In this Issue

Miracle in the Desert

26 May 2011, Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates [Clement Arkangelo, tedNEWS] For the first time in history the Seventh-day Adventist Church owns a building in the Gulf region. Some called it historic, but George Mathew, the Elder of Ras Al Khaimah Adventist Church, called it a miracle seeing the reorganization of the Gulf Section into a Field and... Read more

Al Waad Leader Meets Prominent Muslim Figures in Jordan

19 May 2011 Amman, Jordan [Amir Ghali, tedNEWS] It was a historic visit. In an endeavor to meet Al Waad’s objective of being a Muslim friendly and a respectful TV channel, a team of professionals from the media center recently went to Amman, Jordan. There, they met prominent Muslim figures in the Jordanian community. The four-day trip included visits to the... Read more

also in the news

- New Principal Appointed at Newbold College
- Royal Wedding Endorsement by Jamaica's Governor General
- Nine Young People Baptised in Iceland
- Angélique Hornis Receives a Royal Decoration

features & analysis

- Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understanding of Seventh-day Adventist Hermeneutics
- La Sierra field biologist takes home new species of gecko
- The Trend Toward Integration of Spirituality and Leadership
- Finding Meaning, Significance, Community, Direction and Excitement
Statement on Violence Against Homosexuals

18 May 2011, Utrech, the Netherlands [Wim Altink, tedNEWS] The Executive Committee of the Netherlands Union of Seventh-day Adventists, on 17 May 2011 unanimously pronounced itself against violence towards homosexuals, which goes in harmony with the Statement on Human Relations by General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church World...

Read more

The 2011 Wellness Summit

The British Union Conference Health Ministries Department is organising Wellness Summit from 21 - 26 June, 2011 at De Vere Venues Staverton Park Hotel in Staverton, Northamptonshire. The varieties of courses covering the topics such as: 'Addictions - Breaking Free from Harmful Habits', 'Domestic Violence', 'Forgive to Live',...

Read more

'Me & My Maker'

'Experiencing the Joy' is a collection of 42 short drama clips in a variety of styles dealing with Adventist beliefs in a creative approach and asking current questions. Each video is designed to accompany a chapter from the book 'Experiencing the Joy’ but can also stand alone as a resource for small groups, youth programmes and sermon starters.

Unsubscribe from this newsletter

Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
Miracle in the Desert

26 May 2011, Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates [Clement Arkangelo, tedNEWS] For the first time in history the Seventh-day Adventist Church owns a building in the Gulf region. Some called it historic, but George Mathew, the Elder of Ras Al Khaimah Adventist Church, called it a miracle seeing the reorganization of the Gulf Section into a Field and the inauguration of the new Seventh-day Adventist Church Centre in Ras Al-Khaimah, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The building has church facilities for about 1000 people, offices as well as apartments and guest rooms. It is no less than a miracle of God that the series of events happened in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE, took place. This miracle was not only securing the permission and funding for the construction of the Church premises, it was also a historic moment for the Middle East Union when on 20 May 2011, under the leadership of Dr. Kjell Aune, the Gulf Section was reorganized into a Field and held its first session.

On Saturday, 21 May 2011, before the inauguration of the building, Dr. Bertil Wiklander, the President of the Trans-European Division, delivered a heart-warming message on "Revival and Reformation" based on Micah 6: 6-8 to the audience of delegates of the Gulf Session, the Middle East Union Session and a number of visitors. Close to one thousand people were in attendance. People came from all parts of the Gulf Field and the world. The inauguration, which took place in the afternoon, was blessed by the presence of a number of General Conference representatives, two Trans-European Division officers, the Middle East Union representatives, the Gulf Field Churches and the delegations to the Middle East Union Sessions who came from all over the fourteen counties of the Middle East Union.

The Gulf Field President, Michael Collins, called the gathering "a foretaste of heaven" as he welcomed the dignitaries, the delegates and the honourable guests. The afternoon inauguration was also attended by representatives of His Highness Shaikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah and Supreme Council Member. The Union President, Kjell Aune, extended a word of appreciation to His Highness for the piece of land graciously granted to the church.

On Sunday, 22 May, the Middle East Union Session began, ending on Monday evening. During the sessions, Sudan was reorganized into three Fields. The former South Sudan Field territory, as proposed, was renamed into the Greater Equatoria Field, while the Sudan Field remains as the Sudan Field. A new Field was created in the northern part of South Sudan with the proposed name of Greater Upper Nile Field, which covers five States and northern part of Jonglei State. The headquarters will be in Malakal. During the Union session there were elections of all Field officers, Union departmental leaders and the Union Executive Committee. An unprecedented number of locals were elected to Field and Union positions, making this session a milestone in the history of the Church in the Middle East.

On Tuesday and Wednesday the new Middle East Union Executive Committee met for its Mid-Year meetings, which also included the board of trustees meetings for Middle East University and Adventist Health Education Foundation.

This business was conducted in the Spirit of the Lord. God was active before and during this special week in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Middle East Region, making it a historic and memorable event for many. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-advantist.org
Website: www.ted-advantist.org

tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division.

You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
19 May 2011 Amman, Jordan [Amir Ghali, tedNEWS] It was a historic visit. In an endeavor to meet Al Waad’s objective of being a Muslim friendly and a respectful TV channel, a team of professionals from the media center recently went to Amman, Jordan. There, they met prominent Muslim figures in the Jordanian community. The four-day trip included visits to the Jordanian Supreme Court, the University of Islamic Studies, the Institute of Muslim-Christian Dialogue, and the Arab Bridge Institute for Human Rights.

“We had the unique privilege of dialoguing with our Muslim friends about ways to build bridges of trust and respect,” says Pastor Abed Dwaish, an Adventist pastor in Jordan and the coordinator of the visit.

In a rapidly changing Middle East, the relationship between Christians and Muslims has been facing some tension in recent weeks. It was the duty of Al Waad to do its part in solidifying that relationship and showing, through those interviews, that Christians and Muslims can indeed live together in peace and harmony.

One of the outstanding interviews was made with the Supreme Judge of Islamic Sharia Law, Dr. Ashraf Al Omari. The highly educated, young judge gave a beautiful picture of how Islam deals with non-Muslims as “equals”, with tolerance, love, and forgiveness. He emphasized the fact that the “People of the Book”, are to be trusted and respected.

The Al Waad team was received as welcomed guests to those Muslim scholars who showed their traditional culture of hospitality by serving elaborate meals after each interview. This is the true behavior of a Middle Eastern host.

Al Waad continues to pursue its objectives by building bridges of trust and respect with all its brothers and sisters from the Islamic faith. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division.
You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Statement on Violence Against Homosexuals

18 May 2011 Utrech, the Netherlands [Wim Altink, tedNEWS] The Executive Committee of the Netherlands Union of Seventh-day Adventists, on 17 May 2011 unanimously pronounced itself against violence towards homosexuals, which goes in harmony with the Statement on Human Relations by General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters*.

Violence against homosexual men and women – subtle or less subtle – occurs regularly in this country. They are beaten up, harassed, bullied or called names and on occasions their cars are damaged or their houses plastered with hate language. In many places they dare not to be open about being homosexual.

On the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO), the members of the committee, as representatives of churches in the Netherlands, declare as follows:

'We do not all have the same views on homosexuality, but we are one in the belief that all human beings are created in God's image and are precious in His eyes. Therefore people should treat each other with dignity – respectfully, peacefully and affectionately – and violence against homosexuals, in any form, is completely unacceptable.

To any type of violation of human rights we say: that it is wrong. Today we emphasise this, in particular, the violation of the human rights of homosexuals. This includes all forms of physical, psychological and verbal violence against homosexuals, as well as inciting these expressions of violence. Those who use violence against fellow human beings, made in the image of God, ignore Christ's appeal to love God and their neighbour. Also in our own communities of faith the human dignity of homosexuals has been damaged by uncharitable and unsympathetic behaviour.

We dedicate ourselves to defend in every way the dignity of all people. We call on worshippers in our congregations to refrain from promoting any form of violence against homosexuals. Churches deserve, after the example of Christ, to be places of openness and understanding, a safe haven for all, including homosexuals.

We call on everyone, whatever their place in society, to offer an environment in which homosexuals feel safe and in that way contribute to a healthier social climate.

We will endeavour, in our international ecclesiastical contacts and in our contacts with representatives of other faiths, to oppose homophobia, hatred and violence against homosexuals.' [tedNEWS]

*A Statement on Human Relations by General Conference
Seventh-day Adventists deplore and seek to combat all forms of discrimination based on race, tribe, nationality, color, or gender. We believe that every person was created in the image of God, who made all nations of one blood (Acts 17:26). We endeavor to carry on the reconciling ministry of Jesus Christ, who died for the whole world so that in Him "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28). Any form of racism calls the heart out of the Christian gospel.

One of the most troubling aspects of our times is the manifestation of racism and biblicalism in many societies, sometimes with violence, always with the denigration of men and women. As a worldwide body in more than 200 nations, Seventh-day Adventists seek to manifest acceptance, love, and respect toward all, and to spread this healing message throughout society.

The equality of all people is one of the tenets of our church. Our Fundamental Belief No. 13 states: "In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has united us into one fellowship with Him, and with one another, we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.*

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995.

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herls, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division.
You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
The British Union Conference Health Ministries Department is organising **Wellness Summit from 21 - 26 June, 2011** at De Vere Venues Staverton Park Hotel in Staverton, Northamptonshire. The varieties of courses covering the topics such as: ‘Addictions - Breaking Free from Harmful Habits’, ‘Domestic Violence’, ‘Forgive to Live’, ‘Health Expo Training’, ‘Weight Management’, ‘Youth Alive’ and many more will be presented by highly qualified speakers. For more information about the topics and the registration, please click [here](http://www.ted-adventist.org/news/the-2011-wellness-summit)
New Principal Appointed at Newbold College

08 May 2011 St Albans, UK [Miroslav Pujic, tedNEWS] In its meeting on Sunday, the 8th of May, 2011, the Newbold College Board appointed Dr Philip R Brown from Australia to serve as the new principal at Newbold College. Brown is currently a vice-president at Avondale College in Australia, with particular responsibility for learning and teaching. He brings exceptional academic qualifications including an earned doctoral degree with specialisation in educational administration and leadership, which underpins all the qualities required in fulfilling the key responsibilities of this senior position. He is the 31st principal in Newbold’s 110-year history.

Dr Brown brings to this position a strong awareness of contemporary higher education issues, a practical understanding of Adventist Christian higher education challenges, and an empathetic and vital interest in students and their needs as they prepare for Christian service. He wishes to make a positive difference for students and staff. Based on his wide and varied experiences in the education area, he is committed to team-work and fostering a healthy team spirit and staff morale, in order to dynamically promote the growth and development of Newbold College.

