

The Law

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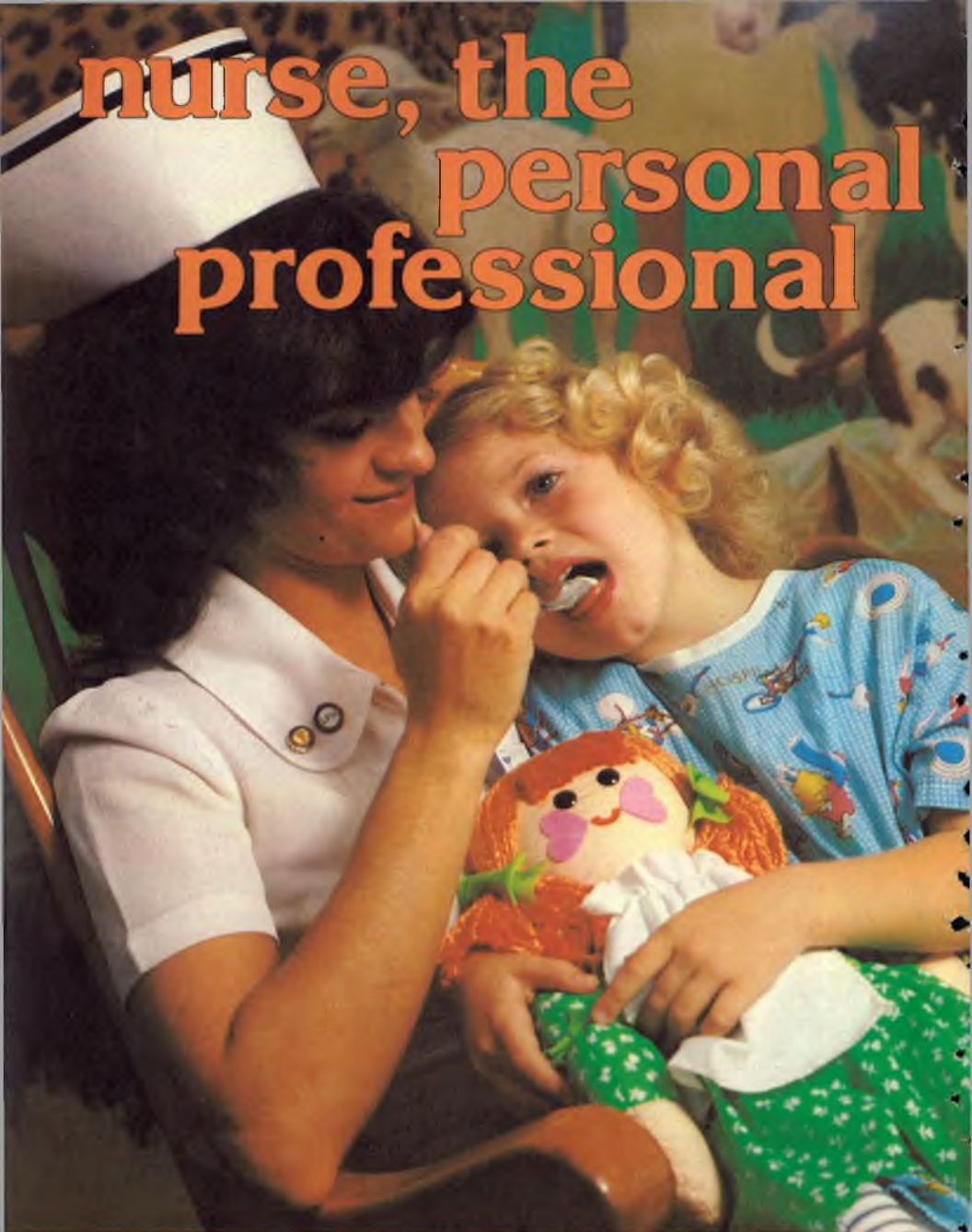
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Collegiate Quarterly

January-March 1982

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2. Build new classrooms for the E. D. Thomas Memorial High School in South India.
3. Construct a new hospital building for the Ruby Nelson Memorial Hospital in Jullundur, north India.

As you think especially of Southern Asia this quarter may we request that you remember us regularly in your prayers. We are facing many difficult problems and the assurance of your prayers on our behalf will be a source of strength to us. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

G. J. Christo
President

mb

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FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

William E. Wallner

Although a clergyman, Hebrew scholar, linguist, historian, and former Chaplain General in the Polish Armed Forces, William E. Wallner has always maintained a keen interest in photography. Born in Teschen, Silesia, now Poland, he studied at the Military Academy of Cracow, Poland; the University of Breslaw, Poland; King's College, London; and Charles University, Prague, Czechoslovakia. He holds doctorates in both philosophy and theology.

It was the movie, "King of Kings," produced by his one-time close friend Cecil B. DeMille, that motivated Dr. Wallner to join the ministry and become a Lutheran minister. He later assisted DeMille during the making of the epic film, "The Ten Commandments."

In the photographic world, William Wallner is known as a master photographer. He is recognized for his unique portraits and character studies, some of which are displayed in this issue of the *Collegiate Quarterly*. His pictorial work has achieved the highest awards in International Salon Exhibits all over the world, and his photography is used as educational material and as illustrations in numerous publications. Some of his work has been acquired by art schools, museums and university libraries. He is also known and respected for his development of a unique style of high contrast etching photography. Although a self-taught photographer, he frequently lectures to professionals.

Many subjects are available, framed and unframed, in various sizes. Each portrait or picture is a handcrafted original, signed, and numbered in limited editions.

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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 fourth quarter of 1981 reached 19,600.

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.

Scripture quotations used in this quarterly, other than the King James Version, are as follows:

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General Introduction to the Lesson

Rationale For Commandment

"The Torah was given only as a means of purifying men"—so runs a famous rabbinic dictum. It is no impossible set of demands, meant for angels or a very few men of superior piety. Its wisdom and ordinances are the way of holiness for all men, even the most ordinary among them. Through obedience we resist the temptations that come to us on each and every day—so Rashi, Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (1040-1150), the classic commentator on the Bible and Talmud, explains the third of the passages immediately below.

And when your son shall ask you in time to come, saying, "What mean the testimonies, the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded us?" then you shall say to your son, "We were bondmen of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord wrought signs and wonders, great and very grievous, in Egypt against Pharaoh and all his house, before our eyes. And He brought us to the land which He swore to our fathers. And the Lord commanded that we should do all these statutes, and that we should fear the Lord our God, that it might be well with us all the days of our life, as it is at this day. And He will be merciful to us if we keep and do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us."

This commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, nor is it far away from you. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who shall go up to heaven, to bring it to us, and make us hear it, that we may fulfill it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, and you should say, "Who shall go over the sea for us, to bring it to us, and make us hear it, that we may fulfill it?" But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

Rabbi Simlai expounded: Six hundred and thirteen commandments were transmitted to Moses on Mount Sinai. Three hundred sixty five of them are negative commandments (i.e. prohibitions), corresponding to the number of days in the solar year. The remaining two hundred forty eight are positive commands (i.e. injunctions), corresponding to the number of limbs in the human body.

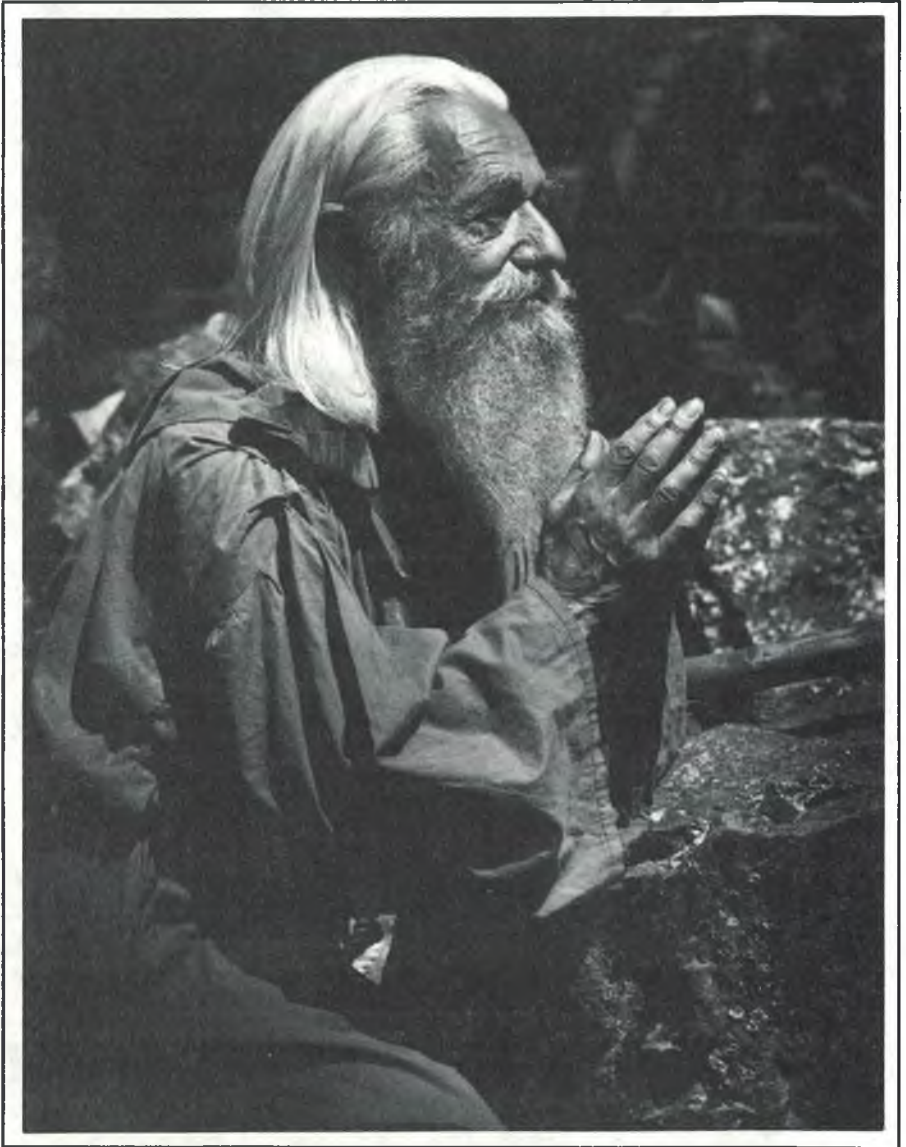
After Moses, David came and reduced the six hundred thirteen commandments to eleven, as it is written: "Lord, who shall sojourn in Your tabernacle? Who shall dwell on Your holy mountain? He who walks blamelessly, and does what is right, and speaks truth in his heart, who does not slander with his tongue, and does no evil to his friend, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor, in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but honors those who fear the Lord, who swears to his own hurt and does not change, who does not put out his money at interest, and does not take a bribe against the innocent" (Ps. 15:1-5).

Then Isaiah came and reduced the commandments to six, as it is written, "He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil" (Isa. 33:15). . . . Then Micah came and reduced them to three, as it is written, "It has been told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8). . . . Then Isaiah came again and reduced them to two. "Thus says the Lord: Keep justice and do righteousness" (Isa. 56:1). Amos came and reduced them to one, as it is written, "Thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: Seek Me and live: (Amos 5:4). . . . Habbakkuk came and also reduced them to one, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4).

Taken from *Judaism*, by Arthur Hertzberg. Washington Square Press, Inc. Copyright © 1961 by George Brazillers Publishers, New York. Pages 57-59.

Eugene B. Shirley, Jr.
Collegiate Quarterly Editor

“Love: The Supreme Motive”



“For Christ’s Love compels us” (II Corinthians 5:14, NIV).

Lesson 1, December 27, 1981-January 2, 1982

by Ken McFarland

Franchised Altruism? INTRODUCTION

"Plop, plop—fizz, fizz—oh, what a relief it is!"

"Everything you want from a store and a little bit more."

"Reach out—reach out and touch someone."

OK. Let's hear it: Alka-Seltzer, Safeway, and Ma Bell, you say? Right! But then, after hearing those insufferable phrases 3,268 times, you certainly *ought* to get them right.

Every third decade or so, of course, Madison Avenue finally retires an old commercial and comes up with a new slogan to drill into your neurons.

Datsun used to save. Then it was driven. And lately we're told it's a long way to empty in one.

Then there is the commercial I want to talk about. After "You deserve a break today" came "We do it all for you."

"We do it all for you."

Oh, really? McDonald's, a humanitarian outreach? Franchised altruism? Golden arches and Ronald the clown and open till eleven and french fries—all for me? How nice.

Suppose, then, that I stagger into the fast-food shelter on a scorching hot day and order up a tall, cool strawberry shake.

"That will be eighty-five cents, Sir."

Eighty-five cents? But . . . And slowly it occurs to me that there is just an outside chance that they aren't doing it all just for me after all. In fact, their reason for doing what they are doing apparently has a lot less to do with me than with the loose change in my pocket.

The fast-food people, it ought to be safe to say, are not in business out of love for me. An entirely different motive drives them to keep cranking out the shakes and fries and burgers.

Oh, their motive is love, all right. But it's love, not for me, but for my money. It doesn't make for good marketing, however, to say, "We do it all for your money."

And we really have to go back farther than love for my money, to love for what my money can do for them. No one, after all, really "loves" little pieces of metal and green paper with pictures of the Presidents on them.

And going even farther back, behind the love of the fast-food employees for what my money can do for them, we find their love for themselves—or, to put it bluntly, their self-interest. The employees show up for work each morning, not for the purpose of performing a labor of love, but for what they will be getting out of it. But again, it's poor advertising to admit that "We do it all for ourselves."

This week we take a look at "Love—the Supreme Motive." And right off the top I'd like to suggest that—as stated so clearly in Tuesday's *Testimony* section—there are only two basic motives that impel each of us. Love—and selfishness.

We'll focus this week on those two great motives. But first, a closer look at the nature of love itself, in tomorrow's section.

Love: The Supreme Motive

by editors

LOGOS

We all like to be loved. Often, however, it seems as though we must love others before they will love us. But God “demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8; NAS). God’s love, which is not based upon reciprocation, is altogether different from that emotion which humans often describe by that name. Thus it is that the apostle calls upon his reader to “See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God” (I John 3:1; NAS).

Because God is love, humanity is claimed by God to also act in a loving way. But John makes it clear that “We love [only], because He first loved us.” (I John 4:19; NAS). Only in response to the reconcilable act of God in Jesus Christ can the Christian even begin to existentially know what it means to love like the divine.

Paul writes of those who have various gifts of the Spirit, but lacked this deity-inspired love. Using himself as the example, he pens, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing” (I Cor. 13:1-3; NIV). In the world renowned passage, He then describes in human terms what love inspired by the omnibenevolent One is like: “love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered . . . bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (I Cor. 13:4-7; NAS).

Of course, Jesus is the Christian’s Model for what it means to love in a divinely-inspired way. Thus, He challenges His followers of every age with a “new commandment”: “A new commandment I give to you that you 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; NAS). Referring to these verses, the *Commentary on the Whole Bible* says, “. . . a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you . . .—This was the new feature of it. Christ’s love to His people in giving His life as a ransom for them was altogether new, and consequently as a Model and Standard for theirs to one another. It is not, however, something transcending the great moral law, which is ‘the old commandment’ (I John 2:7 . . .), but that law in a new and peculiar form. Hence it is said to be both new and old (I John 2:7, 8). By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples—the disciples of Him who laid down His life for those He loved. If ye have love to another—for My sake, and as one in Me; for to such love men outside the circle of believers know right well they are entire strangers. Alas how little of it there is even with this circle!”¹

Of all things human, only love lasts forever. “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away” (I Cor. 13:8; NIV). But love is inspired only by God, and it is shared from human to human as we become “partakers of the divine nature” (II Peter 1:4; NAS).

D.R.S./E.B.S.

¹Commentary on the Whole Bible, Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), p. 1059, 1060.

Divided by Two

In the universe, according to Ellen White, there are only . . .

TESTIMONY

Key Passage:
Luke 22:31, 32

Two great powers

"Unless we . . . yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one. We must inevitably be under the control of the one or the other of the **two great powers** contending for the supremacy of the world. It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light."¹

Two great principles

"The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. The gospel of the grace of God, with its spirit of self-abnegation, can never be in harmony with the spirit of the world. The **two principles** are antagonistic."²

Two great motives

"He [the student of the Bible] should understand the nature of the **two principles** that are contending for the supremacy . . . He should see . . . how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the **two antagonistic motives**."³

Two great powers: Christ and Satan.

Two great principles: Love (1 John 4:8) and Selfishness (Isaiah 14:12-14).

If we "yield ourselves to the control of Christ," we will be motivated by His great principle of love. If we allow ourselves to be "dominated by the wicked one," we will be motivated by his principle of selfishness.

For the Christian, there is only one motive that should prompt what is said, done, or decided:

"A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart love for his Master."⁴

"In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action."⁵

"When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action."⁶

A few of the selfish motives for our acts, words and decisions as pointed out by Ellen White include:

1. Fear of punishment or hope of reward.⁷
2. Love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others.⁸
3. Desire for the praise and honor of others.⁹
4. Desire to be entertained.¹⁰
5. Desire to be first (rivalry or competition).¹¹
6. Sense of duty.¹²

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 324 (emphasis mine).

² *Ibid.*, p. 509 (emphasis mine).

³ *Education*, p. 190 (emphasis mine).

⁴ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 490.

⁵ *Steps to Christ*, p. 59.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 45.

⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 58.

⁸ *Steps to Christ*, p. 58.

⁹ *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 195.

¹⁰ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 345.

¹¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 101; *Education*, p. 225, 226; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 595, 596.

¹² *Steps to Christ*, p. 44.

The Right Thing for the Wrong Reason

by Ken McFarland

EVIDENCE
Key passage:
Ecclesiastes
12:14

In a sermon called "The Right Thing for the Wrong Reason," Elder Morris Venden, former pastor of the Pacific Union College church, quotes and discusses a comment from *Testimonies*, vol. 3:

"It is an important duty for all to become familiar with the tenor of their conduct from day to day and the motives which prompt their actions. They need to become acquainted with the particular motives which prompt particular actions. Every action of their lives is judged, not by the external appearance, but from the motive which dictated the action' (p. 507).

"Then it's possible for me," Venden observes, "to do what looks to be right to everyone else, but it will be wrong if it's done from the wrong motive. I'd like to suggest that there are basically only two motives for doing anything: Love—love to God shown in love for others, or the motivation of self—selfishness.

"The two are not compatible. In fact, they are antagonistic. And a question to consider is, Can you use both motives in the church?

"The great apostle Paul said it in II Corinthians 5:14: 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' But we have a serious problem. If love for Christ is supposed to be our only motivation, then how are we going to get things done? Because, does everyone respond to the motive of love? Does everyone in the world? Does everyone in the church? Should we resort to some forms of the other motive, as well, to accomplish what we're after?

"Now, going back into the annals of history, centuries ago, what was the motivation in heaven before sin entered the universe? Was there any of 'self' motivation before Lucifer? You say No. Was it a dull, uninteresting place to be? Did anything get done? Do we have any evidence that things did not get done in heaven, where the motive was always love?

"And what's more, let's consider heaven tomorrow. If we expect to spend a thousand years in heaven and then a thousand years plus ten million and more when heaven comes to earth, are we going to be content in an atmosphere where the only motive is love? Will we be happy with it? Will we accomplish what needs to be done?

"Now, if we're going to live in an atmosphere where love is the only motive, then we had better get used to it now, hadn't we? It would be too bad to step out of an atmosphere in which the motivation was an appeal to self, into a place where the motivation was love only, and have to readjust. We might not make it.

"The world considers that the appeal to self is inevitable in order to get things done. And even in the church we can detest this kind of thing and yet say, 'Well, but it's a necessary evil. We must resort to the usual methods in order to stay out of debt in the church, in order to raise our Ingathering goal, etc.' Traditionally, churches have appealed to the selfish motivation to accomplish what they figured was important."

In these comments, Venden makes clear that the only motivation heaven knows is love. The motivation of selfishness, however, is an aberrant interruption, embraced not only by a fallen world system, but also at times by the church, as the most effective stimulus to getting things done.

"If we're going to live in an atmosphere where love is the only motive, then we had better get used to it now"

Looking Out for Number One

by Ken McFarland

HOW-TO

Key passage:
Matthew
25:37-46

Love, as our lesson title this week indicates, should be for Christ's followers "the supreme motive." It should, in fact, be the *only* motive impelling us to do what we do, say what we say, and choose what we choose. So it was with Christ, and so it may increasingly become for those who are voluntarily controlled as He was by the Spirit of God.

But as Morris Venden pointed out in yesterday's *Evidence* section, an imperfect church—and the imperfect members in it—may import the world's dominant motivation of selfishness in order to get things done. Today, consider a few possible ways that the "self" motive may appear in a Christian setting.

1. A man stands up in an evangelistic meeting with 13 people he has brought out to hear a sermon on the mark of the beast. The audience applauds, and the evangelist beams as he calls the man forward to receive a beautiful family Bible for bringing out the most people to the meeting.

Questions: Was the man motivated solely by concern for the salvation of his neighbors in his efforts to get them to the meeting? Is it possible that his primary motivation was to get the free Bible? If no reward had been offered, would he still have brought 13 visitors?

2. The fifth-grade class at a church school sells over \$300 worth of boxed chocolates—almost exclusively to parents and other church members—to raise money for new desks. After paying the distributor, they get to keep half the money.

Questions: Did those who bought the chocolates do so only because of their desire to see the children have better desks? Would they have given \$300 without the "incentive" of a little something for the old sweet tooth? If so, why didn't they? As it is, the kids end up with only half of what they might have realized had the money been given directly to the project.

3. A teenager shows up every single Sabbath in his youth class. Although he rarely participates, he has a perfect attendance record.

Questions: Is the young man in class because he loves Christ and loves to join others in worshiping Him? Is it possible that he is only there every week because his parents make him attend? How valuable is his attendance, as far as God is concerned, if he is there against his will? Is the primary responsibility of parents to see that their children attend Sabbath School and church—or is it to see that their children want to attend Sabbath School and church?

4. A certain woman in the church seems to be a model Christian. She gives a double tithe. Whenever a call is made for volunteers to help with a church project, she responds. She distributes Adventist books and literature by the boxload. She is out every night during Ingathering as a solicitor. She is a whirlwind of religious activity. Surely someone so obviously committed to the church and its work must be driven by love, right?

Questions: Is it ever possible to be generous, involved and active in the church program for reasons other than love? Do we ever participate in church projects because we'd feel guilty if we didn't? Do we ever look upon certain activities as basic requirements God makes of us? Is it possible to do many good things for God motivated primarily by duty?

Ken McFarland is associate book editor and associate editor of *Signs of the Times* at Pacific Press Publishing Association.

□ December 31
Thursday

Is It Playing A Religious Game?

by Ken McFarland

OPINION
Key passage:
1 John 4:19

What should a Christian do who carefully and honestly examines his own motives, only to conclude that many of his good actions are being prompted, not by love, but by selfish considerations?

Should he continue doing those good things on the basis that they may have positive results even though they proceed from selfish motives? Should he continue doing the good things even from the wrong motives, on the assumption that this will eventually lead him to begin doing them from the right motive? Or should he stop doing his good acts until he can be sure that they are prompted by love?

Let's look at a specific, if hypothetical, example. Brother Reluctant returns a full tithe and gives systematically to the church budget. But he begrudges every dime he gives. He knows, however, that his wife considers him to be a dedicated Christian, and he feels he must maintain that image before her. And his employer—also a member of his local church—is the church treasurer. As such he knows just what Brother Reluctant makes as well as what he turns in.

Knowing that his motives for tithing and giving offerings are faulty, what should Brother Reluctant do? Well, even though he continues to give from basically selfish motives, it could be said that the results of his doing so are positive. The conference, after all, does have tithe to use that it would not have had Brother Reluctant failed to turn it in. The same is true of the funds he gave to the church budget. And he still has the approval, albeit misplaced, of his wife and his employer.

**Is there
no value
whatever
to giving
when it is
prompted
by the
wrong
motive?**

From a human viewpoint alone, there may indeed seem to be some real advantages in continuing to do good things even if for the wrong reasons. But from God's perspective there is no value whatever to Brother Reluctant's giving when it is prompted by the wrong motive.

If Brother Reluctant is not motivated by love, then as far as God is concerned, He would prefer that Brother Reluctant not tithe at all—that he not give a thin dime in offerings.¹ Robbing God is no worse—as God sees it—than tithing without love.

And what is true of tithing and offerings is true of every other facet of the Christian life. God would rather we leave a "good" act undone than to do it without love. Religious activity not prompted by love is worthless, in His estimation.

"There are many who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing. . . . A profession of Christ without this deep love is mere talk, dry formality, and heavy drudgery."²

Again then, what should I do if I conclude upon examining my own motives that I am acting out of selfishness rather than love?

How do I begin to do what I do out of love for Christ? To love Him, I must come to know Him. And to know Him, I must deliberately devote regular time to getting acquainted with Him. The more I behold Love, communicate with Love, and spend time in the presence of Love, the more I will love and act from love.

Anything less and anything else—no matter how outwardly impressive—is religious game-playing and is worthless beyond expression.

¹ See *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 199.
² *Steps to Christ*, pp. 44, 45.

□ January 1
Friday

1. The Opinion article for this week's lesson states: "From a human viewpoint alone, there may indeed seem to be some real advantages in continuing to do good things even if for the wrong reasons. But from God's perspective there is no value whatever to Brother Reluctant's giving when it is prompted by the wrong motive."

Do you agree? Does "God's perspective" exclude that which is only existentially important for the human situation? That is, if a person were to give grudgingly to Cambodian relief, and thereby save the lives of twenty children, is there no value, from "God's perspective," in this person's giving?

The old saying goes, "The only problem with tainted money is that there tain't enough of it." How do you relate to this philosophy? How do you feel the Christian and/or Christian institution should relate to this?

2. Re this week's Evidence article: This article quotes Morris Venden as objecting to the use of selfish appeals in the Christian community in order to get things done. This is not, he says, in harmony with the principles of heaven.

But what do you think? Is it possible—in this very human, very selfish world—for *anyone* to be appealed to and worked with on a purely altruistic basis? Is our righteousness ultimate righteousness; or is there not always within us humans the selfish factor which restricts our acting in pure loving freedom?

3. The Testimony article for this week declares that "In the universe . . . there are only . . . two great powers . . . two great principles . . . two great motives."

How do you relate to this understanding of the world? Can life be simply "divided by two"? Or can it justifiably be divided only by an infinite number of variables? Isn't life so complicated that it can't be divided into simply sheep and goats, elect and damned?

The Spirit's Voice



“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it’ ” (Isaiah 30:21; NIV).

Lesson 2, January 3-9

The Spirit's Voice **INTRO- DUCTION**

by editors

A rock-thrower
the riot squad
and stained-glass windows

Individuals clambering
councils mandating
and time-honored truths

Administrators and theologians
and scholars
who take themselves too seriously

Two brothers killed
each by the other
in a back room of the church
They called it an expression of love

The Red threat
and communist aggression
Western imperialism
and worshiping the god of capital gain
Billions for defense—
a defense which, if used,
will leave nothing to be defended

Another holy war
—the last?
A burst of light
and thunderous roar
“There was no other alternative”

Salve for the blind
food for the hungry
clothing for the scorched
Hurry!

Howl and weep
you bomb-makers

Horrors: I am dead

Sheep and goats
light and darkness
angels and devils
narrow and wide
truth and error
“us” and “them”
Where is life that simple?

Einstein said that
a straight line is
the simplest definition
of a curve
There goes my definition
There goes my truth
Relativity

The truth, election,
manifest destiny and righteousness
We have it
they don't
we're straight

Mr. Einstein, do
straight lines always
curve?

*

To laugh at yourself
hysterically
and to fall to your side
and roll in the
summer grass
till you can't stop

to be tolerant
and tolerant
to be humble
and humble

to be young
and tender
and idealistic
and radical

to risk
and to win
and to lose
and to risk again
—for others
to love life
to enjoy it

to love people
and communists
and capitalists
and heretics
and the orthodox

to love animals
and plants
and water
and air
and dirt

Ah, the Spirit's voice

False prophets
and troubled times
fearful hearts failing

When these things
come to pass
do not be distressed

Listen
Ah, for the Spirit's voice

—E.B.S.

The Voice of the Spirit

by editors

LOGOS

The work of the Holy Spirit is as diverse as the individual people and things which He effects. Jesus spoke of the invisible, dynamic nature of the Holy Spirit when He said to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from or where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8; NAS).

In his letter to Titus Paul emphasized the Spirit's work in the process of salvation: "Then He saved us—not because we were good enough to be saved, but because of His kindness and pity—by washing away our sins and giving us the new joy of the indwelling Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5; LNT). To Timothy Paul answered that this Third-Member of the Godhead "dwells in us" (II Timothy 1:14). And Peter wrote that the Spirit was responsible for the collection of writings we, today, call the Bible, as "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (II Peter 1:21, NAS).

But Peter knew that the inspired writings of the Bible were as nothing compared to the "writing" of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. Thus, this week's lesson is giving study to the subject of "the Spirit's voice." Many have traditionally identified—for all practical purposes—the Spirit's voice with the conscience. And certainly through this medium is one of the ways in which the Holy Spirit makes Himself heard. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines conscience as "the sense or consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good."

Isaiah, possibly, was speaking of something similar when he wrote, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:12). Paul speaks of a Spirit-tender conscience as being universal: "When the Gentiles, which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness. . . . (Romans 2:14, 15). And as it has been traditionally conceived, the Holy Spirit works through and above the conscience to "convince the world of its sin, and of the availability of God's goodness and of deliverance from judgment" (John 16:8; LNT).

We humans, however, are not necessarily always sensitive to the Spirit's promptings. Ellen White therefore encouraged, "Keep the conscience tender, that you may hear the faintest whisper of the voice that spake as never man spoke."¹ Paul was perhaps thinking in a like manner when he wrote exhorting Timothy, "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected. . . ." and encouraged him to develop a "clear conscience" (I Timothy 1:19; 3:19; NAS).

The supreme source of purification for the conscience is, of course, the Bible. Together with sanctified reason and a prayerful, teachable spirit, God's Holy Word will uphold Jesus Christ and make the conscience sensitive to His leading. Studying Jesus' words and actions will help tune our consciences to the divine will, making them more responsive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Then truly, will we know that in "holiness and godly sincerity not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world. . . ." (II Cor. 2:12; NAS).

D.R.S./E.B.S.

¹My Life Today, p. 322.

No Water from the Fountain

selected by editors

Jesus had a second time performed the miracle of healing a man possessed, blind and dumb, and the Pharisees had reiterated the charge, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils." Christ told them plainly that in attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, they were cutting themselves off from the fountain of blessing. Those who had spoken against Jesus Himself, not discerning His divine character, might receive forgiveness; for through the Holy Spirit they might be brought to see their error and repent. Whatever the sin, if the soul repents and believes, the guilt is washed away in the blood of Christ; but he who rejects the work of the Holy Spirit is placing himself where repentance and faith cannot come to him. It is by the Spirit that God works upon the heart; when men wilfully reject the Spirit, and declare it to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. When the Spirit is finally rejected, there is no more that God can do for the soul.

The Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke this warning did not themselves believe the charge they brought against Him. There was not one of those dignitaries but had felt drawn toward the Saviour. They had heard the Spirit's voice in their own hearts declaring Him to be the Anointed of Israel, and urging them to confess themselves His disciples. In light of His presence they had realized their unholiness, and had longed for a righteousness which they could not create. But after their rejection of Him it would be too humiliating to receive Him as the Messiah. Having set their feet in the path of unbelief, they were too proud to confess their error. And in order to avoid acknowledging the truth, they tried with desperate violence to dispute the Saviour's teaching. The evidence of His power and mercy exasperated them. They could not prevent the Saviour from working miracles, they could not silence His teaching; but they did everything in their power to misrepresent Him and to falsify His words. Still the convicting Spirit of God followed them, and they had to build up many barriers in order to withstand its power. The mightiest agency that can be brought to bear upon the human heart was striving with them, but they would not yield.

It is not God that blinds the eyes of men or hardens their hearts. He sends them light to correct their errors, and to lead them in safe paths; it is by the rejection of this light that the eyes are blinded and the heart hardened. Often the process is gradual, and almost imperceptible. Light comes to the soul through God's word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul. Thus it had been with these Jewish leaders. They were convinced that a divine power attended Christ, but in order to resist the truth, they attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. In doing this they deliberately chose deception; they yielded themselves to Satan, and henceforth they were controlled by his power.

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Matthew 9:27-34

"Having set their feet in the path of unbelief, they were too proud to confess their error"

Taken from *The Desire of Ages*, by Ellen G. White, pp. 321, 322.

□ January 5
Tuesday

Conscience and the Voice of the Spirit

by H. Ward Hill

EVIDENCE

Key passage:
Acts 24:16

When Scripture exhorts us to have a "conscience void of offense" (Acts 24:16), it would seem to be telling us to always act conscientiously. And this seems to be almost the same as saying, "Let your conscience be your guide." After all, is not conscience the "voice of God heard amid the conflict of human passions?"¹ And does not the Holy Spirit convict us of sin through the conscience?²

John Henry Cardinal Newman referred to conscience as "that high Monitor" which is an "ever-present reminder of an Unseen God."³ The will may be viewed as that faculty or mechanism at the executive seat of being which chooses among alternatives. The conscience adds a dimension of perceived rightness or wrongness to the selection process. Affecting our judgment relative to the rightness or wrongness of a particular action are multiple data inputs, all of which undergo our own interpretations as they are filtered through our own experience. Indeed, there is no way to hear the voice of God in absolute purity even if we have the prophetic gift. At best we could only become God's penmen, never His pen.⁴

The assumptions which we make as committed Christians are critical factors in the way our conscience operates. As Pascal pointed out in his illustration of the wager, we may be free to choose only heads or tails. Hence, the extent to which we assume that certain interpretations of Scripture are correct and the extent to which we grant authority to other agencies predispose or limit our conscience to function in a certain way. The difficult decision will then not likely be, Shall I embezzle money from my employer? or, Shall I put poison in my enemy's Postum? It may more likely be, Shall I serve God in Fairbanks or Acapulco? And here the answer may well be correct either way.

The overlap of conscience and one's own personal whims is a troubling issue for many. It is not necessarily true that because I detest cold weather the Lord obviously wants me in Fairbanks so as to develop my character. What we may not be free to do is *not* to choose. Some decision may need to be made with dispatch. As theologian Carl Michalson has said, we are not free to "filibuster with destiny beyond the deadline for authentic resolution."⁵

The all too human tendency to bend the Lord's will into conformity with our own and hence align our conscience with our personal preferences may lead us to conclusions which are less than enlightened. For instance, we may reason that because we would enjoy doing something, it cannot receive the unqualified approval of conscience. Foods that taste good cannot be good for us. The corollary of this view is that because something goes very much against our grain, it must be the will of God and the course conscience would have us take. What is generally seen as the sensible course is that stressed by George Muller—to make sure that we have put all personal preferences and desires of our own in abeyance so far as possible and to stand ready to heed whatever God through His Spirit tells us to do.

Not all conscientious behavior is commendable behavior. At times conscientious action seems to have a neurotic component. It may at times border on compulsion, the irresistible impulse to perform or repeat an act, frequently an irrational one. Such is the case of Lady Macbeth with her obsession to wash her hands after the murder of King

"At times conscientious action seems to have a neurotic component"

□ January 6
Wednesday

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H. Ward Hill is chairman of the Division of Humanities at Union College.

Duncan. Failure to perform the act which one feels compelled to do may occasion extreme guilt.

