

Our View of the Bible: Models of Understanding the Word of God

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church was born and grew up in a *Scripture-based* environment where the canonical writings of the Bible were the fundamental authority for life and faith. In the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church -- voted for the first time in 1980 -- the preamble and the first statement show that this is still our view. The first sentence says:

‘Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.’

The word ‘creed’ comes from Latin *credo*, ‘I believe’. By describing the writings of the Bible as our ‘creed’ we state our conviction that they reveal

- God’s *character and nature*
- God’s *will* for our life
- God’s *mission and plan of salvation* on earth
- God’s *commission to the church* as his servant of making him known in the world

On all these points, it is our conviction that the Bible, as our ‘creed’, reveals ‘the truth’ as God’s Word.

By saying that the Bible is our *only* creed, we not only disapprove of the ancient creeds of the Christian church tradition as our rule of faith, but we also say that Ellen White’s writings are not our creed and, what is perhaps even more important, that our own opinions as pastors and leaders, our committee decisions, and our manuals and policy books are not our creed.

As far as Ellen White is concerned, we confirm our view of the Bible in Fundamental Belief number 18:

‘They [Ellen G. White’s writings] also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.’

However, there is no statement of fundamental belief in our church that defines the *role of the church, especially its leaders and committees* in relationship to the Bible. The little we do say on this point can be divided into four areas:

Firstly, in the preamble to the Fundamental Beliefs, we say:

‘Seventh-day Adventists ... hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures’ and that, ‘these beliefs, as set forth here, constitute *the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture*. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference Session when *the church is led by the Holy Spirit* to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds a better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.’

If the Bible is our creed, however, the way in which the Church *understands and expresses its teaching* as ‘the truth of God’s Holy Word’ is fundamentally important.

If the Bible is our creed, what does the Bible teach regarding the role of the church in understanding and expressing the teachings of the Bible *on behalf of God*?

On these crucial points, the current Fundamental Beliefs do not say much at all, except that 'the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth'. But what exactly does the Holy Spirit do for us in understanding and expressing the teaching of the Bible? How does it work? Can we understand it, or some of it? Or is it all veiled in mystery? There is not much material in the Bible that helps us deal with this issue. Maybe we should talk together about our personal spiritual experiences in reading and understanding the Bible, and the test them against the Bible.

Secondly, in Fundamental Belief number 12, 'The Church', the point is made that 'the church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word'.

However, nowhere does the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs define *how* the church's authority to understand, interpret and apply the Scriptures is being taught *by the Bible itself*. This is a weakness in our position and there is a danger that we abuse our rights as a church, as has so many other Christian churches in the course of history. If the Bible is 'our only creed', the church should act within the framework of what the Bible teaches, and this includes our acts of understanding, interpreting and applying the teachings of the Bible.

Let me take an example. Revelation says in its conclusion:

'I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.'
(Rev. 22:18-19)

Maybe we prefer to read this in reference to those who have copied or translated the text. But notice that *the warning is to those who 'hear the words of this book'*, so, what if this double and very serious warning also refers to those who interpret and preach from this book? Have we added anything that is *not* there or taken away anything that *is* there? This should make all of us, particularly we as Seventh-day Adventists, very, very humble, and study deeply and think carefully before we claim we have understood this important book.

Thirdly, in Fundamental Belief number 14, 'Unity in the Body of Christ', the point is made that 'through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children.'

This means that, since God is one and his mind is one, his expression of truth is somehow unified, although it may take various shapes and forms, and it is to be understood and taught in a unified way, although it may take various forms and shapes. But this does not answer the question of how we, as a church, with so many different peoples, cultures, languages, mental models of understanding ourselves and the world, can be sure that we are actually unified in understanding and applying the truth of the Bible. Since the Bible does not speak of itself, a human being has to read, understand, interpret, and apply it to our changing reality. In other words, human beings make the written Bible speak the truth (we pray that we are Spirit-led as we do so). And if the church collectively takes on this role, then how does a church with over 17 million members in over 200 countries do that in the same way?

Fourthly, based on Fundamental Belief number 14, 'Unity in the Body of Christ', we state that, in the Scriptures, God reveals his truth through Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, and this truth consists of 'the same faith and hope and outreach in one witness to all'.

Our unity, therefore, is a unity *in Jesus Christ* and *in what he reveals in Scripture*. Consequently, our understanding and teaching of the Bible must be based on 'the truth as it is in Jesus' (Eph. 4:21). But we are not making it clear in the Fundamental Beliefs what that means and how it is done.

