

SPECTRUM

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spring 1971

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ABORTION

4

General public discussion of induced abortion did not really get started until the beginning of the past decade; but once it started, it became a veritable flood of communication involving all media. Church leaders and theologians participated in this discussion early, speaking particularly to the moral and social issues involved, and representing attitudes varying from the most traditionally conservative to the most permissive.

For much of the Western world, at least, this discussion was at first still somewhat academic, since induced abortions, except in rare circumstances, were illegal and subject to criminal prosecution. Almost overnight this has changed with the liberalization or almost complete abrogation of the old abortion laws in parts of Europe and in the United States. What was once illegal and dangerous is now freely available in many areas, and this legality and availability have forced many to take a second look at the principles and reasons on which the old and new attitudes toward abortion were based.

There has been little discussion on abortion in Adventist publications. Two articles appeared in the March 1971 issue of *The Ministry*, one by Ralph F. Waddell, "Abortion Is Not the Answer," and one by Walter R. Beach, "Abortion?" In the same issue is a statement by the General Conference officers entitled "Abortion Guidelines" (guidelines that are reported to be in the process of revision):

Thus, the church has taken no position establishing general regulations governing the performing of abortions in church-controlled medical institutions everywhere. This does not mean that the church does not favor and does not uphold standards, nor that it does not establish regulations; but rather that these standards and regulations are established in the various countries in which the church conducts hospitals. . . .

It is the position of the church that regulations relating to the performing of abortions are the proper business of responsible medical staffs of hospitals, such regulations to be approved by the hospitals' controlling board[s], and always to be in harmony with the laws of the State. . . .

It is believed that therapeutic abortions may be performed for the following established indications:

1. When continuation of the pregnancy may threaten the life of the woman or seriously impair her health.
2. When continuation of the pregnancy is likely to result in the birth of a child with grave physical deformities or mental retardation.
3. When conception has occurred as a result of rape or incest.

When indicated therapeutic abortions are done, they should be performed during the first trimester of pregnancy.

The introduction to the foregoing includes the following paragraph: "The basis for these guidelines exists on the person-image concept, which is governed by a system of priorities with an ascending scale of values. It is believed that this person-image concept is the biblical basis enjoined upon the church, is one that can be defended, and is one that we should support."

Basically, this last is probably the most important and far-reaching statement, brief as it is, in these guidelines.

In this connection, I would like to direct the attention of our readers to the article by Jack W. Provonsha, "A Christian Appraisal of Therapeutic Abortion," one of the symposium on abortion in this number of *SPECTRUM*.

I am impressed by the fact that all the authors emphasize the needs and problems of the *person* involved in the possible abortion, rather than applying a sterile legalism to an impersonal problem, where "the letter killeth." Concern is expressed for all the issues that have a bearing on the individual problem, be they moral, legal, physical, emotional, social, or economic.

I hope that these presentations will constitute only the first in a continuing discussion of important subjects.

MOLLEURUS COUPERUS

Light

BEN JACQUES

The river comes shining
but I, bald, blind,
can't find you though
I have to.

I send to the bridge
the nuns of my long waiting
to waylay you.

Abortion in Our Changing World

HAROLD F. ZIPRICK

7

Until a few years ago most physicians believed, and medical leaders taught, that therapeutic abortion (the destruction of the fetus for cause) was a grave undertaking, and it should not be considered unless the mother was in imminent danger of death or of great bodily or mental harm from the pregnancy.¹ Today many physicians in the United States have changed their views about abortion. This new viewpoint is shared by large numbers of the general public and by most Protestant physicians, who believe that sympathy and aid must be given to those in trouble with an unwanted pregnancy, and that all circumstances must be studied and abortion considered.

However, a segment of the population and some physicians think that abortion is wrong — that to destroy a fetus is murder. These feel that lack of consideration for life in utero will lead to a lessening of regard for life generally. Some suggest that in time public opinion might demand the destruction of the mentally defective, the insane, the old, and the useless.² This difference of opinion has been, and will continue to be, widely argued, and often the discussion is emotional. The controversy has occasioned such headlines and statements as these in the medical press: "New liberal abortion stand threatens AMA with split;"³ "Legal abortion a demonstration of M.D.'s duty to improve life;"⁴ "Premeditated destruction of our young."⁵

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has changed its policy and advises that, when a physician recommends an abortion, the procedure should be approved by a consultant who is knowledgeable about the condition thought to indicate abortion.⁶ Most hospitals, even in states with liberalized abortion laws, still require at least one consultation, and there is strong agitation to have legislatures modify state laws to conform with the recommendation of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

In most cases abortion is considered because of the possibility of psychiatric injury. Therefore psychiatrists are usually called on to provide the consultation, but they are not happy with this role, because they think that their decisions are largely justification rather than consultation. Eric Pfeiffer, psychiatrist from Duke University, writes in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*: "The present law invites duplicity on the part of psychiatrists and on the part of the pregnant woman as well. It encourages women seeking an abortion to feign psychiatric symptoms, to mouth suicidal ideas, and to present themselves as emotionally disordered when in fact they are not. . . . The psychiatrist is under pressure from medical colleagues and patients to approve abortion on psychiatric grounds."⁷

Because neither the Bible nor the writings of Ellen G. White provide guidelines on the subject of abortion, officers of the Seventh-day Adventist church have received requests for a decision on this grave problem. A "suggestive outline for therapeutic abortion" was formulated and sent to Seventh-day Adventist hospitals on May 12, 1970. These guidelines state that the decision on the performance of abortions is the proper business of the medical staff. Two consultations are advised, approval of the procedures should be given by an abortion committee, state and national regulations should be observed, and the decisions should be in harmony with the moral standards of the community and the sponsoring church.⁸ A committee on abortion appointed by General Conference officers on January 11, 1971, composed of ministers and physicians, is continuing to study the problem.⁹

The policy of the Loma Linda University School of Medicine is in agreement with the guidelines suggested by the General Conference. What to teach medical students about the abortion question is not an easy decision. Communications received by the School administration urge that no abortions be performed except for the gravest reasons. Some state that anything less will weaken the "faith of our Christian brethren" and the public about Seventh-day Adventists. Others demand that Christian physicians should be sympathetic and should aid women in distress — that physicians are unchristian and cruel if they do not perform abortions.

Physicians at Loma Linda University, like the general membership of the Seventh-day Adventist church, are not all of one opinion. Some were taught as medical students that abortion except to save a mother's life is wrong. They are of this opinion still, and they do not recommend or perform abortions. Others feel that the fetus is not yet a real person, and to prevent a greater harm they will recommend or perform an abortion. Relatively few abortions have been performed at the University Medical Center because

the obstetrical staff is united in believing that restraint must be exercised, and a fetal life should be taken only to preserve greater values. The aim of the department of gynecology and obstetrics and of the School of Medicine is to show concern for people — to be humanitarian rather than legalistic. Physicians who do no abortions themselves have not condemned the opinions or consultations of their medical colleagues.

A problem frequently discussed is whether the patient has the right to decide to give up a fetus she does not desire to keep. Another vexing question has been raised: Is the fetus as valuable as a person in coma or a "human vegetable"? The majority of physicians and the public agree that the fetus is living tissue, that it is destined to become a living being, and that it has a unique genetic makeup, different from the mother's, and so is a different person or potential person and not a tumor. Much has been said about when the "breath of life" enters the fetus. Does this event occur at birth, at the time of viability (at seven months of intrauterine life), at five months of intrauterine life (abortus becomes fetus by California law), at quickening (fetal movement), at completion of fetal organ formation, at implantation, or at conception?

One might reason that a conception resulting from rape is not the result of two who "become one"¹⁰ voluntarily; so the resulting pregnancy is not "godly seed"¹¹ or a "godly"¹² child and is therefore unblessed and undesirable. One might also decide with justification that conception resulting from incest is the product of the improper action of two people, one or both mentally ill. Such a child might well be born and brought up in an intolerable environment.

There is much more question about abortion performed to preserve health. Today the mother's life is rarely saved by the destruction of fetal life. The majority of abortions are performed because the health (usually mental) of the mother would suffer deterioration, or because suicidal tendencies are present or would develop if the pregnancy were to continue.

The possibility of genetic changes or fetal abnormalities that result from viral infections or other harmful agents imposes the decision of whether to destroy a possibly normal fetus to prevent the birth of a defective infant. Fortunately, the development and use of a serum to prevent the formation of antibodies that occur if German measles infect the mother in early pregnancy, and the use of vaccine to create immunity in female children, have somewhat alleviated this problem.

What is the duty of the Christian physician regarding abortion? Does he have a moral responsibility to urge his beliefs and ideas on his colleagues?

Is it possible to urge one's difference of opinion in so emotional a problem as this one without being judgmental? What is the effect on the physician who participates in abortion? He may well feel satisfaction because he has made life easier for the troubled patient, but he may also have some conflicting thoughts, since he acted contrary to his usual role — that of preserving life only.

Does the physician have the responsibility of counseling a woman who desires an abortion about the alternatives to abortion, rather than simply acquiescing readily? Should social workers or hospital chaplains, or both, participate in the counseling that precedes a decision? Unwanted pregnancy in the married woman may be the result of her aim to please her mate, fear of contraception, or lack of knowledge. Unwanted pregnancy in the unmarried woman is often the result of a need to be wanted or loved, the desire to be like her friends, a desire to act contrary to parental authority, or a lack of knowledge. All these reasons would indicate the desirability of counseling by the physician or others qualified to do so, lest the problem become repetitious.

The Bible records that Jesus did not condemn others, but that he did caution the offending person not to make the same mistake again.¹³ Perhaps this attitude should guide physicians also to counsel patients and aid them in not repeating their faulty action. A physician who merely acquiesces and does an abortion at a woman's request may otherwise appear to approve of her action. It has been shown that few psychiatric disturbances occur in the aborted patient, since her feeling is mainly that of outstanding relief; but sometimes a continuing sense of guilt requires psychiatric treatment.¹⁴

Should consideration be given to establishing in the United States at least one Seventh-day Adventist adoption home in which unwanted babies and orphaned children could be cared for until a proper adoptive home could be found? Such a home could overcome the objection of some women that giving their offspring to an adoption agency might result in the raising of the child in a nonchristian home. Also, the availability of a home for pregnant unwed women might seem to some a recognition of the undesirable fact that out-of-wedlock pregnancy does occur in the Seventh-day Adventist church, but such an accommodation might be of great aid to those who are unable to meet the problem alone, yet hesitate to resort to abortion.

How does abortion affect the public, particularly the Seventh-day Adventist public? The church believes the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" to the extent that it urges young men to enter military service only in non-combatant roles.¹⁵ In the eyes of some church members, this belief seems

inconsistent with the decision to perform abortions. (The Roman Catholic church allows its young men to fight and kill the enemy but teaches that it is wrong to destroy a defenseless fetus.)

Most opinions about life, marriage, and abortion have been advocated by men. It would be well if women were encouraged to enter into the discussion about the vexing problem of abortion and to help formulate the best solution. The Bible has predicted that the woman's conceptions would be multiplied, would be in sorrow and pain,¹⁶ and yet she would be subject to pregnancy in her desire to please her husband. While it is also written that she would be ruled over by her husband, she is not forbidden to advance solutions to problems arising from pregnancy.¹⁷

II

The decision to take the life of a fetus should not be taken hurriedly. The decision to sacrifice an unborn life should be made only when it is the best way to make a troubled life tolerable. Since the problem of abortion is not delineated in the Bible, we should show by our actions that we have reverence and regard for the life God has created, and that we are trying to do his will. If, in our desire to help another person, we err in our method of helping, we must look to the Creator for forgiveness. Perhaps because we have been given freedom to make decisions about this difficult problem, we will become more responsible and mature Christians.¹⁸

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- 17 Genesis 3:16.
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A Sociologist Looks at Abortion

BETTY J. STIRLING

12

The young woman was part of a student group presenting a discussion on abortion to a university class on the sociology of the family. "I had an abortion myself," she said, and went on calmly to explain the hazards — not of having an abortion, but of trying to obtain one.

Why had she wanted an abortion? She was young, in good health, happily married, had two children "properly spaced," and was also a full-time student. "My husband and I had decided that two children make the ideal family size," she told the class, "especially in the present population crisis. I want to be able to make a professional contribution to society when my children are in school, and I think it would be easier with only two children. So when the pill failed, abortion seemed to be the answer." As this was not sufficient legal reason for an approved "therapeutic" abortion, she found the solution through the abortion referral service run by women students at that university, a service that arranges abortions with qualified doctors locally or outside the country.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND ABORTION

One of the difficulties of analyzing the abortion problem is illustrated by this young woman, for she does not fit the stereotype of the woman who seeks an abortion. If a solution to this problem is to be found, we must discover accurate ways to determine which women seek abortions and why they do so.

Facts on abortion are hard to come by and are widely disputed by persons with one or another ax to grind. One reason is that abortion is frequently a crime, and crimes are generally reported by the victim, not the perpetrator. Abortion is one of the few crimes in which the victim is also the perpetrator,

and therefore guilty. If the crime is not reported by victim or perpetrator, the result is that most statistics either are limited in scope or are educated guesses, or both.

Women who seek abortions include the unmarried, the married with few children, the married with many children, the divorced, and the widowed. Estimates of the total number of women in the United States who seek abortions range from well under one million to two million per year. Why do these women want abortions? Married women usually just don't want another child. The reason may be physical — they already have too many children to care for within their physical strength limit; emotional — they simply cannot cope with another child; social — they feel that they have contributed enough to the population problem; economic — the budget just won't stretch to cover another child; or related to age — they feel that they are too old to care for a child or they are worried that one born at their age might be defective.

For the single woman — whether she was never married or is divorced or widowed — the reason is different, but just as compelling: to avoid having an illegitimate child.

The problem abortion case is not the woman who has been raped or the woman who has a severe mental or physical problem. It is the normal woman who for reasons of her own does not want to bear a child. Most of these women could identify their action as preventing a catastrophe — terminating an undesired pregnancy, preventing the birth of an unwanted child, reinforcing contraception. They view the decision as their private business, on a par with deciding to use the pill or some other form of contraception.

SOCIETY AND ABORTION

But whereas the woman may view the decision to seek an abortion as her private right — equal to her decision to practice contraception — society does not define abortion this way, much as society did not define the use of contraceptives as a private right some years ago. Why is society concerned with what at first seems to be strictly a family or an individual matter? At this point we must ask why society takes an interest in the family and its offspring or potential offspring. The most important reasons are that the family is the basic building block of society, and that replenishment of population, necessary for the continuation of society, is a function of the family.

To ensure the survival of the family and the replenishment of society, the norms of society are balanced in favor of fertility, and provision is made in the normative and value systems for prevention of births only under speci-

fied circumstances. Among the inducements to produce children are the high value placed on marriage and the rewards to those who marry and have children: eligibility of married men for certain positions not open to single men; higher pay to married men; rewards to motherhood, both informal and formal; children viewed as evidence of masculinity or femininity; the emphasis on lineage. In addition to the unwritten norms and values, society at times makes the encouragement explicit by law: tax benefits to the married, especially those with children; insurance preferences to the married; state baby bonuses and other inducements to motherhood.

This support for high fertility is needed in a society in which death rates are high, a large percentage of the infants die, and children are an asset to the labor force (usually an agricultural economy). In the modern industrial society, however, other conditions prevail. A large family may be an economic liability, infant mortality is low, and the expanding population has become a problem. But norms change slowly, and the supports for the previously needed high fertility remain. Norms that favor the spacing of children and the limiting of their number according to the mother's health and the family's resources develop slowly, but eventually some norms place a value on very small families.

No society approves of just any family arrangement; it needs stable families of the socially set pattern, whether the pattern is monogamous nuclear families (one wife, one husband, unmarried children) or polygynous extended families (one husband, many wives, both unmarried and married children). Nor does a society approve of a haphazard replenishment of its population. Society demands properly socialized, well-cared-for young to take over from the departing generation — and it charges the family with the task of properly legitimizing, nurturing, and training as well as producing the replenishments. The question of how to space or limit children is also regulated by the norms of society. Although both contraception and abortion have been known throughout history (sterilization is a relatively new technique), they have not always been approved or even condoned. Until recently, contraception was prohibited by law in two states; and abortion, although legal to some degree in many parts of the world, is definitely prohibited or severely regulated in others.

When norms strongly oppose or uphold certain behavior, a system of social "mythology" grows up to justify and explain the norms, and in modern, educated societies this mythology generally acquires scientific as well as religious and moral aspects. The mythology, or rationalization, of norms against abortion, which stems from religious values, emphasizes the actual

or potential human life of the fetus, or the need to supply a body for a waiting soul. Abortion is then defined as murder, which is morally reprehensible. As members of society become more educated and more secular, appeal is made to science to uphold the definition of murder by affirming that the fetus has life, or appeal is made to medical science to show that abortion is harmful to the mother.