Again, conscientious behavior may produce evil consequences, especially when viewed from the vantage point of the ensuing centuries. When the apostle Paul was persecuting the Christians he was doubtless acting conscientiously. And there would be others in the last days who would put Christians to death who "think he doeth God service" (John 16:2). One of the functions of Christian teaching must include the matter of giving appropriate content for the decisions of conscience as well as informed counsel regarding the whole conscience process.

We have also the problem of the *weak* conscience (I Cor. 8:7), where people are indeed acting conscientiously, but their actions are ill-advised, though not sinful. Here we have a situation where equally sincere people differ over what they consider to be appropriate conduct. But if the Holy Spirit were directing the consciences of those in the group, then why should the individuals come to different conclusions? How can one sit in judgment on his own conscience or the consciences of others? How does one go about strengthening a weak conscience?

I used to think that most people fundamentally agreed on what was right and what was wrong, whether among the throngs along the hot streets of Calcutta or among the Eskimos in Happy Valley, Labrador. But one day I presented a paper on cultural universals to a hardhearted group of graduate students who challenged this idea to the point where I failed to establish that even cruelty to children was rejected by all societies. While there is considerable overlap among the world's great religions in respect to the norms of appropriate behavior, the conscience of the Buddhist may instruct him in ways at considerable variance with the directions which come from the conscience of the Christian Fundamentalist.

That our consciences are conditioned by the practices of our predecessors and the shared concepts of our contemporaries is patently clear. What may be exemplary behavior in an Israeli kibbutz would be forbidden in the Bible Belt. Conscience at times may seem little more than a means of confirming second-hand judgments and adjusting to one's social environment.

Yet there are indications which would suggest that in some respects conscience functions in ways not explained by social conditioning. Many rebel against long established conventions and "stand for right though the heavens fall." Whether it is the denial of instinctive tendencies or the rejections of the popular norms of society, people demonstrate conscientious convictions which suggest an "inner direction" or a principled morality which is not a slavish copy of our collective conscience, to borrow Durkheim's expression. C. S. Lewis maintains that men everywhere have a sense of "ought." They feel that they *ought* to have done better than they did. The specifics of exemplary behavior might indeed be culturally determined. But as Ralph Sockman has said, "The sense of 'ought' is an experience as unique as the experience of sound or color."⁶

Some might argue that sometimes we must violate conscience in or

"Our consciences are conditioned by the practices of our predecessors and the shared concepts of our contemporaries"

"Yet . . . in some respects conscience functions in ways not explained by social conditioning"

der to achieve a higher good. Mark Twain told a story of two ladies who lied in defiance of their conscience in order to protect a runaway slave, and afterwards feared that they might even suffer in hell for what they did. Yet there is some question as to whether or not they really did violate their conscience at a deeper level. They followed their deepest convictions in support of the welfare of another human being. They felt that this was a higher duty than to follow their traditional practice of telling the truth. They truly intended to do good and not evil. Then were they not acting in a conscientious manner?

As Campbell Garnett has pointed out,⁴ conscience has both a cognitive and an emotive element. The emotive aspect of conscience relates to the unique set of emotions, either approval or disapproval, which we associate with certain acts. With adequate reflection we might adapt a cognitive posture with reference to a particular act and thus change the emotional experience associated with its performance. What caused us shame and guilt at one time in our lives may induce joy and a sense of well being at another time.⁷

We may train our consciences to critically evaluate certain forms of moral behavior and reach conclusions at variance with our traditional stances. Those who have been hawks in terms of military operations may suddenly side with the doves. Whereas they might conscientiously engage in combat while holding their hawk position, with their new cognitive stance, they can have peace of mind only as they lay down their arms.

The Holy Spirit would appear to affect the conscience at both its cognitive and its emotive levels. It is the Spirit which guides us into all truth. The apostle Paul maintained that he was conscientious before becoming a Christian. But with advancing light he would conscientiously follow concepts which were anathema to his former views. That there was an emotional dimension in his conscientiousness is evident in the impassioned witness which he left wherever he went.

It would thus appear that the Holy Spirit may strengthen a weak conscience by bringing new light to inform the cognitive dimension of the conscience. But at no time would it seem appropriate to act in other than a conscientious manner. Hence letting your conscience be your guide may not be such bad advice after all.

“The Holy Spirit would appear to affect the conscience at both its cognitive and emotive levels”

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 120.

² *My Life Today*, p. 332.

³ J. Derek Holmes, ed., *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 148.

⁴ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 21.

⁵ Carl Michalson, *World Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 169.

⁶ From the book, *How To Believe*, by Ralph Sockman, p. 49. Copyright © 1963 by Doubleday and Co., Inc.

⁷ "Conscience and Conscientiousness," in John Donnelly and Leonard Lyons, eds., *Conscience* (New York: Aba House).

Sensitive to the Spirit

by Sharon Sawyers

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13, NIV). With these words Jesus intended to comfort His disciples two thousand years ago. And they still provide comfort for the Christian community today—telling of the promised divine infilling.

God has promised that believers will, through the Holy Spirit, become sensitive to His voice and thereby better understand His will. But this process is not a one-way street. There are some things we Christians can do to be more perceptive to the Spirit's voice.

1. **We can will to receive.** God Himself has willed that through the Spirit, those who seek Him with all their hearts shall hear Him speak, and understand. Seeking with our hearts involves knowledge, emotion, desire and will. The will is defined by William James as "human psychic activity whereby man tends with some *self-initiative* toward or away from certain consciously adopted objectives." And man can, by his own volition and the aid of the Spirit, determine for his heart, and his reason also, to be habitually directed toward receiving God's word and will.

2. **We can tap our reasoning powers.** Of course, we perceive and relate through our intellects. But it is with the will that we determine to tap the energies of our minds. Too often, however, our intellectual resources lie dormant, and lazily attempt to be perceptive to the Spirit's voice without understanding the intellectual challenge that this implies. But if we are to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading, we must use our will-power to awaken our intellectual energies and unlock the mind's potential.

3. **We can be open to intellectual stimuli.** The human mind is not always operating in a heightened state of activity. Man has periods when his mind is at equilibrium—when he is neither gaining nor losing. So the Holy Spirit works with abundant stimuli to set loose our minds' powers: with ideas, duties and responsibilities, examples of others, crises, love, anger, fear, despair, challenges, etc. And we should be open and responsive to such, not allowing our environments to make of us mental cowards. We must guard against the stifling effects of unreality, habitual suggestions, social conventions, critical atmospheres, fear of contradictions and powerlessness of will.

4. **We can set no limits.** If life itself doesn't startle and stimulate us, we should, for example, deliberately expose ourselves to ideas we don't like. We should seek out those who disagree with us, and keep an open mind. We shouldn't run away from spiritual adventures which we find hard to understand, for we are most alive and in tune with the Holy Spirit when we are searching.

HOW TO
Key passage:
John 16:13

The Promised Helper

by William Barclay

OPINION
Key passage:
John 14:15-17

Jesus does not leave us to struggle with the Christian life alone. He would send us another *Helper*. The Greek word is the word *paraklētos* which is really untranslatable. The Authorized Version renders it *Comforter*, which, although hallowed by time and usage, it is not a good translation. Moffatt translates it *Helper*. It is only when we examine this word *paraklētos* in detail that we catch something of the riches of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It really means *someone who is called in*; but it is the reason *why* the person is called in which gives the word its distinctive associations. The Greeks used the word in a wide variety of ways. A *paraklētos* might be a person *called in* to give witness in a law court in someone's favour; he might be an advocate *called in* to plead the cause of someone under a charge which would issue in serious penalty; he might be an expert *called in* to give advice in some difficult situation; he might be a person *called in* when, for example, a company of soldiers were depressed and dispirited to put new courage into their minds and hearts. Always a *paraklētos* is *someone called in to help* in time of trouble or need. *Comforter* was once a perfectly good translation. It actually goes back to Wycliffe, the first person to use it. But in his day it meant much more than it means now. The word comes from the Latin *fortis* which means *brave*; and a *comforter* was someone who enabled some dispirited creature to be brave. Nowadays *comfort* has to do almost solely with sorrow; and a *comforter* is someone who sympathizes with us when we are sad. Beyond a doubt the Holy Spirit does that, but to limit his work to that function is sadly to belittle him. We often talk of being able to *cope* with things. That is precisely the work of the Holy Spirit. He takes away our inadequacies and enables us to cope with life. The Holy Spirit substitutes victorious for defeated living.

So what Jesus is saying is "I am setting you a hard task, and I am sending you out on a very difficult engagement. But I am going to send you someone, the *paraklētos*, who will guide you as to what to do and enable you to do it."

Jesus went on to say that the world cannot recognize the Spirit. By the world is meant that section of men who live as if there was no God. The point of Jesus saying is: we can see only what we are fitted to see. An astronomer will see far more in the sky than an ordinary man. A botanist will see far more in a hedgerow than someone who knows no botany. Someone who knows about art will see far more in a picture than someone who is quite ignorant of art. Someone who understands a little about music will get far more out of a symphony than someone who understands nothing. Always what we see and experience depends on what we bring to the sight and the experience. A person who has eliminated God never listens for him; and we cannot receive the Holy Spirit unless we wait in expectation and in prayer for him to come to us.

The Holy Spirit gate-crashes no man's heart; He waits to be received. So when we think of the wonderful things which the Holy Spirit can do, surely we will set apart some time amidst the bustle and rush of life to wait in silence for his coming.

"Paraklētos is someone called in to help in time of trouble or need"

"We cannot receive the Holy Spirit unless we wait in expectation and in prayer for him"

Taken from THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, Vol. 2, Revised Edition. Translated with an introduction and interpretation by William Barclay. Reprinted by permission of the Westminster Press. Pages 166-168.

□ January 8
Friday

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William Barclay was professor of divinity and biblical criticism at the University of Glasgow and a world-renowned Scottish New Testament interpreter.

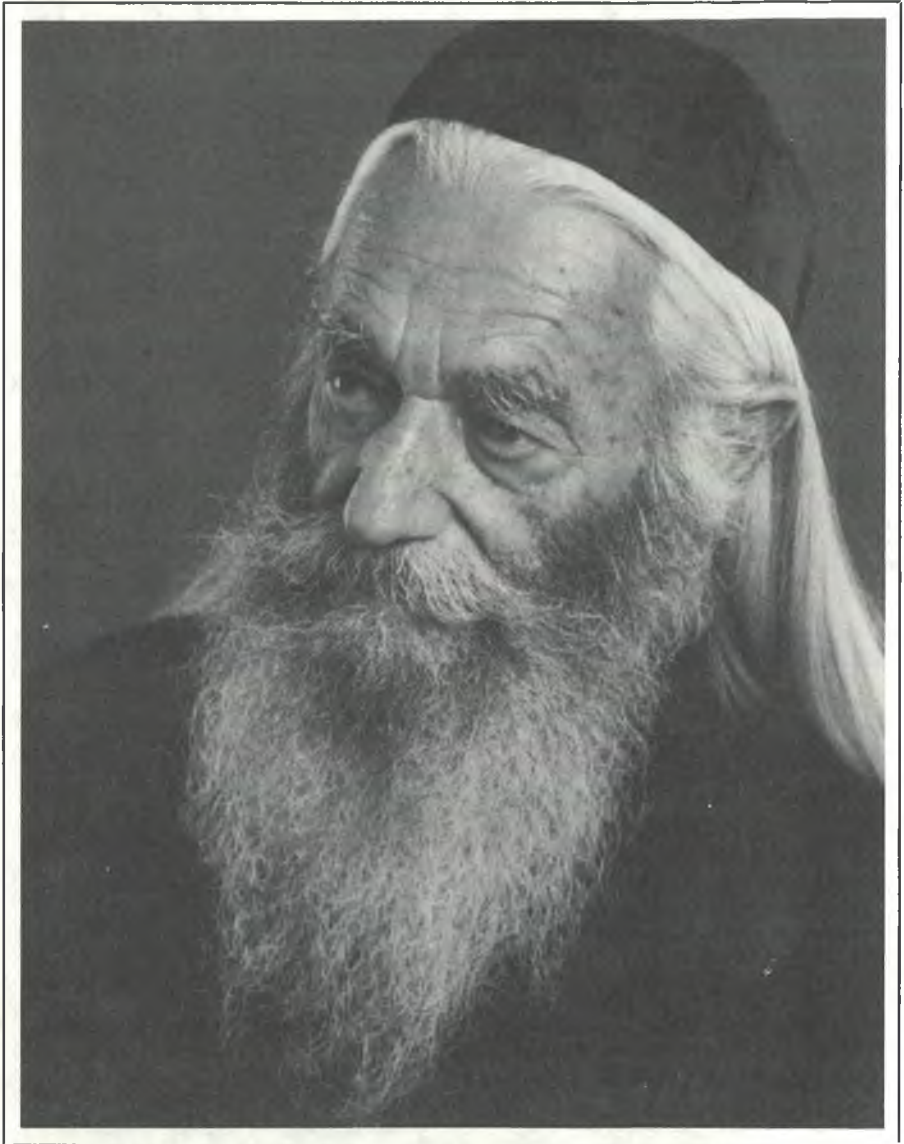
REACT
Lesson 2

1. Isaiah writes, "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it' " (Isaiah 30:21; NIV). Have you known this to be true in your own experience? Must you be in a certain mood, a certain place, etc. to hear this voice? Is there anything you can do to facilitate hearing or understanding?

What part do prayer and meditation play in order to hear the Spirit's voice?

2. After reflecting upon the Bible texts and thoughts presented in this week's lesson, how would you define conscience? How would you define the "Spirit's voice"? How do you differentiate between the two?
 3. Relative to the Evidence article for this week's lesson, do you think that it would be safe to counsel others universally to let their consciences be their guide? Explain.
 4. What is your reaction to the poem in this week's Introduction? What is the author trying to say?
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The Inward Law



“ ‘This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,’ declares the Lord. ‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people’ ”
(Jeremiah 31:33; NIV).

Lesson 3, January 10-16

by Darrell Holtz

“Written on the Heart” INTRODUCTION

He lives somewhere in the United States. He is eight years old. And at that tender age, he has already found, with total clarity, his place in the world: he is going to be a major-league baseball player.

Almost every day, somehow, sometime, alone or with friends, he practices baseball. He swings the bat in the backyard. He fields rubber balls bounced off the side of the house. He destroys his jeans by sliding into bases during recess at school. He pitches against the garage door. He pesters his dad to throw him pop-ups. He tries on the batting helmet with his favorite team's emblem on it. He rubs leather conditioner into his precious glove.

He is not, however, usually self-controlled for an eight-year-old. His arithmetic homework gets overlooked far more often than baseball. “Yes, Mom,” he'll say, “I promise to feed the new puppy every day”—but, good intentions and all, he is sometimes playing catch when the puppy is ready for supper. His mom, like many other moms, sighs frequently when she finds his unmade bed.

What's more, he never gets a grade on his report card for baseball. He has never read anywhere that aspiring ball players are required to report 10,000 hours of practice before they can get into the major leagues. In eight years, his parents have never once said, “Son, don't you think it's about time you got to your baseball practicing?” Now and again, on a fall or winter day, his friends weary of his single-mindedness, and say,—“C'mon—put your glove away and let's play basketball.”

He lives somewhere in the United States. Perhaps you have seen him—in your own neighborhood, maybe even in your own family. If so, you've probably wondered how it can be that, with so little outward motivation, this little boy keeps working so hard, chasing that elusive ball with those stubby eight-year-old legs. Well, let me tell you his secret. Not a huge mystery, really, but an intriguing one to think about. Because you see, the love of baseball is written on his eight-year-old heart.

And didn't Jeremiah once write about something like that?

Darrell Holtz is pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Big Bear City, California.

□ January 10
Sunday

The Inward Law

by editors

LOGOS

The *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans speaks of God's law as being given to man for four principal reasons:

(1) "To be a revelation of God and His will. The distinction between right and wrong is not simply a matter of social convention; it is rooted in the being and character of God, and is written into the constitution of man, created as he has been in the image of God. The law is God's law, and, like God Himself, is 'true and righteous altogether' (Psalm xix.9; cf. Rom. vii.12, 16, 22)."

(2) The law was given "for the health and preservation of the human race." If followed, the way of human history would have been the way of peace.

(3) To "bring sin to light and to lead men to repentance and reliance on the grace of God."

(4) Finally, the Tyndale commentary says the law "was given to provide guidance for the believer's life. Thanks to the indwelling of the Spirit in the hearts of those who are 'in Christ Jesus,' the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in them by a divine spontaneity as they live 'according to the Spirit' (Rom. vii.3f., RSV)."

This "divine spontaneity" which works to fulfill the law in believers is what Jeremiah wrote of: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time . . . I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jer. 31:33; NIV). Indeed, the central fact of Jeremiah's preaching was that "Yahweh will give the people a heart to know him and that, after the breaking of the Sinai Covenant, he will not renew it, but replace it with a new covenant, in which God's will is placed within man and written on his heart, so that man will know and obey him by nature. . . ."2

The author of the book of Hebrews echoed the theme and even words of Jeremiah: "But this is the new agreement I will make with the people of Israel, says the Lord: I will write my laws in their minds so that they will know what I want them to do without My even telling them, and these laws will be in their hearts so that they will want to obey them, and I will be their God and they shall by My people" (Hebrews 8:10; LNT). "The old covenant depended on obedience to an externally imposed law. The New Covenant is to be written upon men's hearts and minds. Men would obey God not because of the terror of punishment, but because they loved him. They would obey him not because the law compelled them unwillingly to do so, but because the desire to obey him was written on their hearts."³

This is the theory, but the practice goes something like this: "I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to—what I hate. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong" (Romans 7:15, 16; LNT). Martin Luther said it this way: "I am more afraid of my own heart than of the Pope and all his cardinals."

But Paul doesn't leave us with our uneasiness and concern. Instead, he offers us hope—a way out: "Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free" (Romans 7:24, 25; LNT).

D.R.S.

¹ *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 6, pp. 55, 56 (bold type ours).

² Taken from the *Introduction to the Old Testament*, by George Fohrer, p. 402. Used by permission of Abingdon Press.

³ From *The Letter to the Hebrews* (revised edition). Translated with an introduction and interpretation by William Barclay. Copyright © 1976 William Barclay. Used by permission of the Westminster Press, p. 93.

Easy, or Hard, or Both?

by Darrell Holtz

There are times when Ellen White seems to be saying that, because of God's law in our hearts, it is easy to live as a Christian. There are also times when she seems to say that it is very difficult to live as a Christian. You may want to reflect on the relation between these two emphases as you read the two statements below.

"The terms of the 'old covenant' were, Obey and live: 'If a man do, he shall even live in them;' but 'cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.' The 'new covenant' was established upon 'better promises,'—the promise of forgiveness of sins, and of the grace of God to renew the heart, and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law. 'This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*'

"The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone, is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness, we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth 'the fruits of the Spirit.' Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked."¹

"Wrongs cannot be righted, nor can reformations in character be made, by a few feeble, intermittent efforts. Sanctification is the work, not of a day, or of a year, but of a lifetime. The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a life-long struggle. Without continual effort and constant activity, there can be no advancement in the divine life, no attainment of the victor's crown.

"The strongest evidence of man's fall from a higher state is the fact that it costs so much to return. The way of return can be gained only by hard fighting, inch by inch, every hour. By a momentary act of will, one may place himself in the power of evil; but it requires more than a momentary act of will to break these fetters, and attain to a higher, holier life. The purpose may be formed, the work begun; but its accomplishment will require toil, time, and perseverance, patience, and sacrifice.

"Beset with temptations without number, we must resist firmly or be conquered. Should we come to the close of life with our work undone, it would be an eternal loss.

"Paul's sanctification was the result of a constant conflict with self. He said, 'I die daily.' His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did God's will, however crucifying to his own nature.

"God leads His people on step by step. The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this warfare there is no release; the effort must be continuous and persevering. It is by unceasing endeavor that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. Christian integrity must be sought with resistless energy, and maintained with a resolute fixedness of purpose.

"No one will be borne upward without stern, persevering effort in his own behalf."²

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Romans 7:24, 25

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□ January 12
Tuesday

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372.
² *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 312, 313.

Is There an Absolute Standard?

by Fletcher
and Montgomery

EVIDENCE

Key passage:

Matthew 22:34-40

Editor's note: God wants to write His law—a high and moral standard transcending culture, race, age, class, religion, time and loyalty—in our hearts. This is the *inward* law of God, as opposed to the relative, subjective laws of man.

But the question is, Is there a principle or law other than simply *love* itself which is universal and not relative? Can the more descriptive definitions of love ever be immutable? Joseph Fletcher and John Warwick Montgomery debate this subject in the article below.

FLETCHER: Two or three years ago, a feature writer for one of the national news services asked me to talk about situation ethics and the new morality, and in the course of answering his agenda of questions, I remember remarking only parenthetically, but at what point I no longer recall, that none of the Ten Commandments represents a normative principle for human conduct which is intrinsically valid or universally obliging regardless of the circumstances, so that, for example, in some situations theft is the right thing to do; in other situations, respect for the property of others is the right way to act. He reported this remark of mine accurately enough for his journalistic purposes and in consequence of the syndicated article's circulation, I received in ten to twelve weeks about 1,500 letters, almost all of them of protest and denunciation. Chiefly they came from the Corn, Cotton and Bible Belts, but also quite generally, and I might just remark that the more pious the writer, the more vicious the letter. (Laughter). . . .

According to the local oral tradition, at the turn of the 19th century, a local Baptist association at Long Run in Jefferson County invited people from far and wide to a log rolling, and as part of the entertainment they provided their guests somebody posed a hypothetical problem of conscience. You are a settler in a frontier community and get wind of an impending Indian raid. You hide your four children. When the savages arrive, they succeed in invading the stockade and in the course of rooting around, they find three of your children and destroy them. When they set about making an armistice and withdrawal, they ask you, the settler, if you have any more children hidden anywhere.

Problem: Do you tell the truth or do you tell a lie? And they say that the debate over this question split that community right down the middle, and the original congregation at Long Run is still known locally as the non-lying Baptists whereas the dissidents who removed themselves about twenty miles away to Flat Rock and started another association or congregation are even today known as the lying Baptists. I mean by telling this story to establish, quite candidly at the very outset, that I identify wholeheartedly with the *lying* Baptists.

I think there are no normative moral principles whatsoever which are intrinsically valid or universally obliging. . . . If we are, as I would want to reason, obliged to conscience sometimes to tell white lies, as we often call them, then in conscience we might be obliged sometimes to engage in white fornications and white killings and white breakings of promises and the like.

MONTGOMERY: Our task is the critical examination of Joseph Fletcher's theological ethic . . . perhaps best summarized in terms of the six "propositions" (not "principles," "rules," or "laws," to be

Excerpts from *Situation Ethics: True or False?* (Minneapolis: Dimension Books, published by Bethany Fellowship, 1972), pp. 13-15, 25, 39, 40, 45-47, 49-55.

□ January 13
Wednesday
30

Excerpts from a debate between Joseph Fletcher, the author of *Situation Ethics*, and John Montgomery, a leading evangelical spokesman and dedicated opponent of situation ethics.

sure!) by which Professor Fletcher first presented his thesis to the general public. . . .

Professor Fletcher offers what seems to be the most specific description of love his situationism is capable of providing: "Love wills the neighbor's good whether we like him or not" (proposition IV). . . . neither utilitarianism nor the new morality is capable of satisfactorily answering the essential questions: "which neighbor's good?" and "just what constitutes my neighbor's good?" Since these questions have to be answered, either explicitly or implicitly, in every ethical action, one finds the situationist continually importing answers to them into his moral decisions by way of unrecognized and unjustified value judgments. The alleged demon of explicit code ethics is exorcised by the new morality, only to return with seven of his friends—the devils of implicit, "self-evident" principles—and the last state of morality is considerably worse than the first. . . .

Perhaps the saddest aspect of the new morality is thrown into sharp relief at this point: though purportedly a *theological* ethic, situationism has little appreciation of the central theological verities. "Some critics," writes Professor Fletcher in his own defense (*The Situation Ethics Debate*, ed. Cox, p. 256), "have been shrewd enough to recognize that situationism is, by traditional standards, a little weak on the side of guilt, 'sin,' repentance, and forgiveness." . . . It is just such theological weakness that keeps Professor Fletcher from seeing the true significance of the ambiguous ethical situations he continually cites in opposing the absolute ethic of biblical revelation. In the published dialogue with Roman Catholics Thomas Wassmer and William May (*Hello, Young Lovers* (1970)), he presses May to admit that he might torture a prisoner to obtain information that would save innocent lives. Dr. May: "I might do the act even though I thought that it were evil. I believe that human beings sometimes knowingly do things that they know to be wrong, acts for which they will be sorry and, if Catholics, matters for confession."

Here the ways divide between situationism and the historic ethic of the Christian church, Protestant and Catholic. Dr. May, over against Professor Fletcher, saw clearly that when sinful human situations require a choice to be made between conflicting absolute moral demands, the trouble lies not with the demands but with the situations. In these cases, the "lesser" of evils may have to be accepted, but it is still in every sense an evil and must drive the Christian to the Cross for forgiveness and to the Holy Spirit for restoration. . . .

This, we believe, is the Fletcherian tragedy: ethics has become a device for self-justification through the very sinful human situations that ought to lead selfish humans to the one source of true forgiveness and life. We plead with Professor Fletcher, in an age crying out for unambiguous ethical principles as the only foundation of human dignity, to cease the irresponsible practice of sticking his thumb into sinful human situations, pulling out the plum of moral self-vindication, and saying, "what a good boy am I." . . .

FLETCHER: Let's hear more from Dr. Montgomery in answer to a kind of package question. Are you saying, sir, that we must in conscience always tell the truth? And if there are any exceptions, when

"The 'lesser' of evils may have to be accepted, but it is still in every sense an evil"

might we prevaricate and why? . . . Is it always wrong to have an abortion? Is it always wrong to kill tyrants? Is it always wrong to tell lies?

MONTGOMERY: As to the specific questions, "Must one never lie? Must one never kill a tyrant? Must one never be an instrument in an abortion?", the answer is, in terms of what is right: "No." One must not tell lies; one must not kill other people; one must not abort. Now, if you're saying, "Will you then under no circumstances do these things?" my answer to this is the same answer that Dr. May gave: "It may be that I am forced to do this, but if so, I am still committing wrong." In my judgment, the greatest difficulty in situation ethics is revealed at exactly this point. The situation ethicist properly recognizes the ambiguity of situations and the extreme difficulty, often, in knowing what ought to be done; but he endeavors, in these situations, to *justify himself*. In terms of the ethical approach that I outlined, one *cannot* so justify oneself. If, concretely, I were put in the position that you described of either informing a killer as to where a child was hidden or lying about it, it's conceivable that I would have to lie. But if I did so, I would be unable to justify this ethically; in short, I would be unable to get off the hook. In Christian terminology, I would have committed a sin which should drive me to the cross for forgiveness. This is what I find almost totally lacking in your writings: no one is driven to the Cross. . . .

"It is ethically foolish to say we 'ought' to do what is wrong!"

FLETCHER: It is ethically foolish to say we "ought" to do what is wrong! What I want to argue philosophically, with respect to the issue over the locus of value in human acts, is that the rightness or the wrongness of anything we do is extrinsic, relative, and dependent upon the circumstances, so that to have an abortion out of loving concern for everybody's best interests involved, is not an inexcusably evil thing to do, but a good thing to do. . . . what I want to contend for is the view that if I tell a lie for love's sake . . . then I haven't committed a sin for which I'm to beat my breast, you know, in self-accusation, *Mea culpa, peccavi, peccavi*, but rather I'm to say that having acted out of love I've done the *right* thing!

MONTGOMERY: Will we, as Christian theologians, go to Jesus to see how he handles such problems? Are we going to attempt to determine whether or not he sets forth absolutes which, when violated, definitely mean that the violator ought to employ the *Mea culpa*? That's the issue; and, as far as I can see, your answer to this is that because you don't see any absolute principles, there aren't any. What do you do with the teaching and example of Jesus? . . .

FLETCHER: You speak as if there were a simple consensus and a rather obvious one about what Jesus said and taught and intended. And this is just not true. And I have to say in all candor that when I examine the Gospel account of Jesus' teaching in the light of our question, the first thing that strikes me is that he said nothing directly or even implicitly about it one way or another. Jesus was a simple Jewish peasant. He had no more philosophical sophistication than a guinea pig, and I don't turn to Jesus for philosophical sophistication.

MONTGOMERY: Well, sir, I think that's your trouble. (Laughter and applause from audience.)

“Seven Steps to Victory Over Sin”

by Colin Cook

God promises that He has inscribed His law upon the hearts of Christians. Nevertheless, every honest believer knows of the difficulties encountered and failures met in attempting to live out that law.

If you fall into this category and often find the Christian road trying and full of failures, consider Colin Cook's practical and insightful “Seven Steps to Victory” below.

(1) **Grow strong in conscience and resist all condemnation** (see I John 3:21). . . . Christ is your peace. Therefore you may trust God. You may be confident about Him. When your conscience nags and tells you that you are sinful and guilty, you may resist with faith and refuse condemnation by claiming that Christ has made peace between you and God. . . .

Say, “God loves me, no matter what I feel. In Christ, my Substitute, I am His beloved son. I will not accept condemnation. I will not accept despair. I will not be angry with myself, because God is not angry with me.”

(2) **Recognize that sin produces deep inferiorities concerning your own Christian experience.** . . .

(3) **Learn the only way of death to sin.** Stop trying to die to sin by greater surrender, more consecration, and more sincerity. As your Saviour, Christ has died for you and thus in Himself has overcome the powers of sin and death for you. You are therefore commanded in Scripture to reckon His death as yours. Instead of trying to die to sin, you are to *reckon* yourself dead to it every day, no matter how many urges you feel (See Romans 6:6, 11). Even if you fail, you may repent, believing that sin does not enslave you (see Romans 6:14; 5:17), for this power has been brought down. This is the way to overcome. . . .

(4) **Learn to reckon yourself now not only dead to sin but also alive to God in Christ** (see Romans 6:11). You will realize as time goes on that it is just as exciting to become aware that Christ's life is reckoned as yours as it is to know that His death is reckoned as yours too. Yes, you can meet condemnation and sin by faith in Christ's death for you. But you can also meet life's challenges by faith that God counts the power of Christ's life as yours. . . .

(5) **Begin an entirely new prayer life.** There are no powers ranged against you now to prevent the weakest prayer from rising to heaven. The accuser is thrown down. . . .

Begin, too, a new kind of victory prayer. Stop praying neurotically, “God, please get me out of this sin. Please give me victory.” Instead, in the calmness of faith, pray, “Lord, I praise and thank you that, because of Christ's overthrow of the power of sin, the victory over sin is already won in Him. The battle is done; the fight is over.”

(6) **Begin the life of praise** (see Ephesians 5:20; I Thessalonians 5:18). . . .

(7) **Learn how to deal with failure so that you may overcome it.** Look at things from the world view that the gospel presents. You are not cast off because you fail. God has taken up your cause. He has subjugated everything that can be against you. . . .

HOW TO
Key passage:
Ephesians 5:1, 2

When this article was written, Collin Cook was a minister on the staff of the Green Hills Health Center near Reading, Pennsylvania.

Article first printed in
These Times, December,
1977 (bold face type
ours).

January 14
Thursday

The Inward Law and Real People

by Earl Palmer

OPINION

Key passage:
Romans 7

Luther states his understanding of Paul: "Now notice what I said above, that the saints at the same time as they are righteous are also sinners . . . are like sick men under the care of a physician; they are sick in fact but healthy in hope and in the fact that they are beginning to be healthy . . . they are people for whom the worst possible thing is the presumption that they are healthy, because they suffer a worse relapse." . . .

Paul's view develops as follows: The Christian person, described in chapters 6 and 7:1-13 as the one with life and freedom, is a *real* person, historical, definite, with body and spirit. It is this person who is baptized and who in Christ is to bear fruit for God in the world. It is this real person who now admits to an inner battle at the very place where his life comes into contact with God's will and with the world. . . . we must note that 7:14-25 sets the Christian person free from still another tyranny—a bondage as deadening as sin itself—that tyranny which Luther called the "presumption that I am flawless." The Christian is not papier-mache but flesh and blood—body and spirit—yet this very one, this very person, is beloved of God (5:8). . . .

It is a complex portrait that Paul sketches for the reader: "I serve the Law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin" (7:25). Gnosticism resolved this inner complexity by an escape from the body through the discovery of spiritual breakthroughs. But even within the Christian community, this whole view of man in Romans 7:14-25 has often been ignored. Both within Catholic and Protestant devotional aspiration, the theory has emerged in different forms that certain of God's saints are able or enabled to become perfected beyond the tension to which the Apostle Paul bears his own witness in these sentences. The result is a life in "harmony" and, therefore, progressively in less and less need of the forgiving grace of God. Christian sanctification in such a view means that, as the Christian truly grows, he needs less and less of the best gift—the forgiving love of God. . . .

"The problem with . . . perfectionist man is that he himself too quickly becomes his own gospel"

The problem with . . . perfectionist man is that he himself too quickly becomes his own gospel; he becomes his own answer to the problem of life. But try as he may to be spiritual and sensitive to the divine, nevertheless the inevitable drift for him is toward autonomy, which he then, either arrogantly or ignorantly, celebrates as freedom. . . . Paul proposes a more healthy way in the realistic sentences of 7:14-26. . . .

The question then for us now to face is this: How shall the Christian of Romans 7 actually live the Christian life here and now? Paul teaches that the Christian discipleship involves a grand tension between:

on the one side:

The complex whole person that the Christian is—The mixture of *weakness of flesh and the reality of the inner work of God's grace in his life*
7:18; 7:22, 23

on the other side:

The righteous claim of God's will upon the Christian life and the grace of God at work 7:16; 7:25

Taken from Earl F. Palmer, *Salvation by Surprise: Studies in the Book of Romans* (Waco, Texas: Word Incorporated, 1975), pp. 83-87.

What Paul explains from his own experience in Romans 6 and 7 is that the Christian is one who faces up to this tension and then, trusting God (7:25, "Thanks be to God . . ."), throws himself into the battle.

