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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

By E. Edward Zinke

Silver Spring, Maryland

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has experienced a revival in its understanding of righteousness by faith. Within the last several decades, this renewed understanding has spread from classroom to classroom, pulpit to pulpit, publication to publication. It has been accepted and proclaimed by church administrators, theologians, pastors, and lay people. It has brought assurance of salvation and revival of meaning to many lives. The God of legalism with His impossible requirements and judgmental attitude has given way to a God of love and understanding.

Such revivals do not take place without debate and excesses on both sides—from a renewed attempt to reinstate legalism on the one hand, to antinomianism on the other. Such debates create ferment from time to time. But ferment creates interest and awareness, it gives us the recognition of the need to study and to make our own decisions for God. Study and discussion gives the church the opportunity to move ahead in its understanding of God's plan. We must praise God for the revival that takes place when we willingly submit our lives to the gift of His righteousness and salvation.

We stand at the crossroads in our understanding of righteousness by faith. Historically the doctrine of righteousness by faith alone cannot be sustained without the renewal of a parallel doctrine—that of “the Bible alone.” Both the doctrines of grace alone received by faith alone and that of the Bible alone accepted by faith alone rest upon the same foundation—the gift of God alone.

Let us put this discussion in historical perspective. The Seventh-day Adventist Church sees itself as fulfilling the initiative of the Protestant. The Protestant Reformation re-enunciated two

principles—the sole authority of the Bible as the foundation and guide to life, and the sole reliance upon grace through faith as the basis for our salvation. These principles shattered the thought patterns of the age. People had come to rely on the Bible along with the authority of the Pope, church councils, tradition, nature, reason, and philosophy. They had come to accept grace along with works and performance as the basis for salvation. The Reformation changed the way man thinks about himself in relation to his environment and his God by responding with the Bible alone, and by Grace alone. The foundation of our thinking does not come from the Bible and reason, or history, archaeology, science, psychology, sociology, or any other human discipline, it comes from the Bible alone. Salvation does not come by grace and works, it comes by grace alone.

Christ's response to Satan in the wilderness illustrated the principle of "the Bible alone." When asked to prove His divinity, Christ could have answered philosophically—a God of love would not allow His Son to endure deprivation for forty days in the wilderness alone. Or, He could have answered scientifically—He could have proved empirically that He was the Son of God by turning stones into bread. Instead, Christ answered with, "It is written."

By the slogan, the Bible alone, the Reformation did not deny that God could speak through nature, or reason, or science, or philosophy—it simply meant that the Bible was the basis for determining when and where God had spoken through other elements of human life. Reason was a tool to use in harmony with God's will rather than a foundation upon which to accept God's Word.

Several years ago, I had the misfortune of building a house. But through that experience I learned some things. That house was built upon a firm foundation and its construction was guided by a set of plans. The house had a number of rooms, doors, windows, and a roof. If it did not have these things, it would not have been a house. By the same token, if the house had been built upon the roof, it would have crumbled. So our lives are composed of many things—our academic disciplines, our thinking processes, our emotions, our relations with people, and so on. Our lives would not be worth living without these various aspects of them. But if we ever make reason

or some other aspect of our life the foundation or the guide to life, our lives will crumble. Our lives must be built upon and guided by the foundation of the Word of God, and upon that alone.

The humanistic world in which we live attempts to teach us to build our professions and our lives upon reason, or science, or experience. The uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist message is that it teaches us to stand up against the norms of contemporary society by basing our lives upon the "it is written"—upon the Word of God alone.

But now, a note of caution. The Bible is not an end in and of itself. The Bible is not the goal of life. The thrust of life is not the establishment of correct doctrine, as important as that may be. The goal of life, that which makes life meaningful, is the re-establishment of our relationship with God and with our fellow men. This is where we introduce the second principle of the Reformation—by grace alone through faith alone.

The miracle of salvation is that while we were yet sinners, even enemies of God, God took the initiative by sending His Son into the world in order that we might be restored to a relationship with Him. Christ defined salvation in John 17:3 when He said, "And this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." If salvation is the gift of God alone that we receive by faith alone and if the life goal is not the establishment of correct doctrine, then why should we be concerned with doctrine at all, why not just concentrate on the relationship?

Let us analyze the nature of human relationships in order to understand better our relationship with God. I would like to get better acquainted with you. What is necessary for us to have a mature relationship with one another? I propose that there are at least four components to human relationships. First of all, I must know something about you. I must also understand myself. I must know something about the proper relationship between us, and we must spend time with each other. If I do not have knowledge about you, and if I do not understand myself, the time we spend with each other will be contentless—the relationship empty.

The same is true in our relationship with God. If we are to come into a relationship with God, we must know something about Him, we must understand ourselves, and we must understand the proper

relationship that is to exist between us. Without this understanding, our relationship with God will be contentless, meaningless.

What then provides content to the Christian's relationship with God? God's self-revelation, the Bible. While the goal of life is not the Bible, the Bible is that which provides the content and the guide to the goal of life—the restoration of our relationship with God.

The principles of the Bible alone and by grace alone parallel one another. Salvation is a given—it is the gift of God, there is not a shred of human devising at its foundation. So also, the Bible is the gift of God, accepted by faith which is itself the gift of God. Just as salvation is not to be founded upon human effort, so the Bible, the Word of God, is not founded upon human wisdom. Just as salvation is not manipulated by human effort, so the Bible is not to be manipulated by human reason. Just as salvation comes by the grace of God alone, so does God's self-revelation, the Bible come by grace alone. Just as human works have their proper place as the outgrowth of salvation, so also does reason have its proper place when it is founded upon God's Word alone.

Life is like an equilateral triangle. Its firm foundation is Jesus Christ. At one corner is the principle of the Bible alone, at the other is the principle of grace alone. At its apex is its goal, restoration of relationships with God and man. If our relationship with God does not rest upon these two principles, it will collapse. If we remove the principle of the sole authority of Scripture, the relationship will collapse into meaninglessness. If we remove the principle of grace alone, the relationship will collapse into formalism and pharaseeism.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been the church of the book. The Bible was the foundation of our understanding of God, of ourselves, and of the world. However, just as our understanding of righteousness by faith was dimmed by time, so also our understanding of the authority of the Bible has been blunted by the modern world in which we live. Just as twenty years ago this church was blessed by the refreshing message of salvation by faith, so also the church is being strengthened by a renewed emphasis upon the fundamental authority of the Bible in our lives and understanding. I praise God that this powerful message is begin-

ning to be taught from classroom to classroom, preached from pulpit to pulpit, understood and affirmed by administrators, and accepted by lay people. Not only will this new understanding of the authority of Scripture sustain the message of righteousness by faith, it will also give power to the preaching of God's Word at this last hour of earth's history. I pray that the message of "the Bible alone" will continue to find renewed acceptance just as has the message of righteousness by faith.

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SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY: Focusing the Complementary Lights of Jesus, Scripture and Nature

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A Complex Problem

The Problem of Definitions. The problem of the relationship between science and theology is complicated by the fact that there are no universally accepted definitions for these terms. Bengt Gustafsson comments that the various sciences seem to constitute a turmoil of different and often contradictory assumptions, methods and results. While specific sciences have attained a limited coherence, the system of the sciences has not yet produced a completely ordered theoretical world view.¹ Similarly, Robert King observes that there is an apparent disarray in theology. Even individual communities of faith are being overwhelmed by theological pluralism. Today there are no commanding theologians, no systems of theology that elicit wide support, and no general agreement even as to what theology is.²

On the one hand, the terms science and theology have been used to distinguish the study of nature from the study of God.³ According to the naturalistic view of science, nature is a closed system in which God does not act. Some scientists go so far as to assume that nature is the ultimate reality and that there is no God beyond nature. From this perspective, theology is unscientific because its methods and objectives are unlike those of other sciences. These sciences are presently dominated by methodological naturalism.⁴ However, even naturalistic science seems to have

theological implications. To view nature as ultimate is to put it in the place of God, making it divine. As Roy Clouser points out, there may be a hidden role for religious belief (or unbelief) even in naturalistic theories of science.⁵

On the other hand, the term science may be used to denote any disciplined methodological search for knowledge where the method of study suits its objective. From this perspective, theology may be regarded as a theistic science; and nature may be viewed as a system which is open to divine revelation. Therefore, knowledge about God and nature are not independent of each other. As Herman Bavinck expressed it, "natural science is not the only science, and cannot be."⁶ Actually, the element of *scientia* in the theological tradition has kept it viable for a long time. Only with German Pietism did a theology which was understood as devoid of science acquire any notable authority.⁷

The Problem of Multiple Models. The various conceptions of science and theology result in a large number of conflicting theoretical frameworks or models for their relations. William Austin categorizes these models in terms of direct relations—where science and theology compete with, confirm and/or contradict each other; and indirect relations—where they provide insights, metaphysics and/or methodology for each other. Also, some models may be categorized as complex—where there are direct as well as indirect science-theology relations.⁸

The search for a viable model takes on great importance because science-theology relations may be regarded as harmful and/or helpful. For example, in rejecting one model, Carl Raschke writes that "perhaps the most formidable obstacle for theological thinking is the epistemological challenge posed by modern science." However, in support of another model, he suggests that it is "the neglect of theological thinking [which] has led not only to the demise of what was once the premier "science," [theology] but to the slow deterioration of the various habits on intellectual probing [in other sciences]."⁹

The *National Academy of Sciences* manifests a similar ambivalence about science-theology relations. The *Academy* denies that there is "an irreconcilable conflict between religion and science." Yet it claims that scientific and theological thinking are

“separate and mutually exclusive realms of human thought whose presentation in the same context leads to misunderstanding of both.” Some models for science-theology relations are regarded as a “challenge to the integrity and effectiveness of our national education system and the hard-won evidence-based foundations of Science, . . . [to] academic and intellectual freedom and to the fundamental principles of scientific thought.”¹⁰

The Problem of Scripture. Can Scripture provide a basis for the evaluation of the various models for science-theology relations? Yes it can. Dale Moody reports that, in the dialogue among theologians, it is increasingly evident that the only sufficient ground of Christian unity is the common Christian regard for Scripture.¹¹ Dorothee Sölle—a radical theologian—suggests that all Christians view Scripture not only as a source but also as the binding, limiting, norm making (*norma normans*) standard that sets the rules for the use of other normed standards for theology (*normae normatae*).¹² Similarly, Richard Davidson—a Seventh-day Adventist theologian—suggests that all Christians should come to Scripture acknowledging our biases and preunderstandings and claiming the divine promise to bring us into harmony with normative biblical presuppositions.¹³

Nevertheless, radical theology is very different from and incompatible with Adventist theology. This indicates that the role of Scripture in contemporary Christian theology is in itself problematic. Even among those who agree that Scripture sets the rules for theology there may be much disagreement as to what those rules are. A focal point of this debate is the *sola Scriptura* principle. Lack of agreement on this issue contributes to the largest division in Christianity. Catholics and Protestants regard experience, reason and tradition (ERT) as a proper context for the interpretation of Scripture.¹⁴ However, Protestants use the slogan *sola Scriptura* to identify Scripture as *the* standard for *their* evaluation of ERT. Catholics also claim to be faithful to Scripture but they evaluate ERT differently.¹⁵

The issue of the *sola Scriptura* principle also contributes to a division among Christians concerning how to relate the study of Jesus, Scripture and nature. (Notice that human nature, which includes ERT, is the context for the incarnation of Jesus and the

inspiration of Scripture). This provokes a number of difficult questions. Are Jesus, Scripture and nature revelations of God and therefore sources and standards for theology? What are the relations between God and revelation, between the divine and the human in revelation, and among God’s revelations? Do Jesus, Scripture and nature shed light on each other?

A Seventh-day Adventist Solution

An Inclusive Model. A biblical and inclusive model for Christian theology proposes a viable solution to the complex problem of science-theology relations. In this model, theology (*theologia*) is the study of God as He is revealed to humanity in His word (*logos theou*). The word of God in the entire Judeo-Christian Scripture (*tota Scriptura*) is a unique (*sola Scriptura*) and primary (*prima Scriptura*) standard for theology. According to Scripture, there is a sense in which Scripture is the source, standard and context for theology. Scripture interprets Scripture. However, also according to Scripture, Jesus and nature are in a sense unique and primary as source and context for theology. Jesus—the supreme revelation of God, is the source of the special revelation in Scripture and the general revelation in nature. Nature, including human nature, is the context for the incarnation of Jesus and for the inspiration and the interpretation of Scripture.¹⁶

An Adventist Model. This biblical model implies that there is a legitimate place for a theological interpretation of the methods and results of other sciences. As the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* suggests, “the revelation contained in the word of God is necessary for meaning and perspective in science” and the “revelation in the world of science gives added meaning to religion.”¹⁷ This does not mean that theology establishes the methods and results of other sciences or that they establish the methods and results of theology. In this model, the authority of one divine-human revelation does not compromise the authority of another. According to the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, when rightly understood, the divine-human revelations in Jesus, Scripture and nature are in perfect harmony. Any apparent conflict is the result of our imperfect comprehension.¹⁸

Sin obscures God’s self-revelation through creation [nature] by limit-

ing our ability to interpret God's testimony. [However,] in love God gave a special revelation of Himself [in Scripture].

The Bible both contains propositions that declare the truth about God, and reveals Him as a person. Both areas of revelation are necessary: we need to know God through Jesus Christ . . . as well as "the truth that is in Jesus" . . . by means of the Scriptures . . .¹⁹

Limitations. The model for theology which is presented here is necessarily relative to the writer's present understanding of God's word and is therefore open to revision. The reader is encouraged to keep an open mind to the evaluation of theoretical models on the basis of a continuing consideration of the entire word of God. It is not possible here to give an exhaustive treatment of all the issues involved in the solution of the science-theology problem. Also, only a few quotations from the many scientists and theologians who recognize the significance of these issues are included. However, the endnotes provide some indication of the extent of the contemporary discussion within and outside of Adventist theology.²⁰ In what follows, a brief history of the complex science-theology problem is presented as a background to a more complete description of the inclusive model for Adventist theology introduced above.

The Problem: Historical Background

The Premodern Period. The two thousand year history of the science-theology problem may be divided into three periods: premodern, modern and postmodern. For sixteen centuries before the Protestant Reformation, premodern theology was influenced by two theologians above all others. First, Augustine (d. 430 A.D.) promoted the idea of Plato (d. 347 B.C.) that wisdom is superior to knowledge. As a result, theology was regarded as superior to science. Later, Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274 A.D.) promoted the idea of Aristotle (d. 322 B.C.) that science is derived from first principles. Thus theology came to be regarded as the highest derived science.²¹

Nevertheless, premodern theology contained the seeds of the idea of God-world separation that would produce a harvest of science-theology conflict in the modern period. The Eastern strand of premodern theology modeled the relations of God and nature as organic through the mediation of a Cosmic Christ.²² In contrast,

Western theology modeled the transcendent world of God (*neotos*) as separated from the immanent human world (*aisthetos*) by a chasm (*chorismos*). This gap was bridged by a combination of rational natural theology grounded in nature and revealed theology received by faith.²³ However, God's word in Christ and in the language of Scripture²⁴ was viewed as primarily a source of timeless doctrine about the transcendent divine order and only secondarily a support for ideas about the immanent natural order.²⁵

The Modern Period. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, there was a decline of traditional natural theology and a rise of methodological naturalism in modern science. Consequently, nature was modeled as a machine which was separated from God. Two philosopher-theologians are especially representative of this development. René Descartes (d. 1650) divided reality into matter and mind or spirit; and Immanuel Kant (d. 1804) divided knowledge into that which may be known and that which must be believed because of practical necessity.²⁶

Jerrey Hopper comments that in the premodern period, for the most part, theology set the rules for science. "Now this situation was reversed, and the findings of science were setting the problems for philosophy which in turn was beginning to define new rules for theology."²⁷ This led to increasing conflict between modern science and traditional theology. On the one hand, modern science has undermined premodern views of the factual relevance of Scripture. On the other hand, modern *critical* hermeneutics views language as essentially descriptive of an immanent natural reality rather than a transcendent supernatural reality.²⁸

Modern theologians have responded in different ways. On the one hand, Friedrich Schleiermacher (d. 1834), the father of Protestant Liberalism, sought a truce in the science-theology conflict by describing theology as a positive and practical science rather than as a pure science. He viewed Scripture as essentially a record of religious experience. On the other hand, Benjamin B. Warfield (d. 1921) was a foremost proponent of the view that Scripture records factual propositions. This view has come to be associated with fundamentalist and conservative theology.²⁹

The Postmodern Period. A growing number of scientists and theologians regard 20th century science as radically different from

premodern derived science and modern methodological naturalism. However, others emphasize the continuity of the history of science. What is clear is that scientific models have undergone significant change. Nature is now modeled as a history in which the core of reality is mysterious. Theology has also changed. *Postcritical* theologians usually use modern critical methods, but they recognize the limited theological usefulness of the historical-critical paradigm with its emphasis on the human context of the formation of Scripture. Much of postmodern thought tends toward irrationalism and nihilism. However, many contemporary theologians seek to overcome the imbalance of the premodern and modern emphasis on transcendence and immanence by recognizing Jesus, Scripture and nature as in some sense revelations of a mediated divine transcendence.³⁰

Unfortunately, because of the tensions within postmodern thought, no new theological unity has emerged. The tendencies toward division in the premodern and modern periods have developed into a radical pluralism of views about Jesus, Scripture and nature. The Scholastic, Liberal and Fundamentalist influences continue. In addition, other types of theology view Scripture in different ways as: witness to revelation (NeoOrthodox); symbolization of divine-human encounter (Existentialist); salvation message (NeoEvangelical), source of metaphors (Narrative), source of models (Feminist), foundation for freedom (Liberation), and as an unfolding of divine action (Process). These approaches to theology view the text of Scripture either as a revelation, as a witness to a historical revelation "behind" the text, or as a catalyst for contemporary revelation "in front of" the text. Presently, the cutting edge of Christian theology involves the search for a viable model which deals with the manifold revelation of God in Jesus, Scripture and nature.³¹

Two Case Studies. Further perspective on science-theology relations in the postmodern period may be provided by tracing the influence of two *postliberal* theologians. On the right of liberal theology, Karl Barth (d. 1968)—the father of neo-orthodoxy—aimed to restate orthodoxy independently of science. On the left of liberal theology, Paul Tillich (d. 1965)—the father of existentialist theology—developed the idea that Bible symbols provide answers

to the ultimate symbolic questions of science. According to John Dillenberger, these theologians "represent the theological revolution in our time." They are key reference points on the theological landscape.³²

Langdon Gilkey (1919-), on the right of Tillich, practices a *scientific-existentialist theology* and assumes a divine realm beyond science and the complementarity of God and nature. According to Gilkey, some constitutive elements of the Bible have lost their legitimacy in a scientific culture. Science is the normative mode for knowing the space-time world, and is confined to explanation by finite or empirical secular causes. In contrast, theology is unrelated to facts and unable to establish anything relevant to science. Therefore, Scripture is to be interpreted in light of the factual conclusions of a science characterized by methodological naturalism. As a result, Gilkey concludes that while the early Christians were certain that God had raised Jesus from the dead, contemporary Christians can speak of the resurrection only in symbolic language. It is impossible to say what happened in literal terms, such as "empty tomb" and "bodily ascension," because it was the work of God and not a natural event.³³

Thomas Torrance (1913-), on the left of Barth, practices a *trans-scientific theology* which balances scientific relevance with theological independence and goes beyond the other sciences in theological explanation. Unlike Gilkey, Torrance rejects the idea that we are limited to knowledge of what early Christians appeared to make of Jesus as they clothed Him with meanings and created 'historical events' to suit their needs. He also rejects the idea that we must seek by symbolic reinterpretation to let what they did become a focus of meaning for ourselves. Theology must do its work within the context of the revolutionary changes in the scientific foundations of knowledge, but it should never build upon the foundations of any other science. Theology must be faithful to its own scientific objective and to the material content of God's self-revelation. Concerning the resurrection, Torrance concludes: "Everything depends on the resurrection of the body, otherwise all we have is a ghost of a Saviour."³⁴

Summary. The complex problem of science-theology relations developed in the aftermath of a series of dominant models for

Christian theology, namely: precritical orthodoxy—where Scripture refers primarily to timeless reality; critical liberalism—where Scripture refers primarily to temporal reality; and postcritical-postliberal theology—where Scripture refers primarily to a mediated transcendence. Postcritical thought is open to irrationalism and nihilism as well as to the idea that Jesus, Scripture and nature are in some sense revelations of God and are therefore sources and standards for theology. However, there is no theological consensus concerning the nature of divine-human communication or concerning science-theology relations. The difficulties involved in the search for a viable model have contributed to a crisis in contemporary theology. This is evident in the tension between the approaches of Barth, Tillich, Gilkey and Torrance. The inclusive model for Seventh-day Adventist theology which was introduced above will be more completely described in the remainder of this paper.

