

Conceptions Of Truth

Part I



Collegiate Quarterly

July-September 1981

**It was a desolate spot.
The heat was oppressive.
After the breakdown
I abandoned the car with
disgust and started walking.**

**I had been going for maybe
half an hour when one of those
compact cars that look so
terribly sensible pulled up
beside me.**

**Such is my dislike of
those cars that had it not been
oppressively hot, I would have
waved the driver on.**

Let me start by admitting to a certain amount of irrationality when it comes to cars. Like my friends, I buy because of tradition. (I buy what my father bought.)

I have always had cars that are faster than they need be, more luxurious than they should be and more expensive than they've any right to be.

In short, when on four wheels, I am a confirmed seeker after pleasure.

In the opposite corner, I've always imagined cars such as the one I found myself in at the moment.

The kind of car your mother would say was good for you.

Judge then my feelings as the little car stopped beside me on that overbaked dusty roadside.

The driver was not some elderly farmer from the hill country, but a man I'd have put in his early thirties.

"Can I give you a lift?" he inquired as he held open the door. "I passed your car down the road — beautiful looking machine."

As I slipped into the passenger seat, I noticed that I was sitting in quite adequate, even supportive, surroundings.

My rescuer was obviously less uptight than I and introduced himself easily as a record producer saying that he had a home some thirty miles away.

"Have you driven far?" I asked.

"About 400 miles," he answered. "But it's very easy in this car. It handles the long trip dependably and its lean design makes it economical. I've tried bigger and fancier cars but after the first little bit the frills and size become boring and really quite superfluous."

At this point I began to go through one of the most uncomfortable of human emotions — a change of mind.

"Yes, this is a practical car," he said. "It seems to keep on going when the others just sit there and look good."

Looking back, I'm surprised he didn't dump me right there when I said, "I should think that you'd get tired of the small size."

He just smiled lightly and pointed out how well it took a series of "S" turns we were coming to just then in the road.

The heat was being tempered with a breeze and I was cooling off in the airconditioned comfort. I recovered a little of my customary good humor.

"Well, it's certainly more comfortable than I thought, and it's proven its dependability in this dust and heat. But is it expensive?"

"It's the least expensive in its class," was the pleasant response.

When I thought of what I had in-



vested in that overrated piece of exotica languishing on the road some 15 miles behind us, I was stung and lashed out with one more attempt to justify the big car.

"Of course my car is much faster. I can do 150 on a good straight stretch."

"But how often do you find those stretches in real driving conditions?" he asked in the mildest voice possible.

After a moment's hesitation (to my credit) I burst out laughing.

"Touché," I said. And for the rest of a very enjoyable journey we talked about Mozart.

THE MORAL

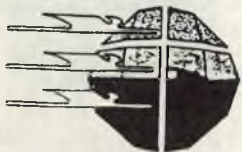
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General Conference Corporation of Seventh-Day Adventists
South American Division

Caixa Postal 12-2600

70000 Brasilia, DF, Brazil

Dear Sabbath School Members Around the World:

There is in the symbolism of the book of Revelation, a text that can be very aptly applied to the Iberian-American situation today: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: . . ." (Rev. 3:8).

In fact, Latin America, agitated by its great social revolutions, has a new look. Its doors are now wide open to the penetration of the Adventist message.

Never in the history of this Movement have there been such splendid possibilities as there are in these days. Cities once hermetically sealed and unreachable by the preaching of the message are now opening their doors to evangelism, and this is beginning an era of denominational explosion. Consequently, we are confronted with a growth crisis, creating enormous needs in many areas.

The South American Division is to receive the Thirteenth Sabbath Special Projects Offering for this quarter for the following projects in the North and South Brazil Unions:

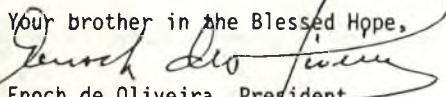
1. Starting a new academy in Santa Catarina.
2. Building a new academy in the State of Goias.
3. Expansion of the dormitories in the Rio Grande do Sul, Parana, and Sao Paulo academies.
4. Construction of an additional building at our academy in the Trans-Amazon.
5. Evangelistic Center in Fortaleza.
6. Building new chapels in the West Amazon Mission.

Over 55% of our members are young people, and they represent an extraordinary asset for the church both in quantity and quality. Because of this there is a demand for new educational institutions and the urgent need for expanding the present schools. Our intention in dedicating this offering to so many different projects in the various fields was to challenge them to go on and complete their projects with their own resources.

We would like for you to remember the South American Division in a special way in your prayers, and to give liberally as the Lord has blessed you, so that we can meet some of the great needs of our church in its rapid growth and expansion.

With anticipated gratefulness, I am

Your brother in the Blessed Hope,


Enoch de Oliveira, President
South American Division

Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus



Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus, was responsible for obtaining articles for lessons one through five for this issue of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

Chaplain: Steven G. Daily

Contributing Writers:

Neils-Erik Andreasen	Bonnie L. Casey	Norman R. Gulley	Christy K. Robinson
Michael J. Bauer	Suzette Catalon	Margarete Hiltz	Karl-Heinz Schroeder
Mark Bohner	Daniel Chavez	David Johnson	Albert E. Smith
Linda Bowers	Michael Clark	Edwin A. Karlow	Tom Teske
Elden Buck	Mark Duarte	Richard Pershing	Janet Weighall
	Robert Paul Dunn	Bradley Richardson	

Pacific Union College



Pacific Union College was responsible for obtaining articles for lessons six through nine for this issue of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

Chaplain: Ted Wick

College Editors: Tom Donaldson
Michelle Naden-DuNesme

Contributing Writers:

William Abbot	Larry D. McGill	David Smith	Mike Wiist
Michelle Naden-DuNesme	John S. McIntosh	Ted Wick	Judy Wright
Henry Jay Karp	Roy C. Naden		



Southwestern Adventist College

Southwestern Adventist College was responsible for obtaining articles for lessons ten and eleven for this issue of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

Chaplain: Robert Shepherd

Contributing Writers:

H. T. Burr	C. William Cole	Samuel A. Myers	Carol Sample
Jack E. Bynum	Karl Konrad	Ralph Neall	Andrew P. Woolley
Douglas R. Clark	Donald R. McAdams	George W. Reid	Hal Wright

Canadian Union College



Canadian Union College was responsible for obtaining articles for lesson twelve for this issue of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

College Editor: Laurence R. Downing

Contributing Writers:

Chris Kinman	Ernest LeVos	Warren D. Trenchard	Caroline Wiebe
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Kingsway College



Kingsway College was responsible for obtaining articles for lesson thirteen for this issue of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

College Editor: Allen Keiser

Contributing Writers:

Ormand Jones	Allen Keiser	Floyd Peterson	Karl-Heinz Schroeder
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Editorial Office: Union College 3800 South 48th Lincoln, Nebraska 68506 (402) 488-2331, ext. 390

Staff

Editor: Eugene B. Shirley, Jr. Editorial Assistant, Business Manager: Linda L. Bowers Copy Editor: Shelley Schurch Art and Design: Heidi Klooster

Advisors: Eric Graham Larry D. McGill Karl-Heinz Schroeder Maylan Schurch Printing: The College Press Collegedale, Tenn.

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Facts About The Collegiate Quarterly

- Published with the approval of the General Conference Sabbath School Department.
- Discussion is centered around the same themes as the adult quarterly.
- Special attention is directed toward the expressions and needs of the college and university person.
- An intercollegiate project of the colleges and universities across North America.
- Approximately 200 professors, college students, pastors, church administrators and laymen have contributed articles for the quarterly.
- The international circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY for the first quarter of 1981 reached 19,000.

How To Use The Collegiate Quarterly

1. The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is not designed to be just a supplementary quarterly. It is *the* Sabbath School quarterly for the college and university person—though many in other environments and age-brackets are also attracted to its use. So use it just like you would any other daily study guide or Sabbath School quarterly.
2. The Logos articles of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY have been condensed and rewritten from the corresponding weeks of the adult Sabbath School lessons. As the articles with the greatest Bible base, they most clearly reveal the central theme for each week and around them the other articles center their discussion.
3. Along with each daily discussion, a reference is given of a biblical passage for further Bible study. We encourage you to read these passages—even though some may be lengthy—as this will greatly enhance your study.
4. Do not accept every concept and emphasis made in the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY just because it is in the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY. For it can be dangerous to accept anything as truth, without personal investigation, simply because it has an organizational stamp of approval.

One goal of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is to aid in developing “thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.” To meet this goal, it is necessary to include within the pages of this quarterly challenging and stimulating material—which inherently may contain something with which you disagree. But that’s OK. Challenge the authors. Think. Prayerfully and critically question the material in each day’s lesson to determine the truth in the material for you.

UNION COLLEGE

LINCOLN, NE 68506 (402) 488-2331

It was in southern California that I ran across a guy named Jamal Chamazi. I had gone to the Los Angeles County Courthouse to see if I could get out of a traffic ticket when I saw him on the courthouse steps. There he was, with his long hair and beard and robe, talking about the "Empire of the Supreme Being," as he called it.

I had started to walk on by him and his gathering to take care of my ticket, because I didn't want anyone to think that I was really listening to this kook. But then I thought that I might get a kick out of what he was saying, and who knows, maybe even be able to help him a little.

So I moved closer.

"Those of you who are poverty stricken," I heard him say with a Middle East accent, "should be very happy, for you will be the ones to live in the Empire of the Supreme Being.

"Those of you who have joined peace movements, who are speaking out against the arms race and supporting peaceful measures to be used to overcome military/political problems, don't be discouraged if your peacemaking efforts seem to fail. You should consider yourselves blessed, for you are indeed children of the Supreme Being.

"Those of you who are active in seeking justice for the poor and minorities, who are working to abolish discrimination, and who treat every man or woman as your brother or sister, you too should consider yourselves blessed and heirs of the Empire.

"For it is not those who subscribe to certain beliefs that will be in the Empire of the Supreme Being, but those who lift drunks out of the gutters, give all the money they have to the poor, and generally work for the suffering and oppressed."

I looked around at this guy's audience. Flanking him on either side were some pretty wild characters—sleazy-looking women decked out to the hilt, and grubby die-hard hippies of the draft-dodger type. I wasn't impressed.

I stood listening for a few seconds longer and then went on about my business. No doubt the guy had a few good points, but he seemed kind of weird—and pretty radical.

In court, I argued for about half an hour over my speeding ticket—and finally won. Yes, I had been speeding, but the policeman had failed to fill out the ticket in the proper way, and so my case was dismissed. I walked out of the courtroom feeling quite proud of myself.

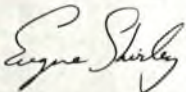
On the way back to my car I again passed by that Jamal Chamazi fellow. As I walked by I couldn't catch all of what he was saying, but he was making some wild claim about going to heaven when he died and that he would be the "Supreme Being's right-hand man."

This fellow is too far out for me, I thought. I did wish though that I had had the opportunity to share with him some of my views from the Bible. In the first place, I wanted to show him some texts to get him straight on the state of the dead, and then I wanted to show him how the Bible says our major concerns shouldn't be over nuclear war, poverty and social injustice, but that as Christians we should help people fight the serious battles in their lives—over smoking, adornment, theater-going, etc.

And then I thought I would advise him about the company he was keeping. If he really wanted to be an influence for good in this world, I knew he would have to stop having such close associations with the sleazy, grubby, even smelly dope-heads he was running around with.

Now, how I wished that I had taken the time to talk with him and in love had shared with him the truth. But it is too late. For I read in yesterday's paper that he, along with a couple of pimps, had been murdered by a street gang in Los Angeles.

How sad. For he might have been saved if only I had shared with him the truth.



Eugene B. Shirley, Jr.
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY Editor

God The Revelator



"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

— Hebrews 1:1, 2

by Margarete Hilts

Key passage: Isaiah 40:26

*The heavens are telling the glory of
God,
The wonder of His work displays the
firmament.*

— Haydn, *The Creation*

When the Greeks looked into the night heavens and noted the orderly path of the stars through the sky, they imagined each flaming star-jewel set in a crystal sphere. Depending on the speed of its movement through the sky, the star produced its own special pitch as it whirled within its crystal ball. But the spheres, too, swirled through space, over, under and around each other, thus creating the music of the spheres. Only the gods could hear this divine music; mortals, never.¹

But the Greeks underestimated the music of the spheres. Instead of the tinkle of crystal on crystal, the music of the spheres is a great cosmic symphony played by the stars, many of them trillions of light years apart, yet all in glorious, perfect harmony. This spectacular, dramatic, cosmic symphony, echoing from one end of the universe to the other, makes known from galaxy to galaxy the glory, majesty and power of our Almighty God. But this is not music for the gods alone; mortals who stop to listen can hear it clearly.

Abraham heard it when invited by God to step out of his tent to contemplate the stars. It told him that he could always count on God to fulfill His promise.² David heard it, tending his sheep on the hills of Bethlehem. To him it said that God is a Master Craftsman whose laws are absolutely perfect.³

And I have heard it. One lonely night, disappointed, confused,

distraught, I gazed long into the brilliant night sky. Slowly I came to know that, although mortals cannot number, much less name, the trillions times trillions of stars in the universe, God has named each one in His star symphony and He directs the whole without a mistake. That night the stars let me know that my God is an intimate, caring God who loves me in the special way I need. He knows my name. He will keep me off a collision course. I am a part of the universal symphony.

It's a crystal-clear fifteenth century Christmas Eve. Mara, with a dead child in her arms, is running to the miserable hut of her sister, Violaine, who is a blind leper. Because of her enforced isolation, the only communication Violaine has had for the past ten years has been with God. In her desperation, Mara demands of her a miracle of resurrection, since by now Violaine must surely be a saint. But Violaine asks a favor: "Please read the Christmas story."

Mara, in a hurry, reluctantly begins, "Unto us a Child is born. . . ."

"Mara, listen," interrupts Violaine, "Do you hear music?"

Impatiently Mara continues, "His name shall be called. . . ."

"Listen, Mara, don't you hear that divine, that angel music?" But earth-bound Mara hears nothing.⁴

In this way Paul Claudel, a twentieth century writer, suggests that night after night the stars play for us earthlings the music of the spheres, but only those who listen hear the great cosmic symphony whose Director is our gracious, caring, omnipotent God.

¹ Florence Armstrong Grondal, *The Romance of Astronomy* (New York: The Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1937), pages 4, 5.

² Genesis 15:5.

³ Psalm 19:1-7.

⁴ Paul Claudel, *The Tidings Brought to Mary*, trans. Wallace Fowler. (Port Washington, New York: Henry Regency Co., 1969), page 107.

by editors

Notes

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1,2).

This text contains much vital information in a few words. Perhaps one of the most important things it tells us is that if God had not chosen to reveal Himself to His creatures, they would have had no means of discovering Him. The initiative, therefore, belongs to God, and our lesson today touches briefly on the three principal ways in which He has given His Self-revelation to man: through creation, the Scriptures and Jesus Christ.

“Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing” (Isaiah 40:26; NIV). Before man was made, the stars and planets in their brilliant and orderly array silently testified to the existence of a Creator. The heavenly bodies continue to present that evidence, and people everywhere are invited to take time to lift up their eyes on high and contemplate it. **“For all that may be known of God by men lies plain before their eyes; indeed God himself has disclosed it to them. His invisible attributes, that is to say, his everlasting power and deity, have been visible, ever since the world began, to the eye of reason, in the things he has made” (Romans 1:19, 20; NEB).**

The realm of nature, however, speaks a wordless and ambiguous language. Mankind has needed clearer instructions to gain the deep insights into the attributes of the Creator. Therefore, Christians claim that **“All scripture”** has been **“given by inspiration of God. . . .” (II Tim. 3:16).** From the first page to the last, the Bible purports to quote the speech of the Most High in many of its passages (see **examples in Genesis 1:3, 6, 26, 28, 29, and Rev. 22:13, 17, 20**), and its writers repeatedly declare that they are conveying **“the word of the Lord”** (see **II Kings 17:13; Isaiah 1:2, 10; 6:8; 42:5-8; Joel 1:1; Gal. 1:11, 12; Rev. 1:1, 2**).

The Holy Scriptures are the only books that hold within their pages a worthy original revelation of God and His plan for re-creating that which has been so brutally deformed by sin. The Scriptures can make their students **“wise unto salvation,”** and convincingly teach, rebuke, correct and train them in righteousness or in right conduct. In so doing, they reveal their more-than-human origin, and establish their claim to inspiration.

But in spite of all that has been declared in nature, and in spite of the revelation in Scripture, men and women have still woefully misunderstood the character of God. Thus, to save man from his destructive ignorance, God planned a still clearer revelation of Himself. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (John 1:1, 14; NIV).**

A pitying, merciful God determined to reveal Himself in the Person of His Son, who lived in such a way on earth that He could say of Himself: **“he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:8).**

by Elden Buck

Ellen White was a great believer in the fact that God “. . . is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” She stated, “No truth essential to our salvation is withheld . . . ;”¹ “So long as we come to our heavenly Father humbly and with a spirit to be taught, willing and anxious to learn, why should we doubt God’s fulfillment of His own promise [to give the Holy Spirit as a revelation of the Father to them that ask]?”²

Certainly Ellen White’s own experience bears this out. As a child, she set her heart to be at peace with Jesus, and she pursued that end feverishly. Despite horrible bouts with guilt and despondency, which made part of her life a roller-coaster ride from the heights of security to the pits of despair, she did not abandon her goal. Often she lay in anguish at nights, longing for acceptance in the eyes of a Holy God. Finally she got what she was after—never to let that precious assurance go.

Ellen White’s tenacity in her youthful war with doubt, and later her experiences in the devastating “great disappointment,” are astounding and humbling to a great many of us less determined members of this church which she helped to pioneer. But let us consider her exhortations to seek and find God individually, and we will know the source of her strength. In these exhortations, three sources of divine revelation are invariably set forth: an authoritative Bible, the beauty and order of nature, and the life of Jesus Christ.

Her accounts of the lives of Enoch, John the Baptist, and Jesus all mention these sources of divine revelation, in passages not unlike the following: “As we try to become acquainted with our heavenly Father through His word angels will draw near, our minds will be strengthened, our characters will be elevated and refined. We shall become more like our Saviour. And as we behold the beautiful and grand in nature, our affections go out after God. While the spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works. Communion with God through prayer develops the mental and moral faculties, and the spiritual powers strengthen as we cultivate thoughts upon spiritual things.”³

Adventists have traditionally discussed the subject of God’s revelation to man in the straightforward manner Ellen White recommended. While the “rock-rimmed” elements of this approach face opposition by some who see this Bible-nature scheme as simplistic, it remains an important part of Adventist tradition.

In our modern grapplings with intellect and inspiration, however, Ellen White’s early experience and views demonstrate a helpful principle. For her, the important thing for a Christian was his spiritual honesty.⁴ If a man wished to know truth with all his heart, God would not leave him in error. The vital factor was a person’s heart attitude toward available truth. Doctrines, mores, and ideas followed.

Key passage:
Hebrews 11:6

Notes

“No truth essential to our salvation is withheld”

“The important thing for a Christian was his spiritual honesty”

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 58.

² *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 1155, 1156.

³ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 71.

⁴ *My Life Today*, p. 265.

by Neils-Erik Andreassen

"A religion which does not affirm that God is hidden is not true."

— Blaise Pascal

The greatest sin a Christian can commit is to be bored in the presence of God. God tolerates anger, doubt and frustration; He forgives our failures; but He cannot stand boredom in His presence.

Boredom occurs when the surprises in life have been exhausted. It can happen in a marriage, in a friendship, and in a class. It sets in when our lives have become flat and predictable, when nothing new happens or is expected to happen. It can also creep into our relationships with God. When we have learned all about Him that we care to learn, when we have exhausted our curiosity about Him, we become bored in His presence. And this is the worst sin of all.

A truly religious person affirms that God is hidden and that He is not a known quantity. Our knowledge of Him can never be exhausted. Therefore, a truly religious person can never be bored in God's presence, for he can never know all he wants to know about God. He is always surprised. He always learns something new and unexpected.

But, if God is hidden, how can He even be said to reveal Himself? Think of children playing hide-and-seek. One child is looking for his mates. He knows what he is about, he knows approximately where to look, but he is not exactly sure whom he will find and when he will succeed. However, of this he is certain: someone is hiding somewhere, and he is seeking to find him. He hears the rustling of leaves, a twig bends, a bird is disturbed, someone is giggling, and, if he is lucky, maybe a shadow will flash by—not enough revelation so that he can claim to have found it all out and won the game, but enough to know that someone, even someone special, is there.

Thus, religious people, like children playing, are very much in the dark concerning their God. They know that He is, for He has left signs of His whereabouts. But the game is not over yet. The One who is hiding has not yet stepped out into the bright light to reveal Himself; and the one who is seeking cannot shout, "I see you, I know who you are, come forward into the light." He is still looking, the hidden One is still hiding. The rustling of leaves still continues, the shadows flash by, the twigs keep bending, sounds come from unexpected corners, the tension keeps building. So it is with the true believer and his God. He knows, but not completely; he imagines, but is not sure; he sees a shadow, but not the whole form; he gets a glimpse, but not a still study. He steals forward, cautiously and quietly, to learn more, to surprise and to be surprised, to see better, to recognize more clearly. He is never bored in the presence of God.

Revelation (*apocalypse*) means to uncover what is hidden. Therefore, as long as God is the One who reveals Himself, He will remain hidden, or better, elusive. And there is never a dull moment.

Key passage:
Genesis 3:8, 9

Notes

A truly religious person is always surprised in God's presence

"Religious people, like children playing, are very much in the dark concerning their God"

by editors

Key passage:
I Kings 9:11, 12

Notes

People today are seeking for a revelation of God. In revival meetings, in television and radio religious programming, through Christian entertainment, much of the human race is desiring a genuine understanding of God.

But where may He be found? In the rich churches of today? In singing "Kum ba ya"? Consider the following:

1. Seek God in the fellowship of other Christians. God has chosen to reveal Himself to humanity through His children. In New Testament times He revealed Himself through His Son, and under the working of the Holy Spirit, through His followers. Likewise today, His foremost method of expression and communication to the world is through His children.

God reveals Himself in the fellowship of believers. Hence, if you deny one the privilege of fellowship, you deny him a revelation of God. As we fail to love, communicate, honor, cherish, we are depriving others of some part of a saving glimpse of God.

This "fellowship of believers" may be found in your church. But wherever you happen to find true believers in Christ, there you are promised a revelation of the Divine.

2. Seek God amidst the poor and suffering. Rarely was Christ found in the fellowship of the affluent. God identifies with the oppressed.

In our rich churches of today, in our over-staffed, multi-million dollar offices, in our costly programming, it may be difficult to find the meek and lowly One who owned but the coat on His back.

So search for Him among the hungry. Search for Him in the hovels of poverty. Search for Him where men are persecuted for righteousness' sake or oppressed in seeking human rights. The Christian's God is the God of the destitute, weak and suffering.

3. Seek God in the quietness of your own heart. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Search for God in a pasture with cows, on a lake in a quiet cove, on a walk along residential streets late at night. So far as possible, search for Him in an environment which He has created. Then talk with the Revelator.

Tell Him your innermost ambitions and desires. Tell Him of your lusts and unholy dreams. Tell Him of your perplexities and of your hope for fortitude. Then listen as He reveals Himself in concern, forgiveness, and counsel.

Often God is not found in "freewill" offerings, "kum ba ya" and three-minute public prayers. The Hidden God reveals Himself to those who hunger and thirst after Him in quiet meditation and heart-felt communion.

And God said to Elijah, "'Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord.' And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (I Kings 19:11, 12).

by Edwin A. Karlow

Key passage:
John 14:1-4

Notes

Philip was a modern man. He wanted clear, undeniable evidence. He was willing to be persuaded, but as a practical person he wanted more than promises. "Lord, show us the Father; that is all we need." Philip might have been thinking as many of us do— "Enough of these parables. Give it to me straight!"

Of course, you know what Jesus said next. He mildly rebuked Philip for missing the point. He, Jesus, was the best revelation of the Father Philip could have! For Jesus, Philip's questions were a "letdown," not an opportunity to expound hidden mysteries. Only a moment before Jesus had told His disciples, "Now that you have known me you will know my Father also, and from now on you do know him and you have seen him."

Had Philip completely missed the point, or had he simply failed to pay attention? The answer is "yes" to both questions. He missed the fact that the only chance he could have of comprehending the Father was through another human being, and his attention (as well as that of the other disciples) had been squandered over three years of traveling with Jesus by seeing Him as *only* a human prince awaiting coronation. "Have I been *so long* with you all, and you *still* do not know me?"

It's not that the Father was unwilling to make an explicit revelation of Himself. The Bible records a few times when the Father began to reveal Himself; however, He came across too thunderous (Exodus 20:18-21), or too loud or too bright (Matthew 17:1-7).

The problem of revelation lies in our limited capacity to receive and understand. God's revelation of Himself to us must be expressed in *our* language. He can use only those concepts and examples that have meaning in human life. And God must restrain His revelation so that we are not overwhelmed. Jesus understood this when He spoke with His disciples in the upper room on the night of His betrayal: "I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear" (John 16:12).

Today, the clear, persuasive evidence about God that we need is in the person of Jesus Christ. Here is evidence that matches the dignity of our intellect, but will not frighten or harm us. Still, we must remember what philosopher Immanuel Kant has said, that any sufficient explanation for God would be incomprehensible, but that any comprehensible explanation would be incomplete.

Just following Jesus' resurrection, Thomas picked up Philip's theme, but added a condition of his own: "Unless I see the scars of the nails in His hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in His side, I will *not* believe" (John 20:25; emphasis supplied). As you know, Jesus easily met his conditions, and Thomas believed. Compared with Philip's request, Thomas' seemed trivial. But they both sprang from the same mistaken belief that God's existence and personality can be independently verified apart from Himself. Again, Jesus understood this problem of revelation and faith. He asked the disciples a question and then offered a promise which has sustained Christians ever since: "Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!" (John 20:29).

"The problem of revelation lies in our limited capacity to receive and understand"

Any sufficient explanation for God would be incomprehensible, but any comprehensible explanation would be incomplete

—Kant

REACT

1. Neils-Erik Andreasen, in the Evidence article for this week, writes of the "hidden" God. He quotes Blaise Pascal who says, "A religion which does not affirm that God is hidden is not true."

Is God indeed "hiding"? If so, why?

2. When God does reveal Himself today, His revelation rarely takes a fantastic form. But why is this? Why doesn't God thunder from the heavens now and then, as He did from Sinai, or use some other fantastic bit of phenomena to reveal to men the truth?

3. In describing where one might find a revelation of God, the author of the How To article suggested to "search for Him among the hungry. Search for Him in the hovels of poverty. Search for Him where men are persecuted for righteousness' sake or oppressed in seeking human rights. For the Christian's God is the God of the destitute, weak and suffering."

What does it mean to search for God among the hungry, poverty-stricken and oppressed? Is this a call to social involvement?

4. Edwin A. Karlow, in the Opinion article for this week, reminds us of the words of Immanuel Kant: Any sufficient explanation for God would be incomprehensible, but any comprehensible explanation would be incomplete.

Do you agree with this statement? If so, then what are the implications of it? Does it suggest anything to you regarding the study of theology? Explain.

5. Have you ascertained in your own mind how God communicates to you?

The Lord God



"Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary:
praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise
him for his mighty acts: praise him according to
his excellent greatness. . . . Let everything that
hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

— Psalm 150:1, 2, 6

by St. Augustine

GREAT ART THOU, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Thy power, and of Thy wisdom there is no number. And man desires to praise Thee. He is but a tiny part of all that Thou hast created. He bears about him his mortality, the evidence of his sinfulness, and the evidence that *Thou dost resist the proud*: yet this tiny part of all that Thou hast created desires to praise Thee.

Thou dost so excite him that to praise Thee is his joy. For Thou has made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee. . . .

But how can I call unto my God, my God and Lord? For in calling unto Him, I am calling Him to me: and what room is there in me for my God, the God who made heaven and earth? Is there anything in me, O God, that can contain You? All heaven and earth cannot contain You for You made them, and me in them. Yet, since nothing that is could exist without You, You must in some way be in all that is: therefore also in me, since I am. . . . So it is, Lord; so it is. Where do I call You to come to, since I am in You? Or where else are You that You can come to me? Where shall I go, beyond the bounds of heaven and earth, that God may come to me, since He has said: *Heaven and earth do I fill*.

But if You fill heaven and earth, do they contain You? Or do You fill them, and yet have much over since they cannot contain You? Is there some other place into which that overplus of You pours that heaven and earth cannot hold? . . . You fill all things: but with Your whole being? It is true that all things cannot wholly contain You: but does this mean that they contain part of You? and do they all contain the same part at the same time? or do different parts of creation contain different parts of You—greater parts or smaller according to their own magnitude? But are there in You parts greater

and smaller? Or are You not in every place at once in the totality of Your being, while yet nothing contains You wholly?

What then is my God, what but the Lord God? *For Who is Lord but the Lord, or Who is God but our God?* O Thou, the greatest and the best, mightiest, almighty, most merciful and most just, utterly hidden and utterly present, most beautiful and most strong, abiding yet mysterious, suffering no change and changing all things: never new, never old, making all things new, *bringing age upon the proud and they know it not*; ever in action, ever at rest, gathering all things to Thee and needing none; sustaining and fulfilling and protecting, creating and nourishing and making perfect; ever seeking though lacking nothing. . . . Thou owest nothing yet dost pay as if in debt to Thy creature, forgivest what it owed to Thee yet dost not lose thereby. And with all this, what have I said, My God and my Life and my sacred Delight? What can any one say when he speaks of Thee? . . .

Who shall grant me to rest in Thee? By whose gift shalt Thou enter into my heart and fill it so completely that I shall turn no more to my sins but embrace Thee, my only good? What art Thou to me? Have mercy, that I may tell, What rather am I to Thee, that Thou shouldst demand my love and if I do not love Thee be angry and threaten such great woes? Surely not to love Thee is already a great woe. For Thy mercies' sake, O Lord my God, tell me what Thou art to me. *Say unto my soul, I am Thy salvation*. So speak that I may hear, Lord, my heart is listening; open it that it may hear Thee say to my soul *I am Thy salvation*. Hearing that word, let me come in haste to lay hold upon Thee. Hide not Thy face from me. Let me see Thy face even if I die, lest I die with longing to see it.

The Confessions of Saint Augustine. Books I-X, trans. by F. J. Sheed, (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews, & McMeel, 1942, 1970). Pages 3-5. Used by permission.

by editors

Notes

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27).

It is amazing that such a concept of God should have come from such a time and environment. Israel was still on the east of Jordan, it had not yet conquered Canaan, and Moses was about to die and be buried in the alien land of Moab. Yet after forty frustrating years that would have destroyed the faith of a lesser man, Moses firmly retained this understanding of the Lord whose lieutenant he had been throughout those four difficult decades. In unshaken conviction he saw God as the Eternal, the Guardian, the Sustainer, the Champion of His chosen people.

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2). In this, the only psalm that has come down to us from Moses, the veteran leader records his unequivocal belief in God's eternity. He who wrote Genesis 1 clearly sees that the Creator Himself must have existed before His creation. And he sees no bounds to that existence: God is from timeless eternity in the past to timeless eternity in the future. He lives in an eternal present.

But the Eternal must also be the Creator for, so far as human reasoning can perceive, there must have been a time when the Eternal was alone. If that "aloneness" was to change, creation had to begin.

"Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath into the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein" (Isaiah 42:5). Creation is shown solely as an act of the Godhead, and is kept that way. Creation demands a creative power outside of the created. The mystery of life remains in the mind and hand of the Creator.

Beyond a Creator, however, God is also the royal Lord. **"For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods" (Psalm 95:3).** The poet lived in a largely polytheistic world. Only one small nation had the vision and the courage to worship one God. In their better moments, the citizens of Israel cried: **"The Lord, he is the God . . ." (I Kings 18:36, 39).** And when truly worshiping Him, they repudiated all other claimants to godhood, and saw their Lord as sovereign Ruler of the universe.

Isaiah saw God as holy: **"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts . . ." (Isaiah 6:3).** Moses saw Him as **"merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).** And John saw Him as One who **"so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).** Christianity is a courageous religion. It dares to offer standards that are superhuman. It calmly does this based on its knowledge of the Christian's God: He is sinless; He is the perfect One. And yet, the great God, "the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," loves our world so wholeheartedly and everlastingly that He has given Himself in His Son to save His creation from the results of failing to meet His own standard. He need not have done this; He could have left mankind to its own fate. But that would have been contrary to the highest of all His qualities—Love!

selected by Elden Buck

"The very first step in approaching God is to know and believe the love that He has to us (I John 4:16); for it is through the drawing of His love that we are led to Him.

