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# Developing and Implementing a Framework to Address Theological Fragmentation at Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Toronto

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*Andrews University*

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A FRAMEWORK TO  
ADDRESS THEOLOGICAL FRAGMENTATION AT  
BETHEL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHURCH IN TORONTO

by

Vincent Lue

Adviser: Jeff Potts

## ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Doctor of Ministry

Title: DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS  
THEOLOGICAL FRAGMENTATION AT BETHEL SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN TORONTO

Name of researcher: Vincent Lue

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jeff Potts DMin.

Date completed: February 2013

### Problem

Some members of the Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church have demonstrated tendencies towards extremes in their belief system accompanied by conflicts, attraction to fringe groups, and a lack of progress in evangelism and mission. There is a tendency to place strong emphasis on fragments of the Adventist message rather than the whole. Anecdotal evidence and biblical principles suggest that this fragmented theology leads to an imbalance in understanding of gospel principles, and the noted problems are a corollary of this (Knight, 2008). Thinking affects being (Prov 23:7).

## Methodology

A holistic framework for ministry was developed based on the template of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral where Scripture is the source of theology while tradition, reason and experience are resources that confirm scripture. The framework was informed by Ellen White and Adventist theologians under the blaze of Reformation theology.

Chapter 1 is a general introduction of the project. The root problem is identified as theological fragmentation while the problems of conflicts, attraction to fringe groups, and lack of growth are the symptoms. The topics addressed are introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, justification of the study, definitions, delimitation, limitations, and methodology.

In chapter 2 a general theological reflection is developed accompanied by Ellen White's reflection on the components of the holistic framework: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

In chapter 3 there is a literature review in which current evangelical theology is presented as it impacts the holistic framework. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral and its development through the Anglican tradition is analyzed through Wesley's writings and the views of Wesleyan scholars. Adventist theologians is also be analyzed pertaining to the components of the Quadrilateral.

In chapter 4 the Bethel context is presented with its challenges. The pastor's biography presents the faith, experience and skills brought to Bethel especially in relation to the Holistic Framework. Paul Hiebert's anthropological model of mission and its relation to the holistic framework for leadership is presented as it will guide the pastor in his participant-observer approach to Bethel.

In chapter 5 the implementation of the holistic framework for leadership is described as it impacts preaching, teaching, administration, mission and leadership.

In chapter 6 the summary and evaluation of the project is made. A seminar based on the holistic framework and evaluation surveys are described. Conclusions both positive and negative are drawn. Recommendations for future development and application of the framework are made.

### Result

Bethel became a healthy place relationally. While people still have differences, they have learned to bear with each other. The church has assumed a new role as the center of mission in a large territory involving two church plants and other benevolent work. It gives support to the rest of the district generously. The possibility of planting other churches is quite feasible given its large territory. Parkdale is now the only church in the downtown area of the western half of Toronto. The Perth Avenue Church, which has been the flagship of Seventh-day Adventism in that area since the 1970s, has now moved out of that vicinity. It is no doubt providential that the Parkdale Church now exists.

Bethel has grown theologically. A multitude of issues and problems disappeared. Improvements in all sectors of ministry have taken place. Theological fragmentation has decreased. Those who were consistently involved in prayer meeting, Bible class, health ministry and church planting have shown maturity in greater ways than the larger population

There is a clearer sense of the Adventist identity and the Adventist place within Christianity. Some cultural impediments to theology have eased, as members are thinking

scripturally rather than culturally where principles are concerned. The business side of the church has been placed on a sound foundation.

My experience at Bethel has been involved and special. Creating the changes demanded presence physically, mentally and otherwise. The church has recognized that our time together has been very special and that God had truly blessed. A foundation is set on which to build a better future.

Leadership development has been significant at all levels. Two couples have developed in pastoral leadership. They gained experience in preaching, teaching, and administration. Young people studying to be pastors received opportunity to practice and develop at Bethel, and have moved on successfully to pastoral ministry. Youth have been involved in church planting and development in the areas of preaching, teaching, and church administration. They are engaged in mission at a creative level, studying and analyzing how to advance church ministry.

The mother church—Bethel—strengthened in all ministries. New ministries like the seniors ministry were developed. Yearly evangelistic series and revivals produced baptisms continuously. Baptisms varied from a low of five per year to a high of 22. Meanwhile the Parkdale Church grew by about 40 new members in the duration of my ministry. The AIM group grew to about 20 people in attendance and its programs attract many non-Adventists.

### Conclusion

Adventists need to disciple converts to the church. Pastors can use the Holistic Framework for personal and leadership development, and congregational development.

The accomplishments at Bethel can be largely credited to the facilitation of the Holistic Framework in leadership. The weak point of the process at this seminal stage was the extent to which the members adopted the process of the framework individually. Work at Bethel was more pastor-dependent than was desirable. This is not the best-case scenario for the long term. Some congregations may be more ready to adopt the framework than others may. However there was advancement in getting members to think and work theologically.

An outstanding part of the project at Bethel was the education that came through prayer meetings, Bible classes and diverse ministries. The power of Ellen White's conflict series and *The Ministry of Healing* were evidenced in these classes. The impact was both expressed and seen. Believers became familiar with resources they can use independently to understand scripture and to motivate theological pursuits. This strategy was fitting for a congregation that respects Ellen White's role as messenger in the Adventist Church. Many witnessed to the blessings received through the books and passed on copies to others. Creative simplification, a hallmark of Wesley, is necessary for each context. The utilization of the gifts and resources resident in the local church as well as the Adventist church in general is a godly responsibility. Often Adventists gravitate towards new and popular resources, which lack the spiritual power of our established resources.

Getting people to study independently and reflect theologically will do far more to enhance their development than remaining dependent on pastors, teachers and experts. Taking responsibility for personal development is crucial to fulfill the priesthood of all



believers. Since the components of the Holistic Framework are present in Ellen White's writings, the pastor can use them to impart this theological process to his students.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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Vincent Lue

February 2013

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Seventh-day Adventists have a unique body of truths that are biblical, holistic, inspiring, and elevating. The power of these truths to transform believers, to increase their love for God and humanity, and to develop a missionary consciousness is evident in Adventist missions worldwide.

Yet, there are places where this transformation appears to have regressed or become stunted among many believers and in its place are severe conflicts, lack of motivation in mission, and a general lack of spiritual development.<sup>1</sup> My ministry experience in the Ontario Conference has led me to churches where this problem exists. I have had to address this situation to build spirituality and advance growth.

My experience has led me to believe that the root cause in some of these situations is theological fragmentation where believers grasp only a partial understanding of our theology and their lives and relationships are imbalanced by their fragmented theology. William Johnsson (1995) in his book *The Fragmenting of Adventism* addressed the problem of fragmentation in Adventism.<sup>2</sup>

George Knight has written that the “search for a balanced Adventism is at the

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<sup>1</sup>Russell Burrill, *Waking the Dead* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 2004), 14-15.

<sup>2</sup>William G. Johnsson, *The Fragmentation of Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 17, 90-91.

center of the development of Adventist theology.”<sup>3</sup> Knight’s latest book, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, outlines the ill effects of Protestant liberalism, and how Adventists are seemingly imitating such a pattern.

The remedy for theological fragmentation, I believe, lies in helping believers form a holistic understanding of Adventist theology. This will work against fragmentation and increase spiritual transformation. Solomon tells us that thinking impacts being (Prov 23:7). Paul tells us that transformation takes place with the renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2). Rational Emotive Therapy demonstrates that our thoughts precede our emotions so that healthy emotions spring from healthy thoughts.<sup>4</sup> In the Galatians and Corinthian churches of the New Testament the problems addressed stemmed from beliefs.

The Adventist pastor-leader facing theological fragmentation must address the root cause of the problems, which is theology. He/she can make a difference by heightening sensitivity to the holistic nature of Adventism and by preaching, teaching and modeling this in the parish. In addition, the pastor-leader can help parishioners to understand how to develop their theology systematically. This is what this project seeks to address at the Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church in Toronto, Canada. A holistic framework for leadership based on the template of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral has been developed and implemented to keep the pastor-leader on the holistic track of Adventism and to work methodically against theological fragmentation. In this framework scripture

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<sup>3</sup>George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008), 13.

<sup>4</sup>Paul A. Hauk, *Reason in Pastoral Counseling* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1972), 25; Albert Ellis and Debbie Joffe Ellis, *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2011), 18.

is the only source of theology while tradition, reason, and experience are resources that complement the understanding of scripture. Observations and evaluations will be made.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Some members of the Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church have demonstrated tendencies towards extremes in their individual belief system, resulting in conflicts, a strong attraction to fringe groups, and a lack of progress in evangelism and mission. There is a tendency to place emphasis on fragments of the Adventist message rather than the whole.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Seventh-day Adventist ministry must respond to the challenges that confront it in the local churches to inspire and develop spiritual health in individuals, families, and congregations. The health of the denomination at the macro level is dependent on what takes place at the micro level.

It is beneficial that pastors as ministry leaders develop frameworks that can address these problems to create the positive changes needed. As Adventists, we emphasize a holistic biblical approach to life and worship that has proven to be wholesome historically. In our post modern and technological society new problems arrive and complicate an already challenging ministry. Creative approaches are necessary to intensify the process of knowing God holistically.

The purpose of this study is to develop and implement a holistic framework for leadership at Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church that will bring the church to spiritual health and growth as it counters theological fragmentation. The components of the

Wesleyan Quadrilateral (scripture, tradition, reason, and experience) will be examined in their relation to each other. Ellen White's perspective on them will be analyzed along with Evangelical theologians in general and Adventist theologians in particular. The implementation of this framework will be analyzed and evaluated.

### **Justification of the Project**

Seventh-day Adventists are primarily influenced by scripture as the source of theology; and by tradition, reason, and experience as secondary resources for theology; however, there is a need for more awareness of these influences and their interrelationships to gain a holistic understanding of Adventist theology.

Such awareness may be facilitated by the development of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience into a holistic framework for leadership informed by the writings of Ellen White and Adventist theologians. Ellen White's commentary and counsels have been invaluable for leadership and theology in Seventh-day Adventism. Adventist theologians grapple with the issues and challenges facing the Adventist Church and add clarity to doctrines and beliefs. This holistic framework for leadership applied by the pastor seeks to help believers develop a balanced and holistic belief system individually, while avoiding the tendency towards fragmentation where fragments of our theology are taken to extremes.

The holistic framework will impact Christian experience as it enhances the spiritual health of churches, families, and individuals. Spiritual health depends on not only knowing about Christ, but on experiencing Him, and keeping Him at the center of life and worship.

Understanding the place of tradition in the framework helps Christians face new and complex challenges successfully. The framework reveals and connects God's leading in the past with His leading in the present. In this project, historical and theological connections are made between early Christianity, the Reformation, and Seventh-day Adventism.

The biblical relation between reason and revelation needs to find its proper place in answering theological questions, and other questions relating to life. For example, while the Seventh-day Adventist teaching on healthful living is biblical and scientific, extreme approaches by some often cause others to resist health reform.

### **Definition of Terms**

A number of terms used in this project are here defined:

*Holistic:* This means addressing the whole rather than the part. It is characterized by the view that the whole system (e.g., of beliefs) must be addressed rather than its individual parts.

*Holistic Framework:* This is a structured approach to working out theological issues in which the Bible is the source of theology while tradition, reason, and experience are resources to complement understanding of Scripture.

*Wesleyan Quadrilateral:* A term used to describe an inherent theological method in John Wesley's writings identified by Albert C. Outler, a Methodist theologian and Wesleyan scholar. In this scripture is the primary source of theology while tradition, reason, and experience are secondary or complimentary sources.<sup>5</sup> Outler's view of the

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<sup>5</sup>Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 21-37.

Wesleyan Quadrilateral has been widely accepted by evangelical theologians. For the purposes of this project there is a presupposition that Outler is correct. The evidence exists in the theology of the New Testament, the continental reformation and English reformation, John Wesley and Methodism, and Ellen White and Adventism.

### **Delimitations**

This study draws from several disciplines: leadership, Adventist history and theology, Christian history and theology, contemporary evangelicalism, and Ellen White's writings. While a lifetime of study in all of these areas will impact the project, it will be largely informed by the theology of John Wesley, Ellen G. White, and Adventist theologians.

### **Limitations**

The study is limited to the Bethel Adventist Church, Parkdale Company, the AIM group, and the Shiloh Adventist Church in the Ontario Conference.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive research will be done at the James White Library, Andrews University; the William Hornsby Library, Tyndale Seminary in Toronto; and the University of Toronto libraries. Critical resources used will include primary sources, landmark books, publications, and secondary sources.

In chapter 1 a general introduction of the project is given. The root problem is identified as theological fragmentation while the problems of conflicts, attraction to fringe groups, and lack of growth are the symptoms. The topics addressed are



introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, justification of the study, definitions, delimitation, limitations, and methodology.

In chapter 2 a general theological reflection is developed accompanied by Ellen White's reflection on the components of the holistic framework: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

In chapter 3 there is a literature review in which current evangelical theology is presented as it impacts the holistic framework for leadership. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral and its development through the Anglican tradition is analyzed through Wesley's writings and the views of Wesleyan scholars. Adventist theologians are also analyzed pertaining to the components of the Quadrilateral.

In chapter 4 the Bethel context is analyzed with the challenges presented to the pastor-leader. Three subjects will be addressed: first, a biography of the pastor-leader and what he/she brings to the context; second, the Bethel context consisting of its location, history, and trends that impact it and the in-reach, outreach, and theological challenges that it presents to the pastor-leader; and third, the analysis of Paul Hiebert's anthropological model of mission and its relation to the holistic framework for leadership. This approach will guide as the pastor-leader becomes the participant-observer-intervener at Bethel.

In chapter 5 the implementation of the holistic framework for leadership is described as it impacts preaching, teaching, administration, mission, and leadership. The change in mission that resulted in two church plants and expanded ministries are described.

In chapter 6 the summary and evaluation of the project is made. The results in the Bethel district as a result of the application of the Holistic Framework are presented. An evaluation survey of the Holistic Framework at Bethel is analyzed. A seminar based on the holistic framework and an evaluation survey indicating changes in understanding after the seminar are analyzed. Conclusions both positive and negative are drawn. Recommendations for future development and application of the framework are presented.

## CHAPTER II

### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents theological reflection on the background of the Holistic Framework: scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. There are two parts to this reflection. First, is a general theological reflection, and second, a reflection based on the theology of Ellen White.

#### **General Theological Reflection**

It is good for all believers to think theologically and a significant part of the pastor's task is giving them the tools to do so. The church should become a seminary with a view towards theological education. Believers should not only learn theological conclusions but should understand the process that led to those conclusions. It was through the prophetic tradition of Adventism that I became convinced that the Bible is a revelation from God. Since then, learning to reflect theologically has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. I took Paul's advice to Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God" seeking to rightly divide the word of truth (1 Tim 2:15). I have sought to "speak a word in season" through the guidance of God (Isa 50:4; Prov 15:23). Over the years, many issues that were confusing became clear as I advanced in knowledge of scripture. At the beginning of my faith journey, I was afraid of being

unable to live up to the principles of the Gospel for the long term. I have been amazed at the power of God to transform and to sustain our relationship with Him. Systematically God revealed new truths and higher standards, and as I learned, I received the impetus and strength to advance spiritually. The art of seeking truth is an important asset for the pastor-leader and for every believer. A systematic approach to knowing and applying scripture is of paramount importance in the development of believers so that they too can fulfill the reformation principle of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:9).

Fritz Guy, an Adventist professor at La Sierra University, identifies neglect in this because of “elitism and apathy” on the part of church officials including pastors to the extent that “almost no-one is enthusiastic about involving the whole community in the interpretation of faith.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, the interpretation of faith is a “theological task” that must be included in the church’s mission to the world.<sup>2</sup> It should find its place alongside the other components of mission as well as for its own sake—as faith seeking understanding.<sup>3</sup> Greg Ogden thinks this will work towards the development of the priesthood of all believers—a reformation pillar that “was never fulfilled.”<sup>4</sup>

Theological thinking ultimately facilitates growth since “the more we know about and understand the meaning of such spiritual realities as the activity of intercessory prayer, Sabbath, the community of faith, and the Advent hope, the more profoundly we

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<sup>1</sup>Fitz Guy, *Thinking Theologically* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 199), 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>4</sup>Greg Ogden, *The New Reformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 11; William Willimon, “The Spiritual Formation of the Pastor: Call and Community,” in *The Pastor’s Guide to Spiritual Formation*, ed. Neil B. Wiseman (Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill, 2005), 21-29.

can experience these realities.”<sup>5</sup> In the promotion of theological thinking, pastor-leaders need to plan a broader syllabus of information for the congregation that begins with a sound foundation in areas like revelation-inspiration.

## Scripture

### **Revelation/Inspiration**

In the case of biblical interpretation Gerhard Hasel says “every informed person” should have “a basic knowledge and understanding of the methods of biblical interpretation and their history.”<sup>6</sup> Adventist interpretation of scripture is based on the belief that “all Scripture” is given by inspiration of God or all Scripture is “God breathed” (2 Tim 3:15). This means accepting the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation equally. It precludes “degrees or levels of inspiration” or any ranking of the books.<sup>7</sup> Given the many versions of the Bible, believers need some understanding of how the canon developed so that they can see God’s handiwork in this. In essence, they need to see that God is not only the author of Scripture but that He has providentially influenced the formation of the canon and the preservation of it. Thus, what we have received in Scripture is what God chooses to give us.

While the church was actively involved in the formation of the canon, the authority of the Bible does not rest on the church but on God. The canon of Scripture is

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<sup>5</sup>Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 49.

<sup>6</sup>Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), 1.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 100 -101.

the product of the Holy Spirit through human instruments.<sup>8</sup> It is divine truths expressed in human language and this is a pivotal principle in understanding inspiration.

Ellen White and many Adventist theologians believe in “Thought Inspiration” rather than “Verbal Inspiration.”<sup>9</sup> God did not dictate the truths given. The prophets spoke in their own words. While this is so, it is evident that there is diversity in the way God has revealed truth. Luke did research in his presentation of Luke-Acts and this was canonized even though he was not one of the original disciples. God’s own hands wrote the Decalogue so God gave precision of words in this case. God at times communicates in vision and dreams, through symbols, or orally. The Apostle John received visions of the future in which he actually participated.<sup>10</sup> The veracity of “thought inspiration” as the general approach to revelation-inspiration bodes well in an age where scribal and translation errors seem to cast a shadow on biblical inspiration. The many versions of the Bible today makes knowledge of revelation-inspiration essential as it allows believers to approach the various versions constructively rather than ascribing more inspiration to particular versions.

Seventh-day Adventists “have considered themselves people of the book” “in the full tradition of the Reformers of the sixteenth century.”<sup>11</sup> They accept the principles of Sola Scriptura and Tota Scriptura. Sola Scriptura is the understanding that Scripture is the

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<sup>8</sup>Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today*, 101-102.

<sup>9</sup>Fernando Canale, “Revelation and Inspiration,” in *Understanding Scripture*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 55-56.

<sup>10</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Dept., General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 16.

<sup>11</sup>Frank Hasel, “Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 36.

final authority on all doctrines and beliefs. A statement by the Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists states thus:

The Holy Scriptures Old and New Testament are the written word of God, given by inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are an infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines and the trustworthy recorder of God's acts in history.<sup>12</sup>

Tota Scriptura informs us that the whole Bible is accepted—all sixty-six books. Truths are embodied in the accumulative wisdom of all the inspired writers. Where there is an obscure passage, the consultation of the whole Bible reveals the full extent of the biblical message. This moves us beyond mere proof texting to seek the full intent of the writer on any subject. The infallibility of Scripture therefore rests on the total message given by scripture on any subject rather than a portion by itself.

The implication of Sola Scriptura and Tota Scriptura brings to focus an important principle: The Bible is its own expositor. One part of the Bible explains another part. This was the principle by which William Miller worked out the chronology of the 2300 days prophecy: “Unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Dan 8:14). His chronology was correct but he failed to let the Bible inform on the meaning of the “cleansing of the sanctuary.” He believed the earth was the sanctuary and identified its cleansing at the end of the 2300 days with the Second Coming of Christ to purify the earth. It was through scriptural knowledge of the sanctuary that Adventists later understood the full understanding of this prophecy. Scripture revealed there is a heavenly sanctuary of which the earthly sanctuary is a copy.

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<sup>12</sup>Seventh-day Adventists Believe, “The Word of God” (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of SDA, 1996), 11.

Paul in Hebrews tells us that Christ is our High Priest who ministers in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:1-2). The Adventist understanding of the sanctuary was a significant development for Seventh-day Adventist theology.

Another implication of *Tota Scriptura* is that the Bible is not merely the primary authority but the only authority for doing theology. Protestantism claimed more than the primacy of Scripture over against other sources, or even its priority. It claimed that “Scripture alone is the final norm for theology and the sole source of its own interpretation.”<sup>13</sup> “To the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa 8:20). While this is so, there are Adventist theologians who recognize that “Scripture is not the only ingredient in Christianity, including the Adventist interpretation of faith.”<sup>14</sup> Fritz Guy gives some credence to the Wesleyan Quadrilateral recognizing that there are other places for gaining knowledge of God.<sup>15</sup> However, knowledge gained elsewhere must be predicated by Scripture.

God reveals Himself in the Bible (1 Sam 3:20). What God has revealed “belongs to us” but those things that are not revealed are secret and “belongs to God” (Deut 29:29). We cannot by research find out God. Our finitude places limitations on us (Job 11:7-9). Knowing this all seekers of truth must approach scripture with humility and prayer. His spirituality will also affect his understanding for it is clearly taught in scripture that spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:14).

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<sup>13</sup>Hasel, “Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture,” 43.

<sup>14</sup>Guy, *Thinking Theologically*, 137.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.



## **Jesus and Scripture**

Jesus invites us to “search the Scriptures” because they “testify” of Him (John 5:39). Although He was speaking of the Old Testament, the New Testament is more so about Him since His life and teachings bring to pass the revelations in the Old Testament. “The Word incarnate (Jesus Christ) cannot be separated from the Word-inscriptured (Holy Scripture).”<sup>16</sup> Jesus taught from the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (Luke 24:44). He taught the disciples all things about Himself (Luke 24:27). He read from the book of Isaiah concerning His Messiahship (Luke 4:18-19). “The inmost central glory of the gospel, therefore, is not a great truth, not a great message, not a great movement, but a great Person. It is Jesus Christ himself.”<sup>17</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists recognize the cross as the central point of the scriptures. There Christ made atonement for the sins of humanity from beginning to end. Salvation is therefore available to all who will come to Him and receive Him as Savior. In this understanding, Adventists and Wesleyans are Armenian in their theological outlook. The saved of God have freedom to choose God and receive salvation. They are not predestined to be saved, as Calvinists believe.

## **The Holy Spirit and Scripture**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth that guides us into all truth (John 16:13). It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus works on the hearts and minds. The Holy Spirit brings to mind what Jesus spoke (John 14:26). He directs the work of God in all aspects. A

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<sup>16</sup>Hasel, “Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture,” 42.

<sup>17</sup>Norval Pease, *By Faith Alone* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962), 194.

guarantee is given to those who are committed to do God's will that he will know the truth (John 7:17). Scripture established that God sought us while we were sinners. John Wesley identified that initial work of the Holy Spirit drawing sinners as prevenient grace (John 6:44).

### **Transformative Knowledge**

Jesus declared that anyone who hears and obeys His words is like one who builds his house on a rock (Matt 7:24-27). It will stand through the storms. There is power in knowledge of scripture to save, to enlighten, and to prosper us. Characters are transformed and believers are prepared for this world and the next. The young person is helped to "cleanse his ways" (Ps 119:9). Through the knowledge and practice of scripture, a believer gains blessings and wisdom over enemies, teachers, and the ancients. It becomes "a lamp" unto our feet and a "light" unto our path (Ps 119:97-105).

Nicodemus was told by Jesus that he must "be born again" of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-8). As the born again person feeds on the Word, he experiences. He connects to Christ as the branch to the vine and receives nourishment from it (John 15).

The importance of Scripture in the revelation of God and the transformation of lives makes it incumbent that every resource God has given be employed to understand scripture. If more attention is given to this in congregations, it is apparent that greater good and less problems will exist in congregations.