Dr Brown received his Bachelor of Education from Avondale College in Australia, two Master Degrees in Commerce and Educational Administration from the University of New South Wales, Australia, a Master of Tertiary Education Management from the University of Melbourne, Australia, and, finally, in 1997, his Doctorate in Education from La Sierra University, USA.

On his appointment, Dr Brown says: “I have a strong commitment to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, coupled with knowledge of and sensitivity to the unique needs of higher education in Europe. In particular, I have enthusiasm for furthering Newbold’s vision, mission, values and contribution to the Adventist identity in the modern world.”

"Through our research we found that Dr Brown has an excellent grasp of higher education issues”, says Dr Bertil Wikander, the College Board chair and the President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division, commenting on the appointment of the new principal, and continued “He is also strategic and knows how to work hard to make things happen and manage change. We heard very positive comments on his management style which characterises integrity, professionalism and a balance between project-task and people-focus in providing direction and inspiration. We believe that Brown’s spiritual focus, knowledge, skills, and wide-ranging educational experiences will bring growth to the College in numbers and spiritually. We wish him and the Newbold staff God’s blessings as they begin this new and critical phase of the college’s history.” concludes Wikander.

Dr Brown succeeds Dr Svein Myklebust from Norway who has served as acting principal since December 1, 2010. The Newbold College Board expressed their gratitude and appreciation for his good work during the interim period and recognised that it was a challenging time which Myklebust has managed to lead in a balanced, fair, and successful way.

Newbold College continues to have a key role in preparing ministers for pastoral leadership within the countries of the TED and runs a variety of degree programmes that benefit young people from all countries in the TED and also the rest of the world. The College is central to the Trans-European Division in implementing its strategic objectives and for the growth and Identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, particularly in its European context. It is an institution that consolidates faith, equips youth with the tools for exploring truth, and provides a burning passion for mission and service. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division.
You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Royal Wedding Endorsement by Jamaica's Governor General

05 May 2011, London United Kingdom [Derek Morrison, BUC NEWS] Pomp, pageantry and praise – not just at last Friday’s Royal Wedding at Westminster Abbey, but continued the next day at a special Day of Fellowship at Hampstead Adventist church with Sir Patrick Allen, Governor General of Jamaica.

Themed 'The Royal Wedding', the day’s proceedings featured stirring and appealing musical input from the London Male Voice Choir, the Millennium Brass Ensemble, and 14-year-old Tennae Drysdale. A well-ordered procession and guard of honour mounted by Pathfinders contributed to a sense of splendour and occasion. With well over 500 people packing the sanctuary for the extended morning service, local minister Humphrey Walters delivered the morning’s address based on the parable of the wedding garment, taking his cue from the royal wedding service.

Sir Patrick Allen, former President of the West Indies Union Conference, and now Governor General of Jamaica, was special guest for the day. He had attended the Royal Wedding on Friday but, he informed us, like any dedicated Adventist, looked forward to worshipping on Sabbath in church with his brothers and sisters in the Lord. Addressing a packed out congregation, Sir Patrick remarked that he appreciated the sacredness of Friday’s wedding service and hoped it would help in encouraging young people to continue to uphold the institution of marriage.

Even though he has been Governor General for two years, he is still defined by many people he meets as a minister of the gospel, Sir Patrick disclosed to us. This, he says, gives him the opportunity to witness regarding his faith. He shared an example that while at the wedding he was asked about the significance of being an Adventist, and was quizzed on whether his duties as Governor General ever clashed with his Sabbath-keeping. He was able to explain that there was no inevitable conflict; that he is happy being an effective Governor General and, at the same time, a faithful Sabbath-keeping Christian. Requesting the prayers of the church, he conceded that if he were ever to turn away from the faith, everyone in Jamaica, Adventist or not, would be disappointed in him.

Key issues being championed by him and his wife, Sir Patrick informed us, revolve around the family, education and youth affairs. These, they are seeking to address from a holistic standpoint that embraces mental, spiritual, social, emotional and physical considerations. He has used his high position to implement a programme that is tagged the "I believe" initiative, where young people are empowered to find good values and use their God-given talents to build a good nation and serve God and country. Sir Patrick concluded his address by challenging us to do good, stating: "We will only pass this way but once; any good deed we can do, let us do it now, because we will not pass this way again."

Accompanying him on the day were BUC President, Pastor Don McFarlane, as well as former BUC President Pastor Cecil Perry. Also in attendance were SEC representatives, along with a number of pastors. [tedNEWS]

fteNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: fte@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

fteNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division.
You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify fteNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Nine Young People Baptised in Iceland

03 May 2011 Reykjavik, Iceland [Eric Guðmundsson, tedNEWS] Baptisms are not really about numbers and they should be used only carefully as a measurement of church growth. We all know that baptism as such is only one of many contributing factors to a thriving, let alone a blooming church. Recently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Iceland could celebrate nine baptisms within two weeks. This may not sound so spectacular in regions where hundreds are baptised even in one day but here in Iceland, it certainly does.

Therefore, I would like to tell the story of three siblings within this group. Sigurður Ella, Jon Thor and Anna Mary live in a village in Western Iceland. In their town, the three kids, along with their parents are the only Seventh-day Adventists. Even though the main road system in Iceland has now been tarmaced for many years, that does not mean that you can get wherever you like, especially during the winter months. Therefore this family has not the possibility to attend church with fellow Adventists on a regular basis. Even in good conditions, a visit to the church would be an about five hours’ roundtrip amounting to a distance of 360 kms (220 miles). This means that the youngsters have always attended school and most other activities outside of the community of the Adventist church.

Through the years the family has though attended camp meetings and other Adventist activities, especially in the summertime and last year the youngsters joined the Icelandic pathfinders group at the “Faithbook” camporee in Finland. Recently we have established a regular online streaming of our services in the Reykjavik church. This gives our family in Western Iceland along with many others who live in remote areas, or others who are unable to attend church due to other reasons, the possibility to celebrate the Sabbath with their fellow believers in Reykjavik.

Preparation of the baptismal ceremony is quite a challenge when you don’t have the opportunity to meet on a regular basis. Only three of the nine who were baptised were in fact able to have their weekly Bible study with their pastor. For the others, special arrangements had to be made. We had fewer sessions, but they were longer each time. This arrangement gave us the possibility to get to know each other well on a personal basis. In my opinion, baptismal classes are very much about establishing a life-long mutual relationship of trust and fellowship in Jesus, rather than transmitting knowledge or information.

“It is only 20 months since I have started my work as a pastor. Before, I have been a teacher on various age-levels”, says Manfred Lemke pastor who did the Bible studies with this group, and continued: “For me, the baptismal preparation has been the highlight of my work. The skills and experience acquired during my former occupation have now their true focal point, which is teaching about Jesus. Whereas many of the daily tasks of pastoral work have been new and challenging, the sessions with these lovely young people have always been a source of joy for me.”

Pastor Lemke continued to explain his feeling while he was standing in the baptistery with these young people: “When I finally stood in the baptistery, awaiting the first youngster to join me, I felt how little I was. Would I find the right words to say? Would we do right? Would all go well? There are so many things that can go wrong, so many things to worry about. But, at that moment, there was no feeling of worry. The strength we felt was supernatural, the words spoken were given by someone else”, concluded Pastor Lemke.

It is this moment that gives us hope. There is a future, a good future with good young people. In a such moment we feel both strong and weak, strong because we know we are not alone in this, and weak because we feel how utterly dependent we are upon the grace and guidance of our almighty God.

What does it mean for the Church in Iceland to have nine young people baptised in the spring days of 2011? Well, in a church where growth is an issue, this gives us hope. This is particularly important for the elderly who have seen another time where the church grew rapidly and they are yearning for a revival. But the real meaning or fruits of these baptisms will only unfold in the years to come.

Will they find their way in the church? Will the church find a way to integrate them and give them the feeling of belonging and support? Will they be strong enough to withstand the pressure of their peers to live a ‘normal’ life? All this is a question of relationships. My prayer for these young and beautiful persons is that they may always work on their relationships in order to keep them good and let them grow. Above all their relationship with God, but also their relationship with their travelling companions through life. [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujice, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter’s Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

tedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division.

You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify tedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Angélique Hornis Receives a Royal Decoration

03 May 2011 Emmen, The Netherlands [Wim Altink, tedNEWS] On Friday 29 April 2011 Mrs. Angélique Hornis van der Horst received a Royal Decoration and thus became a member of the Order of Orange Nassau. She received a ribbon which was pinned up at the Grote Kerk in Emmen. Angélique is a member of the Adventist church in Emmen and despite her disability caused by rheumatism, she places herself above it for the cause of her fellow men.

“When I was 21 years old, I consciously decided to become a Christian. It has always been my desire to share with others the message of Jesus as the Saviour of this world. I am trying to show it by my way of living but also whenever I have an opportunity, I would talk about it, too. God deserves all the honour because He has given me the strength to do it. This faith is my support and I am a happy person,” said Angélique in her speech this morning.

In the ‘60s there were a few attempts to establish local radio stations and finally, the Lokale Radio in Emmen went on air. It is here that Angélique quickly found a spot in the programme called Kerk Lokaal that was broadcasted on Wednesday evenings. “In a team of devoted Christians, I was given the opportunity to provide a slight input of the faith by which I lived”, said Angélique during her speech in the Grote Kerk. And she continues: “Now after 22 years, RTV has developed into a fully grown local broadcasting company of which we can be proud of. In this organisation I have the privilege to be a small radar within. Together with a group of pleasant colleagues, some young and some older, I am able to reach Emmen and the southeast corner of Drenthe with an important message”.

Pastor M. de Reus, a local church pastor from Emmen, was present during the ceremony and congratulated Mrs Hornis on behalf of the Union Church Board from The Netherlands Union. Pastor Wim Altink, the President of The Netherlands Union, has complimented her over the phone and spoke with apprecilation of her example of being a Seventh-day Adventist believer who is socially involved with the community.