Religion — for example, Christianity — thus backs the norm against abortion, because it is immoral to take human life. But religion also supports a norm for taking human life: criminals should die to pay their debt to society; righteous wars are blessed by the Lord. In other words, religion can support the taking of human life when it meets the needs of society to do so, and it could endorse abortion if this were defined by society as desirable.

The relevant Christian belief seems to be that of responsibility for human life. The question then becomes how responsibility for life is defined, not whether abortion is murder. Are we responsible for the preservation of all potential human life or only for the preservation of potential human life that can be adequately cared for? Are we responsible for the prevention of human life that cannot be cared for? Which is the greater responsibility — to the already human or to the potentially human?

Science, although more free of values than religion, is still guided by the hypotheses of its practitioners, who have value systems. Hence contradictory definitions of "life" are proposed, frequently reflecting the bias of the scientist. Medical research likewise reflects the hypotheses of the researcher. In addition, much of the so-called medical writing on abortion is moralistic argument showing the horrors of illegal abortion rather than research. The reports that describe actual controlled research and that point out the dangers of abortion do not always indicate differences between the effects of one (or infrequent) abortion and the effects of repeated (or frequent) abortions. Nor do the reports always compare the effects of abortion with those of completed pregnancy or frequent completed pregnancies. Hence the medical science findings are also contradictory: some research shows that abortion is relatively safe, with few adverse results; and other findings show that abortion is still hazardous even under good medical conditions and that it is often followed by unfortunate physiological or psychological consequences.

Generally speaking, the scientific arguments about the life or potential life of the fetus are based on biological facts; that is, they ask, When does life begin biologically? Good cases are made for several beginning points: conception, quickening (which means making alive), the first detectable

heartbeat, etc. But a biological definition of life has drawbacks when human life is under consideration. Medicine has had to wrestle with these problems more frequently in recent years, not just in connection with life's beginning but also with its ending. When does life end? When the heart ceases to beat? When other bodily functions no longer operate? When the brain is no longer active? The same questions can be asked about life's beginning.

At this point social science steps in with other complicating questions. Is even the newborn infant really a "human" or only an animal that will become human as a result of its interaction with those who are already human? Studies of neglected and isolated children cast doubt on the full humanness of those who have been deprived of human social contact. As for the fetus itself, in the first few months the social definition is clearly different from that of the infant, for in the case of natural death the early fetus is not treated as a dead human being but is disposed of in any convenient way.

To further complicate the problem, norms against abortion, supported by social mythology derived from religion, science, and medicine, may conflict with norms for individual freedom of choice or the right to seek one's own welfare or the right to privacy in family matters. These norms also have their social mythology supported by religion, science, and medicine. Modern societies are especially plagued by conflicts in normative systems, partly because of the rapid changes in society (norms cannot long remain contrary to social facts) and partly because of the varying cultural backgrounds of members of society — which means that not all persons share the same norms on either abortion or individual freedom of choice.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY IN CONFLICT

What will the woman with an unwanted pregnancy do when she is confronted by the conflict of norms? In part it depends on her own normative view. If she is strongly against abortion for religious or other reasons, abortion may not even occur to her as an option. If she is married, she will accept the unwanted child — hopefully wanted by the time of birth. If she is not married, she will try to bear the child as inconspicuously as possible and will probably give it up for adoption. It is an interesting point that societies that are most against abortion are frequently the most punitive in cases of illegitimacy as well, whereas those societies that are permissive about abortion are frequently permissive about illegitimacy.

If the woman who is faced with unwanted pregnancy does not personally see abortion as a moral problem, but instead places a high value on individ-

ual freedom and the right to manage her own life and to refuse pregnancy, she runs into the social limits created by the norms: the illegality of most abortions, the high cost of obtaining either legal or illegal abortions, the privacy-invading, bureaucratically-involved procedure necessary to obtain a legal "therapeutic" abortion. These problems may cause her to wonder if either she or the fetus is human. She may even be forced to remain pregnant, which to her is an infringement of her freedom.

The argument has been used that she does not need to get pregnant in the first place; pregnancy is not forced. In other words, if she errs she should take her "punishment." This argument is used particularly against the unmarried woman. But does society have the right to punish her child with the stigma of illegitimacy? Should society punish the woman with pregnancy and not punish the man? Would not the humane solution be to allow her the choice of terminating the pregnancy? For the married woman the situation is frequently the failure of preventive methods. Is she to be punished for this? Or is she to bring into society an unwanted child, for which society itself may pay dearly?

SOLUTIONS

Society has no easy solutions to the abortion problem. Proposed alternatives range from abortion on demand — a private arrangement between the woman and the abortionist (doctor or other trained person), through abortion that is easily available but accompanied by counseling or other persuasion against it, to strict control or complete prevention of abortion. There are logical arguments for and against all these alternatives and other combinations of alternatives. The following is a possible compromise solution.

1. Abortion could be left to free choice. Women who want abortions would be able to get them on request, but those who do not want them would not be urged to comply. Nor would medical personnel who are morally opposed have to perform or aid in the performance of abortions. Private hospitals that are based on religious philosophies opposed to abortion would have the right to refuse these cases.

2. Because a rise in the number of abortions might strain existing facilities and exceed the amount of medical time available, paramedical personnel could be trained to perform abortions (as they are trained for midwifery, for instance), using approved outpatient facilities or clinics.

3. Services could be made available to women who desire counsel, but counseling would not be required. Unmarried young teenagers who seek abortions would be urged, or perhaps required, to avail themselves of counsel, however.

4. Family planning services and contraceptive materials could be made available to all women who seek abortions, and more educational programs on family planning could be carried on in order to prevent as many abortions as possible, since contraception is a much more socially efficient means of birth control.

5. The cost of abortions could be reduced to a reasonable figure for all cases, and abortions for the poor could be paid for by public medical aid funds.

A compromise like this one will not satisfy everyone. In fact, because this solution leans to the on-demand alternative, it probably would not meet the approval of the very conservative group at all. Yet it is obvious from the agitation over the problem that some change in existing *policies* must come. Those who are opposed to abortion because they feel it is immoral must recognize that this belief is not shared by all, and they must ask themselves whether they can legitimately impose this belief on nonbelievers.

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The Nurse and Abortion

R. MAUREEN MAXWELL
CLARICE J. WOODWARD

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"The nurse doesn't need to be concerned about the rightness or wrongness of abortion. The physician makes the decision and the nurse does what she is told," wrote an obstetrician recently.

"Why should nurses discuss the pros and cons of abortion? It's up to the government and the church to adopt a position, not the nurses," said a maternity nurse who was asked to participate in a debate on the subject.

Although these comments reflect the attitudes of some professional people, there are a number of reasons why the nurse cannot ignore the question of abortion: relatively safe abortion is now a reality; laws are changing to make abortion readily available; increasing numbers of women will seek abortions; and nurses are involved frequently and directly with abortion. As members of a profession, nurses have a responsibility to themselves and to society to examine their attitudes toward abortion. Both personal integrity and standards of professional practice demand that the nurse, because of her education and training, participate in the care of patients only in ways that are therapeutic.

I

Nurses are directly involved with abortion in three principal ways:

1. *Nurses are asked for information and advice.* Studies have shown that women and girls in trouble often turn first to the nurse because she is a woman. Nurses who work in schools, in public health departments, or in health education frequently conduct discussion groups for young girls who are seeking information about sex, contraceptives, abortion, and other problems of life. When she is consulted by a woman who is seeking an

abortion, what should the nurse's position be? She is likely to think: "What would my feelings be if I were the one who was contemplating an abortion, or if it were my sister or daughter? How would I decide what was right?" Certainly the nurse has a responsibility to refer the woman to a competent physician; and when she has the opportunity, she should help the woman consider all aspects of the problem before making a decision.

2. *Nurses may help the physician during the procedure of abortion.* In this case the nurse must decide whether her moral, religious, and ethical beliefs make it possible for her to participate. By participating in the procedure, is the nurse giving approval to a life style that places secular and private convenience above moral considerations? If the nurse decides that abortion is morally wrong, she should find a way to avoid participating in the procedure. Many nurses will take this position because their whole orientation to nursing has emphasized saving life, and they cannot take a part in destroying life.

3. *Nurses give care to women who have had abortions.* At this time the nurse must realize that the patients have come for help, not for moral judgment. The nurse must guard against finding out why the decisions were made and then categorizing patients according to reasons which she can accept and those she cannot. Many patients who are admitted for abortion are sensitive to feelings of rejection; one who feels accepted and understood at this time is likely to find ways of coping with her problem that will result in changes in behavior. At this time the nurse has an unusual opportunity to help the patient toward a better adjustment. Abortion is always a very personal and lonely problem for the patient.

II

The nurse must consider some fundamental moral and ethical questions when she determines her position on abortion. The definition of therapeutic abortion in the past presented little problem. The law allowed abortion only when the physical or mental health of the patient was threatened or when there were special circumstances such as rape and incest. However, states are now adopting liberalized laws that permit interruption of pregnancy for reasons other than to save the life of the woman. Some states have removed virtually all barriers to abortion during the first 20 to 24 weeks of pregnancy, leaving the decision up to the woman and her physician. Although there is still considerable opposition to outright repeal of abortion laws, national opinion appears to be moving in that direction,¹ and the number of women seeking abortion is increasing rapidly.

Is abortion the taking of human life? Perhaps the question is not so much "What is life?" as "At what point does this developing group of cells have being or become a human soul?" Some choose to believe that this event occurs at conception and that the worth of the potential individual cannot be determined by length of gestation or ability to survive independently.² Others believe that it is necessary to include in the definition of human being the ability to reason and to respond in a thinking, human way. Since people may lose their reasoning ability through illness, accident, or old age, however, to suggest that reasoning is a necessary part of the definition of a human being raises a whole new set of questions in which genocide, euthanasia, and infanticide would be justified.

One approach to the question of when the fetus becomes a human being could be based on the Genesis account of the forming of man: "Then the Lord God formed man of dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7 RSV). The fetus is not viable until after 20 weeks of gestation. Its growth and life are fully dependent on its connection with and the function of the placenta. According to the Genesis approach, the infant would become a human being when it has taken its first breath and is able to live apart from the mother.

Should this question be solved by society, by the church, or by the individual? As with many other important issues in life, this question does not have an easy either-or answer. The Seventh-day Adventist nurse, along with others in the church, should not expect that this problem will be settled by an edict from church leaders. The nurse needs to resolve these important questions for herself or she will have difficulty helping the troubled person who seeks an abortion or caring for the patient after the procedure.

There are times when the rights of the parents and those of the developing fetus conflict. Nurses need to examine their beliefs about human life and dignity and to develop an understanding of what it means to "save life." The rights and well-being of both parents and child must be considered. The 1970 Bill of Rights for children and youth clearly states: "Every child must be granted the right to be wanted and born well" and to have "loving and continuous adult care."³ Ellen White gave similar counsel when she stated that parents should not bring children into the world if they cannot be well cared for.⁴ In this case a moral choice must also be made and the question answered: Is it better to allow an unwanted, unloved baby to enter the world to be neglected, possibly to be battered as an infant, and perhaps to grow up a social outcast, or to prevent it from becoming a human being?

III

Nursing organizations are restating their positions in regard to abortion. In 1968 the American Nurses' Association supported a proposal to study and possibly help shape abortion laws.⁵ There is also recognition of individual right and responsibility.⁶ For example, excerpts from a statement made by the California Nurses' Association reads: "The provision of competent nursing care is the major responsibility of the nursing profession; nevertheless, as individuals, licensed nurses hold certain moral, ethical, and religious beliefs and in good conscience may be compelled to refuse involvement with abortions. . . . Further, licensed nurses and others must be familiar with the provisions of the California laws relative to abortions. Although determination of the length of pregnancy is a medical judgment, when the licensed nurse is aware that legal limits have been exceeded, participation is an illegal act on the part of the licensed nurse."⁷

Nurses as individuals are divided in their thinking about abortion. A survey of five hundred nurses conducted by *RN Magazine* shows that a high percentage of nurses are opposed to abortion on demand. On the other hand, many nurses concerned about the problems of women carrying unwanted or malformed babies feel that in many cases abortion is justified.⁸

But no matter what the pros and cons of the issue are, a woman involved in an abortion needs help, and nursing exists because there "are people whose conditions, feelings, and situations give rise to needs that they are currently unable to deal with unaided."⁹ The Christian nurse can show genuine concern and compassion for the woman caught up in circumstances that cause her to choose abortion as the solution to her problem.

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The Psychiatrist and Abortion

HARRISON S. EVANS

23

TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ABORTION

In the past, when the obstetrician, with appropriate consultation, determined that a pregnancy threatened the mother's life and/or health, interruption of the pregnancy was medically and legally sanctioned. Reasons for termination of pregnancy included the threat to the mother's psychological health as well as to her physical well-being — that is, if the pregnancy were sufficiently stressful to the mother that she was reacting with an actual or impending psychotic break, interruption of pregnancy was sanctioned.

However, the psychiatric criteria for a therapeutic abortion have never been as clear-cut or as easily defined as have the medical criteria. Whereas serious infections, toxemias, and cardiac complications are easily and objectively identified, psychiatric disorders, even serious ones, may demonstrate little objective evidence, but may instead present themselves primarily as a subjective experience. Consequently, interruption of pregnancy for psychiatric reasons has depended on the psychiatrist's opinion based on his clinical skill, mature judgment, insight, objectivity, and humane understanding.

Nevertheless, the psychiatrist has had certain accepted clinical guidelines he could follow in forming his opinion to interrupt pregnancy for psychiatric reasons. For example, in the presence of such major mental disorders as schizophrenia and psychotic depression, with the accompanying risks of suicide and infanticide, or in situations in which pregnancy resulted from rape or occurred in a mentally retarded, incompetent girl, abortion would be considered justified by most psychiatrists.

The guidelines and reasons for performing abortion are undergoing radical changes in the direction of greater permissiveness, and many modifications have already received legal sanction in a number of states. Many of these changes in attitude have resulted from psychosocial pressures, a fact which has placed the consulting psychiatrist in a role of special importance. Most requests for abortion today probably do not occur because of definable physical or mental illness, but rather because of the applicant's belief that the continuation of the pregnancy would bring upon her and her family "intolerable" hardships, possibly provoking a total breakdown in an already precarious psychosocial equilibrium within herself or her family structure. In such instances, the consulting psychiatrist can no longer use only his former clinical guidelines. He still evaluates a person's strengths and weaknesses, but also he has to make a much broader evaluation, namely, of psychosocial factors. He must attempt to determine whether the pregnancy does indeed constitute an "intolerable" hardship and does truly place in jeopardy the health and welfare of the patient and her family.

As the psychiatrist and his colleagues attempt to play the role of a Solomon, they must realize that significant psychosocial changes are taking place. They must be aware of those very real threats to life and health: oversized families, overcrowding, broken homes, poverty, crime, delinquency, and the depersonalizing influence of urban and ghetto life. Consideration must be given to the fact that there are different kinds of sickness — that there is social as well as medical and psychological sickness. The latter two may be more immediate and more in keeping with the physician's traditional experience and training, but an additional pregnancy may be just as inimical to social as to medical or psychological sickness.

THE PSYCHIATRIST'S DILEMMA

The changing nature and circumstances of illness and medical practice create problems for the psychiatrist and for all physicians. The doctor must rethink his position. Every act of the physician must be executed within the framework of clinical judgment and a set of values. What have become acceptable criteria to many physicians and laymen might not be acceptable to the individual psychiatrist or physician who has his own established basis for professional conduct. As greater latitude in the reasons for abortion is permitted, especially in reasons based on psychosocial factors, the doctor is moved further from his clinical base and from time-honored medical and psychological guidelines. The psychosocial basis for abortion is full of risks,

and in the face of harmful psychosocial conditions it is easy for both the doctor and the patient to rationalize the need for an abortion.

In fact, abortion on demand, without the supporting evidence of clinical need, is now a common event, because of such influences as feminine liberation movements, the undesirability of adding to the population explosion, pollution, and the breakdown of social order. This position, of course, bypasses the use of clinical judgment and makes the surgeon merely a technician who performs a procedure that was once taken seriously but is now often looked upon as little more than removal of an annoying wart from a person's finger.

NEW GUIDELINES FOR THE DOCTOR

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The old guidelines will remain, but in the new milieu of medical practice new guidelines must also be considered. This is essential as long as physicians desire to practice medicine by exercising their judgment in the framework of clinical criteria and ethical and moral values. The following thoughts might be of help in adding new guidelines to the old ones.

