore their teachings were acceptable. However, the question of how far Protestant Reformers could go in adhering to the *sola Scriptura* (Bible only) principle left them divided into the so-called magisterial and radical Reformation groups.

Having broken away from the main Roman Catholic Church which was under papal authority, Protestant Reformers became further divided along national and theological lines throughout Europe. The Roman Catholic Church convened the Council of Trent to put its house in order. One of the outcomes of this council was the consolidation of the authority of the church whose teachings stream from both Scripture and Tradition; an outright rejection of the Protestant Reformers' *sola Scriptura* principle.

Chapter 2, entitled "Sola Scriptura in Adventism" examined the claims Adventism's adherence and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle in its theological system. The study examined Adventism's claims to be heirs of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, particularly the radical Reformation lineage manifested by its adherence to the *sola Scriptura* principle. Adventist historians show that Adventism's roots are anchored within the Restorationist wing of the radical Reformation which arose in the United States of America in the eighteenth century. Adventist theologians also maintain that Adventism seeks to advance the Protestant Reformation further than where the early Reformers ended. While they claim unwavering adherence to the *sola Scriptura* principle, Adventists' understanding and application of this principle, acceptance of the manifestation of the prophetic gift in the end time (Rev 12: 17; 14: 12) which they believe was manifested in the ministry and writings of Ellen G. White (1827-1915). Although Adventists believe that Ellen G. White was inspired in the same way as the Hebrew prophets, her writings are do not understood to constitute an addition to the biblical canon, which is believed to have closed. The purpose of Ellen G. White's writings is believed to provide counsel and encouragement to the Adventism movement in fulfilling its end time mission of preaching the gospel to the world. Apart from the 66 books of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, Adventists accept no other writings such as the apocrypha to be inspired and to have authority for doctrine and practice.

Chapter 3 entitled "The Supremacy or Primacy of Scripture" explored the supreme authority of Scripture in theology. The study pointed out the various media through which God is revealed to

humanity, namely: nature, Scripture and Jesus Christ. In addition to these are other means through which God spoke to his people, among which are the Holy Spirit, Holy Angels, the Urim and Thummim, casting lots, theophanic appearances, divine dreams and visions, and the prophets/seers. Although there was a long period from creation to Moses, before Scripture was written, God communicated through these secondary media. After the composition of Scripture, some of these auxiliary means of communication continued to function side by side with Scripture. Almost two millennia have passed since the close of the biblical canon but God still communicates to humanity through Scripture and other secondary media.

Due to the existence of other writings and spiritual manifestations which present a potential for deception, the Bible remains the most reliable authority for testing the authenticity of every other means of divine manifestation or communications. Adventists accept Ellen G. White's ministry and writings to have been inspired in the same way other biblical prophets/prophetesses were. Nevertheless, her writings are not an addition to the Scriptural canon. Rather they are treated in the same way as the other inspired writings which did not find their way into the Scriptural canon. Adventists acknowledge the existence and general value of the apocryphal writings, but like other Protestants, they reject the inclusion of these apocryphal writings from the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, accepts the apocryphal books as deuterocanonical writings which constitute the religious literature for reading in worship services.

In view of the existence of such other secondary sources which have relative theological value, the present study argues that the Bible should better be regarded as the "primary", "ultimate", "supreme", or "final" source, authoritative for doctrine. The Bible is the supreme authority but there are also useful secondary sources, such as the writings of Ellen G. White which are recognized and accepted by Seventh-day Adventists.

Chapter 4, entitled "Scripture in Zambian Adventism" explored the role the Bible has fulfilled in Adventism's education system during the last one hundred years (1905 to the present). The Bible was used as a primary tool for evangelism throughout the Missionary period (1880-1924)

as well as during the colonial period (1925-1963). Although the introduction of colonial Government Grants-in-Aid funding for running missionary schools brought challenges mission run schools, it did not hinder the mission schools from teaching Bible. Neither did the United National Independence Party (UNIP), led by Dr Kenneth Kaunda interfere with Bible education in mission schools during Zambia's First Republic (1964-1972). Nevertheless, this was to change after 1973.