For example, Ephesians 4 could be a significant point of departure. After outlining the role of the various leaders in the church and how all of them have from Christ the function of 'preparing God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ maybe built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ' (4:11-13), this passage goes on to say:

'Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does it work' (Eph. 4:15-16)

Seventh-day Adventist Bible understanding, interpretation and application must always be *Christ-centred*, and this means that there is no difference between being Christ-centred and Scripture-centred. Christ is the Word and the Word is Christ.

This is the background for what I want to share in this presentation. I am not suggesting that I have all the answers or that I cover this vast topic in full. What I am doing is presenting some suggestions that I believe are important as we continue to develop our understanding of our faith and mission.

I will proceed in three steps:

- How does the human mind understand meaning in texts?
- The shape of the Bible and our model of the Bible
- A Biblical view of the Bible as a model of understanding it

1. How Does the Human Mind Understand Meaning in Texts?

We are talking here about *spiritual* reading of texts. We do not understand the Bible by human wisdom but by the Spirit of God, as clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16:

'... We speak of God's secret wisdom ... But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God ... no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words ...'

When Paul stated this, his mind was focussed on the issue of Greek wisdom denying the possibility of the cross and the resurrection of Christ, and his answer was that the Spirit of God makes the mystery of the cross and the resurrection clear to those who have faith and are accepting the understanding from the Spirit.

I suggest to you, however, that the Spirit of God works in our minds by using the natural capacity of our brains to 'understand' and 'know'. Insights from Epistemology, the Philosophy of Cognition or Knowledge, can help us understand more of how this works, especially as those insights are applied to textual understanding or literary hermeneutics. So, I am asking here: How does the human mind understand meaning in texts?

I am going to rely on some passages from my doctoral thesis printed in 1984, *Prophecy as Literature* (pp. 26-38).

Firstly, the concept of 'model' is recognised as a valuable asset in the theory of knowledge. All human endeavour to understand what cannot be perceived by immediate observation requires some kind of preconceived idea or model of the thing to be grasped, i.e. a 'model' symbolising 'the original thing'. In the natural sciences today, there is general acceptance that all observation is theory-dependent. My conceptual model of the text I seek

to understand, therefore, will determine the outcome of my reading. Jesus' saying applies very well to this phenomenon when he says that 'to the one who has, it will be given'. We cannot understand the Bible unless we have a model of the Bible in our minds, and the better the model is, that is, the better it *imitates* the real thing, the better it will work. Truth can be found in the Bible only if we apply 'true' models of the Bible text. And if the Bible is our creed, we should try to find such models in the Bible.

Secondly, the meaning of a 'text' is not an automatic given which exists in the text as an objective reality, being immediately available to the perceiving human mind. It is rather something which arises from an organised interaction between

- *features in the text* (where the parts and the whole interact in the 'woven' text structure)
- *various factors external to the text*
- *mental operations in the mind of the reader/interpreter*

Thus, the reader discovers and assigns meaning to the written text in accordance with his *theory or model* of 'text'.

The driving force in the reader's discovery of and assigning meaning to the written symbols of the visible text is his 'sense constancy'. By this is meant that 'we expect what we hear (or read) to make sense, and we analyse the incoming message so as to conform to this criterion'. Now, the process of making sense out of a text is governed by rules which decide what is 'legible' (or meaningful) and what is 'illegible' (not meaningful). These rules consist in the reader's

- foreknowledge (theories, models of text)
- concerns (issues, interests, problems)
- process of reading, analysing and concluding (logic, criteria, etc.)

The process of reading is guided by the answers the reader finds to the questions he puts to the text. Those questions are part of his expectations, needs, or interests, and come out of the rules which decide for him what is 'legible' and what is 'illegible'. Thus, the reader's model of text has a guiding role in formulating well-organised, relevant, and adequate questions to which the texts provide answers.

Our Seventh-day Adventist view of the Bible, therefore, must guide us in understanding the Bible texts as appropriately as possible. If we say: 'Brother, don't worry. The Holy Spirit will take care of it all, and Ellen White has confirmed what we are to believe.' Then, we will lose the opportunity of talking about what we find in the Bible text, comparing it and bringing it together in unity. Why is this important? Because people do claim the Spirit's guidance for very contradictory things, not only between various churches but also within our church. Sometimes, people seem to claim the Holy Spirit's leading only when the interpretations fit their own points of view. May that not happen among us!

2. The Shape of the Bible and our Model of the Bible

Our model of the Bible today is usually that it is one book in one volume, where the Holy Spirit has inspired the authors to say things that are essentially unified.

