The Creator God made humanity into His image (Genesis 1:26–27) with multiple functions and dimensions, and one important aspect of this reality is that we were created as social beings to form a community. As humans, we need to live in all five dimensions of our existence—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social—in order to enjoy the fullness of life, harmoniously grow, and develop a true personality. However, anthropological studies usually stress only the first four aspects, but the fifth one, namely social, is as essential as the other ones, even though often overlooked. We tend to live individualistic lives, independent of the community, and we are proud of our distance and separation. Unfortunately, it is possible to isolate ourselves and withdraw into the shell of our individualism and forget the world around us and our essential God-given mission to live a life of integrity built on loving relationships, trust, and service.

The two biblical creation accounts clearly explain this social aspect. Our Creator created us for fellowship with Him, living in total dependence upon Him and enjoying His Presence. His desire is that we live a balanced life by first cultivating vertical and then horizontal relationships. These two features of life—a spiritual relationship with God and social relationships with other human beings—are essential ingredients for a healthy life and experiencing true happiness.

Our Creator God is unique and creative and by His magnificent design, so are His children. This uniqueness derived from God is good, and it is precisely the reason why we belong together, need each other, and have a strong desire for belonging. Because we are diverse yet equal, we can be a contribution and blessing to each other. From the very beginning, God’s model is that we form a community, not a human island: first a community of faith that will in turn serve the larger community in need.

God is a community; one God manifested in three persons, the Heavenly Trio. He is not a solitary person but a fellowship of love. The Bible alludes to this reality by proclaiming that the Creator made us in His image as the divine “We.” He created humanity as “we,” because He is the “We” (Gen 1:26). It is significant that God usually speaks about Himself in the “I” formula in the Old Testament (e.g., Exodus 20:2; Isaiah 41:10, 13), nevertheless, five times (in four biblical verses), He refers to Himself in the category of “We” (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7 [twice]; and Isaiah 6:8). Three times these specific proclamations are stated in cohortative forms, i.e., admonitions in the first person plural (“let us make,” “let us go down,” “let us confuse”) and twice with prepositions (“of us,” “for us”).

I wish to underline that the plural of the divine “We” is a plural of fellowship or plural of community within the Godhead. This plurality is a “plurality of Persons.” God communicates within Himself; He is in a dialogue within the Godhead. Edward Young speaks about the “plurality of persons in the Speaker,” Gerhard Hasel about “an intra-divine deliberation,” and Allen Ross about “a potential plural, expressing the wealth of potentials in the divine being.” When we truly know Him, then we will fellowship with Him and bow down in adoration before Him and His revelation (Isaiah 66:2). This will enable us to cultivate meaningful relationships and fellowship with others. God is the foundation of society, because He is We, He is Plurality, and from Him flows all the blessing.

This divine “We” also made humans as “we” (male and female; husband and wife), not as isolated individuals, but persons in close relationship and fellowship to Himself and to each other. From the very beginning, God wanted to be known not by His “I” only but also as “We” in His relationship to humanity. Humans created in His image must also be a plurality as He is We; and as there is a unity within God Himself, so two human persons (male and female), distinct and different, should become intimately one in marriage. Thus, the whole human being is “We” and not only “I” (Genesis 1:26–27). This will happen when they live in close personal fellowship and stay in relationship with Him who created them out of love. This communion and community of love and friendship begins in a marriage and should be reflected as well in our families. Marriage is a nucleus and model of all other healthy relationships. Society and community are built upon family units.

God’s intention was to have one big family living in harmony, love, peace, joy, and service. Their unselfish nature was to be God centered and other-person oriented. After the Fall, humanity lost this closeness, and alienation, separation, division, and blaming began. Only after conversion, when we become Jesus Christ’s disciples, are we changed and sent to build
meaningful relationships founded in unselfish service. As Jesus was preaching, teaching, and healing, so we should do (Matthew 4:23; 9:35–36; Mark 10:45; Acts 1:8). Service is one of the crucial characteristics of life and a sign of genuine Christ-like discipleship (Luke 10:25–37; James 4:17).

There is no commission without a mission (Genesis 12:1–3; Matthew 28:18–20). God is giving His spiritual gifts (gifts of ministry) to equip and enable His people to serve unselfishly.

The spiritual gifts must be exercised within the fruit of the Spirit, otherwise the service misses the mark and is empty because of self-centeredness. Paul proclaims powerfully in 1 Corinthians 13:3, “If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (NIV). It is interesting to observe in the book of Acts that the gift of the Holy Spirit was never given to an individual in isolation. This precious gift was always exercised in community as a result of prayer. As a community, we need to be equipped and serve together.

Believers in God, His Church, exist and should exist for others. This special community of faith is in the world to serve humanity’s needs: to preserve, to care, to heal, to give hope, to give a foretaste of heaven because of love (John 13:34–35). In this way, people will be attracted to God. For the first time, the universality of the mission was explicitly mentioned to Abraham. The Great Commissioner of the Old Testament declared: “And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3). The Lord stressed it three times to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18) that he was to be a blessing to the “all families on earth,” i.e., a light to the whole world. To Abraham, God explicitly said: “Be a blessing!” Why? Because He richly blessed him. He could be a blessing only because God blessed him. The seven-fold structure of Genesis 12:1–3 is striking. In the center position of the divine statements is an imperative (in Hebrew; not well expressed in our English translations and usually overlooked): “I will bless you.... Be a blessing! [italics added] ...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2–3).

God commands Abraham to be a blessing to others because the Lord’s blessing cannot and should not be taken selfishly. Abraham needed to live for others. Genesis 12:2–3 was therefore God’s programmatic statement for Abraham and those who would follow the same faith.

Abraham thus became the special messenger, missionary, to the entire world with a mission that would later be carried out by Israel and only fully fulfilled by Ebed Yahweh, the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 42:1–9; 49:1–7; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12; 61:1–3), on an even larger scale, because He would be the Salvation (not only that He would declare, bring or proclaim it) for the whole world (Isaiah 49:6)!!

When the Creator God calls His people into existence, He gives them a mission. God’s call presupposes a call for action. Biblical theology is a mission-oriented theology. The Hebrew Scripture knows nothing about an election of individuals or a people for salvation, but knows an election for mission (Exodus 3:7–10; 7:1–2; 19:5–6; Deuteronomy 7:6–8; Jeremiah 1:5). The mission and the message of the Old Testament people, even though both issues can be separated, belong firmly together. The mission includes the proclamation of the message to the larger community.

We need to remember and recognize that our mission also includes the God-delegated responsibility to care for His creation (Genesis 1:28). Ecological global concerns form part of this enormous task. Godly stewardship includes the care of nature, God’s created world. God did not say that we should malach (rule like monarchs over the animal world) or mashal (dominate by force or fear), but rather we should radah (rule with care). This special word suggests that we should rule by respecting this precious gift of life. We need to have in mind that this command is given in the pre-Fall situation to Adam and Eve, who were to exercise and imitate God’s loving and caring rulership as His representatives. They needed to exercise His delegated authority. Also, the term kabash used in Genesis 1:28 underlines the synonymous idea: to subdue with respect and love as God lovingly rules over His creatures.

We are here to create safe neighborhoods with good relations between neighbors. We have a message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19), a message of forgiveness and healing (Psalms 32:1–2; 41:4; 1 John 1:9), and a message of hope (Zechariah 9:12; Romans 5:1–5; 1 Corinthians 13:13). Jesus Christ stressed—in His intercessory prayer—for His followers to go to the world and serve, but at the same time be untouched by the world’s pollution and corruption (John 17:11, 15–19) and unite people (John 17:20–23; 14:6). The question always remains: How are we as a Church, Seminary,
or individuals engaged in answering and fulfilling the needs of the larger community around us and responsibly caring for God's creation? Sometimes we can live as if in a greenhouse isolated from others or in a mighty un conquerable fortress that is isolated from people. In His commission at His ascension, Jesus underlined: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything I commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20 NIV), and “Be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8 NIV). We are without excuse to go forward by His grace and fulfill this God-given task.

