Theological War Presentation Part 2

(Original notes on the subject comes from ‘Future UK’ Ministries. I’ve just slightly modified it to fit the flow of the presentation on utube)

Part Two Video

In this section we will look at historical grammatical method... We will be quoting from a book by Samuel Pippin.... called ‘Receiving the Word’. Pippin who is an advocate for the “historical grammatical method” and a critic of the ‘higher critical method.’ He is a US-based Ghanaian author, speaker, and theologian. Trained in engineering and systematic theology. It is stated: “In a work on “Adventist Views on Biblical and Prophetic Inspiration,” a colleague of Pippin’s judged Receiving the Word as “one of the most influential landmarks in that debate” and one of “the two main conflicting poles around which gravitate[d] the contemporary discussions on [the Bible’s] inspiration” during the second half of the 1990s.” [Wikipedia]

So it is a book well received by those who adopt the historical grammatical method so we will be using his writings to show what they believe and demonstrate whether this methodology makes good Bible study.

Continuing on from Part 1, it was because of Desmond Ford’s ‘coming out’ in regards to the rejection of the Foundational Pillars that led to the establishment of the SDA Church that caused the General Conference to confirm and adapt the ‘historical critical’ method of study.

“The Rio Document, 1986. The BRI’s rejection of the historical-critical approach to Bible study found reaffirmation in 1986 at the General Conference Annual Council meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In a document entitled, “Methods of Bible Study,” leaders representing all world fields urged Bible students to avoid the use of historical criticism in the two forms in which liberal scholars were employing it: (a) “as classically formulated,” based on presuppositions that deny the miracles and supernatural events recorded in the Bible; and (b) "a modified use of this method" which retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason. Church leaders affirmed: "The historical-critical method minimizes the need for faith in God and obedience to His commandments. In addition, . . . such a method de-emphasizes the divine element in the Bible as an inspired book (including its resulting unity) and depreciates or misunderstands apocalyptic prophecy and the eschatological portions of the Bible." Because the historical-critical method undermines faith in God, obedience to Him, and the full inspiration and unity of the Bible, Adventist Bible students were urged “to avoid relying on the use of the presuppositions and the resultant deductions associated with the historical-critical method.” The Rio document (as "Methods of Bible Study" is also called) explicitly stated that "even a modified use . . . of the historical-critical method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists" Not surprisingly, the reaction of Adventist Bible
scholars to the Rio document was mixed—a fact that has contributed to the quarrel over the Word". {RW 79}

The reason it caused a quarrel is because the historical grammatical is believed to be a modified view of the historical critical, so it’s hypocritical. Doesn’t arrive to the full truth!

“Some Adventist Bible scholars believe they can reasonably use a little of the historical-critical method without adopting the naturalistic presuppositions on which the method is founded—a claim to which Eta Linnemann responded bluntly: “One can no more be a little historical-critical than a little pregnant.” Linnemann, by the way, is unquestionably a world-class expert in, and a former advocate of, the historical-critical method.” {RW 36}

Introduction to the argument by Samuel Pipin:

“The "Liberal Left" and The "Independent Right"

“The Seventh-day Adventist church is caught in the middle of a crossfire of attacks from the "liberal left" and the "independent right." The liberals, often educated and influential, operate within the church structure; the independents, appearing spiritual and orthodox, operate from without by establishing organizations and structures of their own.

Both groups are critical of the church because they believe that today’s Adventism is not what it should be. So both attempt to "rehabilitate" the church.

In order to make Adventism "relevant" for this generation, the liberals seek to "liberate" the church from its alleged "fundamentalist" doctrines and nineteenth-century Victorian lifestyle.

In their attempt to bring a "revival" to the church, the independents desire to "reform" the church from its ways of "apostasy." The liberals reinterpret Adventism’s historic doctrines; the independents oppose any tampering with the Adventist pillars.

Regarding lifestyle or conduct, the liberals emphasize "love," "acceptance," and "inclusiveness." The independents stress "law," "perfectionism," and "uniqueness." When the liberals on the left speak about the Adventist church, they often seem to see only the independents on the right; and when the independents discuss the church, one could almost believe that all members of the church are liberals.

The independent right is often perceived as siphoning off tithe from the church; the liberal left, which includes many church workers, is paid with tithe money while it often appears to be challenging, if not undermining, the beliefs and practices of the church.