"The perception of God's love works the renunciation of selfishness. In calling God our Father, we recognize all His children as our brethren. We are all a part of the great web of humanity, all members of one family. In our petitions we are to include our neighbors as well as ourselves. No one prays aright who seeks a blessing for himself alone.

"The infinite God, said Jesus, makes it your privilege to approach Him by the name of Father. Understand all that this implies. No earthly parent ever pleaded so earnestly with an erring child as He who made you pleads with the transgressor. No human, loving interest ever followed the impenitent with such tender invitations. God dwells in every abode; He hears every word that is spoken, listens to every prayer that is offered, tastes the sorrows and disappointments of every soul, regards the treatment that is given to father, mother, sister, friend, and neighbor. He cares for our necessities, and His love and mercy and grace are continually flowing to satisfy our need.

"But if you call God your Father you acknowledge yourselves His children, to be guided by His wisdom and to be obedient in all things, knowing that His love is changeless. You will accept His plan for life. As children of God, you will hold His honor, His character, His family, His work, as objects of your highest interest. It will be your joy to recognize and honor your relation to your Father and to every member of His family. You will rejoice to do any act, however humble, that will tend to His glory or to the well-being of your kindred."¹

"The last like the first sentence of the Lord's Prayer, points to our Father as above all power and authority and every name that is named. . . . The power and the glory belong to Him whose great purpose would still move on unthwarted toward their consummation. In the prayer that breathes their daily wants, the disciples of Christ were directed to look above all the power and dominion of evil, unto the Lord their God, whose kingdom ruleth over all and who is their Father and everlasting Friend."²

"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. . . . In thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all" (I Chron. 29:11, 12).

"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever . . . amen."

¹ *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 105, 106.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 121.

Key passage:
Matthew 6:9

Notes

**"In calling
God our
Father, we
recognize
all His
children as
our brethren"**

by Robert Paul Dunn

Key passage:
Isaiah 40:26

Notes

Students do not very often think of God as a father. If the phrase "God the Father" is used, it is used in a rather formal way, without much thought, as in the salutation of a prayer— "Our Heavenly Father." Prayers reveal a lot about student faith. And these prayers suggest that faith in Jesus is more alive than faith in the Father. This can be seen in such minor details as the number of prayers addressed to Jesus and in the preference for such a modern and informal term as *you* over the archaic *thy*, but above all in the egocentric and often sentimental character of the prayers. For whenever people emphasize the work of Jesus in the believer over the work of God in the world made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection, introspection and sentimentality result.

This preference for the Second Person of the Godhead goes back at least to William Blake, at the end of the eighteenth century, who pictures God in his poetry and art as austere and vindictive but who shows a loving Jesus. Other aspects of culture are in revolt against the Father, but have no understanding of the salvation of Jesus. Such thinkers as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Jean-Paul Sartre, who have had much influence on contemporary economics, psychotherapy and philosophy, hold that God must be abandoned if the liberty of mankind is to be pursued. More recently Women's Lib has had a difficult time accepting the patriarchal image of the biblical God.

With so much against the traditional picture of God the Father, how are we to understand this week's lesson? Is there still something for us in the biblical image of the Father?

The difficulty our age encounters is that the world no longer seems ordered and beneficent behind the evident confusion and suffering of people and nations. Whereas people in the Middle Ages and later were able to believe in the Father even without divine revelation (in the manner specified in Romans 1:20), today natural science no longer accepts the premise that God exists. Uncertainty characterizes our art and literature.

Yet our age continues, against all odds, to hope. And where there is hope, there is faith. There are signs that the vein of introspection, frequently accompanied by sentimentality and formlessness, may be running out. A concern for others and for form has returned. In literature, the area that I know best, obscurity and personal confession are no longer prized so much as they have been recently. The vein of hope suggested by writers like the later T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden and C. S. Lewis is being developed by younger writers like Denise Levertov, Annie Dillard, John Betjeman and Charles Causley. These younger writers base their hope on a re-examination of God's creation. They are conservation-minded, holding that the created order really does reveal a divine and transcendent Presence. Levertov complains, inverting Wordsworth, "The world is not with us enough."¹ Dillard exults, "A hundred times through the fields and along the deep roads I've cried Holy."² For Adventists, too, it should be possible to renew faith in the Father by lifting the eyes from self to the God of creation.

"The difficulty our age encounters is that the world no longer seems ordered and beneficent behind the evident confusion and suffering of people and nations"

"For Adventists, too, it should be possible to renew faith in the Father by lifting the eyes from self to the God of creation"

¹ Denise Levertov, "O Taste and See," from *O Taste and See* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1964.)

² Copyright © 1977 by Annie Dillard. From the book *HOLY THE FIRM*. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., Pages 72-73.

by Michael J. Bauer

Key passage:
Isaiah 55:8, 9

Notes

There are many beautiful descriptions of God that have been graciously revealed to us. He is called the holy One, the eternal One, a loving Father, etc. But how valuable are these divine descriptions if we have difficulty comprehending them or applying their meanings to our lives? Following are six different ways that Christians perceive God and my thoughts on how these perceptions may relate to us.

The Eternal One. Loss of property, a communist takeover, or even death need not frighten us, because we are followers of the only Constant in all of reality: God. He always has been and always will be. He is timeless and changeless, and we can depend on Him (Malachi 3:6). The world may lose heart and hope, but Christians never will. Believers find no fear of being in bondage to other people, even to nations, because whatever may happen God will still reign supreme.

The Creator. Being created in God's image means that we are like Him (Genesis 1:26). Therefore, we must be imaginative and creative in everything we do—as He is—in order to find more complete meaning and happiness in our lives. Such creative activity is a fulfillment of God's purpose in making us in His image (Genesis 1:29-31).

So try new and creative ways of leaving a part of yourself in your work, play, witness, etc. Be expressive and leave the world a better place than it was when you entered it.

The Royal Lord. On the whole, the world leaders of today cannot be trusted. However, we are not disheartened, because our King is Jesus. We do not belong here, for we are citizens of a better land in which exists the city of God (Hebrews 11:16).

The Holy One. Mental illness, much of which is caused by an overwhelming sense of guilt, can be cured by believing that the Holy God loves us and wants us to be close to Him. And whenever God does bring us close to Him, we are "set apart" as special, and we thus become holy. Our burden of guilt is healed when we see how much God loves and accepts us in spite of our sins.

Loving Father. Because of our weaknesses, we often need someone to go to in whom we may confide. Unfortunately, most of us cannot be completely open with other people because of the pain and worry we may cause them to suffer. But during quiet times, and in natural surroundings, we may open our hearts to God. We can *always* tell Him everything because His love is unconditional.

Our Savior. When we behold God with unveiled faces, we are changed, becoming more and more like Him (II Cor. 3:18). God is Savior because He both declares and makes us righteous.

by Linda Bowers

Key passage:
Isaiah 11:6c

Notes

I don't know how many in this audience have read the book, *Mister God, This Is Anna*, but if you have read it, then you will know that it is one of the most stimulating, practical and fun-to-read of the inspirational books around.

It was written by an Englishman named Fynn—just plain "Fynn"—and it is about his 3½ year encounter with a young girl named Anna, whom he first met and, for all practical purposes, adopted when she was but four years old.

There can be little doubt but what Anna was a genius—especially in the areas of philosophy and theology. And nothing bears this out better than statements made by her and recorded in the book on the subjects of God, the church, Christian living, etc.

Below is an account by Fynn of a conversation that took place between Anna and the local parson about Anna's "Mister God."

"After the evening meal was finished and all the bits and pieces put away, Anna and I would settle down to some activity, generally of her choosing. Fairy stories were dismissed as mere pretend stories; living was real and living was interesting, and by and large fun. Reading the Bible wasn't a great success. She tended to regard it as a primer, strictly for infants. The message of the Bible was simple and any half-wit could grasp it in thirty minutes flat. Religion was for doing things, not reading about doing things. Once you had got the message there wasn't much point in going over and over the same ground. Our local parson was taken aback when he asked her about God. The conversation went as follows:

" 'Do you believe in God?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Do you know what God is?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'What is God then?'

" 'He's God!'

" 'Do you go to church?'

" 'No.'

" 'Why not?'

" 'Because I know it all!'

" 'What do you know?'

" 'I know to love Mister God and to love people and cats and dogs and spiders and flowers and trees'—and the catalog went on—'with all of me.'

" . . . There's nothing much you can do in the face of that kind of accusation, for that's what it amounted to. ('Out of the mouths of babes. . . .') Anna had bypassed all the nonessentials and distilled centuries of learning into one sentence: 'And God said love me, love them, and love it, and don't forget to love yourself.' "

¹ *Mister God, This Is Anna* by Fynn. Published in the United States by Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York. This edition is published by arrangement with Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977. Page 19.

REACT

1. The Bible writers use a number of different metaphors to illustrate God. Below, list three *different* metaphors you have thought of to describe Him. Be prepared to explain why you chose the descriptions that you did.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. In the Testimony article for this week, Ellen White says, "In calling God our Father, we recognize all His children as our brethren." Which of the following do you see as being compatible with this statement:

___ interracial marriages

___ racially segregated congregations

___ ordination of women (as ministers)

___ the Equal Rights Amendment

___ neighborhood boundaries defined by social class

___ abortion

___ political disregard for the oppressed in foreign lands

Be prepared to explain why you marked some answers and did not mark others.

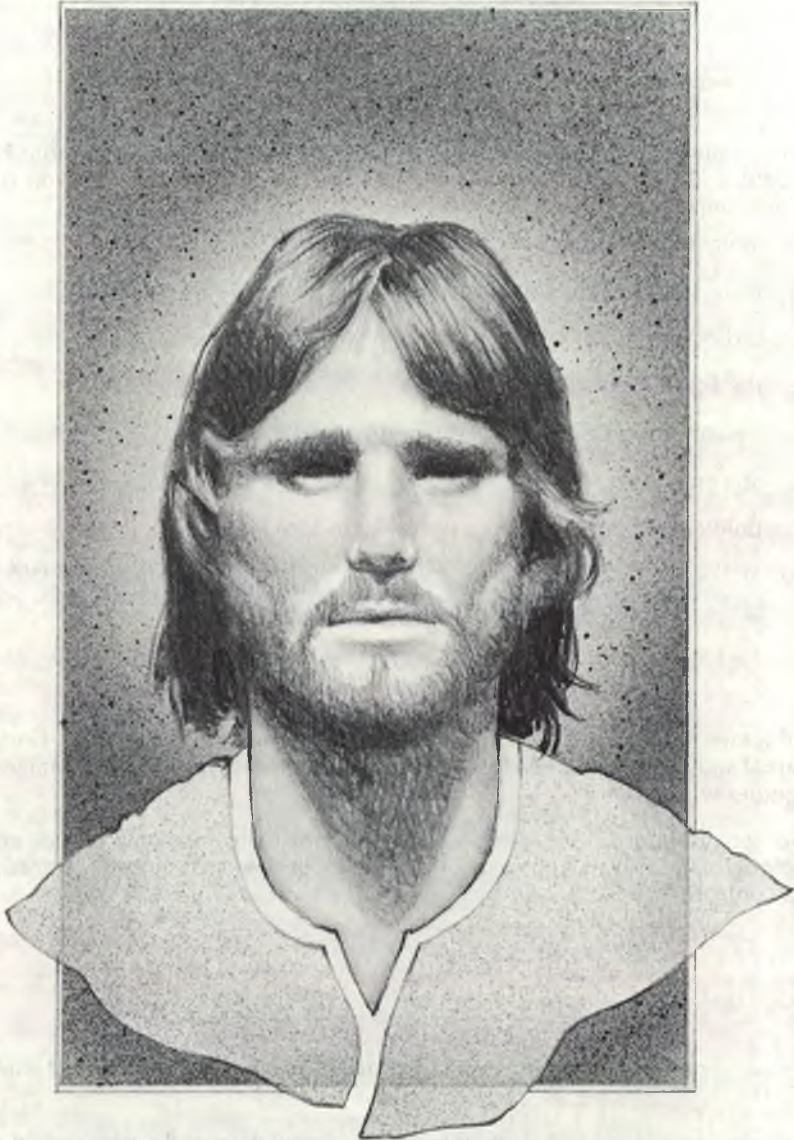
3. The lesson this week discusses, among other things, the concept of God being an eternal and all-powerful Lord—controlling nations and events and organizing all to fit together with harmony.

And yet, there are discordant notes in His universe: heavenly bodies collide and explode, nations war, hundreds of millions of people are suffering. Hence, where is His control?

4. A popular descriptive name for the Christian's God is *Savior*. Certainly it is apropos, as it is His desire to save all.

And yet, one cannot help but wonder why the all-powerful Savior would not reveal Himself in the same manner to all of mankind. Why hasn't God given complete and full revelations of Himself to all the inhabitants of the world?

Son Of Man! *Son Of God*



“The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

— John 1:14; NIV

by Bonnie L. Casey

When my husband is feeling particularly canny, he is fond of predicting the outcome of events such as elections, arguments or soccer games as "likely to go either one way or the other." We let him think he's cute.

But in considering the subject of this week's lesson, I began to see his little joke as representative of a very serious way of looking at life. The same sentiment is reflected in such great American clichés as, "You can't have your cake and eat it too" or, "America: Love it or Leave it." This apparent difficulty with seeing that some things may be this way *and* that way at the same time is certainly understandable, given the natural state of things. After all, anyone knows that there are certain absolute conditions: you can't be rather dead or a little bit pregnant. But when it comes to understanding some basic tenets of Christianity, this way of thinking presents severe limitations.

Take, for example, the doctrine of the dual nature of Christ: all human, all divine. This paradox is, to our either/or minds, a mystery; the New Testament sense of the word is "divine secret." And it does indeed take a sort of mental agility to grasp what that means; a certain breadth of imagination, and a willingness to accept a wonder.

In some religions, people grow up with the idea of mystery as an essential element of faith. But Christian fundamentalists seem to have a particularly hard time with this idea of mystery. The word is not common to the conservative vocabulary. Fundamentalists like things to be simple, literal and generally explainable. Perhaps this tendency to see things in set ways has to do with the restrictions we

place on the Truth (either *they* have it or *we* have it, but *we can't all have it!*).

But regardless of where the tendency has come from, seeing things as having to be either one way or the other certainly does snarl up the process of understanding life (which comes as a relentless barrage of complex paradoxes) or of creating a coherent and consistent system of values. Did you ever ask yourself any of these questions: How can they love me when they know what a schlemiel I am? How can success be so gratifying and so insidious at the same time? How can fiction be literally untrue and yet speak truths that are timeless and searching? How can the human body serve both the highest art and the basest pornography?

If we still can't understand these seeming contradictions, then how can we understand a Savior who is both God and man? Well, the truth is we can't. Witness the recurring, impassioned controversy over the issue of righteousness by faith, which ultimately hinges on the nature of Christ: *either* He is our divine substitute *or* our earthly model. This inability to grasp the essential mystery of Christ's nature is tragic, because the significance of His life cannot be isolated from the truth it reveals about mankind: that we are creatures of spirit *and* flesh, and *both* are very good; that the Lord knows we are "but dust" and also that we maintain in our souls a spark of the divine that is worth risking the universe to redeem; that when you receive your neighbor in charity, sullen and boorish though he may be, you are receiving the Son of God. These are essential mysteries.

by editors

Notes

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5).

What a shock to realize that until the Father sent forth His Son to redeem the human race there is no record that any member of that fallen family specifically knew of the Son's existence! Many knew God as the sovereign Lord of the universe, but even they had no clear vision of a Second Person in the Godhead. And God Himself had not enlightened them. In His inscrutable wisdom He waited until "the fulness of time was come," then gave the world the revelation that cradled its salvation.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you," the angel told the young, engaged Jewish girl, **"and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35; NIV).** Here we are observers of the holiest moment in human history. The Godhead was visiting a humble but dedicated young woman to appoint her to be the mother of her Lord. The Holy Spirit was to be the agent to bring about that motherhood; the Most High was to "overshadow" her to the same end; and the Second Person of the Godhead was Himself to be the divine-human Babe, the Son of Mary as well as the Son of God.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1-3; NIV). In these words the apostle introduces his Master as the *Logos*, the Expression of God. He portrays Him as eternal and divine, the co-Creator of all things with God the Father. "If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in this regard are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed for evermore."¹

Belief in the divine sonship of Christ must necessarily embrace belief in His eternity. **"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).** This text is important in that it is more than a reference to ancient ancestry; it proclaims the Messiah's eternity. Thus, Christ "was with God from all eternity."²

And yet, He who is in every respect equal with God did not allow that prized position to prevent Him from rescuing man from the clutches of sin. **"The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14; NIV).** John 1:1-3 instructs us as to Christ's eternal divinity while John 1:14 teaches His assumption of humanity. The Word, "God's thought made audible," became man, and thereby, "God's thought made visible."

"For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Our great High Priest is **"Jesus the Son of God" (v. 14)**—Jesus, forever retaining our human form, and the Son of God, having divine strength.

¹ SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1126.

² Ellen G. White, *Review & Herald*, April 5, 1906.

selected by Michael Clark

A disease—a cancer of the soul—had infected the human race. And God knew that “The only way in which the fallen race could be restored was through the gift of His Son, equal with Himself, possessing the attributes of God. Though so highly exalted, Christ consented to assume human nature, that He might work in behalf of man and reconcile to God His disloyal subjects.”¹

But “By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.’ John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. . . . God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into highest heaven. It is the ‘Son of man’ who shares the throne of the universe. It is the ‘Son of man’ whose name shall be called, ‘Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6.”²

“But while God’s Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding his pre-existence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father. From everlasting He was the Mediator of the covenant, the One in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted Him, were to be blessed. ‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was our God.”³

Today, “It is our privilege to contemplate Jesus by faith, and to see Him standing between humanity and the eternal throne. He is our Advocate, presenting our prayers and offerings as spiritual sacrifices to God. Jesus is our great, sinless propitiation, and through His merit, God and man may hold converse together. Christ has carried His humanity into eternity. He stands before God as the representative of our race.”⁴

“The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love.”⁵

¹ *The Review and Herald*, Nov. 8, 1892, p. 690 (edited).

² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

³ *The Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906 (edited).

⁴ *The Youth’s Instructor*, Oct. 28, 1897.

⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

Key passage:
Isaiah 9:6

Notes

“He gave
Him to the
fallen race”

“Heaven is
enshrined in
humanity,
and humanity
is enfolded
in the bosom
of Infinite
Love”

by Norman R. Gulley

Key passage:
Philippians 2:5-11

Notes

Editor's Note: In this article, Dr. Gulley takes a fascinating look at the doctrine of the incarnation. The first three paragraphs give an excellent summary of important and contemporary Christological (the study of the nature of Christ) views. The remainder of the article discusses current Adventist thinking regarding these issues.

What do we mean by "incarnation"? (1) Is it God coming towards our world but distanced from it, as in Deism and the "Wholly Other" eternity-time dialectic of the early Barth? Or is it God coming closer by meeting man at the outer circumference of his existence, as in the early Luther? (2) Or is it the opposite emphasis of finding Jesus within the stream of human history, as one man in whom the God-consciousness developed quantitatively, though not qualitatively, more than in any other, such as in Schleiermacher? Or is it the goal of an evolution of man, the place where God took that man up into a unique relationship with Himself, like picking up a coat, at either baptism or crucifixion, as in Adoptionism? Is the incarnation the point at which the man Jesus was infilled with the Holy Spirit and thereby became God, as in Ebionitism? (3) Or would it be another possibility, neither above nor within history but a mixing of the two, to form a third "neither God nor man" person, such as milk and eggs lose their identity in scrambled eggs, as in the developed Christology of Luther (*communicatio idiomatum*)?

Is the incarnation a timeless event, and thus a "nonevent," a mere "yo yo" dancing on the threshold of time, as in Bultmann? Is it a natural event rather than a miracle, as in Brunner? Or did it require an immaculate virgin, as in Catholic theology? Or did the incarnation event itself sanctify the humanity of Jesus, as taught by Athanasius? Did it involve a laying aside of divinity, as with the Kenoticists? Or did the Babe in the manger at the same time still occupy His throne in heaven, as in Calvin (*extra Calvinisticum*)? Was it the eternal humanity that came with God in the incarnation as in Barth's *Logos ensarkos*? Did God's Son always want to become a man, irrespective of whether sin had entered the human race, as in Irenaeus, or did He come with overflowing love in response to man's sin with risk and eternal sacrifice involved, as in White?

These and many other questions crowd in. All emphases in Christology can be subsumed (for practical purposes) under three headings: (1) those distancing the divinity of Christ too far from our humanity, (2) those identifying the humanity of Jesus too much with our humanity and (3) those who make of the God-man a third person in whom the divinity is "humanized" and the humanity "divinized."

Seventh-day Adventist Views

Adventists concur with Bonhoeffer that the *who* question in Christology is more important than the *how* question. How the event took place is a biological question that rushes carelessly onto holy ground. The incarnation is a divine mystery—a divine miracle. The answer to the *how* question is hidden, but the answer to the *who* question is revealed.

Having said this, there remain two main Adventist views on the

incarnation: (1) that God took Adam's nature as it was before the Fall, and (2) that God took upon Himself the nature of man as it had become after four thousand years of degeneracy. Biblical and Ellen White sources are used to support both positions. Which is correct? Or could both be understood as not necessarily being mutually exclusive? And sin is involved in this discussion. Did Jesus take on man's sinful nature? Is it still true, as classical theology says, "The unassumed is the unredeemed"? In other words, if Christ didn't assume fallen humanity could fallen man have been redeemed? Can medicine be effective two feet above the wound? Or must it enter where the problem is? Or is there a deeper dimension involved—healing that comes from One who remained spotless?

Is "The unassumed the unredeemed"?

Sin Defined

Sin can be defined in at least two ways: (1) breaking the law, or (2) a broken relationship with the Lawgiver. But at its root, sin is a broken relationship between man and God (and between fallen angels and God), and the broken relationships issue in law-breaking. The first man, Adam, fell out of relationship with Christ and ran and hid from Him (Genesis 3:10). Thus, sin is an estrangement of man from God, but it is not an estrangement of God from man. Man, not God, broke the relationship.

"Sin is a broken relationship"

The plan of salvation is God's answer to man's estrangement from Him. In the incarnation Christ entered into a closer relationship with man than ever before. God became God-man. God entered into man's estrangement from Him to work out an atonement (at-one-ment). He came to restore the relationship. The incarnation was a man-ward movement of God to actualize a God-ward movement of man. In it, Christ left the community of the Trinity to enter into the community of man. In it Christ still remained a member of the Trinity but He also became a member of humanity. A double relationship is involved. Jesus Christ, the God-man, was in perfect relationship with both God and man throughout His incarnational life. This has profound theological significance. For it is only out of this double relationship that we can articulate the reality of the incarnational natures of Jesus Christ. All Christological views need to be understood out of this context.

What was involved in holding together these two relationships? Jesus Christ spanned the awful gulf between sinless God and sinful man, between the unity of the Trinity and the estrangement of mankind, between God in search of man and man on the run from God. "Though He had no taint of sin upon His character yet He condescended to connect fallen humanity with His divinity."¹ In other words, while remaining in perfect relationship with God He entered into a saving relationship with man. "By His obedience to all the commandments of God, Christ wrought out a redemption for men. This was not done by going outside of Himself to another, but by taking humanity into Christ, to bring the fallen race into oneness with divinity."²

"While remaining in perfect relationship with God He entered into a saving relationship with man"

The incarnation must always mean a man-ward movement of God to achieve a God-ward movement of man. The incarnation was for the purpose of relationship—to overcome estrangement. The incarnation attacked sin at its core. If sin broke the relationship then the incarnation

was God's answer to restore it. All biblical and Ellen White passages find their proper hermeneutic within this context. Outside of this relational definition of sin these same statements run wide of the mark. All statements about the nature of Jesus Christ must be interpreted in a manner appropriate to their Subject. His mission interprets them, and not vice versa. His mission was to restore a broken relationship, and the incarnation therefore involved a movement to that end and therefore could never be God becoming sin. He came with the spiritual sinless nature of Adam even though He also accepted the physically weakened nature of fallen man. These two are irreversible in Jesus Christ.

“Christ came with the spiritual sinless nature of Adam even though He also accepted the physically weakened nature of fallen man”

Christ As “Sin For Us”

If sin is a broken relationship with God, then when did Jesus Christ become “sin for us”? Not until the horror of Gethsemane and the crucifixion. *The Desire of Ages* puts it this way: “Throughout His life on earth He had walked in the light of God’s presence. When in conflict with men who were inspired by the very spirit of Satan, He could say, ‘He that sent Me is with Me; the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.’ John 8:29. But now He seemed to be shut out from the light of God’s sustaining presence. Now He was numbered with the transgressors. The guilt of fallen humanity He must bear. Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us. So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father’s love. . . .

“Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. . . . As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. He saw what justice meant. Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for others; now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself. . . .

“As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure that coming conflict with the powers of darkness.”⁷³ No wonder He cried out on the cross, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; NIV). Here, for the first time, the man Jesus entered the terrible separation struggle. Here, as our substitute, He plunged into the very abyss of hell (sin) itself—total separation from God. He had been a man with the physical limitations of man upon Him throughout His life. He needed food and sleep and He felt pain. But never had His relationship with God been broken. Throughout life on earth He had maintained a perfect relationship with God and man. He held on to His Father to remain sinless and He held on to humanity to remain a Savior.

Repeatedly Ellen White pictures this dual relationship as Christ reaching heavenward with one hand to grasp the hand of God and reaching man-ward with the other hand to grasp the hand of humanity. Throughout His incarnational life and death Jesus Christ knew nothing of sin, either in His nature or in His acts, that broke this dual relationship with God and man. He maintained a dependent relationship upon God and a saving relationship with man.

Jesus became “sin for us” at Gethsemane and Golgotha

Tempted Like We Are

How then could Jesus have been tempted in all points like as we are (Hebrews 4:15) if He were not a sinner?

All we have to do to be sinners is to be born. But Jesus wasn't born a sinner or He too would have needed a Savior. So any seeming advantage over us, because of His birth, is actually *for* us. And yet because He was unlike us in birth (He was God on a mission to do the will of His Father, Hebrews 10:9) and thus certainly not in a broken relationship with Him (He was without propensities to sin), how could He still be tempted like we are?

The key has to do with the thrust of temptation. Satan tempts us to depend upon ourselves, to try to operate by our own power, and thus become separated from God. And sins develop logically out of this separation. In like manner, Satan tempted Christ to become separate from His Father. And these temptations to use His own power were greater than ours for He really had power to use—power we will never have, for He was divine. To that extent the temptations of Jesus were far greater. Satan also dogged Him far more than he does us. Everything was at stake in “getting” Jesus. But it isn't with us. Also, sin would have cut the man Jesus off from God forever, and thus there could have been no forgiveness for Jesus or for us.

“Jesus wasn't born a sinner or He too would have needed a Savior”

Diving Analogy

Perhaps the most important discussion in the church (issuing out of a study on the incarnation), concerns itself with whether Jesus is our model or substitute, or both, and which is the most important aspect. So to understand this, think of a diving analogy. The Olympic high-diver soars from the heights, enters the water so cleanly, and moves down to the lowest point so expertly before ascending to the surface. Imagine a UPI photographer shooting a photograph of the moment the diver entered the water, and focusing alone on that moment of entry as the overall view of that dive. Would the fans be satisfied? Never. “There's more to it,” they'd cry out. Neither can the human nature of Jesus be understood from His birth alone.

A dive begins in the heights and its downward movement does not end until the lowest point in the water is reached. Likewise Jesus came from the heights and didn't reach His lowest point until Gethsemane and the cross. *The entire journey downward constitutes His substitution for us.* He came as God from those heights. He came as the sinless One. He entered our sphere (as a diver enters the water) with a sinless birth, lived a sinless life and only in the deepest point downward plunged into separation from God. He became “sin for us” at that deepest point (see Phil. 2:5-11). He died as our substitute.

The substitution of Christ for us constitutes the entire length of His man-ward journey, whereas the way He lived—totally dependent upon His Father, as a vine clinging to Him, so that He could of His own self do nothing (John 15:1, 5:19, 3:28)—constitutes a model for us. For every look to Jesus as my model I need to look away a thousand times to Christ as my substitute. There will never be another Savior. Jesus is still

“The entire journey downward constitutes His substitution for us”

“For every look to Jesus as my model I need to look away a thousand times to Christ as my substitute”

the only "way" to heaven. The way of the cross still leads home. We need only cling to Him as He did as a man to His Father and we will be saved. Clinging to Him is more important than copying Him. The latter can only result from the former. For clinging is the relationship restored within. The incarnation was the entrance of God into the realm of man to do for us that which we could never do for ourselves. Atonement comes through incarnation. Our becoming like Him will never be the focus of our study throughout eternity, but Christ becoming one of us to save us will. "Behold the Lamb of God" will be our delight—behold our Substitute. And forever more we, "beholding the glory of the Lord," will be "changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another" (II Cor. 3:18; RSV).

¹ Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, May 26, 1896.

² *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 250.

³ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 685f.

by Karl-Heinz Schroeder

Key passage:
Matthew 5-7

Notes

Jesus was both divine and human—living in heaven while on earth. As Christians, we are called to be both not of this world and to live in this world. But how may we effectively do this? This question has plagued the minds of many throughout the years. The following points show the steps a Christian must take in living the incarnate life.

1. Christians must reject the value system of this world completely.

The value system of our modern society is entirely materialistic; everything is determined by the dollar value attached to it. As an example, look at the goal of the average college student in our higher learning centers today: professions are selected that ensure success financially. As an example, there has been a rise in the number of students enrolled in business courses and a decrease of enrollment in esoteric courses.

2. Students should direct their educational programs toward a profession that transcends the material benefits. With money no longer an issue, how many would become doctors? Or how many ministerial students would there be if these truly wanted to serve God and mankind without thinking first of the ministry's job security? Can we really serve our Master while thinking of ourselves first, and not caring who we step on in our climb to "success"?

3. Completely restructure your value system. If you can successfully reject the world's value system and direct your education toward God's plans, the next step must be to restructure *your* value system, focusing on the kingdom of God.

Restructuring your value system extends beyond simply your professional life; it touches your personal, political and philosophical views just as much. You are a member of the kingdom of God—a transitional and metaphysical institution. As a lifetime member (if you so choose), what do your duties entail?

First of all, you must understand what is determining the relationships you now hold with people. Are these relationships based on self-interest or interest in the well-being of others? Do you exploit or enjoy people? Do you treat people as beings who have value in themselves, or do you see them as objects contributing to your ulterior, materialistic motives?

Christ's relationships were not motivated by trying to prove Himself. Jesus did not come proclaiming, "I am a good God;" rather, the objective of Jesus' life on earth was to save man because He loved man (John 3:16). The love motive is so frequently overlooked, and it cannot tolerate personal exploitation.

4. As each day begins, re-examine yourself—think again of the values, motives and responsibilities you hold as a child of God. Christianity, as ordained by Christ, is easier to talk about than to practice. But we have waited too long to live what we believe; now is the time to take the Sermon on the Mount and biblical ethics seriously.

Jesus was both divine and human—living in heaven while on earth. As Christians, we are called to be both not of this world and to live in this world. We may effectively accomplish this revolutionary function as we reject the materialistic value system of this world and restructure our values to meet the responsibility we have of living in the kingdom of God.

by Michael J. Bauer

The two facets of Christ's nature which we have discussed this week have become very meaningful to me: His sinless humanity and His inherent divinity.

His sinless humanity became an important part of my Christian experience during my freshman year in college. Writing a research paper on "perfection" for an English class, I came to the conclusion that in order to be saved, I had to become just as perfect as Jesus. Thus, I began to focus on being a simply wonderful, victorious Christian. As time went on, however, I began to get depressed. I found myself doing things each day that just were not the kinds of things I knew Jesus wanted me to do. I firmly believed that Jesus had come in the same kind of sinful nature I was enslaved to in order to show me that I could overcome sin by depending upon the Father, as He did. But something was wrong; no matter how hard I tried, I could not be like Jesus.

But towards the end of that first year, it happened: I realized that it had not been necessary for Christ to come in my sinful, fleshy condition to prove that I did not have to sin, because I was *born* a sinner (Psalm 51:5). Rather, Christ had to come to prove that *Adam* did not have to sin, and therefore, He came with the sinless human nature that Adam had (Romans 5:12-19). Whereas Jesus was tempted and could have sinned, Adam was tempted and *did* sin.

Once I realized this, I quit worrying about being "perfect," accepted Christ's perfection of character to cover my sinful nature, and began to concentrate on knowing more about Him through Bible reading and prayer. Since then, I have never seen so many sins in my life become of no effect. Once I realized that I was not nor ever could be as good as Jesus, I saw my need of Him as my Savior, and He delivered me from the bondage of uncontrollable sin.