### **Tradition**

Adventism was not born in a vacuum. It has connections with many traditions especially Methodism. Adventist theology follows the main roots of the reformation and

connects with Wesley's theology in a special way. Ellen White grew up in the Methodist Episcopal Church and received her conversion there. The Wesleyan view of sanctification (apart from the concept of entire sanctification) became prominent in Adventism. Adventists, like Wesley also believe that Justification by Faith does not exist apart from sanctification. "Justification is imputed righteousness and sanctification is imparted righteousness."<sup>18</sup> Ellen White accepted the Wesleyan view of perfection defined by a life of perfect love towards God.<sup>19</sup>

The Sabbath was received from the Seventh Day Baptists and became a rallying point to unite many disappointed Millerites, revive their faith, and set them on course to a greater mission through the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As time passed, emphasis on obeying the Ten Commandments and keeping the Sabbath became dominant in Adventism. The place of Christ in salvation was shadowed by emphasis on law keeping.

Adventists had lost touch with the Reformation tradition of justification by faith and salvation through Christ alone. "It was inevitable that the doctrine of Justification by Faith should eventually become a general issue. The indifference of four decades was being challenged," Norval Pease noted.<sup>20</sup> The church prospered during those decades preceding 1888. Foreign missions and educational institutions developed growth that was healthy. Nevertheless, the church's foundation was being built on sand and there was a notable decline in spirituality. It is by beholding Christ that people become changed. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up"

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<sup>18</sup>George Knight, *Search for Identity* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 33.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Pease, *By Faith Alone*, 127.

(John 3:14-15). It is imperative that Christ become center of the church's theology and mission.

In the 1888 General Conference session, the leading theologians portrayed a lack of Christian courtesy as they debated over doctrines and beliefs. A controversial spirit prevailed instead of the grace of Jesus. Ellen White addressed the situation:

God is presenting in the minds of men divinely appointed precious gems of truth appropriate for our time. God has rescued these truths from the companionship of error, and has placed them in their proper framework. When these truths are given their rightful place in God's great plan, when they are presented intelligently and earnestly and with reverential awe by the Lord's servants, many will conscientiously believe because of the weight of evidence without waiting for every supposed difficulty which may suggest itself to the minds to be removed. Others not discerning spiritual things will keep themselves in a combative frame of mind, opposing every argument that does not meet their ideas. Shall this miserable work cease? Those who have not been sinking the shaft deeper in the mine of truth will see no beauty in the precious things presented at the conference.<sup>21</sup>

The main issue had been the doctrine of Justification by Faith, which was preached powerfully at the conference but opposed vigorously. There was fear among church officials that this doctrine would endanger the distinctive doctrines of Adventism.

Adventism is built on the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (Rev 14:12). The commandments of God had been emphasized prior to 1888 but not the faith of Jesus. The result of the 1888 crisis brought the faith of Jesus to prominence. The core of Ellen White's writings since then has focused on the life, teachings, and pre-eminence of Jesus in all things. The Adventist Church was now placed on the rock of justification by faith and its future was secured. This event underscores the need to connect new truths with the scriptural tradition handed down through the ages.

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<sup>21</sup>Pease, *By Faith Alone*, 138; Ellen White, MS 8a, Minneapolis, 1888, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

When God called Abraham, he was asked to leave a tradition of idolatry in his home environment and start a new tradition based on worshipping the true and living God. The Abrahamic tradition of promise was established. Paul spoke of the power of that tradition based on faith and hope above the tradition based on lineage. “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal 3:7). Those who follow the teaching of Jesus become heirs of the Abrahamic covenant. “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:29). The Judaic tradition in its purity was the Messianic tradition through its vast system of types. Even though the larger body of Judaism missed the essence of the Messianic tradition, strangers like the wise men from the east received it. A remnant within Judaism kept the faith and fulfilled the mission. God’s word never returns to Him void (Isa 55:11).

Adventists claim to be the Remnant Church, which keep the commandments of God and have the Testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17). Adventism is therefore part of the Remnant tradition of believers who adhere to Scripture in every age. Adventists also belong to the Reformation tradition in which the revelation of scriptural truths is ongoing. God has led Adventists in specific and powerful ways for over 150 years. We have a tradition of our own to guide and to remind us of our mission to bear the end-time message and to prepare a people to meet the Lord.

Herbert Bird, a non-Adventist, has noted that Adventism has been able to avoid the Arianism of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the idealistic pantheism of Christian Scientists, and the skepticism of modernists. He further notes that much of Adventism finds support within Christianity. The Law finds support in the creeds of Christendom and other

principles are in agreement with the Reformers, Puritans, Wesley, Spurgeon, and others, whom God has used to bring blessings to His work.<sup>22</sup>

Geoffrey Paxton, an Anglican, is puzzled because Adventists claim to be special “remnant-heirs” of the Reformers, yet in our approach to justification and sanctification, he found elements he perceives to be in accordance with the Council of Trent.<sup>23</sup>

However, Adventists are not merely a reaction or opposition to Catholicism or any other group. This is not its theological intent. As with the Reformers, Adventists are theologically opposite to Catholicism in many doctrines and beliefs. This is more intensely so, when it comes to the Decalogue. Yet, it is the drive to keep Scripture’s authority that propels Adventism. Adventists are not intentionally seeking innovation or opposition but the revelation of biblical truths.

Clearly, even though tradition is subject to Scripture, it is necessary to include it as part of the hermeneutic mechanism. The need arises not because of the insufficiency of Scripture, but human frailties. William Miller had an oversight concerning the cleansing of the sanctuary and the main leaders of Adventism in 1888 failed to understand the necessity and power of justification by faith. God has asked believers to remember to keep the Sabbath, yet they have found reasons to forget and to be negligent in following His instructions. When Tradition moves away from Scripture to represent human *self aggrandizement* it works against God. Tradition must therefore remain subject to Scripture.

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<sup>22</sup>Herbert S. Bird, *The Theology of Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961), 129-130.

<sup>23</sup>Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (Wilmington, DE: Zenith, 1977), 77.

## Reason

William Johnsson, retired editor of the *Adventist Review*, observes the increased frequency of high-level discussions between Adventists and other denominations. In addition, he notes that Adventists are making the news more often as there is an increasing curiosity about us. Some Adventists are not sure what to make of this but Johnsson quotes Peter's admonition that we should always be ready to convey the reason for the hope that we experience (1 Pet 3:15).<sup>24</sup> Here is a case that demonstrates the need for reason in ecclesiastical affairs. In fact, it demonstrates that we cannot not reason and interpret. Some would reason that the church should stay away from dialogue with others.

Humans are creatures of reason but their reasoning powers need to be developed and become sanctified. We need to reason positively and biblically. God has made us free moral agents. He does not force the will: "I set before you life and death" (Deut 30:19-20). We are to choose whether to serve Him or not. He invites us to reason with Him. We are totally depraved but He invites us to victory through Him (Isa 1:18). Throughout the scriptures, God seeks to arouse our thinking powers. Questions are asked; offers are given. Consequences are pointed out; cause and effect are taught. He gives us freewill but offers us life more abundant and salvation. He gives us evidence and reasons to choose Him. "I am the way the truth and the life," says Jesus (John 14:6).

The use of hermeneutical devices to understand scripture also requires reason. Through reason, we trace the lines of truth within scripture and maintain scriptural authority. William Miller was a deist but used the "logical approach to the study of the

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<sup>24</sup>William Johnsson, *Embrace the Impossible* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008), 181-182.

Bible” and eventually called the scriptures a “feast of reason.”<sup>25</sup>

The Scriptures teach us that God will put enmity between Satan and us (Gen 3:15). Hence, within us there is a resistance to evil giving us the ability to know wrong from right. Sin distorts our reason, but by God’s grace, our reason can become sanctified to serve the Divine purposes. In the parable of the talents, Jesus teaches that talents are to be used and developed. God blesses those who use their talents. It is a law of nature that whatever is exercised improves. God has not called us to passivity but to a life of active service in the crucible of life.

### **Reason and Nature**

Nature reveals God. In the Psalms, we are told: “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiworks. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge” (Ps 19:1-2). The heavens declare that there is a creator but it is in the scriptures that we learn of Him. The scriptures tell us that Jehovah God is the creator. Some information about creation is given, but beyond that, we cannot go. Scripture gives us a creation week and a memorial—the Sabbath—to remember this. Reasoning away from scripture brings us to concepts like evolution, but reasoning through scripture leads us to accept the creation story and to avoid speculation about what God has not revealed.

Paul in Romans also attributes some revelation to nature. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them,

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<sup>25</sup>Knight, *Search for Identity*, 34.



for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made” (Rom 1:18-20).

There is an innate resistance to evil. Humans are not absolutely ignorant even without scriptural education. The Holy Spirit urges the conscience to do right. Paul argues that the Gentiles can “do by nature the things contained in the law” without having the law.

Thereby they become a law unto themselves for they have the law written in their hearts (Rom 2:13-15). In these revelations, we realize that God is in active pursuit of humans to save them. His Spirit restrains and urges people to do right and refrain from wrong. The fuller revelation, however, comes from Scripture and the Spirit will ultimately lead a person to Scripture wherever it is possible to do so.

Healthful living is the will of God for us. “Beloved I wish above all things that that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2). The Bible informs us of health principles that are best for us. Being able to reason physiologically emboldens a person’s faith in God. Science reveals laws in all of nature confirming an intelligent creator.<sup>26</sup> True science finds common ground with revelation for they both have their source in God.

### **Right Thinking**

Right thinking is at the very center of being Christian. “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he” (Prov 23:7). “The knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Prov 9:10). Humans seem to be prone to addiction. Whatever the mind is allowed to dwell upon becomes habitual. It shapes the thinking and manifests itself in action. In Rational Emotive Psychotherapy, it is demonstrated that irrational thoughts lead to suffering.

People interpret events according to what they believe and the interpretation affects their response to events. One of the irrational ideas found to impact people negatively in Rational Emotive Therapy is “the idea that it is a dire necessity for an adult human being to be loved or approved by virtually every significant other person in his community.”<sup>27</sup> This leads people to judge and value themselves according to how others treat them. This counterworks the assurance God gives that all humans are “fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps 139:14).

Correspondingly, rational thoughts based on a true knowledge of God have a positive effect on life. People seek the paths of life towards happiness, success, and peace. Peter informs us that grace and peace are multiplied through knowledge of God. His divine power gives us all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:2-3). It is safe to say that the increase of true knowledge of God increases the positive effect on all of life when practiced; therefore, reason has its place in theology. Where this is lacking, there will be negative and extreme views.

### Experience

The Scriptures invite us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8). The Christian life is one born in the experience of God’s love and power. Jesus advised Nicodemus that he must be born of the Spirit. The Spirit is like the wind. You cannot see from where it comes, or where it goes, but you hear the sound of it (John 3:8). The rebirth by the Spirit is demonstrated in the believer’s experience. There is evidently an aspect of the spiritual life that cannot be explained but must be experienced.

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<sup>26</sup>Alister E. McGrath, *A Fine-Tuned Universe* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2009), 4-8.

<sup>27</sup>Hauk, *Reason in Pastoral Counseling*, 32.

The Christian life is not merely intellectual assent. We can and must have an experience with God confirmed by Scripture. Faith grows by the results of that experience. John testified about his experience with Jesus: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us” (1 John 1:1-4). Peter also appealed to experience: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Pet 1:16). The book of Acts demonstrates the power of God attending the preaching of the Gospel. History has shown that believers throughout the ages when under intense persecution and pressure had an assurance that was extraordinary. The providential workings of God have also attended His followers. The lives of Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and Ellen White demonstrated this.

### **Ellen White’s Theology**

As a founding member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White has influenced its development tremendously. She continues to influence it through the vast legacy of her written work. She lauded John Wesley for moving the English Reformation forward after it had become stuck in antinomianism and other extremes during the eighteenth century. She highlighted Wesley’s transformation from legalism to a life of faith, and his tremendous impact in continuing the Reformation. Her theology has many connections between Adventism and Wesleyanism, especially with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience.

## Scripture

Ellen White presented a philosophy of life that sought harmonious development of the mental, physical, spiritual, and social powers. The ultimate goal of this development is godliness and godlikeness. She believed that it is only through knowledge of the scriptures that this goal is possible. She herself demonstrated an exceptional knowledge of the scriptures. The unvarying stance that runs throughout her writings is summed up thus: “It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth; and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow their example.”<sup>28</sup> The Scriptures are the “authoritative, infallible revelation of His will” and “the standard of character, revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Truth Is Progressive**

Ellen White believed that as the church moves forward it engages truths from the past while gaining special truths for the times. “The Reformation did not as many suppose end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of the world’s history.”<sup>30</sup> Each age has a new development of truth—a message of God to the people of that generation. This is the same with the Adventist end time messages. These new truths connect with the old truths. Those who reject the new do not possess the old.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 598.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 148-149.

<sup>31</sup>White., *Christ Object lessons* (Washington DC: Review & Herald, 1941), 128.

## Transformation and Scripture

Ellen White presents the scriptures as having the power to build intelligence, psychosocial stability, and overall balance.

The effort to grasp the great truths of revelation imparts freshness and vigor to all the faculties. It expands the mind, shapes the perceptions, and ripens the judgment. The study of the Bible will ennoble every thought, feeling and aspiration as no other study can. It gives stability of purpose, patience, courage and fortitude; it defines the character and sanctifies the soul.<sup>32</sup>

In biblical study, finite minds connect with the infinite so that the human mind is strengthened and the intellect is activated.<sup>33</sup>

## God's Self-Revelation

To Ellen White: “The Omniscient one is above discussion.”<sup>34</sup> Wisdom is found “in humbly receiving the revelation that He has been pleased to give, and in conforming the life to His will.”<sup>35</sup> Knowledge of God is inexhaustible. “We may be ever searching ever inquiring, ever learning and yet there is an infinity beyond.”<sup>36</sup> In the historical conversation about faith and reason Ellen White is on the side of those who “believe in order to understand,” for to her faith is the key to knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 94.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>34</sup>White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 429.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 431.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1852), 24.

## **The Bible—It’s Own Interpreter**

The principle that the Bible is its own interpreter was crucial in the development of Adventism, and Ellen White taught this. The Holy Spirit inspired the biblical writers and reveals these truths to those who study them. One part of the Bible explains other parts and with the help of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is able to reveal all things necessary. The example of the Reformer Zwingli is illustrative. He “submitted himself to the Bible as the word of God, the only sufficient infallible word. He saw that it must be its own interpreter.”<sup>38</sup>

## **Spirituality and Knowledge**

Growth in grace leads to growth in biblical knowledge, for grace enlarges the capacity to know God.<sup>39</sup> Maximizing knowledge of God requires the desire for it, the search for it as well as the desire for purity of heart, and holiness of life.<sup>40</sup>

Many theologians do not have a clear understanding of God’s Word because “they close the mind to what they do not want to practice.”<sup>41</sup> To Ellen White, the end of seeking knowledge of God is the practice of godliness, and there is a relation between knowing and doing. Understanding does not advance much without practice.

## **Tradition**

A cursory look at Ellen White’s view of tradition gives the appearance that she

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<sup>38</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 173.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., *Education*, 80-81.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 228-229; *Great Controversy*, 599.

<sup>41</sup>*The Great Controversy*, 599.

rejected it as a resource that has any bearing on good theology. On closer examination, it is clear that she differentiated between a scriptural tradition and a human tradition. The human tradition places itself above Scripture, and she decried the ill effects of such a situation. By contrast, the scriptural tradition fulfills the will of God.

### **Problems with Tradition**

The life of Christ demonstrated His struggle to present and exemplify the pure truths of God against those who would entangle it with human systems and traditions. Jesus saw that “the requirements of God and the requirements of society were in constant collision. Men were departing from the word of God, and exalting theories of their own invention. They were observing traditional rites that possessed no virtue.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, they were not edified. Neither did they receive the satisfaction they sought. “Jesus had come to teach the meaning of the worship of God and He could not sanction the mingling of human requirement with divine precepts.”<sup>43</sup>

In the case of the disciples, Jesus “set before them the truths of the scriptures in contrast with tradition.” He strengthened their confidence in God’s Word, and largely “set them free from their fear of the Rabbis and their bondage to tradition.”<sup>44</sup> The fact that Jesus would not follow the established order brought Him into intense conflict with authorities. “He had exposed the evil practices of the priests and had irreparably hurt their influence. He had injured the effects of their maxims and traditions, declaring that though

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<sup>42</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950), 84.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. 349

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.,

they strictly enforced the ritual law, they made void the law of God.”<sup>45</sup>

The failure of Judaism to represent God aright was a tragedy with disastrous consequences in Ellen White’s view. Satan had used heathenism to turn people away from God, but he achieved a “great triumph” in perverting the faith of Israel, repeating the path of heathens, and thereby misrepresenting God.<sup>46</sup> This made the teachings of Jesus appear new to the Pharisees who had lost the “original significance and beauty” of God’s Word.<sup>47</sup>

The Christian era found itself with problems similar to Judaism. “Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the church . . . as persecutions ceased and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and his apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions.”<sup>48</sup> Paganism entered the church deceptively. Her “doctrines, ceremonies and superstitions” were intermingled with the gospel truths to build a “gigantic system of religion” which became a “masterpiece of Satan’s power.”<sup>49</sup> This accounts for the apostasy of the church of the Middle Ages. “As her power increased the darkness deepened. Faith was transferred from Christ, the true foundation, to the pope of

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<sup>45</sup>White, *The Desire of Ages*, 541.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 49.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 50.



Rome.”<sup>50</sup> Serious departures from the pure faith took place, like Sunday worship, and the belief in the immortality of the soul. True Christians were denounced as heretics and persecution increased leading to the eventual establishment of the inquisition.

### **The Scriptural Tradition**

Given the atrocities of the Middle Ages, the necessity of a Reformation loomed large. John Wycliffe preached biblical truth and translated the Bible into English. He became the morning star of the Reformation, with Huss and Jerome following his example. When Luther discovered Justification by Faith, the Reformation was born. This brought to the fore the doctrines of Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, and Sola Gratia.

The doctrines of the reformation became beacons since Protestantism did not develop smoothly. In England during the eighteenth century, “the doctrine of justification by faith so clearly taught by Luther had been almost fully lost sight of; and the Romish principle of trusting to good works for salvation had taken its place.”<sup>51</sup> The Moravians rescued John Wesley from a legalistic religion centered in works. Afterwards he lived a self-denying life, “not now as the ground, but as the result of faith; not the root but the fruit of holiness.”<sup>52</sup> Wesley devoted his life to preach the great truths of God: “Justification through faith in the atoning blood of Christ and the renewing through the Holy Spirit upon the heart bringing forth fruit in a life conformed to the example of Christ.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 55.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 253.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 256.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

Sadly, “the fires of divine truth” were almost extinguished by Protestantism by the eighteenth century but there was an “ancient torch handed down through the ages by the Bohemian Christians.”<sup>54</sup> It was from this scriptural tradition that light come to the Wesleys to advance their understanding of Scripture.<sup>55</sup>

### **The Reformation Tradition**

In reviewing the Reformation tradition, Ellen White illustrated patterns of reform. In the case of Huss and Jerome, “God permitted great light to shine upon the minds of these chosen men, revealing to them many of the errors of Rome, but they did not receive all of the light that was to be given to the world.”<sup>56</sup> God was leading people out of the darkness of Romanism, but there were many complexities. “They were not prepared to receive all the light at once. Like the full glory of the noontide sun to those who have long dwelt in darkness, it would, if presented, have caused them to turn away. Therefore he revealed to the leaders, little by little, as it could be received by the people. . . . Other workers were to follow, to lead the people on, still further in the path of reform.”<sup>57</sup>

Reform movements of today parallel those of the past. The Holy Spirit leads these at the right time and in the right proportion. No person, “however honored of heaven,” has ever fully understood the plan of redemption, or fully appreciates God’s purposes in His work at any time. “They do not comprehend in all its bearings, the message which

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<sup>54</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 254.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 103.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

they utter in His name.”<sup>58</sup> “Even the prophets . . . did not fully comprehend the import of the revelations committed to them. The meaning was to be unfolded from age to age, as the people of God should need the instruction therein contained.”<sup>59</sup>

There was always a Remnant in every age that followed and conveyed truth despite opposition. The Messiah came despite the failures of Judaism. Throughout the middle ages, God had witnesses that kept the light of truth amidst the prevailing darkness. The fact that “God has always preserved a faithful remnant for Himself” has been demonstrated in the Old and New Testaments and throughout the history of the Christian Church.<sup>60</sup>

In meeting the challenge of pantheism promulgated by John Harvey Kellogg, Ellen White appealed to the Adventist tradition (1904). “As a people we are to stand firm on the platform of eternal truth that has withstood test and trial. We are to hold to the sure pillars of our faith. The principles of truth that God has revealed to us are our only true foundation. They have made us what we are.”<sup>61</sup> She realized that many did not understand “how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, father Pierce, Elder Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, were among those who after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for

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<sup>58</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 103.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 344.

<sup>60</sup>Angel Manuel Rodriquez, “The Remnant People of God in the Writings of Ellen G. Writings,” in *Towards a Theology of the Remnant*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriquez (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 191-199.

<sup>61</sup>Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Book One (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 201.

hidden treasure.”<sup>62</sup> At a point in her biography, after reviewing the progress of Adventism under severe difficulty, Ellen White affirmed, “We have nothing to fear for the future except we shall forget the way the Lord has led us and His teaching in our past history.”<sup>63</sup> Evidently, she recognized that there is an Adventist tradition and this connects with the reformation tradition and the remnant tradition.

### Reason

Ellen White gave Reason a laudable place in life and ministry, subordinating it only to the Bible. To her the reasoning powers are to be protected, developed, and respected and sanctified by the Word. The sanctified reason is then enabled to understand scripture to a greater degree; hence, there is a circular relationship between reason and Scripture.

### **Godlikeness and Reason**

Reason is involved in the very identity of humanity, and in every aspect of life and mission. Humans created in the image of God, are endowed with a power akin to that of the creator—individuality and power “to think and to do.” Those who develop this power can bear responsibilities, lead in enterprises, and influence character development. True education seeks to accomplish this end—training people to become “thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thoughts.”<sup>64</sup>

God desires humans to fulfill their full potential within the possibilities given

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<sup>62</sup>White, *Selected Messages*, 206.

<sup>63</sup>Ellen White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 196.

<sup>64</sup>White, *Education*, 17.

them.<sup>65</sup> This requires education and Ellen White has been instrumental in establishing an education system that is one of the largest in the world today within Protestant Christianity. “God requires the training of the mental faculties” so that His people can “possess more intelligence and clearer discernment” than those of the world.”<sup>66</sup> When human minds connect with the mind of God—the finite with the infinite—endless possibilities are achievable to the learner.<sup>67</sup>

### **Freewill and Reason**

God has granted the power of choice to humanity. We are free moral agents with freedom and ability to exercise the reasoning powers. We must freely choose to love and obey God.<sup>68</sup> “He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded.”<sup>69</sup> “In matters of conscience the soul is to be left untrammelled.”<sup>70</sup> Individuality must be respected and conscience must have freedom to determine duty.

### **Nature and Reason**

Ellen White has a high view of nature. Nature is a lesson book that speaks of the creator just like Scripture—the book of revelation. Nature does not conflict with revelation because both have the same author, and they witness to the “same great

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<sup>65</sup>Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1941), 329-30.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>67</sup>White, *Education*, 16.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>69</sup>White, *Desire of Ages*, 22.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 550.

truths.” “Rightly understood, both the revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature.”<sup>71</sup> “Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high, and explores new depths; but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with Divine revelation. Ignorance may seek to support false views of God by appeals to science, but the book of nature and the written word sheds light upon each other.”<sup>72</sup>

Where God did not reveal creation’s secrets, human science cannot fathom it. Exploration from a mere human approach will only bring wrong conclusions. “The Bible is not to be tested by men’s idea of science.”<sup>73</sup> “Nature is the servant of her creator” and it testifies of an intelligent being working through her laws.<sup>74</sup>

### **Faith and Intelligence**

Concerning the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White is resolute on this: “Let God’s people act so that the world will see that Seventh-day Adventists are an intelligent, thinking people, whose faith is based on a surer foundation than the bedlam of confusion.”<sup>75</sup> She constantly struggled against tendencies in the Church towards obscurantism and fanaticism. She warned against the danger of reducing the sacredness of God’s work “by allowing the mind to consent to a cheap interpretation of the way that

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<sup>71</sup>White, *Education*, 130.