Endnotes

6 The New King James Version renders this text in the following way: “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). The proper translation depends on the understanding of the Hebrew preposition “b” (“in,” “by,” “through,” “on,” etc.) and its syntactical function (taken here as an instrumental bet).
7 My translation. The Hebrew phrase kol mishpechet is rendered in the Septuagint as passai hai phulai “all the tribes” (12:3; 28:14); but the Hebrew expression kol goyeh is used in Genesis 18:18; 22:18; and 26:4 and is translated in the LXX as panta ta ethne (“all the nations”). The intention of the text envisioned the whole world with all families or clans.
8 Paul Borgman, Genesis: The Story We Haven’t Heard (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 124: “God’s ultimate promise to Abraham, a challenge also, lies in the bringing of blessings to others.” Sarna comments on the statement “you shall be a blessing” in the following way: “As a consequence, you [Abram] will serve as the standard by which a blessing is invoked” (Nahum Sarna, Genesis [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 89).
10 It is significant that the seventh promise is quoted in Acts 3:25 with reference to the Jewish people who listened to Peter’s sermon, but in Galatians 3:8 it is used in reference to the Gentiles. In this way Abraham's physical and spiritual descendants are included. The mission of the Christian church is the same: to be a blessing to the whole world (Matthew 5:16; John 15:5, 16; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 2:9).
11 The literal translation of Isaiah 49:6 highlights this point plainly: “And he says [the Lord to His Servant]: ‘It is a small thing that you be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will even give you for a light to the Gentiles (nations) to be my salvation to the end of the world’” (translation is mine).
13 God did not make a decree in the eternity past to save only some people and others to condemn to eternal damnation regardless of their will, attitude, life and response to His love (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 45:22; Ezekiel 18:23; 32; 33:11; compare with 1 Timothy 2:3–4; 4:10; Titus 2:11). See also Romans 8:28–39; Ephesians 1:1–10. Salvation is only in Christ Jesus and eternal condemnation is for those who refuse to believe in Jesus as their personal Savior (John 1:12; 3:16, 17, 36; 16:9; Acts 4:12).
14 About the summary and characteristics of the Old Testament message, see my article “The Message of God's People in the Old Testament,” Journal of the Adventist Theological Society 19, no. 1–2 (2008): 18–39. It is misleading to speculate what was first—mission or message. It is like asking the question: What was first, a hen or an egg? Mission without its content is a contradiction per se, an empty experience; and it is no mission at all, because it would have nothing to live for and proclaim. Content without mission is dry and deadly.
“Toward A Theology of Community” by Jiří Moskala
Ruach ve Dabar

“Sanctuary of the Soul” by Peter Swanson
A motif of the busy marketplace in the Bible

“Christ in a Water Crisis” by Darnisha Thomas
Outreach to the community of Flint, Michigan

“Coming and Going” See the faculty members who are leaving or joining us at the Seminary

“The Shepherd and the Exegetes” by Richard M. Davidson
Hermeneutics through the lens of Psalm 23

“The Story of The Grace Place” by Hyveth Williams & Betty Eaton
A church benefiting the community of South Bend, Indiana

“Interview with Jiří Moskala” by Ryan Brousson
A discussion of the dean’s vision for the seminary, its magazine and more!

“Theological Field Education” by Harizo Fanivana & Emeka Buffong
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COMING and GOING

WELCOME ANDREA LUXTON
President, Andrews University

WELCOME CHRISTON ARTHUR
Provost, Andrews University

FAREWELL NIELS-ERIK ANDREASEN
President Emeritus, Andrews University

Ron and Lisa Clouzet, former director and associate director of the North American Division Evangelism Institute, accepted a call to the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, South Korea, where they will serve as ministerial director and associate director, respectively, as of June 1, 2016.

Jerry Moon, chair and professor of the Department of Church History, was given a grand send-off by his Seminary colleagues when he retired July 1, 2016.

Boubaker Sanou, recent Andrews University PhD graduate, joined the Department of World Mission as assistant professor, August 1, 2016.
INCOMING ... continued

FELIX CORTEZ

Felix Cortez is director of the MA in religion and affiliations & extension programs as of August 1, 2016.

WILLIE HUCKS

Willie Hucks, former associate editor of “Ministry” magazine, joined the Department of Christian Ministry as associate professor on July 1, 2016.

JOHNNATHAN WARD

Chaplain Johnnathan Ward, author of “Hope for Families of Children with Cancer,” joined the Department of Christian Ministry as assistant professor on July 1, 2016.

WAGNER KUHN

Wagner Kuhn is interim dean of the School of Graduate Studies and will become chair of the Department of World Mission on January 1, 2017.

JOHN REEVE

John Reeve became chair of the Department of Church History on January 1, 2016.

DENIS KAISER

Denis Kaiser is currently completing a PhD at Andrews University and will join the Department of Church History as assistant professor on January 1, 2017.
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The Intersection of Adventism and Luther

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Ministry is more than a theory. Ministry is the Gospel in action for seminarians. Whether it’s preaching an evangelistic series, serving in local churches, or meeting the needs of the surrounding community, we desire to spread the light of life to all we meet. A few Current magazine contributors conducted a survey to determine exactly how seminarians were involved in ministry during the 2015–2016 school year. Listed below are the findings:

1. Local Church Leader (elder, deacon, Sabbath school, etc.)
2. Bible Studies & Visitations
   - Young Adult Friday night vespers
   - Nursing home visitation
3. Small Groups
   - Grow Groups (Pioneer Memorial Church)
   - Accountability group
4. Youth Ministry (Pathfinders, youth group, etc.)
   - Lake Union Season of Service Youth Rally
   - Center for Youth Evangelism
5. Evangelism
   - Field school evangelism in Lexington, Kentucky
   - Care for Cuba
     - Evangelistic series
     - Providing bicycles, computers, etc., to the pastors in Cuba
   - Unlock Revelation (churches across the Lake Union)
   - Weekend revivals
6. Campus Ministries
   - Passion Play
   - Seminary Running Club
   - Deliverance Mass Choir
7. Family Ministry
   - First the Blade
   - Family Conference
8. Social-Aid Ministry
   - Mission for Salvation & Health to Communities in Distress (MISCOD)
     - Providing aid for Haiti
   - Water for Flint, Michigan
   - Paying school fees for 20 children in Mali
   - Refugee service ministry activities
   - Adventist-Muslim relations
   - Refugee ministry in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Jeanmark A’Kessler, associate pastor and MDiv student, is a servant of God and friend to man. He is married, creative and energetic to share the Gospel in new and dynamic ways for this generation.
THE SANCTUARY OF THE SOUL

By Peter Swanson

It all starts in the noisy marketplace! People everywhere, sharp bargaining, vendors yelling to get your attention. But there's a quietly insistent Voice that can be heard above the tumult. If you listen carefully, you will hear the invitation: Come out of the marketplace into the meeting place. Come into the Sanctuary of the Soul.

“Listen! Wisdom is calling out in the streets and marketplaces.” At the corners of noisy streets, she calls out. At the entrances to the city, she speaks her words.” She calls out to the crowds along the main street, and to those in front of city hall. “Come and listen to my counsel. I’ll pour out my spirit on you and make you wise.”

“In the midst of this maddening rush, God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him.” Come out of the Market Place into the Meeting Place—come into The Outer Court of the Sanctuary of the Soul. “When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God.”

“At the altar of prayer, [in the Holy Place] as the throne of grace is touched by faith, we receive from the hand of God that celestial torch which enlightens our darkness, and convinces us of our spiritual necessity.”

“The citadel of the heart is the temple of the Holy Spirit.” The heart [the Most Holy Place] is the citadel of the spiritual life.” “To love God with all the heart is the first great law of the universe.” “A heart of faith and love is dearer to God than the most costly gift.”

“With a heart all aglow with the love of Jesus, we may reveal to others [in the Market Place] what we have seen and learned.”

The Penitent Thief

The Sanctuary of the Soul motif is illustrated by the unfolding understanding of the thief on the cross. The Market Place of the dying thief was a cross, surrounded by a jeering mob. Though spiked hand and foot to the instrument of torture, he feels himself drawn toward the malignant and despised Man crucified beside him.

In the Outer Court of his experience, “He calls to mind all he has heard of Jesus.” “He had heard Pilate declare Him to be a just man; he had marked His Godlike deportment and His pitying forgiveness of His tormentors.”

In the Holy Place of his experience, “The Holy Spirit illuminates his mind, and little by little the chain of evidence is joined together.” “As his heart went out to Christ, heavenly illumination flooded his mind.” “The faith of the dying thief grasps the truth of a sin-pardoning Saviour.”

The Most Holy Place of his soul is where, “In his heart he acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of God.” And, “the poor thief, on the brink of eternity, calls Jesus his Lord.”

“Amid the moral darkness [in the Market Place] there shines with distinct brightness the faith of a dying sinner as he lays hold upon a dying Saviour.”