Once this became apparent to me, I discovered that my Savior was also God Himself in the flesh (John 1:1-4, 10, 14). At one point I believed that Jesus was so much like me that I could have done the very works He did, but later I realized that He was so very *unlike* me that He could be my Savior and God. He was so much God that He had the power both to lay down His life and take it back up again. No one could take it from Him nor give it back to Him; He could do all things by virtue of His own inherent divinity (John 10:17, 18).

Realizing this, I am not afraid of death, because He who saved me has power over it. I have done missionary work late at night on dark city streets among the "dropouts" of society, and not once did I fear danger, because the Christ is God.

Therefore, as you can see, the sinless humanity of Jesus and His inherent divinity have a lot of meaning for me. I hope they mean something for you.

Key passage:
John 1:1-3, 14

Notes

"Once I realized that I was not nor ever could be as good as Jesus, I saw my need of Him as my Savior, and He delivered me from the bondage of uncontrollable sin"

REACT

1. Norman Gulley, in the Evidence article for this week, defines sin as basically being a broken relationship with God. He sees the mission of Jesus, then, as "remaining in perfect relationship with God" while entering "into a saving relationship with man." He understands that Jesus became "sin for us," therefore, not until the horror at Gethsemane and on the cross when His relationship with God was broken.

Do you agree with Dr. Gulley's ideas here? Explain.

2. Some have argued that if Jesus were not born a sinner, then He had it much easier in overcoming sin than we do. Do you agree? Explain.

3. Dr. Gulley states, "For every look to Jesus as my model I need to look away a thousand times to Christ as my substitute." And, "clinging to Him is more important than copying Him."

Do you agree?

4. Michael Bauer writes in the Opinion article for this week, "Once I realized that I was not nor ever could be as good as Jesus, I saw my need of Him as my Savior, and He delivered me from the bondage of uncontrollable sin."

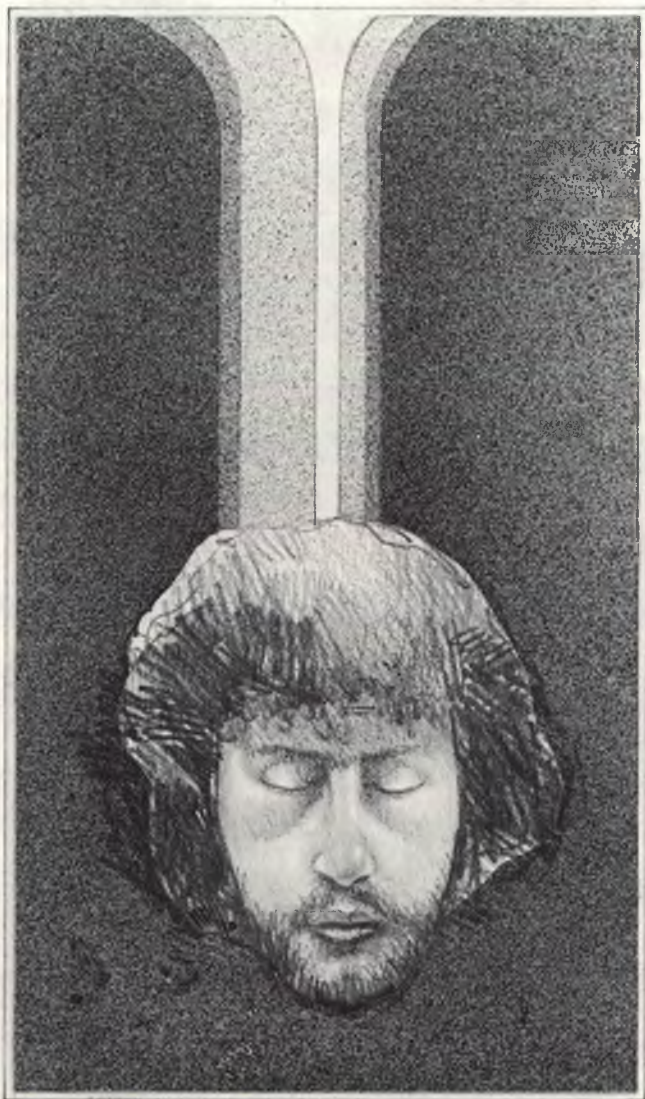
It seems that many, however, who, like Mike, have seen their need of a Savior, still find themselves in "the bondage of uncontrollable sin." What's wrong?

5. Many words and a lot of ink have entered into the discussion of the nature of Christ. Was He divine or human or both? Was He a model or a substitute? Etc., etc.

Some see such theological discussions as being useless, claiming that if one finds his identity as a child of God, then that is all that matters. Others understand such discussion as being very important, claiming that the foundations for one finding his identity as a child of God lie in such important theological issues.

What do you think?

The Holy Spirit



“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” — II Corinthians 13:14

by T. S. Eliot

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.

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by editors

Notes

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

This week's theme centers on one of the deepest mysteries of our religion. We generally feel more comfortable studying about our heavenly Father and His Son than about the Holy Spirit.

But in any case, we need to recognize that the Spirit is no less important than His Companions, and that He is intimately involved in our spiritual lives.

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). From the beginning, the Third Member of the Godhead has been involved in our world's history. Active not only in creation, but down through the centuries of time the Holy Spirit has been instructing "holy men of God" concerning the Godhead.

Of course, the Spirit was also an important actor in the drama surrounding the birth of Jesus (see Matthew 1:18). And a careful reading of Luke's gospel reveals that He directed Simeon's and Anna's recognition of the infant Savior (Luke 2:36-38). The Child's unusual growth (vs. 40, 52; DA 68-74) was only possible by His unusual submission to the Spirit's guidance. This spiritual cooperation led Jesus to the Jordan for baptism (ch. 3:21, 22), and to His "being full of the Holy Ghost" (ch. 4:1). Immediately, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness (ch. 4:1; Mark 1:12), and afterwards gave Him power for His Galilean ministry (Luke 4:14). Thus, the Holy Spirit might even be called the central figure in the life of Christ, linking heaven and earth in this great drama.

On the mount with Nicodemus, Jesus explained how the Holy Spirit might become the central figure in man's life. **"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).** In every true believer's heart there is the desire to become like Christ. How can this dream be fulfilled? The answer is simple and utterly uncompromising: Each must be born again. That transformation can come only by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Hence, Paul's statement to the Corinthians: **"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. 3:16).** This text conveys a profound spiritual truth, namely, that God, being spirit (John 4:24), will dwell in the hearts of His contrite and humble followers (Isaiah 57:15; John 14:23; Rev. 3:20). This is done in the person of the Holy Spirit who seems to have the particular task of representing the Godhead in the consciousness of the believer.

Yet, not only on an individual basis, but collectively as well is the Spirit the active force representing the Godhead. The Spirit is involved with the Christian community, or church, here on earth. **"Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9:31; NIV).** If the Spirit had been restricted to the original apostles, His ministry would have ceased with their deaths. But such was not the divine plan. For immediately prior to His ascension Jesus said, **"Ye shall receive power" (Acts 2:8),** and history confirms that the power came at Pentecost through the divine agency of God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 16-21).

selected by Michael Clark

Key passage:
II Corinthians 3:18

Notes

“Christ determined that when He ascended from this earth, He would bestow a gift on those who had believed on Him, and those who should believe on Him. What gift could He bestow rich enough to signalize and grace His ascension to the mediatorial throne? It must be worthy of His greatness and His royalty. He determined to give His representative, the third person of the Godhead. This gift could not be excelled. He would give all gifts in one, and therefore the divine Spirit, that converting, enlightening, and sanctifying power, would be His donation. . . .

“Christ is represented by the Holy Spirit; and when this Spirit is appreciated, when those controlled by the Spirit communicate to others the energy with which they are imbued, an invisible chord is touched which electrifies the whole. Would that we could all understand how boundless are the divine resources.”¹

“It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil and to impress His own character on His church. . . .

“When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the joy of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see, creates a new being in the image of God.

“The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ. . . .

“The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit every sincere prayer is indited, and such prayer is acceptable to God. Wherever a soul reaches out after God, there the Spirit’s working is manifest, and God will reveal Himself to that soul. For such worshipers He is seeking. He waits to receive them and to make them His sons and daughters.”²

“Would that we could all understand how boundless are the divine resources”

“The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God”

¹ *The Southern Watchman*, Nov. 28, 1905

² *The Review and Herald*, Nov. 19, 1908.

by Martin Luther

This is truly a very comforting verse [John 14:26], one that should be noted well. Earlier we heard the same thing: "He will be in you and will dwell with you forever." Thus Christendom has the promise of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in its midst. But not only this. He will also teach the Christians and call all Christ's words to their remembrance until the Last Day. Thus we confess: "I believe in the Holy Spirit and the holy Christian Church." With these words we affirm that the Holy Spirit dwells with Christendom and sanctifies it, namely, through Word and sacrament, through which He works faith in it and the knowledge of Christ. Those are the tools and the means through which He continuously sanctifies and purifies Christendom. This also makes Christians holy before God, not by virtue of what we ourselves are or do but because the Holy Spirit is given to us. . . .

Christians need this comfort, lest they doubt that the Christian Church will remain in the world in the midst of all the unbelievers . . . as well as the devil and his angels. For here is the promise, which neither lies nor deceives: The Holy Spirit "will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." Now we can be sure of this and joyfully glory in it; we can wager everything and live and die on our possessing the Holy Spirit if we have and believe Christ's Word. . . .

Men assume that the Holy Spirit sits high above in heaven, while we are down here on earth and have to attain holiness ourselves by means of our life and our works. This viewpoint pushed monkery to the foreground. People said: "This is a holy order! These are holy fathers!" But at the same time so much uncertainty came about because of all this that no one among them was able to say for his own part that he was holy. It is, of course, shallow and poor reasoning and altogether false glory to call a social position or an order holy even though not a single person in all the orders lumped together can say: "I am holy." In the devil's name, of what good is a holy order that does not make anyone holy? Or what other purpose do the orders serve than to wring vain admiration from the people and to hinder and divert them from recognizing and receiving the true holiness that is given by the Holy Spirit?

A Christian, however, can glory truthfully and with good reason, and he can say: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, who makes me and all believers holy. Therefore I am a member of a holy order, not that of St. Francis but that of Christ, who makes me holy through His Word and sacraments. . . ."

Thus you must learn . . . how and where you are to look for the Holy Spirit—not up above the clouds but in the place to which Christ directs you when He says: "The Comforter whom the Father will send" and "He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance." From these words we infer that He does not remain seated up above but is sent down to Christians. And he who is to find and receive Him must not gape upward—as we once did—as though He were flitting about up there among the deceased saints, apostles, martyrs, virgins, etc. No, He is down here on earth, just as Christendom is here on earth. For wherever it is, there He will also be at all times and forever, as Christ said earlier. Thus we must picture Him as being in close association with the office and order of Christendom, the Word and the sacraments.

Key passage:
John 14:26

Notes

"Christians need this comfort, lest they doubt that the Christian Church will remain in the world in the midst of all the unbelievers"

"I am a member of a holy order, not that of St. Francis but that of Christ"

"The Spirit is down here on earth, just as Christendom is here on earth"

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by David Johnson

Key passage:
Acts 2; Romans 12

Notes

Talking about who and what the Holy Spirit is can be a very useful undertaking because such knowledge can keep us straight on what the Spirit is and is *not* doing. In short, we can avoid much of the confusion that surrounds various Christian groups today. Too often when personal experience is sought with the Spirit, Christians think of wind and fire and miracles with ecstatic utterances and “holy rolling,” expecting the ultimate Wizard of Oz down a Yellow Brick Road who can give to their highest desires the perfect fulfillment. And we get two groups: one which will search every group and lifestyle and church till it finds the high experiences it wants, and the other which is so appalled at that kind of freedom and frivolity that it rejects that view of God.

Perhaps both groups are wrong, and both right. I can personally rejoice in the new life and power that the Spirit brings here and now! But I also rejoice that the Spirit Himself is unfettered, a “wind” that goes where He wills. The best part, however, is that God wishes us *all* to have His Spirit! With that, consider the following “How To” principles for finding the Spirit—here and now.

1. Realize that you don’t have to go out looking for the extraordinary. Expecting the spectacular out of God is really selfish at best. At worst it is a dangerous experience to your spirituality, considering the devil’s counterfeit systems. The important point to consider is that God wants you here and now—not at some spectacular place doing great things.

2. Understand that the Spirit is found where there is faith and obedience. The apostles testified to this in Acts 5:32. God’s law is not forgotten by people of the Spirit. Neither do these people forget the faith by which they are righteous. Indeed, you will find that as you receive the Spirit, you become part of that community that loves God, and keeps His commandments.

3. Remember that the Spirit is found where He is desired. Jesus said, “If any one *thirst*, let him come to me and drink” (John 7:37). The Holy Spirit won’t be “dumped” into your being! You won’t get the Spirit if you don’t want the Spirit.

4. Realize that the Spirit is given to strengthen and upbuild the church. Conversely, the Spirit is not given to simply edify individuals. His gifts of love, service, preaching, teaching, prophecy, tongues, even administration, are all talents given to the church so the faith of each member might have a community, or “body,” in which to be nurtured and grow freely. Thus, being strong in Christ, you become well prepared to defend the faith of His church, and to be witnesses to His salvation.

If you are truly seeking for the Holy Spirit, then ask the Father for Him, and He shall be poured out without measure (Luke 11:9-10). And the Gift you receive of love and service for your own community will be, to paraphrase Paul, the most inexpressible of all gifts, for it brings Christ here and now to you and your fellowship.

by Howard A. Snyder

Editor's Note: As the lesson this week has been discussing the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, I thought it most appropriate to include an article on the Spirit and spiritual gifts. In this article, Howard Snyder attempts to "peel away layers of culturally defined conceptions so that the biblical teachings can be seen." And he offers sound and creative thinking in dealing with this important issue of the gifts of the Spirit.

Key passage:
I Corinthians 12
Ephesians 4

Notes

The Christian faith makes room for gifts and creativity on the basis of the important biblical doctrine of the gifts of the Spirit. And yet, great confusion exists regarding spiritual gifts. Too often specific Christian traditions—implicitly, if not explicitly—deny the possibility of real creativity. The institutional church often shows a serious and crippling misunderstanding of the biblical concept of spiritual gifts. And even though there is a great renewal of interest in the gifts of the Spirit today, this interest has often generated more heat than light.

"Too often specific Christian traditions — implicitly, if not explicitly — deny the possibility of real creativity"

One cannot really understand what the New Testament means when it speaks of the church unless one understands what it teaches about the gifts of the Spirit. Spiritual gifts are primarily a matter not of individual Christian experience but of the corporate life of the church. Gifts are given for, and in the context of, community. . . .

The contemporary church in its institutional form makes little room for spontaneous spiritual gifts. Worse yet, too often it does not need spiritual gifts in order to function more or less successfully. When the local church is structured after an institutional rather than a charismatic model, spiritual gifts are replaced by aptitude, education and technique, and thus become superfluous.

"When the local church is structured after an institutional rather than a charismatic model, spiritual gifts are replaced by aptitude, education and technique"

Several common misunderstandings of spiritual gifts today need to be corrected and shown for what they are: unbiblical tendencies that effectively quench the working of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community. I suggest, in particular, five such tendencies.

1. *The tendency to deny or discredit spiritual gifts.* In its most extreme form, this tendency says the gifts of the Spirit were given as miraculous signs at Pentecost but have no legitimacy today. Gifts of healing, prophecy and tongues are no longer considered valid. In a milder form this tendency admits, in theory, the validity of spiritual gifts but in practice is suspicious of them and tends to discredit them. All spiritual gifts, and especially the more controversial ones, are thought to be superfluous at best and heretical at worst.

Such a position, however, arbitrarily limits the operation of the Holy Spirit and the applicability of the New Testament to our day. There is no more warrant, for instance, for applying chapters 12 and 14 of I Corinthians exclusively to the early church than there is for limiting the thirteenth chapter in this way. Gifts and love go together—in the twentieth century as in the first.

The denial of spiritual gifts really indicates a basic misunderstanding of the nature of such gifts. Those who fear spiritual gifts (and often the problem is, in reality, one of fear) usually conceive of such gifts as highly individualistic, irrational and eccentric manifestations that disturb the unity of the Body of Christ. But such a caricature is not at all what the Bible means by the gifts of the Spirit. . . .

"We simply have no authority to declare specific gifts invalid"

We simply have no authority to declare specific gifts invalid. It may be difficult to accept the full range of biblical teaching here, but this is

necessary to avoid impoverishing the church. And it is absolutely essential for a truly biblical doctrine of the church and its ministry.

2. *The tendency to overindividualize spiritual gifts.* Western Christianity in general has tended to overindividualize the gospel to the detriment of the gospel's communal and collective aspects, and contemporary conceptions of spiritual gifts have suffered from this tendency. . . .

The biblical conception is that the community of believers acts as the controlling context for the exercise of gifts, thus discouraging individualistic aberrations. And gifts *must* operate in this way. The church is, to use Gordon Cosby's phrase, "a gift-evoking, gift-bearing community." And when the church really functions in this way, the various gifts not only reinforce each other, they also act as check-and-balance to prevent extremes. Here the New Testament analogy of the body is helpful. The hand or foot is prevented from some extreme action by its connection to the body's various organs and systems. Functioning as part of the body, the hand is helpful and nearly indispensable, but cut off from the body it becomes grotesque and useless. So it is with spiritual gifts.

It is at this point, incidentally, that small Bible study groups find their utility. The small Spirit-led group builds community and provides the context for both awakening spiritual gifts and disciplining their use. As a consequence of many such cells, the whole larger community of the church is edified. . . .

3. *The tendency to confuse spiritual gifts and native abilities.* The error here lies in the tendency to go to one extreme or the other: to make spiritual gifts and native abilities either synonymous or else antithetical.

Each person is born with latent potentialities which should be developed and employed to the glory of God. This is stewardship. But when the New Testament speaks of spiritual gifts, it goes beyond this. Paul says the Holy Spirit "apportions to each one individually as he will" (1 Cor. 12:11). This suggests a direct, immediate relationship between God and man through conversion and life in the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit result from the operation of the Spirit in the life of a believer, and so are something more than merely the wise and faithful use of native abilities. Gifts must be understood as, literally, *gifts of the Spirit*. . . .

A native capacity does not really become a gift of the Spirit until it is given over to the Spirit and used by him. The principle of crucifixion and resurrection, of dying and rising, applies here. Natural abilities remain in the plane of powerless human works until given to God in self-sacrifice. . . .

4. *The tendency to exaggerate some gifts and depreciate others.* This is one of the most serious and most common distortions of spiritual gifts—the tendency to restrict legitimate gifts to only certain specific ones. How serious this aberration has become is seen in the fact that any discussion of spiritual gifts today usually becomes sidetracked on the question of tongues. The tendency to think of spiritual gifts only in terms of the more spectacular gifts such as tongues, healing or prophecy is an aberration which must be avoided. All gifts are important, all gifts are necessary and all are given by God for the common good.

An examination of the relevant biblical passages suggests that the various gifts mentioned are intended as representative, not exhaustive.

"The community of believers acts as the controlling context for the exercise of gifts"

"A native capacity does not really become a gift of the Spirit until it is given over to the Spirit and used by him"

The various gifts mentioned in the Bible are intended as representative, not exhaustive

The multiform operation of the Spirit may awaken an infinity of gifts; gifts may be as varied as human personality. The New Testament lists the specific leadership gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor-teacher (Eph. 4:11; I Cor. 12:28). But such designations as utterance of knowledge, helps, service, acts of mercy and so forth, may be understood as general categories which include a wide spectrum of specific gifts and ministries. Thus any ability ignited and used by the Holy Spirit—whether in music, art, writing, intercessory prayer, homemaking, hospitality, listening or whatever—is a legitimate spiritual gift. If God has given the gift, then it is good and is intended to be used. . . .

The function of a local church should be to expect, identify and awaken the varied gifts that sleep within the community of believers. When all gifts are affirmed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and in the context of mutual love, each gift is important and no gift becomes an aberration. Whether the Holy Spirit chooses to grant to a particular local congregation all the gifts mentioned in Scripture remains, of course, a divine option. We have nothing to say about that, for the Holy Spirit is sovereign. We can be sure, however, that God will give to each local church all the gifts really necessary for its own upbuilding in love.

5. *The tendency to divorce spiritual gifts from the cross.* This tendency arises from the failure to incarnate the tension between the cross and the *charismata*, between Passover and Pentecost. It is the tendency, on the one hand, to emphasize gifts in such a way that the cross is lost sight of and the community is fractured by self-centeredness, or, just the opposite, to deny any emphasis on gifts because of this tendency toward self-centeredness and self-aggrandizement. . . .

There is a danger here, for spiritual gifts are often misunderstood. The New Testament teaching about spiritual gifts is not a call for each Christian to "do his own thing" and forget the welfare of the group and the need of the world. Ministry is not determined exclusively by personal desire, but by the cross.

And yet, biblically, there is no contradiction between gift-affirmation and self-denial. In fact, the two go together. The biblical principle, again, is that of death and resurrection. As one is crucified with Christ and dies to his own will, the Holy Spirit resurrects within him his significant gift. So the spiritual gift, rightly exercised, is not self-centeredness; it is self-giving.

But we must go further than this, and say that a *Christian discovers the true meaning of the crucifixion as he really begins to exercise his gift.* . . .

Great confusion exists today about spiritual gifts. And yet the biblical teaching is clear, if we seek it. The various distinctions I have suggested here are merely attempts to peel away layers of culturally defined conceptions so that the biblical teachings can be seen. . . .

When spiritual gifts are misunderstood—through being over-individualized, denied, divorced from community or otherwise distorted—it is the church which suffers. The church truly becomes the church only when the biblical meaning of spiritual gifts is recovered. A church whose life and ministry is not built upon the exercise of spiritual gifts is, biblically, a contradiction in terms.

"The function of a local church should be to expect, identify and awaken the varied gifts that sleep within the community of believers"

"A church truly becomes the church only when the biblical meaning of spiritual gifts is recovered"

Taken from *The Problem of Wineskins* by Howard A. Snyder. © 1975 by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of the USA and used by permission of Intervarsity Press. Pages 129-138.

1. Ellen White writes in the Testimony article for this week, "Would that we could all understand how boundless are the divine resources."

One reason why perhaps some have difficulty understanding just how boundless the divine resources are, is that struggles are often lost, victories often not gained. And thus, at times, laying hold of "divine resources" seems but an elusive dream.

May this situation be remedied? Explain.

2. T. S. Eliot, in the Introduction for this week's lesson, speaks of the purging and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit—heavenly fire.

When the Holy Spirit enters the life of a new convert, which of the following do you feel will be among the most significant evidences of His cleansing entrance? Rank order the following ("1" being the most significant evidence of the Holy Spirit, "2" being the second most significant evidence, etc.):

- ___ stops smoking
- ___ begins daily devotions
- ___ stops wearing jewelry
- ___ becomes forgiving of men who at one time embezzled some of his company's funds
- ___ weekly distributes Christian literature
- ___ begins to take the outcasts of society into his home
- ___ begins to pay tithe
- ___ becomes a vegetarian
- ___ has the gift of "helps"
- ___ stops drinking
- ___ becomes accepting of all races of men
- ___ has the gift of prophecy
- ___ stops working on Sabbath

3. Howard Snyder, in the Opinion article for this week, suggests five tendencies which he claims work effectively to quench the operation of the Holy Spirit in the church. The first of the tendencies, he says, is to claim that "the gifts of the Spirit were given as miraculous signs at Pentecost but have no legitimacy today. Gifts of healing, prophecy and tongues are no longer considered valid."

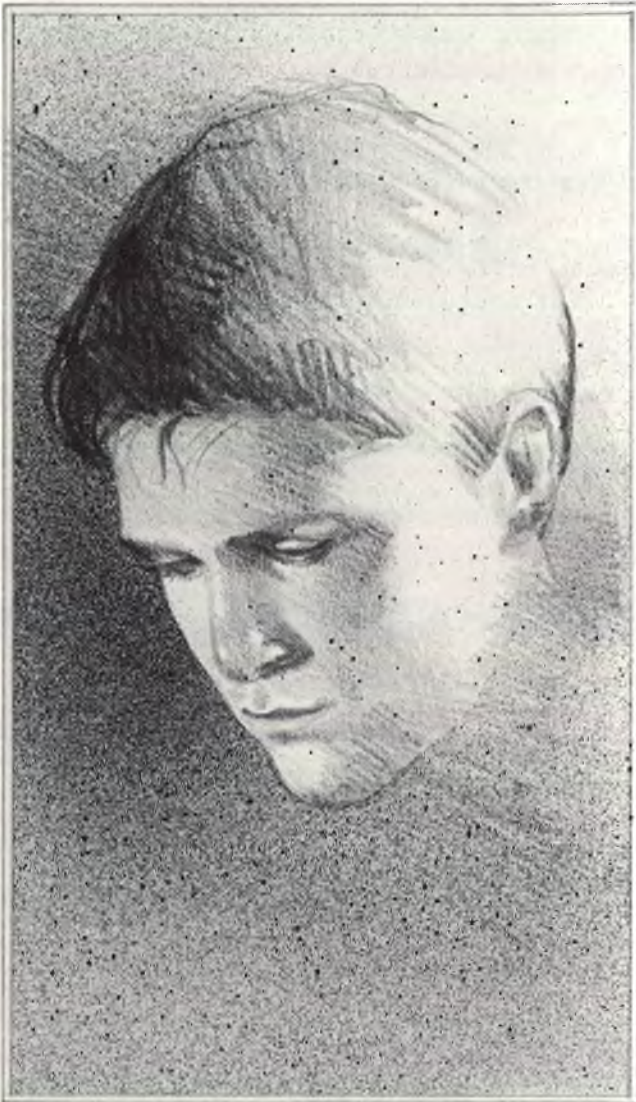
But what do you think? Do *all* of the gifts of the Spirit which were manifested in the early church have legitimacy and a "right to life" today?

4. Howard Snyder also writes: "The function of a local church should be to expect, identify and awaken the varied gifts that sleep within the community of believers." How may this be effectively done?

5. Howard Snyder ends his article with: "A church whose life and ministry is not built upon the exercise of spiritual gifts is, biblically, a contradiction in terms."

Do you agree with this statement? If so, then what are the implications for your life and your local church?

Creator And Sustainer



“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”
— Genesis 1:1

selected by editors

I will remind you of the works of
the Lord,
and tell of what I have seen.
By the words of the Lord his works
come into being
and all creation obeys his will. . . .
He has imposed an order on the
magnificent works of his wisdom,
he is from everlasting to
everlasting,
nothing can be added to him,
nothing taken away,
he needs no one's advice.
How desirable are all his works,
how dazzling to the eye!
They all live and last for ever,
whatever the circumstances all obey
him. . . .

The sun

Pride of the heights, shining vault,
so, in a glorious spectacle, the sky
appears.
The sun, as he emerges, proclaims at
his rising,
"A thing of wonder is the work of
the Most High!"
At his zenith he parches the land,
who can withstand his blaze?
A man must blow a furnace to
produce any heat,
the sun burns the mountains three
times as much;
breathing out blasts of fire,
flashing his rays he dazzles the
eyes.
Great is the Lord who made him,
and whose word speeds him on his
course.

The moon

And then the moon, always punctual,
to mark the months and make
division of time:
the moon it is that signals the feasts,
a luminary that wanes after her full.

The month derives its name from
hers,
she waxes wonderfully in her
phases,
banner of the hosts on high,
shining in the vault of heaven. . . .

The rainbow

See the rainbow and praise its maker,
so superbly beautiful in its
splendour.
Across the sky it forms a glorious arc
drawn by the hands of the Most
High.

The wonders of nature

By his command he sends the snow,
he speeds the lightning as he
orders.
In the same way, his treasures open
and the clouds fly out like birds.
In his great might he banks up the
clouds,
and shivers them into fragments of
hail.
At the sight of him the mountains
rock,
at the roar of his thunder the earth
writhes in labour. . . .
Those who sail the sea tell of its
dangers,
their accounts fill our ears with
amazement:
for there too there are strange and
wonderful works,
animals of every kind and huge sea
creatures.
Thanks to him all ends well,
and all things hold together by
means of his word.
We could say much more and still
fall short;
to put it concisely, 'He is all.'

Taken from "Ecclesiasticus 42: The Glory of God," in *The Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966), pp. 1095-1097.

by editors

Notes

"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6).

Most human beings ask questions concerning origins. And out of the welter of proffered answers there emerge two principal replies—we, and the world around us, originated either by accident or by design. Moral considerations, among others, lead us to opt for design, and that choice leads us to God.

Once we have posited God, the thought of creation is inescapable. Creation is a natural activity of the Deity: it may even be said to be inevitable, for if nature abhors a vacuum, how much more must God? It is basic to the whole structure of our religion, and proclaims: "In the beginning, God."

Our lesson, then, is biblically based, and it must be that way. For by the very nature of the operation, no earth-bound observer could have seen creation in action.

So **"By faith we understand that the words were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3).** Here the writer of Hebrews is not suggesting that we, in our present state, can *understand* the process of creation, but rather that faith enables our minds to *perceive* (a more accurate translation) how our universe owes its origins to God. Understanding will come only in the hereafter. Until then, faith enables us to accept the mind-staggering concept that our physical universe came into existence and is maintained by a word or saying of God (cf. Psalm 33:6, 9).

"Thus saith the Lord, the creator of the heavens, he who is God, who made the earth and fashioned it and himself fixed it fast, who created it no empty void, but made it a place to dwell in: I am the Lord, there is no other" (Isaiah 45:18; NEB). The Bible offers no hospitality to evolutionary theories. It is unashamedly creationist. Creationism is woven into the very warp and woof of the Book. It offers only one explanation for the origin of our earth and all that lives and grows upon it—God's creative acts.

God said, **"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26),** and later, **"Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isaiah 43:6b, 7).** Those who are called by God's name, that is, who are members of His worldwide family, have been created by Him to enhance His glory. The *Jerusalem Bible*, translating Paul, puts it this way: **"We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it" (Eph. 2:10).**

Paul, however, in his descriptions of the Creator-God (see also Col. 1:16), does not stop with the creation of this world and of man: **"he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:17).** Nature is not a self-propelling, self-sustaining machine. For God is the **"I Am" (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58),** The Sustainer.

And, according to Isaiah, by His power alone will the universe be re-created and forever be maintained: **"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17).**

by Tom Teske

Key passage:
Genesis 1:26-31;
2:20-25

Notes

God had just completed our world. Certainly to the universe it was a magnificent display of His creative action. Yet, God acted again.

"After the earth with its teeming animal and vegetable life had been called into existence, man, the crowning work of the Creator, and the one for whom the beautiful earth had been fitted up, was brought upon the stage of action. To him was given dominion over all that his eye could behold; for 'God said, Let us make man in Our Image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over . . . all the earth. . . . So God created man in His own image; . . . male and female created He them.'"¹

"Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is 'the express image' (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will.

"As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry. His countenance bore the ruddy tint of health and glowed with the light of life and joy. Adam's height was much greater than that of men who now inhabit the earth. Eve was somewhat less in stature; yet her form was noble, and full of beauty. The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them"²

Very unfortunately, however, our father Adam chose a course which separated him from God and led to the ruin of our world. But God was prepared to act again. The final result of this redemptive act is clearly seen when Adam is reunited with the perfect world he once knew, and with his God.

"Transported with joy, he beholds the trees that were once his delight—the *very trees* whose fruit he himself had gathered in the days of his innocence and joy. He sees the vines that his own hands have trained, the very flowers that he once loved to care for. His mind grasps the reality of the scene; he comprehends that this is indeed Eden restored, more lovely now than when he was banished from it. *The Saviour leads him to the tree of life and plucks the glorious fruit and bids him eat.* He looks about him and beholds a multitude of his family redeemed, standing in the Paradise of God. Then he casts his glittering crown at the feet of Jesus and, falling upon His breast, embraces the Redeemer. He touches the golden harp, and the vaults of heaven echo the triumphant song: 'Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and lives again!'"³

"Man was to bear God's image both in outward resemblance and in character"

"Unfortunately, however, Adam chose a course which separated him from God. . . . But God was prepared to act again"

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 44.

² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 648 (emphasis mine).

by Albert E. Smith

Galapagos Islands (1980): Giant tortoises for which the islands are named, their shells domed gently on one island, saddle-shaped on another—a practiced eye can identify the home of each. Drab finches, seen as different species by their beak shapes and habit patterns, fitting into a broad span of ecological niches normally occupied by sparrows, warblers or woodpeckers. Two iguanas, one a desert dweller with a diet consisting of cactus apples, and the other the world's only sea-going, algae-eating reptile with inverted reptilian behavior—lethargic in the sun and active in the cold water of the ocean. Flightless cormorants and frigate-bird flying machines. The most southerly sea lion and most northerly penguin at 0° latitude.