The Solution: "Postmodern" Adventism

Adventist Crisis. Gerhard Hasel reminds us that Seventh-day Adventists are not immune to the postmodern crisis in Christian theology.³⁵ In fact, many Adventists are passing through what Fritz Guy refers to as a crisis of belief—a critical moment when a change of belief is possible.³⁶ As Raoul Dederen writes in a different but related context:

the issue at stake is essentially one of authority, namely, how SDAs are going to do theology while holding to Biblical authority. Can we agree on exactly what the Bible means for us and how it is to be heard and interpreted? Can we maintain our claim to Biblical authority as a distinctive hallmark if we cannot find a way to move effectively toward theological consensus?³⁷

According to Edward Lugenbeal, this crisis includes "a deep and continuing debate among SDA scientists and theologians."³⁸ Some Adventists conceive of science-theology relations in terms of changes in our view of science which are prompted by the study of Scripture. Others advocate changes in our view of theology which are prompted by the study of nature. Still others advocate a two-way interaction between the study of nature and Scripture which may change our view of science and of theology. If this discussion

proceeds with an openness to the Spirit of Jesus and to His revelation in Scripture and nature it can only result in a continuing clarification of the Adventist model for theology and for science-theology relations.³⁹

Historic Adventist Theology. John Baldwin suggests that the "principles of historic Adventist theological method need not be abandoned, but that the approach represents a viable and convincing postmodern theological method."⁴⁰ Adventist theology is postmodern in that it developed towards the end of the modern period and offers a solution to the contemporary science-theology problem. However, the place of Scripture in Adventist theology distinguishes it from other theological trends. As Fernando Canale comments, authentic Adventist theology does not "utilize humanly originated philosophy at the detriment or plain rejection of the *sola Scriptura* principle [by] following the classical, modern, and/or] postmodern trends in Christian theology."⁴¹

The Adventist understanding of the *sola Scriptura* principle deserves special attention. Gerhard Hasel classifies Adventist theology as "postmodern" and "postcritical" because of its view of Scripture. Allowing for secondary norms, he points out that the "highest and most authoritative norm" for Adventist theology is the revelation which is "most uniquely and directly incarnated in Scripture."⁴² This uniquely direct "incarnation" of special revelation in normative Scripture is contrasted with the normed standards of general revelation in human nature such as experience, reason and tradition. However, it does not compromise the uniqueness of the revelation incarnate in Jesus or the revelation given in nature.⁴³

Ellen G. White's Contribution

The writings of Ellen G. White—the most outstanding founding member of the Adventist Church—continue to be relevant to the postmodern crisis. White's ministry is regarded by Adventists as a lesser light under the authority of the greater light of Scripture and the supreme light of Jesus. Her views, which are representative of Adventist theology, are outlined below. Thereafter, some of the evidence for the compatibility of this model with Scripture is presented.⁴⁴

Divine-Human Revelations. There are divine and human dimensions to God's revelations. First, it is impossible to gain a perfect knowledge of God from nature because sin has obscured God's revelation in nature.⁴⁵ But in spite of the distortion caused by sin, nature is "an open book which reveals God"⁴⁶ who works in nature.⁴⁷ God's character, thoughts, glory, wisdom, power and law are revealed in nature.⁴⁸ Actually, "the whole natural world is designed to be an interpreter of the things of God."⁴⁹ This revelation includes human nature. God's "law is written by his own finger upon every nerve, every muscle, every fiber of our being, upon every faculty which has been intrusted to man."⁵⁰ "The brain nerves . . . are the medium through which heaven communicates with man."⁵¹ The mind purified by grace is an intellect which is in close communion with the divine mind and to which God will be manifest.⁵²

Second, Scripture is also an imperfect representation of God due to its humanity, to the process of its preservation, transmission and translation.⁵³ In addition, "the Bible, perfect in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought."⁵⁴ However, the divine and human dimensions of Scripture are wonderfully united. "The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God."⁵⁵ "Every chapter and every verse of the Bible is a communication from God to men."⁵⁶ Scripture has been preserved through "the unerring pen of inspiration"⁵⁷ in its present shape as a guidebook for humanity. God, who cannot lie, qualified the human communicators of His word. He guided the selection of what to speak and write. Thus, Scripture is a perfect chain with one portion explaining another. It reliably reveals the knowledge necessary for salvation, God's will, the standard of character, doctrines, historical facts, various types of knowledge, and the highest science.⁵⁸

Last, but not least, the divine-human communion which is provided in nature and Scripture points to the divine-human union "in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man."⁵⁹ In Jesus, the divine and human natures were united in one person. Yet the human was not made divine and the divine was not made human.⁶⁰ "The work of God's dear Son in undertaking to link the created with the Uncreated, the finite with the Infinite, in His

own divine person, is a subject that may well employ our thoughts for a lifetime."⁶¹

The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. . . . We marvel at the Saviour's sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. . . . Yet this was but the beginning of His wonderful condescension. It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. . . . He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.⁶²

Harmonious Revelations. "Rightly understood, both the revelations of science and the experiences of life are in harmony with the testimony of Scripture."⁶³

The book of nature and the written word do not disagree; each sheds light on the other. *Rightly understood* they make us acquainted with God and his character by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which he works. We are thus led to adore his name and to have an *intelligent trust* in his word.⁶⁴

When the Bible makes statements of facts in nature, science may be compared with the written Word, and *a correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony*. One does not contradict the other.⁶⁵

By different methods and in different languages, they [nature and Scripture] witness to the same great truths. Science is ever discovering new wonders; *but* she brings from her research nothing that, rightly understood, conflicts with divine revelation.⁶⁶

However, harmony alone is not a sufficient evidence of correct interpretations. Not just any harmony will do because it is possible to harmonize incorrect interpretations of nature and Scripture.

Inferences erroneously drawn from facts observed in nature have led to *supposed conflict* between science and revelation; and in the effort to restore harmony, interpretations of Scripture have been adopted that undermine and destroy the force of the word of God.⁶⁷

In order to account for His works [in nature], must we do violence to His word [in Scripture]?⁶⁸

The Hierarchy of Revelation. Correct interpretations depend on the recognition of the hierarchy of Jesus, Scripture and nature. First, the supreme revelation of God in Jesus is unique and primary as Source and Subject of every divine revelation. "No other light ever has shone or ever will shine so clearly upon fallen man as that which emanated from the teaching and example of Jesus."⁶⁹ Jesus is the key to the correct interpretation of Scripture.

Christ makes no apology when He declares, "I am the light of the world." He was, in life and teaching, the gospel, *the foundation of all pure doctrine*. Just as the sun compares with the lesser lights in the heavens, so did Christ, the Source of light, compare with the teachers of His day. He was before them all, and shining with the brightness of the sun, He diffused His penetrating, gladdening rays throughout the world.⁷⁰

In Christ is gathered all the glory of the Father. In Him is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person. The glory of the attributes of God are expressed in His character. *The gospel is glorious because it is made up of His righteousness. It is Christ enfolded, and Christ is the gospel embodied.* . . . Every text [of Scripture] is a diamond, touched and irradiated by the divine rays.

We are not to praise the gospel, but [to] praise Christ. We are not to worship the gospel, but the Lord of the gospel.⁷¹

The study of nature is also illuminated by Jesus. "Only under the direction of the Omniscient One shall we, in the study of His works, be enabled to think His thoughts after Him."⁷² Scientific research which does not acknowledge God is a positive injury.⁷³ "Knowledge and science must be vitalized by the Spirit of God in order to serve the noblest purposes. The Christian alone can make the right use of knowledge."⁷⁴ "With the first advent of Christ there was ushered in an era of greater light and glory; but it would indeed be sinful ingratitude to despise and ridicule the lesser light because a fuller and more glorious light had dawned."⁷⁵

Second, the special revelation of God in Scripture is unique and primary in that it is the standard for the theological interpretation of Jesus and nature. The Bible "contains the science of sciences,

the science of salvation." It "is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ."⁷⁶ "Above all other people on earth, the man whose mind is enlightened by the word of God will feel that he must give himself to greater diligence in the perusal of the Bible, and a diligent study of the sciences."⁷⁷

The theme of the Bible is Jesus. Therefore, "the foundation of all true science is contained in the Bible."⁷⁸ It is "necessary that the study of the Bible should have a prominent place among the various branches of scientific education."⁷⁹ "The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of an infinite power. But to man's unaided reason, nature's teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation [Scripture] can it be read aright."⁸⁰ "The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to trace the relations of science and revelation."⁸¹ Scripture is not to be tested by our ideas of nature or of Christ. Instead, our ideas are to be tested by Scripture.⁸²

Third, the general revelation of God in nature is unique and primary as the widest context for the theological interpretation of Jesus and Scripture. Scripture is not to be regarded as a textbook for all facts about nature or God. The study of nature itself is indispensable and leads to a knowledge of God.⁸³ Adventist schools are "established for the purpose of teaching the sciences, and at the same time leading the students to the Saviour, whence all true knowledge flows."⁸⁴

In the study of the sciences also, we are to obtain a knowledge of the Creator. All true science is but an interpretation of the handwriting of God in the material world. Science brings from her research only fresh evidences of the wisdom and power of God.⁸⁵

The study of nature also illuminates the study of Scripture. "As we observe the things of the natural world, we shall be enabled under the guiding of the Holy Spirit, more fully to understand the lessons of God's word."⁸⁶ "Scientific research will open vast fields of thought and information." Contemplation of "the things of nature" provides "a new perception of truth."⁸⁷

False Science and Theology. Neglect of the light of God in Jesus, Scripture or nature results in science and theology which are not Christ-centered.⁸⁸ On the one hand, false science manifests a

“show of plausibility” and places Satanic “ideas of science and nature” above the word of God as a test.⁸⁹ It is a disguised infidelity, does not recognize the limits of science, and misinterprets the facts of nature which actually support faith in Scripture. It explains the world by natural law alone and wrongly attributes infinite power to nature. This is because false science does not distinguish philosophy, theory and speculation from fact.⁹⁰ On the other hand, false theology ignores the “connected chain of truth” in the Bible and manifests “a disjointed medley of ideas” supported by a passage of Scripture here and there and “woven together in a tissue of falsehood.”⁹¹ The ignorance and folly of these “disconnected theories [are] arrayed in new and fantastic dress,—theories that it will be all the more difficult to meet because there is no reason in them.”⁹²

Reason and Faith. Reason is a “great masterly talent” which “will be taken to heaven.”⁹³ God desires that we be “intellectual Christians.”⁹⁴ He wants us to use our brains. God does not desire men to be less acute, less inquiring, less intelligent. However, it is a sin of the mind to extol and deify reason to the neglect of Scripture. To exalt reason unduly is to abase it. To place the human in rivalry with the divine, is to make it contemptible. Reason can never explain creation. Reason is limited and in need of faith because God is supreme.⁹⁵

God does not promise to remove every doubt, but He gives sufficient evidence as a reason for faith. The Bible strengthens the intellect⁹⁶ and is the norming source and standard for the reasons for our faith in Jesus.

We should know for ourselves what constitutes Christianity, what is truth, what is the faith that we have received, what are the Bible rules—the rules given us from the highest authority. There are many who believe without a reason on which to base their faith, without sufficient evidence as to the truth of the matter. . . . They do not reason from cause to effect. Their faith has no genuine foundation, and in the time of trial they will find that they have built upon the sand.⁹⁷

Summary. Correct interpretations of Jesus, Scripture and nature are never in conflict. For White, “God is one. His truth, all truth, forms a unity. . . . God is the source of all knowledge and all truth is a revelation of Him.”⁹⁸ However, not every theological

harmony is adequate because incorrect interpretations may be harmonized. Correct and harmonious interpretations must deal with the divine and human dimensions of God’s revelations. Because the special revelation of Scripture is divine, it is more accurate, authentic, attractive, true, inspired, ancient, comprehensive, wonderful, instructive, and interesting than any other book.⁹⁹ Because Scripture is also human, we should study the context, human authorship, literary form, and translation and textual variations of Scripture.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, there are divine and human dimensions in the revelation through Jesus. Also the divine revelation in nature includes human nature.

Correct and harmonious interpretations must also respect the hierarchy of Jesus, Scripture and nature. Divine revelation cannot be correctly evaluated by human ideas of science and theology. First, direct divine aid from Jesus is needed in order to understand science-theology relations. He is the Word in which our faith is anchored.¹⁰¹ Second, Jesus has given Scripture as the standard for theological interpretations of Jesus and nature. Our faith is anchored in the Jesus of Scripture. Third, Scripture recognizes nature as the widest context for theology. It is a false science which excludes any explanation other than by natural law. Also, it is a false theology which excludes insight from the light of nature. True science and theology involve a reasonable faith and a faithful reason which are based on the sufficient evidence which Jesus gives in Scripture and nature.

Evidence From Scripture

Seventh-day Adventists are often criticized for regarding Ellen White as a resource for theology. Some question how a theology illuminated by White may at the same time be faithful to the *sola Scriptura* principle. However, an *a priori* rejection of White’s ministry is a rejection of the Bible teaching on spiritual gifts.¹⁰² Further, White’s model for theology may be evaluated in terms of its faithfulness to Scripture.

Complementary Lights. Scripture depicts the revelation of God’s word in terms of the metaphor of light (Ps 119:105). First, the revelation of God—who is light (1 John 1:5), is His Word Jesus—who is the light of the world (John 1:1-14). Second, the light

of God's word shines in Scripture (2 Pet 1:19-21; Rom 3:1-2). Third, this light also shines in nature (Ps 19:1-6; Isa 6:3; Rom 1:20)—including human nature (John 1:9; Rom 2:14-16).¹⁰³ Jesus is supreme as the unique (*monogenous* John 1:14) and primary (*prototokon* Heb 1:6) Son of God. However, he brings many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). Similarly Scripture is a unique and primary revelation. However, it points to Jesus as the foundation of our faith (John 5:39) and includes nature in its scope (Col 1:15-20).

There is a sense in which nature is the widest context for theology. Nature travails for the revelation of the sons of God (Rom 8:18-26). However, sin has darkened human minds so that they do not perceive the light of general revelation in nature and special revelation in Scripture (Rom 1-3; 2 Pet 3:16). Therefore, Scripture is "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star [Jesus] rises in your hearts" (1 Pet 1:19-21). Indeed the path of the just is like a shining light that shines more and more [clearly] until the perfect day (Prov 4:18). This light of the glory of God in Jesus is manifest in the unity of the Church (John 16:14; 17:21-22; Eph 4:4-6, 8, 13). This light of the gospel according to Scripture (Rom 16:26) in the hearts of believers by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 4:3-6) is a foretaste of the full revelation of God's glory in nature (Rom 8:18ff).¹⁰⁴

Science in the Bible. The English word "science" appears only a few times in the King James Version of Scripture. Daniel and his associates are described as understanding "science" and "all wisdom." The same Hebrew words are used to identify God's gift of the knowledge of wisdom ((Dan 1:4, 17) which is related to salvation (Dan 12:3, 4, 10). This wisdom includes a knowledge of God's revelation in nature. The heroes of the book of Daniel were wise teachers (*maskilim*) who were skilled in the science of the Babylonians. Further, this book depicts the structure of the universe and of history.

The wider context of the OT also contains much that is relevant to science-theology relations. For example, there is a balancing of the divine transcendence which should not be imaged in worship (Exod 20:4-5) with the immanence of divine interaction in all aspects of the lives of His people (Isa 63:9). Divine redemption is presented as a matter of empirical fact in the context of a

cosmology of creation and fall (Gen 1-3) which may be compared and contrasted with other cosmologies. Wisdom is depicted as prior to and as active in the creation of the world (Prov 8). Clearly the OT encourages the theological interpretation of nature.¹⁰⁵

The English word science is used in the NT (KJV) where a warning is given concerning pseudo-science (*gnosis*). The same Greek word is used to refer to Christians as filled with "all knowledge" (1 Tim 6:20; 15:14). The immediate context of this epistle suggests that Christians are qualified to avoid a false theology of God (1 Tim 6:21). A closely related epistle teaches that Scripture makes us wise unto salvation and every good work (2 Tim 3:15-17).¹⁰⁶ In addition, the wider theological context of the NT and especially the Pauline epistles suggest that Christian's are also qualified to avoid a false theology of nature.

The issues of premodern science were raised in the Greek natural philosophy which influenced the culture to which Paul ministered. Apparently Paul was trained in both the Gentile and the Jewish schools (Acts 17:16-32; Tit 1:12; Acts 17; 22:3). As a result, there is a "thought world" connection between the terms science and theology and the Pauline terms: wisdom, philosophy, knowledge, and mind. Paul uses these terms in different ways in his complex and subtle rhetoric. Because of this, he is often interpreted contrary to his intended meaning (2 Pet 3:15-16) as one who rejected science. However, a careful contextual reading of Paul's writings provides insight on science-theology relations.¹⁰⁷

Sources of Revelation. In spite of the distortion caused by sin, Paul regards nature as a divine revelation. God's wrath is provoked by the suppression of the truth (Rom 1:18) which God gives of Himself in the world (1:19-21) and in human nature (2:14-15). This evil suppression of truth results from a futile reasoning and pretended wisdom which is actually foolishness and cannot comprehend God because it misunderstands His glory in the world (1:22-23). The solution to this foolishness is the righteousness of God, which is by faith alone (1:16-18).

Does this emphasis on "faith alone" mean "faith without reason?" Hardly! Faith is the antidote to the foolishness of sinners and is reasonable in the light of Christ.¹⁰⁸ For Paul, Christian knowledge is different from natural knowledge in its origin and

content. But revelation does use natural channels. Faith, like intuition, is the conviction of things not seen (Heb 11:1). The gospel is pragmatic: since you desire proof, Christ is powerful in you (2 Cor 13:2). There is also a place for the rational mind: let each one be fully assured in his own mind (Rom 14:5).¹⁰⁹

The Mind of Christ. Paul's discussion of the mind is very relevant to the issue of science-theology relations. Six Greek words from the Pauline epistles have been translated into English as mind. Five of these refer to factors common to all human beings: soul (*psuche*), opinion (*gnome*), thoughts (*noema*), dispositions (*phronema*) and intellect (*dianoia*).¹¹⁰ The sixth word (*nous*) is often used to indicate the seat of understanding and conviction: I will pray, sing and speak with my mind and understanding rather than in an unknown tongue (I Cor 14:14-19); Let each one be fully assured in his own mind (Rom 14:5).

This word (*nous*) is also used to indicate the content of understanding and conviction: Don't be quickly shaken from your mind (2 Thes 2:2). According to Paul, the content of the mind may be shaped by lusts, desires, appetites, and ambitions or by divine revelation. As a result, wisdom and spiritual perception, or the lack of these, focuses into a world view called a "mind." Human beings possess a world view that is vain, reprobate and fleshly: they walk in the vanity of their minds because of the hardness of their hearts (Eph 4:17); God gave them over to a reprobate mind (Rom 1:28); the fleshly mind is vainly puffed up (Col 2:18). However, world views may be changed and renewed: be not fashioned by the world, but be transformed by the radical metamorphosis (*anakainoo*) of your mind (Rom 12:2); be made young (*ananeo*) in your mind (Eph 4:23). Those who experience this miracle may say: we have the mind (*nous*) of Christ (I Cor 2:16).¹¹¹

The Natural and the Spiritual. How is the mind or world view of Christ relevant to the issue of science-theology relations? Paul uses the term "soulical" (*pseuhikos*) to identify the person with a natural mind. The term "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*) identifies one who judges everything but is not subject to the judgment of persons without the mind of Christ (I Cor 2:10-16). It is often assumed that the spiritual mind judges theology and the natural mind judges science. However, Paul does not separate the natural from the

spiritual in terms of dichotomy between special revelation in Scripture and general revelation in nature. Rather, the terms "natural" and "spiritual" are used to distinguish pseudo-science from true science.

Philosophy: Love of Wisdom. Paul regards so-called "natural knowledge" as being in opposition to the gospel of Christ. Hence his only use of the word philosophy consists of a warning: "beware lest anyone spoil you with philosophy" (Col 2:8). Paul is concerned about opposition to the claims of Jesus by some who advocate practices and teachings contrary to the truth of the gospel. In response to false philosophies of beguiling speech (2:4), empty deceit, false tradition, elemental spirits of the universe (2:8), false abasement, angel worship, visions (2:18), and self-made religion (2:23), Paul presents the antidote of the wisdom, knowledge and science of Christ.

Paul is not against true philosophy (*philosophia*) which is a search motivated by love (*philia*). Neither is he against the wisdom (*sophia*) which is the goal of that search. However, he rejects false philosophies (such as Greco-Roman philosophy, Hellenistic Judaism and Proto-gnosticism) which contradict the gospel. Paul's attitude to knowledge is made evident in many Bible translations and paraphrases. He rejects "hollow and delusive speculations, based on traditions of man-made teachings" (*New English Bible*); "intellectualism or high sounding nonsense" (*Phillips*); "false and shallow ideas based on man-made tradition" (*Translators New Testament*); and "secondhand, empty, rational philosophy" (*Jerusalem Bible*).

Similarly, Paul's rejection of worldly wisdom in his preaching to the Corinthians (1 Cor 2) does not imply the rejection of true science. The letter to the Corinthians is one of the best examples of the complexity of Pauline rhetoric. This church was divided into factions on the basis of a so-called superior wisdom which was actually foolishness. Paul rejects this pseudo-wisdom. In this letter, the meaning of knowledge or wisdom changes from one chapter to another. Mixing his categories, Paul refers to the Corinthians as filled with knowledge of Jesus (chapter 1), then as potentially subject to worldly wisdom (chapter 3), and finally, as full of conceit, bragging, fleshliness and immaturity which are part of worldly

wisdom and are morally and epistemologically undesirable (chapter 4). Paul is not denying the epistemological status of the knowledge of Jesus or its relevance to science. Rather he is contrasting it with pseudo-knowledge.¹¹²

In-Part Knowledge. Some are tempted to depreciate science because of 1 Cor 13: when the perfect (*to teleion*) comes, the "in-part" (*to ek merous*) will be abolished (v. 10). According to Paul, the in-part will be "abolished" in the same way that the childish is outgrown (v. 11), the indirect is replaced by the direct, and the puzzle or riddle (*ainigmati*) is solved (v. 12). Paul does not mean that partial knowledge should be despised. In-part knowledge is real knowledge (v. 12). It seems that while we wait for the more perfect day, we should combine our in-part knowledge of nature and our in-part knowledge of Scripture so that the light of Jesus may be more clearly seen.¹¹³

Cosmic Christ. The NT Gospels link Jesus and nature in the message of the Word of wisdom who created and enlightens everyone and became flesh revealing His glory (John 1:1-14). They also present the signs of nature which will be associated with the return of Jesus (Matt 24). Similarly, Paul depicts Jesus as the image of God who created, sustains and reconciles all things (Col 1:15-20). This is the gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ which leads to a knowledge of God's plan (*oikonomia tou theou*) for the world. The Creator chose Israel and proclaimed through prophets the coming of His Son who suffered, was resurrected and anointed with power, and who reigns until his enemies are all overcome and all Israel (Jew and Gentile) has been saved. Then Jesus will return to consummate the freedom of the children of God in the midst of a world freed from vanity (Col 1:25; Eph 1:10; 3:2, 9; Gal 4:4; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Rom 1:1-6; 9:5; 11:25-31; 15:8-9).¹¹⁴

Summary. While the English term science is rarely used in Scripture, the Bible world view is relevant to the issue of science-theology relations. God's supreme revelation is Jesus who is the light of the world. Scripture is the special revelation of light which leads to Jesus. Nature is a general revelation which provides the context for Jesus and Scripture. While sin has obscured the light of God's revelation in nature, Jesus unveils that light. He is the light

of Scripture and the light of nature who lights every person in the world (John 1:9).

While Scripture focuses on Jesus it includes nature in its scope. Emerson Shideler remarks that "the biblical account is as insistently empirical as any scientific record."¹¹⁵ Rolf P. Knierim concurs that the scientific aspect is as much a part of the Bible as the religious aspect is inevitable in science. The Bible speaks neither about God in isolation from the world nor about the world in isolation from God.¹¹⁶

There is massive evidence that the biblical writers were not only concerned with the knowledge of God but also with the knowledge of the world. Their knowledge of God's presence in the world became transparent through their knowledge of the world. That is the point where "science" became inevitable.¹¹⁷

Stuhlmacher documents how Paul's presentation of the gospel is based on the OT eschatological creation-tradition with its concept of a cosmic lawsuit. The benefit of the gift of justification through the righteousness of God is not only individual but cosmological. It is the realization of God's justice toward the world—a gift of presence and power toward the entire creation. In righteousness, God creates well-being and salvation in history and in nature.¹¹⁸ Paul's distinction between the natural and the spiritual refers to the false and the true rather to science and theology. He is against pseudo-philosophy and worldly wisdom which contradict the gospel. He is not against the study of nature. The study of Jesus, Scripture and nature is in-part, but in-part knowledge is real knowledge.

Divine revelation is the source of knowledge which is mediated through Jesus, Scripture and nature. In fact, the mind of Christ is a unique world view which is relevant to the study of nature. According to Abraham Kuyper, while naturalistic and theistic science are produced by two different minds, the history of their development has been intertwined from premodern times.¹¹⁹ Bruce Norman concludes,

Paul used some of the common cosmological terminology of the day to reach both Jew and Gentile. But he used the language with a different meaning. For him, Christ became the beginning and end of

cosmology. . . . Herein lies Paul's contribution to ancient and modern cosmology.¹²⁰

Conclusion

An Inclusive Model. In the inclusive Adventist model which is manifest in the writings of Ellen White, theology is the study of God as He is revealed in His word. Jesus, Scripture and nature are words of God and therefore are sources and standards for theology. Authentic theology recognizes the divine and human dimensions of, and the hierarchy among God's revelations. The divine human incarnation of Jesus is the supreme revelation. The divine-human inspiration of Scripture is a special revelation. Nature, including human nature, is a general revelation.