<sup>72</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1958), 115.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>White, *Selected Messages*, Book 2, 24.

God desires His work to be done.”<sup>76</sup> Facing fanaticism in Wisconsin, she said: “The Lord requires his people to use their reason; and not lay it aside for impressions. . . . His teaching will be such as to commend it to intelligent minds.”<sup>77</sup> In fact, “God never asks us to believe without giving sufficient reason.”<sup>78</sup>

Ellen White has been an ardent teacher of health reform. Protecting the reasoning powers is a solemn responsibility given us. A healthy mind can better perceive revelation from God. There is also sympathy between mind and body. The body is the medium through which the mind and the soul are developed and thereby influences the development of character. We owe it to God and ourselves to “intelligently and conscientiously care for our bodies.”<sup>79</sup>

### Experience

Ellen White often spoke of the need to have an experiential or experimental knowledge of God. Scripture informs us to “taste and see that God is good” (Ps 34:8). Thus, we can judge God “from His handiwork and not by the presuppositions of great men.”<sup>80</sup> She proclaims with conviction that “the real evidence of a living God is not merely theory; it is in the conviction that God has written in our hearts, illuminated and explained in His word. It is the living power of His created works, seen by the eye which

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<sup>76</sup>White, *Selected Messages*, Book 2, 28.

<sup>77</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:230.

<sup>78</sup>Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, (1972), 105.

<sup>79</sup>Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1923), 427.

<sup>80</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:325.

the Holy Spirit has enlightened.”<sup>81</sup> The presence of God is everywhere and we need to learn how to discern this.

### **Personal Experience**

In addressing physicians, teachers, and pastors, Ellen White admonished them to deepen their experience with God. “The Lord bids you to come up higher, to reach a holier standard. You must have an experience much deeper than you have yet even thought of having. Many who are already members of God’s great family know little of what it means to behold His glory and to be changed from glory to glory.”<sup>82</sup> Then each can have a testimony: “I needed help and I found it in Jesus. Every want was supplied, the hunger of my soul was satisfied; the Bible is to me the revelation of Christ.”<sup>83</sup>

In her conversion experience, Ellen White, like Luther and Wesley, had a special experience of justification by faith. She described being plagued with a feeling of unworthiness and explained how she gained assurance at a Methodist camp meeting. As she knelt at the altar and prayed, she was relieved of her burdens and “my heart was light.” She felt Jesus was very near to her and that she could approach Him with all her “grief, misfortunes, and trials.” She experienced assurance “of the pitying tenderness of Jesus.” In her experience, she had learned more on her knees than ever before. The change in her was so evident that an onlooker detected it.<sup>84</sup> She affirmed that there is a

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<sup>81</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:325.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 317, 318.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 8:321.

<sup>84</sup>White, *Life Sketches*, 23-24.



level of Christianity that cannot be explained, but must be experienced. Those who experience it receive attributes of the divine character. “The soul must be cleansed from vanity and pride, and vacated from all that has held it in possession, and Christ must be enthroned within.”<sup>85</sup>

### **Nature and the Senses**

In *Steps to Christ* Ellen White addressed the subject of how God reveals Himself: “Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make Himself known to us and bring us into communion with Him. Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing.”<sup>86</sup> The example of Jesus in connecting the things of nature and the life experiences of His audience with scripture is a lesson for all who preach and teach the gospel.<sup>87</sup> This captured their attention and interests and impressed the lessons on their minds.<sup>88</sup>

Nature is one of the three books that contain the “great storehouse of truth” along with the written word and the book of life experience; and they are “treasures” given to God’s workers.<sup>89</sup>

### **The Holy Spirit**

The fact that God communicates His will through His word “has not rendered needless the continued presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.” In the process of

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<sup>85</sup>White, *Desire of Ages*, 494.

<sup>86</sup>White, *Steps to Christ*, 54.

<sup>87</sup>White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 17.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 126.

conversion and transformation of character, the Holy Spirit is the central agency. “No human invention can find a solution for the sinning soul.”<sup>90</sup> The Christian is a transformation of nature. There is death to self and sin and a new life altogether—a change that can be brought about only by the Holy Spirit.

Little by little perhaps unconsciously to the receiver, impressions are made that tend to draw the soul to Christ. These may be received through meditating upon Him, through reading the Scriptures, or through hearing the word from the living preacher. Suddenly, as the Spirit comes with more direct appeal, the soul gladly surrenders itself to Jesus. By many this is called sudden conversion; but it is the result of the long wooing by the Spirit of God,—a patient, protracted process.<sup>91</sup>

Nevertheless, the experience of the Spirit cannot supersede Scripture because it is through Scripture that all spirits are to be tested.<sup>92</sup>

### **Knowing God’s Will**

How do we know the will of God? Ellen White said: “There are three ways in which the Lord reveals His will to us, to guide us, and to fit us to guide others. How may we know His voice from that of a stranger? How shall we distinguish it from the voice of a false shepherd?” Apart from the Scriptures, “His voice is revealed in His providential workings, and will be recognized if we do not separate our souls from Him by walking in our own ways.” Another way “is through the appeals of His Holy Spirit, making impressions on the heart, which will be wrought out in the character.” Evidently, when you are truly consecrated to God and cooperate with Him you will learn “by experience

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<sup>90</sup>White, *Desire of Ages*, 172

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 9.

to know the voice of the Good Shepherd” and distinguish His voice.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:512.

## **Prayer and Communion**

Scripture, nature, providential workings, and impressions on the heart are good but are not enough. “In order to have spiritual life and energy, we must have actual intercourse with our heavenly Father. . . . We must have something to say to Him about our spiritual life.”<sup>94</sup> What is prayer? It is the “opening of the heart to God as to a friend.” It does not tell God anything He does not already know but it “brings us up to Him” and we are then “enabled to receive Him” and receive “His boundless love.”<sup>95</sup>

While public prayer and family prayer are necessary, it is the “secret place of communion that sustains the soul life.” The case of Moses on the mount alone with God receiving wonderful instructions illustrates this. Jesus also demonstrated this through time spent with His Father in solitary prayer.<sup>96</sup> It is incumbent that we find quality time to spend with God. “We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. 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. He bids us ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (Ps 46:10).”<sup>97</sup>

## **A Christological Experience**

To Ellen White, Christ is the center of the Scriptures. “Of all professed Christians Seventh-day Adventist Christians should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the

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<sup>94</sup>Ellen G. White, *A Call to Stand Apart* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 26.

<sup>95</sup>White, *Steps to Christ*, 65.

<sup>96</sup>White, *Education*, 258, 259.

<sup>97</sup>White, *Ministry of Healing*, 58.

world.”<sup>98</sup> Her strong Christology has guided Adventists to a balanced understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification, the law and gospel, and between what Christ has done for us and what He has done in us. The law and the gospel are to be preached side by side, for together they will convict of sin. They are to be blended and never divorced. While the law condemns sin, the gospel points to Jesus, the only remedy for sin. “Jesus Christ is the glory of the law.”<sup>99</sup> Ellen White observed that the most successful people of faith “have felt the importance of following Jesus closely, of making the life of Christ their study and example.”<sup>100</sup> She recommended spending a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. Our confidence will become more constant and the overall spiritual experience will deepen.<sup>101</sup>

### **Summary**

Theological reflection has demonstrated that the Holistic Framework, based on the template of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, exists in Scripture. In New Testament times, believers looked to the Old Testament scriptures. There were Judaic traditions like the sacrificial system and the Messianic tradition that were known even outside of Judaism. As a result, wise men from the East became instruments of God to welcome the Messiah. The New Testament, as well as the Old Testament, calls on believers to reason and demonstrate that their faith in God is intelligent. Peter and John appealed to the evidence

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<sup>98</sup>Ellen G. White, *MS 747*, 1891, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Spring, MI.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:637.

<sup>101</sup>White, *Desire of Ages*, 83.

of their experience with Christ to verify the truths they taught. The transformation that comes through experience of the Holy Spirit in conversion is clearly taught in Scripture; hence, all the components of the Holistic Framework work together in the New Testament era to bring us the present canon of Scriptures.

Theological reflection has demonstrated that the Holistic Framework exists in Ellen White's writings. She holds firmly to Sola Scriptura affirming that Scripture is the only source of theology. Nevertheless, she clearly demonstrated the importance of Tradition, Reason, and Experience as resources in the process of understanding Scripture.

The finishing of the great commission requires a return to the priesthood of all believers. This necessitates the theological development of believers more comprehensively and holistically. This benefits them personally and relationally as knowledge of God transforms. The Holistic Framework of Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience in their proper relationship as described in this chapter is a systematic approach to leading, educating, and motivating the church for spiritual health and growth.

## CHAPTER III

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter the use of Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience in the process of theology will be explored. The chapter will have three parts: General Evangelical perspectives, Wesleyan perspective, and Adventist perspective. In the general evangelical perspective, the connection with the Lutheran and Reformed branches of Reformation theology will be analyzed; in the Wesleyan perspective, the development of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience) through the English Reformation will be analyzed; and in the Adventist perspective, the discussion will take place in the period of Adventist history from the nineteenth century to the present. The Adventist discussion will not fall under the headings of Scripture, Tradition, and Experience since this was discussed in chapter two in the general theological reflection and the theological reflection informed by Ellen White. This section will show how Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience factor into the development of Seventh-day Adventism.

#### **General Evangelical Perspective**

Alister McGrath traces evangelicalism back to the sixteenth century where it first referred to Catholics who sought a more biblical religion than the Medieval Church.

Today it refers to Christians across denominational boundaries who accept Scripture as the basis of their theology. McGrath posits four basic identification marks: First, is the authority and sufficiency of Scripture; second, is redemption through Christ; third, is the need for personal conversion; and fourth, is the need for evangelism.<sup>1</sup> Stanley Grenz points out the affinity of evangelicalism to the sixteenth century. He finds the beginning of the movement in the Reformation with the call to return to “biblical doctrine and its emphasis on personal salvation.”<sup>2</sup>

The Protestant Reformation created the theological foundation for evangelicalism throughout the centuries. Today many Evangelicals are calling for a return to the ideals of the Reformation. They want to ground the Church in Reformation principles. Pastor Greg Ogden calls for a new Reformation and presents an argument for this:

We live in a generation when the unfinished business of the Reformation may at last be completed. Nearly five hundred years ago Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others unleashed a revolution that promised to liberate the Church from a hierarchical priesthood by rediscovering the priesthood of all believers. But the Reformation never fully delivered on its promise.<sup>3</sup>

Ogden passionately argues that there should be no mediator between believers and Christ. He speaks as though he senses a Protestant quasi-sacerdotalism in practice, if not in theory. To him the pastor should be the parishioner’s minister as the parishioner is also the pastor’s minister.

William Beckham calls for a second Reformation that would replicate the New Testament Church. He calls for cell groups of five to fifteen people who can build solid

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<sup>1</sup>Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994), 110-111.

<sup>2</sup>Stanley Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 22.

<sup>3</sup>Ogden, *The New Reformation*, 11.



relationships, facilitate maturity, develop members, and evangelize effectively. The cells will cluster together weekly or bi-weekly for congregational worship and celebration, but the emphasis will be on the cell group's meetings in homes where love and the sense of community can be better experienced. This "two-winged church" would emphasize the priesthood of all believers.<sup>4</sup>

Many Evangelicals fear that evangelicalism today is weak on scriptural principles. Some prominent leaders like Os Guinness and David Wells are afraid that the movement is "not driven by truth." They compare the multitude of evangelical organizations to medieval fiefdoms. They are strong on business but elicit fragmentation because of competition. They are only "superficially friendly" They "fight for their own expanding turf while professing nominal allegiance to the same distant King."<sup>5</sup> There is a strong sense that serious changes are necessary, especially the need to go back to the fountainhead of evangelicalism's reason for existence—the Reformation.

### Scripture

David F. Wells, a professor at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, in his book *The Courage to be Protestant*, addresses the fragmentation of evangelicalism today and looks back to classic historic evangelicalism—Christianity in its biblical form where doctrine is taken seriously. Wells bemoans the outlook of many who see doctrine as an impediment. Wells observes that sola cultura is replacing sola scriptura. He asks some

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<sup>4</sup>William A. Beckham, *The Second Reformation* (Houston, TX: Touch, 1995), 27.

<sup>5</sup>John Steel, *The Evangelical Forfeit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 14-15.

pertinent questions: “What is the binding authority on the Church? What determines how it thinks, what it wants, and how it is going to go about its business? Will it be Scripture alone, Scripture understood as God’s binding address, or will it be culture?”<sup>6</sup>

Classic evangelicalism, according to Wells, existed right after the Second World War—a time when doctrine was taken seriously. Liberal Christians found the evangelical concern with doctrine problematic. They instead emphasized deeds over creeds and life over doctrine. Fundamentalist evangelicals insisted that Christianity was about creeds as well as deeds.<sup>7</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s, a neo-evangelicalism developed with people like Harold Ockenga, Billy Graham., John Stott, and J. I. Packer.<sup>8</sup>

Mark Noll identifies the Diet of Worms in 1521 as the starting point of Protestantism. Appearing before Charles V, the new Holy Roman Emperor, Luther admitted that he may have done some harsh things but he would only recant if his detractors exposed his errors through the writings of the prophets and evangelists. “Once I have been taught I shall be quite ready to renounce every error, and I shall be first to cast my books into the fire.”<sup>9</sup> Luther would not recant unless convinced by the Scriptures: “I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against the conscience.”<sup>10</sup> The Church and Europe changed for good and the basis of

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<sup>6</sup>David F. Wells, *The Courage to be Protestant* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 3-4.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 154.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Protestantism was set. To Luther Scripture was the final authority to judge his teaching. Sola Scriptura became established as the foundation on which everything was dependent. During the Middle Ages Scripture and Tradition were dual authorities but in reality Tradition trumped Scripture. Whatever the Church decided was good and proper—tradition trumped scripture in the Church’s decisions.

Charles V summoned the diet at Spires in 1529 with the intent of reversing the freedoms Protestants had gained. All were being forced to accept the terms with no variation. Just when the battle appeared to be lost, one of the most historic and far-reaching protests was launched by Evangelical Princes:

We protest by these present before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Savior, and who will one day be our Judge, as well as before all men and all creatures, that we, for us and our people, neither consent nor adhere in any manner whatever to the proposed decree in anything that is contrary to God, to his holy Word, to our right conscience, or to the salvation of our souls. . . . There is no sure doctrine but such as is comfortable to the word of God.”<sup>11</sup>

With the power of this protest, the authority of the Scriptures gained strength and Protestantism received its name. The right of a person to worship according to conscience was reinforced. It was a great day for evangelicalism in Germany and for Protestantism as a whole.

Martin Luther powerfully influenced John Calvin, foremost theologian of the Reformation. What was important in Calvin’s view was that God spoke in Scripture. He accepted the whole Bible and studied it intensely. He recognized that some knowledge was available to all humans through God’s creation, but saw that sin marred the

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<sup>11</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 202-203.

knowledge thus gained.<sup>12</sup> Calvin produced the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, setting out clearly “the basic ideas of evangelical theology justifying them on the basis of Scripture and defending them in the face of Catholic criticism.”<sup>13</sup> For him “the wellspring of reform was constant engagement with Scripture.”<sup>14</sup>

Calvin recognized that Scripture did not work alone, but with the Spirit. The words of Scripture have no power by themselves apart from the Holy Spirit. Jesus represents the word revealed and He is the fullest revelation of God. While the Bible has authority in embodying Christ, Christ transcends the Bible. The word proclaimed is the work of the Church in preaching the good news of God’s grace in Scripture.<sup>15</sup> While Calvin preached *Sola Scriptura*, he felt it necessary to accept truth from all sources. He divided knowledge of God in two parts: First, is knowledge of the creator and second, knowledge of the Redeemer. Knowledge of the creator is available to everyone (Rom 1:19-20). While knowledge of God as Creator is important it is powerless until it is connected to knowledge of God as Redeemer as revealed in scripture through the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> To Calvin Christ is the head of the Church and Christianity is about following God. God is sovereign and transcends all earthly and ecclesiastical powers. He is without

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<sup>12</sup>Ray C. W. Roennfeldt, *Clark H. Pinnock on Biblical Authority* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), 21.

<sup>13</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 64.

<sup>14</sup>William Stacy Johnson, *John Calvin: Reformer for the 21st Century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2009), 31.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

limitations or restrictions. Hence, reform is an ongoing process unbounded by a list of items.<sup>17</sup>

As the Reformation fire spread throughout Europe, there developed an inadvertent diversification of approaches to Scripture. The general acceptance of the Bible's authority for determining beliefs and the simplicity of New Testament Christianity was outstanding. How to interpret the Bible became a big issue. The question arose: Does biblical mean that which is "explicitly and unequivocally stated in the Bible" or what is "consistent with it?" Luther and Zwingli agreed on the latter. The Radical Reformers viewed this as a compromise, which kept the Bible shackled by tradition and close to popery. This diversity still exists today.

J. I. Packer, in his landmark book *Knowing God*, concurs with a sermon by Spurgeon preached in 1855 illustrating the power of contemplating scripture.

There is something exceedingly improving about the mind in the contemplation of divinity. It is a subject so vast that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. . . . No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than the thoughts of God. . . . But while the subject humbles the mind it also expands it. . . . The excellent study in expanding the soul is the science of Christ, and Him crucified. . . . Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject Deity.<sup>18</sup>

John Stott, one of the foremost evangelicals today, testifies that Scripture brings "light in darkness, strength in weakness, and comfort in sadness". He can thus endorse the Psalmist's experience that the Word of God is more precious than gold (Ps 19:10).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Johnson, *John Calvin*, 120.

<sup>18</sup>J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), 15-16.

<sup>19</sup>John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 159.

He finds the idea of divine revelation and our need to submit to it quite reasonable since the infinite God is above all. None could know Him if He had not revealed Himself. Stott postulates that submission to the authority of Scripture leads to mature discipleship. He does not deny that genuine followers of Jesus exist who may not be strong on Scripture, but he feels that “their discipleship is bound to be impoverished on account of their attitude to the Bible. A full, balanced and mature Christian discipleship is impossible whenever disciples do not submit to their Lord’s teaching authority as it is mediated through Scripture.”<sup>20</sup>

Whatever ails evangelicalism and Christianity today can be helped by a return to the Reformation fervor of Sola Scriptura. This will set streams of blessings from God flowing through the Church in the same way that Sola Fide and Sola Gratia followed Sola Scriptura.

### Tradition

Alister McGrath states, “Tradition implies not merely something that is handed down, but an active process of reflection by which theological or spiritual insights are valued, assessed, and transmitted from one generation to another.”<sup>21</sup> He identifies three approaches to tradition: a single source tradition, a dual-source tradition, and a total rejection of tradition.

The early church faced many controversies and threats like Gnosticism. There was a protective move to develop a tradition of interpretation.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 173.

<sup>21</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 188.

Scripture could not be allowed to be interpreted in any arbitrary or random way. It had to be interpreted within the context of historical continuity of the Christian Church. The parameters of its interpretation were historically fixed and given. Tradition here means simply a traditional way of interpretation Scripture within the community of faith. This is a single source theory of theology.<sup>22</sup>

Doctrines like the Trinity were accepted as long as it was in line with Scripture.

The dual-source theory of tradition developed in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Tradition became a source of theology where Scripture was silent. While the atrocities of the Middle Age Church were within the reach of memory, the mainstream Reformation did not reject Tradition out-rightly. Correcting what was wrong was the central focus and Sola Scriptura had found its place. The total rejection of Tradition took place within the Radical Reformation. When the enlightenment developed, it further cast a shadow on Tradition.

However, as each faith community began to develop its own distinctiveness, traditions were developing. Even more so today, Protestantism is not uniform. There are places in the Bible where some things are unclear leaving each tradition to its own interpretation. The case of church organization and structure is illustrative. Here different systems developed as each organization applied its own interpretation. Fossilization took place as denominations developed creeds and refused to move from the positions first established. F. F. Bruce noted:

Where subordinate standards (such as creeds) are not recognized, it does not follow that there are no such guidelines. . . . Indeed, in some more enclosed traditions the authority of Scripture will be identified with the authority of the accepted interpretation and application, because it has never occurred to those inside the enclosure that Scripture could be interpreted or applied otherwise.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 188-189.

<sup>23</sup>F. F. Bruce, *Traditions Old and New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 13-14. See Rex A. Koivisto, *One Lord, One Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 134.

In essence, humans tend to be tradition bound even inadvertently. Tradition has its place for security and stability; for defining boundaries and maintaining standards. To avoid the continuance of dead orthodoxy it is important to know our tradition well enough to understand how it affects us. We should be able to analyze our position in relation to Scripture. This makes allowance for renewal and correction as needed. Rex Koivisto observes that Jesus did not attack all traditions. He only attacked some while He practiced others without comment.<sup>24</sup> Paul also worked with the Jewish tradition as much as he could.

The Reformers while touting *Sola Scriptura* recognized a category, which is outside of Scripture. There was a place for that which did not run counter to Scripture, even if Scripture does not teach it. These fall into the category of adiaphorous (things indifferent). The Lutheran Augsburg confession in addressing the unity of the Church makes this statement: “And unto the true unity of the Church, it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites or ceremonies instituted by men should be alike everywhere, as Saint Paul says: There is one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”<sup>25</sup> There is a place for Tradition where it is not treated lightly but it does not supersede Scripture.

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<sup>24</sup>Rex A. Koivisto, *One Lord One Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 140.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 143.



## Reason

Millard J. Erickson asks a question pertaining to biblical authority and Reason. If reason is the means to interpreting scripture, is not reason the real authority? He explains the perceived issue by making a distinction between legislative authority and judicial authority. One makes the law and one interprets. “Reason does not tell us the content of our belief. It does not discover truth. Even what we learn from general revelation is still a matter of revelation rather than a logical deduction through natural theology.”<sup>26</sup> Erickson recommends that the best hermeneutical devices should bear on interpretation of scripture and this includes reason.

John Stott affirms, “Christian discipleship involves the whole of our human personality. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength” (Mark 12:30).<sup>27</sup> A responsible use of our mind glorifies the creator for He is a rational God, who has made us in His own image as rational beings. Stott views both Scripture and nature as rational revelations. The universe is a rational system, which makes scientific research possible. The fact that the pioneers of the scientific revolution were Christians is telling. Scientists “whether they know it or not are thinking God’s thought,” says Stott.<sup>28</sup> The use of reason is a necessity of life for the responsible use of the mind enriches our Christian life. There is no disharmony between faith and reason.

## Experience

Outside the traditions that arose from the English Reformation, it appears that

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<sup>26</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 256-257.

<sup>27</sup>Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 114.

experience is not given much prominence as a source of theology. Stanley Grenz, professor of theology at Regent College in Vancouver (1993), saw as problematic the appeal to experience as “constituting a theological norm” apart from scripture, tradition, and reason. He sees experience as the “medium through which theology’s sources are received.” Experience is better seen as the “focus of the theological task.”<sup>29</sup>

However, Alister McGrath presents experience as referring to “the inner life of individuals in which those individuals become aware of their own subjective feelings and emotions. It relates to the inward and subjective world of experience as opposed to the outward world of everyday life.”<sup>30</sup> Christianity is not merely an intellectual exercise but it is also about the “interpretation and transformation of the inner life of the individual.”<sup>31</sup>

McGrath finds common ground between Christianity and areas of existentialism. Human life is unique when compared to other forms of life because humans know they exist and they have the consciousness to analyze their lives. Existentialist philosophy developed on this basis and some find common ground with Christianity in differentiating between the existentialist concept of the authentic and inauthentic self. The unredeemed life is inauthentic existence while the redeemed life is authentic. The inauthentic life depends on self while the redeemed life depends on God.<sup>32</sup>

McGrath views positively the use of experience as a source in the process of theology. He sees some commonality between all the religious experiences of humans

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>29</sup>Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*, 91. See Paul Tillich, *Systemic Theology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:42.