The activities of both groups are often encouraged by the silence and indifference of mainstream Adventism.
Although in recent times an effort has been made to inform church members (not always accurately) about the activities of the independent right, little has been done to alert unwary Adventists to the influence of the entrenched liberal left. Ellen G. White stated that "we have far more to fear from within than from without" (Selected Messages, 1:122). If this applies to our current situation, then the mainstream Seventh-day Adventist church, caught in the crossfire, should be more concerned about the liberals within than about the independents without.

The "crisis over the Word" is really a clash between two versions of Adventism that currently operate within the church: mainstream Adventism and liberal Adventism.

This book, Receiving the Word, is a response to liberal Adventism's challenge to the mainstream Adventist faith and lifestyle. It is this challenge, and the sophisticated manner in which it is articulated by some leading thought leaders, that is creating an identity crisis in the church." {RW 16-17}

Pippin draws attention to the battles faced within the church. However Pippin in the next quote seems a little confused in regards to what methodology of interpreting scripture is truly causing this problem because in the following passage, he states that the Advent Pioneers that established the SDA church used the ‘historical grammatical method’ which you will soon find is not true. We saw in our last presentation that they used the ‘proof text message’ which you will also soon find is different from the ‘historical grammatical’ method... though some Adventists try to mingle the two. Even Cottrell himself recognised that the Advent Pioneers used the ‘proof’ text method. Pippin greatly errs when he makes the following statements below:

“Even though the approach of mainstream Adventism is consistent with the sola scriptura of the sixteenth-century Reformers, William Miller, and Ellen G. White, and even though their plain reading of Scripture (the historical-grammatical method) is shared by a majority of church members around the world...{RW 61}

Seventh-day Adventists have always adopted the approach advanced by the Protestant reformers, in which they sought the simple, plain, direct, or ordinary sense of Scripture. Technically, this method of studying Scriptures is known as the historical-grammatical method...” {RW 19-20}

Here it is demonstrated the two groups of SDA theologians, Cottrell and Pipip give two very different accounts as to what hermeneutic was used by the SDA pioneers. ‘Critical’ scholar’s state that the proof text method was used by William Miller and the proceeding SDA pioneers until the mid 1930’s, while ‘grammatical’ scholars state that Miller and the Pioneers did not use the proof text method, but used the historical grammatical method. Now I think the reason Pippin may have stated this because he fails to understand exactly what the proof text message is... and I can say this because the definition he gives of the proof text message is not entirely correct.
Note how he describes this methodology below:

“The proof-text approach to Scripture can lead to misguided conclusions. You probably have heard the story of the man who adopted such an approach to seek the will of God in a major decision of his life. Unwilling to engage in the painstaking effort of studying the Bible in its historical and grammatical context as the basis for drawing valid applications for his situation, he decided to close his eyes, open his Bible at random, prayerfully put his finger down, and get guidance from whatever verse his finger landed on. His first try came up with "Judas went out and hanged himself" (Matt 27:5). Finding these words unhelpful, he tried again and this time got "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37). In desperation he tried one more time. The text he found was: "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27).

This story may not be true, but it aptly illustrates the dangers inherent in the proof-text method. Though this approach takes the Bible as God’s inspired, trustworthy and authoritative message for all people—a foundational assumption which every Bible-believing Christian must share—yet the proof-text method fails to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). It looks for meaning in Scripture not by probing the historical-grammatical context, but by discarding it. Correct biblical hermeneutics seeks to discover the original meaning of Scripture in its proper context and to draw out principles for contemporary application. “[RW 29]

Now that’s not a correct definition of the ‘proof text’ message because according to Miller in rule 4 we are told:

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

All scripture in their context needs to be brought together for example in another passage the bible states “do not kill” another passage tells us that “its not God’s will that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” etc… so you need to look at the context of the reading in its proper baring rather than picking and choosing random scriptures.

It is because of Pippin’s lack of understanding on the ‘proof text message’ Like Cottrell, they reject the ‘proof text message’ as a means of studying the bible:

“In addressing the issue of Bible interpretation (hermeneutics), Seventh-day Adventists are faced with only two options:
(1) The historic Adventist approach to Scripture, which recognizes that the Bible is fully inspired, trustworthy, and authoritative, and
(2) The contemporary liberal approaches to the Bible, which deny the full inspiration, reliability and authority of Scriptures. Although these two approaches are miles apart, they are both agreed in their rejection of a third approach--namely, the "proof-text" method of interpretation. “[RW pg28]
Evidently, (which I will demonstrate further) Piipin was wrong about the Millerites and the Method of study they used because we saw that Miller used the proof text method according to the rules he outlined in regards to studying the bible. And Piipin, a well known theologian in Adventism... you’d think would know this because Miller didn’t even understand Hebrew or Greek, we saw that in our last presentation... and to follow the ‘historical grammatical method’ you need to understand the original language. Note how he defines the historical grammatical methodology:

“*The name "historical-grammatical method" describes the approach that focuses attention on a detailed analysis of the biblical text in accordance with the original language and historical situation...*

**Assumptions About the Bible.** Adventism's plain reading of Scripture (the historical grammatical approach) recognizes that the Bible is (a) fully inspired, (b) absolutely trustworthy, (c) solely authoritative, and (d) thoroughly consistent in all its parts, since it comes ultimately from one divine mind.