No time now to ask for forgiveness from those he had wronged. No time to pay back what he stole. No time to break his ingrained bad habits. No time to see the fruits of the Spirit emerge. Just enough time to cling fast to that magnificent promise and to let his light shine even as his life ebbs away.

Quest for Truth

The Sanctuary of the Soul metaphor illustrates the process involved in the search for truth, and tests the veracity of what is accomplished at each stage.

In the Market Place of every day’s bustling activities, the appealing Voice of the Eternal is heard, “Come here and listen to me! I’ll pour out the spirit of wisdom upon you, and make you wise.”

Come away from the noise and distractions into a secluded place where limitless riches will be revealed.

It is in the Outer Court that the mining for truth takes place. This is where knowledge is accumulated; it is here that extremely careful attention is given to the sacred task of rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

“The Lord would have his people search for truth as for hidden treasure. The shaft must sink deep in the mine of God’s word which is rich with precious jewels of undiscovered truth.” “Let the inquirer after truth put to the stretch of his mental powers in diligent study of the word of God.” “As Christians we are made depositories of sacred truth, and we are not to keep the truth in the outer court, but bring it into the sanctuary of the soul.”

“God’s people have evidence piled upon evidence; they have truth powerful and convincing. Shall it be kept in the outer court, so that it does not sanctify the soul?”

Clearly, the work does not end in the Outer Court. The Lord wants more than our mere assent to the truthfulness of what is learned. He wants the
truth that He has revealed to our intellects to move beyond the Outer Court into the Holy Place of Integration. As the fragrant oil flows through the golden pipes to replenish the flame that burns in the golden lampstand, so the gentle influence of God’s Spirit flows into our minds and brings conviction to the Conscience.

“Let each one closely examine himself to see whether the truth which he professes to believe has been kept in the outer court, or brought into the inner sanctuary of the soul.” “When the conscience is guided by human perceptions, which are not subdued and softened by the grace of Christ, the eye of the mind sees things in a false, distorted light.” “The question is, Has the man a well-instructed, good conscience, or is it biased and warped by his own preconceived opinions?” “Men may be conscientiously wrong as well as conscientiously right. Paul hunted the Christians from city to city, verily believing that he was doing service to God.” “Is the conscience in harmony with the Word of God? If not, it cannot safely be followed, for it will deceive. The conscience must be enlightened by God.”

The conscience may be misinformed. Ellen White’s conscience did not tell her that she was in error about her faithful Sunday observance. “God overlooked the times when people didn’t know any better. But now he commands everyone everywhere to turn to him and change the way they think and act.” Her conscience needed to be enlightened and recalibrated and aligned with revealed truth so that it would approve Sabbath observance instead of Sunday observance.

The correctly functioning conscience instantly recognizes the distinction between right and wrong. It consistently promotes right doing and consistently shuns wrongdoing. The spiritually revitalized conscience is “as true to duty as the needle to the pole.”

In the Sanctuary-of-the-Soul model the conscience is enshrined in the Holy Place. This is where light from the golden candlestick shines on the inspired page—represented by the showbread. That radiance convicts the conscience about the integration of truth into the life.

But Outer-Court Truth is not enough. And Convicted-Conscience Truth is not enough. “You may have a conscience, and that conscience may bring conviction to you, but the question is, “Does that conviction reach your heart?” Has the truth gone from the Outer Court into the Holy Place of Conscience, and then into the inner sanctum of the soul—the Most Holy Place?

“The heart is to be kept as a temple holy unto God.” “When the truth is held as truth only by the conscience, when the heart is not stimulated and made receptive, only the mind is affected. But when the truth is received as truth by the heart, it has passed through the conscience and has captivated the soul with its pure principles.” “The truth is no truth to the one who merely makes a profession, who is not sanctified by its power, upon whose heart its image is not stamped.” “Many accept an intellectual religion, a form of godliness, when the heart is not cleansed. Let it be your daily prayer, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.’”

“The change of heart represented by the new birth can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. It alone can cleanse us from all impurity.” “Then a spirit of kindness will be manifested, not by fits and starts, but continually. There will be a decided change in attitude, in deportment, in words and actions toward all with whom you are in any way connected.” “When the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the Word of God will drop off.” “When it is in the heart to obey God, duty becomes a delight.”

Those changes will be observable and obvious to people in the Market Place. “Through conformity to the will of God, we shall become so Christlike that men will see that we are partakers of the divine nature.” “The light, and love, and power of the indwelling Christ shine out through them, so that men, beholding, ‘marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.’”

No One is Excluded

A full and accurate understanding of Bible truth is not essential in order for one to be saved. Through the gracious initiative of God, the path to salvation can be found even by one who knows not one verse of Scripture.

“Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.”

“The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn [out of the Market Place] to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus.” “Though ignorant of the written law of God, [Outer Court] they have heard His voice speaking to them [Holy Place] the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts [Most Holy Place] and they have done the things that the law required.” [Market Place]

A Puzzling Paradox: the pious heathen person may be information impoverished about Bible truth and salvation, but very rich in good works, which provide convincing evidence of his conversion. “Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.”

The diligent student of Bible truth may be very rich in information about salvation, but poverty-stricken when it comes to the works of righteousness that attest to a changed life.

Discernment Road Blocks

There are hindrances to an accurate understanding of truth. No matter how skillful a person may be in the exegesis and interpretation of Scripture, a disconnect from the integration of truth into the life will obscure the true meaning of the text. “God does not conceal His truth from men. By their own course of action they make it obscure to themselves.”

“In order to arrive at truth we must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it.” “He only who makes righteousness a part of his life is prepared rightly to estimate the truth.” “A faultless creed and a carnal life are too often found together in professes believers.”

The person whose Market-Place life is inconsistent with revealed truth loses the perspective that lived truth brings to the understanding of God’s Word. Another hindrance to an accurate understanding of truth is jarring discord among believers. In their personal relationships, in their interactions with their professional associates, and in the ways they relate with their antagonists, there is disension. Dissonance and disunity distort relationships and dishonor God.

“Let Christians not make it possible for the enemy to point to them and say, Behold how these people, standing under the banner of Christ, hate one another.” “Those who refuse to work in harmony greatly dishonor God. The enemy of souls delights to see them
working at cross purposes with one another.” “Do not make little wedges of slight differences of opinion, and drive them in to separate heart from heart, but see how you can love one another even as Christ has loved you.” “Those who are following a course of action that separates them from their brethren and brings in discord and dissenion, need a thorough conversion. Our hearts must be melted and subdued by the love of Christ.”

“The most convincing evidence of the power of the gospel to the world is its effect on the lives of those who believe it.” “The fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character.”

Enriched Devotional Experience

The Sanctuary-of-the-Soul motif may also be a means of enlivening one’s daily devotional experience. “Let us turn aside from the dusty, heated thoroughfares of life to rest in the shadow of Christ’s love.”

In imagination let us see Him take us by the hand and lead us from the Market Place into the tabernacle of our minds. It is here in the Outer Court that we see Him pause at the altar of sacrifice that reminds us of His great sacrifice on the cross. It is here that we must place our hands on the Sacrificial Lamb and confess our sins and sinfulness and our utter need of the salvation that He offers to us as a free gift!

He points us to the laver, to the place of cleansing. And we remember how we came up out of the waters of baptism, and how His robe of righteousness was wrapped around us, and how we were declared righteous, just as if we had never sinned.

He guides us into the Holy Place where we are to eat the Bread of Heaven, and where the lamplight glows on the sacred page. And where the fragrant oil and the golden flame of the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment reinvigorates our consciences and makes plain our duties for the day. At the altar of incense our prayers of gratitude, perfumed by the merit of Christ, ascend to the Father, whose smile of acceptance assures us of our standing as joint-heirs with our Redeemer.

Jesus puts His arm around us and leads us into the Most Holy Place. In this sacred trysting place He covenants to create within us the desire to do His gracious will and to provide the power we need in order to do what is pleasing in His sight.

And in this sacred trysting place we bow before the Shekinah, and we covenant with Him to fully and joyfully employ His empowerment to do whatever He asks us to do.

Then He reminds us that it is time for us to go out into the Market Place. “There is nothing that the Saviour desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character.” “Angels are amazed as they behold the transformation of character brought about in those who yield themselves to God. They see those who were in darkness becoming lights to shine amid the moral night of this crooked and perverse generation.”

“Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions.”