<sup>30</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 192.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 193-194.

throughout the world. “If humans share a common experience, whether they choose to regard it as religious or not, Christian theology can address that experience.”<sup>33</sup>

In reality, experience needs interpretation and this is possible within the framework of Christian theology. McGrath points to the case of Martin Luther’s theology of the cross. Luther viewed theology without experience as leaving a vacuum, but on the other hand, experience without theology is not safe. The case of Christ dying on the cross and the disciples loss of hope is an example. By appearance, God had taken leave. Even Jesus’ cry: “My God my God why hast thou forsaken me” seemed to indicate this (Matt 27:46). With the apparent loss of Jesus on which was invested so much of their hopes and dreams, the disciples, would have been deceived if they had only their experience on which to depend. However, theology comes to the rescue and reveals the truth of that situation. When such contradictions of life exist, theology must intervene.<sup>34</sup>

McGrath also finds support for experience in the theological process coming down from Augustine. To Augustine, the Christian theology of creation has given us the ‘made in the image of God’ status. God has given humans a capacity and a need to relate to Him. The “Fall” has complicated this and humans are searching in the wrong places for fulfillment of this need; hence, Augustine’s famous summary: “You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until we find rest in you.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 195. See also Graham Tomlin, “Alister E. McGrath on the Cross of Jesus Christ,” in *Alister E. McGrath & Evangelical Theology*, ed. Sung Wook Chung (Cumbria, CA: Paternoster, 2003), 22.

<sup>34</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 197; Tomlin, “Alister McGrath on the Cross of Jesus Christ,” 5-8.

<sup>35</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 197-198.

The transformation that is accomplished through the Holy Spirit in the experience of justification by faith makes it possible to fulfill that longing for God before glorification. Luther, through a life of works, sought pardon and peace. “If ever Monk could obtain heaven in his Monkish works I should certainly have been entitled to it.”<sup>36</sup> In the midst of doing penance Luther heard that voice like thunder telling him “the just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17). “He sprang to his feet and hastened from the place in shame and horror. That biblical declaration never lost its power over his soul. After this he saw more clearly than ever the fallacy of trusting to human works for salvation, and for faith in the merits of Christ.”<sup>37</sup> When the Holy Spirit takes residence in the heart, rest is found in God. The restoration of the image of God develops under His care. The cases of people of faith experiencing justification by faith and the subsequent empowerment of their life of faith testify of its centrality in the process of knowing God. Yet, it is scriptural theology that informs and affirms this experience. Jerry Bridges describes the Christian experience thus: “The transformation process that the Bible describes is much more than a change of conduct or improved human morality; it is actually a work of the Holy Spirit in the very core of our being.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 123.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>38</sup>Jerry Bridges, *The Transforming Power of the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 212)

## The Wesleyan Perspective

### Anglican Roots

Anglicanism, including its dissenters like the Puritans, has played a significant part in developing what became the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. England and its political, cultural, and theological context seem to have provided a cradle for a theological development different from the continental reformation. Anglicanism managed to keep “two battle cries associated with the Protestant Reformation—‘*simper reformanda*’ and ‘*sola Scriptura*’ (always reforming and Scripture only)” on the table.<sup>39</sup> These principles are important to Christianity today and for Adventism in particular.

Richard Turnbull in speaking of Anglicanism identified five factors about Anglicanism, three of which are relevant to this study. It is rooted in the Reformation and cannot be understood apart from the Reformation. It is grounded in Scripture’s authority in all matters of life and faith. In addition, the distinctiveness of the English Reformation was to produce a Reformed Episcopal Tradition.<sup>40</sup> This distinctiveness lends itself to the development of several significant streams of theological outlook apart from Anglicanism. Something about the Anglican mindset generated a vibrant intellectual curiosity and theological ferment.

The King James translation of the Bible in 1611 marked a full century since Henry VIII became King. During that century, Anglicanism emerged as a distinct way. The two greatest influences of Anglicanism at the time were Elizabeth I and Thomas

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<sup>39</sup>Ben Witherington III, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2005), ix.

<sup>40</sup>Richard Turnbull, *Anglican and Evangelical?* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2007), 165.

Cranmer. Queen Elizabeth had kept England protestant and supported the via media theological position. Cranmer was responsible for the shape that Protestantism took in England. He was a Lutheran in his theology and believed in the role of ‘the godly prince’ who had a God-given task to keep society good and Christian. Cranmer’s burden was to restore to the church the true universal faith it had so long lost.<sup>41</sup> He was the architect of the *Anglican Prayer Book* and was largely responsible for the articles of the Church of England.

After Cranmer, in significance, is Richard Hooker who provided “a philosophical foundation for the sixteenth century Church of England” dealing with profound issues in an ecumenical spirit.<sup>42</sup> To Puritans, Scripture was the only basis to determine what pleases God. Hooker felt Scripture alone was too narrow and prone to fall to individual’s “private fancies” mistaken for the leading of the Holy Spirit. He felt that God’s ways are “many and various” working through a universal hierarchy of laws, a complex structure of relationships fundamentally harmonious, but often marred by sin. Included in this structure is Reason, which possesses authority in science, as well as in spiritual matters. He felt Scripture and Reason work together and needed each other.<sup>43</sup>

Hooker consolidated and interpreted what had transpired before him to give Anglicanism what many consider its distinction: an approach to handling theological questions using Scripture, tradition, and reason. Ideally, Anglicanism sought to avoid

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<sup>41</sup>James Atkinson, “Thomas Cranmer,” *Eerdmans’ Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. Tim Dowley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1977), 390.

<sup>42</sup>John E. Booty, “Richard Hooker,” in *The Spirit of Anglicanism*, ed. William J. Wolf (Wilton, CT: Moorhouse-Barlow, 1979), 1.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

believing anything simply because it is Anglican, as was the problem in the Lutheran and Reformed spheres. This problem of insularity stood in the way of progress during the Reformation sidelining the principle of “always reforming.” Anglicanism sought instead: “that it is true.” Anglican distinction defined itself by a method rather than a theological system.<sup>44</sup> Don Thorsen concurred, noting that Anglicans “pursued a theological method that could integrate various sources of religious authority in a spirit of catholicity.”<sup>45</sup> In this, Scripture is the primary authority in handling theological questions with Tradition, and Reason being secondary or complementary.

### The Puritans

The outcome of Anglicanism would not have been possible without the influence of the Puritans. While Puritans did not have their way fully, they maintained the intensity of the Reformation fire in the Church of England. “Puritanism was a distinctive and particularly intense variant of early modern Reformed Protestantism which originated within the Church of England, and was a product of that unique environment and its tensions.”<sup>46</sup> During the Elizabethan era, Puritans complained about the church being “halfly reformed” and pressed for further reform.<sup>47</sup>

### The Enlightenment

The Cambridge Platonists also contributed much on the side of reason towards

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<sup>44</sup>Henry R McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), 1.

<sup>45</sup>Don Thorson, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>46</sup>John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2008), 3.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

theological method. They emphasized the place of reason and declared the unity of faith and reason. They “considered that theology had become preoccupied with word splitting, and that contemporary dogmatic formulations and the tendency to regard reason as being somewhat or other suspect would cut religion off from life and make contact with the new world and its problems difficult to establish.”<sup>48</sup> These Cambridge Platonists were misunderstood and labeled Latitudinarians, but they simply wanted the Platonic philosophy to replace “Aristotle and the schoolmen.”<sup>49</sup>

Philosophers placed the church under pressure to define theology intelligently even as it struggled to remain biblical. Many philosophers believed in the “omnicompetence of human reason.”<sup>50</sup> Alister McGrath presents three stages in the development of this belief. First, “it was argued that the beliefs of Christianity were rational and thus capable of standing up to critical examination.” Second, “it was argued that the basic ideas of Christianity being rational could be derived from reason itself. There was no need to invoke the idea of divine revelation. . . . Christianity was essentially the re-publication of the religion of nature.” Third, “the ability of reason to judge revelation was affirmed.” Reason was thought capable of eliminating irrational and superstitious elements in religion.<sup>51</sup> While some of these views were extreme, the positive outcome was to ensure that reason has its place in the theological process, which became an important factor in Anglicanism.

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<sup>48</sup>McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism*, 82-83.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 81.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.



## John Wesley

Ellen White lauded the ministry of John Wesley and George Whitefield in the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century. They were light bearers “in a day of great spiritual darkness.”<sup>52</sup>

Under the rule of the established church, the people of England had lapsed in a state of religious declension hardly to be distinguished from heathenism. Natural religion was the favorite study of the clergy, and included most of their theology. The higher classes sneered at piety, and prided themselves on being above what they called fanaticism. The lower classes were grossly ignorant and abandoned to vice, while the church had no courage or faith any longer to support the downfallen cause of truth.<sup>53</sup>

Wesley became the reformer of the hour and challenged the various extremist theology of his day. For fifty years, Wesley was immersed in theological controversies against fellow Anglicans, Calvinists, and seemingly the whole gamut of the Christian world. During this time, he served as theological mentor “to the people called Methodists with no peer and no successful challengers.”<sup>54</sup> In the end, he became “the single most influential Protestant leader of the English speaking world since the Reformation.”<sup>55</sup>

### The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Wesley was no system builder of theology. Perfection and assurance represent two of his distinct contributions to Christian thought. Outler observes that Wesley was seeking an alternative to the “sacerdotalism of the Church as by the law established” and the “Calvinism of non-conformity.” To Wesley, the Methodist revival was a

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<sup>52</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 253.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Albert Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley,” 22.

<sup>55</sup>Kevin Twain Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley’s Agenda: A New Paradigm for Wesleyan Virtue Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008), 3.

“providential corrective” to the ills of the English church and he sincerely believed that the “gospel of grace” that Methodists preached was a recovery of apostolic doctrine and a continuation of the Reformation. Further, Methodists were repulsed by the religious wars and anarchy of the seventeenth century and were uncomfortable with the perceived “theocratic visions” of Calvinists and others from the tradition of radical Protestantism.<sup>56</sup> Outler also noted that Wesley had a special gift for “finding fruitful alternatives to barren polarities.” He had “marvelous powers of outreach and ingathering, of up building and nurturing.” The masses became “candidates for conversion to heart religion” and transformation by grace “to Christian service.”<sup>57</sup>

## Scripture

In 1730, Wesley determined to be the man of one book. This obviously meant that the Bible predicated what he believed, for he was a voracious reader. He had declared that he wanted to know one thing, “the way to heaven—how to land safe on that happy shore.” It was for this reason God came from heaven and had written it in the Bible. Yet, Wesley qualified this stance. He declared that those who required no other book but the Bible have placed themselves above St. Paul who requested that his books be brought to him.<sup>58</sup> Hence, in Wesley’s reckoning, there is a place for other books.

Wesley affirmed that God inspires all Scripture. The author is the Holy Spirit who

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<sup>56</sup>Albert Outler, “Biblical Primitivism in Early American Methodism,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longman (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 148.

<sup>57</sup>Albert Outler, “John Wesley’s Interest in the Early Fathers of the Church,” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 99.

<sup>58</sup>Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 55-56; see 2 Timothy 4:13.

inspires both the writer and the reader; therefore, to understand the Bible requires the aid of the Holy Spirit. For Protestants, Wesley believes the Bible is both the whole truth and the sole rule of faith and practice. “Enjoin nothing that the Bible does not clearly enjoin. Forbid nothing that it does not clearly forbid.”<sup>59</sup>

Wesley accepted the principle that scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. Where there is an absurdity in one section, the rest of scripture sheds light on the obscure passage. Outler emphasized that Wesley went deeper than simply proof texting. “His larger concern was to let each part of the Scripture be pondered in the light of the whole.”<sup>60</sup>

Wesley deduced that ignorance of Scripture was a serious problem in Christianity. In his sermon “Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity,” Wesley asks:

Why has Christianity done so little good in the world? Is it not the balm, the outward means, which the Great Physician has given to men to restore their spiritual health? Why then, is it not restored? You say because of the deep and corruption of human nature. Most true. But here is the very difficulty. Was it not intended by our all wise and almighty Creator to be the remedy for that universal evil? But it has not answered this intention. It never did. It does not answer it at this day. The disease still remains in its full strength: wickedness of every kind, vice inward and outward in all its forms, still overspread the face of the earth.<sup>61</sup>

He concluded that an insufficient knowledge of God is the problem. “Here I am: I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not vary from this book, either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am

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<sup>59</sup>Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*, 56.

<sup>60</sup>Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in John Wesley,” 31.

<sup>61</sup>John Wesley, “Causes for the Inefficacy of Christianity, in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 4: *Sermons IV*, 115-151, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1987), 85-96.

determined to be a Bible Christian, not almost but all together. Who will meet me on this ground? Join me on this, or not at all.”<sup>62</sup>

### **Tradition**

The age of Wesley was marked by a high distrust of Christian tradition says Don Thorsen. The Catholic abuses in raising tradition above Scripture and the outcome of such a practice on doctrine, beliefs, and practices were evident. Wesley discerned a genuine religious tradition in history, and he viewed Methodism as the “authentic, manifestation of old religion.” In studying scripture and employing all the hermeneutical devices, often there remains some uncertainty. Here it is wise to “consult those who are experienced in the things of God” from the past.<sup>63</sup>

Wesley therefore recognized the importance of Tradition, but never considered it “inspired or infallible.” He felt that the Church Fathers made many errors, weak suppositions, and poor conclusions.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, “the Church fathers are the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain and eminently endowed with the Spirit by whom all Scripture is given. . . . I speak chiefly of those who wrote before the Council of Nice.” To Wesley there is authority in Christian antiquity—the “religion of the primitive Church, of the whole Church in the purest ages.”<sup>65</sup>

Wesley accumulated a library of fifty volumes called a Christian Library. It consisted of “*Extracts from and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical*

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<sup>62</sup>Wesley, “Causes for the Inefficacy of Christianity,” 85-96.

<sup>63</sup>Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 94-95.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>65</sup>Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*, 65.

*Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Tongue (1749-55).*”<sup>66</sup> He felt comfortable that they were true and agreeable with scripture “unmixed with controversy of any kind” while being intelligible to plain men.<sup>67</sup> The Greek Fathers appeared to Wesley to be truer to the Gospel than the Latin ones. Wesley learned “the rich notion of the Christian life as a participation in the divine” from the Greek fathers. In this salvation is the restoration of the image of God in the human soul. This accounts for Wesley’s understanding of grace and freewill along with the view that prevenient grace is the Holy Spirit’s constant initiative. It also accounts for his view that perfection is a process and not a completed act. The Latin fathers taught him that love is the highest form of knowledge and that God brings about a greater total good from the fall, than if Adam had not sinned. Hence, Christian tradition is not a mere curiosity or a place for illustrative material but “a living spring of Christian insight.”<sup>68</sup>

## **Reason**

To Wesley, reason has a proper sphere. Outside of that, it tends to be overvalued, or undervalued. He fought against both unreasonable charismatic enthusiasts who stressed emotive spirituality and excessive rationalists “who wanted to impose hyper-skeptical criteria on the inquiry into Christian truth.”<sup>69</sup> He was attracted to mystics, but had reservations about their tendency to complicate the simple aspects of Christianity and advance their tenets beyond Scripture. These tend to defy reason and become a danger to

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<sup>66</sup>Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*, 68.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral,” 31-32.

<sup>69</sup>Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley’s Agenda*, 42-44.

religion. Wesley admired the mystic William Law but rejected his extremes on the basis that “they who stop the workings of their reason lie the more open to the workings of their imagination.”<sup>70</sup> He felt mystics exceeded the boundaries of reason and Scripture. The eighteenth century was a period of Deism whose religion was based on reason and natural law. Deists were skeptical of Scripture and traditional theology. They doubted the possibility of miracles. Wesley opposed Deism because to him it tampered with the central truths of Christianity. Nonetheless, the eighteenth century was a time of philosophical ferment with many concluding that truth could be found in both reason and science.<sup>71</sup>

When reason is subject to Scripture, Wesley placed much value on it. Thomas Oden assures us that it would be very difficult for anyone to find Wesley depreciating reason. “He was never attracted to anti-intellectual fideism.”<sup>72</sup> Wesley saw no dichotomy between faith and reason but sees faith in need of the best reasons and the best arguments from God. The reasoning powers that God gives distinguish humans from the “brute creation.”<sup>73</sup> Having created humans in His image God invites us in the Bible to reason with Him. In the Adamic Fall the image of God became effaced but not obliterated. Christianity was therefore reasonable and “all irrational religion is false religion.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda*, 42-44.

<sup>71</sup>Charles Yrigoyen Jr., *John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 26-27.

<sup>72</sup>Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*, 72-73.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 107.

There were intellectual developments in England during the eighteenth century that influenced Wesley's outlook. Newtonian physics was gaining ascendancy over Cartesian philosophy. Lockean empiricism was widely accepted. Locke criticized Descartes' emphasis on abstract reason and posits that one learns from sensory experience. Newton's mechanistic model and the scientific method were crossing over to other disciplines as well. Wesley did not ignore the philosophers but sought from them whatever was useful that did not counter Scripture. He spoke well of Locke and was comfortable in accepting his intellectual developments as long as they were in harmony with Scripture. Wesley saw some value in natural theology for nature reveals knowledge of God and the whole creation witness to the existence of God.<sup>75</sup>

### **Experience**

Wesley often faced accusations that Methodism is an eighteenth century version of nonconformity. In effect, his critics insinuated that he had revived the struggle of Puritanism. The value he placed on the authority of Experience is one of the places where evangelical theology and experiential religion of Puritanism is evident. To Wesley and Puritans, religion is more than intellectual assent to doctrine or outward activities like Church attendance. It must involve a personal experience and relationship with God. The Moravians, pietists, and mystics on many sides influenced Wesley. Nevertheless, while he explored various theological outlooks and learned from them, he remained the master of his belief system. He accepted that which was productive of good spiritually and rejected what he considered extreme.

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<sup>75</sup>Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 120.

The Reformation in England had actually regressed by the time of Wesley as “the doctrine of justification by faith, so clearly taught by Luther had been almost totally lost sight of while the Romish principle of trusting to good works for salvation had taken its place,” according to Ellen White.<sup>76</sup> Wesley himself struggled with legalism, but his Aldersgate experience (1738) turned him around dramatically. “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation. And assurance was given me that He did take away my sins, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”<sup>77</sup> Before this, Wesley was in conversation with Peter Bohler on the necessity of experiencing God. Wesley found this to be true scripturally, but did not have affirmation experientially. Bohler brought witnesses to him who testified that a living faith and a sense of pardon worked together and was the birthright of all believers. Wesley later could testify that he had indeed experienced this promise of Christianity in his own soul.<sup>78</sup>

Emphasis on a personal, inner experience in religion has its dangers and Wesley understood this. He insisted on the role of other authorities to offer checks and balances. Scripture remains the primary authority assisted by Reason and Tradition.<sup>79</sup>

## **Seventh-day Adventist Theology**

### *Always Reforming*

Norval Pease observed that the flow of Adventist history has demonstrated a

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<sup>76</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 253.

<sup>77</sup>Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*, 84.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>79</sup>Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley His Puritan Heritage* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1999), 52.



unique feature among religious bodies. In Adventism, there has been a growing emphasis upon evangelical truths. This Pease attributes largely to the influence of Ellen White “whose writings were strongly on the side of evangelical orthodoxy.”<sup>80</sup> The opposite has been true of many churches, which lose the original fervor and begin to compromise their evangelical beliefs.

Adventism has been a truth-seeking movement willing to accept truths from all sides as long as there is agreement with scripture. In this way, Adventism has maintained the Reformation principle of “always reforming.” The Adventist quest is for the whole truth that God chooses to reveal to humanity. Many Christians have similar desires but without a sense of the direction in which truth is flowing. The Adventist experience has uniquely positioned the Church to consolidate the gains of the reformation and move theology forward. An urgent need for Adventists is to make a more serious attempt to know its place in God’s plan for Christianity and likewise to appreciate and use to the fullest the resources God has bestowed.

#### Adventist Distinctive

LeRoy Froom believed that the “one distinctive, separate, structural truth” that identifies Adventists apart from all Christian bodies historically is the sanctuary truth.<sup>81</sup> Arthur Daniells pointed to the Adventist view of Righteousness by Faith as the most distinctive of Adventist doctrines. He notes that “Christ our Righteousness is the one sublime message set forth in the Scriptures” and it is the “central and commanding

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<sup>80</sup>Pease, *By Faith Alone*, 227.

<sup>81</sup>LeRoy Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1971), 541.

theme.”<sup>82</sup> In the same vein others would point to our end-time messages or the Decalogue. These truths are truly special in Adventism and the whole bundle knitted together presents a system that could only be assembled with Divine guidance.

However, our identity, similar to the confession of many Anglicans, is primarily defined by the Adventist way of doing theology rather than the possession of a body of truths. The Adventist approach evolved from the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, which is a further development of the Anglican method solidified by Richard Hooker. Hooker saw Scripture, Tradition, and Reason working together and Wesley added Experience. In Adventism, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral has taken on Adventist nuances to become a Holistic Framework for doing theology. Like the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, the Adventist approach has been inherent rather than purposefully defined. The effect is evident on Adventist theological development but if it is purposefully defined and applied, its effect would be more powerful.

On surveying Adventist theologians, it is clear there is consensus on the acceptance of Sola Scriptura as the final court to settle all beliefs and doctrines. Adventists have been careful to keep in tension the authority of Scripture against pedagogical resources including the writings of Ellen G. White. Affirming sola scriptura by itself does not ensure accurate interpretation of scripture as history has shown. The human mind shaped by a multitude of contexts requires other resources in the theological process.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is nuanced by Adventism in many ways. The application of Sola Scriptura is more intense. It moves beyond primary source to become

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<sup>82</sup>Arthur Daniells, *Christ Our Righteousness* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1941), 9.

the only source for doing theology. Tradition, Reason, and Experience become resources in the process and are subject to Scripture. Fernando Canale, an Adventist theologian, rejects all other sources of theology other than Scripture. To him Tradition, Reason, and Experience cannot be sources. “Scripture alone reveals Divine thoughts” while reason, science, philosophy, and experience express “human points of view and conflicting interpretations.”<sup>83</sup> While Canale may somewhat minimize the value of Tradition, Reason, and Experience, he represents the strong view of Scripture that is the general pattern of Adventism.

The intensification of the Wesleyan method in Adventism is illustrated in Sabbath reform. Wesley did not see the need for Sabbath reform but the Adventist pioneers saw it. Yet Wesley’s view of the Decalogue is in a similar vein as Adventists. The Sabbath was introduced through the Seventh-day Baptist tradition but when tested by Scripture it was found to be true. Adventists have since developed sabbatarianism to a higher level than other Christian churches. The Sabbath became a rallying experience that brought disappointed Millerites together and gave them new vision and a new movement.

The intensification is also affected lifestyle development. Adventists recognized physiological laws as necessary for healthful living. Human development was approached holistically emphasizing the mental, physical, spiritual, and social, working together to make humans whole. The Bible gave instructions about health which

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<sup>83</sup>Fernando Canale. *The Cognitive Principle of Christian Theology* (Berrien Springs, MI: Lithotech, 2005), 431.

Adventists adopted. The whole system of Adventist beliefs including the Sanctuary and Righteousness by Faith are therefore dependent variables—beliefs dependent on the theological process. The Adventist Holistic Framework evolving from the Wesleyan Quadrilateral is the core of the Adventist identity. This has facilitated the mining and shaping of the deep truths of Adventism.

### Theological Stability

While Adventist beliefs have undergone challenges, analysis, and clarification throughout its history, its core beliefs have remained intact. While there have been apostasies, the main body of Adventism has remained true to its mandate. This is not incidental; rather, it has to do with the theological process. The Holistic Framework has been inherently active.

Norman Douty, a critic of Adventism, observed that the book *Questions on Doctrine* (1957) thought by many to be an evangelicalization of Adventism is actually “old time Adventism in new phraseology.”<sup>84</sup> Douty expected to see Adventism change its core theology. Nevertheless, the core has remained intact while the denomination became more open and evangelical. Others like Geoffrey Paxton, an Anglican, views our approach to justification and sanctification as containing elements from the Council of Trent.<sup>85</sup> Our theological process rooted and grounded in Scripture and the reformation tradition prevents any part of righteousness to be grounded in works. By Faith Alone is salvation received. Faith is the root and works are the fruits. There is no part of salvation

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<sup>84</sup>Norman Douty, *Another Look at Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1962), 9.