Originally, however, the external shape of the Bible testified to multitude and differences. The name *Biblia*, which means 'books', announced that the Bible was a collection of *different* books — often preserved in some sort of cupboard, as may be seen in the mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna from about A.D. 450. The number of copies was limited.

The risk that the many different books would create confusion was counteracted by a conviction. Those who brought the Bible books together and kept them as a unit saw an inner connection and ordering principle because they were convinced that the Bible is 'God's word' and that what had happened in Jesus Christ was its self-evident centre. The Bible became the Bible through a process of interaction between the *written* word of God and the *person* of Jesus Christ. In the Christian community of faith, the relation between 'the word of God — the Bible and Christ' was a living experience.

Today, we encounter the Bible as one volume. Superficially, it looks unified. Over the world there are hundreds of millions of Bibles and the text can now be read in more than 2000 languages.

However, despite its unified form and enormous distribution, the modern Bible reader may face questions concerning the unity of the Bible. Faith in the Bible as the word of God and in Christ as its centre has faded away, and the result is that the unity and coherence of the Bible has become more problematic. A critical thinking is fostered which divides and separates the books and chapters of the Bible.

The model of the Bible I suggest will help us today is one that includes two features:

(a) It benefits from the unified appearance of the Bible as one book, while acknowledging that it is a collection of different books, different genres and text-types, written and collected for about 1,500 years.

(b) It clearly maintains the Bible as the written Word of God which makes him known in Jesus Christ, while recognising that the Bible expresses God's revelation in Christ in many different ways and that being true to the Bible means not to reduce this variety by harmonisation but to allow the full richness and scope of Christ to come forward.

Let me share a personal testimony here. The book of Revelation is key to an understanding of Seventh-day Adventism's view of the Bible, and the three angels' messages in Revelation 14:6-13 summarises our mission. Being a fourth generation Adventist and a third generation Adventist pastor and church leader, I had all this with me for years. But I never became an avid reader of Revelation, and I do confess that for many years I did not understand the point of the three angels' messages. Revelation's message was kind of veiled in the readings of past generations of Adventists, but it did not become my reading. This has now changed completely. And the reason is that I spent time studying Revelation as a separate book, seeking to understand the book itself and 'ignoring' the rest of the Bible. What I found was a wonderful, inspiring vision of God's mission for us as a people – you can read about it in the *Festschrift to Jan Paulsen* (2009). I abandoned the old view of the Bible where Revelation was integrated in the Bible and where verbal clues in many different Bible texts were brought in to decide the understanding – the 'proof text method' was popular in the beginning of our history as a movement, i.e. when you read the Bible through a concordance of words, but also among the scholars it has for decades been very common to read Bible texts comparatively, comparing them to other texts and seldom letting the text speak for itself.

Let us not forget the Holy Spirit. Ellen White said:

'A true knowledge of the Bible can be gained only through the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given.' (*Education*, p. 189).

In our models of the Bible we tend to emphasise that the Spirit inspired the authors, so the text before us is an inspired text with authority. Good. But Ellen White reminds us of the other side, equally important: We cannot understand the Bible unless the Spirit that *gave* the message now helps the *reader* to understand it. The Spirit works together with and blesses our human activity: By a well thought-out biblical model of the Bible, our understanding will be deeper and wider, and therefore more spiritual.

When we speak of the Holy Spirit in Bible reading, however, let us remember that the Holy Spirit is *sent by Jesus Christ* as our Counsellor:

'I will send him to you ... He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.' (John 16:7, 14; cf. vv. 5-15)

As we read the Bible in the Spirit, Jesus 'sends' the Spirit, the Spirit 'brings glory to Jesus'; what the Spirit makes known to us in our reading is something that 'belongs to Jesus'. Our model of the Bible must therefore be thoroughly Christ-centred and deeply spiritual.

Ellen White said:

'You should search the Bible; for it tells you of Jesus.' (*Life Sketches*, p. 293)

'In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary.' (*Gospel Workers*, p. 315)

3. A Biblical View of the Bible as a Model of Understanding

Three broad principles form the basis for a Christ-centred approach to Scripture: The reader needs (1) a spiritual preparation, (2) a biblical view of the Bible, and (3) an understanding of the basic theme and unity of the Bible.

