

Perspective Digest



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The saying that "God loves the sinner and hates the sin" is biblically correct and can be affirmed by the writings of both Testaments. Most times the focus is on the love for the sinner—and that is good. However, God's hatred for sin is also essential in the plan of salvation. This divine hatred can be called "the wrath of God."

The wrath of God is His displeasure against sin and evil. It is God's just and righteous response of judgment against sin, apostasy, unfairness, and injustice both within and without the community of God's people. In the Old Testament, the most frequent cause of divine wrath on God's people was centered on apostasy: (1) especially in the form of idolatry (Ex. 32:10; Deut. 4:25; 1 Kings 11:9; Jer. 2:23-28; Eze. 6:12; 8:5-18) and (2) social injustice, especially the oppression of the poor and weak (Isa. 1:23, 24; 42:24, 25; Jer. 21:12; Eze. 22:27-31). The wrath of God is prominent in the Pentateuch but more especially in the writings of the prophets.

When God's people apostatized in idolatry or social injustice, He used surrounding nations as instruments of wrath on His people. He later turned on those nations, however, and judged them for their sin as well. The prophets made prophecies about nearby nations that the Lord had used previously to judge His people (Isa. 10:12, 13; Jeremiah 46-51; Ezekiel 25-32; Amos 1:3-2:3). Babylon, Assyria, Moab, Syria, Philistia, Sudan, Egypt, Arabia, and Phoenicia were mentioned in these prophecies. Therefore, God punished all nations for their sins, not only Israel and Judah. God dealt with sin wherever it was found. Apart from the use of military invasion, defeat, and destruction from other surrounding nations, natural disasters such as disease, plagues, locust attacks, famine, and drought (Deut. 28:15-68; 1 Kings 8:33-40) were also manifestations of God's wrath against sin.

This wrath is also the basis for divine judgment on the eschatological Day of the Lord. This is to be a time in the future that the Old Testament prophets warned God's people about. This Day of the Lord is a day of wrath, a day of universal judgment on all sinful individuals and nations (Isa. 34:2, 8; Jer. 46:10; Zeph. 1:18; 2:2; 3:8). It is to be a day when God will do away with sin and sinners forever.

In the New Testament, Paul draws on the prophetic theme of the Day of the Lord as a day of wrath. He transformed this Old Testament theme by applying it to Christ. In different parts of his Epistles, Paul refers to the day of Christ in several ways (1 Cor. 1:8; 3:13; 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Tim. 1:12, 18; 4:8). For Paul, this day was to bring wrath on sinners who have disobeyed the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2:8-12). They will receive divine wrath as their reward at the Second Coming (Rom.

2:5, 8).

In the Book of Revelation, the wrath of God is also evident as judgment against sin and sinners, especially at the Second Coming (Rev. 6:16, 17; 11:18). It is described in relation to wine (Rev. 14:8, 9; 16:19) and manifested in the pouring out of the seven last plagues (15:1, 7; 16:1).

God's wrath as a cup of wine, which results in drunkenness, goes back to the Old Testament (Job 21:20; Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15-38). The treading of grapes in a winepress was also Old Testament imagery for divine judgment and wrath on the enemies of God (Isa. 63:1-6; Joel 3:13). Immediately preceding Revelation 15, there is a recurrence of the word *wrath* in chapter 14—the wine of wrath of Babylon's fornication (vs. 8), the wine of wrath of God (vs. 10), and the winepress of the wrath of God (vss. 19, 20). This follows the Old Testament imagery of wine as wrath. While those who receive the mark of the beast drink the wine of the impure sexual passion of spiritual Babylon and become part of her, they will also become recipients of the wine of the wrath of God.

Revelation is very clear that the seven last plagues are poured out as God's wrath on those who drink Babylon's wine and receive the mark of the beast in disobedience to divine warning (chap. 14:8, 10; 16:2). All of God's enemies will be finally judged and destroyed at the end of the Day of the Lord, the day of wrath (Rev. 19:11-21; 20:1-15).

Divine Wrath and the Cross: Atonement

So far it has all been God's wrath and judgment against sin. Where is the love in all this? The Bible shows that the love is revealed at the Cross in the plan of salvation. And this returns to the statement: God loves the sinner but hates the sin. How can a God who hates sin destroy it without destroying the sinner who loves the sin? This is the question that the plan of redemption answers.

Many world religions teach that when their gods are angered by the misbehavior (sin) of their followers/worshippers, the gods need to be appeased—usually through sacrifices. In this way the wrath/anger of the god or gods is turned away from the worshipper, and the god or gods are no longer displeased. This is called propitiation.

But in Christianity, the sinner is doomed to face the wrath of God against sin. God gave Christ, however, as a substitute for the sinner. Because Christ carried our sins on Himself at the cross, He faced the wrath of God for all sinners. He became the propitiation for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2; 4:10) and therefore met the demands of divine law and justice.

His death satisfied and appeased a God who hates sin and is radically opposed to it. His holiness and justice demand that atonement be made to change the condemned condition of the sinner, who faces the wrath of God. And love provides this atonement. Divine love makes provision of propitiation for the sinner to be received by faith (Rom. 3:25). In the end, God is just and the justifier of those who have faith (who believe) in Jesus Christ (vs. 26).

The Synoptic Gospels present a description of Christ as our propitiation by drawing from the Old Testament imagery of the cup as a symbol of God's wrath. The agony of Jesus' suffering in Gethsemane is portrayed as "this cup" (Matt. 26: 39, 42). Through His suffering at Calvary, Christ

tasted death for all sinners (Heb. 2:9) by drinking the cup of God's wrath to the dregs. Jesus "feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. . . . It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God."¹ "The death that God endured on the cross is the price His love pays for taking sin seriously while still loving sinners."²

It, therefore, makes sense that those who do not accept Christ's death as a propitiation for their sins will face God's wrath for themselves (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:1). "As Christ bore the sins of every transgressor so the sinner who will not believe in Christ as his personal Saviour, . . . will bear the penalty of his transgression."³ As the Book of Revelation points out, unrepentant sinners will ultimately drink the wine of God's undiluted wrath (Rev. 14:9, 10). This will be the fate of all sinners who hold on to sin until the end. This is the fate described in the biblical pictures of judgment.

Divine Wrath, Christian Life, and Ministry: Testament

What is the significance of divine wrath for Christian life and ministry? This is an age in which the existence of sin is often denied. Morals have become lax, resulting in abounding licentiousness and immorality.

One of the reasons for this is the presentation of God in modern ministry today. Many churches and ministers present only the picture of a loving God and have excluded aspects of the gospel that include His character of holiness, righteousness, and judgment against sin. Words like *wrath* and *fear* are not in their vocabulary as they present God and our attitude toward Him. The Bible, however, is very clear that these are essential parts of the gospel. Modern ministers and churches today have minimized these fearsome aspects of God to accommodate all people of different backgrounds who are seeking for God (potential postmodern seekers). This approach, however, presents an incomplete gospel and results in spiritual deception.

Because of these presentations of God by modern Christian ministry, people have lost a sense of how sinful sin is and how much God hates it. "The real tragedy is that we have lost much of the knowledge of God, against whom we have sinned. We do not even feel that we have much to repent of, because we're not always sure about just how much we have offended God with our sins. We can become dull to just how bad sin really is. Modern religious sentimentality often minimizes repugnance toward sin. And because sin doesn't anger us anymore, perhaps it becomes harder to realize that sin arouses the wrath of a Holy God."⁴

One major result of these false gospel presentations is cheap grace. Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes it as "the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance. . . . [It] is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross."⁵

However, it is the duty and responsibility of the ministers and Christians to be true to the gospel message and to present the complete picture of God—a God who loves all people but hates sin. They are to point out that it is precisely because God loves humankind that He hates sin and has a plan to do away with it forever. He hates sin because it corrupts His children and does them eternal

harm.

Marvin Moore illustrates this point with this scenario: He asked a father of two teenage daughters "How would you feel if you came home one evening and found an intruder assaulting one of your daughters?"

Harry looked at me with a puzzled expression on his face, and then said, "Murderous."

"And how would you want God to feel?" I asked.

"Murderous," he said.

"In other words . . . you would want a God who was just as angry about what was happening as you were."

"That's right," he said.

Marvin Moore continues, "It's the parents with the greatest love for their children who do the most to save them from abuse. And it's anger that will fuel their actions. Without anger, we would watch abuse and fail to understand the seriousness of what was happening. Actually, millions of people long for an angry God. "Where was God when my child got hit by a car?" they demand. "Where was God when I lost my job?" "Where was God when I got cancer?"⁶

Just like loving parents will fight to protect and save their children from harm because of love, God will fight sin as an enemy until He gets rid of it eternally. Therefore it can be said that divine wrath is God's angry love against sin and sinners. Divine wrath is when divine love becomes angry.

The questions are: What is your testament about who God is? What kind of God would you present to the world as a Christian?

"A Santa Claus kind of God who exists for the pleasure of humanity, to give them whatever they want? A God who tolerates, excuses, and permits sin in order to accommodate all? A God without awe or fear."⁷

OR

A God whose heart is hurt by all the evil and trouble that sin has caused in the world? A God who hates sin and is working out a powerful plan to punish and get rid of all sin forever? A God of justice. A God of righteousness and fairness. This God of wrath is a God to love.

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Considering Levitical Food Laws

Scripture provides sound, specific counsel about what you should eat—and what you should not eat.

Jiří Moskala

The Apostle Paul boldly declares that God's kingdom does not consist of "eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).¹ Seventh-day Adventist doctrines center on God, the redemption in Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. The person, deeds, and teachings of Jesus Christ lie at the heart of our faith. The proper lifestyle springs from this faith in Him. A true religion of love leads to right choices in the matter of eating and drinking, because we were not only created to enjoy food (Gen. 1:31) but also to reflect God's glory in our habits of eating (1 Cor. 10:31).

