LIVE Day of Fellowship
26 July 2011 London, United Kingdom
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First Conversation Between Adventists, Mennonites Focuses on Living Christian Life

11 July 2011 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Bettina Krause, Ansel Oliver/ANN] This month's formal conversation between leaders of the Mennonite World Conference and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists offered...
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The weekend of 23rd and 24th July 2011 marked a year until the London 2012 Olympics commences. The SEC Department, headed by Pastor Colin Stewart, took this opportunity to promote a noteworthy evangelistic event.

The weekend commenced with a Day of Fellowship, which took place at the Emmanuel Centre in Westminster. The doors opened at 9.30am and the day began with a dynamic praise and worship session. Special items were offered including songs and drama before Pastor Paul King Brown delved into the issue of being bold about using your talents for a purpose. The highlight of the morning programme was a commitment session where hundreds of young people took specially commissioned Oyster Card Wallets and Pledge Cards as a symbol that they would promote peace in the country for the next 365 days and beyond. The hall emptied as the young people streamed down the aisles to the front to pledge to be peacemakers. As Pastor Eddie Hypolite prayed for the pledges, the room was filled with raised hands clutching the Oyster Card Wallets. The programme continued with a beautiful special item by Tamara Austin, which prepared our hearts for the message Pastor Juan Carlos Patrick was about to deliver. He spoke with passion, enthusiasm and authenticity around the text Hebrews 12:1-2. The youth were challenged to strip away all that weighed them down and run with perseverance just as Christ did for us.

The morning programme was followed by the LIVE Rally; a march through Central London against the negative things young people find themselves surrounded with. With the emphasis on gun and knife crime, the Pledge Cards promoting peace were the most effective way to explain the march to the public. A team of young people stepped forward to be a street witnessing team while the march was taking place. They left the Centre ahead of the march and explained the significance of the Pledge Cards to young people in the public around Westminster. The march itself was a joy for the tourists of London to behold. The march was headed up by a row of policemen and women followed by Pastors Colin Stewart and Eddie Hypolite. Behind them were Area Representatives, the London Youth Federation President and LIVE London Representatives. Following this lead group was a rhythmic Pathfinder Drum Corp, which provided the march with upbeat cadences as over a thousand young people followed in line. Roads were closed as the group made their way around Westminster, the hub of this country's government, even passing by Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament. Lining the streets were hundreds of members of the general public and tourists, most of which had been targeted by the tireless street witnessing team. In the hands of many were our very own Pledge Cards and Oyster Card Wallets with details of the LIVE movement and the website address where more information is available.

The day was only two-thirds of the way through with an afternoon programme still to come. It kicked of with some more praise and worship songs chosen by members of the congregation. We heard about the experiences of the street witnessing team on the Rally, which inspired others to get involved with future outreach events. Pastor Hypolite and members of The Chronicles Basketball Team showed us how it is possible to minister and share your faith with others using anything God has given us. The basketball ministry in South London has been going strong for over seven years and it has been a great example of how sport can be used for God. Mervyn Weir continued this theme with an original dramatic presentation using the Olympic motto, "Faster, Higher, Stronger". The day culminated with another powerful and practical message from Pastor Patrick and a wonderful musical item by the group Higher Ground Acapella.

This day was definitely a Sabbath to remember with something in the programmes for everyone. The charge to leave you all with is the same that our young people have already taken upon themselves: Live intentionally and promote peace, instead of picking up the pieces. Be peacemakers and spread God’s peace to those around you so that when the thousands of visitors come to our communities next Summer, they will see that there is something different about us; they will see that there is calm amongst all and they will see God in each and every one of us. [tedNEWS]

Photos by Nicholas Blackburn

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Adventist 'Choir of the World' Winners

15 July 2011 [Girlie Mae Andrada/Ray Puen/BUC News] A choir from the Adventist University of the Philippines won three top awards at the 2011 Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod Festival in Wales, 4-10 July, 2011. After gaining first place in both the Mixed Choir and Chamber Choir categories, they went on to win the coveted "Choir of the World – Pavarotti Trophy" on Saturday night. The Llangollen Eisteddfod, with Terry Waite CBE as its President, is among the world's most prestigious choral competitions.

The trophy was made even more special for them as the event organisers moved the starting time of the Saturday evening competition to accommodate the Sabbath-keeping choir. After winning the first two categories, and therefore gaining entry to the final, the group had already decided that they would not compete during the Sabbath hours. However after much prayer and supplication, the group was delighted when the competition was moved to 9:30 pm, after sunset!

That does not mean they wasted the Sabbath hours! During the competition they enjoyed the exceptional hospitality and friendliness of the Welsh people who accommodated the group in their own homes in the village. In return for their kindness and hospitality, the group organised a Sabbath concert for the villagers. Whilst the rest of the competitors were busy rehearsing and preparing for the competition, the 'Ambassadors' the official name of the choir, were giving glory to God through singing and sharing their faith with the community. They were able to answer many questions about Adventists as many of the locals had never heard of Adventists. Tenor Zhean Manalo reported that "It was the first time that they had met people like us, that we were 'different' and how deeply we touched people's lives." A local resident, Peter, had been assigned to host the choir. He told them he was honoured to have been given that assignment, and felt very blessed.

The choir, led by Ramon Lijauco Jr arrived in the UK on Thursday, 7 July, the night before the first competition. Despite jet lag and fatigue from the 12-hour flight, the group gave their all as they battled with top choirs from all over the world and won the first prize in the Chamber Choir and Mixed Choir categories. The 30-voice Ambassadors had a juggling trick to do. The minimum requirement for Mixed Choir is 30 voices, the maximum for Chamber Choir is 29 voices. An alto volunteered to drop out in order for the group to qualify to compete in the Chamber Choir category.

For the Mixed Choir category, the group sang "Agnus Dei" by Krzysztof Penderecki and "Itako" an original composition by the conductor, Ramon Lijauco Jr. For the Chamber Choir competition, where they beat Mansfield University Concert Choir from the United States and CF1 from Wales, they sang "Amor de mi Alma" by Z Randall Stroope and "Bagbagto" by Nilo Alcala. On Saturday evening they went head to head with five other choirs for the most prestigious award, the Choir of the World 2011 and the most coveted Pavarotti Trophy. Printed adjudication notes were given to the choir read: "We were in no doubt this is a quality corporate instrument of very high calibre, based on a strong individual vocal culture moulded towards a clearly understood choral sound."

The AUP Ambassadors is the official chorus of the Adventist University of the Philippines. It was founded in 1957 by an American missionary, Elder Elton Wallace, as an all-male chorus. In 1971, under the leadership of Mrs Minerva Ant-Penaranda, the group began accepting female members and has since become a mixed choir. They have been actively involved in promoting Adventist education by visiting churches all over the Philippines and other countries in Asia and the United States. In 2006, the Ambassadors joined the World Choir Games in China and came home Champion in the Gospel and Spiritual categories. This has inspired them to join more choral competitions, not only to win medals and trophies but most importantly, to raise the profile of the Adventist Church in the music community, the latest being the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod Festival.

Raising the £50,000 needed for the 32 members of the choir to travel was a challenge but did not daunt their spirits or their faith. Since the Eisteddfod they have continued to share their faith – and complete their fundraising with invitations to sing in St Chad's church, Wrexham, followed by a concert in Stockport Adventist church and then a flight to Aberdeen where a series of concerts were arranged by local pastor, Lorance Johnson.

Those in the London area will be able to experience the joy of their music this weekend in a series of performances at local churches and a gala concert at the Advent Centre.