First, a doctor should not surrender his legitimate responsibility to do what he believes is in his patient's best interest, no matter what her emotionally determined wishes are. To illustrate this point, in former years it was not uncommon for surgeons to operate on a patient for symptoms that obviously were of emotional and conversion origin. The doctor would rationalize his actions: "If I don't operate on her, someone else will." Or he might rationalize further: "If I take out her appendix (although it is normal), this will relieve her anxiety and hypochondriacal concern." Surgery on such a basis is no longer acceptable, and the doctor is expected to deal with the patient at the level of her emotional problem; if he is unable to do so, he is expected to refer the patient to someone who can.

Second, in spite of the profound changes in social attitudes that are taking place, an abortion should not be looked upon as a simple or necessarily innocuous act. Technically it may be a simple procedure, but psychologically a pregnancy has meaning to the person involved and carries important emotional and psychological implications. After all, there are still such human reactions as guilt and remorse and such factors as ideals and self-respect. Theoretically, an abortion should not be performed without considering these important aspects of human experience. An evaluation for an abortion should take into consideration the patient's life situation, her strengths and weaknesses, her motivations, and her amenability to psychological help and support. This kind of evaluation must be done within the conceptual framework of psychosocial and medical sickness.

Third, the basic goal of every psychiatrist (and physician) in his encounter with his patient, pregnant or not, is to help the patient deal with life problems in a mature, responsible, farsighted, adequate fashion. It is to be expected that the physician's goals will meet some resistance, because the patient's idea of how the problem should be solved is often different from the physician's idea. But resistance is part of the clinical problem, and the physician must learn to deal with it.

Many patients, when they are confronted with a life crisis such as a pregnancy, want someone to "bail" them out and take over their problem for them. It is true that some patients must be bailed out, as when acute toxemias, acute psychoses, or intolerable psychosocial conditions are present. But often patients should not be bailed out. Rather, the best thing one might do for them is to set limits that may not be manipulated, and to offer support and guidance to the patient as she is encouraged to deal with her own crisis (which after all may be of her own making and which is her responsibility to meet). To ask a person to take the responsibility for her own problem and to cope with it when she is able to do so may lead her to greater maturity and self-esteem and increased capacity for responsibility.

There are many instances when, in the interest of a patient's ultimate good, an abortion should not be performed. But such a decision should be arrived at only after careful and thoughtful consideration of all aspects of the problem, and the patient should be given maximum psychological help and support. I am sure that it has been the experience of every psychiatrist not to have acquiesced to the pleadings of a distraught mother or husband for an abortion on grounds that to them seemed perfectly reasonable, and later to have the parents find enormous satisfaction not only in the spared child but in their newfound strengths and insights.

SUMMARY

Abortion must be viewed in a broad conceptual framework of what constitutes health and illness and what constitutes a threat to life and health. The psychosocial dimension of sickness must be added to the physical and the psychological dimensions. There are psychosocial reasons for interrupting pregnancy; but they are not easily assessed, and they do open the way to permissiveness, manipulation, and "softheaded" decisions. Legitimate psychosocial contraindications to the continuation of pregnancy should be recognized and acted upon, however. (Honest men will differ from time to time in their opinions in this context.)

A guideline of special importance to the doctor is his awareness of his role in helping patients whenever possible to become mature, responsible persons. A person may find that learning to cope with life crises adequately — living with courage and honesty and the willingness to cope with problems when he has the resources to do so — makes life worthwhile.

The Dream

BEN JACQUES

28

Halfway into sleep,
moving in both directions,
he steps into the room of the old,
beginning again the ancient task
for which he is known beyond recognition;
found by the eyes, the gray shirts
and the night shirts, speaking:
I know you too, old men, old women,
past remembering, know each of your feet
of the ditches of salt,
the right one, the left one,
which I will bathe in bowls of hot water.

I will open the windows
and prepare a small wind
to blow over the jar of the oils of eucalyptus.
I will stand you in strength
on a new grass mat,
and give you clean shirts,
new day shirts embroidered with red.
I will rinse out your mouths
with bright words, and care for your teeth
as trees grow new leaves.
I will lead you outdoors
and show you a new gaze.
Your eyes shall find young stars
in the low sky.

Partway into waking,
turning in each direction,
and in the way of forgetting
past speaking, he steps
from the room in a light
neither young nor old,
then walks toward the river,
hearing the sound of dark wings
and the sound of dove wings
over the dark and light water.

An Appraisal of Therapeutic Abortion:

THE VIEW OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

29

JACK W. PROVONSHA

Since pregnancy is sometimes called the most common tumor of the female uterus, it may be useful to frame the abortion issue as a question regarding the value of an intrauterine tumor. There are other tumors in that location, of course, and they form a useful contrast in a study of relative values. Some of these, such as ordinary leiomyoma or fibroid, if they are small and produce no discomfort or dysfunction, have little if any value, either positive or negative. At least their negative value may be so insignificant that it does not warrant risking the higher values of life and health through surgical removal. Other tumors may have only negative value. For example, even minute leiomyosarcomas or adenocarcinomas possess such strong negative value that one must take considerable risk to eliminate them, including the risk of relatively permanent impairment of health.

The pregnancy "tumor" differs from these in that, although it may possess a similar disvalue in the sense of jeopardizing the life and health of the maternal host, or even a different disvalue relating to the disruption of social relationships, it may also possess positive values so strong that they warrant subjecting the mother to considerable danger in order to preserve the pregnancy. The essential difference — that is, the positive value placed on the pregnancy tumor as over against the others — is based on its potential for becoming a human life and thus on the fact that it shares in the worth we ascribe to human existence.

Present attempts to liberalize abortion laws tend to obscure this distinction. It seems important, therefore, that we go over the ground again lest

we lose something of importance to all of us. This discussion should be considered as one more contribution to what should remain, as yet, an ongoing conversation.

I

30

A number of medical voices suggest that the issue be entirely removed from the moral arena, that it is solely a medical or technical problem and should be so treated. This is to say that the pregnancy "tumor" has precisely the same kind of amoral value as any other tumor. However, these same voices would be unwilling to assign to the newborn child a similar status. They would not grant the mother equal right, for example, to dispose of her newborn at will. It is evident, then, that there is thought to be a morally significant difference between the two, the former being considered "tissue" and the latter "human" — which throws into focus one of the chief points at issue in the abortion problem. When exactly does the metamorphosis from tissue to human being take place? Without detailing arguments, let us look at some *moments of transition* from tissue to human that have been proposed in the past.

According to the chronology of the developing organism (not the time the theory was in vogue) the earliest "moment" has traditionally been the instant of conception. No one that I know of has granted human status to prefertilized germ cells; nature's prodigality in its treatment of such cells provides a kind of value-index. It is manifestly impossible for any but a very small fraction of the cells to become anything more than what they are — cells, useless and short-lived at that. By contrast, the fertilized cell, to use a simplistic metaphor, rallies the resources of the whole parent body around it for nurture and protection.

Theological dogma about the infusion of the soul into the body largely conditioned ideas of the value of a newly fertilized ovum throughout much of Christian history. (In earlier times, opinion followed Aristotle's belief that the male embryo received its soul at forty days and the female at eighty days.) According to such a view, the fertilized ovum possesses the rights of a human being from the beginning, and its willful destruction constitutes a crime. In a situation of competition between this life and the life of the mother, the issue is resolved on other grounds — for instance, on which person has had opportunity to prepare for the hereafter.

In a logical sequence the next "moment" would probably be that of transition from embryo to fetus, that is, the time when all the features of the future organism are finally present, even if in small and underdeveloped form. Practical reasons prevented this from being considered seriously by

our forefathers, but it does have some relevance to present considerations of possible injury to the embryonic organism from chemical, viral, or other agents, and whether this justifies abortion.

Other "moments" such as "quickening" have been suggested. This proposal possesses a certain inner logic, since it is at this time that the "tumor" may assume a new kind of "human" meaning to the people in its life. Even the physician, as he checks fetal position and heart tones, is likely to find the term *tumor* increasingly inappropriate. To the parents, fetal movements often produce a new relationship characterized by a heightened feeling of identification with that little "somebody in there."

31

The commonest modern proposal is the "moment" of viability, when the fetus has achieved sufficient maturity to be able to "go it alone" if necessary — when it is potentially independent from the maternal organism. The issue has not yet been legally clarified, but there is a tendency to consider willful destruction of the fetus after this time a crime other than abortion. The term *independence* is crucial here and raises several questions, among them whether the newborn, who is nutritionally bound to its mother's breast or artificial equivalent, is really so different from the fetus bound by an umbilical cord and placenta. How independent is the newborn, even for years afterward? Even in adulthood, independence is relative. Probably no one survives long without someone else somewhere along the line.

The independence of the newborn from his mother's oxygen supply is obvious, but even this is not absolute. Air must be kept available and free of obstruction — that is, from blankets and the like — and the infant may not be able to do all of this for himself. To be sure, the fetus or newborn at viability can be related to in new ways. Never before did it *mean* human to quite this extent. But the question remains: Is it in fact human? Can it perform a single exclusively human action? Most of its activities are performed by lower animals at least as effectively.

A "moment" sometimes suggested as the time the fetus becomes human is that first breath of air, which has some biblical support going for it. The Bible does describe the creation of the first human as God breathing "into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7). This definition may seem a bit arbitrary, however, since breathing is not an exclusively human activity, and the definition we seek is the moment when the organism becomes human. Similar to this moment in its arbitrariness is the rabbinical notion that the infant becomes human when the greater part of his body is delivered. Whether it makes any difference which end comes first I am unable to discover.

The last "moment" seriously proposed is difficult to locate with precision, since it depends on an elusive function that is itself difficult to define. Moral theorists and others sometimes contrast man with lower members of the animal kingdom in terms of his freedom — his capacity to create, to initiate, to do novel things he does not have to do. Lesser animals are assumed to behave within the general pattern of causality, in which every effect has a previous cause, however devious and remote. Most animals merely respond to stimuli in reflex ways. But man may be the initiating cause of at least some of his actions — that is, actions can take place in which the causes are traceable no further back than the man who acted.

This possibility in man cannot be absolutely either confirmed or disconfirmed, of course, and some reject the notion out of hand. But it is a theoretical necessity if one uses such terms as *responsibility* seriously. A man cannot be held responsible for doing what he could not help doing. Our whole normative structure is illusory if such freedom is not a reality. We can describe how people in fact behave (descriptive ethics), but we cannot say how they "ought" to behave (normative ethics) unless they can choose so to behave.

The Christian commandment to love is posited on such a reality. The biblical command to love has to do with love as a principle related to will, commitment, and choice, rather than to mere sentimentality. Such a command makes nonsense if man cannot will an act with his private label on it, if he cannot do something about which he can say, "I did it. It is mine." It is this freedom that defines a human being in the biblical or Judeo-Christian context. If this is so, then we may define man as becoming human at the instant he becomes responsible. But when is that? Can we know? Probably no one but an omniscient being would know the exact moment, although it probably occurs somewhere in early childhood, depending on individual precocity and other variables.

But of what possible use can so imprecise a definition be to the problem at hand? Or worse, how disturbing might such a definition be, since it extends our "tissue" definition far beyond anything currently proposed — even into infancy and early childhood. On such grounds it would be as morally defensible to practice infanticide as to carry out an early abortion — a horrible thought.

And that is precisely the point I wish to make and precisely the reason for extending the discussion of "moments" so far. The morality of abortion concerns other levels of value than the "moment" human value for which we have been searching. One of these is the potentiality for becoming hu-

man. (The "human" value conditions the quest, to be sure. When we speak of the value of one tumor over another in terms of the potentiality of one to become a human being, we are obviously influenced by our regard for the essentially human.)

II

33

Potentiality for becoming human begins at the moment a normal fertilized ovum is implanted. This point is chosen because, at least at present, it is not possible for an in vitro conception — that is, one in an extracorporeal test-tube environment — to continue to maturation. Perhaps one day Huxley's *Brave New World* will be upon us, perish the thought, but not yet. Nor is it usually possible for an embryo to mature in a fallopian tube or some other extrauterine location in the mother's body. Potentiality implies the "possibility of becoming." (One can also speak of an ascending scale of potentiality. The more nearly the embryo or fetus approaches the conditions of being human, the higher its level of potentiality.) The phrase *normal fertilized ovum* is employed because a "blighted" or abnormal ovum may never be able to become a human by our functional definition and, if recognized, it may be assigned nonhuman value.

Another basis for considering abortion as a moral matter goes beyond such human potentiality, however, and is based on that quality in man that makes him a moral being, his capacity for experiencing value and meaning. Man is by definition a symbol-using animal. He is *homo faber*, man the maker (of tools, that is), *homo sapiens*, man the thinker, but he is also man the symbol-user.

By symbol I mean an entity that "means," refers to, or points to another entity, and that may in some cases be treated as if it were in fact this other entity. The capacity for doing this may possibly be derived from, certainly is involved in, both his *faber* and *sapiens* qualities. It is the basis for his speech: words are such symbols. It is also the major basis for his intellection. (Try thinking without using words.) Certainly it is the essential foundation of his capacity to communicate and thus of his whole social structure.

The value of meaning, of symbols, even if they are only word symbols, to religion and morals, for example, should be obvious. It is the meaning of the act, not the act per se, that gives the act its moral quality. Killing with intent constitutes the crime, not the mere fact of killing, as in an accident where no culpable neglect was involved. This is a fact of great importance to the whole of morals; numerous examples can be given in its support.

Another fact regarding symbols is of importance to our present consid-

eration. Symbols point to, or refer to something beyond themselves; thus they are vehicles of communication. But they may also be "taken for" that to which they point. In other words, the attitudes toward the symbols will deeply condition the attitudes toward that to which they point. Religious people have always known this when they have demanded respect for the sacred symbols — the Holy Bible, for example. Disrespect for the sacred book negatively conditions one's respect for the God of the book. How one treats his symbols will influence, reinforce, or diminish his valuing attitudes toward that to which the symbol points. That's the way it is because that's the way man is.

Let us now relate this to the subject at hand. It is perfectly possible to bring "thing" meanings to an embryo and even to a fetus, to think of them in "tumor" terms and thus as objects of medical technique rather than morals. It is also possible, however, to think of babies, children, and men and women in the same terms, as Dachau and My Lai have violently told us.

The question is, ought we to do this? Do we really want to endanger human existence by rejecting what keeps it human? This is what may happen if we do not use and preserve all the reinforcing resources and techniques available. Nuremberg taught us this at least: I ought to view the miracle developing in my wife's body with the compassionate respect that it deserves as a gift from God. To the extent that I am able to do this will my anticipation of the miracle condition the nest into which it is brought into the world. And this has all kinds of implications for the future of the child and its society, as every depth study has amply shown. At least a part of the world's ills have descended upon us because we have lost the capacity to celebrate life, especially at its beginnings.

Unfortunately, conception cannot always be a celebration. Babies are conceived by accident, lust, incest, and rape — unwanted and often foredoomed to the worst that society can do to them. And there are already too many mouths to feed, there is a sick society, there are mothers who are ill — and therefore there must be abortions, not because it is good, but because it is necessary. The question remains: When?¹

III

A symbol's value is derived from that to which it points. The symbol possesses, therefore, a lesser, secondary kind of value — which means that when the symbol seriously competes with, rather than serves, that to which it points, we must be prepared to sacrifice the symbol. In the terms of the present problem, the increasingly potential human organism developing in

its mother's body is not yet human — but it “means” human and can serve human values by crystallizing and conditioning respect for human life. However, if for some reason it should threaten human existence unduly, it cannot be permitted to survive.

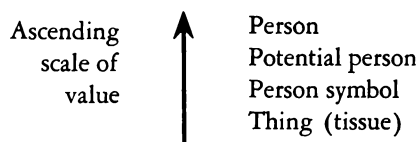
Notice that I have referred to *human existence* and not merely to life itself. “Human” existence can cease, even while the organism lives on, whenever that quality we spoke of earlier that separates man from the brutes is lost. It is a tenuous quality at best, easily diminished or destroyed by a variety of functional disturbances — physical, mental, emotional, social. A threat in any or all of these areas may seriously jeopardize what makes life human; and if such a threat is posed by a secondary symbolic value, the symbol must go.

35

To express this idea in traditional terms: Whenever the developing embryo or fetus places in jeopardy the mother's physical, mental, or emotional health, and that jeopardy is judged to be of sufficiently serious nature, the potential human symbol, the embryo or fetus, may be sacrificed. It is the judgment of jeopardy, however, that is difficult, and society must not thrust such a decision upon a potential mother unassisted.

If all men were ethically sensitive and informed, and if all possessed a high level of sound judgment, we would require very little regulation in these matters. But since not all men are so gifted, they ought to assist each other and protect the weak and the inept from themselves and from others. Undoubtedly it will be important for some time to come for good men to place their heads together and share the burden of deciding what is ultimately best for everyone involved, share it with each other, with hospital administrators, and with the troubled potential mothers on whom the burden chiefly falls. It is also incumbent on a society, as it protects its collective moral sensitivities, to be prepared to “pick up the tab” for such protection.