Five weeks in these islands at the end of four year's exploration as a naturalist-geologist in South America convinced young Darwin more than any other single event of the paucity of the argument from design on which he had been nurtured in his years at Cambridge.

"If design, then a designer" has been (both before and since William Paley—a noted spokesman for the view) the strongest and most convincing evidence for the creative activity of a personal God. The question faced by any observer, on the Galapagos or elsewhere, however, is whether the evidence leads one to the usual concept of design. For the evidence shows, and the design argument does not adequately describe, a scene in constant flux.

Thus, the Galapagos experience forces me to come to grips with the evidence and attempt to frame a dynamic alternative to design. It must be reverent, respectful of both Creator and evidence. It may recognize the world as not what it ought to be, give praise for what *is*, and celebrate a God who has gone far beyond design in His creative acts. For God has given creatures ability to change, to adapt, to become something else as different circumstances arise. The result is that although the world changes, often not for the better, and some lifeforms become extinct, others have sufficient resilience and adaptability to meet new conditions.

It is not necessary to see all change as a result of sin. I am allowed to suppose, even in a sinless world, that event would lead on to event and tomorrow be different from today. Adaptation, this great gift, stretched to its uttermost and all too often broken in our world, is doubtless part of an original plan for a world without sin. In that world creatures might develop, change, become something they are not, and still be within the blessing of the Creator as "good." Would the cormorant become flightless, the iguana go to sea, and finches become warblers in form and habits? Quite possible, for the richness of that world is beyond imagination.

Praise the Giver of gifts for a creation able to adapt—develop new uses for old abilities, form fresh habits, let the unused atrophy and fall away—and expand into new living spaces with vitality. This concept is a recognition that "in Him we live and move and have our being." Change is as much a part of the creation plan as is the original act of design. "Let there be" also includes "Let there become."

Key passage:
Genesis 1:19-25

Notes

"The evidence shows, and the design argument does not adequately describe, a scene in constant flux"

"Adaptation is doubtless part of an original plan for a world without sin"

by Mark Bohner

Key passage:
Nehemiah 9:6

Notes

"Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Neh. 9:6).

The above passage is truly one of the great beauties of the Bible. Its message, rhythm and seventeenth century English expressions are appealing to the religiously-oriented mind.

And yet, what does the passage mean? "That God is Creator and Sustainer," you say. And this is true. But these are vague and overused terms. What *practical understanding* can one get from knowing that God is his Creator and Sustainer? How can these words be more meaningful? What are the implications they suggest? Consider the following:

1. Knowing that God has created me in His image tells me that He has given me special value, dignity and abilities. Therefore, I am worthwhile. And my abilities, feelings and sensitivities have an answering chord in the heart and being of God.

2. Realizing that God is my Creator reminds me that He understands me much better than I understand myself. None of my feelings takes Him by surprise. He designed my mind; He knows me.

3. Jesus has given a picture of God as the constant Sustainer of His creation. God, He says, even cares for birds and flowers, providing for all their needs. Yet He reminds me that I, as a person, am of much greater value than these and that surely God will also provide for all my needs.

When I comprehend God as being my Sustainer and Supplier in all things, I gain a balanced perspective on life's priorities. My motives for acting aren't centered on ensuring my survival—my needs will be met.

4. Understanding that God is not only my Creator but the Maker of every person, I have a feeling of brotherhood. I realize that all are equal in God's sight, and I have a new perspective from which to evaluate and be concerned about others.

5. The fact that God has created me for a purpose, and that He sustains me through every moment of my existence, inspires me with a sense of responsibility to Him for how I spend my time—indeed, my entire life.

"You, dear Lord, are God alone. You have made the heavens, the earth . . . and you created me in your image. Thus, I have special value, dignity and abilities; and I know that You understand me much better than I do myself. I know that You are my Sustainer and the Provider of my needs—and thus I need not worry about survival. But since You do sustain me—and created me in the first place—I know it must be for a purpose, and therefore I sense that I have a great responsibility to serve You and my four billion brothers and sisters alive on this globe."

by Daniel Chávez

Key passage:
II Corinthians 5:17

Notes

Much has been said in the past and much will be said in the future concerning creationism, and evolution or materialism, from a scientific point of view. The theological implications of accepting one position or the other have been widely discussed in relationship to the inspiration of the Bible. However, the philosophical and ethical implications of materialism have not been discussed too much among us as Adventists.

If there is such a thing as evolution, be it materialistic or theistic, it is clear that the world's creation has not come to its end. This means that the world is still in the process of creation. Any improvement in its material aspects is a sign of this process in action. Has such a thing taken place in philosophy or ethics? The majority of philosophers and theologians of the last part of the nineteenth century thought so. But their ideas were severely shaken by World War I, and even more so by World War II. However, the idea still lingers on.

Nietzsche probably best took the concept of materialistic evolution to its ethical conclusion. He had the idea of man becoming a type of "superman." In order to achieve this goal, he thought, nothing should be spared. This was the supreme moral principle. Hitler brought this concept to its practical application. Others, like Canos in Mexico, considered that Nietzsche was basically correct, except that the stage of the superman had not yet arrived. Thus creation, seen as an unfinished task, was to be completed by man himself.

These ideas have had their continued practical manifestations in expressions of racism, class, the superiority of the intellectual or professional, etc. In the other extreme, the application of force to correct these situations such as is manifested in some forms of Liberation Theology also indicates that the conclusion of the process of creation is in the hands of man.

But what can we say to all of this? Is the world still evolving? Is evolution happening in the ethical realm?

The Bible teaches clearly that God finished His work of creation (Genesis 1-2:3). Man, made in His image, was perfect until he invented his many schemes (Eccles. 7:29). But Jesus came to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), and each one of His followers was to become a "new creation" (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). This does not imply an evolution, an improvement, or a process, but a radical change. There would be development in the process of sanctification, but this would begin with a "new creation," a revolutionary transformation. Likewise, the "new earth" will not come as a result of a "new society," but it will manifest itself as part of the completion of this "new creation" at His coming, a specific event with radical changes.

God finished His act of creation. But has He finished His "new creation"? Is Seventh-day Adventism any better than the world? It is better in health, the keeping of the Sabbath, tithing, and probably better in overall honesty. But . . . is this the prayer of the Pharisee? For example, we give offerings to missions but treat people from mission lands and our own Indians as second rate. The state had to teach us to forget racism and ethnicism and at the same time respect the cultures of others.

Indeed, we should have a philosophy and ethic based on creation and the radical new creation by God.

Evolution comes to its ethical conclusion in expressions of racism, class, etc.

But is the ethical conclusion of creationism — as seen in the lives of Christians — any different?

1. Re Albert Smith's "Praise For Adaptability": Is it possible that "Be fruitful . . . multiply . . . replenish" implies "change, adapt, vary as the needs arise"?
2. What do you consider to be the essence of the creation concept?

Does it really matter whether one believes in creationism or not? Why?

3. Daniel Chávez, in the Opinion article for this week, suggests that evolution comes to its ethical conclusion in expressions of racism, class, the superiority of the intellectual or professional, etc. The ethical conclusion of creationism, therefore, should express itself in ways which are opposite to these. But unfortunately, the actions of many Christians—and many Adventists—have been evidence more for evolution than for creation.

Why is this? Doesn't the new birth work?

What can be done to remedy this tragic situation?

4. Mark Bohner, in the How To article for this week, reminds us that God is the constant Sustainer of His creation—providing for mankind's needs.
And yet, there are presently at least *460 million* individuals in the world who are actually starving—*10,000 per day* who die from starvation. How do you understand this in light of God's sustaining activity? Is He really the Sustainer? If so, then for whom? Does He sustain some and not others?

The Law: Man's Relationship With God



"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."
— Hebrews 8:10; NIV

by Judy Wright

Everyone respected Lawrence. In his wide circle of acquaintances, you could have hardly found one who wouldn't admit that he really had it all together. Christina was sure their marriage would be one that was "made in heaven." She recognized Lawrence's many fine qualities, and she had learned to . . . well, not exactly *love* him, but she certainly respected him highly. She was sure that love would come, as they spent more time together.

The day of the wedding arrived. Christina walked up to the altar to make her public commitment to Lawrence. She promised to remain faithful to him, until death parted them, and the two were pronounced husband and wife.

But even before the honeymoon was over, the problems began. By the time they had moved into their new home, it was most apparent that they didn't like the same things at all. Christina became increasingly impatient with Lawrence. He wasn't the least bit tolerant. His ideas were set in cement. She soon gave up even *trying* to argue with him. It wasn't that he forced her to do things his way. But he was just always there, looking at her reproachfully whenever she would try to unbend and be herself. She grew increasingly weary of the constant sense of condemnation. He not only made judgments about her outward behavior, but he judged her inward motives as well.

Christina tried everything to please him. Day after day she would get up, grimly determined that today would be the day that Lawrence would be pleased with her. But while she was taking extra pains to make one thing perfect, something else would be neglected. And there were times when *all* her best efforts ended in total disaster. It seemed that the harder she tried, the more mistakes she made.

If only she could be married to someone else, she thought. Someone who would approve of her, and love her the way she was. "Till death do us part"—the words echoed again and again in her mind. Suddenly she had a bright idea! Lawrence was sleeping quietly beside her. If she could somehow manage to . . . but how? She soon realized that it was impossible for her to kill him. She wasn't strong enough.

Then another idea came. She couldn't kill *him* — but perhaps she could kill herself! But to her dismay, she found that she didn't have the strength to kill herself, either.

Thus, in utter despair, realizing that there was *nothing at all* she could do to help herself, she cried out to God: "God, if anything gets done to save me from this awful mess, *You're* going to have to do it, and *You're* going to have to do it *all*." For the first time in years she felt peace, and she fell asleep.

Christina awakened early the next morning. Lawrence was still there, apparently—yet He seemed different. There were tears in His eyes, and beautiful lines on His face that spoke of some sort of struggle He'd been through. There were also scars in His hands—scars that Christina somehow had never noticed before.

Instead of rushing out to the kitchen, she began her day by taking time to communicate with Lawrence. She began to realize that here was One with a kind heart, who would love and accept her whether breakfast was perfectly prepared or not. She began to relax—that very day she even found herself singing as she did her housework.

And somehow, the more loved and accepted she felt, the less she worried about her performance, and the fewer mistakes she made. Lawrence's demands just didn't seem as unreasonable as they had before.

by editors

Notes

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Hebrews 8:10; NIV).

This verse needs to be hidden in each Christian’s heart. It shows that a believer’s obedience and salvation come not from a legalistic keeping of commandments but as a result of the Lord’s work in his mind. It is God who makes the covenant; He puts His laws in the mind, He writes them upon the heart. Thus, we need to take a fresh look at the law of the Lord. Consider the discussion on the first four of the Ten Commandments below.

“You shall have no other Gods before me” (Exodus 20:3; NIV).

This commandment was given against the background of universal idolatry at the time of the Exodus—but it has always been first in the heavenly statute book, and there has never been a time when it was not valid. This revelation made Israel monotheistic—worshippers of one God, recognizing that **“the Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4).**

“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them. . . .” (Exodus 20:4, 5; NIV).

In prosperous lands, the most seductive idol is probably Mammon, worshipped under many different forms, but always placing material prosperity above self-forgetful dedication to God. We may thus bow down to cars, TV and stereo sets, houses, family, creature comforts—the list is endless. In less favored lands, the daily struggle for existence may claim first attention. But each must discover and destroy the idols in his own life.

“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name” (Exodus 20:7; NIV).

This third commandment is expressed negatively, but its observance is best promoted by such a profound reverence for the name and character of our Maker that we shall *instinctively* honor Him and have *no urge* to refer carelessly to Him or to blaspheme His holy name.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. . . .” (Exodus 20:8; NIV).

Remember. It is not possible to remember that which one has never known. The fourth commandment, then, reveals that the Israelites knew of the Sabbath before they reached Sinai (cf. Exodus 16:22-30), even though it must have been exceedingly difficult to keep it in Egypt. On release from slavery, however, they began to observe it again.

Keep it holy. The same Hebrew verb, *qadash*, is used at the close of the commandment for the Lord’s own act in hallowing the Sabbath, even as it is in Genesis 2:3 where the English translation speaks of *sanctifying*. Mankind, then, is given the same privilege as God Himself exercised at the close of creation.

Six days shalt thou labor. This places a moral obligation upon all God-fearers to work diligently during the week even as did the Lord during the six days of Creation.

In it thou shalt not do any work. This prohibits performance of secular work on Sabbath, Saturday, the seventh day, and should alert us to guard the holy hours so that secular occupations and interests do not encroach on the Sabbath.

selected by editors

Key passage:
Exodus 20:1-11

Notes

Soon after the encampment at Sinai, Moses was called up into the mountain to meet with God. Alone he climbed the steep and rugged path, and drew near to the cloud that marked the place of Jehovah's presence. Israel was now to be taken into a close and peculiar relation to the Most High—to be incorporated as a church and a nation under the government of God. . . .

Jehovah revealed Himself, not alone in the awful majesty of the judge and lawgiver, but as the compassionate guardian of His people: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." He whom they had already known as their Guide and Deliverer, who had brought them forth from Egypt, making a way for them through the sea, and overthrowing Pharaoh and his hosts, who had thus shown Himself to be above all the gods of Egypt—He it was who now spoke His law. . . .

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship. Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." . . .

The second commandment forbids the worship of the true God by images or similitudes. Many heathen nations claimed that their images were mere figures or symbols by which the Deity was worshiped, but God has declared such worship to be sin. The attempt to represent the Eternal One by material objects would lower man's conception of God. The mind, turned away from the infinite perfection of Jehovah, would be attracted to the creature rather than to the Creator. And as his conceptions of God were lowered, so would man become degraded. . . .

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

This commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial manners, and by frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him. "Holy and reverend is His name." Psalm 111:9. . . .

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . ."

The Sabbath is not introduced as a new institution but as having been founded at creation. It is to be remembered and observed as the memorial of the Creator's work. Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it distinguished the true God from all false gods. All who keep the seventh day signify by this act that they are worshipers of Jehovah. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of man's allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him. . . .

God has given men six days wherein to labor, and He requires that their own work be done in the six working days. Acts of necessity and mercy are permitted on the Sabbath, the sick and suffering are at all times to be cared for; but unnecessary labor is to be strictly avoided. . . . All should unite to honor God . . . upon His holy day.

"He whom they had already known as their Guide and Deliverer, now spoke His law"

"The attempt to represent the Eternal One by material objects would lower man's conception of God"

selected by Rabbi Henry Jay Karp

Key passage:
Psalm 1:1, 2

Notes

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who hast called us from among all peoples and hast given us Thy law. Praised be Thou, O Lord, Giver of the Law.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו
מלך העולם. אשר בחר
בנו מקל העמים ונתן לנו
את תורתו. ברוך אתה
יינותן התורה:

The Ten Commandments – 1¹

I am the Lord thy God, I have been with you throughout the ages. Pharaoh is gone. Haman is gone. Torquemada is forgotten and Hitler is dead. But the keeper of Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep.

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make any images and worship them as God. The loyalty of the Jew to God is indivisible. Hannah's children were the victims of Antiochus. Rabbi Akiba was martyred by Rome. But Jews have always said: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is One!"

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain. Our fathers insisted upon sincerity and holiness. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Above all else God demands the purity of the heart. Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord: he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. The seventh day was the day of rest. This was Israel's rebellion against human slavery, its protest against unceasing toil. Our fathers took this Sabbath day and made it a day of beauty and joy, of blessing and peace. "Come my friend the bride to meet—the princess Sabbath let us greet."

Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the World, who hast given us the law of truth and hast implanted within us everlasting life. Praised be Thou, O Lord, Giver of the Law.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו
מלך העולם. אשר נתן
לנו תורת אמת וחסד
עולם נשע בתוכנו.
ברוך אתה יינותן
התורה:

The Ten Commandments by Rabbi Dr. Jacob K. Shankman. An excerpt from a mini-history of the Jewish people, entitled *From Generation to Generation*, released by the Women's League for Conservative Judaism. Selected by Rabbi Henry Jay Karp. Used by permission.

by David Smith

Key passage:
John 17:3

Notes

When God spoke the first four commandments at Mt. Sinai, He was attempting to introduce Himself to a group of people steeped in Egyptian culture. Theirs was a world of many gods, and the idea of one God whose power could transcend the power of all the gods was difficult for them to grasp. They had much to learn about the great "I Am."

Thus, before the children of Israel could begin to serve God, they had to understand who He was. The same is true for us today; for keeping the first four commandments is based on a proper understanding of who God is. The more we understand Him the greater will be our desire to worship Him, to place Him first in our lives. The best way we can go about "keeping" these commandments then, is to increase our awareness of who God is. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Examine the power sources in your life. God's command, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," signifies that His power is supreme. We don't need other gods, for our God is all powerful. If we find ourselves turning to any source of power or strength for help in our daily lives more than we are turning to God, then we are having other gods before Him. If we daily rely on friends, money, our personalities or wit, sheer determination, the power of positive thinking, or any other resource more than we rely on God, we betray a deep ignorance of who God is and what He can do for us. Our motto, based on an understanding of God's power, ought always to be, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

2. Stress the intangible aspects of your faith. God is intangible and omnipresent; He cannot be captured in forms. The more our worship reflects this understanding, the less likely we will be in danger of making graven images. Any unnecessary attention we give to the money we place in the offering plate, to our format of worship, to our Sabbath attire, or to any tangible aspect of our worship, places us in danger of making graven images. In fact, any tangible "work" which we place our faith in could well be considered a "graven image." We are saved by faith in an intangible God, not by faith in tangible forms and works.

3. Look more often at the cross. There, we see a God who loves us unconditionally. Packed between the wooden beams of that solid structure is more love than we will be able to fully fathom through all eternity. This love compels the Christian to tell the world of a God who sent His Son to die for humanity. And, when a Christian who has been touched by God's unconditional love shares with others his conviction, it is never in vain. Seeds are sown and lives are changed.

4. Recognize the power of God. We need to better understand the secret of God's power. How astonished the children of Israel must have been to witness God's power during the plagues. Nothing was immune, not the animals, the elements, or man himself. God, as creator of all that exists, even of time as we know it, has power over it all. Thus, worshiping God every Sabbath should be a "delight" if we recognize that God gives us every breath we take, even the time to take it in, and that He controls every aspect of our existence. How anxious we should be to spend the sacred Sabbath time He has given to us to get to know Him better, to truly worship and praise Him as the God He is, the great and holy "I Am."

by Mike Wiist

As with many who have a casual acquaintance with art, I have seen Picasso's most famous works in print. I have also had a chance to see a number of Picasso originals displayed in the great museums of Europe, with most of these works being abstract masterpieces. (Pardon me, art majors, I know "abstract" has a precise meaning in art history, but I am using it as many lay persons do to mean art other than strictly "realistic" or representational art.) But the biggest personal impact from Picasso's art came to me while visiting a small house-museum in Barcelona, Spain, which primarily contained early works by Picasso.

As I strolled through the exhibits in this small museum I was surprised to see sketches and paintings of the design beginning art classes are made of—simple shapes, forms, light and shadow exercises, still lifes, buildings drawn in perspective, accurate anatomical drawings, etc. And what should have been obvious before suddenly dawned on me: Picasso had to begin somewhere.

Even in the earliest drawings the marks of genius were evident (how safe to say that now!). But before that genius could be unleashed came the disciplined process of learning how to draw. The hand had to be trained to follow the will of the mind. The sight had to be analyzed and disciplined to see the contours, gradients and perspectives that are the substance of vision. And the means necessary to transfer images from the three-dimensional world to flat canvas or paper had to be explored. Indeed, the discipline of art studies preceded Picasso's later creative freedom.

Would Picasso's own ability to see the world in his unique way have developed if he hadn't studied the fundamentals? Would he have been able to express what he saw, and to share it with the world, if he had not first learned how to picture a box, a building, or a piece of fruit?

I believe it was the discipline of his early training that gave him a foundation for his later works. In a sense, that is no great revelation. We see the principle around us often. The most talented composer at one time had to learn scales. Keyboard exercises precede grand hall concerts.

So far, you may agree with the conclusions I've drawn about discipline from these examples. But what about discipline in our relationships to God? Does this principle of the physical world apply to the spiritual realm as well?

In the 1976 Olympics, the daring, free, seemingly effortless gymnastics of a young girl thrilled the world. Yet, before Nadia Comaneci's name became a household word, she had practiced three to five hours daily for six years.

Discipline leads to freedom.

"It is the same . . . even with aspiring saints who wish to be free to live in love and in trust with God and others. What we discipline ourselves to do we master; what we do well we love to do." The law shows us what our relationship with God should be, not to cramp our freedom, but to show us the bounds of discipline which will lead us to the freedom we were meant to have.

"I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Hebrews 8:10; NIV). That promise comes from the same One who says, "If then the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free" (John 8:36; NEB).

Key passage:
Hebrews 8:10b,
John 8:36

Notes

"The discipline of art studies preceded Picasso's later creative freedom"

"Discipline leads to freedom"

¹ James Londis, in his book *God's Finger Wrote Freedom*, Review and Herald, 1978. In the book, Londis shows ways in which obedience to each commandment contributes to trust, freedom and love.

1. To what degree can you identify with Christina in the introductory article for this week's lesson?
2. The first four of the Ten Commandments make it abundantly clear that humanity is to "have no other gods before "Yahweh. The Logos article correctly mentions that today these "other gods" may be in the form of money, cars, TV and stereo sets, homes, families, etc.

But what else can we recognize today as being idolatrous? Can Christian doctrine, the Bible, even revelation itself be idolatrous? If so, how?

3. In the Testimony article for this week Ellen White writes, "He whom they [the children of Israel] had already known as their Guide and Deliverer, who had brought them forth from Egypt, making a way for them through the sea, and overthrowing Pharaoh and his hosts, who had thus shown himself to be above all the gods of Egypt—He it was who now spoke His law. . . ."

What significance does this passage have for you?

4. A passage in the Evidence article of this week's lesson, by Rabbi Dr. Jacob Shankman, says, "I am the Lord thy God, I have been with you throughout the ages. Pharaoh is gone, Haman is gone. Torquemada is forgotten and Hitler is dead. *But the keeper of Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep.*"

Do you find this to be a remarkable confession on the part of a twentieth-century Jew?

Spend time in reflection upon this passage.

5. The theme of Mike Wiist's Opinion article for this week's lesson is, "Discipline leads to freedom."

Do you believe this is true? Does discipline lead to freedom?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of his argument?

The Law: Man's Relationship With Man



"In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."
— Matthew 7:12; NIV

by William Abbot

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus replied. "No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother . . ." and, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor. . . ." (Luke 18:18-22; NIV).

Indeed, "keep the commandments." Which ones? The last six. Jesus summarized for the rich young ruler, not the entire decalogue, but only the second table as the requirement for heaven. But why would Jesus do that? Did He perhaps make a mistake?

We all know that we enter into heaven on the merits of Christ alone; imputed righteousness; justification by faith. We enter into eternal life covered by Christ's good works, His perfect life and death. But the above text seems to say the contrary. And unfortunately (?) this is not the only place where Jesus muddies the theological water. Matthew 25:31-46 depicts the Lord separating the wicked from the righteous as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, saying to the sheep, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was

sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink. . . .'

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.'" (Matt. 25:34-39; NIV).

Here it is obvious that the King has granted the eternal inheritance on the basis of, heaven forbid, the way people have treated their fellow humans, or more accurately, the way people have treated "the least of these my brethren."

Thus, what can we say? First, we must acknowledge that we have all failed miserably in our attempts to keep the law, and that *salvation has to be God's work for us alone*. But while we cry out with Paul, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" let us never deny the obvious implications of what Christ has said: that the final judgment is pronounced on the basis of how we have treated our fellow man. Theologians call it "tension," higher critics call it "contradiction." But no matter what it's called, this concept of the last six commandments being the standard for the final judgment is found in the gospels, and we dishonor God and mislead ourselves if we choose to ignore this fact on the ground that it makes us uncomfortable.

by editors

Notes

“If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15; NIV).

This week’s study of the six remaining commandments, numbers five to ten, will give the opportunity to gauge the reality of our love for Christ. Its measure will be seen in the honor we give our parents, in our respect for human life, in loving faithfulness to marriage vows, etc. And love will lead us beyond the formal observance of the Ten Commandments: it will make us sensitive and responsive to the spirit of our Lord’s biddings.

“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12; NIV).

This injunction is addressed to children—of all ages. To honor one’s parents involves more than formal respect: it includes expressing appreciation for all one’s parents have done, and showing them this appreciation in warm love and practical concern and care for their well-being throughout their entire lives.

“You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13; NIV).

It is entirely appropriate that He who gave Israel its laws from Mt. Sinai should explain the deeper meaning embedded in the four words, “You shall not murder.” In so doing, Jesus shows His concern over the motives that produce the act of murder and reveals the sinfulness of hatred and anger. He retires the old rule of “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” and He bids us replace hatred for our enemies with all-forgiving love (Matthew 5:38, 39; 43-48).

“You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14; NIV).

This arises from God’s ideal, set forth in Eden. He intended one man and one woman, moved by mutual love, to marry, to beget children and establish a home which would be reproduced by each succeeding generation. Today, both marriage partners carry the responsibility of preventing adultery by a love-filled giving of self in satisfying each other’s need for love.

“You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15; NIV).

There are many forms of stealing apart from the direct theft of money or materials. How faithful are we in giving to God a complete tenth of our incomes, and offerings “as God hath prospered us”? Do we steal from the poor by not assisting them when they need our help? Do we limit our “charity” to the narrow circle of church-related needs, or do we show a generous spirit toward genuine need wherever we meet it? The number and variety of questions relating to theft are embarrassingly rich!

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16; NIV).

“This commandment is not only applicable to the law courts. . . . We can bear false witness by listening to unkind rumors as well as by passing them on, by making jokes at somebody else’s expense, by creating false impressions, by not correcting untrue statements, and by our silence as well as by our speech.”¹

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house . . . your neighbor’s wife . . . or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17; NIV).

This command against covetousness transcends legal formalities and digs into “the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Indeed, are we more interested in acquiring possessions, than in possessing true godliness?

¹ Taken from *Basic Christianity* by John R. W. Stott. © Inter-Varsity Press, London, and used by permission of Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois. Page 69.

selected by editors

Editor's Note: In the book *Patriarch and Prophets*, Ellen White elaborates on the last six of the Ten Commandments which deal with man's relationship with his fellow men.

Some of her best thoughts have been selected below.

"Honor thy father and thy mother. . . ."

Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due no other person. . . . And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God. The fifth commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers, and for all others to whom God has delegated authority. . . .

"Thou shalt not kill."

All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for "whoso hateth his brother is a murderer"); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health,—all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the sixth commandment.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

This commandment forbids not only acts of impurity, but sensual thoughts and desires, or any practice that tends to excite them. Purity is demanded not only in the outward life but in the secret intents and emotions of the heart. Christ, who taught the far-reaching obligation of the law of God, declared the evil thought or look to be as truly sin as is the unlawful deed.

"Thou shalt not steal."

Both public and private sins are included in this prohibition. It condemns theft and robbery. It demands strict integrity in the minutest details of the affairs of life. It forbids overreaching in trade, and requires the payment of just debts or wages. It declares that every attempt to advantage one's self by the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another, is registered as fraud in the books of heaven.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint of insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. . . . Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

The tenth commandment strikes at the very root of all sin, prohibiting the selfish desire, from which springs the sinful act. He who in obedience to God's law refrains from indulging even a sinful desire for that which belongs to another, will not be guilty of an act of wrong toward his fellow-creatures.

Key passage:
Exodus 20:12-21

Notes

"Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due no other person"

"Every attempt to advantage one's self by the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another, is registered as fraud in the books of heaven"

Taken from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 308-309.

by Karl Menninger

Key passage:
Luke 6:17-36

Notes

Editor’s Note: This week we have been studying the last six of the Ten Commandments which deal with man’s relationship with his fellow men. We have discussed such things as honoring parents, respecting life, telling the truth, etc.

However, Dr. Karl Menninger in his book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* goes beyond those things which we ordinarily think of as “evil” to suggest some “new sins.” Consider a partial listing of these “new sins” below.

The Sin of War. War is surely the great, prototypical example of group sin. It is a massive, organized violation of all ethics and all laws, a purposive and sanctioned campaign of destructiveness. All behaviors ordinarily regarded as criminal and/or sinful are suddenly sanctioned—murder, mayhem, arson, robbery, deceit, trespassing, sabotage, vandalism, and cruelty. Nearly always the decision to “declare war” is made by a few persons, heavily committed to the “group-think.” . . . Then it is put into effect by another large, silent group. To compensate all these, heavier taxes are levied on the total population by another small group. . . .

The whole war business is a horrible, irrational, despicable business, an archaic and traditional method of deciding a disputed point, whose survival is a disgrace to and refutation of civilization. There is always talk of pride and victory—but actually there is no victory; no one ever wins in the long run. One group of fighters and its backers finally decides to quit risking, quit charging, quit dying; that its sufferings are too great to be extended. This side is then said to be defeated. But the other side has suffered, too. . . .

The picture of one screaming, burning child or of one half-dismembered or disemboweled woman shocks and revolts us, although we are spared the sound of the screams and groans. We are not witnesses to the brokenhearted mother’s sorrow. We know nothing of the despair, the hopelessness, the loss of everything. We don’t go with them into the hospitals and observe the hideous wounds, the agonizing burns, the shattered limbs. And all this is only one tiny dot on a great map of millions. It cannot be described. It cannot be grasped. It cannot be imagined. . . .

The case of the war hero Claude Eatherly shatters the myth that the brave soldier who does his duty will feel no guilt. He was one of the American pilots who took part in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Upon his return to the United States, the military authorities wanted to make a “national hero” of him. But. . . .

The story of what is behind that “but” is told by Robert Jungk in his “The Unending Nightmare of Claude Eatherly, Hiroshima Pilot,” published serially in the Brussels *Le Soir*, February, 1961:

Claude Eatherly came back to America a changed man. His friends could hardly recognize him. He had become taciturn and reserved, shunned the company of his fellows. He began to suffer periods of dark depression. In 1947 he received his discharge and returned to his home in Van Alstyne, Texas, refusing the pension he was entitled to. He even wanted to send his medals back to the Pentagon but his friends prevailed upon him to refrain. They could not, however, keep him from expressing his shame and fear at the least mention of Hiroshima. . . .

“The whole war business is a disgrace to and refutation of civilization”

“The case of the war hero Claude Eatherly shatters the myth that the brave soldier who does his duty will feel no guilt”

Karl Menninger, respected psychiatrist and author, is best known for founding The Menninger Foundation, a psychiatric center of world renown in Topeka, Kansas.

He wandered about the country from job to job, started to study but gave it up and took to drink and cards. . . . Early in 1950 he tried to commit suicide. Then he decided that he must get himself punished in order to ease his conscience. If society refused to recognize him as a criminal for his part in the bombing of Hiroshima, he reasoned, he must commit some crime recognized as such in the United States. By suffering punishment for that he would expiate his real crime.

Several times, then, he committed crimes and was captured, tried, convicted, sentenced, and then ordered released or sent to an asylum. He refused an offer of \$100,000 for the film rights to a story of his life.

The Eatherly case illustrates how the individual caught in the command of the group and forced to commit crimes cannot escape guilt feelings. Some, perhaps, let them rest lightly on their consciences or are able to assuage them—as all of us do—by various social devices and mental tricks. We can rationalize, deny, repress, project, and do all the other human things for which Freud found names. And we can join in various celebrations of the scapegoat ritual—I am tempted to call it the scapegoat *festival* because it is done so jubilantly—which is designed to take away the sins of the world. . . .

Slavery. One of the primary objects of war in olden times was the acquisition of slaves. One great sin thus fed another. Both were taken for granted as being among the necessary facts of life. And it is disturbing to reflect that less than three generations ago the 5,000 year-old slavery business was still “going strong.” . . .

Terrible, you say, but it all happened a long time ago. We punished ourselves for that. We know better now. . . .

We don't call it slavery anymore, but our economic system produces and permits and exploits a kind of slavery, of the subproletariat. Fr. Paul Furfey refers by this to the poor in general and to the extremely poverty-ridden sections of the country—some of it urban and ghetto, some of it rural, some of it on the Indian reservations. There are millions of people in our rich country who go to bed hungry every night, whose lives are pinched, harsh, meager, drab, miserable, and dangerous, and who rise in the dark to drag themselves to another dreary round of arduous toil. I say it is “dangerous” because I don't think we realize how threatened poor people are by their neighbors, especially embittered, resentful, frustrated, borderline characters—nor how threatened we are by the continuation of this evil. . . .