Friday 7:00 pm: Wimbledon International church
Sabbath 9:30 am: Holloway church
Sabbath 11:30 am: Central London church, Advent Centre
Sabbath 7:00 pm: London Filipino International church
Sunday 7:00 pm: Gala Concert, Advent Centre

Aware of the image they project for church and school, the Ambassadors strive to perform to the glory of God at every performance. At Llangollen and elsewhere, they deflect all compliments to the glory of God, acknowledging at every opportunity that they are blessed to be singing ambassadors for Christ.
Highlights of the competition can be seen on the Llangollen TV website.

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Health Reaches a Summit in the British Isles

08 July 2011 Northamptonshire, United Kingdom [Sharon Platt-McDonald, BUC News] Sandra Golding was effusive: "The Wellness Summit was truly inspirational, thought-provoking and life changing," she said. "The workshops that I attended were extremely beneficial and ... the speakers were excellent and had so much knowledge and experiences to share with the attendees." Others of the delegates agreed stating things like, "This has been a fantastic learning experience. It has to be the best training event I have attended so far," or "I am leaving this Summit equipped to take back health programmes that I can use in my church and community. I am so glad I came."

This was the first Adventist Health Summit for the UK. Under the caption "Wellness Summit – To Train, Inspire, Equip", a range of courses, workshops and plenary presentations on 31 topics, provided comprehensive training for delegates between 21 - 26 June at the De Vere Venues Staverton Park Hotel, Northamptonshire.

Trainers and presenters were both from the UK and from as far away as the World Church Headquarters in Washington DC. In his evaluation, Dr Handysides World Church Health Ministries director, classified the event as 'outstanding' and stated: "The conference achieved its objectives of educating, empowering, and enlisting many to the ranks of a balanced, compassionate and sensitive Health Ministry."

Planning the event was a challenge. BUC Health Ministries director and Summit organiser Sharon Platt-McDonald states: "Last June, I wrote out to our team of Health Ministries directors and sponsors and other health professionals about my vision of hosting a Wellness Summit in the UK. I had in mind an event that would embrace a holistic view of health covering the emotional, spiritual, physical and social aspects of wellbeing. I commenced by asking the team to identify what the key health needs were in their local churches, communities and what would be the most impactful training that they could bring back to their Conferences and Missions. With a planning team of 13 I was relieved when they all bought into the vision and as a result the subsequent planning meetings went smoothly."

Pastor Jackson was asked to evaluate the efficacy of the Summit including the scope of training, ministerial input/support, evangelistic potential, ongoing health programmes and medical missionary work within the British Isles. It was encouraging to see pastors and the delegates they sponsored sitting around tables planning how they would implement the training received. For instance, evangelistic campaigns will be prefaced with one health programme while another one will be placed as a follow-up at the conclusion of the series.

On a practical level, the Food Health Educator, Hydrotherapy and Massage courses equipped individuals with a range of skills to make health programmes more varied with learning that can be transferred to church programmes and community initiatives as well as domestic settings.

Health was seen in action during the Summit! Morning exercises were led by Sandra Golding who took the delegates through a range of movements to music, from stretching exercises to salsa! Equally, none of the attendees will forget the wonderful evening of laughter (laughter therapy), led by Beryl Emm. The benefits of laughter were vividly demonstrated and resulted in a sound night's sleep for most participants.

Enthusiastic health leaders and Summit delegates are now returning to their churches armed with skills to run courses such as Depression Recovery, Living Free (Finding freedom from habits that hurt), Weight Management, and Wellness Expos. The emotional and mental wellbeing of our churches and communities will improve as delegates attending the Forgive to Live, Depth Evangelism (faith and mental wellbeing), Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Education and Mental Health First Aid courses, bring back the learning to their local areas.

Equally encouraging were the delegates who attended the courses aimed at both ends of the age spectrum. Drug Endangered Children and Youth, Paediatric Obesity, Trauma, Loss and Compassion and Adverse Childhood Experiences were eye-openers that equipped delegates with skills to better understand and minister to vulnerable children and youth. The Older Persons’ Health Strategy sought to raise awareness of the need of our aging population and how best to minister to this age group. Men's Health, Cancer Focus and many other aspects of health were covered in the varied training sessions some with an external presenter from the NHS. As a result the National Action Cancer Team will be extending its existing work with the BUC Health Ministries department.

If you would like any of the workshops/courses mentioned above to be brought to your church and community please ring the BUC on 01923 672251 to speak with Sharon Platt-McDonald. A video report of the Summit will be available online in next week's BUC News. A picture gallery is available now. [tedNEWS]

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Adventist Health Workers’ Conference in Hungary

05 July 2011 Pecs, Hungary [Robert Csizmadia, tedNEWS] The health professionals of the Hungarian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church gathered in Pecs, Hungary from 10-13 June 2011 for the fortieth Christian Health Professionals’ Conference. Pastors, physicians, and visitors gathered for the Conference were able to attend a series of presentations by the speakers from the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists (GC) and Trans-European Division (TED).

Dr. Ernő Ósz-Farkas, the leader of the Health Ministries Department for Hungarian Union, started with his opening sermon using the example of Luke, the physician from the New Testament, whose eye for details, systematic mind and knowledge made God's choice to be on of the evangelists. Dr. Ósz-Farkas refers to the ways of healing Luke used some 2000 years ago and he explains that Luke used two Greek words to describe healing throughout his writings. One of them describes supernatural healing, the other therapeutic healing and both must be seen as the wonderful gift and working of the Holy Spirit. This work of God was trusted to all health professionals, who participate in the ministry of healing to help others experience a lifestyle change and freedom from the bondage of disease and sin (Luke 4:18-19), ‘God needs modern Lukes in his work.’ Dr. Ósz-Farkas concludes.

It is challenging to find a scientifically sound Christian perspective in the jungle of popular trends of the modern age. However, the participants concluded the conference strengthened with the feeling of common purpose in their ministry. Salvation is in Jesus Christ and in self-redemption based on healthy lifestyle. This unifying message was supported by Dr. Allan Hadysides and Dr. Peter Landless, GC Department of Health Ministries Directors, and Dr. John Sanches, TED Health Ministries Department Director.

Another blessing of the conference was to see the surfacing of a new generation of Adventist health professionals: young medical doctors, researchers, and university teachers. It seems that the church community in Hungary got an understanding of the advice given by E.G.White about 140 years ago, to do their profession with the highest possible standards. The audience witnessed their devotion, enthusiasm, and professionalism. [tedNEWS]

Religious Liberty Advocates Wary of Europe's Proposed Work-free Sundays

30 June 2011 Brussels, Belgium [APD/ANN] A new alliance promoting fair and balanced work conditions in Europe asked the European Union's Economic and Social Committee last week to declare Sunday a "work-free day" in its new working guidelines for member states.

The European Sunday Alliance is a network of 65 civil society organizations, trade unions and churches that agree work-free Sundays and fair working hours would promote healthier families and strengthen social cohesion among EU member states.

The alliance's proposal came during a conference on the impact of Sunday work on the health, safety and social integration of European workers, which drew psychologists, social scientists and other experts to Brussels June 20.

"A work free Sunday and appropriate working hours are a well deserved right for all citizens of Europe," the alliance's founding charter states. The charter's definition of "appropriate working hours" goes on to exclude "late evenings, nights, public holidays and Sundays."

Seventh-day Adventist religious liberty advocates worry the proposal might infringe on free expression of religious beliefs, despite its well-intentioned goals of reducing stress and overwork.

"We support the notion that people need a day of rest to achieve a life/work balance to maintain the health and safety of workers," said Raafat Kamal, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Northern Europe, adding that the idea was first modeled by God, who rested following the biblical creation week.

"At the same time, we want to be sure that those who don't have Sunday as a designated religious day of rest will be respected and tolerated," Kamal said.