For many years within the Adventist church in The Netherlands, Angélique has been very active as a speaker for the divine service on Saturday mornings. Furthermore, she was an active member of the local Personal Ministry. On a local level she takes upon herself the work for community growth, catechism and youth work. Angélique and her husband Martin, live in Emmen, The Netherlands with their four sons.

fedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujo, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor
119 St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England
E-mail: tednews@ted-adventist.org
Website: www.ted-adventist.org

fedNEWS is an information bulletin issued by the communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division.
You are free to re-print any portion of the bulletin without need for special permission. However, we kindly request that you identify fedNEWS whenever you publish these materials.
Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understanding of Seventh-day Adventist Hermeneutics

How shall we approach Scripture? With what hermeneutic shall we conduct our theological investigations? A bewildering array of past and current hermeneutical theories confronts us. These range from the allegorical hermeneutic of the Alexandrian school and the medieval Church, to the literal-historical and typological hermeneutic of the Antiochene school and the Protestant Reformers; from the antispirtual rationalist (historical-critical) hermeneutic of the Enlightenment to Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic of subjective understanding; from the neo-orthodoxy of Barth and Brunner; to the existentialist models of Heidegger and Bultmann; from the metacritical hermeneutical theories of Gadamer and Pannenberg, to the hermeneutic of suspicion and retrieval of Paul Ricoeur; from the hermeneutics of socio-critical theory (including liberation and feminist hermeneutics) to the literary-critical hermeneutical approaches (rhetorical criticism, New Criticism, structuralism, semiotics, narrative theory, etc.); from reader-response criticism to radical deconstructionism.

In the face of this plethora of suggested hermeneutical methodologies, how shall we proceed in our approach toward Scripture? If it appears evident that without specific divine revelation on the subject of hermeneutics, we will never be able to find our way through the maze of human theories. On the other hand, if we accept the full authority of Scripture with regard to other biblical doctrines, should we not also expect to find in Scripture the divine perspective on how to interpret Scripture? Seventh-day Adventists believe that just as we go to Scripture to find the doctrines of God, humanity, sin, eschatology, etc., so it is appropriate, yes, essential, that we should go to Scripture itself to discover the doctrine of Scripture, and in particular, to learn the Scriptural teaching on hermeneutics as a basis for constructing a theology that is hermeneutically faithful to Scripture.

Of course we come to Scripture acknowledging our own biases, our own pre-understandings, but we come willing, and claiming the divine promise, that the Spirit will bring our presuppositions ever more in harmony with the biblical presuppositions (see John 16:13, 14:16, 17, 26, etc.). In this paper an attempt is made to summarize what Seventh-day Adventists understand to be the main contours of the Scripture’s presuppositions and principles of interpretation, as they emerge from a study of the biblical passages that speak to this topic.

I. Foundational Principles for Biblical Interpretation

A. By the Bible and the Bible Only (Sola Scriptura)

A fundamental principle set forth by Scripture concerning itself is that the Bible alone is the final norm of truth, the primary and absolute source of authority, the ultimate court of appeal, in all areas of doctrine and practice. The classical text which expresses this basic premise is Isa 8:20 (NIV): “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.” The two Hebrew words gadol (“law”) and tevakah (“testimony”) point to the two loci of authority in Isaiah’s day which now constitute Holy Scripture: the Pentateuch (the Torah or Law of Moses) and the testimony of the prophets to the previously revealed will of God in the Torah. Jesus summarized the two divisions of OT Scripture similarly when He referred to the “Law and the prophets” (Matt 5:17; 11:13, 22:40). The NT adds the authoritative revelation given by Jesus and His apostolic witnesses (see Eph 2:20; 3:15). The principle of sola Scriptura implies two corollaries: the primacy and the sufficiency of Scripture.

1. The Primacy of Scripture. Isaiah warned apostate Israel against turning from the authority of the Law and the Prophets to seek counsel from spiritual mediums (Isa 8:19). In the NT era other sources of authority were threatening to usurp the final authority of the biblical revelation. One of these was tradition. But Jesus and Paul clearly indicate that Scripture is the superior authority over tradition, including the tradition of the religious authorities (Matt 15:3; 6: Col 2:8). This does not deny the usefulness of Judeo-Christian tradition, as some wrongly interpret sola Scriptura, but rather upholds the primacy of Scripture over all tradition as the final norm of truth. Tradition, even ecclesiastical tradition, must be judged by Scripture.

Paul also emphatically rejects another source of authority, that of human philosophy, as final norm of truth for the Christian (Col 2:8). Even the philosophical presuppositions of fundamental theology must be judged by the standard of sola Scriptura. Seventh-day Adventists believe that much of Christian fundamental thinking (“the principles behind the principles”) since shortly after NT times has been dominated by dualistic (Platonic-Aristotelian) philosophical foundations which present a timeless and spaceless concept of God. Thus the passages in Scripture that speak of God dwelling in a spatio-temporal reality, must be deconstructed and reinterpreted in allegorical, figurative, or metaphorical terms. Adventists see the biblical teaching about God as including a call to Christians for a radical return to the biblical realism of sola Scriptura that views the being of God compatible with space and time.

Paul likewise rejects human “knowledge” (KJV “science”; Greek gnōsīs) as the final authority (1 Tim 6:20). Both OT and NT writers point out that since the Fall in Eden, nature has become depraved (Gen 3:17-18; Rom 8:20-21) and no longer perfectly reflects truth. Nature, rightly understood, is in harmony with God’s written revelation in Scripture (see Ps 19:1-6 [revelation of God in nature] and vv. 7-11 [revelation of the Lord in Scripture]); but as a limited and broken source of knowledge about God and reality, it must be held subservient to, and interpreted by, the final authority of Scripture (Rom 1:20-23; 2:14-16; 3:1-2).

Humankind’s mental and emotional faculties have also become fallen since the Fall; but even before the Fall, neither human reason nor experience could safely be trusted apart from or superior to God’s Word. This was the very point upon which Eve fell—trusting her own reason and emotions over the Word of God (Gen 3:1-6). The wisest man in history (who ultimately failed to heed his own warning) perceptively observed: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Prov 14:12).

2. The Sufficiency of Scripture. The principle of sola Scriptura implies the further corollary of the sufficiency of Scripture. The Bible stands alone as the unerring guide to truth; it is sufficient to make one wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3:15). It is the standard by which all doctrine and experience must be tested (2 Tim 3:16-17; Ps 112:10; Prov 30:5, 6; Isa 8:20; John 17:17; Acts 17:11; 2 Thes 3:14; Heb 4:12). Scripture thus provides the framework, the divine perspective, the foundational principles, for every branch of knowledge and experience. All additional knowledge and experience, or revelation, must build upon and remain faithful to, the all-sufficient foundation of Scripture. The sufficiency of Scripture is not just in the sense of material sufficiency, i.e., that Scripture contains all the truths necessary for salvation. Adventists also believe in the formal sufficiency of Scripture, i.e., that the Bible alone is...
sufficient in clarity so that no external source is required to rightly interpret it.

Adventists maintain the rallying cry of the Reformation—sola scriptura, the Bible and the Bible only as the final norm for truth. All other sources of knowledge and experience must be tested by this unerring standard. The appropriate human response must be one of total surrender to the ultimate authority of the word of God (Isa 66:2).

B. The Totality of Scripture (Tota Scriptura)

A second general principle of biblical interpretation is the totality of Scripture (Tota Scriptura). It is not enough to affirm the primacy of Scripture. Those like Martin Luther, who called for sola scriptura, but failed to fully accept the Scriptures in their totality, have ended up with a "canon within the canon." For Luther this meant depreciating the book of James (as an "epistle of straw") and despising other portions of Scripture (as presenting the way of Law and not the Gospel).

The self-testimony of Scripture is clear in 2 Tim 3:15-17: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

All Scripture—not just part—is inspired by God. This certainly includes the whole OT, the canonical Scriptures of the apostolic church (see Luke 24:17, 32, 44-45; Rom 1:2; 2:2; 2 Pet 1:21; etc.) But for Paul it also includes the NT sacred writings as well. Paul’s use of the word “scripture” (graphē, "writing") in his first epistle to Timothy (5:18) points in this direction. He introduces two quotations with the words “Scripture says,” one from Deut 25:4 in the OT, and one from the words of Jesus recorded in Luke 10:7. The word "scripture" thus is used simultaneously and synonymously to refer to both the OT and the gospel accounts in the technical sense of "inspired, sacred, authoritative writings."

Numerous passages in the gospels assert their truthfulness and authority on the same level as the OT Scriptures (e.g., John 1:1-3 paralleling Gen 1:1; John 14:26; 16:13; 19:35; 21:24; Luke 1:24; Matthew 1 paralleling Genesis 5; Matt 23:34). Peter’s use of the term "scriptures" for Paul’s writings supports this conclusion (2 Pet 3:15, 16).[So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.] By comparing Paul’s letters to the "other scriptures," Peter implies that Paul’s correspondence is part of Scripture.

The NT is the apostolic witness to Jesus and to his fulfillsment of the OT types and prophecies. Jesus promised the twelve apostles to send the Holy Spirit to bring to their remembrance the things He had said (John 14:26). Paul states that "the mystery of Christ" was "revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3:4-5). The apostles held a unique, unrepeatable position in history (Eph 2:20) as bearers of the humanity of Christ (Luke 1:2; Gal 1:11-17; 2 Pet 1:16; 1 John 1:1-4). This certainly validates the apostolic writings by the apostles like Peter, John, and Matthew. Paul also was called to be an apostle (see Rom 1:1, 1 Cor 1:1, and the greetings in the other Pauline epistles), and he indicates that his writings are given under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and have full apostolic authority (1 Cor 7:40; 12:13; 14:37; 2 Cor 3:5-6; 4:13; Gal 1:11-12; 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Thess 3:6-15). Thus the NT embodies the witness of the apostles, either directly, or indirectly through their close associates Mark, Luke, James, and Jude (see Luke 1:1-3; Acts 12:12, 25, 15:37; 16:11; Col 4:10, 14; 2 Tim 4:11; Philm 24).

The principle of tota Scriptura involves several related issues/corollaries.

1. Tota Scriptura and the Canon. What is the full extent of the Biblical canon, and what forces/sources "authorized" the various biblical writings to be canonical? Adventists join other Protestants in af-firming that the canonization of both OT and NT is not a product of human agencies but of the Holy Spirit, and that the canonical books contain internal self-authenticating and self-validating qualities that were recognized as such by the community of faith. Regarding the OT, Adventists, along with other Protestants, accept only the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible, and not the so-called deuterocanonical books of the Apocrypha. The latter books, while containing some helpful historical information, were not written by inspired prophets, but came after the close of the OT prophetic period (ca. 400 BC). Adventists accept a sixth-century date for the writing of Daniel (in harmony with the internal claims of the book), and place the canonization of the OT in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (ca. 400 BC), both of whom as prophets played a role in popularizing and affirming the canonized books among the Jewish people (Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:2-8). Jesus Himself recognized the three-part Hebrew canon (Luke 24:44), which was later reaffirmed at the Council of Jamnia (ca. 90 A.D.).