The living conditions of migrant agricultural workers in numerous midwestern and southern states has been a national scandal for thirty years. Despite child labor laws, children of tender years still work in factories in these United States of America. Domestic labor achieved such a bad reputation as a form of peonage that it has become almost impossible to obtain household employees at any price. That women employees are underpaid for their services as compared with male workers in similar positions is known to everyone. The sharecropping system of the South continues to be a device for extortion labor by economic pressure.

All this we know. But, you say, we readers are not sharecrop landlords. We are not child labor employers. We are not ghetto property owners. We know there are “bad” men doing these things; we deplore it. But what can we do about it? Why, those men never bring the subject up in our hearing! They seem to be nice enough when we see them. Should we denounce them and make a scene? To what end? . . .

**We know
better now?**

**“There are
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The Sins of Affluence. St. Ambrose was moved to exclaim: "How far, O rich, do you extend your senseless avarice? Do you intend to be the sole inhabitants of the earth? Why do you drive out the fellow sharers of nature, and claim it all for yourselves? The earth was made for all, rich and poor, in common. Why do you rich claim it as your exclusive right?" . . .

And John Ruskin, who wrote: "The art of making yourself rich in the ordinary mercantile economic sense, is therefore equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbor poor." . . .

Robert Maynard Hutchins put the matter poignantly: "Our real problems are concealed from us by our current remarkable prosperity which results in part from our production of arms, which we do not expect to use, and in part from our new way of getting rich, which is to buy things from one another that we do not want, at prices we cannot meet, because of advertising we do not believe."

What we can't avoid seeing is the obvious disparity in living between one man even *having* a billion dollars and a billion people have scarcely one dollar. This disparity, it seems to me, is irreconcilable with an ethic which assumes that human beings are brothers, living together on the same borrowed earth, and trying to love one another for the mutual benefit of doing so. I will be reminded that the discrepancy is not as great as my hyperbolic illustration. But the few rich do grow richer, and the many poor grow poorer; that we know. The fact is that while many have more to eat than they should have, others have far less to eat than they should have—in the very same country. . . .

I remember . . . a patient who would become very angry when approached by anyone for a contribution to a cause.

"Why should I give what I have to others?" he demanded. "It's mine. I'm not socialist. I earned this—some of it—and I'm keeping it, not sharing it. It is mine, I tell you."

"But," I reminded him, "you are very unhappy with it. And you are very lonely. You have no heirs. You could make many people happier, including yourself, by disbursing some of it. Why be Mr. Scrooge?"

But he, too, went away sorrowing, for he, too had great possessions. That was twenty years ago. He is still an unhappy Scrooge, still "in treatment" with one of my colleagues for the relief of all sorts of symptoms other than greed.

It is reassuring to remember that even Jesus didn't always cure this affliction. I have wondered whether theologians are impressed by the contrast of this failure in dealing with "a certain rich man" and the many successes in healing that are reported.

In real life greed and affluence rarely look as bad as these words and examples sound. The rich are generally "such nice people"—a few of them "beautiful people"—and very generous. There are some in every big city. They live decently, even graciously, and associate together in groups. Many of them have their pet charity. They are flattered by poor relations and wistful friends. They are admired and envied by the public. There is a kind of excitement in the thought of their power and the great things which they could and just *might* do with their wealth. They often have expensive but interesting hobbies. They are a romantic element in our social structure.

Clergymen bear a cross in connection with them. Being themselves mostly underpaid and innocent of the sin of affluence, clergymen see it

"The art of making yourself rich . . . is . . . the art of keeping your neighbor poor"
— John Ruskin

This great disparity between the poor and the rich is irreconcilable with an ethic which assumes that all men are brothers

"In real life greed and affluence rarely look as bad as these words and examples sound. The rich are generally 'such nice people' "

all about them, and throughout their congregations. Hence, if they denounce it from the pulpit, they sound envious and personal. If all the rich young rulers in the congregations were to face up to the judgment, there might be an embarrassing exodus, including old ones. Some would seek a church where righteousness is equated with success and success with accumulation. Others would settle for materialism without benefit of clergy. Still others would seek a church which denies all realities except affluence. These escapes all occur frequently, I am told. It is disappointing to learn how few people conscientiously tithe in regard to their benevolences. Even the internal revenue department encourages it. . . .

Well, let me make one thing clear (meaning that I'm not sure I can). By affluence, in this discussion, I do not refer exclusively to what we vaguely designate as millionaires. I really have in mind the upper-class bourgeois citizens of our society—many of them my friends— *and I include myself*. I am far from being rich but I have more than I need. Many of us do, I think. . . .

We can't decide *which* of several television programs to watch; we can't get nearly all the new journals read, and new books seem about to engulf us. The housewife must choose from a plethora of things at the supermarket. There are a thousand cities to which we could make a visit that could be completed in twenty-four hours. We can be in London for dinner tonight. Instead of these luxuries being a blessing, they have become a vexatious burden. The overload of possessions, things, gadgets, opportunities, and money requires us to make innumerable choices. The "simple life" with its privations has been replaced with a complex life, with many frustrations—and, let us add, with many guilt feelings! We know we are throwing away many opportunities! We know we may be making the "wrong"—at least the less desirable—choice. And we know we are contributing to the sin of waste. . . .

Cruelty as a Form of Sin. Whipping, beating, burning, or otherwise causing pain to a helpless animal, child, wife, slave or prisoner sounds irredeemably evil. It is so unpleasant that we prefer to think of it as a near extinct, uncivilized practice. . . .

Cruelties of many kinds are daily fare in many prisons, even yet. This is especially true, I am ashamed to record, in detention centers and other semipenal institutions for children.

It is not my purpose to contribute a lengthy essay on the infliction, endurance, and avoidance of pain. But we have been speaking on sin, of the performance of acts which injure others, and surely the intentional unnecessary infliction of pain falls in that category. Inflicted pain *can* institute or accompany recovery from illness, or from other danger—for example, in reviving a cold-stupefied person, or in the lancing of an abscess. Mild inflicted pain can, no doubt, be used to teach something crucial—for example, the avoidance of a dangerous step or contact. But this is not the great sin of cruelty of which I am speaking.

If we go through pages of history reading the tortures joyfully or solemnly inflicted upon victims—often before great crowds of sightseers—if we review the books of martyrs, slavers, inquisitors, jailers, conquistadors, Indian hunters, soldiers, and other brave, fierce men, if we recall the reasons leading to the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and of the humane societies for

"I am far from being rich but I have more than I need. Many of us do, I think"

"Cruelties of many kinds are daily fare in many prisons, even yet"

animals, we are made keenly aware of the apparently ineradicable streak of cruelty in all human beings, as well as the strong reactions against its indulgence. Sometimes it is rationalized as serving this purpose or that, but, usually, what emerges is the plain ugly fact of sadism. . . .

Other Common Sins. I have said nothing . . . about familiar saddening sins such as breaking faith or promises, betrayal, conspiracy to harm, and others that will come to the reader's mind. Nor have I perhaps dealt adequately with the emotion of hate which is at the root of so much sin.

Hate usually seems to the hater to be so logical, so appropriate, so justified, that it is difficult for any healing power of love to interpose its neutralizing effect before some aggressive expression has occurred. . . . We observe it in many patients and occasionally in friends. In its less vigorous forms we recognize it in most of the sins I have listed.

Here I wish to say something in loud tones; if this were a speech I would raise my voice. THESE OFFENSES I HAVE ENUMERATED DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN OFFICIAL LIST OF SINS, not even wrongdoings. At best (at worst) they are forms of behavior dictated by a *mens rea*, a wrong attitude, a hard heart, a cold heart, an evil heart.

I do not believe anyone would seriously classify them as either crime or disease. I'm aware that psychological jargon can be employed which relates many of them to peculiarities of conditioning, special inhibitions, interactional incompatibilities, and a dozen other technical constructs. I wouldn't dispute these; I just don't think they lead to the proper steps for correction.

If one wanted to find a germinal word to link all sins, perhaps *hate* would do it. In terms of action, however, the long-term consequences of hate are self-destruction. Thus the wages of sin really are death.

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"Hate usually seems to the hater to be so logical, so appropriate, so justified . . ."

by David Smith

Key passage:
Matthew 22:34-39

Notes

John Bunyan's book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, provides a helpful insight into the issue of morality and its relationship to salvation. Christian is travelling down the path to the Celestial City when a Mr. Worldly Wiseman invites him to leave the path and travel to the city of Morality where Mr. Civility dwells. According to Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Mr. Civility could help relieve Christian's heavy burden on his back (his guilt). The idea presented allegorically here is that living a moral life, and acting in a civil way towards others, will relieve us of our burdens of guilt by making us feel like better people. Fortunately for Christian, however, Evangelist comes along and helps Christian stay on the path to the Celestial City, while pointing out that people are saved by faith, not works (morality). The important point is that the City of Morality lies off the path to the Celestial City. Living a "moral" life is not what saves us.

Yet, as those who know of their salvation, we Christians do have an obligation to love our fellow humans. As Christ put it in Matthew 22:38: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." How then, should we go about keeping the last six commandments? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Learn to love yourself. We can't love others well unless we have accepted ourselves. We can't offer others security until we have experienced it ourselves. We often break the last six commandments because we don't have personal peace of mind. Our insecurity causes us to disregard the rights and needs of others, and to place our own needs above theirs. But when we love ourselves in terms of accepting ourselves, we will be much more likely to keep the last six commandments by loving others.

2. Practice an awareness of others. It's easy to live in a tight little world from day to day where we seldom notice the deep needs and wants of others. It's easy for us to see life only from our own limited perspective. And thus, if we haven't cultivated a sensitivity to other people, we may have little concern for the impact of our actions on their lives. Lying, cheating, coveting, and lusting can readily become part of a lifestyle for one who continually lives in his own private world.

Self-gratification is at the heart of any breaking of the last six commandments. The breaking of any part of the law often tends to be an impersonal act. Thus, the more "personal" or person-oriented one is, the less likely he will be to fail to love his neighbor with all his heart.

3. Study the life of Christ. This is the best way to go about trying to keep the last six commandments, for, "By beholding we are changed." A deep study of Christ's relationships with other people can't help but inspire the student of Christ's life to love others more. The more Christlike we become as a result of such a study, the less cheating, lying, stealing, lusting, or any of the other "sins" of the last six commandments will really tempt us.

4. Examine your motives for loving others and living a moral life. Many people live a moral life out of a sense of obligation, in order to be "good," or simply to make life easier for themselves. But the Christian has a better motivation for keeping the last six commandments. He recognizes that God loves all of those with whom he comes in contact, that God died for them, and that God wants what is best for them. It is the Christian's awareness of God's genuine concern for humankind, then, which compels him to love others.

Indeed, getting to know the commandment Giver is the key to keeping the commandments He gave.

by Judy Wright

Key passage:
1 Samuel 12:22

Notes

Fred was a lifeguard down at the lake. He was happy with his job, most of the time. He enjoyed the water, and was an excellent swimmer.

But on this particular day he was frowning as he looked out across the lake. A couple of the other lifeguards joined him.

"Hey, Fred, why so glum?" asked Jonathan. Sue nodded questioningly.

Fred sighed. "It's that Mr. Suthers I'm worried about. He got into deep water again this week. He simply does *not* learn to swim. I can't understand it. I'm sure he knows some of the strokes because I've watched him in the shallow end of the lake. But once he gets into deep water, well, either he can't, or he won't. . . ."

Jon shook his head. "Fred, you take your job too seriously. Remember what we learned in life-saving classes?"

Fred remembered: "One thing you must learn about this life-saving business," the teacher said, "is that you can't save them all."

At first Fred had thought he was talking about those who would refuse to take the swimming classes, and if they fell into the lake would fight desperately any attempt made to rescue them. But the teacher had continued. "There will be a certain type of person who will come to all the swimming classes, ask questions, apparently try—but they'll never learn how to swim. They'll get into deep water regularly, and expect to be rescued. Why, I've had people in my experience who would have *wanted* to be rescued once or twice a week all summer if I'd gone along with it.

"Don't fall into the trap of letting anyone depend on you to get them out of deep water. It's not good for them or you. Some people will never learn to swim for themselves if they think you'll keep rescuing them."

The teacher had continued for a long time. That was one point he really hammered down.

"I'm afraid you're letting your classes depend on you, Fred," said Sue. "Now me, I make it a rule never to rescue the same person more than twice. If a person can't learn by then, he probably never would have learned anyhow."

Later that afternoon Mr. Suthers went out into deep water again. "Help! Help!" he cried, as he began to sink.

Fred dived off his lifeguard chair in an instant. Then he remembered what the other lifeguards had said. He slowed down and just before he reached Mr. Suthers, paused and began treading water.

"Mr. Suthers, I've already told you everything I know about swimming."

Mr. Suthers went down and came up choking.

"It's not good for you to depend on me, Mr. Suthers. I won't always be here to rescue you. I've got an obligation to the rest of the swimmers, you know."

As he had been talking, Fred had gotten a little too close, and Mr. Suthers grabbed Fred's arm in a desperate attempt to get help.

Fred slowly peeled off the fingers from around his arm and said as kindly as possible, "Please don't take it personally, Mr. Suthers. I've really enjoyed having you in my swimming classes."

Fred pried the last finger loose, and Mr. Suthers sank for the last time. Fred turned and swam slowly toward the dock.

1. The Logos article for this week asks, "Do we steal from the poor by not assisting them when they need our help?" How would you answer this question?

If you answered affirmatively, then would you also believe that we steal from the poor by not working to change the social structures which keep them oppressed?

2. Karl Menninger in the Evidence article for this week aptly describes war as "a horrible, despicable business . . . whose survival is a disgrace to and refutation of civilization."

After careful reflection, what do you feel is the Adventist's responsibility in working for peace? in working for more "justice" in war itself?

3. Relative to the issue of modern-day slavery in the United States as seen especially in the exploitation of migrant agricultural workers, ghetto dwellers, etc., Menninger writes, "We know there are 'bad' men doing these things; we deplore it. But what can we do about it? Why, those nice men never bring the subject up in our hearing! They seem to be nice enough when we see them. Should we denounce them and make a scene? To what end?"

What do you think?

4. Regarding the sin of affluence, Menninger writes that the great disparity between the poor and the rich is irreconcilable with an ethic which assumes that all men are brothers.

Do you agree? What are the socio-political ramifications of your answer?

5. What is your reaction to the Opinion article for this week by Judy Wright?

Can you identify yourself or others with Fred? with Mr. Suthers?

Born Again



"I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."
— John 3:5; NIV

by Judy Wright

Once upon a time there was a lion who decided to become a lamb. He'd been watching the flocks of lambs from a nearby clump of rocks and he had decided that they had it made. He had heard their bleats and baa's from a distance, and so he practiced until he thought he had a pretty good imitation. He had noticed how they walked, and he practiced that too. And one day he jumped over the fence and sidled up to the closest group.

"Baa-a-a," he said sociably. It came out a little low-pitched, but not bad. The lambs looked his direction curiously.

"Who are you?" the biggest lamb asked with a bleat.

"Why, I'm one of the lambs," said the lion cordially.

"You're dressed sort of funny," said one of the littlest sheep. "I thought lambs were supposed to wear white—not gold."

"Oh, that's not important," the lion replied. "In my heart I'm one of you."

And the sheep began grazing contentedly and accepted the lion as one of them.

Now the lion hadn't much of an opportunity to watch lambs up close before, and what had looked to him from a distance as strolling aimlessly across the green fields, turned out to be . . . why, these crazy lambs were EATING that grass! Leo couldn't believe it. He watched for quite some time, just to make sure, and then asked the nearest ewe, "Don't you ever get any lamb chops around here?"

The ewe looked at him suspiciously, and began edging away.

Leo realized his mistake, and quickly bleated out, "Just a joke! You surely didn't think I was serious!" And in an attempt to look as lamb-like as possible, he bent down and took a mouthful of grass.

It was the most terrible thing he'd ever tasted! He tried—really he did. But after a couple of seconds he knew for sure it would *never* go down. So he hurried to the edge of the field and spit it out. But the taste stayed in his mouth all day, and it wasn't until he sneaked out of the fold late that night and caught a rabbit that he finally got rid of it.

But Leo was persistent. He continued watching and imitating the lambs. He tried to copy their movements when they gamboled across the pastures. He pretended to eat the grass. He kept on trying to bleat and baa, or at least remember to keep it down to a dull roar.

But the strain was telling on him. And he always felt out of place when the shepherd boy came by and all the lambs ran to him.

Then one day, when a bear came down from the forests above and tried to make off with one of the lambs, Leo was completely astonished at what the lambs did. They went running to the *shepherd* for protection!

That did it. The lion knew then that he'd never make it as a sheep. He preferred to fight his own battles, thank you. He certainly didn't need any shepherd. So he left the flock, and returned to the clump of rocks at the edge of the field.

by editors

Notes

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

During the past two weeks we have studied the law of the Lord, finding it to include the Ten Commandments but not being restricted to them, and seeing it as an expression of God's loving will for mankind. But human frailty grasps at mechanical means of salvation by works. Thus, all must learn that "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God," and that "the just shall live by faith."

Faith is the only ingredient in the recipe for salvation because that is all that man has to offer. **"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:2, 3).** This is not *pessimism*; it is *realism*. The compilers of the Psalms were sufficiently impressed by the theme to include an almost identical psalm (53); while Paul (Romans 3:10-18) uses selections from the Psalms (mostly from the LXX) to establish the concept of the depravity of man and his lost estate: **"there is none righteous, no, not one" (vs. 10).** The apostle thus makes clear man's helplessness because of the enslavement of sin, and his need for a Savior outside of himself.

When confronted with his sinfulness, however, the sincere man's instinct is to reform and demonstrate that he is better than others suppose him to be. He attempts to conform to God's standard, the law, but discovers that he cannot live according to its precepts. He then learns that **"by the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh justified in his [God's] sight" (Romans 3:20),** and is prepared for an almost incredible plan: **"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).** In His unfathomable mercy, God makes provisions for a sinner to be treated as though he were righteous; all past sins are pardoned, and a new sin-free life begun.

Jesus illustrated this new-life experience during a conversation with Nicodemus: **"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:3, 7).** It is important to remember that Jesus made this statement — "Ye must be born again" — to a deeply religious person. But to be a member of the kingdom of God is not a matter of subscribing to certain beliefs, being "religious" or joining a given community. Rather, to be a member of the kingdom of God is to undergo a revolutionary change in all aspects of life, a miraculous experience, a new birth.

Thus, as Ellen White has said, "The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether."¹ And as Paul said, **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life" (Romans 6:3, 4).** And again, **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things become new" (I Cor. 5:17).** Thus, if anyone is *in Christ*, or hidden in Christ, being completely identified with Him, then he becomes a different person. He begins a new life that is entirely dependent on Jesus. The old has gone—a new, Christ-centered life has taken its place. He has been born again.

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

selected by John S. McIntosh

Key passage:
II Corinthians 5:17

Notes

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (II Cor. 5:17; NIV). In Christ and by His self-sacrifice, we become new creatures. "The eternal God has drawn the line of distinction between the saints and the sinners, the converted and the unconverted. The two classes do not blend into each other imperceptibly, like the colors of the rainbow. They are as distinct as midday and midnight."¹

"Conversion is a work that most do not appreciate. It is not a small matter to transform an earthly, sin-loving mind and bring it to understand the unspeakable love of Christ, the charms of His grace, and the excellency of God, so that the soul shall be imbued with divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries. When he understands these things, his former life appears disgusting and hateful. He hates sin, and, breaking his heart before God, he embraces Christ as the love and joy of the soul. He renounces his former pleasures. He has a new mind, new affections, new interest, new will; his sorrows, and desires, and love are all new. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which have heretofore been preferred before Christ, are now turned from, and Christ is the charm of his life, the crown of his rejoicing. Heaven, which once possessed no charms, is now viewed in its riches and glory; and he contemplates it as his future home, where he shall see, love, and praise the One who hath redeemed him by His precious blood.

"The works of holiness, which appeared wearisome, are now his delight. The word of God, which was dull and uninteresting, is now chosen as his study, the man of his counsel. It is as a letter written to him from God, bearing the inscription of the Eternal. His thoughts, his words, and his deeds are brought to this rule and tested. He trembles at the commands and threatenings which it contains, while he firmly grasps its promises and strengthens his soul by appropriating them to himself. The society of the most godly is now chosen by him, and the wicked, whose company he once loved, he no longer delights in. He weeps over those sins in them at which he once laughed. Self-love and vanity are renounced, and he lives unto God, and is rich in good works."²

There are some, however, who doubt the miracle of the new-birth experience. As Ellen White said, "Men . . . think to explain everything, even the operations of His Spirit upon the human heart, by natural laws; and they no longer reverence His name or fear His power. While they think they are gaining everything, they are chasing bubbles, and losing precious opportunities to become acquainted with God. They do not believe in the supernatural, not realizing that the Author of nature's laws can work above those laws. They deny the claims of God, and neglect the interests of their own souls; but His existence, His character, His laws, are facts that the reasoning of men of the highest attainments cannot overthrow."³

**"He lives
unto God"**

¹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 87.

² *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 294-295.

³ *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 309.

selected by Michelle Naden-Du Nesme

What does it mean to be born again? It is not just a remodeling job, performed somehow by us on ourselves. Today we hear a lot about recycling, reconstruction, and reshaping. We renovate houses and add on more rooms. We tear down old buildings and build new ones in our cities, calling it urban renewal. Millions and millions of dollars are spent every year on health spas, beauty resorts, and exotic cosmetics—all by people hoping to reshape their faces or renew their bodies.

In like manner, people frantically pursue all sorts of promised cures for the renewal of their inner lives. Some people hunt for renewal at the psychiatrist's office. Others search for spiritual renewal in exotic oriental religions or processes of inward meditation. Still others seek for inner peace and renewal in drugs or alcohol. Whatever the path, however, they eventually come to a dead end. Why? Simply because man cannot renew himself. God created us. Only God can re-create us. Only God can give us the new birth we so desperately want and need.

I believe this is one of the most important subjects in the entire world. Governments may be elected or may topple. Military machines may advance and retreat. Men may explore outer space or probe the ocean depths. All of these events are part of the grand plan for humans on this planet.

But the central theme of the universe is the purpose and destiny of every individual. Every person is important in God's eyes. That is why God is not content to stand with His arms folded (as it were) and simply watch the human race wallow in misery and destruction. The greatest news in the universe is that we can be born again! "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

This new birth happens in all kinds of ways. It may seem to happen over a period of time or in a moment. The paths which people take to reach that point of decision may be very direct or very circuitous. Whatever the path, we always find Christ at the end to welcome us. And that encounter with Christ, that new birth, is the beginning of a whole new path in life under His control. Lives can be remarkably changed, marriages excitingly improved, societies influenced for good—all by the simple, sweeping surge of individuals knowing what it is to be born again.

Billy Graham, *How To Be Born Again*, Copyright © 1979, pages 9-11; used by permission of WORD BOOKS, PUBLISHER, Waco, Texas 78703.

Key passage:
John 3:1-21

Notes

"Man cannot
renew himself""This new birth
happens in all
kinds of ways"

by Roy C. Naden

Key passage:
Luke 15

Notes

I talked recently with a physician who's about fifty years of age. Rarely have I met such an alive, enthusiastic Christian. He experienced his new birth just two years ago and is full of "first love." But the tragedy of that "late" birth is simply this: He attended Adventist schools, kindergarten through university! An exceptional case? Maybe. But there are too many like him. I attended Adventist schools from elementary grades through college and had been in the ministry for two years before my minister father took me aside in my kitchen one evening and in half an hour shared the Good News about how to be born again.

So how does this birth happen? Let's put it down in four steps.

1. God starts the process through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks to us principally through the words of the Bible and through the convictions of an educated conscience. He brings the awareness that we have rebelled against God's will. We sense Him saying, "You're a sinner. You're condemned. The penalty is eternal death." If you've never experienced that conviction, take time to read Luke 15. Put yourself in the younger son's position. Ultimately you'll discover how far away you are from the security of "home."

2. Repentance leads to repentance.

Jesus loves you so much He would have died on the cross if you had been the only one in need of help! You *have* to love the One who loves you that much! So when the Spirit convicts, we feel sorrow for hurting Jesus through our disobedience. This sorrow is *not* for the consequences of sin—death. It's sorrow for *the act of disobedience against God's will*.

3. Repentance leads to confession.

The moment we feel this sorrow, we should ask God to forgive us and BELIEVE HE HAS FORGIVEN US. These two must go hand in hand. It's not enough just to *ask* for forgiveness, we must *believe* God has forgiven us. Then the miracle happens in our lives.

4. Forgiveness completes the new birth.

The moment you accept Jesus' death on Calvary as a substitute for the death you should die for your sins, you are counted as being PERFECT. God sees you as if you had never sinned, as if you had never done anything wrong. You are as perfect as a newborn babe! You have been born again.

When you present to someone the free grace of God, you will probably be accused of offering "cheap grace," making salvation too easy. So be it! But there is another side to this. God can only forgive those who are honestly sorry for their sins, those who have *no intention of repeating that sin*. That is, they have *every intention* of being obedient in the future. Their changed lives will then be the evidence of their sincerity. This emphasis on obedience to Jesus' will can often incite the charge of salvation by works! Again, so be it! Remember, the ark in the Most Holy Place had both *commandments* and a *mercy seat*.

by Roy C. Naden

Key passage:
I Corinthians 2

Notes

There's nothing like a General Conference Session for inspiration! And although Dallas may be more prominent in memory, Vienna in 1975, with its milling thousands speaking in countless languages, seemed to me to be reminiscent of the early church after Pentecost. Reports of victories, baptisms and progress brought daily expressions of thankfulness to God for His obvious leading. But at all such gatherings, one subject must be mentioned, ever so briefly—that dreaded subject of *apostasies*.

Little study had been given to this problem until a doctoral dissertation in 1977 at Andrews University, under the supervision of Dr. Oosterwal, broke significant ground. Researcher Louis Nielsen interviewed hundreds of former Seventh-day Adventists to analyze the reasons why those who once were so committed to this truth no longer associated with it. That research and recent reports from the General Conference statistician make gloomy reading. In *each* of the last five years we have lost, worldwide, between 60,000 and 70,000 people from our ranks. We lost 347,000 people between Vienna and Dallas! These are not deaths, mind you, but *apostasies*! During the same period in North America, the apostasy rate grew to almost 40 percent—that is approximately 40 *apostasies* for every 100 baptisms. Indeed, if we stopped all evangelism and directed our efforts toward those already baptized, we would be almost a third of a million people stronger by 1985.

Few people who leave our church have any question about its teachings. They don't usually leave to join a Sunday-keeping church or because they suddenly believe you go to heaven when you die. Usually, they just drift out for lack of social contacts in the local church.

Does this suggest our greatest need is to start weekly or nightly social meetings? Well, the Lord made us with social natures so we need to develop a healthy social life for sure. But could it be that the problem is far more basic? Could it be that in at least some cases, the mature were baptized because of an intellectual conviction and the younger from peer or social pressure rather than a total dedication to and love for the Lord Jesus? Might it not be that the most important relationship in the world, a new birth, a new life, a solid relationship with the Lord Jesus, had never become a reality in the lives of many of those who drift out each year? And yet, if nothing changes, if that personal relationship is not established, hundreds of thousands of Adventists will apostatize in the *next* five years.

God has placed upon His church of these last days the enormous privilege of sharing "the truth," as we rightly call it. But if our presentation of that truth *begins* with doctrinal studies on the Sabbath, or the state of the dead, or the sanctuary, or any other great Bible doctrine, without first teaching of the necessary relationship with the Lord Jesus, tragedy surely lies ahead.

In education, in preaching, in evangelism, *Jesus* must be made first and last and best, and then, certainly other points of belief will fall naturally into place.

by Watchman Nee

Notes

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15, 16).

To many of us the form of that second sentence comes as a surprise. Jesus did not say that he who believes and is saved shall be baptized. No, he put it the other way round. He who believes and is baptized, he said, shall be saved. It is only at our peril that we change something that the Lord has said into something that he did not say. Everything he says matters, and he means every word of it. But if this is so, then it must be a fact that only by having faith in him and being baptized are we saved. Some will be puzzled at this. What do you mean? they will protest. But do not puzzle; and do not blame me! I did not say that; my Lord said it. He it was who laid down the order: faith, then baptism, then salvation. We must not reverse it to faith, salvation, baptism, however much we might prefer it that way. What the Lord said must stand, and it is for us only to pay heed to it. . . .

So I repeat, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do you mean to tell me, you will now exclaim, that you believe in baptismal regeneration? No, indeed I do not! The Lord did not say, "Believe and be baptized and thou shalt be born again"; and since he did not say that, I have no need to believe in that. His words are: "He that believeth and is baptized *shall be saved.*" What therefore I do believe in is baptismal salvation.

So the question naturally arises: What does this statement *mean*? And what does it mean when Luke tells us that, in response to Peter's exhortation to "*save yourselves* from this crooked generation," then they that received his word *were baptized*?

To answer this we must ask ourselves first what we mean by the word "saved." I am afraid we have a very wrong idea of salvation. All that most of us know about salvation is that we shall be saved from hell and into heaven; or alternatively, that we are saved from our sins to live henceforth a holy life. But we are wrong. In Scripture we find that salvation goes further than that. For it is concerned not so much with sin and hell, or holiness and heaven, but with something else.

We know that every good gift that God offers to us is given to meet and counter a contrasting evil. He gives us justification because there is condemnation. He gives us eternal life because there is death. He offers us forgiveness because there are sins. He brings us salvation—because of what? Justification is in terms of condemnation, heaven is in terms of hell, forgiveness is in relation to sins. Then to what is salvation related? Salvation, we shall see, is related to the *kosmos*, the world. . . .

What we are speaking of as the *kosmos* always stands opposed to God as Father and Originator. His was the eternal plan in creation hinted at in the words "It was very good," a plan toward which he has not ceased to work. From before the foundation of the world he had purposed in his heart to have on earth an order of which mankind would be the pinnacle and which should freely display the character of his Son. But Satan intervened. Using this earth as his springboard and man as his tool, he usurped God's creation to make of it instead

"I am afraid we have a very wrong idea of salvation"

"Salvation is related to the world"

something centered in himself and reflecting his own image. Thus this alien system of things was a direct challenge to the divine plan.

So today we are confronted by two worlds, two spheres of authority, having two totally different and opposed characters. For me now it is no mere matter of a future heaven and hell; it is a question of these two worlds today, and of whether I belong to an order of things of which Christ is sovereign Lord, or to an opposed order of things having Satan as its effective head.

Thus salvation is not so much a personal question of sins forgiven or of hell avoided. It is to be seen rather in terms of a system from which we come out. When I am saved, I make my exodus out of one whole world and my entry into another. I am saved *now* out of that whole organized realm which Satan has constructed in defiance of the purpose of God.

That realm, that all-embracing *kosmos*, has many strange facets. Sin of course has its prior place there, and worldly lusts; but no less part of it are our more estimable human standards and ways of doing things. The human mind, its culture and its philosophies, all are included, together with all the very best of humanity's social and political ideologies. Alongside these too we should doubtless place the world's religions, and among them those speckled birds, worldly Christianity and its "world Church." Wherever the power of natural man dominates, there you have an element in that system which is under the direct inspiration of Satan.

If that is the world, what then is salvation? Salvation means that I escape from that. I go out, I make an exit from that all-embracing *kosmos*. I belong no more to Satan's pattern of things. I set my heart on that upon which God's heart is set. I take as my goal his eternal purpose in Christ, and I step into that and am delivered from this. . . .

[In] Noah's day we find a wholly corrupt world. Created first by God, the earth had become corrupted by man's act on that day when he placed himself under Satan. Sin, once introduced, had developed and run riot, until even God's Holy Spirit cried Enough! Things had reached a state where they could never be remedied; they could only be judged and removed.

So God commanded Noah to build an ark, and to bring his family and the creatures into it, and then the flood came. By it they were "lifted up above the earth" upon waters that covered "all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven." Every living thing, both man and beast, perished and those only who rode the waters in the ark were saved. The significant thing here is not just that they escaped death by drowning. That is not the point. The real point for us is that they were the only people to come out from that corrupt system of things, that world under water. Personal life is the inevitable consequence of coming out, personal perdition of staying in, but salvation is the coming out itself, not the effect of it. Note this difference for it is a great one. Salvation is essentially a present exit from a doomed order which is Satan's.