3.1 Spiritual preparation

The Bible reader needs to work with himself to attain an attitude of *humility* before the word. Ellen White says that 'meekness' is 'among the first qualities for Christ's kingdom' (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 14) and it begins with receiving the word of God: it 'opens the heart to God's word' (*The Sanctified Life*, p. 15). In numerous instances she says that the Bible can only be understood if approached 'with great humility of mind' (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 37), 'with a humble and teachable spirit' (5 *Test*, p. 303), 'with a humble heart' (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 25; 5*Test*, p. 214; 2*Testimony Treasures*, pp. 69, 332; *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 155); 'with humble prayer' (2*Test*, p. 343); 'with humility of heart' (*The Great Controversy*, p. 530); 'with prayer and humility' (*The Great Controversy*, p. 521).

I would describe this attitude as follows:

I approach the Bible in devotion and prayer, with respect and reverence, with an openness to receive and learn, with a longing for spiritual food, hunger for God and a determination to subordinate myself and obey the word, even if it means that I must change my ways and give up attitudes and things I want. This spiritual attitude is expressed by prayer for power and wisdom to receive the word, while I empty myself of all that is me and mine, all everyday concerns, worries, human problems, and focus totally upon God, His mercy and grace.

Nobody has this as an automatic given. It is a growing gift of God which must be desired, developed and cultivated. That is why *a regular, functional and growing personal devotional life is the foundation of a prosperous pastoral ministry in the Church*.

3.2 A Biblical View of the Bible

There are many, many views of the Bible, but far from all are trustworthy, make sense, or are fruitful. Since the Bible is our authority, I suggest that we need a biblical view of the

Bible, which leads us to the only text in the Bible which at some length exposes what the Bible is, namely, 2 Tim. 3:15-17:

‘... and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.’

Historical texts

‘How from infancy you have known ...’: It is clear from this statement that the Scriptures are *historical* texts. Timothy has known them for a long time, they existed before him, and witness themselves of the fact that they come from a distant past. We know today that the Bible was ready about 200 AD and that 1,800 years have passed since then. The oldest of the 66 books making up the Bible may date from 3,400 years ago. The Bible books, therefore, must be read in their historical contexts in order to secure the universal principles and messages that are relevant today.

A striking statement suggesting a lack of recognition of the Bible as made of historical texts is: ‘The King James’ Version was good enough for the apostle Paul, so it is good enough for me.’

So, we must accept that the Bible may have two basic meanings: as original text (what the historical author intended and to whom he addressed himself) and as a text providing universal principles and Christian messages valid for all times. Our view of the Bible should indicate how we distinguish between these two.

Biblical Canon Determined by the Church

‘The holy Scriptures’ at the time Paul wrote his second letter to the young Timothy were the Old Testament writings. Exactly which books were part of this canon in Paul’s days, especially in the third section called ‘The Writings’, is not fully certain, but in general the early evidence shows that the young church followed the Jewish way of determining the canon which was essentially established towards the end of the second century (R. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, SPCK, London, 1985. pp.263, 274 ff.).

The New Testament canon was determined, not by a church council but by practices in the life of the church, where three concomitant factors dominated:

- apostolic authority (the words of Christ and of the apostles/eyewitnesses)
- right doctrine (preserve the teaching of the O.T. and of the Lord and his apostles)
- general usage (avoid sectarianism)

At the third Council of Carthage (397), the canon that had already gained widespread acceptance by such factors was simply confirmed.

The extent of the canon of the Bible is not determined by any clear Scriptural reference, but it was determined by the church. It is our faith that God led the church in establishing the canon as it now is. In the same way we believe that God has been involved in the Bible translations and the copying and preserving of the biblical manuscripts over the centuries.

The church that determined the canon saw itself as a fulfilment of the teaching of the Bible, namely, (a) as the body of Christ, which has Christ as its head ‘from whom the whole body grows and builds itself up in love’ (Eph. 4:15-16) and which Christ ‘feeds and cares for’ (Eph. 5:30), and (b) as keeper of the word of God, which ‘is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and judging the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart’ (Hebr. 4:12). Thus, the church’s decision on the canon is based on the inseparable identity between Christ and the Word, being kept

alive in the church through the Holy Spirit and by Christ as the Head of his body.

The Holy Scriptures are inspired by God

What Paul meant when using the word *theopneustos*, 'God-breathed', has been the subject of extended theological study and discussion. But it is simple enough. Paul says that the Bible originated with God, not humankind. The Bible always underlines that the writers were inspired, but the words were their own. Ellen White gives the following summary of a biblical view of the Bible:

'It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.' (Manuscript 24, 1886; 1 SM 21)

This view of the Bible implies that the Bible text functions as the formal vehicle that conveys the message, meaning and spiritual impact of the Word of God on readers that are influenced by the Spirit of God. It also implies a view of inspiration that is not limited by the written signs in the text but by the event of communication between author, text and reader - not only were the Bible authors inspired, but every time the Bible is being read, the reader who is led by the Holy Spirit understands God's word. This is the point of 1 Cor. 2:10-16, being highlighted several times by Ellen White.