□ January 15
Friday
34

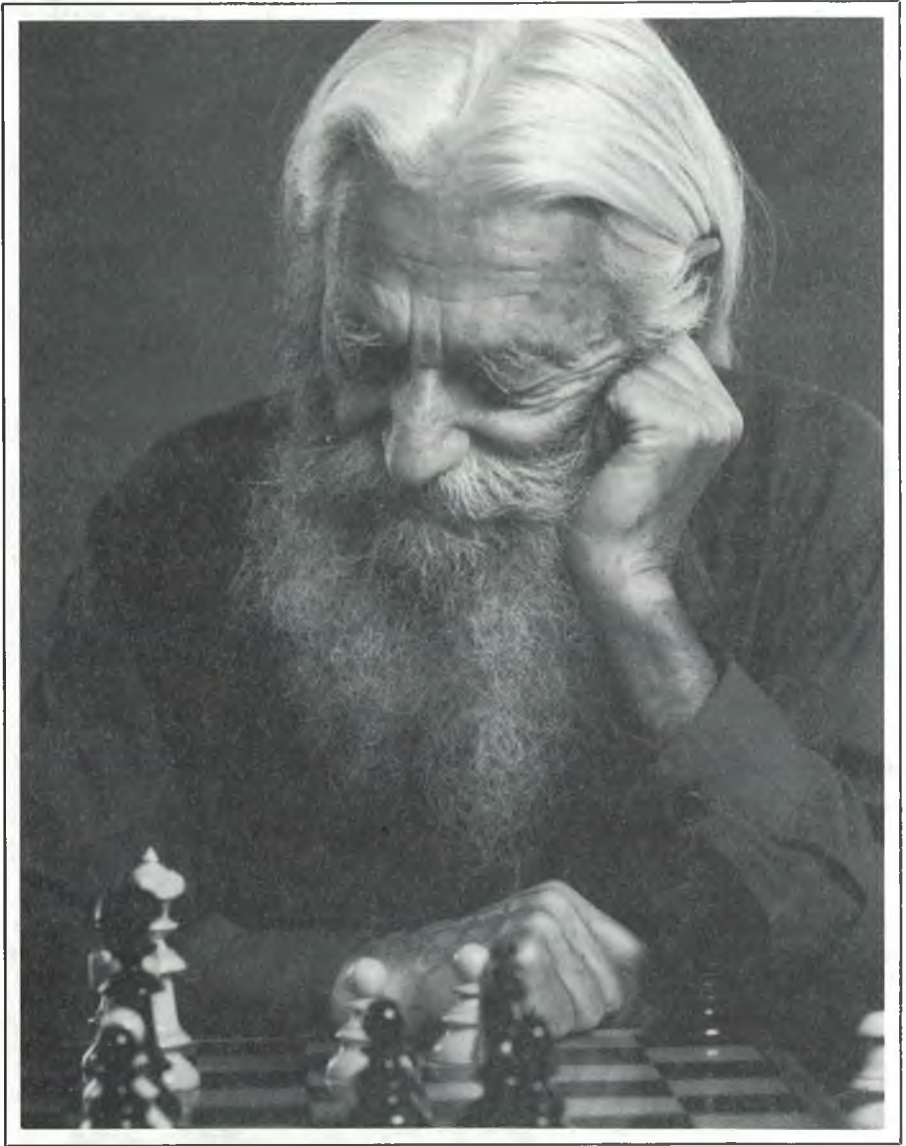
Earl Palmer is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley, California, and one of the country's leading biblical preachers.

1. If you are a Christian believer, then the law of God has been "written upon your heart." But what does this mean *to you*? In very practical, non-metaphorical language, what does it mean for you to "have" the "inward law"?
2. The title for this week's Testimony article is, "Easy, or Hard, or Both?" referring to the inward law. How would you answer this question? Explain.
3. Re "Is There an Absolute Standard," this week's Evidence article: Is there a principle or law other than simply *love* itself which is universal and not relative? Can the more descriptive definitions of love (don't kill, don't steal, don't lie, etc.) ever be immutable?

John Montgomery's position in this article was that "the 'lesser' of evils may have to be accepted, but it is still in every sense an evil and must drive the Christian to the Cross for forgiveness." Joseph Fletcher retorts: "It is ethically foolish to say we 'ought' to do what is wrong!" Where do you stand on this issue. Explain.

4. Does Colin Cook's How To contribution touch all bases? Does victory include more than reconciliation to failure?
 5. What does Romans 8:1-5 contribute to the picture painted in Romans 7 as elaborated in this week's Opinion article?
-

Freedom of Choice



“The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. . . . For many are invited, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:2, 3, 14; NIV).

Lesson 4, January 17-23

“What Kind of a Puzzle?” INTRO- DUCTION

by James W. Walters

Seek not to pass by greed or pains the lot
assigned to thee by God. . . .

So heaven willed, O Seeker after glory!
Content thee and be not morose and thankless!

Thou canst not 'scape the turning of the sky.

Do not cry out so much over a 'strange' world,
do not curse fortune and throne!

Why do you utter mean complaints of God?
Be not so displeased with fortune,
for displeasure brings affliction.

(Illustrations of fatalism in ancient Persian epics)¹

Is individual human life like a complex jigsaw puzzle? And is our role in existence merely to put into place the next predetermined piece? Are we only puppets dangling on the strings of a divine puppeteer and dancing to another's tune?

When I was a young Christian, I realized considerable cosmic comfort in imagining my life history as plotted on graph paper. God knew the exact jagged path my life-line should take, and if I were faithful He would be able to move my life along that predetermined course. As I have matured and thought more about my Christianity, I have come to question whether my earlier comfortable life-as-plotted-graph-paper notion is true. Is the essence of Christian faithfulness and responsibility mere human passivity?

Is a Christian a mere human robot operated by interstellar remote control? Is there a divine computer readout indicating where I should go to school, what I should major in, whom I should marry? And if I am *truly* committed to God, could the readout even indicate automobile make, hair style and brand of jeans?

Even if we can derive security from giving the reins of our lives over to God, there still is the question over whether He wants the job. Those who say he does are labelled Theological Determinists. They are called "determinists" because they see all of life as determined, and they are "theological" determinists because they believe God does the determining. They deny that we are self-conscious human beings who are free to make significant decisions. We are basically role-playing a script which is stored in the mind of God.

Although the theological determinism of an earlier era of Christianity is largely rejected today, a new breed of determinism—natural determinism—is on the rise. Our fate is not in God's mind, but it is encapsulated in our genes. We are programmed by an impersonal script dictated by nature which allows us to believe it is our own, or so say the sociobiologists.

Regardless of one's viewpoint, life is a puzzle. The question is whether the pieces are predetermined or whether God has designed that we are participants in cutting out the pieces.

¹Helmer Ringgren, *Fatalism in Persian Epics* (Uppsala: A. B. Lundequisska Bokhandeln, 1952), pp. 126, 127.

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□ January 17
Sunday

Freedom of Choice

by editors

LOGOS

Does God predetermine who will be saved? Or is man free to make that decision for himself? With two giants of the Protestant Reformation—Martin Luther and John Calvin—as strong believers in predestination and many in Christendom today believing in free will, this topic indeed deserves consideration.

Paul's words in his letter to the Romans have been, perhaps, the center of the controversy: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29; NAS). Speaking of the two sons of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Paul says, "For though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God's purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'" (Romans 11-13; NAS).

Continuing, Paul writes, "So then He [God] has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires" (Romans 9:18, NAS). Although these and other Bible verses are straightforward on the subject of predestination, the conflict between these and texts emphasizing free will has caused much study to be given to this subject. The *SDA Bible Commentary* attempts to harmonize such opposing Bible passages and comes down on the side of free will:

"God foreknows because He is omniscient, that is, He knows all things. . . . God predestinated those whom He foreknew. To use human language, as God foresaw, and thus foreknew, each generation of men that would come upon the stage of this world's action, He coupled immediately with His foreknowledge the decision to predestinate them all to be saved. God never had any other purpose than salvation for the members of the human family. For God 'will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:4). . . . Christ Himself said . . . 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev. 22:17)."¹

Referring to God's predestination of Jacob and Esau, the commentary says, "Simply because Jacob was chosen as the progenitor of the nation that was to be God's evangelizing agency, by no means meant that his brother was elected to be lost. Such a deduction is wholly unwarranted. . . .

"Esau have I hated. This strong expression does not imply positive hatred, as the term is used today, but that God had preferred Jacob above Esau in His choice of the progenitor of the chosen race. It seems to have been common in Biblical times to use the term "hate" in this sense."² (See Genesis 29: 30, 31; Luke 14:26; John 12:25.)

And in reference to God hardening hearts, "In Exodus the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is sometimes described as self-produced (Ex. 8:15, 32, etc.) and sometimes as produced by God (Ex. 4:21; 7:3; etc.). In the Bible God is often represented as doing that which He does not prevent (see on 2 Chron. 18:18). . . ."³

But perhaps the most biblical decision one could come to regarding free will and predestination would be to simply hold the two ideas in tension: One is saved only because of the free, electing grace of God, and yet, man is responsible for accepting God's grace and acting in an appropriate way.

D.R.S.

¹ *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1975), p. 575.

² *Ibid.*, p. 586.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 588.

by James W.
Walters

“A Theology of Human Responsibility”

The Bible portrays God as “hardening the heart” of Pharaoh (Exodus 9:12) and electing Israel’s salvation (Romans 11:28-32). Frankly, these passages are difficult for the Western mind to understand because simultaneously the whole Bible presupposes a person’s right to freely chart his own course in life. The question, simply put, is whether we are free to choose? Ellen White, the beneficiary of eighteen centuries of Christian reflection, has prophetically put the dilemma of divine activity and human choice into a coherent framework by emphasizing human choice.

Ellen White is adamant on the absolute demand for human autonomy. “The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. ‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ is the Creator’s invitation to the beings He has made. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind and character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development . . . He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God.”¹

The biblical idea of election is held by Ellen White in a manner which does justice to human responsibility. “There is an election of individuals and a people, the only election found in the word of God, where man is elected to be saved. Many have looked at the end, thinking they were surely elected to have heavenly bliss; but this is not the election the Bible reveals. Man is elected to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. He is elected to put on the armor, to fight the good fight of faith. He is elected to use the means God has placed within his reach to war against every unholy lust, while Satan is playing the game of life for his soul. He is elected to watch unto prayer, to search the Scriptures, and to avoid entering into temptation. He is elected to have faith continually. He is elected to be obedient to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, that he may be, not a hearer only, but a doer of the word. This is Bible election.”²

God has a basic knowledge of the future, and He plans for it. But this knowledge is not a coercive knowledge, says Ellen White. “God had a knowledge of the events of the future, even before the creation of the world. He did not make His purposes to fit circumstances, but He allowed matters to develop and work out. He did not work to bring about a certain condition of things, but He knew that such a condition would exist. The plan that should be carried out upon the defection of any of the high intelligences of heaven—this is the secret, the mystery which has been hid from ages. And an offering was prepared in the eternal purposes to do the very work which God has done for fallen humanity.”³

¹ *Steps to Christ*, pp. 43, 44.

² *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 453, 454.

³ *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1082.

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TESTIMONY

**Key passage:
Romans 9-11**

□ January 19
Tuesday

"A Free Will— Determinism Debate"

by James W. Walters

EVIDENCE

Key Passages:
Acts 4:27, 28;
John 15:7

"God destines
some persons
for eternal
happiness and
others for
damnation"

Determinism, I stated in the Introduction, is the belief that all of our actions are determined by causes beyond our control. Theological determinism, the belief that God is the determiner of human actions, has a close relative called "predestinarianism." The reformers John Calvin and Martin Luther were united in this live issue of their times in opposition to the humanist priest Desiderius Erasmus.

John Calvin held to absolute or double predestination. That is, God destines some persons for eternal happiness and others for damnation. This was the result of his heavy emphasis on the all-powerfulness of God and his scant attention to human responsibility. Calvin held that "men do nothing save at the secret instigation of God, and do not discuss and deliberate on anything but what he has previously decreed with himself, and brings to pass by his secret direction, is proved by numberless clear passages of Scripture. [see II Kings 2:20; Acts 2:23; 4:28] . . ."¹

Luther agreed with Calvin's focus on the all-determining will of God. Not surprisingly, these reformers declared human nature was totally evil. Salvation depended solely on God. Luther believed that if persons were free to choose salvation, humankind would be in competition with God Almighty. Luther once compared the human will to the will of a beast of burden which is ridden by either God or Satan. Each contends for the saddle and thus the control of the beast. However, regardless of the outcome of this supernatural struggle, the beast does not choose the rider.

Erasmus, the most noted biblical scholar of Luther's time, was at the other lectern in the free-will debate.

"Those who deny any freedom of the will and affirm absolute necessity, admit that God works in man not only the good works, but also evil ones. It seems to follow that inasmuch as man can never be the author of good works, he can also never be called the author of evil ones. This opinion seems obviously to attribute cruelty and injustice to God, something religious ears abhor vehemently. Nonetheless, those holding such an implausible view have an answer: No creature can adjudge the Creator's intentions. Man must subject himself completely to them. In fact, if it pleases God to damn this or that one, nobody must grumble, but accept what pleases him, and be convinced that he does everything for the best."²

Just as Calvin used biblical texts to support theological determinism, so Erasmus uses the Bible to support free-will.

"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me' (Luke 9:23). Although this is a very difficult commandment, nevertheless the appeal is to the will. Subsequently, 'For he who would save his life will lose it' (Luke 9:24). Wouldn't even the clearest commandment of Christ be senseless, if we could expect nothing from the human will? 'Amen, amen I say to you' and again 'Amen I say to you' (Matt. 5:22 and 28). 'If you love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15). How often does John alone impress this upon us! The word 'if' does not at all imply necessity, as, for example, 'If you abide in me, and if my words abide in you' (John 15:7), as well as, 'If thou wilt be perfect' (Matt. 19:21)."³

¹ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, XVIII, 1.
² Erasmus, "On Free Will" in *Erasmus-Luther Discourse on Free Will*, (Frederick Ungar Pub.: New York), p. 88. Used by permission.
³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

"The Modern Challenge"

by James W. Walters

SUPPLEMENTARY

A variety of determinism which is in vogue today is *natural* determinism. A person of this ilk holds that our actions are totally determined by natural forces—all of which, of course, are beyond personal control. Those natural forces could come from within or from without the person. A variety of the "outside" type of determinism is psychological behaviorism. It holds that outside forces control our actions. Sociobiology is an "inside" type. It contends that our decisions and actions are the logical and inevitable outgrowth of our genetic, biological composition. In any case, the individual person has no free input into his own life. But how can a person be held responsible for actions beyond his control? This is the real "sleeper" in the notion of determinism.

Renowned behavioral psychologist B. F. Skinner portrays a scientifically-shaped utopia in *Walden II*. Frazier, the protagonist in the fictional story and the spokesperson for Skinner, is speaking to his friend Castle and the question of freedom is the issue.

"My answer is simple enough," said Frazier. "I deny that freedom exists at all. I must deny it—or my program would be absurd. You can't have a science about a subject matter which hops capriciously about. Perhaps we can never prove that man isn't free; it's an assumption. But the increasing success of a science of behavior makes it more and more plausible.

"On the contrary, a simple personal experience makes it untenable," said Castle. "The experience of freedom. I know that I'm free."

"It must be quite consoling," said Frazier.

"And what's more—you do, too," said Castle hotly. "When you deny your own freedom for the sake of playing with a science of behavior, you're acting in plain bad faith. That's the only way I can explain it." He tried to recover himself and shrugged his shoulders. "At least you'll grant that you feel free.

"The 'feeling of freedom' should deceive no one," said Frazier. "Give me a concrete case."

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"Well, right now," Castle said. He picked up a book of matches. "I'm free to hold or drop these matches."

"You will, of course, do one or the other," said Frazier. Linguistically or logically there seem to be two possibilities, but I submit that there's only one in fact. The determining forces may be subtle but they are inexorable. I suggest that as an orderly person you will probably hold—ah! you drop them! Well, you see, that's all part of your behavior with respect to me. You couldn't resist the temptation to prove me wrong. It was all lawful. You had no choice. The deciding factor entered rather late, and naturally you couldn't foresee the result when you first held them up. There was no strong likelihood that you would act in either direction, and so you said you were free."¹

As a boy, Skinner regularly attended a Presbyterian Sunday school in his home town of Susquehanna, Pa. He tells of being terrified as a child at hearing his grandmother's vivid description of the hell that awaits children who tell lies. The mature Skinner, viewing religion as possessing some valuable psychological insights, explained it away behaviorally. Religion, he held, is essentially one of several basic "controlling agencies"—along with government, law, psychotherapy, economic factors and education.

In developing his ideal scientifically controlled community, Frazier does not flinch from assuming a blasphemous better-than-God stance. In one exchange, an associate accuses Frazier of acting like God:

"There's a curious similarity," he said.

I suffered a moment of panic.

"Rather considerably less control in your case, I should imagine," I said, attempting to adopt a casual tone.

"Not at all," he said, looking up. "A least, if we can believe the theologians. On the contrary, it's the other way around. You may remember that God's children are always disappointing him."

"While you are in complete command. Well, I congratulate you."

"I don't say I'm never disappointed, but I imagine I'm rather less frequently so than God. After all, look at the world *He* made."

"A joke's a joke," I said.

"But I'm not joking."

"You mean you think you're God?" I said, deciding to get it over with.

Frazier snorted in disgust.

"I said there was a curious similarity," he said.

"Don't be absurd."

"No, really, the parallel is quite fascinating. Our friend Castle is worried about the conflict between long-range dictatorship and freedom. Doesn't he know he's merely raising the old question of predestination and free will? All that happens is contained in an original plan, yet at every stage the individual seems to be making choices and determining the outcome. The same is true of *Walden Two*. Our members are practically always doing what they want to do—what they 'choose' to do—but we see to it that they will want to do precisely the things which are best for themselves and the community. Their behavior is determined, yet they're free.

"Dictatorship and freedom—predestination and free will," Frazier continued. "What are these but pseudo-questions of linguistic origin? When we ask what Man can make of Man, we don't mean the same thing by 'Man' in both instances. We mean to ask what a few men can make of mankind. And that's the all-absorbing question of the twentieth century. What kind of world can we build—those of us who understand the science of behavior?"

"Then Castle was right. You're a dictator, after all."

"No more than God. Or rather less so. Generally, I've let things alone. I've never stepped in to wipe out the evil works of men with a great flood. Nor have I sent a personal emissary to reveal my plan and to put my people back on the track. The original design took deviations into account and provided automatic corrections. It's rather an improvement upon *Genesis*."

A 1970's naturalistic challenge to the ideal of human freedom has come in the name of a new discipline, sociobiology. Harvard zoologist, Edward O. Wilson, the father of the fledgling discipline, contends that "the genes hold culture on a leash." Moral norms are

SUPPLEMENTARY

not truly willed, but rather we find "ethical premises inherent in man's biological nature." Wilson advocates a new ideology of "scientific materialism" and declares that "religion constitutes the greatest challenge to human sociobiology and its exciting opportunity to progress as a truly original theoretical discipline." Religion is meaningless for modern persons without a basic notion of human freedom, and sociobiology contends that both religion and its postulate of free-will are mere illusions.

"If biology is destiny, as Freud once told us, what becomes of free will? It is tempting to think that deep within the brain lives a soul, a free agent that takes account of the body's experience but travels around the cranium on its own accord, reflecting, planning, and pulling the levers of the neuromotor machinery. The great paradox of determinism and free will, which has held the attention of the wisest of philosophers and psychologists for generations, can be phrased in more biological terms as follows: If our genes are inherited and our environment is a train of physical events set in motion before we were born, how can there be a truly independent agent within the brain? The agent itself is created by the interaction of the genes and the environment. It would appear that our freedom is only a self-delusion."²

The above position of mechanistic science is not new. And needless to say, there is no great alarm in the ranks of humanist thinkers, to say nothing of the Christian theologians. The two conflicting views of human life are just light-years apart. Finally, the decision between the two alternatives is a matter of faith. And Christians are convinced that the evidence is on their side.

¹ B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1948), pp. 257, 258.

² Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 71.

"God Understands: Do We?"

by James Walters

HOW TO
Key Passage:
Psalm 87:6

I vividly remember a recurring question from one of my graduate school professors: "Do you hold that positon merely because of your toilet training or for some more basic reason?" It's a fair question. There are many positions we hold and activities we perform principally because of our "toilet training." My wife and I have disagreed on some of the mundane matters of existence, e.g. which way to cut the orange slices. And it is always informative to find out how a spouse's mother or father approached a similar situation. It is obvious that much of what we do in life is determined by factors beyond our own selves. But for all its scientific appeal, only a minority of informed persons believe that our "toilet training" or any other external factor totally determines behavior. The very idea that we can intelligently weigh and debate the merits of determinism demonstrates its repudiation.

However, even those who most strongly contend for the reality of freedom of choice concede that precious few human actions are totally free. Philosopher C. A. Campbell, one of the most distinguished defenders of free choice in this century, believed that precious few human actions qualify as truly free actions.

It is a paradox that we can be both free and determined, but this is reality. Not surprisingly, this same paradox is seen in the different Bible texts cited as evidence by Calvin and Erasmus. This paradox, at the very least, means for our practical Christian lives that:

1. **God understands and accepts us as beings who are at once free and determined.** He does not expect the impossible. The child who is emotionally deprived may never have the lovely disposition which comes quite naturally to another. God accepts each human individually and "the Lord shall count when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there" (Psalm 87:6). The preciousness of the gospel is that God accepts us because of abounding grace and not because we become a clone of an external standard.

2. **We ought to understand and accept one another as beings who are at once free and determined.** The notion of freedom-to-choose is often loosely assumed and tossed around with abandon. And scant recognition is made of the determining factors in our acquaintances' backgrounds so we are quick to quip:

... "Why did he lapse back into smoking? Well, I've never even been tempted by the stuff!"

... "Why doesn't she give a strict ten percent to the church? I'd be too embarrassed to attend if I didn't."

We prize freedom, yet "no man is an island" making decisions in the mid-Pacific. In reality, we are strongly influenced (determined?) by our family, our church, and our society—and this surely isn't totally bad! The challenge is for us to take the next step and freely choose to help transform those important institutions of life. Only in this way can they reflect their divine purpose: to make human life what God intended in creation.

"It is a paradox that we can be both free and determined, but this is reality"

James W. Walters is an assistant professor of Christian ethics and theology at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda Campus.

□ January 21
Thursday

“Freedom to Be Truly Human”

by James W. Walters

OPINION
Key passage:
Psalm 8

And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered up in a shining ball
And flung against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
(from “The Creation,” James Weldon Johnson)

And some of those stars, we now know, are as large as the earth’s orbit around the sun, as distant as 10 billion light years. Yet our God is infinitely superior to His expansive, mysterious creation. Our God’s power and greatness are unimaginable. And His absolute sovereignty in His universe is not enhanced by His human creation rolling over and playing dead—or dumb!

This is what I mean. We cannot enhance God’s stature by putting ourselves down. By minimizing the importance of human life we actually lower our own estimate of God. We make Him in *our* image—the unhealthy image of a paranoid person who is threatened by other intelligences. This is *not* the biblical God, the God who courageously declared: “Let us make man in our image.” This is not the God of the Psalmist who argued that persons were created a little lower than divine beings (Psalm 8:5). Whatever else this biblical view of humankind means it says that humans share with God the freedom of choice and action. “Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do,” comments Ellen White in a popular quotation.¹

The reformers, despite their recovery of precious religious truths, were not without error. The doctrine of predestination actually degrades the God it is constructed to revere. The portrait of God as a cosmic puppeteer pulling the strings which determine human life is unworthy of the Almighty. It is not that God couldn’t pull the strings—and do it magnificently. The ability and power of God is not the point. The status of humankind—free or predetermined—is the question. And God opted for free and hence morally responsible human beings. Needless to say, without human freedom the notion of personal responsibility is moral fiction and life is a giant charade.

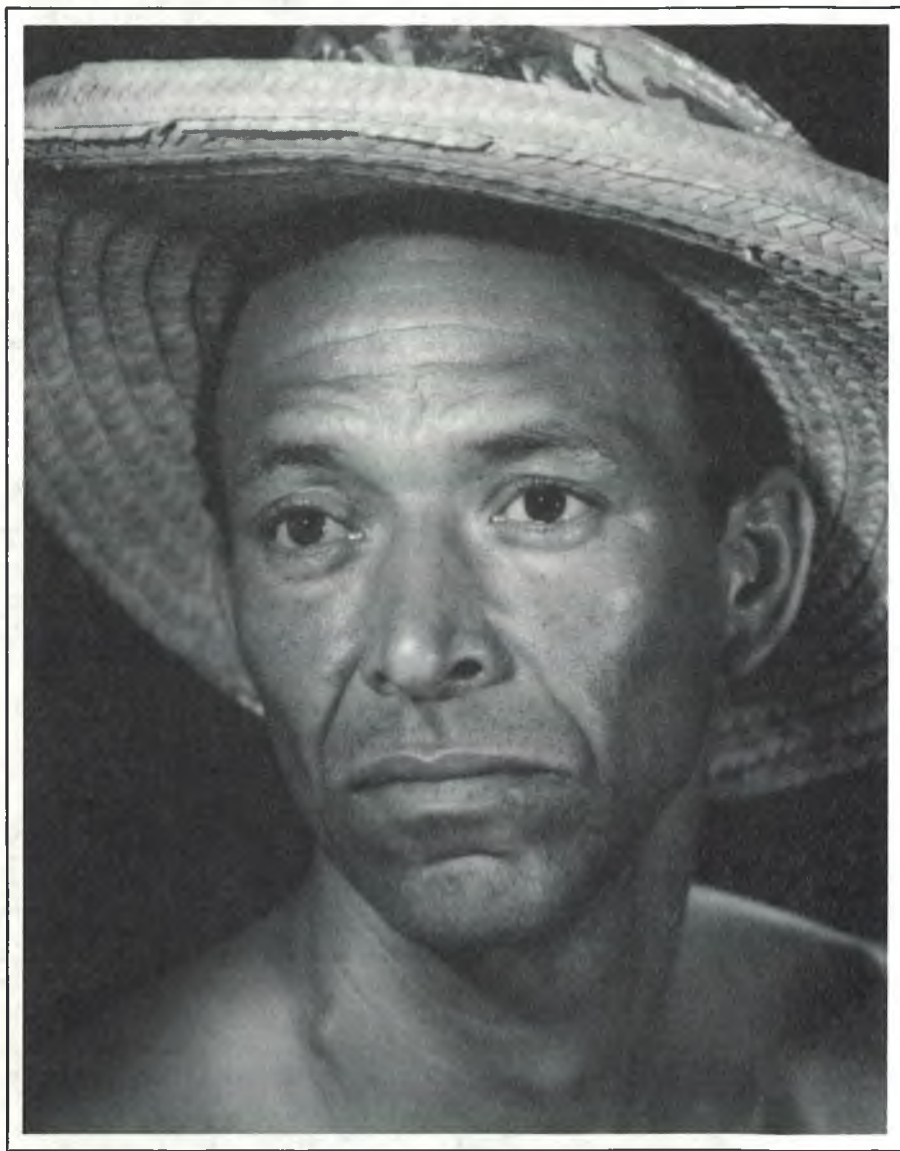
Human beings are endowed with freedom, but not unlimited freedom. We cannot choose to change the structure of reality. We cannot by our choosing make the practice of lying to our roommate into a good, or the honoring of our parents into an evil. God has not created us as stage puppets, but He has designed the set. If God had not determined a basic structure to life there would be no need to talk about good or evil, for in a totally indeterminate universe chaos is king.

Chaos is not king. To the contrary, the biblical God is creator and designer of an undergirding moral continuity in His universe. And further, He has significantly invited His human creation to be responsible co-creators in spelling out that continuity for the ongoing, complex world civilization.

¹ *Education*, p. 17.

1. How can both Calvin and Erasmus cite biblical support for conflicting views? Which, if either, Christian thinker is misinterpreting the Bible? Is it possible that the Bible is ambiguous on the free-choice/determinism issue?
 2. Luther held that free choice is incompatible with Christian assurance of salvation. What was his rationale? Do you agree?
 3. Traditional Adventism, emphasizing free choice, has been reluctant to advocate personal assurance of salvation. Can the contemporary Adventist have assurance of salvation without embracing determinism or surrendering free-choice?
 4. In this week's How To article, Walters stated that it is not totally bad that family, church and society influence us to the high degree which they do. Do you agree?
 5. What is your reaction to the observation that very few human actions are truly free?
 6. In the supplementary reading, B. F. Skinner suggests that humans are predestined and only have the illusion of free choice. Skinner's utopia would go further. It would also preclude the need for God's personal intervention because of a superior original design which takes deviations into account and provides automatic corrections. Why do Christians find this scenario repugnant?
-

Respect for Authority



“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18; NAS).

Lesson 5, January 24-30

Arthur Bietz/Charles Joseph
excerpted by Charles Teel, Jr.

Might Christians Break Bad Laws?

INTRO-
DUCTION

Editor's note: The order and nature of the articles for this week's lesson have been altered somewhat to accommodate the theme.

No

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers."

Love is never accomplished by violence and law-breaking. The idea is that we could achieve love through resistance. But whether that resistance be violent or non-violent, it is resistance nevertheless. Respect comes only from obedience to law. Not by its violation.

Many churches and pulpits have become centers of political agitation instead of fountains from which flow human understanding and cooperation. They pray and sing, and then march in protest against people. Is this of the genius of the Gospel?

Seventh-day Adventists I think, in a very peculiar way, have a right to speak on this subject. And if we wish to better our life in Glendale it must be done within the confines of order.

Before we can put on Jesus Christ, says the apostle, there must be respect for law and order. . . .

Order is maintained only by obedience to law, God's law and civil laws. This is a day when the ministers of the Gospel should preach obedience to the laws of God.

Well, what about the so-called "bad laws"? Should we break them? Actually, there are no bad laws as compared with violence and anarchy.¹

YES

The reminder, "We ought to obey God rather than men," means that there may come times when man's laws must be disobeyed in order to foster God's justice.

If you are standing on my foot and . . . wearing spikes—baseball shoes—I would say, "Off! Now!" If you keep standing on my foot and quote Bible texts, I'm really not interested because my foot is hurting. See?

Now I'm a black minister in Greenwood, Mississippi. I'm pastoring in a town where the congregation is so poor that they have to fish to eat. These folks are poor. They are being fenced out. They are not even being allowed to vote.

Now I can't come to that town and to that congregation and separate spiritual religion from the physical world. I can't go about only quoting the Good News as a cliché: "Jesus will save" or "The Gospel will heal." These folks want to see evidence of that. The gospel will be about the business of changing persons. And the gospel will also be about the business of changing those social conditions that hurt persons.

So I protest. I march. I go to jail. And they then, and only then, change the rules. And we slowly change the system that makes the rules.

Getting these spikes out of peoples' feet is a very real part of saving souls—and sometimes it may become necessary to break bad laws in the process. O.K.?²

Charles Teel, Jr., is an associate professor of
Christian ethics at Loma Linda University.

¹ Excerpted from the sermon "Should Christians Break Bad Laws" preached at the Glendale (California) Adventist Church by Pastor Arthur Bietz in 1966. Dr. Bietz has subsequently assumed the presidency of a local bank.

² Excerpted from a 1972 interview with Pastor Charles Joseph in which he reflected on his pastorate at Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1964. Dr. Joseph has since become president of the Lake Region Conference.

□ January 24
Sunday

Paul, God and Government

by Charles Teel, Jr.

LOGOS

"We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). Pretty blunt. This assertion by Paul's future colleagues pledges ultimate commitment to One who is the sovereign Lord of history. There is no higher allegiance, no higher authority. What happens when the believer must choose between the sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of the civil or religious order? There is pain and groping and examination of self and goals and motives. But the choice is inescapable. The Christ accepts the cross. Stephen goes to the pit. And from jail cells the earliest disciples sing protest hymns.

"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers" (Romans 13:1). Equally blunt? Seemingly. Demanding total submission to civil government? No. Not if we are to take seriously the biography of this tentmaker-evangelist who spent the last years of his life under house arrest. His police record reveals bookings on the grounds of disturbing the peace and inciting to riot, and his major writings include the first Christian letters from prison. Moreover, his final act was that of subjection to the executioner's blade rather than to imperial demands.

Read Paul out. This passage goes on to suggest distinct qualifications for obedience if not norms for city hall. A good governor is the protector of the innocent and punisher of the guilty. He is "not a terror to good works but to the evil." He praises those who "do that which is good." He opposes that which is evil and thus functions as "the minister of God . . . to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Thus qualified, civil government is not "a terror to good works but to the evil."

New Testament commentators offer further contextual observations which aid in understanding Paul's counsel. First, the verses immediately preceding this passage stress that the believer is not to reward evil with evil and yet the state does precisely that which is prohibited for the Christian. Even so, the passage argues, the Christian may feel free to support civil authority in its punishment of evil, for in carrying out this task it is acting as God's servant. Second, it is significant that immediately following these verses the author restates the commandments of the Decalogue—not to covet, steal, commit adultery or kill. On this point Jean Hering has concluded: "By this the apostle reveals to us a presupposition of supreme importance: the crimes forbidden by the Jewish and Christian religions are the same as those which the State is to prevent."¹ Third, the expectation of the end looms forcefully in this passage. For the believer who lives between the times, the state is a temporary institution which may function as a divine agency, yet it is neither final nor absolute.²

While the apostle suffered martyrdom for his refusal to give the civil government *carte blanche*, there were limits to his grounds for resistance. In fighting the "good fight" and in "keeping the faith" he clearly did not feel called to resist such governmental excesses as slavery or infringements on civil rights. Slaves are admonished to submit to their owners. And wives are exhorted to be subject to their husbands.

For Paul, keeping the faith included taking the consequences for proclaiming the general tenet that Jesus was Lord. The apostle did not feel called to translate that general tenet into specifics for the warp and woof of society and culture.

¹ Jean Hering, *A Good and Bad Government According to the New Testament*, American Lecture Series (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1954).

² Oscar Cullman, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1956), p. 36. Used by permission.

Justin Martyr "Worship" and "Other Things"

by Gilberto Abella

"Whence to God alone we render worship, but in other things we gladly serve you, acknowledging you as kings and rulers of men. . . ."¹ These were the words used by Justin, a Christian writer of the second century in a work addressed to the Roman Emperor Antonius Pius. This statement summarizes the attitude of the early church towards the state: a full respect for the authority of the government, which was limited only by a commitment to obey God rather than men on religious matters.

This position brought immense difficulties to the early Christians because religious affairs could not be separated from civic or patriotic duties in Roman society. Worship to the Emperor and to the gods of Rome was required of citizens in order to establish their loyalty towards the State. Especially during such periods of crises as natural calamities or military disasters, every Roman citizen was expected to perform his religious obligations. Failure to comply was considered treason. The Christians therefore, were faced with a problem of ultimate allegiance. They had to choose between betraying the Empire or disobeying God.

The stand taken by these spiritual ancestors led them to face periods of harsh persecution. Their faithfulness to divine commands, even under the threat of imprisonment, torture or death, became an admirable example for subsequent generations. Yet, one can ask: Was their attitude toward the civil authorities and toward the society at large the ultimate example of Christian social and political conduct?

Without minimizing their courage and their deep commitment to the practice of the principles taught by Jesus Christ, it should be recognized that the early Christians did not give us the final model of Christian behavior. The limited value of the precedents they set can be illustrated by their position on the question of slavery. Although they understood well that Christianity proclaimed the brotherhood of all men, they never took a stand against this institution. In contrast with this, the early Sabbatarian Adventists did not hesitate to take strong anti-slavery positions and to distinguish between good and bad laws even in purely secular matters.

Just as different historical settings allowed these 19th century Christians to go beyond the landmarks left by the church of the first four centuries, so today we may have to look for new ways of implementing human ideals in our civic activities and in our relations with the authorities. "All the light does not burst upon us at once but it comes as we can bear it."² New developments and new situations may lead us to a new understanding of our duties towards society. In areas in which our spiritual ancestors were silent in the past we may have to speak out today if we really want to be the "salt of the earth" and a light for the world.

EVIDENCE

Key passage:
Matthew 5:13-16

"New developments and new situations may lead us to a new understanding of our duties towards society"

¹ Justin, First Apology, XVII, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. I: Justin Martyr-Irenaeus (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 166.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1948), p. 446.

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January 26
Tuesday

John Calvin/Menno Simons, Majorities and Minorities

by Gilberto Abella

HOW TO
Key passage:
Luke 17:20, 21

Sometime between 1532 and 1533, a young humanist scholar underwent a profound experience of conversion and took a stand on the side of the Reformation to become the most outstanding pastor of the Evangelical movement in Switzerland. His name was John Calvin.

In January 1536, after a long inner struggle, a Dutch Roman Catholic priest left his parish in order to join a small "underground" sect: the Anabaptists. His name was Menno Simons. In time, he came to be the leading figure in the group. Yet, in contrast with Calvin, who enjoyed the protection and the cooperation of the Genevan authorities, the ex-priest was persecuted everywhere he went, both in Catholic and Protestant territories.