It is crucial to note that God's first commandments to humans were related to eating (Gen. 2:16, 17). The Hebrew word for "command" is used here for the first time. But unfortunately, the fall into sin was connected with food, too (3:6). One can observe how important food is by the fact that the first temptation of Jesus related to eating (Matt. 4:1-4). The way of eating and its choices bring consequences.

God's legislation of Pentateuchal dietary laws, however, where certain food is prohibited for human consumption, was not given for the purpose of gaining salvation. Eating or fasting does not convey anyone into heaven. These regulations God gave to holy people! They were already saved, liberated from the bondage of slavery, and should maintain their holiness. They received God's gift of food legislation because they were holy.

In Deuteronomy it is aptly explained: "You are the sons of the Lord your God. . . . You are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession" (14:1, 2, ESV) and only then God commands: "Do not eat any detestable thing. These are the animals you may eat . . ." (vss. 4, 5). This is the correct and the only proper sequence of things: First comes God's grace, and then He provides His instruction on how to live in holiness. People thus respond to this revelation in thankful recognition of His loving and unique leadership.

Response to questions about diet should be God-centered, not law-centered. Jesus did not eat any unclean food (Matt. 5:17-20; 15:16-20), and such an answer sets a Christocentric tone to discussions with those who question our food choice. This makes us known as people who follow Jesus and are in love with Him.

The Mosaic dietary laws as recorded in Leviticus 11 are unique. No such list of clean and unclean animals is known in the Bible outside of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, or in the Near

Eastern ancient literature. This legislation is not only about eating or restraining from consuming pork. This list is broad and comprehensive and includes all categories of living creatures as it is seen in the detailed literary structure of Leviticus 11, in which sections A and A' deal with the universal division of animals for human consumption.

Leviticus 11 can be outlined in the following way:

Introduction, vss. 1, 2a

1. Formula of divine speech, vs. 1
2. Specific living creatures may be eaten, vs. 2a

A. Edible and inedible living creatures, vss. 2b–23

1. Land living creatures, vss. 2b–8
 - a. Edible land creatures, vss. 2b, 3
 - b. Inedible land creatures, vss. 4–8
2. Water living creatures, vss. 9–12
 - a. Edible water animals, vs. 9
 - b. Inedible water animals, vss. 10–12
3. Air living creatures, vss. 13–23
 - a. Inedible birds, vss. 13–19
 - b. Winged insects, vss. 20–23
 - i. Inedible winged insects, vs. 20
 - ii. Edible winged insects, vss. 21, 22
 - iii. Inedible winged insects, vs. 23

B. Acquired uncleanness resulting from contact with carcasses, vss. 24–40

1. Unclean dead land creatures, vss. 24–28
 - a. Introducing the principle, vss. 24, 25
 - b. Carcasses of land creatures, vss. 26–28
2. Swarming dead creatures, vss. 29–38
3. Clean dead land creatures, vss. 39, 40

C. Inedible swarming living creatures, vss. 41–43

Conclusion, vss. 44–47

1. Basic rationale: Be holy for I am holy, vss. 44, 45
2. Final summary, vss. 46, 47

Scholars usually treat the laws of clean/unclean animals/food in the narrow context of Leviticus 11–15. Jacob Milgrom, however, rightly claims that “the diet laws of Leviticus 11 cannot be comprehended in isolation” and that “they form part of a larger dietary system. . . . Only when the system is viewed in its totality does the significance of Leviticus 11 become clear.”² This is why he begins the exploration of the subject with Genesis 9:3 and 4.

This, however, is not sufficient. The starting point for the explanation of the dietary code regarding permitted and forbidden animals has to be put within an even larger context, namely

Creation itself.

There have been many attempts to explain the rationale behind the distinction of clean and unclean animals/food. At least 14 theories/hypotheses have been suggested by scholars: the arbitrary command explanation; the cultic explanation; the sociological explanation; the symbolic explanation; the didactic explanation; the psychological/repulsiveness explanation; the taboo and totemism explanation; the death-life antithesis explanation; the anthropological explanation; the nature/culture boundary explanation; the ethical/moral explanation; the sacrificial paradigm explanation; the economic explanation; and the hygienic/health explanation. Unfortunately, there is still no consensus.

Two main objections are given against the observance of the Mosaic dietary laws regarding clean and unclean food: (1) selectivity—choosing only one Pentateuchal uncleanness, namely uncleanness of animals, and neglecting others, is arbitrary; (2) the New Testament explicitly abolishes laws of clean and unclean dietary regulations. Thus, many Christians claim that they are under no obligation to observe these food regulations, which they consider obsolete. Are the laws regarding clean and unclean animals of Leviticus 11 still valid?

Response to these objections involves reasoning from different angles to demonstrate the validity of these dietary instructions. Here are the main arguments for maintaining their relevancy.

1. Respect for the Creator God

The principal rationale behind the distinction between clean and unclean food is respect for the Creator God. This theological concept of respecting the Creator is also strongly present in the New Testament (John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 14:7). There are at least 10 close connections between the first Creation Genesis story and Leviticus 11. The parallelism between Creation and the Mosaic dietary laws demonstrates a literary design and main rationale behind these laws.

First link: key terminology. Key lexicography occurs in both chapters in the forms of nouns (e.g., *earth, water, seas, animals, birds, kind*), demonstrative pronouns (e.g., *these, all*), Divine name (*God*) and verbs (e.g., *eat, separate, be holy*).

Second link: universal taxonomy. The universal taxonomy of the animal kingdom (Leviticus 11) is built on the universal view of Creation (Genesis 1). In Leviticus 11 the Hebrew word for “all,” “everything,” and “everyone” occurs 36 times. These occurrences testify to the universal view of the author of the chapter, who sees the animal kingdom as a whole and classifies it comprehensively. This points back to Creation where the same word is used 29 times. God’s whole creation is finished and classified as “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Third link: three habitats for the living creatures. According to the first Creation story, God created three habitats for the living creatures: land (vss. 2, 9, 10), water (vss. 2, 6, 7, 9, 10), and air/sky/firmament (vss. 6–8). In Leviticus 11, the same three habitats are implemented for living creatures (land [vss. 1–8, 41–43]; water [vss. 9–12]; air [13–23]). This threefold division of the created world is the foundation of biblical cosmology, and it is significant that they are mentioned in

the same sequence.

Fourth link: four categories of living creatures. Living creatures were created to fill space—the land, water, and air (Gen. 1:20, 21, 24, 25). Four categories of living creatures were made: animals, fish, birds, and “swarmers.” This Creation scheme is reflected in Leviticus 11 in its classification of the whole animal kingdom into four categories of living creatures, although with slightly different terminology. Careful comparative analysis of different categories of Leviticus 11 and Genesis 1 reveals that both chapters describe the same four categories of living creatures.

Carmichael acknowledges the connection between Leviticus 11 and the Creation story: “The clean and unclean water creatures and the birds of the sacrificial and dietary rules in Leviticus 11:9–19 and Deuteronomy 14:9–20 have a fundamental link to day five of creation.”³

Fifth link: the same rules for reproduction. According to the first Creation story, reproduction must be “according to its kind.” The Hebrew word for “kind,” with its various forms, is a keyword of Genesis 1 where it occurs 10 times out of the 31 times that it is used in the Hebrew Bible. The expression also occurs in Genesis 6 and 7 (seven times), Leviticus 11 (nine times) and Deuteronomy 14 (four times). Creation is about the establishment of order. God sets boundaries, and living creatures of different species and of different kinds are expected to keep them. Leviticus 11 preserves that Creation order and respects these boundaries.

Sixth link: the concept of separation. Creation is a process of separation, division, and distinction. The word for “separation” is used five times in the Creation story itself (Gen. 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18; outside of Genesis 1 it is used 37 times in the Hebrew text). God separated light from darkness, day from night, the heavens from the waters (sea), land from water, the Sabbath from the other six days, etc.

The idea of separation or division explicitly connects the Creation account with the dietary laws. This term is also used in Leviticus 10:10 (once); 11:47 (once); and 20:24–26 (four times), thus occurring 11 times in the passages under study. This phenomenon is very important considering that in the Pentateuch itself it is used only 20 times. More than half of these occurrences are related to our key texts. It is crucial to notice that this word is not used elsewhere in Leviticus 11–15 or in the Holiness Code. This does not appear to be the result of chance; it reflects intentionality and design. This link shows that the same Creation activity (i.e., separation) must be involved in the decision-making process when God intervenes and separates/distinguishes between clean and unclean food. It is His ultimate decision. When humans distinguish between clean and unclean food, they are participating in God’s creative activity. Thus the dietary laws teach their observers the ability to choose in everyday matters of life what is right, and to help them make right decisions.

Seventh link: the concept of locomotion. Created life is not stationary; motion is involved. Each species has its own sphere and can move in that realm. This is stressed in the second couplet of God’s creative activity—on the fourth, fifth, and sixth days. God brings forth entities that have locomotion: first Sun and Moon, then birds, fish, animals, and finally humans. The feature of motion in the Creation story is stressed by the idea of separation (which is also a kind of motion). The

element of locomotion is reflected in Leviticus 11.

This is a feature of the Creation account that Mary Douglas stresses in her interpretation of the Mosaic dietary laws. Her dictum that “any class of creatures which is not equipped for the right kind of locomotion in its element is contrary to holiness”⁴ may go too far; nevertheless, it is important to observe that locomotion plays a role in the identification of clean living creatures according to Leviticus 11. Though motion may be a characteristic of unclean animals, dietary laws thus stress motion as essential in the enumeration of clean animals, such as split hoofs for quadrupeds, fins for fish, and hopping for edible locusts.