“It is our privilege to have a living, abiding Saviour. He is the source of spiritual power implanted within us, and His influence will flow forth in words and actions, refreshing all within the sphere of our influence, begetting in them desires and aspirations for strength and purity, for holiness and peace.”

Live out Thy life within me, O Jesus, King of Kings!
Be Thou Thyself the answer to all my questionings;
Live out Thy life within me, in all things have Thy way!
I, the transparent medium, Thy glory to display.
The temple has been yielded, and purified of sin;
Let Thy Shekinah glory now shine forth from within,
And all the earth keep silence, the body hence-forth be
Thy silent, gentle servant, moved only as by Thee.

Its members every moment held subject to Thy call,
Ready to have Thee use them, or not be used at all:
Held without restless longing, or strain, or stress, or fret.
Or chafings at Thy dealings, or thoughts of vain regret.

But restful, calm and pliant, from bend and bias free,
Awaiting Thy decision, when Thou hast need of me.
Live out Thy life within, O Jesus, King of kings!
Be Thou the glorious answer to all my questionings.”

Endnotes

1 The “Sanctuary of the Soul” concept is patterned after the tabernacle in the wilderness, “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting.” (Exodus 40:34 New International Reader’s Version) “And The Dazzling Light Of The Lord’s Presence Filled It.” (Exodus 40:34 Good News Translation)
2 Proverbs 1:20, Good News Translation
3 Proverbs 1:21, God’s Word Translation
4 Proverbs 1:21, New Living Translation
5 Proverbs 1:23, Common English Bible and The New Living Translation
6 Choice selections from the elegant writings of Ellen White provide the inspiration for these reflections about “The Sanctuary of the Soul.” References to the sources from which these quotations were drawn are too numerous to include in this article. Her statements are enclosed in quotation marks throughout. To get a hard copy of this document, please email swansop@andrews.edu.
7 Proverbs 1:23 The New Living Bible
8 Acts 17:30 God’s Word Translation
9 Frances Ridley Havergal

Peter Swanson, PhD, has taught graduate courses in Pastoral Care for over twenty-five years. He has been invited to teach and present at numerous national and international sites, and served as the chair of the Department of Christian Ministry. Prior to his emigration to the United States, he engaged in pastoral ministry for twelve years in his home country of South Africa.
One of the seven principles in the African-American holiday, Kwanzaa, is Ujima (collective work and responsibility). This means “To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers’ and sisters’ problems our problems and to solve them together.” (Karenga). This Kwanzaa principle resonated as the theme of a trip composed of seminarians, to Flint, Michigan, where our brothers’ and sisters’ problems became as if our own.

When I first heard about the water crisis, I didn’t take the time to understand the severity of this calamity. I thought it was going to be a temporary ordeal that would be taken care of in a matter of days or weeks. I also thought it was caused by water mixed with mud, but I was wrong. The water crisis began in April 2014, and it was only in January 2016 that Michigan’s Governor, Rick Synder, declared a state of emergency in Flint. I could not stop thinking about houses having unclean water gushing out of their faucets after staring at my sink streaming with clear water. I reflected on the possibilities of my family dealing with this deadly situation. I could only imagine a family of five going to the store every day in hopes of finding, at least, five cases of water, wondering how to make the water last for one day. After praying for a solution to this problem, I contacted the president of the Black Student Association of the Seminary (BSAS), Arnell McCoy, to brainstorm a plan as a response to the water crisis. McCoy fully supported this initiative as he was looking for an organization to donate water to Flint. During our conversation, he said:

“As the president of the Black Student Association of the Seminary at Andrews University, I felt like there is no way we can sit on the sideline and pretend like this crisis will somehow fix itself. We needed to act, and we needed to do it now! Water is an essential part of life that we take for granted until we can no longer go to our shower or kitchen sink, and use the water that we pay for every month. The residents of Flint, Michigan, did not ask for this problem; it was dumped on them. That is why I felt like it was so important that we did not spend our time asking why, but instead, we spend our time gathering resources so we could provide them with what they needed the most, clean water.”

We both agreed it was important to get the Seminary involved in this initiative. After our discussion, I was informed of a seminarian, Latina Carriger, who had recently made a trip to Flint with her husband. McCoy and I connected with her regarding the water distribution location, and she mentioned going back to distribute more water. An online fund-raiser account (Go Fund Me) was created for out-of-state individuals who wanted to make monetary donations. Both seminary and local community members were eager to donate cases of water. The water aisles in the local
stores were vacant as a result of this water relief initiative. I remember going to the grocery store and encountering two seminarians with two carts filled with water; the manager of the store brought out more cases of water for them. Moments later, I witnessed a shopper giving a monetary donation to help with gas and other expenses then wishing them Godspeed.

On Jan. 29, 2016, 12 seminarians gathered and packed over a thousand cases of water in two trailers and began the three-hour drive to Flint, Michigan. Many seminarians sacrificed studying and Sabbath preparations to be a part of this initiative. “I have embraced the command that I am my brother’s keeper and the resources God has blessed me with are to share,” Charlene Jenkins mentioned, “Although I was extremely saddled with school assignments I believed human survival took precedence.”

Upon arrival, a group of us stopped for a break at a pediatrics office. We noticed where the parents and children would normally have the freedom of using the water fountain it was covered by water bottles. We were able to talk with the receptionists and the pediatrician about the water crisis. We discovered the reason for the pediatrician opening the office on Fridays was for lead testing as a result of the water crisis. After leaving, we eventually arrived at one of the distribution areas across the street from the fire station where residents go to pick up water. The residents were only allotted one water case per person at the fire station each day. However, we were able to give the residents as many water cases as they needed, whether five cases or ten cases. One case of water is not enough for one person because water is a vital necessity. We were able to show authentic love for those who came to collect water by taking the time to hear their stories about the water crisis and praying with them; they were so glad we were able to travel from Berrien Springs, Michigan, to provide water relief. At the end of the day, we were able to serve over 200 people with over a thousand cases of water.

Going to Flint, Michigan, is an experience I will never forget. It was amazing to see fellow seminarians from different walks of life coming together whether giving water and monetary donations, loading water cases in the trailers, distributing the water, or soliciting prayers for this outreach project. New friendships were made from the water relief initiative. We received so much love from the campus of Andrews University, the local community, and our global community. This was a great way to start a revolution of service by extreme generosity with no strings attached to those who were affected by such tragedy. God had blessed us to be a blessing to the people in need for such a time as this. Jesus mentioned in a parable in Matthew 23:40, “Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.” Let us continue with the revolution of service here in the Seminary. Let this become a recurring theme that we, as seminarians, will continue to expand our walls and fill a need when we see a need.

Works Cited

Darnisha Thomas is currently finishing her degree at the seminary. She is excited to be used by God upon graduation. She enjoys reading, blogging, cooking and music.
THE SHEPHERD AND THE EXEGETES
Hermeneutics through the Lens of Psalm 23

By Richard M. Davidson

Introduction

The hermeneutical process, as it emerges according to Scripture's own testimony, may be outlined in rough comparison with the biblical Decalogue (“Ten Words”) of Exodus 20. Just as the first table of “Four Words” deals with the divine-human (vertical) relationship, so there are four general principles arising out of the divine-human nature of Scripture, which constitute foundational presuppositions undergirding the entire hermeneutical endeavor. Similarly, just as the second table of “Six Words” in the Decalogue encompasses the human (horizontal) relationships, so the specific hermeneutical guidelines for the interpreter may be organized under six basic headings.¹

Many years ago I read a book entitled God’s Finger Wrote Freedom,² in which the author argued that each “commandment” of the Decalogue is really a safeguard allowing freedom to experience the ten positive principles of the Ten Commandments set forth by God. I would like to suggest that the “Hermeneutical Decalogue” which arises from Scripture likewise constitutes safeguards to preserve our freedom to receive the meaning of the biblical passage which God intends to impart to us. The truth shall set us free (John 8:32). Let us see how this plays out in the case of Psalm 23.³

The Hermeneutical Decalogue (“First Table”) and the 23rd Psalm

I. Sola Scriptura (“By Scripture Alone”)

First, the sola Scriptura principle (Isaiah 8:20) frees us from the tyranny of tradition, and philosophy, science, reason, and experience (Matthew 15:3, 6; 1 Timothy 6:20; Proverbs 14:12). These are no longer the authoritative norms by which we read and interpret the Bible. The Bible is free from these restrictions. The Bible and the Bible alone is the rule of our faith and practice, and by Scripture alone are we to judge what is truth. We are freed to read Scripture without having to critique what it says by our reason. We have to critique every other book and source of information in the world, but when we come to the Scripture (and the writings of Ellen White, which have met the Scriptural test of a true prophet), we can breathe “pure oxygen” of truth, and use our reason, guided by the Spirit, not to critique, but to receive, and understand, Scripture (Isaiah 66:2).