The careers of our two reformers present more contrasts than similarities, and the same can be said about their theological views. Nevertheless, on the question of the relationship between the Christian and the civil authorities, their positions were very similar. Both argued that the magistracy had been ordained by God and that every believer should obey the rulers, even if they were bad. Both also recognized, however, that obedience to man should not become disobedience to God. Finally, both believed that the church should be separate from the state and that neither entity should seek to regulate the other. But these commonly shared views do not tell the whole story.

Calvin encouraged the members of his flock to be active in civic matters and to participate in the government. For him, even the pastors should play a role in the formulation of laws and state policies by advising the magistrates on moral questions and by denouncing injustices and faults of the authorities. Simons called for a passive attitude. In his opinion, Christians should not accept public offices or take part in the administration of the state. They should not even criticize the rulers. Those who follow Christ were not to become involved in the affairs of this world.

Several possible reasons may be given as causes for these particular divergences between the two Reformation figures. But the primary reason is certainly the fact that each had to address the specific set of circumstances in which his people were living. In the case of Calvin, the entire city of Geneva had accepted the Reformation. Virtually all the citizens of Geneva were members of the church. The guidelines that he proposed therefore resulted not only from theological considerations but from pragmatic considerations as well.

With Menno Simons things were different. When he abandoned his parish he entered the ranks of a persecuted minority. The Anabaptists were considered outcasts of society everywhere and he could do very little to change that state of affairs. Rejected by "this world," the Anabaptists concentrated their attention toward the "other world." But, could they have kept their stand if they had become a majority in any state?

This question may lead to another one more significant for us today. Should a world-wide religious body adopt a uniform stance for members of all countries and of the present and future generations in relation to the civil authorities? Or should a certain flexibility be allowed in order to respond to unexpected or new situations?

□ **January 27**
Wednesday

Gilberto Abella is a graduate student in history at Loma Linda University.

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Philemon

Ellen White: "God is punishing the North, that they have so long suffered the accursed sin of slavery to exist; for in the sight of heaven it is a sin of the darkest dye."¹

"When the laws of men conflict with the word and law of God, we are to obey the latter, whatever the consequences may be. The laws of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey; and we must abide the consequences of violating this law."²

"Much might have been accomplished by the people of America if adequate efforts in behalf of the freedom had been put forth by the government and by the Christian churches immediately after the emancipation of the slaves. Money should have been used freely to care for and educate them at the time they were so greatly in need of help. . . . The Seventh-day Adventist Church has failed to act its part.

"Noble efforts have been put forth by some Seventh-day Adventists to do the work that needed to be done for the colored people. Had those who were engaged in this work received the cooperation of all their ministering brethren, the result of their work would now be altogether different from what it is. But the great majority of our ministers did not cooperate, as they should have done, with the few who were struggling to carry forward a much-needed work in a difficult field."³

James White: "[The United States] professes to guarantee to every man liberty and the pursuit of happiness . . . Yet about four millions of human beings are held by the Southern States of this nation in the most abject and cruel bondage and servitude, and the theological bodies of the land have adopted a creed-power, which is as inexorable and tyrannical as is possible to bring to bear upon the consciences of men. Verily with all its lamblike appearance and profession, it has the heart and voice of a dragon; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."⁴

Uriah Smith: "[Lincoln], following his present conservative, not to say suicidal, policy . . . has to stand up against the 'enthusiasm for freedom' which reigns in nearly twenty millions of hearts in the free North, and against the prayers of four millions of oppressed and suffering slaves. If he continues to resist all these, in refusing to take those steps which a sound policy, the principles of humanity, and the salvation of the country, demand, it must be from an infatuation akin to that which of old brought Pharaoh to an untimely end."⁵

J. N. Andrews: "This sin [of slavery] is snugly stowed away in a certain package which is labeled 'Politics.' They deny the right of their fellow men to condemn any of the favorite sins which they have placed in this bundle: and they evidently expect that any parcel bearing this label, will pass the final custom house, i.e. the judgment of the great day—without being examined. Should the all-seeing judge, however, inquire into their connection with this great iniquity, they suppose the following answer will be entirely satisfactory to Him: 'I am not at all censurable for anything said or done by me in behalf of slavery; for O Lord, thou knowest, it was a part of my politics.' Will this plea be offered by any reader of this article?"⁶

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 359.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 201, 202 (italics mine).

³ Excerpted from *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 205.

⁴ James White, "Thoughts on Revelation," *Review*, November 11, 1862, p. 188.

⁵ Uriah Smith, editorial comment, *Review*, September 28, 1862, p. 130.

⁶ J. N. Andrews, "Slavery," *Review*, October 25, 1864, p. 172.

"Letter From Birmingham Jail"

excerpted by
Charles Teel, Jr.

OPINION
Key passage:
Amos 4:1-5

Note: Martin Luther King, Jr., black Baptist clergyman and civil rights leader, emerged as the nation's leading spokesman for nonviolent resistance during the tumultuous 1960's. Known as "an apostle of nonviolence" he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. His 1963 "Letter From Birmingham Jail," a reply to eight clergymen who criticized his methods, is an eloquent and vigorous justification of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience. He was killed during the Easter season of 1968 while leading a campaign on behalf of garbage collectors in Memphis, Tennessee.

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:¹

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I. On The Problem

There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is widely known. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unresolved bombings of the Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. On the basis of these conditions Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation. In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist, negotiation, self-purification and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. We know through experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation.

Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to

"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed"

□ January 29
Friday

Charles Teel, Jr., is an associate professor of Christian ethics at Loma Linda University.

form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait: There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair.

I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

II. On Civil Disobedience

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

Now what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law of the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator and the segregated a false sense of inferiority.

Let us consider some of the ways in which a law can be unjust. A law is unjust, for example, if the majority group compels a minority group to obey the statute but does not make it binding on itself. By the same token a law in all probability is just if the majority is itself willing to obey it. Also, a law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority, that, as a result of being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law.

I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. *In no sense do I advocate evading the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.*²

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians who were willing to face hungry lions rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman empire. We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that had I lived in Germany at the time I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers.

"An unjust law is no law at all"

"One who breaks an unjust law must do so . . . with a willingness to accept the penalty"

"Everything Hitler did in Germany was 'legal.' It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew"

III. On Creative Tension

You may well ask, "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.

My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the register may sound rather shocking. But I readily acknowledge that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth.

**"Injustice
must be
exposed, with
all the tension
its exposure
creates"**

Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its pus-flowing ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

IV. On The Church

The Church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the State but rather the conscience of the State. It must be the guide and critic of the State and never its tool.³

I have watched white churchmen stand on the sidelines and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice I have heard many ministers say, "Those are social issues with which the gospel has no real concern," and I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, unbiblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular.

Certainly, otherworldly concerns have a deep and significant place in all religions worthy of the name. Any religion that is completely earthbound sells its birthright for a mess of naturalistic pottage. Religion, at its best, deals not only with man's preliminary concerns but with his inescapable ultimate concern. When religion overlooks this basic fact it is reduced to a mere ethical system in which eternity is absorbed into time and God is relegated to a sort of meaningless figment of the human imagination.⁴

But a religion true to its nature must also be concerned about men's social conditions. Religion deals with both earth and heaven, both time and eternity. Religion operates not only on the vertical plane but also on the horizontal. It seeks not only to integrate men with God but to integrate men with men and each man with himself. This means, at bottom, that the Christian gospel is a two-way road. On the one hand it seeks to change the souls of men, and thereby unite them with God; on the other hand it seeks to change the environmental conditions of men so that the soul will have a chance after it is changed.⁵

So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an arch-defender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent—and often even vocal—sanction of things as they are.

I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and have walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the south on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. They have acted in the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has preserved the true meaning of the gospel in these troubled times.

"The Church . . . is not the master or the servant of the State but rather the conscience"

"So often the . . . church is a weak ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound"

"Right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant"

Never before have I written so long a letter. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone for days in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that *understates* the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

¹ ix "Letter From Birmingham Jail," *The Christian Century*, June 12, 1963, pp. 767-773.

² Emphasis supplied.

³ *Strength To Love*, New York, Harper & Row Publishers, p. 47.

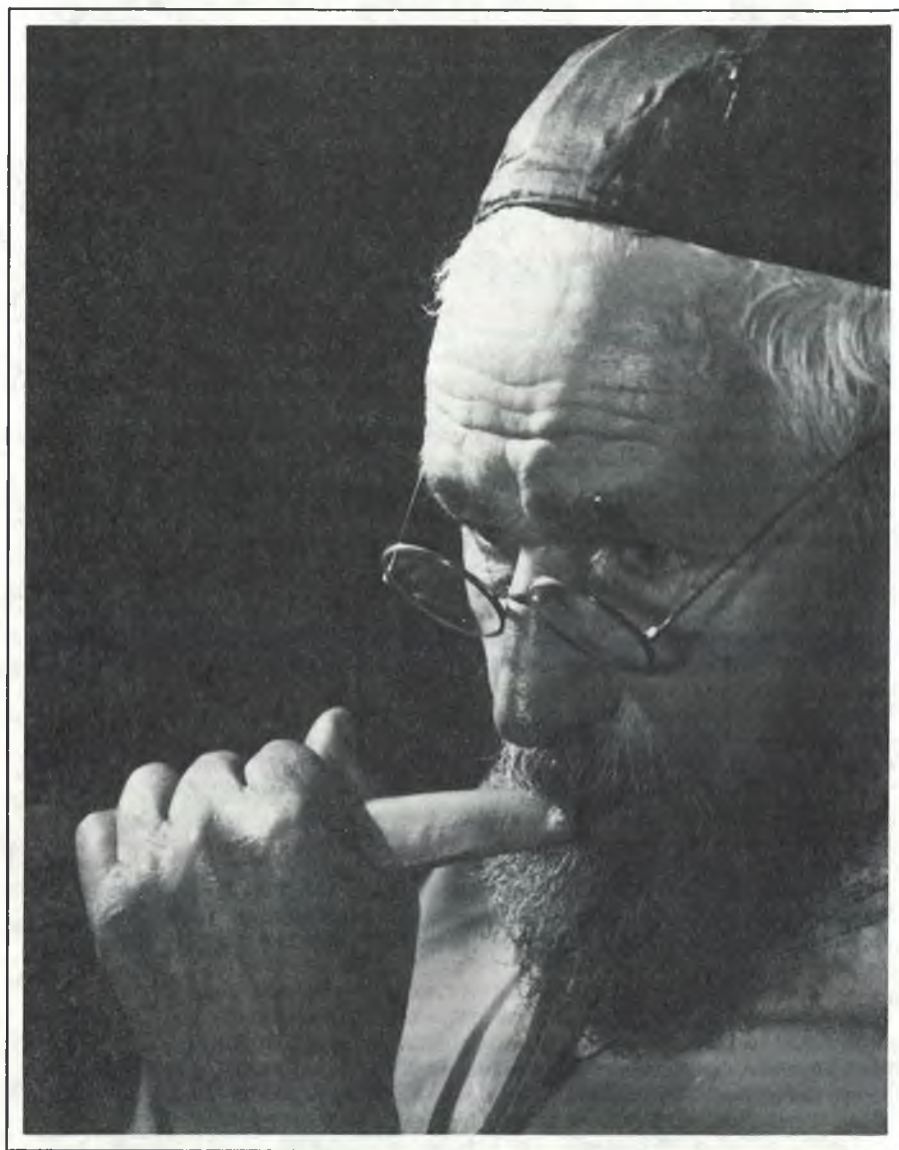
⁴ *Stride Toward Freedom*, New York, Ballantine Books, p. 36.

⁵ *ibid.*

REACT
Lesson 5

1. For starters this week you noted that a black Adventist pastor from rural Mississippi and a white Adventist pastor from suburban California offer very different answers to the question "Might Christians disobey bad laws?" What factors do you feel contribute to their opposing answers?
 2. The quote from Justin Martyr which contrasts "worship" with "other things" delineates one way of dividing allegiance between God and the State. Issues explicitly affecting "worship" demand allegiance to God and may call for disobedience to the state. "Other things," issues beyond the realm of worship and faith, require allegiance to the state. Are you comfortable with this distinction as an operational model for your decision making today?
 3. Paul seems to have operated from a model not dissimilar to that of Justin. (Indeed, they were both martyrs for their Christian beliefs under Imperial Rome.) Paul stood firm on issues of worship while not making an issue of slavery and other things. Paul's definitions of "keeping the faith" and "bearing testimony to Jesus" allowed him to send the slave back to his master. Ellen White's definition of "keeping the faith" and "bearing testimony to Jesus" called her to advocate civil disobedience of the Fugitive Slave Act. What factors do you feel contribute to these contrasting interpretations?
 4. If the Adventist pioneers made their decisions solely on the basis of Paul's biblical example, they would have been left with little option but to send the slaves back to their owners. We must conclude that they viewed contemporary Christian decision making as far more complex than merely an imitation of biblical example. Might such considerations of majority status vs. minority status, totalitarian rule vs. democratic rule, perceived truth "then" vs. perceived truth "now," aid in wrestling with this issue? What biblical principles aided them here?
 5. What parallels do you note between Ellen White's definition of civil disobedience (*italics*, p. 53) and King's definition of civil disobedience (*italics*, p. 55)?
 6. Fantasize that the Adventist pioneers were alive and well during the 1960s and were scheduled to preach on the summer campmeeting circuit. Do you think their response to the question "Might Christians break bad laws" would have been closer to the answer of Bietz or the answer of Joseph?
 7. Today, we are forced to ask where God would have us act in *this* time and in *this* place. Paul, Justin, John Calvin, Menno Simons, Ellen White, Martin Luther King and *you* are all about the business of hearing God speak not only through the biblical canon but through fresh newspaper print as well. In what contemporary issues do you hear God speaking? What beasts require slaying? How are you responding?
-

The Sabbath



"You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy" (Exodus 31:13; NIV).

Lesson 6, January 31-February 6

Of Sabbaths and Fellowship

INTRODUCTION

by N. E. Andreasen

"Men at moderately heavy work performed about as well during the 6-day week as they had during the 5-day week in terms of efficiency and absenteeism." But "after protracted periods of 7 days of work per week, workers actually produced as much, or more, in 6 days as they formerly had in 7 days." These conclusions were reached in an extended study by the U.S. Department of Labor.¹

Here is evidence that workers need one day off in seven in order to function effectively. So, can we say that we have finally found an irrefutable proof to support the Sabbath doctrine? Probably not. First of all, the Labor Department did not really think about Sabbath but about Sunday when it made its study. Second, the Labor Department was not first in discovering the importance of free time for the worker. Recent studies of the ancient Near East have concluded that the biblical Sabbath practice of taking one day off from work regularly once a week stands in stark contrast to the practices among people of having irregular days of rest for the workers. Evidently, what the Labor Department discovered after World War II was known a few thousand years earlier by some Hebrew shepherds in the Middle East. How did they make that startling discovery? We really don't know. But they did report that the whole idea came from their God who had scheduled life in the world so as to make accommodation for this need to rest. It was a brilliant idea.

But, you say, all the Labor Department discovered was that a worker needs one day off in seven. It could be Sunday, the first day of the week, or Wednesday, in the middle of the week, or Saturday, the seventh day.

This, of course, is true. But the fact remains that long before the Labor

Department made its discovery the seven-day week was invented, and, of course, the Sabbath. Curiously enough, however, the Sabbath was not invented primarily as a day of rest, but for some other purpose, according to the Bible.

The first introduction a Bible reader gets to the Sabbath occurs in the story of creation (Genesis 2:1-3), and it says little if anything about rest. This is natural enough, for mankind had been created just before the Sabbath began (on the sixth day) and surely man and woman had no need to rest. And God who created everything does not get tired. But if the first Sabbath was not really a day of rest, what was it then? It was the day on which God stopped His work, not because He was tired, but because He wished to turn His attention to the people and the world He had just created. Hence, the Sabbath was really made for fellowship between God and His creation.

Now it is true that elsewhere in the Bible the Sabbath is also a day of rest for laborers who are weary after six days of toil. But why should they rest? Just to feel better? Or merely to produce more each week? No, the original purpose of the Sabbath stands. It is to provide fellowship between God and His people.

How then can we enter such fellowship? By working six days so as to complete our work (just as God did) and by stopping, taking time off, and giving our attention to God on the seventh (for it does take time to give our full attention to God). This was the original purpose of the Sabbath, and it still stands, as you will discover in this week's lesson.

¹ Bulletin No. 917, 1947.

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**□ January 31
Sunday**

The Sabbath—Sign of the Inward Law

by editors

LOGOS

“By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:2, 3; NAS).

From the beginning, the Sabbath has been hallowed time for the fellowship of God and man. On this day God has rested, and so must man, to commune together “as friend with friend.”

The Bible is very specific about what is and is not to be done on this day. From Sinai the Lord commanded that the Sabbath be “remembered,” and that no work—either on the part of family members, servants or beasts—be done (Exodus 20:8-11). As recorded in the Old Testament, the children of Israel were often given injunctions to keep the Sabbath in a manner appropriate for divine fellowship, and in Isaiah the command is fairly specific: “If you treat the Sabbath as sacred and do not pursue your own interest on that day; if you value my holy day and honor it by not traveling, working, or talking idly on that day, then you will find the joy that comes from serving me” (Isaiah 58:13, 14; GNB).

By the time of Jesus’ sojourn on earth, however, the rituals and traditions surrounding the Sabbath had made it a day of hardship and oppression. It was in this context that Jesus proclaimed, “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2.27). To some, these words of Jesus were revolutionary. But no more so than His Sabbath-day activities!

In an early chapter Mark records two of Jesus’ Sabbath-day activities that tended both to dispel traditional conceptions of proper observance, and to provide a new understanding of what “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” should mean: “One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, ‘Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?’

“‘He answered, have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.’ . . .

“Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, ‘Stand up in front of everyone.’

“Then Jesus asked them, ‘Which is lawful on the Sabbath, to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they remained silent.

“He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, ‘stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored” (Mark 2:23-26; 3:1-5; NIV).

Indeed, the Sabbath was made for man. It was made to bring man rest and peace and healing and blessing—to bring man into communion and fellowship with God.

D.R.S./E.B.S.

How Shall We Keep the Sabbath?

selected by editors

After God had made the world in six days, he rested, and sanctified and blessed the day upon which he rested from all his work which he had created and made. He set apart that special day for man to rest from his labor, that as he should look upon the earth beneath and the heavens above, he might reflect that God made all these in six days and rested upon the seventh; and that as he should behold the tangible proofs of God's infinite wisdom, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.

In order to keep the Sabbath holy, it is not necessary that we inclose ourselves in walls, shut away from the beautiful scenes of nature and from the free, invigorating air of heaven. We should in no case allow burdens and business transactions to divert our minds upon the Sabbath of the Lord, which He has sanctified. We should not allow our minds to dwell upon things of a worldly character even. But the mind cannot be refreshed, enlivened, and elevated by being confined nearly all the Sabbath hours within walls, listening to long sermons and tedious, formal prayers. The Sabbath of the Lord is put to a wrong use if thus celebrated. The object for which it was instituted is not attained. The Sabbath was made for man, to be a blessing to him by calling his mind from secular labor to contemplate the goodness and glory of God. It is necessary that the people of God assemble to talk of Him, to interchange thoughts and ideas in regard to the truths contained in His word, and to devote a portion of time to appropriate prayer. But these seasons, even upon the Sabbath, should not be made tedious by their length and lack of interest.

During a portion of the day, all should have an opportunity to be out of doors. How can children receive a more correct knowledge of God, and their minds be better impressed, than in spending a portion of their time out of doors, not in play, but in company with their parents? Let their young minds be associated with God in the beautiful scenery of nature, let their attention be called to the tokens of His love to man in His created works, and they will be attracted and interested. . . . as they view the beautiful things which He has created for the happiness of man, they will be led to regard Him as a tender, loving Father. They will see that His prohibitions and injunctions are not made merely to show His power and authority, but that He has the happiness of His children in view. As the character of God puts on the aspect of love, benevolence, beauty, and attraction, they are drawn to love Him. You can direct their minds to the lovely birds making the air musical with their happy songs, to the spires of grass, and the gloriously tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air. All these proclaim the love and skill of the heavenly Artist, and show forth the glory of God. . . .

The Sabbath should be made so interesting to our families that its weekly return will be hailed with joy. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than by devising means to impart proper instruction to their families, and interesting them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God, and what He requires of us in order to perfect Christian characters and attain to eternal life. Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children may look forward to it, and have a welcome in their hearts for it.

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Mark 2:27, 28

On Sabbath, seasons of worship and prayer should not "be made tedious by their length and lack of interest"

"Parents, make the Sabbath a delight"

Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 582-585.

February 2
Tuesday

A Palace In Time

by Abraham J. Heschel

EVIDENCE

Key passage:
Exodus 20:8-11

Technical civilization is man's conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time. In technical civilization, we expend time to gain space. To enhance our power in the world of space is our main objective. Yet to have more does not mean to be more. The power we attain in the world of space terminates abruptly at the borderline of time. But time is the heart of existence.

To gain control of the world of space is certainly one of our tasks. The danger begins when in gaining power in the realm of space we forfeit all aspirations in the realm of time. There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord. Life goes wrong when the control of space, the acquisition of things of space, becomes our sole concern. . . .

Even religions are frequently dominated by the notion that the deity resides in space, within particular localities like mountains, forests, trees or stones, which are, therefore, singled out as holy places; the deity is bound to a particular land; holiness a quality associated with things of space, and the primary question is: Where is the god? There is much enthusiasm for the idea that God is present in the universe, but that idea is taken to mean His presence in space rather than in time, in nature rather than in history; as if He were a thing, not a spirit. . . .

Indeed, we know what to do with space but do not know what to do about time, except to make it subservient to space. Most of us seem to labor for the sake of things of space. As a result we suffer from a deeply rooted dread of time and stand aghast when compelled to look into its face. Time to us is sarcasm, a slick treacherous monster with a jaw like a furnace incinerating every moment of our lives. Shrinking, therefore, from facing time, we escape for shelter to things of space. The intentions we are unable to carry out we deposit in space; possessions become the symbols of our repressions, jubilees of frustrations. But things of space are not fireproof; they only add fuel to the flames. Is the joy of possession an antidote to the terror of time which grows to be a dread of inevitable death? Things, when magnified, are forgeries of happiness, they are a threat to our very lives; we are more harassed than supported by the Frankensteins of spatial things. . . .

Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time. Unlike the space-minded man to whom time is unvaried, iterative, homogeneous, to whom all hours are alike, qualitiless, empty shells, the Bible senses the diversified character of time. There are no two hours alike. Every hour is unique and the only one given at the moment, exclusive and endlessly precious. . . .

One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word *qadosh*, holy; a word which more than any other is representative of the mystery and majesty of the divine. Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar?

It is, indeed, a unique occasion at which the distinguished word *qadosh* is used for the first time: in the Book of Genesis at the end of the story of creation. How extremely significant is the fact that it is applied to time: "And God blessed the seventh *day* and made it *holy*." There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of holiness.

This is a radical departure from accustomed religious thinking. The mythical mind would expect that, after heaven and earth had been established, God would create a holy place—a holy mountain or a holy spring—whereupon a sanctuary is to be established. Yet it seems as if to the Bible it is *holiness in time*, the Sabbath, which comes first. . . .

The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.

He who wants to enter the holiness of the day must first lay down the profanity of clattering commerce, of being yoked to toil. He must go away from the screech of dissonant days, from the nervousness and fury of acquisitiveness and the betrayal in embezzling his own life. He must say farewell to manual work and learn to understand that the world has already been created and will survive without the help of man. Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul. The world has our hands, but our soul belongs to Someone Else. Six days a week we seek to dominate the world, on the seventh day we try to dominate the self. . . .

To the biblical mind . . . labor is the means toward an end, and the Sabbath as a day of rest, as a day of abstaining from toil, is not for the purpose of recovering one's lost strength and becoming fit for the forthcoming labor. The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life. Man is not a beast of burden and the Sabbath is not for the purpose of enhancing the efficiency of his work. "Last in creation, first in intention," the Sabbath is "the end of the creation of heaven and earth."

The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of the Sabbath. It is not an interlude but the climax of living.

"There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of holiness"

"On the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul"

Three acts of God denoted the seventh day: He rested, He blessed and He hallowed the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3). To the prohibition of labor is, therefore, added the blessing of delight and the accent of sanctity. Not only the hands of man celebrate the day, the tongue and the soul keep the Sabbath. One does not talk on it in the same manner in which one talks on weekdays. Even thinking of business or labor should be avoided.

Labor is a craft, but perfect rest is an art. It is the result of an accord of body, mind and imagination. To attain a degree of excellence in art, one must accept its discipline, one must adjure slothfulness. The seventh day is a *palace in time* which we build. It is made of soul, of joy and reticence. In its atmosphere, a discipline is a reminder of adjacent to eternity. Indeed, the splendor of the day is expressed in terms of *abstentions*, just as the mystery of God is more adequately conveyed *via negationis*, in the categories of *negative theology* which claims that we can never say what He is we can only say what He is not. We often feel how poor the edifice would be were it built exclusively of our rituals and deeds which are so awkward and often obtrusive. How else express glory in the presence of eternity, if not by the silence of abstaining from noisy acts? These restrictions utter songs to those who know how to stay at a palace with a queen. . . .

What is so luminous about a day? What is so precious to captivate the hearts. It is because the seventh day is a mine where spirit's precious metal can be found with which to construct the palace in time, a dimension in which the human is at home with the divine; a dimension in which man aspires to approach the likeness of the divine.

For where shall the likeness of God be found? There is no quality that space has in common with the essence of God. There is not enough freedom on the top of the mountain; there is not enough glory in the silence of the sea. Yet the likeness of God can be found in time, which is eternity in disguise. . . .

What would be a world without Sabbath? It would be a world that knew only itself or God distorted as a thing or the abyss separating Him from the world; a world without the vision of a window in eternity that opens into time. . . .

"The seventh day is a palace in time which we build"

"The likeness of God can be found in time, which is eternity in disguise"

It must always be remembered that the Sabbath is not an occasion for diversion or frivolity; not a day to shoot fireworks or to turn somersaults, but an opportunity to mend our tattered lives; to collect rather than to dissipate time. Labor without dignity is the cause of misery; rest without spirit the source of depravity. Indeed, the prohibitions have succeeded in preventing the vulgarization of the grandeur of the day.

Two things the people of Rome anxiously desired—bread and circus games. But man does not live by bread and circus games alone. Who will teach him how to desire anxiously the spirit of a sacred day? . . .

May Thy children realize and understand that their rest comes from

Thee, and that to rest means to sanctify Thy name.

To observe the Sabbath is to celebrate the coronation of a day in the spiritual wonderland of time, the air of which we inhale when we “call it a delight.”

Call the Sabbath a delight: a delight to the soul and a delight to the body. Since there are so many acts which one must abstain from doing on the seventh day, “you might think I have given you the Sabbath for your displeasure; I have surely given you the Sabbath for your pleasure.” To sanctify the seventh day does not mean: Thou shalt mortify thyself, but, on the contrary: Thou shalt sanctify it with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy senses. “Sanctify the Sabbath by choice meals, by beautiful garments; delight your soul with pleasure and I will reward you for this very pleasure.” . . .

“The Sabbath is a reminder of the two worlds—this world and the world to come; it is an example of both worlds. For the Sabbath is joy, holiness, and rest; joy is part of this world; holiness and rest are something of the world to come.”

To observe the seventh day does not mean merely to obey or to conform to the strictness of a divine command. To observe is to celebrate the creation of the world and to create the seventh day all over again, the majesty of holiness in time, “a day of rest, a day of freedom,” a day which is like “a lord and king of all other days,” a lord and king in the commonwealth of time. . . .

The seventh day is like a place in time with a kingdom for all. It is not a date but an atmosphere.

Rest without spirit is the source of depravity

“The Sabbath is a reminder of the two worlds”

It is not a different state of consciousness but a different climate; it is as if the appearance of all things somehow changed. The primary awareness is one of our being *within* the Sabbath rather than the Sabbath being within us. We may not know whether our understanding is correct, or whether our sentiments are noble, but the air of the day surrounds us like spring which spreads over the land without our aid or notice. . . .

The difference between the Sabbath and all other days is not to be noticed in the physical structure of things, in their spatial dimension. Things do not change on that day. There is only a difference in the dimension of time, in the relation of the universe to God. The Sabbath preceded creation and the Sabbath completed creation; it is all of the spirit that the world can bear.

The Fine Art of Sabbath-Keeping

by Richard Rice

Sabbath observance is not just an obligation. At its best it is a fine art which calls for careful cultivation. So below are some suggestions for a more rewarding Sabbath.

1. The first is to recognize what a challenge real Sabbath observance is.

Several factors make it difficult to keep the Sabbath properly. One is the secular outlook of our modern world. Most people today have no sense of the sacred. For them, all words are the same. All places are pieces of real estate. And, as measured by clocks and calendars, all days alike; there is no holy time. Yet the Sabbath presupposes that all time is not alike. It assumes that one day in seven is "holy." It has a quality all its own.

Another obstacle to effective Sabbath observance is the prevalent attitude toward the "weekend." Television commercials assure us that the weekend is our time—time to relax, to stop working and start enjoying. Consequently, we tend to regard the Sabbath as a time for self-indulgence, for doing our own thing. And this makes Sabbath nothing but a means of personal gratification.

A third problem is the tendency to think of Sabbath observance in negative terms, as avoiding certain things. Young people often begin their questions about Sabbath with the words, "What's wrong with . . . ?" But if we are preoccupied with drawing lines between right and wrong Sabbath activities, or with determining how much we can get away with and not actually break the commandment, we have not even begun to keep the Sabbath day.

And this brings us to a basic rule of effective Sabbath-keeping:

2. Put the question of Sabbath observance in positive rather than negative terms. Don't ask what's wrong with doing this or that on the Sabbath. Instead, ask yourself what you *can* do that will help you to experience the meaning of the Sabbath to its very fullest. In other words, look at the Sabbath as a glorious opportunity, not as a tedious obligation.

3. A final suggestion for enhancing Sabbath observance is to do everything you can to reinforce your sense of the day's uniqueness. Of course, there are the obvious restrictions on your activities. Most often, manual labor is out, for example. But beyond that you may need to invent other restrictions to meet your particular situation. As a graduate student in divinity school, I discovered that reading theology on the Sabbath made it seem like just another day. So I found other things to read and think about. For similar reasons, a biology student may turn to poetry on the Sabbath. And an English major may take up bird watching. The idea is to do things that remind yourself that this day is unique—a golden opportunity for developing new aspects in your relationship with God. Not just another day on the calendar.

Naturally, this kind of Sabbath doesn't just happen. It takes careful preparation. Consequently, to make your Sabbath a day to remember you will have to remember the Sabbath throughout the week. But whatever it takes, it's worth it. Real Sabbathkeeping is a splendid experience.

HOW TO
Key passage:
Isaiah 58:13, 14

Richard Rice is associate professor of theology at Loma Linda University and author of *The Openness of God*.

February 4
Thursday

The Sabbath: Experiencing the Gospel

by Bruce Nelson

OPINION

Key passage:
Ezekiel 20:12

As Adventists, we urge the importance of the Sabbath without much sympathy from mainstream Protestant thought. Perhaps this is primarily because this doctrine is seen to emphasize man's activity, and thus seemingly stands in contrast to the grace of God. This problem, however, is typical of problems that face all of Christian experience. We Adventists ask ourselves, "How should we fill the hours of the Sabbath?" But is not this the same basic question that Christians ask as they seek to fill life itself with experiences? Indeed, the grace of salvation cannot be separated from the experience of life. Thus, in learning to observe the Sabbath we are confronted with the same problem that we face when learning to live as Christians—i. e., the problem of learning to *experience* the gospel. For what God intends for us in the hours of the Sabbath is what He intends for us in all the experiences of life.

For example, God has given us the Sabbath to commemorate creation—as a weekly celebration of His creativity. But its influence and blessing was also given to urge us to daily realize in creative expression the reflection of His image—to explore, to investigate, to imagine and to experiment.

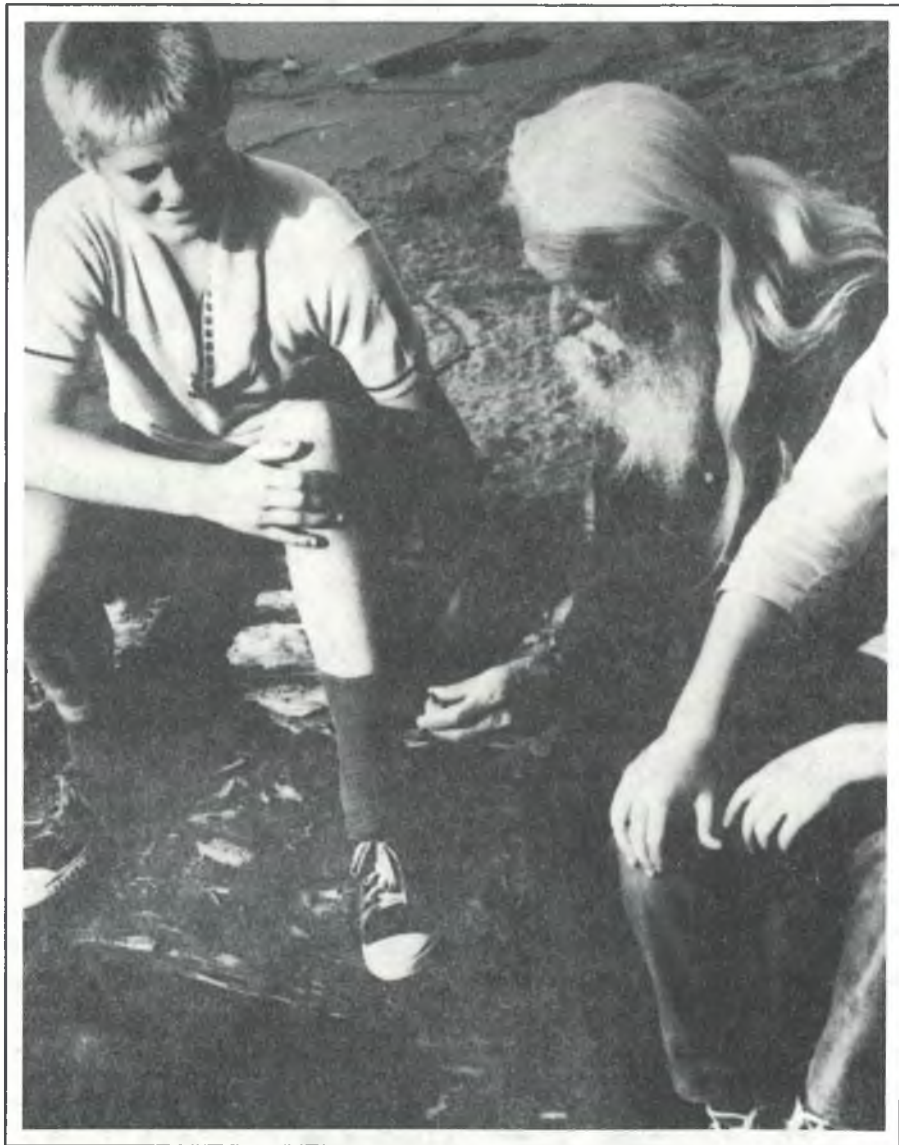
Too, the Sabbath is a reminder of deliverance and thus celebrates freedom. In a world where oppression is no stranger the influence of the Sabbath is daily an echo of an ancient memory of God's power to deliver His people from slavery. And in the Sabbath miracles of Christ we are assured that His power to set men free does not decrease with time. So the weekly Sabbath calls us to daily participate in Christian freedom, "for he who the son of man sets free is free indeed."