<sup>85</sup>Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism*, 77.

that is earned in the Adventist position. Salvation is a free gift. Jesus paid it all. The Adventist theological process keeps Adventism under the reformation fire and from merely reacting to the view of others.

Norval Pease, an Adventist, has some sympathy for the “Catholic reaction” to the Reformers because the Reformers were inconsistent in some ways. However, while some aspects of the Council of Trent appear quite evangelical, the usual sacerdotalism of Catholicism is evident, which by far distances it from the Adventist position.<sup>86</sup>

The theological temper of Adventism is in the vein of the continental Reformers and John Wesley. There is universality similar to the “catholic spirit” in Wesley’s approach. Like Wesley, Adventists feel no obligation to follow the old polarities of the Reformers, which hindered the principle of “always reforming.” As Wesley insisted faith alone and holy living work together, the latter being the corollary of the former. Justification does not stand-alone for justified individuals are also born anew.<sup>87</sup> Forgiveness is not simply a judicial act but a “reclaiming from sin.”<sup>88</sup>

Adventism has grasped elements of beliefs from many traditions. Similarly, it rejects elements from all. When we examine our selection and rejection process, we see

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<sup>86</sup>Pease, *By Faith Alone*, 95-97.

<sup>87</sup>George Knight, *The Pharisees Guide to Perfect Holiness* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 89.

<sup>88</sup>Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956), 114.

the inherent work of the Holistic Framework. This adds stability to Adventist theology. If the Holistic Framework becomes universal among Adventists, it is possible that our strength theologically would be emboldened.

### Adventist History and the Holistic Framework

A look at William Miller and how the Millerite Movement came into being, shows the working of Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience. Miller was a deist for twenty years, yet based on reason he became convinced that the deistic postulation on concepts like human goodness was wrong. History did not verify human goodness. In the battle of Plattsburg in September 1814, he saw where a largely inexperienced American army defeated an experienced British army three times larger. He felt he had experienced the providential working of God in that battle.<sup>89</sup> From thence, he began to have a series of convictions about God and the Bible until he found Jesus to be his friend and the Bible a delight. “Jesus became to me the chieftest among ten thousand, and the Scriptures which before were dark and contradictory, now became the lamp to my feet and light to my path.”<sup>90</sup> Miller studied the Bible intensely and through reason developed his approach to biblical interpretation. Living in a rationalistic age Miller found the Bible to be a “feast of reason.”<sup>91</sup> He continued to have interplay between Scripture, inner impressions, providential experiences and reason.

Between 1800 and 1844, more than sixty-five expositors predicted that the 2300

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<sup>89</sup>George Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 32.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 34.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 39.

days prophecy would find fulfillment between 1843 and 1844.<sup>92</sup> Miller no doubt tapped into the tradition of prophetic interpretation as he worked out his chronology of the 2300 days prophecy. He was wrong in his identification of the event, which led to the Great Disappointment when Christ did not come as expected.

After the Great Disappointment, the Millerites were largely in disarray. The most successful group developed to become the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They believed God had led William Miller in the Advent movement and they looked to the Bible prayerfully for answers. They went on a path of theological development and became organized as a Church. They made mistakes along the way but these they were able to correct and clarify while growing theologically.

One of the problems that developed was an over-reaction to tradition. Seventh-day Adventists had overstressed their unique doctrines to the extent that they failed to recognize their historic connections to Christianity. What made them Adventists absorbed their attention so that they failed to recognize vital elements that made them Christians.

This led to a crisis in 1888 when an entrenched legalism overemphasized law keeping at the expense of faith in Christ. Furthermore, the principle of “always reforming” was shunted as many leaders held firmly to entrenched legalistic positions. History has shown the importance of the lessons learned in 1888. Here is illustrated how human mindsets can be blinded to scriptural truths. It also illustrates well the need to resonate with the Scriptural tradition. Out of this came the establishment of justification by faith at the core of Adventist beliefs.

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<sup>92</sup>Knight, *Millennial Fever*, 16.

One of the powerful peculiarities of Seventh-day Adventism is the quality of a learning organization, drawing truths from many places, constructing them into a system of beliefs while constantly moving forward learning, clarifying, and growing.

### Theological Necessity

While Adventism is orthodox in the core doctrines of the Christian religion, many Adventists do not know this and many would not believe it if told. Many believe we should be absolutely separate and apart from the rest of Christianity. Some have survived, even reasonably well, with fragmented theology. In the past, believers accepted doctrines with fewer questions than today. This situation is inadequate and unnecessary. We need reform guided by the Holistic Framework.

At all levels of Adventism, there are challenges to our dogma and a lack of consensus on what we believe. In general, there is too much disparity in our approach to the same things; hence, we have a vast array of Adventists, too often in the same congregation. Ted Wilson, General Conference president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, appeals for unity in biblical beliefs and in our mission to the world. He also calls for all to unite in the ministry of reconciliation “looking to the Holy Spirit to guide us in reaching consensus as we utilize the church’s representative and democratic process in decision making.”<sup>93</sup> If there is to be more consensus and unity of beliefs, there has to be more work on the theological front to assist and bolster the efforts of leaders. A conscious definition of our theological process could be a great blessing. Christian beliefs, including ours, are constantly challenged along the fronts of Reason, Tradition, and Experience. An

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<sup>93</sup>Ted N. C. Wilson, “Conflict in the Church: Working Towards Consensus,” *Adventist World* June 2012, 8-10.



inherent weakness exists when we fail to use all the resources God has given us. Obscurantism will continue in many places leaving many in a state of scriptural imbalance. We must attempt greater things that are within our reach. The Holistic Framework helps believers to possess an examined belief system, so that they not only believe, but also understand why they believe. This brings them to a greater level of assurance and greatly impact personal and congregational life.

Adventists recognize the reality of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan, and realize there is a perennial battle between truth and error. In the psychosocial areas of life, various therapies are being developed and refined to address the varied needs of people. In the spiritual sphere, issues and needs must be addressed at the theological level. While it is arguable that many of our seemingly theological problems are psychosocial in nature, the reverse is also true. At the deepest core of our psychosocial being are beliefs. The various cognitive therapies direct their intervention at helping clients to believe more rationally. Helping Christians to believe authentically becomes even more therapeutic since our very identity is defined by our beliefs.

George Knight addresses the need for balance in our theology. “Over time we have oscillated between overemphasizing those aspects of our belief system that make us Christian and those that distinguish us as distinctively Adventists.”<sup>94</sup> The result is the development of different strands of Adventism, each emphasizing some things over others. There are people who focus on law to the extreme and others who focus on grace, also to the extreme. Many problems are the result of taking good things to the extreme.

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<sup>94</sup>Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 13.

“Balance is the goal but clearly that is something difficult to discover and almost impossible to maintain in an unbalanced world. Yet, that does not mean we shouldn’t try to approximate it in our ministries.”<sup>95</sup>

### **Summary**

Christian history has demonstrated the veracity of using Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience in their proper relation as a framework for doing theology. This framework is also evident in Scripture.

During the Middle Ages Scripture lost its primacy while tradition gained much prominence. A stream of errors emerged in the church as a result. The Reformation returned Scripture to its primacy. Since then tradition, reason, and experience have been developing as part of the theological process. Anglicanism had the distinction of attending to scripture, tradition, and reason as a method. John Wesley recognized experience as a component that works with scripture, tradition, and reason. Albert Outler recognized this inherent Quadrilateral of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience in Wesley’s theology.

The components of the Quadrilateral also exist in Ellen White’s writings as a framework for knowing God. Ellen White and Adventists give prominence to Scripture beyond the role of primary source. Scripture is the only source of theology. Tradition, reason, and experience are resources and they play an important part in the theological process because of the nature of human understanding rather than any lack in scripture.

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<sup>95</sup>Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision*, 13.

These components making up the Holistic Framework were active in the development of Adventist theology.

This project develops the Holistic Framework with the components of the quadrilateral and applies it in the leadership and the education of the Church. Given the prolific history of the quadrilateral, the Holistic Framework should gain more prominence in Adventist ministry.

While the Adventist message is intact biblically, many have not grasped its holistic nature. The framework of Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience will help towards this. It will help to identify issues that fall under adiaphorous (things indifferent) and produce answers to such situations.

The complexities of the times demand that every resource bestowed by God to reveal Scripture be employed, knowing that such knowledge has amazing transformative power for all the ills of humanity and for redemption.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BETHEL CONTEXT

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, a brief biography of my ministry experience and my engagement with the Holistic Framework is given. The Bethel context is presented with its history, special challenges, and needs. Paul Hiebert's anthropological explorations for mission and its relevance to the application of the Holistic Framework are presented as the basis of my participant-observer approach to the Bethel church community. My approach to ministry at Bethel has been more missional than merely pastoral and the Holistic Framework has heightened sensitivity to such a ministry.

#### **Pastor-Leader-Intervener**

I started ministry at Bethel with the advantage of having previously laid the foundation of my approach to ministry. I had experienced ministry in similar contexts as Bethel. Professionally, I had sought to be the consummate pastor adopting the servant-leadership model that our Savior practiced. In this endeavor, I recognized the need to be a life-long learner who seeks to view all things through the spectacles of Christ.

On becoming an Adventist, I was attracted to prophetic study and the intellectual basis of Christianity. I had a strong sense of security in the knowledge I possessed. My

sense of mission developed rapidly and I became enveloped in the outreach of my local church. Within three years, I went to college to study theology. After a couple years, I experienced financial difficulties and had to leave college for some time. I was very disappointed about this and wondered why God had allowed this to happen.

While out of college, I enrolled in a correspondence course on the life and teachings of Jesus. In this course, the Gospels and the *Desire of Ages* were the main texts of study. For the first time I looked into the life and teachings of Jesus intricately. I saw the centrality of Christ in scripture and came in touch with the suffering servant aspect of Jesus' mission. Whatever I had thought were difficulties in my personal life became as nothing in the light of the cross. All my experiences and questions were placed into a more balanced biblical perspective. It was then, about five years after conversion, that I truly experienced justification by faith. I felt the assurance of salvation and God's personal presence in my life. I saw justification by faith as the root of my salvation and mission. From then on Christ became a friend and a constant study. Communion with Him became the indispensable element of my life. That experience became the powerbase of my life and ministry. It was evident to me that God had arranged this encounter because of its far-reaching effect on the believer's life and mission. Ellen White explained the importance of this doctrine in the life of Luther and others throughout the ages as presented in the epistle of Romans: "With great clearness and power the Apostle presents the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ" which "has stood as a mighty beacon to guide repentant sinners into the way of life."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 373-374.

In the course of researching Christian perfection for my Master's thesis, I studied John Wesley and came in touch with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. I sensed there was something special here that was worthy of further study. I had found a similar pattern in Ellen White's writings where Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience worked together to reveal God. Exploring the Reformation tradition demonstrated that this model has been honed and chiseled out of the theological and philosophical ferment of Western society since the sixteenth century. While it may not be the only method of value for doing theology, I felt it had something special for Adventists given our holistic approach to theology and ministry.

History has recorded the battles fought over interpretation of scripture. Checking scriptural understanding against tradition, reason, and experience provides depth, balance, and clarity to theology and ministry. Scripture with the Holy Spirit's guidance are well able to reveal God but the frailty of the human instrument in grasping divine things makes it necessary to view beliefs holistically by incorporating tradition, reason, and experience as complementary resources.

Leadership was not one of my natural gifts, so I worked hard at leadership development. I felt the need for mentors who had experience with God and ecclesiastical matters. This led me to study the great people of faith in Christian history. I was particularly impressed with those in the Reformation tradition and I saw a strong connection between John Wesley and Adventism. Comparing Ellen White with the Reformers revealed patterns in the way God has led them all. These people of faith with their experiential knowledge became mentors and models for me in both my personal faith development and my ministry.

One of the big questions of inquiry for me in my spiritual development was the subject of Christian perfection. It is within the Wesleyan Quadrilateral framework that I was able to get a balanced understanding of the subject. In studying Adventism within this framework, the Adventist place in Christianity was confirmed to me as unique, yet very orthodox. I have developed a firmer grasp of Christianity as a whole even while sifting through the multitude of approaches to theology from conservative to liberal. This framework enabled me to assess the issues of Adventism and Ellen White within evangelical Christianity. As a result, I became a stronger Adventist and a better Christian.

On becoming the pastor at Bethel and surveying its context, I felt God had prepared me for such a ministry. The Holistic Framework that had become the basis of my life and ministry would become invaluable in guiding my leadership at Bethel.

### **The Bethel Story**

Bethel is located in the Etobicoke section of Toronto adjoining the city of Mississauga. The population of Etobicoke is very diverse with various cultures concentrated in different areas. The area of Alderwood where Bethel is located has a concentration of mainly Europeans. Three highways intersect within a mile of Bethel providing easy access to downtown Toronto in the East, Brampton in the north, and the full extent of Mississauga in the west. Members of Bethel were largely from Etobicoke, Brampton, and Mississauga.

Bethel is one of the older predominantly West Indian congregations started at a time when there were roughly twenty Adventist churches overall in Toronto including six West Indian congregations. During the 1990s Bethel had an influx of Filipinos but

demographic shifts and changes in growth patterns of Adventism in Toronto has made it more West Indian. Filipinos have gravitated towards newly developing Filipino churches.

There is now over 60 Adventist Churches plus Branch Sabbath Schools in Toronto. Within these are about 30 West Indian congregations. The ethnic churches especially West Indian, Filipino, Korean, African, and Portuguese have grown with their corresponding populations in the city. Two factors have contributed to the immense growth of West Indian churches in Toronto: (1) many Adventists have emigrated from the West Indies to Toronto and (2) the West Indian population is mainly evangelical Christians and many like me have become converted to Adventism. I grew up in the Presbyterian Church but had some exposure to the Wesleyan Holiness Church. Adventist evangelism in Toronto had been very successful in converting evangelical West Indians.

Even though the immediate community around Bethel has been evangelized over the years, growth from the area has been minimal. The majority of Bethel's members commute to Bethel from outside the area. Many after moving to the suburbs have still maintained their membership at Bethel.

At the beginning of my ministry at Bethel, roughly 30 percent of Bethel's membership had been members at Bethel for over 10 years, 10 percent have been there for over 20 years, some being original members. Approximately one third of the membership is over 50, one third is between 25 and 50, while the other third is below 25.

### Bethel: History

Bethel started in 1974 with the intention of placing an English-speaking church within the vicinity of downtown Toronto. New converts, along with members from the West Toronto and Perth Avenue churches, came together to form the South Toronto



Seventh-day Adventist Church. Over 90 percent of the church was West Indian. The group met in a room at the Portuguese Church.

During the first year of existence the church grew rapidly to a membership of 86 and needed a larger sanctuary for worship. The British Methodist Episcopal Church at 460 Shaw Street was rented for Sabbath and Wednesday night services. The church continued to grow and in December 1977, the St. Jude's Anglican Church building at 437 Roncesvalles in the Parkdale area of Toronto was purchased. It was felt appropriate to rename the church Parkdale Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In 1982, during the high interest rate crisis Parkdale Seventh-day Adventist Church had severe difficulties servicing its debt and maintaining its large building. It became necessary to sell the building and the congregation moved out on January 28, 1982. The congregation then went on a pilgrimage moving west. For a few weeks, services were held at the St. Dunstan's Anglican Church at 722 Lansdowne Avenue, but the facilities proved to be too small. They moved to the Ukrainian Seventh-day Adventist Church at 532 College Street with services held on Sabbath afternoons, but this was also inadequate. Four months later, in May 1982, the congregation moved to the College Street United Church at the intersection of Bathurst Street. Worship continued there until 1984.

By this time, the need for the congregation to have its own premises became acute. So far, the church was located in the downtown area and this was its preferred location. This was not to be since a church was found at the Southwestern extremity of Toronto in Etobicoke—the present location. The building was purchased November 1984, and the name Bethel Seventh-day Adventist Church was adopted. I had been a

visiting speaker at Bethel a few times during the 1990s. As chaplain of the Adventist academy, I interacted with the church, its Christian education program, and its students.

I became the pastor of Bethel on the first day of January 2001. I spent nine years there leaving at the end of January 2010. During that time the Parkdale Church was planted, the Parkdale Café and the AIM group were established. AIM became part of my present church district because it was in its infancy and needed much nurturing to fulfill its mission of reaching out cross-culturally and cross-generationally.

## The Challenges at Bethel

### **In-reach Challenges**

Within the two years before my appointment as pastor of Bethel, a good section of Bethel members had left the church. Some joined other congregations and some stopped going to church altogether. On my arrival, there were many grievances still existing and the relational health of the church was poor. The church needed healing relationally, theologically, and missionally. Members of Bethel come largely from the sections of Toronto where the large churches exist. Most attended church spasmodically, visiting other churches quite often. There was just enough commitment for them to remain members of Bethel but not enough to get involved to any great degree. Most of the youth sector considered themselves members of Bethel, but they also attended Bethel infrequently. This situation made it more challenging to increase spiritual development through the programs Bethel offered; hence, the full extent of preaching, teaching, and seminars reached only a portion of the church consistently.

Bethel was also lacking in committed leadership. In the past, there had been many dynamic and committed leaders, but over the years, they moved to other churches. Over

the past twenty years, there had been a proliferation of new Adventist churches across Toronto and some significant leaders were lost to these. Other leaders grew old and were unable to continue leading. There was a need to develop new and younger leaders.

Within Bethel there were diversities of world views from very conservative to fairly liberal. Postmodernism existed among the youth to whom traditions were suspect. For the older generation, traditions were sacred, but there were no strong theological basis for their beliefs. The youth wanted drums and guitars to be among the church's musical instruments, while others thought this was sacrilegious. Decisions were based on whims, emotions, and culture. Some were anxious to institute a dress code while others felt this was not necessary.

There were people who demonstrated ecstatic elements in worship and sincerely felt this was the influence of the Holy Spirit while others felt this was absolutely out of place. Some promoted a healthy lifestyle while others were unconcerned about this. Questions of how to deal with unwed pregnancies elicited strong debates based on opinions rather than theology. Senior members bemoaned changes while younger members wanted more radical changes. Influences from fringe groups were evident and tensions over this were strong.

Nonetheless, there was a core group of members committed to Bethel. In-reach programs reached them consistently and growth resulted among them. These became the backbone of the congregation and made it possible for Bethel to continue to exist. These were frustrated with all the issues and problems. They needed inspiration and guidance to better things.

My observations revealed that Bethel had faltered in fostering a balanced spiritual growth among its membership. There had been no systematic approach to theological education of the church. The knowledge base had been largely doctrinal and revolved around a core of subjects repeated continuously. Knowledge of relationship building was largely inadequate. Members held firmly to fragments of Adventist theology apart from the whole. Even among the most fervent, there were gaps in theological understanding, and with the complexities and challenges faced, the congregation was ill equipped to deal effectively with the situation. This led to severe disenchantment and a lack of assurance in Jesus with the attending problems.

I perceived the need for a strong Christ-centered ministry that went back to the basics of faith. Assurance in Jesus needed to be restored. The theological reasons for our faith had to be established. An approach was needed that would impart and apply a holistic understanding of Adventist theology. This would impact leadership, the relational aspect of church life, and mission on a whole.

The education of the church needed to become more intense, reaching beyond the Sabbath sermon and Sabbath School. Members needed to develop their theological understanding much more and to experience Christ personally and corporately. They needed not only guidance but also the tools and approaches that would work towards this. A culture of learning, lifelong and independent, was needed. The best resources available were to be utilized. “When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on the body and mind and soul is beyond estimate.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 126-127.

The church also needed to address mission in a big way. While development in other areas would influence mission, it needed to find a different vision for mission. Old methods that worked in the past were not working anymore. There was a question hanging in the air, both sensed and real: What is to be done?

### **Outreach Challenges**

Some of Bethel's problems were understood based on the life cycle effect on churches. Russell Burrill identified a life cycle of birth, growth, maturity, decline, and death. He points out how important it is to identify the current stage the church is in order to help it. His description of the fourth phase of decline fits Bethel very well.

The state of decline is more attitude than anything else. Mission has ceased to be the driving force of the congregation. They give lip service to it but few people in the congregation could articulate the vision or mission of the church if they were asked. New members simply feel they have joined a nice church, but they have no concept of what the church is trying to accomplish, because no one communicates it to them.<sup>3</sup>

The prominent members of Bethel have been Adventist for a long time. The initial fire of conversion had subsided. Given the age of the church, and the corresponding changes throughout Toronto, life cycle problems were not surprising and we sought solutions with this in mind.

Having been an Adventist for over thirty years in the Toronto area, I could see clearly the trends that had taken place. Older churches that gave birth to Bethel and its contemporaries had been going through ebb and flow over the past two decades. Some

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<sup>3</sup>Burrill, *Waking the Dead*, 36.

churches had a greater flow through membership, which created some sense of renewal, but to a large degree, these churches had plateaued. A developing trend was for the

established churches to move out of the inner core of the city to the outskirts where there was more parking, and greater comfort through better premises. A large portion of the membership of these churches had already relocated in these outer regions. The churches were following the church population shifts. Mission was not at the forefront of these movements.

Some members at Bethel felt moving to a West Indian community was the answer to Bethel's problems for the membership would increase, finances would improve, and more could be accomplished. Others felt it more important to maintain witness in the present community rather than duplicating what others were doing—ministering to those of our culture. Bethel had the advantage of owning its premises with no other Adventist presence anywhere near its location. With the movement of churches away from the inner city, a large sector of inner Toronto is devoid of an Adventist presence. Bethel was one of the few churches left in the inner core of the city. The decision was made to remain in the present location.

Bethel was caught in the nexus of geographical, demographic, generational, social, and spiritual changes. The church was reeling from the frustrations, ambiguities, and challenges of these changes. The congregation failed to understand the full extent of this. The responsibility to navigate a path out of the predicament fell in the hands of leadership. There was no doubt that God had a purpose for Bethel as the Body of Christ. Theology should inform the purpose and that path.

When a church is productive, the spiritual strength of believers often is not severely tested. When things got as complicated as they were at Bethel, there was need for a sound spiritual constitution to endure the challenges, make the necessary changes,

and chart a future with God. In such circumstances, people are prone to wander, judge each other harshly, blame others, look for answers in the wrong places, and oversimplify their interpretations of events. Bethel was experiencing all of these.

From the records of the Ontario Conference Directory, Bethel peaked in membership in 1995 at 309 members. Since then membership had been decreasing, so when I arrived in 2001 there were 259 on the books, but more than half were not attending.

Over the years, the level of witnessing by the Bethel membership had decreased. The results of recent efforts were discouraging. There was frustration with the neighborhood in not responding to evangelistic efforts. This frustration deterred evangelistic activity in the area.

Evangelism targeting West Indians also did not bring strong results as before. Demographic shifts happened on many fronts. West Indian immigration to Toronto had decreased. The children of West Indians were not showing as much interest in church as their parents. To compound the problem, the newly baptized at Bethel often moved quickly to other churches; hence, motivation for mission was constantly diminishing.

In the first six months of my ministry at Bethel, we presented a three-week evangelistic series in the traditional way. The speaker was very motivating and attendance by Adventists was good. At the end, few apart from children were converted. While there was some sense of revival, there was much disappointment in the failure to accomplish more. It was obvious that a different approach was necessary.

Research and development in ministry was necessary for Bethel. An experimental approach was necessary to find solutions and create changes. This reality struck me with



force. Multitudes of new immigrants settle in Toronto daily from every part of the globe. Bethel's base members were very sensitive to the need to witness to all cultures but there was a lack of a model to proceed in this regard. An approach adequate to the task had to be developed. It had to reach inward as well as outward. It had to repair old problems and deal with new ones. It would need to operate in a biblical framework with the blessings of God.

### **Theological Challenges**

The need for changes at Bethel was clear but some members insisted on doing things the usual way—preoccupation with the rudiments like dress, music, worship styles, and others. Almost all would argue about issues from extreme positions. Tensions would increase. Relationships became more strained.

Perfectionist views were many and varied. From time to time new practices arrived from other churches, such as, kneeling every time you pray, even for simple opening prayers. Then there were those who attached salvation to vegetarianism.