Eighth link: the concept of eating. God provides food for humans. Even though the diet was changed, the same principle remains—God as the Creator points out what is good and proper for human consumption (Gen. 1:29; Lev. 11:1–23, 41–47). God’s given diet for the whole created primeval world was vegetarian. Humans and animals were given “herbage,” “herb,” and “plant” as food (Gen. 1:29, 30).

Ninth link: God as the subject of Creation and of the dietary laws. God is the subject of Creation; therefore, He determines what is clean and unclean (Gen. 1:1; Lev. 11:2). God is the Creator and the Giver of life. He is also the Giver of the dietary regulations. The goal for the act of eating is the sustaining of life. His Sovereignty is stressed by this observation.

Tenth link: the concept of holiness and imitatio Dei. The concept of holiness is at the conclusion of the first Creation account as well as at the conclusion of the dietary laws (Gen. 2:3; Lev. 11:44, 45), and functions as a climax to these two chapters. Humans were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27); and according to Leviticus 11:44, 45, they must imitate God, i.e., be holy, as He is holy. Milgrom aptly says: “Holiness means *imitatio Dei*—the life of godliness.”⁵

Furthermore, there are at least three important links between the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and Genesis 2. Besides the key terminology used in these two chapters, there is a significant concept expressed in relation to eating in Genesis 2 that is later repeated in Leviticus 11. God’s first positive and negative commands are given in relationship to eating (Gen. 2:16, 17). In Leviticus 11 there is also first a positive command (vs. 3) and then a negative one (vs. 4). These commands have in both cases exactly the same idea: what you may and may not eat.

The third important issue in the second Creation story in connection with Leviticus 11 is the perspective of death or separation in relation to the forbidden. The transgression of the command “you may not eat” has as its ultimate end death: explicitly stated in Genesis 2:17 and implicitly included in connection with the dietary laws, separation from the holiness of God brings as a final result: death. God is life, and everything in relation to Him has life. Disobedience always brings complications and death (Lev. 7:26, 27; Deut. 7:12–15; 28:58–61).

Creation is the overall umbrella for discovering a rationale behind the biblical dietary laws, and the theme of Creation unites different factors of this rationale which may be discovered from the biblical text. Thus, behind the legislation of clean and unclean animals/food lies a deep theological reason, which is the respect for the Creator, the Holy One.

2. Two Categories of Uncleanness

The 11 kinds of Pentateuchal dietary uncleanness⁶ can be classified into two basic categories: one type is temporary; the other, permanent. These two types can be differentiated in the following way:

A. Permanent uncleanness uniquely characterizes the dietary laws. The type of uncleanness of the unclean animals is permanent, and thus natural, hereditary, non-cultic, and universal, while the other kind is acquired, temporary, and ritual/ceremonial. An unclean animal is born unclean and dies unclean. This uncleanness means that an unclean animal is not fit for human consumption. This definition is evident in Leviticus 11:47, in which unclean equals uneatable; and clean, edible: ""You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.""

B. Impurity of living unclean animals is not contagious. There are five sources of uncleanness: carcasses, corpses, various skin diseases, mildew, and sexual discharges—blood or semen. No living unclean animal, however, belongs to this category of the "fathers" of uncleanness because they cannot cause uncleanness, transmit its impurity, or pollute someone or something. The fact that natural uncleanness is nontransferable indicates that it is of a different nature from that of ritual/cultic impurity.

C. Touching or carrying a living unclean animal does not result in exclusion from social or religious activities such as visiting the temple or worshiping in the sanctuary. One could ride a donkey or caress a dog, and then enter the temple without any hindrance to worship God.

D. There is no provision for making unclean animals clean. It is impossible to cleanse or cure this uncleanness. There is no purification rite capable of making an unclean animal clean. Cooking, slaughtering, or even the time element cannot change it.

E. There is no punishment for disobedience against these food prescriptions, no penalty for the actual eating of the meat of an unclean animal. This does not mean, however, that these dietary laws are taken lightly. They belong to the category of sins that were not atoned by rituals in the sanctuary, such as the moral offenses of murder, marital unfaithfulness, or idolatry.⁷

F. The dietary laws are not related to the Old Testament earthly sanctuary services or to the visible presence of the Lord (so-called resident Shekinah) among God's people. No cultic ceremony is prescribed when transgression of these dietary laws occurs, in contrast to other kinds of uncleanness.

G. A comparison between Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 demonstrates that the repetition and abbreviation of the dietary code in Deuteronomy 14 is free from ceremonial or ritual regulations connected with the sanctuary, i.e., holy space.

H. The origin of the dietary laws is presented in the Pentateuch as being much older than laws related to other kinds of uncleanness; they are pre-Mosaic. The distinction between clean and unclean animals was known in the antediluvian world in connection with Noah's flood (Gen. 7:2, 3) which is strong evidence that they form an integral part of universal law, and thus should form an

integral part of the laws given to Adam in the Garden of Eden.

I. The Pentateuchal dietary regulations are applicable to the “sojourner/alien.” From the whole corpus of uncleanness of Leviticus 11–15, only these laws are applicable to the “alien sojourner” via the law of hunting, which was binding on the Israelites as well as on aliens (Lev. 17:13). Thus the universality of the dietary code is stressed.

This comparison of different kinds of uncleanness in the Pentateuch clearly demonstrate that choosing the uncleanness of certain animals and rejecting that of others is not an arbitrary choice, because this impurity is of a different category.

3. Call to Holiness

The call to holiness, the dominant theme in the Book of Leviticus, contains a strong emphasis and admonition for Christians in the New Testament writings. The *imitatio Dei* is an ongoing demand. It is significant that Peter’s reason for being holy (1 Peter 1:15, 16) is substantiated by the text derived from the passage dealing with the Mosaic dietary laws (Lev. 11:44–45).

4. Abomination Practices

The close connection between dietary prohibitions, warning against idolatry, and prohibition of all immoral sexual behavior (all three activities are called “abomination”) is a strong indication that this triune ordinance has to find continuity in the New Testament era. The moral aspect of the dietary law plays a crucial role in the Old Testament (Lev. 11:44, 45; Deut. 14:3; Eze. 33:25, 26).

5. Prohibition of Blood Consumption

In our culture of consumerism, it is important to cultivate respect for life. The Pentateuchal dietary regulations include this ethical dimension by stressing the prohibition of blood consumption in seven passages in the Pentateuch: Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17; 7:26, 27; 17:10–14; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:16, 23–25; 15:23. The prohibition of blood is explicitly given as a command after the Flood (Gen. 9:4) when God gives a new creation order and for the first time allows humans to eat the flesh of living creatures.

The prohibition of eating blood in Leviticus 11 is further implied by two factors: (1) eating blood is forbidden in the larger context (Lev. 7:26, 27; 17:10–14), where it is mentioned in connection to eating clean meat; and (2) clean animals that are permitted for human consumption are not primarily carnivorous, thus the command of not eating blood is applied to the eating behavior of animals as well. It is true that some unclean animals also do not eat blood. To identify an animal as clean solely because it is herbivorous is insufficient, even though this characteristic is significant. There are additional specific characteristics for recognizing clean animals and distinguishing them from the unclean ones.

Even though God permitted the eating of meat, humans were still to have reverence for the life which he would be required to take. This is the reason for the command to “pour out blood” and the

prohibition against eating it. In addition to this, the manner in which living creatures were to be slaughtered was also referred to (Deut. 12:21), although the actual specifics of slaughtering were nowhere explained in the Torah. Later, in the Mosaic Law, a more detailed explanation of the prohibitions against the consumption of blood is given: The blood of animals and birds is prohibited (Lev. 7:26), but not that of fish or clean locusts.

The removal of blood is a significant lesson for humanity. Blood is a symbol of life (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, 14), which belongs to the Creator. Reverence for life is thus codified. Human beings must be constantly aware of the concession that God has made in allowing them to take the life of another creature for the sake of food. They were also to be reminded of this responsibility as beings created in the image of God. Their humanness and humaneness must be maintained even in the act of killing. They need to keep in mind that they are not God. They must be reminded that they are dependent on their Creator, who alone is the Giver of life.

From the fact that in the beginning a vegetarian diet is given to animals as well as to humans, and that in the future kingdom of God it will again be the same (Isa 11:7), it is plain that the eating of blood is also not natural for animals and is a trespass on God's given order from Creation. This is why mammals and birds that are primarily carnivorous are excluded from the list of edible animals. It means that the preservation of the original sacred life (a main feature of creation) is envisaged by these dietary regulations. Firmage correctly observes: "Unlike the rest of the code of impurities, the dietary laws place a value on behavior and so belong in the category of moral imperatives."⁸

6. Health

The aspect of health should not be overlooked. Even though the primary purpose of the dietary laws is not health, this dimension is one factor that must be taken seriously, because it is a quality of life valid at any time.

Holiness means wholeness and completeness. On that well-recognized basis, there is also a close relationship between holiness and health, that health is one important aspect of holiness. It is significant to note that there is no specific word in biblical Hebrew for the English equivalent of "health." People usually understand health in the negative sense as the absence of sickness. Negatively stated, a healthy person is one who is not sick. The World Health Organization, however, defines health in a more profound way: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."⁹

When God or biblical writers speak about health, they use different language from what we would expect. In Hebrew thinking, health expresses the totality of wellness of the human being. The physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspects are included. The psychosomatic approach can be discerned from the Hebrew Bible. In the words of Hasel: "Health in the biblical view is not one particular quality among many that pertain to the human being; it is the wholeness and completeness of being in itself, and in relation to God, to fellow humans, and to the world."¹⁰ Biblically speaking, health is total well-being, a comprehensive wholeness.