The European Jewish Congress has not yet commented on the proposed work-free Sunday. Europe is also home to some 13 million Muslims, who worship on Fridays.

"I hope that the partners in the European Sunday Alliance network ... will appreciate the pluralistic dimensions of the European Union countries and the importance of respecting those with different religious beliefs and practices," Kamal said.

Catholics in Europe are welcoming the proposal. Maximillian Aichern, a retired Roman Catholic bishop of Linz, called a work-free Sunday the "oldest social law of Christian-Jewish civilization."

"The common day of rest, the social contracts which go with it and the praising of the Lord are the most important Christian values and ... are indispensable for the human dignity," he said.

The alliance is urging the EU and its member states to "take all legislative and political measures" to achieve a "better reconciliation of private and professional life," its June 20 press release said. [tedNEWS]

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First Conversation Between Adventists, Mennonites Focuses on Living Christian Life

11 July 2011 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Bettina Krause, Ansel Oliver/ANN] This month’s formal conversation between leaders of the Mennonite World Conference and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists offered the opportunity for both groups to share their beliefs and dispel misunderstandings in a receptive forum, leaders of both groups said.

"By sitting down and talking with those of other faiths, we gain a deeper understanding of who they are," said John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Adventist Church, whose department organized the June 28 to July 1 event at its world headquarters.

In a joint statement, leaders from both faiths said each shares "a desire to recover the authenticity and passion of the New Testament church, a similar understanding of Christian history, and a strong commitment to be followers of Jesus in their personal lives and in their corporate witness to the world."

The Mennonite World Conference represents some 99 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ national churches worldwide, with a combined membership of some 1.6 million. Mennonites, who trace their roots to the Anabaptist branch of the 16th Century Reformation, are today recognized for their emphasis on peacemaking, their stance as conscientious objectors, and their involvement in dispute resolution, both at local and international levels.

The roughly 500-year-old communion faced some of the most severe persecution of Christians; last year the Lutheran World Federation even apologized for its persecution of Anabaptists, the root of the Mennonites.

The Adventist Church rose following the Second Great Awakening in the United States in the 19th century, and it now has a world membership of some 17 million.

Danisa Ndlovu, president of the Mennonite World Conference, expressed his thanks to the Adventist Church for hosting the conversation.

"When you see people from a distance you can’t say that you know them," said Ndlovu, who also serves as bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe. "But it is different when you sit down with someone and exchange ideas -- now we can say ‘We know you.’"

Still, further conversations will pick up were this meeting left off. Future talks would explore Sabbath, its theology, and the Second Coming, said William Johnsson, director of the Adventist Church’s inter-faith relations. "They believe in the Second Coming but it doesn’t have the focus we put on it," Johnsson said.

Adventists hold their Sabbath day of worship from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, as opposed to Mennonite and other Christian groups who worship on Sunday. The Mennonite delegation requested an opportunity to experience how Adventists keep Sabbath, and they stayed an extra day to attend a Friday evening supper and a church service on Saturday, Johnsson said.

Mennonite leaders at the meeting said they were interested to learn of the Adventist Church’s focus and commitment of resources to issues of healthful living and religious freedom. The Adventist Church incorporates health as part of its faith and operates the largest integrated network of Protestant hospitals worldwide. The Adventist Church also launched in 1893 what is now the International Religious Liberty Association, a non-sectarian organization dedicated to promoting freedom of conscience.

Mennonite leaders also identified the structure of their global communion as inverted compared to the Adventist Church. Though based in Strasbourg, France, Mennonites congregations are autonomous, which generates more diversity, said Robert Suderman, former general secretary of the Mennonite Church Canada, who co-chaired the meeting.

Suderman said structures of both communions "have their pros and cons." In the Adventist Church, theology and direction is offered at the General Conference world headquarters and then trickles down through the rest of its five levels of administration: divisions, unions, conferences and local congregations.

The administrative structure may have been responsible for some of the Adventist Church’s success, Suderman said.

"Adventists have grown very quickly in 150 years and we haven’t," he said. "That's probably an issue we want to investigate in the next round of conversations."

The two faiths are planning another conversation next year in Switzerland.

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23 July 2011, Norway

Pastor Reidar Kvinge, President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway, stated on Friday that "Our thoughts are with relatives and friends of those who have been injured and killed on Utøya." At least 80 people died when a gunman opened fire at a youth camp on the island on Friday, 22 July and a 32 year old Norwegian man has been arrested. The Adventist Church has its headquarters and its Junior College just a few miles from the island in Lake Tyrifjord and Norwegian Communication Director, Torre Tjeransen states that while everyone is safe that "we have been emotionally affected by the national tragedy". A further seven people died in the bomb attack in the capital, Oslo. Pastor Kvinge adds, "The grave tragedy that has affected young, enthusiastic people gathered at Utøya must not lead us in Norway to let hatred prevail. We are appalled by the cruel disregard for human life these actions show."

While the bomb attack in the government building on Friday afternoon did not cause damage to the nearby Adventist Church's property in Akersgt, there will be no service this weekend, reports Oslo Pastor, Reidar Olsen. He took the decision to cancel the service on the advice of the police.

We would ask our members and communities to remember those suffering hurt, loss and pain in our prayers this weekend. In a world that is hurting, Adventists need to even more strongly share the hope that is in Jesus Christ.

[tedNEWS]

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Forty-six Awards for Newbold Graduates

22 July 2011 Bracknell, United Kingdom [Newbold Public Relations Dept./BUC News] The annual Newbold College Awards Ceremony took place on Sunday, 10 July in a packed church centre. Amongst the audience was a considerable gathering of local dignitaries including mayors, councillors, local politicians and police representatives.

As the UK degrees are accredited by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, many students, staff and well-wishers had journeyed to Lampeter in North Wales for the Degree Ceremony on Friday, 8 July. As usual, Newbold College staff took part in the academic procession and were on the platform to witness various awards and degrees in Theology and Business Management being conferred on Newbold College students – in Welsh and in English.

The Newbold College ceremony two days later recognised the achievements of these students, as well as those who had completed their degrees through Andrews University in Michigan, USA.

For a small higher education institution, Newbold College offers wide academic provision. This was underlined as the College celebrated the success of students from over twenty countries in Behavioural Sciences; Diversity Studies; Arts & Humanities; Business Management; and Theology – from Bachelor's degrees through Graduate Diplomas to Master's degrees.

In his final role as interim principal, Dr Svein Myklebust presided over the occasion. He emphasised to graduates that, "Degrees and certificates open doors and lead to new opportunities, but the extent of your success will depend on your ability to make use of your acquired learning in a work-place setting and a life-long commitment to education in its widest sense." On behalf of all the College staff who have invested in the students he added, "As you take on new challenges, we wish you success and blessings from above."

The speaker for the ceremony was Pastor Wim Altink, President of the Netherlands Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. An alumnus of Newbold College who is currently completing his PhD studies at the College, Pastor Altink reminded students of the need for them to be qualified for their profession, their faith and their community.

Many of those graduating with Bachelor's degrees or with Graduate Diplomas will be continuing their studies at Newbold College as they enter the realms of postgraduate work. [tedNEWS]

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Pioneer Work in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq

19 July 2011 Kurdistan, Iraq [Basim Fargo/Kjell Aune, tedNEWS] After the war that started in 2003, many Christians in Iraq – including Adventists – left Iraq to seek asylum in other countries. Some fled to neighboring countries like Jordan and Syria, hoping to be able to go back home one day soon. Some also went to the north of Iraq where the situation has been safer. About 10 families went to Duhouk city in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq. Iraq used to have a strong work going, with hundreds of active members and congregations in Baghdad, Mosul and Kirkuk. We still have some faithful members in Baghdad that worship in the nice and spacious church center that the church owns and that has been expanded after the war started.