A Biblical Model. This model for theology is faithful to Scripture. *Sola Scriptura* means that Scripture has a unique authority as source and standard for theology. However, according to Scripture, its authority comes from Jesus who also works in nature. A theology of Jesus other than the Jesus of Scripture leads to the worship of antiChrist. But to put Scripture in the place of Jesus (bibliolatry) is as much a false worship as the worship of nature. We do not undermine God's revelation when we interpret Jesus, Scripture and nature in the light of each other. To do otherwise is to reject the plain teaching of Scripture.

Revelation and Theology. Revelation is not to be subjected to human standards. Rather, theology must be subject to revelation. It is important to distinguish between God's word and any human interpretation which can never be absolutely perfect. Only after the return of Christ will the full harmony between Jesus, Scripture and nature be revealed. Then the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Until then, even Adventist experience, reason and tradition must remain open to revision based on continuing study of the entire word of God.¹²¹

Science and Theology. Any effort to separate the issues of science and theology seems to involve intellectual suicide and obscurantism. Since one word of God does not contradict another, we should seek for coherence among our interpretations of Jesus, Scripture and nature. A lack of this coherence is a signal that we

have an imperfect comprehension of God's revelation. The words of Clyde Webster are applicable to science and theology.

[In the] conquest for knowledge and truth, [we should] not force all answers to come from a single source. Where multiple sources exist, examine the differences and then strive to find the harmony between them. Truth has many faces, comes from many places, and will withstand the tests of time.¹²²

Reason and Faith. While real answers to questions about truth do come from nature, this is not the basis of faith. It is futile to build a rational natural theology as a foundation for faith in Jesus.¹²³ The interpretation of nature should be an integral part of a theology grounded in the revelation of Jesus in Scripture. Carl Raschke correctly comments that "we do not need a new natural theology, but we are obliged to bring the study of 'nature' once more back into the arena of theological investigation."¹²⁴ Theology built on reason will fall because reason apart from God has limited usefulness. However, reason is a useful resource which we should not separate from faith. Rather we should exercise a reasonable faith and a faithful reason. Reason can be a work of faith which is faithful to God's Word. Faith is not a leap into the dark. It is a leap into the light of God!¹²⁵

Evangelistic Appeal. The gospel of Jesus—which is communicated in Scripture, and which we are called to preach—is a cosmic gospel. In the words of Ellen White: "A knowledge of science of all kinds is power, and it is in the purpose of God that advanced science shall be taught in our schools as a preparation for the work that is to precede the closing scenes of earth's history."¹²⁶

There are many . . . [who] are not fully informed in regard to the truth for this time; and yet . . . in every sphere of action they work on principles that God accepts. . . . Not all men forget God in their investigation of true science.

. . . . God . . . works for these He prepares the way for them to take the place of those who have been given a knowledge of Bible truth, but who have disappointed the Lord our Savior. These men will be true to pure, holy principles in their investigation of the laws which rule our world. . . . That they may obtain advanced light, God places them in connection with men [and women] of superior knowledge regarding His Word.¹²⁷

These words are not only relevant when witnessing to those who are specialists. As Philip Hefner points out, the content of science increasingly becomes a part of the understanding of all people. In fact, contemporary science is well on the way to producing a global village.¹²⁸ This is the context of the Seventh-day Adventist global mission. Adventists must no longer allow themselves to be mistaken for "provincial globalists" who are handicapped by a local world view.¹²⁹

A Double Challenge. George Reid has issued a double challenge to Seventh-day Adventists. First, we must continue to do theology in light of the fact that God is the central fact of the universe and that theology is in a sense a monitor for all knowledge. Second, we must continue to develop approaches which are responsive to contemporary values including those of science. He warns that if we fail, our unique world view which is so relevant to the contemporary scientific culture will be written off by others as irrelevant.¹³⁰

The task of witnessing to the harmony of science and theology is great. However, Jesus is the Creator of nature and the Author of Scripture. He is the Source and Standard for authentic Adventist theology. Let us accept *His* challenge to continue to develop Adventist theology on the sure foundation of Jesus and in harmony with the norming standard of Scripture and the normed standard of nature. All His biddings are enablings. In the light of Jesus, the light of Scripture and nature may be properly focused so that the whole earth may be lightened with the glory of God.

Endnotes

¹ Bengt Gustafsson, "The Current Scientific World View," in *The New Faith-Science Debate: Probing Cosmology, Technology and Theology*, ed. John M. Mangum (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1989), p. 1; Paul Tillich, *The System of the Sciences According to Objects and Methods* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1981).

Some of these views are a part of the accepted history of science. Others are even now competing in the marketplace of ideas. Even within a single science such as Physics, our present understanding of the laws of nature are not harmonized. In response to this fact, some scientists are searching for a grand unified theory (GUT) of physics that will unify the presently contradictory laws of the four fundamental forces—electromagnetism, the weak and the strong nuclear force, and gravity. See Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam, 1988); John Polkinghorne, *The Faith of A*

Physicist (Princeton University Press, 1994); David Lindley, *The End of Physics: The Myth of a Unified Theory* (Basic Books, 1993).

² Robert H. King, "Introduction: The Task of Theology," in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, eds., Peter C. Hodgson, Robert H. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 1; Maurice Wiles, *What is Theology?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); John P. Newport and William Cannon, *Why Christians Fight Over the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1974); Richard J. Coleman, *Issues of Theological Warfare: Evangelicals and Liberals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980).

³ Because of the semantic complexity involved, some theologians like Eta Linnemann prefer not to use the term science to denote "competent intellectual work in theology." See Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), p. 140.

Like the word science, the word nature is ambiguous. On the one hand, it may be used to refer to inanimate, animal, human and/or superhuman natures (i.e., angelic and divine nature). On the other hand it may be used to distinguish that which is determined by law and that which is free to determine itself and is therefore supernatural or above nature. See Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1877); Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980); William Alston, *Divine Nature and Human Language* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989); R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1945); Gordon Kaufmann, "Nature, History and God: Toward an Integrated Conceptualization," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 27 (December, 1992): 379-401; William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (New York: Macmillan, 1956); E. O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

⁴ According to the generally accepted definitions, "a natural science is a theoretical explanatory discipline which objectively addresses natural phenomena within the general constraints that (1) its theories must be rationally connectable to generally specifiable empirical phenomena and that (2) it normally does not leave the natural realm for the concepts employed in its explanations." See Del Ratasch, *Philosophy of Science* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 13; Norman Campbell, *What is Science?* (New York: Dover Publications, 1953); E. Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961); R. Giere, *Understanding Scientific Reasoning* (New York: Holt, Reinhart & Watson, 1979); N. Rescher, *Scientific Explanation* (New York: Free Press, 1970); M. Wartofski, *Conceptual Foundations of Scientific Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1968); G. Gale, *Theory of Science* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Karin Knorr-Cetina, *The Manufacture of Knowledge: An Essay on the Constructivist and Contextual Nature of Science* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981); Imre Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1972); Tito Arecchi, "Why Science is an Open System Implying a Meta-Science," in *The Science and Theology of Information*, eds., Wassermann, Kirby and Rordorff (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1992).

On methodological naturalism see Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); Stephen Jay Gould, "Impeaching a Self-Appointed Judge," review of Johnson's *Darwin on Trial* in *Scientific American* (July 1992): 118-20; Nancy Murphey, "Phillip Johnson on Trial: A Critique of His

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BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND MORAL AUTHORITY

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Much of the contemporary debate about the usefulness of Scripture in moral life is caused by the presuppositions held by the various contenders rather than from the contents of the Bible itself. These assumptions naturally impact on the questions of the accuracy of the ancient texts and their relevance for contemporary culture and the sinful human condition. In this essay I wish to show that the omission of some very basic day-to-day courtesies given to the interpretation of secular documents are frequently withheld from the interpretation of the Bible. As a result, the trust of the reader in the Word of God as a moral guide is often unduly shaken.

Interpretation Rests on Identification

If we chance upon an ancient letter and decide to interpret its contents, we need at least four pieces of information: First, who is its author? Second, who is its recipient? Third, what is the life situation of the recipient? And fourth, what are the writer's intentions or purposes for writing the letter? If the document is neither signed nor addressed, and if it is difficult to infer the situation of the recipient or the intentions of the author, then any attempt at interpretation becomes a guessing game. One interpretation will be as good or bad as any other, and the meaning of the same letter will vary drastically even if only one basic factor is changed by the interpreter.

For instance, if we conjecture that the letter comes from a

mother who wishes to reassure her son, a CEO (a chief executive officer in a large business) of her love, we will hear and note the words which fit that relationship, and our interpretation will be affected by it. If, however, we suppose that the son is a criminal in prison, and not a CEO, then, of necessity, we will emphasize different words and concepts and give the whole message an entirely different thrust.

When we come to the Bible, we are faced at the onset with an important decision. Either we grant the Bible sufficient trust and accept its claims about authorship, recipient, situation addressed, and the intentions of the Author, or we choose to alter or deny those claims. In the case of the latter, the interpretation will reflect our opinions and contribute to a large number of conflicting readings. This liberal approach to Scripture overlooks several crucial points.

The Bible's Self-Identification. The Bible explicitly articulates the four basic items of identification as can be seen in the following summarizations:

1. *The Bible is Autographed.* Its Author is God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, steadfast in love and faithfulness, ready to forgive sinners but intolerant of sin (Exod 34:6, 7). Because He is eternal (Jer 10:10), He is changeless (Mal 3:6). Because He has foreknowledge (Ps 139:1-6), He is a prudent and wise counselor (Deut 30:15-19). Because He is love (1 John 4:8), He is worthy of our obedience.

2. *The Bible is Addressed to Human Beings.* Humans are limited in ability and understanding (Job 42:1-3), unfit for autonomy (Jer 10:23), helpless in the face of death (Isa 40:6-8) and yet endowed with potential, precious in His sight (Ps 8:4, 5), and loved as a parent loves his/her children.

3. *The Bible Discloses Humanity's Helpless, Sinful Condition.* God knows human infirmities (Ps 103:13, 14) and measures all needs accurately (Isa 53:4-6). His letter of love addresses human beings in their helplessness. Every bit of advice and each commandment is scaled to reach down to the human plight and not to the level of some ideal, perfect state of being.

4. *The Bible Brings the News of Salvation.* While addressed to human beings marred by sin, God's Word is not at home in the sinful life. Like medicine it fits the condition; but it also works miracles

to change and heal (Heb 4:12; 2 Cor 5:17). Without it humans would remain in darkness about their nature, condition, and destiny. More importantly, they would remain ignorant of the great plan of salvation, of the victory over sin and death, and of their bright and happy eternal future.

With these four items of identification at hand, the reader can reconstruct the Author-recipient relationship, and the causal connection between the human predicament and salvation. The interpretation of Scripture need not follow the haphazard road of human conjecture as illustrated by much of 19th and 20th century theology.

The Challenge. To challenge the claims of any document may mean the critique arrogates a better knowledge of the matter than the document or the original author. The burden of proof lays heavily on those who challenge the identity of the Bible, however. It is a heavy burden indeed. Why should the insight of someone who lives two millennia after the composition of the document be more trustworthy than the testimony of those involved in the process? How can I doubt Peter's claim of inspiration when I did not have such an experience nor was I there to examine the phenomenon? Only if I set myself as a judge, and my wisdom as the final criterion, can I presume such a responsibility. Thus one presumes to affirm authoritatively what the writers of the Bible, and even Jesus, really had in mind, what they actually knew, or could not have known about certain subjects about which they wrote or spoke.¹ Inevitably the opinions on what could or could not be known vary with each attempt to gain insight. Such a task is an impossibility, even more so when trying to read the mind of those who lived thousands of years ago!

Is it so unreasonable then, to hear the Bible as it speaks? Is there more wisdom in trusting human insight into the mind of another, even when it becomes clear that the interpreter's goal is to arrive at conclusions which fit preconceived ideas? To listen intelligently, with courtesy and humility, will prove much more profitable even when faced with questions of biblical accuracy and relevance.

Charges Against Biblical Relevancy

The Issue of Biblical Accuracy.² The indictment of inac-

curacy in the biblical text strikes at the very core of the trustworthiness of Scripture as a moral guide. How can one rely on false information? It is alleged that there are evidences of a pre-scientific mode of thinking by biblical writers. This results in a vague, incomplete, and even misleading message.

The creation story is a case in point. Genesis 1-2:3 offers an account of the six-day creation of the world. How could the writers of Genesis know that? asks J. Barr. The fact is, he responds, they did not. They knew the legends and myths of the surrounding cultures, they had their own experience of nature around them, and they were immersed in the theological ethos concerned with differences made between plants and animals. From this background alone, not from inspiration or revelation by God, comes the Genesis story. The Bible never claims that God revealed the story to humans; therefore, He did not. For that reason creation did not happen as described in Genesis.³

But why not? What would it take for someone with a similar outlook to accept that "All Scripture is inspired by God"? First of all, we would need somewhere in Genesis 1 or 2 a statement such as "thus says the Lord" (so says J. Barr) or the narrative would not be credible. "Essential stories like the account of creation (Genesis 1) or Adam and Eve (Genesis 2 and 3) are told without any express insinuation that the words or the matter have been 'given' to the writer or divinely communicated at all."⁴

Secondly, the creation narrative must be in harmony with the 20th century scientific data.⁵ The findings of geology and biology confirm the development of living beings according to their species from lower animals, and not created by God as the writers of Genesis affirm. When it comes to such historical or factual information which could be considered accurate or inaccurate, the Bible has no "thus says the Lord,"⁶ which, apparently opens the possibility to interject a "thus says the human science," according to J. Barr.

Thirdly, the Bible lacks academic rigor, precision, and exhaustiveness. Its language is vague, indefinite, and confusing. Some expressions used betray a pre-scientific understanding of the nature of the universe. Heaven has no pillars, the earth does not rest on foundations, nor is it flat.

Barr suggests that the Bible cannot speak authoritatively outside the narrow concerns of theology.⁷

The above three expectations warrant a more extensive and detailed treatise than we can provide in a limited space.⁸ We can make only a few observations. In the first place, from where have these requirements for understanding Scripture originated? We wish to reaffirm our conviction that these expectations are an integral part of the presuppositions which the interpreter brought to the task a priori, and are not necessitated by evidence of falsehood in the text itself. That is, the reader has decided beforehand what could and what could not be true, and then has interpreted the text accordingly.

This has serious implications for Christian ethics. The Christian approach to moral life places the Bible in the position of ultimate authority. If, however, the meaning of biblical content is determined presuppositionally and a priori by the perspective of the interpreter, and if categories foreign to the Bible serve as criteria, then moral guidance faces some form of relativism as its only option. Then the decisions of serious moral consequence depend on the ideology of the reader who interprets (and there can be as many ideologies as readers).

However, there is another consideration. The biblical law of consequences (Gal 6:7), for example, pays no attention to the intentions and presuppositions of the interpreter. If someone decides that monogamy is equally legendary for him as the six-day creation is for J. Barr (this on the basis of some assumptions), and if this person decides not to respect the exclusiveness and sanctity of marriage, the consequences for adultery will follow notwithstanding. For that reason, precisely, many Christians strive to come to God's word ready to hear Him. Their experience, as well as the biblical promises and examples, show unequivocally that negative consequences follow closely the violation of the obvious meaning which comes from the pages of the Bible, and not from a meaning produced when a different mind-set is superimposed on the text.

It is common knowledge, of course, that we all have our assumptions and outlooks, and how difficult it is to be a perfectly open and unbiased reader. It takes a conscious and determined

effort to have at least a partial inner silence and to achieve a sufficient level of concentration so as to hear the Bible speak to us personally. While, these tendencies flash caution lights we must not give in to the temptation to impose our own ideology on the biblical text just because perfect objectivity cannot be achieved.

The difficulties which arise from apparent imprecision and the use of pre-scientific terms need not discourage us either. God's word can be trusted as a moral guide. Complete and absolute exhaustiveness and accuracy cannot be achieved even at the level of a science textbook.⁹ As the evidence shows, God has chosen to use several styles of writing rather than just one, namely, scientific, academic, and scholarly. The Bible was written for practical purposes. Scripture addresses human life in the total context of needs and struggles with the intention to guide humanity out of a quagmire of suicidal sinfulness. Information alone, no matter how rigorously exact and academically flawless, cannot encompass the totality of human existence, because it has limits as a tool of communication. God's agenda includes more than information alone, and more people than scholars.

The Issue of Relevance. At this juncture, our particular interest focuses on one aspect of the relevance of biblical teachings as they interface with human sinfulness. God's will, expressed in the commandments, examples, parables, and the life of Jesus looms high above any best-known human achievement. "You, therefore, must be perfect" . . . (Matt 5:48); "You shall be holy . . ." (I Pet 1:16); "Go, and do not sin again" (John 8:11), are well-known statements that defy realism. They often raise doubts as to the moral usefulness of Scripture. Why do such impossible, idealistic requirements exist? If God has inspired the biblical writers, and if He knows what fallible and fallen creatures can, and cannot do, then what good can possibly come from such pronouncements? How relevant are detailed instructions on driving a car or flying a jet when given into the hands of a child?

Christians have related to this issue in several ways. The divergences follow the presuppositions they hold as they approach the text. Those who reject these statements may be classified into two groups.

1. *Antinomianism.* Under the economy of grace, some argue,

such assertions need not be taken literally. These are vestiges of a law-centered behavior from Old Testament times. Our behavior matters little if we are in Christ whose perfection, holiness, and sinlessness became ours independent of what we do or do not do, provided we believe in Him.

2. *Situationism*. Others insist that love makes everything we do perfect, holy, and sinless. Even an outright transgression of any of the Ten Commandments, if premeditated with love as its norm and love as its end, is transformed into an act of courage and virtue.

Much has been written about both of these approaches to interpretation. Both antinomianism and situationism yield unsatisfactory moral results, and their faithfulness to the entire message of the Bible have been successfully challenged.

Those who accept the challenge of perfection, holiness, and sinlessness may also be identified broadly into two camps.

1. *Perfectionism*. At the opposite extreme from antinomianism stand those who argue that if God, who knows us, requires perfection, holiness, and sinlessness, then it means we can do it if we try hard enough. They subject their lives to severe discipline and austere control. Ascetics of all ages, Puritans, and Christians with a legalistic mind-set illustrate this group.

Much has been written on this issue as well, and more needs to be done. Our focus must center on another approach in order to understand the expressions of God's will in the Bible.

2. *Theological Relativism*. Many who accept the call to be perfect, holy, and sinless view these injunctions as mere statements of an ideal. Such goals they argue will never be reached. God did not intend to burden us with impossible demands. He only intends to motivate and orient our lives towards these lofty objectives. Even the life of Jesus serves only as a moral influence, as an example to see, but not as an example to emulate. We cannot be exactly as Jesus, and we must not presume such a possibility.

For example, God's will for us is to respect human life. We have no right to take it or to harm this precious gift of God. Abortion is not in harmony with the biblical message or with the sixth commandment. Pro-creative and sexual activities must be strictly reserved within the confines of a responsible Christian marriage.

This is the so-called "ideal will" of God. The Bible is clear on this subject.

However, we are reminded by the idealist that we live in a sinful world. We are sinners. God's "ideal will" cannot be practiced. Fortunately for us, His "ideal will" can be substituted, so the argument goes, by His "permissive will." We are told that He will overlook and graciously forgive our sins, and we must not be fearful of Him. As we consider our options we can count on Him, so that our plans, and the policies of the church, can reflect God's "permissive will" and not His "ideal will." The implication here is that God's "ideal will" may be irrelevant and out of place in our sinful state and condition.

Because He is a forgiving Father, and not an inflexible judge, it is argued that our lifestyle can also be flexible. We must anticipate His mercy and count on it in advance. Our sense of duty must be a sense of adjusted duty, not a sense which reflects a direct connection with His law. When we read "You shall not steal," we are advised not to interpret the statement to mean "Do not steal because you will face the consequences of your misbehavior." Rather, it is recommended that we factor in God's love and hear Him say: "Do not worry if you have to steal. I am not that particular."

This is definitely a more pleasant interpretation of the biblical content. It fits well into our comfortable, western lifestyle. However, an important question begs for attention: Is this reading coherent with the complete message of the Bible, or are we witnessing another attempt at superimposing a personal, private desire upon the text? Is it in harmony with the four basic identification points of the Bible, the points which we must respect in order to interpret its message aright?

Admittedly, several statements in the above reasoning ring true. For example, we do live in a sinful world, we are sinners, God's will does describe what appears to us now as an impossible ideal, and we are not Jesus the Messiah, the Savior of humanity. Furthermore, it is a beautiful fact that God forgives sins. Yet, we must examine the angle from which these truths are approached, as well as their partial understanding of them and/or selective applications.

1. We know we live in a sinful world, and not because mass

media made us aware of it or because scientific research has proven the fact. It is the Bible that affirms our sinfulness, and at the same time it claims its main function is to speak to human beings steeped in the self-destructive mode of living. And this is precisely the first important point. God's revelation of our sinfulness is not merely diagnostic, an attempt to explain our strange behavior. God's will in the Bible is tailored to fit us, our condition, our needs, and our hopelessness. It suits us like a medication matches a sickness, like an exercise corresponds with a heart condition, like a diet harmonizes with a cure. His will, in the Bible, does not concern sinless beings even as a medication does not pertain to healthy persons. Therefore, His will is most appropriate and eminently useful.

2. The ideal, nothing short of that, is desired by every loving parent for his/her children. A child, flying a jet may indeed be an absurd proposition. Spiritually speaking, however, the wonderful truth is that next to the child in the cockpit sits a flying Ace holding in His hands, securely and confidently, the identical controls. Such a prospect, far from being frightful and overwhelming, promises to be exciting and successful. Nothing, absolutely nothing, should be changed or omitted from those detailed instructions about flying, because He can fly us ideally. In fact, the so-called "permissive will" can only cheapen the experience, underestimate the Pilot, and ultimately miss the runway.

3. We cannot be Jesus. Only He can save us to the uttermost. He is the *monogenēs*, the one of a kind, the unique Son of God. While we cannot *be* Jesus, we can be *like* Him. "We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ . . ." (Eph 4:15). The ultimate goal of Scripture's ministry is to foster, to nurture Christlikeness, not just to require or expect it. The "mature manhood," the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13) is what we can grow into under the influence of God's Word.

It is presumptuous and conceited to trust and count on God's grace as we *plan to sin*. This was the essence of Christ's temptation atop of the temple (Matt 4:5-7). God's grace is abused when we insist on jumping into trouble, playing with sin, or actually sinning and then expecting Him to prove His love by providing us with a parachute.

Correct Interpretation: Faithful to Bible Data

Interpretation of Scripture must be an adventure in discovery, an exercise in humility, and an experience in spiritual growth if it is to provide moral guidance in the contemporary setting. Interpretation is discovery because God has revealed His will to us. He has said what needs to be said, and done what is necessary for our salvation. No additions or subtraction are permitted (Rev 22:18, 19), no inventions or alterations are required. Scripture is completed, signed, and delivered.

Interpretation must not generate or produce contradictory meanings. It must remain dependent and faithful to the existing text and the dynamic which comes from the Author-recipient relationship, as well as the Author's stance on relation to the recipient's life condition. An interpretation cannot say that *creatio ex nihilo* did not happen if the document states it did—and remain a valid interpretation. It is possible that a theologian, who prefers to think along today's scientific modes, presents a different theory of origins. That is a legitimate endeavor. However, when some alternate theory contradicts the Scripture and yet claims that the thesis is an interpretation of Scripture, then such behavior is misleading and reprehensible on moral grounds. It is also conceivable that someone may attempt harmonization between evolution and creation. Such an attempt is legitimate as well. But if the message of the Bible is thereby damaged or deformed, then such an activity cannot be called interpretation.