Regarding the NT, we have already noted above the apostolic witness inherent in all of these writings—all written by an inspired apostle or an apostle’s direct disciple who was an inspired eyewitness—and thus the canon of the NT was closed by the end of the first century when the last inspired apostolic document had been written. Such inspired apostolic/canonicity was eventually recognized by the NT covenant community. The Church "came to recognize, accept, and confirm the self-authenticating quality of certain documents that imposed themselves as such upon the Church’s in sum, the Church did not determine the Canon, but discovered it, did not regulate the canon, but recognized it; the Church is not the mother of the canon, but the child of the Canon, not its magistrate, but its minister, not its judge, but its witness, not its master, but its servant."

2. Inseparable Union of the Divine and Human. All Scripture, both OT and NT, is of divine origin. It is "inspired by God," literally "God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). The picture here is that of the divine "wind" or Spirit coming upon the prophet, so that Scripture is a product of the divine creative breath. Thus it is fully authoritative: profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.

A corollary of the tota Scriptura principle is that all Scripture is an indivisible, indistinguishable union of the divine and the human. A key biblical passage which clarifies the divine nature of Scripture in relation to the human dimensions of the biblical writers is 2 Pet 1:19-21 (NIV): "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain. and you will do well to pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 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 [theîlêma] of men, but men spoke from God as they were carried along [phœn] by the Holy Spirit."

Several related points are developed in these verses. V. 19 underscores the trustworthiness of Scripture. It is "the prophetic word made more certain." In v. 20 we learn why this so, because the prophecy is not a matter of the prophet’s own interpretation, i.e., the prophet does not intrude his own interpretation. The context here primarily points to the prophet giving the message, who does not inject his own ideas into the message, although the implication may be heeded by the non-inspired interpreter of Scripture.

V. 21 elaborates on this point: prophecy does not come by the theîlêma—the initiative, the impulse, the will—of the human agent; the prophets are not communicating on their own. Rather, the Biblie writers were prophets who spoke as they were moved, carried along, even driven [phœn] by the Holy Spirit.
This Petrine passage makes clear that the Scriptures did not come directly from heaven, but rather God utilized human instrumentalities. An inductive look at the biblical writings confirms that the Holy Spirit did not abridge the freedom of the biblical writers, did not suppress their unique personalities, did not destroy their individuality. Their writings sometimes involved human research (Luke 1:1-3); they sometimes gave their own experiences (Moses in Deuteronomy, Luke in Acts, the Psalms); they present differences in style (contrast Isaiah and Ezekiel, John and Paul); they offer different perspectives on the same truth or event (e.g., the four Gospels). And yet, through all of this thought-inspiration, the Holy Spirit is carrying along the biblical writers, guiding their minds in selecting what to speak and write, so that what they present is not merely their own thoughts, but the utterly reliable word of God, the prophetic word made more certain. The Holy Spirit imbued human instruments with divine truth in thoughts and so assisted them in writing that they faithfully committed to apt words the things divinely revealed to them (1 Cor. 2:10-13).

This corollary of the sola Scriptura principle, that the human and divine elements in Scripture are inextricably bound together, is reinforced by comparing the written and incarnate Word of God. Since both Jesus and Scripture are called the "Word of God" (Heb 4:12; Rev 19:13), it is appropriate to compare their divine-human natures. Just as Jesus, the incarnate Word of God was fully God and fully man (John 1:1-3,14), so the written Word is an inseparable union of the human and the divine. Just as Jesus' humanity was sinless, so the holy Scriptures, though coming through human instrumentalities, is fully trustworthy.

3. The Bible is Equivalent To, Not Just Contains the Word of God. Another corollary of the totality of Scripture principle is that the Bible is equivalent to, and not just contains, the Word of God. The testimony of Scripture is overwhelming. In the OT there are about 1600 occurrences of four Hebrew words (in four different phrases with slight variations) which explicitly indicate that God has spoken: (1) "the utterance (ne'îm) of Yahweh," some 361 times; (2) "Thus says [v'âmar] the Lord," some 423 times; (3) "And God spoke [âḇôḇêr]," some 422 times; and (4) "the word [dâḇôḏ] of the Lord," some 394 times. Numerous times are recorded the equivalency between the prophet's message and the divine message: the prophet speaks for God (Ex 7:1,2; cf. Exod 4:15,16), God puts His words in the prophet's mouth (Deut 18:18; Jer 1:9), the hand of the Lord is upon the prophet (Isa 6:11; Jer 15:17; Ezek 1:3; 3:2; 37:1), or the word of the Lord comes to him (Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Mic 1:1, etc.). Jeremiah (chap. 25) rebukes his audience for not listening to the prophets (v. 4), which is equated with not listening to the Lord (v. 7), and further equated with "His words" (v. 8).

Summarizing the prophetic messages sent to Israel, 2 Kings 21:10 records, "And the Lord said by his servants the prophets," and 2 Chronicles 36:15-16 adds: "The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers..."; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets. "The prophets' message is God's message. For this reason the prophets often naturally switch from third person singular reference to God ("He"), to the first person direct address ("I"), without any "thus saith the Lord" (see Isa 3:4; 5:3 ff.; 10:5 ff.; 27:3; Jer 5:7; 16:21; Hos 6:4 ff.; Amos 5:21 ff.; Joel 2:26; Zech 9:7). The OT prophets were sure that their message was the message of God!

Numerous times in the NT it is written is equivalent to "God says." For example, in Hebrews 1:1-3, seven OT citations are said to be spoken by God, but the OT passages cited do not always specifically ascribe the statement directly to God (see Ps 104:4; Ps 46:6-7; Ps 102:25-27). Again Romans 9:17 and Galatians 3:8 (citing Exodus 9:16 and Genesis 22:18 respectively) reveal a strict identification between Scripture and the word of God: the NT passages introduce the citations with "Scripture says," while the OT passages have God as the speaker. The OT Scriptures as a whole are viewed as the "oracles of God" (Rom 3:3).

Though the Bible was not verbally dictated by God so as to by-pass the individuality of the human author, and thus the specific words are the words chosen by the human writer, yet the human and divine elements are so inseparable, the human messenger so divinely guided in his selection of apt words to express the divine thoughts, that the words of the prophet are called the Word of God. The individual words of Scripture are regarded as trustworthy, accurately representing the divine message.

This is illustrated by a number of NT references. Jesus says, quoting Deut 8:3, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [Greek rhema; "word," translating he deuteroi, "everything"] that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). Paul says of his own NT references, "And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13). Again Paul writes: "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess 2:13).

What is stated explicitly in the NT is also indicated by the instances when Jesus and the apostles base an entire theological argument upon a crucial word or even grammatico-form in the OT. So in John 10:33 Jesus appeals to Ps 82:6 and the specific word "gods" to substantiate his divinity. Accompanying his usage is the telling remark: "The Scripture cannot be broken." "It cannot be loosed, broken, repealed, annulled, or abolished—even to the specific words. In Mt 22:41-46 He grounds His final, unanswerable argument to the Pharisees upon the reliability of the single word "Lord" in Ps 110:1. The apostle Paul (Gal 3:16) likewise bases his Messianic argument upon the singular number of the word "seed" in Gen 22:17-18. As we shall see below, Paul is recognizing the larger Messianic context of this passage, as it moves from a collective plural seed to a singular Seed.

Jesus shows His ultimate respect for the full authority of the OT Torah when He affirms its totality: "For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished" (Matt 5:18).

C. The Analogy of Scripture (Analogia Scripturae)

A third general foundational principle of biblical interpretation may be termed "the Analogy (or Harmony) of Scripture" (analogia Scripturae).

Since all Scripture is inspired by the same Spirit, and all of it is the Word of God, therefore there is a fundamental unity and harmony among its various parts. The various parts of OT Scripture are considered by the NT writers as harmonious and of equal divine authority. NT writers may thus support their point by citing several OT sources as of equal and harmonious weight. For example, in Romans 3:10-18 we have Scriptural citations from Ecclesiastes (7:20), Psalms (14:2,3; 5:10; 140:4; 107:6; 36:2), and Isaiah (58:7,8). Scripture is regarded as an inseparable, coherent whole. Major OT themes are assumed by the NT writers and further developed.

The two Testaments have a reciprocal relationship in which they mutually illuminate each other. Jesus described how the OT illuminates the NT (and Himself in particular) in John 5:39: "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me." Elsewhere Jesus describes how he is the Illuminator, even the fulfillment, of the OT: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17).

Neither Testament is superseded by the other, although the later revelation is tested by the former, as illustrated by
the example of the Bereans, who "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Even Jesus insisted that the conviction of His disciples not be based primarily upon sensory phenomena alone, but that they believe in Him because of the testimony of OT scripture (Luke 24:25-27).

The "analogy of Scripture" principle has three main aspects: (a) Scripture is its Own Expositor (Scriptura sui ius in interpretis); (b) the Consistency of Scripture; and (c) the Clarity of Scripture.

1. "Scripture is Its Own Interpreter." Or as Martin Luther put it, "Scripture is its own light." Because there is an underlying unity among the various parts of Scripture, one portion of Scripture interprets another, becoming the key for understanding related passages.

Jesus demonstrated this principle on the way to Emmaus when, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Later that night in the upper room, he pointed out "that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures . . . " (Luke 24:44-45).

Paul expresses this same principle in 1 Cor 2:13 (NKJV): "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches." This text has been translated in different ways, but certainly the apostle's own use of Scripture indicates his adoption of the principle. We have already noted the whole catena of OT quotations cited in Rom 3:10-18. The same phenomenon may be observed in Heb 1:5-13; 2:6, 8, 12, 13.

In practical application of this principle that the Bible is its own expositor, Jesus, on the way to Emmaus, shows how all that Scripture says about a given topic (in His case the Messiah) should be brought to bear upon the interpretation of the subject (Luke 24:27, 44-45). This does not mean the indiscriminate stringing together of passages in "proof-text" fashion without regard for the context of each text. But since the Scriptures ultimately have a single divine Author, it is crucial to gather all that is written on a particular topic in order to be able to consider all the contours of the topic.

2. The Consistency of Scripture. Jesus succinctly stated this aspect of the analogy of Scripture: "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Since Scripture has a single divine Author, the various parts of Scripture are consistent with each other. Thus Scripture cannot be set against Scripture. All the doctrines of the Bible will cohere with each other, and interpretations of individual passages will harmonize with the totality of what Scripture teaches on a given subject. We have already seen how the NT writers linked together several OT citations from different OT genres as having equal and harmonious bearing upon the topic they were explaining.

While the different Bible writers may provide different emphases regarding the same event or topic, this will be without contradiction or misinterpretation. This is evidenced especially with parallel passages such as in the four Gospels. Each gospel writer recorded what impressed him most under the inspiration of the Spirit, and each facet of the whole is needed in obtaining the full and balanced picture.