Because of the violence, kidnappings, explosions, Christians fleeing the country in large numbers, and the loss of the majority of the Adventist members who also have left the country, it has been difficult to do outreach and to progress with the work in Iraq. For some time there has been a dream to start a new work in Kurdistan, in the north of Iraq, away from the violence of Baghdad. Now the dream has come true. Pastor Oweda Wehbe from Egypt has accepted a call to serve in Iraq Field as a pastor in the city of Duhouk in the Kurdistan region. The family is already established there and about to start their new work. A place has been rented as a gathering place and parsonage.

It is exciting that God has opened a window of opportunity to start a new work in this northern, un-entered area of war-torn Iraq. Ten years ago this might never have been thought possible, but God had his timing and we can now praise him for making a dream come true. We pray that pastor Oweda together with his family and the Adventists in northern Iraq will be able to build a strong church and an effective outreach to the local communities. [tedNEWS]

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Pastor Ian Sweeney to Lead Church in British Isles

Pastor Ian Sweeney to Lead Church in British Isles because of "the marvellous teams we have worked with." He will be supported by another new officer. Pastor Paul Lockham has served as Executive Secretary in both the North and the South Conferences, before that having gained pastoral experience in the South England Conference as well as the Irish and Welsh Missions. Along with his wife, Helen, he also spent time as preceptor at Stanborough Secondary School. As a man of broad experience he was thus the logical choice to take on the Executive Secretary role at Union level. Standing on the platform he noted that Stanborough Park church is a special church for him. It is the church he grew up in and where many momentous events had taken place. "Today," he said with an emotional tear in his eye, "this one has to be the greatest." His greatest hope for the next five years is that our Church can "move closer to being a place where the love and grace we see in Jesus’ ministry is seen in our churches and members’ lives.”

Well-known to all delegates, the third member of the leadership team, Mr Victor Pilmoor, was returned to office to continue as Treasurer. Delegates appreciated his financial stewardship of the Church through recent difficult economic times. For the future he recognises that we "are on a life long journey to the kingdom, whatever the battle – God is in control and He wins." Looking at the big picture, he adds, "Too often we lose ourselves to the passion of clauses and sub-clauses, the tyranny of small numbers, fickle personalities and trifling behaviour. But if God is for us, who can be against us?"

In concluding the weekend of meetings, Pastor Sweeney stated that "the tone set for the weekend is a powerful one, it is one of love." He added, "It is scary for me, but it is my passion and I've not always been successful: we must never lose sight, to love the people who don't know Christ." To achieve that would undoubtedly be success.

Delegates listen to Pastor Tapp's challenging morning devotional on unity in the 'love church'.

Teams are now in transition. In the coming weeks the North England Conference Executive Committee will be meeting to select a new President. Pastor Lockham will carry the mantle of both the BUC and SEC Executive Secretary until the SEC Session in September, supported until then by Pastor Lowe. There will also be a time of transition for directors who are leaving, and new names who are coming in but it is anticipated that the full team will be in action by September.

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Delegates listen to Pastor Tapp's challenging morning devotional on unity in the 'love church'.

A photo gallery from the Session, plus an audio recording of Pastor Tapp's Sunday devotional is available from the BUC Picture gallery. The Session Report and supporting documentation is on the BUC Session website.

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Sleep and Obesity - Facts with Hope

How does sleep relate to obesity? Here is the Fact: when we are short-changed on sleep, we make up for it — in calories. Columbia University researchers found that people actually eat more when they are sleep-deprived vs. well-rested. Normal-weight men and women consumed 296 calories more on average when they slept for four hours vs. when they got a full night's sleep. That is also true with kids and adolescents. Researchers have found that one of the root causes for the epidemic of childhood obesity is sleep deprivation. Overall, most of the extra calories came from high-fat foods such as ice cream and fast foods.

Here is the Hope: If you are trying to lose weight, take an inventory of your sleep habits. Address chronic sleep deprivation as part of your overall weight loss strategy. Cutting 300 calories a day from your diet may be as easy as getting to bed earlier.

Isn’t it time to rearrange your schedule to get to bed before 10 p.m.? I would answer Yes to that! Our daily healthy choices can make a difference in preventing disease and in our overall wellbeing.

For more Facts with Hope please go to the NAD Health Ministries website or subscribe to our Health Unlimited newsletter which contains more evidence-based information on choosing a more full, abundant life. (John 10:10)

Facts with Hope are evidence-based health messages that may be used in a church bulletin, newsletter, or during the "Health Minute" as part of church service to motivate people to choose a full, abundant life.

by Katia Reinert, MSN, CRNP, FNP-BC, PHCNS-BC, FCN
Director, NAD Adventist Health Ministries [NAD News Points]
There is no “I” in “T-E-A-M-W-O-R-K”!

In 1935, the Nepali Sherpa Tenzing Norgay made his first trip to Mount Everest. For 15 years previously, climbers had been trying to conquer the world’s highest peak.

The 1935 expedition had got as far as North Col, a flat area between Everest’s peaks. Just below this col the climbing party made a gruesome discovery. In a wind-shredded tent they found a skeleton sitting in an odd position, with one boot off and the laces of the other boot between its bony fingers.

The body was that of Maurice Wilson, an Englishman who had sneaked into Tibet without official permission. To preserve secrecy, he had hired only three porters. As they approached the North Col, the porters refused to go any further. Wilson decided to continue the climb alone. That decision cost Wilson his life. Since Wilson’s failed attempt, over 200 other climbers have also lost their lives too - over 150 of which remain on the mountain to this day.

Only someone who has climbed a formidable mountain knows what it takes to make it to the top. Between 1920 and 1952, seven major expeditions failed to make it to the top of Everest. Tenzing Norgay was on six of these expeditions. Teammates joked that Tenzing had a third lung because of his capacity to carry heavy loads. But he learned that no one should underestimate the difficulty of the climb.

On one climb when conditions became difficult, Tenzing and his fellow Sherpas put on their crampons (climbing boot-spikes), George Frey, an experienced but overconfident mountaineer, decided not to wear crampons but slipped and fell 300 metres to his death. Tenzing wrote of careless climbers, “Like so many men before them – they had held a mountain too lightly and they paid the price.”

In 1953, Tenzing embarked on his seventh expedition to Everest with a British team. By then, Tenzing was respected not only as a porter, but also as a fully-fledged teammate, an honour unusual at that time for a Sherpa.

Tenzing was responsible for hiring, organising and leading the team of porters for the journey. To get just two people to the summit, the team brought 10 high-altitude climbers, including New Zealander Edmund Hillary. Altogether the team would require almost 2.3 tonnes of equipment and food, delivered from Kathmandu on the backs of porters 290 kilometres up and down Himalayan ridges and over rivers crossed by narrow rope-and-plank bridges to the base camp. Tenzing hired over 200 people just to get the supplies to the mountain.

Another 40 Sherpas with extensive mountain experience carried supplies up the mountain. The best third of that team carried 340 kilograms of necessary equipment in 14 kilogram loads to higher camps. Only Tenzing and three other porters would have the strength and skill to go to camps near the summit.

For each level reached, a higher degree of teamwork was required. One set of men exhausted themselves just to get equipment up the mountain for the next group. Two-man teams worked their way up the mountain, finding a path, cutting steps, and securing ropes. By this stage they were exhausted but made the next leg of the climb possible. Of the teamwork involved, Tenzing remarked:

“You do not climb a mountain like Everest by trying to race ahead on your own, or by competing with your comrades. You do it slowly and carefully, by unselfish teamwork. Certainly I wanted to reach the top myself. It was the thing I had dreamed of all my life. But if the lot fell to someone else I would take it like a man, and not a cry-baby. For that is the mountain way.”