Dr Kaunda's educational reforms during Zambia's Second Republic (1973-1990) threatened to marginalize the provision of Bible instruction in schools by replacing it with the philosophy of "Zambian Humanism". Resistance put forth by the Evangelical Protestant Christian denominations resulted in the introduction of two alternative Religious Education (RE) syllabuses: 2044 (with a human development focus) and 2046 (with a more Bible knowledge focus). The Roman Catholic Church operated schools implemented syllabus 2044, while the Protestant Christian denominations schools implemented syllabus 2046. Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church's various levels of church administration developed and attempted to implement a Seventh-day Adventist Bible curriculum for use in its schools, these efforts failed to be implemented in Zambia and at Rusangu Secondary School in particular due to the school's acceptance of Government Grants-in-Aid funding for school operations and using teachers on government payroll. Up to this day, the Bible education at Rusangu secondary school depends on the government provided Bible-based syllabus 2046, at the end of which the students write Bible examinations set by the government Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ). Thus, Seventh-day Adventism in Zambia failed to fully escape the external religious and political pressure exerted by the Zambian context in the post-independence era.

Zambia's entry into its Third Republic (1991 to the present) removed the threat from the philosophy of Zambian Humanism in the teaching of Bible or Religious Education in Zambia. Dr Frederick J.T. Chiluba, who became the new president of the Republic of Zambia, after the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) party won the political elections on October 31, 1991, declared Zambia a "Christian Nation" on December 29, 1991. This declaration became later

enshrined in the preamble to the Republican Constitution in 1996. The introduction of liberal multiparty democratic system of governance gave Christianity a priority preference in the nation without denying freedom of worship to other faith groups such as the Hindus, Muslims, Bahai and Traditional African Religions. Today, while Zambia may be called a “Christian Nation”, a religious pluralistic context prevails in the country.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has shown that the Seventh-day Adventist Church inherited the same tendencies of conservatism and continued reform evidenced by on-going doctrinal refinements which characterizes the Protestant Reformation churches of the post-sixteenth century. Just as there was not a single Reformation but many reformations in different geographical and socio-political contexts in Europe, Seventh-day Adventism too inherited these traits from its parental Protestant denominations. Adventism’s adherence to and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle carries with it a conservative, radical and non-tolerant tendency toward alternative doctrinal positions or views. Adventism itself broke away from its parental religious bodies which existed in the eastern United States of America in the mid-nineteenth century. Its adherence to the *sola Scriptura* principle, coupled with the challenge of attempting to achieve a single approach to the interpretation of Scripture, serves as a recipe for doctrinal divisions. It is not strange therefore that even after having established institutions for advanced Bible scholarship in form of university seminaries since the 1940s, Adventism still finds itself administratively united but theologically divided at the turn of the twentieth century.

Adventism’s biblical understanding that the spiritual gift of prophecy is to continue being manifested in the Christian church up to the end of this earth’s history, and that this manifestation is to characterize the end time remnant church, makes Adventism to accept the prophetic ministry and writings of Ellen G. White. While it is not formally acknowledged, the presence of the Ellen G. White writings in the Adventist church introduces another source of religious authority outside the 66 books of the biblical canon. Adventism generally denies that its doctrinal beliefs emanate from

the Bible and the Ellen G. White writings, but it acknowledges the impact these writings have made on the denomination's theological development and growth.

This study has argued that Adventism should recognize the position maintained by Martin Luther, in contrast with the extreme radical Reformers. Luther held a high view of the authority of Scripture, but he accepted the doctrinal formulations of the early church councils and the contribution of the early church fathers. But that is not to say that Luther had no questionable doctrinal views, such as the so-called "canon within a canon" in respect of his restricted New Testament canon. His understanding and application of the *sola Scriptura* principle presents a broader form than that espoused by the radical Reformers. Such a view makes it possible for the church to acknowledge and accept the ministry and writings of later non canonical prophets such as Ellen G. White whose writings are not an addition to the biblical canon.

The use of multiple insufficiently defined adjectives to provide meaning for the *sola Scriptura* principle, such as "only", "ultimate", "supreme", or "final" is a recipe for confusion and divisions. Although adhering to and continuing to apply the *sola Scriptura* principle in theology, Seventh-day Adventism has not provided a clearly, unified and officially accepted definition of the meaning of *sola Scriptura*. If *sola Scriptura* is to be understood to mean that the Bible alone is the only source of doctrines that will be a denial of the full inspiration of Ellen G. White who is so indispensable to Adventism. If *sola Scriptura* is to be taken to mean that Scripture is its own interpreter, a question remains on what constitutes the role and authority of the General Conference in session which is regarded as the highest voice of God on earth in determining what is to be accepted as the correct understanding of Bible teaching (see the preamble to the fundamental beliefs). Conservatively adhering to and applying something (like the *sola Scriptura* principle) that has not been clearly and officially defined by the church will remain a continuing source of misunderstandings and divisions in Adventist theology.