A few specifics remain. What of the chemical (for example, thalidomide), viral (rubella, for example), or otherwise damaged embryo or fetus? On a Christian scale of values such as suggested by the diagram, in which the actual human takes priority over the potential human, what cannot ever be human because of genetic or developmental defect must find its place farther down the scale. The subhuman, even if it has certain symbolic



value, cannot take priority over the potential human. It would not be right, therefore, to sacrifice normal potential humans in the process of eradicating abnormal individuals estimated on a purely statistical basis.

This is particularly true if we have no way of accurately predetermining the extent of congenital defects. Ordinarily the abnormality must be cared for after delivery, again with society prepared to pay the price for preserving the human values involved. Abortion might be performed, however, if the mother's mental health were sufficiently threatened by the possibility of abnormality. When the day arrives that serious dehumanizing defects can be diagnosed with certainty in utero, then it will be possible to abort routinely certain defective fetuses.

36

The time of performing a legitimate abortion on the above terms is largely a technical matter, but for symbolic reasons it should be done as early as possible, especially since we are dealing with an ascending scale of potentiality and thus increasing symbolic meaning and value.

To summarize: What is at present subhuman, or what merely "means" human, although it actually is not human, may possess a value that warrants reasonable efforts for its preservation. However, we must not usually allow what is subhuman to enter into serious competition with actual human existence, either directly or indirectly. The value of the potentially human is largely a supporting, reinforcing value; and when the threat to the already human exceeds the value of this support, morally the potentially human becomes expendable. An abortion may be performed whenever it threatens not just life but what makes life human. But it can never be right to interfere with so important a value for trivial or casual reasons. And since this problem requires judgment and a certain expertise, it is probable that the decision-making should be shared by a community of sensitive and informed persons in addition to the persons subjectively involved.

NOTE

- 1 Extreme indications for terminating pregnancy might conceivably include the obvious as well as the more subtle effects of serious overpopulation. For symbolic reasons, however, contraception will always be preferable to abortion as a means of population control, but we must be prepared to admit abortion on moral grounds where the situation is grave and no other practical means of control is available. In principle it is morally indefensible to allow additional fully human swimmers — let alone what is only potentially or symbolically human — to jeopardize a life raft already filled to its limit.

The Woman and Abortion

ANNA LOU HALL

37

A harried Seventh-day Adventist college student called his pastor and asked in desperation, "What is the church's position on abortion?"

"It is illegal in this state," the minister replied, "and the church's position is that we should abide by the laws of the state in such matters."

"What if a person goes where abortion isn't illegal?"

The conversation continued, and the boy admitted that his fiancée was pregnant. Because he had long years of education ahead of him, they felt they simply could not be married and support a child at the time. With the advice and help of the girl's physician father, they decided to abort the child by means of drugs. However, the drug did not have its usual effect; and since the pregnancy was not terminated by this means, the drug had almost surely done irreparable harm to the embryo. The expectation was that the girl would give birth to a hopelessly deformed, mentally deficient child if the pregnancy were to continue. The abortion was finally performed in another country.

Some persons who take the law into their own hands are not so fortunate. No one knows how many illegal abortions are performed annually in the United States, but estimates range from 200,000 to 1,500,000. Some say that in urban areas at least one in five pregnancies ends in induced or criminal abortion. In these cases the incidence of infection is high, and deaths resulting from infected abortions constitute 30 to 35 percent of maternal deaths from all causes. If these figures are correct, surely many Seventh-day Adventist physicians, and not a few ministers and guidance counselors, have had to deal with the moral problems involved in abortion — and will have to deal with these problems more often in the future.

A few years ago even the mention of abortion was taboo, but a recent

National Opinion Research poll shows that the majority of Americans, including Catholics, now favor liberal abortion laws. In 1967 an American Medical Association survey of 40,000 American doctors found that 86.9 percent favored liberalization, and the AMA House of Delegates backed the change of existing laws. This was the first policy change on the subject since 1871, when the organization stated that it was the duty of every physician in the United States to resort to every means in his power to rid society of this practice. In June 1970 the AMA voted for the first time in its 123-year history to allow doctors to perform abortions for social and economic reasons as well as for medical reasons. The House of Delegates voted 103 to 73 to consider performing abortions ethical, provided that accredited physicians perform the operation in an accredited public health facility and that two other physicians be consulted.

Since 1967 at least a dozen states and the District of Columbia have altered their abortion laws to make it possible for a woman to obtain a legal abortion on grounds other than rape, incest, or probability of bearing a deformed child.

Why should existing abortion laws be reformed? What significance will these changes have for a Seventh-day Adventist? What ethical principles do Seventh-day Adventist professional counselors use in making decisions about abortion? What can be done about the suffering, and often death, that result from the traffic in illegal abortions? Surely these questions merit attention from conscientious Adventist physicians and counselors.

I

I decided to interview or correspond with as many qualified counselors as I could, in order to bring out their views so that others might be provoked to think about the abortion question. The following discussion is the result of fourteen productive interviews. Seventeen Adventist counselors were interviewed; six of these were ministers, nine were physicians, and two were guidance counselors with specialized training in psychology. Only one stated that he had had no experience with the abortion problem. Each person based his views on considerable experience, and almost all agreed that a discussion of the problem would be useful and desirable. The average frequency with which each counselor was approached about abortion was estimated to be six times per year, and some of the women desiring abortion (an unstated percentage) were Adventists. Two of the ministers stated that they knew of other Adventist women who had obtained abortions for non-medical reasons, but these were cases on which they had not been consulted.

Although the number of legal abortions has risen in states with liberalized laws, the illegal traffic continues, probably because of the high cost of a legal abortion in an accredited hospital. The doctor's fee, fees to obtain the confirmation of specialists, the cost of the surgery, and hospitalization can run the total bill up to two thousand dollars. If a woman can afford such fees, she is likely to go to other states or countries where safe abortion is more easily arranged.

When the poor learn that abortions are legally permitted and begin to apply for them, what then? When poor people with sound reasons for applying for abortion confront an Adventist doctor, will he help them by lowering fees? One Adventist physician, asked what he would do in such a situation, shrugged and said, "Well, I believe in charging all that the traffic will bear — period." If he did charity work for such people, he reasoned, he would make himself an easy mark for those who wished free care.

Among the counselors questioned it was a common opinion that a better solution would be to accept as many patients as possible who have a legitimate need, regardless of their ability to pay. If a physician's family were to suffer because of his charitable practices, that might be going too far; but nonmedical persons make the observation that this does not often happen, especially in America. When Christ healed the ten lepers, nine may have been unworthy, one might observe, but they were cleansed along with the one who was worthy.

As for the poor — what can be done about the obstacle of high hospital costs? "There are county hospitals to serve a large number of these people," said one physician. "If such people could be cared for in outpatient clinics, it would cut costs," suggested a counselor. "Do everything possible to make effective contraception more widely available," said another. "An ounce of birth control practice is worth the proverbial pound paid for the hospital costs of an abortion." The latter solution, of course, was aimed at reducing the need for abortion, but it cannot be taken lightly.

Would most Adventist physicians favor abortion based on the statistical probability of abnormality of the fetus? "No," stated one physician. "To destroy normal fetuses for the sake of eradicating the abnormal suggests an inversion of value priority, and I would object to this as unethical." "Yes," said another. "At least I'd consider it carefully, especially if the statistical probability were high enough. I worked for six months in a state school for mental defectives, and that experience changed my mind about a number of things."

What will happen to a physician's reputation if he performs abortions?

One doctor said that he had not accepted such patients and would continue to discourage them even if laws were considerably liberalized in his state, because he felt that it would tarnish his reputation as a Christian physician to perform abortions. I asked him if he felt that an embryo or fetus could be considered a person or if an abortion could be considered murder, and he replied, "That is a question for the theologians to decide. I have no opinion on that." Yet the specter of the large number of maternal deaths from infected criminal abortions seems to indicate that, at least for some physicians and counselors, immediate decisions do have to be made, without benefit of guidance by church authorities.

Another doctor brought up a question that might be pondered by those who feel that abortion, except in extreme cases, is immoral. The intrauterine device, prescribed by many physicians to prevent pregnancy, can also be considered an abortifacient, since it prevents the already fertilized ovum (a potential person) from being implanted in the uterine wall so that it will grow to maturity. Is this less immoral than ending the life of the embryo or fetus a few weeks later for women who simply do not want the child but have no other reason for an abortion?

All the persons interviewed felt that abortion laws would continue to be liberalized and that more patients would obtain medically safe abortions if such were permitted for reasons of mental health. The states in which new liberal laws have been in effect for more than a year have shown this to be true; the majority of abortions were performed to preserve the woman's mental health.

Each interviewee was asked what he would do (if he were given legal freedom) if he were faced with a distraught patient seeking to obtain an abortion. No position evolved that most counselors could agree with. Some felt that there are very few good reasons for abortion, and that the idea of "abortion on demand" is completely indefensible. Said one physician, "In the vast majority of cases, women who ask for an immediate abortion are not emotionally capable of making such long-range decisions. If I performed abortions on these women, most of them, and especially the Adventists, would have tremendous feelings of guilt afterward, so that 'the end' of those women would be worse than 'their beginning.'"

A counselor of much experience in one Adventist college said that he had indeed found this to be true — many women who had abortions did have misgivings and guilt feelings later. One Adventist woman who had come to him for counseling and had gone ahead with the abortion said later, "I'm now married to a fine man; but I feel that even if God has for-

given me I am in many ways still paying the price for the murder of my unborn child. . . . For I still cannot help but feel that that is what it was — murder.”

Other clients of the same counselor, however, felt no real guilt and seemed to be able to forget “those things which are behind.” When deciding whether to advise abortion, this counselor felt that he would have to investigate thoroughly the person’s psychological background to determine as far as possible the aftereffects that might be expected. “I would not say to the patient, ‘You have done a wicked thing; now you must pay the price of bearing the child.’ This, I feel, is not the solution. One must look for the common good of all, and not be vengeful,” he said thoughtfully.

41

One person suggested that perhaps we should look at the abortion problem from a different viewpoint. We ought to consider the positive arguments for abortion, as well as to decide whether the absence of moral reasons against it can be demonstrated.

An Adventist pastor in a large church felt that, theologically, he could condone abortion for mental, economic, and social reasons. “You have to ask yourself, ‘What chance will this child have?’ Ellen White felt that it was a sin to bring children into the world if they could not be provided for properly.” And although evil is not transmitted directly through the genes and chromosomes, it is true that “many children have received as a birth-right almost unconquerable tendencies to evil” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 256).

II

To many Adventists, the term *situation ethics* seems like a serpent in sheep’s clothing, and such people might feel that the sixth commandment would outlaw all abortion except when the mother’s actual physical life is threatened. Although the law of God is unchanging and unchangeable in principle, many people fail to see that each of us at some time in his life is compelled to choose the lesser of two evils (the above exception is itself an example). Often the decision about which is the lesser evil must be made after considering more than one factor.

In the case of abortion, the principle of the preservation of life and personhood is absolute. But the preservation of personhood must take precedence over the preservation of life. An unborn child may or may not be considered a person, but the members of his family have already achieved this status and can be considered a higher form of life. This question is therefore relevant: Should concern for the fetus be balanced by concern for the happiness and welfare of other family members? Perhaps the way of the

transgressor (or the careless) ought not to be easy. But should innocent children suffer the results of their parents' transgression?

To sum up, in the words of a prominent Adventist educator: "If a fetus, or even an older unborn child, were to threaten the personal existence of its mother (or family), actions designed to preserve the existence of the one higher on the scale of value would be appropriate. Her personal existence means more than actual physical life. It also includes her capacity to function as a human being."

Ellen G. White and Her Writings

W. PAUL BRADLEY

43

The purpose of this paper is to review four articles in the Autumn 1970 issue of *SPECTRUM*. In these articles about the writings and work of Ellen G. White, a number of questions were raised, proposals set forth, and interpretations suggested. Some points are well taken; some call for a more careful analysis. I will refer to the articles in the order in which they appeared and will make an effort to touch on principal issues raised in each.

ELLEN WHITE: A SUBJECT FOR ADVENTIST SCHOLARSHIP

1. *Can we understand Ellen White?*

This article¹ raises the question above and contends that, as she is used, there are many Ellen Whites, in effect, saying many different things, and that we make her say "almost anything we want."² It is asserted that she is "an impersonal voice subject to our manipulation"³ and that, therefore, we need a method of interpreting what she says.

Then certain procedures are suggested to solve the alleged problem. But the conclusion is disturbing: "Following methods like those outlined here would open up far-reaching scholarly enterprises. No one Adventist during his entire life could accomplish the tasks that would emerge. Indeed, no single discipline has adequate tools to do the job alone." It is proposed that "Adventist scholars from various disciplines bring their different perspectives and insights and equipment to the challenge of understanding Ellen G. White."⁴

This position is unreasonable. From both the practical and the theoretical viewpoints it is unthinkable that Ellen White will not be understood until scores of years have been devoted to a critical study of her writings by high-

ly trained specialists in various disciplines. Commenting on the study of the Bible, Ellen White pointed out that “scriptural difficulties can never be mastered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical problems.”⁵

Let us look at the ingredients constituting the argument in the article.

First, as to Ellen G. White statements that should be read in the light of special context, it has always been understood that certain specific counsels should be read in the light of the circumstances of the times of writing. As time advances and there is less personal knowledge of the circumstances and the way of life of sixty to a hundred years ago, there will doubtless be areas where knowing the circumstances of the times will facilitate a discovery of the principles involved and make a present-day application more meaningful. But that this matter is “among the top priorities of the church” and “an essential and immediate task for the church”⁶ considerably overstates the problem.

Seventh-day Adventists should be cautious in accepting the suggestion that the need of special understanding of context is true of the writings as a whole — all 24,000 pages of the current fifty-six Ellen G. White books. One may ask in what way such an examination would be necessary for *Steps to Christ*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, *The Desire of Ages*, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, and the devotional books.

Let us raise the question whether, among the thousands of Adventist ministers and members, the problem of understanding Ellen White is as acute as it is made to appear. It is true that she did her writing during the time of a previous generation. But are we so far from her time as to make historical criticism necessary? She wrote in simple English that we use. Why should there be difficulty in understanding it? I was in my late teens and had entered college the year she died, and I object to the suggestion that she is so far removed as to make it impossible to get her meaning. We have the original manuscripts of much of what she wrote, and these haven't had to be translated from other languages for English readers, as was the Bible from Hebrew and Greek. She has been understood equally well by the Australians, the Americans, and the British.

Certain steps have been taken by the trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate to provide information on the historical context. *Early Writings* (made up of Ellen White writings of the 1850s and presuming a personal knowledge of the 1844 disappointment and its aftermath) in printings since 1963 has carried a “historical prologue” of twenty-six pages and eight pages of appendix notes. *Testimonies to Ministers* (made up of “special testimo-

nies" written largely during the perplexing 1890s) was furnished in 1962 with twenty-two pages of historical foreword and fifteen pages of appendix notes. The volumes of the *Testimonies for the Church* since the 1948 reprinting have included statements reviewing the "time" of each volume.

Two appendixes were furnished in 1963 for the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, filling pages 3180-3188. One is of proper names, and the other is of obsolete words, little used words, and terms with altered meanings. These steps meet needs seen to exist. In actuality only a relatively small proportion of the White materials require such historical orientation.

One problem that certainly has existed with respect to Ellen White's writings — one of which there are numerous examples — appears when persons have quoted her out of context, or used isolated fragments of her writings, or combined quotations artificially to suit the particular purpose of the user. The fair-minded student will use White materials so that the conclusion will be in keeping with the overall tenor of her writings as a whole. She witnessed a misuse of her writings in her own time and warned vigorously against this lack of ordinary integrity on the part of extremists, teachers of error, advocates of spurious visions, and others of the same class. Commenting on how some people misused her own writings, as well as the Bible, she said:

This is the way my writings are treated by those who wish to misunderstand and pervert them. They turn the truth of God into a lie. In the very same way that they treat the writings of my published articles and in my books, so do skeptics and infidels treat the Bible. They read it according to their desire to pervert, to misapply, to willfully wrest the utterances from their true meaning. They declare that the Bible can prove anything and everything, that every sect proves their doctrines right, and that the most diverse doctrines are proved from the Bible. . . . It is not that the difficulty is in the Bible.⁷

Writing to a misguided compiler of some of her writings, she pointed out: "You have also taken from their connection portions of the testimonies which the Lord has given for the benefit of His people, and have misapplied them to the support of your erroneous theories — borrowing or stealing the light of Heaven to teach that which the testimonies have no harmony with, and have ever condemned. Thus you place both scripture and testimony in the framework of error."⁸

And on another occasion she wrote: "It will be found that those who bear false messages will not have a high sense of honor and integrity. They will deceive the people, and mix up with their error the *Testimonies* of Sister White, and use her name to give influence to their work. They make

such selections from the *Testimonies* as they think they can twist to support their positions, and place them in a setting of falsehood, so that their error may have weight and be accepted by the people.”⁹

Ellen White had a suggestion for those who are truly seeking an understanding of her meaning: “The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture.”¹⁰

She also suggested a commonsense approach to the problem of communication faced by the Bible writers: “Human minds vary. The minds of different education and thought receive different impressions of the same words, and it is difficult for one mind to give to one of a different temperament, education, and habits of thought by language exactly the same idea as that which is clear and distinct in his own mind. Yet to honest men, right-minded men, he can be so simple and plain as to convey his meaning for all practical purposes.”¹¹ The lesson of this passage is that if one will approach the messages of Ellen White reasonably, he can get her meaning “for all practical purposes.”