Then, the Sabbath is also a sign of sanctification—a reminder and celebration of the fact that Christians are set apart, unique, responsible for fulfilling a holy purpose. This purpose which we are called to fulfill is to individually experience the vast creative potential that lies dormant in each of us. Thus, the Sabbath calls us to both remember the purpose for which man was created and to celebrate the creative potential within him. The Sabbath, that is, is a celebration of all that life is intended to be by fully and creatively experiencing that life.

Truly the Sabbath was made for man as it celebrated God's risk in creating life after His own image—to be like Himself. And ultimately, the Sabbath speaks of responsibility—the determination to be responsible for the life that now we create by God's grace. Thus, the Sabbath is the day for learning to be God's children, for learning to experience life as He promises in the message of the gospel. And perhaps guarding those important hours from interference can be relevant to the purpose of the Christian's "good news."

1. In your own mind, what are the criteria for proper Sabbath observance? What have been the major influences on the development of your ideas here?
 2. Must one always—or often—go to Sabbath School and church on Sabbath, or are there at times other and better options available for the dedicated Adventist Christian?
 3. In the How To article for this week, Richard Rice discusses several obstacles to proper Sabbath observance, one of which is “the tendency to think of Sabbath observance in negative terms, as avoiding certain things.” Why do you think Adventists generally have this negative tendency? Does the answer lie in taking themselves and their Sabbath observance a little less seriously?
 4. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”(Mark 2:27). How would you interpret and apply this statement of Jesus’ today?
 5. In the blank space below or on a separate sheet of paper share with yourself your deepest feelings about the Sabbath—your frustrations, or joys, or doubts, etc. Be honest.
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Honor Thy Father and Mother



“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—‘That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4; NIV).

Lesson 7, February 7-13

The Parent: INTRODUCTION Children and Adults

by Roger Bothwell

Some years ago, miles away, a caring faculty with genuine concern for each student was forced by prevailing evidence to call the parents of a wayward student requesting them to come and take him home from the academy. It was a highly emotional moment when parents and child met in the principal's office. The boy stared at the floor, his bottom lip quivering, as the decision of the faculty was explained to the parents.

Hardly able to believe what he was hearing the father turned to his son and with tension in his voice said, "How could you have done this, you've always been such a good boy? Please, tell me. I deserve an explanation. Now!"

"Please, Dad," said the trembling boy. "Please, I can't tell you now. But it isn't quite what it appears to be."

"Then explain," demanded the father.

"I'm sorry, Dad. I'm really sorry. But I can't explain now. Someday I'll be able to. Just trust me, Dad. Please trust me."

Stunned, the father turned, mumbling, "Trust me," he says. He is expelled from this school and he asks me to trust him."

Walking to the window the father paused for a long moment. The silence in the room was only broken by the mother's sobs. "Yes," he said, "Yes, you are my son. You have been a good son, I will trust you. You can explain when you feel you can. Until then I will trust you. Let's go home."

"Dad," he said, years later now as they walked together through the fields, "Dad, remember that awful and wonderful day at school in Elder Sincere's office? Dad, it was awful because it broke your heart. But it was wonderful as we left that day, because I knew how much you loved me. And I vowed someday to be a dad like you."

"Honor thy father and thy mother" says the commandment. The Scripture also says "cast thy bread upon the water and after many days you will find it again." The child is the parent of the adult.

Respect, honor, positive regard, meaningful relationships—these are all two way streets. The parent or child who desires to receive these in life must be willing to give.

The Beginning of Human Relations

by editors

LOGOS

Human relations today, as always, are being strained. Countries fight with countries, Republicans with Democrats, and even friends with friends. And the foundation of human relations—the family—is also involved in this constant turmoil. It is this divinely-originated institution that the fifth commandment of God's decalogue deals with: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Exodus 20:12; NAS). Paul also addresses this issue: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1).

Jesus, of course, is the Christian's model for understanding what "Honor your father and your mother" means. Luke tells us that after His excursion in Jerusalem, "Jesus went down with them [His parents], and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them" (Luke 2:51; NAS). The obedience and subjection shown by the Christ to Mary and Joseph is even more noticeable when we think of who He was: the Creator of the universe—indeed, the Creator of Mary and Joseph. One commentator writes of the incident, saying it "seems a downward step . . . self-submission, all the more glorious in proportion to the greatness of that self."¹

We see Jesus still concerned about and considerate of His mother again at the close of His life. Although hanging in torture upon the cross, "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household" (John 19:26, 27; NAS).

There is seemingly another side of Jesus' relationship to His family, however. Matthew tells us, "As Jesus was speaking in a crowded house His mother and brothers were outside, wanting to talk with Him. When someone told Him they were there, He remarked, 'Who is My mother? Who are My brothers?' He pointed to His disciples. 'Look!' He said, 'these are My mother and brothers.' Then He added, 'anyone who obeys My Father in heaven is My brother, sister and mother.'" (Matt. 12:46-50; NAS). Was Jesus setting Himself against His own command? Was He placing Himself under the curse promised in Deuteronomy: "Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother" (Deut. 27:16; NAS)?

A cursory reading of the passage might suggest this. But it would be most consistent to interpret Jesus' statement in terms that are complimentary and respectful of His parents and family. Says *The Interpreter's Bible*, "The family tie was taken by Jesus as the best illustration of all deep spiritual kinship."² Thus, Jesus was simply using the familiar relationships of the family—with all the connotations of honor and respect—to exemplify the relationships that are to exist between those in the body of Christ. His comments are to be seen in this light, and not as commentary on the fifth commandment.

While giving us a living illustration of how to fulfill the fifth commandment, Jesus also gave us an indication of how parents should behave towards their children to keep the entire unit happy, together and maturing. As Paul wrote, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4; NIV).

D.R.S.

¹ Alfred Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, Publishing Company, 1979), p. 35. Used by permission.

² *Interpreter's Bible*, (New York, Nashville: Pierce and Smith in the U.S., Abingdon Press, 1952), p. 986.

An Unending Obligation

selected by Roger Bothwell

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Colossians 3:18-4:12

The best way to educate children to respect their father and mother is to give them the opportunity of seeing the father offering kindly attentions to the mother, and the mother rendering respect and reverence to the father. It is by beholding love in their parents that children are led to obey the fifth commandment. . . .

Our obligation to our parents never ceases. Our love for them, and theirs for us, is not measured by years or distance, and our responsibility can never be set aside. When the nations are gathered before the judgment seat of Christ, but two classes will be represented—those who have identified their interest with Christ and suffering humanity; those who have ignored their God-given obligations, done injury to their fellowmen, and dishonor to God. Their eternal destiny will be decided on the ground of what they did and what they did not do to Christ in the person of His saints.¹

“And when the children of God manifest mercy, kindness, and love toward all men, they also are witnessing to the character of the statutes of heaven. They are bearing testimony to the fact that ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul’ (Psalm 18:7). And whoever fails to manifest this love is breaking the law which he professes to revere. For the spirit we manifest toward our brethren, declares what is the only spring of love toward our neighbor. ‘If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother whom he hath seen how can he love God whom he hath not seen? Beloved, ‘If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us’ (I John 4:20, 12).²

Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. . . . 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.³

The approval of God rests with loving assurance upon children and youth who cheerfully take their part in the duties of the household, sharing the burdens of father and mother. Such children will go out from the home to be useful members of society.⁴ All should find something to do that will be beneficial to themselves and helpful to others.⁵

Children and youth should take pleasure in making lighter the cares of father and mother, showing an unselfish interest in the home. As they cheerfully lift the burdens that fall to their share, they are receiving a training which will fit them for positions of trust and usefulness.⁶

While the parents live it should be the children’s joy to honor and respect them. They should bring all the cheerfulness and sunshine into the life of the aged parents that they possibly can. They should smooth their pathway to the grave. There is no better recommendation in this world than that a child has honored his parents, no better record in the books of heaven than that he has loved and honored father and mother.⁷

¹ *Review and Herald*, Nov. 15, 1892, p. 7

² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 505.

³ *Youth’s Instructor*, July 10, 1906, p. 7

⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 72.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Adventist Home*, p. 288.

⁷ *Review and Herald*, Nov. 15, 1892, p. 7

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□ February 9
Tuesday

Judaism: Parents and Children

selected by editors

EVIDENCE

Key passage:
Exodus 20:12

That children must love and honor their parents is undoubted. However, the sources emphasize that, patriarchal though ancient Jewish society was, the duty to honor parents applied in equal measure to the father and the mother. The parent-child relationship was not one way, for parents have specified duties toward their children. . . .

They asked Rav Ulla: To what point must one honor his parents? He told them: Go and see how a non-Jew named Dama ben Netinah treated his father in Ashkelon. The sages once sought to conclude a business transaction with him, through which he would gain 600,000 gold *denarii*. But the key to his vault was under the pillow of his sleeping father, and he refused to disturb him.

The disciples of Rabbi Eliezer the great asked him to give an example of honoring one's parents. He said: Go and see what Dama ben Netinah did in Ashkelon. His mother was feeble minded and she used to strike him with a shoe in the presence of the council over which he presided, but he never said more than "It is enough, mother." When the shoe fell from her hand he would pick it up for her, so that she would not be troubled.

Rabbi Simeon ben Johai said: Great is the duty of honoring one's parents, for the Holy One, praised be He, gave it status greater than the duty of honoring Him. Concerning the Holy One it is written "Honor the Lord with your substance" (Prov. 3:9). How is this done? By leaving grain in the field, giving priestly and poor tithes, observing the commandments of *Sukkah* and *Lulav*, *Shofar*, *Tefillin* and *Tzitzit*, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and clothing the naked. If you have the means to do these, then you are obligated to do them, but if you do not have the means you are not obligated. However, when it comes to honoring your parents, whether you are a man of substance or not, you are obligated to "honor your father and your mother" (Ex. 20:12)—even if you have to beg from door to door. . . .

A father is obligated to see that his son is circumcised, to redeem him (if he is the first-born), to teach him Torah and a craft and to find a wife for him. Some say that he must teach his son to swim. Rabbi Judah said: Whoever does not teach his son a craft is considered as having taught him thievery.

Rav said: A father should never favor one son more than the others, for because of a little extra silk which Jacob gave to Joseph, his brothers became jealous, sold him into slavery and it came about that our ancestors went down to Egypt.

Whoever hears a section of the Torah from his grandson is considered as hearing it at Mount Sinai on the day of Revelation, as it is written ". . . make them known to your children and your children's children . . . on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb" (Deut. 4:9, 10).

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba did not eat breakfast before he reviewed the previous day's verse with the child and taught him a new verse. Rabba bar Rav Huna did not eat breakfast before he took the child to school.

". . . and teach them to your children, to speak of them" (Deut. 11:19). From this it is said: When a child begins to speak, his father should speak with him in the holy tongue and teach him Torah. If he does not do so, it is as though he buries him.

Taken from *Judaism*, ed.
by Arthur Hertzberg,
Washington Square
Press, Inc. Copyright
George Brazilliers
Publishers, New York,
1961. Pages 86-88.

□ February 10
Wednesday

Truly Honoring Our Parents

by Rick Williams

"Honor your father and mother" means considerably more than saying "Yes" to all that they ask you to do. In fact, a successful argument could be made that saying "Yes" to everything they ask you to do would not be an honor to them at all. (For example, there was once a twenty-seven year old man living in a college dormitory who broke up with a girl that he had been dating because his parents told him that they thought he should not be spending time with girls while attending college.)

Certainly, to "Honor your father and mother" means much. But one of the most fundamental things it must mean is to develop good interpersonal skills with which to communicate with them. Thus, to honor our parents we should practice:

1. **Respect**—the ability to care genuinely about another person and be non-judgmental, even though he may behave in a manner that is not consistent with one's own belief of what Christian behavior should be.

2. **Genuineness**—the ability to be honest about the feelings and beliefs that we actually have. When we are honest we are indicating a high level of trust in the person with whom we are interacting. Through our genuineness we communicate to others that they are important enough for us to risk being truthful with, even though our truthfulness could be somewhat painful.

3. **Empathy**—the ability to imagine one's self in another person's position and understand what it feels like to be in that position. We honor others when we take time to understand what it would be like to be functioning in their positions with all the forces that are pressing upon them.

4. **Confrontation**—the ability to be actively involved in attempting to understand a discrepancy that you are perceiving in another person's behavior. For example, when an individual is saying one thing and yet seems to be behaving in quite a different manner, the "confronting" person would take the risk of saying, "On the one hand you indicate _____, while on the other hand you seem to be doing _____. Can you help me understand this?" Notice that there is no attack on the other person. But what one is doing is simply seeking clarification of an issue that he does not understand completely.

What an honor it would be to our parents if we would treat them with love and respect regardless of what their behavior may be. We would honor them significantly if we would take the time to see what it would be like being in their positions—to be making the decisions from their perspectives. We would honor them also if we could risk being honest at all times, and if we were willing to confront them when we did not understand an apparent difference between their words and actions.

HOW TO
Key passage:
Ephesians 6:2, 3

Rick Williams is a professor of education at Loma Linda University.

February 11
Thursday

Inspiring Honor

selected by Roger Bothwell

OPINION
Key passage:
John 4:23, 24

Authority. . . , particularly in the home and in religion, is based on love and respect, not force. As St. Thomas Aquinas put it: *Ex reverentia praecipientis prodedere debet reverentia praecepti*, "The respect that one has for the rule flows naturally from the respect that one had for the person who gave it." Authority must always have behind it some value which elicits respect and reverence. . . . If Mickey Mantle were to tell a boy how to hold a bat, his authority would be accepted out of reverence for the excellence of the instructor. . . . The acceptance of parental authority is not blind and baseless: Its foundation is love and confidence. . . . To a great extent the opposition of children to the authority of their parents is not directed against the law itself but against the person who enforces the law. Whenever a parent lacks those qualities which command respect, or whenever a child finds his parent to be without certain moral values, reverence vanishes. For example, if a child knows that a parent has been married and divorced four or five times, he will not be much impressed when the parent says, "You told Johnny that you would let him use your baseball bat; never break your word: always keep it." . . . Every defect in the parent's character creates a defect in the child's obedience. The authority of the parent is never abstracted from his personality; a rule is always incarnated in the person who makes it: "The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us." The child accepts the rule because of the moral value inherent in the parent. . . . The real basis of obedience in the family, therefore, is not the fear of punishment, as in religion it is not the fear of hell. Rather, it is based on the fact that one never wants to hurt anyone that one loves. As our Blessed Lord said; "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

Taken from Fulton J. Sheen, *Love, Marriage and Children* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1957), pp. 125-127.

□ February 12
Friday

Roger Bothwell is professor of counselor education at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

REACT
Lesson 7

1. Roger Bothwell writes in this week's Introduction, "The child is the parent of the adult." What does he mean? What are the implications?

2. Rick Williams brings up an interesting point in his How To article: Does "Honor your father and mother" mean to say "Yes" to all that they ask you to do?

3. Re the How To article for this week's lesson: What are three things you can do to help establish within your home a safe and affirming laboratory for the practice of interpersonal skills?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. A tragedy in American society today is that millions of fathers and mothers who should be "honored" are kept in old-age and nursing homes, away from family and friends and familiar places, often ignored and improperly cared for. What do you think can be done about this situation. Be creative.

Certainly there are people close to you who are old and deserve your honor and respect. What can you do to fulfill your duty to them in this way?

Life: An Irreplaceable Gift



"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. . . . And God spoke all these words: 'I am the Lord your God. . . . You shall not murder' " (Genesis 2:7; Exodus 20:1, 2, 13; NIV).

Lesson 8, February 14-20

An Irreplaceable Gift

INTRO-
DUCTION

by Vern R. Andress

It wasn't an impulsive idea that had led him to this shabby motel. He had methodically planned it, even rehearsed it in his mind until he felt he had each move memorized. At first, the thoughts had turned his stomach with anxiety and he had displaced them almost as quickly as they had come. But as time passed, it became easier to let the thoughts flow. It seemed like any rehearsal . . . practice made perfect.

Months of rehearsing had smoothed the rough edges and the thoughts had begun to flow easily. It was for this reason that he was surprised when he drove up to the door of the motel that night and realized that his stomach was in knots, his hands wringing wet, and his breath short and erratic. He sat at the front door for several long minutes before stepping into the office, wondering why the reality of this moment was so different from the carefully plotted thoughts that had led him here.

Having completed his registration he briskly walked down the hallway to the room which had been assigned to him. Several times his thoughts raced out of the reality of what was happening and nearly caused him to reverse his actions. He was intelligent, extremely well educated, successful in business and family relations and completely alien to the surroundings in which he found himself. He had a powerful ability to concentrate which permitted him to remove himself from his immediate surroundings almost at will. It was this purposeful ability to concentrate that had helped him to become what his friends would call "the epitome of success."

In a moment his actions were almost automatic as he began to perform in reality the ritual so often performed in his imagination. Removing the wallet from his pants pocket he

extracted three photos which he carefully placed on the cigarette-scarred bedstand. He paused, looked, and for a brief moment tears blurred the smiling faces he had grown to love so much.

In all his mental rehearsal of this moment, he had two major questions which were difficult to resolve. Uncharacteristically he had chosen to answer these questions by not dwelling on them. The first question, prompted by the photographs of his family, lingered in his mind no longer than the tears that had gathered in the corners of his eyes. "What long-lasting effect will my actions today have. . . ? He couldn't bear to complete the question, let alone contemplate an answer.

The first question invariably initiated the second one. He couldn't remember a time when he wasn't deeply concerned about eternity and his relationship to God. His was a personal God with whom he was in daily communication . . . until just recently when he had chosen not to deal with that one burning question. "How will today alter my relationship to God?" At first he had tried to answer the question, but with time he had become more and more resistant to giving it room in his thoughts. Somehow, he had convinced himself that surely God would understand. Yet, deep inside him was the ever-present concern that what he was about to do might forever separate him from the eternity he had dreamed about since his youth.

He was conscious of the cold steel revolver in his hand for only a brief instant. His last thoughts, scribbled on the face of an envelope began simply, "Forgive me. The pain has grown so great I can think of no other alternative. . . ."

Vern R. Andress is dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Loma Linda University.

□ February 14
Sunday

Life: The Irreplaceable Gift

by editors

LOGOS

From Sinai the command thundered, "Thou shalt not murder" (Exodus 20:13; NAS). Positively worded, the divine Law-Giver was saying, "Thou shall respect, love and cherish life."

This command, usually understood as being fundamental to a conception of human experience, is not self-evident. There is no naturally postulated reason as to why one should respect human existence. For unbelievers, there is no purely philosophical proof from which one may argue, for example, why a dictator such as Hitler should not exterminate millions of Jews.

Thus, the sixth commandment, often taken for granted, is indeed very significant. It calls upon man to respect life, not because such is the natural order of things, but because it is the command of God. Because God has commanded, man "shall not murder" other men.

Still, however, the commandment seems quite simple. But for one who is perceptive and given to reflection upon such things, it soon becomes obvious that the application of the command becomes tangled in our daily lives.

For example, it would be legitimate to consider the extent to which the command to respect life impinges upon our health. Is, for example, the unnecessary eating of an ice-cream cone, which contains between five and eight teaspoons of sugar per scoop, a breaking of the "thou shalt respect life" commandment? Or, one could ask, is failure to vigorously exercise on a regular basis breaking the command?

The questions concerning respect for life go much deeper than the personal ones, though. Note that 525,821 Americans lost their lives in the five years of civil war, 406,000 died during World War II and 47,000 were killed in the Vietnam era.

The story is told of a cannibal who once asked a "civilized" person, "Why do you kill so many people in war? You cannot eat them all! Is it not rather wasteful to kill so many?"

In a "modern" and "civilized" age, the understanding that one is to respect life should be fundamental. But as Daniel Berrigan makes clear, in this time of technological warfare, it is not. "It is terrible for me to live in a time when I have nothing to say to human beings but 'Stop killing.' There are other beautiful things I would love to be saying to people . . . I cannot . . . nothing can be settled until this [the problem of war] is settled. Or the missiles will settle us, once and for all."

Jesus, of course, is the Christian's example in learning to respect the lives of other human beings. His commands radically enforce those given from Sinai: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder. . . .' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement . . . You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies. . . ." (Matt. 5:21, 22, 38, 39, 43, 44; NIV).

Paul wrote that "the God who made the world and everything in it, . . . gives to all men life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:24, 25; RSV). God gives it and we have been asked to respect, love and cherish this gift, in ourselves and in others.

D.R.S./E.B.S.

Love, a Divine Principle

selected by Albert E. Smith

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Matthew 5:43-45

"All created beings live by the will and power of God. . . . From the highest seraph to the humblest animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life."¹

"The Jews held that God loved those who served Him. . . . Not so, said Jesus; the whole world, the evil and the good, lies in the sunshine of His love. This truth you should have learned from nature itself; for God 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' . . . His love received, will make us, in like manner, kind and tender, not merely toward those who please us, but to the most faulty and erring and sinful."²

"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 or 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."³

"We are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and whatever we do to benefit and uplift others, will reflect in blessing upon ourselves. The law of mutual dependence runs through all classes of society."⁴

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 785.

² *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 74, 75.

³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 534, 535.

Albert E. Smith is professor of physics at Loma
Linda University.

□ February 16
Tuesday

On Respect For Life

by Karl Barth

EVIDENCE

Key passage:
Exodus 20:13

The command
of God alone
creates
respect for
life

We now turn to the specific theme of . . . respect for life. Those who handle life as a divine loan will above all treat it with respect. Respect is man's astonishment, humility and awe at a fact in which he meets something superior—majesty, dignity, holiness, a mystery which compels him to withdraw and keep his distance, to handle it modestly, circumspectly and carefully. . . . Life does not create this respect. The command of God creates respect for it. When man in faith in God's Word and promise realises how God from eternity has maintained and loved him in his little life, and what He has done for him in time, in this knowledge of human life he is faced by a majestic, dignified and holy fact. In human life itself he meets something superior. He is thus summoned to respect because the living God has distinguished it in this way and taken it to Himself. We may confidently say that the birth of Jesus Christ as such is the revelation of the command as that of respect for life. This reveals the eternal election and love of God. This unmistakably differentiates human life from everything that is and is done in heaven and earth. This gives it even in the most doubtful form the character of something singular, unique, unrepeatable and irreplaceable. This decides that it is an advantage and something good and worthwhile to be as man. This characterizes life as the incomparable and non-recurrent opportunity to praise God. And therefore this makes it an object of respect. . . .

But what does respect for life mean? We have spoken of astonishment, humility, awe, modesty, circumspection and carefulness. Application must now be made to our particular theme. . . .

First, it obviously means an adoption of the distance proper in face of a mystery. It is a mystery that I am, and others too, in this human structure and individuality in which we recognize one another as the same kind, each in his time and freedom, each in his vertical and horizontal orientation. This is indeed an incomprehensible and in relation to ourselves intangible fact, inexhaustible in its factuality and depth and constantly adapted to give us pause. . . . All human life as such is surrounded by a particular solemnity. This is not the solemnity of the divine, nor of the ultimate end of man. Life is only human and therefore created, and eternity as the divinely decreed destiny of man is only an allotted future. But within these limits it is a mystery emphasized and absolutely distinguished by God Himself. As such it must always be honoured with new wonder. Every single point to be observed and pondered is in its own way equally marvellous—and everything is equally marvellous in every human existence. First, then, we have simply to perceive this, and once we have done so we have not at any price to relinquish or even to lose sight of this perception. We must be awake to this need to keep our distance, and always be wakeful as we do so.

But a mere theoretical and aesthetic wonder is not enough. On the contrary, the theoretical and aesthetic wonder which rightly understood forms the presupposition for everything else, must itself have a practical character if it is to be the required respect. And this means that human life must be affirmed and willed by man. We hasten to add that it must be affirmed and willed as his own with that of others and that of others with his own. . . . Although they are not the same, but

Life "must
always be
honoured with
new wonder"

taken from Karl Barth,
Church Dogmatics, vol. 3,
part 4 (Edinburgh: T. & T.
Clark, 1961), pp. 339-344.

□ February 17
Wednesday

Karl Barth is considered by some to be the most
significant theologian of this century.

each distinct, the homogeneity and solidarity of all human life is indissoluble. . . . against the constant threat of egoism, there is always the safeguard and corrective recollection that the real human life is the one which is lived in orientation on God and co-ordination with others. The last is particularly important from the practical standpoint. The will to live which is the form of respect for life will always be distinguishable from an inhuman and irreverent will to live contrary to the command, by the fact that it considers the existence and life of others together with its own, and its own together with that of others.

But having considered and said this, we must also show that the commanded respect for life includes an awareness of its limitations. . . . We refer to the creaturely and the eschatological limitations. These cannot diminish respect for life, much less abrogate it. But it is necessarily modified and characterized by the fact that the life to which it is paid has these limitations. . . . Life is no second God, and therefore the respect due to it cannot rival the reverence owed to God. On the contrary, it is limited by that which God will have from the man who is elected and called by Him. For the life of man belongs to Him. He has granted it to him as a loan. And He decides in what its right use should consist. He also decrees and decides in his command in what man's will to live should at any moment consist or not, and how far it should go or not go as such. And what God will have of man is not simply that he should will to live for himself and in co-existence with others. God can also will to restrict man's will to live for himself and in co-existence with others. He can weaken, break and finally destroy it. He actually does this. And when He does, obedience may not be withheld from Him. As Creator and Lord of life, He has also the right to will and do this, and if He does, then He knows well why it must be so, and in this too He is man's gracious Father. In relation to man, He has much more in mind than what man can see here and now in the fulfillment of his life-act. He has determined him for eternal life, for the life which one day will finally be given him. He is leading him through this life to the other. The respect for life commanded by Him cannot then be made by man a rigid principle, an absolute rule to be fulfilled according to rote. It can only try to assert and maintain itself as the will to live in the one sense understood by man, whether in relation to his own life or that of others. Respect for life, if it is obedience to God's command, will have regard for the free will of the One who has given life as a loan. It will not consist in an absolute will to live, but in a will to live which by God's decree and command, and by *meditatio futurae vitae*, may perhaps in many ways be weakened, broken, relativised and finally destroyed. Being prepared for this, it will move within its appointed limits. It can always be modest. And it will not on this account be any the less respect for life. It will be so in this modesty and in readiness for it. . . . Respect for life without this closer definition could be the principle of an idolatry which has nothing whatever to do with Christian obedience.

But this reservation must now be strictly and sharply qualified. This inwardly necessary relativisation of what is required of us as respect for life, this recollection of the freedom of the controlling and commanding God and of eternal life as the limitation of this present life,

“The real human life is the one which is lived in orientation on God and co-ordination with others”

“God can also will to restrict man's will to live for himself and in co-existence with others”

must not be forgotten for a single moment. But the application of this reservation, the reference to it and the corresponding modesty, cannot have more than the character of an *ultima ratio*, an exceptional case. They arise only on the frontiers of life and therefore of the respect due to it. Hence it is not true that respect for life is alternately commanded and then not commanded us. Neither is it true that alongside the sphere of this respect there is a sphere in which it is not normative, or only partially so. However much what we understand by this respect and therefore by the commanded will to live is limited and relativised by God's free will and man's determination form this respect. The one God, who is of course the Lord of life and death, the Giver of this life and that which is to come, will in all circumstances and in every conceivable modification demand respect for life. He will never give man liberty to take another view of life, whether his own or that of others. Indifference, wantonness, arbitrariness or anything else opposed to respect cannot even be considered as a commanded or even a permitted attitude. Even the way to these frontiers—the frontiers where respect for life and the will to live can assume in practice very strange and paradoxical forms, where in relation to one's own life and that of others it can only be a matter of that relativised, weakened, broken and even destroyed will to live—will always be a long one which we take thoughtfully and conscientiously, continually asking and testing whether that *ultima ratio* really applies. The frontiers must not be arbitrarily advanced in any spirit of frivolity or pedantry; they can be only reached in obedience and then respected as such. Recollection of the freedom and the superior wisdom, goodness and controlling power of God, and recollection of the future life, cannot then form a pretext or excuse for attitudes and modes of action in which man may actually evade what is commanded within these limits. They are frontiers which are necessarily set by God, and cannot be claimed as emancipations of man. This will be best understood by those who do not treat respect for life as a principle set up by man. Even on these frontiers they will not see a relaxation of the command or exception to the rule, but only a relaxation of that which they think they should understand and offer as obedience when they accept it as a summons to the will to live. Even here there will be required of them a new and deeper understanding of the will to live, which *ultima ratione* can now take the form of a broken and even destroyed will to live, and, if it be the will of God, must necessarily do so. Yet if it is an obedient and not a frivolous will, if it is not wantonness and self-will, it must always be the will to live, and therefore the practical form of respect for life. . . .

**“Man may
not be
the murderer
of man”**

The explicit biblical form of the command is the “Thou shalt not kill” of the Decalogue. . . . We may note already the clear-cut reason for this command in Gen. 9:6: “For in the image of God made he man.” Both in form and sense this Old Testament command is impressive by reason of the very fact that it has a purely negative and therefore a purely defensive character. Man may not be the murderer of man. Respect for life is thus described from its opposite pole.

On Improving the Irreplaceable Gift

by Vern R. Andress

How fragile life can be at times. Yet, despite the odds, organisms fight on for survival . . . even in the most hostile environments. The will to live is one of the strongest driving forces of the human being; but it can be overpowered by self-pity, sorrow and negative thinking. We all have times when we are down emotionally. Sometimes these moments are overwhelming and our discouragement makes living seem like an impossible task. So following are some tips on how to improve living so that life can be seen as the irreplaceable gift it really is.

HOW TO
Key passage:
Psalm 102

1. **Accept the fact that life may be a struggle.** Greenberg emphasizes this in the title of her book, *"I Never Promised You a Rose Garden."* But acceptance of the fact is not, in and of itself, sufficient. One must learn and truly believe that through the act of struggling and overcoming, one is strengthened. The art of the body builder who struggles with the strenuous task of lifting weights gives evidence of this.

2. **Don't "catastrophize."** Some people can make a mountain out of the smallest molehill. "Catastrophizing" is blowing one's problems up to a size that is completely out of proportion to their significance. Problems confront us every day but very few of them are catastrophic. Life goes on in spite of them.

3. **Be willing to make mistakes . . . and grow by them.** No human is perfect. We all make mistakes and survive them. Usually we grow by them. The person who catastrophizes is convinced that his mistakes are unlike any other mistakes ever made by anybody—and he is tempted to give up. But rather than doing this one should analyze failure and see how he can correct or prevent it in the future. It is through this process that the infant learns to walk. He stumbles and falls (a mistake), ponders his situation (analysis), gets up and tries again and eventually conquers the task by learning from his mistakes.

4. **Develop positive attitudes.** Many people become discouraged because they can only look for the bad in their experiences. But one must consciously decide to look for the good. Few experiences are *all* bad.

5. **Develop a sense of humor.** This doesn't necessarily mean learn how to appreciate jokes. It means learning not to take one's self *too* seriously. Life has little meaning for the person who is overly self absorbed. There is no freedom to be and to enjoy when one is continuously worrying about himself.

6. **Develop a healthy love of self.** The commandment says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." This doesn't mean one should become self-centered or selfish. But it does mean that one should have a healthy self-respect which acknowledges one's worth. For the Christian this is particularly easy if one realizes the high price that was paid for his personal salvation.

7. **Don't bottle up . . . be willing to be open and share.** Sharing one's problems and concerns is one of the healthiest ways of dealing with them and making them livable. It helps one gain insight and new perspectives. Sharing can be done with respected friends and family. And in tough cases it can—and many times should—also be done with professionals. But in every case it should be done with God.

Vern R. Andress is dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Loma Linda University.

February 18
Thursday

The Ultimate Disrespect of Life

selected by editors

OPINION

Key passage:
II Peter 3:10

"And so it was in those days . . . that the princes of Earth had hardened their hearts . . . and of their pride there was no end. And each of them thought within himself that it was better for all to be destroyed than for the will of other princes to prevail over his. For the mighty of the Earth did contend among themselves for supreme power . . . and of war they feared greatly and did tremble; for the Lord God had suffered the wise men of those times to learn the means by which the world itself might be destroyed, and into their hands was given the sword of the Archangel wherewith Lucifer had been cast down, that man and princes might fear God and humble themselves before the Most High. But they were not humbled.

And Satan spoke unto a certain prince, saying: "Fear not to use the sword, for the wise men have deceived you in saying that the world would be destroyed thereby. Listen not to the counsel of weaklings, for they fear you exceedingly, and they serve your enemies by staying your hand against them. Strike, and know that you shall be king. . . ."

And the prince did heed the word of Satan, and he summoned all of the wise men of the realm and called upon them to give him counsel as to the ways in which the enemy might be destroyed without bringing down the wrath upon his own kingdom. But most of the wise men said, "Lord, it is not possible, for your enemies also have the sword which we have given you, and the fieriness of it is as the flame of Hell and as the fury of the sun-star from whence it was kindled."

"Then thou shalt make me yet another which is yet seven times hotter than Hell itself," commanded the prince, whose arrogance had come to surpass that of Pharaoh.

And many of them said: "Nay, Lord, ask not this thing of us; for even the smoke of such a fire, if we were to kindle it for thee, would cause many to perish." . . .

But one of the magi was like Judas Iscariot, and his testimony was crafty, and having betrayed his brothers, he lied to all the people, advising them not to fear the demon Fallout. The prince heeded this false wise man. . . .

And the prince smote the cities of his enemies . . . and for three days and nights did his great catapults and metal birds rain wrath upon them. Over each city a sun appeared and was brighter than the sun of heaven, and immediately that city withered and melted as wax under the torch, and the people thereof did stop in the streets and their skins smoked and they became as fagots thrown on the coals. . . . Poisonous fumes fell over all the land, and the land was aglow by night with the afterfire and the curse of the afterfire which caused a scurf on the skin and made the hair to fall and the blood to die in the veins.

And a great stink went up from Earth even unto Heaven. Like unto Sodom and Gomorrah was the Earth. The stink of the carnage was exceedingly offensive to the Lord, Who spoke unto the prince, *Name*, saying: "WHAT BURNT OFFERING IS THIS THAT YOU HAVE PREPARED BEFORE ME? WHAT IS THIS SAVOR THAT ARISES FROM THE PLACE OF HOLOCAUST? HAVE YOU MADE ME A HOLOCAUST OF SHEEP OR GOATS, OR OFFERED A CALF UNTO GOD?"