The team, using the “mountain way,” made it possible for two pairs to make an attempt at reaching the summit. The first team tried and failed, so the other team of got its chance. That team consisted of Tenzing and Edmund Hillary. Tenzing wrote of the first team:

“They were worn-out, sick with exhaustion, and, of course, terribly disappointed that they had not reached the summit themselves. But still... they did everything they could to advise and help us. And I thought... Yes, that is how it is on a mountain. For where would Hillary and I have been without the others? Without the climbers who had made the route and the Sherpas who had carried the loads? ... It was only because of the work and sacrifice of all of them that we were now to have our chance at the top.”

Tenzing and Hillary made the most of their chance. In late May, 1953, they accomplished a human first: they stood on the summit of Mount Everest, the world’s highest peak!

Could Tenzing and Hillary have made it to the top without a great team? NO. This lesson in leading teams is no less important for team leaders today: As the challenge ESCALATES, the need for teamwork ELEVATES!

A smart team leader learns that people operate better as individuals if they consider themselves to be part of a well-functioning, supportive team. Teammates remain committed and loyal to their team if they adopt the attitude of mountain climbers – they always help each other. A great team is characterised by a great attitude – it may not come as a consequence of climbing Mount Everest but it goes something like: “I don’t care who gets the credit as long as WE achieve great goals TOGETHER!”

Tenzing was not concerned who got the credit for conquering Everest. His attitude was not dissimilar to Jethro’s counsel to Moses in ancient times:

“The work is too heavy for you, you cannot handle it alone...select capable people...have them serve...That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.” (Exodus 18:18, 21-22 NIV)

May God continue to bless as you achieve great goals with your team!
Remember, there is no "I" in "T-E-A-M-W-O-R-K"!


3 Ibid., 250.

4 Ibid., 255.


By Philip R Brown
Are you Committed or Overcommitted?

When we begin a new job there is the danger of a panic reaction. Always there is a period when there is much to do and learn. Allowance is made for a settling in period. But at some undefined point the dynamics change, the honeymoon is over. We are expected to deliver. By nature leaders are committed to the organisations they serve. Christian leaders have the additional component of faith. This can make them more susceptible than most to fall into the trap of over commitment, with the consequent problem of excessive anxiety and stress.

Paradoxically, leadership often means less rather than more free time. Leadership has the possibility of providing greater opportunities to organise work and family life more effectively. However higher visibility often means giving into greater demands, which eat into personal time for rest, relaxation and family responsibilities.

Control of our life demands discipline, the ability to recognise the distinction between quality and quantity of work. Knowing how to organise time for a fulfilling not a fruitless life.

Job cycle
On accepting a new assignment most people are usually full of enthusiasm, ideas and energy. They throw themselves into the job. The more successful and effective the leader becomes, the higher their visibility. In turn this leads to more requests and assignments.

A certain amount of tension is positive. Like elastic we need to be stretched to be effective. However, as work builds up there is the danger that commitment slides into over commitment. Some of the more common warning signs are:

- Spouses regularly commenting: “He/she is never home”, “When was the last time you ...?” “You never have time for ...”.
- Regularly recurring personal ethical dilemmas such as: “Do I attend this or keep my promise to do ... with my family?”
- Recurring headaches, tension, tiredness, inability to sleep, all are possible indicators that you are over committed.

At this point, or preferably before, a leader needs to be intentional and make responsible choices, which will enhance her performance and make him more effective. There are a few practical steps which will help in the choice process.

Job analysis
First, what is the job? Take out the job description, look at it carefully. What are the key tasks? Is that your primary focus? Are there grey areas? It could be there is no job description. If not write one and obtain agreement on it. Clearly defined areas of responsibility are the keys which can enable you to creatively and successfully manage your workload.

We may fill our time with interesting, important and essential tasks, but if they are not part of our job description, we should not be doing them. At the end of the day we will not be judged on how well we did someone else's work, but what we did our own.

Prioritise
Make a simple list of what needs to be done: not only the major tasks. All assignments should be included. This provides a complete overview and eliminates the distraction of that undone task nudging at the edges of your memory. Include commitments outside the office. We do not live one dimensional lives. Work and life outside the office impact each other. Remember this list is for your eyes only.

Once the list is complete break the larger tasks into their component pieces. Now prioritise by using a simple A (very important) to F (unimportant) scale. If a number of tasks have the same priority, reprioritise within that category, ie A1, A2, etc.

Two main factors should influence the categorisation: urgency, and importance. However we should also reflect and factor in:

- Spiritual commitments
- Personal commitments
- Family commitments
- Church commitments – even when we are employed by the church, we still have contributions to the local life of the church to make outside of our work.

If in doubt, look at the job description. If it is important but not central to your job description, should you be doing it?

If commitment has already transitioned to over commitment ask the following questions:

- Is it possible to delegate some responsibility?
- Is it possible to negotiate another deadline?
- Is it possible to postpone?
- What would happen if this [task] was abandoned? Would anyone be hurt? What goals might be missed?

If you know that you cannot deliver on time, alert others as early as possible. Forewarned in these circumstances is half way to disarming.

Plan
Having broken down tasks into their component pieces and deadlines, plan how to achieve the required result, particularly if it involves other people. Looking at the required resources for each task will facilitate realistic and reasonable delivery targets.
At this stage look at your commitments outside the office. How do they tie in with your work plans? Have you accepted an appointment which coincides with a birthday or family event? Clashes are inevitable, how they are managed and how we respond, determines whether they are negative, sapping our energy or positive and affirming.

When you have finished ask yourself: What has been forgotten? Always plan in some spare time. There are always tasks which take longer, and occasionally something takes less time, providing a bonus!

Work in progress
My grandfather always used to say "The only reason why Rome wasn't built in a day was because I wasn't the foreman". Him aside, we are all works in progress. Finding the right balance is not a one-off task, but an ongoing challenge.

Taking time to reflect and refocus on a regular basis will help guard against over commitment or focusing on the wrong things, making us more effective leaders and servants in the Lord's vineyard. It is a truism. If you enjoy what you are doing it is not work but pleasure.

by Audrey Andersson, Trans-European Division Executive Secretary
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 antiscientific 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 new literary-critical hermeneutical approaches (rhetorical criticism, New Criticism, structuralism, semiotics, narrative theory, etc.); from reader-response criticism to radical deconstructionism.1

In the face of this plethora of suggested hermeneutical methodologies, how shall we proceed in our approach toward Scripture? 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 Scriptural presuppositions and principles of interpretation, as they emerge from a study of the biblical passages that speak to this topic.2

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 סדרת ("Law") and תכודע ("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; 3:5). 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 spiritist 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 the 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.3

Paul likewise rejects human "knowledge" (KJV "science"; Greek γνῶσις) 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 depraved 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—trust-ing 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 119:105; Prov 30:5, 6; Isa 8:20; John 17:17; Acts 17:11; 2 Thess 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 3:16-17: “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; 3:2; 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 attest 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 1:2:4; Matthew 1 paralleling Genesis 6; 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 fulfillment 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 direct contact with 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 4:14; 14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 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 deuto-canonical 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 B.C.), 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.” 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 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.