Personal issues were brought to the church board that should be settled privately and quietly. Members were wont to take sides on these issues—dividing the church. There was a tendency to make minor things major while making major issues minor. Addressing symptoms rather than the root causes was the method of operation. The pastor's refusal to participate in this was viewed negatively.

The pastor needed the authority of Scripture bolstered by tradition, reason, and experience. Scripture and the writings of Ellen White as part of the Adventist tradition were highly recognized by most of the membership at Bethel. This was a base on which to build.

The approach to theological development needed to be more structured and intentional. Orthodoxy could not exist apart from orthopraxis. Pastoral leadership had to lead from the head as well as the heart.

### **Anthropology and Missiology**

#### **The Pastor-Participant-Observer**

The study of missiology gives much insight into ministry in a context such as Bethel. The pastor enters this field as a participant-observer but also creates intervention. He observes the impact of his intervention and makes further intervention. Hence, the participant-observer process is ongoing, moving from one stage to another.

Paul Hiebert integrates anthropology and missiology in a way that facilitates the pastor-participant-observer application of the Holistic Framework at Bethel. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is inherent in his theological anthropology. He heightens the pastor's awareness of social-cultural issues that impact ministry. He has shown how holistic theology can work in human contexts and work out adiaphorous (things indifferent) in a reasonable and scriptural way. The application of the Adventist Holistic Framework will intensify the process making some adjustments to his offering. It is providential that such a missiological model exists to guide the implementation of this project.

#### **Paul Hiebert's Holistic Model**

Paul Hiebert offers a holistic model for Christian mission. He postulates that anthropology, theology, and mission must come together in a biblical worldview. He believes "a Christian worldview begins with the reality that God has revealed himself in

Scripture in the person of Jesus Christ and in the work of the Spirit in the church and the world.”<sup>4</sup> He asks pointedly, “How can we embody in human contexts divine revelation given us in Scripture so that people believe and follow Christ, and societies are transformed? And how can we do this in such a way that the Gospel does not become captive to the world?”<sup>5</sup> Hiebert develops an anthropological approach that seeks to be true to Scripture, human experience, tradition of both theology and culture, and scientific objectivity (reason).<sup>6</sup>

## **Scripture**

Hiebert is firm on Scripture. The Bible contains “God’s self revelation” not simply “human constructed beliefs.” Looking to scripture, we receive the good news of salvation and we see God’s methods in accomplishing His will. Divine revelation in scripture is given to humans and not humans searching and finding it.

He insists that whatever is not based on scripture be it preaching or teaching is not authentically Christian mission. All things must be scripturally based and they must be Christ-centered for Christ is the “only way to God and his kingdom.”<sup>7</sup>

However, Hiebert observes problems in the way we understand and process scripture. “As Christians we are often unaware that our beliefs are frequently shaped more by our culture than the Gospel. We take our Christianity to be biblically based and

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<sup>4</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), 11.

<sup>5</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 33.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 29-31.

normative for everyone. We do not stop to ask what parts of it come from our socio-cultural and historical contexts, and what parts come from scripture.”<sup>8</sup> Success in mission will depend on the extent to which we examine and address this problem.

Here Hiebert identified the necessity for resources in studying the Bible, even as we propound *Sola Scriptura*. The problem is not the incompleteness of scripture but the lens through which humans make their interpretations—how theologies are infected by our cultural backgrounds.

### **Tradition**

Hiebert resonates much with culture and contextualization. From a missionary point of view, he addressed tradition in a broader way than John Wesley and Ellen White. He observed the constant clash of cultures with Christian beliefs and demonstrated the difficulties inherent. There are problems with the traditions of new Christians as well as the traditions of the missionaries. We are never free from tradition as a part of culture. Ethnocentrism has caused missionaries to denounce some traditions as pagan when they are just different.

Christians have two traditions, “cultural and Christian.”<sup>9</sup> Rituals such as baptism and the Lord’s Supper connect other cultures with the historical church and its parent body, but there may be differences in how funerals are conducted in different cultural traditions within Christianity. To understand and deal appropriately in these situations requires the spiritual leader to have access to more information to deal in a broader

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<sup>8</sup>Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, 18.

context. The spiritual leader also needs to be able to process information on his feet and come up with appropriate application to unfamiliar events. The leadership framework of this project bears this in mind.

Hiebert gives guidance on avoiding excessiveness. First, everyone must begin at the same place, which is scripture. Second, we must recognize the priesthood of all believers and the fact that the Holy Spirit guides believers in understanding and applying scripture. Third, the church as a corporate body needs to check on things as a “discerning community” in which people are given spiritual gifts. Pastors and missionaries generally have a greater grasp of scripture and should give guidance in exegesis and application. Others have different gifts that they share with the community. Thus, the community becomes authentic in representing Christianity to the world in belief and practice.<sup>10</sup>

The impartation of skills in exegesis and application is where ministry has failed too often. It illustrates the need for experimentation with models to increase breadth in the approach to ministry. It confirms the need to educate believers in the theological process.

## **Reason**

In missions, reason should play a critical part; with postmodern society, this need increases. Hiebert suggested that while we analyze those we are seeking to reach, we must analyze our theology and ourselves. All theologies are flawed and incomplete since they were formed in human contexts. Our various theologies are “maps of reality” which

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<sup>9</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 189.

<sup>10</sup>Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*, 192.

systematizes our experience, while giving us guidance in the future. The application of reason is needed and necessary for a sense of understanding of where we are and from whence we have come. Then we can sense where we need to go and what is to be done. Theologies are also bridges between the Bible and culture, since God reveals Himself “within the history and culture of a specific people.”<sup>11</sup> There is much to process at all times, so there can be no objectivity without reason.

### **Experience**

Missionaries may not always agree with choices people make, but Hiebert wrote it is important to some degree to accept decisions of the local Christians and to recognize that the Spirit of God also leads them. They need space to make mistakes and get experience in engaging Scripture. While their decisions are not always the wisest, they develop better when making them rather than simply obeying orders given by others.<sup>12</sup>

Hiebert acknowledged the importance of a personal experience with Christ. While knowing Christ is the Son of God, people need to feel an emotional attachment towards Him. They must develop a relationship with Him. The over emphasis of the cognitive aspects of Christianity at the expense of the experiential works against the development of a balanced belief system.

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<sup>11</sup>Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights*, 202-203.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 190.

## Summary

Many of the challenges at Bethel existed in other Adventist churches in Toronto, but Bethel's situation was more complex. Changes demographically, economically, generationally, and otherwise were signaling the need for changes in ecclesiastical administration and mission execution.

To meet the challenges, believers needed a strong sense of the Adventist identity and mission. There was a need to return to the basics of Christianity like understanding and experiencing justification by faith. There was a need to understand the Adventist place in Christianity, the reformation, prophecy, and the remnant tradition. In general, members needed to understand the theological reasons for their faith in a holistic way. This was necessary in order to meet the challenges of their context in new but scriptural ways.

Believers at Bethel needed an understanding of the theological process and how to test the spirits. There was an increase of misinformation from all sides in the world. Negative views of Ellen White and Adventism were being promulgated on the internet and other places. Cultural traditions were very prominent in ordering church life and in setting the Bethel agenda. All things needed to be brought under the guardianship of the Holistic Framework to correct, direct, and educate for a positive forward movement on all sides. More of Christ, more of the story of how God has led Adventists needed to be preached and taught more intensely.

Paul Hiebert's anthropological approach to mission offered much to guide the pastor in ministry at Bethel. Hiebert's approach helped to bring more awareness of how theology is shaped and how life experiences and culture affects the pastor and

parishioners. Hiebert helped to heighten the understanding of the Bethel members and their context. In addition to theology and context Hiebert's approach addressed the Holistic Framework: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience within ministry.



## CHAPTER V

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the implementation of the Holistic Framework from orthodoxy to orthopraxis in ministry at Bethel. The implementation of the framework proceeded in three ways. First, the pastor-leader used the framework for self-education, self-analysis, and self-correction in his personal development; second, he uses the framework in problem solving, visioning, and in navigating the way forward; and third, the leader seeks to impart the framework to parishioners, as much as possible, so that they can self educate. The Bethel church was moved to develop the culture of a learning organization.

The problems at Bethel were many and varied but they were symptoms of theological fragmentation among the membership. They needed a holistic understanding of the Gospel in general and the Adventist message in particular. The Holistic Framework built on the template of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral was the structured approach to inform principles and practices at all levels of the Bethel project.

#### **Battling Theological Fragmentation**

As I started ministry at Bethel, there was expectancy that things would be different. The membership expected me to fix things. To them, fixing things meant doing

what they perceived needed to be done. Many expressed various grievances. I looked beyond the personal viewpoints and was careful of my own immediate view recognizing as Paul Hiebert affirmed that the cultural orientation and experience of both the parishioners and the intervener will influence what is perceived.

Some informed me that changing the course of the church would gain the angst of many who would withdraw the support of the church financially. Others felt that a change in the course of the church and the local leadership was the greatest immediate need. Another set was skeptical about the possibility of any good coming out of Bethel.

On getting to know the members, it was clear that they were not bad or ungodly people but they lacked balance in their view of God, the church, and the church's mission. They demonstrated goodness and commitment in some ways but were off-based in other ways. The most committed members were strong on emotions. Ecstatic experiences in worship had been a feature at Bethel for a long time and had become part of the culture of the church. The place of Reason in theology and ecclesiastical affairs was very low. This proved to be a long-term battle that was incomplete after my nine years of ministry at Bethel. Nevertheless, extreme views predominated to the extent that vigilance was necessary at all times to impress theological reasons for all things.

There were controversies over many things like the use of drums and contemporary music in worship, with no reference to theology. The conclusion of some was that drums would bring worship to life and solve Bethel's problem of low attendance especially among the youth. Personal views dominated the discussion. The injection of theological thinking on the issue brought clarification. Balanced views prevailed, drums were included, and all sides were satisfied as the quality of worship music advanced

without extremes. The worship service became more contemporary without losing its sanctity.

Youth ministry ebbed and flowed because many of the youth and leaders lacked a theologically informed approach to church and ministry. Within the first year, we developed two youth choirs—junior and senior. This stimulated interest and activity. Youth ministry became active; creativity was at a high with music, drama, and exchange programs with other churches. Soon a competitive spirit created friction and other problems. The negative effects of weak theology were very evident. Youth speakers were expected to entertain and supporters of youth ministry defended this approach as sacred ground. It was quite noticeable that the youth who sought theological knowledge were stronger, more committed, and prevailed over all difficulties.

Many minor issues at Bethel were treated as major issues while minor issues became major. Addressing them theologically issue by issue became necessary. As the principles changed, people changed. Personal relationships improved and commitment to the church strengthened. A major issue that was treated lightly was the physical condition of the church. This received inadequate attention. A few people did their best to take care of things but the state of the church was below the standard of the neighborhood. By addressing the issue and the theology behind it—the Adventist emphasis on good health and its biblical basis—a system was set up and professional services employed.

While addressing the issues in the midst of congregational life the preaching and teaching ministry of the church was where the long-term changes would be sought.

## Sabbath Sermons

With the complexities and challenges faced at Bethel as described in chapter 4, the most fundamental need of Bethel was Christ at the center of all things. The congregation needed to refocus from the multitude of distractions, misunderstandings, conflicts, and faulty theology to center on Christ. As they beheld Christ, the Holy Spirit would be pleased to work their transformation. A presupposition based on *Scripture* informs that as people are drawn to Christ, they are drawn to each other. They would experience grace and be enabled to dispense grace to each other. The strategy of presenting truth rather than addressing error was in place. As Christ is lifted up, He will draw people to Him and dispel error and darkness.

The application of the Holistic Framework to sermon presentation reoriented the congregation to a Christological focus. Christ is the head of the Church. The battles we faced were His. We trusted that Christ had a work to do at Bethel and He would accomplish it through us as we looked to Him. This became our grand strategy. In the book of Revelation (1:10-30), Christ is seen walking between the candlesticks (the Church) thereby promising us His presence. He holds the seven stars (His ministers) in His hands promising us His help. This gave me courage that I could face all challenges with assurance and I sought to pass this assurance on to the congregation.

The Adventist *tradition* demonstrated to us that Bethel's situation was similar to the 1888 crisis in the Adventist Church. A Christ-less church becomes legalistic and powerless to help itself and instead become plagued with problems. For positive changes to happen placing Christ at center becomes a major theological task of the church. Only the grace of Christ can draw us from our polarities, fragmented beliefs and varied

perception. Christ working from the inside out would add the missing beliefs and bring wholeness to their theologically fragmented minds. Perceptions and commitments would change. This was a work of faith.

*Reason* brought us to examine biblical cases that were applicable to Bethel. The problem in Galatians—started by faith but exchanged faith for works—resulted in confusion of the Gospel with other gospels. The case of the church of Ephesus losing its first love was also applicable to Bethel. Bethel had experienced a dynamic period in its development when faith was strong. Bethel also mirrored the Corinthian church with a list of similar problems. The principles presented by Paul would apply at Bethel.

My own *experience* of justification by faith informed me that this was the most basic need at Bethel. Many needed to experience the grace of God. They needed to get back to the basics before they could move on to greater things. Before God gives a person a mission, He gives experience preparatory to the work to be accomplished. The case of David facing Goliath illustrates this. David had a godly boldness because God had helped him to face big threats successfully.

God's providential leading was evident to me in the present. The Conference had designated me for another church but the complexities at Bethel led them to send me there instead. I had experienced similar challenges. It appeared to me that God had given me a special mission in seeking prescriptions for such churches. In this quest, the Holistic Framework emerged.

### **Sermon Series**

My first sermon at Bethel was the "Revelation of Jesus" based on the first chapter of Revelation. Sermons thereafter focused on the principles of Jesus as taught by Him

and illustrated in His life and the church throughout history. Illustrations injected the support of tradition, reason, and experience to build-up theological thinking. Social science has been very helpful in bringing awareness to human traits psychologically and sociologically. Building a strong sense of the Adventist identity, the scriptural roots and prophetic messages of Adventism were interwoven in preaching and teaching. To reinforce this, in my first year I presented a Sabbath evening series on the Book of Revelation. My Sabbath sermons were generally a series on Christology.

### **Prayer Meetings**

The pulpit was not sufficient to create the necessary theological development at Bethel. Other ways were employed to teach Scripture in a Christ-centered way. The church moved in the direction of a school as it found new ways to educate. This took place through prayer meetings, Sabbath afternoon Bible classes, vespers, revivals, seminars, and evangelistic meetings.

One of the special features of my ministry at Bethel was my presence there about ninety percent of the Sabbaths and prayer meetings. Most Sabbaths were spent with the church, participating in most programs, socializing with the members, and working in partnership with the various ministries. At prayer meetings, I was the main teacher for all of my time there. This was partly by default since the elders did not attend prayer meetings often.

For the first year of prayer meeting, the focus was on studying the life and teaching of Jesus by using the Gospels and the books: *Desire of Ages*, *Ministry of Healing*, and *Christ's Object Lessons*. Prayer meeting afforded a more consistent focus on Jesus with more time for discussion. A core group attended prayer meetings

consistently and these were among the strongest and most faithful group in the church.

At prayer meetings we discerned the power of the Ellen White's books on the life and teachings of Jesus. The messages come across simply, clearly, and spiritually. We were impressed how truly blessed were these Adventist resources to build spirituality and awaken greater interest in Scriptural knowledge. Interest and interaction were always vibrant. Relevant principles pertaining to personal and ecclesiastical issues entered our conversations as we studied. Prayer meetings became workshops for theological development. The components of the Holistic Framework were also taught in these books. In the case of *The Desire of Ages* the following examples demonstrates this:

1. Scripture—Chapter 3 deals with the defeat of the devil by the “It is written” approach of Jesus highlighting the importance of Sola Scriptura.

2. Tradition—In the chapter “The Sermon on the Mount” commenting on Jesus statement that He came “not to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17). Ellen White says: “While he set aside the false interpretation of the law, He carefully guarded His disciples against yielding up the vital truths committed to the Hebrews” (307-308). There is a false and a true tradition.

3. Reason—the chapter “Among Snares” gives much on scripture, tradition, reason, and experience but pointedly affirms: “the human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong” (458- 459).

4. Experience—In the chapter “The Last Journey from Galilee” Ellen White gives a very strong commentary on the power of experience in knowing God. “The science of salvation cannot be explained; but it can be known by experience” (493-495).

Evidently, *The Desire of Ages* is an exceptional instrument to teach the Gospel as

well as to teach the Holistic Framework for doing theology. While people resist a formal approach to theology, many accept *The Desire of Ages* for its proven power to present Christ, its beauty of presentation, and its simplicity and clarity in spiritual education. The same is true in the full Conflict of the Ages series of Ellen White and *The Ministry of Healing*. There are pastoral aids in the spiritual education.

Members have, as a result, requested these books to give to others. A consistent part of Bethel's mission was the distribution of these and other literature freely.

### **Bible Class**

Many people spend their whole Sabbath at church. They lunch together, study together in the afternoon, and/or visit the sick and shut-ins. We held a Bible class in the afternoon where the focus was on prophetic subjects. This went on for two hours generally and afforded time for questions and answers to critical issues. In these sessions the use of *Daniel and Revelation* by Uriah Smith, the *Great Controversy*, and *Patriarch and Prophets* proved to be aids in prophetic study. This was not as consistent as the prayer meetings but it was significant.

### **Health Ministry**

Bethel has a strong group in natural health promotion. This group held regular health seminars including a medical missionary school. The health programs heightened the holistic nature of the Adventist message. This was a challenging sector to keep theologically balanced. In their zeal, there were tendencies to take the health message to extremes.



One of the strong points of the health ministry was working with the sick and elderly in their homes in practical ways. My involvement in this ministry was to support, guide, educate, and advance health ministry. Overall, our health program helped to facilitate holistic theological education. Praxis conveyed the genuineness of our ministry and thereby built stronger relationships among the congregation. The practice of Christian love puts an end to many negative and unprofitable argumentations. The health group initially demonstrated the greatest potential for relational problems but by the pastor's participation and guidance it became one of the most productive, influential, and consistent areas of ministry at Bethel. Some significant theological battles were won, strong bonds developed, and critical needs met. Health seminars contributed much to the holistic education of the church.

### **Administration and Leadership**

Servant leadership became the natural model employed at Bethel given the Christ centered emphasis. The *scriptural basis* of servant leadership preached, taught, and modeled in all areas of church life were new to Bethel. Members had inherited a hierarchical model of Christianity. They were impressed with the practice of servant leadership. Leadership seminars reinforced these principles.

The rich Christian *tradition* of missions was a fountain for illustrations with people like Livingstone, Wesley, and early Adventists. The self-sacrificing experience of the Adventist pioneers was emphasized. The West Indian tradition of evangelism that led to its dynamic growth, in and outside the West Indies, gave impetus to the discussion. The consistent presentation of powerful examples of faith-driven lives, as opposed to trivial illustrations enlarges interest and builds faith.

Established social science principles enabled a *reasoned* approach to leadership in organization and in understanding people in varied contexts. Leaders learned to lead by biblical principles where it exists. Correspondingly, reasonable principles for adiaphorous (things indifferent) were applied to many day-to-day issues. Finding these principles while staying biblical was the power of the Holistic Framework. Principles like gender inclusiveness on the Elders board were new to Bethel but found acceptance with time and better understanding. We developed a larger Elders board including women, more cultures, and younger people.

Through providential *experience*, God demonstrated that He was with us. After the first year, the two experienced elders at Bethel no longer wanted to lead the board of elders—due to a fall-out of the old problems at Bethel. We were in a dilemma in the midst of reorganizing leadership for the future, but a newly transferred member of Bethel had been a life-long Adventist and had served in the mission field. He agreed to lead the elders and he served for several years making an invaluable contribution to the program. As a new member of the church, and being culturally neutral, he provided an objectivity we needed at Bethel.

### Board Meetings

My approach to board meetings was to be firm on principles but flexible in accommodating the flow of interaction. We approached Board meetings as a vital part of church ministry. Christian courtesy were expected of all. We insisted on respect for human rights and the dignity of all members. This ensured a serious attempt on every occasion to be fair and just. Private matters were dealt with privately, especially matters relating to family.

The pursuits of peace rather than conflicts, and redemption rather than condemnation were established. While space was allowed for spirited debates on issues, the general flow of board meetings was very positive and civility was generally maintained.

People were encouraged to reason and dialogue teleologically—understanding the ends being sought—rather than operating from blind beliefs. For example, in usual practice, pregnancies out of wedlock were announced in business meetings and the person involved was disfellowshipped based on policy without understanding of the circumstances. Should we not seek to deal with such matters privately, sensitively, with the aim to redeem? The examples of Joseph’s attitude towards Mary in seeking to put her away “privately” and Jesus’ attitude towards Mary Magdalene caught in adultery became reference points in thinking theologically with the ends being sought in view. The Holistic Framework was very productive in establishing principles in areas like these.

Practices have entered some places in the Adventist fold that were not biblical, redemptive, reasonable, or motivated by love. Some things were suited for some places but not for others. Legalistic traditions have developed in some places and have inhibited love and civility. These were evident at Bethel but were ameliorated as such were dealt with issue by issue holistically.

### Cultural Issues

In a multi-cultural church, it is important that culture and diversity issues be addressed proactively. Principles of operation need to be understood clearly. As no individual is perfect, so also no culture is perfect. All are worthy of respect. Denouncing or ignoring any culture will elicit negative feelings and harm relationships. Mutual

acceptance and sharing of cultural values that are beneficial to the church builds community. People can accept each other and learn from each other. Each has its own strength.

People ultimately choose what they want to be and seek to order their priorities accordingly. This is a God given right and allowances were made for this at Bethel. The uniqueness of each person and his/her right to individuality is foundational to good government. Cultural appreciation at Bethel became exceptional and celebrated. Changes came through theological understanding rather than cultural preference.

### **Mission**

In seeking to lead Bethel forward, the development of a more dynamic mission was of paramount importance. The Holistic Framework proved its viability in affirming this need to the congregation and in accomplishing it.

*Scripture:* “Go ye therefore and teach all nations” (Matt 28:19). Jesus sent the twelve and the seventy to seek success in mission. When refused in one place move to another.

*Tradition:* The *Adventist Church Manual* affirms that the church exists for mission. In Battle Creek, Ellen White warned against centralization in one place. We should distribute the work widely. The cell group movement presents itself as a solution to stagnant growth.

*Reason:* The power of experimentation is demonstrated in every science and industry. Research and development is necessary in church as it is in industry. If one approach is unsuccessful, try another. If one location does not bear fruit, try other locations. Reason leads us to the presupposition that the masses of people in Toronto are

here by God's design to be evangelized. It cannot be God's will for any church to remain stagnant. God has a work for Bethel and we must find it.

*Experience:* My personal experience in soul winning motivated me to expect great things from God and therefore to attempt great things for God. Impressions on my heart concerning church planting and providential happenings towards this confirmed this to be the way to go.

After Bethel's first evangelistic series with a visiting evangelist, the results were unimpressive. The meetings were a success in terms of attendance but attendees were mainly Adventist. We baptized twelve candidates but these were mainly children of the church. After studying the pattern at Bethel, it became obvious that changes to our mission were necessary. While we worked to keep Bethel revived, it was unlikely that there would be much growth given the demographic shifts and growth patterns in Toronto. Given Bethel's recent history, there was a temptation to focus on keeping things merely normalized at Bethel, which by itself would be considered a significant accomplishment.

In the West Indian Adventist tradition, the evangelistic fervor has been exceptional. Despite cultural barriers, we have seen people from all cultures accept Christ through Bethel. I felt greater numbers could be reached through more creative efforts.

### The Parkdale Church Plant

In my visitation of interests in the Parkdale area of Toronto, Bethel's original location, I was impressed that a church should be located there. We investigated the possibility of renting a church on Sabbaths but the rent was expensive. We laid aside the idea for some time, but as we contemplated moving Bethel forward, we became more

convinced other geographical locations should be evangelized. There was a small mission-conscious group at Bethel. One person had a degree in theology and was capable of greater challenges. He agreed to lead a church plant at Parkdale. On rechecking the cost of renting a church at Parkdale, the cost of renting had decreased dramatically. We could start the church with little cost to the mother church. We established the Parkdale church and after two months the Parkdale church became independent financially.