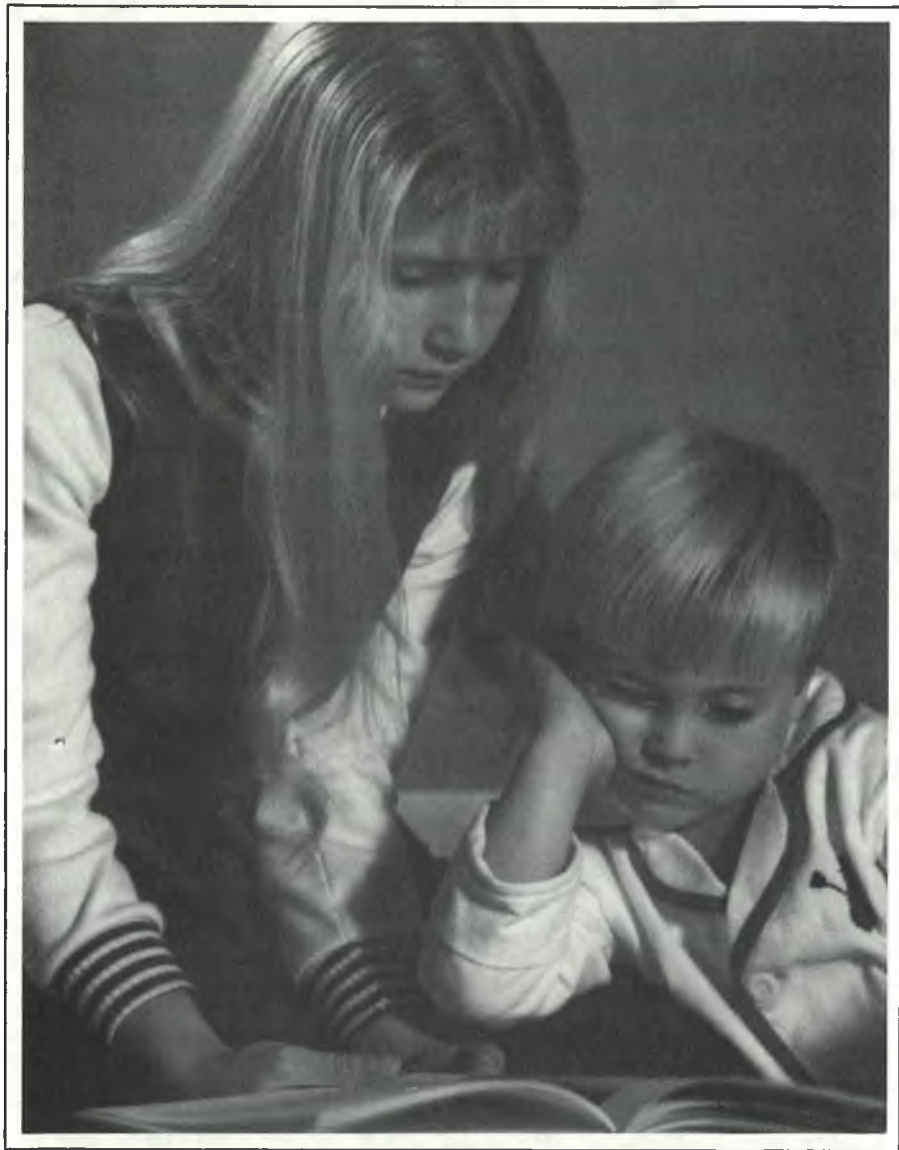
But the prince answered him not, and God said: "YOU HAVE MADE ME A HOLOCAUST OF MY SONS."

Canticle for Leibowitz
by W. M. Miller, Jr. (Bantam Books: New York, 959), pp. 151-153.

□ February 19
Friday

1. What is your reaction to the introductory article for this week's lesson? Could it ever be morally right to commit suicide? If one does commit suicide, has that person automatically forfeited eternal life? Explain.
2. Ellen White is quoted in this week's Testimony article as writing: "We are all woven together in the great web of humanity and whatever we do to benefit and uplift others, will reflect in blessing upon ourselves. The law of mutual dependence runs through all classes of society." What are the social and political implications of this statement?
3. Karl Barth suggests in this week's Evidence article that theoretically there is a limit to God's command to respect life—i.e., when this command to respect life conflicts with the command to reverence God. In life, where might these limitations be found? In matters of abortion? Capital punishment? War? etc.?
4. After reading this week's Opinion article, do you believe the article is appropriately named: *The Ultimate Disrespect of Life*? What is your reaction to this piece, relative to the sixth commandment and the information in this week's lesson? What is the Christian's responsibility to see that a scenario like this does not take place?
5. This week's lesson has focused on human life as an irreplaceable gift. But to be fair, one must realize that *all* life is irreplaceable, the human's as well as the toad's and the tulip's. Therefore, what relationship do you see between this week's lesson topic and ecological concerns?

Marriage



"On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples also had been invited to the wedding"
John 2:1, 2; NIV.

Lesson 9, February 21-27

author unknown

The Wall

INTRO-
DUCTION

Their wedding picture mocked them from the table, these two,
whose minds no longer touched each other.
They lived with such a heavy barricade between them that neither
battering ram of words nor artilleries of touch could break it
down.

Somewhere, between the oldest child's first tooth and the
youngest daughter's graduation, they lost each other.
Throughout the years, each slowly unraveled that tangled ball
of string called self, and as they tugged at stubborn knots
each hid his searching from the other.
Sometimes she cried at night and begged the whispering darkness
to tell her who she was.
He lay beside her, snoring like a hibernating bear, unaware of her
winter.

Once, after they had made love, he wanted to tell her how
afraid he was of dying, but, fearing to show his naked
soul, he spoke instead about the beauty of her breasts.
She took a course in modern art, trying to find herself in
colors splashed upon a canvas, and complaining to other
women about men who were insensitive.
He climbed into a tomb called "The Office," wrapped his mind in
a shroud of paper figures and buried himself in customers.

Slowly, the wall between them rose, cemented by the mortar of
indifference.

One day, reaching out to touch each other, they found a barrier
they could not penetrate, and recoiling from the coldness
of the stone, each retreated from the stranger on the other
side.

For when love dies, it is not in a moment of angry battle,
nor when fiery bodies lose their heat.
It lies panting, exhausted, expiring at the bottom of a wall
it could not scale.

Marriage

by editors

LOGOS

"Now about those questions you asked in your last letter: my answer is that if you do not marry, it is good. But usually it is best to be married, each man having his own wife, and each woman having her own husband, because otherwise you might fall back into sin" (I Cor. 7:12; LNT). Paul seems to be saying, "Remember where you are living; remember that you are living in Corinth where you cannot even walk along the street without temptation rearing its head at you. Remember your own physical constitution and the healthy instincts which nature has given you. You will be for better to marry than to fall into sin."¹

Paul is here offering marriage as a protection against the believers' own desires and those desires of others. And he is certainly well intentioned. But isn't this quite a negative view of the great Edenic institution? Is marriage just an "out" to escape from sexual temptation? Is it just a means of protection from one's incapacities to control sexual desires? Apparently not. Listen to the testimony of Genesis: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him'" (Genesis 2:18; GNB). The Genesis account does not encourage marriage as the lesser of evils. It pictures God writing His signature and bestowing His confidence upon the nuptial state.

"For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24; NAS). Walter Trobisch points out the three elements making up a biblical marriage in this verse: (1) leaving (2) cleaving (3) becoming one flesh.² God's creation and God's directions: marriage was God's idea!

Yet, we still must come back to Paul's negative, or perhaps better put, "cautious" attitudes towards marriage. He wrote, "An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please Him. But a married man can't do that so well; he has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife" (I Cor. 7:32, 33; LNT). He adds, "Those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that" (I Cor. 7:28; RSV).

Jesus' words also leave the option of the single life open to His followers. After telling them "Anyone who divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery," the disciples asked Him, "If that is how it is, it is better not to marry!" Jesus answered, "Not everyone can accept this statement . . . Only those whom God helps. Some are born without the ability to marry, and some are disabled by man, and some refuse to marry for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19:9-12; LNT).

Although Jesus' own bachelor existence adds credibility to the single life, the single person unfortunately does not find him or herself especially supported in the Christian community in this lifestyle. Many "singles'" needs are left unattended. Thus, Joy Adams challenges, "First let the church acknowledge that far too little has been done to provide wide, significant contacts for young unmarried Christians. In her repentance the church should 'do works fitting for repentance' by beginning to do a great deal more for singles."³

Since the Bible, then, describes marriage as a gift from God, but also celibacy as being a gift, the church must attempt to affirm and to meet the needs of both the married and the single.

D.R.S.

¹ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Corinthians*, (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1956), pp. 117, 118.

² Walter Trobisch, *I Married You* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 12.

³ Joy Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Nuthley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972), p. 63.

Counsel to A Newly Married Couple

selected by editors

Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church. The spirit that Christ manifests toward His church is the spirit that the husband and wife are to manifest toward each other. If they love God supremely, they will love each other in the Lord, ever treating each other courteously, drawing in even cords. In their mutual self-denial and self-sacrifice they will be a blessing to each other. . . .

Both of you need to be converted. Neither of you have a proper idea of the meaning of obedience to God. Study the words, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad." I sincerely hope that you will both become true children of God, servants to whom He can entrust responsibilities. Then peace and confidence and faith will come to you. Yes, you may both be happy, consistent Christians. Cultivate keenness of perception, that you may know how to choose the good and refuse the evil. Make the word of God your study. The Lord Jesus wants you to be saved. He has wonderfully preserved you, my brother, that your life may be one of usefulness. Bring all the good works possible into it.

Unless you have an earnest desire to become children of God, you will not understand clearly how to help each other. To each other ever be tender and thoughtful, giving up your own wishes and purposes to make each other happy. Day by day you may make advancement in self-knowledge. Day by day you may learn better how to strengthen your weak points of character. The Lord Jesus will be your light, your strength, your crown of rejoicing, because you yield the will to His will. . . .

You need the subduing grace of God in your heart. Do not desire a life of ease and inactivity. All who are connected with the Lord's work must be constantly on guard against selfishness. Keep your lamp trimmed and burning. Then you will not be reckless of your words and actions. You will both be happy if you try to please each other. Keep the windows of the soul closed earthward and opened heavenward.

Men and women may reach a high standard, if they will but acknowledge Christ as their personal Saviour. Watch and pray, making a surrender of all to God. The knowledge that you are striving for eternal life will strengthen and comfort you both. In thought, in word, in action, you are to be lights to the world. Discipline yourselves in the Lord; for He has committed to you sacred trusts, which you cannot properly fulfill without this discipline. By believing in Jesus, you are not only to save your own souls, but by precept and example you are to seek to save other souls. Take Christ as your pattern. Hold Him up as the One who can give you power to overcome. Utterly destroy the root of selfishness. Magnify God, for you are His children. Glorify your Redeemer, and He will give you a place in His kingdom.

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Song of Songs
5-8

"Unless you have an earnest desire to become children of God, you will not understand clearly how to help each other"

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

by Diana Cole
and Monica Schulte

EVIDENCE

Key passage:
Colossians
3:18, 19

Any time two personalities mesh, whether in friendships, dating or marriage relationships, there will be some clashes and conflict, and readjustments to be made.

This is especially true of the marriage relationship because of the demands and expectations inherent in it. Conflict can arise because of differences in understanding between the couple as to what they expect marriage to be or what role they expect it to fulfill in their lives. For example, one mate may see marriage as a place to be nurtured in the kind of relationship he or she was deprived of as a child, while the other partner may view marriage more as a respectable position which provides status in society.

Intrapsychic (within the mind) and biological determinants between two personalities can also lead to early difficulties. Issues such as dependence vs. independence, use or abuse of power by one partner, fear of loneliness or abandonment, the need to possess or control the other person, differences in perceiving and reflecting upon reality, or the need for acceptance are common in many marriages. Disharmony later in marriage is usually caused by problems that have an external focus, such as families of origin, relationships with children, money, sex, values, friends, roles or interests.¹

Conflict:
"a natural
component of
the dynamics
of an intimate
human
relationship"

Indeed, in life, conflicts always have and always will arise. But it is much easier to understand and relate to conflict if it is accepted as a natural component of the dynamics of an intimate human relationship. To simply experience conflict in marriage is not a sign of an unhealthy or unloving relationship. Nevertheless, it is important for growth and happiness that this conflict be resolved.

Conflict resolution leads to greater intimacy. The most devastating result of avoidance of conflict, or inappropriate management of it, is decreased intimacy. If conflict areas are not openly dealt with, communication about other topics, events, and feelings dwindle and may result in a deafening silence. Whether or not a relationship survives under these circumstances is one thing. But at a bare minimum it is robbed of the joy that can be found through the process of communication.

The first step in dealing with conflict is to accept it as a natural part of any intimate relationship. L'Abate, a psychologist who has studied the relationship of intimacy and conflict, has defined intimacy as the sharing of hurt and fears of being hurt. In other words, intimacy requires the risk of openness in self-disclosure that makes each person vulnerable to the other. L'Abate points out that there are three paradoxes of intimacy. (1) We need to be separate in order to be close. (2) We hurt and are hurt most by those we most deeply love. (3) We need to comfort and be comforted by those we have hurt or who have hurt us.²

It is unrealistic for any person, Christian or non-Christian, to expect marriage to be a "happily ever after" experience. Thus, our challenge is to find ways to creatively deal with and accept conflicts as they arise. Words can either build bridges between people or burn them. And we should each strive to build rather than destroy.

¹ Clifford J. Sager. *Marriage Contracts and Couple Therapy: Hidden Forces in Intimate Relationships*. (New York: Brunner/Mazel, Pub., 1976).

² Luciano L'Abate. Intimacy is sharing hurt feelings: a comparison of three conflict resolution models. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, (April) 5 (2) 35-41, 1979.

To Be Committed

by Alberta Mazat

HOW TO
Key passage
Genesis 2:15-25

All too frequently, "lived happily ever after" isn't the conclusion to the story with the marriage vows. Marriages now, even within church communities, are failing with dismal regularity.

I propose that one of the reasons is centered around the lack of commitment. Too often we hear, "My marriage is simply not meeting my needs," or "I want more from marriage than this!" Now, it is very possible that these statements are expressing a very real situation. But instead of giving up at this point of despair, what is needed is a firm commitment to work on the relationship. Commitment implies a pledge or a promise to stay with something. But that is a rather general statement. Let's be more specific, and talk about three ways a married couple can work on their commitment to one another.

1. Emotional commitment. This commitment strives to meet one's spouse on the emotional level. Wives and husbands will need to realize that this does not mean flowery, well-turned phrases. Some of the most precious moments center around simply expressing to one another what brings joy, what hurts, what causes feeling of failure, what lifts spirits.

Mini-retreats of reading love poetry together, even for five minutes a day; leaving a note where it will be found; touching which is not related to a sexual experience, many times a day; these are good starts, the repertoire can build from here.

2. Intellectual commitment: This can take two forms. One would be a back-up system to a weakening emotional commitment. One's emotions are not always faithful under stress and frustrated expectations. A co-worker's rapt listening when you felt put-down at home, a series of arguments which make you feel misunderstood—these can sometimes try the faithfulness of an aggrieved spouse. Here is where the intellectual commitment brings with it a reminder of vows, of the rewarding aspects of the relationship, to remind that impulse is not a good judge of future satisfaction.

Intellectual commitment can also involve the spouses in a growing knowledge of how to enrich their marriage. It can help them to understand cognitively why they respond to one another as they do and teach them new ways of responding which are more constructive. It can add to their hours of enjoyment together by attending lectures, workshops, classes, by reading and discussion.

3. Physical commitment: Sexual pleasure is part of God's wonderful plan for wives and husbands. He made woman and man with special capabilities and desires to unite as one flesh in this ultimate act of communication. Physical commitment does not consist only in being faithful in the flesh to one's marriage vows. It represents a growing joyousness as marital partners strive to enhance their appreciation of this gift which God bestows. Where uneasiness and reluctance, thoughtlessness or misunderstanding of the sexual act is part of the data that one or the other brings to the marriage, both will want to communicate, to read, to counsel, so that this part of their togetherness is not marred.

Good marriages don't just happen, they are carefully nurtured. They involve an investment of time. But wasn't assuring time alone together one of the main reasons that marriage seemed so desirable?

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□ February 25
Thursday

Communicating Intimacy in Marriage

by Nanci Bellington

OPINION

Key passage:
Song of Songs
1-4

Intimacy is
"keeping in
good repair
the bridge
that joins
two persons"

"How beautiful, how grand and liberating this experience is, when couples learn to help each other. It is impossible to overemphasize the need men have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood. . . . No one can develop freely in this world and find a full life without feeling understood by at least one person."¹

Within each of us there exists a powerful longing for a meaningful relationship with at least one other person. The quality of this relationship determines to a large extent the satisfaction of our basic interpersonal needs and our development in the process of self-actualization. Marriage is intended to be an intimate relationship. In taking marriage vows, partners agree to become key resource persons in providing intimacy for one-another. And intimacy is the crucial need of marriages today.

The word "intimacy" in freighted with meanings, ranging from friendship, to close association, to deeply personal and private intimacy, to intimacy pertaining to the inmost nature or being of a person, or to intimacy in sexual relations. Intimacy with a marriage can refer to both a close moment of intense sharing or an ongoing quality of the relationship which is present even in times of distance and conflict. Intimacy is being together both physically and emotionally in each other's worlds of feelings, anxieties, and dreams. It is keeping in good repair the bridge that joins two persons.

Communication is essential in establishing intimacy, for only through communication do we reach understanding, which is the heart of marital intimacy. This communication can occur on both verbal and non-verbal levels and can be intrapersonal or interpersonal. Intrapersonal communication, or an understanding of oneself, is the basis for all other communication arenas. Through exploration of ourselves we become aware of things within us that cause barriers to intimacy. A lack of a firm sense of identity, emotional immaturity, low self-esteem, the fear of intimacy, or feedback from another person can make us unable or unwilling to risk the self-disclosure that is essential in the development of intimacy. But growth of intimacy is evident when couples can risk this openness in their strivings to have a genuine encounter with each other. Jourard has said, "Only when each individual relaxes his mask and becomes transparent can intimacy develop."²

¹ Tournier, Paul. *To Understand Each Other* (Virginia: John Knox Press., 1972).

² Jourard, Sidney, M. *The Transparent Self* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1971).

REACT
Lesson 9

1. Read again the poem, "The Wall," in this week's Introduction. If you are married, do you see yourself in this poem? If you are not yet married but anticipate it, what do you think can be done to help prevent "the wall" from dividing you from your future spouse?
2. The authors for this week's Evidence section state that conflict should be "accepted as a natural component of the dynamics of an intimate human relationship. To simply experience conflict in marriage is not a sign of an unhealthy or unloving relationship." Do you agree? Would you add any cautions to this statement?
3. The seventh commandment ("You shall not commit adultery;" NIV) obviously explicitly prohibits only adultery. Nevertheless, some often interpret it as prohibiting pre-marital sex, incest, rape, etc. Is this broad interpretation of a specific command justified? Explain.
4. This week's Logos article suggests that the Christian community is generally not as supportive and affirming of the single lifestyle as it is of the marriage relationship. Why is this? What can be done to help assure the Christian "singles" of the support, intimacy and close relationships we humans all need?
5. Read Colossians 3:18, 19. What do you appreciate about this text? What do you find difficult to understand?
6. After reading the Song of Songs, discuss the implications this book should have on the marriage relationship.

Does this book have significance for the single person as well?

Absolute Honesty



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

Lesson 10, February 28-March 6

The Ethics of Honesty

INTRODUCTION

by Steve G. Daily

Several years ago a high ranking government official in the United States, faced with an international crisis, publicly declared that the government has "an inherent right to lie" for the sake of national security. Do you agree?

A dangerous intruder enters the house of a woman who is home alone. Keeping her wits about her, she calls out to her husband—who is not there—and the intruder flees. Is such deception justified under such circumstances?

When these questions were asked in a survey¹ taken at a Seventh-day Adventist academy involving one hundred twenty-six seniors 23% replied in the affirmative to the first question, and 80% reacted positively to the second question.

Whenever we approach the ethical question of honesty, there is always the danger that such a discussion will degenerate into a debate over a host of hypothetical situations that few of us will ever face in real life. Still, we cannot deny the fact that situations do arise in real life that force us to consider the following questions:

1. Is absolute honesty possible? and
2. Is absolute honesty in all cases desirable?

God put a double emphasis on the importance of honesty in the Ten Commandments. It is the only principle that is dealt with in two separate commands. The eighth commandment deals with honesty in action or behavior, and the ninth commandment focuses on the importance of honesty in word, or truthfulness. But the dawning of the ethical revolution in Christian theology (the new morality) which has occurred in the last twenty years, advocates of this ethical position, such as John A. T. Robinson and Joseph Fletcher, have pro-

posed a redefinition of honesty which denies the sinfulness of deceit in certain situations.

Fletcher suggests that there are only three possible approaches for making ethical decisions: 1. the legalistic approach—whereby one rigidly holds to a set of rules or moral absolutes even if his decision harms others; 2. the antinomian approach—which denies the need for any rules and leads to moral anarchy; 3. the situational approach—in which the individual evaluates a given situation and does what he believes is the most loving thing, that which will benefit the greatest number of people, even if it means lying, cheating or killing. Fletcher believes that the third option is the only acceptable alternative for the Christian. Therefore he says, "if a lie is told unlovingly it is wrong, evil; if it is told in love it is good, right."² Whatever is the most loving thing in a given situation is the right and good thing. Whereas the rigid legalistic approach results in what can be termed the "immorality of morality." It can produce what Mark Twain called, "a good man in the worst sense of the term." Fletcher believes that a fanatical love for virtue rather than people has done more harm than all the vices put together. It is the situation that counts.

Where do we as Adventists stand on this ethical question of honesty? How can we avoid the extremes of relativism, on the one hand, which reduces morality to a subjective ethic and opens the gates for human rationalization, and a rigid legalism on the other hand, which can produce an insensitivity to human need and a blindness to the spirit of God's law? This is our challenge this week.

¹ Survey quoted by Gordon Kainer in his book, "Faith, Hope and Clarity" (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1977), p. 3.

² From *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, by Joseph Fletcher. Copyright © MCMLXVI by W. L. Jenkins. Used by permission of the Westminster Press. Page 65.

Steve G. Daily is campus chaplain at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

□ February 28
Sunday

On Honesty

by editors

LOGOS

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16, NAS).

"The Ten Commandments have been criticized because they do not contain a prohibition against such an elementary sin as lying. But this Ninth Commandment is at least a start in the right direction. It is true that it refers specifically to evidence given in court about the conduct of a member of one's own race, but other passages in the O.T. testify to the people's understanding of the importance of truth, i.e., the agreement between language and facts. . . ."¹

Jeremiah testifies against his people who, "make ready their tongue like a bow, to shoot lies; it is not by truth that they triumph. . . . For every brother is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer. Friend deceives friend, and no one speaks the truth." (Jer. 9:3-5; NIV). Proverbs declares, "Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment" (Prov. 12:19; NIV). And the Psalmist asks, "Lord, . . . Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue. . . . who . . . casts no slur on his fellow man . . . who keeps his oath even when it hurts. . . ." (Psalm 15:1-4; NIV).

"There is much to be said for starting the teaching of virtue by a simple concrete case rather than with a general principle. If a people start with this commandment, it may be possible to continue in the school of virtue till the principle of truth-telling is established in the more difficult instances that arise between buyer and seller (Prov. 20:14); but it is probably true that in the early books of the O.T. lying artistically was looked upon as something of an art which had its masterpieces. So Laban seemed to have felt about his exploit in Gen. 29:21-27; but Jacob could not very well complain if he remembered the incident related in Gen. 27:6-36, of which he and his mother were also proud."²

In the New Testament, James is pessimistic about the prospects of correcting this evil: "No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God" (James 3:8, 9; NAS).

Although holding dominion over the earth, man does not have dominion over his own tongue. Unaided, it cannot be controlled. But "with Christ's help, it is possible."³

"Truth-telling has never been what might be called an endearing virtue. George Washington has gained nothing in popularity among youthful Americans by Parson Weems's story of the cherry tree: there are too many people who pride themselves on telling unpleasant truths; and there are some races who, though possessing little of this virtue, seem to have most of the other virtues and yet are delightful people! Perhaps Moses went as far as he could at the time in this commandment; the world seems still to consist of two types of people—those who believe in principles like truth-telling, and those who believe in people and lay more stress on manners and courtesy and kindness. There are still too few who unite both types in themselves and love truth and people equally well, or almost equally well. These are the men and women who know the meaning of the text "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15)."⁴

D.R.S./E.B.S.

¹ From *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, Copyright © 1952, Abingdon Press. Used by permission. Page 988.

² *Ibid.*

³ From the book, *The Anchor Bible*, by William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, commenting authors. Copyright © 1976 by Doubleday and Co., Inc. Page 39.

⁴ From *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1. Page 988.

Was Ellen G. White a Fraud?

by Jack W. Provonsha

I have before me a letter that states the matter bluntly. Referring to the meeting of a special commission set up earlier this year (19__) in Glendale, California to air Elder Walter Rea's allegations regarding Ellen White's literary "borrowing" especially in the book *Desire of Ages*, the writer, who had listened to tapes of that session, says,

"It seemed to me that the members of the committee needed a gentle reminder of Christian morality.

"If a writer borrows from other authors without giving credit, this is called plagiarism. If the writer denies plagiarism, this is called lying. If the writer says the Holy Spirit brought it all about, this is called blasphemy.

"No one in the session dealt with the morality of plagiarism. No one mentioned that paraphrasing is the most subtle form of plagiarism and potentially the most dishonest.

"Ellen White obviously tried to hide her literary dependency.

1. She denied it on several occasions in writing, and affirmed that the Spirit was the source of all she wrote.

2. She never gave credit.

3. She paraphrased in a massive way from numerous authors.

4. She was aware of scholarly requirement.

"The above is called fraud. . . . Surely someone at the meeting must have entertained the notion that E. G. White may very well be a fraud. No one had the courage to mention it."

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Proverbs 8:6-9

"The above is called fraud"

So let us face this issue in its worst possible terms—which is about what my correspondent describes. It probably was not nearly as simple as his letter suggests, of course. There is the possibility that her "borrowing" was not always conscious or deliberate. This author, at least, has had the unsettling experience of writing down something he thought was original only to discover later that what he wrote he had read and underlined in someone else's work sometime before and forgotten. And this is not an experience unique to me.

Moreover, given the manner in which many of her books were put together, there is a built-in mechanism for possibly losing trace of the original sources. A letter from Marian Davis to W. C. White suggests the scope of her task,

"You will remember some things last spring about the matter from articles and scrapbooks, that might be available for use in the life of Christ, copied, so as to be convenient for reference. Perhaps you can imagine the difficulty of trying to bring together points relating to any subject, when these must be gleaned from *thirty scrapbooks* (of E. G. White materials), a half-dozen bound volumes, and fifty manuscripts, all covering thousands of pages. . . ."¹

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□ March 2
Tuesday

How much of this material represented notes taken by Mrs. White as thoughts were impressed upon her mind while she was reading, notes not clearly intended for publication, for example the material in her diaries? Does one ordinarily exercise the same care regarding quotation marks and sources in one's private notes (and diary) that one would in doing conscious research for a book manuscript? I think not. As Marian Davis later brought these "scraps" together she would have no way of knowing whether the materials were quoted or not, and placed in their new setting Mrs. White, herself, might not recall that she had "borrowed" them in her original notes.

"Fortunately, God has never insisted that His chosen workmen be ideal in every respect"

One may properly ask whether this is the ideal way to write books, and of course it isn't. Fortunately, God has never insisted that His chosen workmen be ideal in every respect. His chosen ones are often merely the best that is available (and willing) at the moment of need.

But back to our worst of possible scenarios. In it the prophet sits down in her study with a number of books spread out before her, and as she writes her "inspired books" she simply lifts material out of these writings, denying dependence upon these authors and claiming guidance from God alone.

And suppose we accept this depiction for the purposes of discussion. Is it possible to have something like this happen but there be an honest denial of human dependence? Is that too tall an order? Let us see.

"I find the idea of Ellen G. White being a fraud both logically and emotionally repugnant"

First, my reactions to the notion of fraud. (Fraud implies an intent to deceive.) I must confess at the outset that I find the idea of Ellen G. White being a fraud both logically and emotionally repugnant. I admit it. I have always believed, respected and loved her. My early life involved much insecurity and uncertainty, but I discovered Ellen White largely for myself—and I found purpose and direction in that discovery. I could understand her words and I eagerly read them again and again. Take these away from me now and something central to the core of my being will have died.

But it is not merely a question of emotional bias.

For logical reasons I have difficulty believing that so manifestly a godly woman was capable of so crass a falsehood over so long a lifetime. Somewhere, sometime, the truth must have slipped out.

Now let me interject a consideration of perception processes which would be appropriate here. What follows is an oversimplification but in its general outlines represents generally accepted (and substantiated) learning theory.

All of our perceptions of reality are conditioned by previous experience. Previous experience, previous perception, desires, needs, character traits, even the state of the central nervous system—its psychochemistry, for example—provide a “filter” through which all new experience must pass. In the process the experience comes to be seen in terms of that filter as light filtered through colored glass is seen as taking on the color of the glass.

Thus none of us is ever able to perceive reality as it really is. Only God can do that, by definition. We can only perceive reality from our perspectives—as we see *it*. We see things thus not as *they* are but as we are.

Since our way of looking at things (our perception of reality) may not precisely correspond to actual reality it is appropriate to speak of our perceptual bias as a “delusional system.” Delusion is here defined as a sincerely held belief that is at least in some respects inaccurate. A “delusional system” may involve a set of beliefs possessing a greater or lesser inner consistency—but is only relatively accurate in relation to “the thing itself” (Kant’s *ding* and *sich*) which is never, of course, perceptually fully available to any of us.²

This is so even if we are prophets. That is, Ellen White had her personal “delusional system” as a member of the human race.

Since all men perceive reality in a more or less “delusionally” distorted way, it is appropriate that One who wished to reveal absolute truth to men as clearly as possible, chose as His vessels those who, of persons available (and willing) would, from God’s perspective, distort reality the least. The prophet is therefore selected, not because he is able to perceive things absolutely “as they really are,” but because he or she is the best (least distorting) vehicle available at the moment of need.

God also provides the ongoing experiences by which the “delusional system” of the prophet more and more approximates the reality that God sees. Truth is thus progressive, (or better, perception of truth is progressive) even for prophets. Ellen White’s later observation that she was “no longer the child she once was,” is consistent with this notion.

This God-provided, prophetic role would also have an undoubted effect on the self-concept of the prophet.³ The prophet, having accepted and “lived with” the prophetic call would come to experience reality not merely as other men but as a *prophet*. Thus the prophet would be unlikely to look at things exactly as do others.

Now let us put all of this together and see if it has anything to say to the situation at hand.

“We see things . . . not as *they* are but as *we* are”

“Ellen White had her personal ‘delusional system’ ”

All of us have had the experience, while reading, of feeling that God has spoken to our hearts in something we have read. Now, when this happens, do we say, "Ah, C. S. Lewis, or Francis Schaeffer, or Isaiah, or John really spoke to my soul in that passage this morning?" No. We place the credit where it belongs if we are sensitive to such matters. We say "God or the Holy Spirit spoke to me in my reading today." And that's quite correct and we know it.

But what if you had as a major element in your self-concept, the role of messenger or prophet with all of those years of believing that God had been speaking to you in general as well as very special, unusual ways. When we read expressions like "The word of the Lord came unto me" or "I was shown" "I saw" we must remember that those expressions come out of a prophet's intensive, self-consciousness not ours. Such phrases might have quite special meaning in a prophet's perceptual system.

Moreover, I suspect that a prophet, who felt the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit while reading in his or her library would be even less inclined to give the credit to the human author of the *momentary words* he or she was reading. The sense of the divine presence—the "light" behind those words—would seem so intense that it would seem inaccurate, indeed almost blasphemous, certainly demeaning, to attribute the enlightenment to a human source.

**"The prophetic
'delusional
system' would
tend to place
the prophet
back in those
times before
modern
copyright
ethics"**

Could that be a factor in the borrowing, the parallels, the paraphrases, even the quotations—without giving human credit—that we see in Ellen White's and the Bible prophets' writings? In a sense the prophetic "delusional system" would tend to place the prophet back in those times before modern copyright ethics where the gifts of the Muses were nobody's private property. I think that it is quite possible that a "prophet" might see things that way even in our times—and act accordingly.

In other words the charge of plagiarism or fraud could be appropriate if one of us from our self-view did what the prophets did, whereas the intent to deceive might be utterly absent from a prophet's perceptual point of view.

In summary, was Ellen White a fraud? No. I think the more likely possibility is that this godly woman was so sensitive to the many voices of God and responded to them so intensely that she tended to overlook customary amenities like saying "thanks" to the ordinary writers who provided the occasion. She was good and she was honest, though human. But she saw things differently. (Would that we all were prophets.)

This doesn't mean that everyone involved gets "off the hook" that easily, however. I feel justifiable resentment toward those even well-intentioned people who concealed these "facts of life" from us all of those years out of a mistaken impression that we couldn't handle them. Those leaders who spoke so freely at that 1919 Bible conference and then went home with their lips sealed showed at the very least a lack of courage.

And for some the lack of courage also represented self-interest. The church having misused the gift as an authority instrument, serving both pride and power (the frequent basis for the verbal inspiration fallacy) placed persons who knew better in a position of professional vulnerability. To speak out was often to risk one's career. But to misuse a gift of God—and thus the power of God—for self-serving ends is to take His name in vain.

The fact that Ellen White's writings have been so misused says something about the users. The authority that comes from possessing a prophet—and thus the "truth"—can come to serve individual and group pride. It is the special sin of those who label themselves the "remnant people" and who possess the "Spirit of Prophecy."

It may be good for the church to go through this period of crisis, a period characterized by the shaking of our certainties. Perhaps it may be a new occasion for discovering that certainty never lies in having all the right answers, but in knowing and trusting our Lord and thus being free to face up to the questions. The finding will ever be in the questing, not in final solutions. The spirit of the prophets is a spirit of eternal openness and expectancy.

"The prophetic 'delusional system' would tend to place the prophet back in those times before modern copyright ethics"

Pride is the special sin of the "remnant people"

"The spirit of the prophets is a spirit of eternal openness and expectancy"

¹ Marian Davis: *White Estate Document File #393a*; Italics mine.

² The term delusional is a technical term and could be misleading so a word of caution is necessary. Delusion suggests pathology. Indeed there are pathological delusions which represent so great a degree of perceptual distortion as to produce isolation and destructive behavior—destructive to others and to the self. But there is normally in perception delusion also.

³ The role one plays inevitably is a basic component of his personal "delusional system." The physician looks at the world through physician's eyes, the minister perceives as a minister, a housewife as a housewife, a church administrator, etc.

Is Honesty Always the Best Policy?

by Steve G. Daily

EVIDENCE

Key passage:
Joshua 2:1-4;
6:22, 23

Lloyd Bucher was the commander of the U.S. spy ship *Pueblo* when it was captured with his crew of 23 men by the North Koreans. When interrogators threatened to kill his crew, Bucher signed confessions, untruthfully admitting to the guilt of spying on North Korean territorial waters. These false confessions became the grounds for sparing the lives of the crew and led to their ultimate release.

The question then is this: Was Bucher's lie to save these lives morally justified? Your answer will depend upon which of the following six approaches to ethics you accept.¹

1. Antinomianism—(literally, against the law, without moral principles) Lying is neither right nor wrong. There are no norms.

2. Generalism—Lying is generally wrong. There are no universal norms.

3. Situationalism—Lying is sometimes right. There is one universal norm—love.

4. Legalistic Absolutism—Lying is always wrong. There are many non-conflicting norms.

5. Conflicting Absolutism—(Choosing the lesser of evils in a sinful world) Lying is never right. There are many conflicting norms.

6. Hierarchicalism—(Norms are not equal in importance) Lying is sometimes right. There are higher norms.

Most Adventists subscribe to either the fourth or fifth of these ethical systems depending upon their understanding of Scripture. Those who hold to legalistic absolutism maintain that one should never lie or deceive anyone under any circumstances even if the truth may endanger someone's life. These individuals maintain that if one has genuine faith he will tell the truth and trust God to take care of the resulting circumstances. Texts such as Mark 5:36, "be not afraid, only believe" would be quoted in defense of such a position.

