Newbold Gap Year Students Visit Dembidollo, Ethiopia

07 November 2011 Bracknell, United Kingdom [Philip Brown, tedNEWS] On 5 November Newbold College Gap Year students Saskia Heibutzki, Marieke Hulzinga, Judy Lewis, Julie Zielke, Spencer Tonack and Nicklas Risager along with Henrik Jorgensen (Head of Student Experience) returned from a two week trip to Dembidollo... Read more

Newbold College Partners with Adventist Colleges Abroad

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'Good preaching – What is it?

04 November 2011 St Albans, United Kingdom [Daniel Duda, tedNEWS] As a leader in God’s church, you will probably be asked on some occasions to deliver a sermon to a different audience and/or congregation. Wanting to do your task well, you will inevitably ask: How do I do this well? What is a good sermon?... Read more

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Newbold Gap Year Students Visit Dembidollo, Ethiopia

Newbold students stayed in a Christian community run by the Sisters of Charity. This is a special order within the Catholic Church made up of women who have dedicated a part of their life to work with the poorest of the poor. Their work includes a hostel for girls from very poor backgrounds, microfinance programmes, women’s centres, medical centres and kindergartens with feeding centres. Newbold students considered it a privilege to get some insight into this community and its work as well as assist and support some of their ventures. The theme of the Newbold-sponsored trip was “the Footwashers of Ethiopia” as the focus was on people who were suffering from the little known foot disease Podoconiosis (Podo). Podo is a non-infectious but very debilitating type of elephantiasis, caused by extended exposure to a silica fibre in the soil. The fibre attacks the lymphatic system and causes a swelling of the foot and lower leg. It is believed that Podo is preventable by better hygiene of the feet and by wearing shoes.

Newbold students were able to spend some time at the local medical clinic on their Podo Days seeing firsthand the suffering of these patients. Students were given the opportunity to wash these people’s feet with a special herbal soap, soak their feet in bleach, give them a special ointment to rub on their feet and legs and give them a new pair of shoes. This experience was communion with footwashing on a whole different and possibly more real level than ever experienced previously!

On one day of the visit Newbold students decided to give the girls in the hostel a special treat. They washed the girls’ feet, painted their nails and gave each the equivalent of £10 so they could go to the market the following day, buy themselves a pair of new shoes and whatever else they might need or want. It was a real joy for Newbold students to see the sparkle in these Ethiopian girls’ eyes as they showed off their new shoes and skirts on the “catwalk” for them on the final evening of the visit to Dembidollo.

The children in the area had also been promised new shoes and the Newbold Gap Year student group was supposed to have helped out distributing these shoes. However, to the students’ disappointment the supplies of children shoes had been exhausted and a new promised shoe drop during the visit never materialised. With the little money Newbold students had brought with them, they decided to use some of it to buy shoes for the 130 children in the kindergarten run by the sisters. On the last day of the visit each of the children received a new pair of shoes.

While in Dembidollo Newbold students painted a new building to be used as a children’s centre. One Sabbath also included a visit to the local Seventh-day Adventist church and school where new and much needed English language teaching material donated by the Newbold College library was delivered.

Visits to places like Dembidollo where people are suffering in so many ways can leave
Newbold Gap Year Students Visit Dembidollo, Ethiopia | TED Adventist

one feeling that what has been done is of so little significance - and in some ways it is. However, what the Newbold Gap Year students who had this recent experience can do, must do and will do is tell their stories and make sure the children of Dembidollo, Ethiopia are not forgotten. So you can expect to hear more concerning the “Footwashers of Ethiopia.”! [tedNEWS]

tedNEWS Staff: Miroslav Pujic, director; Deana Stojkovic, editor

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Newbold College Partners with Adventist Colleges Abroad

NEWBOLD 01 November 2011 Bracknell, United Kingdom [tedNEWS] On Thursday 27 October the Adventist Colleges Abroad (ACA) Board of Directors voted to welcome Newbold College as an affiliate member of Adventist Colleges Abroad, a consortium of Colleges and Universities in the North-American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“We believe passionately that this partnership can afford significant opportunities for North-American students who choose to explore, live and learn abroad in England for a year” Dr Philip Brown, Principal, Newbold College said in welcoming the decision. “Our wish is that students who are attracted to Newbold will discover not only the unique diversity of our college community but seek out the numerous opportunities afforded on and off campus to cultivate their spirituality and learn for life” Dr Brown added.

“It is my joy to announce to you that the ACA Board of Directors voted to welcome Newbold College into the Adventist Colleges Abroad, a consortium of Colleges and Universities in the North-American Division” Dr Odette Ferreira, Secretary of the ACA Executive Board and Director, ACA advised Dr Brown in writing last week. “We are looking forward to this partnership and to the opportunity of offering our North-American students this new international experience which, with God’s help, will be unique in their lives.” Dr Ferreira said. “The Office of Education, as well as the North American Division administration rejoice over this new venture” she concluded.

“I am delighted that Newbold College has been received into the ACA-consortium” Dr Bertil Wiklander, Chair of the Newbold College Board of Trustees said in also welcoming the decision. “Well done, Newbold! We are thankful to North America for including us in ACA and will provide an offer to students that is difficult to resist!” Dr Wiklander stated.

“I am thrilled that Newbold College has been considered for the ACA-consortium” Dr Niels-Erik Andreasen, Vice Chair of the ACA Executive Board announced. “I am confident that students who choose to explore, live and learn abroad in England for a year will discover not only the unique diversity of our college community but seek out the numerous opportunities afforded on and off campus to cultivate their spirituality and learn for life” Dr Andreasen added.

“I am delighted about this news. It was part of the restructuring plan in February to achieve this objective” Dr Niels-Erik Andreasen, Vice Chair of the ACA Executive Board announced. “In addition to studying several languages, ACA students can now explore the arts, letters, humanities, social sciences, and religion in a European setting while being exposed to more traditional British ways of teaching and learning” Dr Andreasen added.