Interpretation of Scripture must be an exercise in humility.¹⁰ We come to its pages with open minds to learn, with attentive ears to hear, and with willing hearts to obey. The most erudite among us is a mere *school child* at the feet of God's Word. If we would meet Paul or Isaiah today, we could teach them a few things about the modern state of knowledge. In terms of learning they would be our students. However, when these persons write under divine inspiration the roles must be reversed.

If a scholar desires to subject the Scripture to the modern literary or historical analysis, treating the Bible as if it were like any other piece of ancient literature, such a work would be fascinating. But when such an exercise is completed and the data gathered, it would be hazardous to consider such findings as truth. The initial

presupposition limits the text to only one narrow mode of apprehending reality. The mere fact that the text can be studied with literary means as any other piece of literature does not make the scholar an authority over the Bible or the text an ordinary text. A presupposition has no power to change reality. To understand God's Word we must stand under it and be willing to be guided by it through our moral perplexities.

Finally, the interpretation of Scripture must be an experience in spiritual growth. The purpose for writing the Bible is the salvation of humanity (2 Tim 3:15-17). A faithful elucidation of its meaning makes the Word more accessible without weakening or diluting its content. If we change the principles of a healthy or a good life, we will reap the results. If interpretation strives to satisfy any other need than the need to overcome sin, such a work, no matter how rigorous, creative, and laudable, cannot maintain Scripture as a moral guide. Exegesis alone, even with the best hermeneutical apparatus, will produce distorted or partial results if the presuppositions guiding the research do not harmonize with the biblical claims, and the above mentioned identifying marks.

Endnotes

*Biblical citations are from *The Revised Standard Version*, 1946, 1952.

1 James Barr. *Beyond Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), pp. 132-138.

2 This issue has received comprehensive treatment by Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988).

3 Barr, pp. 132-134.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

8 Weeks, especially pp. 95-118.

9 In a college astronomy textbook we find such expressions as "sunrise" and "sunset" even though we all know that such terms are pre-scientific. See T. T. Arny, *Explorations, an Introduction to Astronomy* (Boston: Mosby, 1994), E4-0 and E4-1.

10 J. M. Templeton, *The Humble Approach* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981).

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CONSCIENCE

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The purpose of this study is to examine certain psychological views of conscience in the light of Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White. Our analysis will focus on certain critical dimensions out of which may emerge a particular Adventist view of conscience in harmony with Scripture. The clarification of an Adventist view of conscience is believed to be vital for the development of a systematic psychology in agreement with Scripture and Adventist principles.

A review of the psychological and theological literature suggests the following as major questions about conscience: What is conscience? What is its source? Is conscience innate in man, and does it unfold spontaneously after birth? Is man born only with the capacity for the development of conscience? Does the process of socialization determine the essence of conscience? Is conscience a transcultural phenomenon? How does a man's response to conscience affect his spiritual potential and his emotional health?

Until the 1950's, textbooks in psychology rarely, if ever, mentioned moral development or conscience. Psychology was trying to establish itself as a science, especially by using objective methods. Psychology's work was restricted to the more readily objectifiable areas of study rather than areas as elusive as conscience.

In more recent years, however, learning theorists, psychoanalysts, and developmental psychologists have developed techniques for the study of conscience and other aspects of moral development.

In 1968, the topic was considered of sufficient importance to

be made the central theme of a conference at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. This conference assembled developmental psychologists, psychiatrists, theologians, and clergymen of many denominations. (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1969).

Behavioral scientists and theologians *are agreed* that without the existence of conscience, "the human race would have bogged down in a hazardous course, and no kind of civilization would have been possible." (Knight, 1969) Such unanimous concord not only underscores the importance of our discussion, but suggests significant implications deriving from our understanding of and attitude toward conscience.

Unfortunately, while the behavioral scientists and theologians are unanimous in their agreement that the conscience is absolutely essential for the ultimate survival of the human race, they are not agreed on what the conscience is. In fact, they are not agreed on their answers to *any* of the questions posed at the beginning of this study.

What is Conscience?

Some of the world's most influential minds have wrestled with this question: Thomas Aquinas, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Hobart Mowrer, Jean Piaget, Lauretta Bender, Abraham Maslow, Lawrence Kohlberg, Raymond Cattell, to name a few.

How one defines conscience depends upon one's theoretical orientation, including his view concerning the nature of man and the role and purpose of God in man's behalf.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) initially defined conscience as "the internalized voice of the family," but later on as the "internalized voice of community." He saw conscience as punitive in function. Freud taught that a dominant conscience predisposes one to a neurosis. For Freud, the cure for neurosis required the weakening of conscience.

Hobart Mowrer (1971) questioned the validity of Freud's theory regarding the conscience and neurosis. The neurotic typically withdraws from people. But, if his neurosis indicates a dominant conscience and conscience is the internalization of the values of the

community, then the neurotic should be moving toward and identifying with society instead of withdrawing as he does.

Mowrer insists that neurosis is the result of blocking off the conscience from the id and the ego. Mowrer believed that only when conscience is heeded, will the neurotic be freed of his neurosis, and once again affiliate comfortably with the society whose norms it has internalized. For Mowrer, then, therapy consists of the therapist's alignment with the conscience of the individual to restore it to its normal function.

Furthermore, when Hobart Mowrer himself developed a neurosis and tried to find healing by weakening his conscience, he got worse. But when he worked at strengthening his conscience he got well! When he presented his views in an address to the American Psychological Association, they were not well received. However, he did become president of that Association!

Abraham Maslow ties conscience to the nature of man. He declares that "conscience is the voice of the inner nature of man which is basically good." For Maslow, then, therapy consists of facilitating the free expression of this inner self. If a person listens to his conscience, he will freely express his inner self, according to Maslow. (Incidentally, more and more Adventists are encouraging each other to freely express the inner self as a means of breaking loose from the bonds of legalism. Historically, however, Adventists have rejected the notion that the inner nature of man is basically good.)

Carl Jung, an early disciple of Freud, later developed his own independent theory of personality. He wrestled at great length with some of the difficulties encountered in the attempt to define conscience adequately.

He finally argued that conscience contains both *moral* and *ethical* factors. The moral factor reflects the admonitions of society. But the ethical factor is an inherited archetype and possesses a compelling authority that might be characterized as the voice of God. Note that for Jung, it is the compelling authority of conscience that characterizes it as the voice of God.

Erich Fromm considers this authoritarian nature of conscience as deriving from *parental* authority. He sees this as but a *preliminary* stage in the development of conscience. He states that

conscience can be either *authoritarian* or *humanistic*. According to Fromm, guilt feelings create dependency and form the roots of neurosis. Through humanistic conscience, an adult becomes his or her own father, mother, and child. Quoting from Erich Fromm, "*Fatherly conscience* informs us of duty and consequences based on reason and judgment. *Motherly conscience* offers loving and forgiving for self and others despite any offense" (Fromm, 1971). Finally, Fromm defines a healthy conscience as *the loving voice of care for ourselves*, as *the expression of our true selves*, and as *the expression of the essence of our moral experience in life*.

Jersild (1968) suggests that conscience may be only the voice of expediency or a sort of gadfly which merely prevents a person from enjoying what he knows he should not do, but often does not keep him from doing it.

On the other hand, Laretta Bender (1947), an expert in psychological measurement and individual differences, asserts that "conscience is formed by the deferring of the gratification of ones wishes. . . the psychopath has no conscience because he has never learned to defer immediate gratification of his wishes."

Developmental theorists like Erik Erickson emphasize that conscience development is largely dependent upon the development of trust in the infant. Erickson believes that a dependable regularity of parental caring develops trust. This dependable regularity also develops the infants sense of time. Because of this sense of time and trust, the child learns to defer the gratification of his impulses. (Note that Erickson agrees with Laretta Bender that learning to defer the gratification of ones impulses precedes the development of conscience.)

Two other developmental theories of conscience are worthy of note.

Jean Piaget has postulated two major stages in moral development, the transition between the two stages occurring about seven years of age. The first he called "heteronomous" and the second "autonomous."

According to Piaget, in the first stage the child judges the seriousness of offenses in terms of how much damage was done, regardless of the accidental nature of the event. In the second stage,

children judge the seriousness of the offense in terms of the *intent* of the offender.

For Piaget, *physical maturation* provides the *increasing capacity* for conscience development, and *learning through socialization* provides the *extent of conscience development*. If both provisions are met, it is assumed that the child will naturally develop his conscience.

Lawrence Kohlberg (1964) postulates six stages of moral development, with two stages characterizing each of three levels in the process of development. Kohlberg's theory suggests that physical maturation and learning determine the extent of conscience development according to a fixed sequence which moves from decreasing degrees of self-interest, which foster a relativistic conscience, to a selfless commitment to absolute rights, and finally to absolute principles of morality that are universal.

Many adults never achieve the higher levels of conscience development according to Kohlberg. For them, moral choice is based upon self-interest alone—the avoidance of pain, the enjoyment of pleasure, the approval of others. When the highest level is attained, Kohlberg sees the individual as being willing to die, if necessary, for the preservation of what he believes to be universal principles of right. He does what he believes to be right simply because it is right.

In summary, for Kohlberg conscience initially operates for self-interest, later for the welfare and rights of others, and finally for principle itself. According to Kohlberg many adults never achieve this final stage.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) taught that conscience is the bond between the principle of morality and the action that implements that morality—conscience is the bond between law and responsibility.

Raymond B. Cattell, probably the most cited contemporary psychologist, refers to conscience as being inner-driven rather than society-driven, and designates it as Factor G in his list of personality traits. For Cattell, the tendency to reproach oneself, to be guilt-ridden, is an entirely separate personality factor or trait, and is called Factor O, designated as primary anxiety. Anxiety neurotics are found to be high in Factor O, but low in conscience strength, designated as Factor G.

For Factor G, Cattell observes that "a core not unlike the Ten Commandments is found as a common denominator. . . ." It also brings a strong involvement in moral concerns of right and wrong. . . it best depicts the deeply rooted concern for moral standards, for persistence of effort, and, in general, that tendency to drive the ego and to restrain the id, which clinical theory has regarded as marks of the superego.

Referring to his test items that measure the strength of factor G, Cattell emphasizes "The proof of the nature of G is, in the last resort, not its item content, but the criteria with which it correlates. It correlates negatively with delinquency, sociopathic behavior, homosexuality, etc. It tends to be particularly low in psychopaths, criminals, and other groups who are characterized by low regard for conventional moral standards." (Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1970).

Drawing upon Cattell's research findings, Delhees concludes, "Therefore, from the standpoint of practical clinical use of these measurement findings, therapy (to cure neuroticism) should aim at building up the superego (conscience) rather than attempting to reduce anxiety and guilt feelings, as is often the practice in psychoanalytic therapy." (Cattell & Dreger, 1977).

Cattell and Gorsuch (1965) presented empirical data on the moral structure in societies themselves showing that *a general morality factor does exist extending across behavior in some 52 countries of quite varied cultures*. Although it varies in some social content, and the biblical Ten Commandments are certainly not the explicit core in all the earth's religious traditions, yet the necessary moral conditions for societies to cohere and live generate a sufficiently basic similarity of prohibitions. Hence, as these investigators show, "there is a single factor across these countries loading high (negatively) on syphilis death rate, illegitimate births, death rate from alcoholism, and various basic crime incidence rates" (Cattell and Gorsuch, 1965).

Cattell accepts the Freudian theoretical labels *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. However, he has suggested a model in which the ultimate integration of the harmonious personality occurs when the ego and superego become one. This is a departure from Freud who leaves the two structures always separated.

Nicolas Berdyaev clearly departs from the notion that conscience is of social origin. He declared that conscience is the "spiritual, supernatural principle in man and it is *not of social origin* at all. . . Conscience is human nature at the depth at which it has not completely fallen away from God, but has preserved its connection with the Divine world" (Berdyaev, 1960, pp. 59, 167-168).

Note how brilliantly he argues his position. He says,

Moral life is intertwined with the social, and man's moral experience has social significance. But the first source of moral life is not social. The moral act is first and foremost a spiritual act, and has a spiritual origin. Conscience is not instilled into man by society, although society does affect conscience. Society is an *object* of moral valuations and cannot be the *source* of them. *Customs and manners have a social origin and are the result of social sanctions, but they are not moral facts*. . . Conscience is that aspect of man's inmost nature which comes into contact with God, is receptive to His message and hears His voice. . . Conscience may be repressed, hidden and perverted, but it is connected with the very essence of man, with the divine image and likeness in him. . . Conscience is the organ of perception of the religious revelation, of goodness, righteousness and truth in its entirety. It is not a special department or function of human nature, but the wholeness of man's spiritual being, its center or its heart in the ontological and not in the psychological sense of the term. . . Conscience is the spiritual, supernatural principle in man and it is not of social origin at all. It is rather the perversion and confusion of conscience that is of social origin. Conscience is human nature at the depth at which it has not completely fallen away from God but has preserved its connection with the Divine world. Repentance and remorse are only possible because man has a conscience that is not irreparably damaged. Conscience is the meeting point of freedom and grace. What theology describes as the action of grace upon the human soul is the awakening of its depths, the recollection of its depths, the recollection of the Divine source of life. Repentance is the experience of pain and horror at the disharmony between my present life and the memories of the true life for which I was created and from which man fell into this world of sin and sorrow (Knight, 1969, p. 5-6).

The Meaning of "Conscience" in Scripture

One definition difficulty frequently encountered in the litera-

ture stems from the tendency to equate morality and conscience. The etymological definition of morality derives from *mores* or social customs of the group.

On the other hand, the expression "conscience" is derived etymologically from the Latin verb which means "to know with." It has a corresponding linguistic root in several other languages. Thus in Latin it is *conscientia*; in Greek, *suneidesis*; in Norwegian, *samvite*; and in Swedish, *savete*. All mean "to know with." It appears that by definition, at the very least, conscience is a knowing, a conscious experience.

Regarding the Greek meaning of *suneidesis*, it is interesting and informative to note that in 1 Peter 2:19, the King James version translates the phrase *suneidesis theou*, "conscience toward God": For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." The NIV translates the same expression with "conscious of God". Thus we read, "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God." Either rendering is grammatically correct.

A review of Scripture reveals that the word "conscience" does not appear in the King James Version of the OT, though its nature and function are referred to several times. In the NT the word itself is used many times, and an examination of its usage will clarify its nature and function, its source, and how conscience is modified by one's response to it.

The NT speaks of a good conscience (Acts 23:1), a pure conscience (2 Tim 1:3), a wounded conscience (1 Cor 8:12), a weak conscience (1 Cor 8:7), a defiled conscience (Titus 1:15), a purged conscience (Heb 9:14), an evil conscience (Heb 10:22), and a seared conscience (1 Tim 4:2).

According to Scripture then, the conscience can be good, pure, wounded, weak, defiled, purged, evil, or seared. And when it is seared, it is cauterized or burned out as the Greek suggests. It is insensitive. It no longer responds.

In using these adjectives, the Scriptures are in each case focusing on one of three ways of defining conscience:

1. A physical site or cluster of nerve cells in the brain.

Such is the case in 1 Timothy 4:2 which warns against a seared conscience. This is a reference to rendering insensitive a physical

area in the brain. The Greek word for *seared* in this verse is *kauteriazō* from which we get the English word *cauterized* or charred.

Ellen White writes of the brain nerves as the only medium through which heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life (2T, p. 347).

Psychologist J. M. R. Delgado, while at Yale, invented a transeiver about the size of a twenty-five cent piece. He implanted it under the scalp, but on the outside of the skull of a fighting wild bull. With a remote control gadget similar to what we use to control our TV sets, Delgado would send radio signals to stimulate different centers in the brain. When the septal cells were stimulated, the bull was especially affectionate and would seek affection. When the amygdaloid cells were stimulated, the bull would go into a fighting rage. If Delgado could communicate with the brain cells of a fighting bull in an arena while sitting on the bleachers, I am sure God has no difficulty communicating with our brain cells!

Ellen White alludes to a physical set of brain nerves when she admonishes, "Keep the conscience tender, that you may hear the faintest whisper of the voice that spake as never man spake." Ellen White is here referring to keeping a set of brain cells responsive to the faintest communication of our Lord.

Some years ago, my wife and I visited with the late Dr. Wilder Penfield, world-famous brain surgeon who by stimulating different surfaces of the open brain resolved the mysteries associated with epileptic seizures. Dr. Penfield shared with us a very significant finding. He found that every time a brain cell responded when stimulated, the membrane of that brain cell became increasingly tender and responded more readily to the next stimulation!

In Romans 2:14, 15 we read "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do *bynature* the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their *conscience also bearing witness*, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

God speaks to that special set of nerves in the brain, even the brain of the Gentiles who have not heard a gospel preacher and do not know about the law of God! Conscience is a special area of the

brain that God has reserved for Himself! He speaks to that area. There is evidence that this special area for conscience is in the frontal lobe near the will center with which we exercise the power of choice! Let us keep the conscience area tender, so that we can hear the faintest whisper of Him that spake as never man spake!

2. Sometimes, when speaking of conscience, the Scripture refers to the *felt experience of conviction* (for good or evil, weak or strong).

Hence, 1 Corinthians 8:12 speaks of a *weak* conscience, or in 1 Timothy 1:19 of a *good* conscience, or in Hebrews 10:22 of an *evil* conscience. Ellen White admonishes, "Do not stop to argue the case with your *weak* conscience" (*CH*, p. 587).

To some people the voice of God comes in very faintly. The brain nerves don't pick up the signals very clearly. The experience of conviction is weak!

"Light comes to the soul through God's word, through his servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit, but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned" (*DA*, p. 322).

A good conscience is an approving conscience, a conscience that makes us feel good. When we obey our conscience we feel good! An evil conscience is a condemning conscience, a conscience that makes us feel bad. We feel sinful, wicked, evil, when we disobey our conscience.

3. And thirdly, sometimes when Scripture speaks of conscience it is referring to a *still, small voice*.

"Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it. . .'" (*Isa* 30:21).

"Holding the mystery of the faith in a *pure* conscience" (1 Tim 3:9). A *pure* conscience is uncontaminated by other voices.

Ellen White writes "Conscience is the voice of God heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted the Spirit of God is grieved" (*5T*, p. 120).

What is the conscience? The Bible says the conscience bears witness (Rom 2:15), testifies (2 Cor 1:12) and convicts (John 8:9). This is the same function assigned the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-14).

Can we put all of the references to conscience in Scripture and

in the writings of Ellen White together in a comprehensive definition? Let me suggest, by way of summarizing, the following definition of conscience:

Conscience is the voice of God that brings conviction by privately addressing or sensitizing a physical site or cluster of nerves in the human brain.

Conscience is the voice of God. It is the voice of God convicting us. Conscience is God's special, private area of our brain responding to God's voice and bringing conviction to our inmost mind! When the felt conviction is strong, it can radiate throughout the entire brain and body. Current brain research is informing us that brain activity in the frontal lobe typically affects every cell throughout the body.

Rather than the internalized voice of society, the voice of inherited archetypes, or the voice of human nature, conscience is here defined as the voice of God perceived by fallen human nature. True, the perception is often faulty, but for the person who chooses to know and do the will of God (John 7:17), God promises to continue speaking until the perceptions and the character are perfected (Phil 1:6).

The universality of conscience is assured in the following Ellen White statement: "Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, and a desire for goodness, exists in every heart" (*ED*, p. 29).

Parenting That Strengthens the Conscience

Our generation is producing children without a conscience. The psychopathic personality is multiplying at an alarming rate. Christian families need to practice parenting styles that help our children to develop strong consciences. Here are the major ingredients of parenting that help develop strong consciences in our children:

1. Be dependable and regular in supplying the physical needs of your children, beginning in infancy. If you supply these needs on a schedule, and not on the infants' demand, you will develop their sense of time, their trust, and their ability to defer the gratification

of their impulses until a later time. This is essential for the development of conscience.

2. Practice what you teach. Modeling is the best teacher. If you are consistent with your verbal teaching, the child's mind will connect the concrete example to the abstract principle.

3. Teach them to practice self-denial. Recall that it was Lauretta Bender who said "conscience is formed by the deferring of the gratification of one's wishes. . . the psychopath has no conscience because he has never learned to defer immediate gratification of his wishes."

We have also previously noted that Erickson agrees with Lauretta Bender that learning to defer the gratification of one's impulses precedes the development of conscience. When Jesus extended the call for disciples He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24). It seems clear that self-denial prepares one for following "the voice of one that spake as never man spake."

Ellen White states in repeated instances that by one's attitudes and habits of behavior he can either weaken or strengthen the conscience, sensitize or dull it, purify or defile it, preserve or pervert it, quicken or sear it, wound or heal it, clarify or confuse it, enlighten or deceive it!

With the intellect one learns what is right; with the will he chooses; and with the conscience his words, feelings, actions, and motives are judged. The function of conscience is to prod us to do the will of God. Often our faulty learning, weakened will, or overpowering emotions will contaminate our perception of the pure will of God.

But if we choose to know and do the will of God (John 7:17), God will teach us His will. As we walk in the light we do have, God increases the light. He enhances the clarity of the path to walk in (Prov 4:18). God will continue to speak until our perceptions and our character are perfected (Phil 1:6; Hos 6:3).

Part of our learning is culture determined. Part of it is divinely determined. Furthermore, God monitors man's learning. Our errors in learning will eventually be corrected by God's Spirit as we obey our conscience's demand that we do the will of God.

Both the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White teach that

conscience can be strengthened or weakened by one's attitude and response to its workings. But by far the overwhelming emphasis is upon man's need to heed the conscience (as the medium through which God directly communicates to man), enjoining him to do what he knows to be right. Even when the content of conscience is in error, if it is the best light the individual has, he is to follow it (John 15:22; Jas 4:17; 1 Cor 8:7-13).

Let us note in this connection that conscience functions in the same way for everyone regardless of cultural upbringing, unless it be the psychopath who appears to have no functioning conscience whatsoever. Nevertheless, the judgments of conscience are specific to each individual. They concern the individual only, and no one else. Hence, I should not seek to compel others to accept the judgments of my conscience. Instruct, yes. Compel, no (4T, p. 62; EV, p. 216; CG, p. 429; TM, p. 477; TM, p. 208; TM, p. 295; 9T, p. 234).

I want to appeal to all of us: **BE TRUE TO YOUR CONSCIENCE!** Be quick to obey it!

Be diligent and faithful in your study of the Bible with a mind seeking the will of God. This will sensitize your conscience. (CT, p. 357). Constant contact with God's Word quickens or makes alive your conscience (7T, p. 195). Be faithful in much praying. Prayer keeps the conscience sensitive (3T, p. 373). Constantly pray for the Holy Spirit's work on your conscience. The Holy Spirit sensitizes your conscience (3BC, p. 1150.)

When Martin Luther stood before the tribunal at the Diet of Worms he was on trial for his faith. He was pressed to recant, to renounce his convictions. If he refused, he knew he would be burned at the stake. In that momentous decision point, Martin Luther declared:

"My conscience [is] bound by the word of God. I *cannot and I will not retract*, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen." (GC, p. 160).

Soon, very soon, if we live, we will all be required to renounce our faith or suffer death. God help us to stand as did Martin Luther. We can stand then, only if we have made it a practice before then to be true to conscience.