On the other hand, Christians who accept conflicting absolutism believe that as sinners in a sinful world we are all confronted with situations in life where we are forced to choose between the lesser of evils. For example, the wife who is being unmercifully beaten by her husband may be forced to choose the evil of separation or divorce. This position is also not without biblical support. Scripture declares that Rahab's lie to protect the lives of the two spies not only helped to save their lives, but led to the deliverance of her own family from Jericho (Joshua 2:3, 4; 6:22, 23). And her decision to hide the spies is called an act of faith (Hebrews 11:31). Abraham was willing to break the sixth commandment for unselfish reasons of faith (Genesis 22:1-12). And Christ defended the lawbreaking of David when he allowed his men to eat the holy bread rather than suffer from hunger (Mark 2:24-26).

In each of these cases we find individuals making a value judgment and choosing the lesser of evils as the best available alternative. To say that such behavior is not sin is to misunderstand the human condition and to misrepresent the scriptural teaching that every human motive and action is tainted with evil (See Romans 3:10-23). God alone is capable of absolute goodness (Matthew 19:17) and God alone has an absolute understanding of truth (John 14:6). Such considerations should act as a safeguard against the ethical extremes of blind rigidity, on one hand, and subjective relativism, on the other.

"In a sinful world . . . we are forced to choose between the lesser of evils"

¹ Norman Geisler, *Ethics: Alternatives and Issues* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), pp. 13-19.

To Be More Truthful Today

by Robert Dunn

After reading the admonitions to perfect honesty printed in earlier sections of the lesson, you probably feel a bit discouraged. You may think that if the absolute demand of the lesson is an absolute impossibility, then it is an absolute absurdity to try to specify "how to" achieve absolute honesty.

There is a danger here of going to extremes. Faced with the impossibility of fulfilling an absolute demand, you are likely either to give up, thinking that you can not do it, or deceive yourself, believing somehow that you have finally reached perfection.

But before deciding what you might do in this situation, you should be aware that it is not Christianity alone that has made the possibility of absolute honesty appear remote. Modern psychotherapy has also taught us how difficult it is for people to understand themselves as they really are, to be truly honest even with themselves. The subconscious has depths that few penetrate very far and no one ever exhausts.

But then psychotherapy does not ask you to be totally honest. It is only Christianity that does this. "You shall not swear falsely," Jesus says, "but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn" (Matthew 5:33). How are you to attempt to fulfill this serious and absolute demand?

There are two basic steps. **The first is to seriously face the situation.** You need to carefully examine your life, looking for the particular moments when you are likely to be less than honest with yourself or others.

The second step is to see where your dishonesty is likely to lead. This does not mean to contemplate hell. On the contrary, think primarily of the consequences of dishonesty for your conception of yourself and for your relationships with those you love most.

If you think through these two steps carefully, you are likely to make the necessary positive changes simply because they are "reasonable" things to do. You consider the situation; you consider what is likely to occur if you take the proposed step; finally, you decide that what you once thought was attractive really is not attractive and, through the grace of Jesus, refuse to do it.

However, you may not always find it easy to do what is in your own best interests. Paul says, "I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:22-24; RSV).

What are you to do in this situation? Give up? Far better would it be to pray that God will give you a clearer picture of yourself and of why you want to avoid honesty. When Paul said that he could not keep God's law as he wished, he did not mean to encourage you to emulate his "wretched" condition. On the contrary, he wanted you to rely on God for insight and help in your condition. "Stand therefore," he encourages you, "having girded your loins with truth" (Eph. 6:14; RSV). If that truth is not in you, it certainly is in Jesus, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6; RSV). It is possible to be more truthful today than yesterday.

HOW TO
Key passage:
Matthew 5:33-37

Robert Dunn is professor of English at Loma Linda University, La Sierra Campus.

March 4
Thursday

The Blessings of Being a Crook . . . and the Curse

by Paul J. Landa

OPINION

Key passage:
Genesis
28:28, 29

The story of Jacob has long proved to be an embarrassment for those Christian moralists who keep on warning: "A man reaps what he sows" (Gal. 6:7; NEB).

He first sneaks on the biblical scene as "Jacob the Supplanter," who outwitted Esau, his boorish older twin brother, out of his birthright—meaning clan leadership and a double share of the family inheritance (Gen. 25:29-34). He followed this up by deceiving his blind father and securing from him the special blessing which had been intended for Esau (27:1-41).

What is remarkable in this less-than-edifying story is the sequel of the whole affair. If Jacob had been ostracized by his family and friends and sent off in the desert to suffer the pangs of a guilty conscience and to repent from his crookedness, the moralists would have been able to press the point that honesty is indeed the best policy. But consider how differently the story unfolded.

"It would appear that . . . dishonesty is not a bad policy either"

When Jacob's dishonesty was exposed, the only person who got really angry was Esau. Neither Isaac nor Rebekah appear to have been particularly upset. When the fleeing crook beds down for the night in an open field, he dreams—not the nightmare of the guilty, but a vision of blessedness which carries with it the divine promise: "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go . . . the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants" (Gen. 28:15, 13; RSV). If honesty is the best policy, then it would appear that, morally speaking, dishonesty is not a bad policy either!

Witness the fact that when he took up sheep-herding for his uncle Laban, he craftily manipulated the breeding of the stock and crookedly divided the young lambs so that the feeble animals ended up in Laban's flock and the good ones in his own flock (30:42). When he decided it was time for him to move back to his homeland to claim his inheritance, he once again very successfully hoodwinked his father-in-law (Gen. 31) and carefully plotted a strategy to mollify any remnants of resentment in his brother Esau (32:13-23).

Jacob's type of dishonesty is "the dishonesty of the ambitious, aggressive executive"

Crookedness, let's face it, is not always the bad policy it has been made out to be. To be sure, "extreme" crookedness, the kind that is likely to land one in jail, is not envisaged here. Only Jacob's kind of crookedness—the dishonesty of the ambitious, aggressive executive who is strong on guts and weak on principles, who knows what he wants and will concentrate all his energies on getting it, wheeling and dealing and manipulating people and things to his own ends. It is not illegal to take advantage of someone else's gullibility. Nor is it wrong to elbow your competitors out of the business. After all, it is the law of the market place. And it usually gets you a good deal, a promotion, good stocks, admiring winks, many pats on the back, respect. And all these contribute in large measure to what we call "happiness." There is some truth to the modern beatitude: "Blessed are the crooks, for they get ahead in the world and taste of happiness." This happiness is real, make no mistake about it. But so is the *curse*—the curse of a gnawing conscience which will never allow a person to be at peace with himself and to live with himself as an authentic human being, a genuinely good replica of a genuinely good Creator.

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1. Quoting from this week's Introduction: "Several years ago a high ranking government official in the United States, faced with an international crisis, publicly declared that the government has 'an inherent right to lie' for the sake of national security. Do you agree?"

"A dangerous intruder enters the house of a woman who is home alone. Keeping her wits about her, she calls out to her husband—who is not there—and the intruder flees. Is such deception justified under the circumstances?"

2. After carefully reading and considering Jack Provonsha's "Was Ellen G. White a Fraud?", how would you respond to the original objection:

"If a writer borrows from other authors without giving credit, this is called plagiarism. If the writer denies plagiarism, this is called lying. If the writer says the Holy Spirit brought it all about, this is called blasphemy."

3. Paul Landa writes in this week's Opinion article that Jacob's type of dishonesty is "the dishonesty of the ambitious, aggressive executive." Do you agree?

Is it possible for one to be a successful executive and be consistently scrupulously honest? Or is the system such that only those who "lie well" will generally get ahead?

4. Regarding the Evidence article for this week: Do you see any meaningful difference between situation ethics and "conflicting absolutism" (which states that a wife who is being unmercifully beaten by her husband may be forced to choose the evil of separation or divorce)?

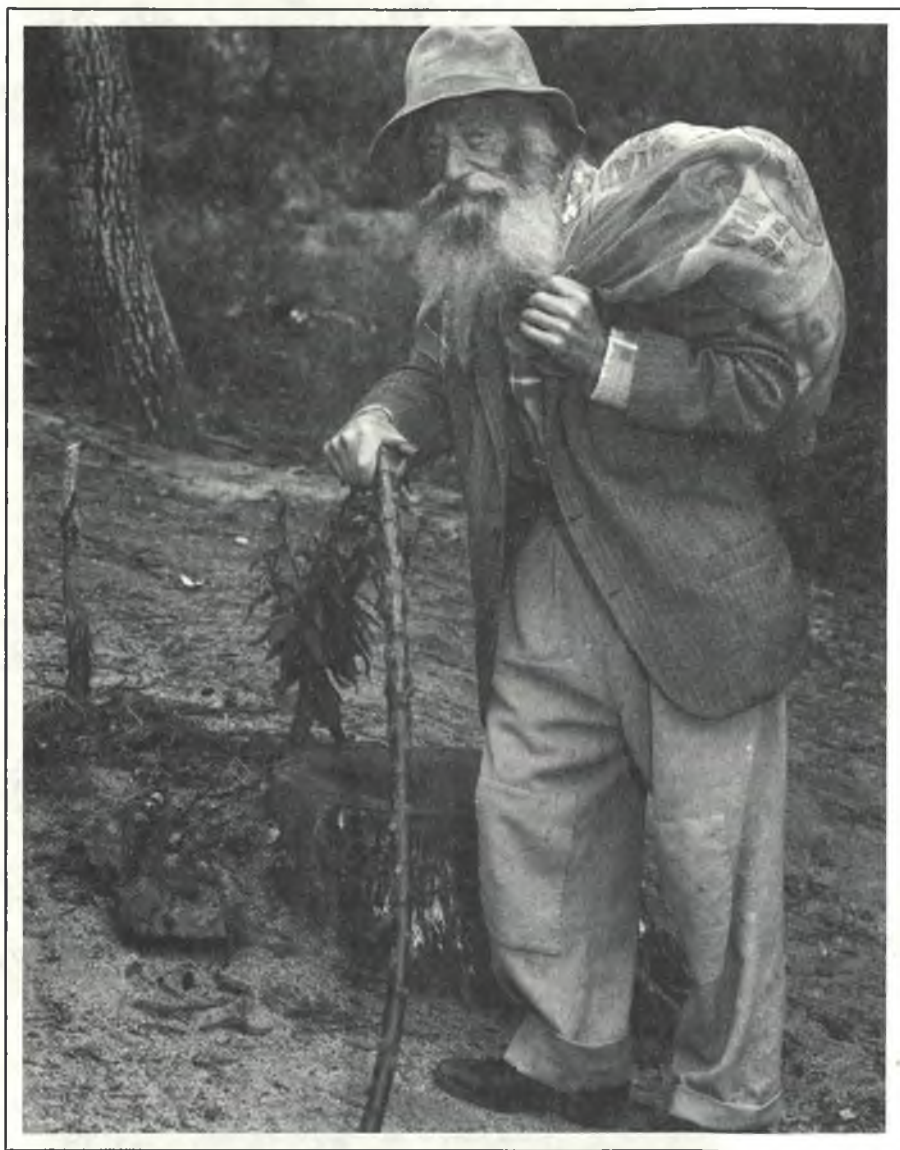
5. Below list three different ways in which you successfully deceive yourself and/or others.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Covetousness and Stewardship



"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. . . . No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money" (Luke 16:10, 13; NIV).

Lesson 11, March 7-13

The original meaning of the word steward—a ward of the sty, a keeper of pigs—goes back to a simple order of life, but still has force: man is God’s agent to rule a lower level of life. He should not immerse himself in that subworld; for if he does, he sinks in the scale, becoming hardly better than a beast. We are stewards, not owners: the word “my” on any man’s lips is false. That is why it has bedeviled the world. God is the only capitalist. Our job is not hoarding of wealth or fencing it for our own pleasure, but the proper circulation and use of it in God’s sight. These phrases run easily from lip or pen, but if they were applied, they would be revolution—benignant revolution. That the phrases are true is hardly open to question. If we treat even forests as our own, dust storms and droughts come upon us: the universe knows its rightful Lord, and rebels against the impious usurper.

A man has a right to livelihood, but only on a commission basis, i.e., he may keep enough of this world’s goods for himself provided he lives to serve the common good within the will of God. “Enough” is a measure hard to determine: mathematical equality would not make sense, even if it were possible. Some men, such as a physician or a judge, should be kept from livelihood anxiety; but even in these instances the ex-

ception should not be abused to become a selfishness. “To serve the common good” is also a phrase hard to construe, but parasitical work (and there is much of it) is at once condemned. Because all men are stewards, no man is better than another: his greater gifts, e.g., as judge, may entitle him to more money for training and support, but he is still a steward. His gifts are gifts—a trust, not a possession; and they lay on him the greater measure of responsibility. These truths Jesus stressed repeatedly, as witness the parable of the talents (19:11-27; Matt. 25:14-30).

Every man must give account as steward. The day of reckoning is every day; for the drawing of the curtain of night says almost of itself, “Another day! Give an account of thy stewardship!” Every crisis in life—sorrow or joy, war or peace—calls us to account: the very word crisis means in its origin judgment. It says of itself, “This is how you have lived,” and of itself tots up the columns of the ledger. Death is judgment. How could so climactic an event fail to carry that meaning? The eschatological stress is always present in the words of Jesus: he told us that every act is freighted with destiny. Thus our handling of this world’s goods is stewardship—a direct dealing with God, from whom we come, to whom we go.

Covetousness and Stewardship

by editors

LOGOS

□ March 8
Monday

"Do not steal. . . . Do not desire another man's house; do not desire his wife, his slaves, his cattle, his donkeys, or anything else that he owns" (Exodus 20:15, 15; GNB).

"To the sacredness of the life and of the family, the Eighth [and Tenth] Commandment adds the sacredness of property." Herein "is the protection which the diligent and prudent have against the idle and careless. The underlying conviction is, 'I have toiled to collect these possessions, and you who have been idle must not rob me of the fruits of my industry.' Over a century ago the Plaindealer comfortably asserted, 'In a great majority of cases the possession of property is the proof of merit.' . . . Yet all through human history, in each generation, there have been some who . . . have requested that some attention be given to the rules of the game under which this property was acquired. They have asked, 'Are the rules fair?' or 'Are the dice loaded which give some people such Saratoga trunks full of splendor and other equally worthy people only a beggarly bundle of sorry rags?' Horace Greeley in 1845 defined this controversy in historic words as 'the everlasting class war of a portion of those who HAVE NOT against the mass of those who HAVE.'

"Thinking men strive toward an application of this commandment which will ensure that the products of industry will be fairly divided, that the rules may ensure that each man shall have his fair share of the good things of this life. They do not limit the application of the commandment to forbidding the poor man to steal the silver candlesticks from the rich man; they pry into the question whether the superior 'merit' of the few is real or imaginary, whether our economic system itself does not permit the few privileged ones continually to steal from the many life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . ."¹

Thus it is that stewardship is seen as an important element—if not just the flip-side—of the command to not covet or steal. Time and again God used His prophets to thunder warnings against His unfaithful stewards: "How terrible it will be for you that stretch out on your luxurious couches, feasting on veal and lamb! . . . So you will be the first to go into exile. Your feasts and banquets will come to an end" (Amos 6:4, 7; GNB). Isaiah challenged the children of Israel to be faithful stewards and to "Loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke" (Isaiah 58:6; NAS).

Time and again God is represented as defending the cause of the poor. For the God who commanded the sacredness of property implied in that and other commands the just distribution of goods.

In this light, Jesus, too, acknowledged Himself as a steward of all He had been given by God: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; He has appointed Me to preach Good News to the poor; He has sent Me to announce that captives shall be released and the blind shall see, that the downtrodden shall be freed from their oppressors, and that God is ready to give blessings to all who come to Him" (Luke 4:18, 19; GNB).

Later, as recorded in Matthew 25, Jesus interpreted the eighth and tenth commandments in a way that challenged those with means to be faithful stewards in caring for those who would be tempted to covet and steal. He warns: "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Matthew 25:45).

¹ *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952), pp. 987, 988. Used by permission.

Danger in Prosperity

selected by editors

TESTIMONY

Key passage:

Matthew

19:16-30

Throughout the ages, riches and honor have been attended with much peril to humility and spirituality. It is when a man is prospered, when all his fellow men speak well of him, that he is in special danger. Man is human. Spiritual prosperity continues only so long as man depends wholly upon God for wisdom and for perfection of character.

And those who feel most their need of dependence upon God are usually those who have the least amount of earthly treasure and human honor on which to depend. . . .

Very few realize the strength of their love for money until the test is brought to bear upon them. Many who profess to be Christ's followers then show that they are unprepared for heaven. Their works testify that they love wealth more than their neighbor or their God. Like the rich young man, they inquire the way of life; but when it is pointed out and the cost estimated, and they see that the sacrifice of earthly riches is demanded, they decide that heaven costs too much. The greater the treasures laid up on the earth, the more difficult it is for the possessor to realize that they are not his own, but are lent him to be used to God's glory.

Jesus here improves the opportunity to give His disciples an impressive lesson: "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Here the power of wealth is seen. The influence of the love of money over the human mind is almost paralyzing. Riches infatuate, and cause many who possess them to act as though they were bereft of reason. . . . Their fears of coming to want increase with their riches. They have a disposition to hoard up means for the future. They are close and selfish, fearing that God will not provide for them. This class are indeed poor toward God. As their riches have accumulated, they have put their trust in them, and have lost faith in God and His promises.

"The influence of money over the human mind is almost paralyzing"

The faithful, trusting poor man becomes rich toward God by judiciously using the little he has in blessing others with his means. He feels that his neighbor has claims upon him that he cannot disregard and yet obey the command of God, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." He considers the salvation of his fellow men of greater importance than all the gold and silver the world contains.

Christ points out the way in which those who have wealth and yet are not rich toward God, may secure the true riches. He says: "Sell that ye have and give alms;" and lay up treasure in heaven. The remedy He proposes is a transfer of their affections to the eternal inheritance. By investing their means in the cause of God to aid in the salvation of souls, and by relieving the needy they become rich in good works, and are "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." This will prove a safe investment. . . .

Rich poor men, professing to serve God, are objects of pity. While they profess to know God, in works they deny Him. How great is the darkness of such! They profess faith in the truth, but their works do not correspond with their profession. The love of riches makes men selfish, exacting, and overbearing.

Counsels on Stewardship, pp. 147, 150, 151.

March 9
Tuesday

On Stewardship and World Economic Policies

selected
by editors

EVIDENCE
Key passage:
Isaiah 1:21-26

Editor's note: The January, 1981 issue of *Sojourners* magazine focused on the topic of economics. Included was an article entitled, "The Failure of Conventional Wisdom," which was based on a forum on economics, convened at the request of *Sojourners*. Some will feel uncomfortable with the remarks directed against prevailing economic systems. We would not wish to have the lesson discussion focus on matters with such strong political overtones. However, principles are articulated which are highly pertinent to this week's lesson topic of stewardship.

Sojourners: Let's look at some of the basic assumptions in economic theory. Are they compatible with biblical faith? How do the biblical concepts of stewardship and jubilee relate to current economics. And what might be some biblical alternatives to current economic theory?

Barnet:¹ The only thing that I see would give us a new worldview would be an accurate perception of the meaning of interdependence. Many people would like to abandon large parts of the planet. That cannot be done; the poor are with us.

Once you remove the social mechanisms that controlled poor people under the liberal ethos—the hope that while others might not make it, you may—things become unstable as the poor realize there is no hope. The instability increases as others sense that the economic and political order is not legitimate. Then the instability is felt by those who are privileged. . . .

In this upheaval, our institutions are pursuing very short-term notions of self-interest. . . .

"Stewardship obliges you to think about the human family and the next generation"

Stewardship obliges you to think about the human family and the next generation. It is a geographically expansive notion which will not allow you to think only about yourself and the people in your immediate experience. The biblical concept of stewardship is directly opposed to the incentives we have built into the economy.

Rifkin:² Before the Enlightenment, Judeo-Christian theology believed that God intervened in history. When the architects of the Enlightenment decided that mathematics and mechanics ran the world, they didn't want a personal God intervening, so they reduced God to a watchmaker who created fixed forces working within an order and then retired.

Capitalism went one step further and said that since mechanics and mathematics ran the world, it could also determine human behavior. Adam Smith said that if we obeyed some fixed natural and mechanical laws, we could move in compatibility with the cosmos. That was the ultimate rejection of God as a personal God. . . .

As the Protestant Reformation was secularized through the Enlightenment and on into modern times, a second creation was substituted for the first. Human beings came to believe that we could gain immortality by developing permanent wealth, order, and value out of a flawed creation. Until we break that mindset and begin to see that nature has a rhythm and order and that our actions are integrally related to our surroundings, we will never reach interdependence. . . .

Hamrin:³ I do not think that there is any existing general economic theory that a Christian should be satisfied with. Economics is not as value-free or neutral a science as economists are led to believe. Adam Smith's view was that human egoism, which he thought was tempered by a general desire for peace and a respect for others, provided a sufficient moral basis for the economic development of the New World.

That assumption should appear highly questionable to any thinking Christian. Self-interest as a motivation tends to lead to a socially destructive outcome rather than to a genuine mutual concern that Smith postulated. So, rather perversely, liberal capitalism accepts as inevitable and even applauds the ethical quality of egocentrism, which from a Christian perspective is guaranteed to ruin human association. Modern economists have lost much of Smith's optimism about human nature and replaced it with large doses of determinism, agnosticism, or existentialism—all trends of thought which belie any serious examination of underlying values.

Rifkin: In classical economic theory the language is laden with the idea that people are sovereign and that they can take the place of the Creator.

Barnet: That idea is also in socialism, where the basic notion is that a different political order, one in which there is a state rather than anarchic private units, will provide a better organization for conquering nature and distributing the benefits. That seems to me equally wrong.

I see several conflicts between the assumptions of the economic system and the Christian message. One conflict is the incentive system, which is based not only on sin in the abstract, but in the specific—for example, envy. . . .

Another appeal of our economic system is to greed. The explanation for paying corporate executives a million and a half dollars a year is that such a salary will become the goal of everyone. Of course, that spawns whole industries designed entirely to help that elite class of people spend their money. A significant percentage of our economy's growth stems from the need to provide products for a very small number of people, while the basic needs of the great majority of the people go unmet.

"I do not think that there is any existing general economic theory that a Christian should be satisfied with"

The incentive system is based not only on sin in the abstract, but in the specific

Gluttony, I would add, is another sin which is used by the economic system, and of course, lust. Advertising is a direct, unabashed appeal to all the seven deadly sins. . . .

A more basic point is that the present economic systems, capitalist or socialist, make production the purpose of human activity. A socialist society may use a different incentive system, but the point is still to get people out there producing.

Our problem today is not in motivating people to produce goods. We have more goods than we know what to do with. Our problem is in what we see as life's purpose, and what the role of production is in that.

A Christian definition of productivity, of what should be produced through people, is the development of human beings and the growth of relationships not just between people, but with God. Exploitation must then be seen as not merely wounding and damaging to people, but also to God. The systematic destruction of Guatemalan coffee workers, or contract banana pickers, or cotton farmers who are tossed off the land in Pakistan in the interests of productivity, amounts to inflicting a wound on God.

The notion of a caring God means nothing if we cannot believe that God cares about the billion people who are starving because of the world economic system. That's why capitalism requires a watchmaker God, because a God with feelings would condemn that system.

Finally, we need to take the message of Scripture seriously about the relationship between sharing and abundance. The stories of manna in the wilderness, and of the loaves and fishes, illustrate that where there is sharing there is abundance. The willingness to share creates the complex relationship between nature and human beings that allows for abundance; and when in fact people try to appropriate nature's bounty, it dries up.

Hamrin: . . . In terms of an alternative, the bottom-line question is whether the thrust for growth, the drive to affluence that is still with us, is acceptable from the Christian point of view. A growth amount of literature deals with the individual Christian's responsibility to the poor and hungry. But analagous with the danger of wealth on the individual level is its danger on the aggregate level.

For both capitalism and socialism, production is the purpose of human activity

"Capitalism requires a watchmaker God"

Luther asked the question, "What is it to have a God?" And his answer was that God is that to which we look for all good in life, in which we find refuge in every time of need. America must examine, in this century in particular, where it has looked for the good in life, and in what it has sought refuge.

The answer lies with the notion of economic growth and progress. And the environmental crisis and projections of future human suffering could be warning of God's impending judgment on this idolatry.

Christians can put forward positive alternatives in our perspectives on natural and human resources. We can hold forth the concept of stewardship, the idea of taking something in trust that we have been given by God and passing that along to the next generation preserved and enriched.

The testimony of the Old and New Testament is that people are created in God's image and therefore we should be very cognizant of trying to fully develop each person's God-given abilities, skills, and gifts. Of course, the development would place first emphasis on basic human needs; Christian literature says a lot about relieving suffering, poverty, disease, and ignorance.

People must begin to seriously question the industrial growth values of efficiency, standardization, and organization, which obscure basic human values. We are dealing with an economic system which is totally impersonal. It undermines one person's basis for existence in the process of creating a better existence for others. The labor market assigns hierarchical values to persons as well as to commodities.

To the contrary, the biblical message declares that each person is the object of God's love. One of the most important perspectives that needs to be considered in the discussion of future employment policies is the inherent dignity of all human beings. People cannot be assigned values in terms of economic production.

Barnet: The critical test of an economic system is whether it builds or destroys community. We must move from individual self-sufficiency toward community as the ultimate unit for an economy. . . .

I think, too, that the concepts of stewardship and simplicity are crucial. Any alternative system should be biased toward simplicity rather than complexity of technology and organization; and it should carry a new definition of work which recognizes and rewards the great diversity of contributions people may make to the community which don't result in a product—like visiting people, caring for one another in a human rather than a professional way.

"People must begin to question the industrial growth values . . . which obscure basic human values"

"The critical test of an economic system is whether it builds or destroys community"

Any alternative would also need to recognize that all concentrations of power are demonic. The transformation of both government and the multinational corporation is an absolutely critical agenda. . . .

Rasmussen:⁴ . . . The Christian faith may not offer an alternative so much as a perspective that is helpful in forging a different pattern. We need "anticipatory communities" that are trying to order their lives differently, drawing on traditions which result in changes in how we perceive ourselves, which is crucial for any change in economic systems.

It's important that there be Christian communities who live economic alternatives over the long haul. The Reagan administration will have people spending all their energies choosing among lesser evils. And we must have communities somewhere that will do what Israel and the early church did, which was to work out the nuts and bolts of grander dreams when everyone else was clutching at their own dwindling hopes.

Taken from *Sojourners*, January, 1981, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 16-18.

¹ Richard Barnet is a senior fellow and co-founder of the Institute for Policy Studies and author of several books.

² Jeremy Rifkin is co-director of the Peoples Business Commission and author of *Entropy: A New Worldview*.

³ Robert Hamrin is an economist, senior staff member of the President's Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties and author of *Managing Growth in the 1980s: Toward a New Economics*.

⁴ Larry Rasmussen is professor of social ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary and author of *Economic Anxiety and Christian Faith*.

The Use of Money

by John Wesley

'The love of money,' we know, 'is the root of all evil'. . . . The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. . . .

It is, therefore, of the highest concern, that all who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent And, perhaps, all the instructions which are necessary for this may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact observance whereof we may approve ourselves faithful stewards of 'the mammon of unrighteousness.'

I. The first of these is (he that heareth, let him understand!) 'Gain all you can.' Here we may speak like the children of the world: we meet them on their own ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: we ought to gain all we can gain, without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it than it is worth. But this it is certain we ought not to do; we ought not to gain money at the expense of life, nor (which is in effect the same thing) at the expense of our health. . . .

We are, secondly, to gain all we can without hurting our mind, any more than our body. . . .

We are, thirdly, to gain all we can, without hurting our neighbour. . . .

II. Having gained all you can, by honest wisdom, and unwearied diligence, the second rule of Christian prudence is, 'Save all you can.' Do not throw the precious talent into the sea: leave that folly to heathen philosophers. Do not throw it into the sea. Expend no part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh. . . .

Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desire of the eye, by . . . expensive apparel, or by needless ornaments. . . . Let your neighbours, who know nothing better, do this: 'Let the dead bury their dead.' But 'what is that to thee?' says our Lord: 'follow thou Me.' Are you willing? Then you are able so to do! . . .

III. But let not any man imagine that he has done anything, barely by going thus far, by 'gaining and saving all he can,' if he were to stop here. All this is nothing, if a man go not forward, if he does not point all this at a farther end. Nor, indeed, can a man properly be said to save anything, if he only lays it up. You may as well throw your money into the sea, as bury it in the earth. And you may as well bury it in the earth, as in your chest, or in the Bank of England. Not to use, is effectually to throw it away. If, therefore, you would indeed 'make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,' add the third rule to the two preceding. **Having, first, gained all you can, and, secondly, saved all you can, then 'give all you can.'**

In order to see the ground and reason of this, consider, when the Possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being, and placed you in this world, He placed you here, not as a proprietor, but a steward: as such He entrusted you, for a season, with goods of various kinds; but the sole property of these still rests in Him, nor can ever be alienated from Him. As you yourself are not your own, but His, such is, likewise, all that you enjoy. Such is your soul and your body, not your own, but God's. And so is your substance in particular. And He has told you, in the most clear and express terms, how you are to employ it for Him, in such a manner, that it may be all an holy sacrifice, acceptable through Christ Jesus. And this light, easy service, He hath promised to reward with an eternal weight of glory.

HOW TO
Key passage:
Matthew 6:19-21

John Wesley was the eighteenth century English reformer and co-founder of the Methodist Church.

March 11
Thursday

Reflections on Stewardship

by Kenneth Kennedy

OPINION
Key passage:
Romans 12:1, 2

Thank you Lord for saving my soul
Thank you Lord for making me whole:
Thank you Lord for giving to me,
Thy great salvation so rich and free.

Discussion on covetousness and stewardship is usually centered on the way we relate to our material environment. And this is important and valid. But the more "spiritual" implications of this discussion are important as well.

Stewardship has to do with the gifts God has given us. Some of the most important of these are life, priorities in the use of our talents and the use of the mind.

Our first responsibility is to be good stewards of life itself. In the beginning, humanity was created perfect—physically, mentally and spiritually. As Adam and Eve were given the opportunity to develop within each of these areas, so they were called to be stewards of that which God had made. Of course, when they failed in this stewardship and turned to covetousness, they paid the price with the loss of life—a life that could only be restored through Christ (Romans 5:12, 17).

Thus, the Christian's very life is bought with a price—a dear price. And his first responsibility is to protect that life which is within himself and others.

Another responsibility God places upon His own is for the proper development and employment of the talents He has given. We are called to be stewards of our God-given talents whether they be one or five. It is in this way that God exercises His persuasive influence upon the world to redeem it from hatred and conflict and save it from despair. Talents, when used for temporal purposes, bring dissatisfaction in life. When they are creatively used to the glory of God, however, their effect is redemption.

Finally, God has challenged us to be stewards over our minds. How important it is to begin each day with the proper mindset, for the attitudes and values that arise from that will certainly have their effect on the relationships we share with God and with others.

As God created us above all creatures to be thinkers, so it is over these thoughts that he has called us to be stewards. The mind is built upon that which it feeds and it is the responsibility of each individual to determine with what it will be fed.

We are stewards of our thoughts. What a challenge to direct our thinking in channels that will bring about community and peace in this troubled world!

Indeed, stewardship is not a theory. It is an action. Here am I, send me.

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,
And love that soul through me
And may I humbly do my part
To win that soul for thee.

-
1. The introductory article for this week's lesson makes the following point: We are stewards, not owners: the word 'my' on any man's lips is false. That is why it has bedeviled the world. God is the only capitalist. Our job is not hoarding of wealth or fencing it for our own pleasure, but the proper circulation and use of it in God's sight. These phrases run easily from lip or pen, but if they were applied, they would be revolution—benignant revolution.

Do you agree? Is God the only capitalist? Is the Christian as steward to help bring about what is termed above as "benignant revolution"? violent revolution?

2. What do you consider to be the most significant dangers in wealth and affluence? List your ideas below.

What do you consider to be the major causes of poverty in the world today? List your ideas below.

Reflect upon the above responses and share your ideas with those in your Sabbath School class.

3. The Evidence article quotes Richard Barnett as challenging: Stewardship obliges you to think about the human family and the next generation. It is a geographically expansive notion which will not allow you to think only about yourself and the people in your immediate experience. The biblical concept of stewardship is directly opposed to the incentives we have built into the economy. What do you think about Barnett's analysis?

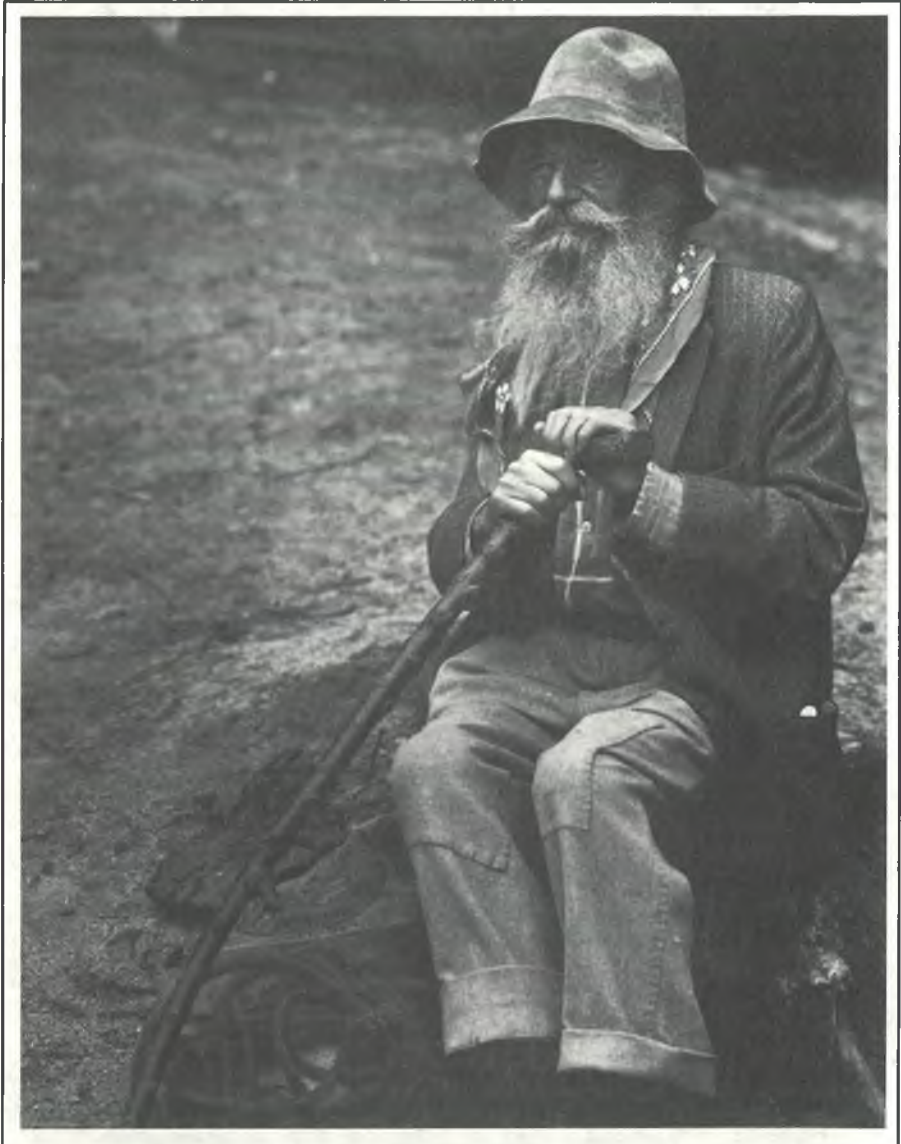
Do you hold to such an expanded view of stewardship in your personal philosophy and action? Why or why not?