“I believe that an international experience is one of the most exciting and enriching experiences that a student can have. Encountering different cultures, habits and people makes you open-minded and gives you the ability to look at life from a whole different perspective” Izak Juric, recently elected President of the Newbold Student Association (NSA) commented. “I was looking forward to welcoming this new cohort of students to our multicultural campus” he said.

Newbold will now be profiled in the upcoming ACA Bulletin and catalogue in readiness for the 2012-13 recruitment cycle and will be featured in other ACA displays and materials and presentations for the schools sector over the year ahead” Dr Philip Brown advised. “We have also been offered the opportunity to send a representative on two promotional trips - one from late January 2012 (US east coast providers i.e., Andrews University, Southern Adventist University, Oakwood University, Union College and Washington Adventist University) and the other from late February 2012 (US west coast providers i.e., Walla Walla, Pacific Union College and La Sierra University)” Dr Brown confirmed. [tedNEWS]
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03 November 2011 Middle East [tedNEWS] On 31 October 2011, Director of Al-Waad Media Center from Middle East was delighted to share with us an email which he received recently. We found it very encouraging and we are sure that Hope Channel is blessing people all over the world. We praise God for Hope Channel NAME.

*Through its amazing programs, Hope Channel North Africa/Middle East has played a major role in comforting me during my time of mourning I especially mention the program entitled 'Road to Salvation'. This particular program has introduced me to Jesus Christ, how He was miraculously born, how He lived, and His true nature. This program also introduced me to the third person who is the Holy Spirit. I didn't know there was a Holy Spirit before. Now I know that He is the one who comforted me during my time of distress. I know that He is with me wherever I go. I live among people who don't believe in Jesus, and my life may be in danger. If my family finds out that I have accepted Jesus they may kill me. In spite of all that, I feel happiness and peace in my heart. I have found a treasure which I will never give up. I used to be so afraid before, but after I have found the Holy Spirit, I am no longer afraid of anything. I now know that Jesus Christ is the door to the Father. I now pray in His name, and know that He will hear my prayer. Last time I had a big problem in my life, I prayed in the name of Jesus. The problem was solved in an unexpected way. I believe in Jesus Christ and in His grace for me.

Thank you for Hope Channel NAME. Without it, I would have been lost.*

Please continue to pray for Hope Channel NAME and the ministry it is carrying out to the people in this part of the world.

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"Look at the Reality" Sweeney Tells Ministers

03 November 2011 Watford, United Kingdom [BUC NEWS, TedNEWS] "If we followed national statistics our membership would be over three-hundred thousand," Pastor Ian Sweeney told South England Conference provincial ministers at a gathering on Tuesday, 1 November. It was the third in a series of meetings that the recently elected President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the UK and Ireland is holding with ministers around the country. As President he wears his passion for evangelism and mission on his sleeve – and that passion is causing him to think about how Adventists are reaching out to the majority of the population in the British Isles.

The Adventist mission ethos means that members can be found in almost every country of the world. Yet, while the church in the UK sent out many missionaries from its shores in the last century, the indigenous church over the past thirty years has struggled while church growth has come via immigration followed by evangelism largely within the ethnic minority communities.

White hard statistics are difficult to come by, it is estimated that less than 10 percent of those 32,000 members would be regarded as indigenous. In earlier discussions with the London ministers he noted that within the 11,000+ members in the London area there are probably less than 200 that can be described as white British. "This is total role reversal in terms of the British population where less than ten percent are immigrants," Sweeney stated adding, "in reality we have become a black majority church within a white majority population." To be proportionate with the general population that would require a membership increase of 90 percent! "An impossible dream? "We need to wake up and look at the reality," Sweeney says. "We need to look for ways to make an impact."

The aim of the meetings that he has so far held with ministers in the North and South England Conferences, as well as with a number of local congregations, is not so much to provide solutions as to raise awareness of the enormous challenge and commission the church faces. Quoting Elder E E Cleveland he says, "You can't finish the work without doing the work," and has pledged that the primary focus of the Executive Committee will be evangelism. However, it is at local church level where the real impact is made and in his discussions Sweeney is challenging every local congregation to "take seriously its reason for being." The aim of every board and business meeting should be "how do we reach the lost?"

Reacting to the presentation Pastor Ron Clemow noted that Adventists need to be more proactive in their communities. The discussion focused on how many Adventists have genuine friendships in the community, how to develop them and provide solutions as to raise awareness of the enormous challenge and commission the church faces. Quoting Elder E E Cleveland he says, "You can't finish the work without doing the work," and has pledged that the primary focus of the Executive Committee will be evangelism. However, it is at local church level where the real impact is made and in his discussions Sweeney is challenging every local congregation to "take seriously its reason for being." The aim of every board and business meeting should be "how do we reach the lost?"

A meeting such as this is obviously just the start of a process. However, Sweeney, with Antiguan parents, an Irish grandfather, but born and bred in Leicester, finds within himself a burning desire to use his time in leadership to reach beyond the histories of the past and the challenges of the present in order to allow God to do something amazing in our communities in this increasingly secularised country.

While evangelism was the major focus of the day at Newbold church centre, other presentations included taking time for the ministers to focus on their "Sabbath rest" as well as discussions on the current media evangelistic efforts on the web and on Revelation TV. Time was also taken to look at how well local churches are communicating their mission with their communities. Robin Lewis was voted as Secretary to the provincial ministers' forum which is currently chaired by Ian Sleeman.
A full article on Evangelism and Mission in the British Isles exploring these ideas more fully will shortly be available in a future edition of MESSENGER. Comment on this article now and join the discussion on Pastor Sweeney's new blog [tedNEWS]

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As a leader in God's church, you will probably be asked on some occasions to deliver a sermon to a different audience and/or congregation. Wanting to do your task well, you will inevitably ask: How do I do this well? What is a good sermon? As a member of a local church and listener to sermons Sabbath after Sabbath, you ask that question too.

Is a good sermon a matter of taste, similarly to a good meal or music? Is it that our personal upbringing, culture, taste, how we are psychologically wired and other things, determine which sermons we consider to be good and which perhaps bad and boring? Any preacher who ever preached a sermon is aware of the enormous variety of different people's perceptions in his/her audience.