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 Bible writers were prophets who spoke as they were moved, carried along, even driven [pherô] by the Holy Spirit.
This Petrine passage makes clear that the Scriptures did not come directly from heaven, but rather God utilized human instrumentality. 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 Psalmists); 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 opinion, 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 tota 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<um] of Yahweh,” some 361 times; (2) “Thus says [hörmar] the Lord,” some 423 times; (3) “And God spoke [ṭāḇāḇr],” some 422 times, and (4) “the word [ṭāḇāḇr],” 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 8:11; Jer 15:17; Ezek 1:3; 3:22; 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 Kgs 21:10 records, “And the Lord said by his servants the prophets.” and 2 Chr 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 proof reference to God ("He"), to the first person divine direct address (""), 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 2:25; 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 Heb 1:5-13, 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 45:6-7; Ps 102:25-27). Again Rom 9:17 and Gal 3:8 (citing Exod 9:16 and Gen 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 3:2).

Though the Bible was not verbally dictated by God so as to pass-by the individuality of the human author, and yet the human and divine elements are 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 hrēmā, “word,” translating Hebrew qol, “everything”] that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). Paul says of his own inspired message: “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 grammatical 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 [lud] . . . .” 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.

C. The Analogy of Scripture (Analogy Scripturarum).

A third general foundational principle of biblical interpretation may be termed “the Analogy (or Harmony) of Scripture” (analoga Scripturarum).

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 Rom 3:10-16 we have Scriptural citations from Ecclesiastes (7:20), Psalms (14:2; 3:10; 140:4; 10:7; 36:2), and Isaiah (59:7,8). 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 fulfil 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 ipsius interpess); (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. Comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 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 1:13; 2:6, 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 1:34, 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 Jesus' own distinction and the discursive recognition 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, uncontrollable 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 student. 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 Col 1:18-20; Col 2:18-25, 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, a close reading of a later passage may indicate echoes of, or allusions to, earlier passages, and the earlier passages in their context become the key to interpreting the fuller meaning of the later (see, for example, the rich intertextuality in the book of Revelation). 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 12:38, 42, 43; 1 Pet 1:10-12.) Thus the spiral of understanding grows as later illuminates earlier, and earlier illuminates later.

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.

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 meant" 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 clear 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 exegetical 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 believe the promises of Scripture, and that is why the Spirit's guidance and direction are essential. But for Christians who believe the promises of Scripture, it is possible to believe the promises of Scripture, and that is why the Spirit's guidance and direction are essential. 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).

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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), evolutionist (the developmental axiom), 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 a man 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 honored 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).

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical-Critical Method</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Definition:</strong> 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.</td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>B. Objective:</strong> To arrive at the correct meaning of Scripture, which is the human reason and the supremacy of reason as the ultimate criterion of truth.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. Basic Presuppositions:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 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.</td>
<td>1. Sola Scriptura: The authority and unity of Scripture are such that Scripture is the final norm with regard to content and method of interpretation. (Isa 8:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Principle of criticism (methodological doubt): the autonomy of the human investigator to interpret and evaluate on his own apart from the specific declarations of the biblical text.</td>
<td>2. 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)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 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.</td>
<td>3. Suspension of the compelling principles of analogy to allow for the unique activity of God as described in Scripture and in the process of the formation of Scripture. (2 Peter 1:19-21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Principle of correlation (or causation): a closed system of cause and effect with no room for the supernatural intervention of God in history.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. “Time-conditioned” or “culturally-conditioned” nature of Scripture; the historical context is responsible for the production of Scripture.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The human and divine elements of Scripture must be distinguished and separated: the Bible contains but does not equal the Word of God.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D. Basic Hermeneutical Procedures:</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 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).</td>
<td>1. Literary analysis: Examination of the literary characteristics of the biblical materials in their canonical form, accepting as a unity those units of Scripture that are presented as such, and accepting at face value the specific Scriptural statements regarding the origins and nature of the biblical materials.</td>
</tr>
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<td>2. 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 that folk-literature arises on the basis of traditions which are formed according to the laws inherent in the development of folk traditions.</td>
<td>2. Form analysis: An attempt to describe and classify the various types of literature found in the canonical form of Scripture, accepting at face value the life setting for each form as indicated by the biblical data.</td>
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<td>3. 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, edited, 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.</td>
<td>3. Theological analysis of Biblical books: A study of the particular theological emphasis of each Bible writer (according to his own mind set and capacity to understand), seen within the larger context of the unity of the whole Scripture that allows the Bible to be its own interpreter and the various theological emphases to be in harmony with each other.</td>
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<td>4. 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 interpretively reshaped the material.</td>
<td>4. Diachronic (thematic) analysis: The attempt to trace the development of various themes and motifs chronologically (through the Bible in its canonical form); based upon the Scriptural position that God gives added (progressive) revelation to later generations, which, however, is in full harmony with all previous revelation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Canon 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.</td>
<td>5. History of the canon: Examination of the process of canonization of Scripture, assuming that the criteria for canonicity are inherent in the biblical materials as inspired by God, and that the Holy Spirit guided the Jewish and Christian communities to recognize these canonic books which preserved the witness of the OT prophets and the NT apostles.</td>
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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.”14 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.
Note how the historical-biblical approach to hermeneutics rejects each of these presuppositions based upon biblical evidence. With regard to the principle of criticism in particular, Gerhard Maier, a noted German scholar who broke with the method, must fall, because he presents an inner impossibility. For the correlative or counterpoint to revelation is not criticism, but obedience; it is not correction of the text—not even on the basis of a partially recognized an applied revelation—but it is a let-me-be-corrected.”15

As to the basic hermeneutical procedures, note how both methods analyze historical context, literary features, genre or literary type, theology of the writer, the development of themes, and the process of canonization. But the historical-biblical approach rejects the principle of criticism; it analyzes, but refuses to critique the Bible; it accepts the text of Scripture at face value as true, and refuses to engage in the three-fold process of dissection, conjecture, and hypothetical reconstruction (often contrary to the claims of the text) that is at the heart of all historical-critical analysis.

Some evangelical scholars in recent decades have attempted to “rehabilitate” the historical-critical method by removing its anti-supernatural bias and other objectionable features and still retain the method. However, Adventists believe that this is not really possible, because presuppositions and method are inextricably interwoven. The basis of the historical critical method is secular historical science, which by its very nature methodologically excludes the supernatural and instead seeks natural causes for historical events.

The central presupposition of the historical critical method is the principle of criticism,16 according to which nothing is accepted at face value but everything must be verified or corrected by reexamining the evidence. The Bible is always open to correction and therefore the human interpreter is the final determiner of truth, and his reason or experience the final test of the authenticity of a passage. As long as this basic principle is retained even to the slightest degree, the danger of the historical-critical method has not been averted, even though the elemental structure in theory may be accepted. And if this principle of criticism is removed, it ceases to be a historical-critical method. The presence or absence of the fundamental principle of criticism is really the litmus test of whether or not critical methodology is being employed. Seventh-day Adventists have taken an official stand against even a modified version of the historical critical method which retains the principle of criticism: “Even a modified use of this [the historical-critical] method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.”17

Those who follow the historical-biblical method apply the same study tools utilized in historical criticism. There is careful attention given to historical, literary and linguistic, grammatical-syntactical, and theological details, as we will outline in the next section of this paper. But while utilizing the same tools of analysis the historical-critical method in sharpening various study tools for analysis of the biblical text, there is an consistent intent in historical-biblical study to eliminate the element of criticism that stands as judge upon the Word.

There is a major recent paradigm shift in critical biblical studies toward various new literary-critical hermeneutical approaches. These critical procedures usually do not deny the results of historical-criticism, nor abandon the central principle of criticism, but rather bracket out the historical questions concerning of the historical development of the biblical text and concentrate upon its final canonical shape.