4. Robert Hamrin is quoted in the Evidence article as stating: "I do not think that there is any existing general economic theory that a Christian should be satisfied with."

To what extent do you believe Christians should involve themselves—both collectively and individually—with the working out of a more just social economic theory? Explain.

5. Barnett is quoted as saying: "The critical test of an economic system is whether it builds or destroys community." Do you agree? Explain.
-

Natural Law



“When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them” (Romans 2:14, 15; NIV).

Lesson 12, March 14-20

The natural-law theory involves the following claims: (a) there are some basic and unchanging principles of right and justice that ought to govern the affairs of men; (b) these principles can be known by man; and (c) laws have the force and authority of law insofar as they are derivable from these principles.

No one has, to my knowledge, ever attempted to codify all of the basic principles of right and justice which together make up the natural law, but it is not at all difficult to produce numerous examples. . . . [e.g.:] The needless destruction of human life is evil. Many such principles are stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, such as "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Article 1); and "Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others" (Article 17 [1]). . . .

Two things should be noted about these principles. First, they are fundamental in the sense that they apply to all people at all times and in all circumstances. Any society that did not attempt to embody these principles in its laws would be regarded by all decent people as degenerate. . . . Second, these principles are not capable of being *proved*. If anyone is so base as to assert that some people are entitled to greater dignity than others (contra Article 1), or that there is nothing wrong with arbitrarily depriving some people of their life or liberty (contra Article 3), there is no way in the world that you can prove him wrong. . . .

Unprovable though these principles are, however, they can be known by man because they are *self-evident*. They are, so to speak, laws that

nature has inscribed upon the heart of man. . . . "We hold these truths to be self-evident," said the authors of the American Declaration of Independence; the advocates of the natural-law theory take this to be the status of all of the fundamental principles of right and justice.

In saying, then, that laws have the force and authority of law insofar as they are derivable from these principles, I am saying, quite simply, that laws are valid and worthy of obedience insofar as they embody these principles. The basic principles of right and justice contained in the natural law are principles to which every person ought to be subject. The "oughtness" of the laws of any society derives from this source. Government is, so to speak, nature's surrogate in ordering the affairs of men according to nature's laws.

In asserting that valid laws are derivable from natural law I do not mean to be asserting that every particular valid law can be rigorously deduced from natural law by a series of valid syllogisms. The principle that every person has a right to security of his person, for example, justifies in general the limiting of the speed of automobiles in populated areas, but you cannot strictly conclude from this (and other relevant propositions) that the maximum allowable speed on Third Avenue between Apple Street and Cherry Boulevard should be exactly twenty-five miles per hour. Whoever is responsible for establishing speed limits has to exercise judgment in a matter such as this; he might reasonably settle on any of several speeds as the one to be regarded as the "legal limit." Such a law, nonetheless, "embodies the principles" of natural law and is therefore a valid law.

The Natural Law

selected by editors

LOGOS

The existence of the natural law is affirmed by St. Paul: "When the Gentiles who have no law do by nature what the Law prescribes, these having no law are a law unto themselves. They show the work of the Law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:14f). . . .

By a natural, spontaneous and quasi-instinctive judgment, man's reason directs him to do some things and restrains him from doing others. These basic dictates, everywhere and always generally the same, are compelling evidence for the existence of a natural law in man. It is man's distinctive share in divine wisdom. Therefore, it is clear that *man's rational participation in the eternal law* is the natural law.¹

Among the principal effects of the natural law are its obligations and its sanction.

Obligation. The obligation of natural law arises from two sources: (1) it is rooted in the essential order of things, and (2) it is ultimately made not by man but by God. Of all creatures, man alone is endowed with a moral law and with reason to discern its obligations. He is aware that it is precisely this ingrained moral law that distinguishes him from the lower animals. It is the badge of his natural nobility. To obey the dictates of this moral law is to be true to his own nature. To play false to his nature, on the other hand, is to fall lower than brute animals, who, although devoid of rationality and a sense of obligation follow instinctively the laws of their nature. . . .

When one is aware that the same God who established the order of the universe also instituted the internal order of man's nature, his vision is like that of David, who saw the whole universe radiant with the glory of God (Psalm 18:24). . . .

Sanction. Only a portion of the natural law can be adopted and enforced by human law with its external sanctions. To take a simple instance, human law can forbid adultery with penal and civil sanctions. But Christ said that "anyone who so much as looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Mt. 5:28). This, too, belongs to the natural law; but human law is too clumsy an instrument to take cognizance of such cases. Does this mean that the natural law is without a sanction of its own? If so, it would be ineffectual. In fact, however, natural law is more effective than human law. In the first place, virtue is its own reward; and vice, its own punishment. One simply cannot be virtuous without being happy, nor can one sin without being miserable. Man's natural end is complete self-realization, that is, being entirely true to his nature.

Again, natural law is sanctioned by the law of spiritual causality: one reaps what one sows. "Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit" (Mt. 8:16-17). In saying this, Christ merely restated part of the natural law. For it does not take a special revelation to know that "God's mill grinds slowly but surely," as the Greeks observed. . . .

Christ did not come to destroy the natural law, but to fulfill it (cf. Mt. 5:17). As a consequence of His coming, the Christian's obligation to fulfill the law has increased immeasurably. For unless his justice exceeds that of those who know not Christ, he shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.²

¹ Francis L. B. Cunningham, *The Christian Life*, (Dubuque, Iowa: The Priory Press, 1959), p. 227 (bold type ours).
² *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967), p. 258 (bold type ours).

God in Nature

Upon all created things is seen the impress of the Deity. Nature testifies of God. The susceptible mind, brought in contact with the miracle and mystery of the universe, cannot but recognize the working of infinite power. Not by its own inherent energy does the earth produce its bounties, and year by year continue its motion around the sun. An unseen hand guides the planets in their circuit of the heavens. A mysterious life pervades all nature—a life that sustains the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity, that lives in the insect atom which floats in the summer breeze, that wings the flight of the swallow and feeds the young ravens which cry, that brings the bud to blossom and the flower to fruit.

The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom control human life. The laws that govern the heart's action, regulating the flow of the current of life to the body, are the laws of the mighty Intelligence that has the jurisdiction of the soul. From Him all life proceeds. Only in harmony with Him can be found its true sphere of action. For all the objects of His creation the condition is the same—a life sustained by receiving the life of God, a life exercised in harmony with the Creator's will. To transgress His law, physical, mental, or moral, is to place one's self out of harmony with the universe, to introduce discord, anarchy, ruin. . . .

As the dwellers in Eden learned from nature's pages, as Moses discerned God's handwriting on the Arabian plains and mountains, and the child Jesus on the hillsides of Nazareth, so the children of today may learn of Him. The unseen is illustrated by the seen. On everything upon the earth, from the loftiest tree of the forest to the lichen that clings to the rock, from the boundless ocean to the tiniest shell on the shore, they may behold the image and superscription of God. . . .

In no other way can the foundation of a true education be so firmly and surely laid. Yet even the child, as he comes in contact with nature, will see cause for perplexity. He cannot but recognize the working of antagonistic forces. It is here that nature needs an interpreter. Looking upon the evil manifest even in the natural world, all have the same sorrowful lesson to learn—"An enemy hath done this." Matthew 13:28.

Only in the light that shines from Calvary can nature's teaching be read aright. Through the story of Bethlehem and the cross let it be shown how good is to conquer evil, and how every blessing that comes to us is a gift of redemption.

In brier and thorn, in thistle and tare, is represented the evil that blights and mars. In singing bird and opening blossom, in rain and sunshine, in summer breeze and gentle dew, in ten thousand objects in nature, from the oak of the forest to the violet that blossoms at its root, is seen the love that restores. And nature still speaks to us of God's goodness.

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Jeremiah 29:11. This is the message that, in the light from the cross, may be read upon all the face of nature. The heavens declare His glory, and the earth is full of His riches.

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Psalm 19

**To transgress
God's law—
physically,
mentally
or morally—is
to place one's
self out of
harmony with
the universe**

Taken from *Education*,
pp. 99-101.

March 16
Tuesday

The Conclusion: Natural Law

selected by editors

EVIDENCE

Key passage

Romans 2:14, 15

Without natural law, "human beings would be without any moral basis for opposing tyranny"

Editor's note: Consider below the principle arguments that may be given in support of the natural law theory.

Consider, in the first place, that if there were no natural law, it would follow that there would be no criterion for distinguishing between just laws and unjust laws. As Plato said, "What is to be the standard of just and unjust is the point at issue."¹ Were it not for the natural law written in the heart of man, human beings would be without any moral basis for opposing tyranny. Legislators could enact laws to further their own interests and those of their friends, and the hapless citizens whose interests were violated by these laws would have no recourse to a higher tribunal. They could not appeal to the conscience of mankind and would be powerless victims whose only hope for redress would be in over-throwing those in power.

But in fact we *do* distinguish between just and unjust laws. We recognize, for example, that the federal Fugitive Slave Law of 1793, which allowed slave "owners" to capture and retrieve slaves who had sought freedom in another state, was a profoundly unjust law because it violated the basic principle that every human being has a right to his personal freedom, that compulsory servitude—slavery—is morally wrong. Were it not for our common awareness of such a "higher law" we could not make such a judgment. . . .

A second argument that may be adduced in support of the nature-law theory is that aliens are held to be punishable if they break a just law of a country other than their own, even though the lawmaking agency of that country has no legal mandate to control their behavior. The British Parliament, for example, has no power to make laws governing the behavior of anyone except citizens of Great Britain. Yet we freely grant that an American citizen who commits, say, theft or murder in Great Britain is rightly punished for his crime according to British law. It is as if nature had assigned to each sovereign state the task of enforcing the natural law on all who happen in the course of their lives to come within the geographical borders of this or that state. It is, in the last analysis, the conscience of mankind that renders a verdict when a judge or a jury decides a case. Were it not for the universal applicability of the natural law, individuals would leave the reign of law whenever they left the country whose laws they are, as citizens, legally bound to obey.

The natural-law theory is supported by yet another line of reasoning—that natural law provides the only justification for many laws of the civilized nations of the world. Consider, for example, laws governing the distribution of pornographic material. It is hard to make a convincing case for the view that a substantial public interest is involved in this matter. If some people want to pay money to look at lewd pictures or to read about the sexual exploits of others, the rest of society is not at all affected. Why, then, does society pass antipornography laws? . . . On the basis that the proliferation of smut and the encouragement of lust are contrary to what most human beings perceive as good and right—contrary, in other words, to natural law. . . . Take away natural law and you must take away much of the moral legislation that governs the everyday life of all of us.

Taken from William H. Halverson, *A Concise Introduction to Philosophy*. Copyright © 1976, Random House, Inc., pp. 358, 359.

¹ Plato, *Laws*, IV, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, tr. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937), Vol. II, p. 485.

□ March 17
Wednesday

Natural Law and Day-to Day Living

by editors

Theologians and philosophers, lawyers and judges, sociologists and anthropologists have, through the ages, spent innumerable hours and pages of writ discussing natural law. It has been a key concept in Western Christian orthodox theology since the time of St. Thomas Aquinas. It is fundamental to the Roman Catholic belief system, providing the foundation for its prohibitions against such things as contraceptives and abortions. Over recent decades, however, natural law theory has come under increasing attack—a summary of views of those in opposition to natural law follows in this week's Opinion article.

But the most important question for the lay social scientist and Saturday-afternoon philosopher is: How does the natural law theory affect the practicalities of day-to-day living? Consider the listing below:

1. **Human dignity.** The idea of the dignity of humanity is nothing that can be objectively conceived. No syllogisms can lead one logically to this conclusion. But *natural law* teaches that human life is to be preserved, that living is worthwhile, that humanity is by definition dignified.

Thus, one is called upon to seek peace and refrain from hurting others. Promises should be kept, and the property of others respected. One should have self-respect, and respect the dignity of every other human being.

2. **Implicit knowledge of "justice."** One cannot *prove* that it was unjust for Hitler to order the extermination of millions of Jews. Indeed, Eichmann and Hitler believed it to be justice of a high order. But they were wrong. Why? Because of systematic proofs? No. Because such action is simply unjust. One cannot prove its injustice, it is simply something that humans know.

Thus, the poor should not be oppressed. The rich should not be favored. One should be considered innocent before being proven guilty.

3. **Freedom.** One's right to free speech should not be restricted. Communist countries should not restrict the immigration of Jews. The rights of women and minorities should be respected. Why? "Because of natural law."

One could successfully argue analytically that there is nothing *wrong* with the powerful circumscribing the freedom of the weak. But here again, fundamentally, the appeal is made to that universal principle which shows what one *ought* to do—that moral power which transcends cultural and hereditary determinations.

E.B.S.

HOW TO
Key passage:
Matthew 5:21,
22, 27, 28

Natural Law Re-Examined

by editors

OPINION

Key passage:
Matthew 7:16, 17

**"It has been
used in history
to defend
anything"**

**"The civil
community . . .
has no other
choice but to
think, speak,
and act on
the basis of
this allegedly
natural law"**

The essence of natural law theory is this: "that there are in reality some laws which are not posited by men, but which are grounded in some kind of transcendent source. To put the point another way, the central concern of any natural law thought is to indicate the notion that there is a 'justice which human authority expresses, or ought to express—but does not make. . . .'"¹

As mentioned earlier in the week, this concept has faced serious assault in recent years. Joseph Fletcher, in his book, *Moral Responsibility*, quotes four objections to the theory taken from the Episcopal Bishop James Pike: "(1) its 'universal precepts,' such as 'avoid the evil, do the good' and 'to each according to his due,' are platitudinous; (2) it has been used in history to defend anything and everything—feudalism, capitalism, socialism, fascism, both the 'divine right' of kings and democracy, denial of political and religious liberty ('error has no rights'), and affirmation of the same ('conscience is always to be followed'); (3) cultural anthropology has made it plain that there is disagreement 'on every subject' in morals—there is no *consensus gentium*; (4) its—the natural law's—conclusions are always built into its premises, and the premises are based on faith assertions, entirely legitimate but not a matter of reason at all!"²

Helmut Thielicke in his *Theological Ethics* agrees that objections to natural law theory are indeed sound. Nevertheless, he cautions the Protestant world against being too quick to disclaim the theory, primarily because of its effective use in the secular world. He quotes an important statement made by Karl Barth on this matter: "The civil community as such—the civil community which is not yet or is no longer illuminated from its centre—undoubtedly has no other choice but to think, speak, and act on the basis of this allegedly natural law. The civil community is reduced to guessing or to accepting some powerful assertion of this or that interpretation of natural law . . . never certain whether it may not in the end be an illusion to rely on it as the final authority. . . ." ³

Thielicke comments: "When men know nothing of a revealed will of God, what other possibility do they have of expressing both the limitations of their own caprice and also their respect for superior norms? Even as Christians, as Church, we should respect these references to natural law in the secular sphere. We should respect them as a kind of symbol in which are expressed both 'recollection' and, if not fear of God, at least something similar, namely, 'reverence.'" ⁴

Because of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the Christian "must act on very different grounds from those of natural law. He acts in obedience to the commandments of God. He acts in the knowledge that even those actions which conform to the ultimate norms perceptible in this aeon must stand under forgiveness, and that these perceptible norms are not identical with the divine commandments, or, more precisely, with the 'true' will . . . of God."⁵

¹ John Underwood Lewis, "The Basis of Active Law," in *The Monist*, Vol. 49, No. 3, July, 1965, p. 444.

² James Pike, *A Time for Christian Candor* (Longmans: Green and Co., Inc., 1964), pp. 41-50 as quoted in Joseph Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work*, copyright © MCMLXVII The Westminster Press. Used by permission. Page 71.

³ Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., © 1966 by Fortress Press), p. 430.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 431.

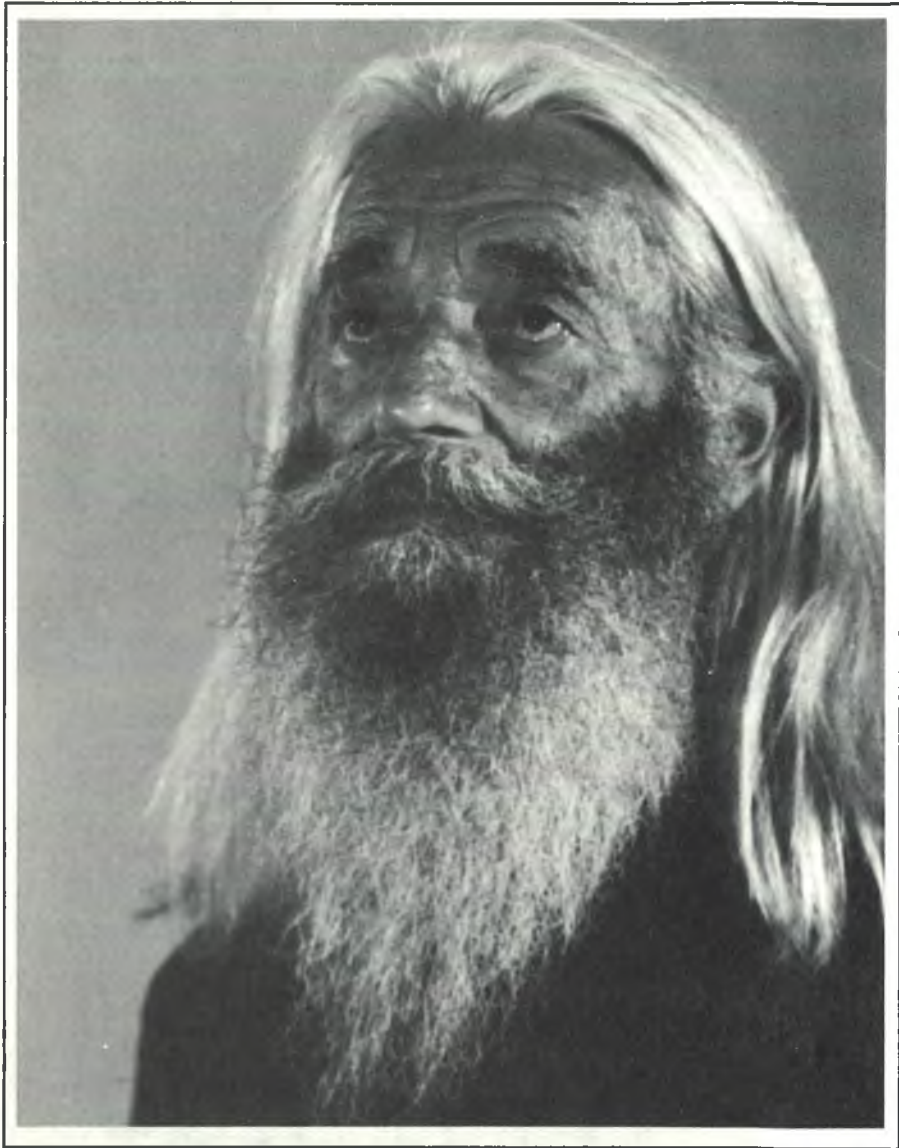
⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 431, 432.

REACT
Lesson 12

1. The theme verse for this week's lesson is taken from Romans 2:14, 15. In this week's Logos article, it is used to support natural law theory from the Bible. But what do you think? Is Paul referring here to natural law, as described in this week's lesson?
2. The Testimony article quotes a passage from Ellen White in which she discusses the power and laws of God that can be seen in the natural world. After reading this article, do you believe she is referring to "natural law" in the same way the philosophers and theologians do? What do you see as the differences and similarities between the natural law spoken of by Ellen White and that of the rest of the authors of this week's lesson?
3. The author for this week's Evidence section gives reasons in favor of the natural law theory. After reflecting upon these reasons, what is your opinion of them? Are they solid?
4. In this week's Opinion article Bishop James Pike objects in four principal ways to the theory of natural law. Do you consider his objections to be valid?

How do you respond to Barth's and Thielicke's retorts?

Maturity Through Conflict



**“For Christ’s sake, I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong”
(II Corinthians 12:9, 10, NIV).**

Lesson 13, March 21-27

The Test of a Man

INTRODUCTION

selected by editors

I can still hear my father telling the story about old Mr. Blaine and his watch factory: "We went to work as soon as we got out of grammar school in those days," he would begin. . . . "Each morning they opened the doors and we filed in one by one. Sitting there behind a desk would be an old high-collared clerk. You'd get in front of the desk and he'd ask you: 'Protestant or Catholic?'

"If anyone answered 'Catholic' he was told, 'No openings today.' If you said 'Protestant' you were handed a slip and told to report to a certain section for work. Like many other Catholics in the line I gritted my teeth and said 'Protestant'—we needed the buck that badly."

The simple brutality of this story awoke a fierce anger in my boyish mind and I understood why my father had joined Frank Hague and his political cohorts in the 1920s. . . .

Galled by years of injustice from men like Blaine, they had built an aggressive political machine that stormed out of the slums and took charge of the city.

The Depression years ground away, reducing all opposition to the Hague regime. . . . But the test of a man is not simply his ability to acquire money and power—it is what he does with these things. One winter night in the early 1940s I saw my father meet this test. Out of the haunted house came the scion of the old watch factory owner. Up the street he came to ring our bell and to ask to see my father.

For a moment my father looked startled when I told him who was waiting for him in the living room. Then a more serious, thoughtful expression passed over his face. . . .

"Nice to see you, Mr. Blaine," he said, holding out his hand. . . .

Mr. Blaine seemed surprised by the extended hand. He seized it awkwardly, then sat down on the edge of the couch. . . . "Mr. Fleming, I need a job. I don't know whether you can help me. I don't know whether you will help me. I know my family hasn't been on your side politically."

There was silence. . . . Here, if ever, was the perfect moment for revenge. . . . "Now ask him 'Protestant or Catholic?'" I wanted to scream.

Instead, my father's voice came up to me, steady and calm. . . . "You're a college graduate, aren't you?" . . .

"Yes, of course."

"Ever work in a library?"

"No."

"But you know your way around books?"

"Yes. Yes, I think I do."

"How would you like a job as a city librarian?"

"Mr. Fleming, that would be—just perfect."

"I heard about an opening . . . I'll call you tomorrow."

Blaine shook his hand. "Mr. Fleming, I can't thank you enough. . . ."

Blaine did not realize it, of course, but when he shook my father's hand he was sealing a bargain. . . . Shaking this man's hand meant he would go down to City Hall tomorrow morning and battle other politicians who also had candidates for the librarian job. . . . I sat on the stairs thinking of those ragged lines filing into the watch factory each morning to accept their humiliation. . . . They were part of history now: a foolish, sad history. With five minutes of matter-of-fact kindness my father had healed the wound.

Taken from "The Test of a Man" by Thomas J. Fleming in *We, Too, Belong*, ed. by Mary Turner (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), pp. 126-130.

□ March 21
Sunday

Maturity Through Conflict

by editors

LOGOS

Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians, "I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of contentment in every situation, whether it be a full stomach or hunger, plenty or want" (Phil. 4:12; LNT). Considering that these words were written while Paul was imprisoned, he displays a remarkable ability to "conquer life."

But how did Paul reach this level of maturity in living? "I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for the churches."

The troubles and inner conflicts in Paul's life, however, did not break his spirit. Rather, they were necessary agents in his maturation as a Christian and apostle to the world: "He [Christ] has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weakness, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Cor. 11:26-28; 12:9, 10; NAS).

Inside this strong, rock-like Paul, however, was also a side not so mature and unconquerable—a side perhaps we can better identify with: "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin" (Romans 7:14; NAS).

William Barclay comments: "Flesh is that part of our nature which gives sin a bridgehead and a point of attack. The meaning of the flesh will vary from person to person. One man's weakness may be in his body, and his risk may be sexual sin; another man's sin may be in earthly things and his risk may be unworthy ambition; another man's sin may be in his temper and his risk may be in envyings and strife. All are sins of the flesh."¹

So we see the dilemma that every born-again Christian, including Paul, must face. Having received Christ as a personal Savior and having turned one's life and heart over to Him, the Christian still battles hour after hour with sin. *Believers are still flesh.*

The Christian escapes judgment, however, because "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1; NAS).

This means that the Christian can fight his inner battles with love as a motive, assured of his salvation. Rather than cringing throughout a life of failure and tribulation, the Christian grows trial by trial, for, "I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power" (Phil. 4:13; LNT).

D.R.S./E.B.S.

¹ William Barclay, *The Daily Bible Study Series: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1958), pp. 117, 118

Of Conflict and Growth

selected by editors

... the development of the plant is a beautiful figure of Christian growth. As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and our knowledge increase. We shall become strong to bear responsibility, and our maturity will be in proportion to our privileges.¹

The word of God often comes in collision with man's hereditary and cultivated traits of character and his habits of life. But the good-ground hearer, in receiving the word, accepts all its conditions and requirements. His habits, customs, and practises are brought into submission to God's word. In his view the commands of finite, erring man sink into insignificance beside the word of the infinite God. With the whole heart, with undivided purpose, he is seeking the life eternal, and at the cost of loss, persecution, or death itself, he will obey the truth.

And he brings forth fruit "with patience." None who receive God's word are exempt from difficulty and trial; but when affliction comes, the true Christian does not become restless, distrustful, or despondent. Though we can not see the definite outcome of affairs, or discern the purpose of God's providences, we are not to cast away our confidence. Remembering the tender mercies of the Lord, we should cast our care upon Him, and with patience wait for His salvation.

Through conflict the spiritual life is strengthened. Trials well borne will develop steadfastness of character, and precious spiritual graces. The perfect fruit of faith, meekness and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness.

"The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain" (James 5:7). So the Christian is to wait with patience for the fruition, in his life, of the word of God. Often when we pray for the graces of the spirit, God works to answer our prayers by placing us in circumstances to develop these fruits; but we do not understand His purpose, and wonder, and are dismayed. Yet none can develop these graces except through the process of growth and fruit-bearing. Our part is to receive God's word and to hold it fast, yielding ourselves fully to its control, and its purpose in us will be accomplished.²

The plant grows by receiving that which God has provided to sustain its life. It sends down its roots into the earth. It drinks in the sunshine, the dew, the rain. It receives the life-giving properties from the air. So the Christian is to grow by co-operating with the divine agencies. Feeling our helplessness, we are to improve all the opportunities granted us to gain a fuller experience. As the plant takes root in the soil, so we are to take deep root in Christ. As the plant receives the sunshine, the dew, and the rain, we are to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. The work is to be done, "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."³

TESTIMONY

Key passage:
Matthew 3:1-8;
18-23

"None who receive God's word are exempt from difficulty and trial"

"The perfect fruit of faith, meekness and love often matures best amid storm clouds and darkness"

¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 65, 66.

² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.

**March 23
Tuesday**

On the Examples of the Holy Fathers

by Thomas a' Kempis

EVIDENCE

Key passage:
Philippians
4:10-14

Consider the glowing examples of the holy Fathers, in whom shone true religion and perfection; compared with them, we do little or nothing. Alas, how can our life be compared with theirs! The Saints and friends of Christ served Our Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in toil and weariness: in watching and fasting, in prayer and meditation, in persecutions and insults without number.

How countless and constant were the trials endured by the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, and all those others who strove to follow in the footsteps of Christ. These all hated their lives in this world, that they might keep them to life eternal. How strict and self-denying was the life of the holy Fathers in the desert! How long and grievous the temptations they endured! How often they were assaulted by the Devil! How frequent and fervent their prayers to God! How strict their fasts! How great their zeal and ardour for spiritual progress! How valiant the battles they fought to overcome their vices! How pure and upright their intention towards God!

All day long they laboured, and the night they gave to continuous prayer; even as they worked, they never ceased from mental prayer. They spent all their time with profit, every hour seeming short in the service of God. They often forgot even their bodily needs in the great sweetness of contemplation. They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends and kindred; they desired to possess nothing in this world. Scarcely would they take the necessities of life, and only with reluctance would they provide for the needs of the body. Thus, although destitute of earthly goods, they were abundantly rich in grace and all virtues. Outwardly they were poor, but inwardly they were refreshed with grace and heavenly consolation. They were strangers to the world, but to God they were dear and familiar friends. To themselves they were nothing, but in the eyes of God they were precious and beloved. Grounded in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience; and thus daily increased in the Spirit, and received great grace from God. They were given for an example to all Religious, and they should encourage us to advance in holiness, rather than the lukewarm should incline us to laxness.

How deep was the fervour of all Religious as the foundation of their Order! How great was their devotion in prayer, and their zeal for virtue! How strict was their observance of the Rule! What respect and obedience to the direction of the Superior flourished in those days! Their examples still witness that they were indeed holy and perfect men, who fought valiantly, and trampled the world under their feet. But in these days, any who is not a breaker of rules, or who obeys with patience is accounted outstanding!

Oh, the carelessness and coldness of this present time! Sloth and lukewarmness make life wearisome for us, and we soon lose our early fervour! May the longing to grow in grace not remain dormant in you, who have been privileged to witness so many examples of the holy life.

"May the longing to grow in grace not remain dormant in you"

Taken from Thomas a' Kempis *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. by Leo Sherley-Price (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, Inc., 1952), pp. 46, 47.

□ March 24
Wednesday

Thomas a' Kempis (1380-1471) was a fifteenth century monk and influential religious author.

Heaven: Worth Any Price

by Ruthita Fike

HOW TO
Key passage:
Zechariah 13:9

"Heaven is worth any price. If I had not endured such suffering perhaps I would not be as close to the Lord." That quote is from one of my best friends who has recently gone through a divorce. Because I know her so well I know she does not speak those words idly; her experience with practical growing religion has been exciting. Jesus Christ is real to her and she speaks of Him with ease.

When I first learned of her divorce I called her, hoping to give her some support. I grieved for her and as we talked I began to cry. But before long she was comforting me. Although her problems have seemed immense to me, she has learned the value of "casting her burdens upon the Lord," and as a result, has stayed realistically optimistic. I'm always impressed with the fact that she has remained in charge of her life despite troublesome circumstances. She thanks the Lord for the problems she has had because they have made her rely more heavily on heavenly strength.

Her experience has encouraged me to attempt to analyze the Christian pathway through life. Is it true that Christians need conflict to be close to the Lord? The Bible seems to indicate that Christians do need conflict. Zechariah has written, "And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried" (13:9). Life on the earth is such that no one is free from problems. The real question is not if Christians will have conflict, but how they should relate to conflict when it comes.

Following is a list of things to remember during troublesome periods.

1. **Live one day at a time.** That has been said so many times that it has become a cliché and most of us ignore clichés. But the truth is that living each day at a time is not easy. Most of us spend immense portions of time planning and worrying over the future. But it is still true "that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Jesus promises daily strength, just as He promised a daily supply of manna for the Jews. Strength will be there, in sufficient quantity, when we need it most.

2. **Thank the Lord for caring enough about you to want to purify your character.** Like the text in Zechariah implies, the Lord does not spend time attempting to purify something that has no value. Furthermore, trials are good teachers which serve to bring us closer to the Lord. If life were problem free it is possible that mankind would feel unneeded of a powerful and loving God. Conflicts, however, can teach us of our need for a Savior and for a better world. Conflict can also strengthen the character. We all feel closer to issues we have had to stand up for.

3. **Don't feel as if the Lord doesn't love you if things are going well.** The Christian life is not one of total conflict. If it were, not many of us would want to try it. Instead, it is a life of constant growth and a knowing of oneself through an intimate knowledge of a personal Savior. There are times of trial and times of peace, but always times of joy in a relationship with an omnipotent and omniscient God.

Ruthita Fike is Assistant to the President at Union College

**March 25
Thursday**

The Salvation Game

by Duane Fike

OPINION

Key passage:
John 15:1-10

“Personal struggles are not the hopelessly deep valleys that they are first taken for”

As a small boy, I played the “salvation game.” I would throw a rock or stick, and if it hit the target, such as a tin can, then that meant that I would eventually go to heaven. I was usually careful that the attempt had a good chance of success.

Such games have now lost their value, but the struggle with inner conflicts still pops up now and then. Maturity, however, has helped me to realize that obtaining eternal life is neither won nor earned; it is a gift that will come as a result of a close communion with Christ.

Such communion enlarges one’s perspective. Instead of a small tin can, my view of the promise of eternal life has grown into what might be called the “big picture.” By stepping back and trying to understand the view God must have of the needs and despairs of all of us, each Christian can begin to see that personal struggles are not the hopelessly deep valleys that they are first taken for.

But as Christians we are not always able to remove ourselves from our limited perspective on our own accord. At such times, then, we need to fall back on the peace that comes from knowing Christ. Because we are sinful by nature, no matter how old we become the struggle against sin and doubt stays with us. However, the more mature we become in our Christian growth, the more we realize that Christ’s presence in our lives can help us to overcome the struggles in our hearts.

Christ said, “Abide in me, and I in you.” While He cannot remove our sinful nature, at least He can help us to withstand or ignore the sinful urgings that always lie just beneath the surface. Thus, a close communion, a deep understanding of Christ’s power and love, helps us over those many rough spots in what we wish would always be a smooth road.

One truth remains about my childish “salvation game.” My fate always rested upon a single instance, a brief second or two. In almost the same short space of time, we are all accountable. On the other hand, a moment to moment faith in Christ is a very comforting position. We do not have to worry about the struggles that will come later. Knowing that Christ loves us and forgives us at each heart beat helps us to overcome the doubts of the mind.

What other salvation games do immature Christians play? Do they think that they will have more time for Christ later in their lives? Do they assume that their present struggles are unique, and thus they are excused from accountability? Do they look for a time when they will be free to concentrate upon God’s Word, but know that God “understands” their delay? All these are popular “games,” and certainly there are many more. But are they really different than my old one? Is there a difference between a “sweepstakes” view of winning heaven and one that involves barter—a promise to do better later. I doubt it. In the game of life, Christ always deals the winning hand to His partner.

REACT
Lesson 13

1. The title for this week's lesson implies that Christian maturity comes through inner conflict. "Too often, however, Christians seem to fear that a free exchange of ideas will threaten the security they have found in their established teachings and ethical action. They hesitate to place themselves in an environment where they may encounter conflicting and differing opinions. But an environment which fosters careful examination of whatever is presented as truth appears to be necessary for spiritual growth."

Consider: In your own life, do differing ideas—especially on what you consider to be fundamental issues—tend to make you shrink back from critical thought and discussion? Why? If you are apprehensive about freely discussing theological or philosophical issues, is it because you are afraid that such might move you from what you conceive as being "truth"?

2. In this week's key passage, Paul writes, "for when I am weak, then I am strong." What does he mean here? What is he actually saying?

Does this "when I am weak I am truly strong" philosophy hold true for societies as well as for the individual (i.e., does Paul's sense of weakness *in a society* result in true strength or in foreign occupation)? Or is Paul's observation true only for the individual, but impractical—indeed, suicidal—for nations or social organizations?

3. Paul affirms, "I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power." What is Paul saying here? Have you found this statement always to be true experientially?
 4. Thomas a' Kempis writes on the examples of the holy fathers in this week's Evidence section. Here he discusses how their extraordinary Christian maturity came about as a result of the divine conquering of conflicting claims in their lives. "Scarcely," he says, "would they take the necessities of life. . . . Outwardly they were poor. . . . They were strangers to the world. . . . After reading a' Kempis' praise of these holy men in Wednesday's article once again, how close do you believe his brief description of their saintly lives is to the fullness of Christian maturity? Explain.
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NOTES

NOTES

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Central India	148,695,053	142	27,638	34,384
Northern	386,926,990	142	17,720	18,716
Pakistan	76,000,000	41	3,095	5,541
South India	92,021,255	333	44,059	49,404
Sri Lanka	14,000,000	24	1,368	1,627
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(Figures as of Second Quarter, 1980)

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“Need I say more?”

J. Russell Shawver
President
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