A lot could be said about what is a good sermon, good preaching. For this article, let me just highlight two.

Good news not good advice

In my last church, one of my members came to me and said: "Pastor Duda, I am so disappointed with you. You have been our pastor for two years now and you have not preached against women wearing trousers yet!" Obviously, her idea of a good sermon was that it should tell people what to do (and not to do).

However, from my experience as a pastor and administrator, most people know what to do; they are just not very good at that. My problem is that I already know that I am not what I ought to be; I know I am doing things that I ought not to do and that I am leaving undone things I ought to do. Like most people, I do not live my life crippled by moral indecision, paralyzed for lack of good advice. Our problem is not moral indecision, but moral impotence (Rom 7:21-25).

That's why the remedy cannot be just good advice about what we ought to do, but good news about what God has done – "What the law could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of all potency, God has done: by sending his own Son..." (Rom 8:30). Thus remedy and good preaching is not good advice about what we ought to do, but good news about what God has done. Ultimately preaching is about God, and what he has done, not just about us and about what we ought to do. Surely, our understanding of who God is and what he has done in Jesus Christ. Our problem is not moral indecision, but moral impotence (Rom 7:21-25).

If preaching is to be proclamation and not mere moralizing, the ethics of our preaching must be rooted in the theology of our preaching. We cannot make sense of who we are and what we ought to do, unless we first know who God is and what he has done in Jesus Christ. Theology empowers the ethics; it does not just accompany it with an encouraging, heavenly-Father pat on the back.

Seeing yourself as part of God's story

Preaching is kerygma, the proclamation of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Preaching therefore must be biblical, or it is not preaching at all. The talk may be interesting or edifying, but it is not preaching. The sole source of our knowledge, of what God has done, comes to us through the text of Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

However, the fact that a sermon is rooted in a particular text or passage is no guarantee that what we are saying is authentically biblical. It is not the frequency of quoting the Bible (or EGW) that makes it biblical. For a sermon to be biblical, it must be rooted not only in a specific Bible text or passage, but also the immediate and wider context of the passage and in the cosmic sweep of God's story as a whole.
I have been teaching Homiletics for over 20 years. In my enquiries with pastors, theology students and members about
the sermons which they remembered after a year, 5 or 10 years, or even more after the first time they heard them, I found
one common denominator – a memorable sermon was one that somehow “clicked” the Bible material with the current
experience of the listener.

The Bible did not come to us as a collection of proof texts, system of fundamental beliefs, a recipe on how to know God’s
will, or seven rules for successful leadership. It came to us as a story that has its beginning and its climax. Thus good
preaching must recognize not just what God has revealed to us, but how he has revealed it. The gospel that we preach
come to us through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments telling God’s story. This needs to be connected to
our story, which is part of the bigger story.

The stories of the Bible are not merely illustrations of the revelation of God, they are the revelation. Biblical truth is the
Event (not just cerebral doctrine) and the Event is what God has done in our creation and recreation (salvation), in what
He is doing now and in what he is yet to do before the story ends.

Good preaching is telling and retelling God’s story and our stories from creation to the Second coming (not in one sermon
hopefully!). The Bible speaks about this special type of remembering (OT zakar, NT anamnesis), a remembrance which
does not merely call to mind the things past, but makes them real, present, potent and demanding here and now.

The gospel is no longer the story of something that God did once for all, far away then and there. It is now also the story
of our world, our society our culture, our individual lives in all the complexity and strange mixture of glory and shame.

That’s why we need to do not only the exegesis of the Bible text, we need to do the exegesis of life. If we have no idea
where people are today, the complexities of their lives, the demands of their environment and allurements of culture in
which they live, then even the most brilliant exposition of historical details of Ezekiel is not going to connect with them.
However theologically sound, however exegetically accurate, however historically informative, however interesting and
inspiring it may be, until the saving acts of God which He accomplished once for all then and there have become
embedded in our experience, our culture, our history, our individual lives, we have not preached. We might have delivered
a religious talk, but not a sermon, and certainly not a good sermon.

A good sermon is not just remembering His story, it is also the remembering of ours. And when our story becomes part of
His story, His bigger story, we have a good and a memorable sermon. The two stories are not two anymore, they have
become one as we begin to live, however imperfectly “in Christ”. As the apostle Paul put it: “the life that I now live is not
my life, but the life which Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

We preach the good news that in Christ God’s kingdom has come, a new kind of life has been made possible here and
and now, a new kind of humanity has been born, a new kind of community has been established. The critical and decisive
battle with the power of darkness has been fought and won, not by us, by what we do, but by Christ and what he
accomplished on the cross of Calvary 2000 years ago. The war is not yet over, but the outcome is no longer in doubt.

Our personal future may be uncertain, but the outcome is not unknown for those who know the story of God. We know for
sure how His story will end. Paradise lost has been regained and will be restored by Him. And we all can be a part of it.
That’s what good preaching is all about!

By Pastor Daniel Duda, Education Director, Trans-European Division

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Change in Church's Operations in the Middle East…

Dr Bertil Wiklander, Trans-European Division President, took an active part in the discussion on the floor and said, after the decision: “Of course at first we were disappointed when we were informed about this proposal. We have personal ties to our people in these territories and have spent much time in praying and working for them and with them. In one way, it feels like the biblical saying that ‘we planted the trees but others will eat their fruit’; but that is how it can be sometimes in the church. We must remember that we are all united and work for the same goal.”

There has been growth and development everywhere in the Middle East, Pakistan Union Mission, and the Israel Field in the past. The Middle East Union Mission has grown from the 8,000 members when it was handed over to the TED from the General Conference, and now it has 20,000 members. “We have thoroughly enjoyed working with these fields and have given our best time, talents, and resources to them”, says Wiklander. He continued, “But change has now come and we accept what our world church has decided. The good thing is that as a division we will now be able to focus our energy and attention on the mission challenges in Europe.”