Even though in biblical Hebrew there is no specific word for *health*, nevertheless the idea is expressed by words we in our culture do not expect. The concept of health can be expressed by Hebrew words for “wholeness, well-being, peace” (Gen. 37:14; 1 Sam. 25:6; Isa. 57:18, 19) and for “holy, complete, whole” (Lev. 11:44, 45; 21:23; Deut. 14:21), and for “clean, pure, genuine” (Lev. 13:17–20; 14:9; 2 Kings 5:14).

The Hebrew Bible has a concern for health. God promised: “If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, . . . I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you” (Ex. 15:26). God also stated that if the people would obey His laws, pay attention to His commandments, and keep covenant with Him, He would keep them “from every disease” (Deut. 7:15), but if they would not obey, He would bring upon them “all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded” (28:60). God’s blessing is described in such a way that it includes good health (often stated negatively), prosperity, and promise of long life (Gen. 15:15; Ex. 23:25, 26; Deut. 28:27, 35; Ps. 32:3–5; Prov. 3:8). God takes care of all our physical needs. It is God who heals (Gen. 20:17; Ps. 103:3).

Humankind was created as a unit. Biblical anthropology states that a human being is a living soul. According to the Creation story, humans have no soul—they *are* a soul (Gen. 2:7). This holistic view of humanity has something to do with holiness, because holiness also means wholeness. This fact emphasizes the unity of our nature. It follows that if we are to live to the glory of God, we must do so in all dimensions of life—physical, emotional, spiritual, and social (1 Thess. 5:23).

A result of respecting the Mosaic dietary laws appears in the realm of hygiene. Although “observing salutary results is not necessarily the same as discerning the intent for issuing these dietary restrictions,”¹¹ yet both aspects are here valid (health intent as well as health benefits). Some scientific studies suggest that eating meat from clean animals is healthier for human consumption than eating the flesh of unclean ones.¹²

7. Distinction Given for Food or Sacrifice?

The origin of the regulations regarding laws of clean and unclean animals is connected with the pre-Flood world. Noah had to make a distinction between clean and unclean animals (Gen. 7:2, 3), but for what reasons?

Noah knew the distinction between clean and unclean animals. The biblical text gives no indication whether Adam had such knowledge after the entrance of sin, because it is not known when exactly this distinction originated. One can assume that it was revealed sometime after the Fall, most probably in connection with the Flood when a new creation order was presented. It is highly significant that at the first mention of sacrifice in the Book of Genesis (chapter 4), there is no indication of the distinction between clean and unclean animals, but when permission to eat flesh is mentioned for the first time (chapter 9), the distinction between clean and unclean animals/food is understood.

Offerings completely burnt till the time of Moses. It seems that until the time of Moses (when

the sacrificial system was fully developed) the meat of animal offerings was completely burnt (Gen. 8:20; Ps. 51:19). There is no case recorded in the Book of Genesis in which the meat of the offered animals was eaten (4:3–5; 8:20; 22:13). When Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob built their altars to worship God, there is no indication that they consumed the sacrifice (12:7, 8; 13:4, 18; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7). Nothing was left for food from a burnt offering. Only later, when the tabernacle was built in the wilderness, were meat portions of some sacrifices given as food to the priests (Lev. 6:26, 29; 7:6, 7, 31–34) and to the participants (7:15–17).

Only a few clean animals sacrificed. Only a few clean animals were used for sacrificial purposes: three species of animal (cattle, sheep, and goats), two species of bird (turtledoves and pigeons), and no fish.

It seems that the distinction between clean and unclean animals was not made primarily for the purpose of delineating animals that could be used for sacrifices. Sacrifices could be taken only from among the clean animals. However, not all clean animals could be used in the sacrificial services. The primary purpose of these laws was to regulate diet.

8. Unclean Food and the New Testament

A. Unclean food legislation is not abrogated in the New Testament. There is a basic continuity between the Old and New Covenants and this fundamental premise is supported by many scholars from a variety of interpretive approaches. It is true that the New Testament abolishes the ceremonial/sacrificial system of the Old Testament because it was typological and/or symbolic in nature. At the Cross Jesus brought to an end the whole sanctuary system, which pointed to Him as its ultimate fulfillment (Dan. 9:27; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14). There is nothing typological or symbolic, however, in the nature or rationale of the Mosaic dietary laws regarding clean and unclean animals/food that would point to the fulfillment in Christ, to the church, or to the last events.

B. In order to interpret correctly many New Testament passages dealing with this subject, one must consider the difference between two Greek words that represent two different concepts: one is translated “unclean,” which reflects the Old Testament teaching; the other is translated “common, polluted,” which on the other hand points to the special rabbinical concept adopted sometime in the intertestamental period (most probably in the second century B.C.) and known as defilement by association. It was believed that if something clean touched something unclean, it would become “defiled, polluted, common.”

C. Jesus’ statement in Mark 7:19b translated “cleansing all the food” can be understood as an irony. Christ is contrasting the tradition of the elders with the biblical law and demonstrates the difference between spiritual and physical defilement.

Many scholars recognize today that Jesus and the apostles were not against the dietary laws, but against their misuse. Since original intent of the dietary laws had been distorted, He had to restore their true meaning. Jesus’ teaching does not diminish the validity of the dietary regulations. Danger to the purity of the mind and the heart is more important than what goes into the stomach.

Modern translators often fail to reflect that Jesus is referring in Mark 7 to food that is desecrated/polluted by association—and not to food that is “unclean,” because the word translated as “unclean” does not appear in this pericope. The same can be said about Matthew 15:11, 17–20.

D. When asked what kind of animals were in the sheet Peter saw in his vision according to Acts 10, the typical answer is a “variety of different kinds of unclean animals.” However, this answer is wrong, because the biblical text shows that in the sheet were clean as well as unclean animals.

This observation leads to a crucial question: What was then the problem for Peter? He could pick up the clean animal and “kill and eat,” but he refused. Bruce is right when he asserts that Peter “was scandalized by the unholy mixture of clean animals with unclean; this is particularly important when we recall the practical way in which he had immediately to apply the lesson of the vision.”¹³

Thus, the real problem for Peter was the association of clean animals with unclean animals. Otherwise, he could select a cow, sheep, or goat from the shown creatures and prepare it for food. Peter felt he could not eat anything, because even the clean animals became unclean by association with the unclean animals, a concept that is *not* supported by the Hebrew Scriptures. (A living unclean animal is not a source for uncleanness!) This distinction derived only from rabbinic tradition.

God was instructing Peter to give up the idea that clean animals could be defiled by association with the unclean animals. This meant that he (a Jew) had to stop considering himself unclean by associating with Gentiles. This goes along with a different concept that was also developed during the intertestamental period: that clean animals represented the Jews and unclean animals symbolized the Gentiles/pagans. This had tremendous implications for their social life, because they needed to be constantly avoiding defilement by association with unclean pagans. If a Jew were in close contact with a pagan, he thus became polluted. In the time of Jesus and the apostles, there were huge social barriers between Jews and Gentiles. They could not eat together or visit each others' homes for a variety of reasons. Through the vision, Peter was taught that the social barriers between Jews and Gentiles had fallen down (he was now free to socialize with them and visit the house of a pagan Cornelius), and not that a biblical distinction between clean and unclean animals was no longer valid.

E. Another confirmation of the validity of the Mosaic dietary laws may be seen in Acts 15, in which the eating of blood is prohibited. This prohibition is included in the Levitical dietary legislation. Acts 15:29 affirms that the new non-Jewish believers should continue to “abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.” These four binding prohibitions of the so-called Apostolic Decree clearly reflect the universal laws of Leviticus 17–18.

It is highly significant that the four issues decided at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:20, 29) are found in the same sequence in Leviticus 17–18, and all of them are related to the “alien”: (1) food offered to idols (Lev. 17:3–9); (2) prohibition of blood (vss. 10–14); (3) abstaining from the meat of strangled animals (vss. 15, 16); and (4) abstaining from sexual immorality (18:1–30). In light of Leviticus 17:10–14, these apostolic prohibitions implicitly include the clean and unclean food distinctions. It is plainly stated: “When any man from the sons of Israel, or from the aliens who

sojourn among them, in hunting catches a beast or a bird which may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth" (Lev. 17:13, NASB). It is important to observe that three of these four minimum requirements for the Gentile believers are related to food regulations.

F. In Romans 14, Paul is probably addressing problems relating to ascetics among the Essenes or is confronting the same issue as the Corinthian problem: meat offered to idols. In Romans 14:14–23, Paul explains that the most important law is the law of love. He declares that nothing is "common" or "polluted" in itself. He does not say that nothing is "unclean." The concept behind this assertion is pollution by association. Nothing becomes polluted by association with idols.

G. In 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; 10:23–33, Paul explains the hot problem in the apostolic church: "Is it permitted to eat meat offered to idols?" This question of conscience is dealing with an issue that has no clear-cut answer in Scripture. Paul holds that since idols are nothing more than human creations, one is free to eat meat that has been offered to them on condition that this is done apart from the cultic setting. His concern is very pastoral. He wants to stress that love must prevent the misuse of this knowledge for the sake of the weaker brother.

H. In 1 Timothy 4:1–5, it is stressed that food created for human consumption (reference to Genesis 1:31) and sanctified by prayer is suitable. The author of that epistle is not advocating eating anything! He is in disagreement with gnostic ascetics who despised God's good creation and had negative attitudes toward physical matter, under the influence of Greek thinking and culture.