3. The Clarity of Scripture. The principle of the analogy of Scripture also involves the aspect of the clarity of Scripture. Adventists, with other Protestants, understand that the Bible is perspicuous. The biblical testimony encourages the readers to study the Bible for themselves in order to understand God's message to them (e.g., Deut 30:11-14; Luke 13:4; John 20:30-31; Acts 17:11; Rom 10:17; Rev 1:3).

The implication is that the meaning of Scripture is clear and straightforward, able to be grasped by the diligent student. Jesus illustrates this in his dealing with the lawyer. He asked him, "what is written in the law? How do you read?" (Luke 10:26). In other words, He expected that the Bible could be understood. When the lawyer cited Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18, Jesus commended him for having correctly answered (Luke 10:27). Numerous times in the gospel accounts Jesus makes the same point: "Have you never read in the Scriptures . . . ?" (Matt 21:42), "Have you not read . . . ?" (Matt 12:3, 5; 19:4, 21:16, 22:31; Mark 2:25; 12:10, 26; Luke 6:3), "Let the reader understand" (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14).

The consistent example of the Bible writers is that the Scriptures are to be taken in their plain, literal sense, unless a clear and obvious figure is intended. Note especially the distinction of the difference between literal and figurative language (John 16:25; 29). There is no stripping away of the "husk" of the literal sense in order to arrive at the "kernel" of the mystical, hidden, allegorical meaning, that only the initiated can uncover. Scripture also maintains that there is a definite truth-intention of the biblical writers in any given statement, and not a subjective, uncontrolled multiplicity of meanings. Jesus and the apostles spoke with authority, giving not just one of many individual readings of a passage, but the true meaning as intended by the human writer and/or divine Author (see, e.g., Acts 3:17-18, 22-24). At the same time the NT interpretation does not claim to exhaust the meaning of a given OT passage; there is still room for careful exegesis. There are also instances where the biblical writer intentionally used terminology or phraseology with a breadth of meaning that encompasses several different nuances indicated by the immediate context of the passage (e.g., John 3:3).

This is not to deny that some parts of Scripture point beyond themselves (e.g., typology, predictive prophecy, symbols and parables) to an extended meaning or future fulfillment, but even in these cases the extended meaning or fulfillment arises from, is consistent with, and in fact is an integral part of the specific truth-intention of the text; and Scripture itself indicates the presence of such extended meaning or fulfillment in such cases.

It is also true that not every portion of Scripture was fully understood by the original hearers, or even by the inspired writers. In 1 Pet 1:10-12 the apostle indicates that the OT prophets may not have always clearly understood all the Messianic implications of their prophecies. Thus Peter implies another facet of the principle of the clarity of Scripture, i.e., that additional clearer revelation becomes a key to more fully understanding the less clear passages. This same point seems implied also from a different perspective in 2 Pet 3:16 when Peter writes that some of the things Paul has written are "hard to understand." These difficult passages are not to be the starting point, which "the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction," but are to be viewed in the larger context of clearer Scriptural statements of truth (v. 18; cf. v. 2).

The clarity of Scripture corollary also involves the concept of "progressive revelation." Heb 1:1-3 indicates this progress in revelation from OT prophets to God's own Son (see also John 1:16-18; Col 1:25-26, etc.). This is not progressive revelation in the sense that later Scripture contradicts or nullifies previous revelation, but in the sense that later revelation illuminates, clarifies, or amplifies the truths presented previously. So Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) does not nullify the precepts of the Decalogue, but strips away from them the accretions of erroneous tradition and reveals their true depth of meaning and application. The basic insights on this fuller import of the law were already in the OT, and Jesus enables these gems of truth to shine with even greater brilliance as they are freed from the distorted interpretations of some of the scribes and Pharisees. Progressive revelation also occurs in the sense that Jesus is the fulfillment of the various types and prophecies of the OT.

A final practical application of this principle of clarity is to recognize the increasing spiral of understanding as one
passage illuminates another. On one hand, later biblical authors write with conscious awareness of what has been written before and often assume and build upon what comes earlier (sometimes called the epigenetic principle or analogy of antecedent Scripture). On the other hand, earlier passages may not be fully understood until seen in the light of the later revelation. This is true in particular with typology and prophecy (see Matt 12:6, 42, 43; 1 Pet 1:10–12.) Thus the spiral of understanding grows as it illuminates earlier, and earlier illuminates later.

D. “Spiritual Things Spiritually Discerned” (Spiritualitas spiritualiter examinatur)

A fourth general principle of biblical interpretation concerns the issue of preunderstanding or objectivity. In modern hermeneutical approaches toward the Bible, both among conservative/evangelical and liberal critical scholars, it is often assumed that the original intent of the Bible writer can be ascertained by the rigorous application of hermeneutical principles and exegetical tools, quite apart from any supernatural spiritual assistance. Thus non-Christians can determine the meaning of Scripture as well as Christians, if they use the tools and apply the principles correctly. This assumption is maintained in the laudable interest of upholding a degree of objectivity in interpreting the biblical text. However, Scriptural data leads to a different conclusion. We note in particular, 1 Cor 2:11, 14: “For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God . . . The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

1. The Role of the Holy Spirit. “Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.” Since the Bible is ultimately not the product of the human writer’s mind but of the mind of God revealed through the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:12–13), it is not possible to separate “what it means” to the human writer—to be studied without the aid of the Holy Spirit, from “what it means”—to be applied by the help of the Spirit. Both the original meaning and its present application involve the thoughts of God, which according to Paul can only be adequately comprehended if we have the aid of the Spirit of God (cf. John 6:45; 16:13; 1 Cor 2:13–14; 2 Cor 3:14–18).

Some have resisted letting the Spirit have a place in the hermeneutical spiral because it seems to them to allow the subjective element to overcome solid exegetical/hermeneutical research. It is true that “spiritual exegesis” alone—that is, an attempt to rely totally on the Spirit without conscientiously applying principles of exegesis and hermeneutics arising from Scripture, can lead to subjectivism. But the proper combination of dependance upon the Spirit with rigorous exegesis based upon sound hermeneutical procedures, far from leading to subjectivity, constitutes the only way of escaping subjectivity. Modern scholars are increasingly more willing to recognize that all come to the Scripture with their own preunderstandings, presuppositions, biases. This cannot be remedied by approaching the text “scientifically” without a “faith bias.” In fact, since the Scriptures call for a response of faith, an attempted “neutral” stance is already at cross-currents with the intent of Scripture (cf. Matt 13:11–17; John 6:69; Acts 2:38).

Believing and Spirit-led interpreters also come with their own biases and preunderstandings and are not impervious to error (cf. Acts 11:15). But for Christians who believe the promises of Scripture, it is possible to ask God to transform their minds so that they increasingly adopt and incorporate the presuppositions of Scripture and discard their own. (see Rom 12:1). The Spirit of truth was promised to the disciples, and to us; “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). It must be noted that the “you” here is plural; the Spirit directs interpreters together in the fellowship of the church body (Ps 119:63; Acts 2:24; 4:32; Rom 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12; Eph 4:3–6), where they may be benefited by exchange with and correction of other believers.13

Interpreters must make a decision that their pre-understandings will derive from and be under control of the Bible itself, and constantly be open for modification and enlargement on the basis of Scripture. They must consciously reject any external keys or systems to impose on Scripture from without, whether it be naturalistic (closed system of cause and effect without any room for the supernatural), evolutionary (the developmental axiom), humanistic (man the final norm), or relativistic (rejection of absolutes). They must ask the Spirit who inspired the Word to illuminate, shape, and modify their pre-understandings according to the Word, and to guard their understandings to remain faithful to the Word.

2. The Spiritual Life of the Interpreter. “Spiritual things are spiritually discerned” implies not only the need of the Spirit to aid in understanding, but also the spirituality of the interpreter. The Spirit not only illuminates the mind, but also must have transformed the interpreter’s heart. The approach of the interpreter must be that called for by Scripture, an attitude of consent or willingness to follow what Scripture says, if he/she is to understand Scripture’s meaning. “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 7:17).

There must be diligent, earnest prayer for understanding, after the example of David: “Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I will keep it to the end” (Ps 119:33; cf. vv. 34–40; Prov 2:3–7). There must be an acceptance by faith of what the prophets say (2 Chr 20:20; cf. John 5:46–47).

In sum, the Bible cannot be studied as any other book, coming merely “from below” with sharpened tools of exegesis and honed principles of interpretation. At every stage of the interpretive process, the book inspired by the Spirit can only be correctly understood “from above” by the illumination and transformation of the Spirit. God’s word must be approached with reverence. Perhaps the best encapsulation of the interpreter’s appropriate stance before Scripture is recorded by Isaiah: “But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word” (Isa 66:2).

II. Specific Guidelines to Interpretation

The specific guidelines for interpreting biblical passages arise from and build upon the foundational principles we have observed in Scripture thus far. These guidelines encompass essentially the grammatico-historical method, in contrast to the historical-critical method that arose out of the Enlightenment project.

A. Two Hermeneutical Methods Compared

The two major hermeneutical methods we have just mentioned—the historical-critical method and the historico-grammatical (also called the historical-Biblical)—may be schematically compared by means of the following chart.
A Comparison of the Two Major Modern Hermeneutical Methods

### Historical-Critical Method

1. **Definition:** The attempt to verify the truthfulness and understand the meaning of biblical data on the basis of the principles and procedures of secular historical science.

2. **Objective:** To arrive at the correct meaning of Scripture, which is the human author's intention as understood by his contemporaries.

3. **Basic Presuppositions:**
   - Secular norm: The principles and procedures of secular historical science constitute the external norm and proper method for evaluating the truthfulness and interpreting the meaning of biblical data.
   - Principle of criticism (methodological doubt): the autonomy of the human investigator to interrogate and evaluate on his own apart from the specific declarations of the biblical text.

4. **Principle of analogy:** present experience is the criterion of evaluating the probability of biblical events to have occurred, since all events are in principle similar.

5. **Principle of correlation (or causation):** a closed system of cause and effect with no room for the supernatural intervention of God in history.

6. **Disunity of Scripture:** since its prediction involved many human authors or redactors: Scripture therefore cannot be compared with Scripture ("proof-texts") to arrive at a unified biblical teaching.

7. **"Time-conditioned" or "culturally-conditioned" nature of Scripture:** the historical context is responsible for the production of Scripture.

8. **The human and divine elements of Scripture must be distinguished and separated:** the Bible contains but does not equal the Word of God.

### Historical-Biblical Method

9. **Definition:** The attempt to understand the meaning of biblical data by means of methodological considerations arising from Scripture alone.