**Goal in Interpretation.** Relying upon the Holy Spirit’s illumination, believers using this method seek to ascertain the meaning of Scripture by carefully discovering the historical, literary and grammatical identity of a given biblical passage in its immediate historical context and in the wider context of the whole Bible. Having thus understood what a given passage meant in its historical context, the interpreter makes a responsible application to the contemporary situation. This method should not be confused with a "literalistic" approach which does not take into consideration the historical, grammatical, and literary (e.g., poetry, parable, symbol, epistle, etc.) characteristics found in the Bible. “ {RW 32-33} 

Note it tells us that to follow the Historical Grammatical Method, one must study the Biblical text in its original language...

Another definition of the Historical- Grammatical Method is found in Wikipedia

“*The **historical-grammatical method** is a Christian hermeneutical method that strives to discover the Biblical author’s original intended meaning in the text. It is the primary method of interpretation for many conservative Protestant exegetes who reject the historical-critical method to various degrees (from the complete rejection of historical criticism of some fundamentalist Protestants to the moderated acceptance of it in the Catholic Church since Pope Pius XII), in contrast to the overwhelming reliance on historical-critical interpretation, often to the exclusion of all other hermeneutics, in liberal Christianity.”* (WIKIPEDIA)

All this confirms that Miller and our pioneers did not follow this approach.

Pippin now goes onto provide us with an example of how one will adopt the ‘higher critical method’ and then shows the difference with the “grammatical historical” method when studying a portion of the scriptures.
This is taken from an analysis of the quail story in Numbers 11:4-23, 31-35. (Please read this story if you are not familiar with it)

The interpretations:

**Liberals and Quail.** The two kinds of liberals are likely to respond in slightly different ways to the quail story. On the one hand, classical (or radical) liberalism, denying any possibility of miracle, rejects as a myth the account of God's provision of quails. At best, it will reinterpret the miracle and reconstruct the biblical account along this line: "A group of nomadic tribes of pre-historic Israel (numbering far less than the 600,000 figure given in the Bible), while wandering in the wilderness, came across a few migrating birds which had paused to rest for the night. Seeing this phenomenon for possibly the first time, the Israelites attributed it to their God and exaggerated the number of birds 'rained down' to highlight their God's omnipotence."

On the other hand, moderate liberals accept the miracle of God in providing quails. But because of such problems as the 578 bushels per meal per person and the environmental hazard, they may discount the accuracy of the story. They are likely to argue that Christians should not be concerned about how God provided the quails. The important point in the story, they would say, is that God did provide food for His people, a truth that is valid even though the details about it may not be trustworthy. The underlying assumption is that some parts of the Bible are inspired while others are not. [RW 35]

**Historical Grammatica and Quails.** Regarding the "quail problem," those who adopt the historic Adventist approach insist that the Bible is fully inspired and trustworthy even in the details about the quails. Therefore, in the face of an unresolved difficulty, rather than maintaining that the Bible writer was mistaken in his figures, we carefully re-study the biblical account to see if we have not erred in our interpretation. We shall explore the quail problem more fully shortly, to show in detail how a Bible-believing student may approach it. [RW 32-33]

Regarding the quail, the Bible simply states: "And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth" (Num 11:31). Notice that the Bible doesn't say that the quails were packed solid, or piled up two cubits (three feet) deep, from ground up, over a territory forty miles across. Rather, Scripture says that the birds were brought "two cubits high upon the face of the earth." The New International Version translates it, "Now a wind . . . brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction." The Bible is merely saying that instead of the birds flying so high that they were out of reach, God brought them so low--about three feet above ground level--that anyone could take as many as he wanted (note Num 11:32). [RW 37]
The historical grammatical seems to make sense and seems to be the most faithful of the two, to the inspiration of the scriptures.