The Holy Scriptures give wisdom and knowledge for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

This is the primary function of the Bible and we should read it with that expectation. Salvation by faith in Christ should be the biblical focus in our private lives, in our ministry and in the life of the church. This focus implies that, while we recognize that there may be truth that is not found in the Bible, the Bible alone provides the truth needed for salvation. It further implies that, as God's people, we have no reason to proclaim any other truth than the saving knowledge by faith in Christ, since '*in Christ* are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ... For *in Christ* all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form' (Col. 2:3, 9).

The Holy Scriptures train in righteousness and equip for every good work

By daily Bible reading, we allow the Bible to be a useful tool for the Holy Spirit to teach, rebuke, correct, train and equip ourselves, leading us to incorporate principles of a Christ-like life and have a clear understanding of Bible doctrines. These are in no way separate from Christ. It is salvation by faith in Christ that equips us with the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), who then explains the secrets of God's word in a spiritual way (1 Cor. 2:10-16). Therefore, the best way to do evangelism and win souls should be to lead people to a faith in Christ as Saviour, rather than focus on an intellectual acceptance of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. When the believer believes in Christ, the Holy Spirit will provide a spiritual understanding of Bible doctrine, which helps to keep Christ and my spiritual communion with him as the central topic of the Bible.

3.3 The Central Topic of the Bible

The third basic principle of a Christ-centred approach to reading the Bible is the recognition that the Bible has one central topic, namely, 'the mission of God as Creator, the love of God as his character, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ as his power of salvation'. It may also be described as 'the plan of salvation and the restoration of the image of God in man'. Ellen

White states:

'The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God' (*Education*, p. 125)

When the image of God is restored in man, the love of God, his presence, is restored. So, Paul could say in Galatians 5:6:

'For in Christ Jesus ... the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.'

This central topic of the Bible is 'the truth as it is in Jesus' Ellen White develops it further in *Christ's Object Lessons*. In passing, she mentions 'the truth as it is in Jesus' on p. 129. In the context of this reference, she says that the sources of truth are three:

'The great storehouse of truth is the word of God – the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience of God's dealing with human life.' (p. 125)

What are we to find in the storehouse of truth? 'The heaven-born love of Christ' (p. 125), 'the gospel' (p. 133), 'the deep things of God' (p. 133), and 'the truth as it is in Jesus' (p. 129). Since all this has its source in God, who is boundless and Almighty, Ellen White repeatedly points out that human beings must diligently *search* the truth. This search proceeds from a *need*, from our 'hungering and thirsting for the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ' (p. 125).

Now, listen to this carefully: Since 'it is possible for us to see all that we can bear of the divine compassion', the-truth-as-it-is-in-Jesus is unfolded to *the humble, contrite soul*'. Thus, 'as we search the word of God in *humility of heart*, the grand theme of redemption will open to our research' (p. 129). There is a connection between human emptiness and divine fullness: the more we humble ourselves and confess our needs, the more God is able to provide of his gifts. The way to growth is by an awareness of our own emptiness – like the tax collector standing at a distance, not daring even to look up to heaven, but calling to God for mercy upon his life as a sinner.

The door into our hearts for truth is our attitude of humbleness and total need of God. Even this is however a gift from Jesus:

'Often there will come to us a sweet sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the *experience* of the Christian, there is seen in his life a *simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart ...*' (pp. 129 f.; italics supplied).

All this leads us back to the first point, *the attitude of humility before the Bible*. But it also provides the basis for the following argument:

If each Bible text is part of the whole of the Bible by links with 'the truth as it is in Jesus', then it is a crucial skill required by the serious Bible reader that he/she is able to find in each sentence the clue that connects it with the truth as it is in Jesus.

We must therefore train ourselves and develop our ability to master *contextual Bible reading*, applying the love of God and the plan of salvation as our main concern in reading.

To you as an esteemed colleague, a fellow pastor, I say: Exercise your skill in making these connections from any text in your Bible! And teach your congregations and youth to follow!

Our mission is to make God known in Europe. We make him known by reading the

Bible with people and enabling them to experience the power of his word in their lives. The devil knows that this is the way, and therefore he is now busy trying to lead our entire culture in the western world away from reading, away from the Bible. Let us protest against that and start communities where Bible reading is at the centre, so that the truth as it is in Jesus may be widely known!