There is nothing in the New Testament when taken in its context to suggest that the distinction between clean and unclean food has been abolished. Heiki Sariola explains that Mark 7:1–23 should not be understood in such a way that the author (Mark) "rejects the dietary laws."¹⁴ The same is attested by David Rudolph: "It is 'historically unimaginable' to an increasing number of [New Testament] scholars that Jesus taught against the Torah's dietary laws."¹⁵ Péter-Contesse correctly states: "As for the notion of cleanness and uncleanness, it seems at first glance that the perspective of the New Testament is diametrically opposed to that of the Old Testament. . . . These texts [Mark 7:19; Acts 10:12–15; Rom. 14:14; 1 Cor. 8; 2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:7; Heb. 9:13–14; James 4:8] do not deal with the distinction between what is clean and what is unclean as in the case of the Old Testament ritual (cultic) texts. The notions are spiritualized and the stress lies no longer on ritual purity, but on moral purity. . . . The break which Jesus brings is not demonstrated in relationship to the fundamental Old Testament doctrine, but in contrast to the formalism of the scribes and Pharisees of his time."¹⁶ Kleinig plainly argues when discussing Christ's teaching on purity (Matt. 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23) that Jesus did not abolish dietary laws: "He [Jesus] did not ridicule their concern for purity and abolish the rules for purity in Leviticus. Instead, he reaffirmed them and deepened them. His teaching on purity presupposes that his disciples shared in his holiness with their hearts rather than just with their bodies."¹⁷

The Mosaic laws form a mosaic. It would do great damage if we threw away the Mosaic laws simply because they are present in the Pentateuch. There are many examples of laws that Christians accept even though they are included in the Mosaic legislation like laws against idolatry, prostitution,

homosexuality, bestiality, and incest (Leviticus 18–19). The two greatest commandments are also taken from the Pentateuch: ““Love the Lord your God with all your heart”” (Deut. 6:5), and ““love your neighbor as yourself”” (Lev. 19:18).

By not eating things our Lord prohibited, humans exercise deep respect for their holy Creator, and thus our tables become silent witnesses for our allegiance to our Creator God. By not eating certain food, Christians do not earn salvation or gain God’s favor, because the observation of these dietary principles is not a way to heaven, but an expression of faithfulness to God. In this way, we live to the glory of God in a more consistent way.

Moses actually assures that these laws are for the saved people, and that it is a lifestyle of the children of God: ““You are the children of the Lord your God. . . . You are a people holy to the Lord your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession. Do not eat any detestable thing”” (Deut. 14:1–3). Taking seriously His revelation is a celebration of God’s gift of creation. The best way to know the benefits of God’s dietary instruction is to follow them.

Rabbi Kushner put it well: “We sanctify the act of eating with the dietary laws.”¹⁸ The Talmud says: “A man’s table is like the altar.”¹⁹ It matters not only what but especially how we eat, as MacDonald expresses it appropriately in his outstanding study on food in the Old Testament: “You are how you eat.”²⁰ Food is related to our identity. Food should be taken as an expression of gratitude and thankfulness, because it is God who provides everything that we need. Thus a common thing such as eating becomes something special. The ordinary is made extraordinary. Our tables should be unspoken silent witnesses of our respect for our holy Creator. “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

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The Ecclesiological Role of Ellen G. White

God's church for the endtimes derived its mission and its message from the leadership of this prophet.

Alberto R. Timm

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has recognized Ellen G. White over the years as a genuine non-canonical prophet called by God to assist the final restoration of truth at the eschatological time of the end. She played a crucial role in the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the definition of its mission to the world. So significant was her ecclesiological contribution that Herbert E. Douglass suggests that "the ministry of Ellen White and the emergence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are inseparable. To try to understand one without the other would make each unintelligible and undiscoverable."¹ Yet, her ecclesiastical leadership was, according to George R. Knight, "of a charismatic rather than of an administrative nature."²

Formation of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines and Lifestyle

The Millerite disappointment of October 22, 1844, led many Millerites to look for the reason Christ did not return as expected on that day. By studying the Scriptures, the founders of Sabbatarian Adventism discovered not only a biblical answer to the disappointment but also many other biblical teachings overshadowed by the Christian tradition. Several lines of truth were restored and integrated over time into the so-called system of "present truth." Once the theoretical foundation (doctrines) of the emerging movement was established, efforts were concentrated in the development of the practical dimension of faith (lifestyle). Crucial in the whole process was the prophetic assistance provided by Ellen White.

Of the overall doctrinal-lifestyle contributions Ellen White left for the church, at least four foundational ones deserve special consideration. First, she helped the church to build a *solid doctrinal-lifestyle platform* based on the principle of "the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines, and the basis of all reforms."³ Seeing her own prophetic mission in terms of confirming biblical truth and reproofing error, White wrote in 1851: "I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the 'last days'; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth."⁴

In the process of doctrinal-lifestyle formation, Seventh-day Adventist pioneers devoted themselves to a prayerful study of the Bible until they reached a general consensus on the topic under consideration. Then Ellen White sometimes received a vision on that subject that would

“reaffirm the consensus” and “help those who were still out of harmony with the majority to accept the correctness of the group’s biblically derived conclusions.” Thus, according to George R. Knight, “we can best view Mrs. White’s role in doctrinal development as confirmation rather than initiation.”⁵

With many doctrinal-lifestyle components already in place, Ellen White helped the church to build a *major theological framework* based on the all-encompassing Great Cosmic Controversy motif (see Revelation 12). The first major step in this direction was undoubtedly her 1858 Great Controversy vision.⁶ In contrast to other previous descriptions of a spiritual conflict between good (truth) and evil (error), Ellen White’s vision placed obedience to God’s Law and the seventh-day Sabbath at the very core of that controversy. Satan’s continuous efforts to mislead humanity away from God are clearly reflected in the Israelite idolatry, Jewish legalism, and Christian antinomianism.

Douglass views the Great Cosmic Controversy Theme as “Ellen White’s unifying principle,” that “provided a coherent framework for her theological thought as well as for her principles in education, health, missiology, social issues, and environmental topics.”⁷ The prophetic gift she received from the Lord allowed her to look behind many historical events not clearly understood by mere human perceptions. Behind those scenes she could see two supernatural powers disputing the ground. On one side, God tries to save, through His loving grace, as many human beings from the bondages of Satan as possible. On the other side, Satan keeps the vast majority of humanity bound to sin, and uses a great variety of strategies to mislead, if possible, even God’s people. This controversy has cosmic, historical, and personal dimensions that permeate all doctrinal-lifestyle discussions.

Besides contributing to build a solid doctrinal-lifestyle platform and a major theological framework, Ellen White also encouraged the church to study the Bible from an *exegetical-systematic perspective*. The relevance of exegetical studies trying to unfold the true meaning of a passage is highlighted in her following statement: “There is but little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Scriptures. One may read the whole Bible through and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning. One passage studied until its significance is clear to the mind and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained.”⁸

Systematic studies of Scripture are seen by the same author as the key to discover the “beauty and harmony” of truth. She declared: “When you search the Scriptures with an earnest desire to learn the truth, God will breathe His Spirit into your heart and impress your mind with the light of His word. The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another. By comparing scriptures referring to the same subjects, you will see beauty and harmony of which you have never dreamed. There is no other book whose perusal strengthens and enlarges, elevates and ennobles the mind, as does the perusal of this Book of books. Its study imparts new vigor to the mind, which is thus brought in contact with subjects requiring earnest thought, and is drawn out in prayer to God for power to comprehend the truths revealed. If the mind is left to deal with commonplace subjects, instead of deep and difficult problems, it will become narrowed down to the standard of the matter which it contemplates and will finally lose its power of expansion.”⁹

A fourth major contribution by Ellen White for the development of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines and lifestyle was her *concentric concept of theological center*. In Ellen White's integrated understanding of truth, the various entities she regarded as theological centers were not of an isolated or self-exclusive nature, but rather complementary concentric centers that vary according to the level of broadness or narrowness of the theological perspective involved. Davidson regards the Great Controversy as "the grand central theme of Scripture" and the sanctuary as the "window into the Biblical System of Truth." He displaces, from a narrower to a broader perspective, (1) the Cross, (2) substitutionary atonement, (3) Christ, and (4) the plan of redemption—all regarded as theological centers.¹⁰

Several statements by Ellen White confirm the fact that she held to a systemic-integrative view of truth. She mentioned, for instance, that "The truth for this time is broad in its outlines, far reaching, embracing many doctrines; but these doctrines are not detached items, which mean little; they are united by golden threads, forming a complete whole, with Christ as the living center."¹¹ "Christ, his character and work, is the center and circumference of all truth, he is the chain upon which the jewels of doctrine are linked. In him is found the complete system of truth."¹²

Thus, Ellen White helped Seventh-day Adventism to: (1) build a solid doctrinal-lifestyle biblical platform; (2) develop a major theological framework based on the Great Cosmic Controversy motif; (3) study the Scriptures from an exegetical-systematic perspective; and (4) uncover a concentric concept of theological center. These four major contributions not only gave strength and coherence to the Adventist message during Ellen White's lifetime, but also provided helpful guidelines for future refinements of that message.

Yet, the numerical growth of those who accepted the Seventh-day Adventist message generated the need for a formal church organization. The early establishment and later refinement of such organization was assisted by Ellen White's prophetic ministry.

Formation and Organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Ellen White played a crucial role in the formation and organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The public visions she began to receive shortly after the October 1844 Millerite disappointment placed her in evidence as a significant leader. Instead of calling attention selfishly to herself, she used her prophetic influence to unite the growing body of Sabbatarian Adventist believers around God's Word. This means that for Ellen White, since the very beginning of her prophetic ministry, the divine message was far more important than the human messenger, and she tried to bring as many disappointed Millerites as possible to the emerging Sabbatarian platform of truth.