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ETHICS BASED ON THE CONCEPT OF DOMINION IN GENESIS 1:26-28

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Apart from Jesus' use of the Genesis creation story to establish ethical standards for marriage (Matt 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12), and apart from Ellen White's osteal ethics of marriage equality,¹ there seems to be very little effort to ground ethics in Genesis 1-2. This may be due to the increasing belief in the mythical nature of Genesis 1-2.² It may also be due to the almost nonexistent role of the OT in the theological structure of many theologians or churches.³ We are thus confronted with the problem of whether Genesis 1-2 can be used to ground ethics and the problem of how one's interpretation of Genesis 1-2 affects the resulting ethics.

The purpose of this article is to critically survey the use of Genesis 1-2 as a ground of ethics. In particular, we will focus on the issue of human dominion over nature. A survey of *positions* on the ethics of dominion (as published in some Presbyterian sources) will provide the focus for our study. Likewise, the response of a Jesuit scholar to these published statements will be used to aid a brief, critical, and exegetical evaluation of these viewpoints.

Little has been done to establish a meaningful connection between Genesis 1-2 and ethics. It appears to be a virgin field. Apart from the Presbyterian/Jesuit exchange just mentioned, there is almost nothing in this area of study. With the role that the doctrine

of Creation plays in Adventist theology, the relationship between creation and ethics should be a topic of great interest.

In this article, *continuing creation* will refer to the view that creation is a continuous process (somewhat evolutionary in appearance) in which the work of creation is turned over to man through the gift of technology.⁴ *Evolution*, will refer primarily to the Darwinian concept. *Eugenics* refers to attempts to genetically improve humanity through various means of procreative control.⁵ Our study will be limited to exploring the Presbyterian position, the Jesuit scholar's response, and to a critical analysis.

Special thanks are given to the Lake Michigan Presbytery in Kalamazoo, Michigan for its help in identifying the publication containing the Presbyterian documents central to this discussion. The Presbytery specifically requested that it be made clear that the positions of these documents (approximately a decade old) are no longer held. A more moderate position has since been adopted.⁶ It is not my purpose to cast the Presbyterians in a negative light. Their work is simply the most convenient means of presenting a particular position. It is not the source or proponents which is of interest for this study, but the position itself as found in these historical records.

"Let Them Have Dominion": Ethics of Dominion and Survival

Social Statements of the Presbyterian Church. In 1983 the Presbyterian Church held its 95th General Assembly. Part of the outcome of this assembly was the production of two social statements, "The Covenant of Life and the Caring Community" (hereafter referred to as "Covenant of Life"), and "Covenant and Creation: Theological Reflections on Contraception and Abortion" (hereafter referred to as "Covenant and Creation"). Both documents were published in the minutes of the assembly in consecutive order (with "Covenant of Life" being first), and with a common introduction.⁷

The development of the "Covenant of Life" and "Covenant and Creation" statements was the result of a four year effort by the Advisory Council on Church and Society, an internal committee of the General Assembly. In 1979, the 191st General Assembly requested this council to study the implications of genetic research and

human engineering. The Advisory Council in turn, appointed a task force that produced a significant "resource issue of *Church and Society* magazine [a Presbyterian publication] entitled 'Genetics, Health, and Personhood' (Sept.-Oct. 1982)."⁸

This work of the Advisory Council, culminating in the magazine publication, forms the essential foundation for both the "Covenant of Life" and "Covenant and Creation" statements. "Covenant of Life," being the first report, is the more significant of the two when viewed in light of the purpose of this article. It sets the theological tempo for both documents.

Covenant of Life: Continuing Creation. "God is the God of history and historical events are vehicles for divine revelation," the opening words tell us.⁹ This statement may well be true. God may certainly make use of historical events to reveal His will or Himself to us. However, it seems that this statement could mean something different than this simple truth. It could also be construed to mean that the flow of history, such as in technological development, is automatically considered to be a divine revelation. Then we end up with the potential for new, "historical" revelations to impact our view of Scriptural revelation instead of Scripture affecting our understanding of historical events.

Taken far enough, this belief could lead to radical reinterpretations of Scripture in the light of our "historical events," for example, our scientific advancements, etc. The question comes, "How do the authors of this document understand this opening statement?" The key to answering this question is found in certain statements regarding the role of humanity in the creative processes.

Options for human choice-making at the beginning of life are many, offering persons the opportunity to be *co-laborers with God* in the development of their families. . . . While abortion may be a morally responsible choice *and must remain available*, it cannot become ordinary.¹⁰

Abortion seems implied as a means of co-laboring with God in the development of one's family. On the other hand, there are balancing statements warning of the potential for "abuse and dehumanization" as well as an admonition not to allow genetic research to turn into a form of idolatry in the search for the "perfect man."¹¹ Nevertheless, both genetic research and abortion are im-

plied to be viable methods in human collaboration with God in the development of the family. Thus eugenics seems possible as a means of collaboration with the divine. These views would seem to indicate that the creators of this document have a more radical understanding of historical events as vehicles of divine revelation. The clincher now appears:

As Presbyterians, we welcome the challenges that cause us to reexamine the boundaries and descriptions of our faith. *Scientific research has revealed* to us that *creation is not fixed, but ongoing*; God calls us to be involved in the process. We behold God as the initiator and director of the process of continuing creation. Old securities are now gone; new insecurities appear; hope and faith remain.

These recommendations are a *call to venture forth with God* out of the already into the not yet.¹²

Notice that the verbal form of "revelation" is used of science. This clearly ties into the opening statement that historical events are vehicles for divine revelation. Thus we find here the affirmation that scientific research is part of revelation, for scientific research is said to "reveal." What does it reveal? It reveals that creation is not fixed, or finished as Genesis 1 says, but rather is an ongoing (and assumably progressing) process, a process that God calls us to participate in. It is a process that God initiates and directs but with which humanity is intimately involved.

As part of this process, this document (as well as "Covenant and Creation") gives strong support to genetic research and counseling, and sees abortion as a justifiable option in light of genetic counseling (for example, one can—and maybe should—abort a genetically defective fetus to prevent suffering for the fetus-turned-child and the family).¹³ Therefore, genetic technology, abortion, and the possibility of eugenics are implicitly included as legitimate aspects of continuing creation.

In short, we are on the borders of theological justification for eugenic-like activities. "Scientific undertakings are imbued with moral and ethical values and are central to living under the Word of God in contemporary society."¹⁴

Ethics of Dominion. In "Covenant and Life," the concept of continuing creation is augmented with a very subtle dose of the concept of dominion over nature. There is one major section head-

ing entitled, "Genetic Choices and the Ethics of Dominion."¹⁵ This title apparently is an allusion to Genesis 1:26, 28, but not necessarily so. When one views creation as an ongoing process, the immediate supervision of which has been delegated to man by God, one naturally would tend to have a very high view of that dominion. (Ironically, this high view of dominion would seem to depict God as an absentee landlord, which in turn adds weight to the concept of human dominion, and an endless, increasing cycle is born.)

It is in the name of exercising dominion that genetic research on the fetus is encouraged, and abortion of genetically "defective" fetuses is considered. In the name of dominion and continuing creation, research and development in science is to be guided by the following human values: "survival, enhancement of life [that is, quality of life], justice and equity of access [to the various technologies]."¹⁶ The ethics of dominion have produced an ethics of survival and life quality, an inherently consequentialist form of ethics.¹⁷ That which enhances life quality and survival is good. Good is determined by results alone.

Covenant and Creation. This document follows immediately on the heels of "Covenant of Life" and draws on the themes of continuing creation and dominion. Man's responsibility to care for God's world, the care for creation, and the stewardship of life are all prominently emphasized. Contraception, abortion, and genetic technology are all related to the exercise of this care over creation. In what seems to be a magnificent oxymoron, abortion is considered to be an aspect of the stewardship of life! The statement continues:

Abortion can therefore be considered a responsible choice within a Christian ethical framework when serious genetic problems arise or when resources are not adequate to care for the child appropriately. Elective abortion, when responsibly used, is intervention in the process of pregnancy precisely because of the seriousness with which one regards the covenantal responsibility of parenting.¹⁸

Again we notice the line of reasoning that man's position in continuing creation and his position of dominion justifies termination of pregnancies. This dominion over pregnancy is to be utilized to terminate the genetically inferior or the economically inconvenient. The high view of dominion, and the virtual autonomy of man from God in exercising it can be further seen in the assertion

that while some of these types of decisions are difficult, and there are no easy answers, we are assured by the gospel of God's forgiveness, even if we misuse our freedom.¹⁹ As long as the intent is good, we can presume on the forgiveness of God. This is an extremely high view of human dominion. It seems to forget the famous saying that, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

These views of continuing creation and dominion are the final result of a theological process initiated earlier as we have seen. To bolster this position, so as not to create a straw man, we will now go back to the three consecutive articles in the magazine *Church and Society* which provide more detailed support for this view of human dominion and further draw out the ethical implications of continuing creation and dominion. We will also see that survival of the "species" is a strong motivating ethical factor.

Church and Society Articles

The Optimistic View: Part One. In "Ethical Options in the New Genetics," Peter Browning depicts three positions or reactions to the potential uses of genetic technologies:²⁰ the "Optimistic," the "Pessimistic," and the "Moderate."²¹ The optimistic view encourages continued development of genetic technologies, for it has great faith in the ability of human beings to use technology wisely. Joseph Fletcher is cited as a "spokesman for this view." Browning cites Fletcher as supporting this optimism on two grounds:

First, that humans are rational and free creatures who may use their power to control nature, and second, that genetic intervention is morally justified because it produces the "greatest good" for society.²²

Browning connects the first principle in this Fletcherian concept of control with Genesis 1:28 and asserts, with Fletcher (who makes no reference to Scripture in the materials I read), that man is "obliged" to exercise his rational choice and to no longer submissively trust the random workings of nature in human reproduction and genetics. "This attempt to influence heredity [through genetic technology] is not a foolish desire to 'play God,' but a rational exercise of *dominion over creation*."²³

At this point, Browning moves from the dominion argument to the consequentialist argument of what produces the greatest

good for society. For this reason, we will turn to the second of the three articles, for the further development of the dominionist position, based on Genesis 1-2.

In his article "Bio-Ethics: A Theological Frontier,"²⁴ Carl G. Howie also cites Genesis 1:28 to establish man's dominion over creation. Man is to subdue and dominate the earth and its creatures. Howie couples the passage with Genesis 2:15 which notes that God put man in the garden to till and keep it. Howie interprets this second passage to mean that God gave humans "the role of maintaining and changing the habitat."²⁵ Howie continues in this line of reasoning, asserting that interference with or reshaping creation is not forbidden. In fact, he sees the Genesis texts as calling humanity to "use the raw material of nature and of life to make creation better. . . to alter creation by intervention."²⁶

Howie observes that some object to this position, asserting that creation was completed in a specified span of time according to Genesis [2:1,ff.] and that it was called good and complete. Howie responds by stating that the more pervasive biblical theme is one of creation as a continuous process. He notes the description of God creating new heavens and a new earth (an apparent allusion to Isaiah 65:17). John 5:17b ("My Father is working still, and I am working," RSV) is quoted as evidence. The book of Revelation as a whole is cited, and Paul's comments about the creation being in turmoil (Rom 8) are mentioned on the grounds that this kind of suffering and turmoil is not God's intent. Paul is interpreted as characterizing the turmoil as birth pangs for that which is not yet.²⁷

The *Imago Dei* is the next support given by Howie for human dominion. His reasoning gets a little foggy, but his major point is that our being in the image of God uniquely qualifies us to be "consciously involved in the creative process with God." What is this creative process directed toward? "Theologians like Leslie Dewart . . . insist that the human person is a self-creating person."²⁸ Thus, the image of God seems to be understood as the functional use of man's creative genius in cooperative creation with God, including the application of that ability towards the development of the human race.

This development must be wrought by decision making that finds its guidance both from abstract laws and principles as well as

by evaluating the consequences. The result is that Howie affirms the sacredness of life as a divine gift and not as an emanation from the divine. Thus innocent life must be protected. But on the other hand, issues of genetic engineering, therapeutic and selective abortion, and other issues, raise new questions about the sanctity of life for all religious people.²⁹ The concept of human dominion that makes man co-creator with God in the process of continuing creation leads to a stunning conclusion:

*The gene pool is our ultimate heritage, and we have a responsibility to keep and pass on this biological heritage, in better shape if possible, to succeeding generations. Far from being forbidden, to be involved in the realm of life would, at least for some, be seen as a duty. So life is extraordinary, a precious stewardship which we are to protect and to improve in quality, both for individuals and the common good.*³⁰

In the name of dominion, Howie and Browning have supplied a theological justification for a eugenical mentality. Man is to apply his genetic technology to manage the human gene pool as part of his dominion and stewardship. Browning's slant in this direction is not so readily apparent after only discussing the first principle of Fletcher, namely that man must exercise control over nature, justified by Genesis 1:28. We now return to Browning's article and continue with the second aspect of the optimistic response to genetic technology.

The Optimistic View: Part Two. Browning's depiction of the second principle of Fletcher's, that genetic intervention is morally justified because it produces the greatest good for society, will be quickly summarized, since it is simply an application of the dominionist ethic through a consequentialist approach. In short, the Fletcherian ethics would allow for the possibility of compulsory genetic screening of fetuses for genetic defects. "Therapeutic" abortion is affirmed as desirable when the fetus is diagnosed with a "serious" birth defect. This abortion is justified in that it is thought to produce the greatest good for the greatest number of people—which is exactly the definition of utilitarian ethics. A "quality of life" ethic replaces the "sanctity of life" ethic. Physical existence is not sacred in and of itself. Serious genetic abnormalities may require "cured" patients not to have children. Fletcher is depicted as not being beyond permitting some social control in human

reproduction for the "common good." Positive genetic programming is an option³¹ (known as positive eugenics).³² Fletcher is said to be unconvinced by skeptics who assert that humans are not wise enough to know which genetic traits to create.³³ My reading of Fletcher makes these allegations entirely believable.³⁴

The Pessimistic View. The mention of skeptics brings us to the pessimistic response to the capabilities of genetic technology. Paul Ramsey and Leon Kass are cited as representatives of this position.³⁵ Since the argumentation is not Genesis based, I shall only briefly summarize.

The essential foundation of the pessimistic response is the basic sinfulness and finitude of man, and the concern for "covenantal fidelity" to individuals (that is, individual life is sacred). The basic sinfulness and finitude of man is certainly implied in his fall as recorded in Genesis 3, and is implied by his creatureliness as well. Man by nature is not seen as trustworthy or wise enough to manage genetic technology. The negative consequences of genetic research are potentially worse than the "cure".

Finally, difficult questions arise over the probable sacrifice of semi-human, laboratory creations³⁶ in the experimentation process. The overall concern is that absolute dominion for man moves him from the position of creature into the divine role of Creator. Man thus ends up playing God.³⁷ In short, the pessimistic view is worried about what Browning calls the "slippery slope effect."³⁸

The fear is that acceptance of, for example, aborting fetuses with Downs Syndrome, could eventually lead to the abortion of fetuses for any unpleasant reason. As James Gustafson so artistically expressed the slippery slope sentiment in these words:

If one permits the camel's nose of the primacy of consequences to come under the tent of societies which protect inherent individual rights, does the whole frame and fabric of protection of the individual collapse?³⁹

The pessimists, then, have attempted to turn consequentialist ethics on its head with a consequentialist argument against consequentialism!

The Moderate View. The moderate response is simply an attempt to unite the optimistic and pessimistic responses. What is

significant is not so much this position but Browning's reporting of it.

Browning depicts this position in such a way that the pessimistic concerns all but disappear. Citing the work of Charles Curran, he employs eschatology as a model to clarify the tension between human freedom and sinfulness. Humanity is seen as having a limited, but active participation in bringing in the kingdom of God. This limited participation is said to "affirm technological progress."⁴⁰ Genetic intervention, therefore, becomes part of bringing in the kingdom of God! "Thus, while human beings should not try to create a genetic utopia, they can implement moderate controls over human heredity."⁴¹

This control is to be limited to the removal of defective traits, which is to say, limited to negative eugenics. We ultimately find this position closer to the Fletcherian model with only minimal effect from the pessimistic view. Browning, by this portrayal, clearly sides himself with the Fletcherian approach and its ethics of absolute dominion. We are left only one step from frightening implications of totalitarian control of the individual. How far can the ethics of dominion be taken? The third article of the trilogy under discussion will show us.

Evolution-Based Dominionist Ethics. "Genetics, Evolution, and Human Values" follows immediately after the articles by Browning and Howie.⁴² As Howie's article expanded the dominion concept of the optimist position in Browning's article, so Bentley Glass expands the second part of the optimist model, namely Fletcher's justification for genetic intervention.

Glass takes an explicitly evolutionary foundation for his ethics. Human values are derived from our biological nature and past evolution, says Glass, but transcend that nature and evolutionary history. The principle biological values are inherent in the evolutionary process, namely the adaptive nature of biological life (through natural selection). The adaptive features which are valuable in this evolutionary scheme are those features which "ensure the survival of the individual and the continuation of the species."⁴³ Thus sexual reproduction is of value for its wide variety of genetic recombinations, while a fixed life span is also of value for it "permits older individuals to survive only so long as they have themselves

[sic] the capacity to promote the survival and evolution of the species."⁴⁴ In short, we find an ethics of corporate survival that supersedes individual rights. Could this imply euthanasia (or abortion) for those deemed unable to promote the survival and evolution of the species?

Glass continues by addressing the issue of what humanness is, for to preserve the species, one must know what needs preserving. Man is unique because he evolved into a unique level of intelligence, cooperation, and emotion. These three characteristics have led to social evolution: first the family, then tribe, then nation, and probably a one world governmental order. For this process to work, the "old biological values" of survival and multiplication are inadequate and must be superseded by better values. "People cannot continue to exist except in a carefully ordered environment."⁴⁵ Glass then continues:

In the future, we may expect that genotypic diagnosis of the carrier state, and prenatal diagnosis of severely or fatally affected homozygotes of genetic disease will make it possible to *avoid the marriage of carriers of the same harmful genes, or at least to avoid their reproduction, or by means of selective abortion or prenatal treatment* to avoid births of severely or fatally handicapped babies.

In the past, the primary human right in the area of reproduction . . . has been the right of every person to produce offspring. This right need not be curtailed, *provided* every person is sufficiently informed *and willing* to avoid producing severely handicapped children. . . . In the future, *a higher right must prevail: the right of every child to be born with the assurance of genes entitling him or her to adequate health and intelligence.*⁴⁶

Although he rejects compulsory participation in such a program, Glass leans toward promoting a "voluntary" participation. While declaring the foundations of Nazi eugenics to be faulty (that is, we all have defective genes), Glass clearly propounds negative eugenics and leaves too many subjective doors open that could make eugenics compulsory. In fact, what he has done is to base human dominion on evolutionary values.

Humanity is seen as the apex of evolution and the only earthly entity capable of managing the genetic pool. As such, this evolutionary based dominion is functionally as absolute as the dominion

argued from Genesis 1-2. Proponents of this evolutionary dominion fear the dangers of a deteriorating gene pool and see the need to control the evolutionary process!⁴⁷ This raises important questions.

For example, who will determine the order of the carefully ordered environment needed for human survival? Who will determine which conditions are handicaps or undesirable? How can "voluntary" be kept truly "voluntary"?

Negative eugenics was practiced in the United States in the early part of this century.⁴⁸ Between 1907 and 1938, sterilization laws were passed in thirty states, and the "voluntary" participation promoted by these laws tended to become forced. For example, it was a simple matter of withholding a welfare check from an unmarried mother until she "voluntarily" agreed to participation. This usually took only a day or two.⁴⁹ The people control implications are staggering! When evolutionary values of survival and genetic maintenance determine one's ethical values, almost anything becomes possible. For example, could it be possible to justify behavior such as infanticide in an evolutionary based ethics?

Evolution and Infanticide

Infanticide as Adaptive Behavior. Until recently, most people would have considered infanticide an extremely repugnant, abnormal behavior. But within the last twenty years, a few evolutionary scientists have proposed that infanticide may simply be an "adaptive" behavior inherited from our evolutionary development. Thus infanticide would fall in the normal instead of abnormal classification of behavior.⁵⁰ Several possible evolutionary explanations are given.

First, through the study of monkeys, Hrdy proposes that infanticide is a means of dominant males to eliminate competing genes and to establish their own genes by siring the most offspring. Thus both personal selfishness and the potential benefit to the species of these dominant genes become validators of infanticidal behavior.⁵¹

Second, female competition is suggested as a possible cause of infanticide by Duncan Anderson, among others. Females monkeys (and other animals) are thought to commit infanticide on the babies

of other's to make room for their own. Or, a female may kill her own baby to come into heat faster for the new dominant male (the theory being she fears losing social status with the male).⁵²

What we end up with is an evolutionary ethic of competition for mates and resources. This ethic is applied to human infanticide. Barbara Burke argues that human infanticide is too widespread in history and geography to explain it on the basis of pathology and aberrant culture. She cites Darwin as noting that infanticide is probably the most important of all population checks. Over one hundred primitive societies practice infanticide.⁵³ Four justifications are listed by Burke, three coming from the cultures that practice infanticide.

Justifications for Infanticide. The first justification is that the new baby will put too great a strain on the family resources. One application of this is to kill the second twin. Second, birth spacing is justification for infanticide. This usually relates to the matter of convenience, for this argument is most often found in nomadic cultures where the strain of multiple small children on a mother would be very great. The third reason given is that the child is born with the wrong gender, namely female. This is a narrow type of the "defective child" argument. Hrdy notes that for one third of the cultures surveyed, the first justification of infanticide was the elimination of infants considered defective.⁵⁴ Burke adds a fourth justification for infanticide *in these primitive cultures*, namely that neither effective contraception nor safe abortion are available in those cultures; therefore, infanticide is the safer alternative.⁵⁵

Notice the similarity of reasoning between the "primitive" justifications for infanticide and the "modern" justifications for abortion. In fact, they are essentially identical. Elimination of defective children, gender selection, convenience (including birth spacing), and strained resources (affordability) are all common justifications for abortion. Furthermore, some primitive cultures do not consider the newborn to be human until a recognition procedure or ceremony is performed. Consequently, infanticide is not considered murder.⁵⁶ Note the similarity to the argument that the fetus is not human and that abortion is, therefore, not murder. The shocking thing is that we find evolutionary justification of infanticide as normal, adaptive behavior for survival.

Evolution's Moral Implications

It seems evident from the preceding discussion, as well as the Presbyterian data, that evolutionary viewpoints regarding human origins are accompanied by serious moral and ethical implications. James Rachels, an avowed Darwinist, clearly shows how Darwinian evolution undermines the two classic justifications of the special status of man: (1) That man is different from animals because he exists in the image of God, and (2) that man is different from animals because he possesses reason. By destroying these two distinctions, man no longer is special. He can no longer be treated on a different standard from animals. Humans are different only in degree, not in kind. Thus, ethics are to be determined by the individual's characteristics and the situation, not by the "species" of the creature.⁵⁷

This means that damaged humans could be sacrificed for the welfare of non-humans, especially the higher mammals.⁵⁸ In my estimation this could also mean the sacrifice of damaged humans for the welfare of undamaged humans as well. The sanctity of life, and particularly human life, is destroyed. The Ethics of Dominion, whether based on Genesis and continuing creation or on evolution, appear to be but a stepping stone to an explicit evolutionary ethic, a transition point between traditional Christian ethics and far more radical ethical viewpoints. But not everyone accepts these developments. Let us now turn our attention to critiquing dominionist ethics.