10. **Objective:** To arrive at the correct meaning of Scripture, which is what God intended to communicate, whether or not it is fully known by the human author or his contemporaries (1 Peter 1:10-12).

11. **Basic Presuppositions:**
   - Sola Scriptura: The authority and unity of Scripture are such that Scripture is the final norm with regard to content and method of interpretation. (Rom 8:20)
   - The Bible is the ultimate authority and is not amenable to the principle of criticism: biblical data is accepted at face value and not subjected to an external norm to determine truthfulness, adequacy, validity, intelligibility, etc. (Isa 66:2)
   - Suspension of the compelling principles of analogy to allow for the unique authority of God as described in Scripture and in the process of the formation of Scripture. (Deut 28:21)
   - Suspension of the principle of correlation (or natural cause and effect) to allow for the divine intervention in history as described in Scripture. (Heb 1:2)
   - The Bible contains the whole counsel of God, the Word of God (2 Cor 5:17)

12. **Timelessness nature of Scripture:** God speaks through the prophet to a specific culture, yet the message transcends cultural backgrounds as timeless truth. (John 10:35)

13. **The divine and human elements in Scripture cannot be distinguished or separated:** the Bible equals the Word of God. (2 Tim 3:16, 17)

### Basic Hermeneutical Procedures:

14. **Literary (source) criticism:** The attempt to hypothetically reconstruct and understand the process of literary development leading to the present form of the text, based on the assumption that sources are a product of the life-setting of the community which produced them (often in opposition to specific Scriptural statements regarding the origin and nature of the sources.)

15. **Form criticism:** The attempt to provide a conjectural reconstruction of the process of pre-literary (oral) development behind the various literary forms, based upon the assumption that the biblical material has an oral pre-history like conventional folk literature and like folk literature arises on the basis of traditions which are formed according to the laws inherent in the development of folk traditions.

16. **Redaction criticism:** The attempt to discover and describe the life setting, sociological and theological motivations which determined the basis upon which the redactor selected, modified, reconstructed, altered or added to traditional materials in order to make them say what was appropriate within his new life setting according to new theological concerns; assumes that each redactor has a unique theology and life setting which differs from (and may contradict) his sources and other redactors.

17. **Tradition history:** The attempt to trace the precompositional history of traditions from stage to stage as passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation to the final written form; based upon the assumption that each generation interpretedly reshaped the material.

18. **Canonic criticism:** The attempt to reconstruct the life setting (sociological and theological forces) in the synagogue and the Early Church that determined the present shape and contents of the biblical canon; assumes that human forces explain the canonization process.

Notice the differences in definition, objective, and basic presuppositions. With regard to the presuppositions of the historical-critical method the first ("secular norm") represents the basic orientation point of the method: "human reason and the supremacy of reason as the ultimate criterion of truth." Presuppositions 2-4 indicate the crucial underlying principles of the method (see the classic formulation of these by Troeltsch in 1913); and the last three indicate the method leads to the destruction of the unity, timeless relevance, and full authority of Scripture.
Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understan... http://www.ted-adventist.org/features-and-analysis/interpreting-scripture...
Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understan... http://www.ted-adventist.org/features-and-analysis/interpreting-scripture...
Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understand...
flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you" (1 Pet 1:23-25).

Most of the ethical instruction in the NT gospels and epistles may be seen as the practical homiletical application of OT passages: for example, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:17-32) applying the principles of the Decalogue; James’ application of the principles of Leviticus 19 throughout his epistle; and Peter’s ethical instruction building on “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16, citing Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2, 20:7).

Of course, it is true that certain parts of the OT, in particular the ceremonial/sanctuary ritual laws and the enforcement of Israel’s civil/theocratic laws, are no longer binding upon Christians. The NT writers do not arbitrarily (by a casuistic approach to Scripture) decide what laws are still relevant, but they consistently recognize the criteria within the OT itself indicating which laws are universally binding.

The general principle, then, articulated and illustrated by the NT writers in their homiletical application of Scripture, is to assume the transcultural and transtemporal relevancy of biblical instruction unless Scripture itself gives us criteria limiting this relevancy. As William Larkin states it, “aall Scripture, including both form and meaning, is binding unless Scripture itself indicates otherwise.”

The final goal of interpreting Scripture is to make practical application of each passage to the individual life. Christ and the NT apostles repeatedly drove home the message of the gospel contained in the Scriptures in order to bring the hearers or readers to salvation and an ever closer personal relationship with God.

At the Exodus God articulated a principle in which each succeeding generation of Israelites should consider that he/she personally came out of Egypt (Exod 12:26, 27; 13:8, 9), and this principle of personalization was repeated many times, both to OT Israel (Deut 5:2-4; 6:20; 21; Josh 24:6-8) and to spiritual Israel (Gal 3:29, Rev 15:1, 2; 2 Cor 5:14, 15, 21; Rom 6:3-6; Eph 1:20; 2:6; Heb 4:3, 16; 6:19; 7:9, 10, 10:19, 20; 12:22-24). The Scripture should ultimately be read, and accepted as if I am the participant in the mighty saving acts of God—“I am there!”—as if God’s messages are personally addressed to me. They are God’s living and active Word to my soul.

1. See Anthony C. Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) for an overview of these hermeneutical approaches.

2. This is not the place for a full-blown discussion of Revelation-inspiration-illumination. The doctrine of revelation-inspiration is foundational to the whole enterprise of biblical interpretation. According to the biblical record God has revealed Himself and His will in specific statements of propitiational truth to His prophets (Heb 1:1). Through the inspiration of the Spirit He has enabled His prophets to communicate the divine revelation as the trustworthy and authoritative Word of God (2 Tim 3:15-16; 2 Pet 1:19-21). The same Spirit who has inspired the prophets has been promised to illuminate the minds of those who seek to understand the meaning of the divine revelation (John 14:26; 1 Cor 2:10-14).

3. This is a working document, prepared by a single author, which has not been voted or otherwise approved by the Seventh-day Adventist Church Annual Council or General Conference Session, and therefore does not purport to be an official statement of beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists on the approach toward Scripture. It represents one scholar’s attempt to elaborate the Adventist understanding of how to interpret Scripture, in harmony with the biblical teachings, as these are summarized in the Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Fundamental Beliefs and “Methods of Bible Study” document voted by the Annual Council of Seventh-day Adventists in 1986. Many of these points are adopted from the author’s article, “Biblical Interpretation,” in the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology, Commentary Series, vol. 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 58-104.

4. The term sōn interpretation is best translated as an ablative phrase (“by faith alone”) in parallel with the other two defining phrases of the Protestant Reformation, sola fide “by faith alone” and sola gratia “by grace alone.”


7. For further discussion of additional reasons why Protestants (including Adventists) do not accept the canonicity of the Apocrypha, see, e.g., Norman L. Geisler and Ralph E. MacKenzie, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreement and Differences (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 157-175; Hasel, 74-75.

8. For discussion of the new scholarly consensus that rejects the older theory that the OT canon was not fixed till the Council of Jamnia, see Hasel, 99-96; and Jack P. Lewis, “Jamma Revivified,” in The Canon Debate, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 146-162.


10. Adapted from Geisler and MacKenzie, 173.


13. This is perhaps an appropriate place to briefly mention the role of the church in the interpretation of Scripture and formulation of doctrinal statements. The preamble to the “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists” states this as follows: “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs... constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. 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 in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word” (Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2003 [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald], 5).


Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understanding...

by Richard M. Davidson
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Andrews University
La Sierra field biologist takes home new species of gecko

Imagine this: High on adrenaline, you battle chokehold vines, scorching heat and leeches while crawling uphill through a remote Malaysian jungle with a reputation for ghosts and poisonous snakes. You’re the first known person to ascend this cloud-laden summit.

You’re not in search of a lost civilization -- this isn’t the script for the next Indiana Jones movie. Instead, your eyes are peeled for an elusive new species of Southeast Asian forest gecko.

“No one really wants to go there,” says Seventh-day Adventist field biologist Lee Grismer, who recently returned from the trek to his Temecula, California home, gecko in tow.

The 55-year-old herpetologist and his team are credited with discovering 80 new species of reptiles and amphibians during his 15-year career in the biology department of church-run La Sierra University.

One is a frog with almost transparent skin, turquoise bones and green blood, discovered during a previous expedition in Cambodia. That trip, Grismer says, ended in a veterinarian’s office, where he swallowed potent canine worm pills to combat a nasty intestinal parasite he’d acquired.

The latest is a forest gecko. Grismer describes it as a “long, spindly looking lizard,” with a triangular head and yellow eyes.

Identifying a new species doesn’t end with discovery, Grismer says. While he says he immediately knew the gecko was a new member of a group of Southeast Asian lizards he’s previously studied, he now has to convince the scientific community. This requires anatomical measurements, color-pattern analysis, scale-counting and sequencing DNA from liver tissue. Then, the gecko can join the 36 new species of lizard his lab has identified in Malaysia during the past six years.

During his trips to countries such as Malaysia, Grismer works closely with local officials and scientists, says James Wilson, chair of the biology department at La Sierra. “Lee is highly regarded by his colleagues and respected in the countries where he conducts his studies [and] collects samples,” Wilson says. Grismer is the sort of guy who walks through the jungle and sees “what others don’t,” Wilson adds.

Grismer says his earliest memory is of chasing a lizard. “I just remember that animal looked so fascinating and mysterious and primeval to me. When I’m in these jungles and see some new lizard on a tree, I get that exact feeling. Looking at a piece of natural history that remained hidden for however many years, that’s a rush,” he says. “I’m blessed.”

Recapturing that “rush” is only part of what drives Grismer, he says. He’s also deeply concerned by what he describes as “biodiversity decrease.” With compromised habitats driving many species to the brink of extinction, the discovery of new species becomes vital, he says.

Discovery often leads to government conservation of the new species’ habitat, Grismer says. That protection extends to “the rainforests, the other species and the small communities that depend on the rainforest to survive and make a living,” he says. “So the implications are tremendous.”

In between the four or five expeditions he leads per year, Grismer teaches general biology courses and upper-division herpetology classes at La Sierra. “I can’t wait to get back out into the field,” he says.

“My [human anatomy] students always ask me these in-depth medical questions, and I go, ‘Listen guys, you’re talking to a grown man who chases lizards. I teach anatomy to pay the bills,’” Grismer says.

After a lecture and book signing tour in Malaysia and Singapore beginning in June, he’ll be back where he’s most comfortable in August. “buried in the jungle, two weeks away from anything that even remotely resembles human habitation,” he says.

“I like being places where every decision you make really matters,” Grismer says. “There’s nothing quite like it.”