Early Sabbatarian Adventism was kept together mainly by the leadership of Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen White, as well as by the circulation of publications carrying on their message. But already in 1854, Mrs. White's booklet titled *Supplement to the Christian Experience and Views* had come off the press with a special section on "Gospel Order." Without prescribing any

specific form of church organization, she challenged her fellow believers to move toward the establishment of an organizational structure: "The Lord has shown that gospel order has been too much neglected and feared. That formality should be shunned; but in so doing, order should not be neglected. There is order in heaven. There was order in the church when Christ was upon earth; and after his departure, order was strictly observed among his apostles. And now in these last days, while God is bringing his children into the unity of the faith, there is more real need of order than ever before. For as God is uniting his children, Satan and his evil angels are very busy to prevent this unity, and to destroy it."¹³

Significant organizational steps were taken in the late 1850s and early 1860s under the prophetic guidance of Ellen White. For example, when the Systematic Benevolence plan was established in 1859 to finance the Sabbatarian cause, she stated that "God is leading His people in the plan of systematic benevolence, and this is one of the very points to which God is bringing up His people which will cut the closest with some."¹⁴ When the name "Seventh-day Adventists" was adopted in 1860, she declared that "No name which we can take will be appropriate but that which accords with our profession and expresses our faith and marks us a peculiar people."¹⁵

But, by contrast, she had no difficulty in rebuking those who opposed the organizing process. In August 1861, she stated that, due to the lack of organization, "the churches in Central New York have been perfect Babylon, confusion," and unless they are "so organized that they can carry out and enforce order, they have nothing to hope for in the future."¹⁶ Despite such challenges, the organizing process culminated with the establishment of a General Conference in May 1863.

The fact that Ellen White did not write much on church organization during that period does not mean that she did not play a major role in the organization process. From her later reminiscences, we might infer that she influenced the process more personally and orally than literarily. In 1892 she explained, "We had a hard struggle in establishing organization. Notwithstanding that the Lord gave testimony after testimony upon this point, the opposition was strong, and it had to be met again and again. But we knew that the Lord God of Israel was leading us, and guiding by his providence. We engaged in the work of organization, and marked prosperity attending this advance movement. . . . The system of organization has proved a grand success. Systematic benevolence was entered into according to the Bible plan. . . . As we have advanced, our system of organization has still proved effectual. . . . Let none entertain the thought, however, that we can dispense with organization. It has cost us much study, and many prayers for wisdom that we know God has answered, to erect this structure. It has been built up by his direction, through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down, for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. In the name of the Lord, I declare to you that it is to stand, strengthened, established, and settled."¹⁷

But already in this same document, she pointed out that "In some parts of the work it is true, the machinery has been made too complicated; especially has this been the case in the tract and missionary work; the multiplication of rules and regulations made it needlessly burdensome. An

effort should be made to simplify the work, so as to avoid all needless labor and perplexity. The business of our Conference session has sometimes been burdened down with propositions and resolutions that were not at all essential, and that would never have been presented if the sons and daughters of God had been walking carefully and prayerfully before him. The fewer rules and regulations that we can have, the better will be the effect in the end."¹⁸

Indeed, during the 1890s, she spoke more and more openly about the need of a major revision of the church's organizational structure. Her own missionary experience in Australia and the South Pacific helped her to understand the challenges of the mission fields and to foresee structural changes that could solve those challenges. In a special meeting at the Battle Creek College Library, just before the opening of the 1901 General Conference Session, she stated to the church leaders that "new blood" should "be brought into the regular lines" and that "an entire new organization" was needed.¹⁹ The reorganization that took place at that meeting included the creation of union conferences and union missions; the decentralization of the General Conference president's authority; auxiliary organizations became departments of the denomination's organizational structure; and a fund-sharing plan provided "a more substantial financial base for the missionary enterprise of the church."²⁰

Reflecting on the organizational-structural revisions made at the 1901 General Conference Session, Mrs. White declared, "I was never more astonished in my life than at the turn things have taken at this meeting. This is not our work. God has brought it about. Instruction regarding this was presented to me, but until the sum was worked out at this meeting, I could not comprehend this instruction."²¹ However, neither in the organization process of the late 1850s and early 1860s nor in the reorganization endeavors that took place between 1888 and 1903 did Ellen White provide any specific model of organization. She just presented basic principles which, when implemented adequately, helped the denomination to fulfill more efficiently its double task of keeping the faith unified and carrying the advent message to the world.

Besides her contribution for the organization and reorganization of the church, Ellen White also counseled many church leaders over the years. Not everyone accepted gladly her counsels, and sometimes the final outcome of rejecting her message was unfortunate.

Much can be learned from the contrasting attitudes of General Conference presidents George I. Butler and Arthur G. Daniells. Butler did not attend personally the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference Session, but his warnings against the teachings of justification by faith endorsed by Ellen White helped to nourish the polemic and divisive spirit of that conference. On the other hand, Daniells' disposition to accept and implement Mrs. White's advice brought to the 1901 Battle Creek General Conference Session an overall tenor of unity and improvement. What made the difference between both occasions was not merely a matter of attitude about personal opinions, but rather the acceptance or rejection of divine counsel communicated by a prophetic voice (2 Chron. 20:20; Luke 10:16). Although such counsel was given to specific people living in a world different from ours, they are grounded on universal principles applicable to all subsequent generations of church leaders.

Ellen White assured her fellow believers that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, although militant and faulty, would never apostatize to the point of having to be replaced by some other "holier" church or independent movement. She stated in the 1890s unambiguously that "God has a church upon the earth who are His chosen people, who keep His commandments. He is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people."²²

"There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and he will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port."²³

Thus, the formation and consolidation of the Seventh-day Adventist message and organizational structure gave the denomination conditions to expand its outreach program. Ellen White was the key figure in transforming the Seventh-day Adventist Church from a small New England and New York state movement into a worldwide missionary denomination.

Development of Seventh-day Adventist Missiology

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been shaped largely by the theological-practical contribution of Ellen White. On the *theological* level, her missiological thinking was the convergence and interplay of three basic concepts. One is that God's saving grace is universally accessible to all sincere Christians and even non-Christians who live according to the light available to them (Rom. 2:14). She explained, "Our standing before God depends, not upon the amount of light we have received, but upon the use we make of what we have. Thus even the heathen who choose the right as far as they can distinguish it are in a more favorable condition than are those who have had great light, and profess to serve God, but who disregard the light, and by their daily life contradict their profession."²⁴

"Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness; before the words of life had fallen upon their ears, they have befriended the missionaries, even ministering to them at the peril of their own lives. Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God."²⁵

Another basic theological concept is that all children of God are responsible for sharing the light they receive with those without it. Reflecting on the experience of the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), Mrs. White argued that "Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are

ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life."²⁶

A third basic concept is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's end-time remnant church with the prophetic mission of restoring and preaching all biblical truths to the entire world (Matt. 4:4; 24:14; 28:18-20; John 16:13; Rev. 14:6-12). Ellen White declared, "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.

"The most solemn truths ever entrusted to mortals have been given us to proclaim to the world. The proclamation of these truths is to be our work. The world is to be warned, and God's people are to be true to the trust committed to them."²⁷

By interrelating these basic concepts, one might conclude, first of all, that, although God's saving grace is available to all humanity, it becomes effective only for those who follow, with integrity of heart, the light they receive from Him. However, God's ideal for human beings is not that they remain in ignorance, but rather that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9, NKJV). While other Christians might help to restore some biblical teachings, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was called into existence by God as an end-time prophetic movement with the mission of restoring biblical truth as a whole, in preparation for the second coming of Christ. This special *theological* awareness moved Ellen White into the *practical* level of convincing church leaders to expand its missionary outreach program over the years.

After the October 1844 Millerite disappointment, many "shut door" Adventists (Matt. 25:10-12), including Ellen White, believed that their mission to the world was already fulfilled and that there was no reason to preach the Adventist message outside the ex-Millerite circles, for Christ would come very soon. But in that context she received some visions describing the preaching of the Seventh-day Adventist message in a worldwide scope. For example, on November 18, 1848, she saw the spreading of Seventh-day Adventist publications "like streams of light that went clear round the world."²⁸ On July 29, 1850, she received a vision showing that "others who had not heard the Advent doctrine and rejected it would embrace the truth."²⁹

But far beyond the mere expansion of the Adventist presence within North America, Ellen White foresaw and encouraged the sending of an increasing number of missionaries overseas. The fact that the church leaders did not support the Polish minister M. B. Czechowski in his missionary move back to Europe in 1864 was not rebuked by Mrs. White, because she knew of his financial problems and temperament instabilities. Likewise, in 1866 the leadership refused to send to Africa the newly converted missionary-experienced Hannah More, who died a few months later. Still in 1875, Mrs. White declared with deep sorrow, "Already a great deal of time has been wasted, and angels bear to heaven the record of our neglects. Our sleepy and unconsecrated condition has lost to us precious opportunities which God has sent us in the persons of those who were qualified to help us in our

present need. Oh, how much we need our Hannah More to aid us at this time in reaching other nations! Her extensive knowledge of missionary fields would give us access to those of other tongues whom we cannot approach. God brought this gift among us to meet our present emergency; but we prized not the gift, and He took her from us. She is at rest from her labors, but her self-denying works follow her. It is to be deplored that our missionary work should be retarded for the want of knowledge how to gain access to the different nations and localities in the great harvest field.³⁰

Finally, in 1874 the church sent J. N. Andrews to Europe as its first official overseas missionary. Writing to the brethren in Switzerland, who were not initially as supportive of him as they could be, Ellen White stated, "We sent you the ablest man in all our ranks; but you have not appreciated the sacrifice we made in thus doing. We needed Elder Andrews here. But we thought his great caution, his experience, his God-fearing dignity in the desk, would be just what you needed."³¹ This statement reflects the fact that, in Ellen White's mind, for mission outreach, any true sacrifice is worthwhile. So true is this that she not only encouraged others to go overseas as missionaries, but she also set the example by leaving her home country to serve as a missionary for two years in Europe (1885-1887) and almost 10 years in Australia and the South Pacific (1891-1900).