A Critique of Dominionist Ethics

We have looked at one corporate attempt to address some of the challenges presented by the explosion of human technological abilities. Addressing these issues to the point of taking positions is an extremely difficult task, in part, because of the current rapidity of human technological development. How are we to address this explosion of abilities and the issues it brings? Carl Howie has aptly noted that responses vary between groups.

Jews have usually depended on the Torah and tradition to guide them in such matters. Conservative Christians have tended to depend on a literal use of the Bible as the basis for knowing how to act and what to do. Liberal Protestants have ordinarily sought to respond

creatively and freely within the real life situation as it arises. Roman Catholics traditionally have held that what is natural is God-given and thus good and that there should be no interference with the natural.⁵⁹

It is my contention that the positions we have examined have been forged in the liberal Protestant mode. By contrast, we will be critiquing these positions from an essentially conservative approach. We will start with a brief look at the issue of continuing creation, then focus most of our attention on the issue of dominion, making use of a reaction article written by a Jesuit scholar in response to "Covenant of Life" and "Covenant and Creation." A few general analyses will conclude our remarks. This analysis is in no way exhaustive. Whole studies could be written on any one of these aspects. We will simply introduce possible avenues of understanding which could be developed in future research.

Continuing Creation Critiqued. The assertion is made that while Genesis 1-2 does teach a finished creation, the rest of the Bible depicts a process of continuing creation. In particular, references to God's creating a new heavens and new earth are cited (Isa 65:17; Rev 21-22), as well as John 5:17b, "My father is working . . .".

It seems grossly unfair to me to pit the Bible against itself. Without a belief in the unity of Scripture, this would be a natural method to employ. But in this instance a Protestant denomination proceeds to undermine a major pillar of Reformation and Protestant theology, namely the unity of Scripture. This tactic is simply a variation of the evolutionists' procedure to challenge the reliability of Scripture by raising the issue of internal contradictions. Pitting the Bible against itself in order to support continuing creation weakens the basic sense of trustworthiness needed to maintain the normative role of Scripture.

Second, the continuing creation position has confused *restoration* with ongoing creation. The Fall and resulting degeneration of man and the world are not taken into account. Isaiah 65:17 is part of an eschatological passage which closes with the depiction of the lion and lamb living peaceably together. Revelation 21-22 depicts a new order suddenly imposed, no sickness, dying, etc. The context is clear that these are restorations of a marred creation, not the apex of an ongoing creation.

The Bible opens with a perfect, deathless, sinless world. Later, this perfect situation was marred by sin and judgment. The ground was cursed. It was no longer the same world. Man degenerated so badly that the judgment of the Flood was imposed to restrain the course of sin. In Jesus, the first fruits of the restored kingdom are experienced. His miraculous healings attested to this fact. We finally close out the Bible with Eden restored. The tree of life reappears and all is perfect again. This is a redemption and restoration motif, not a creation motif. This same motif is operating in Romans 8:18-25 (especially vs. 21). However, it should be noted that the NT connects *the creative power of God with redemption and restoration*,⁶⁰ and not with an ongoing creation through human agents.

The same confusion is applied in the document to John 5:17b. The context is the healing of the sick man by the pool of Bethesda who had been an invalid for thirty eight years. Whether the man was born an invalid, or more likely became an invalid by disease or injury, doesn't matter. The healing of this man was not a case of ongoing creation from lower to higher, but was the restoration of a lost wholeness.

Because this healing occurred on the Sabbath, Jesus was persecuted. His response? "My father is working still and I am working." But what kind of work is Jesus referring to? The context demands that it be the work of restoring something lost, not the creation of something new. Once this confusion is cleared up, the concept of continuing creation becomes highly untenable.

Dominion Limited to Vassalship. The kingpin of the ethics of dominion which we have reviewed is the position that man's dominion is virtually absolute with little or no limitations. In response William Kurtz, a Jesuit scholar, has zeroed in on the issue of dominion as one going for the jugular vein. Kurtz has written an insightful article on the theology of dominion in Genesis 1:26-28, critiquing both "Covenant of Life" and "Covenant and Creation."⁶¹ Kurtz's work is significant in that very few commentators give significant attention to the issue of dominion. We will draw on his observations in our analysis of the issue of dominion.

There is no doubt that the language of Genesis 1:26-28 includes a divine commission for man to rule and subject the natural

world. But as Kurtz has rightly asked, "Are there limits to this rule?"⁶² He answers his own question, "Humans are to rule as God's image and representative, according to God's will, as stewards and not absolute masters, with respect for the creation they rule."⁶³ This comment is reminiscent of Brueggemann's statement that man was to live in God's world, with God's creatures, on God's terms.⁶⁴ Kurtz continues:

The very context of the commission [to subdue the earth] puts limits on human dominion. The fact that this dominion is a gift from God to humans He has created imposes the implied limits of God's will on human dominion. These implied limits are further underscored in Gen [sic] 1:29-30, where God gives humans only vegetable life for food, not animal life (that comes only after the flood in Genesis 9).⁶⁵

Kurtz has rightly observed that man was restricted in dominion with regard to diet. A very specific diet was prescribed, namely, things that could be picked, thus not killing even the plants. As Gerhard von Rad has observed, there was to be, "No shedding of blood within the animal kingdom, and no murderous action by man! This word of God, therefore, *means a significant limitation in the human right of dominion.*"⁶⁶

Kurtz notes a second evidence of limitation related to diet, namely the restriction from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Human freedom is expressly limited by a prohibition under penalty of death. The serpent's temptation was designed to entice Eve to reject the gap between Creator and creature by extending her dominion beyond the prescribed limits.⁶⁷

In my estimation this tree also illustrates stewardship. The restriction implies God's ownership of the garden. It is His garden, not Adam and Eve's. An analogy can be drawn with human ownership. I tell visiting children that they are free to play all over my back yard *except* in the raspberry patch and vegetable garden. I can reserve those portions because I am the legal owner/resident (on the human level). The right to reserve something for oneself comes with ownership. No further reason is needed. Human dominion, therefore, cannot be a dominion akin to the dominion of ownership.

In this vein of thought it is interesting to note that the language of dominion and rulership regarding man is royal lan-

guage. Man was created to rule.⁶⁸ This rulership was to be compassionate, not exploitive. "Even in the garden, he who would be lord of all must be servant of all."⁶⁹ Brueggemann also recognizes this rulership was for care-giving, not exploitation.⁷⁰

The royal aspect of this commission would suggest that the corporeal totality of mankind was to act as a vassal for God. Thus, as Davidson has noted, human dominion is delegated, and because it is delegated, man is responsible, that is, accountable, to God.⁷¹ As we all know, no vassal rules autonomously, but rather according to the suzerain's policies.

Dominion Partially Lost By Man's Fall. Another issue that seems virtually undealt with is whether the dominion of Genesis 1:26 was partially or fully lost with the Fall. Kidner notes James 3:7-8 as evidence for a limitation of dominion caused by sin.⁷² Indeed, in Genesis 3:17ff., man loses dominion over the ground. The cultivation of crops will be more difficult. Man is often victimized by animals, weather, etc. We can't control everything. John Muir, the pioneer environmentalist, in rebutting the view that man has total control over animals without ethical qualm, satirically characterizes man's lack of dominion. With his typical, sharp-witted flair Muir wrote:

The world, we are told was made especially for man—a presumption not supported by all the facts. A numerous class of men are painfully astonished whenever they find anything, living or dead, in all God's universe, which they cannot eat or render in some way what they call useful to themselves. They have precise dogmatic insight into the intentions of the Creator, and it is hardly possible to be guilty of irreverence in speaking of *their* God any more than of heathen idols. He is regarded as a civilized, law-abiding gentleman in favor of either a republican form of government or of a limited monarchy; believes in the literature and language of England; is a warm supporter of the English constitution and Sunday schools and missionary societies; and is as purely a manufactured article as any puppet at a half-penny theater.

With such views of the Creator it is, of course, not surprising that erroneous views should be entertained of the creation. To such properly trimmed people, the sheep, for example, is an easy problem—food and clothing "for us," eating grass and daisies white by divine appointment for this predestined purpose, on perceiving the demand for

wool that would be occasioned by the eating of the apple in the Garden of Eden.

In the same pleasant plan, whales are storehouses of oil for us, to help out the stars in lighting our dark ways until the discovery of the Pennsylvania oil wells. Among plants, hemp, to say nothing of the cereals, is a case of evident destination for ship's rigging, wrapping packages, and hanging the wicked. Cotton is just another plain case of clothing. Iron was made for hammers and ploughs, and lead for bullets; all intended for us. And so of other small handfuls of insignificant things.

But if we should ask these profound expositors of God's intentions, How about those man-eating animals—lions, tigers, alligators—which smack their lips over raw man? Or how about those myriads of noxious insects that destroy labor and drink his blood? Doubtless man was intended for food and drink for all these? Oh, no! Not at all! These are unresolvable difficulties connected with Eden's apple and the Devil. *Why does water drown its lord? Why do so many minerals poison him? Why are so many plants and fishes deadly enemies? Why is the lord of creation subjected to the same laws of life as his subjects?* Oh, all these things are satanic, or in some way connected with the first garden. . . .

. . . When an animal from a tropical climate is taken to higher latitudes, it may perish of cold, and we say that such an animal was never intended for so severe a climate. But when man betakes himself to sickly parts of the tropics and perishes, he cannot see that he was never intended for such deadly climates. No, he will rather accuse the first mother of the cause of the difficulty . . . or [he] will consider it a providential chastisement for some self-invented form of sin.⁷³

Muir here puts an exclamation point on the fact that man does not currently possess the power he was given at creation. Man has partial dominion but not the fullness of the creation dominion. In the light of human nature, as expressed in Genesis six, it is probably just as well that we don't have the fullness of that dominion. But what was that original dominion like?

It seems to me that we cannot be dogmatically sure of what the unfallen dominion was like, but I believe Scripture gives us a clue. Romans 5:12-21 depicts Christ as the new Adam. Reading the new Adam motif into the Gospels, one sees Christ as the new Adam, exercising dominion over fish (filling fishing nets, retrieving a coin),

demons and swine, an unbroken colt, storms, trees (the fig that withered), and the properties of water (he walked on it and turned it to wine). It would appear that Christ modeled Adam's dominion over nature as part of His life revelation. This kind of dominion is unknown to us. We find, therefore, that while technology gives us greater dominion over nature, it still is far short of the original. Thus, it seems a bit dubious to take dominion as seriously as the Presbyterian statements have taken it.

Dominion Over Other Humans Not Intended. Even if man had been given unlimited dominion, that dominion is clearly stated to only be over nature. The wording of Genesis 1:26 indicates that "man," as male and female entities, was to have dominion over nature. Male was not given dominion over female or vice versa. The text does not depict some humans having dominion over other humans, but portrays all humans as being given dominion over nature. In the blessing of verse twenty eight, the forthcoming generations of humanity are included in having dominion over nature. Clearly, then, this dominion is not applicable to intra-human relationships.

This portrayal of dominion in the biblical text closes a Pandora's box of issues involving whether the zygote or fetus constitutes a human being. If either is a human entity, then, from an exegetical reading of Genesis 1:26,28, our dominion over nature does not extend over them, and the primary justification for genetic tampering with, and research on the fetus is undermined. Fetal life could not be considered part of the human dominion over nature under these circumstances.

Furthermore, it is of vital importance to note that human power over nature through technology is intimately related to human power over humans. C.S. Lewis has aptly noted that "what we call Man's power over nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument."⁷⁴ Any or all of the things in nature that man claims power over,

... can be withheld from some men by other men—by those who sell, or those who allow the sale, or those who own the sources of production, or those who make the goods. What we call man's power is, in reality, a power possessed by some men which they may, or may not, allow other men to profit by.⁷⁵

Lewis then applies this thinking to the issue of man exercising that power over his offspring. Until now, man has lived exercising power over his predecessors by changing traditions, etc. If one generation can attain by eugenics, the power to make its descendants what it pleases, (which is very close to the negative eugenics supported by the Presbyterian social statements we examined), then all succeeding generations will be subjects of that power.⁷⁶ Lewis continues:

I am only making clear what Man's conquest of Nature really means and especially that final stage in the conquest which, perhaps, is not far off. The final stage is come [*sic*] when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, has obtained full control over himself. *Human* nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man. The battle will be won. We shall have taken the thread of life out of the hand of Clotho' [*sic*] and be henceforth free to make our species whatever we wish it to be. The battle will indeed be won. But who indeed will have won it?

For the power of Man to make himself what he pleases means, as we have seen, the power of some men to make other men what *they* please.⁷⁷

Lewis has cogently shown how human dominion and power over nature necessarily becomes the power of some men over other men. When, in the name of dominion and genetic purification, one argues that genetic intervention, abortion, and "voluntary" non-procreation are needed to preserve the human race, by necessity, involuntary people control must appear in that generation. For who but the experts could determine what is genetically best? Genetic "counseling" by necessity must become genetic salesmanship, or, more likely, genetic coercion.

This necessarily leads us to a society reminiscent of Plato's republic with its philosopher king whose expertise in "the good" was to determine private life and public policy.⁷⁸

In the name of species preservation, the individual becomes expendable for the common good, and a utilitarian ethic emerges. "Plato's entire conception of the *pólis* reveals a thoroughgoing subordination of the individual to the interests of the com-

munity.”⁷⁹ I see no way to avoid a quasi-totalitarian rule of the experts.

We find, therefore, by two different means that the interpretation of dominion as expressed in the Presbyterian documents becomes untenable for it ends up placing man in dominion over man. Exegesis of Genesis 1:26-28 clearly excludes this form of dominion, and Lewis shows how dominion through technology cannot be universally held, since it places man in dominion over man. We now turn briefly to the issue of humanness.

Defining What Is Human

Because man is not to dominate his fellowman, the big question that must enter the ethical issues surrounding the zygote, fetus, and newborn is the question, “Are these human?” This issue is a very hot potato, and there is no way to address adequately this issue in the confines of this article.⁸⁰ However, a couple of points are noteworthy.

Early Christianity expressly condemned the practices of abortion and infanticide.⁸¹ A hotly debated issue was that of the ensoulment of the embryo/baby. Three major views were promoted. The *Transducian* view said the soul was generated with the body at conception. The *Pre-Existence* view was derived from Plato and asserted that the soul preexists conception and is joined to the body after conception. The *Creationist* view maintained that the soul is created *ex nihilo* by God and infused into the developing embryo, but the timing was debated.⁸²

Of interest to us is the fact that all three are dualistic and view the embryo/fetus as becoming human with ensoulment. The hot topic? When does ensoulment happen? When does the embryo become human? Thus an embryo or fetus could be non-human if not ensouled, and the door to fetal tampering is wide open again.

But what if one’s theology rejects the dualist view of man?⁸³ Robert Dunn has fittingly observed that the difference between the unified view and dualist view must necessarily impact one’s view of fetal humanness.⁸⁴ Dunn implies a unified view would favor seeing the zygote as human.⁸⁵ Certainly it mitigates against the idea of becoming human at some process oriented point. It would

seem that the unified view would require a human status at either conception or implantation in the uterus.⁸⁶

The wholistic view of man in Scripture would thus lend itself towards regarding the fetus (and possibly the zygote) as essentially human. Thus, the fetus would be excluded from the natural realm which humanity was to have dominion over, sharing dominion in *potentia*. This in turn raises serious questions regarding tampering with fetal life through our technology. While further exploration of these issues is possible and needed, we must briefly give some attention to the survival basis of ethics.

A Few Thoughts on Survivalist Ethics

We have seen that the more oriented toward evolution the authors of our study were, the more “survival of the species” oriented they were. This tended to produce a utilitarian view of the individual, namely, individual rights are expendable for the greater good of species survival. We will entertain two brief thoughts regarding the ethics of species survival.

First, when the “cause” to be maintained is species survival, “moral” right and wrong becomes defined by whether or not something contributes to the cause. This means that without another, superimposed ethic, any action that contributes to the survival of the human species is justifiable. Positive and negative eugenics, as well as infanticide, have all been defended on the survival of the species ground as we have seen.

A classic expression of this survivalist ethic was the statement by Caiaphas that it was better for one [innocent] man to die than to jeopardize the survival of the nation. (See John 11:47-50). The death of Jesus was plotted and justified on the basis of a survivalist ethic. An inconvenient, innocent man could be destroyed to preserve the status quo.

Second, maintaining species or personal existence does not seem to be the ultimate value in Scripture. It is an important value, but not the ultimate value. When Israel worshiped the golden calf (Exod 32:9,ff.), there was a dialogue between Moses and God. God said he would destroy Israel and make Moses a great nation. Moses responded by asking God how the pagan Egyptians would perceive

Him if Israel were destroyed. They would impute evil motives and an evil reputation to God. Moses asked God to repent of his decision.

After going to the people, Moses continued in dialogue with the Lord. He asked God to forgive Israel but if not, to "blot me out of thy book." (verse 32). Moses felt that God's reputation was more important than his own existence. He was more concerned that God honor his promise to Abraham than he was in his own survival or personal gain. He could not conceive of living where there is no faithful God. He could not bear to see God's name dishonored by the Egyptians.

Jesus addressed the issue of survivalism with an astounding paradox: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35). Christ's "sake" or benefit (or reputation) and the Gospel's benefit are of higher value than life.

The public relations aspect of God's character is of supreme value. His glory is the ultimate value. Thus Revelation describes those who gain victory over the devil and the beast as gaining that victory, in part, because they "loved not their lives unto the death." (Rev 12:11). These true believers found something of greater value than life itself. For Christians to engage in an ethic of survival is to seek to save one's life, and the paradox is, they will lose it.

Conclusions

What shall we conclude from our study? I see at least five main conclusions.

First, it seems clear that the concepts of continuing creation and absolute dominion are not supported by Scripture. Therefore, attempts to support continuing creation end up pitting the Bible against itself and undermining its reliability and normative quality.

Second, it seems clear that the positions taken in the Presbyterian documents, especially continuing creation, are founded on modern science and then read back into Scripture. When Science is viewed as revelation that interprets the Scriptures instead of *visa versa*, one elevates Science to a position of authority higher than Scripture. From a conservative position, this is very dangerous and not acceptable.

Third, views of creation and origins that deviate from the

literal reading of Genesis 1-2 do have moral implications and consequences, denials notwithstanding. Rachels and the infanticide data clearly demonstrated moral implications. Furthermore, the ethics of dominion were based in continuing creation. Clearly, alternative views of origins have moral and ethical implications.

Fourth, when consequentialism is the sole ethical system, as Glass and Fletcher suggest, and survival determines the moral value of the consequences, anything can be justified. Therefore, consequentialist ethics needs a supporting system of ethics in order to prevent abuses. An outside, absolute norm is needed.

Finally, we discovered that we can ground ethics in Genesis 1-2. Jesus did, Ellen White did, and we did. Our whole study that human dominion does not apply to man over man was based entirely on Genesis 1:26-28. However, much more can be done with ethics and Genesis 1-2.

I believe there is great potential insight into the ethics of marriage, sexuality, homosexuality, and environmental stewardship that can be found in these chapters. While defining humanness is debated, most interpretations assume a dualistic view of man. Seventh-day Adventists could do more to develop a definition of humanness, based in part on Genesis 1-2, which reflects the implications of the unified view. Out of the new insights, issues such as genetic intervention in the fetus could be more adequately addressed. Great things are yet to be done in regard to Genesis and ethics.

Endnotes

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1958), p. 46.

² See Gerhard Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), pp. 7-50. Hasel overviews the major, modern critical approaches to the Old Testament and mentions the mythical view of Genesis 1-11 on page 38. See also Erickson's criticism of Langdon Gilkey in Milard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 378-379.

³ William M. Landeen, *Martin Luther's Religious Thought* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1971), 182-190. Landeen clearly outlines how Luther did not see Moses as normative for Christians, an attitude passed on to his followers. See also, David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 22-42. Tracy outlines four systems of theology beyond orthodoxy which illustrate varying degrees of revisionism regarding all or part of the Bible.

⁴ *Minutes: 195th General Assembly [of] The United Presbyterian Church in*

the *United States of America, 1983, Part 1, Journal* (publishing data unavailable), pp. 363-370. Hereafter referred to as *Minutes*.

5 Ted Howard and Jeremy Rifkin, *Who Should Play God?* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1977), p. 48. "Eugenics is generally categorized into two types, negative and positive. Negative eugenics involves the systematic elimination of so-called biologically unfit types of people from the population. Positive eugenics is concerned with the increased breeding of the most 'fit' biologically sound types of persons in society."

6 There is a more recent document entitled "Problem Pregnancies and Abortions" which can be obtained for \$2.00 by calling 1-800-524-2612. Order number is: OGA-92-017.

7 *Minutes*, pp. 363-370.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 362.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 363.

10 *Ibid.*, Emphasis supplied.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.* Emphasis supplied.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 364-366, 368.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 365.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 364.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 365-366.

17 See Joseph Fletcher, "New Beginnings in Life," *The New Genetics and the Future of Man*, ed. Michael P. Hamilton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 81. Fletcher says, "Over against this approach is the consequentialist one, seen in utilitarianism, pragmatism and implicitly in the ethics of all biomedical research and development. Most of us reason inductively from the data of choice or option situations to decisions aimed at maximizing desirable consequences. We do not argue deductively from *a priori* or predetermined notions that whole classes of acts (such as *in vitro* fertilization or the sacrifice of test zygotes) are right or wrong to the conclusion that we ought or ought not to do anything that happens to fall in that class. For consequentialists, and I am thoroughly in their camp, what counts is results, and results are good when they contribute to human well-being."

18 *Minutes*, p. 368.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Peter Browning, "Ethical Options in the New Genetics," *Church and Society*, September/October 1982, pp. 52-61.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53. Emphasis Browning's. Browning is citing Joseph Fletcher, *The New Genetics and the Future of Man*. (Hereafter called *New Genetics*), p. 8 [sic]. The actual pages of this chapter are 78-89. The second point is clearly found on p. 78, but the first point is more clearly expressed in Joseph Fletcher, *The Ethics of Genetic Control* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 36-38. (Hereafter called *Ethics*.) Browning later quotes a phrase from p. 36.

23 Browning, p. 53. Emphasis supplied. Browning cites Fletcher, *Ethics*, p. 36, changing a rhetorical question of Fletcher's into a plain statement of opinion. However, the context of Fletcher supports Browning's alteration in my estimation.

24 Carl G. Howie, "Bio-Ethics: A Theological Frontier," *Church and Society*, September/October 1982, pp. 62-68.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*, p. 65

30 *Ibid.* Emphasis Howie's.

31 Browning, pp. 53-55.

32 Howard and Rifkin, p. 48. "Eugenics is generally categorized into two types, negative and positive. Negative eugenics involves the systematic elimination of so-called biologically unfit types of people from the population. Positive eugenics is concerned with the increased breeding of the most 'fit' biologically sound types of persons in society."

33 Browning, p. 54.

34 See Fletcher, *New Genetics*, pp. 83-83, and *Ethics*, pp. 30-38.

35 Ramsey's position is taken primarily from: Paul Ramsey, *Fabricated Man: The Ethics of Genetic Control* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970). This book is a thoughtful and thorough criticism of eugenics, based on genetic technological capabilities.