Regarding the most challenging part of the work in the Middle East region, Wiklander pointed out that “We have not had much success with evangelism among Arabic Muslims in the Middle East, but then no one else has either. Since 2006, we have built up a new work around the concept of Muslim-Friendliness and of being open and transparent about who we are as Seventh-day Adventists. We have set up Al Waad TV-Radio-Online ministries based on that principle, which we believe will give us progress. But the big need is missionaries, that is, pastors who are educated in how to mingle with people”, concluded Wiklander.

By having the Greater Middle East Union Mission under the General Conference, the whole world church will become more aware of the needs and work in this important region. This part of the “10-40 Window” will be a special Mission Field for the whole world church. “This is a strategic move that could give new impetus to the work; and that is our prayer. We are as eager to see growth in these fields as in Europe”, concluded Wiklander.

Photos by: Ansel Oliver

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Adventist World Church Approves Urban Focus; New York City is First Launch Site

9 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States [Elizabeth Lechleitner, ANN] Top leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today endorsed a plan to evangelize the world's cities, beginning in 2013 with New York City. The vote came as a practical response to world church President Ted N. C. Wilson's call yesterday to prioritize outreach to large urban centers, where half of the world's population now lives.

Historically, rural areas have responded to the Adventist Church's message of hope more than cities, said world church Secretary G. T. Ng. "We are a church of islands and villages," he told more than 300 delegates at world church headquarters on October 9 for Annual Council business meetings.

"Urban evangelism can be overwhelming," Ng added.

An estimated 19 million people who speak some 800 languages live in New York City.

Outreach to cities weighed heavy on the minds of even the first Adventists, Ng said. Church co-founder Ellen G. White wrote that she spent many sleepless nights thinking about evangelism to big cities. "It is distressing to think that they have been neglected for so long," she wrote.

Even today, "most of the church's resources are going outside the cities, even though most of the needs are now inside cities," said Gary Krause, director of the church's Office of Adventist Mission. Echoing a well-known statement from White, Krause said the church must follow Jesus' New Testament example of outreach -- He mingled with people, showed care and compassion and met physical needs before calling anyone to follow Him, he said.

The plan that delegates endorsed today hinges on both corporate and personal evangelism. Between 2012 and 2015, church leaders will equip pastors and lay members alike to launch outreach efforts in more than 650 of the world's major cities. To better reflect the "cultural diversity and unique character" of the church's thirteen world divisions, regional administrators will choose the outreach cities and craft an approach that will best connect with their respective communities.

Adventist evangelist Mark Finley compared the nine-page blueprint on urban evangelism to the U.S. Declaration of Independence. "This will be looked on as one of the most significant turning points within the modern-day Seventh-day Adventist Church," Finley said. "This document is more than paper; it can be a north star in modeling comprehensive care and compassion to big cities."

While delegates demonstrated collective support for the plan, several offered suggestions on how to strengthen it. Many said it should acknowledge the work of Adventist evangelists and laypeople already ministering in New York City. Leslie N. Pollard, president of church-run Oakwood University, said such people should be recognized in the document. "We would like to see these people affirmed for sticking with the city, not abandoning it. We don't want to invalidate them because now the big boys from Washington are coming in," Pollard said.

G. Earl Knight, president of the church's Greater New York Conference, echoed Pollard's call for collaboration with those on the ground in New York City. "They know the challenges. Some who entered that battlefield got discouraged and left. Some stayed and fought the battle," Knight said. By working together, and through the world church's "insight, vision and all the resources we can find," the church can accomplish "this tremendous task," Knight said.

Other delegates questioned whether a major evangelism effort in New York City could be sustained "long after the lights
go out, the speakers leave and the tent is pulled down." One suggested a lifestyle center focusing on the church's emphasis on healthy living.

"I promise you that Health Ministries is here to train, to coordinate with you, to come work with you in the trenches to do whatever we can, because Health Ministries is a first way we can approach evangelism," said Allan Handysides, Health Ministries director for the world church.

"Every department of the General Conference will bend their backs to provide you in the field with whatever resources you feel you need to accomplish whatever you feel is most appropriate for your region," Handysides said.

The church's educational institutions, too, can play a central role in making urban evangelism sustainable, Pollard said.

"Our schools could serve not just as havens," Pollard said, "but as mission centers." Schools could also coordinate research on which methods of urban evangelism are most effective, turning evangelists into "professors of ministry," Pollard said. Here again, he called for input from those already ministering in the city. "They have a strong sense of what works and what doesn't work."

Trevor Baker, president of the church's regional Northeastern Conference, reiterated the need for a "sustained presence" in New York City after the "onslaught of evangelism."

Ministry to New York City has been a longtime passion of Wilson's. The world church leader's 1981 New York University doctoral dissertation was "A Study of Ellen G. White's Theory of Urban Religious Work as it Relates to Seventh-day Adventist Work in New York City."

While the church's focus on urban evangelism will begin in New York City, Wilson reminded delegates of the global scope of the effort. He visited cities in Europe several times this year and told delegates he holds a "deep burden" for the region.

[tedNEWS]
Newbold College Staff Celebrate World Teachers’ Day at Breakfast

07 October 2011 Bracknell, United Kingdom [tedNEWS] Newbold College of Higher Education staff celebrated World Teachers’ Day last Tuesday morning while enjoying a hot breakfast together on campus. The breakfast was the initiative of Dr Philip Brown, who last month took up his post as the 31st Principal of Newbold College in Binfield, Bracknell. Newbold College is operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which also operates a system of 7,598 schools, colleges and universities worldwide, with a total enrolment of more than 1,545,000 students and approximately 80,000 teachers.

“World Teachers’ Day provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the essential role of teachers and those who support them in providing quality education at all levels” said Dr Brown in welcoming Newbold staff and invited principals and teaching staff from neighbouring primary and secondary schools to the breakfast.

Guest speaker was Dr Laurence Turner, Newbold’s Head of Theology, who humorously reflected on the impact that a number of teachers had had on shaping his learning journey to date. Dr Brown presented Dr Turner with a Certificate of Recognition for 15 years of service to the College’s learning and teaching programme.