We do not need to accept the traditions of the church fathers regarding the allegorical meaning of the Psalm, nor be swayed by the historical-critical dissections, conjectures and reconstructions or post-modern deconstructions of the text. We can engage in the interpretation of the psalm accepting its own claims!

II. Tota Scriptura (“By the Totality of Scripture”)

Second, the tota Scriptura (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 3:14–16) principle frees us to accept all of Scripture, all of Psalm 23, not just the part that fits a predetermined worldview. We seek to view the psalm in the light of the totality of Scripture and its own worldview, rather than impose our own worldview upon the text. For example, when the superscription of Psalm 23 states that it is a “Psalm of David,” (mizmor ledavid), we do not need to have a hermeneutic of suspicion regarding the authenticity of such a superscription, but with a hermeneutic of consent we are free to accept all that the text says, including the superscription, without taking out the redactor’s scalpel to perform surgery on the text.

III. Analogy of Scripture (“Scripture Interprets Scripture”)

The totality of Scripture implies the third presupposition: if all Scripture is inspired by the same Spirit, then there is an underlying harmony among the various parts of the Word. The “analogical of Scripture” frees us to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture (Luke 24:27; 1 Corinthians 2:13). As Jerome Skinner has demonstrated in...
his recently-defended dissertation on the Davideic psalms with historical superscriptions, the Hebrew lamed in the phrase mizmor ledavid (“Psalm of David”), used in the superscriptions of 73 psalms in the Psalter, is a lamed of authorship, indicating that the author of these psalms (including Psalm 23) is David. We are freed to look at the historical books (1 Samuel 16) to see the background of David as a shepherd boy, as well as parallel psalms such as Psalm 78, which describe God taking David from shepherding to be a shepherd king.

With the biblical principle of the analogy of Scripture, we are free to accept the consistency and clarity of Scripture, and we do not have to resort to a deconstruction of its meaning according to some postmodern, post-colonial agenda of power politics.

IV. Spiritual Things are Spiritually Discerned

As a fourth freeing principle, “Spiritual things are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:11, 14), through the work of the Holy Spirit we have freedom in His power to begin to lay aside our own biased presuppositions and grasp Scripture’s worldview, freedom to see more and more clearly the meaning of Scripture through His enlightenment and be changed by that knowledge of Scripture in our personal lives (John 5:46–47; 7:17; Psalm 119:33).

With these powerful four basic principles of hermeneutical freedom, arising from Scripture itself, we can plumb the depths and soar to the heights of truth, beauty, and goodness in our exegesis. As we catch this positive vision of the freeing effect of these foundational principles, we can explore the biblical text with new passion and joy as we apply the six practical steps of interpretation arising from the testimony and precedence of Scripture. Let us savor some of this passionate joy in regard to the 23rd psalm!

The Hermeneutical “Decalogue” (Second Table) and the 23rd Psalm

V. Text and Translation

Unlike many passages in Scripture, there is widespread agreement regarding the unity and integrity of the text. There are no textual variants displayed in the apparatus of BHS for this entire psalm. We are free to take the full text as it reads, and seek to grasp its import. The translation is straightforward, although, as we will see, there are some surprises that await us.

VI–X. Other Practical Hermeneutical Steps of Interpretation

In what follows, I will integrate the various practical steps of the hermeneutical process that emerge from the self-testimony of Scripture (steps VI to X), as we move briefly through the psalm. These include: (VI) Historical Context/Questions of Introduction; (VII) Literary Context and Analysis; (VIII) Grammatical/Syntactical/ Semantic Analysis; (IX) Theological Context/Analysis; and (X) Homiletical Application.

Superscription: “A Psalm of David.”

As we have already noted above, the superscription mizmor ledavid informs us that the author of this Shepherd Psalm is David. When we go to 1 Samuel 16, we find the historical background of David’s own experience as a shepherd as a youth, and Asaph continues to use the shepherd metaphor in depicting the nature of David’s kingship: “He also chose David His servant, And took him from the shee-fold;” (cf. Proverbs 27:25). This imagery reminds me of springtime as a preschooler, living in an area surrounded by desert, where the tall, soft grass sprang up and I would lie down contentedly in its softness.

Superscription: “A Psalm of David.”

Verse 1: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” A surprise awaits us already in the opening line of the poetry. The word for “shepherd” in Hebrew comes from the verb ro’ah, which has two meanings for the same spelling: to “shepherd” and “to be fond of, delight in, associate with as a friend.” Thus, in the “unpointed” consonantal text (recall that in the original Hebrew text there were only consonants, no vowels) the verb (Qal active participle plus the 1cs ending) can be translated as either “my shepherd” or “my friend.” The MT points this word as ro’i “my shepherd” but it could just as well be pointed as re’i “my friend” (as in Song 5:16). In the context of Psalm 23, it is clear that it refers to a shepherd, but the semantic ambiguity could lead one to associate the meaning “friend” with shepherd, with powerful connotations. The shepherd is also a close friend! Therefore the sheep will not lack any good thing.

Verse 2a: “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” What picture does this poetic line in English evoke? I used to think that this describes a verdant place for the sheep to eat good quality grass, a place with plenty for the sheep to eat. But several indications are that this is not the primary force of David’s words:

1. The Hebrew word used here for “pasture” (no’vah) is not the normal word for a sheep’s feeding place; it means “comely, lovely, pleasant place.” The emphasis is upon beauty and pleasantness, not food.

2. The Hebrew word for “green” (desheh) is really a noun, not an adjective. It refers to “tender, fresh soft grass” (cf. Proverbs 27:25). This imagery reminds me of springtime as a preschooler, living in an area surrounded by desert, where the tall, soft grass sprang up and I would lie down contentedly in its softness.

3. Habits of sheep verify this. The shepherd grazes the sheep early in the morning (3 or 4 a.m.) till the sun is getting hot, and then leads them to a place where they can comfortably lie down in the shade. The sheep do not eat lying down! The verse is not speaking of sheep eating (although this may
be secondarily implied). Rather the focus is upon their place of comfort after their eating, as they are chewing their cud (ruminating) in a place of pleasant fresh soft grass. If I were preaching this psalm, I would make application to today, where God “causes us to lie down” sometimes, and invites us to “ruminates” over His word.

Verse 2b: David writes, “He leads me beside the still waters” (lit. “waters of rest/quietness [menukhot]”). Modern shepherders inform us that sheep do not like turbulent waters; with their heavy wool they might easily drown, and they are poor swimmers. So David describes how the good shepherd leads the sheep by still waters; the shepherd, if necessary, damns up the fast-flowing stream to provide calm waters where the sheep can drink.

The verb nahal “lead” (in the Piel stem) does not connote force, but has the idea of gentle leading, drawing with bands of friendship and love, as in Isaiah 40:11: “He shall gently lead me...” The Hebrew word tsalmavet is sometimes translated as “deep darkness,” but I prefer the more literal meaning “shadow of death.” Archaeologists and biblical geographers have suggested that this phrase refers to a specific place in Palestine called “the Valley of Death.” It has been identified with the Wadi Qilt that runs through the Wilderness of Judea from Jerusalem to Jericho. The gorge is some 15 miles long in total, and I have hiked (and camped) with my son through the entire wadi. The narrowest part is about five miles long, with cliffs reaching some 1,500 feet on each side, and space to walk at the bottom of only 10–12 feet in many places. (There was a murder in this torrent valley the week before I walked it; truly it is a “valley of death”).

Verse 3a: He restores my soul. Literally, “He causes my nephesh [soul/life] to return.” The shepherd “revives the soul/life” of the sheep by rubbing their nose and ears. Modern Basque shepherds relate how they go to each sheep sometime during the day, and the sheep rubs his leg or nibbles at the shepherd’s ear, or rubs his face against his cheek. It is a picture of the affectionate connection and acts of reassurance and encouragement of the shepherd with his sheep.

Verse 3b: “He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” Note especially the Hebrew word for “paths.” I always envisaged the shepherd leading the sheep through the steep and narrow mountain paths. But the word for “path” here is ma’gal, which refers to wide “wagon tracks,” a broad path. They are “righteous” (or “straight”) paths. The shepherd knows that sheep have poor eyesight, and no sense of direction. So when possible he leads them not in narrow paths, but wagon tracks, a broad, straight path for them to follow easily.