36 Joseph Fletcher states: "There may be the need one day, in the human situation at large, for one or more people especially constituted genetically to survive long periods outside a bathysphere at great marine depths or outside space capsules at great heights. If the greatest good for the greatest number were served, it would be justifiable not only to specialize people by cloning or constructive genetic engineering but also to bio-engineer or bio-design para-humans or 'modified' men as chimeras (part animal) or cyborg androids (part prostheses)." *New Genetics*, p. 83.

37 Browning, pp. 55-57.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

39 James M. Gustafson, "Genetic Counseling and the Uses of Genetic Knowledge—An Ethical Overview," *Ethical Issues in Human Genetics*, eds. Bruce Hilton, et al. (New York: Plenum Press, 1973), p. 103.

40 Browning, p. 60.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Bentley Glass, "Genetics, Evolution, and Human Values," *Church and Society*, September/October 1982, pp. 68-78.

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 73. Emphasis supplied.

47 Browning, p. 55. What a fantastic admission of the failure of natural selection and evolution! The evolutionary process which is supposed to have produced a superior being called man, now needs man to control its processes. It is amazing how natural selection could produce artificial selection to preserve itself!

48 Howard and Rifkin, pp. 47-49.

49 Ian T. Taylor, *In the Minds of Men: Darwin and the New World Order* (Toronto: TFE Publishing, 1984), pp. 407-408. Taylor also reviews the eugenics and forced sterilization programs of Nazi Germany. The blind, deaf, and criminal came under these laws, for example. At one point, 450 people per day were sterilized. Positive eugenics was also practiced including "human stud farms."

Infanticide and euthanasia were adopted as part of this program. See pages 408-411.

50 Nancy Pearcey, "Why People Kill Babies," *Bible Science News* 30:6 (undated): 6-8. Pearcey writes a very accurate description of the infanticidal research while also giving an excellent analysis of implications. Pearcey also supplies an excellent starter bibliography for further research, a noteworthy exception to many works of conservative authors.

51 Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, "When the Bough Breaks," *The Sciences*, March/April 1984, pp. 45-50. This appears to be a landmark article for it is referenced by all the other authors I consulted on this subject.

52 Duncan Maxwell Anderson, "The Delicate Sex: How Females Threaten, Starve, and Abuse One Another," *Science* 86, April 1986, pp. 42-48. Anderson cites female competition for a reproductive partner as the underlying foundation of the cosmetic and fashion industries (p. 48). These products, he says, are designed to make a woman look younger and healthier than she is, "by giving her the big eyes, smooth skin, and ruddy cheeks and lips of a young girl. Makeup makes her look as if she has more potential years of childbearing ahead of her than she really has." Maybe there is more to the traditional Adventist call for simplicity in this matter than has been recognized up to this point.

53 Barbara Burke, "Infanticide," *Science* 84, May 1984, p. 29.

54 Ibid. See also, Hrdy, p. 49.

55 Burke, p. 30.

56 Hrdy, p. 50.

57 Rachels, pp. 171-172. This is Rachel's own summary of the first four chapters of his book. It gives the essential points without the detailed arguments.

58 Earl M. J. Aagaard, "Darwinian Morality?" *Origins* 18:2 (1991): 86-88. This article is a review of James Rachel's book, *Created From Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism*, cited earlier. Aagaard reviews Rachel's work chapter by chapter and gives some insightful analyses in the process.

59 Howie, p. 65.

60 E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890; facsimile reprint, Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1972), pp. 31-38.

61 William Kurtz, "Genesis and Abortion: An Exegetical Test of a Biblical Warrant in Ethics," *Theological Studies* 47 (1986): 668-680. Pages 669-675 are devoted to an exegesis of Genesis 1:26-28, specifically the issues of dominion and the *Imago Dei*.

62 Ibid., p. 670.

63 Ibid.

64 Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 40. See also *Genetics, Ethics and Parenthood*, ed. Karen Lebacqz (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983), 30-31 where human power and glory are argued to be derived from God and therefore limited. There are four contributing authors in this book but their work is not identified on an individual basis.

65 Kurtz, p. 670.

66 Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*: (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1961; revised, 1972) 61. Emphasis supplied.

67 Kurtz, p. 671.

68 Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis (1-17)*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 138.

69 Ibid.

70 Brueggemann, p. 32.

71 Robert Davidson, *Genesis (1-11)*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 25.

72 Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Chicago: Inter Varsity Press, 1967), p. 52.

73 John Muir, *The Wilderness World of John Muir*, ed. Edwin Way Teal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1954), pp. 316-318. Second emphasis supplied.

74 C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 68-69.

75 Ibid., p. 68.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., p. 72.

78 See Donald Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy: The Unbearable Heaviness of Philosophy Made Lighter* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1988), pp. 71-74.

79 Julián Marias, *History of Philosophy*, trans. Stanley Applebaum and Clarence Strowbridge (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), p. 56.

80 An excellent little article that addresses the issue of humanness is Bruce K. Waltke, "Reflections from the Old Testament on Abortion," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 19 (1976): 3-13.

81 Carol A. Tauer, "The Tradition of Probabilism and the Moral Status of the Early Embryo," *Theological Studies* 45 (1984): 7-8. See also, John T. Noonan, "An Almost Absolute Value," *The Morality of Abortion*, ed. John T. Noonan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 7-12. This whole chapter is an excellent history of the abortion issue in the early through medieval church. See also, Elaine H. Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 81.

82 Tauer, pp. 7-8.

83 A belief in evolution would also affect one's view of humanness as has been seen in the work of Rachels. One conservative Christian asserts that Abortion itself is rooted in evolutionary thinking. The claim is that the aborted fetus is not considered human but a "tadpole larva," or perhaps an 'early vertebrate larva.' A later abortion may kill a 'mammalian larva,' etc. See, Paul A. Bartz, "Abortion Rooted in Evolutionary Scientific Fraud," *Bible Science News* 30:6 (undated): 1-2.

84 Robert H. Dunn, "Man and Soul in Genesis 2:7 - Ethical Considerations," (Term paper, Andrews University, 1987), pp. 8-9, Adventist Heritage Center.

85 Ibid.

86 If having an existential future is part of the *Imago Dei* (since God is depicted in Scripture as having one), then it could be said that the zygote has only a very limited existential future unless implanted in the uterus. In an ectopic pregnancy, the zygote/embryo has no real future. It will die with the mother, or die in the process of saving the mother. There is no way out alive. This could have implications on contraception, i.e., that prevention of uterine implantation is morally permissible if one considers humanness to occur at uterine implantation and not conception. However, this view opens a Pandora's box of ethical issues surrounding laboratory conceptions used for research.

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JUST SAY THE WORD

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A Centurion's Faith

"But just say the word" (Matt 8:8, NIV). This ringing affirmation of faith addressed to Jesus didn't come from the Pharisees or Sadducees—not even from the lips of Peter, James, or John. They came from a Roman centurion, the imperial knife at the throat of Capernaum. Unlike Pilate, who seemed to hate the Jews, this centurion was attracted to the Jewish people and their religion. Normally the conqueror tries to force his "superior" religion on the conquered. This soldier was different, because he desired truth.

Living in Capernaum, he could not escape the reports of Jesus. The accounts of His miracles and teachings flooded the town and excited everyone. As the centurion put it all together, it became obvious to him who Jesus was.

Capernaum lay on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Peter's home was situated there. Archaeologists believe that it was later enlarged to become one of the earliest Christian churches. The Romans who lived there also bought and sold slaves as they did all over the empire. Often they treated them with cruelty. Yet, again, this centurion seemed to be different. He treated his servant more like a son. He cared deeply for the young man.

In the course of events the servant came down with a terrible disease. We are not told what it was, but it must have been dreadful. The Scriptures say that he was "paralyzed and in terrible suffering" (Matt 8:6, NIV). The officer could only sit beside him and watch his servant's life ebb away. He knew his only hope was in Jesus. But how could he, an unclean Roman soldier, appeal to the Savior.

In the first of three approaches to Jesus, the centurion asks the Jewish elders of Capernaum to intercede with Jesus for him (Luke 7:2-5). They were happy to do this, and they told Jesus things like: he is worthy, he loves our nation, and he built us a synagogue. They emphasized his merits. They, no doubt, noted that it would be good P.R. with Rome. When Jesus agreed to go with them to the centurion's house, they must have sent messengers ahead to tell the officer that Jesus was coming to his house.

The reaction of the centurion is mysterious. He sent another delegation of friends to tell Jesus that he was not worthy for Him to come into his house (Luke 7:6). Doesn't that seem strange? If we heard that Jesus was coming to our home, what would be our reaction? In this age when there is no fear of the Lord, I wonder how we would react. The reason the centurion reacted this way was because he knew who Jesus really was.

Perhaps fearful that his friends might be misunderstood, he finally went himself to Jesus. He repeated that he was not worthy for Jesus to come under his roof. He shared the thought that he was a man who was under authority. He answered to Rome. Whatever orders he received, he carried them out—no questions asked. He also had 100 soldiers in his command who did exactly what he told them (Luke 7:7-8; Matt 8:8-10). What was he saying to Jesus with all of this?

I think he was saying something like the following: "Jesus you are not who you appear to be. It is true, you are dressed in those humble Galilean clothes, but you are not a simple Galilean peasant. You have vast, unseen forces at your command—forces whose power is awesome and mysterious. Even disease flees at your command. The truth is that you are really King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Your power and kingdom are vastly superior to any known on earth, including Rome. I am awed in your presence. For this reason, I am not worthy for you to even come under my roof. Just say the word and it will be done."

The reaction of Jesus is fascinating. The Scriptures say that Jesus marveled (Matt 8:10, KJV). If Jesus marveled, what must the Devil have done? Shattered? Rome was the Devil's doing and here was one of her sons expressing more faith in and understanding of Jesus than even the Jews. Jesus turned to the multitude around

him and said simply, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (Matt 8:10, NIV).

Then Jesus gave a warning. Sometimes we don't like to hear the warnings of Jesus. We just want to hear the kind, thoughtful words He expresses. Some can't imagine Jesus speaking a rebuke or a warning. Yet here is what He said, "I say to you, that many will come from the east and the west, and shall take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside into darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt 8:11-12, NIV). Jesus was saying that because of their lack of trust, the children of Abraham would be replaced by Gentiles who would put their faith in Him.

End-Time Trust in God's Word

The question arises for us who live in the time of the end: Is it possible for some similar scenario to happen to those who have been entrusted with the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus? Is it possible for thousands to leave the truth as it is in Jesus? Is it possible for some of the greatest and most brilliant lights of Present Truth to go with them? Is it possible that their places will be taken by many from the "east and west"? If that is possible, and I believe it is, then the next question is *Why*? The deception that would cause such defeat must be very powerful.

How shall we resist such a temptation? The answer is found in the centurion's request to Jesus, "Just say the word." In those few words he declared his trust, his unworthiness, and his willingness to believe.

First, consider the centurion's trust in the word of Jesus. If there is going to be continual change for the good in our lives, we must trust the word of God. If we don't trust the word of God and yet declare ourselves to be Christians, we are like a hot, sweaty basketball player who puts fresh, clean clothes on a perspiring, dirty body. We may look different, but we still smell bad.

We live in an age of skepticism and cynicism. The people of our day are proud and confident in their own opinions and abilities to think. Like Pharaoh of old, our generation responds, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him" (Exod 5:2, NIV). If we want to put it

in the modern tongue, they say, "Who does God think He is?" Unfortunately, no church or Christian is immune to the temptation to set up his/her own opinion in place of the Lord's.

Many times I have sat across from people who were discovering the Sabbath for the first time. After reading a few scriptures concerning the issue, I would start to get excuses and opinions why they couldn't keep the Sabbath. But I would ask, "But what does the Bible say?" There is great power in God's word.

I would hand them my Bible and ask them to read it. They would begin in a loud confident voice, but as they continued to read the Sabbath commandment, the voice would become slower and more sober. Finally, as they finished, I would simply ask the question, "Well, what does the Bible say?" They would look at me and say, "Well it says what it says. Then I would say, "The only question left is, Will you obey it?" It has been a great joy to watch people surrender their opinions, wants, and desires to the word of the Lord Jesus Christ on this issue.

But it is a struggle, because in this age people love their own opinions. We often say to Jesus, "Just say the word, but we will do the translation." Or "Just say the word, but we will do the explanation." Or "Just say the word, and we will do the clarification." How many times have I sat in a Sabbath School class and listened to people discuss the lesson. Sometimes the Bible is scarcely opened, while people drown in their own opinions.

The world today is flooded with opinions. There must be 10,000 talk shows, many of them spewing out nothing but poison! From the air waves to cyberspace, we are inundated with opinions, opinions, opinions. The real question is, What will shape our attitudes? What will shape our character? What will direct our living? Jesus asked the haunting question, "Will [I] find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8, NIV). Will He find a generation of Christians who will say, "Just say the word"?

In those few words the centurion also declared his unworthiness. Even though he was the "big man" in Capernaum, he was humble. When the Jewish elders came to Jesus, they emphasized his worthiness but the centurion said of himself, "I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you" (Luke 7:7, NIV). When He

did come to Jesus, he did not come to bargain but to plead his great need. What a marvelous example to us all.

We often give a good deal of lip service to our great need of Jesus, but we act differently. We talk about praying, but we devote little time to prayer. We commonly spend more time watching television and reading newspapers than reading His word. Then we demand a firecracker sermon in 20 minutes on Sabbath morning to make up the difference.

Today, some Christians no longer think they even need Jesus as their Substitute. They just want a good example. The truth is, we are not worthy of Jesus. We don't deserve Him but, oh, how we need Him! The song of our heart should be, "Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling."

In his appeal to Jesus, "Just say the word," the centurion declared his willingness to do what Jesus asked. Many people like to hear what Jesus has to say, but they don't want to do what Jesus asks them to do. Even Jesus told a parable about two boys: one, He said, was willing to go to work for his father, but didn't; the other, He said, wasn't willing to go, but he did.

I was holding a series of meetings in Kent, Washington. I never will forget the contrast between two women who attended: one in her fifties, the other, about 18, was in high school. We came to the subject of adornment. The lady in her fifties was quite attached to her jewelry. After going over some of the Bible texts, I asked her what she thought. She was not the least inclined to surrender that jewelry to the Lord.

Then I asked her this question, "If Jesus were here in person, and you knew it was He, the Savior Himself; if He asked you to give up these things, what would you tell Him?" I will never forget her answer. She looked at me and said, "I would tell Him, No." Then I knew we had a deeper problem. These trinkets had become an idol in her life.

A few days later I sat around the table with the 18-year-old young lady. Her mother was at the table with us. I presented the same subject. With tears of joy streaming down her face, she reached up and began to remove her earrings, voluntarily, and told me how happy she was to give these things to Jesus.

We must ask ourselves a serious question, "What good is it for

Jesus to 'say the word' to us if we are not willing to do what He asks us to do?" (cf. Luke 6:46).

The Bible and the Bible Only

There is no question in my mind that the end-time events are moving rapidly all around us. The great day of the Lord is moving ever closer. In the book, *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White makes a prophecy concerning the last conflict. She says, "In the great final conflict, Satan will employ the same policy, manifest the same spirit, and work for the same end, as in all preceding ages. That which has been will be, except that the coming struggle will be marked with a terrible intensity such as the world has never witnessed. Satan's deceptions will be more subtle and his assaults more determined" (p. xi).

This prophecy seems to be coming to pass right before our very eyes. Both within the church and out of the church there is a terrible struggle going on between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. But God will have an answer to Satan's vicious and persistent attacks. The answer is found in the same book:

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any part of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support (*The Great Controversy*, p. 595).

So once again, in the end of time the battle will be over the Scriptures. That was the issue between the 16th century Reformers and Rome, the Waldenses and the Pope, and the early Christians and Pagan Rome. The question that faces all of us is, "Will we stand like the centurion before Jesus and say to Him, 'Just say the word'?" Will we be willing to surrender our opinions in light of His word, or will we take our opinions and sit in judgment on His word? Do we love the Truth enough to cry out to Jesus as did the centurion, "Just say the word"?

There is a wonderful story that Dr. Truitt tells about a famous

radio commentator. His life had not been good, and he went out to a western ranch to spend some time thinking things through and trying to put his life back together.

While living at the ranch, he met one of the cowboys who seemed to be terribly depressed. The young man was short and bow-legged and nothing anyone could say seemed to cheer him up. Finally the guest asked him why he was so down.

The cowboy told how he had reared his most beloved horse from a colt. It would follow him around like a puppy. Then one night, he said, about three weeks before the commentator had arrived at the ranch, some wild horses had broken into the corral, and his horse had run off with them; and no one knew where they were. Anyone acquainted with horses knows they take a lot of care, and the wild ones don't fare nearly as well as those who are looked after.

The radio commentator related that a few days after this conversation, about sunset, another cowboy came galloping into the corral. He jumped from his horse and ran to the short, bow-legged cowboy announcing he had sighted the horse in a ravine not too far away. The glad owner determined he would find his horse the next morning.

The ranch guest asked if he could join the young man. Yes, said the cowboy, if you will do what I tell you to do. Together they started off before sunrise. As the morning sun lighted up the valley they could see the horses grazing below, and the cowboy spotted his horse. The cowboy told the radio commentator to sit very quietly on the rim rock while he worked his way down to where the horses were.

The commentator watched as the cowboy stalked the horses from rock to rock and bush to bush until he was next to them. Then, suddenly, he stood and began calling to his horse. A tremendous struggle immediately gripped the senses of the pet animal. As the horse heard its master's voice, it started toward him; then it started running back to the wild mustangs. What a cross pull! A few steps toward the wild horses—a few steps toward the cowboy. Finally the beloved animal trotted after the wild horses. The cowboy gave one last pleading call. The horse stopped, bowed its head, and walked with a purpose back to its cowboy master. As the horse nuzzled up

to its master, the cowboy began to weep, hugged its head, slipped on a halter, and fed the animal sugar cubes out of his pocket.

The commentator exclaimed he suddenly saw the solution to his problems. "I slammed my fist down on that rim rock and cried out to God. I said, 'Oh, God I have been running with the wild horses far too long. I am coming home to your corral never to roam again with the wild horses.'"

My appeal to each of you today is, Stay in the corral of God's Word, because all of the wild opinions galloping around us in our modern societies will bring you nothing but grief. Like the trusting centurion, hold fast to the Word, humble yourself to its authority, trust it, obey it, and it will lead you safely into God's eternal kingdom!

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TASTE AND SEE

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At her college graduation party Jane received a gift from a young engineering professor. Arriving home that evening, she opened the present and discovered it was a book. One glance at the uninteresting title was enough to cause her to lay it aside unopened for months. Engineering was not exactly the most fascinating subject to her.

Sometime later she and the professor fell in love and became engaged. One evening as they were happily pondering their wedding plans and future lives together, he asked her what she thought of the book he had given her at her graduation. All of a sudden she remembered how she had dismissed it from her mind. Embarrassed for neglecting it, she determined to show better appreciation for the gift of her soon groom-to-be.

Arriving home that evening, she could hardly wait to find the book. And looking at more than the title this time, she was pleasantly surprised to discover that the author was no other than the professor himself, and that he had written in it a note of dedication to her. Needless to say, Jane did not sleep much that night. Gripped by the whole experience, and utterly fascinated by the book her lover had written and dedicated to her, she simply could not lay it down until she had read the last page.¹

Delighting ourselves in the Lord, who loved us and gave Himself for us, propels us to delight ourselves in His Word, and anything else related to Him. In loving Him, we love what He loves, and shun what He shuns. As we look upon Him, we come to view things from His perspective, in a brand-new way. Jesus incon-

testably possesses our hearts and our warmest affections. For when we are His, "our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things."²

If we search through all our mail and happily find a letter from a loved one, we lay everything else aside and tear that letter open, devouring its contents. We find ourselves totally absorbed in the sentiments and details it brings. Probably we read it more than once to make sure that we miss out on nothing. Is this because of the stationery, handwriting, or sentence structure? No, it's because of the writer himself or herself.

That is the reason we love the Written Word—because we love the living Word. Tasting and seeing that the Lord is good, we delight ourselves in Him who poured out His love in the sacred pages of Scripture, breathed His Spirit into it, and lovingly autographed it for us with His own blood.

When I committed my life to Christ at the age of 10, I found myself driven with great desire to spend time with my best friend Jesus—praying and studying His word. Waking up long before dawn, I would sit at my desk voraciously reading my Bible. Not wanting to let go of this precious experience, I would study for hours learning about Jesus, the Person I loved and admired the most. I will never forget the look on my parents' faces when they would find me—an expression of gratitude mixed with concern. Gratitude for my spiritual interest, yet concern for my lack of sleep.

The impetus for our delighting in the Lord is His delight in us. "Let Israel rejoice in the Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King," the psalmist urges God's people. Then he follows his call by giving the reason for it: "For the Lord *takes delight in his people*; he crowns the humble with salvation" (Ps 149:2-4, NIV). Our loving Lord takes delight in us just as loving parents find great pleasure in their loving children.

Jesus took delight in His relationship with His Father. He was the source of Christ's greatest joy. Speaking prophetically through the psalmist, Christ thus addressed Him: "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is *fullness of joy*; at Your right hand are *pleasures forevermore*" (Ps 16:11).

Not only did He taste that His Father was good, but it was His very food, His very life to do His will (John 4:34). Christ wants us to experience the same devotion and delight He and the Father mutually enjoy together. "He [Christ] studied the word of God, and His hours of *greatest happiness* were found when He could turn aside from the scene of His labors. . . to hold communion with God . . ."³

The biblical concept of tasting and seeing that the Lord is good (Ps 34:8) and of delighting ourselves in Him (Ps 37:4) is not one that we usually associate with devotional life. Normally we approach the devotional life from the perspective of a sense of duty, even of drudgery. Inevitably this leads to a meaningless relationship with God, or we abandon it altogether. If the Lord is good—and He is—then why is it so difficult for us to delight ourselves in Him? Here are a few reasons to consider.

First, it requires that we invest quality time in such a relationship. Most of us are keen on investing in things other than relationships. Second, we are more inclined to be task-oriented than people-oriented. Tasks and accomplishments drive our lives rather than relationships to others, including God. Third, we find ourselves surrounded by just too many distractions. We become so devoted to them that they divert all our attention from Him. Fourth, whatever knowledge we have of Christ tends to be head knowledge rather than heart knowledge. We go through the motions of knowing *about* Him, but do not know Him *personally*.

Of course, we do find ourselves talking about our relationship with Christ, and of our obedience to Him, but we find neither passion nor pleasure in the experience. The heart has grown rather cold and callous. "The joy of the Lord is [my] strength" (Neh 8:10) does not exactly describe the spiritual song lived out in our daily lives.

On the other hand, our joy and delight in the Lord will reveal that our love for Him is real and our spirituality genuine. But when such love fades and such joy vanishes, then we know that self-centeredness has sapped the vitality out of our spiritual lives. One of the signs of the end, according to Christ, is that "the love of many will grow cold" (Matt 24:12). Here He is describing those who

previously loved Him and rejoiced in their relationship with Him. But in focusing on self, they destroyed that spiritual relationship.