Other long-serving Newbold staff recognised at the celebratory breakfast with Certificates of Recognition to the College’s learning and teaching programme included: Zak Ambrus (15 years), Pam Frost (15 years), Ursula Lewis (15 Years), Henrik Jorgensen (20 years), Per Lisle (20 years), Sandra Rigby-Barrett (20 years), Hazel Rennalls, John Baldam (25 years), Erica Hole (35 years), Colin Hole (35 years) and Michael Pearson (35 years).

World Teachers’ Day is now celebrated annually on 5 October in over 100 countries. It also commemorates the anniversary of the 1966 signature of the UNESCO/ILO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers. UNESCO utilises World Teachers Day to celebrate the profession of teaching and to promote international standards for the teaching profession.

[tedNEWS]

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Black or White?

06 October 2011 Hadsund, Denmark [Thomas Rasmussen, tedNEWS] We were in for a treat when Dr Radisa Antic, and Dr Mike Pearson from Newbold College visited Denmark for our theological weekend from 23-25 September. The theme for the weekend was 'Black or White' – put it another way. The topic was Ellen White. We have not had a national event with this topic for quite a few years, so people were excited, and so were the speakers, because just like we had advertised, they did not agree on everything.

The weekend started on Friday evening, where Dr Radisa Antic, Director of EG White-Seventh-day Adventist Research Centre and Lecturer at Newbold College, passionately presented the relevance of Ellen White for the church today. We had over 60 participants at the event, half of them under 35. Young and old were very interested to see the influence she has had in our church and also in which areas. It was a good way to begin the Sabbath.

Sabbath morning we continued with Dr Mike Pearson, Principal Lecturer in theological at Newbold College, presenting 'The Ellen White I Never Knew'. He shared with us his frustration growing up in the church where Ellen White had never become a person to him, but merely a set of read books. Later in life when he started his doctoral studies and the EGW Estate released more than 200 pages on what Ellen White had written on divorce and remarriage. He discovered her personality, her love and affection for people, which seemed very different than what he had experienced. We were all very touched by his presentation, on which even commented: "What he is saying is very important."

Throughout the weekend we had time for many more presentations – perhaps too many, but everyone hung in there and were thoroughly blessed. We talked about hermeneutics, the sanctuary, inspiration, revelation, illumination and we had plenty of time as well for questions and answer sessions, which were very fruitful. The interaction between the younger participants and the older ones was great. It was also interesting to hear the speakers, as the first Q&A started, and Mike Pearson began by saying that both Radisa and he had discovered over the weekend how much they actually agreed. Two completely different personalities, two cultural backgrounds, two completely different educational settings – but both with an enormous respect for the other, and both with the same faith and trust in Jesus Christ and a love for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We were truly blessed and encouraged to read more from Ellen White and most importantly, as she herself said to read the Bible – God's Word to us. [tedNEWS]

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How should we treat the newly elected leader?

In the build-up to the average constituency meeting – whether it be at conference, union or higher levels – you will always find at least three groups of people involved: the speculators; the agitators; and the orchestrators.

The speculators are a benign group to which most of us belong. The agitators are usually a smaller and more focused group who have an agenda they want others to share, thereby hoping that they will be able to influence outcomes towards their bias. The orchestrators will always have sinister intentions, backed by strategic plans designed to put their candidates into power.

Session delegates are very much aware of these things, and generally arrive at such constituency meetings with a touch of apprehension in the pit of their stomachs. The dominating question in the minds of most is: ‘Who will it be?’ Once the vote is taken and the new leadership announced, that tension quickly dissipates and many delegates leave immediately, thinking that their work is done.

Does our responsibility cease once we’ve voted?

Do we discharge our obligations and responsibilities to church leadership with a cross on a piece of paper, or by waving a voting card?

Are we only there to determine who will lead us – or do we have responsibility to influence how they lead?

To my thinking, the real question that we should ask ourselves is: ‘How should we respond to these new leaders, whether they are our choice or not?’

Do we adopt an aloof ‘wait-and-see’ attitude, secretly hoping that they will make heavy weather of their new responsibilities? Then, if they do, we can smugly broadcast that we ‘knew it would happen’!

Or do we become more aggressive than that, creating complex issues that will put them to the test – so we can then ‘put them to the sword’!

The ‘saints’ have had practice

This strategy is not new. Regular upstanding churchmen tried it on Jesus 2,000 years ago: ‘After dinner the Pharisees and the lawyers attacked Him with all kinds of questions, hoping He would say something wrong. From then on, they acted more like His enemies than His friends.’ (Luke 11:53, 54, The Easy English Clear Word.)

Ingratiation

Another approach to new leadership is ingratiating. Those who employ this strategy are often masters in the use of subliminal compliments that gently caress the carnal nature. Suggestions that ‘Things have never been so well-run before’, or ‘You fellows are a breath of fresh air’, can create dangerous illusions of success for new leaders.

It is human to want to be close to our leaders and count them as our friends. But ingratiating slides easily beyond compliments to tangible favours, and favours build obligation, and obligation may cloud objectivity!

Beware of ‘courtiers’

A ‘courtier’ was one of those people who once swarmed around the rich and the famous, especially royalty. The courtier couldn’t ‘buy’ the regent’s favour with gifts of money or land, but if he supplied choice information he gained a special status, and the protection of the king.

Some leaders have an insatiable thirst for certain types of information. They want to know about the latest alliances, what people think of them and their leadership style, the moral blind spots of their colleagues and counterparts – anything that may give them perceived leverage over those they lead! But the real ‘leverage’ is in the clever courtier’s hand. He may use information selectively, mischievously, partially, or in any way he chooses, to manipulate the gullible leader.

How does God want us to act?
God can't support aloofness, aggression, ingratiations, obligation or manipulation. So what does he expect from us?
Perhaps these ideas will be helpful:

Join them in ‘Gethsemane’ – Every leader is going to have moments of intense pressure, or times when nothing runs to plan, and nobody seems to care. These are often very, very lonely moments – times when our leaders need to know there is someone else in their ‘Gethsemane’ with them – someone who is praying for them!