The phrase “for his name’s sake” indicates that the shepherd’s very name (reputation) is at stake as a good shepherd in making sure that the sheep are safe.

Verse 4a: “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” The phrase “you are with me” connotes the intimacy between shepherd and sheep. The “rod” (shebet) usually refers to a rod used to punish the enemies. It was probably about 2–3 feet long like the Basque shepherd’s rod today, and used to protect the sheep from wolves and other predators. The “staff” (mish’enet) was the eight-foot long shepherd’s staff with a crook at the end, which could be used to rescue sheep if they fell into ravines or other hard-to-reach places of danger. The shepherd was prepared to take care of the sheep in any emergency.

Verse 5: “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.” The “table” in the presence of the enemies perhaps alludes to the shepherd’s clearing the ground of poisonous plants, and preparing a place for them to eat, protected from the “enemies”—lurking wolves and lions and bears.

The shepherd had a big earthen jar of olive oil and a large stone jar of water. As the sheep come into the sheepfold in the evening, the shepherd dips his hand into the jar of oil, and puts ointment on the sheep’s head for healing and soothing. He draws out cupfuls of water from the pottery jar of cool water, for the sheep to sink his nose down clear to the eyes if fevered, and drink till refreshed. One by one the shepherd cares individually for the needs of the sheep.

Verse 6: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” The Hebrew word for “follow” is radaph, which actually means “pursue.” Some have suggested that “Goodness” and “Mercy” refer to the two sheepherds which herd (“pursue”) the sheep. And the sheep will dwell in the house (“presence”) of the divine shepherd forever (lit. “for length of days”).

The Deeper Theological (Typological) Meaning of the Psalm

We commonly make application of this psalm to our lives as the sheep, under the protective care of the divine Shepherd. But I suggest there is a deeper import to this psalm that has often been overlooked.

Scholars have recognized that in the inspired compositional strategy of the arrangement of the psalms in the Psalter, psalms with similar import were often placed together in thematic clusters. A careful study of Psalm 22 shows that this is a Messianic psalm, indicated as such within the psalm as it moves typologically beyond the experience of David to that of the New David. The psalm is cited repeatedly by Jesus and the Gospel writers depicting Jesus’ experience on the cross. It starts with “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” and ends with “It is done!”

But Psalm 22 is not isolated in the book of Psalms. It is part of a trilogy in the Psalter. Psalm 24 is a royal entrance liturgy, and is also ultimately a Messianic Psalm, pointing to Jesus’ ascension and entrance into Heaven, amid the antiphonal shout of the angels: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in! Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory.”

Sandwiched between the Psalm of the Cross and the Psalm of the Crown, is Psalm 23. I suggest this psalm is not just a nice “comforter” for God’s people.

Note it well: the Shepherd’s psalm was sung by a sheep (or lamb)! “The
Lord is my shepherd." On the deepest level, I suggest, this sheep is none other than the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He trusts His Father, the Shepherd. The Messianic import of this psalm is indicated not only by its compositional placement in the book of Psalms between two other messianic psalms, but also by its literary structure highlighting key Messianic terminology. This psalm has an intricate chiastic structure:

A. Presence: With God (v. 1)
  B. Provisions: Needs supplied (eat and drink) (vv. 2–3a)
  C. Paths: Righteousness (v. 3b)
  C' Paths: Shadow of Death (v. 4)
  B'. Provisions: Needs supplied (eat and drink) (v. 5)
  A'. Presence: With God (v. 6).

The heart of the psalm, the climactic central verses of its carefully crafted chiastic structure, describes the two major experiences of the Lamb: (1) "He leads me in the paths of righteousness" and (2) "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Ultimately, only the Lamb of God was both the Righteous One (fully innocent/blameless) and the one who passed through the shadow of death (as the sacrificial Paschal Lamb).

Psalm 22 is the Psalm of the Cross. Psalm 24 is the Psalm of the Crown. Psalm 23 is the Psalm of the Paschal Lamb! And, according to the ending of the psalm, He will ultimately "live forever" in the "house of the Lord," the heavenly sanctuary.

Only in the light of this Messianic interpretation of the Psalm can we in the deepest way "follow His steps" as God's sheep (1 Peter 2:21, 25). The Messianic dimension gives greater import to its practical application to our lives. If Psalm 23 is about the Lamb of God trusting in His Shepherd, then it has even more precious relevance for us who are to follow in His steps. We can walk in the steps of the Lamb of God, and like Him, trust in the Shepherd, in the paths of righteousness, and even in the valley of the shadow of death.

**Conclusion**

The hermeneutical principles found in Scripture free us as exegetes to plumb the depths of the Shepherd Psalm, following the clues of the contents and the contexts. In the 23rd psalm, we are invited to "Behold the Lamb of God" and, then, walking in His steps, to "Follow the Shepherd!"

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**Endnotes**

3 This paper was originally presented as Part II of a two-part study of the biblical foundations of hermeneutics, with illustrations taken from Psalm 23, given at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Faculty Symposium on Hermeneutics, Cancun, Mexico, May 3, 2016. Part I was prepared and presented by Felix Cortez, and consists of a historical survey of various allegorical, critical, and post-modern interpretations of Psalm 23, all of which in some way devalue or misconstrue the literal interpretation of the Psalm.
5 For biblical warrant for each of these hermeneutical steps, arising from Scripture itself, see Davidson, “Hermeneutical ‘Decalogue,’” 101–114.
7 For the meaning of Hebrew words referred to throughout this article, see the standard Hebrew lexicons, BDB and HALOT.
10 For this basic structure, and crucial insights into the Messianic character of the psalm, I am indebted to one of my students, Kevin Neidhardt, who wrote on this psalm for one of my seminary classes many years ago.

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“...innovative, creative, simple acts of kindness evangelism.”
I won’t be coming to church anymore,” Hyveth Williams, professor of Homiletics at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, declared to her pastor, Throstur Thordarson. She continued, “I feel the Lord has called me to do more than just sit in a church. I have been praying about this with one of my students, Heber Aviles, and I have decided to go to a section of Chicago and start knocking on doors. If you don’t see me in church it will be because I am out knocking on doors praying with people and seeing if I can find some who will study the Bible with me.”

Pastor Throstur calmly responded, “Let’s pray about this.” When they finished praying, he said, “There is a little company I have in South Bend. They are not growing and I’m thinking of disbanding them, but they have this beautiful church. Why don’t you go and look at it before you go to Chicago. Just see what can come of it.” The next Sabbath Hyveth looked at the church. “I was just overwhelmed by the facilities, the location, and everything. It was just as if God was saying, ‘This is where I want you to minister.’” Immediately, Hyveth contacted her friend, Heber, a Seminary student, and they both prayed about the possibilities. They invited a few other individuals to join them and the group eventually grew to twelve. They prayed and fasted together for a whole month, asking the Lord to reveal His will. The impression on all involved was that God wanted them to do something in South Bend, Indiana. They were further affirmed in their goal and zeal and became charter members and The Executive Team of “The Grace Place,” as the church plant has been named.

They felt the Lord leading them to do a church plant with a community focus rather than simply another worship program for disgruntled or disenfranchised Adventists. The thought was that if the community could be made healthy spiritually, physically, and mentally, the church would grow and make a difference through innovative, creative, simple acts of kindness evangelism. The plant was adopted by the South Bend First Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Indiana Conference, under the leadership of Dr. Thordarson.
Research of the city of South Bend revealed a population of 100,886 (2% of Indiana’s 6.6 million residents); 66% claim some kind of religious affiliation (29% Methodist, 20% Catholics – Adventists were too small to make the list and may have been lumped with the 6% others). It was evident that there’s a 44% un-churched to be reached with the Gospel, so the Team enthusiastically selected an area that includes about one-third of South Bend for outreach. After fasting and praying for three months, during the last month the small group spent a week walking throughout the community they hoped to minister to. They prayed for the people living there. They asked that God work in a mighty way to touch hearts and change lives. The next week the group drove around the target community every day and prayed for it. They said, “Lord, we are claiming this community in your name.” Each day of the third week someone prayed in the church facility. They prayed that God would bless the work and not only change those who came but also enable those ministering to be conduits of His love.