Several years ago, when the three-volume *Index* of Ellen White’s published writings was in preparation, it was asked whether the church was not inviting trouble by gathering together in one place, under one subject heading, references to all her statements on a given point, thus making it easy to detect any contradictions and inconsistencies. Actually, it hasn’t worked out that way. The making of the *Index* has not in itself introduced any new problems; rather, one statement complements and illustrates another. Nor has the publication of the full scope of the 2,000 articles Ellen White wrote for the *Review* during the years of her active labor introduced any difficulty in reconciling her messages.

The assertion made that “we may never be able fully to recapture Ellen White’s original intentions or the absolute truth of what she meant”¹² is subject to serious challenge. The bulk of her writings convey to the fair-minded reader her teachings in their full intent. The rather rare item dependent on historical context can be easily fathomed in the light of information readily available.

2. *Some have considered “as more authoritative those statements that start with the words ‘I was shown.’”*¹³

The article under discussion makes the foregoing statement and goes on to point out that “to take as authoritative only the statements that cite a specific vision depreciates the value of the many things God ‘showed’ her through the guidance of the Holy Spirit pervading her life.” This point is

well taken and will bear further elaboration. The idea that a direct reference to a vision gives a statement added authority is not a new thought among observers of her work. It had some currency in Ellen White's own time, and she corrected this error.

When a question arose concerning her letters and periodical articles, she said: "In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision — the precious rays of light shining from the throne."¹⁴ Again, in another situation, she said: "In the testimonies sent — I have given you the light God has given to me. In no case have I given my own judgment or opinion. I have enough to write of what God has shown me, without falling back on my own opinions."¹⁵ Concerning the Testimonies she said: "Do not by your criticisms take out all the force, all the point and power, from the Testimonies. Do not feel that you can dissect them to suit your own ideas, claiming that God has given you ability to discern what is light from heaven, and what is the expression of mere human wisdom."¹⁶

In the five volumes of the Conflict of the Ages series,¹⁷ Ellen White does not once use the expression "I saw" or "I was shown." She purposely omitted such references in books intended for non-Adventist readers. But in her 1888 introduction to *The Great Controversy*, the first of her works planned for general distribution, she freely, yet discreetly, wrote of the source of the information she presented: "Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold the working, in different ages, of the great controversy."¹⁸

The manner in which God has operated in the past — through his spokesmen, by the Spirit of prophecy — may always remain to human minds somewhat of a mystery. We have an unusually interesting statement by Ellen White that sheds some light on this point. And if we accept her explanation as to the manner in which God works through the human instrument, we would have to be careful in judging whether any one or more of the messenger's writings was not inspired of God.

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.¹⁹

There were numerous situations in history, in the church, and in the lives of members and leaders of the church concerning which Ellen White received instruction and enlightenment. Whenever she wished to communicate information to others, she drew on these subjects and scenes that had been revealed to her. As she wrote the messages — whether testimonies to individuals, Bible commentary, or historical scenes — she acknowledged the presence of God's Spirit to guide her and strengthen her powers of recall.

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After I come out of vision I do not at once remember all that I have seen, and the matter is not so clear before me until I write; then the scene rises before me as was presented in vision, and I can write with freedom. Sometimes the things which I have seen are hid from me after I come out of vision, and I cannot call them to mind until I am brought before a company where that vision applies, then the things which I have seen come to my mind with force. I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision.²⁰

While writing the manuscript of *The Great Controversy*, I was often conscious of the presence of the angels of God. And many times the scenes about which I was writing were presented to me anew in visions of the night, so that they were fresh and vivid in my mind.²¹

To those who were inclined to differentiate between which of her statements or counsels were inspired and which were not, she replied: "Some have taken the position that the warnings, cautions, and reproofs given by the Lord through his servant, unless they come through special vision for each individual case, should have no more weight than counsels and warnings from other sources. In some cases it has been represented that in giving a testimony for churches or individuals, I have been influenced to write as I did by letters received from members of the church. There have been those who claimed that testimonies purporting to be given by the Spirit of God were merely the expression of my own judgment, based upon information gathered from human sources. This statement is utterly false."²²

3. *What was Ellen White's relation to the historical authors she quoted?*²³

This question with its implications is left for consideration later in connection with another article.

4. *We need an understanding of "the social and intellectual milieu in which [Ellen White] lived and wrote."*²⁴

We must all acknowledge the validity of this statement. No one could object to any line of investigation that would give us better understandings of the social, religious, economic, and political factors that were at work in North America during the latter two-thirds of the past century.

Ellen White recognized that conditions change and circumstances may differ widely. She wrote: "Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered."²⁵ Again, she pointed out: "In the advancement of the work of God, that which may be said in truth of individuals at one time may not correctly be said of them at another time. The reason of this is that one month they may have stood in innocence, living up to the best light they had, while the month following was none too short for them to be overcome by Satan's devices, and, through self-confidence, to fall into grievous sins and become unfitted for the work of God."²⁶

However, principles are not changed by the passing of time, and no alteration of conditions can invalidate them. And the testimonies of Ellen White were intended to help the church to the end of time, to guide the church in its travels to the kingdom. With regard to these abiding principles, they speak clearly, and no re-interpretation is required to make us know God's messages for us. In 1907 she wrote in the *Review*: "The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these its closing days."²⁷ Again, she said:

In a view given me about twenty years ago, 'I was directed to bring out general principles, in speaking and in writing, and at the same time to specify the dangers, errors, and sins of some individuals, that all might be warned, reprov'd, and counseled. I saw that all should search their own hearts and lives closely, to see if they had not made the same mistakes for which others were corrected, and if the warnings given for others did not apply to their own cases. If so, they should feel that the counsel and reproofs were given especially for them, and should make as practical an application of them as though they were especially addressed to themselves.'²⁸

It will be of interest to know that the trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, with the approval of the General Conference administration, have commissioned Arthur L. White to write a definitive biography of Ellen G. White. When completed, this will help organize and make available much material that will clarify questions of circumstance and background of certain of the *Testimonies*.

5. *What about the compilations of Ellen White's writings made since her death in 1915, particularly with respect to content and editorial slant?*

Ellen White fully expected that her extensive collection of unpublished materials found in letters, manuscripts, sermons, and materials in out-of-print sources would be searched for relevant and applicable instruction that would be published and circulated throughout the church after her death. In a 1903 letter she said: "The articles that from week to week are printed in our papers are soon forgotten. . . . These articles are to be gathered together, reprinted in book form, and placed before believers and unbelievers."²⁹ "I am endeavoring, . . ." she wrote in 1905, "to write letters that will be a help, not merely to those to whom they are addressed, but to many others who need them."³⁰

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In her will, dated February 9, 1912, Ellen White appointed five trustees who, with their successors, were empowered to exercise custody over her literary materials and given the responsibility of "administering, preserving, and protecting the said . . . property, and publishing and selling said books and manuscripts and conducting the business thereof."³¹

The manner in which compilations of Ellen G. White writings are prepared is of great significance of course. It would be possible to edit a compilation so as to slant her teachings, one simple way being to omit quotations on some aspect of the subject. The possibility that this might ever be done has been a matter of concern to the trustees. Arthur L. White, executive secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, speaks of this:

Great care must be exercised in making selections from the writings for general circulation, that subjects be not presented in an unbalanced manner. The trustees sense keenly the care that must be taken in placing in general circulation hitherto unpublished testimonies. They do not trust merely to their own judgment in this, but secure the help of other workers of long experience who give careful study to the manuscripts to ensure that fair and wise selection has been made. All new matter which is placed in general circulation by the trustees is considered not only by them, but by experienced members of the General Conference Committee.³²

When a compilation of Ellen G. White materials for a new book is desired by any office or department of the church, or by others, the proposal is first considered by the trustees, and also by a General Conference committee that gives guidance in matters relating to collections of such materials from the viewpoint of their role in serving the interests of the church. An experienced staff member of the estate office is assigned to make a wide gathering of materials bearing on the subject. The compilation is not made to fit a preconceived outline; but rather the material itself determines the

content and indicates the emphasis of the outline. Then finally the materials are grouped into chapters and subsections.

Before being sent to the publisher, compilations are subject to careful reading by the trustees. If the subject matter deals with a particular area, persons of special competence in that field are asked to read the material critically to judge the adequacy and fairness of selection. The custodians of Ellen White's materials have never denied the right of responsible investigators to verify and check in her unpublished writings as to any statement which may be called into question.

DIVINE REVELATION:

A REVIEW OF SOME OF ELLEN G. WHITE'S CONCEPTS

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This paper³³ makes some helpful contributions to an understanding of the nature of revelation, a subject that has been occupying the thinking of many Adventist Bible students lately. In pursuing the author's line of thought we would need, it appears, to keep the distinction between special revelation and general revelation quite clearly in mind. There is no doubt, as the author has shown, that Ellen White teaches that God speaks to the hearts of all his children through the agency of the Holy Spirit. But this line of thought should not be carried to the point that every sincere believer living in the right relationship to God becomes a prophet.

Ellen White's comments on this point are quite enlightening. Several extracts are given here to show the direction of her counsel and to make it clear that she made a definite distinction between general revelation, or leadings of the Spirit, and special inspiration. "In the highest sense the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration, communicating to the people the messages he had received from God."³⁴ When she was asked, "Do you not think that these men [Adventist pioneer writers] who have brought out the truth in the past were inspired of God?" She replied: "I dare not say they were not led of God, for Christ leads into all truth; but when it comes to inspiration in the fullest sense of the word, I answer, No."³⁵ Concerning Martin Luther she declared: "Angels of heaven were by his side, and rays of light from the throne of God revealed the treasures of truth to his understanding."³⁶ And of William Miller she said: "God sent His angel to move upon the heart of a farmer who had not believed the Bible, to lead him to search the prophecies. Angels of God repeatedly visited that chosen one, to guide his mind and open to his understanding prophecies which had ever been dark to God's people."³⁷ But at no time did Ellen White consider either Luther or Miller to be a prophet.

When she was left alone after the death of her husband, James White, Ellen White felt the need of someone on whom she could lean for help and support in her many heavy responsibilities. She was assured concerning her son, W. C. White: "I have given you My servant, W. C. White, and I will give him judgment to be your helper. I will give him skill and understanding to manage wisely."³⁸ But no one has claimed or would claim that upon W. C. White the gift of prophecy had been bestowed.

In 1904 a report reached Ellen White, in Australia, that A. T. Jones was quoting her as saying that the time had come when, if believers held the right relation to God, all could have the gift of prophecy to the same extent as she. When Ellen White heard this, she asked: "Where is the authority for this statement?" In writing of this incident she commented: "These ideas in relation to prophesying, I do not hesitate to say, might better never have been expressed. Such statements prepare the way for a state of things that Satan will surely take advantage of to bring in spurious exercises."³⁹ And in writing to A. T. Jones about the supposed visions of a certain Anna Phillips, Ellen White said:

You cannot be too careful how you talk of the gift of prophesying, and state that I have said this and that in reference to the matter. Such statements, I well know, encourage men and women and children to imagine that they have special light in revelations from God, when they have not received such light. This, I have been shown, would be one of Satan's masterpieces of deception. You are giving to the work a mold which it will take precious time and wearing soul labor to correct, to save the cause of God from another spasm of fanaticism.⁴⁰

The thoughtful reader will consider well the impact of these statements as he ponders and endeavors to hold in balance the implications of the article on divine revelation.

A TEXTUAL AND HISTORICAL STUDY OF ELLEN G. WHITE'S ACCOUNT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

This article⁴¹ opens with the declaration that Seventh-day Adventists "know remarkably little about [Ellen G. White] or her literary work," and asserts that, "if we are ever to understand Adventism . . . we must undertake this study." The article then provides an example of the method that the author suggests "Adventist scholarship might profitably adopt in this examination of Ellen White's writings." The one chapter of *The Great Controversy* selected for consideration is from that portion of the book which traces the history of Protestantism. There are several pitfalls to be avoided.

The reader should note, first of all, that the chapter title, "The Bible and the French Revolution," reveals Ellen White's intent in the chapter: the treatment is primarily a study of the results of a nation's following a certain course of action. In view of its context in the book, it is clear that this is Ellen White's point. Her sketchy historical treatment only confirms this conclusion.

By direct statement and by repeated implications, the SPECTRUM article holds that until all of Mrs. White's writings are analyzed by scholars somewhat in the manner suggested, her true meaning cannot be known (as in the article "Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship").⁴² But the reader should observe that the scope of the published Ellen White works covers many areas of teaching and concern. There are the devotional writings as well as the instruction on education, church administration, missionary outreach, health and family life, and child care and training. Twenty percent of her writings in current books are in the *Testimonies for the Church*. A little better than ten percent are Bible commentary appearing in the first four of the five Conflict of the Ages books. The last parts of both *Early Writings* and *The Great Controversy* are prophetic of last-day events.

The candid student will be slow to accept the implication that because some have seen problems in certain of the historical chapters in *The Great Controversy* the writings as a whole are called in question. Involved are the largely historical first eighteen chapters of *The Great Controversy*, aggregating 319 pages of text, about one-half of the book. This is three-fourths of one percent of the current published White books. The chapter on "The Bible and the French Revolution" is one-tenth of one percent. The field of these historical chapters is quite different from the text of her other published writings. Whether or not one sees some problems in these eighteen chapters will depend on his concept of the purpose of the author and the nature of inspiration, and also on his understanding of how Ellen White did her work.

When one looks at the array of materials in the White books, he may rightly ask just how would Adventist scholars apply the suggested methods to the examination of such chapters as "God's Love for Man" (in *Steps to Christ*), "The Lord Is Risen" (in *The Desire of Ages*), or "The Last Crisis" (in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume nine). One may well inquire whether Adventists must wait until such an examination is made and reports submitted before these and like counsels and admonitions are permitted to speak to their hearts.

It is evident that the chapter selected from *The Great Controversy* does

not represent the bulk of the Ellen G. White writings given through the Spirit of prophecy for edification, instruction, protection, and encouragement. It has already been granted that there are writings that deal with certain specific lines of counsel concerning which an investigation into the circumstances of the times of writing makes the counsels more meaningful. But to assert that the Ellen G. White writings as a whole must be evaluated by scholars in their special fields of competence before they can be truly meaningful or carry to us God's thoughts is a proposal which would largely neutralize or negate the counsels.

Another serious pitfall easily seen in this article, and reflected also in the first article I reviewed, is the assumption that the Ellen G. White writings are based on the writings of others. Both articles speak of "her sources" in a way that tends to leave little place for inspiration but suggests that she wrote as any historian would write. While it is true that Ellen White did use certain historical quotations, it does not follow that she searched histories to develop a theme or plot. She viewed the events of history in the light of the contest between the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil. This is clearly disclosed in the full book title, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan in the Christian Dispensation*.

A few statements will remind us of what Ellen White understood to be her "sources":

I was moved by the Spirit of the Lord to write that book.⁴³

God gave me the light contained in *Great Controversy*. . . . Thus He is speaking to the people in stirring words.⁴⁴

As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed — to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future.⁴⁵

Sister White is not the originator of these books [being sold to the public]. They contain the instruction that during her lifework God has been giving to her.⁴⁶

According to this testimony it is evident that Ellen White's basic source was the visions God gave to her. She consulted certain historical writers for supplemental data as shown below.

The reader should notice how Ellen White employed history as background on which she depicted the story of "the great controversy." Perhaps a statement written by W. C. White in explaining the 1911 revision of *The Great Controversy*, and endorsed in the margin by Ellen White in her own handwriting, will be helpful here:

Mother has never claimed to be authority on history. The things which she has written out, are descriptions of flash-light pictures and other representations given her regarding the actions of men, and the influence of these actions upon the work of God for the salvation of men with views of past, present, and future history in its relation to this work.