27 April 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Elizabeth Lechleitner/ANN]
The Trend Toward Integration of Spirituality and Leadership

My first visit to the annual International Leadership Association Conference was in October of last year in Boston, Massachusetts, USA (the next is in October in London, England). What I discovered was a trend much further advanced than I would ever have imagined. Religion and spirituality was fully integrated into this traditionally secular conference which is dedicated to a “deeper understanding of leadership knowledge and practices for the greater good of individuals and communities worldwide.” Leadership specialists are embracing the reality that leadership is a process that invites, nurtures and leads the spirit of man. The spiritual nature of leadership, both religious and non-religious, is being embraced as a necessary component and has gained a place among the disciplines that have traditionally comprised formal leadership studies. The conference featured one formal presentation on an emerging model referred to as Transcendent Leadership which assumes a natural merging of the spiritual and the scientific in effective leadership in the 21st century.

So what does this trend in leadership studies have to say to those of us called to serve as spiritual leaders in the context of the church? Is it possible that biblical spirituality may be the most significant aspect of leadership effectiveness for the Christian pastor or teacher? The Word has much to say regarding the spiritual component of living but does it specifically address the issue of leadership? What qualifies a person with the title of pastor or Christian teacher as a spiritual leader?

Robert Frying explains the title of his recent book, The Leadership Ellipse: Shaping How We Lead by Who We Are, by urging that we live our professional or vocational lives around two points—spirituality and leadership rather than one (spirituality) and another (leadership) as though they are separate realms; in doing so our life pattern becomes an ellipse rather than two circles that may or may not intersect. Spirituality is integral to Christian leadership.

The Holy Spirit is the equiper of the church and the source of authentic Christian spirituality. In Romans 12:8 the apostle mentions “rule” or “lead” as one of the unique competencies given by the Holy Spirit to certain ones in the church but does that indicate that only those with the specific gift of leading or ruling are able to contribute to the process of leadership? Actually leading is presented as only one of many competencies granted to the Church. The gifts in each of the three passages dedicated to spiritual competencies are embedded in a discussion of unity and oneness. The metaphor of the Body would suggest an interdependent organism of parts and systems that function in a coordinated and sympathetic manner toward the end of healthy and productive behaviour. As such, leadership names the integrated process of all competencies rather than just the output of a few that have the gift or gifts necessary to positional leading.

As such, spiritual leadership is something that every member contributes to though some do so in a highly visible manner while others contribute with little or no visibility. The Holy Spirit is the source of our individual and collective competence in pursuing the mission of the church.

But the necessary components of leadership, whether spiritual or not, reach beyond competence and embrace attitude and character as well. All three passages that address the spiritual nature of gifts (competencies) embed the topic in a context of Christ-like behaviour. The prime characteristics of the Fruit of the Spirit recorded in Galatians 5:22 are addressed in Romans 12 where Paul mingles character related behaviours with the spiritual competencies and concludes the chapter from verse 9 onward with counsel regarding behaviour that gives evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and all of chapter 13 provide a spiritual character context for the practice of these competencies. Finally Ephesians 4:1-6 provides a similar preface to the presentation of the spiritual competencies and follows them with a pointed discussion of the need for spiritual behaviour as we practice them.

The two essential elements of spiritual leadership are both provided by the grace of the Spirit of God—Gifts for competency and Fruit for Christ-like character. Added to these two components is the active presence of spiritual authority. The Gospel Commission offers spiritual authority to every believer as the necessary empowerment that enables all to lead in the context of their unique spiritual giftedness. These three elements are available as part of the providence of God for every believer who chooses to walk in the Spirit.

All who lead in the name of Jesus need to capitalize on the availability of all three of these spiritual elements. Our own spiritual growth must be nurtured and refined if we are to emerge as effective leaders. This requires discipline and commitment to the value we place on the centrality of God’s Spirit in our lives and leadership ministry. The spiritual nature revealed in our character provides the vehicle of credibility that carries our competencies into operational ministry. Spiritual behaviour provides a relationally healthy and inviting context that when present maximizes the impact of all ministry efforts. If character fails then the competencies will stand as useless regardless of the education and training that have honed and developed them. Finally, we need the influence of generative authority that comes not from a self-serving heart but from a Spirit-filled desire to leave all people better than we found them. Without these essential spiritual elements we are left with an impotent presence that lacks effectiveness. Holistic biblical spirituality is being sought by many outside of our community of faith and is our only qualification as spiritual leaders.

1 http://www.ila-net.org/
5 Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:8-16.
6 Matthew 28:16-20
Finding Meaning, Significance, Community, Direction and Excitement

In the first part of Leadership as Relationship, we compared what followers' want and leaders do. We discovered that there are many points on which followers and leaders agree. The common ground falls into five interesting categories – meaning, significance, community, direction and excitement. Remembering that leadership is relationship, it makes sense to begin our work in these areas of agreement.

The question now is how do we go about creating an environment in which this becomes a reality. Where do we start? Most organisations, from congregations to multinational organisations, make some formal attempts to create meaning, significance, community, direction and excitement. What do we already have in place? Although there are far more, lets examine a cluster of four opportunities: mission, vision and values, strategic planning; hiring and evaluations; and social gatherings. This is not new; there are no headlines in this list. In fact, they are the standard list used by administrators and managers everywhere. They may be a tired and worn-out quartet but what would they look like if re-energized?

The secret to rejuvenation is in reframing the task. By looking at the task in a new way, by giving it a new purpose or by turning it upside down, leaders see new relationships and opportunities. How can we take the administrative tasks and routine touchpoints inherent in our leadership positions and create exciting and imaginative ways to respond to the very things followers want? How can we reframe these tasks so that we can create meaning, significance, and purpose?

Mission, vision, values. Although their power may have in the past disappointed us, the very purpose of this trio is to create shared meaning. How can they be rejuvenated? What if the goal was to create a sense of mission rather than write a formal mission statement? What would happen if the emphasis shifted from preparing ‘statements’ to engaging everyone in creating an active on-going narrative? What if we shifted the focus to collecting stories instead of printing a paragraph? Stories would keep the mission current with retelling. “Our organisation is like…” Everyone could add new stories to the developing narrative.

Likewise, vision statements, rather than statements of goals evaluated once a year, would be replaced by a set of questions that guide decision-making throughout the year. The operational question becomes, how will we want to do things tomorrow? Each task becomes an opportunity to practice the future now. Strategic planning. The purpose of planning, and particularly strategic planning, is to set direction. When done imaginatively it can also give individuals a good sense of how their efforts contribute to the whole, or in other words, create significance and excitement. As with many processes, strategic planning has suffered not from visions of grandeur but from the tyranny of details and minutiae. The challenge is to find something that replaces traditional strategic planning. What would happen if a set of questions replaced the traditional targets and goals? A sense of direction would emerge, and, rather than focusing on a solution designed in the past with the data then available, at each decision point we would be guided by strategic questions. The decisions would then be made in ‘real-time’.

Hiring and evaluations. If we think of leadership as relationship, then the points of contact at hiring and evaluation become central to creating a sense of significance. We may have overlooked these moments as important relationship building opportunities. In what ways can we restructure our conversations at these critical moments so they result in active coaching and helpful individual feedback? How can we move from ‘telling’ (typical orientation and evaluation responses) to ‘experience’ (an on-going activity)? Of course, this takes more time and effort. But relationship requires active on-going involvement. For meaning to emerge, engagement must be mutual, stories shared, and feedback frequent.

Social gatherings. Bringing people together promotes connection and builds a sense of belonging. As community gathers, it also provides opportunities to create overall meaning and significance and to affirm individual and group efforts. But meeting without purpose can be counterproductive. How can we make every meeting or gathering count? How can our public and private gatherings build bridges between diverse groups and individuals? How can we change the way we gather in committee meetings and move away from simply conducting business to the imperative of ‘creating the future’?

The short list is an easy one. Share stories. Ask questions. Give affirmation. Stories connect persons with history, place and aspirations. Questions such as what do you bring to the organisation and what will you add to the project provide opportunities for the individuals to give something back to the organisation. Affirmations create connections and give added meaning.

Leadership as relationship is best served by shifting the emphasis from ‘telling’ to ‘sharing’, from a focusing on a fixed ‘strategic point’ to developing a ‘sense of direction’, and from simply ‘conducting business’ to ‘creating the future’. The relationship develops by creating a ‘sense of mission’ rather than a ‘mission statement’, a ‘guiding vision’ rather than a ‘vision statement’, and collecting stories rather than lists of words. It remains dynamic and alive with guiding questions rather than remaining static with historically definitive statements. In other words, leadership as relationship can create a dynamic environment for those in the organisation to find meaning, significance, community, direction and excitement.

By David S Penner, PhD, Director of the doctoral leadership program, Loma Linda University
Reflections on Seventh-day Adventist Leadership

There is a growing awareness in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that Leadership Development is very important and that, not only are pastors leaders, but they are the most important leaders in the Church – I use "pastors" in a broad sense here, including all believers who in some way "lead the flock".

What is required of a Seventh-day Adventist church leader today? What should a leader be like? What should a leader do and how? How does a leader grow and develop his/her gifts for leadership, which Paul makes reference to in Romans 12:8?

Today, leadership is difficult, demanding and exhausting. Leaders face new challenges and more decisions at a faster pace. We are expected to make quick choices, prioritize what is most important, delegate that which we don’t have time to do, and maintain checks and balances by working effectively in teams.

The matters we were trained to deal with are no longer there. The rapid cultural change has led to a crisis in leadership. One Christian author says that "the major challenge for leaders is not only the acquisition of new insights and skills, but also unlearning what they already know. Today’s leaders need the courage and ability to risk their false sense of confidence and to surrender their predetermined, "wired" responses, and outdated and inaccurate mental maps.”

We are being challenged to change, learn, and grow as an on-going commitment in life. How do we do that?

It helps to begin with a general definition of "leadership". There is much talk of various "leadership styles" these days. But more important than style is substance. We need to know what leadership actually is before we can know the best style in which to do it.

The definition I propose has been proposed by Edwin Locke and captures the essence: "Leadership is the process of inducing others to take action toward a common goal." With this starting-point, leadership includes four parts:

1. Leadership is about relations:
   Leaders must know how to inspire and relate to their followers. If you have no followers, you are not a leader.

2. Leadership is a process:
   Leaders must act and set events in motion. Just holding a position of authority does not make you a leader.

3. Leadership is persuasion:
   Leaders induce or persuade followers to take action. Leaders influence followers by inspiring their trust, acting consistently, and motivating them by words and deeds. Examples of the tools of leadership are: legitimate authority, setting an example, setting goals, team-building, and communicating a vision.