Praise God, they came out! How? Through the waters. So today when believers are baptized they go symbolically through water, just as Noah passed in the ark through the waters of the flood [1 Peter 3:20, 21]. And this passage through water signifies their escape from the world, their exodus from the system of things that, with its prince, is under the divine sentence. May I say this especially to those who are being

"Salvation is not so much a personal question of sins forgiven or of hell avoided. It is to be seen rather in terms of a system from which we come out"

"What then is salvation? I set my heart on that upon which God's heart is set"

baptized today.¹ Please remember, you are not the only one who is in the water. As you step down into the water, a whole world goes down with you. When you come up, you come up in Christ, in the ark that rides the waves, but your world stays behind. For you, that world is submerged, drowned like Noah's, put to death in the death of Christ and never to be revived. . . .

The same flood which saved Noah and his family drowned the world in which they had once lived their lives—the very same flood. So the same water on the one hand puts you and me on salvation ground in Christ, and on the other hand buries Satan's whole system of things. Not only does your own history as a child of Adam end in your baptism; your world also ends there. In both cases it is a death and a burial with nothing resurrected. It is an end of everything.

This means that you cannot carry over anything from that former world into the new one. What belonged to that former realm of things in Adam stays there and may never be recalled. Formerly perhaps you were an employee in a shop, or a servant in a house. Or perhaps you were the master, or the manager, or director of a business. Still today you may be a master, or still a servant, but you will find that when coming to divine things, when coming to the Church of God and the service of God, there is neither bond nor free, neither employer nor employee. Again you may be a Jew or a Gentile, or any of a hundred-and-one things that were of repute—or of disrepute—in Adam. When you pass through this water, all that system of things goes, never to return. Instead you see yourself in Christ, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythian nor anything else, but one new man. . . .

So, to recapitulate, we have here two worlds. On the one hand there is the world in Adam, held fast in bondage to Satan; on the other hand there is the new creation in Christ, the sphere of activity of God's Holy Spirit. How do you and I get out of the one sphere, Adam, into the other sphere, Christ? If you are uncertain how to answer that question, may I ask you another? How did you get *into* Adam in the first place? For the way of entry indicates the way out. You entered the sphere of Adam by being born into Adam's race. How then do you get out? Obviously by death. And how, in turn, do you enter the sphere of Christ? The answer is the same: by birth. The way of entry into the family of God is by new birth to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). Having become united with him by the likeness of his death, you are united with him also by the likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6:5). Death puts an end to your relationship with the old world, and resurrection brings you into living touch with this new one.

Finally, what occupies the gap? What is the steppingstone between those two worlds? Is it not burial? "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death" (Rom. 6:4). From one point of view there is a grim finality about those words "buried into death." My history in Adam has already been concluded in the death of Christ, so that when I walk away from that burial I can say I am a "finished" man. But I can say more, for, praise God, it is no less true that there is the other side. Since "Christ was raised from the dead," when I come out of the water and walk away, I may walk "in newness of life" (6:4).

This double outcome of the Cross is implied too in the preceding words of Romans 6:3. "Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized

"The same flood which saved Noah and his family drowned the world in which they had once lived their lives"

"The way of entry into the family of God is by new birth to a living hope"

into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" Here in a single sentence the two aspects of baptism are again hinted at. It is baptism into two things. First, we who believe were "baptized *into his death*." This is a tremendous fact, but is it all? Not by any means, for in the second place the same verse says that we were "baptized *into Christ Jesus*." A baptism into the death of Christ ends my relation with this world, but a baptism into Christ Jesus as a living Person, Head of a new race, opens up for me a new world of things altogether. Going into the water I simply act the whole thing out, affirming publicly that the "judgment of this world" became real to me from the day when the "lifted up" Son of man drew me to himself.

What a Gospel to preach to the whole creation!

¹ The occasion of this address was a baptismal service in the month of May, 1939.

From: LOVE NOT THE WORLD. By Watchman Nee. Published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., © 1968 by Angus I. Kinnear. Used by permission. Pages 34-46.

"A baptism into the death of Christ ends my relation to this world, but a baptism into Christ Jesus as a living Person opens up for me a new world of things altogether"

REACT

1. Can you identify with Leo in the Introduction to this week's lesson? If so, how?
2. Billy Graham, in the Evidence article for this week's lesson, states: "that encounter with Christ, that new birth, is the beginning of a whole new path in life under His control. Lives can be remarkably changed, marriages excitingly improved, societies influenced for good—all by the simple, sweeping surge of individuals knowing what it is to be born again."

Too many times, however, problems do not disappear for the Christian, struggles become more intense, failures frequent. What's wrong? Doesn't the new birth work?

3. In the above-quoted passage, Billy Graham refers to marvelous miracles that can occur—"all by the simple, sweeping surge of individuals knowing what it is to be born again." Do you consider the new-birth experience to be properly described as a "simple, sweeping surge"?

Is the new birth a simple process, or is it quite involved and complicated?

4. We often speak of changes which are to occur in the lives of Christians. Roy Naden, in the How To article for this week, speaks of "changed lives which will then be the evidence of their [the believer's] sincerity."

But what types of changes are evidence of a believer's sincerity? If one stops going to movies and adorning him/herself, but is racially prejudiced, is he/she sincere?

On the other hand, if a believer has seen *The Empire Strikes Back* five times and wears a wedding ring, but is actively involved in seeking social justice among the oppressed, is he/she sincere?

Again, what types of changes are evidence of a believer's sincerity? What are the distinguishing marks of a born-again Christian?

To Trust And Obey



"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

— Romans 6:14

by Judy Wright

Ed didn't feel very well. His mouth was terribly dry. His throat ached. His skin was hot, and his lips were beginning to crack. Even the slightest exertion made him feel light-headed and dizzy, and several times a day he would become so faint and weak that he'd fall. And whenever THAT happened, he *really* got discouraged.

One day, as he lay huddled at the bottom of the porch steps where he had just fallen, he made a decision. "Surely I don't have to be like this for the rest of my life. I'm going to try to get help."

Dr. Smith listened carefully to all of Ed's symptoms and then nodded his head. "Ed, your problem is that you're thirsty."

Ed felt relieved. "Thanks, doctor. What should I do about it?"

Dr. Smith leaned back in his chair. "Well, first of all, try to decide what it is that bothers you the most. Let's say, for example, that your cracked lips are more of a nuisance than anything else. Go to work on those cracked lips. After they're healed up, maybe start to work on your dizzy spells. Don't try to do everything at once. Overcoming these symptoms is a lifetime process."

But after Ed got home, he was puzzled. "I should have asked more exactly how to do it," he thought. After several days of repeating over and over, "I choose not to have cracked lips," he felt worse than ever. So he went back to the office.

"Have you *really* been trying?" Dr. Smith asked sternly.

"Well, maybe I haven't tried as hard as I might have," Ed admitted. "But isn't there something more tangible I can do?"

Dr. Smith smiled. "Yes, I guess

there is. Science has been discovering a very close connection between health and exercise. Why don't you try doing 200 push-ups every day?"

Ed went home again, but after doing only 17 push-ups, he collapsed and had to spend the rest of the day in bed. He was too ashamed to return to Dr. Smith—yet his thirst was no better. So he tried another doctor.

"Why Ed, how unfortunate Dr. Smith didn't explain everything to you," Dr. Jones said when he had heard Ed's story. "I'm sure he knows—what you need when you are thirsty is *water!*"

"Water?" Ed asked, hope beginning to flicker in his eyes. "That does sound appealing." He went home joyfully, got a shovel from the garage, and began digging. But after digging for only five minutes he passed out.

When he came to, his next-door-neighbor was bending over him.

"Ed, what are you doing?"

"I'm digging a well. I need water desperately!"

"Why, haven't you heard? There's a well already dug. All you have to do is go to it. The owner of the well will give you, freely, all the water you need. In fact, He guarantees that if you'll come and drink from His well every day, you'll never be thirsty again."

by editors

Notes

"But some will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18; NIV).

It seems as though man for a long time has had difficulty in understanding the relationship between faith and works. Paul dealt with this problem, and so did James—as we read above. And throughout the Bible we find evidence for the fact that we are not saved by a combination of faith and works, but by a faith that is the foundation and presupposition for all Christian activity.

"Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life" (John 3:16; *Jerusalem*). In this best-known of all Bible verses, Jesus reveals the foundation for the Christian's life—belief in the Son. Some have questioned this idea, thinking that there is surely something more one must do in order to be saved. But what could sinful man ever possibly hope to accomplish to merit the favor of the Holy One? For indeed, even one's best deeds brought about by the purest motives need the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus.

Thus it is that Paul could say, **"What makes a man righteous is not obedience to the Law, but faith in Jesus Christ. We had to become believers in Christ Jesus no less than you had, and now we hold that faith in Christ rather than fidelity to the Law is what justifies us, and that no one can be justified by keeping the Law."** **"It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them. . . . For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God" (Gal. 2:16; II Cor. 5:18, 19, 21; *Jerusalem*).**

Therefore, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:8).**

But, you might say, what about *works*? Doesn't the Bible demand that we do good works in order to be saved? What about the rich young ruler whom Jesus told to **"sell whatsoever thou hast" (Mark 10:21)**. Isn't this a call to obedience?

Perhaps. But more than a call to obedience, it is a call to establish a firm foundation in Jesus. Jesus understood that the rich young ruler was in bondage to the flesh, and thus it was His desire to see the young man build his life upon a non-fleshy foundation. Jesus' purpose therefore was to renew the foundation of the young man's life. But, says Helmut Thielicke, "He was sure that, once that bondage to the flesh represented by riches was broken and replaced by bondage to the Spirit in the form of an emancipated love for God, the works of this life would also be transformed. For these works are simply the expression of the basic reality that underlies them."¹ For—and this is the key in understanding the relationship between faith and works—*justification by faith is the foundation and presupposition of all Christian ethics*. Sanctification is but walking in and living out the reality of justification. Hence, Paul says, **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. . . . For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:1, 2, 7, 11-14).**

"Works are simply the expression of the basic reality that underlies them"

¹ *Theological Ethics*, vol. 1 - Foundations by Helmut Thielicke, ed. by William H. Lazareth. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans' Pub. Co., 1979). Used by permission. Page 59.

selected by John S. McIntosh

“Our acceptance with God is sure only through His beloved Son, and good works are but the result of the working of His sin-pardoning love. They are no credit to us, and we have nothing accorded to us for our good works by which we may claim a part in the salvation of our souls. Salvation is God’s free gift to the believer, given to him for Christ’s sake alone. The troubled soul may find peace through faith in Christ, and his peace will be in proportion to his faith and trust. He cannot present his good works as a plea for the salvation of his soul.

“But are good works of no real value? Is the sinner who commits sin every day with impunity regarded of God with the same favor as the one who through faith in Christ tries to work in his integrity? The Scripture answers, ‘We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.’

“In His divine arrangement, through His unmerited favor, the Lord has ordained that good works shall be rewarded. We are accepted through Christ’s merit alone; and the acts of mercy, the deeds of charity, which we perform, are the fruits of faith; and they become a blessing to us; for men are to be rewarded according to their works.

“It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God, and it is grace that enables us to do the works for which He rewards us. Our works in and of themselves have no merit. When we have done all that it is possible for us to do, we are to count ourselves as unprofitable servants. We deserve no thanks from God. We have only done what it was our duty to do, and our works could not have been performed in the strength of our own sinful natures.

“The Lord has bidden us to draw nigh to Him and He will draw nigh to us; and drawing nigh to Him, we receive the grace by which to do those works which will be rewarded at His hands.”¹

“The faith that justifies always produces first true repentance, and then good works, which are the fruit of that faith. There is no saving faith that does not produce good fruit.”²

Key passage:
Colossians 3:1, 2

Notes

“It is the fragrance of the merit of Christ that makes our good works acceptable to God”

“There is no saving faith that does not produce good fruit”

¹ *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, pp. 199-200.

² *Ibid.*, p. 195.

by Helmut Thielicke

Evangelical ethics is completely different from all natural or philosophical ethics. Indeed the two . . . must be sharply differentiated from one another, however much the theme of "obedience" may be common to both. The difference between them may be stated provisionally in the form of three propositions.

First, philosophical ethics takes as its starting point the goal of the ethical act, whether that be some objective value outside the ego . . . or some kind of self-realization within man. . . . For philosophical ethics proceeds from the discrepancy between what *is* and what *ought* to be; it distinguishes between the *de facto* situation and the ideal situation. Evangelical ethics, on the contrary, takes as its starting point not the goal but the presupposition of the ethical act. It proceeds from the fact of justification as accomplished and given (though of course the Christian is constantly thrown back upon it and cannot simply take justification for granted as the given ground of an existence on which he may henceforth proceed to build for himself). The ethical act, then, is simply an expression of the prior fact of justification; it is, as it were, a "subsequent" demonstration of the given justification.

Second, in philosophical ethics the goal, e.g., the intelligible ego, has merely the significance of a heuristic symbol; the ethical act alone has reality. In evangelical ethics, on the contrary, only the given justification has reality; the ensuing ethical acts in which it is expressed have symbolical significance. They are the symbols in which the reality expresses itself. The so-called "works" done in the state of justification serve only by way of demonstration.

Third, in philosophical ethics the ethical acts are determined by the "task" to be performed. . . . In evangelical ethics they are determined by the "gift" already given. . . .

In accordance with this outline of the distinction between the two planes, we may now proceed to elaborate the basis of evangelical ethics. . . . In other words, we have to consider the relation between justification and sanctification, gift and task, indicative and imperative.

In order to show clearly at the outset the importance which attaches to this question in the New Testament, we may recall that it is found there in the most varied forms, especially in the Pauline epistles. Here expositions of the doctrine of justification are usually followed by a concluding paraenesis in which Paul exhorts his hearers to take on the task of expressing in their actions what the fact of Christ implies for them. That is, they should live out *de facto* the "new creation" which has been given them. They are not to allow the old existence to continue any longer, like an unremoved alien body in the magnetic field of this new creation.

How explicitly and unconditionally the promise of the gospel precedes the ethical claim in the teaching of Jesus may be seen most clearly in the Sermon on the Mount. Here the radicalization of the Mosaic Law, and therewith the ethical claim, is introduced by the various Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-11) and by the repeated statement that—in virtue of the fact that *I* am here, here for *you*—*you are* (!) the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13, 14).

The point of everything that follows in the nature of a claim is that this crucial, prior, given fact should now also be put into action and brought to concrete realization [see Matthew 5:11-12; 15-16; 44-45; 48].

Key passage:
Matthew 5

Notes

"Evangelical ethics is completely different from all natural or philosophical ethics"

For a Christian, the ethical act is simply an expression of the prior fact of justification

"That is, they should live out *de facto* the 'new creation' which has been given them"

Theological Ethics, vol. 1 - Foundations by Helmut Thielicke, ed. by William H. Lazareth. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans' Pub. Co., 1979). Used by permission. Pages 51-53.

Helmut Thielicke, professor emeritus of systematic theology at the University of Hamburg, Germany, has been called "the most thorough Protestant ethicist of our time."

by Larry D. McGill

Key passage:
Ephesians 2:4-10

Notes

The gospel is the good news that God through Jesus Christ has chosen humanity to be His covenant partner. It is a Christ-centered gospel. It tells of Jesus Christ as the alpha and omega, as the first and last word about man, and as the fulcrum of salvation history.

Historically, and especially recently, however, the Christian church has faced another gospel. I call it the gospel of the hot sale—of the irresistible special deal. The minister says, "People, if you will just accept Jesus . . . [and right there is already part of the problem, because it is Jesus that accepts us] you will have joy and peace and health and prosperity. . . . If you pay \$100.00 tithe you will get \$200.00 back. . . ." etc. And somehow, this gospel reminds me of the fabulous Aladdin's lamp — if you rub it just right it will give you your heart's desire.

But the gospel of the poverty-stricken, oppressed, crucified Jesus of Nazareth is not a gospel to make your every wish come true. The gospel is good news, not necessarily from humanity's perspective, but from the perspective of the One who alone determines goodness and reality. Hence, in order for the gospel to indeed be good news, God Himself in Jesus Christ must be its very center and determining point. For only then will the gospel fulfill its purpose, only then will the Christian understand what it means to live a life after Christ, to *trust* and *obey*.

So, what can we do to keep Christ in the center of the gospel—which is necessary if we are to live a life in faith and obedience?

1. We must fully understand that in Jesus Christ, we have been reconciled to God. In and of ourselves, we are and will always be alienated from the divine. Such is simply our lot as humans. But in Jesus Christ we have been elected to partnership with God. In Christ we are sinless, perfect, children of the heavenly Father.

Obviously, this reunion with God is nothing a person can affect. For who is powerful enough or in the position to unite himself with the divine? Thus, this work of reconciliation has been accomplished outside of, apart from and in spite of humanity. Because of **God's decision in Jesus Christ**, the Christian has entered into a covenant relation with Him.

2. We must remember that our reconciliation with God is as secure as He is. If our salvation were dependent to any degree upon ourselves or our "righteousness," then our reconciliation with God is as secure as we are—and that's not very secure. However, because our salvation does not depend upon what we have done or will do or fail to do, we may rest confidently in God's abiding love.

3. When we believe the good news about a reconciliation with God accomplished for us, then doing those things which are appropriate to God's mercy is the way of saying "amen" to God's promise. Notice that it is not the Christian who makes the promise. The Christian only says "amen" to the promise God has made on his behalf. The Christian's only appropriate response is to thank God for the gift of His grace. And this thankfulness expresses itself in those ways which most closely correspond with the will and word of God.

by Ted Wick

Key passage:
James 2:22

Notes

In our commercial world of the twentieth century, much of life revolves around earning, pay, money and compensation. It seems that monetary value is attached to almost every activity. The consumer attitude is an apt description of our culture.

Thus, this mentality collides head on with the "free grace" teaching of Paul. A mind adapted to the marketplace has difficulty relating two concepts that appear to conflict:

1. the Christian life as a struggle, and
2. salvation as a free gift.

The Master referred to the Christian's struggle as taking up "the cross" and following. Scripture also speaks to the believer in terms of disciplined life, obedience, struggle and conflict, but with no hint of our struggle purchasing anything. However, the struggle has value, for it demonstrates the faith professed, purifies the motives for following Jesus, and, in a unique sense, brings one into fellowship with our Lord, who experienced our struggles also. Hence, the Christian life is indeed a struggle.

But a life of struggle—either Jesus' or ours—is not what has purchased our salvation. It is only because of Christ's shed blood and broken body on Calvary's cross that the Christian may be saved. Hence, salvation is a free gift.

But this is not to say that a life of struggle is without value or importance. Submission to the Father is essential to life for all created beings. And submission becomes concrete when we make specific choices and act upon those choices in accordance with the words of God.

Take for example the family seating pattern in the automobile. Father sits at the controls. Mother sits beside father, and the children sit in the back seat. Each time the family members get ready to take a drive, they choose their appropriate places and act upon those choices. This says that each person acknowledges both his own place and the father's place. Please note that the child establishes his own place by acknowledging and submitting to the place of the father, at the controls. In the same way, every act of obedience towards God accords Him His rightful position, and simultaneously defines our dependent status upon Him.

Thus it is that worship of God by words is good but not sufficient. What is needed are acts that demand time and energy and choices which declare that we know who God is and who we are—that we recognize Him as the one in the driver's seat. When that knowledge is denied, as by Lucifer, the consequences amount to chaos and finally annihilation. But when that knowledge is affirmed by word and act, then peace, harmony, health and life result.

Indeed, the tension that exists between "trust" and "obey" is the tension within ourselves between the ease of making a verbal commitment and the difficulty of acting out that commitment.

"Every act of obedience towards God accords Him His rightful position, and simultaneously defines our dependent status upon Him"

1. Can you identify with any of the characters in the Introduction for this week's lesson? If so, how?

2. The Logos article for this week states: "justification by faith is the foundation and presupposition of all Christian ethics." What does this statement mean?

What are the implications of it?

3. The story is told of a young woman convert who was told by her pastor prior to joining the church that most Adventists do not wear wedding rings. He explained that such was not a terribly significant matter, and that when the time came and she felt "so impressed," she might also want to take hers off.

A few weeks after she was accepted into church membership, the pastor paid the young woman a visit. He told her that she had worn her ring long enough and that certainly by this time her faith should be so influencing her works. Needless to say, the young woman became quite upset.

If, when working with fellow members of the church or new converts, one's "good works" do not meet the standards the church has set, what should our attitude and reaction be? Does the "size" of the "wrongdoing" have any significance here?

At what point in the life of a Christian should the church demand that one's actions be consistent with the church's definition of faith?

4. Re "Of The Gift And Struggles," the Opinion article: Is obedience, as used in describing the Christian life, equivalent to dependence? submission? or what?

To Die, To Sleep . . .



"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build. . ."

— Ecclesiastes 3:1-3; NIV

by St. Augustine

During the period in which I first began to teach in the town of my birth, I had found a very dear friend, who was pursuing similar studies. He was about my own age, and was now coming, as I was, to the very flowering-time of young manhood. He had indeed grown up with me as a child and we had gone to school together and played together. . . . With me he went astray in error, and my soul could not be without him. But You are ever close upon the heels of those who flee from You, for You are at once God of Vengeance and Fount of Mercy, and You turn us to Yourself by ways most wonderful. You took this man from the life of earth when he had completed scarcely a year in a friendship that had grown sweeter to me than all the sweetness of the life I knew.

What man could recount all Your praises for the things he has experienced in his own single person? What was it, O my God, that You accomplished then and how unsearchable is the abyss of Your judgments! For he was in a high fever and when he had for a long time lain unconscious in a deathly sweat so that his life was despaired of, he was baptized. Naturally he knew nothing of it, and I paid little heed, since I took for granted that his mind would retain what he had learned from me and not what was done upon his body while he was unconscious. But it turned out very differently. The fever left him and he recovered. As soon as I could speak to him. . . . I began to mock, assuming that he would join me in mocking, the baptism which he had received when he had neither sense nor feeling. For by now he had been told of it. But he looked at me as if I had been his deadly enemy, and in a burst of independence that startled

me warned me that if I wished to continue his friend I must cease that kind of talk. I was stupefied and deeply perturbed. . . . But he was snatched from the reach of my folly, that he might be safe with You for my future consolation. Within a few days he relapsed into his fever and died. And I was not there.

My heart was black with grief. Whatever I looked upon had the air of death. My native place was a prison-house and my home a strange unhappiness. The things we had done together became sheer torment without him. My eyes were restless looking for him, but he was not there. . . . They could not say "He will come soon," as they would in his life when he was absent. . . . If I said, "Trust in God" my soul did not obey—naturally, because the man whom she had loved and lost was nobler and more real than the imagined deity in whom I was bidding her trust. I had no delight but in tears, for tears had taken the place my friend had held in the love of my heart. . . .

Rightly has a friend been called "the half of my soul." For I thought of my soul and his soul as one soul in two bodies; and my life was a horror to me because I would not live halved. And it may be that I feared to die lest thereby he should die wholly whom I had loved so deeply. . . .

This is the root of our grief when a friend dies, and the blackness of our sorrow, and the steeping of the heart in tears for the joy that has turned to bitterness, and the feeling as though we were dead because he is dead. Blessed is the man that loves Thee, O God, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee. For he alone loses no one that is dear to him, if all are dear in God, who is never lost.

The Confessions of Saint Augustine, Books I-X, trans. by F. J. Sheed, (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews, & McMeel, 1942, 1970), pages 54-58. Used by permission.

St. Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo, has been called the most towering intellect of the Western church.

by editors

Notes

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25, 26). Jesus was talking to Martha, the bereaved sister of Lazarus, and assured her that her brother would rise again. Martha believed this, but thought in terms of “the last day.” Jesus enlarged her knowledge and her faith by revealing more of His own nature and power than she knew. He is the I AM. He is the resurrection. Apart from Him, there is no hope of victory over death, no resurrection. He is the life: all life comes from Him; without Him no life is possible.

The truth of these assertions takes us back to the beginning of human life, to Eden. There, He who is life shared that life with the first man and woman and, through them, with all their descendants. **“And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being”** (Genesis 2:7; NIV). But the ideal situation was soon upset and death, the very negation of life, came and has reigned in every generation since. **“After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life”** (Genesis 3:24; NIV).

Ever since this time, death has been a deep concern of man’s. Job asked one of the earliest recorded questions concerning death: **“If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands”** (Job 14:14, 15). Job’s faith in God led him to look beyond the grave to the possibility of living again. In pre-Christian darkness he caught a glimpse of the resurrection. He believed the Lord would call him from the tomb, unwilling to lose His creation, and that he would gladly respond to the life-giving call.

The psalmist is also concerned with this matter of death. He, thinking of the son of man in whom there is no hope of salvation (vs. 3), says, **“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish: (Psalm 146:4)**. There is no room here for the idea that the soul leaves the body at death and continues its own existence in a more blessed state. The fact that an individual’s thoughts perish on the day of his death precludes any possibility of conscious life after death prior to a resurrection.

But such an outlook is not comfortless. The writer goes on to find joy and hope in the God of Jacob, in the Lord his God (vs. 5). And the informed Christian will share a similar optimism. **“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. . . . For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself”** (John 5:21, 26).

Thus, Jesus could describe Himself to His disciples as **“the way, the truth, and the life”** (John 14:6)—the embodiment of life, the source and channel of existence. There is no subsistence apart from Him (John 5:26; Col. 2:9). This fact is illustrated in the Gospels in the accounts of three miracles of resurrection (Luke 7:11-17; Mark 5:22-43; John 11:1-46).

The greatest evidence of the power of the life that was in Christ, however, lay not in His resurrection of others, but in His resurrection of Himself. Hence, **“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”** (I Cor. 15:55).

by Samuel A. Myers

Key passage:
Genesis 2:16-17

Notes

Just as the computer program "If . . . then" statement specifies an exact result to a given condition, so it is with sin and death. If the condition is "sin," then the result is "death." Ellen G. White makes a point of this, among others, being sure that we understand that death is a *natural result* of sin and is not something which God uses to threaten people into being good. Consider the following statements.

"It is transgression of God's law—the law of love—that has brought woe and death."¹

"Christ never planted the seeds of death in the system. Satan planted these seeds when he tempted Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge which meant disobedience to God."²

"Our heavenly Father does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. He is not the author of sickness and death; He is the source of life. He would have men live; and He desires them to be obedient to the laws of life and health, that they may live."³

"It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God, —as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin."⁴

"Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, his spiritual vision dimmed. He had become subject to death."⁵

"It is a solemn thing to die, but a far more solemn thing to live. Every thought and word and deed of our lives will meet us again. What we make of ourselves in probationary time, that we must remain to all eternity. Death brings dissolution to the body, but makes no change in the character. The coming of Christ does not change characters; it only fixes them forever beyond all change."⁶

"To the believer, death is but a small matter. Christ speaks of it as if it were of little moment. 'If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death.' To the Christian, death is but a sleep, a moment of silence and darkness."⁷

"It is a solemn thing to die, but a far more solemn thing to live"

¹ *Steps to Christ*, p. 9.

² *SDA Bible Commentary*, E. G. White Comments, vol. 1, p. 1082.

³ *Gospel Workers*, p. 239.

⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 471.

⁵ *Education*, p. 15.

⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 466.

⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 787.

by Jack E. Bynum

I stared incredulously at the unopened letter. I had mailed it ten days earlier—a light-hearted communication to an old friend. We first met as university graduate students, and I had been drawn to the brilliant, idealistic young scholar. In the years that followed, I had enjoyed his warm and witty correspondence. But now, my undelivered letter had come back. His name was unceremoniously crossed off and someone had scrawled in its place: "DECEASED. RETURN TO SENDER." A standard Post Office directive, stamped on the envelope, completed the chilling message: "MOVED—LEFT NO FORWARDING ADDRESS."

In one stroke my friend was gone. His social identity was suddenly and traumatically altered.¹ His name was crossed off, eliminated—from the telephone book, the faculty list, the church membership—and from my letter. No one by that name lives there anymore. Professor X has been effectively removed from society.

Death lies in ambush and often catches us by surprise. Typically, we try to reject the demands of this unknown and unwelcome intruder. For a while, youth and good health create an illusion of personal immortality. However, as the years pass and health becomes more tenuous and the future less certain, we discover for ourselves that "life is a solo voyage in a vessel whose bottom is guaranteed to rust away."

Americans are especially reluctant to accept the reality of death. With a culture that honors vitality and productivity, many even find it difficult to acknowledge the legitimacy of the "sick role" (that often precedes death). To many, illness is unacceptable because it appears to be wasteful and dysfunctional to society.²

Death is often a taboo subject because it is unique and unlike anything we have ever personally experienced before, and thus it defies adequate conceptualization. "For unlike any other aspect of life that we know, death is nonlife. . . . It takes much rigor of disciplined thought to contemplate and disentangle the experiencable and the inexperiencable, the imaginable and unimaginable aspects contained in the thought of 'my death.'"³

A more complete understanding of the enigmatic role of death in the overall context of life has been suggested by sociologists who perceive each person as moving through a succession of related biological and social stages that together comprise "the life course." The life course begins at birth and progresses through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, educational and occupational activities, marriage, parenthood, retirement, old age and death. The Christian may project the life course beyond death to an additional stage called "life renewal." Transition from one status and stage of the life course to another is facilitated by appropriate "rites of passage" such as graduation, wedding and funeral ceremonies, and the resurrection. Thus, life is perceived as dynamic and anticipatory, with new thresholds to cross and new roles to play.⁴ The recognition of each as an integral and normal part of the life course—an interlude of rest before resuming an ongoing, unfolding experience—can give us confidence for our present lives and as we anticipate the future.

John Bunyan tells us in his classic allegory that when Faithful passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, he was terrorized by no hideous demons, and heard no screeching goblins, because in singing to himself the psalms, he found the "Sun-shine" to lighten his path through that intimidating place, and beyond.⁵

Key passage:
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

Notes

"Life is a solo voyage in a vessel whose bottom is guaranteed to rust away"

"Life is perceived as dynamic and anticipatory"

¹ Jack E. Bynum, "Social Status and Rites of Passage: The Social Context of Death," in *Omega*, vol. 4, no. 4, August, 1973.

² Talcott Parsons, "The Sick Role and the Role of the Physician Reconsidered," in *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* LIII, Summer 1975, pp. 257-258.

³ Edwin S. Shneidman, *Deaths of Man*, (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1973), page 62. Used by permission.

⁴ Leonard D. Cain, Jr., "Life Course and Social Structure" in *Handbook of Modern Sociology*, ed. by R.E.L. Faris (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), pp. 272-309.

⁵ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to That Which is to Come* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 74.

by George W. Reid

Key passage:
Isaiah 25:8

Notes

Although scientists and philosophers alike struggle to define just what life is and what brings it to an end, they have reached no consensus. Despite this, it is an undeniable fact that both the beginning and ending of life surround us constantly. Our culture tries to compensate by talking about death only as a last resort, something we talk about only out of necessity. Just take a look at yourself. Isn't it true that despite the fact that death is always present with us, you seldom even mention it?

Of course, we Christians are just as subject to death as is anyone else, but we see it differently, especially so if we have a clear understanding of the biblical truth that death is but a sleep (John 11:11-13). With this insight the fear is gone.

But suppose you know someone whose close relative or dear friend has just died. How would you go about offering comfort? Would it be best to act as though nothing had happened, or would that seem like playing the ostrich? On the other hand, if you go about carelessly discussing the loss, you run the likelihood of wounding with boorish insensitivity. So what should you do? Let me offer two simple suggestions.

1. In most cases the best thing to do is to offer an understanding ear, allowing the hurt and sorrow to pour out with the certain knowledge that you are genuinely interested. Let your confidence in the resurrecting, saving power of Christ build courage in others, and your insight be transmitted outward in your concerned responses.

2. But perhaps the deepest reassurance of the Christian experience you could give would be a positive knowledge that death has been vanquished along with Lucifer, its author and high priest. At that magnificent moment on a springtime Friday afternoon, when the Son of God let life slide noiselessly through His fingers, Lucifer's doom was sealed. While a universe watched in breathless suspense, the Creator of life, hanging from a cross, accepted death. The die was cast. But by the third day He was risen. And from that moment to the very depths of eternity arises the chorus of the redeemed, "Death is swallowed up in victory." No rationalistic philosophy or cultic mirage yields this kind of secure triumph—only a profound trust in Him whom to know is life everlasting.

by Douglas R. Clark

Archaeologists take pride in conjuring up sophisticated names for mundane objects and places. For instance, an important sector of any ancient occupation is the graveyard, and for such the archaeologist has coined the term "necropolis," which is derived from the Greek and means "city of the dead."