In Matthew 26 we see how much Christ would have appreciated the praying presence of Peter, James and John. Just listen to the sadness and raw human need in these words: ‘Then Jesus came with the disciples to a place called Gethsemane and said to them, “Sit down here while I go over there and pray.” Then he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be in terrible pain and agony of mind. “My heart is breaking with a death-like grief,” he told them, “stay here and keep watch with me.”’ (Verses 36-38, New Testament in Modern English, J. B. Phillips)

His vivid anticipation of the next day’s legal charades, public humiliation and inhuman torture, and the burden of humanity’s measureless iniquity, squeezed blood from his pores – but they slept. He was in severe turmoil – but they slept. Three times he urged them to ‘watch’ with him – but they slept!

So, loyal members and colleagues, let’s join our leaders in their daily ‘Gethsemanes’.

Hold up the leaders’ hands – On the way to the Promised Land, Israel was attacked by the Amalekites, and this is what happened: ‘As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses’ hands grew tired, . . . Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.’ (Exodus 17:11-13, NIV.)

Moses was holding up his rod, a symbol of God’s power and grace, but he could not do it alone. He needed the ongoing support of Aaron and Hur, because victory is always a team effort!

So, when our leaders are holding high the symbols of God’s power and grace, let’s support them tirelessly!

Tell truth to power, but do it properly – Bob Stone, a management consultant, makes the following observations: ‘Telling the truth to the boss is the first responsibility of an ethical subordinate. . . . Speaking the truth isn’t just a matter of personal integrity; it’s crucial for organisational success.’

And he is right on target. The one thing that our newly appointed leaders wish for is that we tell them the truth. We need to be open with them about what we think should be stopped, fixed or initiated for God’s work to be successful. But we must make sure that we have the truth before we tell: that our motives are pure, our facts accurate and our perspectives balanced.

‘Telling truth to power’ is never easy. It takes courage – but it also needs to be done in a gracious spirit and with due tact. Time and place are also important. Many a true word has been wasted because it was said at the wrong forum. The rule of thumb for ‘truth telling’ is simple: the smallest audience will usually deliver the best results! Nathan confronted David about his sin, not Israel.

‘Tell truth to power’ – our leaders are waiting!

So...

Do we discharge our obligations and responsibilities to church leadership with a cross on a piece of paper, or by waving a voting card?
Are we only there to determine who will lead us – or do we have responsibility to influence how they lead?


By Julian Hibbert

-Pastor Julian Hibbert is the Editor of MESSENGER, the British Union Conference journal, and this article is an expanded version of an editorial he wrote in the issue of 22 July 2011.
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 Reinhart, 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.1

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.”2

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.”3

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.”4

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 teams 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”!**

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3. Ibid., 250.

4. Ibid., 255.


*By Philip R Brown, Principal, Newbold College*
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 antsupernatural rationalist (historical-critical) hermeneutic of the Enlightenment 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, redemption, 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 believe 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.3

I. Foundational Principles for Biblical Interpretation

A. By the Bible and the Bible Only (Sola Scriptura)4

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 דָּרָה (“Law”) and לֵיכָלָה (“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 Scripurata 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 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.5
Paul likewise rejects human "knowledge" (KJV "science"; Greek gnōsis) 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 foundation of the Church's case for Christianity. 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 necessarily 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 5, Matt 23:34). Peter's use of the term "scriptures" for Paul's writings supports this conclusion (2 Pet 3:15, 16) ["So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures."] By comparing Paul's letters to the "other scriptures," Peter implies that Paul's correspondence is part of Scripture.

The NT is the apostolic witness to Jesus and to His 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, unimpaired witness to 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 Thes 3:27; 2 Thess 3:6-15). Thus the NT embodies the witness of the apostles, either directly, or indirectly through their close associates Mark, Luke, James, and Jude (see Luke 1:1-3; Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37; 16:11; Col 4:10; 14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24).

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

1. Total 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 affirming 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.s

Regarding the OT, Adventists, along with other Protestants, accept only the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible, and not the so-called deuter-kanonical 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 apostolicity/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
Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understandi... http://www.ted-adventist.org/features-and-analysis/interpreting-scrip... cannot be broken [v. 8]. The Lord," some 422 times; (2) the "word of Yahweh," some 361 times; (3) the "utterance of man," some 423 times; (3) and God spoke [dibbār], some 422 times, and (4) the "word [dibbār] of the Lord," some 344 times. Numerous times are recorded the equivalency between the prophet's message and the divine message: the prophet speaks for God (Ex 7:12; 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 strong upon the prophet (Isa 8:1; 10:1; Ezek 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 reads, "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 despoiling the prophets of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets ... " The prophets' messages are God's messages. For this reason the prophets often naturally switch from third person reference to God ("He"), to the first person direct divine address ("I"), without any "thus saith the Lord" (see Isa 3:4; 5:3 ff.; 10:5 ff.; 27:3; Jer 5:7; 16:21; Hos 6:4 ff.; Amos 5:21 ff.; Joel 2:25; 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 19:16 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 use 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 as so as to by-pass the individuality of the human author, and thus the specific words are the words chosen by the human writer, yet the human and divine elements are so inseparable, the human messenger so divinely guided in his selection of apt words to express the divine thoughts, that the words of the prophet are called the Word of God. The individual words of Scripture are regarded as trustworthy, accurately representing the divine message.

This is illustrated by a number of NT references. Jesus says, quoting Deut 8:3, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [Greek hēmōa, "word," translating Hebrew qōl, "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 [lushō]; ... It cannot be broken, loosed, broken, healed, annulled, or abolished—even to the specific words. In Mt 22:41-46 He grounds His final, unanswerable argument to the Pharisees upon the reliability of the single word "Lord" in Ps 110:1. The apostle Paul (Gal 3:16) likewise bases his Messianic argument upon the singular number of the word "seed" in Gen 22:17-18. As we shall see below, Paul is recognizing the larger Messianic context of this passage, as...
it moves from a collective plural seed to a singular Seed.