4. Leadership is purpose-driven:
   Leaders act in order that the organisation achieves its mission.

According to this model, church leadership may be defined as "the process of activating church workers (members, volunteers, employees) for the mission of the Church".

This leadership has a fundamental spiritual dimension. Every area includes cooperation with God and following God. Leaders count on God to change people in order to achieve God’s purpose. This happens by the leader’s and his followers’ faith and by the power of the Holy Spirit working in them. Because of that, we say that our work as leaders is "God’s work".

This spiritual dimension comes across very strongly in J. Robert Clinton’s definition of leadership: “A Christian leader is a person with a God-given capacity and the God-given responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people toward God's purpose for the group.”

Spiritual leadership must impact visible reality. If it is not happening through the leader’s actions of persuasion and an active response to them by his followers, it becomes a "spiritualised" leadership which remains in the leader’s heart, takes place in his office, and is seen at best in his spiritual attitude. There is such leadership in the church. I am not impressed by it. This is leadership that abdicates from its responsibility with the excuse of leaving all things to God.

As a ministerial secretary, I once visited a pastor. I asked him to show me his plan for his work. He said: “I intentionally do not have a plan, because I feel I need to leave space for the Holy Spirit to do his work.” This man’s ministry was highly unproductive, although he prayed day and night. His problem was that he was self-centred and therefore irresponsible. He prayed to God about himself, not his responsibility or the people he was to lead. And nobody else in his team, or in the conference, knew what he was doing and why. Others could not relate to his work. He remained a lonely leader with no followers, although he was very "spiritual" in one sense. He longed for God. But He was not a spiritual leader, because he misunderstood true spirituality. He did not see that true spirituality is always action-oriented. It impacts the real world. It impacts God’s people and those who seek him.

Another time, an elected president was invited to sit with the nominating committee and give advice on the candidates to be nominated to form his team. He declared: "I can work with anybody, because I am open-minded and it is God’s work, so he will do it. You may choose whoever you like." Of course, everybody in the committee thought highly of this man’s tolerance and great faith, while incapable and totally unsuitable persons were nominated to make up his team! Five years later, after conflicts, lack of quality work, and no good team spirit, he was not re-elected because, although being considered a spiritual man, his leadership lacked efficiency. He failed to take responsibility for carefully selecting his team. Why? Maybe he feared personal conflicts, the danger of exposing his personal preferences for or against
people, and the politics in his church, and resorted to a spiritualising attitude which always means failure in taking responsibility for the real world.

Of course, there are specific situations when we can do nothing but asking God to intervene, when we are desperate and there are no options. But we must be careful not to abdicate from our responsibility too soon. God has chosen to work through us, and we must do our work well, so that he can add his blessing to what we do.

In Leadership for Dummies (1999), it is underlined as the first and fundamental characteristic of a leader that there is a willingness to assume responsibility or ownership. Spiritualised leadership is not good enough. Why? It abdicates from its responsibility and authentic faith in God. Such leadership was the repeated temptation Jesus resisted from the Devil, namely, testing God by abusing his leadership role. Jesus said: "Don't put God to the test by abusing your position", which implies that we must not abdicate from our responsibility and say that God will fix it. Such behaviour means, in fact, that we bury our God-given talent in the ground. It is not leadership for the real world. We know that God performs miracles and that he has all the power in the universe. But we also know that we have been asked to use our brains and abilities and gifts to serve him faithfully and that, if we do that, God will add his blessing to it. And this is particularly important in light of Seventh-day Adventist leadership values.

In Adventism, based on instruction from Ellen White, the biblical view of man and the biblical view of work are of central importance. We say that man is not merely a spiritual being but a being in whom harmonious growth depends on an interaction between spiritual, mental (intellectual and emotional), physical and social dimensions. And, as far as work is concerned, it is God's way of forming our character, developing it and refining it, in order to bring glory to the Creator. Something happens to us when God's power, God's gifts, and God's will are allowed to pour out through us to the world. We change. We become like the Creator. We learn to create new things, and new things do not occur without change and growth. Spiritualised leadership fails to allow us to grow, which is God's plan for us.

It is therefore an essential Adventist value that the spiritual dimension does not function in isolation from the human effort and its impact in the real world. Our ideal of spiritual leadership, therefore, is being so close to God in our faith that we hear his voice, act according to his will, and seek to achieve his purpose, so that God is performing his acts through us. This will only work if we are humble and see ourselves as God's servants. "Servant leadership" is therefore a better term than "spiritual leadership", because it draws attention to both our attitude and actions as leaders.

Before I proceed, let me prevent a misunderstanding. Just as there are leaders who spiritualise their work, putting all responsibility on God and doing little or nothing themselves, there are of course those who fail by the opposite extreme, i.e. by seeking to do everything themselves and not relying on God at all. God does not enter into their strategies, job descriptions, committees, decisions, conversations and speeches. While working in the church, they see God and his mission as a decoration, a romantic atmosphere which is put on at times, but when that is over the "real work" begins, and that is the human effort.

This is so obviously mistaken for us that I don't need to spend time here on the obvious dangers of such a view. Emphasising the human effort and forgetting that we are doing God's work is to fail as a leader. Failing in this way is the great temptation for the gifted, well-educated, and hard working leader. There is only one remedy for it, and that is the gift of Christ's humility (see Philippians 2:3-11).

Another factor leading to this kind of failure in leadership is where the leadership culture is governed by the concept of dictatorship, i.e. the strong and absolutist leader who concentrates all power and initiative to himself. Ultimately, this leadership is based on fear and an enormous misunderstanding of who you are -- you think you are better and more perfect than you really are. Jesus taught us in clear words to shun such leadership:

"Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' " (Matthew 20:25-28)

The system of leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is therefore not the presidential system but the committee system (see TED Working Policy 05).

"The frillage of [the Seventh-day Adventist concept of church] is a representative and constituency-based system. Its authority is rooted in God and distributed to the whole people of God. It recognises the committee system. It provides for shared administration (president, secretary, treasurer) rather than a presidential system. It recognises a linkage of entities (church, conference, union, General Conference) that binds the believers together in a universal fellowship. It assures essential unity of purpose and mission. While the integrity of each entity is recognised (church, conference, union), each is seen to be a part of a sisterhood which cannot act without reference to the whole."

Adventist leaders, therefore, are team leaders and lead so that the whole church is recognised and benefits from their leadership.

Another reason for team leadership is that the leader does not have all knowledge and wisdom. A leader must humbly see his/her own limitations. What the leader lacks can be compensated for by his/her team.

In order to work in a team, the leader needs to have a sound self-esteem and dare to be open. Prestige and position in the system becomes irrelevant in the midst of team work, although, of course, in the end some people have a formal responsibility for what takes place.

A decision will be better founded and have greater success if we have taken the time to involve the team around us, before we go to action. That is why consensus is a virtue in church leadership. It is based on Philippians 2:1-5 which sets the model of Jesus Christ as the greatest who serves.
Philippians 2:1-5
"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..."

In order for leadership to work, therefore we must be deeply connected with the spirit of Jesus Christ. Our devotional life is the key to such leadership. So, care for and cultivate your faith!

In conclusion, applying our model of church leadership helps us see that, by our faith and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we perform leadership in four ways in the church:

1. Church leadership is about relations:
Leaders achieve the mission of the church by inspiring, elevating and leading the people in their organisation, so that they do their assigned work exceptionally well and with joy. This requires an organisation, where it is clear to everybody what their role is – an organisation which is dynamic, flexible and effective enough to accomplish the mission. It also requires a culture, where Seventh-day Adventist values and particularly the value of mission set the tone. Adventist leaders, therefore, need to be effective organisers, peacemakers, and builders of Adventist church culture.

2. Church leadership is a process:
Leaders take action and something happens. They change people and the organisation through their actions. Leadership is not static but dynamic. It strives for excellence and constantly asks if there is a better way to do what we do, in order to achieve the mission. God is active in this process. It is therefore an Adventist tenet that "we must walk in the increasing light". This requires that we see ourselves as leaders functioning as agents of change, God’s change.

3. Church leadership is persuasion:
Leaders persuade or induce their followers to act, by various means, for example, by their legitimate authority, by how they manage relationships and conflicts, by the example they set, by goal-setting, encouragement and evaluation, re-organisation, team-building, and by communicating a vision. In all of these activities, the leader draws on his personal faith and draws on his biblical values. This requires skills in transparent communication, ability to inspire others, and being a team leader.

4. Church leadership aims at the mission of the Church:
Leaders need to define what this mission is and what it means to themselves and the organisation they lead.

The way God has defined the church’s mission is essential. We find that He has allowed variety in the wording of our mission. Various biblical authors at various times say it in various ways. Jesus taught His disciples a mission to the world which we have in at least four versions, in Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:44-49/Acts 1:8, and John 14-17. Luke then describes the fellowship of the first church in Acts 2:42-47. The mission of the church comes out in numerous instructions on church order in Paul’s writings. And it has a special significance for Adventists in John’s apocalyptic vision in Revelation 14-16-13, where we have found our eschatological mission defined.

But even today, we say it in different ways. The General Conference says it in one way. The Trans-European Division says it in another way. Unions, conferences, churches and institutions say it in yet other ways.

So, obviously, a mission statement can be worded in different ways, although the mission remains the same. The choice of statement reflects what the leader and his team feel should have priority at a specific point in time. For us as Adventist leaders, however, I have found no better wording than the one written by Ellen White in The Acts of the Apostles (p. 9):

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through his church shall be reflected to the world his fullness and his sufficiency. The members of the church... are to show forth his glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be manifest... the final and full display of the love of God."

If we believe this, a Garfield cartoon becomes pertinent (see adjacent box).

GARFIELD

If we have no goals in our work, how will we know when we have failed? How do we know when and where we need to...
improve? This will be of great importance as we implement our new strategic plan Tell the World!

The TED Tell the World Strategic Plan 2010-2015 is a serious commitment to

- Reach Up by renewing my own faith
- Reach Out by communicating the hope of Jesus Christ within my sphere of influence
- Reach across to embrace and protect the quality and health of my family of faith

If you would like to get hold of the TED Strategic Plan 2010-2015, please contact your union president (in the TED) or write an elm to: apecula@ted-adventist.org

The leader needs to have God’s mission for the world in his/her heart, apply it to his/her work, and communicate it to the followers. This requires a rich personal devotional life, including prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, and witnessing. It requires the skills of a visionary, a strategist, a goal setter, a decision maker, one who is able to show the direction and keep the organisation focused on God’s mission. If you don’t have these skills, build a team of people who have them, pray together and listen to each other. And God will speak through His spirit and lead you all the way!

By Dr. Bertil Wiklander, the President of the Trans-European Division