We sent a team of twelve to Parkdale. Some felt this was not a wise move considering Bethel's membership was still not very strong. However, the Bible compelled us, providential workings propelled us, and reason informed us that we had nothing to lose but much to gain. It was necessary to force a change by doing things differently. What was unlikely at the Bethel location was very possible at Parkdale. Tradition demonstrated that this location produced a church in the past—the original Bethel. This area was also one of the most diverse communities in Canada and so the opportunity for reaching a greater mass of diversity was greater at Parkdale than at Bethel. We went forward and never retreated.

#### The Parkdale Cafe

Bethel had long participated in the Touch of Love ministry in Toronto where members distributed lunch to needy people on the streets of downtown Toronto. Our efforts however were largely a duplication of what others were doing adequately. There were many needy people at Parkdale including new immigrants. We decided to shift our touch of love ministry to Parkdale in a way that would embolden the spiritual outreach.

We instituted the concept of a Gospel cafe. Live gospel music was performed and a hot supper would be given free of cost once per month. The church planting group

would lead out in this assisted by members from Bethel. We invited our host church to work in collaboration with us. They provided the hall and we provided the food. Together we would provide the live music and serve attendants.

This has been a huge success for Bethel, the Parkdale Adventist group, and our partners—the United Church. It was an enjoyable evening out for those who could not afford it. People enjoyed the music and the food. A ten-minute Christ-centered message was given each time. Attendance was generally 60 to 100, and at Christmas over 100. The attendees were from a multitude of cultures. A community of regular attendees developed around this café. They became acquainted with each other and enjoyed coming together.

While this did not actually win members to the church, we introduced many people to Christ and we established good relations with the community. The Parkdale Church grew in ways that Bethel would not. They now have over 50 members. The leader and his team did a marvelous job and gained pastoral experience utilizing and developing his skills. He has since become a full-time pastor. It was a radical decision to start in Parkdale, but a theologically sound one based on Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience.

#### AIM (Adventist International Mission)

About three years after the start-up of Parkdale, the opportunity to start another multicultural group in another location presented itself. Parkdale was still a traditional Adventist church. There were people looking for a worship experience that did not exist. They needed something that was more mainstream, yet still true to Adventism. Most were young professionals; some were non-Adventists, but they were a very diverse group

culturally. Meetings started in the home of a mission conscious couple. This couple became the local leaders of this group.

Again, premises were found with low rent and the group moved into a church. This has been a challenging ministry because the members come from a wide geographical area and the means to get to the church easily has been lacking for some. Over the years, some have left but new ones have come. The group now seeks to reach out not only across cultures but also across generations. Young musically inclined Adventists are seeking to develop a better way to reach their peers. My function there is mainly to guide and keep things on course. The members fully run the group. Everyone has grown in preaching, teaching, and leadership skills. They represent the priesthood of all believers more so than anything I have yet experienced. They have developed a music group and a modern style of worship. Socio-economically this group is more homogenous than most churches. The level of creativity and intensity of mission consciousness is outstanding. They are now at the stage to launch a greater outreach. This group is truly an experimental group anticipating future development of Adventist mission in Toronto.

Their ministry is a compassionate one, visiting the elderly and ministering to the sick and needy. Families are deeply impressed by the love they receive, and some have accepted Christ. AIM has been attracting young adults who had left the Adventist church. Yet, they have maintained a balanced theology in theory and practice. They have grasped the essence of the Holistic Framework better than Bethel probably because they are more homogenous in age and education.



## Summary

The Holistic Framework was applied to every aspect of ministry at Bethel. The pastor-leader approached ministry as a participant-observer-intervener in the vein of Paul Hiebert's anthropological missiology. In this the pastor and his family became a part of the Bethel community, bonded with them, won their confidence, and led them forward theologically and experientially.

Ministry at Bethel was an experience in relationship building, leadership development, church planting, and theological development. Christ was placed at the center of theology with the presupposition that He would draw people to Himself and transform their lives. The Adventist message was preached and taught from all angles including its history, prophetic tradition, reformation connection, evangelical base, and health emphasis. Orthodoxy and orthopraxis were bedfellows as the love of Christ was engaged with multifarious needs. Adventist resources like *The Desire of Ages* and *Ministry of Healing* proved to be dynamic tools to educate and lead people to habits of independent study.

The Holistic Framework informed decision making, revealed principles, and developed theological thinking. It guided the selection of social science principles that would be beneficial to the church community. One such principle that proved effective was: the more people spend time together the more they bond together. This was very effective in strengthening the Bethel community including the pastor. Irrational thinking leading to negative and unchristian behaviors were addressed by connecting psychological principles with theology.

Missionally, the Holistic Framework informed the change in direction at Bethel giving it a new role as the center of mission in a larger district. Ministry became more energized and creative. Leadership development advanced at all levels through opportunities created in the missional thrust. Ministry at Bethel became purposeful and systematic.

CHAPTER VI  
EVALUATION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS,  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Introduction**

In this chapter, the application of the Holistic Framework at the Bethel Church is evaluated. A summary of the project is given, conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

First, results of growth at Bethel are presented. Second, a survey taken at Bethel sought to understand the impact of a seminar on the Holistic Framework in changing the beliefs of participants. The survey also sought indication of the congregations' knowledge of revelation-inspiration and the components of the Holistic Framework after my ministry at Bethel. Another survey evaluated how the members at Bethel view the church plant at Parkdale in light of the Holistic Framework. The results of these surveys are analyzed.

**Evaluation**

Results at Bethel

**Leadership Development**

*Elders:* Bethel developed a larger and younger set of elders including women.

This ensures leaders for the future.

*Departmental Leaders:* A large number of leaders circulated into different offices from year to year. They grew significantly and can now serve in multiple roles as needed.

*Pastoral Leadership:* Two couples have developed in pastoral leadership and church planting. They gained experience in preaching, teaching, and administration. Young people studying to be pastors received opportunity to practice and develop at Bethel, and have moved on successfully to pastoral ministry.

*Youth Leaders/Preachers/Teachers:* In the AIM church, at least six youth have been developing in the areas of preaching, teaching, and church administration. They are engaged in mission at a creative level, studying and analyzing how to advance church ministry. The Parkdale Church has developed leaders at all levels for the various needs of a new congregation. Former Adventists have been reclaimed, and have become dynamic leaders.

### **Relational Impact**

Bethel became a healthy place relationally. While people still had differences, they learned to bear with each other. The advancement in mission had a notable effect relationally. Too many people in the same place unaccomplished and unchallenged missionally increased friction. Moving people into missional action produced positive all-round benefits. Advancement in mission gave a sense of purpose and increased spiritual growth at Bethel and Parkdale.

### **Theological Impact**

*Scripture:* Bethel has grown theologically. A multitude of issues and problems disappeared. Improvements in all sectors of ministry have taken place. Theological fragmentation has decreased. The people who were actively involved in prayer meeting, Bible class, health ministry, and church planting have shown maturity in greater ways than the larger population. Many who passed through Bethel has moved on to pastoral and other ministries.

There are still differences but they have largely tempered their beliefs and approaches. The main issues have been addressed and the congregation has a sense of balance. Many vexed issues have been resolved amicably and the foundation for problem solving has been laid.

*Tradition:* There is a clearer sense of our Adventist identity and the Adventist place within Christianity. Some cultural impediments to theological interpretation have eased as members are thinking scripturally rather than culturally where principles are concerned.

*Reason:* People are reasoning much better in all the affairs of the church. There are still some issues where emotions bear too much sway.

*Experience:* My experience at Bethel has been tough but special. Creating the changes demanded a lot physically, mentally, and otherwise. It involved working on many fronts and levels simultaneously. The church has recognized that our time together has been very special and that God had truly blessed. A foundation is set on which to build a better future.

## **Business**

After three years at Bethel, the tithes increased more than a third in the district and offerings also increased significantly. Evangelistic programs were afforded consistently and compassionate ministries to children, seniors, and others in need were constant. Health seminars, family life programs, leadership seminars, and a generous literature program were always on the agenda. In general, a structure was in place for the continuous execution of holistic ministry.

Bethel has defrayed all loans. It fulfills a heavy obligation to the Toronto Adventist school system and maintains a healthy financial status.

### **Growth at Bethel**

The approach to mission produced two new congregations in the Bethel district—Parkdale and AIM. In addition, the Parkdale Café is a creative mission that reaches a very wide cross section of people, many of whom do not have a Christian background. In this ministry, we sought to meet the physical and social needs and to present Christ.

The mother church—Bethel—strengthened in all ministries. New ministries like the seniors ministry were developed. Yearly evangelistic series and revivals produced baptisms continuously. Baptisms varied from a low of 5 per year to a high of 22. Meanwhile the Parkdale Church grew by about 40 new members in the duration of my ministry. The AIM group grew to about 20 people in attendance and its programs attract many non-Adventists.

### *A More Contemporary Church*

Worship at Bethel became more contemporary with better quality music, and better programming overall. A selective mix of contemporary gospel music along with traditional hymns has enhanced worship in a way that is acceptable to all age groups. The

church has become more inclusive with women elders and a better generational mix in leadership.

## **Bethel's New Vision**

Bethel found a new vision as a mission center rather than a mere congregation serving itself. It is the support base of the full district and has done so generously. The possibility of planting other churches is quite feasible given its large territory. Parkdale is now the only Adventist church in the downtown area of the western half of Toronto. The Perth Avenue Church, which has been the flagship of Seventh-day Adventism in that area since the 1970s, has now moved out of that vicinity. It is no doubt providential that the Parkdale Church now exists.

### *The Holistic Seminar*

The seminar was based on Revelation/Inspiration and the components of the Quadrilateral. It was presented at Bethel, AIM and the Shiloh church. A shorter version based on revelation/Inspiration was presented at the Ontario Conference evangelism school twice as background to the hermeneutics course. People demonstrated strong interest in the material. Many issues were clarified as a result. The question of which version of the Bible is best is a troubling area for many people and the information received helped them to process this. When people saw that the Bible as a whole must be accepted above its parts and that such things as scribal and translation errors does exist, it was very revealing. To some this kind of knowledge was new and startling and there was some resistance but understanding increased. Thought inspiration was also surprising to many. They came to see that God used imperfect humans with an imperfect language to present perfect truth. Overall, these kind of foundational information is important to the understanding of theology. It should be the plan of all churches to teach this. Knowledge of the Holistic Framework also elicited much interest. For the long term and for the



deeper development of believers seminars can only clarify and increase awareness but the principles need to be brought into the life and ministry of the church and believers..

A questionnaire was given to test the general understanding of the concepts in the seminar. It was hoped that the same questions would be answered after the seminar to see if changes took place as a result of the presentation. Many people did not answer the questions properly or fully. Any solid research of this sort may have to be done with control groups, etc. Such research will require focus and detailed work which will have to be another project. Only the survey of the seminar at Bethel are analyzed.

Another short survey was done at Bethel on the Parkdale church plant to see how members feel about it. It was thought profitable to have their reflection on it also.

**Table 1. Holistic Seminar Evaluation Form**

Pastor's Name		Vincent Lue		
Church		Bethel		
Date		January 14, 2012		
<b>Evaluation Rating Legend:</b>		<b>5 – Absolutely true</b> <b>4 – Very true</b> <b>3 - True</b> <b>2 – Not so true</b> <b>1 - False</b> <b>N – Not sure</b>		
	<b>Rating</b>			<b>Result</b>
	<b>5, 4, 3, 2, 1, N</b>			
	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>		
<b>A</b>			<b>Revelation/Inspiration</b>	
1			I believe in verbal Inspiration	
2			I believe in Thought Inspiration	
3			God dictated every word to the Prophets	
4			The prophets wrote God's messages in their words	
5			God is revealed in nature	
6			Human language is imperfect but God uses it nevertheless	
<b>B</b>			<b>Scripture</b>	
7			Scripture is the only source for forming faith and doctrine	
8			Scripture ennobles thoughts, feelings and aspirations	
9			Scripture interprets itself	
10			Scriptural understanding of God is progressive	
11			The Scriptures testify of Christ	
12			The Holy Spirit is author of Scripture	
13			The Holy Spirit reveals Scripture to us	
14			We must study Scripture prayerfully	
<b>C</b>			<b>Tradition</b>	
15			There is a Scriptural tradition	
16			Adventism belongs to the Reformation tradition	
17			Adventism belongs to the Remnant tradition	
18			Adventism belongs to the prophetic tradition	
19			Today's truth is built on past truths	
20			We must follow the biblical tradition rather than man's tradition as a resource for knowing God	

<b>D</b>			<b>Reason</b>	
21			We should exercise the ability to think and to do as a resource for knowing God	
22			Reason must be sanctified by Scripture	
23			Reason must be used in understanding Scripture	
24			Christianity is an intelligent religion	
25			Reason helps us to be balanced in our beliefs	
26			Reason takes precedence over impulses	
27			Reason helps to avoid extremism and fragmentation in beliefs	
<b>E</b>			<b>Experience</b>	
28			Experience cannot supersede Scripture	
29			Experience is a resource for knowing God	
30			We must have a personal experience with God	
31			It is essential to experience justification by faith	
32			God speaks to us through His providential workings	
33			The Holy Spirit speaks to us through impressions on the heart	
34			It is essential to have an active prayer life with God	
35			Private communion with God brings power to spiritual life	
36			The Reformers and Adventist pioneers had a special experience with God.	

*Survey on the Parkdale Church Plant*

Use the same scale above to answer the questions below.

38. Has Bethel accomplished much in planting the Parkdale church?
39. Did planting Parkdale fulfill the great commission?
40. In hindsight, was the decision to plant Parkdale motivated by the Spirit?
41. Was the decision to plant Parkdale based on sound reason?
42. Was the decision to plant Parkdale in line with Christian mission tradition?
43. Does the Touch of Love mission demonstrate God's love for the needy?
44. Is the Touch of Love mission a creative way to reach all nations?
45. Does the Touch of Love mission enhance the work of the Parkdale church?
46. Did Bethel as a two-church district accomplish more than Bethel as a single church?
47. Is the approach to mission at Bethel/Parkdale worthy to be used elsewhere?
48. Did Bethel also grow in knowledge, spirituality, and human relations under Pastor Lue?

**Table 2. Bethel Results: Survey Before Holistic Seminar**

Questions	Rating	5	4	3	2	1	N
1		24	6	6	1	0	3
2		15	6	8	3	2	5
3		13	7	10	9	3	1
4		12	9	10	1	6	3
5		29	4	7	0	1	1
6		22	7	10	1	0	2
7		19	5	7	5	4	1
8		14	12	13	2	0	1
9		23	5	7	4	0	2
10		30	7	3	1		2
11		30	7	4	0	0	1
12		25	11	6	0	0	1
13		28	6	5	1	0	1
14		32	6	3	0	0	1
15		7	9	17	6	2	5
16		11	10	7	2	4	7
17		19	9	7	1	1	6
18		15	9	9	2	1	6
19		19	8	9	2	1	4
20		35	3	4	0	0	1
21		16	14	10	0	0	2
22		19	10	8	1	0	3
23		12	13	11	4	0	2
24		19	13	8	1	0	1
25		8	13	9	4	1	4
26		12	7	12	3	3	3
27		16	15	9	1	0	3
28		15	10	9	2	2	3
29		15	9	13	2	0	1
30		32	5	1	1	1	1
31		18	13	6	1	0	4
32		25	10	5	0	0	2
33		30	8	2	1	0	1
34		38	1	2	1	0	0
35		33	4	2	1	0	2
36		25	6	10	0	0	1

Rating: 5=absolutely true 4=very true 3=true 2=not so true 1=false N=not sure

Respondents: 47.

## *Survey Before the Holistic Seminar: Analysis*

### **Revelation-Inspiration**

Questions 1-6 were based on revelation-inspiration. The main point of interest and change was Verbal Inspiration vs. Thought Inspiration. All except four respondents believed in verbal inspiration. All except ten believed in thought inspiration. This demonstrated some confusion about inspiration. On the other hand God's use of imperfect instruments in inspiration was understood to a high degree.

### **Scripture**

Questions 7-14 were based on Scripture. The belief in Scripture was very positive on all sides. Four people believe Scripture is not the only source for faith and doctrine. One was not sure.

### **Tradition**

Questions 15-20 were based on Tradition. Most believe there is a Scriptural tradition but they were not absolutely certain about this. Seven were not sure we belong to the Reformation tradition. There was more certainty that we belong to the Remnant tradition. All except two (who were not sure) believe in following the biblical tradition rather than human tradition. The weighting was two-thirds absolutely sure.

### **Reason**

Questions 21-27 were based on reason. All except two (who were not sure) believed we should exercise our ability "to think and to do" as a resource for knowing God. That Reason must be sanctified by Scripture and must be used in understanding Scripture was overwhelmingly yes except that these ratings were one third absolutely sure and one third in the true and very true range. The question on reason governing

impulses (question 26), in avoiding extremes in (27), and in bringing balance to beliefs (25) showed some difference to the other questions on reason. Three respondents said no to reason over impulses and three were not sure. In question 25 only one respondent said no and four were not sure about reason bringing balance to beliefs. In 26 three were not sure about reason taking precedence over impulses.

## **Experience**

Questions 28-36 were based on Experience. There was a very strong belief that experience is a resource for knowing and that it must be subject to Scripture. There was an overwhelming belief in the need to have a personal experience with God (32 absolutely true and 5 very true). The strongest response is the belief in having an active prayer life with God (38 absolutely true). There is also strong belief that communion with God brings power to the spiritual life and that the Reformers and Adventist pioneers had a special experience with God. In addition, there was strong belief that God speaks through impressions on the heart and in providential workings.

### *Change after Seminar: Analysis*

Enough respondents did not give their views of the seminar post presentation to make definitive conclusions about changes but enough responded to indicate that there have been changes. The greatest change respondents showed was in their understanding of thought inspiration vs. verbal inspiration. Before the seminar, there was confusion with many indicating belief in both thought and verbal inspiration. After the seminar, some indicated a change. Some were not sure indicating that more education on revelation-inspiration is needed.

## **Scripture**

Some had believed Scripture to be the only source for doctrines and beliefs but gave a higher weighting for this post seminar. Many were more convinced that Scripture ennobles thoughts, feelings, and aspirations and that Scriptural understanding is progressive.

## **Tradition**

Positive changes were indicated on all the questions pertaining to tradition. The fact that there is a Scriptural tradition and that Adventism belongs to the Reformation tradition changed to a greater degree.

## **Reason**

All points on reason showed changes and more so than the other components of the Holistic Framework. This indicated the need for more instruction on the place of reason in theology.

## **Experience**

All questions on experience showed changes post seminar. Respondents changed from “true” to “very true” and “absolutely true” in understanding experience to be a resource for knowing God. It was similar in understanding that experience cannot supersede Scripture. The question on justification by faith showed many positive changes. Some were unsure before but became sure or very sure post seminar.

Overall, there were about three respondents that were uncertain (even confused) about most questions who indicated very significant changes all round. See table 3 on responses to questions regarding the church plant at Parkdale.



**Table 3. Response to questions pertaining to the church plant at Parkdale**

Questions	Rating	5	4	3	2	1	N
38		19	10	9	1	0	4
39		16	11	11	2	0	2
40		20	9	12	0	0	2
41		17	10	11	2	0	5
42		24	7	12	1	0	1
43		24	9	8	0	0	3
44		26	6	8	1	0	1
45		15	9	11	2	0	4
46		12	11	9	0	0	4
47		19	11	8	1	0	5
48		22	4	9	2	0	5

*Survey on Parkdale Church Plant: Analysis*

The response was very positive on all questions. Respondents felt that Bethel accomplished much by planting Parkdale and that this was a providential project based on scripture, tradition, reason and experience. The last question was based on Bethel’s growth in knowledge, spirituality, and human relations under Pastor Lue’s ministry. The result was: 22 absolutely true, 4 very true, 9 true, 2 not so true, and 5 not sure. Overall, these surveys are indicators of how people felt.

**Summary**

This project addressed ministry in one of the most challenging contexts—one that involved an array of cultures, worldviews, extreme personalities, gifts, generations, and theological outlook. Intervention was necessary at the macro and the micro levels in a multitude of ways. The issues were too many and too varied for a single congregation. A sensitive approach was necessary to analyze and impact the multiple needs

simultaneously. The pastor faced a high level of multi-tasking as a participant-observer-intervener-leader. The Holistic Framework afforded that possibility. It allowed the development of a structure for the spiritual, social, physical, mental, and business stability of the church. The framework process allowed the pastor to preach, teach, counsel, and address the day-to-day needs of the congregation scripturally, intelligently, and practically on an ongoing basis.

Russell Burrell in his book *Radical Disciples* advised: “Adventism must return to its Wesleyan Roots.”<sup>1</sup> He explained the difference between Wesley’s approaches to evangelism compared to Whitefield. Whitefield operated from a Calvinistic theology, which specialized in bringing people to conversion assuming that salvation is assured them through predestination. Wesley sought to enroll people in a class to make them into disciples. Burrill finds that Adventism has been moving into the Whitefield style and needs to return to the Wesleyan style.

Believers after conversion need to be educated theologically. Wesley had a keen missionary consciousness and a folk theologian’s mindset. He worked missionally and theologically, simultaneously converting and creatively communicating the pure truths of Scripture to the multitudes. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral was honed and chiseled through

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<sup>1</sup>Russell Burrill, *Radical Discipleship for Revolutionary Churches* (Fallbrook, CA: Fallbrook Research Center, 1996), 88.

Wesley's engagement with Scripture, history, and the theologically rugged terrain of the times in which he lived.

The Quadrilateral is inherent not only in Wesley's writings but also in Scripture. The Apostles did not identify a method but they appealed to the confirmation of Scripture through tradition, reason and experience. The quadrilateral is also inherent in Ellen White's writings. While she did not seek to develop a framework for doing theology, she sought the truth as it is in Jesus and utilized every resource to illustrate it. She was far more scientific than some conservative theologians would accommodate, yet, she did not lose hold on Sola Scriptura.

The twentieth century has been a time of development of narrow specializations in the science of management, in assembly line production, and in academia. Taken to extremes, this has evidently caused fragmentation in all spheres and at all levels in modern technological society. The practice of specialization is so pervasive that the present generation is prone to think fragmentally. The conversation about fragmentation has been ongoing for some time in evangelicalism, and has now entered Adventism. Rooted in the Adventist theological and philosophical foundation is the concept of harmonious development of the mental, physical, spiritual, and social. The Holistic Framework is a means to develop and convey this holistic foundation to Adventists to enhance and advance spirituality in individuals and congregations.

There is progress in Quadrilateral thinking from Wesley's theology to Adventist theology. While Wesley presented it in its basic form, Ellen White and Adventist theologians have intensified it. For example, Wesley accepted the law in the same language as Adventists but he did not see the need for Sabbath reform. Yet, the

implication of Sabbath reform is huge in significance to Adventists. It ties in with the Sanctuary message, the Three Angel's Messages, and the end-time prophetic messages. Hence, Sola Scriptura had greater implications on Christianity than Wesley and Wesleyans perceived. Wesley had feared that Methodism would fail to be true to itself even as it continues to be the Methodist Church. Adventists through the quadrilateral has advanced the Reformation beyond Methodism by “continuously reforming.”

The Holistic Framework has confirmed the Sabbath truth. It confirms the veracity of the bundle of beliefs that became the Adventist message. It confirms the reforms made along the way as in 1888. For the vast postulations about the meaning of 1888, the Holistic Framework clearly shows the problem—losing touch with the established Reformation tradition; and the solution—Justification by faith as the foundation of the Adventist bundle of beliefs and Christ at the center of Adventist theology.

The Holistic Framework presents a way to address challenges to Ellen White proactively. She has demonstrated a rootedness in Sola Scriptura and the Reformation tradition. Her experience aligns with the Reformers and the great people of faith. She engaged the timeless theological conversations and concerns. Clearly, she has found common ground with Anselm on the concepts of ‘faith seeking understanding’ and ‘believing in order to understand’. To her faith is the key to knowledge. Her views of nature would suggest that she finds a place for natural theology. All of nature works on laws given by the creator and all knowledge comes from Him. That natural theology exists is not a problem but it must recognize the authority of Scripture. Ellen White affirms that “creation and Christianity have one God.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 25.