Following this, the group fasted and prayed for themselves and their leaders for a week. Then on Sabbath afternoons they began visiting malls and shopping centers in the designated area. They gave out cards and prayed for and with people. They announced they were starting a community church plant on February 16, 2013. In addition to these efforts, 175 former Adventists living in the area were contacted through personal visits, telephone calls and invited to return to church. Letters of apology were sent to each person. The letters, signed by Pastor Williams said, “We apologize for whatever caused you to be disconnected from us. We want you back.”

When visited, some people slammed their doors and said, “You are too late. Get lost!” However, a few accepted the invitation and came back. When the first church service began on February 16, 2013, ninety people were in attendance and at least fifty of them were from the community. Today, many have been baptized and others returned to the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist faith at The Grace Place where an average of eighty attendees worship weekly.

Once worship services began, attendees were invited to share a Sabbath meal together each week. Rather than being a potluck, the food was prepared by a hospitality team. The menu included two options—clean meats, like chicken, and vegetarian to allow community visitors to sample vegetarian food and learn about it while still being able to eat something they were used to in well-prepared, balanced meals. A few months after her baptism, Janet Turner, the first community member to join, became a vegetarian and the transformation of new members continues to amaze the leaders.

After the meal, those who are willing and able, go into the community to pray and invite them to worship at The Grace Place. They give out bread and other food as well as amenities such as toothpaste and soap. “Whatever we have we give,” says Hyveth. “Our gifts of love are changing lives. We have been told how different things are in the community since we started doing this. When we first started, one man cursed us and slammed the door in our faces. ‘Don’t bother me. I don’t want to have anything to do with anybody,’ he yelled. Immediately the visitors gathered on the front walk and prayed for the man. Then they carried a bag of food and set it near the door. As they were leaving, the man again opened the door. ‘We are from the Seventh-day Adventist Church and we just wanted to pray with you and give you this bag of food,’ they told him. ‘Ok. You can pray for me,’ he responded. During subsequent visits it was learned the man had lost both legs in the war in Afghanistan. He lived by himself and had no one to look after him. Now members of the church regularly check on him. He has come a long way from cursing us to now allowing us to pray with him, bring him things and look after him. We see this connection drawing us closer to God and to others.”

Being community focused includes cleaning up the neighborhood. Sometimes these efforts involve snow removal. Sometimes they involve cleaning out a house where the people are just so depressed and overwhelmed they can’t deal with it. Church members go in, scrub, throw out trash and help organize the home. Hyveth said, “When we revamped a house in one neighborhood, the neighbors came around, looked and asked ‘Who are these people?’” Curiosity drew them to the church and to evangelistic meetings the church currently holds every summer. Many people have baptized during these series.

While The Grace Place serves as a training lab for Seminarians, the Team has found many ways to reach the community. Financial Peace seminars, diabetes seminars and a health fair are just a few ways they have assisted residents. They also hosted a big July 4th party for the neighborhood. More than 200 people came to enjoy free popcorn, a bounce house and games for the children. Just For Kids is a monthly birthday program where parents having a hard time, economically, bring their kids who are given a great party, taught Bible stories and given birthday presents. In July 107 children accompanied by 81 parents were treated to the best party imaginable. The Creative Café is another innovative community program reaching college and young professionals through the “Spoken Word” held on the third Saturday night of each month at the Kroc Center. Many community people attend and share their poetry and songs about
Jesus providing opportunities to share the message from an Adventist perspective (see tgpthegraceplace.org for more information).

“Our strategy,” says Hyveth, “doesn’t focus on having a high worship service with the best singers, the best pianists, the best organists and long offering appeals. We have a simple service with three parts—prayer, praise and preaching. We don’t pass around a basket. We have a box in front where worshippers, moved by the spirit, bring their tithes/offerings and deposit it in the box. Generosity has characterized these gifts. Community residents see what the church is doing in the community and they want to show their support by giving. Another unique aspect of The Grace Place is that transfers from other churches are not encouraged or even accepted. While anyone may attend and are welcome to the weekly worship experience, to be a member one must be a returning Adventist or a new believer. “This is to help us see if we are truly growing, because to me, transfers do not reflect church growth,” emphasized Pastor Hyveth Williams who serves with two Seminarians, Pastor Leif Cano, Associate Pastor and Chris Hughes, Administrative Pastor. The Word is getting out. The Grace Place is making a difference!

Hyveth Williams. DMin, professor and director of homiletics, and editor of CURRENT magazine. She also serves as founder and pastor of The Grace Place, South Bend, Indiana.

Betty Eaton is an editor of the "Lake Union Herald," where this article first appeared.
Jiří Moskala has served as dean of the Seminary since 2013. Current magazine interviewed him regarding his five-year vision for the three-year-old magazine and the Seminary.

JM: My vision for Current is that each issue address specific questions that are relevant to the Church and students, provide an orientation as well as some answers to current problems we face in the post-Christian era, and enable us to better serve our gracious Lord, the worldwide community of faith and the needs of the world. It should also inform a larger audience about Seminary life, symposia and conferences being offered, and provide examples of the thinking and research of Adventist scholars, faculty, and students.

CM: Thus far into your tenure as dean, what are your impressions/reflections?

JM: The issues of life are more complex than ever. I am overwhelmed and “terrorized” by emails. When I accepted the call to be dean, I asked God for joy and peace so that the work could be done in a proper way and to His glory. God is fulfilling my request; and when the peace and joy are gone, I will know it is time to quit. To work with the students and to develop new programs brings me deep satisfaction. Serving and supporting the best staff and faculty in the world is a great privilege. Our faculty is an estimable resource for the Church, and to stimulate them to deal with hot issues is very rewarding. I have realized the wisdom of one African proverb that says: “If you want to go fast, run alone, but if you want to go far, walk together.” My desire is to build a happy, committed Seminary family; a community that supports each other unselfishly and with a passion to serve others in order to strengthen their Adventist identity.

CM: What goals/roles do you have as dean?

JM: My role as dean is first to cast a vision and to closely collaborate on that vision with the faculty, staff, students, and our Church. Working together in mutual trust and responsibility is my goal. As faculty, we need to diligently cooperate in order to give our students in the various programs the best education possible. We currently offer five master’s programs, six dual-degree programs on the master’s level, and six doctorates, as well as a post-doctoral fellowship. With over 1,000 students worldwide, this is a huge task. As the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, my vision for us is that we be a theological resource for the world Church, a global institution providing answers to the problems that the Church is facing on a worldwide scale, making the Seminary a source of light for the Church, and a model of a spiritual community of faith, love, and hope.

Second, to create space for faculty to excel and succeed in their God-given mission. My role is not for myself but to promote and create room for our faculty to collaborate with others. Creating space also means to create new programs and international sites, as well as online programs. I need to build and foster excellent relationships with the leadership of Andrews University and the Church, not only on the local level but also with all 13 world divisions, especially the North American Division (NAD) and the leadership of the General Conference (e.g., the president, vice-presidents, education and ministerial departments and Biblical Research Institute). I desire that our doctoral programs reach both national and international students.

Third, to motivate and encourage faculty and staff to fulfill their goals and mission.

Fourth, to listen carefully to students who come from various backgrounds and will be serving diverse groups once they graduate. I plan to promote the implementation of their ideas and thus improve the delivery of our spectrum of programs.

Fifth, to focus on the North American Division pastors, their education and development.

CM: What are some of your most satisfying accomplishments?

JM: There are many but let me enumerate some of them: hiring new faculty and staff dedicated to our mission, seeing students reach their academic goals, giving faculty awards for special accomplishments, being able to provide students needed financial
support that enables them to realize their education goals, receiving meaningful notes from faculty, staff, students, or church representatives which express gratitude for what is being done in the Seminary. Also, providing many successful conferences and symposia at the Seminary. Being able to work with top Church scholars and theologians in harmony, as well as to see the dedication of our staff to God’s cause and service. All these bring joy to my heart in the midst of heavy administrative responsibilities.

CM: Where and when was it decided to have a faculty hermeneutics conference?

JM: Three years ago, I expressed my passionate desire to bring our faculty together to study the Word of God, laugh and play, which would not only facilitate, theological unity but also social and spiritual. Later I spoke with a sponsor who was interested in helping with that vision. The topic of hermeneutics was chosen, because everything in the classroom and our ministry needs to be studied and done from a proper biblical perspective. It is a very important topic in our Church, so I wanted to engage all our seven departments in this enormous task. I was very pleased that they all decided to closely collaborate in presenting professional research papers on hermeneutics. This was a unique feature in itself because biblical hermeneutics is usually done in isolation by biblical scholars and systematic theologians.