By the end of the 19th century, there was an Adventist presence in all continents of the world. But for Ellen White, the church leaders were still too narrow-minded in their missionary plans. So at the 1901 Battle Creek General Conference Session, she gave a powerful speech titled "In the Regions Beyond," in which she spoke directly to the point: "I told the Lord that when I came to Battle Creek this time, I would ask you why you have withheld means from the work in Australia. The work there should have been pressed with ten fold greater strength than it has been, but we have been hindered on the right hand and on the left. . . . Why am I telling you this? Because we desire that at this meeting the work shall be so established that no such thing shall take place again. Two or three men, who have never seen the barren fields where the workers have had to wrestle with all their might to advance an inch, should not control matters. . . . There are many barren places in America, many places that have not been worked. What is the matter with the church here? It is congested. This is the reason why there is so little of the deep moving of the Spirit of God. There is a world perishing in sin, and again and again the message has come to Battle Creek, God wants you to move out into places where you can labor for the salvation of souls. . . . The people in Battle Creek are dying of inaction. What they need is to impart the truth which they believe. Every soul who will impart will receive from God more power to impart. This is what we are in the world for—to bring souls to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Before the way is hedged up, it is for every one to realize his accountability to proclaim the message that God has given him. . . . The work is one. Do not think that because you are here in Battle Creek, God is not supervising the work in any other parts of the field. The world is the field; the world is the vineyard; and every spot must be worked. God desires every soul to put on the harness."³²

So, in addition to the role Ellen White played in the formation of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines-lifestyle and in the organization and reorganization of the denomination, she was also the

main ideologist and the strongest pushing leading the church into a worldwide mission enterprise. But the crucial question is: How relevant is her counsel in these areas for a church that is living close to a century after her death?

The Role of Ellen G. White's Writings in the Church Today

The prophetic ministry of Ellen White is as important for the church today as it was in the formative period of the denomination. Her long-term prophetic ministry brought significant doctrinal, administrative, and lifestyle stability to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Even though she died in 1915, her writings should continue to provide the same stability for the denomination.

In 1907 she stated, "Abundant light has been given to our people in these last days. Whether or not my life is spared, my writings will constantly speak, and their work will go forward as long as time shall last. My writings are kept on file in the office, and even though I should not live, these words that have been given to me by the Lord will still have life and will speak to the people."³³

In the early days of Sabbatarian Adventism, she provided a helpful prophetic assistance to begin and carry on the end-time *restoration* of Bible truths. But today her writings are strongly needed to help contemporary believers to *persevere* in the already-restored biblical faith. Ellen White's writings have served, according to T. H. Jemison, "three basic purposes: (1) to direct attention to the Bible, (2) to aid in understanding the Bible, and (3) to help in applying Bible principles in our lives."³⁴ Her writings were not intended to replace the Bible, but rather to free its interpretation from the large amount of unbiblical traditions accumulated over the centuries.

The need of prophetic assistance to persevere in the faith comes from the fact that all religious movements tend to lose over the years their early restorationist commitment. Such movements are usually launched with the purpose of reforming the culture in which they exist. But in the second century of their existence, after the pioneers and those who knew them have passed away, those very same movements tend to lose their own identity and to be reabsorbed by the same culture they originally intended to reform. The original message and lifestyle of the movement are reread into a new cultural setting to such extent that they lose much of their prophetic meaning. The acculturation process obfuscates, consequently, the capability of many church members to distinguish between the holy and the profane.

The fact that Seventh-day Adventism came into existence as an end-time restorationist movement does not mean that it is invulnerable to a loss of identity. But that risk can be minimized and even overcome by unconditional commitment to the same prophetic guidance that assisted the rise and early development of the movement. Proverbs 29:18 warns: "Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint" (NRSV). The Hebrew word for *prophecy* translated here means a "prophetic vision."

Underlying this statement is the foundational principle that whenever God's people disregard genuine prophetic revelations, they are susceptible to be drifted away by the unbiblical ideologies of contemporary cultures (2 Chron. 36:11-16). On the other hand, the acceptance of God's true

prophets helps the believers to overcome anti-biblical cultural temptations (20:20).

Yet, the stability fostered by Ellen White's writings can be distorted whenever the interpreter does not distinguish clearly between the universal principles and the temporal applications of those principles. Difficulty is caused by the fact that those writings are frequently interpreted just from the perspective of the contexts in which they were penned and to which they were addressed, leaving the interpretation too open to subjective views of the interpreter. Any serious interpretation should take into consideration not only such contexts but also the interaction of those writings with the whole content of the Scriptures. While the contextual knowledge helps to understand better her temporal applications, the interaction with the Scriptures helps to identify more precisely the universal principles that flow throughout her writings.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been largely shaped by Ellen White's prophetic guidance. In the formation of its message, she helped the church to build a solid doctrinal-lifestyle biblical platform; to develop a major theological framework based on the Great Cosmic Controversy motif; to study the Scriptures from an exegetical-systematic perspective; and to uncover a concentric concept of theological center. The full meaning of these concepts can be better understood by a more comprehensive study of her writings.

The formation and organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was assisted, first, by Ellen White's personal charismatic leadership; then, by her efforts to convince her fellow believers to develop a church organization; later on, by her appeals and counsel in the process of reorganizing the structure of the church; and, during the whole extension of her prophetic ministry, by her counsels to the leadership of the church.

Ellen White's prophetic legacy will be ever more helpful for those who are able to identify in her writings a constant dialogue between universal principles and cultural applications of those principles. Though the cultural contexts may vary significantly, the principles involved are applicable to all times and cultures, and are still relevant for the church today. The Seventh-day Adventist Church will be able to preserve its prophetic identity only by remaining loyal to the prophetic voice that personally guided the denomination during the first decades of its history.

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Are the Bible and Science in Conflict?

The questions that arise between scientists and theologians should help them to grow together in their understanding.

David Ekkens

In discussions of science and faith, one often gets the impression that either science or Scripture can be believed—not both. In the secular world, science is by default considered the true source of knowledge. The Bible, if consulted at all, is seen as useful only as a source of spiritual insight—as long as it presents no conflict with current scientific consensus.

Are the Bible and science truly in conflict? How can a believer who is also a scientist relate to this issue?

First, a definition of *science*. For the purposes of this article, the word *science* refers to a systematic process that attempts to explain phenomena in terms of the physical mechanisms that cause them. Other definitions are possible, but this definition will suffice for this discussion. In a similar vein, a miracle is an event that cannot be explained solely by naturalistic scientific means.

Experimental and Historical Sciences

In discussing science and faith, it is useful to distinguish between experimental (or empirical) science on the one hand and historical science on the other. Sciences that are mainly experimental (e.g., chemistry, physics, anatomy, ecology) involve the manipulation of physical conditions to isolate and identify causal factors that explain an event. Sciences that are mainly historical (e.g., archeology, paleontology) study the results of some past event and attempt to explain what occurred to produce the observed evidence.

Most sciences include both empirical and historical aspects. Only the empirical aspects, however, are open for experimentation. The historical parts are not. Normally, there is no conflict between Scripture and experimental science. Difficulties arise when attempting to understand historical events for which the Bible provides a supernatural explanation, and a scientist attempts to arrive at a naturalistic explanation.

Different Types of Bible Passages

Before considering further the ways in which science and Scripture seem difficult to reconcile, note that there are many areas where there is no conflict. For example, although the Bible is not primarily a science text, it nevertheless describes many events of a scientific nature. Various Bible authors mention mammals, birds, and plants. Aspects of anatomy, physiology, and behavior—plant,

animal, and human—are mentioned by Bible authors. The Bible describes the creation of life forms, implying that God designed and fabricated the living systems available for study today. Science today confirms the appearance of design at all levels of complexity, although considerable disagreement exists over the *cause* of the design.

Some passages in the Bible were written in symbolic terms or in figures of speech. Thus, one might mistakenly interpret an expression as literal when it is meant to be figurative. For example, Habakkuk 3:3 says that God came from Teman. Perhaps some people would conclude from that text that God lives in Teman, but most readers consider this to be a figure of speech. Here, God is represented as coming from the south, or Sinai, where the Ten Commandments were given. Other passages may be poetic, illustrative, or expressions of common understanding, not written to convey scientific explanations. On the other hand, many passages of Scripture are clearly intended as historical narrative. These include passages such as Genesis 1–11, the Gospel accounts of Jesus' miracles, and His virgin birth, death, and resurrection. The clearly expository prose does not support attempts to “spiritualize” them or otherwise categorize them as figurative, poetic, etc.

Natural and Supernatural Explanations

There are two possible explanations of phenomena (or events): natural or supernatural. The two explanatory systems may be in conflict or may complement each other. As the Bible primarily describes God's activities in the course of human history, it almost always proffers supernatural explanations. As mentioned above, explanations of past events are inherently not directly testable by scientific methods. For a given phenomenon that the Bible describes as supernatural, a materialistic (or naturalistic) scientist may give a naturalistic explanation. In some instances, both explanations may apply. In other words, God may well have used ordinary physical processes in a supernatural way to accomplish His will.