In connection with the writing out of these views, she has made use of good and clear historical statements to help make plain to the reader the things which she is endeavoring to present. When I was a mere boy, I heard her read D'Aubigne's 'History of the Reformation' to my father. She read to him a large part, if not the whole, of the five volumes. She had read other histories of the Reformation.

This has helped her to locate and describe many of the events and movements presented to her in vision. This is somewhat similar to the way in which the study of the Bible helps her to locate and describe the many figurative representations given to her regarding the development of the great controversy in our day between truth and error.

Mother never laid claim to verbal inspiration, and I do not find my father, Elders Bates, Andrews, Smith, or Waggoner put forth this claim.⁴⁷

Ellen White herself clearly stated in her introduction to the book that the quotations she employed were used not to cite "that writer as an authority but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject."⁴⁸

Out of a number of specific problems that have been introduced in considering Ellen White's writings that touch on history, the six below are representative.

1. *Ellen White quoted from historical works, even lifting out whole passages and embodying them in her account in the 1888 edition of The Great Controversy without giving credit.*

This must be acknowledged; but while credit was not given, such quotations usually appeared in quotation marks. One can explain this omission in the 1888 stage in the development of *The Great Controversy* on two counts. It was quite common for writers of her time not to be too careful about credit when copying from one another. Ellen White herself explains what she did in the 1888 edition: "In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject."⁴⁹

In the 1911 edition the author and those who assisted her in the revision sought to the best of their ability to give the proper source for all quoted matter.

2. *Ellen White quoted authorities whose work was characterized by undue haste in its preparation, or by a strong philosophical or historical bias, thus making their works not too dependable.*

This objection against Ellen White's use of these historical writings loses its meaning when one takes into account her purpose in employing these quotations, and if one accepts her as God's true messenger who has special revelations from God that have a bearing on the meaning of history. She was privileged to choose freely the writers who best expressed the thoughts she wished to convey. There is no doubt that authors she quoted had strong antipathies against the Catholic system and in some cases even against democracy as it was exemplified in some situations. Is it now claimed that the Roman Catholic power is innocent of the abuses attributed to it by Ellen White, or that the excesses of the French Revolution enhanced the ideals of democracy? What else could Ellen White say in view of the burning rhetoric of the prophecies of the Bible and the visions God gave to her regarding the war of the Catholic power against God, his law, and his people?

3. *If Ellen White were writing today, her account of events during the French Revolution would be different because she would use later, more balanced sources.*

This is only conjecture. She would use these later sources only if they paralleled what she had seen in vision and represented more accurately what she was trying to express of the outworking of the long controversy between God and the adversary Satan. It is true that today the historical concept of the Protestant Reformation is being modified and that facts are even being suppressed. Ellen White is quoted by W. C. White to have declared: "Much historical evidence regarding these matters [the arrogance and assumptions of the papacy] has been designedly destroyed."⁵⁰

Actually, when the work of revising *The Great Controversy* was in progress in 1911 at Ellen White's Elmshaven office, the researchers who were helping to identify and verify the historical sources were given a word of caution by her secretary, C. C. Crisler. He wrote to Guy Dail in Hamburg, under date of January 3, 1911, in much the same vein as he wrote to H. Camden Lacey in London and Jean Vuilleumier in Basel, enlisting their help in identifying the historical sources:

In all this historical work we are eager to have the Mss. that may be submitted, given the most searching tests. We need never be afraid of historical truth. However, we would do well to avoid accepting the conclusion of some of the more modern his-

torians who are attempting to rewrite history so as to shape it up in harmony with their philosophical viewpoint. We find it necessary to exercise constant vigilance in this respect; and this leads us to set considerable store by the original sources, or fountainheads, of history.⁵¹

A note in the appendix to *The Great Controversy* cited two editions of a Catholic document dated 1584 and 1612 in which the Pope is given the title "Dominum Deum nostrum Papa" (our Lord God the Pope). The note concludes with the sentence: "In several editions published since 1612, the word 'Deum' (God) has been omitted."⁵²

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In the White Estate vault, there is a heavy folder of materials representing the historical sources consulted in connection with the 1911 revision of the chapter "The Bible and the French Revolution." These sources go far beyond those cited in the chapter and give valid evidence, except in some minor details, for the historical accuracy of the presentation of the chapter in question. This documentation, which was not consulted in the preparation of the article I am reviewing here, shows that the matters under consideration here were also of concern to those involved in the 1911 revision.

There is no assurance that modernity alone will give balance and completeness in historical writing. Consider, for example, the very useful and readable (and, in fact, scholarly) book by Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, one volume in the Pelican series on the history of the church, published in England as late as 1964. One searches the index in vain for a reference to the work of Seventh-day Adventists. Yet Adventist missions, according to an American Bible Society report, are found in more countries of the world than those of other American Protestant churches or family of churches. One finds Adventists referred to in the book only once and only briefly.

It is altogether logical that Ellen White, with her inspired insight into the elements back of the French Revolution, would quote from sources which took note of the factors that stand out as a part of *The Great Controversy* story, unfavorable though they may appear to some participants in the events. As for bias and balance in history, it is doubtful if a completely unbiased history exists.

④ *Ellen White incorporated into her account, in quoting from historical sources, inaccuracies that were embedded in the historian's text.*

It might be helpful to focus on the process by which Ellen White received the visions that resulted in volumes such as the Conflict of the Ages series. From her first vision she viewed the struggles of the Advent people as they

traveled to the New Jerusalem. But it was in the vision of March 14, 1858, in Lovett's Grove (now Bowling Green), Ohio, that "the great controversy between Christ and Satan" was unfolded to her more fully, and this understanding was enlarged in subsequent visions. Concerning the way in which the visions came to her, W. C. White explained before the General Conference Council on October 30, 1911, that "the things which she has written out are descriptions of flash-light pictures and other representations given her regarding the actions of men."⁵³

In another W. C. White statement we get a more detailed view of the relation of her writing to the visions. Answering certain questions put to him in 1934, he commented in a letter to LeRoy E. Froom:

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The framework of the great temple of truth sustained by her writings was presented to her clearly in vision. In some features of this work information was given in detail. Regarding some features of the revelation, such as the features of prophetic chronology, as regards the ministration in the sanctuary and the changes that took place in 1844, the matter was presented to her many times and in detail many times, and this enabled her to speak very clearly and very positively regarding the foundation pillars of our faith.

In some of the historical matters such as are brought out in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and in *Acts of the Apostles*, and in *Great Controversy*, the main outlines were made very clear and plain to her, and when she came to write up these topics, she was left to study the Bible and history to get dates and geographical relations and to perfect her description of details.⁵⁴



Evidently in some of the scenes which passed before her, Ellen White was not given a disclosure of the exact place, or time, or even an identification of all the characters involved. She fitted what she had seen into the framework of secular history, making use of such accounts as would describe fairly what she was trying to convey. Always, she focused attention on the controversy issues, not on the minutiae of the historical account. We can hardly imagine an angel dictating to her the names of all places, the exact identity of people, the hour of the day, and other minor details over which historians differ. Rather, her preoccupation was with the meaning of the events, drawing back the curtain so the reader might see apostasy and evil at work, and God's countermeasures in the lives and work of his servants. She expressed it in the introduction to *The Great Controversy*: "It is not so much the object of this book to present new truths concerning the struggles of former times, as to bring out facts and principles which have a bearing on coming events."⁵⁵

If one accepts this view of Ellen White's role, an inaccuracy brought over from a historian into her writings would not cause too great concern. But we would have no basis on account of that to question her analysis of

how the general events of the historical period fit into the prophetic picture of the Scriptures.

5. *Ellen White depended on histories to fill in the broad outline of what she was trying to describe.*

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The inference here is that she had nothing to say but what was in the histories. This is a judgment that rests entirely on supposition and is belied by a careful review of her first treatment of the subject in 1884, in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, volume four, in a chapter entitled "The Two Witnesses." Allusions to the history run through the chapter. In the enlargement in 1888, considerable historical matter was summoned to fill out the account. If we follow the development of the Conflict series in its several states of expansion, we see what seems to be a logical progression of the material from simple and condensed to a full and more elaborate account as there was a market and as she had the time to make the account more complete. Unfortunately we are unable to penetrate back to see what fund of information was in Ellen White's mind, put there in views presented to her by the Spirit of prophecy, and to compare that with what she wrote when she made use of the historical sources.

⑥ *We must make Ellen White more fallible and human than we have in the past.*

Ellen White said, "In regard to infallibility, I never claimed it; God alone is infallible, His word is true, and in Him is no variableness, or shadow of turning."⁵⁶ Let us agree, as we have above, that Ellen White was not infallible. She was just a human being, and she taught that "God alone is infallible." But she received revelations from the Holy Spirit who *is* infallible, and her messages written in human language reflect as accurately as human language can the mind and will of an infallible God.

One's views on historical detail arise from his understanding of the inspiration of the prophetic writers. The minutiae of history may seem to loom large in certain circumstances, but they become secondary and of much less prominence when it is understood that in the works of inspired writers the principal concern is with the prime issues and causes of church history.

Henry Alford illustrates the point: "Two men may be equally led by the Holy Spirit to record the events of our Lord's life for our edification, though one may believe and record that the visit to the Gadarenes took place before the calling of Matthew, while the other places it after the event; though one

in narrating it speaks of two demoniacs, — and the other, only of one.” And concerning the humanness and fallibility of the apostles: “We do not find the apostles transformed, from being men of individual character and thought and feeling into mere channels for the transmission of infallible truth. We find them, humanly speaking, to have been still distinguished by the same characteristics as before the descent of the Holy Ghost.”⁵⁷

THE ‘SPIRIT OF PROPHECY’

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The article about the Spirit of prophecy⁵⁸ points to the anomaly involved in using the term *Spirit of prophecy* when referring to the writings of Ellen G. White, or even to the author herself. The writer of the article is right in saying that the common Adventist practice is in error when the expression is used loosely. The term “Spirit of prophecy” describes the activity of the heavenly agency when it is at work in an individual making him a prophet. The term is not the prophet nor his messages. Ellen White was not the “Spirit of prophecy,” but in her work we find the manifestation of the Spirit of prophecy.

The Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen White lists the expression seven times. There are references both with and without quotation marks which refer to the four-volume series presenting the “great controversy” story published during the years 1870 to 1884.⁵⁹ The expression is also used in its basic sense, to refer to the agency through which Ellen White received her messages: “When this position is taken by our people, then the special warnings and counsels of God through the Spirit of prophecy can have no influence with them to work a reformation in life and character.”⁶⁰

The writer of the article raises a question about the correctness of linking Revelation 12:17 with Revelation 19:10 so as to reach the conclusion that the remnant church (inferentially, the Seventh-day Adventist church) is to have the gift of the Spirit of prophecy. Here I wonder whether he is not surrendering too easily a position which we have held and taught for many decades. I suggest the following reasons why we should hold to our historical position.

1. It is true that we have a variety of renderings of the latter part of Revelation 19:10 — so many, in fact, as to be somewhat bewildering. This is what happens when an effort is made to infer meanings that are not in the text, and so-called translations become personal interpretations rather than translations. We have strong confirmation of the King James reading in the American Standard Version and in the Revised Standard Version,

both of which render that part of the verse "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

2. Bible scholars seem to agree that Revelation 12:17 can be translated with either of two meanings, both implied in the original: "In the Greek this phrase may be understood either as the 'testimony' (or 'witness') Christians bear concerning Jesus, or as the 'testimony' (or 'witness') that originates with Jesus and is revealed to his church through the prophets (see on ch. 1:2). A comparison with ch. 19:10 clearly favors the latter interpretation. . . . The close relationship between the 'testimony of Jesus' and prophecy is further demonstrated by a comparison between chs. 19:10 and 22:9."⁶¹

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3. In Revelation 1:1, 2 appears the title of John's book, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," which is given by God to Jesus, who "sent and signified it by his angel unto his servants," and which is designated in verse 2 simply as the "testimony of Jesus Christ." This would seem to identify the "testimony of Jesus" with prophecy.

4. The pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church first employed, as their biblical support for the exposition of the prophetic gift, Joel 2:28-31 and Acts 2:16-20. When in the mid-1850s they studied the application of the Revelation texts, they pondered the question of the testimony of Jesus very carefully and came to the firm conclusion that the use of Revelation 12:17 and 19:10 was not out of harmony with good exegesis. In 1883 a scholarly article by W. H. Littlejohn⁶² reflected the further development of this viewpoint.

5. Ellen G. White used these familiar biblical expressions in the way Adventists are accustomed to: "We have the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the spirit of prophecy."⁶³

CONCLUSION

In forming one's personal judgment about the validity of the gift that resulted in the work of Ellen G. White in the Seventh-day Adventist church, one must doubt whether historical criticism of her writings will have a preponderance of weight. There will always have to be present a strong element of faith. On this point she said: "If you refuse to believe until every shadow of uncertainty and possibility of doubt is removed, you will never believe. The doubt that demands perfect knowledge will never yield to faith. Faith rests upon evidence, not demonstration."⁶⁴

But such needed faith might have more chance of survival if judgments are approached with humility, a grace that is always present in true scholar-

ly pursuits. Ellen White counseled: "Let intellectual pride be banished. I lift my voice in warning against every species of spiritual pride. There is an abundance of it in the church today."⁶⁵

That evidence on which we may base our faith I discern as I peruse the Bible prophecies concerning the time of the end, and the vast scope of God's work to be done then as outlined in the prophecies of Revelation 14 and 18. I see it in the identification of the advent movement in Revelation 10, and in the straightforward scriptural declarations of the characteristics of the remnant people (Revelation 12:17, 19:10). I read it in Joel's prophecy of events to transpire in the last days, and to be confirmed in the coming of the prophetic gift at a most strategic moment in the advent movement. I follow the subsequent outworking of God's providence in the fortunes of the church and the remarkable spreading of the movement as the messages of counsel have been received and followed.

And I listen to the testimony of those closely joined with Ellen White in labor during her entire life, adding evidence that comes to me with convincing force. For Ellen White's work was not done in a corner. It was open to scrutiny by opposers as well as friends. Yet her work has endured and does endure. There is no doubt of that.

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- 57 Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers*, quoted in *Notes and Papers*, pp. 66, 64.
- 58 Richard B. Lewis, The Spirit of prophecy, *Spectrum* 2:69-73.
- 59 *Testimonies for the Church*, volume four, pp. 390-391 and volume five, p. 681.
- 60 *Testimonies for the Church*, volume five, p. 685.
- 61 *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume seven (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1957), p. 812. The subsequent development of the comparison of Revelation 19:10 and 22:9 is much to the point. See also the "Additional Note on Chapter 19," *Commentary*, pp. 876-877.
- 62 W. H. Littlejohn, Seventh-day Adventists and the testimony of Jesus Christ, *Review and Herald Extra*, August 14, 1883, pp. 13-16.
- 63 *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 114.
- 64 *Selected Messages*, book one, p. 28.
- 65 *Testimonies for the Church*, volume five, p. 534.

HEROLD D. WEISS'S REPLY:

That a call for Adventists with different scholarly expertises to engage their talents in the study of Mrs. White should be considered "disturbing" and "unreasonable" is, to say the least, baffling. Neither from a practical nor from a theoretical point of view is it "unthinkable" that highly trained specialists must establish the basic criteria for the interpretation of a document. This is especially so when the document in question is to serve as a basis for policy or conduct. Of course, no one denies that for devotional purposes the Holy Spirit reaches the reader through the writings in an immediate way. The issue which our article addresses cannot by an act of fiat be classified as an "alleged" problem. It is a real problem, and Bradley grants that much in his reply. If it were not, the church would have no difficulty, just to give one example, in dialoguing with Robert Brimsmead and his followers.

I would like to thank Bradley for agreeing that Mrs. White is being used out of context rather frequently, as well as for his support and further evidence concerning the nature of her inspiration, and for his recognition, supported by Mrs. White herself, that "time and place must be considered." Indeed, the only way to know which is the "principle" involved in a particular counsel is by knowing the historical circumstances to which the "principle" was first applied. How could one know what principle the apostle Paul taught in First Corinthians, chapters eight to ten, if one does not know what it meant "to eat meat offered to idols" in the Hellenistic world, and if one does not know what it meant to make a distinction between those who have "knowledge" and those who have "love" in that same Hellenistic age?

I think Bradley misunderstands what we said concerning the compilations of Mrs. White's counsels published after her death. In no way were we concerned about the integrity of those entrusted with the responsibility to bring out these compilations. We were only saying that for the adequate understanding of a compilation as a document by itself, the circumstances, the specific needs which, in the minds of the editors, the compilation was meant to supply, should be taken into account if the compilation is not to serve only as a source of quotations subject to easy misreading.