The City of the Dead may well be a morbid place to visit. Yet, even though most people prefer to put off the trek to Necropolis, all roads ultimately lead in this town's direction. Anyone may find lodging there; in fact, no one can skirt the city by means of bypass routes.¹ In addition, the city's charter provides for universal equality; none are denied citizenship on the basis of race, religion or sex. And, although many are seeking to impede the process, Necropolis continues to extend its city limits in its quest for additional residents.

But the ominous spectacle of the City of the Dead overtaking the cities of the living need not frighten us. For in living with death, we stand in a long and creative historical, psychological, social and theological tradition.

The Old Testament community did not until late in its history seriously reflect on alternatives to death. There exists no systematized "theology of death." Believing that death resulted from sin, Israel came to accept it as the normal termination of life. Of course the community did not meet death with jubilation, but it did face both death and life in very practical and healthy ways. To the ancient Israelite it was important under God to live long, vigorously and prosperously, to bear children (thus extending the family's life), and to die in peace, having a respectable burial. Under these circumstances ancient mourners quite unaprehensively laid to rest their loved ones who were "full of years" and "gathered" to their people.² And, even though some Old Testament passages apparently drew maps of Necropolis without exits,³ the believer rested trustingly in a God who controlled even the grave and whose stated purpose was to make life meaningful.

In the periods both before and during the time in which the New Testament was written, greater complexity surrounded people's views of death. The Christian community arose in these perplexing times, and, in the face of death's menacing pursuit, came to terms with dying. On the one hand, it saw Necropolis as merely a temporary stopover—a resting place on an unending journey. Jesus Christ had already cleared the road and was paving the way for future followers. He thus removed the sting of death. On the other hand, the New Testament utilized death symbolically, even if paradoxically, as the necessary precondition for the Christian life.⁴ "Death is the undoing of the old world and the entry to new life with Christ. . . ."⁵ In these ways, the Christian community coped with the fear of death and faced it without anxiety.

In light of these attitudes, however, we should not seek to make an early application for citizenship in Necropolis. In anybody's book, "a living dog is better than a dead lion."⁶ At the same time, the Bible does allow us to view ways in which God's people of the past successfully lived in the shadow of the City of the Dead. For in Christ, life assumes greater significance and death less dread.

Key passage:
I Cor. 15:54, 55

Notes

"But the ominous spectacle of the City of the Dead overtaking the cities of the living need not frighten us"

¹ Psalm 89:48. Of course Enoch, Elijah and those translated at the advent may disregard this notice.

² Genesis 15:15; 35:29; Judges 8:32; I Kings 2:10; 11:43; 15:8; I Chron. 29:28; II Chron. 24:15, 16; Job 42:17.

³ Job 7:21; Psalm 39:13; Eccles. 9:1-10; Jer. 51:39, 57.

⁴ Romans 6:4-7; Luke 9:23, 24.

⁵ W. Brueggemann, "Death, Theology of" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, supplementary volume, ed. by K. Crim (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), page 221. Used by permission.

⁶ Eccles. 9:4.

by Ralph E. Neall

Notes

There is a sharp difference between the doctrines of resurrection and natural immortality. Resurrection is the restoration of the whole man from death. It is an event that is still future, which depends on the resurrection of Christ which is past. Immortality, on the other hand, is the belief that the "souls" of men are immortal by nature, and hence need no resurrection. Resurrection implies that death is an enemy which has been overcome by Christ and will be overcome in His followers. Immortality sees death as a welcome friend which releases the soul from its imprisonment in the body.

These different attitudes toward death are dramatically illustrated by the deaths of Socrates and Christ. Socrates, in Plato's impressive description, awaited death with perfect equanimity, discussing with his disciples the proofs of immortality. He believed that the body is only an outer garment which prevents the soul from moving freely. The soul is imprisoned in the body; it belongs to the eternal world. Death is the great liberator which loosens the chains, leads the soul out of the prison of the body and back to its eternal home. The destruction of the body, Socrates thought, could not mean the destruction of the soul, any more than a musical composition can be destroyed when the instrument is destroyed. So, in wonderful harmony with his teaching, Socrates drank the hemlock in sublime calm.

Christ, on the other hand, feared death. "My soul is troubled even to death," He said to His disciples. He began to "tremble and to lose heart" (Mark 14:34). In the garden He prayed, "Let this cup pass from me" (Mark 14:36). According to Hebrews 5:7, He wept and cried in the face of death. On the cross He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is not death as a friend; it is death in all its frightful horror; the last enemy.

It was necessary for Jesus to die in order to overcome death. He could not obtain the victory by simply living on as an immortal soul, thus fundamentally *not* dying. Whoever wants to conquer death must die, he must really cease to live, both body and soul.

Only he who apprehends with the first Christians (and Christ) the horror of death, who takes it seriously as death, can comprehend the Easter exultation of the primitive Christian church. Immortality is only a *negative* assertion: the soul does *not* die, but simply lives on. Resurrection is a *positive* assertion: the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to live by a new act of creation by God.

Belief in the resurrection presupposes the Biblical connection between death and *sin*. Both are unnatural, abnormal, opposed to God. Death is a curse—which can be removed only to the extent that sin is removed, for death is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23).

Contrary to the Greek philosophical belief, both the body and the soul of man are a gift of our Creator. The entire Greek dualism between body and soul is foreign to the Jewish and Christian interpretation of Creation. The body is not the soul's prison, but a temple (1 Cor. 6:19; Genesis 1:31). Behind the pessimistic Christian interpretation of death stands the optimistic view of creation. Behind the optimistic Greek view of death stands a denial of the visible world as God's creation. The contrast for the Greek is between outward form and Idea; for the Christian, the contrast is between creation delivered to death by sin and the new creation, between the corruptible body and the incorruptible resurrection body.

What then is the part played by the flesh and the spirit in the New Testament? For Pauline theology, these are two transcendent powers

"Socrates drank the hemlock in sublime calm"

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

"The body is not the soul's prison, but a temple"

which can enter man from without, but neither is given with creation as such. "Flesh" is the power of sin or the power of death (often defined as man apart from God). It seizes the whole man, outer and inner. "Spirit" is the antagonist of flesh: it is the Holy Spirit, the power of creation and re-creation. It also seizes the whole man, outer and inner.

Wherever the Holy Spirit is at work we have a momentary retreat of the power of death, a foretaste of the End. When Jesus healed the sick, this was a sign of His victory over sin and death. But the healings were only a retreat, not a final transformation of the body of death into a resurrection body. Those whom Jesus raised in his lifetime died again, for they did not receive a resurrection body.

We must note the difference between New Testament anthropology and that of the Greeks. In the New Testament, body and soul are both originally good as created by God; they are both bad insofar as the deadly power of the flesh has hold of them. Both must be set free by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. Deliverance consists not in a release of soul from body, but in a release of both from flesh.

Even Matthew 10:28, "Fear not them that kill the body, but cannot kill the soul," does not presuppose the Greek conception. The next clause, "Fear Him who can slay both soul and body in Gehenna" shows that the soul is not immortal. It means that we must fear God who is able to give us over completely to death, so that there is no resurrection to life.

The Christian hope relates not only to my individual fate, but to the entire creation. ("We wait for a new heaven and a new earth." II Peter 3:13.) Because this is true, the resurrection cannot be an event which begins with each individual death, but only at the End. It happens when the present age gives way to the future at the coming of Christ.

This hope, however, is not entirely future, because at one point it has already happened. Jesus Christ is the firstborn from the dead, the first fruit of them that sleep (I Cor. 15:23; cf. Romans 8:23). In Him the resurrection is decisively inaugurated, although it remains to be consummated in His people. This tension between the "already fulfilled" and the "not yet consummated" is the essence of the Christian faith. Cullmann's illustration characterizes the whole New Testament situation: the decisive battle has been fought in Christ's death and resurrection; only V-day is yet to come.

Although we still die, we now enjoy a foretaste of the resurrection in a two-fold way: we are already being renewed from day to day by the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16); and we enjoy miracles of healing even in this life. We now enjoy the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:5). We now have "the Holy Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (II Cor. 5:5; NIV).

The contrast between immortality and resurrection was clearly perceived by Justin, who wrote of people "who say that there is no resurrection from the dead, but that immediately at death their souls ascend to heaven."² The contrast was also seen by Marcus Aurelius, a philosopher who despised Christianity. This man, who regarded death with equanimity, had no sympathy for the eagerness with which the Christian martyrs met their deaths. But Stephen, the first martyr (Acts 7:55), shows us how death is overcome by him who dies in Christ. He saw "The heavens open and Christ standing at the right hand of God!" He saw Christ, the conqueror of death. With faith that the death he had to undergo was already conquered by Him who had Himself endured it, Stephen let himself be stoned.

Indeed, the answer to the question of immortality of the soul or resurrection of the dead in the New Testament is clear.

"Wherever the Holy Spirit is at work we have a momentary retreat of the power of death, a foretaste of the End"

The event of resurrection has at one point already happened

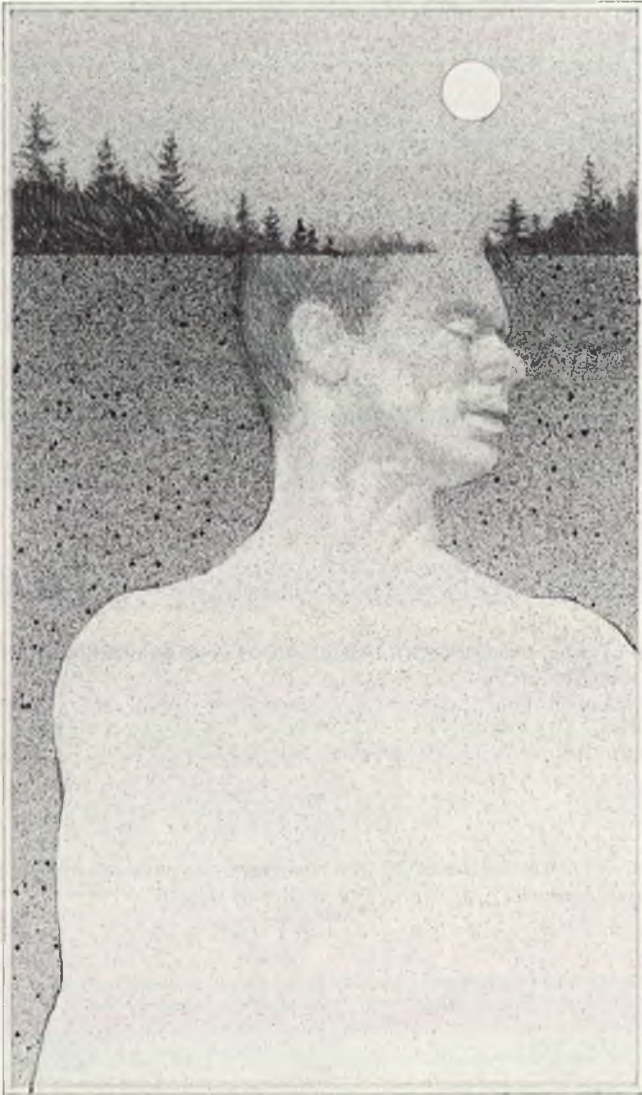
¹ The thoughts composing this article were gleaned from a book with the same title which was written by Oscar Cullmann in 1958 and published by the Macmillan Company. While his position on the state of the dead does not agree with Adventist belief in every detail, his book has been very influential in convincing many that the idea of the natural immortality of the soul has its origin in Greek philosophy rather than in the Bible.

² *Dialogue*, 80; c. 150 AD.

REACT

1. St. Augustine, when writing of the death of his friend, stated: "If I said, 'Trust in God' my soul did not obey—naturally, because the man whom she had loved and lost was nobler and more real than the imagined deity in whom I was bidding her trust."
Has there been an experience through which you have passed that has prompted you to express in your heart the words of Augustine quoted above? Explain.
2. St. Augustine also writes: "Blessed is the man that loves Thee, O God, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee. For he alone loses no one that is dear to him, if all are dear in God, who is never lost." Contemplate on the meaning of this passage and be prepared to discuss with your Sabbath School class members what Augustine was attempting to say and the implications of his thoughts.
3. How important is it to know what happens to a person when he/she dies? Explain.
4. To what extent does the concept of death affect your life today? Mentally? Socially? Spiritually? Physically?
5. If a Christian did *not* have the hope of a resurrection, what advantage would he have over the unbeliever in confronting the reality of death?
6. It is characteristic of young people to view life as lasting forever; it is difficult for them to accept the reality of their own deaths. Why is this? Is this beneficial or harmful to the young person? To society?

... *To Sleep,
Perchance To Wake!*



"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

— John 11:11; NIV

by Carol Sample

Walking through a cemetery on a sunny spring day, vibrant with bursting buds and golden leaves and grass, I paused to imagine the scene in that "city of the dead" when Jesus returns to Planet Earth "and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Tombstones topple and the sod begins to crack over the graves of the righteous. As the cracks deepen into gaping crevices, those who died in the hope of the first resurrection burst forth in vigor and immortal perfection. Because it all happens so quickly—"in the twinkling of an eye"—the scene suggests a vast moving kaleidoscope of nature, unfolding rapidly and miraculously. But this is no optical illusion! As the righteous sleepers awake, the living saints join them and together they rise "to meet the Lord in the air." Christians know that this is no mere science fiction fantasy. When bodies which long ago have dissolved into dust respond to the energizing power of Christ in the first resurrection, the incredible will indeed become credible.

Although the Scriptures do not endorse the Platonic concept of the immortality of the soul, man does have an innate desire for everlasting life placed there by the Creator Himself. And for the Christian, the period of death (whether long or short) will seem as a moment.

Ellen White, in the context of Christ's discussion with the unbelieving Sadducees, makes this paradoxical statement concerning the resurrection and its aftermath: "God counts the things that are not as though they were. He sees the end

from the beginning, and beholds the result of His work as though it were now accomplished. The precious dead, from Adam down to the last saint who dies, will hear the voice of the Son of God, and will come forth from the grave to immortal life. . . . This condition, which is anticipated in His purpose, He beholds as if it were already existing. The dead live unto Him."¹

Christ is the *alpha* and *omega* of the doctrine of the resurrection as He is of all biblical doctrines. The resurrection of the saints depends wholly upon His resurrection, and the fantastic growth of the early Christian church is testimony to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. For those who approach the subject honestly and without preconceived ideas, there is ample historical evidence to substantiate this fact.²

Today, the tenacious desire for immortality still persists. In California, nine people have had their bodies frozen awaiting the day when medical science will find a cure for whatever killed them. The initial cost for this service is \$17,000, plus a \$2,000 per year maintenance fee.³ How tragic to place confidence in one's fellowmen to do what Jesus alone has the power to accomplish!

John Donne, a seventeenth century devotional poet and Dean of St. Paul's, knew wherein his hope lay; and so may we:

One short sleep past, we wake
eternally
And death shall be no more;
death, thou shalt die.⁴

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 606 (emphasis mine).

² Colin, Brown, *Philosophy of the Christian Faith* (London: Tyndale Press, 1969). p. 72.

³ *Prime Time Saturday*, NBC, March 22, 1980.

⁴ *The Complete Poetry & Selected Prose of John Donne*, "Sonnet X from the *Holy Sonnets*," (New York: The Modern Library, Random House, Inc., 1941), used by permission.

by editors

Notes

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27, 28).

One of the most persistent of all the puzzles that confronts mankind is the enigma of death. It is one of the certainties of life. It is not surprising then that the morbid topic has occupied some of the finest minds, and that these have produced many explanations about death and its sequel; but, of himself, man is no nearer finding an answer to the questions about death than were his forebears.

We overhear in the words of Jesus, however, a brief description of the state of man in death. Discussing the condition of the deceased Lazarus, Jesus said, **“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep” (John 11:11)**. Death is often spoken of as a sleep, even by those who believe in an immortal soul that leaves the body at death. But Christ’s subsequent actions and words leave no room for such belief. Jesus had deliberately gone on a two-day journey to be with the bereaved sisters, to stand by the tomb or cave, and to call specifically to the dead man, **“Lazarus, Come forth” (John 11:43)**. If a soul had left the body, then the Savior would have spoken differently. As it was, He clearly called to the whole being of the dead man and brought his complete person out of the rocky grave.

In John 5:28, 29, Jesus again buttressed the belief in soul-sleep at death. Here He says, **“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28, 29)**. Jesus teaches that all who die will be subject to one of the Judge’s two resurrecting calls—the good, to life; the evil, to condemnation of judgment. But such calls would not be necessary if at death the righteous immediately enter into eternal life, while the wicked are cast into hell. Judgment would already have been pronounced and rewards bestowed, for good or ill.

Hence, with the biblical concept of total unconsciousness at death, the resurrection is of vital importance. But belief in the resurrection is important for another reason as well: **“If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: but if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (I Cor. 15:13, 14)**. This is strong but necessary language, for the denial of the authenticity of a resurrection leaves a gaping hole in the fabric of Christian doctrine. Without the resurrection of Christ, the doctrine has no foundation; while without the hope of the saints’ restoration, the Christian message has no point, and preaching it is only useless and deceptive, and believing it is foolish.

But thanks be to God, there is no need to doubt. Christ is **“risen from the dead”** and has become **“the first fruits of them that slept” (I Cor. 15:20)**; He is the assurance of the saints’ resurrection. **“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Cor. 15:22)**. How calm, how confident, how reassuring!

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Cor. 15:51, 52).

by H. T. Burr

"It was at midnight that God chose to deliver His people. As the wicked were mocking around them, suddenly the sun appeared, shining in his strength, and the moon stood still. The wicked looked upon the scene with amazement, while the saints beheld with solemn joy the tokens of their deliverance. Signs and wonders followed in quick succession. Everything seemed turned out of its natural course. The streams ceased to flow. Dark heavy clouds came up and dashed against each other. . . . There was a mighty earthquake. The graves were opened, and those who had died in the faith under the third angel's message, keeping the Sabbath, came forth from their dusty beds, glorified, to hear the covenant of peace that God was to make with those who had kept His law."¹

"Soon our eyes were drawn to the east, for a small black cloud had appeared, about half as large as a man's hand, which we all knew was the sign of the Son of man. We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer and became lighter, glorious and still more glorious, til it was a great white cloud. The bottom appeared like fire; a rainbow was over the cloud, while around it were ten thousand angels, singing a most lovely song; and upon it sat the Son of man. . . . Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered blackness. Then we all cried out, 'Who shall be able to stand?' . . . when Jesus spoke: 'Those who have clean hands and pure hearts shall be able to stand; My grace is sufficient for you.' At this our faces lighted us, and joy filled every heart.

"Then Jesus' silver trumpet sounded as He descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire. He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised His eyes and hands to heaven, and cried 'Awake! awake! awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise.' Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, 'Alleluia!' as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air."²

"And as God . . . delivered the everlasting covenant to His people, He spoke one sentence and then paused while the words were rolling through the earth. The Israel of God stood with their eyes fixed upward, listening to the words as they came from the mouth of Jehovah and rolled through the earth like peels of loudest thunder. It was awfully solemn. At the end of every sentence the saints shouted, 'Glory! Hallelujah!' Their countenances were lighted up with the glory of God, and they shone with glory as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked could not look upon them for the glory. And when the never-ending blessing was pronounced on those who had honored God in keeping His Sabbath holy, there was a mighty shout of victory over the beast and his image.

"Those bodies that had gone down into the grave bearing the marks of disease and death came up in immortal health. . . ."³

Key passage:
Matthew 25:30, 31

Notes

"Soon our eyes were drawn to the east. . . ."

"Awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise"

¹ *Early Writings*, p. 285.

² *Ibid.*, p. 15, 16.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 285-287.

by Karl Konrad

While there are several biblical accounts of dead persons being raised to life, scientifically acceptable evidence for life after death is nonexistent. "Scientific proof" rests on a foundation of repeated measurement and observation of a repeatable phenomenon. Death is common enough, but resurrections are rather rare and do not lend themselves to repeated measurement and observation. Hence, the lack of scientific evidence. Additional difficulties arise because there is no uniform definition of what death is, or what is involved in resurrection.

Nevertheless, death, dying and resurrection (the last sometimes given the acronym OBE, "out of body experiences") have become the focus of serious research by several well-known scholars. The subjects of such research are those who have experienced clinical death, that is, the heart has stopped beating. As a result of modern medical practices many such "dead" persons cannot really be thought of as having been dead and then resurrected, but it is as close as we can get.

A comparison of the recollections of such persons concerning their experiences of "dying" shows a remarkable uniformity. They all seem to know they are dying: there is the initial confusion followed by a barrage of noise; they see themselves leaving their bodies behind and ascending through a tunnel; there follows the vision of a bright light; a being is met; their entire lives flash by in review; they somehow then return to their bodies. The experiences of Christians do not differ from those of non-Christians.

The reports of these studies in the popular press have stirred the public interest, and books on the topic have become best sellers (e.g., *Reflections on Life After Life*, by Raymond J. Moody, Jr.). But what is really being promoted is a totally nonbiblical view of death and life after death. Here, there is no difference between believers and nonbelievers; there is no judgment and everyone becomes "good," so it really doesn't matter how one lives now.

In contrast, the Bible reveals an all-powerful God, the source of life, who has a complete record of every human being from the genetic code to every thought, word and action. It states that death is an unexplainable cessation of every activity carried on by a human being, and calls it a sleep. The Bible also states that at the command of God those who have been dead for centuries will resume living. The event of resurrection is just as unexplainable as the event of death.

With the assumptions that God is omnipotent and that He has a complete record of every person, it doesn't seem so strange after all that He can restore to life those who have been dead. Such a course of reasoning, while not strictly "scientific," does strike a responsive chord and we accept by faith what we have not seen.

 Key passage: **1 Corinthians 15:52**

Notes

"Here, there is no judgment and everyone becomes 'good,' so it really doesn't matter how one lives now"

by William Cole

Key passage:
Ephesians 2:4, 5

Notes

Uncertainty is just something we have to live with—uncertainty with regard to a certain dating relationship, career choice, hair style, or most frustrating of all, uncertainty as to what flavor of ice cream to choose!

Relative to this week’s lesson, we must concede that there is much uncertainty among some Christians as to whether or not they will be among those “sleepers” whom the Lord Jesus awakes at the last day. But if there is one aspect of our lives in which there should be *no* uncertainty, it should be regarding the question of our salvation—and thus of our eternal destiny.

Nevertheless, most of us are probably most accurately described spiritually as “ye of little faith.” For when it’s a smoggy day, or when life seems to be passing on by, when we do something we’ve always known we shouldn’t do, or when we feel we’ve become insensitive, uncaring, hard—our faith has a tendency to plummet, and along with it our self-esteem.

So it is important that we learn to live with confidence in the fact of our salvation. For although this saving faith may not always pull us out of the doldrums, and may not even provide the remedy for our guilt feelings, it can lay the unshakeable rational foundation for living a secure life of freedom in and in correspondence with the divine.

Below I have listed some suggestions which have helped me learn to live with *confidence* before God.

1. First, I have had to realize the simple but profound fact that God wants me—and you—to be secure in Him. The most concise biblical proof is this: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13; NIV; emphasis mine).

2. Then, I need to constantly remind myself that salvation is mine only because it is the free gift of God. If it became mine or remains mine on the basis of what I have done or do, then I might as well give up right now. For I know myself too well to try to pretend the absurdity that there is something I can do to make my salvation more secure than it is already in Jesus Christ.

Thus, I have rejected such thought patterns as: “I’ll never make it because . . .” or, “If I keep struggling then someday I hope to be saved,” or, “If I could only stop . . ., then I could feel secure.” For the *scandal* of the gospel—and that which offends moralists to no end—is that I am saved not because of my sincerity (for I am always insincere), nor because of my promises (because I always break them), but because God through Jesus Christ has elected me to salvation in Him. He has chosen me! and I have faith in that promise.

3. Knowing that I have been reconciled to God, I can now live in joy and freedom. I am free to explore, investigate, experiment and discover. I am emancipated from the shackles of dogma and codes; I am liberated to be joyfully responsive to the dynamic and spontaneous will of God. I am free to be my true self—the person God has ordained me to be; I am no longer bound to be determined by the prescriptions of society and cultures and sub-cultures. Indeed, I am free. I am free in joy and in gladness and in thanksgiving. But best of all, I am free, at last, to be *for* God, and *for* my fellow man and woman.

And on the last day, I will be free for eternal fellowship with Him.

by Andrew P. Woolley

Many Christians are not looking forward to a resurrection because they are not preparing for it in this life. To some the resurrection is a spiritual event which will transform them for an equally spiritual paradise. No wonder poets such as Wallace Stevens have rejected resurrection and the afterlife. In his poem "Sunday Morning," Stevens creates a dialogue between a woman who states her hesitation about giving up her beliefs in a life after death, and a speaker who urges the sensuality and beauty of this life and the lack of substance in the afterlife. "Death is the mother of beauty," the speaker urges, for the grave and the thought of it makes humans value the beauties and emotions of this life; it makes humans see the importance of pain and beauty when there is only one life. Nature and the world around is all that endures. Philosophies of resurrection and afterlife come and go.

If other-worldliness were the only alternative to Stevens' philosophy, I would cast my lot with Stevens. A heaven filled with people without feelings except joy, recreations without any meaning except praise, and fruit trees without functions except bearing doesn't sound like a challenging place to live.

But the resurrection and heaven are not just spiritual events. Consider the physical aspects of resurrection. In whatever way God chooses, the body is reactivated. Nerve endings begin to send signals to the brain; the brain sends back an interpretation of the signals so that fingers touch fingers, legs, face. Muscles move legs into standing position, then become taut and firm as the person strides. Eyes open and focus to see faces of forgotten people, familiar people. Energy makes every response action.

To prepare for this physical world, one must live in the physical world now, not wish everyday for a world beyond. Adventists are often seen as a group living for another world, living outside of the reality of everyday life. But God has given good in the physical world around us, and until we can see this life as good and meaningful, we will never be ready for the resurrection or heaven. Both will be a continuation of this life; more glorious and sinless, without a doubt, but a continuation. Life is textures, tastes, smells, all the things of the senses. Life is the constant defining of relationships, the finding of friends who share. Life is making oneself vulnerable to pain through commitments. Each day is an opportunity for physical well-being and emotional experiences. Heaven will be all these. If not, then the resurrection is not the glorious experience it has promised to be.

Key passage:
John 10:10

Notes

"The resurrection and heaven are not just spiritual events"

"Until we can see this life as good and meaningful, we will never be ready for the resurrection or heaven"

REACT

1. In the Introduction article for this week's lesson, Carol Sample quotes Ellen White as saying, "The dead live unto Him"—"God counts the things that are not as though they were."

What significance does this idea of Ellen White's have upon your life? Upon the plans and purposes of God?

2. In the Evidence article for this week, Karl Konrad discusses "out of body experiences." He writes that "what is really being promoted is a totally nonbiblical view of death and life after death. Here, there is no difference between believers and nonbelievers; there is no judgment and everyone becomes 'good,' so it really doesn't matter how one lives now."

When you consider such extraordinary happenings as "out of body experiences," do you classify them all as being "of the devil"? Could some be phenomena not directly associated with any supernatural power?

3. In the Testimony article for this week, Ellen White speaks of God delivering "the everlasting covenant to His people" at the time of His second coming. What is this "everlasting covenant"?

4. Should a desire for eternal life be a consuming passion of our lives? Explain.

The Shining Future



“When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’

‘Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?’ ”

— I Corinthians 15:54, 55; NIV

by Stanley Mooneyham

Pessimism may be the psychological plague of the late 20th Century—and Christian believers have found that not even faith provides immunity. Some of the most successful books on the evangelical market have been cheerless previews of apocalypse. I have met young people immobilized by fear of the future. Nothing seems worth doing, because the world may fall apart in the middle of the doing. Christians are more shaken than they have any right to be. Faith equates with confidence, not with fear. Scripture does not authorize Christians to cringe or cower.

For another, there is the magnificent conclusion of Romans 8. You remember how Paul said it:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This passage has always been a favorite of mine—a shelter in the time of storm, a beacon in darkness, an encouragement in despair. But only recently I rediscovered what I think is one of its most important and most neglected phrases: "Nor things to come."

This is not something to be read only at funerals. It means things to come at any time. After death? Sure, but before death, too. Things like an energy shortage. Inflation. International turmoil. The feeling we're being outnumbered by lawbreakers, domestic and international. Things that happen in Washington, Moscow, Teheran, Riyadh—wherever. Things that happen on our own street, in our own family, on our own job.

"Nor things to come:" Words to be written over our fears!

Emblazoned over the lintel of tomorrow! Embedded in our hopes!

Things to come, whatever they may be, hold no paralyzing terror for those whose Lord is Christ Jesus. God's love does not come and go. He will not let anything get in its way.

Which means getting back to our Father's business-as-usual. Living with an unquenchable confidence, not so much knowing what or when or where—as *who*. Not being wiped out if we have to make substantial adjustments in our way of living.

The sin in fear is that it causes us to hold back, to hoard our talents or resources or life itself. It is the enemy of sharing, cautioning us to hold on to that crust of bread rather than to cast it on the waters. Too risky, fear says. But faith says, "*Nor things to come.*"

These four little words restore our perspective, cool our feverish self-centeredness, unclench our fists, straighten our backs, get us going again.

Things present we somehow cope with, however distressing. Nine-tenths of fear hides in the future tense. Fear lives not in the known but in the unknown. Not in what is already here but in what hasn't yet arrived. But note: "Neither . . . things present, *nor* things to come. . . ."

From Genesis to Revelation the good word is, "Fear not." Neither things present. *Nor things to come.*

That doesn't turn a Christian into a Pollyanna, but it should make one an unwavering optimist. It's the believer's birthright.

Taken from *Christian Reader*, vol. 18, #2, (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale)—from *World Vision*, October issue, 919 W. Huntington, Monrovia, Calif. Used by permission.

by editors

Notes

Humans are myopic with regards to the future. We cannot see one day ahead. A year, a decade, a century become increasingly foggy as they stretch ahead of us. But in the Bible, the general features of the future are sketched out before us—they loom as mountain peaks, sometimes swathed in mist, other times lit by a setting sun.

The highest mountain on our present horizon is the second coming. But from its summit can be seen the first and second resurrections, and the country that lies between, which we call the millennium.

“Verily, verily I say unto you he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). Here, Jesus boldly declares His Father’s plan for all who would accept His Son. The first thing that is required is for one to perceive in Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God, and consequently to believe that He is the One through whom salvation comes. Secondly, faith is needed for holding on to the promise of eternal life, for this will not be fully realized until “the last day.” This points to a resurrection, without which a great proportion of the divine promises would remain unfulfilled.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (I Thess. 4:16). Thus it is that the promises recorded in John 14:1-3 will be at last fulfilled. For Christ promised to come again, and Paul foresaw that event happening.

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:4). Here the revelator sees a vivid tableau in heaven. To the saints have been granted the responsibility of judgment—this is why they are enthroned. Paul asked the Corinthians if they did not know that **“the saints shall judge the world?”** and that **“we shall judge angels?” (I Cor. 6:2, 3).** “The world” must refer to unrepentant sinners, since the glorified saints certainly will not come under any judicial review at that time. “Angels” must be those who followed Lucifer, since those who are loyal to God will need no judgment. It therefore appears that it is the resurrected saints of all ages who will participate with Christ in judging those who have spurned the love of God as revealed in Christ’s saving ministry. And this work of judgment happens during the “thousand years”—the millennium.

During this period of time, the devil is **“bound”** and cast **“into the bottomless pit” (Rev. 20:2, 3).** This marks the beginning of the millennium. But the Lord of hosts will not consider keeping the producer of sin in endless captivity. Thus, **“when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison” (Rev. 20:7).**

Also at the end of the thousand years, **“the rest of the dead”** are resurrected (Rev. 20:5a). These, joining Satan and his forces, make their final, desperate, albeit futile attempt to overthrow the government of God (Rev. 20:8, 9). Here is the supreme illustration of the inescapable truth concerning persistent, unrepented sin: **“Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15).**

But **“even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Cor. 15:22)**—all, that is, who have formed friendships with Him—friendships lasting throughout eternity.

compiled by Chris Kinman

Key passage:
 Matthew 25:31-46

Notes

"At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth—consumed with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the City of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants."¹

Bound to this world, "Here is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a thousand years. Limited to the earth, he will not have access to other worlds to tempt and annoy those who have never fallen. It is in this sense that he is bound: there are none remaining, upon whom he can exercise his power. He is wholly cut off from the work of deception and ruin which for so many centuries has been his sole delight."²

"During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. . . . In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death."³

"At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty He bids the dead arise to receive their doom. They come forth, a mighty host, numberless as the sands of the sea."⁴

"Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy. While deprived of his power and cut off from his work of deception, the prince of evil was miserable and dejected; but as the wicked dead are raised and he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy. He will marshal all the armies of the host of the lost under his banners and through them endeavor to execute his plans."⁵

"At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on. . . . Satan, the mightiest of the warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for their final struggle. . . . By the command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city, and make ready for the onset."⁶

"But in the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven the final coronation of the son of God takes place. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels against His government and executes justice upon those who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people."⁷

¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 657.