Many of these literary-critical hermeneutical approaches focus upon the final form of the biblical text as a literary work of art. These synchronic approaches (i.e., approaches which deal with the final form of the text) include such (overlapping) procedures as rhetorical criticism (James Mullenberg), New Literary criticism (poetic and narrative analysis, Robert Alter), and close reading (Meir Weiss). Common to all of these is the concern for the text as a finished work of art. Adventists welcome this renewed interest upon the synchronic analysis of the received canonical form of the biblical text, and appreciate many of the tools of analysis developed within these approaches. Unfortunately however, in these approaches as commonly practiced by critical scholars, the literary productions of the Bible are usually divorced from history and regarded as works of fiction or myth, with their own “autonomous imaginative universe” and “imitation of reality.” Emphasis is placed upon the various literary conventions utilized (consciously or unconsciously) by the writer as he creatively crafts the fictional biblical “story” into a literary work of art. Such presuppositions that ignore, or go against the historical claims of the biblical texts are rejected by Adventist interpreters.

Another recent synchronic approach is structuralism. Biblical structuralism builds upon modern linguistic theory fathered by the French theorist Claude Levi-Strauss, and has been developed in the USA by such scholars as Daniel Patte. Its main purpose is to “decode” the text to uncover the subconscious “deep-structures” universally inherent in language that deterministically impose themselves upon the writer. The divine absolute in this method is replaced by an absolute from below—the deep structures of language. A related literary approach is semiotics, or “sign-theory,” fathered by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce, which focuses upon the different linguistic codes that form the framework within which the message of the text is given (much like the musical staff and clef in music where the specific notes may be placed). The concern of these approaches is upon neither the history nor the meaning of the text, but upon the layers of linguistic structures or sign-systems underlying the message. These approaches have limited value in Adventist hermeneutics inasmuch as fundamental presuppositions tend to compromise the sola Scriptura principle.

In recent decades there have been developed a number of other approaches to Scripture that retain the critical presuppositions of the historical-critical method, but focus attention upon other goals than hypothetically reconstructing the historical development of the biblical text. Some of these postmodern approaches build upon new trends that have been mentioned in previous paragraphs. Major examplifies include the metacritical hermeneutical theory of Gadamer and the hermeneutic of suspicion and retrieval of Ricoeur; hermeneutics of socio-critical theory, including societal criticism (Gotwald), liberation (Gutierrez) and feminist hermeneutic (Trible); reader-response criticism (McKnight), and deconstructionism (Derrida).

In these postmodern methodologies, no longer is there a single objective, normative meaning of Scripture: rather there is a feminist reading, a black reading, an Asian reading, a Lutheran reading, etc. All are seen to have their own validity as the reader’s horizon merges with the horizon of the biblical text. These latter approaches have provided some useful insights into the biblical text, and rightfully point out the need for the modern interpreter to recognize his/her individual cultural context, but the common tendency is to have some external norm—be it philosophy, sociology, Marxist political theory, feminism, or the subjectivism of the reader—which replaces the sola Scriptura principle and relativizes Scripture.

B. Biblical Interpretative Steps Arising from Scripture

Most Judeo-Christian writers on the proper hermeneutical approach to Scripture simply list the various interpretative steps. But a full commitment to sola Scriptura would seem to imply that all these basic guidelines also either explicitly or implicitly arise from Scripture itself.

We may interject here that many modern scholars do not consider the Bible writers’ own hermeneutical practice a very helpful place to go for guidance in developing a sound hermeneutic. It is claimed that the NT writers often follow the first century prevailing Jewish rabbinic methods of exegesis that are often not faithful to the original meaning of the
The Bible writers repeatedly identify their written materials in terms of specific genres or literary types. A few samples include: "history" or "account" (Hebrew הַסְלָה; e.g., Ps 46:3, 7, 11), or (c) an acrostic (e.g., Psalm 119, with every succeeding eight verses of which the first word is the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet). Thus by precept and example Scripture underscores the importance of interpreting the biblical material in its literal, historical sense, including details of chronology, geography, and miraculous divine interventions in history.

3. Literary context/analysis. For the biblical writers the literary context of the Scriptures was no less important than their historical context. Scripture is not only a history book, but a literary work of art. Recent study is giving increasing attention to the literary characteristics and conventions of Scripture.

Scripture itself gives us countless explicit and implicit indicators of the presence of its literary qualities and the importance of recognizing these as part of the hermeneutical task.

One of the first tasks in interpreting a given passage in its immediate literary context is to determine the limits of the passage, in terms of paragraphs, pericope, or stanzas. Even though the paragraph and chapter divisions of our modern versions of the Bible have been added much later than biblical times, the Bible writers often provided indicators of passage limits and in their interpretation of antecedent Scripture show awareness of the discreet units of Scripture. In the inner-Scriptural hermeneutic of biblical writers, mention is often made of various questions of introduction, and these questions sometimes become crucial to the Bible author’s argument. In each case, the plain declaration of the passage, often providing a key to the flow of thought or central theological themes. Bible writers have structured their material by such devices as matching parallelism (see the book of Jonah), reverse parallelism (or chiasm, e.g., the books of Leviticus and Revelation), inclusio or "envelope construction" (e.g., Ps 8:1, 9; 103:1, 46), or (b) the word "selah" (71 times in Psalms: e.g., Ps 46:3, 7, 11), or (c) an acrostic (e.g., Psalm 119, with every succeeding eight verses starting with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet).

The Bible writers repeatedly identified their written materials in terms of specific genres or literary types. A few samples include: "history" or "account" (Hebrew הַסְלָה, Gen 2:4, plus 12 more times throughout Genesis), legal material (Exod 21:1; Deut 4:44, 45; and throughout the Pentateuch), covenant making and renewal (e.g., the whole book of Deuteronomy; see Deut 29:1-40; 14), riddles (Judg 14:10-18), court chronicles (e.g., 1 Kgs 9:1), psalms (with various subdivisions of types of psalms, indicated in the superscriptions) or song of songs (Prov 1:1-10:1, 25:1), prophetic oracles or "burdens" (Hebrew массה, e.g., Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1; Mal 1:1), visions (e.g., Dan 8:1, 2; Obadiah 1), covenantal oracles (Hebrew נֶבֶר, e.g., Isa 3:1-13; Hos 4:1; Mic 6:1), lamentations (Hebrew וַנֵּבֶר, Ezek 27:32; Amos 5:1; Lamentations), gospels (e.g., Mark 1:1, parables (e.g., Mark 4:2), "figures" (Greek παραβολή; John 10:6; 16:25), epistles (e.g., Rom 16:22; 1 Cor 5:9; 2 Pet 3:1, 16; including Pauline, Petrine, Johannine, James, and Jude), and apocalyptic (the apocalypsis or Revelation of John, Rev 1:1). Each of these genres has special characteristics that emerge from a careful study, and these characteristics are often significant in interpreting the message that is transmitted through the particular literary type. Literary form and interpretation of content go hand in hand.

In more general depiction of literary genre, the biblical materials separate themselves into poetry and prose. The poetic sections of Scripture (some 40% of the OT) are characterized particularly by various kinds of parallelism ("thought rhyme") and to a lesser degree by meter and stanzas (or strophes). The prose may be of various kinds, such as narrative, legal and cultic material.

The literary structure, both on the macro-structural and micro-structural levels, is a crucial part of the analysis of a passage, often providing a key to the flow of thought or central theological themes. Bible writers have structured their material by such devices as matching parallelism (see the book of Jonah), reverse parallelism (or chiasm, e.g., the books of Leviticus and Revelation), inclusio or "envelope construction" (e.g., Ps 8:1, 9; 103:1, 22), acrostic (Psalms 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145), qinah (3+2 meter, e.g., the book of Lamentations), and suzerainty treaty
components (e.g., the book of Deuteronomy).