Mrs. White is absolutely correct when she contends that the Scriptures are not to be considered a philosophical challenge to be resolved by philosophical methodology. But I think no one would deny that the Scriptures contain linguistic, historical, and theological challenges which need be resolved by the appropriate methods. In the case of Mrs. White, the same is true not only in terms of what prompted her to write certain things, or which were the sources at her disposal and the way in which she used them, but also what prompted the trustees of her estate to publish particular statements at particular times.

Bradley's solution to the problem (which he, in fact, admits and faces) differs from ours in a quite simple way. We would like to have the historical context established upon an objective basis according to scientific methodology. Bradley would leave it to the "fair-minded" and trust that they will not distort the counsels. This means that the only way to challenge the use of a quotation out of context is to call into question the character of the one using the quotation. I would rather carry on a discussion at the level of the evidence, as this can best be established by open research, and leave personalities out as much as possible.

Comments on Peterson Study

ELLEN G. WHITE'S ACCOUNT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

GLENN C. BOLTON, College Place, Washington:

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The first part of the article is largely devoted to discussing what [the author] is about to do. He believes Mrs. White's other books should have similar treatment. Second, he discredits, without data, Mrs. White's sources as biased relative to more recent scholars who are not so anti-Catholic and are therefore presumably more reliable. Third, he presents his study, which consists of two pages, 64 to 66, where the errors of the chapter are discussed. The errors are here reviewed.

The first error was made in the 1888 edition and has been discussed at length by Arthur White, he states. I do not have this material. At any rate, the statement in the 1888 edition says that the "ringing of the Palace Bell" was the signal to begin the massacre. In the 1911 edition this was changed to "a bell." Going to Wylie (whom Peterson considered to be her source), I found that the bell of St. Germain l'Auxerois was rung prematurely at 2:00 a.m. and precipitated an early commencement of the St. Bartholomew Massacre. The Palace of Justice bell, scheduled to ring later, did in fact ring, and most of the bells in Paris took this signal up and rang also. This official signal was given and the massacre became generalized. As this has been studied more extensively before, we have here no new contribution.

A second error is referred to where the 1888 edition mentions "brevaries of the Old and New Testament." In 1911 this was changed to "brevaries, missals, and the Old and New Testament" (p. 276). This, too, is no new contribution.

A third error was referred to where in 1888 millions are referred to as dying in connection with the French Revolution. In 1911 this was changed to multitudes. This also contributes no new insights. The ten-year period referred to was characterized by war and revolution. The number who died would indeed be difficult to calculate, and I presume for this reason Peterson has not given us new, more reliable figures.

A fourth serious error he now focuses on, which has not been corrected, he states. He places a great deal of emphasis on this important point. In the 1911 edition, page 278, [Ellen White] said, "Thousands upon thousands" of Protestants fled France in the sixteenth century. He points out that Wylie, in the paragraph preceding the one which she used as a basis for this flight information, mentioned 400 or 500. He then states that "Wylie himself is given to hyperbole in discussing Catholic persecutions; and when one compounds his exaggerations with Mrs. White's, the distance from historical reality is very great indeed" (p. 65). Even a brief reading of the statement in

The Great Controversy makes it clear that Mrs. White was referring to a period of 250 to 300 years. Wylie for this period gave a figure of hundreds of thousands.¹ Albert Hyma, a recent historian, gives a figure of 400,000.² He should qualify as a historian even for Peterson, as his book is dated 1931.

Education does not ensure that one can interpret history accurately when prejudice is present. Perhaps divine inspiration is just what is needed to read history and repeat it accurately.

A similar example follows where Monort is spoken of as a "priest of the new order." Alison, who apparently was the source of this anecdote, called him a comedian. Peterson feels that there was a "clear indication" by Mrs. White that she wished to be understood as identifying him as an apostate Roman Catholic priest. I had read this many times, and it never had occurred to me that she was attempting to describe an apostate Catholic priest. I rather think Peterson is seeing Catholic prejudice where none was intended.

At the top of page 66 [Peterson] discusses a statement on page 274 of *The Great Controversy* where the Bishop of Paris renounced Roman Catholicism as "priestcraft with no foundation in history or sacred truth." He feels she should have included Sir Walter Scott's two sentences: "It is said that the leaders of the scene had some difficulty inducing the bishop to comply with the task assigned him, which, after all, he executed, not without present tears and subsequent remorse. But he did play the part prescribed." Whether including these sentences would have increased or decreased the Roman Catholic image is difficult for me to see. I question that Catholic malice would be the motive for not including this "hearsay" information.

Peterson's criticism proving Ellen White "a very human" if "godly woman" proves again how remarkable that she was able to "escape the intellectual influences and limitations that are experienced by every man and woman" and write history so accurate that her critics stand clearly revealed as in error by their own exposé.

REFERENCES

- 1 James A. Wylie, *History of the Waldenses*, fourth edition (London: Cassell and Company, Limited N. D.).
- 2 Albert Hyma, *Europe from the Renaissance to 1815* (New York: F. S. Crofts and Company 1931), p. 222.

WILLIAM S. PETERSON'S REPLY:

The fundamental assumption of Bolton's letter is that my article was designed primarily to list and correct the factual errors in "The Bible and the French Revolution." Hence he finds the core of the article on pages 64-66 and implies that everything before and after these pages is superfluous padding. I certainly cannot accept this view of the article, which, as a matter of fact, examined a number of other questions that Bolton evidently feels are unimportant: the record of *The Great Controversy's* liter-

ary development; the shared assumptions and political attitudes of the historians whom Mrs. White consulted; and, most importantly, what the factual errors in the chapter tell us about Mrs. White's handling of her sources.

Bolton is wrong, therefore, when he peremptorily dismisses my article as "no new contribution" merely because one or two of the factual errors in question have been cited before. I made no false claim of originality; when Arthur White or Francis D. Nichol had already discussed some matter in print, I pointed this out. Whatever value my article has lies in its fresh approach to the problem and the kinds of questions that it asks — not simply in the list of errors which has so absorbed Bolton's attention. I might add that I am baffled by his assertion that I discredited, "without data," Mrs. White's sources. The article was fully documented. Possibly Bolton accidentally overlooked the notes at the end.

Now to turn to the specific points which Bolton raises:

1. He says that I "consider" Wylie to be the published source of Mrs. White's description of the St. Bartholomew Massacre. There can be no doubt about this particular assertion; I refer Bolton to the two parallel columns of page 63 of my article for evidence of how closely Mrs. White was following Wylie at this point, even to the verge of plagiarism. Wylie first makes this statement: "It was now eleven o'clock of Saturday night, and the massacre was to begin at daybreak. . . . The signal for the massacre was to be the tolling of the great bell of the Palace of Justice." Two pages later Wylie writes: "The Queen-mother anticipated the signal by sending one at two o'clock of the morning to ring the bell of St. Germain l' Auxerois, which was nearer than that of the Palace of Justice."¹ Mrs. White in 1888 says that "the great bell of the palace" signaled the beginning of the massacre; in 1911, tacitly acknowledging her error, she says merely that it was "a bell" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 272).

Now, nobody (except Bolton) denies that Mrs. White made a mistake. The only interesting question is *how* the mistake was made. Arthur White's explanation is ingenious but not, I think, convincing: "She [Mrs. White] was now [in 1911, while revising *The Great Controversy*] informed that historians differed on the point of which bell actually gave the signal, (1) the bell of the palace, (2) the bell of the palace of justice, or (3) the bell of the church of St. Germain. . . . The plan was that the bell of the palace would give the signal, and certain reliable historians state that it did. Others differed."² My own explanation of the error is that Mrs. White had read the first passage in Wylie (and the verbal correspondences between Wylie's account and hers are very striking) but not the second. In other words, I believe Mrs. White was guilty of hasty and careless research. If Bolton chooses to regard one of her acknowledged errors as evidence of superior insight, he is of course free to do so.

2. The paragraph in which Mrs. White speaks of the "millions" (later corrected to "multitudes") refers directly to the Terror; there is no mention of war in it. Thus I think the number of deaths cited by Mrs. White must be connected with the Terror alone, though she does also, inexplicably, refer to a ten-year period. Donald Greer, in a careful statistical study, has found records of 16,594 victims during the Terror. "Further research in local archives might add two or three hundred names," remarks Greer; "but if every death sentence of the period were known it is extremely doubtful that the total would reach 17,000."³ Again, since Mrs. White confessed to the

error by changing the sentence in 1911, I cannot imagine why Bolton wishes to defend a figure which the writer herself disavowed.

3. As for the number of Protestants who fled France in the sixteenth century, I can only say that I have laid out all the evidence already in my article. I invite the readers of SPECTRUM to reexamine my paragraph (page 65 and note 25) and then judge whether my interpretation or Bolton's is correct. I believe the evidence speaks for itself.

4. Mrs. White's remark about "one of the priests of the new order" follows close on the heels of Scott's anecdote about the Bishop of Paris, which concludes with this sentence: "Several apostate priests followed the example of this prelate." Under these circumstances, who could possibly conclude — as Bolton claims to have done — that "one of the priests of the new order" was in fact not a priest?

REFERENCES

- 1 James A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, volume two (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin 1874-1877), pp. 600, 602.
- 2 Arthur White, Ellen G. White as an historian (unpublished manuscript), pp. 22-23.
- 3 Donald Greer, *The Incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution: A Statistical Interpretation* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith 1966), p. 26.

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WALTER H. ROBERTS, Loma Linda University:

At hand is volume one of the 1827 edition of Scott's *Life of Napoleon*, which I had been reading just before the appearance of [Peterson's] article, and John Buchan's life of Sir Walter Scott written [in observance of] the centenary of the latter's death. Buchan evaluates Scott's biography of Napoleon, with its introductory comments on the French Revolution in essentially the following terms:

It represents a herculean labor matched by tireless industry — a prodigious feat. Scott read, and noted, and indexed with the pertinacity of some pale compiler in the British Museum as he outlined the work. Authoritative source materials were not lacking and were secured from at home and abroad. It is a history for the ordinary reader and not for the scholar. The prerequisites of such a work would include: a just perspective, a well-proportioned narrative, and vigor and color in the telling.

In respect to the first, the work is remarkable for the fact that it was written so close in time to the events described. In respect to the second, the expository matter is skillfully interwoven into the text; it is lacking only in the ability to sustain the reader's interest throughout the nine volumes (attributable in part to the pressure under which it was composed). The work was attacked by the critics on the basis of not being judgmental enough of Napoleon; and after all, the author was not a bona fide historian. Observably, it was the product of a man of genius and on a vast scale (as even a casual perusal will confirm). I might interject here that the *Messiah* was written "in haste," but again by a man of genius.

The Scott references embellish *The Great Controversy* — if the latter needs it. They do not appear incongruous, for [Ellen] White is no mean writer herself. The absurdities and excesses of the revolutionary period are highlighted, and the basic causes are brought into focus. There is a French motto, "Death before dishonor." Perhaps the bishop of Paris (mercifully nameless) should have thought of it and achieved the honor rather than the dishonor. It was my impression that *The Great Controversy*, like Scott's *Napoleon*, was written for the common man. This seems to have been lost on the eminent critic.

Carlyle's *French Revolution*, written in 1837, says essentially the same things as Scott does regarding the bishop and associated events, even giving the bishop's name. McCrie's life of Anton Lavoisier, the great French scientist and patriot, might have suited Peterson better if it had yet been written. In any case, we would look in vain in Lavoisier's writings for any aspersion of the clergy of that day; Lavoisier lived and died a staunch Catholic.

In my opinion, the English instructor at our sister university had better take on a less formidable opponent than [Ellen] White. It is unfortunate that so many readers will not have the resources available to check out the allegations. As Carlyle would say, "Faith is gone out; Scepticism is come in." In these times we need more faith, not more doubt.

WILLIAM S. PETERSON'S REPLY:

I am sorry to have to report that Roberts has seriously misinterpreted John Buchan's remarks on Scott's biography of Napoleon. The passage which he cites — praising Scott for his industrious research — is in fact a quotation from J. G. Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law; but Buchan then goes on to evaluate the *Life of Napoleon* in language almost identical to that which I used in my article:

It was task-work, no doubt, but a prodigious feat of task-work. Most of it was written in haste, with a mind overwrought and a heart distracted by cares. The materials were not available for a full and accurate chronicle, even had Scott the capacity and the desire to use them. . . . Both [Scott's *Life* and Hazlitt's *Life of Napoleon*] are productions of men of genius; both are on a vast scale; neither is the work of a careful scholar.¹

It is true that Buchan praises the *literary* qualities of the biography, but he nowhere makes the claim that it is reliable *history*. Hence Roberts cannot legitimately invoke the authority of Buchan to endorse his own view that Scott is a sound historian. Modern historians are, in fact, almost unanimous in their low estimate of Scott's biography of Napoleon, for the very reasons which I outlined in my article.

In his attempt to defend Scott, Roberts is quarreling not only with me but with a host of witnesses. Scott's own publisher complained that the "tautologies and inaccuracies" of the *Life of Napoleon* cost him "5 hours labour" on every proof sheet of the book;² and when it was published, John Stuart Mill subjected the *Life* to a searching analysis in the *Westminster Review* which revealed once and for all the profound

deficiencies of the book.³ Surely at this late date Roberts does not propose single-handedly to rescue Scott's reputation as a historian merely because Mrs. White thought highly of him.

As for Scott's anecdote about the bishop of Paris, which both Roberts and Bolton discuss, I should emphasize that I was not questioning the accuracy of Scott's account. I said only that Mrs. White distorted the episode by suppressing the key fact that the bishop renounced Christianity under coercion. Therefore, whether Carlyle mentions the episode or whether Roberts thinks the bishop should have chosen martyrdom is simply beside the point. What is at issue here is whether Mrs. White gives a fair and accurate account of the bishop's behavior; I submit that she has not.

Georges Lefebvre, one of the leading modern authorities on the French Revolution, offers the following comment on the incident: "On the night of 16-17 Brumaire, Year II (November 6-7, 1793) they [the extremists] compelled [Jean Baptiste Joseph] Gobel, the bishop of Paris, to resign, and on the 17th he came with his vicars to the Convention to confirm his action officially."⁴ It will be seen that this agrees substantially with Scott's version, and that it emphasizes once again precisely the aspect of the story which Mrs. White ignored: that the bishop was *compelled* to act as he did. To treat Gobel as a willing apostate, as Mrs. White does, is to write bad history.

REFERENCES

- 1 John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott* (London: Cassell 1932), pp. 311-312.
- 2 Eric Quayle, *The Ruin of Sir Walter Scott* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis 1968), p. 224.
- 3 John Stuart Mill, Scott's life of Napoleon, *Westminster Review* 9:251-303 (April 1828).
- 4 Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution from 1793 to 1799*, volume two, translated by John H. Stewart and James Friguglietti (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1962-1964), p. 78.

CYRIL EVANS, Adelaide, South Australia:

The Autumn 1970 issue of *SPECTRUM* has just been received [January 29] to enliven our midsummer reading in this part of the Antipodes. Congratulations on the whole issue, and especially for publishing Peterson's study of Ellen White's account of the French Revolution.

It is high time that some of our scientists undertake similar studies of Ellen White's medical ideas and theories. Scientists, who should be well trained in the evaluation and assessment of data, have apparently left the field open to a professor of English to analyze, in the critical scientific method and tradition, part of one of Mrs. White's works. Surely the scientists should have been first in this field. Or has their research and critique been unpublished?

Were such a scientific evaluation undertaken, it would undoubtedly show that Ellen White was very much a product of her time, influenced by some of the changing

ideas to which she was subjected by those around her. Probably the influence on her medical writings of the distant Tolstoy group and his followers, as well as the profound influence of men of strong personality like Bates and Kellogg, would be clearly shown. The many ideas, in her writings, which are no longer medically or scientifically acceptable would be discussed. The historical perspective would be preserved, and we would see how valuable were her remarks to a certain group at a specific time in one country in particular. We would no longer, however, feel compelled to regard what was reasonable for certain people or groups seventy years ago as of value or credibility today. As with most of us, she would be seen to have been ahead of her day in a few things, behind in others, but basically a product of her environment, reading, and education in the times in which she lived.

Richard B. Lewis should also be commended for the stress he places on correct usage of words and phrases, and for the discussion of logical analysis and thought in his paper in the same issue. These two papers [by Peterson and Lewis] certainly add cogency to Peterson's concluding sentence: "Most Seventh-day Adventists could more readily respect and understand a fallible, imperfect Ellen White than the superhuman saint that the church has often given them in the past."

BENTON M. STIDD, Western Illinois University:

Peterson's well reasoned analysis is a significant contribution to Adventist understanding of the nature of inspiration as manifested by Mrs. White. If further study yields similar results from a broad spectrum of her writings, a full-scale evaluation is inevitable.