² *Ibid.*, p. 659.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 660-661.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 662.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 663.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 664.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 666.

by Warren C. Trenchard

You won't find the word "millennium" in the Bible. However, few theological ideas have generated a wider range of opinions and positions. The word is a compound Latin term that refers to the one-thousand-year period described in the cryptic verses of Revelation 20. During this time the saints are to rule with Christ.

The millennium has fascinated and challenged biblical scholars and theologians ever since John penned the description on Patmos. Various views of its time and details have been championed by both main-line and fringe Christians from the second century to the present. These positions fall into three general categories. They differ largely in how they relate the millennium to the time of Christ's second coming.

Some feel that Christ will return to earth before the millennium. Seventh-day Adventists, of course, hold this view. We believe that the ruling saints will be with Christ in heaven during this one-thousand-year period. The earth will be desolate and devoid of human life, in effect nullifying Satan's power. This is known as *premillennialism*.

Most premillennialists, however, understand the saints' co-rule with Christ to take place on earth and not in heaven. The old form of this view taught that the present age of the world would end after six thousand years. After this, Christ's coming would introduce one thousand years of Sabbath rest before the judgment and the new creation.

Today many premillennialists believe that Christ will return to the earth with the living saints who had been secretly taken to heaven. Along with these and the saints raised from the dead at His coming, He will rule the world from Jerusalem. This will mean the restoration of Israel and of the throne of David. The period will end with the final judgment.

The second view, *postmillennialism*, involves the notion that Christ will return at the end of the millennium. This one-thousand-year period is often seen to be the final age of the church. It will be a time of triumph for the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit.

A third category of millennial ideas sees the one-thousand-year age as completely symbolic. This view, called *amillennialism*, understands the symbol to refer to Christ's rule in the life and practice of the Church. It does not expect a special time period prior to or following Christ's return.

The pre-advent, post-advent and symbolic views of the millennium represent the general understandings of the one-thousand-year period of Revelation 20. We have reviewed the basic ideas involved in each. But we must note that there exist many individual adaptations of these broad concepts—probably at least a thousand.

Key passage:
 Revelation 20:1-10

Notes

Premillennialism
Postmillennialism
Amillennialism

by Caroline Wiebe

Key passage:
Psalm 32:8

Notes

Imagine a Roman philosopher in 980 A.D. sitting down and attempting to outline his life for the next one thousand years. If he had an extremely creative imagination he might have been able to realistically deal with the first few centuries, but it is unlikely he would come very close to what the later centuries would reveal.

Yet we who plan to leave Planet Earth someday are expected to comprehend living, not only for a thousand years, but for eternity—and not here at home, but somewhere “out there.” Most of us, if asked what we will be doing at varying stages in our future lifetime here, would not be able to give a very accurate guess. Planning for our future, however, is one of the most essential processes we must go through.

And planning for eternity can involve many of the basic steps that planning for a mortal life does. So let’s look at a few of them.

1. Set goals for yourself. This should be an easy one. Goals for life here on earth are often rather hard to decide upon when we have to choose from options such as spending our lives in service overseas, making a million dollars, or raising ten children. Eternity itself, however, is a goal. We must choose to want to spend eternity either with God or without Him.

Assuming we all choose as our major goal to spend eternity with God, let’s move on to the next step.

2. Assess your strengths and weaknesses. Our abilities play a large role in determining what we will be doing for the rest of our lives here on earth. Similarly, an understanding of our spiritual strengths and weaknesses will determine the direction our lives will take for eternity. Unlike our earthly abilities, which, unfortunately, we can’t often change or make amends for, our spiritual abilities can be strengthened through spiritual exercise, and, through the covering righteousness of Christ, be acceptable before God.

3. Plan for the necessary training. If you want to be a lawyer you will need to apply to and attend law school. If you want to be the Judge’s assistant in the Heavenly Court, you must study in His school. Fortunately, God’s school has open admission so that all we need to do is study. This step, then requires spending time learning the knowledge of God.

4. Don’t give up. The road to life’s goals is not usually a smooth one, but thankfully we have parents, teachers, pastors and friends to encourage us and help us along. On our road to eternity we will stumble and fall, but we have the assurance that God is always there to help us back on our feet and on our way. And the result is well worth the struggle.

Indeed, what is so great about making plans in life is that God takes our plans for this life here and fits them right into our eternal plans there, so we can be working on both at once. Plan now for eternity!

by editors

Key passage:
Matthew 25:31-46

Notes

"Jesus, could You come over here a minute?"

"Sure." Jesus picked up what few pieces of dry wood remained around the evening campsite and brought them to the cleared area where Thomas had just started a fire to roast the evening meal, and then walked to where John had called Him.

"What are you doing out here—all by yourself?"

"Well, you see, Jesus, uh, I'd like to talk to you about something . . . uh, about Your kingdom. Now, we've been with You here for quite a long time, and I'm just a little concerned over *when* You're really going to set this kingdom up."

"John, I have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them yet. But I can tell you this: The angels don't know the time for the coming kingdom, I don't even know; only My Father in heaven knows that. But such questions are unimportant. We have a work to do for our Father in heaven regardless of when and where that kingdom is set up, don't we?"

"Yes, but Jesus, I'm still kind of curious. Now, there are some people who teach that Your kingdom will be set up *before* the time of the next Passover. Then, I have heard some say that the kingdom will have to be set up *after* the next Passover, as there is not enough time for You to fulfill all of the prophecies concerning Your life if the kingdom were set up *before*. And then some of the government officials have been saying that You plan to set up a kingdom here in Palestine first, and then gradually overthrow the Romans and eventually. . . ."

"John, wait a minute."

"No, first let me say. . . ."

"John! . . . listen. . . . I think someone's in trouble. . . . Follow Me!" Jesus tears off down the mountain and John, picking himself up, follows.

After running some distance they stop—breathing the cool night air heavily, but carefully listening. "Over this way," Jesus cries, and races off again with John following. Further down the mountain they stop again to listen.

"I don't hear anything," says John. Jesus neither looks at nor answers him, but concentrates with piercing eyes on the darkness. Minutes go by. Jesus is still listening, praying; John is impatient.

And then a muffled sob.

Lying against a rotting log, with a torn and dirty coat attempting to enclose him, lay a peasant man—old, hardened, and quietly crying. Jesus, as His custom was, wrapped the old man in His coat, and He and John half-carried him back to their camp.

Later that evening when nearly everyone else was asleep, John lay awake. Seeing that Jesus was also awake, he walked over to His side, motioned for Him to get up, and the two of them walked from their camp into the quiet evening.

"Sorry to bother You, Jesus. It's so late and all."

"That's O.K. What's on your mind?"

"Well, it's the same thing I was thinking about earlier this evening. Now, I think it's important for us—as Your chosen disciples—to know what is the truth regarding when You plan to set up Your kingdom. Like I said earlier, some teach a pre-Passover philosophy, saying that the kingdom must be established before. . . ."

"John, wait a minute."

"No, just let me say. . . ."

"John ! . . . listen. . . . I think someone's in trouble. . . . Follow Me!"

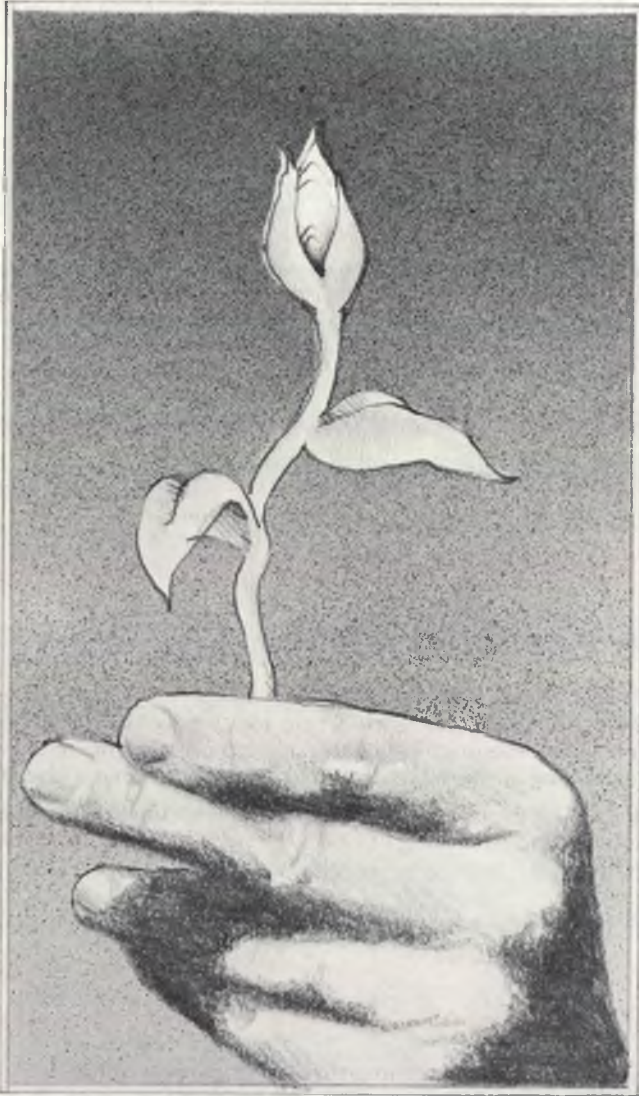
1. In the Testimony article for this week's lesson, Ellen White says: "In union with Christ they [the saints] judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death."
Why is it that the wicked must suffer "according to their works"?

In the above quotation we read that the wicked are to suffer in proportion to their evil deeds. But what is proportional? How can "proportion" ever be computed? How long should the mass-murderer, the one-time rapist, the fifteen-year-old car thief burn?

In the end, is not retributive justice mixed with mercy?

2. Warren Trenchard, in the Evidence article for this week, surveys the three major positions relative to the doctrine of the millennium: premillennialism, postmillennialism and amillennialism. Adventists are most comfortable with premillennialism.
But how important is the Adventist view of the millennium to an individual's salvation? To an individual's understanding of God's overall plans and purposes? To the institutional church?
3. Re "Following Him," The Opinion article for this week: What does this story say to you? What ideas do you think the author is trying to communicate?

Bearing Fruit



“Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” — Matthew 7:17-20; NIV

by Floyd Peterson

The practical and accepted way to enjoy homegrown peaches is to grow a peach tree. The sure way never to enjoy peaches is to try to make them yourself.

Likewise, the practical and accepted way to enjoy the fruits of belief is to be a "tree" of God's planting. The sure way to never enjoy a sanctified life is to try to live it by yourself.

Life on this earth begins for us at our physical birth. This birth is probably the most important event of our lives up to this point. Having been present at the birth of both of my children, I am forcibly impressed with Christ's use of birth as the symbol for the beginning of the sanctified life in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3).

It seems to me that Christ was saying: "Nicodemus, living the sanctified life is so different from your original natural life that birth is the only word adequate to describe the transition. You see, to experience the sanctified life is not just to make a navigational correction, it is death and birth."

Now, building on what Jesus has said, let us hasten to make two points clear. First, we do not give birth to ourselves. All we can do is consent to the death of our original lives of sin and ask to be born of the Spirit. Second, there is a

total commitment to the new life right from birth, be it physical or spiritual. Although total commitment does not exclude a maturing process—sanctification is the work of a lifetime—that commitment must remain total or the new life will cease. After spiritual birth, Christ is the life (John 14:6). And thus, a total commitment to life is a total commitment to Him.

Now, if this new life is so different from the old life, what about the practical results, the "peaches," if you please?

It is by its fruit that a tree is most easily identified. When a tree is laden with fruit, one does not have to make a closer inspection to tell what kind of tree it is. In fact, a single whiff may indicate that a peach tree is in the vicinity.

So it is with the Christian life. By the fruits of belief which the Christian exhibits one should be able to unmistakably know that here is indeed a child of God, for the fruits of sanctification are completely opposite to our natural way of living: "love your enemies," "rejoice when evil is said against you for my sake," have "patient endurance on the part of the saints," etc. Surely these "peaches" borne as a natural result of the life in the "tree," will be the Christian's identifying feature.

by editors

Notes

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20, 21).

This beautiful petition, coming at the close of the Epistle to the Hebrews, asks that the book's message might lead its readers to "do his will." This week's lesson has a similar purpose.

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:13, 14). In this text we discover the Christian's foundation for living a victorious life. Neither in faith nor in obedience does the Christian base his spiritual experience, but in the *mercy* of God alone.

And it is because of God's mercy that **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15).** It was at great personal cost that the Lord made our salvation possible: **"he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isaiah 53:5).** But such is the nature of the mercy of God: He saves from sin.

Yet, Christians should remember that "Jesus died, not to save man *in* his sins, but *from* his sins."¹ The mercy of God provides for complete redemption: justification of sins and sanctification of the new life. This sanctification is the promised experience of every life to which has been imparted the Holy Spirit of God.

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). The Spirit transforms the lives of believers in any number of ways. Those gathered together at Pentecost were given the power to preach the gospel. The Holy Spirit, Paul tells us, also imparts to some the gifts of healing, prophecy, helps, etc., each according to an individual's and the church's needs. And, of course, the power of the Spirit in overcoming sin is something every Christian has recognized.

It is because of the Holy Spirit's power in the Christian to bring about the fruits of belief—the sanctified life—that Paul could challenge the followers of Christ: **"Be ye not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).**

Paul also wrote, **"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. . . ." (Col. 3:12).** Not in order to gain salvation or to remain in a "saved" condition is the Christian to do these things. In Christ, believers are secure. But because of the mercy of God in redeeming him, the Christian desires to serve his "Father of mercies."

Earlier in his letter to the Colossians Paul had written, **"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12).** Christians are those who believe they have died to "this world." They believe that they have been buried with Christ, and raised again to a new life. Hence, their lives are sanctified—as the fruit of their belief.

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 251.

selected by Allen Keiser

"The apparently dry branch, by being connected with the living vine, becomes a part of it. Fiber by fiber, and vein by vein, it adheres to the vine till it derives its life and nourishment from the parent stock. The graft buds, blossoms, and produces fruit. The soul, dead in trespasses and sins, must experience a similar process in order to be reconciled to God and to become a partaker of Christ's life and joy. As the graft receives life when united to the vine, so the sinner partakes of the divine nature when connected with Christ. Finite man is united with the infinite God. When thus united, the words of Christ abide in us, and we are not actuated by a spasmodic feeling, but by a living, abiding principle. The words of Christ must be meditated upon and cherished and enshrined in the heart. They should not be repeated, parrotlike, finding no place in the memory and having no influence over the heart and life."¹

"The good tree will produce good fruit. If the fruit is unpalatable and worthless, the tree is evil. So the fruit borne in the life testifies as to the condition of the heart and the excellence of the character. Good works can never purchase salvation, but they are an evidence of the faith that acts by love and purifies the soul. And though the eternal reward is not bestowed because of our merit, yet it will be in proportion to the work that has been done through the grace of Christ."²

"Good deeds are the fruit that Christ requires us to bear: kind words, deeds of benevolence, of tender regard for the poor, the needy, the afflicted. When hearts sympathize with hearts burdened with discouragement and grief, when the hand dispenses to the needy, when the naked are clothed, the stranger made welcome to a seat in your parlour and a place in your heart, angels are coming very near, and an answering strain is responded to in heaven. Every act of justice, mercy, and benevolence makes melody in heaven."³

"When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle because the harvest is come.' Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.

"It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the last precious grain."⁴

"The fruit Christ claims, after the patient care bestowed upon His church, is faith, patience, love, forbearance, heavenly-mindedness, meekness. These are clusters of fruit which mature amid storm and cloud and darkness, as well as in the sunshine."⁵

"The fruit we bear is the only test of the character of the tree before the world. This is the proof of our discipleship. If our works are of such a character that as branches of the living Vine we bear rich clusters of precious fruit, then we wear before the world God's own badge as His sons and daughters. We are living epistles, known and read of all men."⁶

Key passage:
John 15:1-17

Notes

"Fiber by fiber, vein by vein. . . ."**"Good works can never purchase salvation, but they are an evidence of the faith"****"Faith, patience, love, forbearance, heavenly-mindedness, meekness"**¹ Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 354-355.² The Desire of Ages, p. 314.³ Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 23.⁴ Christ's Object Lessons, p. 69.⁵ Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 117.⁶ Ibid., p. 348.

by C. S. Lewis

There is a difference between doing some particular just or temperate action and being a just or temperate man. Someone who is not a good tennis player may now and then make a good shot. What you mean by a good player is the man whose eye and muscles and nerves have been so well trained by making innumerable good shots that they can now be relied on. They have a certain tone or quality which is there even when he is not playing, just as a mathematician's mind has a certain habit and outlook which is there even when he is not doing mathematics. In the same way a man who perseveres in doing just actions gets in the end a certain quality of character. Now it is that quality rather than the particular actions which we mean when we talk of a "virtue."

This distinction is important for the following reason. If we thought only of the particular actions we might encourage three wrong ideas.

(1) We might think that, provided you did the right thing, it did not matter how or why you did it—whether you did it willingly or unwillingly, sulkily or cheerfully, through fear of public opinion or for its own sake. But the truth is that right actions done for the wrong reason do not help to build the internal quality or character called a "virtue," and it is this quality or character that really matters. (If the bad tennis player hits very hard, not because he sees that a very hard stroke is required, but because he has lost his temper, his stroke might possibly, by luck help him to win that particular game; but it will not be helping him to become a reliable player.)

(2) We might think that God wanted simply obedience to a set of rules; whereas He really wants people of a particular sort.

(3) We might think that the "virtues" were necessary only for this present life—that in the other world we could stop being just because there is nothing to quarrel about and stop being brave because there is no danger. Now it is quite true that there will probably be no occasion for just or courageous acts in the next world, but there will be every occasion for just being the sort of people that we can become only as the result of doing such acts here. The point is not that God will refuse you admission to His eternal world if you have not got certain qualities of character: the point is that if people have not got at least the beginnings of those qualities inside them, then no possible external conditions could make a "Heaven" for them—that is, could make them happy with the deep, strong, unshakable kind of happiness God intends for us.

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Key passage:
Matthew 23:23-32

Notes

"Right actions done for the wrong reason do not help to build character"

"If people have not got at least the beginnings of certain qualities of character, then no possible external conditions could make a 'Heaven' for them"

by Allen Keiser

Key passage:
I John 3:11-24

Notes

"Practice, practice what you preach." The song has a pleasant ring and the catchy phrase lingers. But after the pleasant sound of the music wears off, the phrase seems less smooth and the thought sobering. Indeed, how does one implement this sentiment? No one wants to be a phony. And the thought of appearing like one intimidates some to be less daring for God, to be retiring, for instance, to turn down Sabbath School superintendents without a truly valid reason and to decline invitations to direct song service.

"Practice, practice, what you preach." But how?

1. **Remember that you cannot do anything alone.** Christ must be with you. In the chapter "Growing Up Into Christ" in *Steps to Christ*, Ellen White says, "Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail."¹

2. **"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work."**² Lay all your plans before Him, "to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate."³ Nothing will give you more confidence than knowing that God is being instrumental in the plans of your life, that He is placing you in the right place at the right time.

3. **Be careful about what you say.** One Christian woman often prayed, "Lord, help me to think before I speak or act." We all admire those who seem to have the seasonal word, that which soothes troubled waters or cuts through the maze to the nub of the problem. Such words of wisdom come from godly people who have paused a moment in the presence of the Lord.

4. **Remember the message of the gospel that you are preaching, the good news of salvation, freedom from condemnation and guilt.** When you make an oft-repeated mistake, the Lord is just as willing to hear your confession and grant forgiveness as He was when you first went to Him. If it is someone else that you have wronged, don't be afraid to ask for his or her forgiveness. Pride often deters us from making everything right.

5. **If someone points out your mistakes to you, honestly monitor your response.** Are you hurt or happy? Hurt because *that* person pointed it out to you or because *you* are simply not capable of behaving that way? Or are you happy that the Lord chose to point out something which will enable you to grow?

6. **Remember that everyone who is in Christ is growing.** A person may be more developed spiritually in one area of his life and be less spiritually mature in another. So be patient. And remember that God will bring you both along at a speed consistent with your willingness and ability.

¹ *Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

by Karl-Heinz Schroeder

Key passage:
John 13:34, 35
I John 3:14

Notes

The fruits of belief can be summarized in one word — love. Everything else is only a footnote. The concept of love is the guiding principle of the plan of salvation: “For God so loved . . .” (John 3:16). In the Sermon on the Mount Christ pushed the concept of love to the extreme when He commanded, “love your enemies” (see Matt. 5:43-48). Yes! Just as the Father has shown His perfect love so are we to show a perfect love—a love that recognizes no limits.

Today, we are called to love in a world that is in the awesome grip of ideological hatred; a world that is about to unleash again a most devilish arms race in the name of security, peace, free enterprise, social justice, and even in the name of Christ. We are called to proclaim to this world God’s love and to practice it. But are we willing to echo the prophetic words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1934):

Who gives the call to peace so that the world hears it, so that the world is forced to hear it? So that all nations have to rejoice? The individual Christian cannot do it. . . . Only the one great ecumenical Council of Christ’s Holy Church throughout the world can proclaim it, so that the world, gnashing its teeth, has to hear the word of peace and so that the nations rejoice because this Church of Christ takes the weapons out of its sons’ hands in the name of Christ, and forbids the war and shouts out the peace of Christ over the raging world. . . . The hour is at hand—the world bristles with weapons . . . the fanfare of war could be sounded tomorrow—*why are we still waiting?* Do we ourselves want to be guilty too, guilty as never before?”¹

In a time of possible international nuclear confrontation, the call of Bonhoeffer and Jesus’ admonition to love one’s enemies have never been more appropriate or urgent. A radical commitment to love and peace is imperative for the church; it is its *categorical imperative!* But are we willing to sacrifice ourselves for our brothers and sisters in the world who are about to light a fuse that may not only destroy and maim millions of people, but annihilate life itself? Or will we help in lighting this fuse by lending our support to the present madness of ideological hatred? “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9).

A look over the almost two-thousand-year history of the church makes one rather pessimistic about the church’s role as a peacemaker. The history of physical and spiritual violence used against fellow Christians and nonbelievers in the name of the true faith or for some other “good” cause is quite a horror story: the inquisition, Luther’s quarrel with Zwingli, Calvin’s execution of Michael Servetus, the church’s silence and sometimes acquiescence of the gassing and bombing of millions of innocent people,² etc. Indeed, examples like these have persuaded many people that the church has become irrelevant.

This image of the church can only be dispelled by taking the scriptural message of love seriously and without any reservations. Christ said: “A new commandment I give to you that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this *all* men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35; RSV). It was for this radical commitment to love that the early church was ridiculed by the Graeco-Roman satirist Lucian of Samosata.³ He called Christians “simpletons” because they showed their love and concern for an imposter “believer” who was in trouble. But like the early church, if we have to be ridiculed by present or later generations, let it be for our unbounded and radical love.

¹ Copyright © 1979 by Eberhard Bethge. From the book *COSTLY GRACE: an illustrated biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. Page 74.

² The Moral Majority’s scurrilous attacks on so-called liberals.

³ See, *The Death of Peregrinus*.

1. The Logos article for this week concludes with: "Christians are those who *believe* they have died to 'this world.' They *believe* that they have been buried with Christ, and raised again to a new life. Hence, their lives are sanctified—as the fruit of their belief."

Is sanctification only the fruit of an intellectual *belief* and emotional experience, or is a supernatural experience also involved? Explain.

2. Allen Keiser, in the Testimony article for this week, quotes a much-discussed passage from the writings of Ellen White: "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."

How do you interpret this passage? What does it mean for the character of Christ to be "perfectly reproduced" in lives of His people? Will the majority of the members of the end-time church be more perfect than the apostles, or than Ellen White herself (who confessed that she was not perfect shortly before she died¹)?

3. C. S. Lewis states in the Evidence article for this week: "right actions done for the wrong reason do not help to build the internal quality or character called a 'virtue.' . . ." Does this statement suggest that if one has polluted motives for good works, he is better off not to do them?

4. When discussing the sanctified life, it is important to deal with this subject realistically—i.e. to recognize the tremendous failures of the organized church throughout the centuries—and the failures of Christians individually—to show a consistency between Christian profession and conduct.

Why do you think this discrepancy is here? What is the solution? More Bible study? More prayer? Better health habits among Christians?

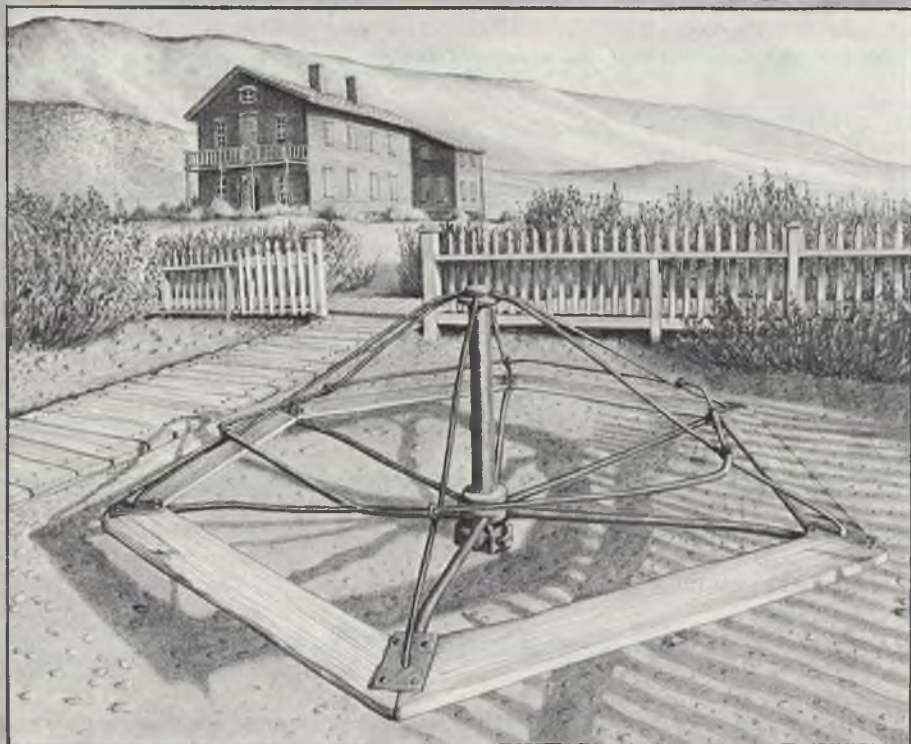
5. Some feel that the best environment for "fruit-bearing" is one which is secluded from the activities and cares of the world, and found in living in Christian communities and among natural surroundings.

Others, while finding refreshment in Christian fellowship and in nature, feel that the best environment for living the sanctified life is found in being totally immersed in the world, actively involved with it, and working for its good.

But what do you think? What is the best environment for becoming all that the Lord God wants us to become?

¹ "The Last 153 Days," *Review and Herald*, July 23, 1970, pp. 2, 3.

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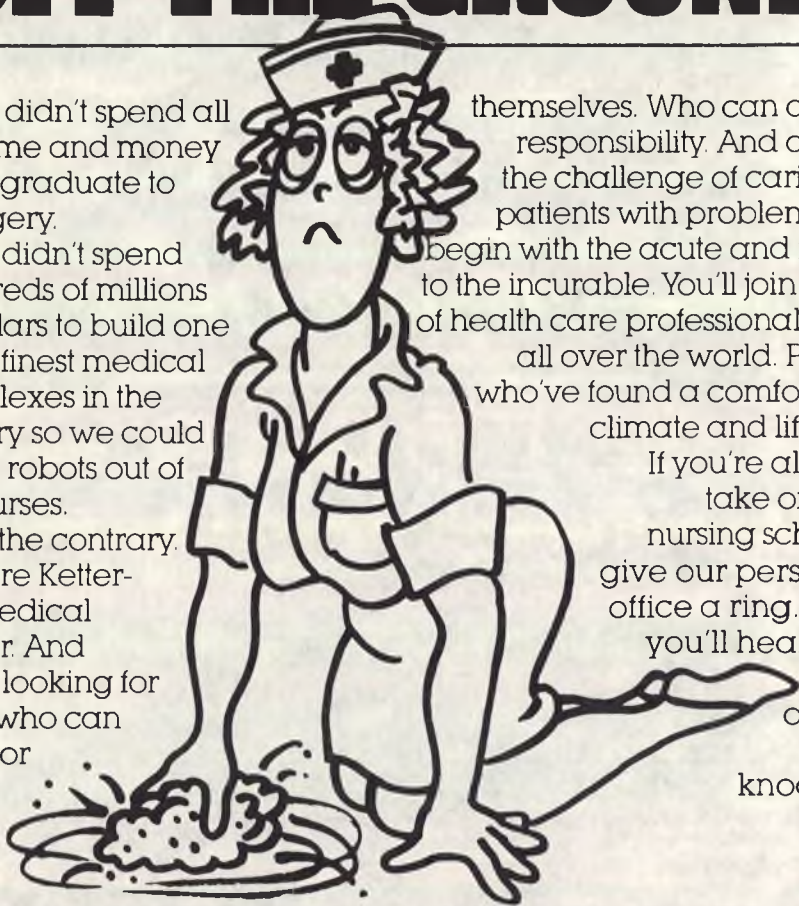
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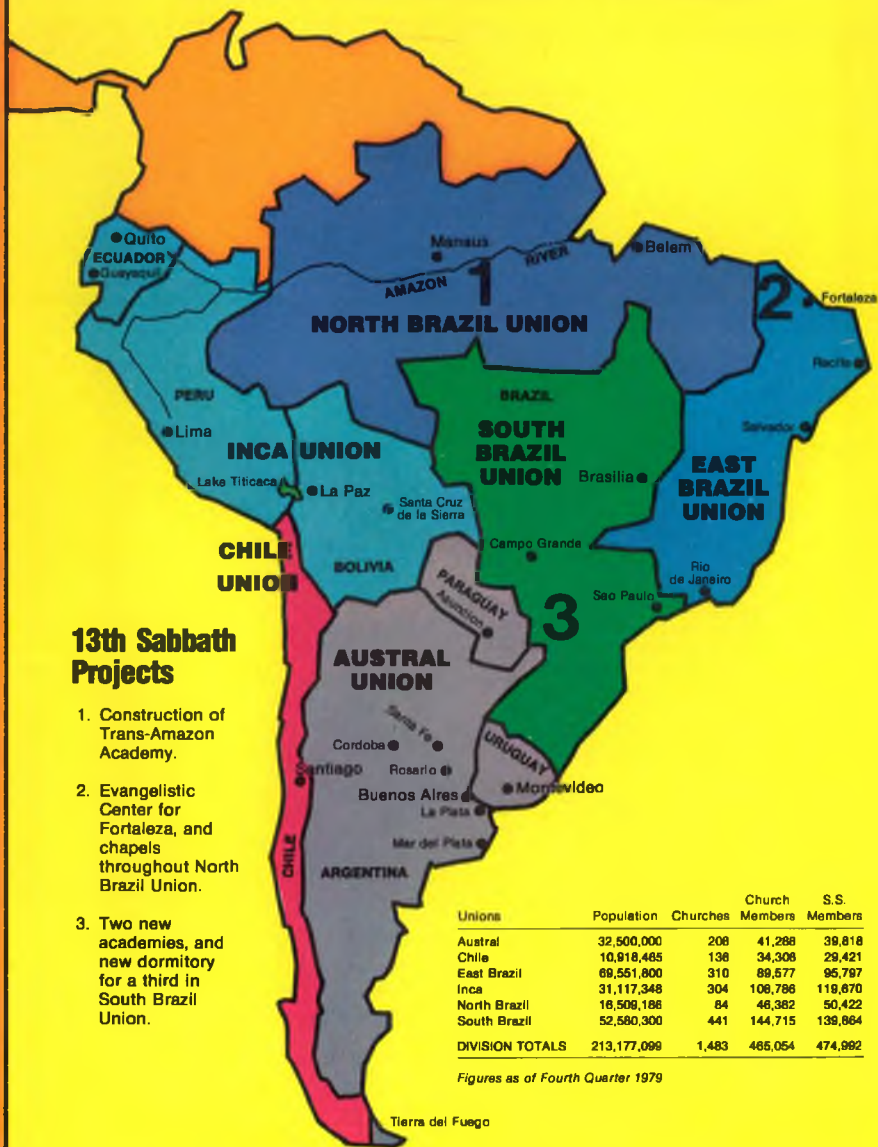
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