Many other literary techniques and conventions, and stylistic elements are utilized by the biblical writers. We find the employment of irony, metonymy, simile, metaphor, synecdoche, onomatopoeia, assonance, paronomasia (pun/play on words), etc. All of these literary features are important for the biblical writer as they contribute to the framing and forming of the message, and they are essential for the interpreter to examine as he/she seeks to understand the meaning of a given passage.

4. Grammatical/Syntactical/Semantic Analysis Scripture, and in particular the NT interpretation of the OT, provides evidence for engaging in the analysis of the grammatical forms and syntactical relationships, with attention to the meaning of various words in context, in order to arrive at the plain, straightforward meaning of the passage being interpreted.

A classic example of grammatical sensitivity on the part of the NT writers is in Paul's interpretation of the word "seed" in Galatians 3. Citing Gen 12:7, 22:17-18 and 24:7, Paul recognizes (Gal 3:16) that the singular form of "seed" narrows in meaning to single "Seed"—the Messiah—while a few verses later (Gal 3:29) he correctly points to the collective plural aspect of this same term in its wider context.

A vivid example of the apostle's syntactical sensitivity is in the citation of Ps 45:6, 7 in Heb 1:8, 9: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." The syntax of the Hebrew original points to One who is God, who is also anointed by God, thus implying the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Godhead.

There are numerous examples in Scripture where the NT writers are careful to represent faithfully the meaning of crucial words in the original OT passage. Note, e.g., Paul's use of "the just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17 citing Hab 2:4); Matthew's selection of the LXX parthenos "virgin" to best represent the Hebrew almah of Isa 7:14 ("A virgin shall conceive . . . ," Matt 1:22, 23 NIV); and Christ's use of the word "gods" in John 10:34, citing Ps 82:6.

Numerous other examples may be cited, where the NT quotation of an OT passage involves the NT writer's recognition of the wider context of the OT citation. This larger OT context is frequently the key to understanding the interpretation drawn by the NT writer. For example, C. H. Dodd has shown how Peter alludes to the larger context of Joel 2 in his Pentecost sermon, and again, how that Matthew's interpretation of Hos 11:1 in Matt 2:15 is not taking the OT passage out of context, but rather seeing it in the larger context of the eschatological/Messianic New Exodus motif in Hosea and the other eighth-century prophets.

The grammatical-syntactical and semantic-contextual analysis often becomes more involved for us today than for those whose native tongue was the living biblical Hebrew/Aramaic or koine Greek languages. It is necessary now to make use of appropriate grammars, lexicons, concordances, theological wordbooks, and commentaries.

5. Theological Context/Analysis. The Biblical writers provide abundant evidence for the need to ascertain the theological message of a passage as part of the hermeneutical enterprise.

For examples, Jesus lays bare the far-reaching theological implications of the Decalogue in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:17-28). The Jerusalem Council sets forth the theological import of Amos 9:11, 12—that Gentiles need not become Jews in order to become Christians (Acts 15:13-21). Paul captures the theological essence of sin in various OT passages (Rom 3:8-20) and of righteousness by faith in his exposition of Gen 15:6 and Ps 32:1, 2 (Romans 4). Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2) delineates the theology of inaugurated eschatology found in Joel 2, and his first epistle explores the theological dimensions of the Messiah's atoning work as set forth in Isaiah 53 (1 Pet 2:21-25).

The theological messages of the NT writers presuppose, build upon, and stand in continuity with, the major OT theological themes such as God, Man, Creation-Fall, Sin, Covenant, Sabbath, Law, Promise, Remnant, Salvation, Sanctuary, and Eschatology.

The NT writers also place their theological analyses of specific passages within the larger context of the multiplex "grand central theme" or metanarrative of Scripture as set forth in the opening and closing pages of the Bible (Genesis 1-3; Revelation 20-2234); creation and the original divine design for this world, the character of God, the rise of the cosmic moral conflict (Great Controversy) in the setting of the sanctuary, the atoning work in Christ and His atoning work, and the eschatological judgment and end of sin at the climax of history.

The theological thought-patterns of NT writers, though expressed in Greek, stay within the trajectory of biblical Hebrew thought, and do not imitate alien thought-forms of the prevailing surrounding culture such as gnosticism and platonism.

6. The Deeper Meaning of Scripture. In their exploration of the "deeper" meaning of Scripture, in particular with regard to the typological fulfillment of OT persons, events, and institutions, the NT writers do not read back into the OT what is not already there ("inspired eisegesis"), or what is not apparent to the human researcher (sensus plenior), or an arbitrary assigning of meaning that strips away the historical "husk" (allegory). Rather they remain faithful to the OT Scriptures, which have already indicated which persons, events, and institutions God has divinely designed to serve as prefigurations of Jesus Christ and the Gospel realities brought about by Him. The NT writers simply announce the antitypical fulfillment of what had already been verbally indicated by the OT prophets.

The NT writers do not give an exhaustive list of OT types, but show the hermeneutical procedure, controlled by the OT indicators, of identifying biblical types. Furthermore, the NT writers provide a theological (salvation-historical) substructure for interpreting the eschatological fulfillment of OT types. Based upon a clear theological understanding of the theocratic kingdom of Israel and the kingdom prophecies within the context of covenant blessings and curses, the NT reveals a three-stage fulfillment of the OT types and kingdom prophecies—in Christ, in the church, and in the apocalyptic wind-up of salvation history. Each stage has a different modal quality of fulfillment based upon the nature of Christ's presence and reign. Thus the NT writers have worked out a sound hermeneutic for interpreting the types and kingdom prophecies of the OT, built upon solid controls arising from the OT scriptures.

7. Contemporary Application. For the NT biblical writers, the contemporary application arises naturally out of their theological interpretation of OT passages. We have just noted how the application of the types and kingdom prophecies of the OT arises from understanding the three-stage fulfillment within salvation history. All the promises of God have their yes and amen in Christ (2 Cor 1:20), and all the OT types find their basic fulfillment in Him; and if we are spiritually part of the body of Christ, we therefore share in the fulfillment of those prophetic and typological promises, and yet await sharing in their final glorious literal apocalyptic fulfillment. These basic hermeneutical principles dealing with the fulfillment of Israel-centered prophecies in the NT provide a Christo-centric approach which safeguards against dispensationalism and liberalis.

The biblical writers insist that the message of Scripture is not culture-bound, applicable only for a certain people and a certain time, but permanent and universally applicable. Peter, citing Isa 40:6-8, forcefully states, "having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All
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 1:18; 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 casebook 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. 40

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, “all Scripture, including both form and meaning, is binding unless Scripture itself indicates otherwise.” 41

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. 42

At the Exodus God articulated a principle in which each succeeding generation of Israelite should consider that he/she 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, 6; 16:6; 1:9, 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. 43

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 propositional 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 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 the Adventist Theological Society Occasional Papers.
4. The term sola Scriptura is best translated as an ablative phrase (“By Scripture 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: Agreements 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, 99-106; and Jack P. Lewis, “Jamma Revisited,” in The Canon Debate, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 148-162.
10. Adapted from Geisler and McKenzie, 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, 2000], 58-104).

38. Dodd, According to the Scriptures, pp. 59, 60.


41. See William J. Larkin, Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 316-318, for illustrations drawn from the way the NT writers used the OT.
La Sierra field biologist takes home new species of gecko

Imagine this: High on adrenalin, 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 Fryling 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 giftness. 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/  
- Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:6-16.  
- Matthew 28:18-20
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 news; 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 this 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 maginatively 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 and feedback. How can we engage in imaginative ways to respond to the very things followers want? How can we reframe these tasks so that we can create meaning, significance, community, direction and excitement?

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