SUGGESTIONS

If Seventh-day Adventism is to remain mission-focused, administratively and theologically united, it needs to acknowledge that God's activities are greater than, superior to and not confined to the covers of the Bible. God spoke through the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ prior to, and continues to speak through the Bible, the Holy Spirit and nature even after the close of the biblical canon. Various spiritual and religious manifestations should all be judged by the previously received and written revelation of God contained in Scripture. The Bible should be accepted as the supremely authoritative Word of God human beings can depend upon. But that should not be taken to mean that there shall be no further word from God in the future, either spoken or written, even when such writings may not be added to the biblical canon.

Seventh-day Adventists should accept the spiritual and theological insights found in other secondary theological sources, including the apocryphal writings (which were even quoted by some inspired writers of biblical books), the authoritative writings of Ellen G. White, and also the writings of Christians with deep experiences in matters of faith and practice, whether they be early church fathers or contemporary theologians and spiritually keen Bible students. This is not to say that all such writings are inspired like the Bible. The apostle Paul admonishes well, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess 5: 19-22). Such a stance avoids basing theological unity and commitment on some poorly understood and inadequately defined or applied principles for determining one's Protestant standing. But rather what is needed for Christians is to take a firm stand on the solid, sure foundation of previously revealed, divinely inspired and written Word of God (Isa 8: 20), the Bible, while listening, testing, and discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit who guides into all truth (John 16: 13), "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephes 4: 12-14).

Appendix I.

**RUSANGU SECONDARY SCHOOL
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

The purpose of this survey is to find out the role of the Bible at Rusangu Secondary School. By answering this questionnaire, you will assist **Pastor Passmore Hachalinga** to complete his doctoral studies in Theology at the University of South Africa. Please attempt to answer all questions as best as you can. Do note that participation is voluntary and you are not required to write your name on the questionnaire. The information you provide will be used for study purposes only. This questionnaire should be answered by any one of the Officers shown in question number (1) below.

1. Please indicate your position/responsibility in the School:

Headmaster Deputy Head Bible Teacher

2. Do you require all students to have their own Bible once accepted at the school?

Yes No

2.3. How many times is Bible generally taught per week?

Once Twice Thrice Four Five

4. Are all pupils required to take Bible classes while at Rusangu?

Yes all of them, Some of them, None of them is required

5. What kind of Bible syllabus are you using?

Seventh-day Adventist supplied Bible-based syllabus.

Government supplied Religious Education syllabus (with Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. lessons).

6. What Bible version is required for use at this school?

New International Version

King James Version or New King James Version.

Revised Standard Version

Bible version with the Apocrypha

Any Version is accepted

7. How do you rate the importance of the Bible in this school:

Very importance

Important

Not very important

I am not sure

8. Does the school have a Mission Statement? If yes, what does it say?

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9. How many Bible teachers are there at the school? _____

9.10. Are all Bible teachers baptized Seventh-day Adventist Christians?

____ Yes ____ No

11. Do you have a School chaplain?

____ Yes ____ No

12. What extra-curricular activities promote the study of the Bible among pupils?

13. How many times a year do you have a week of spiritual emphasis?

____ One Time ____ Two Times ____ Three Times ____ None

14. Is church attendance compulsory or voluntary for all pupils?

____ Compulsory ____ Voluntary

15. How many conversions and baptisms have you achieved during the last 5 years?

2008 _____ Conversions _____ Baptisms

2007 _____ Conversions _____ Baptisms

2006 _____ Conversions _____ Baptisms

2005 _____ Conversions _____ Baptisms

2004 _____ Conversions _____ Baptisms

16. What text book do you use for Bible class lessons in the school?

Book Title _____

Author(s) _____

Publisher _____ Date _____

Thank you for answering the questions above. Now please fax the papers to: Pastor Passmore Hachalinga at SID, Pretoria, South Africa. Fax: 012 345 7006/ 086 636 515

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