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

C. The Analogy of Scripture (Analogia Scripturae)

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

Since all Scripture is inspired by the same Spirit, and all of it is the Word of God, therefore there is a fundamental unity and harmony among its various parts. The various parts of OT Scripture are considered by the NT writers as harmonious and of equal divine authority. NT writers may thus support their point by citing several OT sources as of equal and harmonious weight. For example, in Rom 3:10-18 we have Scriptural citations from Ecclesiastes (7:20), Psalms (14:3, 5:10; 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 illumimates the NT (and Himself in particular) in John 5:39: “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me.” Elsewhere Jesus describes how He is the Illuminator, even the fulfillment, of the OT: “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Mt 5:17).

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

The “analogy of Scripture” principle has three main aspects: (a) Scripture is its Own Expositor (Scriptura sui ipsius interpretes); (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 opens to them the sense in which he understands 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 1:5-13; 2:6-8, 12, 13.

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

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

While the different Bible writers may provide different emphases regarding the same event or topic, this will be without contradiction or misinterpretation. This is evidenced especially with parallel passages such as in the four Gospels. Each gospelwriter 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 straight-forward, 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 disciples’ 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, uncontrolled multiplicity of meanings. Jesus and the apostles spoke with authority, giving not just one of many individual readings of a passage, but the true meaning as intended by the human writer and/or divine Author (see, e.g., Acts 3:17-18, 22-24). At the same time the NT interpretation does not claim to exhaust the meaning of a given OT passage; there is still room for careful exegesis. There are also instances where the biblical writer intentionally used terminology or phraseology with a breadth of meaning that encompasses several different nuances indicated by the immediate context of the passage (e.g., John 3:3).

This is not to deny that some parts of Scripture point beyond themselves (e.g., typology, predictive prophecy, symbols and parables) to an extended meaning or future fulfillment, but even in these cases the extended meaning or fulfillment arises from, is consistent with, and in fact is an integral part of the specific truth-intention of the text; and Scripture itself...
It is also true that not every portion of Scripture was fully understood by the original hearers, or even by the inspired writers. In 1 Pet 1:10-12 the apostle indicates that the OT prophets may not have always clearly understood all the Messianic implications of their prophecies. Thus Peter implies another facet of the principle of the clarity of Scripture, i.e., that additional clearer revelation becomes a key to more fully understanding the less clear passages. This same point seems implied also from a different perspective in 2 Pet 3:16 when Peter writes that some of the things Paul has written are “hard to understand.” These difficult passages are not to be the starting point, which “the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction,” but are to be viewed in the larger context of clearer Scriptural statements of truth (v. 18; cf. v. 2). The clarity of Scripture corollary also involves the concept of “progressive revelation.” Heb 1:1-3 indicates this progress in revelation from OT prophets to God’s own Son (see also John 1:16-18; Col 1:25-26; etc.). This is not progressive revelation in the sense that later Scripture contradicts or nullifies previous revelation, but in the sense that later revelation illuminates, clarifies, or amplifies the truths presented previously. So Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) does not nullify the precepts of the Decalogue, but strips away from them the accretions of erroneous tradition and reveals their true depth of meaning and application.11 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 and often assume and build upon what comes earlier (sometimes called the epigenetic principle or analogy of antecedent Scripture).12 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 12:6, 42, 43; 1 Pet 1:10-12). Thus the spiral of understanding grows as later illuminates earlier, and earlier illuminates later.

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

A fourth general principle of biblical interpretation concerns the issue of preunderstanding or objectivity. In modern hermeneutical approaches toward the Bible, both among conservative/evangelical and liberal critical scholars, it is often assumed that the original intent of the Bible writer can be ascertained by the rigorous application of hermeneutical principles and exegetical tools, quite apart from any supernatural spiritual assistance. Thus non-Christians can determine the meaning of Scripture as well as Christians, if they use the tools and apply the principles correctly. This assumption is maintained in the laudable interest of upholding a degree of objectivity in interpreting the biblical text.

However, Scriptural data leads to a different conclusion. We note in particular, 1 Cor 2:11, 14: “For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. . . . The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

1. The Role of the Holy Spirit

“Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.” Since the Bible is ultimately not the product of the human writer’s mind but of the mind of God revealed through the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:12-13), it is not possible to separate “what it meant” to the human writer from “what it means” to the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates the mind of God to the interpreter. “One is not 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 dependence upon the Spirit with rigorous exegesis based upon sound hermeneutical procedures, far from leading to subjectivity, constitutes the only way of escaping subjectivity. Modern scholars are increasingly more willing to recognize that all come to the Scripture with their own preunderstandings, presuppositions, biases. This cannot be remedied by approaching the text “scientifically” without a “faith bias.” In fact, since the Scriptures call for a response of faith, an attempted “neutral” stance is already at cross-currents with the intent of Scripture (cf. Matt 13:11-17; John 6:69; Acts 2:38).

Believing and Spirit-led interpreters also come with their own biases and preunderstandings and are not impervious to error (cf. Acts 11:15). But for Christians who believe the promises of Scripture, it is possible to ask God to transform their minds so that they increasingly adopt and incorporate the presuppositions of Scripture and not their own (see Rom 12:1). The Spirit is promised of the disciples, and to us: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). It must be noted that the “you” here is plural; the Spirit directs interpreters together in the fellowship of the Church body (Ps 119:63; Acts 2:42; 4:32; Rom 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Eph 4:3-6), where they may be benefitted by exchange with and correction of other believers.13

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

2. The Spiritual Life of the Interpreter

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

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

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

II. Specific Guidelines to Interpretation

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

A. Two Hermeneutical Methods Compared

The two major hermeneutical methods we have just mentioned—the historical-critical method and the historico-grammatical (also called the historical-Biblical)—may be schematically compared by means of the following chart.
Notice the differences in definition, objective, and basic presuppositions. With regard to the presuppositions of the historical-critical method the first (“secular norm”) represents the basic orientation point of the method: “human reason and the supremacy of reason as the ultimate criterion of truth.” Presuppositions 2-4 indicate the crucial underlying principles of the method (see the classic formulation of these by Troeltzsch 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 historical-critical method, writes: "a critical method must fail, because it represents an inner impossibility. For the correlative or counterpart to revelation is not critique, 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,15 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 supernatural element 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 gains brought about by 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 procedures. 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 all of 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 by 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. Pierce, which focuses upon the 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 examples include the following: philosophical hermeneutics (the metacritical hermeneutical theory of Gadamer and the hermeneutic of suspension and retrieval of Ricoeur); hermeneutics of socio-critical theory, including sociological criticism (Gottwald), 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 interpretive 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-
Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understanding

In more general depiction of literary genre, the Biblical materials separate themselves into poetry and prose. The poetic literary type. Literary form and interpretation of content go hand in hand. For the biblical writers the literary context of the Scriptures was no less important than historical sense, including details of chronology, geography, and miraculous divine interventions in history. Thus by precept and example Scripture underscores the importance of interpreting the biblical material in its literal, biblical text.