Ellen White writes that "He [in Matt 24:12] speaks of a class who have fallen *from a high state of spirituality*." Then she searchingly asks, "Where is the fervor, the devotion to God, that corresponds to the greatness of the truth which we claim to believe?" Finally she candidly answers her question: "The love of the world, the love of some darling sin, has *weaned the heart* from the love of prayer and of meditation on sacred things. A formal round of religious services is kept up. but where is the love of Jesus? *Spirituality is dying*."⁴

Hannah Smith commented that the general public does not have the impression that Christians experience genuine joy in their lives. She was once told, "You Christians seem to have a religion that makes you miserable. You are like a man with a headache. He does not want to get rid of his head, but it hurts him to keep it. You cannot expect outsiders to seek very earnestly for anything so uncomfortable."⁵

But that is a far cry from what Jesus desired for all His followers. Said He, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). We can never find genuine joy and permanent pleasure except in Christ, the inexhaustible source. The reason that others fail to discern our joyous experience in the Lord is that we have not ourselves tasted and seen that He is indeed good.

God could say that David was a man after His own heart (1 Sam 13:14) because they enjoyed a heart relationship together. It becomes quite obvious from reading the Psalms that David possessed that joy and delight in the Lord. He said that his soul panted for Him as the deer thirsts for cool flowing water in a desert (Ps 42:1, 2) and that his flesh longed for Him as he longed for cool water in a dry and hot land (Ps 63:1). We cannot help sensing that he did indeed delight himself in God, and that he did taste and see that the Lord is good.

It all sounds like savoring a sumptuous meal, doesn't it? But the delicious spiritual meal that our souls hunger for is the Lord Himself. He is our real food that we taste, eat, and delight ourselves in. Enjoying such a meal with Christ does not in any way imply

rushing through some mechanical activity. Rather it points to a relaxed and exuberant time involving our whole being. It also calls for appreciating the ambience, savoring the aroma and taste of every morsel, and relishing the goodness of the One who is altogether lovely.

Let us consider how Jesus explained the importance of such a crucial experience when He visited the home of Martha and Mary (see Luke 10:38-42). Martha was certainly a thoughtful and conscientious friend as she welcomed Jesus into the house and worked so hard to make Him feel comfortable. On the other hand, Mary seemed totally oblivious to all the hustle and bustle of cooking and cleaning taking place around her. She completely absorbed herself in Jesus and what He had to say from the very moment He entered the house. He was all that she could think of, and she was determined to take advantage of every moment she could be with Him.

Martha's *service* to Christ, and Mary's *solitude* with Christ—what made the difference? Martha had *many distractions*, but Mary had *one attraction*. Martha "was distracted with much serving" (verse 40) while Mary simply "sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word" (verse 39). She sat while Martha frantically raced back and forth. But where did she sit, and for what reason? That is the crucial question. Mary sat *at Jesus' feet listening to His word*. And that is all that matters when Christ is around.

Martha soon had had just enough. Exasperated, she complained to Him that Mary was not helping her, and that He was a part of the problem in allowing her sister to get away with it. Jesus answered her with love and concern: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (verses 41, 42).

Many things worry and trouble us when we really need only *one thing*. The many things that we spend our entire lives worrying about will eventually vanish, but the one needful thing will never be taken away. Doesn't this direct our minds back to what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 about keeping our priorities in order? "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

There He exhorts us, first of all, to seek the *one* important

thing—Himself—and then we will find *all other* things taken care of. Life is more than food, drink, and clothing. We should not let life's turmoil so distract us that it eclipses our view of the Life. Focusing on Jesus will straighten our priorities out, for "when once the gaze is fixed upon [Christ], the life finds its center."⁶

Hospitable Martha, in her concern to make sure that the meal tasted good and the house looked meticulous, missed enjoying communion with her special Guest. What Martha, the ideal hostess, did was important, but it was not a priority. "Here is a magnanimous gesture but a mistaken one," explains Ken Gire. "Because Jesus does not want food; He wants fellowship."⁷ Tasty meals, immaculate homes, and perfect hosting—wonderful as they are—can get in the way of loving fellowship with friends.

So many things get in the way of meaningful and delightful times with God and others. And finally when we really want to do something about it, it may be too late. Attending a funeral of a friend, I overheard someone lament the fact that he had always intended to get together with the deceased individual but had never gotten around to it. Stephen Grellet wrote: "I expect to pass this way but once, any good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now; let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Martha, out of courtesy, might have actually listened to Jesus at the very beginning. She might have been torn as to what to do, for she loved Jesus too, and would have enjoyed visiting with Him as well. Gradually, she found herself drawn more to the kitchen and pulled farther away from Jesus. Thus she found herself increasingly caught up in her frantic preparations. In the anxiety of the moment to serve Jesus, she began focusing on herself.

Consequently, her attitude changed not only toward her sister but also toward her Saviour. She accused Mary of laziness, and even blamed Jesus for indifference. And that is what subtly happens when performance becomes our priority. We focus on self, critically comparing our performance with the performance of others—or lack of it. And our criticism of others knows no limits. No one is immune to its attack, not even Jesus. Martha implied that the all-caring Jesus was uncaring!

Unfortunately, our performance for Christ may supersede our

devotion to and love for the person of Christ. The spiritual danger is subtle and real, for our dedication to His service may crowd out our devotion to Him as a person. If we are not careful, the savior of our success may supplant the Saviour of our souls. "As activity increases and men become *successful* in doing any *work for God*, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to *make a savior of our activity*. We need to look constantly to Jesus, realizing that it is His power which does the work."⁸

Martha would make a very efficient and self-giving church member, to the delight of any pastor or church board. We need many like her in the Master's service today—men and women who are energetic and resourceful. Although we do not want to dismiss such fine qualities in any church member, at the same time they must, first of all, be subordinated to Christ, and must issue forth from devotion to Him and delight in His person.

"The 'one thing' that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit. . . She needed less anxiety for the things which pass away, and more for those things which endure forever. . . There is a wide field for the Marthas, with their zeal in active religious work. But let them first sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus. Let diligence, promptness, and energy be sanctified by the grace of Christ; then the life will be an unconquerable power for good."⁹

One has to wonder how many times Jesus misses us when He comes by to enter into fellowship with us. Sadly, He too often finds us preoccupied with so many things, including serving Him, that we do not seize the opportunity to delight ourselves in simply being with Him. Planning to try us again, He reluctantly leaves, ardently hoping that the next time He comes by He will not only find our homes and kitchens open to Him, but, more important, our hearts.

And when He returns, will our welcome to Him be shown by sitting at His feet and listening to His voice, or will we be feverishly fretting about many things? What kind of welcome will our churches give Him when He stops by? Will our reception consist more of labor than devotion? "The church seem content to take only the first steps in conversion. They are more ready for *active labor* than for *humble devotion*, more ready to engage in outward religious

service than in the inner work of the heart. Meditation and prayer are neglected for bustle and show."¹⁰

It is really a matter of priorities. Misplaced priorities can lead us to miss Christ. May this prayer become your and my heartfelt prayer, so that He may become our foremost priority and our supreme delight: "Forgive me for being so much distracted by my preparations, and so little attracted by Your presence. For being so diligent in my duties, and so negligent in my devotion. For being so quick to my feet, and so slow to yours. Help me to understand that it is an intimate visit You seek from me, and not an elaborate meal."¹¹

The beautiful description of the love relationship of Solomon and his bride can illustrate the quality we yearn for in our love relationship with Christ. Said he to her: "Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens." Responds she: "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love" (S of Sol 2:2-4, NIV).

The Song of Solomon here captures in such a superb way what the psalmist means by delighting ourselves in the Lord. It does not depict, by any means, the too often hectic, hurried, and stale relationship we have with Christ. On the contrary, it describes the great joy we have in each other's company. The blissful time to bask in the cool shade of such intimate fellowship, and to relish its taste for the sheer delight of it.

Remember that the Lord invites us to a spiritual banquet with Him, and we will feast with the Lord. Banqueting with Jesus is never like hastily gulping our fast food from a drive-in restaurant. It is neither like frozen dinners swallowed while glued to television nor like munching on snacks while reading the newspaper.

Visiting some countries in southern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East has clearly shown me how sharing a meal with someone can be so relaxed, delightful and conducive to human relationships. Somehow, in the West, we have been conditioned to think that if we take time to enjoy food and fellowship, we are wasting our time, perhaps depriving ourselves of a chance to make more money or get something important done. But this is

not so. For in being so obsessed with gaining riches and temporal things, we squander life itself—this life and eternal life to come.

I have counseled numerous parents and youngsters having difficulties in their family relationships about the quality time they need to have together. I will never forget some of the responses.

"Dad, you are always gone. You never spend time with us," one says.

"Mom, you are always so busy. It is impossible to talk with you," another protests.

"I am killing myself to make a good life for you, and I wish you would start appreciating this for a change," the father answers defensively.

"We are doing all of this for you," the mother joins in.

"Dad, Mom, we do appreciate the money, the cars, the nice home and everything, but we just want to spend time with you. We want to go places together, do things together," one of the children answers back.

Too busy making a living, we cannot make a life with our loved ones and with our God.

In his book *The Table of Inwardness*, Calvin Miller uses the Latin term *otium sanctum*, translated "holy leisure," to explain how to delight ourselves in Christ amid the busyness of everyday life. It is not trying to squeeze Christ into our hectic mode of existence, but inviting Him to totally invade and rule it.¹² "Holy living is not abrupt living," Miller suggests. For "no one who hurries into the presence of God is content to remain for long. Those who hurry in, hurry out."¹³

In our relationship with our Lord we are to devote ourselves to Him more than anything or anyone else. Our beloved Christ is like a luxurious fruit-laden tree under whose shade we delight to sit, and His fruit is sweet to our taste. This is tasting and seeing that the Lord is good, and this is the intimate experience that we so desperately need.

"In the midst of this maddening rush [in the world], God is speaking. He bids us come apart and commune with Him," Ellen White observes. "Many, even in their seasons of devotion, fail of receiving the blessing of real communion with God. They are in too great haste. With hurried steps they press through the circle of

Christ's loving presence, pausing perhaps moment within the sacred precincts, but not waiting for counsel. They have no time to remain with the divine Teacher. With their burdens they return to their work."¹⁴

Why do we hurry away from Christ's loving presence? Why do we make such hasty excursions to Him and eagerly pull away from Him? It is as if we suffer from the paradox of being unable to stay with Him, yet unable to remain away from Him. Is this because we are not accustomed to feeling comfortable in close relationships? We have an innate need to really know and be known, but we are afraid of the experience. Like our first parents, we hide from our God behind some flimsy fig leaves. But He already knows us, and in spite all that we are, He greatly loves us and longs to be close to us.

Furthermore, in our task-oriented society, we often do not feel at ease reaching out to others—even to friends and family members—unless we have a need, or we can come up with some sort of excuse or explanation. This mind-set frequently affects our personal relationship with God. We do not often seek Him simply for the joy of being with Him, but rather because we are in desperate straits. Even when we rush to Him under such circumstances, we still do it rather reluctantly and impersonally. One may compare such an encounter to that of paying bills or going to the dentist—unpleasant but essential.

But relationships require more than discussing issues and tackling problems. Do we ever feel that we miss being with God when we have not needed to seek His help for some time? For example, when it comes to our good friends, do we miss them and feel like seeing them just for the joy of being with them? Do we feel free to drop by to see them, or do we experience some unexplained reluctance to do so? When we sometimes feel reluctance, do we find ourselves pressed to furnish an excuse or fumble for an explanation in order to justify getting together with them?

Few of us feel free to see friends just for their sake, just for the joy of being with them. And that is perhaps because heart-to-heart interaction makes us uncomfortable. We would rather avoid such intimacy by distracting ourselves in discussing other safe issues. Is this possibly one reason what we prefer to entertain in our homes

large groups rather than one person or family? That way we have less risk of vulnerability and closeness.

Although our loving God welcomes us with open arms when we run to Him in times of distress, He also longs to see us come to Him at all times simply because we love Him and enjoy being with Him. Genuine love is always seeking togetherness with the beloved. "We come to the Lord not because we want something from Him or even because we have something we need to share with Him," Larry Richards explains, "but simply because *we want to be with Him*, and with Him alone."¹⁵

But what can we do about the quality of our communion with Christ? How can such communion become a delight to dwell on rather than a drudgery to endure? How can we take our hectic time and make it holy time? How do we learn to enjoy lingering long in Christ's loving presence?

We need to earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the excellence and all-sufficiency of our Lord. He is what our hearts desperately need because He alone possesses in Himself all that we have ever longed for. Christ is the only true source of love, peace, acceptance, security, friendship, riches, and eternal life. By uniting our lives with His we possess all things.

Hopefully we can all think of one ideal friend whom we greatly love and admire. A best friend with whom we have enjoyed a long and loving relationship. Take such quality friendship and multiply it by eternity, and there we have Jesus. Isn't this the kind of ideal and best friend that we have been searching for? Christ has our very best at heart, for His thoughts are only of good, and not evil. He created us for His pleasure, He sacrificed His life for our restoration, He longs to live His abundant life in us today, and He yearns to lavish on us His eternal glory at His coming.

If we can have this type of Friend, why should we hesitate to come to Him and stay with Him for the sheer delight of just being with Him? Why not hasten to be in His loving presence at every opportunity we have? It is easy to take such an ideal Friend for granted, but it is not that easy to maintain our vital relationship with Him unless we jealously and continuously guard and nurture it.

For you see, I know from personal experience. In rushing to

finish this chapter about tasting and seeing the goodness of the Lord, I had to guard lest I let writing spiritual things in any way compete with my spiritual priority of sitting at the feet of Jesus. It would be quite an irony, if in the process of rushing to finish this book on Christ and spirituality, I find myself overlooking the joy of spiritual communion with Christ. May He ever remain the one attraction among the many distractions. And may He ever continue to be the joy and delight of our hearts as we taste and see that He is good indeed.

Let us suppose that some friends invite us to eat their home. At mealtime they want us to sample the fine whole-wheat bread they just made. However, before we can try it, we hear a detailed discourse describing all the wonderful things about the tasty loaf of bread. As our appetites quicken, we hear them winding down their lecture on the bread's ingredients, nutrients, taste, and texture—only to have them whisk it away at the end. Baffled, we wonder how useful an exercise the experience was—learning all about the fine qualities of the bread, yet stopping short of actually tasting and seeing that it was good.

While few people would actually do that to us in everyday life, in the spiritual realm it, unfortunately, occurs all too often. The bread of life contains all the spiritual nourishment ever needed for spiritual restoration. However, all too often we test this bread but never taste it, describe it but not digest it, and analyze it but not assimilate it.

The Scriptures present an intimately intertwined relationship between themselves and the living Word. Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible are both referred to as the Bread of Life. Moreover, both were conceived by the Holy Spirit, who leads us to encounter the living Word in the written Word. Both give spiritual strength and life to all who taste and see that the Lord and His Word are good.

Scripture interchangeably uses such descriptive terms as "taste," "eat," "rejoice," and "delight" to illustrate our intimate relationship with the Lord and His Word. Jeremiah said: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer 15:16). Notice the progression in this text. God's words are, first of all, to be found, implying a desire to search for them. Second, finding such words is not enough in

itself, for then we must eat them. And finally, partaking of the life-giving words brings profound joy to the heart. George Mueller accustomed himself to continue feeding on the Word until he rejoiced in God, and then he felt ready to face the new day.

David declared: "How *sweet* are Your words to my *taste*, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps 119:103). And, "I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your law is my *delight*" (verse 174; see also verses 97, 111, 127, 162). And he says of God's judgments: "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:10).

As we look at such biblical references, we clearly sense that the divine bread of life can be personally experienced as surely as eating our daily physical bread. Christ, is ever revealing Himself in His Word, encouraging and empowering us. And we can experience it as immediately as tasting fine food, and as readily as enjoying being with a faithful friend.

Jeremiah and David clearly come across as taking their time to feast on the words of God. They are not interested merely in thinking about the words, or even hearing them. But they linger in God's presence, slowly savoring every bit and morsel of His spiritual meal, and assimilating its nutrients into every fabric of their being. Each summons every faculty to such spiritual activity. The reason they delighted themselves in the word of the Lord is that they delighted themselves in the Lord of the Word.

Jesus, in John 6, referred several times to Himself as the "bread of life" (verses 35, 48, 51). Then He added that this bread is His flesh, which when eaten gives life eternal (verses 51, 53). Said He: "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (verse 55). Whenever we eat, it should remind us that He gave His body for us, and whenever we drink we remember that He spilled His blood for us.

Yes, we receive life from eating His flesh as we receive it from appropriating His words. "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (verse 63). In studying Scripture we are meeting the Saviour. For in seeking His words we find ourselves "brought into communion with Christ."¹⁶ As we feed on the Word of the Lord we are feasting on the Lord of the Word, and in receiving life from His Word, we are receiving *His* very life.

"He who by faith receives the Word is receiving the *very life* and character of God."¹⁷ Andrew Murray compares the word with prayer, declaring that in prayer we give ourselves to God, and go up to dwell with Him, while in the word, God gives Himself to us, and comes down to dwell with us.¹⁸

In Christ giving Himself to us in His Word, He also speaks to us just as He spoke to His contemporaries when He lived on earth. I used to wish that I could hear Christ's voice speaking specifically to me. But I learned in time that He indeed does. "The word of the living God is not merely written, but spoken. The Bible is God's voice speaking to us, just as surely as though we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe would we open God's Word. . . . The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One."¹⁹

In childhood we first hear before we are able to speak. Similarly, if we do not listen to God speak to us, then we do not learn how to speak with Him. Unfortunately, even then we often do more talking to God than listening to Him. "To speak words that reach and touch God, affecting and influencing the power of the unseen world, depends entirely on our hearing God's voice," Andrew Murray explains. "The extent to which we listen will determine the extent to which we learn to speak in the voice and the language that God hears." Murray continues: "As the words of Christ enter our very hearts, becoming and influencing our lives, our words will enter His heart and influence Him."²⁰

It is true that we are what we eat. If we eat poor food, we have poor health, but if we eat good food, we have good health. More than that, we biologically become the very food we eat and assimilate. When we feed on Jesus, He becomes our health and life. For "what food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. . . . A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that *His life becomes our life*."²¹

No wonder that we may find even some Bible scholars, who devote themselves to the study of the Scriptures, spiritually anemic and lacking the joy of the Lord. They squander their precious time losing sight of the Lord in His Word. Knowing the theory but not the power of the Word, they analyze but do not assimilate. Such

individuals delve into but do not digest, critique but not consume, the Word.

While it helps to spend some time in analysis, we must still go beyond that to taste and see that the bread of life is good. Only here will we truly find spiritual vitality, and without it we become famished and emaciated. "We must be Christians in whom the Word is never separated from the living God Himself. We must live as Christians to whom God in heaven speaks every day and all day long."²²

But some may say that they tried to taste the Word of God, but unfortunately found it neither good nor sweet. In fact, it was bland and boring to them. Consequently, either they have given up Bible study altogether or they just read it out of routine or duty. Why do we, then, suffer such deprivation and lack of joy in God's Word? At least five thoughts come to mind:

First of all, have we experienced Christ's love and fellowship in our lives? If we haven't, then it is understandable why we do not enjoy His Word. When we genuinely love someone, we become quite interested in knowing about that person. Likewise, we need to experience a loving relationship with the living Word in order to delight ourselves in His written Word.

Second, we tend to be impatient, expecting quick results. We give up easily unless a desired outcome is immediately forthcoming. But no project will produce worthwhile results unless we have put considerable effort into it. Things of value take time to cultivate and enjoy. We often ask whether doing something is *fun* when we really need to ask whether something is *right*. This applies particularly in the spiritual realm.

Of course, some things are fun as soon as you start them, but that must not be the main criterion. On the other hand, there are many things in life worth doing, but we do not always feel like doing them. Yet we do them because we know they are right to do. With time such worthwhile endeavors become increasingly easier and more enjoyable. Then they become *real fun*.

Most of us know from experience that it is not that easy to start and sustain a physical exercise program. Take jogging, for example. It is not initially fun, and it takes discipline to keep it up. Our sore and aching bodies tempt us to give it all up for good.

However, with perseverance, such activity becomes progressively invigorating, enjoyable, and even something we actually look forward to.

Third, we are so used to tasting and consuming unspiritual foods that our spiritual taste buds become too depraved to enjoy wholesome spiritual foods. The body craves whatever we get it used to. How can we enjoy the bread of life if we have been feasting on unspiritual junk foods? How can we relish studying the Bible if we have been saturating our minds with whatever we find in the hedonistic media? Or if we have been caught up in what the world has to offer, how can we enjoy what the Word has to offer?

If we get so conditioned from childhood to consume inordinate amounts of sugar in our food, then whatever is naturally sweet is no longer sweet enough for us. We even pour more sugar on breakfast cereals whose first ingredient is sugar! Therefore, we should not be surprised and become discouraged if the word of God does not taste good initially. We need to give God time to recondition and recreate our spiritual taste buds. Each of us needs to alter our spiritual diet by eating His Word and staying away from spiritual junk foods. He will help us recover the capacity to appreciate and enjoy the wholesome spiritual food that He offers us.

Fourth, even the most tasty food does not appeal to us when we get sick. But we still must eat in order to regain our stamina and strength. I remember my childhood years when I would become ill. My mother would prepare my favorite food and bring it to my bedside. I would take a bite or two of it and then discard it. I simply did not have the appetite or the taste. Under normal circumstances I would have quickly devoured it. Now she would encourage me to eat, explaining that her food tasted as great as before, and that I especially needed to eat it on account of my illness.

It is likely that when we are spiritually sick, spiritual food does not feel appetizing to us. However, we must not go merely by feeling, but by principle. We must eat in order to regain our strength, and soon we will recover our appetite for spiritual food and it will become an integral part of our everyday lives.

Finally, we need to keep in mind that discouragement is one of the most formidable weapons Satan uses against us, especially in the area of communion with God. He knows that for us to continue

such communion would break his power over us. Therefore, he tries his hardest to defeat us, realizing that if he succeeds here he would overwhelm us in many other areas as well.

Years ago when I resolved to commit myself to a devotional life, I decided to do that every morning. I chose mornings because that is the best way to begin the day, energized by a hearty spiritual breakfast. However, at times circumstances forced me to forgo my spiritual breakfast. Satan would seize on that, causing me to become demoralized and to question the depth of my commitment. A sense of failure would flood me, affecting my entire day.

One day as I sought God's help, He impressed me with the commonsense thought that while the first meal of the day is most important one, still if you sometimes miss your breakfast, it does not mean you have to go hungry all day. You still can eat a late breakfast, lunch, or supper. Certainly eating something sometime during the day is much better than simply eating nothing. The thought was a timely spiritual insight and apt analogy. It does not mean that our entire day has to be ruined if sometimes we miss our devotional time in the morning. We definitely do not have to be spiritually famished all day, for we can take time at noon, in the evening, or sometime between to meet with God for spiritual nourishment. Now if I have to miss my devotional time in the morning (which I never like to do), then I make sure to satisfy my spiritual hunger later in the day.

Of course, analysis of the word has its place, but our priority here is to experience Christ's life becoming our life. The ultimate purpose of God giving His Word was not merely to dispense helpful information but to invest His life in us, so that His life may in turn become ours. For only His life can quicken and transform ours, molding and fashioning them after His likeness. Jesus said: "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). They contain His very spirit. And whoever by faith receives His words receives His life (John 5:24) and the semblance of His character.

Endnotes

This article is taken from chapters 10 and 11 in Dr. Samaan's new book, *Christ's Way to Spiritual Growth* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub.

(See description on the following page.)

Assn., 1995), and was preached as a sermon at the National Convention of the Adventist Theological Society on May 19, 1995.

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4 White, *Testimony Treasures* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1949), vol. 2, p. 210. (Italics supplied.)

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