Many of the great scientists of the past were believers and saw no conflict between the Bible and science. In the 17th century, scientists were divided into two camps in regard to religion and science (or philosophy, as it was then called). Francis Bacon and Galileo Galilei belonged to the “separatist” group who felt that the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature were best kept separate, while recognizing that both had the same Author. In the past half-century, American scientist Stephen Gould has extended the idea of separation with his NOMA (Nonoverlapping Magisteria) proposal, which declared that science and religion occupy separate realms that do not interact.¹ According to Gould, religion deals with spiritual and ethical ideas, while science deals with the real world. Accepting NOMA thus seems to necessitate rejection of Scripture as the inspired Word of God. The other group of 17th-century scientists, the Pansophists, viewed science and Scripture as being ultimately in harmony.

Thus, both groups arrived at a “no conflict” answer—the separatists because they compartmentalized the fields of study, and the Pansophists because they saw science as reinforcing Scripture. Both groups saw God as author of Scripture and Creator of the world. Any apparent

conflict lay in a disagreement between interpretations of the Bible and/or interpretations of science. We might take the same approach today with the additional caveat that not all of our questions will be answered. Since we are in a sinful world and have only incomplete understanding of science and Scripture, we will not arrive at complete answers to all questions.

Areas of Conflict

Conflict is especially prominent in the study of origins, which is a historical question, not an experimental one. Those with a naturalistic worldview prefer evolutionary theory because it posits explanations in terms of purely physical mechanisms. Those with a worldview based on biblical revelation prefer creation theory because it accepts biblical accounts of supernatural activity in the creation and maintenance of the natural world. Both views appeal to evidence. Because that evidence is so incomplete and open to different explanation, the scientist's worldview comes to play a major role in interpretation; conflict is very evident.

One of the best-known examples is found with regard to Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), considered by many to be the father of modern observational astronomy, modern physics, and ultimately the individual most responsible for the birth of modern science.

In the late 16th century, leaders of the Roman Catholic Church endorsed the idea that the Earth was the center of the universe. While a pious believer, Galileo was nevertheless a scientist. He advocated Copernicus' idea that the Earth revolved around the Sun. Since the church considered itself the supreme authority, Galileo was deemed a heretic. In this example, it is important to note that Galileo's problem was not strictly a Bible/science conflict, but it reflected a difference between religious leaders and some scientists over how to interpret the Bible and scientific data.

In the eyes of most materialist scientists, conflict has always existed between secular scientists and those who hold a theistic worldview. Books have been written on the topic of the so-called war between science and religion. Unfortunately, overzealous Christians share in the responsibility for this conflict. Serious thinkers were often alienated by superstition, suppression, and coercion (associated with the dominant church), and this led to distrust of the Bible itself.

The Bible chronicles the occurrence of numerous miracles, which are almost invariably interpreted differently by two groups. A person not persuaded of the Bible's divine inspiration—a "non-believer" for the sake of this article—concludes that the miracle did not in fact occur and that the biblical account is fallacious. The non-believer arrives at one of the following conclusions: (1) the writer *thought* it happened the way he wrote it but was wrong; (2) he knew it was wrong but was trying to fool his audience; or, (3) he wanted to make a point and merely told an illustrative story to do so. In any of these cases, the biblical report is regarded as unreliable, or at the least, not to be taken literally. In contrast, the person who accepts the Bible as divinely inspired—a "believer" for the purpose of this article—accepts the miracle by faith. Because the occurrence was placed in the Bible, and the Bible is God's Word, the believer accepts that God used His power to cause the miracle.

Miracles With No Available Physical Evidence

But what about miracles for which there is no physical evidence? An example included by Gospel writers is Jesus walking on the water (Matt. 14: 25-32). Skeptics might suggest that Jesus may have known the location of rocks just under the surface so that He could walk from land to the boat, thus *appearing* to walk on water. Peter, not knowing the location of these rocks, lost his footing and had to be rescued. Believers may rightfully regard such explanations as strained, but since no direct physical evidence is available today, no tests may be conducted. Thus, the story is accepted or rejected based on personal presuppositions.

A second example is Jairus' daughter, a young girl who has died, whom Jesus brings back to life (Luke 8: 49-56). The non-believer may observe that Jesus Himself declared that the girl was only asleep (Matt. 9: 24), and that He merely woke her. Matthew and Luke's reports are thus discounted as wrong. There is no direct physical evidence to know for sure whether the girl was in fact dead or not. One's response to the account will depend on one's confidence in the reliability of Scripture.

Miracles With Observable Physical Effects

Miracles for which physical evidence does exist today seem to present more problematic issues. At times, it appears that scientific evidence strongly disagrees with the most careful interpretation of Scripture. These are issues that may be called "No conflict, but . . ." issues. The belief is that the Bible and science are not in conflict. Nevertheless, they do appear to be so. To resolve these issues, evidence must be very carefully evaluated, as it can be interpreted in many different ways.

According to a believer, the origin of life on Earth is an example of a miraculous event in which the Bible and science are not in conflict. For more than half a century, numerous experiments have been conducted in an attempt to produce life from non-living material via naturalistic means. Thus far, these experiments have failed to produce empirical evidence for the spontaneous origin of life. Therefore believers feel this is consistent with the biblical narration that life originated through supernatural activity. Non-believers would not be convinced—the absence of evidence is not considered good evidence. The fact that organic molecules have been made from inorganic gases is taken by secular scientists as evidence that spontaneous generation of a living cell could occur and therefore there is conflict in their minds.

The area where the "No conflict, but . . ." questions are perhaps the most vexing is the amount of time required for accumulation of the fossil-bearing sediments in the Earth's crust. There seems to be a conflict between the relatively short time implied in the Bible and the long time inferred by science. Ice cores offer another example. In places on the world's surface like Greenland, a thick layer of ice has formed. When the ice is drilled into and a core is pulled out, there are layers like rings in a tree. Some ice cores may contain 160,000 layers,² the lower ones of which have been identified by chemical means. Since the layers are presumably laid down one layer each year, this presents a conflict with the Bible's timetable. Of course there are no dates in the Bible, but most conservative biblical scholars have used genealogies mentioned in the text to conclude that not much

more than 10,000 years are represented by biblical history.

Many other examples can be given of conventional dating techniques that suggest the Earth is much older than 10,000 years. Many Bible-believing scientists see no conflict in old dates for rocks. God certainly could have created the rocks of the Earth many millions of years ago and then organized the Earth's crust during a more recent Creation week. However there are many examples of fossils found in rocks dated by standard techniques as much older than 10,000 years.

Even considering these problems, there is evidence that the last chapter in age dating has not yet been written. In some cases, new scientific evidence may cast doubt on current conventional age dating. For example, soft tissue was recently discovered inside fossil dinosaur bones thought to be about 67 million years old.³ No one has an explanation for how soft tissue can survive that long. Another example is the discovery of the catastrophic nature of the Yellowstone fossil forests,⁴ once thought to represent long ages of ordinary processes. Other evidence for rapid deposition of sediments includes the rapid underwater deposition of turbidites (geological formations that were caused by a type of underwater avalanche), the rates of erosion of the continents, which seems to be too rapid for the supposed great age of the Earth.⁵

Taking the Bible as Myth

Some people solve the conflict by concluding that the biblical miracles are myths—traditional stories that serve to express a worldview. For these individuals, no conflict exists since the event didn't happen the way it was described. For example, there really wasn't a man named Daniel who spent a night in a lions' den. This is merely a story told to show that God takes care of those who believe in Him.

This approach, however, undermines the inspiration of Scripture. Some see the ages obtained by conventional dating as so strongly indicating an old Earth that they conclude a literal reading of the Bible to be absurd. Such individuals may accept the ideas of some biblical scholars who believe that parts of Genesis (Chapter 1, for example) were written after other sections. Taking this view of Scripture may lead one to deny Christ's life and ministry. The evidence against the bodily resurrection of Christ is comparable to that against a literal reading of Genesis 1.

To be consistent in an understanding of the inspiration of Scripture, one must be ready to accept that miracles did occur and that, using conventional means, their literal occurrence cannot be proved. Thus the conflict remains.

Unavoidable Conflict

For most believers, it is no surprise for there to be conflict between faith and secular science. Christian doctrines are based on faith and are supported by evidence that appeals to reason, including personal experience, documentary evidence, and eyewitness testimonies. Empirical evidence is also important but is not the only factor as it is in secular science.

Interpreting Scripture must always be done in humility. Are there other interpretations possible

that do not destroy the original meaning? Alternate views may be acceptable if the passage allows for them without losing sight of the event's miraculous nature. The same principle should apply to interpreting science—a humble attitude and consideration of alternative hypotheses. Maintaining this attitude can help keep conflicts between the Bible and science in perspective.

To be consistent in understanding the inspiration of Scripture, one must be ready to accept that miraculous events did in fact occur and that, using conventional means, how they happened cannot be proved. Thus, the potential for conflict remains—as it will as long as the world does in its present iteration.

Perhaps God will someday reveal to a greater degree the laws within which He has chosen to operate. Only then will an understanding come that there was no conflict after all. For the present, the tension must be tolerated.

There will always be some conflict between science and the Bible. Some apparent conflicts may be resolved as science makes new discoveries, but others will be resolved only in eternity. Conflict between the Bible and science arises for several reasons: (1) the differing philosophical understandings of the role of God in nature; (2) the difficulty of interpreting the history of the world scientifically; (3) the inability of science to explain in scientific terms what God did miraculously; and, (4) the brevity and incompleteness of the biblical information about the history of nature.

All these questions and conflicts should present opportunities for scientists and theologians to grow together in their understanding. The tragedy is that both often seem limited by and locked into their own perspective and fail to communicate in a common language.

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