The life setting (Sitz im Leben) of Abraham’s justification by faith in the Genesis account is very significant in Paul’s argument to the Romans, to show that it was before Abraham had been circumcised that this had happened (Rom 4:1-12). For Paul there is no question of a hypothetically reconstructed life setting that gave rise to the account, but the argument concerning His Messiahship (Matt 22:41-46). Again, Davidic authorship of Psalm 16 is also crucial to Peter in his Pentecost sermon to convince the Jews of the predicted resurrection of the Messiah (Acts 2:25-35).

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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, pericopae, 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 book of Genesis the book is divided neatly into ten sections, each identified by the phrase “the generations [toledoth] of . . . .” In the Psalms, along with the superscriptions introducing individual psalms, a number of psalms contain (a) stanzas that naturally divide the sections of the psalm (see, e.g., Ps 42:5, 11; 43:5), 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 identify their written materials in terms of specific genres or literary types. A few samples include: “history” or “account” (Hebrew toledoth, 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 28:1, 14, 15), 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 songs (Cant 1:1), proverbs (e.g., Prov 1:1, 10-11; 25:1), prophetic oracles or “burdens” (Hebrew massā‘, e.g., Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1, 11; Mal 1:1), visions (e.g., Dan 8:1, 2; Obadiah 1), covenant lawsuit (Hebrew rib, e.g., Isa 3:13; Hos 4:1, Mic 6:1), lamentation (Hebrew qināḥ, Ezek 27:32; Amos 5:1; Lamentations), gospels (e.g., Mark 1:1), parables (e.g., Mark 4:2), “figures” (Greek paraomia; 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 apokalyptai 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 cletic 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 chiastic, e.g., the books of Leviticus and Revelation’s), inclusio or “envelope construction” (e.g., Ps 8:1, 9; 103:1, 22), acrostic (Psalm 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145), qirash (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 and phrases in their context. This attention to 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 3:14 ("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; 32.

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 (Acts 2). Again, how that Matthew’s interpretation of the word "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 same process is true for 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 2:4-10); Matthew’s selection of the LXX patroinos “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, 32.

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 example, 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 20-22): 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 plan of redemption-restoration centering 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 imbibe alien thought-forms of the prevailing surrounding culture such as gnostic and platonic dualism.

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 modality 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. They 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 literalism.

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 1:16; citing Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7).

Of course, it is true that certain parts of the OT, in particular the ceremonial/sanctuary ritual laws and the enforcement of Israel's civil/therotic 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.

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.

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

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

2. This is not the place for a full-blown discussion of Revelation-Inspiration-Illumination. The doctrine of revelation-inspiration is foundational to the whole enterprise of biblical interpretation. According to the biblical record God has revealed Himself and His will in specific statements of 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 been promised to illuminate the minds of those who seek to understand the meaning of the divine revelation (John 14:26; 1 Cor 2:10-14).

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

4. The term 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), 151-175; 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, 90-96; and Jack P. Lewis, "Jainna Revisited," in The Canon Debate, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 146-162.


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 believe 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 of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word" (Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2003 [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald], 5).


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This is not to say that every time a scripture is referred to in passing, that the NT authors are attempting an exegesis of the passage. Just as we today might say that we escaped "by the skin of our teeth" without exegeting Job 19:20, so the biblical writers are steeped in OT language and imagery, and may use scriptural language without intending to exegesis the passage alluded to. We refer rather to those NT instances where the biblical writer is clearly expounding the meaning of OT passages.


29. Note in particular the usage of zeran in Gen 22:17, where the first occurrence of the word, in the verse clearly has a plural idea in the context of "the stars of the heavens" and the sand which is on the seashores, whereas the second occurrence of zeran in vs. 17b narrows to a singular "Seed" in the context of "his [singular] enemies." This usage parallels Gen 3:15, where in a similar way the word zeran moves from collective/plural to singular in meaning. See O. Palmer Robertson, Christ of the Covenants (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), pp. 93-103.

30. See Moody, pp. 205-208.

31. See Archer, Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, pp. 266-268.

32. See ibid, pp. 373, 374.


41. See William J. Larkin, Culture and Biblical Hermeneutics: Interpreting and Applying the Authoritative Word in a Relativistic Age (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), p. 316, who lists various possible criteria for normativity within Scripture: "limited recipient, limited cultural conditions for fulfillment, limited cultural rationale, or a limiting larger context." Even these cases, Larkin argues, involve only the form, and not the meaning of Scripture, and call for the reduction of the cultural-specific form to a principle, and the substitution of a contemporary form compatible with it. See Larkin, pp. 316-318, for illustrations drawn from the way the NT writers used the OT.

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Geneva, 20-21 May 2003
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."¹ Leadership specialists are embracing the reality that leadership is a process that invites, nurtures and leads the spirit of man.² 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.³

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 equipper 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 mingle[s] character related behaviours with the spiritual competencies and concludes the chapter from verse 9 onward with counsel regarding behaviour that gives evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit. ¹ Corinthians 12:12-31 and all of chapter 13 provide a spiritual character context for the practice of these competencies. Finally Ephesians 4:1-6 provides a similar preface to the presentation of the spiritual competencies and follows them with a pointed discussion of the need for spiritual behaviour as we practice them.

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

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

¹ http://www.ila-net.org/
- Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:6-16.
- Matthew 28:18-20

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