CM: Who attended?

JM: Forty-three of our full-time faculty and their spouses.

CM: Why is hermeneutics important?

JM: Hermeneutics is in crisis in our Church. There is a need to comprehensively develop a balanced biblical hermeneutics and avoid the two extremes, the literalistic or the liberal approaches, in order to know how to interpret the Scriptures so we can have a solid foundation for all our activities. We need to be consistent in our interpretation of the Bible. We can say that church history is a reflection of the interpretation of the Bible. As Seventh-day Adventists, we need to be able to convey the Bible in a meaningful way in the 21st century. We are living very far (1,900–3,500 years) from when Scripture was originally written. Language, culture, habits, and lifestyle have changed over that time. We need to understand this change as well as the original intent of the biblical text for the original audience so we can know how to apply it to our postmodern world.

CM: Who paid for it?

JM: A private sponsor completely paid for it. Neither the Seminary nor Andrews University paid for this conference.

CM: What was the purpose?

JM: The purpose was to really engage all our professors and departments in rethinking what we do in order to make sure that everything we do in the Seminary is done from a biblical perspective and engagement. What we teach or do, and everything in the Seminary must be done in such a way that it reflects firm biblical principles, methodology, and worldview.

CM: What was the hoped-for result?

JM: To be more faithful to the interpretation of the biblical text. I am sure that from this engagement will spring a renewed passion for truth, because such an engagement with the Scriptures in seeking to obtain a better understanding of the Holy Word cannot do otherwise than bring an experience of joy, as happened in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah when they engaged in a deep study of the Scriptures (see Nehemiah 8). And the goal is that the Word of God will be in our mind and penetrate and transform our lives and that our hearts will burn for God in loving and humble service to others. As we read in Luke 24:32 regarding Jesus’s two disciples who only recognized Jesus after walking with Him and listening to His interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures for at least two hours on their way to Emmaus, they declared: “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” (NIV). It is my desire that our hearts will burn, and we will enjoy God’s Presence in such a way that we will freshly see the face of God and share this experience with others.

Ryan Brousson, MA (Religion) student, with an emphasis in systematic theology. Interested in science and religion, his goal is to teach within those fields at the university level.

“If you want to go fast, run alone, but if you want to go far, walk together.”

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Ryan Brousson, MA (Religion) student, with an emphasis in systematic theology. Interested in science and religion, his goal is to teach within those fields at the university level.
Athletes spend years preparing their bodies for a sporting event. Farmers prepare their land for plowing, fertilizing, weeding, and harvesting. Bakers prepare their kitchen and ingredients to make fine pastries. Soldiers prepare for various missions. Seminarians must also prepare for a life in pastoral ministry. At the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, if one has less than two years of pastoral experience, it is a requirement to enroll in Theological Field Education (TFE) in order to be prepared to minister after graduation. But what is TFE?

The 2014–2015 Andrews University Bulletin explains it like this:

TFE is built around the mentoring relationship between a ministry context mentor and an individual seminarian in area churches or community ministry settings. It fosters the formation of ministry practitioners who are intentional about theological reflection to create insightful religious practice. Two credits required for the Master of Divinity program.

Kenley Hall, associate professor of homiletics, was given the responsibility of developing a Field Education program for the Master of Divinity program because there was no formal field education program. After extensive research into existing benchmark programs, he developed the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary’s program. The first TFE handbook was published in 2010 and the program was launched in 2011.

TFE is unlike any other course the Seminary offers. This is where theory is put into practice. Seminarians are able to get practical experience in every aspect of pastoral ministry. Students with families are also encouraged to adjust their schedules to ensure they are ministering at home as well as in the church to which they are assigned. They are also rigorously assessed by and are able to learn from supervision of a Ministry Context Mentor (MCM) who is a seasoned pastor or educator. She or he measures and evaluates the TFE’s progress in relation to the goals set at the beginning of the program. There are over 40 MCMs who function as coaches. They are located in Berrien Springs and as far away as Indiana and Chicago, Illinois. Students are reimbursed for gas for mileage and, although the TFE program has a one-year requirement, they can stay with their particular church for as long as they are enrolled in the Seminary. Ministry opportunities abound and students are free to be creative, but they must discuss ideas with their MCMs to ensure a specific type is available, especially those participating in an extension ministry such as Ruth Murdoch Elementary School, prison ministry, seminary chapel services, to name a few.

In my interview with Michael Orellana, graduate assistant to Kenley Hall, I asked about the greatest challenges he has encountered in the program. He shared the following:

(a) From the students’ perspective, their role as participants in churches is the greatest challenge. He is, however, longing for the day when students will look beyond participating in established congregations and begin planting churches.

(b) There are two challenges from the professor’s perspective. The fact that there’s only one professor (Kenley Hall) over the entire program serving over 300 students and, although MCMs serve as supervisors, there are often generational gaps between MCMs and seminarians. Ways of mitigating these two challenges continue to be discussed and developed.

Michael Orellana, himself a PhD candidate in the Seminary, also shared two things he thought were the greatest benefits of this program. These are the opportunity for students to use and

THEOLOGICAL FIELD EDUCATION

By Harizo Fanivana and Emeka Buffong

MINISTRY IS MORE THAN STUDY, IT IS SERVICE

By Michael Orellana, graduate assistant to Kenley Hall
develop their skills, and the chance to learn from experienced mentors. He adds, “Ministry is more than study, it is service. If we don’t have TFE, students will lose a lot.” Indeed, I believe that without TFE, students would be at a great disadvantage. It seems clear that this program creates the environment for the seed of potential in each seminarian to flourish.

Three students were also interviewed about their experiences in the TFE program. The first interviewee commented that he served in Youth and Adult Sabbath School at his assigned church. He was also grateful to be able to sit in on board meetings and see how decisions are made. This was his favorite experience. He lamented that his ministry was limited by time and tasks. He suggested that TFE students be given the privilege of performing, as much as possible as pastors and deal with tasks in areas such as church administration, finance, and developing programs.

The second student was involved in developing programs with social component actions. His role in that position was to encourage and help members to take part in evangelistic and social meetings. He mentioned that one of the advantages of being in this role was his personal growth. As he looked back on his experience, he was unable to find anything negative to report about the program. He advises future seminary students to consider themselves as pastors when involved in the TFE program, because sadly too many see the program as just earning credits.

The third student was involved in Sabbath School for youth and teens. His main task was to develop the high school students’ leadership abilities during their presentation of Sabbath School lessons. He met with these student presenters on Friday evenings so that he could pray with them and discuss the lessons they were going to share on Sabbath. He helped the students to develop their thoughts and understand the theological meanings in the lessons. He allowed the students to think about what the Bible had to say to them and how these lessons could be applied to their personal lives. He encouraged them to think about the best illustrations that matched the biblical context such as storytelling, short sketches, and relevant real-life situations. They decided who would perform each task at the end of the meetings. He noted that this was quite beneficial for the teens. This student believes the TFE coordinator should encourage MCMs to allow TFE students to be involved in every area of church affairs as they would as eventual pastors.

Each of these students benefited from the TFE program and their comments could be summarized as: “The TFE program is like going to the gym—you get out of it what you put in. You cannot get stronger just by being present. It requires involvement, and the more students are involved, the greater the benefits.”

References
Three Seminary students who have completed the TFE program. 2016. Interview by Harizo D. Fanivana, Seminary student.

Emeka Buffong, MDiv and MA in communication student at Andrews University. He is an elder and member of the Niles Philadelphia SDA Church and enjoys being engaged in church activities. He loves to help people appreciate the treasure of God’s Word.

Harizo Fanivana, earned an MA in education in Madagascar and is currently in the MDiv program at Andrews. He previously taught English in Adventist high schools and colleges in Madagascar. He wants to pursue a PhD in education to teach at the college level.
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Please include three items in your abstract: 1. Title; 2. 200-word (or less) summary of the research project you wish to present (Poster) or the abstract (Paper); and 3. the name of a faculty member familiar with your project.

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“Those were more noble than those..., in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:11 KJV

GOD’S ILLUMINATION...
“If we would study the Bible diligently and prayerfully every day, we should every day see some beautiful truth in a new, clear, and forcible light” CG 511

...AND WRITING.
Wonderful moments to share and learn from each other what we have discovered from God’s Word and with Him we will celebrate it.


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Photo on page 16

Christ ministered to people’s needs before inviting them to follow Him—Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them “Follow Me.”

Ellen G. White
("The Ministry of Healing," page 143)
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