Now we shall revisit the issue of whether the Millerites and the founding church fathers would have used the Historical grammatical method. Part of the Historical grammatical method is understanding the original language (ancient Hebrew & Greek) This quote from the biography of William Millers life called ‘The Memoirs of William Miller’ will give us our answer.

Mr. Miller again repeated the call for 'Anonymous' to stand up, if he was present. No one arose. Mr. Miller then read the question which closed the letter, namely - ‘Mr. Miller, how dare you assert your theory with so much confidence without a knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages?’ To this Mr. Miller promptly replied, 'If I am not acquainted with the HEBREW and GREEK, I know enough to quote the English texts of the Scriptures rightly.' - 'Anonymous' never made himself known, and it was the impression of many of the audience that the author of the letter, if he was skilled in the Hebrew and Greek, was exceedingly deficient in his knowledge of the English Scriptures. {1853 SB, MWM 155.1}

This quote shows that Miller did not know Hebrew or Greek, therefore he could not have employed the Historical Grammatical method.

Note some of the rules he used:

"1. Every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible;

2. All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent application and study;

3. Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, not wavering;

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

5. Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a teacher to expound to me, and he should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of his sectarian creed, or to be thought wise, then his guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule, and not the Bible." {RH, November 25, 1884 par. 24}

14. The most important rule of all is, that you must have faith. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and, if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth, the world and all its desires, character, living, occupation, friends, home, comforts and worldly honors. If any of these should hinder our believing any part of God’s word, it would show our faith to be vain. Nor can we ever believe so long as one of these motives lies lurking in our hearts. We must believe that God will never forfeit His word. And we can have confidence that He that takes notice of the sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head, will guard the translation of His own word, and
throw a barrier around it, and prevent those who sincerely trust in God, and put implicit confidence in His word, from erring far from the truth, though they may not understand Hebrew or Greek.

Now we will apply, Miller’s rules, the proof text method to the quail story...

Num 11:31 And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day’s journey on this side, and as it were a day’s journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth.
Num 11:32 And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

A homer (Hebrew: חמר; also kor, Hebrew: כּר) is a unit of volume used by ancient Hebrews for liquids. 1 homer is equal to 10 baths. 1 homer equals 220 litre or 220dm³. The homer should not be confused with the omer, which is a much smaller unit of dry measure.

Ten homers = 2200 litres of quail gathered in two days per person

73 litres of quail per day for the month per person.

Both grammatical and critical scholars will deny that this was the case and attempt to rationalize the miracle.

Num 11:20 But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?
Num 11:21 And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.

The context of the scripture is that it is a miraculous amount, but before we can begin to rationalize this miracle the proof text method demands that ALL other texts connected to this one be used to explain it.

Psa 78:24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.
Psa 78:25 Man did eat angels’ food: he sent them meat to the full.
Psa 78:26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.
Psa 78:27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:
Psa 78:28 And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations.
Psa 78:29 So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire;
Psa 78:30 They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths,
Psa 78:31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.

Compare with:

Psa 105:40 The people asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.

Exo 16:13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

This account of quails in Exodus & Psalm 105 are not dealing with the same story in Numbers, but Psalms 78 corroborates with the plain reading of the original story in Numbers. Not the bible explicitly tells us that the Lord “rained flesh” and let it “fall in the midst of the camp” and not that “God brought them so low—about three feet above ground level—that anyone could take as many as he wanted” as Pipin stated.

Ellen White also comments on the miracle.

“A strong wind blowing from the sea now brought flocks of quails, "about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and about two cubits above the face of the earth." Num. 11:31, R.V. All that day and night, and the following day, the people labored in gathering the food miraculously provided. Immense quantities were secured. "He that gathered least gathered ten homers." All that was not needed for present use was preserved by drying, so that the supply, as promised, was sufficient for a whole month.” (PP 382.1)

Notice that the previous two methods (Liberal and Historical Critical) came up with an interpretation inconsistent with the entire bible account. This is because so much emphasis was put on the original language in that particular portion of scripture and that other texts and spirit of prophecy was not consulted.

The proof text method allows the bible to be its own expositor.