The Holistic Framework renders dismissive accommodations towards Ellen White, because of her frailties, as out of line with God's attitude towards human instruments. The Reformers and all human channels over the ages demonstrate that God uses imperfect human vessels to convey truth. Calvin was wrong about predestination, yet that has not nullified his contribution to Christianity as a great person of faith. Luther's emotional intelligence was apparently flawed by today's standard, but his accomplishments testified of his value as a mighty instrument of God. God sent him an able assistant in Melancthon in the same way that James and Willie White assisted Ellen White.

William Johnsson has given a summary of the trends towards fragmentation in Adventism. He addressed fragmentation of Adventists into groups, but the existence of these groups is the result of the theological state of their belief system. George Knight has addressed liberalizing trends that are leading to the neutering of Adventism. He affirms the need for balance and the need to learn from similar occurrences in the history of the mainline churches. Even these problems are the result of unwholesome beliefs. Sometimes this is due to theological underdevelopment and at other times to the selectivity of preferred points of belief over others. Whatever the cause, the result is the same—fragmented beliefs. In theology, preference must give way to Sola Scriptura confirmed by tradition, reason, and experience.

Adventist ministry must seek to address the theological education of the laity more intentionally and systematically. It must start with the basics—justification by faith. A lack of a personal experience with God leaves the believer open to deceptions, distractions, unchristian attitudes, and various degrees of stunted theological

development. A lack of theological growth affects spiritual health. Scripture has power to transform, to sustain, to heal, and to bring spiritual equanimity. A better and more holistic understanding of Scripture is a cure for much that befalls us. Holistic theological development erodes theological fragmentation. Thus, a way exists to restore individuals and congregations to spiritual health. Then the symptoms of severe relational problems, lack of mission and growth, and attraction to extremist beliefs will erode.

There are dangers in engaging the present world with a multitude of competing religions and philosophies, with their seemingly well-reasoned arguments; however, the Holistic Framework has demonstrated the power to navigate us through all of these and channel us into safe paths. It is in the crucible of life that faith must witness to the true and living God. There is a certainty that Adventists once possessed which has diminished to a great degree. The Holistic Framework can restore this based on solid theology rather than mere sentiments.

### **Conclusions**

As Russell Burrill indicates, Adventists need to disciple converts to the church. Pastors can use the Holistic Framework for personal and leadership development and congregational development.

The accomplishments at Bethel can be largely credited to the facilitation of the Holistic Framework in leadership. The weak point of the process at this seminal stage was the extent to which the members adopted the process of the framework individually. Work at Bethel was more pastor-dependent than was desirable. This is not the best-case scenario for the long term. Some congregations may be more ready to adopt the

framework than others may. There was advancement in getting members to think and work theologically but the extent of this was less than desired.

An outstanding part of the project at Bethel was the education that came through prayer meetings and Bible classes which bolstered the sermons and Sabbath school. The power of Ellen White's conflict series and *The Ministry of Healing* were evidenced in these classes. The impact was both expressed and seen. Believers became familiar with resources they can use independently to understand scripture and to motivate theological pursuits. This strategy was fitting for a congregation that respects Ellen White's role as messenger in the Adventist Church. Many witnessed to the blessings received through the books and passed on copies to others. Creative simplification, a hallmark of Wesley, is necessary for each context. The utilization of the gifts and resources resident in the local church as well as the Adventist church in general is a godly responsibility. Often Adventists gravitate towards new and popular resources, which lack the spiritual power of our established resources.

Getting people to study independently and reflect theologically will do far more to enhance their development than remaining dependent on pastors, teachers, and experts. Taking responsibility for personal development is crucial to fulfill the priesthood of all believers. Since the components of the Holistic Framework are present in Ellen White's writings, the pastor can use her writings to impart this theological process to his students.

## **Recommendations**

### **A Larger Work**

In today's world, there are many paradigms, models, and methods being applied to all disciplines to simplify understanding and learning. In the Holistic Framework, we

have an approach that is biblical, holistic, and Adventist. It is rooted in Reformation history and the modern evangelical foundation. It is worthy of further attention and development. There are some contexts where the application can be more extensive in doing theology. Presenting the Framework at AIM with a younger college-educated group, their appreciation and readiness in grasping the concepts were notable. Further experimentation and study is recommended.

In an information age, the Framework offers a way to process and analyze information. For the pastor it helps to analyze principles, practices, and models presented by disciplines outside of theology. For example, the concept of emotional intelligence and the various therapies in use can be analyzed by the Framework to discern how well they align with Scripture and how beneficial they can be in ministry. The diversity of needs and complexities in the churches require access to more information by leaders with the wisdom to apply them. “He who seeks to transform humanity must understand humanity.”<sup>3</sup> The Holistic Framework takes into consideration revelation and the human context.

We are often attracted to systems that become popular for a season and then pass away. Here is one that is apparently timeless and well established by reputable people of faith in various contexts. Theological solutions sought by arguments over a specific belief by itself is a variable dependent on a process. Analyzing how that belief evolved—the theological process—is the independent variable. Notable theologian Clark Pinnock says: “The central problem for our theology is its own epistemological base. From what fountainhead does theology acquire the information from which she forms her doctrinal

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<sup>3</sup>White, *Education*, 78.



models and test her hypotheses?"<sup>4</sup> Herein lays the power of the Holistic Framework. It searches the epistemological base of Adventist theology.

### Building Connections with Evangelicalism

Further research development of the Holistic Framework presents an opportunity to connect with the wider evangelical community. There is a search there for models of theology. The liberal approaches have proven to be aberrations of genuine biblical theology. Sola Cultura has invaded evangelicalism and many sense something is wrong but are unsure of any genuine replacement. The Holistic Framework fully developed would be an Adventist contribution to the evangelical world that many would appreciate. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral seems to have largely run its course without seriously moving from theory to practice.

### Ellen White

There is a need to introduce Ellen White to a wider theological audience. Her theology on the components of the Holistic Framework and on harmonious development is outstanding and the wider body of theologians ought to be aware of this. A work could be done showing the development of theological methods from Richard Hooker to Ellen White. This would no doubt attract attention and inquiry. It would also reveal her theological and philosophical depth. For example, Ellen White is not opposed to natural theology except when taken to extremes—when it is cut loose from its scriptural moorings. In the same way reason has a place in theology but not its omniscience.

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<sup>4</sup>Clark H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1971), 11.

This would no doubt be a formidable offence that would become her greatest defense.

### Expanding Adventist Theology

Adventist theologians ought to explore theology to its widest extent making the Adventist connections in all areas. The extent of Alister McGrath's exploration of theology is to be commended. He has done a great deal to present the authenticity of evangelical theology against liberal streams. He has entered all the relevant conversations to enlighten genuine seekers of scriptural truths. Adventist theologians have limited themselves to specific corners of theology that have possibly contributed to fragmentation. Warren Wiersbe from the Moody organization has specialized in matters pertaining to ministry and has been an effective guide in many areas. Adventism is theologically and historically located at a strategic point to offer holistic theology of ministry to Christianity. This may bear fruit evangelistically.

### Revival and Reformation

The call for revival and reformation by the General Conference is necessary and laudable. The REACH program launched by the North American division in October 28, 2011, presents five enduring values to be developed in churches: Revival and transformation, Education and Discipleship, Alignment within the Church, Community Outreach and Discipleship, and Health Leadership and Management. These calls are no doubt Spirit-led. They identify the direction in which the Church needs to move.

The Holistic Framework provides a methodical approach to accomplish these developments. It is knowledge of God that will work transformation. While there is a corporate work to be done, the individual believer at every level and station must be

helped to do theology and participate in his own development. Educators, pastors, and theologians should cooperate in exploring the Holistic Framework.

## APPENDIX A

### A PERSONAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

I have long sought to discover God's will for my life. I felt strongly that my conversion was a direct call from God and saw many providential workings in how it happened. It was also apparent to me that even before I knew God personally He had been working on my behalf. I sought to understand with some certainty all the ways God speaks to us. Through Adventism and the Protestant Reformers I saw the essence of Sola Scriptura but understood that while Scripture predicates everything and is the final authority on all doctrines, there were other ways in which God speaks to us. Ellen White noted impressions on the heart, providential workings, and nature. She proposed that science and revelation had the same author and so were actually in harmony. She confirmed the supernatural nature of the conversion experience. Then there were her own writings accepted as inspired by the Adventist Church. While I accepted these I felt the need for some deeper understanding of how these relate to each other.

I became familiar with the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in 1988 and was immediately attracted to it as a framework for the understanding theology since Ellen White seemed to be in agreement with it. Scripture, tradition, Reason and Experience appear to be the general headings under which is contained all the ways we can know God and His will for us. At that time, I felt that for Adventists to use the quadrilateral, the Spirit of Prophecy should replace tradition because of the dangers of following tradition. I wrote a chapter on the quadrilateral in my Master of Religion thesis completed in 1994. From then I have been pursuing a deeper study of this subject. My ministry became increasingly guided by it. I noted that wherever any of the components are lacking both

historically and currently there is a tendency for fragmentation of beliefs. I had decided from 1994 that I would write a dissertation on this subject someday.

When I started ministry at Bethel in 2001, the quadrilateral was established in my mind and I analyzed everything looking through the spectacles of the quadrilateral. The complexities at Bethel made this more so. From the start I sought to work methodically using the framework of the quadrilateral.

When I presented my proposal to my Cohort group and others, there was skepticism about it. Developing it into a proposal acceptable to all concerned was trying. Understanding what was required for the project dissertation was the most difficult task for me. I could clearly see the veracity of building a framework on the template of the quadrilateral. I employed it in ministry at Bethel but it was difficult for others to see what I was proposing.

I now realize that a number of factors prevented the visioning of the quadrilateral in Adventist ministry. It was necessary to spend time with it in order to understand it. If the confirmation of Ellen White is not known, it may not be given enough plausibility. I discovered this but many had not. This became my prima facie evidence to pursue it. When I checked the New Testament it was there. The historical development and connection with the reformation also further confirmed its veracity. Even though I had done the groundwork, how to present it was not clear. This would come through the experience of developing it into its theological frame which could not be seen clearly from the outset. I also did not understand the dissertation process so I did not present the vision well. Having completed it, I can now see easier ways in which I could have

communicated what I intended. Also, controversies about the Wesleyan Quadrilateral at the argumentative level had left a negative view of it in some quarters. All of this complicated matters and led to delay of its approval until after I left Bethel.

While the presentation of this project could have been shaped in other ways and could have been done more easily and with less time, I sense that the delay worked for good. The theological structure that has emerged is better than I originally intended and a deeper understanding of the historical, philosophical and theological linkages have been gained. This makes the Holistic Framework more relevant to contextualization in post modern technological society and the information age.

The total work including the project and dissertation was a special experience that helped to dictate its own final outcome. Many changes took place along the way and providential events helped. A research method was required but I had already done the ministry at Bethel when this was requested. I had used the participant observer method with the inclusion of social scientific principles that considered contextualization without reducing Sola Scriptura. I found that Paul Hiebert's anthropological approach described my approach almost perfectly. The fact that I have studied social work and have read widely in social science and missiology may have accounted for this. There is no doubt that providence played a part in this.

Along the way, I also came to understand more clearly how tradition fitted into Adventist theology so that the Wesleyan template of the Framework could be maintained. Dr. Martin Hanna had vouched for the legitimacy of tradition when I expressed doubts about it. As the research deepened became crystal clear and my nagging suspicion about

tradition's worth disappeared. Evidences in Adventist history illustrated this very well like the 1888 experience. As history, theology and philosophy coalesced revelations took place.

The development of the dissertation could not be done chapter by chapter because a deeper understanding of some things predicated changes in former understanding at the outset. This was a work that was constantly reforming even though the basic frame remained. Many practical events could be better interpreted as the theological framework advanced. It was necessary to write a full draft and move forward and backward before finalizing the first chapter. To sit at home base waiting for perfection of the beginning would be counterproductive.

At first I had thought the theological research would largely be a comparative study of John Wesley's and Ellen White's theology on the components of the quadrilateral but it vastly expanded beyond that. My second chapter was at first centered on Ellen White's theology but this was open to criticism since the power of the project was *Sola scriptura*. I felt an unease about this even as I wrote it. Yet, it was a revealing section of the work that was absolutely necessary. My advisor Dr. Potts identified the problem and recommended a general theological reflection alongside Ellen White's. This significantly improved the objectivity of the work. These kind of issues were no doubt sensed by others but to readily see the solution at the outset was difficult. As the journey progressed understanding increased.

How did these factors impact the ministry at Bethel? They did not affect the work at Bethel. The reforming consciousness existed from the outset and the basic frame of the

Holistic Framework existed. While I had doubts about tradition, it did not prevent me from seeing and accepting the place of the Reformation and the veracity of its reforming principle. In essence, the positive parts of tradition were accepted as dictated through the sifting process of Spirit of Prophecy. The difference between what I anticipated and what became my conclusion was nominal and did not prevent the blessings of the quadrilateral in ministry at Bethel. The changes made the theological development and presentation of the Holistic Framework in the dissertation more catholic (universal) in spirit and stronger philosophically. The project calls for the “development and implementation” of the framework. While both development and implementation are connected, they are two separate tasks and have their differences, but both have been fulfilled in this project and dissertation.

In the development of the proposal it was thought that a seminar might be a necessary part of the project. Again this was after my work at Bethel was completed. Obviously, this could not be a main event in the ministry at Bethel. This seminar could not be scientific in nature. Rather, indicators could be revealed about how people grasped the material presented in a teaching situation. It became clear that a major seminar is unnecessary. A theological work such as this requires focus to do justice to it. The ministry at Bethel as the project and the theological research of the dissertation were very absorbing. The power of the Holistic Framework active in Adventist theology and consistent with John Wesley, Ellen White and the New Testament is demonstrated in the historical and theological research. A seminar would not add much to this. The implementation of the Holistic Framework also does not require a seminar. Works such



as this are at the very heart of the practice of ministry. The application of the Framework, the principles revealed and applied, and the results gained are evaluative in themselves.

There is a limit to what can be accomplished by statistics and scientific research. Many principles applied in this project are mystical. They cannot be significantly understood except by experience. While these principles cannot be considered objective, they are not merely subjective. They are works of faith. When Christ is lifted up he draws people to Him. When the Holy Spirit coverts a person, it cannot be seen but it happens and the effects are evident. When people spend time together they bond together and relationships become better. When love, respect, acceptance, compassion and godliness overall is practiced, problems disappear and community develops. When impressions are made on the heart to change course and providential workings open the way to follow Scripture's commands, the valid evidence of the work is the fruits borne.

The power of this project has been demonstrated in the relational improvements and the advancement in mission. Theological education with a Christological focus was promulgated through Sabbath sermons and Prayer meetings consistently while many other ministries reinforced this. Time spent in practical ministry including a strong visitation program cultivated this. Method and intentionality in all things were instituted. Strategies like presenting truth rather than attacking error were consciously employed.

The Holistic Framework is designed to work at three levels. It first informs the pastor in developing his theological system. Secondly, it is a way to work out principles of operation as needed in each context. Thirdly, it offers the members a means to also work out their theology.

In this project the Holistic Framework has worked best in helping me shape my theology and leadership. It has also immensely helped in my prescriptive design for Bethel. The weakest area is passing the framework on to the membership. It is evident to me that some churches and some people will be more successful than others in reception of the Holistic Framework. I have invested much to internalize it and gain the value that comes in its application. It takes commitment to strive for this deeper understanding. Leaders should especially seek after it. With leadership of this sort believers can be helped towards theological development. The teleological drive of this project is that many will see the value and strive to gain it through what is revealed here.

## APPENDIX B

### OUTLINE OF HOLISTIC SEMINAR

#### REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

The Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will....Every Scripture inspired by God is profitable.... (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

#### REVELATION

- Special Input from God. (Alden Thompson)
- A message to His creatures
- Visions and dreams – Daniel and Revelation
- Voice from Heaven (Abraham, Jesus)
- Jesus Christ – ultimate revelation

#### TYPES OF REVELATION

- Special – Previous slide
- General – God’s created works in nature that reveal Him
- Lucan model –Spirit led research

#### INSPIRATION

- Spirit’s special urging of a messenger to speak or write
- God breathed (Thepneustos)
- Fire in the bones.
- All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. 2 Timothy 3:16

#### ILLUMINATION

- Enlightenment given to ordinary people (great ideas).

#### REVELATION IN EDEN

- Open communion with God

#### AFTER THE FALL: PLAN OF REDEMPTION INSTITUTED

- God communicates with men by His Spirit
- “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”
- 2 Peter 1:21

#### FIRST 2500 YEARS OF HUMAN HISTORY (GC vi)

- Oral Tradition
- No written revelation
- Handed down from father to son
- From generation to generation

## WRITTEN WORD

- Began in time of Moses
- Inspired revelation embodied in Inspired Book
- Continued for 1600 years from Moses to the Apostle John
- Old Testament Masoretic Text - Septuagint

## AUTHOR OF BIBLE - GOD

- Yet written by human hands
- Reflects characteristics of different writers
- Written in different ages
- By men varying in rank, occupation, mental and spiritual gifts
- In perfect harmony
- Union of Divine and Human
- The Holy Spirit sheds light into minds and hearts of His servants
- Through dreams, visions, symbols, figures
- He guided the minds on what to speak and write about
- Receivers of truth: Embodied revelation in human language

## INCARNATIONAL INSPIRATION

- “The treasure was entrusted to human vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet, it is the testimony of God and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a Divine power, full of grace and truth” (GC vii).

## THOUGHT INSPIRATION

- The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen.
- It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that are inspired.
- Men under the influence of the Holy Spirit are imbued with thoughts.
- (SM, Book One, 19-22).

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- There is variety in a tree. There are scarcely two leaves just alike. Yet, this variety adds to the perfection of the tree as a whole.
- Each writer has a different experience. The diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge to meet the necessities of varied minds.

## VERBAL INSPIRATION

- The writer is God’s pen. God dictates every word

## GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- AD 45-100
- Formation of Canon

## JEROME TRANSLATION: LATIN

- The vulgate AD 400: Standard of middle ages

## ERASMUS'S GREEK NEW TESTAMENT 1516

- Forerunner of textus receptus

## TEXTUS RECEPTUS

- Luther's Tyndale
- KJV

## JOHN WYCLIFFE

- First attempt to translate bible into English 1380 -1382
- Translated from Vulgate

## MARTIN LUTHER'S BIBLE 152

## WILLIAM TYNDALE

- English New Testament-1525
- 1536 Strangled and burned
- Considered Father of English Versions
- Heavily influenced wording of KJV and RSV

## GREAT BIBLE

- 1538 Great Bible: First authorized for Public Use
- 1534 English Church separated from Rome.
- 1560: Geneva Bible
- 1568: Bishop's Bible: Revision of Great Bible

## THE KING JAMES BIBLE 1607-1611

- Culmination of 200 years of Bible translation
- Over 50 Scholars
- Revision of Bishop's Bible
- Change only where original Greek and Hebrew dictates
- Extensive use of Tyndale –Geneva-Rheims
- Best Translation of the times

## BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS

- The best-preserved literary works of all antiquity.
- Thousands of existing OT manuscripts and fragments that agree with each other
- The manuscript evidence for the NT: Nearly 25,000 ancient manuscripts

## TEXTUAL CRITICISM

- Assures us that the Bible translations we have today are essentially the same as the ancient Bible manuscripts

## MAIN MANUSCRIPTS USED IN TRANSLATIONS

- Codex Vaticanus – 4<sup>th</sup> century
- Codex Sinaiticus of the 4th century,
- Codex Alexandrinus of the 5th century

## THE WESLEYAN QUADRILATERAL

### Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience

#### SCRIPTURE

- It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth; and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow their example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently weighing every thought and comparing every scripture with scripture.”
- “It is the only rule of faith and duty, and the means by which all teaching is to be tested.” It contains all the principles that believers need.  
*Education*, 123.

#### TRUTH IS PROGRESSIVE

- “The Reformation did not as many suppose end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of the world’s history... he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures and new truths have been constantly unfolding.” Each age has a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation but an important principle must be recognized: the new is built on the old and those who reject the new do not possess the old.

#### POWER OF SCRIPTURE

- The effort to grasp the great truths of revelation imparts freshness and vigor to all the faculties. It expands the mind, shapes the perceptions, and ripens the judgment. The study of the Bible will ennoble every thought, feeling and aspiration as no other study can. It gives stability of purpose, patience, courage and fortitude; it defines the character and sanctifies the soul.” Finite minds are connected to the infinite and the result is minds are strengthened and intellects that are activated.

#### TRADITION - FALSE

- Almost imperceptibly the customs of heathenism found their way into the church... as persecutions ceased and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and his apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted human theories and traditions.”
- Paganism entered the church cloaked in righteousness. Her “doctrines, ceremonies and superstitions” were intermingled with the gospel truths building a “gigantic system of religion” which became a “masterpiece of Satan’s power.”  
*GC.*, 49.

#### THE REFORMATION TRADITION

- God permitted great light to shine upon these chosen men, revealing to them many of the errors of Rome, but they did not receive all of the light that was to be given to the world.”

- “Like the full glory of the noontide sun, to those who have long dwelt in darkness, it would, if presented, have caused them to turn away. Therefore he revealed to the leaders, little by little, as it could be received by the people. From century to century, other workers were to follow, to lead the people on, still further in the path of reform.”
- GC. 103

#### SDA TRADITION

- “God is presenting to the minds of men divinely appointed precious gems of truth appropriate for our time. God has rescued these truths from the companionship of error, and has placed them in their proper framework.” (Pease, 138.)
- 1888 Example
- Many of our people do not realize how firmly the foundation of our faith has been laid. My husband, Elder Joseph Bates, father Pierce, Elder Edson and others who were keen, noble and true, were among those who after the passing of the time in 1844, searched for the truth as for hidden treasure.” “We are God’s commandment keeping people. For the past fifty years every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us, to becloud our minds regarding the teaching of the Word...
- We have nothing to fear except we forget the way God has led us in the past

#### REASON

- Every human being created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the creator – individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thoughts.” *Education*, 17.
- Rightly understood, both the revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testament of Scripture to the constant working of God in nature.” “Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high, and explores new depths; but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with Divine revelation. Ignorance may seek to support false views of God by appeals to science, but the book of nature and the written word sheds light upon each other. (Ed 130)
- Let God’s people act so that the world will see that Seventh-day Adventists are an intelligent thinking people where faith is based on a surer foundation than the bedlam of confusion. The people are longing for the bread of life. Do not give them a stone”
- Facing fanaticism: “The Lord requires his people to use their reason; and not lay it aside for impressions. His work will be intelligible to all his children. His teaching will be such as to commend it to intelligent minds. SM 2, p. 24. SM2, p. 28, T 1, p. 23.

## EXPERIENCE

- “The real evidence of a living God is not merely theory. It is the conviction that God has written in our hearts, illuminated and explained in his word. It is the living power of his created works, seen by the eye which the Holy Spirit has enlightened.” *Testimonies* Vol. 8, p. 325.
- We must individually hear Him speak to our hearts. When every voice is hushed and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us ‘Be still and know that I am God’ (Psalm 46:10).
- MH 58.
- New Birth; Impressions on Heart, Providential workings; Taste and See

## ATTITUDE IN BIBLE STUDY

- Canst Thou by Searching Find God?
- God Reveals Himself
- Prayer
- Early Adventists: Prayer and Study

## CHRIST CENTERED

- Those who are most successful in spiritual things “have felt the importance of following Christ closely, of making the life of Christ their study and example.”
- Spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ.” We should take it point by point and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. Our confidence will become more constant, our love quickened. (*T 2*, 637; *DA.* 83.)

## SALVATION: CHRIST ALONE

- “Christ was treated as we deserve that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins in which He Had no share That we might be justified by His righteousness In which we had no share He suffered the death which was ours That we might receive the life which was His. ‘ With His stripes we are healed.’”*DA*, 25.

## SOLA FIDE

## SOLA SCRIPTURA

## SOLA GRATIA

## SOLA CULTURA?

## RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

- Justification by Faith: Imputed: Luther, Wesley, Ellen White
- Sanctification by Faith: Imparted – Wesley, Ellen White



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