In the light of the present interest in earth history and the relationship between science and revelation, high priority should be given to a Petersonian analysis of Mrs. White's statements in these areas. If it is established that God has not seen fit to override the thought patterns, assumptions, and scientific conceptions peculiar to an inspired writer of a particular era, then a much more thoughtful approach to such writings is required. This will of necessity require a greater reliance on personal decision based more on *all* the facts available and less on the authority of a particular writer. Such a conclusion would no doubt be resisted by authoritatively oriented individuals and religious bodies, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the psychological satisfaction associated with reliance on an absolute authority.

May I add my support to the suggestion made by Fraser [Problems of Creation and Science, *SPECTRUM* Autumn 1969] that a symposium be organized to deal with conflicts between science and Scripture? I suggest further that such a symposium be organized by personnel at Andrews University representing both science and theology, and that the problem be considered from both points of view.

OTHER LETTERS

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I am convinced that SPECTRUM has the potential to be a significant force for change within the Seventh-day Adventist church. Indeed, I believe the church will continue to lose the support of its most thoughtful members unless they find an effective channel for contributing to review and change of both policy and doctrine. SPECTRUM has made an excellent beginning as such a channel, and you are to be complimented for your part in creating this new journal.

The major contribution of SPECTRUM thus far has been to provide a forum for the relatively uninhibited exchange of ideas and views that previously were expressed only in private. This contribution simply cannot be overrated. It represents tangible evidence that the church (or at least some of its members) has achieved sufficient maturity to permit consideration of ideas that in the past were regarded as heretical at worst and inconsistent with good standing at best. Now that the appropriateness of such exchanges has been established and the vehicle to accomplish it brought into existence, a systematic program for focusing attention on a series of issues in desperate need of searching review should be developed.

J. RUSSELL NELSON
University of Colorado

A crude survey I recently made of the education of Seventh-day Adventist leaders in the nineteenth century provides an interesting footnote to the article by Richard C. Larson and Wilfred M. Hillock [The Education of Adventist Administrators, Winter 1971]. It is based on biographical sketches in the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* of 315 prominent Adventists born between 1790 and 1870. Because of the rarity of college-trained members in the nineteenth century, it seems safe to assume that most of those who did attend college are listed in the *Encyclopedia* and that their college experience is mentioned. On the other hand, the names of thousands of uneducated members do not appear. Thus, educationally, our statistics show the church in a more favorable light than it really deserves.

	MINISTERS (203)	EDUCATORS (30)	PHYSICIANS (23)	OTHERS (59)
No college	68.5%	26.7%	—	72.9%
Battle Creek College	20.7%	30.0%	—	18.6%
Other Adventist college	6.4%	6.7%	4.3%	1.7%
Non-Adventist college	4.4%	36.7%	95.6%	6.8%

These figures reveal that the great majority of our most influential ministers and other workers, like publishing house employees, had no college education at all. And of the minority who did, only a fraction had any exposure to non-Adventist institutions of higher learning. Consequently, these leaders were effectively isolated from the tre-

mendous intellectual ferment taking place in the academic world of the middle and late nineteenth century. Our physicians were not much better off, since their "college" education generally was purely professional and involved no contact with the liberal arts. (Until this century, most physicians went on to medical school with a high school education or less.) Only among the small group of educators do we find a significant number who had attended — not necessarily graduated from — nondenominational colleges. But, then, almost as many of our "leading" educators seem to have had no college experience whatever, denominational or otherwise.

By themselves, these statistics are obviously inadequate. Yet they do indicate the need for future studies of the effects this intellectual isolation had upon the thinking of our church in its formative years.

RONALD L. NUMBERS
Loma Linda University

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I was made editor of the British Adventist student magazine *Contact* [some months] ago and had intended to write to you then, as it was then that I saw my first copy of *SPECTRUM*. Quite a lot has happened since, including the British postal strike, and I find myself writing rather belatedly to offer my warm congratulations for producing such an excellent magazine, which gave me an enormous and pleasant surprise when I first saw it. It is a credit to the movement.

Contact won't be a British *SPECTRUM*, as we have nothing like the same resources of money and intellect. Also, the magazine will have to serve rather diverse functions, including a means of communication between scattered Adventist students at British universities. But *SPECTRUM* is certainly an ideal standard and an indispensable magazine for Adventist graduates here.

RICHARD LEHMAN
Pembroke College, Oxford

EDITOR'S NOTE: We congratulate Editor Lehman and the organization of the British Adventist students with their publication of the new journal *Contact*, and we wish them much success and God's guidance.

Last summer it was a great pleasure to meet Svend Overlade (a teacher at the Teachers College at Odenze in Denmark and one of the contributing editors of *SPECTRUM*), and to see the excellent journal *Kommunikation* published by the association of Danish Seventh-day Adventist students. Overlade also made me acquainted with the periodical *Recherches et Contacts*, the organ of the French language Adventist students published in Paris. It was also my privilege to meet with some of the leaders of the Adventist academicians in Germany at Darmstadt and to become acquainted with their activities and plans for German Adventist university students. Recently I received the first issue of *Scope*, the new quarterly journal of the Association of University Seventh-day Adventists' Societies of Australia and found it stimulating.

To see Adventist students and scholars in Australia, North and South America, Africa, and Europe dedicating and organizing themselves for the pursuit of the common goals to strengthen their relationship with their God and with each other and to participate in the continual growth of their church is really inspiring.

REVIEWS

Christianity and Society

GARY LAND

THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL

By Sherwood Eliot Wirt

New York: Harper and Row 1968 177 pp \$4.95

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"Why does the move toward social involvement seem to require a rejection of biblical Christianity?" asks Sherwood Eliot Wirt, the editor of *Decision* magazine (p. 41). Although he explains the historical background of this problem, Wirt's real answer is that the situation does not need to exist. Pointing to the social commentary of such Old Testament prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah, to the Magnificat of Mary, and to Jesus' injunction that we show our love for God by loving our fellowman, Wirt finds a strong biblical basis for social concern. He points to the fact that the social gospel began with the evangelical churches, although they lost its leadership by the time of the Civil War. Thus, by recovering its social conscience, conservative Protestantism is really going back to its historical tradition.

Wirt does not feel that a belief in the second coming of Christ excuses the Christian from social concern. The whole problem of the evangelical's social conscience, he states, is bound up in the word "meanwhile." Commanded by Christ to love his fellowman, the Christian loses much of his testimony if he fails to express his love in existential situations. "Evangelism is presenting Christ to men in the power of the Holy Spirit. Social action is an effort to apply Christ in finding solutions to human problems" (p. 129).

Having established the theological basis for social concern, the author probes the various complex social problems of race, environment, war, and freedom, in an attempt to articulate the manner in which the Christian may apply Christ's love to his society. Characteristic of his conclusions is the statement that if the Christian "does not join the Negro marches, he had better make sure that it is because he has found a more effective way to contribute to the racial struggle" (p. 88).

Wirt's book, however, is only a starting point. Rather than being an exhaustive study, it is written as a popular appeal to the Christian conscience. Time after time, the author indicates that Christians have much work to do in exploring the meaning of the gospel's social dimension. Although one may not agree with his specific analyses on certain matters — the Vietnam war and capital punishment, for example — Wirt has made clear the principles that should inspire and guide Christian social action.

Although Adventists, as the evangelical churches, once had a lively social conscience, the Seventh-day Adventist church also fell to interpreting its social responsibilities in a very narrow vein. Seventh-day Adventists, particularly those in positions of leadership, should read this book. Surely, with their emphasis on the whole man,

Adventists can make a significant contribution to reawakening the Christian social conscience through both scholarship and social action. As Wirt says, "There is no escaping responsibility. Christians are to work, to plant, to build, to pray, and to bring men to God while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work" (p. 112).

A Pilgrim's Progress

BRIAN S. BULL

76

A SEARCH FOR MEANING IN NATURE

By Richard M. Ritland

Mountain View, California: Pacific Press 1970 320 pp \$2.95

Bernard Ramm has pointed out that there are two traditions in the study of the relationship between Scripture and science. "There is the ignoble tradition that has taken a most unwholesome attitude toward science and has used arguments and procedures not in the better traditions of established scholarship. There has been and is a noble tradition in Bible and science, and this is the tradition of the great and learned evangelical Christians who have been patient, genuine, and kind and who have taken great care to learn the facts of science and Scripture."¹

A Search for Meaning in Nature by Richard Ritland is, above all things, patient, genuine, and kind — too patient and perhaps too kind for Adventists, who are accustomed to polemics in their science and to facile and spectacular answers. This is a most unusual book on science to have come from an Adventist publishing house: it is undeniably Christian, but nowhere is it identifiably Adventist.

Ritland is a thoroughly professional scientist. His areas of expertise, though broad, are not universal. His choice of subject matter seems to indicate that he feels most comfortable in the scientific disciplines of geology and comparative anatomy. *A Search for Meaning in Nature* is a "pilgrim's progress" of one man in his search for cohesiveness and order. In addition, however, it is a fascinating ramble through nature in the company of a competent naturalist who is a born teacher. Thus the book may appeal to readers on two levels. Read superficially, it will appear as a commentary on selected interesting and unique natural phenomena, a selection without obvious unity. Readers who have wrestled with problems similar to the ones that perplex the author, and who identify with his intense need for satisfying answers, will appreciate the caliber of his scholarship and the agony and soul-searching that this book represents.

Ritland opens with a brief historical sketch of why Darwinism swept the world. He lays much of the blame, and rightly so, at the feet of sincere but misguided clerics. (With friends like these, who needs enemies?)

Chapter two is an investigation into the limitations of knowledge. This discourse is fundamental to the remainder of the book, since it clearly delineates the approach that Ritland has taken to the "facts" he later quotes. The reader must appreciate the

points raised, or much of what follows will be opaque. Ritland quotes the following illustration of Karl Popper. (It is a concept referred to in one form or another by all Adventist authors discussing the life sciences. Most have let it stand as is, but Ritland commendably balances it later with a quotation from Alan T. Waterman.)

The empirical basis of objective science has thus nothing "absolute" about it. Science does not rest upon rock bottom. The bold structures of its theories rise, as it were, above a swamp. It is like a building erected on piles. The piles are driven down from above into the swamp, but not to any natural or "given" base; and when we cease our attempts to drive our piles into a deeper layer, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that they are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being.²

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Adventists manifest a peculiar schizophrenia about the reliability of science. When scientific findings agree with our practices, we quote the authorities and invest them in our minds with infallibility. When we disagree, we are quick to point out the deficiencies and inadequacies of the scientific method and intimate that those who hold contrary views are either charlatans or fools. Ritland presents the more considered approach of Waterman:

Anyone can challenge the alleged facts and theories of science. If he can prove his point within the scientific community by observations, experiments or reasoning that others can repeat and verify, then his contribution becomes an integral part of the body of science. . . . Generally speaking, and contrary to popular view, these revisions commonly take the form of refinements or increased generality and only occasionally bring about a revolutionary overthrow of existing principles. The impressive result is that the edifice of science has a strength and ability which is dynamic and resilient rather than static and brittle.³

Ritland's is not an easy book to read. The diversity of topics covered is great. Frozen mammoths in Alaska and the principle of entropy are discussed, as are *Australopithecus* and his ilk, along with the theory of recapitulation. To the uninitiated, the juxtaposition of such apparently unrelated topics must appear most confusing. Logic, however, is present. Virtually all of the topics discussed have been adduced in conservative Christian literature as proofs of the truth of Creation or as indicators of the falsity of the evolutionary hypothesis. In essence this book is a personal quest by a dedicated scientist via those channels which have been touted by others as solutions. Obviously the author found no easy answers. It is clear from the preface that he did not expect them.

Nature, as C. S. Lewis has observed, does not teach: "The tendency to take her as a teacher is obviously very easily grafted onto the experience which we call love of nature. But it is only a graft. While we are actually subjected to them, the 'moods' and 'spirits' of nature point no morals. Overwhelming gaiety, insupportable grandeur, sombre desolation are flung at you. Make what you can of them, if you must make at all. The only imperative that nature utters is, Look. Listen. Attend."⁴ Neither the creationist nor the evolutionist can ever develop from nature an open and shut argument in favor of his particular approach. Any author who fails to concede this point is not a trustworthy guide through the natural world.

As one would expect, *A Search for Meaning in Nature* is fair to opposing views. It is so fair, in fact, that occasionally the clarity of the text suffers. For example, on page 164 the author states: "The creationist should recognize . . . that the existence of gaps, the apparent absence of transitional series between major groups of animals and plants, is not in itself proof that such forms never existed. But on the other side of the picture, the evolutionist must also recognize that apparent absence of certain groups of higher animals and plants in lower strata likewise is not proof that these forms of life were not in existence at the time."

As one man's personal search for meaning, this book will not appeal to everyone. To read it requires concentration; sometimes the problems presented have not been dealt with in a compelling or gripping manner. The whole exercise may seem futile to those who have never asked the appropriate questions. To those who have personally wrestled with the problems of origins and purposes of Creation, however, and who have sought answers in the natural world by means of the scientific method, this work is invaluable.

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Professors' Porridge

M. JERRY DAVIS

THEOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Prepared by SDA Theological Seminary Professors

Edited by Sakae Kubo, Charles Sandefur, Jim Walters

Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104: Andrews University 1970 \$1.50

This list of "basic books for the minister's library" makes no reference to its purpose, beyond the implications of its title. The intent must be drawn from its content, therefore. My first impression is that the contributors have listed titles which for the greater part would tend to confirm that which the Seventh-day Adventist clergyman already believes about theological questions. The organization of the materials reflects the structure of the seminary curriculum. From the standpoint of enlarging and updating a college or seminary experience or supplementing a scanty theological education, the bibliography offers safe guidelines. On the critical side, I want to call attention to the arrogant style of the annotations:

"This is the sort of book to have on hand when the church or its individual members need legal advice" (p. 1). Does the clergyman give legal counsel? "Catholic in mood but pithy" (p. 4). What does "Catholic in mood" mean? "Beyond the average level of the parish minister" (p. 9). Average level? "His is a very useful work at the point where he does his positive exegesis" (p. 43). Ladd's exegesis is negative at some points?

"Still not as thorough and substantial as it might have been" (p. 55). "A somewhat conservative scholar" (p. 68). "Anyone who hasn't read the first part of this book has not yet grappled with the dramatic force of the biblical meaning of love" (p. 96). "Concedes too much to economic determinism and not enough to divine providence" (p. 105). "If he had ever been 'converted' during an evangelistic campaign he would probably have written a more understanding interpretation" (p. 105). "Its scholarship has been accepted by reputable American church historians" (p. 107). "Engaging style based on reasonably good scholarship" (p. 107).

These examples are perhaps petty to the point of humor. However, I take serious exception to the note appended to Sidney Mead's *The Lively Experiment*: "A provocative work by a man who is sometimes called a 'historian's historian' in spite of his prejudices" (p. 106). Mead once told me, "I've searched twenty-five years for an Adventist who writes history. Your 'histories' come across as propaganda."

Such a bibliography can hardly include every significant work, but the omissions seem glaring, in view of the title's suggestion that these are basic books for the minister's library. The selections seem right for getting one through the academics of seminary but impoverished at the point of helping a minister minister to the kinds of problems that confront him when he leaves the seminary and meets the realities of a parish ministry. There are *fifteen* entries dealing with ministry to personal problems (only three published in the last decade) and *ninety* dealing with missions. A clergyman may preach forty years and not encounter a Buddhist, yet he deals with his congregation daily. Why not more entries where the real problems are?

How can a 1970 bibliography ignore the invasion of drugs in modern society; the implications of Vietnam; a Christian's responsibility to his government (resistance as well as support); the growth of homosexuality, divorce, marital infidelity, student promiscuity, and the whole permissive society? The bibliography is strong in its presentation of the timeless Scriptures, but feeble in its relation to timely issues. The major currents of the Sixties: violence, civil rights, radical theology, communication, automation, situation ethics, and renaissance of lay involvement receive no reference. To ignore such figures as Thomas Althizer, Martin Luther King, Joseph Fletcher, J. A. T. Robinson, James Baldwin, Marshall McLuhan, Eric Fromm, Eldridge Cleaver, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Rollo May, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslowe, Harvey Cox, John Cobb, and John Robinson suggests an unfortunate isolationism.

A few inclusions of works that offer social criticism or take a look at society and the church would add perspective: Charles Merrill Smith's *How To Become a Bishop without Being Religious*, Pierre Berton's *The Comfortable Pew*, W. Kilbourn's *Restless Church*, David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, Edward T. Hall's *The Silent Language*. These may be more existential than scholarly, but they speak much truth that needs recognition. In summary, the bibliography appears to see the minister as a scholar. I would like to see a bibliography for the minister as a minister.

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