NB: The methodology used by the Millerites and SDA pioneers is also referred to as the historicist method, this method focuses on historical events rather than language to find the correct fulfillment of prophecy

Now don’t get me wrong, nothing wrong with understanding a bit of Hebrew, Greek... but that cannot form the basis or the final outcome of what the scriptures are trying to communicate to us. First and foremost, the Bible must be its own expositor. We are told:

“What is higher education? No education can be called higher education unless it bears the similitude of heaven, unless it leads young men and young women to be Christlike, and fits them to stand at the head of their families in the place of God. If, during his school life, a young man has failed to gain a knowledge of Greek and Latin and the sentiments contained in the works of infidel authors, he has not sustained
much loss. If Jesus Christ had deemed this kind of education essential, would He not have given it to His disciples, whom He was educating to do the greatest work ever committed to mortals, to represent Him in the world? But, instead, He placed sacred truth in their hands, to be given to the world in its simplicity.” {FE 467.3}

There are times when Greek and Latin scholars are needed. Some must study these languages. This is well. But not all, and not many should study them. Those who think that a knowledge of Greek and Latin is essential to a higher education, cannot see afar off. Neither is a knowledge of the mysteries of that which the men of the world call science necessary for entrance into the kingdom of God. It is Satan who fills the mind with sophistry and tradition, which exclude the true higher education, and which will perish with the learner. {FE 468.1}

So we see the same ‘historical grammatical’ General conference leaders that claim to accept the writings of Ellen White as inspired go directly against her counsel by making it mandatory for students that wish to attain higher learning for the work of ministry, to gain knowledge of ancient languages.

All the while and even to this day the leaders of the church continue to promulgate that the church founders used the historical grammatical method, which is simply not true. Below is an extract of a sermon by Ted Wilson

Sabbath sermon to the General Conference Session at Georgia Dome - July 3, 2010

“Go forward, not backward! Let Scripture be its own interpreter. Our church has long held to the Historical-Biblical or Historical-Grammatical method of understanding scripture, allowing the Bible to interpret itself; line upon line, precept upon precept. However, one of the most sinister attacks against the Bible is from those who believe in the Historical-Critical method of explaining the Bible. This unbiblical approach of “higher criticism” is a deadly enemy of our theology and mission. This approach puts a scholar or individual above the plain approach of the scriptures and gives inappropriate license to decide what he or she perceives as truth based on the resources and education of the critic. Stay away from this type of approach because it leads people to distrust God and His Word.” Elder Ted Wilson.

The admonition to avoid liberal theologians is valid, but in the same speech he proves himself and conservatives to be untrustworthy with the blatant promulgation of the irrefutable error that the pioneers used the historical grammatical method. The historical grammatical source for this study (Receiving the Word – Samuel Pipim) does not recognizes any pioneers in the book dedication, but rather Gerald Hasel and others that brought the historical grammatical method into Adventism.

The late Dr. Gerhard F. Hasel of Germany was the dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University and the director of its Ph.D. program; he represents the faithful scholars of the church who contribute greatly to scholarship without surrendering the Word. {RW 22}
And as a result of this... i.e. the mingling in with the ‘higher critical’ method in the church has still caused the same problems as you can see in this following clip... You see where he is going..

(Play Video)

“The People Have Lost Confidence--It is working upon wrong principles that has brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought it was almost blasphemy. The voice of the Conference ought to be the voice of God, but it is not, because some in connection with it are not men of faith and prayer, they are not men of elevated principle. There is not a seeking of God with the whole heart; there is not a realization of the terrible responsibility that rests upon those in this institution to mold and fashion minds after the divine similitude”.—Manuscript 37, 1901, p. 8 (April, 1901, Talk by Mrs. E. G. White in the Review Chapel regarding the Southern work). {ChL 20.4}

“The most important rule of all is, that you must have faith. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and, if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth, the world and all its desires, character, living, occupation, friends, home, comforts and worldly honors. If any of these should hinder our believing any part of God’s word, it would show our faith to be vain. Nor can we ever believe so long as one of these motives lies lurking in our hearts. We must believe that God will never forfeit His word. And we can have confidence that He that takes notice of the sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head, will guard the translation of His own word, and throw a barrier around it, and prevent those who sincerely trust in God, and put implicit confidence in His word, from erring far from the truth, though they may not understand Hebrew or Greek.” William Miller

Where the Word Hermeneutic Originated From,

Folk etymology places its origin with Hermes, the mythological Greek deity who was the 'messenger of the gods'. Besides being a mediator between the gods and between the gods and men, he led souls to the underworld upon death. Hermes was also considered to be the inventor of language and speech, an interpreter, a liar, a thief and a trickster. These multiple roles made Hermes an ideal representative figure for
hermeneutics. As Socrates noted, words have the power to reveal or conceal and can deliver messages in an ambiguous way.\footnote{18} The Greek view of language as consisting of \textit{signs} that could lead to truth or to falsehood was the essence of Hermes, who was said to relish the uneasiness of those who received the messages he delivered.